DRAGON AGE™

ROLEPLAYING GAME CORE RULEBOOK

BY CHRIS PRAMAS

Dragon Age™

Dark Fantasy Roleplaying in the World of Thedas

Core Rulebook

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Introduction

Welcome to *Dragon Age*, a roleplaying game of dark fantasy adventure. In *Dragon Age* you and your friends take on the personas of warriors, mages, and rogues in the world of Thedas and try to make your names by overcoming sinister foes and deadly challenges. You may face down one of the vile darkspawn in ancient dwarven ruins, engage in a duel of wits with an Orlesian noble, or uncover the secrets of the Fade. You may win renown or you may die alone in the trackless wilderness. Whatever your fate, your story is your own to tell. In *Dragon Age* you make the choices and try to survive the consequences.

What Is a Roleplaying Game?

Dragon Age is what's known as a tabletop roleplaying game, so named because you usually play while sitting around a table with your friends. The action is similar to computer roleplaying games. You will play a character who goes on exciting and dangerous adventures in a fantasy world. The difference is that you do it all with your imagination instead of a computer. One person must be the Game Master (GM). The GM presents the story and acts as a referee. Those remaining are the players. Each player makes a character and roleplays him or her in the ensuing adventures.

If you don't grasp how this works, don't worry. Keep reading and by the time you finish the introduction, you should understand the basics of tabletop roleplaying and the *Dragon Age* RPG.

The *Dragon Age* RPG takes place in the world of Thedas, the featured setting of BioWare's video games *Dragon Age: Origins*, *Dragon Age II*, and *Dragon Age*: *Inquisition*. Thedas has also been explored in novels from Tor Books and comics from Dark Horse. If you are not familiar with Thedas, never fear. This book provides all the background you need to understand the setting and your character's place within it. If you are a fan of the video games, novels, and comics, so much the better!

Getting Started

The first thing you need is a group of friends to play with, and one of you must take on the role of Game Master, or GM. While you can play with as small a group as one GM and one player, the game works best with one GM and three to five players. It is possible to play with more players, but that can slow down the pace of the game.

The GM has a key position, so try to make sure that they really wants the job. Running a game is fun, but it's a different experience than playing. The second half of this book, the **Game Master's Guide**, explains the GM's role in detail. The GM (and only the GM) should read that part of the book. If you are a player, you should only read the first half of the book, the **Player's Guide**.

Once you've settled on a GM, everyone else needs to make characters, known as PCs or Player Characters. In *Dragon Age* your character has the potential to become a great hero of Thedas, but begins as just another hungry adventurer scrabbling for glory. You do not get to start play as an Inquisitor or a Grey Warden. Those are positions that must be earned, and that's what playing the game is all about.

Your character is your primary responsibility as a player in an RPG. This is your alter ego in the world of Thedas. Over the course of many game sessions, your character will grow and change, but every hero needs a starting point. That is exactly what **Chapter 1: Character Creation** provides, giving you not only game stats—the abilities and corresponding numbers that tell you what your character is good at—but also a character concept, starting goals, and ties to other Player Characters. Once play begins, the portrayal and development of your character is all up to you. Playing your character, achieving goals, and navigating the perils of a fantasy world—this is the fun of playing an RPG.

Playing Your Character

"What do you do?"

When playing an RPG, that's the question you must ask yourself all the time. The Game Master will describe a situation, framing a scene for one or more of the Player Characters. It is then up to you to decide what your character does and why. You tell the GM what you want to do, as do the other players, and then you all work out what happens. Sometimes, you use dice to resolve actions. Other times, you simply interact with the other players and the characters portrayed by the GM, which are known as Non-Player Characters, or NPCs.

"Who are you?"

This is the question to keep in mind when making decisions. When you create your character, you will decide on some traits and goals as a starting point. You can then flesh out your PC; there are two basic approaches to this. The first is to paint your character in a few broad strokes and then jump right in to playing. The intention here is to come up with details about your character during play, often by using the springboard of the current adventure to create touchstones to your character's past. This is a common storytelling technique and a perfectly valid approach if you don't want to spend a lot of time working on your character before starting play. The second approach is to come up with a lot of details and roleplaying ideas before the first session. If you can come to the table with a good idea of who your character is before the first die is rolled, that can help get the game going.

However you approach your character, playing the game will help you refine your ideas. After you have played your character for a while, you should have a strong sense of personality and an intuitive sense of what your character would do in a particular situation. Of course, not all situations present easy choices. It is from difficult choices that tension and drama emerge.

Adventure & Campaign

An adventure is a discrete story and scenario in an RPG. You can think of it as a single novel or an episode of a TV show.

There may be several plot threads, but in the end it tells one story. The difference between a roleplaying adventure and a book or show is that you have authorship. It is the decisions of you and your fellow players that will drive the story to its conclusion.

A campaign is a series of interlinked adventures. If an adventure is a novel or TV show, a campaign is a series or a season. Some adventures may have self-contained plots, while others will tie together to tell a larger story. During a campaign the characters of the adventuring group earn experience points and gain levels. Over time they will gain more powers and abilities, face greater challenges, and perhaps gain renown for their deeds. A full *Dragon Age* campaign will take characters from levels 1 through 20, and provide hundreds of hours of entertainment.

Example of Play

What follows is an example of play with three characters. This should give you an idea of what a game of *Dragon Age* is like. You'll note various points where the example refers to dice rolling and its results. You don't need to worry about the particulars of that right now. Just follow along with the action and see how the GM uses the rolls to test the skill of the characters.

In this example Peter is the Game Master (GM). Kate is playing a city elf rogue, Troy is playing a Fereldan Freeman mage, and Jess is playing an Avvar warrior.

Peter (GM): You've been traveling for several hours under the hot midday sun. The road passes through a small forest and for a few minutes at least you find some respite in the shade the trees provide. As you emerge on the other side of the forest, you see a caravan up ahead. It is not moving, but neither has it set up camp.

Kate (Rogue): Do I see any guards around the caravan?

Peter (GM): Make a **Perception (Seeing)** test and tell me your result.

Kate (Rogue): [Rolls dice] I got a 13.

Peter (GM): Good roll. Your eyes quickly adjust to the sunlight and you scan the caravan. You see many carts and wagons but no people. The only things moving are the draft animals and they seem restless.

Jess (Warrior): This doesn't look good. I want to take a closer look.

Peter (GM): Just you, or are you all going?

Troy (Mage): Let's all go. If this is a trap, better to be together than separated.

Kate (Rogue): Why don't you two go straight up the road and I'll swing around the right side and approach from there. I'll try to move quietly, crouched down with my bow out.

Jess (Warrior): My sword and shield are out and I'm heading straight up the road.

Troy (Mage): I stay behind the warrior and keep an eye on the woods as we advance. We don't need any surprises from that direction.

Peter (GM): You approach the caravan and no threats emerge. When you get close, you see the bodies. There are at least six corpses spread out around the carts. They look like dwarves.

Jess (Warrior): That seems strange.

Troy (Mage): Not really. The surface dwarves are great merchants. They buy and sell from almost everyone.

Kate (Rogue): How did they die? Do I see any arrows sticking from the corpses?

Peter (GM): You can try to figure that out with a **Perception (Seeing)** test or a **Cunning (Healing)** test.

Kate (Rogue): I'm better at Perception so I'll stick with that. [Rolls dice] Ha, I got a 15 this time.

Peter (GM): You approach one of the corpses and look it over. The wounds were not made by weapons. The way the clothing and armor are torn, you'd guess claws. Big claws.

Troy (Mage): Do the corpses smell?

Peter (GM): Now that you are closer, yes, they do. The hot sun is making it worse by the minute, too.

Troy (Mage): So they've been dead for a while, which probably means the attack ended some time ago. I don't see any creatures with claws in the area, so I'm going to move into the caravan and search for survivors.

Jess (Warrior): I'm going to climb onto one of the carts and use the vantage point to keep an eye on things.

Peter (GM): Roll a **Perception (Searching)** test, Troy.

Troy (Mage): [Rolls dice] I got a 9. Not a great roll.

Peter (GM): No, not great. You find more bodies but no survivors.

Jess (Warrior): Maybe some of the dwarves ran away. If I watched my friends get torn open like that, I might hoof it.

Kate (Rogue): You might be right. I'll look for tracks. That's a **Perception (Tracking)** roll, right?

Peter (GM): That's correct.

Kate (Rogue): I rolled an 11.

Peter (GM): The tracks are confusing around the caravan. You can see many sets of prints, some dwarf and some from larger bipeds.

Troy (Mage): Bipeds with large claws. I don't like the sound of that.

Peter (GM): You do find one set of dwarf prints leaving the scene though. Whoever it was seems to have been wounded, as there are drops of blood every few feet. The trail leads off the road and back towards the forest.

Troy (Mage): Let's follow it.

Kate (Rogue): Agreed. I will lead the way.

Peter (GM): You follow the trail back into the woods. Maybe 30 feet from the edge you find a dwarf under a fallen log. He looks unconscious and wounded, but alive.

Troy (Mage): No time to mess around. I approach the dwarf and cast my heal spell. I'm using 2 mana points.

Peter (GM): Make your casting roll. As I recall, Heal has a target number of 10.

Troy (Mage): It does indeed. [Rolls dice] And I got a 12. [Rolls dice again] He gets back 7 Health from the spell.

Peter (GM): You touch the prone dwarf and the healing magic spreads from your hands. He's lost a lot of blood but the spell revitalizes him and he wakes up with a start.

Troy (Mage): Easy, friend. You're safe now.

Peter (GM): The dwarf relaxes a bit and regards the three of you. "Thank you for helping me. Where are the rest of my friends?"

Kate (Rogue): You are the first dwarf we've found alive I'm afraid.

Jess (Warrior): Can you tell us what happened?

Peter (GM): "It was the damn caravan master," says the dwarf. "He thought we could save time if we pulled up camp in the middle of the night. I argued with him but he wouldn't listen. I was worried when we passed into those woods but thought we were all right once we made it through. Then they came at us from the shadows—big brutes with claws as big as my head. After I saw three of the guards go down, I made a run for it. One of them caught me in the shoulder with a claw but I kept running. I made it to the woods and hid. After some time the screams and sounds of battle faded, then I passed out. Next thing I saw was you."

Jess (Warrior): Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

Troy (Mage): I am: darkspawn.

Kate (Rogue): Darkspawn. So much for a sunny day of leisurely travel.

The Group Dynamic

Much of the **Player's Guide** is focused on teaching you the rules and how to make a character. It is important to remember that roleplaying is a group activity. There are two aspects to this: the adventuring group and the player group.

Your character is one member of the adventuring group (also known as a party). Each character in the group has individual goals, but there are also larger group goals. The characters may have their disagreements and even feuds, but for the game to go on they must remain together. The adventures themselves often assure this by their plot and structure, but a good group dynamic can help. This can start during character creation when everyone is settling on what they want to play. It's a smart idea, for example, to make sure you have at least one character of each class in the group. When working out ties and goals amongst the PCs, you can build in reasons for the characters to adventure together.

The people gaming with you make up the player group and that too has a dynamic. You and your friends are going to be spending a lot of time together, so you want a group of people who fundamentally get along. Roleplaying is meant to be fun for everyone, so be aware of tension around the table. Some players try to make the game all about them, hogging the spotlight and trying to insert themselves in every scene. Don't act that way; it just makes other players angry. Everyone deserves a chance to shine, so be ready to take a step back

There's a recipe to a good hero, Hawke. It's like alchemy. One part down-to-earth, one part selfless nobility, two parts crazy, and you season liberally with wild falsehoods. You let that percolate through a good audience for a while, and when it's done, you've got your hero.

—Varric

when someone has a good idea or is pursuing something important for their character.

If a game session didn't go well for some reason, talk about it afterwards. It won't do any good if everyone goes home to stew. Try to figure out where things went wrong and see if you can come up with solutions so it doesn't happen again.

A common problem is a player who is unhappy with their character. Maybe the character doesn't fit into the group well, or maybe the player finds another class preferable after some play experience. This doesn't have to be a problem. It's perfectly fine for a player to make a new character of the same level and retire the old character. It is preferable to do that than to make a player continue to play a character they aren't having fun with.

Basic Game Concepts

Before you delve into the **Player's Guide**, here's a brief overview of the basic concepts of the game. You'll learn more about all of these things as you read on.

In the *Dragon Age* RPG you will make a character. You can play a human, an elf, dwarf, or Qunari of various backgrounds. You then pick one of three classes: mage, rogue, or warrior. Your class defines the core of your character and determines the powers at your command. Your character begins at level 1 as an inexperienced adventurer. By surviving encounters and overcoming challenges, your PC gains experience points and rises in level. Your character may eventually make it to level 20 and become one of the mightiest heroes of Thedas. It won't be easy, though.

Your character has eight abilities, such as Strength and Cunning, and each one has a numeric rating, with 1 being average. When your character wants to do something, the GM may call for an ability test. This is a dice roll to determine success or failure, and it's the most common roll in the game. To make an ability test, you simply roll three six-sided dice (3d6), add the results together, and add the appropriate ability. This generates a test result, which you want to be as high as possible.

Test result = 3d6 + Ability

You may have to apply other bonuses or penalties, most commonly ability focuses that represent areas of special expertise. Once you determine your test result, you tell the GM what you got and they'll let you know if it's a success or a failure and what happens.

Your character also has a Health score. When damage is inflicted, this reduces Health. If it reaches 0, your character may die.

In combat your character can perform stunts. When doubles are rolled on an attack roll, this generates "stunt points." You can then use these points to pull off a number of special maneuvers. Stunts help keep combat dynamic and fun. There are also spell stunts, which let mages enhance their spells.

Game Dice

Dragon Age only uses one type of die: the six-sided die, also known as the d6. This is the most common die and it can be found in many classic boardgames if you need to scrounge for some. We also have the *Dragon Age* Dice Set, available through game retailers and at GreenRoninStore.com. It features six high-quality dice from Q Workshop, four emblazoned with symbols from the Circle of Magi and the Templar Order, and two bearing the Grey Warden griffon and the blood dragon. In general dice are rolled four different ways in *Dragon Age*:

- **1d3:** Sometimes you need to generate a number from 1-3. In that case you roll a d6 but halve the result, so a roll of 1 or 2 = 1, a roll of 3 or 4 = 2, and a roll of 5 or 6 = 3.
- **d6:** You roll a single die and simply read the result. Sometimes there is a modifier attached, for example 1d6+3. In that case, just add the modifier to the die roll. If you rolled a 2, for example, you'd add the modifier of 3 to get a result of 5.
- **2d6:** As above, but you roll two dice and add them together. If you rolled a 3 and a 6, for example, your result would be 9.
- **3d6:** As above, but you roll three dice and add them together. If you are making an ability test, you must ensure that two of the dice are one color and the third a different color. That third die is known as the Dragon Die, and it's important. The result of the Dragon Die can determine your level of success and allow you to perform stunts.

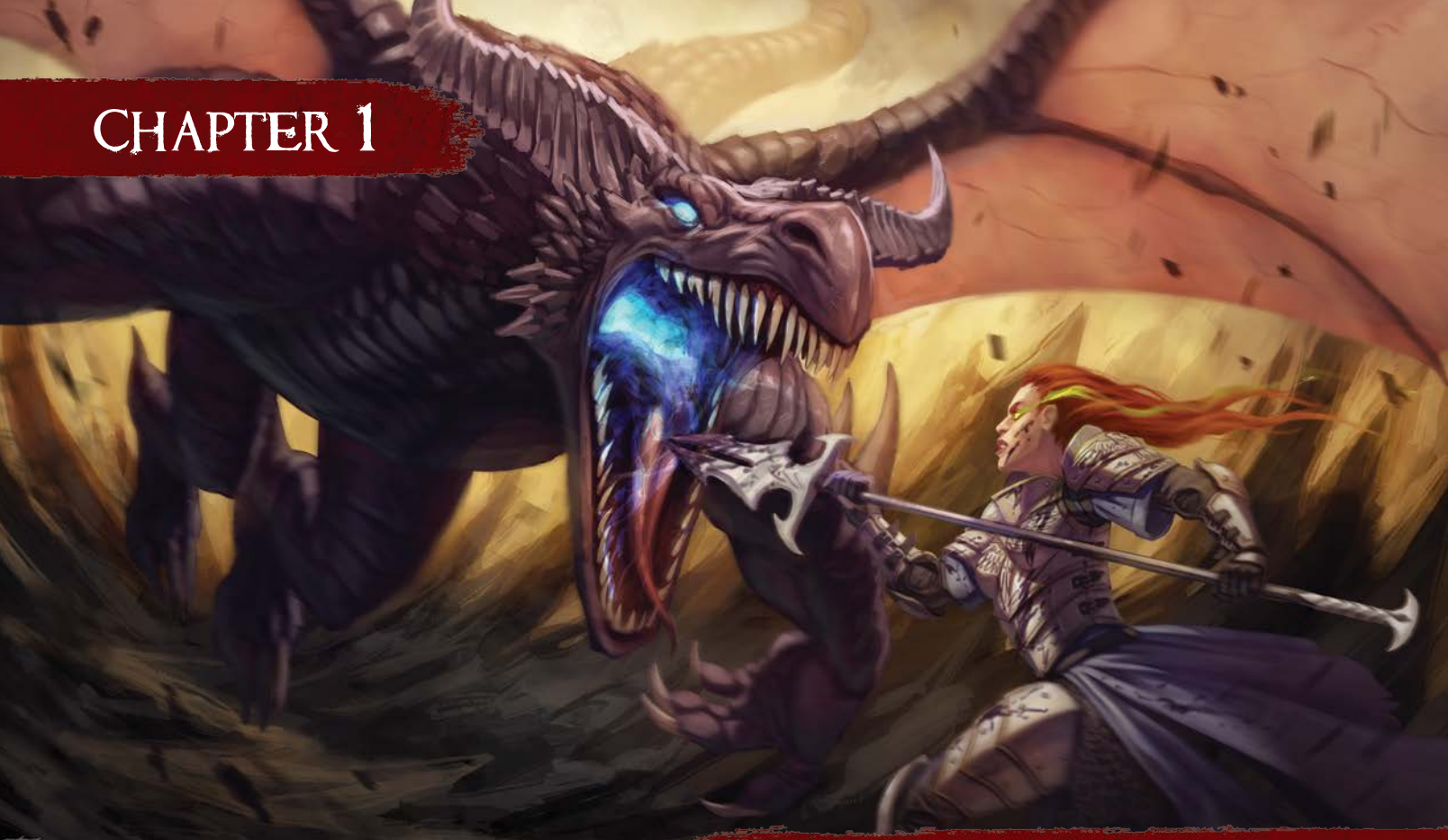
What's Next?

If you are a player, you want to look over the chapters of the **Player's Guide** first. They provide the key information you need to know about the game. When you are ready to make a character, go to **Chapter 1: Character Creation**. That will explain the process and get you going.

If you are the Game Master, you too should familiarize yourself with the chapters of the **Player's Guide**, as they contain the core rules of the game. You should then move on to the chapters of the **Game Master's Guide**. They explain your unique and important role in a tabletop RPG and give you valuable advice and resources.

You are now ready to enter the world of Thedas. Game on, and may the Maker protect you!

Player's Guide



Chapter 1

Character Creation

Making a *Dragon Age* character is a straightforward process that you can complete in eight easy steps. The steps are listed here, and the rest of the chapter covers each step in order.

To play in a game of *Dragon Age*, you must first make a character. This is your alter ego in the land of Thedas, the persona you'll be taking on as you experience exciting and perilous adventures. Since your character is the focus of your play experience, making the right character for you is quite important. If you end up with a character you find unappealing or who isn't fun to play, your enjoyment of the game will diminish. So don't be afraid to take some time and put some thought into creating your character. This chapter explains the whole process and provides examples so you can see how it's done. When you are finished, you'll have a character ready to play.

The first time you read this chapter, you will come across rules and terms you don't understand yet. Don't panic. You'll learn everything you need to know as you work your way through the **Player's Guide**, and you'll want to at least skim the whole book before you sit down to make a character. Also remember that there is a glossary at the back of the book. You can look up important terms there at any time.

Before you start making a character, you will need a character sheet. You'll use this record to keep track of your character's various abilities and powers. There is a blank character sheet on the back of this book, or you can download a PDF version from www.greenronin.com.

1. **Create a character concept.** This is a rough idea of the sort of character you'd like to play. See the following section.
2. **Determine abilities.** These are your character's core physical and mental attributes. See page 11.
3. **Choose a background.** This represents your culture and upbringing, and also determines your race (dwarf, elf, human, or Qunari). See pages 12-31.
4. **Choose a class.** This is your character's calling in life. You can choose mage, rogue, or warrior. See pages 31-39.
5. **Pick equipment.** Your character needs gear before the adventures begin. See page 40.
6. **Calculate Defense and Speed.** Both are very important in combat. See page 41.
7. **Pick a name.** Every hero needs a name! See pages 41-44.
8. **Choose goals and character ties.** They help give your character personality. See page 44.

Character Concept

Before you sit down to make a character, you should know a little bit about the setting. If you are already familiar with Thedas from the *Dragon Age* video games, you're probably ready to get started. If not, you might want to skip ahead a bit in this book and read through **Chapter 7: Welcome to Thedas** It will give you an idea of what *Dragon Age* characters can be like.

Now that you know more about the setting, you can start thinking about what kind of character you want to play. You'll be making the two most important choices—your background and class—in steps 3 and 4 of character creation, but before you get there it's a good idea to come up with a basic character concept. This can be quite broad to start; the process of character creation will help you focus it.

When coming up with a character concept, remember that one of the conceits of the game is that your character begins as an unknown and struggling adventurer. You don't get to start play as the crown prince or a senior enchanter. You have to earn your honors with deeds, and you can be sure there will be a price. So start thinking about who your character is and how he became an adventurer. Here are some example character concepts:

- A guttersnipe raised on the streets who'll do anything to survive.
- A free spirit who fled from an arranged marriage for a life of adventure.
- A naïve farmer who wants to travel farther than 5 miles from where they were born.
- The child of a disgraced knight who wants to return honor to the family name.
- A cynical mercenary who trusts little but coin.
- A seeker of forbidden knowledge who often acts before thinking.
- An artist seeking inspiration in dark and dangerous places.
- A refugee from a village that was sacked and destroyed.
- A child of the forest more comfortable around animals than people.
- The scion of a merchant family who wants more from life than ledger books.

Example

Kate and her friends are starting a Dragon Age campaign, so she must make a character. She decides to play a character with a crusading spirit and a keen sense of justice, probably from the lower rungs of society. She's a little light on the details for starters, but these basic ideas will guide her as she creates her character and you can follow along in examples throughout this chapter.

Abilities

Your character is defined by eight abilities: **Communication**, **Constitution**, **Cunning**, **Dexterity**, **Magic**, **Perception**, **Strength**, and **Willpower**. Taken together these abilities map out your character's strengths and weaknesses. You determine your abilities randomly by rolling dice, giving each one a numeric rating ranging from –2 to 4. A –2 is quite poor while a 4 is outstanding; a 1 is average. The higher the ability, the better. During play your abilities can increase as you gain experience and learn how to better harness your natural aptitudes.

Abilities are a key component of the game and you'll be using them frequently. You'll find it useful to understand the nature of each ability, so descriptions of them follow.

- **Communication** covers your character's social skills, personal interactions, and ability to deal with others.
- **Constitution** is your character's fortitude and resistance to harm.
- **Cunning** is a measure of your character's intelligence, knowledge, and education.
- **Dexterity** encompasses agility, hand-eye coordination, and quickness.
- **Magic** determines your character's innate arcane power.
- **Perception** covers all the senses and the ability to interpret sensory data.
- **Strength** is your character's physical prowess.
- **Willpower** encompasses mental toughness, discipline, and confidence.

Determining Abilities

You roll dice to determine your starting abilities. You will need three 6-sided dice (3d6). Roll all three and add them together to get a result. If you rolled 3, 4, and 6, for example, your result would be 13 (3 + 4 + 6 = 13).

You need to make eight of these rolls all together, one per ability. On your character sheet, you'll notice a section for abilities that begins with Communication and ends with Willpower. Starting at the top with Communication, make a dice roll, and consult the Determining Abilities table to determine your starting ability. A roll of 11 on the chart, for example, means the ability's starting score is 1. Once you've recorded

Determining Abilities

3d6 Roll	Starting Ability
3	–2
4	–1
5	–1
6	0
7	0
8	0
9	1
10	1
11	1
12	2
13	2
14	2
15	3
16	3
17	3
18	4

Ability Options

The character creation rules were designed with the beginner in mind. Random elements make the process easy because they cut down on decision making. If you have some RPG experience or just want more control when determining your abilities, however, you can use one of the following two options for determining abilities with your GM's permission.

Option 1: Arranging Abilities

In this option you roll your abilities randomly as described. However, you can assign the results as you wish, so you can decide which rating goes with which ability. Instead of rolling in the ability order of the character sheet, you simply roll eight times on the Determining Abilities table and note the results on a piece of scratch paper. Then you assign each rating to the ability of your choice.

Option 2: Buying Abilities

Option 1 provides you with more power over your character's starting abilities, but some players want total control. In this option your character's abilities start at 0 and you get 10 advancements to increase them. Each advancement you spend raises an ability by 1, but no ability can be greater than 3. You must spend all ten advancements. Backgrounds then modify these starting ratings as normal in Step 3 of character creation: Choose a Background. So you could buy your character's Constitution up to 3 with advancements, for example, and then choose the Fereldan Freeman background to make it a 4.

Note that unlike some similar systems in other RPGs, this option does not allow you to make some abilities worse so you have more advancements to spend on others.

Communication, move on to Constitution, and then so on down the list until all eight abilities have starting scores.

When you are done, you may swap any two of the abilities. This gives you a chance to customize your abilities a bit.

Example

Kate must now roll for her character's starting abilities. She rolls 3d6 and gets a 13. Looking at the chart, Kate sees this gives her character a starting score of 2 on her first ability (Communication). Kate makes seven more dice rolls, getting 5, 8, 16, 11, 6, 11, and 15. Her character's starting abilities are thus Communication 2, Constitution -1, Cunning 0, Dexterity 3, Magic 1, Perception 0, Strength 1, and Willpower 3. Kate then has the option of switching two of her scores. She decides to swap Perception and Willpower, so she ends up with a Perception 3 and Willpower 0.

Ability Focuses

A **focus** is an area of expertise within the larger ability. While Cunning as a whole determines how smart your character is, for example, a Heraldry focus would indicate a special knowledge of coats of arms and royal families. In game system terms, if you have a focus, your ability is effectively 2 higher than normal when working within that specialty. This is explained in greater detail in **Chapter 2: Playing the Game**.

Ability focuses (or focuses for short) are one of the ways to make your character unique. There may be another warrior in your adventuring party, but your focuses can be completely different. You don't need to worry about choosing focuses now; that happens later in the character creation process. Your character will get access to focuses through backgrounds, classes, and talents. For a complete list of and more information about ability focuses, see **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations**.

Backgrounds

Your character did not spring from nothing. Just like real life, culture and upbringing shaped their personality and attributes. In *Dragon Age* you pick a **background** to represent these facets of your character and to determine your race.

You should read over the following section and then pick the background you find most appealing or suitable for your character concept. The descriptions of the backgrounds will also give you a better sense of the setting and help you place your character within it. Choosing a background modifies your character in several ways. These are spelled out in each description, but generally include the following:

- An increase to one or more of your abilities.
- One or more ability focuses.
- Determination of your race (dwarf, elf, human, or Qunari).
- Determination of your class choices.
- The languages you can speak and read.

Example

Now that Kate has rolled her abilities, it's time to pick a background. She is drawn to city elf because of the injustice of elves' treatment, and this works well with her character concept. She's already thinking about how growing up in an alienage explains her character's poor Constitution. The background increases her character's Dexterity by 1, making it an impressive 4. She can choose one of the two offered focuses, and settles on **Perception (Seeing)**. *She notes that she speaks the Trade Tongue, the most common language of Ferelden. She then must choose a class and has the option of playing a warrior or a rogue. With her character's high Dexterity, she's leaning toward rogue, but wants to read over the classes before deciding for sure. Lastly, she rolls on the city elf background table twice to get two more benefits. She gets a +1 to her Perception, which brings it up to 4, and gains another focus,* **Dexterity (Bows)**.

As noted previously, backgrounds have limits on race and class of character. For example, you can't have a Dalish background unless you're an elf. Of course, rare exceptions might

Buying Background Benefits

If you use the option for buying abilities, you may want to apply the same kind of system to background benefits. Instead of rolling twice on the table for your chosen background, you get 3 advancements instead. You can buy one of the ability increases from your background's table for 2 advancements, or any of the other listed benefits for 1 advancement each. If you decide to play an Antivan Wayfarer, for example, you could choose to increase your Cunning by 1 for 2 advancements and to gain the focus **Dexterity (Initiative)** for 1 advancement. If you wish, you can choose three non-ability benefits for 1 advancement each, but choosing two ability increases won't work, obviously.

exist. For example a human raised by a Dalish band might have a background similar Dalish elves. Unique backgrounds might also be possible in some campaigns, such as Shale, the golem from *Dragon Age: Origins*. Players wanting to play such unusual concepts should talk to their GMs to customize an existing background or come up with their own using the guidelines provided at the beginning of this section.

Ander Survivor

The Anderfels is a nation in the northwest of Thedas, distant and remote from Ferelden. It is the home of the Grey Wardens' headquarters, Weisshaupt Fortress, and is the one nation in which the Wardens retain an important political influence. No region of Thedas has paid a higher price for defeating the Blights. The Anderfels, once a part of the Tevinter Imperium, was the center of three of them and its steppes have still not recovered. The Blights poisoned the land to such an extent that they are utterly devoid of life. Even with the defeat of the old Blights, however, the Ander people could not rest easy. Darkspawn raids have been common there since the Divine Age. This has made the Anderfels a nation of survivors. You must be tough to see your adult years there. A surprising number of Anders choose to remain in this harsh environment but those who decamp for other parts of Thedas are quite capable of taking care of themselves.

Playing an Ander Survivor

If you choose to play an Ander survivor, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Constitution ability. Anders must be tough.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Constitution (Stamina)** or **Strength (Climbing)**.
- You can speak and read Ander and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Ander Survivor** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Ander Survivor

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	**+1 Dexterity**
3–4	**Focus: Constitution (Running)**
5	**Focus: Cunning (Historical Lore)**
6	**Focus: Perception (Tracking)**
7–8	**+1 Strength**
9	**Focus: Dexterity (Brawling)**
10–11	**Focus: Willpower (Courage)**
12	**+1 Perception**

Apostate

In those nations outside the Tevinter Imperium (including Ferelden) during much of the history of Thedas, only the members of the Circle of Magi may legally practice magic. Those who defy the law are known as apostates. The Circle of Magi is supposed to find humans and elves with magical power and train them before they endanger themselves and others. All those who practice magic risk demonic posses-

Elf Apostate

2d6 Roll	Elf Benefit
2	+1 Cunning
3-4	Speak Elven
5	Focus: Cunning (Cultural Lore)
6	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
7-8	+1 Magic
9	Focus: Dexterity (Stealth)
10-11	+1 Dexterity
12	Weapon Group: Bows

Human Apostate

2d6 Roll	Human Benefit
2	+1 Constitution
3-4	Focus: Constitution (Stamina)
5	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
6	Focus: Cunning (Healing)
7-8	+1 Magic
9	Focus: Dexterity (Riding)
10-11	Focus: Communication (Deception)
12	+1 Cunning

sion and could turn into abominations, and there is always the risk that any mage might turn to the same forbidden arts practiced by the magisters of the Tevinter Imperium, dangerous blood magic that relies on ritual sacrifice and subverts the minds of other men. This is why there are Chantry templars in every Circle tower, and why templars hunt down apostates.

While the law treats all apostates the same way, the category is a broad one. Some are self-taught mages who discovered how to use magic by trial and error. Some come from magical traditions that pre-date the formation of the Circle of Magi, like hedge mages and Avvar shamans. Others are rebels, opposed to the Circle of Magi, the Chantry, or both. They resent the law and choose to go their own way despite the risks.

If you choose to play an apostate, your character will have a disadvantage that those of other backgrounds do not. Namely, your character's powers must be used carefully lest they draw unwanted attention from the Circle of Magi or the Chantry templars. The upside is that this conflict can lead to some great stories, but you should understand that your character will face challenges others do not.

Playing an Apostate

If you choose to play an apostate, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Willpower ability. An apostate needs strength of will to fend off possession.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Cunning (Natural Lore)** or **Willpower (Self-Discipline)**.
- Choose whether your character is a human or an elf.
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue.
- Take the mage class.

Roll twice on the **Apostate** table that matches your chosen race (elf or human) for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the results together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Antivan Wayfarer

Antiva is a coastal nation north of Ferelden and east of the Tevinter Imperium. While technically a monarchy, Antiva is really ruled by its merchant princes. It produces little of note but excellent wine, so trade is a way of life. Antiva is famous for its merchants and sailors, though it has little in the way of a warrior tradition. It is said that Antivans are good at everything but fighting. Or at least fighting on the battlefield. In fact, they excel at dirty fighting and Antiva is home to the most notorious guild of assassins, thieves, and spies in Thedas: the House of Crows. The Crows are part and parcel of the political structure in Antiva, though the identities of the rich and powerful that direct its council are a secret. The system seems anarchic but the House of Crows have proved a valuable safeguard to Antivan independence. While the nation may not have a standing army, the leaders of any invading force know that the Crows will get to them in the end. This is an effective deterrent to would-be conquerors.

Antivan Wayfarer	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Cunning
3–4	Focus: Cunning (Evaluation)
5	Focus: Communication (Seduction)
6	Focus: Communication (Persuasion)
7–8	+1 Dexterity
9	Focus: Dexterity (Initiative)
10–11	Focus: Perception (Hearing)
12	+1 Perception

Since Antivans trade all over Thedas, they are frequently found in port cities and other commercial centers. The Crows, too, export their services. They are valued for their skill, discretion, and professionalism.

Playing an Antivan Wayfarer

If you choose to play an Antivan wayfarer modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Communication ability. Antivans are expressive and love to talk.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Communication (Bargaining)** or **Cunning (Navigation)**.
- You can speak and read Antivan and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Antivan Wayfarer** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Avvar

The Avvar are a rugged human people who make their homes in the Frostback Mountains. In centuries past they were one of the many barbarian tribes that lived in and around the Fereldan region. When the Alamarri clans united 400 years ago under the first king of Ferelden, the Avvar refused to join them. The Avvar were too independent, too proud, and too stubborn to pay homage to any king. Their continued raiding into the lowlands led to many long and bitter wars, but ultimately they could not stand up to the united forces of Ferelden. The Avvar were driven back into their mountain homes, but no commander dared to fight them on their home ground. Since then there has been an uneasy peace with Ferelden.

Today the Avvar are largely isolated in the Frostbacks. They do trade with the dwarves and some Avvar descend to the lowlands to work as mercenaries or adventurers. Most people in Ferelden consider them uncivilized barbarians, while the Avvar think their old foes weak and corrupt. It is thus no great surprise that there are still sporadic raids from the Frostbacks, but the Avvar have learned to strike quickly and retreat to their holds before they are counterattacked.

Avvar	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Dexterity
3-4	Focus: Communication (Gambling)
5	Focus: Constitution (Swimming)
6	Focus: Strength (Intimidation)
7-8	+1 Communication
9	Focus: Strength (Might)
10-11	Focus: Constitution (Stamina)
12	+1 Constitution

Playing an Avvar

If you choose to play an Avvar, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Strength ability. Avvar must be strong to survive the mountain life.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Communication (Animal Handling)** or **Strength (Climbing)**.
- You can speak the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a warrior or a rogue.

Roll twice on the **Avvar** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Chasind Wilder

The Chasind are a barbarian folk that live to the south of Ferelden in the Korcari Wilds. While they did unite on several occasions with the Avvar and the Alamarri to fight against the Tevinter Imperium, Fereldans have stronger memories of the many times the Chasind surged north into their land. It is said that ages ago the Chasind conquered the Alamarri, the ancestors of the modern-day Fereldans, until the latter rose up in rebellion. Later the legendary witch Flemeth led an army of Chasind into Ferelden to take vengeance on the bann who had been her husband. While Flemeth is said to have been killed at that time, many claim that she and her daughters (the Witches of the Wild) lived amongst the Chasind well into the *Dragon Age*.

Chasind Wilder	
2d6 Roll	**Benefit**
2	**+1 Cunning**
3–4	**Focus: Cunning (Natural Lore)**
5	**Focus: Perception (Tracking)**
6	**Focus: Dexterity (Traps)**
7–8	**+1 Constitution**
9	**Focus: Dexterity (Brawling)**
10–11	**Focus: Strength (Jumping)**
12	**+1 Strength**

Today the Chasind are a more peaceful folk but there are many superstitions regarding them. They live in houses build on stilts and do some trading with Fereldans living in the south. Some Fereldans still consider the Chasind a threat and fear the day a charismatic figure will unite them once again.

Playing a Chasind Wilder

If you choose to play a Chasind Wilder, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability. The Chasind move like ghosts in the wilds.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Dexterity (Stealth)** or **Strength (Climbing)**.
- You can speak the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Chasind Wilder** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Circle Mage

In ages past the use of magic was outlawed outside the Tevinter Imperium, and those who practiced it were persecuted and hunted. This only got worse with the rise of the Chantry, as the new religion spoke out against magic as corrupt and evil. Magic, of course, was also quite useful, particularly when fighting creatures like darkspawn. This led to a compromise in which mages could legally practice magic—but only under the watchful eye of the Chantry. Blood Magic, the practice of the dreaded maleficarum, was also strictly forbidden.

During the Second Blight the mages proved their worth and helped save humanity. This allowed them to gain a measure of autonomy, and thus was born the first Circle of Magi. While there are still Chantry templars stationed in every Circle tower, it is the mages who police those with magical power. Circle mages find humans and elves with magical talent and bring them to their towers for training and supervision, and to teach them to defend themselves against demonic possession. Practicing magic outside a Circle is a serious or even capital offense in many time periods.

Playing a Circle Mage

If you choose to play a Circle mage, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Magic ability. This represents the training you have received from your Circle.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Cunning (Arcane Lore)** or **Cunning (Historical Lore)**.
- Choose whether your character is a human or an elf. Most Circle mages are human, but some elves choose to join to avoid becoming apostates.
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue and language of your native land, if different from Trade Tongue. You can read Ancient Tevene.
- Take the mage class.

Elf Circle Mage	
2d6 Roll	Elf Benefit
2	+1 Communication
3-4	Speak Elven
5	Focus: Cunning (Healing)
6	Focus: Perception (Seeing)
7-8	+1 Cunning
9	Focus: Cunning (Cultural Lore)
10-11	+1 Dexterity
12	WEAPON GROUP: Bows

Human Circle Mage	
2d6 Roll	Human Benefit
2	+1 Willpower
3-4	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
5	Focus: Communication (Etiquette)
6	Focus: Cunning (Heraldry)
7-8	+1 Cunning
9	Focus: Constitution (Stamina)
10-11	Focus: Cunning (Religious Lore)
12	+1 Constitution

Roll twice on the **Circle Mage** table and reference the colum that matches your chosen race (elf or human) for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the results together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

CITY ELF

It is said that over two millennia ago the elves and dwarves were the powers of Thedas. The elves ruled above the earth and the dwarves below it. The elves spent centuries becoming master magicians, craftsmen, and artists, and it is said they were nearly immortal. When humans first arrived in Thedas, the elves gave them aid despite what they considered impatient and rude behavior on the humans' part. The elves were shocked when diseases carried by the humans began killing them. They were horrified when they discovered that just being near humans shortened their lifespan and made them mortal. They attempted to shut themselves away from the rest of Thedas, but the rising Tevinter Imperium attacked them with its legions and its blood magic. The elf kingdom of Arlathan fell and the survivors spent the next 500 years as slaves of the Imperium.

When freedom did come, it was all too brief. The new elf homeland, the Dales, tried to revive the lost culture of Arlathan. That included worship of the ancient elven pantheon and this the Chantry would not tolerate. It declared an Exalted March against the Dales, accusing the elves of blood magic and practicing other forbidden rites, and for a second time the elves lost their homeland. Some of the survivors became wanderers

City Elf	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Cunning
3-4	Focus: Perception (Searching)
5	Focus: Cunning (Evaluation)
6	Focus: Dexterity (Initiative)
7-8	+1 Perception
9	Focus: Communication (Deception)
10-11	Focus: Dexterity (Bows)
12	+1 Communication

(see the Dalish Elf entry) but the rest were absorbed into the various human kingdoms. Here the so-called city elves still live as second-class citizens, mostly working as servants and laborers. Few remember the culture of their heritage, fewer still can even speak elven any more, and almost none have a lifespan much longer than that of a human these days. They live in segregated sections of cities and towns known as alienages. Bitter and downtrodden, many city elves turn to crime. These rogues, all too common, only reinforce the prejudice most humans have towards city elves.

PLAYING A CITY ELF

If you choose to play a city elf, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability. The city elves retain their race's natural agility.

- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Dexterity (Stealth)** or **Perception (Seeing)**.
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a warrior or a rogue.

Roll twice on the **City Elf** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the results together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Dalish Elf

After 500 years of slavery, the elves won their freedom as part of the rebellion that broke the power of the Tevinter Imperium. While liberated humans and barbarians from the south took over former lands of the Imperium, the human leader Andraste gifted the elves a region of southern Orlais as a reward for their role in the rebellion. Here they established the Dales, a new elven homeland to replace the long-destroyed kingdom of Arlathan. Despite the centuries of slavery, the elves remembered much of their heritage and in the Dales their culture had a rebirth. As part of this they began to worship the ancient elven pantheon and this ultimately caused their downfall. The Chantry in the Orlesian Empire would not stand for such heresy and it declared an Exalted March against the Dales. A second elven homeland was destroyed and most of the survivors went to live in human lands and became the city elves.

Dalish Elf	
2d6 Roll	**Benefit**
2	**+1 Communication**
3-4	**Focus: Perception (Seeing)**
5	**Focus: Perception (Hearing)**
6	**Focus: Cunning (Cultural Lore)**
7-8	**+1 Dexterity**
9	**Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)**
10-11	**Focus: Dexterity (Riding)**
12	**+1 Perception**

The remaining leadership of the Dales would not bend a knee to the humans, however. They chose a life of exile instead. These Dalish elves are descended from some of the oldest elven families and they retain a strong sense of duty to their people. They have taken it upon themselves to preserve elven culture and lore, so that when the day comes that the elves once again have a homeland they can teach the ancient ways to their city elf brethren. Until that time the Dalish elves wander in the ornately carved wagons they call aravel. Called landships by the humans, aravel are pulled by halla, a unique breed of white stag that originated in long lost Arlathan. The Dalish elves travel in small family groups for the most part and do not stay in one place for long. Rumor has it that they have rediscovered the secrets of elven magic, but if that is true no human has seen proof of it.

Playing a Dalish Elf

If you choose to play a Dalish elf, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Willpower ability. The stubbornness of the Dalish elves is legendary.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Dexterity (Bows)** or **Willpower (Courage)**.
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue. You can speak Elven.
- Choose a class. You can play either a warrior or a rogue.

Roll twice on the **Dalish Elf** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the results together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Dwarf Duster

Dwarven society in Orzammar is rigidly hierarchical. Most dwarves belong to a caste, with the nobles on top and the servants on the bottom. All citizens with a caste receive certain protections under the law. There exists an underclass of dwarves who have no caste, however. The casteless are known as dusters, after their neighborhood—Dust Town—in Orzammar. These dwarves lost their caste or are descended from those who did. Dusters receive no protection under the law and they are forbidden from doing any job controlled by a caste. Practically speaking, this means almost no legal work is open to them. They can't be miners, craftsmen,

Dwarf Duster	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Perception
3–4	Focus: Constitution (Running)
5	Focus: Perception (Searching)
6	Focus: Dexterity (Stealth)
7–8	+1 Communication
9	Focus: Communication (Bargaining)
10–11	Focus: Cunning (Evaluation)
12	+1 Cunning

traders, or even servants. To survive in Dust Town, most have little option but to turn to crime. Many work for the Carta, a powerful organized crime syndicate that controls a virtual shadow economy in the slums.

Dusters are the most likely dwarves to leave Orzammar. They have little to lose by going to the surface world, since they are already casteless. If there is a surprising facet to dwarf society, it is that so many dusters stay in a city that treats them like rubbish. Those who escape to the surface rarely look back.

Playing a Dwarf Duster

If you choose to play a dwarf duster, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability. Dusters must be quick to survive in the slums of Orzammar.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Communication (Deception)** or **Dexterity (Legerdemain)**.
- You have Magic Resistance, a side effect of growing up in a lyrium-rich environment. You gain a +2 bonus on ability tests to resist the effects of spells and other magical attacks.
- You can speak and read Dwarven and the Trade Tongue.
- Take the rogue class.

Roll twice on the **Dwarf Duster** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Escaped Elven Slave

The elves were first enslaved when the Tevinter Imperium conquered the ancient kingdom of Arlathan. After they had suffered 500 years of bondage, Andraste helped to free the elves and the rising slaves helped defeat Tevinter. That should have been the end of slavery in Thedas but it was not. The Tevinter Imperium slowly returned to its old ways and today slavery is practiced openly there. Indeed, in some alienages elves sell themselves or their relations into slavery to provide for their families. Tevinter slave-hunters operate in secret all over Thedas, kidnapping elves and others and shipping them back to the Imperium for a handsome profit. Most who succeed in escaping slavery flee Tevinter as quickly as they can, for runaways are not treated kindly.

Escaped Elven Slave	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Communication
3–4	+1 Magic
5	Focus: Communication (Deception)
6	Focus: Dexterity (Brawling)
7–8	+1 Dexterity
9	Focus: Strength (Driving)
10–11	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
12	+1 Willpower

Some slave-lords go to great lengths to recover their "property" (particularly those who know magic), even chasing escaped slaves into other nations. It is difficult for escapees to truly feel free with the threat of recapture hanging over their heads.

Playing an Escaped Elven Slave

If you choose to play an escaped elven slave, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Strength ability. Only the strong survive bondage in the Tevinter Imperium.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Perception (Hearing)** or **Strength (Might)**.

- You can speak and read Tevinter and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play a mage, a rogue, or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Escaped Elven Slave** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Fereldan Craftsman

The crafting class in Ferelden is essentially the middle class: above the freemen but below the nobility. The class is divided into a series of guild-like organizations called crafthouses. Most of these groups are indeed concerned with crafting of some sort (smithing, wood carving, building, etc.) but there are two exceptions. First, there is the Traders' Crafthouse, which is an organization of merchants. Surface dwarves founded it originally, since the rough and tumble barbarians of Ferelden looked down on middlemen. The dwarves are still in charge, but most of the day-to-day work is done by Fereldans now. Second, the Chantry is considered part of the crafting class. This gives priests an honored position but not as much political sway as the Chantry would like. The Chantry in other nations, particularly Orlais, has much greater political power.

Fereldan craftsmen are not as likely as freemen to become adventurers. Their lives are generally more settled and most have obligations to their crafthouse or the Chantry. There are always those who seek more from life, however, be it the armorer in search of rare metals, the explorer looking to open up new trade routes, or the priest in search of ancient artifacts.

Fereldan Craftsman

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	**+1 Communication**
3–4	**Focus: Communication (Bargaining)**
5	**Focus: Cunning (Evaluation)**
6	**Focus: Willpower (Faith)**
7–8	**+1 Cunning**
9	**Focus: Cunning (Brewing)**
10–11	**Focus: Strength (Smithing)**
12	**+1 Strength**

Playing a Fereldan Craftsman

If you choose to play a Fereldan craftsman, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability. Craftsmen are good with their hands.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Dexterity (Crafting)** or **Cunning (Religious Lore)**.
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Ferelden Craftsman** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Fereldan Freeman

Ferelden, described in detail in **Chapter 7**, is a young nation that human barbarians founded 400 years ago. The Alamarri tribes had come to the region long before that, but they were so fractious that it took extraordinary events for them to come together to form Ferelden. Now it is a nation on the rise, hoping to build on its successes to become a great power.

Nobles rule Ferelden, and the craftsmen and the priests have a powerful influence upon them. The bulk of the population, however, is made up of freemen. As their name indicates, they are not slaves or serfs but free men and women. They are soldiers, shopkeepers, laborers, farmers, entertainers, hunters, and so on. The freemen are not rich but they are proud and pragmatic. In Ferelden a freeman with ambition and ability can climb the social ladder and many do just that.

Playing a Fereldan Freeman

If you choose to play a Fereldan freeman (or freewoman), modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Constitution ability. The people of Ferelden descend from tough barbarian stock.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Constitution (Stamina)** or **Willpower (Courage)**.

- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue, or as you call it, the King's Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a warrior or a rogue.

Roll twice on the accompanying table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the results together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Fereldan Noble

Nobility in Ferelden is hereditary but not exclusive. It is possible for commoners to become nobles through deeds and service, which stands in stark contrast to nations like Orlais. Perhaps the most famous example of this is Loghain Mac Tir, who rose from nothing to become one of Ferelden's teyrns. The most common nobles in Ferelden are the knights, heavy foot soldiers who swear direct allegiance to an arl, bann, teyrn, or the king/queen. Many young nobles, knowing they will not inherit a position unless an elder sibling dies unexpectedly, turn to adventuring to make a reputation for themselves.

Playing a Fereldan Noble

If you choose to play a Fereldan noble, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Strength ability. Nobles in Ferelden must be strong to protect their people.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Cunning (Military Lore)** or **Strength (Intimidation)**.
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue. or as you call it, the King's Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the Fereldan Noble table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Free Marcher

North of Ferelden, across the Waking Sea, are the Free Marches. This loose confederation of city-states is known as the bread-basket of Thedas due to its rich farmland and abundant crops. The Free Marches have no central government and most of the time its member cities are embroiled in any number of minor feuds over trade, tariffs, and territory. When threatened by an outside power, however, the Marchers pull together and put armies in the field that rival those of their neighbors. The major cities of the Free Marches are Ansburg, Hercinia, Kirkwall, Markham, Ostwick, Starkhaven, and Tantervale.

The Marchers are a dynamic people. They are great traders but also fierce defenders of their home cities. Some practice their martial skills to compete in the Grand Tourney, a traveling tournament and fair that moves from city to city. Roughly once every three years, the Grand Tourney settles down for a year to hold a Contest of Arms. People from all over Thedas travel to the Free Marches to see or compete in this legendary event.

Fereldan Freeman

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Communication
3-4	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
5	Focus: Communication (Animal Handling)
6	Focus: Dexterity (Riding)
7-8	+1 Willpower
9	Focus: Strength (Driving)
10-11	Focus: Constitution (Swimming)
12	+1 Strength

Fereldan Noble

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Constitution
3–4	Focus: Cunning (Heraldry)
5	Focus: Communication (Etiquette)
6	Focus: Dexterity (Riding)
7–8	+1 Cunning
9	Focus: Communication (Leadership)
10–11	Focus: Cunning (Historical Lore)
12	+1 Dexterity

Playing a Free Marcher

If you choose to play a Free Marcher, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Cunning ability. The Free Marches are nothing if not competitive and it takes a sharp mind to thrive there.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Cunning (Evaluation)** or **Communication (Bargaining)**.
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Free Marcher

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	**+1 Constitution**
3–4	**Focus: Constitution (Swimming)**
5	**Focus: Communication (Gambling)**
6	**Focus: Cunning (Cultural Lore)**
7–8	**+1 Communication**
9	**Focus: Communication (Deception)**
10–11	**Focus: Dexterity (Legerdemain)**
12	**+1 Dexterity**

Roll twice on the **Free Marcher** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

High-Born Dwarf

At the top of dwarven society are the noble houses, whose feuds and fights go back many generations. The rest of the population is divided into castes, within the top tier of which are the Warrior Caste, Smith Caste, and Artisan Caste. The Warrior Caste is the most prestigious. The warriors fight a never ending war against the darkspawn in the Deep Roads, as well as providing the rank-and-file soldiers of the noble houses. There are so many warriors that the caste is actually divided into several sub-castes, including those of officers, soldiers, and guardsmen. The Smith Caste is the next most important—how would the warriors fight without arms and armor? Finally, there is the Artisan Caste. They, too, are highly esteemed in dwarf society, for they are the builders and makers that make Orzammar hum.

Since upper caste dwarves have privileged positions in Orzammar, it is rare for them to leave for the surface world. Some are exiled for committing crimes or being on the wrong side of a dispute between houses. Others may be sent on missions to the human lands, though this an unusual occurrence. If you want to play an upper caste dwarf who has left Orzammar, you should talk to your GM about the circumstances of your departure and whether this will lead to the loss of your caste should you return home.

Playing an High-Born Dwarf

If you choose to play an high-born dwarf, modify your character as follows:

- Choose a caste: Artisan, Smith, or Warrior.
- Add 1 to your Strength ability. You must be strong to survive the politics of Orzammar.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Dexterity (Crafting)**, **Strength (Intimidation)**, or **Strength (Smithing)**.
- You have Magic Resistance, a side effect of growing up in a lyrium-rich environment. You gain a +2 bonus on ability tests to resist the effects of spells and other magical attacks.

High-Born Dwarf

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	**+1 Willpower**
3–4	**Focus: Willpower (Courage)**
5	**Focus: Communication (Etiquette)**
6	**Focus: Cunning (Heraldry)**
7–8	**+1 Cunning**
9	**Focus: Cunning (Engineering)**
10–11	**Focus: Constitution (Stamina)**
12	**+1 Constitution**

- You can speak and read Dwarven and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **High-Born Dwarf** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Low-Born Dwarf

The dwarves of the Miner, Merchant, and Servant Castes do the hard work, day after day, that keeps Orzammar functioning. The Miner Caste is the most prestigious of these three, particularly those that do the dangerous job of mining lyrium. The Merchant Caste is the next most important, as they bring money into the city and arrange valuable trade deals. The Servant Caste is the lowest, though even they rank above surface dwarves and the casteless.

Of this group it is the members of the Merchant Caste who are most likely to leave Orzammar or become adventurers. Trade deals often lead to contact with humans and the surface dwarves were originally part of the Merchant Caste. Sometimes a member of the Merchant Caste will join their kin on the surface despite the loss of status at home. This happens more rarely with members of the Miner and Servant Castes, though it is not unknown for miners to sell their expertise to human nations for gold and other riches.

Playing a Low-Born Dwarf

If you choose to play a low-born dwarf, modify your character as follows:

- Choose a caste: Merchant, Miner, or Servant.
- Add 1 to your Communication ability. Members of the lower castes need to make friends to get ahead.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Communication (Persuasion)** or **Constitution (Stamina)**.
- You have Magic Resistance, a side effect of growing up in a lyrium-rich environment. You gain a +2 bonus on ability tests to resist the effects of spells and other magical attacks.
- You can speak and read Dwarven and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or a warrior.

Low-Born Dwarf

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	**+1 Perception**
3–4	**Focus: Communication (Etiquette)**
5	**Focus: Perception (Hearing)**
6	**Focus: Communication (Bargaining)**
7–8	**+1 Constitution**
9	**Focus: Constitution (Drinking)**
10–11	**Focus: Strength (Might)**
12	**+1 Strength**

Roll twice on the **Low-Born Dwarf** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Nevarran Adventurer

Nevarra was once one of the Free Marches, and it still might be if not for the military genius of the Pentaghast clan. A series of strong rulers and brilliant commanders enabled Nevarra to expand and become a powerful nation in its own right. This was cemented in the Blessed Age when Nevarra defeated Orlais in a war and conquered the mineral-rich hills to its west. Despite the military tradition of Nevarra, few thought that this upstart nation could beat the empire and its vaunted chevaliers. The hills remain under Nevarran control but are a troubled territory. The Nevarrans tax their new subjects heavily and Orlais foments unrest there.

The Nevarrans are proud of their heroic tradition and this is celebrated with statuary throughout the country. Nevarra is famous for its dragon hunters, who were thought to have eradicated dragonkind until the start of the current age. The romance of such deeds exerts a strong pull on the young and many seek their own adventures throughout Thedas. They hope they too will be celebrated in song and statue in their homeland one day.

Nevarran Adventurer

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Communication
3–4	Focus: Communication (Leadership)
5	Focus: Perception (Tracking)
6	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
7–8	+1 Strength
9	Focus: Strength (Jumping)
10–11	Focus: Constitution (Stamina)
12	+1 Constitution

Orlesian Commoner

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Communication
3–4	Focus: Cunning (Religious Lore)
5	Focus: Dexterity (Crafting)
6	Focus: Communication (Bargaining)
7–8	+1 Willpower
9	Focus: Dexterity (Legerdemain)
10–11	Focus: Communication (Deception)
12	+1 Constitution

Playing a Nevarran Adventurer

If you choose to play a Nevarran adventurer, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Willpower ability. It takes inner strength to face the challenges of Thedas.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Strength (Might)** or **Willpower (Courage)**.
- You can speak and read Orlesian and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Nevarran Adventurer** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Orlesian Commoner

Commoners in Orlais have a hard lot in life. The nobility rules and the chevaliers have the power of life and death over any commoner. Most of the population of Orlais consists of serfs—laborers tied to estates with little to no social mobility. They spend their entire lives within a few miles of where they were born and have little hope that their children will lead better lives than they did. In the cities there is an emerging middle class of merchants and tradesmen. They have more wealth and opportunity than the serfs and many travel within the empire and even beyond. Still, the difference between even the successful common folk and the opulent nobility is glaringly obvious to outsiders and the observant.

Playing an Orlesian Commoner

If you choose to play an Orlesian commoner, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability. Life is fast-paced in Orlais.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Dexterity (Brawling)** or **Willpower (Faith)**.
- You can speak and read Orlesian and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Orlesian Commoner** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Orlesian Exile

Orlais is the most powerful and cultured nation in Thedas. The Empress Celene I rules from the glorious city of Val Royeaux. The Andrastian Chantry is also centered in the city. Its leader, the Divine, rules from her seat in the Grand Cathedral, one of the most breathtaking buildings in Thedas. In Orlais secular power and religious power meet and it is not often clear where one ends and the other begins. Despite the power of the empire, however, Orlais has seen serious setbacks in the last 60 years. First, it lost a war with Nevarra over a slice of valuable territory. Then the Orlesians were

Orlesian Exile	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Perception
3–4	Focus: Perception (Empathy)
5	Focus: Cunning (Heraldry)
6	Focus: Communication (Deception)
7–8	+1 Strength
9	Focus: Dexterity (Riding)
10–11	Weapon Group: Light Blades*
12	+1 Dexterity

* If you get this from your class already, you can take the focus Dexterity (Light Blades) instead.

defeated in Ferelden and their occupation there ended. The situation remained tense for some years, but under King Maric relations with Orlais were eventually normalized and the threat of renewed war receded.

Within Orlais, and in Val Royeaux in particular, the nobles play an endless game of status and politics. The gossip of the salons can end a man's life as quickly as a sword thrust. The fickle nature of factions and fashion can see a family ruined one year only to return triumphant the next. Like any game, this one has losers and sometimes the wisest course of action is to leave Orlais, at least for a time. Some are formally exiled for crimes real or implied, while others choose to wander Thedas until conditions at court change. Such Orlesian exiles can be found all over Thedas.

Playing an Orlesian Exile

If you choose to play an Orlesian exile modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Communication ability. Orlesians are artful in their use of language.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Communication (Persuasion) or Cunning (Cultural Lore).
- You can speak and read Orlesian and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the Orlesian Exile table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Orlesian Noble

Nowhere in Thedas is it better to be a noble than Orlais. There they stand atop the social order, unchallenged by the commoners they rule. It is perhaps a blessing to the common folk that the nobles spend most of their time engaged in the Grand Game—a never-ending battle for power, prestige, and status amongst the nobility. While this sometimes leads to the spilling of blood, the real battlefields of the Game are the ball, the salon, and the court. The nobles of Ferelden find the whole thing ridiculous, but of course Orlesians find Fereldans

Orlesian Noble	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Constitution
3–4	Focus: Communication (Leadership)
5	Focus: Cunning (Cultural Lore)
6	Focus: Dexterity (Riding)
7–8	+1 Strength
9	Focus: Cunning (Heraldry)
10–11	Focus: Communication (Persuasion)
12	+1 Cunning

to be silly country bumpkins whose opinions are as laughable as they are irrelevant.

Playing an Orlesian Noble

If you choose to play an Orlesian noble, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Communication ability. In Orlais the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Communication (Etiquette) or Strength (Intimidation).

- You can speak and read Orlesian and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Orlesian Noble** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Orlesian Student

The University of Orlais in Val Royeaux is a rare institution in war-torn Thedas. While the Circles of Magi are centers of learning, they are focused on magic. The university is a secular school where nobles from across Thedas enjoy the best education money can buy. Since eldest sons tend toward military careers, it is often the younger sons who go to the university. Thinking at University is often freer than within the Chantry and this has led to the occasional conflict with Chantry fundamentalists.

Note: You can use this background to represent nobles of other nations who come to the University of Orlais to study. Speaking and reading Orlesian is required, as most classes are taught in that language.

Orlesian Student

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Perception
3–4	Focus: Dexterity (Calligraphy)
5	Focus: Communication (Etiquette)
6	Focus: Cunning (Historical Lore)
7–8	+1 Communication
9	Focus: Cunning (Cultural Lore)
10–11	Focus: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
12	+1 Dexterity

Playing an Orlesian Student

If you choose to play an Orlesian student, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Cunning ability. Intelligence is prized at the university.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Communication (Persuasion) or Cunning (Research).
- You can speak and read Orlesian and the Trade Tongue. If you choose to come from another nation, you also speak its language (if any).
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Orlesian Student** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Qunari Beresaad

It is fair to say that the humans of Thedas have little understanding of the Qunari. To outsiders they appear a diabolic race of giants bent on conquest. It is often assumed that Qunari live under a military dictatorship. This is understandable because it is the leader of the military, the Arishok, who handles diplomacy with foreign nations. The Qunari do not have a dedicated group of diplomats, however. Instead they have the Beresaad, the vanguard of the Qunari people. The Beresaad are soldiers first and foremost, and they view the world as such. They are trusted to go into foreign lands and deal with humans, elves, and dwarves. Sometimes these are formal diplomatic missions, but in other instances the Arishok sends the Beresaad to do intelligence work or investigate specific aspects of foreign cultures.

The Beresaad always have a mission, even if its nature is not apparent. If you choose this background, you should work out with your GM what brought you to Ferelden and what your orders are. Soldiers of the Beresaad are sometimes gone for years at a time, but they are still part of a military machine and at a certain point they must report in. In a long-running campaign, this is something you'll have to deal with eventually.

Playing a Qunari Beresaad

If you choose to play a Qunari Beresaad, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Strength ability. Qunari are large.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Cunning (Qun) or Strength (Intimidation).

- You can speak and read Qunlat and the Trade Tongue.
- You are male. Qunari females do not join the military.
- Like all Qunari, you are susceptible to magic. You suffer a –1 penalty on all ability tests to resist spells and other magical effects, such as magic item powers.
- Choose a class. You can play either a warrior or a rogue.

Roll twice on the **Qunari Beresaad** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Rivaini Merchant

Rivain is a nation in northeast Thedas that was once part of the Tevinter Imperium. While it survived two Blights on its soil, Rivain was conquered by the invading Qunari in the Steel Age. Three Exalted Marches later, the Qunari were pushed back to a single city, Kont-aar. The Chantry then turned its forces on the Rivaini, for those people continued to follow their old ways and honor their traditional seers. Nowadays, Rivain is a center of trade, even with the Qunari. Where there is shipping there is smuggling and piracy, of course, and sometimes the line between a merchant a smuggler is blurry. The Rivaini are used to being the underdogs but they have a spirit no force in Thedas has been able to crush.

Playing a Rivaini Merchant

If you choose to play a Rivaini merchant, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability. Rivaini hands are as fast as their mouths.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Communication (Seduction)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)**.
- You can speak and read Rivaini and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Rivaini Merchant** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Seheron Convert

Seheron is a large, jungle-dominated island north of the Tevinter Imperium. It was part of the Imperium for many centuries but the Qunari conquered it in the Steel Age. Since then the Imperial Chantry has launched countless offensives against the Qunari on Seheron and the fighting has been fierce. The Qunari even lost the island in the Storm Age but re-conquered it in the Blessed Age. When part of the Imperium, Seheron had a large population of elven slaves. Many of these (and some humans as well) converted to the Qun and enjoy a much higher status as a result. If you play a Seheron convert, you'll want to read about Qunari beliefs on page 193.

You can use the background to represent Rivaini converts as well, since the Qun has had a marked influence there.

Qunari Beresaad

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Constitution
3–4	Focus: Constitution (Stamina)
5	Focus: Communication (Leadership)
6	Focus: Cunning (Military Lore)
7–8	+1 Cunning
9	Focus: Cunning (Historical Lore)
10–11	Focus: Strength (Might)
12	+1 Strength

Rivaini Merchant

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Willpower
3–4	Focus: Communication (Persuasion)
5	Focus: Constitution (Swimming)
6	Focus: Dexterity (Brawling)
7–8	+1 Communication
9	Focus: Cunning (Evaluation)
10–11	Focus: Strength (Climbing)
12	+1 Cunning

Seheron Convert

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Perception
3–4	Focus: Cunning (Historical Lore)
5	Focus: Strength (Might)
6	Focus: Constitution (Stamina)
7–8	+1 Cunning
9	Focus: Communication (Persuasion)
10–11	Focus: Perception (Empathy)
12	+1 Strength

Surface Dwarf

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Strength
3-4	Focus: Strength (Axes)
5	Focus: Strength (Driving)
6	Focus: Communication (Persuasion)
7-8	+1 Communication
9	Focus: Cunning (Engineering)
10-11	Focus: Willpower (Courage)
12	+1 Willpower

Playing a Seheron Convert

If you choose to play a Seheron convert, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Willpower ability. It takes strength of will to embrace the demands of the Qun.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Cunning (Qun)** or **Willpower (Self-Discipline)**.
- Choose whether your character is an elf or a human. Most converts on Seheron are elves, but some humans also embrace the Qun.
- You can speak and read Qunlat, Tevinter, and the Trade Tongue. If you choose to be a Rivaini convert, you also speak and read Rivaini.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Seheron Convert** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Surface Dwarf

In ancient times the dwarves ruled a huge underground empire. They had many cities and settlements, all connected by Deep Roads that ran far beneath the surface. Today only two dwarven cities remain: Orzammar in the Frostback Mountains and far-distant Kal-Sharok. Both are waging an endless war against the darkspawn that conquered the old dwarven lands. While the two fortress-cities remain strong, dwarven numbers have been dwindling slowly for the past thousand years. For the most part Orzammar and Kal-Sharok look inward. Dwarven society is rigid and caste-based and politics are notably vicious.

One caste stands apart from the others though: the surface dwarves. They play a vital role in dwarven society, but curiously other dwarves look down on them. Surface dwarves are largely merchants and middlemen, trading goods and raw materials to humans and elves. They provide ore, gems, finely-forged steel, expertly-crafted goods, and the precious mineral lyrium. Dwarf adventurers and wanderers also belong to the Surface Caste. In Orzammar and Kal-Sharok dwarves of this caste rank below all others except the casteless and the criminals. It is ironic that the most famous dwarf adventurers in human lands have little standing and no prestige in their homelands.

Playing a Surface Dwarf

If you choose to play a surface dwarf, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Constitution ability. Dwarves are famous for the toughness.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Constitution (Stamina)** or **Communication (Bargaining)**.
- You can speak and read Dwarven and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a warrior or a rogue.

Roll twice on the **Surface Dwarf** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the results together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Tal-Vashoth

The Qunari people follow a philosophy known as the Qun. Before they embraced the Qun, it is said they were a barbaric people prone to violent rages. The Qun made these barbarians into thinkers, planners, and technicians, though they also remained warriors. There are those Qunari, however, who reject the Qun. Some of them want to return to the old ways of their people, while others just want to live by their own rules. These rebels are known as vashoth, or "grey ones," and they must leave Qunari lands before they are detected or face reeducation or punishment. Such exiles are not considered part of the Qunari people any more. In the spirit of defiance, they call themselves Tal-Vashoth, or "true grey ones." Many of them worship the old, animist gods of their people and see themselves as the real inheritors of their ancestors' legacy.

Tal-Vashoth live in foreign lands and get by as they can. Many work as mercenaries, while others become raiders, pirates, smugglers, or even slavers. Roving bands of Tal-Vashoth are not uncommon in the north and they pose problems for both Qunari and human settlements.

Playing a Tal-Vashoth

If you choose to play a Tal-Vashoth, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Strength ability. The Tal-Vashoth revel in their physical dominance.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Constitution (Stamina)** or **Strength (Intimidation)**.
- You can speak and read Qunlat and the Trade Tongue.
- Like all Qunari, you are susceptible to magic. You suffer a –1 penalty on all ability tests to resist spells and other magical effects, such as magic item powers.
- Choose a class. You can play a mage, a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Tal-Vashoth** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Tevinter Altus

The Tevinter Imperium is one of the few places in Thedas where mages are not under the thumb of the Chantry. This, in fact, was a root cause in the Schism within the Chantry. Tevinter has its own Divine and Chantry, though it is a much less powerful institution than the Chantry centered in Orlais. In ancient times the Imperium was ruled by magisters, though it was their hubris that is said to have led to the creation of darkspawn and the Blights. After Andraste freed the elven slaves and brought the Chant of Light north, the mages were in check for a time but no longer. The Altus are the noble mages who rule the Imperium.

Tal-Vashoth

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Willpower
3–4	Focus: Willpower (Courage)
5	Focus: Constitution (Running)
6	Focus: Strength (Might)
7–8	+1 Constitution
9	Focus: Constitution (Swimming)
10–11	Focus: Strength (Climbing)
12	+1 Strength

Tevinter Altus

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Cunning
3–4	Focus: Dexterity (Riding)
5	Focus: Cunning (Heraldry)
6	Focus: Magic (Arcane Lance)
7–8	+1 Communication
9	Focus: Cunning (Historical Lore)
10–11	Focus: Communication (Etiquette)
12	+1 Willpower

Tevinter Laetan

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Constitution
3–4	Focus: Cunning (Evaluation)
5	Focus: Dexterity (Riding)
6	Focus: Communication (Deception)
7–8	+1 Magic
9	Focus: Communication (Persuasion)
10–11	Focus: Cunning (Cultural Lore)
12	+1 Communication

Tevinter Soporati

2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Perception
3–4	Focus: Cunning (Evaluation)
5	Focus: Willpower (Courage)
6	Focus: Communication (Deception)
7–8	+1 Constitution
9	Focus: Strength (Driving)
10–11	Focus: Communication (Animal Handling)
12	+1 Willpower

Playing a Tevinter Altus

If you choose to play a Tevinter Altus, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Magic ability. The bloodlines of mages are tracked carefully in Tevinter and those of the noble families are the strongest.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Communication (Leadership) or Cunning (Arcane Lore).
- You can speak and read Tevinter and the Trade Tongue.
- Take the mage class.

Roll twice on the **Tevinter Altus** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Tevinter Laetan

The Altus are mages with the power and prestige of Tevinter's old noble families, but they are not the only users of magic in the Imperium. The Laetans are those mages who come from the mundane class (the Soporati). While they do not have all the advantages of the Altus, their magical power still puts them ahead of the majority of Tevinter's citizens. They are identified at a young age and trained to serve. Some question the old ways and strike out for a life of adventure in other nations of Thedas. Outside of the Imperium, of course, few understand the difference between the Altus and the Laetans.

Playing a Tevinter Laetan

If you choose to play a Tevinter Laetan, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Cunning ability. Laetans must be clever to get ahead in Tevinter.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Communication (Deception) or Cunning (Arcane Lore).
- You can speak and read Tevinter and the Trade Tongue.
- Take the mage class.

Roll twice on the **Tevinter Laetan** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Tevinter Soporati

Commoners in the Tevinter Imperium don't have it as bad as those in Orlais—slavery is still legal in the Imperium and thus slaves are given the worst jobs. Tevinter commoners, known as Soporati, or more disparagingly as mundanes, work hard but they benefit from the existence of a despised underclass. Many Soporati become soldiers, as the Imperium is in near constant conflict with the Qunari in Seheron. While they do follow Andraste and worship in the Imperial Chantry, the emphasis on magic as a positive force, sometimes even referenced in prayer, can be shocking to people from other parts of Thedas.

Waking Sea Raider	
2d6 Roll	Benefit
2	+1 Constitution
3–4	Focus: Cunning (Evaluation)
5	Focus: Strength (Intimidation)
6	Focus: Constitution (Swimming)
7–8	+1 Perception
9	Focus: Cunning (Navigation)
10–11	Focus: Constitution (Rowing)
12	+1 Strength

Playing a Tevinter Soporati

If you choose to play a Tevinter Soporati, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Strength ability. The Tevinter common folk retain the hardiness that helped build an empire.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Constitution (Stamina)** or **Dexterity (Brawling)**.
- You can speak and read Tevinter and the Trade Tongue.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Tevinter Soporati** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Waking Sea Raider

The Raiders of the Waking Sea are pirates. Once there were many individual pirate chiefs operating in the Waking Sea but during the Exalted Marches against the Qunari the nations of Thedas needed naval support for the war. The pirate ships came together as the Felicisima Armada and provided key support in the conflict. At the end of the Exalted Marches, most hoped the Armada would disband, but the pirates had found their strength together and kept the Raiders going. This isn't to say that the Raiders won't fight against each other, but any threat to them as a whole is met with a fierce and unified response.

Playing a Waking Sea Raider

If you choose to play a Waking Sea raider, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability. A sailor's life requires agility.
- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** or **Perception (Seeing)**.
- You can speak and read the Trade Tongue and one of the following languages: Antivan, Orlesian, or Rivaini.
- Choose a class. You can play either a rogue or a warrior.

Roll twice on the **Waking Sea Raider** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

Classes

If background is where you came from, **class** is what you've become. Classes are both mythic archetypes and frameworks for your character's advancement. You have your choice of three: mage, rogue, and warrior. If you want a character who can cast spells, play a mage. If you want a character who is sneaky, play a rogue. If you want a character who can fight, play a warrior.

The classes are quite broad by design. A rogue could equally represent a thief with a penchant for burglary or a scout in a mercenary company. Your class helps define what your character can do, but it's up to you to interpret how those capabilities fit with your character concept.

Example

Kate must now pick her class. After reading the descriptions, she goes with her first inclination and picks the rogue class. Since most city elves in Thedas are poor, more than a few turn to crime. Kate decides that her character is going to buck that trend. She is going to take the rogue class, but use it to represent a sort of elven freedom fighter. Her character wants to liberate her people and give them a new homeland. Fighting the power this way will require stealth and that makes rogue a good match.

Your character starts at level 1, which means that they're a novice adventurer. As your character completes adventures and gains experience points, they'll go up in level and get access to new powers. There are 20 levels total in the game, with 1-5 roughly being "beginner" levels, 6-12 "middle" levels, and 13 and up being "high" level.

Ability Advancements

When characters gain a level, they get an ability advancement. For lower ranked abilities this translates into a direct increase, but as a character grows in power it becomes more difficult and expensive to increase their most potent abilities. The exact number of advancements required to advance your rating to the next number depends on the new rating you're trying to obtain.

- For abilities up to 5, it costs a single advancement.
- For abilities from 6 to 8, it costs two advancements.
- For abilities from 9 to 12, it costs three advancements.

Ability Advancement Table

New Ability Rating	Advancements Required
–1 to 5	1
6 to 8	2
9 to 12	3

Experience Point Table

XP Total	Level
0	1
2,000	2
4,000	3
6,000	4
8,000	5
10,000	6
13,000	7
16,000	8
19,000	9
22,000	10
25,000	11
28,000	12
32,000	13
36,000	14
40,000	15
44,000	16
48,000	17
52,000	18
56,000	19
60,000	20

This is summarized in the accompanying table. You get no benefit from advancements spent until you've gained the new rating. You should obviously keep a careful record of advancements spent that have not yet increased the relevant ability rating.

Example

The mage Lorrahn reaches level 6 and so receives one ability advancement. He wants to raise his Magic, which is currently 5. It takes two advancements to raise his Magic to 6, so Lorrahn spends one now to start the process. For the time being his Magic is still 5, but he is halfway to a higher rating. He receives another advancement at level 7 but must spend it on a secondary ability (he chooses Constitution). It is not until he achieves Level 8 that he gets another advancement he can spend on a primary ability. He once again uses it to raise Magic, and with two advancements now spent, his Magic increases to 6.

Gaining Levels

There are two ways to gain levels in *Dragon Age*. First, the GM may simply elect to inform players when their characters advance a level. This usually occurs after a major milestone or campaign event is reached, such as the end of an adventure or plot arc. However, sometimes advancement can occur during a session, especially if there is a lot of in game downtime.

The other way to advance is through experience points. If the GM prefers, they can award experience points at the end of every adventure or session. When a character has enough experience, they advance to the next level. GMs can award more or less experience if they want to slow or increase advancement during play. The rules and guidelines for awarding experience points are in the **Game Master's Guide**.

The experience points required to attain each level are summarized on the accompanying table. When your experience point total is high enough, your character gains a level. When this occurs, four things happen immediately:

- Your character's Health increases by 1d6+Constitution at levels 1–10. From levels 11-20, your Health increases just by your Constitution ability. Gaining Health at higher levels is not as easy.)
- You get one advancement to spend on one ability. When you gain an even-numbered level, you must spend it on a primary ability. When you gain an odd-numbered level, you must spend it on a secondary ability.
- You can pick one new ability focus. When you gain an even-numbered level, you must choose a focus from one of your primary abilities. When you gain an odd-numbered level, you must choose a focus from one of your secondary abilities. Starting at level 11, you can select a focus you already have to increase your bonus with that focus from +2 to +3; see **Chapter 3** for details.
- You gain the class powers for your new level. You can find them in the class descriptions.

When you go up a level, you may also want to review your goals. Have any of them been achieved? Based on the events of the campaign, do you have any new goals? You can do this any time, of course, but leveling up is a convenient time to check in and reassess.

Example

At the end of her most recent adventure, Kate's character receives enough experience points to make it to level 2. First, she rolls to add to her Health. She gets a 4, subtracts 1 for her poor Constitution, and ends up gaining 3 Health. Second, she adds 1 to her Dexterity, making it 5. She had her choice of Communication, Dexterity, or Perception (the rogue's primary abilities) and decided pumping her Dexterity was the best option at this level. Third, she takes **Communication (Investigation)** *as a new ability focus. She could have chosen any focus from Communication, Dexterity, or Perception. Lastly, she gains a stunt bonus as her class power for becoming a level 2 rogue.*

Specializations

Your class also gives you access to more focused ability groupings called **specializations** at levels 6 and 14. They provide a way to focus your character and each unlocks a new type of talent. All rogues are good at being sneaky, for example, but you can become a master of stealth if you take the Shadow specialization. Each class has several specializations to choose from. You can learn more about them in **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations**.

Class Descriptions

Each class determines certain key features of your character. A class description includes the following elements: The class descriptions can be found on pages 34-39.

Primary Abilities

A class has three primary abilities. These are the abilities most important to the class and the ones used most often.

Secondary Abilities

A class has five secondary abilities. These abilities are not as important as primary abilities but all can be useful in the right circumstances.

Starting Health

Health is a measure of your character's fitness and wellbeing. Class choice determines starting Health.

Weapon Group

Your class determines the weapons your character knows how to use. Weapons are divided into groups and this entry tells you which ones your character is trained in. For more information in weapons and weapon groups, see **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.

Class Powers

A class provides your character with a variety of special powers, such as ability focuses and talents. These powers are listed out by level in each class description.

Mage

There is magic in all living things, but only a rare few beings can manipulate it. The mage class represents these users of magic. They have been gifted (or cursed, depending on your point of view) with the ability to absorb mana, the life force of living beings, and use it cast magical spells. This sets them apart from normal people. In some times and places, mages have been honored for their power and wisdom. In others they have been feared and hunted, especially once the dangers of demonic possession were understood. Blood magic, as practiced by the mages of Tevinter and the maleficarum, has also made mages widely feared.

The mage class represents users of magic in Thedas, most commonly from the Circle of Magi but sometimes the renegade apostates or other sources. A mage is capable of amazing feats, but must be wary of demonic attack when using powerful magic. The very gift that allows mages to use magic also makes them vulnerable to possession.

As a mage you will be a master of arcane powers. You should stay away from melee combat (let warriors handle that) and use your spells to help your allies and harm your enemies. Mages generally don't wear armor, so your Defense will be low. You also have limited access to weaponry. Your access to spells makes up for these limitations, though. You get access to many different spells; a mage who masters their use is a powerful character.

While mages only start with three spells, they gain more over time. These ever-increasing options require more decision making than other classes during encounters. If you've never played an RPG before, you might want to consider that before choosing this class. Whatever your experience, you'll want to read **Chapter 5: Magic** to learn more about the rules and terms used in spell casting.

Like Warriors and Rogues, Mages gain Specializations as they level up, allowing them to focus and increase their powers when dealing with certain situations, elements, or types of magic. There are multiple specializations for mages, including Force Mage and Shapeshifter. Specializations are detailed later.

Primary Abilities: Cunning, Magic, and Willpower.

Secondary Abilities: Communication, Constitution, Dexterity, Perception, and Strength.

Starting Health : 20 + Constitution + 1d6.

Weapon Groups: Brawling and Staves.

Class Powers

Mages gain the following powers at the specified level.

LEVEL 1

Arcane Lance: Mages learn to focus magical power through a staff. If you are holding a quarterstaff, you can make a special ranged attack that damages foes with a lance of magical energy. This is resolved like a normal ranged attack (so stunts are possible), but the attack roll is a **Magic (Arcane Lance)** test. An Arcane Lance has a range of 16 yards and inflicts 1d6 + Magic damage. It requires no mana points to make this attack.

Magic Training: This is the most important of the mage's powers. It allows a mage to cast the spells that are the hallmark of the class. Magic training gives you three spells to start with, and you can gain more through talents and class powers. See **Chapter 5: Magic** for more information about choosing and casting spells.

Mana Points: You use mana to power your spells. You start with a number of mana points equal to 10 + Magic + 1d6 and you gain Magic + 1d6 more whenever you gain a new level. You must keep track of your current mana points; this is a measure of how much magical power is at your command at any given time. You spend mana points when you cast spells; you can regain them through rest and meditation. See **Chapter 5: Magic** for details.

Starting Talent: You become a Novice in one of the following talents: Chirurgy, Linguistics, or Lore. See **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations** for more information.

LEVEL 2

New Spell: You gain one new spell.

LEVEL 3

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

LEVEL 4

New Spell: You gain one new spell.

Spell Lance: You can cast a spell after hitting a foe with an Arcane Lance. This is a stunt that costs 3 stunt points, and the spell you cast cannot have a mana point cost greater than 3. A casting roll is required as usual. For more information about stunts, see **Chapter 2: Playing the Game.**

LEVEL 5

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

LEVEL 6

New Specialization: You may choose one specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent. See **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations.**

LEVEL 7

Long Lance: The range of your Arcane Lance attack becomes 24 yards.

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

LEVEL 8

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 6.

New Spell: You gain one new spell.

LEVEL 9

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Power Lance: You can increase the damage of an Arcane Lance attack by 1d6 by spending 2 mana points. You must spend the mana before making the attack roll, and you cannot do this more than once per attack.

LEVEL 10

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 6.

New Spell: You gain one new spell.

LEVEL 11

New Spell: You gain one new spell.

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Mana Points: Starting at level 11, you only gain mana points equal to your Magic ability when you gain a new level. Increasing your power at higher levels is not as easy.

LEVEL 12

Stunt Bonus: You are so practiced with your Arcane Lance that you can make attacks faster than lesser mages. When attacking with an Arcane Lance, you can perform the Lighting Attack stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3.

LEVEL 13

New Spell: You gain one new spell.

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

LEVEL 14

New Specialization: You may choose one new specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent.

LEVEL 15

New Spell: You gain one new spell.

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

LEVEL 16

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 14.

LEVEL 17

New Spell: You gain one new spell.

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

LEVEL 18

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 14.

LEVEL 19

New Spell: You gain one new spell.

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

LEVEL 20

Epic Mage: Pick one type of stunt (combat, exploration, roleplaying, or spell). You gain a +1 bonus when generating stunt points of that type.

Rogue

The rogue class represents the classic trickster. You can use this class to represent a thief, scoundrel, or conman, or a scout, expert, or spy. While a warrior gets by on brute strength and a mage on arcane power, a rogue relies on quickness and cleverness. Whether engaging in witty repartee or slipping a dagger between an enemy's ribs, a rogue must be artful to win the day.

As a rogue you are the eyes and ears of your adventuring group. You are excellent at ranged combat and can launch devastating melee attacks with your Backstab ability. You are not, however, a true frontline fighter. Your Defense will be good due to your Dexterity, but your light armor means you can't absorb a lot of damage. Let the warriors go toe to toe with the enemy while you use stealth and surprise to keep them off balance.

The rogue is the most open-ended of the classes. If you aren't sure where you want to go with your character, rogue is a good choice, as the class provides the flexibility to develop in many directions.

Like Mages and Warriors, Rogues gain Specializations as they level up, allowing them to focus and increase their powers when dealing with certain situations, elements, or skills. There are multiple specializations for rogues, including Assassin and Shapeshifter. Specializations are detailed later.

Primary Abilities: Communication, Dexterity, and Perception.

Secondary Abilities: Constitution, Cunning, Magic, Strength, and Willpower.

Starting Health: 25 + Constitution + 1d6.

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves.

Class Powers

Rogues gain the following powers at the specified level.

Level 1

Backstab: You can inflict extra damage with an attack if you can strike an opponent from an unexpected direction or catch them unawares. You must approach your opponent with a move action If attacking with a melee weapon. Then you must win an opposed test of your **Dexterity (Stealth)** vs. your target's **Perception (Seeing)**. If you win the test, you can use your major action this round to Backstab him. This is an attack with a +2 bonus to the attack roll that inflicts +1d6 extra damage. You cannot Backstab an enemy that you begin your turn adjacent to (but see the Bluff power at level 4. .

Rogue's Armor: You are at home in leather armor. You can ignore the Armor Penalty of leather armor altogether. It affects neither your Speed nor your Dexterity.

Starting Talents: You become a Novice in one of the following talents: Contacts, Scouting, or Thievery. See **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations** for more information.

Level 2

Stunt Bonus: You become more adept at finding the weak spots in your opponents' armor. You can perform the Pierce Armor stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2.

Level 3

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Level 4

Bluff: You can try to Backstab an opponent that you begin your turn adjacent to. You must first use a minor action to try to deceive him. This is an opposed test of your **Communication (Deception)** vs. your opponent's **Willpower (Self-Discipline)**. If you win, you have wrong-footed your opponent and can Backstab him. As usual with a Backstab, you make a melee attack with a +2 bonus and inflict +1d6 extra damage if you hit.

Level 5

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Level 6

Stunt Bonus: You become adept at instantly noticing the many dimensions of a tricky situation. You can perform the That Makes Me Wonder exploration stunt for 2 stunt points instead of the usual 3. See **Chapter 6: Advanced Roleplaying** for information on exploration stunts.

New Specialization: You may choose one specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent. See **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations**.

Level 7

Dirty Fighting: You can daze opponents with sharp blows to vulnerable areas. To use Dirty Fighting, you must first hit with a melee attack. If successful, you inflict no damage but your opponent must make a successful TN 15 **Constitution (Stamina)** test or become stunned. A stunned character can attempt the test again at the start of their turn, and if successful can act normally. Otherwise, the only thing a stunned character can do on their turn is take a single move action. While your opponent is stunned, all attacks against them from rogue characters are considered Backstabs. Stunts are possible on your initial attack roll, so you could stun your opponent and then use Lightning Attack for an immediate Backstab, for example.

Level 9

Lethality: You use your wits to hit enemies where it hurts. You can add your Cunning to your damage when making ranged attacks.

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Level 10

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 6.

Level 11

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Level 12

Slippery: You are hard to pin down in combat. Opponents do not gain an attack bonus for outnumbering you in melee combat. Normally, attackers can gain up to a +2 bonus in such circumstances (see page 216). If you also have the Master degree in the Single Weapon Style, your Defense bonus increases to +3 when fighting in that style.

Level 13

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Stunt Bonus: You know how to act with style and grace. You can perform the With a Flourish exploration stunt for 3 SP instead of the usual 4.

Level 14

New Specialization: You may choose one new specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent.

Level 15

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Perforate: You know how to take advantage of an enemy when their guard is down. Perforate is a special stunt that you can perform for 2 SP if you've just hit an opponent with a Backstab. You can make a second Backstab attack against the same opponent; this second attack does not generate stunt points.

Level 16

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 14.

Level 17

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Quick Shot: You can make a ranged attack vs. a visible opponent within range as a minor action. The attack roll and damage of the quick shot suffer a –2 penalty. You cannot combine Quick Shot with other powers such as Dirty Fighting or Backstab.

Level 18

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 14.

Level 19

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Level 20

Epic Rogue: Pick one type of stunt (combat, exploration, or roleplaying). You gain a +1 bonus when generating stunt points of that type.

Warrior

The warrior is the classic fighter. You can use this class to represent any kind martial character. Your character could be an ex-soldier, a caravan guard, a mercenary, a member of a militia, or a former blacksmith turned adventurer. A warrior may fight for honor, revenge, justice, money, or a better tomorrow. Some members of the warrior class have received formal training and others fight by instinct; all can handle themselves in a fight.

As a warrior you'll usually find yourself in the thick of combat. You have access to heavier armor and more weapons than members of any other class, and you can dish out and take a lot of damage. It is often up to you to engage the hardest-hitting enemies, so the rogues and mages of the group have the chance to use their abilities.

If you've never played a tabletop RPG before, the warrior is a good class to start with. Your powers are straightforward and you have plenty to do in any combat encounter.

- **Primary Abilities:** Constitution, Dexterity, and Strength
- **Secondary Abilities:** Communication, Cunning, Magic, Perception, and Willpower
- **Starting Health:** 30 + Constitution + 1d6
- **Weapon Groups:** Brawling, plus any three of the following: Axes, Bludgeons, Bows, Heavy Blades, Lances, Light Blades, Polearms, Spears, or Staves.

Class Powers

Warriors gain the following powers at the specified level.

Level 1

Starting Talents: You become a Novice in two of the following talents: Archery Style, Dual Weapon Style, Single Weapon Style, Throwing Weapon Style, Two-Hander Style, or Weapon and Shield Style. You also start as a Novice in Armor Training.

Level 2

New Ability Focus: You now gain one of the following ability focuses: **Cunning (Military Lore)**, **Dexterity (Riding)**, or **Strength (Climbing)**.

Level 3

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Level 4

New Weapon Group: You learn a new weapon group of your choice.

Stunt Bonus: You can strike so fast in combat that your weapons are a blur. You can perform the Dual Strike stunt for 3 stunt points instead of the usual 4.

Level 5

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Level 6

New Specialization: You may choose one specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent. See **Chapter 3**: Focuses, Talents, and Specializations.

Level 7

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Stunt Bonus: You know how to unhinge your opponents. You can perform the Threaten stunt for 1 stunt point instead of the usual 2.

Level 8

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 6.

New Weapon Group: You learn a new weapon group of your choice.

Level 9

Expert Strike: You know when to strike with precision and when to strike with power. When you make a attack with a weapon belonging to a group you possess, you can take up to a –3 penalty on your attack roll to receive a corresponding bonus to your damage roll. For example, you can take a –2 penalty on your attack roll to get a +2 bonus on your damage roll. Alternately, you can receive up to a +3 bonus on your attack roll if you take a corresponding penalty on your damage roll.

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Level 10

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 6.

Level 11

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

"What's the most pieces you've ever cut someone into in a single swing? I'm up to three, but I have some ideas."

-The Iron Bull

LEVEL 12

Veteran: Persevering through long hours of practice and many bloody encounters has made you a fearsome combatant. When you inflict damage with an attack, you can add your focus bonus to your damage total if you have an applicable weapon group focus. The focus must match the weapon group of the weapon you attack with. For example, if you attack with a battle axe, you must have the **Strength (Axes)** focus to get the +2 bonus damage of this power. If you have the same focus twice, the damage bonus increases to +3 as well.

LEVEL 13

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

LEVEL 14

New Specialization: You may choose one new specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent.

LEVEL 15

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Quick Strike: You can make a melee attack vs. an adjacent opponent as a minor action. The attack roll and damage of the quick strike suffer a –2 penalty. This action cannot be combined with an expert strike.

LEVEL 16

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 14.

LEVEL 17

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

Stunt Bonus: You can sweep opponents before you. When you perform the Dual Strike stunt with a melee attack, you can hit two secondary targets instead of one. All three of your targets (the original target and the two secondary targets) must be adjacent to you either when you made the attack or after you've used the Skirmish stunt to move next to them.

LEVEL 18

New Specialization Talent: You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 14.

LEVEL 19

New Talent: You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

LEVEL 20

Epic Warrior: Pick one type of stunt (combat, exploration, or role-playing). You gain a +1 bonus when generating stunt points of that type.

Equipment

Player characters do not generally start their adventures with much to their names. In play your character will have a chance to get better equipment but must start with the basics. Think of better gear as something to aspire to. Characters begin play with the following:

- A backpack, traveler's garb, and a waterskin.
- If you are a mage, you get one weapon and a staff (for your Arcane Lance).
- If you are a rogue, you get light leather armor and two weapons.
- If you are a warrior, you get heavy leather armor and three weapons.
- If you choose a bow or crossbow, you get a quiver and 20 arrows or bolts.
- If you have the Weapon and Shield talent, you get a medium shield.

Make sure to pick weapons from weapon groups your character knows. Otherwise, you'll suffer penalties when you wield them, and there will be little point in carrying the weapons around. Also remember that some weapons have a minimum Strength requirement, so be sure your character is strong enough before picking something like a two-handed sword. You'll also want to write down your armor's Armor Rating on your character record sheet. This is a measure of the armor's protection and you'll need to know that during combat.

Your character also gets **50 + 3d6 silver pieces** to buy additional gear. You'll find a complete list of available items in **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.

Example

Kate is ready to outfit her rogue. She writes on her character sheet that she has a backpack, traveler's garb, and a waterskin. As a rogue, she starts with light leather armor and two weapons. She can choose anything from the rogue's weapon groups: Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves. She decides to take a short bow and a shortsword, so she can make both ranged and melee attacks. Since she took a bow, she also gets a quiver and 20 arrows. She then rolls 3d6 and gets 12. That means she starts with 62 silver (50 + 12). She spends 15 of that on a light shield for when things get up close and personal. She also spends 2 silver on 20 yards of rope. That leaves her with 45 silver as the campaign begins, so she has some resources for food, lodging, bribes, etc.

Of course starting equipment is merely a suggestion and should be tailored to individual campaigns and concepts as needed. A game centering around a group of Orlesian nobles might have characters who start out with substantially better arms, armor, and resources while a game where everyone is an escaped slave or prisoner might not even have the modest equipment provided here.

Defense & Speed

There are two final numbers you need to calculate for your character: **Defense** and **Speed**.

Defense

Defense measures how hard it is to hit your character in combat. The higher the Defense, the better. You calculate Defense as follows:

Defense = 10 + Dexterity + shield bonus (if applicable)

Shield bonuses are explained in **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**. For the moment, you just need to know that light shields have a +1 bonus and mediums shield a +2 bonus.

Example

Kate now calculates her rogue's Defense. With her Dexterity of 4, her Defense is 14 (10 + 4). If she equips her light shield, it rises to 15.

Speed

Speed measures gait and quickness of foot. Basically, your character can move up to a number of yards equal to Speed when taking a move action. This is explained in greater detail in **Chapter 2: Playing the Game**. You calculate Speed as follows:

Dwarf Speed = 8 + Dexterity – armor penalty (if applicable)

Elf Speed = 12 + Dexterity – armor penalty (if applicable)

Human Speed = 10 + Dexterity – armor penalty (if applicable)

Qunari Speed = 10 + Dexterity – armor penalty (if applicable)

Most suits of armor have a penalty that represents their weight and bulk; this naturally slows characters down some. You can learn more about this in **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**. For the moment, you just need to know that light leather armor has no penalty and heavy leather armor has a –1 penalty.

Example

Kate is ready to calculate her rogue's speed. Since her character is an elf, she takes a base of 12 and adds her Dexterity of 4 for a total Speed of 16 (12 + 4 = 16). Her light leather armor has no armor penalty, so Speed 16 it is. Kate's rogue is quite light on her feet.

Names

What is a character without a name? Although this step is towards the end of the character creation process, it should not be an afterthought. The right name can be that little something that sums up who the character is or wants to be. This section contains some naming guidelines for different cultures in *Dragon Age* and some example names for male and female genders. Do feel free to make up your own names in the same style, but try to avoid silly name syndrome (Orf the Dwarf, for example).

Example

Kate's character is a city elf and they typically go by one name. Though some have elven names, others try to fit in by giving their children more common Fereldan names. Kate decides her character is named Locke, and that her character's cruel human mistress used to call her Lack instead.

Dwarven Names

Dwarven society is made up of various houses, each of which comprises a group of families. A dwarf has a given name and a house name. The house name is sometimes used as a last name and sometimes as part of a title. A dwarf might call himself Bhelen Aeducan or Bhelen of House Aeducan, for example, depending on the situation.

Sample Female Names

Althild, Branka, Ethelwid, Hildred, Jarvia, Orta, Peada, Sigge.

Sample Male Names

Eadrek, Gorim, Kerdik, Legnar, Oerik, Oswulf, Roshek, Vengest, Witred.

Sample House Names

Azagale, Cadash, Dunnharg, Gundaar, Korkill, Kitrik, Moratin, Ortan, Tethras, Varen

Elven Names

City elves follow the Fereldan standard. Though they have family names, they are rarely used outside of formal settings. Dalish elves generally only identify themselves by first name as well, but they also have a clan name. These clan names are shared among all members and have been passed down for generations. Clan names are said to date back to a time before the reign of humans, though this is hard to prove given the lack of historical evidence from that era.

Sample Female Names

Adanna, Ashalle, Desta, Elora, Hanan, Maram, Lanaya, Rinalla, Shianni.

Sample Male Names

Athras, Falos, Harel, Lindel, Masarian, Nethras, Pellian, Ralath, Sarel, Zathrian.

Sample Dalish Clan Names

Alvar, Brightmore, Brunwyn, Ellwood, Fadrick, Litwyn, Redway, Winbow, Yonwyn.

Human Names

Human names tend to be based on their nation of origin. Each nation has a rough, real world equivalent. Tevinter names generally sound Roman. For Ferelden and much of the Free Marches, mostly think England or Ireland, though the multicultural Marcher states allow for some freedom from rules generally followed elsewhere. Orlais is old French. Nevarran names tend to have an Austrian edge to them, like Pentaghast or Van Markham. Antivan names are predominantly Italian or otherwise Mediterranean. Treviso and Rialto are two major centers there. Rivain is similar, though the Spanish influence is more apparent. There are also significant numbers of Qunari in Rivain. The names of people from the Anderfels are roughly Germanic, though the Roman influence of Tevinter has made this hardly the rule for naming there. The people of Par Vollen are Qunari, so most names there follow their rules. Seheron is a mix of Tevinter and Qunari sensibilities.

Common people in most human cultures tend not to make much of their family names, though most do have them. In some places, they may identify themselves by their trade (Jannelle the Baker) or by their place of origins (Darran of Highever) if needed. Among the nobility, however, one's family name and title may carry all the clout, and are used liberally by those who care about such things.

Avvar Names

The Avvar are divided into clans, each centered on a settlement called a hold. Clans are usually named for their hold beast, or occasionally for deeds of valor, so the Stone-Bear clan resides in Stone-Bear Hold.

Avvar go by two names, a first name and either a byname or a legend-mark. First names are roughly Nordic or Germanic inspired. Bynames indicate the parent of the same gender as the child with "sen" for son of or "dotten" for daughter.

Legend-marks replace the byname, and are awarded by the clan for notable deeds—notable, but not necessarily good, heroic, or great. So Thane Svarah Janesdotten, who gained notoriety for having once caught her hair set on fire during a battle might be given the legend-mark Sun-Hair, but she might not be pleased about it. Like clan and hold names, legend-marks are usually hyphenated.

Sample Female Names

Agnes, Anja, Astrid, Dagmar, Lilja, Sigrid, Svarah

Sample Male Name

Amund, Arne, Bertil, Dietmar, Gurd, Helsdim, Olaf

Sample Clan Names

Stone-Bear Hold, Wyvern Hold, Red-Lion Hold, Eagle-Reach Hold

Sample Legend-marks

Bright-Ax, Sun-Hair, First-Thaw, Star-Caller, Feather-Fall

Ander Names

Sample Female Names

Adelheide, Anke, Gunda, Jana, Korinne, Marliss, Narika, Thea

Sample Male Names

Axel, Detlef, Ewald, Friedal, Gerlach, Janko, Konrad, Otwin, Raimund, Velker

Antivan Names

Sample Female Names

Abele, Chiara, Donata, Gemma, Leonor, Marisa, Nives, Piera, Reyna, Valeria.

Sample Male Names

Adan, Basilio, Dimas, Gianni, Ignacio, Marzio, Roldan, Sabas, Tore, Zacaras.

Chasind Names

Sample Female Names

Ancret, Branwayn, Denore, Gaenor, Jocosa, Lisotta, Meryld, Tiriel, Vanora, Yismay.

Sample Male Names

Aleyn, Cenayn, Drystan, Gawne, Helayn, Jasce, Neel, Ronayn, Tygell, Walgan.

Fereldan Names

Sample Female Names

Anora, Brianne, Leandra, Meghan, Moira, Sarah

Sample Male Names

Adam, Alistair, Edward, Garrick, Landon, Marden, Robert, Richard

Rivaini Names

Sample Female Names

Carmen, Daniela, Isabela, Lucia, Nina, Sol

Sample Male Names

Alano, Amador, Felipe, Gil, Lalo, Rafe, Ruy

Marcher Names

Sample Female Names

Aida, Becca, Erie, Gwyneth, Hilde, Lilla, Mildred, Tetwin, Wilhelmina.

Sample Male Names

Aidan, Burgess, Cedric, Orsino, Paul, Sebastian.

Nevarran Names

Sample Female Names

Ada, Cassandra, Emmeline, Forsythia, Gabriele, Klara, Rosamund

Sample Male Names

Almeric, Aurelian, Caspar, Leonid, Matthias, Nestor, Typhon

Orlesian Names

Sample Female Names

Aline, Carrine, Elodie, Evette, Josette, Manon, Perrine, Roselle, Solange, Violette.

Sample Male Names

Bastien, Fulbert, Ghyslain, Guy, Justien, Lazare, Michel, Pierre, Urbain.

Sample Family Names

Azoulet, Belal, Chavel, Gautron, Mellerin, Pallier, Richomme, Trillaud, Vedel.

Tevinter Names

Sample Female Names

Calpernia, Claudia, Julia, Livia, Murcia, Severina

Sample Male Names

Almadrius, Amatus, Darinius, Dorian, Ether, Florian, Tarsian

Qunari & Tal-Vashoth Names

There are very few if any Qunari who know their birth name. These names, kept by the Tamassrans, are made secret. Instead, Qunari are named for the role they play in society. For those of the Beresaad this is specifically a military rank. Some suitable ranks are given below, with descriptions in parenthesis.

The Tal-Vashoth, having generally rejected Qunari society, do not abide by these naming conventions. Since the names of their ancestors are lost to them, many take to choosing a qunlat word and using that as their name. Examples again are below, with descriptions in parenthesis.

Sample Beresaad Ranks

Ashaad (scout), Karasaad (mid-rank infantry soldier), Karashok (private), Karasten (corporal), Sten (infantry platoon commander).

Sample Tal-Vashoth Names

Aban (the sea), Dathras (cattle), Hissra (illusion), Issala (dust), Kadan (friend), Kata (death), Maraas (nothing), Sataa (the world), Shok (struggle), Taam-kas (battle axe).

Goals & Ties

Now your character is almost ready to go. Before you jump into your first adventure, though, take a few minutes to think about your character's goals and what ties you might have to other characters in the group. Even if you've made your character on your own, it's a good idea to take these last steps together. Setting up goals and ties as a group allows you to riff off each other and come up with ideas that are complementary.

Goals

Your character can have any number of goals, but try to come up with at least three. Goals usually have something to do with why your character became an adventurer in the first place. It's not a common calling after all, and certainly not a safe one. These driving forces often translate into one or more goals.

When making your list, try to come up with a mix of short- and long-term goals. Short-term goals are things you want to focus on now, and long-term goals are of a size and scope that may require years or even decades of struggle. A good GM will take your goals into account when running the game, and the more info the GM has to work with, the better.

So what makes a good goal? Two things. First, a good goal should help define your character by making explicit what is important to him. Second, it should provide story hooks that other players and the GM can grab and use in play.

Example

Kate is nearly finished with Locke. At the first session of the campaign, she gets together with her group to finalize their characters. Kate decides that a good short-term goal is that Locke wants to find her missing brother. He left the alienage on a mysterious mission and never returned. Locke's next goal is to learn the elven language. Few city elves speak it anymore and she wants to reconnect with her heritage. Lastly, she picks a long-term goal of destroying the alienages and finding a new homeland for her people. She may not see this in her lifetime but she will strive to make it a reality.

Guidelines for designing more complex and longer-term character goals can be found in **Chapter 6: Advanced Roleplaying**.

Ties

The classic RPG set-up has the group meeting up in a tavern and embarking on a series of death-defying quests together despite being virtual strangers. That sort of approach can work if you are developing the characters as the campaign goes on. The group's cohesion will be stronger, however, if the characters start with some ties. It doesn't mean that all the characters need to know each other before play begins, but they should have some connections. Characters might have grown up in the same village, served in the same military unit, or even been romantic rivals. Or maybe they are distant cousins, chased by a shared enemy, or in debt to the same underworld figure.

You should try to come up with at least one tie for each other player character, even if it's a tenuous one. The group bond will grow over time but it's a good idea to plant the seed early so it can grow.

Example

The other players in Kate's group are Gloria, who is playing a Ferelden warrior named Ulla, and Keegan, who is playing a circle mage named Oswald. Gloria was intrigued by Locke's goal to find her missing brother. She decides that Ulla's best friend also left home and never returned. Ulla found out that Locke's brother was on the same journey and tracked down Locke to see if she knew any more. Keegan decides that Oswald has but slight connections with the other characters. Locke was briefly a servant in his Circle tower (perhaps they share a secret from this time?) and Ulla served as bodyguard for some of his Circle's mages. With that finished, they are ready to play!

The Next Step

Once everyone has completed making characters, you are ready to get your game on! The next logical step is for you to read a bit more deeply into the next few chapters.

- If you haven't already, take a look at **Chapter 2: Playing the Game**. It explains the basic rules of *Dragon Age* and should prepare you for your first session.
- If you'd like to learn more about some of your character's abilities and perhaps look at ahead at ways to develop in the future, take a look at **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations**.
- If you want to delve more deeply into what it means to be a player in a roleplaying game and read about some additional ways to develop your character, read **Chapter 6: Advanced Roleplaying**.
- If you want to learn more about the world, check out **Chapter 7: Welcome to Thedas**.

If all that reading sounds like too much bother, that's all right! Learning the game through play is a perfectly valid method too. Jump on in, and explore the world of *Dragon Age*!

Chapter 2

Playing the Game

By now you've seen almost all the elements of the *Dragon Age RPG*, but you haven't seen how they all work together. That is what this chapter is all about. First, it gives some practical advice on being a player. It starts with the basics of roleplaying and then follows that up with the remaining rules of play, giving you what you need to know when you sit down at the table. Here you will find rules for ability tests, narrative and action time, combat, stunts, and healing. After that it returns to a more advanced discussion of roleplaying for those ready to move on from the basics.

If you feel a bit overwhelmed after reading this chapter, don't worry. You don't need to memorize all this to play. The GM is there to help adjudicate the rules, and you'll pick things up as you play. And while reading the rules is important, nothing is a substitute for play. It is during a live game that you'll really see how it all fits and works together.

Player Basics

As you've surely noticed by now, this book contains a fair amount of rules material. The nuts and bolts of the game system are explained, along with plenty of examples to make everything clear. If you've never played a roleplaying game before, though, you may still be wondering what it means to be a player. Before getting into the nitty-gritty of ability tests and running combats, it's worth taking a step back and reviewing a few basics.

Tools of the Roleplaying Trade

Your character sheet is a good place to start. You'll find a character sheet at the back of the book and you can photocopy this as needed. You can also find printable versions of the *Dragon Age* character sheet at the Green Ronin Publishing website. The character sheet is the cornerstone of your PC. Make sure you bring it to each game session, as playing without it is difficult. Some players leave their character sheets with, or make copies for, the GM to make sure this isn't a problem.

You should also ensure that your character sheet is up to date. It's up to you to track Health, experience points, ability increases, money, and other details. When you show up at a session, your character should be ready to go. Health is going to change the most, going up and down as your character gets into fights and heals up. You may want to track this on scratch paper so you don't have to constantly erase your sheet during play. If your character is wounded at the end of a session, be sure to note current Health so you have that for next time.

You'll also want to bring dice (at least 3d6, with a different color for the Dragon Die), a pencil, some scratch paper for notes, and any drinks and snacks you might want during play. You may also need to bring one or more miniatures if you are using battle maps (see page 52).

Playing Adventures

During a session you will play your character through an adventure. It's the GM's job to present the adventure and yours to play a leading role. An adventure is played out in a series of scenes known as **encounters**. Each encounter builds on the last and leads ultimately to a climax and a conclusion. At the end of each play session you get experience points based on the resolution of each encounter.

There are three basic types of encounters in *Dragon Age:*

- **Combat Encounters:** These are the classic action scenes that pit the adventuring group against one or more foes.
- **Exploration Encounters:** These scenes are about delving into the environment, and include such challenges as finding clues, overcoming natural hazards, avoiding traps, and solving puzzles.
- **Roleplaying Encounters:** These scenes are for conversation, intrigue, and investigation.

Each type of encounter has different challenges and rewards. Some require a lot of dice rolling and others none at all. Different players around the table may prefer different types of encounters. One may live for the thrill of combat, another for the challenge of problem solving, and another for the immersion of roleplaying. A good adventure will use all three types of encounters to mix things up and provide something for everyone.

Ability Tests

The **Ability Test** is at the core of all the rules for *Dragon Age*. If you can understand this one rule, you're well on your way to figuring out the rest of the game as everything from casting spells to carving up an ogre with your sword derives from it. Yes, combat, magic, and other special circumstances do have additional rules that help model certain concepts and keep things varied and interesting, but at the heart of conflict, action, and interaction in the rules is the Ability Test. So what is it? Let's find out.

During a game session, the GM sets the scene and then the players decide how their characters act and what they do in that scene. As a player, you narrate the actions of your character. You might say, *"I search the library for a tome about the Fade."* The GM tells you the results of your action, and may introduce new elements into the scene. Their response might be: *"You search for 10 minutes but before you find what you are looking for an angry priest bursts into the library and confronts you."*

When your character is taking everyday actions that do not have a significant chance of failure, no dice need to be rolled. It's enough to say that you are walking to the tavern or buying a dagger from the local weaponsmith. When you want your character to do something that requires risk or has a real chance of failure, that's when the dice come out.

To resolve actions you must roll an ability test. These tests are the heart of the *Dragon Age* system and you'll make many in each game session. Ability tests are easy to learn and quick to resolve, so the game can keep moving at a good pace.

To make an ability test, first pick up three six-sided dice (**3d6**). Two of the dice should be one color and the third a different color. The off-color die is known as the **Dragon Die** (see **The Dragon Die** sidebar on page 47). Roll all three dice and add the results together; you want to roll high. You then add the ability you're testing and another 2 if you have an applicable ability focus. The final number is your test result.

Test Result = 3d6 + Ability + Focus

Even if you have several focuses that could apply, you can only use one on a test. You can never gain the benefits of more than one focus on an ability test.

Example

The rogue Gerhard is trying to vault over a fence while on the run. The GM decides this is a Dexterity test. Gerhard's player rolls 3d6 and gets a 10 (3 + 3 + 4). He then adds his character's Dexterity of 3 and another 2 because he has an applicable focus (Acrobatics). Gerhard's final test result is 15 (10 + 3 + 2).

When ability tests are referred to in *Dragon Age* books, they use the following format: **Ability (Focus)**. **Cunning (Arcane Lore)** and **Constitution (Swimming)** are examples of this format. In most cases, it does not matter if you have the listed focus. You can still attempt the test; you just won't get the bonus a focus provides. Some tests demand specialized skill

Using the Rules and Introducing New Ones

As you'll probably notice when you first start playing *Dragon Age*, the best way to assimilate all the information and rules is to jump right in and give them a try in your campaign. The best way to approach the rules presented is simply to start using them. Don't study and agonize. Just go for in.

Of course, this can get overwhelming and you don't need to introduce every single rule in your first session or even first few sessions. In fact, you probably shouldn't. Start with the basics: combat, ability checks, and basic stunts like combat and magic. If exploration and roleplaying stunts are too confusing or intimidating at first, add them later. Some rules, like those for running Organizations and the Advanced Spell Stunts from the **Magic** chapter, should definitely be added only once you're comfortable with the basic rules.

If, when you try out some new rule, you get confused or things don't go exactly the way you were expecting, the GM should make a quick ruling and keep the game going forward. Then, after the session, anyone who's interested in revisiting what happened can talk, with a little bit of distance, about any troubles the group had. You can figure out what you might have done wrong, or, if you just don't dig the rule, you can introduce a house rule for use in the future. Keep the game going in the moment and debate the rules later.

or knowledge to even attempt, however, and those require you to have the focus to even attempt the test. If you don't have the required focus, you automatically fail. These tests note that the focus is required by using this format: **Cunning (Navigation required)**.

Example

The mage Lorrahn and the rogue Gerhard find a book written in a strange script. Naturally, they try to decipher it. The GM tells the players that the test will be **Cunning (Arcane Lore required)**. *Lorrahn has the Arcane Lore focus so he is able to make a test and read the book. Gerhard does not have the focus, so he has no hope of deciphering the book. It's gibberish to him.*

Stunt Points

When doubles are rolled on certain types of tests, this generates **stunt points**. You can then use these points to pull off a number of special maneuvers. Stunt points are used primarily in combat encounters (see page 54) to keep fights dynamic and fun, along with spell stunts, which let mages enhance their spells (see page 106).

If your GM permits it, you can also use stunt points in exploration and roleplaying encounters Check out **Chapter 6: Advanced Roleplaying** for more information on those options.

Types of Tests

Now that you have the final result of the ability test, you need to compare it against another number to determine the outcome of the attempted action. There are two common types of test, basic and opposed, and you resolve each in a different way.

Making a Basic Test

This is the most common sort of test. In a **basic test**, you are rolling against a fixed target number (abbreviated TN) determined by the GM.

The Dragon Die

You always roll three dice when taking an ability test, two dice of one color and one die of another. The off-colored die is known as the Dragon Die and it has several uses in the game system. It is used to measure degrees of success, to break ties, and to generate stunt points. When you see a reference to the Dragon Die, just remember it's the off-colored die from ability tests. The official *Dragon Age* dice created by Q-Workshop are pictured above, but you can use any 6-sided dice.

1. You tell the GM what you are trying to do.
2. The GM determines the ability to be used and the applicable focus (if any). They then assign a target number to the task based on its difficulty and the prevailing circumstances.
3. You make an ability test and figure out your test result.
4. If your test result is equal to or greater than the target number, you have successfully passed the test and completed the action.

Example

The rogue Gerhard is trying to climb a building in the dark of night. The GM decides this is a Strength test and Climbing is the obvious focus. The wall has many handholds but it is dark, so the GM decides the target number is 13. Gerhard's player rolls and his test result is a 14. Despite the darkness, the rogue skillfully climbs the wall.

Basic Test Difficulty

When a character takes a basic test, the must roll vs. a target number (TN) picked by the GM. The GM determines the target number based on their assessment of the test's difficulty. The GM should take all relevant factors into account, including terrain, weather, equipment, assistance, and so on. The GM may also choose to keep the target number secret under certain circumstances. The following table provides benchmarks for basic test difficulty.

Basic Test Difficulty

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

Making an Opposed Test

When your character is competing with another character directly, you must make an **opposed test** to see what happens. In this type of test, both characters get to roll and the results are compared. Another way to think about it is that your target number is determined by your opponent's test result.

1. You tell the GM what you are trying to do.
2. The GM determines the ability and applicable focus (if any) to be used by you and your opponent. They may then assign bonuses or penalties to the ability rolls to either of you that take circumstances into account.
3. You and your opponent both make ability tests and figure out the test results.
4. Compare the test results. If you beat your opponent's test result, you win. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Dragon Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.

This same process can be used when more than two characters are competing. In such cases, everyone makes an ability test and all results are compared. The highest test result is the winner, with ties broken as in step 4.

Also note that that it isn't necessarily the case that all characters will be using the same ability. That would make sense in an arm wresting bout, for example, with both characters making Strength tests. Other situations may require pitting one ability against a different one. A bodyguard trying to penetrate a spy's disguise, for example, would take a **Perception (Seeing)** test and their opponent a **Communication (Disguise)** test.

Example

Gerhard has made his climb, but he notices that a woman is stargazing on the opposite side of the roof. He wants to quietly sneak to the trapdoor and slip into the building without the woman noticing. The GM decides that this is an opposed test of Gerhard's **Dexterity (Stealth)** *vs. the woman's* **Perception (Hearing)**. *Gerhard's player rolls a 10 and the GM rolls a 12 for the woman. The GM relates that the rogue was approaching the trapdoor when he kicked a potted plant he hadn't seen in the dark. At the sound, the woman whips around and sees Gerhard. Now the rogue may be in trouble.*

Tests and Time

The GM determines how much time each test takes. This can vary from just a couple of seconds to an hour or more depending on what you are attempting. Sliding a dagger up your sleeve without anyone seeing would be a minor action taking but a moment, while asking around town about a specific person might take two hours.

While you most commonly take tests when you initiate an action, sometimes you take them as a reaction or to resist something or someone. If pushed to the edge of a cliff, for example, you might have to pass a Dexterity test to avoid falling. Or if a mage cast a spell at you, you might have to make a Magic test to resist the effects. These sorts of reaction tests usually happen on another character's turn and taking them is considered to take no time. When it comes around to your turn again, you get your two actions as usual.

Degrees of Success

Most of the time, you only need to know if you succeeded in your ability test. Sometimes, however, it's important to know how well you succeeded. This is one of the uses of the Dragon Die. Check the dice on your ability test and note the number on the Dragon Die. If you are level 6 or higher, you can add the test's focus to the Dragon Die if you have it. The higher the final number, the more impressive your success. A 1 on the Dragon Die means you barely pulled it off, while a 6 or better means you did it spectacularly. Note that if you failed the test, the result of the Dragon Die is irrelevant.

Example

The rogue Gerhard, forced to flee the scene of an attempted burglary, wants to stash his gear in a stables while he hides in plain sight at a tavern. Guards will be searching for clues so the GM wants to know how good a job Gerhard did hiding his kit. Gerhard's player rolls a successful **Dexterity (Legerdemain)** *test and gets a 5 on his Dragon Die. That means the gear is very well hidden indeed. When guards search the stable, the GM reflects that by adding 2 to the test's target number. With the added difficulty, none of the guards find the kit and Gerhard enjoys his drink in peace.*

Narrative Time

It is the GM's job to track time in the game. It is divided into two types: **narrative time** and **action time**.

For much of play, time tracking will be rough. It isn't important to track things to the minute in most circumstances. If you tell the GM you want to climb a ridge to get a view of the surrounding countryside, they might say, "*It takes you about an hour to make the climb.*" Long distance travel is usually handled this way. A GM might say, "*Three days later you ride into town.*" This sort of loose tracking is narrative time. A typical game will have sections of narrative time and action time interspersed. When the GM says, "*Roll for initiative,*" that's the signal that the game is switching into action time.

Action Time

When things get tense and it starts to matter who does what in which order, narrative time ends and action time begins. Action time is most commonly used to handle combat, but it has other uses as well. Anything that would be considered an action scene in a movie can be handled with action time.

While narrative time is loose, action time is more tightly defined. Once it begins the GM tracks time in 15-second increments called **rounds** (so there are 4 rounds in a minute). During each round every character or creature in the encounter gets an opportunity to act. Once everyone has taken a turn, the round ends a new one begins.

When action time begins, the following procedure is used.

1. The GM says, "*Roll for initiative.*" Action time is now in effect.
2. Each player makes an **initiative** roll. This is a **Dexterity (Initiative)** ability test. The GM rolls initiative for each major NPC and each group of minor NPCs (major NPCs act individually, while minor NPCs act together in groups).
3. The GM compares the test results of all the characters and arranges them from highest to lowest into an initiative list. This is the order that characters will take their turns in each round of the combat. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Dragon Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.
4. The character at the top of the initiative list takes their turn. On a turn, a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. Once the actions are resolved, this character's turn is over.
5. The next character on the initiative list takes their turn.
6. Repeat step 5 until each character has taken a turn.
7. Once each character has taken a turn, the round ends and a new one begins. Continue steps 4-7 each round. Initiative does not need to be rolled each round. The order remains set for the duration of the encounter. If new characters join the encounter, they roll initiative at the start of the round they appear and are added to the initiative list.
8. When the encounter is finished, the GM declares that action time is over. Narrative time now resumes.

Example

The rogue Gerhard, the warrior Jannelle, and the mage Lorrahn are investigating an ancient graveyard when four fanged skeletons attack them. The players each roll for initiative and the GM rolls once for the skeletons (as a group, they will act at the same time on the initiative list). Putting the test results in order, the GM writes down the initiative list: Jannelle 14, Gerhard 12, Fanged Skeletons 9, and Lorrahn 8. Jannelle takes her turn first, followed by Gerhard, the skeletons, and Lorrahn. Then a new round begins with Jannelle taking another turn and so on.

Taking Actions

When it's your turn in a round, you tell the GM what you want to do. On your turn you can take a **major action** and a **minor action** or two minor actions. You can take these in any order and can take fewer actions if you like. You can talk while taking your actions, but since a round is only 15 seconds long, what you can say is limited.

A list of the most common major and minor actions follows. You are not limited to these actions. If you want to do something else, just tell the GM and they will adjudicate it. The GM may require you to take an ability test depending on what you are trying to do.

There are two additional actions of importance: cast and reload. Cast is used with a mage's spells and reload is used with missile weapons. Depending on the spell, weapon, and related talents, cast and reload can be major actions, minor actions, or free actions. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear** and **Chapter 5: Magic** for more information.

Stacking Effects

As a rule of thumb across the whole of the *Dragon Age RPG*, the effects of different talents, powers, spells, stunts, items of equipment, and the like stack with each other when they apply to the same test or circumstance, but the effects of multiple instances of the very same thing do not stack.

For example, a rogue's Backstab power inflicts 1d6 extra damage when used successfully, and any character under the effects of the spell *frost weapons* inflicts +2 penetrating damage. A rogue in both circumstances inflicts 1d6+2 extra damage on a hit, the sum of both effects.

As a counterexample, the same rogue in the company of two different allies, both having the Champion talent, might find himself within 8 yards of both of them while both are in Rally mode. The Journeyman effect of this talent gives a +1 Defense bonus to allies. These bonuses do not stack to give a +2 bonus to the rogue's Defense since they arise from exactly the same talent. The rogue's bonus is only +1 to Defense.

This rule is stated more explicitly as it pertains to spells on page 114 of this book. Exceptions exist only when specific talents, powers, spells, stunts, or pieces of equipment explicitly override this general rule.

Some actions take a negligible amount of time, such as dropping something you're holding or yelling for help. They are known as free actions and they don't count towards your usual limitation on actions. The rules will note when something is a free action.

Major Actions

All-Out Attack

You attack one adjacent enemy in hand-to-hand combat, throwing the full weight of your Strength behind the attack even though your ability to react to counterattacks will suffer. If you hit, you do +1 damage, but whether or not this attack hits, you suffer –1 to your Defense until your next turn.

Charge

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

Defend

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

Heal

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

Melee Attack

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

Ranged Attack

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

Run

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

Minor Actions

Activate

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

Aim

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

GUARD UP

You put your skill to use balancing action and defense. Add +1 or +2 (your choice) to your Defense until the end of this round. However, you suffer the amount you choose as a penalty to all tests you make, even opposed tests, for the remainder of the current round as well. (This is a key difference between the guard up and defend actions. Guard up only lasts until the end of the round, where defend lasts until the beginning of your next turn.) If you choose this minor action, you must do it before any major action you take this turn.

MOVE

You can move up to your Speed in yards. You can also go prone, stand up, or mount a horse or vehicle, but if you do so you can only move at half Speed (rounded down). If you start a round prone and do not stand up, you may only move at half Speed.

PREPARE

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

PRESS THE ATTACK

You stand ready to pursue an enemy if they should fall back or flee your blows. Declare an adjacent enemy combatant when you do this action. Until the beginning of your next turn, if that enemy moves away from you, you may immediately move up to your Speed in yards in direct pursuit of that enemy at no additional cost in actions. This occurs immediately after your foe's movement, before they can do anything else. However, you can only use this minor action on an enemy you have already successfully struck in melee combat this turn (whether you inflicted damage or not). When you make your move, it need not bring you adjacent to that enemy if you can't go that fast. In that case, you simply move as far as you can before stopping. You are free to forego some or all of the movement this action allows when your enemy triggers it, if you wish.

READY

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

STAND FIRM

You lower your weight and prepare to resist any and all efforts to move you from the place where you stand. Until the beginning of your next turn, any enemy who uses the Skirmish or Knock Prone stunts to move you or knock you to the ground must succeed in an opposed test pitting their **Strength (Might) vs. your choice of your own Strength (Might) or Dexterity (Acrobatics)** in order to move you or knock you prone. This test can only be attempted after your opponent spends the relevant stunt points, which are nevertheless expended to no effect if you win the test. An opponent who attempts to Skirmish you more than once as part of a single attack (to move you more than 2 yards) only makes a single opposed test against you, with all of the skirmishing movement hanging in the balance.

Combat Encounters

Sometimes words are not enough. Sometimes conflict can only be settled in brutal combat. Young adventurers seek out such trials in the quest for honor and glory; veterans know that any fight you walk away from is a good one. Few are ready for the overpowering din of battle: arrows hiss through the air, steel clashes with steel, magical fire explodes, and the injured and dying cry for aid. Here you must fight for your life or become another forgotten corpse in the endless battles of Thedas.

Combat is the major feature of action time. Like everything else in *Dragon Age,* the core of combat is the ability test. Since lives are on the line, however, some additional rules are required. Specifically, you need to know how attacks are made, how damage is inflicted, and what it takes to kill a character.

Making Attacks

There are two basic types of attack: **melee** and **ranged** (magical attacks from spells are covered in **Chapter 5: Magic**). Both are handled the same way.

1. You start by picking a target. To make a melee attack, you must be adjacent to your opponent. To make a missile attack, you must be able to see your target and be within range. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear** for more information about weapon ranges.
2. You make an **attack roll**. This is an ability test based on the weapon group of the weapon you are using (Strength for heavy blades, for example, or Dexterity for bows). This is modified by a focus if applicable and any other relevant bonuses (such as aiming, charging, magic items, talents, etc.).
3. Your attack roll is a basic ability test. Your target number is your opponent's Defense.
4. If your test result is equal to or greater than your opponent's Defense, your attack has hit.

Example

It's the warrior Jannelle's turn. She sees a fanged skeleton 3 yards away and uses the charge action to close the distance and make an attack. Jannelle's player makes an attack roll. Jannelle is using a two-handed axe, so this is a **Strength (Axes)** *ability test. The roll is a 9. To that she adds her Strength of 3, and she gets a +2 bonus because she has the Axes focus and another +1 for charging. Her test result for the attack roll is thus 15 (9 + 3 + 2 + 1). This beats the skeleton's Defense of 13, so Jannelle hits the creature with her axe.*

Using Battle Maps

Many game groups play through combat encounters without the use of props. Actions are described and the GM keeps a mental picture of the battlefield and adjudicates distances and relative position on the fly. This keeps combat loose and doesn't bog the game down in tactical details. Other groups find they like to use a battle map and miniatures or other tokens to handle combat encounters because it makes it easier to see what's going on in the fight. And miniatures, particularly painted ones, look great and add a nice visual element to the game.

If your group is going to use battle maps, you'll need a miniature or token for each character. You have many choices here. The most popular miniatures are sized at 28mm and are made of either pewter or plastic. These days there are several pre-painted lines, though many gamers prefer to paint their own. There are also some cheaper options than miniatures, such as 2D tokens and cardboard stand-ups. Several companies make these in PDF format, so you can print out what you need when you need it. If all else fails, you can always use coins, colored stones, or even dice to represent characters on the map. If you do use dice, make sure no one scoops them up to make a roll!

You will also, of course, need battle maps. These come in a variety of sizes and formats. A popular option is the vinyl battle map overlaid with either squares or hexes. These can be drawn on with wet-erase markers, so terrain can be sketched out and then wiped away when the encounter is over. Dungeon walls, pits, water features, and even furniture can be quickly sketched in for all to see. Wet-erase markers come in different colors, allowing scenes to use blue for water, black for buildings, green for vegetation, and brown for relative altitudes of terrain. The height of objects can be written next to them, allowing players to distinguish quickly the 10-yard wall from the 20-yard tower.

Other companies make pre-printed maps of common locations like inns, shrines, dungeons, and so on. These have the advantage of looking great, but they must be used as is. Another option is map tiles, which are smaller areas that can be built out into a larger map. You can get printed sets of such tiles, or PDFs that you can print out as needed. There are also some computer programs that let you design your own maps and then print them.

Using miniatures and battle maps in *Dragon Age* is easy. Two yards in the rules translates into 1 square or hex on the map. Round down if needed. So a character with Speed 9 would move 4 squares or hexes on a battle map with a move action. A short bow with a range of 32 yards can shoot up to 16 squares or hexes on a battle map.

A final option is to use miniatures with 3D terrain instead of a map. Some gamers, particularly those who regularly play miniatures games, have a ready supply of 3D terrain, such as hills, buildings, ruins, and so on. A table with built-out terrain is a beautiful thing. A cheaper option is again provided by PDF products. You can find fold-up terrain that you can print out and assemble as needed. If you go with 3D terrain, there are no squares or hexes to regulate movement. Instead simply use a ruler or tape measure with each 2 yards of distance in the rules translating to 1" on the tabletop (round down). So a throwing axe with a range of 8 yards could be thrown 4" on the tabletop.

Inflicting Damage

Once you've hit an opponent, you then inflict **damage**. Your damage roll determines if you struck a telling blow or one that was glancing and ineffectual. **Armor** is important here, as it protects the wearer from a certain amount of damage. The procedure for calculating damage follows.

1. Roll your weapon's damage and add your Strength ability and any other relevant modifiers (such as talents and magic). You can find the damage for each weapon in **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear.** Note that weapons from the Bows Group add Perception instead of Strength to damage.
2. Subtract the armor rating of your opponent's armor (unless it's penetrating damage, in which case skip this step).
3. The result of steps 1 and 2 is your damage total. You inflict this amount of Health damage on your opponent. Note that if your opponent is well armored you may hit but inflict no damage at all.

Example

The warrior Jannelle has just hit a fanged skeleton with a two-handed axe. The axe's damage is 3d6, so Jannelle's player rolls 3d6 and gets a 10. She adds Jannelle's Strength of 3, and then subtracts the skeleton's armor rating of 4. The damage total is 9 (10 + 3 – 4), so the GM deducts 9 from the fanged skeleton's Health.

Killing Characters

As characters lose Health, they get closer to death. When a Player Character's Health reaches 0, they are dying. They will die after a number of rounds equal to **2 + Constitution** unless they receive healing. A dying character can talk but cannot take any other actions. The character dies at the start of their turn on the final round, so their allies have until then to save them.

Most NPCs simply die when their Health reaches 0. The GM may apply the PC rules to major NPCs at their option, however.Note that Health never goes below 0 (there is no negative Health).

Example

The rogue Gerhard tries to escape from an angry mob. He takes a wrong turn down a dead end street and is cornered. He defends himself for 2 rounds, but a blow from a street tough reduces him to 0 Health and Gerhard collapses on the cobbles. Since his Constitution is 2, Gerhard will die at the start of his turn 4 rounds from now. He had better hope his friends show up.

Pulling Killing Blows

Sometimes characters want to incapacitate their opponents instead of killing them. When a blow is struck that would

otherwise slay a character, the attacker can choose to pull the killing blow at the last second. This leaves the character unconscious with 1 Health. The character regains consciousness in 2d6 minutes unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

Delivering a Coup de Grace

A dying or unconscious character can be killed by a **coup de grace**. Any adjacent enemy can perform a coup de grace as a major action, and this automatically kills the target. A ranged attack can be used to deliver a coup de grace if the attacker makes a successful attack roll vs. Defense 10.

Mounts & Combat

Combatants can ride horses and other mounts. Accounting for that requires a few special rules.

- You can mount an animal as part of a move action. If you do so, you can only move half your Speed in yards (a move action normally lets you move your Speed in yards).
- Once you are mounted, you use move and run actions as normal, but you use the Speed of the mount instead of your own.
- Many mounts do not have attacks of their own (they aren't trained for fighting). Those that do take their attacks on your turn in a round. You don't need to roll initiative separately for the mount.
- When engaging in melee combat, you get a +1 bonus on attack rolls vs. opponents on foot. The GM may rule that this does not apply vs. particularly large monsters.
- Enemies can choose to attack you or your mount. You must keep track of your mount's Health.
- Opponents can use the Knock Prone stunt to try to dismount you. This is more difficult than overbearing someone on foot, though, so you get a chance to resist it. If you make a successful **Dexterity (Riding)** test, you remain mounted. The TN for this test is equal to 10 + opponent's Strength. If you fail, you are knocked to the ground, take 1d6 penetrating damage, and are now prone. The GM controls the actions of the mount until you re-mount or the encounter ends.
- Passengers do not have to use move and run actions, as they are simply carried along. They take actions as normal but the GM should bear their situation in mind.

These rules also apply when driving a vehicle like a cart or wagon, but you use **Strength (Driving)** for tests instead. If Knock Prone is used against a passenger of a vehicle, **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** is used to resist it. Certain characters like those with the Chevalier specialization or Mounted Combat Talent have special rules for mounted combat. These are described in **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, and Specializations.**

Combat Stunts

Combat is more than two fighters taking turns whacking at each other. A good fight should be dynamic and feature a lot of movement and action. The rules described so far create a good framework but to that the game adds stunts to mix things up and make fighting a little more unpredictable. There are stunts for various types of action, but we're going to start with Combat stunts as they are the most common and straightforward; we'll get to Exploration and Roleplaying stunts shortly and GMs and players with Mage characters can find Magic stunts in the **Magic** chapter.

The stunt system is simple. If you make a successful attack roll and get doubles on any of the dice, you can perform one or more stunts in addition to dealing your normal damage. You receive a number of stunt points (**SP**) equal to the Dragon Die and must use them right away to perform stunts. Initially, all characters choose from the same list of stunts, but as characters gain levels they get access to new stunts and may use standard ones for fewer stunt points. These details can be found in each class's description.

You can only perform a given stunt once in a round. The only exception to this rule is the Skirmish stunt, which can be used multiple times as long as you have enough stunt points.

Once you have decided on what stunts you want to use, you can narrate how your character pulled them off. You can perform the stunts in any order you choose.

The stunts on ths **Combat Stunts** table can be used by any character for the SP cost indicated. Additional stunts can be found in class and monster descriptions.

Combat Stunts

Stunt Point Cost	Stunt
1+	**Skirmish:** You can move yourself or the target of your attack 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend.
1	**Rapid Reload:** You can immediately reload a missile weapon.
1	**Stay Aware:** You take a moment to make sure you're mindful of everything that's happening around you. Make a **TN 11 Perception test** with the focus of your choice. If you succeed, the GM may either make you aware of some battlefield situation that has so far escaped your notice, or give you a +1 bonus to the next test you make. This bonus can never stack with any other test bonus other than from a focus, must be used on the very next test you make (even if you're the defender in an opposed test), and expires at the end of your next turn even if you haven't used it by then.
2	**Knock Prone:** You knock your enemy prone. Any character making a melee attack against a prone foe gains +1 bonus on the attack roll. Prone characters cannot Run and must use a Move action to stand up.
2	**Defensive Stance:** Your attack sets you up for defense. You gain a +2 bonus to Defense until the beginning of your next turn.
2	**Disarm:** You attempt to disarm the target with your melee attack. You and your opponent must make an opposed attack roll. These attack rolls do not generate stunt points. If you win the test, you knock your enemy's weapon 1d6 + Strength yards away in a direction you nominate.
2	**Mighty Blow:** You inflict an extra 1d6 damage on your attack.
2	**Pierce Armor:** You find a chink in your enemy's armor. Their armor rating is halved (rounded down) vs. this attack.
2	**Taunt:** You insult or distract one opponent of your choice within 10 yards of you. You must make an opposed test of your **Communication (Deception)** vs. the target's **Willpower (Self-Discipline)**. If you win, the target suffers a –1 penalty on attack rolls and casting rolls on their next turn.
2	**Threaten:** You strike a threatening pose, challenging an opponent of your choice within 10 yards of you. You must make an opposed test of your **Strength (Intimidate)** vs. the target's **Willpower (Self-Discipline)**. If you win, they must attack you in some way (melee, missile, spell, etc.) on their next turn.
3	**Lightning Attack:** You can make a second attack against the same enemy or a different one within range and sight. You must have a loaded missile weapon to make a ranged attack. If you roll doubles on this attack roll, you do not get any more stunt points.
4	**Dual Strike:** Your attack is so strong it affects two targets. First, pick a secondary target. They must be adjacent to you if you are using a melee weapon or within 6 yards of your primary target if you are using a missile weapon. Apply the test result of your original attack roll to the secondary target (in other words, you only make one attack roll and apply it to both opponents). If you hit the secondary target, inflict your normal damage on them.
4	**Seize the Initiative:** Your attack changes the tempo of the battle. You move to the top of the initiative order. This means you may get to take another turn before some of the combatants get to act again. You remain at the top of the order until someone else seizes the initiative.
5	**Lethal Blow**: You inflict an extra 2d6 damage on your attack.

Example

Jannelle is trying to fight her way through the crowd to rescue Gerhard before he dies. She attacks a tough on the outside of the crowd. Her test result is an 18 in total and her dice read 3, 5, and 5, with one of the 5s being her Dragon Die. This beats the tough's Defense so Jannelle hits. Since she also rolled doubles, she receives a number of stunt points equal to her Dragon Die (5 in this case). Jannelle is trying to fight her way through the crowd, so she decides to perform three stunts. She spends 1 stunt point to use Skirmish on the target of her attack, moving him to the side 2 yards. He also takes normal damage from the attack. Then Jannelle spends a second stunt point to use Skirmish on herself to step into the spot recently vacated by her opponent. Lastly, she spends her remaining 3 stunt points to make a Lightning Attack. Since she is still adjacent to her original target, she could attack him, but chooses to attack a new opponent: the man now in front of her. She rolls another successful hit and gets doubles again. She does not, however, get any more SP. Jannelle's player describes how she barrels into the crowd shouting her war cry, smashing the tough aside and pushing forward to rescue her comrade.

Health & Healing

Health measures a character's fitness and wellbeing. A character with full Health is vigorous and ready for action. A character with less than full Health is fatigued or wounded. A character reduced to 0 Health is dying. Unless healing is received in **2 + Constitution** rounds, the character dies.

Health is fairly abstract by design, as is the nature of the damage received. When a character takes damage from a sword hit, for example, it can represent bruising, fatigue, loss of breath, or actual wounds. It would be tedious to track each cut or broken bone, so the rules sacrifice realism for the sake of playability. The exact nature of the damage isn't important. You just need to watch your character's Health and be careful when it gets close to 0.

When your character is wounded, there are several ways to heal.

- Another character can aid you with a heal action, as described previously in this chapter. You can't benefit from another heal action until you take more damage; there is only so much benefit you can gain from first aid. (see the **Heal** action, p. 59)
- You can take a breather after a combat encounter. This is a 5-minute rest that lets you catch your breath, tend to minor cuts and abrasions, drink some water, and so on. After a breather, you get back **5 + Constitution + Level** in Health. You can only take one breather after an encounter. If you were at 0 Health when the combat encounter ended, you cannot take a breather at all.
- You can get some sleep. If you can get at least 6 hours of restful sleep, you gain **10 + Constitution + Level** in Health.
- You can receive magical healing. This is most commonly the mage spell *heal*.

Example

Jannelle drives off the toughs before Gerhard dies and the combat encounter ends. He is still at 0 Health and dying, so she tries to save him with a heal action. She makes a **Cunning (Healing)** *test, which is not her strong suit. However, she gets an 11 and just manages to save his life. She rolled a 10 (3 + 3 + 4) and then added her Cunning of 1 for a total of 11. Gerhard gets back 5 Health (the Dragon Die result of 4 plus 1 for Jannelle's Cunning). Not much, but better than dying. With Gerhard saved, Jannelle can relax a bit and take a breather. She rests for 5 minutes. She is a level 2 warrior with a Constitution of 2, so she gets back 9 Health (5 + 2 + 2). Since Gerhard had 0 Health when the combat encounter ended, he cannot take a breather.*

Start Playing!

You now should know enough about the rules to start playing the game. Don't worry about remembering everything your first time out; that's not important. Getting a campaign going and having fun are what's it's all about. Rules mastery will come in time. Now pick up those dice and get ready to play!

Chapter 3

Focuses, Talents, & Specializations

This chapter of the *Dragon Age Core Rulebook* introduces focuses, talents, and specializations. Focuses and talents are ways to make your character more unique. Your character starts with some of each through the process of character creation, and will earn more by gaining levels in play. Ability focuses are usually gained through background, class, and talents. Talents are usually gained through class alone. There are magic items, however, that can grant both focuses and talents.

Focuses and talents provide game system benefits, but they also give you convenient back-story hooks. Let's say you take the Horsemanship talent. Well, where did your character learn to ride horses? Perhaps an uncle passed on his expertise or maybe it was part of militia training. You can come up with anything you like, but answering the question tells you more about your character.

Lastly, the chapter introduces specializations. You get access to them through your class and each one opens up a special talent that is off-limits to other characters. They help distinguish your character from others of the same class as well as making them more effective.

Ability Focuses

As noted in **Chapter 1: Character Creation**, a focus is an area of expertise within a larger ability. A character with Communication 3 and the Deception focus is a good communicator in general, but excels at fooling others. If you have a focus, you get a +2 bonus when making an ability test related to it. The GM will usually let you know what focus applies to each test, but if it isn't clear don't be afraid to ask if a focus applies. You can learn more about ability tests and how focuses apply in **Chapter 2: Playing the Game**. Descriptions of the ability focuses follow. The GM has the final call on whether a focus applies to a given test.

Here is a complete list of focuses in the game.

Communication Focuses

Animal Handling: Interacting with and caring for animals.
Bargaining: Negotiating with others and making deals.
Deception: Lying to and tricking those less mentally adept than you.
Disguise: Making yourself look like someone else, or a different class of person.
Etiquette: Knowing the social niceties of various cultures.
Gambling: Playing games of chance and profiting from them.
Investigation: Interviewing people for information and finding and deciphering clues.
Leadership: Guiding, directing, and inspiring others.
Performance: Entertaining an audience with an artistic talent.
Persuasion: Convincing others to agree with you.
Seduction: Making winning moves in the game of love.

Constitution Focuses

Drinking: Consuming large quantities of alcohol and avoiding the aftereffects.
Rowing: Propelling a vessel with oars.

Running: Moving quickly in both short sprints and long distance hauls.
Stamina: Enduring fatigue, disease, and privation.
Swimming: Moving through the water and staying afloat.

Cunning Focuses

Arcane Lore: Knowing about magic, its traditions, and the Fade.
Brewing: Making ales, wines, and other concoctions.
Cartography: Making and reading maps.
Cryptography: Creating and deciphering codes and ciphers.
Cultural Lore: Knowing the traditions and beliefs of various cultures.
Enchantment: Understanding the art and craft of enchanting magic items. Note to actually Enchant items one must be either a dwarf or one of the Tranquil.
Engineering: Knowing the practicalities of construction, building, and invention.
Evaluation: Determining the value of goods and objets d'art.
Healing: Aiding the wounded and sick.
Heraldry: Knowing coats of arms and royal families.
Historical Lore: Knowing important events and personalities from the past.
Military Lore: Knowing strategy, tactics, and famous applications thereof.
Musical Lore: Knowing musical traditions and songs.
Natural Lore: Knowing the flora and fauna of Thedas.
Navigation: Planning and following a route from one place to another.
Poison Lore: Knowing about poisons, their uses, and their preparation.
Qun: Knowing about the philosophy of the Qunari people.
Research: Making a systematic investigation, usually using records, archives, and books.
Religious Lore: Knowing religious traditions and practices, particularly those of the Chantry.
Writing: Expressing yourself with the written word.

Dexterity Focuses

Acrobatics: Executing gymnastic, balancing, and tumbling maneuvers.
Bows: Fighting with weapons from the Bows Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.
Brawling: Fighting with weapons from the Brawling Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.
Calligraphy: Writing with artful penmanship.
Crafting: Making items with manual skills like woodworking, sculpting, glassblowing, etc.
Dueling: Fighting with weapons from the Dueling Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.
Grenades: Making ranged attacks with grenades.
Initiative: Acting quickly in tense situations.
Legerdemain: Using sleight of hand to trick others, hide things, and pick pockets.
Light Blades: Fighting with weapons from the Light Blades Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.
Lock Picking: Opening locks without using keys.
Riding: Directing a mount such as a horse or pony.
Staves: Fighting with weapons from the Staves Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.
Stealth: Sneaking about quietly and out of sight.
Traps: Detecting and disarming traps and other mechanical devices.

Magic Focuses

Arcane Lance: Using the mage's class power of the same name. See **Chapter 1: Character Creation**.
Blood: Understanding the forbidden art of Blood Magic. See **Chapter 5: Magic**.
Creation: Understanding the secrets of the Creation school of magic. See **Chapter 5: Magic**.
Entropy: Understanding the secrets of the Entropy school of magic. See **Chapter 5: Magic**.
Primal: Understanding the secrets of the Primal school of magic. See **Chapter 5: Magic**.
Spirit: Understanding the secrets of the Spirit school of magic. See **Chapter 5: Magic**.

Perception Focuses

Empathy: Discerning the feelings and emotions of others.
Detect Darkspawn: A Grey Warden's ability to sense nearby darkspawn. Only Grey Wardens can take this focus. For more information, see pages 73-74.
Hearing: Using your auditory sense.
Searching: Finding things that are hidden or obscured.
Seeing: Using your visual sense.
Smelling: Using your olfactory sense.
Tracking: Following tracks and other signs of passage.

Strength Focuses

Axes: Fighting with weapons from the Axes Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.
Bludgeons: Fighting with weapons from the Bludgeons Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.
Climbing: Scaling walls and other vertical obstacles.
Driving: Directing and guiding carts, carriages, and other wheeled vehicles.
Heavy Blades: Fighting with weapons from the Heavy Blades Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.
Intimidation: Overawing with physical presence and threats.
Jumping: Springing and leaping.
Lances: Fighting with weapons of the Lances Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**
Might: Performing feats of raw power, such as lifting or holding up heavy objects.
Polearms: Fighting with weapons of the Polearms Group. **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**
Smithing: Forging metal items, from weapons to jewelry.
Spears: Fighting with weapons from the Spears Group. See **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.

Willpower Focuses

Courage: Overcoming fear in the face of adversity.
Faith: Deriving inner strength through spiritual or moral belief.
Morale: Maintaining good spirits and confidence in yourself or your group. NPCs tend to use this focus more than Player Characters.
Self-Discipline: Focusing your mental energy or controlling your impulses and emotions.

Improving Focuses

Focuses grant a flat +2 bonus to one's ability tests. For more powerful characters, that measure of focus is not always enough to win the day or to set your character apart from others with similar training. Therefore, at higher levels, characters can take a focus for a second time to further improve their bonus on those rolls. Starting at level 11, when you would gain a new focus you may select a focus you already have to increase your bonus with that focus bonus to +3 (instead of the +2 it was before). Underline the focus on your sheet to indicate you've chosen it a second time.

You still must always select a focus for a primary ability on even-numbered levels and a focus for a secondary ability on odd-numbered levels, as usual.

Optional: Trade Focuses

Dragon Age is not the game of everyday life in Thedas. It's about adventurers facing grave threats in extraordinary circumstances. This is why, while there are focuses to cover trade skills, they are quite broad. There is one focus—Smithing—that covers armorers, weaponsmiths, goldsmiths, and so on. This is not an accurate simulation of the differences between artisans, but nor is it meant to be. For the purposes of most *Dragon Age* games, the Smithing focus is enough.

Some players, however, may want finer distinctions than the current focus list provides. Maybe your character is a dwarf from the Smith Caste in Orzammar and it's important to you that their skills are specifically those of a weaponsmith, rather than a common blacksmith. If you want to do that and your GM agrees, you can take almost any medieval trade you can think of and turn it into a focus. You just need to figure out the most appropriate ability (most will likely be Cunning, Dexterity, or Strength). These focuses will be much narrower than most in the game, but if that suits your character concept (or an NPC's nature, in the case of the GM) the option is open to you.

Talents

Your character has areas of natural aptitude and/or special training called talents. They provide a way to customize your character that goes beyond background and class. Choosing talents is thus an important part of developing your character.

Each talent is divided into three degrees: Novice, Journeyman, and Master. Each of these provides a game system benefit. You have to be a Novice in a talent before you can become a Journeyman, and a Journeyman before you can become a Master.

You gain new talents and new degrees through your class. You normally get a new talent or degree when you gain an odd-numbered level (3, 5, etc.). Your class also limits the talents you have access to. Each talent lists the classes it is available to; you cannot take talents that are not open to your class. Most talents also have requirements, like specific focuses or weapon groups. If you don't have the requirement you cannot take the talent unless it's a talent your class grants you at level 1..

When talents are listed for a character, the standard format is talent first, followed by the degree achieved in parentheses. Command (Journeyman), for example, or Music (Novice).

A catalog of the talents available follows. They use the following format:

Talent Name

Classes: Classes that can take this talent are listed here.
Requirement: You cannot take this talent unless you have the specified requirement(s).

A short description of the talent.

Novice: The benefit gained when you become a Novice.

Journeyman: The benefit gained when you become a Journeyman.

Master: The benefit gained when you become a Master.

List of Talents

Animal Training, Armor Training, Archery Style, Carousing, Chirurgy, Command, Contacts, Creation Magic, Dual Weapon Style, Entropy Magic, Horsemanship, Intrigue, Linguistics, Lore, Music, Poison-Making, Mounted Combat Style, Observation, Oratory, Pole Weapon Style, Primal Magic, Quick Reflexes, Runecrafting, Scouting, Single Weapon Style, Spirit Magic, Thievery, Thrown Weapon Style, Trap-Making, Two-Hander Style, Unarmed Style, Weapon and Shield Style.

Animal Training

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
Requirement: None.

You know how to train animals. Fereldans commonly train dogs, while Avvar prefer falcons and other birds of prey.

Novice: You know the basics of dealing with animals. With a week of training, you can teach an animal to follow a simple one-word command like "heel," "follow," or "attack." You can teach a single animal a number of commands equal to your Communication.

Journeyman: You can train animals to follow more complex commands, like "guard this place" or "return to me when strangers approach." Teaching a complex command takes two weeks of training and the total number of commands a single animal can learn is equal to your Communication +2.

Master: Your training can turn animals into prime examples of their kind. With a month of training, you can increase an animal's Dexterity or Strength by 1. It also gains the **Willpower (Morale)** focus. An animal can only receive such training once.

Armor Training

Classes: Warrior.
Requirement: None.

You have learned to fight while wearing armor. You only take the armor's penalty to your Speed, while those without this talent suffer the penalty to all Dexterity-based tests and calculations (including Speed).

Novice: You can wear leather and mail armor without suffering a penalty to Dexterity.

Journeyman: You can wear plate armor without suffering a penalty to Dexterity.

Master: You can get the most out of your armor. You gain the benefit of half the Armor Rating (rounded down) of your armor when you take penetrating damage. (Normally, armor provides no defense against penetrating damage.)

ARCHERY STYLE

Classes: Rogue and Warrior.
Requirement: You must be trained in the Bows Group.

You are experienced with bows and crossbows.

Novice: Your aim is true. When you take the aim action while using a bow or crossbow, you gain a +2 bonus on your attack roll instead of the usual +1.

Journeyman: Due to long hours of practice, you can reload faster than common bowmen. You can reload a bow as a free action and a crossbow as a minor action.

Master: When shooting a bow or crossbow, you can perform the Lightning Attack stunt for 2 stunt points instead of the usual 3. (If you are using a crossbow you'll also need to perform a Rapid Reload stunt to take advantage of this benefit, since you must have a loaded weapon to use Lightning Attack.)

CAROUSING

Classes: Mage, Warrior, and Rogue.
Requirement: Communication and Constitution 1 or higher.

You take your fun seriously.

Novice: You can drink other people under the table. When making **Constitution (Drinking)** tests as part of an advanced test, you gain a +1 bonus to the result of each Dragon Die. This allows you to reach the success threshold faster.

Journeyman: The tavern is your second home. Choose one of the following Communication focuses: Gambling or Seduction. If you fail a Communication test with your chosen focus, you can re-roll it but you must keep the result of the second roll.

Master: When you're having a good time, (you think) you're invincible! Choose one of the following roleplaying stunts: Flirt or Tower of Will. You can perform that stunt for 3 SP instead of the usual 4 SP and you gain a +1 bonus to the opposed roll for that stunt. Thus, if you choose Tower of Will, your bonus on opposed tests is +2 instead of the usual +1.

CHIRURGY

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
Requirement: You need the **Cunning (Healing)** focus.

You can treat wounds and illnesses.

Novice: You have trained in the art of chirurgy and your aid is swift and sure. Heal is a minor action for you.

Journeyman: You have the hands of a healer. When you use the heal action, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to (Dragon Die × 2) + Cunning.

Master: Your healing ability is legendary. When you use the heal action, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to (Dragon Die × 3) + Cunning.

COMMAND

Classes: Mage and Warrior.
Requirement: You need Communication 2 or higher.

You are a natural leader.

Novice: Your presence inspires your allies. If you take a major action to make a heroic gesture (raise your sword, shout a battle cry, wave a flag, etc.), your allies gain a +1 bonus to **Willpower (Courage)** tests for the rest of the encounter.

Journeyman: Your allies follow your lead. Any NPCs that you lead gain a +1 bonus when rolling for initiative.

Master: When you stand firm, your allies stand with you. When you lead NPCs in an encounter, they do not have to take a **Willpower (Morale)** test until more than two-thirds of your side's combatants are out of the fight (dead or incapacitated). If you leave the fight or fall in battle, this benefit is lost.

CONTACTS

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Communication 1 or higher.

You know people, sometimes in the unlikeliest places.

Novice: You can attempt to make a contact out of a NPC with a successful **Communication (Persuasion)** test. The GM will

set the target number based on the likelihood of you knowing the NPC or having mutual friends. The more distant the NPC's homeland or social class from yours, the more difficult the test will be. A contact will be friendly to you, but won't go out of the way to help you without additional motivation. You can't make a contact out of a NPC who already dislikes you or is an enemy.

Journeyman: Once you've established a contact, you can try to get a favor with another successful **Communication (Persuasion)** test. The target number is based on the nature of the favor and whether it puts the contact in any danger.

Master: You can turn an acquaintance into an ally with a show of loyalty. If you do a significant favor for a contact, they will treat you as a friend when you ask them for favors. They will go out of their way to help you and will be willing to put themselves in danger for you.

Creation Magic

Classes: Mage.
Requirement: You need the **Magic (Creation)** focus.

You have delved into the secrets of Creation magic.

Novice: You can summon a light wisp without spending mana points. The wisp hovers near your shoulder until dismissed, illuminating a 10-yard radius around you with the brightness of a lantern. Summoning and dismissing the light wisp are free actions.

Journeyman: Your knowledge of Creation magic is deep. When you cast a Creation spell, its cost in mana points is reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1. You also gain one new Creation spell.

Master: Creation magic flows through you, granting you a +1 bonus to Defense. You also gain one new Creation spell.

Dual Weapon Style

Classes: Rogue and Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Dexterity 2 or higher.

You can fight with a weapon in your main hand (your primary weapon) and another in your off hand (your secondary weapon). Neither can be a two-handed weapon, and the secondary weapon is considered to have a Minimum Strength 2 higher than normal (you'd need Strength 1 to use a short-sword as a secondary weapon, for example). Unless otherwise stated, your attacks come from the primary weapon.

Novice: Wielding two weapons can aid you in attack or defense. If you take the activate action, you can gain either a +1 bonus on your melee attack rolls or a +1 Defense bonus vs. melee attacks until the end of the encounter. You can switch the bonus you are taking with another activate action.

Journeyman: You can perform the Lightning Attack stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3 but the extra attack must come from your secondary weapon.

Master: You can overwhelm opponents with blows from both weapons. If you make a melee attack with your primary weapon and you are not charging, you can make another attack with your secondary weapon as a minor action. The second attack cannot generate stunt points, and you only add half of your Strength (rounded down) to damage.

Entropy Magic

Classes: Mage.
Requirement: You need the **Magic (Entropy)** focus.

You have delved into the secrets of Entropy magic.

Novice: You gain deathsight. When someone you can see drops to 0 Health, you can tell how many rounds it will take him to die.

Journeyman: When you cast an Entropy spell, its cost in mana points is reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1. You also gain one new Entropy spell.

Master: Entropy magic is so strong in you that opponents making melee attacks against you suffer a –1 penalty to Strength. You also gain one new Entropy spell.

Horsemanship

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
Requirement: You must have the **Dexterity (Riding)** focus.

You are a skilled rider and can handle horses and other beasts of burden with ease.

Novice: You can jump into the saddle quickly. Mounting a steed is a free action for you.

Journeyman: You can ride like the wind. When you ride a mount, it gains a +2 bonus to its Speed.

Master: You were born in the saddle. You add +1 to your Defense while mounted. You may also re-roll a failed **Dexterity (Riding)** test, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

Intrigue

Classes: Mage, Warrior, and Rogue
Requirement: Communication 2 or higher.

You are a master of secrets.

Novice: You know how to play the Game. Choose one of the following Communication focuses: Etiquette, Deception, or Seduction. If you fail a Communication test with your chosen focus, you can re-roll it but you must keep the result of the second roll.

Journeyman: You always gain more information than you give out. You can perform the And Another Thing roleplaying stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2. In addition, you gain a +1 bonus on any further tests the stunt allows.

Master: You know how to end a conversation. You can perform the Stunned Silence roleplaying stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3. In addition, you have the opportunity to change this immediately into a combat encounter. If you do so, you and one ally per extra stunt point you spend can act in the first round of combat. Everyone else is surprised.

Linguistics

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Cunning 1 or better.

You can learn new languages easily. Some of the listed languages are spoken in lands far from Ferelden and are not commonly heard there. When you learn a new language, you learn to both speak and read it, with two exceptions. Ancient

Tevene is rarely, if ever, spoken outside Tevinter. Elven is only spoken because the Keepers keep it alive.

Novice: You learn an additional language from the following list:

Ancient Tevene, Ander, Antivan, Arcanum, Dwarven, Elven, Orlesian, Qunlat, Rivaini, Trade Tongue.

Journeyman: You learn an additional language from the previous list. You can also imitate a specific dialect with a successful **Communication (Performance)** test.

Master: You learn two more languages from the previous list. You can also pick any one language you know and speak it like a native—that is, without an accent.

Lore

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Cunning 2 or higher.

You have an inquisitive mind and absorb facts easily.

Novice: You have studied hard. When you make a successful Cunning test with a lore focus, the GM should give you an extra piece of information on the topic. A lore focus is any Cunning focus with the word "lore" in it, such as Cultural Lore and Historical Lore. The GM determines the additional information and it may or may not be pertinent to the main question at hand.

Journeyman: You are an accomplished researcher. When making **Cunning (Research)** tests as part of an advanced test, you gain a +1 bonus to the result of each Dragon Die. This allows you to reach the success threshold faster. Advanced tests are detailed on page 213; ask your GM if you want to know more.

Master: While your knowledge is vast, you have two areas of particular specialization. Pick any two of your lore focuses. When making tests using those focuses, you can re-roll a failed test but you must keep the result of the second roll.

Mounted Combat Style

Classes: Warrior
Requirement: **Dexterity (Riding)** focus.

You are trained cavalry, adept at fighting on horseback.

Note: Two-handed weapons and long bows cannot be used on horseback (by anyone, not just those with this talent). If you attempt it, they count as improvised weapons.

Novice: You can use the mobility of your mount to your advantage in combat. When mounted and making a move action, you can move part of your allowed distance, then use your major action to make a melee or ranged attack, and then move the rest of your allowed distance. The total distance moved cannot be more than your mount's Speed. Normally, you'd have to finish moving before attacking.

Journeyman: Your mounted charge is fearsome. You can move at your mount's full Speed when making a charge action and inflict +1 damage if your attack strikes home.

Master: You and your mount are one. The Knock Prone stunt cannot dismount you.

Music

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
Requirement: You must have the **Communication (Performance)** focus or the **Cunning (Musical Lore)** focus.

You have a natural talent for music.

Novice: You know how to play an instrument, sing, and write and read music.

Journeyman: Your musical journey continues as you learn to play more instruments. You know how to play a total number of instruments equal to your Communication.

Master: You are a true virtuoso. You can play all the instruments common to Thedas. If you come across a more exotic instrument, you can learn to play it with 1d6 weeks of practice.

Observation

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
Requirement: Perception 3 or higher.

You have an eye for detail.

Novice: You notice things others do not. Choose one of the following Perception focuses: Empathy or Seeing. If you fail a Perception test with your chosen focus, you can re-roll it but you must keep the result of the second roll.

Journeyman: Analysis of your observation often leads to insight. You can perform the That Makes Me Wonder exploration stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3.

Master: Nothing escapes your scrutiny. You can perform the "object of your attention" exploration stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3. In addition, the stunt gives you a +2 bonus instead of the usual +1.

Oratory

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
Requirement: Communication (Persuasion) focus.

You are a skilled public speaker who can sway others with your words.

Novice: You know how to work a crowd. If you fail a Communication (Persuasion) test when trying to convince a group, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll. You can't take this re-roll in an intimate setting or when trying to persuade an individual.

Journeyman: Your words are like magic. Each time you perform the "sway the crowd" roleplaying stunt, you affect three additional people instead of one.

Master: You can agitate a crowd. If you make a successful Communication (Persuasion) test when addressing a group and the result of your Dragon Die is 5 or 6, you rouse them to immediate action. You can't necessarily control what they do, though you can try with Communication (Leadership) tests, but they take your words to heart and act on them.

Poison-Making

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
Requirement: You must have the Cunning (Poison Lore) focus.

You've managed to survive the dangerous training required to make and use poisons and other useful but dangerous compounds. See the The Art of Poisoning in **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear** for details on how to use this talent.

Novice: You know how to prepare poisons, and how to use them without danger to yourself. Choose two Novice poisons you know how to make from memory. You can brew other Novice poisons as you find and learn their recipes.

Journeyman: You have learned how to prepare more effective—and more dangerous—poisons. You have also learned how to make grenades. Choose one Journeyman poison or one grenade you know how to make from memory. You can brew other Journeyman poisons, and make other grenades, as you find and learn their recipes.

Master: You have learned how to prepare the deadliest poisons known in Thedas. Choose one Master poison you know how to make from memory. You can brew other Master poisons as you find and learn their recipes.

Pole Weapon Style

Classes: Warrior
Requirements: Trained in the Polearms Group or the Spears Group.

Pole weapons can be cumbersome, but not in your hands. You can fight in this style with the two-handed spear or any weapon of the Polearms Group.

Novice: You can use the length of your weapon to advantage. You treat enemies up to 4 yards away as if they were adjacent to you, so you can make melee attacks against them (they can't do the same unless they also have this talent). If an ally is between you and your opponent, you can still attack. In fact, this is a common tactic.

Journeyman: Given a chance to prepare yourself, you are hard to move. You can set yourself with an activate action. Until the end of the encounter, any opponent that attempts to use the Skirmish stunt or the Novice degree of the Two-Hander Style against you must first make an opposed attack roll. If you win, your opponent fails to move you and wastes the stunt point(s). If your opponent wins, they may perform the Skirmish stunt(s).

Master: You get the most of your weapon's design features. If wielding a military fork or two-handed spear, you can perform the Pierce Armor stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2. If wielding a glaive or halberd, you can perform the Knock Prone stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2. In addition, mounted combatants do not gain the +1 bonus for fighting against an opponent on foot when attacking you.

Primal Magic

Classes: Mage.
Requirement: You must have the Magic (Primal) focus.

You have delved into the secrets of Primal magic.

Novice: You can create a small flame in your hand without spending mana points. The flame can't be used in combat but can set mundane items alight. It remains in your hand until dismissed. Creating and dismissing the flame are free actions.

Journeyman: Your knowledge of Primal magic is deep. When you cast a Primal spell, its cost in mana points is reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1. You also gain one new Primal spell.

Master: You are bursting with Primal magic. When you perform the Mighty Spell stunt with a Primal spell, you can inflict the stunt's extra damage on more than one of the spell's targets. This costs 1 stunt point per additional target (so it costs 3 SP to affect two targets, 4 SP to affect three targets, etc.). You also gain one new Primal spell.

QUICK REFLEXES

Classes: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Dexterity 2 or higher.

You react to threats speedily and instinctually.

Novice: You can prepare yourself for action in an instant. Once per round you can use Ready as a free action on your turn.

Journeyman: You can flip yourself up or drop down with lightning speed. You can go prone or stand up as a free action. (These normally can only be done as part of a move action.)

Master: It is hard to get the drop on you. You may re-roll your initiative roll at the start of a combat encounter, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

RUNECRAFTING

Classes: Mage (Tranquil only), Rogue and Warrior
Requirement: Dwarf or Tranquil, Cunning 3 or higher and the **Cunning (Enchantment)** focus.

You are a trained enchanter, able to inscribe runes onto armor and weapons.

Novice: You can inscribe a Novice rune onto a suit of armor or a weapon. A Novice rune takes 2 hours to inscribe. You can do it faster with a successful TN 13 **Cunning (Enchantment)** test. Each degree of success reduces the time by 15 minutes. If your Dragon Die result was 3, for example, you'd do it 45 minutes faster.

Journeyman: You can inscribe a Journeyman rune onto a suit of armor or a weapon. A Journeyman rune takes 3 hours to inscribe. You can do it faster with a successful TN 15 **Cunning (Enchantment)** test. Each degree of success from the Dragon Die reduces the time by 15 minutes.

Master: You can inscribe a Master rune onto a suit of armor or a weapon. A Master rune takes 4 hours to inscribe. You can do it faster with a successful TN 17 **Cunning (Enchantment)** test. Each degree of success from the Dragon Die reduces the time by 15 minutes.

SCOUTING

Classes: Rogue.
Requirement: You must have Dexterity 2 or higher.

You are skilled at the art of reconnaissance.

Novice: You can use the lay of the land to your advantage. If you fail a **Dexterity (Stealth)** test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

Journeyman: You know how to get the drop on your enemies. You can perform the Seize the Initiative stunt for 2 stunt points instead of the usual 4.

Master: You are a skilled observer. If you fail a **Perception (Seeing)** test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

SINGLE WEAPON STYLE

Classes: Rogue and Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Perception 2 or higher.

You can fight wielding only a single-handed melee weapon.

Novice: Fighting with a single weapon demands increased awareness. If you take the activate action, you gain a +1 Defense bonus until the end of the encounter while fighting in this style.

Journeyman: You can create a web of steel with but a single weapon. Your bonus to Defense increases to +2 while fighting in this style.

Master: You know how to fight several enemies at once. Opponents making melee attacks against you never gain a bonus on their attack rolls for outnumbering you.

SPIRIT MAGIC

Classes: Mage.
Requirement: You must have the **Magic (Spirit)** focus.

You have delved into the secrets of Spirit magic.

Novice: You can sense the mood of an intelligent being within 6 yards of you as a minor action. The GM must describe the mood in one word (angry, confused, or happy, for example).

Journeyman: Your knowledge of Spirit magic is deep. When you cast a Spirit spell, its cost in mana points is reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1. You also gain one new Spirit spell.

Master: Your skill with Spirit magic is such that mana flows through you like a river. When you roll to regain mana points, you can choose to re-roll the dice but must keep the results of the second roll. You also gain one new Spirit spell.

THIEVERY

Classes: Rogue.
Requirement: You must have Dexterity 3 or higher.

What's yours is yours and what's theirs is yours too.

Novice: You don't let locks stand in your way. If you fail a **Dexterity (Lock Picking)** test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

Journeyman: You are familiar with many types of traps. If you fail a **Dexterity (Traps)** test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

Master: You know how to find what's hidden. If you fail a **Perception (Searching)** test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

THROWN WEAPON STYLE

CLASSES: Rogue and Warrior.
REQUIREMENT: You must be trained in the Axes Group, Light Blades Group, or Spears Group.

You are adept with throwing weapons.

NOVICE: Your accuracy is uncanny. You gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls with throwing weapons.

JOURNEYMAN: You can ready a throwing weapon in an instant. You can reload a throwing weapon as a free action instead of a minor action.

MASTER: You know how to bypass your enemy's armor. When you perform the Pierce Armor stunt, your damage is penetrating. (That stunt normally halves your opponent's armor rating, but penetrating damage allows you to ignore it altogether.)

TRAP-MAKING

CLASSES: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
REQUIREMENT: You must have the **DEXTERITY (CRAFTING)** focus.

You've learned how to design and build devices to harm and ensnare your enemies. See **The Technique of Traps** in **CHAPTER 4: WEAPONS, ARMOR, & GEAR** for details on how to use this talent.

NOVICE: You know how to set and disarm simple traps with up to 2d6 base damage and up to one additional effect. (You can choose a different additional effect for each trap you set.) You have a +1 bonus to understand the nature of traps set by others, and to disarm them.

JOURNEYMAN: You know how to set and disarm more dangerous and complex traps with up to 4d6 base damage and up to two additional effects each. You have a +2 bonus to understand the nature of traps set by others, and to disarm them.

MASTER: You know how to set and disarm fiendish and lethal traps with up to 6d6 base damage and as many additional effects as you wish. You have a +3 bonus to understand the nature of traps set by others, and to disarm them.

TWO-HANDER STYLE

CLASSES: Warrior.
REQUIREMENT: You must have Strength 3 or higher and be trained in the Axes Group, Bludgeons Group, Heavy Blades Group, or Spears Group.

You are deadly with two-handed melee weapons.

NOVICE: The length of your weapon and the power of your attacks forces foes to yield ground. When you hit with a melee attack with a two-handed weapon, you can move the target 2 yards in any direction.

JOURNEYMAN: You can strike fearsome blows with your weapon. You can perform the Mighty Blow stunt for 1 stunt point instead of the usual 2 when wielding a two-handed weapon.

MASTER: You and your weapon are as one. When wielding a two-handed weapon, you can choose to re-roll your damage, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

UNARMED STYLE

CLASSES: Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
REQUIREMENT: You must be trained in the Brawling Group.

You know a thing or two about brawling.

NOVICE: Your hands are as tough as iron. When you attack with your fist, you inflict 1d6 damage instead of 1d3.

JOURNEYMAN: Your punch can drop the toughest opponents. You can perform the Knock Prone stunt for 1 stunt point instead of the usual 2 when attacking with your fist or a gauntlet.

MASTER: You can't be disarmed, but the same can't be said of your opponents. When performing the Disarm stunt, you gain a +2 bonus to your attack roll in the opposed test.

WEAPON AND SHIELD STYLE

CLASSES: Warrior.
REQUIREMENT: You must have Strength 2 or higher.

You've been trained to fight with a single-handed melee weapon and shield.

NOVICE: You can use shields of all shapes and sizes. You get the full Defense bonus when using a shield.

JOURNEYMAN: You know how to get the most from your shield. You can perform the Defensive Stance stunt for 1 stunt point instead of the usual 2.

MASTER: Opponents must work hard to get by your defenses. The shield bonus of any shield you use increases by 1.

Specializations

A specialization is another way to customize your character and focus your class. If you say your character is a warrior, that's a broad statement. If you say that your character is a templar, that says a lot more about them.

You get access to specializations through your class. You can take a specialization for the first time at level 6. That grants you the Novice degree in the appropriate specialization talent (a talent unique to that specialization). You gain the Journeyman degree at level 8 and the Master degree at level 10; this is the only way to gain new degrees in specialization talents. You get a second specialization at level 14. The specializations included in this book are as follows:

- **Mage:** Arcane Warrior, Blood Mage, Force Mage, Keeper, Necromancer, Shapeshifter, and Spirit Healer
- **Rogue:** Assassin, Bard, Duelist, Legionnaire Scout, Marksman, Ranger, and Shadow
- **Warrior:** Berserker, Champion, Chevalier, Guardian, Reaver, Spirit Warrior, and Templar

Example

Kate's city elf rogue character, Locke, makes it to level 6. She can now choose her first specialization. Her choices are Assassin, Bard, Duelist, Legionnaire Scout, Marksman, Ranger, and Shadow. Kate looks over the three specializations and decides that Duelist is most appropriate for her character. She notes on her character sheet that Locke now has the Duelist talent at the apprentice level. She sees that this gives her training in the Dueling Group, so she writes that down as well. She will get her next degree in this specialization as one of her class powers at level 8.

The classes are designed so you finish one specialization at level 10 by taking one degree of the specialization talent at each of levels 6, 8, and 10. It could be, however, that you don't want to take a specialization, or can't qualify for one. If you prefer, you can always take a degree in a regular talent instead of a specialization talent at these levels. The next time you'd get a specialization talent, you can take a specialization at that point or take another regular talent.

Example

The mage Lorrahn reaches level 6. He could take a specialization at this point but decides he'd rather take another magic school talent. He gains a degree in Spirit Magic instead of taking of a specialization. When he gets to level 8, he faces the same choice. This time he decides to become a Spirit Healer, taking the apprentice degree of that specialization talent. When he reaches level 10, he takes the Journeyman degree. At level 14 he can take the Master degree or a new specialization.

Unlocking Specializations

The default assumption of the rules is that every specialization for your class is open to you when you hit level 6. This gives you the broadest array of choices. Your GM may require you to work to access certain specializations, however. If that is their decision, you can unlock a specialization in three ways:

Find a Trainer

A trainer is a GM controlled character who already has the specialization. Trainers have motivations of their own, of course, so they may require money, favors, oaths, or actions before agreeing to teach you.

Go on a Quest

Quests can vary widely in specific details, but basically your GM will create a special side adventure with you as the focus, the completion of which will unlock the desired specialization. If you wanted to become a Spirit Healer, for example, you might have to figure out how to contact a benevolent spirit in the Fade.

Find a Tome

The knowledge and techniques of some specializations has been written down and can sometimes be learned by reading and study. There are many forbidden tomes about Blood Magic, for example, and they have led many a mage down that dark path.

Planning Ahead

Since you know that you'll be getting a specialization at level 6, it's a good idea to start thinking about what you're going to choose when you hit level 5. Then discuss it with your GM. This will give your GM a chance to prepare and work your choice into the campaign. If they decide you must find a trainer, for example, that's something you can pursue while working towards level 6. Then when you get there, you'll be ready for the specialization.

Mage Specializations

Arcane Warrior

Among the elves of ancient Thedas there was a tradition that fused the arts of magic and combat. Known as arcane warriors, these mages channeled mana to boost their combat prowess. These abilities are thought by most to be forgotten, another casualty of the wars that destroyed the elven homelands. Though hidden, that knowledge does survive.

Due to the rarity of this specialization, the GM should consider requiring it to be unlocked (see **Unlocking Specializations**). Arcane warriors have not been widely seen in Thedas in hundreds of years. Their return should provide great story and adventure material for your campaign.

Arcane Warrior Talent

Classes: Mage.
Requirement: You must have Magic and Dexterity 3 or higher.

You have learned a potent mix of magic and melee skills.

Novice: You learn a new weapon group of your choice, and you can use Magic to satisfy the minimum Strength requirement of weapons. You can also enter Combat Magic mode by taking an activate action. While in this mode, you add Magic instead of Strength to your damage with melee weapons. However, any spell you cast in Combat Magic mode has its mana point cost increased by 2. You can end Combat Magic mode with another activate action.

Journeyman: You reduce the strain of any armor you wear by 3. You are also allowed to take the Armor Training talent, which is normally restricted to warriors.

Master: When you activate Combat Magic mode, you can spend 5 MP to shift yourself so you exist partly in the real world and partly in the Fade. This is called a Fade Shroud and it gives you a ghostly countenance that is obvious and unsettling to many. A Fade Shroud increases your Defense by 3 but you must pay 3 mana points per round (at the start of your turn) to maintain it. If you do not, the effect ends immediately (though Combat Magic mode remains active).

Blood Mage

The Tevinter Imperium conquered Thedas with Blood Magic. Its magisters, it is said, learned the craft from demons. Every mage feels its allure. There is much power to be gained using blood instead of mana. The Chantry, however, forbids the practice and on this they are unequivocal. The vile practices of the magisters led to the Blights, and to the Maker turning away from his creations. Blood mages are maleficarum (singular maleficar, from the ancient Tevene, "one who is depraved") and the templars hunt them down. Interestingly, some Grey Wardens have been known to dabble with Blood Magic. Many Wardens believe that any weapon that can be used against the darkspawn should be, and that includes Blood Magic.

Blood Mage Talent

Classes: Mage.
Requirement: You must have Constitution and Magic 3 or higher.

You have learned the forbidden art of Blood Magic.

Novice: You can use your own blood to power your spells. First, you must use the activate action to enter the Blood Magic mode. When casting a spell in this mode, you can inflict 1d6 penetrating damage on yourself and you gain mana points equal to the damage. The mana points so generated must be used on the spell you are casting this round; any excess are lost. You can use this mana to cast spells from any school but you must be in Blood Mage mode to cast Blood spells. While in this mode, you cannot be healed with potions or Creation spells. You can end Blood Magic mode with another activate action.

Journeyman: You can use the blood of a willing ally to power your spells. This works as per the Novice degree, but your ally takes the damage. The ally must be within 6 yards of you when you cast the spell.

Master: You can use anyone's blood to power your spells. You can pick a target with 6 yards of you and attempt to use their blood as a minor action. Success requires an opposed test of your **Magic (Blood) vs. the target's Willpower (Faith or Self-Discipline)**. If you win things work as per the Journeyman degree. If the target is adjacent to you and helpless (unconscious, tied up, etc.), you inflict 2d6 penetrating damage (and perhaps understand why mages of the Tevinter Imperium were not so popular).

Force Mage

Force mages love magic's raw power. While other mages use mana to create fire or electricity, force mages prefer to pummel their foes with barely restrained magical energy. The common spell, mind blast, is but a taste of what a true force mage can do. Their telekinetic spells are much more potent and can toss enemies around like rag dolls. At the same time, Master force mages can stand unmoved on the battlefield.

Force Mage Talent

Classes: Mage
Requirement: You must have Magic and Willpower 3 or higher.

You are adept at manipulating the raw power of magic.

Novice: You learn the Force Mage spell *fist of the maker*.

Journeyman: You learn the Force Mage spell telekinetic burst.

Master: Your mastery of force magic makes you unshakable. When an opponent uses the Skirmish or Knock Prone stunts on you, you can negate the effect by spending mana points: 1 per use of Skirmish and 2 for Knock Prone.

Keeper

A Keeper is the leader of a Dalish clan. They guide the clan, both spiritually and physically. Keepers are respected for their wisdom and their knowledge of the ancient traditions of the elves. Each clan has one Keeper and one First (the chosen successor of the Keeper). A clan may have several apprentices but usually only two full mages (the Keeper and the First). Templars, of course, consider ancient, unregulated magic to be dangerous and hunt Keepers when they can. This is one of the reasons the Dalish clans never stay in one place too long.

Keeper Talent

Classes: Mage
Requirement: You must be a Dalish elf with Cunning and Magic 3 or higher.

You have learned the ancient secrets of elven magic.

Novice: You learn the Keeper spell *wrath of the elvhen*.

Journeyman: You learn the Keeper spell *ensnare*.

Master: You can tap into the natural cycle of death and rebirth. When you kill an enemy with the spell wrath of the elvhen, you get back 1d6 Health if you are wounded. If you are already at full Health, you gain no benefit.

Necromancer

Necromancers specialize in binding spirits drawn to the dead and dying and using them to increase their magic powers. They can cause crippling fear in opponents, summon spirits to fight for them, and can even turn their enemies' spirits to fight for them. Necromancers are not necessarily evil, though many hate and fear them for their connection to spirits and death.

Necromancer Talent

Classes: Mage
Requirement: Must have Willpower of 3 or higher and the Entropy Magic (Novice) Talent.

You hear the calls of the spirits of the dead, and when you call, they answer.

Novice: If you kill an enemy, your Spellpower increases by +2 for a number of turns equal to your Willpower. Killing another enemy during this time resets the duration but doesn't add to the Spellpower bonus.

Journeyman: You learn the spell *death syphon*, regardless of whether you meet the requirement. You can cast it for 4 mp instead of 7.

Master: If you go down to 0 Health during a fight, a spirit appears by your body for a number of turns equal to your Magic or until the fight ends. This simulacrum takes on your form and can cast any spells you know for no mana cost. You are not considered to be dying while the simulacrum is protecting you, but you cannot be healed until the spirit returns to the Fade. The simulacrum cannot be damaged.

Shapeshifter

The Circle of Magi likes to pretend that its method of practicing magic is the only way, but that is not true. It is dominant, certainly, but there are older traditions that defy the Circle's assertions. One of them is the way of the shapeshifter. It is an ancient magic, now only practiced by a few mages in the hidden corners of Thedas. The infamous witches of the Korcari Wilds are said to be shapeshifters, and some even claim their matriarch Flemeth can turn into a mighty dragon. More typical shapeshifters—if there can even be said to be such a thing—can transform themselves into creatures like wolves, bears, and even giant spiders.

Shapeshifter Talent

Classes: Mage
Requirement: You must have Constitution and Magic 3 or higher.

You transform into the shape of other creatures.

Novice: You learn the Shapeshifter spell *small animal form*. While you've taken on a creature's form with a Shapeshifter spell, the following general rules apply. You cannot speak or cast spells. Spells you cast before the transformation remain in effect as normal, and you can pay mana when required to keep them going. You retain your Cunning and Magic abilities and your Health, but the rest of your stats are determined by the Shapeshifter spell you use.

Journeyman: You learn the Shapeshifter spell *large animal form*.

Master: You learn the shapeshifter spell *vicious beast form*.

Spirit Healer

While demons are the most notorious denizens of the Fade, other spirits reside there as well. These spirits are more benevolent and do not have the driving desires that make demons so evil. Spirit healers are those rare mages who learn to communicate and summon such spirits. There is danger in this path, as there always is when the Fade is involved. Sometimes demons pretend to be kindly spirits and the spirit healer pays a dreadful price. When the summoning is successful, however, a spirit healer is capable of healing feats beyond the bounds of normal magic. This is why spirit healers believe the risk is worth it.

Spirit Healer Talent

Classes: Mage.
Requirement: You must have Communication and Magic 3 or higher.

You can summon benevolent spirits from the Fade to heal people.

Novice: You have learned to summon spirits. You learn the Spirit Healer spell *group heal*. To cast it and other Spirit Healer spells

(that is, spells requiring you to have the Spirit Healer specialization), you must first enter Summoning mode. This requires an activate action and a successful **TN 14 Magic (Spirit)** test. If you fail and roll triples, you must roll on the **Magical Mishaps** table (see **Chapter 5: Magic**). If successful you attract a suitable spirit and can cast Spirit Healer spells for as long as you stay in this mode. You can end the mode with another activate action, which releases the spirit back whence it came.

Journeyman: You learn the Spirit Healer spell *revival*.

Master: You learn the Spirit Healer spell *life ward*.

Rogue Specializations

Assassin

Assassins are masters of the art of death. They train to kill using weapons, poisons, and their wits. The most famous assassins are the Antivan Crows. They will kill anyone for the right price, and because of that they hold the real political power in their homeland. There are always those willing to kill for money, so assassins can be found all over Thedas.

Assassin Talent

Classes: Rogue.
Requirement: You must have Cunning and Dexterity 3 or higher.

You know how to kill quickly and efficiently.

Novice: You can assess a nearby opponent and spot weaknesses that can be exploited in combat. With an activate action you can mark for death a visible target within 10 yards of you. All ranged and melee attacks against a target marked for death receive a +1 damage bonus. The mark lasts until the end of the encounter, the target is slain, or you pick a new target with another activate action. You can't have active marks on multiple targets at the same time. A character cannot be marked for death more than once in the same encounter.

Journeyman: Your attacks are sudden, precise, and deadly. When you use the rogue's Dirty Fighting power, your opponent's **Constitution (Stamina)** tests are TN 17 instead of TN 15. Additionally, once per encounter, you can use the Dirty Fighting power as a free action.

Master: You know how to exploit your target's weaknesses. When you Backstab an opponent you have marked for death, you inflict an extra 1d6 damage.

Bard

Bards may seem like simple minstrels and troubadours, but they are much more. A peculiar feature of Orlesian politics, bards act as spies, saboteurs, and sometimes killers (though they usually prefer to leave that to assassins). Intrigue is a way of life in Orlais, so bards are common there but less so in other nations. Worldly people of all nations look twice at any traveling minstrel, which makes life for honest members of that trade more difficult. It is said that King Maric of Ferelden fell in love with an Orlesian bard with tragic results.

Bard Talent

Classes: Rogue.
Requirement: You must have Communication and Dexterity 3 or higher, and Music (Novice).

You learn songs that can uplift and captivate. Starting a song is a major action. On subsequent rounds, you can maintain a song with a free action.

Novice: You can sing a Song of Valor. Allies within 12 yards of you gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls as long as the song is maintained.

Journeyman: You can sing a Song of Friendship. It can be used in a combat encounter like the other songs, but it's more appropriate for roleplaying encounters. You perform a song for those assembled that affirms the power of camaraderie and harmony. Until the end of a roleplaying encounter (or for as long as it's maintained during a combat encounter), you and your allies gain a +1 bonus to **Communication (Etiquette)**, **(Investigation)**, **(Persuasion)**, and {**Seduction**) tests.

Master: You can sing a Song of Captivation. Once per round while singing the song, you can attempt to captivate one opponent within 16 yards. This is an opposed test of your **Communica-**

tion (Performance) vs. the target's Willpower (Self-Discipline). If you win, the target can take no actions on their next turn.

Duelist

Heavily armed and armored warriors may dominate the battlefield but duelists rule the streets and alleys of cities like Denerim and Val Royeaux. In such conditions the quick blades and wits of duelists count for more than raw strength. They eschew cumbersome shields and fight with a weapon in each hand instead. They have even developed a weapon set customized for their style of fighting. The classic duelist fights with a rapier and either a main gauche or a spiked buckler in their off-hand, though some pride themselves on fighting with more unusual weapon combinations.

Note that while Duelists have their own Weapons Group revolving around their specialized weapons, Light Blades and other Dexterity-based melee weapons can be used by Duelists with this specialization. Note that in formal duels, using unconventional weapons may be forbidden or seen as dishonorable.

Duelist Talent

Classes: Rogue.
Requirement: You must have Dexterity and Perception 3 or higher, and Dual Weapon Style (Novice).

You are a master of speed and precision on the battlefield.

Novice: You learn the Dueling Weapon Group, a weapon group unique to Duelists. When fighting in the Dual Weapon Style and using a melee weapon that uses Dexterity, you gain both +1 on your attack rolls and +1 Defense vs. melee attacks. (Normally when fighting in that style, you must choose between these benefits.)

Journeyman: Your precise attacks hit opponents where it hurts. While fighting in the Dual Weapon Style, you inflict +1 damage with melee attacks.

Master: Your pinpoint accuracy can find the gaps in your opponents' armor. When you perform the Pierce Armor stunt, your damage is penetrating. (That stunt normally halves your opponent's Armor Rating, but penetrating damage allows you to ignore it altogether.)

Legionnaire Scout

The dwarven Legion of the Dead are famed for their courage, and none more so than the Legion's scouts. Traveling ahead of the rest of their group or operating alone in the Deep Roads on special missions, Legionnaire Scouts must be careful and utterly fearless. They learn to suffer incredible hardship without the slightest complaint and hone their resolve into an armor that can protect them from pain, despair, and strife.

Legionnaire Scout Talent

Classes: Rogue
Requirement: Must have Willpower and Constitution of 3 or higher. Dwarf only. Legion of the Dead only.

You can endure any hardship to aid your people and complete your mission.

Novice: Gain a +2 bonus to any tests to resist pain, hunger, fear, or despair.

Journeyman: The combat stunts Mighty Blow and Lethal Blow cost an extra stunt point when used against a legionnaire scout (so 3 SP for Mighty Blow and 6 SP for Lethal Blow).

Master: You can shrug off the worst damage through force of will alone. Gain a bonus to your Armor Rating equal to half your Willpower (round up, minimum 2). This bonus stacks with other armor and is present even if no other armor is worn.

Marksman

Marksmen are crack shots who can take down enemies at a distance. Other than their extraordinary skill with missile weapons, most marksmen have little in common. A marksman might be a Dalish archer, a Fereldan scout, a Chasind raider, or an Antivan street tough. Some are soldiers, others mercenaries for hire, and others wanderers trying to win prize money in shooting competitions. While marksmen are deadly with any ranged weapon, each has a favorite type and often a signature example that they have customized to their liking. To steal such a weapon is to ask for terrible retribution.

Marksman Talent

Classes: Rogue
Requirement: You must have Dexterity and Perception 3 or higher and either Archery Style (Journeyman) or Thrown Weapon Style (Journeyman).

You are an expert shot.

Novice: Your missile attacks are so powerful they can fling opponents back and knock them off their feet. You can perform the Knock Prone stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2 when making ranged attacks. Additionally, you may push the target straight back 2 yards before applying the knockdown. (This is similar to the Skirmish stunt but more limited).

Journeyman: You can unleash a storm of missiles on your opponents. You can perform the volley stunt for 5 SP. This allows you to make two more ranged attacks, at the same target or at others in sight and within 10 yards. You must have a loaded missile weapon to make a ranged attack, so use of up to two Rapid Reload stunts may be required to use volley. If you roll doubles on either of these attack rolls, you do not generate any additional stunt points.

Master: You can find the vulnerable spot on any opponent. When you perform the Pierce Armor stunt with a ranged attack, your damage is penetrating. (That stunt normally halves your opponent's Armor Rating, but penetrating damage allows you to ignore it altogether.)

Ranger

There are songs and stories of noble-spirited heroes who protect the sanctity of nature from the encroachment of corrupt civilization. Rangers are not those heroes. Rather, they are skilled scouts who use their knowledge of nature for their own benefit. They can lure animals, sometimes of fright-

ening size, to fight for them. If the animals die in battle, that is not the rangers' concern as long as they fulfill their role in the fight. The Dalish call such rangers cruel; the rangers say they are just being practical. Rangers make excellent guides and are often hired as such.

Ranger Talent

Classes: Rogue
Requirement: You must have Communication and Perception 3 or higher and the **Communication (Animal Handling)** focus.

You use your knowledge of the natural world to your advantage.

Novice: You can lure nearby animals to your location and make them fight for you. Start by making a **Communication (Animal Handling)** test, which takes 2d6 minutes. The base TN is 13 but the GM may adjust it based on the area you're in and the orneriness of the local animals. For each degree of success, you reduce the time the test takes by 1 minute. If the test is successful, you attract an animal and can control it during the next combat encounter. When that's over or after half an hour has elapsed, the animal wanders away. As a Novice, you can lure common animals like dogs, wolves, and birds of prey (you can use falcon stats for these). The GM has final say over what sorts of animals you can lure with this talent.

Journeyman: Your time in the wild has honed your ambuscade skills. When you attack an opponent who has been surprised, you inflict +2 damage.

Master: You can now lure larger animals like black bears, brontos, halla, and even giant spiders. The base TN remains 13 for the **Communication (Animal Handling)** test, though individual animals of this size may be more ornery.

Shadow

Shadows are rogues who are masters of stealth. While all rogues are stealthy to some degree, shadows excel in the arts of concealment and deception like no others. They can hide themselves nearly anywhere and almost seem to be able to bend the darkness around them. They can fool opponents into attacking empty air while they position themselves for a lethal attack. While there are stories of a shadow guild and secret magic that fuels such powers, there is nothing to substantiate such claims. Shadows have simply perfected their techniques through training and practice.

Shadow Talent

Classes: Rogue
Requirement: You must have Dexterity 4 or higher and both the **Dexterity (Legerdemain)** and **Dexterity (Stealth)** focuses.

You live in the shadows.

Novice: You are a master of stealth. With an activate action, you can enter Shadow mode and gain the following benefits. You gain a +1 bonus on **Dexterity (Stealth)** and **Dexterity (Legerdemain)** tests. Opponents also find it difficult to land telling blows against you. They suffer a –1 penalty on damage rolls when making melee or ranged attacks against you. You can leave Shadow mode with a free action.

Journeyman: You can confuse and misdirect opponents so they attack imaginary enemies. While in Shadow mode, you can perform the decoy combat stunt for 2 SP. Make a **Dexterity (Stealth)** test and note the test result. Until your next turn, anyone attempting to target you with a ranged or melee attack must beat your test result with a **Perception (Seeing)** test. Those who fail still make the attack (thus using an action) but miss automatically.

Master: You know how to choose the perfect moment to strike. When you Backstab an opponent in Shadow mode, add your Cunning to your damage.

Warrior Specializations

Berserker

Berserkers rose first among the dwarves of the Warrior Caste. They learned to tap into their rage on the battlefield and use it to perform feats of incredible valor. The Avvar learned from the dwarves and from there the berserker tradition spread to all the human nations. The Ash Warriors are the most famous of the human berserkers. They are mercenaries of a sort, but they do not fight for money. Rather, they lend their considerable might to those whose cause they find the most just. They have fought for many kings of Ferelden but they maintain a stubborn independence.

Berserker Talent

Classes: Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Strength and Willpower 3 or higher.

You use your rage as a weapon.

Novice: You can drive yourself into a killing frenzy. First you must use the activate action to enter the Berserk mode. You receive a +2 bonus on **Willpower (Courage)** and **Willpower (Morale)** tests while in this mode. You also receive a +1 bonus on your damage rolls in melee combat. However, you suffer a –1 penalty to Defense and to Perception tests while Berserk. You return to normal at the end of the encounter or if you force yourself out of the mode with another activate action.

Journeyman: Your rage becomes more potent. While Berserk you gain the same bonuses and penalties as described in the Novice entry, but your bonus damage in melee combat increases to +3.

Master: Your fury is unstoppable! When Berserk, you can perform the Lethal Blow stunt for 4 stunt points instead of the usual 5.

Champion

There are many tough warriors in Thedas, but those that can truly inspire their allies and intimidate their enemies are few. Champions do not just fight; they are a palpable presence on the battlefield. Comrades in arms look to them for strength and courage in the chaos of battle. Foes hesitate and lose heart when facing them. Champions are not unique to any one army or organization. They can be found in all parts of Thedas, and smart commanders recruit as many as possible into their forces when battle approaches.

Champion Talent

Classes: Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Communication and Strength 3 or higher.

You are a beacon of strength on the battlefield.

Novice: Your battle roar intimidates your opponents. When you take the charge action, you can shout a war cry that gives all enemies within 8 yards of your charge's final position a –1 on attack rolls on their next turn.

Journeyman: You can lead your allies in an inspired defense. First, you must use the activate action to enter Rally mode. Your allies within 8 yards of you gain a +1 Defense and a +1 on **Willpower (Morale)** tests while this mode is active. You can end Rally with another activate action.

Master: Your presence on the battlefield cannot be ignored. When in Rally mode, your Journeyman effects affect allies within 12 yards of you. They also receive a +1 bonus on **Willpower (Courage)** tests and inflict +1 damage with melee attacks.

Chevalier

Chevaliers are the elite knights of the Orlesian Empire. They are a powerful force, both militarily and socially. An Orlesian

commoner can be executed on the word of a chevalier, a practice that is prone to abuse but rarely challenged. Scions of noble families dominate the chevaliers, and their status is such that the order attracts many nobles without land or an inheritance. In Orlais chevaliers are used to getting their own way. When they travel to other nations, the reception is frostier. Their reputation precedes them. None would deny that they are powerful warriors and unrivaled on horseback, however.

Chevalier Talent

Classes: Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Strength and Dexterity 3 or higher and Mounted Combat Style (Journeyman).

You are the elite of Orlais.

Novice: You learn the Lances Weapon Group. You also learn to unnerve your enemies with well-chosen insults. You can perform the Taunt stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2. You may substitute **Communication (Etiquette)** for **Communication (Deception)** when making the stunt's opposed test at your option. This represents the Orlesian art of being polite and insulting at the same time.

Journeyman: Your lance hits with the strength of a golem. When making a mounted charge, you can add 1d6 to your damage if you are wielding a weapon from the Lances Group. If wielding any other melee weapon, you inflict +1 damage instead.

Master: You get the most from your steed. While mounted, you can run as a minor action and add +1 to your Defense when you do.

Guardian

Many warriors fight for personal glory; not so the guardian. They are trained to consider not just their position on the battlefield but that of their allies. They can assess who needs protection and when, and their timely intervention often prevents situations from going out of control. Since shielding others is their first priority, a guardian often leaves themselves to make sure they block an attack on their ally. Those of long service have many scars as badges of their sacrifice. Guardians naturally make excellent bodyguards and are often employed as such. Mages, often vulnerable in hand-to-hand combat, particularly value guardians.

Guardian Talent

Classes: Warrior
Requirement: You must have Constitution and Dexterity 3 or higher and the Weapon and Shield Style (Journeyman).

You know how to protect others.

Novice: You can protect an ally with the tactical use of your shield and body. Choose an ally and enter Guardian mode with an activate action. When this ally is adjacent to you, they gain a +2 to their Armor Rating. However, each time your ally takes damage, you take 2 points of penetrating damage. You can choose to switch your protection to a different ally with a free action. You can leave Guardian mode with a free action.

Journeyman: Once you plant yourself, you cannot be moved. While in Guardian mode, the Skirmish and Knock Prone stunts have no effect on you.

Master: Those who attack your charge suffer the consequences. When you are in Guardian mode and an opponent successfully hits or damages your protected ally, you can immediately attack that opponent (moving up to 2 yards to get adjacent if necessary) as a free action, generating stunt points as usual. You may only do this once per round. After the attack, the normal initiative order resumes. This retaliation does not count as your turn.

Reaver

Reavers have learned to channel blood magic internally, making them terrifying and deadly warriors. To become a Reaver, one must take part in an arcane ritual where the would-be Reaver drinks the blood of a dragon or similar beast such as a wyvern. The ritual grants the power to draw strength from pain and death. The nature of the Reavers means that few truly heroic individuals seek to join their ranks, though desperate times sometimes push someone to take up the role of Reaver to fight some darker power. Due to its connections to blood magic, becoming a Reaver incurs the risk of being corrupted by demonic forces.

Reaver Talent

Classes: Warrior
Requirement: Must have Strength and Constitution of 3 or higher. Must perform an arcane ritual in which the character drinks the blood of a dragon or dragon-like creature.

You drink deeply of death and use it to make yourself stronger.

Novice: You can draw an enemy's life force into you through an attack, healing you even as they weaken. Once per encounter, take a minor action to activate this ability. For a number of consecutive turns equal to your Willpower, you gain Health equal to the amount of damage the target suffers on a successful attack, or your opponent's Constitution ability rating, whichever is less.

Journeyman: You are able to channel your own rage and pain into an aura that injures and weakens enemies around you. You can create an aura of pain with an activate action. While it's active, once per turn you may elect to take 1d6 penetrating damage to inflict 1d6+Willpower Penetrating damage on all enemies within 6 yards of you. Maintaining this ability is a free action.

Master: The death of your foes lends speed to your step and swiftness to your reflexes. Immediately after you kill a foe in combat, you can make another attack against a different foe in range as a free action. If no foe is in range, you may instead perform a free Move action to put you in range of a new target. If you kill your foe with the free attack, you do not get another free attack or move.

Spirit Warrior

Spirit warriors, like spirit healers, understand that not all denizens of the Fade are malevolent. They make deals with spirits of the Fade, gaining access to special powers in exchange for giving the spirits a personal view of the physical world. Spirit warriors can cloak themselves in magical energy and even use it to blast enemies. Though they are not mages, this distinction is lost on most. Templars tend to treat spirit warriors as apostates, since their displays of power certainly look like magic and they'd rather err on the side of caution.

Spirit Warrior

Classes: Warrior
Requirement: You must have Magic and Willpower 3 or higher.

You harness the power of the Fade.

Novice: You can wreathe yourself in mystical energy. With an activate action, you can enter Spirit Warrior mode. This grants you a +1 bonus to Defense and a +1 bonus on Magic tests to resist spells and other magical attacks. You can end Spirit Warrior mode with a free action.

Journeyman: You can channel energy from the Fade into your weapons. While in Spirit Warrior mode, your melee and ranged attacks count as magical. This allows them to inflict full damage to incorporeal creatures like shades. They also inflict bonus damage equal to your Willpower on demons and other creatures of the Fade.

Master: You can overload your body with the power of the Fade and then release it violently. While in Spirit Warrior mode, you can perform the Fade burst stunt for 4 SP. A coruscating wave of energy causes 1d6 penetrating damage to all enemies within 4 yards of you. Demons and other creatures of the Fade take 1d6 + your Willpower penetrating damage instead.

Templar

The templars are the militant arm of the Chantry. Their primary functions are to watch over the Circle of Magi and hunt down apostates and maleficarum. For more information about templars, see **Chapter 5: Magic**. As noted there, templars are given small amounts of lyrium to awaken and maintain their special powers. Hard and fast rules for this are not provided, as tracking such things is tedious. The templars' use of lyrium makes excellent story fodder, however.

Templar Talent

Class: Warrior.
Requirement: You must have Magic and Strength 3 or higher.

The Chantry has trained you to deal with mages.

Novice: You have learned mental techniques that help you resist magic. You gain a +2 bonus on tests to resist the effects of spells and other magical attacks. If you have this power already (from the dwarf backgrounds in this book, for example) you must still take this degree of the talent but its effect is to increase your existing bonus by +1.

Journeyman: Your blows can drain mages of their mana. When you do damage to a mage (or any creature that uses mana) with a melee attack, your target loses 1d6 + your Magic mana points in addition to taking normal damage.

Master: You can cleanse an area of ongoing magic. This is a major action and the concentration required is such that you suffer a –2 penalty to Defense until the beginning of your next turn. All ongoing spells within 6 yards of you, whether cast by friends or foes, end immediately. Spells that were only partially cast are also cancelled and actions previously spent on casting them are wasted.

Grey Wardens

It is possible for any Player Character to become a Grey Warden. There are no strict prerequisites for this, and it is not tied to class or level. The only qualification is that a Grey Warden thinks that the candidate has what it takes. Strength of will and a strong sense of duty are common attributes but sometimes the most unlikely candidates end up making the best Grey Wardens. Duncan, who eventually became the leader of the Grey Wardens in Ferelden, was naught but a street thief in Orlais when he was recruited into the order.

Those chosen go through a period of training. This can be as long or as short as the Warden trainer desires. It is uncommon for characters of less than level 6 to be chosen for the Joining,

Join us, brothers and sisters. Join us in the shadows where we stand vigilant. Join us as we carry the duty that cannot be forsworn. And should you perish, know that your sacrifice will not be forgotten. And that one day we shall join you.

—From the Joining

the perilous and enigmatic ritual that turns a recruit into a full-fledged Grey Warden. It is an elite order and normally only those who have proved themselves are given the chance to join its ranks.

If you become a Grey Warden, it will be a major event in the game. You will play through your training period and the Joining. If you make it and become a Grey Warden, you gain the following:

- Take an ability advancement in the ability of your choice.
- You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.
- You gain a resistance to the taint. You can't be turned into a ghoul by darkspawn blood (see the **Game Master's Guide**, pages 260-261).
- You have the Right of Conscription, and so can recruit others into the Grey Wardens. In theory this can be anyone, but political realities (especially in Ferelden) usually cause Wardens to tread carefully. You must also learn the Joining ritual (and have access to the esoteric components it requires) in order to mint new Wardens, and this is not always taught to newer recruits.
- You can detect darkspawn up to a number of yards away equal to 5 × your level (so a level 8 character can detect darkspawn up to 40 yards away). You can make **Perception (Detect Darkspawn)** tests to find out more information, such as their rough numbers or even their types. The result of the Dragon Die determines how much information you get. You do not start with the Detect Darkspawn focus, but you can take it later when you level up.

There is more to being a Grey Warden than this, but the rest you will find out by playing in your campaign.

In war, victory.
In peace, vigilance.
In death, sacrifice.

Playing a Grey Warden

There are as many ways to play a Grey Warden as there are Grey Wardens; there is no wrong way to go about it.

Broadly speaking, Wardens tend to be responsible individuals with a strong sense of will. Most outsiders believe the Grey Wardens must truly hate darkspawn to dedicate their lives to fighting them, but in fact, a personal hatred of the darkspawn can be detrimental to a Warden's effectiveness if it leads them to make rash decisions to serve some irrational and deep-seated hostility. In fact, many Grey Wardens see their first darkspawn only after becoming initiates of the order.

Many Grey Wardens try to avoid extended romantic entanglements knowing that their lives are at constant risk, but others throw themselves into love, figuring that they should embrace life to the fullest while they can. Grey Wardens often make a point to stand apart from the communities they serve, knowing they may be called on to sacrifice, tomorrow, those they protect today. But again, other Wardens take the opposite stance, befriending any and all in the moment and addressing sacrifice when the times require it. It would be easy to assume that all Grey Wardens want nothing more than to end all Blights forever, but some have such zeal for the fight that they wish only for a lifetime of tests and war.

When you play a Grey Warden, consider your hero's background, the circumstances of their initiation, and what being a Warden means to them. A criminal saved from execution by the Right of Conscription will have a different take on what it means to be a Grey Warden than a young woman who aspired to join their ranks since childhood. Above all, don't let anyone—in Thedas or at your game table—tell you how your Grey Warden must behave. Instead, embrace your own vision of what one of these mighty heroes can be!

Chapter 4

Weapons, Armor & Gear

Your character has many types of equipment to choose from, all of which can be found in this chapter. Starting characters choose from equipment packages (see **Chapter 1: Character Creation**) to make getting started easy. During the course of play, though, your character will have the chance to earn (or steal!) money, and may buy or gain access to additional equipment. In this chapter you'll find details on armor, weapons, clothing, foodstuffs, and miscellaneous goods and services. The prices presented are typical of Thedas, but they can vary widely depending on the vagaries of supply and demand. Later in the section specialized equipment such as poisons, traps, and explosives are given their own specific focus and rules.

Currency

Every nation in Thedas stamps their own coins. It used to be that they varied in size and purity, but the dwarven merchants used their powerful influence to standardize coins into gold pieces, silver pieces, and copper pieces. Now, while each nation's coins look unique and often have different names, their value is generally equivalent. So Ferelden calls a gold piece a sovereign and Orlais calls it a royal, but both have the same value.

A coin's nation of origin usually doesn't matter, so in *Dragon Age* the following terms are used as standard: gold piece (gp), silver piece (sp), and copper piece (cp).

1 gold = 100 silver = 10,000 copper

Prices for most items are given in silver pieces, as that is the most common currency and the one used for day-to-day transactions. Gold pieces are much rarer and even one represents a good deal of money.

Armor & Shields

Armor and shields protect you from harm, but in different ways. Shields make you harder to hit, while armor reduces the damage you take when you are struck. Depending on your class and your talents, you may use neither, one or the other, or both armor and shield. Warriors and rogues start with some training in armor use, and warriors usually wear the best armor they can afford. Using a shield properly requires the Weapon and Shield Style talent; this is most common among warriors. Those who prefer two-handed weapons or archery, however, usually forgo shields. You'll find more information on the role of armor and shields in **Chapter 2: Playing the Game.**

Armor and Shield Details

The two accompanying tables provide game system information for armor and shields. The following details are provided:

Armor Rating: Each armor type has a numeric rating. When you take damage in combat, you subtract the armor rating

Armor

Armor	Armor Rating	Armor Penalty	Cost
Light Leather	3	0	15 sp
Heavy Leather	4	–1	30 sp
Light Mail	5	–2	50 sp
Heavy Mail	7	–3	75 sp
Light Plate	8	–4	100 sp
Heavy Plate	10	–5	150 sp
Light Leather Duster	3	0	15 sp
Tailored Leather Duster	4	0	+45 sp
Lining with Concealed Pockets	+1 to **Dexterity (Legerdemain)** tests		+25 sp

Shields

Shield	Shield Bonus	Cost
Light Shield	+1	15 sp
Medium Shield	+2	30 sp
Heavy Shield	+3	60 sp

before losing Health. This applies each time you are hit, so over time even poor armor can prevent you from taking a lot of damage. Certain attacks, however, can bypass the effects of armor. They inflict what is called penetrating damage, which ignores armor altogether. Armor offers no protection against penetrating damage.

Armor Penalty: Each armor type also has a penalty that represents its weight and bulk. The penalty applies to your Speed if you are trained in the armor's use, but to Dexterity (and thus to Speed) if you are not. See the Armor Training talent in **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations**.

Cost: The item's price in silver pieces.

Shield Bonus: If you are carrying a shield, you get the listed bonus to your Defense. This helps you avoid getting hit in the first place. You need proper training to get the most out of shields, however. If you do not have the Weapon and Shield Style talent, the maximum Defense bonus you receive from a shield is +1. In other words, you must have the talent to get any benefit from using a medium or heavy shield.

Armor & Shield Descriptions

Descriptions of the various armors and shields follow. They are classed into broad categories for ease of play. It is not important to know every little piece of armor your character wears. For game purposes you just need to know the overall

level of protection. Light mail, for example, could indicate a mail shirt and a helmet, a full suit of ring mail, or a mix of heavy leather and chainmail with a coif. You can decide the specifics if you like, using the categories as a guideline.

Heavy Leather Armor: Boiling it in water or wax hardens the leather, which is then fashioned into breast and back plates and shoulder guards. More flexible leather is used for the leggings, gauntlets, and so forth. Some versions are sewn with metal rivets or studs.

Heavy Mail Armor: Also called chainmail, heavy mail is armor made by interlocking small metal rings to form a mesh. Heavy mail is normally worn over a layer of quilted cloth to make it more comfortable, reduce chafing, and absorb some of the force from blows.

Heavy Plate Armor: A full suit of armor favored by knights and lords, plate armor is composed of shaped steel plates fitted over most of the body. The plate is strapped and buckled on over a padded doublet, evenly distributing the weight over the entire body, so it is less restrictive than it might seem.

Heavy Shield: This is the large shield of heavy infantry troops. It is most common on the battlefield, as its use requires the kind of training usually provided only to professional soldiers. Heavy shields can be rectangular or kite shaped.

Light Leather Armor: Light leather armor is common throughout Thedas. Cured and hardened for protection, it is supple enough to be worn like regular clothing. This category also includes hide, quilted, or padded armor.

Light Mail Armor: Also known as ring mail, this armor is made of interlocking metal rings worn over hardened leather armor. The rings are bigger than those used to make chainmail, so it is not as effective.

Light Plate Armor: Light plate, also known as half-plate, is a full suit of heavy mail with select pieces of plate armored (typically a breastplate and greaves) layered on top.

Light Shield: A small shield, sometimes called a target, usually made of wood but sometimes of metal. Light shields are usually round.

Medium Shield: The most popular shield amongst warriors, it provides good protection without being ungainly. Medium shields can be rectangular, round, or kite shaped.

Weapons

Adventurer is not a safe occupation. Sooner or later you'll find yourself cornered by rampaging darkspawn. When that happens, you'll want a good weapon in your hand. It's also important that you be trained in the weapon's use. If you're not, you'd be better off trying harsh language.

Weapon Training

As discussed in **Chapter 1: Character Creation**, weapons are broken down into weapon groups, in which you receive training through your class. If you are trained in a weapon group, you can use any weapon in that group that you are strong enough to wield (see **Weapon Details**, following). If you are untrained in a weapon group, however, you take a –2 penalty on attack rolls and inflict half damage (rounded down) when using a weapon from that group. If it's a missile weapon, the range is cut in half as well. When halving damage, add your Strength before cutting the damage in half.

Weapon Details

The **Weapons** table on page 78 summarizes the game statistics for the most common weapons in Thedas. They are broken down by weapon group and the governing ability is noted in parentheses. The first entry, for example, is Axes Group (Strength). When you attack with a weapon from this group, it's a **Strength (Axes)** test.

The following details are provided for each weapon:

Cost: The weapon's price in silver pieces.

Damage: This is the weapon's damage. When you hit an enemy, you inflict this amount of damage plus your Strength if you are trained in the weapon group. If you are untrained, damage is halved (rounded down). Weapons from the Bows Group add Perception instead of Strength to damage.

Minimum Strength: Some weapons are heavy and/or difficult to wield. You must have the minimum Strength listed to use a weapon effectively. If you don't, the weapon only inflicts 1d6–1 damage.

Weapons

Weapon	Damage	Min. Str	Cost
Axes Group (Strength)			
Battle Axe	2d6	1	14 sp
Throwing Axe	1d6+2	1	10 sp
Two-handed Axe	3d6	3	20 sp
Bludgeons Group (Strength)			
Mace	2d6	1	12 sp
Maul	1d6+3	1	14 sp
Two-handed Maul	2d6+3	3	19 sp
Bows Group (Dexterity)*			
Crossbow	2d6+1	1	20 sp
Short Bow	1d6+1	–1	9 sp
Long Bow	1d6+3	1	15 sp
Brawling Group (Dexterity)			
Fist	1d3	-	-
Gauntlet	1d3+1	-	4 sp
Improvised Weapon	1d6–1	-	-
Dueling Group (Dexterity)			
Main Gauche	1d6+1	–	11 sp
Rapier	1d6+3	0	18 sp
Spiked Buckler	1d6	–1	15 sp
Heavy Blades Group (Strength)			
Bastard Sword	2d6+1	2	20 sp
Longsword	2d6	1	18 sp
Two-handed Sword	3d6	3	23 sp
Lances Group (Strength)			
Heavy Lance	2d6+1	3	20 sp
Jousting Lance	1d6+1	0	6 sp
Light Lance	1d6+3	1	12 sp
Light Blades Group (Dexterity)			
Dagger	1d6+1	-	9 sp
Shortsword	1d6+2	–1	14 sp
Throwing Knife	1d6	-	10 sp
Polearms Group (Strength)			
Glaive	2d6+1	1	23 sp
Halberd	2d6+3	3	25 sp
Military Fork	2d6	2	18 sp
Spears Group (Strength)			
Spear	1d6+3	0	12 sp
Throwing Spear	1d6+3	0	12 sp
Two-handed Spear	2d6	1	20 sp
Staves Group (Dexterity)			
Club	1d6	-	1 sp
Morningstar	1d6+3	1	11 sp
Quarterstaff	1d6+1	-	3 sp
Ammunition			
Arrows (20)	-	-	2 sp
Blots (20)	-	-	3 sp

* Weapons from the Bows Group add Perception instead of Strength to damage.

Missile Weapon Ranges

Weapon	Short Range	Long Range	Reload
Crossbow	30 yards	60 yards	Major Action
Long Bow	26 yards	52 yards	Minor Action
Short Bow	16 yards	32 yards	Minor Action
Throwing Axe	4 yards	8 yards	Minor Action
Throwing Knife	6 yards	12 yards	Minor Action
Throwing Spear	8 yards	16 yards	Minor Action

Missile Weapons

You can make ranged attacks with missile weapons. These are weapons you either shoot at or throw at opponents. Due to the nature of ranged combat, these weapons require a few more details. They are summarized on the **Missile Weapon Ranges** table. The following details are provided for each weapon:

Short Range: If your target is within this range, you attack normally.

Long Range: If your target is within this range, but farther way than short range, your ranged attack suffers a –2 penalty.

Reload: After you make a ranged attack, you must reload before you can fire again. Reload is an action (see **Chapter 2: Playing the Game**); this can be a major, minor, or free action depending on the weapon and your talents. This entry on the table indicates the type of action required to reload each weapon. Talents may change this.

Weapon Descriptions

Descriptions of the various weapons follow. Sometimes a weapon may represent a category of similar weapons. This is noted in the text.

Axes Group

Battle Axe: A wicked, broad-headed axe that is larger than a hand axe, used to cleave through armor and shields. Some battle axes are double-bladed.

Throwing Axe: A warrior's version of a hatchet, smaller than a battle axe and balanced to be thrown.

Two-handed Axe: A greater cousin to the battle axe, this imposing weapon may end in a double-bladed axe head or may have a spike on one side.

Bludgeons Group

Mace: A blunt crushing weapon designed to smash armor, a mace consists of a heavy head of stone or metal set upon a wooden or metal shaft. The head is often flanged or knobbed to better penetrate armor.

Maul: Normally a blacksmith's or woodsman's tool, this long-handled hammer may be used in warfare as a bludgeon to smash foes.

Two-handed Maul: A stout wooden shaft about four feet in length topped with a brutal metal hammerhead.

Bows Group

Crossbow: A crossbow is a type of mechanized bow where the bow is mounted to a wooden stock and drawn with a lever.

Long Bow: A tall bow, roughly the height of a man, made from a single piece of wood and with a long draw.

Short Bow: Sometimes called a horseman's bow, this weapon is smaller than a long bow but handier to use.

Brawling Group

Fist: The favored weapon in barrooms across Thedas.

Gauntlet: A heavy glove made of leather and sometimes reinforced with metal. This category also includes weapons like brass knuckles.

Dueling Group

Improvised Weapon: When you try to bash someone with whatever's at hand, it's an improvised weapon. This can be nearly anything.

Main Gauche: This is a long dagger specifically designing for use in the off-hand, as a parrying weapon. Fereldans prefer the term "left-handed dagger" to the Orlesian "main gauche."

Rapier: A rapier is a long, narrow thrusting weapon favored by duelists. It is a weapon of finesse, its users prizing deftness over the raw power of heavy blades.

Spiked Buckler: This is a very small shield with one or more extruding spikes. It can be used to block blows or punch opponents. It is a weapon, but also gives the wielder a +1 Defense vs. melee attacks.

Heavy Blades Group

Bastard Sword: Also known as a hand-and-a-half sword, a bastard sword has a longer blade and hilt than a longsword.

Longsword: These one-handed blades are also known as broadswords or simply "swords." The blades are about three feet in length, double-edged, and mounted on a hilt with a heavy crossguard.

Two-handed Sword: A large, powerful blade that requires both hands to wield effectively. Two-handed swords can reach five or six feet in length.

Lances Group

Lance weapons are meant to be used while mounted. When used on foot, they count as improvised weapons.

Heavy Lance: This is a long spear used couched under the arm of a horseman.

Jousting Lance: Also known as a tourney lance, this weapon lacks the sharp metal tips of other lances. It is meant for completion instead of battle. Once you make a successful attack with a jousting lance, it splinters and is destroyed.

Light Lance: Similar to the heavy lance, but it can be used overhand or underarm.

Light Blades Group

Dagger: A long knife used to stab and pierce, often carried as a tool as much as a weapon. Long daggers are sometimes called dirks.

Shortsword: Shorter than a longsword but longer than a dagger, the shortsword is a one-handed blade meant for thrusting.

Throwing Knife: Similar to a dagger, but shorter and balanced for throwing.

Polearms Group

All polearms are two-handed weapons.

Glaive: A glaive is a pole weapon with a long curved blade on the business end.

Halberd: This weapon features an axe head and spike mounted at the end of a long pole. Nevarran dragon hunters used them with some success.

Military Fork: Descended from the farmer's pitchfork, the military version is designed to punch through armor.

Spears Group

Short Spear: A simple weapon used for hunting and battle, a short spear is made of a shaft of wood with a sharpened steel head.

Throwing Spear: A light spear that is thrown as a ranged weapon. This category also includes weapons like javelins.

Two-handed Spear: Also called a long spear, a two-handed spear has a wide head of steel at the end of a long wooden shaft.

Staves Group

Club: A short cudgel fashioned of hard wood or sometimes metal. This category also includes weapons like saps.

Morningstar: A short-hafted weapon with a spiked head on the business end.

Quarterstaff: A simple weapon made from a length of hardwood, sometimes reinforced with metal tips.

Equipment

Though an adventurer's life centers on their armor and weapons, their pack and pockets may carry dozens of other pieces of equipment they hope might prove useful in their journeys. These items can mean the difference between life and death, or they might just provide a bit of comfort or entertainment when far from home.

The tables in this chapter list a wide variety of items available for purchase not just by adventurers, but commonly across Thedas from traveling traders and from appropriate shopkeepers. The prices indicated are typical, but may vary based on supply and demand.

Traveling & Adventuring

This section includes common equipment favored by adventurers, and those who live their lives traveling.

Bedroll: More than just a blanket, a bedroll includes a piece of attached waxed canvas to give some protection from the damp ground. More expensive versions include pockets into which leaves or other material can be stuffed for additional insulation and warmth, and straps and buckles that make for tighter packing and easier attachment to a pack or mount.

Blanket: A simple wool blanket, but it can be all that stands between an adventurer and death (or at least discomfort) on a cold night.

Candle: A simple wax candle that illuminates a small (2-yard) radius and burns for 1 hour.

Candle clock: Expertly made to burn at a very particular rate marked on the candle itself or on a rod that stands alongside it, an adventurer will be able to tell within 10 minutes how much time has passed since the candle clock was lit, provided it burned continuously. Will burn for up to 12 hours, but only illuminates a tiny (1-foot) radius around it.

Chain: A length of iron links. A blacksmith can attach multiple short lengths together, or attach a chain to other items, such as shackles.

Chalk: A finger-length piece of white chalk.

Compass: A delicate piece of equipment with a needle floating in oil or water, reliably pointing north.

Cord: Thin line that comes in both a cheap quality useful for tying up parcels, as well as a more expensive version that can withstand the stress of fishing.

Cup: A simple tin cup that can, in a pinch, be used to heat a liquid over a fire.

Dice: Six-sided cubes made of wood or bone inscribed with runes and used to play games of chance. Cheaper versions may be misshapen and will not roll all results with equal probability; more expensive versions are shaped (or loaded with internal weights) to increase the frequency of a particular outcome.

Dining utensils: Small pieces of tin shaped into a spoon and fork, for those travelers who can't make do with just their knife and their fingers.

Fishing tackle: A small selection of hooks, weights, and corks to make fishing an easier task.

Flint & steel: A set of flint and steel is used to start a fire; striking the pieces together causes sparks, which are shed on tinder to begin a blaze.

Floater: A large piece of cork with an attached cord typically used to bind it to cargo being carried over open water so it isn't lost to the depths, but which some adventurers who can't swim cling to in the same situations. A single floater is the size of a large book and provides enough buoyancy to keep an unarmored adventurer from sinking below the surface.

Hook: A length of metal with a ring on one end allowing a rope to be attached. The hook is then flung up to a ledge or branch to secure the rope and allow for easier climbing.

Traveling & Adventuring

Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost
Bedroll	10 sp	Floater (cork)	30 sp	Rope (silk, 20 yards)	1 gp
Blanket (wool)	6 sp	Hook (climbing)	25 sp	Shackles	3 gp
Candle (2)	5 cp	Hook (grapnel)	4 gp	Smoke bomb	15 sp
Candle clock	10 sp	Hunter's snare	8 sp	Spark tube	8 sp
Chain (5 yards)	1 gp	Incense	2 sp	Spike	5 cp
Chalk	2 cp	Lantern	5 sp	Spyglass	15 gp
Compass	5 gp	Lockpicks	12 sp	Stinker	6 sp
Cord (fishing, 50 yards)	2 sp	Mirror (hand, metal)	3 sp	Tarp (canvas)	20 sp
Cord (twine, 50 yards)	1 sp	Pan (frying, iron)	5 sp	Tarp (canvas, waxed)	35 sp
Cup (tin)	10 cp	Plate (tin)	7 cp	Tent, small	10 sp
Dice	20 sp	Playing cards	35 sp	Tent, large	35 sp
Dining utensils	2 sp	Pole, (10 foot)	3 cp	Torch	10 cp
Fishing tackle	10 sp	Pot (iron)	10 sp	Whetstone	10 cp
Flint & steel	10 cp	Rope (20 yards)	2 sp	Whistle	22 sp

A climbing hook is a simple J-shaped piece of metal, easy to carry and throw, but often difficult to get to "stick." A grapnel hook has multiple prongs and a greater chance of finding purchase but is heavier and more difficult to throw properly.

Hunter's snare: A short length of wire that can be looped and used as a snare for small animals.

Incense: A small stick of slow-burning, pleasant-smelling material, incense comes in a variety of scents. A single piece of incense burns for 1 hour.

Lantern: A lantern is like a lamp but is enclosed in glass. It may have shuttered or hinged sides to control how much light it emits. A lantern will burn for about the same amount of time as a lamp (6 hours), but it normally illuminates a wider area (a 10-yard radius). (See "Lamp" under Home and Hearth.)

Lockpicks: A set of tools used to manipulate locks.

Mirror: A small, palm-sized piece of metal polished until it is highly reflective on one side. More expensive versions come in a metal or wooden frame with a small handle.

Pan: A heavy iron skillet, about 10 inches in diameter.

Plate: A simple tin platter.

Playing cards: A deck of pasteboard cards, identical on one side and woodcut-printed on the other with a variety of pictures and symbols that allow for playing a variety of games.

Pole: A straight, 10-foot shaft of cleaned and smoothed wood that can be put to a variety of uses.

Pot: A heavy iron pot with a lid and a looped handle that allows it to be suspended over a fire.

Rope: A length of twisted fibers normally made from hemp, but more expensive varieties are made from lighter, stronger silken cords woven into a rope.

Shackles: With the use of a hammer, these shackles can be riveted shut around the wrists or ankles of any normal-sized humanoid. The two bracelets are usually connected by a one-foot length of chain, but more expensive versions are separated by a stiff iron rod to further restrict the prisoner's movements. A skilled blacksmith given a length of chain can connect two sets of shackles such that a prisoner's ankles and wrists can be simultaneously restrained, or to connect multiple sets of shackles so that prisoners can be moved as a group.

Smoke bomb: One round after the fuse on a smoke bomb is lit, it will begin spewing a thick cloud that will spread outward at a rate of 1 yard per round for 5 rounds until an area 10 yards in diameter is filled with smoke that obscures normal vision.

Spark tube: Immediately when lit, this eight-inch tube shoots a five-foot funnel of bright sparks out one end. The sparks cause no damage, but can be used as a distraction or as a way to signal at a distance.

Spike: A sharp stake of metal, often with an eye on the end. The spike is driven into a rock or ice face, or a castle wall, and a rope can be passed through the eye or tied off to assist in climbing a difficult surface.

Spyglass: Two carefully crafted lenses placed at the ends of a sheet of leather, rolled, and held in place to create a tube that magnifies distant objects for whomever looks through it. More expensive versions come in fixed, wooden cylinders with caps that can be fitted over the ends to better protect the lenses, and the most costly come in tubes that collapse down for easier carrying.

Stinker: A small clay bottle of extremely potent and noxious liquid that can be spread in a 5-yard radius in an attempt to slow or confuse any pursuers who might be tracking an adventurer by scent.

Tarp: A square of canvas 10 feet on an edge that can be put to a multitude of uses; some adventurers and travelers use it to provide partial shelter from the wind. More expensive versions are waxed to provide a further degree of waterproofing, and have holes around their edges reinforced with brass grommets making the tarp easier to tie down over cargo or stake out as shelter.

Tent: A small tent is intended for one person, with arms and armor. Two would find it cramped. A large tent can fit up to four adventurers.

Torch: A short piece of wood or length of flax or hemp, with an end soaked in tallow to make it easier to light. A torch illuminates about a 6-yard radius and burns for approximately 1 hour.

Whetstone: A small palm-sized stone used to keep weapons sharp.

Whistle: A hollow, wooden tube notched so that it makes a shrill sound when someone blows into it.

Carrying & Storage

Those who live a life of travel and adventure sometimes bring a significant number of items along on their journeys. Just as often, they return with even more belongings and want to stow them away securely. This section includes a multitude of ways that items can be transported or stored.

Backpack: Many adventurers prefer a small, standard backpack, a simple canvas sack that won't get in the way in a fight and can carry up to 25 pounds of cargo. Those with more belongings or who want more organization carry a traveler's backpack, a larger backpack separated into several compartments, each secured behind its own tie-down flap, and with a total capacity of 75 pounds.

Barrel: A large wooden vessel bound with iron hoops, a barrel can carry up to 35 gallons of liquid or 175 pounds of a solid material (such as flour). Barrels are typically made of whatever wood is native to the area of its construction, but more expensive barrels are made of rarer materials or wood chosen for how it will flavor or affect what's stored inside.

Basket: A simple, open container woven of dried reeds.

Bottle: A small, fragile container available in a variety of sizes that can contain anything from a few ounces of liquid up to 3 pints. Typically made of baked clay, more expensive versions are made of colored glass, but all come with a clay or cork stopper to seal it shut.

Bucket: Whether fighting a fire, carrying up to 5 gallons of fresh water, or just flipping it over to make an improvised stool, this wooden bucket is what you need.

Cask: A smaller barrel, a cask holds between 9 and 10 gallons of liquid or 50 pounds of solid material.

Chest: A sturdy, wooden box with a hinged lid and a hasp that allows it to be locked shut using a separate lock. Small chests have up to 3 cubic feet of internal storage, while large chests can contain up to 12 cubic feet of material.

Crate: A reinforced wooden box, crates can be constructed anywhere from 1 to 3 feet on an edge in order to contain a wide variety of objects and materials.

Flask: A small, flat metal container designed to carry up to one pint of liquid in a pocket.

Hasp: Two pieces of metal that can be attached to a container, then one folded over the other to provide a loop where a lock can seal the container shut. A hasp and a pair of hinges can convert a simple crate into a crude chest.

Hinge: A jointed piece of metal that allows a door or lid to swing open and closed.

Lock: Intricate clockwork mechanisms designed to keep something closed or sealed. Cylinder locks are opened by twisting dials that move the tumblers inside its casing, slowing thieves but able to be opened by those with enough persistence to attempt enough possibilities. Keyed locks are more secure, opening only to those who carry a unique, matching key, but are vulnerable to thieves skilled in using lockpicks.

Pouch: A small bag held shut by a button or drawstring. More expensive pouches have leather tabs that allow them to be threaded onto a belt for easier carrying and access.

Sack: A simple bag of rough material that can carry up to 40 pounds of cargo, but is very prone to ripping open if overloaded, and can be difficult to seal shut if near to full.

Sawdust: Clean, fresh sawdust is sold cheaply in quantity to those who wish to fill in the loose space in a container with packing material to protect its contents from damage in transit.

Carrying & Storage

Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost
Backpack	9 sp	Cask	3 sp	Lock (cylinder)	2 gp
Backpack (traveler's)	15 sp	Chest (large)	5 gp	Lock (keyed)	6 gp
Barrel	9 sp	Chest (small)	1 gp	Pouch (belt)	1 sp
Basket (reed)	7 cp	Crate	20 cp	Pouch	8 cp
Bottle (clay)	3 cp	Flask, metal	50 cp	Sack	5 cp
Bottle (glass)	8 cp	Hasp	4 sp	Sawdust (1 cu. foot)	1 cp
Bucket (wooden)	11 cp	Hinge	1 sp	Skin, water/wine	40 cp

Skin: Water is a necessity and a prepared adventurer ensures a ready supply. Wine is a luxury…but many adventurers try to bring some of it along as well.

Tools

An adventurer without tools may be stuck without a way to open a sealed tomb, or forced into trying to chop down trees with a longsword to make a raft in a flood. This section includes items adventurers might carry to be better prepared for specialized or heavier tasks, or items that might be found in a professional craftsman's workshop.

Tools such as axes or hammers are very similar to some weapons, but are typically ill weighted for use in combat, or made with materials that might quickly break, splinter, or shatter in the heat of battle.

Anvil: Similar to the enormous chunk of iron next to a blacksmith's forge, this smaller version still weighs 40 pounds but can be moved around and used on the road for emergency repairs of weapons, armor, horseshoes, and more.

Awl: A short wooden handle attached to a metal spike, used to punch holes in heavy materials such as leather.

Axe: A heavy axe on a three-foot shaft, appropriate for felling and trimming trees.

Bellows: An air bladder with a nozzle on one end and a pair of handles that allow the air inside to be quickly expelled in a strong gust to keep coals burning as hot as possible.

Chisel: A short bar of iron sharpened into a blade at one end, used with a hammer to shape or cut wood or stone.

Crowbar: A two-foot length of iron flattened on one end, allowing an adventurer to wedge it into a gap and lever upon the surrounding material. More expensive crowbars are longer (and heavier), allowing for greater leverage.

Drill: With one end bent into a handle that allows the adventurer to spin the other, sharpened end in place, a drill can bore a hole the size of the sharpened end (the bit) into wood or stone. More expensive drills allow for the bit to be removed and replaced with a new one when it becomes dull, while the bits on cheaper drills are simply sharpened in place.

Glue: A viscous material sold in airtight pots. When spread between two surfaces that are pressed together and left to dry, glue creates a strong bond—though one that can be easily broken if enough force is applied.

Hammer: A wide variety of hammers are available for the similar variety of tasks that can be accomplished by banging on something as hard as possible. A simple, one-handed iron hammer can handle most simple tasks. A forge hammer, specially tempered and shaped for metalworking, is often found in the hands of a blacksmith. Those dealing out large amounts of brute force often carry a sledge hammer, a heavy hammerhead mounted at the end of a three-foot shaft.

Hatchet: A small, one-handed version of an axe. It would be difficult to fell a tree with a hatchet, but it's the perfect tool for trimming branches from a felled log, or chopping firewood down to size.

Tools

Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost
Anvil (portable)	40 sp	Hammer (iron)	5 sp	Pitchfork	5 sp
Awl	3 sp	Hammer (sledge)	20 sp	Rake	3 sp
Axe (woods)	8 sp	Hatchet	5 sp	Saw	4 sp
Bellows	12 cp	Hoe	2 sp	Scythe	35 cp
Chisel	1 sp	Knife (skinning)	5 sp	Shovel	3 sp
Crowbar	3 sp	Ladder (4 yards, rope)	3 sp	Sickle	5 sp
Drill	5 sp	Ladder (4 yards, wooden)	3 sp	Spade	4 sp
Glue (small pot)	7 cp	Mallet (wooden)	6 cp	Tongs (forge)	4 sp
Hammer (forge)	8 sp	Nails (25)	20 cp	Tongs (hand)	1 sp

Pitchfork: A long, wooden shaft with three sharpened tines attached to one end, perfect for separating and turning hay or other materials.

Rake: A broom, but with the bristles replaced with metal nails or tines, used to loosen soil or separate dead grass or plants from the still-living.

Saw: A piece of metal edged in sharpened teeth, used (via the attached handle) to cut apart pieces of wood.

Scythe: A long, curving handle with a similarly long and curving blade attached perpendicularly at one end, used for mowing grass or reaping crops.

Shovel: With a wide, flat metal blade on one end of a solid wooden haft, a shovel is perfect for moving around earth or other loose materials.

Hoe: A simple tool with a flat, metal blade at one end, used by farmers and fieldworkers to break up hard earth.

Knife, Skinning: A small knife with a specially shaped blade that makes short and clean (as possible) work of separating a creature's pelt from its carcass.

Ladder, Rope or Wooden: For those willing to carry its bulk where it's needed, a ladder allows nearly anyone to make an easy, stable climb. Wooden ladders are sturdy but long and inflexible. A rope ladder is bulky but is easier to move in enclosed spaces.

Mallet: Unlike a hammer, a mallet has a wooden head, making it usable for light work but easy to break if used on sharp edges or metal materials.

Nails: Short pieces of metal, sharpened at one end and flattened at the other for easy pounding.

Sickle: A hand-held tool with a crescent-shaped blade designed for harvesting grain or chopping apart loose vegetation.

Spade: Similar to a shovel, but with a narrower, longer blade allowing for easier digging and breaking apart of hard-packed earth.

Tongs: Pincers that allow materials to be grasped and moved about at a distance, hand tongs are made of two pieces of wood connected by a pivot. Forge tongs are made of iron allowing for the handling of heavier and hotter materials such as those found in a blacksmith's workshop.

Clothes & Fashion

Few in Thedas go about naked, but once someone decides to wear clothing the options they have are limited only by fashion, imagination, and necessity.

More so than nearly any other table in this section, the items in this table are only broad guidelines as to what an adventurer may be able to purchase. Prices on the table are indicative of quality but common versions of the item, made of standard materials. Adventurers might pay less for a version made of lesser material, or for one that has been heavily (and usually badly) used, but they might also be able to pay more for any of the following options:

- *Better materials,* such as a wool or silk shirt rather than a cotton one.
- *Sturdier construction,* for clothing that will better withstand the rigors of adventuring and travel.
- *Adornment,* such as embroidery or fur trim on a cloak or a fancier buckle on a belt.
- *Bespoke fitting,* for clothes designed especially to fit an individual's size or form.
- *Fashion,* for items in a style favorable to the fashion-sensitive portions of an area or culture.
- *Coloring,* when an object is desired in a particular shade rather than that of the raw materials or what's available.
- *Season,* for clothing better suited to a particular time of year or climate, such as heavier and warmer, winter-weight gloves as opposed to thinner, summer-weight ones.

The more of these options desired for the same item, the more expensive it may be. Similarly, the more special ized the clothing the more difficult it may be to find, and may require the buyer to find instead a tailor or other professional who can custom-make the item.

Breeches: Tight trousers that fasten just below the knee.

Belt: A length of leather cinched through a simple buckle.

Boots: Heavy foot coverings that extend up to near the knees.

Cloak: A sleeveless, cape-like garment that clasps around the neck, often with an attached hood.

Clothes & Fashion

Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost
Breeches	8 cp	Jacket	2 sp	Sash	5 cp
Belt	7 cp	Jerkin	9 cp	Shirt	1 sp
Boots	5 sp	Loincloth	1 cp	Shoes	1 sp
Cloak	3 sp	Mask (cloth)	8 cp	Skirt	7 cp
Dress	12 cp	Mask (plaster)	3 sp	Slippers	8 cp
Gloves	4 sp	Pants	1 sp	Stockings	16 cp
Gown	40 sp	Robe (dressing)	11 cp	Tabard	7 cp
Hat	1 sp	Robe (mage's)	6 sp	Underclothes	3 cp
Hood	5 cp	Sandals	6 cp	Vest	6 cp

Trade Goods & Raw Materials

Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost
Beads (10)	15 cp	Food (1 pound, dried)	4 sp	Pelt (small)	15 sp
Beeswax (1 pound)	10 sp	Food (1 pound, fresh)	3 sp	Salt (1 pound)	25 sp
Cotton (10-yard bolt)	20 sp	Honey (1 ounce)	2 sp	Silk (1 square yard)	35 sp
Dye (1 pint)	25 sp	Leather (1 pound)	8 sp	Spices (1 ounce)	5 gp
Feathers (1 pound)	45 sp	Linen (10-yard bolt)	15 sp	Wool (1 pound)	35 cp
Flour (1 pound)	2 sp	Pelt (large)	40 sp		

Dress: A one-piece garment with a shirt that billows into an attached skirt around the legs.

Gloves: Hand coverings with separate parts for each finger and the thumb.

Gown: Similar to a dress, but longer, bulkier, and more formal.

Hat: A head covering that perches atop the head and comes in many forms.

Hood: A head covering that drapes loosely over the entire head.

Jacket: A garment worn over the torso and arms, to provide additional protection, warmth, or style.

Jerkin: A sleeveless jacket that extends down over the hips.

Loincloth: The simplest of garments, a single strip of cloth covering the groin and fastened in place with a short length of rope.

Mask: Used to disguise or cover the face, a mask can be a simple strip of cloth or can be a shaped piece of plaster covered in decoration or designed to look like something else (such as the stylized face of a monster).

Pants: Full-length trousers that cover the legs from the waist to the ankles.

Robe: A simple item of sleeved clothing that drapes down the full length of the body but hangs open in the front unless held shut with buttons or a sash. Dressing robes are worn around the home as simple and comfortable clothing, while some mages wear heavier robes as their everyday garments.

Sandals: A leather or wooden sole held onto the foot with small thongs to provide the foot with basic protection.

Sash: A short length of cloth worn as a decorative item, wrapped around the head or waist, or used in any of dozens of ways.

Shirt: A light piece of clothing covering the entire upper body except the head and hands.

Shoes: Sturdy soles attached to upper pieces of leather that cover and protect the foot.

Skirt: A loose garment worn around the waist and draping down to billow around the legs.

Slippers: Shoes that provide limited protection, but some comfort and style.

Tabard: A full-length piece of cloth, sleeveless and worn via a hole for the head, typically emblazoned with a symbol or a coat of arms.

Underclothes: Simple garments worn beneath other clothing. They are also known as smallclothes.

Vest: A tight, sleeveless piece of clothing that buttons closed over the lower torso.

Trade Goods & Raw Materials

Not every item is carried because of its utility. Some are carried because of their value. The table in this section provides a base value for the listed items, but even before haggling begins there may be wild swings in an item's value based on the availability of that particular commodity, whether it is in season, if it's of particularly high (or low) quality in that area, or based on the reputation of its producer.

Similarly, this list is only the beginning of what items a traveler might carry from one place to another in hopes of making a profit. Many items on the table (such as food, pelts, and spices) come in a wide variety of types, and some items that are nearly worthless in one area may be incredibly valuable in another. Making a profit requires intelligence, nerve, money, and the ability to move items safely from one place to another. An adventurer might be able to make some easy money if they have empty room in their pack…but they may also decide that it's easier to hunt monsters and collect bounties than it is to try to win big profits away from established traders!

Beads: Small pieces of glass, stone, or other material with a hole drilled through them so that they might be strung together or otherwise incorporated into jewelry, clothing, or artwork.

Beeswax: The raw wax produced by bees when they make their honeycombs, used to make candles and for other purposes.

Cotton: A simple fiber that can be put to a variety of purposes. Often spun into thread and then woven into fabric.

Dye: A liquid used to add color to fabrics and other materials.

Feathers: Gathered from a variety of birds, with rarer or more attractive feathers used for decorative purposes and cheaper and more common feathers used to stuff mattresses and pillows.

Flour: Ground grain used to make a variety of foodstuffs.

Food: Dried or otherwise preserved food lasts much longer before becoming inedible, which is important when moving it between distant markets. Fresh food spoils faster, but commands a higher price (and a higher profit) if still edible and salable at its destination.

Honey: Sweet and highly portable, honey is valued for how it brings sweetness to dishes it is added to.

Leather: Tanned and ready for use, leather comes in as wide a variety of shapes as the creatures it initially belonged to, requiring it to be sold by the pound.

Linen: A light, simple textile woven from fibers of flax.

Pelt: The skin of an animal or other creature, with the fur, hair, scales, or wool still attached.

Salt: Used as a flavoring for food, but also as a preservative and to cure meats.

Silk: The most luxurious of fabrics.

Spices: Seeds and other plant substances typically used in small quantities to bring flavor to food.

Wool: As a trade good, wool is usually transported in loose bundles of material recently shorn from sheep, cleaned but not yet made into yarn or fabric.

Professional Gear

Some items are typically only acquired and used by those of a profession that requires its use. Many of the items on the following table are expensive, but they are also of high quality and extremely well suited for their intended purpose.

Book: Blank pages bound between sturdy covers, ready for whatever the author chooses to inscribe on them.

Book lock: Attached to the covers of a book with small nails, the parts of a book lock fold together, latch, and require a simple key to open. A book lock will provide little or no barrier to those with lock picks or those willing to use brute strength to pry the book open, but it will slow those hoping to peek casually or surreptitiously within.

Canvas: Stretched across a sturdy framework, a canvas provides a smooth clean surface for a painter to work upon. A standard canvas is square and about two feet on an edge; the prices of larger and smaller canvases vary proportionally. (Note that the price of a canvas does not include that of a frame, often crafted or purchased after the artwork is complete.)

Healer's kit: This kit contains bandages, herbs, salves, potions, small knives, thread & needle, & other tools used to treat injuries.

Horn: A tapered, rigid tube made from a hollow animal horn or shaped from metal. It can be used to blow a few loud, clear tones, and is used to sound warnings or coordinate hunters across long distances.

Illuminating kit: This kit contains the variety of intricate tools needed to decorate a page (but not any raw materials, such as inks or gold leaf).

Ink: A fluid used for writing, drawing, and printing. Ink comes most commonly in black, but ink in red (and sometimes other colors) is available for a higher price.

Musical instrument: Nearly anything can become an instrument in the hands of a skilled musician, but well-crafted instruments can help that skilled musician perform something akin to magic.

Paint: Many artists produce their own paint, but often also jump at the chance to use high-quality paint or paint in unique colors produced in faraway places. Transported and sold in pots sealed with wax to prevent the paint from drying before use.

Painter's kit: This kit includes a variety of brushes, a small palette, and other tools a painter can use to produce their art.

Paper: Paper comes in as wide a variety of forms as the materials used to make it, but the larger a piece of paper the more expensive it is, up to and including broad sheets used to craft large maps.

Pencil: A short piece of charcoal or graphite used for sketching or writing.

Quill: A carefully selected feather that, when properly prepared, is well suited for writing or drawing using ink.

Scroll: A length of paper or vellum three feet long and one foot wide, affixed at both ends to a wooden or metal rod allowing the paper to be rolled around it for storage and transport.

Sealing ring: A ring that can be pressed into hot wax, sealing a letter or parcel, that leaves a particular impression. Sealing rings are often available with a standard variety of basic (and reused) shapes on them, but custom sealing rings featuring a unique sigil or a coat of arms can be fashioned for a higher price.

Sealing wax: Small blocks of wax that can be heated with a candle and dripped onto a surface, ready to be impressed with a sealing ring.

Home & Hearth

The items in the following table are of little use to adventurers on the road, but are often part of what makes a comfortable home to come back to after their journeys.

Bed frame: A wooden framework with a net of rope woven through it to provide support for a mattress.

Blanket: Though it wouldn't stand up long under the rigors of travel, this cotton blanket will provide considerable comfort at home.

Bowl: A simple dish for serving or eating food, available in a variety of materials.

Broom: A collection of straw bristles bound at the end of a long handle, used to clean floors.

Brush: A bound collection of bristles and a handle, used to detangle and style hair.

Professional Gear

Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost	Gear	Cost
Book (blank, 30 pages)	10 gp	Musical instrument (horn)	15 sp	Pencil	1 cp
Book lock	2 gp	Musical instrument (drum)	8 sp	Quill	3 cp
Canvas	5 sp	Musical instrument (stringed)	20 sp	Scroll	1 gp
Healer's kit	25 sp	Musical instrument (wind)	10 sp	Sealing ring (custom)	6 gp
Horn (hunting)	8 sp	Paint (pot)	3 sp	Sealing ring (standard)	5 sp
Illuminating kit	5 gp	Painter's kit	1 gp	Sealing wax	5 cp
Ink (black, one vial)	20 cp	Paper (mapsheet)	1 sp		
Ink (red, one vial)	25 cp	Paper (page)	3 cp		

Home & Hearth

Gear	Cost
Bed frame	30 sp
Blanket (cotton)	4 sp
Bowl (clay)	3 cp
Bowl (metal)	20 cp
Bowl (wooden)	6 cp
Broom	7 cp
Brush	12 cp
Cauldron	35 sp
Chair (upholstered)	25 sp
Chair (wooden)	10 sp
Comb	6 cp
Cup (clay)	5 cp
Cup (tin)	10 cp
Cup (wooden)	8 cp
Lamp	2 sp
Looking glass (full)	7 gp
Looking glass (small)	5 gp
Mattress (feather)	45 sp
Mattress (straw)	20 sp
Mug (clay)	8 cp
Mug (metal)	15 cp
Oil (pint)	8 cp
Pillow	3 sp
Quilt	10 sp
Soap (1 pound)	15 cp
Stool	25 cp
Table (large)	45 sp
Table (small)	10 sp
Wineglass	3 gp

Food & Lodging

Gear	Cost
Ale (pint)	10 cp
Ale (pitcher)	25 cp
Bath	1 sp
Bread (1 loaf)	5 cp
Candy (1 pound)	8 sp
Cheese (1 pound)	25 cp
Dried meat (1 pound)	35 cp
Fruit (basket, fresh)	20 sp
Lodging (1 week, private apartment)	5 gp
Lodging (1 week, private house)	20 gp
Lodging (1 night, inn, common room)	5 cp
Lodging (1 night, inn, private room)	2 sp
Mead (pint)	15 cp
Meal (inn; full)	25 cp
Meal (inn; bowl stew)	5 cp
Pickled vegetables (1 serving)	3 cp
Rations (1 week, travel)	2 sp
Tea (1 pound)	6 sp
Vegetables (basket, fresh)	25 cp
Wash	2 cp
Wine (bottle, cheap)	20 cp
Wine (bottle, fine)	3 sp

Cauldron: A large, heavy iron pot used to prepare stews and large quantities of food.

Chair: A basic piece of furniture, available as a simple wooden chair or as a more expensive (and more comfortable) version with upholstered cushions.

Comb: A simple piece of carved wood or bone used for hair styling.

Cup: Simple drinking vessels found around the house, available in a variety of materials.

Lamp: An oil lamp will burn for about 6 hours on a pint of oil. It illuminates a 6-yard radius. It burns more steadily than a torch, but the flaming oil can spill easily.

Looking glass: A large piece of glass affixed to a similarly large piece of polished metal to provide a clear reflection. A small looking glass is often propped atop a table or other piece of furniture, while a full looking glass is as tall as a human and set in a freestanding wooden frame.

Mattress: After a time on the road, adventurers may fall into a deep and dreamless sleep on a good mattress. Decent mattresses are stuffed with clean straw, and the better ones are stuffed with feathers.

Mug: Taller than a cup, often with a hefty handle and thicker walls, mugs are typically used for drinking heated or chilled beverages, as well as ale, since it can contain a full pint.

Oil: Burned for light in lamps and lanterns. A pint lasts for about 6 hours.

Pillow: A small square stuffed with feathers, used to provide additional comfort in bed and elsewhere around the home.

Quilt: A heavy blanket pieced together from numerous pieces of fabric.

Soap: A cake of material that can be combined with water to clean people or objects.

Stool: A short, knee-high seat.

Table: Tables come in small versions that can be used as a desk by a single person, or larger versions that can seat up to six for a meal.

Wineglass: A delicate vessel carefully crafted and shaped by an expert glassblower, perfect for drinking similarly subtle and delicate wines or liquors.

Food & Lodging

As you'll find on the table in this section, when on the road an adventurer can sometimes purchase the comforts of a home.

Ale: Alcoholic drink made using water, malted grain such as barley, bitter herbs or flowers such as hops, and yeast. Higher quality ale could cost as much as three to five times that listed here. In Ferelden, some ale is made using ryott instead of barley.

Bath: A full basin of hot water, soap, and sponges and brushes that can be used to scrub away the grime of adventure.

Lodging: The price of lodging varies, not just as shown in the table, but also with the quality of the lodging, its furnishing, and its location.

Mead: Alcoholic beverage made from fermented honey. Stronger than ale, with a hangover potential to match.

Meal: A full meal includes fresh bread, cooked meat, and whatever stew, cheese, porridge, or pastry the innkeeper has prepared for the day.

Rations: Dried meats, nuts, and other simple foodstuffs that provide sustenance (but not always pleasure) while traveling.

Wash: A small basin of clean water and a rag, suitable for basic (but not full) cleansing.

Wine: Fermented beverage made using grapes or other fruit.

Animals, Mounts, & Vehicles

This section describes common mounts and domestic animals and their associated gear, and includes a table with a price for each. Game statistics can be found in the **Game Master's Guide**

Cart: A small vehicle used for hauling. They are either pushed by hand or pulled by a mule.

Dog: Any of the various hunting and guard dogs common in Ferelden. The famed mabari dogs are covered in the **Game Master's Guide**.

Draft Horse: Slow but strong beasts used to pull wagons.

Falcon: A bird of prey highly regarded among the Avvar.

Feed: Oats and grains used to feed horses and other animals.

Mule: A pack animal used for carrying heavy loads.

Riding Horse: A common horse used for travel and recreation. Not trained for combat.

Saddle: A leather seat used by riders on mounts.

Saddlebags: A pair of large pouches hung on horses and mules and used for storage.

Stabling: One night in a stable for an animal.

Wagon: A four wheeled vehicle usually pulled by draft horses.

Animals, Mounts, & Vehicles

Animal, Gear, or Service	Cost
Cart	20 sp
Dog	15 sp
Draft Horse	50 sp
Falcon	75 sp
Feed (per day)	5 cp
Mule	20 sp
Riding Horse	120 sp
Saddle	20 sp
Saddlebags	10 sp
Stabling (per day)	10 cp
Wagon	150 sp

The Art of Poisoning

The body of lore on the preparation and use of poisons in Thedas is extensive. In most realms this knowledge is shrouded in secrecy, its ancient recipes passed from master to student through generations. Even where this knowhow is easier to come by its use is difficult and dangerous to learn. Many are those who perish learning the art of poisoning.

Thus, the preparation and use of poisons is usually—and wisely—left to specialists. Most noble houses of Orzammar regularly employ one or several poisoners, to say nothing of the Antivan Crows, who have informal annual contests to recognize the most creative uses of poison in the previous year.

There are three classes of poisons in *Dragon Age*: Novice, Journeyman, and Master. These correspond to the level of the Poison-Making talent needed to prepare them.

There are three facets to the utilization of poisons. First, the recipe for a poison must be learned. Second, the poison must be prepared from its raw materials. Finally, it must be used (and without harming the wrong target). Each facet requires skill, and is described in the following sections.

Learning Poisons

All characters with the Poison-Making talent know how to make at least two poisons, and more are learned automatically as that talent is improved. However, most poisoners will seek to learn more recipes.

To learn a new recipe a poisoner must find a teacher, which is generally either a poisoner of greater talent or a written record such as a book or scroll. Most high-level poisoners guard their knowledge jealously, paranoid that it will be used against them or will undermine a monopoly they enjoy in their homeland. Books are hard to find. Those not destroyed by the zealous are often held under lock and key. Several sample books are described in the **Poison Texts** sidebar on page 92**.** Game Masters are encouraged to create their own. Where knowledge can be paid for—always and only at the GM's discretion, and usually requiring an adventure on top of the cash price—Novice recipes cost 50–100 sp, Journeyman (and grenade) recipes cost 1–10 gp, and Master recipes cost 10 gp or more.

Given an appropriate source, learning a recipe requires an advanced **TN 13 Cunning (Poison Lore)** test with a threshold of 15. Each test requires a day of study. Some sources of poison knowledge may be corrupted, partial, or dangerous as the GM sees fit. When learning a recipe from a source like this, the player must roll on the **Poison Research Mishaps** table each time they fail a test.

Poison Research Mishaps

d6 Roll	Effect
1–3	No additional danger.
4–5	You suffer the regular effect and basic damage of the poison you're trying to learn.
6	You suffer the regular effect and double the basic damage of the poison you're trying to learn.

Preparing Poisons

To prepare one or more doses of a poison requires knowledge of the appropriate recipe, the right raw materials, and time to work.

The cost of the raw materials for each poison or grenade is listed in the **Poisons & Grenades Table** on page 94 (the number before the slash). These prices assume reasonable access to ready avenues of commerce, including black markets for the more dangerous poisons. The GM may always declare that certain poisons cannot be prepared in certain areas because the raw materials are simply not available there, and is free to require social tests for heroes who wish to acquire the ingredients for deadly poisons without attracting the attention of the local authorities.

Player Characters can avoid paying (and attracting unwanted attention) by trying to harvest raw materials from the landscape. Harvesting one's own ingredients requires an **Advanced Cunning (Natural Lore)** test with threshold 10 and a TN based on the class of the poison in question: TN 11 for Novice poisons, TN 15 for Journeyman poisons, and TN 19 for Master poisons. Each test takes a day of traveling the landscape. The GM is always free to rule that the ingredients of certain poisons are not available in a given area.

Once the raw materials are in hand, preparing a dose of poison requires an **Advanced Cunning (Poison Lore)** test with threshold 10 and a TN based on the class of the poison in question: TN 13 for Novice poisons, TN 15 for Journeyman poisons, and TN 17 for Master poisons. Each test takes two hours (Novice poisons), four hours (Journeyman poisons), or 6 hours (Master poisons) with access to a private place and appropriate tools of the trade—burners, tubing, vessels, and so forth—in each case. A decent working setup costs 1 gp at the very least and is difficult to transport without damage. Superior and masterwork lab apparatuses cost a great deal more.

On success, the test produces three doses of a Novice poison, two doses of a Journeyman poison (or two grenades), or one dose of a Master poison.

The GM may rule that a character working with substandard or improvised equipment, tainted raw materials, or under chaotic conditions must roll on the **Poison-Making Mishaps** table each time they fail a production test, adding +1 to the roll if they're working on a Journeyman poison or +2 if they're working on a Master poison. Given potentially fatal outcomes, the GM should provide advance warning in circumstances where failure will warrant use of the mishaps table.

Poison-Making Mishaps

d6 Roll	Effect
1–3	No additional danger.
4–5	You suffer the regular effect and basic damage of the poison you're trying to prepare.
6	You suffer the regular effect and double the basic damage of the poison you're trying to prepare, and your tools are damaged or destroyed (GM's option which one).
7+	You die and your tools are destroyed.

Poison Texts

Heart of Fire

This substantial tome was written by an anonymous priest of the Imperial Chantry. In it, he discusses the most and least proper methods for raining the wrath of the Maker on His enemies. It contains recipes for shock bombs, magebane, and concentrated magebane.

On Combustibles and Corrosives

This book by a dwarven miner named Grundrak discusses the use of combustibles and corrosives for best effect. It contains the formulae for both acid flasks and fire bombs. Grundrak wrote it in the Trade Tongue, certain that humans needed its advice most of all.

Riaan's Hammer

A noted work by the templar Riaan, this book mostly concerns subjects other than poison making, most notably the effective torture of maleficarum to save their souls. Even so, the chapter on magebane contains its recipe. The Chantry supposedly has copies that also contain the formula for concentrated magebane, but none are known to exist outside its cathedrals and it would be heresy to possess one.

Thoughts on Fragrance

Supposedly written by the Antivan poetess Evelina, this book is a masterwork of cunning prose. Those who know the correct Crow ciphers are aware that, along with its fancy turns of phrase, it contains recipes for crow poison, concentrated crow poison, and adder's kiss.

Unusual Diseases

This large physician's reference tome was written by the Tevinter physician-mage Telregard. Not only an invaluable study of the many strange ailments that afflict Thedans, it also contains detailed notes on substances that can cause the semblance of such diseases. These notes include the recipes for fleshrot and marrow lock. The book also gives a +2 bonus to **Cunning (Healing)** tests for those treating the more outré diseases of the world.

The Web Deceiving

This folio by the Shaper and naturalist Orgaard contains extensive notes—in the Dwarven tongue—on deep crawlers, which he studied extensively. It contains the recipes for both regular and concentrated spider venom.

Some creatures may be immune to the effects of certain poisons, or of all poisons. Because each poison differs from others and every creature is different, the GM is always the arbiter of these immunities. In general, the GM should consider potential immunities logically rather than biologically. For example, the incorporeal nature of shades and ash wraiths would logically render them immune to the effects of toxins. As another example, although genlocks, ghouls, and blight wolves are all Blight-tainted, nothing about their physical nature suggests that they should be immune to the effects of poisons.

Using Poisons

Unless a given poison's description says otherwise, poison can be inflicted on unfortunate victims either by ingestion or by coating a bladed weapon in the stuff and stabbing them with it. Grenades are used by throwing them with enough force to destroy the glass flasks in which they're carried.

Those with the Poison-Making talent are able to use poisons and grenades in combat without endangering themselves or their allies. They've been taught how to carry glass flasks with due care, how to avoid nicking themselves with toxic blades, and where best to stab and cut their enemies to ensure poisons do their work quickly and effectively. Those without that talent can try to use grenades and poisons, but run the risk of disaster when they do. See the **Armed and Very Dangerous** sidebar on the facing page.

You can coat a single melee weapon (from the Dueling, Light Blades, or Spears Groups) or three arrows/bolts with an activate action. This uses up one dose of poison and both the poison and the weapon must be readied. This can be done prior to combat, but no more than one minute before the encounter begins. Once applied, a poison's effectiveness on a weapon lasts for the duration of a combat encounter only (whether because it drips off, is worn away by a scabbard, or sees its effectiveness degrade through exposure to the air or elements). A single weapon may only be coated with a single type of poison at a time, and only with a single dose of the stuff. That is, doses can't be "doubled up."

The poison is delivered by means of a special stunt, Envenom, which can be used by any character attacking with a poison-coated weapon. Note that a single enemy can only suffer the effects of a given type of poison once per encounter. "Concentrated" poisons are distinct from their non-concentrated counterparts for these (and other) purposes.

Example

Two thugs in the back streets of Denerim attack the warrior Jannelle with shortswords coated with crow poison. In the first round of combat, only one thug hits Jannelle. He did not roll a stunt so inflicts damage as normal. On the second round both thugs hit Jannelle and both roll a stunt as well. The first thug gets 4 stunt points and performs Envenom and Mighty Blow. Jannelle takes damage from the attack itself plus 1d6 for Mighty Blow, and benefits from the protection of her armor as normal. She then also suffers the effects of the crow poison, which inflicts 1d6 penetrating damage. The second thug generates 2 stunt points. He'd like to use envenom as well, but Jannelle can't be affected by crow poison a second time in the same encounter. He chooses Pierce Armor instead.

SP Cost	Stunt
2	**Envenom:** The toxins on your blade pump through your opponent's body and do their deadly work. Your enemy immediately suffers the basic damage and additional effects of your poison. Remember that the basic damage from poisons is penetrating damage.

Using Grenades

Attacking with grenades works differently than poison or normal ranged combat. You don't need to actually hit a target, just get close enough to catch him in the blast.

All grenades are missile weapons with a short range of 4 yards and a long range of 8 yards. Grenade attacks are handled as follows:

1. To use a grenade you must first prepare it with a ready action. If you do not throw the grenade the same round you prepare it, you become susceptible to the kaboom! stunt (see **Armed and Very Dangerous**).
2. You must pick a target point within 8 yards of you. It doesn't need to be visible to you, but there must be a way for the grenade to get there. You can throw a grenade over a hedge, for example, but you can't throw one through a stone wall.
3. Once the grenade is prepared, you can lob it (a major action).
4. When lobbing, make a **TN 11 Dexterity (Grenades)** test. The GM may modify the target number for difficult throws, such as tossing a grenade through a small window.
5. If the test is a success, the grenade lands in the target area and explodes. If the test is failed, the grenade misses its target and goes 1d6 yards in a direction of the GM's choosing (have fun with that, GMs!) before exploding.
6. Everyone within 2 yards of the explosion—friend and foe alike—takes damage from an exploding grenade.

You can use the following stunts while attacking with a grenade: Defensive Stance, Knock Prone, Lethal Blow, Mighty Blow, Pierce Armor, Seize the Initiative, Skirmish, Stay Aware, Taunt, and Threaten. Each stunt can only affect one target, but if several targets are damaged by the grenade, not all stunts need to be be assigned to the same target. For example, if you catch two darkspawn in the blast of a grenade and generate 4 stunt points, you could use Pierce Armor on one darkspawn and Knock Prone on the other.

Armed & Very Dangerous

When a character without the Poison-Making talent tries to coat a weapon with poison they must make a **TN 13 Cunning (Poison Lore)** test. They suffer a –3 penalty if battle has already begun. If the test is failed, the poison does not coat the weapon and the character immediately suffers both its basic damage (penetrating as always) and additional effects. Even if the test is passed, the character (or anyone using their imperfectly coated weapon) must spend 4 stunt points rather than 2 to perform the envenom stunt.

Anyone carrying grenades is asking for trouble, whether they have the Poison-Making talent or not. All enemies attacking such characters can perform the Kaboom! stunt.

SP Cost	Stunt
3	**Kaboom!** Your attack detonates either a grenade held by your target or carried by your target. ("Held" means "prepared to throw"; "carried" means "stowed somewhere on their person.") If your target has the Poison-Making talent, their carried grenades may not be chosen. Held grenades must always be chosen before carried grenades, if both are legal targets. If carried grenades are targeted and multiple grenades are being carried, the GM randomly determines the exploding grenade among them. The detonated grenade inflicts its full damage on your target and anyone else within 2 yards of him. Be aware that if you inflict this stunt on a melee attack, *you* are within 2 yards of the exploding grenade, unless you also Skirmish!

Poison & Grenade Details

The **Poisons & Grenades** table summarizes Thedas's most common toxins and explosives. The following details are provided for each:

Damage: The basic damage the poison or grenade inflicts. Poison damage is always penetrating unless otherwise noted. (Grenade damage is affected normally by armor.)

Additional Effects: The subtle and unusual effects of the poison or grenade, described in greater detail in that poison's extended description.

Cost: A typical price for the raw materials needed to make a batch of that poison or grenade, followed by a typical price to purchase a single pre-made dose or grenade. Availability is always subject to GM approval, as most of these compounds are very difficult to find on the open market given that few have common or legitimate uses.

Poisons & Grenades

Poison	Damage	Additional Effects	Cost
Novice			
Crow Poison	1d6	–	20 sp / 1 gp
Deathroot Extract	–	Hallucinations	5 sp / 25 sp
Hale's Dust	–	–2 Strength	10 sp / 50 sp
Spider Venom	–	–2 Dexterity	10 sp / 50 sp
Journeyman			
Adder's Kiss	2d6+4	–	1 gp / 5 gp
Concentrated Crow Poison	2d6	Delayed initiative, stunt restriction	70 sp / 350 sp
Concentrated Spider Venom	–	–4 Dexterity	60 sp / 3 gp
Fleshrot	1d6	Actions lost to pain	80 sp / 4 gp
Magebane	–	Lose 2d6 mana points	80 sp / 4 gp
Master			
Concentrated Magebane	–	Lose 4d6 mana points	130 sp / 650 sp
Marrow Lock	–	Major actions difficult and damaging	150 sp / 750 sp
Quiet Death	2d6	Fall to 0 Health	2 gp / 10 gp
Wyvern Venom	–	Fall to 0 Health in Constitution + 1d6 hours	- / 8 gp

Deathroot Hallucinations

Roll	Result
1	**Even the birds are mocking me!** The character spends the next turn raving at and attacking something innocuous like a tree, barrel, wagon, shrub, or bird.
2	**Get it off! Get it off! Get it off!** The character is convinced they are covered by bugs, leeches, snakes, or the like. They spend the next turn swatting at non-existent creepy-crawlies.
3	**You did this to me!** The character believes one of their comrades has backstabbed them or is otherwise plotting their demise. On the next turn the character can only take the defend action and yell in outrage at their "betrayer."
4	**The sky, the hideous sky!** The character believes that some malign creature from the sky is about to carry them off (or, for dwarves, that they are going to fall into the sky). The character spends their next turn dropping their weapons and grabbing something solid.
5	**The shadows are alive!** The character is overcome with fear of the surrounding shadows, including their own. They spend the next turn running at top speed away from the closest concentration of shadows.
6	**Foul darkspawn!** The character is suddenly convinced that a random nearby ally (determined by the GM) is a darkspawn or other natural enemy. The character spends the next turn attacking that "enemy," with a +1 bonus on attack rolls for their fervency.

Poison Descriptions

Extended descriptions of the poisons listed in the **Poisons & Grenades** table follow.

Novice Poisons

Crow Poison

Favored by the Antivan Crows, this poison is mainly derived from the venom of a particularly nasty Antivan serpent.

Deathroot Extract

Deathroot is a common and relatively harmless plant. The Chasind Wilders use a distillation made from its root bulbs to induce vivid hallucinations in which they seek mystic knowledge. When concentrated the substance can be used as a weapon. Those exposed to deathroot extract must make a **TN 15 Constitution (Stamina or Drinking)** test. Those who fail suffer hallucinations according to the **Deathroot Hallucinations** table at left. The involuntary actions described last only for the victim's next turn (15 seconds during which no other actions can be taken), but they continue to suffer disorienting minor hallucinations without mechanical effects for up to an hour.

Hale's Dust

Originally used by the eponymous healer to help subdue and quiet wounded or troubled soldiers who were too much for him to handle, others have since come up with more sinister uses. Its effects last for the duration of the encounter.

Spider Venom

Extracted from the massive arachnids the dwarves call deep crawlers, this poison can take the edge off a warrior's skill. Its effects last for the duration of the encounter.

Journeyman Poisons

Adder's Kiss

Adder's kiss was the principal agent in the great Antivan tragedy *Rosetta & Javier*, supposedly a historical account of a nobleman who believes his wife has been having an affair. After a series of apparently innocent misunderstandings, Javier at last kisses his wife with lips coated with this poison, and neither survives.

Concentrated Crow Poison

This wicked brew results from a long, complex distillation process. A character suffering its effects immediately moves to the end of the initiative order. Additionally, the victim must make a **TN 15 Constitution (Stamina)** test or cannot use any stunt costing more than 2 SP for the remainder of the encounter.

Concentrated Spider Venom

A concentrated distillate of an already-deadly natural poison. Its effects last for a day.

Fleshrot

Nasty stuff, fleshrot causes a victim's skin to immediately begin to slough off, which is horribly painful and grossly noxious. Each round for 2d6 rounds, a victim must make a **TN 15 Constitution (Stamina)** test at the beginning of their turn to overcome the pain. If they fail they can only take a minor action that turn. A –2 penalty to social tests where a disgusting appearance would be relevant persists for a number of days equal to the number of rounds the immediate effects persisted.

Magebane

Developed by the Templar Order, this violet liquid is anathema to apostates, draining their arcane energy. Circle mages aren't exactly fond of it either.

Master Poisons

Concentrated Magebane

A more potent version of magebane, templars supposedly keep huge vats of the stuff in Val Royeaux.

Marrow Lock

This insidious poison runs ice through its victim's limbs, all but locking them into place. Marrow lock's victims can only take minor actions without consequence for the remainder of the encounter. To take a major action they must make a **TN 15 Constitution (Stamina)** test. On a success they suffer 1d6 penetrating damage and can carry out their action. On a failure they suffer 2d6 penetrating damage and can do nothing but howl in agony.

Quiet Death

A foul mixture of poisons infamous even in assassins' circles, quiet death kills instantaneously—or doesn't, if (say the legends) its intended victim is destined for greater things. Victims must make a **TN 19 Constitution (Stamina)** test, but also add their level to their roll. Those who succeed shrug off the effects. Those who fail fall immediately to 0 Health and soon expire according to the normal rules for dying. Attempts to stabilize victims of quiet death suffer a –3 penalty.

Wyvern Venom

Wyvern venom slows prey and kills gradually. Once afflicted, a target is in mortal danger. After a few moments, however, venom exposed to air becomes far less dangerous. Thus it is essential to harvest wyvern venom quickly and carefully if it is to be stored for future use by, say, poisoners. A **TN 17 Cunning (Poison Lore)** test, requiring the remains of a freshly slain wyvern, harvests 1d6 doses of viable venom, leaving none behind for a second attempt. When using the **Poison-Making Mishap** rule, wyvern venom adds only a +1 to the mishap result with a maximum result of 6—it never slays outright.

A character poisoned with wyvern's venom must make a **TN 15 Constitution (Stamina)** test or be subject to its effects. A poisoned character drops to 0 Health after a number of hours equal to 1d6 + Constitution (minimum one hour), dying unless they receive a dose of antidote before their time runs out. During this time, victims are subject to fever, visions, and a -4 penalty to Dexterity..

Crafting Ingredients

The following unique materials are used in a variety of crafts including poison-making and trap construction. These descriptions are provided for flavor rather than any mechanical purpose, to inspire the GM and players and give them a bit more information about the world of Thedas.

- **Fire Crystal:** Fire crystals are lifestones that have been infused with agitated thermal energy, either naturally or by one of the Tranquil.
- **Frostrock:** Frostrock is lifestone that has absorbed some of the cold of the Frostbacks, either naturally or through the efforts of the Tranquil.
- **Frozen Lightning:** These are crystals that store natural chemical energy, effectively making them electrical batteries.
- **Lifestone:** Lifestones are chunks of rock that have lain in long proximity to lyrium ore and gained unusual properties from the exposure. They are invaluable for enchanting a wide variety of objects.
- **Lyrium Dust:** Lyrium found in a naturally powdered state, far easier to employ than lyrium ore.

Aquae Lucidius

Its venom makes the wyvern widely sought by potion-makers, alchemists, and crafters of potent liquor called aquae lucidius. A miniscule quantity of wyvern venom remaining in the aquae after distillation results in a unique hallucinatory effect. Just how effective wyvern venom is at enhancing potions and alchemical recipes is either a closely guarded secret or a continuing mystery; opinions differ.

Making a batch of aquae lucidius requires 1 dose of wyvern venom per 10 servings, plus additional brewing supplies such as water, sugars, herbs, and yeast (costing about 10 silvers for a 10-serving batch). Crafting any sized batch of aquae lucidius requires an **advanced TN 15 Cunning (Brewing)** test; each roll represents about an hour's work. Those who drink a serving of the stuff must make a **TN 13 Constitution (Drinking)** test, the result of which determines the drinker's general reaction to the brew. Increase the TN by 1 for each additional serving consumed after the first. Any character who fails the test passes out after 1d6 minutes of dizzying, ugly hallucinations that leave him rattled and uneasy (–1 to Cunning and Perception) for 1d6 hours. Characters who succeed react to the drink based on their Dragon Die result, compared to the table below. (No actual magic effects take place but drinkers may be difficult to convince of that.)

Aquae Licidius Effects

Dragon Die	Effect
1	*"I can see through time!"*
2	*"You're all just made up of firelight and shadows, you know, flavored like blue and yellow. If I douse you, you might go out. Wouldn't want that."*
3	*"I had a brief vision of my great-grandmother, though she was eating turnips with a modest dragon and Andraste was there putting salt on everything."*
4	*"It was as though my soul took wing and floated about my head."*
5	*"I feel strange but also good!"*
6	*"That stuff works well enough. 'Nother round, anyone?"*

Grenades

Grenade	Damage	Effect	Cost
		Journeyman	
Acid Flask	3d6	Degrade Armor Rating	40 sp / 2 gp
Fire Bomb	3d6	Ignite flammables	40 sp / 2 gp
Freeze Bomb	3d6	–4 Speed	40 sp / 2 gp
Shock Bomb	2d6	Penetrating to metal armor	40 sp / 2 gp

The antidote to wyvern venom is a potion (crafted with a **TN 15 Cunning (Poison Lore)** test) made from a mixture of three particular herbs: Andraste's mantle, drakevein, and winterberry. Andraste's mantle, drakevein, and winterberry are not particularly rare, in general, but may be out of season or found mostly in distant lands if you want to increase the difficulty of such a quest.

Grenade Descriptions

Extended descriptions of the grenades listed in the **Poisons & Grenades** table follow. Note that unlike poisons, the basic damage of grenades is not penetrating unless otherwise stated.

Acid Flask

Corrosive fog that burns skin and corrodes everything else emerges from these flasks. Armor worn by those in an acid flask's attack radius permanently loses 1 point of Armor Rating (before the acid damage is applied) until it is repaired. Increasingly severe damage to armor can accumulate from the effects of multiple acid flasks.

Fire Bomb

Often made using dwarven firedust or gaatlock (Qunari black powder), this combustible liquid sets flammables in its attack radius ablaze, which is generally a minor (1d6) or moderate (2d6) hazard, but varies depending on the exact circumstances.

Freeze Bomb

An ice-cold liquid distilled by using powdered frostrock, these grenades blast cold through the limbs of their victims, slowing their movements until the end of the encounter.

Shock Bomb

A brilliant fluid that scintillates with raw energy, these flasks contain powdered frozen lightning and explode with a burst of light and the stink of ozone. They cause penetrating damage to anyone clad in any kind of metal armor.

The Technique of Traps

Trap making was originally a hunter's craft that eventually came to see use in warfare. Clever new devices and ever more efficient ways of achieving old effects are always being invented. The most basic traps are little more than simple snares and spiked pits, but more advanced traps are often complex apparatuses designed to command a victim's absolute attention, set them ablaze, or reduce them to bloody chunks in the blink of an eye.

The Trap Making talent allows characters to set traps that will be set off by those who pass close to them without avoiding their trigger. Traps function as hazards, doing a basic level of damage. Many traps add special effects to this baseline damage. Incorporating special effects into a trap's design often reduces its damage. The following sections describe how traps can be set, and what happens when they are triggered.

Setting Traps

Any character with the Trap Making talent can build a simple trap to inflict a baseline amount of damage on a victim who stumbles onto it. The traps of Novice trap makers inflict up to 2d6 base damage, those of Journeyman trap makers inflict up to 4d6 base damage, and those of Master trap makers inflict up to 6d6 base damage. A trap's maker can always choose to make a trap that inflicts less damage than they're capable of in order to limit its difficulty or expense.

To set a trap that inflicts simple damage requires a **Dexterity (Crafting)** test with the target number indicated by the accompanying table. The process of setting a trap takes 1 minute assuming appropriate tools and sufficient materials are close at hand. A decent set of trap-making tools costs 10 sp and the cost of materials for a given trap depends on the magnitude of the trap as shown in the table.

Most trap makers carry a kit of materials with them, which should be abstracted and described simply by its total value in coin. The kit may consist of strange solvents, miniature clockworks, ragged blades, sharp darts, and other assorted other dangerous bits. Players are encouraged to describe these components in as much or as little detail as they wish. As these raw materials are deployed the value of the kit is reduced by their value. If and as those traps are taken back apart (see page 99) their value is increased by the same amount. The Game Master should apply sense and reason to the amount of weight and bulk in raw materials a trap maker can carry on their person, on their horse, in their wagon, and so on.

A trap maker who fails to set a trap must make an additional **Dexterity (Crafting)** test, at the same target number, to see whether their raw materials are ruined in the attempt. On a success, they are not. On a failure, they are rendered useless.

The materials to build a trap can also often be scavenged from the area by a clever or determined trap maker. This requires a **Cunning (Natural Lore)** or **Perception (Searching)** test with the same target number as is required to build a trap of that magnitude. Success means that the trap maker need not deplete that trap's value from their kit when setting it,

Trap Materials Cost

TN	Base Damage Desired	Cost of Materials
9	1d6	1 sp
11	2d6	10 sp
13	3d6	20 sp
15	4d6	50 sp
17	5d6	1 gp
19	6d6	10 gp

Additional Effects of Traps

Effect	Dice Lost	Summary	Restriction
Area Effect	–1d6	2-yard radius	—
Wide Effect	–2d6	4-yard radius	Journeyman or Master only
Expansive Effect	–3d6	6-yard radius	Master only
Intricate	–1d6	+3 TN to disarm	—
Convoluted	–2d6	+6 TN to disarm	Master only
Alluring	–4d6	Distracting	Journeyman or Master only
Fascinating	–6d6	Very distracting	Master only
Concealed	–1d6	+2 TN to detect	—
Hidden	–2d6	+4 TN to detect	Journeyman or Master only
Shrouded	–3d6	+6 TN to detect	Master only
Knock Prone	–1d6	Flatten opponents	—
Penetrating	–2d6	Damage penetrates	Journeyman or Master only
Slick	–2d6	Grease	Journeyman or Master only
Self-igniting Slick	–3d6	Flaming grease	Master only

whether they succeed or fail. A trap maker parted from their kit can scavenge materials this way as well.

The exact nature of a particular trap is left to the imagination of the player and the arbitration of the GM. The difference between spiked pits, biting metal jaws, and icy shrapnel driven by exploding frostrock is mechanically irrelevant.

Additional Effects

In addition to dealing simple damage, traps can also inflict other effects on those who stumble into them. The **Additional Effects of Traps** table describes these options. Many effects require the trap maker to be a Journeyman or even a Master at the Trap Making talent. A Novice trap maker can't use the alluring effect, for example.

Each option reduces the damage the trap will inflict when it's triggered, increases the TN required to set the trap by +1, and doubles the cost of materials. The raw materials for traps involving additional effects can't be scavenged from the area; they must come from the trap maker's kit.

A trap's damage can be reduced to nothing by adding effects, but after that point no additional effects can be added.

Duplicate and similar added effects can't be stacked in the same trap. For example, a trap can't be both hidden and shrouded, or be intricate "times two."

Area Effect

This trap has a small blast radius or spray effect. The trap affects all those in a 2-yard radius of its location.

Wide Effect

This trap has a modest blast radius or spray effect. The trap affects all those in a 4-yard radius of its location.

Expansive Effect

This trap has a large blast radius or spray effect. The trap affects all those in a 6-yard radius of its location.

Intricate

This trap is more sophisticated than normal in its construction. The target number to disarm the trap is increased by +3.

Convoluted

This trap is built in an incredibly complex manner. The target number to disarm the trap is increased by +6.

Alluring

The victim's attention is distracted. They suffer –3 Defense and cannot take any actions until they make a **TN 13 Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test, which can be attempted at the beginning of each of their turns until they succeeds.

Fascinating

As alluring, above, but the test's target number is 17.

Concealed

This trap has been hidden in a fairly sloppy but still effective manner. Tests to spot this trap have their target number increased by +2.

Hidden

This trap has been expertly hidden. Tests to spot this trap have their target number increased by +4.

Shrouded

This trap has been so carefully concealed that its rendered almost invisible. Tests to spot this trap have their target number increased by +6.

KNOCK PRONE

Those affected by this trap are knocked prone and lose their major action on their next turn.

PENETRATING

The lethal construction of this trap makes its basic damage penetrating damage.

SLICK

The trap creates a slick of flammable grease. Those affected must make an immediate **TN 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test or fall prone. At the GM's option, those who remain in the area may have to roll again in future rounds, depending on their movements. Contact with fire ignites the grease, immediately causing 1d6 penetrating damage to those affected, who continue to take the same amount of damage at the end of each of their turns until they exit the flaming area. A slick that is not burned persists indefinitely, dispersing only in rain, when appropriately provisioned characters scour it away, or in similar conditions.

SELF-IGNITING SLICK

As slick, above, except that the mechanics of the trap itself ignite the grease.

Triggering Traps

Once a trap is set, it lies dormant, waiting without thought or malice for an unsuspecting victim to trigger it.

Spotting a trap that one is not looking for requires a **TN 13 Perception (Seeing)** test. Proactively searching an area for a trap requires a **TN 11 Perception (Searching)** test.

Once a trap has been spotted, understanding its nature—that is, what it does—requires a **Cunning (Engineering)** test with a target number based on the expertise of the trap maker who set the trap: TN 13 for a Novice, TN 15 for a Journeyman, and TN 17 for a Master. Those with the Trap Making talent receive a bonus based on their level of talent to this test.

A spotted trap can generally be routed around and its effects avoided entirely. However, if a victim who has spotted a trap absolutely must trigger the trap in order to accomplish some desired objective (passing through a trapped doorway, for example) they only take half damage.

A character of sufficient nerve and skill can also try to disarm a trap they've spotted, as described in the next section.

Disarming Traps

Any character can try to disarm a trap they've spotted regardless of whether they have the Trap Making talent and regardless of whether they succeeded in the **Cunning (Engineering)** test to understand its nature. To do so requires a **Dexterity (Traps)** test with a target number based on the expertise of the trap maker who set it: TN 13 for a Novice, TN 15 for a Journeyman, and TN 17 for a Master. Those with the Trap Making talent receive a bonus based on their level of talent. Additionally, the disarming character receives a +2 bonus if they successfully understood the trap's nature with **Cunning (Engineering)**. Failure to disarm triggers the trap, which immediately deals its full damage and affects to the one trying to disarm it.

To disarm a trap while harvesting its raw materials (in order to add them to one's own trap-making kit, presumably) adds +2 to the target number. If this is not attempted the components are automatically destroyed in the disarming process.

As an alternative to disarming, most traps can simply be set off from a distance. This always destroys the trap's components and may have other dangerous or hazardous affects depending on the situation and the GM's mad whim.

A trap maker can always disarm their own traps and absorb the raw materials back into their kit without making a test.

Example

The trap maker Walyse decides to conceal a trap in the door of his workshop to chop unwelcome visitors off at the ankles. As a Journeyman trap maker he can make traps that deal up to 4d6 base damage. He decides to start with that level of damage, which requires a base TN 15. He adds the concealed and Knock Prone effects to his trap-in-progress. Each of these reduces the damage by 1d6, adds +1 to his TN, and doubles the price in raw materials. He must make a **TN 17 Dexterity (Crafting)** *test to set the trap. He makes the test, expends 200 sp of materials from his stock (50 sp doubled, then doubled again), and has set a trap that's difficult (+2 TN) to spot, and that deals 2d6 damage and knocks prone those who trigger it. Nasty.*

Some time later the rogue Gerhard tries to enter Walyse's workshop under cover of darkness. He has reason to suspect that the trap maker might have booby-trapped the premises, so he's on alert and looking around. He makes a **TN 13 Perception (Searching)** *test. He rolls high enough to spot it even with the penalty. He doesn't care what it does, so he doesn't even try to understand it. He decides to simply crawl in through the window, neatly avoiding its danger.*

Some months later Walyse chokes on a chicken bone and dies, leaving his son Wilis to inherit the workshop. By some miracle Wilis succeeds at the **TN 15 Perception (Seeing)** *test to spy the trap when he blunders into the workshop for the first time. He takes a closer look, trying to figure out what the trap does. He fails his* **TN 15 Cunning (Engineering)** *test dismally. Scratching his chin, Wilis decides to disarm the trap—whatever it does—so he won't have to climb in and out through the window for the rest of his life. He needs to make a* **TN 15 Dexterity (Traps)** *test to do it, since he doesn't care about destroying the components. (If he wanted to keep them, it'd be a TN 17 test.) He fails his roll—he's got a lot to learn about trap making—and suffers the trap's activation, which deal him 2d6 damage and knocks him over squealing and bleeding.*

Chapter 5

Magic

Magic permeates all living beings in the land of Thedas. It courses through every animal, plant, and sentient creature. Some even believe that magic is the power that gives life. Despite the prevalence of magic in all living beings, only a rare few possess the ability to manipulate it. Mages and other spellcasters are able to draw mana from living matter around them and shape it into fire to blast their foes, channel it into arcane glyphs, or use it to dominate the minds of those around them. This chapter provides some background on the use of magic in Thedas and then explains how it works in the *Dragon Age* RPG.

Magic is a complex and dangerous art. Those with the potential to wield its power undergo years of extensive training and study to master it, and are tested until they are tempered—or broken—by the process. Magic is not for the faint of heart, because those lacking the strength to use it will instead be used by it, becoming vessels for unspeakable evil and cruelty.

This chapter explains the power of magic. It describes the basics, higher order spells, enumerates the risks of magic, and discusses some of the factions most concerned about the power of magic in the world.

The Fade

Mages have a special connection to the otherworldly realm known as the Fade. According to the Chantry, the Fade is the source of the primeval matter from which the Maker formed Thedas and all living beings. When the living die, their souls pass through what is called the Veil and into this realm. Those who lived good lives and worshipped the Maker then journey into the sky to join him as an eternal reward. Those who lived evil lives or did not worship the Maker, however, return to the ether from which they were formed when they enter the Fade. Mages claim that what happens to the souls of the dead is a Chantry tenet that has no substantiation. No dead soul has ever been witnessed to enter the Fade, according to the mages, so it also cannot be proven that anything described by the Chantry happens upon death. It is an eternal debate between the Chantry and the Circle of Magi, made all the more difficult because the Chantry requires that its position be accepted as a matter of faith.

The Danger of Magic

The Fade is not an empty realm. Indeed, it is full of spirits of various sorts, as well as those of beings asleep in Thedas. For reasons still unknown, mages attract the attention of the Fade's native spirits. Some sages speculate that the mages' natural ability to use magic makes them appear differently in the Fade. Unlike other living beings, when a mage enters the Fade (voluntarily or no) they are able to act normally, and spirits may be able to sense this difference in them. However it occurs, malevolent spirits (such as demons) that wish to enter the world of the living are drawn to mages like beacons. Should a mage encounter such a demon in the Fade, it will attempt to possess them. Some demons try to use force, but

others cajole or trick their prey, offering power or nearly anything to get their way.

The result is inevitably the same: an abomination is created. This is the name given to possessed mages, though it is not a physical possession. The demon is still in the Fade, but so is the mage's own spirit; the demon twists and controls the mage's body through that captive spirit. The demon sees through the body's eyes, channels power through it, and is able to use the mage's magic in ways the captive would never have imagined. Once the demon is in control, an abomination becomes a mad creature that goes on a rampage until stopped. The more powerful the demon, the worse the abomination, and historical records tell of abominations that have destroyed entire settlements and continued to terrorize the countryside for years.

So it is that the fears of the common people are not unjustified. All mages are susceptible to demonic possession, and even the strongest must stay on their guard. This is why the Chantry created the Circle of Magi in the first place. If mages must exist so their power can be wielded against the darkspawn, so be it. The Chantry insists, however, that they must be watched carefully and that those who endanger Thedas be dealt with before possession can take place.

Mage Training

A mage's training consists of extensive study of the arcane lore collected and passed down over centuries, and long practice at harnessing and channeling magical energy. Early training is aimed at giving apprentices discipline and focus, which helps prevent inadvertent magical outbursts. Later, the apprentice learns the specific forms of common spells. Many apprentices demonstrate a talent or propensity for a particular school of magic, and are allowed or encouraged to focus their studies there.

To one degree or another, every Circle is a war college of sorts. The Chantry never forgets that its greatest use for mages is in fighting darkspawn, particularly during a Blight. Philosophically, this is seen as proper penance for the ancient hubris of the magisters of the Tevinter Imperium, who offended the Maker with their trespass in the Golden City and brought on the First Blight. Thus, even in peacetime, much of a mage's training emphasizes battle magic. Every Circle mage learns to wield the Arcane Lance, and most master one or more combat spells. They train to keep their wits about them in battle and wield their powers to defend themselves and their allies.

Apostate mages might not be trained in the same methods and with Chantry supervision, but each must undergo their own apprenticeship, training, and trials. Apostates certainly run a greater risk of demonic possession or other dangers due to lack of supervision, but there is nothing inherent in study of magic outside the Circles which leads a mage to ruin despite what the templars and Chantry claim.

The Harrowing

The ultimate test of a Circle mage is the secret and sacred rite of the Harrowing. It is the event every Circle apprentice studies, trains, and prepares for. The Harrowing looms large for apprentices in part because the enchanters of the apprentice's Circle decide, on their own and in secret, when and if the apprentice is ready for the rite. When they do so the apprentice is taken, without warning or preparation, to face the Harrowing. It can come at any time, and so one must always be ready.

The rite itself is fairly simple. With the aid of a dose of lyrium, the apprentice's mind is sent across the Veil and into the depths of the Fade. There the apprentice must resist the attack of a demon, which attempts to possess the candidate. If the apprentice's will is strong enough to fend off the demon's attack then the test is successful and the candidate becomes a full-fledged mage of the Circle, having proven the necessary strength of will and character to master and use magic.

If, on the other hand, the apprentice's will proves lacking, the demon takes possession. Templars keeping vigil over the Harrowing see the signs of impending transformation into an abomination and slay the failed candidate. Thus the only result of a failed Harrowing is death, and every templar knows they may be called upon to kill a failed apprentice.

Apostates don't engage in the Harrowing per se, but most will find a time when they are called upon to enter the Fade and face demonic forces. Those who survive emerge stronger and wiser for the experience; those who fail are usually possessed, becoming abominations to be hunted down and destroyed.

The Tranquil

In cases where the enchanters of a Circle feel a particular candidate will not ever be ready to face the Harrowing, or if a candidate proves otherwise unworthy before the rite, the only other option is the Rite of Tranquility, which permanently severs an apprentice's connection to the Fade in order to protect all concerned. Some apprentices also request to be made Tranquil, most often because they fear either their own power or the Harrowing itself.

As part of the ritual, a magical lyrium brand is inscribed on the candidate's forehead, severing the mage's ties with the Fade. This renders them immune to the possibility of demonic possession, with the side effect that subject can no longer dream or experience emotions. True to their name, the Tranquil exist in a state of peace and calm, untouched by feeling. They have simple, theoretically untroubled lives. Most prefer to keep to themselves.

The Tranquil are generally in charge of working with lyrium and making enchanted items. They also trade in such items with outsiders. The calm face of the Tranquil is the face of the Circle known to many outside its ranks.

Apostates have no Tranquil and it is the threat of this and other such "precautions" by the templars which drive many to flee the Chantry Circles. More than one willful apprentice became an apostate after discovering they were selected to become Tranquil.

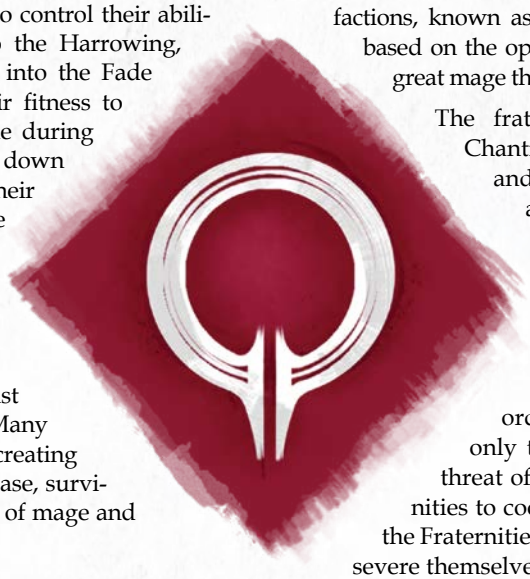
The Circle of Magi

The peoples of Thedas long ago recognized those with magical potential are both incredibly useful and terribly dangerous. Trained mages can provide many worthwhile services, but

every mage is also a potential target for demonic possession, a possible abomination and threat to everyone.

So the Chantry created and governs the Circle of Magi to oversee the training of those with magical talents. The Circle has the right and responsibility to seek out those with magical potential, which typically manifests in late childhood or early adolescence. Such latent mages are taken from their families and raised by the Circle. No one is exempt; even children of noble blood must be surrendered to the Circle's custody if they display magical promise. Only those raised beyond the reach of the Circle and Chantry, or who are deliberately concealed, have a chance of going unnoticed. The Circle and templars are sworn to hunt down all apostates.

Apprentices to the Circle are taught to control their abilities and are eventually subjected to the Harrowing, in which apprentice mages are sent into the Fade to confront a demon. This tests their fitness to become full-fledged mages. Many die during the Harrowing, and some are struck down by the templars standing watch over their test if they become possessed. On the other hand, some who fail—or who show insufficient strength of will to take the test at all—undergo the Rite of Tranquility to largely remove their magical abilities. This leaves them emotionless, unable to cast spells, and unable to enter the Fade. Many of the Tranquil become talented at creating enchanted items nonetheless. In any case, survivors of the Harrowing attain the rank of mage and full membership in the Circle.



Organization and Hierarchy

The Circle is broken down into numerous smaller circles, each an enclave of mages. Circles are typically isolated from the rest of the populace, their towers and strongholds located on islands, lonely shorelines, the far reaches of dense forests, and so forth. This protects people from mishaps and discourages casual visitors. A Circle is inevitably accompanied by a garrison of templars and various support staff, the latter often former mages who have undergone the Rite of Tranquility. The Tranquil are the Circle members most likely to venture into cities on a regular basis.

The hierarchy of a local Circle is simple. The Chantry (through its templars) oversees the organization. Within each Circle a first enchanter leads a council of senior enchanters, the highest-ranking mages. While ideally those with proven ability and merit hold these posts, they often fall to the mages with the strongest knack and appetite for politics, as well as those in favor with the Chantry and the Circle's most influential fraternities.

Below the council of senior enchanters are the enchanters, responsible for teaching and training within the circle. Below them are the rank-and-file mages, those who have passed their Harrowing. Finally, there are the apprentices, those in various stages of magical training who have not yet passed their Harrowing. Apprentices are typically organized into classes based on age and experience.

Officially, the Circle of Magi remains neutral in all outside matters. A given Circle is not supposed to become involved in the politics or internal affairs of even the realm where it is located. Circle mages acknowledge the authority of their organization and the Chantry and little else. In practice, mages do become involved in conflicts from time to time, and minor infractions tend to be overlooked.

Fraternities

A well-educated and generally thoughtful lot, mages tend to form their own opinions and naturally gravitate towards discussion and debate. This has led to the formation of distinct factions, known as fraternities, within the Circle of Magi, based on the opinions and teachings (some heretical) of great mage thinkers and philosophers.

The fraternities are informal alliances. The Chantry does not officially recognize them, and does its best to discourage mages from any allegiances other than to the Circle itself. Still, the fraternities exert considerable cultural and political influence within the Circle, a bit like political parties. A local Circle must often have alliances or coalitions between different fraternities in order to function smoothly. Sometimes only the authority of the Chantry—and the threat of the templars—can get different fraternities to cooperate. Ironically, it is at a conclave of the Fraternities where the Circle eventually decides to severe themselves from the Chantry, thus beginning the Mage-Templar War. This decision was not made lightly, and its effects are felt throughout Thedas.

The following sections list the Circle's largest fraternities.

Aequitarians

The most practical and pragmatic of the fraternities, the Aequitarians seek balance and moderation in the application of magic and in dealing with most problems. They believe in a firm set of rules and the ideal of selfless service to the greater populace. They are often the moderators of disagreements between fraternities, calling for unity and cooperation within the Circle and brokering compromises whenever possible.

Formari

The Formari is made up of the Tranquil and does enchanting and trade work on behalf of the Circle. Exposure to lyrium and the process of the Rite of Tranquility leaves the Formari somewhat isolated from the rest of the Circle, while they are also the Circle members with the most interaction with the outside world. Even so, they do not have a broad philosophy or outlook. The Formari maintain trading posts and trade houses in major cities and settlements to carry out Circle business.

Isolationists

The Isolationist fraternity would prefer an even greater separation between mages and the rest of the world. They advocate

that mages live apart from ordinary people as isolated hermits, or in small, hidden communities. Some Isolationists believe this is the best way for mages to pursue the study and use of magic in peace and safety while others think magic is as dangerous as the Chantry says it is (or even more so) and that mages should be isolated from the world for its own protection. The former faction has some Libertarian leanings, preferring their isolation be free of the Chantry and its templars, while the latter faction has Loyalist or Aequitarian leanings.

Libertarians

Libertarians want as much independence for the Circle (and, often, for mages in general) as possible. The most conservative Libertarians seek to loosen the Chantry's hold on the Circle, making it an independent body with control over its own destiny. The most radical Libertarians advocate the abolition of the Circle as anything other than a loose network of training and communication between mages, claiming all full-fledged mages should be sovereign and free to pursue their studies and practices as they see fit. The Libertarians are the largest opposition block to the Loyalists and their conservative Aequitarian allies.

Loyalists

The Loyalist fraternity seeks to strengthen ties between the Circle and the Chantry to the point of wanting the Circle of Magi to become an official arm of the Chantry, like the templars. Loyalists are often apologists for Chantry policy toward the Circle, explaining how the Chantry has the best interests of both mages and the general populace at heart, and how the oversight of the templars is both necessary and honorable. Many Loyalists are driven by a deep personal faith in the Chant of Light while others have a more cynical desire to curry favor with the hierarchy of the Chantry.

Lucrosians

To the Lucrosians magic is power, pure and simple, and therefore the work of a mage is the acquisition of power. To Lucrosians this pursuit extends past magical power and knowledge to other forms of worldly power, particularly wealth. If a mage has the potential to earn great wealth, why should they not be allowed to do so like any skilled artisan or crafter? The Lucrosians find allies amongst the Libertarian fraternity, who favor greater freedom to pursue the kind of power that interests them. They are most often opposed by the Aequitarians (with their rules and sense of duty and service) and the Loyalists (who would cede power to the Chantry).

The Templar Order

While the Circle of Magi was established by the Chantry and the Orlesian Empire to provide internal control over mages, who guards the guardians? The answer is the templars, a warrior arm of the Chantry dedicated to overseeing, controlling, and—when necessary—eliminating mages to ensure they do not pose a threat to the people of Thedas. The templars are a symbol of the Chantry's military might and

a constant reminder to mages of the Chantry's oversight of their lives and activities. The people of Thedas generally see templars as heroes: holy warriors armed by their faith to protect the world from the ravages of magic. The tensions between the templars and their charges, the Circle of Magi, eventually lead to the Mage-Templar War during 37th year of the 9th (Dragon) Age and ultimately the formation of the Inquisition..

Initiation and Training

The templars and the Chantry choose candidates for initiation based on their courage and combat prowess but also, even more importantly, on their unshakeable—and often unquestioning—faith in the Maker and the Chant of Light. Templars must face horrors that would break lesser warriors, and must rely on their faith to sustain them.

The Chantry does not rely solely on the templars' steadfast faith. Knights of the Order are given doses of refined lyrium as part of their initiation and training to awaken and develop their unique magical talents. Thereafter, they must continue to consume small doses of the rare mineral, supplied by the Chantry.

A templar deprived of lyrium develops emotional instabilities and can eventually go mad. Some suspect lyrium plays only a tangential role in a templar's training and that the mineral's primary purpose is to addict the templars to its use and allow the Chantry (which controls the legal lyrium trade) to maintain control over them. Of course, few voice such suspicions, and certainly not where a templar or sister of the Chantry might overhear.

Capabilities

Templars are trained to deal with hostile magic, and develop unique talents focused on fighting magical foes, particularly mages. At the most basic level, templars have a draining effect on mages. The blows of experienced templars dissipate a mage's store of mana, making it more difficult and costly to wield magic against them. Templars can resist or ignore the effects of magic used against them, and purge an area of magical effects. Templar talents are described as part of the Templar specialization in **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations**.

Perhaps the templars' greatest capacity, however, is utter certainty in the righteousness of their cause. Mages fear templars as much for the fact that there is no swaying them from their mission as they do for their powers.

Garrisons

Templars are organized into garrisons, each led by a Knight-Commander, each typically assigned to a specific Circle of mages. It is the garrison's job to watch over their Circle, ensure its good behavior, and step in to deal with any problems that it seems the mages of the Circle aren't coping with to the templars' satisfaction.

A common ceremonial function of a Circle's templars is keeping vigil over an apprentice's Harrowing. If the apprentice fails and falls victim to the demons of the Fade, the knights act and destroy the transformed abomination before it can become a threat. The templars are also involved in choosing mages for the Rite of Tranquility.

Right of Annulment

The ultimate authority of a Knight-Commander is the Right of Annulment. In the event that a Circle or tower is lost and cannot—in the Knight-Commander's sole opinion—possibly be saved then the templars have the authority to "pacify" the Circle or tower and all associated or within it. The Right of Annulment is rarely invoked, but is not unknown. Its potential threat hangs over every Circle, with the templars a constant reminder. Every member of a garrison is aware that, at any time, they may be ordered to slay every mage in their charge.

Not surprisingly, the Harrowing vigils, the Rite of Tranquility, and the Right of Annulment do not endear the

Templar Order to the Circle of Magi. Although members of the two institutions spend considerable time together, they only tolerate each other at best. Plenty of mages deeply resent the templars as clear and persistent symbols of their oppression. Similarly, many Templars view every mage as a cataclysm waiting to happen. Fraternization between templars and Circle mages is strongly frowned upon, as emotional attachments threaten the delicate balance the organizations must maintain.

Magic Rules

Using magic in the *Dragon Age* RPG requires some additional rules, and you will find them in this section. If you are playing a rogue or warrior, you don't need to worry about these rules for the moment. If you are playing a mage, read on!

Starting Spells

Only a mage can learn spells, so be sure to pick this class if you want to use magic. A level 1 mage begins the game knowing three spells. If you are the only mage in your group, you should seriously consider taking the *heal* spell as one of them. It will keep your allies alive in dire circumstances.

A starting mage can choose any three spells that do not have a requirement. If you're not sure what to pick, try one these suggested combinations:

Balanced Mage

arcane bolt, heal, rock armor.

This is good choice if you are playing a mage for the first time. It has one attack spell, one defense spell, and Heal to help your companions.

Creation Mage

glyph of paralysis, heal, heroic offense

This is the support choice, as most of your spells are for aiding your allies. Your only offense is the glyph and proper use of it takes some forethought.

Entropy Mage

daze, drain life, weakness

This choice lets you really mess with enemies, but has no spells that help your allies.

Primal Mage

flame blast, rock armor, winter's grasp

If you like to fight, this choice is for you, since it offers some more physically direct magical options, along with some protection for direct physical combat.

Spirit Mage

mind blast, spell shield, walking bomb

This is also a good choice for combat, but offers no protection from mundane threats.

Learning New Spells

A mage can gain more spells in two ways: class powers and talents. A mage learns a new spell every couple of levels on average as a class power. Over 20 levels a mage will learn nine additional spells just by being a mage. The other way to learn new spells is through talents. See **Creation Magic**, **Entropy Magic**, **Primal Magic**, and **Spirit Magic** in **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations** for examples of such talents.

Spell Requirements

Some spells have a **Requirement** entry. This lists spells, talents, or specializations a character must have in order to learn that spell. For example, *glyph of warding* lists *glyph of paralysis* as a requirement, so a character must already know the *glyph of paralysis* spell in order to learn *glyph of warding*. A character who does not meet a spell's requirements cannot learn it.

Mana Points

It takes the magical energy of living beings, known as **mana**, to power spells. The amount of magical power a mage has available at any given time is measured in mana points (abbreviated MP). The more you have, the more spells you can cast. If you run out of mana points, you can't cast spells until you get some back.

A level 1 mage starts the game with mana points equal to 10 + Magic + 1d6 and adds Magic + 1d6 more every time they gain a level. Powerful mages can cast spells for a long time without running out of mana points. That said, mana points are a finite resource and a smart mage knows when to spend them and when to hoard them.

Each spell has a cost in mana points. This must be paid when the cast action is taken, regardless of whether the spell works or not. Magic always has its price.

Spells and Armor

Although not trained in its use, mages can wear armor. However, doing so makes it more difficult for them to cast spells. When a mage in armor casts a spell, they must pay an additional amount of mana points equal to the **strain** of the armor type (see accompanying table). This extra mana must be paid for each spell, which makes wearing heavy armor a losing position for mages in the long run.

Casting in Armor

Armor Worn	Strain
Light Leather	1
Heavy Leather	2
Light Mail	3
Heavy Mail	4
Light Plate	5
Heavy Plate	6

Regaining Mana Points

A mage can regain spent mana points by resting. For each full hour of rest and/or meditation, you get back 1d6 + Magic mana points. If you manage 8 hours of uninterrupted rest and/or meditation, you get all your mana points back.

Casting Spells

You can cast any spell that you know by making a successful **casting roll** and spending the required number of mana points. A casting roll is simply a Magic ability test. The most common focuses that apply are Creation Magic, Entropy Magic, Primal Magic, and Spirit Magic, each of which corresponds to one of the schools of magic. For more information on ability tests, see **Chapter 2: Playing the Game**.

Casting roll = 3d6 + Magic + focus (if applicable)

If your casting roll equals or exceeds the spell's target number (TN), you successfully cast the spell. If not, the spell fizzles and has no effect. Either way, you must spend the required mana points. Some spells make use of the Dragon Die, so it's a good idea to leave the dice where they fall until the spell is totally resolved.

Spellpower

For many spells, making a successful casting roll is all you need to worry about. Make it and the spell works as intended.

Standard Spell Stunts

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

Sometimes, however, you must overcome the natural resistance of the target before the spell takes effect. **Spellpower** is the measure of your arcane might; certain spells allow the target(s) to test against Spellpower to resist or at least offset the spells' effects.

Spellpower = 10 + Magic + focus (if applicable)

Example

The mage Lorrahn wears a suit of light mail as part of a disguise while infiltrating a castle. He had hoped to find somewhere to remove the armor before the action started, but he is discovered and must defend himself. He casts an arcane bolt spell at an approaching guard. This would normally cost him just 2 mana points, but light mail has a strain of 3, so it costs him 5 mana points (2+3=5) to cast the spell instead. He will continue adding the strain to the mana cost of each spell he casts until he can remove the armor.

Once again the most common focuses that apply are Creation Magic, Entropy Magic, Primal Magic, and Spirit Magic. This means that if you are a specialist in entropy magic, your entropy spells are harder to resist.

The abilities used to test against your Spellpower vary by spell. The entry for each spell should tell you whether a test is required, the applicable ability, and the consequences of a passed or failed test.

Spell Stunts

Each spell has a standard effect, but if you do an exceptional job casting it you can manipulate the mana to get even more impressive results. This is known as a **spell stunt**.

If you make a successful casting roll and get doubles on any of the dice, you can perform one or more spell stunts in addition to the spell's normal effect. You receive a number of stunt points (SP) equal to the Dragon Die and must use them right away to perform stunts. Initially, all mages choose from the same list of spell stunts, but as they gain levels they get access to new stunts and may use standard ones for fewer stunts points.

Once you have decided on what spell stunts you want to use, you can narrate their effects. You can perform the stunts in any order you choose. You can only perform a given spell stunt once in a round. The spell stunts on the **Standard Spell Stunts Table** can be used by any character for the SP cost indicated.

The Risks of Magic

As the need for a Circle of Magi and the existence of the templars attest, magic is dangerous. When casting any spell with a requirement, if the casting roll fails and the Dragon Die result is a 1, a **magical mishap** occurs. Spells without requirements never cause magical mishaps, which Is why they are usually among the first taught to any fledgling mage.

When there is a magical mishap the caster immediately makes a **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test against the spell's target number. A successful test means the caster is knocked prone, with the usual consequences (that is, it takes a move action to get back up and opponents gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls). The mage may avoid the ignominy of falling over by spending additional mana equal to the spell's original cost.

If the Willpower test fails, the outcome of the mishap is based on the Willpower test's Dragon Die. Consult the **Magical Mishaps** table for details

The GM is always free to impose additional or special magical mishap results based on the circumstances: location, weather, environment, type of spell attempted, and so forth, particularly for a Misfire result.

Example

The mage Lorrahn is ambushed by a group of darkspawn. He wants to slow them down before they engage him in melee so he attempts to cast grease. However, he fails his casting roll and rolls a 1 on his Dragon Die, putting him in danger of a magical mishap. Since grease is a spell with a requirement, Lorrahn must make a Willpower test. He needs to meet or beat the TN of the grease spell to avoid trouble, but fails again. The Willpower test's Dragon Die result is 4, so a Misfire has occurred. The GM decides that grease is indeed created, but instead of landing where the mage wanted, it has doused Lorrahn and knocked him prone. The GM further specifies that if Lorrahn is hit with any sort of fire attack, he'll ignite and take the damage specified in the spell description.

Magical Mishaps

Dragon Die	Mishap Result
1	**Mana Drain:** The mage loses mana equal to twice the spell's original cost in addition to the initial cost paid (for a total of triple the usual cost).
2	**Mana Burn:** The mage loses Health equal to twice the spell's original cost.
3	**Backlash:** The shock of the mishap leaves the mage unable to cast any spells for 1d6 rounds.
4	**Misfire:** The spell effect occurs, but targets an ally rather than an enemy (or vice versa) or has the opposite of the intended effect (healing rather than harming, or vice versa). The GM determines the particulars of the misfire.
5	**Lost in the Fade:** The mage falls into a trance, their spirit lost in the depths of the Fade for 2d6 minutes. The mage is helpless during this time and vulnerable to a coup de grace.
6	**Harrowing:** As **Lost in the Fade**, except the mage must also make a **TN 13 Willpower (Faith or Self-Discipline)** test every two minutes to avoid being possessed by a demon and becoming an abomination, so the longer the mage's spirit wanders the Fade the greater the risk. A Player Character who becomes an abomination falls under the GM's control; the player must make a new character.

Advanced Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Arcane Acuity:** Your expertise in the magical arts assists you. Make a TN 11 Magic test using the focus of your choice. If you succeed, you either become aware of some key magical detail of the current encounter or else gain a +1 bonus on your next magic-related test, up until the end of your next turn.
1	**Arcane Advantage:** The target of the spell suffers a –1 penalty to resist your next spell until the end of your next turn.
1+	**Staggering Spell:** If the spell does damage, you can move the target 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend.
1+	**Arcane Armor:** Channeling residual mana from your spellcasting, you create a protective field around you, gaining an Armor Rating equal to the SP spent until the beginning of your next turn.
3	**Lasting Spell:** If the spell has a duration beyond instantaneous, it is extended to twice the original duration with no additional mana cost. So rock armor, for example, lasts an additional hour, glyph of paralysis lasts 2d3 rounds, and so forth.
4	**Mana Surge:** Immediately after casting the spell, regain 1d6 mana.
4	**Masterful Casting:** Reduce the mana cost of the spell cast by 2. This can reduce mana cost to 0.
4	**Split Spell:** If the spell affects only one target, you can have it affect two, so long as the second target is within the spell's range and no more than 6 yards from the original target. There is no additional mana cost. Targets test against the spell separately.
5	**Disrupt Magic:** In addition to its normal effects, your spell is so powerful that it may disrupt another magical effect on the target; roll an immediate test of your **Magic (Spirit)** vs. the Spellpower of any one effect on the target. Success removes the effect, while failure has no additional effect (beyond the normal effect of your spell). Doubles on this test do not generate additional stunt points.
5	**Lethal Spell:** If the spell does damage, one target of the spell takes an extra 2d6 damage. Alternately, all targets of the spell take an additional 1d6 damage.
6	**Penetrating Spell:** If the spell does damage, all of its damage this round becomes penetrating damage, ignoring the target's armor rating.

Advanced Spell Stunts

In addition to standard spell stunts, additional stunts that may be available to mages in your campaign. They can make magic more varied and interesting, but they're optional since they are more stunts and effects to track. Check with your GM to see if these stunts are accessible in your current campaign.

Unlocking Advanced Spell Stunts

Advanced spell stunts are not automatically available to all mages. They represent advanced training, expertise, or creativity in the art of magic. To use these stunts, Player Character mages must have access to them and that access is described in the game rules by the Spell Expertise talent.

In the game world of Thedas, where the Player Characters live, learning these stunts might require access to expert trainers, such as high-ranking Circle mages, famed and mysterious Dalish Keepers, or remote and fabled apostates in distant wilds. Wherever these extra stunts are learned, they are not likely institutionalized abilities taught in formal classes but special flourishes and exertions understood only by the great mages of the day—the kind of rare and distinctive people the Player Characters become as they gain greater levels of power. Put another way, even though these stunts work in a familiar way for you, the player, for your character they are something difficult to explain and their use in public may cause a fearful reaction from the superstitious in Thedas. Every mage learns these stunts by making personal breakthroughs in their understanding of their own magical abilities, even if they are guided somewhat by the teachings of other mages.

Seeking out training and understanding of these stunts may be a source of adventure and intrigue, not unlike seeking out a specialization. Therefore it's a good idea to let your GM know that you want to pursue these stunts for your character so you can find out if this optional talent is available and, if so, where your character can learn it.

Optional Talent: Spell Expertise

Classes: Mage
Requirement: Magic 4 or higher, at least one Magic focus, and at least a Novice rating in a talent dedicated to a magic school (such as the Creation Magic talent).

You are so proficient at casting spells that you can perform feats with mana that dazzle and surprise even other mages.

Novice: You may use spell stunts from the list that corresponds to any magic school talent you possess when casting spells from those schools. Thus, if you have both the Creation Magic and Primal Magic talents to any degree, you may use stunts from the Creation and Primal stunt lists when casting spells from those schools.

Journeyman: You may use stunts from the core Advanced Spell Stunts list which do not correspond to any particular magic school.

Master: You may use spell stunts from any list that corresponds to a magic school for which you have a focus. Thus, if you have focuses in Creation, Primal, and Spirit magic, you may use stunts from those lists when casting spells from those schools.

Should You Use Advanced Spell Stunts in Your Campaign?

Allowing advanced spell stunts in your *Dragon Age* campaign shouldn't throw play out of control but it can cause some side effects that some players won't appreciate. Advanced spell stunts give mages a lot more options than rogues and warriors get when spending stunt points, potentially causing two problems. First, players of warriors and rogues may feel left out. Second, players of mages may be overwhelmed with options when they generate stunt points, thereby slowing down play.

The optional Spell Expertise talent lets individual players decide whether access to new stunts is worth their time and resources. It also introduces the stunts gradually, rather than opening up dozens of new stunts all at once. Because spell stunts are a fleeting option fueled by a limited resource, stunts may alter encounters in surprising ways, giving Player Characters an edge when they need it most, but varied encounters make different stunts appealing in different ways.

Some player groups may find the advanced spell stunts to be more trouble than they like. Simply disregard the advanced spell stunts, if that's the case. Or compromise by working with the GM to pick just a few that you like to add to your campaign. If you're adding just a handful of advanced spell stunts to your campaign, we recommend you skip the Spell Expertise talent and make the stunts available to all mages who cast a spell of the appropriate school.

Advanced Creation Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Strengthening Spell:** One ally within two yards of you gains a +1 bonus to Strength until the beginning of your next turn.
1	**Quickening Spell:** One ally within two yards of you gains a +1 bonus to Dexterity until the beginning of your next turn.
1+	**Bolstering Spell:** You or one ally within two yards of you with greater than 0 Health recovers one Health for each SP spent.
2	**Sustaining Spell:** An ally within 10 yards currently at 0 Health doesn't count this round when determining how many rounds he can survive with 0 Health.
3	**Empowering Spell:** You gain +1 Spellpower on the next spell you cast before the end of your next turn.

Advanced Entropy Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Consuming Hunger:** If a character within 10 yards of you dies this round, you recover 1d6 mana. Note this only recovers mana you have spent; it doesn't give you bonus mana above your normal maximum.
2	**Minor Curse:** The target of your spell suffers a –1 penalty to Defense until the beginning of your next turn.
2	**Leaden Feet:** The target of your spell is briefly drained of vitality. The target suffers a –1 penalty to Speed until the beginning of your next turn.
3+	**Entropic Blessing:** The target of the spell loses 1 Health and you are healed for the same amount. Note this only heals damage you have suffered; it doesn't give you bonus Health above your normal maximum. If you have enough stunt points to spend, you can use this stunt twice on your turn.

Advanced Primal Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
2	**Dazzling Spell:** In addition to other effects, the target of your spell is at a –1 penalty for all tests involving vision (including attacks) until the start of your next turn.
3	**Immolation:** The magic you use causes you to burst into flame. It causes you no harm, but until the beginning of your next turn anyone who comes into contact with you or attacks you in melee takes 1d6+1 damage.
3	**Thick Skin:** Your skin hardens briefly and adds 1 to your Armor Rating until the beginning of your next turn. This stunt has no effect if you are affected by a spell that raises your Armor Rating.
4	**Lightning Arcs:** Electricity arcs from your body, inflicting 2 points of penetrating energy damage to any foes within 2 yards.

Advanced Spirit Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1+	**Spirit Shield:** You shape excess mana to protect you. Until the beginning of your next turn, any spell stunt (helpful or harmful) that costs up to the number of SP you spent to activate energy shield has no effect on you. If it's a spell stunt that affects multiple targets, you are not affected but others are as normal.
2	**Knock Prone:** You knock the target of your spell prone. Any character making a melee attack against a prone foe gains +1 bonus on the attack roll.
3+	**Enervating Spell:** If the target of this spell has a mana rating, that character loses 1 mana point. If you have enough stunt points to spend, you can use this stunt twice on your turn.

Spells

The rest of this chapter details the spells available to characters of levels 1-20. Where applicable, any requirements to learning a particular spell are included. Remember that spells with requirements are both potentially more powerful and more dangerous (see **The Risks of Magic**)

Affliction Hex

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 7 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 14
Test: Magic (Entropy) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Vulnerability Hex*

You curse a visible target within 30 yards and all other foes within 10 yards of your target. Until the end of the encounter, those affected by the affliction hex have a –2 penalty to all tests against Spellpower. A primary target who makes a successful **Magic (Entropy)** test against your Spellpower suffers only a –1 penalty and completely negates the effects on the secondary targets. Secondary targets may also make **Magic (Entropy)** resistance tests to negate their own penalties entirely, but their individual successes or failures only affect themselves. It doesn't matter whether a given target is a primary or secondary target of an affliction hex; additional castings of the same spell while the original casting's duration persists have no effect on the target (see Stacked Spells and Effects).

Animate Dead

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 12 MP
Casting Time: One Minute
Target Number: 17 **Test:** None
Requirement: *Virulent Walking Bomb*

Potent spiritual energy enters a corpse you touch, causing it to jerk to life at your command. The corpse remains animate for a number of minutes equal to your Magic ability, or until you release the enchantment. Use the stats for the skeletons on page 304 for the animated dead. In special circumstances, the GM may want to devise unique stats instead, to reflect who the corpse was in life.

Anti-Magic Burst

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 20 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 20
Test: Magic (Spirit) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Anti-Magic Ward*

You dispel all magical effects, both harmful and beneficial, within a 20-yard radius. Make a **Magic (Spirit)** test vs. your Spellpower of any affected magic. Make a single roll and apply the results to each magical effect. Success means you remove the effect, while failure means it is too powerful to be dispelled. You may remove some effects and not others, based upon the various Spellpower totals. The GM may rule that

some magical effects not created by spells can also be affected by anti-magic burst, in which case he assigns a Spellpower rating to describe the effect's potency.

Anti-Magic Ward

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 10 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: None **Requirement:** *Dispel Magic*

You ward an ally against harmful magic until the end of the encounter, granting them a +5 bonus to all tests made to oppose or resist Spellpower.

Arcane Bolt

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 2 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 10
Test: Dexterity (Acrobatics) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: None

A bolt of arcane energy springs from your hand or your staff and streaks towards a visible target within 30 yards. The arcane bolt inflicts 2d6 damage, with bonus damage equal to the casting roll's Dragon Die. If the target makes a successful **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower, the spell only inflicts 1d6 damage.

Arcane Shield

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 4 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 14
Test: None **Requirement:** Arcane Bolt

You create an arcane aura around you that deflects attacks. For one round, your Defense becomes equal to your Spellpower (10 + Magic + Focus). You can extend the spell's effect when you cast it by spending 1 MP per additional round you would like it to last.

Aura of Might

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 14
Test: None
Requirement: Arcane Warrior Specialization

Magic flows through the Arcane Warrior, giving them a +2 bonus to damage with melee attacks for one minute.

Blizzard

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 20+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Dexterity (Acrobatics) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Cone of Cold*

This spell conjures forth a blizzard with a 5-yard radius, centered anywhere within 50 yards. Anyone in its howling winds takes 2d6 + Magic penetrating damage and must succeed at a **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower or slip and fall prone on the accumulating ice. Targets that start their turn in the blizzard take an additional 1d6 penetrating damage and must make an immediate test to avoid falling prone. All melee attacks made into or from the blizzard suffer a –2 penalty, all such ranged attacks suffer a –5 penalty. This spell normally lasts for one round but for 10 MP, paid at the start of your subsequent turns as a free action, you may extend the duration by an additional round.

Spell Format

Spells in *Dragon Age* have the following format.

Spell Name: What the spell is called. Of course individual enchanters might call a certain effect something different, just for psychological effect.

Magic School: There are four different schools of magic in the world of *Dragon Age*—Creation, Entropy, Primal, and Spirit. Each spell belongs to one (and only one) of them.

Spell Type: There are four types of spell—attack, defense, enhancement, and utility—and each spell falls into one of these categories.

Mana Cost: This tells you how many mana points (MP) it takes to cast the spell.

Casting Time: It can take anywhere from a few moments to a few hours to cast a spell. This entry tells you how long it takes to cast this one.

Target Number: Your casting roll must meet or beat this number for you to successfully cast the spell.

Test: Some spells require tests from the target, usually against your Spellpower. This entry details the type of test the spell requires, if any. The effects of the test are specified in the description. Oftentimes a successful test has one effect and a failed test a different one.

Description: This entry explains what the spell does in detail. Armor protects against any damage inflicted as normal unless it is noted as penetrating damage (in which case, it ignores armor altogether).

For an example of this, let's take a look at *flame blast*, a fairly straightforward and basic Primal magic spell.

Flame Blast

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: Dexterity (Acrobatics) vs. Spellpower

Gouts of blazing fire erupt from your outstretched hands, burning nearby targets. The flame blast is 8 yards long and 2 yards wide. Anyone hit by the blast takes 2d6+1 damage. Targets that make a successful **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower only take 1d6+1 damage.

CHAIN LIGHTNING

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Tempest*

Lightning leaps from your outstretched hand or staff to a target of your choice within 30 yards. It then arcs to up to five secondary targets of your choice within 10 yards of the primary target. You must pay 3 MP for each target beyond the first (declare secondary targets before you roll to complete the spell). The primary target suffers 3d6 + Magic penetrating damage, while secondary targets each suffer 2d6 + Magic penetrating damage. Any target that makes a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower reduces their damage by one die (thus the primary target would suffer only 2d6 + Magic penetrating damage and secondary targets would suffer only 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage).

CONE OF COLD

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Frost Weapons*

You project a blast of freezing air from your outstretched hands that is 2 yards wide and 8 yards long. Anyone caught in the blast suffers 2d6 + Magic penetrating damage and a –10 penalty to Speed for a number of rounds equal to half your Magic ability. Subjects who make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower only suffer 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage and a –5 penalty to their Speed for the same duration.

CRUSHING PRISON

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Constitution (Stamina) or Strength (Might) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Telekinetic Weapons*

You encase one enemy within 20 yards in a contracting cage of force. The spell immediately deals 1d6 + Magic damage and the target must succeed on a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower or become immobilized. Immobilized targets cannot move, though they may make attacks and cast spells through the cage of force. They also take an additional 2d6 + Magic damage at the start of their next turn and remain immobilized until they pass a **Constitution (Stamina)** or **Strength (Might)** test vs. your Spellpower to break free of the cage. Targets that fail a third test take another 3d6 + Magic damage at the beginning of their next turn and remain immobilized until they break free, but suffer no additional damage on subsequent turns.

CURSE OF MORTALITY

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Death Magic*

This spell forces a single enemy ever closer to its inevitable death. The subject suffers 2d6 + Magic penetrating damage initially, and 1d6 + Magic damage at the start of each of their turns. Additionally, they cannot regain Health by any means. The effects of this curse last for a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability. If the target makes a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower when the spell is cast, they instead suffer 1d6 penetrating damage per turn and can regain Health as usual.

DAZE

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 2 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 11
Test: Willpower (Self-Discipline) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: None

You ensorcell one visible target within 10 yards. A target that makes a successful **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test vs. your Spellpower is slightly confused and suffers a –1 penalty on all ability tests until the beginning of your next turn. A target that fails the test suffers the same penalty and cannot take any actions on their next turn.

Death Cloud

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 20+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 21
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Curse of Mortality*

You unleash a cloud of entropic energy with a 5-yard radius centered anywhere within 50 yards. Anyone, be they ally or enemy, who enters the cloud or starts their turn in it suffers 3d6 + Magic penetrating damage. Targets who make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower only suffer 2d6 penetrating damage. This spell normally lasts for one round but for 10 MP, paid at the start of your subsequent turns as a free action, you may extend the duration by an additional round.

Death Hex

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 17 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Magic (Entropy) or
Willpower (Morale) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Misdirection Hex*

You curse an enemy within 30 yards to suffer mightily from each strike upon them. Until the end of the encounter, all attacks made against the target gain a +3 bonus, deal +3 damage, and automatically generate +2 SP on a hit, even if doubles aren't rolled. The subject can end the effects with a successful **Magic (Entropy)** or **Willpower (Morale)** test vs. your Spellpower, made on its turn. The spell otherwise ends after a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability.

Death Magic

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 7 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** *Drain Life*

You draw upon the residual life force of the dying to replenish your own. Any living creature that dies within 6 yards of you while this spell is active heals damage to your Health equal to the creature's Constitution, with a minimum of 1. It cannot bring you above your unwounded Health, however. Death magic lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability. This spell and death syphon are mutually exclusive, and cannot be maintained at the same time. Casting one cancels the other.

Death Syphon

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 7 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** *Walking Bomb*

You draw upon nearby entropic energy to replenish your own mana. Any living creature that dies within 6 yards of you while this spell is active restores a number of your spent mana points equal to the creature's Magic, with a minimum of 1. It cannot bring you above your normal full complement of mana points. Death syphon lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability.

This spell and death magic are mutually exclusive, and cannot be maintained at the same time. Casting one cancels the other.

Allies and Enemies

Many spells' descriptions refer to "allies" and "enemies." Don't overthink these definitions: Allies are those who're fighting on the caster's side and enemies are those trying to do them harm. It's possible but not common for a disinterested third party roped into a combat situation to be neither ally nor enemy, and it's likewise possible but uncommon for someone to switch sides (and thus, classifications) in the middle of a fight. In instances where things are complicated or unclear, the GM decides whether a given combatant is an ally, an enemy, or neither at any given time.

Decompose

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: One Minute **Target Number:** 12
Test: None **Requirement:** Entropy Magic (Journeyman)

By tracing mystic glyphs over the subject, which may be any single piece of non-living organic material, you speed up the natural process of its decay. Once your casting is finished, every second that passes is the equivalent of a day for the subject. So in a minute's time, it decays as if two months have passed. In an hour, it decays nearly ten years! This continues until the object is reduced to dust. You can halt the decomposition with a glyph of preservation, but the subject decays some ten months in just the time it takes to cast that spell, and if the glyph of preservation wears off the accelerated decay continues where it left off, at the same rate. Decompose can't be dispelled; its effects are permanent.

Dispel Magic

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 8 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Magic (Spirit) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Spell Shield*

You remove all magical spell effects from a chosen visible target within 25 yards of you. Roll a test of your **Magic (Spirit)** vs. the Spellpower of any affected magic. Success means you remove that magic. Failure means you do not remove that magic, as it is too powerful. Make a single roll for all magic affecting the target; you may remove some effects and not others, based on their varying Spellpowers. The Gamemaster may rule that some magical effects not from spells can be affected by dispel magic, in which case an effective Spellpower is assigned to represent the effect's resistance to being dispelled.

Stacked Spells and Effects

Unless a spell's description says something else, the target of a given spell can only be affected by one casting of that spell at a time, whether the multiples are cast by the same mage or by different mages. For example, a character already enjoying a +2 damage bonus from an aura of might spell cannot gain an additional damage bonus if a mage casts it on them again. Similarly, a character suffering a –1 penalty from the daze spell cannot suffer an additional daze while the first one is in effect.

A spell already cast on a target is completely unaffected by an additional copy of the same spell cast on the same target. Another casting does not, for example, extend the duration of the effect. It instead does nothing at all. For example, a mage under the effects of rock armor cannot cast rock armor again five minutes before the first casting's expiration to effectively extend the duration. The mage must wait for the first casting to expire and then cast it again.

The above is true even when a target is suffering only partial or reduced effects of a spell because they resisted an earlier casting. For example, a character suffering the reduced effects of a vulnerability hex (only the Defense penalty) cannot be targeted with an additional vulnerability hex while the effects of the first one persist by a mage trying to make that character suffer the ability test penalty, too.

Perhaps obviously, spells that have an immediate effect that then becomes permanent are not subject to a stacking restriction. For example, a character who is restored by a heal spell and regains lost Health can immediately be affected by another heal spell. There is no "duration" of heal; its effects do not lapse.

The effects of different spells can overlap, and are cumulative when they do, unless a given spell's description says something else. For example, a character with a +1 bonus to Strength from a heroic offense spell who is also enjoying the +2 damage bonus from an aura of might spell does three more points of damage than normal on a hit in combat—the effects stack.

Unless a given spell's description says something else, there is no restriction on the number of times a mage can cast a particular spell on different targets, even if their durations overlap. For example, a mage beset by enemies can cast a *walking bomb* each turn even while previous targets survive, as long as each walking bomb spell has a different target.

Dowse

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 10 MP
Casting Time: One Minute **Target Number:** 17
Test: None **Requirement:** Spirit Magic (Journeyman)

You extend your senses throughout a 100-yard radius in order to locate a desired object. This spell may be used to locate any one of a type of item (for example, a nearby source of clean water or the nearest item of jewelry) or one particular item (for example, the Cauld Creek or your uncle's lost signet ring). You must be familiar enough to picture in mind any specific item you intend to find with this spell. The GM may immediately reveal the location of the object, if it is within range, or grant you 5 SPs to spend immediately on exploration stunts.

Drain Life

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 4 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: None

You suck life energy out of a visible target within 10 yards to heal yourself. The target takes 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage and you are healed by the same amount. Note this only heals damage you have suffered; it doesn't give you bonus Health above your normal amount. If the target makes a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower, the penetrating damage is only 1d6.

Dream Sending

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 7 MP
Casting Time: Five Minutes **Target Number:** 15
Test: none **Requirement:** Sprit Magic (Journeyman)

You send a dream across the Fade to a particular subject, who must be known to you. When the subject next dreams, it will be the dream you have sent. You can script the general events of the dream, including things like conversations, but you do not become aware of the subject's reactions and are not truly interacting with them. You can use a dream sending to carry a message or convey information, or to display imagery meant to incite emotional reactions.

Generally, the content of a dream sending cannot be longer than an hour or so. While the dream may influence the subject's decision making (providing a particular omen or key piece of information, for example) it does not exert any direct power over the subject's mind or will. Dream sending does not work on subjects that do not dream, such as dwarves or the Tranquil.

Earthquake

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 11+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Dexterity (Acrobatics) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Stonefist*

The ground bucks and rolls in an area with a 6-yard radius anywhere you choose within 30 yards. Anyone caught in the area suffers a –2 penalty to Defense and a –5 penalty to

Speed for one round. They must also succeed on a **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower or fall prone. This spell normally lasts for one round but for 5 MP, paid at the start of your subsequent turns as a free action, you may extend the duration by an additional round.

Elemental Mastery

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** Primal Magic (Master)

You strengthen your ties with the primal forces of the elements. For one minute, you add +2 to the damage of any Primal attack spell you cast. This includes damage dealt through an intermediary object, as with flaming weapons and frost weapons. You can extend the spell's duration when you cast it by spending an additional 4 MP per additional minute you would like it to last.

Ensnare

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 8 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Strength (Might) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Keeper Specialization (Journeyman)

You send out tendrils of raw nature magic that pull enemies towards you. You can target a number of enemies up to your Magic ability who are each within 8 yards of you. Each target must make a successful **Strength (Might)** test vs. your Spellpower or be pulled adjacent to you (or as close to adjacent as terrain and other obstructions allow). Targets that fail the roll and get 1, 2, or 3 on their Dragon Die also take penetrating damage equal to half your Magic as the tendrils lash and squeeze.

Entropic Cloud

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 20 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Magic (Entropy) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Entropy Magic (Master)

The chaos of battle is yours to command as you extend a cloud of entropic energy 20 yards in radius from your own body. Allies in the cloud enjoy a +2 bonus to all attacks and receive +1 SP on all rolls that generate stunt points. Enemies in the cloud receive a –2 penalty to all attacks and –1 SP on all rolls that generate stunt points unless they succeed at a **Magic (Entropy)** test vs. your Spellpower. This spell lasts until the end of the encounter.

Fade Shield

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 6 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** Arcane Shield

Shifting partway into the Fade enhances your arcane defenses. For one round, your Spellpower increases by +2 and your Defense becomes equal to your Spellpower. You can extend the spell's effect when you cast it by spending 2 MP per additional round you would like it to last.

Fireball

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 11 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Dexterity (Acrobatics) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Flaming Weapons

You throw a mote of fire to a point anywhere within 50 yards, where it erupts into a ball of flame with a 4-yard radius. Anyone caught in the blast takes 3d6 + Magic damage and may be knocked prone; those who make a successful **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower remain standing.

Fist of the Maker

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Force Mage Specialization

You slam your enemies to the ground with magical force. You create a circular blast with a 4-yard radius that's centered anywhere within 24 yards that you can see. Those caught in the blast are knocked prone and take 1d6 penetrating damage. Targets that make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower are only knocked prone.

Flame Blast

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: Dexterity (Acrobatics) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: None

Gouts of blazing fire erupt from your outstretched hands, burning nearby targets. The flame blast is 8 yards long and 2 yards wide. Anyone hit by the blast takes 2d6+1 damage. Targets that make a successful **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower only take 1d6+1 damage.

Magic is dangerous, just as fire is dangerous. Anyone who forgets this truth gets burned.

—Vivienne

Magic can't be made safe and it can't be destroyed. Fear makes men more dangerous than magic ever could.

—Merrill

FLAMING WEAPONS

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 6 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** Flame Blast

The readied melee weapons of allies within 10 yards of you burst into flames, and inflict an additional 1d6 damage with each successful attack. This last for one minute; you can extend this duration when you cast the spell by spending an additional 3 MP per additional minute you would like it to last. This spell does not harm the weapons it affects and may be cast on *frost weapons*.

FORCE FIELD

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 10 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 18
Test: None **Requirement:** *Mind Blast*

You surround a subject within 25 yards (which may be yourself) with a protective field of magical force that absorbs all damage that would otherwise affect its target. The *force field* lasts for one round. During that time, the subject is completely immune to damage, but also cannot move from the spot (the force field is immobile), make melee or ranged attacks, or give or receive any items. Spells and other effects that do not cause direct damage, such as daze, mana drain, or vulnerability hex, still affect the subject normally, and spells pass out of the force field normally. You can extend the spell's effect when you cast it by spending 5 MP per additional round you would like it to last.

FROST WEAPONS

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 6 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** *Winter's Grasp*

The readied melee weapon of all allies within 10 yards of you exude freezing cold, inflicting +2 penetrating damage with each successful attack. The freezing cold lasts for one minute; you can extend this duration when you cast the spell by spending an additional 3 MP per additional minute you would like it to last. This spell does not harm the weapons it affects and may be cast on *flaming weapons*. Only the additional damage is penetrating.

GLYPH OF NEUTRALIZATION

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 20 MP
Casting Time: One Minute **Target Number:** 17
Test: Magic (Creation) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Glyph of Repulsion*

The bane of all mages, this magical glyph saps mana from a target and temporarily prevents them from casting spells. The first enemy that moves within 2 yards of the glyph's location triggers it. The target and anyone within 10 yards is drained of 3d6 + Magic MP and must succeed at a **Magic (Creation)** test vs. your Spellpower or lose the ability to cast spells for 1d3 rounds. You can maintain a number of active *glyphs of neutralization* equal to your Magic ability at any one time. Each glyph is good for only one use.

GLYPH OF REPULSION

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 10 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Glyph of Warding*

You trace a hasty arcane symbol onto the ground in front of you and strike it with all your might, causing a wave of force to send enemies within 10 yards reeling. All enemies are pushed 10 yards away from you and must succeed at a **Constitution (Stamina)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower or be knocked prone.

GLYPH OF PARALYSIS

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: 1 minute **Target Number:** 10
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: None

You trace your fingers on the ground, creating an invisible glyph that holds a charge of magical power. The first enemy that moves within 2 yards of the glyph's location triggers it. The target must make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. Spellpower or become paralyzed for 1d3 rounds. A paralyzed character can take no actions and has a Defense of 7. You can maintain a number of *glyphs of paralysis* equal to your Magic ability at any one time. Each glyph is good for one use.

Glyph of Preservation

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 1 MP
Casting Time: Five Minutes **Target Number:** 10
Test: None **Requirement:** None

You draw a faint glyph on the surface of the subject, which can be any piece of dead organic material. The spell arrests the process of decay for the material, keeping it as fresh as it was when the glyph was inscribed for a month. A glyph of preservation can be renewed during its duration, which extends its affects for another month. When the glyph expires the process of decay begins again from where it left off. The spell is used to preserve foodstuffs, to preserve corpses (for lying in state or dissection), or to protect valuable items made of wood, paper, or leather.

Glyph of Sealing

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: One Minute **Target Number:** 11
Test: None **Requirement:** None

You touch any object that closes, from a door or gate to a jar, drawing a faint glyph that connects its two surfaces. Once the glyph of sealing is complete, the object is held closed and only you or someone you designated when casting the spell may open it. For anyone else, the only way to open the seal is by breaking whatever it is inscribed upon, whether smashing open a jar or breaking down a door. The glyph lasts until the object is opened, after which it must be recast to seal the object again (assuming it is not destroyed in the process).

Glyph of Warding

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** Glyph of Paralysis

You trace an arcane glyph on the ground where you stand with your hand or staff. Allies within 3 yards of the glyph of warding gain a +2 bonus to Willpower tests and their Defense against ranged attacks so long as they remain within the glyph's area. A glyph lasts until the end of the current encounter. You can maintain a number of different *glyphs of warding* equal to your Magic at any one time (although this does not allow the effects of multiple *glyphs of warding* to stack on the same target).

Grease

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 7 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: Dexterity (Acrobatics) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Spell Wisp

You create a slick of grease covering an area up to 10 yards in diameter anywhere within 30 yards of you. Anyone within the slick when it is cast, anyone entering the area, and anyone who moves within the area must make a successful **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test against your Spellpower or fall prone at each of those times, as they apply. Prone characters may crawl normally.

The grease created by this spell is flammable; contact with fire ignites it, immediately causing 1d6 penetrating damage to everyone in the area. A grease fire burns for rounds equal to your Magic before burning out (which expends the grease), and those inside the area take 1d6 penetrating damage on their turn each round until they exit it. A slick that is not burned persists indefinitely, dispersing only in rain, when appropriately provisioned characters scour it away, or in similar conditions.

Group Heal

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 3-9 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** Spirit Healer specialization

A number of subjects equal to twice your Magic, all of whom must be within 10 yards of you, regain 1d6 Health per 3 MP spent on the casting (maximum: 3d6 Health for 9 MP). You may make yourself one of the spell's subjects.

Hallucination

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: One Minute **Target Number:** 15
Test: Perception (Hearing, Seeing, or Smelling) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Entropy Magic (Journeyman)

You conjure, in the mind of a subject within 30 yards, an optical, auditory, and olfactory hallucination that can appear to be no wider or taller than your Magic ability in yards. Add additional targets for 5 MP each. Targets must succeed at a Perception (Hearing, Seeing, or Smelling) test vs. your Spellpower to realize the illusory nature of the sight. "Touching" the hallucination automatically reveals the ruse but does not end the spell unless you want it to. The hallucination lasts for as long as you spend free actions to concentrate on it.

Haste

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 10 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: None **Requirement:** Heroic Defense

This spell turns a single ally into a blur on the battlefield, allowing them to move and strike with blinding speed. The subject gains a +10 bonus to their Speed, treats the Lightning Attack stunt as having a cost of 2 SP, and may buy the stunt multiple times to make multiple extra attacks in one round. None of these extra attacks can generate stunt points.

Haste only lasts for a single round unless its duration is extended at a cost of 10 MP per additional round, paid as a free action at the beginning of the caster's subsequent turns. You may cast this spell on yourself.

Heal

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 1-3 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 10
Test: None **Requirement:** None

Your touch seals wounds and restores vigor to one wounded target. You can choose to spend up to 3 mana points when you cast this spell. For each mana point spent, the target gets back 1d6 Health. You can cast this on yourself.

Heroic Aura

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 6 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** *Heroic Offense*

This spell surrounds a subject within 30 yards with an arcane aura that deflects incoming attacks. The subject gains a +2 bonus to Defense for the rest of the encounter. You can cast this spell on yourself. Its effects do not stack with those of spells that reset your Defense to be based on your Spellpower, such as Arcane Shield and Fade Shield.

Heroic Defense

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 8+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** *Heroic Aura*

You surround an ally within 30 yards with bands of protective force that stop all but the most devastating attacks. The subject gains a +5 bonus to Defense and a +2 bonus to Armor Rating for a number of rounds equal to half your Magic score. You can extend this duration at the cost of 4 MP per additional round, paid on the start of your subsequent turns as a free action.

You can cast this spell on yourself. Its effects do not stack with those that adjust your Defense to be based on your Spellpower, such as arcane shield and fade shield.

Heroic Offense

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 11
Test: None **Requirement:** None

Your touch fills one ally with magical might. Until the end of the encounter, the target gains a +1 bonus to Strength.

Horror

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 8 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Willpower (Courage) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Daze*

You overwhelm a visible target within 20 yards with a blast of sheer terror. Until the target succeeds on a **Willpower (Courage)** test vs. your Spellpower, they can do nothing but cower in fear. A target failing the initial test may try again at the start of each of their turns.

Invigorate

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 4 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 14
Test: None **Requirement:** *Mana Drain*

You emit waves of mana, bolstering your allies. Allies within 10 yards of you get +1 SP whenever they generate stunt points. You may spend 1 MP at the start of each of your turns to extend the effects for another round; otherwise they end at the beginning of your turn.

Inferno

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 20 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Dexterity (Acrobatics) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Fireball*

Calling upon the raw elements of creation, you ignite a column of air 6 yards in radius and 12 yards tall anywhere within 50 yards. Anyone, whether ally or enemy, who enters the inferno or starts their turn in it, suffers 3d6 + Magic damage. Targets who make a successful **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower suffer only 2d6 damage but fall prone. Additionally, any target that leaves the column of fire continues to burn, taking 1d6 damage at the start of their turn until they succeed on a **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower to put out the flames. The column normally lasts a single round, but you can extend its duration another round by spending 10 MP at the start of your subsequent turns as a free action.

Large Animal Form

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 10+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: None
Requirement: Shapeshifter Specialization (Journeyman)

You transform yourself into a large animal for a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability. You can extend the spell for the cost of 3 MP per additional round. You retain your own Cunning,

Magic, and Willpower but otherwise your stats are those of the animal. Black bears, brontos, Mabari war dogs are examples of large animals. GMs may create similar stats for others.

Levitate

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: Strength (Might) vs. Magic (Spirit)
Requirement: *Mind Blast*

You exert telekinetic force to move an inanimate object as though it were motivated by an invisible pair of hands. When you cast *levitate*, split your Magic score as you wish between the effective Dexterity and Strength the object will have as you manipulate it. Neither can be assigned a value less than 0. If your Magic is negative, both Dexterity and Strength are automatically 0.

You must be able to see the object in order to manipulate it; the spell ends if it moves out of your vision. You cannot *levitate* anything that is both aware and able to animate itself (such as most creatures and characters). You can move a levitated object with a Speed equal to your (Magic × 3) with a minimum of 1. If you try to wrest an object from someone's grasp, its holder may resist by making an opposed **Strength (Might)** vs. **Magic (Spirit)** test. If successful, your spell ends immediately. You may spend 1 MP at the start of your turn to maintain this spell for another round, otherwise it ends at the start of your turn.

Once the spell is cast, moving the object is typically a minor action, unless you do something like attack with a levitating weapon, in which case it is a major action. Attack rolls are based on the Strength or Dexterity you assigned when you cast the spell (depending on the type of weapon or object being animated), save that you use your Spirit focus rather than the relevant weapon focus. Most objects do damage as improvised weapons. Weapons do their regular damage if you have that weapon group; otherwise they do improvised damage.

Life Ward

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action
Target Number: 16 **Test:** None
Requirement: Spirit Healer Specialization (Master)

You weave a protective ward of mystic energy around one ally within 6 yards of you, or around yourself. The first time the target's Health drops below 10 in this encounter, they immediately regain 2d6 Health. Life ward only works once per casting and it ends at the end of the encounter if not triggered. A character cannot have more than one *life ward* on them at the same time.

Lightning

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 6 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 16
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Shock*

A bolt of electricity leaps from your outstretched hand or staff to strike a single target within 30 yards. The bolt inflicts 2d6 + Magic penetrating damage. Targets who make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower take 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage instead.

Lingering Mark

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 21 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Magic (Entropy) or
Willpower (Morale) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Necromancer Specialization,
Entropy Talent (Journeyman), *Spirit Mark*

Lingering mark is the upgraded version of the *spirit mark* spell. You mark an enemy within 40 yards so that spirits will assault them, doing ongoing damage. Until the end of the encounter, the subject takes 2d6 + the Caster's Willpower Penetrating Damage per turn. The subject can end the effects with a successful **Magic (Entropy) *or* Willpower (Morale) test vs. your Spellpower**, made on its turn. The spell otherwise ends after a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability.

If a target dies while the *lingering mark* is on them, their spirit will arise to fight for the caster for a time. The spirit's intensity and how long they will fight for the caster is greatly increased over Spirit Mark. The spirit has all the normal statistics of the deceased but gain +2 bonuses to attack and damage. These spirits ignore the effects of terrain and normally only magical attacks (spells or hits from magical weapons) can harm them,

other attacks passing through their forms without effect. The spirits fight for the caster for turns equal to the caster's Willpower × 2 before they depart.

MANA CLEANSE

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 7 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: None **Requirement:** *Mana Drain*

You use your own mana to block that of other casters. For the duration of the encounter, if someone spends mana points in a 16-yard radius of you, you can spend your own mana points to negate their spell on a 1-for-1 basis. For example, if another mage spends 4 MP to cast a spell within 16 yards of you, you can spend 4 MP to negate that spell. If you do not have enough mana points to counter the entire cost, your spell has no effect. This spell does not reveal which spell the other mage is trying to cast; only how many MP are being spent to fuel it.

MANA CLASH

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 10+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Magic (Spirit) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Spell Might*

You sacrifice personal magical reserves to burn out an enemy's mana. One target within 30 yards suffers 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage. Additionally, for every 2 MP you spend beyond the initial cost of this spell, the target loses 2 MP and suffers an additional 1 penetrating damage. If the subject makes a successful **Magic (Spirit)** test vs. your Spellpower, they take no additional damage for the mana drain but still take the initial 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage and lose the mana you paid to burn. This spell has no effect on targets without mana.

MANA DRAIN

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: Magic (Spirit) vs. Spellpower **Requirement:** None

You create a parasitic bond with a visible spellcasting target within 30 yards unless the target makes a successful **Magic (Spirit)** test vs. your Spellpower. Until the end of the encounter, an affected target must spend 1 extra mana point each time he casts a spell and each time this happens you gain 1 mana point.

MASS PARALYSIS

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 22 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 21
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Miasma*

You surround each enemy within 20 yards with tendrils of entropic energy, all but locking them in place. Each target must succeed at a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower or become paralyzed. Targets that pass this initial test lose their Dexterity rating from their Speed until they pass the test again or the spell expires. Paralyzed characters have a Speed of 2 yards per turn, lose their Dexterity factor to Defense, and can take no actions, but are not subject to a coup de grace unless they would otherwise be vulnerable. A paralyzed target makes a new test at the start of their turn each round to shake off the spell. Effects otherwise persist for a number of rounds equal to your Magic.

MASS REJUVENATION

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 10+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: None **Requirement:** *Rejuvenate*

You channel healing energy to a number of allies within 10 yards equal to twice your Magic score, though each subject beyond the first costs an additional 5 MP. You may target yourself. Subjects each regain 1d6 Health immediately, and another 1d6 Health at the start of their respective turns each round for a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability.

MIASMA

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 8 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Paralyze*

A sickly green mist radiates out along the ground from your feet. All enemies within 10 yards of you at the start of their turns must make a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower or suffer a –2 penalty to Defense and a –2 penalty to all attacks. Subjects must make this test each turn they begin in the miasma or upon entering the miasma. This spell lasts one round unless you extend its duration another round by spending 2 MP as a free action at the start of your subsequent turns.

MEMORY

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 6 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 16
Test: Willpower (Self-Discipline) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Mind Blast*

You touch a target and cause them to either forget or recall a specific memory. You can remove a memory within a number of hours of the event in question equal to your Magic, but the spell can restore a memory of any age, so long as it is the memory of an event the subject actually experienced. The subject makes a **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test against your Spellpower to resist losing a memory, but there is no test to restore a lost memory.

The GM decides on the appropriate length of the affected memory, but it should generally concern a single incident or experience no longer than the caster's Magic in hours (and likely much less).

MIND BLAST

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: Strength (Might) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: None

You create a circular blast of telekinetic force with a 2 yard radius that's centered anywhere within 50 yards that you can see. Those caught in the blast are knocked prone and cannot take a major action on their next turn. Targets that make a successful **Strength (Might)** test vs. your Spellpower are only knocked prone. In either case, any prepared actions are lost.

MISDIRECTION HEX

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 10 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: Magic (Entropy) or Willpower (Courage) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Affliction Hex

Fortune turns against the subject of this spell at every opportunity, making their attacks all but fruitless. Until the end of the encounter, a single enemy within 30 yards suffers a –2 penalty to attack rolls and cannot generate stunt points. The subject may make a **Magic (Entropy)** or **Willpower (Courage)** test vs. your Spellpower as a free action at the start of each of their turns to end the spell. Otherwise, the effects end after a number of rounds equal to your Magic.

PARALYZE

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 7 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 16
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Weakness*

Ghostly wisps of entropic energy surround an opponent within 30 yards. A target failing a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower is paralyzed, completely unable to move, while a successful test means the target's Speed is cut by one-quarter (rounded in the target's favor). Both effects last for the rest of the encounter. A paralyzed target gets a new test at the start of their turn each round. Paralyzed characters lose the Dexterity bonus to their Defense and can obviously take no actions, but are not subject to a coup de grace unless they are otherwise unconscious or dying.

PETRIFY

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Earthquake*

You turn a single target within 30 yards to stone unless they succeed on a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower.

A petrified character gains a +5 Armor Rating, but has their Defense reduced to 7 and may take no actions on their turn. They are not subject to a coup de grace. Petrified subjects may take no actions except to reattempt their test at the start of their turns until they succeed and overcome the spell.

PIT

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 14 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: Dexterity (Acrobatics) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Primal Magic (Journeyman)

You magically carve a pit into the bare earth or nearby stone, up to 4 yards long by 4 yards wide by 4 yards deep. Subjects standing on the affected ground must succeed at a **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. your Spellpower or fall prone into the pit. Climbing out of the pit requires a minor action.

PULL OF THE ABYSS

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 8 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Strength (Might) vs. Willpowerr
Requirement: Force Mage Specialization, *Telekinetic Burst*

You use telekinetic force to cluster your enemies together and slow them down. You create a circular area of force with a 6-yard radius that's centered anywhere within 30 yards of

you. Those caught inside must make a successful **Strength (Might)** test vs. your Spellpower or be pulled to the center of the area (or as close as terrain and other obstructions allow). Affected enemies cannot run, have their Speed reduced by 6, and suffer a –2 penalty to attack and spell casting rolls for 1 round. Those that make the test are not moved but do suffer a –1 penalty to attack and spell casting rolls for 1 round.

Regeneration

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: One Hour **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** Creation Magic (Master)

Grievous wounds close and broken bones knit together as you speed up a subject's natural healing to accomplish in an hour what would normally take weeks. The subject regains 3d6 + your Magic in Health and is cured of any major injuries, such as broken bones or damaged organs. Powerful as this spell is, it cannot be used to reattach severed body parts. It is also unable to cure diseases or neutralize poisons, though it can counteract some symptoms and repair organ damage suffered.

Rejuvenate

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** *Heal*

You channel regenerative energy to an ally within 10 yards. The subject regains 1d6 Health immediately, and another 1d6 Health at the start of their turn each round for a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability.

Repulsion Field

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 6 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 16
Test: Strength (Might) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Force Field*

This spell surrounds you with a field of energy that pushes foes away from you. Every other round, at the end of your turn, beginning on the round you cast the spell, a wave of repulsive energy surges out. Enemies within 6 yards must make a successful **Strength (Might)** test vs. your Spellpower or be pushed 4 yards away from you and knocked prone. To maintain this spell you must spend 1 MP at the start of each of your turns, even on the rounds when no wave surges out. You may not cast this spell twice in order to generate a wave each round.

Revival

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 14
Test: None
Requirement: Spirit Healer Specialization (Journeyman

Your touch helps to restore the fallen. A dying subject adjacent to you immediately regains 10 + their Constitution + your Magic in Health. Since dying characters cannot take actions, you cannot cast this spell on yourself.

Rock Armor

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 3-8 MP
Casting Time: 1 minute **Target Number:** 10
Test: None **Requirement:** None

Your skin becomes as hard as stone and protects you from harm. Rock armor has an Armor Rating equal to your Magic ability. The spell lasts for 1 hour but its duration can be extended by spending additional mana points. For each additional MP spent beyond the first 3, rock armor remains in effect for another hour, to a maximum of 6 hours total. A mage wearing regular armor gains no benefit from this spell. You can only cast this on yourself.

Shape Earth

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 6 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None
Requirement: Creation Magic (Journeyman)

You can shape and move a mass of sand, earth, or even stone within 6 yards. The spell allows you to move earthen materials with an effective Strength equal to twice your Magic. The materials do not levitate, but are pushed or pulled along the ground. The GM determines how fast objects can be moved based on their mass and your effective Strength. You can also mold objects as if they were soft clay, shaping them as you direct. The GM may require a **Magic (Creation)** test if you want to finesse a particular result, especially if any fine detail is involved. To maintain this spell you must spend 1 MP at the start of each of your turns.

Once you stop maintaining the spell, the materials stay where they are, subject to the usual natural forces (like gravity). Shaped stone will typically retain its new shape, so long as it is capable of supporting its own weight.

Shelter

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 2 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: None **Requirement:** Primal Magic (Novice)

A glyph traced upon the earth with hand or staff creates a faintly shimmering dome, up to 6 yards across and up to 3 yards high at the center. The environment within the dome is cool, dry, and comfortable regardless of the weather outside. Rain, snow, and other minor debris (including falling leaves, ash, or smoke) are kept out, though fresh air can penetrate the dome, and smoke—such as from a campfire—can escape. The shelter's barrier is of no use whatsoever in combat. You can control the light level within from shade (slightly darker than the outside) to lit as brightly as by a lantern.

The shelter lasts for up to 12 hours, or until you dismiss it. You can only maintain a single shelter at a time.

SHOCK

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 4 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 13
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: None

Electricity arcs from your hands or the end of your staff, shocking enemies in a 6-yard by 6-yard area. Anyone in this area takes 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage. Targets that make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower only take 1d6 penetrating damage.

SLEEP

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Willpower (Self-Discipline) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Horror*

Enemies within 10 yards of a point you choose within 30 yards of you are overcome with heavy drowsiness, falling asleep on their feet unless they succeed at a **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test vs. your Spellpower. Targets that fail the initial test may make another test on each of their turns until they awaken. Sleeping targets have a Defense of 10, but are not subject to a coup de grace. Any damage immediately awakens a subject.

SMALL ANIMAL FORM

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 5+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: None **Requirement:** Shapeshifter Specialization

You transform yourself into a small animal for a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability. You can extend the spell for the cost of 1 MP per additional round. You retain your own Cunning, Magic, and Willpower but otherwise your stats are those of the animal. Dogs and falcons are examples of small animals. GMs may create similar stats for others.

SPELL MIGHT

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 11 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** *Mana Cleanse*

You channel deep reserves of magical energy, granting yourself +2 to Spellpower and gaining +2 SP on all rolls that generate stunt points until the end of the encounter. While under the effects of this spell, each additional spell you cast costs an additional 2 MP. You may end this spell as a free action at the beginning of your turn.

SPELL SHIELD

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Defense **Mana Cost:** 4 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 13
Test: None **Requirement:** None

You use your own magical power to protect yourself from the spells of others. The spell shield lasts a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability. During that time any spell (helpful or harmful) cast on you has no effect, but you must spend mana points equal to the spell's base mana cost (not counting deductions for spell stunts or talents). An arcane bolt cast at you would cause no damage, for example, but you would have to spend 2 MP (the spell's mana cost). If it's a spell that affects multiple targets, you are not affected but others are as normal. If you do not have enough mana points left to pay the cost, the spell shield ends and the spell affects you as normal.

SPELL WISP

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: 1 minute **Target Number:** 11
Test: None **Requirement:** None

You summon a small wisp that floats near you for up to an hour and boosts the power of your spells. While the wisp is aiding you, you gain a +1 bonus to your Spellpower. The wisp itself is insubstantial and cannot be attacked or touched.

SPELLBLOOM

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 8 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: None **Requirement:** *Grease*

You conjure a font of magical energy with a 4-yard radius centered anywhere within 50 yards that you can see, and that lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability. Each mage, whether ally or enemy, inside the spellbloom at the beginning of their turn, regains 1d6 MP. As a free action on your turn you may dispel the bloom to gain a number of SP equal to the rounds of duration remaining on it. These SP must be used on spell stunts on the same round they are gained. Any unspent points are lost at the end of your turn

SPIRIT MARK

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 18 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Magic (Entropy) or Willpower (Morale) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Necromancer Specialization

You mark an enemy within 30 yards so that spirits will assault them, doing ongoing damage. Until the end of the encounter, the subject takes 1d6 + the Caster's Willpower Penetrating Damage per turn. The subject can end the effects with a successful **Magic (Entropy) *or* Willpower (Morale) test vs. your Spellpower**, made on its turn**.** Otherwise the spell ends after a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability.

If a target dies while the Spirit Mark is on them, their spirit will arise to fight for the caster for a brief time. The spirit has all the normal statistics of the deceased, but they ignore the effects of terrain, and only magical attacks (spells or hits from magical weapons) can harm them. Other attacks pass through their forms without effect. The spirits fight for the caster for turns equal to the caster's Willpower before they depart.

STINGING SWARM

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 20 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Spellbloom*

A swarm of biting insects materializes around a single enemy within 30 yards. The subject takes 2d6 + Magic penetrating damage at the start of each of their turns for a number of rounds equal to half your Magic ability. They must also succeed at a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower each round or suffer a –2 penalty to all attacks and spell-casting tests. If the subject dies before the swarm dissipates, the swarm moves on to another enemy within 20 yards.

STONE'S EMBRACE

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Strength (Might) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Pit*

The earth swallows up and traps the feet of a number of enemies up to your Magic ability within 30 yards unless they succeed at a **Strength (Might)** test vs. your Spellpower. If they fail, they remain trapped until they succeed at the test as a minor action on their turn.

STONE'S THROW

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 4 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 13
Test: None
Requirement: *Ensnare*

You disappear into the earth or stone under your feet and reappear anywhere within 24 yards, erupting from below without warning. This is not teleportation; you are traveling through the ground. There must be uninterrupted earth or stone between your starting and ending points (you could not get from one wooden rooftop to another with this spell, for example), but most mortar is as good as stone for traveling within stone structures.

SPRING

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 4 MP
Casting Time: One Minute **Target Number:** 13
Test: None
Requirement: Creation Magic (Journeyman)

Tracing magical glyphs on natural earth or stone, then striking them with your hand or staff, you cause a spring to burst forth from the spot, pouring out water at a rate of your Magic in gallons per minute. The water is fresh, clean, drinkable, and entirely mundane—it pours and evaporates naturally. If the spring forms in a hollow, it fills to become a pool. You may stop the flow of the spring at any time. Otherwise, it lasts a number of hours equal to your Magic before stopping of its own accord.

STONEFIST

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 11
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower

You hurl a magical rock at a visible enemy up to 20 yards away. The rock inflicts 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage and the target is knocked prone. If the target makes a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower, the spell only inflicts 1d6 penetrating damage and remains standing.

SUMMON BEAST

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 22 MP
Casting Time: One Hour **Target Number:** 17
Test: Magic (Entropy) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Creation Magic (Journeyman)

You summon a mundane wild animal from the local area, which remains loyal to you until the next sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first. The animal understands your spoken commands and follows them to the best of its ability. Though you may specify the type of animal, the Game Master is the arbiter of what type of animals are available to answer. Summoned animals do not fight to the death and are likely to flee when they've lost more than half of their Health (at the GM's discretion) unless you succeed on a **Communication (Leadership)** test to keep the beast around, or the animal succeeds on a **Willpower (Morale)** test. The TN of these tests depends on how dire the situation is but should rarely be less than TN 13.

TELEKINETIC BURST

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 15
Test: Strength (Might) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Fist of the Maker*

You create a circular burst of force with a 4-yard radius that's centered anywhere within 24 yards that you can see. Those caught inside must make a successful **Strength (Might)** test vs. your Spellpower or be thrown to the nearest edge of the burst and knocked prone. Targets may take damage from terrain and hazards depending on the situation. A burst that sends enemies flying into a wall inflicts 1d6 damage if the wall is wood and 2d6 damage if the wall is stone, for example. The GM determines what damage, if any, is applied. Those that make the test are not moved but are still knocked prone.

TELEKINETIC WEAPONS

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 8+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: None **Requirement:** *Force Field*

The readied melee weapons of all allies within 10 yards of you pulse with arcane force. Affected weapons inflict bonus damage equal to your Magic ability. Any attack made with an affected weapon that generates stunt points may treat the Pierce Armor stunt as costing 1 fewer SP. (This can be combined with other effects, such as the level 2 Rogue stunt bonus, to reduce the cost of the stunt to 0 SP.) The enchantment lasts for one minute, but you can extend the duration when you cast the spell by spending an additional 6 MP for each extra minute you would like it to last. This spell does not harm the weapons it affects and may be cast on weapons currently subject to the spells frost weapon and flaming weapon.

TEMPEST

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 11+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Lightning*

You create a small electrical storm centered anywhere within 40 yards, with a radius of 4 yards. Anyone in the storm's area suffers 2d6 + Magic penetrating damage from lightning. Targets that make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower only suffer 1d6 penetrating damage. The storm only lasts a single round, but you may extend its duration another round by spending 10 MP as a free action at the start of your subsequent turns. If you extend the spell, all creatures in the radius immediately suffer its effects again.

VICIOUS BEAST FORM

Magic School: Creation
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 25+ MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: None
Requirement: Shapeshifter Specialization (Master)

You transform yourself into a vicious beast for a number of minutes equal to your Magic ability. You can extend the spell for the cost of 10 MP per additional minute. You retain your own Cunning, Magic, and Willpower but otherwise your stats are those of the beast. Giant spiders and drakes from the are examples of vicious beasts appropriate for this spell. GMs may create similar stats for others. It is beyond the power of this spell to grant the caster the form of creatures like high dragons or varterral.

Virulent Walking Bomb

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 13 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Death Syphon*

You infect the blood of a target within 10 yards with deadly magical venom. When first cast, this spell immediately deals 2d6 + Magic penetrating damage. The subject must then make a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower at the start of each of its turns. If it succeeds, the spell ends. If it fails, the target suffers another 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage. If the target dies while virulent walking bomb is still in effect, it explodes in a shower of gore, dealing 2d6 damage to anyone within 4 yards. Subjects caught in this blast must succeed at a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower –2 or become secondary targets of this spell, suffering 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage on each of their turns until they succeed on the test. Secondary targets do not infect additional targets.

Vulnerability Hex

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 4 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: Magic (Entropy) vs. Spellpower

You curse a visible target within 20 yards, making them more vulnerable to attacks and spells. Until the end of the encounter, the target suffers a –1 penalty to Defense and a –2 penalty on ability tests vs. Spellpower. A target that makes a successful **Magic (Entropy)** test vs. your Spellpower only suffers the Defense penalty. A character can only be subject to one vulnerability hex at a time.

Waking Nightmare

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 20 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Willpower (Self-Discipline) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: *Sleep*

You trap a single enemy within 20 yards in a waking nightmare. Until it succeeds at a **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test vs. your Spellpower, the target falls into a fugue and attacks your enemies to the best of its ability. A target already asleep when affected by this spell takes a –3 penalty to its initial test. The target may make another test on each of its subsequent turns until it awakens.

Wrath of the Elvhen

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 6 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 13
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Keeper Specialization

Earth, wood, plant, and stone lash out against your enemies. While this spell is active, any enemy that starts its turn within 4 yards of you must make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** vs. your Spellpower test or take penetrating damage equal to half your Magic ability. Spend 2 MP as a free action at the start of your turn each round to maintain this spell.

Walking Bomb

Magic School: Spirit
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 4 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 13
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower

You infuse the blood of an opponent within 10 yards with a corrosive poison. The round you cast it, walking bomb inflicts 1d6+1 penetrating damage. While the spell is in effect, the target must make a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower at the start of each of their turns. If successful, the spell ends. If the test is failed, the target takes another 1d6+1 penetrating damage. Should the spell's damage reduce the target's Health to 0, they explode in a spray of blood, flesh, and bones. Anyone within 4 yards of the exploding victim takes 2d6 damage.

Weakness

Magic School: Entropy
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 11
Test: Magic (Spirit) vs. Spellpower

Your magic drains a visible enemy within 20 yards of energy, making them slower and more sluggish. The target suffers a –1 penalty to Strength and Dexterity and a –5 penalty to Speed for a number of rounds equal to the casting roll's Dragon Die. If the target makes a successful **Magic (Spirit)** test vs. your Spellpower, they only suffer the Speed penalty.

Weather Weaving

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 8 MP
Casting Time: One Hour **Target Number:** 16
Test: None **Requirement:** Primal Magic (Master)

You shape and direct the weather in an area with a radius equal to your Magic in miles. You can choose any natural weather condition normally possible in the area for the given time of year (so you cannot make it snow in the middle of summer, for example, or rain in the desert). The weather forms within eight hours of your casting, so generally only limited changes are possible. You can make it warmer or colder by about 20 degrees Fahrenheit (12 degree Celsius), cause it to rain or snow (or stop doing so), or make the sky overcast or clear.

Multiple castings (and expenditures of mana) over multiple days can extend the spell's effect, creating more dramatic shifts in the weather. Note that you do not control the weather from moment to moment. Once you have set it in motion, it follows its natural course.

Wind Weaving

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: One Minute **Target Number:** 14
Test: None **Requirement:** Primal Magic (Novice)

You cause the wind to blow in whatever direction you wish, with force up to a stiff gust: strong enough to blow out candles and other small open flames, and to scatter light debris like leaves or paper. You can direct the wind for up to an hour, although changing its direction or intensity requires a major action each time you do so.

Among other things, wind weaving is used to propel sailing vessels without the need to rely on the often-fickle nature of the weather, and to calm winds that might otherwise prove disruptive.

Winter's Grasp

Magic School: Primal
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 12
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower

You envelop a visible target within 20 yards of you in a cloud of frost and ice that lasts a number of rounds equal to your Magic ability. The round you cast it, winter's grasp inflicts 1d6 penetrating damage. While the spell is in effect, the target must make a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower at the start of each of their turns. If successful, the spell ends. If the test is failed, the target takes 1d6 penetrating damage and suffers a cumulative –2 penalty to Speed. Those killed by winter's grasp are frozen solid.

Blood Magic

Blood Magic, which is practiced by mages with the Blood Mage specialization, is an exceptionally powerful but dangerous type of magic using the power found in blood (the mage's and that of others) to fuel spells. Blood magic is feared and despised by many, including many mages. Outside the Tevinter Imperium, it is stigmatized and banned, with blood mages facing summary execution at the hands of the templars. In fact, it was a long held position of the Chantry that all apostates will eventually fall to blood magic and similar dark practices.

Despite the dangers, some mages maintain blood magic is simply an alternate avenue of magical power. Groups that worship the Old Gods sometimes turn to blood magic, claiming it can be used for good and the Dalish companion of the Champion of Kirkwall, Merrill, sought to use blood magic to help her people.

Blood magic is treated as a fifth school of magic. Only those with the Blood Mage specialization can learn its spells, and even they must be in Blood Magic mode to cast them (See Blood Mage Specialization in **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations**. For this reason, Blood Magic spells are listed separately.

Blood Sacrifice

Magic School: Blood
Spell Type: Enhancement **Mana Cost:** 5 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 14
Test: None **Requirement:** Blood Mage specialization

You can draw upon the life force of a willing and visible ally within 20 yards to replenish your own Health. This ally must have blood (no golems, for example). You gain 1 Health for each 1 Health lost by your ally, up to 25. This can result in the subject's death, if reduced to 0 Health. The subject of a blood sacrifice recovers the lost Health normally.

Blood Slave

Magic School: Blood
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 20 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Willpower (Self-Discipline) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Hemorrhage

One of the most feared powers available to blood mages, this spell allows you to take complete control of an enemy's body unless they make a successful **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test vs. your Spellpower. If the subject fails, you may dictate the actions he takes on their next turn. The subject may attempt a new test to resist you at the start of each of their subsequent turns. Once the target successfully resists, the spell ends. All attacks made by a target under your control suffer a –2 penalty (if the target chooses to resist) due to the

imprecise nature of your manipulation. Targets without blood cannot be affected by this spell.

BLOOD WOUND

Magic School: Blood
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 8 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 17
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Blood Mage specialization

You make the blood of all enemies within 12 yards of you boil, causing excruciating pain. All targets take 1d6 + Magic penetrating damage and must make a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower. Those that fail can only take a minor action on their next turns. Targets without blood or some similar substance are not affected by this spell. Golems are not affected, for example, while wild sylvans are affected through their sap. Insubstantial and incorporeal targets like shades and ash wraiths are also not affected.

HEMORRHAGE

Magic School: Blood
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: Major Action **Target Number:** 19
Test: Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Blood Wound

You take control of a large volume of a target's blood and force it out through their mouth, nose, and eyes. unless they succeed at a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. your Spellpower. If the target fails the test it takes 4d6 + Magic penetrating damage; if it succeeds it suffers only 2d6 penetrating damage. Regardless of whether the target succeeds, the horrific nature of this spell may demoralize enemies; the Imposing Spell stunt only costs 2 SP when used while casting hemorrhage. The target of this spell must be within 50 yards and visible to you.

THOUGHT-TAKING

Magic School: Blood
Spell Type: Attack **Mana Cost:** 15 MP
Casting Time: One Minute **Target Number:** 17
Test: Willpower (Self-Discipline) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Blood Mage Specialization

This spell allows a blood mage to probe deep into a target's thoughts, uncovering their deepest secrets, desires, and fears. You must touch a target's forehead and concentrate for one minute, during which time the target makes a **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test vs. your Spellpower. If they succeed, you fail to penetrate their mind but you may spend another 5 MP to extend the casting time by another minute and force the target to make the test again. Once a target fails the test, you have access to their mind and may expend 2 MP to ask the Game Master for the target's honest answer to a single question. You may ask a total number of questions equal to your Magic ability, at a rate of one question per minute. This spell is often quite painful for the target even though it deals no actual damage.

WRACK

Magic School: Blood
Spell Type: Utility **Mana Cost:** 3 MP
Casting Time: One Minute **Target Number:** 13
Test: Willpower (Self-Discipline) vs. Spellpower
Requirement: Blood Magic specialization

You extend faint tendrils of entropic energy into the target of this spell, which must be within 2 yards while it is cast. So long as you concentrate you can inflict terrible, wracking pain on the subject at will. The victim must make a **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test vs. your Spellpower to resist answering your questions or capitulating to your demands. A victim wracked by pain suffers a –3 penalty to all tests while it persists, though suffers no damage from the spell. You cannot have more than one wrack spell active at once.

Wrack is a favored spell for interrogation, as it causes no real physical harm and leaves no signs or marks. Some victims injure themselves, and someone with a weak constitution may die from prolonged use, but otherwise it is far safer and more effective than conventional methods of torture. Tales of this spell and its use are one of the many reasons people fear blood mages and their powers.

Chapter 6

Advanced Roleplaying

Hopefully you've got the hang of the basics by now and feel quite comfortable keeping track of your stats, advancing your character, making all kind of tests, and doing the basic stuff. Like any other skill, though, you can always get better at roleplaying. This section provides some more tips to help everyone in your gaming group have even more fun in your campaign.

Playing with Personality

One of the advantages of playing a tabletop RPG as opposed to a video game RPG, miniatures game, or anything else is that it lets you develop a deep alter ego limited only by your own imagination, in the game world. As much as you may like the tactical or mechanical aspects of the *Dragon Age* RPG, don't neglect to take full advantage of the opportunity to give your PC an interesting personality. Creating a great personality for an RPG character is an art, and it's different from creating a well-rounded character in a short story, crafting a drama's wracked protagonist, or "statting up" a cool avatar for a video game RPG. The following should help point you in the right direction.

First, it pays to exaggerate your Player Character's personality. Figure out what the one or two most important aspects of your character's personality are and really emphasize them in play. If your hero is brave, roleplay braver than might really make sense. If your hero is self-sacrificing, sacrifice more than you can imagine any real-world person giving up. If your hero is greedy… well, you get the idea. The reason is that there's lots of stuff going on at the game table and the other players—much less the busy, busy GM—aren't likely to pick up on subtle, actorly clues as much as they are on broad strokes of temperament. You don't want your hero to be an obnoxious caricature, but it's just as bad to have one who's bland and flat.

Second, give your character something to want and keep your goals up to date. Specifying goals and ties during character creation is intended to spur you in this direction. As your campaign unfolds make sure to keep your PC's goals in mind, and as you accomplish them (especially your short-term goals), make sure to evolve your ambitions or choose new aims. Past helping you keep your own eye on the ball, another important benefit to giving your character fresh goals to chase is that it helps the GM continue to unspool the campaign in directions that will keep your interest. Don't wait for the GM to tell you what your character should want next. Take the initiative instead.

Third, avoid personality traits or goals that are at odds with the rest of the party. Or, if you must create a disagreeable misanthrope, find some way to exempt the rest of the party from your hero's grouchiness, or at the very least, to set it aside when there's arterial spray to deal with. Thedas is dangerous enough without inter-party strife that goes past the requisite friendly kidding and superficial professional rivalry.

Finally, evolve. If you're not having fun with some aspect of your character's personality, change it. If you can invent a reason for the change that's organic to the world, that's great, but it's not necessary. Or, if you're really not digging your character talk to your GM, retire that character, and start a new one.

Keep the Game Rolling

There's no way around it: One of the least-fun parts of play is downtime, while you're waiting for your next turn to do something. One of the best ways to make sure everyone keeps having fun is to do your part to keep the game moving.

Part of this is to simply observe common courtesy and common sense at the game table. Don't get up to grab a drink or go to the bathroom right before your initiative is coming up, for example, or everyone will be stuck waiting for you. Don't waste everyone's time by getting into a long discussion with the GM about some rules issue that doesn't really matter. Don't watch TV or make a phone call while everyone else is playing. Common courtesy; common sense.

But in addition to the obvious things, you can do other, proactive things to keep the game moving and help everyone have fun. One example is to figure out what you want to do before the GM asks you what your actions are going to be. Although you should (of course) pay attention to what the other PCs are doing, that shouldn't prevent you from also making plans in advance.

Another thing you can do is offer suggestions when another player seems to be stuck figuring out what to do. If your teammate likes one of your ideas it can get the game moving again. Even if they don't your thoughts might spur more ideas of their own. What you should absolutely not do, though, is try to take control of someone else's character. That's just annoying. Think "suggestions" rather than "directions" and you'll find the right tone.

Finally, keep in mind that while your character is in the spotlight, and you're taking your actions and rolling your dice, everyone else is in their own downtime. Help the other players have fun while you're acting by giving exciting, fun descriptions of what you're doing. This draws the others in. If you can make what you're doing exciting to everyone, no one will mind—or even remember—that they're between their own actions. But also: don't grandstand. Do your thing and then get out of the way for the next player.

Support Your Party

The *Dragon Age* RPG is built on the assumption that the adventures revolve around a whole party of Player Character heroes. Although your character will sometimes be leading the charge—either literally or figuratively—part of the challenge of playing as a group is sharing the spotlight.

When other players are doing their thing you should be willing to pitch in by taking a supporting role. If you're playing a warrior during a part of the adventure that revolves around some kind of magical research, there's no reason you can't contribute to the effort by collecting components that your party's mage needs, or by simply looking out for trouble while the mage is concentrating on rituals.

Think of your party as a team, not an assortment of individual heroes. Be willing to take on a secondary, supporting role from time to time. By doing so you'll set a tone that will encourage the other players to support your hero when you're the one in the spotlight.

Players vs. Characters

Players aren't their characters. It seems so obvious that it doesn't even bear saying. Even so, there can sometimes be friction among the players in an RPG over things that their Player Characters do in the game. The biggest key to avoiding problems based on the differences between players and characters is just to remember, always, that there's a difference.

Keep in mind that you can play a character with odious—even obnoxious—personality traits without being obnoxious yourself. (Not only can you do this, you should do it.) Your joker rogue can antagonize your party's stolid warrior over their stoicism without having that spill over into you antagonizing the warrior's player. It can be a subtle distinction, but it's one that's completely critical.

The obvious way to tell if you're pushing things too far is if you notice that another player has stopped having fun. If everyone's having fun, it's all good. If someone's obviously not having fun, take corrective action. You don't necessarily want to stop the game in its tracks to have a heart-to-heart among the players. If you can quickly get past some problem in the immediate term and postpone a longer talk about it until after the game session, you should do it.

The converse of this guideline is a bit more subtle, but also bears explicit discussion: Don't try to read the tea leaves of another player's character and make assumptions about their real-life beliefs or personality. Roleplaying is escapism, not psychotherapy or divination.

Give the GM a Hand

The Game Master of a *Dragon Age* game has a lot to do. They did a lot of work prepping the game before you even showed up to play, and at the table they're controlling the actions of the whole host of enemies and NPCs in the entire world of Thedas while you've just got your one character—and maybe a horse or a dog—to worry about. There are lots of small, subtle ways you can show your appreciation and lend a hand to keep the game running smoothly. Make a copy of your character sheet each week and pass it to the GM even if you're not asked. Offer to get them a drink when you go to the fridge.

During combat, offer to keep track of everyone's initiative numbers—even the enemy's—so the GM doesn't have to. Most importantly, don't argue when you disagree with one of the GM's rulings. If you must, bring up your objection quickly, and if they still don't agree with you, go along with the GM's interpretation and talk about it after the game.

You should also keep in mind that in many groups the GM is the one who pays for the books, boxed sets, and PDFs that are helping everyone have fun. While it's not necessarily your responsibility to pitch in cash money, a comment of appreciation is more than most GMs get, and we've yet to meet a GM who wouldn't appreciate having one of the players in their campaign pitch in to cover their share of pizza.

Again: common sense, common courtesy. Games aren't so much different from real life after all.

Exploration & Roleplaying Stunts

Using stunts during combat and spell-casting are one of the most fun parts of playing *Dragon Age*. When you pull off a stunt, it helps you feel like your character is a real hero, and it gives you choices about what you want to do. But combat and magic aren't the only times when stunts can occur. This section brings stunts outside the realm of combat, adding two new classes of stunts: exploration stunts and roleplaying stunts. It's no coincidence that there are three kinds of encounters in *Dragon Age*—combat, exploration, and roleplaying. With these two new classes of stunts, the stunt system is now fully rounded.

The basic system for generating and using stunt points to pull off exploration and roleplaying stunts is exactly the same as it is for combat stunts. Whenever you are successful at a test and you roll doubles on two of your dice, you can perform one or more stunts in addition to reaping the benefits of success on the test. You receive a number of stunt points equal to the result on the test's Dragon Die, and must use them right away to perform stunts.

Just like with combat stunts, except where noted in a particular stunt's description, you can only perform the same stunt once with the stunt points from a single test. As with combat stunts, once you choose which stunts you'll perform, you're responsible for narrating how your hero pulls them off. As with combat stunts, you can perform your non-combat stunts in any order you choose.

The exploration and roleplaying stunts available to everyone are listed in the Standard Exploration Stunts and Standard Roleplaying Stunts tables. As with combat stunts, encounter-, monster-, and class-specific exploration and roleplaying stunts are also presented in the appropriate contexts.

Roleplaying stunts must always be delivered along with a description of the interaction you're engaged in, and must be consistent with the description you give. If you have your character deliver a scathing dressing-down via a **Strength (Intimidation)** test and then say that it turns out to be funny (using the Jest stunt), you'll have to propose a really clever justification for why that would work.

GMs should be aware that, in general, exploration and roleplaying stunts will call for more on-the-fly decision-making than combat stunts. This is because of the simple fact that outside combat, there are fewer hard-and-fast rules and statistics to govern what characters can do, how they might feel or react to provocations, where they're standing, and so on. That said, exploration stunts and roleplaying stunts aren't any different than exploration and roleplaying in the game overall—they're just a little more flexible and open than situations where life and death hang in the balance, and so they require the GM's flexibility and interpretation.

To avoid bogging the game down with the need for the GM to make lots of minor, on-the-fly decisions about non-combat stunts, the GM can always decide that any particular

non-combat test can't generate stunt points, for any reason or no reason. They can also rule that stunt points generated from any particular combat test can't be spent on exploration stunts or roleplaying stunts. They can even make either of those decisions after a test has been made. (Although a good GM will only "take away" stunt points that have already been rolled very rarely. It's usually better to let the players have their fun.)

Finally, GMs should be clear that the effects of exploration stunts, especially, do not call for them to invent new elements that weren't there before to add to the situation at hand. For example, if there's nothing additional in the encounter at hand for a character who chooses the That Makes Me Wonder stunt to learn, the GM isn't obligated to make something up to satisfy the effects of the stunt.

Which Stunts Can I Use?

With the addition of exploration and roleplaying stunts it is possible to generate stunts point from any test. Outside combat, though, different kinds of tests and scenes can bleed into each other, their boundaries sometimes difficult to discern.

As a general rule—and always subject to the GM's decisions to the contrary—you can use stunt points from any test to generate any kind of stunt. Although you will most frequently want to use exploration stunts when doing investigation and use roleplaying stunts when dealing with NPCs because those stunts will make the most sense and be the most useful, you're not restricted that way. You can even use exploration and roleplaying stunts during combat. (Or, for that matter, use combat stunts outside combat, although doing that is likely to start a combat.)

Stunt Notes & Test Restrictions

When you consider the potential of combat, exploration, roleplaying, and possibly spell stunts with multiple characters and tests, a few restrictions and clarifications bear repetition, and a few terms must be defined.

- You can only roll a test when the GM calls for one. With the potential for great success in some of the new stunts, it will sometimes be tempting to roll for anything and everything in the hopes of generating stunt points that will provide broader-than-normal effects, enduring bonuses, and so forth. In cases where you're obviously fishing for stunt points, especially when you're attempting tasks at which you'd obviously succeed, the GM has every right to disallow a test, and simply say that you've succeeded at your task.
- For most tests, players will not know the target number they're rolling for on a given test. They simply roll the dice, generate a total, and tell the GM what it is. The new rules for exploration and roleplaying stunts don't change things by exposing tests' target numbers.
- Some new stunt descriptions refer to an "object of your test." This refers broadly to an item or person being searched for, an NPC with whom a hero is interacting, or something similar. If an opposed test is being made, the object of the test is always the other party to the test. It will almost always be obvious what the object of a given test is, but whenever it's not, the GM is the final arbiter. And keep in mind that the object of a test may be obvious to the GM but not the player. Most Perception tests are examples of this.
- Some stunt descriptions say that some effect lasts "until the time or venue changes." This means that the effect lasts until the focus of play jumps forward in time by any significant amount, or the focus of play changes to some other place. This phrase is meant to approximate the duration of a single encounter but be a little clearer to players (since the GM is usually the only one who worries about when encounters begin and end). However, note that when the GM is jumping back and forth between two different groups of PC who're doing different things in different places in order to create drama and excitement, the change of the game-table's focus on one sub-group of the party, and then another sub-group, shouldn't count as a change of time or venue. It's just clever technique.
- For the avoidance of doubt, as with other stunts, roleplaying stunts can target Player Characters.

Remember that all stunts are available to the GM's NPCs, too. Turnabout is fair play, after all. This can be awkward, however, when roleplaying stunts seem to take away a player's freedom to choose how their Player Character behaves. The GM should be circumspect in such cases, while players should also embrace the idea that good fun can arise from the adversity of their heroes being psychologically and emotionally affected by the characters they interact with, even in ways that they wouldn't necessarily choose themselves. As always, the GM is the final arbiter of how things play out in whatever situations arise.

Example

A noble has hired the rogue Gerhard to stop a secret society among the local populace from trying to oust him as their liege. Gerhard has infiltrated a clandestine meeting of the group but he still doesn't know who, among those assembled, is the agitator behind the movement. The GM assigns Gerhard's player to make a **Communication (Investigation)** *test to try to figure it out as he talks to those present and observes their body language.*

The GM secretly sets the target number for this test at 13. Gerhard has Communication 2 and possesses the Investigation focus. He rolls 4, 3, and 3, with the 4 being the Dragon Die result. His total is thus 14, which exceeds the target number. The GM tells the player that Gerhard was successful. Since doubles were rolled, the test generates stunt points equal to the Dragon Die result of 4.

Gerhard's player has lots of options.

He considers using the That Makes Me Wonder stunt in order to try to learn something else about the members of the secret society or the place where they're meeting at the same time he's on the lookout for the ringleader. However, he knows that the bann is very anxious to learn what Gerhard can find out as soon as possible. Given that, he decides to spend 2 SP on Speedy Search. He decides to spend his leftover points on And Another Thing. He

Exploration Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Advantageous Positioning**: You make your discovery from an advantageous position of your choice. That position, however, can't be more than 2 yards away from the place that would normally lead to your discovery. You may wait until the GM describes what you've found, if relevant, before you choose.
2	**Efficient Search:** If resources of any kind are typically consumed in the course of your test, you use only half as much as would be normal.
2	**Speedy Search:** You complete your test in half the time it would otherwise take.
3	**That Makes Me Wonder:** You may immediately make another **Perception** test, at no additional cost in time or resources, to discover more information about your surroundings, or the object of your test. This bonus test must use a different focus from the first test, however, and doubles on this bonus test do not give rise to stunt points. The two tests are assumed to transpire simultaneously, not one after the other. If there is nothing additional to discover the stunt is wasted, but the GM will not prevent you from choosing this stunt even when there is nothing additional to learn.
3	**The Object of your Attention**: You receive a +1 bonus to further tests to examine or perceive additional aspects of the object of your test until the time or venue changes.
4	**The Upper Hand**: If your discoveries lead to combat within a moment or two you receive a +3 bonus on your initiative roll.
4	**Resources at Hand**: Choose a focus that you don't have, that falls under the same ability as the test you're making. You are considered to have that focus until the time or venue changes. The GM may require you to explain how this bonus arises from the environment and deny it if you can't make a reasonable suggestion.
4	**With a Flourish**: The manner of your success is impressive to those who are nearby to watch you. You have a +1 bonus to opposed tests against them until the time or venue changes.

Roleplaying Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Bon Mot:** You tag the perfect witty remark onto the end of your action, affecting all those who hear it that much more deeply. If you can't think of one, the rest of the players and GM quickly brainstorm options, and you choose among them. Word of your wit is likely to spread, for good or ill.
2	**And Another Thing:** You manage to weave a second thread of conversation into the primary interaction that called for the test, if your description supports it. If relevant, you may make an additional test as part of your action, before anyone else has a chance to respond or make any tests or arguments of their own.
2	**Sway the Crowd:** Your interpersonal efforts are so effective that they spill over onto others in the area, and you affect one additional person of your choice past the original target. You may use this stunt multiple times on the same roll. However, if the test that gave rise to this stunt was an opposed test you may not expand the effect to anyone who has a higher ability + focus total than the original target.
3	**Stunned Silence:** You are so impressive that you leave all those who witness your display completely dumbfounded and unable to speak for at least a full round. Outside combat this lasts, at the very least, long enough for your character to begin to do something else.
3	**Jest:** You turn a phrase, twist your expression, or make some other comic motion that leads those nearby to laugh, or at the very least, stifle their snorts. Anyone nearby who wishes to avoid laughing must make a **TN 11 Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test, with the exception—at the GM's discretion—of whomever you've made the butt of your joke.
4	**Flirt:** Choose one character who's present and immediately make an opposed **Communications (Seduction) vs. Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test. If you win, that character becomes enamored with yours, assuming gender-preference compatibility. What exactly this means in the moment and how it might play out (or fall apart) in the long run are up to the GM (or the player, if this stunt targets a PC), and depend on how you continue to act, but if you're successful, you've created an opening for romantic opportunities.
4	**Tower of Will**: Your success gives you a sense of your own brilliance and strength of character. For the rest of the current roleplaying exchange you gain a +1 bonus to any opposed tests where an opponent tries to put you at an emotional disadvantage, such as by intimidating you, impressing you, bargaining with you, and so on.
5	**Enrage**: You twist the knife, delivering a provocation or insult in such a way that a single target you designate must choose between either attacking you or storming away from the scene. If they choose to attack the assault need not be deadly, although that option is open to the enraged character. A slap or the throwing of the gauntlet may stand in as an "attack" just as well.

tells the GM that while he's talking to the conspirators to try to figure out who's in charge, he'll be interjecting the idea that he thinks the secret society should move slowly in opposing his employer, since taking action too quickly could result in half-baked schemes that will fall apart before they can come to fruition. Gerhard figures that slowing down the group's plots will make his benefactor happy and give him more time, and that his rationalizations will make sense to the plotters.

Because Gerhard was successful at the test, the GM reveals the identity of the shadowy individual who seems to be behind the society, a local cooper with political ambitions. The GM tells Gerhard's player that he manages to make that deduction before the meeting is even half done, giving him the option to slip away immediately, if he wants to. It will be up to the GM to figure out how to weave Gerhard's suggestions that the society should slow things down into the unfolding story, but since the stunt was paid for, the GM takes it as given that the idea was communicated effectively and without exposing Gerhard to suspicion.

Again, remember it's okay to ease into the stunt system. We recommended starting with Combat and Spell stunts earlier, but that's not the only method. GMs could introduce a few of each kind of stunt each session until they're all available, for example. The key is to make the most of stunts without becoming overwhelmed by them.

Character Goals

While all characters likely have basic goals, you can set specific goals for a character as part of character creation and play. Used in this manner, goals offer valuable guidance to the Game Master. Each goal says something about your character or about you as a player: It says what you'd like to see happen in the campaign. They are sort of like a "wish list" mixed with a roadmap that both players and GMs can use to guide a character along paths that will make them more interesting, fun, and significant to the setting.

When selecting or writing goals for your character, consider the signal you're sending to the GM as a fellow participant in the game. While the goals you write can help to shape and steer a campaign, they're not orders for the GM to carry out. Goals that align with the themes, style, and scope of the campaign are easier for the GM to incorporate and therefore more likely to come up in actual play. It might be okay to present one goal as a friendly challenge to the GM ("I can't wait to see where my character's father turns up!"), but don't limit your communication with the GM to just your character's goals. You might want to be surprised but you shouldn't leave your GM out on a limb with a tough goal to work with, either. Collaborate.

Your Character's Goals

Goals help you imagine what your character wants, which can help you understand and play that character. What goals have led your character to become a rogue or to explore their magical power? What goals might they develop after gaining experience in their adventures? What does your character want out of the next week, the next year, and their career as an adventurer?

A character's goals don't have to be public knowledge in the game world, even if you share your character's goals with the other players. What would your character say are their goals if a common innkeeper asked? What if the question came from a trusted ally, like a fellow Player Character? What goals might they keep secret even if asked by a close friend?

Your Own Goals

All of those are goals you can consider as the player of your character, but *your* goals—as the creator and portrayer of your character—are also important. Writing down goals for your character can help get you thinking like the author of your character. Authors don't just protect their characters; they challenge them, too. As the author of your character, think about a goal or two that you have for your character but that the character might not have herself. For example, you might want your character's long-lost father to appear in an adventure one day, even if the character believes him to be dead or has made peace with the idea of never seeing him again.

Sharing Goals

Do you tell your character's goals to the other players? It's a good idea, so everyone can collaborate during play as much as possible, but not every goal needs to be known to players other than the GM. Maybe you want to keep part of your character's history a secret for the sake of a dramatic reveal down the line. Maybe you and your fellow players want to share your goals through in-character dialogue, so you have fuel for roleplaying scenes in which the characters ask each other about their goals. Those are potentially good reasons for hiding goals.

Unfortunately, hiding goals can also create tension and awkwardness during play. Take, for example, the situation in which *you* want to explore a perilous tomb because you believe it's tied to a secret goal you have for your character. Imagine that the other players don't want to risk venturing into that tomb for no good reason. If only you'd tell them about your goal, your fellow *players* could join you on the quest even if their characters remain skeptical. Sharing goals with your fellow players often just makes things smoother.

Three goals per PC can quickly turn into a lot of goals for the GM to manage and incorporate if you have a lot of players. Consider giving your characters goals in common so they can cooperate to achieve them.

This helps tie the characters more tightly together. Two characters with the same goal might go about achieving that goal very differently, of course, so use the goal as a touchstone for showing how your characters are both alike *and* distinct. A warrior and a mage might both want to find the villain who burned their village in pursuit of apostates all those years ago, but maybe the mage seeks justice and the warrior seeks

vengeance. Now you have fertile ground for great roleplaying when that goal comes into play.

PCs also might have similar goals, but not identical. It might even be that two PCs cannot achieve each goal perfectly and either will come into conflict or need to come up with some creative resolution. For example, a warrior might want to slay the man who killed their brother in single combat while their friend the mage wishes to see this villain brought to the authorities to face justice. This can be very fun for some groups and create needless tension between PCs and players in others. It's best to talk about this option before employing it, but if it's to your taste it can be wonderful fodder for roleplaying.

Devising Goals

Creating goals can be easy or challenging, depending on how you approach the process. You can say a lot about your character through the goals you compose. You can discover things about your character, too.

First, decide whether you're writing a goal that comes *from* your character or a goal that you're creating *for* your character. Is it your character's goal or your own?

Remember, thinking like your character can help you imagine details and storylines that drive your roleplaying and propel your character into the fictional game world. Thinking like your character's author helps you collaborate with the GM to conjure plot twists and add depth or drama to the game world itself. If you want your character's missing father to appear in a future adventure, you're helping shape the game world by adding a new character (the father) and mixing your character's history into the future of the campaign.

Think about how the goals you devise interact to evoke your character's views and ambitions. Think about how the goals, if they're achieved, might contribute to your character's future stories. Do you want your character's journey to be a tale of redemption or revenge, of conquest or cooperation, of ambition or luck?

To give your character nuance and depth, try to have three goals written down at a time. Fewer goals can imply a character of rare focus… or shallow depths. More goals can be just plain difficult to track and incorporate. Your list can be a mix of character goals and player goals but you always want to have one or two of the *character's* goals written down so you know what the character wants.

What's In a Goal?

Goals can be simple or complex; neither approach is superior. Some GMs want lots of material to work with while others prefer to improvise or prepare surprises from session to session. It's okay to mix simple and complex goals, especially over the life of a whole campaign. Talk with your GM to determine how detailed you should make your goals.

However simple or complex your goals, consider the value of curiosity and surprise for both you and your fellow players. You're not scripting. You're not guaranteeing your character's success. Each goal should carry with it the possibility of interesting failure. Whether your character achieves her goals or not, new goals lay ahead.

Curiosity

Strive for goals that pique curiosity. *Why* does your character seek that ancestral sword? Why does your character seek revenge rather than go on with their life? *Why* does your character think their father is dead? If you can't answer why a character wants to achieve their goal, it's probably not the right goal for you.

These kinds of questions fuel your roleplaying by giving your character things to talk about. Answering them can reveal your character's history or inner workings. What's more, they help the other players take an interest in your character's history and goals. When everyone is a good audience for their fellow players, goals can collide and combine in compelling ways.

The fulfillment or failure of a goal—even a long-term goal—shouldn't necessarily mean the end of the character. Instead of implying ruination in the event that a goal isn't met, the question should be, *"What's next?"* Your character wants to retrieve the ancestral sword stolen from their family by Orlesian nobles a generation earlier? Well, they've done it, so what's next? Your character fails to get revenge on a villain before they die of illness? Your character must find a new goal, so what's next?

The outcome of any goal shouldn't be a sure thing. Keep your imagination open. Be ready to incorporate surprises.

Surprise

Part of the excitement of an RPG adventure is its unpredictability. Maybe the dice just won't cooperate with your character's scheme to get revenge on their nemesis. Maybe, in the heat of play, another player offers up a plan to get your character's ancestral sword from the bad guys and that plan turns out to be so much more exciting than what you had in mind when you wrote your goal. Note that in the latter case you still achieve your goal, just not how you expected.

Part of the GM's job is to keep things exciting and, in both stories and games, surprise is a key tool for excitement. Say you devised a goal in which your character's missing father returns to complicate their life. Be ready for that missing father to appear in an unexpected role in a future adventure. Maybe he'll need rescuing or maybe he'll be the captor of an ally. He could be friend or foe.

The GM may combine character goals into tangled plots meant to involve as many of the PCs as possible. So your character's long-lost father may end up the prisoner (or henchman!) of another PC's villain. Embrace the surprises.

It isn't easy, juggling all the players' goals at once. You won't always get what you expected, but if you collaborate with the GM and your fellow players with an open mind you can get a great mix of satisfyingly surprising and dramatic adventures built out of the goals you all devise. Then you ask, *"What's next?"*

Simple Goals

Simple goals are straightforward statements of what your character is after in life, either in the short term or the long term.

As a guideline, simple goals are better for stating your character's aims and ambitions. A simple goal says that you and your character both want to pursue this quest in the game. (Otherwise you probably wouldn't make it a goal.) Simple goals often leave their short-term or long-term status either implied or up to the GM to decide.

A simple goal isn't necessarily easy, but it is straightforward. *"I will kill Arl Afric for his role in the murder of my family"* is a simple goal. It has very few parts and is basically achieved by one ultimate action. Of course, simple goals aren't necessarily easy ones; it might be incredibly difficult to locate, isolate, and defeat Arl Alfric, but it isn't a complex concept.

To write great simple goals, use active verbs and write in your own character's voice. Try to vary the verbs you use so your character has multiple kinds of goals to pursue. Have each one represent a different kind of action. For example:

- Discover which mage killed my brother.
- Deliver the killer to the templars.
- Rebuild the family manor in Ferelden.

The way goals interact can say a lot about your character's ambitions. The samples above imply a chain of action—the first has to be accomplished before the second can be attempted—which suggests their immediacy: the first is more immediate than the second. The third is a long-term goal.

These three goals also reveal how important the character's family is to them.

Note, too, that the second goal could wait to be stated until the first goal was accomplished. By not waiting, though, these goals imply a character with a cause on her mind: avenging or healing her damaged family. If the second goal was different—e.g., *"Recover the missing coffer of Gwaren"*—the character might not seem so single-minded.

Simple goals aren't always easier to make. A simple goal usually says less about what you or your character wants and can leave the GM with more questions than inspiration. When that leads to intriguing curiosity, it can be good. If it leads to you disappointed in the surprise you get, that's bad.

Complex Goals

Complex goals expand on the statements of simple goals to help you collaborate with the GM on future storylines and subplots. They break out individual aspects of the goal into something sort of like a quest outline.

Some GMs create a number of complex goals at the start of a new campaign and let players choose from them. This helps players get an idea of the GM's goals for the campaign and translates the GM's vision for future adventures into immediate character motivations. Use the complex goals at the end of this chapter as examples for your own campaign or characters.

As a guideline, complex goals are better for stating your aims and hopes as a *player*. A complex goal is as likely to be something you want to spring on your character as it is to be something you and your character share in common. A complex goal contains more information for the GM to take into account when incorporating your goal, though not every aspect of a complex goal may turn out the way you anticipated.

A complex goal has far more moving parts than a simple one. *"I will ruin Arl Alfric and his allies, making them suffer as my family suffered before I finally end his life"* is a complex goal. It requires plotting, planning, and likely will take quite a while to complete. With a complex goal like this, it isn't enough to just accomplish one task; the PC wants to manipulate a number of events to get a particular result, in this case the poetic demise of Arl Alfric and his allies only after they have suffered appropriately.

Description

A complex goal starts with a **description**, which might be as short as the statement of a simple goal but shouldn't be more than three or four sentences. This description might include a bit of character history, too, as context.

Term

Next, decide on the goal's **term**. Is it a short-term goal or a long-term goal for you *as a player?* This says a lot about your level of interest in the activity, as a player, and how epic you want the pursuit of it to be. A short-term goal to rescue your character's captured son can feel very different from a long-term goal to do the same—maybe you're more interested in exploring the aftermath than in playing out the search? Consider the facts of the game world, too. A short-term goal to become ruler of Ferelden is unlikely to succeed quickly, so don't choose that term unless you and the GM understand that what you're sketching out is a story in which your character wants, for a short time, to aspire to royalty.

Difficulty

How **difficult** do you, as a player, want the goal to be? This statement maps roughly to the table for experience point rewards on page 315*:* Easy, Average, Hard. This isn't a prescription. Actual play can sometimes make Easy goals more difficult when dice roll badly or Hard goals feel easier when the dice roll the other way. What you're saying here is whether you want the goal to be a difficult milestone for your character or a mere plot point. The total number of encounters, scenes, or adventures involved has more to do with the term of the goal. This measure of difficulty is just a guideline for the GM, who uses it to set TNs surrounding your goal when designing future adventures.

Type

Finally, what **type** of scenes do you want your goal to involve? Put it in terms of encounter types: Do you want your goal to hinge on combat, exploration, or roleplaying? List them in order of preference, if you like multiple options. This doesn't mean you won't be able to roleplay scenes involving a combat goal, but it gives you a chance to express a certain *style* of encounter that might obviously support or intriguingly confound the heart of the goal. Consider, for example, the difference between discovering a long-lost father in an exploration quest versus discovering him in a combat scene. Bringing all or most of these elements together will create a complex goal. For example:

Discover which mage killed my brother, secure evidence of their crimes, and bring them to the templars for justice.

Discover the killer who has been preying on elves in the alienage, capture and interrogate them, and expose their allies and confederates.

Convince the crown to restore my family title, reclaim my family estate from those who usurped it, and rebuild it to its further glory so that my mother might one day be able to return to her childhood home.

Note that in many cases complex goals like the examples above can be broken into a number of simple goals. The reason to make one complex goal instead of a number of simple ones is to make it easier to track and to remind everyone that the PC won't consider their goals truly achieved until all of these conditions are met. This could lead to partially completed complex goals. This is fine, and could even lead to some interesting roleplaying opportunities as the PC has to decide if they're satisfied with the results or needs to create a new goal to fix things.

All of these details give the GM ways to meet your expectations—or to surprise you. If you want your warrior to meet their vanished father in a combat scene and the GM decides that means you first meet when fighting side by side in glorious battle against a common enemy, look at it as an act of satisfyingly surprising drama.

Ready-to-Use Goals

Here are a few examples of simple and complex goals, written from a player's perspective. Each complex goal's title works as a simple goal. Some entries contain elaborations to demonstrate what they mean in context. These goals might be suitable for starting characters or as new goals for more experienced heroes. Use these directly or as models for your own goals.

Prove Myself Worthy

Demonstrate worthiness as a warrior by besting a formidable opponent in battle without losing composure. My character wants to make the knights see she has what it takes so they'll trust her with serious missions.

Complexity: This is a simple goal that will be accomplished once the PC does something that proves her worth to her peers.
Term: Short **Difficulty:** Hard
Type: Combat, Roleplaying (Fight well and tell the tale.)

Discover My Missing Father

My character's father disappeared before he was born. He presumes his father's dead. He's not. His return complicates the character's life.

Complexity: This is a simple goal as it is fulfilled with one act of discovery, though there might be many false leads, clues, or adventures along the way.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Average
Type: Exploration, Roleplaying

Avenge My Family

Orlesians massacred my character's family during the war for Ferelden's independence. Only my character survived. She seeks bloody revenge.

Complexity: Unless the guilty parties are well known and easily located this is a complex goal, especially if the PC's revenge involves more than just killing her targets or requires traveling far across Thedas to reach her targets.
Term: Long
Difficulty: Hard (These Orlesians may be well protected.)
Type: Combat, Exploration, Roleplaying (Find them, reveal the truth, and fight them.)

Avenge My Honor

My character's honor was impugned during a masquerade in Orlais and he seeks to repair the damage done by humiliating his rivals… perhaps with the flat of a blade.

Complexity: This is a simple goal satisfied when he either defeats or otherwise humiliates his rivals.
Term: Short **Difficulty:** Average
Type: Roleplaying, Combat

Attain Great Wealth

My character's looking to amass a fortune as a treasure hunter. This is her life's ambition – little setbacks are no great threat. She seeks ancient wonders, forbidden loot, and forgotten hoards.

Complexity: This is a simple goal that can be achieved a myriad of ways, though depending on just how much money the PC wants it could take a very long time.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Average **Type:** Exploration

Locate My Ancestral Sword

My character's mother was a fabled knight and adventurer who fell in battle in a neighboring land. In her hand was the family's ancestral blade, crafted from rare metals. My character wants to find that ancestral sword as a matter of pride.

Complexity: This is a simple goal with one task to be achieved.
Term: Short (Finding it and getting it back may be different goals.)
Difficulty: Hard **Type:** Exploration, Combat

Slay the Monster

A fearsome beast stalks the land, ending lives and spreading terror. My character wants to be the one to bring peace and calm finally to the people by slaying the beast.

Complexity: This is an extremely simple goal, though it likely isn't easy and could be incredibly dangerous depending on the monster.
Term: Short **Difficulty:** Average **Type:** Combat, Exploration

Make It Up To Them

A great and remarkable company of heroes trusted my character once. He let them down. He seeks to make amends by bringing them trinkets and tales from distant lands, shared through storytelling and carousing in the finest taverns in the realm.

Complexity: This is a complex goal requiring many adventures and dealing with a number of personalities, some of whom might not agree on what constitutes paying this debt.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Hard
Type: Exploration, Roleplaying

Learn Forbidden Magic

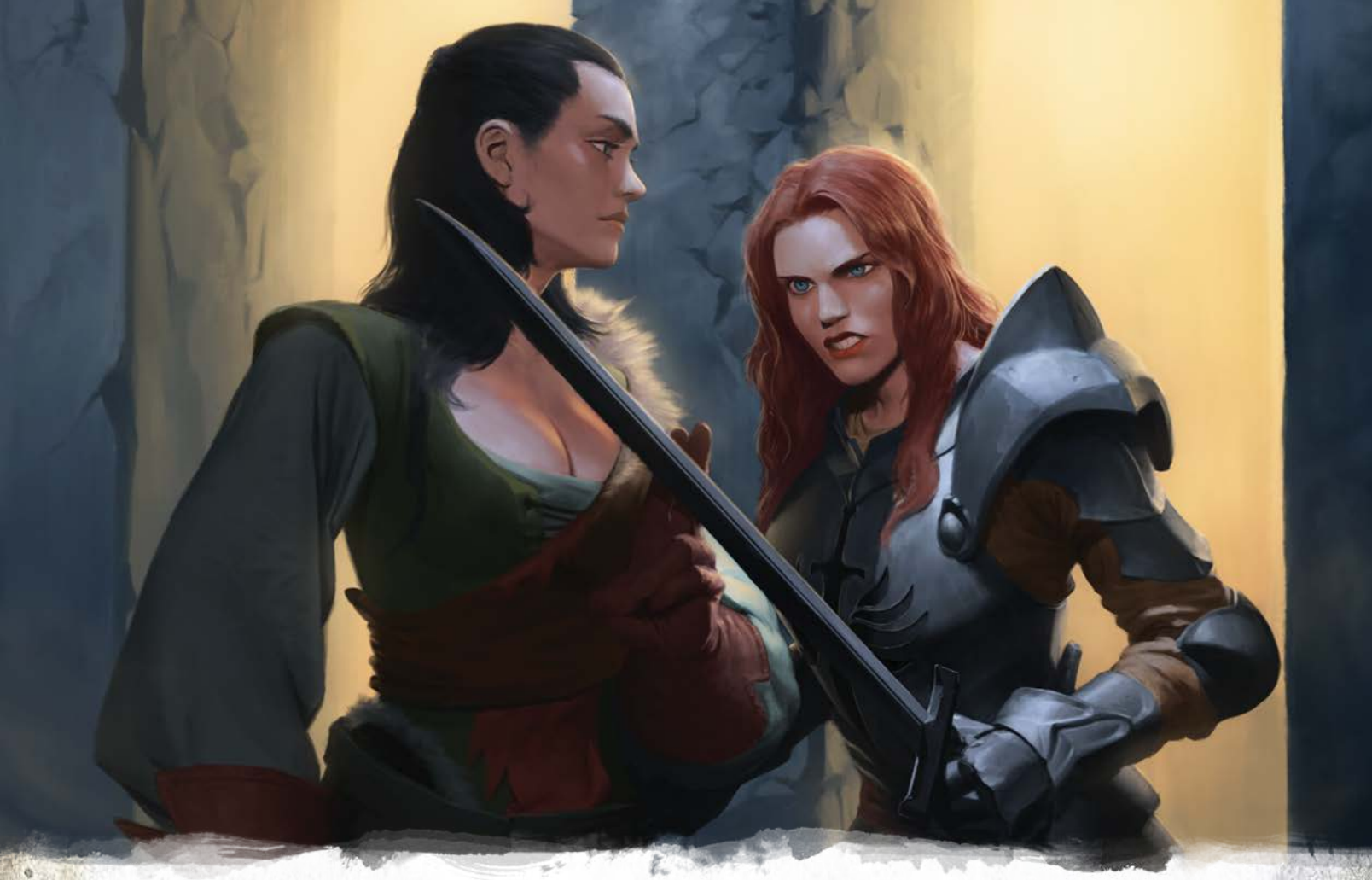
My character was picked on for being weak and untalented in the magical arts compared to his fellow Circle mages. He wants to discover and learn blood magic or some other ancient source of power to show his peers what real power is and that he alone among them can command these forces.

Complexity: This is a very complex goal requiring discovering such magic, locating where one can acquire it, acquiring it, and then showing up ones peers.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Hard
Type: Exploration, Combat, Roleplaying

A Good Death

My character shamed her family and loved ones with past cowardice. Now she seeks to find a glorious but suicidal endeavor to throw herself into. It's not enough to just die, she must buy some greater good with her sacrifice.

Complexity: This is a simple goal, though locating the best end might be tricky.
Term: Short (Though most players will likely want to drag this one out)
Difficulty: Hard **Type:** Combat, Roleplaying



START A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

My character knows he can't adventure forever and wants to get enough resources and contacts so he can someday retire in comfort as a merchant. It isn't enough to open up a shop or tavern in some rundown corner of Thedas; he wants to build something that he can pass on to his children and grandchildren.

Complexity: This is a complex goal that will require a lot of tasks be accomplished before the PC can reliably ensure the success of this endeavor.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Average **Type:** Roleplaying

FIND MY TRUE LOVE

My character once knew love so pure and wonderful it was thought to exist only in stories. Her lover was lost during the Blight and thought killed. Recently she discovered her lover still lives and seeks to reunite with them.

Complexity: This is a simple goal, though like any romance it might come with many twists and turns.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Average
Type: Exploration, Roleplaying (Though Combat is pretty common too)

GET A MABARI WAR HOUND

Since his parents told stories of their courage and the bond they form with their masters, my character has wanted a Mabari hound of his own. He will go to great lengths to secure such a treasured animal.

Complexity: This is a simple goal with many ways to achieve it, though methods other than just finding a dog to purchase will be more interesting.
Term: Short **Difficulty:** Average
Type: Exploration, Roleplaying

ACHIEVE ULTIMATE POWER

My character's lust for power is boundless. It isn't enough to be a powerful warrior or mage; she seeks the power to topple nations.

Complexity: This is pretty much the ultimate complex goal, one that could take an entire campaign to have any chance of success and will likely remove the character from play and make her a powerful NPC in the setting.
Term: Very Long **Difficulty:** Very Hard
Type: Combat, Exploration, Roleplaying

STUDY WITH A GREAT MASTER

My character has heard tales of a swordsmaster so skilled that even a score of foes couldn't touch her. He seeks to find this master warrior and convince her to train the character to be her pupil and successor.

Complexity: This is a complex goal, as even if the character can find this master, convincing her to train the PC is a whole other matter.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Hard
Type: Exploration, Roleplaying, Combat

Delve the Deep Roads

My character is looking to make a name for herself in Orzammar. This is difficult, as dwarven society is rigid by nature. However, if she can find some great treasure or the lost knowledge of the Ancestors, everything changes.

Complexity: This goal is very simple and quite general, but very dangerous.
Term: Short **Difficulty:** Hard
Type: Exploration, Combat

Get Back My Ship

My character was a sea-faring raider and a smuggler until his first mate betrayed him and stole his ship. He wants his ship back – not just any ship, his. And then he'll see what he needs to do to settle up with his old mate. Of course, he needs to find where she's taken it first.

Complexity: This is a pretty simple goal, but it might end up leading to other more complex ones.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Medium
Type: Exploration, Combat

Find a Home for My People

For as long as she can remember, my character's Dalish clan has wandered from place to place. She wants to change that and find her people a place of their own to settle, be safe, and grow. In time they might even invite other elves to join them, but first a homeland must be secured.

Complexity: This is a complex goal as it's not just about staking claim to some piece of land, but acquiring a suitable locale that is protected and recognized by neighboring powers as belonging to the Dalish.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Hard
Type: Exploration, Roleplaying

Kill My Brother

When my character's brother ran away from the Circle, he was captured by the templars and made Tranquil for his transgression. It was a fate he never wanted, and one my character swore he would never let happen to his brother. He failed to uphold his promise, but he won't fail to do what must now be done to give his brother peace.

Complexity: This is a very simple goal, though one that is likely very emotionally taxing for the character.
Term: Short **Difficulty:** Hard **Type:** Roleplaying, Combat

Take Control

My character is an errant member of a powerful crime family in Orlais whose head recently died. She seeks allies, wealth, and influence that will allow her to return home and take control of the whole organization before another member of the familyseizes power.

Complexity: This is a complex goal that requires building up proper support and making various allies before the main goal can even be realistically attempted. Even then, there is much that could go awry.
Term: Long **Difficulty:** Hard
Type: Roleplaying, Combat

Setting Yourself Up to Fail

Some players might want to give their PCs goals they know they really can't achieve or those where success will result in the PCs' death or removal from the game. As along as the player is okay with this ending, this is fine. Of course the question comes with how does the GM reward a character for achieving such a goal?

Most of the time, they don't need to. The player knew what they were getting into and by achieving this goal they are getting exactly what they want. The character's glorious exit is the reward for playing through such a goal and the most important thing the GM and other players should do is help make that character's final acts exciting, memorable, and fun.

However, the GM shouldn't punish a player with such a goal either. A character whose goal results in their PCs' death should be given some consideration for their new PC to show how the goal had an impact on the game. For example, a dwarf warrior who sought a glorious death at the hands of the darkspawn might find that their new PC, the warrior's brother, now has increased family reputation and opportunities in dwarven society due to their sibling's sacrifice.

Finally, some players might just want to set up a goal that's likely to fail to explore how their PC adapts and grows from this failure. This is totally fine; in fact it can be very cool. Such dramatic if inevitable failure could even result in its own rewards if the PC learned something valuable from their lack of success.

Rewards

Goals are great for player motivation and helping the GM figure out how to tailor a game for their group, but that shouldn't be all they're good for. A successfully achieved goal should give the PC some reward. What this benefit is depends on the goal in question.

Usually a goal has a reward written into it or clearly implied. Want to locate your father's sword? Well, the reward for doing so is probably getting that sword to use yourself. Want to reclaim your family's reputation and lands? The holdings and elevated status are clearly what's gained from success. Titles, reputation, and other such rewards are common for achieving many rewards, especially if important NPCs in the setting hear of the PC's success.

Experience is also a common reward, and can even be awarded for goals failed or abandoned, provided this happens in a way that implies the character grew and learned from their experiences. These map roughly to the GM's table for experience point rewards on page 315: Easy, Average, Hard. However, if a goal takes a long time to complete or has a lot of elements to it, multiple or larger experience rewards might be in order.

In some cases, special abilities might also be awarded for completing a goal. For example, a warrior who seeks to study with a famous swordsmaster might learn her mentor's special battle form that makes certain combat stunts cheaper or adds damage or other effects to certain attacks. As a rule, GMs should avoid giving out abilities like this if they just duplicate talents or class abilities, as those are learned from general experience; such abilities should be unique to the goals achieved.

Side Effects

Of course, completing a goal can have its downside. Killing the noble who murdered your family might be really satisfying, but it's bound to result in the PC making some enemies. Even mostly positive goals come with new troubles. For example, reclaiming your ancestral castle is great, but it will likely result in the PC being thrust into a world of politics, intrigue, and the pressures of rule.

While these might be problems for the PC, it's not a bad thing for the player or the game. New problems lead to new opportunities for roleplaying and adventure. Whole campaign arcs can be spun off of the problems that arise once a major goal is completed.

Realms & Organizations

As characters grow in power and influence in the world of Thedas, they may find themselves in charge of important institutions. These might be lands bestowed upon them by a ruler or other noble. It might be a business, knightly order, or secret society. In *Dragon Age,* all these realms and organizations use the same general rules to determine their capabilities and ability to affect the world around them. These rules are abstract and favor speedy play over minute details. They take things out of the hands of regular characters and put it into the hands of groups run or influenced by important figures such as powerful PCs and NPCs.

Organizational Statistics

Each organization, group, or realm has a number of abilities that represent its power and resources in various areas. These are rated on a scale similar to PC ability scores, with –2 or worse being very poor and 4 or greater being exceptional. Most organizations will have scores in the 0 to 5 range, though those with exceptionally powerful or weak aspects will have ability scores above or below this range. There are five abilities for realms and organizations: Might, Wealth, Influence, Intrigue, and Magic.

In addition to these abilities, there are four other secondary abilities organizations have; Structure, Stability, Focus, and Scope. Structure represents how well put together an organization is, making it harder to destabilize or undermine. Stability represents how much damage can be done to an organization before it collapses into ruin and chaos. In character-oriented terms, Structure is akin to an Armor Rating and Stability to Health. Focus works like a character's focus and reflects specialized traits that help an organization perform certain tasks. Various focus examples will be described shortly. The fourth ability, Scope, is a measure of the group's size and is discussed in the following section.

Might

Might represents military power, armed guards, and other things an organization can use to attack others or defend its holdings from physical assault. Might need not be a dedicated or standing garrison; a merchant house with a long-standing contract with group of mercenaries would use its Might to reflect this. Large noble houses and military orders tend to have high Might.

Wealth

Wealth represents buying power and riches. Stores of gold, valuable goods, and significant assets all help determine Wealth. Note that this score represents assets that can be actively used in play; a noble house whose riches are mostly tied up in long-term investments or with significant expenses might have low Wealth. Merchant houses and noble houses with many holdings usually have high Wealth.

Influence

Influence is a measure of political power. Allies in various kingdoms, secrets with political value, and friends among influential groups like the Chantry or Templar Order are included in Influence. Like Wealth, Influence only represents what an organization can throw around to make things happen; an ancient noble house with few modern allies might be respected and yet still have low Influence. High Influence is possessed by many large and successful organizations with noble houses and merchants often having exceptionally high scores.

Intrigue

Intrigue is all about intelligence gathering, secrets, and underhanded operations. Whereas Influence tends to happen out in the open, Intrigue is what goes on in the shadows and behind closed doors. Spies, little black tomes full of dirty secrets, and similar resources help determine Intrigue. Public organizations with no hidden arm such as most city watches and small town governments have low Intrigue. Conversely, secret orders or covert organizations attached to more public entities have high Intrigue, as do many criminal organizations.

Magic

Magic determines the mystical resources. Potions, spellcasters, enchanters, and magic items all contribute to an organizations' Magic. It can also represent access to materials used in enchantment and potion-crafting like elfroot or lyrium. Many organizations not focused on magical study or resources have low Magic, though many do have a mage on retainer or some enchanted items around to help protect them from mystical assault. Magic-heavy organizations such as the Circle of Magi and apostate factions have high Magic.

Scope

Not all organizations are created equal. A small-town bandit gang might be a big deal among the settlements in a region, but they pale in comparison to the might of the Orlesian Empire or even a medium-sized syndicate from a major city such as Kirkwall. Some of this difference in power is represented in other ability scores, but there is also Scope. Scope is rated in four categories: Local, Regional, National, or World. It determines how wide the organization's reach is, and acts as a bonus when trying to affect things smaller than themselves. Local covers a town or small city, Regional covers part of a nation or a large

city like Denerim or Kirkwall. National deals with everything within the borders of a nation like Nevarra or Orlais, while World is reserved for kingdoms and other organizations who can affect large areas of Thedas with their power.

Building a PC Organization

Unless the PCs inherit or take over leadership in an existing organization, they will want to generate their organization's abilities. There are three ways to do this.

Option One: Freeform

Working with the GM, the players can assign abilities to their organization as required. They shouldn't take every ability at high levels and will want to leave some room to grow and expand, but if everyone can agree, this is a quick and easy way to generate a PC-operated organization. Stability should be at around 25 to 45 and Structure between 2 and 6 for most organizations. Select two focuses that make sense for the organization as envisioned by the players.

Option Two: Assign Points

With this option, PCs take 3 in one primary ability, 2 in another, 1 in two more, and 0 in the last one. They can also lower one ability by 1 to increase another by 1. Starting Structure is 3, Stability 25 + 2d6 + the organization's highest ability score. Scope is Local unless the GM determines a larger scope is warranted by the campaign. Select 2 focuses, one of which must be for the organization's highest ability.

Option Three: Random Generation

With this option, the PCs roll for their abilities in order as if they were making a character (use the table on page 11). As with character creation, they can then switch two ability scores with each other. Starting Structure is 1d6−1 and Stability is 25 + 2d6 + the organization's highest ability score. Scope is determined by a d6 roll: 1–4: Local, 5–6: Regional. Organizations won't randomly have a larger Scope, though GMs might increase this if the campaign warrants. Select 2 focuses, one of which must be for the organization's highest ability.

Organizational Focuses

This section gives examples of organization focuses for the five abilities. Each can be used as-is or as examples for PCs and GMs creating their own focuses.

Might Focuses

Garrison: Used to defend the organization from physical attack.

Organizations and Mass Battles

GMs using the **Mass Battles** and **Organization** rules will want to determine how an organization's abilities translate into troop types and numbers. General guidelines are that an organization can muster a number of troops equal to sum of their Might, Wealth, and Influence multiplied by a modifier determined by their Scope.

Scope	Number of Troops Available
Local	(Might + Wealth +Influence) × 10
Regional	(Might + Wealth + Influence) × 25
National	(Might +Wealth + Influence) × 50
World	(Might + Wealth + Influence) × 100

The exact numbers can be influenced by a number of factors, including the nature of the organization itself. A noble house likely has more troops at its disposal than a merchant guild. Also, these numbers don't necessarily represent every single soldier an organization can recruit, but the largest force they can muster, supply, and mobilize without leaving their holdings undefended and coffers and larders bare.

An organization's focuses and general concept help determine what, if any, troops they have available. The Might (Specialty Troop) focus should definitely provide such troops, but if it makes sense the GM can allow other focuses to provide soldiers as well.

Raiders: Used to harass and attack others.

Siege: Used when laying siege and attacking fortified locations.

Specialty Troops: Pick a special military or guard unit (Avvar barbarians, Orlesian chevaliers, etc.) that provides a bonus in situations where their expertise grants an advantage.

Wealth Focuses

Treasury: Coin of the realm used for purchases, bribes, and other transactions.

Goods: Used for lucrative trade deals, influencing economies, and supplying others.

Services: Used for making goods and trading skills and manufactured goods.

Influence Focuses

Chantry: Used when influencing Chantry officials, templars, and other religious organizations.

Commonfolk: Used when dealing with peasants, craftsmen, artisans, servants, and other non-noble or religious groups.

State: Used when dealing with politicians, nobles, and government entities.

Dwarves: Used when dealing with dwarves, especially those of the upper castes.

Elves: Used when dealing with the Dalish and noteworthy citizens of various alienages.

Qunari: Used when dealing with the Qunari and followers of the Qun.

Foreign Power: Used when dealing with powerful forces from faraway lands. Pick a nation or other major organization when this focus is taken (Ferelden, Tevinter, etc.).

Intrigue Focuses

Spies: Used for surveillance, sabotage, and conducting various covert operations.

Counter-Spies: Used to protect your own organization from the spies and assassins of others.

Assassins: Used to eliminate troublesome individuals through killing or abduction.

Secrets: Used to discover and leverage secrets and scandals through blackmail and deal-brokering.

Magic Focuses

Enchanters: Used for producing enchanted weapons, armor, potions, and similar items.

Lore: Used to research arcane secrets and dealing with the Fade, demons, and the like.

Mages: Used for direct spellcasting and dealing with other mages.

Specialized Magic: Pick a type of magic (Primal, Spirit, etc.). The organization's ability to use and understand this magic is especially potent.

Organization Generation: The Hounds of Ferelden

The PCs in Steve's game decide to form The Hounds of Ferelden, a group of Fereldan patriots seeking to protect the kingdom and weed out corrupting influences. The PCs and GM decide to generate the organization randomly and then explain what they get afterwards.

First, they roll 3d6 five times for abilities getting 9, 13, 14, 10, and 11. They decide to switch their roll for Might (9) and Magic (11), giving them Might 1, Wealth 2, Influence 2, Intrigue 1, and Magic 0. They roll a d6–1 for Structure getting 4, and their Stability comes to 32. The PCs discuss and determine that these scores suggest their little society has modest backing from some important Fereldan nobles and merchants, but other than some eager volunteers they don't have much in the way of spies, soldiers, or magical assistance yet.

A d6 roll for Scope gives them Regional scope, meaning the organization begins already well-established over a large region. As the PCs find themselves in Denerim frequently, they decide the capital city is where their group currently is based. They then pick two focuses, one of which must be in their highest ability (Wealth or Influence). They opt for the Influence (State) to help model their political pull, and also select Intrigue (Secrets) to show they've already gathered a bit of dirt on disloyal nobles and Orlesian sympathizers in the area.

The Hounds of Ferelden are now ready for play. They will grow, maintain their modest power, or fall into ruin based on the actions of their PC leaders and the challenges the organization encounters from here onward.

Organization Misfortune Table

2d6 Roll	Misfortune
2	**Darkspawn Difficulties:** A darkspawn attack somehow damages or destroys organization resources.
3–4	**New Arrivals:** A new organization or local arm of an organization from elsewhere moves in, drawing resources and recruits away.
5–6	**Attacks of Opportunity:** Bandits, thieves, or some other group try to ravage or rob the organization.
7–8	**Rival Maneuvering:** A rival organization undercuts the group's power with their own actions.
8–9	**The Winds of Change:** A shift in leadership within a nation or city government weakens the organization's power base.
10–11	**Crisis Abroad:** A war, rebellion, or other threat damages the organization's influence, supplies, or contacts.
12	**Mutiny!** Traitorous forces inside the organization sabotage its operations.

Organization Growth Stunts

SP Cost	Effect
1+	**Rebuild/Expand:** Add or replace Stability at the cost of 1 per SP spent.
1+	**Equip:** Supply one character with an important and significant item (quality arms and armor, a fine horse, etc.) or 1d3 minor items suitable to the organization (gems, potions, etc.).
2	**Exciting Opportunities:** Gain a +2 bonus to the next action the organization takes.
2	**Useful Secrets:** You gain an interesting tidbit of information about a rival organization. Learn 2 exact ability scores or focuses of another organization in play.
3	**Bolster Infrastructure:** Increase Structure by 1.
3	**New Hire:** A skilled or influential NPC joins the organization, reducing the SP cost of one Plot or Growth stunt by 1 SP. Should the individual be killed or removed, this bonus is lost.
3	**Contacts:** The organization makes a contact that will provide useful information from time to time.
4	**New Assets:** Increase any ability rated 5 or less by 1.
4	**Significant Growth:** Increase the Scope of the organization from Local to Regional.
4	**New Focus:** Add a Focus.
5	**Best of the Best:** A skilled and influential NPC joins the organization, reducing the cost of two Growth or Plot stunts by 1 SP each. Should the individual be killed or removed, this bonus is lost.
5	**Major Growth:** Increase the Scope of the organization from Regional to National.
6	**Greater Assets:** Increase any ability rated 6 or more by 1.
6	**Rampant Growth:** Increase the Scope of the organization from National to World.

Building an NPC Organization

GMs using these rules to represent NPC-run organizations and realms can generate them as PC organizations, with Freeform generation probably being the easiest for most NPC-run organizations. When doing so GMs should consider the type of organization they are, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they want this organization to interact with the setting, the PCs, and any other organizations. A powerhouse NPC organization can either be a great source of adventure if used well, or highly disruptive to a campaign if used poorly, so taking time to figure out exactly what role such institutions fill and how they function is worth the trouble. A strict organizational chart or lengthy background isn't necessary, but GMs should at least know what an NPC organization does, what their capabilities are, who's in charge of it, and what are their goals.

Using Organizations in Play

Now that an organization has been created, it's time to do something with it. Organizations can perform actions much like characters, though they perform them much less often and usually over a longer period of time. Organization actions come in two forms: growth checks and plot actions.

Growth

Growth checks represent regular maintenance, slow development, and dealing with day-to-day crises and opportunities. Growth is performed once per month and is a simple test (TN 10) using the organization's highest ability. If successful the organization maintains its current condition. If it fails, some calamity has befallen the organization and it will lose 2d6 Stability or must reduce one of its ability scores,

Plot Stunts

SP Cost	Effect
1+	**Bolster:** Add extra Stability equal to the SPs spent.
1	**Further Advantage:** Gain a +2 bonus in the next plot action test against this same opponent.
2	**Disorganize:** Pick a Focus; the opponent cannot use it in its next plot action.
2	**Embarrass:** You taunt or ridicule your foe publicly with the state, local religious officials, or the people. Make an **Influence (State, Chantry, or Commonfolk) vs. Influence (State, Chantry, or Commonfolk)** test. If you win, the target organization's members receive a –1 penalty to Communication tests until the organization rolls doubles during a Growth check.
2	**Undermine:** Your group manages to discover an important secret about your foe. Make an **Intrigue (Secrets or Spies) vs. Intrigue (Counter-Spies)** test. If you win, the target organization suffers a –2 penalty to its next plot action involving you.
3	**Devastate:** Add +1d6 extra Stability loss to your opponent.
3	**Steal Asset:** Seize a notable but not unique asset from your opponent such as a ship, storefront, or shipment of valuable goods.
3	**Surgical Strike:** Ignore Structure when determining opponent's Stability loss.
4	**Split Targets:** Use the results of your plot action to target two organizations. These need to be linked together in some way. Each organization rolls and resists separately.
4	**Two-Pronged Plot:** Make another plot action immediately against the organization. This must use a different ability than the current plot.
5	**Defection:** An important individual in your opponent's organization changes sides and brings with them significant resources. Gain a focus that your opponent has (they still retain their focus).
5	**Extreme Devastation:** Add +2d6 extra Stability loss to your opponent.
5	**Overwhelm:** Make another plot action immediately against the organization. This uses the same ability as the current plot.
6	**Power Shift:** Lower one of your target organization's ability scores by 1 and raise your organization's rating in the same ability by 1.
6	**Sabotage Operation:** An important individual in your opponent's organization changes sides. They bring many subordinates, resources, and sabotage their former employer's operations when they defect. Gain a focus that your opponent has and they lose their focus.

Scope, or Structure by 1 rank unless the PCs undertake some adventure to address the problem. Abilities cannot be reduced below –2 in this fashion, Structure can't go below 0, and Scope cannot be less than Local. GMs looking for guidance as to what misfortune struck the organization can roll 2d6 and consult the **Organization Misfortune Table**.

GMs wanting slower growth and fewer organization-based adventures can change the frequency of growth actions, making them once a season, every six months, or even yearly. Note that slowing growth too much could cause organizations to stagnate to the point they might not be fun additions to a campaign.

If doubles are rolled on the test and it is a success, the organization grows in some way. This is done by spending stunt points in the same way as a character would. The **Organization Growth Stunts** table provides the list of how PCs can spend their SPs to grow their organization.

GMs can add new stunts as they see fit to provide even more resources for the organization, though the really powerful and unique assets of an organization should come from the PCs' actions. Organizations are there to provide opportunities for adventure and as a way for the PCs to make an even bigger mark on the world. They shouldn't be used in place of the PCs going out and doing exciting and interesting things.

GMs can also use organizational growth as a reward for adventures. The exact nature of these rewards should arise from the stories and actions of the PCs, and GMs should only use them when it makes sense.

Plots

Plots are actions that represent the organization using its resources to affect another organization. This could be a physical raid on someone else's territory, trying to ruin their reputation with false rumors and fake evidence, robbing them of vital business opportunities, or any number of other possibilities. Successful plots hurt their targets and often strengthen the plotting organization. Unsuccessful plots do the opposite.

To make a plot action, the organization makes an opposed test with its target. Any appropriate focuses give each party a +2 bonus to their rolls. If the attacking organization wins, it does 2d6 + the ability used damage to the defending organization's Stability. Structure acts as armor against this result, reducing Stability lost by the rating. If the defender wins, the attacker takes the same damage to its Stability. The winner gains SP equal to their Dragon Die result if they roll doubles, to spend on the **Plot Stunts** table.

Plots Against Individuals

Organizations can and often do move against particular individuals. An NPC or PC who has made themselves a thorn in an organization's side could easily find itself the target of a plot. If this happens, this should be run as an encounter or even a whole adventure if the target is a PC. The organization might send assassins, attempt to have the PC arrested, or do whatever else seems dramatic and troublesome. If the PC manages to survive this plot, they've dodged the organization's ire. At least until next time.

If the target is an NPC, the GM should determine the likely outcome based on the power of the organization and its target. Making a mouthy beggar disappear or ruining one small-town merchant should be pretty much automatic; destroying a nobleman's reputation or killing a mercenary captain is much harder. When in doubt, the GM can treat an influential NPC as an organization and roll.

The ability used depends on the nature of the plot or defense. For example, theft, spying, and other sneaky endeavors would use Intrigue while sending troops to raid and burn someone's holdings uses Might. Note that sometimes an organization will attempt a plot that involves a third party, such as supplying an organization's rivals with potions and other mystical gear to better oppose them. That's fine; just use the appropriate abilities and perform the test as normal. This is especially important with PC organizations; you don't want to push them to the side just because they've decided to hire, bribe, and convince someone else to do their dirty work, but it might change what ability scores are used. If a justification for using a particular ability is too far-fetched, the GM should disallow it and require the use of another ability.

Frequency of Plots

It's generally a good idea to allow no more than one plot action a game session to keep things from getting bogged down, though if a session covers a long period of in-game time a GM could allow more than one. Conversely, a session that covers a short period of time or ends with a cliffhanger that runs right into the next session might not have any plot actions. Essentially GMs should allow these actions when it makes sense that the PCs and their organization would have time to enact them.

Long Involved Plots

Sometimes an organization has a plan to destroy or undermine another organization that's elaborate and will take a lot of time and effort. In such cases, just break up the overall scheme into various plot actions and conduct each one separately. If one of these actions fails along the way, the PCs or GM running the organization will have to decide if the organization changes plans and tactics or tries again. This is also attractive because it allows an organization to chain together a number of plots which could ultimately destroy a foe utterly or greatly increase their own power but which are thematically consistent and create a unified narrative. Of course, the other organization won't just stand around, and might do some plotting of their own.

Other Actions

Plots cover most everything an organization will want to do involving things outside their own growth and development. However, there might be a few incidents where the organization wants to do something that doesn't quite fit the contested nature of a plot action. They might want to acquire a large amount of a particular resource to assist the PCs in an adventure or to put on a festival or tournament to impress the locals.

In such cases, it's usually easiest to look at the organization's abilities and decide how well they can accomplish such tasks. A poor merchant house might be able to secure a small amount of a rare good, but more is out of their reach without engaging in a plot or adventure to grab it from someone else. A well-to-do noble house can likely put on an impressive tournament, though a grand tourney the likes of which the nation has never seen requires some special action. If there's any doubt whether an organization can do something, the GM should call for a test and set a difficulty, but in most cases it's better just to decide on a reasonable result and move things along.

Scope and Plots

Every organization has a Scope, and it makes a big difference when it launches plots against others operating at a smaller or larger Scope. For every difference in Scope (Local to Regional, Regional to National, National to World) the larger organization gets a +2 bonus to the plot action test. However, it also costs 2 additional stunt points to perform a stunt per difference in Scope. It's easier for a large organization to overwhelm and push around smaller institutions, but they get less out of it when they do. Conversely, it's harder for small organizations to affect larger ones. Even large organizations of modest power can crush local kingpins, powerbrokers, and noble houses. In fact, that reality defines a lot of the political and economic relationships in Thedas.

On the other hand, if a smaller organization gets the better of a larger organization, they get a bonus as their daring grows their own power by attracting new allies, recruits, and aid. These victories rarely weaken the larger organization much, but often do wonders for the smaller. To reflect this, for every Scope they are below their opponent, the organization winning a plot action test gets a +2 bonus and receives 2 free SPs to spend with their next Growth check. This makes plots by small groups against larger organizations very attractive, but they also risk drawing the ire of an institution with far superior resources. This too reflects the political and economic realities of Thedas.

Organizational Ruin

An organization that loses all its Stability or has had all its abilities reduced to 0 or less is in ruins. It's basically dead and will completely collapse unless the PCs step in and succeed at some last desperate attempt to save it. Such actions are always the focus of an adventure, and PCs might even be called to do this for organizations that aren't theirs. If this last-ditch attempt to save it succeeds, the organization immediately gains 2d6 Stability and 1 rank in two abilities of the PCs' choice. It's still in sorry shape, but it still exists.

A Final Word on Organizations

The rules for organizations are meant to be fast, fun, and require only periodic and minimal bookkeeping. They are essentially treated like characters with slightly different characteristics and fewer abilities to worry about. In fact, the statistics for even the largest noble houses, merchant guilds, or crime syndicates will fit on an index card. This makes it attractive (and fun!) to make a lot of organizations for your game. PCs might even want each to have their own organization to run instead of working together. That's fine, but there's a risk of overdoing it.

GMs wanting to run complex games with dozens of organizations competing with each other can do so fairly easily, but don't let this optional mini-game get in the way of the main thrust of *Dragon Age*—the PCs adventuring and exploring the rich and often dangerous world of Thedas. Keep an eye on how much fun everyone is having and if running organizations ever becomes a chore, push it into the background and get back to adventuring. The organization doesn't even need to go away; just assume that NPC stewards, assistants, and lieutenants run things without incident from then on.

PLAY EXAMPLE

The Hounds of Ferelden

The following example shows how a PC-run organization handles both growth and plot actions.

Growth Action

The Hounds of Ferelden, a PC-run organization, have been operating for some time in Denerim and the surrounding areas. Having reached the end of another month in-game, the GM calls for them to make a Growth check. The TN for the check is 10, and the organization uses its highest ability, in this case its Influence of 2. One of the PCs rolls for the check getting 6, 6, and 5 on the Dragon Die! Not only is that a great roll, but they rolled doubles and earned Stunt Points. This allows the PCs to spend their 5 SP to grow their organization. After consulting the Organization Growth Stunts chart they decide to boost their Influence from 2 to 3 with New Assets for 3 SP, and spend the other 2 SP to gain Exciting Opportunities (+2 bonus on the organization's next test).

Plot Action

Encouraged by their Exciting Opportunities, the Hounds decide it's time to really do something to aid loyal Fereldans everywhere, using their newly increased Influence. They choose to target Bann Fletcher, whose family is rumored to have aided the Orlesians during the occupation and who still has strong ties with Orlais. In particular, they are going to attempt to convince the Fletchers' Fereldan allies and associates that further association with such a group would cast their own loyalty into question. The Hounds hope to thereby reduce the Fletchers' power.

The GM calls for a contested roll against the Fletchers to determine the effects of this plot action. Both sides have Influence 3, but the Fletchers have National Scope to the Hounds' Regional, giving them a +2 bonus to their roll. This would normally be a problem, but the recent Exciting Opportunities for the Hounds gives them a +2 bonus of their own to counteract it. Both organizations also have the Influence (State) focus, giving them both another +2 bonus that balances out on each side. So it's a totally even roll, with the dice determining the ultimate outcome. The PCs roll for the Hounds, getting a 2, 6, and a Dragon Die of 6 with a +4 bonus for a total of 18. The GM rolls for the Fletchers, getting a 3, 2, and a Dragon Die of 1 with a +4 bonus for a total of getting 10. The Hounds' plot to discredit the Fletchers and distance them from their allies is a success! House Fletcher takes 2d6+3 Stability damage from this, in this case a modest 5 points of Stability after subtracting their Structure of 3. As the Fletchers have 35 Stability, they're not in any real danger of collapse.

However, that's not all that happens. The Hounds rolled doubles, so they get to spend the value of their Dragon Die as SPs on Plot Stunts. Those 6 Stunt Points are enough to use the Power Shift Stunt. This transfers a point of ability from the loser to the winner of the contest. The PCs decide their actions cause the Fletchers to lose various business opportunities and financial backing and that some of the Fletchers' former allies will now donate to the Hounds of Ferelden. They lower the Fletchers' Wealth from 3 to 2 and increase their own Wealth from 2 to 3. They also note they get a +2 bonus and 2 free SPs to spend on their next Growth check as their success bolsters their organization for a time for beating an organization with larger Scope.

Being the Target of a Plot Action

The GM decides before moving on with the adventure that the Fletchers want a little payback with a plot of their own. Disguising their house guards as brigands to mask their involvement, they assault various members of the Hounds. This plot action uses the Fletchers' Might of 2. The PCs try to defend with Wealth, saying they hire bodyguards to protect themselves. The GM rejects this rationale due to the sudden and covert nature of the plot and the PCs agree to use their Might 1 instead.

The Hounds have no current bonuses and the Fletchers receive +2 bonus for their superior Scope. However, the Hounds do possess a Might (Mabari Hounds) focus that gives a +2 bonus, as their well-trained dogs warn and defend their masters from these cowardly attacks. The Fletchers roll a 4, 1, and a Dragon Die of 2 with a +4 bonus (ability plus Scope bonus) for a total of 11. The Hounds luckily get a 4, 1, with a Dragon Die of 4. With their +3 bonus (ability plus focus) they get a 12. Though it's close, the Hounds – with their faithful canine companions acting as bodyguards – manage to drive off the Fletchers' attacks.

Better still, rolling doubles gives them 4 SPs (the value of their Dragon Die) to spend on Plot Stunts, which they use to add 1 Stability to their total for 1 SP and do an additional 1d6 Stability damage for 3 SP. This represents the Hounds' bonds of brotherhood being strengthened by fighting off their foes and the serious blow dealt to the Fletchers. This results in 3d6 + 1 (their ability used) Stability damage minus the Fletchers' Structure of 3, or 11 Stability damage. The plot is foiled and the "brigands" captured are revealed to be Fletcher hirelings, seriously hurting their reputation. The Fletchers have seen better days.

Finally, again defeating a foe of superior Scope gives them an additional +2 bonus and 2 free SPs on their next Growth check, virtually guaranteeing a good result. The Hounds' next actions are up to the PCs. They might continue to plot against House Fletcher, trying to ruin them utterly, or move onto some other endeavor.

Sample Organizations

The following organizations represent typical groups, orders, and realms in *Dragon Age*. They can be used as models for PC organizations or NPC organizations.

Apostate Faction

Abilities (Focuses)	
Might	0
Wealth	1
Influence	1
Intrigue	2
Magic	4 (Mages; Specialty Magic: Blood Magic)

Combat Ratings		
Structure	Stability	Scope
2	30	Local

This represents a small group of apostate mages and their mundane allies. While not rich or powerful, their magic and the skills they honed evading templars make them dangerous.

Dalish Clan

Abilities (Focuses)	
Might	3 (Raiders, Specialty Troops: Dalish Archers)
Wealth	0
Influence	2 (Dalish)
Intrigue	3
Magic	3 (Specialty Magic: Primal Magic)

Combat Ratings		
Structure	Stability	Scope
5	30	Local

This represents a modest sized band of Dalish, many of whom are trained to fight and hunt in defense of their people. Led by elder warriors, hunters, and their Keeper, these elven outcasts are far more formidable than their small size and nomadic nature suggests.

Local Chantry

Abilities (Focuses)	
Might	1 (Specialty Troops: Templars)
Wealth	1 (Treasury)
Influence	3 (Chantry)
Intrigue	2
Magic	2 (Lore)

Combat Ratings		
Structure	Stability	Scope
4	25	Local

This represents one of the small local chantries found around Thedas. They serve the religious needs of the people, help templars root out apostates and abominations, and oversee religious events and rituals. Chantries in major cities or wealthy regions will have higher abilities and possibly greater Scope.

Merchant Guild

Abilities (Focuses)	
Might	1
Wealth	6 (Goods, Services, Treasury)
Influence	2 (Commonfolk)
Intrigue	3 (Secrets)
Magic	1

Combat Ratings		
Structure	Stability	Scope
4	40	National

This organization represents a merchant guild of modest size and considerable power. Such organizations are often part of trade networks that extend around Thedas and the guild has more money than many noble families, though far less in the way of material holdings and troops.

Noble House, Major

Abilities (Focuses)	
Might	6 (Garrison, Siege)
Wealth	4 (Treasury)
Influence	5 (State)
Intrigue	3 (Spies)
Magic	1

Combat Ratings		
Structure	Stability	Scope
5	45	National

This represents a major noble houses of Thedas, many of which have several minor houses as vassals. They are the true movers and shakers in their homeland, able to influence kings and governing over large areas with multiple towns and keeps.

Noble House, Minor

Abilities (Focuses)	
Might	4 (Garrison)
Wealth	3
Influence	2 (State)
Intrigue	1
Magic	0

Combat Ratings		
Structure	Stability	Scope
4	35	Regional

This represents any number of small noble houses of modest resources and minor significance. These houses usually control a small area of land and maintain a modest fortified hall or keep. Depending on the area, they might have specialized troops or resources represented by additional focuses, such as Mabari warhounds or Tevinter slave warriors.

The Donarks
Qundalon
Colean Sea
Seheron
Seheron
Sundarin
Alam
Ventosus Straits
The Weathered Pass
Tallo's Eye
Feral Fjords
Tallo
Minrathous
The High Reaches
Valerian Fields
The Wandering Hills
Kassel
Eyes of Nocen
Qarinus
Carastes
Nocen Sea
Anderfels
The Free Flows
Hossberg
Layh
The Imperial Hwy
Asariel
Marnus Pell
Neromenian
Vol Dorma
Nordbotten
The Merdaine
Weisshaupt
Vyrantium
Tevinter Imperium
The Hundred
The Imperial Hwy
Perivantium
Solas
Hunterhorn Mountains
Kal-Sharok
Nessum
Caimen Brea
The Silent Plains
Trevis
Perendale
Haasmal
Tantervale
Nevarra
The Blasted Hills
Andoral's Reach
Hunter Fell
Nevarra
Wildervale
Churneau
Ghislain
Fields of Ghislain
The Tirashan
Montfort
Arlesan
The Imperial Hwy
Cumberland
Planasene Forest
Nahashin Marshes
Val Chevin
Waking Sea
Urthemiel Plateau
The Imperial Hwy
Jader
Orlais
ValRoyeaux
Orzammar
Aal Dimat
Val Foret
The Western Approach
The Heartlands
The Imperial Hwy
Lydes
Halamshiral
Gherlens Pass
The Abyssal Rift
Verchiel
Lake Calenhad
Malcellin Geysers
The Sulfur Lakes
Lake Celestine
Montsimmard
The Dales
Frostback Mountains
Redcliffe
Gamordan Peaks
Sulfur Point
Val Firmin
Beauvin Flats
The Arbor Wilds
Mont-de-glace
Sundered Sea
Uncharted

The Nine Ages

There have been nine ages since the ancient era when the Tevinter Imperium dominated Thedas. Each age is 100 years. Dates are noted with the number of the age, a colon, and then the year. The nine ages are:

I. Divine: This was the age of the Second Blight.

II. Glory: In this age Teyrn Caedmon became the first king of Ferelden, but the kingdom did not survive his death. The Chantry also declared an Exalted March against the Dales, and troops from Orlais and Ferelden destroyed the elven homeland.

III. Towers: This was the age of the Third Blight. Ferelden also faced the threat of the Chasind, led by the abomination Flemeth and her daughters the Korcari witches.

IV. Black: Ferelden fought a great war against the werewolves, driving them to extinction. Orlais tried to take advantage and invaded Ferelden for the first time but was defeated after a three-year war.

V. Exalted: This was the age of the Fourth Blight. Calenhad claimed the kingship of Ferelden and succeeded in uniting the tribes into a true nation at last. The Grey Wardens also established a permanent presence in Ferelden.

VI. Steel: The Avvar invaded Ferelden, causing widespread devastation and famine. They were eventually pushed back, but bad blood between Fereldans and Avvar continues to the present day.

VII. Storm: The Grey Wardens were forced out of Ferelden. In the north new Exalted Marches were fought against the Qunari, strange invaders from across the sea.

VIII. Blessed: Orlais invaded Ferelden a second time. Civil war wracked the country as the usurper King Meghren fought the forces of the Rebel Queen.

IX. Dragon: Maric, son of the murdered Rebel Queen, defeated the Orlesians and claimed the throne of Ferelden. Shortly before the decisive Battle of the River Dane, a dragon appeared and ravaged the Orlesian countryside. Dragons were thought to have been hunted to extinction, so there was no doubt that its appearance heralded the Dragon Age.

Chapter 7

Welcome to Thedas

Thedas is a land of uneasy neighbors, of national frictions, and cultures in conflict. The borders between the great nations of Thedas—nations like the Tevinter Imperium, Orlais, and Ferelden—are sometimes shifting, sometimes understood only by the locals. The heart of these lands is clear but their reach is a matter of politics, posturing, and intrigue. This isn't a place or time of strict and rigid maps. "This is the marchland between Orlais and Ferelden," a frontierswoman might say, waving her hand. "This side of the mountain is Ferelden, that side is Orlais, and the rocks between aren't worth dying for. Not yet."

This chapter details various important parts of the nations, people, and history of Thedas. It is by no means a comprehensive look at the entire setting, but it provides ample material for Game Masters and players alike to use to explore and play In the setting. This chapter focuses strongly on Orlais, Tevinter, and Ferelden, not only because they are three major nations of Thedas, but also because they are where a lot of the action from the *Dragon Age* video games, books, and comics takes place and thus are the areas about which the most is known. Other areas and events are also extensively discussed, particularly the culture and lands of the elves and dwarves. Other regions, races, and events are also covered, though in somewhat less detail.

No matter where your campaign is set, there is plenty of room for your own creativity. Thedas is a rich world that also provides a strong framework to build upon. As you read about the nations and peoples of Thedas, you will no doubt have ideas for stories and adventures. These are the seeds from which your campaign will grow.

Ferelden

The country of Ferelden rests far to the southeast of the continent of Thedas. It is a wide and barbarous nation, populated by a fiercely proud folk who've only just begun to "civilize" within the last few centuries. The Fereldans are a martial people who value loyalty and honor far more than mere material goods. They are the descendants of the Alamarri, a warlike culture of fractious barbarian tribes that lived for battle. The Alamarri followed powerful warlords known as "banns" into near constant struggle with their fellow tribes, as each bann sought to widen their territory and influence. The history of the Alamarri is written with the blood of great champions who rose to immense power and wide dominion, only to have their legacies and tribes torn apart with their deaths.

History

The Alamarri were an animistic people, who worshipped a wide variety of nature deities. Most sacred of all creatures was the wolf, which they believed was created by the gods to be both a guide and protector for mankind. Promising young Alamarri warriors were paired off with cubs, and wolves were afforded as much honor as the greatest fighters when they fell in battle. There is a dark side to the old tales, though. One legend states that a wolf betrayed his master to evil gods

in exchange for the power to walk in the man's shape. The resulting creature could not hide the beast in his heart when he dwelt among men, nor the man within when he tried to find a place amidst animals. Thus was the first werewolf born, scorned by all creatures, hating both men and wolves alike. Regardless of the truth of the old tales, the Alamarri were indeed long plagued by werewolves till at last all the tribes joined in battle against their hated common foe. They were victorious, slaughtering their shape changing foes and driving the last of them deep into the forests where a few folk whisper they lurk still.

In modern times, the Fereldans still face two enemies born of the Alamarri. Several centuries after their ancestors first came into Ferelden, a great civil war rose among the tribes that caused one large faction to break away from the Alamarri. The rebels eventually became known as the Avvar, a bloodthirsty offshoot of an already fierce people. Despite their brutality, the Avvar were gradually pushed high into the Frostback Mountains where they dwell still, nursing their ancient bitter grudge against their kin. They cling to the old ways, worshipping the nature gods that they once shared with the Alamarri and despising "lowlanders" as blasphemous weaklings softened by the trappings of civilization. While the Avvar are comparatively few in number, they are fell warriors, hardened by their harsh lives. Their winter raids, though rare, are still greatly feared by all Ferelden.

When the Alamarri first passed into Ferelden from the distant west, some moved into the swampy forest vastness and the tundra beyond it to the south now known as the Korcari Wilds. These folk became known as the Chasind wilders, a strange twisted people plagued by dark desires. The old tales state that after "countless winters" had passed since they parted from the other tribes of the Alamarri, the Chasind invaded the lands to the north accompanied by "white shadows" and twisted swamp creatures. They conquered the Alamarri for a time, though many of the tales dispute just how long this period lasted or even if the valley tribes were ever truly subjugated, before the Alamarri slaughtered the Chasind shamans who had called up the shadows with their magic, and drove their warriors back to the south. Over a millennia later, the legendary witch Flemeth rose as a terrible power amidst the Chasind. Her daughters, the Korcari witches, led an army of wilders and other, more terrible things, against the north. They were all but unopposed until the hero Cormac led an army of Alamarri fighters and Orzammar dwarves against Flemeth's army. After a long series of dreadful battles, the Chasind were all but destroyed, and the witches burned. To this day the Fereldans eye the south warily, regarding the Chasind with suspicion and hatred.

Arguably, the Alamarri's most impressive achievement was withstanding the invading armies of the Tevinter Imperium. The Imperium was once considered the greatest power in Thedas and all nations save one were forced to bow before its sorcerous might. Even as the Imperium was reaching the very height of its supremacy, for close to two centuries the Alamarri and their allies thwarted its campaigns across the Frostback range to conquer the barbarians of Ferelden.

Three times Tevinter nearly succeeded, pressing farther and farther into Ferelden's interior before being pushed back beyond the mountains. All three times the Alamarri united with the Avvar and the Chasind to drive the Imperium back, the only points in their long histories that the three peoples stood together against a common enemy. On the fourth, and what was destined to be final, push of their advance into Ferelden, Tevinter successfully held the western half of the valley long enough to build several fortresses and extend the Imperial Highway, which was designed to allow for quick deployment of troops and supplies. The renowned fortress Ostagar was built in the far south to watch for the coming of the Chasind and its mortar was so reinforced with magic that legend holds nothing will ever tear it down completely.

Tevinter's success came at a high price. While they remained entrenched, they were subject to near constant raids, their supplies eternally rationed. Rumors slipped back into the Imperium of the fierce and unrelenting blood thirst of the southern barbarians. Being posted to Ferelden was soon looked upon as punishment, exile, and likely a death sentence.

Dragon Age Canon & Campaigns

Thedas is a rich and deepening world. Its lore grows into a marvelously complicated web of characters and creatures, ambitions and histories, with each new publication. The stories of Thedas are complex and interwoven in a way that befits a violent and conflicted world.

This chapter is merely a jumping-off point. Use what's here to begin something. This chapter's aim is to provoke and fuel new adventures, not shut them down.

Where possible, we have chosen not to spoil other *Dragon Age* stories like *The Silent Grove* or *Dawn of the Seeker*. To wring all the lore out of key sources, you're best off reading and watching those sources directly. Novels like David Gaider's *Asunder* have hundreds more pages with which to explore characters and cultures in Orlais, for example. Take advantage of them.

What's here is meant as a starting place for at-home RPG campaigns, which are endowed with the luxury to deviate from canon. You are free to adapt whatever sources of *Dragon Age* lore you and your fellow players are familiar with—be they video games, comics, novels, the film, the web series, or anything else—without having to please any audience except the one that shows up to the game table. It may be inevitable, for example, that your campaign deviates from the unfolding lore of Thedas as your Player Characters, say, fatally defeat figures that continue to play a key part in *Dragon Age* canon outside of your campaign. As players, it's part of your job as simultaneous collaborators and audience members to stay open-minded and embrace the possibilities that come with telling "what if" stories in a larger world.

Tevinter managed to maintain a presence in Ferelden for well over a century, but their hold was ever tenuous. At last, a cunning barbarian hero figured out a way to defeat the supposedly impregnable defenses of Ostagar. His name and identity have been lost, so that even today, the Avvar, Chasind, and Fereldans (as the descendants of the Alamarri) all claim him as one of theirs; the histories, oral and written, simply refer to him as the Bane of Ostagar. With the fall of their greatest fortress in Ferelden, the will of the Imperium to stay was broken. Though many bloody battles were fought before they were sped on their way, they retreated beyond the Frostbacks at last, never to return…

For the First Blight had come to Thedas.

The Chantry, the Church of the Prophet, teaches that the hubris of men brought the Blights and darkspawn upon the world. A group of mages sought to "breach Heaven itself" and were cast forth from the higher realms, twisted by the foulness in their own hearts into terrible creatures, the first of the darkspawn. These monsters crept into the deep places of the world, taking some of the tunnels of the dwarven kingdoms as their own. Drawn by whispers in the dark, they found Dumat, one of the Old Gods—an ancient dragon slumbering in the depths. By unholy rituals they released him, now transformed into a terrible creature known as an Archdemon, to make war upon the world. It has been thus, ever since. During a Blight, the world itself seems poisoned by the advance of massive numbers of darkspawn, which come in many forms, each more terrible than the last. The earth withers, rivers foul, and the sky itself turns an ashen hue as a Blight advances. Each Blight is caused by the rise of an Archdemon to lead the usually fractious hordes of the darkspawn.

The First Blight arose beneath the Tevinter Imperium and laid it waste, but the Fereldan valley was all but untouched by the devastation. It was almost two centuries before members of the order known as the Grey Wardens slew Dumat at the Battle of the Silent Plains in southern Tevinter. The First Blight was ended, but the Tevinter Imperium lay in near ruins.

In Ferelden, the prophet Andraste beheld the Maker, who charged her with bringing his teachings to his children. Mankind was to turn away from false gods, corruption, and dark magic. Andraste's most passionate supporter and her husband, the Alamarri chieftain Maferath, united all the tribes under his rule and his wife's spiritual leadership. The two convinced their people that the time had come to topple the Imperium and they set out across the Waking Sea with an army great enough to do so. Tevinter gathered all

of their remaining forces to stop the Alamarri horde and it was almost enough to destroy the barbarians, but for a slave revolt amidst the Imperium's underclass and slaves—elves for the most part—who had heard of Andraste's teachings. At the Battle of Valarian Fields, Tevinter's greatest force was routed and Maferath conquered southern Tevinter. The Prophet, however, was captured by Imperial agents and executed. Ten years to the day after Andraste's execution, the Archon of Tevinter declared his conversion to her beliefs and announced that her husband, in his jealously of her growing stature, was the instrument of the Prophet's betrayal. Maferath had arranged for a truce with Tevinter in exchange for Andraste's death. The Alamarri abandoned Maferath en masse to return to Ferelden and the south fell once more into centuries of martial chaos.

It was many long years before the legendary Hafter, the first teyrn of Ferelden, brought any measure of peace to the Alamarri. He led his people in many battles against the darkspawn during the Second Blight and secured a long period of relative peace. Hafter's grandson Caedmon was the original warlord who attempted to declare himself King of Ferelden. Though he did not succeed, he did establish the Andrastian Chantry as the official religion of Ferelden. After another three centuries of bloodshed and many bleak times, the great warrior Calenhad finally defeated all other claimants to the throne and was crowned King of Ferelden by the Chantry. King Calenhad opened Denerim, the capital city, to trade with other nations.

Several strife-filled centuries passed before the Empire of Orlais succeeded in invading Ferelden. While Denerim was eventually sacked, King Brandel waged a guerilla war against the usurpers for decades before falling. His daughter, the Rebel Queen, spent her entire life fighting the Orlesian occupiers. It is her son, Maric, who at last retook the throne and drove the Orlesians from Ferelden entirely. King Maric's rule is considered the beginning of a golden age for Ferelden. Showing that he held no grudges, Maric signed a peace treaty with the young Empress Celene of Orlais when she visited Denerim.

Ten years after the treaty, King Maric was lost at sea and presumed dead, leaving the throne to Cailan, his only son. Shortly after the Grey Wardens ended the Blight but the devastation weakened Thedas, particularly Ferelden. It is uncertain what the future holds for the nation, especially with new dangers.

The Land

Ferelden is a temperate and fertile country, though its winters are unforgiving. Ferelden boasts a wide variety of terrain, and large portions are still untamed, which can prove hard on the unprepared. To the immediate north of the region known as the Coastlands is the Waking Sea, which parts Ferelden from the Free Marches, a collective name given to a series of wealthy city-states that control the central portion of the continent. Denerim, the capital city of Ferelden and home of the their kings and queens, rests in the east. A large portion of the east to southeast of Ferelden is a feral wilderness, dominated by the hoary Brecilian Forest. The forest is said to be a cursed place, an abode of thieves, murderers, and werewolves. The trees themselves are rumored to move and slay the unwary. Only the strange folk known as the Dalish elves dare to enter Brecilian regularly, leading many to believe that they may have had a hand in whatever cursed the place. Those Fereldans who are willing to brave the forest generally live in the city of Gwaren, a city port on the Amaranthine Ocean. The Amaranthine forms Ferelden's eastern border. It is a massive body of water, stretching beyond the horizon, and remains uncharted.

The south of Ferelden is mostly hilly grasslands, in many parts covered with wide tracts of untamed forest. The region is unofficially split by the remains of the ancient Imperial Highway which still snakes its way down from the west, all the way to the ruins of Ostagar. The area east of the highway is known as the Southron Hills; to the west lie the Hinterlands. The Southron Hills are rocky highlands that stretch into the southern portions of the Brecilian Forest and edge the Korcari Wilds. The Hinterlands run from the massive inland Lake Calenhad out to the first peaks of the Frostback Mountains. A long stretch of the Hinterlands borders the Korcari Wilds. With the Avvar to the west and the Chasind to the immediate south, the folk of southern Ferelden are justly famed for their stoicism in the face of danger. Whatever lies south beyond the Korcari Wilds, if there is more than just endless plains of tundra, the Chasind do not speak of.

To the west Ferelden is bordered by the Frostbacks, a mountain range home to the tribes of the Avvar. The Frostbacks hold numerous high peaks, many of which are snow covered year round. Strange ice formations form regularly before quickly shattering, including "ice bridges" that run between peaks, which the daring can cross. The yearly runoff from the Frostbacks feeds the cold waters of Lake Calenhad. The Lake is a magnificent clear blue and is said to have mystical properties. That is not surprising, though, as the Circle Tower, home to Ferelden's Circle of Magi, is situated on an island located in the northern portion of the lake. The tower is a landmark, visible for many miles across the entire countryside. The great dwarven city Orzammar is carved beneath the northern end of the Frostbacks. The dwarves deal cautiously with all folk, though they are always wary when dealing with the Avvar. Beyond the Frostbacks lies the Empire of Orlais, center of the Chantry and presently considered by scholars to be the most powerful country in all of Thedas. Since the Orlesians occupied portions of Ferelden well within living memory, peace treaty or no, relations between the two countries remain tense.

At the central heart of Ferelden, both geographically and politically, lies the Bannorn. This great valley hosts the majority of farming within Ferelden. While freeholders own their land, political and military control over the Bannorn is split between many different banns, a title taken from the ancient Alamarri word for "chieftain"—hence the region's name.

The People

Fereldans are famous for their fiercely independent nature, and this is reflected throughout all levels of their culture. Neither blood nor birthright automatically entitles one to respect, and the nobles of Ferelden must earn their people's esteem. There has never been a serf class in Ferelden, and the selling of slaves is illegal, though both are very common in other countries.

Fereldans value courage and martial prowess over wealth and famous ancestors. While they are not free of prejudice, they are remarkably open minded for a supposedly "barbarian" people.

Fereldans appreciate fair speech, though they like it better when it is followed by action. They are sparing in their insults, unless they are prepared to follow them up with blows. Many Fereldans hold their personal honor beyond price, and they would rather die than betray their given word. Correspondingly, they are often cautious about entering into any agreement that they are not absolutely certain they can fulfill.

The Alamarri were the only people to reject the "benefits" of Tevinter Imperium rule. To them, the Imperial government, along with its magic and culture, was a corrupt decadence that would have destroyed all that it meant to be Alamarri. Since the rest of Thedas eventually succumbed to Tevinter, their cultures were overlaid and irrevocably changed by Imperial values. While in many cases this greatly advanced their arts and sciences, it also radically skewed their viewpoints. Correspondingly, foreigners tend to view modern Fereldan arts and entertainments as somewhat crude, though occasionally undeniably powerful in a "barbaric" sort of way. The Fereldans, for their part, are exceedingly proud of their accomplishments, as they feel little need to compare them to other cultures that they quietly regard as merely attempting to emulate the feats of the Imperium.

The Nobility

All folk belong to a social class, and each class has its own rights and responsibilities. However, in Ferelden, unlike nearly all other countries in Thedas, members of the nobility are not considered to be intrinsically better or afforded more rights than any other class; they just have different ones. It is true that nobles are generally treated with deference, but this is often due more to

the (correct) assumption of martial ability than social status. Nobles from other lands frequently find Fereldan commoners to be phenomenally insolent in comparison to the fawning treatment that they are used to.

The primary purpose of the nobility of Ferelden is to fight for their people against all threats—human, darkspawn, or otherwise. While most Fereldans boast some level of martial ability, nobles are expected to excel at warfare—it is, literally, their "job." The nobles of Ferelden do not own the land. They likely have some small holdings, with more powerful or influential lords controlling progressively greater keeps or fortresses, but it is the freeholders that actually own the farms, the crops they produce, and the profits that come from selling their goods. In Ferelden this matters a great deal, because it is the commoners who are actually the patrons of the nobility. Each freehold chooses which bann or arl it gives allegiance to and the decision is renewed each year. A group of freeholders dissatisfied with the protection they are getting from their local bann can remove their patronage and give it to another bann—though likely one within a fairly short riding distance.

At the top of the noble structure sits the King or Queen of Ferelden, whose court is in the capital city, Denerim. They are entrusted with advancing the interests of all the people of Ferelden in both war and trade. While Ferelden's ruler can suggest new laws for the land, the "King's (Queen's) Law" is in fact generally dictated by precedent and voted on by the Landsmeet, a legislative body made up of all the nobles of Ferelden that meets once a season within Denerim to deliberate on issues and bring grievances before the royal court. Not all of the nobility can regularly make the trip to Denerim, so many send a proxy, either a younger family member or a trusted commoner, to vote in their place. In recent times, Ferelden was ruled by King Cailan, son of the near-legendary Maric, who ended the long occupation of the Orlesian Empire. Cailan died at Ostagar at the beginning of the Fifth Blight, throwing the nation into chaos and disorder. With the help of the famed Warden Commander Duncan and his brave companions, the Archdemon was defeated and Ferelden restored to stability once again under a new ruler.

Directly beneath the King or Queen are the teyrns, warlords of such power and influence that they have multiple banns sworn directly to them. While some teryns are of noble birth, others come from more humble origins. A recent example of the latter is Teyrn Loghain Mac Tir of Gwaren, who held great power in Ferelden before his betrayal of King Cailan. Loghain was once a commoner whose brilliant tactical skills eventually elevated him to become King Maric's favored general, and his daughter Anora was Cailan's wife and Queen of Ferelden. Despite his tarnished legacy, Loghain is widely regarded as a living example that anyone can rise as far as their abilities allow in Ferelden.

Beneath the teyrns are the arls, powerful banns who control critical fortifications or regions of land along the borders of Ferelden. Banns make up the bulk of Ferelden's nobility. There are a great many banns with widely varying levels of power throughout the kingdom. When the banns speak with one voice, they are the greatest power in Ferelden, but this is rare, for they're a quarrelsome lot. Trivial feuds, which occasionally give rise to petty wars, are far from unknown among the banns.

The least of the nobility is the Fereldan knight, a heavy infantry soldier sworn to serve a greater noble. The prestige of a given knight is greatly influenced by whom they serve. They have no particular code of conduct, valuing fighting skills and leadership abilities before all else. While some knights do control land, it is never very significant, as anything more would mean they would be regarded as a bann. In Ferelden, commoner soldiers of exceptional fighting skill have a very real chance of being knighted and joining the ranks of the nobility. Fereldans are proud of this "social mobility," which is rare in Thedas.

The Calendar

The yearly calendar has been in use since the early days of the Tevinter Imperium. There are 12 months of 30 days each, and then five annums (annual holidays). The annums mark the transitions between the four seasons and the first day of the year. Each month has a high name in the language of Ancient Tevene, but in Ferelden almost everyone uses the low names, which follow.

Annum: First Day
First Month: Wintermarch
Annum: Wintersend
Second Month: Guardian
Third Month: Drakonis
Fourth Month: Cloudreach
Annum: Summerday
Fifth Month: Bloomingtide
Sixth Month: Justinian
Seventh Month: Solace
Annum: Funalis
Eighth Month: August
Ninth Month: Kingsway
Tenth Month: Harvestmere
Annum: Satinalia
Eleventh Month: Firstfall
Twelfth Month: Haring

The Commoners

Because Ferelden's social system developed directly from the Alamarri tribes, it carries their barbarian values within it. A single hunter is certainly a valued member of their tribe, but there are many other hunters. Those who can craft a fine weapon, on the other hand, have a rare skill and are thus more respected. The craftsmen of the Alamarri tribes, the woodworkers, the smiths, the builders, and so forth, organized themselves over the years into semi-formal groups known as "crafthouses" that shared knowledge and trade secrets with one another. They truly became a power unto themselves, though, when they made their members swear to put crafthouse before tribe. While the crafthouses have no formal political power, only a fool ignores them as they have total power over their particular craft in Ferelden.

Beneath the crafters are the freemen, who make up the bulk of the common classes. Scholars split the freemen into "High Freemen"—freeholders, soldiers, innkeepers, and other employed persons; and "Low Freemen"—criminals, prostitutes, elves, and other riffraff. Freemen are exactly that in Ferelden—they have the right to go where they will, live where they choose, and earn such a living as they may. There are no serfs in Ferelden; all are paid in coin or barter for their work.

"Know this: above all things, we Fereldans value our freedom. Other folk say we revere loyalty before all else, but loyalty is meaningless when forced at blade point. I tell you this so that you all can begin to understand the sacrifice I undertook in agreeing to tutor you lot, for I'm a traveling man by nature. Such sights our world has to see—more than you pups dare to dream of. I have gazed upon the twin juggernauts that stand guard before the gates of Minrathous, capital of what's left of the Tevinter Imperium. I've thrown dice in Antiva with 'Lords' from the House of Crows and lived to collect my winnings. With these eyes, I have beheld the fabled domes of Qunandar itself. I did not look to see a Blight in my lifetime, yet here one clearly is... And now I see your fear. Do not be afraid. You are the sons and daughters of a people who have never been broken, who have never faltered. Let the Orlesians sneer at us through their gaudy masks of paint and porcelain. Let our cursed once-kin, the blasphemous ice-hugging Avvar, deride us from their wretched mountain peaks. It is our blood that ran in the Prophet's veins. Our ancestors toppled the greatest nation this world has ever known with nothing but dogs and determination. Of all the wondrous places I have seen, Ferelden is still the fairest to gaze upon."

—Ser Howel, World Traveler, Knight of Ferelden, and Reluctant Tutor

The Chantry

In the Tevinter Imperium, humans worshipped the Old Gods, ancient dragons said to have challenged the might of the Maker and been punished for their insolence. It was from the whisperings of the Old Gods, imprisoned deep in the bowels of the earth, that man learned the secrets of magic. The hubris of the Imperium led to the creation of the darkspawn and the first Blight, which left Tevinter in ruins.

At this time, it is said, a young Alamarri slave named Andraste was visited by the Maker. He charged her with carrying his teaching to his children and urging them to turn their backs on corruption and false gods. Andraste proclaimed that magic must exist to serve humanity rather than rule over them. She and her husband Maferath led an Almarri alliance into the Imperium and brought it to its knees. She was betrayed by her husband and martyred and soon her legend grew.

A cult of Andraste was not long in forming. Her followers claimed that Andraste's Chant of Light must be sung from every corner of the earth until the Maker would forgive humanity for the death of his Prophet and turn the world into paradise. During the Second Blight Emperor Drakon of Orlais embraced these teachings and helped found the Chantry. It quickly became the dominant religion of humanity, even in the lands of the Tevinter Imperium.

Today the Chantry remains a potent force in Thedas. Its power emanates out from the Grand Cathedral in the Orlesian capital of Val Royeaux. While priests of the Chantry are honored in Ferelden, they do not have the political influence that they enjoy in the Empire of Orlais and other nations. Fereldan priests are considered part of the crafting class and are expected to focus their attentions on spiritual matters. The Chantry has been trying to increase its political influence for a long time, but they have not been very successful. That the Revered Mother Bronarch, Grand Cleric of Ferelden, put the Orlesian usurper Meghren on the throne did not help their cause.

Mages and Magic

The Fereldans, as a people, tend to be highly superstitious and extremely distrustful of magic. It is no accident that the Circle Tower of Ferelden is situated on a remote island far from the more populous cities. Long ago it was in Denerim, but an angry mob burned it down. Magic use outside of a restrictive set of rules is forbidden.

Mages are required to join the Circle of Magi. Those who do not are called apostates and hunted down by Chantry templars. Apostates who practice forbidden blood magic are known as maleficarum and they are feared above all. To guard against the use of proscribed magic and demonic possession, templars are stationed in every Circle tower. The Chantry admits that mages can be useful against foes like darkspawn, but their trust of mages only goes so far.

Dwarves

The Fereldans don't know a great deal about their dwarven neighbors in Orzammar, other than that they're a stout folk whose troubles are many and whose craftsmanship is exquisite. Neither, in fact, do the dwarves living in Ferelden. Long estranged from their kin, the bulk of Ferelden's dwarves belong to a dwarf caste known as the "Surfacers" and they are regarded with barely concealed contempt by their kind, though this apparently doesn't prevent Orzammar dwarves from doing business with them. Long years ago, Fereldan crafters regarded merchants with distaste, as they profited from goods they had no hand in creating. When dwarves first started selling their wares within Ferelden's cities, the locals thought they were the crafters of the goods in question, and the dwarves saw no need to educate them otherwise. The dwarves eventually offered to move the merchandise of the various crafthouses for them, which was agreed to, so long as they didn't undercut human goods with their own. This accord grew over the years into the creation of the Trader's Crafthouse, which now handles the selling of goods throughout Ferelden and beyond, even as far as Orlais and the Free Marches.

Elves

Old stories relate that there was once an elven empire in the north, but the Tevinter Imperium destroyed it long ago and enslaved its people. The words of the Prophet were instrumental in convincing the elves to rebel against Tevinter and after the fall of the Imperium, the elves were

granted a country of their own south of Orlais called the Dales, in return for their help. For several centuries, all was well, until the elves were found to have accepted Andraste's words, but not her faith. The Chantry called for an Exalted March against the people of the Dales for daring to adhere to their old gods. The Dales were sacked and their people scattered, now a nation without a home. The elves that still cling to their old beliefs are known as the Dalish elves, an insular people who travel the wilds in massive wagons drawn by huge white stags and have as little truck with humans as possible. The rest of the elves now live in human settlements, but inevitably apart in an area sectioned off for their use called an "alienage." Some alienages are walled off, but this is as much for the safety of the elven families as it is to protect humans from the "thieving knife-ears." Elves are a graceful people with fair features. They are usually servants or laborers in Ferelden. While their lot is not easy, they are paid for their work and have rights, which is seldom the case elsewhere. Many Fereldan elves hold that they have far better lives than their people in other countries, as they would rather be poor freemen than rich slaves.

Dogs

Since the days of the Alamarri when wolves fought alongside warriors, canines have been highly regarded in Ferelden. In modern times, dogs have taken the place of wolves. Many communities allow dogs to roam freely, and "own" them collectively. Breeding is an ancient tradition and a wide variety of dogs exist. One of the most famous breeds in Ferelden and beyond is the "mabari"—a huge, mastiff-like war hound of incredible intelligence, capable of responding to complex orders.

Living in Ferelden

Fereldan cities radiate outward in a haphazard fashion from a central keep or fortress. The inner city is the domain of the rich with elegant mansions, manicured parks, and affluent chantries. The streets will be paved with cobblestones and boast a proper sewage system. As you move away from the city center, you'll find only loosely packed dirt for roads and buildings set about with no particular plan in mind. Taverns sit alongside crafthouses next to food markets beside brothels. The streets twist along on bewildering paths, with countless slanting and narrow alleyways between them. In poorer quarters, the roads can quickly become a nightmarish labyrinth for an unsuspecting traveler. The closer one lives to the city center, the higher one's social status tends to be. Most goods are readily available; other than slaves very little is illegal to sell in Ferelden so there isn't really much of a "black market" to speak of. The majority of Fereldans believe in the Maker's Chantry, following the words of the prophet Andraste. Those who do not believe generally hold their tongues.

Outside the cities, people typically live on freeholds, farms that may have been worked for generations by one or more families. Freeholds are highly social and communal with everyone pitching in to help their neighbors. Freehold governance varies wildly, but generally involves a council made up of representatives from each family that decide on what to plant, what to build, which bann to support, and so forth.

The law in Ferelden is supplemented with a good sword arm, so don't expect a lot of help from the authorities unless major property damage or murder is involved. Petty theft is ignored and most guardsmen are expected to protect their posts more than to enforce laws. Laws regulating behavior are almost non-existent in Ferelden. The carrying of arms and armor is unregulated, as are gambling, prostitution, drinking, and so forth. Arbiters appointed by the royal seneschal hear disputes. Known as "blackhallers" due to the seneschal's hall in Denerim being constructed of black granite, arbiters often have busy schedules. Out in the countryside, a sheriff appointed by the local bann will maintain the peace and keep track of the cases that the next scheduled arbiter will hear. Since this can take some time, a tradition has arisen where a suspect, in order to get out of prison, will give up something of great value to the sheriff and be released "on his bond." The property will be returned to the suspect if he shows up to be judged by the arbiter. Otherwise, the sheriff retains the bond and the crime of fleeing justice is added to his original offense. Imprisonment is frowned on in Ferelden as more than a temporary measure. Punishment tends to be quick: whipping, disfigurement, fines, or execution. Public humiliation is often thrown in for good measure.

The Tevinter Imperium

Hardly a corner of Thedas lies untouched by the Tevinter Imperium's long and bloody history. Many of modern Thedas' troubles stem directly from the Imperium's magister lords. The Chantry teaches that it was they who forced their way into the Maker's Golden City and turned it black with their sin. It was their pride and lust for power that caused the Maker to turn His face away from His creation. And it was those same mages—cast out of the Maker's realm and twisted into the first darkspawn—who slunk their way deep below the ground and roused the first Archdemon from its slumber.

Two centuries later, just when the voice of Andraste had drawn the Maker's attention back to the world, the Archon of the Tevinter Imperium released Andraste from life. The death of Andraste, beloved of the Maker, asserts the Chantry, drove Him away once more.

And yet, without the arrogance of the Imperium, neither would Thedas have ever known Andraste. If not for Archon Hessarian's violent example, the prophet's Chant of Light might never have survived the rebellion. Word of the prophet's martyrdom spread, and with it, the Chant of Light.

The Tevinter Imperium lies north of Nevarra and the Free Marches, across the Silent Plains where the Archdemon Dumat was vanquished. In its far north, on the coast of the Nocen Sea is the empire's capital, Minrathous. Though the empire's borders have shifted over not just ages but millennia, Minrathous itself remains like an icon. Stone spires rise high above the city, lifting the magisters and the nobility away from the squalor of the decaying metropolis below. Golems still guard the city gates, the dwarven-crafted sentries watching over a city that has yet to fall to an enemy siege.

The old bones of the Imperial Highway stretch all the way from the Tevinter capital of Minrathous to locales like the ancient fortress of Ostagar in the south. Though the road has crumbled in places, much of it is still in use today. Evidence of Tevinter occupation can be found in ruined temples once dedicated to the Old Gods, or in white stone towers constructed by the Imperium's slaves for aristocratic mages and their peers. The magister-lords of Tevinter even left their mark on the landscape itself: the carved faces of their Old Gods yet glower from the black cliffs of Kirkwall.

The Tevinter magisters' ruthless quest for power both mundane and otherworldly has tinged people's view of mages everywhere, leading many Thedosians to believe that all magic users are dangerous and, if not already corrupt, then easily corruptible. While mages in the Imperium enjoy great freedom to practice their craft, their brethren outside of the empire are hunted down and forced to join the Circle of Magi, where they can be kept under the watchful eyes of the templars. The heinous deeds of the ancient Tevinter mages must never be repeated; thus the templars hold the authority to destroy any mage they perceive as a danger to others. The magisters' mark is therefore well made on the minds of the people, though it be more of a scar than a badge of honor.

Role in History

Among the first humans to cross the Boeric Ocean and settle in Thedas, Tevinter tribes founded the port city of Minrathous in the far north. The location made Minrathous a perfect center for trade, and Tevinter soon grew into a great and prosperous nation. For a time, a dynasty of kings ruled the city-state, bent on conquest, and led their armies ever deeper into Thedas. As they amassed land for their empire, so too did they claim people as slaves for their quarries.

During their exploration, the Tevinters encountered the elvhen—the elves—whose people had inhabited Thedas for millennia before humans arrived. At first, the elves traded willingly with the mortal newcomers. However, it seemed the very presence of mortal humans diminished the verve of the elvhen. As human illness and disease began drastically shortening the elves' life-spans, the elvhen began isolating themselves from the short-lived humans. Gradually, they pulled their scattered people back to their capital, Arlathan.

The Tevinters took advantage of this withdrawal, settling in the elves' abandoned lands and enslaving those elves who had been determined to stay behind or risked living among the so-called quicklings. It was captive elven scholars who taught the early Tevinter mages how lyrium could allow them to send their minds into the Fade while their bodies slept on in the waking world. Enflamed by this knowledge, the Tevinter magisters set about attempting to map the Fade, that they might first gain a deeper understanding of that land the elvhen called The Beyond. After that, of course, the magisters imagined they would make that land their own, as well.

The Rise of Darinius

The elves were not the only beings teaching the Tevinters new ways to work their magic. While his brothers and sisters were learning the rules of the Fade, one mage heard the whispers of an Old God. Dumat, the Dragon of Silence, found Archon Thalsian to be an eager pupil. Dumat taught Thalsian that power could be taken from blood as well as lyrium. In fact, fresh, living blood boosted a mage's abilities far beyond any limits they'd previously believed possible.

Having absorbed Dumat's lessons in blood magic, Thalsian set out to teach its ways to his peers. To show his gratitude to Dumat, Thalsian established temples throughout Tevinter dedicated to the worship of the Old Gods. Then he gathered his newly trained blood mages into an army and set forth on a mission of conquest.

The Tevinter mages, confident in their dominance, preferred to sequester themselves away to study and improve their skills unhindered, in places where fewer people could be harmed by a miscast spell. (Some now say they preferred locations where they could experiment with blood magic away from prying eyes.)

In –1195 Ancient (0 Tevinter Era or TE), one magister rose above the others: Darinius. He became the first official Archon, gathering the Tevinter peoples and city-states together into one Imperium. Darinius established the Magisterium from the priesthood of the seven Old Gods. These folk ruled over the cities, handing down laws pertaining to magic and its use throughout the Imperium, solidifying the notion that those with magical power were proper leaders.

Darinius lifted the magisters above the rest of the nobility, making them his royal court.

The time of kings was over.

Expansion

Under Darinius, the Tevinter Imperium expanded ever further, conquering and enslaving those in its path until the Imperium reached the Korcari Wilds in the south and the Amaranthine Ocean to the east.

The elvhen were the first targets.

Perhaps because they had no idea how to contend with or counter blood magic, or perhaps because they were unprepared for the zeal with which the Tevinters made war, the elvhen tribes fell. Not satisfied with subjugating a whole people, the Imperium felt the need to utterly destroy all that the elves had built. It was said that the Archon led his maleficarum to the edges of Arlathan and—fueling their rites with the blood of the conquered—sank that once-glorious city beneath the ground. Countless generations of elven history and culture were reduced to debris and memory in the space of a few hours.

The dwarves received much different treatment. Darinius ventured below ground, into the thaig of Kal-Sharok, to treat with Endrin Stonehammer. So impressed was the dwarven king that he broke from his people's typical isolationist stance. For the first time, dwarves would trade with the surface folk. The resulting trade agreements benefitted both the dwarves and the people of Minrathous for many years to come.

Resistance

Not all nations fell easily to the Imperium. Three times, the Imperial army attempted to take what is now Ferelden, and three times they failed, thwarted by an unusual alliance among the Alamarri, Avvar, and Chasind tribes. On the fourth foray, the Tevinter army finally succeeded in gaining a foothold. They held the land long enough to extend the Imperial Highway through Ferelden as far as Ostagar, but it was an occupation maintained at great cost. The Imperium's troops and supply lines were constantly harried by warriors from the tribes. Legions assigned to Ferelden were not expected to return home—being stationed at Ostagar was often seen as a slow form of execution.

For all the land the Imperium controlled, the magisters weren't content with ruling the mortal plane. For centuries, they'd used lyrium as the elves had taught them to enter the Fade in dreams and explore the spiritual landscape they found there. In –395 Ancient (800 TE), in dreaming rituals fueled by the blood of many slaves, a group of Tevinter magisters forced their way *physically* into the Fade. They were intent on claiming the Maker's throne for themselves. If they thought they could slip unnoticed into the Maker's realm, they were wrong. It is said the moment their hands and feet touched the streets of the Golden City, their sin stained it black as soot. Their touch rotted the city, breaking its seams and causing its mortar to run. Enraged, the Maker cast them from His realm, twisting them into the first darkspawn as they fell back to the ground. In anger, the Maker turned His face away from all of His creation.

Punishment

The darkspawn, however, were not the first creatures to face the Maker's wrath. Legend held that the Old Gods took terrible advantage of their devotees' worship and the Maker imprisoned them deep beneath the ground in punishment. The newly formed darkspawn sought out their mighty predecessors and eventually found the lair where the Old God Dumat lay sleeping. The presence of the tainted darkspawn not only corrupted Dumat, but woke him for the first time in thousands of years. Dumat thus became an Archdemon and the First Blight began with his rise.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the darkspawn horde set its sights on the Tevinter Imperium. While the Imperial troops were more than adept at fighting elves and other humans, their armies were in no way prepared for the unyielding, unrelenting thirst of the evil darkspawn. Terrified and overrun, the people begged their gods to intervene and save them. But the gods made no answer. What the people couldn't know, at the time, was that one of the very gods they were beseeching was the source of their torment.

The people's faith dwindled and then curdled. As the Old Gods' silence grew colder, their worshippers' ploys for attention and acknowledgement grew more desperate. If the gods weren't going to answer earnest prayers, perhaps violence would draw them out instead—perhaps ire was better than apathy. Yet despite the sacking of the temples and the murder of the priests, the gods kept their distance.

It would be nearly two hundred years before the people found a new faith to lift them out of their despair.

The First Blight

The Blight took its toll on the Imperium's ability to maintain cohesion. As the darkspawn continued to rise up from underground, the Tevinter empire was forced to turn its focus further and further inward, leaving its outlying territories to fend for themselves. The Tevinter army was called on to protect Minrathous above all else. Whole cities that had once depended on Tevinter for defense were swallowed by the ravaging darkspawn.

It seemed that mortal life was doomed. Willpower faded ever more. Yet the fight went on.

Dumat was defeated at the Battle of the Silent Plains in –203 Ancient (992 TE). The darkspawn tide broke. The weakened Imperium rejoiced, then looked about itself and discovered a new conflict. With the darkspawn in retreat, Thedas found itself ripe for rebellion. The first stirrings of unrest came from the lands now known as Antiva and Rivain. All across the Imperium, citizens rose up—even within Minrathous itself—but after two centuries of battling darkspawn, a revolution seemed like a simple matter to the Imperium's armies. The Tevinter magisters summoned demons and turned them loose on the uprisings, quelling most of the outbursts as they began.

Yet even with their magical advantage, the Imperium's troops were spread thin, scattered across Thedas, and morale was low. In the south, the Alamarri people saw an opportunity.

The Alamarri warlord Maferath and his wife Andraste led their people in a revolt. Andraste had heard the Maker's voice and carried with her His message of hope. Her song (especially a refrain that said magic should serve the people) resonated with the common folk. It reached all the way into Tevinter, into Minrathous, calling to those whose gods had left them to the darkspawn. Now, when they attacked the Old Gods' temples, they did it in the Maker's name.

Maferath's army marched north, gathering support from other pockets of rebels and slaves as it went. At the Battle of Valarian Fields in northern Thedas, the Tevinter Imperium's army suffered a crushing defeat. The Imperium's capital was only a few days' march away, and the people would eagerly follow Andraste to Minrathous' golem-guarded gates.

Andraste's Betrayal

Yet it was in the aftermath of this battle that Andraste was betrayed. Chantry legend says that Maferath saw the love his people held for Andraste and jealousy filled his heart. History suggests another possibility: perhaps Maferath realized that, once the Tevinter army had a chance to regroup, it would crash down on the rebels like a tidal wave, washing away all they'd fought for and won. His people would be slaughtered, the survivors enslaved once more.

Whether driven by jealousy or despair, Maferath journeyed to Minrathous and struck a deal with Archon Hessarian: The Imperium could have Andraste. In return, the rebels would be free to go, and they'd be granted the lands south of the Waking Sea. (The regions that would become the Free Marches and Nevarra were later gifted to Maferath's sons.) Modern Andrastians see this solely as a betrayal.

The ambush was set, and Andraste captured. Hessarian might have quietly executed her and been done with it, but his wife, Lady Vasilia, convinced him otherwise. Andraste needed to be an example, Vasilia said, her death serving as a show of Hessarian's power. Thus, Hessarian had Andraste brought before all of Minrathous—before both the Imperial army and the Alamarri-led rebels—and burned alive.

As he stood watching her burn, Hessarian witnessed the prophet's agony. Moved by pity—some say by sudden piety—he pierced her heart with his sword and ended her suffering. Lady Vasilia had hoped to send a

message that the Maker was uncaring, but instead Andraste's death gave the faithful new purpose, even in the heart of the Imperium.

Years later, Hessarian became a great and meaningful convert to the Andrastian faith during a time when Andrastianism was spreading among rebellious territories and into the common populace of the empire. With Hessarian embracing the Cult of the Maker, that faith was no longer an outsider belief. Yet whether his belief in Andraste's divinity was sincere, or whether his conversion was a clever ploy to stay in power as the cult grew, is often debated among modern scholars.

Blight & Rebellion

The Imperium never quite recovered from its losses after Andraste's death. Nor did the nations it had abandoned to the darkspawn forget how their masters had left them to die during the First Blight. Twenty-five years later, the Imperium's determination to keep Rivain under its control distracted it from its efforts to re-conquer the south.

The coming of the Second Blight further scuttled any hopes Tevinter might have had at retaking the rebel lands. In 1:5 Divine, the Imperium once again abandoned a mass of its territory to defend its inner core. The Anderfels, left to their own defense, would neither forget nor forgive. Before the Second Blight ended, Minrathous was all but sacked by the darkspawn. Though the city never fell, the resources required to keep it from being overrun further weakened the Imperium.

Over the next several ages, two more Blights and a passel of rebellions would chip away at the Imperium's borders. Today, Tevinter is a shred of what it used to be. Yet, it is still a powerful force in the north, its mage-rulers exhibiting the pride and ruthlessness of their ancestors as its citizens live in the decaying reminders of its former splendor.

The Tevinter Chantry & the Black Divine

For nearly three ages, the Chant of Light recorded the Maker's Second Commandment as this: "Magic exists to serve man, and never to rule over him." This utterance from Holy Andraste's lips was used by the Divines of the Chantry to enforce strict rules on magic and its practitioners, a mandate that stymied the ambitions of Tevinter's magisters far too long for their liking.

In 3:87 Towers, the clerics in the Imperial Chantry reinterpreted the Commandment. They declared Andraste and the Maker were forbidding the use of magic to control another man's mind. However, clearly they'd also meant (the clerics argued) magic could—and *should*—be used to augment the power of mankind's rulers so they could best govern their subjects. And who better to understand and implement this Maker-sanctioned decree than the magisters themselves?

Accusing the Chantry in Val Royeaux and its Divine of internal corruption, the Tevinter Chantry elected its own leader. Blasphemy followed blasphemy: not only was Divine Valhail male when all the Chantry's previous Divines had been women, he was also chosen from among the ranks of the magisters.

Hostilities only grew from there. In 3:99 Towers, the Black Divine—as the head of the Imperial Chantry came to be known outside Tevinter—declared a holiday upon the death of Joyous II, Val Royeaux's so-called White Divine. Joyous' successor responded by naming the age that was to follow the Black Age, and dedicated it to weeding out the heresy in the north. Nearly the first half of the Black Age was marked by writs and proclamations from Orlais trying to coax or intimidate the Imperial Chantry back into line.

By 4:40 Black, however, any and all efforts to bring the Imperial Chantry to heel through diplomatic means had failed. The Divine in Val Royeaux saw no alternative; she declared the first in a series of Exalted Marches. Four Marches occurred between 4:40 Black and 5:50 Exalted, but not a single one managed to take Minrathous. Even blessed by the Divine and with the might of the Orlesian army at its core, the Marches only deepened the Schism.

The fighting might have carried on for another age or two—might be occurring still—had the Third Blight not arisen and made both Chantries turn their efforts towards greater dangers.

On the fifteenth day of my journey across the Tevinter Imperium, our caravan reached a great rolling plain. Swaying grass hid flocks of birds so vast that when they took flight, their numbers blocked the sun. This, our guide informed us, was the great City of Barindur, wonder of the ancient world, famed for its fountains, said to grant eternal youth.

Legend has it that during the celebration of the winter solstice, Carinatus, High King of Barindur, turned away an envoy from the High Priest of Ðumat. The priest called upon his god to punish Carinatus for the offense and the Ðragon-god of Silence answered him.

Months passed. The kingdom of Barindur fell silent. In distant Minrathous, the priests of Razikale dreamed of dark omens. Their oracles declared that a dire fate had befallen King Carinatus. Finally, the fearful High King of Minrathous sent a company of soldiers to Barindur.

The men reported that the road that led across the northern plains ended abruptly. They walked for leagues over barren, empty rock where the Kingdom of Barindur had once been. All of it swept from the face of the world by the hand of a god.

Not a single stone of Barindur remains, and nothing of the once-powerful city has ever been found. A secret now, that can never be told.

—Brother Genitivi, "Travels of a Chantry Scholar"

After the Blights, the Exalted Marches were never resumed. The Chantries are still separate today. It is within Val Royeaux and Tevinter that the split most matters. The Imperial Chantry refuses to recognize the authority of the White Divine, and the Andrastian Chantry won't acknowledge the decrees of the Black Divine.

This works out rather well for the Imperial Chantry. Under its tenets, magic is the purview of the powerful. In Tevinter, both men and mages may become priests;

indeed, the Imperial Divine is chosen from the First Enchanters of the Minrathous Circle. He acts as Divine *and* Grand Enchanter, ruling both Chantry and Circle from his home high in the capital city's Argent Spire.

Because of its relaxed magical restrictions, many southern mages flee to Tevinter's Circle. Some practices that would end in a southern mage's death or forced Tranquility are ignored if not outright condoned in Tevinter. Even the templars of the Tevinter Circle are less apt to interfere with the mages. While they are still charged with monitoring the Circle's inhabitants and ensuring their good behavior, rumor in and out of Tevinter has it that the Imperial Templar Order's authority is heavily influenced by the magisters.

War with the Qunari

After the Blights and the Exalted Marches, Tevinter's might had seldom been challenged—until the Qunari came.

In 6:30 Steel, the Qunari landed on Thedas' shores and proved more than a match for the Imperial army. The implacable giants swept across the north, taking over a vast swath of the Imperium within a decade. The Qunari possessed tools of warfare the humans had never before encountered: their cannons and blackpowder far outstripped the ordinary ballistae and arrows the humans knew so well. With their superior ordnance, the Qunari were able to push right up to the gates of Minrathous. The city—as with every other enemy who had set themselves outside its walls in the past—was besieged but never breached.

By 6:85 Steel, rebellions from within Tevinter drove the Qunari back, but did not succeed in pushing them out of Thedas entirely. It wasn't until 7:25 Storm, nearly a century after the Qunari first sailed from Par Vollen, that the humans were able to force them back as far as Seheron and Rivain.

For the first time since the end of the Fourth Blight, the Imperial Chantry and the Andrastian Chantry came together. They declared a series of new Exalted Marches against the Qunari, with the first March launching in 7:25 Storm. The second, in 7:52 Storm, lost more than it gained when the Qunari captured Antiva. It wasn't until 7:84 Storm that the combined strength of the Chantry armies were enough to push the Qunari back to Par Vollen and the tip of Rivain. The humans' advantage lay, somewhat fittingly, in the Circle of Magi. While Qunari mages—called saarebas and kept under strict control by Qunari soldiers—were not unheard of, the giants loathed to use them. The Circle mages had far fewer qualms about calling fire and lightning down on their opponents, and that ruthlessness won the day.

With the invaders holding and defending only a scrap of land in northernmost Thedas, the nations were able to take stock. They quickly realized that they had to make a choice: rebuild their war-shattered cities, or throw all the gold in their coffers towards driving the Qunari off the continent completely. The latter option could not guarantee that they'd have homes or people to return to when the war ended. *If* the war ever ended.

Thus it was that most of the human nations met with a Qunari delegation on the neutral island of Llomerryn off the coast of Rivain. There, they signed the cease fire which came to be known as the Llomerryn Accords. One notable presence was absent from the human emissaries: Tevinter's ambassadors did not attend the meeting and refused to sign the armistice.

The war between the Imperium and the Qunari continued. During the Blessed Age, the beresaad took the island of Seheron, hardly a day's sail from Minrathous. The invasion moved quickly, conquering the island within three years. Today, the war still rages, with the Imperium throwing their slaves at the Qunari lines when their own citizen musters

aren't enough. Even now, despite a new age turned and the Blight in Ferelden, the Tevinters fight to drive the Qunari out.

Mage Dominance

In Tevinter, "magic" and "power" are near synonymous. If it wasn't clear when the magisters mapped the Fade to learn its secrets and plotted to steal its throne from the Maker, Archon Darinius erased any lingering doubts when he made his peers into royalty. Even in the early days of Andrastianism, when the very thing that made the Tevinter Imperium strong was being outlawed by the Divines, Tevinter mages found ways to maintain their dominance. The Circle at one time even kept records and detailed genealogies of any families whose children were born with magical abilities, though what they aimed to do with that knowledge has been lost to history.

Thedas is filled with reminders of the Tevinter magisters' influence. Not all of the reminders are physical ones, like the Imperial Highway. Some of their experiments left scars on the world which haven't healed even after a thousand years or more. In northern Ferelden, in a location now known only to the templars, is the prison called Aeonar. Tevinter mages used it as a place from which they could explore the Fade and its effects. The magical experiments they performed there, both within Aeonar's grounded location and its Fade-twin, left the Veil damaged and thin.

Aeonar's walls remember the slaughter that occurred there shortly after Andraste's death. Upon learning that their prophet had been murdered, Andraste's followers stormed Aeonar and killed the mages they discovered within. All but one of their victims were asleep, slain while their minds were still in the Fade. The fortress is now used by the Chantry as a prison for apostates and maleficarum and quite possibly for those who disobey the Chantry regardless of their magical transgressions (or lack thereof).

In some cases, whole cities were designed to facilitate magic and ritual. Kirkwall, originally named Emerius after the magister who controlled it, was a great city on the outskirts of the Tevinter Imperium. It was the envy of even the most wondrous cities in the heart of the empire because its location on the Waking Sea made it a convenient port for slave ships. Over a million slaves came and went through Kirkwall's Gallows before the Imperium's demise, and the magisters took advantage of the abundant supply of chattel. The streets and alleyways of Kirkwall—especially in Lowtown's slums—were designed in the shapes of magical symbols so blood mages could enact their rituals with the blood of slaves.

Not far from Kirkwall were quarries filled with black stone that the slaves were tasked to mine. The stones were shipped back to Minrathous, where more slaves would use the stones to build temples for the gods and towers for the mages.

In 7:34 Storm, with the Qunari pushing ever deeper into Thedas, Archon Nomaran was elected from among the First Enchanters. He wasted little time abolishing the laws that had forbidden mages to become involved in politics. While the rest of Thedas might have learned of this and been filled with dread—hadn't the mages of the Imperium wrought enough havoc already?—the people of Tevinter itself cheered the proclamation. Under the magisters, the Imperium had controlled nearly all of Thedas. Restricted by the Chantry and no longer under official mage-rule, the empire had shrunk and fallen into decay.

Neither did the mages squander the opportunity to return to power. Within a century of Nomaran's declaration, the magisters once again openly ruled the Imperium, wresting control of the country from the non-magical senators and replacing them with their own colleagues.

The Tevinter Imperium

Before he took power, Archon Darinius had a vision. A hooded ferryman helped him cross a raging river. No matter how hard he tried, Darinius couldn't see beneath the ferryman's hood until they reached the far bank. There, in the shadows, he realized the ferryman's face was his own. This reminder that true power lies within became the symbol of his rule. The Archons to this day wear signet rings stamped with the ferryman, their names inscribed below. When an Archon dies, his signet is crushed before a gathering of the magisters to show that no other man can wield his power until a new Archon is elected.

Even today, the use of blood magic in Tevinter isn't fully forbidden. It has been outlawed as a political measure, but some mages are known for their skill at seeing the dreams of others. Being able to see another person's dreams makes a target susceptible to manipulation, an invasion that few in Tevinter are likely comfortable to admit attempting. According to even the Imperial Chantry's interpretation of the Second Commandment, using blood magic to influence dreams and control minds is forbidden. Such restrictions might get public acknowledgement from the magisters, but once they're away from authority, some mages just do as they please.

Neither has the magisters' magical experimentation ceased. Some masters have gone as far as infusing lyrium into their slaves' skin, to make them more formidable warriors. The process also makes the

victims more biddable, with the potential side effect of lost memories—useful, sometimes, for rendering a slave docile and devoid of ambition.

The Imperium Now

The Tevinter Imperium today is a pale reflection of its former self. Minrathous still stands—never taken, oft-besieged—its stone towers home to the luxurious dwellings of the magisters. In the streets far below, commoners and slaves eke out livings among the ancient, decrepit buildings. Even prized and public buildings often stand in disrepair, weedy and mossy, as monuments to the ancient days of the Imperium. The people of the Imperium celebrate the ruins they have left crumbling throughout Thedas as evidence of their civil achievements. The cities of the Imperium disguise their smell with clouds of incense.

The nation's long and bloodstained history has produced a people adapted to deceit and trickery—anything is fair, as long as it advances a noble agenda. If you believe you've made an ally of an Imperial citizen, chances are the knife is already aimed at your back. It is a society based on power and the acquisition thereof, much like Orlais. However, where the Orlesians play their Grand Game with subtlety and finesse, the Tevinters often dispense with the niceties and take their power by any means that can be explained or condoned.

Tevinter is a nation supported by slavery. While the practice has been outlawed in the Chantry nations of Thedas, it has not stopped neighboring rulers from turning a blind eye to unwanted citizens "disappearing." In some cases, Tevinter slavers are bold enough to kidnap unwary travelers right from another city's docks or steal elves from its alienages, and human authorities do not always investigate or protest. Tevinter's slavery is another reason so many curse the Tevinter name but it has not yet sparked any wars for emancipation.

While today, maleficarum are far too cautious to openly use slaves for blood magic, Tevinter still has no qualms about using slaves as fodder for their martial endeavors. Rather than sending them to die for magical experimentation, the Tevinter slaves of today die in battle, pressed into military service against the Qunari.

It is hard to guess what effects a slave uprising would have on Tevinter today. Yet consider the havoc that one escaped slave woman was able to muster a thousand years ago, when the Imperium was at its strongest. Perhaps one day Minrathous shall fall to a rebellious army that rises up within its own walls, imported and oppressed by the magisters themselves.

Orlais

The symbol of the Orlesian empire is a golden sun, apt for the nation that hosts Thedas' shining centers of religion, education, and military excellence.

The Orlesian empire sprawls. Where once it ruled nearly all of southern Thedas, today it is bounded by Nevarra to the northeast, the Frostback Mountains and Ferelden beyond to the southeast, and bleak, uncharted lands to the south and west. The empire has won and lost control of Ferelden within living memory and its current Empress, Celene I, is determined to keep the peace with Orlais' eastern neighbor.

Two main traits compose most outsiders' impressions of Orlais. First, it is a country known for opulence; from fashion to food to furniture, items of Orlesian design are expected to be of the highest quality. Second, its people are renowned for their ambition. In Orlais, if you aren't born to power—and, truthfully, even if you are—you may spend your life in pursuit of it. Within the noble courts, intrigue is often more highly valued than integrity.

In Orlais, the gentry and nobility socially cover their hands with finely crafted gloves and hide treacherous smirks beneath elaborate masks. Fanciful masquerade balls serve to amuse the powerful with diverting social games, to facilitate the pursuit of sometimes impolite ambitions, and to distract with protocol and prestige those who might otherwise take overt action in the nation's grand schemes. Orlesians, as civilized folk, strive to gild even their dirtiest and most sordid plays, to maintain a veneer of traditional courtesy even as they cut throats. Never mind that the history of Orlais is punctuated by people and actions that defy civility.

And yet, for a country so steeped in betrayal and bloodshed, Orlais is also home to the Chantry of Light. In fact, at its founding, Emperor Drakon I dedicated the nation to spreading Andraste's song and carrying out the Maker's will.

The Orlesian capital of Val Royeaux—bustling, varied, beautiful—sprawls to one side of the stark and glorious Grand Cathedral of the Divine herself. The city's skyline stands defined by the White Spire, a magically lit tower housing Circle mages and much of the Templar Order's leadership in Orlais. Thedosians in and out of Orlais prize Val Royeaux as a center of culture and a religious destination… even as they curse the Orlesians for their excesses and hubris.

The Early History of Orlais

After the prophet Andraste's death, the Tevinter Imperium granted most of the lands south of the Waking Sea to the Alamarri rebels. The "sons" of Maferath spread throughout the territory, eventually founding the Kingdoms of the Ciriane and the Planasene, naming them after the human tribes that had originally settled in the area. Nevarra lay to the north of the Ciriane while the Dales—claimed as a new elven homeland—lay to the south. The kingdom couldn't maintain cohesion, however and within a century the land had broken up into independent city-states. Over the next several decades, the former Alamarri rebels settled into their new territory.

In –11 Ancient (1184 TE), Prince Kordillus Drakon, inspired by the words of Andraste, took up the Maker's banner and sought to unite the fragmented city-states. For the first time since Andraste and Maferath led their rebellion across Thedas, the followers of Andraste made war in her name. Drakon led his forces across the southwestern part of the continent, spreading Andraste's word and calling the splintered nations to join him in his holy quest. While some of the tribes had to be persuaded with military force, Drakon was as much a unifier as he was a conqueror. His campaigns were successful; within twelve years, the lands joined under him as one ruler.

In –3 Ancient (1192 TE), Drakon returned to Val Royeaux, where he was crowned the first Emperor of Orlais. The new nation devoted its people to the worship of the Maker and Drakon sent missionaries far and wide to bring the Chant to all in his domain. After all, Andraste had proclaimed that once the Chant was sung in all four corners of the world, the Maker would turn his favor back upon His creation at last.

Up until the founding of Orlais, Andraste's followers, though numerous, were recognized as little more than scattered cults. Shortly after his coronation, Drakon declared the "cult" the official religion of Orlais and named it the Chantry of Andraste. Magic, he decided, would now be allowed only to mages who served the Chantry directly.

There are those who believe the tale that Antiva owes its independence to the looming threat of the Crows. But this story, mostly spread by the Crows themselves, is no more credible than the promises of any other market-stall huckster. For the truth of the matter, we must look instead to the Palace of the Kings in Antiva City. A grand statue of a woman in Rivaini royal garb towers over the entrance, her watchful eyes keeping track of everything that goes on within those walls: Asha Subira Bahadur Campana, Queen Mother of Thedas.

When the matriarchs of Rivain arranged the marriage of Princess Asha of Ayesleigh to King Alonzo Campana of Antiva, it went unnoticed and unremarked by their contemporaries; the eyes of Thedas were busy watching the wars of Orlais and Nevarra. The marriage of a minor princess of Rivain to an almost powerless king was beneath their consideration. But this wedding was, in retrospect, perhaps the most important event in Thedas' history since the Blackening of the Golden City.

Queen Asha was a great tactician, and seeing the military ambitions of Tevinter, Nevarra, and Orlais, she concocted a plan. Antiva was too prosperous a country to escape the avarice of its neighbors. There would be no means of raising an army capable of fending off both Tevinter and Orlais without impoverishing her kingdom. If her people were to be safeguarded it must be through means stronger than steel.

The Queen spent decades making alliances in the ancient Rivaini way: by marriage. She strategically wed her many children and grandchildren into nobles houses across the continent. Within thirty years, Antiva was so well-connected that any hostile action taken against it would force half the nations of Thedas into war.

The blood of Queen Asha runs in the veins of the Empress of Orlais and the Prince of Starkhaven, the King of Nevarra and seven of the Dukes of the Anderfels; even some of the Magisters of the Tevinter Imperium have ties to the Antivan royal family. Asha's web of blood forces most of the continent to remain at peace with Antiva or risk terrible consequences at family dinners.

—Brother Genitivi, "Travels of a Chantry Scholar"

The era of Tevinter's dominion came to a symbolic end in 1195 TE with the elevation of Justinia I as the first Divine of the Chantry and the formation of a new calendar in Val Royeaux. Thus 1195 TE was also the first year of the Divine Age.

Soon after, in 1:5 Divine, the Archdemon Zazikel rose and the Second Blight unleashed itself upon Thedas. Drakon rallied his armies, leading them north to the Free Marches to engage the darkspawn and relieve the cities who lay in the creatures' paths. In 1:16 Divine, Drakon and the Orlesian army defeated the darkspawn at the Battle of Cumberland. Though the Blight had only just begun, this early victory spared much of the Free Marches from almost certain destruction.

In the midst of the Second Blight, Drakon was busy forging a military arm for the Chantry. Magic, still seen by some as emblematic of Tevinter hubris and power, was seen by mage-hunters and members of the Inquisition as a danger to be snuffed out, yet Drakon knew that mages could serve vital roles in his empire. Mages, while officially outlawed unless bound to the Chantry, ran rampant. So Drakon brought the Inquisition under the banner of the Chantry as guardians and protectors of mages—and of the people, endangered by mages—with the signing of the Nevarran Accord in 1:20 Divine. Thus were the two arms of the Inquisition formally manifested in the Chantry as the Templar Order and the Divine's own Seekers of Truth. Thus, too, were the Circles of Magi founded in Orlais—Circles that would persist and develop throughout Orlesian history.

The inhabitants of Orlais weren't the only people who found faith in Andraste through Drakon's actions, not during this Second Blight. In 1:33 Divine, Weisshaupt Fortress in the Anderfels, near the border of the Tevinter Imperium, was under siege by the darkspawn. The Grey Wardens held their ground, but no supplies could get through, and the darkspawn horde on their doorstep kept increasing. It was—or would have been—only a matter of time before even the elite Grey Wardens succumbed to hunger or exhaustion.

Drakon could have left the Wardens to their own fates—he was on the march to press into a weakened Tevinter—but instead, he turned his army aside from conquest and came to the Grey Wardens' aid in the Anderfels. The Wardens, moved by his bravery, thus formally converted to the Andrastian faith. More than sixty years later, though Drakon I was twenty years' dead, his son Kordillus Drakon II brought the Orlesian army to stand with the Wardens at the Battle of Starkhaven, where the Archdemon Zazikel fell.

Orlais & the Dales

By the time of Drakon I's death in 1:45 Divine, Orlais controlled much of southern Thedas. Drakon's successors didn't share his ability to hold the land, however, and over the next two centuries, Orlais' borders shrank steadily, with one notable exception: the Dales.

Though Drakon's ultimate goal was to expand his empire as far as possible, he did not immediately set out to conquer the Dales. The Orlesians' interactions with the elves of the Dales to the east were uneasy at best. This was perhaps understandable—co-mingling with humans had wrought havoc on elven life-spans and the *last* empire with whom the elvhen had treated had destroyed their greatest city and enslaved their people. As years passed, the elves grew more and more insular, refusing all emissaries and offers of trade.

In 1:25 Divine, with the Second Blight well under way, the relationship grew more strained. The city of Montsimmard sat along the Imperial Highways, on the border of the new elven homeland. When Montsimmard was overrun by

Not many people take the road west into Perendale for the sake of pleasure. Few living things inhabit the rocky countryside save for silver miners, wyverns, and an astoundingly pugnacious breed of mountain goat. In far-off days, the mountains around the city were full of dragons, and perhaps this was what first brought it to the attention of the Pentaghast kings.

Certainly, it was not the goats.

Although the region has belonged to Nevarra since the late Blessed Age, travelers here will find much that reminds them of a provincial Orlesian town. A great carving depicting the Lions Slaying the Dragon adorns Perendale's gate, and many Orlesian lions decorate the city's buildings. And there are still many citizens who cling to the hope that the Empress will restore the city to the Empire.

Historians mostly agree that it was not the dragons, nor the silver, and certainly not the goats that began centuries of warfare between Orlais and Nevarra. It was Emperor Etienne Valmont and the Pentaghasts.

In 7:82 Storm, the Pentaghast family, fresh on the throne again for the first time in generations and eager to build up the alliances lost by the Van Markham dynasty, approached the Emperor to solidify a peace treaty through marriage. The Emperor, who was under great pressure to produce an heir, set aside his Empress of 17 years and wed Princess Sotiria Pentaghast, theoretically cementing a promise of peace and cooperation between Nevarra and Orlais.

Promises are hard to keep. By 7:97 Storm Sotiria was still childless, and the Emperor sent her to a cloister so that he might marry his mistress. As anyone other than Etienne might have predicted, the Nevarrans took this poorly. Angry letters arrived in the Imperial palace by the cartload. A small war party of Pentaghasts rode into Orlais and reclaimed Princess Sotiria. But the Nevarrans did not take military action yet. They were strategists, and knew to bide their time.

In 8:46 Blessed, while most of the Orlesian army was committed to a war in Ferelden, the Pentaghasts began their war against Orlais. The Orlesians rallied a defense and drove the Nevarrans from Ghislain and Arlesans, but at the cost of much of their northern territory. Perendale was lost and never recovered: a lingering sign that peace between the two nations was impossible.

—Brother Genitivi, "Travels of a Chantry Scholar"

darkspawn, not only was there an elven city close enough to lend aid, the elven army was actually within sight as the sacking occurred. And yet, the elves stood by and watched as the humans were slaughtered or corrupted and the city all but destroyed. It was a betrayal that Orlais neither forgot nor forgave.

As the ages marched from Exalted to Glory, trouble with the Dales reared once more. At first they seemed easily quelled as a series of minor skirmishes broke out along the border between the two nations. Unfortunately, skirmishes wouldn't be the end of the conflicts.

In 2:9 Glory, a band of elves attacked the Orlesian town of Red Crossing. No accounts exist documenting what led up to the massacre, but the savagery of the attack shocked the Orlesians. The elves, who had obstinately refused or denied missionaries and the Chant in the past, were now overtly hostile to Orlais and its people. Elven forces would go on to sack Montsimmard and approach Val Royeaux in arms.

The Chantry saw no other course than to declare an Exalted March on the Dales. The elves put up a fierce resistance, engaging in formal battles and minor skirmishes. They fought in their fields, on the hillsides, in the streets of their capital, Halamshiral. They defied the Exalted March with words and with steel and with magic. In 2:20 Glory, however, the elves lost Halamshiral and the Dales to their zealous foes and scattered once again.

The Chantry, in its strange mercy, declared that humans had an obligation to take care of those displaced by the Exalted March. Cities were expected to make room for the elves and offer them their own spaces to live. The Chantry was nonspecific about how livable those conditions needed to be. Those elves who agreed to the Chantry's conditions moved into newly demarcated alienages, becoming the ancestors of modern city elves.

Yet one last price needed to be paid: In order to remain in human cities, the Divine stipulated, the elves must forget their pagan gods and place their trust in the Maker.

The fallout from the loss of the Dales came with another ripple through the Chantry: As a result of the March on the Dales, the Chantry's clerics had verses struck from the Chant. No longer would the priests sing of Shartan, the elf who led his enslaved people in a revolt against the Tevinter Imperium and fought for Andraste's cause. Removing these Dissonant Verses showed the awful might of the Chantry: Anyone could be revised out of history, their deeds forgotten by all but a few thus deemed heretics.

Political Rules

Since the time of the empire's founding, the nobles of Orlais have played what they call the Grand Game. Rivals in the Game must rely not only on their resources or political standing but also on their wits, their skill at intrigue, and sometimes on their sheer audacity—is one lord brave enough to poison another? Is he willing to suffer the backlash? To face the rumors? The potential retaliation?

The question is often not about what is legal or permitted but what can be achieved. While the ends do not officially justify the means in Orlais, the ends often do justify the means in Orlais.

All is fair in the pursuit of political power and social influence, provided that each opponent's moves are made with subtlety and finesse. One noble may ruin a rival's reputation or have them murdered, depending on what best helps their position in the Game… as long as the plays aren't made in the open, as a public showing of one's hand is considered impolitic. Political sabotage, undermining a rival's business deals or turning public opinion against an enemy are common ploys. And, of course, the meddling doesn't always have to be directly between two parties. If a pair of houses are about to enter into an agreement that a third finds unacceptable, either or both houses might find themselves pulled into another round of the Game.

Under Drakon I's rule, nobles playing the Game were dying in droves. So much blood had been shed, the emperor feared it would tear the fledgling nation apart. Modern Orlesians boast that the Game has claimed more lives than any war Orlais has fought. In an attempt to bring an end to the Game, Drakon did away with all titles of rank, believing that the constant shifting of titles as some nobles ascended and others were deposed was the heart of the problem. If all of his gentry were equal, perhaps they might stop dying for a while. No more barons or baronets, viscounts or comtesses. The Emperor alone kept his title. All below him became lords, ladies, and commoners.

Of course, this only *encouraged* the most dedicated players.

The abolition of official titles meant that the newly dubbed lords and ladies could make up their own honorifics. They adopted such titles as "Esteemed Slayer of the Bereskarn, Lord Gilles" or "Lady Helene, Patroness of the Arts." Now the nobles' deeds and associations could raise them to heights that might previously have been restricted by rank.

If one is not born into a noble house, that doesn't mean one is exempt from the Game. In Orlais, it may mean a deeper

Until nearly halfway through the Storm Age, women weren't allowed among the ranks of the Orlesian knighthood. One woman, a warrior named Aveline, paved the way for her future sisters in battle. Aveline was born to an Orlesian family on the outskirts of Halamshiral. As she was guilty of the double crimes of being neither male nor an especially pretty baby, her father left her in the forest to die rather than be burdened with another mouth to feed. The baby was rescued by a Ðalish clan. The elves adopted the human child as their own and raised her as part of the clan.

Aveline grew to be tall and strong not only by elven standards, but was a formidable woman by human ones as well. Her elven parents gave her a sword and shield, and the clan taught her how to hunt and fight.

By the time she came of age, Aveline had mastered her martial skills. With nothing more for the elves to teach her, she entered a tourney in the city of Montsimmard at the bidding of her elven family. She registered as a mystery knight and refused to remove her helm between fights. She didn't dare let it be known she was a woman fighting in a man's contest.

Knight after knight faced her, and Aveline bested them all, including the Orlesian Prince Freyan. No one could topple her from the lists, until her last contest. Ser Kaleva, a knight in the emperor's service whose skills were unparalleled, had witnessed Aveline's victories during the day. Still, Kaleva believed the mystery knight had yet to face his better. As they exchanged their first blows, he soon realized how deeply he'd misjudged his opponent. Aveline met Kaleva's sword strike for strike and showed no sign of weakening.

Enraged by his imminent defeat, the knight abandoned all courtesy: Kaleva tripped Aveline and tore off her helm.

With the mystery knight's secret revealed, Kaleva tried to have the contest declared invalid: Not only was his opponent no knight, she wasn't even lawfully able to aspire to knighthood. But Aveline had fought well. Technicalities couldn't overrule the crowd's favor. Prince Freyan declared the combat legitimate.

Unable to bear the humiliation, Kaleva slew Aveline while she lay in the dust.

The other knights and the crowd might have moved on to other entertainments after that day, but Prince Freyan never forgot that tourney. When he became emperor in 7:44 Storm, he abolished the rule that kept women from rising to knighthood. Aveline was named the first female knight in honor of her skill and determination. Her death opened the door for other Orlesian women to win glory and honor on the battlefield.

involvement: The Grand Game gives even commoners a chance to rise to the nobility if they play well enough. In Orlais, only the aristocracy may own land, so the possibility of becoming a lord or a lady means more than a mere social gain. Owning land means growing food, being worthy of official defense, and a right to muster troops. Everyone is a potential connection that might give your social standing a boost. Conversely, that means everyone is also a potential rival.

The necessities and subtleties of the Grand Game gave rise to a new profession in Orlais. While in other countries, bards are musicians and entertainers with few other hidden talents, Orlesian bards are much more than that. They are trained in the art of song, certainly, but their skills as spies and assassins are what the nobles value most. Bards learn how to blend into any situation—they can carry themselves like highborn courtesans or go unnoticed as part of the household staff. They are also adept conversationalists, able to charm their lords and ladies with clever turns of phrase while coaxing secrets from their target's lips. A good bard might glean information from what *isn't* said.

Anywhere else in the world, it might be thought wiser not to invite a bard into one's keep. The lords and ladies of Orlais sponsor their bards, however, and are honored to host them at their courts. It heightens the excitement of the Game, knowing that the woman playing madrigals tonight might poison your wine tomorrow.

One doesn't have to rely solely on courtly intrigue to gain power and prestige. Many Orlesian nobles seek a different path, joining the knightly order of the chevaliers. This elite branch of the Orlesian military is famous for its rigorous—even harsh—training practices. Though the instruction may be deemed cruel—aspiring knights sometimes sustain grievous injuries or even die during their training—it is done for a reason. The Orlesian army has defended Thedas from darkspawn and Qunari invasions for centuries. They *have* to be Thedas' most formidable foes on the battlefield.

Chevaliers, it is well known, value honor above all. Indeed, death is preferable to—and the punishment for—disgrace. This doesn't mean the chevaliers never participate in the more devious aspects of the Grand Game nor that they are kind and just to all they come into contact with. Lower-class citizens especially are expected to give in to any demands made of them by the chevaliers, not all of whom are benevolent or chivalrous after years of straining honor against the Game. A chevalier's honor is often expressed through dedication and loyalty even to a player in the Grand Game who might be seen as without honor from outside the house. Success is virtuous. Accomplishments are prizes. What comes between the outset and the victory may be mere details.

Chevaliers are widely revered for their prowess in battle. Their accomplishments can rival even the Grey Wardens'. It was a chevalier, Sir Michel Lafaille, who freed Kirkwall from Qunari occupation in 7:60 Storm. His determination to reverse the indoctrination the Qunari had forced upon the citizens won him immense respect in a city that was famously proud to be free from outside rule. Lafaille became Kirkwall's first Viscount, and even when the Orlesians were eventually driven out in 8:05 Blessed, the city kept the title in honor of the Lafaille family.

Titles of Orlais

Title	Feminine	Proper Form of Address	Usage
Emperor	Empress	Your Radiance, Your Imperial Majesty	Only for the ruler of Orlais (and their spouse)
Prince	Princess	Your Imperial Highness	Direct family members of the ruler (e.g., children and siblings)
Grand Duke	Grand Duchess	Your Highness	Anyone who was once a Prince/Princess but is no longer directly related to the Emperor; not hereditary
Duke	Duchess	Your Grace	Highest noble title
Marquis	Marquise	Your Grace	
Comte	Comtess	Your Lordship/Ladyship	
Baron	Baroness	Your Lordship/Ladyship	Lowest noble title, often considered equivalent of Lord/Lady
Lord	Lady	Monsieur/Madame, "de" or "du" honorific	Also considered acceptable address for any nobility, no matter the rank, but not royalty
Chevalier	Chevalier	Chevalier/Dame	

The Strata of Orlais

As it is in all of Thedas outside of the Tevinter Imperium, slavery is outlawed in Orlais. However, the Orlesian nobility relies heavily on its "servants." Attendants are treated with care so their masters can maintain the illusion that their cupbearers and pages and maids serve willingly in the house's employ. While they don't have to expressly have their servants' undying devotion, it wouldn't do for a noble to be seen treating their staff poorly. Servants are—like most other things in a proper Orlesian household—expected to be pleasant to look at when they must be acknowledged. Elves are especially valued (a value perhaps derived from ancient allegiance against the Imperium or as a kind of superficial appreciation following the fate of the Dales).

If a noble wishes to truly compete in the Grand Game, it is imperative that he pay attention to high fashion and the ever-changing trends followed by his peers. Orlesian lords and ladies spend much of their time chasing after the latest designs from all across Thedas, no matter how ridiculous they might appear to the less fashion-conscious. Being the first to show off or improve upon the newest designs from Nevarra and the Free Marches is vital to nobles who wish to be noticed.

Appearing at a ball in a dress whose cut is a season behind can make a lady the object of ridicule for weeks to come. Donning an outfit from the wrong tailor can ruin a business deal. Even the shoe styles in Orlais can become particularly ostentatious—the wearer need not be able to walk comfortably in them, as long as the world sees them peeking out from beneath a hem.

Also of note are the elaborate masks Orlesians wear in public. Not just for masquerades or seasonal celebrations, nobles' masks are perhaps their most important accessory. Rather than hide the wearer's identity—which would be useful

Perhaps it might seem odd that one of the favorite heroes of the Orlesian commoners came from the nobility, but the exploits of Lord Remi Vascal in the latter half of the Blessed Age have caught the hearts of the people, and the Black Fox's adventures are regaled in taverns and common rooms not just throughout Orlais, but through all of Thedas.

Remi's illustrious career began in Val Chevin, where he grew tired of the overbearing rule of its lord. Vascal would appear at the lord's gatherings, disguised and masked, and made great sport of humiliating the man and escaping before the guards who gave chase could catch him.

The lord of Val Chevin set a hefty bounty on the Black Fox's head, and hopeful bounty hunters from across Orlais took up the challenge. Among them was Karolis, whose dogged pursuit of Remi often ended with one of them very nearly killing the other and the defeated party escaping or retreating to fight another day. Over time, the rivalry grew into a friendship, and Karolis abandoned the bounty. He joined the Black Fox's side as his most trusted companion. The people's favorite tales often involve the men working together to harass the nobility, foil their plots, and thwart their tax collectors.

Remi's thrilling adventures nearly came to an end after his lover Servana de Montfort turned him in. Remy was captured and held prisoner for over a year until his companions came to his rescue and smuggled him out of Orlais. From there, all of Thedas became the stage for his exploits. Tales of the Black Fox grew, pitting him against Tevinter mages and Antivan Crows. Look far enough into a country's courtly tales, and Remi will appear, embroiled in a dangerous-yet-amusing plot.

The Black Fox was said to wear ten puzzle rings, one for each finger. What their purpose was is unknown, though theories abound about what secrets might be revealed if all ten were brought together and solved. Perhaps not content to be the fools in the Black Fox's story, or perhaps hoping to snatch a bit of his mystique for themselves, many Orlesian nobles claim to have one of these rings in their possession.

Innkeepers throughout the continent claim to have rented a room to the Black Fox and his band. For a few extra coins, a barmaid in Ghislain might regale her patrons with a tale of the night the Black Fox sat at their very table.

Before the Age turned, however, sightings of the Black Fox and his companions ceased. They were said to be heading northward, to seek out and explore the lost elven city of Arlathan, and have not been seen since.

for players of the Grand Game—the masks announce the wearer's house as well as any heraldic crest would in other countries. Some masks have been worn by generations of nobles from a single house, passed down as heirlooms. In some houses, inheriting a mask might be more prestigious than receiving a treasured ring, or sword, or estate.

Orlesian Titles & Address

Lord and Lady are the only *official* titles in Orlais, as reaffirmed by the "Mad Emperor Remille" in 8:29 Blessed. With the conquest of Ferelden just behind him, he decreed that no noble of Orlais was the equal of the royal family and thus all would only carry the title of Lord or Lady in his presence. Persons were to be introduced in court by their title and distinguished by the lands they ruled as well as the achievements of their family. The result: more ornate titles.

Outside of the Imperial court, the use of the traditional titles continued as a social matter. Dukes and Comtesses politely referred to each other by titles they knew, with a wink, were both apt and unofficial… but did not let the Emperor hear of such things.

When Remille died in 8:51 Blessed, many among the gentry hoped their titles would be restored. The problem, however, lay with the large number of Lords and Ladies who had their titles bestowed during Remille's rule. They had no titles to restore or inherit. Many nobles with pre-existing, traditional titles claimed the new Lords and Ladies only deserved their new title, which naturally placed them lowest in the hierarchy of the Game. That play nearly sparked a dozen tiny civil wars within the empire. It took the assassination of an Emperor to decree that courtly titles would be maintained—with tacit recognition of "unofficial" titles being handled through the use of the Council of Heralds.

Orlesian Occupation of Ferelden

In 8:24 Blessed, the "Mad Emperor" Reville was seized by the desire to walk in Drakon I's footsteps and expand the empire once more. He sent his armies across the narrow plains between the Waking Sea and the Frostback Mountains that separate Orlais from Ferelden and quickly took Vigil's Keep. Before the Bannorn could respond in force, the Orlesian army pressed further, capturing Redcliffe in Ferelden's west and Amaranthine in the north. With these three strategic holds under their control, the army settled in for a long campaign.

Proud and fervent, the people of Ferelden formed pockets of resistance. The Orlesians, however, outmaneuvered the rebels at every turn. Arls who were defeated by the invading army were forced to lend their favor to Orlais or die. After twenty years of trying to turn back the invasion, Ferelden's resistance suffered two devastating blows: The Orlesians sacked Denerim and King Brandel, whose rule was already tenuous, died.

Emperor Florian, Reville's successor, wasted no time in placing the Orlesian Lord Meghren Dufayel on the Fereldan

throne. The Orlesians bypassed Brandel's daughter Moira, never giving her a chance to claim the crown that was rightfully hers. Rebels who didn't wish to swear fealty to Meghren flocked to Moira.

The Rebel Queen led the Fereldan resistance until her assassination in 8:96 Blessed at the hands of several arls who sought to gain favor with King Meghren. However, the Rebel Queen's son, Maric, survived the ambush. With the stoic Loghain Mac Tir and Lady Rowan Guerrin at his side, Maric picked up his mother's mantle and rallied the rebels once more.

While Prince Maric was traveling through Ferelden and seeking the support of the bannorn, a high dragon rose from the Frostback Mountains. For months it terrorized the countryside between Ferelden and Orlais. The Divine in Val Royeaux initially interpreted its appearance as a sign that Orlais would conquer. After all, a dragon was the symbol of the Dufayel line. However, at the Battle of River Dane in 8:99 Blessed, it was the Orlesian forces upon whom the dragon focused its rage. With the Orlesian line broken and in chaos, the battle tipped in Maric's favor, and the Fereldans won their independence.

For twenty years, Orlais and Ferelden had little contact. In 9:20 Dragon, Empress Celene I ascended to the throne and re-opened communications with King Maric. The two nations have attained an uneasy sort of peace these last few years, though King Maric's presumed death at sea and the rise of his son Cailan has added new complications to the relationship.

Before Cailan's death while battling darkspawn at Ostagar, there were murmurs that Cailan might be wise to put his queen, Anora, aside. Anora had yet to bear Cailan any sons and for the first time in hundreds of years, the Theirin line was without a legitimate heir. If, perhaps, Cailan and Celene were to make a match, the truce between Ferelden and Orlais could be solidified, and a future war of succession avoided.

Cailan's death has left not only the Fereldan throne in question, but also jeopardizes the shaky truce between Ferelden and Orlais. Already, there are nobles plotting without Celene's blessing to retake the nation they'd held for nearly three-quarters of an Age. Whether a new war begins or the truce can be upheld might depend on how well the empress can play her people's Grand Game.

Val Royeaux

The Orlesian capital of Val Royeaux sits on the inland coast of the Waking Sea. It is one of the largest cities in Thedas, dwarfed only by Cumberland in Nevarra. As one might expect in a nation known for extravagance, Val Royeaux is a wonder to behold, leaving even visiting dignitaries breathless with its grandeur.

The Belle Marché is one of the city's most opulent sections, crafted in fine hardwoods, plaster, and marble. Scents from hundreds of shops and stalls fill the air, and it is here that one might see the stylish folk of Orlais come for shopping and soirees in their full plumage: the outfits, the shoes, the masks, all a riot of color and style, enough to overwhelm the senses.

In addition to the imperial court, the capital is home to several of Thedas' most esteemed institutions: the Chantry, the Templar Order, and the University of Orlais.

Whether she is arriving by land or sea, the first things a traveler sees on the approach to Val Royeaux are the Grand Cathedral and the White Spire rising above the city. The Cathedral, whose construction was ordered by Emperor Drakon I, was not finished until nearly 150 years after the emperor's death. Its final stones were laid in 2:99 Glory, and the following Towers Age was named to celebrate its completion. Val Royeaux is the only place in Thedas where the Chant of Light is sung in its entirety, an act that takes two weeks of dedicated prayer to accomplish. The White Spire, meanwhile, contains Circle mages and templars devoted to the proper schooling and protection of magi within Orlais.

Throughout Thedas, chantries have curators whose lives are dedicated to seeking out holy relics, verifying their authenticity and, if those relics were truly once Andraste's possessions, keeping them safe and cared for within the Chantry's walls. The Grand Cathedral naturally boasts the largest collection of these relics. Pilgrims come from as far as Antiva and Rivain to view the worldly belongings of their beloved prophet. There, adherents may sit in contemplation and prayer, surrounded by the humble reminders of the prophet's mortal life.

In addition to the Andrastian Chantry, Val Royeaux also houses the Templar Order, with its Knight-Vigilant issuing commands from the White Spire of the Grand Cathedral. This arrangement is a physical reminder of the synergy between the Chantry and the templars. Each is dependent on the other, yet the Chantry has ultimate control of Andraste's holy knights.

Many retired templars make their homes in Val Royeaux. As some templars get older, their dependency on lyrium muddles their thoughts and makes safeguarding the mages too much of a task for them. Instead, many return to the Chantry's heart and their Order's home, and live out their days in contemplation of the Maker's word.

While the Orlesians' devotion to Andraste is no surprise, it takes only a glance at the likenesses of Drakon I to realize how deeply the citizens revere their first emperor. His statue in Val Royeaux stands of a height with Andraste's, both of them towering over myriad other sculptures.

Cumberland, in Nevarra, hosts the College of Enchanters, but for more worldly studies, no institution can rival the University of Orlais. Students travel from across Thedas to enroll there and children of noble birth are groomed from the time they begin talking in hopes of some day walking its halls. Not since the destruction of Arlathan has there been a place so dedicated to scholarly endeavors. The liberal views of the University's professors and curriculum can quite often put it at odds with the more conservative Chantry. While no sanctions have yet been ordered by the Divine, the potential for future tension can't be denied.

However awe-inspiring the Cathedral or majestic the halls of the University, not all is lovely in Val Royeaux. The alienage, whose space was set aside by the order of the Divine after the Exalted March on the Dales, packs 10,000 elves into an area the size of Denerim's market. The elves live in poverty and squalor, away from human sight or concern. In fact, the walls surrounding the alienage are so high that it is akin to living at the bottom of a well. Sunlight only shines on the *vhenadahl*—the elves' sacred tree—at noon, when the sun reaches its zenith. Of course, the elves and the alienage's ugliness are out of sight of the nobles, and thus hardly a concern for the human citizens of Val Royeaux.

The Dales

The history of the Dales is tangled up with the history of Orlais and the Tevinter Imperium. It is a melancholy tale, punctuated with stretches of violence and hope, as sad and faceted as any mortal life when viewed from outside. The elven story of the Dales varies somewhat from the perspective of Orlais and the Imperium. To the elves, the story of the Dales is not yet finished.

The Dales shone, diminished, died, and are mourned almost like a living soul. And the Dalish keep the memory of that land alive in their identity and traditions the way a family name preserves the memory of a revered elder. The elders may be dead and new generations may wander Thedas, but the family lives on.

The Dalish version of history overlaps with other accounts in broad strokes but differs in details and meaning. Though the Dales were once a sovereign land, home to free elves, hindsight reveals the days of the Dales were only a respite from ongoing woe. History is not yet finished and neither is the fate of the elves.

Ancient History

The story of the Dales is one of broken promises and a people displaced. History speaks of the Dales as an elven homeland, but that is only half true—it is their *second* country. Elven tradition holds that they originally hailed from Elvhenan, which means "place of our people" in the ancient elvhen tongue, a nation that sprawled across the face of Thedas.

The elves believe that in the early days of their civilization, their people were immortal, untouched by age or sickness. So blessed by their ancient gods, they built a society based on remaining in tune with the natural world and serving these gods. But this ideal state wasn't to last.

Humans arrived from Par Vollen in the north and with them came the eventual destruction of Elvhenan. Relations between the elves and humans were distant and cold, as the elves saw

humans as warlike and rash. Elves named the newcomers *shemlen*, or "quick children," due to the humans' seemingly intense, brief lives. While this term was originally dismissive, it quickly became a curse as the elves began to see humanity's mortality spread to them. As they spent time around humans, elves began to show signs of aging and disease, and finally they began to die.

Fearful of the mortality humans seemed to carry like a disease, the people of Elvhenan retreated from their borders, preferring avoidance to conflict. This only opened more land for human occupation, however, eventually paving the way for the rise of the Tevinter Imperium. As the armies of the Imperium grew, so did its magisters' mastery of magic, and eventually they looked to the elves to fill their "needs" for slaves.

The human mages turned the full power of their blood magic against the frightened elves. The elves tried to flee, and pleaded with their gods, but it was to no avail. Eventually, after an uncounted number of years, the magisters triumphed, crushing the elves completely. All of Elvhenan fell under the Tevinter banner, and the capital, Arlathan, was said to have been swallowed up by the ground at the magisters' command.

Andraste & the Founding of the Dales

When the magisters of the Tevinter Imperium stepped into the Fade in search of the Golden City in –395 Ancient (800 TE), they unwittingly sowed the seeds of the elves' freedom, though it would take another two centuries for the deeds of that day to bear fruit. The elves remained in chains as the Maker turned His back on the world, and throughout the events of the First Blight, when the cursed magisters and the Old God, Dumat, plagued the world as darkspawn, but their freedom did come eventually.

In –175 Ancient (1020 TE) a horde of barbarians marched on the Tevinter Imperium from the south, led by a woman who claimed the Maker had returned and spoken with her. She was Andraste, and she spoke against the practices of the Imperium, claiming that magic should not rule over humans and that slavery was an evil in the sight of the Maker. Many elves took her message to heart and organized a rebellion that weakened the empire from within.

The elves rallied around a charismatic leader named Shartan, who led his people into an alliance with Andraste. Together, the two forces nearly ended the Tevinter Imperium. But the war came to an end when both leaders were slain. Shartan fell in combat against his people's oppressors, and Andraste was betrayed to the magisters by her husband, who grew jealous of her influence. This halted the war against the Imperium, and allowed the magisters time to regroup and sue for peace.

Though the Tevinter Imperium remained, it was changed by the events of that first so-called Exalted March, and fell in time under the influence of the Andrastian Chantry. Archon Hessarian, the Tevinter ruler who had Andraste put to death, later repented and converted to her faith. As he consolidated his power in the northern territories of the Imperium, the conquered southern territories began to organize under their own rule.

The followers of Andraste recognized the heroism of the elves during the war, and in -170 Ancient (1025 TE) granted them a new homeland in the sparsely-populated Dales, on the fringes of Tevinter territory. Elves from all over the empire fled to the Dales in what became known as "the Long Walk." Many did not survive the journey, but those who did founded a new elven capital: the city of Halamshiral.

The End of the Dales

The truth behind the events that led to the Chantry's Exalted March against the Dales is lost to most living elves. Forgiving sorts see this as yet another in a line of infuriating tragedies to befall the elves: they must accept that the accounts of historians from victorious Orlais are taught because no testimony survived from the elves, who were accused of massacres and were slaughtered as hostile pagans. Less forgiving sorts see this as part of an Orlesian conspiracy to break and scatter the culture of the Dales; some among them maintain that Orlesian histories are lies written by oppressors bent on conquest of territory and minds. Perhaps no elves can testify on the Dale

Uthenera

The elves of old are said to have lived forever but legends make it clear that not all of them wished to continue on for eternity. Some elders of Elvhenan volunteered for the sacrifice called Uthenera, also known as "the long sleep" or "the endless dream." They were laid to rest in a specially prepared chamber that was part bed and part tomb. In a mystic semblance of sleep, their spirits would leave their bodies to roam the Fade in a kind of dream state. Though some elders eventually woke from this state, many never did. Thus was room made for future generations. Thus, also, do some hidden and forgotten elder elves supposedly still roam the Fade, their bodies long dead, their memories tattered and worn, but perhaps still containing knowledge and secrets thought lost to the modern age. Though the formal practice of the Uthenera apparently ended along with great dominion of the ancient elves of Arlathan, the echoes of such traditions may sometimes manifest among modern elves who seek to reclaim old customs and knowledge.

army's indifference to the Montsimmard massacre by the darkspawn because the story is a falsehood meant to turn a frightened populace against its strange neighbors. That the truth cannot be known is not merely sad but suspicious.

Life Under the Imperium

The elves were the first to be taken as slaves by the Imperium. They were kept as a permanent underclass, used as labor and sacrifices to fuel the expansion of the human empire. A people once free and immortal became doomed to lead short, brutal lives in the service of cruel masters.

The elves suffered greatly under the Tevinter lash, losing nearly all of their culture and history. Elders and family leaders tried to keep Elvhenan alive through stories and songs, but such practices were outlawed and punished with ferocity. Much was lost. Even much of the elven language faded into memory as more and more of the people accepted their role within Tevinter society.

Worship of the elven gods was also banned, though many slaves continued to practice their faith away from the eyes of their masters.

Though much was done to crush the spirit of the elves during this time, perhaps the greatest blow came from the magisters themselves. The blood magic practiced by the Tevinter mages required many sacrifices, and the elves were seen as a ready supply. Torture, ritual murder, and even medical and magical experiments were commonplace. It is still said by the Chantry that many of the hundreds of slaves sacrificed by the magisters in order to reach the Golden City were elves. Elven numbers dwindled in the face of these horrors, contributing to their minority status even centuries later.

Historians, nobles, and common folk alike from Ferelden to Orlais have lamented the scars on the Dalish people even as they call for the Dalish to let go of their tragic past and shake off their pain. For some Dalish elves, those scars are a vital part of their identity. For some, the pain is passed down to keep memories alive. Some Dalish forgive or forget and look to the future of their culture while others hold onto the past as a warning and reminder of what is at stake… and what the enemies of elves

Vallaslin

Translating literally as "blood writing," vallaslin are the intricate facial tattoos worn by many among the Dalish. The tattoos are said to signify a devotion to the elven deities and serve as reminders of the importance of preserving tradition.

A Dalish elf receives their vallaslin as part of an initiation into adulthood, and it is only applied after a period of meditation and ritual purification. The tattooing process is overseen by the clan's Keeper, who may call off the ritual if the applicant shows unwillingness or cries out in any way. Failure to receive a vallaslin is not seen as something shameful, but rather a sign the elf is not yet ready for the responsibilities of adulthood. Such things come with time.

Elven

The elven language is a fragmented relic of ancient history. Few city elves can speak it and even the Dalish have wide gaps in their vocabulary. Despite this, a few terms and phrases still see common use by both groups:

Abelas (ah-BEY-lahs): Literally translating to "sorrow," this is commonly used as an apology.

Andaran atish'an (ahn-DAHR-ahn ah-TEESH-ahn): Meaning "I dwell in this place, a place of peace," this is a formal elven greeting.

Aneth ara (AH-neth AH-rah): A friendly, less formal greeting. Literally it means "my safe place."

Arlathvhen (ahr-LATH-vehn): Literally, "for love of the people." The name given to the meeting of the Dalish clans every decade.

Dareth shiral (da-RETH shee-RAL): Used as a farewell, it means "safe journey."

Falon (fah-LOHN): "Friend."

Hahren (hah-REHN): "Elder." This term is used by the Dalish to show respect, but it has been adopted by city elves as a title for the leader of an alienage.

Ma nuvenin (mah noo-VEY-nihn): "As you wish."

Ma serannas (ma SEHR-ahn-ahs): "My thanks."

have done to them. Together they make the Dalish people more than remnants and rebels; they make them whole. Grief and pain sometimes transform within survivors into pride.

In a way, the very act of identifying as Dalish is an act of defiance, a display of hope. The surviving Dalish are a living memorial of the Dales as much as they are a promise of a future for the elvhen.

The Dales Today

The lands that once comprised the Dales are now the easternmost marches of Orlais and the frontier with Ferelden. Cities and towns like Montsimmard, rebuilt in proper Orlesian fashion, stand as bastions of Imperial culture in a rugged wilderness, links in a chain that runs from the Heartlands to the new estates built up in the reclaimed ruins of Halamshiral. The Empress herself explores the gardens and urban forests of the former Dalish capital when she visits, and keeps her Winter Palace there. Old elven architecture has been built over with bold Orlesian flourishes. Pagan statues have been replaced with icons of Andraste and images of Drakon I rendered in marble. The city's boulevards and wooded glens hearken to its days as the Dalish capital but Orlesian symbolism is everywhere.

South of the cities and towns, the former Dales are home now to human farms, pastures, and grazing lands. The land becomes ever more stubborn into the south, the grasses grow longer, the boulders and glens more frequent. In the distant south, the vast woods of the Arbor Wilds, which once captivated and enchanted the elves with their darkening eaves and unexplored depths, mark the edge not only of Orlais but of civilized lands altogether. The territory beyond is an uncharted stretch of ancient trees, deep ravines, knotted roots, and hidden pools all supposedly haunted by ghostly lights and whispering voices. Bold would-be explorers enter the Arbor Wilds every year and those who return seldom report more than days spent lost in sunless woods.

Rumors abound that some Dalish of old erected a hidden refuge within the Wilds, protected by spells and patrolled by camouflaged guardians, but neither human nor Dalish explorers have been able—or willing—to prove the tales true or false.

Between the Wilds and the coast, the rugged land is often trod by bandits and outlaws who think they can survive on their own or prey on lonely farms. Some of these bandits are city elves fleeing the alienages of Orlais and trying to transform themselves into Dalish revolutionaries. A few seek out ancient traces of the Dales that lay amid the springs and rocks of the region. Scattered elven ruins, overgrown by the wild and forgotten by all but pagan spirits and devoted Dalish, offer up treasures to grave-robbers and historians alike.

To the nearby folk of Ferelden, the border between the old Dales and their lands is broad and irregular. Fereldans frequently hunt and graze on lands that could be contested if pressures were right. The foothills of the Frostbacks are popular with some Dalish caravans in Ferelden, part of a circuitous pilgrimage that lets the elves lay eyes on their past.

The borderland is a broad and seldom-patrolled region where souls can feel a bit freer and the weights of civilization can be shed for a while. But that narrow pass between the mountains and the sea may one day be bloodied and warred over again. The nearby town of Jader grows busier and more prosperous each year that Orlais and Ferelden maintain peace, but its prosperity threatens to bring bustle to the borderland, spoiling its remote feel.

Orzammar

The dwarven kingdom of Orzammar is the last great bastion of a failing race that once ruled an underground empire that stretched beneath the whole of Thedas. The peoples of the world above count four Blights and some believe a fifth may be in the offing, but to the dwarves, since the coming of the darkspawn there has only ever been one epic campaign without end. In fact, each of the four Blights actually offered a temporary respite to the dwarves as the darkspawn hordes poured onto the surface, away from the dwarves' beleaguered domain beneath the ground.

When most folk think of dwarves they picture the surface dwarves they've met and imagine all dwarves to be skilled smiths, greedy merchants, or doughty fighters. They would be surprised to learn that the stout folk they've met above the ground are accounted little worth by those below, who are steeped in an ancient culture of caste, honor, excellence, and tremendous pride.

Pride, they say, comes before a fall.

A History of the Dwarven Kingdoms

The first dwarven kingdom was founded in time out of memory, so long ago that even the supposedly flawless Memories do not record it. The dwarves of the elder days filled the thaigs, large open caverns beneath the earth, living in great cities carved from the living rock. It is known that these dwarves interacted with the elves of Arlathan long before the coming of humans; a rare few works of great beauty depicting cooperation between both peoples still remain. Even so, it could not have been too close a relationship, for when the Tevinters destroyed the last of the elven kingdoms, the dwarves said nothing, favoring their close relationship with that human dynasty.

Endrin Stonehammer and Orseck Garal laid the foundations of the present-day dwarven kingdom. As the Tevinter Imperium came to rule more and more territory above, their Archon Darinius traveled deep under the ground, presenting himself in Kal-Sharok and asking for an alliance. Impressed by the human lord, Stonehammer entered a sweeping covenant with him. The Tevinter capital Minrathous became the paramount human city for trade between humans and dwarves. The dwarves' coffers overflowed.

After decades of this prosperity, Garal moved his capital from Kal-Sharok to the south, to the distant kingdom of Orzammar, which was the ancestral home of the Smith and Miner Castes beneath the Frostback range. He claimed the desire to preside more directly over the commercial activities—mining and crafting—that had become so important to the dwarves. Many scholars also suspect that he and his ally Stonehammer foresaw trouble, in the wake of Darinius's passing, with the squabbling magisters of the Tevinter Imperium, and that they wanted to stand as far as possible from any problems of succession in the human empire.

When Garal died, Stonehammer took up the kingship. He expanded Orzammar, building the legendary hall that still bears his name. The Provings were reorganized to allow for far more massive tournaments. A huge chamber was built to house titanic statues of the Paragons—the greatest exemplars of dwarven excellence—near the surface of the thaig. Endrin himself was named a Paragon on his deathbed, though he died before seeing his own statue completed.

Dwarven scholars consider the centuries that followed the rise of Orzammar, before the coming of the darkspawn, as the golden years of their people. Thaigs were built under every human kingdom and the Deep Roads—the underground passages that connected the thaigs—expanded in length, breadth, density, and scope. Trade flourished among the dwarven realms and great discoveries were made. Paragon Heldane Zadol of Hormak pioneered the art of folding steel, and his blades are still coveted. The kingdom of Gundaar labored for generations to produce the House of Crystalline Waters, a massive underground lake whose quartz stalactites refracted colors no dwarf had ever witnessed, and its beauty was heartbreaking. While each dwarven kingdom had its own king or queen, all looked to the high king or queen in Orzammar as the leader of their people.

It was not to last.

The Coming of the Darkspawn

The Memories do not record where the darkspawn came from, only that they came up from the Deep Roads in countless hordes. Looking back, there were early warnings—a traveler lost here, a patrol gone missing there—but they were subtle at best, nothing to truly indicate what was to come.

> Drink deep of the ale while it's still cold.
> Marvel at the breadth of the hall.
> Once you couldn't move for the host.
> The Stone now embraces them all.
>
> —Shaper Tole
>
> Time, in the end, is one long Proving, and we are failing at the test.
>
> —Warrior Etrol of House Saelac

The greater bulk of the darkspawn attacked from the west. Some of the outer thaigs fell in a matter of days, completely unprepared for the hordes that poured out of the darkness. The darkspawn swiftly overran the sites of their early victories and used them as staging grounds to push further into the Deep Roads. The Memories record that large forces would sometimes bypass barricaded thaigs to strike

on the surface from an unexpected quarter. The dwarves sent warnings to the human kingdoms when they could, but had little other assistance to spare.

When this First Blight began, Orzammar was caught in the midst of a bitter inter-house war. The greatest members of the Warrior Caste battled in its petty skirmishes, or had been injured in those fights. As news of the darkspawn attacks on the outer thaigs began to pour in, each house insisted that aid be sent to its own holdings, but none would agree to help defend others' thaigs at the expense of their own. The Assembly was soon deadlocked and the darkspawn went completely unchecked until their mass arrived at the gates of Orzammar itself.

In this darkest hour, a warrior arose who would eventually be known as one of Orzammar's greatest Paragons. Aeducan had never particularly sought to distinguish himself within the Warrior Caste, but it was he who took charge of Orzammar's defenses, enlisting the Miner Caste to collapse key passages and demolish critical bridges. It was he who ignored the directives of the Assembly and ordered nobles into battle. It was he who was made a Paragon by a near-unanimous vote of the Assembly (there was one abstention). And at the very end, it was he who died cursing that he should have done more to save the outer thaigs.

But even for Aeducan's heroism and that of countless other dwarves, within fifty years every outer thaig and all but the four greatest dwarf-kingdoms—Orzammar, Kal-Sharok, Hormak, and Gundaar—had fallen. The great kingdoms survived only by close cooperation, and by abandoning to the darkspawn a lion's share of the network of Deep Roads.

The dwarves shared all they learned of the darkspawn with their human allies. The Memories record that several notable dwarven warriors, including the legendary Paragon Moroc the Maul, were present at the Grey Wardens' founding. In fact, Moroc's contribution is a key reason there

But a journey to the thaig reveals a culture of nobility and of poverty, of proud warriors and of necessary brutality. Much as the heat of the forge strengthens the blade, the dwarves have been hardened by the constant threat of the darkspawn onslaught, forcing their warriors to excel or die, their craftsmen to create masterpieces of durability and style, and their nobles to engage in a deadly political game of intrigue that shames the goings-on in the simpler courts of Ferelden.

—From Stone Halls of the Dwarves by Brother Genitivi, Chantry Scholar

is no loss of caste associated with becoming a Grey Warden: if such duty is worthy of a Paragon, it is surely fit for any dwarf of lesser stature.

Caridin and the Golems

The renowned smith Caridin was made a Paragon for building the impregnable fortress Bownammar, but his greatest achievement looms larger still in the Memories. The war against the darkspawn had raged for well over a century, and slowly, inexorably, the dwarves were being ground down. With each warrior who fell without fathering a son, the Warrior Caste faltered.

As this darkness loomed, Caridin's golems appeared. Bipedal, "living" siege engines hewn from stone or forged from steel, and infused with lyrium, the golems were near unstoppable. For the first time since the start of the war, the darkspawn were driven back. The dwarves retook thaigs and reclaimed Deep Roads that had long been given up for lost. Golems became the backbone of all the kingdoms' armies, and some were even exported to Tevinter and a few groups of Circle magi. The Shaperate of Golems became one of the most influential voices in Orzammar.

Just as talk of an eventual victory against the darkspawn started, tragedy crashed down when Paragon Caridin disappeared, and the secrets of golem manufacture with him. Many were accused of having a hand in his disappearance, but no culprit was found. Many expeditions were sent into the Deep Roads to search for him, but all were pushed back by the darkspawn. After years of debate in the Assembly, a massive expedition of 126 golems—the entire Legion of Steel—was sent into the Deep Roads to recover the Paragon. Not one returned. The Shaperate of Golems never recovered. All-golem regiments were forbidden to ever again fight in the Deep Roads, and Caridin was declared dead.

The Sealing of the Deep Roads

With the Archdemon Dumat slain at the Battle of the Silent Plains, the human kingdoms considered their battle against the darkspawn finished, and the Blight at an end. For the dwarves, the war continued without respite. Though the darkspawn did not coordinate their attacks well without an Archdemon to lead them, what they lacked in focus they made up in savagery and the weight of numbers.

The dwarf kingdoms survived, but their situations worsened steadily over a century and half until by 1155—according to the reckoning of Tevinter—all communication between the dwarven kingdoms had ceased. High King Threestone of Orzammar bowed to what seemed inevitable. With the consent of the Assembly and with great sorrow, he ordered all Deep Roads to the other dwarven kingdoms permanently sealed. Within a decade, word reached Orzammar that Hormak and Gundaar had fallen. Conclusive word from Kal-Sharok was never received, but as Kal-Sharok's silence continued to mark time's passage, the leading dwarves of Orzammar eventually came to believe that they were the last dwarf kingdom.

Today

Nearly a thousand years have passed since the sealing of the Deep Roads. The once-sprawling kingdom has been reduced to a central district and a handful of threatened border thaigs, the war with the darkspawn centuries-old and never-ending. Orzammar maintains relations with Ferelden and Orlais, but as a practical matter, respectable dwarves ignore the world above, dogmatically embracing their caste-roles and letting outcast dwarves they actively disdain handle dwarven business interests above the surface.

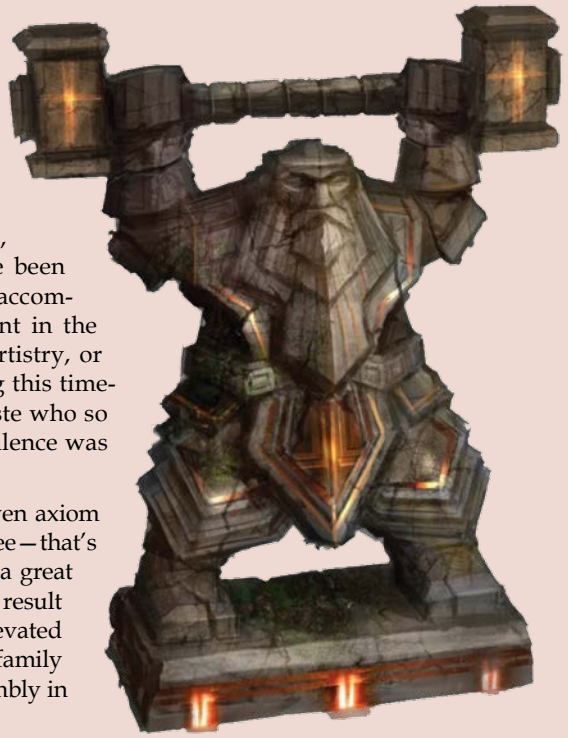
It is known to a few upper caste dwarves that the high king of Orzammar has recently, in 9:12 Dragon, learned of Kal-Sharok's survival. Far from a joyous reunion, communication between the kingdoms has so far consisted of Orzammar's insistence that Kal-Sharok pay homage to its high king and Kal-Sharok's response that they consider the denizens of Orzammar who gave them up for dead to be wraith-blooded traitors to the Stone.

But worse than that, in the last few decades the darkspawn have grown increasingly brazen. The ancestral fortress of the Legion of the Dead, Paragon Caridin's Bownammar, fell to the enemy in 9:13 Dragon. The Shapers have seen portents leading them to believe that a new Archdemon has arisen, or will soon. Some say that these are the final days of Orzammar.

The Culture of Orzammar

One would be hard pressed to find a people prouder of their history and accomplishments than the dwarves of Orzammar. They have done much of great worth. Their architectural feats alone are staggering. But their greatest triumphs are also all long past, and their pride eclipses them. In fact, the dwarves' pride has contributed substantially, if not definitively, to Orzammar's current condition. There is little doubt that their embattled kingdom could stand the military aid of any surface kingdom that would be willing to provide it.

Paragons



The pinnacle of the dwarven ideal of excellence and the grand exception to the rules of caste, Paragons are the absolute elite of dwarven culture. They are the exemplars of dwarf society, the heroes who all other dwarves seek to emulate. Their words, whether spoken or recorded, have the weight of a king's truth. It is often the case that there are no living Paragons; they are like unto gods.

To be named a Paragon is the greatest honor a dwarf can achieve, but it is not a feat easily accomplished. Many Paragons have been elevated only posthumously. To become a Paragon, one must accomplish an achievement so remarkable that there is no precedent in the Memories. While great victories in battle, legendary feats of artistry, or new techniques of smithing are the obvious routes to achieving this timeless status, there have also been Paragons from the Servant Caste who so completely embodied dwarven ideals of service that their excellence was unassailable.

Status as a Paragon is conferred by the Assembly. An old dwarven axiom runs, "Doing the impossible is easy; getting the Assembly to agree—that's hard," and by that truism, Paragons are rarely elevated without a great deal of contention and debate. Indeed, bloody feuds have arisen as a result of Paragon deliberations. This isn't simple obstinacy, because an elevated Paragon forms a new noble house consisting of their immediate family and any hangers-on they wish to adopt. Because of this, the Assembly in effect dilutes their own power when they name a new Paragon.

The dwarves of Orzammar are not xenophobic, but neither do they believe that there is much of worth to be found beyond their stone halls. They believe dwarves to be the most formidable race of Thedas and condescend to outsiders on the unusual occasions when they interact. To their credit, most dwarves of Orzammar can be readily convinced that some particular human or elf is worthy of respect based on deeds either observed or reported, but at the same time, these dwarves also argue until the end of their breath that these individuals are unusual exceptions to the general rule.

Change is regarded unfavorably in Orzammar, for the dwarves' experience tells them that change is usually a harbinger of sorrow. When in doubt, they look to the past to determine the appropriate course for the future. Answers to troubling questions that are rooted in tradition, no matter how inappropriate, are always more readily accepted than new ideas.

The Caste System

The most important aspect of a dwarf's life is the caste into which they are born. It regulates their professional options and dictates the ways that other dwarves interact with them. Social position is a constant subject of intense interest to dwarves and not properly acknowledging one's place can be considered a deadly insult in some halls.

There are eight dwarf castes. From highest to lowest they are the Noble, Warrior, Smith, Artisan, Miner, Merchant, Servant, and Surface Caste. There are also the casteless, those without any place in dwarf society, who fall beneath even the Surface Caste. Some castes have further subdivision. The Warrior Caste, for example, is divided into the Officer, Soldier, and Guardsman Sub-Castes. Legend holds that this system arose from a family of brothers who each personified one of the castes, but if they actually lived, it was long before the first Memories were recorded.

Dwarves inherit the caste of their same-sex parent, and so it is possible for a lower-caste dwarf to sire or bear the child of a higher-caste partner, who—half the time—inherits the greater caste. Dwarf women of lower caste who try to bear the sons of Noble Caste males are often called "noble hunters." These pursuits are common because when these children are born, their mothers are generally brought into the noble household, which is a significant practical improvement in their day-to-day lives even if their castes don't change.

It is exceedingly difficult to change castes, with the exception that becoming casteless is as easy as leaving Orzammar without the permission of the Assembly. However, Paragons can be drawn from any caste save the casteless; indeed, the Memories record the ascension of even Servant Caste dwarves to Paragon-hood. Dwarves who become Paragons found a new noble house and elevate their families to its ranks.

The Noble Caste and Noble Houses

A dwarven noble house is a collection of noble families, typically related to one another by blood. Most of the noble houses of Orzammar trace their founding to a Paragon, from whom they draw their name. However, some noble houses were founded by upper caste dwarves who were not originally nobles—usually of the Warrior Caste or Smith Caste. The respect accorded to these houses tends to be proportional to

Honor

If any trait is constant across all levels of Orzammar society, it is an obsession with honor—or at least, an obsession with the public appearance of honor. Dwarves who break their oaths are utterly shunned—the equivalent of social death—so all who wish to accomplish anything must play the game regardless of whether they actually value the high principles in question. This is doubly true among the noble houses, whose members are supposed to set the standard by which other dwarves judge their own conduct. Since a dwarf who gives their word would rather die than see it broken, the folk of Orzammar have become masters of subtle insinuation in the place of clear promises.

The behavior of every dwarf reflects on their family and house. Correspondingly, every family and house actively polices its members' honor, out of self-interest if for no other reason. Indeed, supporting one's house is seen as an intrinsic good in Orzammar, regardless of the moral consequences. Murder, blackmail, duplicity, backstabbing… all are acceptable if they support one's house and don't lead to public exposure as an oath-breaker.

their age, and their achievements. Cash-strapped noble houses of proud name sometimes marry their younger scions into non-noble families of great wealth, elevating both the family and its riches into the house proper.

Noble houses and influential individual nobles often act as patrons to lesser houses or families. They also sponsor noteworthy individuals like Proving champions or famed artisans. As those they support prosper, the patrons gain honor in equal proportion. In the complex political environment of Orzammar, the prestige that flows from successful patronage can be an important source of advantage. Thus, there is often substantial competition to patronize promising young dwarves. It is not at all unheard of for such jockeying to come to bloodshed.

Many dwarven nobles are originally from the Warrior Caste, and so are skilled combatants. This is often a practical political skill given how quickly—and physically—many dwarven nobles take offense. Such dwarves often command forces in the field. A rare few nobles have made names for themselves as skilled smiths, but this is unusual save where the house in question ascended from the Smith or Artisan Caste. Even in those cases, to perform such physical labor is widely seen as beneath the nobility.

The Warrior Caste

The price of Orzammar's survival has been heavy, and it is the Warrior Caste who has paid it in blood. There is not a single Warrior Caste house or family in all of Orzammar that has not lost sons and daughters to the war against the darkspawn. Despite the rate at which Orzammar's warriors die, the Warrior Caste is one of the most populous of Orzammar.

The threat of death overshadows everything the members of the Warrior Caste do. They lead lives of drill and practice, they marry early, and they wear their martial pride like justly deserved badges. Most are notably stoic in public; those who embrace life too fully are carefully watched by their fellows so they don't bring dishonor to their house.

There are sub-castes within the Warrior Caste, with certain houses known for producing officers, soldiers, bodyguards, law-enforcers, and so forth. These distinctions were more rigidly observed in times gone by. Today, the Warrior Caste has largely put such divisions aside in favor of the best defense possible for Orzammar, and because of the reality that there are only so many warriors to go around. Thus (for example), while officers usually come from houses that have traditionally produced them, warriors skilled at leading others in battle find few practical barriers to promotion, which would have been unthinkable in centuries past.

Each Warrior Caste house is sworn to a particular noble house. Even the smallest noble houses have at least a handful of Warrior Caste houses in their service. The largest noble houses have more than a dozen under oath to serve them. The more important the noble house that a warrior serves, the more highly they are regarded within the caste.

The warrior houses that serve the Royal House are considered the elite of Orzammar's military. They have access to the best equipment, to the services of the greatest smiths, to the finest brothels, and so forth. When a house falls on a ruler's death, their sworn warrior houses fall with them and the warriors that serve the new royal house take their place at the top of the heap. Even though bloodshed can arise from the tumult of such times, a respected warrior remains a respected warrior, regardless of the house he serves, and those of the Warrior Caste usually remain tactful with one another. Insult a great fighter today, and he may not rush to your aid on the Deep Roads quite so quickly tomorrow.

When campaigns are planned or battle comes to the dwarves, the Assembly assigns one or more noble houses to handle the matter. Those houses then appoint officers from the ranks of those sworn to them to make practical tactical decisions, deploying the resources available to the house as they're allowed, and able.

Women of the Warrior Caste are expected to raise the next generation of fighters and tend to the needs of today's warriors. Many become capable battlefield medics. Women determined to wield arms frequently follow in the footsteps of Astyth the Grey, the first female Paragon of the Warrior Caste, by joining the Silent Sisters and removing their tongues. The Silent Sisters are justly renowned for both their fighting abilities and the daggers they wield, the very same ones with which they cut out their tongues.

The Smith and Artisan Castes

Smiths produce the finished goods required by the other castes, whereas the artisans ornament the same, or make works of art purely for their own sake. Professions where both tasks are joined generally see their members as part of the Smith Caste, though there is no hard-and-fast rule for all cases. The Smith Caste has produced many Paragons, resulting in a few noble houses of smiths, which are profligate sponsors of promising young smiths.

Smiths jockey for position among their caste by displaying their skill, artistry, and technique. There are regular competitions, the equivalent of "Smith Provings," that determine the best smiths. The dwarves delight in watching such displays and owning their fruits. Weaponsmiths, and then armorers, are the most highly regarded craftsman of the Smith Caste.

Artisans do not enjoy quite the same level of respect as smiths, but the majority of them take this in stride. The most talented artisans work closely with smiths, who often lack the breadth of skill to put the proper flourish into their work. A master swordsmith with no particular talent for engraving his blades, for example, might employ an equally renowned engraver to ensure that his blades have an appearance that befits their provenance.

Leather and cloth goods are typically created wholly by artisans, though those intended for nobles often incorporate chain mail contributed by smiths.

The Miner Caste

Orzammar has always been the traditional home of the Smith and Miner Castes due to the rich veins of ore that run beneath the Frostbacks. The Miner Caste's labor drives the engine of Orzammar's wealth and they know it. It's an unspoken reality that they are capable of shutting down ore production if abused or taken for granted, a tactic that they employ rarely, but effectively when they must. While they have to be careful just how far they push the nobles, the miners get what they want within reason.

While dwarven males have the upper hand in most castes, this is not true among the miners. Lyrium is an unusual mineral, requiring as much finesse as brute strength to coax from the Stone, and women work many of the most productive veins and shafts. Since the lyrium trade is the key element of Orzammar's wealth, those who determine its availability are very influential indeed.

The Merchant Caste

The bulk of goods sold in Orzammar pass through the hands of the Merchant Caste, whether they find customers within the city proper or move through middlemen to surface contacts. Since space is at a premium in Orzammar only very old, highly respected, or unusually savvy merchants have permanent shops. The rest make do with temporary stalls. Permits for choice spots are valuable indeed, and require hefty bribes or substantial favors to acquire.

The Merchant Caste was more highly regarded in centuries past than it is now. Although its members once served as the ambassadors of Orzammar to the surface, the wealth their trade generated led many merchants to break ties with Orzammar in particular and dwarf-kind generally, forming the original nucleus of non-caste surfacers in the interests of keeping all that money for themselves. This betrayal of the entire cherished caste system is one that has stained the loyal members of the Merchant Caste even to this day.

The Servant Caste

The lowest of the respectable castes of Orzammar is the Servant Caste. While most humans look upon the work of servants with great disdain, dwarves consider any task well done to be worthy of honor. Members of the Servant Caste tend to be proud of their positions, and are quick to point out how essential they are to the effective operation of Orzammar. They also tend to loudly disparage the casteless at every turn.

The families of the Servant Caste make up the bulk of Orzammar's population, though they hold the least of its wealth.

The Casteless

Every society has its downtrodden, and Orzammar is no exception. The casteless are destitute dwarves who live in Dust Town in the shadows of Orzammar, eking out a desperate existence in the broken ruins on the outskirts of the realm.

The casteless have no legal standing in Orzammar. They are effectively non-people, without rights, considered to be the descendants of criminals and other undesirables. Many are tattooed on their faces soon after birth so they can be easily identified.

The casteless are forbidden to perform any work that is reserved for another caste, which effectively means that they have no legal means of supporting themselves. Most turn to crime. Others beg, sweep street trash, hire on with miners to check for poisonous or explosive gas pockets, or engage in noble hunting.

For their wretchedness, the casteless do serve a useful social function as a constant reminder to the other castes that despite hard times and an endless war with the darkspawn, they could have it much worse. The casteless also serve a practical purpose as a ready source of dwarves with loose honor and much skill at stealth and subterfuge. And while they do not speak of it in polite company, every noble knows the story of the Paragon Gherlen the Blood-Risen, a casteless dwarf who left Orzammar, became a hero among the surface-dwelling folk of Thedas, ultimately returned to claim the kingship of the city. If one casteless could do it, another may come along someday.

The Surfacers

Not so much a caste as a designation, surfacers are casteless dwarves and their descendants who have either been exiled or gone voluntarily to live on the surface. Dwarves who leave Orzammar without the permission of the Assembly are immediately and permanently stripped of their caste, though as the number of formerly upper caste surfacers grows, there is sometimes talk of revisiting that notion.

The dwarves of Orzammar hold that surfacers are "lost to the Stone," meaning that their spirits will never join their ancestors, a notion most dwarves consider profoundly tragic.

Most casteless surfacers who return to Orzammar come for commerce, to sell goods from the outside. They are usually allowed to do so, but have no rights, and there are many ways that the members of the Merchant Caste can make their commerce unpleasant, unprofitable, or both.

The Memories, Shapers, and Shaperate

The Memories are the repository of all dwarven knowledge, and are in many ways the soul of Orzammar. Most simply, they are archives that hold the whole known history of the dwarven people: births, deaths, marriages, victories, defeats, blasphemies, Provings, smithing techniques, the ascensions of Paragons, the tallies of Assembly votes, the entire genealogies of all dwarves living in the city, and much more besides. For the dwarves, they are sacred scripture.

The Memories are recorded in lyrium by a magical process known only to dwarves known as the Shapers of Memory. According to these esoteric methods, even the minutest details can be recorded with precise accuracy, for all time.

The Shapers are the scholars and historians of Orzammar, and its poets, genealogists, and philosophers besides. They are an academic class typically drawn from the ranks of the Noble Caste, though exceptions are made for those of other castes who possess great intellectual gifts. The political body of Shapers is known as the Shaperate, which is also the name for their physical edifice in Orzammar where the greater portions of the Memories are housed.

The Shapers are theoretically apolitical, offering knowledge for its own sake to any who ask. In practice, the matter is seldom so straightforward. Shapers are individuals, some staunchly traditional, others more progressive or even radical. Some Shapers are gregarious and some withdrawn. Some are cautious while others are adventurous; some of the latter have been known to travel the Deep Roads alongside Orzammar's warriors in order to truly record what passes.

The Shaperate advises the Assembly on matters of procedure and precedent, and thus have a hand in the governance of Orzammar. The Shaperate also wields authority over when and whether golems are committed to battle, a function left over from the time when there was an entire Shaperate of Golems to actively handle such affairs.

> No victory lasts
> If it is not remembered
> Be kind to Shapers
>
> —Paragon Lynchcar, 7:45 Storm

The Assembly and the King

The politics of Orzammar are perhaps the bloodiest in Thedas, and holding power is no small feat. Orzammar is ruled jointly by a king or queen and an Assembly.

Members of the Assembly are known as "deshyrs" which loosely translates as "assembly lords." Any deshyr may submit new laws or regulations for consideration. A majority of Assembly-members must vote in favor for such a proposal to be passed. Many proposals are debated, on and off, for years.

Members of the Assembly represent the most powerful noble houses of Orzammar at any given time. To join the Assembly, there first must be an opening in its ranks. Openings arise through death or resignation, the latter being essentially unheard of and the former commonly arising through circumstances of obvious assassination. In fact, it's not uncommon for dwarves of the Assembly to be cut down in the streets in open skirmishes between noble houses. To fill a vacancy, a standing member nominates a candidate, who must then simply be ratified by one-third of the standing Assembly.

Like the deshyrs do, Orzammar's king holds his (or her—there have been several queens of Orzammar) position for life. He is the theoretical war-leader of all Orzammar. In practice, though, he only actually commands those warrior houses sworn to his own noble house. In order to expand his army's breadth, kings often appoint High Generals from allied noble houses to add their sworn warriors to his own host. Like the deshyrs, the king may submit new laws or regulations to the Assembly for consideration, which are subject to its deliberation and vote in the normal manner. When the Assembly enacts a law or regulation by any margin other than unanimity, a king may send it back to the Assembly for further consideration and another vote before it is recorded with the force of law in the Memories. This can be done on an effectively unlimited basis, and so amounts to the practical power of legislative veto.

A king is voted into power by a simple majority of the Assembly, but there is seldom anything straightforward about the practice of proposing candidates and voting on them. Rather, the ascension of a king is typically preceded by violence, political strife, and massive tides of jockeying for position.

Removing Kings

A king or queen of Orzammar can be dethroned by a vote of no confidence from two-thirds of the Assembly, but such votes can only be attempted once per year, and are almost always doomed to failure.

In Orzammar's entire history, only two kings have been removed by a vote of the Assembly. The first, King Felbin the Mad, descended into dementia and even then held his position for four more years, a vote to dethrone him passing only once he had lost the capacity to speak anything other than gibberish. The second, the "Lost King," was systematically removed from the Memories and all records of his rule—other than its end by the action of the Assembly—are gone. Even the Shapers know of the Lost King's rule only due to a conspicuous absence of records spanning a thirty-year period over eight hundred years ago.

Tradition holds that a dying king can support a particular successor—typically his eldest son—by naming the first candidate to be voted upon, but this tradition does not have the force of law, and is often ignored by the Assembly. Although there's no guarantee that a king's blood relations will hold the throne after him, it happens often enough that the royal family often has a sense of entitlement about it.

There are standing offices in Orzammar other than king. All are held by deshyrs and all are appointed by a majority vote of the Assembly. Examples include the General of Orzammar's Garrison, Master of Stores, Keeper of the Vaults, and Chief Miner. Some appointments are for life, others become open for new candidates on a recurring schedule.

Provings

Provings are duels between dwarves, sacred representations of dwarven honor and duty, held in a massive arena called the Proving Grounds. Dwarves believe that their ancestors watch over all Provings from the Stone, and that only dwarves who have their approval can prevail in them. Thus, Provings are used to resolve conflict between noble houses, debates in the Assembly, and honor challenges that cannot be settled in any other fashion.

Any dwarf may theoretically fight, but champions from the Warrior Caste are typically enlisted on both sides of most conflicts. Few Provings are explicitly fought to the death, but many dwarves die in them nonetheless. The dwarves stoically accept that it's better for one dwarf to die to settle a matter in a Proving than for dozens to die in open battle between factions or houses.

Over the last few centuries, Provings have become a form of entertainment as well as a method to resolve conflicts. The Warrior Caste holds regular tournaments, and outsiders with unusual fighting styles are allowed (or even paid) to participate. Lower-caste dwarves are typically not allowed to fight purely for spectacle's sake, only participating when their honor or innocence are at stake. The casteless aren't even allowed to view the Provings, as the dwarves believe they would dishonor the ancestors by allowing the casteless to so much as stand in the Proving Grounds.

Orzammar

The city of Orzammar is magnificent, one of the finest creations of a people skilled in craftsmanship. It is intricately carved from stone with simple, recurring motifs. Metals, and occasionally lyrium, embellish the rock.

Broadly considered, the city is a rough crescent consisting of tiered layers, with lower tiers being progressively larger and higher tiers progressively wealthier and more prestigious. As the ancestral home of the Smith and Miner Castes, Orzammar was originally constructed with their needs in mind. The city was built around a lava vent from which molten rock still sluggishly flows in cleverly carved channels, providing light and heat for the entire thaig.

The main route to and from Gherlen's Pass goes through Stonehammer Hall, which is filled with massive statues of the Paragons who have led the dwarven people through its

history. While Endrin Stonehammer commanded that the edifice be built so the denizens of Orzammar would appreciate all that their ancestors had done, the Assembly has always regarded it appropriate that those who leave Orzammar are forced to consider all they leave behind as they pass beneath the Paragons' stony gazes.

The Diamond Quarter

The Diamond Quarter is the highest point of the city, both literally and figuratively. The noble houses' halls are located here, and few lower-caste dwarves ever walk its narrow streets. The Royal Palace stands at its absolute apex, with the Chamber of the Assembly alongside. The Shaperate brackets the Assembly Chamber.

The tiers of the Diamond Quarter are the most intricately carved in Orzammar, set with lanterns of diamond and lyrium that shine with warm light. Elite members of the Warrior Caste patrol the Diamond Quarter, and they are swift to question anyone they do not recognize. Merchants may only sell their wares on the streets of the Diamond Quarter with rare permission, granted only on special occasions.

The Commons

The largest and central portion of Orzammar, the Commons is home to the bulk of Orzammar's population.

The Commons has many tiers. As a general rule, higher tiers are home to more powerful or influential dwarves. Warriors generally live higher than Smiths, who dwell higher than Artisans, and so forth. As a rule, though, the dwellings of the Commons are far simpler than those of the Diamond Quarter, and seldom extend as deep into the rock.

The lowest Commons tier rests just above a pool of lava spanned by a bridge that leads to the Proving Grounds. Merchants of every stripe, including surfacers, do their business here. There is always a great deal of activity on the streets, and regular patrols of soldiers keep order.

Many passages lead from the Commons to Orzammar's mine works and to the Deep Roads, though many of the latter are sealed and heavily guarded.

Dust Town

Barely a part of Orzammar, Dust Town is a district outlying the Commons. Choked with the tumbled and crumbling remains of ancient dwellings and discarded masonry, this is where the casteless dwell in squalor and dishonor. Neither the Assembly nor the king takes any responsibility for order or the enforcement of laws in Dust Town, and it is consequently an area no respectable dwarf enters lightly.

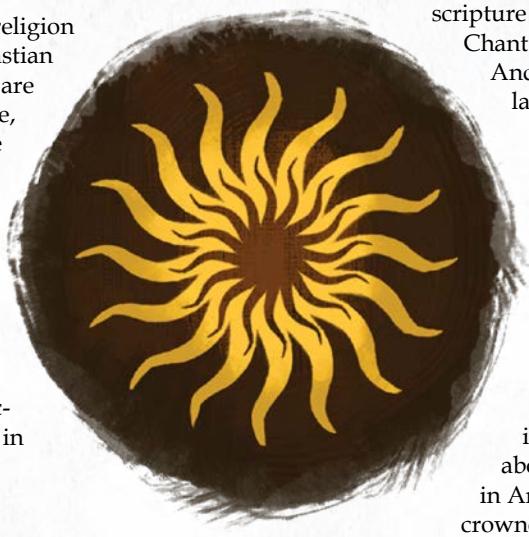
In the miserable poverty of Dust Town, a life of crime is sometimes the only way out for its residents. The district is thus also the home of the shadowy syndicate known as the Carta. This dwarven criminal organization thrives in the very shadow of Orzammar's grandeur, smuggling lyrium, selling slaves, running prostitution rings and extortion rackets, and generally profiting from exploitation and violence.

Religion & Belief in Thedas

Much of the history of Thedas can be viewed as a long series of protracted struggles over which set of beliefs will hold sway over its people. The oldest historical records in Ferelden, the sung oral histories of the Avvar, are filled with tales of the many battles the ancient Alamarri tribes fought to appease their myriad patron spirits. The elves were all but destroyed for clinging to their faith in their ancient deities. And the Tevinter Imperium—the greatest nation Thedas has yet known—was toppled because of the beliefs of a barbarian tribeswoman who had once been a slave.

The Chantry

The most powerful contemporary religion throughout Thedas is the Andrastian Chantry, a faith whose teachings are modeled after the sermons of Andraste, the prophet of the Maker. These collected teachings are called the Chant of Light, and its bulk consists of hymns and songs on a wide variety of topics including history and moral behavior. Emperor Kordillus Drakon I of Orlais founded the Chantry as it presently exists in seeking to codify into a single coherent religion the beliefs and practice of the many cults that sprang up in the wake of Andraste's death.



The Maker's Chosen

Andraste was a slave. She escaped from the Tevinter Imperium in the chaotic years following the death of the Archdemon Dumat, during the empire's struggle to recover from the First Blight. Returning to the land of her birth, she rose to power as the wife of a powerful Alamarri warlord named Maferath. According to the Chantry's modern teachings, Andraste sang of the world's woes to the Maker, and to Andraste alone the Maker listened.

The Maker chose Andraste as His bride and entrusted her with spreading His words across Thedas. The Prophet gathered a mighty army and set out to topple the forces of the corrupt mages of the Imperium. But at the brink of her success her mortal husband Maferath, whose jealousy had led him to secretly bargain with the Archon of the Imperium, betrayed Andraste to her death. Andraste was immolated at Minrathous, before the collected armies of Tevinter and the Alamarri. Ironically—or perhaps miraculously—the Archon Hessarian saw his error immediately; he spared her continued suffering by piercing her heart with his sword.

The Maker, in rage and sorrow, turned once more from creation.

The Chantry's Foundation

After Andraste's death many despaired. A number of ominous sects were founded in this dark time. Some venerated the demons of the Fade, or were so vile as to advocate the worship of darkspawn.

Some remained faithful to Andraste's word. They gathered every scrap and record of her teachings into a vocal scripture that would eventually be known as the Chant of Light. Proselytizing as they went, Andraste's followers traveled to all the lands of Thedas, believing that when the Chant was sung in every corner of the world the Maker would hear and return.

More than a century later a young king of Orlais, Kordillus Drakon, heard the Chant for the first time. The monarch became a devout follower of Andraste. Perhaps more importantly, he grew into a gifted general. He built the first great chantry in his capital city of Val Royeaux and set about conquering the surrounding lands in Andraste's name. A decade later, he was crowned emperor and instated Justinia I as the first Divine, the titular head of the Chantry.

Just five years later, the Second Blight began with the awakening of Zazikel. Darkspawn poured up from the mountain ranges across Thedas, having used the Deep Roads to spread to every corner of the world.

Drakon's armies stood at the forefront of every major battle against the darkspawn. They always carried the Chant of Light with them and built chantries in their wake. When the emperor relieved the siege of Weisshaupt in 1:33 Divine he made a powerful ally for the faith: the Grey Wardens converted to the Andrastian Chantry en masse.

While much of Drakon's vast empire crumbled with his death, the Chantry's power did not.

"When the Maker returned to the world, He chose for Himself a bride who would be His prophet. He could have looked to the great Imperium, with its wealth and its powerful mages. He could have looked to the civilized lands of the west, or the cities of the northern coasts. But instead He looked to a barbarian people on the very edge of Thedas. And thus fell the eye of the Maker on Andraste, she who could be raised up from outcast to become His bride. From her lips would fall the Chant of Light, at her command would the legions of righteousness fall upon the world."

—from the Chant of Light

The Chant of Light

Andraste's faithful followers collected the texts at the core of the Andrastian faith over many years in the wake of her death. The Chant of Light, the compilation of those texts, is as much a collection of historical stories as it a compendium of moral teachings, or a hymnal containing songs that were actually sung or taught by Andraste herself.

The Chant is divided into canticles, which are sub-divided into stanzas and verses. The canticles are subject to a great deal of interpretation. The same story is sometimes told several different ways within the same canticle due to the vagaries of the Chant's writing and compilation. The Chant of Light is only typically sung in its entirety at Val Royeaux, as it takes several weeks to finish.

Broadly speaking, the Chant advocates that the strong are charged to protect the weak and succor the needy. However, many of its stanzas suggest that the weak and needy who strive on their own behalf are often blessed by the Maker. It is understood by most of the faithful that the Maker's blessings are enacted by His human agents in the world, rather than arising through miracles, magic, or blessed happenstance. Also of note, the Chant admonishes that magic must serve mankind rather than rule it. This is the injunction that has led to the Chantry's strict laws regarding the use of magic and the conduct of the Circle of Magi, as enforced in contemporary times by the Chantry's templars.

Historically, the Chant teaches that in ancient times the corrupt magisters of the Tevinter Imperium crossed physically into the Fade and breached the walls of the Maker's Golden City, turning it black with their sins. The Maker cursed them for their hubris and cast them out of the Fade; they became the first darkspawn. According to Andraste, the Maker then turned away from the world in disgust, returned only when Andraste beseeched Him, and turned away again at Andraste's immolation. Contemporary orthodoxy holds that when the Chant is sung in every corner of the world, the Maker will return again.

Dissonant Verses

The Chant of Light has evolved over time to emphasize particular interpretations or comply with the will of particular Divines. On occasion, inconvenient verses have been struck from the Chant. These "Dissonant Verses" are now considered sacrilegious, and to retain copies of the Chant that contain these verses is blasphemous.

The most infamous passage to be removed in this way was the entire Canticle of Shartan. Shartan was the leader of the elven slaves who joined Andraste's army to fight for freedom and an elven homeland. He was murdered when Andraste was betrayed, never seeing the Dales' foundation. The Canticle of Shartan was struck from the Chant shortly after the Chantry declared an Exalted March against the Dales.

Exalted Marches

Exalted Marches are holy crusades declared by the Chantry against enemies of the faith. Andraste's campaign against the Tevinter Imperium is considered to be the first Exalted March, so the concept predates even the founding of the Chantry. The second was against the elven Dales, and though the Chantry had many reasons to choose from the one most often stated by Chantry historians is the elves' refusal to accept the Chant of Light or give up their pagan gods. The Andrastian Chantry declared four different Exalted Marches against the Imperial Chantry in Tevinter, though none succeeded. The last three Exalted Marches have been against the Qunari. While the Chantry considers the final Exalted March done with the peace accords of Llomerryn in 7:84 Storm, the separate Imperial Chantry of Tevinter fights skirmishes against the Qunari to this day.

> Let the blade pass through the flesh, Let the blood touch the ground, Let my cries touch their hearts. Let mine be the last sacrifice.
>
> —Canticle of Andraste, stanza 7 verse 12

The Imperial Chantry

Despite having martyred Andraste in the first place, the Tevinters were eventually swayed and finally converted to the Chantry of Andraste. Even so, the tenets of their faith were never in strict accordance with the teachings of the Divine in Val Royeaux. In particular, followers of the Chantry in the Imperium looked more favorably on magic and mages than their co-religionists elsewhere in Thedas.

More than two centuries of drift came to a head in 3:87 Towers. The Imperial Chantry arose in schism from the Andrastian Chantry. Among their many disagreements with Val Royeaux's orthodoxy was the question of whether Andraste was divine or mortal. Members of the Tevinter faction argued that she had been mortal, albeit a powerful mage, and that even her ascension to the Maker's side on her death did not change this fundamental aspect of her nature. The Imperial Chantry, furthermore, allowed male priests and stood by their ancient conviction that mages could rule as long as they abstained from using blood magic.

The Chantry of Andraste censured the Imperial Chantry. The Imperial Chantry responded by electing its own Divine, a man named Valhail who was also a prominent member of the Circle of Magi. This "Black Divine" (as the Andrastians called him) was instated in Minrathous, and some years later, called for celebrations and a holiday on the occasion of the death of the Andrastian Divine Joyous II. The infuriated Chantry of Andraste declared a new Black Age that would see the false Chantry and their schismatic Divine cleansed from Thedas. Four Exalted Marches and a century of warfare failed to unseat the "pretender" Divine and his successors, and these efforts finally ended with the coming of the Fourth Blight.

Since the Schism, the Imperial Chantry's orthodoxy has diverged considerably from the Andrastian Chantry's. The most obvious facets are the instatement of male priests, priests who are mages, and the general acceptance of magic in society. The modern Chantry of Andraste has formally given up on subduing the Imperial Chantry, reckoning that their efforts are better spent else-

where. The Imperial Chantry's power has been bolstered by their acceptance of mages, many of whom flee to Tevinter from persecution in the south.

Those who want to mark a distinction between the two Divines refer to the female Divine in Val Royeaux as the "White Divine," and her male counterpart in Minrathous as the "Black Divine." When a distinction must be made between the two chantries, they are most often distinguished as the "Chantry of Andraste" (or "Andrastian Chantry") and the "Imperial Chantry." However, it's important to note that most followers of one or the other are most likely to resolutely ignore the opposing camp and refer to their Divine as "the Divine" and their Chantry as "the Chantry," disregarding even by their nomenclature the existence of some other alternative.

Dwarven Belief

The dwarves of Orzammar have no use for gods. They have no organized religion, and barely possess a basic concept of "worship." Instead, they embrace a philosophy of striving for excellence, hold an intense respect for their ancestors, and reserve their most profound respect for the Stone itself.

The Stone & the Ancestors

The dwarves refer to themselves as the Children of the Stone, literally regarding themselves as the Stone's children. The Stone is not worshipped, per se, nor given anthropomorphic form.

The Stone supports and shelters the dwarves, offering up her bounty and protection. At the same time, the Stone's dangers are many, so the dwarves know that they must listen always to her voice.

Dwarves who die are said to have "returned to the Stone," and their bodies are entombed within it. Those who achieved excellence in life are said to strengthen the Stone, regardless of their caste, whereas those who shamed their house or caste are thought to weaken it. Nobles and Paragons are buried in grand, ornate crypts. Great warriors are more frequently interred in cairns. Dwarves of modest means share space with their brethren in mausoleums encompassing vaults for the honored dead of many different houses.

A worthy dwarf properly interred is said to become an ancestor, a guiding spirit who watches over their descendants for eternity. Dwarfs believe that the unworthy are rejected by the Stone, and that their spirits are cursed to wander forsaken Deep Roads and abandoned mines forever. These spirits are said to cause cave-ins, confound miners, and lead ranging dwarves astray. They are most frequently invoked to keep young dwarves in line.

Dwarves believe the ancestors speak to their descendants in the outcomes of Provings, giving or withholding their blessing on matters of honor, political debates, and even matters of royal succession. No dwarf doubts that a combatant needs the blessing of the ancestors in order to win on the Proving Grounds. This doesn't prevent dwarves from resorting to foul play of any and every stripe to win these contests, though. The ancestors certainly *withhold* their favor from those whose strivings are insufficiently enthusiastic.

The Legion of the Dead

Public honor is all-important to the dwarves, even if what happens out of sight is a different story. Because the ignoble acts of one dwarf can influence the standing of their entire house, the dwarves have a way for discredited dwarves to atone.

A dwarf who has dishonored their house can undergo a voluntary, ceremonial death, and thereby join the Legion of the Dead. This clears that dwarf's name and restores the family honor. The individual in question is recorded as having died in the honorable fight against the darkspawn and leaves Orzammar behind, heading out onto the Deep Roads to accomplish in fact that which has already been written in the Memories. Those who fight bravely are buried by the Legion within the Stone, finding peace and a place among the ancestors.

The Elven Pantheon

Before humans came to Thedas, the gods of the elves were revered across the world. Their temples stood in beautiful places, shaped from natural materials. Their magnificent rituals lasted for months on end.

But no more. With the fall of the great elven cultural center of Arlathan to the Tevinter Imperium, the voices of the elvish gods fell silent. The Tevinters enslaved the elves and all but destroyed their culture. Centuries passed while the elves labored in cruel bondage and all but forgot how to revere their gods.

The words of Andraste, however, set fire to the heart of an elf named Shartan. He led a host of elves out of bondage with the promise that they could reclaim a land of their own and once again worship the gods of their ancestors. As a reward for their support, they were given land in the south of Orlais; it came to be called the Dales.

The Dales were a dream of remembrance for the elves. They recovered much of their lore and language. The dream, however, was short. After the Second Blight, tensions between the Chantry and the elves led to an Exalted March that utterly smashed the Dales and saw the elves forbidden to worship their gods. Those who accepted the Chantry's dominance were corralled in alienages and forced to worship the Maker. Those who refused became the Dalish, elves without a homeland who keep to the old ways as best they can.

The Creators

The Dalish hold that there are two groups of gods, the Creators, who favor the elves, and the Forgotten Ones, enemy gods who fought against the Creators whom the elves occasionally had to appease.

Elgarínan the Eldest of the Sun. He Who Overthrew His Father

Elgar'nan is the male head of the elven pantheon, the first-born of the earth and sun. He is the patron of fatherhood and the taker of vengeance, and his name is frequently invoked by Dalish who seek retribution.

Elven legend relates that the earth brought forth life to please Elgar'nan, but that his love of this gift of his mother cause his father to grow envious, so in a fit of jealous rage, the sun turned the creatures of the earth to ash. Elgar'nan, wrathful, grappled with his father, hurling him from the sky.

Elgar'nan set about replacing what had been lost, but could not without the sun's life-giving rays. With Mythal's cool counsel, Elgar'nan set the sun free in return for a pledge that he would be gentle, and retire from the earth each night. Together with Mythal and his parents, Elgar'nan recreated all that had been.

Mythal the Great Protector

Mythal is the female patron of motherhood and justice, Elgar'nan's counterpart. Born of the sea, Mythal's serene hand calmed Elgar'nan after he threw his father from the sky, allowing him to see how his anger had betrayed him. Mythal had a hand in creating all that is in the modern world, but is especially credited with crafting the moon from the earth that surrounds the sun's bed. Elves invoke Mythal's name for protection and justice.

Falonídin the Friend of the Dead

The god of death and fortune, Falon'Din and his twin brother Dirthamen are the eldest sons of Elgar'nan and Mythal. From birth, these two were inseparable spirits, split from each other for the very first time in adulthood when the kindly Falon'Din carried a dying deer to rest beyond the Veil, to a place where Dirthamen could not easily follow. Falon'Din swore to guide all beyond the Veil when their times came, a duty that became more and more important as death became more and more common among the elves.

Dirthamen the Keeper of Secrets

The twin brother of Falon'Din, Dirthamen is the god of secrets and lore. When Dirthamen was first parted from Falon'Din, he wandered the grey paths of the Fade for a time until he happened upon two ravens. Though they tried to confuse him, Dirthamen outsmarted them and became the master of Fear and Deceit. The ravens took him to Falon'Din and the brothers swore to never be parted again.

Andruil the Huntress

The goddess of the hunt, some tales paint Andruil as a daughter of Elgar'nan and Mythal while others suggest she is a child of the earth. In either case, she is thought to be the

The Way of Three Trees

The Dalish speak Andruil's Vir Tanadahl as a mantra, adding to the end an oath that reflects their vow to remain unbent before those who persecute them:

Fly straight and do not waver, bend but never break – together we are stronger than the one. We are the last of the elvhenan, and never again shall we submit.

sister of Sylaise. Andruil is the originator of the Vir Tanadahl ("Way of Three Trees"), a philosophy of the hunter's life that has become a code among the modern Dalish:

- **Vir Assan ("Way of the Arrow"):** *Fly straight and do not waver.*
- **Vir Bor'Assan ("Way of the Bow"):** *Bend but never break.*
- **Vir Adahlen ("Way of the Forest"):** *Together we are stronger than the one.*

Sylaise the Hearthkeeper

Sylaise is the goddess of all the domestic arts and sister of Andruil. She taught the elves to use fire and the herbs of the forest, as well as how to weave fabric and work healing magic. Sylaise is invoked before every fire is kindled and thanked whenever one is quenched. Sylaise is also seen as a protector of all who dwell close to a hearth, especially children.

June the Master of Crafts

June is the god of crafting. He taught the elves how to make all needful things, but is especially known for showing them how to fashion bows. June's crafts helped give the elves purpose; before they learned his arts they were incapable of hunting game, and so ate only the nuts and berries they could forage. June is sometimes described as Sylaise's husband and at other times as her brother. He is said to have crafted himself.

Ghilanínain the Mother of Halla

The youngest of the elven deities, Ghilan'nain was once a mortal elven woman and beloved of Andruil. There are a number of different stories involving her betrayal at the hands of an elven hunter, all of which end with her being transformed into a halla, one of the horned stags sacred to the Dalish. As the goddess of halla, Ghilan'nain is invoked when the Dalish must travel swiftly.

Feníharel the Dread Wolf

Fen'Harel is known as the lord of tricksters and bringer of nightmares. In even the oldest tales Fen'Harel is regarded as a dangerous figure, a god beholden to both the Creators and the Forgotten Ones, part of both camps and neither. He is said to have never been particularly fond of the elves, interacting with them for sport and imparting dark wisdom as the whim took him. The Dalish do not worship Fen'Harel so much as attempt to appease him.

Dalish legend has it that not long before the fall of Arlathan, Fen'Harel carried out his greatest intrigue. The Creator gods had long been at war with the Forgotten Ones. Fen'Harel swore to the Creators that he could negotiate a truce if they withdrew to the heavens for a time, even as he vowed to the Forgotten Ones that he could defeat the Creators if they kept to the abyss for a while. Having convinced both sides, Fen'Harel sealed the ways shut behind them all and was left alone with the world all to himself. The Dalish refer to this scheme as the Betrayal, and it serves as the only explanation they have for their abandonment by their gods.

The Forgotten Ones

Supposedly, no Dalish can remember these dread beings. All their tales are thought to have been lost in the centuries since the fall of Arlathan, even though a few powerful spirits in the Fade still whisper their names: Geldauran, Daern'thal, and Anaris, the gods of terror, malevolence, spite and disease. Some fear that these dark beings are less forgotten than most believe, and that a terrible few have strayed deeply into darkness in their quest for vengeance against the shemlen. If these fears are true and secretive cults do indeed hide among the elves, then such lost souls have torn out their hearts and forsaken all that it means to be Dalish in return for the keys to a twisted and terrible strength.

Qunari Beliefs

When the Qunari first came to Thedas they sought not only to conquer new lands, but to spread enlightenment as well. Centuries have passed since their arrival and a truce long since been made with all but Tevinter, but the Qunari have never abandoned their intent to bring their philosophy to all. The Qunari regard their present situation as a period of extended investigation into their potential future foes and converts. Trade gives them a chance to closely study their adversaries, the better to bring about their eventual illumination when conflict resumes.

The Qun

The Qun is the philosophy that guides the Qunari. It is the most important force in their culture, the lens through which they view life itself. It is impossible to overstate its importance; even the name "Qunari" literally means "People of the Qun." Interestingly, from the Qunari point of view, anyone who accepts the Qun becomes "Qunari." Even though others in Thedas may only regard the giant bronze-skinned folk of the north as Qunari, the People of the Qun apply that label differently. (Presumably, those of the bronze-skinned race once had a distinct name for their racial people, as opposed to those who cleave to Qunari beliefs whatever their race, but no one left living in Thedas remembers it today.)

"Qun" refers to both the writings of the Ashkaari Koslun and the philosophy based on it. ("Ashkaari" means "One who seeks," and is the title given to all Qunari philosophers, scientists, and holy persons.) Koslun wrote the Qun so long ago that very little is remembered of him. He may not have even been of the race that others of Thedas call Qunari, but contemporary Qunari regard this as immaterial. What he was is not as important as what he wrote.

> My people don't pick leaders from the strongest, or the smartest, or even the most talented. We pick the ones willing to make the hard decisions... and live with the consequences.
>
> —The Iron Bull

Some Chantry scholars translate "Qun" as "the Way," but the Qunari say that it simultaneously encompasses "not the Way." Practically speaking, the Qun defines the role of everyone and everything in Qunari society, all activities of the religious and secular spheres. Qunari devote their lives to their duty as set down in the Qun, which demands that each individual excel in the role for which they are best equipped. Qunari know which roles they are best equipped for because they are raised communally by the Tamassrans, an order of priestess-teachers who monitor and evaluate their charges, and decide which roles they must undertake.

The Qunari are fanatically devoted to maintaining the Qun's dictates in their society. The Ben-Hassrath are those charged with enforcing Qunari religious law, and are infamously brutal with those who transgress. Qunari who disavow the Qun are exiled, becoming "Tal-Vashoth."

Qunari find the idea of invisible, omnipotent gods ridiculous. They acknowledge the existence of demons and powerful spirits, but consider their veneration inane. They tolerate the hallowing of gods, spirits, and demons in recently conquered lands because they believe that these practices will inevitably die out once these populations embrace the Qun and become Qunari.

The Rivaini

The dark-skinned Rivaini were converted to the Qun by force in centuries past, but because its philosophies are not at great odds with their native beliefs, both coexist in contemporary Rivain. By contrast, the Chant of Light has never been widely adopted among the Rivaini. This is largely because the Rivaini tribal religion revolves around the consultation of wise-women, seers, and hedge mages who allow themselves to be possessed by spirits in order to prophesy and work magic, a mélange of practices that are all anathema to the Chantry. Little else is known about this remote group's religious practices in the central nations of Thedas.

Wars of Thedas

Darkspawn and Archdemons may be the most all-consuming threats in Thedosian history, but in the long years between Blights the nations of Thedas are rarely at peace. Ancient rivalries still stand and slights that are centuries old might cause conflicts to erupt in the modern day. The impulse to conquer and expand—or to throw off a tyrant's control—can spur a people to fight and an army to march in retaliation. Here are just a few examples of reasons why the people of Thedas escalate from dialogue to duels, from words to war, even without a bloodthirsty army of infected monsters rising to conquer the world.

The Avvar

The Avvar, like the Chasind wilders, were once part of the Alamarri tribes that first settled in Ferelden. While the bulk of the Alamarri made their homes in the land's rugged valleys, a civil war within the tribe caused a large faction to split off, settle high within the Frostback Mountains and become the Avvar. When the lowland tribes united into the banns that would become Ferelden, the Avvar refused to join. Kings and queens were not part of their way of life, and so they kept their camps in the Frostbacks and left their former kin to grow soft and complacent in the valleys below.

To this day the Avvar still send raids into Ferelden. Winters are especially harsh in the Frostbacks, and when food and game are scarce, they venture down into the towns to take what they need from their ancient enemies' descendants. The raids are quick strikes, in and gone like a storm, so town militias seldom have time to retaliate. Battling the Avvar is like fighting the weather, they say.

Highever's Secession

During the Towers Age, legend holds that Bann Conobar Elstan married the beautiful Flemeth of Highever. Their marriage was a happy one, until a traveling poet named Osen came to court and stole Flemeth's heart. The lovers fled Highever and sought refuge in the Korcari Wilds. For a time, the Chasind wilders gave them shelter and hid them from Conobar's forces. When word came that the bann's dying desire was to see Flemeth one last time, they traveled back to Highever to grant him his wish… and walked right into Conobar's trap. Osen was slain, Flemeth imprisoned.

In her grief and rage, Flemeth called to spirits for help. A spirit of Vengeance answered her plea, took possession of her body and, with it, slew Conobar and his men.

Flemeth returned once more to the Wilds, where she seduced Chasind men and bore daughters who became known as the Witches of the Wilds. These women led raids into Alamarri lands for a century, until the hero Cormac, aided by the Alamarri tribes and a contingent of Orzammar dwarves, captured the witches and burned them all to ashes.

After Flemeth fled Highever, Conobar's Captain of the Guard Sarin Cousland—one of the few survivors—named himself Bann of Highever and declared the territory's secession from Amaranthine. For thirty years, Cousland and his men fought for independence. In the end, their persistence won out, and Highever was not only on its own, it had gained a significant chunk of land that formerly belonged to Amaranthine. Couslands rule there still. Their bloody history and savage battles have not been forgotten.

Calenhad & the Unification of Ferelden

While Ferelden has long been governed by its banns, arls, and teyrns, it has not always had a monarchy. Until Calenhad Theirin's rise in the first half of the Exalted Age, the bannorn ruled themselves independently, settling occasional disputes with warfare rather than bringing the issues to a higher authority.

Calenhad proved himself to be a man of honor and, backed by the powerful Arl Myrddin, rose from being a commoner's son to one of the most respected knights in history. With the arl's men and resources to support him, the so-called Silver Knight led his army across Ferelden with the intention of uniting the land. Perhaps reminiscent of—or inspired by?—Emperor Drakon I of Orlais before him, it wasn't only Calenhad's superior strength on the battlefield that won the bannorn to his side, but also his devotion to Andraste and the Maker.

In 5:42 Exalted, with help of the Circle of Magi and the Ash Warriors, Calenhad defeated the last true holdout against his rule: Teyrn Simeon of Denerim. The Landsmeet crowned Calenhad king within the year, and for a time, peace reigned. Calenhad and his queen, Arl Myrddin's daughter Mairyn, traveled their kingdom expanding the Chantry's influence and reopening long-neglected trade routes with other nations.

The peace did not hold forever. Calenhad's closest friend, Lady Shayna, was convinced by a witch to seduce the king—whom she long loved in secret—with a potion. She succeeded.

While the Avvar and the other tribes were often at war, they came together in peace on occasion as well, though these fragile truces rarely lasted long. It was during a feast between the Alamarri and Avvar that one of their most famous conflicts arose.

Luthias Dwarfson earned the respect of the Alamarri at an early age. Born smaller than the other children, he had to prove his worth on the battlefield, which he did handily. He later garnered fame for living among an outpost of dwarves of Orzammar for a time, even returning with the dwarven king's daughter Scaea as his bride. Soon enough, he became the chieftain of his people.

At a feast between tribes, Morrighan'nan, head of the Avvar, found herself quite taken by Luthias. To the Avvar, nothing is permanent, not even marriage. Thus, Morrighan'nan thought nothing of setting her sights on Luthias and seducing him.

The dwarves, however, marry for life. When Scaea learned of her husband's betrayal, she returned to Orzammar. Morrighan'nan saw an opportunity and offered her own hand to Luthias. His refusal was a terrible insult to the beautiful chieftain and the rebuff sparked a war that would last more than a decade.

Years later, at the Battle of Red Falls, a young warrior of great ferocity and prowess proved to be a near-fatal match for Luthias. The boy and Luthias battled into the night, yet the chieftain prevailed in the end, slaying the boy. Morrighan'nan then revealed him to be Luthias' son, born of their affair. This revelation turned the tide of battle against Luthias, and he suffered the first of many losses at Morrighan'nan's hand.

When they met for their final confrontation in the Frostback foothills nearly fifteen years after the conflict began, Luthias finally defeated his rival's armies. However, Morrighan'nan landed a deadly blow of her own despite the enchanted armor Scaea had gifted to Luthias the night before the battle, out of her lingering love.

Upon discovering their betrayal, the queen fled to her father's arling and Ferelden found itself on the brink of civil war once more. Tensions escalated, culminating when Calenhad killed Myrddin in an honor duel. The fight was won fairly but the banns no longer trusted their king. Calenhad saw no other choice: He visited Mairyn one last time and named their unborn son his heir.

Then Calenhad disappeared.

With the king missing and Myrddin dead, Mairyn ruled until her son Weylan came of age. After his rule, the line of Theirin rulers was unbroken to Fereldan eyes until 9:30 Dragon, when King Cailan Theirin died without leaving an heir.

The Qunari Wars

The First Qunari War was fought on the island of Par Vollen. However, the invasion was so lightning-quick and the resistance so half-hearted, it is hardly fair to call it a war. Over the century and a half between the Qunari's first appearance and the signing of the Llomerryn Accords, disparate forces from across Thedas joined together to force the invaders back. Magi from the Circles called down fire and lightning on the Qunari lines. Troops from Nevarra fought alongside chevaliers from Orlais. Armies from both the Imperial and Andrastian Chantries charged together against the giants' legions.

The Qunari had quite a formidable navy as well and battles were waged at sea by an unlikely set of allies. Pirates who set sail from neutral Llomerryn had for years preyed upon ships from Orlais and the Free Marches. Now they found their services needed by the very nations whose holds they once robbed.

Rather than be defeated by the Qunari, the previously unaffiliated bands of pirates came together as the *Felicisima Armada*—more commonly known today as the Raiders of the Waking Sea. Their nimble ships picked away at the massive Qunari fleet, intercepting supplies and harassing the navy of invading giants with quick wits and clever tactics.

When the Llomerryn Accords were signed, the Raiders decided to continue their association, much to the dismay of the legal fleets and trading ships of Thedas. The pirates are active today, harrying the eastern coastlines of Thedas. Encounters with the Raiders are more often high-seas robberies than outright battles, but ships do sometimes seek out bold pirates to thin their forces… or seek vengeance.

Nevarra vs. Orlais

While Nevarra and Orlais are often in opposition, neither has an interest in proper warfare with the other. Yet skirmishes in outlying borderlands may keep their armies sharp. (If outright war is to break out between these two proud nations, it may have to be orchestrated by the Player Characters.) Nevarra has expanded swiftly over the last century, along Orlais' border, making the Orlesian empire nervous enough to post chevaliers along the borderlands. In recent years, it has become a challenge for some travelers to pass between the nations without being spied, harassed, or turned away.

After the Third Blight, when Orlais and the Tevinter Imperium were grabbing up land as quickly as they could, the Orlesian Empire claimed Nevarra as its own. The Orlesians had saved the nation from being overrun by the darkspawn, but Nevarra was devoted to its independence. It took forty years, but Nevarra finally threw off Orlesian control in 3:65 Towers.

During the Exalted Age, the Orlesian Empire attempted to take Nevarra once more. King Tylus led his armies against the chevaliers' ranks again and again, never letting Orlais capture even a solid mile of Nevarran territory and proving to the Orlesian emperor that Nevarra was a venerable and powerful nation in its own right.

Most recently, in 8:70 Blessed, Nevarra and Orlais clashed over the Blasted Hills, a rich mining area situated between the two countries' known territories. Nevarra ultimately won control but the Orlesians haven't given up on the region. To this day, Orlesian nobles scheme to spark a local rebellion and compel the common folk to wrest the hills from Nevarra's grasp.

Game Master's Guide

Chapter 8

The Art of Gamemastering

If you are reading this and subsequent chapters that means you have chosen to take on the role of Game Master for your group, or are at least considering doing so. This is an important and challenging job, and also a rewarding one. The Game Master or "GM" is equal parts storyteller, referee, social director, and supporting actor. The Game Master section of this book is designed to help you run, plan, and play *Dragon Age* games as the Game Master, providing rules, advice, and threats to use in your adventures and campaigns. Finally it will provide rules and guidance for using two of the trickiest elements of the world of Thedas: the Blight and the Fade.

The GM's Job

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

While the players are responsible for keeping track of their characters and deciding on their actions, the Game Master is responsible for everything else in the game. A good GM tries to make sure the game runs as smoothly as possible and is enjoyable for all of the players. Many components go into creating a good *Dragon Age* game. The following sections give you all the basics, but experience is the best tool to help you become a better Game Master and get a feel for the job. The essential parts of Game Mastering are:

Adjudicating the Rules

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

Preparing Adventures

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

Running the Game Session

The Game Master is much like the director of a play, coordinating all the various elements of the game to make it happen. So it is the GM's job to set up the adventure, introduce the events to the players, and narrate the story according to their decisions about their characters. It is also the GM's job to

take on the roles of the various supporting and adversarial characters, describing their actions and interactions with the players' characters. All the while the GM must maintain the pace of the game, trying to keep things going at a good clip and moving the story forward.

Planning the Campaign

The Game Master plans out the overall "arc" of a series of adventures, creating what is known as a *campaign* (named for military campaigns, since early roleplaying games were derived from war games). Some GMs plan out a whole campaign in advance, working out a series of adventures taking the PCs from one place and challenge to another, while other GMs have a more open-ended approach, perhaps only planning one or two adventures ahead and seeing how the story unfolds through the players' choices and the characters' actions. There is more information about campaigns in **Chapter 10: Running Campaigns.**

Adjudicating the Rules

The Game Master serves as referee when it comes to applying the rules of *Dragon Age* fairly and equally to help ensure everyone has fun. Part of this job involves knowing the rules: prospective Game Masters should read through both the *Player's Guide* and this book carefully and have a good working knowledge of the game. The rest of the job is applying the rules to events that come up during the game. This may be as simple as knowing which rule applies to a given situation and following it, or as complex as coming up with a new application of the rules on the spot or modifying an existing rule that isn't working for your group and is inhibiting everybody's fun. While the *Player's Guide* contains the core of the game system, there is more that the GM needs to know. **Chapter 2** of this book, **Playing the Game** gives you those rules and advice on how to use them.

Secret Tests

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

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

Game Master Fiat

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

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

Dragon Age in a Nutshell

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

So, when all else fails, if you need to come up with an immediate way of handling a situation and the game rules are not clear, choose the ability and focus that best apply, and call for a test using them. You can base the outcome on the result of the test or compare it against a target number, using the **Basic Test Difficulty** table (see page 213), to give you an idea. Then just continue on with the game.

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

Creating Adventures

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

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

Defining the Challenge

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

The threat in a *Dragon Age* adventure is often a villain with a scheme the heroes must thwart. It can also be a non-player character with an agenda the characters can aid, such as protecting a border region, clearing a notorious group of bandits from the forest, or arranging an alliance through marriage. The land of Thedas has plenty of inspiration for adventures, and you'll find many suitable villains in **Chapter 12: Adversaries**.

Outlining the Plot

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

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

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

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

Subplots

As you gain experience as a GM, you may want to weave in subplots to your campaign. They can be related or unrelated to the adventure and they serve to mix things up and keep the players guessing. Subplots are also a great way to use the goals and ties of the PCs and you should keep your eye out for opportunities to do so. Let's say a goal of one of the PCs is to find their missing sister. When investigating the bandit menace, they discovers that their sister is one of these outlaws. Worse yet, she has embraced the bandit life and does not want to give it up. Now the group as a whole must deal with the bandits, but that player must try to figure out what to do about their sister. This makes the story more complicated and has the potential for great drama.

Encounters

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

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

Then decide if the encounter is primarily about combat, exploration, or roleplaying, and note this accordingly. Try to set up a good mix of the three types of encounters, since they provide a variety of challenges and styles of play to keep all of the players involved in the game. More advice on the mechanical elements of encounter design is found in **Chapter 9: GMing the Rules.**

The Grand Finale

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

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

For example, perhaps the party is dealing with a darkspawn about to be unleashed from a nearby ruin. They have dealt with most of the creature's cult of minions and are ready to finish off the evil mage who is trying to free the monster. Along the way, they have learned the darkspawn has a weakness: a particular spot where its otherwise near-impenetrable armor does not protect it. In other words, the creature is vulnerable to the Pierce Armor stunt, which ignores *all* of its armor, rather than halving it! If the heroes exploit this information, it makes the fight against the creature that much easier. Note, however, they should still have a chance even without this knowledge, since you cannot count on them learning it; the players might miss a vital clue along the way, and you don't want your adventure spoiled because of it.

The Wrap-Up

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

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

Running a Game Session

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

The Play Environment

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

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

Choosing a Play Space

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

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

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

Taking a Break

If a game session is going badly no matter what you try, it may be time to step back from the game for a bit. In the short term, a game session can break for everyone to stretch, get a drink, or even go get something to eat. Much like changing

the focus within the game, getting everyone's attention off the game entirely can shake things up and allow a fresh start later on. The length of the break should be carefully considered—doing something that takes too long may result in the group not wanting to go back to playing the game with just a little time left.

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

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

Information Management

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

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

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

Vigilance saves you a lot of headaches later on. If possible, keep a notebook open at each game session. Whenever anything significant happens, make a quick note about it. Don't describe the whole event—just jot down who, where, and what in the simplest terms. Try to note both the real world date and the game world date. Doing so acts as a reminder when you update your bookkeeping after the game. It also reminds you what has occurred in the past, which is especially helpful if your campaign lasts a while. Being able to look back and see what date a group met a pregnant princess is great when you're trying to decide if she has a child yet when the characters return for another visit.

Quick Reference Sheet

As Game Master, you have to reference a lot of information about different characters during play: Defense values, Health values, ability modifiers, and so forth. Rather than shuffling through papers or flipping pages in a book, it's a good idea to compile a quick reference sheet with all the essential information you need. The sheet lists characters and creatures, their combat values, and other essential scores, allowing you to see any of them with a glance. Below you'll find an example Quick Refernce sheet, filled out with the statistics of a skeleton. Photocopyable Quick Reference sheets can be found on page 438, and downloadable ones can be found at **www.greenronin.com/dragon_age**.

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

Name	Skeleton	Health
Class/Level	Rage demon	17

Communication	-2	
Constitution	2	stamina
Cunning	-2	
Dexterity	2	
Magic	1	
Perception	0	
Strength	3	claws
Willpower	2	

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
2-hand spear	+3	2d6+3
claws	+5	1d6+5

Speed	Defense	Armor
10	12	0

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

Equipment 2-hand spear

Combat Cards

An important piece of information to keep track of during play is initiative order. Prepare a 3" x 5" index card for each character, including NPCs. When a combat begins, write the current initiative for each character on the upper right hand corner of the card (ideally in pencil) and place the cards in initiative order. Then simply start with the character on top of the stack. When that turn is done, flip to the next card, cycling through the cards until you reach the end of the round. This can be more effective than just listing the initiative order on a sheet of paper, since you can change the order, if need be.

Combat cards are also a good place to put basic character information, since you usually use this information when

that character's turn comes up. Defensive information, such as Defense and Health, should be kept on the separate quick reference sheet, since it's normally used when other characters or monsters act, and not shuffling through the index cards looking for a character's Defense is best. Below you'll find an example Combat Card, filled out with the statistics of a level 1 rogue named Locke. Photocopyable Combat Cards can be found on page 438, and downloadable ones can be found at **www.greenronin.com/dragon_age**.

NAME	Locke	SPEED	INITIATIVE
CLASS/LEVEL	Rogue 1	16	11

COMMUNICATION	CONSTITUTION	CUNNING	DEXTERITY
2	-1	0	4
MAGIC	**PERCEPTION**	**STRENGTH**	**WILLPOWER**
1	4	1	0

SPELL CARDS

Another variant kind of card can be used to keep track of spell durations. If a character casts a spell that lasts 5 rounds, you can give the spell its own index card. The card lists the name of the spell and its duration, and every time it comes up, mark off one round. Not only does this keep spells from being forgotten, it allows the spell's duration to end on the initiative it was cast even if the caster has changed initiative. hotocopyable Spell Cards can be found on page 438, and downloadable ones can be found at **www.greenronin.com/dragon_age**.

CAMPAIGN JOURNAL

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

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

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

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

GAME NOTES

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

WHITE BOARDS

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

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

Miniatures, Maps, & Props

Roleplaying games are games of the imagination, so a "game board" is never required to play. However, having a map of a particular scene laid out, and counters or miniature figures to move around on the map, can help players to visualize what is going on and track information like the relative positions of different characters, the placement of obstacles, and so forth. You'll find more information about using miniatures and other accessories in the *Player's Guide,* in the **Using Battle Maps** sidebar on page 52 of **Chapter 2.**

Styles of Play

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

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

Game Mastering Styles

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

Adversarial

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

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

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

and therefore the feeling of accomplishment is increased if the players succeed.

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

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

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

Benevolent

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

Done well, this style of Game Mastering produces fun and flexible games in which everyone knows both how the world works (as there are consistent rules) and that the rules won't be used to enforce an unreasonable outcome. Benevolent GMs often fall prey to assumption clashes (see page 208) if they bend a rule once but refuse to do so under different circumstances. These GMs also often give their players too much free reign, allowing a game to devolve into dead-end quests and aimless wandering. A skilled Benevolent GM can provides the PCs with both freedom to make choices and a certain amount of structure, however.

Director

A director tries to get players to act as they feels is appropriate to given situations and storylines. Most adventures have a "right" course of action, and players are rewarded if they find it, but punished if they do not. This style of play often puts the needs of the story told ahead of the rules of the game.

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

On the negative side, a director can easily steamroll players who are just trying to have some fun. A GM's biases become much more obvious in a director and can impact reactions to player character actions. Bad directors penalize players who take reasonable actions that simply don't fit into the GM's plans, or otherwise attempt to "railroad" the group into following a particular path, whether they want to or not. If you are concerned you are pushing your players too much, talk to them about the campaign. A frank conversation can help you strike the right balance.

Knowing Your Group

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

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

Problem Player Types

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

n-slashers. You may need to try different solutions before finding one that works with a particular player.

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

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

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

Griefer

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

Hack-n-Slasher

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

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

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

Hanger-On

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

You may occasionally try to get a hanger-on more deeply involved with the game, but if such efforts regularly fail, there's no point in trying harder. Check in with a hanger-on to be sure they're not actually a wallflower who'd *like* to be more involved; otherwise, hangers-on are beyond your ability to get involved. Roleplaying games aren't for everyone, and some people are willing to play for convenience but just won't get deeply involved. There's no need to spend the time and energy trying to change your campaign to draw in these players if they just aren't interested.

Junior Thespian

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

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

Motivator

The motivator just wants to get things done. *Now.* As long as the PCs are on track to accomplishing some goal, the motivator is happy, but side-treks, down time, and goofing off all annoy him. Some motivators restrict themselves to keeping the PCs on track, while others want the players and GM to stay

focused on the game as well. A motivator can be useful when a group strays too far from a game's plot (or gets distracted from gaming in general). If too demanding, however, motivators are often perceived as bossy, clashing with other players.

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

Wallflower

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

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

Rules Lawyer

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

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

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

Other rules lawyers see knowledge of the rules as a way to compete with the GM. By pointing out your mistakes, these players try to score points and control the flow of a campaign. A roleplaying game is a cooperative effort, and you must work with players, but as the referee, you have final say on

how the rules work. If a rules lawyer attempts to control how rules are interpreted, take firm actions to establish your authority without being rude or tyrannical.

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

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

Spotlight Hog

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

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

Assumption Clashes

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

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

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

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

Free Wheeling & Improvisation

It is said that no battle plan survives contact with the enemy and, in roleplaying games, no adventure plan truly survives contact with the players. No matter how much careful planning and preparation you do, your players will *always* surprise you by doing something completely unexpected, or finding the one loophole in your logic that you overlooked. When this happens (and it *will* happen, eventually) the most important thing is not to worry. Your adventure is *not* ruined and your campaign can still go forward, even if it is not quite in the direction you originally planned.

The first thing to remember about improvisation is not to hold too tightly to your plans. Planning and preparation are important, but, contrary to what some might think, the Game Master does *not* control the story in a roleplaying game. The players do. The GM can help to direct the players, giving them hints, clues, and nudges in one direction or another, but it is ultimately the players' decisions that drive things along.

Take the classic "tavern hire" for example: Someone might approach the heroes in a tavern or inn and offer them employment. Obviously, this is an opportunity for the players to have their characters say "yes" and engage in the story… But what if they say "no"? Similarly, if a villain offers a hero their

heart's desire to betray their friends, the classic high-fantasy expectation might be for them to refuse, no matter the cost, but what if they accept? What then?

Keep in mind that you never know for certain which way the players are going to jump, and every decision gives them the opportunity to influence the story. You have only two ways of dealing with this: Either limit the players' decision-making power so much that they might as well be watching or reading the story, rather than participating in it, or learn to roll with what happens and improvise.

The three important things about improvisation are planning, patience, and *not* panicking!

Taking the last first, do not panic if the players do something completely unexpected. While you can try to deflect them with a comment like "Do you *really* want to do that?" it's most often better just to go with the flow and see where it takes you. Don't worry, it's not the end of the world, and given some time you'll get the adventure headed in the right direction again.

That makes patience important to improvising. Sometimes players insist on taking side-trips and investigating things that are of no importance to the adventure, but they have made them important by virtue of focusing on them. The best thing to do is to be patient and let events play out. If you can fit an element of your story into the players' new interest, by all means, do so. Otherwise, just enjoy the roleplaying or exploration scene the players have helped create. For example, if the characters are visiting a fair, and you want them at the archery tournament, but they've instead fixated on the Dalish fortuneteller's wagon, go with it and play out the scene with the fortuneteller. Perhaps she can drop some portentous hints. The scene at the archery tournament can either happen later, or perhaps the characters can hear about what happened there from someone else, if it's not actually vital they be there in person.

Lastly, prior planning (see **Planning and Preparation**) can help make it easier to improvise. If you have quick references and cheat-sheets at hand, you can more easily come up with things on the spur of the moment and adapt your current plans to fit the players' decisions. To use the previous example, if you wanted to have the heroes ambushed at the archery competition, just move the ambush to the Dalish camp: you have the game info on the ambushers all prepared, and you can come up with some fun details for the camp on the fly. Maybe the fortuneteller calls out a warning to the heroes just before the ambush occurs!

Being willing to improvise opens you—and your game—up to one of the best elements of tabletop gaming: the creative collaboration that happens when a group of players gathers around a table to build and play out a story together, rather than just listening passively to a story that's already written. When the game gives you an opportunity to use your imagination, go with it!

Game Master Dos and Don'ts

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

Do...

...Plan Ahead

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

...Describe Things

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

...Challenge Your Players

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

...Be Flexible

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

...Focus On the Characters

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

Don't...

...Make It All About Fighting

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

...Argue

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

...Be Mean

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

...Be Boring

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

...Worry About It

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

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

Chapter 9

GMing the Rules

Now that you've had a general overview of the GM's role in the game, it's time to give you some practical advice on using the rules as a Game Master. For starters, you should read the *Player's Guide*. Most of the core rules of the game can be found there; you should pay particular attention to **Chapter 2: Playing the Game.** This chapter is focused on providing GMs with advice and guidance to use the rules to enable and enhance their adventures and campaigns.

For newer GMs, note this chapter covers everything from running mass battles to basic encounter design, which can be a bit overwhelming when starting out. Don't hesitate to introduce the concepts and optional rules here gradually into your games.

Mastering Ability Tests

As **Chapter 2: Playing the Game** makes clear, ability tests are the heart of the *Dragon Age* system. Most dice rolls during play are ability tests, so one of your main tasks as GM is to adjudicate them fairly while keeping the adventure moving along. Rather than provide you with huge lists of approved actions and modifiers for every occasion, *Dragon Age* gives you a simple but robust system that you can use as a tool when running the game. This means you'll be making judgments frequently, but the system is flexible enough to handle most situations easily.

You'll find a general overview of ability tests in **Chapter 2**, but let's review the basics here. An ability test uses three six-sided dice (3d6). Two of the dice should be one color and the third a different color. The off-color die is known as the Dragon Die.

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

Test result = 3d6 + ability + focus

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

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

- Which abilities and focuses apply?
- How much time does the test take?
- What are the stakes?
- What are the consequences of failure?

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

Important Things About Ability Tests

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

Which Abilities & Focuses Apply?

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

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

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

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

How Much Time Does the Test Take?

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

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

What Are the Stakes?

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

What Are the Consequences of Failure?

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

You may also have to decide if characters can try failed actions again. You can say yes, yes with conditions, or no to this depending on the circumstances. If a character has time to spend and the action seems reasonable, another attempt can be made. You may say yes, but require a new approach or assistance. Or you can rule that the task is too daunting and the character cannot try again. As always, you should try

to be fair, but you don't want the game to bog down into an endless series of re-rolls.

Basic Tests

Basic tests are the easiest to resolve because a character is testing against a fixed target number. Unless a character is actively opposed by another character or monster, you should use basic tests. What's nice about them from the GM's point of view is that they require only one judgment and that's an overall assessment of the action's difficulty. The **Basic Test Difficulty** table provides baseline benchmarks for test difficulty. You'll probably consult this more than any other table in the game.

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

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

Opposed Tests

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

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

Advanced Tests

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

Basic Test Difficulty

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

Advanced Tests

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

Example

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

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

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

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

Roleplaying & the Rules

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

A central issue is the social skills of the player vs. the social skills of the character. When is it appropriate to roleplay an interaction out and when is it appropriate to roll dice? And what if you do some roleplaying but also roll dice? What if a character has a lousy Communication ability but the player is glib? Or what if the player who's tongue-tied in real life wants to play a character who's a great orator? These issues don't come up during combat or exploration encounters for the most part. No one expects a player to actually be able to fight or decipher an ancient script. People are content to let dice rolling handle such things. When it comes to roleplaying, however, players can talk and interact. They are doing so in character but it is the players using their social skills to roleplay.

Let's imagine a scene in which the PCs have to convince a local bann (a Fereldan nobleman) that a man was wrongly imprisoned. There are four ways you can run this scene.

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

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

Combat Considerations

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

Major & Minor NPCs

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

- In combat encounters, you should roll initiative for each major NPC separately. Minor NPCs you can break up into groups by type and then make an initiative roll for each group. If you had three genlocks and four fanged skeletons in a combat, for example, you'd roll initiative once for the genlocks and once of the fanged skeletons. When initiative for the genlocks came up, all three of them would take a turn. Each one could take different actions, but they'd all happen on the same initiative. Then when the skeletons' initiative came up, the four of them could take their turns.
- You may, at your option, apply the rules for dying PCs to major NPCs. If you do, a major NPC dropped to 0 Health will die after a number of rounds equal to **2 + Constitution** unless healing is received. A dying character can talk but cannot take any other actions. The NPC dies at the start of their turn on the final round, so their allies have until then to save them.

Surprise

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

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

- **Test or No Test:** Next, you must decide if one or both sides get a chance to detect the other before contact is made. In some situations, you may decide there is no test. In that case, one side automatically gets the drop on the other. If you decide there is a chance of detection, you can have characters make Perception tests with focuses as appropriate (though Seeing is most common). This can be a basic test, in which case you assign a TN based on circumstances, or you can make it an opposed test of Perception vs. **Dexterity (Stealth)**. It is possible that some characters will be surprised while others on the same side will not.
- **Combat Begins:** Everyone rolls for initiative as action time begins and the combat starts. Any characters that were surprised do not get a turn during the first round of the fight. On the second round, everyone gets to act as normal.

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

Example

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

Morale

In many games combat is an all or nothing affair. Opponents fight until one side or the other is wiped out. War is indeed bloody, but it'd be infinitely more so if it was executed in this way. In truth, most combats end when the morale of one side breaks and its combatants flee. Now in fantasy you will, of course, find monsters who will fight on regardless of circumstances, but most NPCs have some sense of self-preservation. You can simulate this with **Willpower (Morale)** tests when it seems appropriate. Characters will fight on with a successful test or attempt to break off from combat or even surrender on a failed test.

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

- When more than half of the side's combatants are out of the fight (dead or incapacitated).
- When the side's leader or champion is defeated.
- When fighting on will mean being trapped or surrounded.

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

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

Example

The rogue Gerhard, the warrior Jannelle, and the mage Lorrahn are fighting off an ambush by Avvar. After four rounds of combat they have killed four of the attackers, leaving a leader (a major NPC) and two Avvar warriors (a group of minor NPCs). The GM decides it's a good time to test morale, since over half of the attackers are down. He rolls once for the leader and once for the Avvar warriors, getting a 14 and an 8 respectively. The GM set the TN at 11, so the leader makes a successful test but the warriors fail. The next time the warriors take a turn, they will attempt to flee. The Avvar leader now has a tough decision to make: Should he fight on alone, or follow his men?

Attack Rolls & Circumstance

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

Attack Roll Modifiers

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

Flying Combatants

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

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

Minor Actions

Circle

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

Fly

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

Major Actions

Dive

A character that was circling or flying high the previous round can dive this round. A character that was circling can move a number of yards equal to their Flying Speed and make a melee attack against an opponent on the ground. A character that was flying high can move a number of yards equal to double their Flying Speed and make a melee attack

against an opponent circling or on the ground. In either case the attack can take place at any point in the character's movement and receives +1 bonus on the melee attack roll and damage roll. At the end of the dive the character is roughly 3 yards off the ground, just as if they had taken the fly action.

FLY HIGH

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

EXAMPLE

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

HANDLING HAZARDS

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

Rather than come up with a raft of special rules for each individual type, *Dragon Age* handles hazards with a simple system that can be used to simulate everything from pit traps to drowning. Published adventures will define hazards for you, but when you need to adjudicate them on your own, you must answer the following questions:

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

Things to Remember About Hazards

- They may sometimes be avoided with appropriate ability tests.
- Determine damage using the **Hazard Category** table.
- Ability tests may allow characters to mitigate the damage. A successful test usually means half damage (rounded down).
- Some hazards have special effects.
- Some hazards are one-offs, but others reoccur.

What is the Nature of the Hazard?

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

Can it be Avoided?

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

How Dangerous is the Hazard?

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

Hazard Category

Category	Damage
Minor Hazard	1d6
Moderate Hazard	2d6
Major Hazard	3d6
Arduous Hazard	4d6
Harrowing Hazard	5d6
Murderous Hazard	6d6

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

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

Does it Have any Special Effects?

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

How Long does it Last?

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

Putting It All Together

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

The Burning Inn

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

Pit Trap

A section of corridor falls away when enough pressure is put upon it, dropping the unlucky victim into a pit 15 feet deep. If

the triggering character makes a successful **TN 12 Perception (Touching)** test, they feel the floor starting to give away and can step back before falling in. Otherwise, they fall and take 2d6 penetrating damage (a moderate hazard). A successful **TN 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test halves the damage.

The Rushing River

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

Encounter Design

Campaigns are made of adventures, and adventures are made of encounters. Without encounters, there is no foundation to build adventures, or campaigns. Given that, properly designed encounters are important. The sections that follow explore each of these encounter types in greater detail with the goal of giving you a broader perspective and a more fully-stocked toolkit for creating encounters of all three types. These sections also suggest tips and tricks that you can employ during your game sessions to keep all three types lively and challenging, and to modulate the emotional tone of the adventure from encounter to encounter—and even round to round or challenge to challenge—to keep everyone's excitement level right where you want it. Before we address the encounter types, though, here are general encounter tips discussing goals and obstacles for all kinds of encounters, as well as the moral dimension of creating and running encounters.

General Encounter Tips

For all types of encounters, the first and most important thing to determine or understand is what the heroes' goal in the encounter is. What is it that the heroes are trying to accomplish?

Example Goals

- Gain access to a critical location.
- Secure the cooperation of an important noble who has tools the PCs need.
- Determine where the individual the PCs seek was last seen.
- Prevent a mortal enemy from continuing to bedevil the PCs.
- Talk an enemy's allies out of opposing the PCs.
- Ferret out the secrets contained within a library of ancient lore.
- Knowing the goal, you can determine what stands in the heroes' way—their obstacle(s). Sometimes, the goal suggests or outright determines the obstacles.

Example Obstacles

- A band of hurlocks and genlocks who're standing guard at the critical location.
- The functionaries and gatekeepers who defend with great zeal their noble master's time and attention.
- The rain that has fallen for the past week, obscuring the tracks of all who have traveled through the region.
- The physical might—not to mention tenacious character—of the heroes' mortal enemy.
- The long-standing alliance between the heroes' enemies and the neutral party they want to leave them alone.
- The disorganization and dilapidated physical condition of the ancient library, and the array of strange and foreign alphabets in which its information has been recorded.

Sometimes you'll have an idea for an encounter's obstacles before you understand or write down, in concrete terms, the encounter's goals. This can be fine in some cases, but it can also be a danger sign that you're creating a problem without a purpose. Such encounters go wrong by having intricate tasks that you intend for the PCs to perform—enemies to fight, NPCs to parlay with, areas to investigate—but that lack any compelling reason for why they must.

For example, you might have an encounter in mind where the heroes will fight bandits while both sides race through a treacherous ravine on horseback. Such a combat might indeed be exciting. But unless either the heroes or the bandits are compelled to chase the other group to achieve their aims why would they do it? As a roleplaying example, you might want to include in your campaign a fascinating NPC whose backstory is a triumph of determination over misfortune, and who talks with a really awesome accent you've been perfecting for weeks. But if convincing that NPC to do something (or refrain from doing something) isn't the key to the Player Characters' overall goals why would they talk to that NPC in the first place? As an exploration example, you might map out in loving detail the ruins of an ancient fortress and include in your notes all manner of trivialities regarding its various regions and what they have been used for over the course of the ages. But if the heroes don't need to search the whole place or understand your lovingly crafted history in order to succeed in some critical ambition, you may have had fun but you've also created a lot of backstory that the players will never uncover.

To avoid these problems, ask yourself—and be brutally honest—whether the heroes could achieve the goals of the adventure just as easily by ignoring the encounter or routing around it in some obvious way. If the heroes could ford the river ten minutes upstream as easily as they could cross at the king's bridge then the corrupt toll-takers at the bridge aren't much of an obstacle. If the PCs could buy a mule from the next stall as easily as from the one run by the obstreperous merchant then the difficulties posed by the vendor in question are more or less irrelevant.

To solve the problems of encounters whose challenges are divorced from the heroes' goals figure out how you can orient the intermediate steps that lead to the goal of the adventure so that the obstacles you have in mind absolutely must be overcome in order for the heroes to get there. Perhaps the

river can't be forded for leagues on either side of the road, or perhaps the toll-takers have allies among the local populace who alert them whenever they see travelers trying to avoid paying the toll. Maybe the difficult merchant's counterparts only have unsuitable animals for sale or all of the local dealers are in collusion to fix prices.

Sometimes tying the obstacles you have in mind to relevant goals is simple and sometimes it's impossible. In the latter case its best to realize the problem as soon as possible and simply jettison the encounter from your plans.

When locking down an encounter's goals, keep this in mind: While you need to understand the PCs' goals, the players don't necessarily need to understand them from the outset of the scene. Although it must eventually become clear to the players that they're not going to be able to get to their destination without either paying the toll or convincing the toll-men to let them pass without paying, it's perfectly fine for the heroes to learn this only as they explore other options and see them closed off one by one. In fact, you can make many encounters more interesting by intentionally obscuring the heroes' goals or even actively misdirecting the players at the beginning of the encounter and then allowing them to perceive what they must actually do only as the encounter unfolds.

Moral Choices

Part of the *Dragon Age* RPG's dark approach to fantasy revolves around presenting the Player Characters with moral choices. Moral choices can be incorporated into any kind of encounter; they're not exclusive to combat, roleplaying, or exploration encounters.

For every encounter you create think about how you can make the heroes' decision points grueling by making all of the options hazardous or distasteful or by associating unpleasant outcomes with even the obvious good. Here are some example moral decisions to guide your thinking in the right direction:

- Enemies menace two equally pitiful NPCs. With only enough time to save one of the two victims, which one will the heroes choose?
- In order to secure the assistance of a local crime lord the heroes must commit a crime. Will they agree?
- The only way to entice the spirits who have the information the Player Characters need is to offer them a blood sacrifice. Will the heroes kill an innocent for the knowledge they must have?
- The heroes are attacked by noncombatants under the mental domination of evil forces. Will the PCs go out of their way to avoid killing these accidental fighters?
- To convince a bann of their worth the PCs must publicly repudiate something or someone they hold dear. How far will they go against their deeply held beliefs for the current moment's expediency?
- An ancient scroll is so decayed that reading it will destroy it, but the PCs need a certain piece of information it contains right away. Will they destroy a wealth of knowledge to retrieve but a nugget?

The moral decisions that work best in *Dragon Age* are those that require the players to choose the lesser evil or opt for the good that's encumbered by the least odious side effect. And the key word, here, is choice. As often as you can, prevent the players' dice from telling you whether some evil is overcome or some good achieved. Instead, force the heroes to make an actual decision to go one way or the other.

Combat Encounters

Combat encounters are the most challenging encounters to create in the *Dragon Age* RPG for two reasons. First, combat encounters usually have higher stakes than other types of encounters. The heroes can die! But second, combat is by far the most mechanically complicated aspect of the game and its many moving parts can be difficult to understand at a glance. Of course, both of these factors also contribute to the game's fun. Players rarely have as much fun as when life is on the line, and many players enjoy the mechanical depth of combat and the different strategies that come with it.

When creating combat encounters remember the general rules of encounter creation and always think about the encounter's goals and obstacles. Of the three types of encounters, combat encounters are the types that are most likely to accidentally become de-coupled from goals. Always keep in mind that if the enemy combatants don't stand directly in the way of something the heroes must get or accomplish, the encounter is basically optional.

Introducing obstacles in combat encounters is easy—that'd be the enemy combatants. But don't neglect to create combat encounters that layer in additional challenges. Adding challenges in the landscape of the battle is an obvious option that brings myriad possibilities to the table. The terrain can stand in the way of certain strategies or attacks, or give new life to otherwise marginal tactics. Think three-dimensionally. What possibilities would great heights or dizzying depths bring? Consider the weather and time of day, too. A nighttime fight is different from a daytime brawl. Fighting in the rain makes cobblestones slick and swinging a big metal sword at the top of a mountain in a lightning storm might prove exceptionally risky.

Fights also become more interesting if there are unusual dangers (or opportunities!) inherent to particular strategies. What about a fight that must be over before the enemies' overwhelming reinforcements arrive, a fight that must be fought in silence lest the sleeping dragon awake, a fight that must be won without inflicting casualties on the enemy, or a fight against enemies whose carcasses have value as long as they remain intact?

Failure to offer and vary complications in combat encounters will lead, over the course of a campaign, to a boring sameness. The players will come to feel that they're fighting the same enemy—albeit with somewhat varying statistics—over and over again.

Combat Math

Goals and obstacles aside, it's also important to be able to understand the mechanical impact of a combat encounter on the heroes when you're crafting the statistics for the opposition.

There are three mechanical axes you need to consider: the frequency with which you expect a given combatant to land their blows, the amount of damage you expect a given combatant to dish out on a hit, and the amount of damage a given combatant can soak up before dying.

The critical benchmark for the frequency of hitting is easy to understand. A combatant will land blows against an enemy roughly half the time when their basic attack bonus + 10 is within a point or so of their opponent's Defense score. As the gulf between these two factors increases, hits become more and more (or less and less) likely. It's important to note that the bell curve of 3d6 results makes large differences between the attack side of the equation and the Defense side of the equation increasingly overwhelming. That is, a difference of six points is more than twice as bad as a difference of three points.

The amount of damage you can expect a combatant to dish out on a hit is easy to calculate given an average d6 result of 3.5. Simply do the math to calculate the average damage of a particular kind of attack. (Obviously, this is based on the combatant's weapon rather than their attack bonus.) It can be helpful to create an average of these averages across the party of heroes. Keep in mind, though, that the more factors you average, the more detail you lose in the final calculation.

The amount of damage a combatant is likely to dish out per hit is most useful when considered as a percentage of the enemy's capacity to absorb damage. Although it may be impressive for a warrior to strike their enemy for a mighty 20 points of damage, it's going to take them a long time to cleave their way through a foe who has 200 Health.

To factor in both of these elements divide a combatant's Health by the average damage their foe will dish out on a successful attack. This gives you the average number of rounds the former can withstand successful attacks from the latter. In the example above, it's ten rounds (200 Health ÷ 20 points of damage per hit). To make this a truly useful calculation, though, you also need to factor in the likelihood of successful attacks. For evenly-matched combatants—that is, for combatants whose attack and Defense, as describe above, are close to each other—you can multiply the average number of rounds by two in order to learn how many rounds of combat will be fought, on average, before the defender is vanquished.

Unless you're a real glutton for math (or a real spreadsheet wiz) you probably won't have a lot of fun making all of these calculations for every PC, every enemy, and every combination among the two sides for every combat encounter you're planning. And that's fine. It's much more important that you understand the general outlines of which statistics are being compared in combat so you can make quick estimates, assign antagonist stats that are in the right ballpark, and move on.

The wildcard that can throw a monkey wrench into the general combat calculations is Armor Rating. Because it subtracts damage from each and every successful hit its effectiveness over the course of a long fight can be monumental. Heavily armored foes can be nearly impossible to dispatch, and heavily armored PCs likewise. This factor isn't particularly easy to reflect in simple calculations. Rather, it's something to remain aware of in both the PCs and their enemies, and to take into account as Armor Ratings creep into the range where they approach or exceed half of any given

combatant's average damage-per-hit. You can make any combat encounter significantly more difficult by jacking up the antagonists' Armor Ratings and you can allow the PCs to become significantly more effective in combat by making good armor broadly available in your campaign.

As a starting point for creating a given combat encounter, assume enemy combatants that are roughly identical to the PCs in terms of their attack scores, Defense scores, Health, Armor Ratings, and strength of numbers. The heroes will win such a fight roughly half the time. Now, you probably want the heroes to prevail more often than that. (Otherwise the players will wind up having to create new characters, on average, after every other encounter!) So, it's good to start by knocking a few points off the antagonists' attack scores, and knocking one or two times the PCs' average damage-per-hit off each one's Health. This skews the fight solidly in the heroes' favor and provides a baseline from which to customize the fight.

Next, start taking into account the kind of fight you want for this particular encounter. If you're looking for a flavor of few-against-many, knock another point or two off each enemy's attack score, reduce their Health by another one or two times the average PC's damage-per-hit, and double the quantity of enemies. On the other hand, if you're interested in a fight where one mighty enemy stands alone against the heroes, jack the opponent's attack scores up by as much as three to five points above the average PC's attack score, double or triple their Health, and consider giving them an Armor Rating that will eat up about half of most of the heroes' average damage-per-hit.

The critical thing to do once you've arrived at a rough estimate of the opposition's combat statistics is to do a quick reality check. You may discover that you've inadvertently created an opponent that only one of the PCs has a mathematically significant chance of damaging at all. Again, estimates are sufficient; no need to break out a calculator.

For encounters where the goal is something other than simply dispatching the enemy, keep that in mind when you do your reality check. For a running battle, take a moment to think about relative movement rates. For battles involving ranged combat, make sure the ranged combatants have weapons that can fire far enough. And so on.

Special Sauce

Don't misinterpret the preceding section's depth of math talk as a suggestion that you should spend most of the time you use to create a combat encounter pushing statistics around a piece of scratch paper, because the fact of the matter is that blow-by-blow levels of falling Health aren't what makes combat encounters memorable.

Remember—and keep remembering—the flavorful obstacles and goals you devised when you first started designing the encounter. Then reflect those mechanically in either the enemies' statistics or the special modifiers that will apply in the course of the fight.

A fight in the fog, with an attendant penalty to attack rolls, will tend to prolong a fight. If a long fight isn't what you want, reduce the number of enemies even more or knock a point or two off their Defense scores. A fight at the lip of a volcano where every combatant must suffer damage from the

heat each time they act will shorten a fight. If you're looking to stage a drawn-out battle of epic proportions in such a locale, provide ways the combatants can avoid that recurring damage by clever tactical thinking. (By taking and holding a shielded location, perhaps?)

The morale of enemies can be a key way to ameliorate otherwise-difficult combat encounters. Enemies who're likely to break and run when they face stiff resistance, or who must make Courage or Morale tests as they suffer casualties, can be overcome more easily than enemies who must be slain to the last. You can also build special opportunities to demoralize the enemy into combat encounters. Perhaps attacking pirates are especially prone to panic and return to their own ship if it's set ablaze. Perhaps Dalish elves can be driven to despair if some precious relic they carry is destroyed, or their beloved leader is slain.

The bottom line is that you should always return to whatever makes this particular fight unique and always reality-check the mechanics you invent to reflect those elements. Those two steps will do more than anything else to net you fun and effective combat encounters. Any gap that remains can almost always be closed on the fly by buffing, nerfing, or fudging statistics or die rolls behind your Game Master's Screen as the fight progresses at the game table.

Exploration Encounters

Exploration encounters are relatively easy to create. They have goals and obstacles just like other encounter types. Their goals are frequently informational—the heroes must learn some piece of information or find some critical object to proceed with the adventure. Perhaps they must learn who wrote an incriminating letter, discover the tracks of enemy scouts who're reconnoitering their liege's lands, or uncover the hiding place of an ancient cache of weapons. The obstacles in an exploration encounter typically involve the ways that the critical information is hidden or otherwise difficult to learn. Lack of access to handwriting samples, a broad area that must be searched, or thick undergrowth are obvious barriers to the example goals above.

The goals of some exploration encounters are broader than the examples given above. Instead of learning some specific clue, they might revolve around learning lots of related facts that together paint a larger picture. For example, an exploration encounter might revolve around understanding the lay of the land over which some future battle may be fought or discovering who the key players are in the local underworld and what motivates them.

The method by which the obstacles in an exploration encounter are typically overcome is with tests that the Player Characters must make. Perhaps a hidden clue must be found with a **Perception (Searching)** test, or a pass through the mountains discovered with a **Cunning (Cartography)** test. Be aware that an exploration encounter that can be successfully overcome with a single test is a very lightweight encounter. Such simple affairs are usually best rolled into another encounter, or beefed up with additional complications such as additional tests that must be made, puzzles that must be solved before the nature of the test can be understood, or options that must be discussed to determine the best of several ways forward.

Exploration encounters have a common and grave peril that you should always keep in mind when you're creating them: Since exploration encounters often deal with the discovery of clues that must be learned in order to keep the adventure moving forward, when you create exploration encounters you must always give careful consideration to what will happen if the Player Characters fail to discover the clue. It's unsatisfying (to say the least!) to bring an adventure to a screeching halt because the heroes all fail their **Perception (Searching)** tests.

So, each time you create an exploration encounter ask yourself what will happen if the PCs fail the critical test. If failure will stop the story in its tracks, the clue in question should probably not require a test to find in the first place, or the test should be re-imagined so that success offers advantageous information but even failure results in enough knowledge for the heroes to continue moving forward. Or, to avoid such situations entirely, create exploration encounters that can give rise to exciting opportunities if the heroes are successful but that don't have corresponding show-stopping downsides. An exploration encounter might allow the PCs to find allies in an upcoming fight, for example, without threatening that they'll fail to show up for the fight altogether if the dice are unkind. It might give the heroes the chance to learn some juicy tidbit of gossip that will give them decisive leverage when negotiating with an NPC later on but without preventing them from carrying out those negotiations in the first place when the time comes.

Roleplaying Encounters

Like other encounters, solid roleplaying encounters revolve around interesting goals and obstacles.

One quote common goal of roleplaying encounters is to accumulate information from knowledgeable NPCs. The relatively standard briefing encounter is the epitome of this type; the most common version features an important NPC who hires or directs the heroes to carry out the grand task that the adventure encompasses. Interview encounters are another common sub-type of the information-accumulating roleplaying encounter, wherein the Player Characters must draw out information from NPCs who might or might not be invested in the heroes' success, and who might or might not want to actively conceal the facts the heroes want to learn.

Encounters of persuasion are a separate class of roleplaying encounter. In these, one or many NPCs must be convinced to take action—even if that action is only for the NPCs to look the other way and do nothing.

Like combat encounters, roleplaying encounters go wrong most often by failing to have concrete goals that the heroes must achieve. An alternate but related pitfall can arise when the Player Characters' goals aren't opposed by the objectives or circumstances of the NPCs involved. For example, you may find that you've lovingly crafted an achingly complex personality for some NPC only to realize—as the heroes begin to converse with them—that the PCs don't need anything out of the interaction. The players will quickly move on without learning even a fraction of the detail you spent so much time making up, because they simply don't need to.

The obstacles in roleplaying encounters usually arise from the stances, objectives, and character traits of the NPCs involved.

The NPCs in roleplaying encounters of any type can be friendly, antagonistic, or disinterested in the heroes, or may have mixed stances toward the Player Characters depending on the matter in question. An example of mixed stances might be a captain of the watch who wants to see the city remain safe (and so is willing to assist the PCs in any endeavor that helps make it so) but who secretly failed in their duty in recent days (and so seeks to obscure the PCs' investigations into the matter of their failure). NPCs with different stances toward the heroes on different matters are the most interesting characters you can introduce to your adventures. Interactions with them become minefields of danger that simultaneously carry the promise of critical information or assistance, as long as things don't go sideways.

The objectives of the NPCs with whom the heroes must interact are often the most critical obstacle in a roleplaying encounter. NPC objectives can dovetail with the Player Characters' goals, be at odds with them, run on an unrelated axis, or be a mix of the three. As with an NPC's stance toward the heroes, NPCs with mixed objectives are the most interesting and rewarding participants in roleplaying encounters. Roleplaying encounters featuring NPCs with obstacles that are only and directly at odds with the Player Characters often fail dramatically as roleplaying encounters because nothing the heroes can say will convince the NPC to change their mind, and with no common ground there's no room for maneuvering. Such encounters sometimes degenerate to violence when the players become frustrated with their lack of progress, which can send a situation spiraling toward the tragic, the ridiculous, or both. Would heroes worthy of the name really resort to deadly force against an obstinate cobbler? Of course not. It's beneath them, it's inadvertently comedic, and it damages the verisimilitude of the world.

Sometimes, simply figuring out an NPC's aims can be a roleplaying challenge for the heroes. If an NPC's goal is to undermine some rival in complete secrecy, even Player Characters who might gleefully join the sabotage must find out that they have common cause with the NPC before they can join forces.

Obstacles based on NPC character traits can be interesting and sometimes memorable, but are typically the least effective sorts of complications in roleplaying encounters. Examples of trait-based obstacles include NPCs who are drunk, megalomaniacal, belligerent, mute, insane, smelly, lecherous… The list could continue forever. The reason that character traits are less effective than other obstacles is that there's rarely anywhere to go with them after they've been presented. Once the heroes learn that their informant is an anti-elf racist, their strategies for dealing with the NPC are obvious (to leave the elf PC back at the inn) and their chances of persuading the informant to abandon his odious beliefs are nil. This isn't to say that the NPCs you create shouldn't have interesting—and sometimes difficult—character traits. Simply be aware that these traits are rarely effective as the sole or even primary obstacles in a roleplaying encounter.

The best roleplaying encounters involve a rich tapestry of stances, objectives, and traits that all point in different directions. Antagonistic NPCs who want the same things the heroes do, physically or socially attractive NPCs with odious aims, truly conflicted NPCs who don't know what to think

Roleplaying & Roll-playing

Central to the whole roleplaying experience is the difference between the characteristics of a game player and the characteristics of the hero they create inside the world of the *Dragon Age* RPG. You wouldn't ask a player to step up from their chair and fight you in order to determine whether their character prevails in battle against a genlock. That's crazy. (And dangerous!) By the same token, some roleplayers believe that it's silly to limit a silver-tongued character's interpersonal abilities to those possessed by their player. On the other hand, a roleplaying game is a verbal exercise at its heart and to boil character-based interactions in the world to nothing more than stat values and tests on dice would rob your game of a mountain of fun.

When you run a roleplaying encounter you must always walk the line between allowing the players the fun of playing their role directly—of saying what their characters say—and making sure that the results of those interactions reflect the characteristics and abilities that describe their Player Characters in a reasonable way.

As a general rule, assume that a given PC is about as persuasive, seductive, or deceptive (for example) as their player roleplays them, but call for tests on **Communication (Persuasion, Charm, or Deception)** whenever a gap between the roleplaying and the statistics stretches the group's suspension of disbelief. That is, when Urbald the Profoundly Ugly puts the moves on that comely women at the bar, it's going to come to a test of the dice more often than not no matter what kind of real-world Casanova the player is.

Keep in mind that whether you emphasize roleplaying or roll-playing, the dichotomy is a matter of deeply held and sometimes polarizing preference among RPG fans. When in doubt, an open and adult conversation among the players in your game can air out these differences of perspective and make sure everyone has fun.

and change their mind with the wind… these are a very few examples of the multitude of interesting possibilities you can bake into roleplaying encounters.

Roleplaying encounters with friendly NPCs can benefit the most from secondary NPC objectives at cross-purposes with what the PCs want, or the incorporation of odious personal habits. Without these kinds of obstacles to provide texture, encounters with friendly NPCs become predictable and boring.

Outside the three primary types of obstacles discussed above, sometimes the key obstacles in roleplaying encounters involve the players' own enterprise or cleverness, or lack of either. In briefing-style encounters, for example, there may be facts about the task at hand, the lay of the land, or the antagonists that the briefing NPC knows and would happily share if only the Player Characters thought to ask. Sometimes you can tell that the players are forgetting to ask some critical question even though it's an obvious question to ask. These become "pants issues." The players don't inform you that their characters have put on their pants in the morning, but even so, all of the heroes are assumed to be wearing them. By the same token, if the players don't explicitly ask their employer about the best route to the place where they've been hired to go, it's not fair to assume that they're actually so stupid as to believe that they don't need to know how to get there. When in doubt, you can ask the players to clarify. *"Did you mean to get a map from the bann or were you planning to ask someone else about the best route?"*

Be aware that roleplaying encounters designed to provide clues that are necessary for an adventure to continue can suffer the same game-derailing problems discussed for exploration encounters in the previous section. These problems are solved in the same way for roleplaying encounters as they are for exploration encounters.

One final thing to be aware of when creating and running roleplaying encounters is the proper place of tests. In general, you should make sure that the players' use of tests to persuade, deceive, seduce, or otherwise influence NPCs in roleplaying encounters dovetails appropriately with the tack they've actually taken in their roleplaying. You shouldn't allow the PCs to mercilessly browbeat some informant and then make a **Communication (Persuasion)** test to sweet-talk the clue out of him. Interpersonal tests are best employed to gauge the success or failure of some already-roleplayed line of coercion, plan of enticement, or other interaction. The player makes their best argument and then the die roll helps you decide exactly what the NPC thinks and how they respond. See the sidebar **Roleplaying and Roll-playing** for further discussion of this sometimes-divisive topic.

Mass Battles

The clash of armies is a common occurrence in the history of Thedas, but uncommon in a typical RPG campaign. Playing out the tactical moves of individual units of soldiers is a game of its own, and one not all roleplayers are keen to engage in. Still, the excitement and drama of a mass battle can add a lot to a campaign and drive home the epic nature—and the stakes—of high-level play. This section features a narrative system for mass battles for the *Dragon Age RPG*. It is not a precise simulation of battlefield conflict. Rather, it is designed to give you a fairly quick way to resolve mass battles while giving the Player Characters a chance to shine and really affect the outcome with their heroics (or lack thereof!).

Planning a Mass Battle

If you want to feature a mass battle in your campaign, you need to plan it out ahead of time. The fight is handled as a series of advanced tests and encounters and you should expect playing it through to conclusion will take at least one session.

The first thing you should do is re-read the section on advanced tests (page 213). These are important for battle resolution, so make sure you understand how they work before trying to stage a battle.

Dragon Age breaks up a battle into three stages: **Opening Moves**, **Main Engagement**, and **Finishing Moves**. Each stage is handled as a competitive advanced test between the rival commanders. The army that wins at least two of the three advanced tests is the victor of the battle. You can run an entire battle as this series of tests between commanders, but that would be like viewing the whole affair from a distance and we want the players to feel like they are right there in the thick of it. To do that, you identify one to three crisis points and play those out as normal combat encounters. The results affect the commanders' tests. This gives the PCs a real chance to turn the tide of a battle with their own heroics.

The Commander

Each army must have a commander. This can be a Player Character or an NPC. Unless the commander is going to fight in one of the crisis points, all you need to know is the commander's Communication and Cunning abilities and whether they have the Leadership and Military Lore focuses respectively. A commander who will fight in a crisis point will need full game stats like any other character in a combat encounter.

The Armies

When using this system, it is not important to create a full order of battle for each side or to know the number of troops down to the man (or monster). That's something best left to war games. You only need to know three things about each army: a rough estimate of the total number of troops, their primary troop type, and whether they have specialists that can help in the different stages of the battle. You'll want to fill out a Battle Card for each army. It consists of the following entries:

- **Army Name:** If the army has a formal name, note it here. If it does not, use the commander's name (Martin's Raiders, Kedwalla's Warband, etc.).
- **Commander:** Name the army's commander here, be it PC or NPC.
- **Commander's Communication (Leadership):** Write the total of the commander's Communication ability and Leadership focus here.
- **Commander's Cunning (Military Lore):** Write the total of the commander's Cunning ability and Military focus here.
- **Number of Troops:** Give a rough total of the number of troops in the army.
- **Primary Troop Type:** Note the main troop type of the army here. These are the common soldiers of the force who do the bulk of the fighting.
- **Stage 1 Specialists:** These troops provide a bonus on the battle's Opening Moves. They are generally scouts and skirmishers.
- **Stage 2 Specialists:** These troops provide a bonus on the battle's Main Engagement. They are generally heavy shock troops.
- **Stage 3 Specialists:** These troops provide a bonus on the battle's Finishing Moves. They are generally mobile reserves and hard-hitting cavalry.

You'll find Battle Cards that you can reproduce for your own use on page 438.

Stages of Battle

There are three stages to a typical battle: opening moves, main engagement, and finishing moves. The winner of each phase is determined by an advanced test known as a battle test. As with all advanced tests, you must determine the success threshold and test difficulty for each stage of the battle. The success threshold is based on the size of the engagement, while the test difficulty is based on the enemy's primary troop type in the battle. These are summarized in the accompanying tables. The length of time each test represents varies, but 10 minutes per test is typical. This can be extended to as much as a full day for something like a siege.

As is always the case with advanced tests, you can modify each side's test to take circumstances into account. Most commonly, an army receives bonuses if it has appropriate specialist troops for that stage of the battle. You can also take into account terrain, disparity in numbers, weather, and other factors. Common modifiers are summarized on the accompanying table. You can add others as appropriate to the circumstances.

You will note that some of the same troop types appear on both the Test Difficulty for Battles table and the lists of example specialist troops. This is intentional. Test Difficulty is determined by the primary troop type in the army. While this commonly will be something like men-at-arms and genlocks, you may have cause to run battles where the primary troop types are more elite. This is why examples like templars and ogres are given, though they are more likely to show up in battles as specialist troops due to their relative rarity.

Stage 1:

Opening Moves

Battle Test: Opposed **Cunning (Military Lore)**.
Example Specialist Troops: Dalish archers, rangers, scouts, shrieks.

In this stage, the opposing forces are moving into position and launching preliminary attacks. Scouts and skirmishers are important, as they are gathering intelligence about the enemy's movements. The side that wins this stage of the battle has learned more about the enemy's forces and intentions and has used the information effectively. This may allow the winner to identify key pieces of terrain and maybe even occupy them with fast moving troops.

During this stage of the battle, a commander's mind for strategy and tactics is most important. This is why the advanced test is based on **Cunning (Military Lore)**.

Stage 2:

Main Engagement

Battle Test: Opposed **Communication (Leadership)**.
Example Specialist Troops: Elite infantry, mabari, ogres, templars.

With the two armies in position, the main engagement begins. The major forces of each side clash and there's no going back. This is not the time for fancy maneuvers or tactical moves. This is a slugging match, and the side that maintains discipline and motivation is likely to win. The advanced test for the main engagement is thus based on **Communication (Leadership)**.

The winner of the main engagement receives a major advantage: they can decide if stage 3 is based on **Communication (Leadership)** or **Cunning (Military Lore)**. This allows the commander to play to their strengths in the final push.

Stage 3:

Finishing Moves

Battle Test: Opposed **Communication (Leadership)** or **Cunning (Military Lore)**.
Example Specialist Troops: Chevaliers, elite cavalry, werewolves.

In this stage the battle comes to a conclusion. This is when flanking maneuvers, counterattacks with reserves, surprise allies, and battlefield ruses that can change the tactical situation come into play. The fate of the losing side is then decided. They may break off and live to fight another day, rout and be run down by fast moving troops like cavalry, or face utter annihilation.

It is possible that an army will lose Stages 1 and 2 and so have no hope of winning the overall battle. You should still roll for Stage 3, however, as the results will help you determine consequences of the battle. An army that loses all three stages is defeated in detail, while one that wins only Stage 3 likely makes an orderly retreat.

As noted above, the advanced test for this stage can be either **Communication (Leadership)** or **Cunning (Military Lore)**. The winner of stage 2 decides.

Crisis Points

The **Stages of Battle** section described the basic mechanics of a battle at a high level. With two battle cards and a series of dice rolls, you can determine the winner of a large battle. While that will give you results relatively quickly, it does not put Player Characters in the thick of things. That's what the crisis points are all about. These are normal combat encounters that happen in the midst of the battle, in which the PCs can have a major impact on the result.

The first thing you should decide is how many crisis points you want to play out. You can create one for each stage, so a battle will feature from one to three in total. Plan for one crisis point if you want to resolve the battle quickly, two if you want it to feel like an important event, and three if you want to really challenge the players with an epic slugging match.

In each stage of the battle, the commanders make an advanced test as previously described. A crisis point is triggered when an army is within 5 of the success threshold. At this point, you should describe the situation and play out the crisis point. Whichever side wins the combat encounter adds 5 to its advanced test total. This can decide the winner of the stage or at least stave off defeat for an army faring poorly.

Note that skirmishes have a success threshold of 5, so a crisis point can be substituted for any of the advanced tests. The winner of a crisis point then automatically wins that stage of the battle.

Success Thresholds for Mass Battles

Task Difficulty	Battle Size	Success Threshold
Easy	Skirmish (50 to 250 total combatants)	5
Average	Small Battle (251 to 1,000 total combatants)	10
Challenging	Large Battle (1,001 to 5,000 total combatants)	15
Hard	Huge Battle (5,001 to 20,000 total combatants)	20
Formidable	Epic Battle (20,001+ total combatants)	25

Test Difficulty for Mass Battles

Test Difficulty	Sample Troop Types	Test Difficulty
Routine	Non-combatants	7
Easy	Brigands, militia	9
Average	Men-at-arms, genlocks, skeletons	11
Challenging	Hurlocks, knights, templars	13
Hard	Chevaliers, Legion of the Dead, werewolves	15
Formidable	Grey Wardens, ogres, rage demons	17
Imposing	Pride demons, steel golems	19
Nigh Impossible	Dragons	21

Test Modifiers for Mass Battles

Circumstance	Modifier
Specialist troops	+1 per type
Battlefield surprise*	+1 to +3
Enemy outnumbers you 2 to 1	–1
Enemy outnumbers you 3 to 1	–2
Enemy outnumbers you 4 to 1	–3
Enemy occupies high ground	–1
Enemy in prepared positions	–2
Enemy in fortifications	–3
Poor weather	–1 to –3

* For example, an ambush, fresh reserves, or an attack from the rear.

Example

A Fereldan force is fighting an Avvar clan in a small battle, so the success threshold of each stage is 10. The commanders begin rolling their battles tests for Stage 1: Opening Moves. After several rolls, the Avvar total rises to 7, while Ferelden's total stands at 4. Since the Avvar total is within 5 of the battle's success threshold of 10, this triggers the GM's planned crisis point. The GM describes how the Avvar ambushed the Fereldans and how heavy casualties are causing the Fereldans to waver. The Fereldan leader on the spot leads a counterattack on the weak point of the Avvar line, hoping to turn the tide. The spearhead of this attack is played out as a combat encounter. The Fereldans fight valiantly but cannot break the Avvar. The Avvar victory lets them add 5 to their previous total of 7. With 12, they pass the success threshold and thus win Stage 1 of the battle. Not an auspicious start for the forces of Ferelden.

Each crisis point is a combat encounter, and you should base the particulars on what's going on in the larger battle. A Stage 1 crisis point might revolve around seizing a strategic hill, for example, while a Stage 3 crisis might have the PCs making a surprise attack from an unexpected quarter. These encounters are happening within the context of the larger battle, so try to play that up when describing the action. If you have a crisis point planned for Stage 3, be aware that the battle could be decided already if one side wins Stages 1 and 2. When this occurs, you can skip the crisis point if you like, or play it out if dramatically appropriate. You might make it a valiant rearguard action, for example, in which the actions of the PCs have the opportunity to save much of the army to fight again another day.

If you want to, you can have crisis points that consist of several linked encounters, but you should do this sparingly, as getting the timing right can be tricky. You want the players invested in the battle, and the longer a crisis point takes to resolve, the more distant from it they may feel.

Stunts in Crisis Points

For the most part the stunts used when fighting out a crisis point have no effect on the larger battle. They are used as normal and can help win the combat, but their impact is limited to the confines of the encounter. Sometimes, however, a character will do something so awe-inspiring that it can affect the battle as a whole. This is represented by a new stunt, which can be used as either a combat stunt or a spell stunt.

SP Cost	Stunt
6	**We Are the Champions:** You perform a stunt that is so impressive that it inspires your troops and intimidates those of the enemy. Your commander adds 1 to their advanced test total for this stage of the battle.

EXAMPLE BATTLE

The Battle of Ostagar

The first big clash we see in *Dragon Age: Origins* is the Battle of Ostagar, so it makes an excellent extended example to illustrate how this system works. In the battle, the forces of Ferelden under King Cailan attempt to end the Blight by defeating the darkspawn as they emerge from the Korcari Wilds. The fight takes place in Ostagar, a ruined fortress in the south of Ferelden. If you have access to the cinematic of the battle, either through *Dragon Age: Origins* or the internet, you may want to watch it before reading further. Having a visual idea of how the battle went will help you understand what's going on in this example.

Now we're ready to look at the Battle Cards for each army. You must have these to run the battle properly, so they are a good first step. See the next page for the Battle Cards of The Royal Army of Ferelden under the command of King Cailan and the Darkspawn Horde under the command of a Hurlock General. As you'll note, the forces of Ferelden have advantages in leadership and specialists, but the darkspawn have numbers on their side.

Stage 1: Opening Moves

In Stage 1 of the battle, the Darkspawn Horde approaches the Royal Army in Ostagar. King Cailan has scouts out in the Korcari Wilds, so this gives him a slight edge. Stage 1 is an advanced test using **Cunning (Military Lore)**. *King Cailan has a total of +4 (+5 for his ability, +1 for his scout specialists, but –2 because his forces are outnumbered 3 to 1). The Hurlock General has no specialists, so his total is just his ability of +3. The battle has 20,000 combatants, which makes it a huge battle and sets the success threshold for each stage at 20.*

To determine the outcome of this stage, the GM now has the two leaders make an advanced **Cunning (Military Lore)** *test. The test difficulty is 11 for both sides, as their primary troop types are men-at-arms and hurlocks respectively. The GM rolls for the Hurlock General and lets the players roll for King Cailan. In the first five rolls, the Hurlock General fails two of the tests and succeeds on three, with Dragon Dice results of 2, 3, and 5. This gives him a total of 10 towards the advanced test; only half way to the 20 needed to win. King Cailan does much better, succeeding on all five tests and getting Dragon Dice results of 2, 3, 3, 4, and 6. That gives him a total of 18. At this point the GM could decide to play out a crisis point, but has none planned so has the two commanders roll again. Both succeed, but King Cailan's Dragon Die result of 4 pushes his total to 22. As the first to get to the success threshold, King Cailan wins Stage 1 of the battle.*

The GM decides that the Fereldans located the Darkspawn Horde and engaged it with skirmishers. They didn't inflict a lot of damage but they got the Hurlock General's attention and lured the Horde to the battle site that King Cailan had chosen in the ruins of Ostagar. As the armies maneuver for Stage 2, it begins to rain.

Mass Battle Force Card

Force Name	The Royal Army of Ferelden
Commander	King Cailan Theirin
Primary Troop Type	Fereldan men-at-arms (Test Difficulty 11)
Commander's Communication (Leadership)	+6
Stage 1 Specialists	Scouts
Commander's Cunning (Military Lore)	+5
Stage 2 Specialists	Mabari, Knights, Mages
Number of Troops	5000
Stage 3 Specialists	None

Mass Battle Force Card

Force Name	The Darkspawn Horde
Commander	Hurlock General
Primary Troop Type	Hurlocks (Test Difficulty 11)
Commander's Communication (Leadership)	+4
Stage 1 Specialists	None
Commander's Cunning (Military Lore)	+3
Stage 2 Specialists	Ogres, Hurlock Emissaries
Number of Troops	15000
Stage 3 Specialists	None

Stage 2: Main Engagement

Now the main forces of the armies clash and the battle test is based on **Communication (Leadership)**. *King Cailan's total is +6 (+6 for his ability, +1 for mabari, +1 for knights, +1 for mages, –2 because his forces are outnumbered 3 to 1, and –1 for poor weather). The Hurlock General's total is +4 (+4 for his ability, +1 for ogres, +1 for hurlock emissaries, –1 for poor weather, and –1 for fighting an enemy with the high ground). As with Stage 1, the Test Difficulty is 11 and the success threshold is 20.*

Once again the players roll for King Cailan and the GM for the Hurlock General. In the first six rolls, the Hurlock General fails two of the battle tests and succeeds on four with Dragon Die results of 3, 4, 4, and 5. This gives him a total of 16 towards the advanced test. King Cailan succeeds on five of the six battle tests and gets Dragon Dice results of 2, 3, 3, 4, and 5. That gives him a total of 17. Both commanders now have a total within 5 of the success threshold of the battle, so there is the potential for a crisis point.

The GM describes how the forces of Ferelden fire flaming arrows at the advancing horde, unleash their mabari hounds, and then charge the darkspawn. The plan is that a small group of Grey Wardens stationed at the Tower of Ishal will light a signal beacon at the key moment and Fereldan reserves under Teyrn Loghain will make a surprise attack on the darkspawn and hopefully route them. But there's a problem: Darkspawn have captured the Tower of Ishal! A group of heroes must enter it, defeat the darkspawn, and light the beacon. Enter the Player Characters.

The fight in the Tower of Ishal is the crisis point of Stage 2 of the battle. As portrayed in Dragon Age: Origins, it is on the long side for a crisis point, but for a battle of this magnitude it is appropriate enough, and for tabletop play, a GM could easily shorten it if desired. In this example, the PCs fight their way through the tower, defeat a mighty ogre, and light the beacon. However, a fresh wave of darkspawn overwhelms them in their moment of triumph and there is a problem with the beacon (see Stage 3). The darkspawn thus win the crisis point. The Hurlock General adds 5 to his 16, and his total of 21 wins Stage 2 of the battle (the success threshold, as you may recall, was 20).

Now the battle is on a knife's edge, with each side having won one stage. With his victory in Stage 2, the Hurlock General can decide what the advanced test is going to be for Stage 3. He chooses **Cunning (Military Lore)**, *since King Cailan is slightly weaker in that.*

Stage 3: Finishing Moves

The agreed-upon Fereldan battle plan was that Loghain would lead a surprise attack on the darkspawn once the beacon was lit. However, the treacherous teryn instead retreats, leaving the king and the army to its fate. Had the attack gone in, the GM would have given King Cailan a +2 bonus for a battlefield surprise. The betrayal of Loghain is such a shock though that the GM gives this

bonus to the Hurlock General instead. The Fereldans are bewildered that their reserves are marching off the field, and this gives the darkspawn an advantage.

In the final advanced test of the battle, neither side has specialists. King Cailan has a +2 total (+5 for his ability, -2 because his forces are outnumbered 3 to 1, and -1 for poor weather). The Hurlock General now has a +4 total (+3 for his ability and +2 for the battlefield surprise, and -1 for poor weather). Again the Test Difficulty is 11 and the success threshold is 20.

Now the Hurlock General has the advantage. He succeeds in his first five battle tests, getting Dragon Dice results of 2, 3, 4, 4, and 6 for a total of 19. King Cailan now has the numbers against him and succeeds at only three battle tests, with Dragon Dice results of 3, 4, and 5 for a total of 12. Another crisis point could be played out now (the last stand of King Cailan and the Grey Warden leader Duncan , for example), but the GM decides to roll one more time. The Hurlock General succeeds with a Dragon Die result of 2, while King Cailan fails again.

That gives the Hurlock General a total of 21 and the victory.

The GM describes how the darkspawn horde destroys the Royal Army of Ferelden, with King Cailan and Duncan slain in the final melee. The traitor Loghain has left the field with his troops. Who will make him pay for his treachery? And what has happened to the PCs in the Tower of Ishal?

Optional Battle Rules

The battle system as described so far is broad by design. It is designed to give a narrative framework for using mass battles in your campaign. It is not a tactical simulation, nor does it try to be. Your players may, however, want more detail than the basic system provides. If that's the case, consider using the following optional rules.

Working Out Casualties

The basic battle system does not work out specific numbers of casualties. It is left for the GM to describe the outcome of the battle based on advanced tests and crisis points at each stage. In many battles, the exact numbers of wounded and dead is not important to the larger story. There may be times when that information is valuable, however. Maybe you are running a campaign in which the PCs lead a guerrilla force in a desperate campaign. Since each soldier is a precious commodity, knowing how many fall in each battle is important information.

To determine casualties, have each general make a **Cunning (Military Lore)** test with the same TN as the battle. This roll determines how smartly the general used their troops. On a successful test, the army's casualties are equal to 35%, –5% for each degree of success.

Test Modifiers for Casualties

Circumstance	Modifier
Each stage of the battle won	+1
Each stage of the battle lost	-1
Enemy outnumbered you 2 to 1	-1
Enemy outnumbered you 3 to 1	-2
Enemy outnumbered you 4 to 1	-3
Enemy has Stage 3 specialists	-1

On an unsuccessful test, the casualties are equal to 30%, +5% for each point by which the test was failed. These tests are modified using the **Test Modifiers for Casualties** table. Casualties include the wounded and the dead. In general, you can assume that one third of the casualties are dead and two-thirds are wounded. The fate of the wounded depends largely on who is left in control of the battlefield.

Example

Returning to the Battle of Ostagar, the GM decides he'd like to know the number of casualties caused. King Cailan and the Hurlock General each make a **Cunning (Military Lore)** *with a TN of 11 (the same as that of the battle). King Cailan has a total of +2 (+5 for his ability, +1 for winning Stage 1, -2 for losing Stages 2 and 3, and -2 because his forces are outnumbered 3 to 1). The Hurlock General has a total of +4 (+3 for his ability, +2 for winning Stages 2 and 3, -1 for losing Stage 1).*

The Hurlock General rolls and gets a 14 on the test, but his Dragon Die result is only 1. That means his casualties are 35% minus 5% for his one degree of success, or 30%. The darkspawn started the battle with 20,000 troops, so that means they suffered 6,000 casualties. The soldiers of Ferelden lost but they took a lot of darkspawn with them.

Now King Cailan rolls. OK, technically he's dead but the GM still uses his stats as he was the general throughout the battle. He rolls poorly (being dead can take a lot out of you), getting a total of 7. This means the casualties of the Royal Army of Ferelden are a horrific 50% (30% plus 20% for failing the test by 4). 2,500 dead and wounded soldiers are left on the field. The fate of the wounded is best not contemplated.

Troop Deployment

The basic battle system considers only the total troops committed to the battle. This makes things simple but does not allow for any tactical finesse on the part of the commanders. At your discretion, you can allow the commanders to divide up their troops amongst the three stages of the battle. A commander with 5,000 troops, for example, might deploy 1,000 to fight in Stage 1, 2,500 to fight in Stage 2, and 1,500 to fight in Stage 3.

Once troops are deployed, you can handle the battle in two different ways. The simpler way is to fight each stage using only the troops deployed for it. So, if a commander committed 500 troops to Stage 3, that's the force for that stage. A more realistic but also more complicated way of handling it is to use the casualty system after each stage of the battle, and then give each commander the option of keeping the survivors committed or withdrawing them. If the commander needs more troops in subsequent stages, survivors can go back into battle. If they think they can win the battle without them, the survivors can be withdrawn to fight another day. It's also acceptable to commit some survivors but withdraw others.

Example

Bann Teagan leads 1,200 Fereldan troops into battle. He deploys 300 to Stage 1, 600 to Stage 2, and 300 to Stage 3. His small force in Stage 1 is defeated and suffers 40% casualties (120 soldiers). He decides he needs more troops for Stage 2, so he adds the 180 survivors to the 600 he already committed, bringing his total up to 780 for Stage 2. Teagan wins this stage and suffers 20% casualties (156 soldiers). He has 624 survivors from Stage 2 (780-156 casualties) and decides to go for broke and commit them all to Stage 3. This gives him 924 soldiers for the climax of the battle.

Sub-Commanders

Each side only has one commander in the basic battle system. Again, this makes things easy but it gives the commander a level of battlefield control that is somewhat unrealistic. One commander can't be everywhere at once, after all. As an option, you can allow each commander to appoint up to two sub-commanders. Each can then be assigned to one stage of the battle and is considered the commander for purposes of its advanced test. A plus of this system is that it allows several Player Characters to share command duties in a battle, giving each a chance to have a moment of glory.

Example

In the previous example, Bann Teagan commanded in all stages of the battle, but let's say he decided to appoint sub-commanders. He appoints his leader of scouts to command Stage 1, retains Stage 2 for himself, and appoints his leader of knights to command Stage 3.

Chapter 10

Running Campaigns

One of the most rewarding ways to play the *Dragon Age RPG* is as a campaign of ongoing adventures featuring the same Player Characters. But running a campaign can be difficult in the same way that running a marathon can be difficult. Even though playing *Dragon Age* is fun, it takes expertise and stamina to keep a campaign going.

This section first looks at ideas about different ways to structure a *Dragon Age* campaign. Later there are suggestions and advice about how to keep it running like a finely tuned machine, scene by scene.

Campaign Themes

A campaign is a series of adventures, much like an adventure is a collection of linked encounters. They take their name from military campaigns, since early roleplaying games were derived from war games. In this way, a *Dragon Age* campaign is much like an adventure writ large, and much of the advice on creating adventures applies to the campaign as a whole.

In the original *Dragon Age* boxed sets, the default assumption of the *Dragon Age RPG* was that your campaign would be set during the latest Blight to threaten Thedas. With this book, the game has moved beyond that default assumption. It's still a perfectly fine way to begin a campaign, but there are far more options within Thedas to explore and use for campaigns now.

Thus, though the unfolding story of the Blight is the thread that connects the earlier published *Dragon Age* adventures, it's now only one of many possible stories. This chapter explores and introduce many of these available options, but even these are just a small sampling of what adventuring in the world of Thedas has to offer.

Dark Fantasy

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

No Unicorns and Rainbows

There are some fantasy settings in which elves ride unicorns, knights take the air on pegasi, and wise kings with good hearts do what's best for their people all the time. Thedas is not one of them. This is a setting in which elves are oppressed and exploited, mages are feared and mistrusted, and even the vaunted Grey Wardens have dark secrets. The Blights, the great evil that may destroy Thedas, are the direct result of human hubris, not the master plan of some cartoonish

mad overlord. And evil, since it comes from the hearts of men (and elves and dwarves), can be checked but never defeated forever.

Life Isn't Fair

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

Actions Have Consequences

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

Sometimes Evil Wears a Smile

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

Raising the Banner of Hope

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

Consulting the Players

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

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

Casting the Heroes

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

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

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

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

Defining the Arc

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

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

Campaign Outlining

Once you have defined the arc of the campaign, start breaking it down into individual adventures, roughly game-session long chunks you can plan out. For starters, you're going to want a series that goes on for a good eight to ten sessions or so, but a campaign can go on longer.

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

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

Sketching the Ending

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

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

Note also that the ending of a campaign does not necessarily mean the end for a group of characters. It is always possible to start a new *Dragon Age* campaign with existing characters, a further story of their adventures, with a fresh new focus and an all-new arc.

Planning the Campaign

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

Campaign Frameworks

One of the key strategies for creating a successful *Dragon Age* campaign is to base it on a coherent campaign framework. A campaign framework is nothing more than a unifying structure that ties the Player Characters together and motivates the breadth of adventures that they'll undertake.

The primary advantage of proactively erecting a framework for your campaign is that it helps organize the players and their heroes around common goals.

With common goals, they'll be able to work together and keep moving in the same direction on adventure after adventure, instead of (as sometimes happens) chasing different distractions in a dozen directions, dismembering the group and making it increasingly difficult for you to keep crafting adventures that everyone can be organically involved in. The framework, in short, explains why the PCs are working together and what they're trying to achieve in the long run. It's a roadmap that everyone can buy into at the beginning of the epic journey.

A secondary advantage to having a well-established framework is that it helps you maintain an organized idea about what comes next. Or, if not *exactly* what comes next, then what *kinds* of things *might* come next. Whenever you sit down to create an adventure, or a series of interlocking adventures, the campaign framework serves as a beacon for your efforts, lighting your way so you can always go in a direction that makes sense.

Different frameworks that you can use as the basis of your own *Dragon Age* campaigns are presented below. You can also create your own framework, perhaps drawing on one of these for inspiration but spinning it in your own unique way. A section that discusses the critical factors in creating your own framework follow the six samples.

In the section about planning a campaign, there's a discussion of defining, outlining, and ending a campaign arc. A campaign arc is a good way to provide some breadth of play while also giving your players a sense of closure. However, you can also run an open-ended campaign—one that doesn't have a defined or obvious ending—and using a solid campaign framework is a good way to do it. The frameworks presented here can be open- or closed-ended; all work well for either type.

Grey Wardens

In this classic *Dragon Age* campaign the Player Characters become Grey Wardens and the group of heroes fights the rising Blight in Thedas. This framework also supports players who don't want to have characters who are actually Grey Wardens as long as their characters are oriented toward fighting the darkspawn menace and working alongside the Grey Wardens PCs.

Given the nature of the Grey Wardens, it can be tricky to start a Grey Warden campaign, since 1st-level characters aren't appropriate to actually be Grey Wardens right out of the gate. But naturally, the various story lines of *Dragon Age: Origins* provide the ready solution to this issue: Low-level PCs in this campaign framework are characters who either seek to become Grey Wardens or who will eventually be pressed into that role by rising necessity.

The key consideration, as you erect the Grey Warden framework at the beginning of a new campaign, is to make sure that the players are aware that the group's eventual thrust will be to become, or support, the Grey Wardens, and fight the Blight. Even if the *characters* only come to discover this destiny as they level up, they'll have been engineered by their *players* from the start to be heroes willing to take up that calling.

One of the strengths of the Grey Warden framework is the organization's willingness to embrace the skilled and courageous from any background or race. That is, this framework doesn't impose any limits whatsoever on the types of Player Characters that the players can make. A player who wants to create a truly interesting hero might even collaborate with the GM to make a PC who will be conscripted against their better judgment into the Grey Wardens because of some special skill they have, due to some destiny that the Grey Wardens believe applies to them, or even to survive infection with darkspawn corruption. Such a character would then learn only over time to fully embrace the Grey Wardens' cause.

Motivating Grey Warden heroes in their adventures is simple business, since their missions are handed down directly from their seniors in the organization. Wildly diverse missions with equally diverse geographical locations can be tied together quite easily. The heroes must go where they're told to fight the darkspawn threats there.

The types of adventures that the PCs undertake in a campaign with a Grey Wardens framework will all be of the same cloth: they'll fight the depredations of darkspawn. This isn't to say that their every mission must—or should—be a search-and-destroy assignment ending in a battle against a foul and horrible enemy. But you will have to make a conscious effort, with this framework, to vary the adventures of your campaign in order to avoid having them feel too similar to each other. Even for the most devoted hack-and-slash, search-and-destroy players, too little variation on the theme can grow stale, especially when the theme is so strongly tactical in nature.

Blight Campaigns

Knowing what the overall course of a Blight looks like, you must translate those factors into concrete adventures as well as background conditions and events that change over time to give the heroes the sense of a Blight-stricken world. As the Blight begins, for example, the prices for goods tend to rise as raw materials become scarcer and travel becomes more dangerous. This is something Player Characters will observe firsthand even if "rising prices" aren't the centerpiece of some particular adventure. As the Blight continues and conditions become more dangerous, more and more able-bodied citizens will be called away from their peacetime labors to man fortress walls and safeguard critical resources. If you begin a Blight-centric campaign in the later stages of a Blight, low-level Player Characters may even see their early adventures center around such mundane concerns as finding unspoiled food and clean water to survive.

Eventually, the open fight against the darkspawn will become the heroes' central task. Although finding and

slaying the Archdemon is the clear goal, many intermediate adventures pave the way to that climactic event.

You'll probably want Grey Warden Player Characters to play a significant role in a Blight campaign, but the option is yours. No citizen of Thedas is untouched by misfortune in a time of Blight; there are adventures to be undertaken by all. In fact, one of the best features of a tabletop RPG is that you can take your campaign in any direction you wish. You may wish to decide that your Fifth Blight will be centered on some other realm of Thedas (Orlais? Nevarra? Rivain?), or that no Archdemon has arisen and the depredations in modern Ferelden are the work of a dangerous darkspawn warlord of great power but who is not motivated by a corrupted, awakening Old God. It's up to you.

Freedom Fighters: Orlesian Occupation

The "historical" period of the Fereldan Rebellion can provide an exciting campaign setting. In this framework, the Player Character heroes take up the roles of freedom fighters on the side of the Rebel Queen and (or) not-yet-king Maric. The meat of the campaign is their waging of a guerilla war against the Orlesian occupation of Ferelden at the end of the Blessed Age.

Appropriate heroes for such a campaign must have a robust reason for fighting. Although the GM can provide a certain amount of motivation in the first few adventures of such a campaign, any Player Character whose primary motivation is to look out for Number One will be constantly stretching to provide a satisfactory reason to continue fighting the Orlesians in adventure after adventure in which the forces of the enemy are overwhelming, the available resources are slim, the ground is hard, and the food is terrible.

There are plenty of character backstories that provide ample motivation, of course. Players Characters might fight for personal or practical reasons, out of greed, loyalty, or a desire for vengeance. Heroes might be hunted by the occupiers for crimes committed deliberately or accidentally. They might owe a personal or monetary debt to some bann who has elected to side with the Fereldan freedom fighters. They might have seen their property seized by the invaders and want it back. Or they might have a simple but profound need to see a true-born Fereldan, instead of a foreigner, sit upon the Fereldan throne. There are many good options; make sure that each player chooses one (or more!) for their hero.

There are lots of obvious adventures for campaigns built on this framework. The most plain are military operations against Orlesian foes and their Fereldan collaborators. The challenging aspects of these operations, for the players, is that the freedom fighters are vastly outnumbered by their enemy, and much more poorly supplied. But martial adventures only scratch the surface. Given the occupiers' advantage on the open field, the battle to capture the love and spirits of the occupied Fereldans becomes as or more critical. And given the difficult disposition of the Fereldan freedom fighters, even securing food and supplies for their army-in-hiding is no simple matter.

The key to successful adventures along all of these lines lies in making the objectives concrete. It's easy to write an adventure where the goal is to convince a far-flung bann to allow the rebel army safe passage. Conversely, it's essentially impossible to write an adventure in which the heroes are dispatched to foment dissatisfaction with Orlais among the freemen of Ferelden, because the task to too broad and fuzzy. How can the players be expected to know where to begin? How will the PCs (not to mention you, as GM) know when they've succeeded? Narrowing the objective to an easily understood goal is the key.

If you're ever having difficulty thinking of new adventures for a campaign set during the Orlesian occupation, don't hesitate to go to the history books and read about historical or even modern-day occupations to get a sense of the mundane, as well as military, challenges facing partisans who must wage guerilla war against an occupying foreign force.

The first *Dragon Age* novel, *The Stolen Throne,* also provides good reading for both players and GMs in communicating a sense of the world and the feel of a campaign built on this framework. Note that a campaign based around playing Orlesians in Ferelden trying to put down rebellions and restore order during this time is possible, but some players are going to not feel very heroic playing invaders, especially those who eventually "lose" and withdraw.

Freedom Fighters: Today

This campaign framework is similar to the previous one, but instead of being Fereldans and their allies pitted against the Orlesian occupiers at the end of the Blessed Age, this campaign takes place in Thedas's modern day. The Player Characters take the roles of heroes who are the members and/or sympathizers of an oppressed racial group, most likely elves living in Ferelden, or casteless dwarves living either above or below ground. (Obviously, the campaign must be based around a single such group, rather than a grab bag of the subjugated.)

This campaign framework is probably the most difficult to run of those presented here, in practical terms as well as emotional terms. However, if approached with maturity, and run and played with care, the thematic subject matter of such a campaign can give rise to moments of incredible heroic depth.

Most clearly, the adventures of the ethnically downtrodden are difficult to motivate in dramatic terms because they're challenging to make concrete. While the villains—both immediate and long-term—of an Orlesian occupation campaign are obvious (the Orlesian ruler and their collaborators) the villains of a contemporary campaign of racial equity are nearly all members of the privileged overclass. Against such a diverse and fuzzy "enemy," what do the PCs do first? They cannot aim to simply seize land or political power, but must angle instead to win over the hearts of those inclined to believe that they are less than dirt because of the shape of their ears or the accidents of their birth. The nature of the heroes' opponents isn't the only difficulty. An obstacle looming just as large is the question of how the Player Characters will even know when they've won. Will they have done enough when the local elves are able to afford to eat just a bit better? When they're allowed to live outside the alienages? When one of their number is able to represent their perspective in the court of the local bann? It's easy to know when the Orlesian puppet-king has been overthrown; it's hard to know when Ferelden's elves are no longer oppressed.

A campaign based on this framework can also be difficult to run because it invites such obvious real-world comparisons. Ethnic tensions are a real and sensitive fact of life for plenty of people in the real world, and a political hot-button issue even for those in the local majority wherever they happen to live and play. In the very best case, of course, the activity and art of roleplaying can provide an alternate and welcome perspective on its players' day-to-day living, and can nourish their lives with its valuable food for thought just as the best fantasy and science-fiction literature does. But in the worst case, it can give rise to arguments and bad feelings that can send players packing. In short, no one wants to spend game night arguing politics, whether contemporary or historical.

If you choose to take on this style of campaign, its heroes should be, for the most part, members of the oppressed group. There is certainly room for sympathizers of other races, but the goals of the campaign are so clearly those of the subjugated group that it only makes sense for them to form the bulk of the adventuring party. In addition to their race or ethnicity, the adventurers must also be motivated to change the system that's oppressing them. A campaign like this is no place for those whose goals stand apart from their subjugation.

Successful adventures erected around this framework will be those that take some aspect of oppression and make it concrete, and thus something around which an adventure can be crafted. Individual villains whose subjugations are particularly effective or perverse can become the antagonists of such adventures. The persecution of specific individuals whose freedom would rally others to the cause can be similarly motivating. Concrete situations, with concrete end goals, are the key.

One way to make adventures in this campaign framework absolutely concrete is to push, rather than pull, the Player Characters. This means that instead of enticing the heroes with some good that they can accomplish, you can instead crush them with horrible circumstances that they must get out from under and put a stop to. A villain seeking to purge Thedas of every last elf, or evict the casteless even from the low precincts of Dust Town, is a force that must be struggled against if even the less-than-desirable status quo is to be maintained. Circumstances like these have the dramatic advantage that they can't simply be ignored or walked away from. They must be dealt with or the unthinkable will occur.

Mercenaries

Under this campaign framework, the Player Characters are uniquely skilled adventurers working for no greater end than to be as well compensated as possible for their unique capabilities, whatever their (probably violent) specialties happen to be. Groups like this are relatively common across Ferelden and Thedas at large; those mentioned in *Dragon Age: Origins* include the Crimson Oars, White Falcons, and Blackstone Irregulars. The players should certainly be encouraged to invent a similarly colorful name for their band to which their notoriety can accrue over the course of their adventures.

The heroes of a mercenary campaign should all—obviously—be motivated by the accumulation of coin. Ideally, the members of the group should have a better chance of increasing their wealth together than they would have individually, since over the course of the campaign they may otherwise be tempted to split off on their own to keep more of their earning for themselves. Alternately, some other communal bond—friendship, even—can provide the explanation for their continued common cause.

One additional factor you should direct the players to consider and talk to you about, if not at the beginning of the campaign then as it progresses, is whether their individual heroes, or their group as a whole, have some end use in mind for the lucre they accumulate. Is there some vast bankroll that, if someday amassed, would finally be enough? Or is simple hoarding the goal, with an end to it all neither imagined nor desired? Both types of characters can be interesting. In practical terms, though, the thing you gain from talking to the players about this subject is the ability to scale the financial rewards of your adventures to either prolong the campaign or end it at just the right moment. For example, if the goal is to accumulate enough money to commission the construction of a castle on the Fereldan hinterlands where the heroes' descendants can dwell until the dawn of the next great age, you can take it as a given that once the PCs have accumulated enough money to make that dream real you're going to need to motivate their continued mercenary adventures in some new way. (It won't necessarily be difficult to do so. In the castle-

construction example, the PCs' adventures would obviously transition to the logistical challenges of the construction, protection, and administration of the fortress in question.)

Many campaigns default to the generic mercenary motivation because wealth is one of the most obvious tangible benefits of adventuring. (Experience points are often more rewarding than cash, from the player's perspective, but no campaign can survive the death-blow to verisimilitude that would arise from the heroes taking on adventures for the explicit, in-character purpose of going up in levels. Consider, as a mental exercise, the ridiculousness of the exchange that ends, "'Level up,' Ser Thorne? 'What in the Maker's name is a *level?!*'") There's nothing wrong with mercenary motivations, but they work best when all of the PC heroes are created with this in mind, rather than winding up as the fallback position because no other framework has been erected. So, by no means is the mercenary campaign framework some lesser breed, but like every other framework, it works best when it's clearly articulated and the heroes are developed to adopt it.

The adventures of a campaign based on mercenary adventurers can be as wide as the universe of people who have money and want something accomplished. Player Characters might become caravan guards, pit gladiators, assassins, couriers, bodyguards, political agitators… The opportunities are as broad as the breadth of human motivation and occupation. Some mercenaries might even reach further than the coin of paymasters to become out-and-out thieves, simply stealing the wealth they would accumulate from anyone with more ample money than security. Such Player Characters are hard to call "heroes," but some players find banditry entertaining. In a game that features moral choices the way that the *Dragon Age RPG* does, it would be inappropriate and counterproductive to impose moral ultimatums from outside the game world. That is, if the players want their characters to be thieves, afflict their heroes with the obvious consequences of thievery rather than simply ruling that they may not.

In a campaign based on the mercenary framework, you can have fun by mixing in secondary motivations for the heroes, and pitting these various motivations against both their avarice and against each other. For example, what happens if the heroes are hired to deliver some precious cargo to a faraway land for a princely sum, and then, en route, are offered a *kingly* sum to deliver the cargo to someone else? How will they prioritize loyalty and greed, when it comes down to it? It's best to avoid pitting different heroes' secondary motivations against each other, though, unless you really know what you're doing and you know your players well. Otherwise, you're liable to wind up running a series of parallel campaigns, one per Player Character, as the heroes fragment in different directions, or worse, start to actively work against each other.

Political Partisans

This campaign framework makes the Player Characters allies in forwarding the cause of some political faction, ideology, or person. They might be the foot soldiers of a cabal of Orlesian statesmen, agitators for open war between Ferelden and the Avvar, or operatives in the service of some prominent bann. (Consider, for example, a campaign based on service to

Bann Nicola Baranti, the central NPC in the *Blood in Ferelden* scenario "A Fragile Web.")

Even more so than with other campaign frameworks, (except perhaps the contemporary freedom fighters framework) the unity of the heroes' motivations is key to the success of this campaign. Here, you absolutely need a group of Player Characters who're all pulling in the same direction. So when beginning a campaign based on this framework, you should either decide, or ask the players to help you decide, what faction, cause, or individual they will back, and then you should insist that all of the PCs be created with that motivation in mind.

Individual heroes can be tied to the central goal in a wide variety of ways. If the goal is the furtherance of some individual's political career, any possible relationship between two individuals can be the basis of a PC's motivation to aid the cause. A hero might be a blood relative of the central figure (their heir, better yet!), a lover, an employee, a fellow traveler, or even the victim of blackmail. As always, each hero should be created with specific goals. A given PC's motivations might stem from some injustice in their past or some hope they have for the future. These goals can be either abstract ("to see justice done in the land") or specific ("to live to see my offspring on the Fereldan throne"). Just make sure they tie into the central goal for each Player Character.

Individual players can create characters who have secondary motivations as well, and those can provide interesting roleplaying moments centering on choices and priorities. These secondary considerations should be side dishes rather than main courses, though, and when push comes to shove each hero should always be willing to sacrifice their personal ambitions for the common goals.

(However, one interesting possibility is for one player, cooperating with you in secret, to create a Player Character who's at clandestine odds with the group's cause—a secret agent of the opposition. Such a player should be clear about the fact that their character is not likely to prevail in the end, and that when the other PCs find out about their treachery their life will be forfeit. This is a long-term campaign tactic, obviously, and one that you should only attempt with mature players. Insecure or inexperienced roleplayers can take this kind of betrayal personally if they're not adept at keeping their real-world feelings separate from their success, or lack thereof, in the game.)

The adventures appropriate to a campaign of political partisans depend entirely on the nature of the central cause. One common thread in most cases is that the adventures are likely to skew toward the social rather than the martial, at least compared to the other campaign frameworks. Typical adventures will involve the heroes persuading reluctant allies to join them, neutralizing the civic or diplomatic activities of enemy factions, or outmaneuvering the opposition within established political structures. Although the time for swordplay will arise from time to time, these encounters will be less common than in other types of campaigns.

Inventing a strong antagonist faction—or, better yet, many strong antagonist factions—for a campaign of this type will help you create concrete adventures as the Player Characters find themselves pressed into stopping or neutralizing the plots and plans of their enemies. On the days when they find their characters faced only with the simple task of enacting their own plans, the players will count themselves blessed.

Campaigns of this type are best centered on some geographical locale, like Denerim or Orzammar. (These are two particularly good examples. Each is broad enough to accommodate many adventures, but narrow enough to grasp easily in the mind.) As the campaign continues and the Player Characters meet with success in advancing their agenda, the scope can expand to encompass larger and larger geographic or conceptual areas. For example, if low-level PCs are successful in promoting the interests of some local bann within their local domain, their later adventures might involve promoting their agenda in Denerim, and if they're successful there, perhaps they'll wind up leading the bann's armies across the breadth of Ferelden, or even to the other realms of Thedas.

Free Agents

If you're good at thinking on your feet and you have a group of players who're willing to be proactive, you can base your campaign around the complete moment-to-moment free will of the Player Characters in acting as free agents, making their own opportunities for adventure across the breadth of Thedas. They might fight as mercenaries one week, undertake mighty labors on behalf of the persecuted the next, and then take a month off to drink themselves into a stupor and get into tavern brawls from one end of Denerim to the other.

The most suitable heroes for such campaigns are those who are outsiders, and rootless to a certain extent. More grounded heroes can certainly flourish in a campaign of free agentry, but another framework that better reflects their grounding might make more sense for such Player Characters. And grounded heroes—especially if the heroes' backgrounds are not the same—can tend to divide the group. But if the PCs are united in a general rootlessness, they'll have more cause to stick together over the course of the campaign as collective fish out of water.

The most critical characteristics of the group of Player Characters in a free agent campaign are twofold: enterprise and cohesion. The heroes must, either as individuals or as a group, have a motivation to travel forward, proactively doing things and seeking adventures. If they're content to let the world come to them, then another framework that's organized around actually bringing the world to them is more appropriate. Some force of cohesion that keeps the heroes together is also of critical importance. Otherwise, at the end of every adventure both you and the players will struggle to grasp some fresh rationale to explain why the PCs don't head off in their own separate directions, effectively ending the campaign.

Motivating the adventures of a free agent campaign isn't an issue in one sense, because the players become their own motivating force as the heroes go forth into the world and find—or make—their own adventures. But as a practical matter you're still responsible for providing suitable hooks for adventures in the form of interesting NPCs, unstable local situations, and opportunities for wealth, travel, or excitement. You don't have to know where each hook or opportunity might lead, but that's where your ability to create encounters and adventures off the cuff becomes paramount. The bottom line is that the critical

GM skill in getting new adventures off the ground in a free agent campaign is a keen sense of which hooks will pique your players' interest and which are more likely to go nowhere.

The types of adventures that might take place in a campaign of free agents are clearly without limit. Free agent campaigns also allow for adventures of wildly different lengths. Whereas the adventures of other campaign types will more naturally organize themselves into one- or many-session lengths, in this style of campaign a narrative thread need never be pursued any longer than the PCs are interested in it. An adventure might consist of a single encounter encompassing no more than the heroes' intervention in a street fight before things move on to some other plot line, completely unrelated.

It's of critical importance and so it bears repeating: A campaign based on the heroes' unencumbered moment-to-moment choices is recommended only for experienced GMs and proactive players.

Race Relations

This campaign framework centers around the politics and social structure of one of the nonhuman races in Thedas. Often, the majority of the PCs are of the race at the center of this framework: mostly elves, dwarves, or Qunari. Ethnic groups such as the Avvar can also be the center of such campaigns, provided the group in question has a distinct cultural identity and issues in the setting that need resolution or improvement. Action, exploration, and roleplaying are still at the center of this campaign, but most of this relates in some way to the races involved.

The campaign can be tricky to run, especially if players attach real world significance to various races of Thedas. If the GM is not aware of these connections, it's easy to kill the fun of the game or even unintentionally give offense. Because of this, it's crucial to communicate with players before and during the campaign to make sure everyone is on the same page and has compatible goals. This campaign also limits concepts, since it really only works if most or all of a party is a member of, or tied closely to, a particular race.

Player goals and motivations in this campaign need to be interlocking and compatible. Not every PC must agree on the proper course of action at all times, but they need to be engaged and invested. This is because the central conflicts of this campaign are social and political, not physical. A disparate group of heroes might band together to fight a Blight or drive off a marauding dragon, but that same group would struggle to find common ground on the issue of Dalish sovereignty or Qunari relations.

However, this sort of campaign can also be highly rewarding. By focusing on the problems, struggles, and culture of a particular group, the campaign can make great strides in changing things for that group. Where another campaign might improve things for the elves in a particular alienage, this campaign could improve conditions for elves living in alienages across a nation or even all of Thedas. There are also a lot of options for such a game; a campaign focused on finding a new homeland for the Dalish would be very different than a game focused on caste relations in Orzammar. In this way, this really represents multiple campaign frameworks under one umbrella and not just a single type of campaign.

This campaign framework shares much with the Political Partisans one, but usually operates on a wider and more long-term scale. While a political game might focus on a throne changing hands, this campaign is more likely to involving trying to change the customs and attitudes of all who hold power. This means that it is often a good idea for a later campaign or campaign arc, when PCs have achieved power and influence they can leverage to change the status quo.

The Mage-Templar War

This campaign focuses on the conflict between the Circle of Magi and the Chantry, namely their "keepers," the templars. Spiraling out of the events after the Fifth Blight, the Circle broke from the Chantry, no longer trusting the templars to prevent corruption among them and police their behavior. Abuses of power on both sides followed by armed conflict make this a volatile conflict that could break Thedas in two.

This campaign logically has two sides to it, but Player Characters don't need to actually side with either the mages or templars. Working for a compromise and brokering a peace between the two groups is extremely challenging given recent events in the setting, but that's the sort of incredible and difficult task heroes were made for!

Even if PCs are on one side of this conflict, it's important to portray both sides as complex and varied. Not everyone in the Chantry thinks mages are dangerous monsters to be contained or eliminated. Not all mages think the Chantry and the Order of Templars are a bunch of thugs out to oppress them. Most people drawn into this conflict wish to live with some measure of security and freedom; they just don't agree with their opponents on the best course to achieve those ends.

The central themes of this campaign are war and magic. While large battles with flashy magic and clashing swords will feature often, at the heart of it all are the ideas that war is hard and bloody and that magic comes at a cost. Even when a group is winning in the conflict, they will need to work hard not to lose their humanity, keep allies and powerful patrons happy, and avoid weakening their group and allied organizations so much they can't deal with other threats as necessary.

The Mage-Templar War is especially dangerous because it weakens both groups. Demons, bizarre cults, political opportunists, and charismatic extremists are just some of the threats that could use the opportunity the war creates to grow their power. Even if the PCs' side "wins" the war, they might find themselves soon facing an even greater threat with only war-weary and diminished forces to aid them.

Campaigns of this sort can easily range across multiple nations and various locales, but they usually start somewhere. Establishing a "home base" for the PCs is useful since it gives them a place to defend, rest, and recuperate. However, as the conflict grows and spreads, the group may find themselves spending more and more time away from where they started. This is fine, though be careful that the PCs don't lose their connection to the campaign's goals and themes in the process.

This campaign doesn't necessarily need to end or resolve the Mage-Templar War itself, but the PCs should be given ample opportunity to influence the outcome or they're likely to feel ineffective and it won't be as enjoyable. Also, interpersonal

conflict can be very interesting in this sort of campaign, with characters not completely agreeing as to the best way to end hostilities or how the dangers of magic should be addressed. However, GMs should take care to ensure the campaign doesn't devolve into a series of philosophical or even actual battles between PCs about their views; tension and intrigue is great but the PCs constantly fighting each other over policy likely won't be fun in most groups.

The campaign usually works best if at least one PC uses magic, as it makes the conflict more personal. This isn't a requirement for running this campaign, but it is recommended. An entire party of mages could be interesting as well, though it might make some adventures and conflicts tricky. Alternatively, an all-templar group could work well, though PCs wanting to alter their superiors' policy on mages and magic would likely break away from the Order, or have to find a way to take it over. Note that in the canon setting, the Mage-Templar War leads into the events of *Dragon Age: Inquisition* but individual campaigns may take a different direction.

Local Saviors

This campaign framework begins small, but is designed to eventually set up a group of heroes as the greatest heroes of a large region, city, or nation. While many campaigns will have Player Characters gain status and fame through their actions, this campaign is designed around that eventual goal and focused on a particular place.

These campaigns usually start small, introducing the PCs as heroes, mercenaries, or even just concerned citizens in the area. They develop a modest local reputation through early adventures, meeting and interacting with various important local luminaries. For example, they might aid a local templar captain or shut down a local crime boss. Eventually, a larger threat or conspiracy is revealed involving the region and the PCs must stop it with the aid of their allies while dealing with any additional enemies they've made along the way. This larger threat can be anything—it doesn't even need to be directly connected to early adventures. The connection to the location is sometimes enough to motivate the PCs as local heroes to get involved.

The **Realms & Organizations** rules (see **Chapter 6**), can be very useful in this sort of campaign since during play heroes can easily find themselves founding their own group or being placed in charge of a local chapter of a larger organization. Honorifics and titles are also useful to represent the PCs' rise to local heroes and dignitaries. These aren't required, but they can be a real boon to showing how the group grows in influence and power during play.

The end effects of a local saviors' campaign, with the heroes as major power players and heroes in an area, can lead to another campaign dealing with even larger threats that affect the region as well as Thedas as a whole. This is especially appropriate where the PCs end up in charge of a major organization or government entity in the area.

The plotline of *Dragon Age 2* was very similar to the Local Saviors campaign framework, with Hawke arriving in Kirk-

wall with his family and eventually becoming the Champion of Kirkwall. GMs looking for inspiration on how to structure their campaign could use the mix of main missions, side quests, and character interactions in that game for inspiration. You don't need to copy the exact events of that game, you should tailor things to your group and preferences, but it's a good place to start.

Inquisition

Warning: This framework contains some spoilers for *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. If you haven't played it yet, you might want to skip this section for now.

With *Dragon Age: Inquisition* covering the continuation of the Mage-Templar War, the rise of Corypheus and his forces, and the creation of a new Inquisition, tabletop GMs and players can use this as a campaign framework. With the loss of the Divine and the rise of the Herald of Andraste and their Inquisition, Player Characters can take the role of Inquisitors, a counter movement among the templars or mages, or just heroes trying to help who they can during this tumultuous period. Against them are numerous foes, from demons to corrupted templars and more.

Like the video game, an Inquisition campaign would be one of hard and lasting choices. Who to trust, who to serve, and what goals to pursue give the PCs a lot of leeway to affect things. The PCs will likely be agents or even heads of the Inquisition or similar organizations and many will look to them to handle serious problems and make important decisions. With the destabilization of the Chantry, there will be chaos and strife around every corner and only heroes like the PCs can help the people and save Thedas from greater troubles. Conflicts, alliances, sudden changes of fortune, and intrigue would be key themes with roleplaying being as or more important in many cases as winning an important battle.

Enemies are legion in this sort of campaign. Aside from Corypheus and his forces, there are the corrupted Grey Wardens, those attempting to destroy the Orlesian empress, and many other threats to deal with. The PCs have a chance to influence the future of all of Thedas with their actions. The PCs will need support and allies to triumph, providing numerous roleplaying opportunities. Assuming the plot of your campaign follows the computer game closely, ultimately Corypheus and his forces would have to be defeated and the Breach closed or Thedas will fall to ruin and disaster. This is a tall order, but it's exactly the sort of thing a stalwart band of heroes can accomplish.

One alternate to the Inquisition campaign framework is to make one of the PCs the Herald of Andraste and put the PCs directly in charge of the Inquisition and its battles to save Thedas. This is a big responsibility and will likely need to diverge from the plot of the computer game to keep things unpredictable and dramatic for those who have played through *Dragon Age: Inquisition* already. This sort of campaign can be very rewarding and allows for maximum freedom for

GMs and PCs alike, but it can become unfamiliar or confusing to those very attached to *Dragon Age* canonical history and events. It also will likely cover nearly all levels, from 1–20, to properly echo the gravity and scope of its source material. This can be very challenging and some groups may find the campaign too long.

Other Frameworks

Campaign frameworks other than those discussed above are certainly possible. Some may be similar to those outlined, some may combine their aspects, others may be completely of your own devising.

As you consider your own frameworks, the important factors to get a grip on are what kinds of heroes make the most sense, how the heroes will be bound together into a cohesive group, what kinds of adventures the heroes will go on, and what will motivate them to continue going on those adventures over the course of the campaign. The following sections consider each of these factors in turn.

Types of Heroes

Will the Player Characters need a motivating set of personal relationships to bind them into the campaign? Some unifying background element like a common race or profession? A common debt that must be repaid? Does each hero require some baseline level of martial skill (or some other skill, like the ability to ride a horse, to operate a siege engine, or to speak some foreign language) to explain or allow their participation in the campaign? In short, it must make sense for each Player Character to take part. This is where you consider what's necessary in that regard.

Binding the Heroes Together

Are the Player Characters allies with one another before the campaign starts or does the situation that kicks off the campaign somehow bind the heroes together? Do the PCs have existing personal relationships with each other or has some higher authority thrown them together? Do all the members of the group have the same relationship with each other? (Are they all siblings? All employees of the bann?) Or is the group more like a web of different kinds of relationships (this one is that one's spouse while this one is the personal servant of another one entirely)? The heroes must have some reason to continue working together in adventure after adventure. There are some obvious and common reasons that can work for any framework, but if the framework you're contemplating provides any special options or has any unusual requirements, this is where you consider them.

Types of Adventures

Will the Player Characters' adventures generally be search-and-destroy missions against darkspawn and other malevolent threats? Military adventures in a more conventional vein? Epic journeys that cross the realms and seas of Thedas? Political operations? Explorations of strange new lands? You should know and keep in mind the preferences of the players in your group when you consider these questions. You may discover as you think about the types of adventures that are most interesting to your group that it would be best to skew your campaign framework in a different direction than you were originally inclined. The campaign's planning stage is the easiest time to undertake these changes. Once the players have created their PCs and the campaign is underway, it becomes harder and harder to make course corrections.

Motivating the Adventures

Will the Player Characters go on their adventures at the direction of some political or military master? Or will they be compelled by a combination of their own heroic traits pitted against the machinations of some grim mastermind, or the depredations of some horrible villain? Will the heroes go wherever the money is or do they have deeper loyalties? Knowing what motivations for adventure will be called on time and again in the campaign will help you avoid periods of downtime during play, especially to the extent that you can direct the players to create characters who have appropriate goals in the first place.

These four factors inform each other, and as you make decisions about some of them, you may want to re-examine your earlier choices.

In addition to these four factors, you might also give some thought to whether your nascent campaign framework has an obvious end. Are you planning a campaign with an arc (or several arcs) or one that's totally open-ended?

Keep in mind, finally, that campaigns can switch their focus over time. Even if you don't get things exactly right out of the gate, you'll have the opportunity to fine-tune your approach as the group's adventures unfold.

Epic Campaigns

Now that we've got the basics of campaign building and planning covered, this section looks at combining all of those guidelines to help you make the world of Thedas your own and create tales of adventure you and your players will talk about for years after they are done. That's no small order, but do not be intimidated: You can create your own *Dragon Age* epic, putting the very fate of the world into your players' hands, now that their characters have made their way from humble beginnings to the ranks of some of the greatest heroes of Thedas.

Making Your Epic

The making of an epic campaign has four main ingredients: a great villain (or villains), worthy allies for the heroes, worthwhile causes for the heroes to fight, and opportunities for courage and heroism on the part of the main characters. Add to these the fifth ingredient—the players' heroes themselves—and you've got all the essentials to build your epic. You just need to assemble them in the right order and manage them as your game progresses.

Epic Villains

An epic story is a conflict and, for there to be conflict, there must be a villain, a foe who opposes the heroes and their goals, and whom the heroes oppose in turn. This opposition creates the conflict that drives the story as each side works to advance their goals in spite of the efforts of the other.

Ideally, each side has goals beyond just thwarting the other. A villain may seek the corruption and destruction of all life as it has been, but the heroes should want things other than preventing the villain's plans from coming to fruition (see **The Hero's Story** for more on this). Likewise, while some villains' goals are simple (conquer or destroy the world) others are more complex, such as winning favor, renown, or the love of a populace or paramour. Indeed, a villain may have multiple goals, creating additional opportunities for drama when those goals conflict with each other. For example, a general or bann might sell their soul and ally with a hedge mage for the opportunity to claim the spouse of a rival they love, only to discover that they are the intended victim of the mage's demon master!

The Human Element

While *Dragon Age* has many inhuman and monstrous foes, from darkspawn to demons, some of the very best villains for an epic adventure have a human element to them. They are more understandable in their motivations and goals than inhuman monsters, and generally more interesting to interact with in roleplaying scenes. An Archdemon is a powerful foe, but not much of a conversationalist.

In this regard, you may want to consider having multiple tiers of adversaries for your heroes. Perhaps the Archdemon or other powerful monster is intended as the heroes' ultimate foe, but it has a mortal lieutenant or underling the heroes must contend with first. This allows the inhuman foe to remain a menacing background element of the story, only occasionally glimpsed and hinted at through its sinister powers and minions. The mortal underling serves as a mouthpiece and an extension of the villain with which the heroes can interact and, more importantly, perhaps even empathize with.

In the world of Thedas, with threats like the corruption sown by the Blight, it is easy to play the human element as a character who has made some poor choices. Some of the most interesting villains *do not consider themselves evil*. The best human villains think of themselves as the heroes of their own story, often wronged by someone else, or dealing with a choice that only seems to get them in deeper the more they try to recover from it. Take the aforementioned general in love with the liege's spouse: perhaps they were a person of honor with a distinguished record of service, but their desire to have what they cannot have has overwhelmed their better judgment. Having once cooperated with darkspawn, they are now committed, and fears what would happen if their actions were revealed. So they press forward, unable to turn from the course they have chosen. Perhaps they grows to hate their liege—and the heroes who represent them. They may even grow to resent the object of their desire, blaming them for their own personal downfall.

Grand Ambition

Truly legendary villains have grand ambitions, even if they are tempered or surrounded by smaller ones. In a low-level *Dragon Age* game, a villain might threaten the fate of a village, town, or castle. In an epic story, the villain's scheme threatens whole nations, perhaps even the whole world! When you're coming up with goals for your villain, think *big!* For example, a Dalish madman in a low-level adventure might be a stealthy killer of "round-ears", perhaps driven by a rage demon.

In an epic campaign, the mad Dalish Keeper wants nothing less than to become the vessel of the god of vengeance and wipe humanity from the face of Thedas for their crimes against the elven people!

Once again, you can tier the ambitions and plans of your villains based on their power and role in the story. The most powerful and driving villain has the greatest ambition, while lesser lieutenants and henchmen may have more modest

Sacrifice and Success

As discussed in this section, one of the elements of epic adventure is opportunity for the heroes to make a difference; another is making difficult choices. These come together in the idea that epic heroes often make sacrifices to achieve their goals, perhaps even the ultimate sacrifice of a hero who perishes in order to achieve victory (or even just the chance of victory) for others.

As the dice themselves have no sense of drama, it can be difficult to allow them to decide the outcome of these moments of supreme sacrifice. Instead, we recommend exercising some creative license and just narrating the hero's sacrifice and its outcome in the most dramatic and epic way you can. If you need a guideline, consider the sacrifice the equivalent of achieving six stunt points without a roll, and don't allow the fall of the dice to mess up a perfectly exciting and dramatic moment.

For example, the heroes are in an area where the Veil is thin, struggling to prevent demons from crossing over and wreaking havoc. They face a horde of darkspawn who are determined to see the demons come into Thedas. The heroes are fighting a desperate holding action, waiting for the mage and the templar to stop the demonic incursion, if they can do it in time. The darkspawn, however, are close to overwhelming them and the demons are drawing closer and closer to the world.

Rather than risk the luck (i.e., the dice) not being with them, the mage chooses to sacrifice themselves, exchanging a few last words with the templar, before pushing their comrade aside and exerting a final, last effort. The demons are rebuffed with a thunderclap of magical power, a blast that scatters the darkspawn nearby and gives the heroes a chance to rally. Rather than calling for a roll, the GM decides the mage's sacrifice is enough to do the job, and the player is satisfied that their character will be remembered for their heroism and sacrifice throughout Thedas.

It's worth noting that a variant of this kind of sacrifice and success is when the heroes are willing, and fully intend, to make the necessary sacrifice, but fate intervenes and saves them at the last moment. For example, the mage does what is needed to stop the demons, but the templar manages to pull him clear at the last second. The heroes ride out to challenge the darkspawn hordes in a blaze of glory, but the cavalry arrives to ride to their rescue and turn the tide of battle, and so forth. Play this kind of thing carefully, as it can dilute the power of a heroic sacrifice if the players *expect* to be saved from the consequences of their actions, but it can make for a satisfying turn of events to have all the drama of a heroic sacrifice without necessarily losing that character in the process.

plans. The mad Keeper's circle of elven allies might be a cult dedicated to the god of vengeance, with their own agendas, for example. His lieutenant is an elven apostate with a personal score to settle, having been hounded by the Chantry and its templars, but may not have the stomach for the kind of mass slaughter his master plots, and so forth.

You can tease out the villain's ambitions in the campaign, revealing things to the players piece by piece. Indeed, some of the low-level threats they initially face may later be revealed to be part of the main villain's master plan. Perhaps that mad elven killer was a disciple of the main villain's cult, and the heroes encounter that organization in several forms throughout the campaign before realizing its full scope and the intended purpose of its profane rites. Likewise, the seemingly random attacks of darkspawn may create a larger pattern of atrocities intended to create a powerful Veil tear in a region, fully unleashing the power of the Blight upon the land. Although you want to have the villain's grand ambition in mind, you don't necessarily have to state it outright to the players right away. You can take some time and build toward it.

Epic Heroes

Opposing the schemes and ambitions of the legendary villains are the legendary heroes, the main characters of the *Dragon Age* epic your game group is crafting. While they might start out at lower levels, eventually these characters will rise to become some of the most prominent and powerful figures in Ferelden and maybe even Thedas. This section looks at some things to consider from the story side, the things that make the characters legendary heroes apart from the numbers and game stats.

Worthwhile Causes

In an epic adventure, it helps if the heroes have something to fight *for,* apart from mere survival. While the goal of many epics is "save the nation (or the world) from terrible evil" that can become a rather abstract and impersonal goal from the players' perspective. You can involve the players more deeply in the adventure by making the cause they fight for more personal.

For example, perhaps one mage character experienced a terrible Harrowing, nearly possessed by a demon that in fact *did* possess one of their fellow apprentices, a dear friend they then had to assist the templars in destroying. Now that same demon (which fled into the Fade) is either the agent of a greater evil, or behind the grand scheme of the campaign. The mage finally has their chance at vengeance, but must also confront what they feel is their failure to save their friend and the injustice of the Circle for placing them in that situation in the first place. Another character is a seasoned veteran, tired of war, who wants nothing more than to retire in peace, but must fight one last battle, knowing that it may be hopeless, or that they may win the peace by sacrificing their own life and ability to enjoy it.

Giving the heroes goals beyond just "complete the adventure and save the world" provides opportunities for dramatic conflict and storytelling. Will the Circle mage abandon other goals in order to gain vengeance? Will the veteran warrior abandon duty if offered the opportunity to have the peaceful retirement they seek? What is more important to a character: love or honor? Ambition or loyalty? Great stories come from conflicts and choices such as these.

Encourage your players to help create causes for their characters, using the goals and ties they came up with at the very start of the campaign or developed later through roleplaying. It is in the epic campaign where those goals may be realized, and where the heroes' ties will be tested, and perhaps changed forever.

Worthy Allies

In addition to having worthwhile causes, epic adventures benefit from having worthy allies for the heroes, those who can aid and advise them, who can support them and be supported by the characters in turn. One of the strengths of fantasy heroes like those in *Dragon Age* is their ability to cooperate, as opposed to their more authoritarian opponents. Allies can put a real face on the stakes of a challenge that the heroes face and what will happen if they fail.

Allies fill a number of roles in epic adventures, from giving the heroes someone to rescue to showing up in the nick of time to rescue *them*. Major roles, and the types of allies that fit each, include the following:

Advisor

The ally's primary role is to offer sage advice to the heroes, perhaps being an experienced scholar, mage, or priestess schooled in lore, or a veteran soldier or courtier, familiar with battlefields both literal and metaphorical. The ally often serves as a kind of "mouthpiece" for the GM, funneling advice and information to the players, although the ally should not be an all-knowing font of information, and any advice is likely to come from a particular perspective, with the character's own biases. Indeed, on some things, the advisor may be flat-out wrong. Regardless, decisions should be largely up to the heroes, made with the assistance of the advisor's insight.

Assistant

An assistant provides help other than the guidance of an advisor (previously), from making or caring for the heroes' weapons and armor to caring for their injuries or seeing to their other needs. Some assistants are hired henchmen or other loyal followers. Others are allies who do not accompany the heroes on their adventures, but are available to them for assistance in between.

Charge

The ally is a responsibility for the heroes, someone they must protect and look after, from the true heir to the throne to a ward, apprentice, or family member. The charge may fill other roles as well, and need not necessarily be a burden, but seeing to the charge's welfare should be something foremost in the characters' minds. A charge might even be more than one person, such as heroes looking after the populace of a whole village, town, or even city and taking responsibility for their welfare.

Foil

Although the foil might not *seem* like an ally, they can be the stone that sharpens the heroes' wits and determination. This character is often a potential ally, but too blinded by personal ambition or biases to welcome the heroes. Instead, the foil often plays "devil's advocate" and works to undermine the characters, poking holes in their plans and challenging their authority and their ideas. The classic example is the courtier or military leader who questions "upstart" heroes' identities and what right they have to take any responsibility. Still, when it comes right down to it, most foils prove loyal to the cause and do what is necessary. Only a few fall victim to their baser natures, betraying the heroes to go over to the villain's side.

Noble

Lastly, there are those allies who have greater authority than the heroes: the nobles, banns, kings, and leaders of influential organizations like the Chantry or the Circle. The heroes may owe allegiance to one or more of these people, or may see them as peers, depending on their social positions. A noble ally can potentially offer a great deal to help the heroes, but nobles also have the most responsibilities and other factors to weigh in their decisions, and might well envy—and rely upon—the heroes for their relative freedom to act.

Opportunities for Heroism

Lastly, to be truly *epic*, an epic adventure must offer the heroes opportunities to be *heroes*, to go above and beyond and accomplish feats that will be retold in song and story for generations to come.

The beginning of this is just applying the encounter design guidelines to higher levels heroes. Higher-level characters can dish out—and take—more damage and handle tests with greater difficulties. You can layer more complications and challenges onto otherwise routine tests, staging combats up amongst the branches of trees, or inside a burning manor house, for example.

Along the same lines of adding challenge, you can also provide opportunity. Epic adventures are a great venue for situational stunts: While fighting amongst the tree branches, for example, you might allow heroes to perform a special stunt of whipping a branch back (or shaking it) to cause an opponent to fall, a variation on the Knock Prone stunt (but with more severe consequences!). Perhaps the victim gets a Dexterity test to grab the branch at the last moment. Similarly, heroes fighting in the midst of a blaze might get a special stunt to knock a foe into the flames.

You can put these stunts "in-play" yourself by jotting them onto a sticky note or piece of scrap paper like "Branch Whip – 2 SP" and putting them out on the table (or on the side of your GM screen facing the players). Alternately, you can let the players come up with their own ideas for situational stunts, using the environment and opportunities you have provided. Use the existing *Dragon Age* stunts as models and guidelines, but be liberal in allowing players to do this, especially if their ideas for stunts truly are epic and exciting.

Lastly, do not forget the "moral choices" element of encounter design. As *Dragon Age* heroes grow in power and influence, the decisions they must make do not get any easier. If anything, they become more difficult, and affect far more people. Where once the heroes might have been deciding the fates of a handful of people or the future of a

village, now they hold the fates of thousands and the future of entire nations, if not the world, in their hands. If they have the one person a Tevinter army wants, do they hand that person over or risk a battle that could result in the loss of hundreds of lives, or more? If the heroes have proof that a noble is responsible for terrible crimes, but they need that noble's support in court, will they resort to blackmail? Will they keep the noble in place, reasoning "better the devil they know" rather than deal with their stiff-necked, but honest, successor?

These decisions might not come off as particularly "heroic" but then the heroes of *Dragon Age* are not those of song and story in that they must often deal with some harsh realities. The ability to make the tough decisions, and live with the consequences, is also a mark of a hero in Thedas.

The Hero's Story

Every hero has a story. In *Dragon Age*, that story emerges through playing the game, allowing the players to look back on the adventures their characters have shared and have a story to tell about them. Early events in a *Dragon Age* campaign will focus on planting the seeds of a character's story—with goals and ties—and how to cultivate those seeds through character growth with roleplaying encounters and choices like specialties. In an epic adventure, the time arrives for harvesting the fruits of the characters' stories and bringing them to a satisfying conclusion.

Among other things, this means looking at the goals players established for their characters at 1st level and asking which have been met, which have changed, and which are still waiting to be fulfilled. While characters have likely cycled through various short-term goals up to this point, consider moving things forward for some of their long-term goals. Does an elf hero want to find a new homeland for her people? Perhaps a surface dwarf has always dreamed of retiring from the adventuring life to become a wealthy merchant and middleman for dwarven goods, and so forth. In the higher levels, start dropping hints pointing toward the characters' longterm goals, allowing them to make progress in that direction, if they so choose. Who knows? They might discover such long-held dreams do not have the same attraction they once did, or they might seize the opportunity to have a chance of finally realizing them.

Changing the World

An epic adventure has the potential to change the world by its very nature. The stakes are high, and the potential rewards equally great. One thing is for certain: whether the heroes succeed or fail, things will never be the same again. This is a good thing, because it tells the players their characters' actions and decisions matter. Win or lose, they will remember that things changed because of what happened in the campaign.

Fortunately for you, the world of Thedas is wide open for your own *Dragon Age* game. You can change things to suit you and your group, and the events of your campaign, however you want. Want the heroes to fulfill the prophecy of the Maker's return to restore the Golden City? You can.

Want to give them the opportunity to end the Blight, unite the banns of Ferelden, or any number of other things? You can do those, too. Of course, there's always the possibility the heroes might fail, leaving the world worse off than it was before. Then it is either up to them to try to fix things, or for the next generation of heroes (the players' new characters) to do so.

Campaign Continuity

Speaking of later generations, you get to decide if your *Dragon Age* setting lasts beyond a single campaign. One of the other great things about tabletop RPGs is that, if the heroes *do* change the world a great deal, you can either keep on playing in that different setting, seeing how far you can go with it, or you can "reset" and start a new campaign, putting everything back the way that it was (or, at least, as much as you want to). You can run any number of games in any number of versions of Thedas, with different starting points, themes, and characters. You can set all of your campaigns in the same version of the world, with their events influencing each other, or make them completely separate. If you wanted, you could even connect "parallel" versions of Thedas and have characters meet alternate versions of themselves and see what might have been. The sky is the limit!

Planning & Preparation

Part of producing epic campaigns and adventures is planning and preparation. Now, you do *not* have to plot out every single scene and encounter of your game. Indeed, it is often best if you do not, since you're running a game and not writing a novel. Instead, you want to prepare enough so that you have a good grasp of the key characters and events in the adventure, what's going on at any given time, and easy access to find other important information during play without having to stop the game to rummage around looking for it. Some useful things to prepare for your adventure include the following:

Outline

Put together an (ideally) one-page outline for the adventure, showing a rough chronological sequence of events. Put in important dates and times, if necessary, such as whether a particular event happens during the day or at night, on the first night of the full moon, Wintersend, or the like. Refer to this outline in play to track where the players are in the course of the adventure. You can even tick off events as they happen or use a paperclip or other marker to show progress along the timeline.

Important Characters

Have a one-page reference sheet of the important characters in the adventure and campaign; typically just a listing of their name and a one-sentence summary is enough to jog your memory and keep track of who's who. You may also want individual game stats for important characters who may interact with the heroes on a game system level. Otherwise, you don't need to know the stats of every innkeeper and castle guard. Make them up as needed.

Adversaries

You *will* want complete game stats for all the adversaries the characters may face in the adventure. You can divide these up by encounter, having all the adversaries for a particular encounter on a page, or individually, so you can mix-and-match them as needed. Leave yourself space on the reference sheets to note things like damage and other conditions affecting the adversaries in play, or have scrap paper or another place (like a tablet or laptop) to track these things.

Quick Reference

Like the important characters sheet, you might want to prepare a quick reference sheet with key information for running the adventure. In particular, you can include key facts (names of locations, historical events, and so forth), bits of color (like a phrase in elven or dwarven the heroes might hear), and information on the characters themselves you'll need to reference in-play, such as their Defense and Armor Ratings.

And Who Are You?

Lastly, you might want to prepare a "cheat sheet" with some useful spur-of-the-moment ideas and references for things that happen during play, such as a list of random names (of different cultures and races) for those times when a player asks the name of a minor background character you haven't planned in advance, the names of random inns and other places of business, and the names of streets or other locals found in a large city you don't happen to have completely mapped out in detail. These details add richness to your narrative with a minimum of fumbling and let you quickly move through such random questions.

Record Keeping

Just as historians and scholars will likely want to keep tales of the heroes' exploits, you may want to take notes about them, especially as the characters begin to change the world around them. If in your *Dragon Age* campaign the heroes have placed someone different on the throne of Orzammar, for example, you'll want to keep track of it. The same goes for other details that differ from the material found in the various *Dragon Age* sourcebooks and adventures. Make notes to yourself during the game and, after each game, take a few minutes to consolidate your notes into a notebook, word processing file, or other place to keep them organized. This will allow you to flip back through them easily to find an important piece of information during later games when it might come up.

Chapter 11

Secrets of Thedas

Chapter 7: Welcome to Thedas provided a general overview of the setting that was detailed but safe for players to read if they are interested in *Dragon Age* lore. This chapter is for GM eyes only, however, as it has secrets unknown to the average denizen of Thedas. Here you'll find a history of the Blights and the effects of the Taint, details on the Grey Wardens and their organization, and information about the Fade and the challenges of adventuring there.

History of the Blight

Thedas has seen five Blights. Although all Blights have shared similarities, none have been exactly the same. Some Grey Wardens say that the darkspawn have grown increasingly violent with each Blight. Whether this is true, what's clear to all is that a rising Blight must be fought lest its motivating Archdemon and its darkspawn horde choke the life from every corner of the living world.

The Chantry teaches that the First Blight was unleashed upon Thedas because the mage-lords of Tevinter opened a gate to the Maker's Golden City through the Fade and their hubris brought the Maker's wrath. The mage-lords were cast back into the mundane world as the first darkspawn, say the Chantry's texts, their souls corrupted. In their depravity they sought the Old Gods, and, finding the Archdemon Dumat slumbering deep within the earth began the First Blight in earnest.

In all probability, these religious histories of the First Blight are either too simple, partially inaccurate, or even flat-out incorrect. Consider that the Memories of Orzammar record that the darkspawn first appeared in the Deep Roads in 800 TE. If the Chantry's history and Orzammar's Memories are both true, then Tevinter mages would have breached the Golden City, been cursed, fled into the darkness, found and corrupted Dumat, raised an army of darkspawn, and then completely overrun the western thaigs all in one year.

It seems more likely that in 800 TE, the Tevinter magisters had already been seeking Dumat for some time. A few Grey Warden scholars believe they may have even found him by that time, and that it was only with his counsel that they were able to reach the Maker's Golden City. Different groups of mages may have been pursuing different agendas that were later fused. The truth will probably never be known.

In any case, the people of Thedas did not at first connect the rising contamination of the earth with the coming of the darkspawn. The "blighting" of the world initially seemed more like additional proof that the Old Gods had abandoned the world. But, over decades, as the land continued to sour while the darkspawn became more profuse, the correlation became increasingly obvious. Growing certainty about the connection was one factor that would eventually drive Carinus to found the Grey Wardens in the hopes that purging Thedas of darkspawn would also reverse the terrible effects of the Blight upon the land.

The pre-founding travels of Carinus and his circle are solidly part of the Order's legend but they may be little more than fables. While Carinus looms large in some histories, others don't even acknowledge his existence. At least one story of the foundation credits a group of Anders soldiers who shamed Tevinter with their courage in hunting Dumat even while their own families died.

Origin of the Joining

Whether Carinus existed or not, the tale of his travels to recruit allies suggest the first would-be Wardens were doing more than getting the word out. They also sought a way to battle the darkspawn and protect themselves from the Taint. They found this in the Joining ritual. It is unknown exactly how the Grey Wardens discovered the ritual that has allowed them to fight the darkspawn and remain free of the Taint. Rumors abound of blood magic rituals or ancient secrets used to create the dangerous formula which transformed the Wardens, but the truth of the Joining remains a mystery.

What is known is that ritual the Grey Wardens crafted proved critical to their success. Those who underwent the ritual not only became immune to the darkspawn disease, but found that they could also sense the presence of darkspawn and "overhear" their unspoken communication. Indeed, this was the first real proof that the darkspawn were communally driven by a centralized motivating force.

The Grey Wardens used the abilities granted by the Joining to take the fight to the darkspawn. For centuries they have used it join their fates to the Archdemons and their followers so they may battle and destroy them. Not all survive the ritual, but those who do become potent and necessary weapons against the Blight.

Prices Paid

As the First Blight wore on the Grey Wardens began to learn the price of the Joining. They suffered gruesome dreams and visions, ravenous hunger, and—as years continued to pass—an increasingly irresistible compulsion to join with the darkspawn hordes. The darkspawn also learned, over time, to differentiate between their allies and the Grey Wardens. They even learned that they could sometimes detect the presence of unseen Wardens, just as the Wardens could detect them.

Despite these drawbacks, the Grey Wardens met with great success in the early years of their campaign against

the Blight. A group of determined Anders soldiers even managed to slay Dumat while the dragon was on the run from a Warden offensive. Their celebrations were cut short when Dumat returned—apparently unharmed—a very short time later. Grey Warden scholars learned, in the years that followed, that the Archdemon's death had only forced its soul to relocate into the body of another nearby darkspawn, whose form it then twisted back into the shape it preferred. It seemed that as long as a single darkspawn remained, Dumat was immortal.

The Grey Wardens despaired. Then their Order proposed that the Wardens' subtle ties to the darkspawn might prove to be Thedas's salvation. If Dumat were slain by a Grey Warden, they proposed, then the Old God's dying spirit would rush into the Warden's body. Since a Warden's body already has a soul (as opposed to the soulless darkspawn), the resulting paradox would destroy both Warden and Archdemon.

Dumat's death at the hands of Grey Wardens at the Battle of the Silent Plains proved this idea correct, for the Archdemon did not return in the years that followed. The Order's histories do not record which Warden gave up their soul to destroy the Archdemon, for many Wardens struggled against Dumat, and the dragon's very death throes slew seven or more of the Order's warriors.

The Corruption of Decades

Since those days, the Grey Wardens have learned more about the condition that the Joining brings about in them. They have observed that Grey Wardens not otherwise slain in battle or strife are able to resist the slow corruption of their souls for about thirty years. They have also learned that certain herbs can counteract the Blight disease if administered in timely and appropriate fashion, and they have disseminated this knowledge across Thedas.

Blights

No one knows exactly what a Blight is. The Chantry still teaches that Blights are the Maker's curse on the ancient magisters of Tevinter who breached His Golden City. The Grey Wardens think of Blights as a pervasive spiritual corruption. The ever-practical dwarves do not care what Blights are, or what causes them, as long as they are fought with resolve and steel.

It is clear that a Blight arises when darkspawn, in their burrowing, unearth one of the Old Gods once worshipped by

Tevinter. The darkspawn are somehow drawn to the resting places of these ancient high dragons. It may be that the Old Gods call to the darkspawn hoping to be released from their ancient prisons, or it may be that the darkspawn are somehow able to sense the presence of the corruptible deities and so seek them out. Both may be true.

In any case, upon reaching a slumbering Old God the corruption of the darkspawn transforms the powerful being into an Archdemon. Some suppose that this transformation drives the deity mad, while others believe that the actions of such beings are beyond understanding in the first place. Whatever its motivations, an unearthed Archdemon eventually rises to the surface of the world and leads seemingly limitless darkspawn hordes in battle against all who oppose them.

Between the time an Archdemon is transformed and the moment when it first appears on the surface of the world the land itself begins to show signs of the growing corruption. Crops shrivel, water turns foul, animals sicken and become twisted, people fall ill for no obvious reason. As these effects increase, darkspawn are seen with greater frequency.

Once the Archdemon appears on the surface, the Blight's corruption follows in its wake as it travels the land, expanding especially swiftly from any area where the tainted Old God lairs. The longer the Blight continues the more intense the effects become. Eventually the sky fills with roiling clouds that blot out the sun. The little rain that falls from such clouds is thick and viscous, yet evaporates quickly.

A Blight only ends with the death of the Archdemon whose rise brought it forth. In all the history of Thedas, only the Grey Wardens have managed to permanently slay an Archdemon. It's not clear whether this is the only way an Archdemon can be destroyed for good, but it's certainly the case that most would-be slayers perish simply attempting to penetrate the foul malaise that surrounds these horrible creatures.

How Blights are Experienced

Blights advance in a progression that the Grey Wardens now understand relatively well. However, the Order remains uncertain about the precise "rules" under which Blights operate. Does an Archdemon's presence cause and spread the Blight, or is it the hordes of darkspawn that invariably travel with them? Does it take all Archdemons a similar amount of time to reach the surface? What would happen if an Archdemon were left unchecked forever? Even for the gaps in their knowledge, the Grey Wardens use what they do know to carry out their vigilant—and sometimes violent—work.

Blights begin without warning, and spread quietly at first. Those on the outskirts of surface civilization begin to report darkspawn activity, but environmental effects are difficult to discern. Some assume the darkspawn have been driven to the surface by calamity below and that their depredations will pass, while others immediately conclude that a Blight is coming. The Grey Wardens spend much time and effort investigating the activities of darkspawn—and rumors of their activities—between Blights, always trying to become aware of the next Blight as early as possible.

If a Blight is truly on the rise, as time passes more and more witnesses spot increasingly large forces of darkspawn in the land. It becomes clear that the plants and animals in the areas where the darkspawn have been most often are sickening. Outlying villages suffer attacks. Sometimes, despite appearances, even this level of corruption and devastation is not truly a Blight. A particularly strong or clever hurlock or genlock alpha can carry their minions to great triumphs even when an Archdemon is not active in the world. In such cases, if the horde that follows such a leader is defeated, the land slowly recovers.

Attacks on small villages eventually give way to raids on increasing lager, and more central, bastions of civilization. Even though the Archdemon has not yet been seen, darkspawn forces include increasingly mighty creatures. Massive armies besiege sizable cities outside a realm's central lands. Blight disease spreads and intensifies. Famine arises. These manifestations can continue for years, even decades.

By this time, only a fool would deny that a Blight has come, even if an Archdemon has not yet been seen. Travel becomes difficult and dangerous. Blight wolves, bereskarn, and worse attack travelers even near towns and on major roads. Whole armies of darkspawn march in the open. Many villages have been devastated or abandoned. Those that remain distrust travelers and fall under frequent attacks. Potable water is scarce. The skies are overcast and ominous, although there is little rain.

Eventually, the Archdemon takes the head of its darkspawn armies, leading them into battle and smashing the cities of civilization. Roiling clouds block the sun across the whole of the world for months on end. Only the scarcest pockets of healthy wilderness remain. The tainted land itself is capable of infecting the weak or unwary; ghouls and other weird mutants run rampant through the countryside.

Civilized travelers are invariably hunted unless they travel in armies, and even armies fall under attack without notice. All small and most medium-sized settlements have been razed, their denizens now either dead or refugees in other places. Larger and larger cities fall. More and more people are killed. The Blight spreads and the darkspawn armies grow until the Archdemon is slain.

The tide turns when the Archdemon is slain. The skies clear almost immediately and the weather returns quickly to normal for the season. The land can take months or years to recover, depending on how far into Blight various areas fell. New-growth plants break the surface. Some sickly animals recover and some twisted animals finally manage to breed (producing non-mutant offspring), but even by life's various means it still takes a long time for animal populations to reach their pre-blight levels. Rebuilding old villages and founding new ones continues for human generations. Some particularly hard-hit areas never recover from the Blight. There are portions of the Anderfels that have been so ravaged by two Blights that they are now deserts.

The Order organizes hunts to kill off as many disoriented and leaderless darkspawn as possible before they retreat back underground. Eventually the darkspawn are killed or retreat, and even deep wildernesses become generally safe for civilized traffic.

Should a Blight continue unchecked, it would lay waste to the world of men, something every realm prays will never come to pass.

The Grey Wardens

Since the First Blight the Grey Wardens have been the protectors of Thedas. When an Archdemon stirs beneath the earth and armies of darkspawn spill onto its surface, it is the Grey Wardens who are sworn to defeat them. Four Blights have ravaged Thedas, each a long and brutal war. Four archdemons have been slain and four hordes of darkspawn defeated and scattered, the Grey Wardens victorious, though always at great cost. For these deeds the Grey Wardens have been lauded as the heroes—at least while memories of the Blights remained fresh…

In the hundreds of years after the Fourth Blight, many generations of Grey Wardens spent their lives training for a war that never came, remaining vigilant. They knew that down in the Deep Roads the darkspawn were searching for Old Gods that yet remained.

At the start of *Dragon Age: Origins*, it had been four hundred years since the last Blight and many believed the darkspawn had been defeated forever. The Grey Wardens had declined in number and influence, and their famous griffon mounts were long dead. In many courts they were seen as a nuisance, a relic of bygone ages.

It was in the land of Ferelden where the Grey Wardens were weakest, and it was there—whether by chance or design—that a new Archdemon had risen and gathered armies of darkspawn to it. The Grey Wardens had to recruit a new generation of heroes there, if a Fifth Blight was to be stopped.

History of the Grey Wardens

The world was dying—literally, not metaphorically—and the folk of Thedas were stumbling in dawning horror.

The year was 889 TE by the calendars of the Tevinter Imperium. For almost ninety years, beasts the likes of which had never been seen were ravaging the length of the Imperium, striking from an apparent multitude of staging points in the western countryside of Thedas. The dwarven kingdoms reported that many of their outposts had fallen, and that the "spawn of the dark" had overrun portions of their Deep Roads and were using them to travel the breadth of the land unseen by those above.

The sky itself had become rebellious, with unnatural light and strange storms reported across the land. Crops grew strange, and many creatures of the wilderness did as well. The Old Gods of Tevinter no longer answered prayers for deliverance, if they ever had. Their temples were being burned and looted with abandon, their priests assailed with pleas for help, or stoned to death for their impotence. Andraste would not be born for another 92 years, and the Maker was not listening to the cries of the world.

In this hour of Thedas's greatest need, 890 TE, at Weisshaupt Fortress in the desolate Anderfels, a band of knights and soldiers from that realm and across the Tevinter Imperium renounced their oaths to their various lords and commanders and together assumed a higher duty: to defeat the Blight. Thus was born the Order of the Grey Wardens, and they would defeat the Blight or dash their lives against it until not one of them stood.

The Grey Wardens' ritual of the Joining dates from this time. The Joining is a secret rite by which Warden initiates consume lyrium and the blood of darkspawn and in so doing are granted—among other capabilities—the ability to mystically sense the nearby presence of their darkspawn enemies.

The nascent military order prosecuted an aggressive campaign against the Blight. Outsiders first witnessed their might at the Battle of Nordbotten, where the Grey Wardens rode into battle mounted on griffons and slew the foul creatures ten and twenty at a time. Beholden to no temporal lords, the Wardens continued to fight the darkspawn and the Archdemon that led them without complicating concerns. They were free to sacrifice villages and fortresses that could not be won, preserving their might for the clashes that truly mattered. Thus, the tide began to turn.

For the next hundred years battles raged. Lands given up for lost were reclaimed. As the other nations saw the Grey Wardens' brutal effectiveness they lent their aid. The order grew in numbers and their reputation spread to every corner of Thedas. They accepted all with skill, might, or tenacity into their ranks, slaves and noblemen alike, regardless of their race or temperament. Finally, in 992 TE the Grey Wardens met the Archdemon Dumat on the Silent Plains, sacrificing fully one-third of the armies of the north in order to fell their ultimate enemy and drive the darkspawn back beneath the earth.

> You will guard them and they will hate you for it. Whenever there is not a Blight actively crawling over the surface, humanity will do its best to forget how much they need us. And that's good. We need to stand apart from them, even if they have to push us away to make us do it. That is the only way we can ever make the hard decisions.
>
> —Kristoff, Commander of the Grey

The Grey Wardens' goal had been seen to its completion, but they knew that the Imperium had once venerated seven gods, and that six remained beneath the earth. They knew that they must continue to keep watch.

Highs and Lows

Two centuries passed before the rise of the second Archdemon, Zazikel. The darkspawn were better prepared for their tenacious Grey Warden foes in this second campaign. The first coordinated darkspawn attack of the Second Blight (on the surface, anyway) sent a pointed message, ending in the utter destruction of Nordbotten. The darkspawn also besieged Weisshaupt directly during the Second Blight, bringing the fight unambiguously to the Grey Wardens' doorstep. The timely intervention of Emperor Drakon of Orlais broke the siege and ultimately led to the order's official embrace of the Andrastian Chantry. The Second Blight lasted 90 years. Zazikel was slain at Starkhaven in 1:95 Divine. As before, the Grey Wardens were instrumental in driving back the Blight.

The following Glory Age was a watchful time for the Grey Wardens. Although they fought skirmishes in the wilderness against small groups of darkspawn, and small bands of Wardens travelled to Orzammar to fight alongside dwarves in the Deep Roads, there were no major surface incursions. The Wardens pointedly refused to help the Chantry during the Exalted March against the Dales.

In 3:10 Towers, the Archdemon Toth awoke beneath central Thedas and darkspawn poured across the Free Marches. Only unfailing pressure from the Grey Wardens convinced Orlais and Tevinter to render any aid at all. The significant battles of the Third Blight were massive in scope, but it ended relatively quickly in 3:25 Towers at Hunter Fell with the destruction of Toth.

The Grey Wardens entered a long, introspective period. They remained mindful of their duty, but also became more involved in the politics of the nations of Thedas.

The Chantry's great schism with the Imperial Chantry of the Tevinter Imperium came to an abrupt end with the rise of Andoral and the Fourth Blight in 5:12 Exalted—everyone had more pressing concern than a religious schism to worry about. (See the section The Imperial Chantry for more information about this schism.) This time, the darkspawn came from both the northwest and the northeast, attacking throughout the Anderfels and Antiva. Antiva was swiftly overrun and its ruling family slain before the horde poured into Rivain and the Free Marches. In the west the Hossberg, capital of the Anderfels, was besieged. Orlais and Tevinter were attacked by smaller hordes, which they repulsed; in response to outside requests for aid, Orlais sent only a token force and the Imperium helped not at all. It was Garahel, the now-legendary elven Grey Warden, who answered the call for help in Anderfels. Leading an army of Anders and his fellow Wardens, he broke the siege of the Hossberg in 5:20 Exalted. At Starkhaven, Garahel gathered an army of Grey Wardens from every nation, of Anders, and of nearly every battle-worthy man and woman from the Free Marches before marching to Antiva. Four blood-drenched years of war ended in 5:24 Exalted at the city of Ayesleigh, where Garahel fell only after personally slaying the Archdemon Andoral.

Since this great victory, the Grey Wardens have been in decline. It has been four hundred years since the Fourth Blight, and the Wardens are seen as an anachronism in most of Thedas outside the Anderfels. Their refusal to join the struggles against the Qunari earned them enemies in many courts. Their magnificent griffons are long extinct. The darkspawn seem all but vanquished, and while the dwarves of Orzammar know better, they keep their own counsel. While tales of the Grey Wardens' heroism are still told in some places, they are considered by most to be ancient accounts, with no bearing for those living in the *Dragon Age*.

Organization

From their founding, the Grey Wardens have prized flexibility over hierarchy. Not only are their numbers few and thinly spread, due to the dangers of their self-appointed task they see death come often. An order such as theirs beholden to a rigid chain of command would shatter when confronted with the ravages of a Blight.

The First Warden, who dwells at Weisshaupt, ostensibly commands the Grey Wardens as a whole. In practice, the

First Warden is embroiled in the politics of the Anderfels, where the Wardens are akin to nobility and are afflicted with responsibilities to match. First Wardens have traditionally left nearly all practical, day-to-day decisions about the order's activities to their field commanders.

Each country has its own Grey Warden contingent led by a Warden-Commander, sometimes called a "Commander of the Grey." While some Warden-Commanders have been appointed by orders from Weisshaupt, many have achieved their posts by the acclamation of their fellows, which the First Warden typically ratifies without comment. Each Warden-Commander directs the Grey Wardens assigned to their nation, and frequently have to deal personally with the political authorities in their areas of command.

All Grey Wardens have the authority to act as necessary and wise in pursuit of their fight against darkspawn, wherever they find themselves. Although Grey Wardens often observe an informal pecking order based on seniority counted from their Joining, this is not always the case. Warden-Commanders typically present a problem or task to a group of Wardens judged to be of sufficient size or fortitude, who then have complete discretion in how they wish to proceed.

Once, the authority of the Grey Wardens was unquestioned. A Grey Warden could literally command monarchs and expect obedience. Times have changed. While Wardens are expected to do their duty no matter where it takes them, they are frequently admonished to avoid offending local authorities where at all possible.

Griffons

Magnificent creatures, griffons possessed the bodies of lions but the heads, wings, and claws of raptors. Their fur and plumage varied from charcoal black to brilliant white, with most bearing the grey hues between.

Fierce predators, griffons were known to protect their young with unrelenting fury. But certain groups among the Anders and Orth had forged alliances with these creatures, and while they laughed at the idea they had "tamed" these powerful beasts, those of their number who had joined the Grey Wardens taught their new battle-brothers how to ride them in battle.

The griffons were native to the Wandering Hills and the northern reaches of the Hunterhorn Mountains. There has been much speculation about what led to the decline of the species. Regardless, this would be a great blow to the order, as Blights in later ages devastated the griffons' eyries and they slowly died off, becoming extinct some two hundred years before the *Dragon Age*. Rumors occasionally surface of griffons surviving in some remote area, but have always come to naught.

While it is not specifically recorded in the annals at Weisshaupt, many Grey Wardens believe that the griffons' grey coloration directly inspired their order's name. The Griffon Rampant remains the symbol of the Grey Wardens to this day, and griffon iconography appears on many Grey Warden artifacts.

The Wardens have the Right of Conscription. If the order wants you, you're recruited. End of story.
—Fiona, Grey Warden

Recruitment

The Grey Wardens are open to men and women of every race, nation, and background. Humans, elves, and dwarves fill their ranks. While no Qunari who follow the precepts of the Qun have ever joined their ranks, there are rumors of several Tal-Vashoth embracing the order in recent decades.

While it is true that they are nominally open to all, they only accept the very best—although the rest of Thedas doesn't always agree with what the Wardens consider "best." The Grey Wardens value many traits that usually serve to get people in a great deal of trouble with the laws of civilized countries. They are known especially to recruit felons, giving them a chance to atone for their crimes by pledging themselves to the order.

To make sure their ranks never become too thin, the Grey Wardens have the Right of Conscription, an authority that dates from the end of the First Blight. After the hard-fought victory against Dumat, the nations of Thedas were so indebted and grateful to the Grey Wardens that they guaranteed them the ability, in perpetuity, to maintain and bolster their ranks. By the Right of Conscription, a Grey Warden may instantly and irrevocably commandeer the services of any individual, drafting them into the ranks of the order. Conscripts technically cannot refuse, though in modern times the Wardens only rarely recruit the unwilling. This Right is more commonly deployed in the contemporary period to quell protest from a recruit's lords or commanders.

The majority of Wardens are reluctant to avail themselves of the Right of Conscription unless they have no other recourse. In countries where the order is in disfavor they are careful not to raise the ire of the populace, or its rulers. Most Grey Wardens would rather offer a formal invitation to a worthy candidate, and allow them to accept or decline as their conscience dictates.

The stresses of a Grey Warden's life are not for the faint-hearted. Recruits suffer excruciating tests to determine their worthiness, and it is said that many do not survive them. While this is seen as unfortunate, the Wardens understand that this process elevates their membership to the highest caliber. To face any Grey Warden is to face an elite and deadly adversary.

The Joining

The ritual that inducts new Grey Wardens is a secret rite about which little is known beyond the Order's ranks for very good reason: it taints or kills those who submit to it.

During the ritual, recruits drink from a chalice containing a mixture of darkspawn blood, lyrium, herbs, and a drop of blood from an Archdemon. This potent mixture kills outright many who imbibe it. Those who survive are forever after Grey Wardens, connected to the darkspawn by the corrupted blood they've consumed.

A recruit to whom the Joining Ritual and its ramifications have been explained must go forward and drink from the chalice. There is no turning back. Those who refuse are put to the sword by the Grey Wardens overseeing the ceremony to preserve the Order's secrets.

A new Grey Warden gains the ability to tap into the darkspawn's collective mind. New Grey Wardens are told that the Joining renders them immune to the Blight disease, though this is a calculated lie with the force of long tradition. The disease is drastically slowed for Grey Wardens, yes, but the Joining does not stop it forever. New Grey Wardens also find that their dreams turn dark. They suffer from nightmares, though these occasionally offer prophetic glimpses about darkspawn actions and activities. Many Grey Wardens experience ravenous hunger. Some become more physically robust. Certain scholars among the Grey Wardens have suggested that other powers might be unlocked in the exploration of the Wardens' tainted blood, but there is no hard evidence to support these claims, and the path to unlocking them would be rocky if not fatal.

Methods, Philosophies, and Greater Society

From the first, the Grey Wardens knew they would have to use every tactic against the darkspawn, no matter how unorthodox. Whatever powers could be mustered would be, so long as they led to the Blight's end. The ranks of the order are thus filled with dangerous men and women, some unscrupulous in the extreme, but the Wardens make a point of suspending judgment of any who are effective against the darkspawn. In short, the Grey Wardens do whatever it takes to win, employing whomever they must, regardless of their defects of morals or character. They often turn a blind eye to blood magic, deal with the demons of the Fade, and do whatever else they must.

Even for their willingness to use any tactic, a philosophical split—nearly invisible to outsiders—has long divided the members of the order. While some Grey Wardens feel that their protective mission is the greatest dimension of their calling, others see the eradication of darkspawn as paramount. A theoretical circumstance best describes the division. Imagine a host of darkspawn about to sack a defenseless village. Grey Wardens oriented to protection would chance alerting the darkspawn to their presence by warning the villagers, helping them to safety as best they can before turning to fight. Those oriented to destruction would be more likely to wait for the darkspawn to enter the village before springing a more effective ambush on them. The dead villagers, in their minds, are an unfortunate but necessary sacrifice.

The Grey Wardens' first allegiance is to their duty, and their second to the order, but Wardens are not expected to abandon their former lives. Rather, Wardens are encouraged to put their worldly ties to use in furtherance of the order's aims. Noble titles and merchant wealth can often accomplish what sharp swords cannot, opening doors of great influence and carrying critical messages on fast ships. Many families are honored to claim a Grey Warden as one of their own, though few encourage their firstborn to walk that path. Whatever relationships they maintain or cultivate, however, Wardens are expected to remain neutral, and are discouraged from taking the field in civil or religious conflict against any enemy other than the darkspawn.

The Calling

Most believe that the Calling is a life-ending ritual undertaken by aging Grey Wardens when it becomes clear that they will soon succumb to corruption. According to the lore of the Order, once an older Warden begins to hear the voices of the Old Gods, it is time for this final stage of the Grey Warden's life.

The Joining Ritual

The game rules for being a Grey Warden—the specific benefits a Player Character receives—are listed in the **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations**.

The only thing that's not covered there about the Joining is the chance that a person who undergoes the ritual might die, then and there. The basic rule is that a hero who undergoes the Joining Ritual must roll three dice, and if they are triples, the PC dies. Otherwise, they survive.

This actually gives Player Characters a much better chance to survive the Joining than most who attempt it. The actual survival rate of those who go through with the Joining (not including those who try to backpedal and are killed) is about only about one-quarter to one-third. This is much of the reason the ranks of Grey Wardens are so few.

You may wish to make the Joining more or less deadly in your own campaign. There are benefits and drawbacks to each approach. Making the Joining exactly as deadly for PCs as it is for everyone else (say, by requiring a **TN14** roll with no bonuses to survive) lends verisimilitude to the game at an obvious cost in satisfaction for players who spent many game sessions with those characters. On the other hand, ruling that every PC automatically survives the Joining makes the benefits of being a Grey Warden a bit too easily come by. If you want to deviate from the default rule, make sure that your decision matches with the style of campaign you want to run, and that you've led your players to expect.

Knowing that the time has come, the Grey Warden takes their leave of their comrades with celebration or gravity as their personality dictates. They distribute any of their belongings that they wish to see carried into future battles and descend into the Deep Roads, where they take as many darkspawn as they can with them, a fate that earns them immense respect among the dwarves.

Most in the Order are led to believe that this final sacrifice is more practical than simply continuing on with their lives until the taint proves fatal. The truth, however, is that taint will never ultimately prove fatal to a Grey Warden, in and of itself. Rather, the taint will eventually transform a Grey Warden into a being so much like a darkspawn that the horde will eventually accept it as one of its own. Those who keep this secret and promulgate the Calling as it is known to most Grey Wardens have concluded that it is better for Grey Wardens—who live lives of sacrifice in any case—to die fighting the enemy than to increase the enemy's number.

> We bear a sacred burden. For an age, we have protected the lands of men. But now, a Blight is upon us and we dare not falter. Regardless of race, noble or commoner. The best must take up our banner to save us all from annihilation. We are the Grey Wardens. Join us.
>
> —Duncan, Warden-Commander of Ferelden

Special Hazards

In addition to the villains, monsters, political schemes, and other hazards PCs face in *Dragon Age*, there are some special environments or circumstances that merit special attention. In this section we discuss rules and GM advice for the two of the most common of these special hazards of the world of Thedas: the Taint and the Fade.

The Taint

With the Fifth Blight during or after many *Dragon Age* adventures and campaigns, the darkspawn taint is a very real danger for adventurers who choose to spend their days battling hurlocks and genlocks. Likewise, heroes who venture into the Deep Roads to try to flush out the Archdemon or in search of lost thaigs will inevitably find themselves facing down a pack of darkspawn somewhere in the maze of tunnels.

The taint stems from the sin of the magisters whose pride turned the streets of Golden City black, and has been in the world ever since the Maker cast those Tevinter mages from his realm as darkspawn … or so the Chantry legends say. It can be transmitted through contact with darkspawn blood and fluids, or through objects imbued with the taint. There is evidence that prolonged exposure to the darkspawn can also begin the process of corruption, but very little is known for certain about the darkspawn taint aside from this:

The taint is a death sentence, except in the rarest of circumstances.

While elven Keepers can concoct a remedy that will stave off the effects for a time, eventually the sickness will return and kill the infected.

Although the Grey Wardens discovered a way to slow the taint by combining the Keepers' ritual with the actual drinking of darkspawn blood, the Joining itself does not cure the new Wardens of the corruption. Eventually, even the strongest of those who have undergone the Joining will succumb to the taint. In the intervening years, the Wardens gain the ability to sense the presence of nearby darkspawn, and can sometimes even glean their intentions.

Some unlucky victims who don't have access to a Keeper or a Grey Warden might continue living after being infected. It is possible that they will retain some of their memories of their former selves, but as the corruption digs in deeper, the tainted person will be drawn to the darkspawn and eventually become a ghoul. The darkspawn might put them to use crafting armor and weapons, or they might turn the infected back upon their families. Women who have been captured by the darkspawn are candidates for becoming broodmothers. More likely, however, the taint will simply kill a character within a matter of weeks.

From a storytelling point of view, the risk of characters becoming infected heightens the tension of a plot. Characters far within the Deep Roads might live in constant fear of corruption—their own or their companions'. If you like to add a bit of paranoia to their journey through the ancient, dark, infested thaigs, opportunities abound for you to remind your players that the taint could be worming its way through them.

The gruesome reminders work as well after a battle with darkspawn on the surface—perhaps a pack of blight wolves harries the party, or a shriek gets a fang into a player's arm. If the party steals into a temple that has been forgotten for hundreds of years, or discovers a darkspawn lair, or stumbles across the sanctuary of something ancient and evil, it is possible they will happen upon a tainted item. How willing the characters are to tempt fate and meddle with the danger can be excellent fodder for character building and both roleplay and combat encounters, depending on what was left behind to guard the item.

However, while the *threat* of the taint is an excellent tool to have in your kit, it is probably one whose actual effects should be used extremely sparingly.

The taint is usually a death sentence. The best way to truly be rid of it is to burn the corpses of the infected, and roasting a character alive isn't a terribly fun way to end an adventure. There are no items that can magically remove the corruption, no Keepers whose magic can purify the blood of the infected. Only one person has ever been known to recover from its effects, and that case is the subject of much debate and study.

If the potentially-tainted character is not aiming to become a Grey Warden (and if you, as a GM, don't have a Warden up your sleeve or behind your screen who can guide the character through the Joining), consider very carefully whether you wish to bring the effects of the taint into your game and into that character's blood.

As with the potential for a character to die during the Joining (see page 258), you might wish to make the taint easier or harder for the characters to resist. Talk about it with your players, and make sure you all agree on the risks of allowing the taint to come into play. It's good to have a feel for how your players would react to the death of a character, especially one to whom they've committed many sessions, or spent time between games fleshing out a backstory.

Rules for the Taint

If you decide to use the taint as more than a story element, you can give all darkspawn the following special combat stunt:

SP Cost	Stunt
4	**Infect:** A darkspawn can attempt to infect a melee opponent as a special stunt. Through a bite or blood spray, the darkspawn attempts to spread the taint. A character affected by this stunt must make a **TN 13 Constitution (Stamina)** test. If the character fails the test, they become tainted.

Unless the character is able to seek out a Keeper or a Grey Warden, their fate is sealed. They will be able to function with the taint for a little longer, but eventually they will die, turn on their friends, or become a ghoul.

Effects of the Taint

Once a character is infected, the GM should roll 2d6 and add the character's Constitution to the result. This will give you the number of weeks the unfortunate adventurer has before they are overcome by the effects of the taint. It is your choice whether to keep that number a secret or let the character know how long they are for this world. Infected parties will begin feeling the effects of the taint after a few days. The taint corrupts the blood, the mind, and the body, though how its symptoms manifest will vary.

- Physically, the effects can start out as mildly as a summer cold: The once-hardy adventurer will be feverish or get chills, and might feel achy and off.
- They begin to lose their appetite. After a while, their skin will become blotchy and grayish as the taint settles deeper into their system. As the corruption gets worse, so does the pain and the physical effects. A tainted character's skin takes on a grayish tinge, open sores appear on the body, and wounds take longer to close.
- For each week the taint has had to set in, subtract 1 from the results of all tests. After 1d6 weeks, all healing the character receives has its effectiveness halved (so a character who'd normally get 10 points back from a *heal* spell would only get 5).
- These physical changes might very well affect adventures that require the party to seek help or supplies in a town—citizens certainly wouldn't want to be near the infected in their final stages. Situations that once were routine become tenuous and potentially volatile.

Of course, there are mental changes as well. After 1d6 weeks, a tainted character begins to hear the voices of the darkspawn in their mind. At the start of any encounter (combat, exploration, roleplaying), a tainted character must take a TN 11 **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test to ignore the gibbering. Otherwise, the character takes a –2 penalty to Communication tests and a –1 to all other tests. These penalties are in addition to the penalties for physical changes noted previously.

Tainted Items

There are also some items that can infect a character who has long-term exposure to it. A character bearing such an item can try to resist its effects with a successful Advanced **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test. Every morning for a week, the character must make a TN 13 **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test. You determine the success threshold using the Advanced Tests table on page 213. The more potent the item, the higher the success threshold should be. If the character meets or beats the success threshold within a week, the taint is resisted. Otherwise, the character becomes tainted.

During the week of the advanced test, the character will be wracked with terrible nightmares. They will also become increasingly resistant to any suggestion from friends or advisors that they should get rid of or destroy the item. On the first day of the advanced test, a character can follow such suggestions if a TN 14 **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test is made. Each day that follows the TN of the test increases by 1 (so by the seventh day the TN will be **20**).

Staving Off the Effects

Only two sure ways to combat the corruption are known: Dalish Keepers can combine herbal tinctures and a magic ritual to slow down the disease if it is caught soon after infection; Grey Wardens can keep someone alive even longer, provided they are willing to undergo the Joining and pledge the remainder of their lives to the organization.

Either choice, if the party decides to seek one, gives you the option for a race-against-the-clock type of quest: searching for a Dalish camp or a travelling Grey Warden, pleading the tainted character's case, possibly hunting for items needed to complete the rituals. There are excellent roleplay and character-development opportunities here—don't be afraid to fudge the numbers a little if your infected hero is on the brink of succeeding. The taint isn't an hourglass, killing the infected character as soon as the sand runs out. A strong will and a hardy constitution might buy a warrior a few extra days.

While there are occasional whispers of enchanted items that can slow or even cure the taint (the sword Prince Maric discovered in the Deep Roads was suspected to be capable of it), those objects are extremely rare, if they exist at all. GMs should consider how serious of a threat they expect the taint to be throughout their game before even considering this last option. Having an artifact that negates the taint's effects might be a relief to the blighted hero, but runs the risk of future exposure feeling trivial.

Succumbing to the Taint

GMs should discuss with the player which of the outcomes makes the most sense for the character. Remember that, even if this plot arc will end in a character's demise, you want that ending to be satisfying for the player. Perhaps there is unfinished business that the player might try to wrap up before the end, or perhaps they'd rather have a dramatic, glorious exit and go out like the legends suggest the Grey Wardens do. Whether you create one last nest of darkspawn for them to slay or they part ways with their companions, keep in mind the character's personality and traits up to this point, and give them the epilogue that feels the most fitting.

If the player would rather leave their character's fate up to the dice, roll 1d6.

Succumbing to the Taint

1d6 Roll	Result
1	The character succumbs to the sickness and dies.
2	The character slips away from the party and seeks out the darkspawn, joining them as a ghoul.
3–4	The character turns on the party and attacks (most likely resulting in death, should they fight back.)
5–6	The character is able to sense when their final hours are drawing near, and uses a final reserve of strength and willpower to leave cherished friends behind before harming them.

The Fade

To most of the people of Thedas, "the Fade" is where their spirits go when they sleep. Others know the Fade is dangerous, necessitating institutions like the Circle and the templars to remain ever-vigilant for threats from that mysterious other-realm, but can say little more about it. Even those schooled in ways of the Fade, the greatest scholars of the Circle or the Chantry, admit they know as much about it as sailors do of the sea. They have learned to read its patterns, and to traverse it safely, but even they are still subject to its whims and unpredictable moods, uncertain of what lies within its depths.

The Nature of the Fade

Chantry doctrine says the Fade was the first world created by the Maker, with the legendary Golden City—the Maker's home—at its heart. The Maker was not satisfied with the impermanent and ever-changing nature of the Fade and the spirits inhabiting it, however, and so created Thedas, separated from the Fade by the Veil. The peoples of Thedas visit the Fade in their dreams, but few recall it. The spirits inhabiting the Fade can perceive Thedas through the Veil but cannot touch or interact with it, except in places where the Veil is especially thin.

Although many describe the Fade as "another realm" it seems actually to be very much a part of the world. The Fade is everywhere, in touch with all living and dreaming creatures, but most cannot perceive or recall it, as if blinded and blinkered. Indeed, mages refer to "the Veil" as what separates most creatures from awareness of the Fade. Still, even though most are unable to perceive it much of the time, it is there.

The Fade is a place of emotion, made up of the stuff of dreams and nightmares. Indeed, most creatures are closest to the Fade when they sleep; in their dreams they wander its misty paths, in nightmares, they brush against demons, and may even fall under their malign influence.

The spirits inhabiting the Fade shape its misty dream-stuff (and, often, themselves) to imitate things they perceive in the physical world. In fact, virtually everything in the Fade is a copy of something a spirit has seen in Thedas, although often they are imperfect or oddly distorted copies, and may be based on things no living being has seen for thousands of years. Spirits themselves have no imagination or creativity; everything they make is based off something made by mortals, another area where the races of Thedas appear to enjoy the Maker's favor, and earn the spirits' envy.

Thus all the features of the Fade—from objects to geography—shift at the whim of the most powerful spirits, with lesser spirits reshaping and choosing the appearance of their own small domains. Because nothing in the Fade is quite as it appears, scholars half-jokingly say visitors should extend the courtesy of a greeting to anything they encounter. It is just as likely for a tree, boulder, cloud, or house to greet you as it is for what appears to be an animal, flower, or even humanoid. The division between spirits and their surroundings is often solely one of interaction.

Because the Fade draws on the stuff of dreams, inspired by the waking world of solidity and form, things in the Fade often seem strangely familiar. Dreamers in particular may find themselves encountering what appear to be places, objects, and people from their waking lives, but these are facsimiles created by spirits, or spirits assuming these forms, rather than the genuine articles. This is particularly true of things with a strong emotional resonance, since the spirits of the Fade are drawn to and driven by powerful feelings.

The Black City

The only fixed feature of the Fade is the Black City; it looms overhead, always in the distance, standing atop a vast island floating in the mists, out of reach.

The Chantry says it was once the Golden City, home of the Maker, who created the Fade and the world of Thedas. Once, the spirits of the dead gathered in the Golden City, returning to their Maker's side, but then the magisters of the Tevinter Imperium attempted to usurp the Maker's power. They dared to breach the Veil and set foot in the Golden City while still living, bringing the first Blight upon the world. Since that day, the city's gold has turned black, and there is no place for the spirits of the dead to go. The Chantry says the Maker gathers those faithful to him to his side, while the rest are left to wander as lost souls.

None have ever been able to reach the Black City, although the Chantry believes one day the Chant of Light will be sung in every corner of the world and the Maker will return in all his glory. He will restore the Golden City and usher in an age of peace and paradise in Thedas. Until then, the Black City is a constant reminder of the Blight and the consequences of hubris.

The Veil

The Veil separates the mortal world of Thedas from the Fade. Although often described as a "curtain" or even "wall" between the worlds, mages and scholars rightly point out that the Veil is more a matter of perception than position; one is not necessarily on one "side" of the Veil or another, one is simply more or less aware of or in touch with the Fade.

Most mortals are blind to the Fade while awake, but touch upon it when they sleep and dream. Strong emotions also serve to part the Veil, and mortals may feel the presence of the Fade (and the spirits within it) in places that have been the focus of such powerful feelings, describing them as "holy" or "unsettling."

Some mortals have virtually no connection to the Fade. Dwarves, for example, typically do not dream and do not experience what lies beyond the Veil, although even they sometimes touch the Fade in places where the Veil is thinnest. The Tranquil, those treated with lyrium to specifically sever their connection with the Fade, neither dream nor see beyond the Veil. They experience no strong feelings of any sort, whether joy, anger, or sorrow.

Those with the potential to become mages have the strongest connection with the Fade, able to perceive beyond the Veil even while awake. Potential mages often experience "visions" and especially vivid dreams when their talent begins to manifest, seeing colored auras or sensing the presence of spirits. They are likewise more visible to the spirits dwelling in the Fade, which may be drawn to them. This is why the Circle recruits potential mages, in order to train and protect them, rather than leaving them at the mercy of malign spirits drawn to their power like moths to a flame—or predators to their prey.

Much of the focus of an apprentice's training with a Circle is in willpower and self-discipline, the ability to harness and control the neophyte's connection with the Fade and to learn how to exist there as well as in the material world. When the time is right, the apprentice undergoes the Harrowing: entering the Fade in a ritual trance and deliberately drawing the attention of a demon to test the would-be mage's ability to fend off possession. Those who succeed graduate to become full-fledged members of the Circle. The templars are responsible for dealing with those who fail, ensuring they never become abominations and threaten others.

Circle mages learn rituals for crossing into the Fade as part of their Harrowing. Apostates may learn to do so as well, but trial-and-error experimentation is dangerous where the Fade is concerned, given the risk of attracting a demon and becoming possessed.

Although mortal minds entering the Fade is the most common crossing of the Veil, it is not the only way. Some spirits manage to cross into the mortal world as well. Most often, they are demons that have co-opted and possessed a body, either living or dead. The inhabitants of the Fade

often cannot tell the difference, and corpses offer them no resistance, a practical reason for the Chantry calling for the burning of the dead. Such possessions create abominations in the mortal world.

In rare cases, demons gather sufficient power to cross the Veil and manifest in the material world as half-real shades. The expenditure of energy is so great the shade constantly hungers for more to sustain it; some drain life force by their very presence, leaving the area around them blighted and lifeless. They prey upon living creatures, particularly mortals able to experience a rich range of emotions, in order to sustain themselves. Shades are particularly dangerous because they exist in a form akin to their normal state in the Fade, meaning they are virtually immune to physical harm. Only magic can affect them.

It is sometimes possible for demons to fully manifest in Thedas, though only for short periods of time. This is usually only possible in areas where the Veil has grown thin, such as the sites of legendary battles and tragedies. Powerful magic, serious bloodletting, and extreme emotions can create such regions and they can remain dangerous for centuries.

Spirits

Most people in Thedas know the Fade is inhabited, but relatively few know anything about the spirits that call it their home. Whispered warnings about demons are common, but that is only one type of the dwellers in the Fade.

Spirits are the first children of the Maker, according to the lore of the Chantry. They lack the divine spark and complexity of the mortal inhabitants of Thedas, however. Spirits can shape the stuff of the Fade as they wish, but lack imagination and creativity. When the Maker created Thedas, the spirits perceived it across the Veil separating the realms, and touched the dreams of mortal creatures as they visited the Fade. The spirits shaped the Fade in imitation of the lands and places they saw in those dreams. Still, spirits have no true understanding of what they create; they merely imitate.

According to the Chantry, there are several types of Spirits in the Fade.

Faith

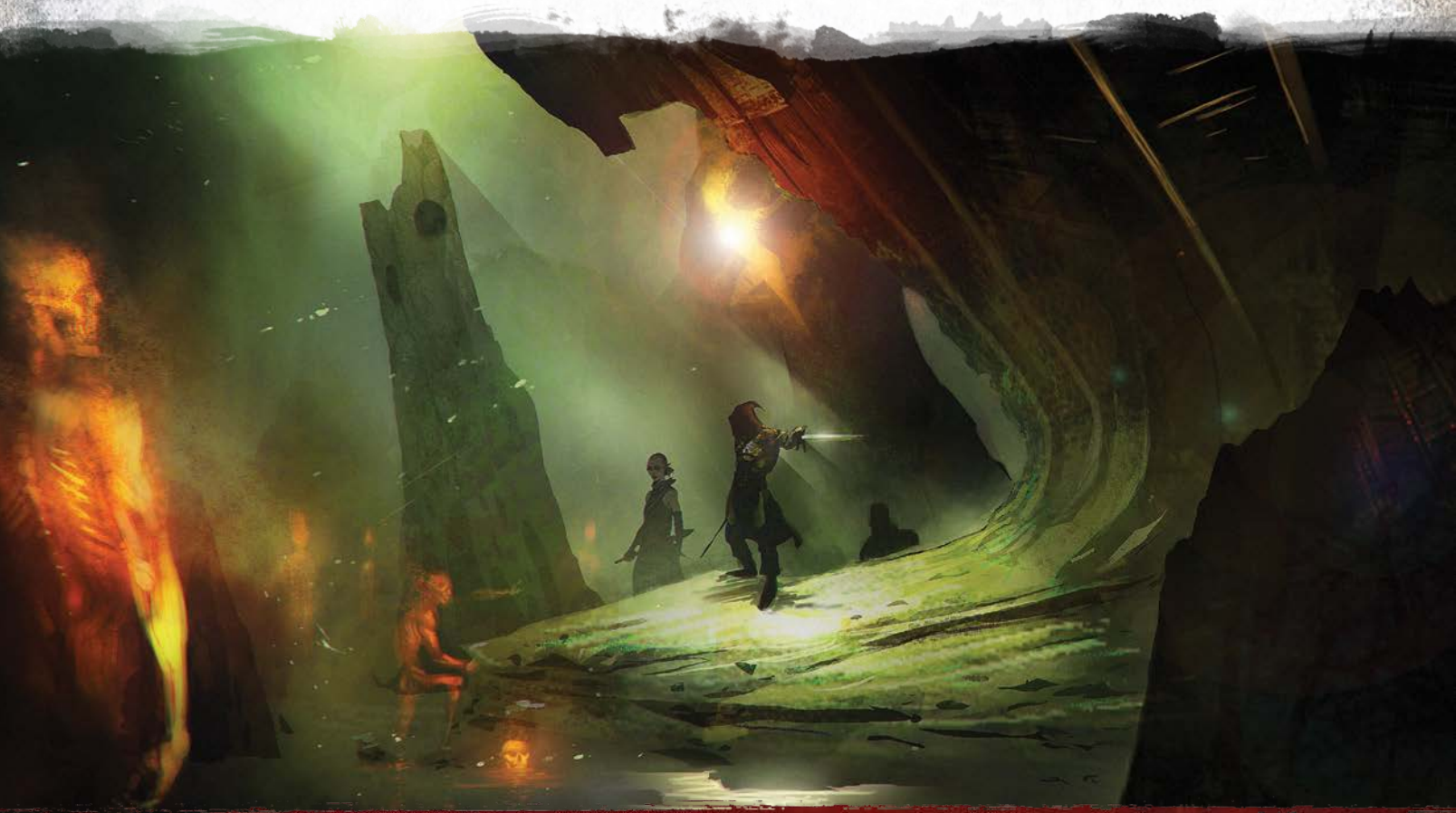
Faith abides and so, too, do faith spirits, the children of the Maker who have never swayed from the belief that all is as it should be in creation, even in spite of the corruption of the Golden City and the unleashing of the Blights upon the world. The Maker has a plan, too great for lesser beings to comprehend, and it unfolds as it should. Faith spirits sometimes serve as a balm for mortals questioning their own faith.

Hope

A small light can shine brightly in the darkness, and spirits of hope are that light in the Fade. They are proof the Maker has not abandoned his children, and help to guide them and keep them from giving up in the face of overwhelming threats like the Blight.

Compassion

Spirits of compassion do not feel envy for the material world, but instead feel the Maker's love and caring, and seek to alleviate pain, suffering, and doubt. They are spirits of healing,



often associated with spirit healers, and partnering in their work.

Valor

Faith, hope, and compassion offer a strong foundation, but spirits of valor embody action. They are the courage to overcome great obstacles and challenges. Spirits of valor can be single-minded in the pursuit of their goals, even foolhardy, unless tempered with other virtues.

Justice

These spirits embody the righteous rule of law, the translation and enforcement of the Maker's edicts and plans for his creations. They can be grim beings, although good folk should have nothing to fear from them.

Demons

"Demon" is a common term for spirits of negative or hostile emotions. Ultimately, demons are no different than other types of spirits, save that the forces that drive them make them dangerous and more inclined to exploit and attack mortal beings.

According to the Chantry, when the Maker created Thedas, it was a place of solidity and permanence, but also mortality. The inhabitants of Thedas held the spark of the divine, the Maker's essence, within them. The inhabitants of the Fade watched the Maker's new creations across the divide of the Veil and some of them felt jealousy towards mortals and desire for what they possessed, an inexplicable hunger to reach across the Veil, yearning towards something they could not have.

This hunger led these spirits to lure the sleeping minds of mortals deeper into the Fade, weaving dreams and nightmares to ensnare them. In particular, it drew the spirits to those mortal minds most strongly connected to the Fade: those with the potential for magic. They could overcome such minds and possess their mortal bodies, creating abominations. In the physical world, a demon's hunger is even greater, and they learn to feed on the flesh, emotions, or very life force of mortals to sustain and increase their power.

The following are the most infamous types of demons known to mages and scholars of the Fade, but they are far from the only ones.

Rage

Rage demons are by far the simplest of their kind, made up of nothing but pure fury, directed at the creatures of the material world. A rage demon lashes out to destroy whatever it can, or else seethes in anger, awaiting its opportunity to destroy.

Hunger

Hunger demons are only slightly more complex, embodying the sheer desire of many Fade spirits to grasp the material world and—in their case—to consume it. They are gluttonous spirits of excess, never satisfied.

Sloth

Spirits of sloth draw victims to them like spiders in the center of a web of influence. These demons seek to bind and enslave, creating servants to see to their needs. Less active by nature, they are cunning and should not be underestimated.

Desire

Where hunger spirits want to take in material substance, desire demons crave sensation, particularly emotional satisfaction. They are often seductive and manipulative, the demonic tempters of legend, embodying envy and unquestioning want.

Pride

The most powerful of demons, pride spirits seek to feed their own sense of vanity and self-importance, to prop up their wounded egos as the First Children of the Maker, abandoned for the lesser creatures of the material realm. Pride demons will prove they are superior, even if they must tear down the whole of creation to do it. They would have mortals kneeling to worship them, holding their fragile lives and souls in their hands.

Exploring the Fade

The Fade is not a place of material solidity, but of thought, emotion, and dream. Spirits have shaped the stuff of the Fade in imitation of mortal dreams and their own limited perceptions of the material world, but such creations have a surreal or dream-like quality to them, not quite accurate, and ignoring mundane concerns like proper craftsmanship. What is more, since spirits can look like virtually anything, "objects" encountered in the Fade may not be objects at all, but intelligent beings, such as the door or tree that sprouts a face and begins talking, or the seemingly mundane animal able to converse with travelers and guide them (or lead them astray). Visitors to the Fade are well advised to consider everything they encounter a potential being rather than a simple inanimate object.

Entering the Fade

Humans and elves—but not dwarves—enter the Fade each night when they sleep, though few recall these experiences upon awakening. Entering the Fade with something akin to waking consciousness takes training in trance techniques or magical ritual.

Any mage can go into a trance to enter the Fade and assist others in doing so. The process of entering the Fade takes 10 minus Willpower minutes of meditation and a successful TN 10 **Magic (Spirit)** test. So a mage with Willpower 3 can meditate for seven minutes to enter the Fade. The character's mind or "spirit form" travels the Fade while the physical body remains behind. The ritual to assist others in visiting the Fade also requires 50 silver pieces worth of materials per person, including powdered lyrium. These materials are used up in the process. The mage's test to enter the Fade has its TN increased by 1 for each other character in the ritual (so TN 11 for one companion, TN 12 for two, etc.).

Leaving the Fade

For mortal dreamers, "leaving" the Fade is as simple as waking from sleep. Just as other travelers make a greater effort to visit the Fade consciously, so too does it take a bit more effort for them to leave. Awakening from a visit to the Fade takes 5 – Willpower rounds of concentration, with a minimum of one round. The character can take no other actions while concentrating, making it difficult (to say the least) when threatened by a spirit or other Fade hazard. Even trying to leave the Fade to avoid such dangers can be risky.

At the Game Master's discretion, certain circumstances or places may make it even more difficult for visitors to leave the Fade, requiring things like Willpower tests or even completion of a particular quest in order to leave.

Fade Hazards

Given the Fade's nature, any imaginable danger can exist there, and probably does somewhere, including hazards that cannot exist in the material world, with its solid and dependable rules. *Dragon Age* Game Masters are encouraged to exercise their own imaginations when it comes to inventing hazards for characters visiting or exploring the Fade, working off the guidelines found starting on page 217. The following are just some examples of potential hazards in the Fade:

The Bountiful Feast

What appears to be a sumptuous feast is laid out before the characters, tables laden to overflowing with all of their favorite dishes, the delicious scent of the food inspiring ravenous hunger. Each round, the characters must make a TN 13 **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test, with failure resulting in 2d6 penetrating damage. This is an advanced test with a success threshold of 9. Characters reaching the threshold realize the food is actually a poisonous essence of gluttony and suddenly find it completely unappetizing.

The Hall of Fire

A corridor through the Fade is filled with shifting curtains of flame. Passing through the corridor is an advanced test with a threshold of 10, requiring a TN 12 test. Suitable abilities depend on the characters' approach to the challenge: a purely physical one might involve **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** while a more cerebral one could rely on Perception with a focus in Searching, Seeing, or Tracking to find a safe route, or even **Willpower (Courage)** to affirm the flames are not real, merely an aspect of the Fade.

Possession Battle

A character struggles against a demon with theirr body as the prize! Each round, the character makes a TN 13 **Willpower (Faith or Self-Discipline)** test with a success threshold equal to 7 + the demon's Willpower. A number of failed tests equal to the character's Willpower results in the character becoming an abomination (and falling under the GM's control).

The Riddle Game

An animated statue (such as in a garden or flanking a doorway) or face (such as a door-knocker or shield covering) speaks and asks the characters to answer riddles in order to pass. This can be handled with roleplaying only (i.e. the players must answer the riddles themselves) or mechanically if your players are not great with riddles. The latter approach requires a TN 12 **Cunning** test for the character answering each riddle, with focuses applying if the subject of the riddle is appropriate. The success threshold is 10, but each failed test results in one of the characters vanishing. If all of the characters fail, they remain trapped in the Fade forever. If they achieve the threshold, all the vanished characters reappear on the other side of the obstacle they must cross.

Rewards from the Fade

Characters earn experience points for success in encounters in the Fade just like they do in the material world. The nature of the Fade precludes material rewards, however. Any treasures or other items the characters find in the Fade are not material goods and therefore cannot return to the material world with them; they are no more real than the stuff of dreams.

There are other rewards characters may acquire in the Fade in the form of *essences,* which grant benefits similar to honorifics (page 317) or specific knowledge or ability while in the Fade (see **Form Changing**).

Essences

In the realm of the Fade, dreams and ideas are things unto themselves. It is possible for the fundamental *essence* of a concept to concentrate in a particular place or thing. Fade locales strongly associated with an essence are known as *founts* of it. Other essences gather like rainwater or dew, accumulating quickly but likely to evaporate. Founts are ongoing wellsprings. Some spirits can also produce essences as a means to bargain with or reward mortals.

A mortal spirit in the Fade can take in an essence, incorporating its energy and what it represents. So an essence of inspiration might grant cleverness or creativity where an essence of strength can provide vigor. The benefits provided by a particular essence, and its availability, are chosen by the GM, based on the following guidelines:

- The essence grants a bonus to particular ability tests, ranging from +1 for applying to a wide range of tests, about as broad as a specialty, to +2 or +3 for more specific types of tests.
- Essence bonuses more often apply to mental tests involving knowledge, lore, insight, and inspiration, particularly Communication, Cunning, Perception, and Willpower.
- Essence bonuses to physical abilities are usually limited to tests occurring in the Fade: Their influence is not strong enough to affect things in the material world. The GM may make exceptions for essences of particular physical skills involving insight or mental discipline. Essences involving outright physical transformations, like the Essence of Form, are always limited to the Fade in their effects.

The following are some examples of essences found in the Fade. The Game Master should feel free to invent others to provide suitable rewards for adventures there, and to use as keys to overcoming hazards and challenges in the Fade.

Essence of Art

A specific artistic or trade focus (pages 56-57) benefits from this essence, gaining a +1 bonus to tests.

Essence of Beast

The essence of a particular type of animal grants the character a +2 bonus for **Communication (Animal Handling)** tests involving that animal. So Essence of Hawk, for example, grants its bonus for tests involving hawks (with perhaps a +1 bonus for eagles and similar birds-of-prey). The holder of this essence may acquire a related penalty to **Communication (Animal Handling)** tests for animals antithetical to the essence, such as Essence of Wolf imposing a –1 penalty for handling horses and similar herd animals, spooked by the essence they sense in the character.

Essence of Compassion

When the imbiber of the Essence of Compassion takes a heal action to aid someone (see page 50), a successful action restores Health equal to the Dragon Die + Cunning + 2 rather than the usual amount.

Essence of Courage

A character who takes in the Essence of Courage gains a +1 bonus to **Willpower (Courage)** tests against a particular threat, typically one associated with the essence or its fount, such as supernatural fear connected with demons and darkspawn.

Essence of Emotion

The Essence of Emotion grants a +2 bonus to **Perception (Empathy)** tests involving that specific emotion, which is also associated with the essence's name, such as Essence of Love, Essence of Fear, Essence of Sorrow, and so forth.

Essence of Experience

Consuming this essence, distilled memories and experiences stored in the Fade, grants a 100 XP bonus to the character, like succeeding in an easy encounter, in addition to any XP earned from the encounter to gain access to the essence in the first place.

Essence of Form

This essence grants the character the ability to change into a particular form while in the Fade. See **Form Changing** for details. Each essence contains a single form, ranging from a mouse, fox, or similar tiny animal to a wolf, ogre, golem, or other creature. Some essences of form may even provide apparently inanimate forms, from trees or rocks to chests, doors, or furniture (primarily useful for disguise, although cunning characters will no doubt find other applications). Each essence is good to acquire a single form; if a character already has that form, the essence has no further value.

Essence of Lore

The Essence of Lore is the sum of knowledge concerning some subject. The character gains a +2 bonus to Cunning (Lore) tests involving that specific subject, such as the essence of lore concerning a city or region, a tribe or culture, or an object, creature, or historical event, to name a few examples.

Essence of Mana

The Essence of Mana either increases the imbiber's total mana by 1 or allows the recovery of 1d6 mana immediately. It has no effect on a character with no mana score.

Form Changing

Appearances in the Fade are not as fixed as they tend to be in the mortal world; the Fade and its inhabitants are made of the stuff of dreams and nightmares, and visitors' Fade-selves reflect their mind and spirit more than their physicality. Most spirits can appear in a bewildering variety of forms, and some visitors to the Fade can also learn the technique of assuming different forms, molding their Fade-selves to suit their wishes.

Acquiring the form-changing ability requires an Essence of Form, which grants the character the ability to assume

a specific form. This ability only works in the Fade, where things are malleable to thought and imagination; form changing does not work in the material world.

Take an activate action to initiate a form change, either assuming a different form, or returning to your normal form. Once you change form, you remain that way until you take another activate action to change again.

You gain all of the physical abilities of the new form, including Constitution, Dexterity, Strength, Armor Rating, Speed, and any special stunts or abilities. You retain your own focuses and mental abilities, including Communication, Cunning, Magic, Perception, and Willpower. You may gain some special physical focuses associated with the form, at the GM's discretion. Any equipment not usable by the form disappears, reappearing when you assume a form capable of using it. So, for example, most animal forms lose all equipment (weapons, armor, etc.) but those items—or their Fade analogs, at any rate—reappear when you assume a humanoid form.

The range of potential forms is almost limitless. It is up to the individual GM what Essences of Form are available to the characters in the Fade, including spirits willing to grant those essences. Just a few examples of possible forms are:

MOUSE

You get Dexterity 2 with the Stealth focus, plus an additional +3 bonus on **Dexterity (Stealth)** tests for your tiny size, plus you can slip into any place that a mouse can. On the other hand, you have virtually no Strength (–3), and can only succeed at mouse-sized Strength tests.

BEAR

You gain Dexterity 2, Constitution 6 (Stamina), Strength 6 (Intimidation, Might) and a bear's bite and claw attacks (1d6+Str and 2d6+Str), as well as access to the special Quick Bite stunt (page 277).

OWL

Your physical abilities become Dexterity 2 (Stealth), Strength –3, and Constitution 0 but you are able to fly at Speed 16 and see in the dark like an owl.

GOLEM

You gain considerable Strength and Constitution—8 each—but Dexterity –1. You also gain Armor Rating 8 with no armor penalty and Speed 6.

CHEST

You turn into an inanimate chest, able to appear and function like a normal chest. You can even speak through the face located in the metalwork of the chest's lid, if you wish. Anything placed in the chest appears held in your arms when you change form (or at your feet, if that is not possible). Form changing into similar inanimate objects is possible, and useful for disguise.

Adventures in the Fade

The Fade opens up a literal new world of adventures for your *Dragon Age* campaign, a fantastic and potentially deadly one. Given the difficulties in visiting the Fade, adventures there should not be trivial, but can allow heroes to gain lore and resources they could not find in the material world. In fact, these goals are the primary reasons for heroes to visit the Fade: either to seek out answers or lore from a spirit (overcoming any challenges to reach it and that the spirit may require) or finding a particular essence—particularly an Essence of Experience or Lore—they need to deal with some challenge in the material world. Adventurers may also set out into the Fade seeking someone who has become lost there: a trapped dreamer or mage, for example, in order to rescue them before their spirit falls victim to a demon, leaving them open to possession.

The dreamlike and surreal nature of the Fade allows you to create literally any situation you can imagine for adventures set there, ranging from nightmarish visitations with the characters' darkest fears and repressed memories to oddball parodies wherein the heroes feel as those they were nothing more than empty, lifeless shells—illusions of light and shadow manipulated by others on a vast game-board, playing through the same challenges over and over again, but ultimately meaningless. A terrifying experience, to be sure.

Chapter 12

Adversaries

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

Statistics Format

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

NPCs and Classes

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

Adversary Focuses

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

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

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

Adversary Threat

While almost any creature can be a threat to any character with proper planning, wild luck, or the right circumstances, it's generally the case that certain adversaries work better against PCs of certain levels. Creatures are organized roughly into Threat categories based on the level of PC they are gener-

Adversary Threat Level	
Threat Level	PC Level Range
Minor	Levels 1-4
Moderate	Levels 5-8
Major	Levels 9-12
Dire	Levels 13-17
Legendary	Levels 18-20

ally a suitable danger to. Check out the **Adversary Threat Level** table for some guidelines.

Also note that Threat is a general indicator; it's not a perfect measure of how dangerous a particular adversary is to all characters. For example, a heavily armored, healthy 3rd level warrior might do better against a Moderate threat than an injured 7th Level Mage who's mostly out of Mana Points. Likewise, Threat is a range not an exact ranking; genlocks are generally less dangerous than hurlocks, but both are comparatively Minor threats when compared to other tougher adversaries.

As always, GMs should be aware of the PC's individual capabilities and any significant things that might make them more or less effective against a particular adversary.

Beefing Up Adversaries

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

Elite

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

Heroic

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

Epic

To make an adversary who is extremely potent, add 3 to one ability, 2 to any two other abilities, and 1 to any three others. Add five focuses, increase the adversary's Health by 20, and increase armor rating by 3. You can also add three degrees to new or existing talents

Note that making an adversary Elite, Heroic, or Epic increases this threat. So does presenting foes in overwhelming numbers. A group of 18th Level characters might not balk at facing down a couple normal ogres, but some Epic ogres or group that outnumbers them three to one? That's a different story.

Other NPCs

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

Innkeeper

Communication 3 (Bargaining, Persuasion), **Constitution** 2 (Drinking), **Cunning** 1 (Evaluation), **Dexterity** 0, **Magic** 0, **Perception** 2 (Tasting), **Strength** 1, **Willpower** 1 (Morale)

Tavern owner

Non-Combatants

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

Peoples of Thedas

While fledging adventurers may believe that they will spend most of their time fighting darkspawn and other monsters, the truth is that many of their adversaries will be humans, elves, dwarves, and Qunari. There are foes to be found in every culture of Thedas and this section provides game stats for a variety of them. You'll find everything from Chasind stalkers to Tal-Vashoth mercenaries. PCs may also find allies amongst them, depending on their outlook. A mage PC might not look favorably on the templars, for example, but a devout warrior could.

Apostates

The corrupting influence of demons threatens all mages, and this danger is far from secret. The Circle of Magi aims to prevent demons from possessing mages, but they take extreme measures in their attempts to control them. Apostates practice magic outside of the Circle, and the templars hunt them. Since most apostates practice magic they would personally consider "safe," they see no reason they should be forced to lose their freedom. Their greatest fear is to be made Tranquil by the Circle, losing both their connection to the Fade and their ability to feel strong emotions.

Desperate apostates seeking to avoid the clutches of the Circle might turn to blood magic, demon summoning, or strikes against innocents. To the templars, this proves that mages must be controlled. To apostates, it proves that the Circle and the templars force harmless mages to take dangerous risks.

Full-fledged blood mages are always apostates in the Circle's eyes. The Circle—and almost everyone else—believes that blood magic always leads down a dark path to demonic possession. Even blood mages who start out with good intentions and only use their own blood could become murderers when they desire more power. Blood mages who find themselves in danger summon rage demons and shades to fight alongside them.

Crazed Apostate

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
0	Constitution
2	Cunning (Arcane Lore)
0	Dexterity (Staves)
3	Magic (Arcane Lance, Creation, Spirit)
0	Perception
0	Strength
1	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	25	10	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Arcane Lance	+5	1d6+2
Quarterstaff	+2	1d6+1

Special Features

Spellpower: 13 (15) **Mana:** 24

Spells: *Arcane bolt, arcane shield, heal, heroic offense, and mind blast.*

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance and Skirmish.

Last Resort: A crazed apostate who drops to 10 Health or less can use the *blood wound* spell, and gains +1 Magic and a Blood Magic focus. This benefit lasts until the apostate dies, even if their Health increases to above 10.

Weapon Groups: Brawling and Staves.

Equipment: Quarterstaff.

Threat: Minor

Blood Mage

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
3	Constitution (Stamina)
2	Cunning (Arcane Lore)
0	Dexterity (Staves)
5	Magic (Arcane Lance, Blood, Spirit)
0	Perception
0	Strength
1	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	40	10	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Arcane Lance	+7	1d6+5
Quarterstaff	+2	1d6+1

Special Features

Spellpower: 15 (17) **Mana:** 47

Spells: *Blood sacrifice, arcane shield, blood wound, bolt, and wrack.*

Favored Stunts: Skirmish and Taunt.

Blood Magic: When casting a spell, a blood mage can use the blood of a creature within 6 yards (including themselves) to power their spells. Using the blood of an unwilling target requires a **Magic (Blood)** vs. **Willpower (Faith or Self-Discipline)** test. The target takes 1d6 penetrating damage (or 2d6 penetrating damage if the target is adjacent and helpless), and the blood mage gains a number of mana points equal to the damage dealt. These mana points must be spent on the spell the mage is currently casting.

Blood Shield: When a blood mage is under the effects of *arcane shield* and an enemy attacks him, the enemy takes 1d6 penetrating damage and the blood mage recovers Health equal to the damage done.

Weapon Groups: Brawling and Staves.

Equipment: Quarterstaff and dagger.

Threat: Moderate

Brigands

Unpatrolled roads and dark alleys across Thedas crawl with all sorts of raiders and thugs. From Orzammar's Carta to Kirkwall's coterie to countless bands of slavers and thieves, these unscrupulous souls keep honest people on guard. Though many of them turned to banditry out of desperation, almost all of them love the life of violence and larceny they lead.

Brigand Lieutenant

Abilities (Focuses)
2 — Communication (Leadership)
2 — Constitution
1 — Cunning
2 — Dexterity (Light Blades)
0 — Magic
0 — Perception
3 — Strength (Heavy Blades, Intimidation)
1 — Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	28	12	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+5	2d6+3
Throwing Knife	+4	1d6+3

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Advance (2 SP) Disarm, Seize the Initiative, and Taunt.

Battle Leader: An ally within 2 yards of a battle leader gains a +1 bonus on Willpower tests, and +1 SP whenever stunt points are generated. An ally can't benefit from more than one battle leader.

Advance: A brigand lieutenant can reposition their allies as a special stunt for 2 SP. A number of allies equal to their Communication (+2 if he has the Leadership focus) within 12 yards can move 2 yards in any direction.

Gang Mentality: A brigand lieutenant gets a bonus on damage rolls equal to the number of their allies adjacent to the target (to a maximum of 2) and a +2 bonus on **Communication (Leadership)** and **Willpower (Morale)** tests if the brigands outnumber their enemies.

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Light Blades.

Equipment: Longsword, throwing knife, medium shield, and light mail.

Threat: Moderate with other Brigands, Minor Alone

These stats provide a baseline for any group of thugs, raiders, or thieves. Most groups of brigands are a motley sort, so mix up their gear and abilities for some variety. The Brigand Types and Weapons table offers some suggestions for focuses to add and weapons to change to make certain types of brigands.

Avvar Hunter

Almost never encountered unless one happens to be traveling through the heights of the Frostbacks, Avvar are skilled hunters and fierce combatants who exult in battle. They raid the Fereldan lowlands under the cover of heavy storms, using the great cold to their advantage, as their mountain homes have all but inured them to its bite.

Their treacherous homeland has taught them to avoid heavy armor. They prefer strong chain links, dwarven wrought if

Brigand Thug

Abilities (Focuses)
–1 — Communication
2 — Constitution
–1 — Cunning
1 — Dexterity (Brawling, Light Blades)
0 — Magic
0 — Perception
3 — Strength (Bludgeons, Intimidation)
–1 — Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	15	11	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Maul	+5	1d6+6
Throwing Knife	+3	1d6+3

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Mighty Blow and Threaten.

Gang Mentality: A brigand thug gets a bonus on damage rolls equal to the number of their allies adjacent to the target (to a maximum of 2) and a +2 bonus on **Willpower (Morale)** tests if the brigands outnumber their enemies.

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Brawling, Light Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Maul, throwing knife, light shield, and heavy leather.

Threat: Minor

Brigand Types and Weapons

Type	Focus	Thug	Archer
Carta	Constitution (Stamina)	Battle Axe	Crossbow
Highwayman	Dexterity (Riding)	Longsword	Short Bow
Raider	Constitution (Swimming)	Shortsword	Crossbow
Urban	Dexterity (Stealth)	Shortsword	Crossbow

they can get it, wrapped in warm furs. The Avvar favor axes and spears over swords. Their bows are heavy, with long shafts capable of piercing a man's torso at great distance.

Some holds train their hunters in falconry; it is nearly impossible to catch these Avvar unawares, and they will nearly always have a mountain eagle or two, highly clever and well-trained birds that scout for them. Indeed, the Avvar are far more likely to ambush others than be caught themselves. The Avvar have a sophisticated relationship with spirits, to whom they give offerings in return for guidance and favor, and for help in keeping demons at bay. The Avvar value skill in song or crafting just as they do skill in warfare. A clever player can attempt to impress the Avvar to avoid combat with them.

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

Chasind Stalker

The Korcari Wilds do not suffer fools lightly and the Chasind peoples who make their home there are a hard folk, ill disposed towards outsiders. The harsh conditions of the Wilds and the primitive nature of the Wilders incline them to take by force or stealth anything they cannot grow or build for themselves—which is to say, almost everything

Brigand Archer

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	Communication
–1	Constitution
0	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Bows, Light Blades)
0	Magic
2	Perception (Seeing)
1	Strength
0	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	12	13	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Crossbow	+5	2d6+3
Dagger	+5	1d6+2

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Pierce Armor, Rapid Reload, and Skirmish.

Gang Mentality: A brigand archer gets a bonus on damage rolls equal to the number of its allies adjacent to the target (to a maximum of 2) and a +2 bonus on **Willpower (Morale)** tests if the brigands outnumber their enemies.

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, and Light Blades.

Equipment: Crossbow, dagger, and light leather.

Threat: Minor

Avvar Hunter

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	Communication (Animal Handling)
2	Constitution (Drinking, Stamina)
0	Cunning
1	Dexterity
0	Magic
1	Perception (Seeing, Tracking)
2	Strength (Axes, Climbing)
1	Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
9	20	11 (13 w/ shield)	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Battle Axe	+4	2d6+2
Long Bow	+1	1d6+4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Mighty Blow and Skirmish.

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

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bows, Brawling, and Spears.

Equipment: Battle axe, light chain, long bow, and medium shield.

Threat: Minor

Chasind Stalker

Abilities (Focuses)
0 — Communication
2 — Constitution (Stamina)
1 — Cunning
3 — Dexterity (Bows, Light Blades, Stealth)
1 — Magic
3 — Perception (Searching, Seeing, Tracking)
2 — Strength (Climbing)
1 — Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	20	13 (14 with shield)	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Short Bow	+5	1d6+4
Shortsword	+5	1d6+4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Pierce Armor and Skirmish.

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

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, and Light Blades.

Equipment: Light leather, light shield, short bow, and shortsword.

Threat: Minor

Dalish Raider

Abilities (Focuses)
2 — Communication (Persuasion)
0 — Constitution
1 — Cunning (Natural Lore)
3 — Dexterity (Bows, Initiative, Light Blades, Stealth)
1 — Magic
2 — Perception (Hearing, Tracking)
1 — Strength (Climbing)
3 — Willpower (Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	16	13	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Long Bow	+5	1d6+5
Shortsword	+5	1d6+3

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Lightning Attack and Rapid Reload.

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

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Light mail, long bow, and shortsword.

Threat: Minor

worth having. Chasind raiders, known within Ferelden as "stalkers," often slip out of the Wilds, traveling in small scavenging parties to search for easy targets amidst the freeholds of the south. The Wilders are famed (and cursed about) for their stealth and hunting skills, both of which they employ to track down suitable targets. They favor vicious ambushes using short bows with wickedly hooked arrows. Stalker groups are invariably small, to deflect attention, and likely to be lightly armored in patchwork leather, so as to move with speed.

Dalish Raider

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

With that said, the typical arrogance of the Dalish will at times rub a bann the wrong way or an aravel will be passing by when an ill happenstance strikes a group of freeholders, who will lay it at the wanderers' door. If cooler heads are kept, the Dalish will simply be asked to move on—but the Fereldan are a hot-blooded people. Any violence to their folk will provoke swift retribution from the Dalish, whose arrows are deadly swift and exceedingly accurate. The Dalish carry bows shaped of wood, bone, and leather, that humans cannot duplicate. They disdain to injure the weak and helpless, but all others are fair game when the Dalish are moved to seek vengeance.

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

Qunari & Tal-Vashoth

The imposing Qunari make the people of Thedas wary, and their beliefs make them seem even more foreign than their often-monstrous appearance would alone. The followers of the Qun philosophy quash any deviation from their rigid caste structure. They feel that the scheming and ambition of the other races of Thedas makes them weak, and that they could become useful if conquered and bound under the Qun.

Qunari avoid magic because of its corrupting nature. The rare few Qunari mages are called saarebas (or "dangerous thing"), and are treated with extreme restriction by Qunari society. It is not unheard of for a Qunari mage's lips to be sewn shut or bound in restrictive armor. An arvaarad watches over a saarebas to prevent their perceived evil from getting loose, using a control device to restrain the mage if necessary.

Tal-Vashoth Mercenary

Abilities (Focuses)
–1 Communication
3 Constitution (Stamina)
0 Cunning
1 Dexterity
–1 Magic
1 Perception
3 Strength (Heavy Blades, Intimidation)
2 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	40	11	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Two-Handed Spear	+5	2d6+3

Saarebas

Abilities (Focuses)
–1 Communication
0 Constitution (Stamina)
1 Cunning (Qun)
0 Dexterity (Brawling)
4 Magic (Primal)
1 Perception
1 Strength
3 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	40	10	2

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Gauntlet	+2	1d3+2

Special Features

Spellpower: 14 (16) **Mana:** 38

Spells: *Lightning, shock.*

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.

Knockback Spell: A saarebas can knock back targets as a special spell stunt for 2 SP. Each target hit by the spell moves 2 yards away from the saarebas and is knocked prone (as the Knock Prone stunt).

Flash of Movement: A saarebas can spend 1 MP to run as a minor action instead of as a major action.

Shackled Will: A Qunari control device attuned to a saarebas can prevent them from taking any action its controller doesn't desire.

Saarebas Armor: The restrictive armor a saarebas must wear gives it an Armor Rating of 2.

Weapon Groups: Brawling.

Equipment: Gauntlet.

Threat: Moderate

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone, Mighty Blow (1 SP), and Threaten.

Magic Susceptibility: Qunari suffer a –1 penalty on all ability tests to resist spells and other magical effects.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice) and Two-Hander Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Spears.

Equipment: Two-handed spear and light leather armor.

Threat: Moderate

Though most humans know only the name "Qunari," only those who submit to the Qun bear that name. The Tal-Vashoth reject its teachings and become exiles. Most Tal-Vashoth take up roles as mercenaries far from Qunari-controlled lands. Some of these Tal-Vashoth look to the old ways before the proliferation of the Qun. Others simply struggle to survive on their own.

The physical abilities of the race are comparable whether or not they follow the Qun.

Knight-Captain

Abilities (Focuses)	
3	Communication (Investigation, Leadership, Persuasion)
2	Constitution
1	Cunning (Religious Lore)
0	Dexterity (Bows, Initiative)
4	Magic
2	Perception
5	Strength (Heavy Blades)
3	Willpower (Courage, Faith)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
5	50	12	10

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bastard Sword	+7	2d6+5
Crossbow	+7	1d6+7

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Disarm, Righteous Fervor (2 SP).

Righteous Fervor: A knight-captain can fill herself and her allies with righteous fervor as a special stunt for 2 SP. The knight-captain and allies within 6 yards of her gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to speed on their next turns.

Mage Slayer: When a knight-captain damages a mage or other creature that has mana points, that target loses 1d6+4 MP.

Cleanse: A knight-captain can cleanse an area of ongoing magic. This is a major action that causes the knight-captain to suffer a –2 penalty to Defense until the beginning of her next turn. All ongoing spells and spells that are partially cast within 6 yards of the knight-captain end immediately.

Essence of Lyrium: A knight-captain gains a +2 bonus on tests to resist spells and other magical effects. Templars within 6 yards of a knight-captain increase their essence of lyrium bonus by 1. A creature can benefit from only one essence of lyrium.

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bludgeons, Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Spears.

Equipment: Bastard sword, crossbow, medium shield, and heavy plate.

Threat: Moderate, Major against mages and other mana-users

Templars

The Templar Order within the Chantry hunts down apostates that threaten the safety of the people of Thedas. To the people, they may seem like shining heroes. Among the mages and those who keep their company, that reputation quickly becomes tarnished. Templars—even the well-meaning ones—can be overzealous in their pursuit of mages. They don't need to find any evidence of wrongdoing on the mage's part; an apostate is an apostate. Mages who escape the Circle have an even tougher time. The templars keep phylacteries that allow them to trace the whereabouts of Circle fugitives easily.

A templar undergoes thorough preparation before earning the right to hunt mages. Beyond their extensive weapons and armor training, recruits ingest lyrium to raise their resistance against magic. Templars become addicted to the magical mineral, and going without it sends them into a state of delusion. The Order boasts of their brave and incorruptible forces, but a great many templars abuse their power. They might be sadistic mage-haters or corrupt; in either case, many in the Order put rooting out corruption low on their list of priorities.

Templar

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication (Investigation)
2	Constitution
0	Cunning (Religious Lore)
0	Dexterity
3	Magic
0	Perception
3	Strength (Axes, Heavy Blades)
2	Willpower (Faith)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
6	25	12	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+5	2d6+3
Throwing Axe	+5	1d6+5

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Cleansing Strike (2 SP) and Disarm.

Cleansing Strike: The templar can dispel magic as a special stunt that costs 2 SP. All ongoing spells affecting the target and spells that target is casting end immediately.

Mage Slayer: When the templar damages a mage or other creature that has mana points, that target loses 1d6+3 MP.

Essence of Lyrium: The templar gains a +1 bonus on tests to resist spells and other magical effects.

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Spears.

Equipment: Longsword, throwing axe, medium shield, and light plate.

Threat: Minor, Moderate against mages and other mana-users

Beasts of Thedas

Even before the First Blight, Thedas was a dangerous place. The swiping claws of a great bear can ruin your day just as effectively as the smashing fists of an ogre. This section includes game stats for beasts, from work animals like horses and dogs to more threatening specimens like giant spiders and great lions.

Black Bear

Large, dangerous, and frequently hungry, bears are a force to be reckoned with. The bears of Ferelden's lowlands have shaggy black fur, the better to survive the harsh winters. They have little to no fear of men and frequently make their homes along the borders of the forests near human settlements, where they can more easily poach stores from outlying cabins. Bears are omnivorous and seldom picky eaters, willingly consuming carrion when fresher fare is not available.

It is neither their great strength, nor their sharply curving claws that most concern the hunters of Ferelden (though only a fool reckons either lightly)—it is their attitude. Bears are unpredictable, belligerent, and regard the bulk of creatures that they meet as potential food sources. They are canny foes and quick to double back on their own tracks, taking those who would dare to hunt them unaware. They are at the top of the natural food chain, and they act like it.

Black Bear

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
6	Constitution (Stamina)
–1	Cunning
2	Dexterity (Bite)
–1	Magic
2	Perception (Smelling, Tasting)
6	Strength (Claws, Intimidation, Might)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	60	12	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+4	1d6+6
Claws	+8	2d6+6

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone (1 SP) and Quick Bite.

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

Threat: Moderate

Bear, Great

The great bear is a rarer, larger, and more powerful type of bear found in the wilds of Thedas. Like their lesser cousins, great bears do not seek to attack humans, but also do not take intruders near their lairs or hunting grounds lightly. They are fierce and attack creatures failing to show them proper deference, or who present any kind of threat.

Bronto

Bronto are beasts of burden that were painstaking "engineered" over many centuries by the dwarven scholars known

Great Bear

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
7	Constitution (Stamina)
0	Cunning
2	Dexterity (Bite)
–1	Magic
2	Perception (Smelling, Taste)
7	Strength (Claws, Intimidation, Might)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	75	12	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+4	1d6+7
Claws	+9	2d6+7

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone (1 SP) and Quick Bite.

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

Threat: Moderate

BRONTO

Abilities (Focuses)
–1 Communication
5 Constitution (Stamina)
–1 Cunning
3 Dexterity
0 Magic
2 Perception (Seeing)
5 Strength (Gore, Might)
2 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	40	13	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Gore	+7	2d6+5

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Mighty Blow and Pierce Armor.

Tough Hide: The bony skin of a bronto gives the creature an AR of 3.

Threat: Minor

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

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

CAVE BEETLE SWARM

Abilities (Focuses)
–2 Communication
3 Constitution (Stamina)
–1 Cunning
3 Dexterity (Bite)
–1 Magic
2 Perception (Smelling, Touch)
–1 Strength
0 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	25	11	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Swarm	+5	1d6 Penetrating

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Pierce Armor (1 SP).

Swarm Attack: A cave beetle swarm covers an area with a rough diameter of 3 yards, and can attack all creatures inside or adjacent to that area on its turn as a single major action.

Swarm Defense: A cave beetle swarm suffers only 1 point of damage from any sort of attack that targets a single point, save that a Mighty Blow inflicts 2 points of damage and a Lethal Blow 3 points. Only area attacks, or magical attacks with a broad effect (like Shock, for example), inflict full damage on the swarm.

Threat: Moderate

Cave Beetle Swarm

Scavengers and carrion eaters, the black hard-shelled cave (or "rock") beetle is little more than a nuisance on its own. Dwarves are even known to roast and eat them out of the shells. However, an entire swarm of cave beetles, such as a stirred-up nest, is capable of stripping an animal to the bone in minutes. Such a swarm is relentless and capable of moving quickly along a tunnel floor, wall, or even ceiling in pursuit of prey.

Dog/Mabari War Dog

Many breeds of guard and hunting dogs can be found in Thedas. The general set of statistics presented here can represent most of these.

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

Dog

Abilities (Focuses)
–2 Communication
1 Constitution (Running)
–3 Cunning
2 Dexterity (Bite)
–1 Magic
2 Perception (Smelling, Tracking)
1 Strength (Jumping)
0 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
16	15	12	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+4	1d6+1

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Skirmish.

Threat: Minor

Mabari War Dog

Abilities (Focuses)
0 Communication
2 Constitution (Running)
–1 Cunning
3 Dexterity (Bite)
–1 Magic
2 Perception (Smelling, Tracking)
2 Strength (Jumping)
1 Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
16	25	13	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+5	1d6+4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.

Threat: Minor

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

Falcon

Abilities (Focuses)
–2 Communication
–1 Constitution
–3 Cunning
3 Dexterity (Acrobatics)
–1 Magic
3 Perception (Searching, Seeing)
–2 Strength
1 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
4 (Flying 20)	10	13	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+3	1d6-2

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Pierce Armor, Skirmish.

Threat: Minor

Falcon

Falcons can be found in many parts of Thedas. The Avvar are known for their skill at training them for hunting. Noblemen in other parts of Thedas have also adopted the practice, though they view it as a sport.

You can use this stat block for falcons and similar types of raptors.

HALLA

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	Communication
3	Constitution (Running, Stamina)
0	Cunning
3	Dexterity
2	Magic
3	Perception (Hearing, Smelling)
4	Strength (Jumping)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
18	35	13	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Gore	+4	1d6+4
Kick	+4	1d6+4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Trample (4 SP).

Trample: Halla can perform a special Trample stunt for 4 SP after a successful attack. The target is knocked prone and struck by the halla's hooves for an additional 1d6+4 damage.

Threat: Minor

DRAFT HORSE — NON-COMBATANT

Abilities (Focuses)

Communication –3, Constitution 6 (Stamina), Cunning –3, Dexterity –2, Magic –2, Perception 1, Strength 5 (Might), Willpower 1

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	50	8	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Kick	+0	1d6+5

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone.

MULE — NON-COMBATANT

Abilities (Focuses)

Communication –3, Constitution 5 (Stamina), Cunning –3, Dexterity –2, Magic –2, Perception 1, Strength (Might) 4, Willpower 2

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	40	8	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Kick	+0	1d6+4

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone.

RIDING HORSE — NON-COMBATANT

Abilities (Focuses)

Communication –3, Constitution 4 (Stamina), Cunning –3, Dexterity 0, Magic –2, Perception 1 (Hearing, Seeing), Strength 4, Willpower 1

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
18	40	10	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Kick	+0	1d6+4

Favored Stunts: Skirmish.

HALLA

The Dalish elves revere the halla, or white stags, ridden by elven knights in days long past. Now the noble creatures mainly draw Dalish aravels in the elves' wanderings. In spite of this, the elves still consider halla proud and noble creatures. Halla horn is a prized material for elven carvings, and jealously guarded from outsiders.

Since the Exalted March's end in 2:20 Glory, belligerent halla have been unknown in Thedas. Though they might fight for a Dalish tribe that found itself under attack, aggressive halla have faded from the world.

HORSES

Several basic types of equine creatures populate the varied nations and enclaves of Thedas.

Great Lion

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
6	Constitution (Stamina)
1	Cunning
4	Dexterity (Bite, Stealth)
–1	Magic
2	Perception (Smelling, Taste)
5	Strength (Claws, Might)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
15	65	14	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+6	1d6+5
Claws	+7	2d6+5

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Skirmish (1 SP), Knock Prone (2 SP), and Quick Bite (2 SP)

Quick Bite: A great lion can follow up a successful attack with its claws with a Quick Bite as a special stunt costing 2 SP. This bite attack must be made against the same target as the original attack. Doubles on the bite attack roll do not generate more stunt points.

Threat: Moderate

- **Draft Horse:** Draft Horses can pull or carry a heavy load but are ponderous creatures.
- **Mule:** Mules are favored pack animals in rough country like hills and mountain trails.
- **Riding Horse:** Riding horses can get you from place to place but they are not trained for war.

These animals are commonly available for purchase in most settles of substantial size. Prices for these animals can be found in **Chapter 4: Weapons, Armor, & Gear**.

Lion, Great

Great lions are rare types of great cats found in the wilds of Thedas. Both larger and more ferocious than more common cousins—like regular mountain lions—great lions are masterful hunters with enormous appetites. They may stalk prey for great distances, waiting for the right time to strike, whether alone or as part of a pack. Combine the Knock Prone and Skirmish stunts to depict a great lion's attempts to drag a target into the underbrush to finish it off.

Spider, Giant

Once found only in the depths of the dwarven Deep Roads, these huge arthropods were originally raised by the dwarves

Giant Spider

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	Communication
3	Constitution
–2	Cunning
4	Dexterity (Bite, Stealth)
0	Magic
3	Perception (Touching)
3	Strength (Intimidation, Jumping)
1	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
14	35	14	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+6	2d6+3

Special Features

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

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Poison Bite.

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

Wall Crawler: A giant spider can walk up walls and even on ceilings.

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

Threat: Minor

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

These giant spiders use sticky silken webs, which they are clever enough to attempt to camouflage, in order to trap prey unaware. They are also quite adept at spitting their webs to capture a target, a racial skill acquired from many generations of hunting bats in the caves beneath Thedas.

Rat, Giant

While common rats can be found in just about any civilized area of Thedas—and can be dangerous in their own right in the correct circumstances—the giant variety are a whole other level of threat.

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

Rat, Giant	
Abilities (Focuses)	
–3	**Communication**
2	**Constitution**
–2	**Cunning**
2	**Dexterity** (Bite, Stealth)
0	**Magic**
2	**Perception** (Smelling)
1	**Strength**
1	**Willpower**

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
14	12	12	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+4	1d6+1

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.

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

Threat: Minor

Darkspawn

With the First Blight came the darkspawn and they have been a plague on the world ever since. The Chantry teaches that the darkspawn cannot be utterly vanquished until sin has been banished from the world, for they are man's hubris made flesh. Regardless of where they first came from, the legions of the darkspawn now make war upon all other races, emerging from the dwarven Deep Roads in vast numbers with each Blight. Darkspawn are cold, heartless creatures, regarding all species not their own as little more than fodder. Their behavior suggests they even look upon their fellow darkspawn with disfavor. When darkspawn travel together in force, they are often observed grouped together with their own kind (genlocks with genlocks, hurlocks with hurlocks, and so forth). Fortunately for the other sentients of Thedas, darkspawn despise the sun and their vision is impaired in daylight.

Basic Darkspawn

This section covers the most basic varieties of darkspawn, the most numerous of their foul breed, and the most likely to be commonly encountered.

Broodmother

While most people prefer to avoid thinking about the darkspawn, the question of how they multiply has been a matter of grotesque speculation among the less squeamish. The idea that they were natural creatures seemed impossible, given their lack of usual biology, and their wanton destructiveness. Some theorized that the darkspawn somehow converted the people that they dragged off into more of their legions, but this could not explain their massive numbers. The darkspawn being simply born from the taint seemed, for a time, the only explanation that actually fit. Then, however, the terrible truth was discovered—the broodmothers.

A broodmother is a form of ghoul that has been twisted to perpetuate the darkspawn. They are captured and taken by the darkspawn beneath the earth, where they are forced to absorb an immense amount of the taint. They are forced to eat the flesh of darkspawn, or even of other people (including friends and family members) who have been corrupted by the taint. The increasing taint causes cannibalistic urges and sickens them, twisting their thoughts until they have no will of their own. However, unlike most ghouls, they do not die from the taint. Instead, their bodies are twisted into massive, grotesque forms capable of birthing thousands of darkspawn over the course of their lives. Each type of darkspawn comes from a broodmother that was originally a different race: Genlocks are born of broodmothers that were once dwarves, hurlocks from human broodmothers, shrieks from elves, and ogres are born of Qunari broodmothers.

Massive and all but immobile, broodmothers are still extremely dangerous. They are generally found in chambers deep within the earth, in the Deep Roads. From these chambers, they give birth to litters of two or three dozen darkspawn at a time. The darkspawn guard the broodmothers

BROODMOTHER — DARKSPAWN

Abilities (Focuses)

0	**Communication**
8	**Constitution** (Stamina)
0	**Cunning**
–2	**Dexterity** (Brawling)
1	**Magic**
2	**Perception** (Detect Darkspawn)
6	**Strength** (Intimidation, Might)
2	**Willpower** (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
1	100	8	6

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Tentacle	+8	1d6+6
Caustic Spit	+2	1d6+4 Penetrating

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Crush (3 SP), Knock Prone, and Mighty Blow.

Immobile: Due to her massive size, and the way she is anchored into the earth by her tentacles, a broodmother is immune to the combat stunts Skirmish and Knock Prone. She cannot move itself using the Skirmish stunt, though she can use the stunt to move her opponents. A broodmother cannot use the run action.

Corrupted Body: A broodmother's thick, mutated flesh gives her an armor rating of 6.

Caustic Spit: A broodmother can spit caustic venom at her enemies as a ranged attack. This attack has a short range of 12 yards and a long range of 24 yards. The attack is based on her Perception.

Special Features

Thicket of Tentacles: A broodmother can have a half-dozen or more tentacles that move through the walls and floor of her chamber, bursting out from anywhere. Because of this, she can make two melee attacks with a single action, and her melee attacks can reach targets up to 4 yards away. She uses **Strength (Might)** to make these attacks.

Crush: For 3 SP, a broodmother can perform a crush stunt after a successful tentacle attack. She grabs the target and inflicts 1d6+6 penetrating damage. She can maintain the crush and inflict this damage as a major action each round, maintain the grab without causing damage as a minor action, or release the grab for free at the start of her turn. On the target's turn, it can escape by using a major action to make a **Strength (Might)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test, opposed by the broodmother's **Strength (Might)**. An ally adjacent to the target can also make a special 2 SP stunt to break the grab.

Caustic Spray: As a major action, the broodmother can let out a spray of caustic venom, 4 yards long and 6 yards wide. Anyone caught within the spray suffers 1d6+4 penetrating damage, or 1d6–2 penetrating damage if they make a successful **TN 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test. A target grabbed by the broodmother cannot make this test.

Hideous Scream: As a 4 SP special stunt, a broodmother can let out a terrible scream that leaves her opponents cowering and covering their ears. Everyone within 15 yards of the broodmother must make a **TN 13 Willpower (Courage)** test. Anyone who fails cannot take a major action on their next turn. This scream will also alert darkspawn in hearing distance that the broodmother is in danger.

Threat: Dire

Genlock Alpha	Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication (Leadership)
3	Constitution (Running)
1	Cunning (Military Lore)
2	Dexterity (Brawling)
2	Magic
2	Perception (Seeing, Smelling)
4	Strength (Axes, Intimidation)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
6	55	11 (13 with Shield)	7

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Battle Axe	+6	2d6+4
Throwing Axe	+6	1d6+6

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Cripple (3 SP) and Dual Strike.

Cripple: A genlock alpha can make a crippling attack as a special stunt for 3 SP. The target suffers a –2 penalty to attack tests and damage, and moves at half speed. The penalty to attack tests and damage expires after three rounds, but the movement penalty persists until the target is able to take a breather.

Magic Resistance: A genlock alpha gains a +2 bonus on tests to resist the effects of spells and other magical attacks.

Tactical Skirmish: A genlock alpha can move another darkspawn under its command 2 yards using a Skirmish stunt (in addition to being able to move itself or its target as normal).

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman) and Weapon and Shield Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Brawling, and Bludgeons
Equipment: Battle axe, heavy mail, medium shield, and throwing axe.

Threat: Moderate

Genlock	Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
2	Constitution (Running)
1	Cunning (Military Lore)
1	Dexterity (Brawling)
2	Magic
2	Perception (Smelling)
3	Strength (Axes, Intimidation)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
7	22	11 (13 with Shield)	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Battle Axe	+5	2d6+3
Throwing Axe	+5	1d6+5

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.

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

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

Weapon Groups: Axes, Brawling, and Bludgeons.

Equipment: Battle axe, light mail, medium shield, and throwing axe.

Threat: Minor

carefully, and it is certain that any encounter with a broodmother will also involve large numbers of darkspawn. The broodmothers themselves are extremely strong, and have massive tentacles with which they can attack enemies within their birthing chambers. While destroying a broodmother can certainly slow the hordes of the darkspawn (and is certainly a kindness to the poor, corrupted broodmother herself), anyone who sets out to do so had best be well prepared.

Genlock

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

Genlock alphas are the strongest, quickest, and most cunning of their kind, bullying their way into the leadership of bands of lesser genlocks. They tend to be taller and more

Genlock Emissary — Darkspawn

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	Communication
2	Constitution (Running)
1	Cunning (Military Lore)
1	Dexterity (Brawling)
4	Magic (Entropy)
2	Perception (Smelling)
3	Strength (Heavy Blades, Intimidation, Staves)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
6	50	11	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+5	2d6+3
Quarterstaff	+5	1d6+4

Special Features

Spellpower: 14 (16 for Entropy) **Mana:** 60

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.

Magic Resistance: A genlock gains a +2 bonus on ability tests to resist the effects of spells and other magical attacks.

Spells: *Affliction hex, blood sacrifice, drain life, heal, lightning, vulnerability hex,* and *weakness*.

Tactical Skirmish: A genlock emissary can move another darkspawn under its command 2 yards using a Skirmish stunt (in addition to being able to move itself or its target as normal).

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Blood Magic (Journeyman), and Entropy Magic (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Longsword, quarterstaff, and heavy leather armor.

Threat: Moderate

Hurlock — Darkspawn

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
3	Constitution (Stamina)
1	Cunning
2	Dexterity (Brawling)
1	Magic
2	Perception (Smelling)
4	Strength (Heavy Blades, Intimidation)
3	Willpower (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	30	12	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Short Bow	+2	1d6+5
Two-handed Sword	+6	3d6+4

Special Features

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

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike and Mighty Blow.

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

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, and Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Light mail, short bow, and two-handed sword.

Threat: Minor

heavily muscled than their brethren, and have a more commanding presence, although their demeanor is more swagger and bluster than cool leadership.

Particularly cunning genlock alphas cultivate skill as sorcerers, mainly in entropy magic. However, emissaries generally only appear during a Blight, acting to rally darkspawn and carry out the more sensitive or intricate plans of the rising Archdemon.

It's not clear how genlock emissaries—said to arise from dwarf broodmothers—are able to cast spells so effectively given their natural magic resistance, and how they are able to cast spells so effectively even though most are usually seen armored. Some Grey Warden scholars theorize that the emissaries' magic is similar enough to blood magic that the emissaries can ignore the magic-damping effects of armor by simply pillaging their minions' life force to fuel their spellcasting.

Hurlock

The shock vanguard of the darkspawn, hurlocks are burly soldiers far stronger than the average human. They are deadly

fighters who wield massive two-handed blades in battle, and scar or tattoo themselves regularly to denote their kills. They typically have to wear patchwork armor, as few full sets that can fit one of them exist. Their skin tone ranges from pale white to dark brown. If they are not bald, which is common, then their hair is always black.

Champions of the darkspawn, hurlock alphas are fearsome warriors who lead marauding war bands—if not entire armies—of lesser hurlocks and genlocks.

A particularly cunning hurlock alpha, rather than becoming a fearsome warrior, may learn the arcane arts, becoming an emissary. Hurlock emissaries are among the most feared darkspawn, not only for their magical powers or their command over others of their kind, but also for their sinister deviousness. They are often deployed as an Archdemon's enforcers, to ensure that the Archdemon's generals and other minions do not become fractious or distracted. As with genlock emissaries, hurlock emissaries are thought to practice a magic akin to blood magic, channeling energy from their minions into their spells so they can gain the protective benefits of armor that would normally hamper their spellcasting efforts.

Ogre

These massive darkspawn tower twice the height of a human, their bestial, primitive faces crowned with heavy, curving horns. The darkspawn born of Qunari broodmothers, ogres are dim and savage creatures, prone to dealing with any obstacle—including their own allies—by crushing or smashing it.

Ogres are a rare sight in most of Thedas, appearing during a Blight as shock troops in darkspawn armies.

Some ogres are believed to lair in the Deep Roads and high mountain peaks, as well as the depths of isolated forests.

HURLOCK ALPHA	DARKSPAWN
Abilities (Focuses)	
2	**Communication** (Leadership)
4	**Constitution** (Stamina)
2	**Cunning**
3	**Dexterity** (Bows, Brawling)
1	**Magic**
2	**Perception** (Smelling)
5	**Strength** (Heavy Blades, Intimidation, Might)
3	**Willpower** (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	70	12 (15 with shield)	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Short Bow	+5	1d6+3
Two-handed Sword	+7	3d6+5
Longsword	+7	2d6+5

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike, Mighty Blow (1 SP), and Rally (3+ SP).

Rally: A hurlock alpha can perform a special rally stunt for 3 SP (or more), inspiring its minions such that all darkspawn within 10 yards who can see the alpha regain lost Health equal to the alpha's Communication plus the number of SP spent.

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Two-Hander Style (Journeyman), and Weapon and Shield Style (Journeyman

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, and Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Light plate, short bow, and two-handed sword (or light plate, short bow, longsword, and heavy shield)

Threat: Moderate alone, Major with allies

Ogre — Darkspawn

Abilities (Focuses)
0 — Communication
8 — Constitution (Stamina)
–1 — Cunning
1 — Dexterity (Throw)
1 — Magic
2 — Perception (Smelling)
9 — Strength (Intimidation, Might)
3 — Willpower (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	80	11	7

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Club	+9	3d6+9
Smash	+11	2d6+9
Thrown Rock	+3	3d6+9

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Crush (3 SP), Lethal Blow (3 SP), and Stomp (2 SP).

Regeneration: An ogre can take a breather as a minor action, regaining 5 + Constitution (typically 13) Health.

Crush: For 3 SP, an ogre can perform a special Crush stunt after an Smash attack. It grabs the target and begins to squeeze, inflicting 1d6+9 penetrating damage. The ogre can maintain the crush as a major action and inflict this damage each round, or hurl away a grabbed target as a minor action, inflicting 1d6+9 penetrating damage, but (obviously) letting go of the victim. To escape on their own, a victim must use a major action to make an opposed **Strength (Might)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. the ogre's **Strength (Might)**. An adjacent ally can also perform a special 2 SP stunt to automatically free the victim.

Smash: The Ogre's strength is so overwhelming they can use **Strength (Might)** instead of **Dexterity (Brawling)** for unarmed attacks.

Stomp: As a major action, an ogre can stomp the ground with great force and knock all targets within 6 yards to the ground.

Tough Hide: Their hardened, calloused hides give ogres an Armor Rating of 7.

Equipment: Massive club.

Threat: Major

Hurlock Emissary — Darkspawn

Abilities (Focuses)
2 — Communication (Leadership)
3 — Constitution (Stamina)
4 — Cunning
2 — Dexterity (Brawling)
4 — Magic (Entropy)
2 — Perception (Smelling)
3 — Strength (Heavy Blades, Intimidation)
3 — Willpower (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	66	12	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Arcane Lance	+4	1d6+4
Longsword	+5	2d6+3

Special Features

Spellpower: 14 (16 for Entropy) **Mana:** 92

Spells: *Affliction hex, drain life, heal, horror, lightning, weakness,* and *wrack*.

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike and Mighty Blow.

Powers: Arcane Lance (as the level 1 mage power except no staff is required).

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Blood Magic (Journeyman), and Entropy Magic (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Longsword and heavy leather armor.

Threat: Major

Shriek

These gaunt and animalistic darkspawn are sometimes known as sharlocks, but most call them "shrieks" due to their loud, wailing cries. Darkspawn assassins born from elven broodmothers, shrieks prefer to approach their victims under the cover of darkness using their echoing wails to unnerve and terrorize their prey before they strike. They are swift and deadly, capable of using the jagged blades mounted on their arms to slice foes to ribbons. Shrieks are known to use poison distilled from their own tainted blood on their blades.

Tainted Darkspawn

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

Shriek	Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication**
1	**Constitution** (Running)
2	**Cunning**
5	**Dexterity** (Initiative, Light Blades, Stealth)
2	**Magic**
3	**Perception** (Hearing, Tracking)
2	**Strength**
1	**Willpower**

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
16	35	15	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Arm Blade	+7	1d6+4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Lightning Attack (2 SP) and Poison (2+ SP).

Frenzy: Shrieks can perform the Lightning Attack stunt for just 2 SP.

Poison: As a special stunt for 2 or more SP, a shriek can poison the target of a blade attack that deals at least 1 damage point. When poisoned, a victim must make a **TN 13 Constitution (Stamina)** test at the beginning of each of their turns or suffer 1d6+2 penetrating damage that turn. This lasts for a number of rounds equal to the number of stunt points spent.

Shriek: A shriek's namesake screaming and moaning requires a minor action, and forces anyone who hears it to make a **TN 11 Willpower (Courage)** test or suffer a –1 penalty to attack tests and Defense until the end of the encounter. These effects are not cumulative.

Tough Hide: Shrieks have an Armor Rating of 3.

Weapon Groups: Light Blades.

Threat: Moderate

Bereskarn

Bereskarn are tainted bears, similar in their nature to blight wolves and other ghouls. They look like massive bears with bony spikes that protrude from their fur and glisten with blood. The blood that constantly seeps from these wounds wets and mats their fur, giving them a terrifying, repulsive appearance and a nauseating smell. Bereskarn are slothful creatures when left alone, but fierce and unyielding when they attack. They are often enraged and prodded into battle by other darkspawn.

Blight Wolf

Scholars believe that animals cannot truly hate themselves, but if there was any beast that could, surely it would be blight wolves. These tainted animals will have almost invariably slaughtered their original pack, the focus of a wolf's life, before being forced to join with other equally miser-

Bereskarn	Tainted Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	Communication
7	Constitution (Stamina)
–2	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Bite)
–1	Magic
3	Perception (Smelling, Tracking)
7	Strength (Claws, Intimidation, Might)
2	Willpower (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	70	13	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+5	1d6+7
Claws	+9	2d6+7

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone (1SP), Quick Bite, and Thunderous Bellow.

Quick Bite: A bereskarn can perform a special quick bite stunt for 2 SP following a successful attack. The creature makes an additional bite attack against the same target. Doubles on the second bite attack do not generate stunt points.

Thunderous Bellow: A bereskarn can perform a special thunderous bellow stunt for 3 SP. All who hear this mighty roar must make a **TN 10 Willpower (Courage or Self-Discipline)** test or find themselves unable to attack the bereskarn until after the end of the next round, though they can defend themselves as normal in the meantime.

Tough Hide: The bony spines of a bereskarn give the creature an Armor Rating of 4.

Threat: Major

able blight wolves at the behest of their darkspawn masters. The darkspawn use them for hunting, a task at which they excel. A lone blight wolf is a slavering horror that will attack anything of living flesh that it can smell and their senses are keen.

Ghoul

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

Blight Wolf	Tainted Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
3	Constitution (Running)
–2	Cunning
2	Dexterity (Bite, Stealth)
0	Magic
3	Perception (Hearing, Smelling)
2	Strength (Jumping)
1	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
14	25	12	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+4	1d6+4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Lightning Attack.

Tough Hide: The bony spines of a blight wolf give the creature an AR of 3.

Threat: Minor

Ghoul	Tainted Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
2	Constitution (Stamina)
–1	Cunning
2	Dexterity
1	Magic
2	Perception
2	Strength (Bludgeons, Intimidation)
1	Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	20	12	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Fist	+2	1d6+2
Maul	+4	1d6+5

Special Features

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

Favored Stunts: Disarm and Knock Prone.

Talents: Unarmed Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons and Brawling.

Equipment: Light leather, maul.

Threat: Minor

Unique Darkspawn

While every darkspawn is unique to some degree, there are some that defy categorization. They are detailed in this section.

The Architect

The darkspawn known as the Architect is a truly unique being: a darkspawn born with his own will, able to think independently of the group-mind caused by the darkspawn taint. Immune to the call of the Old Gods, the Architect is driven, intelligent, and ruthless in pursuit of his goals.

Being singular among the darkspawn has left the Architect lonely, always on the outside from his own race. However, he still carries the taint, and understands that the races of

The Architect	Unique Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
4	**Communication** (Persuasion, Leadership)
3	**Constitution** (Stamina)
5	**Cunning** (Arcane Lore, Research)
2	**Dexterity** (Brawling)
6	**Magic** (Entropy, Primal)
2	**Perception** (Detect Darkspawn, Smelling)
5	**Strength** (Intimidation)
2	**Willpower** (Courage, Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10 (Fly 8)	80	12	7

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Claws	+4	1d6+4
Arcane Lance	+4	1d6+4

Special Features

Spellpower: 16 (18) **Mana:** 105

Spells: *Affliction hex, arcane shield, death syphon, drain life, fireball, flame blast, glyph of neutralization, inferno, misdirection hex, paralyze, vulnerability hex,* and *weakness*.

Favored Stunts: Mighty Spell (1 SP), Imposing Spell, Arcane Armor, and Lethal Spell.

Darkspawn Resistance: The Architect's tough, Taint-infused body has a natural Armor Rating of 4 which stacks with whatever armor he may be wearing.

Vicious Caster: The Architect can use the Mighty Spell stunt for 1 SP (instead of 2) and Lethal Spell for 4 SP (instead of 5) when casting Entropy and fire-based Primal spells.

Arcane Lance: As the level 1 mage power, but no staff is required.

Talents: Entropy Magic (Journeyman) and Primal Magic (Journeyman).

Equipment: Light Leather Armor.

Threat: Legendary

Thedas could never accept him. His goal is create a peace between darkspawn and the other races, and he believes the Grey Wardens are the key. The Grey Wardens represent a bridge between the darkspawn and the other races. They are humans, elves, and dwarves, but they can use the taint to find the darkspawn. They bear the taint, but are able to resist its call, retaining their free will. If all Thedas could be made like the Grey Wardens, then perhaps the darkspawn and the other races would not have to war. This is the Architect's ambitious and terrible dream.

The Architect has many schemes in play. He attempts to spread the taint in human cities, hoping that those who survive will be able to work with the darkspawn. He has created his own version of the Joining ritual, giving darkspawn drinks of Grey Warden blood. He created the Disciples, darkspawn who have gained their own will. He also freed the broodmother known as The Mother from the taint.

The Architect truly believes that what he is doing is in the best interests of not only darkspawn, but all of Thedas. He is polite and persuasive when confronted about his plans, always trying to convince others of the righteousness of his cause. However, he is also a fanatic who does not truly understand other races. He is coldly pragmatic, willing to sacrifice vast numbers of people in pursuit of his goals. His attempts to conduct his Joining ritual with an Archdemon, cutting the Calling off at its source, directly led to the Fifth Blight. While the Architect considers this regrettable, he is not deterred. He will find a way to free the darkspawn from the influence of the Old Gods, even if he has to kill the entire continent to do it.

The Mother

It is unknown who The Mother was when she was still human. Taken by the darkspawn, she was forced to eat their tainted flesh, accelerating the taint within her. She watched as her family was destroyed, and she was forced to devour the bodies of those she knew. She became a broodmother, bound to the taint that drove all of the darkspawn, with no will of her own. And she would have remained so, if not for the Architect.

The Mother was among those that the Architect awakened, freeing from the control of the taint. She was not as a grateful as he expected. Driven mad by her memories of what she once was and what she had been forced to endure, she now was denied the only solace she had remaining, the "sweet music" of her corruption, which had allowed her to remain unaware of what she had become. She, and others who had been freed, turned on the Architect, sparking a civil war among the dark-

The Mother — Unique Darkspawn

Abilities (Focuses)
2 — Communication (Leadership)
8 — Constitution (Stamina)
2 — Cunning
0 — Dexterity (Brawling)
5 — Magic (Entropy, Creation)
3 — Perception (Detect Darkspawn, Seeing)
8 — Strength (Intimidation, Might)
4 — Willpower (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
1	180	10	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Tentacle	+10	1d6+8
Caustic Spit	+3	1d6+4 Penetrating

Special Features

Spellpower: 15 (17) **Mana:** 85

Spells: *Daze, death cloud, drain life, glyph of neutralization, glyph of repulsion, horror, miasma,* and *stinging swarm*

Favored Stunts: Crush (3 SP), Knock Prone, Mighty Blow, and Mighty Spell.

Immobile: Due to her massive size, and the way she is anchored into the earth by her tentacles, The Mother is immune to the combat stunts Skirmish and Knock Prone. She cannot move herself using the Skirmish stunt, though she can use the stunt to move her opponents. She cannot use the run action.

Caustic Spit: The Mother can spit caustic venom as a ranged attack. This attack has a short range of 12 yards and a long range of 24 yards. It uses her Perception to hit.

Special Features

Corrupted Body: The Mother's thick, mutated flesh gives her an armor rating of 8.

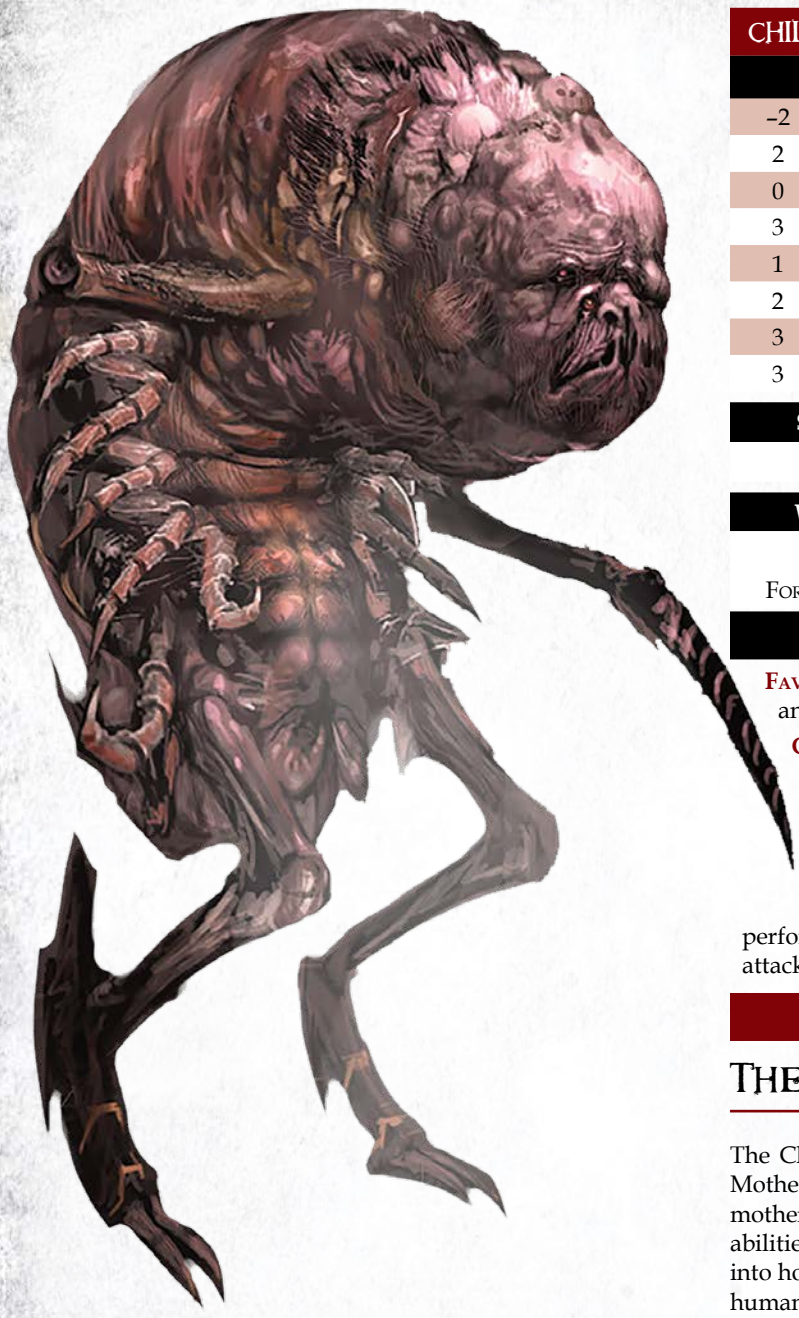
Thicket of tentacles: The Mother has more than a half-dozen tentacles that move through the walls and floor of her chamber, bursting out from anywhere. Because of this, she can make two melee attacks with a single action, and her melee attacks can reach targets up to 4 yards away. She uses **Strength (Might)** to make these attacks.

Crush: For 3 SP, The Mother can perform a crush stunt after a successful tentacle attack. She grabs the target and inflicts 1d6+6 penetrating damage. She can maintain the crush and inflict this damage as a major action each round, maintain the grab without causing damage as a minor action, or release the grab for free at the start of her turn. On the target's turn, it can escape by using a major action to make a **Strength (Might)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test, opposed by The Mother's **Strength (Might)**. An ally adjacent to the target can also make a special 2 SP stunt to break the grab.

Caustic Spray: As a major action, The Mother can let out a spray of caustic venom, 4 yards long and 6 yards wide. Anyone caught within the spray suffers 1d6+4 penetrating damage, or 1d6–2 penetrating damage if they make a successful **TN 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test. A target grabbed by The Mother cannot make this test.

Hideous Scream: As a 4 SP special stunt, The Mother can let out a terrible scream that leaves her opponents cowering and covering their ears. Everyone within 15 yards of her must make a **TN 13 Willpower (Courage)** test. Anyone who fails cannot take a major action on their next turn. This scream will also alert any nearby Children that their Mother is in danger.

Threat: Legendary



spawn. She has spawned The Children, strange, twisted darkspawn, and hopes to use them to destroy the Architect.

The Mother is undeniably mad. She wishes only to be able to hear the call of the Archdemon again, and hopes that the death of the Architect will grant her that. If not, she will continue to spawn her children, sending them to attack the thaigs and the cities of the surface, until someone destroys her. Perhaps, in death, she will hear the music again.

The Mother is unique, and has abilities beyond those of the other broodmothers. While she has the same basic physical abilities as they do, she is also able to cast spells. Who she was is unknown, so there is no way of knowing if her proficiency with magic is something from her previous life, or if it is a side effect of the Architect's Awakening of her. Either way, it can only be hoped that it is a unique event. Were more broodmothers able to learn spells, fighting the darkspawn would become even more dangerous.

Childer Hatchling	Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	**Communication**
2	**Constitution** (Running, Stamina)
0	**Cunning**
3	**Dexterity** (Claw)
1	**Magic**
2	**Perception** (Smelling)
3	**Strength** (Bite, Intimidation)
3	**Willpower** (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
18	25	13	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+5	1d6+4
Foreleg Claw	+5	2d6+3

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Skirmish, Knock Prone, Pierce (1 SP), and Gorge (2 SP).

Gorge: When adjacent to a prone character, a childer can make a bite attack as a special 2 SP action.

Exoskeleton: A childer's tough, beetle-like shell gives it an armor rating of 3.

Needle Sharpness: A childer's insectile legs come to exceptionally sharp, strong points. A childer can perform the Pierce combat stunt for 1 SP instead of 2 when attacking with a foreleg stab.

Threat: Minor

The Children

The Children are strange, mutated darkspawn born of The Mother that do her bidding. While most human broodmothers birth hurlock darkspawn, The Mother's unusual abilities and free will allow her to change her own offspring into horrors that merge insect-like bodies with a disturbingly human-looking face. These twisted creatures daunt even other darkspawn, as they will attack and feed on anything that comes near.

While The Children, like The Mother, seem to be free of the influence of the taint that drives all of the other darkspawn, they are not any more intelligent than other darkspawn. They are monsters that only do as the Mother wishes, and have no goals of their own but to destroy, maim, and feast on anything that comes near them. If they are allowed to eat and grow, and if their number continues to multiply, they could become a horde as terrible as any Blight.

The Children start their life as childer grubs, cockroach or beetle-like forms that hibernate in cocoons after they have been birthed. However, if they sense movement or heat from living beings near them, they will awaken and crawl out of their cocoons. They have humanoid faces and are usually about a half-meter to a meter long, with thick, heavy bodies. They can use their bulk to knock over any creatures near

Childer Grub	Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	**Communication**
1	**Constitution** (Stamina)
0	**Cunning**
1	**Dexterity**
1	**Magic**
2	**Perception** (Smelling)
3	**Strength** (Bite)
3	**Willpower** (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	15	11	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+ 5	1d6 + 4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Gorge (2 SP).

Gorge: When adjacent to a character who is prone, a childer can make a bite attack as a special 2 SP action.

Exoskeleton: A childer's tough, beetle like shell gives it an armor rating of 3.

Threat: Minor

them, and then maul them with their sharp teeth, messily eating chunks of their victims' flesh.

If a childer grub eats the blighted, the grub then swiftly metamorphoses into a larger form, the childer hatchling. The hatchlings can run on long, thin insect legs, allowing them to cover ground with terrifying swiftness. The childer hatchlings can stab and slash with their forelegs, as well as biting their targets. Their jaws unfold even more dramatically than before, opening outward into four sharp, mandible-like fangs, with smaller, shark-like teeth within. The hatchlings will also still knock their foes to the ground, gorging on anyone that they can make vulnerable.

The final life stage of The Children comes when they have again gorged themselves on a darkspawn or other tainted target. Their outward carapace hardens, giving them stronger protection against anyone they attack, and they sprout additional sharp, stabbing insect legs. If they see a moment of weakness in a foe, they will unleash a furious assault with these additional legs, stabbing and mauling their enemies. This final form of The Children is by far the most dangerous.

The Archdemon

Masters of darkspawn and bringers of the Blight, there are few things in Thedas as dangerous as an Archdemon. Created when the darkspawn find one of the Old Gods and corrupt it, these ultimate foes take the form of great, blighted dragons.

Terrifying to behold and vastly powerful, Archdemons are incredibly intelligent and unrelentingly evil. Using their powers and cunning, they control and coordinate the darkspawn,

Childer Adult	Darkspawn
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	**Communication**
2	**Constitution** (Running, Stamina)
1	**Cunning**
3	**Dexterity** (Claw, Initiative)
1	**Magic**
2	**Perception** (Smelling)
4	**Strength** (Bite, Intimidation)
3	**Willpower** (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
18	30	13	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+5	1d6+5
Foreleg Claw	+6	2d6+4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Skirmish, Pierce (1 SP), and Lightning Attack (2 SP).

Exoskeleton: An adult childer's hardened carapace gives it an armor rating of 5.

Needle Sharpness: A childer's insectile legs come to exceptionally sharp, strong points. A childer can perform the Pierce combat stunt for 1 SP instead of 2 when attacking with a foreleg stab.

Multiple Limbs: An adult childer can use its additional, insect-like limbs to make a flurry of attacks. The Lightning Attack combat stunt costs an adult childer 2 SP instead of 3 when attacking with its forelimbs.

Threat: Moderate

transforming them from a hive-mind of violent monsters into a disciplined army. This campaign becomes the Blight and will not stop as long as the Archdemon lives. Their mental control and commands to their followers are often intercepted by the Grey Wardens in the form of disturbing visions and dreams.

Each Archdemon has its own name and personality, though it is said that they all seek to destroy and corrupt all non-darkspawn. Archdemons from previous ages were Dumat, the Dragon of Silence; Zazikel, the Dragon of Chaos; Toth, the Dragon of Fire; and Andoral, the Dragon of Slaves. The Archdemon of the current age is Urthemiel. Originally the Tevinter goddess of beauty, she is now terrifying, evil, and hungry.

Facing the Archdemon of the Fifth Blight should be the climax of the campaign. It is not a fight the PCs should take lightly. In *Dragon Age: Origins,* the heroes did not go to the battle alone. They had allies to keep the darkspawn busy while they concentrated on the Archdemon. In your campaign, you can decide where and when the climactic confrontation takes place. It is likely that at least some characters will die but you should make sure that the PCs have a chance. Questing for potent magic items and allies before the encounter is more than appropriate.

ARCHDEMON

CORRUPTED OLD GOD

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication**
9	**Constitution** (Stamina)
5	**Cunning**
6	**Dexterity** (Bite, Corruption Blast)
7	**Magic**
5	**Perception** (Hearing, Seeing)
10	**Strength** (Claws)
7	**Willpower** (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
14 (Fly 15)	300	16	12

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+8	3d6+10
Claws	+12	2d6+10
Corruption Blast	+8	4d6+5
Tail Bash	+6	1d6+10

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Lethal Blow (5 SP), Lighting Attack (3 SP), Tail Bash (2 SP), Vortex (2 SP).

Buffet: As a minor action, an Archdemon can flap its wings and buffet nearby creatures. Anyone within 4 yards of it must make a successful TN 16 **Strength (Might)** test or be knocked back 1d6 yards. Those that fail their tests and have a Dragon Die result of 1 or 2 are also knocked prone.

Corruption Blast: An Archdemon can spit purple flame as a ranged attack. The corruption blast has a short range of 16 yards and a long range of 32 yards.

Roar: The mighty bellow of an Archdemon can freeze the blood of its enemies. It can roar as a major action. All enemies within 24 yards must make a TN 17 **Willpower (Courage)** test. Those that fail cannot take any major action except run.

Special Features

Detonate Darkspawn: As a minor action an Archdemon can cause a darkspawn within 24 yards to explode. Anyone within 4 yards of the exploding darkspawn takes 2d6+7 damage.

Large and in Charge: Few creatures compare to the size and strength of an Archdemon. It is immune to the combat stunts Skirmish and Knock Prone. It also treats enemies up to 4 yards away as adjacent.

Corruption Breath: An Archdemon can spew a coruscating purple flame either in a wide arc (4 yards long and 6 yards wide) or a narrow stream (8 yards long and 2 yards wide) as a major action. Those caught in the area take 2d6+4 penetrating damage, or 1d6+2 penetrating damage if they make a successful TN 18 **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test.

Nigh Immortal: It is a closely guarded secret of the Grey Wardens that if anyone but a Warden kills an Archdemon, its soul travels to the nearest tainted creature. This is usually a darkspawn and in time the Archdemon will return to its former might. The only way to permanently destroy an Archdemon is to have a Grey Warden make the killing blow. In this case, the Archdemon's soul will enter the Grey Warden's body and both souls will be destroyed. This is fatal for the Warden.

Tail Bash: As a special 2 SP stunt, an Archdemon can make a tail bash attack against any adjacent opponent. Doubles on this attack do not generate stunt points.

Tooth and Claw: An Archdemon is a vicious opponent. It can attack with a claw and a bite as a single major action. Both attacks can generate stunt points.

Tough Hide: An Archdemon is protected by the toughest dragon scale. It has an Armor Rating of 12.

Vortex: An Archdemon can create a swirling vortex of corrupt energy as a special stunt costing 2 SP. The vortex, which has a 4 yard radius, appears anywhere within 24 yards of the Archdemon. Enemies within it take 1d6 penetrating damage, while wounded darkspawn within it gain 1d6 Health. It has no effect on the Archdemon itself.

Threat: Legendary

Dragons

From dragonlings to the great high dragons, dragons in Thedas are central to its history and lore. Thought hunted to extinction by the Nevarran hunters during previous ages, these true dragons have returned to herald the beginning of a new age. Dragons and similar creatures are always dangerous and the most powerful of them can only be defeated by the greatest heroes or most legendary of dragon hunters.

Dragonling

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

Dragonling	Dragon-kin
Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	**Communication**
2	**Constitution** (Running)
–1	**Cunning**
5	**Dexterity** (Initiative)
0	**Magic**
3	**Perception** (Seeing)
2	**Strength** (Claws, Jumping)
1	**Willpower**

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
16	15	15	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+5	1d6+2
Claws	+4	2d6+2
Fire Gout	+5	2d6

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Mighty Blow and Pierce Armor.

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

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

Tough Hide: The scaly skin of a dragonling gives the creature an AR of 3.

Threat: Minor

Drake

Drakes are mature male dragonlings. Unlike females, which continue to grow into the winged dragons of legend, males only grow vestigial spurs where females develop wings, and otherwise stop developing. Mature drakes seek out the lairs of adult females, joining their harems, defending their lairs and young, and hunting for them. Drakes fight with sharp claws and crushing bites. They can spit gouts of flame and strike pulverizing blows with their tails.

Drake	Dragon-kin
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication**
5	**Constitution** (Running)
0	**Cunning**
5	**Dexterity** (Fire Gout, Initiative)
1	**Magic**
4	**Perception** (Seeing, Tracking)
5	**Strength** (Claws, Jumping)
2	**Willpower** (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
16	55	15	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+7	2d6+5
Claws	+7	2d6+5
Fire Gout	+7	3d6
Tail Strike	+7	1d6+5

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Pierce Armor, Rake (2 SP), and Tail Blow (3 SP).

Fire Gout: A drake can spit a gout of flame as a ranged attack with a short range of 6 yards and a long range of 12 yards. For 2 SP, a drake can spread the flames to cover an area with an 8-yard diameter centered on the original target. Targets other than the primary target who fall inside this area can make an **opposed Dexterity (Acrobatics)** vs. **Dexterity (Fire Gout)** test to take only half damage. The drake never takes damage from such a stunt, even if inside the burning area.

Rake: A drake can perform a special Rake stunt for 2 SP following a successful claw attack. The creature makes an additional, raking claw attack against the same target. Doubles on the raking attack do not generate stunt points.

Tail Blow: A drake can perform the Knock Prone and Mighty Blow stunts simultaneously for 3 SP by striking a lashing blow with its tail.

Fire Resistance: A drake suffers no damage from fire-based attacks.

Tough Hide: The scaled hide of a drake gives it an Armor Rating of 5.

Threat: Moderate

HIGH DRAGON — DRAGON-KIN

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	**Communication**
8	**Constitution** (Stamina)
–1	**Cunning**
5	**Dexterity** (Bite, Fire Gout)
3	**Magic**
4	**Perception** (Hearing, Seeing)
9	**Strength** (Claws)
6	**Willpower** (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
14 (Fly 15)	200	15	11

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+7	2d6+9
Claws	+11	2d6+9
Fire Gout	+7	3d6+4
Tail Bash	+5	1d6+9

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Lethal Blow (5 SP), Lighting Attack (3 SP), Pierce Armor (2 SP), and Tail Bash (2 SP).

Buffet: As a minor action, a high dragon can flap its wings and buffet nearby creatures. Anyone within 4 yards of the dragon must make a successful TN 15 **Strength (Might)** test or be knocked back 1d6 yards. Those who fail their tests and have a Dragon Die result of 1 or 2 are also knocked prone.

Fire Breath: A high dragon can spew flame either in a wide arc (4 yards long and 6 yards wide) or a narrow stream (8 yards long and 2 yards wide) as a major action. Those caught in the area take 2d6 penetrating damage, or 1d6 penetrating damage if a successful **TN 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test is made.

Fire Gout: A high dragon can spit flame as a ranged attack. The fire gout has a short range of 12 yards and a long range of 24 yards.

Fire Resistance: A high dragon suffers no damage from fire-based attacks.

Large and in Charge: Few creatures compare to the size and strength of a high dragon. It is immune to the combat stunts Skirmish and Knock Prone. It also treats enemies up to 4 yards away as adjacent.

Roar: The mighty bellow of a high dragon can freeze the blood of its enemies. It can roar as a major action. All enemies within 24 yards must make a **TN 15 Willpower (Courage)** test. Those that fail cannot take any major action except run.

Tail Bash: As a special 2 SP stunt, a high dragon can make a Tail Bash attack against any adjacent opponent. Rolling doubles on this attack does not generate stunt points.

Tooth and Claw: A high dragon is a vicious opponent. It can attack with a claw and a bite as a single major action. Both attacks can generate stunt points.

Tough Hide: Dragon scale is legendary for its toughness, giving a high dragon an Armor Rating of 11.

Threat: Dire

The armies of Andraste and Maferath gathered in the West. And the Prophet went alone into the mountains to sing to the Maker. She would take no one but Justinia and Maferath with her.

They climbed until they came to a hanging valley with a small lake—still and clear, perfectly reflecting the sky—and there Beloved Andraste said they would rest. She sat down on the lakeshore and said to her dear companions, "Wait with me, my friends. And whatever happens, have no fear." Then she began to sing.

As she sang, the mountains bent to listen. Stars came down from the heavens to be near her. Birds and beasts of every variety came forth and knelt at Andraste's feet. Justinia and Maferath witnessed this and were afraid.

Then from the sheer cliffs a great wyvern appeared, baring its fangs and drowning out the Prophet's song with its roars. The beast descended from the cliffs like a thunderbolt from the sky. Maferath drew his sword and struck at the wyvern, slicing off part of its hood.

But the Prophet put her hand on Maferath's sword arm and stopped him. And the wyvern came to Andraste's feet and knelt, and when it rose, it left blood on the ground, dripping from the wound Maferath had given it. And Maferath was ashamed that he had given in to fear despite Andraste's words. He drew his hand along the blade of his sword, spilling his own blood and adding it to the wyvern's. At this, the beast nodded once in acknowledgement and then vanished as swiftly as it had appeared.

Drake scales form a tough natural armor and their hides are prized for making suits of highly effective armor, described in greater detail in Chapter 13: Rewards.

High Dragons

The most ancient and powerful of their kind, High Dragons are always female. Male dragons never evolve beyond the wingless drake stage, but eventually a female who survives to advanced age will sprout wings, grow in size and power, and become a High Dragon. At this stage of development, these females are rarely seen outside their lairs. This makes their appearance a significant and ominous event.

Most of the time, there is little to fear from a High Dragon, despite its power, unless encountered in its lair. It spends decades in seclusion and hibernation in lairs found only in the wildest areas of Thedas. However, when preparing to hatch a clutch of eggs, these creatures will leave their homes and fly across the land seeking prey to feed themselves and their newborns.

High Dragons are formidable foes and make for an extremely challenging fight, Elite, Heroic, and Epic versions even more so. Unlike some dragons of stories and legend, the High Dragons of Thedas aren't much for conversation. They have no use for humans or other beings as anything but food. You never deal with a dragon; you just try to survive the encounter.

Wyvern

The **wyvern** (*wih*-vern) is a member of the dragon family and especially important to Orlesian culture.

An adult wyvern is nearly the size of a dragon, but where a dragon is saurian and lithe, a wyvern has thicker musculature and a more sinewy bulk. A wyvern's head is stout and squarish with a split-mandible mouth and protruding fins. These are colorful creatures, garish and fierce.

Although historically categorized as smaller cousins of drakes and dragons, wyverns differ distinctly from other dragon-kind in both physical form and demeanor. Wyverns lead solitary existences, stubbornly defending their territory against trespass by other creatures, including other wyverns. Bullish wyverns even defend their turf against dragons that might well be able to best them in battle. Wyvern territories sometimes overlap with each other, as multiple wyverns may be drawn to the same feeding grounds or water source, but not for long. Showy, noisy displays of dominance and foul-smelling wyvern spoor serve to settle most contests between their kind, driving each wyvern to ferociously defend whatever ground it can claim.

The wyvern's natural habitat lies within only a few mountain ranges of Thedas—rocky lands, in some places barren, in others verdant, where the wyvern can dwell as an apex predator. Wyverns typically do not discern between intelligent and unintelligent prey. They are as likely to eat ranging cattle, feral wolves, family pets, and civilized folk, if given the need and the opportunity. Often, wyverns inflict their venom on prey and then leave them to wander and die, perhaps as some base animal sense of sport or perhaps out of simple ease.

Wyvern wings are hardy but imprecise things. A wyvern does not truly fly, but glide. With a suitable perch and favorable winds, a wyvern can glide over many miles, stalking prey and surveying its territory. With their strong claws they can grip and climb even vertical stone to achieve good perches and altitude. A wyvern can also leap many times its own body length, not unlike a dragon. They are quick, powerful skirmishers, seldom staying put during a contest of might.

Despite all that, the most dangerous aspect of a wyvern is its venom. When provoked, wyverns spit poison out to a range of several yards. Left untreated, this poison is fatal.

WYVERN

DRAGON-KIN

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	Communication
7	Constitution (Stamina)
–2	Cunning
5	Dexterity (Bite, Initiative)
0	Magic
4	Perception (Smelling)
7	Strength (Claw, Jumping)
3	Willpower (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
18	95	14	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+7	2d6+7
Claws	+9	2d6+7
Tail Lash	+7	1d6+7

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Skirmish (1+ SP), Tail Lash (1+ SP), Rake (2 SP), and Inject Venom (3 SP)

Rake: A wyvern can perform a special rake stunt for 2 SP following a successful bite attack. The creature makes an additional claw attack against any adjacent target. Doubles on the rake attack do not generate stunt points.

Quick Skirmisher: A wyvern automatically generates 1 SP each turn to put toward the Skirmish stunt. It can only move itself with this free stunt point and these free points do not accumulate from turn to turn. It may move itself or its foes with stunt points generated by the Dragon Die as usual.

Special Qualities

Inject Venom: As a 3 SP stunt, a wyvern that succeeds on a bite attack can inject its venom in a target, starting the clock on a slow death. Afflicted targets suffer a –4 to Dexterity for the rest of the encounter and drop to 0 Health after a number of hours equal to 1d6 + Constitution (minimum 1 hour.)

Spit Venom: As a major action, a wyvern can spit its venom in a spray at up to two targets within 10 yards. Potential targets must succeed at either a **TN 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** or a **TN 15 Constitution (Stamina)** test or suffer the venom's dizzying Dexterity penalty for the rest of the encounter. (Effects are not cumulative.)

Tail Lash: With a tail lash attack, a wyvern can perform the Knock Prone stunt for 1 SP each against any number of adjacent targets it can afford to pay for with stunt points. Targets can also be pushed 2 yards away as per the Skirmish stunt, if the stunt-point budget permits.

Tough Hide: A wyvern's pebbly hide gives it an Armor Rating of 5.

Threat: Major

Evil Spirits & Possessed Corpses

The demons of the Fade have a terrible hunger for the pleasures of the world that they sense across the gulf of the Veil. Their jealousy causes them to claw at the walls of their perceived prison, forever testing the boundaries of the Fade. When a demon finally manages to break through, it must immediately seek out a form to possess lest it be pulled back across the Veil to the Fade. Unfortunately for the demons, the Veil is weakest in places where there have been a great many deaths, such as battlefields and pestilence-ridden villages, and many demons end up possessing the forms of the dead. The rage and frustration of such beings is near unimaginable. To have finally broken through to the world of the living with all the delicious pleasures it holds only to be trapped within a corpse that can barely sustain it is infuriating. Almost uniformly these demons go insane, abandoning even the strange reasoning of their kind for howling madness.

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

DEVOURING CORPSE	HUNGER DEMON
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	**Communication**
4	**Constitution** (Stamina)
0	**Cunning**
2	**Dexterity**
2	**Magic**
0	**Perception**
3	**Strength** (Claws, Intimidation)
2	**Willpower**

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	30	12	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Claws	+5	1d6+5

Special Features

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

Favored Stunts: Drain Life and Pierce Armor.

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

Threat: Minor

Animated Corpses

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

ENRAGED CORPSE	RAGE DEMON
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	**Communication**
4	**Constitution** (Stamina)
1	**Cunning**
0	**Dexterity**
2	**Magic**
0	**Perception**
4	**Strength** (Claws, Intimidation)
2	**Willpower**

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	40	10	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Claws	+6	1d6+6

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Disarm and Strangle.

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

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

Threat: Minor

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

Apparitions, Dwarven

In dwarven tales of tunnel and mine collapses, one common theme is a sound of tapping coming from the far side of the collapse, often long after the buried miners are sure to have perished. These are the rappings of dwarven apparitions, the restless spirits of dwarves—usually miners—lost in the depths, their work unfinished, unable to rest.

Dwarven apparitions are often blamed for luring the unsuspecting into dangerous areas: collapsing tunnels, mine shafts with bad air, or the edges of crevasses and pits. Some hear the rapping of their spectral picks and hammers echoing faintly in the tunnels and caves of the Deep Roads, or hear whispering voices urging them onward toward certain doom. If attempts to lure victims to their death fail, dwarven apparitions go mad with rage, manifesting as gaunt, spectral dwarves wielding mining implements and moaning or shrieking with fury.

DWARVEN APPARITIONS	LOST SOUL
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication** (Deception)
4	**Constitution** (Stamina)
0	**Cunning**
2	**Dexterity** (Brawling)
0	**Magic**
1	**Perception**
3	**Strength** (Axes, Bludgeons)
2	**Willpower** (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	25	12	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Hammer or Pick	+5	1d6+6

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Skirmish.

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

Threat: Moderate

Arcane Horror

When a rage demon or hunger demon possesses a corpse, it creates a shambling, flailing creature that endangers only the weak or untrained. The stronger spirits—desire and pride demons—create a much greater threat. These possessed corpses know there's strength in numbers, so they lead hordes of weaker skeletons.

Even in death, a mage runs the risk of succumbing to demonic possession. In the body of a deceased mage, a pride demon becomes an arcane horror, funneling spirit magic through itself even as its desiccated remains crumble. An arcane horror knows magic, and has the tools to sap the power from other mages.

Arcane Horror	Pride Demon
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication**
1	**Constitution**
2	**Cunning** (Arcane Lore)
1	**Dexterity** (Staves)
4	**Magic** (Arcane Lance, Spirit)
0	**Perception**
0	**Strength**
2	**Willpower**

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
11	70	11	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Arcane Lance	+6	1d6+6
Quarterstaff	+3	1d6

Special Features

Spellpower: 14 (16) **Mana:** 40

Spells: *Arcane bolt, dispel magic, force field, and mind blast*

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance and Skirmish

Arcane Burst: When an arcane horror uses arcane bolt, it can pay 2 extra MP; when it does, each creature within 2 yards of the target takes 2d6 damage. A successful **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** vs. Spellpower test reduces the damage to 1d6.

Exhausting Aura: An enemy that starts its turn within 4 yards of an arcane horror loses 1d6 MP if it can cast spells or 1d6 Health if it can't or if it doesn't have any MP remaining. The arcane horror regains MP equal to the amount of MP or Health the enemy lost.

Spirit Resistance: An arcane horror gains a +1 bonus on tests to resist spells and other magical effects. The bonus increases to +3 against Spirit spells.

Weapon Groups: Brawling and Staves.

Equipment: Quarterstaff.

Threat: Major

Possessing Powerful Corpses

The statistics provided for the arcane horror and revenant are for a typical, lesser version. Demons who seize control of powerful corpses such as experienced mages or mighty warriors have even greater abilities, with higher ability scores, additional focuses, more health, and other powers. Even in death, a great hero who has fallen to demonic possession can become a terrifying foe.

Ash Wraith

An ash wraith is a particularly powerful shade, a restless spirit that has crossed over from the Fade. It forms a body for itself, most often out of the ash of burnt corpses, although it is capable of using dust, powdered bone, mold, or even blood. In spite of appearances, an ash wraith's body is merely a construct, and the spirit can disperse and reform it at will. Thus, damaging an ash wraith's body does not harm it; the only way to permanently hurt such a creature is by magic.

Ash wraiths are dangerous foes, able to drain the life out of creatures, wither them with blasts of flame, and surround them in storms of ash and debris. They also use their ability to disperse and reform in order to flank their foes and attack from surprise.

Ash wraiths haunt ancient ruins and mountainous areas. According to legend the first of their kind were followers of Andraste who sacrificed themselves in flames, just as their prophet perished, so they might safeguard the sacred urn of her ashes for all time.

ASH WRAITH	LOST SOUL
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	**Communication**
0	**Constitution**
1	**Cunning**
5	**Dexterity** (Draining Touch, Flame Blast, Stealth)
5	**Magic**
2	**Perception**
–3	**Strength**
4	**Willpower**

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
15	35	15	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Draining Touch	+7	2d6+4 Penetrating
Flame Blast	+7	2d6+4 Penetrating

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Lightning Attack, Surprise Attack, and Whirlwind (4 SP).

Flame Blast: An ash wraith's flame blast attack has the same area of effect as the spell of the same name (see page 113) but does not require mana, does more damage, and deals penetrating damage. The wraith must make a separate attack roll against each target in the blast, and similar to the spell, targets who are hit can attempt a **TN 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test to reduce the damage to 1d6+2 points.

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

Whirlwind: An ash wraith can perform a special whirlwind stunt for 4 SP. All enemies within 6 yards of the wraith are buffeted by a life-draining storm of ash that inflicts 1d6+4 penetrating damage.

Surprise Attack: An ash wraith can make a surprise attack by dismissing and re-materializing its body in a different location. This works like a rogue's Backstab power (see page 36): If the wraith wins an opposed test of its **Dexterity (Stealth)** vs. the target's **Perception (Seeing)**, then its major action in the same round can be an attack that gains a +2 bonus and inflicts +1d6 extra damage.

Threat: Moderate

Revenant

The arcane horror's counterpart, the revenant, has battle skills as great as a horror's magical skills. Fighting from behind a thick shield and armor, the revenant leads its minions by example. Corpses at the command of a revenant fight with surprisingly strong tactics. Many patrols have broken as a

REVENANT	DESIRE/PRIDE DEMON
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication** (Leadership)
3	**Constitution**
0	**Cunning**
1	**Dexterity** (Initiative)
2	**Magic** (Spirit)
0	**Perception**
3	**Strength** (Axes, Heavy Blades)
1	**Willpower** (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	60	12	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bastard Sword	+5	2d6+4
Throwing Axe	+5	1d6+5

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Disarm, Dual Strike, and Threaten (1 SP).

Grave Defense: Possessed allies within 2 yards of a conscious revenant gain a +1 bonus to Defense.

Telekinetic Pull: A revenant can perform the Threaten stunt for only 1 SP, uses **Magic (Spirit)** instead of Strength (Intimidate) for the opposed test, and pulls the target 10 yards closer if the threat succeeds.

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Axes, Bludgeons, Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Bastard sword, heavy mail, medium shield, and throwing axe.

Threat: Major

revenant mowed through their ranks, cleaving down several of them with each swing of its sword.

Shade

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

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

Shade	Lost Soul
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	Communication
0	Constitution
0	Cunning
5	Dexterity (Stealth)
4	Magic
1	Perception
–3	Strength
4	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
15	30	15	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Draining Touch	+5	1d6+4 Penetrating

Special Features

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

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

Favored Stunts: Draining Aura and Lightning Attack.

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

Threat: Moderate

SKELETON	RAGE DEMON
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	Communication
2	Constitution (Stamina)
–2	Cunning
2	Dexterity
1	Magic
0	Perception
3	Strength (Claws)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	17	12	0

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

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Mighty Blow and Pierce Armor.

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

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Bows, and Spears.

Equipment: Two-handed spear or bow.

Threat: Minor

Skeleton

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

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

FANGED SKELETON	HUNGER DEMON
Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	Communication
3	Constitution (Stamina)
–1	Cunning
2	Dexterity (Bite)
2	Magic
0	Perception
3	Strength (Claws, Heavy Blades)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
9	22	12	4

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

Special Features

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

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Mighty Blow.

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

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

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

Equipment: Heavy leather and longsword.

Threat: Minor

Demons

Base spirits that feed on dark emotions, demons inhabit the Fade. They long to pierce the Veil and enter the mortal world, so they seek out those who lack the strength to resist or who lust for the power the demons offer.

There are many types of demon, but the five most common are rage, hunger, sloth, desire, and pride. The simple rage demon poses relatively little threat to the people as a whole, but a desire or pride demon possesses the intellect and charisma to influence events on a wide scale. A demon with such power can sow more negative emotions, allowing even more of its kind to escape the Fade.

Abominations

They can come to Thedas through corpses or unwary dreamers, but mages make the best—and most powerful—targets. When a demon possesses a mage, it creates an

DESIRE DEMON

Abilities (Focuses)	
4	Communication (Deception, Persuasion, Seduction)
0	Constitution
3	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Brawling)
5	Magic (Arcane Lance, Entropy)
3	Perception (Empathy)
1	Strength
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	50	13	7

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Arcane Lance	+7	1d6+5
Fist	+5	1d3+1

Special Features

Spellpower: 15 (17) **Mana:** 55

Spells: *Affliction hex, blood slave, daze, drain life, paralyze, and vulnerability hex.*

Favored Stunts: Scream (3 SP) and Taunt.

SLOTH DEMON

Abilities (Focuses)	
3	Communication (Deception, Persuasion)
1	Constitution
1	Cunning
–2	Dexterity
4	Magic (Entropy, Primal)
1	Perception (Empathy)
2	Strength (Claws)
0	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	60	8	6

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Claws	+4	2d6+2

Special Features

Spellpower: 14 (16) **Mana:** 45

Spells: *Drain life, heal, paralyze, and weakness.*

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike and Fast Casting (3 SP).

Demon Hide: The strange flesh of a sloth demon gives it an Armor Rating of 6.

Immoveable: A sloth demon is immune to the combat stunts Skirmish and Knock Prone.

Powerful Drain: When a sloth demon casts drain life, it affects all targets currently under the influence of one of its paralyze spells.

Threat: Moderate

Special Features

Aura of Magic Resistance: A desire demon and all its allies within 6 yards gain a +1 bonus on all ability tests to resist spells and other magical effects. The bonus increases to +2 against Spirit spells and effects.

Demon Hide: The magical aura of a desire demon gives it an Armor Rating of 7.

Immoveable: A desire demon is immune to the combat stunts Skirmish and Knock Prone.

Scream: The demon can let out a piercing scream as a special stunt with a cost of 3 SP. Any character within 10 yards takes 1d6 penetrating damage and must make a successful TN 15 **Magic (Spirit)** test or lose their major action on their next turn.

Threat: Major

Rage Demon

Abilities (Focuses)
–2 Communication
1 Constitution
–1 Cunning
4 Dexterity (Initiative, Stealth)
3 Magic
1 Perception
4 Strength (Claws)
0 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
14	50	14	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Claws	+6	2d6+4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Pierce Armor, Set Aflame (2 SP), and Skirmish.

Aura of Fire: Rage demons are surrounded by an aura of fire. Any creature adjacent to a rage demon takes 2 points of penetrating damage at the start of the demon's turn.

Demon Hide: The flowing, molten hide of a rage demon gives it an Armor Rating of 4.

Fire Resistance: A rage demon suffers no damage from fire-based attacks like the spells flame blast and fireball.

Immoveable: A rage demon is immune to the combat stunts Skirmish and Knock Prone.

Set Aflame: A rage demon can set its target on fire as a special stunt for 2 SP. The target takes 1d6 penetrating damage at the start of each of their turns until they put out the fire by spending a minor action.

Threat: Moderate

Pride Demon

Abilities (Focuses)
2 Communication (Deception, Persuasion)
1 Constitution (Stamina)
2 Cunning
3 Dexterity
6 Magic (Primal)
0 Perception
5 Strength (Claws)
2 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	85	13	10

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Claws	+7	2d6+5

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone, Mana Wave (4 SP), and Mighty Blow.

Demon Hide: The rocky skin of a pride demon gives it an Armor Rating of 10.

Immoveable: A pride demon is immune to the combat stunts Skirmish and Knock Prone.

Mana Wave: A pride demon can explode with mana as a special stunt causing 4 SP. All magical spell effects within 6 yards of it are affected as if the pride demon had cast Dispel Magic. Spellcasters in the area also lose 1d6 mana points.

Primal Burst: A pride demon can cause a burst of fire or frost (its choice) to emanate from its body as a minor action. Anyone within 2 yards of the demon takes damage (2d6+3 fire damage or 1d6+2 penetrating frost damage), though this can be halved with a successful TN 18 **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test.

Threat: Major

abomination. These creatures can be deadly and they're also the form in which a demon lasts longest in the mortal world. (Summoned demons and demon-possessed corpses burn out quickly.) Most abominations look like wretched, malformed creatures. In a few cases, the person's appearance remains the same, but with its mind taken over by the malevolent spirit.

Abomination

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	Communication
2	Constitution (Stamina)
0	Cunning
2	Dexterity (Brawling)
4	Magic (Claws)
0	Perception
0	Strength
1	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	40	12	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Claws	+6	2d6+4

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Demonic Lightning Attack (3 SP) and Mighty Blow.

Demonic Lightning Attack: An abomination can perform a special demonic Lightning Attack stunt for 3 SP. This functions as the Lightning Attack stunt, but also duplicates the effect of a spell if it hits (in addition to dealing damage). The spell doesn't require a casting roll and has a Spellpower value of 15. Choose the spell when you make the abomination, corresponding to its type: Daze (desire or rage), Drain Life (hunger or pride), or Weakness (desire or sloth). The creature hit by the initial attack must be the target of the spell as well.

Exploding Flesh: When an abomination's Health is reduced to 0, it explodes. Anyone within 2 yards of it takes 2d6 damage.

Arcane Might: An abomination uses Magic to determine its bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls with melee attacks. It is also allowed to have a Claws focus to its Magic ability.

Tough Hide: An abomination's thick, mutated flesh gives it an Armor Rating of 4.

Threat: Moderate

Greater Demons

The statblocks for these demons represent the most common, and thus the weakest, of the various types. More powerful demons will have the Elite, Heroic, Epic modifications as well as additional spells, especially Blood Magic. These demons are usually one or more Threat above their norm, depending on just how powerful they are.

Spellcasting Abominations

The abomination stat block here represents a minor abomination. If a demon inhabits a powerful mage, an abomination can be far more powerful than the one shown here. A spell-casting abomination gains at minimum a Magic focus and three to four spells of a type appropriate to the demon or the mage it has possessed. It has at least 45 mana points and a Spellpower of 16. Abominations spawned from mages with great power or even serious mystical potential will be even deadlier.

Other Creatures

Some adversaries do not fall into convenient groups. Thedas is home to many strange creatures that defy easy categorization. You will find such in this section, from the mighty golems of Orzammar to the cursed werewolves to the ancient varterral.

Cetus

Monsters of the deep, cetuses devour whales, sunder boats, and massacre populations of fish. Their bodies measure longer than most sailing ships, and they can coil around people and boats alike. Electricity arcs over their smooth-scaled skin, and they can issue bursts of electricity at their enemies. Tales say that lightning storms over the sea summon cetuses to the surface. They bring total devastation.

Cetuses thrive in the warm waters of the Boeric Ocean, but are a rare sight even there. A smaller number still migrate south—even as far as the Waking Sea. The beasts can grow to great size, but the largest of them dwell on ocean floors. The Qunari call them aban-ataashi, which roughly translates to "sea dragon." A common phrase among Qunari warriors translates to, "Grasp your foes in the jaws of the aban-ataashi," meaning to crush them utterly and leave no trace of their existence.

Deepstalker

Strange inhabitants of the Deep Roads, deepstalkers are small reptilian creatures that run on powerful hind legs and use extended tails to help them stay balanced. Their heads end in puckered, lamprey-like mouths ringed with sharp teeth. Tezpadam, as the dwarves call them, run or jump swiftly at their prey, and are capable of spitting either acid or paralytic venom. Deepstalkers typically hunt in small packs and try to pick off stragglers and lone prey in the Deep Roads.

Cetus

Abilities (Focuses)
0 — Communication
10 — Constitution (Swimming)
–1 — Cunning
4 — Dexterity (Bite)
0 — Magic
3 — Perception (Smelling)
9 — Strength (Might)
2 — Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
4 (18 Swim)	90	14	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+6	3d6+9
Coil	+9	2d6+9 penetrating

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike, Electric Arc (3 SP), Lethal Blow, and Skirmish.

Coil: A cetus can make a coil attack as a major action. On a hit, the cetus grabs the target and squeezes. The cetus can maintain the coil as a minor action and inflict this damage without making an attack roll. To escape, a victim must use a major action to make an opposed **Strength (Might)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. the cetus's **Strength (Might)**. An adjacent ally can also perform a special 2 SP stunt to free the victim automatically.

Electric Arc: A cetus can shock creatures near it as a special stunt for 3 SP. The closer the enemy is to the cetus, the more damage it will take. Creatures within 12 yards of the cetus take 1d6 penetrating damage. Creatures within 6 yards take 2d6 penetrating damage, and creatures within 2 yards take 3d6 penetrating damage. Targets who make a successful TN 15 **Constitution (Stamina)** test take half damage.

Threat: Major

Glowing Slime

This terror of the Deep Roads is legend among dwarven miners, who tell tales about lost or wandering workers spotting faint light in the tunnels. Thinking it a lamp they go toward it, only to discover the blue-green glow emanates from a shifting slime mold that clings to damp rocks or settles to the bottom of shallow pools. When it discerns the warmth of a living creature nearby, it attacks with alarming speed. Glowing slime is neither intelligent nor sentient, but simply reactive and vicious.

Glowing slime envelops those it attacks, clinging stubbornly, burning and dissolving them with acidic secretions. The creatures are immune to physical trauma and even resistant to magic; dwarves believe this is because the slime leeches lyrium from the rocks. Fire is the most effective weapon against glowing slime, although large amounts of salt can also destroy one. Miners sometimes draw lines of rock salt across doorways and tunnels to discourage their passage.

Deepstalker

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	Communication
2	Constitution (Running)
–1	Cunning
5	Dexterity (Bite, Initiative, Stealth)
2	Magic
3	Perception (Hearing, Track)
1	Strength (Jumping)
0	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
15	12	15	1

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+7	1d6+1
Claws	+3	1d6+3

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Pack Tactics, Pierce Armor, and Skirmish.

Pack Tactics: When part of a group, a deepstalker can perform a special pack tactics stunt for 2 SP, which allows another deepstalker close enough to the same target to attack it as an immediate free action.

Spit: A deepstalker can spit an acidic or paralyzing venom up to 6 yards. Acidic venom does 1d6 penetrating damage each round for three rounds, or until it is washed off with a major action and appropriate agent, like water. Paralyzing venom slows the target to half speed until they make a successful ***TN 13 Constitution (Stamina) test***, which can be attempted on each of the target's turns. Each deepstalker has venom of one type or the other, not both. If the GM wishes, rather than tracking each individual's capabilities, a die roll can be used to determine which is present when it becomes necessary to know (1–3: acidic, 4–6: paralyzing).

Tough Hide: A deepstalker's leathery hide gives it an Armor Rating of 1.

Threat: Minor

Golems

Dwarves created golems to battle the First Blight, but the art of forging them was lost long ago. The dwarves keep the few remaining war machines hidden away, and only bring them out when the Shaperate deems the danger great enough. Golems have free will, but can be commanded with a golem control rod. Most of the golems that remain are in Orzammar, but a few made it into secluded dungeons or the hands of the Tevinter Imperium.

Glowing Slime

Abilities (Focuses)	
–3	Communication
4	Constitution (Stamina)
–2	Cunning
1	Dexterity (Envelop)
1	Magic
2	Perception (Touch)
0	Strength
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
6	20	11	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Acidic Touch	+3	1d6 penetrating

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Lightning Attack.

Acidic Touch: A glowing slime spreads across its target's flesh, burning with acidic secretions. After a successful attack a slime does 1d6 penetrating damage every round on its turn until driven off or scraped away. A slime that takes damage from fire or salt retreats from an enveloping attack. Scraping requires a blade of some kind, a major action on the part of the victim or a companion, and a TN 13 test of an appropriate weapon skill to avoid dealing the slime's victim 1d6 damage.

Immunity: A glowing slime suffers only 1 point of damage from any physical attack regardless of the damage roll. A Mighty Blow inflicts 2 points of damage, and a Lethal Blow 3 points. The slime is also immune to any effect targeting a creature's mind, as it effectively has none.

Magic Resistance: A glowing slime has a +2 bonus on all tests to resist the effects of magic.

Vulnerability: A glowing slime takes 1d6 penetrating damage from contact with fire or salt. This assumes the equivalent of a torch or handful or rock salt. Greater or lesser quantities of fire or salt do less or more damage.

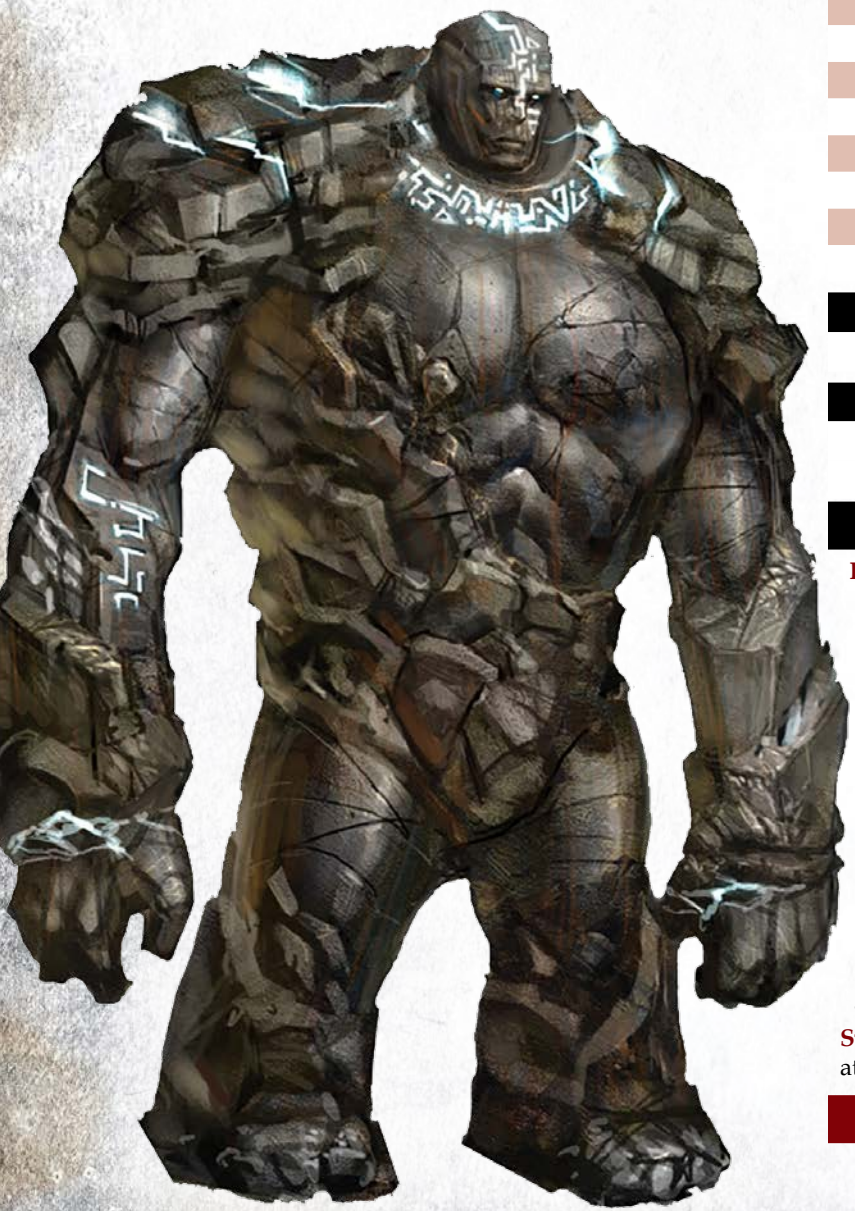
Threat: Moderate

Stone Golem

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
7	Constitution (Stamina)
0	Cunning
–1	Dexterity
2	Magic
2	Perception
6	Strength (Stone Fist)
3	Willpower (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
9	80	9	10

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Stone Fist	+8	2d6+6
Stone Throw	+6	1d6+8



Special Features

Favored Stunts: Arcane Fists (1 SP), Dual Strike, and Quake (2 SP).

Arcane Fists: A stone golem can charge its fists with magical fire as a special stunt for 1 SP. The target takes an additional 1d6 penetrating damage.

Quake: A stone golem can Knock Prone all targets within 4 yards of it as a special stunt for 2 SP.

Stone Body: A stone golem's rocky construction gives it an Armor Rating of 10.

Stone Throw: A golem can throw large stones as a ranged attack at targets up to 12 yards away.

Threat: Major

Steel Golem

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
8	Constitution (Stamina)
0	Cunning
0	Dexterity
2	Magic
2	Perception
8	Strength (Steel Fist)
4	Willpower (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	90	10	10

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Steel Fist	+10	2d6+8
Stone Throw	+8	1d6+10

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Arcane Fists (1 SP), Dual Strike, and Electric Burst (2 SP).

Arcane Fists: A steel golem can charge its fists with runic electricity as a special stunt for 1 SP. The target takes 1d6 penetrating damage.

Electric Burst: A steel golem can fire a burst of electricity as a special stunt for 2 SP. Enemies in a 6-yard by 6-yard area take 1d6+4 penetrating damage. Targets that make a successful TN 14 **Constitution (Stamina)** test take only 1d6 penetrating damage. The electric burst creates a magnetic attraction that pulls every target wearing mail or plate 4 yards closer to the golem.

Steel Body: A steel golem's metal construction gives it an Armor Rating of 10.

Stone Throw: A golem can throw large stones as a ranged attack at targets up to 12 yards away.

Threat: Major

Rock Wraith

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	Communication
4	Constitution (Stamina)
0	Cunning
–1	Dexterity
1	Magic
1	Perception (Touching)
3	Strength (Might, Rock Spike)
0	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	45	9	6

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Rock Spike	+5	1d6+5

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone, Mighty Blow, and Threaten.

Rock Solid: When an enemy would move a rock wraith or knock it prone (using the Skirmish or Knock Prone stunts, for example), the wraith can make a TN 11 **Constitution (Stamina)** test to negate the movement.

Electricity Resistance: A rock wraith suffers no damage from electricity-based attacks.

Stone Body: A rock wraith's stone construction gives it an Armor Rating of 6.

Threat: Moderate

Rock Wraiths

Corrupt ancient dwarves are said to wander the Deep Roads in the form of animated conglomerations of rubble. So great was their greed and hunger in life that the Stone refused to take them. They become even worse as they languish in the Deep Roads, feeding only on lyrium veins as their hatred for the living grows and grows. The creatures call themselves the Profane, but dwarves refer to them as rock wraiths.

If a rock wraith lives for an exceptionally long time, it grows in size and power to become an ancient rock wraith. Though most rock wraiths wander in a roughly dwarven shape, the ancient wraiths have more control over their forms. Likewise, the mindless, raw emotion of a normal rock wraith turns into a sinister intelligence far more similar to how the dwarf thought in life.

The lyrium that nourishes a rock wraith gives it a connection to the Fade, and makes it susceptible to demonic possession. Rage demons often inhabit the weaker rock wraiths, but more powerful demons yearn to possess any ancient rock wraith they can find. The rock wraiths rarely put up much of a struggle. Their desire for power quickly outstrips any caution they might have.

Ancient Rock Wraith

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	Communication (Deception)
6	Constitution (Stamina)
1	Cunning
–2	Dexterity
4	Magic (Primal)
3	Perception (Touching)
7	Strength (Rock Spike)
3	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
7	75	9	10

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Rock Spike	+9	1d6+7

Special Features

Spellpower: 14 (16) **Mana:** 28

Spells: *Lightning* and *stonefist*

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike, Knock Prone, and Mighty Blow.

Arcane Blast: An ancient rock wraith can unleash a massive electric blast for 8 MP. The blast targets all enemies within 12 yards of the wraith and deals 2d6+4 penetrating damage. Targets that make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. Spellpower take only 1d6 penetrating damage. After the blast and through the wraith's next turn, its Armor Rating and speed are halved, and it can't cast spells.

Dust Storm: An ancient rock wraith can create a dusty windstorm for 6 MP. The blast targets all enemies within 12 yards of the wraith and pulls them 2d6 yards toward it and deals 1d6+4 damage to them. (Roll separately for each target.) Targets that make a successful **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. Spellpower move only 1d6 yards and take no damage. After the blast and through the wraith's next turn, its Armor Rating and speed are halved, and it can't cast spells.

Rock Roll: When an ancient rock wraith charges, it can move its full speed, and if it hits, it uses the Knock Prone stunt without paying any stunt points.

Rock Solid: When an enemy would move an ancient rock wraith or knock it prone (using the Skirmish or Knock Prone stunts, for example), the wraith can make a TN 11 **Constitution (Stamina)** test to negate the movement.

Electricity Resistance: An ancient rock wraith suffers no damage from electricity-based attacks.

Stone Body: An ancient rock wraith's stone construction gives it an Armor Rating of 10 and reduces its speed by 1.

Threat: Major

Werewolf

In the Black Age, Ferelden faced the threat of werewolves: ordinary wolves possessed by rage demons and transformed into savage humanoid monsters of unremitting fury and bloodlust. Worse yet, they were capable of spreading their infection, causing some survivors of a werewolf attack to become possessed and transform into werewolves themselves. Some werewolves can speak, though usually with difficulty.

The legendary Fereldan hero Dane led a crusade to wipe out the werewolves. While not entirely successful, it greatly reduced them as a threat, and werewolves have never since plagued Ferelden in such numbers. Dane and the Werewolf remains an epic poem of Fereldan lore.

Werewolf

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication**
5	**Constitution** (Running)
0	**Cunning**
4	**Dexterity** (Bite)
1	**Magic**
3	**Perception** (Smelling, Tracking)
6	**Strength** (Claws, Intimidation)
3	**Willpower** (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
16	50	14	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+6	1d6+6
Claws	+8	2d6+6

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Overwhelm (3 SP), Skirmish, and Werewolf's Curse (variable SP).

Overwhelm: A werewolf can perform a special overwhelm stunt for 3 SP. The creature knocks its opponent prone and pins it, giving the werewolf a +2 bonus to further attacks as long as the victim remains pinned (this includes the usual +1 for attacking a prone target). The pinned character must make an opposed ***Strength (Might) vs. Strength (Might) test*** against the werewolf to escape, which requires a minor action and leaves the character prone. The victim's allies can also attempt this test, but they must spend major actions to do so.

Werewolf's Curse: A werewolf that scores stunt points on a bite attack can inflict its curse upon a victim, who must make a **Constitution (Stamina)** test against TN (10 + the number of stunt points spent). A failed test means the victim is infected. An infected victim makes a new **Constitution (Stamina)** test against the same target number each night after the initial infection. If, after three nights, none of these tests have succeeded, the victim becomes a werewolf and must be retired as a Player Character.

Shaggy Coat: Their thick, shaggy coats give werewolves an Armor Rating of 4.

Threat: Moderate

Wild Sylvan

Not all demons possess humanoid or animal hosts; some seek out even plants. A wild sylvan is a tree possessed and twisted by a rage demon into a tainted and hideous humanoid form. The demon corrupts the tree from within, granting it the power to move and to kill.

Wild Sylvan

Abilities (Focuses)	
–2	**Communication**
7	**Constitution** (Stamina)
0	**Cunning**
2	**Dexterity** (Brawling)
2	**Magic**
0	**Perception** (Touch)
9	**Strength** (Claws, Intimidation, Might)
2	**Willpower** (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
6	85	10	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Claws	+11	2d6+9

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Dual Attack, Knock Prone, Root Grab (2 SP), and Stomp (2 SP).

Root Grab: A wild sylvan can use its roots to grab and immobilize up to three targets within 4 yards of it as a special stunt costing 2 SP. The targets each make an **opposed Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. the wild sylvan's **Dexterity (Brawling)**. Success means they avoid being grabbed. Otherwise they are unable to move and suffer 1d6 penetrating damage each round as the roots crush them. It requires a major action and a ***TN 15 Strength (Might) test*** to pull free, unless the sylvan releases its victims to root grab new ones or moves farther than 4 yards away. A wild sylvan can continue to attack normally while maintaining a root grab.

Stomp: A wild sylvan can perform a Knock Prone stunt against all targets within 6 yards by stomping the ground with great force.

Vulnerable to Fire: Made of wood, wild sylvans are highly flammable. Fire attacks ignore their armor and inflict an additional 1d6 damage. Anyone attacking a wild sylvan with fire can also perform a special ignite stunt for 2 SP, causing the creature to continue to burn for 1d6 penetrating fire damage each round until the wild sylvan dies or the fire is somehow extinguished.

Thick Bark: Wild sylvans have an Armor Rating of 5.

Threat: Major

Wild sylvans are most often found in deep forests touched by taint. They can lay dormant for considerable lengths of time, appearing like ordinary if twisted trees until they surge to "life" at the prospect of fresh prey. Then they take on a vaguely humanoid form, lashing out with branches ending in crooked, claw-like "hands."

Varterral

Dalish beliefs claim the varterral lived even before the rise of Arlathan. They say that Dirthamen, Keeper of Secrets, made the first varterral from fallen trees and other pieces of the earth.

Varterral were meant to serve as guardians over places the elves and their gods held dear. It's true that the creatures viciously guard their territory.

The immense, spider-like varterral thrive in secluded places where they can find ample game. The five-legged beasts rest comfortably at the top of the food chain, hunting elk and bears as a spider would pursue a fly. Despite its great size, a varterral can run at high speed. Against supremely agile game, it spits a caustic poison and catches up to its dead prey later. Only dragons challenge varterral, and even they seldom win. Even after defeat—even what seems like death—varterrals return. The Dalish say a varterral can't die as long as duty binds it to guardianship of a place.

Varterral	
Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication**
4	**Constitution** (Running)
0	**Cunning**
5	**Dexterity** (Bite)
1	**Magic**
2	**Perception** (Smelling, Touching)
7	**Strength** (Claws, Climbing, Jumping)
2	**Willpower**

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
15	125	15	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite	+7	1d6+5
Claws	+9	2d6+7

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike, Knock Prone, Mighty Blow, and Poison Spit (2 SP).

Five Limbs: Because of its five gigantic limbs, a varterral can make two melee attacks with a single major action, and its melee attacks can reach targets up to 3 yards away.

Poison Spit: As a special stunt for 2 SP, a varterral can spit poison onto any target up to 20 yards away. When poisoned, the victim must make a TN 15 **Constitution (Stamina)** test at the beginning of each of their turns or suffer 2d6 penetrating damage that turn. This lasts for 2 rounds.

Exoskeleton: A varterral's rocky carapace gives it an Armor Rating of 8.

Threat: Dire

Chapter 13

Rewards

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

Level Advancement

The most important and most common reward for players is increasing a level or "leveling up". They represent the way characters hone their abilities and talents over time, learning from their successes and their failures. As characters gain XP or level rewards, they go up in level. This is how they gain new class powers and raise their abilities. When a character gains a level, four things happen immediately:

- The character's Health increases by **1d6 + Constitution** up to level 10, and by **Constitution** for every level afterward.
- The character may increase a single ability by 1. This must be a primary ability if an even-numbered level was gained, and a secondary ability if an odd-numbered level was gained.
- The character can pick one new ability focus. This must be a focus from a primary ability if an even-numbered level was gained, and a focus from a secondary ability if an odd-numbered level was gained.
- The character gains the class powers for the new level.

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

There are two basic ways for characters to level up: they can earn experience points (XP) or they can be awarded a level advancement. Neither way is inherently better. They both have their own advantages and disadvantages.

Level Rewards

You can simply level up PCs by rewarding them with a level when they do something significant such as finishing an adventure or achieving a major campaign or personal goal. To exercise this option, don't worry about tracking the details of every fight and encounter. You can award levels as you see fit. This gives the GM a lot of freedom to control the overall level of the PCs and is fast and easy to implement, requiring no XP tracking. However, it can be tricky to work out a balance between stagnating PCs or advancing them too quickly. Also, if you have PCs of different levels, unless you grant lower level PCs extra levels along the way, they'll never catch up to their higher-level companions. That's essentially all there is to level rewards; they can take some getting used to for GMs and players accustomed to XP-based advancement, but they're fast, plot-driven, and easy.

Calculating XP Rewards

If you prefer, you can control the pace of the campaign with experience point rewards instead of level rewards. If you are generous with XP, characters will go up levels quickly and gain new class powers regularly. If your rewards are more measured, the characters will have to really work to level up. Every group is different, so there is no "right" pace, but you don't want to frustrate your players by being too stingy or bore them by being overly generous.

As you know, an adventure is broken down into a series of encounters, and they are the key to handing out experience points. At the end of each play session, even if it's as short as one encounter, review each encounter and rate it based on how it played out. How challenging was this encounter to the party? Did they have to expend resources like money, favors, Health, or mana points to resolve it? After giving the encounter due consideration, assign one of the following ratings and then reward each participating character with the XP indicated on Recommended Experience Point Rewards table. This table keeps XP advancement fairly steady, though it does get a bit harder to earn enough XP to reach each subsequent level. If you want slower advancement, reduce the XP rewards.

- **Routine:** Nothing special or challenging happened in this encounter. Most everyday scenes fall into this category. Characters don't get XP for things like buying supplies, uneventful travel, or casual conversations.
- **Easy:** The characters overcame any difficulties quickly and efficiently. They were in little danger of failing and expended few resources to be successful.
- **Average:** The characters were not taxed to their utmost, but the encounter was a real challenge. It took some skill to resolve and may have required the expenditure of significant resources.
- **Hard:** The characters had a tough time of it. It may have taken significant time and the expenditure of many resources. The characters may have been in mortal peril, and there may even have been character death.

Example

Steve has just run a short session of Dragon Age and needs to calculate XP for the party. The PCs are all Level 1 and there were three encounters: a roleplaying encounter in a tavern, a combat encounter in the streets, and then a roleplaying encounter with a militia captain. The tavern encounter was an attempt to gather some information. The characters talked to some locals and found out a few things, but overall Steve rates it as routine. After leaving the tavern, the characters were ambushed by thugs. Steve hadn't expected this encounter to be too challenging, but bad luck plagued the party and the thugs made good use of stunts. One of the characters went to 0 Health and nearly died and the party mage spent half their mana points. Steve decides to rate this as hard. In the final encounter the local militia captain confronts the party about fighting in the streets. He wants to throw them in jail for murder and isn't well disposed towards adventurers. It takes some doing to convince him that they were defending themselves. In the end he only agrees to let them go if they investigate a small matter for him in a nearby village. Steve decides this is an average encounter. Each character thus earns 650 XP for the session (0 for the tavern encounter, 400 for the ambush, and 250 for the negotiation with the militia captain)..

As you can see, this system is more complex than level rewards. PCs will have to track their XP and, as GM, you will have to decide how much to award for each encounter and adventure. That said, it's more nuanced in some ways, and no adjustment is required to incorporate PCs of variable levels.

Experience Rewards

XP Total	Level
0	1
2,000	2
4,000	3
6,000	4
8,000	5
10,000	6
13,000	7
16,000	8
19,000	9
22,000	10
25,000	11
28,000	12
32,000	13
36,000	14
40,000	15
44,000	16
48,000	17
52,000	18
56,000	19
60,000	20

Recommended Experience Points

Encounter	Reward
Routine	0 XP
Easy	100 XP
Average	250 XP
Hard	400 XP

Bonus XP or Level Rewards

You may also want to hand out bonus experience points in certain situations. The most appropriate time for bonus XP is the end of a successfully completed adventure or long-term story arc. It's a little extra something to tell the players they've done a good job or accomplished something of note. The size

of the award is up to you but it usually shouldn't be more than you give for a hard encounter at the PCs' level unless the PCs' achievements are truly remarkable. Similarly, you can grant level rewards for certain milestones or achievements; you can even do this if you're usually awarding XP. This is a bit more of an advanced option than using only one method of level advancement, but it allows for the most finely-tuned control of PC advancement.

Also, some GMs like to give out bonus XP to individual players for good role-playing, such as staying true to their character's personality through adversity and helping sustain the whole group's enthusiasm. Others do not because it can create squabbling amongst the players. If you do give out roleplaying awards, it's a good idea to keep it around an Average encounter worth of XP per player per session.

Goal Fulfillment

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

There is no hard and fast rules for what rewards to give a PC for achieving their goals. Some goals might earn a character a great treasure, others might place them at the head of a powerful organization or grant them an important title. Truly difficult and impressive goals might result in multiple rewards. Consider what the PC has accomplished when they fulfill a goal, selecting rewards that make sense for the depth, tone, and details of their goals.

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

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

Reputation, Honorifics, & Titles

The following rewards are all similar in theme but have distinctive effects during play. They are Reputations, Honorifics, and Titles. Reputations are informal and are significant for their roleplaying and campaign effects but carry no mechanical benefits. Honorifics are more concrete, giving mechanical benefits as a reward for particular and significant accomplishments. Titles are linked to various organizations, nations, and groups in Thedas and represent significant power and privilege bestowed on a character, often due to some great service or as a result of many great deeds. Characters can earn all three types of rewards in any combination based on their actions during a campaign.

Reputation

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

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

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

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

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

Honorifics

Honorifics are sometimes bestowed by some influential noble, institution, or shaper of popular taste. In other circumstances they arise obviously from some great deed. Honorifics can also bubble up from the populace in response to a lifetime of deeds.

Unlike reputations, honorifics have a concrete mechanical effect in play. A dozen examples are provided below. Enterprising GMs can invent dozens more by following in the same vein with the caveat that the effects of honorifics on tests should be social and interpersonal more often than martial or physical, and that the bonuses and penalties they give to tests should rarely exceed ±1, should exceed that threshold only when limited in the scope, and should never exceed ±3.

Some honorific descriptions refer to "positive" and/or "negative" social interactions. Positive and negative describes how the individuals involved in the interaction are inclined to view each other prior to the test in question. **Communication (Leadership)** tests, for example, are generally positive because one usually only attempts to lead those who're inclined to be led. On the other hand, **Communication (Deception)** tests are typically negative because one usually does not need to deceive friends and companions. The GM is always the final arbiter of whether a given interaction (that is, a given test) is positive or negative.

The social benefits of an honorific are limited to those who are aware of the character's status. A Defender of the Weak traveling incognito gains no particular appreciation of the downtrodden while they remain under cover, for example. The martial or physical benefits of an honorific apply regardless.

Arm of Justice

The character is known to risk life and limb to mete out justice no matter how mighty are the unjust arrayed against them. Criminals—and even those with a guilty conscience—who are pitted against such characters suffer a –3 penalty to **Willpower (Morale and Courage)** tests made in opposition to the character's appraisal of their moral mettle, and in opposition to their retribution.

Beloved of Mabari

The character's life has been saved in spectacular fashion by mabari war hounds and news of the tale has traveled far and wide. A character known to be blessed in this way receives a +1 bonus to positive social interactions with all Fereldans, who are disposed to assume that anyone beloved by their treasured battle-dogs must be worthy of their own respect and good graces. Conversely, this honorific imposes a –1 penalty to social interactions with most Orlesians, who generally look with disdain on the Fereldan interest in mabari.

Beloved of the Maker

The character has been blessed by fortune in a way that seems to reflect the Maker's favor. They receive a +1 bonus to positive social interactions with the Chantry faithful, and a higher bonus of up to +3 at the GM's discretion, to interactions with those who are particularly devout, like brothers and sisters of the Chantry. The nature of this honorific's provenance may lead it to provide different bonuses (or even penalties) between the Andrastian Chantry based in Orlais and the splinter Imperial Chantry in Tevinter.

Chosen of the Age

The character has been visited by or participated in some event in keeping with the nature of the current historical age. In the *Dragon Age*, perhaps the character survived an encounter with a dragon, killed a dragon and lived to tell the tale, or was identified in some way by a dragon as being its fated nemesis. One who is Chosen of an Age was often born or came of age on an auspicious date, such as the date of its inception.

Defender of the Weak

The character is known to defend the frail, sickly, destitute, and downtrodden. They receive a +3 bonus when seeking the aid and comfort of those whom they would defend. (Provided it's aid that could actually be given, of course. Seeking money from the poor is a relatively pointless cause, for example.) The downside of this honorific is that the weak are forever seeking aid in their trials and travails from those known to be their defenders.

Elect of the Sky

The character, who must be an Avvar, has been publicly favored by the Lady of the Skies—the Avvar goddess of death—by cheating their demise in some prominent and celebrated way. They receive a +2 bonus to all positive or negative social interactions with all Avvar.

Furthermore, when the character would normally fall to 0 Health, the Elect of the Sky remains at 1 Health (and fully conscious) instead. Further damage will take the character to 0 Health as usual. This power can be used once per encounter.

Favored of Fate

The character is famous for one or many staggering events of good fortune or serendipity. They may add +1 to the roll result of their Dragon Die once per game session, if adding the bonus would result in doubles where there were not doubles before.

Lion of (Location or People)

Such as "Lion of the Bannorn" or "Lion of the Elvhen". The character is identified with the defense of some region or its people. They receive a +1 bonus to positive social interactions with those under the aegis of the character's protection, and a +2 bonus to positive social interactions with the rightful rulers or leaders of the location or people such as its banns, Chantry leaders, and the like.

Master of Blades

The character is known to be a swordsman without peer. They receive a +1 bonus in positive or negative social interactions with those who respect such mastery. Their enemies in combat suffer a –1 penalty to **Willpower (Courage) & (Morale)** tests to maintain their confidence whenever the Master of Blades is appropriately armed.

Master of Lyrium

The character is known for the peerless mastery with which they manipulate enchanted items, or craft them. They receive a +1 bonus in positive or negative social interactions with those who respect magic, or a +2 bonus with those who practice it themselves. However, they also suffer a corresponding –1 social penalty when dealing with those who are unusually distrustful of magic, including most (if not all) templars as well as the particularly devout within the Andrastian Chantry.

Scourge of Enemy

Such as "Scourge of Orlais" or "Scourge of Werewolves". The character is known to have slain prodigious quantities of some fearsome enemy. Enemies of that sort suffer a –3 penalty to **Willpower (Morale) & (Courage)** tests made in opposition to the character's manifest might. The character may also, at the GM's option, receive a bonus of up to +2 when persuading, intimidating, or bargaining with those in the class of enemies. This honorific can also take the form of "[Enemy]'s Bane" (for example, "Darkspawn's Bane").

Unbent by Misfortune

The character is known to have persevered through some monumental adversity or plague of adversities. They receive a +2 bonus to all **Willpower (Courage) & (Self-Discipline)** tests, as well as being held in awe by those who see themselves as unusually or unjustly afflicted by the cruel winds of fate.

Titles

Reputations and honorifics represent an individual's growing standing among the people and organizations of Thedas. These rewards are meant to represent the prestige and honor accorded a character by those who know of their deeds. But respect alone is not enough for those who dream of greatness. To wield *true* influence, they must have a title.

Titles are formal recognitions of status and authority claimed either by strength of arms or awarded by figures of even greater authority. They can have tremendous impact on a game by providing Player Characters greater access to resources (lords command troops, after all), but also binding them to responsibilities that may limit their freedom (lords also obey their liege's commands). It takes a great deal of effort to earn a title, and even more to keep it if it was won by strength of arms, so only truly powerful Player Characters typically receive one.

The exact mechanical benefits and responsibilities that go along with group membership are best left up to individual GMs to decide on a case-by-case basis, but some standards generally apply. Each title is broken into tiers, representing the hierarchical divisions within governments and organizations. These tiers provide a rough guideline for how to represent a character's place within their organization. Depending on the character's position in the organization, you may wish to represent their authority with a realm (see **Realms and Organizations** in **Chapter 6**).

Social tests made to influence or command members of the realm to which the Player Character belongs are generally positive, and can be made with a bonus equal to the level of their tier. Of course, group members with personal biases or higher standing may not be so open to the Player Character's influence. Groups opposed to the character's realm are also likely to be hostile, resulting in a penalty to social interactions also equal to their tier value.

Titled characters may also petition their organization for the right to use group resources, such as soldiers, treasure, or private libraries. Some rights may be inherent to a title (a Fereldan bann has the power to call up troops from their lands without necessarily petitioning their teyrn), but others may be reserved by the head of the organization (the same bann would need orders from Denerim before they could command a detachment of the royal guard).

We also include a chart here to help GMs target the correct level of resources available at each tier. Please keep in mind these numbers are meant to be a rough average, and even the suggested titles given deviate from them in places. While it is possible to make use of these suggested figures without modification, the potential for these resources to disrupt a game requires final adjudication to rest with individual GMs.

Title Resources

Tier	Monthly Income	Troops	Influence
One	400-800 sp	25-50	+1
Two	1000-2000 sp	100-200	+2
Three	2500+ sp	500+	+3

Orlesian Noble

Whether by newly-discovered proof of pedigree or exemplary service to the Empire, the character is now counted among the nobility of Orlais. While all Orlesian nobles are officially of equal rank, the Grand Game of Orlesian politics shows greater favor to some. This title is only available to native Orlesians or those foreigners who have given the crown ample reason to favor them.

Third Tiers as Plots and Goals

Readers may note that some organizations lack third-tier titles. This is often because the organization lacks the structure, influence, bureaucracy, or some other essential element to allow or necessitate that tier. For example, due to the fractured nature of the Dalish, there are no real leaders above the Keepers.

But what if there were? What if the Dalish were organized, unified, or otherwise united under a King, High Keeper, or other ruler? The elves were once one of the dominant forces in Thedas; could they become so again under the right ruler? Likewise, perhaps a council of rulers or bosses could seize control of another organization in an attempt to restructure and expand.

These sorts of major events could be the focus of epic *Dragon Age* campaigns; they would have to be, given the scope of what would need to be accomplished. Only the most powerful, skilled, determined, and lucky characters could hope to accomplish such things. Such efforts would clearly be the basis for a major part of a campaign. However, if a group of PCs actually pulls off unifying, expanding, and empowering an organization in this fashion, consider rewarding them by creating and granting them a third tier.

First Tier: Lord/Lady

The character is a minor noble, and likely unknown or not well liked. They are granted a small plot of land and the right to collect taxes from their meager holdings. At this level, troops are limited to several dozen guards and whatever followers the character can attract with personal charisma or promises of money.

Second Tier: Favored Lord/Lady

The character is in favor in court, and thus has been granted more land in the countryside, as well as an estate in Val Royeaux. Their income from their holdings is enough to support a luxurious lifestyle, and they likely command a detachment of armed men up to 100 strong, not to mention a veritable army of servants. New blood entering the Grand Game at this level is likely to attract the attention of jealous nobility, all equally eager to make alliances or silence an upstart.

Third Tier: Powerful Lord/Lady

The character holds the highest favor in court, and may be related to the Imperial family by marriage or blood. They have multiple estates and their income allows for a lavish lifestyle. In times of conflict, they can call on hundreds of troops and the Empress will look favorably on reasonable requests for more assistance. Nobility operating at this level have considerable influence and many seek their attention, but just as many seek to replace them as the court's most favored.

Fereldan Noble

The character has become one of the Fereldan nobility tasked with defending the country's freeholders. Such positions are usually awarded by the king or queen or a teyrn after the previous title holder proved extremely unfit, but it is possible that new territories could be created via new settlements in the south, near the Korcari Wilds. This title is only available to native Fereldans or those foreigners who have given the crown ample reason to favor them.

First Tier: Bann/Lord

The character is a lord or one of the minor banns, and has been granted a small keep and the right to petition freeholders for support in the Landsmeet. They are expected to levy a tax on their freeholders to pay for 25-50 troops, but freeholders are known to withdraw their support when taxed too heavily.

Second Tier: Arl/Powerful Bann

If given command over a strategically important location, the character may be considered an arl, else they are a very powerful (and wealthy) bann. This level of influence brings with it a castle and roughly 100 regular troops, though several hundred more can be called up from the surrounding peasantry. Other banns do not owe direct allegiance to an arl, but they may look to them for guidance.

Third Tier: Teyrn/Powerful Arl

This tier represents the highest position in Ferelden outside of the king—that of a teyrn. Teyrns are warlords with multiple banns sworn to them, and thus command hundreds of regular troops. There are only a handful of teyrns in Ferelden at any given time, but they have access to resources to rival royalty.

Tevinter Magister

A Tevinter mage who becomes influential and powerful enough may be appointed to the Magisterium, either by the archon, their home Circle, or through inheritance. Though this position does not automatically grant access to land or money, there are plenty of interests willing to compensate a friendly magister for their vote. This title is only available to mages of Tevinter origins, though given the Imperium's respect for magical abilities, it may be possible for a powerful foreign-born mage to prove loyal enough to earn a seat in the lower tiers.

First Tier: Magister

The character's position in the Magisterium is an unfavorable one, with little influence outside the area they represent. A house and/or country estate are possible, but income is restricted to whatever the character can produce on their own—or what bribes they can secure. Troops are likewise restricted, likely to personal bodyguards.

Second Tier: Influential Magister

As a magister of note, the character's voice and vote carry great weight. Many individuals and groups are eager for

their support, but other magisters are sure to have conflicting desires. Magisters of this authority may command a legion, head a magical academy or oversee large portions of the Imperium's commerce, whatever their interest.

Chantry Priest

Devout followers of the Chant of Light who prove themselves able administrators may be selected by the Chantry to run a particular division. Note that positions in the Chantry focus on power and influence over wealth and command of troops.

First Tier: Brother/Sister

The character is a brother or sister of the Chantry, likely tasked with the oversight of several dozen of the faithful. This position may be focused on any number of the Chantry's areas of interest, from missionary work, to curating religious artifacts, to rooting out heresy. Characters in these positions have few personal resources, but may call upon the vast resources of the Chantry within their narrow purview.

Second Tier: Mother/Father

As a mother, the character is primarily responsible for the spiritual well being of their community and rooting out heresy, but many mothers end up amassing secular political power due to the influence they have over their congregation. Due to the tenets of the Chantry, this title is only available to women, except in the Tevinter Imperium, where the title of father is only available to men.

Third Tier: Grand Cleric

Characters at this level become one of the Grand Clerics, overseeing the Chantry's operations in a whole nation or major region. Again, women are selected for this position in honor of Andraste's gender, while the opposite is true for men in Tevinter. Grand Clerics oversee numerous followers and lower Chantry officials and many are tasked with special projects or allowed to pursue certain personal interests by the Divine. Operating at this tier provides incredible power within the Chantry but the responsibilities are exceptionally high and duties constant. As such, this isn't a tier suitable for most styles of play, save those where other PCs are suitably influential or powerful.

Antivan Merchant

Thanks to shrewd business sense (and possibly judicious use of the Antivan Crows) the character controls a significant trade within Antiva, and has earned the title of merchant prince or merchant queen. These titles are first and foremost concerned with wealth over the loyalty of underlings, so any troops a character commands are likely mercenaries.

First Tier: Merchant Prince/Queen

The character is the head of a small trading firm or the trusted lieutenant of a more powerful prince or queen. They have access to a lifestyle far above most Antivan citizens, but are not quite respected enough to be much involved in the country's affairs.

Second Tier: Wealthy Merchant Prince/Queen

This tier can only be claimed after amassing large amounts of personal wealth and influence, roughly double the normal amount for this tier. However, it brings with it access to the inner circles of Antivan politics and a certain grudging respect from the other titans of commerce. It may also make the character an even larger target for assassins.

Dwarven Noble

Nobility is largely a matter of birth within dwarven society, and thus this title is rarely bestowed upon a character later in life. Should a dwarven Player Character achieve this, though, they can expect to be granted an estate in Orzammar and a vote in the Assembly. Remember that surface dwarves are not allowed to return to Orzammar except in the rarest of cases and are stripped of any caste connections, though their prior standing may persist among other surface dwarves.

First Tier: Minor Noble

The character is the head of a minor noble house in good standing with the Assembly. The easiest method of achieving this title is to be born into it and assume power after the death

of a parent, but it isn't unheard of for some low-born dwarves to rise to the nobility after finding old genealogical records proving their rank in the lost thaigs.

Second Tier: Major Noble

The character is the head of a major noble house and commands a small personal army of Warrior Caste dwarves. They also have considerable standing within the Assembly, allowing them to influence the legislative process of Orzammar to their own ends.

Third Tier: Paragon

Through some great deed that benefits all dwarves, the character is declared a Paragon of dwarven society—a living Ancestor. They are made the head of a noble house (if they are not one already) and their words are considered all but law. A Paragon has access to nearly all the resources Orzammar can bring to bear. Note that this title is so rarely bestowed that a Paragon only appears once every few generations.

Circle Enchanter

The Circle of Magi is composed of numerous philosophical fraternities tied together in a web of temporary alliances and rivalries. Though by no means as cutthroat as the Orlesian court, the politics of the Circle can still be vicious. However, there is one thing all members respect, and that is knowledge. This title offers little access to money or soldiers, but it makes up for that with access to a cadre of loyal mages.

First Tier: Circle Instructor

The character is considered to be a respected instructor within the Circle. Though they command little official power, their status means other members look up to them and value their opinions.

Second Tier: Senior Enchanter

The character is a Senior Enchanter, one of the Circle's dedicated leaders. This position allows them access to the Circle's trove of artifacts, as well as greater freedom to operate independently in the larger world. It is also likely they are considered a philosophical trendsetter, and thus looked to by the other mages in their faction.

Third Tier: First Enchanter

As First Enchanter, the character is responsible for an entire nation's Circle of Magi. They may set the tone for how their mages are educated and just how harshly to deal with apostates. They also have access to extremely powerful artifacts that are handed over to the Circle for safekeeping, though it is assumed they possess the wisdom to know not to use such dangerous tools. They may also be elected the leader of their fraternity.

Nevarran Dragon Hunter

Nevarra is ruled over by the Pentaghast clan, who maintain control chiefly through their highly trained military. Among the most dangerous and devoted of these warriors are the Nevarran dragon hunters. These men and women study, track, and learn to destroy dragons. They are less an organization and more of a profession, but a very elite and dangerous one. There are no formal rankings or titles within the dragon hunters, and no official orders. Instead, status and reputation based on successful hunts determine how esteemed and valuable this title is.

First Tier: Fledgling Hunter

The character has begun their career as a dragon hunter. At this stage the character is largely unproven, but has access to the lore and wisdom of experienced dragon hunters, who know more about the creatures they fight than perhaps anyone in Thedas.

Second Tier: Blooded Hunter

Once the character has actually killed a dragon, they are considered a respected member of the profession. They can more readily get aid or insight from fellow hunters, apprentices may seek them out, and they have a good enough reputation that they may be able to organize especially prestigious or dangerous hunts with multiple hunters. In addition, these warriors are respected and feared throughout Nevarra and often can gain influence and favor with nobles whose lands they help protect from dragonkind.

Third Tier: Legendary Hunter

Only those who defeat a high dragon or multiple lesser dragons achieve this lofty reputation. Widely recognized as among the greatest dragon hunters in the world, legendary dragon hunters are highly sought after and their peers will volunteer in large numbers to aid them on hunts, due to their record of success. Many Nevarran nobles and other wealthy or influential citizens will offer to provide resources to these hunters in order to share in the fame generated by their success.

Elven Elder

The Dalish have their Keepers and under them the First, with one of each for each clan. These elders command great respect, but their resources are limited by those of the clan; in some cases very limited. City elves have similar elders they respect and honor. It is very rare, but not unheard of, for elves of the alienage to advance among the Dalish and vice versa.

First Tier: First/Alienage Elder

The character is an elder within an elven alienage or a First under a Dalish Keeper. "Elder" is rarely a codified position, but it carries with it great social weight. Such standing is

Tiers and Organizations

The rules on creating and running organizations in the *Player's Guide* can be combined with titles to great effect. Lords can run their new holdings like an organization, or an existing organization may provide titles to those who run it. There are no hard and fast rules on using these two concepts together, but they are compatible and complementary.

usually reserved for the aged, but some younger elves of great wisdom or renown may be accorded equal respect. Elven elders lack the hard power of most titled characters, but they wield a great deal of soft power among their close-knit people, who look to them for guidance in running all aspects of their community.

By comparison the Dalish have a stricter hierarchy. There is one First per clan, and they serve immediately under the Keeper. Firsts are respected and their clan will usually heed their advice and aid them, though the practical nature of the Dalish and limited resources make unreasonable requests or aid that comes with a high cost hard to come by.

Second Tier: Keeper/Honored Elder

The character is an honored elder of an alienage or a Dalish Keeper, one of the wise mages looked to by the Dalish clans to help them regain their lost culture. In both cases, they are responsible for guiding and protecting their people, which may include anywhere from several dozen to several hundred elves. Because of this burden and their formal titles, most Keepers are wholly dedicated to their responsibilities, adventuring only when it is necessary for their clan's well being. By contrast, honored elders of an alienage have more freedom, but their authority is less codified, which makes organizing large efforts and resources more difficult.

Carta Leader

The character has achieved the highest stature available to a casteless dwarf—that of a criminal leader. Through a combination of theft, smuggling, and potentially even murder, they have taken command of enough casteless to wield true clout in the lawless vacuum hidden beneath Orzammar's regimented society.

First Tier: Lieutenant

As a lieutenant of the Carta, the character oversees operation of one area of the syndicate's shady business. They likely command some amount of fearful respect among casteless and surface dwarves, but are despised by any "respectable" members of dwarven society.

Second Tier: Boss

The character is considered a Carta boss, and commands the loyalty of up to 100 thugs and thieves. They also personally control numerous illicit and front businesses, funneling a percentage of the profits directly to their personal coffers. The constant threat of arrest and assassination makes this a dangerous title to hold, but the money to be found providing the illicit goods that keep the upper castes running make it a lucrative position.

Mercenary Leader

The nature of warfare in Thedas makes the existence of mercenary companies a fact of life. Though fighting for coin will never be seen as noble work, many companies have earned a measure of respect for their competence and bravery.

First Tier: Captain

The character is the captain of a group of soldiers within a larger mercenary force. Such companies usually number up to 100 fighting men and women, and may operate with limited independence in order to secure smaller contracts on behalf of the larger force. Captains may have great freedom to handle their soldiers as they see fit, but most mercenary commanders will check in from time to time to make sure their organization is being well represented.

Second Tier: Company Commander

Whether they were promoted through the ranks of an existing company or founded their own, the character now controls a fighting force of 400+ soldiers as a mercenary commander. The men and women under their command are unlikely to display any great loyalty, though, unless the deal is fair and the money is good. Representatives of various governments may seek the company's services, but they are unlikely to treat the character with anything more than the barest respect due a competent servant.

Templar Knight

As the martial wing of the Chantry, the templars wield great influence within the realms of Thedas. Whether they are

guarding a Chantry or rooting out heresy, the people see the templars as stalwart defenders of the faith, if sometimes a bit overzealous. Officially, the templars only have access to the resources they need to perform their duties; however, some unscrupulous members of the order are not above soliciting "donations" from those under their protection.

First Tier: Knight-Captain

A knight-captain is one of the field leaders of the templars, overseeing actual operations of the Chantry's martial division. Propelled by a strong faith and a talent for leading men in battle, the character has risen to this rank. They are granted command over several dozen templars, and likely tasked with overseeing the defense of an area considered important to the Chantry, though some detachments are sent into the countryside to hunt apostates and demons.

Second Tier: Knight-Commander

The character is a templar knight-commander in charge of an area of Chantry interest. Such areas may be geographic, such as bannorns, or administrative, such as each country's Circle of Magi. They are able to direct a force of several hundred well-trained templars as they see fit in order to carry out the wishes of their superiors within the Chantry. A knight-commander answers directly to the revered mother of their jurisdiction.

Third Tier: Knight-Vigilant

Commanding a whole nation's templars, the Knight-Vigilant is at the top of their order's hierarchy. The Knight-Vigilant has immense power over others in their order, able to field large forces of templars for various operations. The Knight-Vigilant answers to the Chantry's Grand Cleric in the nation where they have their command.

Seeker of Truth

Members of the Andrastian order the Seekers of Truth traditionally answer only to the Divine of the Chantry. A small order tasked with investigation and elimination of threats both inside and outside the Chantry, it also roots out corruption within the templars and Chantry. The Seekers hold authority over the templars, especially in matters pertaining to the investigation of improper conduct and corruption. Most Seekers were once templars themselves, recruited for their loyalty, skill, and devotion to duty. A Seeker may also serve the Chantry as a Knight-Divine, but that is not necessary to belong to the order.

First Tier: Seeker

A Seeker is an agent of the Chantry and answers only to the Lord Seeker and the Divine. The character has overwhelming authority in their investigations, able to command templars and other Chantry officials in the course of their work. A Seeker can be sent on numerous missions to investigate or eliminate threats to the Chantry. As the order is small, a Seeker has limited manpower at their direct disposal, but can co-opt other Chantry forces if the need is great.

Second Tier: Lord Seeker

There is only one Lord Seeker, who runs the organization and traditionally reports directly to the Divine. Given the small size of the Seekers of Truth, the Lord Seeker often takes a more active role in operations than leaders in larger organizations, but they will still have important duties which might hinder opportunities for certain types of adventure.

Minions for Player Characters

As your heroes continue their adventures across Thedas, they will likely make contacts and accrue allies in the various cities, towns, and taverns that they visit. Some of these acquaintances might even elect (or be recruited) to travel with the party as they embark on a new quest.

Perhaps these are recurring characters that the party took a particular shine to in an earlier adventure ("Hey! Since we're in Denerim, let's see if Ser Dunstan is at the Gnawed Noble!") Others might be NPCs you as a GM have a specific plot-driven purpose for. Still others might be the hangers-on and associates the characters would have following along due to their backgrounds and social standing. A chevalier would not be seen without her squire before a battle, and it would look suspicious for a Fereldan noble to travel to a rival's keep without a liveried bodyguard.

In general, these minions and sidekicks are designed to support the party, but be wary of letting them steal the glory. It's perfectly acceptable—and sometimes dramatically interesting—to let the mousy, unassuming scholar knock out the cat burglar attempting to steal their coin pouch. However, when it comes time to fight the leader of the thieves' collective, it might be best to let your heroes get the killing blow, even if the dice and initiative charts are pointing at the last hit landing on an NPC's turn.

Minions do not just add color to a scene, they can also help bolster the characters' advantage during combat or lend weight to the characters' arguments during a roleplay encounter. An extra person watching the party's backs is almost always welcome. In the midst of a crowded bar fight, a wiry squire might be able to slip outside and ready the party's horses to assist a quick getaway. A trusted advisor can whisper the right name in the heroine's ear or procure an invite to dine with an arl.

While it isn't necessary to draw up a full character sheet for every acquaintance, or to keep track of experience points for the ones that hang around with the party for a while, it is possible your players will ask for Henchman #3 to accompany them on future missions. As your players' characters progress in levels, it might be worthwhile to tweak the recurring extra's stats as well, so one bite from a rampaging bereskarn doesn't kill Ser Dunstan in his first unlucky round.

At a player's discretion, they might wish to pass a stunt along to an NPC during an encounter, allowing their minion an improved action or the advantage of a defensive stunt.

Example

Ser Dunstan has accompanied the party to a meeting with a shady contact in one of Denerim's darkest alleys. Not surprisingly, the shady contact has brought friends and is looking for a fight.The mage Lorrahn's player has three stunt dice to spend on a Mana Shield, but Lorrahn isn't in immediate physical danger. Instead of using the spell on herself, Lorrahn elects to cast it on Ser Dunstan, who is facing down a rather large thug. Ser Dunstan thus receives a +2 bonus to defense until the start of his next turn.

Following are examples of common NPCs players might find sharing their adventures.

Bodyguard

A character's bodyguard might have served the family for years and be a close friend of the PC. They could also be newly hired, brought on board by the party or by the organization for whom the characters are working. A bodyguard's job might be equal parts ensuring the characters arrive safely at their destination and guaranteeing the arrival of whatever goods or equipment the party is transporting.

Bodyguard

Spots ambushes, notices if others are armed, or takes an arrow for you.

Communication 1, Constitution 2, Cunning 1, Perception (Sight) 2, Strength 1

Servant

Like a bodyguard, a servant might have worked with a character's family since before the character was born, or they might be new to the household. Depending on the character's origin, the servant might be a willing companion, earning a decent wage and treated with respect by their employer; or (especially if the character is of Tevinter or Orlesian origin), "servant" might be a softer word for "slave."

Servant

Fetches, carries, and keeps you fed.

Communication 2, Constitution 1, Cunning 2, Perception (Hearing) 1, Strength 1

Squire

Orlesian chevaliers, Fereldan knights, and senior Grey Wardens may have one or more squires in their service to care for their weapons and horses, and to help them don their armor before a battle. In return, the squire will learn the ways of knightly conduct and receive an education in combat.

A squire might be a fresh-faced youth eager to get on with the heroics already, or the bored child of a noble convinced they already know all they need to about fighting. Squires might even be older, a loyal companion who never quite strove for or could afford to achieve knighthood. In the case of a Warden, the squire may be a recruit.

Squire

Whether young and eager or grizzled and jaded, always knows how the buckles are done up.

Communication 1, Constitution (Stamina) 2, Dexterity 2, Strength 1, Willpower (Courage) 1

Comrade-at-Arms

This NPC might be a friend or a friendly rival, someone who came up through the ranks with the character or survived the same horrific battle. Perhaps they survived the Battle of Ostagar together, or held the rear while their fellow villagers fled a darkspawn legion. The comrades might have been farmers who joined the cause of the Rebel Queen and followed her son Maric to the Battle of River Dane. However they are acquainted, the comrade-at-arms has served with the character in the past and will work well and willingly with them.

Comrade-at-Arms

At your side, whatever you go through.

Constitution (Stamina) 3, Cunning 1, Dexterity (Brawling) 2, Perception 1, Strength 2, Willpower 1.

Right Hand

While the right hand of a hero might not have fought in the same life-defining battle or escaped an enemy's dungeon with the hero, chances are they've both been through a series of lesser scrapes together, not to mention one or two greater ones that make great stories when the ale starts flowing. A right hand will be there when it matters most, ready to raise a glass or throw a punch as the situation decrees.

Right Hand

Knows what you need often before you do, and can always be relied on to have your back.

Communication (Performance) 2, Constitution 1, Dexterity 2, Perception 1, Strength 1, Willpower 1.

Flunky

A bit shadier than a right hand, and willing to undertake more… morally ambiguous tasks, flunkies are well-suited for jobs that might very well land them in irons if they're caught. They might find themselves in the employ of bards, thieves, or freedom fighters. While not necessarily sinister minions, chances are it will take less convincing for a flunky to knock a few heads together or to steal an arl's shield than the more upstanding NPCs.

Flunky

Up to no good—for you.

Communication (Deception) 2, Constitution 1, Cunning 2, Dexterity (Lock Picking) 1, Perception 1, Strength 3.

Magister's Apprentice

The best way for a Tevinter mage to climb the ranks in the Circle is to latch on to a magister. The apprentice acts much like a squire, travelling with their master, fetching and carrying, and gleaning whatever arcane knowledge they can. They can often be found poring through a book of lore or off in a nearby field experimenting with various abilities. Unless the mage is from Tevinter, chances are they haven't spent much time out of the Circle Tower and will occasionally be overwhelmed by the sheer size of the world.

Magister's Apprentice

Eager, quick to learn. Wears a robe with cuffs that look a bit singed.

Communication 3, Constitution –1, Cunning (Arcane Lore) 3, Dexterity 1, Magic (Primal) 2, Perception 1, Strength –1, Willpower 2.

Orlesian Bard

If there are Orlesian nobles in the party, the characters might find themselves swept up in the Grand Game. A bard might be hired by the characters to spy on another noble, or even carry out an assassination for them. A bard knows how to navigate any social situation, potentially gaining the party access to august personages they'd otherwise never meet. Heroes dealing with a bard might want to keep a wary eye on their contact, however: The spies tend to keep their loyalties rather fluid, and might not always remain on the players' side.

Orlesian Bard

Might have blood under their fingernails while playing the lute.

Communication (Disguise) 3, Constitution 2, Cunning 1, Dexterity (Legerdemain) 3, Perception 2, Strength 1, Willpower 2.

Scout/Guide

Characters whose adventures take them through the Korcari Wilds, over passes high in the Frostback Mountains, or down into the Deep Roads will likely find they need a guide who knows the area. These scouts know what dangers to look for, where the hostile tribes make their camps, and how to skirt around them (or where best to stage an ambush.) If the party is low on food or shelter, a scout can lead them somewhere safer or negotiate with the locals on behalf of the party.

Scout/Guide

The map is just for show.

Communication 1, Constitution (Running) 3, Cunning 1, Dexterity 2, Perception (Tracking) 3, Strength (Climbing) 3.

Servant or Slave?

This will likely affect not only the servant's demeanor and attitude toward the characters, but might also have an impact on inter-character relationships within the party if the characters don't all hail from the same region or are of disparate social ranks. Be aware of potential friction here—a city elf who has recently escaped a bad situation in the alienage might not take kindly to an Orlesian noble's treatment of their servants.

Be willing to pull this discussion out-of-game if things get tense, and look for ways to best resolve the issue. One character's personal crusade to set the servant free might make for an interesting subplot, but it must be an avenue whose potential outcomes all players are willing to explore.

Seneschal

Presiding high above the run-of-the-mill servants, the seneschal oversees not only the household staff, but also the day-to-day running of the noble *house*. They might know a lord's business better than the lord does, and if it weren't for their efforts, the house would quickly fall into chaos. Seneschals are the reason guests are well fed and comfortable, the accounts are reasonably managed, and why the lady is never late for an engagement.

Seneschal

Quiet, unobtrusive, and likely silently planning out your next month.

Communication (Etiquette) 4, Constitution 1, Cunning (Heraldry) 2, Dexterity 1, Perception 1, Strength –2.

Political Advisor

Like the seneschal, a political advisor has to keep track of hundreds of intricate details for their lords and ladies. Throughout most of Thedas, it is a demanding position. In Orlais, where the Grand Game is ever shifting, keeping track of allegiances as they form, break, and reform requires the keenest of minds. An advisor must be able to draw not only upon occasionally esoteric knowledge from the house's distant past, they must also be able to look ahead and make recommendations based on the political currents.

Political Advisor

Knows the line of succession from tip to tail.

Communication 3, Constitution 1, Cunning (Historical Lore) 4, Perception 2, Strength 1, Willpower 2.

The Procurer

Whatever the character needs, the procurer knows how to get it. Whether it's a bribe to get past a guard, an artifact from a lost city, or a candle from the Divine's window, the procurer is ready to help. They've proven their reliability to the party in the past, producing an object most people believed was no more than a tavern tale, and they'll even knock a percentage off the price for returning customers.

The Procurer

Knows a guy.

Communication (Bargaining) 4, Constitution 1, Cunning (Research) 3, Dexterity 2, Perception 1, Strength 2, Willpower 1.

Treasure

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

When you want to give treasure as a reward, you can consult the **Treasure Category** table. This provides a rough guideline that you can use or modify as you see fit. The value is given in silver pieces, but the actual treasure can be in other denominations of coins, or in the form of gems, jewels, and the like.

Masterworks & Superior Items

There is an obvious difference between a pitted, rusty longsword on one hand and a longsword new-forged by dwarves from veridium mined in their ancestral vaults on the other. There is a critical distinction between an upside-down cookpot and a helm crafted by a master of the king's armories. And it makes a difference whether one's mandolin was assembled from ironbark by a master musician or cobbled together by an itinerant peddler who had one eye on the local fishmonger's wife while he worked on it.

Masterworks are objects crafted by a maker of surpassing skill. Such implements are, simply put, more effective than their counterparts of common provenance. They typically provide test bonuses to those who use them, as well as damage bonuses in the case of weapons. Flamboyant masterworks can also provide a benefit to social interactions with those who are impressed by such things.

Superior items are objects made from the choicest raw materials. These accoutrements are easier to use than their counterparts that are made from inferior raw materials. Superior implements usually impose lesser burdens than common items, endure longer in use, and/or provide the benefits of focuses and/or talents that their users do not otherwise have.

Unsurprisingly, many masterworks are also superior items. However, masterworks made of common raw materials are not unknown, and superior items crafted with only common skill are likewise found across Thedas.

Treasure Category	
Category	**Value**
Trifling Treasure	1d6 silver pieces
Paltry Treasure	3d6 silver pieces
Middling Treasure	2d6 x 10 silver pieces
Substantial Treasure	2d6 x 100 silver pieces
Abundant Treasure	4d6 x 100 silver pieces
Lavish Treasure	6d6 x 100 silver pieces

Masterworks and superior items do not have costs like items of common quality and provenance do. They are not available for general sale. Their acquisition is the province of adventures and stories only. Heroes who seek them must often ask around, pursuing rumors and references for weeks or months—and having adventures in the process—to track down such singular items. Where and when you decide that a particular NPC has masterworks and/or superior items for sale, set the asking prices of such goods based on the needs of your campaign. No matter how much coin they have, the players should always feel pained to part with the cost of a masterwork or superior item; set prices that make it so. Furthermore, the prices of these items are always subject to haggling, best represented by extended tests of **Communication (Bargaining)** that may go on over the course of days.

The following sections detail the concrete benefits of masterwork and superior weaponry, armor, and tools.

Weaponry

Masterwork weaponry generally gives a bonus to the attack and/or damage rolls of those who wield them. Most such weapons give a simple +1 bonus. A rare few give a +2 bonus. A very few legendary treasures of craft give a +3 bonus. Higher bonuses are impossible outside the realm of magic. A given masterwork's bonuses to attack and damage are often different. For example, the hereditary blade of the teyrns of Highever is much more vicious than it is precise—it gives a +1 attack bonus but a +3 damage bonus. Similarly, it is not uncommon for a masterwork weapon to give a bonus to attack or damage only.

Superior weaponry can have several different mechanical effects. Nearly all have reduced minimum Strength requirements, even to the point of the weapon's minimum Strength being a negative number. These are the favored weapons of the anemic and unworthy sons of mighty kings, for obvious reasons. Many such "warriors" would be shocked and horrified to be forced to wield a common longsword. Given such weapons' storied histories, worthy warriors often wield them too, even though some of their benefits are rendered irrelevant by their owners' personal skill and might.

Some superior weapons give those who wield them the benefits of one (or in rare cases more than one) level of increased talent with the weapon style in question. For example, a combatant possessing the talent Single Weapon Style (Novice) who fights with a veridium longsword might gain the Journeyman benefits of that talent as well by virtue of the weapon's superior constituents. Even those without any inherent talent can gain the Novice benefits of such talents from the virtues of these weapons, as long as they meet the requirements of the talent in question. (A wielder who does not meet the requirement does not gain those benefits.) Those who are already masters of the talent in question do not gain additional benefit from this effect of superior weapons.

A few superior weapons forged or constructed from exceedingly valuable materials can give those who wield them the benefits of having a focus with that type of weapon whether they actually have it or not. (This type of bonus, however, does not stack with the bonus a warrior receives from actually possessing the focus in question.) This is of particular benefit to the pampered wealthy who lack discipline and skill of their own and is typically moot for skilled wielders.

The **Raw Material Effects on Weapons** table outlines the general progression of effects that arise from the raw materials used to make superior weapons. These are guidelines only; every weapon is unique and the GM is the judge of any given weapon's capabilities. Metals are used to forge weaponry like swords and axes, while wooden weapons include quarterstaffs and bows, whether crafted for melee or ranged combat. Weapons like spears with functional components made from both metal and wood can benefit from one superior raw material, chosen by the craftsman, but the benefits of several different materials do not stack.

In addition to these effects, the range categories of missile weapons, including thrown missile weapons, can be affected

The Social Benefits of Masterworks & Superior Items

Masterworks and superior items that are particularly impressive or flamboyant can give their owners a bonus to social interactions with those inclined to be impressed by such objects. Such an item can provide a bonus of up to +3, with +1 bonuses being by far the most common, +2 bonuses being rare, and +3 bonuses being very rare.

The GM should consider both the item's form and value when granting such test bonuses, and should feel free to vary them situationally. Soldiers are likely to be impressed with a fine sword whether made by a master or grand master, for example, and a calculating merchant by the works of only the most surpassing artisans, whether they're crossbows or candlesticks.

Thresholds of Benefit

Some masterworks (but generally not superior items) have a threshold of skill that the item's user must meet in order to gain the item's superlative benefits. This reflects the fact that a novice rogue, say, won't necessarily have the foggiest idea what to do with the strange and subtle lockpicks crafted for a master of breaking-and-entering. Thresholds of benefit are especially common for tools, but can apply to weapons and suits of armor as well.

A threshold of benefit is expressed as a number that describes the unmodified test bonus (generally consisting of the relevant ability bonus plus a focus bonus) that a user must have to gain the benefit.

Example

A masterwork costume giving a +2 bonus to **Communications (Disguise) tests** *but having a threshold of 5 requires that the one wearing it have an unmodified test bonus of +5 or better in order to get the additional +2 bonus that the masterwork provides.*

by construction from superior materials. The Raw Material Effect on Weapon Ranges table gives typical effects. The range increase is a percentage of the base range for the weapon's type. For example, a longbow made of yew has a short range of 29 yards (the base short range of 26 plus an additional 10%) and a long range of 65 yards (the base long range of 52 plus an additional 25%).

Armor

Masterwork armor generally provides an increased Armor Rating with respect to non-exceptional armor of the same type. Most such armor provides a +1 bonus to Armor Rating, some suits provide a +2 bonus, and rare suits provide a +3 bonus. Higher bonuses are theoretically possible, but such suits are extraordinarily rare. Some masterwork armor provides a bonus of similar magnitude to **Communication (Leadership)** tests, and/or a penalty to enemies' **Willpower (Morale)** tests.

Superior armor generally features reduced armor penalties. The table below provides typical improvements to armor penalties based on the variety of materials from which armor can be made. Drakeskin is useful for improving leather armors; the various metals apply to mail and plate armor. No armor's penalty can be reduced below zero.

Note that shields are unsubtle tools. Although they can be made beautiful by the touch of a master's hand or creation from superior raw materials (and so can provide benefits as described under The Social Benefits of Masterworks and Superior Items), shields cannot be made physically more effective via crafting.

Tools

Masterwork tools provide the same mechanical benefits as weapons—ingenious construction by a master of craft can give bonuses of between +1 and +3 to the test rolls of those using them.

Superior tools—again, like superior weapons—can give the effects of additional talent levels, as well as the (non-stacking) benefits of a focus that the user does not possess. Use the same tables for weapons when considering the statistics of superior tools. Minimum strengths do not apply to tools. Although masterwork tools can typically be used over longer periods of time with much less fatigue, these effects are not expressed in mechanical terms.

Superior Consumables & Impractical Treasures

In addition to the empirical benefits of masterwork, superior, and magical items, the treasure hoards of Thedas are rife with objects of great value but less-than-practical benefit. Fine artworks are valued by those with refined aesthetics. Superior wines and foodstuffs—spices, especially—are worth fighting over among gourmands and the status-conscious. First-class clothing, whether ostentatious or reserved, communicates the taste and refinement of those who wear it.

Any item of equipment or provision can be crafted or purchased in more-excellent versions. These more-worthy versions are usually no more useful than their common counterparts (and are sometimes less useful, given their ornamentation or fragility) but are nevertheless worth a great deal more. Such items often provide a social benefit to interactions with those who appreciate their worth—see The Social Benefits of Masterworks and Superior Items—that can exceed the social benefits of practical items by providing a bonus of up to +5, albeit at a preposterous cost. The Price and Benefits of Superior Goods table provides rough guidelines as to the increased cost and related social benefit from such items.

Raw Material Effects on Weapons

Metal	Reduction in Minimum Strength	Talent Level Bonus	Focus Benefit
Iron	—	—	—
Steel	–1	—	—
Veridium	–2	one level	—
Silverite	–2	one level	yes

Wood	Reduction in Minimum Strength	Talent Level Bonus	Focus Benefit
Elm	—	—	—
Ash	—	—	—
Yew	–1	—	—
Whitewood	–2	one level	—
Ironbark	–2	one level	yes

Raw Material Effects on Weapon Ranges

Material	Increased Short Range	Increased Long Range
Elm	—	—
Ash	—	+10%
Yew	+10%	+25%
Whitewood	+25%	+50%
Ironbark	+50%	+100%

Raw Material Effects on Armor

Material	Armor Penalty Improvement
Drakeskin	+1
Iron	—
Steel	—
Veridium	+1
Red Steel	+2

Price & Benefits of Superior Goods

Quality	Price Multiplier	Maximum Social Bonus
Fine	x5	+1
Outstanding	x25	+2
Exceptional	x100	+3
Kingly	x1,000+	+5

Example

A fine lamp (base cost: 2 sp) costs 10 silver pieces, an outstanding version 50 sp, an exceptional one 2 gp, and a kingly lamp 20 gp or more. None necessarily illuminates any better than any other. A fine saddle (base cost: 20 sp) costs 1 gp, an outstanding one 5 gp, an exceptional variety 20 gp, and a kingly saddle 200 gp or more. All are equally effective at keeping a rider upon their horse. Fine wine (base cost: 20 cp) goes for 1 sp, outstanding wine fetches 5 sp, exceptional wine costs 20 sp, and wine for the king's table costs 200 sp and up per bottle. Although the rarefied palates of the wealthy and noble can tell the difference, all qualities dull the pain of a hard day with equal sufficiency.

Items of this nature become better and better rewards for Player Characters as they go up in level. They're often more portable than coin, which can benefit adventurers who acquire them far from home. But for you, as GM, they're also more narratively interesting, and can provide story hooks for further adventures as the heroes are challenged to—for example—"make change" for a candelabra of exceptional quality.

Magic Items

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

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

the creation of magic items. They prepare items with lyrium and then mages instill the magic effects.

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

Many of these items have masterwork and superior item benefits in addition to their magical effects, which are listed in each item's entry. Where similar benefits are listed separately, they should be combined for a total effect. For example, a magical masterwork dagger might have a +2 attack bonus arising from its enchantment and a +1 attack bonus because it is a masterwork. Such a dagger would give its wielder a +3 attack bonus.

Temporary Magic Items

Glowstone

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

Lesser Healing Potion

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

Lesser Lyrium Potion

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

Swift Missile

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

Wounding Missile

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

Bull's-Eye Arrows

One who takes an aim action when using one of these magical arrows receives a +3 bonus to a subsequent attack roll, rather than the regular +1 bonus. The enchantment on each missile is good for one shot, but the enchantment is not used up until the aim bonus is actually used to make an attack roll. That is, it is not used up if a subsequent attack is not made, or if a Bull's-eye Arrow is fired without a preceding aim action (and then collected to be fired again later).

Healing Potion

Similar to but more potent than a Lesser Healing Potion, a Healing Potion is made from healing herbs enchanted with Creation magic. Imbibing a Healing Potion requires an activate action and restores up to 4d6 + Constitution lost Health.

Ink of Splendor

The lyrium contained in this single bottle of ink renders it capable of changing colors both as and after it is applied in order to illuminate, both beautifully and helpfully, even the simplest of messages. It provides a +3 bonus to **Dexterity (Calligraphy)** and **Cunning (Cartography) & (Writing)** tests to scribe information. Construction plans drawn up with **Cunning (Engineering)** are easier to carry out. Workers following such plans gain a +2 bonus to relevant tests. A full batch of this ink produces 12 uses; roll 2d6 to determine how many uses remain in a bottle found in the course of play.

Lyrium Potion

Similar to but more potent than a Lesser Lyrium Potion, a Lyrium Potion contains a small amount of refined lyrium. Imbibing a Lyrium Potion requires an activate action and restores up to 2d6 + Magic lost mana points.

Paints of Warding

These war paints, when applied in fearsome patterns to the face of a combatant so that their enemies can see them clearly in battle, provide a +5 bonus to Armor Rating for as long as they are not washed or worn away. (One who goes to great pains to preserve them might see them last for as long as a week.)

Potion of Fortune and Skill

Anyone drinking one of these potions at the beginning of a battle receives two extra Stunt Points (so, 1d6+2 SP) each time they roll doubles for the duration of the fight. Potions of this type go by many different names.

Seeking Torch

These torches provide typical light, but their flickering illumination also seems to bend around obstacles and even shines through opaque objects to find that which is otherwise hidden from sight. Those who search by the light of a Seeking Torch—even in broad daylight—gain a +3 bonus to **Perception (Searching)** tests. Each torch burns only long enough for a single test.

Greater Healing Potion

This draught is made from distilled essence of healing herbs enchanted with Creation magic. More powerful than standard Healing Potions, just a sip has been known to restore energy to the weariest limbs. Imbibing a Greater Healing Potion requires an activate action and restores up to 6d6 + Constitution lost Health.

Potent Healing Potion

The work of a master herbalist, a Potent Healing Potion takes weeks to brew, but they are in high demand amongst those warriors who can afford them. Imbibing a Potent Healing Potion requires an activate action and restores up to 8d6 + Con lost Health.

Incense of Awareness

This incense combines processed lyrium with a variety of herbs to create a mind-altering smoke. When inhaled, the smoke grants the user a +2 bonus to defense and a +2 bonus to all Perception tests for one hour. Lighting and inhaling Incense of Awareness requires an activate action.

Incense of Focus

A pungent and bitter mix of herbs, this incense improves focus and concentration. When inhaled, Incense of Focus provides a +2 bonus to all Cunning tests for one hour. This intense concentration comes at a price, however, as the user must succeed at a **Constitution (Stamina)** test vs. TN 15 or suffer a –1 penalty to Cunning for another hour due to debilitating headaches.

Greater Lyrium Potion

More potent than even the standard Lyrium Potion, this tincture is cloudy with refined lyrium. Imbibing a Greater Lyrium Potion requires an activate action and restores up to 3d6 + Magic lost mana points.

Potent Lyrium Potion

Considered unsafe by some mages due to its heady dose of refined lyrium, this tincture is nonetheless still used as a means of restoring significant magical reserves. Imbibing a Potent Lyrium Potion requires an activate action and restores up to 4d6 + Magic lost mana points.

Rock Salve

This tub of foul-smelling ointment glistens due to the animal fat and flecks of quartz used in its creation. When smeared across the skin it hardens, providing the wearer a +2 bonus to Armor, but at the cost of a –4 penalty to Speed. Rock Salve can be applied in five minutes and lasts for an hour before its enchantment dissipates and it reverts to grease and stone flakes.

Swift Salve

This ointment smells of peppermint and tingles to the touch. When rubbed into the skin, Swift Salve grants the wearer a +5 bonus to Speed and reduces the cost of the Lightning Attack and Dual Strike stunts by 1 SP. The effects of a tub of Swift Salve last only 10 minutes after being applied.

Warding Salt

A mixture of sea salt and refined lyrium, Warding Salt is used to secure an area against demons. Any demon, whether manifested or possessing a creature or corpse, must succeed at a **Magic (Spirit)** test vs. TN 20 to cross a line of the grains. A pouch of Warding Salt contains enough to secure the doors and windows of a single modest house, and lasts a month before needing to be refreshed.

Pricing Potions

Lyrium-based Healing and Mana-restoring potions of various potency are fairly common in the *Dragon Age* setting. Even if a group doesn't have access to healing magic directly, they can usually find, make, or even buy potions to help them survive during their adventures. But if the Player Characters are going to buy potions, how much should they cost? There's a long and short answer to this.

The Short Answer

The short answer is found on the following table. Note that because Lyrium potions can be used to fuel potent magic and due to strict control and high demand for its basic ingredients, they tend to cost more than healing potions of the same potency.

Potion Pricing

Potion Type & Potency	Cost
Lesser Healing	20 sp
Regular Healing	40 sp
Greater Healing	75 sp
Potent Healing	1 gp 10 sp
Lesser Lyrium	30 cp
Regular Lyrium	55 sp
Greater Lyrium	1 gp
Potent Lyrium	1 gp, 50 sp

The Long Answer

Well, the long answer is "that depends", because it's based on just how tough GMs want to make things for the PCs. If a campaign is about fast action and non-stop daring, potions should be cheap and easily found. If combat is supposed to be more dangerous and its effects longer lasting, then potions are rarer and more expensive. In-setting considerations might also drive prices up or down. For example, if the PCs end up blowing up a major supply of lyrium during a campaign, the prices for potions using lyrium would go up. On the other hand, if a major source of new healing herbs or other ingredients is located, the prices might go down. Prices can also fluctuate up and down locally, so a war-torn area might have few healing potions available and those that are might be very costly.

Note that GMs wishing to simulate how acquiring potions generally works in the *Dragon Age* electronic games can balance how often or easily potions are acquired with how many the Player Characters already have. So if the party is nearly out of healing potions, they are more likely to find some. If they have a dozen or so, they have a harder time finding more. This approach is more about play balance than in-setting justification, but it is an effective way to manage such resources.

The Weight of History

Many of the items presented here have a long history associated with them. Most have a heroic pedigree, but some are infamous as the tools of great villains. Either way, learned folk are likely to recognize the items for what they are and judge by association the characters wielding them. In addition to any social benefits or penalties outlined in a specific item's entry, GMs should feel free to apply bonuses or penalties to reactions based upon how someone feels about an item. Adjustments of ±1 should be the most common, but adjustments of ±2 or ±3 are possible in the case of extreme reactions. Also bear in mind that these bonuses and penalties only apply when an NPC is aware of an item's history.

Note that any physical item—whether masterwork, superior, beautiful, or dirt-common—can be imbued with greater value by giving it a history. Items once owned by the outsize figures of past times are valuable to those who know their provenance. Items known to have been present for notable events are likewise valuable because of it—especially if they were involved in pivotal moments. Consider, as just a few examples…

- The common blade that struck down the Rebel Queen.
- The dented chalice used in the Joining of the first Grey Wardens.
- The ostentatious hat made from the pelt of the last werewolf slain in Ferelden.
- The masterwork—and magical, some say—signet ring worn by the chief among the Tevinter magisters who were twisted into the first darkspawn.

An item's history can also be tailored to a particular Player Character. The sword carried into battle by a PC warrior's grandfather should have great value to that hero. Likewise, the mirror that once hung in the keep—now ruined—where a hero's forebears ruled should help provide motivation to that PC to see the quest done that would restore their heirs to their rightful throne.

Although such items can certainly be bought and sold, the value of an item's historical provenance is never expressed in terms of coin. Such value can only be expressed in its sale between a particular buyer and seller. This fact makes such items particularly useful to you, as GM, because you can rule that a particularly desperate buyer will pay just enough to allow the heroes to buy some item that the current quest requires, or, conversely, that there are no buyers in the immediate area who are particularly impressed with the origin of the item in question.

Permanent Magic Items

Permanent magic items continue to operate until destroyed or depowered somehow. As such they are quite valuable, and many will not part with such items at any cost.

Aeducan Family Shields

These silverite medium shields, typically pitted and scarred by the claws of countless darkspawn, all bear the ancient seal of the dwarven House Aeducan. Most are also shaped like the seal. They are indestructible by normal means and give a magical +1 bonus to their wielder's Armor Rating.

Antivan Longbow of Fidelity

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +2 *Damage Bonus:* +0
Superior Benefits: *Minimum Strength:* –1
Talent Level Bonus: One level *Focus Benefit:* No
Short Range: 33 yards *Long Range:* 78 yards

This whitewood longbow is decorated in the style common in Antiva, and is easy to mistake for one of the many masterwork and superior—but non-magical—bows crafted in that land. In addition to its non-magical benefit, its magical nature is that it cannot be stolen or taken from its owner by either guile or force. Weird circumstances, strange and unforeseen decisions, and even the outright defiance of physical laws always conspire to make sure it remains in the possession of the one who rightfully owns it.

Aodh

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +2 *Damage Bonus:* +0
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* –2
Talent Level Bonus: Three levels *Focus Benefit:* Yes
Rune Slots: 2

The battle axe known as Aodh is well known in Fereldan legends, some of which claim it burns with the blood of the first demon it slew. Others purport that its fiery nature is due to the volcanic aurum used in its construction. Whatever the reason, the flames surrounding Aodh's blade deal an additional +3 penetrating damage.

Asturian's Might

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +2 *Damage Bonus:* +2
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* –2
Talent Level Bonus: Two levels *Focus Benefit:* Yes

This white steel longsword was forged for Warden-Commander Asturian by the dwarves of Orzammar in recognition of the completion of Soldier's Peak in 2:34 Glory, and hidden away by him before he succumbed to the Calling. All damage dealt to darkspawn with Asturian's Might penetrates their armor.

Blackened Heartwood Staff

This wood-and-iron quarterstaff was once made of mahogany heartwood, but no more. The corrupting presence of darkspawn during one of the Blights has twisted and tainted it so

that it is no longer possible to tell where the wood ends and the metal begins. Even so, a bit of its ancient magical power remains. A mage holding it gains a +2 bonus to their Spellpower when casting Entropy spells.

Blades of House Aeducan

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +1 *Damage Bonus:* +0
Superior Benefits: *Minimum Strength:* –1
Talent Level Bonus: One level, *Focus Benefit:* Yes

These longswords are a collection of ancient blades that have been carried by Warrior Caste dwarves who have been of, allied with, or sponsored by House Aeducan since the time of the First Blight. These silverite blades are ancestral heirlooms handed down over generations. Folded with lyrium, they are extremely durable and especially resistant to the corrupting nature of darkspawn. They provide a +1 magical attack bonus and are indestructible by normal means.

Boots of the Outlaw

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

Centurion's Cuirass

Superior Benefits: *Armor Penalty:* 0 *Armor Rating:* 11
Rune Slots: 1

Crafted from rare volcanic aurum, this suit of heavy plate is a relic of the former might of the Tevinter Imperium. Said to have been crafted for Archon Almadrius' personal guards, this cuirass protects the wearer from all threats, both physical and magical. The wearer of this armor receives half their armor rating against spells that would otherwise deal penetrating damage.

The Channel of Entropic Might

This ring is a powerful channeler of entropic magic. A mage who wears it gains a +2 bonus to their Spellpower when casting spells of the Entropy magic school. Similar magic items exist for the other schools of magic as well, though not all take the form of rings.

Citizen's Castle

Masterwork Benefits: *Defense Bonus:* +1
Rune Slots: 2

These suits of light plate armor take their names from the dwarven suits after which they're modeled, but have been crafted throughout Orlais and Ferelden for generations. Though these typically sport great craftsmanship, and some may be masterwork items or crafted from superior materials, what makes plate armor into a Citizen's Castle is its sturdiness and the incorporation of rune slots for further enchantment. These are never sleek suits of armor; these are meant to look solid and impenetrable to enemies.

Dead Thaig Shanker

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +2 *Damage Bonus:* +0
Superior Benefits: *Talent Level Bonus:* One level
Focus Benefit: Yes
Rune Slots: 1

This long silverite dagger was recovered from the Deep Roads, where it was found in a trove of ancient dwarven artifacts. It is rumored the darkspawn let it be out of fear for a weapon which claimed so many of their own during the fall of the thaigs. It allows the wielder to adjust their Dragon Die result by ±1 on attacks made against darkspawn. If an adjusted Dragon Die results in doubles on the roll, the wielder generates stunt points as normal, using the new Dragon Die result to determine the amount.

Dragonbone Cleaver

Superior Benefits: *Minimum Strength:* 0
Talent Level Bonus: One level *Focus Benefit:* Yes

This massive two-handed axe was originally crafted from dragonbone to serve as a tool for hewing more workable pieces of bone from a dragon's skeleton. With dragons in short supply these days, its devastating edge has been adapted for use directly on the battlefield. It deals +5 damage whenever an attack generates stunt points.

DRAGONSKIN ARMOR

Masterwork Benefits: *Armor Rating:* +1 *Defense Bonus:* +2
Superior Benefits: *Armor Penalty:* 0 *Armor Rating:* 5

Crafted from the leather of a high dragon, this one-of-a-kind jerkin offers superior protection without restricting movement. The wearer of this armor receives a +4 bonus to Speed.

THE FELON'S COAT

Masterwork Benefits: *Armor Rating:* 5
Superior Benefits: *Armor Penalty:* 0

This heavy leather drakeskin armor fits anyone who wears it like a second skin and provides the wearer deft and speedy movement. It gives a magical +1 bonus to all **Dexterity (Acrobatics, Initiative, and Stealth)** tests.

FEN'HAREL'S TOOTH

Said to be a tooth from the mouth of the elven god Fen'Harel, this simple charm provides some of the Dread Wolf's fickle cunning when worn on a necklace. It grants a +3 bonus to all tests made to detect and disarm traps and locks. If the wearer fails a test to overcome a lock or trap while wearing the Tooth, the charm no longer provides the bonus against that obstacle, but the bonus granted against other traps and locks rises to +4. The bonus continues to improve by +1 after each such failure, but resets to +3 after a successful test.

HANDMAIDEN'S NECKLACE

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

HELM OF THE EAGLE

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

HIGH CONSTABLE'S MACE

Masterwork Benefits: *Damage Bonus:* +2
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* –2
Talent Level Bonus: Two levels *Focus Benefit:* Yes

The High Constable of the Grey Wardens in the Anderfels was responsible for the well being of the order's griffon mounts, making them effectively second in command behind the First Warden. This white steel mace was a symbol of their office, and carries a powerful enchantment from the days of the first Wardens. A Grey Warden wielding it may make a contested **Magic (Spirit)** test vs. **Perception (Empathy)** when near darkspawn to appear to the creatures as one of their own. This ability lasts for up to an hour, or until the wielder attacks an affected darkspawn.

HUNTER'S BANE

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

HUBRIS

Superior Benefits: *Talent Level Bonus:* One level
Focus Benefit: Yes

Said to be the only memento of a Nevarran mage who thought himself the equal of a pride demon, this dragonbone staff is inset with fine gold tracery. It grants a +2 bonus to Communication (Command) tests, and mages wielding it receive a +2 bonus to Magic tests made to cast Spirit spells.

HYPNOTIST'S STAFF

This gnarled staff is covered in swirling patterns that seem to twist and writhe under gaze and touch. The Hypnotist's Staff provides a +1 bonus on attack tests with Arcane Lance and gives all targets a –2 penalty on **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** tests to resist spells cast by the wielder.

MAETASHEAR WAR AXE

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +1 *Damage Bonus:* +3
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* 1
Talent Level Bonus: One level *Focus Benefit:* Yes

A truly enormous weapon, this two-handed axe was forged from two silverite polearms. Its blades are covered in ancient Tevinter runes that tell the myth of how the Fade was cut apart from the world of men. It provides a +4 bonus to all Communication tests made to command or influence spirits.

Key to Orzammar

These ceremonial keys to the city of Orzammar are diplomatic boons, granted by the vote of the Assembly to acknowledge those who have performed significant services to the city. In addition to granting a +3 social benefit (see The Social Benefits of Masterworks and Superior Items) among dwarves and a +1 social benefit among others familiar with dwarven culture, the magical nature of these keys also gives those who carry them the option to subtract one from their Dragon Die when making any Communication test. This option may be exercised—or not—after the dice have been rolled. (Its beneficial effect is to make doubles more likely, thereby giving their owner a greater likelihood of generating roleplaying stunt points.)

Meteor Sword

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +1 *Damage Bonus:* +1
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* 0
Talent Level Bonus: Three levels *Focus Benefit:* Yes (+3)
Rune Slots: 1

Forged from strange metal found in a meteorite, this perfectly balanced greatsword is light enough to be wielded by even the most inexperienced warrior, but it truly shines in the hands of a master. Characters who possess the Master degree in the Two-Hander Style talent receive an additional +2 bonus to both attack and damage when wielding the Meteor Sword.

Oak Branch

Superior Benefits (as veridium):
Talent Level Bonus: One level *Focus Benefit:* No

Said to have been harvested from a sentient tree in the Brecilian Forest, this quarterstaff feels warm to the touch and gives its wielder the sense that it's alive, ever shifting and moving beneath the fingers. It allows a mage who holds it the option to add ±1 (their choice) to any result rolled on the table of magical mishaps. (This modification does not affect the Willpower test roll, only the magical mishap table result, even though the latter is based on the Dragon Die result that informs the former.)

Precision-Geared Recurve

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +1
Superior Benefits: *Short Range:* 60 yards
Long Range: 75 yards

This sylvanwood crossbow is the pinnacle of dwarven engineering. Its gears have been crafted with such precision that it is possible to cock the bow using very little effort, requiring only a minor action. This ease of use does not sacrifice power, as the recurve is capable of hurtling a bolt well beyond the range of standard crossbows.

Seeds of Adventure

One easy way to create an adventure is to choose or create some object, figure out who has it, figure out who wants it, and then fill the empty space in between with encounters. Such adventures can work regardless of what—if anything—the object is good for as long as the people who want it are convinced it's worth having and there are enough obstacles in the way to make the getting interesting. The mechanical effects of objects can provide an extra dimension of motivation for players, who know that their characters will be concretely and measurably more effective as their gear improves.

If you ever find yourself at a loss for the subject of an adventure, it's hard to go wrong starting with an object.

Ring of the Ferryman

All archons of the Tevinter Imperium have cast a unique Ring of the Ferryman to signify their office. Tradition demands these rings be destroyed upon the archon's death, but this tradition is not absolute—sometimes a duplicate is destroyed instead. The wearer of this ring receives a +3 to all Magic tests to cast spells, with an additional +3 bonus to cast blood magic spells. Citizens of the Tevinter Imperium, and especially magisters, are unlikely to take kindly to anyone other than an archon wearing this ring.

Ring of Shielding

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

Shaperate's Blessing

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +1 *Damage Bonus:* +1
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* –1
Talent Level Bonus: One level *Focus Benefit:* Yes
Rune Slots: 1

These silverite maces are awarded by the Shaperate of Orzammar to individuals who have gone to great pains to help preserve dwarven history. When worn openly, they provide a +4 to all Communication tests made to influence dwarves, with the exception of casteless and surface dwarves.

Shield of the Legion

Rune Slots: 1

These shields are awarded to distinguished officers of the Legion of the Dead, the dwarven military force dedicated to driving the darkspawn out of the Deep Roads. Faced with overwhelming odds, the Legion grimly accepts its duty, no matter the cost. This dragonbone medium shield provides an additional +2 to its wielder's Armor Rating and a +4 bonus to all **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** tests to resist fear or mental influence.

SMITH'S TARGE

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

SPAWN CLEAVER

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

SPIDERSILK CLOAK

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

STALWART MAIL

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

STAFF OF PARTHALAN

Magister Parthalan vanished during a trip to Kirkwall to suppress a slave revolt during the Exalted March. Parlathan's staff was thought lost to the ages, but is rumored to have shown up in the hands of various heroes. With a red orb on one end and a sword-like blade on the other, the staff is impressive and intimidating looking. Mages using the staff treat their Magic as 2 higher as long as they use possess it, and add a +2 to **Strength (Intimidation)**. If used in melee combat, it does 2d6 damage.

THALSIAN'S SPIRE

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +2 **Damage Bonus:** +0
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* –2
Talent Level Bonus: Three levels *Focus Benefit:* Yes
Rune Slots: 2

This staff of Tevinter design is made of a black metal of unknown origin that is twisted and pointed at one end, resembling a long narrow spire. It is very old, rumored to date back to the early days of the first magisters, and grants the user increased potency with blood magic. It is unknown if this staff actually belonged to the blood mage Thalsian or was named for him; either way, it's a potent artifact for blood mages. All blood magic used by the wielder has +2 Spellpower and does +4 damage (when applicable), and all stunts used with blood magic spells cost 1 SP less.

TIGER'S TAIL

Superior Benefits (as Silverite):
Talent Level Bonus: One level *Focus Benefit:* Yes

This long oak staff is worn smooth from years of handling, and feels warm to the touch. Both ends are charred and blackened, as though from a recent fire. A mage wielding the Tiger's Tail while casting a Primal spell may choose to lose 4 Health in exchange for a +1 bonus to Spellpower for that spell. They may gain up to +3 Spellpower in this way.

TWINBLADES

Superior Benefits: *Minimum Strength:* —
(No minimum Strength for secondary dagger.)
Talent Level Bonus: Two levels *Focus Benefit:* Yes

A fine set of matching dragonbone daggers of Nevarran make, these blades provide a +4 to all Communication tests made to influence nobility. While useful as ornamental pieces, they seem to have fallen under the influence of curious magic that makes them unreliable in combat. Any character who generates stunt points while wielding the blades will find them missing within the next 24 hours.

THE VESHIALLE

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus* +2 *Damage Bonus* +2
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* –2
Talent Level Bonus: One level *Focus Benefit:* Yes

A reminder of the sad fate of the Dales, this dragonbone battle axe was the personal weapon of the great elven general Rajmael. Hurled into the advancing human armies by the general in a last act of defiance, it is said to rebel against all but elven hands. The Veshialle generates 1 fewer stunt points for any wielder who is not an elf, and for elves it generates an additional 1 SP. Elves also gain an additional +1 to attack and damage tests with it.

VIGILANCE

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus* +3 *Damage Bonus* +3
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* –2
Talent Level Bonus: Three levels *Focus Benefit:* Yes
Rune Slots: 2

Many weapons are seen as little more than tools, but the longsword Vigilance is a rare exception. Painstakingly crafted from volcanic aurum by a master smith in Denerim some time in the Dragon Age, this blade is rumored to carry a powerful enchantment rendering its owner all but unkillable. While such stories are certainly exaggerations, it does provide a +1 bonus to both Strength and Constitution when wielded.

VIPER'S BLADE

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

WOLF-KILLER

Superior Benefits: *Minimum Strength:* –1
Talent Level Bonus: One level *Focus Benefit:* Yes
Short Range: 39 yards *Long Range:* 104 yards

The story of this ironbark longbow's creation has been lost. Though it appears not to have been crafted by a mage's hand and no trace of lyrium can be detected within it, it has the uncanny habit of sending its shafts through the hearts of the beasts it is used to hunt. Whenever a shot fired from Wolf-Killer generates stunt points it also inflicts a free (0 SP) Lethal Blow stunt in addition to the normally selected stunts.

YUSARIS

Masterwork Benefits: *Attack Bonus:* +2 *Damage Bonus:* +0
Superior Benefits: *Adjusted Minimum Strength:* 1
Talent Level Bonus: One level *Focus Benefit:* Yes

Fereldan legend tells of Yusaris, an ancient blade wielded by some of the country's greatest heroes to strike down dragons, werewolves, and more. Whether *this* silverite greatsword is the blade of legend is debatable, but whatever its origin, its power is unmistakable. It provides its wielder a +5 bonus to Armor Rating against fire, and deals +3 damage to all drakes and dragons.

Runes

Runes are magical inscriptions of lyrium that can enchant armor and weapons with various effects. Skilled dwarven craftsmen and the Tranquil know the secrets of runecraft. They inscribe the runes onto blank pieces of stone (unsurprisingly called runestones) and this is how they are commonly found. The runestone itself has no inherent power, but an enchanter can take it and transfer the rune onto weapons or armor. This activates the enchantment.

Not every weapon or suit of armor can be enchanted. The process usually requires the use of special materials, such as red steel and dragonbone. When magic items are described, they may have one to three rune slots. Each one of these slots can be inscribed with one rune of the appropriate type (armor runes for armor and weapon runes for weapons). Items cannot have more than one of the same type of rune. You cannot put two runes of defense on a suit of armor, for example, though you could put on one rune of defense and one rune of fortune. An item without a rune slot cannot be enchanted.

Once an item has been enchanted, the rune(s) effects are permanent. A new rune can be inscribed on a slot already in use, but this destroys the rune that was there. In this way, PCs can upgrade their items with different or more powerful runes, but there is a cost.

Example

Locke, the city elf rogue, breaks into a noble's mansion and steals a magical dagger with two rune slots. She had previously acquired several runes, so she takes the dagger to be enchanted with a Novice Rune of Cold Iron and Journeyman Rune of Slowness. She later acquires a Master Rune of Elements (Fire) and wants to put that on the dagger. Since the two slots are full, she can only do so by destroying one of existing runes. She chooses to lose the Rune of Cold Iron and replace it with the Rune of Elements (Fire).

Only characters with the Runecrafting talent (see **Chapter 3: Focuses, Talents, & Specializations**) can use runes to enchant armor and weapons.

Armor Runes

The five most common types of armor runes are defense, fortune, protection, valiance, and warding. Armor with one or more rune slots can be enchanted with them.

Rune of Defense

A Rune of Defense makes you harder to hit in combat.

Novice: You gain a +1 bonus to your Defense.

Journeyman: You gain a +2 bonus to your Defense.

Master: You gain a +3 bonus to your Defense.

Rune of Fortune

Fortune favors the wearer of this rune.

Novice: Once per encounter, you can take a +2 bonus on any one die roll (ability test, damage roll, etc.). You can decide to use the bonus after the dice are rolled.

Journeyman: As Novice, but the bonus is +4.

Master: As Novice, but the bonus is +6.

Rune of Protection

Armor and shields enhanced with this rune are more resilient.

Novice: You gain a +1 bonus to your Armor Rating.

Journeyman: You gain a +2 bonus to your Armor Rating.

Master: You gain a +3 bonus to your Armor Rating.

Rune of Valiance

This rune fills you with courage.

Novice: You receive a +1 bonus on Willpower tests.

Journeyman: You receive a +2 bonus on Willpower tests.

Master: You receive a +3 bonus on Willpower tests.

Rune of Warding

You gain resistance to one school of magic (Blood, Creation, Entropy, Primal, or Spirit). A Rune of Warding (Primal), for example, will aid your tests vs. Primal spells but not those of other schools.

Novice: You receive a +1 bonus on tests to resist spells from the specified school of magic.

Journeyman: You receive a +2 bonus on tests to resist spells from the specified school of magic.

Master: You receive a +3 bonus on tests to resist spells from the specified school of magic.

Weapon Runes

The seven most common types of weapon runes are cold iron, devastation, elements, paralyzation, silverite, slowness, and striking. Weapons with one or more rune slots can be enchanted with one unique weapon rune in each slot.

Rune of Cold Iron

A weapon with a Cold Iron rune is a bane to the undead.

Novice: This weapon inflicts +1 damage on possessed corpses (skeletons, devouring corpses, etc.).

Journeyman: As Novice, but the damage is +3.

Master: As Novice, but the damage is +5.

Rune of Devastation

This rune turns your weapon into a dealer of death.

Novice: When wielding this weapon, you gain a +1 bonus when generating stunt points. However, the bonus stunt point can only be spent on Mighty Blow and Lethal Blow.

Journeyman: When wielding this weapon, you gain a +2 bonus when generating stunt points. However, the bonus stunt point can only be spent on Mighty Blow and Lethal Blow.

Master: When wielding this weapon, you gain a +3 bonus when generating stunt points. However, the bonus stunt point can only be spent on Mighty Blow and Lethal Blow.

Rune of Elements

There are several different types of this rune (fire, frost, lightning, nature, and spirit), but all have the same basic game effect (using the element to add damage to the attack). With your permission, a PC can use an enchanted weapon to achieve appropriate minor effects. They might use a weapon with a Rune of Elements (Fire) to light a torch, for example.

Novice: This weapon inflicts +1 damage.

Journeyman: This weapon inflicts +2 damage.

Master: This weapon inflicts +3 damage.

Rune of Paralyzation

This feared rune can freeze an opponent with a touch.

Novice: When wielding this weapon, you can perform the paralyze stunt for 6 SP. The target of your attack must make a successful TN 13 **Constitution (Stamina)** test or become paralyzed. A paralyzed character cannot move at all for the rest of the encounter, loses their Dexterity from Defense, and can take no actions, but is not subject to a coup de grace unless otherwise unconscious or dying. At the start of their turn on each subsequent round, the paralyzed character can make another test to end the effect of the rune.

Journeyman: As the Novice rune, but the stunt only costs 5 SP and the TN of the **Constitution (Stamina)** test is 15.

Master: As the Novice rune, but the stunt only costs 4 SP and the TN of the **Constitution (Stamina)** test is 17.

Rune of Silverite

A weapon with a Silverite rune is a bane to darkspawn.

Novice: This weapon inflicts +1 damage on darkspawn (genlocks, hurlocks, ogres, etc.).

Journeyman: As Novice, but the damage is +3.

Master: As Novice, but the damage is +5.

Rune of Slowness

This rune can slow an enemy to a crawl.

Novice: When wielding this weapon, you can perform the slow stunt for 4 SP. The target of your attack must make a successful TN 13 **Magic (Spirit)** test or become slowed. A paralyzed character suffers a –1 penalty on attack and casting rolls and a –4 penalty on Speed. At the start of their turn on each subsequent round, the slowed character can make another test to end the effect of the rune.

Journeyman: As the Novice rune but the TN of the **Magic (Spirit)** test is 15, the attack and casting roll penalty is –2, and the Speed penalty is –6.

Master: As the Novice rune but the TN of the **Magic (Spirit)** test is 17, the attack and casting roll penalty is –3, and the Speed penalty is –8.

Rune of Striking

A weapon enchanted with this rune strikes true.

Novice: You gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls when wielding this weapon.

Journeyman: You gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls when wielding this weapon.

Master: You gain a +3 bonus on attack rolls when wielding this weapon.

Adventures in Thedas

Invisible Chains

Now that you have learned the rules of *Dragon Age* and what is involved in being a Game Master, you are ready to run an adventure. **Invisible Chains** is an introductory adventure designed with new characters in mind and it immerses them in the intrigues of just a few of the factions of Thedas.

You can run **Invisible Chains** as a stand-alone adventure or use it to launch a far-reaching *Dragon Age* campaign. However you choose to use it, you should first read through the entire adventure and familiarize yourself with the plot and the key personalities in the story so that you understand their motivations. You do not need to memorize the adventure as you can refer back to it as needed while running the game, but it is much easier to manage the twists of the plot when you know what is ahead for the characters before play begins.

Text presented in this format is intended to be read aloud to the players. It provides descriptions that set the scene with an overview and what is immediately noticeable. Modify the text or paraphrase it as you see fit so that it suits your adventure and the unique perspectives of the Player Characters of your group.

NOTE: *The following text is for the Game Master's eyes only!* If you are going to be a player in the adventure, read no further! Spoilers and plot twists are revealed that may ruin some of the fun for you and your fellow players.

Adventure Summary

The Player Characters (PCs) witness a gang of ruffians abducting a dwarf in the streets of Halamshiral. The kidnappers flee the scene while their associates attack the PCs in an effort to dispose of any witnesses. The kidnappers flee into the ruined slums of the formerly elven city with a considerable lead on the heroes thanks to their familiarity with the tangled streets. A bit of questioning and some keen observation leads the party to the kidnappers' den, actually a haven for lyrium smugglers selling Carta-processed shipments of the mystical substance as a drug.

The abducted dwarf belonged to a group of smugglers that was supposed to deliver the lyrium to the safehouse in the Ash Quarter for distribution. He and his Carta associates attempted to cut the Halamshiral group out of the supply chain, bypassing the elves and their agents to pocket some extra coin for their own profit. If the PCs arrive in time, they could save the man's life or overhear his questioning; otherwise they arrive to find him killed following an over-enthusiastic interrogation session. The smugglers attempt to send the PCs away without further bloodshed but a desperate lyrium addict arrives and demands the drug that they do not have. The addict becomes enraged and violent and the dangers of the drug become apparent as he attacks anyone and everyone until restrained or killed.

Questioning survivors or examining clues at the scene, uncovers the other Carta dwarves' location, where the illicit goods should be found, but going there only reveals a scene

of violence. Blaen, a disgraced Orlesian chevalier, oversees the smuggling supply chain and has seen to it that his unscrupulous but industrious employees have met grisly ends. Still, clues indicate that the product is headed to the city of Val Royeaux, where clearly a great sum of money will change hands and the lyrium will be further distributed.

The adventurers track Blaen down in Val Royeaux but his considerable political clout protects him from direct attacks and accusations. They can, however, intervene in the exchange he has arranged at a gala event hosted by a local noble by acquiring invitations and infiltrating the event. From within the manor, the PCs can attempt to seize the evidence and prove Blaen's involvement in lyrium trafficking, steal the drugs for their own use and profit, or attempt to insert themselves into Blaen's operation. Regardless of their approach, the characters stand a chance of making both powerful allies and potent enemies.

BACKGROUND

Blue Harvest

With a mind to reestablishing his influence through wealth, former chevalier Blaen turned to the smuggling and selling of lyrium. Thanks to contacts made during his adventuring years, he has established a reliable supplier among the Carta and a thin but functional distribution network that reaches from Orzammar and the Frostback Mountains, down the Imperial Highway, and on to Val Royeaux. Marketing the substance to numerous ex-templars at first, he's been slowly expanding his market to other groups. As lyrium use has begun taking a stronger hold in the shadowy corners of the Orlesian capital, word has begun to spread. Blaen sees an opportunity to extend his reach further north. In order to do so, however, he needs to build additional relationships and find the unlikely: a criminal he can trust.

Blaen does not care about the effects that lyrium has on its users. His distaste for templars, who tend to be among his best customers, actually provides a certain satisfaction as he sees them ruined by the drug. The large number of aging templars in Val Royeaux led to the influx of wealth that prepared him to launch his current expansion efforts. Those efforts, in turn, have allowed him to put lyrium in the hands of more unlikely customers—everyone from thrill-seeking Orlesian nobles to warring syndicates looking to use lyrium to bolster their resistance to magic and empower the mages in their ranks.

The distribution network Blaen assembled, known informally as the Blue Owls, is subject to the same threats as most criminal enterprises. Beyond the need to smuggle their goods in secrecy, because many rulers can see the potential danger the drug represents or, at the very least, might seek to tax the product, the Blue Owls are made of unscrupulous, profiteering men and women like Blaen. Each one of them keeps an eye toward pocketing more of the considerable coin that the sale of lyrium represents. Recently, and without Blaen's permission, some of the Carta dwarves thought to exercise some creative initiative and cut distributors in Halamshiral out of the supply chain. The violence could attract outside attention but, more importantly, could lead to a disruption at a critical point for Blaen who stands on the verge of sealing an incredibly lucrative deal with the Purifiers.

The Purifiers are a faction in northern Orlais that might be willing to distribute lyrium bought from Blaen, but they also intend to put the drug to use among their soldiers. They are planning a bid for control of the region against their rivals, the Elevated Brotherhood. The two groups are at odds in part because the Purifiers are anti-mage zealots who count a number of current and former templars in their ranks. In contrast, the Elevated Brotherhood harbor mages of all kinds, reject the idea of Chantry supervision of mages, and view Tevinter as a model for government leadership. Access to lyrium would certainly bolster the Purifiers and possibly swing the balance of power in their favor enough to cripple the Elevated Brotherhood once and for all and secure a position of control over the northern regions of Orlais. Blaen is wary of partnering with extremists and the Purifiers distrust the disgraced chevalier enough that this deal hangs on a tenuous thread.

PART 1

The Indigo Road

The party encounters a group of thugs attacking a dwarf, Kynedrin, and find themselves drawn into the conflict between the formerly allied gangs of smugglers of lyrium. Either by rescuing Kynedrin or pursuing his attackers, the PCs learn of the Blue Owls and witness firsthand the dangers of the drug when an addict shows up at the hideout of the Blue Owls in the a ruined Halamshiral neighborhood. Clues or interrogation reveal a far-reaching smuggling pipeline that reaches from Orzammar to Val Royeaux. Kynedrin's crew seem to have ideas of their own, spurring violence between them and the Bleakwatch, the gang that represented the Halamshiral portion of the Blue Owls.

Tracking down the dwarf crew, members of the Carta, uncovers a grisly scene of violence and points to the involvement of Blaen, the mastermind behind the entire lyrium smuggling operation. Further clues point toward the city of Val Royeaux where a major deal will take place with the Purifiers. These encounters should reveal the danger, or the potential profit, that lyrium represents, and the dangerous henchmen that Blaen employs to maintain his smuggling operation. Events should direct the party to Val Royeaux, either to halt Blaen's efforts or possibly to involve themselves in, or usurp, his business.

Modify these encounters to suit the characters and their actions. For example, the party could potentially ally themselves with Kynedrin by promising to secure Blaen's operation or, at the very least, avenging the dwarf's fallen brothers. However, it is also possible that the party seeks to eliminate anyone involved in the smuggling ring for fear of the dangerous addiction spreading throughout the region, either on behalf of their own motivations or at the behest of some patron.

Prologue

In **Part 1: The Indigo Road,** the adventure begins in Halamshiral, a formerly elven city ruled by a privileged minority of Orlesian humans who reside in the High Quarter. The opening event should occur in the streets on the edge of the

High Quarter. Events can be set in another city as needed, but keep in mind that other cities' elven populations will reside in alienages. In that case, recast the ruined neighborhood of Halamshiral as a particularly run-down section of an alienage in the party's location.

It is assumed that PCs are already familiar with one another and are traveling together. If that is not the case, arrange a short roleplaying encounter for them to introduce one another and find common ground to travel together. Alternately, they might all stumble upon the attack that takes place in Encounter 1, providing each character an opportunity to react in their own way.

Environs: Halamshiral

Halamshiral was an elven city that fell to Orlais during the Exalted March against the Dales. As a result, unlike other cities, it is populated predominantly by elves who are not confined to an alienage. Instead, the city's rulers and upper class are concentrated in an exclusive enclave known as the High Quarter. The architecture throughout the majority of the city reflects its Dalish origins as much as it demonstrates the ruin visited upon the elves by the Orlesians. The ravages of war and the scars of neglect mar Halamshiral's beauty and grandeur. Entire neighborhoods stand ominously empty, picked over for materials to shore up those buildings still in use.

In stark contrast to the majority of the city, the High Quarter still demonstrates Halamshiral's beauty but altered to suit human tastes and styles. This enclave boasts well-maintained cobblestone streets and upscale markets and inns for wealthy merchants traveling the Imperial Highway. Barring the servants of the wealthy, however, elves are an infrequent sight within the High Quarter. Elven party members find that they are often ignored in conversations with humans in the High Quarter, assumed to be servants, or even asked to leave some establishments that consider themselves "human only" businesses. Meanwhile, outside the High Quarter, non-elves (particularly those that appear wealthy) might encounter similar treatment or at the least be regarded with suspicion.

Scene 1

Abduction in Progress

Combat Encounter

The heroes interrupt a snatch and grab outside Halamshiral targeting Kynedrin, a Carta dwarf. The kidnappers, the Bleakwatch gang, will do whatever it takes to grab Kynerdrin and force him to reveal the location of a shipment of lyrium, a rare and extremely dangerous type of the mystical mineral.

The Carta dwarves that should be delivering the lyrium to the Bleakwatch made camp outside of Halamshiral. Tired of the long road and the wilderness, Kynedrin left his brothers to visit a house of ill repute in the High Quarter. Word reached the Bleakwatch the Carta dwarves have reached Halamshiral but failed to make their expected delivery of lyrium. Suspecting some sort of double-cross, the Bleakwatch boss, Shesella, dispatched some thugs to capture Kynedrin for interrogation. They stalked the dwarf until he left the High Quarter to cut through the run down sections of the city and exit Halamshiral. The party stumbles upon the ambush of the dwarf as several members of the gang attempt the abduction.

The streets are deserted this late in the evening and most folk are unwilling to get involved in any problems outside of their homes at this hour.

The Bleakwatch thugs split into two groups, one to grab Kynedrin and the other to stand watch. The party notices the first group as they set upon the dwarf and attempt to subdue him with their clubs and drag him away but a **TN 13 Perception (Hearing or Seeing)** test reveals the second group skulking in the shadows nearby. Among the second group is Lendrid, Shesella's chief lieutenant. Lendrid assumes the characters are allies of the Carta dwarves if they reveal their presence.

The Bleakwatch members are focused on fighting a delaying action so that Lendrid can escape with Kynedrin. The already battered dwarf is of no use in combat and after three rounds, if there are at least three gang members not engaged with the PCs, Kynedrin is dragged out of sight down one of the alleys along the street. Once they are successful, any remaining gang members are willing to flee if their losses begin to mount.

Keep the battle straightforward and relatively easy. The scene is intended to show new players how combat and skill checks are resolved. Remind the players that doubles on a successful attack roll allows them to perform stunts. If the party allows the abduction to take place and then follows Lendrid and his gang, make an opposed test pitting the party's **Dexterity (Stealth)** against the gang's Perception (Hearing or Seeing)

Kynedrin

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	Communication (Deception, Gambling)
3	Constitution (Drinking)
1	Cunning (Evaluation)
0	Dexterity (Brawling)
0	Magic
0	Perception
2	Strength (Axes, Might)
0	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	22	10	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Battle Axe	+4	2d6+2
Throwing Axe	+4	1d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Pierce Armor and Rapid Reload.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Contacts (Novice), and Thrown Weapon Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bows, and Brawling.

Equipment: Battle axe, light leather, and 2 throwing axes.

Dwarf Carta Smuggler.

Lendrid

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
2	Constitution
1	Cunning
1	Dexterity (Brawling, Stealth)
0	Magic
1	Perception (Seeing)
3	Strength (Bludgeons, Intimidation)
0	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
9	24	11	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Two-handed Maul	+5	2d6+6
Crossbow	+1	2d6+2

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Mighty Blow and Threaten.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Two-Hander Style (Novice), and Unarmed Style.

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Bows, and Brawling.

Equipment: Crossbow, light mail, and two-handed maul.

Lieutenant of the Bleakwatch Gang.

Bleakwatch Gang Member

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication (Deception)
1	Constitution (Running)
1	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Legerdmain, Lock Picking, Staves, Stealth)
0	Magic
2	Perception (Hearing)
2	Strength (Intimidation)
0	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	18	13	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Crossbow	+3	2d6+3
Club	+5	1d6+2

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Skirmish and Taunt.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Scouting (Novice), and Thievery (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, and Staves.

Equipment: Club, crossbow, and light leather.

Thug.

to see if they are spotted. If they are, the gang attacks as described previously, otherwise they lead the characters to Shesella and the safe house as described in Scene 3, although the opposition will be considerably bolstered.

If Kynedrin is dragged off while the party fights the rest of the thugs, they can attempt to track the gang through the streets as described in **Scene 2: Pursuit.** Should the party succeed in rescuing the dwarf, he asks them to escort him out of Halamshiral to his campsite. He is willing to pay the party if that seems to be the only way he can convince them, because he is afraid the Bleakwatch will make another attempt on his life. The dwarf does not reveal his Carta connections unless he believes it might help him and under no circumstances will he discuss the Indigo Road. He insists that he is part of a merchant caravan and that the Bleakwatch thugs intended to rob or possibly ransom him. Proceed to **Scene 4: Backtracking,** but follow the additional instructions there for bypassing **Scene 3: Intervention.**

Adversaries

There are a total of twice as many Bleakwatch gang members, including Shesella's lieutenant, as there are PCs (so if your group has four PCs, they should face seven gang members plus Lendrid. The lieutenant and half of the gang stay focused on abducting Kynedrin while the rest deal with the party.

Kynedrin

The Carta and his brothers are only things that matter to Kynedrin. They have always been there for him in tough times and

the dwarf would do anything they asked of him. Kynedrin and his brothers' recent involvement in the Indigo Road has promised to improve their lot in life as they rarely receive anything but the most menial tasks in the Carta. Kynedrin is determined to do his superiors in the Carta, and his older brother, proud. He is often stubborn and single-minded, but he is also prone to foolish lapses in judgment that only ever seem obvious to him in hindsight.

Lendrid

Lendrid grew up in Halamshiral and does not particularly care about the world beyond it. He contents himself working with anyone who praises him for exercising his mean streak and proclivity for violence. Currently, that person is Shesella and he has worked with her and been a part of the Bleakwatch for nearly two years. He is secretly in love with the elf and demonstrates his devotion to her in exceeding her expectations when she demands brutality from him. Unfortunately, he lacks any other means of expressing himself so he often makes tasteless "knife ears" jokes and periodically attacks other members of the Bleakwatch to assert his dominance. Shesella abides this behavior because she knows she can use his unpredictable temper to keep the rest of the gang in line.

Scene 2

Pursuit

Exploration Encounter

On the trail of the Bleakwatch gang, the heroes engage in a harrowing chase through Halamshiral's Ash Quarter.

If the Bleakwatch thugs that abducted Kynedrin managed to get a head start on the party in Scene 1, they make their way through the streets of Halamshiral headed into one of the worst areas of the settlement, the Ash Quarter. Burned and left to crumble following the Orlesian occupation, the Ash Quarter houses the dregs of Halamshiral society. Although most buildings appear abandoned, squatters have claimed many of the structures as their own and are both territorial and violent. Many are loners, though, and might shrink in the face of numbers if threatened. Unlike the rest of Halamshiral, the watchful eyes of the Ash Quarter are awake late into the evening and take in nearly everything that goes on in the ominously silent streets.

When the characters begin their pursuit, ask each player how they intend to carry out tracking down the escaping Bleakwatch members. Conduct the pursuit as an advanced test (as described in **Chapter 2)** with a starting TN of 11 and average difficulty, meaning the success threshold will be set at 10. Reward particularly good ideas with a lower target number, but try not to penalize any reasonable use of a skill by the players. If the group succeeds by making fewer skill checks than there are characters, they arrive at the safe house in time to hear the entire interrogation (as described in **Scene 3: Intervention**). If the group succeeds after a number of skill checks less than twice the number of players, they discover the safe house just as Shesella concludes the interrogation but Kynedrin is still alive. Otherwise, the party manages to find the clues they need to locate the safe house but arrives after the unfortunate dwarf's demise.

Suggested Ability Tests

The hot pursuit of the dwarf's abductors is a great opportunity to get the players' dice rolling and learn more about the *Dragon Age* rules. Obvious ability tests are Perception (Hearing, Seeing, or Tracking) but characters could potentially try to gather information from some of the local residents with a small bribe and a Communication (Bargaining or Persuasion) test or a **Strength (Intimidation)** test. Clever use of some abilities might allow the use of other skills, for instance a successful **Perception (Hearing)** test might allow a character to hear Kynedrin being dragged through a nearby alley and another character could then make a **Constitution (Running)** test in an effort to close the distance with their quarry. Reward the players' creativity and allow each check to build a narrative that leads to the next.

Scene 3

Intervention

Roleplaying or Combat Encounter

The heroes infiltrate the headquarters of the Bleakwatch smugglers. Before the situation can be resolved by combat or conversation, a crazed ex-templar seeking a lyrium fix disrupts the scene.

The Bleakwatch safe house is made up of a cluster of row homes with sagging roofs and precariously leaning walls. Inside, many of the shared walls between the buildings have been demolished and create a warren of interconnected rooms between the former homes and businesses. The buildings were scorched by the fires that affected most of the Ash Quarter, and the smell of smoke still pervades the interiors. The Bleakwatch use the place as a headquarters, for storage of smuggled goods passing through their hands (they are involved in more than just the lyrium trade), a distribution point for lyrium, and as a flop-house for their gang.

Members of the Bleakwatch trust their reputation among the locals to keep trespassers at bay and keep only one disinterested guard on watch, unless they have reason to believe they will be subject to a serious attack. If the PCs attempt to approach unnoticed, make an opposed test between their **Dexterity (Stealth)** and the guard's Perception (Hearing or Seeing), but penalize the guard by –2 for his general lack of interest in his duties. Catching him off-guard allows the PCs to surprise him (refer to Surprise in **Chapter 2)** and they could potentially eliminate him without alerting the rest of the gang who are either preoccupied with Shesella's interrogation of Kynedrin (assuming the gang abducted the dwarf) or with the outraged leader of the Bleakwatch (if her thugs failed to follow her orders and deliver the Carta member).

If the party arrives early enough, as described in **Scene 2: Pursuit,** they can potentially overhear Shesella's interrogation of the dwarf from the beginning (assuming he was not already rescued by the party). Read or paraphrase the following:

A muscular man and woman hold the battered dwarf on his knees in front of a gaunt elf woman, the lines of her neck taut and her eyes narrowed as she looks down at him. She delivers a swift, wicked backhand across his cheek. Her voice is frighteningly calm and even. "Where are your brothers and where is my blue?"

The dwarf sputters as he stifles back a cry but says nothing in reply. At a nod from the elf, the human woman drives her boot heel into the dwarf's ribs, eliciting a pained scream but still no answer. The elf casually picks up a loaded crossbow from atop a crate. "Did you think you'd cut us out of the Indigo Road, bypass us, try to fumble your way all the way to Val Royeaux without our help, and pocket our share? Do you think Blaen wanted you to do anything other than follow the same plan he put in place when this began?"

She levels the crossbow. The rough-looking men and women seated around the room lean eagerly forward at the promise of violence in the air. "Last chance, Kynedrin, because the Carta isn't going to miss a smuggler without the sense to follow a foolproof plan."

Unless the party intervenes, or if their arrival is delayed by a slower pursuit in Scene 2, Shesella kills Kynedrin with the crossbow and then begins shouting at her subordinates. Demanding they locate Kynedrin's brothers and their delivery of lyrium, she orders them to scour the likely campsites outside Halamshiral. If he survived his earlier run-in with the PCs, Lendrid is present and is charged with leading the search.

If the characters reveal themselves or are discovered, Shesella attempts to speak to them before things escalate to combat. The elf wants to determine who the intruders are and what they know about the lyrium shipment as well as the entire Indigo Road operation. If the PCs are so inclined, and make a convincing argument, she might allow them to aid in the search for the other Carta dwarves and continue to employ them following the discoveries in **Scene 4: Backtracking.** Should the party try to convince her to spare the dwarf, she will accuse them of being in league with the Carta dwarves, revealing not only the Carta involvement but also bringing Blaen's name into things in an effort to determine if the former chevalier deliberately attempted to cut her organization out of the Indigo Road.

If the party keeps Kynedrin alive and defeats or drives off the Bleakwatch members, the dwarf is impressed with their performance and offers to pay them for protection on the road to Val Royeaux. He portrays himself as an important member of the Carta, rather than the lowly grunt that he is, and talks of his influence and the wealth that he could share with the PCs now that the Bleakwatch is out of the lyrium supply chain. He asks them to accompany him to his brothers' campsite so they can depart with all haste. If the party is interested, proceed to **Scene 4: Backtracking.**

Why Go On?

The party should have encountered several NPCs willing to employ them or act as rivals against them by the end of **Part 3: Intervention**. If the PCs have not yet been drawn into a faction (the Bleakwatch or the Carta), seeing the effect of lyrium on Tavrik, the once-proud templar turned deranged addict, might offer a reason to put a stop to the Indigo Road. Play upon the destructive danger of unrestrained lyrium use and the ruinous results apparent in Tavrik. On the other hand, they might be unconcerned with the ramifications, motivated only by the impressive potential profit of distributing the substance or having access to a supply for their own ends.

Finally, if the PCs need further motivation, a friend or relation of one of the PCs could turn out to be an addict or small-time dealer. They relied on the Bleakwatch supply to satisfy a craving or some dangerous customers. Without the PCs restoring the supply chain, or at least acquiring some lyrium for a short-term solution, the friend is in serious danger.

Interruption

At a dramatically interesting moment (perhaps as the conversation with Shesella nears a resolution, or the PCs reveal themselves or are discovered), Tavrik storms into the Bleakwatch safehouse. Shesella has been putting the addicted former templar off for several days, telling him that her lyrium has not arrived so she cannot provide him with his fix. His cravings have reached a dangerous level now, and he is desperate and unwilling (and unable) to take no for an answer. Despite the fact that there is no lyrium available, Tavrik demands his drug and quickly elevates the situation to a violent confrontation. He is not interested in any of the dealings between the Shesella and the PCs and is willing to attack anyone as his addiction overtakes him.

The members of the Bleakwatch are very aware of the danger that Tavrik represents and shrink away from him, hoping that the addict vents his fury on the PCs. Shesella puts on a show of reasoning with him but knows that after going without his fix for so long Tavrik is beyond help. If her conversation with the party has gone poorly, or she deems them a threat, she tells Tavrik that the PCs are responsible for the theft of the shipment in an effort to turn one of her problems against the other. She then orders her gang to finish off the survivor or survivors once the struggle nears its end. Alternately, if she and the party were nearing a compromise of some kind, she asks them to prove their loyalty by "protecting" the Bleakwatch by killing Tavrik.

If the party manages to subdue Tavrik rather than kill him, when he returns to consciousness he speaks to them, although his mood swings between pleading for help with his addiction and begging for lyrium. He is incredibly volatile and desperate but might be willing to aid the party in tracking down the missing shipment if he is promised either help or a share of the drug. He is very likely to betray the party for a fix, however, and his erratic behavior should make this clear. Worse, his cravings frequently manifest in violent outbursts and he is heedless in combat, unable to distinguish friend from foe in his state of withdrawal.

Adversaries

In addition to Shesella there are as many Bleakwatch gang members as there are PCs. If he was not killed by in **Part 1: Abduction in Progress,** Lendrid is also here, potentially nursing any wounds he sustained—and a grudge against the characters. If the PCs allowed all of the Bleakwatch thugs to leave with Kynedrin without attacking, double the number of Bleakwatch members present. Stats for the Bleakwatch thugs are found on page 343**.** Stats for Shesella and Lendrid are found on the next page**.**

When Tavrik arrives, the gang members follow Shesella's instructions. If she is killed, they defer to Lendrid but flee if he is also dead. Lendrid may flee with any remaining gang members if it looks like the PCs have a clear upper hand over the former templar. The gang members could potentially appear later in the adventure to complicate matters if their losses were not serious, because of the money that their leg of the lyrium smuggling chain represents.

Tavrik will not flee from combat. Desperate for a fix, he fights until slain or subdued. In battle, he could just as easily attack a Bleakwatch gang member as one of the PCs. You could either randomize this or use it to tip the balance of the encounter to increase the dramatic tension of the scene. Stats for Tavrik are located on the next page.

Shesella

Shesella hates everything about Halamshiral and has for as long as she can remember. For her, the place represents poverty, oppression, and, ultimately, failure. As a young woman, she watched her parents' meager basket weaving business collapse, and then watched their relationship and their very lives follow suit. Shesella's outspoken rejection of Halamshiral attracted many of the poor youth of her neighborhood. At first, only elves could identify with her angry laments, but her appeal grew among the disenfranchised and soon she had a small following of rough young men and women who despised their home as much as she did but lacked the means to leave. She dubbed them the Bleakwatch, after their original meeting place atop an abandoned building that looked out over the Ash Quarter.

The Bleakwatch turned their distaste for Halamshiral into an excuse to rob, intimidate, and otherwise harm the community around them, and Shesella has slowly worked out ways to turn some profit from that. Blaen enlisted the Bleakwatch into the Indigo Road because they were small enough to go unnoticed and poor enough that the pittance he pays them seems extravagant. Shesella now makes enough money to leave Halamshiral. Yet, for reasons she cannot explain, she does not depart. She routinely becomes angry with herself over it but takes it out on her underlings.

Tavrik

When the mage he was charged with overseeing was possessed, Tavrik single-handedly defeated the creature she became. The templars counted on him to set an example for the newly initiated and his name was always spoken of in respectful tones. The tug of lyrium was strong on him, though—stronger than on most. Soon he craved more than he should have, often shorting the doses of his new charges to increase his own. When his

Shesella

Abilities (Focuses)	
2	Communication (Deception, Leadership, Persuasion)
1	Constitution
2	Cunning
2	Dexterity (Bows, Light Blades, Stealth)
0	Magic
2	Perception (Empathy)
1	Strength
1	Willpower (Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	18	12	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Shortsword	+4	1d6+3
Crossbow	+4	2d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Disarm and Pierce Armor.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Archery Style (Novice), and Command (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Bows, and Brawling.

Equipment: Crossbow, heavy leather, and shortsword.

Elf Leader of the Bleakwatch Gang.

Tavrik

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	Communication
3	Constitution (Stamina)
1	Cunning (Arcane Lore, Religious Lore)
1	Dexterity (Brawling, Initiative)
0	Magic
2	Perception
3	Strength (Heavy Blades, Intimidation)
–1	Willpower (Faith)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	30	13	7

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+5	2d6+3
Fists	+3	1d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Dual Strike.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Unarmed Style (Novice), and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Brawling, and Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Heavy mail, longsword, and medium shield.

Former Templar, Lyrium Addict.

deeds were discovered, he was cast out, but the cravings never ceased. When he learned of the Indigo Road, Tavrik hunted down the man who claimed to know of it and demanded to be brought to the place he could get more of his precious lyrium. When he arrived, Shesella was eager to sell him some, and from that moment on he would do anything he needed to get more.

Tavrik is rarely sober long enough to realize how far he has fallen, but in those moments the lucidity is nearly too much for him to bear. He would do anything to make things right again, or at least make amends for what he has done to feed his habit, but those wishes always collapse under the weight of his addiction.

Scene 4

Backtracking

Exploration Encounter

Guided by the dwarf, Kynedrin, the heroes return to the destroyed Carta camp to discover more about the carnage that occurred there and the Indigo Road.

If the party rescued Kynedrin either in **Scene 1: The Indigo Road** or **Scene 3: Intervention,** he leads them back to the Carta smugglers' camp outside of Halamshiral. Otherwise, the PCs might have to search the wilderness around the city to locate it, either on behalf of the Bleakwatch gang (if they struck a deal with Shesella) or on their own if they gathered some clues about the Indigo Road from earlier events. Characters with **Perception (Tracking)** could locate the site with a straightforward check or you could play out the search in more detail.

Blaen distrusts nearly everyone in his organization and several of his agents regularly shadow the people he deals with, including the Carta dwarves that supply him. When Blaen's lieutenant, Alizera (see Part 2, Scene 1), discovers that the dwarves had ideas of their own and failed to deliver their lyrium to the Bleakwatch, she adhered to Blaen's orders: kill the dwarves to make an example of them, recover the goods, and deliver them with all haste to Val Royeaux. Blaen is far more concerned with securing his deal with the Purifiers, than with the fate of a few smugglers. The Carta will replace them without a second thought thanks to their dependence on Blaen's distribution network.

Kynedrin was supposed to sit guard duty while his brothers slept but headed into Halamshiral instead. Once he left, Alizera murdered the sleeping dwarves and took the lyrium from its hiding place. She then left with all haste to meet directly with Blaen in Val Royeaux. The scene is brutal in its efficiency and if Kynedrin is with the party he is completely overcome with grief and guilt. When he gets control over his emotions, he swears vengeance for the death of his brothers and asks the PCs for their assistance, offering them the entirety of the lyrium when it is recovered, and a good word among the Carta, which could secure them further work or access to allies within the organization. Kynedrin does exaggerate his influence in the Carta, as well as the funds he has access to, but he is realistic enough to know that he cannot strike at Blaen without the PCs' cooperation.

Searching the Site

The Carta dwarves were masquerading as dwarven merchants and the trio had a wagon laden with all manner of common goods that would not draw any attention as they made their stops in settlements along their route to Halamshiral. The wagon and its horse, along with the trade goods, are still at the campsite. The fact that these items were left behind should be an obvious clue that this was not a mere bandit attack.

A **TN 11 Perception (Tracking)** test around the campsite reveals a single set of footprints entering the camp that do not belong to any of the dwarves. They lead back to a set of horse tracks and an area where a horse was clearly tied off to graze. The hoof prints then lead off to the west at a fast pace. The tracks are all reasonably fresh and were made earlier the same evening as the attack on Kynedrin in Halamshiral.

Kynedrin's brothers, Oswulf and Vengest, are both still in their bedrolls with their throats slit. There are no signs of a struggle and a successful **TN 13 Cunning (Healing)** test shows that both dwarves died of a single wound made by a short blade and inflicted with ruthless precision. If Kynedrin is present, he checks the wagon and points out that the hidden compartment under the floorboards where the lyrium was concealed has been opened and the drugs stolen. Otherwise, the smuggling compartment and tampering are evident if a character searches the wagon and succeeds in a **TN 12 Perception (Searching)** test.

The goods on the wagon are of poor quality and are not particularly valuable, but the wagon and draft horse are in good shape. Taking the wagon in pursuit of Alizera, however, will slow the PCs considerably and Kynedrin balks at the delay if he is with the party. Because of the reckless pace she is setting, Blaen's agent is making no effort to conceal her trail and once her tracks have been located, following her route is not difficult. She only makes camp occasionally, and then only briefly. If the party attempts to keep pace with her they must make successful **TN 15 Dexterity (Riding)** and **TN 15 Constitution (Stamina)** tests each day. Failure of either test means the party begins to lose ground. It will prove even more difficult to overtake her, and if Alizera suspects she is being pursued, she pushes herself to the limits of exhaustion to reach Val Royeaux where she knows Blaen can protect her when she finally collapses from fatigue. Thus, barring some exceptional method that allows the PCs to overtake Alizera, they will not encounter the dwarves' murderer until later in the adventure.

Once the party has searched the camp, review the **Resolution of Part 1** to prepare for the next part of the adventure. After the players have devised a course of action, this break in the action allows for a good stopping point to go over any rules that may have raised questions (or maybe to grab some snacks and refill beverages).

Resolution of Part 1

When the first part of the adventure concludes, the PCs should be aware of the Indigo Road and the smuggling of lyrium as well as the drug's dangerous effects. They should also be aware of the fact that the supply chain from the Carta dwarves ends in Val Royeaux and that a man named Blaen seems to have masterminded the entire enterprise.

Ideally, they are motivated by one of the factions they have already encountered—either the Bleakwatch (who do not want to be cut out of the lucrative smuggling route), or the Carta dwarves (through Kynedrin who wants to avenge his murdered brothers). Alternately, hooks from the characters' histories or their present desire to stop (or participate in) the distribution of lyrium should point them toward Val Royeaux and Blaen.

If they are uncertain about the direction they should head or otherwise missed the clues that point toward Blaen, members of the Bleakwatch or Carta could approach the PCs and, because of their earlier involvement in events, ask them to track down Blaen to make sure he is not cutting them out of his latest business dealing.

PART 2

Blaen & the Big City

Pursuing clues or Blaen's agent from Halamshiral, the party reaches Val Royeaux and discovers that Blaen is not at all difficult to locate after only a small amount of asking around the city. Blaen is actually well regarded in some circles and the PCs get a taste of the nature of "the Game" so popular among the Orlesians. Blaen's position makes him untouchable, and he taunts the players if they confront him about the Indigo Road, eager to draw them into the Game in front of some of his Orlesian acquaintances. At the same time, asking around reveals some of the former chevalier's schemes and hints at his business partners in an upcoming deal.

Lady Sennova, an Orlesian noble, currently favors Blaen and she has agreed to introduce him to Ardal of the Purifiers. The former templar intends to take the entirety of Blaen's latest shipment, distribute it through his organization, and use the funds (as well as some of the product among his soldiers) to gain an upper hand over the Elevated Brotherhood, rivals vying for political control over the region. The fact that the Elevated Brotherhood is led by a mage and employs others in their ranks only adds to Ardal's distaste for the group and is another reason Ardal wants to enhance his warriors with lyrium when friction between the groups escalates to open violence.

With this in mind, rivals of both Lady Sennova and Ardal (particularly Nemmaya, the head of the Elevated Brotherhood) are eager to learn more about Blaen's plans and foil them in some fashion. Although they cannot openly confront Blaen, the party can solicit a patron who can help them gain access to a gala event hosted by Lady Sennova. Blaen and Ardal intend to conduct the sale of the lyrium there and resolve the details of their new supply deal.

Of course, as the party attempts to insert itself into the intricacies of the Orlesian Game, word might reach the ears of Lady Sennova's supporters or other parties interested in seeing the deal succeed. The PCs are confronted by agents bent on putting a stop to them before they can involve themselves further.

Environs: Val Royeaux

As one of the largest cities in all of Thedas, the city of Val Royeaux is an incredible sight to behold. The High Quarter of Halamshiral is a pale shadow of the extravagant architecture

and artistry of Val Royeaux. Its winding streets are crowded with people and vendors and filled with thousands of smells, some familiar and may others strange. Unless a PC was raised in Val Royeaux or a similarly large metropolis (such as Cumberland), the city should evoke awe and wonder. Nearly any good or service is available for a price. Appearance and fashion are as important as function.

Orlesian ambition is apparent in nearly everyone the party deals with and most have an ulterior motive, overt or subtle, in aiding them. The practice of wearing extravagant masks and gloves might also prove unusual to PCs from other regions and also contribute to a sense of unease. Despite the masks, Orlesians are able to readily identify one another, something that could take getting used to for visitors. Nobles have their own unique masks that incorporate their heraldry while their retainers wear masks that denote connection to a particular noble house. Wearing a noble's mask is a crime for commoners, embarrassingly bad form for nobles, and won't stand up to close inspection among the nobility who know each other well, masked or otherwise. This means that PCs somehow stealing or copying a noble's mask buy themselves only the flimsiest of disguises.

The city has neighborhoods for residents and guests of all social strata, from a degree of wealth and opulence the PCs might never even hope to attain down to one of the most squalid, crowded, and depressing alienages in the region. As impressive as the heights of the statues of Andraste and Drakon I is the height of the wall that surrounds the alienage and encloses its 10,000 elven residents.

SCENE 1

Hiding in Plain Sight

ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

The heroes meet Blaen, one of the most notorious lyrium smugglers in Orlais, and must decide how to best handle the former chevalier and his syndicate.

Allow the party time to get its bearings in Val Royeaux (or to get lost amid its streets) but before long they should attempt to track down Blaen. Because of his recent influx of wealth, thanks to the Indigo Road, Blaen has been gaining favor among some of the higher-ranking nobility of the city, and his name is increasingly bandied about. Asking after him in upscale taverns with a **TN 13 Communication (Investigation)** test reveals that he frequents the **Sweetsong Brandy Parlor,** a tavern that low- and high-ranking nobles frequent to engage in the Game, each trying to manipulate and use the others.

If the party makes it clear, or lets slip, that they are looking to accost Blaen (or, if they are accompanied by Kynedrin, the dwarf speaks of vengeance) word quickly reaches Blaen that he is being stalked. He is unconcerned over such threats, however, and he welcomes the potential challenge that the party represents. His ego and recent involvement in the Game leaves him eager to toy with them. A cautious man, though, he does increase the number of guards around him.

Gathering any information about Blaen with a successful **TN 13 Communication (Investigation)** test before locating and confronting him uncovers several facts about the former chevalier. Firstly, that he has recently been seen in the company of Lady Sennova. The two do not appear romantically linked and several sources claim they have a shared business interest of some kind. Also, the two were recently seen sharing a tense meal with the ex-templar, Ardal, head of the Purifiers. Rumor-mongers express interest in learning more about this relationship and may actually offer a small sum of money or a favor to the PCs in exchange for information about Blaen's dealings with Ardal. Anyone who knows about this meeting also knows that such information would be valuable if traded to members of the Elevated Brotherhood, although they are unlikely to share this fact with the party.

Sweetsong Brandy Parlor

Nearly every night Blaen can be found in the Sweetsong Brandy Parlor. This is a decadently-furnished establishment

that caters to a clientele of nobles and hopefuls, all looking to advance their station, garner information about rivals, and ultimately secure more political power in Val Royeaux. Depending on the PCs' appearances and demeanor, they may encounter some difficulty gaining entrance to the exclusive drinking parlor. The establishment employs a small handful of bouncers but they are a token effort as no one expects untoward violence to erupt so openly. Many of the nobles have their own personal bodyguards as well, and the city watch is rarely more than a moment's notice away. A doorman refuses entrance to anyone who does not appear to respect the Orlesian sense of wealth and taste or who appears "rough around the edges" and intent on causing trouble within.

The doorman can do little to actually stop someone determined from entering, but he will send for the city watch not long after he is ignored. It is possible to sweet talk or intimidate him into allowing passage, a **TN 13 Strength (Intimidation)** test, but intimidation will buy the party only a limited amount of time before the city watch arrives. Furthermore, if the PCs bully their way in, they are snubbed by many of the patrons inside who do not want to be seen associating with such gauche individuals, raising the difficulty of any Communication tests attempted by the offending PCs by +2.

If they have not already done so, the characters can attempt to learn about Blaen from the Parlor's patrons with the same test discussed previously. They can also be directed to Blaen, seated at a large table chatting and carousing with various nobles. If he is aware of the PCs' pursuit of him, he orders a round of drinks for them and toasts them from across the room in the hopes of goading them into a conversation that will allow him to gain their measure. Bodyguards sit close to Blaen doing their best to blend into the crowd thanks to the Orlesian custom of masks, but a successful **TN 13 Perception (Empathy)** test highlights their unusual behavior (not conversing or drinking and their watchful postures). If the party is bent on violence, Blaen does everything he can to defuse the situation until he can deal with them in a less public venue, otherwise his bodyguards intervene (along with other nobles' bodyguards who are willing to throw their lot in with him), and he attempts to escape. The city watch is called the moment fighting begins.

Drinking with the Enemy

Given the opportunity, Blaen gladly engages the party in conversation to determine what they have learned about his operation and what their intentions are. If they threaten him with the exposure of his operation he openly laughs in the PCs' faces and tells them that there is too much profit at stake for them to halt the flow of lyrium and warns them that they are in over their heads. He also makes it clear, should they raise any concerns, he does not care about the effects of the drug on its users.

Blaen will toy with the PCs in an effort to tease out as much information as possible, giving away some information of his own in the process. He asks if the PCs are aware that they are trifling with the Carta (to determine if they learned the source of his lyrium) or that they have inserted themselves into the Game with a player such as Lady Sennova (to determine if they are aware of his upcoming deal with the Purifiers). Blaen also does his best to determine if the PCs are working on behalf of someone of if they are out for themselves.

If the party threatens to take over his operation he evaluates how capable they are of doing so. If they killed Shesella and effectively dismantled the Bleakwatch, Blaen treats them with caution and does his best to determine whether or not they have the ambition to usurp his control of the Indigo Road (or if they have the necessary contacts to distribute the lyrium on their own). If he thinks they can be easily controlled, and they seem receptive to dealing the drug, he offers them a chance to "prove their worth." Recent events have led him to distrust his employees and he is worried that something could ruin the deal with Ardal at Lady Sennova's upcoming gala. He asks that they infiltrate the event and prevent anyone from entering the wine cellar during the deal but does not want them to seem affiliated with him in an effort to conceal their role from his enemies. In particular, he is concerned with the Elevated Brotherhood, although he does not reveal this detail. If they agree, either in exchange for a one-time fee or for a potential place in his organization, he tells them to make a crass scene in the Parlor so that other patrons believe he and the party are actually at odds.

If Kynedrin is with the party when they meet Blaen, the furious dwarf is difficult to control and must be physically

restrained or removed from the bar. Once Blaen realizes the party is out for revenge he goes through the same information gathering efforts discussed earlier, but does not offer to work with them and is not receptive to any such offer from the party. Instead, he begins to scheme about how to eliminate them as quickly as possible. The attackers in **Scene 3: Angering the Wrong People** are hired by Blaen in an attempt to prevent them from interfering with his plans with what he thinks of as a foolish exercise in revenge.

Any interaction with Blaen is observed by a spy from the Elevated Brotherhood who has been attempting to determine the relationship between Blaen, Lady Sennova, and Ardal. A **TN 15 Perception (Empathy or Seeing)** test reveals the spy's interest in their conversation. If she is noticed, the spy departs the bar immediately and meets up with a group of escorts to return to Nemmaya to make her report. If they follow the spy the party will run afoul of her escorts. In that case the opposition in **Scene 3: Angering the Wrong People** are agents of the Elevated Brotherhood.

Uninvited Guests

Whether Blaen tips them off by discussing Lady Sennova or he actively tells them about the gala at her manor, the PCs can learn of the upcoming event. Simply asking around about Lady Sennova reveals that the gala is taking place in only two days time and that such events are hotbeds of intrigue and backroom deals. It will be no secret, sources tell the PCs, that if Blaen has any deals planned through Lady Sennova, she would want them to take place under her roof so she can claim a share of any profit to be made and oversee the deal to ensure she is not shortchanged in some way.

It would also be common knowledge that access to the event will be restricted to those with invitations and invitations are not necessarily easy to acquire. Denying someone an invitation can be seen as a grave insult just as easily as not attending certain social events can signify the decline of popularity, favor, and status for nobles. As a result, invitations are sought-after commodities and acquiring them often leads to as many traded favors as a guest might expect to see at the actual event. The PCs will need to acquire an invitation to Lady Sennova's gala in order to pursue Blaen (or to assist him covertly if they reached an arrangement with him). Refer to **Scene 2: Invitation Only** for information on several means of getting the necessary invites.

Adversaries

Fighting in the Sweetsong Brandy Parlor is ill-advised, both because of the potential danger that the party's opposition represents and the social stigma that it will earn them in future dealings with nobles who know of their unseemly behavior.

Blaen has one Orlesian bodyguard for every two PCs, rounded up, but if he has gotten word that they are out for revenge (likely due to Kynedrin) there is one bodyguard per PC. If she was not forced to ride to the point of exhaustion, Alizera is sitting with Blaen and moves to protect him if necessary. Stats for the Orlesian bodyguards are on page 352 and stats for Alizera are at right. Blaen's stats are also found on page 352, but he does his utmost to avoid combat and escape the bar as quickly as possible, preferring to confront the party on his own terms if he must.

In the event that the violence puts other patrons at risk, particularly if spells that affect an indiscriminate area are used in the crowded establishment, other nobles bodyguards join the fray, one per round until there are an additional six involved. The bodyguards fight to subdue their foes so they can be handed over to the city watch and so their employers do not suffer the possible ramifications of killing the potential servants of another noble. If matters spin dangerously out of control, or if the doorman has called for them, the city watch arrives on the tenth round of combat. Stats for the Val Royeaux city guards are found on page 352.

Alizera

Among those who have dealt with Blaen, Alizera is his most feared representative. She might be sent once just to deliver a message that Blaen is unhappy, but no one ever lives to speak of a second encounter with the Chasind woman. Although rumors paint her as a cold-hearted savage who was born to kill, those she calls upon are only more frightened to learn that she is well-mannered and talkative, verging on polite, when she delivers her messages. She is an unusual mix of Chasind and Orlesian, a fact that throws many people off. Often, they are further taken aback when the etiquette falls away with surprising suddenness and the knives come out.

Alizera

	Abilities (Focuses)
2	Communication (Investigation)
2	Constitution
1	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Initiative, Light Blades, Riding, Stealth)
0	Magic
2	Perception (Empathy, Hearing)
1	Strength (Intimidation)
1	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	20	13	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Dagger	+5	1d6+1
Long Bow	+3	1d6+5
Throwing Knife	+5	1d6+2

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Lightning Attack, Seize the Initiative, and Skirmish.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Quick Reflexes (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Bows, Light Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Dagger, light leather, long bow, and throwing knives.

Blaen's Trusted Problem-solver.

Blaen

Abilities (Focuses)
3 Communication (Deception, Etiquette, Persuasion)
1 Constitution
2 Cunning (Cultural Lore, Heraldry, Military Lore)
3 Dexterity (Brawling, Initiative, Riding)
0 Magic
2 Perception
3 Strength (Heavy Blades, Lances)
2 Willpower (Morale, Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
9	30	13	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bastard Sword	+5	2d6+4
Gauntlet	+5	1d3+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Disarm, Mighty Blow, and Taunt.

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Horsemanship (Novice), and Intrigue (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Heavy Blades, Lances, and Light Blades.

Equipment: Bastard sword and light plate.

Indigo Road Mastermind.

Orlesian Bodyguard

Abilities (Focuses)
1 Communication (Etiquette)
2 Constitution (Stamina)
1 Cunning (Healing)
3 Dexterity (Bows, Brawling, Initiative)
0 Magic
3 Perception (Hearing, Searching, Seeing)
3 Strength (Bludgeons, Heavy Blades, Intimidation)
2 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
11	20	14	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+5	2d6+3
Crossbow	+5	2d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Stay Aware and Threaten.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Observation (Novice), and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Bows, Brawling, and Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Crossbow, light mail, light shield, and longsword.

Hired Protection.

Elevated Brotherhood Spy

Abilities (Focuses)
3 Communication (Deception, Disguise, Persuasion, Seduction)
0 Constitution
2 Cunning (Arcane Lore, Cultural Lore)
3 Dexterity (Legerdmain, Lock Picking, Stealth)
0 Magic
3 Perception (Empathy, Hearing, Tracking)
0 Strength
0 Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	18	13	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Dagger	+3	1d6+1
Fists	+3	1d3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Skirmish and Taunt.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice) and Scouting (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Light Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Dagger and light leather.

Spy.

Val Royeaux City Guard

Abilities (Focuses)
2 Communication
3 Constitution (Running, Stamina)
0 Cunning
3 Dexterity (Bows, Brawling)
0 Magic
2 Perception (Searching, Seeing)
4 Strength (Bludgeons, Polearms, Intimidation)
2 Willpower (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
9	22	13	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Halberd	+6	2d6+7
Mace	+6	2d6+4
Crossbow	+5	2d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance and Mighty Blow.

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman) and Pole Weapon Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Bows, Brawling, and Polearms.

Equipment: Crossbow, light plate, halberd, and mace.

The Law.

Blaen

Blaen is a former chevalier but despite that disgrace has managed to worm his way back into the good graces of a handful of Orlesian nobles. His adventuring days, although short-lived, proved rich in contacts with various shady individuals. Like Blaen, they were willing to resort to anything to make a few more coins, and the ex-chevalier was excellent at leading the disparate groups of criminals without them even realizing they were being led, or that they were all being led in the same direction. When his associates in the Carta proved able to provide him with a steady stream of lyrium, Blaen saw the value of selling it as a drug. He set plans in motion to create a pipeline to get the illicit substance into the hands of more users. To Blaen, more users means more money.

Blaen enjoys the pretense of honor, manners, and respect, but he lacks in them all and is always the quickest to cast them aside when it means even a marginal advantage for himself. After all, only the winner tells the tale of who was and was not honorable on the field of battle. The newfound respect he has begun receiving in Val Royeaux owes much to his lyrium smuggling and the wealth it brings him. As a result, he protects these two things ferociously and is always looking for more, be it further distribution or more profit. Blaen never forgets slights against him and there is no greater slight in his mind than that of costing him money.

SCENE 2

Invitation Only

ROLEPLAYING OR COMBAT ENCOUNTER

The heroes need access to an exclusive party to continue to reveal the dangers of the Indigo Road and its major participants. This means acquiring an invitation, by any means necessary.

In order to gain access to the gala hosted by Lady Sennova, the party will need to produce invitations. The most straightforward means of doing so are soliciting a patron to sponsor their invitation, forging an invitation, or waylaying other party-goers and taking their invitations. Alternately, they can attempt to break into the manor during the party. This is a much riskier proposition, but that option is detailed in the sidebar **Party Crashers** at the start of **Part 3: Who Wants to Party?.**

These methods cover the most likely efforts a party might attempt, but they are certainly not exhaustive. Creative players develop creative solutions, but you should not declare that those unexpected plans automatically fail. Instead, use these methods as guidelines for setting similar difficulties and challenges and allow the PCs the opportunity to succeed and reward their extraordinary efforts with positive dice modifiers or additional benefits in the third part of the adventure as appropriate.

Based on their approach and who the party seeks out to track down invitations, an opportunity to run afoul of rivals likely presents itself as discussed in **Scene 3: Angering the Wrong People.** Insert that scene at an appropriate, or potentially inopportune, moment to complicate the PCs' lives and demonstrate that their activities are not taking place in a vacuum and that other factions are also making an effort to support or interfere with Blaen's scheme.

Party Favors

The practice of trading invitations for favors is actually quite common, if not openly recognized as acceptable etiquette. Nobles often employ this practice when they want to undertake a risky action against a rival while maintaining plausible deniability. For instance, an invited noble might wish to steal a treasured object from a rival household but getting caught in the act would deal a terrible blow to their social standing. She would send someone else with her invitation and, if her proxy is caught in the act, claim the invitation was stolen and, to add insult to injury, insist her rival's event was so insignificant that she had forgotten the date.

A character can track down such an opportunity with a **TN 15 Communication (Etiquette)** test**.** In exchange for each invitation the patron will ask a "favor" of the PC. Likely favors include the theft of a coveted mask, delivering a humiliating insult to a rival in front of a crowd, seeing to it that the food and drink are spoiled or unappetizing, ruining the musicians' performance, and sowing discord between romantic partners. These are not limitations as much as starting points. The Game is about appearances as much as it is about outright treachery, so a dead rat discovered in the roast turkey could serve as a crueler twist of the knife than an actual twisting of a knife.

The party can opt to undertake fewer services and attempt to secure additional invitations from other sources. Failing to carry out services should come with consequences. Make it clear to the party that they will make a powerful enemy of any noble who is denied their end of the deal.

Theft

Outright theft of the required invitations, either through a strong-arm approach or more stealthy means, can secure invitations for the party but the effort must likely take place the night of the event as guests make their way to Lady Sennova's manor. As the wealthiest nobles arrive in carriages, others will approach on foot. The streets in the exclusive neighborhood around the manor are well lit and many people will be traveling with bodyguards among their entourages.

To pilfer an invitation from someone requires a **TN 15 Dexterity (Legerdemain)** test**,** assuming the thief knows where the target has tucked away his invitation. This requires stalking the target and succeeding in a **TN 13 Perception (Seeing)** test**.** Unless the PC has also made a **TN 15 Dexterity (Stealth)** test to stay out of sight or a **TN 13 Communication (Disguise)** test to blend in with the people moving on the streets, the target's bodyguards suspect that something is afoot which raises the **Dexterity (Legerdemain)** test TN to 17. If a would-be thief is noticed trying to steal an invitation, the victim's escorts will attack.

A less elegant approach is strong-arm robbery—a **TN 15 Strength (Intimidation)** test is enough to get a noble to surrender an invitation, but the moment the PC is out of sight the city watch will be called and the gatekeepers of the party will be alerted to the stolen invitation, potentially complicating matters when the PCs attempt to enter the party. If the test fails, the noble's bodyguards leap to her defense.

Creating Forgeries

In order to forge invitations, the PCs must have an original to work from, secured through one of the other means described or some other creative means. A character must then identify the type of parchment and ink used in the creation of the original with a **TN 13 Cunning (Evaluation)** test, and purchase the necessary materials (approximately 2 gp per invitation to be duplicated). Each invitation takes two hours to create but the PC does not make a **Dexterity (Calligraphy)** test until the invitation is presented at the gala in **Part 3: Who Wants to Party?** If the character rushes the creation of an invitation, reducing the time required to an hour, apply a –2 penalty to the roll when that invitation is presented for inspection. Details of how to handle the inspection of forged invitations is discussed in **Scene 1 of Part 3**.

Adversaries

Assume that in situations that lead to combat the party will be confronted by one Orlesian bodyguard for every invitation at stake. For example, if the party waylays a single noble en route to the gala one escort accompanies her, whereas attempting to halt an entire throng of seven partygoers leads to seven members of their entourage leaping to their defense. Worse, unless they are lured away from the main thoroughfares through some means, the well-lit and well-patrolled streets mean that the city watch arrives to investigate in only two or three minutes.

Stats for the Orlesian bodyguards and the Val Royeaux city guards are located on page 352.

Hit Squad Member

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	Communication (Deception, Disguise)
2	Constitution (Running)
1	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Bows, Staves, Stealth)
0	Magic
2	Perception (Hearing, Seeing, Tracking)
3	Strength (Climbing)
1	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	24	13	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Morningstar	+5	1d6+6
Short Bow	+5	1d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Lethal Blow and Pierce Armor.

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

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Bows, and Staves.

Equipment: Heavy leather, morningstar, and short bow.

Hired Killers

Scene 3

Angering the Wrong People

Combat Encounter

The heroes learn the dangers of investigating the Indigo Road as a group of assassins seeks to eliminate them.

As the party navigates the dangerous waters of the Game and the plans of Blaen, Lady Sennova, and the other factions that all have a vested interest in controlling or shutting down the underground lyrium trade, they are almost guaranteed to make an enemy of at least one group. This scene is intended to be inserted at a moment when the party is exposed or made some misstep in their pursuit of Blaen or, if they have sided with him, in support of his efforts. You will need to adjust the encounter slightly based on which faction is aligned against the party. If more than one is appropriate, select the one that has the deepest ties to the party since the start of the adventure. For example, if both the Bleakwatch and the Carta have reasons to work against the PCs but the party dealt Lendrid a humiliating defeat but left him alive, then assume he has led a group of Bleakwatch members in pursuit of his vendetta against the party.

The encounter occurs at an inconvenient time, ideally when the PCs are pursuing an objective of their own, and their attackers have the element of surprise if possible. Suggested moments include when the party has acquired their invita-

tions and are making their way to the gala (where they cannot arrive covered in their enemies' blood!), when they are negotiating with a noble for one or more invitations (leaving them to defend the noble as well as themselves), or when they have bedded down for the night at an inn.

Adversaries

The opposition is unusual in this encounter in that their appearance varies based on who they represent, but it is expedient to use the same stats regardless of who they represent. Instead, the leader of the hit squad will be different depending on who sent them. Stats for the hit squad members can be found on the facing page Refer to **Who's in Charge** to determine who leads the group.

Resolution of Part 2

By the end of this part of the adventure, the party should be aware that Blaen is the linchpin of the entire smuggling operation and should have decided to either act against him or work toward his interests for their own gain. Either way, they should realize that in order to disrupt or protect Blaen's distribution plan, they need to attend Lady Sennova's event. They should have a plan in place for getting into the gala beyond just storming in ready for battle. If that is the approach the party seems to be favoring, dissuade them with subtle (or not-so-subtle) hints regarding the caliber of security and the quality of the Val Royeaux city guards.

The PCs should also be fully aware of all of the interested parties with regard to the lyrium trade. In the final part of the adventure, recognizing the various factions and knowing their motivations will be a key asset to dealing with each of them. If they have missed out on any key pieces of information, use **Scene 3: Angering the Wrong People** to provide them with an extra clue or two or even a prisoner to interrogate who can fill in some of the blanks.

Part 3

Who Wants to Party?

In an effort to ruin Blaen's business deal with Ardal and the Purifiers, or possibly in defense of the ex-chevalier to ensure the transaction proceeds as intended, the party attends a gala event hosted by Lady Sennova at her Val Royeaux manor. Such events are commonplace among Orlesian nobility and the practice of wearing masks is sure to complicate matters as much as it allows the party easier access than they would otherwise have. Just the same, they are expected to arrive with invitations in hand. Other means of infiltration are possible, as discussed in the sidebar **Party Crashers,** but they are a risky proposition.

Once inside, the PCs can assess the situation and try to spot their rivals in the crowded halls. As they mingle, opportunities arise for them to hamper their opposition as well as make the acquaintance of members of the Orlesian nobility that they would likely never otherwise encounter. If the PCs secured one or more invitations in return for a favor of underhanded behavior, this is the time to execute those plans. Even

Who's In Charge

By the time the PCs reach Val Royeaux, they have more than likely made some enemies in pursuit of their goals. The Hit Squad Member statistics on the facing page should be used for the main body of thugs attacking the PCs. Who's leading them depends on who's making an effort to keep them out of Lady Sennova's gala, or sending around some payback for their earlier meddling.

Bleakwatch

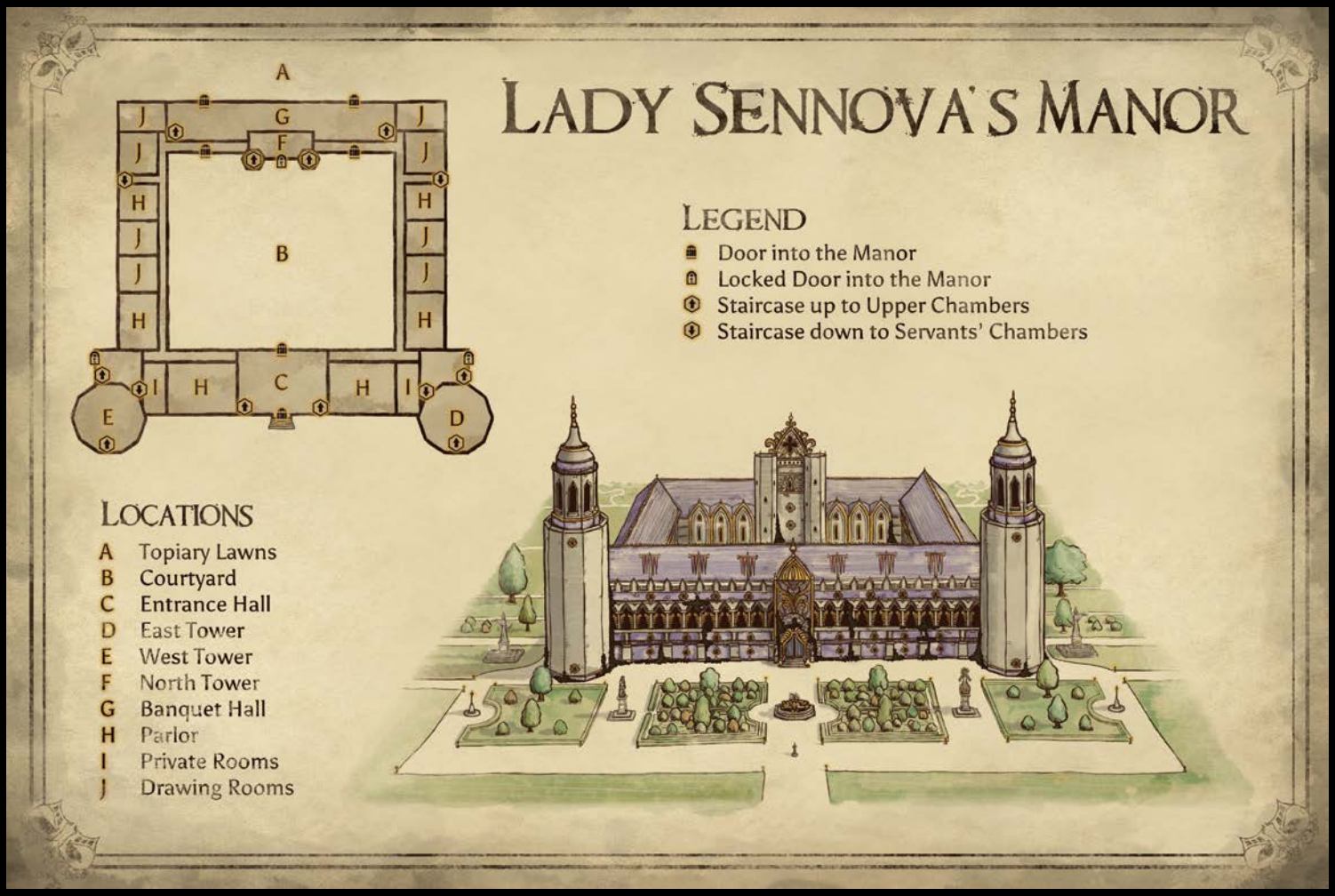
If they expect to be cut out of the Indigo Road smuggling operation, the Bleakwatch use contacts in the Val Royeaux alienage to locate the characters. Local ruffians are led by Lendrid, assuming he is still alive. If he is not, then Shesella herself takes charge of the payback effort. If both high-ranking members of the Bleakwatch have been killed, assume that a new member has assumed leadership of the gang and use Shesella's stats to represent him or her. A Bleakwatch hit squad is focused on punishing the characters for meddling and proving the gang's continued value to Blaen. They will be made up of a mixture of elves from the alienage and other local hoods from low class human neighborhoods in the city.

The Carta & Blaen

In the event that Blaen is concerned with the party's efforts and thinks that eliminating them is his best option, he uses his Carta contacts to locate the kinds of killers he needs for the job. The group is made up of dwarves, with several humans working with them, who have masqueraded as tradesfolk in Val Royeaux (but who mainly work as hired muscle for the least subtle of the city's nobility). Blaen wants reliable confirmation of their work, though, and sends Alizera to lead the Carta team. If she has been eliminated from the adventure somehow, Blaen nominates another of his most trusted agents—substitute one of Blaen's duelists as the group's leader. Stats for the duelist are located in **on page 359.**

The Elevated Brotherhood

If the party is working with Blaen and was observed making a deal with him at the Sweetsong Brandy Parlor by the Elevated Brotherhood spy, the group is concerned enough to send some of their members to deal with the party. It is also possible that **Scene 3: Angering the Wrong People** occurs when the party attempts to tail the spy and runs afoul of the group he was going to meet. In either case, they are led by an Elevated Brotherhood mage who could present a considerable danger to the party. If you feel they are not up to the challenge of the mage and his henchmen, consider reducing the number of hit squad members with him. Their goal is to learn what kind of deal Blaen is making with Ardal, but feel they only need to take a single party member alive in order to do so unless they are convinced otherwise. You can find statistics for the Elevated Brotherhood mage on page 360.



if they had not made any such deals, certain disruptions could provide ideal distractions for the characters to sneak away to the wine cellar where Blaen's meeting with Ardal takes place.

Disrupting the meeting, or standing watch against disruption, leads to a complicated stand-off and probably a complicated melee as members of various factions with a stake in the lyrium trade all make a play for the goods, the money, or even just to make a showing to prove they deserve to be involved in the Indigo Road's expansion. Worse, unless the PCs found a means to head them off in the party, the Elevated Brotherhood arrives to strike a blow against the Purifiers.

When the confusion and combat finally draw to a close, it is left to the victors to divide the spoils and agree upon what becomes of the lyrium trade in the region. The party has likely earned some potential allies and almost certainly some powerful enemies. It is left to them to decide what steps to take next.

Environs: Lady Sennova's Manor

A model of Orlesian extravagance, even among the opulent manors of Val Royeaux, Lady Sennova's manor is remarkably well appointed. Stunning details are found in every room, from hand-carved baseboards of rare woods to etched copper ceilings. Impressive works of art are displayed along most of the hallways where servants continually offer trays of delicacies and flutes of fine wines. Guests admire her good taste, but her rivals do not hesitate to murmur their jealousy in throngs of out-of-favor nobility.

There are a half-dozen conversation parlors where guests congregate to exchange stories and gossip as well as engage in battles of wit, some friendly, others barely veiled threats, and all part of the Game. A long, tiled banquet hall has been converted into a dance floor and a wooden stage has been erected at one end where a band plays a variety of popular Orlesian music interspersed with foreign music to show off Lady Sennova's worldly tastes. A balcony allows guests to take in the dancing and music from above but also features small tables where food and drink are continuously served. The dance floor is flanked by archways that allow the night's cool breezes into the hall and open onto a perfectly manicured lawn surrounded by a garden path that winds among seemingly impossible topiary creations.

SCENE 1

Making the Rounds

ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

The heroes must navigate one of the most perilous and danger-filled places they've yet encountered...an Orlesian high society party.

Party Crashers

The party may attempt to enter the manor without invitations. Lady Sennova has not attained her extraordinary status through carelessness when it comes to the Game. She is very aware that her major social events cement her position as an elite among elites but also expose her to potential dangers and embarrassments. In addition to her gatekeepers inspecting invites at the front of the manor, she has hired members of the city watch to patrol the grounds and stand watch at the manor's other entrances, including the servants' entrance. These guards are delicate in dealing with anyone who strays across their path at first, offering to escort those they find to the front gate where they can display an invitation, but if it becomes clear that no invitation will be forthcoming the guards do not hesitate to resort to force.

Direct confrontation to entire the manor is a losing proposition. The guards hired by Lady Sennova do not hesitate to call upon their "on duty" brethren patrolling the nearby streets and an incident on the grounds or amid the party-goers is guaranteed to leave the party overwhelmed, taken prisoner, or worse.

A combination of stealth and breaking-and-entering stands a marginally better chance of success. Sneaking past the patrols calls for a **TN 17 Dexterity (Stealth)** test to reach a potential entry point and then a **TN 19 Dexterity (Lock Picking)** test to bypass the locks and latches securing the door or window. Depending on the point of entry, guests who see a PC entering through a window or other unexpected avenue might call for guards or, at the very least, allow word to get around that the offending intruder is an outsider to be snubbed and spoken ill of throughout the event (and calling a great deal of attention to the character).

Upon arrival, guests are expected to present their invitation at the front gate. One of Lady Sennova's servants inspects each one as he greets visitors, while several guards stand ready nearby. Bearers of authentic invitations have no cause for concern and are allowed access to the manor without delay. When a forgery is presented, however, the forger (not the possessor of the forgery) must make a **Dexterity (Calligraphy)** test opposed by the manor servant's **Cunning (Cultural Lore)** to see how well it holds up to scrutiny. Remember to modify the roll by –2 if the forgery was rushed. If a fake is detected, the servant politely but firmly refuses entry and the guards arrive at his side if he is forced to repeat his request.

When the PCs enter the manor, allow them time to take in the scene, get the lay of the place, and interact with some of the party-goers. The number of masks makes it difficult to identify people and, at times, difficult to keep track of an individual moving through the crowd. The masks can also lead to mistaken identities that could complicate the PCs' plans in a variety of ways as the gala goes on and the party tries to determine where Blaen and his friends (and enemies) might be. In order to locate Blaen, the party must succeed in a TN 13 advanced test with a threshold of 15 and using **Communication (Investigation)** or Perception (Seeing or Hearing). Each test requires 15 minutes and each failure leads to a complication as detailed in **Awkward Moments and Social Graces.** Track the amount of time the party requires to complete the test as it affects events in **Scene 2: Making the Move.**

If the party is there in support of Blaen, the advanced test is to locate members of the Elevated Brotherhood. Increase the TN to 15 due to the fact that the PCs do not know precisely for whom they are looking, unless their run-in in Part 2 was with some of the group's members and the party managed to interrogate or otherwise gather some information about them.

Awkward Moments & Social Graces

Anytime the PCs fail in their advanced test, it creates a moment of tension as the characters commits some social blunder, reveals a bit too much information, or simply stares too hard at the wrong person. Although the incident can simply be treated as a failure and the advanced test continues, creating details and calling for resolution of the situation develops the scene further and calls attention to the fact that some characters are out of their element when it comes to dealing with Orlesian high society, and also that other characters fit right in!

Here are just a few suggestions of complications:

- The PC's gaze lingered too long on someone on the dance floor. The dancer is intrigued but his or her partner is outraged.
- A pointed question draws the PC into a tedious academic debate about the nature of identity in a parlor full of scholars.
- A PCs action draws the attention of a noble who sends a servant to shadow them, hoping they are engaged in some covert activity the noble can discover and use to advantage. The noble isn't involved with the lyrium trade, Blaen, or anything else going on tonight—they're simply fishing for secrets.
- If a PC is wearing a copy of a noble's mask and doing a skillful job of impersonating them, they may be approached by allies, suitors, or rivals seeking to engage the person whose identity they have stolen.

You might require roleplaying to resolve the complication or an appropriate test. If the complication is not resolved, the PC cannot make a roll in the next round of the advanced test to reveal Blaen (or his enemies).

Repaying a Favor

If the party agreed to perform favors to secure invitations they must resolve those actions during the course of the advanced test. As with **Awkward Moments and Social Graces** the favors can be resolved through roleplaying or appropriate skill tests. While a character is attempting to pay off a favor, however, he or she cannot contribute to the advanced test.

Failed efforts might draw unwanted attention from Lady Sennova's guards, but successes could create useful distrac-

tions to get close to Blaen or members of the Elevated Brotherhood if the party has managed to identify them in time.

Across a Crowded Room

The way events play out, particularly leading into **Scene 2: Making the Move,** hinges on the speed with which the party completes the advanced test. The quicker they identify their quarry, the more options they have available to them.

If it only takes the party an hour or less to locate Blaen (or the the Elevated Brotherhood agents) then they have spotted their opposition before their opposition has spotted them. It is apparent to the PCs that Blaen is headed for a wine cellar entrance and they can beat him there and conceal themselves in the cellar before he arrives, allowing them to secure the element of surprise. If they are pursuing the Elevated Brotherhood they can shadow the group as it descends into the cellar, allowing the PCs to attack them from behind and surprise their enemies.

If it takes more than one hour, but less than two, the PCs identify their chosen target but have also been identified. It is apparent that the meeting will take place in the wine cellar but the Elevated Brotherhood has placed two guards at the door to keep anyone from entering. (Use the Elevated Brotherhood Agent stats found on page 359) Because the door is in the vicinity of the party, open conflict could lead to larger problems if Lady Sennova's guards become involved.

If it takes more than two hours for the PCs to determine identities, Blaen is already in the wine cellar, along with Ardal and his soldiers, and combat will have just erupted as the Elevated Brotherhood attacks. The noise draws the party's attention to the wine cellar but they arrive with the battle already joined making it difficult to determine sides or who is winning let alone attempt to negotiate a deal of some sort.

Lady Sennova

Lady Sennova
Abilities (Focuses)
Communication 4 (Deception, Etiquette, Persuasion, Seduction), **Constitution** 0, **Cunning** 3 (Cultural Lore, Historical Lore, Musical Lore), **Dexterity** 1, **Magic** 0, **Perception** 3 (Empathy, Hearing), **Strength** 0, **Willpower** 2
Orlesian Noble.

Manor Servant
Abilities (Focuses)
Communication 3 (Etiquette, Persuasion), **Constitution** 0, **Cunning** 2 (Cultural Lore, Heraldry), **Dexterity** 1 **Magic** 0, **Perception** 2 (Empathy, Smelling), **Strength** 1, **Willpower** 1 (Self-Discipline)
Servants of the Lady.

Lady Sennova

Lady Sennova excels at the Game and her reputation, especially among foes, is one of grudgingly offered respect. One of the reasons behind her success is her willingness to take the unexpected risks from which other nobles would shrink. Her most recent risk is involving herself with Blaen and his lyrium. The same goes for Blaen. Out of favor as an ex-chevalier, he would normally be untouchable to a noble of her standing, but by associating, even loosely, with him Lady Sennova troubles

Blaen's Duelists

Abilities (Focuses)
2 — Communication (Etiquette, Persuasion)
2 — Constitution
1 — Cunning
4 — Dexterity (Acrobatics, Dueling, Initiative, Light Blades)
0 — Magic
2 — Perception (Seeing)
2 — Strength (Intimidation, Jumping)
2 — Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
14	22	14	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Rapier	+6	1d6+5
Main Gauche	+6	1d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Lightning Attack, Pierce Armor, and Skirmish.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Dual Weapon Style (Novice), and Duelist Talent (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Dueling Weapons, Light Blades.

Equipment: Light leather, main gauche, and rapier.

Henchmen

Elevated Brotherhood Agent

Abilities (Focuses)
1 — Communication (Investigation)
2 — Constitution (Running, Stamina)
1 — Cunning (Arcane Lore, Research)
3 — Dexterity (Bows)
0 — Magic
2 — Perception
3 — Strength (Might, Spears)
2 — Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	24	16	7

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Spear	+5	1d6+6
Long Bow	+5	1d6+5

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance and Pierce Armor.

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

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Spears.

Equipment: Heavy mail, heavy shield, long bow, and spear.

Magic Supremacists

those who would like to see her fall through confusion alone. Meanwhile, nobles of lower standing fall in line with her as a "trend-setter" by also associating with Blaen, creating the impression of support for her behavior.

Despite it all, Lady Sennova could cast aside Blaen without a moment's thought. She regards nearly everyone as a tool with a limited lifespan. For now, Blaen entertains her as an interesting distraction that could prove quite profitable if her introduction of Ardal, another of her entertaining curiosities, proves fruitful. If not, she will be looking for a new amusement in short order.

Scene 2

Making the Move

Combat Encounter

Beneath Lady Sennova's manor, the heroes face down the factions in the Indigo Road. What happens in the shadows of Halamshiral could make ripples across all of Thedas.

Blaen has arranged to meet Ardal in the wine cellar of Lady Sennova's manor and both men have brought security to protect their interests, be it Blaen's lyrium or Ardal's money. And, unless the party has already intervened, agents of the Elevated Brotherhood crash the exchange to prevent the Purifiers from receiving the drug and establishing a connection to get more. When the party arrives, based on the timing established in **Scene 1: Making the Rounds,** there might be time to either take up ambush positions or get involved in the negotiations. If they arrive too late, or when their negotiations are ready to give way to conflict, the members of the Elevated Brotherhood arrive and they are not interested in anything but destroying the drugs and shattering any chance for the Purifiers to acquire a supplier.

Much of what takes place hinges on whether or not the party works for or against Blaen. If they are working for him, Ardal's troops are unnerved by the appearance of the PCs but negotiations can proceed normally until the Elevated Brotherhood arrives. When that happens, Blaen's agents take the opportunity to strike a few blows against the PCs as they believe that Blaen intends to replace them with the newcomers. If the party is aligned against Blaen, matters quickly become complicated. The Purifiers are there to establish regular delivery of lyrium for their own use as well as distribution so, if the PCs are looking to take the route from Blaen, they need to convince Ardal that they can handle the task, and Blaen is not likely to sit idly by as they make their sales pitch. Otherwise, if the party intends to put a stop to the deal and prevent further trade, the Purifiers see them as a problem and join forces with Blaen in battle, until the Elevated Brotherhood arrives.

When the Elevated Brotherhood makes their appearance, Ardal leaps to the conclusion that he suspected from the beginning, the meeting was a set up and that Blaen is in league with the Brotherhood. The Purifiers then turn on everyone, except the PCs if they had already made a case for creating their own smuggling route for Ardal's organization.

Elevated Brotherhood Mage

Abilities (Focuses)	
2	Communication (Investigation, Leadership)
1	Constitution
3	Cunning (Arcane Lore, Historical Lore, Research)
3	Dexterity
3	Magic (Arcane Lance, Entropy)
2	Perception (Searching)
0	Strength
3	Willpower (Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	20	13	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Quarterstaff	+3	1d6+1

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Mana Shield.

Talents: Command (Novice), Lore (Novice), Entropy Magic (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling and Staves.

Spells: Arcane Bolt, Drain Life, Rock Armor, and Weakness.

Equipment: Quarterstaff.

Mage.

Purifier Agents

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
2	Constitution (Stamina)
1	Cunning
1	Dexterity
2	Magic
1	Perception
3	Strength (Heavy Blades, Intimidation)
1	Willpower (Faith, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
9	22	11	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+5	2d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone, Mighty Blow, Skirmish.

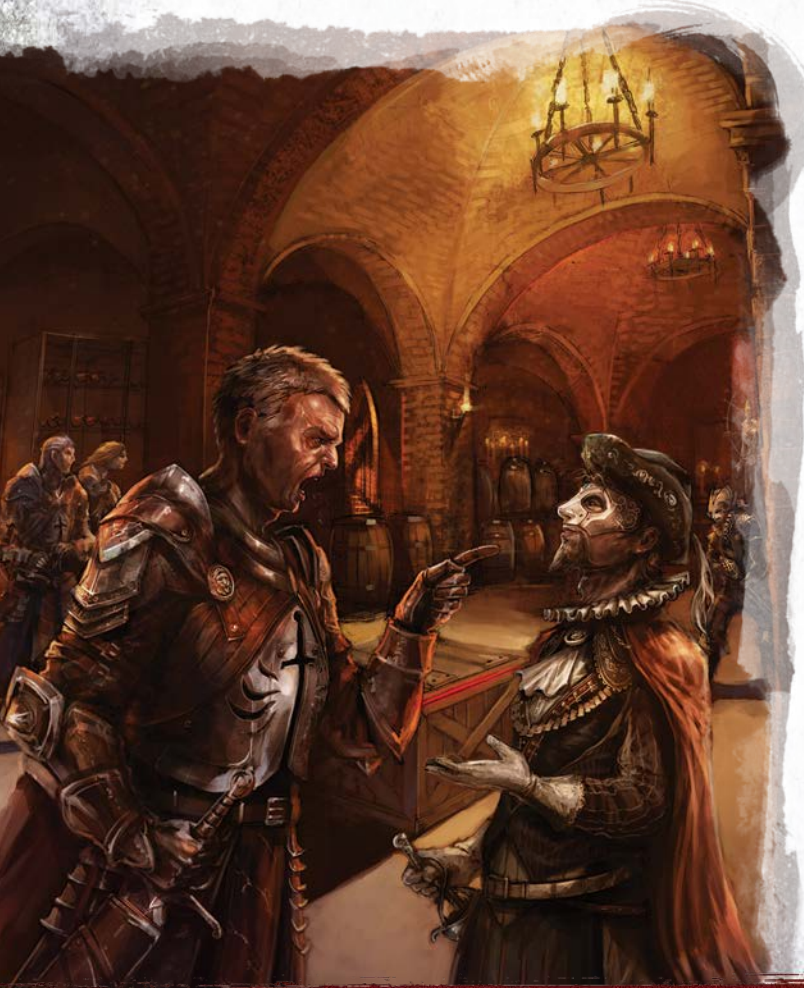
Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Novice)

Templar Training: While not full blown members of the Templar specialization, frequent use of lyrium and training from the Templar Order gives the Purifiers a +1 bonus to resist the effects of spells and other magical effects.

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bludgeons, Heavy Blades, Light Blades

Equipment: Light Mail, Longsword

Ardal's Henchmen.



The battle should quickly develop into a wild free-for-all as the gala continues in the manor above. During the chaos of battle, allegiances could very easily shift as deals are struck over the ring of clashing blades. Any of the involved factions might be willing to align themselves with the PCs provided it supports their goals and interests. Even the Elevated Brotherhood is not going to turn away from the enemies of their enemies, particularly if they see a mage among the PCs.

Blaen is not too proud to flee if things go badly for him. So long as there are members of the Brotherhood still alive, Ardal will not retreat and fights to the death. The reverse is true for the Brotherhood; they will only depart the battle if they have managed to slay Ardal. Once the combat has wound down and the last two parties are standing, proceed to **Scene 3: Making the Best of It.**

Adversaries

Blaen is accompanied by Alizera, if she is still alive, and two of his duelists. There are three of the Purifiers present in addition to Ardal. An Elevated Brotherhood Mage along with five Elevated Brotherhood agents mount their attack on the meeting if the party has not already dealt with them in some way during the gala.

Ardal

Ardal is a man of faith, when it suits him. His distaste for magic does not stem from fear so much as jealousy. Ardal

believes that strength should rule over weaknesses and that those in power should be rewarded for taking on the mantle of leadership. To him, magic is a strength that he cannot possess, and therefore he must destroy it or at least those who can wield its power, to demonstrate his superiority and his right to lead.

Whenever possible, he casts his actions in a light that compares him to the most faithful followers of the Chantry, but there are darker moments when he resorts to the simple philosophy of the ends justifying the means. Such is the case with the lyrium. Ardal sees the opportunity to secure a quick road to power and a means to defeat the Elevated Brotherhood once and for all. He also sees that a group of people addicted to lyrium, with him as their supplier, puts him in an even more powerful position and he will do whatever it takes to realize this vision.

Scene 3

Making the Best of It

Roleplaying Encounter

As the dust from the final confrontation with Blaen and the Purifiers settles, the heroes need to decide how to deal with what's left.

If the party is overwhelmed in combat, it is unlikely that whichever faction emerges victorious is going to murder them outright. Instead, they are likely to put the party in their debt or, at least, give them the option of living to pay off that debt. Otherwise, the last faction still alive attempts to bargain with the PCs to achieve their ends. Blaen still seeks to grow his distribution network, Ardal wants to buy and sell lyrium, and the Elevated Brotherhood wants to work against Ardal's ends and the Purifiers in general.

In the event the party has defeated or driven off everyone else involved, Lady Sennova makes an appearance. (There's no reason she might not anyway, once the PCs have worked out a deal with one of the factions, for that matter, as she might see an opportunity there too.) If there has been a great deal of damage done to the wine cellar she will inform the party that they are now in her debt. She is impressed with their abilities, however, from infiltrating her event to disrupting a major deal between significant factions, and is willing to overlook the damage done provided the PCs are available to "conduct business" for her. She is interested in the lyrium but not so much that she is willing to dirty her own hands with distribution. If the party is unwilling to do the dirty work for her, she instead insists on "collecting the small sum of money left behind on the cellar floor," meaning the money brought by Ardal to pay for the drug.

It is up to the PCs whether or not to deal with Lady Sennova in the future. She is very wealthy, and very well connected, but her reputation for not tolerating failure and her treatment of everyone contingent on their usefulness might give them pause. Should they attempt to leave with the lyrium, the money, and no arrangement of further work, Lady Sennova smiles politely, allows them to head upstairs, and then calls her guards to take them to the city watch for murder and dealing in dangerous substances.

Ardal

Abilities (Focuses)
3 — Communication (Leadership)
3 — Constitution
1 — Cunning (Arcane Lore, Religious Lore)
1 — Dexterity (Initiative)
0 — Magic
2 — Perception
4 — Strength (Bludgeons, Heavy Blades, Intimidation, Might)
3 — Willpower (Faith)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
7	32	11	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Two-handed Sword	+6	3d6+4
Mace	+6	2d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone, Mighty Blow, and Threaten.

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Command (Novice), and Two-Hander Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Brawling, and Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Light plate, mace, and two-handed sword.

Leader of the Purifiers.

Aftermath

As the adventure concludes, the PCs should have made more than a few enemies among the factions involved and perhaps found one potential ally as well. Unless things went terribly awry in the wine cellar, the party is still welcome in Val Royeaux, if perhaps not in Lady Sennova's manor. If Blaen's plans were spoiled but he lived, he is not the sort to hunt down his foes for vengeance alone—there must be profit involved. The Carta and the Bleakwatch are an entirely different matter, and while those groups are motivated by profit, they also run on reputations for dealing harshly with those who cross them.

Continued Involvement

The knowledge of smuggling routes like the Indigo Road can open the eyes of the party to the dangers, or the possibilities, of lyrium in the world. Based on how they handled the drug in the adventure, they might undertake other efforts (or be asked to by leaders and influential forces in other regions) to ferret out smugglers of the drug and end their illicit trade. It is also possible that they involve themselves further in the trade, escorting smugglers or becoming smugglers themselves. Blaen's attempt to open new markets for the drug stood to make him an immense sum of money and some characters might not find themselves able to say no to such wealth and power. Of course, the Carta is the source of Blaen's lyrium,

and they know they have a stranglehold on buyers, so more and more of the profits will begin to flow back to them. Were there another means of sourcing the lyrium, there would be even greater profits available... But the Carta would take serious action against anyone who sought to compete with them.

APPENDIX

Organizations

This appendix presents key organizations and their game stats in the event you wish to use them further during the course of your campaign. At the end of this adventure, you may wish to modify the stat blocks for the three factions to reflect how the PCs' actions affected them.

The Bleakwatch

Although they are little more than the dominant band of thugs in Halamshiral, the Bleakwatch have secured a lucrative opportunity thanks to Blaen. The gang takes the lyrium smuggled to them by the Carta and, after keeping their own cut to distribute to the small but growing handful of local users, passes the drug on to Val Royeaux via caravan travelers who claim to be visiting family members in the Val Royeaux alienage. The members of the Bleakwatch have never had so much income from their operations before and they believe Shesella is the reason for this success. The gang's leader knows that everything is contingent on Blaen and the Carta and she is always on edge that something could disrupt this new prosperity.

The Bleakwatch

Abilities (Focuses)	
Might	1
Wealth	2 (Lyrium)
Influence	3 (Elves)
Intrigue	1 (Indigo Road)
Magic	0

Combat Ratings		
Structure	Stability	Scope
2	21	Local

The Purifiers

Founded by several hardline templars, over time the Purifiers have become more of a political cause that seeks to establish its members in positions of leadership in settlements north of Val Royeaux. They hold the Chantry and its teachings in high regard, but ultimately feel that religion is not enough to govern with and that a strong hand must lead the people so that they can worship when their work is done. Despite their sometimes-rough methods, the Purifiers deliver results. For example, stolen property is located and returned, but the thieves are sometimes left hanging where they were found, or a cheating merchant might be forced to pay money back to the community he has been bilking with his crooked scale before his store is burned to the ground.

The Purifiers have had numerous run-ins with other groups and individuals also seeking to lead communities in the region, but the Elevated Brotherhood has developed into a genuine problem. The fact that the group espouses the superiority of magic as a means of improving quality of life and a birthright of leadership rankles the Purifiers and, in particular, the group's current leader, Ardal.

The Purifiers

Abilities (Focuses)	
Might	3 (Specialty Troops: Former Templars)
Wealth	2
Influence	3 (Chantry)
Intrigue	1
Magic	-1

Combat Ratings		
Structure	Stability	Scope
5	33	Regional

The Elevated Brotherhood

Not all members of the Elevated Brotherhood are magically talented. Most are not, if fact, but they all believe in the superiority of magic in all things. The group believes that anything that can be done, can be done better through magic. More importantly, they believe that anything that cannot be done can still be accomplished through magic. They think that magic is a gift that signifies wisdom and insight and that alone is reason enough to let mages lead communities of non-magical individuals.

The group's leader, Nemmaya, is extremely reclusive and issues decrees to be carried out by the mages who serve her as agents in the world at large. The Elevated Brotherhood has focused its efforts in Orlais, particularly the areas surrounding Val Royeaux, but they have made no inroads in the capital city (nor have they attempted to do so). Their radically different agenda compared to the Purifiers has placed the two groups in direct conflict on numerous occasions, and bloodshed is not uncommon.

The Elevated Brotherhood

Abilities (Focuses)	
Might	1
Wealth	2
Influence	3 (Foreign Power: Tevinter)
Intrigue	2
Magic	3 (Mages)

Combat Ratings		
Structure	Stability	Scope
4	36	Regional

The Autumn Falls

The Grand Tourney of the Free Marches is a spectacle like no other. Part circus, part tournament, part festival, and altogether magnificent, the Grand Tourney is a massive traveling fair that ranges the Free Marches bringing chaos and fortune in equal measure. The Tourney's erratic travels occasionally take it outside the Free Marches, but in the main it moves among the free cities, entertaining the locals wherever it puts down its temporary roots.

Every three years or so, a patron (or patrons) wealthy enough to sponsor a Contest of Arms emerges and the real entertainment begins. Then the Tourney sets down for an entire year, beginning a series of tournaments and exhibitions, each more opulent than the last, that brings competitors and spectators from across the continent to the event widely known as the greatest spectacle in all of Thedas.

Early this year, on the shore of the Waking Sea, in the Nevarran city of Cumberland, the Grand Tourney found a patron in Rainer Aehrenthal, a merchant prince of great means and greater ambition. This year's Contest of Arms has already been one for the record books, but now word has gone out that a trophy unlike any other, a dwarven hammer of ancient provenance, will be the prize for the harvest season's traditional event known as the Autumn Falls.

For the first time in the history of the Grand Tourney, to the delight and shock of all, Orzammar has announced it will send a delegation to compete.Warriors from across Thedas are now closing upon Cumberland: for honor, for duty, for love, for vengeance, for dark gods, for glory, and for its singular prize. The greatest show on Thedas is about to begin!

Adventure Summary

In **The Autumn Falls** a group of Player Characters ranging from 5th to 7th level are invited, compelled, or simply decide to try their luck in the Grand Tourney of the Free Marches' legendary Contest of Arms, which is presently being staged in the Nevarran city of Cumberland. This adventure is designed to take place just before the Fifth Blight, or during the Blight but before news of Ostagar reaches the Free Marches. It can be set during other periods fairly easily, though some of the NPCs will be more or less concerned about the threat of darkspawn and opinions of certain groups may differ, especially the Grey Wardens.

The Contest's patron, Rainer Aehrenthal, is a cunning merchant whose scheme to entice representatives from Orzammar to the Tourney to further his own ends has worked spectacularly. Too well, perhaps: Aehrenthal's announcement that he would offer an ancient dwarven hammer of legendary significance as the prize for the Autumn Falls has attracted not only dwarves from Orzammar, but also a party from strange and nearly forgotten Kal-Sharok.

In fact, news of the magnitude of the contest has drawn hundreds of warriors from farther afield than normal. Naturally, each has their own agenda. Darker forces have also taken an interest in the Tourney, and a plot put into motion that could have grim repercussions for all of Thedas if it is not stopped: A cult dedicated to the Old Gods of the Tevinter Imperium, and disturbingly sympathetic to the darkspawn hordes, intends to destroy the Contest of

Arms' Central Arena in spectacular fashion at the climax of its final event.

Into this maelstrom of martial honor, racial pride, deadly politics, and ancient malice step the PCs, who, due to their status as competent outsiders, are asked to join a secret investigation into mysterious goings-on in Cumberland. They must employ the strength of their arms, the breadth of their charm, and the speed of their wits if they hope to succeed.

A bit of luck wouldn't hurt either.

BACKGROUND

For a Few Dragons More

The city-state of Nevarra was originally one of the largest in the Free Marches. Its history is not so much punctuated as dominated by near-endless battles against both darkspawn and human foes in which the city was fought over many, many times. Orlais even occupied the city-state for some forty years after the end of the Third Blight.

The Nevarrans endured this state of affairs for many generations, building up a cultural military insight over the centuries. Their martial traditions were honed in constant battle, and the city's leading families, most notably the legendary Pentaghast clan, produced a legion of tactical geniuses and legendary heroes. The champions of Nevarra are practically worshipped by their populace to the present day, and not without reason. The Pentaghasts are considered the finest dragon hunters in the history of Thedas, with the trophies to prove it; their armory is filled with the largest collection of dragonbone arms and armor on the continent. The Black Dragon of Nevarra, the symbol of the Pentaghast family, is the most widely famed heraldic symbol in all of Thedas, and is recognized even by the children of freeholders in Ferelden.

Just more than three centuries ago, the Pentaghasts began a series of conquests and made a series of alliances that became the nation of Nevarra, now one of the great powers of Thedas. In fact, the Nevarrans claimed the final victory in a long battle against Orlais itself only a few generations ago, at last wresting control of the mineral-rich hills to their west away from Val Royeaux. This triumph has significantly raised Nevarra in the eyes of the world. Rumor has it that the Pentaghasts believe the time has come finally for Nevarra to consolidate their gains and rest for a while.

Aehrenthal's Ambition

Such a course is unacceptable to the merchant prince Rainer Aehrenthal. His is no mere yearning for wealth, but a raw hunger strong enough to move even a demon of desire to astounded wonder at the sheer force of it. Such is the avarice, the need, that drives him. A favored son of Cumberland whose star is very much ascendant, Aehrenthal is an arms dealer. Rainer's family has been providing the Free Marches with weapons for generations. Rainer grew very rich from the fight with Orlais; he grows richer still as he secretly helps the Orlesians supply the indigenous western rebels who took up arms against their Nevarran conquerors.with a Blight on the horizon, perhaps starting in Ferelden? Delicious. Where sane men see danger, Aehrenthal sees profit.

Aehrenthal has long wished to cement connections with Orzammar, and with a Blight on the horizon he is practically frantic to do so, but the dwarves are not easily won over by human merchants of any sort. Aehrenthal was at a loss as to how to open relations with them until chance brought him a stupendously lucky find. A band of wandering adventurers sold one of his agents an ancient dwarven hammer they discovered in the Deep Roads, which his paid scholars assured him would be of great significance to the dwarves. This was an understatement of ludicrous proportions. The hammer is the forge-hammer of the Paragon Zadol the Weaponsfather, the dwarf who invented the art of folding metal to reinforce blades. There are few Paragons regarded so highly. His hammer is literally priceless to the Children of the Stone, even before considering the various abilities legend ascribes to it.

Aehrenthal's researchers assured him that the deadly and subtle interconnections of dwarf politics would make it all but impossible to know with whom he should be dealing if he simply showed up in Orzammar, hammer in tow. After giving the matter some thought, Aehrenthal offered to act as patron for a Contest of Arms, knowing that by offering the hammer as a prize he could draw out the dwarves and hopefully inveigle his way into their good graces. Helping to put on a massive display of martial prowess is exactly the sort of thing a staggeringly wealthy arms merchant does, which deflects suspicion from his odd choice of prizes.

Contenders from Below

But the situation is more complicated than even the clever Aehrenthal bargained for. Paragon Zadol is sacred to all Children of the Stone, and the dwarves of Kal-Sharok will not tolerate the "faithless" dwarves of cursed Orzammar laying their cowardly hands upon the sacred artifact. Thus, they too have sent a delegation to vie for the forge-hammer. The threat of competing dwarf factions wouldn't concern Rainer even if he knew about it. (The coming of the Kal-Sharok dwarves is not yet known, since they cannot easily reach the surface.) One source of superior weapons is as good as another in his mind. He'd cut deals with both sides if he thought he could arrange it.

Last Moon Rising

As a further and separate complication, there are cults throughout Thedas that still dedicate themselves to the Old Gods of the Tevinter Imperium. These cults hold a special hatred of Nevarrans for their prowess at slaying dragons. The whispers that one of the cults' gods is once again active in the world has moved several long-secret groups to motion, including a devious and terrible sect known as the Last Moon. The Last Moon follows an apocalyptic creed that compels them to seek the means to bring about a dreadful battle that will blanket all of Thedas in a "night that will never end," a pleasing offering to their patron god Lusacan, the Dragon of Night. The massive gathering of the Last Moon's enemies—Nevarrans and Chantry "heretics" alike—for the Grand Tourney affords a unique opportunity to spread suspicion and strife while simultaneously destroying as many foes as possible in one devas-

tating strike. They plan to blow up the Grand Tourney's Central Arena using stolen Qunari gaatlok—that is, fire-powder—at the beginning of the climatic final battle of the Autumn Falls, when the entire edifice will be filled to capacity and beyond.

Unless the PCs stop them, that is.

Getting the Characters Involved

The Grand Tourney's Contest of Arms is justly famed throughout Thedas. You can begin to introduce **The Autumn Falls** subtly and far in advance, with NPCs mentioning the opening of the Contest during the spring while the PCs are on other adventures. As the year progresses and word of the quality of events spreads through southern Thedas, it becomes a common topic of conversation until at last the announcement that Orzammar will participate in the harvest games makes it the talk of Ferelden.

The players may ask whether their PCs have any chance of victory in the Contest. The best answer is that there are many prizes for many different events. And although they may not have a realistic chance of claiming victory in any of the grand events, stranger things have happened…

If the Contest of Arms isn't enough motivation for the PCs, the fact that the Grand Tourney is also a huge festival that draws exotic and interesting folk from all points of the map might also influence them. While the activities that warriors and rogues might pursue at the Tourney are obvious, mages needn't feel left out, because the Contest of Arms also includes challenges specially designed for them. Additionally, the College of the Magi in Cumberland truly stands at the center of every Circle, and any mage worth their staff—even those who studiously avoid the politics of magic—will want to see the fabled Sun Dome at least once in their life. In any case, knowing your PCs' motivations should allow you to craft Tourney-related hooks specific to their desires.

Players eager to have their PCs become Grey Wardens may be aware that not only are Grey Wardens more accepted and easier to find outside Ferelden, but also that the Contest of Arms traditionally draws Grey Warden recruiters to study the participants of the tournaments for candidates. In fact, one of the key NPCs in **The Autumn Falls** is just such a recruiter.

PCs interested in more immediate adventuring work can be gradually drawn into the Grand Tourney, as they are hired to guard a Fereldan merchant on her way to the event. See **Part 1, Scene 1: A Contest Like No Other**.

While the majority of your players will likely wish to use the Fereldan PCs they have advanced from 1st level in this adventure, The Autumn Falls does off an excellent opportunity for players to switch temporarily or permanently to a new character, if they wished to try something new. The circumstances surrounding the Tourney plausibly allow the inclusion of rare individuals such as dwarf nobles from Orzammar. Such an option is introduced with the optional **Part 1, Scene 2: Not for Gold**. If some but not all players choose this route, you will need to spend some time during the opening scenes of **The Autumn Falls** cutting back and forth between PC sub-groups.

In any case, the opening scenes of **The Autumn Falls** have been crafted with flexibility in mind to permit a wide variety of characters to gather together as they travel to Cumberland. The Grand Tourney welcomes all comers.

Optional Subplot: Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

The following subplot can be run if you wish to add yet another layer of complication to the adventure.

The Contest of Arms brings warriors and spectators from across all Thedas, including some folk that only appear in the central portions of the continent once or twice in a generation. This optional subplot introduces an ambassadorial group of Qunari from Par Vollen, the center of Qunari culture in Thedas. Nevarra has formally invited this group to witness the Contest of Arms.

The Qunari are fond of displays of martial prowess and the Grand Tourney seemed an excellent excuse to encourage a group of them to travel down to Cumberland. If Pentaghast agents should have a chance to casually discuss the Qunari's ongoing conflict with the Tevinter Imperium, record their insights for further study, and drop a few hints about where Tevinter is vulnerable, well, that's the sort of thing that happens at the Grand Tourney.

However, for their part, the Qunari have not come for chitchat, which isn't really their way. They accepted the invitation because they are quietly seeking their stolen property, a shipment of

Qunari Warriors

Abilities (Focuses)		
Communication	0	Bargaining
Constitution	2	Stamina
Cunning	2	Qun
Dexterity	0	Light Blades
Magic	–2	
Perception	3	Hearing, Tracking
Strength	2	Heavy Blades
Willpower	3	

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
9	65	10	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+4	2d6+2

Special Features

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance and Dual Strike (3 SP)

Racial Penalty: –1 on ability tests to resist spells and magical effects.

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

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Heavy leather armor and longswords.

Quiet soldiers of a strange culture.

explosive gaatlok powder kegs that went missing several months ago. The "ambassadors" want to reclaim these goods—at least one barrel of which a Rivaini spy claimed to have seen on a ship bound for Cumberland—and to take vengeance on those who murdered their brothers in the course of the theft.

The leader of the Qunari tells humans he answers to the name Drun. He is a tracker of near-supernatural skill. Drun and his brothers could end up greatly helping, or seriously hindering, the PCs as they uncover pieces of the Last Moon's plot. The Qunari's investigations may alert the Last Moon, forcing the cult to accelerate or alter their plot, or the PCs may cause similar trouble for the Qunari.

PART 1

Come One, Come All

It is mid-summer in Ferelden. Wherever the PCs may be, they learn of the Grand Tourney of the Free Marches and hear the rumors that unusual prizes are being offered during the Autumn Falls, the harvest stage of the Grand Tourney's Contest of Arms. Reticent characters may find an offer of employment compelling even if the Tourney holds no immediate interest for them. There is also an optional scene to account for the possibility of dwarf PCs traveling from Orzammar. **Part 1** draws to a close with the PCs sailing over the Waking Sea to Cumberland.

Environs: Vignettes of Thedas

Instead of being set in a specific place, the opening scene of **The Autumn Falls** is loosely described so you can place it wherever is most appropriate for your campaign. If you are running **The Autumn Falls** as your play group's first adventure, or if you have no particular place in mind, then start the action just outside of Denerim.

SCENE 1

A Contest Like No Other

COMBAT & ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

The PCs come upon a dog breeder and her mabari being accosted by ruffians. After dealing with the miscreants the heroes are offered the job of escorting the merchant to Cumberland.

It's a fine summer day in Ferelden. A welcome breeze cools your face… but then carries with it the sounds of a woman crying out in anger, and then the deep baying of a hound mixed with cruel laughter.

As you crest a hillock you see a group of thugs confronting a young woman in simple dress. She's backed against a tree and holds a naked sword in her trembling hand. A gray-muzzled mabari has interposed itself between its master and the toughs as best it can, but the woman and dog are outnumbered and soon to be surrounded.

Caught up in their confrontation, none of them notice you. What will you do?

The young lady is a freeholder merchant, a dog breeder named Felayn. Her companion is a faithful old mabari named Osric whose prime fighting years are behind him.

The men are Fereldan brigands out to steal Felayn's wares, five mabari pups in finely made wooden kennels in the back of a nearby cart. To many Fereldans, that's tantamount to kidnapping.

There are twice as many bandits as PCs. Once the scum become aware of the heroes their leader, a lanky fellow named Torkey, calls out something like, "You don't want any trouble, friends, you had best be moving on." (Unless, of course, their awareness is brought on by the equivalent of an arrow in the back.) If the PCs choose to not get involved, shame on them. The brigands strip Felayn of her struggling wares and kill her and Osric before leaving.

As the PCs begin to take action (whatever it is) two of the bandits move to secure the wagon, pups, and Felayn's horse. The heroes have three rounds to stop them before they manage to get the wagon underway. The bandits won't provide much of a combat challenge to veteran heroes; the danger in this scene is in the harm they can do to Felayn and the dogs, so make sure that figures prominently.

If the heroes try to intimidate or harangue the bandits before attacking, you may wish to remind them of the roleplaying stunts at this point (assuming you are using them in your

Felayn

Abilities (Focuses)	
4	Communication (Animal Handling)
1	Constitution
2	Cunning (Cultural Lore)
1	Dexterity
–1	Magic
–1	Perception (Empathy)
0	Strength
2	Willpower (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
11	30	11	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Fist	+1	1d3
Shortsword	+1	1d6+2

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance (2SP).

Talents: Animal Training (Journeyman) and Contacts (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling and Light Blades.

Equipment: Shortsword, cart, horse, mabari pups, provisions, and traveling gear.

Breeder of mabari hounds, Fereldan freewoman, and enterprising merchant.

Osric

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	Communication
0	Constitution (Running)
0	Cunning
1	Dexterity
–1	Magic
0	Perception (Smelling, Tracking)
0	Strength (Jumping)
3	Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	20	12	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bite*	+1	1d6+2

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone.

Battle Assist: In his advanced age, Osric is no longer much of a combatant, but he makes up for it with heart and courage. Rather than making his meager Bite attack, Osric can help another combatant who attacks later in the round, giving that fighter a +2 bonus on his attack roll.

Faithful old mabari canine soldier.

Fereldan Brigand

Abilities (Focuses)	
2	Communication (Deception, Gambling)
1	Constitution (Drinking)
0	Cunning (Evaluation)
2	Dexterity (Legerdemain, Light Blades, Stealth)
0	Magic
1	Perception (Searching)
2	Strength (Climbing)
0	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	18	12	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Dagger	+4	1d6+3
Short Bow	+2	1d6+2
Shortsword	+4	1d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Lightning Attack and Skirmish.

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

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, and Light Blades.

Equipment: Dagger, light leather, short bow, shortsword.

Cheap Thugs

campaign). Stunts like Sway the Crowd or Enrage could provide a tactical advantage to the heroes, for example.

Once two or more bandits have been taken out of the fight, the remainder must begin making collective **TN 9 Willpower (Morale)** tests to fight on. Each additional bandit removed from the fight calls for another test and increases the target number by 2.

If any PC openly uses magic, the bandits' resolve shatters even more quickly. **TN 15 Willpower (Morale)** tests begin immediately when the brigands witness magic, even if they have sustained no casualties, with continued and increasingly difficult tests upon bandit deaths as described above.

Presuming the PCs rise to the occasion by rescuing Felayn and Osric and securing the pups, Felayn is effusively grateful, declaring the adventurers to be like *"heroes from the old tales."* This obviously sets a thought going in her mind and she looks at the PCs with a bright smile: *"Oh, but of course. You're headed to the Grand Tourney."*

If none of the PCs know about the Tourney, a surprised Felayn goes on to describe it as one of the largest and most important martial events in Thedas, relating whatever commonly known details are most likely to pique the PCs' interest.

Even if the characters are aware of the Grand Tourney and the Contest of Arms, use this opportunity to introduce the forge-hammer that's been announced as the special prize in the Autumn Falls, Orzammar's announcement that a team of dwarves will participate in the Tourney for the first time in its history, or both.

If the PCs show any interest at all in the idea of attending the Grand Tourney, Felayn encourages them to join her for the trip, since that's where she's headed as well. She intends to travel by sea from Denerim. Several ships regularly make the passage from the capital to Cumberland, so finding berths is easily done. She's willing to offer the PCs 20 sp each for their kind assistance and protection, although she must sell one of her pups at the fair before she'll have the cash to make payment.

SCENE 2

NOT FOR GOLD

COMBAT & ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

Orzammar-native dwarven PCs collecting supplies for the trip to Cumberland are ambushed by agents of a rival house.

The rivalries among dwarven houses are both intense and unending; most dwarves think nothing of nursing a grudge for centuries. The dwarven PCs chosen to participate in the Contest of Arms have displaced some other house's members from the delegation—or that's how they see it, at least. By eliminating the PCs, they plan to open their "rightful" slots back up again.

Orzammar has chosen to send a delegation topside to participate in a human Proving because the prize on offer for the event is Anvilbreaker, the legendary forge-hammer of the Paragon Zadol. Your house has put your name forth as a candidate for the trip and you've spent the last few hours acquiring sundries throughout the Commons.

As you head home, you realize the courtyard you are passing through has fallen strangely quiet. Suddenly, footsteps echo in the stillness and cloaked figures slip from the shadows, swords bared.

Defend yourself!

COUNSELOR MARDOHL

Abilities (Focuses)

Communication 3 (Bargaining, Etiquette, Persuasion), **Constitution** 2 (Drinking), **Cunning** 2 (Cultural Lore, Historical Lore), **Dexterity** –1, **Magic** –1, **Perception** 1, **Strength** 0, **Willpower** 2 (Morale).

Trusted dwarf noble house retainer.

DWARF ASSASSIN

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	Communication
2	Constitution (Running)
0	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Initiative, Stealth)
0	Magic
1	Perception
3	Strength (Heavy Blades)
3	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
11	50	13	7

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bastard Sword	+5	2d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike (3 SP) and Lethal Blow.

Class Powers: Backstab (as rogue).

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman), and Two-hander Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Spears.

Equipment: Heavy mail and bastard swords.

Hired Killers

The courtyard is a large cavern with a series of heavy stone benches and some sturdy chairs gathered about a stone table.

There are attackers equal to the number of PCs, plus one. They aim to kill the PCs as quickly and efficiently as possible, ganging up on a single target where effective, or launching distracting attacks from the front while others of their number slip around behind to deliver vicious backstabs. The tone and feel of the ambush as a whole should be fierce and difficult, but not impossible.

If the PCs shout for help it takes five rounds for a group of soldiers to stride into view. The assassins flee if this happens. The assassins also take to their heels if the odds against them begin to look grim. Any trapped assassins fight to the death; none allow themselves to be taken alive.

The assassins' bodies reveal nothing about them, their arms and armor having been purposefully (and obviously so) stripped of any insignia. Even their blades have been hammered to remove the characteristic strike marks of the different smithing families, which read like fingerprints to some dwarven eyes.

A successful **TN 9 Cunning (Cultural Lore)** test is all that's required to know that only a noble family would have the resources to equip killers in such a fashion. It seems unlikely that the ambush was a mere attempt at robbery.

After receiving medical attention if it's needed, the surviving PCs are ushered into the presence of Counselor Mardohl, a trusted retainer of either their house, or the house they're subservient to if they are of low caste.

Our enemies have moved faster than I anticipated. The sooner you are underway the better.

Confused heroes can question Mardohl about the situation. Mardohl doesn't know exactly who is behind the attack. "Any of a dozen houses," he speculates if pressed. Ultimately, to him, the answer is irrelevant. The important point is that the attack failed and a second opportunity shouldn't be allowed.

Counselor Mardohl has arranged passage for the PCs on a ship from the Orlesian city of Jader, which is located just north of the Frostbacks. Although they will all stand together

at the Contest of Arms, Orzammar's delegation is traveling to Cumberland in separate, smaller groups because the various nobles, soldiers, and smiths picked by the Assembly to comprise the delegation are not necessarily friendly to each other. Even so, Mardohl stresses the vital importance that the PCs publicly support the other members of the delegation in front of folk from other nations and races. What goes on away from public view, on the other hand… Well, the good counselor doesn't need—or want—to know about that.

Once the PCs have a grasp of their situation, close the scene and move on.

SCENE 3

FATEFUL PASSAGE

ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

The PCs—Fereldans and dwarves both—travel by ship over the Waking Sea to the Nevarran port of Cumberland. Along the way, they meet others who are also traveling to the Grand Tourney.

The giant waves of the Waking Sea roar and crash about you, tossing your ship, the Whisper, in great rolling swells. The sailors scurrying up and down the rigging laugh at your expressions. One of them shouts down, "If you want to see some real waves try the passage to Cumberland in the winter!"

The ship is filled with all manner of unfamiliar and unexpected folk. Not only are there Fereldans of every stripe, there are members of the delegation from Orzammar, and even more unexpectedly, a band of Avvar hunters who look profoundly uncomfortable at all the water.

The mate says you have another day or two at sea before you reach Cumberland. How do you intend to pass that time?

There are two purposes for this scene. The first is to introduce all of the PCs to each other, such as if you have some PCs from Ferelden and others from Orzammar. The second is to give the heroes their first chance to size up some of the competition in the Contest of Arms.

If you have two groups of PCs, don't concern yourself with making sure that they become fast friends while on board. It's enough to make sure they all come to recognize each other and spend some time getting to know one another. It may spur some cross-group, get-to-know-you interactions if you introduce an interesting but innocuous event to provoke comment from each, which will likely develop into cross-group roleplaying. If both groups are on deck and a bright comet is spotted in the sky, for example, each might have a different perspective on whether the omen is good or bad, what it might mean for the Autumn Falls, and so on.

Notable NPCs on board the *Whisper* include Felayn, a (non-PC) group of dwarves from Orzammar led by Lord Kynrik of House Clangdrol (who is the dwarf noble of highest caste rank on the ship), and a group of Avvar led by one Alsgaard Ar Kjus O Stormhold. If you wish to introduce any NPCs of specific use to your own campaign, this is a good opportunity for that, too.

LORD KYNRIK

Abilities (Focuses)	
3	Communication (Bargaining, Etiquette, Leadership, Persuasion)
2	Constitution
1	Cunning
0	Dexterity
–3	Magic
2	Perception (Empathy)
4	Strength (Axes)
2	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	85	13	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Battle Axe	+6	2d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance (1 SP), Dual Strike (3 SP), and Threaten (1 SP).

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Champion (Journeyman), and Weapon and Shield Style (Master).

Weapon Groups: All.

Equipment: Light plate mail, heavy shield, and battle axe.

Scion of House Clangdrol.

Fereldan PCs who wish to chat with Lord Kynrik are stopped by his guards, who wait to get a nod from their master before letting the characters pass. Surface dwarves are kept away ("Move on, cloud-gazer"), but others are allowed to approach unless they behave with blatant disrespect.

Kynrik is a heavyset dwarf, dressed in exquisitely engraved plate armor forged from glittering silverite. He is well aware that wearing heavy plate at sea is considered foolish by some, but he spares no additional thought for those who know nothing of what means to be a Lord of Orzammar, or who take insufficient care with the importance of appearances. In any case, Kynrik shines in the morning sun like a multi-faceted gemstone, which is an accurate reflection on his personality: complex and ever-shifting. It is no accident that he was chosen as the diplomatic leader of the entire Orzammar delegation. He is an honorable deep lord, well respected by his fellows, and no more a schemer than any dwarven lord must be to survive Orzammar politics.

Kynrik is in a festive mood during the sea passage, looking forward with excitement to the political and economic challenges he expects the Grand Tourney will bring. It's not that he's uninterested in the martial contests to come. He just doesn't think humans stand a chance against the champions of the Warrior Caste who accompany him, especially his ace in the hole, Ralevi the Root, a member of the Legion of the Dead. Kynrik's party met Ralevi, the last surviving member of his unit, in the Deep Roads en route to Cumberland. Kynrik essentially conscripted Ralevi into the tournament party, promising that he'd be allowed to return to the Deep Roads once the human Proving was at an end.

Ralevi the Root

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication
4	Constitution (Stamina)
0	Cunning
3	Dexterity (Brawling)
0	Magic
1	Perception
5	Strength (Axes, Heavy Blades, Intimidation)
3	Willpower (Courage, Morale, Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
11	115	13	7

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Gauntlet	+5	1d3+6
Battle Axe	+7	2d6+5

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike (3 SP), Lightning Attack (2 SP), and Lethal Blow.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Berserker (Master), Dual Weapon Style (Master), and Single Weapon Style (Master).

Weapon Groups: All.

Equipment: Heavy mail armor and two battle axes.

The "Root of the Mountain," an indestructible warrior whose legend is long in the Memories.

Kynrik expects polite deference from dwarves, but realizes that few humans are capable of recognizing his status, especially not the amusingly upstart children of Ferelden. He deals with Orzammar PCs appropriately, in accordance with their castes. He is unwilling to reveal his plans for how the dwarves will go about conquering the Autumn Falls, but he exudes firm confidence.

The other interesting party on the ship is the group of Avvar led by a warrior who introduces himself as Alsgaard of Stormhold. He is willing to chat with anyone and everyone (and as such is another good focus for cross-group, get-to-know-you roleplaying). He respects dwarves and subtly condescends to Fereldans, but remains polite in either case—Alsgaard comes from a culture where a man can get his head split open in a second for being rude.

Alsgaard and his fellow Avvar intend to teach the Nevarrans *"a thing or two about archery."* Those who speak to him notice that his left hand is bound in an armored leather glove. At some point during the conversation he glances up into the sky and, smiling, extends his arm. A bare moment later a gold-plumed eagle drops from the sky above the ship, smoothly avoiding the rigging and sails, to land on the Avvar's arm. *"This is Saba,"* he says, grinning. *"She prefers the wind to this rolling land, eh, girl?"*

Alsgaard looks forward to seeing the Grand Tourney. Avvar seldom leave the Frostbacks for any extended period of time and usually the Tourney is much farther away. Its presence as close as Cumberland is surely a sign from Hakkon Wintersbreath,

Alsgaard ar Kjus o Stormhold

Abilities (Focuses)	
2	Communication (Animal Handling, Leadership)
3	Constitution
1	Cunning (Natural Lore)
4	Dexterity (Bows, Stealth)
0	Magic
3	Perception (Seeing, Tracking)
2	Strength (Heavy Blades)
1	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
15	85	14	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Long Bow	+6	1d6+6 (Range 26/52 yds)
Longsword	+4	2d6+2

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike (3 SP), Lightning Attack (2 SP with bows only), and Pierce Armor.

Talents: Archery Style (Master), Armor Training (Novice), Champion (Novice), and Command (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Bows, and Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Light mail, long bow (and arrows), and longsword.

Skilled archer of the Frostbacks.

the Avvar god of winter and war, that they should attend the Contest of Arms. Any PC pointing out that the Autumn Falls is not being held during the winter gets a wolfish grin out of Alsgaard: "That's why we go for archery and not for slaughter."

Let the PCs talk to whom they will, as well as among each other if some of them have not yet met. Once conversation has run its course, it's time for **Part 2: Welcome to Nevarra**.

Part 1 Resolution & Troubleshooting

This part of **The Autumn Falls** is intentionally loose to help you easily incorporate PCs with different backgrounds and motivations. If you judge that **Scene 1: Vignettes of Thedas** isn't likely to capture the attention and imagination of your particular group of PCs, substitute something more appropriate. If the heroes are truly not interested in going to the Contest of Arms, this adventure may simply not be for them.

The fight with the bandits should be easy for an experienced group of PCs. If it isn't, reduce the brigands' statistics as you go along, or send them running even on a successful Morale check (which, of course, you should roll behind your screen).

Introducing dwarves from Orzammar into your campaign using this adventure can be a lot of fun. You can let the players of your dwarven PCs learn what's going on with the Contest of Arms by listening to what happens to the other players'

heroes in **Scene 1**, to conveniently teach them some of what their characters would already know.

If all of the dwarf PCs fall in battle with the assassins, continue the scene anyway, weaving a tale of how dwarf soldiers arrived the moment the heroes fell, driving off the assassins and saving the PCs with timely first aid.

If you feel like trying a slightly more difficult but rewarding way of running the first two scenes, cut back and forth between the two of them at dramatic moments. For example, you might run the fight with the bandits to the point where the PCs see that Felayn is under attack, then jump to the dwarven PCs in Orzammar and run the first round of the ambush. If you time your cuts between the two scenes well, this approach increases the drama and keeps everyone involved, instead of having one group wait through a whole scene that doesn't involve them.

If one or more players want to play lower caste dwarves from Orzammar, you'll have to figure out a way to realistically incorporate them, since the Assembly would never send a no-account to retrieve a priceless artifact. On the other hand, if said casteless riffraff saved a noble from a band of assassins, a place in the noble's party as a drudge to run errands and perform menial jobs might be appropriate. If you're bereft of good ideas, put the onus for an explanation on the player and see what he can come up with.

PART 2

Welcome to Nevarra

In **Part 2: Welcome to Nevarra**, the PCs arrive in Nevarra and are introduced to Cumberland, one of the largest cities in Thedas. While seeking accommodations, the Fereldan PCs have an altercation with an Orlesian Chevalier and his entourage. In all likelihood, bloodshed is only avoided by the timely intervention of a Grey Warden. Elsewhere in the city the full delegation from Orzammar assembles to discuss their plans for the tournament and after.

Environs: Cumberland

While the capital of Nevarra is the city of the same name, Cumberland is its largest metropolis. Standing on the shores of the Waking Sea and straddling the River Cumber, Cumberland is the natural port through which the greater bulk of the goods passing to and from the Free Marches flows. Almost anything can be bought and sold on the streets of Cumberland if you know where to look.

The roads of Cumberland are paved with well-chosen cobblestones, most worn smooth from the passage of countless feet. The streets are lined with well-made three-story buildings, scores of which are decorated with ornate facades. While some of the streets are narrow, especially those in the older portions of the city, most are spacious, the better to accommodate the passage of laden carts.

The Nevarran custom of venerating their heroic ancestors is most obviously expressed in Cumberland in the statues that fill the city's open, airy courtyards. Most have been carved with great skill.

Built at great expense and with greater secrecy, the Sun Dome is a spired golden dome that rests atop the central building of the College of Magi. It dominates Cumberland's skyline and is visible for miles when the sun shines. The College is the philosophical heart of the Circle of Magi. It is at the College that the First Enchanters of every Circle assemble to elect their Grand Enchanter, the mage who stands as the Circle of Magi's representative to the Chantry, their advisor on the supernatural.

The Grand Tourney has been set up on the western side of the river, a sprawling sea of tents, arenas, temporary buildings, and the like. For more detailed information on this specific area, see **Environs: The Grand Tourney** on pages 377-378. Stretching into the grassy plain beyond the fairgrounds are hundreds of small tents where many of the Tourney-goers who cannot find or afford accommodations in the city proper are staying.

SCENE 1

The City on the River

EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

The PCs arrive at the port of Cumberland and get their first chance to look around.

The sounds of bells and racing feet bring you up to the deck, into the morning sun. Cumberland stretches across the horizon, straddling the River Cumber where it flows into the Waking Sea. The blinding golden reflection from the Sun Dome at the College of Magi is like a crown that sits atop the city. To the west you can make out a mass of tents on a rolling plain – the fairgrounds, you imagine.

Welcome to Nevarra.

The ship soon arrives at a dock and the PCs are free to do what they wish. If the players are at a loss, you can suggest that they concentrate on accommodations first. Cumberland, as a center of trade, is filled with inns and taverns. There is also the tent city.

Players who ask about the customs of Nevarra should make a **TN 9 Cunning (Cultural Lore)** test. Success provides the knowledge that Cumberland is fairly cosmopolitan, but that it is never wise to bring up a Nevarran's ancestors, as Nevarrans are apt to take even the most innocuous comment about their forebears as a personal insult.

If any of the PCs are traveling with Felayn, she informs them that she intends to offer her wares among the Tourney-goers in the tent city. She hopes to find accommodations somewhere decent, but suspects the nature of her wares may force her to take more dubious quarters. Felayn won't consider trying to kennel her pups with strangers—they're much too valuable. As before, she'll appreciate the presence of one or more PCs to escort her.

Dwarven PCs from Orzammar have been given instructions to rendezvous at the Diamond Lass, a large dwarven inn in Cumberland's dwarven trade enclave. The enclave—referred to as the "Dragons' Den," or simply "the Den"—is a walled-off area several blocks square in the northeastern portion of

CUMBERLAND CITY WATCH

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	Communication
2	Constitution
1	Cunning
2	Dexterity (Brawling)
0	Magic
2	Perception (Searching)
1	Strength (Intimidation)
1	Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	40	12	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Fist	+4	1d6+1
Club	+2	1d6+1
Crossbow	+2	2d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Rapid Reload (1SP) and Disarm (2SP).

Talents: Archery Style (Novice), Armor Training (Novice), and Unarmed Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, and Staves.

Equipment: Light mail, club, and crossbow.

Vigilant guardians of Cumberland's peace.

the city, east of the Cumber and adjacent to the city's wealthier human neighborhoods. All of the Den's buildings are made of stone and designed in dwarven architectural styles. The neighborhood's name derives from the Nevarrans' nickname for their gold coins: "dragons."

Characters can hear current gossip and basic information about either Cumberland or the Grand Tourney by querying the throngs of passersby on any given street of the city. There are plenty of sailors throughout the quays who're only too happy to chat with travelers. Keep the new exploration stunts in mind as the heroes search the city for whatever it is they're looking for. They offer the chance for the PCs to learn additional information, accumulate bonuses to additional tests, and the like.

The summer's tournaments are over, but the fair continues, with acrobats, jugglers, fortunetellers, mystics, seers, and entertainers of all stripes in abundance, both in the city proper and on the fair grounds. If the PCs wish to head for the Grand Tourney, look to **Part 3: Let the Games Begin** for details.

As the PCs begin to wander the city, keep the following points in mind:

- With the exception of PCs with backgrounds that run explicitly to the contrary, this is the first time the heroes will have been outside of Ferelden or Orzammar. Encourage the players to roleplay accordingly.
- For Fereldans, Cumberland is massive nearly beyond comprehension. Three Denerims could be easily contained within its walls. Call for **Cunning (Navigation)** tests of appropriate difficulty while the heroes try to get around, until the PCs have been in the city for a few weeks.

- Grubby characters are viewed with skepticism and disapproval in many places, and flat-out forbidden from entering the wealthier districts by the armed guards who stand watch at the perimeters of these neighborhoods.
- Unlike in Ferelden, the cities of the Free Marches and Nevarra do not normally allow individuals to walk the streets armed and armored. Characters wearing mail or plate armor, or carrying weapons larger than shortswords, are eventually accosted by the city watch and asked to explain themselves. Fortunately for the PCs, the Contest of Arms has made the watch both more polite and more cautious than normal. No matter what he happens to look like, it does not do to insult a master swordsman. Presuming the PCs are polite, they are merely asked to store their armor and wrap their heavier weapons when off the contest grounds. Insulting the city watch or ignoring their instructions results in fighting. The watch tries to take malefactors alive, but if the heroes kill a guardsman all bets are off. The city watch travel in groups of six and carry whistles to summon aid when needed. They keep their crossbows slung unless they expect trouble. If it seems likely to present itself, several of their number draw and aim, waiting for orders from their sergeant.

Once the PCs have had a chance to look about for a bit and settle in, move onto the next scene.

SCENE 2

Of Elks & Griffons

ROLEPLAYING & COMBAT ENCOUNTER

The PCs nearly come to blows with an Orlesian Chevalier and his entourage, but a Grey Warden steps in to break up the dispute.

All of Cumberland seems to be part of the Grand Tourney festival. Every courtyard has its own entertainment: jugglers, actors, fire-eaters, puppeteers, acrobats, and storytellers are just a few of the performers you've seen. Music fills the air while barkers beckon travelers to their stalls.

You step onto a narrow side street to get your bearings and suddenly hear one sound quite distinctly: the sharp clatter of hooves against cobblestones!

Each PC present must make a **TN 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test. Those who succeed dive to the side in time, while those who fail suffer 1d6 damage—just enough to be insulting—as they're knocked to the cobblestones by a barded warhorse and rider who come hurtling around a corner.

The rider pulls up some twenty feet away and turns his horse sidelong to the PCs, looking back at them. His features are concealed behind an intricately worked, silver-filigree mask from which two spiraling horns resembling those of an elk curl up. The rest of his clothes are sumptuous, colored a rich blue and embroidered with fine golden thread. A **TN 9 Cunning (Heraldry or Military Lore)** test identifies the rider as one of the infamous Orlesian Chevaliers.

The Chevaliers are a noble military order, the most eminent in Orlais. Often a refuge for landless nobles and children destined to not inherit, the Chevaliers' training regimen is famed for its brutality. Those who survive it are legendary for their fearlessness and absolute devotion to their code of honor. The Chevalier history is a roll of glorious battles won against staggering odds; even faced with certain death the Chevaliers have never broken, their units dying to the last man on the battlefield when their commanders demand it. In Orlais, the Chevaliers hold the Right Majeste over all commoners, meaning that they have complete authority to do whatever they see fit, with no recourse for justice against them. For this, the Chevaliers are nearly as loathed as they are celebrated.

The Chevalier considers the PCs, saying nothing and ignoring anything they say to him. After a moment, a sturdy man in matching colors (though his clothing is not nearly so ornate) runs around the corner, breathing hard. This man, Huon, runs to his master's side, they briefly converse, and then the servant turns to the PCs. In the Trade Tongue, with a faint but distinct Orlesian accent, he informs them, *"My master awaits your apology."*

If the heroes demand an explanation, Huon adds *"You have scuffed Rosemonde's armor and made my lord late for an appointment."*

If the PCs inquire as to the Chevalier's identity, Huon announces *"My master is the Lord Forsard Malecot, Chevalier and Master of Renier Castle."*

The next round, while the PC are either considering their reaction or carrying it out, more retainers dressed in the Chevalier's colors round the corner, a party (not including Huron and the Chevalier) one greater than the total number of PCs present.

Even if the PCs try to avoid a confrontation, Malecot eventually spits something condescending at Huon in Orlesian. Huon sighs deeply, then marches up to throw a punch at the nearest PC, pausing for a brief moment if the PCs were trying to be diplomatic to utter an apology first.

And then the fight is on. The Orlesians, for their part, are just scrapping. Although they're excellent fighters, their intent is to thrash the PCs for their insolence, not to slay them. Unless the heroes escalate to deadly force, the Orlesian retainers do not. At least, that is until Malecot decides, in a few rounds, that his servants aren't making a proper accounting for themselves. At that point he draws his blade and prepares to get very serious about inflicting real harm.

However, before any real bloodshed can commence, a powerful voice rings out in the street:

"STOP."

The command has come, surprisingly, from a slight female figure in silver-trimmed, off-white robes worn over shining mail. Piercing eyes flash from her dusky face, which is decorated with intricate scarifications. The emblem on her robes is the ancient heraldic griffon rampant of the Grey Wardens, identifiable with no test to any but the most provincial heroes.

The PCs can comply or not as they wish, but they all notice that the Chevalier recoils and immediately lowers his weapon, and that his retainers, closely attuned to their master's wishes, also stop fighting immediately, other than to defend themselves if they continue to be attacked.

Orlesian Retainers (including Huon)

Abilities (Focuses)
1 — Communication (Etiquette)
1 — Constitution (Stamina)
0 — Cunning
3 — Dexterity (Brawling, Staves)
–1 — Magic
1 — Perception
2 — Strength
1 — Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	45	13	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Fist	+5	1d6+2
Quarterstaff	+5	1d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone (1SP) and Mighty Blow.

Talents: Unarmed Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling and Staves.

Equipment: Light leather and quarterstaves.

Servants, porters, and occasional men-at-arms skilled at avoiding their lord's displeasure.

Kilina

Abilities (Focuses)
3 — Communication (Disguise, Persuasion)
1 — Constitution
4 — Cunning (Arcane Lore, Research)
2 — Dexterity (Light Blades)
1 — Magic
4 — Perception (Detect Darkspawn, Seeing, Tracking)
3 — Strength (Heavy Blades)
2 — Willpower (Morale, Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
20	70	15 (12 w/o Shield)	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+5	2d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance (1SP), Dual Strike (3 SP), and Threaten (1SP).

Grey Warden Abilities: Resistance to taint and detect dark-spawn (40 yards).

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Champion (Novice), and Weapon and Shield Style (Master).

Weapon Groups: All.

Equipment: Light plate armor, longsword, and medium shield.

Good-humored Grey Warden recruiter.

If any PCs continue fighting, the Grey Warden smiles bemusedly for half a moment, then draws her sword in a blinding motion and repeats herself in a quieter voice that somehow carries even further.

Any heroes who press the fight even in the face of this re-iterated command provoke her to join the fray, knocking combatants unconscious with the flat of her blade rather than killing them.

Once everyone has either calmed down or been knocked out:

The Grey Warden nods. "The tournament will begin in just a few more days my friends. A shame to waste your energy on trifles."

She turns to the Chevalier and raises her eyebrow. "Don't you have somewhere to be?" After a presumably nasty glance at all of you through his mask, the Chevalier nods curtly to the Warden and rides off, his retainers running along after him.

As the Orlesians disappear the Grey Warden turns to you, and a grin suddenly lights up her face. "The Chevaliers are arrogant bastards, but by the Maker, they can fight.

"I am Kilina. You are… not from around here."

Thus, the PCs meet the Grey Warden Kilina, a recruiter for her order (though she does not reveal that she is a recruiter). Kilina is of the Orth people from the Wandering Hills of the Anderfels, a long way indeed from Ferelden. She chats gaily

with the PCs, asking about their backgrounds, whether they're in town for reasons past the tournaments, and so forth. She seems lighthearted for a member of a legendary martial order. If any of the PCs are sheepish about having fought, Kilina shrugs it off: "I like a scrapper."

The Nevarran people respect the Grey Wardens, who fought for them many times and saved Cumberland from fiery destruction during the Second Blight, some 800 years ago. Although it's been a long time since the last Blight and the Wardens are no longer held in awe by the common populace, the heroes would be correct in assuming that Kilina has a certain amount of sway, and perhaps even concrete authority, in Cumberland.

In due course Kilina declares that she looks forward to seeing what the characters can do in the Contest of Arms, makes a polite excuse, and moves on.

SCENE 3

THE DIAMOND LASS DEBATE

ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

Dwarven PCs from Orzammar are dragged into a spirited debate on the plan for acquiring Paragon Zadol's hammer.

The Dragon's Den district is filled with bottom-caste skyers who nevertheless live in such wealthy surroundings that some of the visiting nobles find it a bit disturbing. The lavish room at the Diamond Lass where this scene takes place is dominated by an elaborately engraved marble table. Lush Rivaini rugs cover the floor.

Note that although these events take place in the world whether you are playing with Orzammar PCs or not, they will not be part of your game if you have only Ferelden heroes. If you do not play this scene, simply decide which side prevails in the argument based on which outcome you find most interesting.

For the past two hours at the Diamond Lass, you've been listening to dwarves debate on how best to claim the Weaponsfather's hammer.

There are two factions, each championed by an influential noble. Lord Kynrik of House Clangdrol is convinced the hammer can be won fairly in the Contest of Arms. Lord Quennar of House Gustrik argues that even the greatest warrior can falter, and so the delegation should bribe or eliminate the most dangerous opponents outside the bounds of the competition.

Silence descends on the room as you realize Lord Kynrik has just asked for your opinion on the matter.

Dwarf noble heroes are queried first, with other dwarves (other than the casteless, of course) polled in order of precedence.

Treat the debate as an **ADVANCED TN 11 COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)** test made communally by all the dwarves, but where two separate success thresholds are figured and tracked. Those supporting Lord Kynrik contribute their Dragon Dice to the sum for his argument, while those supporting Lord Quennar add theirs to his own separate and distinct total.

LORD FORSARD MALECOT

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
2	COMMUNICATION (ETIQUETTE, SEDUCTION)
2	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)
2	CUNNING (MILITARY LORE)
4	DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)
0	MAGIC
0	PERCEPTION
5	STRENGTH (HEAVY BLADES, INTIMIDATION, SPEARS)
0	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	50	13	7

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
GAUNTLET	+6	1D6+6
LONGSWORD	+7	2D6+5
SPEAR	+7	1D6+8

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Defensive Stance (1SP), Dual Strike (3 SP), Taunt, and Threaten (1SP).

TALENTS: Armor Training (Master), Champion (Journeyman), Weapon and Shield Style (Master).

WEAPON GROUPS: All.

EQUIPMENT: Heavy plate armor, longsword, heavy shield, and spear.

ORLESIAN CHEVALIER, ARROGANT BASTARD, AND MAGNIFICENT FIGHTER.

Before the PCs join the debate, Lord Kynrik's side is leading with a total of 11, versus Quennar's side's sum of 8. At the end of the debate, when Lord Kynrik calls for a vote of all the dwarves present, the higher total prevails. A tie goes to Kynrik's side.

For the duration of this debate, a special roleplaying stunt can increase a given side's debate total, past the successful test's Dragon Die total.

SPECIAL DEBATING STUNT

SP COST	STUNT
1	**SUPERIOR RHETORIC:** Add an additional point to your side's advanced test total.

Make note of any argument a PC makes in favor of one side or the other where the degree of success is 4 or higher, or where a noteworthy roleplaying stunt is carried off. That speaker will be regarded as affiliated with the side he spoke for when trouble erupts later on.

A dwarf who resists voicing an opinion is judged a coward and treated accordingly by the other dwarves for the rest of the adventure, and perhaps the rest of their lives given the prodigious powers of dwarven political memory.

An attempt to bring the two sides closer together without taking a position requires a **TN 13 COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING)** test.

Lord Quenar of House Gustrik	
Abilities (Focuses)	
1	**Communication** (Deception, Etiquette)
3	**Constitution**
2	**Cunning** (Cultural Lore, Engineering)
3	**Dexterity** (Light Blades)
0	**Magic**
4	**Perception**
2	**Strength** (Bludgeons)
1	**Willpower**

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
11	60	13	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Mace	+4	2d6+2
Shortsword	+5	1d6+4
Throwing Knife	+5	1d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Disarm, Mighty Blow, and Taunt.

Class Powers: Backstab (as rogue) and Bluff (as rogue)

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman), and Thrown Weapon Style (Novice)

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons, Brawling, and Light Blades. Equipment: Light mail, mace, shortsword, and many throwing knives.

All the worst in dwarven politics, with a pound of spite for good measure.

Failure results in a judgment of cowardice as above, while success marks the dwarf a skilled politician in the minds of most of those present (although it fails to have any effect on reconciling the two sides, which are irreconcilable).

An attempt to introduce some third option requires a **TN 17 Communication (Leadership)** test to avoid being shouted down. If a third option is successfully introduced, play the ongoing debate by ear, perhaps going to a three-way advanced test where all three options calculate totals.

A hero who succeeds at any of the preceding tests of Communication and rolls a 6 on his Dragon Die is quietly marked by those present—even those who disagree—as an up-and-comer. Such a silver-tongue is likely to receive special favor in future dealings among these dwarves for the duration of this adventure.

A PC who lies about what he truly thinks must make a **TN 11 Communication (Deception)** test on top of any other tests required. A dwarf who fails is judged a two-faced coward, even worse than the standard variety.

After the vote is taken, the losing leader agrees to abide by the group's decision, but adds, *"Of course, should the situation change…"*

Talk turns to less-important matters. An extravagant meal is brought in, with ale served in hand-carved crystal goblets worked with runes that keep their contents chilled. Let the characters enjoy their surroundings and conversation for a bit before drawing the scene to a close.

Note: This is the last Orzammar-specific scene. Given what's presented about the various important NPCs and their objectives in the encounters that follow, you should be able to extrapolate the course of events for the dwarven heroes without any difficulty.

Part 2 Resolution & Troubleshooting

This part is very much a series of introductions that set the stage for events in the parts of **The Autumn Falls** that are yet to come.

Scene 1: The City on the River is intentionally open-ended since it is likely to be the heroes' first time in such a large city and there are more avenues they may wish to explore than any published adventure could ever account for. Let the PCs wander until it stops being fun, improvising the kinds of encounters that the players are interested in having. (Pay attention to what the players are talking about. They'll telegraph what they're interested in if you listen.)

Don't worry if the heroes have a confrontation of some kind with the city watch. The watch is exceedingly tolerant during the Grand Tourney, although if the PCs are truly disrespectful or hopelessly flippant, beating them senseless and fining them steeply or tossing them in jail for a few days may teach them some humility.

If the PCs get into a serious fight with the watch, remind the players that they can pull killing blows, but don't force them to do it. That said, if they kill watchmen and there are witnesses (and in a city as big as Cumberland there are nearly always witnesses) the adventure is effectively over; the PCs will eventually be found and executed if they remain in Nevarra. Perhaps the players can make Orzammar characters and proceed from that angle.

Forsard Malecot is intended to be an antagonist the players will love to hate for some time to come. In **Scene 2: Of Elks and Griffons**, make certain they understand the difference between a street brawl and lethal combat, and the line that separates them. That is, make sure they understand that drawing a sword in a fistfight changes the game. (Again, don't forbid them from doing it, just make sure they're not escalating the stakes out of misunderstanding.)

Meeting Kilina is more significant than the players are likely to realize. They'll probably think you just wanted to show off a Grey Warden, but really, Kilina's purpose is to study potential recruits, and her observation that they're outsiders brings them to her mind later when unfolding events necessitate heroes unconnected to Nevarra. If you wish, you can decide that Kilina is far more manipulative than she appears, and that she asked the Chevalier to insult the PCs to see what they would do, before showing up in the nick of time.

If you have no Orzammar PCs, **Scene 3: The Diamond Lass Debate** amounts to information for you about what's going on behind the scenes. If there are dwarf PCs at the table, though, do your best to get them into trouble with one faction or the other—it'll make the rest of the adventure more interesting.

PART 3

Let the Games Begin!

In this portion of the adventure, the PCs have a chance to participate in the various competitions and qualifying rounds for the Autumn Falls, the third of the four great events (one per season) that occur during the Grand Tourney's Contest of Arms. Before the conclusion of the qualifying rounds, representatives of the dwarven thaig of Kal-Sharok appear in Cumberland, to widespread surprise. Their arrival may force the Orzammar delegation to reconsider their options.

Not long after the qualifying rounds end, a spectacular "accident" attracts the heroes' attention. Some time later, the Grey Warden Kilina and the Contest of Arms sponsor Rainer Aehrenthal ask for the PCs' assistance in investigating some suspect events that have been concealed from public view.

Environs: The Grand Tourney

The Grand Tourney proper is a massive and sprawling affair. Its heart is the Central Arena, a "temporary" edifice constructed of rough wood and able to seat around 15,000 spectators on two tiers. The most significant events of the Contest of Arms are held here.

A collection of big-top tents and specialized event spaces surround the Central Arena. These areas host side events, animal displays, athletic competitions, the performances of talented bards and entertainers, and the like. Collectively, the Central Arena and its orbit of massive tents and event spaces are commonly called the Tourney Grounds.

The Tourney Grounds stand on what was originally a large grassy field west of the Cumberland city wall. All of the paths to and from this area that weren't destroyed by the Central Arena's construction were demolished by foot traffic within a month of the Tourney's opening. Gravel and straw have been spread in an attempt to stabilize the ground and ameliorate the mud, but the grounds themselves remain rough. Sprained ankles are common and wagons frequently become stuck. (Keep this in mind if the heroes find themselves involved in a foot chase!)

Northwest of the Tourney Grounds lies the Mages' Meadow. To the west of the Tourney Grounds is a sprawling tent city where travelers from around the world encamp. Finally, to the east of the Tourney Grounds lie the city walls and city proper. The events, crowds, and general festivities of the Grand Tourney spill over into all these regions.

The Central Arena

The Central Arena's two tiers boast three distinct grades of seating. The upper tier, furthest from the action, consists of unfinished benches that frequently leave splinters; they are both literally and figuratively the cheap seats. The lower tier is split into two sections, the "merchants" and the "nobles." (A Contest enthusiast might say, *"Got me a seat down in the merchants!"*) These lower-tier seats are expensive-but-superior and exorbitant-but-opulent, respectively. Both sections of the lower tier have both individual seating and box seating.

General admission to the upper tier runs 5 cp for most events. Seating is not reserved, and the gate-workers sometimes oversell the tier's capacity, though more from inattention than malice. Brawls over a place on a bench are not uncommon.

Lower-tier seats are numbered and subscribed, which is to say that single-event tickets in the lower tier are not available from the Tourney administration. Rather, a given seat-subscriber has purchased the right to his seat or box for every Central Arena event, with his right embodied in a slate tile bearing that seat or box number. Of course, no one intends to attend every single event, and so there is an active trade in lower-tier seating rights on an event-by-event basis. Merchants specialized in buying and selling lower-tier event-seating rights, who operate both individually and in small cartels, are making a fortune on the Grand Tourney, probably second only to the bookmakers. Counterfeit seat and box tiles are, regrettably, not unknown, although the bogus tiles are easily discovered and confiscated when two spectators show up to watch the proceedings from the same place. (Of course, by that time, the counterfeiters are long gone…)

As a rule of thumb, single seats in the merchants go for 10–30 sp depending on popular interest in the event in question, and seats in the nobles go for 20–100 sp. Box sizes vary, and typically cost about half again the summed price of the number of seats they accommodate, since the boxes are both prestigious and conspicuous. For example, a four-seat box might run 120–600 sp.

The arena floor is absorbent sand, with rare exceptions. For some unusual events in the past, for example, mages have been enlisted to cover the arena surface with ice, or oil has been poured across the sand and set ablaze.

The Mages' Meadow

At a slight remove from the central Tourney Grounds to the northwest lies the Mages' Meadow, a clear field observed by bleachers and dotted with strange scaffolding. While the latter are occasionally used for unusual fighting events, their chief purpose involves the Grand Tourney's contests for mages.

When the Grand Tourney began several centuries ago, the Circle absolutely forbade the idea that mages would duel one another, but precise displays of magic seemed like an acceptable alternative. The magical contest that developed over the years is effectively a targeting and display contest in which mages use their arcane might to destroy the equivalent of clay pigeons as accurately and breathtakingly as possible before a roaring, awestruck crowd. The scaffolds amount to both launching platforms and acrobatic stages for these events.

The Tent City

The tent city beyond the Tourney Grounds stretches for miles into the fields to the west of Cumberland. Although it is an absolute chaos—it has no proper streets, no guiding principle of organization—the tent city is also fairly safe, since it's in the Tourney organizers' best interests to keep visitors eager and in good health. In addition to patrols of the city watch, there are also mercenary patrols paid to supplement the watch proper. Troublemakers also face the real possibility of having to face twitchy Contest of Arms hopefuls, not to mention sullen Contest also-rans.

Although few visitors need fear for their personal safety, theft is another story entirely. Many visitors form friendships with those whose tents are near their own, and members of these informal communes watch out for each other's things while they're away watching events. Many enterprising individuals also offer their services as paid guards.

SCENE 1

The Qualifying Rounds

EXPLORATION & COMBAT ENCOUNTER

Rainer Aehrenthal welcomes the many contestants to the Autumn Falls qualifiers. The PCs sign up for events and have a look at the competition.

The wait is over, for today the qualifiers begin. There will be archery matches, throwing contests, strength competitions, unarmed bouts, and even a challenge open only to mages. The largest event is the Autumn Falls proper, a tournament in which combatants fight one-on-one, in free form, with all eyes on the ancient dwarf-hammer offered as the grand prize.

Rainer Aehrenthal, a Cumberland merchant of impressive means, is the patron of this year's Contest of Arms. From a dais in the Central Arena, he calls out to hundreds of assembled competitors—including you—"Let the Autumn Falls begin!"

It's assumed that at least one Player Character will want to enter the main Autumn Falls tournament. However, even heroes who choose not to attempt that event will be able to find one or more contests to interest them. As a general rule, assume that any event a player proposes ("Is there knife-throwing competition?") is available at some point. Characters who befriended Felayn find her a ready source of information, local dwarves can fill in heroes from Orzammar, and local Cumberlanders—not to mention Tourney-goers in general—can point Player Characters to events they might like to enter.

The sections that follow describe the qualifying rounds of the Autumn Falls as well as a series of other possible contests. Use them as a basis for other events that the players request or you can imagine.

Given the way these various events are spaced over the course of the Tourney, you will almost certainly wind up interweaving some of them with the scenes that follow this one. However, all of the Autumn Falls qualifiers should be completed before you move to the next scene, since what

Tournament Mechanics

The martial events of the Contest of Arms are adjudicated by a series of complex rules that ensure they remain a celebration of martial prowess rather than a public series of bloodbaths. Although the tournament's body of rules and precedents is voluminous, and its system of judges and judging complex, they boil down to a simple four-part mechanical system by which fights can be ended in one fighter's defeat.

A given tournament combat can be fought to blood (i.e., "first blood"), to distress, to anguish, or (very, very rarely) to death. The majority of contests are fought to distress. Most fights to the death involve old enemies who agree to settle their personal vendettas on the arena floor to the screams of a paying crowd, and the winner usually receives a cut of the upper-tier admissions in addition to whatever glory may accrue.

One-on-one contests end when one party is eliminated. In events with multiple combatants per side, a combatant who suffers elimination (i.e., suffers blood, distress, or anguish) is directed by the judges to leave the event. A combatant who fails to leave when directed, or who strikes an enemy after being eliminated, is ejected from the entire Contest of Arms.

For tournaments of all types, a combatant may yield at any time, surrendering the event in advance of its natural end. A combatant who does not respect an opponent's yield is thrown out of the Contest of Arms. A combatant who yields but then strikes again is "given to the crowd," which is typically both gruesome and fatal.

Blood: A combatant inflicts blood in any of the following circumstances (all of which are considered after accounting for armor):

- A successful attack with an edged weapon that does more than one point of damage.
- A successful attack with a blunt weapon that does three or more points of damage.
- A successful unarmed attack that does four or more points of damage.

A special stunt constitutes a fourth (and particularly flashy or humiliating) way a tournament result of blood can be achieved:

Special Tournament Stunt

SP Cost	Stunt
4	**First Blood:** You draw blood in a humiliating fashion but without dealing any Health damage. This is sufficient to satisfy the Contest of Arms' requirements for a "blood" tournament elimination.

Distress: A combatant suffers distress when they sustain damage, in the current fight, equal to one-third or more of their full Health value. For example, a warrior with a starting value of 53 Health sustains distress upon losing 18 health in the current fight. This is true regardless of how much Health the fighter might have actually had at the beginning of the event given damage left over from other events, from tavern brawls, and so on. If a combatant begins an event with less Health than would be necessary to inflict distress, the judges may, at their discretion, instead use the criteria for a blood tournament elimination.

Anguish: Anguish is similar to distress, save that the damage threshold is two-thirds the full Health value. The example warrior with 53 starting Health sustains anguish upon suffering 36 damage. If a combatant begins an event with less Health than would be necessary to inflict anguish, the judges may adjudge that fighter's loss at the equivalent of a distress elimination.

Death: A combatant suffers death when their Health is reduced to zero, whether their opponent actually elects to make the final blow a killing blow or not. Fights to the death are very rare in the Contest of Arms, and when they're staged, they're more often called "fights until the yield."

follows is predicated on the Kal-Sharok dwarves arriving too late to qualify for the main event.

The Autumn Falls Qualifiers

The qualifying rounds of the Autumn Falls are fought mainly to weed out boring and incapable combatants from the higher-priced main events attended by far more spectators. The Grand Tourney has a reputation to uphold, and while some spectators enjoy watching the kinds of unbalanced match-ups common in the Tevinter Imperium, most Free Marchers prefer a good fight to a massacre.

All competitors must prove themselves in the qualifying rounds, with the exception of the victors of certain previous Contest of Arms events, who are automatically seeded into the tournament proper. The Chevalier Forsard Malecot, for example, won one such event in the summer games, and will only begin fighting in the round of 64 (see page 391).

Qualifying rounds must be fought in armor no heavier than light leather. Warriors accustomed to wearing heavy armor may want to take a close look at the combat options presented on pages 50-51, especially the **Guard Up** minor action, which allows a combatant to forego a bit of offensive power in exchange for an elevated Defense.

Bows and crossbows may not be carried into the arena. Otherwise, combatants are limited to an arsenal of weaponry (including a shield) that they can carry in their hands all at once. Heroes who attempt to game the system, such as by

hand-carrying a half-dozen throwing knives onto the sand before proceeding to re-sheathe them, might or might not get into an argument with the judges, at your discretion.

Magic is not allowed in the arena, with the exception of enchanted weaponry and armor for those who own such. Fighters may neither cast spells nor be their beneficiary during their matches

In each qualifying fight, four combatants are thrown into the arena together in a fight to the point of distress. Fighters enter the elliptical arena from the compass points, and so begin at a range of about 20 yards from the closest opponent. The last fighter remaining advances to the next round. This process repeats until a total of 64 fighters remain, at which point the Autumn Falls proper begins (see **Part 4, Scene 1: Declare Yourself**).

The judges do their best to make sure that there are no potential allies among any given group of four, and there are more than enough entrants to scatter into different fights those who are known to have come to the Contest together. Once a given fight of four starts, any two fighters who obviously ally with each other are called out of the fight immediately, regardless of their wounds. However, unspoken alliances are common (until only the allied fighters remain, anyway). A **TN 11 Communication (Deception)** test is required to dupe the judges in such cases.

All Autumn Falls events are fought on foot; cavalry are involved in the summer games.

Sword & Shield Qualifier

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication**
2	**Constitution** (Stamina)
0	**Cunning**
1	**Dexterity** (Brawling)
0	**Magic**
0	**Perception**
3	**Strength** (Intimidation, Heavy Blades)
1	**Willpower** (Self-discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
11	50*	13	3

*17 damage causes distress, 34 causes anguish

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Fist	+3	1d6+3
Bastard Sword	+5	2d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance (1SP) and Dual Strike (3SP).

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Unarmed Style (Novice), and Weapon and Shield Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Light Blades, and Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Light leather armor, medium shield, and bastard sword.

Human Falls Qualifier Opponent

For PCs in the qualifying rounds, use your judgment to determine how many fights-of-four must be won to seize a place in the round of 64. If the players are having fun fighting, let it continue, but be careful not to marginalize those playing non-combatants, or let them become bored.

Events & Contests

In addition to the main event—the Autumn Falls—the Contests of Arms boasts dozens, and maybe even hundreds, of other events. A few examples are briefly described below. Invent others freely as they interest your party of heroes. Improvise the statistics of NPC contestants in order to challenge the heroes.

The Throwing Contest

In the throwing contest, contestants throw axes or daggers to hit flying (tossed) leather-skinned targets called "punts" at various distances.

In the qualifying round, a contestant must hit two of three punts at 8 yards to advance. Each of the three tosses requires a **TN 11 Dexterity (Axes or Light Blades)** test with a –2 penalty for range unless the contestant has a superior weapon with an extended short range.

Dual Swords Qualifier

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication**
2	**Constitution**
1	**Cunning**
3	**Dexterity** (Light Blades)
1	**Magic**
1	**Perception** (Searching)
2	**Strength** (Heavy Blades)
2	**Willpower** (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	50*	13	3

*17 damage causes anguish, 34 causes distress

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Fist	+3	1d6+2
Longsword	+4	2d6+2
Shortsword	+5	1d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance, Dual Strike (3SP), and Lightning Attack (2SP if shortsword).

Talents: Armor Training (Novice), Unarmed Style (Novice), and Dual Weapon Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Light Blades, and Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Light leather armor, longsword, and shortsword.

Human Falls Qualifier Opponent

In subsequent rounds, remaining contestants must go three for three at targets that become vanishingly smaller. Mechanically speaking, this means that the TNs for the throwing tests increase by 2 per round until only one contestant remains.

If all contestants are eliminated in the same final round, a "sudden death" round commences among the tied participants, with those tied taking turns to throw against the last TN they successfully hit, with elimination on a single miss.

As in the archery contest, competitors can attempt impressive tricks. This is much more common in this contest than in archery.

In addition to the main throwing contest, there are variants staged throughout the Contest of Arms that involve throwing while blindfolded, while increasingly intoxicated, while hanging upside down, or at the other contestants (sometimes while blindfolded, intoxicated, and/or upside down). The fans of these various competitions are predictably among the most light-footed dodgers in all of Thedas.

The main throwing contest offers a 100-dragon purse. The side contests offer smaller cash prizes. Many of these niche contests also have traveling trophies over which many of the same contestants vie year after year. The impressively battered Tin Tankard of Towerby, for example, is the traveling prize for the drunken axe-throwing contest, and has been changing hands for more than a century. Its battle scars arise from the tradition of using it as the punt for any sudden death rounds required in that event.

The Archery Competition

The archery competition draws more than 100 competitors. It is divided into three "flights" of short, long, and distant range respectively. In each flight, competitors shoot arrows into targets made of concentric rings. At short range, each competitor shoots ten arrows and the lowest-scoring half of the field is eliminated. At long range, each remaining competitor shoots another ten arrows and all but six archers are eliminated. At distant range, the final six competitors take turns shooting arrows into a common target. After each archer has fired, the archer whose arrow was most distant from the bull's-eye is eliminated. Thus, the eventual winner will shoot five arrows at distant range, with one competitor eliminated after each.

Long bows are the weapon of choice in archery contests. Crossbows are seldom used, and even disallowed in some archery events.

Dwarf Qualifier

Abilities (Focuses)
–1	Communication
3	Constitution (Drinking)
–1	Cunning
0	Dexterity
0	Magic
0	Perception
4	Strength (Axes, Bludgeons, Might)
3	Willpower (Courage, Self-discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	65*	10	3

*22 damage causes distress, 44 causes anguish

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Fist	+0	1d3+4
Throwing Axe	+6	1d6+6
Two-handed Maul	+6	2d6+7

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Knock Prone and Mighty Blow (1SP).

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Thrown Weapon Style (Journeyman), and Two-hander Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, and Staves.

Equipment: Light leather armor, two throwing axes, and two-handed maul.

Dwarven Falls Qualifier Opponent

Optional Rule: Pure Grit

If you're willing to do a little extra bookkeeping, allow the following optional rule in tournament events fought to distress or anguish (and make sure the players are aware of the option before the fight begins):

Pure Grit

A character who sustains damage that would normally knock them out of a contest can attempt to conceal the true extent of their wounds from the judges—putting on a show of not being hurt—in order to avoid being called out. Upon being hit by an attack whose damage would result in elimination, the character may make a variable **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test with a TN equal to the number of points of damage either (a) sustained from that hit, or (b) sustained above the threshold for elimination in the current event, whichever is higher. On a success, the combatant is not called out, and may continue fighting until another wound causes a failed test. On a failure, the judges realize the true extent of the character's injuries and call him out immediately.

To grit one's teeth and try to fight on bears no stigma of foul play in the Contest of Arms. Rather, it's thought of as excellent strategy, and marks those who can carry it off as disciplined and mighty warriors in the eyes of the crowd and their fellow competitors.

If you allow this rule, NPCs are also permitted to attempt this stratagem.

Treat short range (25 yards) as an advanced **TN 10 Dexterity (Bows)** test requiring a threshold of 15 to advance. A contestant gets 10 shots.

Treat long range (50 yards) as an advanced **TN 12 Dexterity (Bows)** test requiring a threshold of 20 to advance. (The –2 penalty for long range has already been figured into the target number.) Again, a contestant gets 10 shots.

At distant range, the targets are moved to 100 yards. At this range, the competitors make a series of regular (that is, not advanced) **TN 15 Dexterity (Bows)** tests. (The –2 penalty for long range has already been figured into the target number.) Roll separately for each NPC archer. All contestants who fail miss the target entirely and are eliminated. If all fail, repeat the round without eliminating anyone. If all succeed, the archer with the lowest degree of success is eliminated. Repeat this process until only one competitor— the victor—remains.

At any range, a competitor may attempt an impressive trick by voluntarily accepting a –3 penalty on a given shot. Success at a trick shot makes the crowd go berserk. Success at many trick shots over the course of the event is likely to bolster the contestant's reputation around the Tourney. Players should describe the nature of their trick shots before rolling the dice. Examples might include shooting blindfolded, shooting off-handed, making ricochet shots, or splitting opponents' arrows.

Those entering the archery contest will surely face off against the Avvar Alsgaard of Stormhold, as well as others of his band. Alsgaard's stats are provided on page 370; improvise other contestants as needed.

The prize for victory in the archery competition is 100 gold dragons and the ancient long bow Hawksflight, a superior masterwork made of ironbark. It has minimum strength –1, bestows one bonus talent level, gives the benefit of the Bows focus even to those who do not have it, has short range 39 yards and long range 104 yards, has a +2 accuracy bonus, and will have a +3 social bonus (see The **Social Benefits of Masterworks and Superior Items** on page 328) by the time someone has won it in this competition.

Wrestling Matches

Unarmed bouts (called "wrestling" by Tourney attendees regardless of what combat styles the combatants of any given fight actually adopt) are typically fought within a ten-yard ring by two opponents stripped to the waist. Fighters are often matched against challengers of approximately the same size and weight, though certain champions are willing to take on all comers.

Most unarmed bouts are fought to distress, but in all cases, being forced from the ring is an automatic loss. Armor, obviously, is prohibited.

Tournament brackets of 32 or 16 fighters are common, but some events are perpetual, with a "winner stays, loser walks" rule and a small purse—usually ten or twenty silvers—paid for each fight won.

Wrestling bouts are exceedingly popular and heavily wagered on. The crowds they draw are rowdy, to say the least.

The Mages' Meadow

One of the most popular events the Contest of Arms has ever put on is also one of its most controversial, since the Chantry remains uncomfortable with the idea that the mass of Thedans may ever view mages with anything other than distrust and skepticism while the bulk of the Circle would like to be at least neutrally regarded by the populace at large.

In the Mages' Meadow contests, Circle mages compete to destroy fast-moving, enameled clay targets with magic. Special powders are worked into the enamel so they burst in spectacular colors when destroyed with enough force or flame. The targets are hurled from a number of different locations on the meadow, including scaffolds and trenches, so that the contestants never know from where to expect their next target.

For each target, a mage must make a **TN 9 Perception (Seeing)** test to see a target in time to cast either an Arcane Lance or spell at it. Hitting the target then requires a **TN**

Turning One Coin Into Two

While fighters make their reputations in the Contest of Arms, canny bettors and bookmakers make fortunes wagering on the events' outcomes. The placing of bets can be carried out as abstractly or concretely as you desire, as is interesting to the players.

If you desire a simple mechanic for general betting on no particular contestant, a PC betting relatively pedestrian amounts—less than a gold dragon—can spend an afternoon or evening observing events and placing bets to make a **TN 13 Communications (Gambling)** test. Before rolling, the player specifies the amount he's risking. On a failure, the funds are lost. On a success, they're multiplied by the test's degree of success. (So, to be clear, on a Dragon Die result of 1, the hero simply remains even.)

Wagering on the Falls

Afternoon's Wager	Test TN
1–5 gp	15
5–10 gp	17
10+ gp	19

PCs who wish to bet more than a gold piece in a day face higher test TNs according to the accompanying table, as those willing to cover such bets become more canny bookmakers.

There is effectively no wager so large that no bookmaker can be found to cover it. That said, the larger the bet, the more seriously the entire affair will be taken, from the security of the coins themselves to the oversight of the bookmakers' agents in making sure the events themselves are not fixed. (Or, at least, not fixed against the bookmaker…)

If you desire more detail than this abstract system provides you can easily invent and introduce odds for specific events and contestants, intriguing NPC bookmakers, events that disreputable contestants are trying to fix, and the like. It would be possible to base an entire campaign on such contests and their associated shenanigans of commerce, if one wished.

9 Magic (Arcane Lance) test, and destroying it requires 4 points of damage.

The target numbers to both spot a target and hit it increase by +2 each time three more successive targets have been thrown. (So it's **TN11** for the fourth through sixth targets, **TN13** for the seventh through ninth, and so on.) Increasingly hardy targets are also thrown, with the damage threshold for destruction increasing by 1 every three targets. Any mage missing a cumulative total of three targets for whatever reason—failing to spot them, failing to hit them, or failing to destroy them—is eliminated, with their score standing at the total number of targets destroyed.

Trick shots can be attempted by mages willing to add any amount of their choosing to any given target numbers. Greater amounts, naturally, indicate more impressive shots (if successful). As with the archery and throwing competitions, players should describe the trick shots they attempt.

The highest score each day wins a gold dragon, the highest score each week wins a dozen Lyrium Potions (see page 330 of this book), and the highest score for the whole of the Contest of Arms wins a Channel of Might (per the **Channel of Entropic Might** on page 333 of this book, but flavored for the specialty of the victorious mage).

The best trick shot of the Contest of Arms brings with it a 25-dragon purse. The mage who is the audience favorite of the entire Autumn Falls (which is determined from among the obvious contenders in the Central Arena by the vocal acclaim of the crowd immediately before the final round of the Autumn Falls' final combat) is awarded a superior, masterwork crown with a +3 social bonus.

A mage may enter the Mages' Meadow as often as there is space to accommodate them (it wouldn't do to have the Meadow stand unused), which is generally once every 1d6 days.

SCENE 2

Sharokovar Speaks

Roleplaying Encounter

The Grand Tourney is interrupted by the late arrival of a band of dwarves from Kal-Sharok.

It's a warm evening and the night events of the Grand Tourney are just getting started. Rumor has it that a troupe of outrageously skilled fire-eaters will perform on the riverbank tonight, and that's where you're headed when a band of heavily armed dwarves with blazing torches and determined expressions surges around a corner ahead of you with a large – and growing – crowd of gawkers in tow.

Care to follow?

The dwarves are a band of warriors from the distant dwarven city of Kal-Sharok. Their arrival is a total shock to everyone in the city, but especially to the dwarves from Orzammar. Kal-Sharok was abandoned to its fate two hundred years ago when the king and Assembly of Orzammar ordered the Deep Roads between the two cities sealed. Kal-Sharok has been thought destroyed ever since. To recognize these dwarves by their regalia requires a **TN 17 Cunning (Historical Lore)** test. Those who fail this roll see and sense only that these dwarves are strange—pale, younger than would be expected, seem somewhat diminished, as if worn down by prolonged hardship and horror.

Lord Lyulf Azaharg

Abilities (Focuses)	
3	**Communication** (Bargaining)
1	**Constitution** (Stamina)
2	**Cunning** (Engineering, Navigation)
0	**Dexterity**
0	**Magic**
2	**Perception** (Smelling)
4	**Strength** (Axes, Might)
4	**Willpower** (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	65	10	10

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Two-handed Axe	+6	3d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike (3 SP), Mighty Blow (1 SP with two-handed weapons), and Lethal Blow.

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Champion (Journeyman), Two-hander Style (Master).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bludgeons, Heavy Blades, and Spears.

Equipment: Heavy plate armor and two-handed axe.

The young, pale lord of a failing people; the last ember of a dying fire, or the glowing spark of a new one.

The Sharokovar Thaig is where the Assembly of Kal-Sharok now meets. It has no king, and does not bow to Orzammar. Its dwarves have been cut off from their brethren for so long that their culture has become strange and a bit unsettling. This is not remotely common knowledge; the full details are scarce even among the Children of the Stone.

The Kal-Sharok delegation heads directly to the Central Arena, addressing those who question them only briefly and gruffly ("You'll find out why we're here soon enough, cloud-gazer"). At the arena, the delegation demands to be heard by the judges of the Grand Tourney. When the judges present are assembled, the delegation's leader speaks:

"I am Lord Lyulf Azaharg of the mighty and ancient dwarf-kingdom of Kal-Sharok!"

Murmurs race through the crowd but Lord Azaharg thunders above them:

"We have braved Deep Roads long-abandoned to represent the Sharokovar Thaig at this Proving, and to claim the Weaponsfather's hammer that rumor tells us has been discovered. We will undergo any challenge to prove our worth. Name the trial and we shall dispatch it!"

The arena erupts. Some demand the dwarves be allowed to fight, others thunder that they've arrived too late. Lord Aehrenthal, the patron of the Tourney, is soon summoned to adjudge this singular development.

If any of the heroes wish to speak publicly or interact with the Kal-Sharok dwarves they have a few minutes to do so. Then Aehrenthal arrives in the arena at almost exactly the same time that Lords Kynrik and Quennar—along with their Orzammar warriors—arrive on the scene.

The noise in the arena quiets as Lord Aehrenthal arrives and ascends to the box where the judges have been conferring. But it is not Aehrenthal who takes advantage of the silence. From behind you a voice thunders, "These dwarves have missed the qualifying rounds! Certainly the honor of the Autumn Falls shall not be sullied by an unwarranted accommodation."

You spin around. It is Lord Quennar of House Gustrik, accompanied by Lord Kynrik and nearly every Orzammar dwarf in the city.

Azaharg spins, his eyes flashing. He spears Quennar with a look that could shatter a mountain. "You have no voice, Orzammar. The Stone has forgotten your name."

Bedlam erupts!

Dwarves everywhere draw weapons, shouting. Kynrik calls for calm, Quennar for blood. The crowd wavers…

The entire situation rests on a knife-edge, and could fall in any direction. One or more PCs who act quickly and decisively can influence what happens.

- Any hero who calls to be heard is acknowledged, and any PC who makes a **TN 15 Communication (Leadership or Persuasion)** test can influence the crowd.
- A hero who is sympathetic to the Kal-Sharok dwarves but believes that rules are rules can influence the judges to turn down the latecomers' petition. If this happens, Azaharg spits on the ground in front of the

judges' stand and withdraws, casting nary a glance to the Orzammar dwarves. He and his followers retreat to the outskirts of the tent-city where they sullenly observe the games while making plans to ambush the tournament victor and take Anvilbreaker by force.

- A hero who passes the test and argues that the newcomers should be allowed to fight is greeted with a great cheer from the enthusiastic crowd. Aehrenthal and the judges declare the Kal-Sharok band most welcome, deeming a trip through the Deep Roads as the equivalent of a qualifying round. The Kal-Sharok band takes up lodgings in the Dragon's Den, although they make a point of choosing an inn as far removed from the Orzammar dwarves' accommodations as they can manage.

While Lord Kynrik quietly approves of this course, Lord Quennar quietly marks any PCs who spoke in favor of the Kal-Sharok dwarves. At an opportune time, he sends dwarf assassins after them. (Use the statistics for the assassins in **Part 1, Scene 2: Not for Gold**.) He also directs any of the dwarves under his influence to strike to kill against such PCs if they face them in the tournament. More positively, Azaharg approaches any PCs who spoke on his group's behalf as the crowd disperses, to offer his people's thanks. This is a stiff, awkward interaction if any of them are Orzammar dwarves, but Azaharg's honor demands the gesture.

The PCs may also wish to influence the crowd in other directions. It might be possible to ignite a widespread melee, to offer up a PC's earned place in the tournament to Kal-Sharok, or anything else the players can think of. Play outlying ideas by ear. Roleplaying stunts are especially appropriate in this situation.

If the PCs aren't interested in taking a side, Aehrenthal and the judges eventually decide to allow the Kal-Sharok dwarves into the tournament. They figure the excitement will be better for ticket sales.

Scene 3

Explosive Afternoon

Exploration Encounter

An explosion in the city provides an alert that something sinister is afoot in Cumberland.

This scene is best staged at some final, critical moment of one of the events of the Contest of Arms other than the Autumn Falls qualifiers. For example, if one of the PCs is a brawler, perhaps the explosion erupts at the end of a tough wrestling match, distracting the hero's opponent and allowing the PC's final blow to land unblocked. Otherwise, the explosion can be staged so that it occurs while the PCs are traveling through the city streets.

It's best not to stage the explosion while the heroes are actually present at the Broken Oar. If you do that, they'll probably come to the (incorrect) conclusion that the event somehow involves their presence, which is likely to confuse them unduly when they're called on later to get involved in the investigation.

A deep sound like a thunderclap comes suddenly from somewhere to the east, lower than the roar of a crowd but stronger by far. It sounds a bit like the powers you've heard unleashed on the Mage's Meadow, but that lies in the other direction.

In the distance, a cloud of smoke rises above the city. What do you want to do?

Some PCs may decide this is none of their business and ignore it. They eventually hear that a fire got out of control in a tavern kitchen in the city. The rumor mill offers a somewhat perplexing lack of explanation for the noise of the explosion, but most simply shrug it off. (*"How should I know? I wasn't there."*)

Heroes who investigate the noise don't have to look very hard for the source. The rising column of smoke leads them right to the Broken Oar, a tavern that's now missing its entire back wall. Volunteers work a bucket line to put out the fires that remain and a Circle healer tends to the burned and traumatized in a courtyard nearby. None of these people have any idea what happened, although some are happy to propose wild guesses as stone facts.

A hero who asks around after eyewitnesses and makes a **TN 13 Communication (Investigation)** test eventually locates Klera, a stunned tavern worker who can report the following, assuming she's shown a bit of kindness and given a few moments to gather her wits:

- Klera was alone in the Oar's main kitchen when there was some kind of loud explosion in the tavern's smaller, secondary back kitchen. She ran out of the tavern as fast as she could.
- Klera's boss, Oktav Vogl, the owner of the Broken Oar, was in the secondary kitchen at the time of the explosion. She hasn't seen him since the fire broke out, and supposes he's dead. (She begins to cry when she realizes this.)
- Klera can't remember anything unusual that happened this afternoon. She grants that there's a rather high bar for "unusual" these days, given the clientele that's in the city for the Grand Tourney.
- At first, Klera can't think of anyone who might have wished Vogl harm. Given a follow-up question or two and a successful **TN 13 Communication (Investigation)** test, it occurs to her that one of Oktav's old employees, Pauli, came by a few nights ago and had some sort of argument with the tavern-keeper. Klera has no opinion of Pauli one way or the other. She recollects that he was fired (as opposed to having quit), but she also has the sense that he and Oktav remained friends. In any case, she knows for certain that Pauli continued to hang around the tavern after leaving its employ.

Klera

Attributes (Focuses)

Communication 3 (Performance); **Constitution** 1 (Drinking); **Cunning** 0; **Dexterity** 2; **Magic** –1; **Perception** 2 (Empathy); **Strength** 0; **Willpower** 1 (Faith).

Broken Oar tavern worker.

Digging in the rubble of the Broken Oar's secondary kitchen and making a **TN 13 Perception (Searching)** test uncovers a large, twisted lump of iron buried under the rubble at the center of the explosion. It looks to be the remains of a stove.

Heroes who investigate more widely and make a **TN 15 Perception (Searching)** test note that the edges of the breach in the inn's back wall are more blown apart than burned. A degree of success of 4 or more allows a hero to note, further, that there are iron shards embedded in various remains of the secondary kitchen, as well as the shop across the back alley. These are from the stove.

Consideration of the whole scene and a **TN 15 Cunning (Arcane Lore or Military Lore)** test suggests that a few very powerful spells, and a few siege weapons, could theoretically cause such devastation. However, the damage here seems quite concentrated, and the fire damage quite limited, to be consistent with those causes.

If you are using the optional Qunari subplot (see **Guess Who's Coming to Dinner**), Drun and his fellows eventually show up at the Broken Oar to inspect the damage.

If the heroes decide to beat the bushes for Pauli, the outcome of pursuing that lead is described in **Part 4, Scene 4: Pauli's Final Revelation**.

There is nothing more the PCs can discern on the scene, unless you wish to elaborate on some trail of clues or subplot. While the heroes investigate the issues discussed above, remind them of the opportunity for exploration stunts.

In any case, the city watch eventually shoos onlookers away and the encounter ends.

What Happened Here

As Klera reports, Pauli was an employee of Oktav Vogl at the Broker Oar until he was fired for general sloth and slow-wittedness. Even after his firing, the amiable Pauli held no grudges, remaining friends with Vogl and continuing to hang around the Oar.

But Pauli has also made some other new friends recently: He joined the Last Moon cult, and was one of the cultists responsible for transporting the barrels of stolen Qunari gaatlok powder to various points near the Central Arena. For fun, Pauli stole two bags of the stuff to pull a trick on his old boss. He planted them in the seldom-used back kitchen at the Broken Oar, knowing that at some point the increased business of the Contest of Arms would force the back kitchen into use, at which time an entertaining stove full of bright lights and loud noises would prove to be a big, fun surprise for everyone in question.

Whoops.

As described above, the quantity Pauli judged sufficient to shock his old friend instead killed him, blowing out the back half of the tavern to boot. In the wake of this disaster, Pauli is terrified. Not only is he full of absolute remorse at what he's done, he's terrified that his cult masters will kill him for stealing the two bags of powder. But even worse, now that he knows how potent the gaatlok powder is, he realizes the full extent of the cult's plans. They're not putting on a show, they're planning to incinerate the entire Central Arena and kill everyone in it. That's not what he had in mind when he joined the cult to make new friends.

For more information on Pauli's plans and whereabouts, see **Part 4, Scene 4: Pauli's Final Revelation.**

SCENE 4

A LATE INVITATION

ROLEPLAYING ENCOUNTER

The PCs are summoned to a late-night meeting with Rainer Aehrenthal and the Grey Warden Kilina, where they are invited to join the Warden's investigation into a series of disquieting crimes.

It is well past midnight when pounding shakes the door of your room [or, "…when rough voices demand wakefulness from outside your tent"]. A half-dozen figures in gleaming half-plate stand outside. As you squint, bleary-eyed, their apparent leader speaks:

"Ah, good, you are awake. We've been sent to bring you to our employer, Rainer Aehrenthal. He would speak with you on a matter of some urgency."

The men are members of Aehrenthal's personal guard. Their leader's name is Veit. A **TN 11 Cunning (Heraldry or Military Lore)** test confirms that the crest on their armor is Aehrenthal's. They have no idea what their boss wants with the PCs, and are willing to wait while the PCs don arms and armor if they wish (which suggests that the PCs aren't under arrest or otherwise in trouble with the Contest patron).

If the heroes decline Aehrenthal's invitation Veit is genuinely surprised, and makes sure the PCs are aware that Aehrenthal is the patron of the entire Contest of Arms. If the PCs object due to the odd hour, Veit notes that Aehrenthal is most generous with his friends, and that he would not summon the heroes at such a late hour without good reason. If they continue to refuse, Veit shrugs and departs, his men in tow.

If one or more of the PCs is willing to go, Veit gives them dark, hooded cloaks to conceal their features and identities. The troops then take them directly and swiftly to one of Cumberland's richer neighborhoods on the east side of the Cumber. (If necessary, a ferry stands ready to shuttle them across the river.) They take prudent if somewhat paranoid security measures all the way, such as men running ahead to scout their route.

At the end of it they're swiftly ushered into an elegant but fortified mansion. In a warmly upholstered study, an average-sized man of trim middle years with close-cropped grey hair and intense blue eyes rises to meet the group. An ample fire blazes in the hearth to ward off the chill autumn night air. The PCs may recognize Aehrenthal—for this is he— from either the Autumn Falls opening ceremonies or the arrival of the Kal-Sharok dwarves.

Aehrenthal introduces himself, Veit and his men retreat from the room, and drinks are offered and procured. When the door to the room is finally closed so the business at hand can be discussed, the heroes notice that it is closed by the hand of Kilina the Grey Warden, who—unless anyone proactively searched the room on their arrival—went unnoticed until that moment. She smiles at the PCs.

RAINER AEHRENTHAL

Abilities and Focuses

Communication 4 (Bargaining, Deception, Etiquette, Persuasion); **Constitution** 1 (Drinking); **Cunning** 4 (Cultural Lore, Engineering, Military Lore); **Dexterity** 0; **Magic** 0; **Perception** 1; **Strength** 0; **Willpower** 3 (Morale).

Cunning, generous, and obsessive arms merchant.

Once the PCs have made themselves comfortable, Aehrenthal thanks them for coming at such an hour and begins a monologue:

"In any city people die. Age advances, sickness claims health, passion and petty vengeance go astray. But not like this.

"Not so long ago, five dockworkers were foully butchered on the west bank of the river, inside Cumberland. Ritual slayings, it seems, the bodies mutilated. Murders as foul as killings can be.

"The city authorities covered up the atrocity. Why cause a panic? But the slayings have continued, become more bold. A trio of my own best agents. An entire patrol of the city watch. And now, this very evening, an Orzammar dwarf. Their lords scream for vengeance, convinced the party from Kal-Sharok perpetrated the crime. In a foreign city? Above ground? I think not.

"These deaths involve a cult, the Last Moon. They worship the Old Gods of the Tevinter. It's clear they've infiltrated Cumberland's assembly of freemen. They're hatching some plot against the Tourney. They sent an assassin to kill Grey Warden Kilina.

"You are here because you are without local entanglements, and you come highly recommended." He again glances at Kilina.

"Will you help us?"

The Last Moon is highly esoteric, but a hero who makes a **TN 17 Cunning (Religious Lore)** test recalls that it is connected to the Tevinter Old God called Lusacan, known as the Dragon of Night.

The players will no doubt have questions. Question and answer sections below summarize what Aehrenthal and Kilina know.

After the heroes' queries have been satisfied, Aehrenthal hopes the PCs will provide an immediate answer as to whether or not they will accept this mission, but he is willing to withdraw and provide them the opportunity to discuss the matter in private. He is not willing to let them leave his home without giving him an answer; if they will not say yes before going, he takes that as no, lamenting the sad depths to which Fereldan blood has fallen in these dark days. He also requests that the heroes keep what they have learned to themselves.

If the PCs agree, Aehrenthal informs them that they will be able to find his man Veit near the arena on most days, and that they can get a message to Aehrenthal personally through nearly any of the authorities at the Grand Tourney. Kilina informs the heroes that she will continue to investigate on her own, and that while they may see her around the tourney grounds, they shouldn't act with familiarity in public.

Veit and his men see the PCs back across the river, or as far as they wish an escort, and this scene ends.

Questions & Answers

As in other published *Dragon Age* RPG scenarios, these questions and answers are not meant to be literally exchanged. Rather, they're written in this format to communicate the information succinctly, so you can easily manage the roleplay between Aehrenthal, Kilina, and the heroes.

"Why would an assassin attack you?"

Kilina: *Presumably to put a stop to my investigation, or in retaliation for it. I can't say for sure.*

"How do you know the Last Moon is behind all this?"

Kilina: *The assassin said, "Till the night covers all," a phrase associated with the Last Moon. He also bore a tattoo of the stylized crescent that represents the Last Moon. Unfortunately, he fought too viciously to survive for questioning.*

Why do you think the incidents are connected?"

Kilina: *The victims were all butchered similarly, apparently in keeping with rituals that the records my Order keeps say are related to the veneration of Lusacan. There doesn't appear to be any connection between the victims, though – not that we can see.*

Aehrenthal: *Even if they're not connected, the killings must stop. One explanation or many, the Grand Tourney must go on.*

"How are these crimes related to the Grand Tourney?"

Aehrenthal: *We don't know. Perhaps it is simply the case that this grand gathering has attracted murderous madmen just as it has attracted thousands of honorable freemen from the Marches and beyond. But most importantly, it's related to the Grand Tourney in that they are happening in the same place, at the same time. Whatever foul deeds are at work, they cannot be allowed to dampen the success of this tournament.*

"Wouldn't the local watch, or your own men, be better suited to this investigation?"

Aehrenthal: *I've already set my best agents to investigate these killings. They operated with the cooperation of the city watch and officials. As I mentioned, three of those were found butchered and the others have gone missing. It seems clear that our enemies have eyes and ears among Cumberland's freemen.*

"Why us?"

Aehrenthal: *We need skilled, swift outsiders. From what Kilina tells me and what I have observed, you are such. Have we missed our guess?*

"What exactly do you want us to do?"

Kilina: *Find out who's behind these murders, of course. And stop them from committing more.*

Aehrenthal: *And if you can't find them, at least keep them at bay until four days hence, when the tournament's final round is fought. Whatever perversities they intend to continue in service of their dark god, at least the tens of thousand gathered here will begin to disperse back to their homes after that.*

"How can you help us?"

Aehrenthal: *We can provide you with coin and equipment – whatever you need. And, if it comes to it, armed men. If you need it, send for aid at once. We are never further than the tourney ground, or this estate.*

Kilina: *But keep in mind that your anonymity is a potent weapon. If the circle expands of those who know your faces, not only will your investigation be the more difficult, your lives are likely to be at risk, as well.*

"Why did you call for us so late at night?"

Aehrenthal: *Others who've investigated these matters have been slain, or disappeared. The fewer who know you've met with us, that you're involved in this investigation, the better.*

"Why does a Grey Warden care about any of this? Don't you fight the darkspawn?"

Kilina: *My aims and causes are my own. The Grey Wardens owe explanations to no one.*

"Have you found any darkspawn in Cumberland?"

Kilina: *No, thank the Maker.*

"All of this sounds dangerous. What's in it for us?"

Aehrenthal: *As you have doubtless gathered, I am a man of means. If you uncover what's being plotted and put a stop to it, I will provide a chest of silver and a choice gem from my western mines for each of you. As you may also know, my business is the accoutrements of war. I will direct that suits of the finest half-plate in Nevarra be forged to match each of your proportions, and weapons fit for kings be crafted for your hands.*

(Kilina goes no further in speech, but the twinkle in her eye suggests that success in this mission may bring the valuable favor of the Grey Wardens, as well.)

SCENE 5

A Long Night

COMBAT ENCOUNTER

The Last Moon ambushes the PCs as they return to their accommodations.

You make your weary way down quiet streets back to your beds, turning the disquieting information you've just learned over in your minds. As you're deep in thought, roll **Perception (Hearing or Seeing)**.

Although Aehrenthal trusts his man Veit implicitly—Veit is Aehrenthal's nephew, in fact—one of Veit's men has been bribed by the Last Moon. Whether or not the PCs accepted Aehrenthal's offer, the cultists know the heroes have been speaking to the arms merchant and Grey Warden, and have decided to move against them. Luckily for the PCs, the cultists got late news of the opportunity to attack, and have not been able to mobilize their most deadly resources against them.

The ambush takes place after Veit and his men have left the heroes. The ambush may or may not be well staged, depending on the accommodations the PCs have chosen. If they are staying in the city, they are attacked near the entrance to their inn. If they are sleeping in the tent city, they are assaulted as they cross a clearing among tents. If possible, the assassins choose a place where the heroes will have difficulty recruiting allies or finding cover. You should invent the specifics of the location based on what the players have specified about their lodgings, and what has come before.

There are two attackers per hero. Tactically, the assassins fire crossbows from behind the PCs from two different directions and then throw down their crossbows, rushing to engage quickly before the heroes can escape. If possible, they concentrate their initial volley on any obvious magic-users among the heroes.

The fight begins with a **TN 11 Perception (Hearing or Seeing)** test. Any hero who fails is surprised during the first found of combat. A cultist shooting a surprised hero receives a +2 bonus on his attack roll in the first round of combat.

These cultists of the Last Moon are not exceptional warriors, but are disturbingly determined to bring down the PCs, and they fight without regard for their own lives. Upon rolling doubles, a Last Moon cultist can voluntarily suffer up to 5 penetrating damage points in order to gain additional stunt points on a one-for-one basis, up to a maximum of 6 stunt points total. A cultist might throw himself onto a hero's spear

LAST MOON CULTISTS

Abilities (Focuses)
–3	Communication (Deception)
2	Constitution
1	Cunning (Religious Lore)
0	Dexterity (Bows)
0	Magic
1	Perception
2	Strength (Bludgeons, Intimidation)
3	Willpower (Faith)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8 (10 w/o Armor)	30	10	5

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Crossbow	+2	2d6+2
Mace	+4	2d6+2

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Lethal Blow.

Talents: Archery Style (Novice) and Single Weapon Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bludgeons and Bows.

Equipment: Grey and black robes, light mail, crossbows, and maces.

Nevarran dregs turned zealous disciples of the Last Moon.

in order to Disarm the PC, for example, or negate a parry by grasping an opponent's blade with his bare hand, in order to rain down a Lethal Blow.

The heroes' ultimate experience should be that the cultists are easy to kill but unsettling to fight, and absolutely unwilling to be taken alive. They fight silently, never crying out—not as they attack, not as they're slashed or impaled, not as they die.

After the fight, if the heroes inspect the bodies they find crescent Last Moon tattoos, and on a **TN 9 Perception (Searching)** test, they realize that all these attackers have had their tongues cut out, and relatively recently.

If the PCs manage to take a cultist alive, their captive cannot be made to answer questions; they simply stare into space, and given any opportunity to either escape or take their own life, they attempt such without hesitation.

Basically, you should use the cultists' mad devotion to make it clear to the players that the cultists of the Last Moon—and presumably whatever plans they're hatching—are completely insane.

Part 3 Resolution & Troubleshooting

How it goes in the early scenes of this part of the adventure depends a lot on the extent to which the heroes get involved in the various contests of the Grand Tourney. Encourage their

The Murders

The various murders perpetrated by the Last Moon are not all explored in the scenes that follow. Nevertheless, proactive players may want to look into most, or all, of the various killings. This sidebar presents the bare facts of these crimes so you can improvise the results of whatever investigations the PCs undertake.

All the bodies of these fallen were mutilated in specific ways that Kilina says are associated with the Last Moon. (Not that these associations are widely known. Lusacan is an ancient deity, after all, from another part of the world.) Such ritual disfigurements are part of the Last Moon's rites of slaying, and even though this common thread provides clues to the cult's enemies, their veneration of Lusacan does not allow them to deviate from these practices.

The Dockworkers

The murdered dockworkers were killed because they came upon the Last Moon cultists unloading the Qunari gaatlok from its river transport and one of their number recognized the barrels for what they were. This attack took place months ago, and the trail is quite cold.

The City Watch Patrol

The slain patrol of the city watch likewise discovered Last Moon cultists at some nefarious business and were cut down for it. These killings are weeks old, so as above, clues are scarce.

The Investigators

Aehrenthal's slain investigators were killed—as Aehrenthal fears—precisely for the questions they asked about the crimes. Their bodies haven't been found yet, and unless you rule otherwise, they never will be. Determined heroes might eventually be able to identify which member of the Cumberland council is in thrall to the Last Moon and has been feeding them information about the investigations; how far you go down that road depends on your interest in political investigations. Since the focus of The Autumn Falls is more on the gladiatorial events of the Grand Tourney, this thread isn't an explicit part of the scenario.

Eldrek

The slain Orzammar dwarf was killed in an ambush very much like the one that targeted the heroes in **Part 3, Scene 5: A Long Night**. He was killed in the aftermath of the Last Moon's slaying of the as-yet-undiscovered Kal-Sharok engineer Eldrek. As is described in **Part 4, Scene 2: A Dwarven Dispute**, Eldrek was killed by the Last Moon because they saw him taking too close an interest in their booby-trapped architecture at the Central Arena. But once the cult's knee-jerk murder of Eldrek had been accomplished, they worried that an investigation into his death might bring attention that would expose their plan, so in addition to hiding Eldrek's body as well as they could, the Last Moon hurriedly hatched the plan of killing a randomly selected Orzammar dwarf to make it look like a retaliatory attack and hopefully start a distracting feud among the dwarf factions that would persist until after the Last Moon's plot was carried to its conclusion. Keep in mind that although Eldrek was killed first by the cult, his Orzammar counterpart's body was discovered first.

involvement, by all means, but avoid allowing other elements of the plot to fall by the wayside. Run a contest event or two, then **Scene 2: Sharokovar Speaks**, then another event or two, then **Scene 3: Explosive Afternoon**, and so on. If the players seem interested, improvise additional carnival-style events, contests, and games like eating contests, impromptu singing competitions, demonstrations of unusual skills, and so forth.

A party of entirely Fereldan heroes may not care overmuch about the arrival of the Kal-Sharok dwarves. Their disinterest won't particularly affect the main plot line of **The Autumn Falls**, so don't sweat it that's how it unfolds. The worst that happens is that they miss some of the nuances of interacting with the various dwarven factions in **Part 4: For Pride They Shall Come**.

It's possible that the players will ignore **Scene 3: Explosive Afternoon** completely, assuming that it's irrelevant to them. If that happens, they may change their tune after meeting with Aehrenthal and Kilina in **Scene 4: A Late Invitation**. If that happens, allow them to return to the scene of the explosion and find more or less the same clues in the morning, after the ambush of **Scene 5: A Long Night**.

If the PCs don't accept Aehrenthal's mission, run **Scene 5: A Long Night** anyway, since the cultists don't know that the heroes have turned Aehrenthal down. Perhaps the ambush will convince them to reconsider their refusal. If not, the remainder of the adventure plays out quite differently, given that the heroes aren't devoting time to anything other than their contest-related pursuits. In that event, you must decide whether Kilina and Veit step up their game and uncover the Last Moon plot on their own, or whether the entire Central Arena is destroyed according to the cult's plot. The latter option, though grim, is certainly in keeping with the *Dragon Age* RPG's emphasis on dark fantasy and the natural consequences of moral choices. Perhaps such a massive failure will convince the so-called heroes to step it up the next time you confront them with a tough opportunity.

PART 4

For Pride They Shall Come

In **Part 4** the Autumn Falls tournament comes to its conclusion—perhaps in more ways than one. In addition to the scheduled fights, accusations fly among the dwarven factions and brawling spills into the streets. The heroes' investigations into the Last Moon turn up the terrified Pauli, who spills only part of the story before expiring spectacularly. In the end, the PCs must race to prevent the Last Moon from blowing to smithereens the whole Central Arena and its 15,000-plus spectators.

SCENE 1

Declare Yourself

COMBAT ENCOUNTER

The Autumn Falls tournament proper begins in the Central Arena!

This scene is written under the assumption that at least one PC is among the 64 fighters who qualified for the Autumn Falls tournament proper, having made it through the qualifiers (see **Part 3, Scene 1: The Qualifying Rounds**). If none have, tailor the descriptions below if some of the heroes are in the stands to watch, or skip this scene entirely if none of the PCs care to watch the spectacle.

There's nothing like the roar of the crowd, and few crowds in all of Thedas roar with 15,000 voices.

Only 64 fighters remain in the Autumn Falls. You march among them on the sand of the Central Arena, to take your place, to wait for your number to be drawn, and, eventually, to fight.

The first two numbers are called, and two fighters walk to the center of the arena. The tradition of the Free Marcher tournaments calls for each to declare himself—who he is, or for whom he fights. The thunder falls to a whisper as the crowd waits to hear the competitors' declarations.

"Gwaren!" one roars.

"For the honor of my fathers!" shouts the other.

The crowd erupts and the combatants charge!

The Autumn Falls, from this point onward, is a single-elimination tournament with rounds of 64, 32, 16, 8, 4, and 2 warriors respectively. The rounds of 64 and 32 are fought to distress, the rounds of 16 and 8 to anguish, and the rounds of 4 and 2 until one combatant yields—which is to say, until death or unconsciousness. (The rules for these combat stopping-points are found in the sidebar **Tournament Mechanics** on page 379.) In the round of 64, combatants can wear any non-plate armor they wish and carry any weaponry they like, other than bows and crossbows. Otherwise, the rules are the same as the qualifiers.

BELIRAN

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	Communication (Deception)
2	Constitution
2	Cunning
4	Dexterity (Acrobatics, Initiative, Light Blades)
1	Magic
1	Perception (Searching)
3	Strength (Heavy Blades)
2	Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	65*	14	5

*22 damage to distress

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Shortsword	+6	1d6+5
Longsword	+5	2d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Lethal Blow, Lightning Attack (2 SP), and Pierce Armor.

Talents: Armor Training (Novice) and Dual Weapon Style (Master).

Weapon Groups: Light Blades and Heavy Blades.

Equipment: Light mail armor, longsword, and shortsword.

Antivan swordsman.

All 64 qualifying combatants wait around the edges of the arena as 32 first-round combat pairs are determined by the random draw of numbered tiles from a ceremonial bowl. Fights wear on; the morning becomes the afternoon. The crowd cheers wildly for all those who fight honorably. Most spectators have not yet picked out their favorites. Highlights include the resounding success of nearly every dwarf who qualified. There are two obvious standouts among them: Lord Kynrik and Ralevi the Root.

Lord Kynrik declares for House Clangdrol. He proves to be a graceful fighter who wields a magnificent axe and carries a broad round-shield.

Ralevi the Root declares for the Legion, and there's an audible intake of breath as the crowd realizes they're about to witness the fighting skills of a warrior of the legendary Legion of the Dead. Ralevi fights with blackened twin axes, and destroys his opponent so quickly it's a "blink and you missed it" fight.

Lord Forsard Malecot declares for the honor of the Chevaliers, fights in heavy mail, and makes it look easy. He wields a gleaming bastard sword and a kite-shaped heavy shield, wearing his signature antlered mask. He downs his opponent with precise, efficient strokes.

If the Kal-Sharok dwarves managed admission to the tournament, Lord Azaharg declares for "the dwarves left behind," and dispatches his Orzammar opponent by hurling his devastating two-handed maul into his chest, which drives him nearly ten feet backward and leaves him unconscious in the dust.

If heroes who are not fighting take the opportunity of the main event to advance their investigation of the Last Moon, either by keeping an eye on the crowd or poking around in tents and buildings nearly emptied by the draw of the main event, they discover nothing of particular interest at this time.

Eventually, a PC combatant's number is drawn…

You've grown impatient watching others fight, but finally your number is pulled from the bowl. You spring to your feet, collect your weapons, and run onto the sand. The time has come to show these foreigners what you're made of made of. Declare yourself!

A hero who makes a stunning declaration to begin his fight can make a **TN 11 Communications (Performance)** test. Success earns that PC a +2 bonus on their first-round attack from the crowd's roar of approval.

The hero's opponent is an Antivan swordsman named Beliran who declares, "I fight for the lost!" If the PC wins, Beliran is gracious, saluting his opponent before withdrawing from the field of combat.

If several heroes have made it to the round of 64, generate opponents for them who are a level or two above their own, as these fights should definitely be challenging.

As the sun sets, the round of 64 draws to a close. If any PC thinks to ask, locals assure them that on the final day of the Autumn Falls, huge lanterns will light up the Central Arena and the fights will continue into the night, until just two warriors remain to fight one another and fireworks mark the beginning of their battle.

Scene 2

A Dwarven Dispute

Roleplaying Encounter

The PCs hear a commotion and walk into a scene of anarchy: a courtyard full of brawling dwarves.

You're drinking a few well-deserved libations in one of the many taverns near the Central Arena when you hear a commotion outside. Someone near the window gasps, "You've got to see this!"

Outside are brawling dwarves as far as the eye can see. It looks like Orzammar versus Kal-Sharok.

Do you care to get involved?

The Kal-Sharok dwarves just an hour ago found their comrade Eldrek's butchered body and jumped to the communal conclusion that an Orzammar dwarf must be responsible. The Orzammar dwarves, having lost one of their own to foul play recently (as the PCs have heard from Aehrenthal and Kilina), were in no mood to hear such accusations. Unsurprisingly, when the groups confronted each other in the street, someone threw a punch and a general brawl erupted.

When the PCs first see the scene it remains a weaponless brawl. It will remain that way if they wade in and try to break things up, but that's no easy feat: It takes a **TN 15 Communication (Persuasion or Leadership)** test to get enough dwarves to stop fighting long enough to listen to reason. A PC who thinks to suggest that such blatant disregard for public safety could result in the dwarves being kicked out of the tournament, dashing their hopes of obtaining the Paragon Zadol's forge-hammer by legitimate means, gets a +2 bonus to his roll. Conversely, a surface dwarf—no matter how smooth-tongued—who attempts to halt the carnage suffers a –2 penalty to tests to stop the brawl. Roleplaying stunts like Sway the Crowd and Stunned Silence go a long way in this situation to defuse tensions.

If the heroes stand aside, or fail the test, fists and boots escalate to weapons as the city watch arrives and the whole affair turns very, very ugly. At some point during the resulting fight, Lord Kynrik raises his hands to call for calm but an enemy plants an axe in his back and the deep lord slumps to the cobblestones, never to rise again. This has grim implications, for it gives Lord Quennar dominance over the Orzammar dwarves. Quennar directs his delegation to a ruthlessness in tournament combat that leaves their opponents not distressed or anguished, but dead.

On the other hand, if the heroes stop the fighting, Lord Azahard stomps over to them to vent his grief, roaring that one of his brothers has been cruelly murdered. Lord Kynrik pushes his way through the crowd toward the heroes and proclaims with no small dignity that he and his followers

What Happened to Eldrek?

The dwarven smith Eldrek was fascinated by human architecture in part because humans use wood in their buildings, a rare material in the dwarf kingdoms. The Central Arena, being a massive wooden construction, was especially interesting to the engineer.

Eldrek's energetic study of the arena on several occasions brought him to the Last Moon cult's attention. Worried that his active scrutiny would lead him to discover too much about their plan, they killed him and buried his body near the edge of the tent city, hiding it as well as they could. It was for naught, though—the area is so crowded that someone randomly stumbled over it while digging a pit latrine.

If the PCs canvass the Grand Tourney asking after anyone who may have seen a dwarf studying the architecture, a **TN 11 Communication (Investigation)** test turns up one or two witnesses who specifically saw Eldrek checking out the Central Arena with great care, making notes and sketches.

certainly haven't murdered any of their estranged Kal-Sharok brethren.

The PCs can negotiate between the dwarf lords if and as they see fit. The important thing for them to learn at some point in the wake of the fight, in order to advance their investigation plot thread, is that the slain Kal-Sharok dwarf was an engineer of the Smith Caste named Eldrek. Eldrek was fascinated by the human architecture of Cumberland and before his body was found butchered, having been hidden near the outskirts of the tent city, he had told his fellows that he was going to go for a walk about town. The Kal-Sharok dwarves have assumed that he ran into some of the Orzammar host along the way. (This is obviously a flimsy basis for accusing Kynrik's delegation. Gently pointing out that it is so brings a somewhat embarrassed acquiescence from Azaharg, although he protests, "Then who would have done such a thing? We have no other enemies here.")

Scene 3

Every Dog Has Their Day

Combat Encounter

PCs who are still part of the Autumn Falls fight new opponents. One is matched up against the arrogant Orlesian Chevalier Lord Forsard Malecot.

The second day of the tournament dawns bright. The combatants march into the arena; the crowd roars, larger and louder even than yesterday. The first pair of tiles pulled from the bowl brings welcome news: You have been matched against the arrogant Chevalier you fought in the street, Lord Forsard Malecot.

If there are multiple PCs still in the tourney, choose the one with the greatest chance against the powerful Chevalier. Any other PCs still in the tournament should be pitted against one or more of the named dwarven fighters. If Kynrik fell in **Scene 2: A Dwarven Dispute**, remember that under Lord Quennar's leadership, the Orzammar dwarves are deliberately—and dishonorably—fighting to slay their opponents if they can.

This round of 32 is fought to distress, and all armor and weaponry (other than bows and crossbows) are now allowed. Otherwise, the rules are the same as before. Today, however, declarations require a **TN 15 Communication (Performance)** test for a first-round attack bonus, as the crowd is more difficult to impress.

Malecot fights in a suit of ornately decorated half-plate. He has changed his face mask for a far more elaborate (but still antlered) affair covered with intricate writing. He fights cautiously at first, but after taking his opponent's measure to ensure he won't be surprised, he attacks ruthlessly. PCs who fight with unorthodox tactics are treated to extensive verbal abuse in heavily accented King's Tongue.

Lord Malecot has an excellent chance of winning this match. A PC who beats him should feel that the fight was extremely close. Win or lose, Malecot holds a grudge.

Lord Malecot's statistics are found in **Part 2, Scene 2: Of Elks and Griffons**.

This scene ends when its fights conclude.

Scene 4

Pauli's Final Revelation

Roleplaying & Combat Encounter

The PCs discover the whereabouts of ex-cultist Pauli Lueger, who manages to unburden a bit of his soul before he forfeits his life to the Last Moon.

You can stage the opening to this scene in different ways depending on the courses of investigation the heroes have been pursuing. You can even use more than one of these situations:

- If the heroes have been beating the bushes for Pauli after learning about his possible connection to the fire at the Broken Oar, they get a tip that someone has seen Pauli skulking around in the tent city.
- If the heroes were kind to Klera, she tracks them down and tells them that Pauli approached her the night before, behaving in a paranoid fashion and demanding emphatically that she not attend the final day of the Autumn Falls tournament for reasons he was unwilling to divulge. Klera doesn't know what to do; she has the sense that Pauli's strange behavior might be related to the Broken Oar explosion, and worries that he's going to do something stupid on the tournament's final day. Klera says that Pauli mentioned he'd been living in the tent city.

How Did This Idiot Make It So Long?

Given that Pauli is essentially a half-wit, the players (and you, for that matter) may wonder why the Last Moon hasn't found him and taken him out yet. Pauli himself doesn't really know, but the answer is simple: They haven't been looking very hard, until last night. After all, what's one deserter to the Brood of Lusacan, the Dragon of Night? They've been busy pitting the dwarf factions against each other and otherwise keeping their eyes on the prize, which for them is the demolition of the Central Arena and massacre of as many Nevarrans and Free Marchers as the structure will hold.

Last night, though, a Last Moon informant at the Broken Oar—the one who recruited Pauli to the cause originally, as a matter of fact—overheard him trying to warn Klera away from the Central Arena. That's when they decided he had to be tracked down and dealt with, lest he spoil their plans.

- If the heroes have been asking around about the Last Moon, a sleazy informant comes to them offering a tip in exchange for money. He says that he talked to someone in the tent city last night whose name he doesn't know but who matches Pauli's description. Pauli confided that the Last Moon has it in for the whole populace, and that anyone who didn't want to die would stay away from the tournament. Pauli behaved unstably, and wound up running for it in the middle of their conversation, spooked by a loud noise.

If the PCs haven't already been investigating Pauli or the Last Moon cult, and they weren't nice to Klera, they're left in the dark unless you decide to throw them a bone. Pauli is found and killed by the Last Moon (the fight that ends this scene takes place without the PCs' presence) and the heroes are likely to suffer some serious damage in **Scene 5: The Final Rounds**.

However, assuming that the heroes do catch one of more of these leads, they'll likely begin to scour the tent city looking for Pauli. Sometime on the third and final day of the Autumn Falls tournament (the rounds of 16, 8, 4, and 2 are all fought on the same day) the PCs' canvassing turn up a tip, if they can make a **TN 11 Communication (Investigation)** test, that someone has seen a "nervous delinquent" matching Pauli's description lurking around.

Following that lead, they find Pauli lying low in the far northern end of the tent city. He's been sleeping in grass and mud for days, torn between the desperate desire to flee the city and his need to do something to stop the Last Moon's nefarious plot. He knows most of the Last Moon cultists, so he has been able to avoid the few who have bothered to look for him so far.

PCs approaching his hiding spot must make an **opposed Perception (Seeing) vs. Dexterity (Stealth)** test with Pauli to find him. If they find him, Pauli is bedraggled and beside himself. Ideally, the final events have already begun in the Central Arena.

The PCs have about a minute to talk to Pauli, not that they know it. A **TN 13 Communication (Leadership, Persuasion, or Seduction)** test is necessary to get him talking coherently. Mentioning Klera is helpful, giving a +2 bonus to the test. On a success, the heroes can learn that a few months ago, Pauli joined a cult named the Last Moon, but that he ran away from the cult once he found out that they were crazy, and were planning to do something utterly massive—Pauli doesn't really understand what—when the ceremonial fireworks are lit at the end of the tournament. What he does know is that it's going to destroy the whole Central Arena.

Pauli, Ex-Cultist

Abilities and Focuses

Communication –1; **Constitution** 2 (Drinking); **Cunning** –2; **Dexterity** 0 (Stealth); **Magic** –1; **Perception** –1 (Empathy); **Strength** 3 (Might); **Willpower** 1 (Morale).

Largely witless ex-cultist.

Issus Eyras

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication (Deception, Leadership)
3	Constitution
3	Cunning (Arcane Lore, Engineering, Poison Lore)
1	Dexterity
5	Magic (Arcane Lance, Blood Magic)
3	Perception (Tracking)
–2	Strength
3	Willpower (Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
11	75	11	5*

*Rock Armor in effect

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Arcane Lance	+7	1d6+5 (Range 24)
Quarterstaff	+1	1d6–1

Special Qualities

Spellpower: 15 **Mana:** 50 (42 remaining after 6-hour *rock armor*)

Spells: *Blood wound, drain life, flame blast, flaming weapons, invigorate, rock armor,* and *walking bomb.*

Favored Spell Stunts: Mana Shield and Imposing Spell.

Class Powers (Mage 8, Blood Mage specialization): Arcane Lance.

Talents: Blood Magic (Journeyman), Command (Master), and Lore (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Brawling and Staves.

Equipment: Quarterstaff.

Apostate Last Moon cultist.

He knew that his part in the plan was to stand ready, at the arena, in case the tournament was stopped for any reason, to make sure the destruction happened even if the authorities got wind of the plan and tried to evacuate the arena. ("*You can see what I mean – it's madness! I was supposed to stand in a place they're going to completely destroy!*")

If the PCs fail to get Pauli's babbling under control he just keeps spouting useless phrases like, "*They have eyes everywhere! You don't know! Everything's going to end in fire! There's no way to stop it!*"

Either way, Pauli eventually suddenly stops talking in mid-sentence and an odd expression crosses his face. He gasps once; characters witnessing this may think he's been poisoned. A character who makes a **TN 13 Cunning (Arcane Lore)** test has time to scream "*Run!*" (or the equivalent), and a split second later Pauli explodes, the victim of a Walking Bomb spell. Given this warning and assuming immediate flight, the heroes are unharmed. Otherwise, everybody is at ground zero when Pauli explodes and all present take 2d6 damage.

Last Moon Foot Soldiers

Abilities (Focuses)	
–1	Communication
0	Constitution
0	Cunning
1	Dexterity (Initiative, Light Blades)
0	Magic
0	Perception
2	Strength (Staves)
1	Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
11	40	11	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Improvised Weapon	+1	1d6+1
Dagger	+3	1d6+3
Quarterstaff	+3	1d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Mighty Blow and Lightning Attack.

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Bludgeons, Light Blades, and Staves

Equipment: Light leather armor, daggers, and quarterstaves.

Devoted and reliable cultists.

The Last Moon mage who cast the spell is the apostate Issus Eyras. Eyras and a crowd of cultists have managed to sneak up, inside a nearby tent, to just within the 10-yard range of the Walking Bomb spell.

Eyras has no interest in letting the PCs walk away after hearing any of Pauli's revelations, and so the fight is on. There's one cultist present per PC, plus two more, plus Eyras. Eyras hits the most dangerous-looking hero with a Walking Bomb, casts Flaming Weapons to set his minions' weaponry alight, and then proceeds with whatever portions of his arcane arsenal seem most useful to the developing tactical situation.

These Last Moon cultists have not had their tongues cut out like the ones who ambushed the heroes before, and are well-trained to work with the apostate, blocking attackers from reaching him and otherwise fighting intelligently and as ordered. They fight to the death without reservation, doing their psychotic and level best to stop the PCs in any way they can. They do not hesitate to allow Eyras to power his blood magic spells (see the Journeyman level of the Blood Magic talent). They carry quarterstaves, the better to avoid the city watch's attention.

Eyras fights until his mana points are about exhausted, or until it becomes clear that the PCs have gotten the upper hand, at which point he orders his cultists to hold the heroes at bay while he flees to the Central Arena to initiate the final stage of the cult's murderous plan, regardless of what stage the tournament is at.

SCENE 5

The Final Rounds

Combat Encounter

The heroes must stop the Last Moon from blowing up the Central Arena and killing tens of thousands.

On the third day of the Autumn Falls tournament, the rounds of 16, 8, 4, and 2 are fought before the largest audience that will congregate in the Central Arena all year. The rest of the city, for all practical purposes, is empty, with all eyes turned on some of Thedas's most potent warriors.

Player Characters may still be active in the tournament, moving toward the final match-up, although it's not intended to be likely. Barring unusual events that may have transpired so far, Ralevi the Root is widely favored to win the tournament, but upsets are not unheard of, and the PCs may be wildcards. If one or more heroes do remain, pit them against foes of your own invention or against named dwarf NPCs whom they've met. Heroes who're still in the tournament aren't able to go with the rest of the party into the tent city to look for Pauli—at least not without forfeiting the tournament—and so the party may find itself at a significant disadvantage in the fight against Issus Eyras, with their most potent fighters elsewhere.

The Last Moon has concealed barrels of Qunari gaatlok within the arena's scaffolds, pillars, and supports, all rigged to be easily triggered by their willing martyrs. Jagged metal shards packed in with the barrels are expected to send shrapnel flying even as the explosives bring down the stands.

How the final rounds go down depends entirely on what the heroes discover from Pauli, and when they learn it. It also depends on whether Issus Eyras manages to escape his battle against the PCs instead of being slain. If he's running to alert his fellows to blow the gaatlok early, the PCs have a matter of minutes to act, rather than what may be as long as several hours, if they found Pauli in the morning of the third day of the tournament and stopped Eyras cold.

Tactically speaking, there are twenty clusters of explosives scattered around the arena. There are two Last Moon cultists near each cluster, who—when the time comes—must work for three rounds to access their fuse, light it, and wait for it to explode. All have been instructed to work in tandem, lighting their fuses at the moment when the combatants for the round of two are announced from the arena floor.

Spotting a first cluster—for someone who's looking for it—requires a **TN 15 Cunning (Engineering)** test. Spotting additional clusters, for those who know what they're looking for, requires only a **TN 11 Cunning (Engineering)** test. Spotting a cluster by random accident is essentially impossible, unless you're really looking to throw a bone to totally unlucky players.

Stopping a cluster from exploding once its fuse has been lit requires a **TN 15 Cunning (Engineering)** test or **TN 15 Dexterity (Initiative or Traps)** test. Heroes who attempt this and fail find themselves at ground zero of the resulting explosion.

The heroes' job, once they learn what's in the offing, is to find the clusters and prevent them from blowing up. Luckily, they have allies:

- Reiner Aehrenthal needs a bit of convincing that what the heroes are proposing is even possible, but once convinced, he pales and places every resource at his disposal in the heroes' hands.
- Kilina is stunned by the boldness of the Last Moon's plan, but can personally stop at least one cluster from being set off.
- If the heroes have the respect of Lords Kynrik and/or Azaharg, theirs is the most efficient help the PCs could ask for. The dwarves immediately grasp the terrible gravity of the situation and do their level best to assist.
- If the heroes look to Lord Quennar and his followers for help, these blackguards quietly flee the arena, possibly sending agents to try to steal Anvilbreaker as they leave.
- If any of the heroes have good relations with the Circle, they might provide incredibly useful assistance, as there are a considerable number of targeted spells that can stop both cultists and clusters dead in their tracks.

If you'd like some general calculus, assume that Veit and Aehrenthal's men who are immediately at hand are capable of stopping three clusters from being set off. Lord Kynrik and his followers can stop five. Lord Azaharg and his band can stop three. Circle magi can stop four. Kilina can stop one. That leaves four clusters for the PCs in the very best case, which they can attempt to deal with by enlisting unorthodox aid, eliminating cultists on their own, or using any other crazy schemes they can think of. If you're using the Qunari subplot and the PCs have positively interacted with Drun, the Qunari can stop two clusters. Alter any of these numbers as dramatically appropriate.

One thing that you should make clear is that it will be impossible to evacuate the arena. There are simply too many spectators in too small a space with too few exits, and it's too simple for the cultists to manually set off the clusters if they witness any kind of attempt at widespread flight. If the heroes try a general evacuation anyway, their NPC allies try to warn them that the cause is hopeless, but if the PCs persist, they do no more than bring the devastation early.

Keep in mind that the noise and tumult of the crowd is completely overwhelming. Getting anywhere quickly is a non-starter, as is communicating over any kind of distance, or even seeing an ally clearly from more than 10 yards away through the dense crowd. This may work for or against the PCs. For example, if Eyras escapes and returns to warn his brethren, it will take him a while to coordinate them all.

An exploding cluster does 20d6+10 damage 1 yard from the explosion, 19d6+10 damage at 2 yards, 18d6+10 damage at 3 yards, and so on. Don't roll all those dice unless you really need to; assume that most close victims simply die. After 20 yards of distance, the additional damage reduces by 1 point per additional yard, making the closest safe distance 31 yards from a cluster's detonation.

If any clusters explode, dozens of spectators are killed and hundreds wounded by the chaotic stampede that follows (in addition to those killed directly by the explosions). If more than three clusters go off, the Central Arena's structure is

damaged and hundreds more innocents are hurt as they plummet to the ground or are crushed by falling architecture. If more than half of the clusters explode, the entire Central Arena collapses. More than ten thousand people are killed in a horrific massacre. The Last Moon becomes infamous and many dangerous villains flock to their banner, giving you enough fodder for a whole campaign of further adventures.

Part 4 Resolution & Troubleshooting

The progress of this part depends a great deal on how far PC heroes manage to advance in the tournament. Even once all PCs are eliminated from the competition, the Autumn Falls remains an awesome backdrop for their investigation. Give the players as much information as their characters seem to be interested in about who's fighting, how the odds are stacked, and so on. The inexorable advance of the tournament's schedule should give the players—if not their characters—the sense that they're running out of time.

If different groups of heroes are fighting and investigating, cut back and forth between them, trying to keep any players from getting bored.

The fight with Issus Eyras should be nasty and one or more PCs could die. If you want to give the heroes a break, knock Eyras's mana points down a bit, assuming he cast more spells earlier in the day. If Eyras and the Last Moon are really mopping the floor with the PCs, Kilina could show up to even the odds.

Stopping the Last Moon's plot and preventing the explosive clusters from going off should be a difficult task. Stopping all of the clusters should be near impossible, especially if the PCs didn't cultivate allies earlier. If your players will be truly bothered by not being able to save everybody, you may wish to reduce the number of clusters, but remember that *Dragon Age* is a grim game and Thedas a dark world. What an excellent opportunity for roleplaying to be hailed as a hero, yet not be able to forgive yourself for the ones you couldn't save…

Unless a PC is involved, you'll have to decide how the tournament ended. Ralevi the Root may have won, lost, or the final duel been disrupted or abandoned in the middle. Either Lord Azaharg or Lord Quennar may be planning an ambush to claim Anvilbreaker from its rightful winner. If Azaharg and Kynrik came to understand one another, though, especially by working together against the Last Moon, Azaharg grudgingly admits that Orzammar has always been the home of the smiths and perhaps the Weaponsfather's hammer is best off returning to that home.

Aftermath

Hailed as heroes, or witnesses to a great tragedy; the adventure's conclusion is firmly in the PCs' hands. If they fail to diminish the Last Moon's plot at all, a great many of Thedas's best warriors and military commanders die, and the world suffers for it in the Blight to come. Cumberland does not soon recover from the tragedy. The deaths are just the start, with broken families scattering back across the Marches. Aehrenthal turns his back on the PCs, giving them nothing and considering them a failed investment. Kilina is unlikely to regard them favorably for induction into the ranks of the Grey Wardens.

On the other hand, if the heroes stop even part of the cultists' nefarious plan, Aehrenthal keeps his word. The promised chest has the equivalent of 1,000 silver pieces per PC, and each also receives a gem worth nearly 2 gold pieces.

The promised armor is +1 masterwork light plate, made superior by veridium. In addition, it provides a +1 social interaction bonus throughout Thedas, or a +2 bonus in the Free Marches, where Aehrenthal's influence is well known. Mages, sadly, are out of luck—Aehrenthal fits them with plate that they are free to use or sell as promised, but he is an arms merchant, not a dealer of magic. If you wish, you may have Aehrenthal offer mages in the party lighter armor suits—also masterwork—with less severe strain ratings than light plate.

Aehrenthal's blades are +2 masterworks made superior only by quality steel and workmanship. They provide no social bonuses.

The PCs' courage and valor in the face of evil may or may not lead Kilina to invite them to join the ranks of the Grey Wardens, depending on how much further you wish to delay that possibility in your campaign. In any case, they impress her with their capabilities.

The PCs are considered heroes in Nevarra. None will pay for a drink in Cumberland again in their lives.

Dwarven PCs may get caught up in the ongoing rivalries between the different dwarf factions. These problems are likely to follow them home to Orzammar. Fereldan PCs who got along well with the dwarves may be invited as honored guests to Orzammar, though no matter how well the Kal-Sharok band regards them, they aren't invited to that embattled kingdom.

Almost no matter what happens, the Last Moon won't forget about the PCs any time soon. If Issus Eyras survives, he makes a good recurring villain.

Likewise, but perhaps less nefariously, a hero's duel with Malecot cements a long-term rival for the PCs, and an Orlesian one at that. Not all enemies can just be killed…

Anvilbreaker

Anvilbreaker is a forge-hammer, used for smithing rather than fighting. It can warm itself to white heat instantly, as its wielder wills. Weapons forged with it are impossibly sharp. It certainly has other properties known only to certain family lines, which stand completely aside its significance as a cultural artifact. It is absolutely unique, and literally invaluable. If a Player Character wins the hammer, they have acquired a profound bargaining chip the dwarves of Orzammar would do almost anything to repatriate to their thaig.

Battle's Edge

Battle's Edge is an adventure set during the Fifth Blight and highlights the significant threat the darkspawn and their Archdemon master pose to Thedas. The PCs are thrust into the middle of a tense political situation that has weakened and destabilized regional defenses and it's up to them to save the day.

This adventure is intended for a group of 4 to 6 PCs of levels 11 to 13. Ideally, characters will have some connection to Ferelden, but any characters with an interest in stabilizing the political situation in Thedas to better defend against threats such as darkspawn could become involved.

Background

Where & When

Set in the time of the Fifth Blight, this adventure takes place in western Ferelden near the border with Orlais, west past Orzammar and near the Frostback Mountains and Gherlen's Pass. This is the extreme edge of Ferelden, the first to fall to the invasion by Orlais in years past and the last to be freed. The people remember those times more acutely than most of their countrymen and the presence of Orlesian forces is a truly unwelcome site. Despite the efforts of Empress Celene of Orlais to smooth over relations with Ferelden and build amiable diplomatic relations, there's still much resentment and bad blood in this region toward Orlais. Old habits and prejudices die hard, especially when they're rooted in past harms.

Dalish are occasionally sighted in the forests of this land, and encounters between them and local militia are not unknown. Various surface dwarf caravans and trading settlements also dot the landscape, bringing goods from Orzammar to trade with the humans. Still, prejudice against elves and dwarves in the area is noticeable but not exceptional to other parts of Ferelden. Barbarian raids and their history with Orlais make relations with Orlesians and Avvar less cordial.

Structure of the Adventure

The PCs are recruited by Engar, an agent of the Fereldan king, to help deal with a tense military and political situation (a plot by Gell Lendon, an arl seeking to regain power and influence). Needing to unite the local nobility and military leaders against a threat enabled by the presence of a large force of Orlesian mercenaries, the PCs will need to negotiate, recruit, or cajole various groups and attempt to form them into a cohesive military force. If they can rally the local nobles and reveal this plot, the PCs will represent the only force capable of defending when a darkspawn force bursts from below the earth to attack.

There are six leaders in the region (mostly local nobles) who are potential allies for the PCs and each has a military force. In the course of the adventure, the PCs must visit each leader and try to recruit them to take on Arl Lendon. If they are diplomatic and skillful, the PCs can put together a scratch army

to take on Lendon's Orlesian mercenaries (a fight resolved using the mass battle rules). Time, however, is also a factor. Gell Lendon's forces are still settling in and making repairs to Edgehall, which has fallen into disrepair. Within three weeks, a month at the latest, the keep will be fully operational again and it will take more troops than available in the region to conquer it. The PCs must ready their army before then. What they don't know, of course, is that they'll be fighting two battles—one against Arl Lendon and one against a surprise darkspawn attack!

Grey Wardens & Other Faction Members

This adventure assumes that PCs have some interest in Fereldan politics or political stability. If the characters are instead part of some faction or group such as the Grey Wardens or templars, the GM may have to modify parts of this adventure. The easiest way to do this is to find something the PCs need or want from Ferelden that can only be realized if this situation is resolved. For example, Grey Wardens might want additional forces to oppose the Blight and need to fix things so the local nobility feel secure enough to lend more troops. Templars could be sent to respond to rumors of a large group of apostates in the area and thus be unable to deal with matters properly until things stabilize. Even agents of organizations like the Carta might be sent to change tensions into a full military conflict, allowing the syndicate to profit from the chaos.

Prelude

Meeting Engar

At the beginning of the adventure, a middle-aged dwarf calling himself Engar tracks down the PCs. He says he's heard of their skills and exploits and wants to recruit them to deal with "a situation" involving Edgehall, an arldom in the far west of Ferelden. The PCs don't need to be anywhere in particular when they meet the dwarf; he'll show up wherever they are with no explanation of how he found them and an offer of employment. Of course while Engar's skills and network of spies are impressive, GMs should keep this plausible and not have him walk into their secret headquarters or find them in the middle of the Deep Roads. He should appear competent and enigmatic, not annoying and overpowered.

Engar explains he's committed to stabilizing the area and he's sure the PCs are the people for the job. He's not inclined to take no for an answer here, but he won't force them. He'll offer to pay them, appeal to their patriotism, or trade information important to the PCs personal goals. He'll also offer considerable resources to accomplish this task. He can't provide military support or anything that will publically involve the Fereldan crown, but he'll offer to pay for mercenaries and reasonable goods and services as well as bonuses to PCs who have to endure exceptional hardship and danger to get the job done.

Exact rewards offered here depend a lot on individual campaigns. Games where PCs are barely scraping by and rarely seem to hold on to more than a few coins will likely gain less than those where nothing less than a small fortune will coax the PCs out of bed. In any event, the reward should be attractive and considerable for the campaign's standard, at one and half times or double what they usually get during an adventure. Engar may also offer minor magic items or valuable secrets if that would be more persuasive; he needs the PCs' help and is willing to pay handsomely for it.

Engar

To most who meet him, Engar seems like a casteless dwarf who escaped his Dust Town origins to make a modest living on the surface as a spice merchant. In reality, the cagey dwarf is a Fereldan agent devoted to protecting the kingdom from spies, internal threats, and embarrassing political situations. Engar considers Ferelden his adopted home and occasionally remarks on how the people treated him better than his own ever did. He would lie, cheat, steal, and kill to keep Ferelden safe. However, he knows the value of a good reputation and an honest deal and if the PCs agree to work with him he'll do what he can to make sure they're well compensated.

Engar

Abilities (Focuses)	
4	Communication (Bargaining, Deception, Persuasion)
2	Constitution (Drinking)
3	Cunning (Engineering, Military Lore)
2	Dexterity (Bows, Light Blades, Stealth, Throwing)
0	Magic
3	Perception (Empathy, Searching)
2	Strength
4	Willpower

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
10	65	12	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Crossbow	+4	2d6
Dagger	+4	1d6+3
Throwing Knife	+5	1d6+2

Special Qualities

Backstab: As level 1 Rogue power.

Bluff: As level 4 Rogue power.

Dirty Fighting: As level 7 Rogue power.

Favored Stunts: Advantageous Positioning, And Another Thing, Pierce Armor (1 SP), and That Makes Me Wonder (2 SP).

Talents: Archery Style (Journeyman), Contacts (Master), Single Weapon Style (Novice), Throw Weapon Style (Journeyman), Thievery (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, & Staves

Equipment: Crossbow, dagger, light leather, and 6 throwing knives.

Dwarf Spy and Rogue

PART I

The Taking of Edgehall

Generally seen as a usurper and unscrupulous profiteer, Gell Lendon has few friends in the region despite his mostly legitimate claim to Edgehall. What he does have is an army of Orlesian mercenaries led by an experienced commander to secure his claim. He has occupied Edgehall and sent missives to the local nobility and the Fereldan court stating his intent. Few in Ferelden believe his army has any true loyalty to him, but because the bulk of these forces are Orlesian in origin that is actually heightening tensions. The whole affair is a mess, but military and political concerns in other parts of the nation mean that the crown cannot commit forces to stopping him.

Background on Edgehall

Situated in the borderlands of west Ferelden, Edgehall was originally a minor outpost of the surface dwarves. They abandoned it when its links to the Deep Roads were severed. The esteemed Lendon family took possession of Edgehall during the height of the Steel Age, using it as a base to help drive out the Avvar and pacify the region for Ferelden. In gratitude for this service, the King granted the Lendons the hereditary title of arl and the lands surrounding Edgehall.

Edgehall was one of the first keeps to fall when the Orlesians invaded, and they used it as a base throughout the occupation. The chevaliers were not kind to the people in the area and resentment and anger toward Orlais runs strong here. Years of diplomatic efforts and repaired relations between the two nations made less of a positive impact here than in many other parts of Ferelden. To make things worse, Edgehall was not retaken until the Orlesians withdrew from Ferelden. Before they left, they sabotaged much of the keep's defenses, leaving it a shadow of its former glory and a constant reminder of the occupation.

Though control of Edgehall was returned to the Lendon family, things were never the same. Internal division and external conflicts weakened the once noble family and its stalwart keep. When the last arl of Edgehall, Fergus Lendon, died without a clear heir, much of the administration of the surrounding lands fell to the local nobles until a new arl was chosen. Politics and infighting stalled this progress as the nobles continued to squabble. Individual settlements and lands still do well enough, but the governance of the region has suffered.

This instability has recently allowed Gell Lendon, half-brother to the old arl, to return from exile abroad to seize his "birthright." Aided by mercenaries under Commander Corbin, Gell has retaken the keep from his brother's widow and declared himself Edgehall's new lord and master. He hopes the overwhelming power of his mercenary forces will cow the local nobles into avoiding conflict with him. He has since set to repairing Edgehall's decrepit defenses, hiring or pressing into service laborers and craftsmen to accomplish the task.

While many in Ferelden see Gell as a usurper or possibly even an Orlesian puppet, his nominal legitimacy and the need for the crown to concentrate their efforts in defending against the Blight makes direct action to remove Gell and expel his forces impractical. Instead, a Fereldan agent known as Engar has been directed to find people who can deal with the matter in a way that gives the crown deniability but also removes a threat to the nation's authority and sovereignty.

This is where the PCs come in. Due to their previous adventures and reputation, Engar is sure they are just the intrepid individuals to resolve this matter. If they succeed, they will be richly rewarded. Of course, if they fail, then no scandal or political embarrassment will fall upon the royal house. In any event, the whole affair will be treated as internal unrest and inter-noble squabbling so as not to embarrass the crown with its apparent inaction.

Geography

Much of the surrounding area is hills and open fields with patches of dense forest. It is not the richest of lands, but the hardy Fereldans who work the soil make a good living and small towns and settlements dot the landscape. Closer

Changing the Time Period

This adventure is set during the beginning of the Fifth Blight. King Cailan is on the throne and readying his forces for a grand battle against the darkspawn that, if the events of *Dragon Age: Origins* stand true in your campaign, results in his betrayal and death. The Blight is a known threat and concern, but has not yet burst forth to savage the land.

If your campaign is set in a different period this will change. In many cases, the scenario can remain mostly the same. For example, even if the King has fallen and the Blight is in full swing, it still makes sense for an agent of the Fereldan crown to seek aid in protecting the region from an ill-timed power grab. Or if the Blight is over and the Archdemon defeated, a force of darkspawn could still rise to menace the area. While the presence of such a large force would raise many concerns, the events can mostly stand as written.

The biggest period shift is playing during the Orlesian occupation. During this period, the adventure's main antagonist, Arl Gell, becomes the legitimate puppet of Ferelden's Orlesian rulers. Engar becomes an agent of the Fereldan resistance and the nobles turn into oppressed local lords seeking to protect their people, who must be convinced to throw support behind a desperate insurrection. Gell Lendon becomes a full-on Orlesian puppet, with his forces being actual Orlesian military and not just mercenaries. In this scenario, GMs might want to drop the darkspawn element entirely, and instead focus on the desperate, heroic struggle to reclaim Ferelden from the Orlesians.

to the Frostbacks, the land becomes rocky and less hospitable. Pockets of darkspawn activity and other dangerous creatures lurk in various caves and abandoned ruins in the area, making travel a risky proposition for the unarmed and unprepared.

What the PCs Want

The PCs' personal goals and desires will heavily influence how they get involved with the events of this adventure. Those seeking profit and fame can easily find it by taking Engar's offer of employment. Grey Warden PCs could use the region as a recruiting ground for forces to fight the darkspawn after the adventure is over. It's even possible that PCs with noble Fereldan blood could be given charge of Edgehall, though this would tie them down to the area and would likely open up adventures full of scheming nobles and other local threats.

Mages, particularly apostates, might find the area a fairly safe haven if they can deal with current problems. Few Fereldans would wish to bring the Chantry or templars down on those who restored Edgehall. Likewise, surface dwarves and elves might have an easier time in this area of Ferelden due to their actions.

The Opposing Force

Gell Lendon and his forces are occupying Edgehall as part of the nobleman's scheme to retake his ancestral home and force the rest of the nobility to accept his claim. The Fereldan noble has access to a large number of trained mercenary troops led by a young but skilled commander, Marcel Corbin.

GMs who want to introduce Lendon and his Orlesian ally, Corbin, earlier in their campaign have a few options. The easiest is to have them run across either Lendon or Corbin while traveling to Orlais on some task. Alternatively, a PC with ties to Fereldan or Orlesian nobility could have met or at least heard of one or both of these men. They might even be aware that Corbin was once an influential Orlesian noble before political disfavor led him to take up the life of a mercenary. As Lendon in particular is an unscrupulous opportunist, he could have easily hired the PCs for some past skullduggery or they might have inadvertently messed up one of his schemes.

Arl Gell Lendon

Gell Lendon is the half-brother of Edgehall's former lord, exiled for plotting against his brother years ago. He has returned home to secure his birthright. While it's true he has some claim to these lands, he is unpopular and these claims are unlikely to be upheld by the crown unless he acquits himself very well. By bringing in mercenaries to occupy Edgehall, he's not off to a good start.

Gell is craven, treacherous, and possesses an inflated view of his own importance. He isn't much for fighting, preferring to leave that to Corbin and his men. If it wasn't for his allies, he couldn't take Edgehall and has no hope of holding it. Gell has levied all his support and wealth to pay and gather his army. If he loses Edgehall and these forces he's unlikely to get any more help.

Realpolitik & Old Prejudices

While the various nobility and other NPCs in this adventure hold serious grudges against Orlais and Gell Lendon's ties to Ferelden's former enemy is a sore point for some, it should be noted that Orlais generally has little to do with the problems Edgehall is currently facing. Empress Celene of Orlais has worked very hard to repair the damage done to relations between Ferelden and her nation and in much of Ferelden past tensions between the two nations have faded. So even if he claims the contrary, there's no help from Orlais coming for Gell Lendon and in truth those currently holding the bulk of power in the Orlesian court would be fairly irritated to learn that he was trying to drag them into Ferelden's internal problems.

Gell Lendon doesn't have the support of Orlais, but the backing of a handful of hardliners who feel the Empress should be taking a more militaristic stance against their neighbors. They helped him locate and hire his army of mercenaries, but it's not official support or true foreign aid. In fact, despite their money and connections, Lendon's Orlesian allies are generally out of favor with the court and they've provided all the aid they can to their puppet Arl without risking their own necks, something they are wholly unwilling to do.

This all means that the PCs don't have to worry about becoming enemies of Orlais regardless of how aggressively they deal with Lendon's grab for Edgehall. In fact, if they deal with Lendon and don't treat his forces with undue cruelty or disregard, they might even find themselves well regarded by the Orlesian court for ending a particularly annoying political ploy. That's right, they might battle an army of mercenary Orlesians and find that it improves their standing with Orlais. Politics, everybody!

Unfortunately, Lendon's love of implying he has more friends and power than he does, combined with the long memories and old grudges still cloud matters locally. This can lead to some interesting and dramatic misunderstandings, especially if any of the PCs are Orlesian. It's also possible that some future conflict with Gell's Orlesian supporters and their ambitions and disloyalty to their ruler could occur, though that lies outside the focus of this adventure.

Arl Gell Lendon

Abilities (Focuses)	
4	Communication (Bargaining, Deception, Etiquette)
1	Constitution
2	Cunning (Heraldry)
3	Dexterity (Light Blades, Stealth)
0	Magic
2	Perception (Searching)
1	Strength (Intimidation)
2	Willpower (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	55	13	3

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Dagger	+6	1d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance, Skirmish, Taunt, and Threaten.

Talents: Contacts (Journeyman), Single Weapon Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, & Staves.

Equipment: Masterwork light leather, masterwork dagger (+1 attack & damage), and concentrated Crow poison (3 doses).

Human Fereldan Noble and Rogue

Brigitte

Abilities (Focuses)	
1	**Communication** (Etiquette, Leadership)
3	**Constitution** (Running, Stamina)
1	**Cunning** (Heraldry, Military Lore)
3	**Dexterity** (Brawling, Light Blades)
0	**Magic**
1	**Perception** (Empathy)
3	**Strength** (Heavy Blades, Spears)
3	**Willpower** (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	55	13	9

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bastard Sword	+5	2d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance, Dual Strike (3 SP), Mighty Blow (1 SP if 2-Handed), and Pierce Armor

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Command (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman), and Two-Weapon Style (Journeyman)

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Light Blades

Equipment: Masterwork bastard sword (+1 attack and damage) and masterwork light plate (9 Armor Rating).

Hman Orlesian Warrior

Commander Marcel Corbin

Abilities (Focuses)	
3	**Communication** (Etiquette, Leadership)
2	**Constitution** (Drinking, Stamina)
3	**Cunning** (Heraldry, Military Lore)
3	**Dexterity** (Brawling, Light Blades)
0	**Magic**
2	**Perception** (Empathy)
3	**Strength** (Heavy Blades, Lances)
4	**Willpower** (Courage, Morale, Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	70	12/14*	10

*with Shield or One-handed Weapon Bonus

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Dagger	+6	1d6+5
Heavy Lance	+5	2d6+5
Longsword	+6	2d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Lightning Attack (2 SP), Pierce Armor, Seize the Initiative, and Tower of Will.

Specializations: Chevalier (Novice).

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Command (Journeyman), Horsemanship (Novice), Mounted Combat Style (Journeyman), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman), and Weapon and Shield Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Axes Bludgeons, Brawling, Lances, Heavy Blades, and Light Blades.

Equipment: Heavy lance, masterwork dagger (+1 attack & damage), masterwork veridium longsword (+1 attack & damage, +1 talent level), masterwork veridium light plate (AR 10), and medium shield.

Human Orlesian Noble and Warrior

Commander Marcel Corbin

Despite his youthful appearance, Commander Marcel Corbin is an experienced chevalier and keen commander with a flair for the draconian politics of Orlais. Unfortunately, he also has a tendency to overreach and a misstep in the Imperial Court has led to his dismissal, a situation that now finds him in command of an army of mercenaries made up mostly of former Orlesian military. Working for someone as arrogant as the arl and the problems surrounding Gell's power-grab have left Corbin ill-tempered.

Corbin is a handsome Orlesian with fine features and an undeniable air of superiority and aristocratic detachment. He has no particular love of violence or battle, but recognizes them as tools of unquestionable utility. His disdain for a "backwater" nation like Ferelden is largely subtle, but it's coming out more lately since he's been stuck here dealing with "Arl" Lendon. Coming as he does from a storied and wealthy family of noble birth, Corbin's arms and armor are of the finest quality and are crafted with the style and symbols of his house (+1 bonus

to Communication tests with Orlesians, +1 bonus to use Heraldry on him).

The Mercenaries

The mercenary forces under Corbin are experienced, well equipped, and all too happy to battle any Fereldans who seek to remove them. They are in fact mostly Orlesian by birth, professional former soliders in Orlais' army, including many chevaliers who served under Corbin. They are loyal, brave, and proud of their commander and whoever is paying them. Despite this, many are unhappy with technically serving under Gell, whom they feel is a trumped-up, self-important fool. Nevertheless, they will do their duty and obey their superiors.

Loyalty and Lieutenants

Corbin is served by numerous lesser knights and officers, but he relies primarily on two chief lieutenants, Brigitte and Julien.

Brigitte

Third daughter of a minor vassal house attached to Corbin's own, Brigitte has proved herself a skilled commander and warrior time and time again. A loyal officer, she has followed Corbin into what she hopes will be a temporary

Mass Battle Force Card

Force Name	Arl Gell Lendon's Forces
Commander	Marcel Corbin
Primary Troop Type	Experienced mercenary men-at-arms (Test Difficulty 12)
Commander's Communication (Leadership)	+5
Stage 1 Specialists	Scouts
Commander's Cunning (Military Lore)	+5
Stage 2 Specialists	Heavy Infantry
Number of Troops	1250
Stage 3 Specialists	Chevaliers

JULIEN	
Abilities (Focuses)	
2	**Communication** (Deception)
1	**Constitution** (Drinking)
4	**Cunning** (Arcane Lore, Military Lore, Research)
0	**Dexterity** (Staves)
5	**Magic** (Arcane Lance, Creation, Spirit)
2	**Perception** (Searching)
0	**Strength**
4	**Willpower** (Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	45	12	0

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Arcane Lance	+7	1d6+5
Quarterstaff	+2	1d6+1

Special Qualities

Spellpower: 15 (17 with Spirit and Creation) **Mana:** 40

Arcane Lance: As level 1 Mage power.

Favored Stunts: Imposing Spell, Mighty Spell, Skillful Casting.

Talents: Creation Magic (Novice), Lore (Novice), Spirit Magic (Journeyman).

Spell Lance: As level 4 Mage power.

Spells: *Arcane bolt, dispel magic, heal, mind blast, repulsion field, revive.*

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Light Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Quarterstaff.

Human Orlesian Circle mage

exile. Somewhat less politically savvy than her lord and many other Orlesian nobility, she appreciates the simplicity of direct, physical combat. Unfortunately for her, this sometimes means she's too willing to jump into battle. In contrast to her serious warrior demeanor, Brigitte has quite refined aethetic tastes, and is a devoted afficianado of fine music and art. Though no bard, she's been known to sometimes entertain her troops with a song or tale well told. In battle, she's near-fearless, and is usually found leading Corbin's heavy infantry.

Julien

A mage of the Orlesian Circle and close, trusted advisor to Corbin, Julien cuts a dashing figure with his neatly trimmed beard and elaborately embroidered robes. Though a bit soft around the middle and prone to complaining about all but the most elegant of living conditions, he's seen some serious combat action at the side of his commander. Julien leaves inspiring and leading troops and charging headling into battle to more able warriors like Corbin and his other lieutenants, but he's quick to lend his potent magic where needed, as both a healer and battle mage.

Raise an Army

No matter how tough they are, the PCs can't take Edgehall by themselves. If for no other reason than to provide them with a clear path to Gell Lendon and Corbin to deal with them personally, they'll need an army. Fortunately, there are plenty of places to get one.

Authority & Freedom

The PCs probably are encouraged to handle recruiting forces and kicking Lendon and his army out of Ferelden however they want. In fact, that's exactly how those interested in seeing Lendon gone prefer they handle it.

Consulting the Office of the King

PCs with strong ties to the King (or Queen) might try to gain his aid directly despite Engar's warnings to the contrary. Even if the heroes are well known and beloved by the crown, this probably won't work due to the realities of the current political and military situation. Ferelden just can't spare the forces and securing funds to hire mercenaries is both uncertain, timely, and ties the King and the nobility to this problem more than any can afford. If they can secure Edgehall, the King may offer troops to keep it secure and defended, but until then they're on their own.

Operating Without Approval

It's possible the PCs decide to get involved in these affairs without any prompting from Engar or other NPCs. This is fine. In fact, it's pretty awesome. This sort of proactive solution will impress all those interested in getting Gell out of Edgehall and they will likely be rewarded much as if they'd been asked to do the job. Of course, a complete lack of approval also means they'll need to figure everything out without the aid of Engar's intelligence gathering and information.

Pursuing Alternative Plans

It's always possible the PCs aren't interested in helping deal with the problems at Edgehall. That's fine too. They might still take some jobs for the local nobility, help the peasantry with darkspawn, and even fight off some bullying Arl Lendon troops. However, this will make most of this adventure not too useful except as NPC statistics and general information about the region.

Compromise

The PCs might decide to try to negotiate with Gell Lendon instead of kicking him out. This is a reasonable plan, but

it has a lot of flaws. Namely, Gell has what he wants and an army to back it up. There's really nothing they can do to convince him to leave without endorsement of the local nobility and replacements for his garrison. Unfortunately, the nobles will never accept an exiled Orlesian sympathizer as their peer.

This doesn't mean attempting to work out a nonviolent solution is useless. Those who impress Corbin especially will find it easier to gain his aid when the darkspawn show up, and any future relations will more likely be more cordial.

Skullduggery

It's always possible the PCs decide to ignore or betray Ferelden and side with Gell and his allies. This will likely bring them into conflict with the locals. Gell and Corbin would happily supply them with some resources to expand Lendon's holdings in the area. Of course, Blight or no, this could destabilize the region and might even lead to increased tensions with Orlais. This would likely weaken both nations beyond their ability to defend against the darkspawn. However, were it to work the PCs could carve out their own little piece of territory and reap great rewards, at least for a time.

Really sneaky characters might forgo all army raising and steal into Edgehall and kill Gell Lendon. This would require sneaking past an entire army and out again, but capable assassins and spies could handle it. Unfortunately, if Lendon dies, Corbin will produce Gell's son, in truth a five-year old orphan with a passing resemblance to Lendon he will use as a pretext to remain in Edgehall. After all, with Gell dead his forces won't get paid unless they can somehow turn the situation profitable again.

Mustering Forces

This action will likely be a part of many PC plans to deal with the occupying forces in Edgehall. If they aren't sure about it themselves, and assuming they're working for him, Engar will suggest it to them, saying "Can't beat an army without one of your own." He'll also point out that if a majority of the local banns could be united, they could raise a force to rival Corbin's.

Engar points the PCs at the local nobles, informing them there are not enough military resources to resolve the situation without the aid of at least some of them. Here's what Engar knows about the six commanders in play:

- **Bryton:** *"Young, brave, and simple. Not stupid, mind you. Just not seasoned. He'll be easy to get on your side, but you'll have to be careful you use him right, because you can't trust him to know what to do all the time."*
- **Lanya:** *"Stout lass. Hates the Orlesians something fierce, so that's a good start. Course she's hard to impress. You'll likely need to find some way to do that. It'll probably involve stabbing or shooting something."*
- **Kail:** *"Nice enough fellow if you can handle him talking about himself all the time, and you'll have to if you want his help. Course he's got no talent for the dirtier elements of war, but then that's what you're about, eh?"*
- **Parth:** *"Poor Parth – life didn't turn out how he wanted. Never does though, does it? He's got a mad rage in him, that one. If you can direct his rage, he'll be a great help. But that won't be easy…"*

Engar will throw in two other options as well, especially if the PCs seem less than enthused with their choices.

- **Fallon:** *"She's a smart one; she fights for money. If you can meet her price and convince her she's got a chance to be around to spend her pay, she's yours. Course I'll cover those costs, but getting her to say yes is up to you."*
- **Alora:** *"Dalish don't give a damn about who holds these lands. No reason they should, either. But if you could find something to offer to make her care, those elves make great skirmishers."*

Engar will give the PCs a basic rundown of the enemy forces. He doesn't have exact numbers but he'll relate the following:

Five Reasons to Start a War

If the PCs need more justification to get involved in the events surrounding Edgehall, the GM can add more elements through interactions with NPCs or by tying the location to something of direct interest to them. This is easy for more heroic types, though more materialistic or self-centered characters might require some extra motivation. Below are five reasons characters might get involved.

- **Save the people within:** Even if the PCs are unsympathetic to the affairs of nobles, there are good common folk among the denizens of Edgehall who will be hurt or killed if this conflict isn't resolved. Some who reject Gell Lendon's rule may already be languishing in the keep's dungeons. The exact number of these hostages and prisoners is left for individual GMs to decide based on how prevalent they want this issue to be in the scenario.
- **An expert trapped inside::** If the PCs need access to some craftsman, scholar, or other expert for a personal goal or mission, have them trapped inside Edgehall and they must either be rescued, or for some reason they refuse to leave until the matter is resolved.
- **A treasure not easily moved:** Some rare object is in Edgehall, perhaps secreted away in some hidden chamber. In any case, it can't be easily reached and removed with all the current problems.
- **A Carta agent disguised within:** If the PCs are foes of the Carta, they might learn that it has agents within Edgehall using the chaos for its benefit. This could be a simple opportunistic power grab, or they might be responsible for recent events. If not stopped, who knows what sort of havoc they can wreak?
- **Darkspawn dangers:** It's possible the PCs are aware of increased darkspawn activity in the area and need to resolve this situation so the fractured nobility doesn't lose the whole area to the Blight. This eliminates some of the surprise of the darkspawn attack later in this adventure, but it doesn't change much else.

- **Corbin:** *"Orlesian noble. He was pretty influential back in the Empire, but word is he's doing merc work now because he ticked someone off."*
- **Corbin's Forces:** *"Over a thousand men, which is more than anyone else around here's got. They're mostly professional troops, even got some ex-chevaliers with them. Got some good sub-commanders and a mage too."*
- **Gell Lendon:** *"By all accounts he's either a wicked bastard or a power-hungry idiot. Maybe both. He tried to depose the old arl, got run out of Ferelden on a mule for his trouble. Made kissy faces with some old-guard warhawks in Orlais and now they're willing to support his claim to Edgehall if it means they'll have a puppet inside our borders. Their Empress doesn't like this sort of thing any more than we do, but since it has reached our borders, it's up to us to deal with it."*

Available Forces to Muster

This is the list of available forces of the various commanders PCs can recruit. Each force added to the overall army adds its troops and what specialists if any it adds. The Primary Troop Type of the assembled troops should be based on the average quality of the assembled forces.

Bryton's Forces

Number of Troops: 450
Primary Troop Type: Militia (TN 9)
No Specialists

Lanya's Forces

Number of Troops: 450
Primary Troop Type: Fereldan men-at-arms (TN 10)
Stage 1 Specialists: Scouts
Stage 2 Specialists: None
Stage 3 Specialists: None

Kail's Forces

Number of Troops: 450
Primary Troop Type: Fereldan men-at-arms (TN 10)
Stage 1 Specialists: None
Stage 2 Specialists: None
Stage 3 Specialists: Cavalry

Parth's Forces

Number of Troops: 450
Primary Troop Type: Fereldan men-at-arms (TN 11)
No Specialists

Fallon's Forces

Number of Troops: 100
Primary Troop Type: Mercenary men-at-arms (TN 11)
Stage 1 Specialists: None
Stage 2 Specialists: Heavy Infantry
Stage 3 Specialists: None

Alora's Forces:

Number of Troops: 150
Primary Troop Type: Dalish Skirmishers (TN 12)
Stage 1 Specialists: Dalish Archers
Stage 2 Specialists: None
Stage 3 Specialists: Rangers

How to Muster a Commander

It's likely the PCs will need to muster the nobles and various other commanders in the area to their cause to take Edgehall. To do this they need to convince or influence these commanders to lend their support. This process combines advanced tests with roleplaying to create a kind of roleplaying "puzzle." This adventure's method is meant to reward roleplaying without putting the onus on players to be as suave, persuasive, witty, or captivating as their characters might be.

Something to keep in mind first: It's okay for players to collaborate at the game table, taking great roleplaying ideas from each other and applying them to the wittier or more communicative *characters*. "Oh!" says one player, "you could try using Performance to have your character recite an old poem he knows about the commander's father's victory in battle." Maybe a PC with Cultural Lore or Historical Lore has to teach the performer the poem first, stepping away from the feast to confer and giving the PCs a moment to play out. Collaboration can be great fodder for building scenes and moments that are fun to roleplay.

Making the Pitch

To muster a commander (and thereby his or her forces) to the cause, the PCs must convince the commander through talk or deeds. Talk convinces a commander immediately while deeds earn leverage that either makes convincing the commander easier or convinces her outright.

To convince a commander requires an advanced test with a fixed success threshold and a variable TN. Different focuses are associated with different TNs. Good or great roleplaying can alter the TN, give a bonus to the Dragon Die result, or both. Never, in this adventure, penalize a character for a player's roleplaying—PCs usually know how to talk to nobility and mercenary commanders better than we players do, after all.

Success against the TN determines whether a character's approach "gets through" to the commander or not. The TN is set based on the nature of the character's approach and the player's roleplaying. Certain focuses appeal to certain commanders; other focuses are harder to succeed with. Each commander's write-up contains example dialogue for that commander's reactions to key focuses, giving you some material to work with when portraying them during play.

One way to gauge the quality of a player's roleplaying, as the GM, is to consider how closely it matches the focus the player has chosen to apply to her roll. A really good roleplayer might concoct a line of dialogue (or even improvise a short speech) that manages to fit more than one focus at a time, showing elements of both Leadership and Etiquette, for example. Reward that by using the more favorable of the two related TNs and letting the PC gain the benefit of whichever focus they prefer for that roll.

Reading a Commander

Each commander is presented as an NPC with game statistics designed to suit an adversary or companion, not a PC. These characters, while mechanically similar to PC warriors and rogues, are built to reflect the unique combination of training, luxury, and experience these NPCs enjoy (both as fictional authority figures and as non-player characters). Each commander's entry includes guidelines specifically for you to use during this adventure to bring the characters to life and make them feel distinct from one another, including ways to establish the commander in your campaign before you run this adventure, and ways to portray them during play.

Don't hesitate to put your own spin on these characters using your own group's references and touchstones ("He looks like that friendly waiter we had at that diner near school, you remember?") so that *your* players have a strong sense of each commander's character. These are your characters now. Also remember that none of the local nobles know that Gell's forces are not actually from the Orlesian army, so they will respond as if they are until the deception is revealed.

Note that the general default for the nobles and other NPCs here is that the game is set around the time of the Fifth Blight. For example, Bann Parth was orphaned during the final days of the Orlesian occupation. In the case of games set in other time periods, you may have to make minor alterations to character backgrounds. In the last example, perhaps Parth's parents died of a plague or were killed by a bloody internal power struggle.

A single roll might actually use the Deception focus against the Etiquette TN, for example. No matter how good a player's roleplaying might be, however, a roll can only ever benefit from one focus's bonus at a time.

Approaches that match well with the particular commander's personality (as mentioned in each commander's entry) or roleplaying that impresses or persuades you or other players can grant a bonus to the Dragon Die result based on your judgment of how well the attempt appeals to the commander in question.

Persuasion Effects

Dragon Die Bonus	Circumstance
+0	Approach amuses or agrees with the commander
+1	Approach flatters or impresses the commander
+2	Approach dazzles or overwhelms the commander

Getting a Read

Characters who aren't great at communication can still be useful during this process by trying to get a read on the commander in question. To do that, the player attempts a **Communication** roll representing idle chitchat, using any focus. (The Investigation focus and **Perception (Empathy)** can also be used to "feel out" other focuses when making idle conversation like this; just have the player specify what focus they're inquiring after.) Reward rolls that hit a related TN by telling the character's player the TN related to that focus but don't count the Dragon Die as a success toward the success threshold. Rolls that fail utterly do not provoke negative reactions from the commander unless the Dragon Die shows a 1. Everyone understands the PC's intention wasn't to offend unless that 1 on the Dragon Die comes up, in which case the PC accidentally says something off color, crass, or ill-thought, like referencing a shameful family incident or insinuating the commander is inept.

A few non-**Communication** focuses (like **Drinking** and **Intimidation**) can also be used to influence and cajole some of the commanders, as described in individual entries.

By watching other PCs feel out the commander's personality, more communicative PCs with more focuses to draw on can decide what focus to employ (and what spin to put on their dialogue) to have a better chance at success.

It's also your job, as the GM, to give the players plenty of information to make informed decisions, without just telling them outright how to succeed. Thus, each commander includes a section on how to portray that commander at the game table, to help you convey what they want, what they appreciate, and what they find distasteful. It's easy to confound the players; that shouldn't be your aim. Instead, you want to *show* them a character who values protocol and have the players realize that Etiquette is a good bet for communicating with that character. That's what makes this roleplaying puzzle fun for everyone.

Leverage

Leverage provides a way for the PCs to influence a commander by means other than a **Communication** roll. Getting leverage over a commander may help influence that commander to aid the PCs' cause or it may convince the commander outright, depending on the individual NPC's interests. If your players' PCs aren't an eloquent or communicative bunch, you can decide that completing a leverage task automatically persuades any commander.

Leverage is also a pacing mechanism. Talking to a commander is much faster than carrying out quests on their behalf. If your players, or their characters, are pressed for time, you can always substitute other, faster tasks to earn leverage over a particular commander. For example, if the PCs have split up to parley with multiple commanders at once, you probably don't want one PC to engage in just one evening's discussion while another spends several days hunting down a wanted brigand. Maybe, instead of finding the brigand, it's enough for high-level and perhaps well-known PCs to publicly denounce him, thereby gaining leverage with the commander. Use your judgment and be ready to adjust the adventure to suit your own pace.

Bryton

The Young Lord

Bryton, the youthful, energetic, and contemplative new lord in the region, inherited his authority when his father, Abberton, died of a withering disease that caused his health to deteriorate over the course of several months. Bryton's inexperience is tempered, at least a little, by the lessons his father imparted to him from his deathbed. Abberton raised Bryton to be a wise, generous, and compassionate leader. And while Bryton eagerly aims to live up to his father's ideals, he hasn't yet proven to his people that he can fill the space vacated by his father.

To the eye, Bryton is a handsome young man with a sort of bland manner. He has his father's brown hair and brown eyes and a well-trimmed full beard. From his mother, Aureya, he inherited great height and a slender build.

In the adventure, Bryton's role is simple: he is the closest noble to the fighting and the easiest to muster. Bryton is friendly and cooperative, joins the PCs' cause easily enough (so he can demonstrate to everyone he is capable and unafraid), and intends to work well with the other forces mustered to the cause.

That Bryton is easygoing does not mean everyone likes him, however. Lord Parth neither trusts nor respects Bryton, whose father drew away vassals and lands that once belonged to Parth's family. Getting the nobles to work together is one of the challenges of this adventure.

Still, Lord Bryton forms an easy foundation to the PCs' army and helps convey just how the mustering process works in this adventure.

Followers and Forces

Bryton's followers were his father's. They were loyal to Lord Abberton and they intend to honor him by trusting his son, Bryton, until they have good reason to doubt the family. These are hardy farmers and woodsfolk, though, not trained soldiers. Most of the soldiers-at-arms who followed Lord Abberton went off to battle the Blight and never returned (unlike some of the other soldiers in this part of Ferelden). The ranks of Bryton's army are thus filled with half-trained young men and women—more of a militia. Bryton hopes that showing them some civilized battlefield experience against the mercenaries (rather than fearsome Qunari or darkspawn) might sharpen their skills.

Fortunately, Bryton's militia looks up to their leaders, a few dozen knights who either survived various battles or stayed near home to protect the land. These knights wear proper, sturdy armor that's a few years out of fashion and bear banners and flags made by their own weavers and tailors at home. These are a rustic, modest people with dirt under their fingernails.

Establish

Lord Bryton can be established, prior to this adventure, as a novice lord and heir to Lord Abberton, his departed father. If the scenario is set later in the time period and your PCs fought in battles during the Fifth Blight, then perhaps they fought alongside Lord Abberton's forces. You can establish this retroactively, even, telling the players that their characters saw Abberton's soldiers fight bravely and to the death (or heard of such selfless bravery in tavern tales).

Abberton's, and thus Bryton's, lands are remote to Ferelden, notable mostly for their proximity to Orlais. Orlesian nobles retreated over these lands into Orlais in the final days of the Fereldan war for independence. Since then, these lands haven't seen much of note except a rise in surface dwarf activity in the form of modest caravans.

Establish Bryton as a trustworthy and willing ally, perhaps through second-hand accounts from folks like Engar or perhaps from the PCs' own knowledge of Abberton's family, if they know Ferelden. They may doubt Bryton's abilities and readiness, or even his honesty (depending on how many truly good people they've met in their adventures). Let them. While Bryton is a good man—unless the PCs drive him to a darker place—doubting him isn't necessarily foolish and may help the PCs sympathize with Parth and Kail later on. Ideally, Bryton proves himself capable and loyal in battle.

Portray

Bryton is a freshman lord but he was raised for this purpose. He didn't go to some kind of nobleman's finishing school, though. Instead, he sat with his father as they conducted busi-

ness with the local families, handling matters of coins and crops, crime and war. Bryton's greatest deficit is his doubt. He thinks he's ready to lead… he *thinks*.

To that end, portray Bryton as good-natured but wary, eager to please but not foolish about it. He can offer suggestions ("My knights and I can support the infantry") but he's comfortable seeing those suggestions overridden for the greater good. ("Very good, then, sers.") Avoid pity. Bryton is not a puppy. He admires the experience and gall of the PCs (assuming they have either) even as he attempts to minimize the risks to his people.

Here are a few lines of dialogue for you to use:

- *"My father would have liked you, I think. He had a sense about people."*
- *"Shall we draw steel and start this day, then?"*
- *"By your leave, then, I shall inform my knights."*
- *"My people didn't come here to risk themselves for your folly. They came to put Corbin in his place and show that we were not beaten so far down by the Blight that we cannot defend our lands. If you can't appreciate that, we will depart."*

Influence

When the PCs come to Lord Bryton, he welcomes them with a fine dinner—what the locals call a feast, though it would hardly live up to that name in richer parts of the realm. The event is held in Bryton's manor, which is a modest affair on a hill overlooking neighboring farms and grazing land, the whole view shadowed by the Frostbacks. Bryton and a handful of his knights—Alleya, Cardella, Drukkon, Kemp, and Marten—join the PCs for roasted venison with mint and pepper, plus wild greens and sweet pastries. The staff serves wine.

In his heart, Lord Bryton wants to help and wants to show his strength in battle.

Success Threshold: 5

Each roll represents about 20–30 minutes of talk during dinner, perhaps spilling over to ale and mead afterward.

Bargaining (TN 11)

- **If successful:** *"You're quite the negotiator, to be sure. I don't know if I'm comfortable bargaining with my people's well being, but I understand this task may be more important than my comfort."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"Right, but we're not haggling over a sword here. We're talking about the lives of my people. Speak plainly to me."*

Deception (TN 9)

- **If successful:** *"You sound certain."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"Do not lie to me, ser. I can abide any truth but no lie."* (Increase success threshold by 1 point.)

Etiquette (TN 9)

- **If successful:** *"Well spoken."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"Eloquent, but I think matters of blood and banners require more than good graces, don't you?"*

Bryton

	Abilities (Focuses)
2	Communication (Leadership)
2	Constitution (Drinking, Stamina)
1	Cunning (Heraldry, Military Lore)
2	Dexterity (Brawling, Light Blades)
0	Magic
1	Perception (Empathy)
2	Strength (Heavy Blades)
2	Willpower (Morale)

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+5	2d6+5

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Disarm, Knock Prone, & Stunned Silence

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Command (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman), and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Light Blades.

Equipment: Masterwork longsword (+1 Attack and Damage), heavy mail, and medium shield.

Human Noble & Warrior

Leadership (TN 9)

- **If successful:** *"You speak with experience. Can I ask? From where does your leadership come? How can I improve my own?"*
  If unsuccessful: *"The folk who follow me will look for more than words. I suspect you're more a person who leads by action?"*

Persuasion (TN 7)

- **If successful:** *"Yes, you're quite right. I just needed to be led to the water, so that I could drink, you know?"*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"No, no. I* want *to help you, I do. But my doubts must be dispelled."*

Seduction (TN 11)

- **If successful:** *"You're a charmer. I'd gladly chase you past blade and arrow, but I don't think it's right to ask my people to follow for such a reason."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"Now's not the time, I'm afraid."*

Constitution (Drinking) (TN 10)

Bryton is a capable drinker but doesn't think much of those who drink to excess. Only one successful roll with this focus earns success toward the advanced test.

- **If successful:** *"You like our local drink, do you? The family who makes this has a daughter in our militia. Let's not let them down."*
  If unsuccessful: *"You certainly* do *like our local drink. You're gulping down the hard work of a family whose daughter is in our militia. I hope you're not so carefree in battle."*

Getting Leverage: The Favor

Bryton doesn't need a great deal of convincing and isn't eager to push his work off on other people, even experienced heroes or anti-heroes who may have proven their mettle. All Bryton seeks from the PCs is a foundation on which he can build future friendship or camaraderie. He asks "a favor to be named later." As he tries to solidify the sovereignty of his territory against rival neighbors, he anticipates that his troubles are just beginning. Being able to call on experienced warriors, rogues, and mages in the future is worth more to him than calling on them now.

That said, Bryton does ask the PCs if they have advice for him on how to explain the mustering to his people. *"How do I say it? What do I say we gain from facing Corbin in battle?"* (This is as much to get the players and their characters considering the stakes and methods of the adventure as it is to help Bryton.) Answering his question thoughtfully—with something better than "That's your job, not mine, Bryton"—is worth 1 point toward success against Bryton's success threshold (or 2 points if you decide the characters are especially impressive or convincing).

Lanya

The Begrudged Bann

Brave, bold, and begrudged, Bann Lanya inherited not only her father's lands and title but also his distrust and bitterness for the folk of Orlais. To Lanya, though, these are not her father's lands, her father's ideals—these are fibers of Ferelden, the core stuff that makes the realm what it is. Her lands are hers only because her people share them with her and so she loves and fiercely defends her people. She knows full well that, as her parents' only child, she was the only option to take up the mantle. Therefore she aims to do it as best as it can be done by anyone. Banns aren't born; they're made, day by day.

Lanya is no one's idea of a courtly lady. She's muscular, huge, and squarish. Her hair she keeps in braids bound together down her back. A fine scar, sustained while battling brigands, runs across her nose from her right eye to the left corner of her mouth. Even without that scar, her face would seem locked in a serious squint and cautious frown—as if years of grim thoughts were slowly turning her to stone.

In this adventure, Bann Lanya serves a few purposes. While she is easy enough to muster to the PCs' cause, given her latent interest in causing Orlesians pain and embarrassment for subjugating Ferelden in the past, she is not a simple character. Where her goals align with those of the PCs, she is easy to work with. Without quality leadership, Lanya likely makes her own plans and drifts away from the pack. To her, Edgehall is just an excuse to fight Orlesians, and just another example of Orlesian nobility overreaching. That in fact her foes are mercenaries doesn't much matter to her; she'll take opportunities to fight Orlesians where she finds them. She's not a loose cannon but she can be stubborn and uncooperative if she believes the army she's joined isn't making the right decisions.

Simply put, Lanya, as a character, is present to give you means to make roleplaying and decision-making matter. If the army's leadership stalls or meanders or dawdles, Lanya is the one who says, *"let's hurry this up,"* and *"what are we waiting for?"* She may even become reckless on the field of battle, if you want a dramatic consequence for shoddy or hesitant leadership during the third part of this adventure. Lanya's no fool, but she is bold and irritable.

Followers and Forces

Bann Lanya's militia consists of citizen infantry who remained at home while their neighbors with combat experience went off to answer King Cailan's call. The women and men who therefore make up the current militia are a mix of older, experienced combatants and younger, inexperienced would-be combatants who stayed home to defend their lands in case the darkspawn came. These are tough folk, some of them still bearing grudges against the Orlesians, like Lanya does.

Lanya's militia might be counted as seasonal soldiers-at-arms, in some lands, and indeed one reason to muster them now is to get them the necessary experience to upgrade their skills and reputation alike. What truly holds them back, however, is their equipment. Even with the courage and skill to wield sturdy blades in battle, Lanya's people are held back by limited funds from bad harvests and dispatch of their better-equipped troops to the east. They fight now with dinged and pitted blades, homemade shields, and armor that's patched and fatigued. Lanya hopes that she can better arm her people by looting well-supplied mercenary dead.

The knights from her territory are in considerably better shape, thankfully. Many of Lanya's knights stayed home to protect their hearths and families out of fear that Orlais would step in and retake parts of Ferelden without blades to defend it in the west. True or not, it kept knights on hand who might otherwise have gone seeking glory with the king. These knights, clad in simple but sturdy armor etched with emblems inspired by the banners of Fereldan revolutionaries, are heroes to the militia and respected peers to Lanya's neighbors in Bryton's and Kail's territories.

Establish

To establish Bann Lanya prior to this adventure, you have a few options. The goal should be to establish her as a strong, proud bann bordering on stubborn and stymied by circumstance. To that end, you might have other nobles say things like *"At least our crops weren't plagued by drought like Bann Lanya's,"* or *"Bann Lanya's militia refilled its ranks in short order thanks to her resolute and combative folk."*

"They're like oxen in those foothill territories," some say, *"big and stubborn and hard to starve, though the seasons do try."*

To give the PCs some prior experience with Lanya, use this adventure hook: Bandits enter the lands that pay homage to Bann Lanya and the PCs give chase, perhaps for revenge or reward. A knight loyal to Lanya confronts the PCs and says something like *"These criminals don't know what they're in for. We don't tolerate highwaymen and their ilk here. You can go home."* It's up to the players to decide if they leave the hunt to Lanya's knights or carry on with their mission. If they leave, the bandits are never seen again but Lanya's knights "recover" the bandit hoard and have it returned to nearby lands.

LANYA	
Abilities (Focuses)	
1	**Communication** (Leadership)
2	**Constitution** (Stamina, Swimming)
2	**Cunning** (Military Lore, Natural Lore)
3	**Dexterity** (Initiative, Light Blades)
0	**Magic**
1	**Perception** (Hearing, Tracking)
3	**Strength** (Axes, Heavy Blades, Might)
2	**Willpower** (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	65	13	7

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Greatsword	+5	3d6+3
Dagger	+5	1d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Defensive Stance, Mighty Blow, and Dual Strike (3 SP).

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Command (Journeyman), Dual Weapon Style (Novice), and Two-Hander Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Brawling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades, and Spears.

Equipment: Masterwork greatsword (+1 attack and damage), 2 daggers, and heavy mai

Human Bann & Warrior

If the PCs stay, Lanya's knights demand to try the bandit leader by combat—and Lanya beheads him in short order. Then she sends back the bandit's hoard with the PCs. *"Much as I wish it were, this treasure isn't ours,"* Lanya says, *"but the victory we can share. Tell the tale. We don't jail many enemies around here."*

Portray

Lanya appears to be a no-nonsense person around outsiders. In truth, her laugh is like a roar, but that knowledge is a prize for those who truly amuse or delight her. For Lanya, that means earning her trust—no small feat.

When playing Lanya, tolerate only the most minimal horseplay and doubletalk. Call people on their antics. Say what Lanya really thinks and mince words only to play at etiquette. Lanya's not a great communicator but she's an experienced leader of her people—she's been a bann for a decade at least. Note, too, that Lanya is courageous but is not known for her self-discipline.

Lanya's not mean or cruel, exactly. She wants to offer no cracks in her façade for others to exploit. She doesn't have time to be injured or hurt but she doesn't fear pain. Lanya can't abide laziness and inaction. In truth, she regards people individually. She makes exceptions for individual Orlesians who rise above the squabbles and posturing of their homeland, for example, and doesn't think the fates of elves are any of her business.She has her little corner of the proudest nation in Thedas, and its survival and betterment is what she cares about.

Here are a few lines of dialogue for you to use:

- *"On with it."*
- *"Who are we fighting? Because I came to battle some presumptuous Orlesians, not you all."*
- *"Let's get ourselves together when we're in sight of our troops, eh?"*
- *"Listen, I'm not a monster. These Orlesians and their puppet arl chose to make enemies of Ferelden, and that means me. I'm just playing my part, doing my duty as a bann to make sure they suffer for making enemies of us. These Orlesians who follow those banners that would see Fereldan blood spilled? They may not be terrible people, each and every one, but they are my enemies."*

Influence

When the PCs come to parley with Lanya, she takes them out into the foothills near her manor to hunt a mountain lion. She and her guard—Forbeck—take the opportunity to walk and talk with the PCs through the towering pines of the foothills. *"Every few years,"* Lanya explains, *"the great mountain lions*

in this area get overconfident and especially ferocious and try to expand their territory. We have to slay a few to keep them in check."

This errand is meant mostly as a test to see if the PCs are afraid of such a prospect. Have each PC make **a TN 9 Willpower (Courage)** test when Lanya proposes the hunt. The consequences of these tests are wholly cosmetic—Lanya favors the PCs who pass the test and treats those who don't with a sort of patronizing gentleness.

A mountain lion needn't ever actually come into play in this scene, but it can. If you feel the PCs need an enemy to fight, use the great lion statistics nearby to throw a lion (or more) at the PCs. The first time one of the PCs performs the Stunned Silence stunt, count those 2 SPs toward the group's advanced test successes for convincing Lanya.

Success Threshold: 5

Each roll represents 10–20 minutes of talk or action while in the foothills, hunting with Lanya and her guard.

Bargaining (TN 9)

- **If successful:** *"I admit, our price is low. We've been in the market for Orlesian blood for some time."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"I* want *to see some Orlesian blood hit that field, but this doesn't sound worth our while yet."*

Deception (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"I find that easy to believe, but I came here wanting to hurt Orlais, so maybe I'm biased."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"Why are you lying to me? If you won't respect me enough to give me the truth, why should I give you my support?"* (Increase success threshold by 2.)

Etiquette (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"I'm not easily persuaded by gilded words. And yet…"*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"You're gilding your words like an Orlesian. Speak to me like I'm an ordinary person."*

Leadership (TN 11)

- **If successful:** *"I've been waiting, out here, for someone to lead us against Orlais, to show our strength. We have been waiting." (Increase Dragon Die result by 1.)*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"Hmph. You'll lead our army better than that, I hope? Or find someone who will?"*

Persuasion (TN 9)

- **If successful:** *"Yes, good, that's finely said."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"Convince yourself before you try to convince me, eh?"*

Seduction (TN 14)

- **If successful:** *"Dear, maybe when we get back from the battle we can see where this goes. Not before."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"I'm not going to lead my people to a fight just because you want to sleep with me. One's got nothing to do with the other."*

Cunning (Historical Lore) (TN 11)

The first successful roll of this focus grants a +1 bonus to any one Communication test following it, in addition to contributing success on the advanced test. Additional attempts to cite history do not help.

- **If successful:** *"I know the history, too. Orlais wasn't here so long ago, really."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"You don't need to tell me the history. My family lived it."*

Perception (Tracking) (TN 13)

The first successful roll of this focus grants a +2 bonus to any one Communication test following it, but does not contribute toward the success of the advanced test. Additional rolls do not help.

- **If successful:** *"Well done. I can respect a capable hunter."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"These are not easy beasts to track. No shame in that."*

Getting Leverage: The Undesirables

The key to convincing Lanya is proving one's personal integrity and convincing her that the fight is worth joining. The first is all about personal actions, demeanor, and courage and is likely the easy part for a stalwart band of PCs. The second is trickier, as while she's willing to fight the Orlesian mercenaries, she doesn't want to throw away lives on a cause doomed to fail.

She'll also want evidence of the PCs' conviction to fight. If the PCs can point to past encounters against Orlesian forces or other hated foes this would go a long way, but Lanya might also want something more concrete.

Fortunately if the PCs inquire how they might convince her, she has just the thing. She directs them to a nearby manor held by the Moffet family, known Orlesian sympathizers who gained their title during the Orlesian occupation of Ferelden. The Moffets aren't very popular in the area, even though they managed to retain their lands by swearing allegiance to King Maric after the Orlesian forces were expelled. They are now a reasonably poor family with little in the way of forces, just a house guard and some small holdings. However, their presence is a constant annoyance for Lanya, who wishes them removed.

If the PCs can remove the Moffets, she will praise their loyalty as "true sons and daughters of Ferelden" and will grant her aid. How they do so is up to them; she doesn't much care so long as the Moffets are gone. She won't endorse wholesale slaughter of the Moffets, but she won't mind it much either.

The Moffets aren't any sort of threat to the PCs at their level. GMs wanting to run a fight can do so, but any violence against the family would be a one-sided slaughter of an aging impoverished nobleman, his sickly wife, and a handful of aging or inexperienced soldiers. Recruiting the Moffets isn't really a possibility either; they won't fight the mercenaries under any circumstances and they have no forces of value.

Kail

The Arrogant Lord

Kail is no great mystery. Kail is not complex. He is an arrogant man. He is afraid that he cannot live up to the expectations of his family and title and he tries to hide that fear by puffing himself up and pretending to be certain of his might and wisdom.

At least, that's how it's all started. Over the years, Kail fell under his own "spell" and convinced himself of his own greatness. He believes he's meant for better things, for greater titles and a loftier rule. He's not about to doubt himself, lest his whole identity come crumbling down.

To make things more complicated, Kail is no fool. He really can be a great man. It's his expectation that greatness should emanate from him easily, and that good things should fall into his lap, that damns his efforts. He wants things to go smoothly, easily, so everyone will be impressed by his grace and poise.

He's hardly aware of all of this about himself.

Kail's purpose in the adventure is to supply the PCs with troops, of course, but also to make them choose between Kail's and Parth's soldiers—for Kail won't work with Parth. To Kail, Parth is a jealous and vitriolic lesser with an undeserved title. In Parth, Kail has found someone he can feel superior to and jealous of simultaneously without threatening his lands or endangering his station. Parth was already angry and disagreeable and Parth's house is a shadow of what it once was.

Perhaps the PCs try to get Kail and Parth to work together. It must be difficult but—through cunning, trickery, or bold bearing—it's also possible. Ultimately the two must learn to respect and appreciate each other, which is no easy feat. The ability to combine the forces of these two nobles is left as a reward for you to dole out to the PCs if they find a way to heal the rift between these men—or at least temporarily overcome it.

Followers and Forces

Kail's forces are a mixed bag. Some are skilled retainers and veterans who served under his father. Others are untested recruits selected for how they look, rather than how they fight. It's not that Kail doesn't desire a finely tuned fighting force; he's just too full of himself to realize what such an army would actually look like. Thus his men are fairly equipped and competently trained, but far more emphasis is put on striking uniforms and fancy weapons drills than winning battles. Leadership is a particular problem, as he chooses most of his officers for their ability to flatter and look good, though a handful of sergeants and veterans manage to maintain fair discipline.

On the positive side, Kail's men are well equipped. He's spared no expense on arms and armor. While some of this comes in the form of fancy but nonfunctional embellishment, their arms and armor are solid and well maintained. This is especially true of Kail's knights, whose equipment is often ostentatious but always finely crafted and effective.

Establish

Establishing Kail before this adventure depends a lot on who the PCs are. If fellow Fereldan nobles or from influential families, they could easily have heard of Kail and his family. He tries so desperately to impress all around with his grace and wit, that any characters who "move in the right circles" would have likely heard at least something about him. They might not like him, but they'd likely know him.

To give the PCs some direct experience with Kail, use this adventure hook: Seeking to prove his superiority in arms and surpass his father's accomplishments, Kail decides to mount a hunt for darkspawn in the area. He is hiring any willing to join his hunt, promising good pay and a share of the glory. In fact, Kail takes the credit for any heroic deeds done, but he does pay well. If the PCs refuse this offer, have them hear tales of a bloody fight where many died and the arrogant young noble claimed victory only after sending many to their deaths.

Portray

Kail's arrogant and insecure, but he's not stupid. He's selfish and vain, but he's not cruel. Far from the best noble around, he's also nowhere near the worst. If he could learn some humility and give others more credit, he could be a great leader. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to happen. Essentially, Kail is a lord whose failings block him succeeding by his virtues.

KAIL	
Abilities (Focuses)	
3	**Communication** (Deception, Etiquette, Persuasion)
1	**Constitution**
2	**Cunning** (Heraldry, Historical Lore, Research)
2	**Dexterity** (Calligraphy, Riding)
0	**Magic**
3	**Perception** (Searching)
1	**Strength** (Heavy Blades)
2	**Willpower** (Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	60	12	9

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longsword	+4	2d6+2

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Bon Mot, Defensive Stance, Dual Strike (3 SP), and Taunt.

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Contacts (Novice), Horsemanship (Journeyman), Single Weapon Style (Novice), and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Bows, Heavy Blades, and Spears.

Equipment: Masterwork light plate (AR 9), masterwork longsword (+1 attack and damage), and medium shield.

Human Bann & Noble

A believer in the importance of appearances, Kail is more concerned with glory, titles, and credit than results. He'd rather lose and be able to claim he could have won if not for the failings of others than swallow his pride and resort to more pragmatic but less romantic strategies. However, his charm and flamboyance do inspire some loyalty, especially in those who fondly remember his father's rule.

He does love his people though. They don't despise him and in fact are generally fond of him; this inspires great loyalty in a young man who secretly fears he isn't half the man his ancestors were. Some sample dialogue:

- *"You've come to the right place. I've been looking for a good challenge."*
- *"Such methods are beneath us, aren't they? They're certainly not something I would stoop to."*
- *"My people are precious. I won't risk them on folly. Show me you've thought this through."*
- *"Mind your tone, strangers."*

Influence

When the PCs meet Kail, his reaction to them will be based largely on how they appear and act. Characters who cut an impressive figure, have a good reputation, or speak well will be treated as honored guests, offered a fine feast, and regaled with tales of Kail's lineage and the fine way he treats his people. Characters with reputations as rogues, who are crude, or who dress shabbily will be regarded with basic hospitality but little enthusiasm. Still, he will listen to what they have to say, hoping that they offer an adventure that will allow him to show his qualities.

Success Threshold: 10

The threshold is 12 if the PCs fail to impress Kail at first. Each roll represents a 10-20 minute discussion with Kail at his manor.

Bargaining (TN 11)

- **If successful:** *"We're reasonable people. I can respect a reasonable arrangement."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "We're negotiating for lives, for honor, here. Let's keep that foremost in our minds, yes?"

Deception (TN 11)

- **If successful:** *"Yes, of course that's true."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "Do not lie to me, ser. You may lie to others, but not to me." (Increase success threshold by 2.)

Etiquette (TN 9)

- **If successful:** *"Yes, quite right. And thank you for being so dignified about it." (Increase Dragon Die result by 1.)*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"We're not uncouth, out here on the edge of the realm, but neither do we praise poise above all. This is a serious matter."* (The first Etiquette failure adds one to the success total even though it is a failure.)

Leadership (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"You're something of a leader of folk yourself, are you? Perhaps you may be a bann one day, too."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "Don't try to lead me, ser. I am a bann. I lead my people where I think is best." (Increase success threshold by 1.)

Persuasion (TN 9)

- **If successful:** *"A fine point, well made."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "Yes, but I'll need more, or perhaps better, reasons than these to go to battle."

Seduction (TN 11)

- **If successful:** *"Ah, my lovely, it's almost like we'd be going off to war in some romantic ballad, isn't it?"*
- **If unsuccessful:** "We… had best keep our eye on the target, hadn't we?"

Getting Leverage: The Lance

PCs needing something more to persuade Kail can do so by retrieving his father's lance. When his father fell in battle hunting bandits years ago, his lance was left where it fell. Attempts to retrieve the object repeatedly failed, as the cave where the battle took place is tainted and now home to an

epic bereskarn (see page 289) GMs should make the PCs work for the lance. If a greater challenge is called for, perhaps darkspawn still lurk in that area. If more of a reward is needed, perhaps some other special arms or armor will be found in the cave. If the PCs can enter the cave, fight past any enemies they encounter, and retrieve the lance, they will have Kail's support.

Or, at least, half of his support. Kail will not commit the entirety of his forces unless he is also allowed to lead in battle. If the players are especially persuasive (Persuasion or Bargaining, TN 10) he will accept a position of leadership and honor—such as leading the first charge—instead.

Parth

The Angry Bann

Parth has never gotten over the passing of his parents and the damage done to Ferelden by Orlais. He is frustrated with the circumstances into which he was born; they're not like the tales of valor and chivalry he was told as a boy. The muddy, bloody real world is a disappointment to him.

All this makes Parth angry—with himself, with his parents, with his neighbors, at the world. He would delight in an enemy he could face and best in some kind of honorable manner, but as he would say, *"Do such enemies exist anymore? Did they ever?"*

Parth doesn't want to feel better. He doesn't want to be soothed or pleased. He's afraid that'll make him look weak. He's afraid that'll make it look as if his anger was for naught. What he wants is to be told that he *should* be angry—and that his anger can be cured through action.

In the adventure, Parth plays a complex role. He won't work with Kail if Kail is allowed to lead soldiers into battle. Parth doesn't trust him. So Parth is the other half of the choice the PCs have to make between Parth's and Kail's forces. Parth is the more stubborn element, though. If Parth were to arrive on the field of battle to find Kail in a position above him, Parth would withdraw along with his forces. *"Let Kail have his day,"* he would say. *"Now that I see what passes for honor in this endeavor."*

Parth is also hesitant to work with Bryton, because Parth sees him as naïve and privileged. That's surmountable, though—a challenge for the PCs to meet and overcome.

Thus Parth is both a tactical and a roleplaying challenge. Perhaps, through their own cunning and skillful talk, the PCs can devise a way for Parth and Kail and Bryton to all work together? That's a worthy achievement for them and may be worth a bonus from their employer or boost to their local reputation if things go well by the end of this adventure.

Followers and Forces

Due to his parent's death at a young age, Parth has been basically raised by his own retainers and household. Even older members of his militia think of the boy as family though all recognize he is too volatile. This results in his troops sometimes interpreting his orders loosely to avoid violent incidents or rash decisions. This can be very useful, but it makes his forces over-

cautious and slow to act. A strong-willed commander could drive them to swift action, but Parth never learned the knack.

Parth's troops are generally older with a smattering of younger troops drawn from the bann's most loyal families. They are well trained and fairly equipped, but not exceptionally so. Some of Parth's knights and veteran sergeants have experience fighting darkspawn, though most are used to battling bandits and the occasional Orlesian deserters or brigands crossing the border.

Establish

Those who know the history of this region will know the tale of Parth's parents—respected and beloved banns killed in the last days of the Orlesian occupation. Parth was only five at the time and grew up an orphaned bann in a war-torn region, whose title is far more impressive than his damaged and diminished holdings. He has a reputation for treating his people well, but also for dark moods and harsh punishments for banditry and other offenses.

PCs who encounter Parth prior to this adventure can use this adventure seed: The bann has put a bounty on local bandits led by an Orlesian deserter. If the PCs bring down the bandits, they will receive a modest reward and little fanfare. However, Parth will remember their actions and be somewhat less surly when they encounter him (reduce TNs to Influence him by 1).

Parth

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	Communication (Bargaining, Leadership)
3	Constitution (Drinking, Stamina)
1	Cunning (Evaluation, Military Lore)
3	Dexterity (Light Blades, Riding)
0	Magic
2	Perception (Empathy, Seeing)
2	Strength (Spears, Intimidation)
3	Willpower (Courage)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	62	13	6

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Spear	+4	1d6+5
Shortsword	+5	1d6+4

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Enrage, Lightning Attack, Pierce Armor, and Threaten.

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Command (Novice), Two-Hander Style (Journeyman), and Weapon and Shield Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades, and Spears.

Equipment: Light mail, medium shield, shortsword, and spear.

Human Bann & Warrior

Portray

Bann Parth is practical, loyal to his people, and very angry. At his best he's mildly irritable, at his worst he's a bundle of cold rage and resentment. It's not that Parth's a bad guy. It's just he's never learned to cope with life's various disappointments, of which he's had several. He also doesn't feel he gets recognition from the crown and his fellow nobles for his family's efforts and sacrifices. He has a point here as well; little was done to avenge his family and Parth's received little aid restoring the damage done to his holdings during the Orlesian occupation.

Bann Parth views his neighbors with a mix of irritation and jealousy. He feels most of them had it easier than he did and that many of them, especially Kail, seek glory and recognition he better deserves. He reacts better to his subjects and respectful outsiders, but it doesn't take much to get on his bad side. Some sample dialogue:

- *"Sounds like a worthy battle," [sarcastically], "against a stepped-up has-been overstepping his bounds. Shame that true knighthood is dead these days."*
- *"In your storybook version of this tale, I imagine we all come out shining and smiling in our armor. That's so rarely how it is, though, isn't it?"*
- *"Which of my people should die for this cause? Point them out to me. Since you're so eager to see us spill our blood."*
- *"Don't talk to me like that, like I'm a politician or some soft noble. I am a bann! I won't be mocked!"*

Influence

Parth's reactions to the PCs will be based mostly on how respectfully they act. He's going to be irritable no matter what, but if they treat him well despite this, he's willing to listen. That doesn't mean he makes it easy for those trying to gain his aid, just that despite his attitude he'll give the PCs a fair chance to convince him.

Parth also appreciates directness, at least in tone. In truth, he's fairly open to flattery, as long as it's not too obvious. He so rarely feels appreciated that kind words about him or his people could win him over. Of course, if he's lied to or treated as a fool he'll never forget or forgive the slight.

Success Threshold: 12

Each roll represents 10-30 minutes discussing with Parth as he shows them his run-down and impoverished manor and nearby holdings.

Bargaining (TN 11)

- **If successful:** *"On the face of it, you make sense. When we look at this as a matter of numbers, of logistics."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"This isn't all about numbers, is it? Even if we can strike a fair bargain, it won't diminish the risk to my people."* (After the first Bargaining failure, the Bargaining TN becomes 13.)

Deception (TN 15)

- **If successful:** *"I didn't know that. I have my doubts."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "Do you tell lies like these to everyone whose life you intend to risk? Do you think I'm a fool?" (Increase success threshold by 2.)

Etiquette (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"You sound like someone of noble upbringing. Are you?"*
- **If unsuccessful:** "That's very nice, but I doubt protocol will save any of our lives if we go to battle together."

Leadership (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"Practicing our tone for the day of battle, are we? Fair enough."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "You don't lead me. Not yet, you don't. I'm careful whose words I follow."

Persuasion (TN 11)

- **If successful:** *"That's hard to argue with."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"I hope you're better at changing the world through swordplay. I really do."* (Increase success threshold by 1 on first failure only.)

Seduction (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"It's not often that I get spoken to so sweetly. I almost want… to believe you."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "Perhaps I should be flattered that you'd try. But no."

Getting Leverage: Respect

Parth wants respect and assurances he won't be dragging his lands out of another bloody violent mess on his own. He's not afraid to fight, but he wants to know his aid is truly appreciated before, during, and after the battle. Giving him command of the army would go a long way to satisfy him, but so would some sort of other sort of recognition. If the PCs can find a way to ensure his contributions will be honored and praised, he'll decide joining their fight is worthwhile. However, Parth isn't stupid and won't send his troops into battle for a few pretty words.

He's also open to any offer that will gain him similar respect. An influential marriage, treasure of important significance, or similar offer might sway him as well. There's no one material thing Parth wants; he wants recognition and appreciation instead.

Fallon

The Mercenary

Fallon is simple, direct, and volatile. She's not interested in fame or grandeur or spectacle. She fights for money.

Her forces are adept, experienced, hardened, and unimpressed with anyone's motives for battle. They expect to be paid so that they can repair their armor, their weapons, their bodies—and fight again. These aren't the type of troops who laugh at death. They take it seriously. They work with death like a smith works with hot metal and fire, and they've all been burned.

Fallon is a serious woman who loves life. When she's not fighting, she's living. For her, that means good food, hefty drinks, and finding excuses to laugh. When she is fighting, she's fighting for another day to live. She expects the same from those who would share the field of battle with her—whether they're her employers or her followers.

Her purpose in the adventure is twofold. First, she's meant to give the PCs a simple way to acquire more skilled troops (and a way to turn their monetary successes in previous adventures into a benefit here). Second, she's meant to put a dramatic and somewhat frightening spin on what's at stake. She can speak seriously about war and battle and the dangers involved. She can explain to the PCs how things work, delivering exposition that the less experienced nobles might not be willing or able to.

She's a foil; she reveals things about the other characters through contrast. She should also be a fun and intriguing roleplaying opportunity for you and the PCs. She takes no guff, tolerates only a little static, and doesn't get too attached to anyone. When playing her, aim for a little bit friendly and a little bit scary.

Followers and Forces

Fallon's men are hardened veterans. Most are Fereldans, though a few foreigners are found among their ranks. They are loyal to coin, their commander, and themselves. This doesn't mean they're heartless. Experience has taught them those are the things they can depend on.

Fallon's men keep their arms and armor battle-ready, though recent hard times have taken a toll on their gear (see **Leverage**). Still, the mercenary company's heavy infantry are a force to be reckoned with, using their greatswords to great effect.

Establish

As she is a successful and skilled mercenary, Fallon's reputation could easily reach the PCs. They might even encounter some of her troops, even if they've never met the commander directly. Military types might have fought in a battle with or against her.

If you want to establish Fallon in the campaign before this adventure, have the PCs run into her men protecting a caravan from a raid by Chasind raiders, bandits, or darkspawn. If the PCs help the mercenaries and return with them to Fallon she will give them a modest reward and offer them a job to do some work for her. Even if they don't take the offer, she will remember them fondly and reduce her fee should they seek to hire her later.

Fallon

Abilities (Focuses)	
3	Communication (Bargaining, Leadership)
3	Constitution (Stamina)
2	Cunning (Cultural Lore, Military Lore)
2	Dexterity (Brawling, Initiative)
0	Magic
2	Perception
3	Strength (Axes, Heavy Blades, Intimidation, Might)
2	Willpower (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	70	12	8

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Battle Axes	+5	2d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike (3 SP), Knock Prone, Lightning Strike, and The Upper Hand.

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Command (Master), Dual Weapon Style (Journeyman), Single Weapon Style (Novice), Throwing Weapon Style (Novice), and Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Light Blades.

Equipment: 2 axes and light plate.

Mercenary Human Warrior

Portray

Fallon is a no-nonsense seasoned veteran of numerous battles. She makes no bones about being a soldier for hire and sees no shame in that. To her, all soldiers are paid somehow to fight and kill—she doesn't swear allegiance to a nation or institution for her pay. Fallon's soldiers clearly respect her and won't take kindly to her being belittled or mistreated. In fact, she's less sensitive to this than they are.

Other than her pay, Fallon's primary concern is protecting her men from foolish employers who will throw their lives away. She doesn't mind fighting and has accepted death in battle as her probable end. She just doesn't want to hasten that eventuality by working for fools. PCs who seem practical and competent will go a long way toward winning her support and respect. Some sample dialogue:

- *"I won't joke about the danger here. Simple battles don't exist. Something—every time—eventually goes out of control in battle."*
- *"You ever see someone lose their jaw? To an axe? Is that something you want to see? Because you'd best go into battle with your eyes open."*
- *"Might as well find a way to be alive tonight, since we're alive tonight."*
- *"Take this seriously, ser. I do."*
- *"Some of us won't survive this. Remember that."*

Influence

Fallon likes directness and honesty. She doesn't care much about the politics or intrigue surrounding a fight but she does want to know that the PCs understand that war is violent, dangerous, and costly before she agrees to risk her men and herself to aid them. Money up front, respect for her skills and her men's lives, and plain speaking are good approaches with Fallon. Pretty speeches, promises, and empty boasts aren't, and it's even worse if she thinks she's being set up or played for a fool. Despite being a mercenary, she won't fight for anyone she thinks will get everyone killed.

Success Threshold: 10

Each roll represents 5-10 minutes of negotiation for the mercenaries' services.

Bargaining (TN 9)

- **If successful:** *"You're speaking my language."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "You're trying to speak to me, I know, but I can tell this isn't your native tongue."

Deception (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"If you say so, I guess."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "I ought to gut you, but I don't do that for free anymore." (Increase success threshold by 2.)

Etiquette (TN 15)

- **If successful:** *"Do you know the king? You talk like someone who wants to know the king. Which is fine, I suppose."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "You understand what we're talking about—a lot of people are going to get hurt. Formality's not going to keep the blood off your shoes."

Leadership (TN 11)

- **If successful:** *"Spoken like a leader. You're going to enjoy this, aren't you?"*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"If you're going to try that bit in front of my soldiers? I'd try it harder. You sound a little unsure."*

Persuasion (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"I wish all it would take were such good points to convince me."*
- **If unsuccessful:** "I fight for worthy causes when the price is right. You haven't convinced me of either, yet."

Seduction (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"I won't fight for just a chance at love, but maybe we have time before your battle? Tell me, what's the allure? Is it my eyes… or my blades?"*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"I'm nobody's conquest."*

Getting Leverage: The Armor

Coin and a display of basic competence is the easiest way to secure Fallon's support, but there is another way. Recent

hardship and regular wear and tear have left the company's armor in a sad state. Many of the mercenaries have substandard protection, something they all know is dangerous. If the PCs can secure new armor for her troops, Fallon will take that in addition to a modest payment and agree to fight. How the characters get armor is up to them, but the more they can get, the cheaper the price. Engar can help fund this endeavor, as he's agreed to pay Fallon's fee, but the PCs still need to find armorers. There are several in various villages and the merchants of Orzammar could also satisfy this need, though the dwarven city is several days' ride and a trip back laden with armor would be longer and attract bandits, raiders, and possibly darkspawn.

Alora

The Rogue Leader

Alora, leader of a company of rakish Dalish soldiers, doesn't care about the squabbles of Orlais and Ferelden. She cares about the Dales and the forgotten treasures left behind there by elves past. She cares about finding a future for her people. She knows they won't all make it.

It takes more than coin or a polished speech to get Alora's forces to join the cause. It takes honesty, conviction, and wit. She responds to verve and passion, more so than she claims.

Alora is personally past grieving for her people. She wants to make as much of a difference in the fate of Thedas and the elves as she can before her inevitable—and probably gruesome—demise. She's chosen death in battle, which means she gets to decide how her life ends. That's some kind of victory. Now she just needs to forestall her death for as long as possible, so she can outwit fate.

Alora's purpose in the adventure is to dramatize certain choices the PCs have before them. Her forces fight for their own reasons. Are the PCs okay with that?

Alora also provides an outsider perspective on the whole affair, letting you, as the GM, step back and rephrase the action in a way that might change how the PCs approach or react to their own plans. If nothing else, Alora is a test to see if the PCs are willing to spin their perspective on their mission so as to secure more allies. Alora is well aware that the PCs want her help and is happy to let them bargain to get it. She has something valuable—her skillful forces—and they want what they want: passage through the nobles' lands and into the Dales. Are the PCs prepared to bargain?

Her forces intend to slip south into the Dales after the battle is won, to raid the ruins and dig up forgotten treasures. If the battle goes badly, Alora's forces slip away to protect their own goals.

Followers and Forces

Alora's elves are a collection of skilled Dalish hunters and warriors. They live a hard life with little outside aid and this helped mold them into a dangerous and effective force. They aren't much for heavy combat and have no cavalry, but as archers and skirmishers they're the best in this region.

This force's problems are attitude-based. They don't trust humans, mostly for good reason. Many of the non-elven troops won't trust them, either. This could cause tensions the PCs might help diffuse if they secure Alora's aid.

Establish

Anyone with ties to the Dalish could have met Alora before. It's even possible she could be related to a Dalish PC. She might seek out PCs who have spent time in the Dales for information about the location of various ruins and important landmarks.

GMs wanting to introduce Alora in their campaign prior to this adventure can use the following adventure seed: An elf in an alienage of a large city the PCs frequent asks them to deliver a map to Alora and her band in the wild. Unfortunately, the elf didn't come by this map, which depicts various ruins and landmarks in the Dales, easily. The map's former owners, a band of artifact hunters and thieves, want it back and are willing to murder the elf and the PCs to get it. If the PCs can get the map to Alora, she will pay them for their troubles and will think kindly of them when they meet again (reduce TNs to convince Alora to join them by 1).

Portray

Alora's fatalism and reserve are the first things people notice, but they only go so deep. Anyone taking the time to get to know her, especially those who treat her people with respect, will find her passionate with a hidden idealism regarding supporting the Dalish cause. She wants to make her mark on

Alora

Abilities (Focuses)	
2	Communication (Disguise, Leadership, Persuasion)
2	Constitution (Running)
1	Cunning (History, Military Lore, Natural Lore)
4	Dexterity (Bows, Light Blades, Stealth)
0	Magic
3	Perception (Tracking)
1	Strength (Climbing)
2	Willpower (Courage, Faith)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
16	62	14	4

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Longbow	+6	1d6+2
Shortsword	+6	1d6+3

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Pierce Armor (1 SP), Rapid Reload, Resources at Hand, Seize the Initiative (2 SP), Skirmish, and That Makes Me Wonder.

Class Powers: Backstab, Bluff, Dirty Fighting, and Rogue's Armor.

Talents: Archery Style (Novice), Command (Journeyman), Contacts (Novice), and Scouting (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, & Staves.

Equipment: Heavy leather, longbow, and shortsword

Dalish Rogue Leader

the future of her people and she believes the best way to do that is to rediscover their past. She isn't interested in forming an elven empire or fighting humanity, she just wants a safe haven for elves where they can live free. So while Alora won't risk her people needlessly, she will risk them if it will achieve her goals. Some sample dialogue:

- *"We can be polite without being coy."*
- *"My people aren't for sale. We want what we want, which is to roam the Dales. Can you help us get that or not?"*
- *"Go on. I want to see if you'll dig yourself a hole or climb out of one."*
- *"That's enough. I believe you mean what you're saying."*

Influence

Alora wants to make a deal, but she's cautious and stubborn. PCs will have to find just the right way to deal with her and when they do, she'll jump at the chance.

Success Threshold: 5

Alora is looking for an excuse to join the cause. Each roll represents 5-10 minutes of discussion. Alora won't take much time to make up her mind if she's offered the right deal.

Bargaining (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"If you want to reduce this to a deal, I'll listen. Just listen."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"I think you've mistaken us for mercenaries. We fight for a cause."*

Deception (TN 15)

- **If successful:** *"All right."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"Nice lie. Now can you tell me something true that'll keep my people from putting arrows in your throat?"* (Increase success threshold by 1.)

Etiquette (TN 17)

- **If successful:** *"Like an ambassador, you are!"*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"I'm going to stop you right there. You've mistaken us for members of court, I think."*

Leadership (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"You sound quite certain of your cause. I like that. Just remember that I'm not part of your cause and just maybe I can be part of your army."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"I appreciate that people respond to that kind of talk, but I do not."* (Increase success threshold by 1.)

Persuasion (TN 13)

- **If successful:** *"I just needed an excuse to set foot in the old Dales. And I didn't even need it to be a good one."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"I just need an excuse to take my people to the Dales, so try again and make it a good one."*

Seduction (TN 15)

- **If successful:** *"There's something about you, isn't there? I hope my people see it, too. Else they'll cut you loose."*
- **If unsuccessful:** *"This is a matter of love, now? Or of putting an upstart human noble in his place?"*

Leverage: The Contract

If the PCs can't convince her to help through their words, Alora wants something possibly rarer to get than the Dalish relics she hopes to find: official sanction. She wants written permission from at least three lords (ideally one of them a bann) in the area to allow her people safe and unrestricted passage through their lands, including the right to camp or hunt on Fereldan lands as necessary. She also wants assurances that no Fereldan will attempt to confiscate any relics her people find in the Dales. This will allow her and her forces to hunt the Dales for artifacts and lost secrets of her people as well as safe trade and travel from the Dales to elsewhere. That this will force the humans to give Alora and her "wild knife-ears" some extra respect is a nice bonus.

Convincing the nobles of this, even if they're already allies, is going to be tough. The biggest thing is convincing them that they aren't inviting a bunch of Dalish into their lands to settle and do as they please, but just allowing passage and hunting rights. If this can be established and Alora will give assur-

ances, Bryton will agree fairly readily with minimal coaxing, Lanya will as well if Alora agrees to stick to areas where the bann organizes hunts anyway. Kail and Parth require more convincing. Kail sees the whole thing as insulting and a clever PC will have to spin this to make it seem honorable or prestigious. Parth at first refuses, because to him Alora is just another party asking him to sacrifice without appreciation. If he's made to feel respected or knows the other nobles are making similar concessions he'll grumble and complain but he'll agree.

Nobody wants to put it in writing though. That's going to be the hard part. An acceptable document will have to be hammered out that gives Alora everything she wants but doesn't make the nobles feel as if they are rolling over, granting settlement rights to the Dalish, or endorsing their actions away from this territory. This is an advanced test, with a TN of 10, Threshold 8, using Cunning with focuses such as Research or Writing aiding in the roll. Each test takes an hour and with 3 failures the agreement is a total mess and needs to be scrapped. If the PCs don't feel up to it, Engar can arrange it.

This encounter can be run as an involved roleplaying session with lots of intrigue and bickering among the NPCs. Or you can leave it up to a few die rolls. It really depends on play style preference. Some groups would love to play out a tense negotiation between antagonist parties and enjoy working out the exact terms of agreement between everyone. Others can't think of anything more boring. A good middle ground is do some roleplaying to establish the tone of the proceedings and then roll some dice with modifiers based on how everyone feels.

PART III

The Battlefield

After the PCs finally have forces it's time to take Edgehall, kick out Gell's forces, and get paid. Of course, things rarely go that smoothly. A new danger is looms on the horizon as the battle grows near.

Arrival on the Field

The PCs will need to gather their forces before approaching Edgehall; none of the commanders want to march on the keep and find out they'll be facing the enemy alone. This is when any final conflicts, deceptions, or conflicts will need to be resolved.

If the PCs haven't yet chosen a commander for the army, they will need to do so. They can lead the forces themselves if they have the skill, though the nobles' troops could be reluctant to follow unknown commanders depending on how they acted so far. Still, a PC with sufficient **Communication, Leadership** focus, and perhaps the Command talent is probably a superior leader than most of the assembled nobles, who are all inferior commanders to Gell's mercenary commander, Corbin. If not, they'll have to select a commander from the assembled lords and allies. This can lead to problems as follows:

Bryton

Most commanders are okay with Bryton, except Parth. He won't immediately withdraw his support if Bryton is chosen, but he'll need to be assuaged with a successful **TN 14 Communication (Leadership, Bargaining, or Seduction)** test. Bryton's strength is his charisma and weakness his inexperience.

Lanya

All the commanders will accept Lanya, though Kail and Parth will grumble about it. Weirdly, this will give them some common ground and coax them to work better together. However, it might be hard to get them to go along with strategies they feel don't properly use their skills or get them appropriate respect and glory. GMs should apply a –1 circumstantial penalty to battle test rolls if this becomes an issue. Lanya's strengths are her steadfastness and experience, and her weakness is her lack of charm.

Kail

Kail is the least popular commander to pick, but he's also the one who might need to be promised the role to secure his support. Only Parth will outright reject this, taking his forces and leaving. However, the rest of the commanders will be upset and their dissention will spread through their ranks unless the PCs can calm everyone down with an advanced **Communication (Leadership)** test, **TN 11,** Success Threshold 7. Kail's strength is his natural talent for leadership and tactics, but his weaknesses are his arrogance and lack of formal training.

Parth

Nobody likes Parth, though they do respect his tenacity if not his attitude. No one will outright reject his leadership, but it will be a tough sell to the other commanders, requiring a successful **TN 15 Communication (Leadership or Bargaining)** test. If this test fails, then a commander will leave, in this order: Kail, Bryton, Lanya, and Alora. Fallon is the only one who doesn't require convincing. Parth's strength is his will and drive, while his weakness is his anger.

Fallon

Despite her experience, Fallon is a hard sell as leader. She's a mercenary and not of noble birth; the nobles see it as an insult to take her orders. Fallon also doesn't want the job despite the fact she'd be good at it. Thus PCs will need to convince her with a successful **TN 12 Communication (Leadership or Bargaining)** test, and convince the assembled nobility with a successful **TN 15 Communication (Bargaining or Etiquette)** test. Fallon's strength is her experience and pragmatism, but her mercenary nature is a weakness.

Alora

No one will accept Alora as a commander, despite her being very qualified to lead in battle. The old prejudices against elves run too deep and there's no way to make this work. Even Fallon, who doesn't care about the Dalish one way or the other, thinks that selecting her will make directing the army too difficult and will oppose it.

Cry Havoc!

With a commander chosen and any hurt feelings dealt with, it's time to begin the battle! The army can approach within sight of Edgehall unhindered, though they also can't move their forces unseen by Corbin's scouts, barring some exceptional deception or brilliant strategy on their part. If the GM thinks the PCs have accomplished this through innovative tactics or creative use of their abilities, feel free to give them a +1 to +3 circumstantial bonus for the first stage of the battle.

The Battle of Edgehall

With their forces gathered, the PCs must retake Edgehall. Normally this would be nigh impossible with an army roughly the same size as the defenders without a long siege, but disrepair and inadequate space to house all of Corbin's forces cause half of his forces to camp outside Edgehall's walls. A recent further collapse of the western section of the wall also grants opportunity, though assaulting this breach will be dangerous: Corbin has stationed some of his best troops there while repairs are made. Still, it makes this battle less a siege and more of a fight where the enemy has less mobility but superior defenses (granting a +1 circumstance Battle Test bonus to Corbin's forces).

PCs using innovative and novel tactics before the battle could greatly influence its results. Creative use of troops, terrain, and resources should grant bonuses to Battle Tests or perhaps even allow PCs to split up their forces to take advantage of the skill of elite (higher TN troops). For example, having Alora's Dalish and Fallon's mercenaries lure and ambush part of the mercenary forces might result in a side battle with a substantial bonus and a better average quality of troops and leave their main force to face fewer soldiers. GMs should award creativity and strategy, but remember Corbin is no slouch himself. When in doubt if a particular unconventional tactic will be effective, have the PC planning it make an opposed test using **Cunning (Military Lore)** against Corbin to see if he's wise to the PCs' tricks.

The Battle of Edgehall is designed to run using the mass battles rules, though you can of course choose to run in strictly narrative fashion if you prefer. In that case, use the info in the **Mass Battles** section on pages 225-232 to guide you.

The Success Threshold of the battle is 15. Even if the PCs have left command of the troops to various NPCs, let them run the battle unless they aren't interested. Roleplaying the various commanders' strategies and actions could be a fun change of pace for the players, and it makes it easier on the GM to not have to run two sides of the same battle.

Stage 1: Opening Moves

In this stage of the battle the troops the PCs have gathered approach Edgehall and bottle up Corbin's troops inside. As this is likely the players' first time using the mass battles rules, start easy with this stage. Corbin's troops will put up some resistance but then fall back to their fortifications for Stage 2. There is thus no crisis point, so just make battle tests until

you determine who wins Stage 1. If the PCs have recruited and planned well, they should not have too much trouble. By the end of this stage, the players should have a good understanding of how the mass battles rules work.

Stage 2: Main Engagement

This is the big clash the PCs have been working toward, with their troops storming Edgehall and trying to defeat Corbin's. Follow the mass battles rules as in Stage 1, but this time introduce a crisis point. This gives the PCs a chance to shine, and potentially to win the battle outright before the darkspawn arrive.

Crisis Point: Once More into the Breach

Part of the army has reached the collapsed section of Edgehall's west wall. This is a great opportunity to push into the keep, forcing a partial retreat. However, the heavily armored defenders are more than the courageous but outmatched attackers can handle. If one or more PCs can assist their men, there's a chance they will be able to achieve a victory.

Run this crisis point as five rounds of a combat, with each PC fighting two heavily armored Orlesian mercenaries. If they can kill a majority of their foes in the allotted time, their forces will be able to push forward and claim the breach. If not, the defenders' reinforcements will arrive, forcing a retreat. Note that the PCs can retreat at any time during this fight if things go badly, though fallen comrades might need to be rescued to avoid being taken prisoner or killed.

The Arrival of the Darkspawn

Normally, the battle would have the possibility of going into Stage 3: Finishing Moves. However, at this juncture word of approaching darkspawn reaches the battlefield. If you can time it so the darkspawn news is revealed as an end of session cliffhanger, so much the better. It's a suitably dramatic place to pause and you won't have two mass battles running back to back in a single session.

How this new battle begins depends on how the battle between the PCs and Corbin's forces went. If they already won, they have just started dealing with captives and terms of surrender. They also have access to three-quarters of their forces and one-quarter of Corbin's forces remain active. If they lost, they have just been taken before Corbin. In this case only a quarter of their forces remain and Corbin has three quarters of his army. If no clear winner exists yet, they have two-thirds of their forces each and have temporarily disengaged to regroup. Whatever the exact situation post-battle, things take a sharp turn for the worse.

Sounding the Alarm

While recovering from the recent fighting, PCs and any NPCs with them hear one of their sentries cry out in alarm "Rider approaching!" When they investigate, they will see a slumped and bloody figure on a horse speeding toward camp. The horse is panicked and the rider half conscious and has lashed themself into the saddle. Unless someone calms the beast it will run amok and its rider will succumb to their wounds before they can be thoroughly questioned. Characters can make a **TN 15 Communication (Animal Handling)** test to calm the beast, which allows them to pull the injured rider from the saddle.

Mass Battle Force Card

Force Name	The Edgehall Blight
Commander	Claw, Hurlock General
Primary Troop Type	Genlocks & Hurlocks (Test Difficulty 12)
Commander's Communication (Leadership)	+5
Stage 1 Specialists	Shrieks
Commander's Cunning (Military Lore)	+4
Stage 2 Specialists	Ogres
Number of Troops	2500
Stage 3 Specialists	None

The rider's identity varies based on the events to date. If any of the commanders refused to join the PCs, it will be one of them. If not, it will be a scout Corbin sent days ago to see if there were any other Fereldan forces approaching. Either way, it is clear the rider was set upon by darkspawn, as signs of the taint can clearly be seen in their wounds.

If the PCs failed to calm the horse, the rider reports in a strained voice that a force of darkspawn has erupted from the Deep Roads, and then expires. If they calmed the panicked animal, the rider survives long enough to provide more details: The darkspawn are less than a day's march north of Edgehall and number over two thousand. They will also report the enemy slaughtered the rider's forces and they barely escaped to warn the assembled forces, meaning there is no hope of further assistance before their foes arrive. Ultimately, there is nothing that can be done to save the rider and they succumb to their wounds shortly afterwards, though PCs may decide to grant them a swift and merciful death.

The PCs should realize they cannot fight both the mercenaries and the darkspawn, and will likely wish to secure Corbin's aid in fighting off the coming horde. This is easy if he's a prisoner, as he will gladly meet the darkspawn sword in hand rather than watch the battle as a captive. Even if the PCs are his prisoners convincing him he could use their

help shouldn't be hard as long as they haven't gone out of their way to anger the enemy commander. If the previous battle was unresolved, he will agree to a truce while sending his own scouts to confirm matters, and will agree after they return a few hours later.

Unity in Crisis

Regardless of their feelings about Lendon and his mercenaries, the allied commanders will agree to this plan as well. They might despise the enemy, but they all recognize the Blight is a threat to all. The only dissenting voice is Gell Lendon, who claims this is all a trick to rob him of his rightful claim. He can be cowed, subdued, or even killed at this point and no one will raise a hand to prevent it. Corbin in particular is done with "this delusional Fereldan fool" and will lock the man up to silence him if the PCs do nothing.

In the event the PCs' actions to date have infuriated or insulted Corbin so badly the GM can't justify him allying himself with them even in the face of the Blight, he will still leave them to fight without interference or face the darkspawn alone if his forces won. Note that the PCs would have to work really hard to do this by committing such acts as torturing or executing captives; Corbin knows that regardless of his personal feelings he is better off allied with the PCs here.

With the battle between the human forces halted, it is time to prepare to fight the darkspawn. At this point, the assembled commanders and their forces will accept any commander who seems competent and willing to lead. If the PCs are Grey Wardens or are known to have fought the darkspawn before, it will be suggested one of them takes command.

One-Horn

Abilities (Focuses)	
0	**Communication**
10	**Constitution** (Stamina)
1	**Cunning**
2	**Dexterity** (Throw)
0	**Magic**
3	**Perception** (Smelling)
12	**Strength** (Bludgeons, Intimidation, Might)
4	**Willpower** (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
13	105	14	10

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Club	+14	3d6+14
Smash	+14	2d6+12
Thrown Rock	+4	3d6+12

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Crush (3 SP), Lethal Blow (3 SP), and Stomp (2 SP).

Crush: For 3 SP, One-Horn can perform a special Crush stunt after a Smash attack. It grabs the target and begins to squeeze, inflicting 1d6+12 penetrating damage. The ogre can maintain the crush as a major action and inflict this damage each round, or hurl away a grabbed target as a minor action, inflicting 1d6+12 penetrating damage but letting the target go. To escape on their own, a victim must use a major action to make an opposed **Strength (Might)** or **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** test vs. TN 14. An adjacent ally can also perform a special 2 SP stunt to automatically free the victim.

Regeneration: One-Horn can take a breather as a minor action, regaining 15 Health.

Stomp: As a major action, One-Horn can stomp the ground with great force and knock down all foes and allies within 8 yards.

Tough Hide: The armor plates bolted to its already toughened skin give One-Horn an Armor Rating of 10.

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Light Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Massive mace.

Epic Darkspawn (Ogre)

Darkspawn Forces

While not as numerous as the forces that gather in other parts of Ferelden, the darkspawn horde approaching still represents a terrible threat. They will certainly outnumber the PCs' forces, perhaps significantly. The force is mostly an even mix of genlocks and hurlocks, though some ogres and shrieks are also present. The darkspawn are not interested in clever tactics or parlay; they just want to slaughter and destroy anyone or anything thing standing against them. You can find the Battle Card for them on page 423.

While the darkspawn certainly outnumber the PC forces, perhaps by 2 to 1 or more (–1 battle test circumstance penalty), they have no Stage 3 Specialists; this, along with the PCs winning various crisis points, can bring them down.

Running the Battle

GM should run this as a mass battle with a Success Threshold of 18. That may be higher than normal for the total number of troops, but the darkspawn won't give up unless utterly defeated and the PCs need a total victory to secure the area. Total up the remaining Corbin and PC forces and add whatever specialists are available to each side to form this army. This should give the PCs specialists in each stage, perhaps multiples. They'll need the advantage in the coming battle against the terrible inhuman horde.

A crisis point for each stage of the battle is provided, but it is up to you to determine how many and which ones you want to use. Using all three would make for a long and challenging battle, so choose wisely.

Crisis Point: One-Horn

A gigantic armored ogre with one broken horn is ripping its way through the army. None of the PCs' forces can stand against this beast and if it is left unchecked, nearby forces will rout. It's up to the PCs to bring this beast down.

This crisis point is a battle against One-Horn, an elite ogre. If

the PCs can easily handle this foe, GMs should throw in some hurlocks or genlocks to harass them during the fight. Take care not to make the fight too difficult; losing to this beast is almost certainly a death sentence.

Crisis Point: Saving Corbin

Corbin and his chevalier guard have pushed deep into the darkspawn ranks and now are surrounded. Realizing their error, they are attempting to withdraw but find their path back to the rest of the army blocked. Unless the PCs can clear the way, they will watch as the brave Orlesian and his men fall under a sea of tainted blades and claws.

The PCs need to defeat two waves of foes to save Corbin. The first is a group of four genlocks per PC (see page 284). After these foes fall, a hurlock emissary (see page 287), and 2 hurlocks per PC will fall upon them. If they can defeat these enemies, Corbin and his men are saved. If Corbin has somehow already been killed in this adventure, use Brigitte instead. If the PCs are very powerful in combat, make some of these foes heroic or elite (see page 270).

Crisis Point: Sever the Head

The PCs have a chance to kill the hurlock general, a telling blow even to a disorganized darkspawn horde. It is guarded by 1 hurlock alpha guard per PC. If the PCs are exceptionally formidable in combat, the GM may wish to make these guards heroic or elite (see page 270). If the PCs win they have devastated the enemy command structure. The general is a tall, powerful hurlock with a wicked iron claw in place of its left hand.

Aftermath

The end of the adventure depends on the results of the battle against the darkspawn. If the PCs' forces are victorious, Corbin's remaining troops will willingly withdraw to return to Orlais and warn them of possible darkspawn attacks on their borders. If they meet the commander in later adventures, it is likely he has regained some favor with the Orlesian court for his actions here, and might become a valuable ally or rival.

If the PCs' forces lose, they still have bought enough time for many of the surrounding villages and holdings to evacuate. If they survive as well, the PCs can join the exodus to the east away from the darkspawn or may decide to go it alone. Either way, this lies outside the scope of this adventure, but either option could lead to an exciting new chapter in your campaign. Engar will certainly remember their actions, and may approach them in the future with other tasks.

No matter what, the battle will have serious consequences for the region, Ferelden, and nearby Orlais. If they manage to fight off the darkspawn horde and keep most of the nobles and their forces alive, there will be adequate defense against the Blight in this area at least for a time. If they managed good relations with Corbin in the end, they now have an unlikely friend in Orlais. It is even possible the PCs will be granted Edgehall (or what's left of it) as a base of operations. This will only happen if one of the PCs is a Fereldan of noble birth or if they are a member of some organization such as the Grey Wardens. This will tie them to the area, but it creates numerous opportunities for adventure and roleplaying.

Regardless of how the battle goes, characters who acquit themselves very well in combat or leadership roles should gain significant reputation among the locals. This reputation will eventually spread to other parts of Thedas. Awarding Honorifics (see pages 317-318) is a great way to reflect the PCs' growing fame. Some particularly appropriate honorifics are: Defender of the Weak, Lion of Edgehall, Darkspawn Bane, and Unbent by Misfortune. Even if they end up fleeing the region with whatever refugees and forces they can salvage, they will still be praised for all the lives they saved, but it will be a bittersweet honor. Any PCs who defeated significant foes such as One-Horn and Claw will certainly see their fame spread.

Experience awards depend on individual campaigns and GM preferences, but this adventure should be worth a significant amount. The PCs had to deal with politics, war, and darkspawn. Win or lose, they'll have learned a lot.

"Claw"

Abilities (Focuses)
3 — Communication (Leadership)
6 — Constitution (Stamina)
2 — Cunning (Military Lore)
3 — Dexterity (Bows, Brawling, Light Blades)
1 — Magic
3 — Perception (Smelling)
8 — Strength (Axes, Heavy Blades, Intimidation, Might)
5 — Willpower (Courage, Morale)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
8	90	12	10

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage
Bastard Sword	+10	2d6+9
Claw Hand	+5	1d6+9

Special Qualities

Favored Stunts: Dual Strike, Lightning Attack (2 SP), Mighty Blow (1 SP), and Rally (3+ SP).

Rally: Claw can perform a special Rally stunt for 3 (or more) SP, inspiring its minions such that all darkspawn within 10 yards who can see it regain lost Health equal to 3 + the number of SP spent.

Talents: Armor Training (Journeyman), Dual Weapon Style (Master), and Single Weapon Style (Journeyman).

Weapon Groups: Axes, Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades, and Light Blades.

Weapon Groups: Brawling, Light Blades, and Staves.

Equipment: Bastard sword, heavy plate, iron claw hand, and short bow.

Epic Hurlock Commander

Glossary

Ability: One of eight core benchmarks that define a character's physical and mental prowess. The abilities are Communication, Constitution, Cunning, Dexterity, Magic, Perception, Strength, and Willpower. They are used most commonly in ability tests.

Ability Focus: An area of expertise within an ability. A character who has an appropriate focus when making a test adds +2 to the test result. Only one ability focus can add to a test. Also known simply as focus.

Ability Test: The most common dice roll in the game, an ability test is used to resolve actions and reactions. Test result = 3d6 + ability + focus (if applicable).

Actions: During action time, a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. Free actions do not count toward this limit.

Action Time: When it becomes important to track time precisely and know who did what when, the game switches from narrative time to action time. Time is tracked in 15-second rounds during action time, and characters take turns in initiative order. Action time is used most commonly to handle combat.

Adjacent: When characters are within 2 yards of each other, they are said to be adjacent. You can only make melee attacks against adjacent targets.

Advanced Test: Basic or opposed tests that use a Success Threshold to track completion over time. The task is complete when the total of the Dragon Dice from all successful tests is equal to or greater than the Success Threshold.

Adventure: A series of encounters that tells a complete story. Sometimes called a scenario. An adventure may take a single session to complete, or several.

Armor Penalty: Each armor type has a penalty that represents its weight and bulk. The penalty applies to Speed if a character is trained in the armor's use, but to Dexterity (and thus to Speed) if the character is not.

Armor Rating: Each armor type has a numeric rating. When a character takes damage in combat, subtract the armor rating from the damage before deducting Health. Penetrating damage ignores armor rating, however.

Attack Roll: The roll made when a character wants to attack in combat. This is an ability test with a target number equal to the opponent's Defense.

Background: Each Player Character has a background that represents their culture and upbringing. These are all detailed on pages 12 to 31.

Basic Test: The most common ability test in the game. A test is made and the result compared to a target number determined by the GM. If the test result meets or beats the target number, the test is successful. Test result = 3d6 + ability + focus.

Battle Test: The advanced test that is used to determine the winner in each stage of a mass battle. It is based on **Communication (Leadership)** or **Cunning (Military Lore)** depending on the stage of the battle.

Campaign: This is the continuing story of the Player Characters, as experienced through a series of adventures. If an adventure is a short story starring the PCs, a campaign is a novel.

Casting Roll: A mage can cast any known spell by making a successful casting roll and spending the required number of mana points. Casting roll = 3d6 + Magic + focus (if applicable).

Casting Time: The amount of time, usually expressed in actions, which it takes to cast a spell.

Class: Each Player Character has a class that represents their path in life and provides a framework for advancement. There are three classes: mage, rogue, and warrior.

Class Powers: A class provides a character with a variety of special powers, such as ability focuses and talents. Known collectively as class powers, they are listed out by level in the class descriptions.

Damage Roll: A damage roll is made when a character successfully hits an opponent in combat. Damage total = weapon damage + Strength – opponent's armor rating. The opponent deducts the damage total from their Health.

Defense: Defense measures how hard it is to hit a character in combat. The higher the Defense, the better. Defense = 10 + Dexterity + shield bonus (if applicable).

Degree of Success: When it's important to know how well a character performed on an ability test, the Dragon Die is used to determine the degree of success. The higher the Dragon Die, the greater the degree of success.

Dice: *Dragon Age* uses only one type of dice, the six-sided die. Usually abbreviated **d6**.

Dragon Die: In an ability test two dice of one color and one of another are rolled. The Dragon Die is the off colored die and it is used to measure degrees of success in ability tests and to generate stunt points during action time.

Encounter: An encounter is a scene in an adventure. There are three types of encounters: combat encounters, exploration encounters, and roleplaying encounters.

Experience Points (XP): Player Characters receive experience points after completing encounters during an adventure. A running total is kept and when they accrue enough XP, characters gain a new level.

Free Action: An action that takes a negligible amount of time. It does not count toward a character's usual limit of actions on a turn.

Game Master (GM): The Game Master runs the game and acts as a referee. The Game Master's Guide has much more information on this key role.

Health: This is a measure of a character's fitness and well-being. Class choice determines starting Health and characters get 1d6 + Constitution more each time they gain a level. A Player Character whose Health drops to 0 will die in Constitution + 2 rounds unless they receives healing.

Initiative: At the start of action time, each character rolls for initiative. This is a **Dexterity (Initiative)** test. The GM arranges the test results from highest to lowest; this is the order in which characters take their turns during a round. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Dragon Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.

Level: Player Characters and some NPCs have a level. This is a measure of the character's prowess and ranges from 1-20.

Magic School: There are four schools of magic—Creation, Entropy, Primal, and Spirit—and each spell belongs to one and only one of them.

Major Action: An action that takes most of a round to complete. If you take a major action, you can also take a minor action in the same round.

Mana Points (MP): Mana points are used to power spells and each mage has a number of MP based on level. A mage who wants to cast a spell must spend the required number of mana points and make a successful casting roll.

Minimum Strength: Some weapons are heavy and/or difficult to wield. A character must have the minimum Strength listed to use a weapon effectively. Otherwise the weapon counts as an improvised weapon (even if the character is trained in its use).

Minor Action: An action that takes only part of a round to complete. You can take two minor actions in a round, or one major and one minor action.

Narrative Time: The periods of play during which it is not important to track time precisely. Most roleplaying encounters and exploration encounters take place during narrative time.

Non-Player Character (NPC): Any character portrayed by the GM.

Opposed Test: When characters vie against each another, an opposed test is made. This is like a basic test, but the characters compare test results instead of trying to meet or beat a target number. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Dragon Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.

Penetrating Damage: Armor offers no protection against penetrating damage. Armor ratings are considered to be 0 against it.

Player Character (PC): The heroes of a *Dragon Age* campaign. In a typical game, each player controls one PC.

Primary Abilities: Each class has three abilities that are most important to it. They are known as primary abilities and a Player Character can increase one of them by 1 each time an even-numbered level is gained.

Range: Each missile weapon has a short and long range. If a target is within short range, attack rolls are made as normal. If a target is within long range, but farther away than short range, attack rolls suffer a -2 penalty.

Round: A 15 second increment of time used during action time. During a round, each character in the encounter gets one turn to act.

Secondary Abilities: Each class has five abilities that are less important to it than primary abilities. They are known as secondary abilities; a Player Character can increase one of them by 1 each time an odd-numbered level is gained.

Shield Bonus: A character using a shield is harder to hit and adds the shield bonus to their Defense.

Specialization: A class power that lets characters focus their class. PCs gain specializations at level 6 and 14. This is the only way to gain specialization talents.

Speed: Speed measures a character's gait and quickness of foot. A character can move up to a number of yards equal to Speed when taking a move action, or double that with a run action.

Spell: A special few can draw mana from living matter around them and shape it into spells. The ability to cast spells is the major class feature of the mage.

Spellpower: This is the measure of a mage's might; certain spells allow the target(s) to test against it to resist or at least offset their effects. Spellpower = 10 + Magic + focus (if applicable).

Spell Stunt: A special enhancement a mage can make when doubles are rolled on a casting roll. This generates a number of stunt points equal to the result of the Dragon Die.

Spell Type: There are four types of spell—attack, defense, enhancement, and utility. Each spell falls into one of these categories.

Strain: When a mage wearing armor casts a spell, they must add the strain of the armor to mana cost. Strain ranges from 1 for light leather to 6 for heavy plate.

Stunt: A special move a character can make in combat when doubles are rolled on an attack roll. This generates a number of stunt points equal to the result of the Dragon Die.

Stunt Points (SP): These are used to perform stunts. A character must spend the stunt points immediately and no stunt but skirmish can be performed more than once on your turn.

Success Threshold: A character making an advanced test must meet or beat this number to successfully complete the task. Each successful test allows the character to add the result of the Dragon Die to the total.

Talent: An area of natural aptitude and/or special training. Each talent has three degrees: Novice, Journeyman, and Master. A Player Character gains talents primarily through class.

Target Number (TN): You must meet or beat this number to make a successful ability test. The higher the target number, the more difficult the test.

Turn: During action time, each character gets one turn to act each turn. On a turn a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. A character may opt to take fewer actions on a turn if desired.

Weapon Damage: The base damage a weapon inflicts on a successful hit.

Weapon Groups: Weapons are divided into groups, each of which usually consists of three weapons. A Player Character receives training in weapon groups through their class. If a character uses a weapon in which he is not trained, he suffers a –2 penalty on attack rolls and inflicts half damage (add Strength and then divide by two, rounding down). If it's a missile weapon, its range is also halved.

Gameplay Reference

Basic Test Difficulty

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

Advanced Tests

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

Test result = 3d6 + ability + focus

Action Time

When action time begins, the following procedure is used.

1. The GM says, "*Roll for initiative.*" Action time is now in effect.
2. Each player makes an **Initiative** roll. This is a **Dexterity (Initiative)** ability test. The GM rolls initiative for each major NPC and each group of minor NPCs (major NPCs act individually, while minor NPCs act together in groups).
3. The GM compares the test results of all the characters and arranges them from highest to lowest into an initiative list. This is the order that characters will take their turns in each round of the combat. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Dragon Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.
4. The character at the top of the initiative list takes their turn. On a turn, a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. Once the actions are resolved, this character's turn is over.
5. The next character on the initiative list takes their turn.
6. Repeat step 5 until each character has taken a turn.
7. Once each character has taken a turn, the round ends and a new one begins. Continue steps 4-7 each round. Initiative does not need to be rolled each round. The order remains set for the duration of the encounter. If new characters join the encounter, they roll initiative at the start of the round they appear and are added to the initiative list.
8. When the encounter is finished, the GM declares that action time is over. Narrative time now resumes.

Making Attacks

There are two basic types of attack: melee and ranged. Both are handled the same way.

1. You start by picking a target. To make a melee attack, you must be adjacent to your opponent. To make a missile attack, you must be able to see your target and be within range.
2. You make an attack roll. This is an ability test based on the weapon group of the weapon you are using (Strength for heavy blades, for example, or Dexterity for bows). This is modified by a focus if applicable and any other relevant bonuses (such as aiming, charging, magic items, talents, etc.).
3. Your attack roll is a basic ability test. Your target number is your opponent's Defense.
4. If your test result is equal to or greater than your opponent's Defense, your attack has hit.

Attack Roll Modifiers

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

Inflicting Damage

Once you've hit an opponent, you then inflict damage. The procedure for calculating damage follows.

1. Roll your weapon's damage and add your Strength ability and any other relevant modifiers. Note that weapons from the Bows Group add Perception instead of Strength to damage.
2. Subtract the armor rating of your opponent's armor (unless it's penetrating damage, in which case skip this step).
3. The result of steps 1 and 2 is your damage total. You inflict this amount of Health damage on your opponent. Note that if your opponent is well armored you may hit but inflict no damage at all.

Healing Damage

- Another character can aid you with a heal action. You can't benefit from another heal action until you take more damage.
- You can take a breather after a combat encounter. This is a 5-minute rest that lets you catch your breath, tend to minor cuts and abrasions, drink some water, and so on. After a breather, you get back **5 + Constitution + Level** in Health. You can only take one breather after an encounter. If you were at 0 Health when the combat encounter ended, you cannot take a breather at all.
- You can get some sleep. If you can get at least 6 hours of restful sleep, you gain **10 + Constitution + Level** in Health.
- You can receive magical healing. This is most commonly the mage spell *heal*.

Major Actions

All-Out Attack

You attack one adjacent enemy in hand-to-hand combat, throwing the full weight of your Strength behind the attack even though your ability to react to counterattacks will suffer. If you hit, you do +1 damage, but whether or not this attack hits, you suffer –1 to your Defense until your next turn.

Charge

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

Defend

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

Dive

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

Fly High

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

Heal

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

Melee Attack

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

Ranged Attack

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

Run

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

Minor Actions

Activate

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

Aim

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

Circle

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

Fly

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

Guard Up

You put your skill to use balancing action and defense. Add +1 or +2 (your choice) to your Defense until the end of this round. However, you suffer the amount you choose as a penalty to all tests you make, even opposed tests, for the remainder of the current round as well. (This is a key difference between the guard up and defend actions. Guard up only lasts until the end of the round, where defend lasts until the beginning of your next turn.) If you choose this minor action, you must do it before any major action you take this turn.

Move

You can move up to your Speed in yards. You can also go prone, stand up, or mount a horse or vehicle, but if you do so you can only move at half Speed (rounded down). If you start a round prone and do not stand up, you may only move at half Speed.

Prepare

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

Press the Attack

You stand ready to pursue an enemy if they should fall back or flee your blows. Declare an adjacent enemy combatant when you do this action. Until the beginning of your next turn, if that enemy moves away from you, you may immediately move up to your Speed in yards in direct pursuit of that enemy at no additional cost in actions. This occurs immediately after your foe's movement, before he can do anything else. However, you can only use this minor action on an enemy you have already successfully struck in melee combat this turn (whether you inflicted damage or not). When you make your move, it need not bring you adjacent to that enemy if you can't go that fast. In that case, you simply move as far as you can before stopping. You are free to forego some or all of the movement this action allows when your enemy triggers it, if you wish.

Ready

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

Stand Firm

You lower your weight and prepare to resist any and all efforts to move you from the place where you stand. Until the beginning of your next turn, any enemy who uses the Skirmish or Knock Prone stunts to move you or knock you to the ground must succeed in an opposed test pitting their **Strength (Might) vs. your choice of your own Strength (Might) or Dexterity (Acrobatics)** in order to move you or knock you prone. This test can only be attempted after your opponent spends the relevant stunt points, which are nevertheless expended to no effect if you win the test. An opponent who attempts to Skirmish you more than once as part of a single attack (to move you more than 2 yards) only makes a single opposed test against you, with all of the skirmishing movement hanging in the balance.

Combat Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1+	**Skirmish:** You can move yourself or the target of your attack 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend.
1	**Rapid Reload:** You can immediately reload a missile weapon.
1	**Stay Aware:** You take a moment to make sure you're mindful of everything that's happening around you. Make a **TN 11 Perception test** with the focus of your choice. If you succeed, the GM may either make you aware of some battlefield situation that has so far escaped your notice, or give you a +1 bonus to the next test you make. This bonus can never stack with any other test bonus other than from a focus, must be used on the very next test you make (even if you're the defender in an opposed test), and expires at the end of your next turn even if you haven't used it by then.
2	**Knock Prone:** You knock your enemy prone. Any character making a melee attack against a prone foe gains +1 bonus on the attack roll. Prone characters cannot Run and must use a Move action to stand up.
2	**Defensive Stance:** Your attack sets you up for defense. You gain a +2 bonus to Defense until the beginning of your next turn.
2	**Disarm:** You attempt to disarm the target with your melee attack. You and your opponent must make an opposed attack roll. These attack rolls do not generate stunt points. If you win the test, you knock your enemy's weapon 1d6 + Strength yards away in a direction you nominate.
2	**Envenom:** The toxins on your blade pump through your opponent's body and do their deadly work. Your enemy immediately suffers the basic damage and additional effects of your poison. Remember that the basic damage from poisons is penetrating damage.
2	**Mighty Blow:** You inflict an extra 1d6 damage on your attack.
2	**Pierce Armor:** You find a chink in your enemy's armor. Their armor rating is halved (rounded down) vs. this attack.
2	**Taunt:** You insult or distract one opponent of your choice within 10 yards of you. You must make an opposed test of your **Communication (Deception)** vs. the target's **Willpower (Self-Discipline)**. If you win, the target suffers a –1 penalty on attack rolls and casting rolls on their next turn.
2	**Threaten:** You strike a threatening pose, challenging an opponent of your choice within 10 yards of you. You must make an opposed test of your **Strength (Intimidate) vs. the target's Willpower (Self-Discipline)**. If you win, they must attack you in some way (melee, missile, spell, etc.) on their next turn.
3	**Kaboom!:** Your attack detonates either a grenade held by your target or carried by your target. ("Held" means "prepared to throw"; "carried" means "stowed somewhere on their person.") If your target has the Poison-Making talent, their carried grenades may not be chosen. Held grenades must always be chosen before carried grenades, if both are legal targets. If carried grenades are targeted and multiple grenades are being carried, the GM randomly determines the exploding grenade among them. The detonated grenade inflicts its full damage on your target and anyone else within 2 yards of them. Be aware that if you inflict this stunt on a melee attack, *you* are within 2 yards of the exploding grenade, unless you also Skirmish**!**
3	**Lightning Attack:** You can make a second attack against the same enemy or a different one within range and sight. You must have a loaded missile weapon to make a ranged attack. If you roll doubles on this attack roll, you do not get any more stunt points.
4	**Dual Strike:** Your attack is so strong it affects two targets. First, pick a secondary target. They must be adjacent to you if you are using a melee weapon or within 6 yards of your primary target if you are using a missile weapon. Apply the test result of your original attack roll to the secondary target (in other words, you only make one attack roll and apply it to both opponents). If you hit the secondary target, inflict your normal damage on them.
4	**Seize the Initiative:** Your attack changes the tempo of the battle. You move to the top of the initiative order. This means you may get to take another turn before some of the combatants get to act again. You remain at the top of the order until someone else seizes the initiative.
5	**Lethal Blow**: You inflict an extra 2d6 damage on your attack.

Armor

Armor	Armor Rating	Armor Penalty	Cost
Light Leather	3	0	15 sp
Heavy Leather	4	–1	30 sp
Light Mail	5	–2	50 sp
Heavy Mail	7	–3	75 sp
Light Plate	8	–4	100 sp
Heavy Plate	10	–5	150 sp
Light Leather Duster	3	0	15 sp
Tailored Leather Duster	4	0	+45 sp
Lining with Concealed Pockets	+1 to **Dexterity (Legerdemain)** tests		+25 sp

Shields

Shield	Shield Bonus	Cost
Light Shield	+1	15 sp
Medium Shield	+2	30 sp
Heavy Shield	+3	60 sp

Missile Weapon Ranges

Weapon	Short Range	Long Range	Reload
Crossbow	30 yards	60 yards	Major Action
Long Bow	26 yards	52 yards	Minor Action
Short Bow	16 yards	32 yards	Minor Action
Throwing Axe	4 yards	8 yards	Minor Action
Throwing Knife	6 yards	12 yards	Minor Action
Throwing Spear	8 yards	16 yards	Minor Action

Weapons

Weapon	Damage	Min. Str	Cost
Axes Group (Strength)			
Battle Axe	2d6	1	14 sp
Throwing Axe	1d6+2	1	10 sp
Two-handed Axe	3d6	3	20 sp
Bludgeons Group (Strength)			
Mace	2d6	1	12 sp
Maul	1d6+3	1	14 sp
Two-handed Maul	2d6+3	3	19 sp
Bows Group (Dexterity)*			
Crossbow	2d6+1	1	20 sp
Short Bow	1d6+1	–1	9 sp
Long Bow	1d6+3	1	15 sp
Brawling Group (Dexterity)			
Fist	1d3	-	-
Gauntlet	1d3+1	-	4 sp
Improvised Weapon	1d6–1	-	-
Dueling Group (Dexterity)			
Main Gauche	1d6+1	–	11 sp
Rapier	1d6+3	0	18 sp
Spiked Buckler	1d6	–1	15 sp
Heavy Blades Group (Strength)			
Bastard Sword	2d6+1	2	20 sp
Longsword	2d6	1	18 sp
Two-handed Sword	3d6	3	23 sp
Lances Group (Strength)			
Heavy Lance	2d6+1	3	20 sp
Jousting Lance	1d6+1	0	6 sp
Light Lance	1d6+3	1	12 sp
Light Blades Group (Dexterity)			
Dagger	1d6+1	-	9 sp
Shortsword	1d6+2	–1	14 sp
Throwing Knife	1d6	-	10 sp
Polearms Group (Strength)			
Glaive	2d6+1	1	23 sp
Halberd	2d6+3	3	25 sp
Military Fork	2d6	2	18 sp
Spears Group (Strength)			
Spear	1d6+3	0	12 sp
Throwing Spear	1d6+3	0	12 sp
Two-handed Spear	2d6	1	20 sp
Staves Group (Dexterity)			
Club	1d6	-	1 sp
Morningstar	1d6+3	1	11 sp
Quarterstaff	1d6+1	-	3 sp

* Weapons from the Bows Group add Perception instead of Strength to damage.

Casting Spells

You can cast any spell that you know by making a successful casting roll and spending the required number of mana points. A casting roll is simply a Magic ability test. The most common focuses that apply are Creation Magic, Entropy Magic, Primal Magic, and Spirit Magic, each of which corresponds to one of the schools of magic.

Casting roll = 3d6 + Magic + focus (if applicable)

If your casting roll equals or exceeds the spell's target number (TN), you successfully cast the spell. If not, the spell fizzles and has no effect. Either way, you must spend the required mana points.

If the casting roll fails and the Dragon Die result is a 1, a magical mishap occurs. Spells without requirements never cause magical mishaps.

Spellpower

For many spells, making a successful casting roll is all you need to worry about. Make it and the spell works as intended. Sometimes, however, you must overcome the natural resistance of the target before the spell takes effect. Spellpower is the measure of your arcane might; certain spells allow the target(s) to test against Spellpower to resist or at least offset the spells' effects.

Spellpower = 10 + Magic + focus (if applicable)

Magical Mishaps

When there is a magical mishap the caster immediately makes a **Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test against the spell's target number. A successful test means the caster is knocked prone, with the usual consequences (that is, it takes a move action to get back up and opponents gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls). The mage may avoid the ignominy of falling over by spending additional mana equal to the spell's original cost.

If the Willpower test fails, the outcome of the mishap is based on the Willpower test's Dragon Die. Consult the **Magical Mishaps** table for details.

Magical Mishaps

Dragon Die	Mishap Result
1	**Mana Drain:** The mage loses mana equal to twice the spell's original cost in addition to the initial cost paid (for a total of triple the usual cost).
2	**Mana Burn:** The mage loses Health equal to twice the spell's original cost.
3	**Backlash:** The shock of the mishap leaves the mage unable to cast any spells for 1d6 rounds.
4	**Misfire:** The spell effect occurs, but targets an ally rather than an enemy (or vice versa) or has the opposite of the intended effect (healing rather than harming, or vice versa). The GM determines the particulars of the misfire.
5	**Lost in the Fade:** The mage falls into a trance, their spirit lost in the depths of the Fade for 2d6 minutes. The mage is helpless during this time and vulnerable to a coup de grace.
6	**Harrowing:** As **Lost in the Fade**, except the mage must also make a **TN 13 Willpower (Faith or Self-Discipline)** test every two minutes to avoid being possessed by a demon and becoming an abomination, so the longer the mage's spirit wanders the Fade the greater the risk. A Player Character who becomes an abomination falls under the GM's control; the player must make a new character.

Standard Spell Stunts

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

Advanced Creation Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Strengthening Spell:** One ally within two yards of you gains a +1 bonus to Strength until the beginning of your next turn.
1	**Quickening Spell:** One ally within two yards of you gains a +1 bonus to Dexterity until the beginning of your next turn.
1+	**Bolstering Spell:** You or one ally within two yards of you with greater than 0 Health recovers one Health for each SP spent.
2	**Sustaining Spell:** An ally within 10 yards currently at 0 Health doesn't count this round when determining how many rounds he can survive with 0 Health.
3	**Empowering Spell:** You gain +1 Spellpower on the next spell you cast before the end of your next turn.

Advanced Entropy Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Consuming Hunger:** If a character within 10 yards of you dies this round, you recover 1d6 mana. Note this only recovers mana you have spent; it doesn't give you bonus mana above your normal maximum.
2	**Minor Curse:** The target of your spell suffers a –1 penalty to Defense until the beginning of your next turn.
2	**Leaden Feet:** The target of your spell is briefly drained of vitality. The target suffers a –1 penalty to Speed until the beginning of your next turn.
3+	**Entropic Blessing:** The target of the spell loses 1 Health and you are healed for the same amount. Note this only heals damage you have suffered; it doesn't give you bonus Health above your normal maximum. If you have enough stunt points to spend, you can use this stunt twice on your turn.

Advanced Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Arcane Acuity:** Your expertise in the magical arts assists you. Make a TN 11 Magic test using the focus of your choice. If you succeed, you either become aware of some key magical detail of the current encounter or else gain a +1 bonus on your next magic-related test, up until the end of your next turn.
1	**Arcane Advantage:** The target of the spell suffers a –1 penalty to resist your next spell until the end of your next turn.
1+	**Staggering Spell:** If the spell does damage, you can move the target 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend.
1+	**Arcane Armor:** Channeling residual mana from your spellcasting, you create a protective field around you, gaining an Armor Rating equal to the SP spent until the beginning of your next turn.
3	**Lasting Spell:** If the spell has a duration beyond instantaneous, it is extended to twice the original duration with no additional mana cost. So rock armor, for example, lasts an additional hour, glyph of paralysis lasts 2d3 rounds, and so forth.
4	**Mana Surge:** Immediately after casting the spell, regain 1d6 mana.
4	**Masterful Casting:** Reduce the mana cost of the spell cast by 2. This can reduce mana cost to 0.
4	**Split Spell:** If the spell affects only one target, you can have it affect two, so long as the second target is within the spell's range and no more than 6 yards from the original target. There is no additional mana cost. Targets test against the spell separately.
5	**Disrupt Magic:** In addition to its normal effects, your spell is so powerful that it may disrupt another magical effect on the target; roll an immediate test of your **Magic (Spirit)** vs. the Spellpower of any one effect on the target. Success removes the effect, while failure has no additional effect (beyond the normal effect of your spell). Doubles on this test do not generate additional stunt points.
5	**Lethal Spell:** If the spell does damage, one target of the spell takes an extra 2d6 damage. Alternately, all targets of the spell take an additional 1d6 damage.
6	**Penetrating Spell:** If the spell does damage, all of its damage this round becomes penetrating damage, ignoring the target's armor rating.

Advanced Primal Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
2	**Dazzling Spell:** In addition to other effects, the target of your spell is at a –1 penalty for all tests involving vision (including attacks) until the start of your next turn.
3	**Immolation:** The magic you use causes you to burst into flame. It causes you no harm, but until the beginning of your next turn anyone who comes into contact with you or attacks you in melee takes 1d6+1 damage.
3	**Thick Skin:** Your skin hardens briefly and adds 1 to your Armor Rating until the beginning of your next turn. This stunt has no effect if you are affected by a spell that raises your Armor Rating.
4	**Lightning Arcs:** Electricity arcs from your body, inflicting 2 points of penetrating energy damage to any foes within 2 yards.

Advanced Spirit Spell Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1+	**Spirit Shield:** You shape excess mana to protect you. Until the beginning of your next turn, any spell stunt (helpful or harmful) that costs up to the number of SP you spent to activate energy shield has no effect on you. If it's a spell stunt that affects multiple targets, you are not affected but others are as normal.
2	**Knock Prone:** You knock the target of your spell prone. Any character making a melee attack against a prone foe gains +1 bonus on the attack roll.
3+	**Enervating Spell:** If the target of this spell has a mana rating, that character loses 1 mana point. If you have enough stunt points to spend, you can use this stunt twice on your turn.

Exploration Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Advantageous Positioning**: You make your discovery from an advantageous position of your choice. That position, however, can't be more than 2 yards away from the place that would normally lead to your discovery. You may wait until the GM describes what you've found, if relevant, before you choose.
2	**Efficient Search:** If resources of any kind are typically consumed in the course of your test, you use only half as much as would be normal.
2	**Speedy Search:** You complete your test in half the time it would otherwise take.
3	**That Makes Me Wonder:** You may immediately make another **Perception** test, at no additional cost in time or resources, to discover more information about your surroundings, or the object of your test. This bonus test must use a different focus from the first test, however, and doubles on this bonus test do not give rise to stunt points. The two tests are assumed to transpire simultaneously, not one after the other. If there is nothing additional to discover the stunt is wasted, but the GM will not prevent you from choosing this stunt even when there is nothing additional to learn.
3	**The Object of your Attention**: You receive a +1 bonus to further tests to examine or perceive additional aspects of the object of your test until the time or venue changes.
4	**The Upper Hand**: If your discoveries lead to combat within a moment or two you receive a +3 bonus on your initiative roll.
4	**Resources at Hand**: Choose a focus that you don't have, that falls under the same ability as the test you're making. You are considered to have that focus until the time or venue changes. The GM may require you to explain how this bonus arises from the environment and deny it if you can't make a reasonable suggestion.
4	**With a Flourish**: The manner of your success is impressive to those who are nearby to watch you. You have a +1 bonus to opposed tests against them until the time or venue changes.

Roleplaying Stunts

SP Cost	Stunt
1	**Bon Mot:** You tag the perfect witty remark onto the end of your action, affecting all those who hear it that much more deeply. If you can't think of one, the rest of the players and GM quickly brainstorm options, and you choose among them. Word of your wit is likely to spread, for good or ill.
2	**And Another Thing:** You manage to weave a second thread of conversation into the primary interaction that called for the test, if your description supports it. If relevant, you may make an additional test as part of your action, before anyone else has a chance to respond or make any tests or arguments of their own.
2	**Sway the Crowd:** Your interpersonal efforts are so effective that they spill over onto others in the area, and you affect one additional person of your choice past the original target. You may use this stunt multiple times on the same roll. However, if the test that gave rise to this stunt was an opposed test you may not expand the effect to anyone who has a higher ability + focus total than the original target.
3	**Stunned Silence:** You are so impressive that you leave all those who witness your display completely dumbfounded and unable to speak for at least a full round. Outside combat this lasts, at the very least, long enough for your character to begin to do something else.
3	**Jest:** You turn a phrase, twist your expression, or make some other comic motion that leads those nearby to laugh, or at the very least, stifle their snorts. Anyone nearby who wishes to avoid laughing must make a **TN 11 Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test, with the exception—at the GM's discretion—of whomever you've made the butt of your joke.
4	**Flirt:** Choose one character who's present and immediately make an **opposed Communications (Seduction) vs. Willpower (Self-Discipline)** test. If you win, that character becomes enamored with yours, assuming gender-preference compatibility. What exactly this means in the moment and how it might play out (or fall apart) in the long run are up to the GM (or the player, if this stunt targets a PC), and depend on how you continue to act, but if you're successful, you've created an opening for romantic opportunities.
4	**Tower of Will**: Your success gives you a sense of your own brilliance and strength of character. For the rest of the current roleplaying exchange you gain a +1 bonus to any opposed tests where an opponent tries to put you at an emotional disadvantage, such as by intimidating you, impressing you, bargaining with you, and so on.
5	**Enrage**: You twist the knife, delivering a provocation or insult in such a way that a single target you designate must choose between either attacking you or storming away from the scene. If they choose to attack the assault need not be deadly, although that option is open to the enraged character. A slap or the throwing of the gauntlet may stand in as an "attack" just as well.

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Mass Battle Force Card

Force Name

Commander

Primary Troop Type

Stage 1 Specialists

Stage 2 Specialists

Stage 3 Specialists

Commander's Communication (Leadership)

Commander's Cunning (Military Lore)

Number of Troops

Quick Reference Card

Name

Class/Level

Health

Communication		
Constitution		
Cunning		
Dexterity		
Magic		
Perception		
Strength		
Willpower		

Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage

Speed

Defense

Armor

Powers

Equipment

Initiative Card

Name

Class/Level

Speed Initiative

Communication | Constitution | Cunning | Dexterity

Magic | Perception | Strength | Willpower

Initiative Card

Name

Class/Level

Speed Initiative

Communication | Constitution | Cunning | Dexterity

Magic | Perception | Strength | Willpower

Spell Card

Name

Mana Cost

School/Type

Cast Time

TN

Test

Spell Effect

Spell Card

Name

Mana Cost

School/Type

Cast Time

TN

Test

Spell Effect

Dragon Age

Class | **Level** | **Experience Points**

Name

Background

Age | **Gender**

Appearance

Height _____
Weight _____

Distinguishing Features

Speed	Defense	Armor	Penalty	Health
		AP		

Armor Type

Class Abilities & Specializations

Mana

Communication	Rating
Focuses	

Constitution	Rating
Focuses	

Cunning	Rating
Focuses	

Dexterity	Rating
Focuses	

Magic	Rating
Focuses	

Perception	Rating
Focuses	

Strength	Rating
Focuses	

Willpower	Rating
Focuses	

Move	Charge	Run
In Yards		
In Squares / Hexes		

Melee Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage

Weapon Groups & Notes

Ranged Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage	Short Range	Long Range	Reload Time

Spell Name	School	Type	Mana Cost	Cast Time	TN	Test

Talent Name	Novice	Journeyman	Master

Languages

Concept, Goals & Ties

Equipment

Money

GP SP CP