ELVES
- Drow Slayers
- New Gear for Elves
- Elven Language Primer

LOLTH STRIKES BACK!
The Spider Queen’s Elite Killers

The Sleeping Tide
J. Gregory Keyes begins
a new FOOL WOLF saga

Druids & Monks
5 New Feats
23 Unlikely Options
77 Animal Companions

NEW ROLEPLAYER’S COLUMN P. 104
PLUS: Vs. Fiends • Dork Tower • Power Plays • Dungeoncraft • What’s New
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—Game Pro Magazine

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I have always despised elves. In all of my campaigns they’ve been the comic relief, the namby-pambies, and the snobs. My players have avoided even talking about playing elves.

Until now.

After reading this issue and seeing this month’s cover, I’m convinced that elves can be a viable part of my D&D games.

Brom captures this drow hero’s confidence and attitude. With his twin blades and feline companion, seasoned FORGOTTEN REALMS players won’t have a problem putting a name to the face.

—Peter Whitley, Art Director
"First study the enemy, seek weakness."

— Romulan Commander, stardate 1709.2

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www.interplay.com/sfc2 • www.startrek.com
Age Before Beauty

I can’t speak from much experience when talking about elves. In over a decade of roleplaying, I’ve read an elf just once, and that was a rather misguided effort: I played a druid with two scimitars, whose name when mispronounced sounded a lot like a popular brand of snack crackers. Why didn’t I play more elf characters? What prejudice prevented me from trying them more than once? It’s simple really: Elves are old.

Your average elven adventurer begins his career at the spry age of no—and if you want to play an elf whose voice doesn’t crack, you’re looking at a character at least 120 years old. That’s really old. If I were 120 years old, Billy the Kid could have been my baby sitter.

How do you pretend to be someone twice as old as my father who is also you younger than I do? How do you roleplay someone whose childhood lasted a hundred years? The stereotypical haughtiness of elves doesn’t quite cut it.

I want to live a long and fruitful life, but even with the best luck and health, I can barely hope to grow as old as an elf. How do I play a character willing to risk his life for money by crawling into trap-filled monster holes when I know that, if that character would just eat right and exercise, he could live a thousand years? I would never live so dangerously, and I’m shooting to be a mere 125.

Come to think of it, how do you play a character whose grandparents have lived for 400 years? What’s it like to call on that much knowledge and experience? How does it feel to recall the events of ancient history because you were there? What kind of society would characters with that perpetual memory produce?

I can envision meeting an elven child and seeing the eyes of a sixty-year-old staring back at me, but I find it hard to imagine how I should act with twice those years under my belt. I can imagine the feeling of meeting an elf and realizing the creature before me has outlived my great-grandparents, but I find it hard to grasp what it would be like to be that creature.

There’s something wholly alien about elves. There’s a mystery about them that has less to do with a connection to nature and magic than with the simple fact that elves live long lives. I’ve yet to meet a DM or player that portrays elves to my satisfaction (though Chris Perkins comes close in his Arvenian campaign), but I don’t fault anyone for failing or failing to try.

Elves are hard.

Think about how hard it is to play an elf the next time you play one or the next time you’re about to criticize someone else’s portrayal. And if you’ve got some ideas about how to roleplay elves, write us a letter to let us know. For more than ten years I’ve been missing out on the elven experience. While to an elf that’s just a drop in the bucket, for regular human me, it means it’s time for a change.

Matthew Sernett • Assistant Editor
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Not Compromised

So, we not only have a new edition of the game I love, but also a new look for the magazine to go with it. I had visions of a repeat of the New Coke fiasco, or the numerous attempts to revamp dying comics. I was especially puzzled by the reason for this change in appearance and tone—there was nothing wrong with the old magazine as far as I could see.

But, after a couple of issues, I am glad to see that the new layout hasn’t compromised the content of the best magazine in the business. If anything, it seems that the quality of articles is steadily increasing, especially in the October issue, the one I look forward to the most each year (along with the April issue). In particular the new prestige class, the hunter of the dead, was downright funny. I am pleased to see that the articles seem to be dealing more with the game and improving game sessions than presenting a hoard of new magic items, spells, and such like each month. That said, I am always thrilled to see new monsters, especially when they are as impressive and interesting as the avolokia and the sheet phantom, which is going to provide one heck of an interesting Halloween game.

Speaking of monsters, the article on creature creation was probably the single most useful article of the past few issues, since I can now convert all those Monstrous Compendium annuals and appendices to the new edition.

“Dragonmirth” and “Nodwick” were great as always, though the loss of “Knights” is a blow.

Now that I’ve buttered you up, it’s time to complain. I truly detest the new layout, especially since you’ve returned to the habit of splitting up articles across several pages—why do you do that? As for the color scheme, ye gods what were you thinking? Not only does it make the magazine harder to read, but it looks ugly!

Other than that, though, you’re doing a bang-up job, so kudos to you, and here’s to another twenty-five years!

Peter Whalley • Manchester, UK

As you can see in this and the past few issues, Art Director Peter Whalley has been paying attention to the feedback on the magazine’s layout. He’s changed some of the horizontal layout to vertical sidebars (as with “Profiles”) but kept some of them horizontal for variety. What do you think of this issue’s mix?
Mad About Ads

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for a modest three years now. In those thirty-nine issues I was always impressed by how you maintained a high article-to-advertisement ratio. Furthermore, the ads were ones that gamers would appreciate. I know that under our capitalist system you take the ads that pay the most. But never before have I encountered the crude and sickening images that I did in issue #276.

Page 91, for those who don’t remember, depicted two men, both covered in each other’s blood, one lying on the floor dead and another gloating over his corpse. It wasn’t the graphic violence that perturbed me. It was the insinuation that this schmuck killed the other schmuck with his bare hands, fingernails, and probably teeth. As a Dungeon Master, I wouldn’t allow my players to declare that they are biting their opponent’s throat, (well perhaps Chris’s half-orc with 8 Intelligence, but he’s a half-orc) so why in our society, one far removed from the middle ages, should we draw on such [expletive]? I am neither a religious fanatic nor some doped-up hippie. Graphic violence doesn’t phase me any more than the next guy, but this isn’t necessary. Do enough of your readers actually listen to that type of music? Everyone I know that plays D&D doesn’t listen to it. Those roleplayers I know who do favor such music tend to play White Wolf games rather than Wizards of the Coast ones.

I read the new requirements for Dungeon Magazine submissions. They won’t allow “excessive gore or violence” and other tasteless things like the murder of children, explicit sex, and Satanism. If your sister publication (and I suspect Dungeon itself) won’t allow such content to be included if it is described in words, then how did you allow it to be pictured in all its glory on a full-page color advertisement?

I hope you got paid well, because my readership has come under question, and I suspect the readership of several other publishers as well. I also noticed that while this company bought advertising space on not only page 91 and the back cover, no such ads were in the September/October issue of Dungeon.

Steven P. Borck • Wolcott, VT

While normally the editors don’t see ads before they’re printed, we saw these and raised no objection. To us, the images seemed cartoonish rather than offensive, and we figured it was better to err on the side of shock than to fight against printing a pay ad. At least five readers disagreed enough to complain, however, so we’ll weigh their displeasure against the ad money if the situation arises again.

Another reason we didn’t object to the ad was that we were delighted to see a music company pay us money for your eyes. That means people outside the game industry are noticing gamers and our buying dollars.

What do you think? Knowing that plenty of ads from a variety of sources is a sign of a healthy magazine (and a growing hobby), where would you draw the line in outside advertising? We’ll print the most interesting responses right here.

BRUTAL CRITIQUE OF THE MONTH!

Peter Whalley didn’t hold back in his criticism of the design teams’ efforts:

As for the color scheme, ye gods what were you thinking? Not only does it make the magazine harder to read, it looks ugly!

Dungeon art director Peter Whitley responds:

One often-neglected aspect of the environment is color and texture. In your campaign, consider ways that might add to your roleplaying experience. If Dungeon’s colors irritate your eyes, imagine how you might appropriate these themes into your evil temples or beholder’s monstrosities. I must compliment you on your initiative; your parents apparently have better taste than you do.

Thou Shalt Not

In the 25 years I’ve been gaming, I’ve never written to Dungeon Magazine though I have wanted to on several occasions. The recent release of the new edition, the new format of Dungeon, and an article in Dungeon #276 has forced me to put in my two coppers.

First, I want to say that while I started gaming with Dungeons & Dragons, I stopped playing it regularly back in the early to mid-eighties. I have always been a science-fiction fan and began playing Traveller and FASA’s Star Trek most of the time. I found D&D too limited both in the scope of the rules and in the mentality of the designers.

All of that has changed with the new edition. The rules lack the huge number of arbitrary mandates of older editions (halflings can’t be this, the long-lived elves have level limits, and so forth). The new edition has a much better system for handling skills, feats are brilliant, and the sorcerer and barbarian bring in a real touch of fun to character design.

The new look of Dungeon Magazine is another story entirely. From the dark and uninteresting cover art on issues #274 and #276, to the often difficult to read article titles, I think the redesign needs a bit of work. Also, please put the issue number back on the cover.

Finally, the real reason I’ve written this letter is because I am appalled by the text in the article. “How to Create a Monster” written by Skip Williams in issue #278. In all my years of gaming I have never been so insulted as I was when I read the words on page 41, bottom of the section on Terrain Types that reads, “Do not create new climate or terrain types.” Do not? Do not create? Why? Will Wizards of the Coast come and revoke my DMing privileges? Am I subject to a fine by the D&D Good Gaming Commission? How dare anyone tell anyone else what to create and what not to create for their game. While I’m sure Mr. Williams or whomever edits D&D products has a policy for the game line, I see no reason whatsoever why he should pass that mandate to the reader. That line wasn’t the first time in the article he puts forward such a statement, but it’s the one that really got my goat since two species of sky-dwelling life forms from my old campaign are now impossible according to Mr. Williams. I don’t see “air” as a terrain type and since I’m not allowed to write down under the creatures’ descriptions, the poor beasts can’t exist. I never thought the words “do,” “not,” and “create” would be placed together in a roleplaying game product.

I’m not trying to make trouble or be difficult. I am wondering, however, why Mr. Williams is trying to limit my creativity. I thought this game was only held back by the imagination of those who play it. It is this kind of thinking that makes me drop D&D in the first place. I hope this is not a trend and I hope this kind of thinking didn’t go into the new Star Wars game. If it has, creating new planets will be difficult and every gas giant will be uninhabited. How sad.

Adam Dickstein • New York, NY
Skip’s article began life as an in-house design document, so the prohibition about creating new climate and terrain types is a matter of in-house design protocol, not a prohibition against your creating new ones for your campaign. On the other hand, Adam, if you keep causing trouble about such trifles, we’ll have no choice but to send the GSC over to have a few words with you about how you run your campaign.

Forget the Realms!
I'd like to offer my thoughts on the new look of Dragon Magazine. As a veteran gamer of eighteen years, and an avid reader for ten of them, I’d like to congratulate you all on a magnificent job! I find the new font quite readable, and I enjoy the new layout. With respect to the cover, the logo is very impressive; perhaps my only critique would be that I think that making the issue number visible would be appreciated.

“How to Create a Monster” was an enjoyable and useful article as usual; Skip Williams impresses me. I’ve always looked forward to the “Ecology” articles, so “Creature Codex” was quite pleasing. “The Bestiary” was my third favorite article in this issue, even though it was particular to the Greyhawk campaign setting. In fact, I must applaud James Jacobs for writing a piece that, in my opinion, typifies the kinds of articles that should appear in Dragon Magazine — while being campaign-specific, they are written so well that any good DM could take the contents and import them into their own campaign seamlessly.

My second favorite article would have to be “Glass Acts.” Monte Cook has always amazed me with his writing! I consider the Dead Gods to be the paragon of contemporary gaming literature and does again here. Without question, the “Vs.” piece is the best type of article I’ve seen appear in Dragon in years. Well written, concise, and very useful.

My only major problem with this issue was the “Countdown” piece. If it is the case that Greyhawk is to be the official default campaign setting of D&D, then can we please leave it at that? Naturally, from a marketing point of view, support for the Forgotten Realms campaign setting is going to continue, but I fail to understand why this should occur in the pages of Dragon Magazine. Surely we are going to see a veritable plethora of Forgotten Realms resources published in the future, will these not suffice? While I

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**Variety and the "Spice" of Life**

For inspiration in his work, Jason looks just about everywhere. Among his favorite authors are Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, as well as H.P. Lovecraft and J.R.R. Tolkien. While writing Sword & Fist, he read from two different worlds (George R.R. Martin’s Game of Thrones and Norman F. Cantor’s Invoking the Middle Ages). He also finds creative motivation in music. “I listened to the soundtrack from Conan the Barbarian a lot while working on Sword & Fist,” he says. But for true inspiration, the most mundane moments or activities do just fine. “I have my best ideas at unusual times and places—while washing the dishes, for instance, or while playing with my cat.” He says, however, that he draws no inspiration from the heart of Baby Spice that he keeps in a jar on his desk; in fact, he insists the rumor about the Spice Girl’s heart free-floating in a bottle of formaldehyde is pure fabrication. “Nobody takes that story seriously,” he says, then adds, “I hope.”

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**Live Action or Table Action?**

With an expert background in both forms of roleplaying, Jason concedes that there are some distinct advantages to tabletop roleplaying over live-action roleplaying. “Tabletop roleplaying offers both player and DM a greater variety of tools and methods for running and resolving nearly all aspects of the game,” he says. “LARP is far more limited because the environment and action are so immediate—it’s hard to compress time, for example, in the middle of a LARP session, whereas that is a relatively simple and common technique for moving the adventure along during tabletop play.”
Ancient Enemies, Frozen Wastes, & New Adventures

You’re in Our World Now!

- The newly discovered frozen continent of Vellous adds 16 new advanced adventure zones
- 12 new player character armor graphics for each race
- Hundreds of new magical items to discover, trade, and sell from the mundane to the magnificent
- Dozens of quests for characters level 35+ which will take you to the plateaus and a city of dragons
- A new cast of creatures to confront: Fiend Giants, Ice Dragons, Cave Bears, Snowhag Gnolls, Storm Giants and more
- Full version of either EverQuest or Ruins of Kunark required
am no fan of the
FORGOTTEN REALMS (I think
they should be forgotten).
surely if articles like
these are to appear in
DRAGON they could at
least share the same
ease-of-use as “The
Bestiary” does. Needless
to say, my previous com-
ments also apply, if no
doubly so, to “The New
Adventures of Volo.”

Overall, I have to say
that the future of DRAGON
Magazine looks quite
bright. Congratulations
for continuing to improve
upon an already out-
standing publication, and
kudos to you for listen-
ing to your readers. Keep up
the exceptional work!

Stephen Dunphy
Grimsby, Ontario

Steam Twist
I am writing to thank you for the very
interesting article on the “Age of
Steam” by Stephen Kenson. I have been
looking for a new twist on the fantasy
world, and boy did I find it! Now I can’t
wait to run my players through a new
campaign! I hope that Mr. Kenson can
be persuaded to write more articles or
contribute to Wizards of the Coast’s
D&D website.

I have one question concerning
firearms: How would you keep them
from unbalancing the game? I have
decided that firearms are still at the
single-shot level of development. My
reasoning is that with magic still really
powerful, firearms are considered oddi-
ties or replacements.

Dan Pack [address withheld]

Steve sends us articles faster than we
can review them, so have no fear that
his work will continue to grace these
pages—even in this issue and both of
the following issues.

As for balancing firearms in your
campaign, you have more choices than
we could possibly list. Here are a few
to get you started:

• Give the villains the same access to
  firearms.
• Remember that firearms aren’t
  substantially more dangerous than
  bows—just easier to fire.
• Make gunpowder rare, expensive,
or both.

What Kind of Gamer Reads Dragon?

Our favorite is one a
player once related from
another fantasy game:
Ensure that gunpowder is
rare, perhaps by making
it a byproduct of power-
ful creatures like drag-
ons, who know its value
and hide it. After an
adventure in which your
heroes seek the hidden
dungeon of an elder red
wyrm, they might ques-
tion whether it was worth
all the bother just for a
couple rounds of
ammunition.

Prestige Power
First and foremost, let
me say that since I was
introduced to gaming
about six years ago,
DRAGON has been a fun
and helpful read on
many occasions.

Issue #275, with its
emphasis on the drow, was a most
enjoyable and enlightening resource. It
was a great help in developing my first
character for the new edition.

Today, I picked up issue #276 with the
“Create a Monster” article and
“Black Cats and Broken Mirrors” arti-
tles. The best thing in the issue is the
new prestige class: the hunter of the
dead. It’s a powerful new class that
requires your character to make great
sacrifices to obtain it. I hope to see
many more prestige classes in future
issues of DRAGON, perhaps a class based
on the drow weapon masters.

Keep up the good work! And keep
the humor coming, especially more of “Loth
in Space.” See if you can swing some of
those D&D events down south.

Ron Feesser • Parkin, AR

Because you’re such a handsome and
charming fellow, Ron, we promise a
new prestige class each issue—two or
three sometimes. There’s no end in
sight to Aaron’s lampoons of classic
adventures. After this issue’s visit to
the Barrier Peaks, expect a tour of one
of D&D’s most famous evil temples in
just a few short months.

It’s Not a Cane—it’s a Dice
Rake, Like in Vegas

Although I have played DUNGEONS &
DRAGONS for a number of years, issue
#275 of DRAGON Magazine was the first
admits, “I rolled up a dwarf fighter—I’d
just finished reading The Lord of the
Rings and had visions of Gimli
dancing in my head—and we played The
Keep on the Borderlands. From that
afternoon on, I was totally and irreversibly
hooked.” This, despite his dwarven
hero’s “desperate and ill-fated attempt
to escape the maze of the minotaur” in
the Caves of Chaos. Just a few hours
later, Jason had his first copy of the
game rules and was rapidly on his way
to becoming a DM.

But Jason’s fascination with the
game carried him well beyond just play-
ing or Dming it (he continues to run a
D&D campaign for his wife and friends
in addition to his involvement in several
live-action roleplaying games). When he
had the chance to do freelance design
work for White Wolf and DUNGEON
Magazine, the door to his career
opened up. Once a member of the
Wizards of the Coast RPG R&D team,
he was able to design additional mod-
ules and adventures for some of the
biggest settings in the roleplaying uni-
verse (the FORGOTTEN REALMS module
Dungeon of Death, The Apocalypse
Stone and the “Into the Darkness”
adventure that introduced a monster of
his own design, the shocker lizard). But
Jason didn’t begin his career at
Wizards of the Coast as a game
designer; instead, Jason headed the
Organized Play division, where he was
constantly overseeing the myriad rules
and policies that govern the tourna-
ment scene for the trading card game
Magic: The Gathering. The shift from
Policy Director of Organized Play to
RPG designer undoubtedly reduced
Jason’s stress level tenfold, but he’s
very tactful when discussing that shift.
“Both careers have their own rewards,”
he says, “but I’ve wanted to be involved in
RPG design since I was fourteen—
after all, I still remember rolling my first
die. So I couldn’t pass up the opportu-
nity to make the switch.”

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME

Like most designers, Jason is a player
at heart, and he—like nearly every
other player—was thrilled with the
release of the new edition. “I love the
fact that D&D is now all about choices
and their consequences. The staggering
array of options first available during
character creation and later during
class advancement just makes me
want to stand up and shout ‘Huzzaa!’”
Defeat Your Fears To Achieve Grace

Players enter a world of intense magic and thunderous battles – where your survival is determined by collecting powerful artifacts and fashioning them to unique armor and weaponry. Two complete adventures await Darius and Sharline – heroes who must face an evil reborn. Journey as either hero and discover unique characters and monsters for each adventurer. They will need to master the art of arming themselves with items of incredible might and untold magical abilities to thwart the powers of darkness.

"Expect gorgeous special effects and plenty of action."
- PS Extreme

- Customizable elements include weaponry, armor, and clothing.
- Certain combinations of armor and clothing unlock hidden magical abilities and powers.
- Two independent characters to play – each with their own storylines, goals, and discoveries.
- Epic RPG storyline with all the action needed for a legendary quest.

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I have ever bought. The very first thing I read irritated me, to put it mildly: "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax. On page 8, first column, last sentence, I quote: "to get a group of young players together."

It has always been my belief that he/she, if/then, young/old, whomever, could play D&D as well as other role-playing games. Just from reading this issue alone I gather that a number of DMs are in their late twenties and older. So how could an editor let this piece of discrimination slip by? I am well over fifty and enjoy both sides of the gaming table. Others my age feel bad enough when they are no longer invited into games because of age. Some even work as clerks in the stores that host the games and go unnoticed. Now your magazine apparently endorses this. It's sad to think that although we have lost some of our dexterity, you also seem to think that we can no longer have the wisdom or intelligence to get your backsides out of a jam when you leap before you look.

Rich Gorman  •  Columbia, VA

Relax, grandpa! We can tell you're a gamer just by your cranky letter:

We think you're reading too much into Gary's choice of words. Maybe he likes to run games for younger folks to bring them into the hobby, or perhaps most of the gamers in his favorite store just happen to be younger. While we've played with some roleplayers over 60, we haven't seen too many hanging out at the comic shop.

Most of all, thanks for your letter. It reminded us all that we're not that old and irritable after all.

Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

I wanted to write a letter since I've had a copy of the new Player's Handbook but it took me a while to do it. My first reaction when I heard that there would be a new edition of D&D was instinctively rejecting. I read every count-down to the new edition and, when discussing with friends and other players, I never said something good related to it. That might be because I only saw some parts of the changes but not the whole—nevertheless I was always on the anti-new-edition side.

Then I got my Player's Handbook and I read it hungrily, searching for something new to complain about that I hadn't complained about thus far. Of course, I found some new material to discuss with my friends (by the way, most of them thought the same way I did). Seeing all these changes done to my game, I furiously sat down at my computer and began an angry letter to the Dragon Magazine. Wizards of the Coast, Amigo (the German distributor for D&D products), the German edition of Dragon Magazine, the RPGA, and so on, but in my wild fury I wasn't able to express my thoughts in a straight line. So this letter never left my computer.

Some weeks later I sat down and read the Player's Handbook again, this time seeing it without prejudice. As a result, I came to the conclusion that the new D&D is more or less a totally new game, not comparable to the changes from the 1st to the 2nd edition. Nonetheless, these rules are pretty good—no they're better than that. I think that I've been caught by the fever most other players have been caught by. I tested the new edition with my group, and I have the sneaking suspicion that the more I use the new rules the more I want to stick to them.

But that leaves me with another unpleasant question: What about the good old ADD rules? I feel like I've secretly betrayed my girlfriend. You know that can be a bad feeling, especially when your love didn't do anything to earn such a treatment. (Okay, there might be some poor guys that aren't able to feel this way.)

Now, what do you want to do about my feelings? How will I manage this dilemma? Since you introduced me to this new edition of D&D, it's your fault that I'm stuck in such a situation! Don't tell me that it is my responsibility to decide what to do, I know that already. But I hope you have got this bad feeling for destroying my relationship with my "love!"

Holger Campe  •  Lippetal-Schonberg

Don't worry, Holger. We already told your old game you were seeing 3rd Edition behind its back. ADD doesn't want you back, and there's nothing you can do about it now. You can stop sending the romantic dice and character sheets. Think of it as trading up with a little help from your buddies at Dragon Magazine. We're always here to help you with the big decisions. You'll thank us later.
WHAT'S THIS GUY'S STORY?

Your honor rivals that of a Jedi. No one can ever know this. You live in a time when the reins of power dance free and many hands reach to take them. The senate is your battlefield. Subtlety is your weapon.

The new Star Wars® roleplaying game holds a universe of possibilities for fans of every era—all of the action and heroism of the classic trilogy and all-new adventures for Episode I.


The Official Star Wars Web Site
www.starwars.com

Wizards of the Coast Web Site
www.wizards.com/starwars
Headsings Will Roll!
Great issue! I love the new edition’s rules; they are intuitive and encourage, rather than bog down, gameplay. Along with this, I thoroughly enjoy the new format and content of *Dragon* Magazine. I do, however, have a quick question. In your description of the rage mage (p. 98), you list class skills and say: “The hunter of the dead’s class skills are.” Now, as interested as I am in the hunter of the dead, I’d be more interested in knowing for sure what the class skills of the rage mage are. Are they the ones listed, or did the error include the list as well as the “hunter of the dead” snafu?
Rich Thompson, Ph.D.
Philadelphia, PA

The heading is wrong, but the skills are correct for the rage mage. We’ve penalized ourselves 100 XP each for the blunder.

1,000 Years of *Dragon*
You probably get loads of letters and emails from all over the world, and probably mine is as uninteresting as most of them, but I am so amazed by the new edition, as well as by your magazine, that I herewith have to take the time to write you another of those pesky fan letters.

First of all, I’d like to mention that I never really liked *AD&iD*. The different world settings were okay (and some of them were really awesome), but the system was rather unwieldy and unrealistic, so my players and I never really liked it. I have been playing roleplaying games for almost twelve years now, but *AD&iD* never seemed to be a viable alternative to *Vampire*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Das Schwarze Auge* (a German clone of *AD&iD* with a lower fantasy and magic level) or *Deadlands*. But times have changed.

I work in the retail sales department of one of the big roleplaying publishing houses in Germany, so I heard about the new edition quite some time ago. At first, most of our customers were pretty skeptical about it, but when this skepticism changed into euphoria, I was so intrigued that I actually bought a copy of the *Player’s Handbook* myself (which was much more difficult than I expected it to be, as the *Player’s Handbook* sold out in Germany very quickly). But when I finally received my copy, my expectations had not been for naught.

The new edition is without doubt one of the very best roleplaying games ever to hit the stores. Not only are the basic rules rather easy to learn and understand, but the design and layout of the book has really hit a nerve, at least with me. This is what fantasy should have always looked like. The illustrations are top of the line (although the quality seems to decline from front to back), and they show you characters that stimulate your imagination.

I would like to congratulate the people at Wizards of the Coast for this wonderful book.

On to *Dragon* Magazine: I never liked game magazines much, but *Dragon* shows what happens when professionals who were able to make their hobby a job really put their mind to something—the whole magazine just teems with good articles. As I didn’t expect much I was more than pleasantly surprised. Just to illustrate how pleasant this surprise was: though I wanted to buy issue #276 only because of the “Create a Monster” and “Hunter of the Dead” articles, I actually ended up buying issues #275 and #274 as well.

After so much praise I once last question: Is there any chance that we will see a new edition of some of the old campaign settings?

I always loved *Dark Sun* and *Planescape* (although I never really played them much, as I really hated the *AD&iD* rules), so I would very much appreciate some official updates for these two as well as any others. Maybe you could even publish articles for some of the more popular lines that illustrate the changes, maybe some new professions (such as the gladiator) or changes to the existing ones (such as the Dark Sun bard).

The upcoming *Psionics Handbook* will hopefully solve some unanswered questions, as will the articles about the steam punk and future fantasy, but there’s still so much to do and so little time.

Anyway, I am looking forward to hearing from you and once again thank you for bringing us roleplaying for the new millennium.

The best of luck for the next 1,000 years.
Ole Johan Christiansen + Ludwigshafen,
Germany

For fans of psionics and the inactive campaign settings, we have good news. In just two months, we’ll bring you an issue devoted to the new psionics. For *Planescape* and *Dark Sun* fans, we’re cooking up a little something extra for you soon.

Join us next month for an issue devoted to the mystical arts, including tips on enhancing your familiar, giving your sorcerer a mysterious background, and concocting new alchemical brews. See you then!

JUST AROUND THE BEND
Of course, players can look forward to additional supplemental materials for the new edition of *D&iD*; the other character classes will get comparable treatment to the treatment fighters and monks get in *Sword & Fist*. But many of the projects Jason is personally working on now are top-secret; his role in Acquisitions gives him access to some high-profile licenses that might or might not prove to be successful *RPG* settings, and it wouldn’t be prudent for him to promise a product that might not ever make it to the shelves. But of those that he’s personally worked on, Jason is able to reveal a bit about one he’s just finished—*Diablo 2: To Hell and Back*. This road to Hell is paved only with the best of intentions. “It’s a massive *D&iD* adventure based on the wildly successful computer *RPG*,” he says. “It’s a mammoth book, chock full of *Diablo 2* goodness.”
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On the odd chance that you haven’t been subjected to the endless quibbling of late about what is and isn’t “proper” in a roleplaying game, and what an RPG really is for that matter, let me tell you that there is quite a debate going on. There are those who say the roleplaying game is properly thus and so, others heartily assert it is something different. Believe it or not, a few folks assert that the original Dungeons & Dragons game isn’t really a roleplaying game, even though it was the game that started the whole roleplaying game field. They likewise think that the AD&D game is more a wargame than a roleplaying game.

The assertion that “roleplaying is impossible with D&D in any form” is actually made boldly by some.

All of this rancorous debate got me thinking about things analytically. As I had never, until recently, attempted a quantification of the game, I sat down and made a list of all the elements that I consider integral to the roleplaying game form to some degree. After about an hour, I came up with fourteen items that I then passed around. A couple of additional elements I had neglected to list were then called to my attention. So, with sixteen items listed, it seemed a good time to see if most gamers agreed over the parts that belong in a roleplaying game, and at the same time rate each as to how important an element it was.

At left is the survey that has been circulated, a copy of which is posted now on the DRAGON section of the Wizards of the Coast website (http://nafsasp.wizards.com/soapbox/welcome.asp). You are invited to go there and rate the elements in the survey. As you’ll see, I listed them alphabetically so as to not give any weight to one or the other by any sort of placement.

What I will do in future columns hereafter is to explain why I think each component is important, let you know how meaningful I deem it in a roleplaying game, and you can agree or disagree. When all of that is through—after four or so issues—I should have sufficient responses to make a statistically meaningful sampling. Right now—although I have some two hundred ratings from all over the world—most responses are from online gamers, well over 90% male, and nearly 100% of them veteran players. Regardless of the validity of the survey, I thought you would enjoy seeing how the gamers who responded rate each element listed, how many games there were for an element, as well as how many on. The presentation of these results will come at the conclusion of the series.

The Elements that Constitute a Roleplaying Game

Rate each component that is important to a roleplaying game from 1 (least) to 9 (most). If you believe any element listed does not belong in the game, give it a 0.

- Building (construction, land acquisition, and so on)
- Business (as an occupation aside from adventuring)
- Character Development (detailing the game’s persons’ histories)
- Combat
- Economics
- Exploration (both dungeons and larger discovery)
- Intrigue
- Politics
- Problem Solving
- Questing
- Random Chance (encounters, resolution of combat, and so on)
- Role Assumption (staying “in character” in actions and thoughts)
- Roleplaying (ditto, and speaking thus when playing)
- Story (backstory and in play)
- Strategy
- Theatrics (occasional theatrics and sound effects)
- (You name it and rate it.)

Please note:

If you are a female place an “X” here: ☐

If you are new to roleplaying, place an “X” here: ☐

Go to the website to enter your votes. Do not send this form to DRAGON.

As to the 17th element of the roleplaying game, so far no one has named a component that has been omitted. There are many interesting comments in this area, and I’ll summarize these too and note ratings for your amusement and edification.

You might want to wait an issue or two to see what’s being laid out before you vote—or maybe not. In any case, when all is said and done, what makes a roleplaying game fun is one thing; the folks playing it. But finding out what makes one tick, so to speak, should likewise be fun for all, so come back next month.
Map Making for RPGs

city designer 2

From the smallest village to the greatest metropolis, the City Designer 2 (CD2) add-on for Campaign Cartographer 2 is the only RPG tool that lets you create beautiful, incredibly detailed city maps with ease and speed.

CC2 gave you the world; CD2 lets you go to town with it.

CD2 gives you astonishing control over every aspect of city creation. It lets you specify everything from the style and shape of each house (even the chimneys), right down to using color coding for different zones and districts, and linking text to locations. Every detail you could want is easy to find, simple to use - and looks great. CD2's House Builder goes to work making custom buildings of any size, matching the pre-drawn symbols. And you can create your own building styles.

Or you can let the software do the hard work for you, with incredible features like the Street Builder (create an entire street of different buildings with just two clicks), hyperlinked street-indexing and Angle Grid that lets you design square to any road.

Use over 1,500 pre-drawn Smart Symbols for more than a dozen popular styles including Fantasy, SF, Present-day, Gothic, Orcish, Elvish and Classical. Just move a Smart Symbol over a road and watch it rotate into position.

You can create impressive, realistic city maps in a handful of minutes, and have more time for actually gaming, instead of preparing.

Make a modern metropolis...or an ancient walled city...using CD2's Smart Symbols...or with the House Builder.

Full version City Designer 2 is US$39.95 in the US and Canada. £27.95 in the rest of the world.
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Existing CD2 users: CD2 includes a free upgrade to version 2.0 of CC2. If you want the all-new CD2 2.0 170-page manual and CD, it is £15.00 in the US and Canada, £10.00 in the rest of the world.

TO ORDER
If you retailer does not stock City Designer 2:
Internet: go to Profantasy's website at http://www.profantasy.com to order from anywhere in the world.
In the US and Canada: phone free on 1-800-381-4167 (Shipping $7.00)
Elsewhere: phone UK 0171 738 8877 or fax UK 0171 738 8822 ($5.00 postage and packing)

Questions?
e-mail cd2@profantasy.com or call our pre-sales enquiry line on 1-800-281-2411 8AM-8PM Hawaii Standard Time

Requirements
CD2 requires Campaign Cartographer 2 running on any PC with Windows 95/98/NT4 and an 800x600m display.

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**JANUARY CONVENTIONS**

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| Jan 24–25 | **RUNNING GAGG** New York   | Email: rungagg@geneseo.edu  
Web: gagg.geneseo.edu  
Features: RPGs, CCGs, LARPs, RPGA Living City events, computer games, miniature games, dealers, and a charity auction. |
| Jan 25–28 | **WINTER FANTASY** Illinois | The Grand Wayne Center, Ft. Wayne  
Contact: Event Management  
P.O. Box 1740  
Rantoul, WA  98057-1740  
Web: www.wizards.com/rpga/winterfantasy  
Highlights include the launch of the *Star Wars Living Force* campaign (including a trilogy scenario and LARP) and RPGA's 20th anniversary birthday bash. Guild-level RPGA members admitted free when they preregister. Purchase a Guild-level membership for $30 via the website. |

**UPCOMING CONVENTIONS**

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| Feb 24–25 | **GAME INVASION** Florida | University Center, University of North Florida, Jacksonville  
Email: info@gameinvasion.net  
Web: www.gameinvasion.net  
| Mar 15–18 | **CONFUSION** Alberta | University of Alberta, Student Union Building  
Contact: Phantasy Gamers Club  
Box 37, Student Union Building, U of A  
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 1J7  
Email: uasgc@ualberta.ca  
Features: RPGs, CCGs, board games, LARPs, miniature painting, competition, dealers, and an auction. |
| Mar 16–18 | **GAMES UNIVERSITY** California | Radisson Hotel, Fullerton  
Contact: Norm Carlson  
Email: gamesucon@aol.com  
Features: "Meet the Personalities" Party |
| Mar 16–18 | **STEELCON** North Carolina | Greensboro Hilton  
Box 4, EUC, UNC-G  
Greensboro, NC 27412  
Email: steelcon@hotmail.com  
Web: cometo/steelcon  
| Mar 22–25 | **SIMCON XXIII** New York | University of Rochester  
Contact: SimCon XXIII, c/o URSOGA  
CPU Box 277146  
Rochester, NY 14627-7146  
Web: www.rochester.edu/simcon  
| Mar 31–Apr. 2 | **UBCON** New York | University at Buffalo, Buffalo  
Contact: SARPA  
Box 716, Student Union, University at Buffalo  
Buffalo, NY 14260  
Email: krol@mad.sciientist.com  
Web: wings.buffalo.edu/sa/sarpa  
Features: RPGs, CCGs, and board games. |

**ONLINE EVENTS**

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<td>Jan 6</td>
<td><strong>TOTALLY TWISTED TRIVIA</strong> 8:35 PM PST</td>
<td>It's twisted! Been playing D&amp;D since you were just out of the cradle? Own every supplement TSR ever printed? Well, even if you don't, we invite you to test your knowledge in the Totally Twisted Trivia game. Prizes will be awarded!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 7</td>
<td><strong>FROM THE DRAGON'S MOUTH</strong> 5 PM PST</td>
<td>The Trouble With Elves Dave Gross of Dragon and Chris Perkins of Dungeon deal with all things elves this month.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Jan 10–24</td>
<td><strong>RPGA WRITER'S WORKSHOP</strong> 6 PM PST</td>
<td>Robert Wiese hosts a writer's workshop in the RPGA Events room (accessed through the RPGA Forum) for veteran and budding tabletop/trivial writers. This session is designed to help you become better adventure designers and will delve into topics involved in writing adventure scenarios; this is not a D&amp;D session. Designed for: Guild level RPGA members, others are welcome to listen, but you will discuss only Guild-level members' scenarios, and only Guild-level members will receive scenarios to read before the sessions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 11, 18, 25</td>
<td><strong>ROUND ROBIN TRIVIA</strong> 7 PM PST</td>
<td>Get and Give good Trivia Round Robin Trivia doesn't just demand that you know the answers to tough roleplaying trivia, it demands you know the questions as well. Come ready to give as good as you get!</td>
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</table>
| Jan 19  | **RPG HOUR** 5 PM PST | Realmswatch: Nations and States Come hear the philosophical differences behind the old Faerûn geography versus the new!  
Editor: Michelle Carter explains the plans for the North and the Dalelands of Faerûn. |
| Jan 20  | **TOTALLY TWISTED TRIVIA** 8:55 PM PST | Dragoneer Special Edition! Come test your Dragoneer expertise in this session of 3! |
| Jan 23  | **SAGE ADVICE LIVE** 5 PM PST | Think you can stump the Sage with your questions about the D&D, Altenity, and Marvel roleplaying games? |
| Every Mon  | **RPGA FORUM** 6 PM PST | HQ Time at RPGA Every Monday, you find RPGA Headquarters staff in the RPGA Forum. Staff will answer questions and shoot the breeze with you (but not engage in in-character chat), so come on by! |
| Every Wed  | **LIVING CITY TIME** 6 PM PST | Every Wednesday, you'll find a Living City board member in the RPGA Forum ready to answer your questions about our most popular Living campaign. This is your chance to verify rumors, ask questions, and give your suggestions to the campaign board. |
reports from the field

d20 CALL OF CTHULHU coming this fall!
Wizards of the Coast has been granted exclusive rights from Chaosium, Inc. to produce a d20 rulebook for the Call of Cthulhu roleplaying game. Design is underway and the product has been scheduled for a fall release. Call of Cthulhu fans can look forward to rules for horror and insanity, modern era weapons and vehicles, the dark gods of the mythos, and over 60 Cthulhu monsters all compatible with D&D.

Chaosium, Inc. will continue to produce Call of Cthulhu products, and their future roleplaying supplements will contain information to support their use with the new d20 system.

SWORD AND FIST
A GUIDEBOOK TO FIGHTERS AND MONKS
A D&D Accessory
by Jason Carl
Sword and Fist is required reading for any player who wants to make a specific type of fighter or monk. The book contains everything characters need to become masters at combat and offers a step-by-step guide to achieve that goal.

Customize your character more than ever before with over 55 new feats including Circle Kick, Death Blow, Dirty Fighting, Sharp-Shooting, Mantis Leap, and Monkey Grip!

Take your character concept to another level with 19 new prestige classes like the cavalier, gladiator, master samurai, and drunken master!

Fight with more than 50 new exotic weapons and knock your enemies flat!

This plus rules for vehicles, sample keeps and castles, new strategies for using skills and feats, and advice on how DMs can use Sword and Fist to make monsters meaner!

Sword and Fist gives you more of what the new edition offers: same solid rules and tons more options.

THE SPEAKER IN DREAMS
A D&D Adventure
by James Wyatt
Take your players on a journey to a town fair and serious trouble. Rival gangs appear to be fighting for dominance in the town, and while the ruling Baron's forces are strong enough to deal with most crime or insurrection, he has no luck curtailing the activities of the gangs.

If that weren't bad enough, strange creatures and a twisted cult make more trouble as the town turns upside down and martial law is declared. Can your PCs get to the bottom of the trouble and free the city from evil's clutches?
We didn’t invent every game you’ll ever want to play.

But we sell them.

Hey, there are a lot of great games out there. And you can find the widest array of games, from classic board games to cutting-edge electronic games, at Wizards of the Coast® stores—even things without our logo. So, whether you’re interested in checkers, vampire clans, or something you can play on your living room TV, we’ve got the games you want to have fun with.

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www.wizards.com/gamesstores
**Legacy of the Drow**
A Forgotten Realms Collector’s Edition
by R. A. Salvatore
The Legacy of the Drow Collector’s Edition brings together four New York Times bestselling novels: The Legacy, Starless Night, Siege of Darkness, and Passage to Dawn. The adventure begins in seeming serenity as we find Drizzt Do’Urden enjoying a rare state of peace. But he did not arrive at this station without leaving powerful enemies in his wake. Loth, the dreaded Spider Queen of the evil dark elves, counts herself among these enemies and has vowed to end the drow’s idyllic days. Thus begins a severe and lasting chain of events that make these collected Forgotten Realms novels unforgettable.

**Dragons of a Fallen Sun**
A Dragonlance Novel
by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman
The people of Krynn have known war in past ages. There are still those who remember the triumph of good at the conclusion of the War of the Lance. Still more remember the devastation of the Chaos War, which ended the Fourth Age of the world. But now a new war looms for the heart and soul of the world.

**February**
Monster Compendium:
- Creatures of Faerûn
- D&D Miniatures: Heroes
- D&D Miniatures: Monsters
- The Messenger

**March**
Psionics Handbook
Diablo II: To Hell and Back
- Downfall
- The Summoning

**Nodwick**
You are the messengers from the human lands that must rebuild your domain. Yes, the elves no longer live here. But the forest is still here, and the creatures that dwell within. The people call it Zangar. Zangar is a paradise, a land of magic and wonder. But it is not without its dangers. The creatures of Zangar are wild and unpredictable. But they are not evil. They are just different. The people of Zangar rely on you, the messengers, to bring them the news. And they rely on the elves to protect them. So be careful. And may your journeys be safe. Amen. Amen.
~ Massive Multi-Player Graphical Online Role-Playing Game.
~ Players Control Story And Advancement In This Truly Dynamic World.
~ Evolving Living History Based On Actual In-Game Events.
~ Immerse Yourself In A World Where The Players Are Their Characters.
~ A Shared Dream Where The Only Limit Is Your Imagination.
~ Have You Ever Wanted To Role-Play The Monster? Now You Can!
~ No Software To Buy! Download It Now... Play It Now!
~ 30 Day Free Trial With A Valid Credit Card!
~ Get 2 Additional Free Weeks Added To Your Account By Typing The Name Of This Magazine In The Referred By Field When Creating Your Account.

www.underlight.com
countdown to the
forgotten realms

realms of the realms

When the Forgotten Realms setting was first unleashed way back in 1987, the game year was 1357 Dale reckoning. With the launch of the new, 3rd Edition-compatible setting in June, the calendar moves forward to 1372. That advance in time heralds more than a few changes in the world's most popular Dungeons & Dragons campaign.

What you won't see with these changes is another Realms-shattering event on the scale of the Time of Troubles, which sent DMs scrambling to rebuild their campaigns for 2nd Edition. Instead, the kingdoms and city-states of the Realms have evolved naturally both to take advantage of the cool new rules and to provide more opportunities for conflict and adventure.

**THE RED WIZARDS OF THAY**

Once these crimson-cloaked minions of Szass Tam spread discord and misery all across the Moonsea nations and as far west as the Sword Coast. Now they collect your hard-earned gold as the magic merchants of Faerûn. Their change in strategy is proving wildly profitable, as rulers in nations like Westgate and Sembia are granting the Red Wizards Enclaves in their cities. Within the walls of these areas, the Red Wizards enjoy the protection of their own laws and customs. Those who venture into these enclaves with enough money can emerge with the finest in potions, wands, and other magic items. Thus, while the Red Wizards still aren't nice guys, you're now more likely to argue over the price of a bag of holding than trade fireballs... at least while you're in their shops.

**THE SILVER MARCHES**

Silverymoon, Everlund, Sundabar, Mithral Hall and other strongholds formed an alliance in recent years. Their combined territories are now known as the Silver Marches, a bastion against the cruel tribes and oppressive cults of the savage frontier. Beset on all sides by enemies, including the sinister Arcane Brotherhood in Luskan, this fledgling kingdom must fight for survival at every turn. Their most dangerous opponent might be King Obould, an orc barbarian who just might have the power and presence to lead the orcs from the Spine of the World and obliterate the upstarts.

**THE SIMBUL OF AGALAROND**

One of the best known and most powerful spellcasters in Faerûn is the Queen of Avalorand, known to friends and foes alike as the Simbul. For years she has been the primary defensive force that stands between the Red Wizards and her people. While that hasn't changed—except that the Red Wizards seem more bent on commerce than conquest—what has changed is that the Simbul is no longer a powerful wizard. Instead, in keeping with the new arcane magic rules in 3rd Edition, the Simbul is a powerful sorcerer. What changed her? Why nothing; she's always been a sorcerer. You just weren't looking closely enough before.

**MULHORAND INVADES UNTHER**

One of the biggest ongoing changes in Faerûn is the conquest of Uther by its neighbor, Mulhorand. Both nations had the distinction of being ruled by living gods. Since the death of Gilgeam, the god-king of Uther, there's been nothing to stop Horus-Re from sending his warriors across the border. The fallout from this bloody war is sure to affect the western nations politically and economically, but what a glorious place for opportunistic adventurers to forge their reputations!
ANAUROCH

Those who've delved beneath the burning sands of the Anauroch desert know that one of the most wicked and powerful races in Faerûn dwell there. The phaeimim are back with a vengeance, at least until an ancient power returns in the form of a mysterious and mobile city. What happens next is still top secret, but suffice to say the heroes of Faerûn will have a whole new reason to fear the great desert.

THOSE NAUGHTY ZHENTARIM

Lest those industrious Red Wizards steal all the credit for badness throughout the Realms, the Zhentarim are back with a vengeance, and they're licking their lips as they look south at the Dalodons from their reunified holdings in Mulfar and Zhentaril Keep. Their imperial ambitions have Hillsfar calling for aid from the rich coffers of Sembian merchants, who might be willing to send just enough of their treasure north to aid in Hillsfar's defense, knowing they'd be next in line for conquest. What none of the Zhentarim's likely targets yet know is the cause for their renewed fervor... which must remain a secret until the campaign setting arrives in June.

NEXT MONTH

Join us in the February issue for another look at the gods of the Forgotten Realms setting. No, there aren't plans for another picnic on Faerûn, but now they arm their clerics with a powerful battery of new spells and domains, not to mention special powers. 

For more information on the new Forgotten Realms campaign setting, check out the Wizards of the Coast website: http://www.wizards.com/ForgottenRealms/Welcome.asp
Something New Chills the Heart of Icewind Dale...

A Hero reborn, a people betrayed. The Barbarian tribes are on the move, threatening to wipe out the Ten Towns of Icewind Dale. Yet all is not as it seems. An epic journey awaits the heroes of Black Isle’s hit RPG, with new monsters to battle, new places to visit, new treasures to find and new wonders to behold!

www.interplay.com/icewind
Supports 800x600 resolution!

6 new regions to explore, including the town of Lonelywood.
OK... since you successfully completed last week's adventure, this week we'll...

wait!

In honor of our glorious accomplishment, I spent the week writing the Dwarven Epic Ballad of Topdek, Slayer of Orcs, which I shall now render in song!

"There was a war and Topdek saw a way to win... win great fame.

He quested far and even more he found his foe... the Orcs of Bane!"

"He readied his axe, mighty axe... terrible battle did ensue!"

"Topdek won the day of blood and carnage great... vict'ry was his!

The Orc chief taken prisoner now knew his fate... thrown in the pits!"

Epic Dwarven ballads are usually more impressive if they aren't sung to the tune of "Mr. Bojangles," you know...

His Orc up and died... up and died..."
LEAF & THORN
The Secret Life of Elves
by Robin D. Laws • illustrated by Vinod Rams

When will I feel it, mother?
When will I feel Corellan's touch?
Will it be in the warmth of the sun?
Or in deep blue starlight?
Will it come when the air is still?
Or when gales blow petals through the glade?

All of those times and none,
my child;
When he awakens you, you will know.
— traditional elven nursery song, as translated from Elven

At first, it does not even look like a settlement. The visitor sees only a tranquil forest dale, coursed by a meandering stream. He hears the rustle of willow branches caressed by a gentle wind and the piping of songbirds. Then his eye catches movement. He sees a tall figure, slim as the birch trunks she walks among, slip from the woods and down to the stream, carrying a wicker basket heaped with garments of gossamer and moonsilk. The visitor calls her, for he is known here as a friend and can count on a welcome. She turns and waves, and suddenly the place bursts with life, as the visitor's friends emerge from their well-camouflaged huts to greet him. Laughing elven children bound towards him, and soon he is surrounded by elves both young and old. He feels bathed in their acceptance and love. Yet he keeps a portion of his heart hard to them, understanding all too well that these beautiful creatures could carelessly steal his affections and abandon him on a moment's whim.

He knows more of elves than most, and by resisting the webs of love they so unthinkingly weave around him, he reminds himself of their curious ways. Their every moment, from joyous birth to melancholy decline, marks them as a people apart.

THE YOU AND THE WE
Elves revel in a dual nature. Their love of paradox makes them seem mysterious to other races, but elves do not see themselves as mysterious or exotic; it is the world of people who want things to be one way or another that puzzles them.

The main paradox elves embrace is an idea they call "The You and the We." Outsiders must understand it before they can truly know the elven mind. Young elves learn it in the cradle. It tells them that they must balance their duties to themselves with their obligations to the community. An elf's duty to herself is to always strive to explore her own identity, to pursue experience, and to delve into the depths of her own soul. His obligation to the community is to live in partnership with others and to support their quests for inner
RITUALS OF THE LAND

The chief elven deity, Corellon Larethian, grants the following divine spells to community priests and priestesses. By convention, priests cast the forager's blessing spell, while priestesses conduct the womb of the earth ritual. However, clerics of either sex can perform either spell.

FORAGER'S BLESSING

Divination
Level: Clr 0, Rgr 1
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: One elf per level
Duration: 1 hour per level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell is cast on a group of foragers before they head off into the wilderness to look for edible plants and small game animals. The cleric places his hands on the shoulders of each target as he blesses each in turn. For the spell's duration, recipients enjoy a +2 bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when attempting to find food.

If the DM decides that what happens during the foraging attempt is of secondary importance to the adventure, he can, in place of Wilderness Lore checks, simply announce that the foragers return from their efforts with an especially pleasing array of nuts, berries, mushrooms, and game birds.

WOMB OF THE EARTH

Transmutation
Level: Clr 1
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 15 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. per 2 levels)
Area: 15 ft. radius burst + 10 ft. per level
Duration: Instantaneous (D)
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: No

This spell transforms a wilderness area of light vegetation, like a natural clearing or the site of a recent forest fire, into a patch of ground ready for cultivation that enables food plants to grow to harvest maturity in 24 hours. Plants and animals currently inhabiting the site are not harmed or destroyed; both simply move to the edges of the new field. The spell clears furrows in the ground and fertilizes in a manner best suited to the type of seed specified by the caster. Farmers must still tend the garden as it grows, removing weeds and pests.

Residual magic lingers in the patch of ground. Within 24 hours after the food plants are harvested, the surrounding plants and animals retake the land. No sign remains that the ground was ever cultivated.

The spell cannot be cast on densely forested areas, nor on places cleared of trees by farmers or others acting on their behalf.

knowledge. These two things are not contradictory. Without a community to clothe, feed, and comfort her, an elf can't enjoy the physical security she needs to pursue her inner quest. Without knowledge of her own spirit, the elf has nothing of true value to contribute to her community. To master the principle of "The You and the We," an elf must make herself truly individualistic, but without a trace of selfishness.

BIRTH

The twin principles of individuality and unselﬁshness ring through every significant event in an elf's life, starting with his birth. Elves, who strive always for harmony with nature's pattern, celebrate birth as the beginning of a new cycle of life. No event is holier than the birth of a child. Elven mothers do everything they can to deliver their babies in the community where they themselves were born. This custom of returning breathes new life into an elven settlement, reconnecting it to the forces of renewal that keep the world turning. A mother who was herself born away from an elven community will return, if at all possible, to the village where she was raised, or failing that, to the birthplace of one of her parents. In emergencies, any elven community will do. Where none is available, birth in the wilderness is preferable to one among other races.

Elven women remain fertile from around the time of their coming of age (see below) to approximately their 350th birthday.

The elven fetus gestates for approximately twelve lunar cycles. During pregnancy, the mother develops a bond with the developing child. As is well known, elves do not sleep, but slip into trances that renew their souls and bodies. At some time between the sixth and seventh cycles, the child's budding consciousness reveals itself to the mother. Over the coming cycles, she gradually begins to sense what kind of person her child will become. She selects a name for the growing baby, which it recognizes and accepts. The name is kept secret until the moment of birth.

The birth experience serves as the climax of a great communal celebration. Every member of the community encircles the mother-to-be, joyously singing the ancient chants handed down to them by the birthing goddesses. Both
women and men, young and old, attend
the ceremony and witness the miracle
of being. They behold it with neither
shame nor revulsion. Elves recoil at
the suggestion that births are somehow
unclean, or that they should be kept
hidden from the world. Elven births are
easier on their mothers than those of
hazards lurking in even the most tran-
quil natural setting. Although elves
value direct experience over second-
hand learning, there are certain things
that can only be taught. Children learn
to look for danger before exploring, to
recite the names of the thousand elven
gods and spirits, and to imitate their
children are expected to adhere. A
child is neither pressed into learning a
family trade or adopting its artistic tra-
ditions. In elven culture, lines are meant
to be blurred, and distinctions are but a
thing of temporary convenience.

SEX ROLES
As much as elves delight in testing
boundaries and confounding definitions,
even they must admit that some gener-
alizations can be made about the roles
of men and women in their society.
Both men and women frequently
set up the professions of hunters and
warriors. However, some male elves
are seized by wanderlust and seek their
true selves by exploring the adventures
and dangers of the wider world. Female
elven fighters, on the other hand,
sometimes feel a need to stay closer
to home to guard the ones they love.
As a result, they often become the
foresters, guards, or militia of their
communities. The need to seek an
epiphany (see the following page)
overrides all else, though, and no elf
hesitates to pursue any course her
heart tells her to follow.

Both men and women are equally as
likely to play a musical instrument in
elven society. However, men tend to
prefer the vocal arts and wind instru-
cents, and women have a slight
tendency to pick up percussion or
stringed instruments. A mixed quartet
of elven bards is said to be capable
of bringing a god to tears.

Both genders are equally represented
among the priesthood and the ranks of
arcane spellcasters. All elves love
magic and feel it in their bones like
perhaps no other race.

In terms of the less violent crafts,
many elven men enjoy woodcarving,
pottery, and crafts that require shaping
material with their bare hands. Elven
women, on the other hand, lean toward
crafts such as painting, weaving, and
other crafts that require an active
imagination and a gentle, creative
touch. In general, though, elves love
the feeling of bringing a new shape to
something that nature has created.

They find great joy in turning the
mundane into the magical and the normal
into the brilliant, and any effort to work
in harmony with nature is a noble one.

It bears repeating, though, that elves
are much less likely to follow the
unwritten rules of their societies than

ALL ELVES LOVE MAGIC AND
FEEL IT IN THEIR BONES LIKE
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other races; they suffer little pain. (This
is not true when the baby is only half-
elven; these births can be agonizing
and dangerous.)

Elves almost always retain vivid
memories of the moment just after they
emerge into the world, when they are
held up for the community to see. They
remember the special song their new
neighbors sing to them. When the time
comes for an elf to attend her first
birthing, she finds she knows the song
without having been taught it.

CHILDHOOD
An elf’s memories of childhood (the
next fifty or so years) are rarely so
clear. Childhood is a time of play and
exploration, all carried out under the
watchful eyes of the community’s
adults, who are keenly aware of the
elders in the making of crafts, clothing,
and hunting implements. Although the
child learns to recognize and accom-
pany his mother and father, other
family distinctions are unimportant.
Children, already in pursuit of their
individuality, are allowed to form bonds
to the adults to whom they feel most
attuned. Every member of a community
swears, during the birthing ceremony,
to lend the best of his or her knowledge
and spirit to the new child. If a child
grows up to be selfish, dull to beauty,
or unamusing, the entire community
has failed. If a child succumbs to the
forest’s dangers, all share the tragedy
of a life taken before its time.

Although there are some slight
differences in outlook between elven
men and women (see below), these are
tendencies, not enforced rules to which

THE PURSUIT OF BEAUTY

Elves believe that any object a person makes should be as beautiful as its
maker can manage. The most-used objects should be the most attractive
of all, because they’re the items one spends the greatest time looking at.

Elves work to heighten all of their senses, so it is not good enough that an
item look pretty. It should smell pleasant and be rewarding to the touch. When
accidentally dropped, it should make a pleasant ring or chiming sound, not a
nasty clatter.

There is no item so humble or unworthy that it should not be decorated.
Even weapons of war receive loving craftsmanship. In a scene from the elven
verse epic Arrayn’s Brothers, an orc general, pierced by Arrayn’s arrows,
pauses before expiring to reflect on the extreme perfection of their design.
Though poetic license is obviously at work here, the passage does reveal the
elven attitude toward artisanship.

Definitions of beauty vary by region. Elves in one place might favor detailed
ornamentation, never feeling satisfied by a piece unless its every square inch
is covered in complex patterns. Their distant neighbors might favor the mysti-
cal harmony of extreme simplicity.
are the members of any other race. Every community boasts its share of woffish, wandering female hunters and homebound, peaceful male weavers.

**ADOLESCENCE**

The fifty-year span between childhood and full adulthood is the most important in shaping an elf’s character and determining his spiritual path. Elves call this the beryn fin, or “time of discovery.” Beryn fin, the onset of puberty, with its wrenching emotions and romantic urges, is twinned with an even more powerful mystical awakening.

**SEXUAL EXPERIMENTATION**

Other races generally consider the sexual freedom of elves shocking, fickle, and endlessly fascinating. The folk tales and rumors they repeat are much more scandalous and colorful than what really goes on. To an elf, sexual expression is just one item on a long list of experiences anyone should explore in the course of forging an identity. Experimentation with a range of partners is no more or less odd than tasting the juice of a dozen berries, following the path of plum-seeds as winds carry them through the woods, or learning the secret names of the forest’s animals. Still, a young elf’s exploration of love and lust should be as complete as any other quest he or she embarks upon.

Elves hold no double standards in their games of coupling and uncoupling. Males and females are both encouraged to fully express their physical yearnings. Young females can blithely pursue their infatuations because the low fertility rate of their long-lived species makes pregnancy unlikely. Children born out of wedlock, though rare, face no special prejudice in an elfen community.

Young elves seem fickle to other races because they are able to move from one partner to the next without suffering the pangs of separation or unrequited love. Casual liaisons are a common and accepted part of social interaction. An elf might have partnered in the past with a large number of contemporaries in his or her community and feels no lingering feelings of shame or awkwardness in their presence. They might fondly recall the joys of an old rendezvous, but give it no more weight than they would the recollections of a delightful shared meal or a satisfying day of rock climbing.

**GROWING RESPONSIBILITIES**

Alongside their pursuit of pleasure, adolescent elves are expected to slowly take on the duties of mutual support and protection that keep a community together. Males and females alike must master the basics of combat, especially with the bow. They must learn to keep themselves at constant attention during a long watch—not an easy task for an easily-distracted, questing young mind. Adolescents take part in the community’s foraging, farming, and hunting activities. During this time, they must also learn to make useful and beautiful things.

**EPIPHANIES**

Both pleasure and responsibility are less important than the young elf’s spiritual progress. Elves do not draw a line between the everyday world and the realms of the gods. Although everyone knows that Corellon Larethian and his pantheon dwell in a lush and verdant quadrant of the outer planes, their presence also permeates the Prime Material Plane. The spiritual touch of Corellon Larethian can be found in any place where elves live in harmony with nature. An elf does not simply listen to a priest tell him about his god; he goes into the wilderness to seek his presence, to feel the deity’s breath upon his skin, and to hear the words of wisdom he whispers in his worshippers’ ears. Young elves are encouraged to spend hours in solitude out in the wild until they encounter Larethian’s spirit.

The moment of epiphany, when an elf’s inner senses open up and his entire being is flooded with an awareness of the divine, is the pivotal moment in any elf’s life. He does not describe it to anyone, even to his closest love or his own children, except in the vaguest terms. It is hard, then, to reliably say much about this instant of supreme mystery. Each elf seems to experience it differently. Despite the imaginings of certain non-elf scholars, who picture the event as a grand vision of a glowing avatar of Corellon Larethian appearing to the quester, the moment is a profoundly subtle. The elf might come to know the god by seeing an especially sublime pattern traced in the veins of a crumbling leaf, or in the knowledge of imminent power found in the disturbed air that precedes a thunderstorm.

An elf spends his years of beryn fin in spiritual preparation for this moment, receiving tantalizing hints and premonitions of its true significance. It usually occurs during the elf’s one-hundredth year. Some elves, especially those whose births were accompanied by auspicious signs and portents, might experience it as soon as age seventy-five. These individuals often go on to become great priests or priestesses, or mighty heroes. A few unlucky souls find that epiphany eludes them, usually because they’re trying too hard to force the moment to occur. Most, after priestly counseling, experience the awakening no more than a decade or two late. A rare few never taste it. Growing bitter and frustrated with the loving pity they receive from their friends and neighbors, the malawin, or “unawakened,” often choose self-exile, leaving the world of elves to settle in foreign cities or wander as rootless adventurers. Malawin rarely admit their status, even to those who couldn’t care less about elfen spiritual development.

When an elf experiences the Awakening, she is transformed. She declares herself an adult, marking her newfound individuality by selecting a new name for herself. She has become an equal of any adult in the community.
ADULTHOOD
The elf’s relatives and neighbors might be slow to adopt the elf’s newly-chosen
name. Elves, for whom a decade is like
the blinking of an eye, take a while to
adjust their impressions of others to
match new circumstances. Elderly,
doting relatives are especially prone to
use an elf’s child-name as a term of
endearment. Some individuals accept
this; others bristle.

NOW, WHEN SHE CREATES A
WORK OF ART . . . SHE IS ERECTING
A BULWARK AGAINST HATE R A D
AND U N T H I N K I N G DESTRUC T I O N.

AGAINST EVIL
Although a crusty dwarf or impatient
human might not notice it, the newly
matured elf has undergone a sudden
change. She has lost the innocent play-
fullness of beryn fin. Although she
continues to seek our moments of
beauty and pleasure, she now does so
for a different reason and in an altered
spirit. In achieving her moment of one-
ness with the elven gods, she has also
sensed the inscrutable, lurking pres-
ence of their opposites: the gods of evil
and their minions. She understands that
her efforts to live lightly on the land
and protect the community from en-
emies are part of a greater struggle to
protect existence—especially the natural
world—from cruel and powerful entities
that constantly scheme to destroy it.

An elf fights evil not only by remain-
ing vigilant against signs of its taint but
by embracing the beauty of the world.
Now, when she creates a work of art,
she is not just making herself and those
around her happy. She is erecting a
bulwark against hatred and unthinking
destruction. She can’t allow herself to
be consumed by fear or hatred of the
enemy, because it is through these
corrosive impulses that evil does its
work. She must defy evil by bringing
joy into the world and by continuing
her quest to know her true self.

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE
Upon reaching adulthood, elves con-
tinue their sexual explorations.
Eventually, though, each discovers that
his or her heart has developed a capacity for
lasting and exclusive love. Like most
other important things in their lives,
elves describe this in mystical terms.
They believe that a person’s spiritual
progress is unknowingly interwoven
with that of another. This soul-mate is
called thiramin. Upon meeting his or
her thiramin, an elf’s heart fills with passion
and certainty. Ninety-nine times out of
a hundred, the other party is felled by
the same feeling of immediate and etern-
al devotion. (Though rare, an unex-
pected feeling of thiramin is always
disastrous, bringing centuries of
wrenching heartbreak. Sufferers
often commit suicide or succumb to
the temptations of evil.) Elves almost
always feel thiramin for people they
meet for the first time. In other words,
visitors from other communities.
Intermarriage between communities
strengthens the bonds of communication
between settlements, allowing them to
quickly band together against the armies
of evil that march across the land.

Perhaps five couples out of a hun-
dred form when elves who have known
each other since childhood suddenly
look upon one another and fall into a
state of thiramin. When this happens, it
is almost always the case that the two
elves have previously treated each
other as bitter rivals.

The certainty of thiramin is never
allowed to interfere with the experi-
ence of a long and protracted
courtship. Where adolescents will hop
into the hay with one another on the
slightest provocation, a couple swayed
by thiramin might heighten their
moment of ecstasy by delaying it for
decades or even centuries.

Elven marriage ceremonies are stately
and beautiful, often lasting for weeks.
Poetry recitations, musical perfor-
mances, and theatrical events all re-
tell the great love stories of elven lore.
Non-elven often find the protracted
dignity of these occasions unbearable.
The wild debauchery that begins after
the husband and wife have retired to the
nuptial bed might surprise them.

Though they prefer to stay close
together, married couples are capable
of spending long periods of time apart.
The feeling of connection they have for
one another makes a missing partner
feel close at hand, even when they
are far away.

LIVING OFF THE LAND
Elven communities support themselves
with the bounty of nature. Regarding
themselves as just another part of the
natural world, they hunt, forage, and
farm in ways that maintain their cycles
of renewal. Aided by magic, they’re
able to produce food and shelter for
themselves while leaving the area
around them in its original state. They
keep their communities small and
spread out so as not to overtax the
land. Their low birth rate helps them
achieve this. The goal of an elven
community is subsistence, not wealth
or profit. As is the case in any commu-
nity that aims only to sustain itself,
specialized labor is uncommon. People
divide their time according to what
they do best, but every capable indi-
vidual does at least a little farming,
foraging, hunting, and crafting.

TRADE
Some communities completely dis-
courage trade with other races, or
even with neighboring elves. Several
common elven folktales tell of the first
elves to discover trade; they invariably
CORRUPT ELVES

Although the religion and culture of the elves puts them at odds with the forces of evil, elves are no more immune than other species from its temptations. Demons take special pleasure in leading elves astray, which they do by making mental contact with them as they quest for their epiphanies. Some pose as Corellon Larethian, tricking the gullible. Others offer the wealth and dominance that elven society turns its back on. Self-saying malawan, convincing themselves that they have been cast out by Larethian, are especially prone to their manipulation.

It does not take long for the typical elven community to notice the odd behavior of an obviously cruel or insane servant of evil. But more clever types might thrive for decades, if not centuries, subtly taking advantage of a community’s trust to thwart their protective efforts and allow corruption to gain a foothold around their lands. Although elven tolerance is vast, a community member who reveals his evil nature faces execution unless he escapes.

bring near ruination upon all of elvenkind. Other groups are more permissive of trade, so long as it doesn’t drive them to deplete local resources. Even they refuse to trade for those things they can make or gather themselves; to do so would be not only to admit failure but also to accept dependence on unreliable outsiders. Elves, who love the beautiful and exotic, are much more likely to trade for luxury items. They like pretty stones, decorative jewelry, wondrous magic items, and unfamiliar musical instruments. Their sense of value is very different from a human’s or dwarf’s. They might offer a fist-sized nugget of gold in exchange for the performance of a song, or a jar of fireflies for an emerald-encrusted scepter.

Elves who live in human settlements come to accept the necessity of trade and the standard values of items in order to survive among them. Even adventurers quickly learn the importance of purchased gear; when they retire to their communities, they might act as intermediaries between their kin and puzzled peddlers.

LEADERSHIP AND AUTHORITY

As lovers of freedom, elves recoil from authority wielded for its own sake. Yet they recognize that in times of crisis, it is sometimes necessary to follow the directions of a wise leader.

Within communities, leadership stays informal. Community leaders can’t force their people to do anything; they rely on their reputations and the merit of their words to gain cooperation. Everyone knows everyone else, and people know who to ask for advice when they need it. They seek the counsel of a small handful of revered elders, each of whom claims centuries of experience and achievement in a particular area. One elder, probably a priest or priestress, might understand more about cultivation than anyone else. Another knows the local forests inside out and can best supervise community defense. A third might claim the greatest expertise in foreign warfare; she takes charge of the village’s warriors when they go forth to fight evil. A visitor who asks the name of a village’s leader might get five or six different answers, depending on the nature of her business.

Each community recognizes a king or queen who maintains authority over dozens, sometimes even hundreds, of small communities. Their positions are hereditary; each traces descent from elven heroes of the ancient past, and through them, to Corellon Larethian himself. Monarchs must live up to their hallowed pedigrees by making good decisions and winning battles against evil. If they lose the respect of a community, it might enact a ceremony of severance to transfer its allegiance to a ruler of another lineage. Luckily, monarchs take their duties seriously, and this rarely happens. The charisma of elven royalty is stunning; even non-elves who spend time with such rulers find themselves wanting to serve.

In peacetime, a monarch’s main duties are ceremonial. She spends two-thirds of a year traveling from one community to another, where she presides over rituals, judges competitions, enjoys performances, accepts endless poetic tributes, and blesses the crops.
Monarchs don't tax their subjects, but are typically burdened with hundreds of luxurious gifts at the end of each royal visit. They carry these home to their courts, where they are put on display. In times of dire emergency, they might be traded, mostly in human cities, for armaments.

When not touring, kings and queens hold court in fabulous surroundings. Some elven palaces are ancient structures of gleaming marble; others are made of magically-intertwined, living trees. Their locations are kept secret; otherwise, they'd be too tempting a target for raiders.

While at court, elven rulers throw lavish feasts. They sponsor festivals and tournaments to build fraternal feelings between communities. The monarchs, or their senior courtiers, mediate disputes between elves from different settlements. Human observers often remark on the absence of flattery in elven court life. Although an elven queen enjoys compliments as much as any elf (which is to say, quite a lot), she sees them as her due. It does not occur to her to reward those who give them with gold or treasure.

**JOURNEY INTO TWILIGHT**

Beginning around an elf's six hundredth year, her blood begins to slow, her thoughts start to cloud, and her bones grow tired. Elves train themselves all their lives to accept death as an integral part of nature's cycle. Even so, they usually find it hard to adjust to the dimming of their senses, which makes it harder for them to experience pleasure. An elf's declining years are often melancholy ones. She might spend them composing her memoirs in epic verse, hoping that her descendants will memorize and repeat them for generations to come. She might retreat to a hermitage or isolated cave to contemplate the nature of existence. A very few misguided souls turn to blackest sorcery to extend their lives, becoming liches. But most surround themselves with their fellow villagers, trying to impart the wisdom they've gained and take heart in the laughter of children.

Burial customs vary. Where the soil is lush, bodies are buried to nourish the land, repaying it for a lifetime's bounty. Where the ground is hard, they are cremated, and their ashes sent on the winds for one final, unpredictable journey.

Some elves hold that after death, their spirits go to dwell in a verdant paradise with the kin of Corellon Larethian. Others believe in an eternal cycle of reincarnation, in which their spirits return to earth just as an evaporated puddle eventually falls as rain. The true answer remains for each seeker to find herself.

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**DIVORCE**

The condition of thiramin (soul binding) can sometimes vanish as quickly as it came. Again, the feeling of sudden disconnection is almost always mutual. The end of thiramin can almost never be traced to a specific cause, like a fight or an incident of infidelity. Instead, it is seen as an indication that the partners' spiritual paths have diverged, and that Corellon Larethian's divine plans for them call for their parting. The evaporation of love is accepted with mournful resignation. The couple quietly breaks up their household, relying on community leaders to spread the sad news. One partner usually leaves the community in search of his or her new destiny. An elf doesn't usually feel hate or bitterness towards an ex-partner, but still suffers a sense of loss and pain while in his or her presence.

Thiramin can sometimes be broken by outside forces. A ritual known to certain covens of evil clerics can sever the bond between husband and wife. It requires the capture of a personal item co-owned by the targets. Adventurous friends of the sundered couple can break the spell, and reknit the bonds of marriage, by recovering the item and destroying the priest's ritual implements. The unhappy mates normally don't assist in this, as they lose all desire to reform the relationship.
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In the dark recesses of the Abyss lies the Demonweb. There lives Loth, Demon Queen of Spiders and patron of the drow. Angering her is never wise—she is willing to go to great lengths for vengeance. In fact, she has culled from her most powerful followers a group of foul but deadly enforcers and forged them into a strike team dedicated to one purpose: revenge.

These individuals are collectively known as the Hand of Vengeance. They dwell within the Demonweb, each called upon for special missions directly by Loth herself, although their leader Jaggedra Thul is the only one that actually speaks to Loth in most cases. Each has gained a special blessing from the goddess to aid them, in the form of magic equipment, ability score increases, or other special powers.

MISSIONS OF THE HAND OF VENGEANCE

The types of missions in which the Hand of Vengeance take part usually involve attacking someone, either in an ambush or an assassination attempt in the target's home. They are always proactive and used for attack—never defense. Few ever see the Hand of Vengeance unless they want to be seen—and those that do are usually quickly slain.

Those who number among the enemies of Loth include:
- Those who would trespass into the Demonweb and wreak damage or kill servants
- Those who would steal from her
- Those who would slay her most trusted servants, including clerics of 17th or higher level
- Those who would steal from or harm her most trusted servants, and in so doing harm her plans or important sites dedicated to her
- Most importantly, those who would take up arms against Loth's children or Loth herself

Committing any of these acts does not necessarily insure that Loth sends the Hand of Vengeance to slay the transgressors (sometimes her divine attentions are directed elsewhere, and sometimes her motives are strange, alien, and most of all, chaotic). However, the chance for an encounter with the Hand of Vengeance is likely enough that interlopers should never be able to sleep soundly again.

GROUP TACTICS

The Hand of Vengeance prepares as much as it can ahead of time for an attack against a designated target. Sierna uses her clairvoyance/clairaudience ability, as well as scouting the area out invisibly and ethereally if possible. Vinter uses Divination spells to learn what he can. If the target seems well protected, they might even resort to capturing and interrogating those near and dear in order to gain more information, and possibly some leverage to draw the target out.

If there are multiple powerful targets, the Hand of Vengeance might attack them individually. They love fighting foes when their opponents are at their most vulnerable—they thoroughly enjoy exploiting and mocking enemies caught at a bad time or in an unfortunate circumstance. For example, if their foe is having an affair with the queen of the land, they attack when the two are
indisposed so that the target is not only slain but the corpse is exposed and the most embarrassment, anger, and misery are inflicted on the most people.

The Hand of Vengeance has used the following tactics in the past:
- Approaching a target in disguise (this is Sierona’s area of expertise)
- Inflicting a target with a disease (often followed up with an actual attack when the target is weak)
- Poisoning the drinking water of the community that the target lives in
- Poisoning the target’s food
- Attacking with summoned monsters repeatedly, over the course of many days, to weaken a target’s defenses.
- Using Enchantment spells to control or convince the target’s friends and allies that the target is insane, evil, untrustworthy, or otherwise not really their friend—Sierona and Vinter are very good at this, but Jaggedra’s spells and vampire abilities also make her effective at turning people against each other.
- Holding the target’s loved ones hostage to draw him out.

That said, the Hand of Vengeance prefers a more straightforward approach when possible, both because they enjoy inflicting physical pain and because they are inherently lazy and chaotic.

If necessary, the members of the Hand of Vengeance procure bribes or needed equipment (or the money to buy such) from Lofth’s storehouses. Each of them is able to draw upon up to 500 gp per level in wealth or equipment. If targeting non-good foes, members of the Hand that can alter their spell selection do so accordingly.

THE ACHILLES HEEL

The one weakness that the members of the Hand of Vengeance have is something that they would never see as such: their own evil and chaotic natures. They rarely help each other with spells or work to save each other in combat. The exceptions to this include the group’s willingness to help Sierona set up flanking positions and Vinter’s willingness to cast helpful spells on the others (to make them reliant on him). But for the most part, one will abandon, betray, and even hurt the others to save himself, and it often does not occur to them that helping an ally betters their own position.

THE MEMBERS

The following individuals are the members of the Hand of Vengeance. If one is slain, he or she might be resurrected or replaced. When running these NPCs, remember that above all else they are wicked and depraved—and each in their own way. They laugh at their enemies as they inflict wounds. Ruthless to the extreme, each uses his or her most potent attacks first. The only instance in which they accept surrender is when they want to take a prisoner for interrogation and sadistic torture. They pause to make sure a downed opponent is dead with a coup de grace. They have no honor, no sense of fair play, and exploit any weaknesses.

SIERONA

As the only true demon in the ranks of Lofth’s Hand of Vengeance, Sierona is arrogant and imperious in her relations with the rest. She views herself as the leader—at least when Jaggedra is not nearby. The others do not care for her, but tolerate her for her usefulness and work to get her into position to make sneak attacks.

If left to her own devices, Sierona would fall into activities centered around her demonic nature: the temptation and corruption of mortals, particularly males. She despises mortals and delights in seeing them drained of all energy, lying helpless before her. When the group fights such foes, she usually asks that at least one be spared so that she can take him away and torture him for weeks to come (until she gets bored, forgets to look in on him, and he dies).

Tactics: Before battle, Sierona uses her Use Magic Device skill to activate her wand of cat’s grace. With an average roll, she gains a +2 bonus to AC (24 total), Reflex saves (14 total), and...

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SIERONA

Female Succubus, Reg6; CR 6; Medium-size Outsider (chaotic, evil) (5 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 6d8+6d6+24; hp 75; Init +6; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (avg); AC 22 (+2 Dex, +9 natural, +1 ring of protection); Atk +12 melee (id3+1, 2 claws), +13/+8 ranged (id8+1, mighty masterwork longbow); SA spell-like abilities, energy drain, summon tanar’ri, sneak attack +3d6; SQ damage reduction 20/x2, tanar’ri qualities, alterate form, tongues, evasion, uncanny dodge; SR 12; AL CE; SV Fort +19, Ref +12, Will +18; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 20.

Skills: Bluff +17, Concentration +8, Disable Device +9, Disguise +17 (while using her alternate form ability, she gains a +10 circumstance bonus for a total of +27), Escape Artist +8, Hide +14, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Listen +21, Move Silently +14, Open Lock +12, Ride +7, Search +15, Spot +21, Use Magic Device +14.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse (claws).

Spell-like Abilities: At will—charm monster, clairaudience/clairvoyance, darkness, detect good, detect thoughts, doom, ethereal jaunt (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), suggestion, and teleport without error (self plus 50 pounds of objects only); 1/day—unholy blight. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 12th-level sorcerer (Save DC 15 spell level).

Energy Drain (Su): A succubus drains energy from a mortally ill to lures into some act of passion, or by simply planting a kiss on the victim. If the target is not willing to be kissed, the succubus must start a grapple, which provides an attack of opportunity. The succubus’s kiss or embrace inflicts one level of damage; the victim must succeed at a Wisdom check (DC 15) to notice the effect. The Fortitude save to remove the level has a DC of 16.

Summon Tanar’ri (Sp): Once per day, a succubus can attempt to summon one balor with a 10% chance of success.

Alternate Form (Su): Succubi can assume any humanoid form of Small to Large size as a standard action. This ability is similar to the polymorph spell but allows only humanoid forms.

Tongues (Su): A succubus has a permanent tongues ability as the spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. Succubi usually use verbal communication with mortals and save telepathic communication for conversing with other fiends.

Tanar’ri qualities:

Immunities (Ex): Tanar’ri are immune to poison and electricity.

Resistances (Ex): Tanar’ri have cold, fire, and acid resistance 20.

Telepathy (Su): Tanar’ri can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

Possessions: +1 ring of protection, wand of cat’s grace (25 charges), wand of cure moderate wounds (25 charges), ring of invisibility, amulet of proof against detection and location.

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[Note: The rest of the text is not transcribed due to the page limit.]
**PHAUMAN**

Male drw Brgr/Wiz.; CR 15; Medium-
size Humanoid (5 ft., 6 in. tall; HD
$4d4+5d6+8+4; hp 66; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.;
AC 20 (+2 amulet of natural armor, +6
Dex, +10 from stone, +1 buckler); Atk
+2d6+16 melee (1d6+6, +2 rapier), +18
ranged (1d4, masterwork hand crossbow);
SA spells, spell-like abilities; SQ immune to
sleep, +3 to Will saves versus spells and
spell-like abilities (+4 versus Enchantment
spells or effects), darkvision (120 ft.), light
blindness; SR 20; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref
+10, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 22, Con 17, Int 17,
Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Alchemy +15, Climb +15,
Concentration +15, Jump +15, Knowledge
(arcana) +15, Listen +15, Scry +15,
Spellcraft +15, Spot +6, Tumble +11
Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms
and Armor, Exotic Weapon Proficiency
(hand crossbow), Expertise, Improved
Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot,
Scribe Scroll, Weapon Finesse (rapier),
Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon
Specialization (rapier).

**Spell-like Abilities (Sp):** 1/day—
dancing lights, darkness, and faerie fire. These
abilities are as the spells cast by a
14th-level sorcerer.

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to
bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight
spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition,
they suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to
all attack rolls, saves, and checks while
operating in bright light.

Spells (4/4/3/2): 0—detect magic, disrupt
undead, mage hand, read magic; 1st—mage
armor, magic missile, shield, true strike;
2nd—bull’s strength, endurance, invisibility;
3rd—displacement, haste.

**Spellbook:** 0—all; 1st—identify, mage
armor, magic missile, shield, spider climb,
true strike; 2nd—bull’s strength, blur, cat’s
grace, endurance, invisibility; 3rd—dis-
placement, haste, fly.

**Possessions:** +2 rapier, +2 amulet of
natural armor, iron stones (dusty rose
prism, deep red sphere, vibrant purple
that stores haste and fly), potion of spider
climb, potion of blur, potion of cat’s
grace, scroll of displacement, scroll of
invisibility, scroll of mage armor, 5 doses
of giant wasp poison (d6 Dex/d6Dex,
DC 18), masterwork hand crossbow
with 12 bolts, masterwork buckler.

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**VINTER**

Male drider Cl14; CR 15; Large
Aberration (6 ft. long); HD 14d8+4d2; hp
195; Init +9; Spd 30 ft., Climb 15 ft.; AC 27
(+1 size, +3 Dex, +6 natural, +8
breastplate, +3 shield); Atk +15/+10 melee
(ad8+3, +2 mace) and +8 melee (d6+1, +1
bit, +15/+10 ranged (1d6+2, +2 short
bow); Face/Reach: 10 ft. x 10 ft. x
5 ft.; SA poison, spells, spell-like abilities;
SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +14;
Str 17, Dex 16, Con 19, Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 16.

**Skills:** Climb +15, Concentration +15,
Hide +10, Listen +15, Move Silently +8,
Spellcraft +10, Spot +11.

**Feats:** Combat Casting, Dodge, Lightning
Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

**Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):** 1/day—
dancing lights, darkness, detect chaos, detect
evil, detect good, detect law, detect
magic, faerie fire, and levitate. Once per
day, Vinter can use clairaudience/clair-
voyance, discern lies, dispel magic, and
suggestion. These abilities are as the spells
cast by a 6th-level sorcerer (save DC 13
+ spell level).

**Poison (Ex):** Bite, Fortitude save (DC 16),
initial and secondary damage 1d6 tem-
porary Strength.

Spells (6/7/6/5/4/4/3/2/1): 0—cure minor
wounds, detect magic, guidance, read magic,
resistance, virtue; 1st—bless, command, cure
light wounds, divine favor, doom, protection
from good, protection from law, shield of
faith; 2nd—bull’s strength, endurance, hold
person, resist elements, shatter*, silence, sound
burst; 3rd—blindness/deafness, contagion,
cure serious wounds, dispel magic, invisibility
purge, protection from elements; 4th—chaos
hammer*, cure critical wounds (x2), divine
power, greater magic weapon, restoration;
5th—circle of doom; dispel good, flame
strike, greater command, spell resistance; 6th—
blade barrier, harm*, heat, summon monster VI;
7th—blasphemy, destruction, disintegrate.

"Domain Spells":

**Domains:** Chaos (casts Chaos spells at +1
caster level); Destruction (x2/day can
smite for +4 attack and +4 damage on an
attack roll).

**Possessions:** +2 spell-storing mace (cur-
rently stores inflict serious wounds), +2
shortbow, +1 brace, +1 large steel
shield, peripat of wisdom (+2), ring of
feather falling, 3 loads of force.

Dexterity-based skills, as well as an
attack bonus with her claws (+14 total).
She uses clairvoyance/clairaudience to
scope out the location of the attack
beforehand as well, telling the others
what she sees and giving them advice
and even orders.

Sieron uses her wings, teleport
without error, and ethereal fount abili-
ties to get herself (invisibly if possible)
into a position to make a sneak attack.
Loth has granted her the ability
to draw energy with but a touch of her
hand. Thus, she makes sneak attacks
with her claws, hoping to draw energy
as well as inflict damage. With all of her
special movement capabilities, she tries
to stay very mobile.

In battle, she uses her telepathic
abilities to communicate where she is to
her allies so that she can coordinate
actions. She also occasionally relays
information from one team member to
another in this way, but she resents
being a "messenger."

Sieron never attempts to
summon a balor. It just isn’t her style.
If she becomes desperate, she teleports
away instead.

**Design Notes:** Sieron’s CR has
been increased by one because her
energy drain ability has changed and she
has more magic equipment than normal.

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**PHAUMAN**

Confident and chaotic, Phauman is
probably the least cooperative member
of the Hand of Vengeance. He uses his
abilities to help himself and no one else.
He fascinates a desirable and for-
midable lover among the drow
women in the Demonweb, but he is actually a
cruel and heartless boar that abuses
those weaker than him and lies to those
more powerful. He occasionally insinu-
ates that he and Jaggeder are lovers,
which is a lie that she would probably
kill him for if she heard it.

Phauman is a wizard that uses
his spells almost solely to augment his
fighting capabilities. He is not inter-
ested in grandiose, showy spells like fireball,
believing them to have no
finesse or style.

**Tactics:** Phauman doesn’t make a
move without first casting mage armor
(giving him AC 24), bull’s strength (with
an average roll, this increases his attack
bonuses, damage, and Strength-based
skills by +2), and endurance (with an
average roll, this increases his hit
KRAD

Half-fiend dragonne: CR 12; Huge Outsider
(20 ft long, HD: 18d10+100 hp: 2200; Init +17; Spt 40 ft, Fly 60 ft (poor); AC 24 (+2 size, +1 natural +9 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +25 melee (2d8+12, bite) and +20 melee (2d6+6, 2 claws); Face/Reach 10 ft, x 20 ft/10 ft; SA roar, spell-like abilities: SQ acid, cold, electricity, and fire resistance (20), immune to poison; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +12; Str 35, Dex 17, Con 23, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.


Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Roar (Su): A dragonne can loose a terrifying roar every 1d4 rounds. All creatures (except dragonnes) within 120 feet must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or be weakened for 1d4 rounds. Those within 30 feet become deafened for 1d6 rounds. Creatures with 8 or fewer HD get no saving throw, but others cannot negate the effect with a successful Fortitude save (DC 15). Deafened creatures cannot be affected again by the dragonne’s roar.

Spell-like abilities (Sp): 3/day—darkness, Find Veil, holy aura, 1/day—deavor, heal, holy blight, contagion, blasphemy, unshaken, holy war, and summon monster IX (fiends only).

Possessions: +2 amulet of health, +4 collar of strength (as belt).

points by 1 and his Fortitude save by +1). Vinter usually casts resist elements (fire) on him before they go into battle.

Before combat, Phauman also casts shield (AC 31 and +3 to Reflex saves), invisibility, displacement, and haste. Once in battle, he uses true strike against a well-defended foe (5% spell failure chance because he uses a buckler) but mostly he just makes as many attacks in his hasted state as he can with his poisoned blade. In situations where range is a factor, he uses poisoned crossbow bolts, although he doesn’t hesitate to fall back on magic missile.

VINTER

Originally, all of the members of the Hand of Vengeance rebelled at Vinter’s presence based on his status as a drider—often thought of as “cursed,” by the drow and other inhabitants of the Demonweb. That position has changed. As the newest member, he has gained the begrudging respect of the others, as well as put himself in a position where they must rely on him for healing and support spells. Now the others will sometimes go out of their way to protect Vinter as he remains in the back and casts spells.

Tactics: Before battle, Vinter casts endurance (an average roll gives him 14 more hit points and a +1 bonus to Fortitude saves and Concentration checks), dispel good (AC 31 plus offensive capabilities) protection from elements (usually fire), and spell resistance on himself (increasing his SR to 26). In his role as “support,” Vinter casts resist elements (usually fire) on Phauman, bull’s strength on Berkurt, and bless on everyone. He attacks foes with destruction, disintegrate, blasphemy, flame strike, blade barrier, and greater command.

If forced into melee, Vinter casts divine power on himself (and divine favor if there’s time) and uses his smite ability and the inflict serious wounds stored in his mace immediately. Divine power makes his attack bonuses with his mace +20/+15/+10, increases his damage and Strength-based skills by +1, and gives him 14 more hit points. If his first swing (attack bonus +24 total with the smite) with the mace hits, he inflicts 4d8+34 points of damage.

KRAD

Krad was raised and nurtured by priestesses of Loth in the Demonweb, and fed magic elixirs so he would grow particularly large and strong. Surprisingly intelligent, this tough, half-demon dragonne serves as one of the Hand of Vengeance’s central melee combatants as well as a flying mount for both Phauman and Vinter, or Berkurt alone. Unlike most of his kind, his scales and mane are dark, rather than golden in color.

Krad is greedy and materialistic, interested in accumulating a vast hoard like a dragon. Rumor has it that he has started such an accumulation of wealth somewhere in the straits of the Demonweb.

Tactics: Krad is very straightforward and doesn’t hesitate to swoop into battle and attack, although if attacking with surprise he uses horned war, blasphemy, or unholy blight to weaken his foes at range before he gets there (horned war, inflicting 1d6 damage, is the best choice unless the targets are undead or otherwise immune).

Design Note: Krad’s CR has been increased not only due to the increase in size and his half-fiend nature, but because he has useful magic items beyond the sort of treasure a dragonne would normally use.

BERKURT THE CORRUPTOR

A fiendish stone giant, Berkurt is thoroughly evil and vile in his pursuits. He enjoys inflicting pain and spreading misery wherever he goes, crushing those weaker than him simply because he can. He angers easily and flies into bloody rages all the time. The rest of the Hand of Vengeance has simply learned not to get him angry, although a suggestion from Sierona usually can calm him if need be.

Berkurt’s favorite team member is Krad. He does not understand or care for spellcasting, although he appreciates those spells that obviously help him—particularly a well-timed heal from Vinter.

Tactics: Vinter usually casts bull’s strength on Berkurt well ahead of time; with an average roll, this gives him an attack bonus of +24/+18 with his sword and an additional +1 to all damage and Strength-based skills. Berkurt wades into battle with his unholy sword quickly, and he possesses a great love of gore, pain, and death.

BERKURT THE CORRUPTOR

Fiendish stone giant: CR 10; Large Giant
(23 ft tall); HD 14d8+70; hp 134; Init +2; Spd 40 ft, AC 28 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +1 natural, +6 breastplate); Atk +20/+15 melee (2d8+13, +1 holy greatsword) or +24/+17 ranged (2d8+10, rock); Face/Reach 5 ft, x 5 ft/10 ft; SA rock throwing, smite good (+14 damage on one attack per day), SQ rock catching, cold and fire resistance (20), damage reduction 10/+3; AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +6, Will +15; Str 30, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +9, Hide +8 (+8 in rocky terrain), Jump +9, Spot +4.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot.

Possessions: +1 unholy holy greatsword, masterwork breastplate.
JAGGEDRA THUL

Lolth's favored avenger is a priestess that has served her for hundreds of years. Born the daughter of a powerful priestess and a black dragon in drow form, Jaggedra served her goddess for many years, rising quickly through the ranks and eventually assassinating her own mother to attain the position of high priestess in a major Underdark temple. She found a powerful and like-minded mate in a drow vampire named Zachean. Zachean eventually betrayed and slew Jaggedra to get at a powerful magic item, but direct intervention by the Queen of the Spiders allowed Jaggedra to rise as a vampire herself (normally, a half-dragon cannot be afflicted with vampirism). Jaggedra joined her mistress in the Abyss and has lived there ever since.

As a vampiric, half-dragon cleric, Jaggedra has a wide variety of abilities at her command. She is also well-armed with magic items, most of which she fashioned herself. Jaggedra only occasionally associates with the rest of the Hand of Vengeance and works with them only when the task is of the utmost importance. She sometimes carries out missions alone, but she

JAGGEDRA THUL

Female vampiric drow half-dragon (black)
Clairv: CR 22; Medium-size Undead (5 ft., 9 in. tall); HD 12d6; hp 144; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 36 (+5 full plate +10 natural, +2 ring of protection, +1 Dex); Atk -23/+18/+13 melee (1d10+18, +2 heavy flail) or +20 melee (1d6+9 bite) and +15 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws), +14 ranged (1d6+1, +1 light crossbow); SA acid breath, blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, domination, energy drain, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ cold and electricity resistance (20), damage reduction 15/+1, darkvision (120 feet), acid immunity, +4 turn resistance, +2 to Will saves vs. spells and spell-like abilities (+4 versus Enchantment spells or effects), undead immunities, gaseous form, spider climb, alternate form, fast healing, light blindness; SR 29; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +16; Str 29, Dex 20, Con —; Int 19, Wis 22, Cha 21.
Skills: Bluff +18, Concentration +20, Hide +20, Knowledge (Religion) +14, Listen +20, Move Silently +15, Spellcraft +14, Spot +20.


Spell-like Abilities (Sp): 1/day—dancing lights, darkness, and faerie fire. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 17th-level sorcerer.

Acid Breath (Ex): Once per day, Jaggedra can breathe a line of acid 5 ft. high, 5 ft. wide, and 60 ft. long that inflicts 6d4 points of damage (Reflex save DC 17 for half).

Domination (Su): A vampire can crush an opponent’s will just by looking into his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that the vampire must take a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone the vampire targets must succeed at a Will save (DC 23) or fall instantly under the vampire’s influence as though by a dominate person spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. The ability has a range of 30 feet.

Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by a vampire’s slam attack suffer two negative levels.

Blood Drain (Ex): A vampire can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, inflicting 1d4 points of permanent Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained.

Children of the Night (Su): Vampires command the lesser creatures of the world and once per day can call forth a pack of 4d8 dire rats, a swarm of 10d6 bats, or a pack of 3d6 wolves as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the vampire for up to 1 hour.

Create Spawn (Su): A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by a vampire’s energy drain attack rises as a vampire spawn (see the vampire spawn entry on page 182 of the Monster Manual) 1d4 days after burial.

If the vampire instead drains the victim’s Constitution to 0 or less, the victim returns as a spawn if it had 4 or fewer HD.
most often operates as a liaison between Loth and the other members of the Hand.

Tactics: Jaggedra fights on her own terms, or she leaves immediately to prepare, using word of recall, ethereal jaunt, or gaseous form. She enters combat with the following spells cast: divine favor (makes her total bonus with her flail +28/+23/+18, inflicting 1d10+21 damage), shield of faith (grants +4 deflection, but only +2 of that stacks with her ring, for a total AC of 38), invisibility, freedom of movement, non-detection, bane weapon (usually elves unless another choice is more obvious), true seeing, spell immunity (magic missile, fireball, searing light,haft undead), dispel good, and unholy aura. If she is with the other members of the Hand of Vengeance, they all benefit from the effects of the unholy aura. The unholy aura also grants an additional +4 deflection bonus to AC, which does not stack with her other spells but ensures that she maintains a high Armor Class if some of her spells are dispelled; it also adds +4 to her saves (Fort +14, Ref +12, Will +20).

Jaggedra always starts off any attack with implosion, followed by a pair of destructions. She then wades into melee, using Power Attack to maximize the damage she inflicts. If hard-pressed, she might use miracle to bring back fallen allies and restore the Hand of Vengeance to fight alongside her. Otherwise, it uses it as a fallback means of complete escape.

Jaggedra has the following new spell (though Vinter could potentially use this spell as well).

**BANE WEAPON**

Transmutation

Level: Ctr 4, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. /2 levels)

Target: One weapon or 50 projectiles, all of which must be in contact with each other at the time of casting.

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

This spell makes a weapon more potent against a particular type of creature. At the time of casting, a creature type must be chosen from the list below:

- Aberrations
- Animals
- Beasts
- Constructs
- Dragons
- Elementals
- Fey
- Giants
- Humanoids
- (must choose subtype)
- Magical beasts
- Monstrous humanoids
- Oozes
- Outsiders, chaotic
- Outsiders, evil
- Outsiders, good
- Outsiders, lawful
- Plants
- Shapechangers
- Undead
- Vermin

Against its designated foe, the weapon’s effective enhancement bonus is +2 better than its normal enhancement bonus (so a +1 longsword is a +3 longsword against its foe). Further, it deals +2d6 points of bonus damage against the foe.

and as a vampire if it had 5 or more HD.

In either case, the new vampire or spawn is under the command of the vampire that created it and remains enslaved until its master’s death.

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.

Gaseous Form (Su): As a standard action, a vampire can assume gaseous form at will, as the spell cast by a 5th-level sorcerer, but can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.

Spider Climb (Ex): A vampire can climb sheer surfaces as though with a spider climb spell.

Alternate Form (Su): A vampire can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a standard action. This ability is similar to a polymorph self spell cast by a 4th-level sorcerer, except that the vampire can assume only one of the forms listed here. It can remain in that form until it assumes another or until the next sunrise.

Fast Healing (Ex): A vampire heals 5 points of damage each round so long as it has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points or lower, a vampire automatically assumes gaseous form and attempts to escape. It must reach its coffin home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (It can travel up to ten miles in 2 hours.) Once at rest in its coffin, it rises to 1 hit point after 1 hour, then resumes healing at the rate of 5 hit points per round.

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls, saves, and checks while operating in bright light.

Spells (6/7/8+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/3+1/2+1/+1):- detect magic, cure minor wounds, guidance (+3), resistance: 1st—bless, divine favor (+2), doom, inflict light wounds, obscuring mist, protection from good, shield of faith; 2nd—death knell, desecrate, holy person (+2), invisibility; silence (+2), sound burst; 3rd—bestow curse, blindness/deafness, deeper darkness, dispel magic (+2), non-detection, protection from elements; 4th—bane weapon, confusion, cure critical wounds, divine power, freedom of movement, summon monster IV, spell immunity; 5th—circle of doom, dispel good, ethereal jaunt, slay living, true seeing, wall of stone; 6th—banishment, blade barrier, harm; word of recall; 7th—blasphemy, destruction (+2), disintegrate; 8th—fire storm, polymorph any object, unholy aura; 9th—implosion, miracle.

*Domain Spells: Domains: Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills); Destruction (1/day can smite for +4 attack and +1d7 damage). Possessions: +2 acidic burst unholy flail (deals +d6 additional acid damage per strike, +2d6 acidic damage on critical plus unholy damage), +5 ghost touch full plate, ring of spell turning, +2 ring of protection, +1 light crossbow.*
"Bah!" Tordak said, hefting the light, thin shirt of elven mail in one fist, waving it about as if it were made of sackcloth. "You call this armor? My baby blankets were heavier than this! I wouldn't stop a sling stone, much less and arrow or a blade!"

"Don't underestimate the work of our craftsmen," Mialee said softly, a faint smile on her lips. "The secrets of forging elven mail have been passed down for millennia."

"Well you're welcome to keep it," the dwarf said sourly. He put down the mail and picked up one of the slim arrows from the leather quiver lying on the table. They were fletched with eagle feathers and tipped with stone points rather than iron or steel.

"Stone arrowheads! By Moradin's beard, woman, is this another 'ancient elven secret'? How to make arrowheads that'll shatter against the first armor they strike?"

"Actually it's..." Mialee began, but then Tordak slammed the point of the arrowhead into a plate of his own armor and the elven wizard quickly moved to cover her ears. The stone shattered with a clap like thunder and Tordak sputtered in surprise, dropping the arrow and clapping his hands over his ears.

"Ow!" he cried.

"Actually it's a fairly new idea," Mialee continued. "It's proven quite a surprise." But Tordak couldn't hear the elf's explanation or her bell-like laughter as he shook his head and tried to get the ringing noise out of his ears. Perhaps the elves were more clever than he thought...
WEAPONS

Elves tend to favor Small and Medium-size melee weapons. The larger weapons used by humans and half-orcs are too unwieldy in the often close-quarters of elven woods.

Elven fighting styles favor speed and agility over physical power; the feat Weapon Finesse is common among elves, so they prefer lighter weapons that take advantage of their natural Dexterity.

For ranged combat, the ultimate elven weapon is, of course, the longbow, although elves are often proficient in the shortbow as well. Elves tend to disdain the crossbow as cumbersome compared to the elegance of a finely crafted elven bow. In addition to masterwork and magic arrows, elves have a variety of other ammunition:

Blunt Arrow: These masterwork arrows have specially crafted wooden tips. They cause subdual damage instead of normal damage.

Flight Arrow: The light shaft and special design of this masterwork arrow increases a bow's range increment by 25 feet.

Signal Arrow: This masterwork arrow is specially designed to emulate a bird’s call when fired. Elven fletchers craft the arrows to make calls that will be recognized as signals by the elves of the community. For example, a hawk’s cry might be used to signal an attack, and an owl’s cry might be used to signal a stealthy advance. A successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 20) can be made to determine whether the birdcall comes from a bird or another source. The intricate carving of the arrows makes them clumsy in flight, resulting in a -2 penalty if they’re used to attack.

Smoke Arrow: The arrow is essentially a smokesick (Player’s Handbook, p. 114) in the shape of an arrow that can be ignited and fired from a bow. It trails smoke behind and creates a cloud of smoke in a 10-foot cube where it strikes, but the arrow deals no damage. The smoke dissipates normally. Smoke arrows provide excellent concealment for elven warriors, allowing them to make quick raids or retreats.

Thunder Arrow: Thunder arrows have thunderstones (Player’s Handbook, p. 114) at their tip. A direct hit inflicts no damage but does trigger the thunderstone’s sonic attack. Misses should be treated as an attack with a grenade-like weapon (Player’s Handbook, p. 138).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Critical</th>
<th>Range Increment</th>
<th>Weight (per 20)</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blunt arrow</td>
<td>10 gp</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 lb.</td>
<td>Bludgeoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight arrow</td>
<td>10 gp</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>+20 ft.</td>
<td>2 lb.</td>
<td>Piercing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signal arrow</td>
<td>10 gp</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 lb.</td>
<td>Piercing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoke arrow</td>
<td>25 gp</td>
<td></td>
<td>-10 ft.</td>
<td>4 lb.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunder arrow</td>
<td>35 gp</td>
<td></td>
<td>-20 ft.</td>
<td>6 lb.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ARMOR

Elves prefer light armor since they must be able to move quickly and quietly through their forest homes. Armor that slows them down or interferes with their natural grace is frowned upon. Thus, elves rarely make or wear heavy armor, and they prefer small shields or bucklers. Elves tend to wear leather armor, chain shirts, or armor of their own design:

Leaf Armor: Elven artisans weave suits of armor from forest leaves, which are then treated by a special alchemical process that makes them as tough and flexible as leather, with considerably less weight and encumbrance. Such suits are made in both “springtime” and “autumn” styles. Springtime leaf armor is vivid green while autumn leaf armor is made up of red, orange, and yellow leaves.

Spell failure chances for armor made from these treated leaves are decreased by 5%, maximum Dexterity bonus is increased by one, and armor check penalties are decreased by two. Note that armor that are primarily constructed of metal are not meaningfully affected.

Wooden Armor: Similar to leaf armor, wooden armor is made of carefully cured and beautifully carved pieces of darkwood (see p. 243 of the Dungeon Master’s Guide), supplemented by alchemically treated leaves.

Spell failure chances for armors made from this treated wood are decreased by 5%, maximum Dexterity bonus is increased by one, and armor check penalties are decreased by two. Most wooden armors are one category lighter than normal for purposes of movement and other limitations (for example, whether a barbarian can use her fast movement ability while wearing armor or not). Heavy armors are treated as medium, and medium armors are treated as light, but light armors are still treated as light. Note that armors that are not primarily constructed of metal are not meaningfully affected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Market Price Modifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaf Armor</td>
<td>-750 gp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Wooden Armor</td>
<td>-750 gp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Wooden Armor</td>
<td>-2,250 gp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Wooden Armor</td>
<td>-6,000 gp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPECIAL & SUPERIOR ITEMS

Star Lantern: A decorative lantern, made of carved wood or (less often) delicately worked metal, this lantern contains a small crystal meant to produce light that illuminates a 5-foot-radius area. A special potion of light will power the lantern for 12 hours. Elves commonly see in a dark forest area sufficient for their needs.

Elven Instrument: These love of music leads elves to create some of the finest musical instruments anywhere. Popular elven instruments found are the harp, lyre, and the flute.

Forest Camouflage Kit: Masterwork. This is a special set of clothing and body paint that many elven hunters and warriors use when going into the forest. It's the perfect tool for blending in with such environments, and provides a +2 circumstance bonus to Hide checks in the forest. Wearers of the camouflage gear avoid being detected, and any animals or creatures within 30 feet are described by elves as "in such settings."
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LEGEND AND LITERATURE

THE MYTH OF ELVES

by Kenneth Hite

With their near-omnipresence in fantasy fiction and gaming, the elves are paradoxically in danger. Not from their traditional doom of fading away into nothingness, but from fading into over-familiar, cardboard clichés. Elves have become victims of their own success. They’ve lost much of their connection with the supernatural. As we know them now, elves are just a tall, long-lived, beautiful branch of the “fair folk.” A brief tour through the forests of legend and history can point out any number of different paths for you to explore to keep your elves alive by keeping them real.

The word “elf” comes from the Anglo-Saxon “ælf,” which in turn derives from the Old Norse “álf” and/or the Old High German “alp.” The closest anyone has come to tracing the word back to a meaning other than “elf” is a possible connection to an Indo-European root meaning “white” (which would also connect it with the Latin “albus”). If this connection is accurate, the “light-elves” of the Norse edda would be the default type, and our slender, beautiful elves of fantasy represent something not terribly far from the original notion behind the word.

Medieval peasants weren’t too terribly clear on the origin of the elves, either: They were variously thought to be the earlier inhabitants of the land displaced by the coming of men, the spirits of the dead, angels who supported neither Lucifer nor God, or spirits of the air and trees. The actual origin of the myths and legends of elves probably stems from many of these same roots: The association of elves with white connects them to Celtic rituals of the dead as well as to Christian descriptions of angels. A belief in nature spirits as beautiful but clearly inhuman is nearly worldwide and seems to be a natural response to the stresses and stimuli of an early agricultural or hunter-gatherer economy. Although modern anthropology stresses other factors, it’s not impossible that the early Teutonic and Celtic invaders of Scandinavia and the British Isles might not have felt the same combination of romance and fear toward the original inhabitants as the European settlers of North America felt toward the Native Americans: a romance and fear that became the emotional core of the elf-legends.

“Ther are many magnificent dwellings. One is there called Alþheim. There dwell the folk that are called light-elves; but the dark-elves dwell down in the earth, and they are unlike the light-elves in appearance, but much more so in deeds. The light-elves are fairer than the sun to look upon, but the dark-elves are blacker than pitch.”

—Snorri Sturluson, The Prose Edda

“In olde dayes of the King Artour, Of whiche that Bretons spoken gret honour, All was this lond ful filled of faerie; The Elfe-queene with her joly compagnie, Danced ful oft in many a grene mede. This was the old opinion as I rede: I spake of many hundred yeeres ago. But now can no man see non elves no;”

—Geoffrey Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath’s Tale,” The Canterbury Tales

Elves slip in and out of the forests of legend and folklore with the same
maddening subtiley and craft they display in the tales themselves. At the beginning stages, the various types of supernatural races intermingled easily. Elves, trolls, and dwarves shared similar features, weaknesses, and natures. Eventually, with more sophisticated storytelling in the form of bardic and skaldic, the races separated. Separation followed the division between “dark” and “light” that split the fair elves from the goblins or dwarves: that between “wild” and “domestic” elves. Domestic elves became brownies, and the wild elves became (among other things) our familiar faery, elf-like “High Elves.” The Norse invasions of Scotland split the High Elves into “dark” and “light” again, in the form of the Unseelie and Seelie Courts.

n80) and the border-ballad “Thomas the Rhymer and the Elf-Queen” (ca. 1450).

“Fairest black, grey, green, and white,
You moonshine revellers and shades of night,
You heirs of fixed destiny,
Attend your office and your quality.
Crier Hob-goblin, make the fairy O-yes. Elves, list your names! Silence,
you airy toys!”


and William Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1595) firmly set the latter image in the minds of English-speaking audiences, eclipsing the relatively humanlike heroic fairies of Edmund Spenser’s Arthurian Faerie Queene (1590-1596). Llwyd and Shakespeare’s gauzy-winged sprites became the standard “fairy,” from the nymphs in Michael Drayton’s Nymphidia (1627) to Tinkerbell in J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan (1904). House elves took over the word “elf” with their association with Santa Claus and with fairy tales such as Grimm’s “The Shoemaker and the Elves” (1812). The Victorian boom in children’s stories nearly drowned the High Elves in a sea of sentiment and pixie-dust.

THE VICTORIAN BOOM IN CHILDREN’S STORIES NEARLY DROWNED THE HIGH ELVES IN A SEA OF SENTIMENT AND PIXIE-DUST.

With the Norman Conquest, the Old French “fées” (or “fays”) became another term for the High Elves, and a general term (as “fairies”) for any supernatural humanoid race besides giants or ogres (who were the “heroes of Cain”). The word “fées” is a corruption of the late Latin “fatae,” meaning “illusions” or “fates,” and this latter meaning survives in stories such as that of the fairies who grant Sleeping Beauty her future gifts and dooms.

Meanwhile, the Norse invasions of Ireland (and its Christianization) had the effect of pulling its “daoin sidhe” (“people of the mound”) into the fairy/elfen mainstream, and transferring many specifically Irish mythical traits into British elf-lore via Scotland. (For example, the Irish habit of optimistically referring to the daoin sidhe as “sleagh maith,” the Good Folk, became popular in Scotland.) This had the general effect of confusing everything again, and it’s probably a misnomer to speak of there being a generally-recognized elven race (as we know them today) in English folklore, despite such tales as Walter Map’s “Fairy Wife of Brecknock” (ca. 1180) and the border-ballad “Thomas the Rhymer and the Elf-Queen” (ca. 1450).

Fairies and elves took on whatever form the storyteller required, although they generally stuck to a few specific archetypes, including the tall, beautiful “High Elven” form. The Arthurian romances made their elves and fairies (notably Morgan Le Fay) supernaturally beautiful and magical. Marie de France’s Sir Lanval (ca. 1190) is the traditional “fairy-bride” story set in an Arthurian context, and in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven’s Lanzelot (ca. 1200), Sir Lancelot is clearly raised in Fairyland by the Lady of the Lake, who is also Queen of the Elves. Later evolutions of the Arthurian corpus transformed these elves into enchanters or simple queens.

As fairies became more magical and more like noble humans, they became more familiar and comical. Long gone were the days when the elves (even the “bright” ones) demanded blood sacrifices and the removal of dragon-heads from Viking-land. Although the wild countryside of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales still told chilling tales of the Troops of the Dead and changelings, English fairies and elves became pretty humanlike tyrants or tiny winged sprites. John Lyly’s Endimion (1591) and William Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1595) firmly set the latter image in the minds of English-speaking audiences, eclipsing the relatively humanlike heroic fairies of Edmund Spenser’s Arthurian Faerie Queene (1590-1596). Llwyd and Shakespeare’s gauzy-winged sprites became the standard “fairy,” from the nymphs in Michael Drayton’s Nymphidia (1627) to Tinkerbell in J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan (1904). House elves took over the word “elf” with their association with Santa Claus and with fairy tales such as Grimm’s “The Shoemaker and the Elves” (1812). The Victorian boom in children’s stories nearly drowned the High Elves in a sea of sentiment and pixie-dust.

“...So they laughed and sang in the trees; and pretty fair nonsense I darsay you think it. Not that they would care; they would only laugh all the more if you told them so. They were elves of course. Soon Bilbo caught glimpses of them as the darkness deepened. He loved elves, though he seldom met them; but he was a little frightened of them, too.”

—J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit

Although Sir Walter Scott had gathered authentic (and grim) tales of High Elves in The Minstrels of the Scottish Border (1803), his example was almost completely ignored in literature for the next century. William Butler Yeats gathered his Irish Fairy and Folk Tales (1888) and popularized The Celtic Twilight (1893), but it took Rudyard Kipling to finally cut through with his dark-humored historical fairy tale collection, Puck of Pook’s Hill (1906), in which the narrator, Puck, pours scorn on saccharine stories about butterfly-winged fairies. Lord Dunsany, meanwhile, updated Spenser with The King of Elfland’s Daughter (1902), which laid claim to the term “elves” as an alternative to the seemingly permanently infantile “fairies.” With Yeats, Kipling, and Dunsany, the material for the recreation of the High Elves was available.

Oxford linguist J.R.R. Tolkien took some of the themes from those works,
and combined them with his own research into the original Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon versions of the elves, to create modern fantasy elves in The Lord of the Rings (1954). The same year, Paul Anderson’s The Broken Sword contained much of the same turgid treacle of the Edwardian nursery, they still omitted the dark side of the so-called Good Folk. Between Yeats and Tolkien, most fantasy elves have become a sort of vaguely-Celtic, nature-guarding, poetic race of beautiful near-immortals. Occasionally, as with Elizabeth Boyer’s The Sword and the Satchel (1980) and its sequels, the “good” elves have an “evil” reflection, indicating that post-Tolkien authors have themselves divided the Tolkien-like “good” High Elves into “light” and “dark” varieties. The Tolkien model need not result in cardboard, but many authors seem content to stay within its confines.

Elven tales set in either our world, such as Emma Bull’s War for the Oaks (1987) and Charles de Lint’s Moonheart (1984), often attempt a recreation of authentic elven traditions and Celtic mythology, at least back to Scott and Yeats. Occasionally, a work such as Greg Bear’s Infinity Concerto (1984) tries to update these stories (along with Spenser’s) with new imagery and some success. In terms of capturing the truly alien feel of elven myth, supernatural horror tales from Pamela Dean’s Tam Lin (1991) to Raymond Feist’s Faerie Tale (1988) seem to have the edge, although the current champion remains Terry Pratchett’s brilliantly, cruelly authentic fantasy novel Lords and Ladies (1992).

Despite the drought of imagination in much of mainstream fantasy, there are plenty of trees growing in even the small stretch of Fairyland represented by the Tolkien “high-elven” model. Whether you’re a DM or a player, there’s lots of unexplored pathways back into the mythic forest in search of the elves you want to put there. Just don’t trust the Good Folk, and keep your longbow handy.

**DROW**

The word “drow” is a variant of the Shetland Islander word “trow,” which literally means “troll.” In this context, a “troll” is any supernatural humanoid being rather than the breed fitting the *Monster Manual* description. The Shetlanders’ drow live inside hollow hills and possess the traditionally mischievous-to-malevolent turn of mind of most northern folk. The drow introduced in G3: *Hall of the Fire Giant King* (1978) and later in the classic D series of modules, owe only their names to the Shetland drow. Their personalities stem more from the vile aspects of all the stunted “black elves” from Scandinavian and Celtic legend. Evil elves almost universally dwell underground in legend, either in caves, beneath mountains, or inside hills and burial mounds. Their connection to spiders might be Gygax’s coincidental association of elves with the evil Mirkwood spiders from *The Hobbit*, an adaptation of the subterranean spider–cult of Athale-Nacha from Clark Ashton Smith’s dark comic fantasy *The Seven Cities* (1934), or some intentional combination of themes from both. The tiny elves of post-Elizabethan English literature occasionally warred with spiders in whimsical and comic poetry, which might also have helped connect the two. At their core, however, the D&D drow are as fresh a creation as anyone can possibly achieve in the realm of elf lore.

**Recommended Reading List**

In addition to the sagas and fiction mentioned in this article, you can find more elven and fairy lore in the following sources:

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The elves are an ancient race with a long tradition of magic, poetry, song, and literature. Their many sub-races have found homes in most of the natural parts of the world, including their evil cousins, the drow, who survive in the strange environment of the Underdark. Because of this long history and the varied influence on their culture, the elven language is rich with vocabulary, intricate with grammar, and subtle in its expressions. It takes many years to master the elven tongue, and only the elves themselves have the opportunity and time to do it. Many half-elves fall short of true mastery, and all other races can only hope for basic fluency. Most elves think that non-elves can only achieve the proficiency of an elven child, but only the most rude and arrogant elves would verbalize this opinion.

The script of Elven is a beautiful thing to behold, and it is used for many similar languages. Aquan, the language of the water outsiders, uses the Elven script, as does Sylvan, the language of many Fey creatures. Not surprisingly, the elves feel the closest kinship to the water spirits and creatures of nature. Even Undercommon uses the Elven script, as the great numbers of the drow in the Underdark made it the most common. A few scholars who have seen the Druidic script consider it an odd mixing of altered Common and Elven characters, but both the druids and the elves contest this. Unlike Dwarven, few monstrous or evil races use the Elven script for their language, possibly because some of the most fecund and widespread races (orcs and goblins/oids) already use the Dwarven script and others adapted it for convenience.
Elven is a living language, keeping pace with new discoveries and advances in learning. Unlike humans, who adapt words from other languages or make up words to suit their needs, elvish speakers of Elven prefer to use descriptions using current elven words. For example, while a human might refer to his gnome-built exotic weapon as a "pistol," an elf might call it a "thundering iron tube with the smell of smoke and the impact of a great hammer." As this phrasing is time-consuming and therefore inefficient in situations where time is of the essence (such as in combat), a practical elf either uses a shorter version of the lengthy description, such as "thundering tube," or just uses the Common word. In elven writing, song, and poetry, however, the formal and lengthy version is greatly preferred, and literature or arts that use the short forms are reviled as hack-work or doggerel. Because of the longevity of elves and their interest in history, the essentials of Elven have changed little over time, and ancient texts in Elven are completely understandable to modern elves (although cultural references might make some portions of the texts more difficult to understand or inexplicable to non-elves).

Elves prefer natural materials such as wood, and their alphabet reflects this tendency. Elven characters are composed of curving lines and gentle arcs, easy to carve into cut wood or living bark. Some elven artisans practice methods of woodcarving that work with the natural grain of wood. This might make their carvings impossible to see from one angle and completely visible from another, or disguise their marks as normal growth unless viewed with careful scrutiny. These methods are common in areas where enemies are known to pass.

Elven punctuation is a chaotic mess as far as non-elves are concerned. They have marks representing pauses of different length, accent marks that indicate additional levels of detail in a word or refer to a secondary meaning by association with a similar word, marks that show changes in volume, marks for the end of a sentence, a change in speaker, marks showing the status of the speaker and author, marks showing that a phrase should be repeated a certain number of times, marks suggesting hand positions and
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<td>xio</td>
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<td>alurhassa</td>
<td>rain</td>
<td>n</td>
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<td>harsan</td>
<td>red</td>
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<td>revar</td>
<td>rest</td>
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<td>jharren</td>
<td>rope</td>
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<td>lersaat</td>
<td>scroll</td>
<td>adj or n</td>
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<td>don</td>
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<td>desha</td>
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<tr>
<td>dir</td>
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<td>neshunas</td>
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<td>kessuk</td>
<td>stupid</td>
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<td>kerym</td>
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<td>reshuel</td>
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<td>lesheere</td>
<td>thief</td>
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<td>eshaal</td>
<td>through</td>
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<td>nae</td>
<td>to</td>
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Elven consists mainly of open vowels and soft consonants, with few hard sounds. When spoken, it has a flowing flow that is somewhat musical. Words that modify other words can be placed before or after the main word, depending upon how the speaker or writer ranks them in importance. For example,
if an author was writing the story of a
great battle and wanted to describe
how the moon’s light reflected on the
hero’s magic sword like liquid pieces of
silver, thereby emphasizing the moon
motif to relate to the hero’s worship of
Sehanine Moombow, he might say:

Elven
mornelial
belath
sehan
lath
avae
bil
morimhoar
ernath
keryth
alus
quen
kerymeth
gala
ivaе
iæsa
faer
rilis
ashanelath
thuen
avavaen
aæleth
nehel

Common
Tomb
Tomorrow
Travel
Tree
True
Ugly
Undead
Under
War
Water
We
Weapon
Whisper
White
Wine
With
Wood
Year
Yellow
Yes
Yet
You

Part of Speech
n
n-time
v
n
adj
adj
adj or n-creature
prep
n
n-food
pron
n
n
v
adj-color
n-food
adj
n
n-time
adj-color
adv
prep
pron

But if the author wished to relate
how the light from the sword was like
the tears the hero shed at the conclu-
sion of the battle when she realized her
sister had been slain, he might say:

Elven
Felosia3 don alus leret mithral kerym ivae nodel

Common
Tomb
Tomorrow
Travel
Tree
True
Ugly
Undead
Under
War
Water
We
Weapon
Whisper
White
Wine
With
Wood
Year
Yellow
Yes
Yet
You

Part of Speech
n
n-time
v
n
adj
adj
adj or n-creature
prep
n
n-food
pron
n
n
v
adj-color
n-food
adj
n
n-time
adj-color
adv
prep
pron

If he wanted to compare the metal of
her sword with a later statement about
her mirthal mail, he might say:

Elven
Felosia3 mithral don kerym leret alus nodel ivae

Common
Tomb
Tomorrow
Travel
Tree
True
Ugly
Undead
Under
War
Water
We
Weapon
Whisper
White
Wine
With
Wood
Year
Yellow
Yes
Yet
You

Part of Speech
n
n-time
v
n
adj
adj
adj or n-creature
prep
n
n-food
pron
n
n
v
adj-color
n-food
adj
n
n-time
adj-color
adv
prep
pron

These phrases use the simple gram-
mar used by non-elves, sometimes
called Pidgin Elven.

Elves often insert vowels between
words or at the end of words to
enhance flow or to keep a rhythm.
The vowel used is completely depend-
ent upon the intent and preference of
the speaker or author, and sometimes
serves a function similar to Common’s
rule for using “a” or “an” in front of
a word with a consonant or vowel.
Non-elf speakers often omit this
habit, allowing elves to indentify them
despite disguises.

SAMPLE PHRASES

Below are some sample sentences and their translations into Elven. Note
that since the list of vocabulary words is limited, some substitutions for
similar words have been made. In effect, this is Pidgin Elven. Elven
punctuation is included, although it is apparent that many of these sentences
are verbal exchanges.

Mialec, talk to the ugly elf.
Mialic, hinual kesir bilir.
[Mialec talk elf ugly.]

The elf says the magic sword we want is
in the light’s tomb.
Kesir hinual kerym leret quen teshuel au
mornelial @mormhoar[.
[Elf speak sword magic we take in tomb
important-undead.]

He’ll take us to the mountain of the tomb
if we pay him.
Kesir teshuel kikisha teshuel quen nae
mornelial sikath[.
[Elf want pay we to tomb’s mountain.]

The cave is evil and dangerous.
We should go.
Sanden vaarn ent daquin[. Quen shan[.
[Below-earth evil and dangerous. We go.]

Shut up, you stupid coward! Get in there!
Nehi hinual, nehel reloseer? Kessuk.
Shan auo.
[No speak, you cowardice stupid! Go in!]

Tordek, hit the orc with your axe.
Tordek, enyor hakavarn faer neheli
shaath[.
[Hey, battle orc with your axe.]

A red dragon! Scram!
Harsan @bakarmaskannar@ Nehel sakkaro
[Red dragon! You flee!]

Krusk is dead. He died with much
bravery.
Krusk mor! Quartlan shan faer
arranaseer ary[.
[Krusk die. Soul go with bravery big.]

Yeah, bad luck for him.
Avavaen, Krusk teshuel vaarn stales.
[Yes, Krusk take evil luck.]

Check out all of this gold! Tomorrow we’ll
be kings.
Scenti relo Belath quen he’core
[Gold many! Tomorrow we king and king!]
TRUTH OR DAMODAR

Highlander: Endgame's Bruce Payne Gets Badder—and Balder—in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Movie

By Cory J. Herndon

The big-screen DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, starring Jeremy Irons, Thora Birch, Justin Whalin, Marlon Wayans, Kristen Wilson, Zoe McLellan, Lee Arenberg, and Bruce Payne (to name but a few) is playing in theaters as you read this article—get out there and buy your ticket if you haven't seen it yet. Bring the magazine—you can read it in line.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS offers not just one but two classy actors from across the pond in the film's major villainous roles. While Academy Award-winner Jeremy Irons's plotting mage Proton pulls Machiavellian strings from the city of Suddall, his henchman Damodor mercilessly pursues a plucky band of heroes. Damodor heads the Crimson Guard, the secret police of Suddall, who have become an extension of Proton's power.

Damodor is brought to nefarious life by actor Bruce Payne. Genre fans might recognize Payne from his recent role as Kell in Highlander: Endgame, Wesley Snipes' nemesis in the Die Hard-on-a-plane picture Passenger 57, or perhaps from his memorable turn as Jurgen on the television series La Femme Nikita. While filming a "mysterious, high-profile project" in Victoria, British Columbia, Payne was able to speak with us about acting, his work in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS movie, memorable roles from the past, and the finer points of dancing with a steadicam.

GROWING PAYNES

Movies appealed to Payne from an early age. "When I was a wee, wee lad—you know, about two weeks ago—I was fascinated by the movie industry." That wee lad took this fascination seriously even then. "It wasn't lightweight. I realized that it was actually a vocation as opposed to a career. I think they're two very different things. We all have to live, we have to pay our bills on time, but a vocation is a very different psychological prerequisite for doing what we call 'acting.'"

Despite his early start, Payne wasn't born with a script in hand. "Growing up, I decided to test the water by enrolling in a school called the National Youth Theatre, an incredible establishment in London." Payne describes the experience as "four hundred kids thrown together to work on seven plays."

The young performer, though, had found his calling. Soon, he enrolled at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. "Of course you have to say The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art," he laughs, "or else they won't let you in."

Payne doesn't believe that the tradition of drama in England is all that different from acting stateside, or on the other side of the world. "People say 'traditionally trained,' but you're only traditionally trained if you stay inside the lines. I never did that. From a very young age I was exposed to No theater, Japanese films, German films, French films. I was attracted to the whole spectrum of the medium."

Not long after completing his studies at the Academy with a Royal Command Performance of the climax of "the Scottish play" before the Queen ("of England," Payne added helpfully), he set out to become a working actor. Success came quickly, and Payne landed roles in a string of British films such as Privates on Parade and Absolute Beginners.
DAMNED IF YOU DAMODAR

All of film's best bad guys—except maybe Dennis Hopper—have been classically trained British actors. Damodar's success as a villain will ultimately rest with the audience, Payne believes. "The thing that will make it stand out will be the audience's reception. I truly do believe in the power of the people. An audience knows very much—after sitting inside a theater for an hour—how they feel."

The ensemble of actors worked well together despite the extremely short resumes of a few cast members. "I was privileged to be among a cast that was not jaded," says Payne. "A cast that wanted to make a fascinating movie, based on good, solid, old-fashioned story techniques."

The veteran was especially impressed with co-star Zoe McLeLan, with whom he shares an intense scene. "Zoe's got a really good kind of central core to her. She's a very natural person, and unless she led me completely up the garden path, a very honest person. Coming from a real kind of gentle, strong center."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Payne believes that the preparation time director Courtney Solomon built into the production schedule pays off on screen. "We were blessed with the fact that Corey purified and secured a sensible time to just work. Not so much rehearsal, but sitting around a table, day in, day out, working through the script. It is the way it should be done."

Unfortunately, as Payne knows, such work must come from somewhere, and producers aren't crazy about rehearsal as a rule. "I really do believe that most producers have a creative element inside them that wants to make a great picture. I really believe that," Payne insists. "I've known a lot of producers over the years who like to say, 'what a wonderful story!' as long as it doesn't cost too much."

COMBAT READINESS

Payne has developed a reputation for talent with the blade, and he gets ample opportunity to show those skills in this film.

"I guess I'm very much a little boy at heart. I love those swashbuckler movies we've all seen a hundred times. Fortunately, I went to a classical drama school," he says. "During my studies I learned the short sword, dagger, epee, foil, broadsword—you name it."

Payne, who "had the privilege to know some great fight choreographers," wasn't content with that, however, and has never completely stopped his stage combat training. Whenever he can, he fences in L.A. and tries to pick up something new with each swashbuckling film.

Beyond weapons, clothes often make the villain. Damodar is outfitted with only the best in evil equipment, naturally. "The costume was the closest of any to the original design. The armor, says Payne, produces an "almost samurai/Joan of Arc period" look to the character. "The breastplate is very gladiatorial. All the way down to the stomach part it looks like an armadillo."

Then there was the gauntlet. "It was just incredible, the workmanship was just amazing. It's actually quite beautiful to look at." Appearances deceive, though. "Underneath it had this ominous presence, these little holes that were actually made out of the face of this kind of strange-looking beast. It was like, 'What's gonna come out of there?'"

So he fences and thinks fantastic armor is cool. But is he a roleplayer?

Payne's hectic schedule doesn't leave time for leisure activity such as gaming. When he does game, it tends to be electronic. "Mystr and Riven I'm a big fan of. You know, if I had the time to play games, they'd probably detract from what I do. Some of them you could play forever."

He'll also drop a quarter or two for the sake of entertainment. "If I'm in a city where I haven't been in a while, and I know they have a really good arcade... well I'll be down there in a heartbeat."

STEADY AS SHE GOES

Some speculate that Payne might be planning to direct a film soon. "There are so many aspects of filmmaking that I just think are incredible. I think that the camera is an amazing instrument. It can do so much work for you as an actor... it's like being inside a conversation. It's like another character in the film."

Embracing knowledge of film's technical aspects, he believes, can only help an actor. "The more you understand about it, the more you can dance with it. Because that's what you're doing, you're dancing—especially if you're working with a steadycam."

For now, Payne's career as an actor shows no sign of slowing down. Unfortunately, he was not at liberty to name his current projects, saying only, "It's two humongous things, but I can't talk about them yet."

Security is getting out of control, says Payne. "It's a weird world we live in now. I mean, most of the scripts that I have are these serial numbers printed over every single page, you won't go to jail, you will have to suffer the death penalty if you let your grandmother look at one single page... Okay! It's their money, so you know I'm bound by that. It's frustrating."

Payne would also be happy to work with director Corey Solomon again, perhaps even in another DUNGEONS & DRAGONS picture. He appreciated how the director relied on his actors for ideas and valued their input.

"He would share things," says Payne, "He's the director. That's always number one. But like a head chef, he's in charge of the kitchen. You bring the part that you're asked to bring to it. When you're trusted this much, then it leads to even more collaboration. More comes out. Some people are incredibly intimidated by it, which I think is a bizarre situation. Why would you want to be involved if you're going to be intimidated by it? You want to be intimidated by someone, get in the ring with Mike Tyson."
UNUSUAL SUSPECTS 3
Monks & Druids

by James Wyatt • illustrated by Damon Brown

Half-orc druids? Gnome monks? When you already have halfling paladins and dwarf wizards, why not?

MONKS

The Player's Handbook implies that the monasteries that produce monk characters were a human creation, and therefore that monks are found primarily among humans. This need not be the case in your campaign. The monastic tradition might have originated among the members of another race, and it might or might not have spread to other races. Alternatively, monasteries might hold the equality of all races as an essential point of doctrine. They might actively recruit monks from all races, even if they are primarily a human phenomenon. Consider some of these variations on the nonhuman monk:

- Family and clan are extremely important to dwarves in general, and dwarves who—for whatever reason—fall outside of that structure often go to great lengths to find a substitute. For some dwarves, the structured community of a monastery is the ideal replacement, becoming the dwarf's adopted clan. A dwarf who was the orphaned survivor of a clan wiped out in war or a disgraced exile from his stronghold might find a new home in a monastery run by humans or members of other races. While he would be welcomed and accepted in the community, he might not fit in—making him a perfect candidate for missions that require a monk to travel into the outside world.

Dwarves
- A sect of dwarves dedicated to Moradin teaches that the goal of existence is the perfection of the dwarven race, which can only be accomplished one dwarf at a time. Perfection, they believe, is achieved through rigid discipline that turns the body into a fine tool—like a hammer or an axe—and the mind into a point of stillness swayed only by compassion. This sect is made up of lawful good dwarven monks, and they teach a unique style of unarmed combat called the Hammer Fist (see sidebar).

- While some outcast or kinless dwarves find homes in a monastery, others find companionship with a single mentor—whether dwarven or otherwise—who trains them in the monastic life. These dwarves usually form bonds with their mentors deeper than any tie of family ever was, and all too often the sudden death of the mentor propels the student into a life of adventure.

Elves
- Their chaotic bent makes elves poorly suited to the rigid, even aesthetic life (and lawful alignment) required of monks. For this reason, monastic traditions do not normally appear within elven societies, though individual elves occasionally become monks. Such individuals usually have very good reasons for adopting a more lawful perspective: a strong sense of responsibility to others, conversion to a lawful faith, or even, on a societal level, opposition to a powerful chaotic force, such as an army of orcs or a horde of demons. By and large, those rare elves who are drawn to the monastic life study in human monasteries or with human mentors.

- The only native elven monastic tradition, as noted in the Player's Handbook, developed among the evil drow elves of the Underdark. Some drow recognize the need for strict personal discipline in order to hammer themselves into a powerful weapon against the surface elves they so despise. Training for years in brutal academies of martial arts, drow monks form elite strike teams among the military forces of their people. On very rare occasions, a drow monk gains enough
enlightenment on her spiritual path to
overcome the years of indoctrination
into evil that is characteristic of life
among the drow. These lawful neutral
drow monks often journey to the
surface to escape the monstrous evil
of their peers, though they rarely find
any acceptance in surface society.
Many drow monks are trained with
unusual weapons, including kukris,
punching daggers, or sickles (see the
Unorthodox Flurry feat in the sidebar).

Gnomes

- To their lasting regret, many larger
creatures that face a gnome monk in
battle drastically underestimate their
foe. A gnome's small size imposes
some penalties on one who chooses
the life of a monk, including reduced
speed (compared to larger races) and
Strength. On the other hand, gnomes
are skilled at fighting larger creatures,
they gain attack and AC bonuses, and
even special dodge bonuses against
giants. In some gnome societies, monas-
tic orders arise to train gnomes for
the specific purpose of fighting giants.
One of the combat techniques developed
by these monks is the Pebble Underfoot feat (see the sidebar).

- As mentioned in "Unusual Suspects:
Wizards, Sorcerers, and Bards," some
gnomes—usually independent students
working with a single master—become
multiclass illusionist/monk. These
gnomes, who believe that mastery of
magic is closely related to mastery
over one's mind and body, usually
begin their careers as illusionists and
advance in that class until they
achieve a certain level of mastery
(generally 7th level, when an illusionist
can learn phantasmal killer; or 11th
level, when he can cast permanent
image) before becoming monks. On
the other hand, some begin their
careers by developing their impres-
sive physical abilities, advancing at
least 5-7 levels as a monk (viewing
Purity of Body and Wholeness of
Body as important milestones on
the monk's journey) before shifting focus
to their magical training.

Halflings

- Like gnome monks, halflings who
study the monastic way typically find
themselves grossly underestimated.
Unlike gnomes, halfling monks are
unlikely to laugh when this occurs.
Instead, they typically respond with
a ki shout and a tremendous leap into
battle. Surviving enemies have been
heard to swear that the halfling's
feet never touched the ground.
While halflings rarely establish monas-
teries to train their unique martial
traditions, they have distinct schools—
each comprised of a single peripatetic
master and a group of students—that
pass on these traditions. One of the
most common techniques taught in
these schools is the Grasshopper
Strike (see the sidebar).

- Since they so often live in close prox-
imity to humans, halflings often study
with human monks and learn human
styles of martial arts. Though they are
unlikely to remain in one place long
enough to master any single

**Fighting Styles**

These new feats are aimed at nonhuman monks, representing the unique
fighting styles practiced in these traditions. At the DM's option, they might be
available to any character, or only to monks of the race that teaches them.

**Hammer Fist (General)**

Prerequisites: Str 14+, Improved Unarmed Strike.
You are trained in an unarmed fighting style that emphasizes a two-handed strike.
Benefit: You add one and a half times your Strength bonus to your damage
when you hit with an unarmed strike. This extra damage does not apply if you
make a flurry of blows attack or if you are holding anything in either hand. You
must use both hands to make the unarmed attack.

**Unorthodox Flurry (Special)**

Prerequisites: Monk level 6th+.
You are trained in a monastic tradition that uses nontraditional weapons.
Benefit: Choose one light weapon. You become proficient with that weapon and
and can use it as a special monk weapon. You can use your unarmed base attack
when striking with it, including your more favorable number of attacks per round.
You can also make a flurry of blows attack with this weapon. (You cannot choose
a light exotic weapon unless you already have proficiency with that weapon.)
Normal: Without this feat, monks only gain these benefits with specific
weapons: the kama, siangham, or nunchaku.

**Pebble Underfoot (General)**

Prerequisites: Int 13+, Expertise, Improved Trip.
You have learned a special combat technique useful for bringing down
creatures much larger than you.
Benefit: When fighting a creature at least two size categories larger than you,
you gain a +4 bonus on opposed checks when you try to trip your opponent. If
you fail to trip the creature, it cannot immediately attempt to trip you.

**Grasshopper Strike (General)**

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Dodge, Mobility, base attack bonus +4 or higher, Spring
Attack, 5 ranks in Tumble and Jump.
You confuse your foes by leaping around in combat, seemingly never touching
the ground or standing still.
Benefit: You can take 10 on Jump and Tumble checks, even in the heat of
combat, allowing you to jump as a part of your move without making a roll.

**Staggering Blow (General)**

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Improved Unarmed Strike, Wis 13+, base attack bonus
+8 or higher, Stunning Fist, Str 15+ or stunning attack, base attack bonus +4 or
higher. Strength 15+.
When you hit a stunned opponent with an unarmed strike, you can stagger him.
Benefit: If you make a successful unarmed strike against a stunned opponent,
your opponent must make a successful Fortitude save against the same DC as
that for your stunning attack. If he fails this saving throw, he is staggered.
Staggered characters can only take partial actions each round (see page 65 of
the Dungeon Master's Guide). Your foe remains staggered for a number of
rounds equal to half your monk class level.
monastery's teachings, halfling monks often drift from one monastery to the next, learning a variety of styles and techniques. While these halfling monks are often quite impressive, they share the situation common to jacks-of-all-trades: flexibility at the expense of mastery.

Half-Orcs

- A specifically half-orcish monastic tradition is only possible if half-orcs exist as a distinct culture in your campaign (see the earlier "Unusual Suspects" articles for examples), and even so they are rare because of the race's tendency toward chaotic alignment. Where such traditions do exist, they tend to emphasize severe aestheticism and harsh discipline, producing monks who are particularly taciturn and rigid. These monks learn maneuvers and techniques that use a half-orc's strength to best advantage. One such technique is the Staggering Blow (see sidebar).

- Half-orcs (and half-elves) who live among humans enter human monasteries more frequently than any other nonhuman race. Since they are often orphans or foundlings, half-orc children are sometimes raised in good monasteries or serve as slaves in evil ones. The ones that show promise beyond their great strength are sometimes allowed to study and train with human monks.

**DRUIDS**

According to the Player's Handbook, druids represent a way of relating to the divine forces of the universe that is older and more primal—a druid might say, "more direct." Without intermediary deities, druids are connected to the elemental forces of nature, the basic building-blocks of the universe. Of course, races like elves and gnomes, which have a close connection to the natural world, often become druids. But no race is completely cut off from these primal forces, and druids can be found among any people.

- Just as dwarven rangers, called cavers, adapt the ways of a wilderness warrior to the wild places underground, so do some dwarven druids revere the spirits of nature that reside in the earth and stone of their subterranean homes. These deep dwarfs have a close relationship to earth elements and the animals of their world. They know more than perhaps any other creature about the complex ecosystems—from mosses and fungi to mind flayers and dragons—that sustain life underground.

- For all of the typical dwarven affinity for bare earth and rock, there are still some who feel a close connection with the things that grow in the earth. Some of these dwarf druids are like fertile earth themselves, with moss on their backs and vines twisting in their beards. Like deep dwarfs, they are particularly drawn to the element of earth, but they share a closer relationship with the forests and animals of the surface world.

- Just as druids are common among barbarian humans, they are often found near communities of barbarian dwarves. If there are dwarven "hill tribes" in the campaign, or wild dwarves like those in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, these dwarves are likely to produce druids. A multiclass druid/barbarian puts a much harder edge on the standard druid class. (See "Unusual Suspects: Rangers, Paladins, and Barbarians" in DRAGON #275.)

**Elves**

- With their close affinity for nature, elves are commonly druids. However, an elven druid might seem a little more out of the ordinary if she comes from a more unusual natural area: a raiga, a steamy jungle, a mangrove swamp, or even a desert oasis. The druid's choice of animal companions might depend on her origin—a jungle druid might choose monkey companions (or leopards at higher levels), while a swamp druid might prefer snakes.

- Among certain groups of elves, individuals known as celoralanatha—those who sing the trees—are respected, if mysterious, figures in local folklore. These multiclass druid/barbards live in isolation from elven communities, singing their haunting songs to the plants and animals of their woods. They inspire fierce loyalty in their animal companions and use their music to inspire courage and greatness in those animals when threatened.
Gnomes

- Like elves, gnomes live in close harmony with nature and often become druids. But while elves seem to have a particular affinity for trees and other plant life in the forests, gnomes are especially drawn to animals—particularly the small, burrowing animals with which they can speak. Rabbits, groundhogs, badgers, foxes, woodchucks, chipmunks, squirrels, mice, moles, and weasels—these sorts of animals are the gnome druid’s friends and allies, and it is not uncommon for even low-level druids to have dozens of these animals as companions. When they gain the wild shape ability, gnome druids naturally prefer these animal forms as well (although they cannot transform into Tiny animals until 11th level).

- The gnomes of the great swamp from “Unusual Suspects: Rangers, Paladins, and Barbarians” ride giant lizards on their raids to destroy the evil warlord’s caravans. Accompanying these fierce barbarian warriors and sorcerers are savage gnome druids who embody the swamp’s dangers. Accompanied by snakes, lizards, and crocodiles, these druids are masters of traps, using spells like entangle and spike growth to harry the warlord’s forces.

Halflings

- Certain nomadic halflings wander from village to village in human lands. Though they are druids, few of the humans they aid are aware of this fact. They use their spells and abilities to help crops and livestock, drive off threats to the farmlands, and generally provide whatever assistance they can to the community before moving along. In so doing, they believe they are helping humans live in closer harmony with nature; not by exploiting the earth and its bounty but by cooperating with nature in the production of these goods. These halfling druids are known as tenders, caretakers, or simply helpers. Their animal companions tend to be domesticated animals, including dogs, cats, and ponies.

- Some halflings live near elves and in close harmony with the elven woodlands, and druids are quite common among them. Generally, these druids are hermits and loners, since clerics of Yondalla and the other halfling gods dominate the religious life of these communities. As these druids represent the wildness of the forest, with all its dangers, they are not always welcome among their people and spend most of their time in the company of animals or, occasionally, the elfen druids they count as friends.

- Among halfling barbarians—like the plains-dwelling pony-riders described in DRAGON #275—druids can be found as well. More primitive halflings might not know the halfling gods or believe that deities like Yondalla are too weak for their fierce people. These druids serve as the religious leaders of halfling barbarian tribes, performing rites of passage, celebrating the hunt, and calling on nature’s protection for their people.

- Outcasts from both human and orc societies, some half-orcs find their only home in nature and their only friends among animals. Half-orc druids of this type often want little more from life than to be left alone, but they might be drawn into adventuring if something threatens their homelands. Earning the trust of such a character can be a roleplaying challenge for the entire party.

Half-Orcs

- As in other barbarian cultures, half-orc druids sometimes appear as the religious leaders of barbarian half-orc or even orc settlements.

Often multiclass barbarian/druids, these dangerous figures tend to focus on spells of fire and devastation, emphasizing the destructive forces of nature. Though they are not particularly drawn to animals, they choose animal companions who highlight the random violence of nature: dire animals, particularly carnivores, and animals associated with death and decay (vultures, hyenas, and so on). As one might expect, these druids tend toward chaotic or evil alignments.
"WHERE ARE WE?" Fool Wolf asked.

He faced darkness, and his fingers gripped cold stone. From somewhere behind him, torchlight cast an inconstant copper glow on the woman crouched at his side. He could make out the gleaming curve of her thigh, the sleek muscles of her back, and enough of her fine-featured face to recognize her.

"Inah?" Fool Wolf said, more insistently. "Where are we?"
"Quiet!" she whispered.
In that wherever place behind them, several men began shouting. Their voices reverberated, as if in a cave.
"Wonderful," Inah said. Even in the dim light, her eyes were an impossibly pale jade. "Now suddenly you can talk, just when I don't need you to. Now we'll have to jump."
"Jump? Jump where?"
"Straight out there. Are you ready?"
"No! What's going on?"
For answer she snorted and stood. Something fast, small, and hard clipped the stone next to Fool Wolf's hand, and the shouting took on a triumphant tone.
"Jump or die," she said. She took four steps back, then charged into empty space. Fool Wolf, cursing, leapt with her.
"How far down is it?" he asked, as they hurled into cool black air.
"I have no idea," Inah shouted back.
In Fool Wolf's soul, the goddess Chugaachik stirred sleepily, then roared awake.
Where are we? she snarled.
That shocked Fool Wolf more than the fall, which after three heartbeats still hadn't ended.
because something was wrong. He always remembered what he did when Chugaachik took control. It was part of the curse. "It's the name of a goddess. My totem goddess. She lives in my chest, in my mansion of bone."

"I sensed something like that,” Inah murmured, "I can see something in there. Why didn't you tell me? Can she help us escape?"

Fool Wolf laughed bitterly. "She's probably the one who got us in trouble."

"Not so, Chugaachik whispered in his ear. I'm as puzzled as you. Or is this some trick of yours to be rid of me?"

Fool Wolf ignored the goddess. Only he could hear her, anyway. "Chugaachik is a liar," he told Inah. "If I use her power, the price is that she takes control of my body. Then she does very unpleasant things."

"Such as?"

"She killed my cousin."

He always remembered what he did when Chugaachik took control. It was part of the curse.

Your lover, Chugaachik added, in gleeful tones. "I called on her to save you and your father from Prince Faa, but I was so badly hurt she couldn't make me do anything. If I hadn't been injured, she would have made me kill you."

"Oh, we would have done many things before we got to that. Amusing things. Wonderful things. Flashes of bare flesh and blood came with the words. Chugaachik had an inventive imagination."

"She would have tried to kill me," Inah corrected. "I am not as easy to murder as you might think."

"She is a very powerful goddess."

"And your woman is very sweet meat. Let us show her what we can do."

Inah stopped walking and put her hands on her hips. "And yet you didn't mention this to me? That I might be in danger from my own lover?"

"Chugaachik has been weak since the fight on your island," Fool Wolf said. "And I never intend to use her power again."

"Yet you seem to think she set you walking last night."

"Did you make use of her? When? In our lovemaking, perhaps?"

"No," he grinned, pushing on. Up ahead, a circle of daylight appeared, and now he could make out her face plainly. "That was my own natural stamina."

"And she has never taken control of you in your sleep before?"

"Never. She can't."

"No, curse you. If I could, I would do it every night."

"Maybe she can now," Inah said.
Fool Wolf considered that for a long moment. "I didn't kill anyone, torture any children, rape any old women?"

"No. You were very calm."

"That's not like her. Not like her at all."

"Well. Either you are lying to me—not for the first time—or your goddess has changed, somehow. Or we have a great mystery before us." She shrugged, as if it didn't matter which. "Here's more for you to think about. One of the men with the priests recognized you. He shouted your name."

"Really?"

"Yes. Have you ever been to Pethvang before?"

"I've never been to this miserable city in my life," Fool Wolf said, "much less this temple-mountain. I wouldn't be here now if our ship hadn't wrecked up the coast."

"So you say."

Fool Wolf spun her around by the shoulder. "You wanted to come along with me and see the world, remember?"

She stopped, took his face in her hands, and kissed him. "I don't regret it yet," she said, softly, "If you keep talking, I might."

The butterly light of the sun was bright enough to squint at, now. "Before we jumped. How did you know there would be water down here?" Fool Wolf asked.

"I smelled it," she said. "I know about islands. This one is made of soft white stone. Water eats it easily. You remember it? Tall and flat topped, with nearly sheer sides?"

"Like your own island."

"But mine is of hard, black stone. This one is different. Rain has burrowed wormholes in it, and the tide has chewed into its roots. The two watergods meet in the middle, and gnaw a hollow womb. That is what we jumped into, and I smelled the sea. Look, see there? The shore. The seagulls made this tunnel. At high tide, it's probably full of water. We're lucky."

"I didn't think you visited any islands but your own, until you left with me."

"I never did. But my father was a creator of islands, in the ancient days. He told me all about them."

"Is this how we came in, through one of these tunnels?"

"No. There are steps carved on the outside of the island. They go all the way to the top. That's how the pilgrims enter—all the way to the top, then halfway back down to the shrine caves. I don't understand why they don't come in this way. It would be easier."

"Because they're pilgrims," Fool Wolf explained. "They always do things the hardest way possible."

"Why?" Inah asked. She knew little of the world of human beings.

"I don't know," Fool Wolf answered, honestly.

After a moment they emerged from the tunnel onto a sunlit beach. The sheer monolith of the temple mountain rose above them, a few scraggly trees clinging to its steep sides. The beach graded into a marsh of rushes and waving cattails, and beyond that, perhaps a league away, the city of Pethvang floated.

"This man who recognized me, what did he look like?"

"Very dark skinned, but with red hair. Big, very muscular. Tattoos on his forehead. He had the largest sword I've ever seen."

"You speak literally?" Fool Wolf asked, with faint sarcasm. She blinked uncomprehendingly. "'Sword' is the word, yes, for the giant metal knives?"

"Yes."

Her description sounded familiar, suddenly. He had seen such a man before.

"She must have noticed it on his face. "You know him?"

"Maybe." Fool Wolf surveyed the marsh. "Now we need a boat."

"We're going back to Pethvang?"

"Everything we own is there. It's a big place, full of pilgrims. I doubt the priests can mount a search large enough to find us anytime soon."

"A man is coming," Inah murmured. "Maybe he has a boat."

Fool Wolf looked around. He neither saw nor heard anyone.

"I suppose you smell him?"

Inah stuck out her tongue and waggled it. "I taste him," she replied.

THEY CAME ACROSS AN OYSTER-FISHERMAN a few moments later, a slight, grizzled old man who eyed Inah greedily. He agreed to take them across the inlet to Pethvang for no cost.

"Just so long as the lady doesn't mind me looking at her," he said. "One doesn't see such beauty uncovered often. It is forbidden."

"He pulled on the oars a few times. "How did you come to be on the temple-mountain? And how without clothes? Are you pilgrims?"

"We were shipwrecked," Fool Wolf said. "We lost everything."

"Well, Thesk-of-the-Sea must have smiled on you, to bring you to Pethvang. It's the greatest city in the world."

"It certainly is," Fool Wolf lied, glancing at the motley collection of dilapidated houseboats and stilt-dwellings they were approaching. The central city beyond, with its slender towers and colonnaded piazzas, was grander, but Fool Wolf had seen Lhe, Nhol, Rumq Qaj. "Why did they build the city in the water?"

"Ah! It was an arrangement we made with Thesk-of-the-Sea, long ago. We once lived on the mainland, but the marauding Reng tribes were troublesome. Thesk offered us haven. He took the tide out for eight and fifty days, long enough for our ancestors to lay the foundations of the Quays."

"And what do you give Thesk in return?"

"Why, our love, of course, and our respect."

"So Pethvang doesn't really float," Inah said. "It's built on stone."

"Such music, your voice!" the fisherman exclaimed, his gaze fixed on her breasts. "Most of it floats. The Quays are the only solid part of the city. The rest of Pethvang was built on barges. You'll see that when you're there. The Quays stay level—the rest of the city goes up and down with the tide."

Fool Wolf and Inah had already spent a night in Pethvang—or part of one, anyway—but he hadn't noticed that. He reflected that the barges must be very large indeed.

"What's your name?" Inah asked the man.

"Ner. Ner Mank."

"Ner Mank, is there somewhere we can get clothes? At one of these stilt-houses, perhaps?" She reached over absently and rubbed the fisherman's nearly bald head.

He blushed a darker shade of bronze. "I think we can manage that," he said.
FOR AN EMBRACE AND A KISS on the cheek from Inah, Ner took them beneath a clothesline, where they stole a loin-cloth for Fool Wolf and a sarong for Inah. Then the old fisherman paddled them into a long canal marked on each side by towering statues carved of the same white stone as the temple mountain. The first they passed looked new, sharply carved men and women bearing batons in the shape of a paddle in one hand and conch shells in the other. As they moved into the city, the statues became progressively more weathered, until they were nothing more than vaguely human-shaped stones.

"Your kings and queens?" Inah asked.

"No. Those are the sacred heroes, the ones who battle Thesk-of-the-Wave."

"I thought Thesk was kindly to you."

"That's Thesk-of-the-Sea. Of course, both Thesks are the same god. I suppose, just as the dark moon and the bright moon are the same goddess. But how different they are in different aspects. Now, see? Here are the Quays."

They had been passing through the city for some time. On either side of the corridor formed by the statues, buildings crowded together on what Fool Wolf could see were numerous barges, some of moderate size, some massive enough to place a small town on. They were connected by bridges and heavy timbers. But the waterway now entered the horseshoe-shaped harbor in the very center of the city. Each side of the horseshoe was perhaps half a league in length.

Fool Wolf had first seen Pethvang at high tide, and had besides been exhausted from the shipwreck and the effort of relieving a pair of would-be pirates of their longboat and jade coins. Then, the water had come to the very lip of the fitted-stone walkways that outlined the harbor. Now the Quays stood the length of two men out of the water, revealing their barnacle-encrusted sides. Along the inside—the harbor side—a thousand watercraft were docked: double-hulled merchantmen from the Land of Nine Princes, battered twelve-oared galleys from Lhe, lateen-rigged phanga from the Jara archipelago, princely yachts, and leaky fishing canoes like the one they were in. The quays themselves had broad backs, and a few strides from the waterfront the soaring spires and gilded domes of palaces and public buildings challenged the sky.

The rest of the city—which stretched leagues in each direction—had sunk since Fool Wolf had last seen it, though parts of it were no less grand than the Quays. At high tide, the tallest towers on the barges had been higher than the tallest towers on the stone heart of the city. Each day, one part of the city eclipsed the other in stature.

Ner Mank put them off on a landing, and with a final wave and leer at Inah, went to sell his oysters. Fool Wolf and Inah warily wound their uncertain way to the inn where they had taken lodging the day before.

The attendant, a round man with round eyes, met Fool Wolf and Inah at the door.

"Good day, lord and lady," he said, bowing jerkily. "I did not see you go out. How can we attend you?"

"An acquaintance of mine was to drop by. Has he come asking for me?"

"Not to my knowledge, lord."

Fool Wolf affected an exaggerated sigh. "Very well. Have some wine and an evening meal sent up to my room."

When they were back in their room, Fool Wolf confirmed that the jade coins he had hidden under a floor board were still there. The curved Banvan sword he had taken from the pirates and his clothes hadn't been disturbed either.

"Is it safe to stay here?" Inah asked.

Fool Wolf shrugged. "It depends on what they thought we were doing, whether they know we survived, and how efficient their city guard is. In my experience, in a city this large, with as many inns as it has, we have time for a meal, at least. They've probably given up the search."

"But the man who recognized you. What of him?"

At that moment, someone rapped on the door. It was a serving girl, bearing platters of seared tuna, pickled squid, and a pale yellow pudding she called itherel.

"You'll have a good view from the balcony," she said, cheerfully. Fool Wolf barely heard her—he was starving.

Inah and Fool Wolf sat on their balcony, eating, watching the sun set and the city rise. Inah went back over the details of Fool Wolf's behavior the night before, but they made no more progress on deciphering the mystery.

As the city lay beneath the last red gasps of the sun, Fool Wolf heard music approaching, and a crowd began to gather along the boulevard below their window.

"A good view of what?" Fool Wolf said. He'd been so preoccupied with hunger he thought the serving girl meant the sunset, or the city.

Pethvang shook to drumming, conch shell trumpets, and wailing reedy pipes. The already colorful crowd below became positively fluorescent as hordes of children arrived, bearing great baskets of flowers. The throng took the blooms, waving them high as the drumming came nearer.

A bizarre parade followed. The drums were wider than the length of a horse, mounted on carriages dragged by twenty men each. The trumpet players and pipers followed, and then a long procession of dancers in grotesque masks that covered their entire bodies. Men and women—some painted all black, others all white—tripped odd, drunken dances. Giant crocodiles and sea snakes of wood, leather, and paper wiggled down the streets, some with as many as twelve people in them.

After that came the boats. Canoes and catamarans, lapping planked barges, sleek warships with iron prowes shaped like sharks' heads, all dragged on wheeled frames.

It was quite a spectacle, but Fool Wolf was growing bored with it. Inah seemed delighted, however, and he continued to watch with her.

After the boats, warriors in cuirasses of lacquered crocodile skin and brightly colored headgear flourished swords, spears, and bows, shouting fiercely. Finally, following them, a palanquin so huge it took thirty groaning men to bear. It came through, and the crowd frenzied, tossing their flowers. The seat of the litter was high and flat, clearly a replica of the temple mountain, and on it stood one lone figure, holding a bearton shaped like a paddle in one hand and a conch-shell in the other. He had red hair, and in the fading light his skin appeared as black as pitch. On his back was sheathed a sword almost as long as he was tall.

Fool Wolf ducked back into the shadows of his room, Inah one step behind him.

"That was the man!" she exclaimed. "The one who knew you in the temple!" She shook the back of her palm at Fool Wolf. "And you do know him!"
"We've met," Fool Wolf allowed. "His name is Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah."
"You met," she said, skeptically. "Does he have an argument with you?"
"I threw him out of the window of a very high tower," he scratched his chin. "Twice."
"And he lived?"
"That sword on his back is a godsword. It will allow him to be killed only in fair combat."
"And you weren't fighting him?"
"Not exactly. I just distracted him and threw him out the window."
"Twice."
"It's a long story."
"So Uzhdon has little love for you."
"I believe he has sworn to hunt me down and kill me," Fool Wolf admitted.
"He seems to be the champion of these people, the sort they make the statues of."
"Yes, he does, doesn't he?" Fool Wolf furrowed his brow. "But he told me he was from Nah."
"Where is that?"
"Three months travel from here, at least."
"Maybe he lied."
Fool Wolf chuckled. "That's very unlikely."
"Well—could he have anything to do with your sleep-walking?"
Fool Wolf had already thought of that. "I don't know. Maybe."
"Yes, Chugachak said. It must be him. Follow him. Kill him."
"Let's get some rest," Fool Wolf suggested, ignoring his goddess. "Tomorrow, first light, we leave Pethrang."
"And if you walk in your sleep again?"
"Stop me."
"Shall I tie you up?"
"That sounds fun, but no. Still, speaking of fun..."

They tangled, squirmed, and sweated. Surrounded by the scent of Inah's faint, snaky musk, Fool Wolf drifted off to sleep.

And in his sleep, it seemed, he slipped below the lake, whose surface is the world most men know. He drifted down, a sinking leaf.

His feet touched upon gray stone, a plain that stretched away to jagged peaks in every direction. Two of them exhaled plumes of dark ash. He walked, and after a time he came to a city of the same stone. Flanking the broad way were twin statues, crouching figures of jackal-headed lions beside which Fool Wolf was ant-sized. Their eyes gleamed like fishscales, and the sight of them brought blood to his loins and jolted a fierce anger through him. He laughed, Chugachak's laugh.

Beyond the statues, the city was massive cubes and columns, and a thousand thousand kneeling men and women in rags. They seemed to be chanting a hymn as gray dust from the sky settled on their shoulders.

Then something parted the crowd in the distance, a man in the mask of a black-beaked bird. A darkly patterned kilt his only clothing, his flesh so white it was to shine. The crowd shouted a name to him, but Fool Wolf could not make it out. The masked man came on, white light blazing through the eyeholes of his mask, until he stood directly in front of Fool Wolf.

In one hand the masked figure held the leashes of four hounds, or what Fool Wolf first took for hounds. One was as white as his master, skeletal, with sapphire eyes. The next was more tiger than dog, hunch-shouldered like the grass bears of Fool Wolf's native steppes. The third, sleek and gray, had the head of a hawk, and the fourth was a black, bristling mass.

Now Fool Wolf wanted to run, but his feet were rooted. The earth began to tremble, and the hounds drew so near the stench of their breath made him want to vomit.

The masked figure halted, regarded him for a long moment, then removed his mask.

The face was so magnificent Fool Wolf wanted to weep, and he feared the beauty was so terrible he would die from the mere sight of it. But then the face changed, became dusky, with red hair and curling tattoos on its forehead. Became Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah.

"It must be. He must have seen me and done some sort of sorcery."

"Why? Why not simply come kill you?"

"I don't know and I don't care. Maybe he's afraid I will throw him from a window again. I'm leaving, now. You can come with me or not."

"Of course I'm coming with you, you fool."

They stole a boat and made the mainland by morning, slipping through the Reng forests in the early light. By that night they were entering the highlands, following a steep path that wound past stone shrines decorated with human skulls. Near sundown they came to a prospect from which they could see the bay, Pethvang, and the temple mountain looming over it. They camped farther up, where the curve of a ridge obscured the view.

Once more, Fool Wolf awoke pinned.

The next day they reached a high plateau. They bargained for food at a Reng hunting camp, crossed the escarpment, and began descending into the valley that the Reng called Sleeping Mother.

The next morning, Fool Wolf awoke in Inah's sure grip. This time he had escaped her long enough to run all the way back up to the plateau.

Three days later, cursing Uzhdon, Uzhdon's mother, Nah, and Pethvang, Fool Wolf and Inah gave up and returned to the floating city, seeking the Opal of Nah, and an answer.

Fool Wolf Woke with His Wrists Tied tightly behind his back. For a few awful moments, he didn't know what was going on, but then he realized that Inah was beside him, stroking his forehead, soothing him. He smelled brine.

"Shhh," she said. "It worked."

"Untie me!" He had agreed to be tied, this time, to make it easier for her. But he didn't like it.

The bonds parted, and Fool Wolf rubbed his aching wrists. His skin was rough and salty. "I'm becoming very tired of asking 'where are we?,'" he muttered. "Are we in the temple mountain?"

"No," Inah said. "You went into the city, to the easternmost point of it, then leapt into the sea. I had to save you from drowning."

"Were we wrong, then? Uzhdon is not drawing me to him?"

"We weren't wrong. Uzhdon is here."

"Which is where?" He looked around him. They were in a large chamber of cut and polished coral. The walls were incised, floor to ceiling, with some sort of script. A raised altar and a large, half-carved statue occupied one end of the chamber. Though unfinished, Fool Wolf was certain he could see a resemblance to Uzhdon in it.

"Below Pethvang," Inah said.

"Below?"

"Yes. The Quays are built on a coral reef. The reef has caves in it. I believe Uzhdon is in a cave below this one, and I sense the easiest way to it is through here."

"How long have we been here?"

"A few moments. I did not think it was a good idea to confront Uzhdon with you in your sleeping state."

"Good thinking. Let's find the entrance before -"

"Not just yet," someone else said.

Filling into the other end of the shrine were several men in parrot-feather robes, and perhaps twenty armored warriors.

The man who had spoken was one of the robe-clad men, a stocky, flat-faced fellow with broad nostrils. He waved the back of his hand at Fool Wolf and narrowed his eyes. "You were the ones we saw before, in the temple mountain. The ones who tried to spoil the inman ceremony. Now you seek to desecrate the pae shrine of Thesk-of-the-Sea. Why?"

"We weren't trying to desecrate anything," Inah said. "My friend is afflicted with a curse that drew him here."

"Really?" the priest sniffed. "And it drew him to the temple mountain as well?"

Fool Wolf placed a hand on Inah's shoulder. "My friend speaks half the truth," he said. "I am cursed, that is true. A healer put a song on me that would take me to the cure. I believe it has been leading me to your champion."

"He was in the Temple Mountain that night," Inah added.

"And he is here, yes?"

Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah, was seated on a raised dais. He was chained to it by enormous links of coral.

"In a manner of speaking," the priest replied. "If your intentions were innocent, why did you flee in the temple mountain?"

"We were chased," Fool Wolf replied, simply. "We realized we must have accidentally violated some tapu unknown to us and became fearful of the punishment."

"Well, you are fortunate. You did not actually interrupt the inman ceremony, so no harm was done. And this shrine has been rendered unsacred until the champion has completed his task of battling Thesk-of-the-Waves."

"When will that be?"

"Today, at high tide. He has been battling Thesk for four days, now, and that is the time allotted in the founding times, when Thesk-of-the-Sea took the tide out for us. Thesk-of-the-Waves demanded a contest with a champion, every ten years."

"When he is done fighting, we can see him? What if he loses?"

"Win or lose, it doesn't matter to Thesk, so long as he has a battle. But you can see the champion now, if you wish. You can watch him battle. We men of Pethvang cannot—it is tapu for us—but you are foreigners."

"Will Thesk attack us?" Inah asked.
"Assuredly not. He demands one—and only one—champion every ten years." The priest shrugged. "If you wish to see him, the way lies behind the altar. You may borrow an oil lamp. If not, you may remain here and pray, or leave. It is up to you. But make no noise, nor disturb our meditations. Count yourself lucky that your ignorance did not lead you into real trouble."

"Thank you," Inah said.

The priests nodded, then went back out the way they came, the warriors close on their heels.

Fool Wolf and Inah found the passage behind the altar, two large valves of coral set into the floor. They were too heavy to lift, but a windlass on the wall proved the mechanism to open them. What lay beneath was a steep stairway going down, smelling of the sea.

Fool Wolf stepped down a few steps, Inah behind him. After a few more, she tapped him on the shoulder.

"The tide comes this high," she said, indicating the stairwell, a finger’s breadth below the valves.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean at high tide, this stairwell fills all of the way up."

"Horsec Mother!" Fool Wolf cried, bolting back up the steps. If he had made it up another heads-length, the slamming valve would have broken his neck. The echo hummed down the stairs and back up. He pushed at the portal, but it didn’t budge.

"Well," Inah said. "This wasn’t very clever at all."

"It was your idea," Fool Wolf reminded her. He pushed again at the valve. "Well," he said. "I wonder if Uzhdon is down here at all."

"He is, or was," Inah replied. "I taste him."

"Well, let’s follow your tongue, then," Fool Wolf replied. "If it’s never brought me luck, it’s at least brought me pleasure."

THEY FOUND UZHDON in a rough twin of the shrine above, a large chamber with an altar. This one was crusted with slime, seaweed, and pale, purplish barnacles, and there was a large pool of water in the middle of it. Uzhdon turned to look at them as they descended the stairs.

"The four days are passed?" Uzhdon asked. His voice sounded strange, as if something were trying to strangulate him.

"As you see, I am not the champion that you—" he stopped, staring at Fool Wolf’s face.

"You aren’t a priest," Uzhdon said. "I remember you."

Fool Wolf said nothing, but the hairs on the back of his neck, crusted as they were with brine, nevertheless stood on end.

Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah, was seated on a raised dais. He was chained to it by enormous links of coral, his hands and feet hidden by massive manacles of the same substance. The man himself looked haggard and waterlogged, though his eyes still retained a bright gleam.

"Yes," Uzhdon continued, slowly. "I know you! You threw me out of a window in Rumq Qaj!" He frowned. "Twice! And the second time the whole building fell on me."

"Well, you were planning to kill me," Fool Wolf reminded him.

"In fair combat!" Uzhdon shifted his gaze to Inah. "Lady, I advise you against associating with this man. He is without honor or scruples, and a terrible goddess lives in his breast."

"I am aware of that," Inah replied.

"Well, I’m sure you must not know him as well as you think," Uzhdon went on, "or you would not be with him. I sense nothing evil about you, though I do see you have some godblood in you. I urge you to free me—" he broke off, and a look of suspicion crossed his face. "Is this your doing, Fool Wolf? Did you send the dreams, and the spirit that brought me sleep-walking to this place?"

"Oh, great gods of the mountain," Fool Wolf groaned, sinking down onto a damp coral step.

"Well?" Uzhdon said.

"Can’t you at least tell me why you bewitched me?"

"Who chained you down here, Uzhdon?"

The warrior looked puzzled. "Why, the priests, of course. You must know that. They want me to fight their god, Thesk."

"How can you fight a god, chained like that?"

"I’m supposed to fight him in the netherworld, after I’ve drowned. The tide fills this chamber, I’m supposed to die, then fight their god in spirit form. If I defeat him, they make a statue for my soul to live in."

"You agreed to do this?"

Uzhdon pursed his lips. "Well, they didn’t tell me everything, at first. They led me to understand Thesk-of-the-Waves was evil, and, as you know, my mission is to destroy evil, as I did at Rumq Qaj."

"When did they tell you you would have to die?"

"After they put the chains on."

"You aren’t very smart, Opal of Nah."

"I’m perhaps too trusting. After all, I trusted you, and you betrayed me. But cynicism is the first of many steps to damnation. He suddenly looked upset. "Do I understand by your questions that you had nothing to do with summoning me here?"

"Why in the name of the Horse Mother would I do that?"

Fool Wolf asked. "I hoped never to see you again."

"Then please accept my apologies. I accused you without reason." Uzhdon paused. "Why are you here, if I may ask?"

"He thought you were summoning him," Inah said.

"Hush!" Fool Wolf snapped. "Don’t tell him anything he doesn’t need to know."

"What? Then we were both tricked?"

"No," Fool Wolf said. "You were tricked. I was enspelled."

"But by who?" Inah asked. "For what reason?"

"Do you also dream of a city?" Uzhdon asked. "A city in a wasteland, and a man with the face of a hawk crousing four hounds?"

Fool Wolf bit his lip, but did not answer that question. Instead he pointed up. "The priests think you’ve been dead for four days, battling their god."

"Yes, but of course Hukop, my sword, brother to my totem, will allow me to die only in even combat."

"So the tide comes in, and you just sit there, underwater."

"It is very unpleasant," Uzhdon acknowledged.

"What happens if no one fights Thesk?" Fool Wolf wondered.

"If Thesk is anything like my father," Inah said, "he will not take lightly to his covenant being broken. I do not think we will want to be in Pethvang when the tide rises." She pointed to the pool in the center of the floor, which was larger than it had been when the conversation began. "And it’s rising now."

"Will that pool take us out?"

"It certainly goes to the sea. That’s probably why you jumped in, earlier. More than that I cannot say." She shifted. "I can swim for a great distance without air. But you—"

"Can you find out how far it is?"
"Yes."
He leaned over and kissed her. "Good luck."
She smiled and dove into the pool.
After she left, a silence settled between
Uzhdon and Fool Wolf. The warrior broke it.
"You're not going to free me, are you?"
Uzhdon asked.
"Why should I?" Fool Wolf replied. "So you can
kill me as soon as you get the chance?"
"You have evil in you," Uzhdon said, reasonably.
"There you have your answer,"
Uzhdon drew himself up. "Suppose I promise
not to kill you until after this is over?"
"Until what is over?"
"Until we discover who has blemished the two
of us. Even then I will give you fair warning and
a day's start.
"Very well. One week of seven days, from
morning to morning. I swear it by my ancestors,
by the covenant of Nah-hatham, and by my
torment, the Seven-Bearded Hawk, the Fourth
Thunderbolt."
"Fine.
"But will you swear in turn not to throw me
from windows, cliffs, or ledges, or to take me
unawares in any manner while our truce lasts?"
"Why of course," Fool Wolf said. "By my peo-
ple, the Mang, I swear it." His people had never
really cared much for him, anyway.
"Good. Can you free me of these, then?"
It was Fool Wolf's lock-picking tools that
eventually got him through the shackles, and
then Uzhdon rose to his impressive full height.
"Thank you," he said. "Though you only serve your
self-interest, I commend you. You have done a good
thing, no matter how inadvertently."
At that moment, Inah came up from the pool.
She took in the new situation quickly.
"You might make it," she said. "I can't be sure."
"I don't like the sound of that," Fool Wolf said.
"I can swim it," Uzhdon said. "My sword will not
let me drown."
"And so?"
"The priests, I have determined, are evil. I shall swim
above and slay them."
"I'll help," Inah added.
"No, lady, Uzhdon said. "The risk is too great. I would not
jeopardize such beauty."
Did Inah blush and bow her head a bit? Fool Wolf felt a
sudden flash of—of, well, something. Surely Inah did not in
any way admire this fool.
"There must be another way," Fool Wolf said.
The floor was covered in water now, and the level was
rising all too swiftly.
"There is not," Uzhdon replied. "You have freed me; we
have made a bargain." He turned, and leapt into the water.
Inah hesitated. "Will he keep his bargain?"
"Yes," Fool Wolf said. "Every word of it. Go with him."
She hesitated, then kissed him again. He savored the taste.
"Go," he said. "I'll see you above."
She nodded, and plunged into the rising waters.

T**HEY AREN'T COMING BACK, Chugaachik sneered.
Fool Wolf had moved to the top of the stairs, just beneath
the sealed trapdoor. The lantern sat beside him as he
watched the water rise.
"I know," he replied.
You know?
"I listened very carefully to Uzhdon's promise. He never
promised to open the valves and free me. If he meant to free
me, he would have said so. He promised not to kill me him-
self, and he won't, but he won't object to the water doing it.
If you knew that, why didn't you make him promise to
free you?"
"I don't want him to."
Then why didn't you go with them? You might have made
it, with your snake-woman's help.
"Because I wanted to talk to you. I'm about to die. This is
the time you start raging about how I ought to release you,
how you'll save me, and how much I'll enjoy your perverse
antics in my body. But you haven't said a thing."
The goddess was silent, but she moved within him, brushing
his thoughts with a sleekness like fur and warm flesh, a scent
like burning anise, a hunger that only an immortal could know.
"You've closed wounds on me that would have bled ten
men to death," Fool Wolf went on. "We bit through the neck
of a giant together. Maybe we couldn't break these doors,
but you could give me the strength to swim after Uzhdon
and Inah, couldn't you?"

His eyes suddenly blazed
with a different sort of
vision, and strength
went like black wine
into his veins.

Again, she was silent. The water crept higher.
"It's you being summoned, Chugaachik, not me. You.
You just happen to be in my body."
Nonsense.
"No, no nonsense. The priest in Rump Qaj was able to
free you without my consent. Now someone is controlling
you without my consent, and when I'm asleep, they allow
you the use of my limbs. But it isn't your will being done,
it's theirs."
You're guessing.
"So are you, but we've guessed the same thing. And
now you're afraid to take control of me when I'm awake
because you're afraid that will strengthen whoever—its
power over you."
No.
"Where are your promises, then, your cajoling, your
raunts? You don't want to entice me with the pleasures we

will have together, once you’ve helped me escape from here?” The water had touched his toes, now. With it came a tingle that went straight to his head, a feeling of being crushed, buried alive. His throat went dry and his fingers trembled a bit.

Darken your mouth.

Fool Wolf put his back to the portal and heaved until he thought his back would break. The air was getting stale.

Before the air could go too bad, he took four deep, slow breaths, holding the last, dropped the lantern down the stair, and dove.

The lantern sputtered fitfully for a heartbeat or two, and the water-filled way was green, almost tranquil. Then the light went out, and he swam through the darkness before the world was born.

Down, down. Before he even reached the lower temple, his lungs began to hurt.

Come, he said. Come, Chugaachik.

No.

You don’t have a choice. I’ve never compelled you because I’ve never wanted you in me. But I have the right. No.

Come.

His eyes suddenly blazed with a different sort of vision, and strength went like black wine into his veins. The world was limned in shades of blue and gold, the void of cold stone, the glistening heartstrands in living things. He swam down through the pool at the bottom of the shrine, through the twisting tunnels of coral, toward the sea beyond. All pain was forgotten, all remorse snuffed out. There was only anger, and a faint taste like fear.

HE EMERGED FROM THE WATER like a two-legged shark, smelling blood, and thought fled him as he lunged forward at the first prey he saw. His talons tore soft flesh, and blood sprayed like surf. The air was already full of incoherent shrieking, but more immediate screams went up around him. He reached for the next person—a young woman, perhaps sixteen, and his lips curved up in delight. He held her up before himself, laughing at her fear, thirsting . . .

No, Chugaachik said. No. He will find us, like this.

An image leapt up like a flame—the city, the hawk-masked man, the hounds. He is reaching—Hide me, Fool Wolf. Lock me away. And do not sleep.

The rage leaked out of him reluctantly, so reluctantly that the girl nearly died, anyway. But finally he put her down, gazed dully at the messy ruin of the priest at his feet, and tried to understand what was going on around him.

Do not sleep. Then Chugaachik was silent, burrowed as deeply in his Mansion of Bone as she could go.

He had come up, not on one of the stable, stone quays, but on one of the huge barges that supported the rest of the city. It was tilted a bit, so he had a hard time standing up straight.

The reason he had not come up on a quay was obvious—they were underwater, and even the tallest towers upon them were half submerged. The air was filled with the sound of beams shattering, iron twisting and snapping as the barges tried to tear free of the bridges and walls that chained them to the city’s rocky heart. One of the largest barges had already tilted nearly vertically, tumbling its occupants into water already boiling with thrashing human beings. Houses and temples crumbled and slid into the deep. Other, luckier barges at the periphery of the city seemed to have broken free—or more likely been severed—and were floating away on the impossibly high tide.

Never trust a god. If Thesk could take the tide away so Pethvang could be built, it was certainly logical that he could make it rise to destroy the city. And anything a god could do, he would do, given time and a sufficient fit of pique.

The floor beneath Fool Wolf’s feet turned more sharply sea-and-skyward, and he began to run. A row of buildings above him suddenly collapsed and slid toward him, sweeping a handful of people into the sea. Fool Wolf bounded over the flying rubble, thinking to take back to the water; but at the edge he hesitated. The sinking barges were sucking people down in their wakes, and to make matters worse, he saw the fins of sharks cutting among the swimmers. No, he would find a boat.

Something tore, and the barge tilted so quickly it was almost like a catapult. He noted, vaguely, that the upper towers of the buildings on the quays were crawling with antlike figures. Then he was in the air, and realized he was taking his chances with the sharks, after all.

HE DID NOT SLEEP. He walked among the dead and dying on the beach, among the wailing quick. He did not see Uzhdon or Inah, nor did he expect to. Chugaachik did not so much as whisper to him.

He did not sleep, but he knew which direction to go. He could feel a path pulsing in him, deep where Chugaachik was buried. The path did not lead back to ruined Pethvang, or to the temple mountain, but away, across the plateau, northwest.

Weary and alone, Fool Wolf turned his feet in that direction.
Mind Players

Ah, the dreaded chess puzzle trap! Our twelve iconic adventurers have been teleported into this clichéd peril, along with a chained-up invisible stallion. Using the clues (one for each hero), find the starting and ending positions of all twelve heroes. Then show which hero can move to the stallion's square and banish it from this plane.

Heroes

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALHANDRA (female human paladin)</td>
<td>DEVIS (male half-elf bard)</td>
<td>EMBER (female human monk)</td>
<td>HENNET (male human sorcerer)</td>
<td>JOZAN (male human cleric)</td>
<td>KRUSK (male half-orc barbarian)</td>
<td>LIDDA (female half-elf rogue)</td>
<td>MIALEE (female elf wizard)</td>
<td>NEBIN (male gnome illusionist)</td>
<td>SOVELISS (male elven ranger)</td>
<td>TORDEK (male elven fighter)</td>
<td>VADANIA (female half-elf druid)</td>
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Clues

1. All twelve heroes are 3rd-level, single-class characters and can only move as their class piece equivalents do.
2. They represent one each of the major pieces and four pawns, all placed in typical squares from ranks A-G and H.
3. All are in legal, unoccupied positions. They are not in rank A or H, and only one bishop is on a dark square.
4. No hero is within one square of another hero or the stallion.
5. Lidda, a rook who started in H6, can reach exactly two spellcasters (and no other heroes) from her spot on a wall.
6. Demn can move diagonally to reach Ember's spot (and only here) from his position in rank A.
7. The half-orc knight in rank F can reach Alhandra, Devis, and Ember.
8. As a rook, Tordek can reach both Devis and Hennet, who'd have to watch for the dwarf to reach Mialle.
9. Ember, the queen, can reach the pawn Mialle in file F.
10. Soveliss, the knight still in his starting square, can only reach Nebin, the king.
11. A half-elf bishop can reach only Hennet, and cannot be reached by anyone.
12. The invisible stallion is in a square that can be reached in one move by one and only one here.

Word List

1. AEGIS
2. ALBRUN
3. BABY YAGA'S HUT
4. BLACKRAZOR
5. CAT'S CLAW
6. CROWN OF MIGHT
7. DOOMGRINDER
8. DRAGONLANCE
9. EXCALIBUR
10. EYE OF VECNA
11. FRAGARACH
12. HOLY GRAIL
13. ICINGDEATH
14. JOHYDEE'S MASK
15. JUGGERNAUT
16. MACE OF CUTHBERT
17. MIOLNIR
18. ORE OF MIGHT
19. SOUL GEM
20. SOULSTONE
21. SPIDER SHIP
22. SUNSWORD
23. SWORD OF KAS
24. TORC OF THE GODS
25. TWINKLE
26. WAND OF ORCUS
27. WAVE
28. WELM

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- PSM - 100% Independent PlayStation Magazine
VS. FIENDS

by James Wyatt

“If you cannot flee, there is only one other choice: win. The alternative is unthinkable.”
—Sir Thalven, Knight of the Chalice

Damage reduction, spell resistance, energy resistance, regeneration, spell-like abilities, and the living embodiment of all that is evil—that sums up fiends in a nutshell. Demons and devils are a lot more than just Hit Dice and AC, and anyone planning to fight one of these unholy outsiders had better be well prepared for all the extras.

VS. FIENDS HELPFUL TIPS

- Pin down demons with dimensional anchor
- Unleash a flood of holy water
- Do something about those spell-like abilities (even if it’s an antimagick field)
- Blast ‘em with holy power and Spell Penetration
- Use sonic and force effects against demons, electricity against devils...

PREPARATION

Fiends tend to show up when you least expect them—disguised as the king’s adviser, the helpless captive, or the adorable mutt. Still, some people make a career out of hunting them down. Here are some tips for building a fiend-slayer:

Spell Penetration: A spellcaster is useless in a fight with a fiend if her spells can’t get past the creature’s spell resistance. Spell Penetration is a small boost, but that +2 can make all the difference.

Divine Spells: As the champions of holy power, clerics (and paladins) have some good spells for dealing with the minions of utter evil. A dispel evil, dismissal, or banishment spell can end an encounter with a fiend in a single round. (Note that because fiends have so many special abilities, their Hit Dice are usually lower than their Challenge Ratings—which gives you a slight edge when using spells like dismissal). Holy smite and holy word are especially useful against evil creatures, and holy aura will help ward off a fiend’s spell-like abilities. The planar ally spell—easier to negotiate than a wizard’s planar binding—can fight fire with fire: no one’s better-equipped to fight fiends than celestial. That’s what they do.

Holy Water: Especially at medium levels, some party members might not be able to do anything effective against a fiend. Those people should carry holy water—lots of it. The 2d4 points of damage it deals is nothing to sneeze at. With enough flasks in hand, it’s deadly.

Paladins: Smite evil, at the higher levels typical for fiend slaying, can deal massive damage to evil outsiders. Just don’t miss on your smite attack! That said, a paladin’s most ability against fiends might be the aura of courage she gains at 2nd level. Fiends use fear attacks a lot, and one character who is both immune to fear and who gives her allies a +4 bonus to their saves is a valuable asset.

Magic Items: Magic weapons are a must for everyone who could possibly plan to use a weapon against a fiend, as every fiend has some amount of damage reduction. Spellcasters can load up on scrolls and wands carrying some of their most useful spells—including spells just a level or two above those they can normally cast (and don’t neglect healing spells). Against a marilith with 8 melee attacks (starting at +13), you’ll want the best AC you can manage: magic armor, rings, bracers, amulets—the works. Powerful cloaks of resistance will help against all those spell-like abilities.

TACTICS

When you encounter the fiend, seriously consider fleeing, especially if you are not fully prepared. If you can run away and return later after some more preparation without serious consequences, do it. Even paladins should have no qualms with this approach: better to let the fiend exist a little longer before you kill it rather than plunge into certain death.

Hold Still: Most demons have the ability to teleport without error, at will. Many use this ability as an escape route. Others use it to drive you crazy—repeatedly teleporting out of melee range to pepper you with spell-like abilities or other ranged attacks. How many unholy blight spells can you take? Dimensional anchor was invented for just such an occasion: Use it to keep that demon still. It will probably be faster than you, and many demons and devils can fly, but that’s one less spell-like ability to worry about.

Antimagic Field: Demons generally have more spell-like abilities than devils, but the more powerful devils are loaded down with them as well. It’s worth at least weighing the option of an antimagic field, particularly if you’re facing a fiend whose spell-like abilities are wreaking havoc on your party. Toe-to-toe in nonmagical melee, your fighter-types will probably come out ahead of the fiend—their magic weapons will be negated, but so will the fiend’s damage reduction. A marilith in an antimagic field is just a six-armed killing machine with 9 HD and a nasty constriction attack—nothing a 7th-level paladin can handle. The alternative is facing unholy blight every round.

Choose Your Energy Type: If you are hurling spells at a fiend, choose your damaging spells wisely. Remember that tanar’ri (the most common type of demon) are immune to poison and electricity, and very resistant to cold, fire, and acid. Bastezur (the most common type of devil) are immune to fire and poison, and very resistant to cold and acid. That makes electricity a good choice against most devils: everything from shocking grasp to lightning bolt to chain lightning can work well. Against demons...well, how many sonic attack spells do you know? Sound burst is a start, and shock is a good choice at higher levels. Force spells, like the Bigby’s hand spells, work as well. Don’t forget those damaging spells that no one is immune to—the various inflict wounds spells—and remember that flame strike is half fire damage, half divine damage. Fiends are living creatures, so they are fully susceptible to level-draining attacks, death effects, and disharmonize.
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DMDA00
Voahamp Ged darm at your service, gentle, setting the stage of his realism for you like coins rolling along a tabletop, drawing every eye. I write of more lost treasures of Cormyr, tales that began as scenes—the memories of the dead—that so enthralled me in that grotto. Please be aware that some dates and lore herein might be mistaken or false, though I've done my best to set things in their proper place.

Though very bitter at what he considered their betrayal, Baerauble served Cormyr for centuries.

The Rallyhorn Riches
In the days when Cormyr was young, the seeds were planted for what would later become a great vanishing of wealth. This affair involved the minor noble family Rallyhorn—and descendants of the first (and the greatest) High Mage of Cormyr.

Baerauble Etharr
Lord High Mage of Cormyr
(15DR-429 DR)
This slim, quiet man came from the fall of Tarkhaladale to Lythorn (the elven woods between the Lake of Dragons and the Starwater) to put the intrigues and ambitions of men behind him. He befriended the elves, but they made him (against his will) an advisor to the fledgling realm of Cormyr. Though very bitter at what he considered their betrayal (returning him to the in-the-heart-of-intrigues life he'd renounced) Baerauble served Cormyr for centuries; years given him, some say, by elf-supplied potions of longevity. This time allowed him to grow in the Art and led to his appointment as Lord High Mage.

His children included a son, Baergast, whose son Aurd ward Emymara, the daughter of Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn.

Baerauble was a gentle and humble man, polite of speech and never arrogant (though he spoke more sharply to Obarskyr than to others).

His grandson Aurdward (about whom very little is known) is said to have imitated Baerauble's dress and manner, and to have been born with almost identical looks. He seemed, as one observer put it, "an echo of his grandsire."

Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn
Steward of the Court
(92 DR-147 DR)
The distinguished, polite, and moustachioed "right hand of the throne" (as Baerauble once called him) assisted the kings Daravvan, Dorglor, Embold, and Irbrin in the everyday business of running the realm.

Theldrin came to King Daravvan's notice as a quick and diplomatic letter-writer. He rose rapidly in royal service from King's Messenger through Seneschal of the Stables, Seneschal of the Gate, and Master of the Halls to become Steward of the Court—the official who oversees the staffing, provisioning, and defense of royal fortresses (which, in Theldrin's days, was just the Royal Keep in Castle Obarskyr); organizes court functions; and sees to the housing and needs of guests of the crown to this day.

Deeply involved in running Cormyr, Theldrin was ultimately trusted to make almost all royal decisions by every monarch he served. Irbrin is said to have been "lost on the throne, and floundering" (as one noble wrote privately) after Theldrin's death, until he had the wits to appoint Baerauble his daily advisor.

Lord Theldrin was an urbane, able courtier with an eye for details. He saw to it that warmed towels, large and soft housecoats, flasks of fine sherry, and fresh flowers were placed in guests' chambers, for example.

Over the years, Theldrin's raven-black hair turned gray, then shot through with white, and finally...
snow-white and very thin, but its page-boy cut (and his carefully-trimmed moustache) never changed. Nor did the depth of the green of his eyes. He was thin, of average height, and always immaculately and elegantly dressed in the richest of conservative fashions.

**Emrylara Etharr (née Rallyhorn)**
(131 DR–162 DR)
The tall, grave, quiet, and beautiful daughter of Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn, Emrylara was a beauty much pursued by young male nobles. She was repelled by their boisterous courtings, however, admiring instead the kindly, wise, and quiet Lord High Mage Baerauble.

She married Baerauble's grandson Aulard, and bore two children. The second, daughter Narnythea, died young, and Aulard ultimately outlived both Emrylara and their son Obrynn, but died knowing he still had seven healthy children (by later wives).

Emrylara inherited her father's green eyes and raven-black hair. Her bone-white skin almost glowed in dim light. She favored dark, full gowns, and she seemed to drift as she walked, moving smoothly and silently in soft shoes.

**THE LOST RALLYHORN RICHES**

Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn, the inheritor of fabulous fortunes amassed by two uncles, put his wealth into land purchases, sponsoring farmers and loggers in a kindly manner and always selling holdings for several times what he'd paid for them. He didn't stint on himself or his family, but once busy at court, lacked the time and need to spend all that was his.

Desiring to provide for the future needs of his descendants and the realm, Theldrin had a huge adamantine coffin made in secret for himself, as well as a far smaller, simpler one of brass used at his funeral. The large coffin was laid ready in a vault deep beneath the Royal Palace—a chamber sealed from tunnelings and forcible entry by magics laid down by his friend Baerauble. Throughout Theldrin's life, these spells were renewed and augmented by the mage whenever Theldrin and Baerauble entered the vault to add to the Rallyhorn riches in the coffin. Before Theldrin died, they'd secretly filled the coffin to half its depth with handlength,
inch-thick bars of gold—"Some hundreds of them," Baerablu noted in a letter left to rulers after his death.

The smaller coffin, containing Theldrin's remains (including a black metal rod of office capped with fist-sized balls of gold and set with many rubies and emeralds), was laid atop the bars, and the larger coffin closed around it. It was then sealed with Baerablu's spells, which caused the huge adamantine casket to levitate in the vault. The Lord Mage installed a dozen guardian horrors in the chamber and then sealed it, never to return.

When Aulard's wife perished, Baerablu laid her to rest in a side-vault amid objects of much beauty but not staggering value. The same was done for Aulard's son Obrynn, though not for his later children. These side-vaults opened off the passage to Theldrin's tomb, but at some distance from it; Emlynara's ghost still drifts up to Theldrin's door, vainly trying to enter.

A later monarch (carefully unidentified in court records) had need of the wealth and unsealed Theldrin's vault. The horrors were found still active, and the great coffin yet floated in midair, apparently undisturbed. Several careful days were spent penetrating Baerablu's spells—but when the coffin was finally opened, it was empty: Theldrin in his brass coffin and the many gold bars it had rested upon had vanished.

Many and mighty magics were cast in an exhaustive search for any trace of where the Rallyhorn riches might have gone, or who'd taken them—but these spells uncovered nothing. (The needy ruler had to settle for the adamantine coffin.)

The fate of Theldrin's fortune remains a mystery to this day. Mages usually suggest that the missing material must have been translocated, or a dimensional portal established within the larger coffin, affording entry to individuals who physically carried away Theldrin and his gold.

Against this must be laid the evidence that Baerablu's spells would have prevented such magics from tracelessly succeeding.

This leaves the remote likelihood that someone undid all of Baerablu's spells (reportedly overlaid so as to create a web of alarms and traps), plundered the vault, and then recast them all. If Baerablu himself, who was the only being known to be capable of such a venture, did so—why? He had no need of wealth, and no known tendency toward greed; if he thought the gold should be moved elsewhere, again, why? And where did the riches go? Cormyr still lacks answers to this day.

THE LAGARR LEGACY

One of the most troubled Obarskyr reigns was that of King Duar, a warrior-hero who held the realm together through years when its survival was balanced on the sharp edge of his blade. In these perilous times befell a matter of missing wealth little talked of at the time, but much puzzled over since.

King Duar "Longears" Obarskyr
(2 DR—480 DR)

A gruff, short-bearded, giant of a man possessed of mighty strength and hardiness, Duar was a great war-leader, sorely needed by a realm beset throughout his reign by many foes.

Duar left the realm larger and much stronger than when he came to the throne, with a loyal standing army of some size—and good training and equipment—for the first time in Cormyr's infancy. He did this through diplomacy and by the sword, adding the lands of Irongate Gard, Jaredlyn (both now vanished holds), and Wheloon to the kingdom.

Duar stood almost 7 feet tall, had brown hair (shot through with gray for half his life), and fierce blue-black eyes. He swung a two-handed sword almost as tall as himself in one hand and a fearsome mace in the other. In battle-legend he stands second only to Dhalmass as a warrior-king of Cormyr.

Jhanhyl Lagarr
(454 DR—510 DR)

The sharp-tempered, spirited wife of Kuthor Lagarr, Lady Lagarr stood beside the knights of Irongates and fought the warriors of Cormyr after her husband fell. She agreed to surrender without destroying an inherited enchanted item (what exactly it was I do not know) on the condition that the lives of the surviving men who'd stood defending her to the death be spared. She found the King of Cormyr to be a gentle and understanding man off the battlefield... a pleasant change from her cruel first husband (who spent his days drinking and his nights beating..."

ELMINSTER'S FOOTNOTES

1. Ace, and that's the problem. If "Volo's Best" were an ale, it'd see most use as something used to swell out privy-bowls.

2. Baerablu also carried a cartload of variant titles around on his shoulders: "High Wizard of Cormyr," "Lord Wizard of Cormyr," and half a dozen other stylings, none chosen by him.

3. Though it wounds me to be reduced to the office of lecturer on the most basic concepts of magic, know ye that translocational spells are those that involve movement of beings or items from one spot to another without a visible passage between the two places. The teleport spell is perhaps the best-known translocation magic.

4. We've here spared thee from Volo's long lament as to the unwillingness of several clerks of royal records to let..."
her). She grew to love Duar; married him after the death of his second queen, Thresna Cormaeiril, and was devastated when he died years later.

Jhanthyil had shoulder-length brown hair, a lush figure, and a saucy, striking face—several courtiers wrote of her sardonically arched eyebrows and quick wit.

Kuthor Lagarr
(430 DR–475 DR)
The cruel Lord of Iron gates Gard, Kuthor was a southern warlord who'd come to new lands to carve out his own hold. His rule was ruthless and efficient, and he brought many loyal warriors and servants with him. His farms prospered and grew wealthy, and he was soon able to import stone-masons from the Vilhon to raise a castle, iron gates Gard, northeast of Wheloorn. Unfortunately, he'd built on land claimed by Cormyr, and his castle—seen by King Duar as a lasting threat to his rule—was finished barely in time to house his people as the knights of Cormyr swept down on the hold.

Kuthor died in his saddle fighting them, the blades of four knights meeting in his body. He is said to have gasped out, "Jhanthyil—Forgive me!" before he collapsed and fell.

Kuthor had pale yellow eyes and curly red hair worn long but tied back like a woman's. He customarily wore a headband and bracers, was always seen in breeches and boots rather than hose, and sported an untidy beard and moustache. His voice was a rough roar, his temper quick and cold, and his ways were cruel; he enjoyed beating anyone close to him.

Elvrin Crownsilver
(427 DR–475 DR)
An urbane, perceptive veteran courtier at the time of his disappearance, Elvrin's youth was spent at court breeches, and flaring boots, with a half-cloak displaying his family arms (three tumbling silver crowns strung along an upright, point-down, naked silver sword, on a field of dusty blue).

A LEGACY LOST
In the aftermath of Duar's conquest of Iron gates Gard, Elvrin was placed in charge of a guard of some thirty warriors loyal to the crown (some of them bitter rivals of each other, no doubt chosen by the wily Duar to prevent any conspiracies involving the entire force) who were assembled over the northern shore of the Lake of Dragons, on what is now a rock-strewn but otherwise bare ridge.

5. Duar's name for Castle Obarskyr—a term that came to him in a dream, he once told me. When he had time for dreaming between all the fighting and the ladies, I know not.

No trace of the vanished wagons was ever found; elves or brigands with magical aid were suspected.
Most everyone knows that surface elves hate the drow, and that the drow return those feelings. Hatred is a powerful force that can shape an entire way of life. The ancestral avenger is fired in the oven of hatred and cooled in the breeze of ons of experience fighting their racial enemy. The drow might be diabolically depraved and debased, but they still fear the ancestral avenger. This prestige class is limited in scope, but for an anti-drow campaign or an extended trip down into the Underdark, there's no better character to play.

There's nothing a high-level ancestral avenger would like more than to go to the Demonweb pits where the queen-goddess of the drow, Lolth, dwells. An opportunity for such an adventure exists in Dungeon Magazine #84 in the adventure "The Harrowing."

The ancestral avenger is a uniquely elven prestige class. Long ago, the elven race was split by terrible racial wars. Whole legions of dark-hearted elves turned toward the worship of Lolth and eventually fled underground. The remaining surface elves never forgot the betrayal and depravity of these twisted brethren. Never.

Among the ranks of the elves, a secret few are trained to focus on the destruction of dark elves. These elves hate drow more than anything else, and their training allows them to become the most efficient and deadly foes the dark elves have ever faced. They are trained to resist drow spells and overcome whatever defenses and allies the drow possess.

Ancestral avengers are found among all classes. However, many elven rangers who have taken humanoid (drow) as a racial enemy (one of the only instances in which a good-aligned character can take his own race as a racial enemy), are often drawn to this path.

## Ancestral Avenger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lvl</th>
<th>Attack Bonus</th>
<th>Fort. Save</th>
<th>Ref. Save</th>
<th>Will Save</th>
<th>Special</th>
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<tr>
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<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>Underground tracking, drow bane +1/+2d6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+3</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>Overcome spell resistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>Drow bane +2/+2d6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>Spider bane</td>
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<td>+5</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+2</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+6</td>
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<td>+3</td>
<td>+6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Spell resistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lyf**: The level of the ancestral avenger.

**Attack Bonus**: The ancestral avenger's attack bonus, added to the character's normal attack bonus.

**Fort. Save**: The save bonus on Fortitude saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

**Ref. Save**: The save bonus on Reflex saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

**Will Save**: The save bonus on Will saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

**Special**: Level-dependent class features.

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**REQUIREMENTS**

To qualify to become an avenger, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

- **Must be an elf or half-elf**
- **Base Attack**: +5
- **Wilderness Lore ranks**: 3
- **Feat**: Alertness
- **Feat**: Iron Will
- **Feat**: Tracking
CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

The ancestral avenger's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:
- Bluff (Cha)
- Concentration (Con)
- Intimidate (Cha)
- Intuit Direction (Wis)
- Knowledge (Underdark) (Int)
- Listen (Wis)
- Profession (Wis)
- Search (Int)
- Sense Motive (Wis)
- Spot (Wis)
- Wilderness Lore (Wis)


CLASS FEATURES

- **Weapon and Armor Proficiency:**
  Ancestral avengers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all types of armor, and with shields.

- **Underground Tracking:** An ancestral avenger can track underground with no penalty for poor visibility. Furthermore, hard surfaces (like the solid stone most tunnels are made of) are treated as firm surfaces for the purpose of making tracking attempts. This is an extraordinary ability.

- **Drowbane:** Beginning at 1st level, an ancestral avenger gains a competence bonus when fighting drow in the form of a +1 attack bonus and a +1d6 damage bonus. At higher levels, this bonus increases to +2/+2d6 and +3/+3d6. This is a supernatural ability.
  
  This ability stacks with a ranger's favored enemy bonus (provided the ranger has selected drow as a favored enemy). So a 5th-level ranger/1st-level ancestral avenger would have a +2 bonus to attack and an additional +1d6+2 damage bonus versus drow.

- **Poison Resistance:** An ancestral avenger gains a resistance bonus equal to her ancestral avenger class level to saves vs. poison from spiders or poison manufactured by the drow. This is a supernatural ability.

- **Overcome Drow Spell Resistance:**
  Ancestral avengers of 3rd level and higher gain a +2 bonus to overcome the spell resistance of drow and driders. This bonus is cumulative with a bonus gained from the Spell Penetration feat. This is a supernatural ability.

- **Spiderbane:** The 5th level ancestral avenger can use her drowbane bonuses against any type of spider, as well as aranea, driders, retrievers, and bebliths. This is a supernatural ability.

- **Webwalking:** At 6th level, the ancestral avenger can ignore web spells and spider webbing as if affected by a freedom of movement spell. He can walk along webs as if on solid ground (no Balance check is required). This is a supernatural ability.

- **Drowic Change:** A 7th level ancestral avenger can alter her appearance to that of a drow. This supernatural ability functions as the spell alter self as if it were cast by a sorcerer of the ancestral avenger's class level.

- **Demonbane:** At 8th level, the ancestral avenger can use her drowbane bonuses against any type of chaotic evil outsider. This is a supernatural ability.

- **Spell Resistance:** The 10th level ancestral avenger gains spell resistance equal to 10 plus her class level. This is a supernatural ability.
GIANTS IN THE EARTH

HEROES OF THE PERSIAN WAR

by Michael Trice • illustrated by D. Gregory Alexander

They called him the Great King, and from his empire’s heart he ruled a kingdom that stretched from Egypt to the southern tip of the Asian steppes, and from India to the hills of Turkey.

The Persian empire was the greatest of its time, and along the great Mediterranean only the rise of Rome four hundred years later would ever rival it in size or wealth. Yet with all the power and resources of the ancient Persians, their greatest nemesis would prove to be a small group with far more pride and courage than wealth and resources.

During the reign of Darius, son of Cyrus, ambassadors came from a distant and little-known land seeking the protection of the mighty Persians. They called themselves Athenians, and they were desperate for a powerful ally to protect them from their hostile neighbors, the Lacedaemonians of Sparta. Unfamiliar with Persian custom and afraid to return empty-handed, the ambassadors offered their fealty, and that of all of Athens.

An emissary of Darius accepted their oath in Sardis, a city at the westernmost edge of the Persian Empire, and sent the ambassadors on their way.

Hearing of this, Darius turned his eye to the Grecian people for the first time. Coming first to Thrace and Macedonia, the far northern neighbors of the Athenians, Darius overwhelmed them quickly and empowered local tyrants answerable only to him.

The Athenians were proud, and they refused to accept the peace bought with their own freedom. Just ten years prior to Persian control, the Athenians had banished their own tyrant, and the council of citizens was determined not to tolerate another. Thus, even though a great distance and large mountain range separated the Athenians from the areas being annexed by the Persians, the Athenians sparked a rebellion in the north and sent a large portion of the Athenian army to the besieged Greek cities.

Fleeing many cities and laying siege to Sardis itself, the Athenians returned believing a strong message had been sent to the Persians. Darius responded by crushing the Greek rebellion and sending an army demanding the surrender of Athens. The Persian army was finally defeated a few miles short of Athens at the legendary battle of Marathon. Afterward, Xerxes, the son of Darius, vowed that the Greeks would pay.

This brought about the greatest war in antiquity, a war in which the Spartan descendants of Hercules and the children of Athena fought side by side to repel the greatest empire in the world. The battles of Marathon and Thermopylae are legendary, but Miltiades, Xerxes, Leonidas, Mastigias, Epialtes, Themsitocles, and Artemisia were real men and women—figures more heroic than legend because of the truth of their deeds.
Xerxes is a powerfully built and intimidating figure. He has the dark skin and hair of his desert nomad ancestors and the bearing of a king. His cold stare and grim demeanor display the truth of this bearing. Xerxes is 32 years old at the time he leads his army into Greece.

Xerxes assumed the Persian throne after the death of his father, Darius. The Persians were descendants of nomadic warriors of the mid-Asian deserts who had built and expanded their empire through war and subjugation. This was a role Xerxes honored and cherished, believing strongly in the right of the Persian Empire, and its people, to have sole dominion over the known world. Xerxes considered the actualization of this right as the main pursuit of his reign.

His father had died while trying to assemble a force large enough to vindicate himself from the embarrassment caused by his failed attempt to burn Athens, and this remained the predominant task at hand for Xerxes.

At the same time, Xerxes felt that Darius had been weak in his control of the rest of the empire. While he mustered forces for the invasion of Greece, he also ordered an increase of Persian troops into Egypt and imposed a severe regime that nearly broke the will of the once proud Egyptian people. The Persian Empire soon found itself in the grip of a true tyrant after years of comparatively benevolent rule.

For four years, Xerxes marshaled his forces. When they were finally assembled he marched from Sardis northward to the mighty Hellespont inlet. There, Xerxes had a great bridge built.

As his forces marched across the incredible bridge, a thunderous storm arose, destroying the bridge and drowning many soldiers. Angered, but not deterred, Xerxes ordered another bridge built and had the Hellespont whipped ten thousand times to punish Poseidon for his interference.

As the Persian army crossed the Hellespont and marched across northern Greece, most cities surrendered at the sight of it. Stories traveled that it took seven days for a man to march from one end of the train of troops to the other, and that Xerxes himself was surrounded by a core contingent of one hundred men known only as the invincibles.

As Xerxes approached the greater part of Greece though, word arrived that thirty-one Grecian city-states had banded together to oppose him, and that they were led not by the inexperienced Athenian army, but by the mighty Spartans.

Xerxes prepared his forces for the conflict without regard for the possibility of defeat. The Persian Empire was an elephant stepping on a mouse, and he believed even the most ferocious of mice could not stand against him.

Xerxes is the most powerful individual in the known world during his lifetime. Fully aware of his own personal power, and the proud history of the nomadic warriors he is descended from, Xerxes suffers no defiance, and generally no true counsel. He sees himself not as an equal to the greatest of men, but as a god among mortals. He is intelligent, but his arrogance and overwhelming power allow him the vanity of bullying his way with pure strength and force of will as opposed to having to use carefully designed stratagems and sound planning. Xerxes is a levelheaded leader though, and his first love is for Persia, not himself.

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**XERXES, KING OF PERSIA**

10th-level Human Fighter

| Strength  | 16 (+3) | Fort. Save | +9 |
| Dexterity | 11 (+0) | Ref. Save  | +3 |
| Constitution | 14 (+2) | Will Save  | +4 |
| Intelligence | 13 (+1) | Alignment | LE |
| Wisdom    | 12 (+1) | Speed     | 30 ft. |
| Charisma  | 15 (+2) | Size      | M (5' 10") |

Armor Class 17
Hit Points 68

Skills: Climb +5, Diplomacy +8, Jump +5, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Profession (king) +3, Ride +4, Sense Motive +6.


Languages: Common, Latin.

Possessions: half-plate, short bow, short sword.
Miltiades is 60 years old at the time of the Battle of Marathon. His bronzed skin has become leathery, and the armor of his youth has become uncomfortably tight in places. His eyes still contain fire, though, and the ring of gray hair about his head at times seems to sit like a crown.

Miltiades was born to an Athenian family of noble descent. During his youth he served in the Athenian Assembly and in the militia, as was required for all citizens. After expanding his political influence in Athens, Miltiades sailed to Sardis and served the Persians as a landed lord. There, Miltiades became a Persian citizen and grew familiar with the Persians and their ways. While fascinated by the power and wealth of the Persian Empire, Miltiades always remembered the intellectual beauty and political freedom of Athens.

In his later years Miltiades moved back to Athens, having made himself a rich and powerful man in Sardis. Still, he remained outspoken about the sovereignty of Athens and the necessity to protect her from tyrannical foreign influence. With the failure of the northern revolt to dissuade the Persian King Darius from his pursuit of conquest, Miltiades was one of the first elected generals of the Athenian militia.

When the Persians destroyed Eretria and prepared to set sail for the Grecian mainland, Miltiades was placed in charge of the Athenian forces. His experience as a tactical leader was yet unproven, but his gift for rhetoric persuaded the Athenians that he alone knew enough about the Persians to defeat them.

After sending a lone runner to summon aid from the Spartans, Miltiades led the Athenian phalanxes along a narrow valley to the field of Marathon. Miltiades had decided that Marathon was the only direct coastal path to Athens that would afford the Persians a safe landing for their ships.

With a Persian army armed with cavalry and bows steadily advancing, and no sign of impending Spartan aid, Miltiades had no choice but to engage the well-trained Persian army with his force of Athenian farmers and craftsmen. Through a rain of arrows that poured over their heads and into their formations, Miltiades held the Athenian hoplites firm until the cavalry ventured too close, and at that moment he had the Athenian army charge the Persian force through the storm of missiles.

By forcing the Persians into a nearby swamp, Miltiades lead the Greeks to victory in the first battle of what would become known as the Persian War. The Persians fled back to their ships after the loss, and the Athenians managed to capture two of the departing vessels. This was just the beginning; King Darius would not live to see his revenge manifested, but his son would return.

Miltiades is a man of politics more than war. He is a fiery and intelligent speaker well versed in the subtle side of politics, yet he remains an honest man. The use of emotion and small compromises are of great use to him, but he would never lie nor betray the integrity of the Athenian system. His knowledge of Persia and its people is vast and they fascinate him, yet, first and foremost, he is a patriot of Athens. A sharp mind nurtured in political battle aids a natural talent for tactics; an understanding also aided by his vast knowledge of how to inspire others and command their respect. Miltiades is a gifted leader whose only weakness is his own arrogance and blind confidence in himself and Athens.
At the time of the war, Leonidas is in the prime of life for a Greek at the age of thirty-two. Broad-shouldered and well-muscled, Leonidas is a striking and imposing figure on the field of battle. His calm demeanor and stern, commanding aura epitomize the Spartan ideal of a military leader.

The Spartan throne was never an ambition of Leonidas. Being the third of the king's four sons, most of his early years were spent hunting and training for military service, not preparing to lead his people. With one brother leaving Sparta after a failed power struggle, and the next dying in a failed military campaign, the rule of Sparta soon fell upon Leonidas.

Leonidas came to power in a fashion becoming a man who could trace his heritage directly back thirteen generations to the legendary Hercules. When he assumed the Spartan throne, Xerxes was just beginning his march across northern Greece and would soon be reaching the lands of the southern city-states. Realizing the danger that the Persian army represented, the city-states of the region turned to the mighty Spartans for military leadership. Sparta, Athens, and Thebes agreed to work together under the leadership of Leonidas to defend Greece from the mighty Persians.

Leonidas knew even the Spartan army of three thousand veteran soldiers would be unable to face the swarm of Persian cavalry in the open plains of Greece. In order to grant his fellow Greeks time to prepare and gather their forces, Leonidas marched a small force of three hundred Spartans, along with a handful of other Greeks, to the mountain pass of Thermopylae which the Persians would need to pass through to invade lower Greece.

The purpose of defending Thermopylae was a simple one for Leonidas: he would attempt to stall the army long enough for either a successful raid on the Persian supply line—or he would become a martyr for the rest of Greece to rally behind. Either way, he would lead his men valiantly into battle and they would follow.

When early reports from the Greeks came back saying that the Persian archers were so numerous that their arrows would black out the sun, a Spartan under Leonidas's command replied without hesitation, "then we will fight under the cover of shade." Such was the training of the Spartans and their faith in Leonidas.

Leonidas is an inspiring commander of warriors who was raised on hunting and sport. His men trust him because they know he would lay down his own life as quickly as theirs, and they would do the same for him. Leonidas has the bearing of his ancestor Hercules in both his confidence and the manner in which he commands the faith of other men. Leonidas simply inspires loyalty and obedience.

Leonidas also understands that a soldier's duty is to serve and die, and he is willing to do both without regret. If his death will aid victory he will quickly make that commitment for Sparta and all of Greece. Leonidas is not suicidal, but he has a sense of honor and purpose that gives him no cause to fear death. With all this Leonidas is still a compassionate leader. He will spare those of his men who he can. Yet he will unhesitatingly kill those he finds deserving of death as well.
Epialtes is in his late twenties at the beginning of the Persian War. Being from northern Greece he is lighter bronze than most Greeks; he is also a slight man whom no one would mistake for a soldier. He is well kept, with enough wealth to maintain a healthy middle class appearance.

Epialtes was a native of the Greek provinces just north of the mountains surrounding the pass of Thermopylae. Raised in the community as a herder, he ventured into the mountains often and learned them intimately, as did all the people of the region. Epialtes, though, was different from others, placing a higher value on wealth than loyalty to Greece.

When Xerxes’s armies approached the mountains, they spent a great amount of time exploring and searching for alternative passes to Thermopylae. While they found a few, none offered the directness to their coastal supply lines that Thermopylae presented. Since they knew of the Spartan force guarding Thermopylae, Xerxes was interested in alternate paths due to the ferocious reputation of the Spartan warriors.

Epialtes viewed the situation as a path to infinite wealth. He had heard of the incredible riches of Persia and its Great King. Believing that aiding the Persians would insure his own future, Epialtes presented himself to them.

The Persian forces had already been locked in battle for days with the small group of three hundred Spartans when Epialtes came to Xerxes. Xerxes had watched from safety as the Spartans repulsed his forces over and over again, killing thousands of his men and suffering hardly any casualties of their own.

Frustrated by the success of this small force, Xerxes agreed to grant Epialtes an audience.

Epialtes told Xerxes of another path that circled behind the pass of Thermopylae and would allow his forces to attack the Spartans from behind and surround them.

Investigating Epialtes’s story, Xerxes discovered that Epialtes was correct about the existence of other paths. Sending forth some of his troops, Xerxes quickly overwhelmed the handful of native Greeks Leonidas had guarding the hidden path. With the newly discovered pass in the Persian hands, the Spartans quickly fell.

Epialtes received minor rewards for his services to Xerxes but would be hunted down for the rest of his days by the Greeks.

Years after the Persian invasion, the rulers of Sparta would place a bounty on Epialtes’s head that far exceeded the reward he received from Xerxes. While a number of Greeks would try to collect this reward, the great Greek historian Herodotus wrote that Epialtes eventually fell victim to another northern Greek over a personal dispute.

Epialtes is motivated by personal interest more than anything else in life. This is viewed as especially evil within a society that views hospitality, personal humility, a community identity, and community service as being superior to all other values.

Epialtes has no overt hostilities towards Greece, itself. Epialtes is loyal to his home province, but he lacks the wider vision of community to feel compassion or loyalty to southern Greece.

Epialtes is not evil in the traditional sense, simply greedy. Yet he would never find acceptance among Greeks, especially in the south, after his betrayal.
Megistias is in his late fifties at the onset of the war. While he is past his prime, Megistias is still fit and capable of wielding a spear in battle. Iron gray hair and leathery skin are all that remains of his once statuesque build—a gift from a long life lived under the harsh Mediterranean sun.

Born into the life of a soldier, Megistias soon discovered that the gods had given him a greater gift. Blessed with visions, Megistias soon became a revered seer to the Spartans and an advisor to their kings.

While Sparta had developed a rigorous martial philosophy over the centuries that lead to the Persian invasion, it was once a civilization based on art and learning. Thus, Sparta was more accepting of sages and oracles than other forms of magic.

When Xerxes invaded Greece, Megistias and his son went north with Leonidas to fight at Thermopylae. Leonidas valued Megistias’s council greatly, and felt the elder sage would prove beneficial in the battle that would come.

Before the battle of Thermopylae, Megistias performed many divinations to foresee the outcome of the battle. In each of his visions, the gods told Megistias that the Spartans were doomed. Even when Megistias appealed to the power of the Oracle at Delphi, the revelations were no more hopeful than Megistias’s own foretelling.

It was Megistias who discovered the treachery of Epialtes. The day before Xerxes sent his men down the second pass, Megistias had read in his sacrifices that the Persians would overtake the Spartans the following dawn. Megistias then told Leonidas of his reading, which gave the Spartan king cause to send away all the Greeks, except his Spartans.

Leonidas had intended for Megistias to be among those sent away, yet Megistias refused. Instead he offered to stay so that his son—who was just of age and had no son of his own—might leave and ensure the survival of the family. Leonidas agreed to Megistias’s plea, and Megistias fought beside his fellows in the battle that he had foreseen could not be won.

After the battle of Thermopylae, a lone messenger was left alive to tell the tale. Prior to Leonidas’s death, Leonidas had instructed anyone who survived to raise a monument to the Spartans who had perished. It would read: “Stranger, if you go to Sparta, tell them we died here as the law commanded.” Also placed there was a monument to Megistias for his sacrifice.

Megistias is a wise and gifted seer, but his heart is that of a soldier. Soldiery has given him the bravery necessary to accept the fates he foresees, and enables him to perform his duties despite his prophecies. Megistias views his responsibilities as a seer as part of his duty as a warrior.

Unlike many ancient Greek oracles, Megistias is as clear and straightforward as the words of the gods allow. He believes that it rests in the hands of kings to motivate men, while his duty is to report the truth of what he has foreseen.

Megistias is loyal to Greece and his comrades. He is a loving father and dedicated Greek patriot. The service he has given to both Greece and its people are the highest honor he could have ever asked of the gods.

---

**MEGISTIAS**

5th-level Human Diviner
2nd-level Warrior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Bonus</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>13 (+1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dexterity</td>
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<td>Constitution</td>
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<td>Intelligence</td>
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<td>Wisdom</td>
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<td>Charisma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fort. Save</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ref. Save</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will Save</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Size</td>
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**Armor Class**: 19
**Hit Points**: 21
**Melee Attack**: +3
**Ranged Attack**: +3

**Skills**: Climb +6, Concentration +10, Heal +8, Jump +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Knowledge (religion) +4, Ride +8, Scry +7.

**Feats**: Brew Potion, Dodge, Endurance, Mobility, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll.

**Languages**: Common.

**Possessions**: Full plate, small steel shield, mace.

**Spells** (5/4/4/2): 0-level: create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance, read magic; 1st—comprehend languages, divine favor, entropy shield, protection from evil; 2nd—animal messenger, bull’s strength, detect thoughts x2; 3rd—mead into stone, clairaudience/clairvoyance.
A beautiful, dark-skinned Antolian woman, Artemisia is in her early thirties at the battle of Salamis. She is tall by Greek standards, and very imposing. Her face is lined with suffering and hardened by a ferocious will.

Artemisia was born in Antolia, a land northeast of Greece. There she married a minor noble and lived the life of most wealthy women of her age—that of a hostess. Yet with the early deaths of her husband and his brother, Artemisia soon became ruler herself. A reputation for bravery and a deadly temper ensured that she maintained that rule.

When Xerxes marched through the northern regions, many lords joined his forces to preserve their rule and lives. Artemisia was one of these rulers. Her ships fought bravely with those of the rest of the Persian fleet against the first Greek attack, though she did little to distinguish herself in these early confrontations.

As Xerxes advanced, Artemisia remained with the fleets behind the lines of battle, until the battle of Salamis. There she sailed with the rest of the Persian ships to face the Greeks for the last battle.

The battle at Salamis was the most decisive conflict of the Persian War. Artemisia, along with the host of other captains, sailed confidently to where Themistocles had informed the Great King that the Greeks were held up in disarray. The battle did not go according to plan, and Artemisia watched from her ship as the quick Greek fleet darted about the lumbering Persian vessels, which found themselves unable to move or defend themselves within the narrow confines of the strait.

As the battle turned against them, many Persians ships fell in to chaos, and the battle began to fall apart.

Artemisia, feeling that the battle was lost and that survival was the only stake left, formed a desperately brilliant plan for escape. With several Greek ships closing in on her vessel, she spotted a Persian ship on the same course of escape as hers. Ordering her captain to turn about, she prepared to ram the fleeing Persian ship.

Following her orders, the crew speedily rammed the vessel. This caused the Greek ships to fall back, assuming that the ship had either defected or had been captured by a Greek crew. Taking advantage of this confusion, Artemisia swiftly made her escape.

All the while, Xerxes had been watching the actions of his own female captain and had been quite pleased. Amazed at the woman's guile and courage, and disgusted with his other captains' lack of either, Xerxes called out to those around him that, "My men have become women, and my women, men."

Artemisia is a cold and stern woman. Her loyalty extends no further than to those who serve her, and only fear or personal gain can buy her fealty. She will follow those with sufficient strength until the likelihood of her death following them exceeds the likelihood of her death should she desert them.

Fortunately for Artemisia, this is more than is expected of her by most, and thus she excels in the eyes of others. She does not struggle to rise above her way of life, but she is extremely capable of living and surviving in the society she was born into. Her knack for personal survival has earned her all the respect and acknowledgement she could care to receive.
Themistocles is an aging man with the air of an aristocrat. At the time of the war he is forty-two. Having led a life of wealth and privilege in Athens, he is clean and well kept. However, he is not physically soft and possesses the strong body, short black curls, and dark skin of the Greek ideal.

Themistocles was born into a wealthy and influential family in Athens. He was well trained in the politics and sports of Athenian life. It was only natural that he would rise to power in the Athenian Assembly.

Themistocles soon found himself as the military leader of Athens during the Persian war. The discovery of a rich silver mine gave Themistocles leverage early in his rule. He convinced the Assembly to use this wealth to fund a vast armada with which to fight the Persians. Heeding his advice, Athens began to build a navy that would ensure the dominance of Athens in Greece for centuries. Yet, in the beginning, Themistocles’s fleet met many early defeats.

During the battle of Thermopylae, Themistocles gathered all the ships of southern Greece into one great fleet. Under the command of Themistocles the Greek ships fought bravely but could only bring the battle to a standstill against the more experienced and heavily armored Persian fleet. Themistocles was forced to retreat, and Thermopylae fell.

As the forces of Xerxes advanced across the plains of Greece, Themistocles went to the Oracle of Delphi for answers. There, the prophet instructed him, “to trust in the wooden walls.” Themistocles related the Oracles advice to the Assembly.

While many suggested that the Oracles words meant that the walls of Athens would stand against the Persian attack, Themistocles disagreed. He argued that it was the wooden walls of the ships that the oracle had meant. After a great debate, the Assembly agreed. Athens was abandoned, and its people fled across the straits to the nearby islands of Salamis.

With Athens abandoned, Xerxes arrived in triumph and sacked the great city. At their darkest hour, Themistocles appeared to turn on the Athenian people. Sending a message to Xerxes, he told the Great King that the Greek army was in disarray at Salamis and one final attack would surely crush them. Xerxes prepared his fleet for ultimate victory.

As the great ships of the Persians lumbered into the straits of Salamis, the swift Greek fleet surrounded them and—with lightning attacks and retreats—set about destroying the great Persian menace. Unable to navigate effectively, the Persian fleet was soon in complete disarray. In short time the Greeks were victorious, and the Persian advance was permanently halted.

Themistocles never recovered politically from the burning of Athens and his seeming treachery. Rebuilding Athens and the counterstrike against Persia were placed in other hands.

Themistocles is a cunning politician and statesman. At heart he loves his people and their way of life more than anything, and he is willing to sacrifice everything to see Athens flourish and its enemies vanquished.

Still, Themistocles can sometimes become too involved in the games of politics and his own machinations to see what all the possible effects will be when the dust settles, and his arrogance and self-indulgences are not looked upon fondly by others, in either success or defeat.

![Themistocles Character Sheet](image-url)
"Elves respond rather than react to situations," says artist Mike May. "It's one of the consequences of having such long lives. They have sharp minds, quiet dignity, and tend to indulge themselves. Their swept features mark them as a race of beauties. An elf is skillful, deliberate, and cunning. It was interesting, with this formula in mind, to create a series of elves in separate walks of life. I particularly loved the idea of an elf barbarian. I'll always have fun drawing an elf."
**Dragon Mirth**

"IT LOOKS LIKE A GREAT MATCH TONIGHT, AND WE'LL BE BRINGING YOU ALL OF THE ACTION THAT WE CAN INDIRECTLY LOOK AT! RIGHT, HRVY? HRVY?"

"The prisoner is thinking . . . that I look like a squid."

"Because ladies-in-waiting are only for Queens!"

"DON'T CALL ME A PESSIMIST JUST BECAUSE I THINK THAT THE BOAT IS HALF-EMPTY."

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**RPG Blues**

By Delgado Jr.
NOW! IT'S A KNIGHT WHO'S BEEN MAGICALLY MERGED WITH A TUNA CANNERY!

QUESTION OF THE MONTH
What role will psionics play in your campaign after the release of the Psionics Handbook?

This Month: Your thoughts on the new D&D game.

In Defense of Dungeonpunk
After reading the last several issues of *Dragon*, I've fallen completely under the spell of the new edition. I came across Rhian Hunt's letter in issue #276 and felt the need to comment on several points in the letter.

I agree that, with the arrival of the new rules, the magazine has transformed into a slick, updated device with which to attract new fans to the game. I applaud the *Dragon* staff for your hard work and diligence. Hunt mentions the

I was captivated by the art and the teasers that accompanied the "Countdown" articles. I loved the cigar-smoking dwarf and thought that it was an original way of presenting the class. Now we all know that smoking is bad, and I won't even get into that, but I liked it just the same. The sorcerer who was presented in your magazine was what we least expected from the game's redesign. It was eye opening and made me take notice of the new class. Therefore, I think you succeeded in doing what you had set out to do. *Dungeons & Dragons* is fantasy, and each person has his or her own idea on genre, and I feel that his disparaging remark was ill placed.

Remember that the new edition is all about change and breathing new life into our old friend the roleplaying game. I am thankful that these designers decided to push the envelope to invigorate the game, and in that manner recruit fresh blood and new ideas to draw players like me back into the fold.

Scott Sloan • [address withheld]

A Thousand Pardons
Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa! Please forgive a doubting old fool. As someone who played ADDnd since 1st Edition, I was less than enthusiastic about yet another edition of the game. I had just gotten everywhere where I wanted it, a good group with a kicking campaign, and then all the talk about the new edition started, and I panicked. I told my players that a new edition was crap. If it's not broke, why fix it? They (Wizards of the Coast, Hasbro, whoever) just wanted to make easy money on a new system. Yes, I'm also one of those people who waited five years to buy and Edition rules!

One of my players—God bless him—bought the new Player's Handbook despite my protests and nearly forced the book on me. With a lot of hesitation, I started to read it.
“What the heck is a sorcerer supposed to be?” and “What? An evil ranger! What are they doing to my game?!” I said with a sneer and a sad shake of the head. I turned my nose up at the artwork. “This isn’t my world,” I said flatly.

Then I really started to read. The more I read, the more I liked it, and the enthusiasm of the players was phenomenal. Now I am running a complete new edition campaign, and I have discovered a new love for the game. For one thing, the new edition has forced us to return to the basics. What annoyed me in the AD&D edition was the volumes upon volumes of books and optional rules that did little but bog down gaming sessions. The new edition, by making these overwhelming resources obsolete, has taken a tremendous load off my shoulders.

Everything about the new game is sleek, simple, and user friendly while at the same time adding new realism to combat and more logic to spellcasting. Thank you for including miniature combat rules in a core book! I still have some issues about equipment, most notably armor. Steel shields are just too much for us factory workers (two of whom are welders) to believe. Any welder knows that a steel shield capable of thwarting any kind of blow from a heavy weapon would have to weigh a whole lot more than just 15 pounds! That, however, is a minor thing. I’ve even become accustomed to the artwork, after realizing that it is similar in many ways to my A Tolkien Bestiary (by David Day, Gramercy Books, 1979), a book I use often to find inspiration for my campaign.

The price of the books is another reason why I have new respect for all of you at Wizards of the Coast. These books, with all the artwork, great binding, and quality paper, could easily sell for $30 from another publisher. The $20 price is great, especially for us humble factory workers.

In short, I apologize for all the terrible things I have said about WotC, Wizards of the Coast, and Hasbro. I’m thoroughly sorry for making fun of the new edition before I knew the facts, and I will never again leave you without the benefit of the doubt. Keep up the good work!

David Werling • Elkhart, IN

Don’t Panic—Play It

I have played AD&D and D&D on and off for the last 20 years, and I am overjoyed at the look and playability of the newest edition. The art is superb, and the d20 system is an easy-to-use, player- and Dungeon Master-friendly concept that makes combat much easier and faster.

My players were skeptical about the new system (and the thought of buying new rulebooks was a hurdle as well), but after a single session with the new rules they were hooked! Everything makes so much more sense now! We have used some of the new rules as house rules for some time now (most specifically the elimination of race ability limits and calling nonweapon proficiencies skills instead), and it was nice to see some of our own house rules now adopted as part of the core game. I’m sure many gamemasters out there have also found this to be true of their own campaigns.

Now for some verbal sparring, I was surprised at the hostility of some of the letters you and Dungeon Magazine have printed regarding the new edition. It seems obvious to me (but obviously not others) why Dragon and Dungeon have switched over to the new edition—why support a product line that already has thousands of pages of material in print when it is no longer going to be published in its current form? It makes much more sense, both from a financial standpoint for Wizards of the Coast and a service standpoint for those of use who (happily) convert to the new edition.

I also feel I should address Mr. Overton’s letter to “Forum” in issue #274. Sir, if you feel betrayed by the thousands of players who playedtest, designed, made suggestions, or even just wrote letters to magazines about the new D&D, maybe you were never really part of the roleplaying community to begin with. Instead of being appalled with some of the exciting new changes being made in the new edition, maybe you should actually try playing the new version and see how well the new rules mesh together. The game that all of us have grown to love is still there. A simple change in dice mechanics, some new terminology, and a much greater emphasis on roleplaying and story-driven campaigns can’t be seen as giving characters “instant godhood.” (Obviously when Mr. Overton saw that an 18/20 strength now converts to Strength 23—with the same bonus to damage—he panicked, little realizing that this really doesn’t make much of a difference when the monsters you face have Constitution and Strength bonuses themselves.)

Certainly the new combat system is a refreshing change, Armor Classes actually make sense. (A +3 bonus to your Armor Class actually raises your Armor Class! How strange!) In short, if you really don’t want to try the new edition, that is your choice, but I do feel condemned it without ever actually having tried it is grossly unfair. I urge Mr. Overton to seek out a playing group that is running the new edition and give it a try; you might find yourself falling in love with it all over again. My only regret is that Mr. Overton’s obvious hatred of Wizards of the Coast (remember if not for them TSR would have vanished entirely and we would have no D&D of any edition) will prevent him from seeing this new edition as a positive gain for roleplayers everywhere.

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Change Bad!

I don’t like a lot of things.

I don’t like the new. Do I think that everyone should conform to my beliefs? No. If people want to agree with me, gods bless them. If they don’t, that’s their decision.

Actually, it is not the game that bothers me. It is the changes it brings. I really don’t like change.

Don’t get me wrong: I know all too well that some change is necessary. Some change I can stomach, but a number of the things that are being changed rub me the wrong way. Viking-style
lunatic dwarves who secretly plot to kill everyone in their sleep? Okay, I like it. It adds flavor to an old cliche and can be inserted quickly and easily into a game with a minimum of bother. Seemingly generous monsters who give their treasures to adventurers? Add a curse or devious plot twist and it can be fun to play or run.

Monks, barbarians, and assassins back as PC classes, along with the addition of the sorcerer class? Fine by me. My friends and I mourned the passing of these classes as mainstream occupations, and the sorcerer is a welcome addition.

Half-orcs as a PC race? Also fine. I like the race, and to see it as a mainstream race gladdens my heart.

Allowing any race to be of any class? Some Dungeon Masters have been doing that for a long time. A few race-class combinations bother me (dwarven wizards, for one), but I can live with them.

Some things really bother me: Feats, for one. Why? I really don’t see the point in them. So many people complained about Skills and Powers, and now they rejoice over this mechanic that is so similar, I don’t get it.

Domains? What by Mordkainen’s hoary head is a domain? The more I read about them, the less sense they make. I’m going to stay far away from domains for now, thank you very much.

Exotic weapons? Again, why? Why not just group all weapons together? It would be easier. If the Dungeon Master doesn’t want a Western-style fighter to carry a katana at the beginning of the game, that is for the Dungeon Master to decide.

Where are the psionics? I liked psionics. The way of the mind was different from magic, and it could scare the bloody hell out of Dungeon Masters and players alike at times. Fun for everyone. What about campaign settings and other such things? I watched in agony as my beloved DARK SUN died. Will it be revived as a monstrosity in the new edition? What about RAVENLOFT? Or PLANEZCAPE?

GREYHAWK and the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting will almost certainly be transcribed into the new edition, but those worlds are overdone.

And what is this I keep hearing about no more chainmail-bikini-wearing elven Amazon warriors? I won’t have it!

Jeff Dern • Xenia, OH

**Flim Flam, Man**

Once upon a time, there were two heroic adventurers, Flim and Flam. They discovered a great dungeon filled with vast treasures and horrible monsters. But one day, it seemed they had slain all the monsters and stolen all the treasure. Flim wanted to move on to new adventures, but Flam thought that if he stayed, surely more monsters with more treasure would return to his dungeon. So the two parted ways, Flim growing to be a hero of legend as he delved into new quests, and Flam becoming a forgotten name as he sat, not wanting to change, and hoping to find solace in the old.

Most people abhor change, and gamers are no different. We all get set in our ways and become frustrated when our standard routines change. But sometimes this change is for the better, and I can’t think of a finer example than the new edition.

I haven’t played D&D in well over ten years, truly not since the premiere of the second edition. D&D just was not dynamic enough for me. I craved change, and I found it in other games that offered greater depth via skills and talents. D&D tried, but ultimately to me, failed to fulfill this. It seemed a dinosaur doomed to extinction.

Then, in that lovely world of online chat one day, someone told me of a new and improved D&D coming out. I missed my old DMing and dungeon-crawling days. I had played my first game way back in sixth grade, and it was a wonderful, cherished memory. Could the grandaddy of all roleplaying games finally be stepping up to a new level?

I loved what I saw, the things I heard. Yes, change was on the horizon! But, inevitably, so were those who opposed it. Already they griped and grumbled like a dwarf with a dry mug and an empty purse. How dare TSR change their game! How dare they “improve” and “update” it. But the time was long overdue. By the gods, what a change! Now D&D could move into the new millennium with a fresh look! The rules, the format... the art! Oh, and the price, far less than the other core books out there.

Still the grumbling. I appeal to all you old hands out there, pick up the new books, read them with an open mind, and see the beauty of the 3rd Edition! D&D has never looked so good. Think of it as this: TSR has not done away with the old; they have resurrected some great staples like the monk, the barbarian, and the World of Greyhawk.

Change is hard. We are all going to have to learn some new rules and ways of thinking. But when you sit down around the table to live out your fantasies with the new edition, I think you will find you have embarked on the greatest adventure ever!

Randy Donahue • Hot Springs, AR
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ROLE MODELS
Painting Miniatures,
Part 2

by Mike McVey • photographs by Craig Cudnohufsky

Last month's column looked at the basics of getting started in the miniature painting hobby—what equipment you'll need and how to set up your painting area. This month we're going to move on to the practicalities of getting the paint out of the pots and onto your miniatures.

Thinking Time
For me, the first stage in painting any miniature is thinking time. When I've got the piece I'm working on cleaned, assembled, and undercoated, I'll take a little time to decide just how I'm going to paint it. You don't need to spend hours poring over the model, figuring out every minute detail in advance; you just want to work out the general color scheme; what colors you are going to use, and where they're going.

Color Schemes
Color schemes can be as simple or complex as you want, though when you first start painting, I recommend that you don't try anything too complex. All you need to do is to come up with a scheme that you're happy with. The easiest way to avoid getting bogged down is to use a reference.

Using References
Sometimes the thinking is done for you and a color scheme has already been worked out. This is the case with many of the new edition miniatures where there is existing color artwork for many of the characters and monsters. All you need to do is translate this to the miniature.

Reference material can come from anywhere: Books, films, and comics are all good sources. All you need is something that makes you think, "That's a great idea. I'll use it on the next miniature I paint." Whenever I start a new project, I always stick reference pictures to the wall above my desk. These usually come from magazines or are photocopied from books that are in some way relevant to what I'm painting.

Holding the Miniature
Once the miniature is cleaned, assembled, and undercoated, you can begin the actual painting. Many people prefer to mount the model on something to make it easier to hold while painting. This helps keep the model clean and away from paint-covered fingers. An old paint pot is ideal for this; just make sure that it doesn't leak and isn't too top-heavy with...
the model attached. You could also use a small piece of wood if you don't have any old pots.

Where to Start
For many painters, the hardest thing is knowing where to apply that first bit of paint. To be honest, there are no hard and fast rules. Some painters start with the face; others paint the face last. You just need to be logical about it; some areas are hard to reach with a brush, so these need to be painted before the surrounding areas. I tend to start from the inside and work out. On a character model, I'll do the skin first and then work through the layers of clothing, usually finishing with the cloak. The only exception is that I paint the face last. To me, this brings the miniature to life and is really the finishing touch. There will be an entire article dedicated to painting faces later in the series.

4. Keep your hands steady when painting.
Most people's hands shake a little when they paint, and you need to minimize this if you want good results. Rest your elbows on your painting table and lock your hands together so only the fingers that are holding your brush are able to move. This also means that the model is at eye level while you work on it.
THE PLAY'S THE THING

CHOOSING A BATTLE CRY

by Robin D. Laws

Welcome to the first installment of "The Play's the Thing," a new column devoted to making your PCs more fun to play. Although sometimes we'll look at extra features you can add to your characters when you create them, our main focus here is on tricks and strategies you can employ to enhance your existing PCs.

This month's question, the choosing of a battle cry, is a case in point. A battle cry is a simple phrase that your character exclaims as he unsheathes his weapon and charges into combat. The words you choose say volumes about your character. Unlike a lengthy personal history you write out to show your DM, the battle cry is something that actually comes up in play. Every time you use it, it reminds everyone at the table of an essential fact about your PC.

When fleshing out your PC, a battle cry makes a great starting point. D&D characters get themselves into plenty of fights, so you know you're going to get to use your new battle cry at least once a session. Don't overdo it, though. There's a fine line between useful repetition and beating a dead horse. Save the battle cries for the dramatic or important fights. The fact that your character utters his battle cry shows the other players that the current fight is one he really wants to win.

Not all battle cries are created equal. Your specific choice tells us about his personality, his goals, and his loyalties. Let's look at your battle cry options.

The Prayer

In a D&D world, the smiting of a foe can be a holy act. Without the ready weapons of righteous men, the hordes of evil would swarm over the earth. Throughout history, men have called upon their gods to aid them on the eve of battle.

If you want to play a character whose most obvious trait is piety, his battle cry should invoke the powers of his god:

"Unwavering Heironous, speed my sword-arm!"

"Pelor, fill my sinews with the sun's strength!"

"Grant me luck, capricious Korid!"

Make sure that your PC worships a god known for aiding his followers on the battlefield. A prayer to a trade deity will seem beside the point; an invocation of a goddess of mercy, positively blasphemous.

The Vow

If your PC is driven by a vow to complete a particular task, his battle cry—like everything else he says and does—probably reflects that fact. First decide the nature of his vow. Make sure that you pick a quest that allows him to seize on the plot hooks your DM offers you. Perhaps he has sworn to retrieve a sacred relic of his people or to exact final vengeance on the six orc brothers who slew his family. This is the kind of cry that a character will utter infrequently: A fight must not only be important but also further his chances of fulfilling his vow.

"I quest for the Cup of Valior!"

"You killed my father; prepare to die!"

YOUR DM: A dark figure with a familiar, menacing stride emerges from the burning house. Flame plays all around him, but he merely throws back his head and laughs, as if delighting in the destruction.

YOU: No! It can't be! We killed him!

YOUR DM: Yes, it's him: Bavarsy Black-Heel! The one who razed your home village, had you expelled from the Order of the Just, and stole your inheritance! Finally, he stands before you! What do you say?

YOU: There's only one thing to say. Bavarsy! Prepare to... roll for initiative!
The Dedication
Just as a poet might dedicate his latest epic to a royal patron, an adventurer can lay low his foes in the name of another. A dedicatory battle cry informs us of your PC's most important relationship. Every time you utter it, the DM gets a subtle reminder that he should weave that relationship into the occasional storyline. You might dedicate your battles to the memory of an honored ancestor or other family member:

"In the name of my father, Humeo the Swift, I slay thee!"
You could invoke your entire ancestry;
"Worthy fallen of House Dinan, look upon my deeds today!"
A dedication can reflect your character’s relationship to a feudal lord or other noble patron;
"Today you face Lord Dotec’s justice!"
Knights and warriors often seek battlefield glory as they court a regal or noble maiden;
"For Princess Aeal!
If your character is a political rebel, he might invoke the name of an exiled or slain leader, his movement, or the inglorious day when the forces of evil vanquished his cause:
"Remember the Martyrs of Rorrs!"

The Display of Bravado
The cries we've looked at so far ring with drama, but your light-hearted character shouldn't be left out of the fun. No self-respecting swashbuckler should enter a fight without first pausing to flash his exquisitely pearly teeth, swish his rapier about, and toss off a razor-edged witicism.

"Ho! Playtime commences!"
"I'll start with my left-hand and see if you warrant my right!"
"I will commend you to your widows and orphans!"

The Warning
Although the whole idea of a battle cry implies a thirst for blood, it's possible to pick one that underlines your character's kindly and fair-minded nature. Well aware of his superiority over most opponents, his battle cry gives them a chance to back away from a fight they're sure to lose.

"I am Gielar Din; turn back or die!"
"Stand aside, or face the Six Shattering Trusts of Jarra-No!
Flee and live or fight and perish; 'tis all the same to me."
The warning is well-suited for monks, clerics, and others of a pietistic bent. You might also use it for a hard-bitten killing machine grown tired of bloodshed, like a PC inspired by Clint Eastwood’s character in the movie Unforgiven.
Some battle cries change meaning depending on who utters them. An inexperienced character could utter any of the above warnings, even though he can't actually deliver on the mayhem they imply. In that case, he's trying to bluff opponents into fleeing. In the mouth of a low-level PC, the above battle cries would show cleverness and audacity instead of mercy or blood-weariness.

The Unsubtle Approach
Finally, let's not forget that time-honored classic character who's given us all so many hours of pleasure: the Big Dumb Guy with the Great Big Weapon. His battle cry must be short, punchy, and inarticulate:
"Krund crush you!"
"Me kill you now!"

Now It's Your Turn
You're now armed with the inspiration you need to give your character a battle cry. Whether stirring, bloodthirsty, or amusing, it shows your DM and fellow players just what your PC is made of.

YOUR DM:
Finally, he stands before you! What do you say?

YOU:
Hell has too long yearned to embrace you; my sword shall the betrothal seal!
THIS MONTH
The Sage ponders several magical enigmas.

The description of the Scribe Scroll feat says the base price of a scroll is its spell level multiplied by its caster level multiplied by 25 gp. It goes on to say that a character must spend 1/2 of the base price in XP and 1/2 the base price in raw materials. My question is, are 0-level spells off limits, or are they free due to the fact that any number multiplied by 0 equals 0?

Treat any 0-level spell as level 1/2 for purposes of assigning a cost to a magic item (this makes the base price of creating a scroll of one 0-level spell 1/2 x 25 x 0). For more information on creating magic items and the cost for doing so, see pages 241-246 in the Dungeon Master’s Guide.

On page 148 of the Player’s Handbook, under Casting Time, it says you must make all pertinent decisions about a spell (range, target, area, effect, version, and so on) when you begin casting. However, on the same page under Aiming a Spell, it says you do not have to select your target until the moment you finish casting the spell. Which is it?

You have to make all the decisions required to complete the spell when you begin the spell, just as noted under the Casting Time heading—except the spell’s target. The process is analogous to loading a gun. You have to decide what kind of ammunition to load before you can aim and pull the trigger, but you don’t have to pick a target until you’re ready to pull the trigger.

The Player’s Handbook says the sorcerer class casts arcane spells by virtue of raw magical talent or a gift, as opposed to the wizard’s academic, systematic approach. If this is the case, can a sorcerer cast a spell that requires a material component or a focus without using the component or focus?

No. A sorcerer has a natural talent or gift for arcane spells, but that talent or gift only allows the sorcerer to cast a spell without preparing it ahead of time. If you were to watch a wizard and a sorcerer casting the same spell, you could not tell just by looking which was the sorcerer and which was the wizard (not even a successful Spellcraft check would reveal that). The sorcerer uses all the components the spell requires (verbal, somatic, and material) and uses them the same way a wizard does. Of course, either spellcaster can use a feat to make a component unnecessary, such as Still Spell to eliminate a spell’s somatic component.

Are sorcerers, bards, and clerics using spontaneous casting able to use the Quicken Spell metamagic feat?

They can, but there is no point in their doing so. A sorcerer or bard who uses a metamagic feat on a spell must cast the spell as a full-round action (or the normal casting time plus an extra full-round action if the spell’s casting time normally is longer than 1 action). Clerics using spontaneous casting must follow the same rule. This rule makes Quicken Spell worthless for these characters.

If my character casts a sleep spell, do I get to decide who is affected? For example, if friendly characters are in the area the spell affects, can I opt to only affect enemies? Do I ever get to decide who is affected by my character’s spells? In spell descriptions where it is not specifically spelled out, is there a way to adjudicate whether or not a caster can choose to affect just his enemies?

A sleep spell affects 2d4 Hit Dice worth of creatures within a 15-foot burst; creatures with fewer Hit Dice are affected before creatures with more Hit Dice. The caster can place the burst so friendly characters are not inside, but
The Player's Handbook says a spell's range is the maximum distance from the caster that the spell's effect can occur. It also says that if any portion of the spell's area would extend beyond the range, that area is wasted. Does that mean that if a character casts fireball so that its point of origin is at the spell's maximum range, the area that would be affected by the fireball would only be the hemisphere from the point of origin back toward the caster? Would half the spell's volume be wasted?

Yes. Part of the fireball is wasted. No portion of the fireball's spread can be out of the spell's range. You can't squeeze a few extra feet of range out of a spell by placing the spell's point of origin at maximum range. Note that this is a departure from the way previous editions of the game did things.

Many spells in the Player's Handbook list areas of effect by saying something like, "one target per level, no two of which can be more than x feet apart." What exactly does this mean? The description of the mass invisibility spell really confuses me. This spell says there can be no less than 180 feet between any target and the nearest other target. That makes the spell's area of effect potentially very large.

When a spell has a target entry that says no two targets can be more than x feet apart, it means no more than x feet can separate any two targets (all the targets also must be within range—see previous question). For example, the magic missile spell has a target entry that says the spell affects up to 5 creatures, no two of which can be more than 15 feet apart. That means that no more than 15 feet can separate any two creatures affected by the spell. It might be helpful to think of a sphere with a diameter (not a radius) equal to the listed distance. For example, all creatures targeted by a magic missile must fit within a sphere with a diameter of 15 feet or less. The rules don't describe spells like magic missile this way because that tends to make people think of it as an area spell rather than a targeted spell. (The design team learned this the hard way during playtesting.)

In any case, the mass invisibility spell has a target entry and a special condition for maintaining the spell's effect once a target has received the spell. These two things seem to be confusing you. When the spell is cast, no two targets can be more than 180 feet apart. Once you have received the spell, however, you must remain within 180 feet of some other spell recipient (any other recipient, not the most distant other recipient) or you break the effect for yourself. This allows all the spell's recipients to spread out after receiving the spell.

If a spellcaster is casting a full-round or longer spell, does she provoke an attack of opportunity only when she begins casting? Does anyone who gets near her get an attack of opportunity? What happens when a new round starts?

Taking the cast spell action while threatened provokes an attack of opportunity. The character takes that action at the start of the spell's casting time, during her turn in the initiative order. Foes who did not threaten the caster when she took the action don't get attacks of opportunity, even if they subsequently threaten the character. Note, however, that any damage the caster suffers during the casting time requires a Concentration check, so foes who move up and attack can still disrupt the spell.

Suppose a wizard is in melee with a fighter. If the wizard takes a move and casts a spell, the fighter gets an attack of opportunity as the wizard leaves. Would that cause a Concentration check for the spell?

No. The wizard is not casting the spell when the attack of opportunity occurred.

Suppose the fighter in the previous question had readied an action to follow the wizard, could the fighter skip the first attack of opportunity to make one when the wizard actually casts the spell?

Yes, but note that the wizard could opt to cast defensively and would not provoke an attack of opportunity if the attempt succeeds. (If the attempt failed, the wizard would lose the spell.)

Is it possible to ready an action as follows: If the wizard casts a spell, I attack him; if he leaves I follow—or is that condition not specific enough?

It's actually too specific, because you're really specifying two different conditions and two different actions. The ready action allows you to specify one partial action and the condition under which you will perform the action. You could simply ready an attack on the wizard whenever he casts a spell, and this would allow you to do any number of...

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**POWERPLAY**

**BY SEAN K. REYNOLDS**

**13th Stackmaster**

A low-level sorcerer or wizard can use mage armor, shield, and protection from evil for a base AC of at least 23 plus Dexterity against evil opponents, because each provides a different sort of defensive bonus (+1 armor, +7 cover, +2 deflection). At level 3 and above, a cat's grace can add +1 or +2 more to that. Bards are almost as effective at this, lacking only the shield spell.

A cleric has fewer spells that grant an AC bonus at lower levels, since he can wear armor. Once the cleric reaches 6th-level, a shield of faith increases to +3 deflection, and magic vestment provides a +2 enhancement bonus to his armor. By 6th level, he should be able to afford full plate and a large shield, bringing his AC to 25 plus Dexterity.
things, including attack, take a 5-foot step and attack; or even make a partial charge and attack. In such a case, you would not get an opportunity attack on the wizard when he cast the spell, but you would force a Concentration check if you damage the wizard.

Good clerics can recover prepared spells to spontaneously cast any cure wounds spell. Can any good cleric do this even if Healing is not one of his chosen domains? If so, why is there even a Healing domain?

A cleric's domains have nothing to do with spontaneous casting; only the cleric's alignment matters. Neutral clerics, it's the deity's alignment that matters. See page 32 in the Player's Handbook.

There's a Healing domain because many deities concern themselves with healing. Extra cure spells aren't the only benefit clerics with the Healing domain get. They get a caster level boost when casting their healing spells (making them slightly better healers than other clerics). Also, their 5th-level and higher domain spells are not cure wounds spells, so other clerics cannot spontaneously cast them.

Can a divine recover detect magic as a bonus spell, because it's a detection spell, or is it a Universal spell and therefore not a divination?

The detect magic spell belongs to the Universal school, not the Divination school, so diviners can't claim it as a bonus school spell.

When you cast Nystul's undetectable aura, what spells does it protect against? Does it only protect the target item against detect magic, or will it also protect a sentient item against detect thoughts? What about invisible items? If the spell is cast on an item enchanted with the invisibility spell, is it impossible to detect the item? I have a friend who believes that if you cast Nystul's undetectable aura on an invisible item, spells such as see invisibility cannot locate the item since its aura, and therefore the item, remains beyond the means of detection. For that matter, what does the magical aura consist of? Is it a sentient weapon's intelligence located within the aura? Lastly, will Nystul's undetectable aura protect the target item from spells such as detect evil?

Nystul's undetectable aura masks an item's magical aura, which is the aura a detect magic spell detects. The spell does not block any other aura. The only Divination spell (detect magic is a Universal spell, see previous question) Nystul's undetectable aura affects is identity; the identity user must make a Will save to determine the item's actual power.

Note that detect magic reveals active or residual magical auras, not the effects magic produces. An invisible character or object has a magical aura, but it does not have an invisibility aura. Such a character or item can be detected with detect magic, but not very efficiently (see "Sage Advice" in issue #274).

Note also that many "sentient objects" are not objects at all, but creations of the construct type. The intelligent items described in the Dungeon Master's Guide, for example, have Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores and are therefore creatures (see Abilities on page 10 of the Monster Manual), and spells that only work on items, such as Nystul's undetectable aura, don't work on them.

If a wizard casts shocking grasp, grabs at his target, and misses, is the spell still active or does it dissipate harmlessly?

Once you cast a touch spell, the spell effect remains, untriggered, until you touch something with your hand or until you cast another spell (see Touch Spells and Holding the Charge on page 151 of the Player's Handbook).

When a character casts chill touch, the caster's hand glows blue, and a successful touch attack with the hand causes damage and perhaps Strength damage, too. Could a character have chill touch in effect and use a weapon in the other hand? If so, would the normal penalties for attacking with two weapons apply?

Chill touch follows all the rules for holding the charge on a touch spell (see previous question) except that a chill touch spell has one "charge" per caster level. Each time you touch anything with your hand, you lose one charge off the chill touch, but anything you already had in your hand when you cast the spell doesn't count as being touched. You can't have two chill touch spells running at once, because if you cast a spell while holding a charge the whole spell you're holding dissipates.

Otherwise, you can indeed use the hand bearing the chill touch effect as a weapon. When you're using the twoweapon fighting rules, your own hand is a light weapon for you.

My new Player's Handbook shows the range for the fireball spell as a base 400 yards. Shouldn't this be base 100 yards, like lightning bolt?

No. Fireball is a long-range spell, so its range is 400 feet + 40 feet per caster level (not yards). This is longer than the range for a lightning bolt, which is a medium-range spell (200 feet + 10 feet per caster level).

Older versions of the game listed
ranges in yards, but the current rules list all ranges in feet.

Note that a lightning bolt spell creates a stroke of electricity that extends from the caster to the maximum range of the spell (space permitting). This is very different from the way the spell worked in older versions of the game. In the previous edition, a lightning bolt worked much like a fireball; it produced a small missile that detonated and generated a stroke of electricity 40 or 80 feet long. The new version of the spell has a shorter overall range, but produces a much longer bolt (300 feet long for a 20th-level caster).

Does the fireball spell expand in confined spaces as it did in previous versions of the game? If not, how does it interact with creatures in total cover or around corners? According to Table 8-9 on page 133 of the Player's Handbook, total cover affords no saving throw bonus. But if a fireball expands around a corner like the diagram on page 204, what sort of save bonus would a creature around the corner get?

A fireball does have a fixed volume that fills up a confined space as it did in older versions of the game. It does follow the rules for a spread (see page 149 in the Player's Handbook), which means it can reach around corners.

In general, you use Table 8-9 in the Player's Handbook to determine saving throw bonuses from cover. Trace the line of effect from the spell's point of origin to determine what sort of cover might be available, and use the diagrams on page 133 of the Player's Handbook to determine the degree of cover. There's no saving throw bonus listed for total cover because if you have total cover against a spell, the spell can't affect you at all.

When you're hit by a spread, you cannot claim total cover if the spell's effect can reach you somehow. Determine the degree of cover by how small a constriction the spread has to pass through to reach you. For example, if you're peering around the corner when a fireball hits, the best you can claim is one-quarter cover. If you're completely behind the corner, but otherwise in the open, the best you can claim is one-half cover. If you're around a corner and halfway behind a door, you can claim three-quarters cover. If the fireball comes at you through an arrow slit, you can claim nine-tenths cover.

Older editions of the game listed the silence spell in the Alteration school, but now silence is part of the Illusion school. Does this mean that anyone in the area of effect can try to disbelieve the spell, negating most of its effect for enemy spellcasters?

If you could disbelieve a silence spell, its save listing would be "Will disbelieve." Silence removes all noise in its area and nobody gets a save against that. If the spell is actually targeted on a creature or on a creature's equipment, that creature gets a Will save to negate the spell. If the save succeeds, the spell fails and the area is not silenced.
Many of the rules changes introduced in the new edition ripple outward from a new approach to character creation. As I noted last month, the real heart of the new edition's philosophy is a move toward providing concrete rules for a greater number of actions and situations. Where previous editions of the game forced the DM to guess or make an arbitrary ruling whenever the players attempted an unusual action, this new version provides an open-ended set of specific rules that can be used to resolve almost any situation. Want to trick a guard into releasing your friend the thief? Make a Bluff check. Trying to hunt for enough game to feed your party? Make a Wilderness Lore check. In short, the new rules handle many more situations by giving each character a wider range of abilities to check.

One byproduct of this new philosophy is that character creation can be a lengthier process than it was during previous editions of the game, though the final results are considerably more detailed and interesting. Properly selecting and collating all those new abilities certainly takes time. The designers have provided detailed, pre-generated character templates you can ask your players to select in order to save time, but I recommend that you use them only if your players are rather inexperienced.

Character creation can be a lengthier process than it was during previous editions.

While the "starting packages" certainly save you a little time, they'll also make it more difficult for your players to truly personalize their characters and grow attached to them. In fact, character generation has been beefed up so much that I think it's appropriate to reconsider some advice I provided in an earlier column. I now believe it is good idea to hold a separate session for the sole purpose of creating characters. I used to recommend against this practice because my experience shows that campaigns that begin in this fashion tend to have a fifty-fifty chance of never getting off the ground at all. Generally, the play maintains the interest of your fellow gamers, and any session during which you don't actually play is just another chance for one or more players to lose interest. Under the new rules, though, it's difficult to conduct an effective session long enough to allow all the players to create their characters with enough time left over to get a good start on the first adventure. Players who are experienced with the new rules might pull off such a feat without a problem, but there aren't too many people out there who are all that experienced with a set of rules that's a few months old.

One way to avoid this dilemma altogether is to ask your players to show up at the first session with their characters already created. While this works well for some people, I generally don't favor it for a number of reasons. Having all the players in a single location while they create their characters definitely results in a more effective
and well-balanced party. The D&D rules and most D&D adventures assume that the adventuring party will be made up of a variety of character classes. If the players don’t cooperate as they create their characters, it’s far too easy to end up with a weak or unwieldy party. In fact, this risk is somewhat compounded under the new rules—it’s now important that your players select not only a variety of character classes, but a variety of skills as well. A party without a single character who possesses the Bluff or Spot skills, for instance, might run into trouble. Another reason why it’s often not a good idea to ask the players to create their characters on their own is the fact that players can easily make mistakes during the process. If you and the other players aren’t around to notice some of these discrepancies, you run the risk of not spotting an error until it’s already had an unfortunate impact on your game. During a recent session of my own game, for example, I discovered that one of my players accidentally spent too many skill points at first level, making him much more effective in my first few adventures than he should have been.

If you do decide to run a special session for character creation, there are a couple of strategies you might use to get your players’ juices flowing despite the fact that the game isn’t actually starting yet. If your players are particularly creative and oriented toward good roleplaying, you might ask each of them to create a brief “life story” for his or her character and relate it to the whole group. In order to keep things interesting, you can ask the players to judge the tales after all the stories have been told. Pass out score cards that instruct each player to secretly rate each story on a scale of one to ten. After you collect and tally the scores, you can bestow a special prize upon the winner ranging from a few additional skill points all the way up to the privilege of beginning play at a higher level. This scheme has the added benefit of not only making that first session a bit more interesting for the players but also going a long way toward establishing their characters as well.

Another ploy you might try is the old “cliffhanger trick.” Start playing during the character creation session, but don’t attempt to undertake an actual adventure. Instead, run the players through a quick teaser designed to get them hooked and interested in the things to come. A quick combat encounter that gives the players a chance to test out their new abilities is usually in order here, along with some brief exposure to your campaign environment. Most importantly, though, you should try to end the teaser with some sort of shock or twist. Get the players hooked by confronting them with a compelling mystery or puzzle that won’t be resolved until the next session. For example, your teaser might end with a hooded assassin murdering an important townsman right in front of the party. The adventurers give chase, but fail to catch the fiend. Just before he makes good his escape, though, the assassin’s hood is torn off and the PCs are shocked and horrified by what they see. You don’t reveal exactly what that is until the next session.

Note that if you decide to go this route, it’s important that you actually deliver on the mystery you created during the teaser. If you capture the player’s imagination but then fail to invent a revelation that lives up to the dramatic buildup you’ve given the situation, you’ll only do more harm than good. Returning to my example, for instance, it’s probably not enough to simply reveal that what the players found so shocking was an ugly face or a bad scar. Instead, you might reveal that the assassin is inexplicably an exact duplicate of a player character, or that the assassin is an old friend whom the PCs believed to be dead. This sort of solution provides you with a great springboard for adventures that allow the players to uncover further revelations and delve even deeper into the mystery.

**Newfangled Fighting**

Like character creation, the new combat rules are home to many of the new edition’s innovations. In general, combat is more stringently codified and the various actions the combatants can select are more rigidly defined. It’s still possible to run a battle entirely within the imaginations of the participants, but doing so definitely makes it harder to effectively wield all the interesting new maneuvers that the new rules have to offer. Now more than ever, I recommend employing some sort of counters or visual aids to track the positions of characters in battle. Detailed miniatures and scenery are obviously the ideal tools for this purpose, but not everybody has the time or money to invest in building an appropriate collection. In an earlier column, I suggested using a large whiteboard in lieu of miniatures to map out your battles. The idea is that you can quickly draw up battle maps on the board using dry erase markers, and plot the players’ positions using makeshift tokens like coins or dice. The board also gives you a convenient way to record the positions and effects of spells and obstacles. Should a wizard cast wall of ice, for instance, you can quickly sketch the ice wall right on the battle map and even record a helpful note right next to it (*36 hp/10 ft., Break DC 27*).

While the new rules make the whiteboard approach more useful than ever, they also add an additional wrinkle that you should consider. Many of the new combat rules become much easier to administer if a grid is overlaid atop the battlefield to designate 5-foot by 5-foot squares. Such a grid will make it much easier to keep track of the “threatened areas” that provoke attacks of opportunity (Player’s Handbook, page 122) and easier to adjudicate various movements and special maneuvers. In fact, the new Dungeon Master’s Guide provides some detailed guidelines on how to employ a grid on pages 67–69. Unfortunately, redrawing a grid on your whiteboard at the beginning of each battle isn’t very
practical. I've skirted this problem by using a box cutter to lightly scratch a 1-inch square grid directly into the surface of my whiteboard, allowing me to draw on the board and erase to my heart's content without ever removing the grid. You can also add a permanent grid to your battle board with very thin black or gray tape (available at office supply stores).

Beyond the more rigidly defined actions, the most important changes in the combat rules are the various measures taken to clean up some of the awkward mathematics that sometimes plagued earlier editions. In addition to fixing the obvious problems that frequently befuddled newcomers ("Now, let me get this straight... a -1 shield actually adds one to my Armor Class?")—the new rules also eliminate some of their predecessor’s cumbersome charts and formulae. While the old game forced you to repeatedly look up what a 2-Hit-Die creature needs to hit Armor Class 5, for example, the new system makes such calculations irrelevant. Of course, some of the trimmed complexity has been reintroduced in the form of new modifiers and options, but it’s generally easy for the players to keep track of their own bonuses and modifiers, allowing you to concentrate solely on the monsters and NPCs. It’s also easier than ever to conceal the Armor Classes of your monsters. Now, just ask each player for a total attack roll. If the roll equals or exceeds the monster’s Armor Class, the attack is a hit. The players need never know what they’re shooting for.

Equally worthy of attention is the new initiative system. Before, all the combatants on one side of the battle took a turn, then all the combatants on the other side took their turns. A single simple die roll decided which side went first. Now each character rolls his own personal initiative score. Although this system produces more interesting battles, it’s sometimes hard to calculate the exact sequence in which all the combatants act, particularly when you’re resolving a large battle with a wide variety of participants. To minimize your difficulties, you should closely follow the advice that appears in the Dungeon Master’s Guide and scribble down a quick sequence at the start of each combat round. I’m experimenting with my own system that is even faster, though it certainly requires some advance preparation. I’ve created an “initiative board” on a small (6 1/2 inch by 11 inch) piece of corkboard. With a marker, I’ve divided the board into two rows of twenty columns and numbered the resulting squares from one to forty. I’ve also labeled a set of pushpins with the initials of my PCs and reserved a few extra pushpins of different colors to represent monsters. At the start of the round, when everyone rolls initiative, I can simply place the pushpins in the appropriate squares to quickly log the combat sequence, sparing me from the sometimes difficult task of scrawling down notes while eight players are simultaneously shouting their initiative scores. Later, I can place additional pushpins on the board to represent the timing of spells and other effects.

Beyond these simple mechanical matters, the one thing about the new combat rules that every DM should note is that they can be much more brutal than their predecessors, particularly at low character levels. An orc with a battleaxe can now inflict a maximum of 30 points of damage in a single attack (orcs have a Strength of 15, and a battleaxe inflicts triple damage on a critical hit)—more than enough to kill all 1st- and most 2nd-level characters outright. Under the old edition, the same beastie could never inflict more than 8 points of damage—not enough to kill any PC in a single blow (if you used the optional “death’s door” rule). While the circumstances that produce such extreme combat results are certainly quite rare, it’s important to remember just how many battles the average PC will engage in across the course of his career and how many opportunities the monsters get to make such a devastating attack.

The upshot of all this is that you should follow the advice in the Dungeon Master’s Guide very carefully when it comes to balancing your fights. Until you’ve gained experience with the new rules, you should mistrust any “conventional wisdom” you acquired playing the old game, particularly while your players’ characters are at low levels.

That wraps up another installment. Drop back in thirty days to watch me raise the curtain on a whole new phase of Duhgeoncraft.
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STAR WARS
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Today we're talking about Elves—one of the more venerable races in D&D—though for some reason, they're not well liked.

Do all humans who can't get girlfriends play this 'D&d'?

This is a conundrum, as Elves are aesthetically pleasing, knowledgeable, and quick-witted. Do all humans spit when they talk?

Snap?

Elves can live for over seven hundred years. Are all humans as fat as you? Oh I'm sorry—how could they be?

Therefore, with all their advantages, one has to wonder why Elves don't rule the world?

Do all humans sublimate their sexual inadequacies through tawdry political power fantasies?

The answer, of course, is that every species has a 'principal predator' that keeps it in check.

What? Ah-ha! I knew I smelled 'elf'!

Let's go, 'Toy Boy', you got 'Pokemon' to make! Ho ho ho!

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ETERNAL RING

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