

TOUCHED BY THE GODS

A SOURCEBOOK OF CULTS AND CABALS



Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook,
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BY JOHN AND MICHELLE NEPHEW

INTRODUCTION

We at Atlas Games are proud to present *Touched by the Gods*, the first sourcebook in the **Penumbra**™ line. We'd like to tell you a bit about this sourcebook and what you'll find in it, and also take this opportunity to talk about what **Penumbra** is all about.

WHAT IS PENUMBRA?

When we first learned about the D20 System™ license, we were thrilled by the prospect of publishing under it. For years people have produced generic fantasy products, often quite clearly aimed for players of the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. With the decision by Wizards of the Coast® to let other publishers use the D20 System under the Open Game License, these products have the chance to emerge from the shadows. "Penumbra" seemed like the perfect name for some of the first products to actually use the licenses.

One of the founding ideas of **Penumbra** is that gamers are creators of their own worlds. For this reason, there is no single world unifying the **Penumbra** line. Rather, we embrace the concept of modularity, discrete elements that may be adopted or discarded independently. We are not here to tell you how things are in your game world; we are here to give you more options. You decide if a particular adventure can be placed in your world, if a particular cult could be adapted as servants of a god in your world, or if a new domain of clerical spells fits in the cosmology of your personal game universe.

TOUCHED BY THE GODS

This book is a practical example of what we intend **Penumbra** as a whole to be: A toolbox for GMs and gaming groups to draw from as they please. Here are some of the ideas you'll find in the pages that follow:

A dwarven wizard translates his soul into the frame of an iron golem and he collects a following of apprentices upon whom he tests improvements to his impenetrable body, always in search of the unattainable perfect form.

An elven adventurer finds a treasure hoard in a forgotten temple; but the god of the temple is still in residence, and punishes the thief by melding the gold she so coveted into her own flesh. Driven insane by agony, she now thinks herself the reincarnation of one of a pantheon of great warrior heroes, and is gathering an army under her banner.

An attempt at raiding a wizard's laboratory causes a group of goblins to contract a freak magical disease that effects a radical alignment reversal; now these creatures have settled in an idyllic forest commune where they can find harmony with nature, periodically sending out contagious missionaries to preach their new "faith."

Each one of these ideas fits the theme of our book — cults, cabals, secret societies, conspiracies — and reflects

the inscrutable influence of the gods on a fantasy world. The dwarf pursues a clockwork notion of divinity, in which sentient beings are called upon to create for themselves a perfect vessel; the elf was profoundly reshaped by contact with higher powers; the goblins underwent a magical transformation, and created a religion to explain it.

Any or all of these might fit in your game world — it's up to you to decide, and to make whatever modifications you feel necessary. We give you the tools, describing the cabals, their members, and suggesting ways that they might interact with your players' characters to make for entertaining fantasy adventure stories.

Because of the focus of this book — centering on the followers of various new gods, rather on the deities themselves — it's also packed full of crunchy bits that players may apply to their characters. New prestige classes, special abilities, gods and domains, magic weapons, monster templates and more may give PCs a reason to become members of the groups outlined in this book, or may provide interesting new challenges and awards from facing an enemy cabal.

So take a look at the wonders awaiting those who pledge themselves to the deities — those who themselves become touched by the gods.

What is the Open Game License?

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To learn more, visit the Open Gaming Foundation at www.opengamingfoundation.org.

THE ATHENÆUM

“All right, so that was the most dangerous. What about the toughest trade, when you had to drive the hardest bargain?” One of the youngest in the crowd of boys around Benakin asked the question. He was a page for the monastery, not even an apprentice, and in his excitement he forgot to ask the question with proper respect.

Benakin ignored the slight. “Well, this is a story that shows that all knowledge is valuable, and we must not in our compassion or pity forget to treat it as such. A long while ago, there was a young woman who had the most desperate need for a speech King Tomaron made twenty years past ...”

Benakin continued his story of a man, a twenty year curse inflicted by an evil halfling sorcerer, and the young daughter who discovered a way to lift the terrible affliction. When he finished, every assistant, page, and apprentice of Erwan Monastery stood open-mouthed in shock.

Finally, one of the older boys squeaked out a question. “You you said she was young. H-how old was she?”

The elderly loremaster sighed. “Yes, she was young. I looked for something, anything, for her to trade. But she was a peasant girl and had never gone to school or learned a craft. She had nothing but her youth. She was ten years old, if I remember correctly, when she came to me. When she left the next day, I could not say.”

GOALS

Some members of the Athenæum trace their roots to various gods of knowledge, claiming they have been entrusted with the world’s knowledge in anticipation of a time when the world loses its memory. Others consider themselves the defenders of dark history,

protecting the citizenry from evil secrets that they were not meant to know. A few corrupt Collectors use knowledge for their own nefarious ends. All Athenæum members have two tenets they hold sacred, however: as much information as possible must be recorded and guarded by its members, and that knowledge does not come without great sacrifice.

The Athenæum collects anything that reflects a part of his-

tory or holds knowledge within it. Each chapter strives to obtain every book, scroll, and royal proclamation — everything of historical merit that’s been written down — and keep them in their archives. In addition, chapters often have rooms of objects, from ordinary eating utensils to bricks from historic buildings and locks of royal hair. Items of magical power are sometimes among the articles, and are regarded with great reverence. Magical scrolls and spellbooks abound. Even Athenæum chapters of one person have at least a few magical objects of note.

FORMAL NAME: THE ATHENÆUM OF ALL KNOWLEDGE

NICKNAMES: LIBRARIANS, COLLECTORS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE ATHENÆUM IS A LOOSE CONFEDERATION OF LIBRARIES, MONASTERIES, AND SCHOLARS OBSESSED WITH OBTAINING AND RECORDING ALL KNOWLEDGE. THEY OFFER ANYONE THE ANSWERS THEY DESIRE — FOR A PRICE.

SYMBOL: THE SYMBOL IS OF GROUP DEPICTS AN ANCIENT TOME, OPEN TO THE MIDDLE, WHICH EMITS RAYS OF LIGHT.

PATRON DEITY: THE ATHENÆUM, WHICH SPANS CULTURES, KINGDOMS, AND RACES, CLAIMS NO SPECIFIC GOD, THOUGH ITS MEMBERS NATURALLY DRIFT TOWARD GODS OF KNOWLEDGE AND MAGIC.



ORGANIZATION

There is an Athenæum chapter in nearly every major city around the globe, and many can even be found in small villages, traveling caravans, and roaming tribes. Their sizes can vary widely, from a single storyteller in an orcish tribe to monolithic institutions that bend the ears of kings. Most typically, though, Athenæum members join or develop a “front” organization from which they begin their recordkeeping. The leaders of monasteries frequently establish chapters in addition to their other duties, and royal libraries in great kingdoms are an ideal place for a group to flourish.

As the size of individual chapters varies considerably, so do the relations between each group. Indeed, calling them chapters can be misleading, as many in the Athenæum may have little no contact with groups in other areas. There is no central leadership or coordination. Sometimes, particularly diplomatic members manage to collect a few chapters from nearby cities together to share information and resources. Such unions usually do not last long, as egos and differences in doctrine cause them to falter. Violence between groups is rare, though, given the Athenæum’s nature. While chapters with evil or selfish bents have been known to steal books or scrolls from others, even they respect other chapters’ missions, and commit grievous acts against their own kind only rarely.

Collectors, for reasons of security, attempt to keep their activities as quiet as possible. Some operate as clandestinely as possible, using agents and adventurers to obtain items of knowledge for them. Others, especially larger institutions with the ability to defend themselves, are open about their goals, though they still are very careful about who knows the power of what they possess.

MEMBERSHIP & INITIATION

The few individuals who drive the work of the Athenæum are those with magical power, who make knowledge their mystical pursuit. They are loremasters of the purest form, interested in knowledge for its own sake, beyond any rewards to themselves. They come from a multitude of backgrounds. Most were (and still are) scholarly or even royal wizards who took the pursuit of knowledge to new heights. Clerics pursuing answers their faith had not yet grasped are drawn to their

Athenæum. Some are even adventurers — wizards, sorcerers, druids, and others looking to find answers to life beyond their mindless wandering from one dangerous situation to another. A few, it is said, have stumbled upon things that the world should never know, and now dedicate their lives to keeping that knowledge hidden from those that would use it for their own selfish ends.

Joining an Athenæum chapter, if one knows of its existence, typically is not a difficult task. Most groups are pleased to add new guardians of knowledge if they can be trusted. Initiation and acceptance rites vary wildly, though most require prospective members to obtain and donate an item of some historical importance to join.

New members of an Athenæum chapter perform a variety of tasks, including researching newly obtained items, reporting back to the group about local events, and working as a scribe to earn money for the group. Large chapters have servants, apprentices, guards, and even bureaucrats to keep track to finances and the like. They often have good relations with adventurers, who they use to map out unexplored areas far away, or battle foes too dangerous for the chapter in order to gain a new magical item or sacred book. Anyone showing dedication and ability can rise to great prominence in a chapter. Few, however, get to do the most important work of the Athenæum.





IMPORTANT RITUALS

The loremasters of the Athenæum have learned that they can sacrifice power in order to gain knowledge — they call this the Information Exchange. The loremasters have honed an ability to take strength, intelligence, memories, and other aspects of willing subjects (including themselves) and use it to accelerate knowledge and understanding to a remarkable degree. By laying hands and speaking their

secret incantations, loremasters can learn to do things they never could have otherwise, or turn themselves into masters of a chosen skill. They can also transfer skills from one subject to another, though some of the talent degrades in the shift. Many loremasters of the Athenæum themselves have fragile, aged bodies because of the concessions they have made in order to gain new experiences and skills. A few, in times of great crisis, have even sacrificed their memories to gain a great insight to help their families or kingdom.

NEW FEAT:

Information Exchange [Special]

Any character with a level in the loremaster prestige class can take this special feat, as long as he has spent some time in his past at a Athenæum chapter. Learning the basics behind the techniques is relatively simple, and it can be learned by even a 1st-level loremaster in a matter of weeks with a Athenæum teacher.

Once per month per level in the loremaster prestige class, the character can attempt an Information Exchange. This is done between two people — one, the Donor, gives up something so that the other, the Receiver, gains skills. The loremaster can be either the Donor or Receiver, or both (giving up his own abilities, age, etc. to gain skills). Both the Donor and Receiver must be willing subjects and cannot be coerced through threats, unconsciousness, or magical means (*charm* spells, etc.).

Taking from a Donor is a simple task and is automatically successful for the loremaster. In order to successfully transfer that power, however, the loremaster must succeed at a Will save. If it is successful, the Receiver gains the skill as indicated by the chart below. The Difficulty Class of the Will save is also indicated on the chart below.

| Donor Gives Up | Receiver Gains | DC |
|---------------------------------------|---|----|
| For every 1 point of Attribute Score | 4 skill ranks (in a class skill) | 10 |
| For every 2 points of Attribute Score | 4 skill ranks (in a cross-class skill) | 15 |
| For every 3 points of Attribute Score | 4 skill ranks (in a skill exclusive to other classes) | 20 |
| For every 1 year of life* | 2 skill ranks (in a class skill) | 10 |
| For every 3 years of life* | 4 skill ranks (in a cross-class skill) | 15 |
| For every 5 years of life* | 6 skill ranks (in a skill exclusive to other classes) | 20 |
| For every 3 skill ranks | 2 skill ranks (in a class skill) | 10 |
| For every 2 skill ranks | 1 skill rank (in a cross-class skill) | 15 |
| For every 3 skill ranks | 1 skill rank (in a skill exclusive to other classes) | 20 |
| For every 100 Experience Points | 75 experience points (same alignment)** | 10 |
| For every 100 Experience Points | 50 experience points (similar alignment)** | 15 |
| For every 100 Experience Points | 25 experience points (differing alignment)** | 20 |

* multiply the years given up by the Donor by 2 if he is a half-elf, 3 if a gnome, 4 if a dwarf, and 6 if an elf.

** the term “similar alignment” describes Receivers whose alignment is partially sympathetic with that of the Donor (ie. a lawful good character and a lawful evil one). “Differing alignment” describes two characters no similarity in alignment (ie. a chaotic evil character and a neutral good one).

Any effects resulting from the Donor’s loss (ranks lost in skills, age modifiers) or the Receiver’s gains (attack bonuses, additional skill ranks) are applied immediately after the exchange is completed. Note that skills raised in this way can go beyond the character’s normal class or cross-class skill max ranks, and skills normally exclusive to other classes have no limit as well.

A Receiver gaining experience points can spend them on any one class he has, if he is multi-classed, or he can use them to take a new class. However, he can only apply the experience points to one class per transfer.



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

Most Athenæum loremasters are ready and willing to trade knowledge with people from outside the group, including royalty and adventurers. They will give up magical items, scrolls, forbidden tomes, and the like if the information or items presented are important enough to them. Rich Athenæum chapters have given powerful magical scrolls to adventurers willing to venture into danger and return with maps and stories from evil lands.

Sometimes, though, the people looking for knowledge have nothing to exchange. Some, like the young girl Benakin dealt with, look to remove curses or otherwise save themselves or their family. Others are less altruistic, and try to gain hidden knowledge or improve themselves without effort. While Athenæum loremasters might be alternatively sympathetic or repulsed by the seeker's request, their reaction must be the same: for knowledge given there must be a price. Depending on the importance on the knowledge and its value to the seeker, the loremaster will take something from the petitioner's mind or body. For a hundred-year-old deed proving a peasant's ownership of a farm, the loremaster may leave the person a bit weaker. A wizard who needs to learn to create a magical item might age a year. For someone looking for the recipe of an elixir to save his dying wife, or the dark summoning scroll of the Seaeres Swamp, the stakes can be considerably raised — he might give up a piece of his soul. Loremasters most often consume these offerings, absorbing the price the person gave up. They occasionally transfer the offering to other people in the chapter, though few allow apprentice loremasters to learn their craft this way.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

WHERE BOYS FEAR TO TREAD

As one of the largest Athenæum chapters in the world, the Archivists of Sacred Thought have knowledge thought lost to antiquity thousands of years ago. *The Last Song of the Valley of the Selas-Brennis* is one such piece of oral history. As the most treasured fragment of their records, the Archivists of Sacred Thought allow only one person to know the *Song* at any time. When the person, known as the Silent Singer, is near death, the leading loremaster transfers the knowledge to the most promising apprentice in the chapter. It is considered the greatest honor to become the Silent Singer, although it means the

chosen boy must never speak again, lest the *Song* be sung, and its power let loose upon the world. The current Silent Singer is eighty years old and on the verge of death. The chosen boy, Malden, has been preparing for months to receive the *Song*.

On the evening before the ritual, however, the boy is discovered to be missing. An exhaustive search of the city finds nothing. Desperate, as the current Silent Singer is clinging to life by the thinnest of threads and will die in a matter of days, the chapter looks to the adventurers for help. Upon investigating the boy's apprentice peers, the PCs discover that the boy has fled to the ancient ruins of the Selas-Brennis Empire. The boy had dreams of becoming a bard, and is looking for the answers behind this vision in the shattered valley from which the *Song* came.

The adventurers must find the boy in time to continue the ritual. But in the process, they may discover the source of the power behind the ancient *Song of the Selas-Brennis*.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Tiener has loyally served as the royal record keeper of a small human kingdom for 35 of his 55 years. He has recorded every birth, death, and royal proclamation, among many other things, with painstaking accuracy and detail. He has also been a one-man Athenæum chapter for almost as long, having been taught magic from the royal wizards years ago.

Tiener has a problem. Visiting a nearby Athenæum monastery in a larger city far to the north, he saw magnificent texts, weapons, and other artifacts from the dozens of battles and wars the city had survived. But the kingdom's new king is a pacifist, and had solidified the peace before Tiener was even born. What kind of legacy could an Athenæum member leave to future generations if he had no mentions of great military triumphs and defeats?

In come the adventurers, visiting the area after travelling the countryside. Seeing heroic adventurers with little knowledge of the kingdom's history, Tiener concocts the fable of diabolical deeds perpetrated by the elven fiefdom to the east. With their pockets laden with gold given to them by Tiener, the adventurers move to destroy the elves and their "evil" sorcerer king.

If the PCs are unwittingly duped into sparking a race war between the two peoples, will they be able to stop the fighting before Tiener really has something to write about?

DAVLIKA

ORIGINS

Goblinoids – goblins, hobgoblins, and bugbears – are typically nasty, dirty, cowardly monsters who revel in thievery, plundering, raiding, and ambushes on defenseless travelers. They live in filthy lairs, craving only food and treasure; they consider other intelligent beings to be valuable as sources of both.

These three closely related species can occasionally be found congregating together. The larger bugbears enjoy bullying other goblinoid races, and hobgoblins, with their stronger grasp of combat tactics and more aggressive nature, have an organizing influence on roving bands of goblins. Groups such as this tend to be more recklessly brave, and so more likely to break into places they really don't belong ...

A small goblinoid war party was a case in point when it broke into a hermit's hut in search of treasure. While the ancient wizard was away, the goblins glutted themselves on preserves and stored jugs of sherry, the bugbears used magical tomes for target practice, and the hobgoblins ransacked the shelves searching for exotic elixirs and oils. Soon enough, a stray fire arrow lodged itself in a hobgoblin's sack of potions. The shattered contents of the bag leaped into flames as the goblinoids fled the scene in panic.

As they left the burning hut, coughing from the noxious purple smoke billowing out its windows, the goblinoids felt an emotion foreign to their natures: remorse. The conversation went something like this:

"[cough, HACK, cough, cough] That wasn't such a good idea."

"What have we done! Ayiiieeeee! [cough, gasp]"

"We're all [rasp, hack] loathsome fiends!"

"Wicked, wicked, wicked! [hack, HACK, gasp]"

Why had they destroyed an old man's home? What made them so immoral that they could live their entire lives not caring about the welfare of other beings? Didn't they have a responsibility towards those they shared the land with, to do good to others rather than torturing and murdering innocents for their own profit and enjoyment?

These are all questions that don't normally occur to goblinoids, and possibly hadn't entered the mind of any goblin or bugbear in all of recorded history. With no way to cope with this overwhelming sense of guilt and personal responsibility,

they did the only thing that seemed to make sense — they called it a spiritual awakening.

FORMAL NAME: DAVLIKA ("THE MOST REPENTANT KEEPERS OF HARMONY")

NICKNAME: BLADOONGA ("PUTRID LUNGS")

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: A RAGTAG BUNCH OF GOBLINS WHO HAVE FOUND RELIGION BY MAGICAL MEANS AND NOW INFECT OTHERS WITH THEIR FALSE FAITH.

SYMBOL: THE RAGGED BANNER OF THE DAVLIKA SHOWS A RISING PILLAR OF LAVENDER SMOKE ON A PATCHED AND SOILED GRAY FIELD

PATRON DEITY: THESE CREATURES CALL THEIR NEW SPIRITUAL BELIEFS DAVLIKA EIG ("THE ONE TRUE PATH AND WAY TO THE REPENTANT KEEPING OF HARMONY AND TRANQUILITY IN UNITY WITH ALL BEINGS"). IT IS A KIND OF COMMUNAL NATURE WORSHIP WITH NO SPECIFIC GOD.

GOALS

Since the accident, the members of the war party have abandoned their old ways, shrugging off their worship of goblinoid gods. Instead, several of the goblins have become "missionaries" and gone off to spread the joy of spiritual rebirth to their misguided brothers and sisters — they've had an amazing conversion rate. The rest have founded a small woodland commune for like-minded



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

goblinoids to live in peace with their fellow creatures. Their numbers are growing, and soon they'll be able to send off larger groups of zealots into the world.

The rest of the local goblinoid community is not quite as thrilled with the new lifestyle this group has chosen. They've seen their own friends and relatives abandon the goblin tribes, decimating the ranks of the war parties as more and more leave to follow these accursed blasphemers. The Putrid Lungs become weak-minded as the purple haze consumes their malicious natures and makes them reject their own base desires. Instead of making their living by preying on the helpless, they till the earth for food like pathetic humans, becoming repulsive laborers and vulgar preachers of "benevolence," "kindness,"

and "wholesomeness." The goblins will kill on sight anyone showing symptoms of what they call "the putrid demon sickness."

ADVENTURE SEEDS

AN INFESTATION OF GOODNESS

The elders of a small human town hire a group of adventurers to clean out an infestation of goblins that has taken

NEW POTION: *Curse of the Putrid Lung*

The freak accident in the old wizard's laboratory created a permanent *bestow curse* potion that altered the alignments of everyone within its range. Each of the goblinoids that first inhaled its smoke fumes suffered a true alignment change; the three bugbears went from chaotic evil to chaotic good, the six goblins changed from neutral evil to neutral good, and the two hobgoblins were transformed from lawful evil to lawful good. The alteration is mental as well as moral, and so the goblins thoroughly enjoy their new outlook. They consider it to be a gift of providence, and revel in their newfound ethical awareness. They would be horrified by the prospect of being changed back. The curse cannot be dispelled, but can be removed with *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish*.

The nature of this *bestow curse* potion gives it the ability to infect others who come into contact with the original victims. Each victim exhales a thin puff of foul-smelling purplish smoke when speaking; when another creature comes within five feet of the infected individual, it is affected by the curse if it fails a Will save DC 15. The new victim's alignment is altered to one as radically opposite from its original one as possible — good changes to evil, chaotic to lawful, neutral to a randomly determined extreme such as lawful evil, lawful good, chaotic evil, or chaotic good. If a newly infected character's class has an alignment requirement, he or she incurs the effects listed below. Once the curse has been removed, an *atonement* spell can completely restore the compromised powers and abilities of characters suffering from these alignment effects.

| Class | Impact of Alignment Change |
|-----------|---|
| Barbarian | If a barbarian becomes lawful, he loses ability to rage and cannot gain new levels |
| Bard | If a bard becomes lawful, he cannot gain new levels |
| Cleric | If a cleric acts in way opposed to god's alignment, he loses all his spells and class features, and cannot gain new levels |
| Druid | If a druid changes to a non-neutral alignment, he loses all his spells and druidic abilities, and cannot gain new levels |
| Fighter | No effect |
| Monk | If a monk becomes non-lawful, he cannot gain new levels |
| Paladin | If a paladin changes from lawful good, he loses all his special abilities and spells, including use of a warhorse, and cannot gain new levels |
| Ranger | No effect |
| Rogue | No effect |
| Sorcerer | No effect |
| Wizard | No effect |

This particular *bestow curse* potion might be replicated through the following method. It produces an oil that curses only one target when applied topically (this use doesn't produce the smoke exhalation effect). The pungent fumes produced by burning the oil can be inhaled by multiple targets, who then become contagious.



root in the nearby woods. Eyewitnesses claim to have seen the monsters working some unholy magic, chanting incantations, and spouting a diabolical incense from their own bodies. Already one of the villagers has found a jug of cow's milk soured before its time, and the blacksmith's pet dog had to be put down when it went mad a few days ago. Something evil is obviously afoot.

The PCs locate the glen where the ritual was said to have taken place and find a small settlement of goblinoids. Young goblin children run up to the adventurers holding out bouquets of wildflowers in welcome, and their parents welcome the characters with open arms and wisps of lavender smoke curling around their smiling lips. Little do these innocents know that their guests might well become their murderers, especially if the curse takes hold of any of the good-aligned adventurers in the party. It will be up to the unaffected comrades of the now-evil PCs to restore them to their former heroic selves.

A MISSION OF HOPE

While exploring an underground tunnel system, the PCs fall into a pit trap hidden in the floor. They plummet down through the ceiling of a large chamber and land in the middle of a group of goblins, who all look to be in pret-

ty rough shape. Goblins are usually unclean creatures, but these reek of unwashed bodies kept in close quarters for many days, and are thin in a way that bespeaks gradual starvation. When questioned, they admit to having been trapped in this underground chamber for over a week. Many of their number have not survived this long; the bones of these fallen goblins, which have been thrown into a corner, show gnaw marks on them. Those remaining are weak and delusional with hunger and thirst, raving on about the "demon that belches purple smoke." They say that the demon awaits them further down the only passageway out of the chamber, which looks as if its ceiling has been deliberately collapsed to form a stone barricade. This demon apparently possessed the rest of their goblin tribe, and spirited them off to its own hellish domain. From the other side of the barricade can be heard a muffled chanting in the goblin tongue.

When they break through the barricade, the characters find a lone goblin sitting by herself with tears streaming down her radiantly smiling face. With an expression of piteous longing, she begs the PCs and the other goblins to follow her to a new life of harmony with their fellow beings. As she speaks, a thin stream of pungent lavender smoke curls toward the ceiling, sealing the fate of anyone who inhales it.



DEATH'S FORSAKEN

The firelight was little more than a dim and distant spark from where Cadrian stood, deep within the forest. He could see Queen Theresa sitting by the fire, and he was grateful that the distance and the darkness hid him from view. After all, he was one of the Queen's Guard, a knight of the realm and a master of the battlefield. He was a hero to his people and a legend of his country.

It would not do for her to see him cry.

With that thought, the tears ran freely, spilling down his face and trickling into his thick beard. He sank to one knee, choking back sobs; the pain and grief within him nearly blinded him to the person approaching him. "Your Majesty," he said, trying to keep his voice even, "please leave me be. I ..."

"I am not the Queen," said the other person in an unmistakably masculine tone, stepping closer. "I am a friend, of sorts. Tell me ... why do you weep?"

Cadrian's head snapped up. "I do not see what business it is of yours. I do not know you, but if you are the friend you claim to be, you will respect my wishes and leave me alone."

"I cannot do that," the stranger responded. "I believe you have need of someone to speak to; someone who understands your pain, perhaps. Someone who knows for whom you mourn."

Cadrian's eyes were alight with anger now. "How could you possibly understand my pain?"

"Because ... I, too, was once dead."

ORIGINS

The Brotherhood began in the wilderness, with a barbarian chieftain named Othar; his tribe lived in an area frequently menaced by evils, both natural and unnatural. He fell in battle defending his people

against a horde of marauding orcs; however, after days of ritual and ceremony, the shamans of the tribe restored his spirit to his body. Calling himself Othar Novus, he left his people, feeling a sense that, after experiencing the afterlife, he was no longer one of them. He wandered, seeking others that shared his newfound sense of dislocation from the world, and found them in the reborn and resurrected. He began to organize

them into a loosely knit brotherhood, realizing that they all felt a similar need — to use their "borrowed time" for good purpose.

FORMAL NAME: THE BROTHERHOOD OF DEATH'S FORSAKEN

NICKNAMES: OCCASIONALLY JUST REFERRED TO AS "THE FORSAKEN" OR "THE BROTHERHOOD," BUT USUALLY NOT REFERRED TO AT ALL BY OUTSIDERS.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: A SECRET SOCIETY OF HEROES, ALL OF WHOM HAVE BEEN RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD AND HAVE BECOME SENSITIVE TO THE WORLDS BEYOND DEATH.

SYMBOL: AN EYE, HALF-OPENED, SIGNIFYING THEIR AWARENESS OF LIFE BEYOND DEATH.

PATRON DEITY: MEMBERS OF THE BROTHERHOOD WILL WORSHIP ANY GOD ALIGNED WITH THE FORCES OF GOOD, PARTICULARLY THOSE THAT GRANT THEIR FOLLOWERS THE ABILITY TO RESURRECT THE DEAD.

GOALS

The Brotherhood's members wander, seeking people in need of help; they will ally with other adventurers, but very rarely with other members of the Brotherhood, unless the situation is dire. For the most part, the only contact members of the Brotherhood have with each other is when they first meet and begin their training.

ORGANIZATION

The Forsaken has no specific leader, but individuals usually form a mentor/student bond when the newly reborn person is initiated into the Brotherhood. Once they understand their place in the world, new members tend to seek their own paths, and will rarely see their mentor again outside of dire situations. There is no prohibition against communication, though; the Forsaken will come together in times of need.

TRAPPINGS

The Brotherhood is an eclectic bunch; there is no particular uniform that marks a member of their order. Usually, they do not even wear their insignia, relying instead on their abilities to recognize each other. However, they will carve or draw their symbol in places to which they wish to draw the attention of the other members of the order; this may mean a house of sanctuary, or a trail that leads to safety. Minor variations on the symbol can signify danger, or a desire that the discoverer follow the inscriber.

INITIATION

Cadrian's voice was calm; it belied the despair in his eyes. "The Queen's Guard — for my family, for the families who have guarded the royalty for time beyond imagining — it is more than a mere duty. We have been chosen by the gods to protect the Queen, to keep her safe from all harm and all those who would do her harm, and in return, we are favored. We go to the Feasting Halls of Timhain when we perish, there to be reunited with our fathers and our father's fathers, to rejoice forever as reward for duty well served.

"I died serving the Queen. I do not know where I went, but it was not Timhain. I was ... elsewhere. Waiting, I think, but I do not know for what. When I felt the tugging at my spirit, I gladly returned; I feared that place, and feared more the thought that it was punishment for failing in my duty. When I saw Queen Theresa, still alive, I wept in relief ... and now I weep again, for I fear death as I have never feared it before. I do not know, now, if

Timhain was a lie, and the reward my father and my father's father fought for was nothing but a dream. And if it was true, why was I not there? Did I fail my duty somehow?"

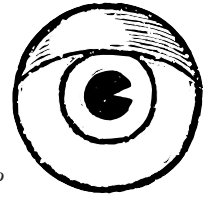
"Perhaps there is another answer," the stranger said. "This Timhain you speak of, I have heard of the place. It is for those of your Guard, those of you with but one duty — protecting the Queen." He stroked his beard. "Perhaps you have more duties than that ... and you were waiting to return, to fulfill them as well."

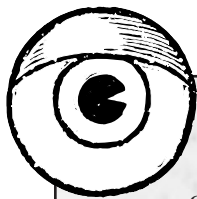
First contact with the Brotherhood is always initiated by a member of the order; there are a few rare cases of people who have sought them out to join, but they have always been refused. Instead, the existing members discover new prospects for the Brotherhood over the course of their journeys; after all, their duties tend to take them to places where death and rebirth is fairly commonplace. Once a prospective member is found, the Brother who located him will let the order as a whole know of the new person, and a mentor is sent to invite him to enter the order. If the prospective member agrees to join, he may choose to train further with the mentor (and begin gaining levels in the prestige class below), or he may simply choose to count himself as members of the Brotherhood without further training. However, it should be noted that this last is the less chosen of the two options.

IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS

OTHAR NOVUS

As stated, the Brotherhood has no leader. Othar Novus, then, is the leader that they don't have. He has spent the most time developing his abilities, and has honed them to a perfection unknown to any other member to date. In fact, given that all others follow his model in training new members, it is possible that he will always be the most powerful member of the group. Despite several close calls with death, he continues to do good works; as he tells his new students, "The gods have called us back to this world for a reason. I cannot believe it was to do nothing."





Othar Novus, Resurrected Warrior

10th-Level Human Barbarian/10th-Level Death's Forsaken

CR 20; SZ M (humanoid); HD 10d10 + 10d8 + 40; hp 148; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 20; Atk: melee +21/+16/+11/+6 (1d10+5/crit 17-20/x2, *heavy flail* +1), ranged +19/+14/+9 (1d6+3/crit x3, mighty composite shortbow); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL CG; SV Fort +16, Ref +10, Will +10; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 14, Cha 12

Special Qualities: uncanny dodge (can't be flanked; +1 Reflex saves & dodge bonus vs. traps), fast movement (40ft.), recognize reborn*, detect disease/poison*, astral communication*, detect undead*, immunity to fear*, turn undead*, extra turning*, immunity to energy drain*, speak with dead*, death ward*

* These are special qualities of the Death's Forsaken prestige class (page 16).

Skills: Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +6, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +4, Listen +8, Ride +14, Spot +8, Swim +4 (with no armor/equip), Wilderness Lore +10, Language (Common, Abyssal, Infernal, Celestial), Knowledge (planar) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8.

Feats: Power Attack, Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Leadership, Improved Critical (*heavy flail*), Extra Turning, Iron Will, Toughness.

Possessions: *amulet of natural armor* +2, *breastplate* +1, *gloves of Dexterity* +2, *heavy flail* +1, mighty composite shortbow (Str 17) and 20 silvered arrows, 1 *bull's strength potion*, 2 *cure serious wounds potion*, 1 *haste potion*, 2 *lesser restoration potions*, 1 *neutralize poison potion*.

VIRIDIAN DAWNSTAR

Viridian Dawnstar's tale is one of tragedy and hubris, but the repercussions of it are still echoing today. He began as a cleric in the service of good, and led armies into battle for the glory of his gods. At one point, he convinced an entire enemy host to surrender by showing that the power of the gods was against them — to do this, he fell on a sword, and was resurrected by his patron god.

It was there that the tragedy began. Viridian was changed by the experience; he felt that he was the most favored of all priests in the world, and began to behave as such. He did not realize that the favor of the gods was slipping away from him until he tried a similar demonstration with his wife. The gods refused to grant his prayers, and he became embittered. He traveled briefly with Othar Novus, seeking to learn hidden secrets of resurrection; when they failed, he turned to alchemy and the worship of darker gods. In the end, he grew dangerous, and Othar fought and imprisoned him. But his own potions had given him extended life, and he waits, hoping that he will someday be freed. He believes that he can find another way to resurrect his dead wife; he just needs to practice first, preferably on his captors ...

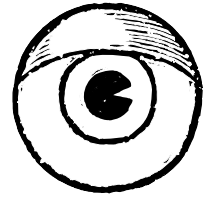
ADVENTURE SEEDS

BUT APART FROM THAT, HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

One of the PCs dies, and is resurrected ... and is soon approached by the Brotherhood. He is given the chance to become a member (granted that he is of good alignment) and train with an NPC mentor. Othar Novus is given as a sample, but feel free to make your own mentor NPC. The PC might be suspicious of this stranger, and it's probably a good idea to play on this suspicion a bit at first, but don't let it stretch too far. The mentor will travel with the party for a short while, training while helping the group battle evil. After a time he will depart, keeping in touch only magically. Having a member of the Brotherhood in an adventuring group can be a very useful hook for further scenarios; after all, when one PC has made a vow to seek out and fight all evil, and has a wide network of contacts, it's a lot easier to steer him to places you want him to go without having him feel manipulated.

I'M NO ZOMBIE! I DON'T EVEN LURCH!

The Order of Endings is always on the lookout for the newly-reborn (see page 56), and as such, are natural enemies of the Brotherhood. They will hunt down



members when they find them, especially if they can corner them in remote locations where individuals can't draw on other members for support. However, your PCs are nearby, and they suddenly become the only hope of a secret champion of truth and justice. The party of PCs will need to defeat continual attacks by the Order of Endings and get the Brother to a safe place. If they are already involved in a quest, they'll have to deal with the moral dilemma of saving a single innocent life when balanced against doing whatever great deed they're involved in; further complicating this might be debilitating injuries, poison, or disease that renders the Brother incapable of aiding the party, or even saving himself.

Alternatively, the reborn person under attack might be a PC, and the Brotherhood might wind up being an unlikely source of rescue for someone under siege from the Order of Endings.

HE TOLD ME HE WAS A GOOD GUY!

It's a sad fact that secret societies tend to engender distrust, especially when they set themselves against the scum of society. You can use this to your advantage, though, by having a seemingly trustworthy NPC (again, Viridian Dawnstar is given as an example, but feel free to make up anyone you want) tell the PCs just a fragment of the truth. Then watch as the players ally themselves with the NPC against this mysterious society of "half-living nomads." Let's face it — with a name like "The Brotherhood of Death's Forsaken,"

they don't exactly sound friendly. In the case of Dawnstar, he'll try to use the PCs to free himself, in order to continue his mad obsession.

Similarly, an evil ruler might claim that he's trying to make the kingdom fair and just, but the Brotherhood thwarts his every move from behind the scenes. Pitting the PCs against the Brotherhood, though, should probably be a short-term occupation — that is, unless you're running an "evil" campaign, in which case they could be the focus of months of constant battle. But sooner or later, the two groups should realize they've been manipulated and turn on their tormentor.

In the distance, the fire had dimmed to embers; Queen Theresa was little more than a shape in the darkness as she slumbered. Deep within the woods, the stranger continued; he explained the strange Brotherhood to Cadrian. Finally, he said, "There is still much for you to learn, Cadrian. The act of returning the soul to the body is not seamless. You wear your body lightly now, though you do not yet realize it. If you choose, I can teach you. You will learn to see the world as it truly is, without the illusions that flesh is heir to." He paused. "Or, I can leave. You can stay as a member of the Queen's Guard until death claims you again."

Cadrian closed his eyes. For a long while, he sat, listening to the voices of the forest. "Very well," he said at last. "I cannot hide from death; she will come to claim me sooner or later. I would rather face her with open eyes."

Viridian Dawnstar, Proud Captive

13th-Level Human Cleric

CR 13; SZ M (humanoid); HD 13d8 + 13; hp 88; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21; Atk: melee +12/+7 (1d8+3/crit x2, *unholy heavy mace* +2), ranged +12/+7 (1d8, light crossbow); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA death touch (once per day), rebuke undead (9 times per day); AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +14; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 14

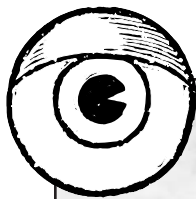
Skills: Alchemy +3, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +10, Heal +12, Knowledge (religion) +10, Language (Celestial, Common, Abyssal, Infernal); Listen +5, Scry +7, Spellcraft +6, Spot +6.

Feats: Scribe Scroll, Extra Turning, Brew Potion, Spell Penetration, Quicken Spell (from spells usable at level 9), Forge Ring

Possessions: Before his capture, Viridian cached the following items in a safe location: *banded mail* +1, *cloak of resistance* +2, *gauntlet of rust*, *unholy heavy mace* +2 (+2d6 damage vs. Good), light crossbow and 20 bolts, *ring of protection* +1, *small steel shield* +2. Scrolls: 2 *cure critical wounds*, 2 *gentle repose*, 1 *heal*, 2 *neutralize poison*.

Domains: Death, Evil

Spells: 6/8/7/6/6/5/3/2 (+1 domain spell per level)



NEW PRESTIGE CLASS: *Death's Forsaken*

For many members, the Brotherhood of Death's Forsaken is simply an organization; they use it to seek personal redemption, or perhaps a death more noble than the one they had the first time. But for some, it is more. They have, after all, died and returned to their bodies; this is not something one does lightly. From that point on, the reborn person is not quite of this world. Although many choose to deny this, seeking to cloak themselves again in the normalcy they had before, others choose to develop these otherworldly qualities. They develop strange powers related to the positive energy that now flows between them and the other planes, making them slightly more than mortal.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

- **Alignment:** Any good alignment.
- **Special:** The character must have died and been the subject of an effect that brings back the dead, such as (but not limited to) the spells *raise dead*, *resurrection*, or *reincarnation*.

Class Skills

The Brotherhood's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Knowledge (both religion and planar) (Int), and Speak Language (Infernal, Abyssal, and Celestial) (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 3 + Int Modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The character uses whatever weapons and armor proficiencies they retained from their previous class. There is no specific focus on weapons training in this class; rather, members use whatever weapons they already feel comfortable with.

Recognize Reborn (Ex): At 1st level, the character gains the ability to recognize others who have also died and been brought back. This requires no skill check, and is considered to be an Extraordinary ability.

Detect Disease/Poison (Su): At 2nd level, the character becomes adept enough at sensing the energy flows within people to see when they have been unnaturally corrupted. They can, simply by looking at someone, tell if they have contracted a disease or been poisoned. However, they cannot tell what sort of disease or poison, or what effect it might be having on the subject, nor can they cure it. This is automatic, and is considered to be a Supernatural ability.

Astral Communication (Su): At 4th level, the character gains the ability to transmit brief messages to people

who he knows well through the spiritual medium. The character must have spent a minimum time of one month with the person for this to work; the communication may be only a simple message, such as "Come to the city of Kell," or "A portal to Hell has opened in Yimshae." This may not be done during combat. It may only be done once per day, and is considered a Supernatural ability. (Note: The character does not actually leave this plane of existence.)

Detect Undead (Su): At 5th level, the character gains enough of a sensitivity to the flow of positive and negative energies around him to sense the presence of undead. This takes the form of a sphere of awareness with a 10 foot radius per level in this class; the character is immediately aware of any undead entering the sphere, what types of undead are there, and their positions. The character does risk being overwhelmed if a powerful undead creature enters his sphere of awareness, as per the spell *detect undead*. This lasts one round from the time the undead creature enters the sphere of awareness, after which time the character is considered to have adjusted to the new presence. This ability is always on, and is considered to be a Supernatural ability.

Immunity to Fear (Ex): At 6th level, the character becomes immune to all magical fear effects, including the fear aura emanated by some monsters.

Turn Undead (Su): At 7th level, the character can channel positive energies well enough to turn undead; this requires no holy symbol, as the character himself is the source of the energy. The character can attempt this a number of times per day equal to three plus his Charisma modifier. As with a paladin, the character turns undead as though he is a cleric of two levels lower than he is.

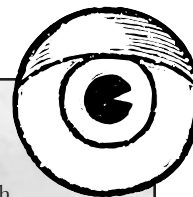
Extra Turning: Members of the Brotherhood may purchase the feat Extra Turning to gain an additional number of times per day that they can turn undead.

Immunity to Energy Drain (Ex): At 8th level, the character gains immunity to any effect that drains levels, such as a vampire's slam attack or a succubus' kiss.

Speak With Dead (Sp): At 9th level, the character gains the ability to speak with the dead once per day, as per the spell by the same name.

Death Ward (Sp): At 10th level, the character becomes immune to all instant kill spells and magical death effects, as per the spell *death ward*.

Spells: Starting at 3rd level, the character gains the ability to cast clerical spells. This does not require prayer to a deity; rather, it represents his studies in channeling positive energies through his own body. As such, the player can only cast spells from the following list on page 17.



DEATH'S FORSAKEN SPELL LIST

0 Level — *detect magic, guidance, resistance, virtue*

1st Level — *bless water, deathwatch, invisibility to undead, sanctuary*

2nd Level — *consecrate, delay poison, gentle repose*

3rd Level — *daylight, remove disease, searing light*

4th Level — *dimensional anchor, dismissal, divine power, neutralize poison, restoration, status*

All requirements for the spell (verbal, somatic, material) remain as normal, with the exception of the holy symbol. The character himself is the source of the energy. Members of the Brotherhood do gain bonus spells for a high Wisdom; however, they cannot learn different spells while training in this class. (They may still use spellcasting abilities they gain from other classes, however.)

CLASS TABLE: DEATH'S FORSAKEN

| Class Level | Base Attack | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special | Spells Per Day | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------------------------|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | | 0 | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th |
| 1 st | +0 | +2 | +0 | +2 | Recognize Reborn | — | — | — | — | — |
| 2 nd | +1 | +3 | +1 | +3 | Detect Disease/Poison | 0 | — | — | — | — |
| 3 rd | +2 | +3 | +1 | +3 | Spellcasting Abilities | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| 4 th | +3 | +4 | +2 | +4 | Astral Communication | 1 | 0 | — | — | — |
| 5 th | +4 | +4 | +2 | +4 | Detect Undead | 1 | 1 | — | — | — |
| 6 th | +4 | +5 | +3 | +5 | Immunity to Fear | 2 | 1 | 0 | — | — |
| 7 th | +5 | +5 | +3 | +5 | Turn Undead | 2 | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| 8 th | +5 | +6 | +4 | +6 | Immunity to Energy Drain | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | — |
| 9 th | +6 | +6 | +4 | +6 | Speak With Dead | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 10 th | +6 | +7 | +5 | +7 | Death Ward | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |



THE FORGE

Three figures sit around a table in a dark room. After a moment of silence, one begins to speak. She is a remarkable sight — a life-sized replica of an elven woman formed from cunningly articulated plates of mithral and adamantine. Her eyes are glittering sapphires set in silver sockets, and they glow with an inner light as she addresses her colleagues.

“We have three new commissions this month. The duke of Soldania wants a special blade to commemorate his son’s name-day — That’s your task, Gurnn. Willem, you’ll be working on a ring of sparks for the Margravine; I promised it would be done in two weeks. And I will create a new guardian for the Soldanian prison.”

“As usual, you save the most interesting contract for yourself, Taja,” rumbles the man to her left, clenching a thick iron fist.

“I don’t have time!” squeals the figure to the left — a bizarre construct of springs, pipes, and gears. “My research is at a critical stage. I’m certain I have the answer. Wood! A wooden brain should hold the imprint of a soul far more effectively than metal or stone. You’ll see! We’ll all be using wood before the year is out. I just need time.”

“You also need gold, and test subjects,” the mithral woman says. She strokes a brass serpent that lies on the table, and it coils around her arm and bares steel fangs. “As usual I doubt your theories, Willem. Wood rots. But complete the ring like a good boy and I will find someone to try your new brain.” She tickles the chin of the metal serpent, which stares at the clockwork gnome with unblinking eyes. “As it turns out, I have the perfect subject in mind. But let’s get back to business ...”

HISTORY AND BELIEFS

And the First Creator made its creatures of flesh, saying “In this weak matter shall you be trapped until you rise above this rotting prison and forge vessels worthy of your souls.” And this is the quest of life, to escape the cycle of flesh and become worthy in the eyes of the First Creator.

— from the *Codex of the Forge*

FORMAL NAME: THE FORGE OF THE IMMORTAL SOUL

NICKNAMES: THE FORGE, FORGERS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: AN ALLIANCE OF POWERFUL MAGIC USERS THAT SEEKS TO TRANSCEND MORTAL EXISTENCE BY TRANSFERRING THEIR SPIRITS INTO PERFECT VESSELS.

SYMBOL: AN IRON ANVIL SURROUNDED BY A CIRCLE OF THREE INTERTWINED SERPENTS — ONE FORMED OF SILVER, ONE OF GOLD, AND ONE OF COPPER.

PATRON DEITY: THE MEMBERS OF THE FORGE AGREE ON THE CONCEPT OF A “FIRST CREATOR,” BUT ONLY A FEW ADHERENTS BELIEVE THAT THE FIRST CREATOR WATCHES OVER THE CULT.

The Forge of the Immortal Soul was founded over three centuries ago. A group of sages — including arcane magic users and mundane scholars — had gathered to debate the nature of existence. A young human philosopher named Jon Allan set forth the idea that would come to be the core of the Forge’s beliefs: that a perfect creator would not devise flawed creatures

unless it was intentionally challenging its creations to overcome their weaknesses. While widely derided, Allan gained a few powerful supporters, including an elven loremaster — Taja Corael — and a dwarven wizard named Gurnn Stonefist. What Allan lacked in mystical power he made up for with charisma and inspiration, and together the three developed the ideas and techniques of the society. Allan and Corael became especially close, and with the aid of the sorcerer Allan was the first to attempt the transfer into another body. However, the techniques of spiritual migration were still in their infancy. The cabal would soon determine that a successful transference could only be accomplished if the subject was responsible for the bulk of the ritual — that he who would transcend must create his own bridge to immortality. But this knowl-

THE FORGE



edge came too late for Jon Allan. His spirit was poorly anchored to his new form; within a short time his reason fell away and he had to be destroyed by the others.

Over the centuries the Forgers have continued to study the mysteries of the soul. Both Taja and Gurnn transcended the flesh, and continued to refine their forms throughout the decades. In time they gathered a group of followers, and a few of these wizards and sorcerers also made the leap beyond the flesh. While the Forge of the Immortal Soul is an extremely small organization, it possesses a tremendous amount of concentrated magical skill; if its members were not so self-absorbed and disinterested in the material world, they could be quite dangerous. However, few people know anything about the true nature or goals of the Forge. The group will craft items of power or golem servants for the wealthy, and those who have encountered the Forge generally believe it to be a simple artisans'

guild. Needless to say, the transcended ones generally avoid public appearances and let their elegants handle daily business contacts.

Most members of the Forge are philosophers rather than religious fanatics. They agree on the concept of the First Creator, the being who is thought to have designed the universe and set the cycle of life in motion. However, there is considerable argument beyond this point. Gurnn Ironfist, as he now calls himself, says that the First Creator is observing the universe, and that those who shape the perfect vessel for their souls will join the First Creator in a higher world. Willem Biffle, the youngest of the transcended ones, holds the theory that a Forger who successfully ascends will replace the current Creator as the guiding hand of the universe. Taja Corael believes that the First Creator still exists, but has no interest in its creation; in her view, the only reason to break free of the cycle of





TOUCHED BY THE GODS

flesh is to avoid the myriad plagues of this lesser form of existence. Each of these elders has his or her own set of followers within the Forge, who emulate the design sense and

behavior of their master.

ORGANIZATION

The Forge is a small faction. It operates out of a single city, although Taja Corael has developed a network of contacts — business and otherwise — that extend much farther. There are three ranks within the Forge: apprentice, elevant, and transcended one (also referred to as “elder” or “master”).

The transcended ones are the masters of the Forge. These are the individuals who have shed their flesh for bodies of steel and stone. At the moment there are only three elders; there have been others in the past, but they have disappeared or been destroyed because of mental degradation. The transcended ones train the elevants and continue to develop the group’s techniques.

Elevants are the personal servants and students of the transcended ones. By Forge tradition, an elder cannot have more than three elevants at one time. The typical elevant is a high-level magic user who has not reached the level of skill required to attempt the ritual of transference. Many have begun experimenting on themselves or have volunteered for their master’s tests and as a result most have one or more replacement body parts (see the section on grafts, page 26). Elevants train the apprentices, assist the transcended ones, and create the lesser magic items that the Forge is commissioned to build. Elevants are typically arcane spellcasters of 8th to 12th level.

Most apprentices are inexperienced magic users who are learning the ways of magic. However, since there is a limit on the number of elevants an elder can have, there are a few apprentices that are simply waiting for a space to open up in the ranks of the elevants. Generally speaking, apprentices are arcane spellcasters of 3rd to 6th level, but there are also a few mundane Forgers. These individuals are usually warrior-craftsmen who seek to increase their physical prowess through mystical grafts; while they may never possess the magical skills to cast the ritual of transference, they are content to come as close to divinity as grafting will allow. Such apprentices are

NEW SPECIAL QUALITY:

Forge Elder

The three elders possess the following special quality:

Forge Elder (Ex): Transcended ones can still be affected by mind-influencing spells, but otherwise they possess all of the characteristics of a golem. As such they are immune to poison, disease, critical hits, sneak attack damage, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. They do not need to eat, breathe, or sleep, and they are unaffected by all but the most extreme temperatures. Finally, they are completely immune to most magical and supernatural effects; exceptions are noted in individual entries, and they can also be affected by magic used in conjunction with the Create Graft feat. In addition to these resistances, all three elders possess darkvision to 90 feet and can *detect magic* at will. Forge elders receive a +2 addition to their Challenge Rating when transferred into their first artificial body.

often the most devout members of the Forge, as they approach the beliefs of the group from more straightforward perspective than the philosophical magic users.

The Forge has a fairly static hierarchy. Few apprentices ever become elevants, and fewer still master the ritual of transference — a ritual that spells doom for the caster if it is performed improperly. There have been a handful of cases in which an elevant has been demoted to make room for a talented apprentice to advance — or where an elevant has been asked to partake in a risky experiment with lethal results — but these occurrences are few and far between.

GOALS

Willem Biffle muttered to himself as he polished his new fingers. The others were too close-minded. When Gurnn wasn't fighting his training drones he was complaining about the price of steel and gems. Taja was lost in another one of her intrigues, some elaborate scheme involving a group of “adventurers” and a fabled artifact that would undoubtedly turn out to be a worthless trinket. Was he the only one who could see the dangers lurking all around them? Surely his last experiment wouldn't have failed unless some outside

force was tampering with his work. Someone was preventing his ascension. And when he found out who it was, he would make them pay ...

The primary goal of the Forge is quite straightforward. The members of the Forge seek to create the perfect vessel for the soul, in order to break free of the cycle of flesh and complete the challenge of the First Creator. But there are a number of complications:

- The apprentices seek to gain the skills and experience they need to cast the rituals of transference. In theory, they will gain these skills through decades of study with their immortal masters. However, some of the apprentices — in particular the short-lived humans — may seek short-cuts to mystical power. Further, a jealous apprentice could always try to eliminate an elefant that is blocking her chance of advancement.
- The goal of the Forge is to create the perfect vessel. But is anything ever truly perfect? Most of the elders are constantly refining their bodies in an attempt to achieve an impossible ideal and to overcome real or imagined deficiencies.
- The experiments of the elders are extremely expensive, and require many rare or unique components. While the Forge subsidizes much of its work by crafting and selling magic items, this is not always sufficient to meet its needs. The elders are rarely willing to risk exposing themselves to the dangers of the outside world, but apprentices may be sent on missions for the good of the Forge — or groups of adventurers may be recruited to serve the needs of the cabal, either to acquire components for research or to carry out operations that will profit the magic users.
- In addition to financial problems, the elders must constantly guard against two additional dangers: boredom and mental degradation. The transcended ones are divorced from most mortal woes — disease, pain, hunger, and the need for sleep. But while they cannot feel pain, neither can they feel pleasure, or any sort of joy other than mental satisfaction. After a few hundred years of this existence, ennui is a relentless foe. Unchecked, this can result in a loss of personality or a slow descent into monomania or paranoia. The greatest weapon against this decay is to find a way to keep the mind constantly active and occupied.

TRAPPINGS



The most distinctive features of a member of the Forge are the mystically animated body parts — or in the case of an elder, the mystically animated body — possessed by the individual. However, most Forgers will go out of their way to conceal these abnormalities, so as to avoid drawing attention to the organization. Players are more likely to notice the serpent and anvil sigil of the Forge, which is often worn as a badge or embroidered emblem by apprentices or elefants on the business of the cabal. As noted earlier, most people who know this symbol believe that it is the sign of an arcane artisans' guild.

INITIATION

The Forge does not actively seek to increase its ranks. The first step in joining the cabal is to discover its existence and purpose. Applicants must profess dedication to the ideals of the cult while under the scrutiny of thought-detection spells, and must also possess skills that will make them useful to the Forge. For the most part the Forge only admits sorcerers or wizards, but other classes may be admitted if they can serve the needs of the cabal.

IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS

The three masters of the Forge are Taja Corael, Gurnn Ironfist, and Willem Biffle. Another important figure in the forge is the elefant Thomas Meryn, the primary contact between the Forge and the outside world. Of course, any powerful and secretive magic user could be a member of the Forge, if you want to tie existing NPCs into the cult.



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

TAJA CORAEL

Taja Corael was ancient before she made her first transition. Long-lived even for an elf — sustained, perhaps, by her considerable sorcerous powers — she had always found life to be somewhat empty. She spent her mortal life in philosophical contemplation, watching the lives of the short-lived races. But this remained a game — a scholarly exercise — until she met Jon Allan. Taja and Jon were not lovers in the physical sense, but Taja was taken with the young sage's energy and charisma; he came to fill the void in her heart.

While Taja is the guiding force behind the Forge, she is one of the least devout of its members. She maintains the cabal more out of a sense of obligation to Jon than anything else. She supports the elevants and does her best to maintain the structure and integrity of the society, but her true interest is in her “games.” For centuries, Taja has been setting up conflicts between parties of adventurers, guilds, and even countries. She has no personal interest in gaining power — she is quite powerful enough already —

but she finds it fascinating to watch conflicts unfold. Not everyone who works for Taja will come to an unfortunate end; her schemes operate on many levels and may take decades to unfold. But any assignment or gift that comes from Taja probably has hidden strings attached.

Taja's vessel is formed of mithral and magically forged adamantine, studded with gleaming gems. The interlocking plates allow tremendous flexibility of movement; of all the elders, she alone retains the grace of movement she possessed in mortal life. Her head is a stylized mask of an elf-maiden, with sapphire eyes and a long braid of mithral hair. Her voice is musical and hypnotic. When interacting with those outside the Forge, she will usually wear a dark blue robe with a deep hood. While she can affect a variety of moods if it suits her purposes, by nature she is calm and virtually emotionless.

The most important thing to remember when running Taja is that she has lived for over a thousand years and expects to live for thousands more. People and civilizations are merely interesting toys and tools that will be gone before long; the only question is if they can provide diversion for the moment.

Taja Corael, Forge Elder

12th-Level Sorcerer/8th-Level Loremaster

CR 22; SZ M (construct); HD 20d4; hp 60; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 37 (+2 Dex, +25 natural); Atk: melee +13/+8 (1d6+3, fist); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ damage immunity 30/+5, Forge elder, gems, grafts, regeneration 2, lore, greater lore; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +17; Str 16, Dex 14, Con —, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 21

Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +10, Craft (armorsmith) +14, Craft (jeweler) +14, Craft (sculptor) +14, Diplomacy +10, Healing +8, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (golems and artifacts) +15, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (philosophy) +10, Knowledge (politics) +10, Scry +10, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +10

Feats: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Create Graft (see page 26), Forge Ring, Quicken Spell, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Knowledge [golems and artifacts]), Spell Focus (enchantment)

Taja despises physical confrontation. If she is engaged in combat, she is more likely to flee than fight. If she cannot leave, she will use spells instead of striking with her fists. Should things come to a brawl, however, she is certainly prepared. Her vessel is formed of mithral and adamantine, and it is virtually indestructible. She possesses Damage Immunity with a value of 30/+5 and she is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects.

Forge Elder (Ex): See the description on page 21. Taja has no unusual vulnerabilities.

Gems (Su): The gems embedded in Taja's *wish*-forged body serve a practical purpose. She is the equivalent of a living *helm of brilliance*, and possesses all of the benefits and powers of a character wearing such a helm. At any given time, she will have the maximum number of each kind of gem; she is quick to replace them after they are used.

Grafts (Ex): Taja's vessel is a masterpiece. In addition to her resilience and the offensive power of her gems, a number of helpful enchantments have been woven into her body. She is always considered to have the spell *tongues* in effect, and she can *detect thoughts* or *discern lies* at will.

Regeneration (Ex): Taja will slowly recover from any sort of damage. She cannot regrow lost limbs, but she can reattach a severed limb by holding it to the stump.

Spells: Taja can cast 6/8/7/7/7/6/6/6/6 sorcerer spells per day. Her magic centers on enchantment and transmutation. Notable spells include *demand*, *dominate monster*, *geas/quest*, *greater scrying*, *polymorph any object*, *refuge*, *wish* and all spells related to creating golems. Her spells have a saving throw DC of 15 + spell level, with an additional bonus of 2 if the spell is an enchantment.



THOMAS MERYN

Thomas is an elevant in the service of Taja Corael. He is her hand in the world, and conducts most of her business arrangements. As a child, he worked con games as part of a prominent



Thomas Meryn, Human Elevant

5th-Level Sorcerer/3rd-Level Rogue

CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d4 + 3d6 + 8; hp 40; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 major grafted limb); Atk: melee +5 (1d6+1, *crystal fist* +1), ranged +7 (1d4, hand crossbow); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ grafts, improved evasion, spells, uncanny dodge; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 17

Skills: Appraise 6, Bluff 10, Concentration 6, Craft (jeweler) 6, Craft (leatherworker) 6, Disguise 12, Diplomacy 10, Gather Information 10, Innuendo 9, Hide 8, Intimidation 12, Knowledge (arcana) 6, Knowledge (golems and artifacts) 6, Move Silently 8, Sense Motive 10, Spellcraft 11

Feats: Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Like Taja, Thomas prefers to avoid conflict. He will try to talk his way out of trouble, resorting to physical violence only if there is no other alternative.

Spells: Thomas can cast 6/8*/5 sorcerer spells per day. Notable spells include *change self*, *charm person*, *mage armor*, *sleep*, and *detect thoughts*. His spells have a saving throw DC of 13 + spell level, with a bonus of +2 if the spell is an enchantment.

* Includes bonus spell for crystal arm.

Grafts (Ex): Thomas possesses the three mystical grafts described below.

Aura Gem: Thomas's left eye has been replaced with an enchanted white opal. This provides him with a number of special abilities described in detail on page 28. He often hides the stone behind a patch or by using *change self*.

Crystal Arm: Thomas's right hand and forearm have been replaced with a limb of enchanted crystal. This improves his abilities in unarmed combat and allows him to cast an additional 1st level spell each day, with a +2 DC to the spell's saving throw. While the limb only has a hardness value of 2 and 7 hp, it has an extra 10 points of hardness against attacks from non-magical weapons.

Silver Tongue: Thomas's tongue has been replaced by a cleverly articulated organ formed from enchanted silver. This provides him with a number of special abilities described in detail on page 28. He can disguise his appearance with *change self* to avoid having others notice the tongue.



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thieves' guild. When this guild was destroyed in one of Taja's games, the elder sensed the boy's potential and plucked him from its ruins. Thomas has blossomed into a talented sorcerer

and kept his quick tongue and ready wit. He believes in the philosophies of the Forge, but this is overshadowed by his intense personal loyalty to Taja Corael. However, a time may come when he seeks to abuse the power he holds as Taja's representative ...

Thomas is a human male, 24 years of age. He has shoulder length, slightly curly brown hair and his natural eye color is blue. He rarely uses his own appearance when he

is carrying out Taja's schemes; instead he uses his magic to assume less obtrusive forms. When he appears in his own shape, he generally wears plain brown clothing and hides his crystal arm graft beneath a leather glove.

GURNN IRONFIST

Gurnn — who changed his surname from “Stonefist” after his transition from flesh to metal — is driven by a monomaniacal obsession with power and strength. He believes that a war awaits in the higher world, and that

Gurnn Ironfist, Forge Elder

16th-Level Wizard/2nd-Level Fighter

CR 20; SZ M (construct); HD 16d4 + 2d10; hp 84; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 32 (+22 natural); Atk: melee +23/+18 (1d6+13 plus 1d6 electrical, *thundering fists* +4); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ damage immunity 50/+3, Forge elder, power gem, *thundering fists* +4; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 28, Dex 11, Con —, Int 18, Wis 11, Cha 9

Skills: Appraise +12, Climb +13, Concentration +10, Craft (armorsmith) +16, Craft (weaponsmith) +16, Craft (woodcarving) +12, Forgery +12, Healing +5, Knowledge: Arcana +10, Knowledge: History +8, Knowledge (philosophy) +8, Spellcraft +10

Feats: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Rod, Craft Staff, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Create Graft (see page 26), Combat Reflexes, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Spell Focus (evocation), Still Spell.

In combat, Gurnn has the power of an iron golem combined with the skills of a warrior and a vast array of spells. He is extremely aggressive. He may soften his opponents up with spells — he is extremely fond of *delayed blast fireball*, as he will actually recover hit points if he is caught in the blast — but he is just as likely to activate his power gem and dive into battle with fists flying.

Forge Elder (Ex): In addition to the basic abilities described above, Gurnn possesses the same immunities and vulnerabilities as an iron golem. Like an iron golem, he is actually healed by magical fire. He is working on a way to retard the effects of rust.

Power Gem (Su): A glowing gemstone is firmly embedded in Gurnn's chestplate. Once per day, Gurnn may use the power of this stone to supercharge his iron form. This duplicates the effect of *Tenser's transformation* and *fire shield (warm)*. While this effect is active he gains 50 temporary hit points and 4 points of Strength and Dexterity. His combat abilities are modified as indicated below:

AC 38; Init +2; Atk: melee +31/+26/+21/+16 (1d6+13 plus 1d6 electrical, *thundering fists* +4); SV Fort +13.

He cannot cast spells while the power gem is active. The effect normally lasts for five minutes (50 rounds), but he can shut it off at will; regardless of how long he uses it, he cannot reactivate it for an entire day.

The power gem is specifically designed to interface with Gurnn's golem form, and its powers cannot be accessed by a creature of flesh even if it is removed from Gurnn's body. Should someone try to strike the gem, it has a hardness value of 20 and 20 hit points, and can only be harmed by weapons with a +2 or greater enchantment.

Spells: Gurnn can cast 4/5/5/5/5/4/4/3/2/1 spells per day. His magic focuses on transmutation and evocation. Notable spells include *fire shield*, *delayed blast fireball*, all *Bigby's hand* spells, and all spells related to creating golems. His spells have a saving throw DC of 14 + spell level, with an additional bonus of +2 if the spell is an evocation. Gurnn's iron body is a masterpiece of design — superior to any grafted limb a player might obtain — but it is still difficult for him to perform the subtle gestures required in order to cast a spell. If he casts a spell with a somatic component, he has a 25% chance of failure.

Thundering Fists (Ex): Gurnn is a master weaponsmith, and he has spent centuries refining his vessel. His fists act as +4 gauntlets of *shocking burst and disruption*. He inflicts 1d6+13 (+9 Str, +4 enchantment) plus 1d6 electrical damage with a successful attack. With a critical hit he inflicts an additional +1d10 electrical damage, as well as doubling his base damage. Undead he strikes must make a Fortitude save vs DC 14 or be destroyed; Gurnn despises liches and occasionally hunts them as sport.



Willem Biffle, Forge Elder

16th Level Wizard

CR 18; SZ S (construct); HD 16d4; hp 60; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 30 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +16 natural); Atk: melee +9/+4 (1d6 +2, fist); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA special weapons; SQ damage immunity 10/+2, Forge elder; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 16, Con —, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 14

Skills: Alchemy +13, Concentration +6, Craft (armorsmith) +10, Craft (clockwork automata) +15, Craft (leatherworking) +10, Craft (jeweler) +10, Craft (sculptor) +10, Craft (weaponsmith) +10, Healing +6, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Knowledge (philosophy) +5, Spellcraft +13.

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item, Create Graft (see page 26), Forge Ring, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Still Spell.

As noted, Willem changes bodies on a regular basis and physical abilities change with each new body; the statistics given above are for a typical Biffle design. He does not have the raw power of Gurnn or Taja, but he often has experimental weapons that can enhance his combat abilities. He further has a wide range of spells at his disposal. As a rule, he dislikes combat and will try to end things through the use of spells, fleeing if necessary. However, he may choose to fight in order to test out the capabilities of a new design.

Forge Elder (Ex): While his body is not as powerful as that of an iron golem, Willem's standard vessel is made of enchanted metal and he possesses the same immunities and vulnerabilities as one. This could change as he perfects his form.

Special Weapons: Willem is constantly adjusting his arsenal. At any given time he will have one built-in weapon to augment his combat abilities. A few possibilities include: a repeating crossbow with *flaming burst* quarrels, a poison gas emitter like that found on an iron golem, or a transmogrifier allowing him to use a *polymorph other* ray every five rounds with a saving throw DC of 18.

Spells: Willem can cast 4/5/5/5/4/4/4/3/2/1 wizard spells per day. He has no particular focus to his studies, although he has a fondness for conjuration. Notable spells include *delayed blast fireball* (like Gurnn, he will use this spell to heal himself while harming his foes), *Drawmij's instant summons*, *Leomund's chest*, *maze*, *phase door*, and all spells related to creating golems. His spells have a saving throw DC of 13 + spell level.

once he has crafted the perfect vessel he will join the First Creator and fight at its side. In recent decades he has begun to set aside his mystical studies in order to pursue the martial arts, in the belief that his vessel will soon be perfected. He is a master craftsman; he specializes in arms and armor, but is equally skilled at shaping wands, staves, and rods.

Gurnn's vessel is a short, stocky iron golem — a caricature of a dwarven warrior in heavy plate mail. His manner is gruff and brusque; he dislikes unnecessary conversation and views strangers with suspicion. Swirling light gleams within the visor of his "helm", and his voice is a low bass rumble that seems to vibrate in the bones of listeners. If he is especially angry, sparks of electricity will arc about his massive iron hands.

WILLEM BIFFLE

Willem was once a gnomish engineer, the scion of a family with a long tradition of merging mystical animation with mechanical ingenuity. He is the youngest of the transcended ones — a mere three hundred years old combining his flesh years and life

thereafter — but he has been through more transitions than the other two elders combined. While Taja and Gurnn have remained close to the initial visions each had of the perfect vessel, Willem is constantly refining and redesigning his mystical form. In many ways he is the weakest of the three, but this is intentional; he believes that the "perfect" form does not necessarily mean the strongest or most resilient. He sees life as a puzzle and believes that the first person to solve it will assume the role of the divine First Creator. However, this constant series of transitions is beginning to take its toll on his spirit. His memories are beginning to fade and he is slowly becoming manic and paranoid. He knows that something is wrong and is looking for someone to blame — in days to come he may become erratic and unpredictable.

Willem's design sense tends towards intricate clockwork constructs, powered both by mystical energy and springs. In his mannerisms, he is also like a tightly coiled spring, filled with nervous energy. His voice is a piping squeak produced by a multitude of steam whistles. He is constantly wringing his hands, polishing this or tinkering with that.



Transcending the Flesh: Grafts

The goal of every Forger is to transcend the flesh entirely. But some people walk this path one step at a time. The masters of the Forge are always testing new materials and techniques, and many apprentices volunteer for grafting in the hopes of becoming closer to perfection. Elevant often design their own grafts — the first pieces of the vessels they hope to inhabit.

Generally characters will only encounter grafts on members of the Forge; the Forge does not sell these artifacts to outsiders. However, a character could be the willing or unwilling subject of a Forge experiment, or she could remove a graft from a fallen Forger and have it installed on herself.

In theory, any part of the body could be replaced by a graft. Examples of the more common grafts are given in this section. While these items are given a market price, bear in mind that it would be extremely unusual to find a graft for sale.

Attaching Grafts

Attaching a graft requires the work of an arcane spellcaster who possesses the spell *polymorph other*, at least 5 ranks of Healing, and the Create Graft feat (described below). A caster who does not possess the feat may still attempt to attach a graft, but the target must make a Fortitude save with a DC of 18; failure means that the attempt was unsuccessful and the graft does not function at all (although it can be removed and reattached). Grafting is an excruciatingly painful process, and the subject will usually require a few days of bed rest after the procedure (1d6 days minus the character's Constitution modifier).

New Feat: Create Graft [Item Creation]

You can create magical items that can be fused with a humanoid body. You are also trained in the techniques required to attach such a graft.

Prerequisites: Create Wondrous Item, Forge training, 5 ranks in Healing

Benefit: You can create any graft whose prerequisites you meet. Enchanting a graft takes one day for each 1,000 gp in its price. To create a graft, you must spend 1/25th of its price in XP and use up raw materials costing half of its price. You can also mend a broken graft, provided that it is one you could create. Doing so costs half the XP, uses half the raw materials, and takes half the time of creating it in the first place.

Grafted Limbs

Creating a limb is a difficult project, and only the elders and most talented elevant can accomplish it. Basic grafted limbs provide enhanced combat capabilities to their bearers. Additional enchantments are

often woven into limbs — for example, a mithral hand might have the powers of a *glove of storing*, while a grafted leg could mimic *boots of striding and springing*. Weapon enhancements — such as *ghost touch* or *shocking burst* — can also be woven into a grafted limb; see Gurnn Ironfist's description on page 24 for an example of this. Creating such an object would require the character to meet the requirements and costs of both items.

The Forge has spent centuries refining the techniques used to create these artifacts. Their secrets include a version of the spell *animate objects* that can be cast as a fifth level wizard or sorcerer spell; this is a critical part of the advanced rituals. Far more important, however, is the feat Create Graft (see above). This represents extensive training in the secret arts of the Forge, and it can only be obtained by training with an elder or a skilled elevant.

The basic effects of possessing a grafted limb vary based on the nature of the limb and the material used to construct it. These are outlined on the following table.

A few general notes about all types of grafted limbs:

In addition to the abilities described above, for each major grafted limb the character possesses she receives a +1 to her Armor Class (a hand alone does not confer this bonus). However, if an attack misses because of this bonus, that attack has struck one of the character's grafts; determine which one randomly and apply the attack against the limb. Damaged grafts can only be repaired by a mage skilled at repairing magic arms and armor (for instance, one who has the feat Create Graft or Create Magical Arms and Armor), and if they have no prior experience with grafts they may destroy the artifact.

A graft does not add to the character's effective weight for purposes of encumbrance. Grafts are designed to balance with the bearer's natural limbs; as such, the weight does not adversely affect the character. If the character is carrying a limb around unattached, use your best judgement based on the size of the limb and the material it is made of.

A character making an "unarmed strike" using a grafted limb is considered to be armed, and as such his target does not receive an attack of opportunity.

Limb Type

Arm: Increase unarmed combat damage to 1d6 lethal (1d4 for a tiny character) and add the enhancement bonus of the limb to both the attack and damage roll. If the character is a monk, he should add the enhancement value of the limb to his basic unarmed attack damage. Add twice the enhancement value to the character's strength for purposes of maintaining a grip, including avoiding a disarm or maintaining a pin. However, subtract the enhancement value from any skill check involving manual dexterity (Pick Pocket, Open Lock, Disable



Device, etc.). The character also suffers an arcane spell failure chance penalty of 10% if he has an arm made of any material type other than crystal or clockwork. The arcane spell failure penalty for multiple grafts is cumulative; a character with an iron arm and leg has a 20% chance of arcane spell failure in addition to any other penalties due to armor or encumbrance. However, skill and dexterity bonuses do not stack in this way for grafts.

Caster Level: 12th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magical Arms and Armor, Create Graft, *animate objects*

Hand: The character receives the bonuses described above for resisting a disarm attempt, and inflicts 1d6 (or 1d4) lethal damage when making an unarmed attack. He receives the enhancement bonus on his attack roll and for purposes of bypassing damage immunity. However, he does not receive the bonus to pinning, and the enhancement bonus is not added to his roll for damage. The character also suffers the skill penalty for manual dexterity skill checks, along with an arcane spell failure chance penalty of 5% that is cumulative with all other limb and encumbrance penalties.

Caster Level: 10th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magical Arms and Armor, Create Graft, *animate objects*

Leg: The character receives all the bonuses to unarmed attack described under arm when using the limb to make an attack. She also receives the enhancement value of the material as a bonus to bull rush, trip, Jump or Climb checks.

However, the enhancement value is subtracted from any Move Silently or Tumble check — such limbs are stable, but not useful when it comes to delicate footwork. The character receives a 10% arcane spell failure penalty, cumulative with all other limb and encumbrance penalties.

Caster Level: 12th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magical Arms and Armor, Create Graft, *animate objects*

Graft Material

Adamantine: Made from the hardest of metals, an adamantine graft is extremely difficult to forge. The scarcity of adamantine ore also has a drastic effect on the cost of the graft. Enchanted adamantine is virtually immune to temperature extremes, directed magical effects, and corrosion; only physical attacks can damage it.

Clockwork: The specialty of Willem Biffle, clockwork grafts combine magic and with mechanical innovation. While somewhat fragile, clockwork limbs are far more flexible than solid metal grafts, and as a result the grafter does not suffer any sort of skill, dexterity, or arcane spell failure penalty due to possession of a clockwork limb. A clockwork graft is resistant to extreme temperatures but is susceptible to magical rusting effects.

Grafted Limbs Table

| Material | Hardness | Enhancement | Arm | | Leg | | Hand | |
|------------|----------|-------------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------|------|-----------|
| | | | HP | Cost | HP | Cost | HP | Cost |
| Adamantine | 25/15 | +5 | 30 | 90,000 gp | 40 | 90,000 gp | 15 | 60,500 gp |
| Mithral | 19/15 | +4 | 25 | 60,000 gp | 34 | 60,000 gp | 13 | 39,200 gp |
| Gold | 5/5 | +3 | 12 | 50,000 gp | 19 | 50,000 gp | 8 | 31,300 gp |
| Iron | 13/15 | +3 | 20 | 37,000 gp | 28 | 37,000 gp | 11 | 19,300 gp |
| Silver | 10/10 | +2 | 15 | 32,000 gp | 22 | 32,000 gp | 9 | 17,600 gp |
| Clockwork | 5/10 | +2 | 15 | 24,000 gp | 22 | 24,000 gp | 9 | 13,200 gp |
| Stone | 10/10 | +2 | 15 | 16,000 gp | 22 | 16,000 gp | 9 | 8,800 gp |
| Wood | 6/5 | +1 | 10 | 4,500 gp | 16 | 4,500 gp | 7 | 1,700 gp |
| Crystal | 2/10 | +1 | 10 | 34,500 gp | 16 | 34,500 gp | 7 | 18,750 gp |

Material is the material used to create the limb. Certain materials have special properties, described in the section below.

Hardness and *HP* determine how difficult it is to damage the limb. An opponent can target a limb just as he would a weapon. Hardness has two values. The first value is subtracted from all damage before it is applied to the hit points of the limb. The second value is added to the first, unless the weapon that is used to attack has an enchantment bonus that is equal to or greater than that of the limb. For example, a person striking a mithral arm using a normal sword would have to get by a hardness value of 34; if they were using a +4 *longsword* the effective hardness would only be 15. Grafted limbs cannot be broken using a strength check. This extra hardness replaces the standard rule that magical weapons cannot be damaged by weapons of lesser enchantment; grafts can be damaged, it's just difficult.

Enhancement has a number of different effects. Grafted limbs are magical weapons with a bonus equal to the enhancement (although hand grafts only receive the bonus to hit and not to damage). Other effects are outlined in the description of each limb type.

Cost is the market price of the limb, in gold pieces. The experience cost for the creator is 1/25th of this value.



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Crystal: Crystal is very fragile, but is an effective channel for magical energy. A sorcerer with crystal grafts can channel additional amounts of arcane energy

each day. A small graft such as a crystal hand can channel an additional first level spell; a major limb like an arm can provide an extra second or third level spell at the GM's discretion. Further, the power of spells cast in this manner is amplified, adding 2 to the spell's saving DC. Note that this only works for grafts that are replacing a body part — a sorcerer can't implant gems all along his forearms to gain dozens of zero level spells. As an additional bonus there is no arcane spell failure penalty, or penalties to skill and dexterity checks, for limbs made from crystal; ignore any penalty listed under the limb type.

Gold: Although gold makes for a fashionable graft that can hold a powerful enhancement, it has the disadvantages of being very soft and very expensive.

Iron: Enchanted iron is the most common material used for grafts. While resistant to temperature extremes, an iron graft is vulnerable to magical rusting effects.

Mithral: Mithral is a step up from iron and a step down from adamantite. Mithral is resistant to rusting and corrosion. Mithral also has the advantage of being light and flexible. Consider a mithral limb to have an enhancement value of 2 when determining skill penalties, and reduce any arcane spell failure penalties by 5%.

Silver: Silver is expensive and not as tough as iron, but it is certainly stylish. These values can also be used as a baseline for other metals that are softer than iron, in case someone ends up with, say, a copper or tin limb.

Stone: While it is an improvement on wood, stone is generally inferior to metal. However, stone has the advantage of being immune to rusting effects.

Wood: Few people *want* wooden limbs, but occasionally they end up with them. Wood is relatively fragile and has the disadvantages of being able to burn or, for that matter, rot. On the other hand, a wooden graft might be the only sort that wouldn't bother a druid.

Sensory Grafts

Eyes, ears, and similar organs are common grafts, as they are easily concealed and good projects for beginning elevants. Gemstones and precious metals are the most effective materials for this type of graft. The nature of the organ provides a sympathetic resonance for sensory enhancement — eyes are often enchanted to *detect magic* or with similar aura-reading effects, ears to *discern lies*, and tongues to *detect poison*. However, these grafts can just as easily hold offensive capabilities. An eye graft could mimic the effect of any of the *Eye* magical items or hold the *eyebite* spell, while a tongue might allow the bearer to use *suggestion* or *enthrall*. A few example sensory grafts are described below.

Aura Gem: The subject's eye is replaced with a gemstone that provides its bearer with the ability to perceive and analyze magical auras. He can see through this stone as if it was a normal eye, and it also has a number of supernatural abilities. When viewing the world through the gem, he has darkvision up to 90 feet. It also allows him to analyze magical emanations. This provides him with a +5 bonus to Spellcraft checks and allows him to use *detect magic* at will.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Create Graft, *detect magic*, *darkvision*; *Market Price:* 14,000 gp; *Weight:* —

Bloodhound's Nose: This squat iron nose enhances its bearer's sense of smell. It provides the bearer with the *scent* special ability. However, it is generally very easily noticed.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Create Graft; *Market Price:* 8,000 gp; *Weight:* —

Discriminating Ear: Formed from brass mingled with silver and precious stones, this ear helps the user to hear things, while blocking out harmful sounds. The bearer can *discern lies* at will and receives a +4 to all Listen checks. Furthermore, he receives a +6 to his saving throw against any sort of hostile enchantment that includes a verbal order, such as *command*, *enthrall*, or *suggestion*; the ear automatically attempts to block out the caster's command with white noise, preventing the spell from affecting the grantee.

Caster Level: 10th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Create Graft, *discern lies*; *Market Price:* 22,000 gp; *Weight:* —

Silver Tongue: The subject's tongue is replaced by a cleverly articulated organ formed from enchanted silver. This provides him with a number of special abilities. As long as the tongue remains in his possession, he is considered to be under the effect of the spell *tongues*. He receives a +2 bonus to any Charisma skill check. Finally, he can alter his voice at will. He can duplicate the voice of someone he has heard by making a Disguise skill check; those around can resist with a Listen check. The tongue can be noticed when he speaks with a successful Spot check against a DC of 25.

Caster Level: 8th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Create Graft, *change self*, *charm person*, *tongues*; *Market Price:* 16,000 gp; *Weight:* —

Other Organs

As noted, any body part could be replaced with a graft. It is easiest to enchant a graft in a manner that replicates or enhances its natural function. A magical liver could protect the bearer against poisons. A wooden brain might allow a character resist to magical control effects — or perhaps it would simply turn her into a vegetable. The science of grafting is still experimental, after all — there are bound to be a few flaws!

ADVENTURE SEEDS

There are a number of different ways that the Forge could enter into a campaign. Wealthy adventurers might be referred to the Forge if they are looking for someone to create a mystical artifact. Alternately players could encounter the results of Forge experiments or get caught up in some game of Taja Corael's. A few examples are provided below.

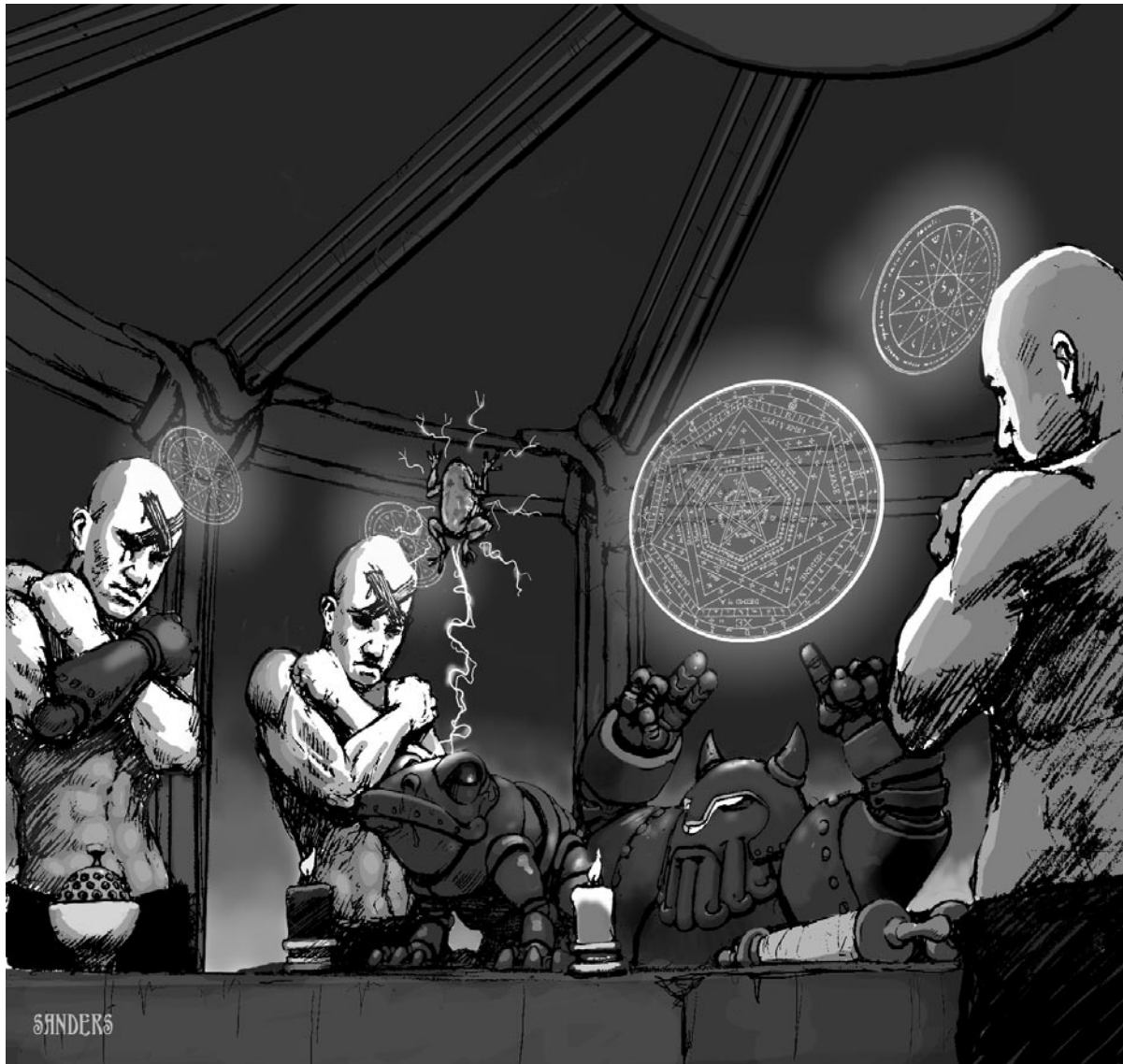
THE IRON TOAD

A stout figure stands by a large stone table. At first glance it appears to be a dwarven warrior in heavy plate mail, but on further examination it moves with a grace that belies

the heavy steel and there is no sign of flesh at any joint. Gurnn Ironfist — for it is he — examines the masterpiece on the table before him. He holds a small toad in one metal hand and strokes it soothingly.

The ritual begins. Gurnn binds his energies to those of his assistants and within hours the spell is complete. The corpse of the wizard's familiar lies cooling on the table next to a bizarre contraption — a fully articulated metal toad the size of a small dog. Suddenly the eyes of the iron toad blaze with blue light. Gurnn reaches forward to touch his newly immortal companion, but the toad leaps off of the table, smashing into an elvart and slamming her to the floor. With another mighty leap, the toad crashes through a window and disappears into the streets below.

Gurnn reaches for his cloak. He has no breath to sigh with, but there is a momentary dimming of his life-fires.





TOUCHED BY THE GODS

He turns to an assistant. "I thought I had solved that problem. Well, I'm sure Taja can find a group to dispose of Wartson ... I'll try again next year."

On the surface, Gurnn Ironfist is grim and aggressive. But his iron shell conceals one weakness that remains from his days of flesh — a great love for toads. Ever since he has made his transition, he has been trying to find a way to transfer a familiar into a new form — to create a toad that shares his power and might, a companion that he can take with him into the eternal battle that lies ahead. He has yet to succeed. He always tries to solve the problem by creating a more powerful vessel, and the result is always the same: a berserk toad-golem rampaging through the streets.

If you are interested in having players develop a friendly relationship with the Forge, this is a good way to start. As magic is ineffective against golems and Gurnn does not wish to deal with the toad himself, the Forge will require the services of a few strong arms to dispose of the failed experiment. The adventurers will be approached by Thomas Meryn, who will offer an appropriate reward of gold or artifacts (based on the power of the characters) in exchange for the elimination of the toad and the party's silence on the matter. He will be very tight-lipped about the origins of the creature, telling the characters the minimum amount of information that they need to know. If you wish to keep things quick, the players might be given a stone that vibrates based on the proximity of the toad in order to help them find it. If necessary, they could be given a weapon that can affect the toad as an advance on payment ... although this should not be extremely exciting aside from its magical bonus.

As noted above, the toad is made of iron and is the size of a small dog. It possesses tremendous strength — it can jump 60 feet — and its tongue can strike with incredible force. At this point it is virtually mindless, and is hopping about the bad part of town in search of flies, smashing through buildings and leaving a trail of wreckage in its wake. Do the characters attempt a physical confrontation, or can they come up with a more clever way to contain the iron toad?

THE SWORD OF LIGHT

You step over the corpse of the flesh-creature. A statue of a noble warrior in full armor stands before you, its hands held out with a gleaming sword resting on the marble palms. The blade seems to shimmer and glow in the dim light. Carefully, you reach out and take the sword from the hands of the statue. As you do so, a brilliant glow flares along the blade and a voice flows into your mind.

"Hail, warrior! At long last, you have taken up your destiny. For you are the chosen one, the vessel of light, and now that we are joined you may at last begin your journey."

This adventure is a way to bring the Forge into a game tangentially while pushing the campaign in a direction of your choosing. The plot begins with the players being hired (by a disguised Thomas Meryn) to retrieve a sword from a local crypt. The crypt is guarded by a few minor golems — enough to seem like a challenge without actually being a serious threat. After defeating the guardians, the players find a beautiful blade. As soon as a character that is proficient with martial weapons touches the sword, it springs to life.

The Iron Toad

CR 7; SZ S (construct); HD 5d10; hp 30; Init +0; Spd 20 ft., 60 ft. jump; AC 23 (+1 size, +12 natural); Atk: melee +9 (1d8+7, tongue strike); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 24, Dex 11, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

Special Attacks and Qualities: bull rush attack, construct, jump, magic immunity, damage reduction 30/+2, rust vulnerability

Bull Rush (Ex): The Iron Toad attacks by striking with its tongue, which has the force of a hydraulic ram; in addition to inflicting damage, this is considered to be a bull rush attack. The creature cannot exhale poison gas.

Jump (Sp): The creature has been enchanted with a permanent *jump* spell.

Magic Immunity (Ex): Like a normal iron golem, the Iron Toad is immune to all magical effects, except for the following: electrical effects slow it for three rounds, with no saving throw; fire effects cancel all slow effects and restore one hit point for every three points of damage it would otherwise deal.

Rust Vulnerability (Ex): Rust attacks and spells affect the Iron Toad normally.



NEW MAGICAL WEAPON: *The Sword of Light*

The Sword of Light appears to be a normal longsword. But at the whim of the sword itself, it transforms into a +3 *brilliant energy longsword of shocking burst*. Three times per day it may emit an 8d6 *lightning bolt* with a 200 foot range and a DC of 15. It also provides its wielder with the Improved Initiative and Mobility feats. It has scores of 15 for Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, communicates with its wielder via telepathy, and has an Ego score of 20. To begin with, the sword will not initiate any sort of Ego conflict with its wielder; it will go out of its way to flatter the wielder, in accordance with the “chosen one” story. However, if the characters refuse to follow up on the sword’s quest, troubles will begin. Since the powers of the sword are ultimately under its own control, it can always revert to a normal longsword when it has served its purpose in the game.

Caster Level: 18th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *gaseous form*, *continual flame*, *lightning bolt*;
Market Price: 125,000 gp*

* This is the technical market price. If the sword refuses to demonstrate its powers, reduce the effective market price to 25 gp.

Communicating telepathically, it hails the wielder as a savior destined to combat a terrible threat.

The truth is that the blade is a creation of Taja Corael. The “destined conflict” is simply a game Taja wishes to see played out. If the players feel obligated to fulfill their contract, they will discover that their employer is nowhere to be found. The sword will blame “the enemy” and urge swift action. This foe could be an individual (also armed by the Forge?), a guild or cult, or even a country. Taja can scry on the blade and send it information and instructions to pass along to the wielder. As events progress, the players may figure out that all is not as it seems — the supposed enemy has no knowledge of the conflict — or else Taja may eventually lose interest and allow the sword itself to spill the beans. Of course, by the time the truth comes out the players may have made some powerful enemies ...

You should tailor the power of the sword to the level of your characters; the description given here is just one possibility.

CLOCKWORK CRISIS

The gnome rubs his hands together and bites his lip. “This is a delicate matter, yes, most delicate.” He glances around, reassuring himself that no-one else is listening. “My family has long studied the art of arcanoanimation — the practice of weaving magic into wire and spring so as to create the virtual illusion of life itself.”

The tinker produces a beetle made from silver and tin from a hidden pocket and sets it on the table. As he continues to speak, the metal creature crawls around, watching you through mirrored eyes and clicking razor mandibles together.

“Fifty-three years ago, one of our greatest engineers disappeared — my uncle, Willem Biffle. We always assumed that he would turn up — or that one of his experiments had, well, gotten the best of him. These things happen, you know. No such luck. Last week one of my brothers, um, discovered an automaton protecting a local wizard’s abode. The work is unquestionably that of my uncle. We need to know what has become of him. We cannot have our family secrets falling into the hands of outsiders!”

A group of gnomish arcane engineers hire the characters to track down Willem Biffle. These gnomes claim to be concerned about the fate of their one-time comrade. Perhaps this is true. Or perhaps their motives are considerably darker. Willem Biffle is a brilliant magic user, and there are a number of gnomish families that would like to learn his techniques. The gnomes that have contacted the players may represent one of these families, or they may in fact be Biffles — but Biffles who wish to eliminate Willem so that others cannot learn his secrets.

Tracking Willem may involve bribery, information gathering, and the like, or it may be a matter of physically overpowering and threatening the wizard who has purchased Biffle’s wares in order to find out where he bought the guardian. The gnomes are using the players as stalking horses to avoid alerting Biffle to their presence. But once Willem has been found, that’s when the gnomish illusionist-assassins will make their move ...

GOD SEEKERS

ORIGINS

The Society of the Apotheosis is a relatively recent cult, having sprung up only in the past fifty years. Under the leadership of the great prophet Seliger, the Fellowship arose in response to the unprecedented number of mortals reputed to have ascended to godhood. Tales of such apotheoses are commonplace in many cultures, both human and nonhuman. Like most people, Seliger never thought to question these legends, accepting them as proof that the gods rewarded their greatest followers with a reward beyond all others — immortality and all that comes with it.

However, Seliger's perspective changed forever when one of his boon companions, a charismatic warrior woman called Angusheva, encountered the minor god of battles known as Talman. A cruel and bloodthirsty deity, Talman had long taken pleasure in encouraging war among the petty kingdoms of the world, including Angusheva's own beleaguered land. Once she had gained sufficient power on her own, Angusheva braved the dangers of Talman's iron citadel and faced him there. Using only her puissant skill at arms and cunning intellect, Angusheva achieved the impossible: she slew Talman and usurped his divine role as patron of battles.

Seliger witnessed Talman's destruction, as well as his friend's elevation to godhood. Needless to say, he was astonished; the world was no longer as he had once known it. He soon retreated to a nearby monastery where he prayed to the gods for guidance in understanding the miracle he had witnessed — but guidance

never came. Seliger reflected on his long association with Angusheva, looking for clues that might explain what he had seen.

After months of thought, he came to a conclusion, the only conclusion that made any sense. If the gods could be slain by mortals — and he had seen this with his own eyes — they must somehow be like mortals. More precisely, Seliger concluded that mortals must be like

the gods in some way, perhaps even "immature gods." He then proposed the theory that some mortals contained within them the embryonic stuff of divinity. Under the right circumstances, these proto-gods could reach their full potential and attain the lofty heights that are their birthright.

Seliger quickly realized that recognizing which mortals held within them the seeds of godhood would be a worthwhile ability. Indeed, he

felt that, by doing so, he might help these mortals better prepare for their eventual elevation, thereby serving humanity as well. After all, would not mortals prefer that their gods be thoughtful and intelligent beings rather than capricious and cruel? Was not the world a better place now that, for example, Angusheva was a goddess and Talman consigned to oblivion?

Seliger then sought to gather together others who shared his vision of a brighter future. Thus was born the original Society of the Apotheosis, which labored long to develop the techniques needed both to recognize and train those who would one day be gods. The present-day God Seekers continue the work Seliger set for them a half-century ago.

FORMAL NAME: THE SOCIETY OF THE
APOTHEOSIS

NICKNAME: GOD SEEKERS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THIS GROUP SEEKS OUT
AND CULTIVATES MORTAL BEINGS IT BELIEVES TO
HAVE THE POTENTIAL FOR GODHOOD.

SYMBOL: THE SUN RISING OVER THE HORIZON,
WITH BRILLIANT RAYS EMANATING FROM IT.

PATRON DEITY: NONE. THE SOCIETY BELIEVES
IN UNLOCKING THE DIVINITY THAT LIES WITHIN
CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS AND THUS PAYS HOMAGE TO
NO SINGLE DEITY.

GOALS AND METHODS

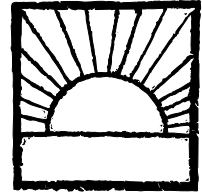
As already noted, the Society seeks to discover nascent gods and prepare them for the day of their ascension. Seliger firmly believed that far too much suffering had been wrought in the world because the gods were selfish and cruel. He saw firsthand how Angusheva's assumption of Talman's place changed the world for the better. Where Talman had been cruel and bloodthirsty, Angusheva was thoughtful and deliberate. The kingdoms formerly suffering under the influence of Talman regained a semblance of peace after decades of pointless war. Seliger hoped that, by ensuring that those who would assume the mantle of divinity were properly prepared for it, the Society would provide for a better future, one in which mortals were no longer mere playthings of the gods.

To that end, Seliger labored long and hard to ascertain the signs of nascent godhood. He rightly thought that the Society's avowed mission would be impossible without developing a solid means of recognizing those who carried the spark of divinity within them. He reflected on his years of association with Angusheva, attempting to see if her character and conduct in any way foretold of her eventual apotheosis. In this way, he discovered the basics of the discipline of Divine Sight, which is eventually taught to all members of the Society.

Using Divine Sight, Seliger felt he could recognize gods among mortals. When the Society encountered such an individual, it attempted to take him or her under its wing, presenting itself as a monastic order dedicated to the development of "physical and mental perfection" — a half-truth that serves its purpose well. Seliger thought it would be dangerous to reveal the Society's true nature until it was certain its newfound charge indeed possessed the makings of a god. Even if the individual did, Seliger worried that revealing this fact too soon might spoil the process of instruction, guaranteeing that the proto-god would become self-centered and evil. Thus, the Society never reveals the true nature of its mission until its charge has spent years perfecting his mind and body.

Because the Society hides behind the mask of monasticism, it attracts casual students interested in following its renowned regimen. Seliger never discouraged the admission of such people. In fact, he embraced it. Not only did it buttress the Society's ruse, but it also widened the net of potential candidates for divinity. The Society couldn't be everywhere. If the prestige of its training regimen

brought outside students, so be it. Among them could well be another mortal with the potential for godhood. As for the rest of its trainees, Seliger believed the program would do them good as well. After all, how could improved physical and mental discipline harm anyone? Sadly, Seliger eventually realized how wrong he was.

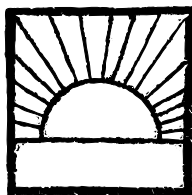


TRAINING

Initially, the Society offers the same regimen to any who join its ranks, whether they do so of their own initiative or at the invitation of a God Seeker. Those who persevere learn many skills and abilities, all of which work toward bringing the mind and body into better harmony and perfecting the mortal form. Even those students who do not possess the potential for godhood learn much from the Society, becoming true monks.

During this time, God Seekers skilled in Divine Sight and other related disciplines observe the progress of those undertaking the training. If anyone — including outside students — shows a strong inclination toward the philosophy that animates the regimen, they are offered a chance to begin "advanced training." This consists of instruction in philosophy, theology, and ethics under one of the Society's masters, perhaps even Seliger himself. This training is intended to further the physical and mental perfection needed to reach one's highest potential, as well as inculcate a sense of responsibility to all mortals. While not all of the Society's advanced students eventually attain godhood — indeed only two have done so since its founding — all develop keen abilities. The best among them become God Seekers, a unique group that both spreads the group's teachings and seeks out potential gods.

One of the more controversial elements of the Society's methods is its preference for seeking out nascent gods as early as possible. Seliger believes that the sooner a potential immortal is identified and taught, the less the likelihood of his becoming a capricious deity. Consequently, the God Seekers look for children who have the divine spark and do whatever they must to bring them to a Society monastery. In some cases, the child's parents readily agree, believing they're doing what's best for their child. In others, though, the parents resist,



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leading the God Seeker to act in ways that outside observers rightly view as morally dubious. God Seekers are quite skilled at casuistry, the “talent” of justifying their illicit actions to others as well as to themselves. This makes them especially dangerous opponents — and very good at getting what they want.

Unfortunately, not all the Society’s students believe wholeheartedly in its teachings. Occasionally, even Seliger makes a mistake. Once such mistake took the form of a young woman named Braevin Ulthorn. Seliger personally instructed her, believing that she possessed the potential for eventual godhood. She advanced quickly and learned much from the Society. In time, Seliger revealed her destiny to her and she was overjoyed. Braevin vowed to embody the Society’s teachings once her apotheosis occurred.

But it never did. Despite her fine abilities and bodily perfection, Braevin never became a god. Perplexed, Seliger and the Society reluctantly admitted they had made a mistake. Braevin, they said, lacked the spark necessary for divinity — although they never denied she was a fine example of a nearly perfect mortal.

Braevin wouldn’t accept this reversal of fortune. In her rage, she claimed Seliger had withheld infor-

mation from her, information that would assure her ascendancy. Seliger denied this, of course, but she would have none of it. Braevin turned her puissant abilities against the Society, killing many students and gravely wounding Seliger. She then fled into the night, promising to achieve the godhood the Society had denied her. Since that time, Braevin has gathered followers of her own, to whom she’s taught a twisted version of the Society’s philosophy. Since then, this “Fellowship of the Imminent Goddess” has challenged the Society at every step, attempting to exact revenge on Seliger and to propel Braevin to divinity.

Braevin Ulthorn is a particular source of trouble for the Society, because Seliger continues to believe he can reform her, as he did so many others. Consequently, the God Seekers have never attempted to kill or otherwise eliminate this evil woman, preferring instead to capture her — with no success. She is a remarkably skilled and cunning individual, in many ways Seliger’s better. To date, Braevin has evaded capture on dozens of occasions, each time causing more harm to the Society and its noble mission. Younger members of the cult grow weary of Seliger’s unwillingness to take genuine action against Braevin and have begun to organize their own efforts to destroy her once and for all. Whether they will prove successful — and whether Seliger would allow them to do so — remains to be seen.

NEW FEAT: *Divine Perception* [General]

You can sense the workings of the gods in the mortal world.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 13+, Skill Focus (Knowledge: Religion)

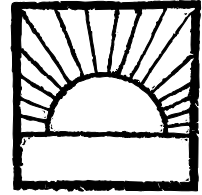
Benefit: A character with this feat is sometimes aware of the active presence of gods and other powerful Outsiders. For example, the character might feel a chill when in the presence of an evil shrine, or he might become calm when visiting a sacred spring dedicated to a good deity. The awareness this feat grants is a purely passive one, meaning the GM should determine if and when the character detects the hand of the gods in the mortal world. Moreover, the awareness is highly inexact and impressionistic; it does not replace spells such as *detect chaos/evil/good/law*, *know alignment*, or anything similar.

Normal: Without this feat, the skill Divine Sight is barred to the character.

ORGANIZATION

The Society of the Apotheosis has several levels of organization. At the pinnacle is the Monastery of Refulgent Perfection, the motherhouse of the sect. This fortified structure exists high on a mountaintop away from any large population center. Seliger selected this locale by choice, hoping that seclusion would both aid in its work and keep prying eyes away from the Society. The exact location of the Monastery is not hidden; anyone who wishes to find it can do so with only a minimum of difficulty.

Beneath the motherhouse are daughter monasteries founded by pupils of Seliger. The two most prominent are the Abbey of Ever-flowing Light and the Hermitage of Radiant Precision. Daughter monasteries are effectively independent, although they are expected to abide by the teachings of the Society in all things. Each year, Seliger makes a pilgrimage to all the daughter houses, both to main-

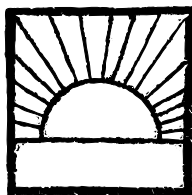


tain ties
with them
and to
determine
whether

any deviations from the Society's precepts have occurred. Since the Braevin Ulthorn debacle, Seliger has become increasingly worried that the Society might again train a monster capable of wreaking great destruction.

Within each monastery of the Society there is a single leader, known as the Master (or Mistress), who is assisted by a council composed of nine Adepts. The Master handpicks these Adepts from among his greatest students. Both the Master and the Adepts serve for life. When a Master dies, the council of Adepts chooses his successor from among its own number. Interestingly, neither the Master nor the Adepts possess the divine spark they seek to cultivate in others. Seliger believes it would be a mistake for a nascent god to assume the governance of the Society. Doing so could lead to self-aggrandizing actions that would undermine the Society's goals. He need only point to the Braevin Ulthorn fiasco for support of his position.

Beneath the Master and the Adepts are various instructors and functionaries, all of whom maintain the Society's teaching mission, as well as maintaining the monasteries themselves. Beneath them are the students, some of whom take vows of obedience to the Society and its leaders. However, there are also "casual" students, who come



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to the Society seeking only to better themselves without any interest in becoming a formal member of the Society. As already noted, Seliger approves of such individuals, believing that, if they walk away with even a small belief in the Society's philosophy, he will have made the world a better place for mortals.

Finally, there are the God Seekers. This small cadre exists outside the hierarchy of the monasteries, answering directly to Seliger himself. The God

Seekers are the eyes and ears of the Society and, if need be, its strong sword arm as well. Seliger created this corps of dedicated individuals to roam the earth in search of the nascent gods their master believes exist. God Seekers are skilled in Divine Sight, divination, and unarmed combat. They are all remarkable individuals, well on the road to achieving a true union between mind and body. They are also small in number, as Braevin Ulthorn takes great pleasure in killing any she or her minions encounter. Consequently, they keep a low profile and try to avoid drawing attention to their activities.

NEW SKILL: *Divine Sight*

(Wis; Trained Only; Requires the Divine Perception Feat)

You can use your sensitivity to divine power to recognize the strength of its presence in individuals. With the Divine Sight skill, you can recognize the potential for godhood in mortal beings, as well as their movement along the path to apotheosis. Use of this skill requires that a minimum of one day be spent in the presence of the mortal examined. Each additional day adds a +1 check bonus to a maximum bonus of +3 after four days.

Check: The DC of the Divine Sight check is based on what you seek to see in the individual examined. In addition, power of the divine potential within the individual examined provides modifiers to the DC. It is easier to gain insight into individuals whose potential is already in evidence to some degree. This generally means that those who haven't been corrupted by worldly influences — ie. lower-level characters — are more readily perceived than others. However, the GM has the final say in his campaign regarding the nature of divine potential within mortals. See "So You Want To Be a God?" on page 38 for more details.

| Task | DC |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Identify Divine Potential | 20 |
| Discern Divine Powers | 25 |
| Determine Time of Ascension | 30 |

The character level of the target gives a circumstance penalty to Divine Sight checks, according to the following table:

| Target Level | Modifier to DC |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1st to 3rd | -5 |
| 4th to 6th | -4 |
| 7th to 9th | -3 |
| 10th to 14th | -2 |
| 15th to 18th | -1 |
| 19th to 20th | 0 |

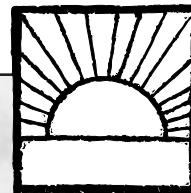
Retry: You can't make more than one Divine Sight check in a single day.

INITIATION

The Society of the Apotheosis has two kinds of members: those who join on their own initiative and those brought to a monastery by the God Seekers. At first, both types show no differences — at least as far as their initiation into the Society. That is, both must pass a strict screening process under the supervision of the Adepts. Any candidate exhibiting evil tendencies or the inability to handle discipline is noted as early as possible. Rather than cast out potential gods who might wreak havoc later, the Society hopes that its program might reform them, thereby effecting an alignment change. The program is remarkably effective, although, as the case of Braevin shows, far from foolproof. Nevertheless, the Society has had relatively few instances of being unable to reform even the worst malcontents in the fifty years since Seliger began it.

Once a candidate has passed the screening process, he is formally initiated into the Society. This involves the recitation of vows of obedience, as well as a promise to uphold the Society's teachings in all things. Although members are not expected to give up all their worldly possessions, they are expected to make them available to others "for the good of Society." Thus, the cult practices a very weak form of communal living among its members. This communism holds even for Masters and Adepts and contributes greatly to the solidarity that characterizes the Society.

Once vows have been made, members undergo a series of tests and examinations. These are designed to ascertain weaknesses and strengths, both physical and mental. For although the Society has but one philosophy, it does not hold that all mortals can achieve its ideals by exactly the same path. The results of these tests — some of which include grueling physical exertions — determine the program of



NEW PRESTIGE CLASS:

God Seeker

Elite members of the Society of the Apotheosis, the God Seeker is an ascetic trained in a rigorous philosophy that seeks union between mind and body as the means to awakened perceptions and skills. God Seekers roam the world, looking for mortals that possess an indescribable “spark” which marks them as gods in the making. God Seekers are gifted with unnatural insights, as well as numerous defenses against those who would thwart their unique mission.

Fighters and rangers make excellent God Seekers, as they are well versed in pushing the body to its limits. Paladins and clerics also do well, but few take up the vocation as it is considered blasphemous by many established religions. Lawful neutral druids may become God Seekers, adding the class’ abilities to their own impressive repertoire. Wizards and sorcerers bring magic to this unusual calling, although most sorcerers find its discipline restrictive. Rogues have little interest in becoming God Seekers, but some do, finding their many skills complement the mission of the class. Monks are natural members of this group and make up the largest number of its adherents. Barbarians and bards may not become God Seekers, since its alignment restriction bars them.

NPC God Seekers usually work in small groups, often pairs. They roam far and wide, seeking those with the potential for godhood. Consequently, they can be found almost anywhere and favor remote locales where they can go about their business without arousing the suspicion of either intolerant religions or their enemies, the Fellowship of the Imminent Goddess.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a God Seeker, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

- **Alignment:** Any lawful.
- **Base Attack Bonus:** +5
- **Feats:** Alertness, Divine Perception (see page 34), Endurance.
- **Concentration:** 5 ranks
- **Knowledge (religion):** 5 ranks
- **Sense Motive:** 8 ranks

Special: In addition, his Adept mentor must select him for God Seeker training, after spending time studying in a monastery of the Society of the Apotheosis.

Class Skills

The God Seeker’s class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Divine Sight (Wis; see page 36).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the God Seeker prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: God Seekers gain proficiency with basic peasant weapons and special weapons whose use is part of monk training. God Seekers are not proficient with armor or shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Divine Sight: At 1st level, the God Seeker gains a free rank in Divine Sight, to which he may freely add skill points if he so desires. At every other level, beginning at 3rd, he receives an additional free rank in the skill.

Improved Healing (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, the God Seeker doubles his natural healing rate. Thus, a 10th level character heals 20 hit points per day rather than the usual 10.

Resist Elements (Sp): Once per day, beginning at 4th level, the God Seeker may harden his body against one type of energy as per the 2nd level arcane spell of the same name.

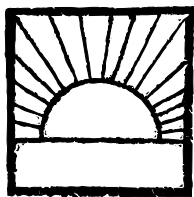
Nondetection (Ex): At 6th level, the God Seeker becomes difficult to detect by divination and detection spells, as per the 3rd level arcane spell of the same name. Unlike the spell, this ability is permanent, the result of the God Seeker’s intense study of detection methods and how to foil them. The DC to detect a God Seeker with this ability is 11 + the God Seeker’s character level.

Bodily Perfection (Ex): Beginning at 8th level, the God Seeker applies the highest positive modifier of his three physical abilities (Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution) as a bonus to all his saving throws.

True Seeing (Ex): At 10th level, the God Seeker gains the ability to view the world once per day as if he could cast the 5th level divine spell *true seeing*. This ability is not magical in nature, but the result of the God Seeker’s keen awareness of his surroundings.

CLASS TABLE: GOD SEEKER

| Class Level | Base Attack | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1st | +0 | +2 | +0 | +2 | Divine Sight |
| 2nd | +1 | +3 | +0 | +3 | Improved Healing |
| 3rd | +1 | +3 | +1 | +3 | +1 Divine Sight |
| 4th | +2 | +4 | +1 | +4 | Resist Elements |
| 5th | +2 | +4 | +1 | +4 | +1 Divine Sight |
| 6th | +3 | +5 | +2 | +5 | Nondetection |
| 7th | +3 | +5 | +2 | +5 | +1 Divine Sight |
| 8th | +4 | +6 | +2 | +6 | Bodily Perfection |
| 9th | +4 | +6 | +3 | +6 | +1 Divine Sight |
| 10th | +5 | +7 | +3 | +7 | True Seeing |



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

study the new member will undertake. Most monasteries maintain enough instructors to create several groups (called nuclei), each one following a different but related regimen of training. Seliger firmly believes that there are many roads to divinity. The programs of the monasteries reflect that philosophy.

Once a student shows exceptional promise — whether or not he possesses the potential for godhood — the Council of Adepts examines him personally. Using their own experiences and knowledge, as well as Divine Sight, they decide whether the pupil is ready for higher studies. If so, the student is assigned one of the Adepts as a personal mentor and trainer. In addition, the mentor watches carefully for signs of emerging divinity. For although most would-be gods show their potential early, not all do, manifesting only after the rigorous training the Society offers. In fact, one of the two members elevated to godhood in the last fifty years did so in exactly this manner.

Adept mentors also decide whether an advanced student is worthy of God Seeker training. These elite members of the Society are a rare breed. Entry into their fellowship requires the utmost dedication to the Society's philosophy, as well as physical and mental unity uncommon in even the best mortal beings. Moreover, God Seekers lead dangerous lives, hunted as they are by agents of Braevin's Fellowship of the Imminent Goddess, as well as certain religious groups who suspect the true motives of the Society. To these zealots, the Society is a blasphemy of the highest order, for it suggests not merely that mortals may one day replace the gods, but also that they may do a better job of it. Consequently, God Seekers and other members of the Society of the Apotheosis face prejudice and peril wherever they go.

SO YOU WANT TO SBE A GOD?

The description of the Society of the Apotheosis assumes that Seliger is indeed correct and mortals can ascend to godhood given the right circumstances. These circumstances are nevertheless exceedingly difficult to arrange, meaning that ascension to divinity remains a rare event. In order to use the Society in an ongoing campaign, the GM must decide where he stands with regards to the cult's beliefs. Is it possible for mortals to become

gods — and if so, is it possible to determine in advance which mortals will eventually succeed in this greatest of endeavors?

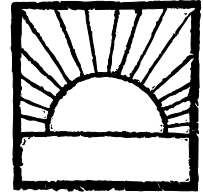
Assuming that the answer to both questions is affirmative, the Society can be used more or less as written. The underlying premise behind its philosophy is that divinity is something mortals can attain for themselves. Within the Society there is much debate as to whether those mortals who achieve this goal do so simply through hard work and determination or through an "inner spark" with which they are born and then hone to perfection.

However, experience suggests the latter to be the case. The description of the skill Divine Sight assumes that the reality of a mortal's nascent divinity becomes more difficult to see (or not see) as he gains worldly power, which is to say as he gains character levels. Thus, would-be gods are easier to recognize at lower levels than at higher ones. The logic behind this is that true embryonic deities distinguish themselves from ordinary mortals much more readily when they are comparatively young and inexperienced. As mortals gain greater world power, their skills and abilities may cloud their true natures, giving an impression of divinity that they do not in fact possess.

A consequence of this is that the Society prefers to look for godhood candidates as early as possible: the younger, the better. Seliger thus sends his God Seekers throughout the world looking for children and youths that distinguish themselves from their fellows not through deeds and accomplishments, but by possessing that spark of potential that others lack.

The GM may decide that true divinity is more easily recognizable at higher levels of ability. In that case, he need only reverse the table included with the Divine Sight skill. He must justify his decision, though, basing it on the understanding of godhood that he has adopted for his campaign. This choice does little violence to the central premise of the Society, so they may be used without any significant modifications.

It is equally legitimate, however, to assume that Seliger is just wrong; that mortals and gods are two wholly different types of beings and so never the twain shall meet. In that case, the Society is mistaken in its mission. The God Seekers are just highly trained ascetics, having attuned mind and body, but they do not possess either Divine Perception or Divine Sight, neither of which actually function as described above. Once again, there's nothing wrong with this approach, since it still allows the Society to be used as a training school whose philosophy yields results, just not the ultimate ones it's seeking.

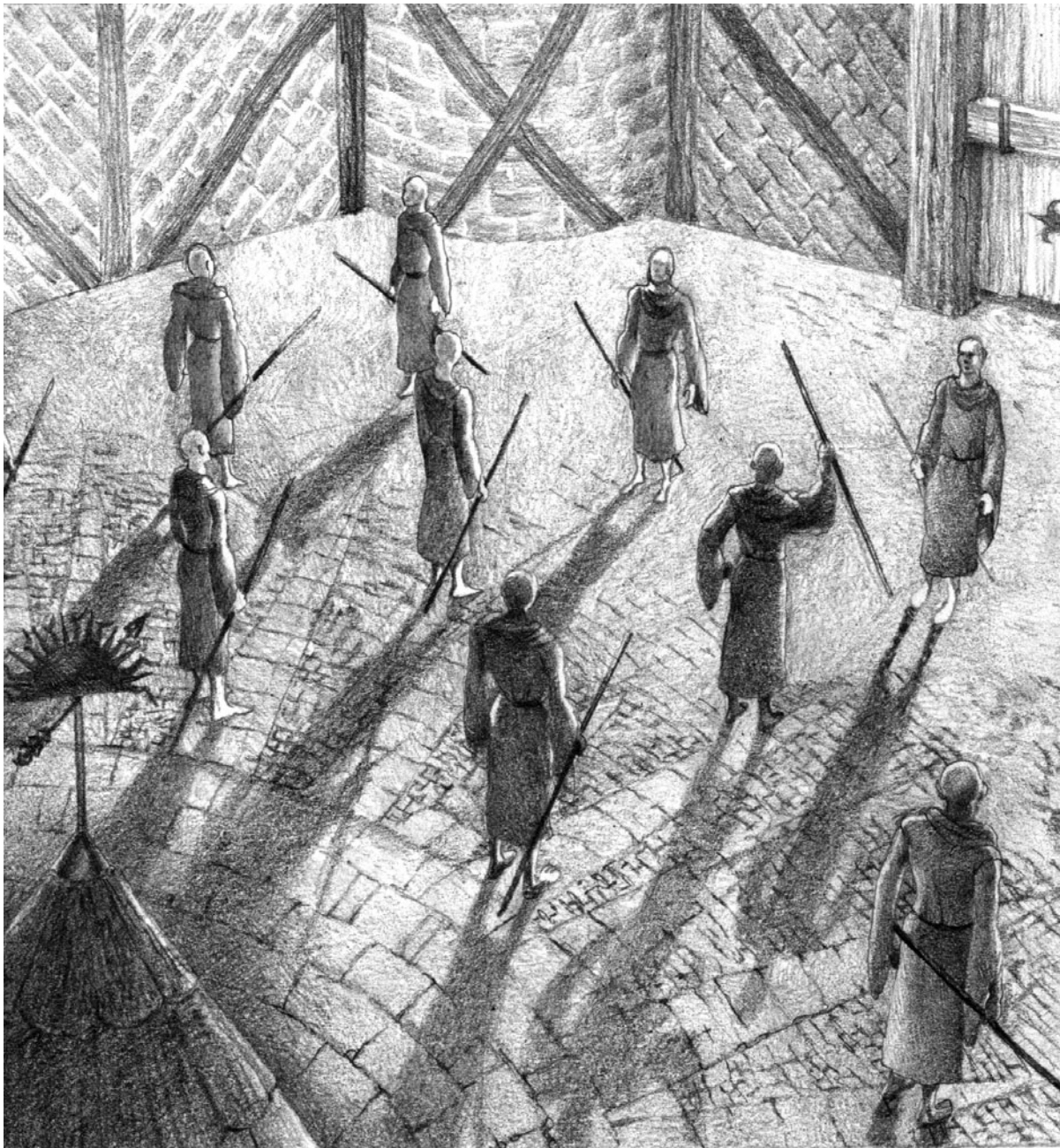


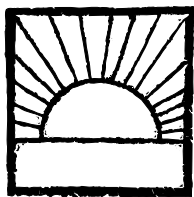
In the end, the GM is the final arbiter of questions regarding the relationship between mortals and the gods. If he doesn't want there to be much traffic between them, or feels that training for ascension is inappropriate for his campaign, so be it. The Society still makes for an intriguing encounter with some seriously deluded individuals. If, however, he accepts the premise on which the Society operates, he'll need to make certain that its implementation matches his own conception of how mortals attain godhood. Whatever the final decision, the Society of the Apotheosis can add interest to any campaign.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

MISSING PERSON

The characters come across a remote village whose inhabitants are in the process of gathering together a mob. When the villagers see the characters, the headman approaches them and asks if they'd be willing to help them. According to him, a mysterious stranger who came into the village a few days ago has kidnapped a young girl. At first, they





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thought the stranger was a cleric or monk, as he dressed like one and spoke at length about the relationship between mortals and gods. The villagers didn't think much of it,

since itinerant preachers visit their isolated community every so often.

During his stay, the stranger spent time with almost everyone in the town, including the young daughter of the blacksmith. The girl is nine years old and exceptionally bright and thoughtful. The stranger tried to convince the blacksmith and his wife that their daughter should come with him to his monastery for training "suited to her unique abilities." However, the blacksmith would have none of it and told the stranger to leave his daughter alone. After the stranger left town the next morning, the blacksmith's daughter was found missing! The headman is sure the stranger has taken her and the villagers intend to find him before it's too late.

The truth of the matter is more complex. The stranger, who is actually a God Seeker of the Society of the Apotheosis, recognized that the blacksmith's daughter possesses the divine spark that could one day lead to godhood. He tried to explain this to the blacksmith, but the simple man neither understood nor cared for his "fancy words." However, the daughter did understand and she agreed with the God Seeker's intentions. She arranged to meet with him later that evening so that the two of them could leave the village and head to his monastery.

However, no one knows this fact. Consequently, the villagers believe the God Seeker has kidnapped the little girl for nefarious purposes. If the characters join their cause, the quest to find the God Seeker will prove difficult. His abilities are significant and he is adept at hiding himself from those wishing him ill. Of course, the presence of the girl in his company slows him down, as well as making some of his abilities less useful. Even so, locating the two of them should be a memorable trek through the wilderness in the face of many dangers.

Once the characters meet up with the God Seeker, resolving the matter may prove difficult. He is adamant that the girl come with him, as is her desire to go and find a "better life" with the Society. Of course, she is only nine years old and her family doesn't approve of the God Seeker's

wishes — or methods. Unraveling this problem should present grave moral quandaries for all involved, making it a good way to introduce the ethical ambiguities that underpin many God Seeker actions.

CIVIL WAR

The player characters are recruited by a small monastery of the Society to protect it from an attack by members of the Fellowship of the Imminent Goddess. The Mistress of the monastery explains the Society's beliefs only in broad terms, emphasizing its rigorous training program and understanding of mind/body unity. If the characters accept her offer, they will see the monastery's students and Adepts engaged in typically monastic endeavors, confirming the Mistress' explanation. Only with time and discussion might they realize that the Society's beliefs go deeper than that.

Being a new monastery, it has fewer God Seekers than is typical and all of them are now too far away to defend it. Against the wishes of the Council of Adepts, the Mistress asks the characters to patrol its grounds and defend it against enemies. These enemies, she explains, are former students of the monastery who believe its teachings should be used to gain temporal power and riches rather than the harmony between mind and body that leads to true perfection. She warns that these enemies are all formidable and tenacious opponents, who will not surrender easily. Thus, the characters had best be on their guard against them. The GM should tailor the number and strength of the Fellowship attackers to the abilities of the PCs. Most are monks and fighters, although a few — such as the leader — possess abilities equivalent to the God Seekers. Defeating them should prove a challenge, even for experienced adventurers.

During the course of defending the monastery, the characters may glean further information about the true nature of the Society and Braevin Ulthorn's Fellowship. How the characters react to these revelations and what repercussions it might have for the campaign are best left to player choice. Once again, the Society should serve as an occasion for moral and ethical debate, as well as the realization that even fantasy worlds possess a diversity of belief.

JUSTICARS

ORIGINS

Although the institution of a uniform code of law is an important moment in every society's history, its application is often the moment at which justice ceases — or so says the secretive sect known as the Justicars. Followers of the long-forgotten god of righteous vengeance, the true origin of the Justicars is lost in the mists of history. The only certainty is that the cult came into being shortly after the suppression of the worship of Raeksen in almost every nation in the civilized world. For their part, the Justicars claim that their god appeared to a downtrodden farmer named Martensyl Jameth and bade him to strike back against those who would use the law as a shield for their unjust acts. Given that several widely placed locales claim Martensyl as a native son, serious scholars hold the truth of this legend in doubt.

FORMAL NAME: THE JUSTICARS

NICKNAMES: THE HANDS OF RAEKSEN, THE BLUE KILLERS, MADMEN

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: A SECRETIVE CULT DEDICATED TO ELIMINATING THOSE WHO HAVE USED THE LAW TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM "TRUE JUSTICE."

SYMBOLS: THE SCALES OF JUSTICE, OR AN IRON SHOD QUARTERSTAFF

PATRON DEITY: RAEKSEN, GOD OF RIGHTEOUS VENGEANCE

Put simply, the Justicars are hired killers. However, unlike more traditional assassins, they accept no fee for their services, but will only act in cases where justice is being thwarted by too strict an adherence to law. Thus, they will punish anyone — from powerful merchants to cheating husbands — who uses his or her legal advantage to wrong those the Justicars believe to

have justice on their side. The Justicars come to this decision by deep thought and lengthy meditation, during which they attempt to divine the will of their god, Raeksen. The Justicars take their role seriously and do not accept missions lightly. They will only act in instances where they believe a genuine injustice has been done, when there is no other way to set things right. For that reason, they do not accept payment for their services. Instead, they

ask that their clients remember the debt they owe the Justicars — a fact they may one day exploit in the performance of other assignments. This network of accomplices is one of the many reasons the Justicars succeed so regularly in their missions.

Once a Justicar has accepted a mission, he is relentless in the pursuit of his quarry. The Justicar uses every resource at his disposal to find and punish the wrongdoer, so he may learn the error of his ways. Justicar punishments take a variety of forms; outright assassination is a last resort. Indeed, the Justicars prefer to perform a "corrective justice" that allows their victims to learn from their past mistakes. This isn't to say that the Justicars' methods are always pleasant or even non-violent. All are designed to provide the utmost "education" to those on whom they are visited. See the table under "The Art of Justice" below for some typical examples.

GOALS AND METHODS

The Justicars hold that law is based on consistency, while justice is predicated upon exceptions. They claim that law serves order first and justice only incidentally. Such an arrangement may be good for the maintenance of the peace, but it does not guarantee that all beings receive their due. In the rush to preserve order, it's inevitable that someone's rights will be trampled. Rectifying such injustices is the goal of the sect.



NEW PRESTIGE CLASS:

The Justicar

The Justicar is a devotee of Raeksen, skilled in the art of eliminating those who hide their misdeeds beneath the cloak of law. The sect benefits from a diverse membership. Fighters, rangers, and barbarians make excellent Justicars, as do clerics and even chaotic neutral druids. Rogues and bards likewise bring qualities of use to the work of the Justicars. The requirements of the class are demanding on wizards and sorcerers, but they too may join its ranks with effort. Being supreme exemplars of law, neither paladins nor monks may become Justicars, unless they first renounce their former allegiances.

NPC Justicars usually work alone while acting on behalf of their sect. They act with forethought and planning, preferring to strike at the moment least likely to result in the deaths of innocents.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Justicar, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

- **Alignment:** Chaotic Good or Chaotic Neutral
- **Base Attack Bonus:** +6
- **Gather Information:** 5 ranks
- **Sense Motive:** 5 ranks
- **Feats:** Track
- **Special:** The Justicar must have suffered an injustice at the hands of a recognized legal authority, whether it be the city watch, a sheriff, or someone else. He must then act on his own to punish the individual who perpetrated this injustice, an act whose success the Justicars believe is a sign of Raeksen's favor.

Class Skills

The Justicar's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information

(Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Justicar is proficient with all simple and martial weapons applicable to his size. Justicars are likewise proficient with light armor but not with shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Climb, Hide, Jump, and Move Silently.

Mission Bonus (Su): Upon accepting a new mission, a Justicar prays to Raeksen and meditates upon his sacred duty to act in the name of justice. This results in a +1 attack bonus against the individual he is being sent to punish. The Justicar receives the same bonus on Listen, Search, Sense Motive, and Spot checks when using these skills against or when tracking the individual. The bonus increases by 1 at every odd-numbered level (3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th).

Spells: Beginning at 1st level, a Justicar gains the ability to cast a small number of divine spells. To cast a spell, the Justicar must have a Wisdom of at least 10 + spell's level, so a Justicar with a Wisdom of 10 or lower cannot cast these spells. Justicar bonus spells are based on Wisdom, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the Justicar's Wisdom modifier (if any). The Justicar's spell list appears below. A Justicar prepares and casts spells just as a cleric does. When a Justicar gets 0 spells of a given level, such as 0 1st-level spells at 1st level, the Justicar gets only bonus spells. A Justicar without a bonus spell for that level cannot yet cast a spell of that level.

Saving Throw Bonus vs. Law Spells (Ex): Because Raeksen's faith teaches that evil often uses law to shield itself from true justice, Justicars slowly grow more and more resistant to the effects of Law spells. This is reflected by a natural saving throw bonus to all spells whose school or domain includes law. The bonus is gained at 2nd level and increases by +1 every two levels the Justicar gains (+1 at 2nd level, +2 at 4th level, +3 at 6th level, and so on).

CLASS TABLE: JUSTICAR

| Class Level | Base Attack | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special | Spells per Day | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | | | | | 1 st | 2 nd | 3 rd | 4 th |
| 1st | +1 | +1 | +1 | +1 | +1 target bonus | 0 | — | — | — |
| 2nd | +2 | +2 | +2 | +2 | +1 save vs. law | 1 | — | — | — |
| 3rd | +3 | +2 | +2 | +2 | +2 target bonus | 1 | 0 | — | — |
| 4th | +4 | +2 | +2 | +2 | +2 save vs. law | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| 5th | +5 | +3 | +3 | +3 | +3 target bonus | 1 | 1 | 0 | — |
| 6th | +6 | +3 | +3 | +3 | +3 save vs. law | 1 | 1 | 1 | — |
| 7th | +7 | +4 | +4 | +4 | +4 target bonus | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 8th | +8 | +4 | +4 | +4 | +4 save vs. law | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 9th | +9 | +4 | +4 | +4 | +5 target bonus | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 10th | +10 | +5 | +5 | +5 | +5 save vs. law | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |



Justicar Spell List

Justicars choose their spells from the following list:

- 1st level** — *detect law, entropic shield, obscuring mist, protection from law, shield of faith.*
- 2nd level** — *endurance, shield other, spiritual weapon, undetectable alignment.*
- 3rd level** — *dispel magic, magic circle against law, obscure object, prayer.*
- 4th level** — *discern lies, freedom of movement, greater magic weapon, tongues.*

The Justicars prefer to strike in stealth, with minimal harm brought to innocents. Nevertheless, their devotion to justice is so great that they will sometimes undertake missions that require more overt action on their part. A Justicar's client knows that an assignment has been completed by the appearance of an iron shod wooden staff in his home or residence. Like the Justicar himself, it appears mysteriously and without warning. No other sign is given — except the eventual announcement of the wrongdoer's "punishment" at the hands of mysterious assailants. After that, the Justicar disappears into the night until needed again.

CONTACTING THE JUSTICARS

Because most nations — even good-aligned ones — consider the Justicars dangerous fanatics, contracting their unique services can prove difficult. The cult of Racksen may be suppressed throughout the world, but it remains strong enough to maintain a small presence in most major population centers. Popular belief holds that someone seeking the Justicars must stand outside a law court (or other legal center) at midnight, grasping an iron shod wooden staff in the left hand. If this secret sign is employed for one hour (no more, no less), the Justicars will make themselves known to the person.

Exactly how they make contact varies from story to story. Some tales have it that a cloaked figure will appear at one's doorstep shortly after the secret sign has been made. Others claim that a note will mysteriously appear, indicating a secluded meeting place to discuss the matter in question. Still other stories make additional claims. In point of fact, most of these tales bear some semblance of the truth. The Justicars, after all, do not believe in a "one size fits all" approach to justice, as it is antithetical to their





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NEW DEITY:

Raeksen the Just

Alignment: Chaotic Good

Domains: Destruction, Good, and Protection

Typical Worshipers: The Justicars

Description: Raeksen (*rayk-sun*) is the god of righteous vengeance and retribution. His preferred title is the Just, although his detractors call him the Mad. He is depicted as a tall, well-built older man with gray hair and a clean-shaven face, clad in blue studded leather armor and brandishing a staff in his left hand. His symbol is a scale, representing his concern for justice above all else. Raeksen fights against evil and oppressive laws, as well as those that stifle justice in the name of order. Consequently, he often clashes with even good-aligned deities, which is why his cult has suffered almost universal persecution over the centuries. Raeksen's preference for justice over law has given his cult a loose structure; his followers believe uniformity leads naturally to oppression. His favored weapon is the quarterstaff.

The Art of Justice

The Justicars do not believe there is a single punishment suitable for every otherwise unpunished crime. Nevertheless, there are certain tendencies in their application of "true justice," which this table reveals. Most operate according to ironic or poetic principles, so that the players and GM can easily create other variations if desired.

| Crime | Possible Justicar Responses |
|---|--|
| Crimes of Lust (adultery, etc.) | Revelation of the affair, or removal of the object of desire |
| Crimes of Greed (theft, hoarding, etc.) | Returning the stolen objects, or stealing hoarded objects |
| Crimes Done in Anger | Justicars punish such crimes more cruelly |
| Crimes of Bad Faith (lies, breaking one's word, etc.) | Justicars punish through trickery and deception |
| Crimes of Violence (murder, rape, etc.) | Assassination, mutilation, or torture |

entire philosophy. Consequently, the sect makes contact with its would-be clients in whatever way it deems best for the situation at hand.

However contact is established, it eventually leads to a face-to-face meeting with a single Justicar. At this meeting, the Justicar asks his potential client to explain why he seeks the service of Raeksen's chosen. If the Justicar is satisfied with the answer given, he will tentatively accept the assignment. During the next three days, the Justicar uses his considerable skills in gathering information to investigate the matter under consideration. He also prays over the matter, asking Raeksen for guidance. If, at the end of this period, he remains convinced that a genuine injustice has taken place, he will undertake the assignment and punish the person responsible for perpetrating this misdeed. If, however, he is unconvinced, he simply does not undertake the mission and never returns to the person who summoned him.

ORGANIZATION

The sect is paranoid in the extreme and its members will do nothing to compromise their fellows. Consequently, the Justicars employ a three-person cell structure, each member of which knows but a single member of another cell. This keeps each cell in contact with three others, while at the same time limiting the potential for the sect to be compromised by authorities wishing to undermine it.

Contact with other Justicar cells is vital to the success of its holy mission, as many missions will require resources that may be unavailable to any given cell. Yet, because no Justicar will ever turn down a mission in which a genuine injustice may be righted, this organization allows the cult to bring to bear whatever forces are needed.



INITIATION

Becoming a Justicar is a difficult process. For starters, an individual must be a victim of a grave injustice, one that the law failed to rectify — or even tacitly condoned. Then, the individual must demonstrate the wherewithal and motivation to correct the law's oversight by eliminating the person responsible for the injustice. The Justicars believe that anyone who acts in such a way has the "hand of Raeksen" upon them and has favor in the god's sight.

Cells always have at least one senior member who has been in the cult for more than three years, in order to ensure continuity of its traditions and methods. When a cell loses one of its members, the senior Justicar will search for an individual who has achieved a victory against injustice. The Justicar will then watch him, looking for evidence that he possesses the necessary skills of a warrior, investigator, and assassin. He then approaches the individual and asks him if he wishes to join their sect. If he refuses, the Justicars will never again contact him. If he accepts, he is initiated into the cult, becoming a member of the deficient cell.

The other two Justicars of the neophyte's cell teach him the sect's methods and skills, including prayers to Raeksen by which he may gain divine spells. Eventually, these two will make discreet inquiries of the other cell members they know; when word comes back of an "unintroduced" member from another cell, a meeting is arranged between the two initiates to complete the three-person cell structure.

Justicars prefer to wear light armor, usually studded leather in imitation of their god. Likewise, blue is a sacred color for the Justicars, who view it as the color of righteousness.

ADVENTURE SEED

REVENGE OF THE LITTLE PEOPLE

Krishnakk is a young kobold. His entire tribe, as well as his own clan, was massacred by a ruthless band of mercenaries. The inhabitants of a human town that coveted the mine the kobolds were developing in a nearby mountain range hired these heartless killers. Now, Krishnakk is an orphan and wants revenge on the mercenaries who killed everyone he'd ever known or cared about.

Unsurprisingly, he turned to the Justicars, who have agreed to take on Krishnakk's mission. In fact, the cult has sent its only kobold member, named Slishnar, to treat the mercenaries to a taste of true justice. Of course, the mercenaries have a somewhat different perspective on matters — especially since they're a band of adventurers!

This seed provides the GM with the opportunity to show how the Justicars can be as easily used against the player characters as used by them. In this particular case, Slishnar intends to kill the characters and steal their possessions so that Krishnakk can begin a new life somewhere far from the tragedy the adventurers have visited upon him.

Slishnar, Vengeful Kobold

7th-Level Kobold Fighter/2nd-Level Justicar

CR 9; SZ S (reptilian); HD 7d10 + 2d8; hp 59; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural, +6 *chainmail* +1); Atk: melee +14/+9 (1d6 + 5/crit 17-20/x3, *shortsword* +2 with Improved Critical), ranged +11/+6 (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL CN; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 10

Special Attacks and Qualities: mission bonus +1, darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, +1 save vs. Law

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) +2, Gather Information +5, Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Search +2, Sense Motive +5, Spot +2.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Critical (shortsword), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (shortsword), Weapon Specialization (shortsword).

Mission Bonus +1 (Su): bonus added to attacks against the object of his mission.

Save vs. Law +1 (Su): bonus added to all saving throws against Law Domain spells.

Possessions: *Chainmail* +1, *shortsword* +2, light crossbow, 2 *potions of healing*, 50ft. silk rope, grappling hook, 30 crossbow bolts.

LURIENT'S LEGACY

"Kings, queens and nobles; gold coin for the rich, mule trading for the poor; the outgrowth of cities where men make a living begging on the street from rich merchants who hawk whatever new gadget comes their way; evil lich sorcerers, thieves raiding villages, dragons breathing fire and attacking kingdoms; heroes slinging spells, killing dragons — and the peasants get smashed in between.

"All bull, I say. There's a better way. Where we don't get the wool pulled over our eyes by greedy merchants. A way where everyone can be proud to earn a living for themselves, not promise their working lives over to some regent high aloft in his gold-laden mansion. A way where we can look in our sons' eyes, as they grow up, and truthfully tell them — 'You can be a man.'

"But how do we do it? You say the kings, the regents, the nobility have the wealth. They have the armies, the magicians. They have the power.

"No! Stop right there. That is what they don't have. They have everything, yes, EXCEPT the power. We are their power. Without us, they're nothing. We are this system's eyes and ears; look at the scouts and guards with us here. We messengers are the system's throats, we caravan riders its feet. We builders are its arms, we craftsmen the system's fingers. The farmers, cooks, and caretakers amongst us; we are the royalty's mothers, by the gods' sake!

"We are the strength of the royalty and merchants. We did not design our current fates, but we toil for

them every day nonetheless. It's time to work for ourselves! Every drop of sweat and blood that falls to the ground should be for our sakes, not theirs! It's time to make things right!

"Let them try to stop us. We'll see who has the power."

— Lurient the Barber, two days before his death

FORMAL NAME: LURIENT'S LEGACY

NICKNAMES: THE CHAOS, WIELDERS OF ANARCHY

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: LURIENT'S LEGACY IS A MOVEMENT MADE UP OF LOOSELY-ORGANIZED CELLS DEVOTED TO EQUALING THE BALANCE OF WEALTH IN THE MONARCHIES, ENDING SENSELESS WARS BETWEEN KINGDOMS WHERE ONLY THE LOWER CLASS IS HURT, AND PROTECTING THE CITIES FROM THE ONSLAUGHT OF EVIL CREATURES PROWLING THE STREETS.

SYMBOL: THE LEGACY HAS COUNTLESS SYMBOLS THAT THEY SCRATCH ON WALLS ALL OVER THE WORLD; IT IS A SECRET CODE THAT CAN GIVE PAGES OF INFORMATION WITH JUST A FEW SCRATCHES. THE SYMBOL FOR THE GROUP ITSELF IS A SIMPLE OUTLINE OF A FIRE.

PATRON DEITY: NONE

ORIGINS

To the rich, Lurient's Legacy does not even exist; an increase in missing caravans, inaccurate paperwork in the city's records, and the occasional random fire can all be explained by many other things. Still, it is peculiar that all these happen to be on the rise for the past six months.

Think about everyone that does things for you that are important to your life. The men who build your castles and mansions, the ones that farm your fields, cut your hair, file your royal documents, keep track of your debts owed and paid, deliver messages to other kingdoms, guard your city walls. The women that take care of your children, cook your meals, sew your clothes. What if all of the people who support your existence suddenly turned against you in the most subtle of ways?

Lurient, an elderly barber, had enough of the peasant lifestyle and the way the vast majority of the population was treated. His wife was one of few that worked outside the home, and she toiled scribing tithe volumes in a regent's mansion. For years



she explained to him how much the regent, kingdom, and rest of the royalty made in gold. He figured out that if every peasant earned as much money as the kingdom got from their work, they would all have nearly a hundred times the gold they did now. This hounded Lurient for years and years as he toiled away, cutting the hair of the rich and powerful as they babbled on about their great wealth. He watched as his city and kingdom grew immensely in size, and yet the peasants lived the same life, if not a worse one, as they did when he was a lad. He watched great “adventurers” swoop in and take hordes of gold from dragon’s lairs — gold that had been stolen from the kingdom, from the hands of the poor, by the foul beasts.

Finally Lurient snapped. While cutting the hair of a particularly arrogant son of the city’s Protector of Law, his scissors interrupted the teenage boy’s assertion that he could purchase Lurient a thousand times over, and plunged four inches deep into the noble’s skull.

Lurient hid for two days, then came out in the squalid neighborhood of Crook’s Edge and made a speech to the masses to turn against the masters of the city. When he was done, he went back into hiding.

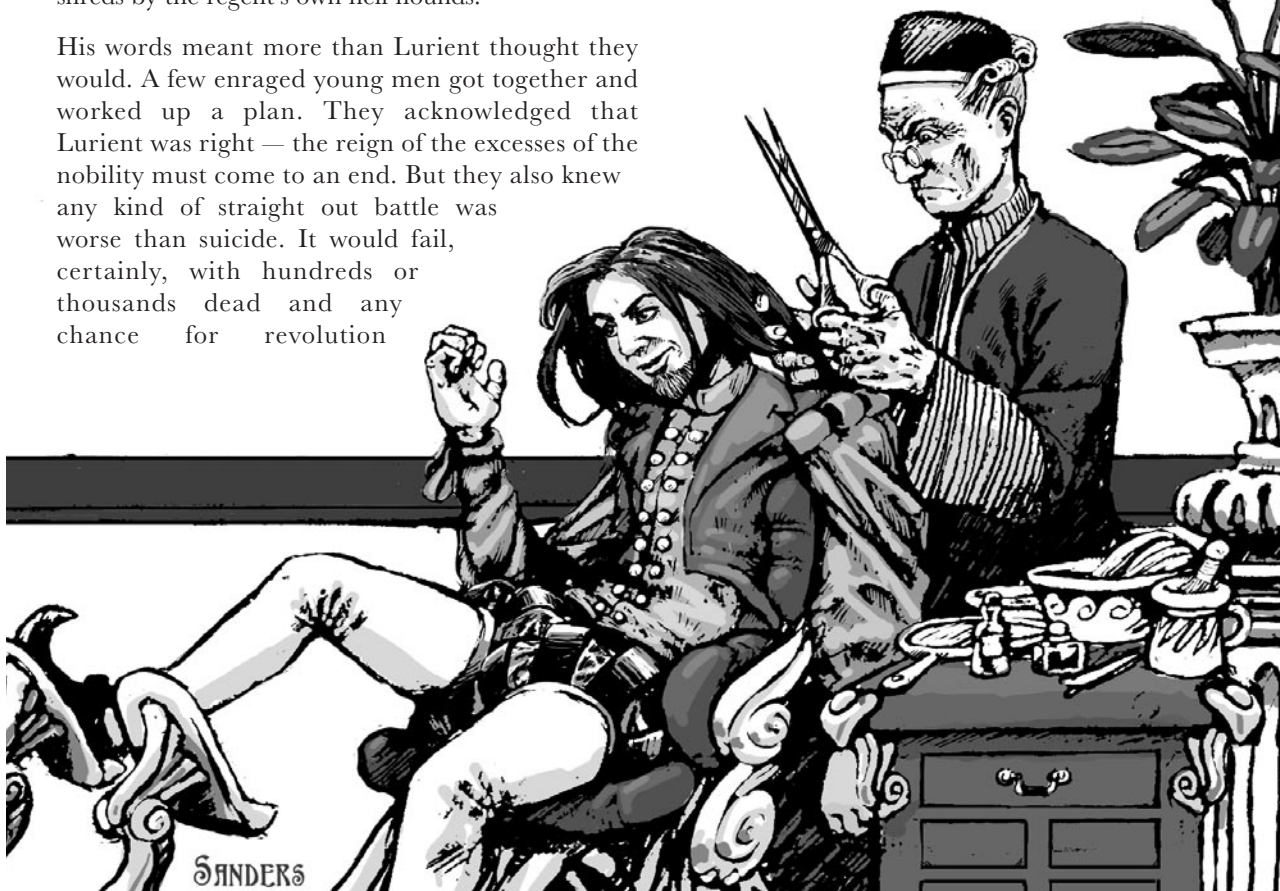
Two days later he was found and publicly ripped to shreds by the regent’s own hell hounds.

His words meant more than Lurient thought they would. A few enraged young men got together and worked up a plan. They acknowledged that Lurient was right — the reign of the excesses of the nobility must come to an end. But they also knew any kind of straight out battle was worse than suicide. It would fail, certainly, with hundreds or thousands dead and any chance for revolution

destroyed forever. They realized that Lurient had the key when he said that, save for the peasants, the nobles had nothing. So they concocted the Plan, and formed Lurient’s Legacy. Within a matter of months, before the founders could even control what was happening, secret chapters of Lurient’s Legacy formed all over the kingdom, and even across the world.

ORGANIZATION

Lurient’s Legacy is an extremely secretive (from the nobles) group that is dedicated to overthrowing the aristocracy through “covert chaos.” Members come from all walks of life, so long they are less than rich: farmers, builders, tax men, smaller merchants, guards, law men, and many many more. They commit acts of terrorism, destruction, miscalculation, and misappropriation that only their jobs could allow them to do. Lawmen frame wealthy businessmen on charges of horse molestation, farmers sprinkle alchemical dusts that destroy





Cuirlas the Miner

6th-Level Commoner/4th-Level Warrior

CR 9; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d4 + 4d8 + 10; hp 44; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk: melee +10/+5 (1d6, light hammer), ranged +8/+3 (1d6/crit x3, shortbow); Face: 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach: 5 ft.; AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14

Languages Spoken: Common, Dwarven

Skills: Alchemy +3, Bluff +3, Climb +14, Handle Animal +3, Hide +1, Innuendo +3, Intimidate +9, Jump +4, Listen +11, Move Silently +1, Profession (miner) +13, Spot +2, Swim +15, Tumble +3

Feats: Blind-Fight, Skill Focus (swim), Skill Focus (profession, miner), Skill Focus (climb), Toughness

Kravek the Herdsman

6th-Level Commoner/9th-Level Fighter

CR 14; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d4 + 8d10 + 42; hp 110; Init +4 (+4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk: melee +15/+10/+5 (1d8/1d8/crit x3, orc double axe), ranged +11/+6/+1 (1d10/crit 19-20/x2, heavy crossbow); Face: 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach: 5 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 19, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16

Languages Spoken: Common, Orc

Skills: Climb +14, Handle Animal +13, Hide +1, Jump +10, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +9, Move Silently +1, Profession (herdsman) +12, Ride +10, Spellcraft +3, Spot +5, Swim +17

Feats: Blind-fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (orc double axe), Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (swim), Trample

crops, scribes rewrite debts to show that the king owes ten thousand gold pieces to the town orphanage. These are men so entrenched in their bureaucracies, that they can devastate whole families of the aristocracy with no one the wiser.

Membership all over the world is swelling, and activities in some cells are getting extreme. Some of the laws of the original group are being broken — even the primary command that “No member of the Legacy ever kills another person, even a noble, under any circumstances.” Cuirlas, one of the founders and arguably the leader of the revolution, no longer has any ability to contain some of the rogues. He even suspects that Kravek, another founding member, may be encouraging this destruction.

IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS

CUIRLAS

A soft-spoken man quietly supporting his family through grueling mining work, Cuirlas could be the last person thought to be leading a continent-wide revolution. But when his wife and two young children were killed during the royal guards' search for Lurient, the old Cuirlas was gone. In his place was a savvy young man who could rally the peasant folk's frustration by using the only weapons they really had: information and positions that could be used to manipulate the rich. For both practical and moral reasons, he abhors the use of extreme violence to advance the Lurient cause.

Cuirlas is an expert at devising ways for peasants with even the most menial job to use their position for the good of Lurient's Legacy. He has spies at every level and area of the city — if something is happening involving any aspect of city life, he usually knows about it within minutes. He can turn garbage collectors, vegetable traders, miners, and almost anyone else into saboteurs.

He sees a place for the aristocracy, but that place isn't at the expense of everyone else. His ultimate goal sounds simple: a city where everyone profits from the work they do and justice is equal, from the powerful to the humble. The people standing in the way of that goal, however, will make it very complicated indeed.

KRAVEK

Kravek was born and raised to be a herdsman and trader, which he did for many years of his life. He was never an honest man, though, and frequently poisoned competitors' animals and dealt in outlawed goods. After he traded sickly livestock to a royal assistant, his possessions were burned and his animals slaughtered as punishment. Rage fueled the rest of his life as he honed his fighting abilities, always focusing on getting revenge. The opportunity came as Lurient's Legacy began to stir. Kravek quickly rose through the ranks and fostered the anger of the underclass and turning it to violence.

Kravek fosters the anger and fear of the peasantry and focuses it with frightening ability. He knows that groups of people commit acts that none of the individuals would do normally, and has led mobs like an military general.



In the long run, Kravek sees his mindless vengeance and violence against the rich as a mean unto itself; he can't or doesn't care to see a future beyond the chaos he loves to create. In his mind, the world has wronged him; and as punishment, the world will be brought down with him.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

A SENSE OF DUTY

The PCs are hired by the town leadership to discover the cause of a rash of arson that has plagued the local moneychanger's offices. Investigating at the scene of the fires, the PCs are attacked by a group of humans. They have far inferior weapons and abilities compared to the characters, but they attack with incredibly coordinated and intelligent tactics.

Upon more searching, or when they interrogate their attackers, the PCs find that the fires are being set by a tiny Lurient's Legacy faction of hardworking farmers. The characters find that hunting down the group is an extremely difficult task, as none of the locals seem willing to help them.

Eventually, the PCs learn that the moneychangers have been letting a spell-charmed gray render destroy the farmers' crops in order to reduce supply, increase demand, and thus line their pocketbooks. The farmers are actually dedicated to a good cause despite the damage caused by their actions.

ROGUE HAWK

The PCs arrive in their hometown after months of adventuring. After a series of oppressive tax increases aimed squarely at the city's fishermen and metalworkers, the small local cell of Lurient's Legacy has become utterly vicious, assassinating nobility left and right in 48 hours of terror. Small riots have broken out between the rich and poor in the city's trading posts. The nobles are scared and crying out for bloody vengeance. Eventually, the benevolent ruler of the city will not be able to hold the city's guard back, and a military *coup d'état* may even come to

pass. Right now, few support the Legacy's most brutal attacks, but that will change as the fighting between the upper and lower classes intensifies.

On the whole, no one trusts anyone else in the city, and half-hearted attempts to locate the Legacy have resulted in nothing. The PCs must stop Lurient's Legacy before the city's leadership declares a war on the lower class, which will inevitably destroy their own homes in the fallout. Can they accomplish this delicate task of negotiating between the rich and poor?

THE TEST

In a sprawling free city where many races and cultures rub shoulders, an underground death match circuit has started up for the amusement of the upper class. The fights force the homeless and mining slaves to engage in battles to the death, and heavy money changes hands betting on the outcomes. The matches have important fans: the mayor's second-in-command bets constantly and uses city soldiers from time to time to round up combatants.

Cuirilas, an original founder of Lurient's Legacy, has found out about these melees and arrives in town to stop them. Unfortunately, his resources here are very limited, and the first few cursory attempts at stopping the fights have ended in disaster. Knowing the PCs' reputation, Cuirilas swallows his pride and hatred for adventurers and sends word asking for the characters' help. He offers a substantial amount of money. The PCs have to stop the matches, but must do it without violating the Legacy's original founders' first law: "No member of the Legacy ever kills another person, even a noble, under any circumstances."

Little does Cuirilas know who actually started up the fights in the first place: Kravek, another original founder of Lurient's Legacy. He began the fights and betting as an easy way to funnel money from the nobles into the Legacy's coffers. He also uses it as a training ground for new Legacy members, recruiting victorious fighters into the organization. Kravek is developing a well-trained army to overthrow the nobility behind Cuirilas' back. Upon discovering this, the PCs will find out quickly that Kravek and his men have little use for the Legacy's "first law."

OPENERS OF THE WAY

The roar of voices in the inn reached a crescendo as the fair-haired man finally pushed the arm of his opponent down into the rough tabletop. Money exchanged hands, drinks were drained (and spilled), and the crowd finally began to turn to other diversions.

Nobody noticed the two robed and hooded men conversing in nervous whispers.

“... And I tell you, Alec, he is the Chosen One!”

Alec sighed. “And I insist that he is not, Verren. Did not the Prophet Anakiel tell us that the Chosen One would be ‘dark of hair, pale of skin, and quiet of demeanor?’ I saw nought of that in this man.”

Verren raised a finger. “But the Prophet Anakiel was decanonized after the Schism of False Brothers, remember? Besides ... the Prophet Gezzerdä told us that the Chosen One would ‘triumph over a giant, defeating mighty odds.’” He took a swig of his drink. “I think that pretty much says it all.”

Alec shook his head. “It wasn’t Anakiel that was decanonized, it was Alakeen. Besides, that wasn’t a giant he defeated.”

“Well, no. Not what you’d call a literal giant, no. But you know as well as I do that the scriptures are interpretive. ‘We have to be willing to look with the heart as well as the mind, if we wish to see the soul as well as the body,’ as the Prophet Vammano said.”

“Didn’t the Prophet Vammano anoint a wombat as the Chosen One?”

“That was ... a mistake, obviously. I’m telling you, this is the Chosen One right here!”

“Didn’t look like ‘mighty odds’ to me,” Alec grumbled.

“You weren’t watching close enough. I had a better view, and I’m telling you, those odds were very mighty. Haven’t seen mightier odds than that in ... a long while.”

“And what of the other words of Gezzerdä? That ‘the birds of the heavens would anoint him, and protect him, and keep him safe from harm’? We should test this man, to see if he is truly the Chosen One, as you believe.”

“Alright, fine! I tell you what — I’ll drug his drink, and then we’ll shove him off a cliff. I’m sure the birds of the air will keep him perfectly safe.”

“Deal.”

FORMAL NAME: THE OPENERS OF THE WAY

NICKNAMES: THE OPENERS ARE FREQUENTLY REFERRED TO BY SUCH COLORFUL SOBRIQUETS AS, “HEY, YOU! DUNGWIT! STOP BEGGING IN FRONT OF MY SHOP! I’VE GOT CUSTOM, HERE!” OR, PERHAPS, “STOP FOLLOWING ME, YOU LUNATIC!” HOWEVER, THE GENERAL POPULACE HAS NO ACTUAL “NAMES” FOR THEM, AS SUCH.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE OPENERS OF THE WAY HAVE SEARCHED FOR TEN THOUSAND YEARS FOR THE CHOSEN ONE, THE REINCARNATION OF A LEGENDARY CHAMPION OF GOOD WHO WILL DEFEAT THE DEMON GOLTHARA WHEN IT RISES AGAIN. UNFORTUNATELY, THEY’RE NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHO THEY’RE LOOKING FOR.

SYMBOL: A DRAWING OF A DOOR, LEFT AJAR SO THAT A SHAFT OF LIGHT SPILLS OUT FROM IT.

PATRON DEITY: THE OPENERS WORSHIP A WIDE VARIETY OF DEITIES; THERE IS NO PATRON GOD SPECIFIC TO THE GROUP. THEY TEND TO LEAN TOWARDS GODS OF GOOD AND JUSTICE, PARTICULARLY THOSE THAT ARE KNOWN TO RAISE THE DEAD.

ORIGINS

“Ten thousand years ago, the mighty demon Goltmara rose from its pit in the deepest hells, coming forth into the world to devour it. Where it stepped, all turned to ash. Where it looked, men lost their souls and became slaves to it. Where it breathed, plague and pestilence destroyed the land. But one man was not afraid. He stood against the evil, and forced it back to hell, though it destroyed him. His last words were that one day, when Goltmara rose again, he would return to save us all once more. Now we wait for this, the Chosen One.”

— the Profession of Faith
by the First Prophet Amann



The *Profession of Faith* is one of the few prophecies considered immutable gospel by all of the different sects of the Openers of the Way. According to this First Gospel, Amann was asked by the Chosen One, an enlightened warrior along the lines of a Shaolin monk or a samurai, to record his war against Golthara, knowing that he would die in battle and be reborn. Amann never bothers to explain the source of this knowledge, but later scholars have speculated endlessly, making claims from “divine insight” to “travel through time” to “we don’t need to know; we simply need to have faith.” Amann is

also noticeably lax on giving details of the final battle; however, given that his prophecies claim everyone who went within forty leagues of Golthara died of a wasting disease, it’s presumed that he was in no position to observe the battle at close range. This means that nobody alive today knows how Golthara was defeated. This doesn’t worry the faithful, though; they presume that when the Chosen One returns, he will have the information already in hand.

Prophets of the Chosen One

Here are a few sample prophets, prophecies, and interpretations to get you started; feel free, however, to come up with your own. The language of the prophecies should be as oblique and confusing as possible; using archaic language is an especially effective technique. Don’t be afraid to give prophecies that imply that a member of your party is the Chosen One; after all, they’re open to interpretation, right?

“Seven shall ride, and seven shall stand before them. Seven shall fall, and seven shall survive, and when seven and seven shall again be seven, and among the seven, the seventh shall be the Chosen One.”

— The Prophet Akalia

Possible Interpretation: The Chosen One will have to fight either as a cavalryman against infantry, or as an infantryman against cavalry; either way, he’ll be one of the survivors of the battle.

“He shall be the lowest of the low, yet exalted in spirit; his greatness shall be cloaked from us, yet in the end, we shall all see his glory full-formed.”

— The Prophet Fordyor

Possible Interpretation: The Chosen One will be lower-class, perhaps even a mercenary or a beggar, and he will have to conquer self-doubt to win his battles.

“And he shall strike the stones and bring forth a torrent of precious jewels, and he shall turn the earth into swords and armor to use against his foe when it, too, re-awakens.”

— The Prophet Morrdwyth

Possible Interpretation: The Chosen One will work in the mining and/or metalworking crafts, making weapons and armor from metal he refines from ore.

“The Gods will return him to us, and they shall return him to those they have granted their favor on before; he shall return to us at the head of a mighty host, and he shall unite the nations under his command to battle Golthara.”

— The Prophet Kneum

Possible Interpretation: The Chosen One will be a noble, perhaps a king, and will be the head of a powerful military force.

“We have to be willing to look with the heart as well as the mind, if we wish to see the soul as well as the body, for the Chosen One may be found within the depths as well as within the heights. Within him he carries hidden greatness, and as he loves all that lives, he will not harm any save those that harm him.”

— The Prophet Vammano

Possible Interpretation: The Chosen One is a wombat, a burrowing marsupial related to the koala.

“From out of the north he shall come, from the land of ice and snow, yet warm of heart he shall be, and the northmen shall know him not, shall claim him not as a brother, shall deny him until Golthara rises; yet then, they shall see him for what he is and stand behind him in the final battle.”

— The Prophet Gammenon

Possible Interpretation: The potential Chosen One will either be from a northern kingdom and an exile from a tribe, or will be from a southern, warmer kingdom and travel to the north and return.



THE OPENERS AND SOCIETY

It should be noted that the above history is the version the Openers of the Way give, and is a large source of friction with the rest of the world. The prophecies of Amann are ancient, and antedate many societies, but those that do have records of comparable age show a very low correspondence with the version he presents. There are a few points of convergence here and there, which are made much of by the Openers, but for the most part what little history there is for ten thousand years ago doesn't mention Golthara or the Chosen One. Needless to say, this doesn't deter the faithful one bit. They simply claim that their records are more accurate, having been kept by the devoted members of the Openers of the Way, and that the elves, dwarves, and more ancient human societies are just confused. This is why the word "friction" is used, although more ... unfriendly ... terms can be substituted. Adding to the problem is the fact that a few sects claim that the reason the ancient races (elves, dwarves, etc.) don't mention Golthara is because they were on his side in the war, and have hidden or destroyed the relevant texts. They preach that these races still carry this taint of evil, and can't be trusted. That doesn't go over well with the ancient races, who've had more than enough in the way of aggravation from humans without religion getting involved.

IMPORTANT MYTHS AND PROPHECIES

Obviously, the most important prophecy is that of the return of the Chosen One. However, over the course of ten thousand years, there have been nearly a hundred prophets, each one with a different set of signs by which the Chosen One can be recognized. Often, these signs directly conflict, or at the very least produce a very odd picture of their prospective savior. In addition to all that, there have been several schisms, jihads, and attempts to reorganize the prophecies over the centuries, which has resulted in the problem that almost no two Openers actually agree on which prophets are the right ones to follow. Any conversation between two members will invariably result in the quoting of different prophets in an effort to prove their point (as seen in the opening text).

GOALS

Eventually, according to the Openers of the Way, they will find the Chosen One. Perhaps he will be a child, as the Prophet Gorshak said, or perhaps he will be an adult, as the Prophet Ollim claimed. Perhaps this time he will be reborn into a woman's body, as in accordance with the scriptures of the Prophet Lia, or perhaps he will be born into another race entirely, which is what the Prophet Munios believed (and the Prophet Vammano, but we're not going to discuss the whole "wombat" angle). In any event, when the Chosen One is found, the Openers of the Way will make him (or her or it) aware of his great destiny, and train him up for the battle with Golthara. For, if the Chosen One has arrived, it is a signal that Golthara is rising once again ... and the fate of humanity will once again rest on this champion of justice.

Then again, there are Gnostic sects of the group that believe that the accounts were confused. They believe that Golthara was here to save humanity, and that the Chosen One was the evil party in that battle. They, in turn, attempt to find and destroy the Chosen One to keep Golthara safe for when he rises again. Fortunately, they rely on evidence every bit as confused as that of the mainstream Openers. There are also a few sects that believe the Chosen One has already come and gone, and that Golthara was defeated again (or never rose again). These sects believe that any new Chosen One that arrives is false, and must be destroyed for desecrating the holy memory of their savior.

ORGANIZATION

No less than three different places consider themselves to be the central authority of the sect, and there are occasional, desultory wars between the three. There are also several sects that guard the Reliquaries, hidden vaults which contain the original weapons and armor that the Chosen One used in his battles. At least, that's what they claim. There are at least fourteen Reliquaries, each one containing somewhere in the neighborhood of a half-dozen items of varying power and value. It is entirely possible that the correct combination of items is contained in one or more Reliquaries; however, adding to the problem is that the vaults are "hidden" with varying degrees of success — a few have been robbed repeatedly, while some are lost for all eternity.

OPENERS OF THE WAY

Most of the actual members of the group wander from place to place, seeking the Chosen One, preaching to the downtrodden, the young, and those that society has let slip through the cracks, all the while making a living through begging. They can be found virtually everywhere, though; since they know that anyone could be the Chosen One, they seek him out everywhere in the world.

taverns and pubs as two men get into a bloody fight over the fact that one of them has an open door drawn on his clothes while the other displays a closed door.



TRAPPINGS

The Openers of the Way dress simply, usually in cast-off robes from other monasteries. As decoration, they sometimes wear the symbol of the group somewhere on their clothing, and that only to tell other Openers that they are fellow seekers of the Chosen One. In the case of the Gnostic sects, they usually draw the door as being closed. This has lead to several interesting situations in

INITIATION

The Openers of the Way are evangelical; that is to say, a part of their religion is “bringing into the fold” new members to help in their search. Some members focus more on this duty than others, but all of them consider it vitally important to impress upon people the seriousness of their cause, and to attempt to enlist them in what they consider to be the saving of humanity. Doubtless, this has contributed greatly to their unpopularity.





The Openers hold impromptu gatherings, at which they harangue crowds with the importance of their mission. If they do find someone who is willing to believe, what follows is a period of

tutelage with the follower; they travel together searching for the Chosen One as the new member learns of the hierarchy of the church (or doesn't, depending on which sect his or her teacher follows), and memorizes the words of the prophets. This is considered a necessity for a follower of the Openers of the Way. They worry that they may catch no more than a glimpse of the Chosen One at first, and any time spent in searching through reference books might be a fatal delay in recognizing him.

Eventually, the new member of the group will split off (generally sooner rather than later, depending on how personally compatible the two are), and begin his or her own search for the Chosen One.

ADVENTURE SEED

I'M THE WHAT?

Obviously, with all of the heroic deeds PCs perform on a day-to-day basis, sooner or later they will attract the attention of the Openers of the Way. (You can use any low-level NPC of good alignment as an Opener.) They will begin to test whichever of the player characters catches their fancy, to see if he really is the Chosen One they believe him to be. (See "Testing the Chosen One," below.) The PCs will have to keep their tempers in check while dealing with these threats; after all, they're not done out of malice, right? Er ... right? The PC might try to convince the Openers that they've got the wrong person, but this will get harder with each success. The PC will have to find some way of failing ... but given that some of the tests are fatal, this might be trickier than it looks.

Some of the more unscrupulous PCs might also try to pass themselves off as the Chosen One in an effort to exploit the sect. This is possible — however, a lot of the Prophets have had strong views on what to do to false Chosen Ones. Boiling oil is usually involved. It might be fun to see the PCs' reaction when this is brought up, though.

TESTING THE CHOSEN ONE

Once the Openers of the Way have decided that a person may be the Chosen One, the most important process of all begins: The Testing. This is a series of trials that the Opener puts the putative Chosen One through, sometimes without his knowledge, that seek to show whether or not the Chosen One acts in accordance with the prophecies. There is no fixed selection of tests; after all, with over one hundred prophets to choose from, it's rare that someone has the patience to test every single one of them. On the opposite page is a sample selection of tests for GMs to use at their discretion; feel free, however, to come up with your own as you see fit. The tests should rarely be lethal (unless players start getting cocky), but can be as irritating as you want. If the Opener is asked about why he acted in a certain way, he should respond with a quote from the prophecies that roughly corresponds with the test; otherwise, there is no explanation given as to why he's doing what he's doing. Keep in mind, also, that the results of the test are open to interpretation as well — partial failures can be counted as successes, complete failures are many times counted as metaphorical successes, etc. It's a subjective process, and it is being judged by a true believer.

If you're interested in further complicating the testing process, it's worth remembering that different members of the Openers of the Way have a lot of trouble co-operating. It's entirely possible that a second member could show up, fixate on a different member of the party, and begin an entirely different set of tests ... or perhaps even pit the two potential Chosen Ones against each other in some way.

After a while, one of the PCs might get convinced that he actually is the Chosen One. You can use this as an opportunity to bring in one of the Gnostic sect members mentioned earlier, who will also test the PC to see if he is the Chosen One — but with the end plan of killing him if he is. If you want to be really sneaky, of course, you can have your first tester be Gnostic, and have him lie about being a member of the regular sect. But this should really be reserved for sneaky rats who read the GM-only material and try to show off by passing all the tests.

ENDING THE TEST

Eventually the PC will fail a test, and the various cult members will get disenchanted and leave ... maybe. Or maybe he'll keep passing tests, and the unpleasant possibility will rear its head that the Openers of the Way have the real Chosen One this time. After all, sooner or later, simply by sheer random chance, the Openers of the Way could actually be right. Why can't it be with your PCs? There's a



downside to this, needless to say — namely, that the demon Golthara will soon rise to destroy the world once more, and the brand-new Chosen One will have to figure out what the original champion did to defeat the all-powerful demon, and fast. This could involve a quest to locate the lost Reliquaries, or a journey to follow in the footsteps of the original Chosen One, or anything that you, as a GM, want to throw in there. In the end, though, when Golthara does rise, he's going to be cranky.

Stats are not given for Golthara. He can't be beaten in straight physical combat; it'll take some secret that the Chosen One possessed to beat him. Or, if you're feeling whimsical, consider that Golthara was a wuss, and the whole battle got seriously inflated through legend. Having the PCs prepare for a legendary battle with the Great Devourer, only to see something about the size of a housecat pop out of the portal to hell, is worth it just for the looks on their faces.

Sample Tests

Select one of the following to start with or roll a ten-sided die to choose. Each test is followed by an appropriate quote.

1 The Opener steals the Chosen's purse, and observes the results.

"All that he shall possess shall be taken from him, yet he shall not despair. He shall persevere, and through that shall we see his greatness."

2 The Opener puts a snake (probably not poisonous) into the Chosen's bedroll.

"And the Serpent shall rise up, yet shall he not be afraid; nay, he shall strike it down and sleep the sleep of the just."

3 The Opener draws the Chosen into a bar fight at the next tavern they stop at.

"When men turn on one another, the Chosen One shall be there, yet he shall end the fighting with the strength of his arm and the might of his words, and all shall be laid low before him."

4 The Opener pushes the Chosen One into a river.

"He shall be baptized in the rushing waters, and he shall rise up from them with fury on his face, prepared to do battle."

5 The Opener searches around the camp area for the most dangerous creature he can find.

Encampments of humanoids are popular, although big and nasty monsters are also fine. He then awakens the beast, and leads it back to the camp at a full run.

"And the faithful shall be pursued mightily, yet the Chosen One shall stand firm, saving them from all harm and rewarding them for their persecution in his name."

6 The Opener steals someone else's purse, and plants it on the Chosen One in such a way that it will be spotted.

"He shall be persecuted and accused, yet he shall be innocent, and his truthful words shall convince his accusers, and they shall embrace him as brother."

7 The Opener drugs the Chosen One's food, and observes the results.

"Aye, though he shall sleep as one dead, yet before seven days he shall awaken once more, and there shall be much rejoicing."

8 At the next town, the Opener pays a small child to kick the Chosen One in the shins, and observes the results.

"He shall be kind to those that assault him, noble to those who persecute him; the children of man shall have nothing to fear from him, though he be a warrior at heart."

9 The Opener places a small stone in the hoof of the Chosen One's horse.

"He shall heal the lame, and make them walk strongly again; he shall befriend the beasts of burden, and they shall draw labor for him, and carry him into battle until the end of ends."

10 The Opener glues the Chosen One's sword into its scabbard.

"Though he shall be beset with enemies, yet still shall he keep his sword in his sheath, and prevail through the power of his words; for the sword is the weapon of war, and though he fights for all of us, he is a man of peace."

THE ORDER OF ENDINGS

Cantor: "All Things"

Congregation: "Must come to an end."

Cantor: "The peasant who toils"

Congregation: "Must come to an end."

Cantor: "The king who rules"

Congregation: "Must come to an end."

Cantor: "The wolf that hunts"

Congregation: "Must come to an end"

Cantor: "The ox that labors"

Congregation: "Must come to an end."

Cantor: "Even the mountains and the fields"

Congregation: "Must come to an end."

All: "That they may endure forever in the Realm of Ascension."

— The Song of Calaam

BELIEFS

Calaamites believe that mortal life is merely the beginning of existence. This world exists to test the living and guide them toward everlasting strength and wisdom. All things are fleeting, only the soul endures forever. After death, every soul eventually finds its way to the netherworld. Those who die unprepared must learn the lessons they failed to master in life. Their path is difficult, and painful. They may wander for centuries before entering Calaam's realm.

In order to prepare themselves for the passage into the afterlife, Calaamites devote themselves to prayer, study, and self-denial. Many become healers or philanthropists, seeking to better themselves and ease the suffering of others. Because they spend their lives preparing for death, truly devout Calaamites can happily endure any hardship, confident that it will pass when they leave this existence.

Calaamites view the undead with a mixture of pity and loathing. Calaamite warriors may try to destroy an undead creature's body and return the soul to its proper path. Non-warriors try to avoid the undead altogether.

THE DEMARKIST HERESY

FORMAL NAME: THE ORDER OF CALAAM

NICKNAMES: CALAAMITES, THE ORDER OF ENDINGS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE ORDER OF CALAAM BELIEVES THAT THIS EXISTENCE IS MERELY A PREPARATION FOR ETERNAL LIFE IN THE NETHERWORLD. ITS RANKS CONTAIN MANY DEVOTED ALTRUISTS AND HUNTERS OF THE UNDEAD.

SYMBOL: A HUMAN FORM SUPERIMPOSED ON THE OUTLINE OF AN ANGEL.

PATRON DEITY: THE ORDER OF ENDINGS REVERES CALAAM (KAY-LAM), GATEKEEPER OF THE NETHERWORLD. HE STANDS AT THE EDGE OF LIFE AND DEATH, WELCOMING SOULS TO THEIR AFTERLIFE. HE ALSO SERVES AS THE GUARDIAN OF THE GATE. ONCE A SOUL PASSES HIS STATION, IT MAY NEVER RETURN TO TROUBLE THE LIVING.

The DeMarkist Heresy began with the infamous Calaamite scholar, Tamel DeMark. She preached that all things were ephemeral, even the "immortal" souls of sentient beings. Souls that died in the netherworld passed on to an even higher level of existence, she reasoned; the cycle of life, death and ascension continued for eternity.

DeMark claimed that even the Lord of Endings must one day die and leave his

post unguarded. The dead would pass freely between the earth and the netherworld until a new Lord of Endings ascended. Although the identity of the new deity is uncertain, DeMark and most of her followers believed that he would come from the ranks of the Order of Endings.

Unlike the majority of Calaamites, followers of Tamel DeMark are not satisfied to pass gently into the next existence. They seek to achieve godhood by living exemplary lives in the service of the Lord of Endings. Some particularly zealous DeMarkists have tried to surpass their competitors by "sending extra souls to the netherworld" or even trying to capture or slay the Lord of Endings himself. The actions of these twisted worshipers have led to the



NEW DEITY:
Calaam, Lord of Endings

Alignment: Lawful Good

Domains: Law, Good, Endings (see “New Domain: Endings,” page 58)

Typical Followers: Altruists, healers, hunters of the undead, those who are suffering, and those who fear death.

Description: The Gatekeeper of the Netherworld, Calaam stands in the gap between life and death. He guides the newly dead to their resting place in the netherworld and holds back souls who wish to return as undead. He is a rather aloof deity, content to perform his own duties without meddling in the affairs of the living. Although his followers believe that Calaam was once a mortal who ascended to divinity, nothing is known about his life on the prime material plane. Calaam is not a warlike deity. He favors weapons that can serve dual purposes specifically staves and axes. When used by a follower of Calaam, spells and magic items which tamper with death have some restrictions. See the “New Domain: Endings” insert on page 58.

NEW POISON:
Makk’ut Poison

Type: Ingested DC 20

Initial Damage: 2d6 Con

Secondary Damage: 1d6 Con per minute

Price: 100 gp

Makk’ut poison is the usual means of “passage into the netherworld” in the Calaamite Rite of Ending. It is quick, painless, and nearly always effective. Although it works well in the Rite of Ending, Makk’ut poison makes a poor weapon or method of assassination. In order to receive a full dose, small characters must drink a quart of the poison, medium-sized characters must ingest one and a half quarts, and large creatures must take in an entire half-gallon. The taste is intensely bitter, but the poison’s numbing effects deaden the taste buds after the first swallow. Those who ingest Makk’ut poison as part of the Rite of Ending fail their saving throws automatically.

The victim continues to lose 1d6 Constitution score points every minute until he dies or makes a successful saving throw.

banning of DeMarkists by the Order and many local governments. Because they operate under constant fear of discovery, DeMarkists are usually skilled at subterfuge and conspiracy.

ORGANIZATION

The Calaamite Order is a mixture of large churches and small missions or charity organizations. Most churches meet in cathedral-like buildings heavily laden with somber decoration and religious trappings. The missions are much smaller and more humble. You may liken them to the soup kitchens, disease clinics, and rescue missions of our modern world. Most of their wealth and effort goes to helping the community. Larger churches may send money to assist the missions, but they have no controlling authority.

THE RITE OF ENDING

Sometimes a person’s suffering is so great, whether from sickness, injury or personal loss, that he wishes to end his own life. Such unhappy people can petition the Order of Calaam for a Rite of Ending. If the Order accepts, the Petitioner must spend three nights in the temple, meditating and making peace with his life. He may not have contact with the outside world during this period, but he is free to leave and end the ritual at any time. If at the end of three days his resolve is still strong, the Order “guides him to the netherworld,” usually with a dose of quick poison followed by a brief ritual to insure the passage is permanent (See *true passage* insert on page 58). Characters who end their lives in this fashion are beyond resurrection, reincarnation, or rebirth as an undead creature.



NEW DOMAIN:

Endings

Deity: Calaam

Granted Power: Clerics of the Endings Domain cast Endings spells at +1 caster level.

Endings Domain Spells

- 1 **Detect Undead.** Reveals undead within 60 feet.
- 2 **Consecrate.** Fills an area with positive energy, weakening the undead.
- 3 **Halt Undead.** Immobilizes undead for 1 round/level.
- 4 **Death Ward.** Grants immunity to death spells and effects.
- 5 **Hallow.** Designates a location as holy.
- 6 **Interment (New Spell).** Destroys 2 HD/level undead.
- 7 **Holy Word.** Kills, paralyzes, or weakens non-good subjects.
- 8 **Holy Aura.** +4 AC, +4 resistance and SR 25 against evil spells.
- 9 **True Passage (New Spell).** Prevents resurrection, reincarnation and reanimation.

Limitations

Because death is sacred to Calaamite clerics, they will never use magic that unnaturally prolongs life, raises the dead, or creates undead creatures. This includes the following spells and magic items. Note that this is not an exhaustive list. The GM may restrict any spell or item that violates the ban.

Spells: *animate dead, contact other plane*, control undead, create undead, create greater undead, raise dead, resurrection, true resurrection, reincarnation, miracle**, speak with dead*, wish***

Magic Items: *ring of regeneration, ring of wishes**

- * The GM may wish to allow this spell in special circumstances, like helping a lost soul find its way to the netherworld. There is no prohibition against contact with non-afterlife realms, such as the elemental planes.
- ** only when used to raise the dead, etc.

NEW SPELLS:

Spells of Endings

Interment

Abjuration

Level: Cleric 6, Endings 6

Casting Time: 1 action

Components: V, S, DF

Range: Close (25 ft. + 2 ft./levels)

Targets: One or more undead creature, all of which must be within a 30 foot diameter sphere

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Interment forces undead souls to abandon their bodies and resume their journey to the netherworld. You may inter up to 2 HD of undead creatures per caster level. When casting Interment, your character must present his holy symbol, as if he were attempting to turn or rebuke the undead. The bodies of interred creatures are quickly absorbed back into the earth while their souls are freed to continue their journey to the netherworld.

You may boost the potency of this spell by using additional holy objects, such as holy water, censers of incense or relics sacred to your deity, in its casting. For each additional item, you gain +1 to overcome the target's spell resistance and +2 to the saving throw's DC. The maximum bonus you may

receive in this fashion is +3 to your check to overcome spell resistance and +6 to the save's DC. Holy water and other single-use items are consumed during casting.

True Passage

Necromancy

Level: Endings 9

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

The *true passage* spell speeds a soul's trip to the netherworld. Once the spell is successfully cast the target is truly dead and cannot be resurrected, reincarnated, or reborn as an undead creature. Naturally, this spell can only be cast on dead targets; living creatures experience no effects. *True passage* has the same effect on an undead creature as a beheading or a stake through the heart.

Material Component: A vial of holy water, which is poured over the target's lips during the casting.



NEW FEATS:

Feats of Calaam

Eyes of Calaam [Special]

Prerequisites: Wis 13+, limited to clerics and paladins of Calaam

Benefits: Your faith in the Lord of Endings allows you to spot even the most insidious undead. You may use appropriate divination spells, such as *true seeing* or *detect undead*, to detect resurrected or reincarnated characters.

Special: The stench of undeath sickens followers of Calaam. You may not hire or associate with resurrected or reincarnated characters.

Fists of Calaam [Special]

Prerequisite: Eyes of Calaam, 3rd Level

Benefits: You may turn and smite (paladins only) resurrected and reincarnated characters as if they were evil undead monsters.

Wrath of Calaam [Special]

Prerequisites: Fists of Calaam, 6th Level

Benefits: Level permitting, you may cast any undead-influencing or undead-damaging spell upon resurrected or reincarnated characters.

NEW MAGICAL WEAPON:

Weapons of True Slaying

Weapons of true slaying are intended to speed their victims' trip to the netherworld. Creatures who receive a killing blow from these weapons may not be resurrected, reincarnated, or returned to life by any means, nor return as undead creatures of any kind, as in the spell *true passage* (see page 58). *Weapons of true slaying* deal double damage to all undead creatures. Any weapon type can be a *weapon of true slaying*. They have a bonus of +3.

Caster Level: 17th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *true passage*; *Market Price:* 170,560 gp; *Cost to Create:* 22,935 gp + 26,810 XP.

MEMBERSHIP & INITIATION

Most Calaamites come from the poorer members of society. To those that live in constant toil, the lure of Calaam's netherworld is very strong. The Order is also very strong in areas where there is great danger from plague, famine, or war. Healers in these locales find that Calaam's promise of eternal life is comforting to those on the verge of death.

Paladins who enter the service of Calaam often become hunters of the undead. Many actually pity their quarry, viewing them as lost souls who must be returned to their proper path. Every undead creature is a cause for sorrow. This has earned them popular nicknames like "Weeping Warriors" or "Swords of Sorrow." They are often equipped with a *weapon of true slaying* +3 (see above).

PCs may join the Order of Endings by pledging to better themselves and prepare for the next existence. The Order will expect them to renounce most of their non-essential goods and devote considerable effort to charity and altruism. Reckless or prodigal characters will be tolerated but will not rise very far in the Order's confidence.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

OLD FRIENDS, NEW ENEMIES

As often happens in fantasy roleplaying games, one of the PCs falls in battle and must be resurrected. The resurrected character attracts the attention of a renowned Calaamite paladin and hunter of the undead. The paladin hunts the PC relentlessly until either he or his quarry is destroyed.

In addition to the usual warlike tactics of a paladin, the hunter embarks on a campaign of propaganda and character assassination. Allies of the hunter post broadsheets depicting the PCs as abominations and necromancers. Calaamite zealots denounce them from the pulpit. The PCs quickly find themselves with a reputation for trafficking with the undead. They may have considerable trouble finding assistance or employment in many good-aligned towns.

This adventure will work best if you introduce the paladin early on, well before the resurrection. He may be



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

an ally or a mentor to a young band of adventurers. If the PCs develop a real fondness for him as a friend, then his betrayal will have a far greater impact.

DEATH IS DEAD

The DeMarkist heresy proves true and the Lord of Endings has passed away. Undead souls swarm into the world of living while his post is left unguarded. DeMarkist conspiracies clash openly as their leaders try to ascend into godhood.

The PCs must defend the countryside from a hoard of undead monsters while they search for a new Lord of Endings. When they discover that the new deity-to-be is an unassuming rural healer, they must protect him from harm until he can ascend to his new position. This can only happen when the cleric takes the Rite of Ending in the region's Calaamite temple.

For an added twist you may want to have one or more DeMarkist conspiracies attack the PCs directly. They assume that one of the PCs is the most likely candidate for Lord of Endings, and they believe they must eliminate the PC in order to achieve their own ascension. The heretics will try to hinder or enlist the PCs in their play for power.

The PC may even come to believe that he is the heir to a god and try to take the Rite of Ending himself. Unless you want to run a campaign that includes a divinely omnipotent PC, this should be a mistaken assumption.

NO REGRETS

A wealthy merchant or aristocrat hires the PCs to “rescue” her son from the temple of Calaam. Her son has recently disappeared and she has heard rumors that the temple has just accepted a petitioner for the Rite of Ending. The PCs must enter the temple and remove the merchant's son either by kidnapping him or convincing him to come peacefully. Since the Order forbids contact during the three-day meditation period, getting to their target may be difficult. It may also earn the PCs a powerful enemy.

If the GM wants to throw in an additional complication, the PCs can reach the petitioner and discover that it's not the merchant's son. Perhaps their target was really kidnapped or is off on a three-day bender. This may extend the mystery or send the PCs off on an entirely different adventure.



THE REBORN

The captain sat at his desk, staring at a map of the city and idly cleaning his nails with the tip of his dagger. The situation with the Black Hands had been escalating over the past few weeks, and he needed a major victory if he was to maintain the favor of the duke. Luckily, such an opportunity had just presented itself. A captured member of the Hand had revealed the location of the guild's stronghold. Tonight, a troop of his best men would put an end to the Hands once and for all.

"I'm afraid that's not going to happen, captain," said an odd, coarse voice just behind his head. He jumped to his feet and drew his sword — or tried to, only to find that a preternatural numbness had spread across his body. A large black bird was watching him, its head cocked to one side. "Don't worry," it said, and its odd voice was strangely soothing. "We know what's best for you. We'll take care of you. And we'll help you make all your decisions from now on."

The words filled him with a warm glow. What luck, to have such a wise advisor to guide him! What a wondrous creature this was! As he gazed at the bird in rapt adoration, he managed to marshal his fading doubts into one last question — "But ... do I still serve the duke?"

Quoth the raven, "Never more."

ORIGIN AND MYTHS

All life is of the wild, and all life is of the cycle. Seasons flow, children grow, predators feed on the sickly and the old. And so it has been since the beginning of time, and so the balance has been

maintained. But the people have grown away from the wild. They have forgotten the cycle, forgotten their place in the world. And so we were formed — spirits of nature who would pass through the life of man and then return. The druid and the wolf patrol the wilderness. It is our duty to guide the people from within their cities, to bring them back to the cycle and to

prevent any further upset of the balance.

— the words of the Great Bear

The story of the Reborn begins with the Great Bear. His birth name is lost, but it is known that in his first life he was a druid of considerable power. It is said that he sacrificed himself in a lonely grove in the deep woods, hoping with his death to atone for the indignities the local baron had inflicted upon the wild. According to legend, he was returned to life on the spot — but in the form of a mighty bear and with

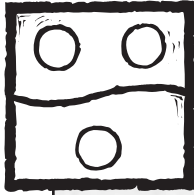
FORMAL NAME: THE REBORN

NICKNAMES: NONE. THE REBORN IS A SECRET SOCIETY AND FEW OUTSIDE OF THEIR MEMBERS KNOW OF THEIR EXISTENCE.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE REBORN IS AN ALLIANCE OF HUMANIDS THAT HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO ANIMAL FORM. THE MEMBERS OF THE REBORN BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE SPIRITS OF NATURE THAT HAVE PASSED THROUGH HUMAN EXISTENCE IN ORDER TO LEARN ITS WAYS. THEY SEEK TO MAINTAIN A BALANCE BETWEEN NATURE AND HUMANITY BY MANIPULATING CIVILIZATION FROM WITHIN. BY CULTIVATING THEIR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE, MEMBERS OF THE REBORN CAN GAIN A VARIETY OF MYSTICAL POWERS; SUCH INDIVIDUALS ARE CALLED TOTEMS, AND THEY ARE THE LEADERS OF THE CULT.

SYMBOL: THE SYMBOL OF THE REBORN IS A SLIGHTLY WAVY LINE WITH TWO SPOTS ABOVE AND ONE BELOW. THIS IS BOTH AN ABSTRACTION OF A PAIR OF SCALES — REPRESENTING THE REBORN'S GOAL OF MAINTAINING BALANCE — AND A MOLE TRACK.

PATRON DEITY: THE REBORN WORSHIP NATURE, BUT IN AN ABSTRACT SENSE. THEY BELIEVE IN THE CONCEPT OF "THE WILD" AS A FORCE THAT ACTS UPON THE WORLD — AS THE FORCE THAT HAS SENT THEM FORTH — BUT NOT AS AN ANTHROPOMORPHIC DEITY. THE MIGHTIEST TOTEMS, LIKE THE GREAT BEAR, ARE ABLE TO CONTACT THE WILD THROUGH TRANCE, BUT THIS IS A TRANSCENDENT EXPERIENCE AND IT CANNOT BE QUESTIONED LIKE HUMANOID GODS.



NEW DEITY: The Wild

Alignment: Neutral

Domains: Animal, Plant, Earth

Typical Worshipers: All of the Reborn revere the Wild, as do the Unborn druids associated with the cult. Virtually all of the priests of the Wild are clerics who changed their allegiance to the Wild upon their rebirth into animal form; however, there may be a few humans who are drawn to the philosophy of the balance.

Description: The Wild is not an anthropomorphic deity; rather, it is a primal force that is expressed throughout nature. Its worshippers believe that the Wild flows through them, and that they are charged to act as its hands to maintain the balance between nature and civilization. The symbol of the Wild is a circle of thorns, and priests use a collar or bracelet of thorns as their holy focus.

If a Reborn follower of the Wild takes the Animal domain, they gain the ability to cast *Claim Thrall* instead of *Animal Friendship*. Priests of the Wild can turn undead and drop spells to spontaneously cast healing magic. The favored weapons of the Wild are claws, horns, and teeth.

knowledge of his destiny and purpose. Perhaps the legend is true, or perhaps a comrade of the druid was responsible for the reincarnation. Regardless, the Bear was the first Totem leader of the Reborn. And the baron in question has been a changed man. People often speak of his love for his animals ... “a slavish devotion,” some say. And this is quite close to the truth.

The reincarnation of the Great Bear occurred nearly ten years ago. Over the last decade he has traveled the land recruiting followers — others who have lived as humans and humanoids only to become animals. The creed of the Reborn is that such individuals have primal souls — that they are spirits of nature tasked to live through a human life in order to gain a closer bond with humanity before resuming their natural forms. The circumstances and nature of the change do not matter; in the eyes of the Bear, there is no difference between an adventurer reincarnated as a wolf and a sailor transformed into a pig. The change is a sign of destiny. The subject must reach within to find his true spirit and to release his inner potential — which is represented by attaining the first level of the Totem prestige class, on page 68.

The Reborn is a young cult and does not have elaborate myths or legends. Its members do not worship anthropomorphic gods. The one figure they all revere is the Great Bear, who most see as a messiah who “speaks with the voice of the Wild.” They see nature as an all-encompassing force; life flows from it in birth and returns to it in death. But while their beliefs are simple, members of the Reborn are usually fanatical in their devotion to the group. For most, the transition from human to animal was a traumatic and demeaning experience. The Great Bear has used his immense charisma to convince these people that what has happened to them was a blessing instead of a curse, that

they are in essence divine creatures with a holy mission — and the powers of the Totems lend credence to these claims. This combination has struck a powerful chord in the hearts of the Reborn, and most are ready to lay down their lives for the cult on a moment’s notice. After all, if you’ve died once already, what’s a second time?

GOALS

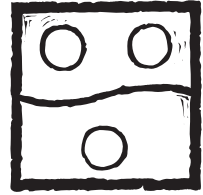
A monkey scampered along the clammy sewer. Her sensitive nose wrinkled in distaste as she dodged a pool of waste. Eventually she reached the chamber where the Great Bear sat in meditation. She rubbed her hands together, uncertain whether to disturb the first of the Reborn, but the bear’s eyes were already open. She gave a quick account of her manipulations of the thieves’ guild and its recent activities in the city.

“You have done well, little one,” the bear rumbled. His voice ran through her like a gentle breeze, dispelling the squalor of the surroundings. “I will send word to Othar. I think the city guard may be in the area when the Black Hands break into house Lorain.”

“I don’t understand, great one,” the monkey said. “If you want to hurt the guild, why not reveal all of their plans to the guard? The strike on the armory is far more important to the Hands than the manor raid. And the guard will suffer for it.”

“You are correct — you do not understand.” The bear glanced at a map of the city scratched out on the floor. “It is not our place to rule these people. What we do here is to restore the balance that they have lost with their careful planning and their cunning tools. We create conflict to thin the herd, not to destroy it.”

THE REBORN

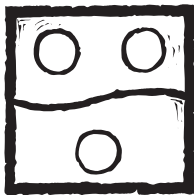


The Reborn see themselves as shepherds of humanity (and the other humanoid races).

Druids are the guardians of wilderness — humans with power over animals and an understanding of the natural world. The Reborn are the reverse side of this coin. They are animals with power over people, spirits with an understanding of the human world. Over the last few years they have been spreading across the land, using their mystical abilities to gain power. Reborn Totems hold many critical individuals in their thrall, and can influence guilds and multiple levels of different governments. However, they make surprisingly little use of this power. As noted above, the goal of the Reborn is not to rule the world. They seek to return “balance” to civilization — weakening groups that have become too powerful and ensuring that “predators” exist to control growth. This may result in the creation of conflicts where none existed before, or the exposure of secret plans. Trade routes may be upset. But these struggles will rarely result in the complete overthrow of a government or group — instead, they will weaken a targeted organization until it has no advantage over its foes. This serves the secondary goal of the Reborn, which is to limit the spread of civilization and its impact on the wild. For the most part the Reborn will let druids and their animal companions deal with those who directly harm the wilderness. The Totems seek to contain civilization itself, both by directly controlling city planners and by creating internal conflicts that weaken states and reduce population.

What does this mean for PCs? A few things. The Reborn spend much of their time gathering information, both for use in blackmail (as there are times when a secret can be more powerful than any spell) and in order to know how and when to effectively exercise their power. Characters that





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develop friendly relations with the Reborn could gain access to a great deal of useful data. Of course, if the Reborn pass information to the characters, this probably serves some purpose

of the Totems — the players will simply end up acting as the hand of the cult in a scheme whose ultimate purpose is beyond the scope of their vision. If the players are not working with the Reborn, the actions of the conspiracy may impact groups that they are allied with — guilds or noble patrons may suffer mysterious setbacks that can be traced to the Reborn, or a Totem may try to enthrall a patron of the characters. The goals of the Reborn should be mysterious, as they never seem to follow up on an attack — but the feuds and chaos that they stir up can certainly make life interesting for the characters.

ORGANIZATION

At this point the Reborn are spread over a fairly wide area. Their activities are concentrated in centers of civilization. A particular piece of territory will have a recognized coordinator. These individuals are charismatic and powerful Totems who guide the actions of the other operatives in the region and report the results of these activities to the Great Bear via *sending*.

Totems are the mystics and leaders of the Reborn, but there are many members of the cult who are not Totems. The second tier of the conspiracy is made up of other non-humanoids — transformed humans who have yet to attain the status of Totem, *awakened* animals, and familiars that have outlived their human masters. These creatures help to gather information and provide military support for the cult. The bottom tier is composed of the humanoid members of the Reborn. For the most part, these are thralls — humans enchanted by the mystical powers of the Totems; they know little or nothing of the Reborn and simply serve their individual masters. However, there is a small sect of druids who believe in the divine nature of the Reborn. These holy men voluntarily abandon the wilds to serve as the hands and voices of their animal lords. These “Unborn” believe that they themselves are natural spirits awaiting their own rebirth. They serve the cult with fanatical loyalty, believing that death will simply be the first step in attaining their greater destiny.

Needless to say, the true power of the Reborn lies with their thralls. A player may be caught up in a scheme of the Reborn without ever meeting a Totem or even a thrall. After all, once you have the guildmaster of the Black Hands in your power, you have the entire guild to work with ...

Note that reincarnated animals can speak the languages that they could speak in their humanoid life, but that this ability does not extend to humans who have been transformed by malign spells. However, any character that becomes a Totem gains the ability to speak, as the process of becoming a Totem involves reincarnation.

TRAPPINGS

The Reborn are a secretive group, and as most of their members are non-human, there are few trappings to identify them. All animals are sensitive to the *cloak of nature* effect that surrounds a Totem (see page 69), which allows the cult leaders to be identified. Totems can instinctually recognize a thrall or a druid. Humans who wish to be identified — like members of the Unborn — may wear the balance symbol of the Reborn on their person. Bear in mind, however, that many thralls have no idea that they are part of the conspiracy; they believe that their actions are their own ideas and it would not occur to them that they have “allies” or need to wear some sort of symbol. See *claim thrall* on page 67.

RITUALS

Just as they have a simple structure of beliefs, the Reborn have few formal rituals. Joining the Reborn is a relatively simple affair. One must be a transformed humanoid or a druid. A Totem using magical means to sense the applicant’s sincerity will explain the philosophy of the Reborn and ask the following questions:

- “Will you preserve our secrecy?”
- “Will you seek to seek to attain your true spiritual form?”
- “Will you help us guide the civilized races back to the balance of the cycle?”

If the character passes the test, he is welcomed into the order. A druid would most likely be assigned an animal companion to work with, while a transformed humanoid would be given a Totem contact. This contact would help to guide the character on the path to becoming a Totem, and would also provide assignments.

The one major ceremony of the Reborn is the Ritual of Rebirth, the process through which a transformed humanoid becomes a Totem. The ceremony must take place when the initiate is qualified to gain a new class

level. She must then go through a period of fasting and sacred cleansing. After this period is complete she is brought to a secluded place, along with the other Totems of the region. The initiate is bathed in water, and the presiding Totem asks the following:

“You are a spirit made flesh, sent into this world to learn its ways and guide it to the proper path. You have lived two lives already. Are you ready to move beyond these lives and to assume your final role? Have you learned all that you must learn?”

If the initiate concurs, she is slain in as quick and painless a manner as possible, and then *reincarnated* by the presiding Totem. It is the GM’s choice whether to have the character keep the same form, assume a new form selected at random from the revised table on page 70, or whether to allow the player to select her new form from this list. When she arises, the character gains her first level in the Totem prestige class (see page 68). Of course, the character must also meet the conditions of the Totem class — otherwise, the ritual fails and the character simply dies.

IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS

The most important characters in the hierarchy of the Reborn are the Totem coordinators. However, these characters may be too powerful for low-level players to interact with directly. This section provides a cross-section of the Reborn: the Great Bear, leader of the Reborn and most powerful of the Totems; Nandi the monkey, a mid-level Totem; and Akara, a lower-level Reborn enforcer. The statistics that are provided here are for the characters in their natural forms; a character that shifts form, such as a were-creature, should receive appropriate statistic modifiers.

THE GREAT BEAR

The Great Bear is the ultimate leader of the Reborn. While he travels occasionally to meet new recruits and to provide inspiration to those in need, he spends most of his time in a network of tunnels beneath a major city, coordinating activities through the use of his magic.

The Bear’s natural form is that of a large grizzly bear. The cloak of nature (see page 69) will typically translate this into an enormous, hairy man, with long brown hair and dark clothing. His charisma is like a palpable force

The Great Bear

10th-Level Druid/10th-Level Totem

CR 20; SZ L (magical beast); HD 10d6 + 10d8 + 100; 190 hp; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk*: melee +23/+23 (1d8+9, claws) and melee +13 (2d8+4, bite); Face 5 ft. X 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +19, Ref +7, Will +19; Str 28, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 12, Wis 20, Cha 25

* The Great Bear uses the rules for natural weapons.

Special Qualities: damage reduction 20/+3, improved grab, scent, trackless step, woodland stride, venom immunity, cloak of nature

Skills: Animal Empathy +27, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +25, Heal +15, Intimidation +20, Intuit Direction +15, Listen +10, Sense Motive +20, Spot +11, Swim +15, Wilderness Lore +15

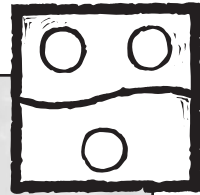
Feats: Leadership, Nature Sense, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (enchantment), Still Spell, Subtle Charm, A Thousand Furs (see page 71)

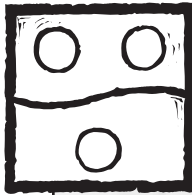
that surrounds him; his voice is deep and rumbling, but has a gentle undercurrent that soothes listeners. He dislikes unnecessary violence, and will try to resolve unexpected encounters diplomatically. However, he is as unforgiving as nature itself, and if he believes that a person or organization must be taken down in order to maintain the balance he will strike without mercy — even if this means killing or betraying a friend.

While he prefers to coordinate events and let others — preferable human pawns — do the fighting, the Great Bear is a force to be reckoned with on the field of battle. His physical powers are impressive; mundane weapons are all but useless against him, he shrugs off minor spells with ease, and his claws strike with tremendous power. Added to this are the combined magics of druid and Totem. In battle, he will use magic at range — striking opponents with flame or plagues of insects, or dominating the minds of his foes — and then charge into battle with claw and tooth.

NANDI THE MONKEY

Nandi was a halfling thief until she misjudged the wards of the sorcerer whose tower she was “visiting”; after that, she spent a rather tedious year as a toad. Eventually the Great Bear found her, and in the Ritual of Rebirth she found her true form: that of a cunning monkey. She has since enthralled the master of a local thieves’ guild, and this influence has been an invaluable tool to the Reborn. She is still a capable burglar in her own right, if a situation





Nandi the Monkey

5th-Level Rogue/5th-Level Totem

CR 10; SZ S (magical beast); HD 10d6; 40 hp; Init +10 (+6 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 size, +6 Dex); Atk: melee +3 (1d3-3, bite), ranged +12 (1d4/crit 19-20/x2, hand crossbow); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +11, Will +6; Str 6, Dex 22, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 16

Special Attacks and Qualities: damage reduction, cloak of nature, sneak attack +3d6, evasion, uncanny dodge

Skills: Appraise +3, Balance +20, Climb +15, Disarm Device +13, Hide +15, Innuendo +5, Jump +15, Listen +10, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +13, Pick Pocket +15, Search +10, Spot +10, Tumble +15

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Thrall Master, Subtle Charm

In combat, Nandi will either flee or transform into a carnivorous ape. This change gives her physical stats of Str 20, Dex 18, Con 20, an AC of 18, +50 HP, and allows her to attack with two claws at +11 (1d6+5 damage) and bite at +2 (1d6+2 damage). Occasionally she will carry a hand crossbow.

requires her personal attention. And her possession of hands makes her a valuable rarity among the Reborn.

Nandi's natural form is that of a primate with a long prehensile tail, similar to a large spider monkey — she is about the size of a halfling child, though her build is far lighter. She is capable of bipedal motion but is more comfortable moving on all fours. Her fur is golden brown and she has black markings around her brown eyes. The cloak of nature often causes people to see her as a cat or raccoon, although those that are comfortable with the idea may simply assume that she has escaped from an organ-grinder; in fact, one of the Unborn occasionally plays the role of an itinerant organ-grinder to get Nandi into certain locations.

AKARA THE WOLVERINE

A barbarian warrior from a mountainous region, Akara fell in battle against a troop of civilized mercenaries. A tribal shaman called her back to life, but in the end her village was destroyed and all of her



people were massacred. Akara does not fully grasp the philosophy of the Reborn, but she considers the Great Bear to be some sort of minor deity and serves him with fanatical devotion. She takes great pleasure in slaughtering civilized people, and can be overzealous in carrying out orders; as a result, she is usually used as a bodyguard and only sent on offensive missions when absolutely necessary.

Akara is a large wolverine with dark brown fur. As she is not a Totem, she does not have the cloak of nature to conceal her appearance. As a result, she tends to stick to shadows and back streets. She speaks common in a deep growl, but she cannot read.

Akara the Wolverine

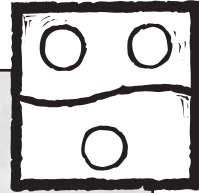
4th-Level Barbarian

CR 4; SZ M (magical beast); HD 4d12 + 24; 55 hp; Init +4; Spd 40 ft., burrow 10 ft., climb 10 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural); Atk*: melee +10/+10 (1d4+6, claws) and melee +3 (1d6+3, bite); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ rage 2/day, uncanny dodge; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 22, Dex 19, Con 22, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 7

* Akara uses the rules for natural weapons.

Skills: Climb +23, Hide +9, Intimidate +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +3

Feats: Power Attack, Cleave



NEW SPELLS:

Totemic Spells

Shape of the spirit and *claim thrall* are unique to the Totem prestige class (see page 68).

Claim Thrall

Enchantment

Level: Totem 1

Components: Verbal

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 feet + 5 feet/2 levels)

Target: One humanoid

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This is the tool that gives the Reborn their power over civilization. It is similar in nature to the spell *animal friendship*; it allows a Totem to win the loyalty of a number of humans or humanoids, whose combined character levels or hit dice cannot be more than twice the user's Totem levels. Like *animal friendship*, it can only be used if the Totem has pure intentions towards the target; the Totem cannot place a person in thrall and then send her to her death. Of course, "pure intentions" means taking proper care of the thrall, much like a good master caring for a pet — there is nothing to prevent the caster from abusing the thrall's position or connections.

Once gained, the target's allegiance is natural and lasting — the magical act is gaining the target's devotion, not maintaining it. Enthralled characters feel a tremendous sense of awe and loyalty towards their animal master. They will obey most orders without question, believing that the Totem possesses wisdom they do not. They will also act to protect their master from harm. However, if the Totem ever knowingly orders the thrall to commit a suicidal act, the effect is broken. Otherwise the only way to break the control is if the Totem physically mistreats the thrall, if the thrall and Totem are separated for a period of several months, or through the use of a *wish*, *limited wish*, or *miracle*. A Totem can dismiss a thrall, but he must wait at least a week before taking a

new one. During this time, the thrall's memories will slowly clear and she may start to question her past actions. For this reason, most thralls don't live for very long after being abandoned by their masters ...

Claim thrall can be a dangerous spell. While its basic functionality is identical to *animal friendship*, the ability to permanently claim the loyalty of an NPC can have devastating effects on a carefully planned plot. As such, GMs may require that it can be used by players if enthralling the target will clearly advance the goals of the Reborn — that it is a divine gift, and should be used sparingly. Another option is to give the spell an experience point cost of 250 points times the target's level at the time the spell is cast.

Shape of the Spirit

Transmutation

Level: Totem 2

Components: None

Casting Time: 1 action

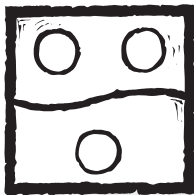
Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 hour

This spell is similar to a druid's *wild shape* power. It can be used to change shape to another creature within the same genus as the Totem's natural form, so a wolf could change into a dog or a black bear could change into a grizzly bear. The effect lasts for one hour, although the caster can change back to his natural form at any point as a free action. While in the new form, the Totem possesses all of its abilities and weaknesses. The maximum size of the new shape is limited by the Totem's level, as indicated below:

- 1st Level — The Totem can assume the form of a small or medium animal.
- 5th Level — The Totem can assume the form of a large or tiny animal.
- 9th — The Totem can assume the form of a dire animal.



NEW PRESTIGE CLASS:

Totem

The first change is the catalyst that prepares you for the next, which readies you to reclaim your heritage. Your birth into human flesh was merely a stage, a time to learn the ways of that world. You have already moved closer to your true nature. Now it is time to embrace it completely. For you are not a creature of flesh. You are an idea made solid, a spirit granted dominion over the world that you might guide it back to the cycle. When you realize this — when you are reborn for the final time — you will have joined the ranks of the Totems.

— the words of the Great Bear

To progress in the Reborn, a member must go through the Ritual of Rebirth — in which the subject dies and is reborn yet again. A character that completes the ritual is changed by it. She returns as a champion of the wild, a mystical guardian with magic flowing through her veins. Such characters are called *Totems*, and they are the vanguard of the Reborn.

Being a Totem has two primary advantages. A Totem has access to a range of magical powers, most of which allow her to affect the minds of others. In addition, as a Totem grows in strength she becomes a mystical creature. Over time, she becomes immune to physical injury and other troubles of the flesh. In exchange the character will be called upon to act as a hand of the Reborn, taking the forefront in the struggle to maintain the balance between humanity and nature.

Like the monk or paladin, developing the abilities of a Totem requires singular devotion. If a character with Totem levels ever chooses to advance in another class, she loses the ability to progress any further as a Totem. And if the character were somehow to return to life as a human, all Totem special abilities and spells would be lost.

Hit Die: d6.

Requirements

A character does not have to have any particular skills or abilities to become a Totem. However, he must fulfill the following criteria:

- He must be a human or humanoid that has been transformed into an animal form.
- He must be committed to the ideals of the Reborn. This requires him to be neutral in alignment.
- He must go through the Ritual of Rebirth, as described on page 64.

Class Skills

The Totem's class skills are Animal Empathy, Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Diplomacy, Healing, Intuit Direction, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, Swim, and Wilderness Lore.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier

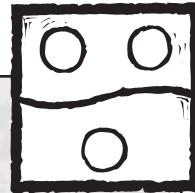
Class Features

All of the following are class features of a Totem.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The Totem class has no inherent armor or weapon proficiencies, although a Totem will retain the proficiencies it has due to its other classes. In theory, Totems with armor proficiencies could wear specially designed armor, such as barding. However, this is an unnatural act. It causes constant discomfort to the Totem — double the skill penalties of the armor — and prevents the wearer from using any sort of Totemic magic. Further, the cloak of nature does not

CLASS TABLE: TOTEM

| Class Level | Base Attack | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special | Spells Per Day | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|--|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th |
| 1 st | +0 | +2 | +0 | +2 | cloak of nature, divine health, fixed form | 0 | — | — | — | — |
| 2 nd | +1 | +3 | +0 | +3 | damage reduction 3/+1, universal speech | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| 3 rd | +2 | +3 | +1 | +3 | damage reduction 5/+1 | 2 | 0 | — | — | — |
| 4 th | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | damage reduction 7/+1 | 2 | 1 | — | — | — |
| 5 th | +3 | +4 | +1 | +4 | damage reduction 7/+2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | — | — |
| 6 th | +4 | +5 | +2 | +5 | damage reduction 9/+2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | — | — |
| 7 th | +5 | +5 | +2 | +5 | damage reduction 12/+2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | — |
| 8 th | +6/+1 | +6 | +2 | +6 | damage reduction 15/+2, cloak of majesty | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | — |
| 9 th | +6/+1 | +6 | +3 | +6 | damage reduction 15/+3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 10 th | +7/+2 | +7 | +3 | +7 | damage reduction 20/+3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |



conceal the fact that the character is wearing armor, which makes it much more likely that the Totem will draw attention to himself.

Spells: Due to their spiritual nature and connection to the wild, Totems have access to a variety of special powers. These are treated as divine spells, with a few exceptions described in detail at the end of the spell list. All Totem spells vary from normal divine spells in that they do not require somatic or material components, including a divine focus; the Totem itself is the focus of the spell.

While they use divine magic, Totems cast spells as bards or sorcerers do. They have access to a list of spells, can cast a certain number of spells per day — shown on the table below, with bonus spells based on the Totem's Charisma — and they select the spell at the time of casting. Unlike sorcerers or bards, Totems do not learn new lower-level spells as they go up in level; when they gain the ability to cast spells of a particular level, they gain access to all of the spells in that range.

To use a spell, a Totem must have a Charisma score of 10 + the spell's level. The Difficulty Class for saving against Totemic magic is 10 + the spell's level + the Totem's charisma modifier.

Cloak of Nature (Su): Often times, the natural form of one of the Reborn is ill-suited to an urban environment ... people tend to react strongly when bears and wolves prowl their streets. However, once the creature becomes a Totem, she is gifted with a supernatural ability that helps to overcome this obstacle — an aura that soothes the fears of casual observers and identifies the Totem to her allies. This power causes most observers to see the Totem as a creature that they would expect to see in the surrounding environment. When possible, this will be a creature similar to the actual nature of the Totem — a wolf might become a dog, while a raven could be a crow. When this is impossible, the cloak will make the next best leap — a bear, for example, might be an extremely large, smelly, hairy man. Note that the Totem has no control over his appearance as caused by the cloak, and does not know exactly what observers are seeing when it is in effect. If the Totem interacts with an observer or if an observer specifically says that he is looking at the Totem, that person gets a will saving throw with a difficulty of 10 + the Totem's charisma modifier; if he is successful, he sees through the illusion. The effect is also cancelled if the Totem takes any sort of hostile action against the observer, or if the observer is using the spell *true sight* or a similar effect.

The cloak does not affect animals, druids, or thralls of the Reborn. Instead, such beings will generally be inclined to view the Totem in a positive light. A Totem receives a +10 social interaction modifier when attempting to improve the attitude of such creatures, with an additional +10 if the subject is a natural animal of the same basic form as the Totem.

Divine Health (Ex): As a mystical creature, a Totem is immune to all diseases, including lycanthropy. As a note, a lycanthrope that somehow became a Totem would be cured of the disease during the Ritual of Rebirth.

Fixed Form (Ex): The form a Totem possesses after the Ritual of Rebirth is completed is his true identity and cannot be altered. The character is completely immune to any form of hostile shape shifting such as *polymorph other*. The character can use shapeshifting magic on himself, but only to change into another creature within the basic genus of his natural form — a wolf could use *polymorph self* to turn into a dog, but not to turn into a monkey. Further, any such voluntary change will wear off within one hour, regardless of the method used to make the transformation. Finally, if the character is ever *reincarnated*, he will always return in the same form.

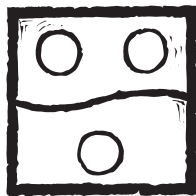
Damage Reduction (Su): As a Totem advances in level, it becomes less a creature of flesh and more a being of pure spirit. This is reflected by an increasing immunity to physical attacks. Blades cannot pierce the hide of a Totem, and the force of a blow simply dissipates when it strikes the creature. This has the bonus effect of allowing the Totem to strike other creatures normally only hit by magical weapons. As soon as a Totem has any level of damage reduction, it is considered to be a magical beast.

Universal Speech (Sp): A Totem can speak with animals and with any intelligent creature. This effect is similar to the spell *tongues*, but it is beyond the control of the Totem; when the Totem speaks, all listeners hear the words as if they are being spoken in the preferred language of the listener. This does not help the Totem understand written languages.

Cloak of Majesty (Su): Totems were created to control humans and humanoids. As a Totem increases in power, it begins to exude an aura of subconscious control over those around it — a cloak that prevents humanoids from taking hostile actions against the Totem. This is a supernatural ability that is similar to the spell *sanctuary*. A humanoid must make a Will save against a Difficulty of 15 + the Totem's Charisma modifier to engage in hostile actions against the Totem. The character receives a +5 to this roll if he has been personally attacked by the Totem in the past, and the effect is broken completely if the Totem engages in hostile actions against the character. Bystanders must still save in order to assist a comrade, although they receive a +5 if they can see a friend being attacked.

Totemic Spells

The following section provides the list of spells that Totems can make use of. For the most part Totemic magic involves mental domination — the assertion of the Totem's primal dominance over other minds. However, there are also a few other feats that can be



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performed, such as minor shapeshifting and healing. Spells marked with an asterisk (*) either function in a different manner than is standard or are unique to the Totem class. These variations are explained after the spell list.

1st Level — *calm animal, calm emotions, charm person or animal, claim thrall*, cure light wounds*, magic fang**

2nd Level — *detect thoughts, dominate animal, hold person, greater magic fang*, shape of the spirit*, suggestion*

3rd Level — *cure moderate wounds*, discern lies, emotion, fear, lesser geas, sending**

4th Level — *awaken, commune with nature*, dominate person, geas/quest, mass suggestion, reincarnate**

5th Level — *cure serious wounds, demand, insect plague, insanity, mass charm*

Spell Modifications

Cure light wounds, cure moderate wounds, and cure serious wounds require the Totem to lick the injured location. If the injury (or injuries) are covered by armor, the spell cannot be used.

Magic fang and *greater magic fang* are self-only spells; the caster shifts shape slightly to increase the power of her attacks. For purposes of *greater magic fang*, add five to the caster's effective level. So a 4th-level Totem would gain a +3 bonus from the spell.

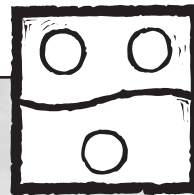
Commune with nature can be used in civilized settings. Buildings show up clearly, and it can be used to gain a sense of sewers and other man-made tunnels just as if they were natural caves.

Sending allows the user and target to make one twenty-five word exchange per caster level. The spell expires after one minute per caster level, regardless of how much information has been exchanged.

Reincarnate uses a modified table when used in the Ritual of Rebirth. This is provided below:

TOTEM REINCARNATION TABLE

| d% | Incarnation | Str | Dex | Con | d% | Incarnation | Str | Dex | Con |
|-------|--------------|-----|-----|-----|--------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 01-02 | Ape | +10 | +4 | +3 | 49-51 | Leopard | +6 | +8 | +4 |
| 03-06 | Baboon | +4 | +3 | +2 | 52-55 | Lion | +10 | +6 | +4 |
| 07-08 | Badger | +4 | +8 | +4 | 56-57 | Lizard, giant | +6 | +4 | +6 |
| 09-10 | Bat | -8 | +5 | 0 | 58-59 | Monkey, tiny | -7 | +6 | 0 |
| 11-12 | Bat, dire | +6 | +10 | +6 | 60-62 | Monkey, medium | -5 | +6 | 0 |
| 13-16 | Bear, black | +8 | +2 | +4 | 63-64 | Mule | +5 | +2 | +6 |
| 17-19 | Bear, brown | +15 | +2 | +8 | 65-66 | Owl | -4 | +6 | 0 |
| 20-22 | Boar | +4 | 0 | +6 | 67-68 | Rat | -8 | +5 | 0 |
| 23-24 | Cat | -7 | +6 | 0 | 69-71 | Rat, dire | 0 | +6 | +2 |
| 25-26 | Cheetah | +5 | +8 | +4 | 72-73 | Raven | -7 | +4 | 0 |
| 27-28 | Crocodile | +8 | +1 | +6 | 74-75 | Snake, constrictor | +6 | +6 | +2 |
| 29-30 | Crow | -9 | +4 | 0 | 76-77 | Snake, viper | -4 | +6 | +1 |
| 31-32 | Dog | +2 | +6 | 0 | 78-80 | Tiger | +12 | +4 | +6 |
| 33-35 | Dog, riding | +4 | +4 | +4 | 81-82 | Toad | -9 | +1 | +1 |
| 36-37 | Donkey | 0 | +2 | +1 | 83-84 | Weasel | -7 | +4 | 0 |
| 38-40 | Eagle | 0 | +4 | +2 | 85-86 | Weasel, dire | +3 | +8 | 0 |
| 41-42 | Hawk | -4 | +6 | 0 | 87-91 | Wolf | +2 | +4 | +4 |
| 43-44 | Horse, light | +4 | +2 | +5 | 92-93 | Wolverine | +10 | +8 | +8 |
| 45-46 | Horse, heavy | +7 | +2 | +6 | 94-100 | Other | ? | ? | ? |
| 47-48 | Hummingbird | -11 | +10 | 0 | | | | | |



NEW FEATS: Totemic Feats

These feats can only be taken by a Totem of the Reborn.

Thrall Master [Special]

Prerequisites: Totem, Charisma 15+

Benefit: This feat allows a Totem to control a greater number of human servants. When using the spell *claim thrall*, the character maintain control of up to four times her level in combined character hit dice or levels as thralls. This also increases the difficulty of the *claim thrall* saving throw to 16 + the Totem's Charisma modifier.

Subtle Charm [Special]

Prerequisites: Totem, Charisma 15+

Benefit: A Totem with this feat is particularly skilled at manipulating the minds of others. This enhances the effect of any enchantment spell cast by the character. It does not actually increase the power of the spell, but it prevents the target from noticing that a spell has been cast. If the spell succeeds, the effect will seem very natural to the target. More importantly, if it fails, the target will not receive the usual sensations that warn him that a spell was just cast. This is a matter of finesse as opposed to metamagic enhancement, so it does not cause a spell to take up a higher-level spell slot.

Nature Sense [Special]

Prerequisites: Totem

Benefit: This is similar to the druidic ability of the same name, but it has a few additional features. A Totem with this feat can identify the true nature of any sort of transformed animal, including a lycanthrope in animal form or a *polymorphed* being. The character can recognize lycanthropes even in human form by making a Spot check against a DC of 20. Finally, the character will automatically recognize and see through any sort of illusion of a natural animal.

A Thousand Furs [Special]

Prerequisites: Totem

Benefit: A Totem with this ability can shapeshift at will in order to make cosmetic changes within his natural form. This is similar to the spell *alter self*, but the user must still remain close to the species of his natural form. So a wolf could disguise himself as a large dog, but not as a duck or as a wolf with wings. Changes made with this ability do not affect the character's statistics in any way.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

As they prefer to work through pawns rather than to tackle problems directly, the Reborn can be excellent patrons for a group of characters. A Reborn contact can provide characters with valuable information or advance warning about enemy plans. And since the Reborn are only concerned with maintaining balance, they are just as likely to help an evil party as a good one. Of course, if the adventurers become too powerful, the Reborn may feel a need to cut them down to size ...

MAN'S BEST FRIEND?

Dolin stretched out by the fire. "Don't worry, we'll figure out a way to get him out tomorrow when there's more light."

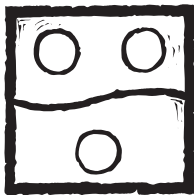
"I suppose." Carina sighed and unrolled her bedroll. "Stupid halfling. Is Luca going to take first watch again?"

The dwarf nodded and turned to his wolf companion. He murmured softly to her. "Look out for strangers, Luca. Wake me when the moon is high."

The wolf watched closely until both were asleep. Then she trotted to the edge of the clearing and gave a low howl.

An owl landed in a tree and stared at the wolf. It listened patiently to her growls, and then swiveled its head thoughtfully. "So little Timmony's fallen down the well and can't get out? Excellent. All goes according to plan."

Any animal associated with the party — a horse, riding dog, or the animal companion of a druid or ranger — could be an agent of the Reborn. Such a beast could be a full-fledged transformed human, or merely touched by the *awaken* spell. There are a number of ways to handle this. If the players have an open relationship with the Reborn, the animal



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could be their contact with the cult — Totems could communicate with the animal via *sending*, and the animal could pass information along to the party. If the players do not know about the Reborn, then the spy might influence the party's actions in subtle ways in order to guide them on a course of action that serves the interests of the Totems — bolting down a particular path, unexpectedly attacking a stranger, making noise that spoils a stealthy approach, and so on.

CHANGE OF HEART

"Somethin's not right," Gunnar grumbled. "We must have a spy in our midst — there's no reason the guard should've been at the Lorain place last night."

Jazelle nodded. "True enough. And it is strange enough that Mistress Tara seems unconcerned about

it. But now she has called off our strike against the Grayknives, when we know they are weak and unable to defend themselves. They will never be this vulnerable again — why do we not strike?"

"Somethin' must have happened to Tara. I don't know what. Maybe one of the Grayknives has a hold on her. Whatever it is, she ain't tellin' us up front — so you're going to have to find out on your own."

If any player character is a member of a guild or similar organization, he is called upon to investigate sudden changes in the guildmaster's behavior ... changes due to the enthralling influence of a Reborn Totem. It should not be easy to unravel the mystery; the Reborn are clever, and *claim thrall* does not leave a magical footprint after it has been cast. Even if the Totem is exposed, the PCs will have to figure out how to protect the guild from Reborn reprisals.



SHEPHERDS OF THE ROOT

“Look at the misery you see about you. Nation wars with nation. The poor grovel for scraps at the feet of the mighty. Man casually turns his back on his fellows. Civilization breeds fundamentally selfish creatures. They consume. They destroy. The Lady’s Children are content to live in the loving embrace of their mother. She provides for them. The trees need never beg. The flowers never turn against each other. Join us, and let her show you a better way.”

— A Traveling Devotee
of the Lady Syllisia

ORIGINS

“Civilization is a pox on the natural order! The world was a happy place before the gods meddled in our affairs. Cities and kingdoms arose only to build bigger temples to the gods and offer up larger sacrifices. The gods let us have the secrets of civilization only because they knew that they would corrupt us and render us all miserable, selfish creatures. They lord over us like greedy nobles, forcing us to work and die for their amusement. Only Syllisia truly cares for the creatures of the earth. She confronted the gods for their selfish actions. Their hearts could not bear the burden of guilt she forced them to bear, so they chose to imprison her and silence her forever. But the gods underestimated the power of Syllisia. Over the centuries, she reached out with her roots and broke out onto the surface of the world. This is how she found us, and taught us this same story that I have told you. And if you should choose to join us, I will teach you the same magics she taught us so that one day we may all return to days of peace and plenty. We are small in number, but not in power.”

— A Cleric of the Shepherds

The Shepherds of the Root are an ardent corps of druids, clerics, and other believers who revere Syllisia, the Lady of the Conquering Root. The Shepherds believe that organized society severs mankind from its natural condition. Primitive savagery is the ultimate form of existence, one that all animals may someday return to if they can deny the shackles of their current, imperfect form. The group pursues this goal by waging a subtle war against cities, kingdoms, and other large-scale settlements. Once the cult has forced humanity to revert to savagery, it can then go about re-educating individuals, and will eventually lead them to the natural paradise that the Lady Syllisia provides.

FORMAL NAME: THE SHEPHERDS OF THE ROOT

NICKNAMES: LEAF-EATERS, GREEN SCOURGE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE SHEPHERDS OF THE ROOT PLOT TO TOPPLE CIVILIZATION AND USHER IN A GOLDEN AGE OF PRIMITIVE ENLIGHTENMENT.

SYMBOL: A TOWER WITH A GREEN ROOT WRAPPED AROUND IT.

PATRON DEITY: THE SHEPHERDS WORSHIP SYLLISIA, LADY OF THE CONQUERING ROOT.

GOALS

The Shepherds work to destroy the artificial constraints and limits that organized societies impose on intelligent beings. The Shepherds believe that large-scale social organizations drive a fundamental wedge between intelligent creatures and the natural world. To counteract the influence of society, the Shepherds work to destroy cities, kingdoms, and other political units. Often, the Shepherds wage a campaign of guerilla war and terrorism, hatching plots to disrupt trade, to deface civic monuments and other important buildings, and to assassinate important political and social figures.

While working in civilized territories, the Shepherds disguise their true nature. Many of them adopt the garb of traveling pilgrims or mercenary warriors. Cult ceremonial garb usually consists of crude robes woven from the fibers of plant roots and coarse cotton.



NEW DEITY:

Syllisia, Lady of the Conquering Root

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Domains: Destruction, Earth, and Plant

Typical Worshipers: Shepherds of the Root

Description: Syllisia appears as a great tree that grows at the heart of the world. Her roots and branches extend like a massive web through the interior of the planet, breaking out to the surface at a few points that are highly revered by her subjects. Syllisia stands against the trappings of civilization and supports those who favor a simpler, more primitive existence. She also favors those who tend for plants and live in harmony with nature, especially those who aggressively defend virgin regions from the depredations of civilized men. The club is Syllisia's weapon of choice, and her symbol is that of the Shepherds of the Root: a crumbling tower embraced by a green root.

Clerics of Syllisia may be chaotic neutral, chaotic evil, or neutral evil. Each cleric of Syllisia must choose two of Syllisia's three domains. Many of the Shepherds' spiritual leaders are single or multi-classed druids.





Shepherd Alignment

The vast majority of Shepherds are chaotic neutral. While the cult espouses destruction and murder as valid tactics, most members see them as necessary evils. On the other hand, the cult is far from benevolent. Rather, most members do not worry about questions of good or evil. They are only concerned with serving Syllisia and returning civilization to a better form. Chaotic evil Shepherds do exist in moderate numbers. Many of them belong to the more militant faction of the Shepherds. These cultists believe that mankind and other intelligent humanoid species are largely a lost cause for which final destruction is the only solution.

ORGANIZATION

The Shepherds of the Root are organized along a hierarchical cell structure. The Shepherds maintain a few isolated, hidden monasteries at the locations where Syllisia's roots are said to break through the surface of the world. The roots themselves are plants that grow on ground consecrated to the goddess; they are a physical representation of the goddess and the center of many cult rituals and rites. These plants produce the seeds necessary to create the Children of the Root described on page 77. Most of these places are heavily defended and strongly fortified, as the Shepherds have made many enemies over the years of their existence. The cult's highest-ranking members typically dwell within these monasteries and work to coordinate and advise the Shepherds, who operate over a wide distance around the monastery. Shepherds working away from a monastery are organized into small cells, many of whom know little of the larger group's plans and membership beyond their own small team. These cells are given general plans of operation but are left to decide on the particulars of their activities for themselves.

Monasteries are often cunningly constructed. Since most of them are built upon ground held sacred by the Shepherds, they are defended with a fanatic abandon. Also, the influence of Syllisia's physical presence often grants the fortress itself strange qualities. Many scholars believe that the monastery structures are themselves very large, intelligent plants that can rearrange themselves to aid their inhabitants or squash intruders. The few battles fought over these sites have always been extremely hard-fought and bloody, leaving few to doubt such claims. The monasteries appear to be wooden, but closer inspection reveals that the structure is carved from what looks like a single block of wood. Hacking at the walls causes thick sap to flow from the wounds, and digging at the base uncovers a

dense network of living roots that prevents any attempts to tunnel under the structure. The upper stories of the monastery are choked with vines, and in the event of an attack these plants animate and lash out at enemies, toppling siege ladders and plucking attackers from the walls and tossing them to their doom. Hordes of the spawn of Syllisia lurk beneath the ground near the monastery, swarming from the soil to ambush and kill intruders. Few thieves have penetrated a monastery and lived to tell the tale. The Shepherds can speak with the living plant that constitutes the structure, and the thing quickly reports any intruders.

The Shepherds rely on the aid of aggressive plant creatures, whether they serve willingly or through the use of manipulative spells. The cult often uses assassin vines and shambling mounds as allies, and common rumor has it that a cadre of chaotic evil treants also works with the Shepherds. These creatures are considered the equals of the Shepherds and are not looked at as mascots or mere tools. In addition, the cult has a process for "liberating" creatures from the shackles of their animal form and creating a more proper, plant-based body for them. The results of this process fill out the rest of the Shepherds' ranks. (See more on this under "Children of the Root," page 77.)

PROPHECIES

The Shepherds of the Root maintain few prophecies within their order. While the cult pursues two goals that most likely will not see completion within any member's lifetime, the Shepherds place a great emphasis on actions and plans made in the here and now. The personal contact that many high-ranking Shepherds have with Syllisia and her accessibility to the flock tends to lend the Shepherds the hope and resilience that prophecies usually lend to the faithful in other cults. One prophecy that does crop up quite frequently amongst the Shepherds concerns the appearance of a



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leader who will guide them to ultimate victory. While the particulars of the prophecy differ wildly from one faction to the next and often change over time, the basics of the story remain the same. The prophecy teaches that the Shepherds' best hope for realizing their aims lies in one who actively opposes the cult's goals. When this person is exposed to the glory of Syllisia she will change her ways and side with the cult, using the influence and power she built before her conversion to help topple a mighty kingdom. The gender, age, and other details of this figure change with each telling of the story.

NEW CURSED ITEM: *Seed of Syllisia*

This rather large seed of the Syllisia root is implanted in a subject's chest during his initiation into the Shepherds of the Root. It takes 24 hours for the seed to have its full effect; the process is reversed with a *cure serious wounds* spell if cast before 12 hours pass from the time the seed was implanted. After that, it can be reversed with *heal* until the first day is over, and a *wish* spell any time after that first 24 hours. Cutting the seed out of a Shepherd without magical aid will kill him. A *diminish plants* spell doubles the transformation time to 48 hours, while *plant growth* cuts it to 12 hours. The seed gives the following special qualities to the host character:

True Believer (Ex): The subject must make a Will save versus DC 20 when first implanted with the seed of Syllisia. If he fails, he becomes a true believer in the Lady Syllisia, and devoted follower of the tenets of the Shepherds of the Root. If he makes the roll, he must make the same check once every day afterward until he fails it.

Tendrils of the Root (Ex): The seed's root network spreads throughout the new Shepherd, toughening his body by reinforcing muscle and bone with its woody tendrils. This growth also makes the cultist less flexible and agile. The seed increases Strength and Constitution ability scores by 2 each while reducing Dexterity by 2.

Favored of Syllisia (Su): The new Shepherd is imbued with a supernatural affinity with all intelligent plant life as a result of having Syllisia's divine blessing upon him. The character gains +4 on all social interaction skill checks (for example, Diplomacy and Bluff) that involve intelligent plant creatures.

Nature's Ire (Ex): When the Shepherd dies, the spawn springs forth from his body and attacks the closest enemy. If none are near, the spawn burrows into the nearest patch of soil and waits to ambush any passers-by (see Spawn of Syllisia on page 79).

Caster Level: 13th level (naturally occurring);
Prerequisites: NA (naturally occurring); **Market Price:** 10,000 gp; **Weight:** 4 oz.





NEW MONSTER TEMPLATE: *Child of the Root*

“Child of the Root” is a template that can be added to any Corporal Aberration, Animal, Beast, Dragon, Giant, Humanoid, Magical Beast, or Monstrous Humanoid of non-Plant origin. Beasts or Animals with this template become Magical Beasts, and they as well as other creatures gain the secondary creature type Plant one week after the change begins. A Child of the Root uses the original creature’s statistics and abilities, except as modified below.

The actual process of creating a Child of the Root requires an incapacitated subject. In game terms, the creature must be paralyzed or unconscious (at or below 0 hit points), or under the effect of some disabling magic spell, such as *hold person*, for 24 hours after a seed of Syllisia is implanted in his body. Once the process has begun it takes 24 hours for the first stage to be completed, and about six months for the process to reach its full potential. After the first 24 hours, though, the Child can usually be released to do Syllisia’s bidding. As is true for initiation into the Shepherds of the Root, this process may be reversed with a *cure serious wounds* spell before the first 12 hours are up. After that time, the effect can be reversed with a *heal* spell for up to 24 hours after the implantation, and a *wish* spell after the first day is over. Cutting the seed out of the chest of a newborn Child will kill him. A *diminish plants* spell doubles the initial transformation time to 48 hours, while *plant growth* cuts it to 12 hours.

Hit Dice: Same as base creature.

Speed: Same as base creature.

AC: Same as base creature; adjust for –2 Dexterity score penalty from Enhanced Tendrils of the Root, below.

Special Attacks

A Child of the Root gains the following special combat abilities:

Mark of Syllisia (Ex): After one week from the original implantation of the seed, the Child develops this ability. The Child’s outer layer of plant material becomes a dark green color, which grants it enhanced hit points while the creature is in bright sunlight. It gains 1d12 bonus hit points when in direct sunlight for more than five minutes. These hit points disappear if it spends two hours in dusky or dark conditions. The hit points accumulated from this ability are lost before the Child’s regular hit points, and it may gain these hit points only once per day.

Grasp of Thorns (Ex): After one month has passed since the implantation of the seed, a Child of the Root may take a full action and launch a mass of thorned roots at an opponent. The roots rapidly grow from the end of the Child’s arm, swarming forth to

engulf an opponent. This is a ranged attack, and has a range of 20 feet. On a successful hit, the target is entangled in the roots and caught on the thorns. The target takes 1d6 points of damage from the thorns each round and suffers a –2 penalty to hit for melee attacks and a –4 penalty to his Dexterity score (which applies to ranged attacks). To escape, the target or someone trying to free him must make a DC 15 Strength check. However, a target that struggles to escape the thorns takes an additional 1d6 points of damage as the thorns tear at him. While the target is trapped, the Child may not move and suffers a –2 penalty to its Dexterity score and a –2 penalty to hit.

Barbed Vine (Ex/Sp): Six months after the transformation process begins, a fearsome barbed vine sprouts from the Child’s now plant-like body. The child wields the vine as a melee weapon since it is actually an appendage, and can attack targets to a maximum range of 15 feet. It acts as a whip in that it can make trip attacks (although it cannot trip the Child), and the Child gets a +2 bonus to disarm an opponent. The Child of the Root is considered proficient with this weapon and may enhance her skill with it by choosing feats such as Weapon Focus or Improved Critical. This aspect of the vine is an extraordinary ability.

Instead of the standard damage of a whip, the Barbed Vine’s thorn acts like the *vampiric touch* spell. It deals 1d6 points of damage for every two character levels the Child has, rather than caster levels as in the spell, to a maximum of 10d6. If a creature becomes a Child, use its CR. When used against a living creature, the thorn draws blood from the target on a successful hit and transfers it to the Child; the Child gains temporary hit points equal to the damage that was dealt by the vine’s attack. The Child can’t gain more than the target’s current hit points +10, which would kill its victim. These temporary hit points disappear after one hour. This aspect of the vine is actually a spell-like ability.

Special Qualities

A Child of the Root retains all the special abilities of its original form. It also gains the following:

Favored of Syllisia (Su): After the first 24 hours of the transformation is up, the new Child gains this quality, as described on page 76.

Enhanced True Believer (Ex): The subject must make a Will save vs. DC 30 when first implanted with the seed of Syllisia. If he fails, he becomes a true believer in the Lady Syllisia, and unthinking slave to the Shepherds of the Flesh. He will do whatever a Shepherd asks of him, even if it means his death. His alignment also changes to Chaotic Neutral (25% chance) or Chaotic Evil (75% chance) if he wasn’t a member of the Shepherds before the conversion. If he



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makes the roll, he must make the same check once every day afterward until he fails it.

Enhanced Tendrils of the Root (Ex): The seed's root consumes the body of the Child, giving his body the toughness of woody tendrils. This growth also makes it less flexible and agile. The seed increases Strength and Constitution ability scores by 2 each while reducing Dexterity by 2 after the first 24 hours of the change process. After one week, this bonus is boosted to +4 Strength and Constitution, and after a month is goes up to +6 Strength and Constitution. At the six-month mark, the Child reaches its full potential of +8 to its Strength and Constitution ability scores.

Plant: After one week, the Child gains the Plant secondary creature type and becomes immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and polymorphing. However, the Child retains a few of its original organs and is thus susceptible to critical hits and mind-influencing effects.

Fire Vulnerability (Ex): Beginning one week after implantation of the seed, the Child of the Root takes double damage from all fire attacks. If the attack allows a save, it takes double damage on a failed save, normal damage on a successful one.

Saves: Same as base creature, but modified by the changes caused by Enhanced Tendrils of the Root.

Abilities: Progressive bonuses to Strength and Constitution scores, and -2 to Dexterity. Otherwise, same as base creature. See Enhanced Tendrils of the Root, above.

Skills: Same as base creature.

Feats: Same as base creature.

Climate/Terrain: Any non-arctic or non-desert.

Organization: Same as base creature.

Challenge Rating: +1 after the first month, +2 after 6 months.

Treasure: Same as base creature.

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral or Chaotic Evil, or as base creature if it was a member of the Shepherds before the conversion. Non-initiates of Syllisia who undergo this treatment always do so unwillingly and are forcibly turned to the worship and reverence of Syllisia as part of the transformation process; as a result, they have a high chance of becoming Chaotic Evil (see "Enhanced True Believer," above).

Advancement: Same as base creature; Child special attacks and qualities manifest gradually over a six-month period.

INITIATION

Any would-be Shepherd must allow a spawn of Syllisia to take root within his body (see insert); because of this, the cult does not require any other shows of loyalty or trustworthiness. Typically, the Shepherds proselytize to the poor, desperate, and marginalized, especially those who live in rural areas. The Shepherds usually play upon the natural rivalry that develops between city and country dwellers, particularly if the rural poor are heavily taxed to the benefit of city dwellers.

The most important ritual amongst the Shepherds is the ceremony used to induct new cult members. A supplicant who comes before the Shepherds must ingest a magical seed plucked from one of the roots of Syllisia found in the Shepherds' monasteries. The initiate first digs a five-foot-deep hole in fertile soil and lowers himself into it. A priest then slices the initiate across the chest, places the seed within the wound, and then uses a low-level healing spell to close the gash. The Shepherds fill the hole with soil and leave the initiate to meditate overnight, placing only a thin layer over the initiate's face and mouth so that he may breathe. In the morning, the Shepherds dig up the initiate and welcome him into

the fold. By this time, the seed has taken root within the supplicant's chest and quickly grows into a spawn of Syllisia that establishes a symbiotic relationship with the new member. When the new Shepherd dies — whether of old age or in combat — the spawn bursts from his corpse and attacks any nearby enemies of non-chaotic alignment. If none are close, it takes root and lies in wait, ready to ambush any passing non-chaotic humanoids. The spawn is an intelligent creature and does not attack Shepherds, or their allies when instructed by a Shepherd with Favor of Syllisia (see insert page 76).

CHILDREN OF THE ROOT

A few selected Shepherds, and more than a few unwilling non-Shepherds, undergo the most drastic change that Syllisia can induce in a creature. This process literally strips away a creature's animal nature and leaves it with a plant-based body, wracked with pain.

Shepherd clerics implant a specially treated seed of



NEW MONSTER:
Spawn of Syllisia

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| | Medium Plant |
| Hit Dice: | 2d8+2 (11 hp) |
| Initiative: | +4 (Improved Initiative) |
| Speed: | 20 ft. |
| AC: | 14 (+4 natural) |
| Attacks: | 2 thorned vines +2 melee |
| Damage: | 1d6+1 |
| Face/Reach: | 5 ft. X 5 ft./5 ft. |
| Special Qualities: | burrow, tremorsense, detect chaos |
| Saves: | Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0 |
| Abilities: | Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 6 |
| Feats: | Improved Initiative |
| Climate/Terrain: | Any non-arctic or non-desert; usually territory of the Shepherds of the Root |
| Organization: | Solitary |
| Challenge Rating: | 1/2 |
| Treasure: | Usually none (see below) |
| Alignment: | Always chaotic neutral |
| Advancement: | 2-4 HD (Large); 5-16 HD (Huge) |

A spawn of Syllisia appears as a large, tangled mass of thorny vines. Created as a byproduct of the death of a Shepherd of the Root, these creatures often lurk in areas controlled by the Shepherds and stand guard over their lairs. A spawn is intelligent enough to tell friend from foe, using its Detect Chaos spell-like abil-

ity to identify Shepherds by their alignment; it will attack any humanoid that is not of a chaotic alignment, unless directed otherwise by a Shepherd using Favored of Syllisia. It will also attack a chaotic character if instructed to by a Shepherd. This makes spawn excellent guardians.

The spawn has no treasure, unless it has existed for a significant amount of time outside of its host or has grown in the wild. In that case it will leave standard treasure from its victims scattered around on the ground above its burrow.

The spawn of Syllisia are relentless foes in combat. They prefer to strike from ambush, rising from the ground to tear at enemies with their thorns. Spawn have the following abilities:

Burrow (Ex): A spawn may take a full-round action to sink into the soil, drilling its vines into the ground and leaving little trace of its presence. It requires a DC 15 Spot check to notice the disturbed soil.

Tremorsense (Ex): Spawn, though blind, can sense creatures and objects with their acute pressure sense and hearing. They can do this equally well whether above or below ground, and darkness has no effect on them. Spawn detect the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with the ground without making Spot or Listen checks, even if it is a person that is invisible or hidden.

Detect Chaos (Sp): As the spell; this allows the spawn to detect chaotic creatures, spells, and magic items to a range of 60 feet. It will attack any non-chaotic humanoid that passes near its burrow.

Syllisia in the subject's chest. Within days, the seed sprouts an extensive network of roots and tendrils throughout the volunteer's body. Over time, the tendrils literally consume the subject's flesh, devouring his body in order to fuel its own growth. Soon, all that remains of the subject are a few vital organs, including the brain, nerves, and eyes. The rest of his body is replaced with a tightly packed weave of tendrils, roots, and thorns that simulate the original creature's basic form and abilities. Often, the Shepherds will bestow this treatment upon animals in order to create trusted guardians and helpers. Sometimes, militant members of the cult force unwilling humanoid subjects to undergo this process, typically reducing them to half-mad servants of Syllisia.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

THE BARON AND THE LADY

Baron de Grayne was never the most beloved of rulers. He lorded over his tiny barony with an iron fist, levying heavy taxes on the peasants and spending much of his time engaged in drunken debaucheries. One day, while riding one of his prized warhorses, his mount threw him from the saddle. The Baron sustained a severe head injury, and after lying in a coma for two months, he awoke a changed man. He came to believe that Syllisia had saved him from death and charged him with converting his holdings into her version of par-



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adise. Soon afterward, a small band of Shepherds appeared in the Barony. Working with de Grayne's thuggish soldiers, they rounded up many of the peasants and forcibly converted them into Children of the Root. Soon afterward, the newly transformed peasants aided the Shepherds in converting those same soldiers.

For now, the Baron and his allies are content to waylay unsuspecting travelers and make plans to eventually conquer neighboring areas. The barony itself is a deserted wasteland. Hamlets stand empty, and the Baron's castle is choked with plant life tended by the Shepherds. Entire towers and passages are filled with vines, and the place is now a refuge for all manner of fearsome plant monsters. The Baron has managed to keep his own conversion into a Child of the Root secret.

Eventually the Baron will hear of the characters' skill and might and decide that they would make worthy additions to the ranks of the Shepherds, willingly or not. He will invite them to a feast in their honor, planning to drug them and convert them in their sleep.

THE PLANT DRAGON

The Shepherds managed to defeat a silver dragon, but rather than kill her they decided to transform her into a Child of the Root. The dragon, however, was too powerful to fully convert to Syllisia's teachings. The Shepherds desperately want to reclaim the dragon and have sent a group of warriors supported by a wizard to recapture the beast. Meanwhile, a small flock of shambling mounds have come to worship the dragon as a god, bringing her offerings of treasure and food, and

defending her lair while she is away. The dragon is slowly falling under the sway of her new nature, and she is tormented by the constant agony she suffers; before long she will fully convert into a follower of Syllisia. The characters must defeat the shambling mounds, then calm the dragon and learn how to cure her. This requires a *wish* spell, the which an ally of the dragon can provide if he is contacted. The PCs must then defeat the Shepherds who have come to reclaim the dragon. Should the characters fail, the Shepherds gain a powerful ally that they will use to devastate settlements in the area.

A TREMOR IN THE CITY

An infamous and highly successful agent of the Shepherds, Allifar Shennifen specializes in planting, tending, and subsequently letting loose highly dangerous plant creatures in civilized areas, particularly cities. An expert horticulturist, Allifar has perfected several types of highly dangerous plants through careful crossbreeding and magical experimentation. Her latest creation is a massive plant that grows below ground, though the leafy ferns that it sprouts to collect sunlight are a telltale sign of its presence. The Tremor Root spreads across the foundation of a building and, when it grows to maturity, shakes the building into rubble. Allifar has planted many of these things throughout the city in which she operates, hoping to create widespread panic and destruction when all of her plants reach maturity.

The strange, leafy plants that have sprung up all over the city are the talk of the town. What no one realizes is the Allifar has managed to sow the area with her Tremor Roots. Soon, she will order them all to tear apart the city. Can the characters discover the threat, alert the authorities, and track down Allifar?

Allifar Shennifen, Evil Horticulturist

9th-Level Elf Druid

CR 9; SZ M (humanoid); HD 9d8; hp 54; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17; Atk: melee +9/+4 (1d6+3/crit 18-20/x2, *scimitar* +2), ranged +8/+3 (1d4, sling); Face: 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 16

Special Qualities: nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, *wild shape* (3/day), *large wild shape*, venom immunity, spell use

Skills: Concentration +12, Diplomacy +9, Heal +9, Knowledge (plants) +15, Spellcraft +6, Wilderness Lore +9

Feats: Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Track

Possessions: *Leather armor +2, scimitar +2, robe of blending, boots of speed*

Spells Per Day: 6/5/5/4/2/1



NEW MONSTER: Tremor Root

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| | Huge Plant |
| Hit Dice: | 8d8+40 (76 hp) |
| Initiative: | +0 |
| Speed: | 5 ft. burrowing |
| AC: | 16 (+8 natural, -2 size) |
| Attacks: | slam +13 melee |
| Damage: | 2d6+7 |
| Face/Reach: | 10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft. |
| Special Qualities: | groundquake, tremorsense |
| Saves: | Fort +11, Ref +2, Will +0 |
| Abilities: | Str 28, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 4, Wis 6, Cha 6 |
| Climate/Terrain: | Any non-arctic or non-desert |
| Organization: | Solitary |
| Challenge Rating: | 6 |
| Treasure: | None |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Alignment: | Always chaotic evil |
| Advancement: | 9-18 HD (Gargantuan); 19-24 HD (Colossal) |

Allifar developed the tremor root in order to strike at cities in secret, destroying massive stretches of urban areas in one fell swoop. She plants the initial seed that grows into a tremor root near her target, and uses *Speak with Plants* and similar spells to keep in touch with her creations, guiding them to the optimal location to strike at the city when the time is right.

The tremor root lashes out at its enemies with its roots and tendrils when directly attacked. It prefers to wait silently beneath the ground until commanded to unleash its groundquake ability by Allifar.

Groundquake (Ex): A tremor root may use its extensive bulk and tendrils to shake the ground directly above it. This causes the equivalent of an *earthquake* spell in an area with a radius of 80' from the center of the tremor root.

Tremorsense (Ex): See description on page 79.



THE SPIRITS OF BOHNARAI

"Merindien, you don't have to do this." Gledac knew what was going to follow his calm plea for rationality, but he needed to feel he at least tried. "That man tried to cross this rotted bridge on his own accord. And look, look! He's already climbing back up it! It'll hold until he gets the whole way, I'm sure. You don't have to do it."

"There's no such thing as 'have to' at times like this," his boyhood friend replied. "Destiny is beyond such ideas. I don't 'have to,' 'need to,' or 'want to.' I simply will to, I mean, will do. It. Will do it. You know what I mean."

He stepped closer to the edge, looking down at the man hanging onto the end of the rope-and-wooden plank bridge — the half that hadn't already fallen into the rushing current of the Azure River. A wave of calm seeped through his body. Here, in front of him, was the beginning of the next stage of existence for Merindien. He was seconds away from becoming part of a god.

All he needed to do was jump down to the man and the essence of Bohnarai would help Merindien grab the unfortunate soul and fly them both to safety.

One. Two. Thr ...

"I'm serious. We can go get help. Maybe there's a sorcerer that can do something. You don't have to prove anything to me or anyone else. Really. I believe you can do it. Let's just ... go ..." His voice trailed off as Gledac saw the look of finality on his friend's face.

Merindien smiled. "No, it is to be this way." The muscles in his legs tensed just a bit, preparing to propel the rest of

his body forward. "You act like I'm not coming back. Don't worry. Gods can have mortal friends. At least, I think they can." He turned his head from the river-bridge-man-terror scene for the first time and looked at Gledac. "Gods can have mortal friends, right?" He paused, then decided. "Hey, I'll be a god. I can make up whatever rules I want."

He pushed his hands out from his chest, spread his arms wide, and jumped. He

soared headfirst, like an eagle rushing to his prey. He looked majestic. He looked free. He looked invincible.

Tonadus, the peasant on the bridge, was about halfway back up when a young, rich, naïve, plummeting noble smashed into him and knocked him into a torrent forgiving as stone.

Tonadus's family was paid quite nicely to keep the matter to themselves. The murder-suicides of children go over so poorly in royal court these days.

FORMAL NAME: THE SPIRITS OF BOHNARAI

NICKNAMES: THE TOUCHED, FALLEN ANGELS, BRATS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE SPIRITS OF BOHNARAI ARE YOUNG NOBLES WHO BELIEVE THEY HAVE THE SPIRIT OF THE GOD BOHNARAI WITHIN THEM, WHICH WILL GIVE THEM THE POWER TO PERFORM A MIRACLE IN A SITUATION OF SEEMINGLY CERTAIN DEATH.

SYMBOL: THE SPIRITS OFTEN DRAW A PICTURE OF TWO GIANT HANDS (PRESUMABLY BOHNARAI'S). BETWEEN THE HANDS IS A MAN OR WOMAN WITH ARMS RAISED TO THE SKY. THE MEMBERS OFTEN DRAW THE SYMBOL ON (SOME WOULD SAY "VANDALIZE") VARIOUS PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND STREETS. THE HASTILY DRAWN VERSIONS SOMETIMES SHOW THE HANDS SQUISHING THE PERSON'S HEAD.

PATRON DEITY: BOHNARAI (BON-AH-REE) WAS A NEARLY FORGOTTEN GODDESS OF NOBILITY BEFORE RE-EMERGING WITHIN THE CULT. ORIGINALLY, THE PHILOSOPHY OF NOBILITY WAS THAT OF THE PERPETUATION OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOR. BOHNARAI'S FOLLOWERS STRIVED TO ALWAYS CHOOSE THE MOST VIRTUOUS PATH IN EVERY SITUATION THEY FACED, NO MATTER THE CONSEQUENCE TO THEMSELVES. THE SPIRITS OF BOHNARAI, HOWEVER, HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD BOHNARAI TO BE THE DEITY OF THE RICH AND PRIVILEGED. THEIR GOD OF NOBILITY WATCHES OVER THE NOBLES OF THE KINGDOM, AND HE (NOTE THE SEX CHANGE) BESTOWS UPON THEM DIVINE PRIVILEGE, WHICH JUSTIFIES THE EXCESSES OF THE RICH AS MERELY ADHERING TO DESTINY.

ORIGINS

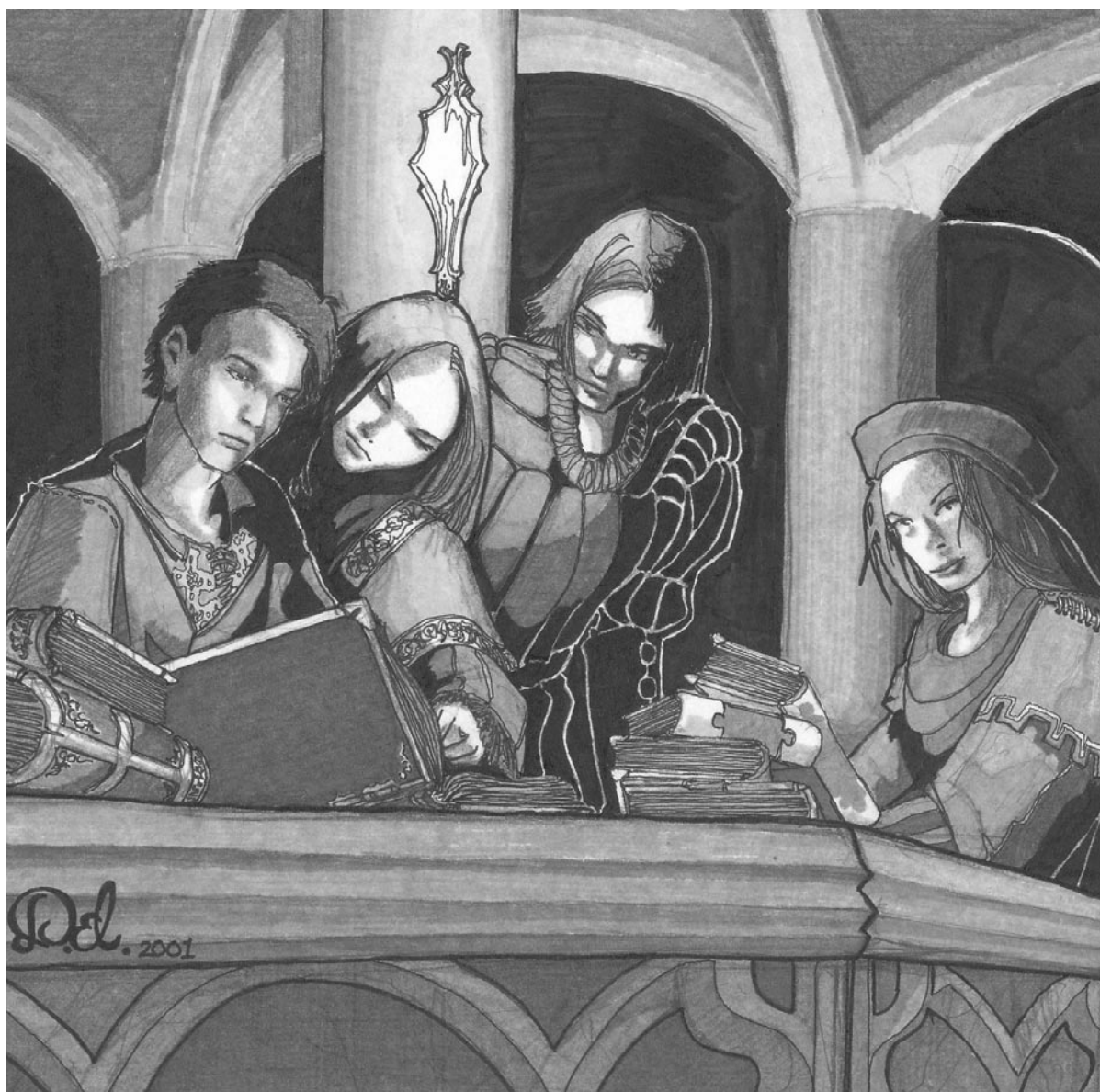
The ancient palace of Bohnarai sat undisturbed for centuries until a past war reduced it to a crumbling husk. The priests of Bohnarai had done an excellent job sealing the underground temple from the rest of the structure, preserving the tomes, artifacts, and statue of the god they had so tirelessly devoted their lives to. Generations passed, and the land above it went through many changes.

A young lord named Artireos was looking through extremely boring history books about the extremely boring cultures that preceded the great, through extremely boring, city-state that he had lived in his seventeen years. His parents always insisted that he

take as much schooling from the clergy as possible, as the appearance of learned children was much in style among the elite. Artireos already was an accomplished flutist, rapier-swordsman, woodcutter, and equine husbandry master from the fashions of the past four years.



He found something in one of the books, though, that hadn't been noticed in the eons since his people conquered the area. The tome was an account of the final days of the previous empire, written by a priest who had managed to flee before the true carnage began. The book detailed the sealing of the temple, and hinted at the treasures that were contained within. Artireos realized that it was possible that the temple had never been uncovered. He feigned illness to leave early that day and assembled a few of his closest friends to go exploring.





TOUCHED BY THE GODS

It was easy to get into the barracks that had been built above the long-forgotten temple. Even at night the guards asked few questions of anyone that wore the blue robes of nobility. They went to the lowest level, and, following the descriptions Artireos deciphered in the books, found a thin wall that gave way to the ancient, sealed entrance to the temple. Artireos' friend Tythos was an accomplished mage apprentice for someone of his age, and his power along with a few pickaxes managed to break open a hole just large enough to squeeze through.

Once inside, Artireos and his group were sorely disappointed. There was no treasure, just old books preserved with some long-neglected incantations. They took a few, thinking perhaps they could con some money out of a few merchants next week, and left the temple.

Artireos was the last to leave, but as he did, the poorly made hole gave way and buried Artireos under a ton of rock. His friends frantically clawed him out, terrified at the prospect of telling their parents about their friend's death. Miraculously, Artireos emerged, still alive. In fact, he was completely unscathed. Dazed, Artireos and his friends fled the barracks as fast as they could.

Attributing his survival to nothing short of divine intervention, Artireos became convinced that this god Bohnaraii had helped leave him without harm. With extreme fervor, he started reading the books that were smuggled out, which explained the word and deeds of the god Bohnaraii. Without hesitation, Artireos became a true believer.

The trouble was that Artireos didn't exactly understand what he was reading. He wasn't stupid, to be sure, but one word continually fouled him up: "nobility." Nobility, in the sense Bohnaraii espoused, was the concept of maintaining high honor and ethics in the face of all else. For Artireos, of course, nobility meant only one thing: the upper class he and his friends belonged to.

The young noble started teaching his small group of friends the virtues of his new god Bohnaraii. He spoke of the god as the "lord of our way of life, the way of the ruling class." He changed the gender of the god, knowing his friends wouldn't take much from a female in their patriarchal society. His friends ate it up; Artireos spoke like a true convert, and none of them could explain how he survived the cave-in. Besides, it was very trendy being part of such an exclusive group, even if it meant disavowing your current religion. His "congregation" grew to about twenty members over the next few

weeks. They didn't really do anything save for meeting twice a week and wrestling afterwards. They were just kids, after all.

Soon, like all young persons' secrets, someone let loose the whole deal to their parents. One thing led to another, and the children were harshly disciplined and forbidden from continuing their blasphemous idolatry. Making it forbidden increased membership three-fold, and many of the original group of friends were soon buying into the religion as much as Artireos.

Artireos, for his part, had come up with an explanation for his survival and how it pertained to the — well, let's just say it: *cult*. He had been spared because he had been imbued with the spirit of Bohnaraii for his whole life. It merely took an accident of life-threatening proportions to bring that spirit to light. It was his destiny, and it was the destiny of the cult to find out who else was imbued with the spirit of their god as well.

ACTIVITIES

The Spirits of Bohnaraii have become a relatively potent force in a very short time. They can squirrel away enough money from their parents to fund most of their activities, and when that's not enough, they can use Suner. Suner is an old, old man (to the Spirits, anyway) who has a lot of resources. He's bought into the cult's ideology hook, line, and sinker, and gives them outlandish sums of money.

A lot of time and effort, especially in the lower echelons of the group, is devoted to committing petty acts, with equal parts defiance and preaching. They carve their symbol into anything that's softer than their sharp diamond-tipped etching quills. They put on elaborate plays in the streets, usually culminating with a stirring climax of the actor "ascending into godhood." Or sometimes they just wrestle. They also arrange "celebrity" sessions, where high-ranking members of the cult stand in public, allowing peasants to touch them, kiss their feet, or whatever strikes them at the time as what noble godlings would do. Usually this just results in huffy god-children, and a few thieves in the city make off with a big pile of loot.

While these efforts seem to waste enormous amounts of the cultists' time (though what else would they really be doing otherwise, dying faster?), they serve a critical purpose. Their parents were against the group in



the first place, but it was generally in a “children-having-fun-must-be-bad” sort of way. When, to the noble parents, it seems that their sons and daughters are doing little but putting on plays and carving symbols, they let it go and some even encourage their membership. It’s become somewhat of a style in itself (“you’re child’s not a Spirit? My oh my ...”). The parents appreciate the kids getting into their roles of superiority over the working class. The fad during their own younger years was to feel guilty over their golden status, which caused all sorts of headaches for *their* parents. They’re all relieved to be able to skip that part of child rearing.

If they knew what their children were really geared up to do, and why there seem to be more fifteen-year-olds coming home with cuts and bruises (or without arms, or not coming home at all), there could be a full-fledged crisis among the aristocracy.

By Artireos’s divine reasoning, the only way to aspire to godhood is to put yourself in a heroic, certain-death situation and wait for the spirit of Bohnarai in you to come out in all its glory. The miracle will occur, as long as the heroism is true and the situation actually life-threatening. Here’s the catch: when the inevitable happens and the poor kid gets skewered attacking a dozen orcs or falls fifty feet to his death from a tree trying to rescue an infant stuck up there (which *he* placed there, with the help of a mage apprentice), the cult reasons that the corpse wasn’t a true follower after all; if he was, Bohnarai would have saved him and brought him to glory.

In the last year and a half since the cult began, thirty-six children have died. Very few people know about this; it’s most often the oldest ones who are convinced to “take the plunge to godhood,” and before their “ordeal” Artireos has them convince their parents they’ve been accepted to the kingdom’s royal army (a tremendous honor) or a distant monastery for a year’s study. A few squeak through and are found to be very suspicious suicides, but

most nobles don’t want their circles to discover one of their children would commit suicide (how uncouth) and so cover it up tidily. As for the other cultists, most know of a few failures (a good friend should always be nearby when someone becomes one with a god) but are kept from real numbers, which would probably implode the group if disseminated at large.

Artireos rationalizes the deaths as necessary for the cause of the great god. He realizes that this can’t hold up too much longer. One can only study at a monastery for so long, after all, and even wars end sometime. He’s betting that the true gifts from Bohnarai will arrive any day now.

ARTIREOS, LEADER OF THE SPIRITS OF BOHNARAI

Artireos (ar-TER-ee-ohs) ran through the first sixteen years of his life as a typically arrogant, coddled offspring of the rich. With the discovery of the books of Bohnarai and his subsequent miracle, he feels his life has been given meaning. Artireos is a tall, strong eighteen-year-old with dazzling emerald eyes (a reflection of nobility), short black hair, and dark brown skin. He is 6 feet tall and weighs 180 lbs. He has a surprisingly high nasal voice, considering his stature. He seems to have an uncanny instinct for debate and conversation; however, he also can have an extremely limited knowledge about basic issues of everyday life. He has already gained a few abilities from his connection to the godly realms, being stronger, faster, and more charismatic than he ought to be. For a long time, he truly believed in his duties to the god Bohnarai. His motives and quest for power may be starting to lead him down an evil path, rather than a merely misguided one.

Artireos

7th-Level Aristocrat

CR 6; SZ M (human); HD 5d8; 40 hp; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15; Atk: melee +9 (1d6, masterwork rapier); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Naïve; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 18

Skills: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +5, Gather Information +10, Innuendo +5, Intimidate +6, Listen +7, Ride +6, Spot +7, Swim +9

Feats: Leadership, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Naïve (Ex): Artireos rolls any Sense Motive check with a –3 penalty



NEW DEITY:

*Bohnaraii, Patroness of Nobility***Alignment:** Neutral Good**Domains:** Good, Luck, Nobility**Typical Worshipers:** Those of a highly moral bent

Bohnaraii, the god of nobility, is neutral good. Her followers are extremely rare, but they will grow now that her temple has been uncovered. She is patron to those who follow a rigid code of moral conduct at any cost. Dying upholding one's honor or beliefs is considered the pinnacle of existence for a cleric or follower of Bohnaraii. The god does not force a specific moral code upon her subjects, but whatever code a follower subscribes to must be good. Unlike lawful good gods and persons, Bohnaraii and her subjects have no allegiance to the existing laws or rules of a kingdom if they are contrary to their own code. People who know followers of Bohnaraii probably describe them as arrogant, though her worshipers would describe themselves as merely having a purpose. Her subjects often get out of remarkable situations; they are known by most as extremely lucky individuals. Bohnaraii, however, believes those who have a purpose in life create their own luck. She has no particular affinity for those of high means ("nobility"), though the Spirits of Bohnaraii are under that mistaken belief. The domains she is associated with are Nobility (see opposite page), Good, and Luck. Her favored weapon is the rapier, which is deadly in disciplined hands.

PERCEPTION OF THE UNDERCLASS

The peasants know a lot more of what's going on than any of the royal class, as is usually the case. After all, despite the naïve arrogance of the Spirits of Bohnaraii, they truly feel great kinship with the poor — as their rightful masters, of course, but with the responsibility to treat them well. In fact, if the Spirits do succeed in replacing their parents' social structure, the impoverished would probably live considerably better lives, as long as Artireos is kept in check. There'd be the occasional deranged noble's body landing on some peasant's roof, but they could live with that. Most peasants just shake their heads at the Spirits, take their money when they get the chance, watch a truly pitiful play once a month, and every so often help fish a body out of the Azure River. A few times the cultist kiddies have even truly helped someone out of physical danger.

A few of the more enterprising individuals, though, have started making considerable profit setting up the children for a fall. The faithful are often gullible, and more than one have been led into a situation where they thought they had their opportunity for ascension, only to be beaten to a pulp and fleeced of their shiny rings and platinum pieces. Usually, only bruised or broken appendages go along with bruised or broken egos, but a few deaths have happened this way. The youngest cult member to die (an eleven-year-old boy) was found far from the city, headless, outside what had been a cave belonging to a pack of hellhounds. At least that's what one boy was told by a group of ruffians from town.

Only a handful of cultists are from the working class, but they have an interesting status within the cult. They are known as the Messengers, and are treated with the

utmost respect. They make more money in a month than they would have in a year before admission into the Spirits. The Messengers continue their normal careers as tailors, smiths, couriers, etc., but act as both teachers and spies for the cult. They teach the children about the underclass and their needs, which has resulted in a surprising amount of empathy towards the poor. They also help look out for the worst attempts at abusing the Spirits, which of course is in their own self-interest, so they can continue at their profitable positions.

THE MISSING

There are a handful of followers that never turned up after their "ordeals". Artireos either personally witnessed or heard from eyewitnesses the circumstances of their attempts at being one with Bohnaraii; all are known to be dead. And yet, their bodies weren't found. A few had reasonable explanations: they jumped from a cliff, or were last seen swimming upstream near the waterfalls, or entered the sewers in the Old Town and never came back out. But the rest seemed to inexplicably disappear. Bernays was rained upon by arrows from a wandering group of bandits, deep in the forest, with four cultists watching from the tops of nearby trees. But his body couldn't be found when his fellows climbed down to retrieve him. Thon died in an unplanned attempt at heroism when he took the brunt of a fireball cast by a drunken halfling sorcerer, which was headed for a pregnant woman outside of the bazaar. His body never appeared after the smoke dissipated.

It worries Artireos, once in a while, that all seven of the Missing had, at some point, been rumored as possible trai-

tors to the Spirits. Other betrayers have, on a somewhat more frequent basis, been efficiently ratted out and dealt with. Just these seven remain unaccounted for.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

SUICIDE MOST FOUL

The concerned parents of one of the children that has gone missing hires the PCs. They will pay the adventurers handsomely to discover the whereabouts of their daughter or son, and can give some information about the friends their child was with.

The adventurers will have to investigate the dark, seedy underbelly to the city, and will find townspeople countering their actions at every turn. Many different people have stakes in keeping the cult going, from the thieves who rob them blind to the few people whose lives have been helped or saved by the cult. Getting information might be tough; when it comes to the cult, talk is expensive, and someone is going to be looking for the PCs to pay the price.

This adventure could easily lead the characters further and further into the cult until they get caught in the middle of a war between a god and her misbegotten followers. The PCs will have to walk a tightrope of morality as they try to save those who don't wish to be saved.



CELESTIAL HOPE

Bohnarai is indeed still in existence, and is horrified by the damage the cult has done with their warped view of her divinity. She has no interest in royalty, money, or power. All she wants is to reclaim her virtuous legacy. She must destroy the cult that has corrupted her while still maintaining her compassion. They are children; they are redeemable. But she is very weak. She has no true followers whose faith could reinvigorate her.

She can, however, gain strength from the few members of the Spirits of Bohnarai that unknowingly believe her true tenets of morality and ethics. These are the Missing that Artireos worries so much about. They fulfilled their destiny (see the Destiny Mechanic, page 89) through their deaths, and so Bohnarai used much of her remaining power to turn their souls into celestials. They now are Bohnarai's best hope to battle the cult covertly.

NEW DOMAIN:

Nobility

Deities: Bohnarai, others as appropriate

Granted Power: Once per day, you can use any spell that you can cast as though it was a quickened spell. You can only do this after you actively adhered to one of your moral codes that same day (see below).

Nobility Domain Spells

The Nobility domain spells stress the ability to prevent others from committing dishonorable acts. They also remove obstacles to a follower's mission to adhere to his own moral code, whether from the interference of nature, enemies, or even his own limitations.

- 1 **Sanctuary.** Opponents can't attack you, and you can't attack.
- 2 **Resist Elements.** Ignore 12 damage/round from one energy type.
- 3 **Prayer.** Allies gain +1 on most rolls, and enemies suffer -1.
- 4 **Discern Lies.** Reveals deliberate falsehoods.
- 5 **Mark of Justice.** Designates 1 action that will trigger *curse* on subject.

- 6 **Globe of Invulnerability.** Stops 1st through 4th level spell effects.
- 7 **Teleport Without Error.** Instantly transports you anywhere with no chance of error.
- 8 **Discern Location.** Determine the exact location of a creature or object.
- 9 **Limited Wish.** Alters reality – within spell limits.

Moral Codes

At character creation or adoption of this domain, develop a list of moral codes your character adheres to. The list must have at least five specific situations your character might enter into and the reaction your character would have to them. The reaction must be one that upholds good, and it must bear some level of consequence that affects the character. The GM must approve each code, and can disallow any code that is not a cause of good, is too general, or does not have a consequence of enough cost. For example, a character might have as one of her codes: "When dealing with children, I must do everything possible to protect them at any cost." Another might be: "If an opponent's back is to me, I will not attack him until he faces me."



LEMMINGS

The Spirits of Bohnaraii can be a dark and sinister presence. But, on the other hand, they can be filled with quirky characters and laughable flaws. They really have done virtually nothing (at least, not yet) to deserve the reputation of being diabolical menaces. They're mostly just a bunch of snot-nosed little brats (despite the vast majority being in their late teens or early twenties) that manage to get themselves offed in the most idiotic ways possible, or at least get picked clean of all their possessions on a weekly basis.

The adventurers start by saving a cultist from an obvious scam, and subsequently are hired by the teenager's rich parents to protect her. Now the PCs will start pulling their hair out trying to follow a rebellious 16-year-old with a grade A death wish. This can range from a dungeon crawl through the dangerous city sewers to a suicidal game of hide and seek.

DESTINY

"Everybody believes, somewhere deep inside in their heart, that they could be a hero. It's simply a matter of the right circumstances coming by. It's just that some come by the right circumstances a lot more often than others."

— Dewin, dwarven ironsmith of Talendale

"You't do da same effet was yer own flesh an' bloodt, milady."

— Glonda Gordunfuke to Princess Selebi, hours after the middle-aged peasant lifted a two-ton boulder to save four children trapped in a collapsed quarry on the outskirts of the Deeps

Many people believe that, despite others having more strength, speed, or charm, living to be a hundred and ten, or being able to throw fire from their fingertips, there is some kind of karmic balance to the world. These individuals, usually peasants who need something to look forward to, or nobles with the guilt of privilege hanging heavy in their hearts (like any one of the Missing before their transformation), feel that given the right circumstances, they could do everything those hoity-toity adventurers that waltz into the tavern every so often brag about.





They're not too far off. Everyone can be great at some point in their lives, if the gods have in it in their plans that it's the way the story should unfold. Those whose lives are normally reserved for the mundane, mediocre, or downright boring even seem to flourish under some circumstances — probably because the gods have decided that they need the biggest lift up. Those who toil the hardest for the least return will

find that often when their lucky number finally is called, the payoff comes in one lump sum. A crazy gnome philosopher used to preach, "everyone has a sliver of the sun of fame in his or her life," to which his wife would usually reply, "you won't if you sit around all day thinking up garbage like that!"

The Destiny Mechanic

The Destiny Mechanic can be used to help simulate the moments of heroism that occur in everyone's life, from your band of adventurers and the soon-to-be-XP bugbear behind that dungeon door, to the town stable owner and the lonely half-orc that can't seem to find a job in any human town he finds.

Every character has a certain amount of destiny. This destiny can be used in several ways, in order to succeed when the odds appear insurmountable, redeem yourself when failure seems imminent, or put some extra "oomph" into an ordinary effort.

The Destiny Bonus a character receives is based upon how high his ability scores are. The higher his ability modifiers, the worse his Destiny Bonus will be. (Is that you whining, Mr. Munchkin? Or is it you, Mrs. I-Use-Loaded-Dice-For-Rolling-Characters? A plague on both your houses!) This reflects the control heroic characters and NPCs already have over their own destiny, and the favor the gods tend to show toward the weak in their time of need.

Add up the character's ability modifiers (not ability scores). This will result in a total typically between -5 and +10, though it can range far below or above that, depending on the type of characters and campaign you play in. The negative of this total is the character's Destiny Bonus.

Example: Aras the Druid has the following ability scores and modifiers: Str 8 (-1), Dex 14 (+1), Con 7 (-2), Int 17 (+3), Wis 18 (+4), Cha 11 (0). Adding up her ability modifiers, she has a total of +5 (-1 + 1 + -2 + 3 + 4 + 0). The negative of this is -5, and so her Destiny Bonus is -5.

The Destiny Bonus can be used once per game session or adventure. The simplest way to keep track of this is to remember that whenever the GM assigns experience points, the Destiny Bonus (if used in the previous adventure) "refreshes" and is available to be used again. If the Destiny Bonus was not used during a given adventure, it is simply retained for the next adventure — you do not accumulate more Destiny Bonuses by not using them.

Non-player characters can have and use a Destiny Bonus as well; it's an easy way to surprise a group of adventurers that are underestimating their opposition. Just like the PCs, non-player characters can only use their Destiny Bonus once per encounter.

The Destiny Bonus can be used in the following ways:

1. On a Failed Single Roll

The character can re-roll any single check that he has failed. Add the character's Destiny Bonus as a miscellaneous modifier to their skill for this re-roll.

Example: Aramil failed his Sense Motive skill check, and is unable to discern whether the toothless beggar was telling the truth about his long-lost brother. He spends his Destiny Bonus (which is +1) to re-roll the check. He now rolls, adding his normal Sense Motive skill modifier +1 due to his Destiny Bonus. He has to beat the toothless beggar's Bluffing check in order to turn his seemingly failed attempt into a success.

In game play, this re-roll does not mean that the character is attempting the action again after failure; it is a reflection that fate has intervened and altered the attempt in an improbable fashion.

Example: Luren the Ranger is trying to retain her grip on the side of a cliff, which has been put into peril by the boot of the evil Knight of Shadows stepping onto the ranger's hand. She fails the roll against a DC 15, and the rock she held onto loosens from the cliff. She spends her Destiny Bonus to re-roll and receives a -4 miscellaneous modifier, as she has a Destiny Bonus of -4. Despite the penalty, she succeeds, and it's clear that Luren didn't actually fail because of the first roll; she'd be quite dead, falling from this height. In a stroke of remarkable "luck," the rock fell about six inches and embedded itself more firmly than before. Luren is safe and out of reach of the dark knight, at least for the time being.

2. Before a Single Roll

The character can use his Destiny Bonus before he rolls any check. If he succeeds, it is automatically considered an Extraordinary Success, no matter how much the roll beat the DC by or whether you have at least rank 10 in the skill or not. If the character was making an attack, a success results in a critical hit rather than an Extraordinary Success.

Example: Revec the Bard has a tough time ahead of him. The band of especially nasty goblins that captured him is forcing him to perform his famous fire-



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

juggling act before he becomes the main dish in a great feast. He decides to use his *Destiny Bonus* in order to try to achieve an *Extraordinary Success*. His skill modifier is normally +8, but Revec has a *Destiny Bonus* of -6, so his modifier is only +2. He takes a deep breath, and begins to perform. He rolls a 14, which, added to his adjusted *Perform* skill modifier of +2, puts him barely over the top of the DC of 15. Having spent the *Destiny Bonus*, however, it is still considered an *Extraordinary Success*. Revec so impresses the tribe that their king decides to make the elf his personal entertainer. He only needs to find a way to escape, now.

3. Fulfillment of Destiny

The character, in an act that can only be considered the definitive moment of his life so far, can permanently use up his *Destiny Bonus* in a last-ditch attempt to successfully commit an act of legendary scale. This action must be declared before the roll.

To use the *Destiny Bonus* is this way, the character must first summon the courage to act in such a pivotal way. The character must succeed at a *Will* save, modified by their *Destiny Bonus*, versus DC 15. If she fails, the character was simply unable to muster in the inner peace and resolve to achieve her destiny. She still retains her *Destiny Bonus* to use in the future — perhaps this was not truly her pivotal moment, and the best is yet to come.

ALIGNMENT MODIFIER TABLE

| The Attempted Action | DC Modifier |
|--|-------------|
| Epitomizes the core philosophy of the character's alignment | -5 |
| Matches the character's alignment | 0 |
| Is within the character's view of Good/Neutrality/Evil | +5 |
| Is a Neutral act while the character is either Good or Evil | +10 |
| Contradicts the character's alignment | +20 |
| Is the antithesis of the character's alignment | +25 |
| Is completely absurd, given the nature of the world's people | NA |

MAGNITUDE MODIFIER TABLE

| The Attempted Action | DC Modifier |
|--|-------------|
| Is one the character could accomplish under normal circumstances | -5 |
| Would be nearly impossible under normal circumstances | 0 |
| Is impossible for the character to accomplish | +5 |
| Would be impossible for any person of the character's race | +10 |
| Is beyond the ability of any known person, of any race | +15 |
| Could be considered a miracle for anyone to accomplish | +20 |
| Is not logically possible, given the nature of the world | NA |

WORLD EFFECT MODIFIER TABLE

| The Attempted Action | DC Modifier |
|--|-------------|
| Will be forgotten soon, even by the participants | -10 |
| Won't be known by many besides those involved | -5 |
| Will influence a town, or change the lives of a group of people irrevocably | 0 |
| Changes the future of a region or the lives of a large group of people | +5 |
| Influences the future of a kingdom or nation, or the lives of very powerful people | +10 |
| Will change the way of living for the current generation of people | +15 |
| Is an event of historic proportions and could reach the status of myth in due time | +20 |
| Disrupts the very nature of the world itself | NA |



If this Will save does succeed, the character's Destiny Bonus is gone forever. The use of the Destiny Bonus in this fashion completely eliminates it from the character for the rest of her life. Nothing, including the most powerful magics or even the will of a god, can bring the character's Destiny back. Whether the act itself or the eventual consequences of it are more important, the attempt is clearly the reason the character is here in the mortal realm.

Upon making the Will save, the character is ready to fulfill her destiny. The Difficulty Class of the test is based on how "in sync" the action is with the character's alignment, the magnitude of the task, and its effect on the world. The player using this power must fully explain exactly what the character is doing and what result she is trying to achieve. It is always up to the GM's discretion if the character is even allowed to attempt to use the Destiny Bonus in this way. If the character's action is disruptive, illogical, or just plain absurd, the GM can disallow the use of this power or adjust it as he sees fit.

To find the Difficulty Class, the GM chooses one modifier that best describes the situation at hand from each of the three charts on page 90 and adds them together.

Fulfilling one's destiny is markedly easier if the person in question will die in the attempt. Such self-sacrificing characters receive a -10 to the test's DC. If a character chooses this option there is no reprieve; she will die whether or not her attempt is successful.

The character uses whatever skill, attribute, or base attack bonus is applicable to the test, and modifies it by her Destiny Bonus. If this test succeeds, the character succeeds exactly as the player described her intent before the roll. If this ability is used in combat, there are no specific damage, Armor Class, or combat modifiers applicable — all that matters is the outcome that the character intended.

Example: A poor farmer with the unfortunate name of Cowpie picks up a stone he found in his field late into a stormy night. He squints slightly in the distance, and focuses on the lone Velasuava Tree fifty yards away. His mind races over the last four years, how he painstakingly cultivated that tree and spent nearly his entire life savings bringing it to full size. It was a mere few months away from bearing the enchanted fruit that would save his ever-weakening wife from the Shadow Sickness that has plagued her for half a decade now. He then changes his focus to glare at the Umber Hulk that is barreling at the tree at full speed, preparing to devour it and strip its life-inducing powers. A slow (physically and mentally) Cowpie uses his Destiny Bonus to throw a fist-sized rock at the beast. His Destiny Bonus is +6. For his Will save, he rolls an 8, which added to his Will save bonus of 3 and Destiny Bonus results in a total of 17. He succeeds in his Will save and has mustered the courage to utilize his destiny. Cowpie's intent is to throw the stone between the fiend's horrible eyes and kill it. Cowpie is lawful good; while killing beasts doesn't define law or goodness, it does conform to the law of self-defense and adheres to a principle of good ridding the world of evil. Cowpie's modifier on the Alignment Modifier Chart is +5. No normal human seemingly could kill this Umber Hulk with one stone, so the Magnitude Modifier is +10. Only a few friends care about the lives of penniless farmers of the edge of civilization, however, so the World Effect Modifier is 0. Adding these three modifiers results in a total DC of 15. He rolls a 10, which modified by his Base Attack Bonus of 0 and his Destiny Bonus of +6 gives him a total of 16. This is a success! Cowpie winds up and hurls the stone as hard as he can. He kills the vile monster with the single stone. The farmer collapses to the ground, adrenaline drained from his body. His wife might make it after all.



SURVIVAL CULTS

Every sentient race has its own survival cult, a faction which guards against the corrupting touch of the other races. They see their race as the pinnacle of creation and actively seek to uphold their values and traditions. Outsiders are decadent or dangerous, threatening their culture and possibly even their existence. Because they have no real culture of their own, half-elves and half-orcs do not have survival cults.

Each survival cult is different. Some are obviously religious establishments with clear-cut dogma and rituals. Others resemble political groups or conspiracies. All try to exemplify the things that make its race unique and, in their view, superior to the others. There are a few basic generalizations that apply to all survival cults:

- **Superiority:** Each cult believes that its race is superior to all others
- **Purity:** No survival cult will tolerate the dilution of its culture, traditions, or bloodlines.
- **Zeal:** Survival cultists are always willing to champion their beliefs. In the right circumstances they will vigorously defend their ideology, using deadly force if necessary.

The following entries give brief accounts of the survival cults for dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, and humans.

SONS OF THE EARTH

The Sons of the Earth advocate an immediate return to the underground ways of their forefathers. They eschew the sun and the stars and greet all “overlan-

ders” with suspicion. Only dwarves who have lived their entire lives in the Under-Kingdoms are welcome in the Duchies, as they call individual cells of the Sons. Overland dwarves are tainted and for all intents and purposes are no longer dwarves.

Orthodox Dwarves can live their entire lives without ever seeing the sun. When they must venture to the surface they wear thick hoods and ornate masks that obscure

their faces entirely. Priests will travel in fully curtained palanquins carried by four stout warriors. They will not open the curtains until they are safely underground. The most orthodox Sons claim they can smell the taint left by exposure to the open sky.

These dwarven survivalists are legendary for their craftsmanship. Many of the world’s greatest magical items are created in their settlements. When it comes to selling their wares, the

Sons of the Earth are surprisingly democratic. Anyone can purchase their craftsmanship, if they can meet the price.

The price for a magical item isn’t gold or other currency. The Sons of the Earth demand items of real value. They take things like the buyer’s passion or sense of courage. At first the price might seem insignificant, but the buyer soon realizes how much he’s lost.

Dwarven craftsmen can produce any magical item, though they usually stick to high-priced items. Good candidates include magic weapons, armor, and mechanical devices. The PCs will rarely find an item worth less than 20,000 gp on the open market. Once a player purchases the item it may not be sold again or given away to another character. At the buyer’s death, the Sons of the Earth will track down the item and take it back to their settle-

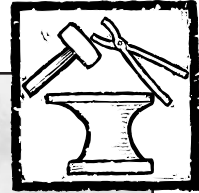
FORMAL NAME: SONS OF THE EARTH

NICKNAMES: UNDER-KINGDOM DWARVES, ORTHODOX DWARVES

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE SONS OF THE EARTH ARE MASTER DWARVISH ARTISANS WHO NEVER VENTURE FROM THEIR UNDERGROUND WORKSHOPS.

SYMBOL: A BLACKSMITH’S TOOLS

PATRON DEITY: SONS OF THE EARTH WORSHIP THE CHIEF DWARVEN DEITY OR THE ELEMENTAL FORCE OF EARTH.



NEW MAGICAL WEAPON:

Ottis' Pickaxe

Although dwarven craftsmen can make ordinary magic items, they prefer to create themed items with specific purposes. Otti's Pickaxe is a good example. The axe appears to be a mining tool and functions as a *light pick +2*. By taking specific actions, any dwarf with the Craft skill may activate the following special powers. All function as if cast by a 13th-level spellcaster.

- *Stone Shape* (1/day): In order to activate this power, the character must actually use the pick axe as a stonecutting tool. The finished product will be exceptionally intricate and well-crafted. Each use takes 1 hour of strenuous labor.
- *Move Earth* (1/day): The character must use the pickaxe as a digging tool. Each use takes 1 hour.
- *Earthquake* (1/day): The user must speak a command word and strike the pick against the earth.

Caster Level: 13th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *stone shape*, *move earth*, *earthquake*; *Market Price:* 87,864 gp (The Sons of the Earth will not take gold for their magic items; the buyer must pay a special, personal price.)

Paying the Price

Here are some typical prices for dwarven artifacts. Feel free to make changes or invent new effects to fit your campaign. Because the buyer enters into the deal willingly, there is no saving throw against these penalties. GMs should try to match each buyer to an appropriate price. Only highly charismatic characters should be allowed to give up their beauty, and so on. You should wait a few hours, or even days, before the penalties take effect.

The prices for dwarven craftsmanship are not curses and cannot be lifted by means of *remove curse*, *wish* or *miracle* spells. Only the dwarven seller can release the afflicted character from their bargain. This usually involves undertaking a quest or great service for the seller. Of course, the buyer must also return his magic item.

DWARVEN PRICE TABLE

| Price | Effect |
|---------|--|
| Youth | The buyer ages 1 year every day until he reaches venerable age. Although he suffers all of the physical penalties of aging, like loss of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, he receives none of its mental benefits. |
| Beauty | The buyer's Charisma bonus goes from positive to negative. With this price, the more a character has, the more he has to lose. |
| Health | The buyer loses most of his natural resistance to disease. Whenever he comes into contact with an ordinary illness, he will automatically succumb with no saving throw. Instead of a Fortitude save vs. dangerous diseases, he must make a regular Constitution roll. |
| Passion | The buyer no longer feels emotion. He becomes immune to spells and special abilities that cause emotional distress, but also suffers from a terrible lassitude. At the beginning of every day, he must make a successful Will save. If he is successful he may go about his daily business as necessary. Otherwise he loses all motivation and will do nothing but lie in bed and stare blankly at the sky or ceiling. He may occasionally sigh or roll over but he will not take any meaningful action until the next morning. The difficulty for this save roll begins at DC 10. Each time the character succeeds at making the roll, the difficulty increases by +1 for the next day's attempt. When he eventually fails, the DC resets to DC 10 for the following day's save roll. |
| Honor | No matter how hard he tries, the buyer cannot perform acts of virtue. He always makes a fatal mistake or chooses the wrong side in a conflict. The innocent maiden he rescues turns out to be a notorious criminal and her kidnappers are decent and hardworking watchmen. With every attempt at virtue, the buyer gains a greater reputation for dishonor and villainy. |
| Courage | Whenever the character is attacked or surprised he must make a Will save (DC 10 plus the attacker's level or challenge rating) or be overcome with terror. If overcome, he will attempt to flee or hide behind another character. He may not take any offensive action until the encounter is over. If the player rolls an unmodified 1 on his Will save, his character faints and may take no actions at all. |
| Insight | Whenever the buyer attempts to use an Intelligence or Wisdom-based skill, he gets one important detail incorrect. A character may successfully use his Intuit Direction skill then forget whether his destination lies to the north or to the south. Or he might mistake the orcish word for "great chieftain" and "rotten cabbage" during an otherwise flawless negotiation. Most of the time, this flaw should be inconvenient and unsettling. Occasionally, it can be downright dangerous. |



ment. They are extremely possessive of their craftsmanship and will continue to send envoys and war parties until the item is recovered.

ORGANIZATION

Sons of the Earth enclaves are organized like small kingdoms or duchies. They may be small underground villages of 10 or more members, or thriving dwarven kingdoms. The priests take royal titles according to their influence on the community. Craftsmen and practitioners of magic are held in especially high regard. The Sons of the Earth have no governing body, but smaller enclaves will generally defer to larger ones.

Sons of the Earth Raiding Party

For an Encounter Level 8 engagement, the first raiding party should contain one Son of the Earth for every two PCs. Subsequent parties should have at least four extra members. The average Sons of the Earth raider is described below:

4th-level Fighter/1st-level Wizard

CR 6; Size M; HD 4d10 + 1d4 + 21; hp 46; Init +4 (+4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 20; Atk: melee +7 (1d10/crit x3, dwarven waraxe), ranged +5 (1d10/crit 19-20/x2, heavy crossbow); Face: 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach: 5 ft.; AL LN; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 7

Languages Spoken: Common (heavily accented), Dwarven, Undercommon

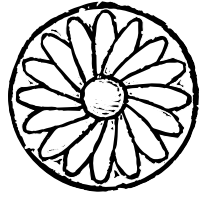
Skills: Appraise +5, Craft +5, Diplomacy +3, Hide +2, Intuit Direction +4, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +2

Feats: Combat Casting, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Focus (crossbow), Weapon Specialization (dwarven waraxe or heavy crossbow)

Possessions: In addition to the standard NPC equipment, every raider carries either a *heavy crossbow* +2 or a *dwarven waraxe* +2 (the bonuses for these weapons are not figured into the stats above). Large parties will also have additional magic items. For every four Sons of the Earth in the party, include one randomly-determined medium ring, rod, staff, wand or wondrous item.

Spells: 3/1





INITIATION

Unless the GM is running a high-powered all-dwarven campaign, PCs shouldn't be allowed to join the Sons of the Earth. It is a vast organization with easy access to powerful magical items. Most games are more fun if the players have to earn that kind of power.

ADVENTURE SEED

A WEAPON OF THE EARTH

At the end of a pitched battle, the players acquire a magic weapon of immense power. The exact nature of this object is up to the GM but it should be something that the characters will want to keep for themselves. Otti's Pickaxe (page 93) is a good example. Unbeknownst to them, it is a creation of the Sons of the Earth. Within a few days the players are confronted by a masked and hooded dwarf who demands, politely but firmly, that the players give up their newly acquired treasure. He will not give them a reason, except to say that "it belongs to the Earth." The masked dwarf is relentless. He will stand up to threats and bluster and try to bar the PCs from leaving. If the PCs attack, the masked dwarf will try to escape before they can significantly injure him.

Unless the PCs surrender the weapon at this first encounter, the Sons of the Earth will hound them, returning each time with greater force and numbers (see the "Sons of the Earth Raiding Party" insert on page 95). The raiders fight with intelligent determination, using a variety of spells and magical items. They will withdraw once they recover their target or if the battle turns against them. You may want to have the raiders appear at particularly inconvenient situations, like while the PCs are fighting other opponents or conducting tense negotiations. The only way to end this persecution

is for the PCs to give up the item. If they do so peacefully, the dwarves may be willing to sell them something new.

TRUE STEWARDS

Elven survival cultists identify themselves with the land. Traditional values like the protection and stewardship of natural resources are lifted to the level of sacred doctrine. A group of the True Stewards will choose an area of great natural beauty, called a Glade, and claim it as their own. They will drive out members of the other races and establish as natural utopia. Outsiders who enter the

Glade's territory will meet with excessive, and often deadly, force. Occasionally they will be captured and paraded through the settlement as examples of foolish and barbaric outsiders.

The True Stewards seek to restore the world to its "natural" state, one region at a time. They defend their territory with vigor and actively seek out those who would do it harm. Occasionally a group of Stewards will leave their

Glade and claim a new piece of territory for themselves. Glades rarely have the discipline or desire to cooperate with one another.

Settlements of the True Stewards are stunning in their beauty and complexity. The buildings are taller and more beautiful than those of any other race, blending into the surrounding landscape with ethereal perfection; the brooks are clearer and more musical than can be found anywhere else in the world; the birds have richer and brighter plumage than any other seen by mortal eyes. While most characters will be overwhelmed by the Glade's accomplishments, other elves, druids, and rangers will find this display excessive and even gaudy. Truly sensitive characters may feel a profound sense of unease as they examine a place that appears more perfect than nature itself.

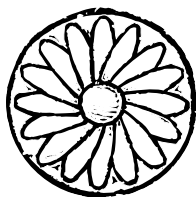
FORMAL NAME: TRUE STEWARDS

NICKNAMES: STEWARDS, FAITHFUL STEWARDS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE TRUE STEWARDS IS AN ELVISH SURVIVALIST CULT THAT CREATES NATURAL UTOPIAS BY PILLAGING THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE.

SYMBOL: EACH ENCLAVE HAS ITS OWN SYMBOL, MOST ARE NATURAL ITEMS LIKE TREES, NOBLE ANIMALS, OR FLOWERS.

PATRON DEITY: THE TRUE STEWARDS WORSHIP NATURE IN THE SAME WAY THAT DRUIDS DO, AS WELL AS THE PRIMARY ELVEN DEITY.



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The immense energy required to sustain an elven utopia is devastating to the surrounding countryside. True Stewards literally siphon the vitality out of neighboring regions. Forests wither, crops become stunted, and livestock sickens and dies. The oldest of the Glades are heartbreakingly beautiful oases in the midst of miles of barren desert.

ORGANIZATION

Elven utopias are usually called Glades. Young Glades can house 10 to 20 True Stewards, while ancient Glades can contain as many as 200. Every Glade has its own unique form of government, but most are ruled by a council of priests or elders. Druids and rangers occupy the highest positions. Nearly all True Steward priests are druids.

TRAVERSING THE GLADES

Although the True Stewards rarely allow outsiders into their Glades, an absolute ban runs counter to their chaotic nature. Most settlements have specific restrictions that allow outsiders limited passage through their territory (see the “Restrictions for Outsiders” insert for examples). These rules are non-negotiable and run a wide range of difficulty and complexity.

Violators of these rules may suffer a variety of unpleasant consequences. If the elves decide not to kill such a person outright, they may rob him of all his possessions, transform him into a harmless forest creature, or trap

him in the Glade’s territory forever. Unless the potential squirrel’s companions can persuade the Stewards to release him, the victim is beyond rescue. Convincing the elves usually involves an appropriately difficult task, like ridding the Glade of a powerful menace or counting all the trees in a forest. Unscrupulous Stewards may try to trick trespassers into violating their restrictions in order to force them into service. GMs should be very careful about springing such nasty surprises on their players without sufficient warning.

INITIATION

The True Stewards will accept any elven character who promises to serve and uphold the Glade. PCs who join will be asked to run errands to surrounding communities and other Glades. They may also be called upon to protect the Glade from outsiders.

ADVENTURE SEED

THE THICKET

A struggling village begs the PCs for assistance. In recent years their crops have failed and local game has become scarce. People and livestock are weak and listless. Children and animals born in the last few months are sickly and deformed. The villagers believe their blight comes from a dense area of “haunted” forest that they call “the Thicket.” The Thicket forms a rough circle about one mile in diameter and is densely overgrown. Villagers who have entered into the haunted forest have not returned.

Restrictions for Outsiders

Here is a list of potential restrictions. You can roll randomly or choose appropriate restrictions yourself. Each settlement should have at most two passage restrictions.

| d10 | Restrictions |
|-----|--|
| 1 | “Touch no tree or animal.” |
| 2 | “Do not eat the food or drink the water you find in this forest.” |
| 3 | “Only the pure of heart (good-aligned characters) may enter.” |
| 4 | “Never look behind you.” |
| 5 | “Do not stray from the path.” |
| 6 | “Say nothing to the inhabitants of this land, no matter what they may say to you.” |
| 7 | “When you eat, set aside a portion for the residents of this glade.” |
| 8 | “Take nothing from this forest but what you bring yourself.” |
| 9 | “Do not sully our home with your foreign magics.” |
| 10 | “Always keep your eyes on the path.” |

If the PCs agree to explore the Thicket, they will find that inside its dense border it is pleasant and beautiful. The plants are extremely healthy and the animals are lively and almost tame. After a few minutes, the PCs themselves begin to feel extraordinarily healthy.

Within an hour of entering the forest, the PCs will encounter a small band of True Stewards. The elves are the founders of a new Glade that encompasses the entire Thicket. Their efforts have begun to drain the village of its vitality. Although they successfully eliminated earlier forays into their Glade, the True Stewards wish to avoid a full-scale battle with a band of well-equipped adventurers. How they act will depend on the PCs themselves. If the party contains a large percentage of druids, rangers, and elves, the True Stewards may try to win them over to the concept of a natural utopia. They will decry the plundering peasants outside the Thicket and ask the PCs to turn the tables on their employers. If the party isn't likely to join them, the elves will try to ease their suspicions until they can be eliminated with treachery. They will only risk a face-to-face battle if no other option is available.

In order to successfully complete this adventure the players must choose between the True Stewards and the villagers. If the Glade remains, it will continue to harm the surrounding forest and fields. If the village is to be restored, it will be at the expense of a place of natural beauty and wonder.

THE WATCHMAKERS

The Watchmakers are a deliberately secretive and obscure organization. Of all the survival cults they are the only one with a completely secret membership. Their rolls include a large number of rogues and illusionists. Many are masters of subterfuge and conspiracy.

Rather than working towards a separate society, the Watchmakers seek to master the "lesser races." Many are blessed with abnormally high intelligence, and they believe that their mental gifts make them the natural masters of the world. With a mixture of illusion, manipulation, and technological superiority, they weaken their competitors and put themselves in positions of leadership and strength.

ORGANIZATION



Watchmakers organize themselves into small cells consisting of two or three gnomish leaders and a potentially infinite number of flunkies, called "cogs." Each Watchmaker cell is a miniature conspiracy with its own goals and modes of operation. Although their tasks may be vitally important to the success of the cell, the cogs rarely have much in the way of useful information. Most believe that they are performing tasks that are completely innocent. They don't realize that they are part of a conspiracy at all. Ever cautious, Watchmakers never give names to their cells or operations for fear that this may lead to discovery.

FORMAL NAME: THE WATCHMAKERS

NICKNAMES: PUPPETEERS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE WATCHMAKERS ARE A SECRETIVE ORGANIZATION OF GNOMISH CONSPIRATORS.

SYMBOL: AN ABSTRACT WATCH CONSISTING OF A CIRCLE SURROUNDING TWO LINES. THE LINES BEGIN AT THE CENTRAL POINT OF THE CIRCLE AND TRAVEL OUT AT A 45 DEGREE ANGLE FROM EACH OTHER UNTIL THEY TOUCH THE CIRCLE'S EDGE.

PATRON DEITY: MOST WATCHMAKERS ARE TOO IMPRESSED WITH THEIR OWN RESOURCES TO ACTUALLY WORSHIP A DEITY. SOME MAY WORSHIP THE PRIMARY GNOMISH DEITY.

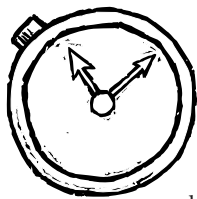
PLANS

The Watchmakers operate through their network of spies, agents, and hired assistants. They rarely take a direct hand in an operation unless it is unavoidable. To the uninitiated, many of their actions may seem senseless or random. Only the fully informed can

see through the deceit to the full scope and nature of the Watchmakers' plans. No matter what their alignment or intentions, the Watchmakers will never hurt another gnome or let him come to harm as part of an operation.

BETTER BREEDING

One of the most bizarre of the Watchmakers' operations is their plan to influence the breeding habits of other races. Through careful manipulation of marriage laws and societal trends they seek to eliminate dangerous traits like stubbornness and unpredictability, and replace them with docility and the willingness to follow orders. They have had the most success with aristocrats and wealthy merchant families, where traditions and arranged marriages make it easy to force their subjects into otherwise unattractive matches.



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

THE ARMS RACE

With their natural talent for invention, gnomes see themselves as more technologically advanced than the other races.

The Watchmakers intend to keep this superiority and widen the gap between the gnomes and their competitors. This usually takes the form of medieval industrial espionage, but it can also include theft of vital components, destruction of prototypes, kidnapping, and even murder. This frequently draws them into conflict with the Sons of the Earth (see page 92) and other magical craftsmen.

INITIATION

The Watchmakers do not have an open membership. If they wish to extend an offer of membership

to a promising gnome, they will send him an invitation. These invitations are never straightforward propositions. The invitee may have to follow a series of written clues, memorize elaborate passwords, or stumble blindfolded down miles of corridor under the guidance of a mysterious stranger. Draw your inspiration from your favorite spy movies and novels.

If the prospective Watchmaker accepts the invitation, he can look forward to years of bizarre assignments and misinformation. The Watchmakers are loathe to divulge information, even to other members. New recruits may never learn the full extent of their organization.

Non-gnomic characters may also find employment with the Watchmakers. The gnomes are always looking for competent couriers, spies, and diversions.

Rumor Matrix

The Watchmakers' broadsheets are a little bit like a word game. Before reading the text below to your players, roll a d6 on each table and insert the results into the appropriate spaces.

The Watchmakers' Broadsheet

Attention Citizens!!!

A vile conspiracy threatens our city. At [roll on Table 1], [roll on Table 2] will attempt to [roll on Table 3] and [roll on Table 4]. The city watch is unprepared to deal with this crisis; the citizenry must mobilize at once. Only you can stop this catastrophe!

TABLE 1

d6

Roll Result

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 | "the cock's first crow" |
| 2 | "the last chime of midday" |
| 3 | "the setting of the sun" |
| 4 | "the darkest hour of the night" |
| 5 | "the rising of the gibbous moon" |
| 6 | "the closing of the gates" |

TABLE 2

d6

Roll Result

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | "dread Prophets of the Golden Age" |
| 2 | "wild elf warriors of the Snow-Leopard Clan" |
| 3 | "enemies of our esteemed Patrician" |
| 4 | "soldiers of the Dwarven Under-King" |
| 5 | "clerics of the twisted (cult from this book)" |
| 6 | "apprentices of the mad wizard Fechit" |

TABLE 3

d6

Roll Result

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | "steal the book of formulae from our Alchemists Guild" |
| 2 | "steal the crown of our beloved Queen" |
| 3 | "steal a sacred goat from the temple of Onariis" |
| 4 | "kidnap the wife of High Merchant Meron" |
| 5 | "kidnap General Raffin's prize racehorse" |
| 6 | "kidnap the firstborn son of every nobleman in the city" |

TABLE 4

d6

Roll Result

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | "and replace her/him/it with a cunningly crafted duplicate" |
| 2 | "and hold her/him/it for a ransom of 10,000 rubies" |
| 3 | "and examine her/him/it for valuable secrets of state" |
| 4 | "and sell her/his/it's components to the highest bidder" |
| 5 | "and hurl her/him/it from the top of the city gates" |
| 6 | "and sacrifice her/him/it in the unholy rite of Sark m'Bar" |

A DVENTURE SEEDS

RUMOR MILL

In a crowded and prosperous city, the Watchmakers begin a campaign to sow dissent and increase their power in the ensuing confusion. Using their new invention, the movable-type printing press, they create posters and broadsheets to spread outrageous and inflammatory rumors.

It doesn't matter how unbelievable each rumor might be, it will always find believers. An unlucky party of dwarves might pass by the home of the High Merchant at just the wrong time, or a daring rogue may actually try to steal General Raffin's racehorse. Every day the Watchmakers publish another broadsheet and every day another misguided mob takes action. The resulting chaos can serve as a backdrop to another adventure or a mystery that requires the PCs' immediate attention.

THE PEOPLE

Halfling survivalists look at the world with a sharp mixture of scorn and wonder. Clod-footed humans conquer indiscriminately and wage pointless wars. Monomaniacal gnomes delve into ancient mysteries with no care for the consequences. Elves and dwarves pursue their own unfathomable goals, persecuting those who do not see their world as they do. Tiny, impressionable halflings have no place in this world of unspeakable danger and violence.

The People are unique among racial survivalists. They reject the peaceful and insular natures of their ancestors. Halfling survivalists intend to carve out their place by becoming more daring, more aggressive, more focused ... more worldly. They identify the survival traits of other cultures and adopt them as their own. Those who settle in a mining town will become masters of earthworks and metallurgy. In barbarian lands, they will earn a reputation for unparalleled violence and savagery. Whatever culture they adopt, the

People will soon be among the most distinguished, and the most plentiful.



Instead of adopting an entire culture, small groups of the People may decide to imitate a small party or individual. Many halflings have entered the adventuring life by taking on the role of a powerful player character or NPC. So strong is halfling adaptability that they may even adopt the personality, quirks, and identity of their chosen role model.

ORGANIZATION

The halfling survivalist movement is more of a state of mind than a formal organization. A

halfling community will decide to abandon their traditional way of living and take on the traits of their neighbors. This is an unconscious choice, much like the instinct that drives some animals to hibernate or migrate to warmer climates. Their government, laws, and societal norms are all taken from their new culture.

FORMAL NAME: HALFLING SURVIVALISTS HAVE NO FORMAL NAME. THEY REFER TO THEMSELVES AS "THE PEOPLE."

NICKNAMES: NONE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE PEOPLE SURVIVE BY IMITATING THE BEHAVIOR OF THEIR RIVALS.

SYMBOL: A CUCKOO

PATRON DEITY: MOST CELLS WORSHIP THE PRIMARY HALFLING DEITY. EXTREMELY DEVOTED GROUPS WILL ADOPT THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THEIR NEW WAY OF LIFE.

PLANS

As they adapt to their surroundings, halfling survivalists begin to drive out the other races and take over their roles in the community. There simply isn't room for everyone. Unless the community acts quickly, it will be overrun by the People in a few short generations. Entire kingdoms have been conquered in this manner. Unless their new role demands it, the People are always unfailingly polite to their role-models. They will defend themselves if necessary.

The reactions of the surrounding community will depend on its culture and traditions. Most communities won't realize the danger until they have been completely overwhelmed.



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

INITIATION

Halfling PCs who wish to join the People may do so simply by picking a role model and imitating him with all their hearts. Although there is no tangible benefit to becoming a halfling survivalist, it does offer some interesting role playing possibilities.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

DIMINUTIVE DOPPLEGANGERS

The player characters learn that someone has stolen their identities. These impostors travel in the same circles, visit the same haunts, and take on the same kind of causes as the player characters themselves. After some careful investigation, the PC's discover a band of halfling survivalists has adopted them as role models. Whether they tolerate this imposture or do away with their impersonators depends on the nature of the PCs.



This adventure will work best if you space it out over the course of several stories. Start by dropping a few hints while the players are off on other errands. Here are a few possibilities:

- The player characters introduce themselves to a new NPC. He looks them over, scratches his head and declares, "I thought you was shorter."
- A local merchant sends a note to the PCs reading, "The new weapon you ordered is ready for delivery. Please send 30 gp immediately." If the PCs send payment they will discover that the new weapon is an exact, halfling-sized replica of their best fighter's favorite weapon. Even the nicks, scratches, and wear marks are reproduced with a good degree of accuracy. The merchant, if questioned, will tell the PCs that a halfling commissioned the weapon with a set of detailed drawings and paid in advance with a bag of gold coins.
- While the PCs are relaxing in a local tavern, a minstrel offers to sing about their mighty deeds. The song is filled with mighty battles, narrow escapes, and daring escapades and may cast the characters in a very pleasing light. But none of the events in the song ever happened to the PCs. The minstrel claims he learned it from a colleague and that every word is true.

Eventually the PCs will realize that something is amiss. Once they begin searching in earnest they will quickly discover that someone else is using their identities. Since the halflings aren't actively avoiding them, it should be fairly easy for the PCs to track them down. What happens then is up to the players and the GM. If they are a noble group they may welcome the existence of another competent band of heroes. Pragmatic or paranoid parties may want to eliminate the impostors. Combat between the groups should be an even and interesting match since the PCs are fighting duplicates of themselves.

PROPHETS OF THE GOLDEN AGE



BELIEFS AND GOALS

The Prophets of the Golden Age is the boldest of all the survival cults. Its members rarely seek to isolate themselves. Instead, they thrive in the most crowded cities, where prospective recruits rub shoulders with elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings. Poorer members of society are drawn to their promises of an impending Golden Age in which the human race will thrive and outshine its competitors.

The priests of this cult are often powerful orators.

They recruit new members actively, often by holding organized demonstrations and rallies. Itinerant Prophets of the Golden Age travel throughout the countryside in their search for new devotees. In rural areas they frequently hold large, carnival-style revival meetings which feature acrobats, bards, and fiery sermons from their most gifted preachers. These traveling shows often include large groups of armed supporters who

actively persecute members of the other races and protect their own members from retribution. To many peasants, this sense of power without consequences is irresistible. In some rural areas the meetings can attract more than a thousand people every night.

FORMAL NAME: PROPHETS OF THE GOLDEN AGE

NICKNAMES: GOLDEN PROPHETS, THE PROPHETS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: THE PROPHETS OF THE GOLDEN AGE ARE RACIST HUMAN ZEALOTS WHO OPERATE UNDER THE CLOAK OF RELIGIOUS FERVOR.

SYMBOL: AN HUMAN, MALE OR FEMALE.

PATRON DEITY: MOST PROPHETS GIVE LIP SERVICE TO THE CHIEF GOOD DEITY IN YOUR PANTHEON. WHETHER THEY ACTUALLY WORSHIP IS UP TO THE GM.

ORGANIZATION

The Prophets of the Golden Age has a very strong organization. A single cell may include as many as fifty sub-cells, called congregations, each providing its own unique talents to the cause. Most congregations have between five and ten members. Cells in large cities can secure the services of any character class, trade, or



NEW COMMUNITY: Tent Revival

To generate your own Prophets' community, use the standard rules for town creation, with the following exceptions:

REVIVAL SIZE

| d20 | Size | Population | GP Limit |
|------------|---------------|------------|----------|
| 10 or less | Medicine Show | 10 | 10 |
| 11-14 | Carnival | 40 | 20 |
| 15-17 | Fair | 120 | 40 |
| 18-19 | Circus | 250 | 100 |
| 20 | Extravaganza | 1000 | 200 |

Leadership

In place of a standard power center, every tent revival is led by a charismatic Prophet of the Golden Age. Roll once on the table below to determine the level of this leader along with his cohort and followers. All of the characters in this table are single or multi-class clerics.

Depending on the size of the community, apply the following modifiers to your roll: Medicine Show -10, Carnival -5, Fair 0, Circus +5, Extravaganza +10

REVIVAL LEADERS

| d20 | Prophet | Cohort | # of Followers (by level) | | | | |
|-----------|---------|--------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th |
| 5 or less | 6th | 5th | — | — | — | — | — |
| 6-10 | 8th | 6th | 5 | — | — | — | — |
| 11-15 | 10th | 7th | 10 | 1 | — | — | — |
| 16-18 | 12th | 9th | 25 | 2 | 1 | — | — |
| 19-20 | 15th | 11th | 50 | 5 | 2 | 1 | — |
| 21+ | 18th | 13th | 100 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 1 |

LEADER'S ALIGNMENT

| d20 | Alignment | d20 | Alignment |
|-----|-----------------|-------|--------------|
| 1-7 | Lawful Neutral | 11-15 | Lawful Evil |
| 8-9 | True Neutral | 16-18 | Neutral Evil |
| 10 | Chaotic Neutral | 19-20 | Chaotic Evil |

Community Authorities

The Prophets of the Golden Age prefer to police themselves. The chief Prophet serves as constable and captain of the guard. Like ordinary communities, tent revivals have one permanent soldier per 100 members of the population and one militiaman for every 20.

NPCs in the Community

Tent revivals have a different mix of NPCs than a standard community. Fighters, rogues, and bards are common, while other classes are somewhat rare. Clerics selected from this table are not Prophets of the Golden Age; they are priests of other faiths who are swept up in the Prophets' cause.

Apply the following community modifiers when determining your highest-level locals of both PC and NPC classes: Medicine Show -3, Carnival -1, Fair 0, Circus +1, Extravaganza +5 (roll twice).

HIGHEST-LEVEL LOCALS (PC Classes)

| Class | Character Level |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| Bard | 1d6 + Community Modifier |
| Fighter | 1d8 + Community Modifier |
| Paladin | 0* |
| Rogue | 1d8 + Community Modifier |
| All other s | 1d2 + Community Modifier |

* Paladins will never associate with Prophets of the Golden Age.

HIGHEST-LEVEL LOCALS (NPC Classes)

| Class | Character Level |
|------------|--------------------------|
| Adept | 1d4 + Community Modifier |
| Aristocrat | 1d2 + Community Modifier |
| Commoner | 4d4 + Community Modifier |
| Expert | 2d4 + Community Modifier |
| Warrior | 3d4 + Community Modifier |

Once you have determined the highest-level NPCs in your community, use the standard method for filling out the population.

Racial Demographics

Prophet tent revivals are 100% human (it is a racist organization). Non-humans in the community are usually prisoners or slaves.

Attractions

In order to attract an audience, many revivals travel with an assortment of carnival shows and exhibits. Use the table on page 103 to determine your revival's attractions. Non-human attractions are chained, caged, and mistreated.

When you roll for attractions apply the following modifiers: Medicine Show -50, Carnival -25 (roll twice), Fair 0 (roll 3 times), Circus +10 (roll 5 times), Extravaganza +10 (roll 10 times).



TENT REVIVAL ATTRACTIONS

| d% | Attraction | d% | Attraction | d% | Attraction |
|-------|------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------|
| 1-10 | none | 64-67 | Giant Snake** | 86 | Ettin |
| 11-30 | 1d8 Clowns (commoners) | 68-70 | Medium Monstrous Bug† | 87-88 | Lizard Man |
| 31-40 | 1d6 Acrobats (experts) | 71-72 | Large Monstrous Bug† | 89-90 | Cockatrice |
| 41-45 | Stage Magician (adept) | 73 | Huge Monstrous Bug† | 91-92 | Merman |
| 46-50 | Bear* | 74-75 | Owl Bear | 93 | Triton†† |
| 51-53 | Lion* | 76-77 | Griffon | 94 | Wyvern |
| 54-55 | Tiger* | 78-79 | Hippogriff | 95 | Pegasus†† |
| 56-57 | Ape* | 80 | Manticore | 96 | Unicorn†† |
| 58-60 | Crocodile* | 81-83 | Ogre | 97-99 | Roll twice more |
| 61-63 | Elephant | 84-85 | Hill Giant | 00 | GM's Choice |

* Roll 1d20: 1-17 Normal Animal, 18-19 Exotic Variety (polar bear, white tiger, alligator, etc.), 20 Dire Animal

** Roll 1d6: 1-4 Constrictor, 5-6 Viper

† Roll 1d6: 1-3 Spider, 4-5 Centipede, 6 Scorpion

†† Only evil communities may have these attractions. Reroll attraction for neutral communities.

profession without difficulty. Usually all of the human racist organizations in a city are overseen by a single group of leaders. Formal meetings are laden with religious oratory and rituals.

PLANS

Human survival cultists are classic bullies. In most situations they limit their actions to intimidation and bluster without actually breaking the law. Only when they are certain of success will they take overt, violent action. If a Prophet of the Golden Age does run afoul with the law he can count on a network of like-minded souls to provide alibis, safe havens, and protection.

INITIATION

The Prophets of the Golden Age will accept any human who pledges his hatred of the non-human races. In most situations they will expect him to prove his zeal by taking part in an act of vandalism or intimidation. The newcomer may be ordered to set fire to a dwarf-owned tavern, or steal the livestock of a halfling farmer. New recruits who fail to carry out their initiations will be dealt with severely.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

A REVIVAL OF RACISM

The PCs learn that a dangerous criminal has taken refuge within the entourage of a traveling Prophet of the Golden Age. Unless they act quickly, the Prophet will smuggle his charge out of the city and beyond the reach of retribution. While non-human PCs attempt to locate the criminal by normal paths of investigation, human PCs may attempt to infiltrate the cult in search of first-hand information.

Those PCs who chose to go undercover face a difficult and morally ambiguous task. Many of the people around them will be swept up in the over enthusiastic tent revival atmosphere. At best, the Prophets will expect them to cheer, wave their hands, and shout with feigned ecstasy in all the appropriate places. At worst they may be called upon to take an active, and most likely violent, part in the Prophets' racist activities.

The PCs who remain outside the Prophets' entourage will have to make their way in an atmosphere of extreme distrust and resentment. As the Prophets' followers become bolder, they begin to strike out at the other races. At first this is just catcalls or rocks thrown through shop windows, but it soon degenerates into more serious violence.

TEN THOUSAND HEROES

"The weaklings, the pathetic, those who shuffle through life tasting neither great victories nor crushing defeats. These people have my undivided pity. Measure not your life in years. Measure it in the telling of your glories. Just as death stalks the battlefield, so too does life truly blossom there."

— the words of Corm Hammerhand

That was how Corm learned of the art of war. He forged the first blade and gathered the men of his tribe for the ultimate hunt. They fell upon their fellow men with a savagery born of countless nights spent in dull safety. Yet the enemy did not fight back. This was little better than the hunt.

"But the gods caught wind of Corm's treachery, and seeking to punish him they secretly taught all of the speaking creatures of the world the secrets of war, to trap Corm in his game and destroy him. When next Corm rode into battle, he found an eager foe armed as he, ready for war. The battle was long and bloody, and when it was over the gods walked the battlefield in search of Corm. Finding him mortally wounded they asked Corm if he was prepared to atone for what he had done, for if he

ORIGINS

"So long as heroes have walked, fought, and died upon this earth, so too have we marched upon it. Kingdoms may rise and fall, wizards fade as their magics grow, even gods may be forgotten. But the way of the world is the way of war, and as surely as man shall slay man, heroes will arise to harvest glory from the fields of battle.

"In the ancient times, the gods walked amongst men. They ensured that all the tribes had enough food to eat, enough wood for the fires, and enough elk to hunt. Life was easy. There were no wars, no raids, no battles. But there were those among the tribe who thirsted for more from life. Chief amongst them was Corm Hammerhand. Corm was a great hunter, yet the chase posed no challenge for him. He took to tracking down the most fearsome prey and slaying them with his bare hands, yet still he could not find a foe that challenged his skill. He turned to the gods, but they told him only to be happy with his lot. They told him to return to his hunting, to his fishing, to his woman, to long nights spent with little danger, fear, or excitement. In his boredom Corm took to following the gods about the wilderness, secretly listening to the words they exchanged that were meant for no mortal man.

FORMAL NAME: LEGION OF TEN THOUSAND HEROES

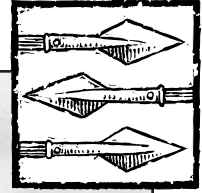
NICKNAMES: BATTLEFIENDS, LEGIONNAIRES, THE TEN THOUSAND

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: A BROTHERHOOD OF WARRIORS DRIVEN TO PROVE THEMSELVES AS THE LATEST INCARNATIONS OF ANCIENT HEROES THROUGH ACTS OF BRAVERY IN BATTLE.

SYMBOL: THREE WHITE SPEARS ON A RED FIELD, PLACED IN PARALLEL POSITION. THE BOTTOM AND TOP SPEARS' POINTS FACE TO THE RIGHT, THE MIDDLE ONE TO THE LEFT.

PATRON DEITIES: THE TEN THOUSAND HEROES

did so they would remove the memory of war from all men. The gods assumed that Corm would agree, for they did not understand the stifling boredom that they had inflicted upon him. Never would he do so, Corm told them, for so long as he lived in peace, he was never truly alive. Upon hearing those words the gods cursed his soul to wander the earth until his descendents were fool enough to make war themselves. Corm laughed upon hearing this, for he knew his sons far better than mere gods did, and he knew that his sons and their sons after them would find their final fate in battle. Too late, the gods realized their mistake. Unable to further punish Corm, they extended their curse to his bloodline, to the tribe, and soon to all mortal men. So this is why we fight, to rescue the spirits of our warrior ancestors, to return the brave to the circle of



NEW DEITY:

The Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral**Domains:** Rage, Strength, War**Typical Worshipers:** Berserkers, mercenaries, and warlike barbarians.

Description: The Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes is a large pantheon of heroes and warriors worshipped as a whole by berserkers and conquering barbarian tribes who place great value on skill at arms and heroism in the face of the enemy. The Ten Thousand's followers seek out battle and throw themselves into it with little regard for their own safety, seeking solely to smash the enemy and overwhelm him with the sheer force of a brutal assault. The Ten Thousand prefer the excitement and thrill of combat to the relatively boring life of peace and contentment. Their favored weapon is the great axe, and clerics who follow the Ten Thousand may choose any alignment.

life. And this is why we teach the legends, so that when we fall, our children shall remember us, and they too shall hear the call to battle, the call to rescue our souls."

— *The Tale of the First Hero*
as told by Old War Chaser

The Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes reveres those who have died heroically in battle. Legion members seek to commune with fallen heroes by whipping themselves into an intense state of battle fury. In this state, Legionnaires channel the spirits of the fallen, tapping into their reserves of strength and courage in order to spur inhuman feats of bravery, conquest, and brutality. This channeling is not a one-sided deal. Legion doctrine teaches that every hero who falls in battle lingers on, waiting for one last chance to redeem himself in combat before passing on to the outer planes, where he then awaits his chance at reincarnation. When a Legionnaire of the Ten Thousand Heroes surrenders himself to a hero's spirit, he gives that hero one final chance to seek glory. Infused with the power of an ancient hero, the warrior enters a berserker fury and throws himself at the enemy, heedless of any danger and pressing the attack with an insane rage. Once the battle is over and the fury has died, the spirit may finally pass out of the mortal realm to await reincarnation in the realms beyond, his burning desire for combat finally satisfied.

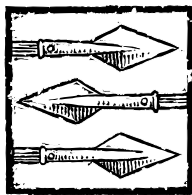
According to tradition, the Legion only communes with the bravest of those who have fallen in battle, the Ten Thousand Heroes. The group believes in reincarnation. While one's physical form may change over lifetimes, one's underlying spirit, personality, and lot in life remain the same. The Legion teaches that at the time of creation, only ten thou-

sand souls were given the strength, courage, and fortitude to become heroes. While others may claim the mantle, and may sometimes even exhibit the characteristics of a hero, only those original ten thousand souls can consistently showcase proper bravery, savagery, and battle skill. The challenge to followers of the Ten Thousand Heroes lies in demonstrating that they are indeed the latest incarnation of a hero of old.

THE WAY OF THE HERO

In practical terms, the creed of the Legion covers four critical points:

- A proper hero must commune with the souls of the fallen once per day. Only in this state of mindless berserker bloodlust can a hero truly tear away the veils of existence and perceive his true status amongst the pantheon of heroes.
- A hero must do his part to ensure that few of the Ten Thousand who have fallen in battle linger on in the mortal realms. Communing with the spirits of the fallen and letting them loose in battle so they might be reincarnated is of critical importance to the Legion.
- A hero must never accept surrender from a foe still capable of fighting. Doing so denies both the hero and his opponent a proper fate in battle. While there is no glory in slaying the defenseless, the Legion does not prohibit it.
- A hero must never offer his surrender.



LEGENDS

The Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes preaches few prophecies. Rarely does the group attract the introspective or scholarly sort, but around the campfires Legionnaires often tell a few stories relating to the fate of the Ten Thousand and the end of the world. The most important prophecy concerns the ultimate fate of the heroes:

"It is important for you to learn now the true burden of the heroes, and why we must ensure that their souls live again and again, and why in each life a hero should lead a proper life of battle. In the end times, the Ten Thousand shall walk the earth together. On a day in which the sun does not set, the last of the Ten Thousand will be born, entering the world to join our pantheon. The first and last shall be one, for Corm himself will on that day once again enter the world as a mortal man. He shall speak as Corm before he learns to walk. He shall fight as Corm before he is bearded. And once he attains the age of a man, he shall walk the earth, gathering the Ten Thousand to his banner. For once each hero meets the first and last, the lifetimes of war that he has experienced shall return to him at once. Bearing the experience and cunning earned over ten thousand battles fought over ten thousand lifetimes, each hero shall be a match for a legion of mortal men. When the Ten Thousand are finally gathered, then they will march upon the home of the gods, and put to the sword those who sought to shackle us and deny the Ten Thousand heroes their rightful place upon the fields of war."

— Legionnaire prophesy

OLD WAR CHASER

A legendary figure of demigod-like status, Old War Chaser is a singer and storyteller who was present at Corm Hammerhand's battles and every major battle fought by the Ten Thousand Heroes. Old War Chaser's duty is to chronicle the greatest deeds of each hero, carefully recording them in preparation for the end times. When Corm himself once again walks the land, Old War Chaser will serve as his chief advisor as Corm leads the final warband that will defeat the gods. Until that time, Old War Chaser compiles his histories and prepares himself to once again serve Corm. He often lends his considerable wisdom to young champions of all stripes,

NEW DOMAIN:

Rage

Deity: The Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes

Granted Power: Rage once per day as a barbarian of the same level as your cleric level. Multiclassed barbarian/clerics use this domain rage ability at their barbarian or cleric level, whichever is higher, and in addition to their normal barbarian rage ability.

Rage Domain Spells

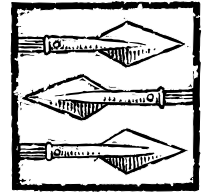
- 1 Inflict Light Wounds.** Touch attack, 1d8+1/level damage (+5 max).
- 2 Bull's Strength.** Subject gains 1d4 Str for 1 hr./level.
- 3 Haste.** Subject gains an extra partial action and +4 AC.
- 4 Emotion (rage).** Those within 15' gain +2 Str and Con, +1 on Will saves, -1 AC.
- 5 Righteous Might:** Your size increases, and gain +4 Str.
- 6 Mass Haste.** As *haste*, affects one/level subjects.
- 7 Tenser's Transformation.** You gain combat bonuses.
- 8 Iron Body.** Your body becomes living iron.
- 9 Miracle.** Request a deity's intercession.

The Makings of a Warband

Warbands usually number from a few dozen warriors to around a hundred. Any number larger than this often proves unmanageable, owing to the fluidity of status and respect between Legionnaires and warband leaders. Legion leaders and champions are generally barbarians or multiclassed barbarian/fighters. Most Legionnaires are chaotic, with chaotic neutral being the most common alignment. Neutral warriors typically care only for battle. Good and evil Legionnaires usually put more thought into the repercussions of their actions, actively seeking out similarly aligned patrons and causes to advance.

Each warband usually has one skald, but larger ones might boast two or three. Skalds usually are bards with a few levels of the barbarian class. About one in every ten Legionnaires is a cleric of the Ten Thousand Heroes. These clerics often have equal levels in both barbarian and cleric.

Wizards rarely join warbands, but barbarian/sorcerers sometimes exist within the Legion's ranks.



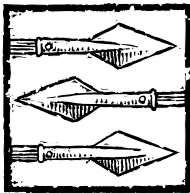
not just warriors of the Ten Thousand Heroes. Old War Chaser especially favors those who crusade for just causes, and he is highly revered by chaotic good members of the Legion.

Old War Chaser appears as a white haired, mustachioed skald clad in simple leathers and furs and bearing an oaken staff. He is said to have a bit of a mischievous streak, and often times his advice comes in the form of a riddle. A visit from Old War Chaser is a powerful omen of good tidings, and even non-Legionnaires to whom he lends advice are held in high esteem by the Legion.

ORGANIZATION

Warbands typically form around a single experienced and charismatic warrior. The most battle-hardened warriors in the group form a leadership council, yet the other Legionnaires have no obligation to follow. Authority stems from experience, success, and battle prowess. When dissatisfied with the state of leadership, Battlefiends often strike out on their own. *Esprit de corps* keeps warbands together and the Legion somewhat unified. Legionnaires often fight on opposing sides of a given battle. Some Legionnaires, especially evil ones, consider their fellow warriors of the Ten Thousand Heroes the worthiest opponents on the battlefield. Personal rivalries, grudges, and friendships determine how Battlefiends interact rather than an overriding organized infrastructure.

Storytellers known as skalds collect tales of glorious deeds committed by current and past Legion members. These bards spread their tales amongst the warbands, keeping tra-

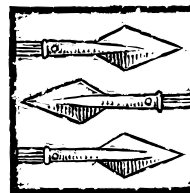


Rite of Testing Rules

In game terms, the Rite of Testing covers two phases. First, the petitioner must impress the warband elders with his tales of battle prowess. The most important requirement of this test is that the petitioner work himself into a barbarian rage while telling his tales, meaning that a character must possess at least one level in the barbarian class to join the Legion. A character who cannot rage has no chance of impressing the warband's leadership. If the petitioner is not in touch with the spirits of the heroes, then he obviously is not worthy of the Ten Thousand. The petitioner must make a Perform skill check with a DC of 15 and a bonus equal to his base attack bonus. Skill at arms impresses Legion leaders, and part of the presentation involves the petitioner's demonstration of his prowess with a weapon as illustration of his deeds.

For the second, combat portion of the ritual, the character must first make a series of Diplomacy skill checks for each warband member who the GM judges is neutral or hostile towards the character's membership. Typically, 1d20+10 Legionnaires are present for the ritual. The DC for the Diplomacy check is 10 for each neutral member, 15 for hostile ones. A failed check means that the warband member challenges the character during the combat phase of the initiation. If the character can reduce each challenger to half his starting hit points in unarmed combat without the aid of magic, he is welcomed into the warband.





ditions alive and preserving the epic deeds of the Ten Thousand Heroes. Most skalds travel with warbands, but some travel alone, seeking out warriors worthy of recruitment into the Ten Thousand Heroes and spreading the Legion's teachings.

Many warbands choose a name for themselves, usually one drawn from a hero of legend or one based on an animal. A warband also often chooses a unique symbol, mascot, or other identifying marker for itself. Some warbands wear particular patterns of war paint, while others sport unique trappings such as kilts, steel animal masks, or intricately detailed tattoos or brands. Since warbands form and disperse so often, many Legionnaires incorporate markers from their previous warbands into

their dress. These serve as a brief personal history telling an observer where their wearer has fought, who he has fought alongside, and who he has bested in battle.

As members of a military organization, most Battlefiends wear a variety of armors and bear a wide range of weapons. Legionnaires do not prefer any particular weapons. Many warriors wear a broken shard of a mighty foe's blade, an ear from a dead opponent, or some other fragment on an amulet. Evil Legion members sometimes festoon themselves in a variety of carefully preserved body parts of fallen foes.

NEW FEATS:

Feats of the Legion

The following feats are commonly used by members of the Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes. A few of them are only available to Legion members.

Battle Howl [General]

You strike terror into your enemies with the sheer force of your primal rage.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus 3+

Benefit: Once per day, you may let loose a terrifying battle cry during a charge action. The target of the charge attack must make a Will save with a DC equal to 10 plus your Charisma modifier or suffer a -1 morale penalty to hit for 1d4 rounds.

Heroic Destiny [Special]

You are a reincarnated hero destined to do great deeds. Fate smiles upon you.

Prerequisite: Barbarian level 1+, Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes member

Benefit: Once per day, you may choose to give yourself a +1 bonus to any attack, attribute check, saving throw, threat check, damage roll, or skill check before making the roll. Unlike regular bonuses, this modifier stacks with everything. Furthermore, if used to modify an attack roll, this bonus may turn a regular hit into a critical threat if after adding this bonus, but before adding any others, the attack result is a threat.

Example: Rod plays a third level barbarian who fights with a longsword. His character attacks a foe and Rod decides to use his Heroic Destiny feat. Rod rolls an 18 before adding any modifiers for the attack. Normally, this is not a critical threat, but since Rod elected to use his Heroic Destiny on this attack roll, the result counts as a 19 and is thus a critical threat.

Vengeful Strike [General]

Not even the icy grip of death can deny you your goal.

Prerequisite: Iron Will, Con 13+

Benefit: When you are reduced to zero or fewer hit points, but not below -10, you may immediately take a partial action. You may not use this ability in response to spells that instantly destroy your character, such as *disintegrate* or any other spell that kills without dealing damage.

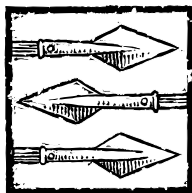
Warsinger [Special]

The skalds of the Legion of Ten Thousand heroes march into battle with their brethren, and even when locked in the grip of battle madness they sing the *Litanies of Bravery* and inspire greatness in the Legion.

Prerequisite: Barbarian level 1+, Bard level 1+, Perform rank 6+, Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes member

Benefit: You may use your bardic music ability even while raging. Both *inspire courage* and *inspire greatness* impart an additional +1 morale bonus to attack and damage rolls when you use your bardic music ability while raging. When your rage ends, this additional bonus ends with it, though the normal effects of *inspire courage* and *inspire greatness* may continue.

Special: You may only use this feat once per day.



GOALS

The Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes fights for glory. Warbands often seek out desperate battles or place themselves in hopeless positions in order to earn a place in the skalds' songs, and to effect the passing of the heroes into their next lives. The Battlefiends pursue few goals as a group. Each Legionnaire follows an intensely personal quest for glory, and warbands gather and disperse far too often for an enduring political or social agenda to form. The typical warband seeks out opportunities to fight worthy foes and spread the Legion's teachings in hopes of uncovering and recruiting reincarnated heroes. Some Legionnaires select particular champions or heroes as targets and seek them out for a battle to the death. Whenever armies clash, the warbands are sure to follow, eagerly seeking out battles to throw themselves into. Often heedless of the reasons behind the battle, they attack both sides with equal ferocity. Most military commanders see the group as a dangerously unpredictable headache.

Adventuring Legionnaires journey prefer to build reputations on their own, seeking great treasures and besting fabulous beasts in a quest to live up to their heroic heritage. Warriors of the Ten Thousand Heroes are renowned for their ferocity in battle, and few parties in need of a brave swordsman turn one away. While a Legionnaire often drags his companions into trouble with his hotheaded tendencies and hunger for glory, no one is as dependable as a Legionnaire in a pinch. Even against overwhelming odds, Legionnaires don't turn their backs on their friends, and can be counted on to fight to the bitter end.

IMPORTANT RITUALS

RITE OF TESTING

This ceremony serves to induct new members into the Ten Thousand Heroes. The petitioner must tell the tale of his exploits in battle to the acknowledged leaders of a warband. This portion of the ritual is the most critical part of the process. The petitioner must provide a sufficiently rousing retelling of his deeds, punctuating his story with physical reenactments and demonstrations.

The trappings of the rite vary with the nature of the warband and available resources. The Legion generally does not go for gaudy, elaborate ceremonies. Typically, the Rite of Testing takes place in a secluded area far from the prying eyes of outsiders. The warband forms a circle around the petitioner and all members, not just the leadership, hear and watch the telling of his exploits. Once the petitioner completes his story, the warband leaders confer amongst themselves.

If the petitioner impresses the warband's leaders, he must then engage in a non-lethal duel with one or more volunteers from among the group's members. There is no limit to the number of Legionnaires who can challenge a petitioner, and each duel must be fought one after another with little time for rest. Unpopular petitioners often find themselves facing the entire warband, one warrior after another.

Morvak, Dwarven Hero

4th-Level Dwarf Barbarian/4th-Level Ranger

CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d12 + 4d10 + 24; hp 95; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 *leather armor* +3); Atk*: melee +14/+9 (1d8+5/crit x3, *battleaxe* +3), melee +12/+7 (1d8+3/crit x3, *battleaxe* +1); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL CN; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 11

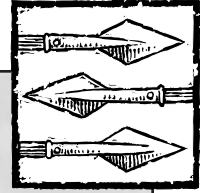
* These are Morvak's attack numbers when he fights with a single weapon. When he attacks with both weapons, use these statistics instead: melee +10/+5 (1d8 +5/crit x3, *battleaxe* +3) and melee +8 (1d8+3/crit x3, *battleaxe* +1).

Special Attacks and Qualities: fast movement, uncanny dodge, favored enemy (human), rage (twice per day), two-weapon fighting

Skills: Climb +11, Hide +11, Jump +11, Listen +10, Move Silently +11, Wilderness Lore +10

Feats: Ambidexterity, Power Attack, Sunder, Track, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (*battleaxe*)

Possessions: *Leather armor* +3, *battleaxe* +3 ("Stonecutter"), *battleaxe* +1 ("Shieldbreaker"), three *potions of cure light wounds*, a *potion of neutralize poison*, and a *cloak of the bat*



Bekkis, Half-Orc Hero

9th-Level Half-Orc Barbarian

CR 9; SZ M (humanoid); HD 9d12 + 18; hp 84; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 19 (+2 dex, +7 chainmail +2); Atk: melee +15/+10 (1d8+6/crit x3 + 2d8 sonic damage, *thundering warhammer* +2); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ fast movement, uncanny dodge, rage (three times per day); AL CN; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 18, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 6, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +9, Jump +9, Ride +10

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack

Possessions: Chainmail +2, *thundering warhammer* +2, *earring of feather fall*

DUELS

Legionnaires fight duels to demonstrate their martial skill and gain respect amongst their fellows, which can be leveraged into leadership of a warband. Ten Thousand Heroes warriors also engage in duels to resolve personal conflicts. When two warriors claim to represent the same hero, they often fight a duel to determine who truly is the current incarnation of the hero. Duels are somber occasions. While the Legion glorifies war and violence, its leaders attempt to keep infighting to a minimum. Legionnaires fight each other without weapons and armor, and the duel lasts until only one warrior remains standing.

IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS

MORVAK AND BEKKIS

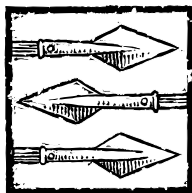
While the Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes can bring together a rather diverse group of warriors, no pairing is quite as odd as that of the dwarf champion Morvak and the half-orc warrior maiden Bekkis. The pair's alliance can be traced to their mutually held belief that they are both reincarnated forms of the ancient hero Ammaris, the grandson of Corm Hammerfist and, as legend tells it, the first mortal to slay a great wyrm in single combat. When the two first met and learned of each others' belief, they fought a duel to determine who truly embodied the spirit of Ammaris. Both flew into their rages in combat, and when it was over both Morvak and Bekkis were sprawled out on the ground having beaten each other down to the point where, once their rages ended, both collapsed from exhaus-

tion. The two agreed that this was a sign that both of them, through some fluke in the cycle of life, were reincarnated aspects of Ammaris. This thought has some disturbing implications for the Legion as a whole. The accepted teaching is that since there are only Ten Thousand Heroes in the pantheon, and only Ten Thousand mortals can embody them at any given time. If more than Ten Thousand heroes actually wander the earth, the completion of the final prophecy is that much more difficult, perhaps impossible, for the Legion to ever actually accomplish. Morvak and Bekkis continue to spread the word of their metaphysical insight to all who will listen, and a rift between those who accept their revelations and those who view it as a heresy is slowly beginning to form. Considering the violent nature of the Legion and the importance placed on its prophesized fate, this new school of thought may lead to a violent split within the ranks of the Ten Thousand Heroes.

MORVAK

Morvak originally served as a bounty hunter for his clan, journeying out into the world to track down debtors, criminals, and other non-dwarves who broke clan law or cheated the clan on trade deals. Morvak's natural skill landed him the job, but his tendency to follow his own curiosity rather than the clan's strict dictates made him somewhat ineffective at his given task. Feeling out of place in the highly regimented society of his homeland, Morvak took to spending more and more time away from the clan, living life as he wanted to and searching for a community that fit his views on life. Morvak found what he was looking for when he met a skald of the Ten Thousand Heroes. The group's teachings on the nature of the heroes' reincarnation explained why Morvak, a dwarf by birth but a human hero by nature, did not fit in with the clan.

Morvak is tall and lean for a dwarf at 4' 10" and 150 lbs; his wiry but strong frame is rare amongst



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

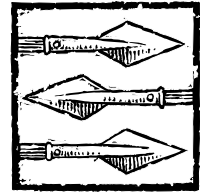
his kind. His hair and forked beard are blonde, his eyes an icy blue, and his skin pale.

An easygoing fellow who prefers to let his actions do his talking for him, Morvak is quiet and slow to excite. He prefers to let the road take him where it will, and is always eager to see what lies over the horizon, unless Bekkis has other ideas. He trusts Bekkis with his life, and truly believes that the two are separate aspects of the same hero. Morvak prefers to listen to others speak, and he delights in hearing tales of the road, though he is too modest to spin tales of his own glories.

BEKKIS

Bekkis' father was the chieftain of a barbarian tribe, but his bond to her mother, and Bekkis' subsequent birth, was caused by political need. Fearful of encroaching settlers from civilized lands, the barbarians and a neighboring tribe of orcs temporarily united to drive back the steady stream of pioneers and frontiersmen. In the end, the alliance failed, as a large army of mercenaries marched against the barbarian and orc settlements and scattered the tribes to the wind. It was during this invasion that Bekkis, long treated as a common orc serving wench rather than as the daughter of a barbarian chieftain, first heard the call of the Ten Thousand Heroes. With the mercenaries burning her village around her, Bekkis snatched her father's magical warhammer from his dead hands and proceeded to pound her way past the attacking warriors. During the battle, she received a vicious blow the head. For a moment, the wound left her dazed, but suddenly she felt a sudden renewal of her energy. Visions of battles from legend filled her mind as she threw herself at her foes with renewed vigor, driving them away and leading the few tribesmen who still lived to safety. Since that time, Bekkis has wandered the land, testing her martial skill at every opportunity and striving to live up to the visions of glory that touched her mind that day.





Bekkis towers over most men, standing an intimidating and well muscled 6' 8". She keeps her head shaved bald, and her orcish features are somewhat muted. Her ears are pointed, her canines only slightly larger than normal, and her skin is a dusky brown. Bekkis feels uncertain in social situations, and makes up for that by using her physical presence to intimidate others. She tends to boast of her exploits, many of which involve her stumbling into some dire situation more out of poor planning than her desire to test her mettle in battle. She has a soft spot for children of all races, and once single-handedly routed an ogre tribe she had allied with after its chieftain suggested murdering a captured group of human women and children.

SCIANA OF THE SCREAMING STEEL

While the Ten Thousand Heroes has long been a nuisance in more civilized regions, the group's chaotic nature and haphazard organization prevent it from ever becoming an organized menace. It is befitting then, that the one person who stands the best chance of molding the Legion into an organized fighting force chanced into that position through little more than bad luck.

Sciana Nightblossom was an adventuring elf wizard with a pronounced greedy streak. While attempting

to steal a treasure hoard from an abandoned temple, she became victim of a horrifying trap. As she began to shovel the coins into the sack she brought with her, Sciana felt an alien presence touch her mind: the gods of that place were not gone, and they dealt harshly with thieves. To Sciana's horror, the gold and iron items before her melted into a pool of liquid, which surged towards her now paralyzed form. The treasure that she sought to steal melded into her body, replaced parts of her bones, organs, and even her skin with iron and gold. The transformation left her alive but half-mad with agony, stricken by the bitter curse of forgotten gods. Sciana stumbled from the temple clutching the only item still remaining from the treasure horde, an enchanted scimitar. As she slowly made her way back to town in a haze of pain, robbers fell upon her. During the attack, Sciana underwent the first of her rages. Focussing the agony of her transformation, she launched herself into a berserker fury. Though an unskilled fighter, Sciana made up for her ineffectiveness with her supernatural stamina. The robbers' weapons bounced off of her half-metal form, and the few blows that struck true did little to wear down the battle-mad elf maid. Since that encounter, Sciana has sought battle wherever she can find it. Only when in her rages can she push the agony of her curse from her mind.

Sciana Nightblossom

9th-Level Elf Barbarian/3rd-Level Wizard

CR 13; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d4 + 9d12 + 108; hp 194; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 25 (+6 natural, +3 Dex, +3 *ring of protection* +3, +3 *small steel shield* +2); Atk: melee +13/+8 (1d6+2/crit 12-20/x2 + 2d6 sonic damage, *screaming scimitar* +4), ranged +13/+8 (1d8/crit x3, longbow); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ uncan-ny dodge, rage three times per day, spell use; AL CE; SV Fort +16, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 28, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 18

Skills: Alchemy +9, Climb +10, Concentration +10, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (ancient history) +9, Knowledge (demonology) +9, Knowledge (tactics) +10, Ride +10, Spellcraft +10, Wilderness Lore +5.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Critical (scimitar), Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Possessions: *Screaming scimitar* +4, *ring of protection* +3, *small steel shield* +2, *horn of blasting*, *wand of lightning bolts* (CL 6, 22 charges), and a *chime of opening*. Her spellbook contains the following spells:

0 Level — all

1st Level — *burning hands*, *expeditious retreat*, *protection from good*, *silent image*, *true strike*

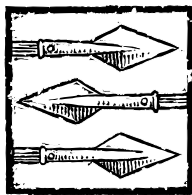
2nd Level — *hideous laughter*, *rope trick*, *shatter*

Spells: Sciana is able to cast 4/3/2 spells per day. She normally has the following spells prepared:

0 Level — *detect magic*, *flare*, *light*, *resistance*

1st Level — *protection from good*, *true strike* (2)

2nd Level — *hideous laughter*, *shatter*



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

NEW MAGICAL WEAPON: *Screaming Scimitar* +4

This unique magical weapon emits the sound of a shrill, human scream when it is swung in battle. When its user scores a critical hit, the *screaming scimitar* deals an extra 2d6 points of sonic damage to its target. In addition, the *screaming scimitar* counts as a keen weapon, doubling the scimitar's normal threat range from 18 to 15. *Screaming* is the equivalent of a +3 enchantment.

Caster Level: 10th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *keen edge*, *shout*; *Market Price:* 98,315 gp

Sciana now leads a growing warband of Ten Thousand Heroes warriors. Her enormous endurance, her naturally stunning looks, and commanding personality have whipped many warriors into a fervor. With each victory, more Legionnaires flock to her banner. Many believe that she is the direct incarnation of a forgotten hero, returned to the mortal realm to pave the way for the return of Corm. Others argue that she herself is Corm born into elvish form. Whatever the case, Sciana's madness and constant thirst for violence have set her warband on a campaign of terror. The band attacks both defenseless settlements and well armed patrols with equal fervor. Sciana's insane courage and uncaring bent have drawn many evil warriors to her banner, and threaten to make the Ten Thousand Heroes a powerful ally of chaos and evil.

Sciana stands 5' 6". She is a slender elf maid with long, ragged red hair. Her pale skin is tiger-striped with bands of iron and gold that glint in the sun.

A DVENTURE SEEDS

TROUBLE BREWING

A warband of the Legion of Ten Thousand Heroes arrives in town, ready to spend its hard-earned treasure on drink and other pleasures of civilization. As the rowdy warriors move from tavern to tavern, they invariably incite a bar brawl and trash the neighborhood in their drunken state. The locals respond in kind, and soon a riot breaks out. The player characters, now trapped in the riot, must

either escape the violence, join in, or work with the authorities to restore order. But doing this without using deadly force against normally hard-working townsfolk may be more than they can handle.

Meanwhile, the evil wizard who hired the Legionnaires to wreck havoc within the city uses the riot as cover for a daring raid on a local temple, where an object of incredible power is stored. The larger part of the warband, led by Sciana herself, begins its all-out assault on the fortified temple. The characters may begin the night seeking to restore order and end it fighting to save a city from the destruction that threatens from within.

THE STAND

The kingdom is beset with raiding tribes of barbarians and other bandits. The raiders spared the characters' hometown in return for tribute, but the barbarians will soon return and the town has nothing to offer for its safety. The player characters must recruit warriors to stand against the bandits, but with little money on hand the town cannot afford mercenaries. The town's only hope lies in recruiting a local band of heroic Legionnaires before the bandits return. The characters must journey to find the small warband that has collected around Morvak and Bekkis, then impress the two with their own skill and the glory that the heroic defense of the town offers. Given Bekkis' background, she is the one most likely to be interested in this proposal.

But even after the warband arrives in town, the characters must organize the defense and rally the Legionnaires against the bandits. Farmers' fields will soon shine with the blood of a glorious battle.

WAY OF THE WOLF

Those who know the truth of it speak in whisper ... of the night when lightning cracked the sky and the northern winds rushed down across the countryside. It is said that the Divine Wolf himself stalked its prey on mortal ground that night; strange portents were seen throughout the land, and Altessa received her holy vision of the Blood Claw and the Wolf's Messenger.

It was two years later, to the day, that the Wolf's Messenger descended from the northern mountains and came before Altessa in corporeal form, naming himself Lupin Tehran and lifting from her shoulders the burden of the holy charge.

— The Story of the Divine Wolf's Coming

ORIGINS

Nine years ago a roving band of lycanthropes attacked a remote farmhouse. The bloodthirsty creatures ruthlessly slaughtered the family that lived there, leaving for dead a sole survivor — a teenaged girl by the name of Altessa. Tragically, Altessa's ordeal was just beginning, for she had been infected by the dread curse of lycanthropy. Feverish and dying the girl transformed into her wolfish form. Consumed by a blood frenzy she feasted upon the corpses of her fallen family and then collapsed.

She awoke two days later — caked in the dried blood of her loved ones. Confused, frightened, driven into a stark terror, she fled her home. For weeks she prowled the countryside, descending ever deeper into the madness which was slowly claiming her mind. If all had continued as it had begun, it is doubtless that Altessa would have been lost forever to her insanity.

But as she balanced on the precipice between the world of man and the world of animal, devouring the freshly slain carcass of a deer, a golden light spread over the blood-spattered snow in which she crouched. The part of her which was succumbing to her madness screamed at her to flee, but that small corner of her mind which clung tenuously to humanity cried out for the light and held her in her place.

As she stood there, frozen in a lingering moment of indecision, a wolf — perfect in shape and proportion; regal in its countenance — stepped forth from the glowing, golden ball. For long moments the two figures stood in utter silence, and then, as quickly as it had come, the golden light — and the wolf that it had brought — was gone.

But in their wake they had left to Altessa a glorious vision: this had been the Divine Wolf,

the celestial personification of lupine nature. In coming before her in his spirit form, he had granted to her mind an epiphany — a glimpse into the heart of the perfect essence of the wolf's existence.

Altessa saw the Way of the Wolf — a philosophy based upon the principles of the wolf, and the key to calming the frightening excesses which fought within her own soul. She saw the Blood Claw — the society of lycanthropes that the Way would form. And she saw the prophecy of the Wolf's Messenger, whose coming she was to prepare for, and who would bring the Blood Claw to all the world.

Seeing herself charged with a holy mission, Altessa began her work by searching the land far and wide. She gathered to herself a small band of lost lycanthropes and others who were drawn to the Way (see Initiation on page 122). These would become the First Pack.

FORMAL NAME: THE WAY OF THE WOLF

NICKNAMES: THE WAY, BLOOD CLAWS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: A DIABOLISTIC SECT OF WEREWOLVES WHO ARE BEHOLDEN TO LUPIN TEHRAN, A WEREWOLF LICH WHO THEY THINK IS THE UNLIVING EMBODIMENT OF THE DIVINE WOLF.

SYMBOL: BLOOD RED WOLF'S PAW WITH EXTENDED CLAWS.

PATRON DIETY: THE DIVINE WOLF



NEW DEITY
The Divine Wolf

Alignment: Neutral

Domains: Animal, Strength, Trickery

Typical Worshipers: Werewolves, monks. (Note: Werewolves are not considered a species for this entry.)

Description: The Divine Wolf is the embodiment of lupine nature — both physically and spiritually. His worshipers idealize the prowess of the wolf's form — its strength and speed. At the same time that the corporeal is idealized, however, it is balanced with the temperance of the wolf's mind — the strength of the pack, the tenets of rightful pride and honor. The Divine Wolf has been known to walk the earth, particularly during the hours of the full moon, but he will not often intervene in the affairs of his followers. He prefers, instead, to let his mere presence provoke action. When raised to act, however, he is said to strike with the fury of a thousand wolf packs.

Two years after Altessa received her vision, the first of her prophecies was fulfilled: the Wolf's Messenger came to Altessa, naming himself Lupin Tehran. With his coming, the ascendancy of the Way of the Wolf was at hand.

ORGANIZATION

The Way of the Wolf — also commonly known as the Blood Claws — is a cabal of werewolves, joined by their faith in the Divine Wolf and the Prophecies of Altessa. The sect is structured around two separate, but interconnected, hierarchies: the Packs and the Castes. At the top of each hierarchy is Lupin Tehran, the Wolf's Messenger, and Altessa, the Wolf's Prophetess and Tehran's second-in-command.

CASTES

There are nine castes; new initiates are inducted into the first caste and Tehran himself is the sole occupant of the ninth. Each intervening caste is possessed of fewer members and greater power. Advancement is achieved through the performance of noteworthy deeds, which are judged by the members of the eighth caste following the petition by a third party from a higher caste.

Identifying the caste to which a Blood Claw belongs can be easily done in a single glance; ritual scarring (see below) is performed whenever an individual's caste changes. A silver-edged wolf's claw is used to create a gash on the forearm, and special herbs are used to promote the formation of scar tissue. Each gash represents a single caste level.

PACKS

While the castes measure the individual importance of any member of the Way, the core structure of the cult is that of the pack: groups of six to ten werewolves that each function as semi-autonomous units.

Each pack is led by an Alpha Claw (typically referred to simply as the pack's "alpha"), who reports directly to one or more of the First Pack. Any member of a pack is capable of challenging the alpha's dominance and leadership, but this is done through a specific structure and form (see below).

LUPIN TEHRAN

Lupin Tehran is not the Wolf's Messenger.

Whether or not the Divine Wolf — and the prophecies he imparted to Altessa — are true, or merely the delusion created by the injured mind of a young woman who was deeply hurt and psychologically unstable, is a decision left up to the GM. Whatever the case may be, however, Tehran is merely an impostor.

A century ago Lupin Tehran was Tehran Hadalek, a wizard of unsurpassed skill whose accomplishments had made him beloved of the people. Unfortunately, his talent and success had also earned him powerful enemies. One night, while he studied a set of arcane rituals, one of these enemies (whose identity is a mystery which haunts Tehran to this day) ambushed him in his own tower — besetting upon him a troupe of mercenary lycanthropes. After a vicious and sorcerous battle, Tehran succeeded in driving back his attackers, but not before a werewolf infected him with lycanthropy.



Lupin Tehran, False Wolf's Messenger

11th-Level Werewolf Lich Wizard

CR 15; SZ M (shapechanger, undead); HD 11d12; hp 85 hp; Init +1 (Dex), +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative) as wolf or hybrid; Spd 30 ft., 50 ft. as wolf or hybrid; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural), 23 (+3 Dex, +5 natural, +5 natural) as wolf or hybrid; Atk: touch +8 (1d8+5 and paralysis, damaging touch), melee +8 (1d3 subdual, unarmed strike), melee +9 (1d6+1, bite as wolf or hybrid); Face 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 14, Dex 13, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 16 (Str 16, Dex 17 as wolf or hybrid)

Special Attacks and Qualities: damaging touch, fear aura, paralyzing touch, wolf empathy, spells, curse of lycanthropy, trip as wolf or hybrid, damage reduction 15/+1 (vulnerable to silver when in wolf or hybrid form), undead, +4 turn resistance, immunities (cold, electricity, polymorph, mind-affecting attacks)

Skills: Concentration +12, Scry +5, Spellcraft +7, Disguise +7, Gather Information +9, Heal +7, Hide +7 (+10 as hybrid/wolf), Knowledge (Arcana) +6, Listen +7, Wilderness Lore +10, Control Shape +10.

Feats: Blind-fight, Brew Potion, Cleave, Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Maximize Spell, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Summon Familiar

With the combined force of both lich and werewolf forms, Tehran is a truly fearsome foe. In combat he prefers his hybrid form as it allows him to both cast spells and use his physical abilities. If his spells are unavailable to him, however, he prefers his wolf form. He carries standard coins, double goods, and double items.

Spells: (5/5/5/4/3/2/1) Tehran usually has the following spells memorized:

- 0 Level — *mage hand*, *detect magic* (x2), *read magic*
- 1st Level — *mage armor*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike* (x2), *charm person*
- 2nd Level — *detect thoughts* (x2), *darkness*, *invisibility*, *whispering wind*
- 3rd Level — *dispel magic*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *hold person*, *lightning Bolt*
- 4th Level — *stoneskin*, *remove curse*, *scrying*
- 5th Level — *rary's telepathic bond*, *cone of cold*
- 6th Level — *circle of death*

Trip (Ex): If Tehran hits with a bite attack he can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip Tehran.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Immunities (Ex): As a lich, Tehran is immune to cold, electricity, polymorph, and mind-affecting attacks.

Damage Reduction (Ex): In human form, Tehran (as a lich) gains 15/+1 damage reduction. When in hybrid or wolf form Tehran gains 15/+1/silver damage reduction (so only magical silver weapons can affect him normally).

Wolf Empathy (Ex): Tehran can communicate and empathize with normal or dire wolves, giving him a +4 racial bonus to checks when influencing the animal's attitude and allowing the communication of simple concepts and (if the animal is friendly) commands, such as "friend," "foe," "flee," and "attack."

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su): Any humanoid hit by Tehran's bite attack in wolf form must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 15) or contract lycanthropy.

Unable to cure himself, Tehran first turned to the priesthood — but his requests for aid seemed to be rejected by the gods. In desperation, he turned to one of his oldest colleagues, only to have his trust betrayed. Branded as a public evil, Tehran found the people suddenly turned against him, and he was forced to flee before the threat of a riotous lynching.

Finding himself increasingly isolated from the rest of humanity, Tehran delved ever deeper into the black arts. Finally, having abandoned all that he had once

believed in, he began preparations for the twisted rituals which would allow him to transform himself into a lich — believing that the dark power of this undead form would free him from his curse.

It did not. Instead, Tehran found his natural form imbued with an immense combination of lycanthropic and undead might. Having tasted power, he now lusted for more. Knowing that society would turn against him out of jealousy and righteous fear, Tehran withdrew from it — taking up residence in



NEW MAGIC ITEM:

Wolf's Paw

Lupin Tehran's phylactery was a wolf's paw stuffed with strips of magical parchment. He carries this on a chain around his neck, and the unique negative energies which fueled his transformation also enchanted the item as per a *staff of healing*, allowing him use of the following spells: *Lesser restoration* (1 charge), *Cure serious wounds* (1 charge), *Remove blindness/deafness* (1 charge), *Remove disease* (1 charge)

Unlike a *staff of healing*, however, Tehran's wolf's paw was also contaminated with his lycanthropic life force. Whenever it is used on a humanoid who is not already lycanthropic, there is a ten percent chance that he or she will be affected as if by a *Curse of Lycanthropy* special attack delivered by a werewolf. This means that the victim must make a Fortitude save of DC 15 or contract lycanthropy.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *lesser restoration*, *cure serious wounds*, *remove blindness/deafness*, *remove disease*; *Market Price:* 33,000 gp; *Weight:* 4 oz.





Altesa, Prophetess of the Divine Wolf

4th-Level Werewolf Fighter

CR 6; SZ M (shapechanger); HD 4d8+4 (4d8+16 as wolf or hybrid); hp 26 (38 as wolf or hybrid); Init +1 (+1 Dex), +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative) as wolf or hybrid; Spd 30 ft., 50 ft. as wolf or hybrid; AC 13 (+2 natural, +1 Dex), 17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural) as wolf or hybrid; Atk: melee +6 (1d3, unarmed strike), melee +3 (1d6+3, bite as wolf or hybrid); Face 5 ft. X 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 17 (Str 17, Dex 17, Con 16 as wolf or hybrid)

Special Attacks and Qualities: trip, curse of lycanthropy as wolf or hybrid, wolf empathy, scent and damage reduction 15/silver as wolf or hybrid

Skills: Balance +3 (+5 as wolf or hybrid), Diplomacy +7, Gather Information +5, Heal +3, Knowledge (Divine Wolf) +6, Sense Motive +6, Wilderness Lore +10.

Feats: Blind-fight, Cleave, Deflect Arrows, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Finesse (bite) as wolf or hybrid.

Altesa dislikes physical conflict, and would prefer to find a peaceful resolution to conflict. However, she has also learned the necessity of balance and will not hesitate to defend herself or those she cares about. When forced into combat she tends to prefer stealth and subterfuge to open conflict, but if backed into a corner those who have raised her ire had best beware.

Trip (Ex): If Altesa hits with a bite attack she can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip Altesa.

Wolf Empathy (Ex): Altesa can communicate and empathize with normal or dire wolves, giving her a +4 racial bonus to checks when influencing the animal's attitude and allowing the communication of simple concepts and (if the animal is friendly) commands, such as "friend," "foe," "flee," and "attack."

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su): Any humanoid hit by Altesa's bite attack in wolf form must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 15) or contract lycanthropy.

a remote keep in the northern mountains. Despite his own isolation there, Tehran would keep his intricate network of associates and spies active — always keeping one eye open for an opportunity to wreak his revenge upon the gods and the land that had betrayed and forsaken him.

Finally, seeing the preparations that Altesa was taking in the aftermath of her visions, he saw his opportunity. With careful preparations of his own, Tehran waited until the right moment to present himself to the would-be Prophetess, using his unique lycanthropic nature and magical powers to present himself as the Wolf's Messenger.

Despite his elaborate preparations, Altesa saw through his deception. This only forced him to place her under a *charm monster* spell, which he has carefully maintained ever since. With Altesa firmly in his thrall, Tehran has begun to remold the Way into a tool of his own making and purpose. Although still true to the word of Altesa's dream, much of what Tehran has wrought is a perversion of its spirit.

ALTESSA

Both beautiful and intelligent, Altesa is naturally an outgoing, charming young woman — despite the traumatic experiences she has lived through. Under Tehran's enchantment, however, Altesa is blind to wrongs which would normally outrage her and ignorant of much that Tehran has done — and plans to do — in her name and the name of her god.

In addition to serving as one of the primary spiritual leaders of the Way, Altesa is also of major importance within the Blood Claw — serving as the Alpha Claw of the First Pack. Although Tehran is slowly working to undermine her authority within the sect (at which point he will most likely dispose of her), her role remains important and she is looked up to as a natural leader by most of the sect.



THE FIRST PACK

In addition to Altessa there are seven other members of the First Pack: Sahra, Itholio, Gregor, Farthan, Elizmeth, Mohwal, and Pelen. These lycanthropes were not only the first to follow the teachings of the Way, but are also some of the most powerful members of both the castes and the packs. All of them have key leadership positions, and are the backbone on which the sect exists.

One of Tehran's major goals has been to subvert the First Pack's loyalty to Altessa. Using a combination of his supposed religious importance and a series of carefully constructed situations, he is gradually making her appear incompetent and even treacherous, sowing doubt into the hearts and minds of her closest followers. Although Sahra and Itholio remain fiercely loyal, the others are not far from turning against the woman who was once their friend and savior. Pelen, in fact, is already a secret member of the Inner Circle.

THE INNER CIRCLE

Unbeknownst to the First Pack, there is another group vying for power within the Way — Tehran's Inner Circle.

Ever since he assumed his role as the Wolf's Messenger, Tehran has slowly been gathering his own personal base of power within the Way. By targeting the baser instincts of carefully selected individuals and stoking their religious fervor through a set of diabolic mystery rituals, Tehran has the absolute and total loyalty of slightly more than two dozen cult members. Indeed, the participants of this Inner Circle are — to all outward appearances — normal members of the Way. As a result, Tehran has been free to use them as the basis for his corrupting influence on the cult — and as spies upon those who might turn against him when his true intentions are revealed.

The exception to this general rule of normalcy is a pack whose sole loyalty lies with Tehran. Known as the Black Wolves, this pack is capable of carrying out a wide range of specialized tasks for the Wolf's Messenger. Its members are among Tehran's most trusted servants.

(The precise number of Inner Circle members should be adjusted depending on just how large and pervasive the GM wishes to make the Way of the Wolf as a whole within their campaign world.)



MYTHS AND BELIEFS

The Way of the Wolf is centered on two basic beliefs: Balance and Temperance. They perceive existence as a continual struggle between the animal and civilized portions of the sentient soul, and they believe that the way to calm this struggle and find peace and happiness is the successful balancing of these opposite tendencies. In the highly structured life of the wolf, they find a model by which this balance may be achieved. Whenever one tendency is given to excess, they hold that it must be tempered by elements of the opposing tendency.

These basic tenets are lent their strength and authority by the Divine Wolf, from whom they were received as prophecy. The Way, therefore, cannot be understood simply as a philosophy, but must also be interpreted through the religious imagery by which it is delivered. As such, the Way rests upon three semi-mythological figures: the Divine Wolf, who is the primal realization and source of the Way; the Wolf's Prophetess, who delivers the Way to mortals and is charged with the Sacred Prophecies; and, finally, the Wolf's Messenger, who not only fulfills the Prophecies, but who is also the living (or, in the case of Tehran, unliving) embodiment of the Way.

The term "Sacred Prophecies" (or simply "the Prophecies") refers collectively to the group of visions and foreknowledge granted to Altessa by the Divine Wolf. Altessa has received a number of seemingly minor prophecies — which are usually cryptic and always ambiguous (such is the way of gods) — but there are three prophecies which are of extreme importance: The Coming of the Wolf's Messenger, the Day of Crimson, and the Society of the Blood Claw.

As far as the Way is concerned, the prophecy of the Coming of the Wolf's Messenger has already been fulfilled (although, as noted above, this is not strictly true). This prophecy (and the symbolism that accompanies it) is the basic foundation on which the cult's mystical nature rests. Tehran's essential corruption of what should have been an immaculate process, if it is ever discovered, will have crucial repercussions: it may destroy the Way. It might tear the Way of the Wolf apart, as distorted loyalties side with both Tehran and Altessa. Or, on the other hand, it may leave them stronger — betrayal, deceit, and an unholy tester of faith are rich grounds of mythological growth, after all.

The second prophecy, the Day of Crimson, is the central event around which the Way's goals are focused. It is the moment when the truth of the Way

will be seen by all, and the Society of the Blood Claw (see below) will be realized. During his reign of power, Tehran has perverted this prophecy — turning the blood imagery of cleansing and purification into the blood imagery of violence, destruction, and warfare. Blood, as a symbol, holds great importance for the Way of the Wolf, and this perversion of the Day of Crimson is indicative of the subtle, but pervasive, changes that this false god has wrought.

Finally, in the prophecy of the Society of the Blood Claw, the religious and philosophic sides of the Way are most clearly revealed. This prophecy consists of a simple vision, in which Altessa saw a glorious future day in which the principles of the Way have been used to structure a great society. The pack and caste structures that the Way uses today are the basic building blocks on which Altessa, and her followers, believe this great society will be built. Tehran, for his part, does not put any credence into these grand visions of societal reshaping. His intentions for the Blood Claw are deadly simple: to create a fiercely loyal fighting force of supernatural creatures, which he can wield for his own tyrannical revenge.

One last, fundamental, component of this belief system is of the utmost importance: the members of the Way of the Wolf are all werewolves. Although they work towards a future in which everyone will prosper under the Society of the Blood Claw (in fact, a key component of the Day of Crimson is this transition from a lycanthropic to a non-lycanthropic domain), they perceive themselves as the chosen people who will lead the rest of humanity into the bright future that has been prophesied. In essence, they see within the werewolf a physical manifestation of the Way's essential philosophy — the balance between animal and man.

An interesting repercussion of this belief system is the great hatred that the Way harbors towards natural lycanthropes. They perceive the lycanthropic races as blasphemous entities created by dark and unnatural powers, with the intention of perverting the purity of the Divine Wolf's vision and the realization of the Blood Claw. The Way's philosophy towards lycanthropes other than werewolves is, as yet, unclear. Individual members of the Way hold a wide range of differing reactions — ranging from murderous rage to tolerance to open acceptance.





RITUALS

The rituals that shape the lives of the followers of the Divine Wolf find their genesis in a peculiar blurring between the mysteries of the Way and the structures of the Claw. Like the belief system itself, these rituals have a significance within both the religious and secular world, and derive their meaning and nature from both.

INITIATION

As noted above, the members of the Way are all werewolves afflicted with lycanthropy. As such, new members basically come in two varieties: those who have already contracted lycanthropy, and those who have not.

Those who have already been afflicted with lycanthropy are almost never rejected by the cult. In fact, members of the Way are constantly searching out such lost souls, hoping to give them the same guidance and help that they received in their hour of need.

Those who have not been afflicted with lycanthropy, on the other hand, face a slightly more rigorous test. At least three members of the Way, of the fifth caste or above, must approve such members before they can be initiated.

The ritual of initiation is the same in either case — with one small difference: previously afflicted lycanthropes are initiated on the night of the new moon (symbolizing their rebirth into the cult), while those who are not werewolves are initiated on the night of the full moon (symbolizing the coming fulfillment of their natural destiny as one of the Divine Wolf's chosen).

The ritual is carried out in a centralized location by a member of the eighth caste (usually a wolf of the First Pack if one is available). First, all of the initiates present at the ceremony are led in three oaths: the Oath of Faith (to the Divine Wolf), the Oath of Loyalty (to the Blood Claw and the Wolf's Messenger), and the Oath of Destiny (to the Prophecies of Altessa).

Next, each initiate is brought forward to receive his or her First Scar. The individual holds out both forearms, and the ritual leader — guided by the holy will of the Divine Wolf — chooses which forearm is to be scarred. During the Initiation of the New Moon, the Silver Claw (a silver-edged wolf's

claw) is used to create a gash on the forearm, and special herbs are used to promote the formation of scar tissue. During the Initiation of the Full Moon, the leader scars the initiate with his own claws and teeth while in hybrid form — infecting him or her with lycanthropy.

When Lupin Tehran presented himself to Altessa he, like all other members of the Way, underwent the ritual of initiation. Altessa herself gave him the First Scar. The moment at which she did so is known as the Revelation — when the Wolf's Messenger's arrival became known to all who followed the Way. Those who were present at the ritual still speak of it in hushed and reverent tones. Those who shared his initiation ritual are granted a special deference.

THE SCARRING

An initiate's First Scar symbolizes the beginning of his journey along the Way of the Wolf, and admittance into the Society of the Blood Claw. As he advances upwards through the Way's castes the Silver Claw will be used on him again — a single gash for each caste.

In addition to simply communicating the werewolf's caste, the scars also indicate the reason for which he has been honored. A scar upon the left arm indicates a feat of cunning. A scar upon the right arm indicates a feat of strength. As a general rule the number of scars on each arm are kept in balance. (So, for example, if a particular werewolf was a member of the third caste — with two scars on his left arm, and a single scar on his right — he would be expected to perform a feat of strength in order to gain a second scar on his right arm and admittance to the fourth caste.) Some rare exceptions are made, however. There are even rumors of one member of the seventh caste possessed of scars only upon his right arm.

A scarring ritual is a major event in the life of a Blood Claw. The ritual is performed in the presence of the wolf who petitioned on behalf of the recipient and one or more members of the eighth caste (including those who approved the petition). Packmates of the werewolf receiving the scar are usually in attendance as well.



ALPHA DUEL

The Alpha Duel is the specific ritual by which one member of a pack can challenge, and perhaps replace, the Alpha Claw of the pack. Essentially, the Duel is a formalized version of a dominance fight within an actual wolf pack. It is composed of three parts: The Challenge, the Choosing, and the Duel.

A Challenge can be issued at any time, but must be done in the presence of a third member of the pack. This immediately triggers the Choosing, which determines three things: the time the fight shall be held, the place at which it will be held, and the weapon that will be used. The alpha being challenged chooses first, then the challenger chooses, and finally the alpha chooses whichever category still remains.

Finally, the Duel itself takes place — as laid out by the rules established during the Choosing. Each participant is permitted a Second. A unanimous decision by the rest of the pack can cancel the Duel at any time (leaving control of the pack within the hands of the alpha). The alpha is also free to cede dominance to his challenger at any time.

SACRIFICE

Tapping into his perverted readings of the Way's blood symbolism, Tehran has instructed his Inner Circle in the workings of an inverted initiation ritual. During the new and full moons, the members of the Inner Circle gather. Wounds are inflicted upon the wrists and forearms of a human sacrifice, and the victim is slowly bled to death. If there is a new member (or members) awaiting induction into the Circle, they are bathed in this blood — which is then drunk by all the attending cult members.

THE WILD HUNT

In general, the Way's hatred of natural lycanthropes finds expression only as the opportunity presents itself (although there are some packs that devote themselves to such pursuits). There is one exception to this, however: whenever it is discovered that a natural werewolf has slain a human being, the offending lycanthrope is mercilessly hunted down by every member of the Way in the area. This pursuit is known as the Wild Hunt.



TOUCHED BY THE GODS

On nights when the Wild Hunt is called, those unfamiliar with the Way will often notice strange things. For the targeted lycanthrope himself, the experience is extremely traumatic — and almost always ends in a bloody death.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

THE HUNTED

While the PCs are staying at a remote inn the night air is suddenly pierced by the howls of wolves. A few minutes later a bloodied traveler comes stumbling through the door of the common room. For several miles now he has been chased by strange wolves (he may even know — and choose to reveal — that they are werewolves) and he desperately needs help.

The truth, of course, is that this stranger is — in fact — a natural lycanthrope who is being pursued by the Wild Hunt of the Way. Whether the stranger is an innocent who the PCs must rescue from the Way's religious zealotry, or a cold-blooded killer who will betray his benefactors at the first opportunity, is a decision left up to the GM.

RESCUE MISSION

The PCs are approached by Lord Hawthorne, a local noble, and Lord Anthony, the fiancée of Hawthorne's young daughter, Elisbet. Hawthorne fears that Elisbet has been kidnapped and possibly *charmed* by this strange "Blood Claw cult" that has recently appeared in the area. He, and Lord Anthony, want the PCs to investigate and — if at all possible — return the beloved Elisbet as soon as possible. They offer not only their eternal gratitude, but whatever monetary reward is necessary to motivate the adventurers.

As the PCs learn more about the cult they should quickly uncover the fact that it is composed entirely of

werewolves, which should make them understandably worried about Elisbet's safety. The truth, however, is that Elisbet has run away from home out of her own free will to join the cult — if, for no other reason, than because she doesn't particularly *want* to marry Lord Anthony. The cult, for its part, has taken her in and set her initiation for the next full moon.

Prompted by the suggestion that Elisbet may have been *charmed*, however, the PCs will most likely assume that her protestations are unnatural in their origin. Unless they're careful, they may end up making a terrible mistake and earning themselves some powerful enemies.

THE COMING OF LUPIN ALTHAIRE

(This adventure assumes that the Divine Wolf — and at least some of the prophecies he imparted to Altesa — are truth.)

Although Lupin Tehran is a false messenger, his corruption of the Divine Wolf's vision has not despoiled the truth of the Prophecies. Lupin Althaire, the true Messenger, has arrived upon the world of mortals — and is greatly distressed to discover that his followers have been beguiled by Tehran's evil.

PCs who decide to help Althaire reclaim the Blood Claw and the purify the teachings of the Way will find themselves in the middle of a bloody conflict of potentially epic scale. Althaire will immediately find himself labeled as a heretic and dangerous foe by Tehran, and will become the target for a wide variety of assassination attempts — including, perhaps, a Wild Hunt of massive proportions.

The True Messenger's first priority will be to free Altesa, his Prophetess, from Tehran's mind control — opening her eyes to what has been wrought around her in the name the Divine Wolf. Once she is free to see the truth, the Way of the Wolf will quickly fall into competing camps: those who remain loyal to the False Messenger and those who follow Altesa in their belief in the True Messenger. The First Pack will be torn apart, while the Inner Circle is revealed and the Black Wolves ride openly across the land.

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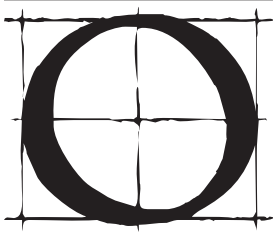
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