

Three Suggestions for...

Interesting Mentors

When he says jump, you jump! Your mentor is the person who made you who you are. They helped train you, they taught you the basic abilities of your class, or perhaps they gave you the confidence to become who you are today, or are destined to become.

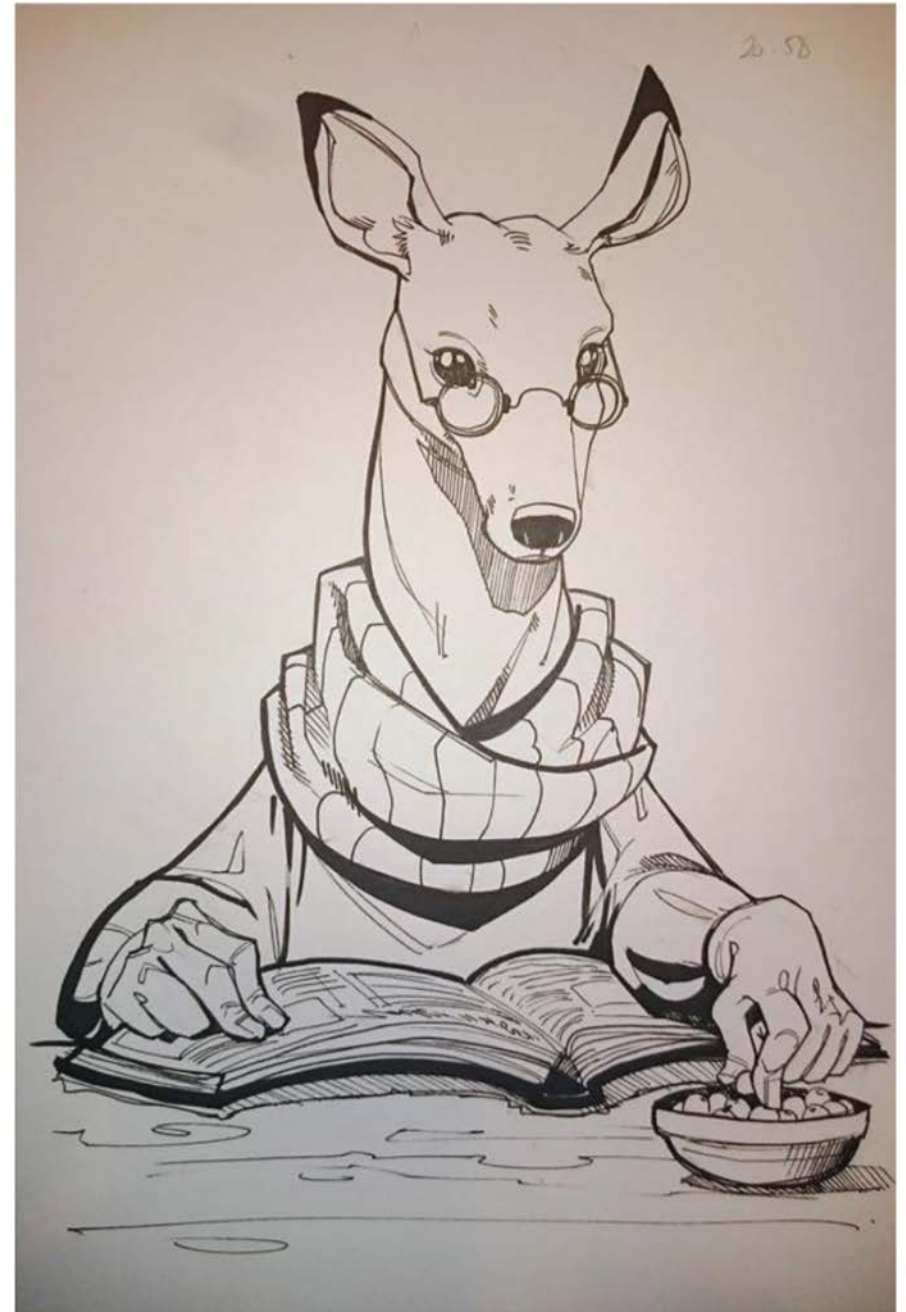
There are various reasons for your character to have a mentor, and not all of them are voluntary. You might have been handed over to the monks as a baby, and grew up under Mother Kikamore's spiritual guidance. Maybe your parents used to toss you into the training yard of the town's marshal every afternoon, to be taught how to "be a man". Perhaps you had a personal, secret friend – a fey-like being who appeared before you every full moon, whispering things that opened your eyes to unknown worlds.

Your mentor is or was the one responsible for making you the person you are today. But the real question is about tomorrow. They taught you most or even everything you need to become a 1st level adventurer. Do you still need their assistance, perhaps for several more levels, until you've "mastered" your profession? Do they consider your apprenticeship complete? Are they happy with your decision to leave them? Your relationship with your mentor was a huge part of your upbringing; now that you're out in the world, it might become *more* complicated, not less.

They Have a Dark Secret

You've known your mentor for a long time, and even though she's always been mysterious, or tends to keep her personal affairs to herself, you never had any reason to think she has an actual *secret*. But she does - something she wants to keep from the world. Have you discovered her secret already? Is it still waiting to be discovered? How does your relationship change after it's revealed?

- **I'm not who I say I am:** Yarka the Fabulous Bard was your personal teacher and mentor throughout your childhood, and through her you learned history,



acrobatics and manners - but you never actually got to see her *perform*. She talked a lot about how to make friends and influence people, but not even once has she picked up her famed flute to teach you how to play. That is because she's a tone-deaf rogue who managed to sleaze her way into a comfortable job as a traveling teacher – and rich people simply prefer hiring someone who's known as a Fabulous Bard.

This is a relatively light case of deception; it can get a lot weirder. The head of the magical college is actually a transformed dragon, or an air spirit in disguise. The town's marshal always wears full armour to cover the birthmark of the One True King, the destiny he's fleeing. The old granny who watched over the sheep and from which you learned true resolve was in fact part of your own psyche, manifested by your dormant powers.

- **I have no idea what I'm doing:** Master Zingama of the 3rd Wind knows many ancient wisdoms. Only problem is, he invented them all; most while sitting in the bathroom. They're clever-sounding, but that's about it – yet he's *still* sure he's doing a good job mentoring you, because the important thing is to teach you discipline. Or something, he's not actually sure. Somehow, probably thanks to being naturally gifted, you manage to become a monk despite the Master's "teachings" (or maybe you *did* find them useful, in your own way?). However, you're becoming wise and powerful enough to realise your amazing Master isn't all that amazing. What will you do about it?

For another example, consider the mentor who sits at home while sending his ranger protégée out hunting, giving advice (that he thought "sounds reasonable", or simply read out from a book) on types of monsters and dangers of the environment. In fact, he's nothing more than an old aristocrat accountant who retired to the swamp lands and just wanted to prove to himself he's still important, so he convinced one of the local kids to follow his directions.

- **I have a dark side:** Is the mentor just an arrogant, selfish bastard, who's good at putting on a show as a humble servant of justice, or are they related in some way to the big bad of the campaign? Is she covering a horrible past, that she now regrets (perhaps seeking redemption), or was she originally a lovely person, but some *things* happened, and she's turning more and more extreme? At what point in this transition do you become aware of it? Do you still have time to redeem your mentor, or was it too late before you even met? Perhaps you're the only one who's always known what they did in their previous life,

and you've come to accept them and receive their teaching despite of it – but now other people know as well, and demand retribution.

They Have a Strange Connection with You

Your relationship with your mentor might be a special connection the both of you cherish, or you might be just one student out of a hundred. Perhaps you've been living under your mentor as an apprentice or servant, or maybe you just used to meet them once every month for a couple of hours. In any case, there's something *else* going on between you two, something that you might not be aware of.

- **You're my chosen one:** You're *real* special to your mentor. Out of the whole class of warriors, he likes you best. The traveling wizard has a protégée in every village, but she's always looking forward to visiting you. Why? Perhaps they see you as the star student, but perhaps they find you interesting for another reason. Maybe the two of you are among the very few dragonborn in this land, and it's pleasant to have some time with someone of your race, who *gets* you. Maybe they're not actually interested in you, but in fact try to curry favour with your parents or guardians. Or maybe, well, they've got a thing for you. Not very professional, but not every mentor is a professional!
- **You're my kid:** It might be that none of you know it (yet) – your mentor is not hiding anything, they're just as ignorant as you are on the matter. You were brought together by destiny, circumstances, or the guiding hand of an unknown agent. It might be that your parent simply was also a mentor to you: your grim father might have taught you his fighting style throughout your childhood, with brutal and merciless methods, perhaps treating you more as a soldier than as his daughter.
- **You're me:** Your mentor is actually you from the future; he/you came back to fix the timeline, after the Time Devourer destroyed your childhood to prevent you from becoming its slayer. You just had to become your own mentor, in order to teach yourself everything you must know. Or maybe your mentor is a manifestation of your powers: you can speak with your reflection, which represent the hidden draconic lineage within you, teaching you how to utilize it better. It might actually be a distant spirit of your past self, who now resides within a house cat and gives you advice from hundreds of reincarnations ago.

They're Planning Something

The main question about your mentor is the same one you should ask about any other background detail: How will this affect my story? What is going to happen with my mentor, what's their future role in the campaign? The simple answer is "They just taught me what I know when I start adventuring, and that's it", but it's a rather bland one. Here are some others.

- **It's related to your campaign:** Your mentor is going to play an important part in things to come. They have a crucial piece of knowledge, or a powerful item, or the ear of someone in power, and one day you'll have to ask them to use their connections to advance your adventure. Perhaps you don't yet know they have this ability, but it'll probably be more dramatically satisfying if it's something well-known about them (even if neither you nor the DM know yet how it'll come into action!).
- **It IS your campaign:** At some point further down the road, it becomes clear that everything's going on was initiated and/or accompanied by your mentor. That, of course, includes your initiation under them as well. Is this good news? Are you capable of performing the Song of Heavens to defeat the demon lord, thanks to your mentor being well-prepared? Or is it a bad thing, and now you find yourself facing a mentor who taught you everything you know, and therefore has an intimate knowledge of your limitations and weaknesses?
- **My time with you has not yet come:** But I've got so many adventures seeds for you, in the meantime! Perhaps the Master Wizard is preparing the Spell of Storms, and it's going to take most of the year; in the meantime, he needs you to plant these four seeds at the four corners of the realm. Perhaps the general is busy for a few months while preparing her army for the invasion, and has no use for you now; but when she's done, she's going to need a small group of excellent infiltrators to get into the palace and lower the defences.

One last thought

In a way, your mentor is part of your character's legacy (or are you *their* legacy?..). If, one day, your hero dies before his time, your new hero might be a new protégé of the same mentor, keeping the flame alive. Or perhaps, one day your hero will decide to retire, *becoming* the mentor for your naive new character.

New Background: Protégé

You have a mentor, in one of the ways described here, or a different way altogether. This mentor was an important part of your life for the longest time, and probably remains so. You probably learned your class abilities from them, and might need to go back to learn new ones. In any case, a huge part of your personality was shaped by your relationship with your mentor.

Skill Proficiencies: Insight, Investigation

Tool Proficiencies: One type of artisan's tools

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A set of artisan's tools (of your choice), a personal gift from your mentor, a proof of apprenticeship (a letter signed by your mentor, or the like), a parcel you've been asked to hand to someone important, traveller's clothes, and a pouch containing 15 gp

Type of Mentor

You should let your choice of class, personality or skill proficiencies determine the things your mentor taught you and the ways in which he or she influenced you. Their demeanour, however, can be left to chance if you are so inclined:

d10	Personality Trait	d10	Personality Trait
1	Angry	6	Demanding
2	Aloof	7	Spiritual
3	Calculated	8	Pedantic
4	Jealous	9	Arrogant
5	Resentful	10	Parental

Feature: Call on Your Mentor

Your mentor is a person of some importance, who can pull a few strings and talk to the right people. When you present your proof of apprenticeship, doors open to you; people in office will agree to at least hear what you have to say. If you're using your mentor's pull too frequently, or in ways that disrespect them, they might politely ask you to stop. Or not so politely, and with a demand for compensation.

If you're dealing with someone who has heard of your mentor and respects them (a highly religious person, and your mentor is a known priest; a tribal hunter, and your mentor is a witch doctor), you can easily impress them, but at the same time you set some expectations that might prove to be too high.

Additionally, if you present your proof of apprenticeship to a person of your mentor's profession (mage, when mentored under a spell-caster) or who looks favourably upon them (presenting the luckstone your fairy godmother gave you to a fey), you're welcomed to a single night's lodging at their home, including a meal.

Suggested Characteristics

Growing up under a mentor shaped your outlook in a specific way. Even if you don't share your mentor's worldview, you're at least somewhat inclined to consider it, always hearing in your head your mentor's remarks.

d8 Personality Trait

- 1 I find myself using many of my mentor's phrases. He was right about a lot of things!
- 2 People who have no respect for their elders and betters deserve no respect from me.
- 3 Many people are just ignorant – I'll teach them, like I've been taught myself.
- 4 Every person should learn to take care of themselves; beggars and dilettantes annoy me to no end.
- 5 I'm eager to get better at my trade. Every challenge is a learning opportunity!
- 6 I've got a well-practiced way of doing things – please don't interrupt me, I know what I'm doing.
- 7 I've got a story for every occasion, thanks to my somewhat... colourful apprenticeship.
- 8 Despite years of effort by my mentor, I still do that one annoying thing. It's my way of putting a little bit of me into my mentor's teachings.

d6 Ideal

- 1 **Mastery.** I want to be the very best, like no one ever was. (Lawful)
- 2 **Education.** The lessons I've learned should be available to anyone who desires them. (Good)
- 3 **Freedom.** People should be able to choose their own path, advance in their own pace. (Chaotic)
- 4 **Respect.** I want to make my mentor proud of me. (Any)
- 5 **Revelation.** By practicing the well-established methods and traditions, one can achieve true enlightenment. (Lawful)
- 6 **Curiously.** I know so much about one specific subject, now I want to learn completely new things! (Any)

d6 Bond

- 1 My mentor always speaks of the "lost teachings" of our order. I must find them!
- 2 I have a close friend who was taught alongside me, although they learned something a bit different.
- 3 The mysterious land of my mentor's youth sounds magnificent; I will discover it one day.
- 4 I owe my mentor everything, I should repay them somehow.
- 5 My mentor thinks nothing will ever come of me – I'll show them!
- 6 This is the same shield my master's master gave him, and he has given it to me. One day I'll pass it on to my apprentice.

d6 Flaw

- 1 I'm so used to doing things in a specific way, I usually don't stop to think of an alternative.
- 2 When I see someone doing something wrong, I can barely keep myself from correcting them.
- 3 Asking for help is a sign of weakness.
- 4 Greater challenges lead to greater advancement; however, sometime I bite off more than I can chew.
- 5 It's better to lie than to admit failure.
- 6 I'm very good at keeping secrets. I keep everything to myself.



Three Suggestions for Interesting Mentors is by Eran Aviram. Eran is the writer for Up to Four Players; the Lead Hebrew Translator for D&D and other games; Editor for City of Mist; produces the weekly podcast On the Shoulders of Dwarves, the main RPG podcast in Hebrew; and used to own a gaming store, it was awesome.

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