

Prestigious Organizations

The Order of the Nullblades



**Interjection
Games**

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Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades Interjection Games

The Order of the Nullblades

Membership: Approximately 1,400

Chapters: Approximately 80

Racial Breakdown: As settlement

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Sigil: A sword over a broken staff in an otherwise featureless circle

Motto: "Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Income: Approximately 500,000 gp annually

"The only thing bigger than a wizard's ego is the size of the crater when he finally snaps." - Drimble Underhill, Nullblade

Overview

Originally established as a mercenary organization, The Order of the Nullblades specializes in techniques and tactics designed to nullify and eliminate spellcasters. While the first nullblade designed the combat discipline simply to get even with overbearing wizards, the Order is now in the very paladin-like business of correcting the "misuse of magic" wherever it may occur. While the Order does still embrace its mercenary roots by taking on jobs to root out mad wizards or interplanar incursions by various eldritch abominations, often with spectacular profit margins, the sound financial footing of the Order gives it the means to force its philosophies on those who happen to be in the area rather than waiting to get paid for it. As a nullblade of the Order will no doubt proclaim, preventing the "misuse of magic" rather than waiting for the call to correct it once everything's gone pear-shaped saves innocent lives and help keep the world from unraveling. Adventurous arcane spellcasters who enjoy a little experimentation, particularly wizards, tend to be harassed time and time again by Order operatives who have been conditioned to believe that every arcane spellcaster in existence is one failed experiment away from transforming into a city-chewing megalomaniac. To the Order's credit, as powerful wizards tend to find ways to become immortal and creatures not born with the ability to cope with immortality eventually go crazy, there's a great deal of truth to their claims. Still, the wizards don't like being told this. It's bad for their image.

While the Order is, quite understandably, not the most popular organization in the minds of law-abiding spellcasters, local non-magocratic governments rejoice when a chapterhouse is established in their jurisdiction. Some municipalities go as far as to offer incredible incentives simply to get the Order to establish a presence in town. Not only does a chapterhouse mean the local economy gets a boost from all of the contract money the Order earns and then spends in town, but their very presence dissuades attacks by everything from a kobold tribe that happens to be heavy on sorcerers to incursions by low-ranking fiends. No spellcaster likes the idea of fighting a dozen warriors trained specifically to eliminate him. Of course, given the size of the town and the zealotry of the soon-to-be chaptermaster, the local cabal of wizards may move to the next city to continue their research in peace, but, generally, the money and protection are well worth the loss.

How The Organization Works

There is no central headquarters to the Order, this decision being made long ago when it was realized that a central point of command makes it easy for a renegade archmage to decapitate the entire organization in one fell swoop. Instead, the Order operates through eight regional headquarters which are themselves responsible for about nine chapterhouses each. Each chapterhouse is presided over by a chaptermaster, who in turn reports to the regional headquarters' grandmaster. Misconduct by a nullblade is handled by the local chaptermaster, while misconduct by a chaptermaster is addressed by the regional grandmaster. Should there be an issue with a regional grandmaster, the other grandmasters convene a special council to decide what to do with their colleague.

Orders are sent down the chain of command in a fairly inflexible manner. For example, in order for an Order operative to be given an assignment to, say, take care of a rampaging water elemental that accidentally found its way to the material plane, the requisition to do so must be drafted and sent from the regional headquarters to the chapterhouse nearest the action and that requisition assigned to the best man for the job by that chapterhouse's chaptermaster. Though this may seem slow and, therefore, bad for the Order's response time and ability to stay on top of actual emergencies, the Order has their chain of command oiled quite well. Further, assuring that only those who know the individual capabilities of his men make the assignments ensures that the mortality rate is kept as low as possible. It also ensures that the documentation is there should a client try to weasel its way out of paying the bill.



Despite this rigorous organizational structure in the face of finance, the Order comes across as fairly grassroots in practice wherever the organization's income is not involved. Chaptermasters are given liberal freedom to acquire and train new talent from the local area as they see fit and have absolute say over what specific amenities their chapterhouses offer to visiting members of the Order. The prevailing logic is that a chaptermaster who lives in the area will always know better than a grandmaster who lives in a city that just so happens to be two weeks away by horse. To add to the general atmosphere of freedom within the organization, not all nullblades are operatives who are subject to the standard chain of command. In an effort to tap into the established information channels built up by generations of adventuring martial specialists, accomplished individuals are invited by the Order to step into nearly any chapterhouse, lay out their credentials and, if accepted, pay for the training necessary to become an adventurer-associate.

Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades Interjection Games

Ranks and Responsibilities

The life of a nullblade varies quite greatly depending on his rank within the organization and whether he considered an actual member or an adventurer-associate.

Knight-operative

The bulk of the Order of the Nullblades belongs to the rank of knight-operative. The most visible outward-facing component of the organization, knight-operatives are professional soldiers trained and retained by the Order itself. Their local chaptermaster assigns them to various contracts that are themselves assigned to that chapterhouse by the appropriate regional headquarters. Experienced at working solo or in squads, depending on the size and lucre of a particular contract, all knight-operatives are experienced fighters with at least one level in the nullblade prestige class.

Knight-operatives can readily be identified by the sigil of the Order in silver, which is typically found on the offhand gauntlet.

Knight-champion

Promoted from the ranks of the knight-operatives, the knight-champion is an experienced operative with leadership experience and at least three levels in the nullblade prestige class. These individuals can be seen taking on more difficult solo assignments or leading squads of knight-operatives. They are otherwise identical to knight-operatives in responsibilities and powers.

Knight-champions can readily be identified by the sigil of the Order in gold, which is typically found on the offhand gauntlet.

Chaptermaster

An experienced knight-champion with over a decade of leadership experience may eventually find himself to be the chaptermaster of a particular chapterhouse. The chaptermaster's role is strongly clerical in nature, but requires a deep understanding of the risks involved in fulfilling the Order's contracts, thus requiring the aforementioned promotion from within. He is responsible for both the acquisition and training of new recruits, as well as for strategic dissemination of contracts assigned to his chapterhouse by the regional headquarters. By training all of his men, he understands the strengths and weaknesses of each of them. By having spent a decade or more doing what it is they do as a career, he understands the risks involved. This makes the chaptermaster the single most important role within the entire Order. Should the Order somehow be decapitated, each chaptermaster has the expertise required to effectively run his chapterhouse independently.

Chaptermasters can readily be identified by their masterwork armor emblazoned with the sigil of the Order. Such a suit of armor is not a relic of the station, but rather made from scratch as a bonus for each chaptermaster to attain the title. Each one is made to the recipient's exacting specifications, minus the sigil, and thus reflects on his particular martial training.

Grandmaster

The oldest chaptermaster in a particular region automatically becomes the grandmaster of that region. Uprooted to the regional headquarters, grandmasters are responsible for the selection of new chaptermasters and have the final say in whether or not a particular contract is simply too dangerous for the price. A grandmaster is also expected to spend his time with various petitioners, whether they be potential allies, potential customers, or potentially homicidal wizards.

Occasionally, the grandmasters gather in what is known as the Council of Eight. This is usually done to debate potential changes to the structure of the Order as a whole, but can also take the form of a tribunal against the misdeeds of a single grandmaster. Operatives jokingly call the latter the Council of Seven. Notable Council of Eight decisions include the establishment of the title of adventurer-associate and the decision to allow those with bardic training to apply to be part of the Order despite their arcane magic.

Grandmasters can readily be identified by a plain white sash upon which the sigil of the Order is embroidered.

Friends and Unofficial Members

The Order exercises a soft hold over many individuals who are not actual operatives. This includes independent allies of recognized skill, trainees, and adventurers who have paid for training in the ways of the nullblade.



Adventurer-associate

Historically, the Order of the Nullblades has been very protective of its knowledge, particularly in the face of the adventuring profession. Why, if an adventurer's wizard friend asked nicely enough, then everything the Order kept secret would be known by everyone! This sentiment continued until a particularly straightforward grandmaster told his colleagues that mental domination and scrying most definitely are things that exist, and the goodwill of intrepid individuals like the adventuring community is necessary for the survival of the Order should the worst happen.

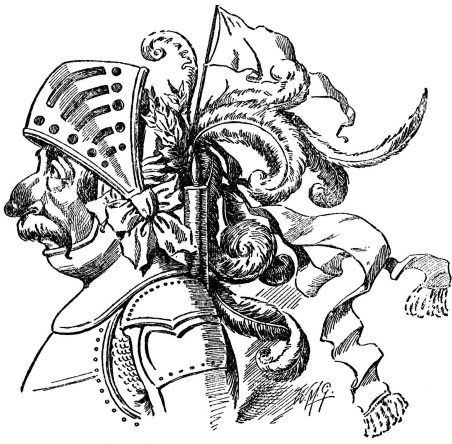
The Order threw its doors open in one of the most rapid reversals of stance in its history. Today, adventurers can pay a nominal fee to receive training from a chaptermaster in the ways of the nullblade and be recognized as adventurer-associates, meaning they receive a number of benefits from the Order in exchange for being there in times of crisis. An adventurer-associate can let a chaptermaster know that he is looking for work and be assigned work as though he were an operative, but cannot have work assigned to him without his express consent; the Order realizes that adventurers have their own, usually chaotic means of fighting the good fight and preventing the "misuse of magic".

Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades Interjection Games

Friend of the Leaden Hand

An honorary title given to non-nullblades in good standing with the Order, Friends of the Leaden Hand can access all chapterhouse amenities, without discount, as though they were nullblades themselves. Special appellations added to this status, such as Fiendslayer or Wizard Hunter, designate a particular Friend as a recognized expert in fighting a specific enemy of the Order.

When a deployed unit of nullblade runs across a Friend in the thick of battle against a foe he is a recognized expert against, that Friend has open permission to attach to the unit with a rank between that of a knight-operative and a knight-champion. For example, Reginald the paladin, Friend of the Leaden Hand - Fiendslayer, has authority just below that of the commanding officer of a squad of nullblades should they be combating a demonic incursion together. It is customary for an attachment to be reported and some gift to be sent to the friend as thanks for lending their valuable expertise, and probably saving lives in the process. This gift is never more than a few percent of the value of a particular contract and regularly takes the form of small wheels of expensive cheeses, fine wines, and other luxury consumables that most individuals the Order calls friend would neglect purchasing in preference of more utilitarian goods. Needless to say, such a luxury, though usually within the friend's means, are appreciated, if only because they're easy to resell in any settlement with an established aristocracy.



Knight-aspirant

Individuals currently under the tutelage of a particular chaptermaster with the hope of becoming knight-operatives, knight-aspirants are the trainees of the Order. Not sent out to fulfill contracts, knight-aspirants are only responsible for their training and for defense of the chapterhouse itself should it ever come to that. All knight-aspirants qualify for the nullblade prestige class, but have no levels in it.

Both knight-aspirants and adventurer-associates are subjected to the same training, a rigorous four-month process that culminates with the leadbane ritual, a ritual performed by allied clerics that renders the subject immune to lead poisoning.

The Chapterhouse

The fundamental unit of organization within the Order of the Nullblades is the chapterhouse. Ranging from little more than a modest dwelling in a village to a powerful member of a city's economy, chapterhouses are typically built for one of two reasons. First, a location with a high population is a perfect way to have access to new recruits, consumer markets, and demand for mercenary work. Second, a location with a history of "misuse of magic", even a thorp, can host a chapterhouse simply to act as a base of operations when the worst does inevitably happen. Chapterhouses that are established for the latter reason typically have an arrangement with the local government. In exchange for their presence and, by extension, protection against likely incursions, the Order does not pay taxes in this municipality.

When entering a settlement for the first time, roll on Table: Chance of Finding a Chapterhouse, below, to see whether or not the Order has a presence in the area. Of course, if the GM simply says that there is or is not, then don't bother rolling. It's already been determined.



**Table: Chance of
Finding a Chapterhouse**



Settlement Size	Percent Chance	Amenities
Thorp	1%	0
Hamlet	3%	1
Village	5%	1
Small Town	10%	2
Large Town	20%	2
Small City	35%	3
Large City	50%	3
Metropolis	20%	All





Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades Interjection Games

Chapterhouse Amenities

Not all chapterhouses are created equal. While the Order of the Nullblades does its best to make sure its operatives have what they need, that is still a far cry from giving them everything that they want. Nevertheless, even the most basic chapterhouse is a point of contact for operatives out on assignment or for adventurer-associates doing their own thing out in the world at large. While all chapterhouses offer news, camaraderie, an opportunity to take on a job rooting out "misuse of magic", and a place for the qualified to rest should the local inn be full, most chapterhouses also feature special amenities, or additions that go beyond the basics to serve the local operative population better.

If there is a chapterhouse in a particular settlement, then proceed to Table: Chapterhouse Amenities to determine the amenities that are present at that chapterhouse. The number of amenities present in a particular chapterhouse is dependent upon the size of the settlement containing it and is listed in Table: Chance of Finding a Chapterhouse. Roll on Table: Chapterhouse Amenities a number of times equal to the Amenities entry of Table: Chance of Finding a Chapterhouse, rerolling all duplicate results. Alternatively, the GM can simply dictate what's there if he wants to do so.

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;">  Table: Chapterhouse Amenities  </div>	
Amenity Name	d6
Alchemist	1
Allied Cleric	2
Chapterhouse Blacksmith	3
Chapterhouse Inn	4
Potion Stockpile	5
Technique Instructor	6

Alchemist

Some chapterhouses of the Order keep a gnomish bard on retainer as an alchemist. A chapterhouse with this amenity has an internal stockpile of all common alchemical goods and sells them to the general public in order to generate additional income. When visiting the chapterhouse, nullblades receive a 10% discount on all alchemical goods, up to a limit of 50 gp market price per nullblade class level. A nullblade may only get this discount once every month. The discount is organization-wide. Whenever a nullblade gains a class level, his purchasing limit is immediately resets to its maximum regardless of whether or not a month has passed.

Any amount of a nullblade's purchasing limit left unspent is carried over to the next transaction. For example, a 5th level nullblade can purchase 250 gp market value from the chapterhouse. If he purchases 150 gp worth of goods, he can purchase another 100 gp market value at the preferred rate at a later date. At a date of one month from this first purchase, the nullblade's purchasing limit resets to its maximum.

Allied Cleric

Honoring an alliance that dates back to before the founding of the Order itself, some chapterhouses contain small shrines to gods who dislike arcane magic. This shrine is maintained by an acolyte of this god who spends much of his time producing and subsequently blessing lead-based talcum powders made for use by his god's allies. When visiting a chapterhouse with this amenity, nullblades can purchase a single bottle of talcum powder for 300 gp. A nullblade can purchase a single bottle of talcum powder each week.

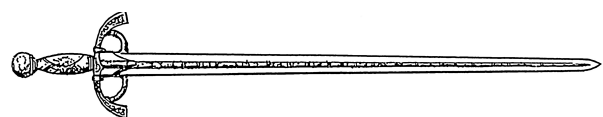
When poured over a creature as a standard action that provokes attacks of opportunity, that creature gains a +1 alchemical bonus to saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities for 1 hour. Creatures without the leadbane ritual class feature take 2 points of Constitution damage on a failed DC 15 Fortitude save when this talcum powder is poured over them. If a creature takes Constitution damage from the talcum powder and this Constitution damage is restored by any means, then the benefit of the talcum powder ends immediately.

Chapterhouse Blacksmith

Some chapterhouses of the Order keep a blacksmith on staff to deal with breakages and the like. When visiting a chapterhouse with this amenity, nullblades can have their broken mundane equipment repaired by an Order blacksmith at a 50% discount.

Chapterhouse Inn

Sometimes, a nullblade has to go where everybody knows his name. While all chapterhouses keep a significant stash of cheap grog, tables, and cramped bunks handy for visiting nullblades, some chapterhouses are designed around the concept of heavy traffic and really go the extra mile to make those passing through feel comfortable. A chapterhouse with this amenity offers the same benefits as any well-maintained inn, including hot food, soft beds, and a fairly good selection of alcoholic beverages. The nullblade's party, excluding non-bard arcane spellcasters, may stay at a chapterhouse inn instead of another inn in town. A nullblade staying at a chapterhouse inn pays 50% of market price for his food and lodging costs, while any bards allied with the nullblade pay 75% of market price.



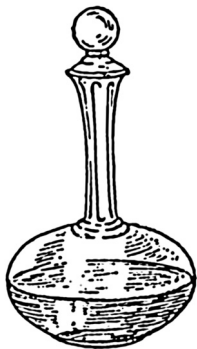
Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades Interjection Games

Potion Stockpile

Some chapterhouses stockpile potions for distribution to other chapterhouses. Given the end goal is to get the potions to the front lines of the war against "misuse of magic", skimming a little off the top is a time-honored tradition that gets the potions to the front lines that much sooner. When visiting a chapterhouse with this amenity, the nullblade can select potions with a market value of up to 100 gp per nullblade class level. He receives these potions for free. A nullblade can only get this benefit once per level. Whenever a nullblade gains a nullblade class level, his potion stockpile allowance resets to its maximum. The potion allowance of a 10th level nullblade resets to its maximum every six months.

Any unspent amount of a nullblade's potion limit is carried over to the next transaction. For example, a 5th level nullblade can take 500 gp market value from the chapterhouse. If he takes 350 gp worth of potions, he can take 150 gp market value of potions at a later date.

Remember, bards are the only arcane spellcasters from whom the nullblades will buy. Potions made by wizards, sorcerers, witches, and the like will never be present in a chapterhouse's potion stockpile.



A label on the potion reads, "Certified 100% witch, sorcerer, and wizard free!"

A second, smaller label actually takes the time to describe what the potion is, how it works, and how long the effects should be expected to last. The nullblades certainly have interesting priorities.

Technique Instructor

Some chapterhouses become the haunts of grizzled veterans who simply aren't spry enough to hunt down megalomaniacal wizards any longer. A chapterhouse with this amenity allows a nullblade to retrain his techniques in the same way a character can retrain feats during downtime. There is no discount applied to this service.

Relationships with Others

The Order of the Nullblades is particularly polarizing, but that is the case for any specialized institution that believes its views are the definitive the right way to be. Even so, a number of groups are staunch allies of the Order, while most simply tolerate them.

Barbarians: Barbarians are a superstitious lot. Some have a primal fear and hatred of magic, while others are from tribes that embrace it to the extent of being ruled by shamans. To that end, the Order's stance toward barbarians is cautious, but not initially unfriendly. This neutrality quickly waxes to friendship or enmity once the views of a particular barbarian are known.

Bards: For most of the Order's history, bards have been lumped together with wizards and sorcerers as dangerous practitioners of magic who frequently crossed the line to what the Order saw as blatant misuse of their gifts. This all changed one day when an arcane duelist, a variety of bard well-versed in martial training, walked right into an Order chapterhouse and demanded induction into the Order. Initially rebuffed, and for good reason, the arcane duelist forced the issue by defeating the chaptermaster in single combat without the use of magic. After such a display, there really wasn't anything the organization could do other than induct the arcane duelist before a public relations nightmare ensued.

Today, arcane duelists make up a small, but significant portion of the Order of the Nullblades. Having successfully made the argument that bardic magic comes from the heart, while other arcane practitioners manipulate external magics that are not provided by a god, bards are no longer on the list of individuals to be watched closely for probable misuse. This gives bards an absolute monopoly on arcane magic provided to the Order, making a chapterhouse of the Order the first stop for any destitute bard who just rolled into town. As for the arcane duelist who started it all, he is still alive and well and is presently the chaptermaster of the chapterhouse he so boldly strode into all those years ago (See Section: *Dramatis Personae*).

Clerics: Most clerics have fairly neutral opinions about the Order. As practitioners of magic whose power is provided by the gods, most clerics are not closely watched in the way witches, wizards, and sorcerers are; however, the Order has been known to move against clerics who fall into blatant misuse just as readily as if they were wizards. Clerics of gods with an emphasis on the arcane arts are one exception to this rule. The nullblades believe that clerics of such a god are followers of a "god-wizard", and as the Order has the audacity to place that god on their list of practitioners of magic to watch for misuse, all followers of that god are effectively on that list by association. Such clerics find nullblades to be a boorish and standoffish sort, particularly when some of their more fascinating experimentation gets labeled a "misuse of magic". Conversely, clerics of gods who have their own issues with arcane magic have been staunch allies with the Order since before its official founding and are responsible for the powerful leadbane ritual that makes being a nullblade possible.

Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades Interjection Games

Druids and Rangers: Druids and rangers are cordial with, if not openly friendly toward, the Order. While it is true that arcane magic is a threat to the natural order of things, the urban leanings of the Order itself is a bit distasteful to men of the wild. Still, both druids and the Order see each other as excellent allies when the need arises.

Though it may seem strange that the Order does not come down upon druids in much the same way as they do wizards, the nullblades have long since decided that as nature is all about balance, then druids, by definition, have a built-in safeguard. Yes, there are those who work to build a new balance, a new natural order, and those individuals need to be eliminated, but, by and large, druids are a low-risk group and need not the constant vigilance assigned to wizards and other arcane practitioners.

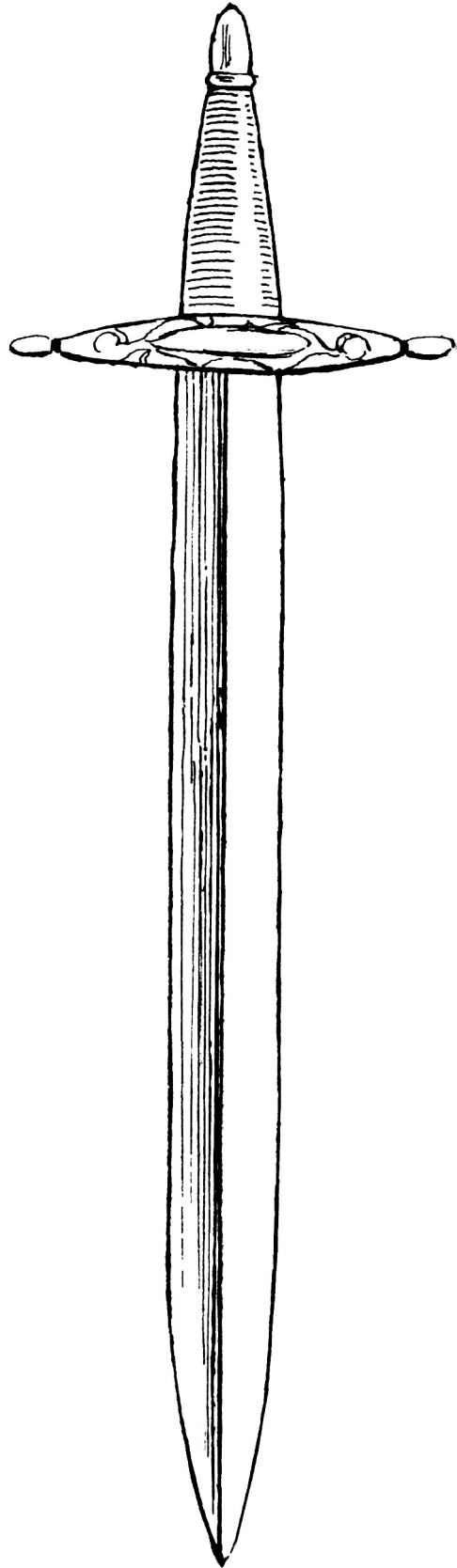
Fighters: Fighters are the primary pool of talent from which new nullblades are drawn. Understandably, fighters and the Order have a love/hate relationship, as is the case with any employer that pays well, but has to be selective.

Monks: Monks and nullblades of the Order respect each others' disciplines and the rigorous training required to excel in them. Still, as the two disciplines are so different, there tends to be a friendly rivalry between the two as they try to prove that their discipline is the superior one.



Paladins: Paladins and nullblades get along shockingly well, primarily because the Order sees undead and the invasion of the material plane by outsiders to be magical misuse of the worst kind. While they may be fighting to uphold completely different ideologies, in the end, any man who willingly stands against the most powerful fiends in the cosmos and swaps war stories in the tavern afterward is alright in the other man's book.

Sorcerers and Wizards: Given the Order is one step away from openly stating that arcane practitioners are the enemy, the relationship between the Order and the arcane practitioners of the world is understandably strained. The Order purchases nothing made by neither wizards nor sorcerers, while individual nullblades are quick to parrot this sentiment in their own transactions. The current tension is best exemplified in the fact that the Order maintains no central headquarters simply because of the high likelihood of arcane invasion should relations suddenly take a turn for the worse.



Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades Interjection Games

The Nullblade Prestige Class

*"Fighters never grow old and die. They simply keep fighting until they draw the attention of an archmage."
- Ferghus "the Surly", Nullblade*

The purists among those invested in the arcane and those who know the seven methods of efficient decapitation have never really gotten along. The former call the latter a bunch of mongrel brutes, then the latter prove the former right to a point by getting upset about it and chopping off the heads of a few apprentices. Choice words are exchanged, somebody's turned into a chicken for a few weeks, usually the fighter, and the cycle starts again the next time either of them gets drunk.

One day, an epiphany of the most transcendent nature came to a great fighter whose name has been long forgotten. After watching a diviner's magic fail time and time again because of a "thin layer of lead", this fighter made the logical leap that lead hinders all magic and contracted an alchemist to produce a small bottle of talcum powder containing high amounts of that very metal. Before long, news of his success as a fighter able to stand toe-to-toe against the practitioners of the arcane and live spread through the martial hotspots, also known as inns and taverns, of the world. Of course, lead being what it is, the first nullblade, for that is what he called himself, was bedridden with lead poisoning within a year and died not long after. Taking up the torch, a small group of admirers forged an alliance with clerics whose gods were just as against arcane magic as the nullblades were, resulting in the advent of a ritual capable of preventing lead poisoning. Within a generation, the nullblades were established as an organization and the smug grins on the faces of wizards haven't been quite so wide ever since.

Role: A nullblade is a specialized fighter who ceases to focus on strength of arms and instead focuses on techniques and tactics to shut down spellcasters. The great quantity of lead present a nullblade's body hinders magic nearby. As the lead is indiscriminate, an undisciplined nullblade is considered a nuisance by allied spellcasters, but these issues tend to be forgiven whenever a nullblade walks up and puts a lich in a chokehold.

Alignment: Any. Nullblades must be of Lawful alignment (or at least act Lawful when on the job) in order to maintain membership in the Order, though nullblades removed from the Order may continue to progress through the prestige class unhindered.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

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

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Ability Scores: Intelligence 13

Skills: Knowledge (arcana) 3 ranks, Spellcraft 3 ranks

Feats: Disruptive, Skill Focus (Knowledge [arcana]) or Skill Focus (Spellcraft)

Class Skills

The nullblade's class skills are Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Spellcraft (Int), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Ranks at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.



Table: The Nullblade



Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+1	+0	+0	Aura of negation, leadbane ritual, spellsense
2nd	+2	+1	+1	+1	Spellbreaker, technique
3rd	+3	+2	+1	+1	Technique
4th	+4	+2	+1	+1	Specialist's bane
5th	+5	+3	+2	+2	Technique
6th	+6	+3	+2	+2	Aura of negation—30 feet
7th	+7	+4	+2	+2	Technique
8th	+8	+4	+3	+3	Specialist's bane 2
9th	+9	+5	+3	+3	Technique
10th	+10	+5	+3	+3	Leadenn nullification

Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades

Interjection Games

Aura of Negation (Su): At 1st level, the nullblade's excessive exposure to substances that hinder magic has made him a mobile dampener of magic as a whole. The Difficulty Class of all concentration checks made within 15 feet of the nullblade are increased by +1. At 3rd level and every 2 levels thereafter, this increases by an additional +1, to a maximum of +5 at 9th level. At 6th level, the aura's radius increases to 30 feet.

A nullblade may suppress or enable this ability at will as a standard action.

Leadbane Ritual (Ex): At 1st level, a nullblade has been officially inducted into the Order of the Nullblades. Performed by one of the various clerics allied with the Order, this ritual combines various alchemical substances with a quick jolt of channeled clerical energy, granting the nullblade complete immunity to lead poisoning, as well as a +2 alchemical bonus to Fortitude saves against poisons and diseases.

Spellsense (Sp): At will, a nullblade can use *detect magic*, as the spell. A nullblade can, as a move action, concentrate on a single item or individual within 60 feet and determine the number of different magical auras and the power of the most potent aura. Further, a nullblade can make Knowledge (arcana) skill checks to determine the school of magic involved in each. (Make one check per aura: DC 15 + spell level, or 15 + 1/2 caster level for a nonspell effect.) If the aura emanates from a magic item, a nullblade can attempt to identify its properties (see Spellcraft). While focusing on one individual or object, a nullblade does not detect magic in any other object or individual within range. This effectively mimics the effects of focusing on an item or individual for 3 rounds.

Technique: The primary tool in the nullblade's arsenal is his collection of techniques. Developed by the Order to combat spellcasters wherever they may be lurking, a nullblade's techniques focus on the debilitation and elimination of opposing spellcasters. At 2nd level, 3rd level, and every 2 levels thereafter, the nullblade perfects the use of one of the techniques listed below. He must meet all of that techniques prerequisites in order to learn it.



Anchoring Blow (Su): The nullblade is confident in his ability to defeat enemy spellcasters if only he can get them to keep still. A nullblade with this technique can make a single attack as a standard action. If it hits, the creature struck must make a DC 10 + the nullblade's class level + the nullblade's Intelligence modifier Will save or be unable to teleport or change planes of existence for 1 minute as the *dimensional anchor* spell. A nullblade must be at least 7th level to take this technique.

Divination Blocker (Ex): It is common knowledge that a thin layer of lead is enough to stop divinations. Luckily for most nullblades, their bodies are effectively layered with lead. A nullblade with this technique has Spell Resistance equal to 10 + twice his nullblade level against divination spells. If he successfully resists a spell in this manner, he can force a momentary link with the caster. This link tells the nullblade the name the caster uses for itself, as well as on which plane of existence it is currently. If the nullblade and the caster are on the same plane of existence, he also learns approximately (within 10% of total distance) how far away the caster is and in which direction he will need to travel to get there. A nullblade must be at least 3rd level to take this technique.

Divine Interception (Ex): The various practitioners of divine magic share behaviors based on the gods they follow, and those gods themselves are defined by the various domains in their portfolios. Select a domain. A nullblade with this technique gets a +3 circumstance bonus to damage rolls against all divine spellcasters whose god has that domain in its portfolio. This technique can be taken multiple times. Each time, select a new domain. Should a particular divine spellcaster have two or more domains that match domains selected by the nullblade, he only gets his bonus to damage rolls once.

Dogged Pursuit (Su): Not content with simply disrupting magic, some nullblades learn to manipulate the energies released by fumbled spells with the radius of their aura of negation. Any spellcaster, even an ally, who fails a Concentration check within the area of effect of the nullblade's aura of negation while the aura is active takes damage equal to the base damage of the weapon or weapons currently wielded by the nullblade.

Hatred of All Magic (Ex): The realization is sudden. Evocation, enchantment, transmutation - it doesn't matter! It's all vile! A nullblade with this technique gets a +2 bonus to saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities. A nullblade must have taken the school hatred technique three times in order to take this technique.

Negation Focus (Ex): The nullblade perfects the use of his aura of negation as a precision instrument and can now smite with a melee weapon as a standard action. If this attack hits and deals damage, the creature struck is marked by the nullblade's aura of negation for 1d4+1 rounds. Creatures marked in this manner receive all of the penalties of the aura of negation class feature at up to double its standard radius, but are immediately unmarked if they move beyond this expanded radius.

Negation Focus, Greater (Ex): The nullblade learns to project his will through his aura of negation, causing those marked by the negation focus technique to be treated as though they are in a threatened square for the purpose of the Disruptive and Spellbreaker feats. This effectively allows a nullblade to make an attack of opportunity with the Spellbreaker feat at up to 60 feet away, even with a melee weapon. A nullblade must have the dogged pursuit and negation focus techniques in order to take this technique.

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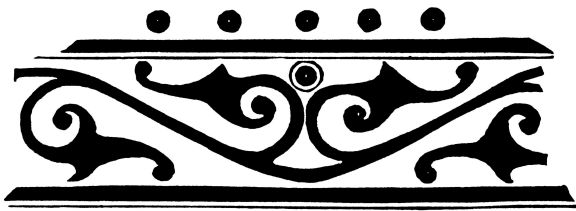
Negating Stand (Ex): Thinking really hard about making magic stop can actually work when the thinker's body is full of lead. If the nullblade successfully resists a spell while using the stand firm technique, the entire spell is retroactively counterspelled. Each day, a nullblade can stop one spell in this manner for every two nullblade levels he possesses. A nullblade must have the stand firm technique to take this technique.

Specialist Specialization (Ex): A nullblade with this technique has studied the habits of wizards who focus on a particular school of magic to the detriment of others and has learned that this weakness can be exploited in very direct ways. He gets a +3 circumstance bonus to damage rolls against all specialist wizards.

Rattle (Ex): A swift swat to the temple is enough to make a spellcaster forget whatever it was he was about to do. As a standard action, the nullblade can make a melee touch attack, smacking the side of a creature's head with the flat of his weapon. If it hits, this technique deals no damage, but rattles the victim quite severely. For the next 1 round, the victim must make a DC 10 + the nullblade's class level + twice the spell's level Concentration check to cast a spell. If he fails this check, the spell is not cast; it and the action used to cast it is wasted.

Rattle, Greater (Ex): The rattle technique lasts for 1d4+1 rounds rather than just 1 round. A nullblade must have the rattle technique to take this technique.

Return Fire (Ex): A nullblade with this technique can ready an action to swat a spell directly out of the air. Only single target spells fired at the nullblade that require a touch attack can be swatted in this manner. If such the spell would strike the nullblade while he has this technique readied, the nullblade makes a melee attack roll against an AC of 20 + the spell level of the spell + the caster's spellcasting ability score's modifier. If successful, the spell is deflected and automatically strikes the caster. A nullblade must be at least 5th level to take this technique.



School Hatred (Ex): Many bar conversations between martial practitioners invariably reach a common topic if allowed to continue long enough, namely wizards and how they killed one of their buddies. Some insist fireballs are the worst. Others hate the enchantments that force allies to kill one another. Whatever the case may be, everyone has their favorite school of magic to hate. A nullblade with this technique has a +2 bonus to saving throws against spells of a particular school of magic. This technique can be taken multiple times. Each time, select a new school of magic.

Seize Time (Ex): Archmages have this annoying habit of stopping time for a moment and teleporting away with several delayed blast fireballs left behind as a parting gift. The entire nullblade profession hated that so much that they came up with a way to get around it. Whenever a spellcaster within 60 feet of the nullblade casts *time stop*, the nullblade makes a Will save against the spell. If successful, the nullblade can act while time is stopped. For both the caster and the nullblade, *time stop*'s standard restriction on not making offensive actions is lifted; however, any offensive actions made against individuals not acting during the *time stop* have no effect. Either weapons and force effects travel so fast that they harmlessly quantum tunnel through the creature struck or spells ignite and end before they can so much as singe a hair. A nullblade must be at least 9th level to take this technique.

Slippery Mind (Ex): If an enemy couldn't hide via *invisibility*, flee via *teleport*, or leave a field of flame via *time stop*, then it would be reasonable to suppose that that individual would give up. That being said, spellcasters have a reputation for being stubborn about admitting that they have been bested. A nullblade who can successfully negate most of their tactics is not something to fear, but rather something to appropriate. Nullblades understand this and prepare for it. If a nullblade is affected by an enchantment spell or effect and fails his saving throw, he can attempt it again 1 round later at the same DC. He gets only this one extra chance to succeed on his saving throw. A nullblade must be at least 5th level to take this technique.

Stand Firm (Ex): The nullblade can stand firm against his enemies as a standard action, granting himself Spell Resistance equal to 10 + twice his nullblade level for 1 round. If he successfully resists a spell during this period, he is healed for an amount equal to the spell level of the spell. A nullblade must be at least 5th level to take this technique.

Stuttershock (Ex): A punch to the auditory organs can make it very difficult for a spellcaster to get a spell off. As a standard action, the nullblade can make a melee touch attack, swatting the spellcaster's throat, auditory tentacles, or some other likely looking organ. If it hits, this technique deals no damage, but makes it particularly difficult for the victim to think of what he was going to cast next.

If the victim cast a spell in the last round, that particular spell is the only one he can recall for 1 round; therefore, if he attempts to cast, it turns out to be that same spell again. Spontaneous spellcasters simply spend a spell slot of the appropriate level, while those who prepare their spells, like wizards, can actually use this technique to their advantage, as any prepared spell of the correct spell level is forced to be the same spell as the spell cast last round. If the spellcaster has no spell slots of the appropriate spell level, he cannot cast. Whether or not the save is successful, a creature cannot be the target of this technique again for 1 hour, as the body has a tremendous ability to brace itself against the same dirty trick in rapid succession. A nullblade must be at least 7th level to take this technique.

Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades Interjection Games

Trained Eye (Su): When losing to a martial individual, spellcasters tend to go invisible and keep up their barrage of spells from relative safety. The nullblade profession realized this to be one of the low hanging fruits that needed to be addressed in order to defeat renegade spellcasters. A nullblade with this technique has tiny flecks of lead floating around in his eyes and ignores all magical effects that render a creature invisible. Natural invisibility effects, such as that of an invisible stalker, still thwart the eyes of the nullblade. A nullblade must be at least 3rd level to take this technique.

Wandsnapper (Su): Despite the name, the wandsnapper technique also works on rods, staves, blessed suits of armor, potions, and just about any other magically-enhanced piece of equipment. Once per day as a standard action, the nullblade can make a melee touch attack as a standard action. If this touch is successful, the creature touched takes damage equal to twice the caster level of the highest caster level among magic items it has on its person. In addition, the item itself has its abilities suppressed for 1 minute. A successful DC 10 + the nullblade's class level + the nullblade's Intelligence modifier Will save negates the suppression effect. At 5th level every 4 levels thereafter, this technique can be used an additional time per day, to a maximum of three times per day at 9th level. A nullblade must be at least 3rd level to take this technique.

Wandstealer (Su): Whenever the nullblade uses the wandsnapper technique on a piece of equipment that uses a body slot, such as goggles, a shirt, or gauntlets, he may choose to appropriate the abilities of that item for the duration of the wandsnapper effect. Doing so suppresses the magical abilities granted him by his own equipment in that slot. This must be done before the nullblade learns which item it is his wandsnapper technique is actually affecting (unless, of course, intense research of the subject reveals the target's equipment beforehand). Weapons and items with no body slot, such as ioun stones and most trinkets, cannot be affected by the wandstealer technique. A nullblade must have the wandsnapper technique to take this technique.

Spellbreaker (Ex): At 2nd level, the nullblade gains the Spellbreaker feat as a bonus feat. He does not need to have its normal prerequisites.

Specialist's Bane (Su): At 4th level, the nullblade has achieved mastery over the lead in his body through sheer will and determination and can now control it to some degree. The nullblade's aura of negation class feature now imposes a -1 penalty to the DC of all spells of a specific school cast within its radius. Spells that travel into or through the radius of the nullblade's aura of negation are not penalized. The school to be penalized can be changed at will as a standard action that provokes attacks of opportunity. At 8th level, the penalty imposed by this ability increases to -2.

Leaden Nullification (Su): At 10th level, the nullblade's mastery over the lead floating about in his body has reached its zenith. Once per day, the nullblade can force the lead in his body into a specific orientation as a standard action, creating a localized area that is incredibly hostile to magic as per the *antimagic field* spell. The area of this field is the square or squares occupied by the nullblade himself, as well as all squares he threatens when using a non-reach melee weapon. This ability lasts for a number of rounds equal to the nullblade's Intelligence modifier, minimum 1.



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Dramatis Personae

Drimble Underhill

Background: A knight-champion of the Order of the Nullblades, Drimble Underhill is an exemplar at the use of a sling in combat. Preferring stealth and ranged tactics over the brute force usually applied by his peers, Drimble's way of thinking is considered strange to those knight-operatives working under him for the first time. Still, his chaptermaster recognizes that such tactics ensure that there's little to no attrition, even when taking on a particularly dangerous assignment.

Unlike most knights of the Order, Drimble is assigned to a single chapterhouse, primarily because most other chaptermasters don't buy into his stealthy tactics. Seeing the lack of travel as a blessing, Drimble has done what most other nullblades do not: purchase a home, which, in true halfling fashion, is decorated with much of his wages. Needless to say, Mrs. Underhill is exceptionally proud of what she believes is a complex scheme of her husband's that resulted in their being able to settle down while he is still in the Order.

Appearance: Of average height for a halfling and kept extremely well-fed by Mrs. Underhill, Drimble looks very much like your average halfling and could easily be mistaken for a well-to-do farmer when not on duty. With his fairly heavy armor on and sling in hand, the dumpy Mr. Underhill looks more comical than dangerous, but that's exactly what he wants you to think.

Personality: Drimble is friendly in all of his dealings, even with those who are likely misusers of magic. Unlike most knights of the Order, Drimble does not buy into the logic that marching around and prying into the business of others will reduce their likelihood of doing the wrong thing. He's been around enough halfling gossip to know better.

Drimble Underhill **CR 8**

XP 4,800

Halfling Fighter 6 / Nullblade 3

NG Small humanoid (halfling)

Init +8; **Senses** Perception +14

Defense

AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 19

(+7 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 size)

hp 69 (9d10+15)

Fort +9, **Ref** +8, **Will** +4;

+2 vs. magic poison and magical disease, +5 vs. fear

Immune lead poisoning

Offense

Speed 15 ft.

Melee +1 *sling* +17/+12 (1d3+6 bludgeoning)

OR +15/+15/+10 (1d3+6 bludgeoning)

OR +14/+9 (1d3+12 bludgeoning)

OR +12/+12/+7 (1d3+12 bludgeoning)

Ranged +1 *sling* +16/+11 (1d3+5 bludgeoning)

OR +14/+14/+9 (1d3+5 bludgeoning)

OR +13/+8 (1d3+11 bludgeoning)

OR +11/+11/+6 (1d3+11 bludgeoning)

Special Attacks dogged pursuit (1d3)

Tactics

Before Combat

Solo - Drimble finds high ground or some other excellent vantage point for ranged combat and waits.

Group - Drimble prepares an ambush using his stealthiest squad members, including himself, up close, while those who are not stealthy hide far enough away so that it is difficult to see them even though they're not very good at hiding.

During Combat Drimble prefers seeks out the opponent with the lightest armor and use Deadly Aim in conjunction with Rapid Shot to eliminate him as quickly as possible. If hits are not consistently struck, he first quits using Rapid Shot, then quits using Deadly Aim.

Morale If outclassed, Drimble will attempt to fall back even if it's only the second round of combat. If there is a chance of leaving a knight-operative behind; however, he will fight to the death to ensure their escape.

Statistics

Str 12, **Dex** 19, **Con** 12, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +9, **CMD** 23

Feats Deadly Aim, Disruptive, Improved Initiative, Point-blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Spellbreaker, Snap Shot, Weapon Focus (sling), Weapon Specialization (sling)

Skills Climb +8, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Perception +8, Spellcraft +7, Stealth +15

Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

SQ armor training 1, aura of negation specialist specialization, warslinger

Gear +1 *sling*, 5 +1 *flaming bullets*, 5 +1 *frost bullets*, 20 bullets, +1 *breastplate*, *ring of protection* +1, 3 *potions of cure serious wounds (CL 5th)*, *brooch of shielding*, 3 weeks' trail rations, 150 ft. rope, backpack, waterskin, 145 gp.

Things to Remember about Drimble

Using Snap Shot, he does not provoke attacks of opportunity when using his sling in melee. He can even use his sling to make attacks of opportunity.

Drimble gets a +3 circumstance bonus to damage rolls against specialist wizards.

Using the warslinger racial trait, Drimble can reload his sling as a free action, though reloading still provokes attacks of opportunity. This allows him to reload his sling as part of an attack of opportunity.



Prestigious Organizations: The Order of the Nullblades Interjection Games

Cerabel, First Duelist

Background: Something of a living legend within the Order of the Nullblades, Cerabel is the first of the small, but greatly appreciated, group of arcane duelists that grant tactical variety to the Order. It was she who, despite her arcane training, broke down the door to a local chapterhouse (some say literally) and demanded entry into the Order some seventy-five years ago. After defeating the local chaptermaster in single combat, the brash youngster got her wish. Though her impulsiveness has calmed itself over the years, her fierce determination has not. Now chaptermaster of that same fateful chapterhouse, which, oddly enough, sports one of the heaviest front doors the Order owns, Cerabel seems poised to attain the title of grandmaster of her region before reaching middle age.

Appearance: Tall and wiry, even for an elf, Cerabel would be considered gangly were it not for her nigh-supernatural grace. Her flowing green hair, which she keeps tied up when on the job, and bark-like skin pigmentation suggest an arboreal family tree. She wears a number of scars proudly, including one over the right cheek whose story takes nearly an hour to relate.

Personality: Cerabel is the definition of an urban elf. She spends a significant portion of her earnings on jewelry and has one of the most richly decorated suits of armor among chaptermasters in the Order. Despite her choice of trappings, she is a serious teacher and combatant, believing that a few bruises here or there will train her knight-aspirants quicker than pulling punches and verbose instruction would. Results suggest that she is correct. True to both her bardic and elven origins, Cerabel has one of the best singing voices in town; her boisterous nature ensures it's shared with local inns on a very regular basis.

Cerabel, First Duelist CR 12

XP 19,200

Elf Bard (Arcane Duelist archetype) 7 / Fighter 2 / Nullblade 4

LG Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +7; **Senses** Perception +17, low-light vision

Defense

AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 16
(+6 armor, +5 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 101 (7d8+6d10+33)

Fort +7, **Ref** +9, **Will** +5; +1 vs. fear,
+2 vs. magical poison, magical disease, and enchantments
Immune lead poisoning, sleep

Offense

Speed 60 ft.

Melee +1 *keen mighty cleaving falchion*
+19/+19/+14/+9 (2d4+9 slashing 15-20/x2 +2d6 bleed)
OR +1 *keen mighty cleaving falchion*
+15/+15/+10/+5 (2d4+17 slashing 15-20/x2 +2d6 bleed)

Special Attacks bardic performance 18 rounds/day (bladethirst, distraction, fascinate, inspire competence +3, inspire courage +2, rallying cry), dogged pursuit (2d4)

Bard Spells Known (CL 7th; concentration +13)

3rd (1/day) *good hope, haste*

2nd (4/day) *allegro, blur, cat's grace, cure moderate wounds*

1st (5/day) *adoration, cure light wounds, ear-splitting scream, expeditious retreat, feather fall*

0th (at will) *daze, detect magic, flare, light, prestidigitation resistance*

Tactics

Before Combat Cerabel casts *blur*, *expeditious retreat*, and *cat's grace*. (These, as well as the spells and songs she uses in the first round of combat, are accounted for in her stat block.)

During Combat On the first round of combat, Cerabel casts *haste* and performs inspire courage. On the second round, Cerabel makes liberal use of her *boots of the daredevil* to close with a group of enemies without provoking attacks of opportunity. While approaching, she draws her weapon and grants it a +4 enhancement bonus for 1 round with her *scabbard of vigor*, then cleaves at what looks like the softest target. If the first attack connects, both her Cleave feat and her *mighty cleaving* weapon special ability grant her additional attacks. If an enemy has not fallen by the end of the third round, Cerabel falls back, usually behind the squad of nullblades she likely has with her.

Morale Though brave, Cerabel is not stupid. If a fight looks very difficult or hopeless, she will make a fighting retreat, and surrender if necessary.

Statistics

Str 16, **Dex** 20, **Con** 10, **Int** 14, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +14, **CMD** 29

Feats Arcane Strike, Bleeding Critical, Cleave, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Disruptive, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Acrobatics), Spellbreaker, Toughness x2

Skills Acrobatics +28, Climb +12, Diplomacy +15, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Perception +17, Perform (singing) +12, Perform (strings) +12, Profession (soldier) +9, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +8 (+10 to identify)

Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

SQ aura of negation, elven magic, specialist's bane, trained eye, weapon familiarity

Gear +1 *keen mighty cleaving falchion*, *scabbard of vigor*, *belt of mighty constitution* +1, *gloves of arcane striking*, *boots of the daredevil*, +2 *chain shirt*, 3 weeks' trail rations, 150 ft. rope, backpack, waterskin, silver harp (50 gp), silver ring (5 gp), gold ring (15 gp), 4 braided copper rings (1 gp), platinum choker (100 gp), engraved silver anklet with turquoises (45 gp), 23 gp.

Things to remember about Cerabel

As Cerabel's falchion is her arcane bond, her weapon has a +3 total enhancement modifier on a +2 budget.

When Cerabel hits when using Arcane Strike, she also deals 2 damage to all creatures adjacent to the primary target. If using her falchion, this is slashing damage.

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