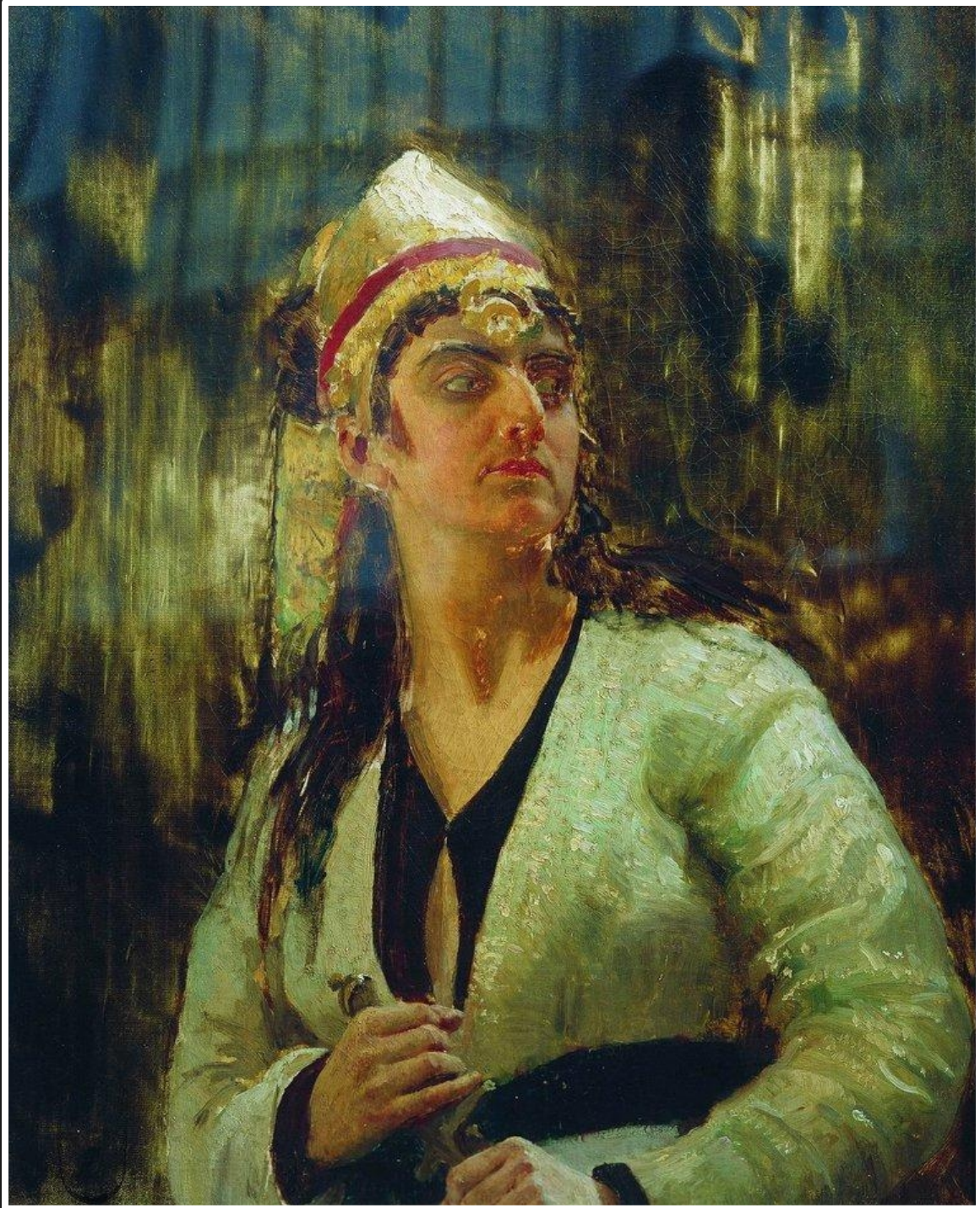


SHADOW & BLADE

A GUIDE TO ASSASSINS IN TUNNELS & TROLLS



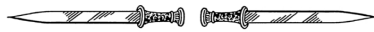
BY SCOTT MALTHOUSE

Shadow & Blade

A Guide to Assassins in Tunnels & Trolls

By Scott Malthouse

Trollish Delver Games



Written by Scott Malthouse
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Contents

Assassin Orders 4

Crown and Thorn 4

The Order of Crows 8

The Fist 10

Assassin Characters 12

The Classical Assassin 13

Assassin of the Fist 14

The Toxic Assassin 15

The Mage Assassin 16

The Assassin's Test 17



1. ASSASSIN ORDERS

"KILLING PEOPLE IS A LOT LIKE WRITING A BOOK, AND I'VE WRITTEN A LIBRARY'S WORTH." – GRIEVE DRAKENSONG



CROWN AND THORN

The most famous of orders, Crown and Thorn is a decadent society of wealthy killers whose activities are the stuff of folklore. Like all groups made up of a murderers-for-hire, Crown and Thorn is not supposed to exist but ask anyone in any city or outlying town and you will be told hushed tales of kings and queens being poisoned, stabbed and ultimately brought down by its members. Because of this reputation, members also go by the informal name Kingkillers.



As a continent-wide organisation, Crown and Thorn is the most diverse in terms of the type of kindred who join. Race means very little compared to wealth, and assassins here are all about the money, vying to be the richest assassin in the world.

Crown and Thorn was founded by legendary assassin Grieve Drakensong over a thousand years ago. It began with a membership of three people – three of the most feared killers in all the land: Allania Bloodraven, Genrick Wolfsbane and Grieve himself.

The Crafting of the Gorgon Blade

In the depths of the Winterblight Mountains lived the great Gorgon, Lucitaras, King of dark places. There he made his wicked domain, commanding armies of devious serpent people to wage war against the peaceful dwarves who lived closer to the mountain's surface. Knowing that their forces could not match Lucitaras', Grina Stonemouth, dwarven Dutchess of Winterblight called upon Crown and Thorn to come to their aid, paying a handsome sum in return.

In the dead of night, Grieve took a potion to disguise himself as a serpent warrior in order to sneak into the enemy camp. He slithered all the way to the royal chambers, silently killing anyone who crossed him. Finally, finding himself face-to-face with the sinister Gorgon, he drove a dagger into Lucitaras' eye, killing him outright.

When the serpent forces realised what had happened, they dispersed, fleeing back into the dark places beneath the mountain. Grieve scored a hefty reward and used some of the money to build the Crown and Thorn headquarters. He also took the spine of Lucitaras to create a sword of legend: the Gorgon Blade, which never left his sight.

Gorgon Blade

Legendary Weapon

Dice: 5

Str. Prerequisite: 10

Dex Prerequisite: 15

Special effect: When an enemy is struck with the blade, they must make a level 3 Saving Roll against Constitution (30). If they fail, they become stone in the next round. They are not dead, but cannot speak or take any actions.

Value: 140,000 gold pieces





The Rise of Crown and Thorn and the murder of Allania Bloodraven

Over the subsequent decade Crown and Thorn grew in its ranks. Assassins far and wide heard about Grieve and of the Gorgon he slew and wanted to join the organisation. Only the most elite killers were allowed to enter the halls of this esoteric society, having to pass a series of tests in order to qualify. The first test was to survive in the snow hills of Everwane for 30 days; naked and alone. The second test was to craft a poison that would paralyse, but not kill their victim. The third and final test was pure assassination. These three tasks are still required today in order to join, along with a price of 5,000 gold pieces.

Soon there are fifty members of Crown and Thorn, with Grieve the most revered, and feared, of them all. He had taken Allania's hand in marriage and the two become the assassin 'it' couple of the moment. Many times they took out contracts side-by-side, working in close harmony as husband and wife.

However, the bliss would be cut short. One night, while on a mission, Allania was discovered by a dangerous urook wizard called Shinrak. The twisted sorcerer tortured Allania for days on end using heinous magic until the day came when she finally gave up and died. Grieve found her on the stone floor, her limbs twisted and her hair completely burnt away. With a swipe of the Gorgon Blade, he turned Shinrak to stone and placed him in the hall of the headquarters as a trophy. Each day he would look upon his wife's killer and be reminded of his revenge. The statue remains to this day.

The Death of Grieve Drakensong

For a decade after the death of his wife, Grieve became distant. He was rarely seen around the halls and Genrick was becoming concerned for his friend's well-being. Genrick had taken it upon himself to run the Crown and Thorn himself and under his leadership the organisation had gone global, with guild halls cropping up in many major cities across the world. Crown and Thorn had been the driving force behind some of the most high profile assassinations the world had seen, killing monarchs, dukes, aristocrats, celebrities and more. Genrick and Grieve had become incredibly wealthy, but Grieve could not bring himself to be happy.

Many winters passed and Grieve had grown very old. One day, he emerged from his chambers and stood in the great hall, staring at the stone statue of Shinrak. His eyes remained transfixed for a long time before he sighed and left through the main door, never to be seen again.

After discovering his friend had left, Genrick put out a search, but it was to no avail. It was thought that their leader had finally taken his own life after all these years, plummeting from the grey cliffs into the icy waters below.

A statue was erected of Grieve in the entrance hall and to this day each assassin lays a flower at the base every year on the day of his disappearance. The engraving on the statue reads: "Grieve Drakensong. The Greatest Assassin Who Ever Lived."



HOW TO USE CROWN AND THORN IN YOUR GAME

Crown and Thorn is the order that players are most likely to come up against due to their all-pervasiveness across Trollworld. It should be noted that any normal kindred can be a member of Crown and Thorn, along with some exotic kindred, which means that it's more than likely that the players will be accepted into the order should they meet the requirements.

There is a Crown and Thorn representative in every major city along with a guild hall used for meetings and learning about new jobs. These halls are secret and their whereabouts can only be learned about through specific channels, usually the aristocracy, who have the wealth to afford such services. If the players ever manage to get inside a hall, unless they have been invited by the representative, they will come under significant attack and interrogation. Crown and Thorn assassins are not to be trifled with, with Monster Ratings ranging from 40 to 200 depending on kindred, character type and experience.

The main headquarters of the Crown and Thorn is in an undetermined location in Trollworld – it's up to the GM to decide where to put it. The headquarters is much larger than the other halls, with an entrance hall, main hall, courtyard, training grounds and several sleeping chambers.

The current leader of Crown and Thorn is Finlar Ossenthor, an incredibly wealthy, jovial human who is thought to be one of the deadliest people in all of Trollworld. He makes his home in the headquarters and can often be found training with sickles, his weapon of choice.

There are two major inspirations for adventure with Crown and Thorn. The first is the statue of Shinrak the wizard. It could come to pass that a magic user either infiltrates or is already a member of the order, and releases Shinrak from his stone prison. If he breaks out, then there is a powerful wizard on the loose, which is always a great excuse for adventure. The second inspiration is the Gorgon Blade that belonged to Grieve. It is said that Grieve took the blade with him when he left and never returned, so what if rumours began to fly that the weapon of legend had been found by an evil warrior or had fallen into an underground cavern full of nasty creatures? This is perfect fodder for adventure. Of course, there is always the mystery of where Grieve went as well as the players joining the order that could make for some incredibly fun sessions.



THE ORDER OF CROWS

The Order of Crows was founded by elf Ela-Kadul-Ela, otherwise known as Ela Silverwind, during a coup to assassinate the High Queen Thania Bronzeberry IV of the Pinewood Kingdom. Ela and her followers were members of the Pinewood military – elite warriors trained to fight in the most inhospitable conditions against the most powerful enemies. Ela and her followers had grown weary of Pinewood Kingdom's domination by the human realm of Rullen, who controlled much of the laws of Pinewood's land as well as trade. They saw Thania as a coward who did not wish for independence and decided that, in order to have a stronger kingdom, they must overthrow the High Queen.

Ela secretly began a revolution with like-minded elves and plotted to bring down the queen and install a new leader before going to war with Rullen. The Order of Crows was formed, and in the cover of night they took the forest palace and killed the Thania. Helenara Glimmergold was installed as the head of Pinewood and soon the kingdom was at war with Rullen, a conflict that still lasts to this day.

A Murder of Crows

Ela Silverwind was raised by her father, Ginthorn, who was a member of the Pinewood military. It was through him that she learnt how to use a dagger and a bow, which she became proficient with at a young age.

She was never rich – in fact her father barely made enough money to feed them both every night and each winter she wondered whether she would see the coming year. Ginthorn was a military man out of necessity – merchants could barely scratch a living because of heavy trade constraints from Rullen and so the army was the best paid job he could get. Still, he was loyal to his queen and would often sit around the table talking about how lucky they were to have her, all the while munching on stale bread.

Ela met Helenara Glimmergold on the cusp on adulthood and both became firm friends. They both worked in the silversmiths as apprentices and grew used to hard labour, working long hours for little pay. Tincara, the silversmith, did not share Ginthorn's loyalty and often went on long-winded rants about how she needs to stand up to Rullen and make Pinewood great again. After the first few rants, Ela and Helenara just rolled their eyes and got back to business, but after a year working with Tincara, they began to realise that he wasn't crazy after all. Both girls had grown up in a poor home while the elves at the top – the nobles and those with royal blood – had everything handed to them on a plate. They too began to grow weary of the queen and started to join in with Tincara's rants.



One winter's day Ela returned to her home with firewood to find her father on the floor, dead. He had died of the cold, clutching a stale loaf, his face grey. For days Ela wept and when all the tears had gone she began to feel a hot anger building inside of her. The queen would pay for this with her own blood.

Ela joined the army and for many years and spread whispers of revolution in the ranks. She knew that most people felt the same way and all they needed was a spark to ignite them. She had regular meetings with Helenara, who was much more well-versed in politics than she, until one day they decided that they must overthrow the queen and install a new leader. The Order of Crows was born.

The Crow Spreads its Wings

The Order of Crows remained in tact even after the coup had established a new government, with Ela at the head. She grew into a most fearsome woman, nicknamed The Silent Death by fellow members because of her ability to remain unheard and unseen until she makes her kill.

Staunchly loyal to her friend Helenara, Ela was brutal in dealing with traitors and enemies. If there was any discontent in the ranks, it was swiftly wiped out. This bloodthirsty regime forged elite fighting machines – assassins who became feared throughout the land for their skill with the bow and dagger. Members of the order would often leave a calling card at the scene of a murder – a black crow feather over the eyes of the victim.

HOW TO USE THE ORDER OF CROWS IN YOUR GAME

The Order of Crows is a purely elvish organisation, and a politically militant one at that. Anyone who supports the cause of making Pinewood independent can join, but will undergo brutal treatment in order to 'harden' them up.

Unlike Crown and Thorn, The Order of Crows has only one base – in Pinewood Kingdom. The base is within the forest palace and gaining entry is notoriously difficult. Helenara is quick to throw outsiders in prison unless they have a very good reason to be there. Usually merchants have the benefit of the doubt as they help the kingdom prosper, but Helenara can't be too careful.

Assassins in the order will use bows and daggers almost exclusively. They often wear a dark green cloak, green boots and black paint across the eyes. It's important to note that these are not assassins for hire as they work for their kingdom, so players wouldn't be able to pay them for their services.

A fine way to get players roped in to an adventure with The Order of Crows is simply to discover a Rullen noble or senior palace member dead with a black feather over her eyes. This will begin a murder mystery quest leading them into the heart of Pinewood Kingdom, discovering the history of Ela and the bloody coup.



THE FIST

The Fist has only one ally: the darkness. Trained from a young age to use their bodies as a weapon, members of this enigmatic order are feared by the rich and corrupt, but celebrated by the poor. They will steal and kill those who are wicked and well-off, taking some of the money but giving most of it to those that need it most.

Not only are members of The Fist highly skilled in martial arts and exotic weaponry, they are also master detectives. Often The Fist will be brought in instead of the usual city watch because of their incredible skills of deduction. Of course, this comes at a high price, so it's rare that anyone below the aristocracy can afford their services.

Kawanaka and the Dragon

It is told in legend that there was once a man called Kawanaka. He was the bravest and strongest human in the land and people from the world over would flock to see his feats of strength and bravery. He would climb the highest mountain, swim the longest lake, and hunt the fiercest foes.

While most were astonished by his feats, one man was not. Toshi was a blacksmith who was once hailed as the strongest and bravest, and he did not like that Kawanaka had stolen this title from him. Every day he became more and more bitter and decided to try to think of a way to get his own back on Kawanaka.

Toshi decided to tell the dragon, Bringol, of Kawanaka's bravery and told him that he should give him the ultimate test. The dragon would tell Kawanaka that if he could steal the treasure from under his nose then he could keep it. If not, Bringol would devour him. What's more is that Kawanaka wouldn't be allowed to take any weapons with him. This was certainly the most dangerous thing that Kawanaka had ever done, but he came from a poor village and that treasure could help them tremendously. So Kawanaka agreed and told the dragon that one night in the coming year he would take the treasure from him.

Knowing that he would be unable to take a weapon with him, Kawanaka trained for months in the art of hand-to-hand combat, becoming incredibly powerful with his hands and feet. He also knew that he must be silent to sneak into Bringol's lair, as dragons are able to sense sound from a great distance. Therefore he trained himself to move silently and wear black to become almost invisible in the darkness.



The day came where Kawanaka would steal Bringol's treasure. Using his new abilities, he sneaked into the dragon's lair as silent as the air. Using a sack, he took the treasure and left for the exit. However, Kawanaka was followed by Toshi, who alerted Bringol. Just as the dragon was to eat him, Kawanaka punched him straight between the eyes, sending the creature crashing into the mountain. The impact caused the mountain to collapse in on itself, burying Bringol and Toshi while Kawanaka was able to escape.

The hero returned to the village with the treasure and dispersed it between the villagers, who lived prosperously from thereon. He also decided to train some of the villagers in martial arts and stealth, forming what we know today as The Fist, an order that took from the rich and corrupt and gave back to the needy and hungry.

HOW TO USE THE FIST IN YOUR GAME

The Fist is an order consisting mainly of humans and elves, however hobbs have been known to join the organisation due to their stealth abilities. Unlike Crown and Thorn, The Fist will only kill corrupt, evil people, as is their oath upon joining.

The Fist clad themselves in black material, covering their faces so only their eyes can be seen. They tend to only use either hand-to-hand combat or exotic weapons like nunchuks and throwing stars, but they will also make frequent use of poison-tipped blow darts and razor wire for a silent kill.

The Fist is proud of its traditions and rituals, which include:

- Bowing before a statue of Kawanaka each at dawn and dusk
- Ritual washing of their garments in a river
- Silent meditation at dawn for one hour
- Annual burning of the paper dragon, representing Bringol perishing
- Ritualistic cleaning of weapons
- Tea ceremonies

Temples, the places where The Fist train, are dotted throughout the land and are not exclusive to cities. They are not especially hidden, but to gain access one must first bring a white lotus to the door in order to show their pure intentions. Inside, visitors must remove all weapons and their shoes out of respect for the temple before bowing to the statue of Kawanaka. If they do not agree to do this, they will be asked to leave. If they do not leave then they will find themselves at the mercy of poison darts, which will paralyse for a short while to give them enough time to imprison intruders beneath the temple.

Adventure hooks could include uncovering the murder of a corrupt mayor, or perhaps becoming honorary members of The Fist to track down an evil noble.



2. ASSASSIN CHARACTERS

"WITHOUT DEATH WE CAN NEVER BEGIN ANEW" – ELA SILVERWIND



The assassin is a brand new character type for Tunnels & Trolls that specialises in stealth and combat. There are several sub-types of assassins that have different skills and weapon preferences, giving the player options when it comes to playing as an assassin.

However, if you want to create an entirely new type of assassin, then feel free to mix and match parts of each sub-type and add your own talents.



THE CLASSICAL ASSASSIN

The classical assassin is the default version of the assassin, a no-frills stealth killer who uses the darkness to her advantage.

Assassins stick to the shadows, attacking swiftly and without warning. They are masters of hiding in one place until the moment is right to strike. When they do, it is usually with daggers, a hidden blade or a garotting wire, making the kill quick and quiet.

Prerequisite: 14+ DEX

Prime Attributes: DEX/SPD/INT/STR

Recommended Talents

- Poison Making (INT)
- Knowledge of the Streets (INT)
- Sprinter (SPD)
- Acrobat (DEX)
- Calm under pressure (INT)
- Blend in with the Crowd (INT)
- Stealth (DEX)
- Climbing (STR)

Recommended Gear

- Katar (dual-wielded)
- Blow pipe and darts
- Brass knuckles
- Fang-wing
- Garotte
- Grapple hook and rope
- Curare
- Wolfbane powder
- Soft leather armour

Special Rules

The classical assassin is excellent at stealth, meaning she always rolls a level under the saving roll she is required to make for her Stealth talent. So a level 3 saving roll becomes a level 2 saving roll.

Assassins cannot afford to be weighed down by armour, so can only wear full suits of quilted silk/cotton and soft leather armour. They may also not wear helms, as they can constrict vision and they may only wear a leather jerkin on the torso. They may not use shields. They may, however, wear any leg or torso armour.

When an assassin is in the dark they are considered to be invisible, reducing enemy combat totals against the assassin by 50%.





ASSASSIN OF THE FIST

Descendants of the great Kawanaka, assassins of The Fist are experts in martial arts and remaining unseen. They haunt the night, slipping through windows and wrapping a garotting wire around their target, or dispatching of them with a blow dart tipped with venom.

Prerequisites: 14+ DEX, 12+ STR

Prime Attributes: DEX/SPD/INT/STR

Recommended Talents

- Poison Making (INT)
- Knowledge of the Streets (INT)
- Acrobat (DEX)
- Calm under pressure (INT)
- Blend in with the Crowd (INT)
- Stealth (DEX)
- Climbing (STR)
- Dead aim (DEX)
- Slow heart rate (CON)

Recommended Gear

- Throwing stars
- Caltrops, small
- Bagh nakh (tiger claws)
- Garotte
- Blowpipe and darts
- Grapple hook and rope
- Curare
- Stone-fish toxin
- Scorpion venom
- Soft leather armour



Special Rules

The assassin of The Fist is an adept martial artist. When in hand-to-hand combat without a weapon, the assassin rolls 3 dice to attack. However, they may not use any weapon aside from unusual weapons with 2 dice or under, any dagger or ranged weapons with 2 dice or under.

The Fist assassin is excellent at stealth, meaning she always rolls a level under the saving roll she is required to make for her Stealth talent. So a level 3 saving roll becomes a level 2 saving roll.

Assassins cannot afford to be weighed down by armour, so can only wear full suits of quilted silk/cotton and soft leather armour. They may also not wear helms, as they can constrict vision and they may only wear a leather jerkin on the torso. They may not use shields. They may, however, wear any leg or torso armour.

When an assassin is in the dark they are considered to be invisible, reducing enemy combat totals against the assassin by 50%.



THE TOXIC ASSASSIN

Toxic assassins specialise in poisons. Instead of getting into combat, the toxic assassin prefers to sneak poison into their target's food or drink and wait for the inevitable to happen. However, when they do find themselves in a fight, they coat their weapons in toxins to make their victim's death all the sweeter.

Prerequisites: 13+ INT, 13+ DEX

Prime Attributes: DEX/SPD/INT/STR

Recommended Talents

- Poison Making (INT)
- Knowledge of the Streets (INT)
- Acrobat (DEX)
- Calm under pressure (INT)
- Blend in with the Crowd (INT)
- Stealth (DEX)
- Climbing (STR)
- Potion making (INT)
- Knowledge of chemicals (INT)

Recommended Gear

- Kukri
- Blowpipe and darts
- Grapple hook and rope
- Curare
- Stone-fish toxin
- Scorpion venom
- Hellfire juice
- Mandrake powder
- Antidotes
- Soft leather armour



Special Rules

The toxic assassin is able to create any given poison or antidote with ingredients costing 50% of the full poison or antidote price and a level 2 saving roll on INT.

Assassins cannot afford to be weighed down by armour, so can only wear full suits of quilted silk/cotton and soft leather armour. They may also not wear helms, as they can constrict vision and they may only wear a leather jerkin on the torso. They may not use shields. They may, however, wear any leg or torso armour.

When an assassin is in the dark they are considered to be invisible, reducing enemy combat totals against the assassin by 50%.



THE MAGE ASSASSIN

While most assassins are martial in nature, there are some who augment their abilities with magic. These mage assassins are powerful and deadly, using the usual assassin methods along with devastating spells.

Prerequisites: 14+ INT, 13+ DEX

Prime Attributes: DEX/SPD/INT/WIZ

Recommended Talents

- Magic knowledge (INT)
- Knowledge of the Streets (INT)
- Acrobat (DEX)
- Calm under pressure (INT)
- Blend in with the Crowd (INT)
- Stealth (DEX)
- Climbing (STR)
- Historical knowledge (INT)

Recommended Gear

- Haladie
- Blowpipe and darts
- Grapple hook and rope
- Net
- Parchment, ink and quill
- Soft leather armour

Special Rules

The mage assassin has access to specific spells of her level or under. These are as follows: Detect Magic, Knock Knock, Cateyes, Hidey Hole, Find Person, Zingum, Porta-Vision, Death Spell #9. Mage assassins do not have to pay for these spells.

Assassins cannot afford to be weighed down by armour, so can only wear full suits of quilted silk/cotton and soft leather armour. They may also not wear helms, as they can constrict vision and they may only wear a leather jerkin on the torso. They may not use shields. They may, however, wear any leg or torso armour.

When an assassin is in the dark they are considered to be invisible, reducing enemy combat totals against the assassin by 50%.





3. THE ASSASSIN'S TEST

A SOLO ADVENTURE

The Assassin's Test is a solitaire adventure that you can play with a newly rolled up assassin character. Your assassin is assumed to have equipped all items from their respective recommended gear lists along with curare, blowfish poison and wolfsbane powder.

You are so close. You have managed to pass all the tests of the Crown and Thorn order – all but the final test. A lithe elven woman sits on the leather chair opposite you, sipping red wine from a silver chalice. She smiles and softly places the chalice on the mahogany table beside her and knits her fingers together in front of her face, her eyes peering over her long, white nails. “You have done well, so far, my apprentice, but the most difficult is yet to come,” she crosses her legs. “Baron Grunder has a price on his head – quite a large one at that,” she leans over towards you, “The price, that is.” She chuckles and draws a dirk from her boot. She balances between the table and her index finger, spinning it with the other. “Grunder will be enjoying his usual evening roast at the Old Hen. It's your job to go and cross him off, no witnesses, alright?” You nod, feeling the pressure of the world on you right now. The elf raises her hand and waves you away.

1.

You leave the hall and make your way through the grimy streets of Gull until you arrive at the Old Hen tavern. You hear drunken singing and general commotion coming from within and decide that it wouldn't be wise to just walk in. What do you do?

Sneak into the kitchens – turn to 2

Wait outside for Grunder to emerge – turn to 3

2.

The back door to the kitchen is located in the alley behind the tavern. You creep up to the door and hold your ear against it, listening for movement inside. Make a L1-SR on INT. If you succeed, turn to 4. If you fail, turn to 5.

3.

You decide to wait in the dark alley beside the tavern until the baron emerges. After about an hour you hear the door open and a drunken Grunder stumbles into the cobbled street, two giggling women under his arms. Why anyone would want to be with that warty old toad is beyond you, but you can't have any witnesses.



Follow him until you can catch him alone - turn to 6

Use a blow dart on the women before dragging Grunder into the alley – turn to 7

4.

You hear the sound of a single person mulling around in the kitchen and realise that you need to take them out before you can do anything else. You knock on the door and in a few moments a grubby chef opens it, grumbling to himself. As soon as he sees you, you clasp your hand around his mouth and drag him into the alley, stifling his cries. Make a L1SR on STR. If you succeed, turn to 8. If you fail, turn to 9.

5.

You can't make out any sound inside, so you confidently open the door and stride in. To your surprise a chef stands before you, clutching a carving knife. As soon as he sees you he starts yelling at you to get out. Before you can do anything, two more people – an elf and a hobb – rush through from the tavern to see what all the commotion is about. You're going to have to fight them all. They have a combined MR of 20. If you defeat them, turn to 10.

6.

You follow at a distance, sticking to the shadows as to remain unseen. He enters a large white house with ornate iron gates, fumbling with his keys, much to the amusement of the women hanging from his arms. He finally managed to click the lock and swing the door open, laughing loudly and muttering something completely untoward about the woman to his left.

You jump the gate and scan the grounds of the house with your eyes, looking for a way to get inside. It looks like you can climb the vine trellis and enter through one of the top-most windows. Make a L1SR on DEX. If you succeed, turn to 11. If you fail, turn to 12.

7.

You slip your pipe from a small pocket on your jerkin and load it with a dart tipped with curare, the next one in hand to quickly release a second shot, Make a L1SR on DEX. If you succeed, turn to 13. If you fail, turn to 14.

8.

You quickly choke him out and his body slumps on the ground. You notice that he's wearing traditional chef's garb, so you proceed to strip him and don the grubby clothing. The smell of onion wafts up from the shirt into your nostrils, forcing you to grimace.

The kitchen is a mess – clearly the chef wasn't exactly proud of his work. However, you spot a plate of meat and vegetables steaming on the counter, likely a meal that was going to be served until the chef went for a walk in the alley. You fish out a small vial of blow-fish toxin and add a drop to the mashed potatoes before mixing it in. Entering the main room of the tavern, you see your gouty target sitting with two giggling women under each arm. Striding over, you present him with the plate of food and tell him that it's on the house. “You know,” Grunder slurs, “I'm quite alright thank you very much.” He turns back to the woman on his left and makes a comment about her appearance. You roll your eyes. Looks like you're going to have to go to plan B. Turn to 3.



9.

The chef manages to wriggle free of your grip and cries out for help. In a moment two guards come barrelling around the corner into the alley, clearly having been drinking in the tavern for a few hours. “What's going on 'ere then?” Asks the tall one, slurring his speech. They both draw their blades and advance on you. You must fight them. They have a combined MR of 60. If you defeat them, go to 15.

10.

You drag the three bodies into the alley and go back inside. The kitchen is a mess – clearly the chef wasn't exactly proud of his work. However, you spot a plate of meat and vegetables steaming on the counter, likely a meal that was going to be served until the chef was prematurely terminated. You fish out a small vial of blow-fish toxin and add a drop to the mashed potatoes before mixing it in. Entering the main room of the tavern, you see your gouty target sitting with two giggling women under each arm. Striding over, you present him with the plate of food and tell him that it's on the house. “You know old, chap,” Grunder slurs, “I'm quite alright thank you very much.” He turns back to the woman on his left and makes a comment about her appearance. You roll your eyes. Looks like you're going to have to go to plan B. Turn to 3.

11.

You manage to easily scale the trellis and find the window at the top open. Slipping inside silently, you let your eyes adjust to the dark. You're in a sleeping chamber with a large four-poster bed on the back wall. Muffled laughing can be heard from downstairs and you shake your head once more at the thought of this fat buffoon attracting so many women. It can't be his personality, can it? Maybe he does a lot of charity work.

Now you can hear someone walking up the stairs. The steps are soft, not the drunken clomping of the baron, so it's got to be one of the women. What do you do?

Wait in the dark until she passes – turn to 16.

Jump out on her and try to knock her out – turn to 17.

12.

You make it about halfway up the trellis before you lose your footing and find yourself plummeting towards the ground. Crash! Lose 1d6 CON. Dear all that is wizardly, that smarts. Next plan – lower floor window. Turn to 18.

13.

The first shot pierces the arm of one of the women and she quickly slumps to the floor, not that the baron notices – he's too busy laughing with the other woman. You're not quite sure what they can find so funny; as far as you can tell they haven't actually said a word to each other. You realise that you might be thinking about this too much and blow another dart at the woman. Suddenly, she throws the drunken fat man in front of the dart, paralysing him instantly.

What the what?!



The woman looks down at the baron and looks at you with a look on her face that says 'I may have just made a mistake.' She pulls an object out of her pocket and throws it on the ground, sending a large plume of smoke, obscuring your view of her and the baron. When it dissipates you only see the first woman on the ground – the other two have gone. This complicates things somewhat.

You realise that you're going to have to track her. Make a L1SR on INT. If you succeed, turn to 19. If you fail, turn to 20.

14.

The darts miss their mark in an embarrassingly wild fashion. Time to change plan and then get some more blow dart lessons. Turn to 6.

15.

You stand in the centre of a pile of guard bodies, one still gurgling blood as he passes to the other plane. Time to continue with the plan.

The kitchen is a mess – clearly the chef wasn't exactly proud of his work. However, you spot a plate of meat and vegetables steaming on the counter, likely a meal that was going to be served until the chef was prematurely terminated. You fish out a small vial of blow-fish toxin and add a drop to the mashed potatoes before mixing it in. Entering the main room of the tavern, you see your gouty target sitting with two giggling women under each arm. Striding over, you present him with the plate of food and tell him that it's on the house. "You know old, chap," Grunder slurs, "I'm quite alright thank you very much." He turns back to the woman on his left and makes a comment about her appearance. You roll your eyes. Looks like you're going to have to go to plan B. Turn to 3.

16.

To your surprise the woman enters the chamber and starts to look around, almost as if she can easily see in the dark. You are crouched behind the bed, hoping upon hope that she doesn't spot you and alert Grunder. You can hear her leaving the room and you let out a sigh of relief. What was she doing in the room? It seemed like she was looking for something.

You get up and enter the hallway, looking both ways to make sure she has gone. You need some way of getting Grunder alone. Sneaking down the stairs, you hear the lardy idiot guffawing and talking nonsense. You slip into the kitchen and pause to think about what you should do.

Make a sound in the kitchen and hope that he investigates – turn to 21.
Go into the room and kill them both – turn to 22.

17.

You spring out from the doorway, weapon in hand and face the woman. She is no longer wearing the dress she wore when she was out, but instead black trousers and a black jerkin. She quickly pulls out two dirks from her boots. You are so confused right now. "Didn't think they'd send along a novice. Don't tell me this is part of your initiation," she says cockily. You give her a look to say 'yep, that's exactly what they did'. "Seriously? When I heard Crown and Thorn were after Grunder I'd have thought it might have been someone who had done at least one mission." She shrugs, "Never mind, easier to kill I suppose." You must fight Grunder's bodyguard. She has an MR of 40.



If you defeat her, turn to 23.

18.

You slip through the window and into the kitchen. You hear the lardy idiot guffawing and talking nonsense. You pause to think about what you should do.

Make a sound in the kitchen and hope that he investigates – turn to 21.
Go into the room and kill them both – turn to 22.

19.

You make your way over to the middle of the street where you last saw the mysterious woman and the baron. You see light footsteps leading into an alley on the opposite side of the road.

You follow the tracks for some time until you reach a door on the side of an unmarked building. Maybe you can salvage the mission after all. Nobody had bothered to lock the door, so enter, your weapon drawn. You are surrounded by crates of all shapes and sizes, obviously some kind of warehouse. Suddenly a figure jumps out from behind one of them, knives drawn. It's the woman, who doesn't seem like the drunken fool she did ten minutes ago. "So this is the fool Crown and Thorn decided to send. You barely look like you've seen action – don't tell me you're a novice." You give her a look as if to say 'yep, I'm a novice'. You figure that she's Grunder's bodyguard.

You must fight her. She has an MR of 40.

If you defeat her, turn to 24.

20.

You walk to the middle of the street where you last saw them both, but after searching for a while you can't find any tracks. It's almost as if she was trained how to hide them, which is unfortunate for you as you don't know where to go from here. You have lost the baron and failed your mission. Close the book and think about where you went wrong.

21.

You pick up a glass and drop it on the floor, shattering it. "What was that?" Grunder says. You hear someone rushing towards the kitchen and ready your weapon – it's time to complete your assignment. To your surprise it's one of the women he brought home, except she has changed out of her dress into black trousers and a black jerkin. She has two dirks drawn and narrows her eyes at you. "Looks like Crown and Thorn sent along a newbie," she says. You realise that she must be Grunder's bodyguard. You must fight her. She has an MR of 40.

If you defeat her, turn to 25.

22.

You decide that the most direct route will be the best. You confidently stride into the room, blow dart in hand. Make a L1SR on DEX. If you succeed, turn to 26. If you fail, turn to 27.



23.

Clearly you're not that easy to kill, you think as you stand over her body. Hopefully you didn't make too much noise and alert Grunder.

You make your way downstairs and confidently stride into the room where Grunder and the second woman are, blow dart in hand. Make a L1SR on DEX. If you succeed, turn to 26. If you fail, turn to 27.

24.

The woman's body slumps down to the ground, a bloody pulp. You search the warehouse for your quarry, and after a while you find it, lying prostrate on the floor behind a crate. He looks at you, unable to move from the dart. It feels wrong to end someone's life when they can't fend for themselves, but it must be done in order to finish your assignment and become a fully-fledged assassin.

You remove your blade from its sheath and finish the job.

Turn to 30.

25.

You finish off the bodyguard and decide to go straight into the room where Grunder is, blow dart in hand. Make a L1SR on DEX. If you succeed, turn to 26. If you fail, turn to 27.

26.

This time your dart is tipped with more than just a paralysing agent. The wolfsbane-coated needle pierces the woman's arm, causing her to convulse and quickly die. You remove your blade and march towards your target, who is blubbing and pleading for you to keep him alive. He tells you he will pay you 1000 gold pieces to leave.

If you take him up on his offer, turn to 28

If you decide to finish the job, turn to 29

27.

The dart misses its mark and you curse under your breath. The woman picks up a large vase and smashes it over your head, almost crushing your skull. You fall to the ground, and look up to see Grunder remove a sword from his mantelpiece and plunge it directly into your heart. Close the book, your mission ends here.

28.

You consider his offer. It would be a great sum to have, especially considering how poor you and your family are. You drop the knife and hold out your hand to shake his. He smiles and returns the shake. "You made the right decision, my friend."



Soon you are walking away from the baron's house, cash in hand but in the knowledge that you will never be accepted into Crown and Thorn. The end.

29.

While it would be nice to have the money, considering how poor you are, you want more than anything to be accepted into Crown and Thorn. You quickly finish the job and leave through the window. Turn to 30.

30.

You return to the hall and seek out the elf who gave you your final task. She is sitting where you last saw her, a book open in her hands. She peers up at you and gives you an expectant look. You tell her that the job is done and she smiles. "Not that we don't trust you, but we will confirm the job is done when the morning gazette arrives."

The next morning you wait with baited breath for the gazette to arrive. Sure enough the elf walks in with a copy and places it on the table in front of you, the headline reading 'Baron Found Dead'. "Looks like we have ourselves a new member," the elf says to the rest of the room. The hall erupts into applause and loud cheers. You realise it's kind of a morbid reaction but you feel elated.

"Don't get too comfortable," says the elf, "I've got a new job for you."

THE END