

Credits

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The Outlaws

"Wot's the password?" Filch leered through the slot in the crumbling, rotten wood door that had been precariously set up at the entrance to the bandits' hideout.

"Don't be stupid, Filch, you know it's me!" was Rothric's frustrated reply. "Or did you not want a share of the salted pork I picked up? Not to mention getting a look at the *real* treasure I found."

"What do you mean, real treasure?" Filch returned, with a nasally whine. "You know everyone gets an equal share. I wanna see, before I let you in."

Rothric could probably have kicked the door in and squashed Filch underneath it, but he was eager enough to show off his find, in any case. He hadn't even been out looking for people to rob, he was just supposed to be scouting, looking for likely targets to ambush and attack later that night, but he'd gotten lucky, and stumbled across a wagon that had been attacked, and by something mean from the look of it. Whatever had done the deed seemed long gone, though, and while they'd certainly ransacked it, they had left quite a bit of value, including plenty of foodstuffs, which Rothric had quickly started gathering, as good food was hard to come by as an outlaw in the woods.

While he'd been looting, however, he'd been startled by the sound of a thud behind him, and had turned around to see a jeweled scepter that had seemed to fall out of thin air, as though some kind of invisible container in the sky had just vanished and left it to fall to the ground. The thing was practically encrusted in gems of all sorts, and made of solid gold, plus it glowed with a rainbow aura and hummed faintly when he held it, so Rothric was sure it was magical.

He fished it out of its place atop the salted pork and held it triumphantly before Filch, grinning. "Yeah, she's a real beaut, isn't she? Came across a...a dragon, out in the fields. A big red one, breathing fire and causing no end of trouble. He was chasin' this princess, see, and then he saw me an' thought I was after her too, so I picked up my bow, and..." Rothric trailed off, turning to look towards a rustling sound, behind him. "Hey, what was that?"

Suddenly, the forst erupted in armored men. There were perhaps twenty in chain shirts and wielding crossbows, all pointed on Rothric. Emerging from between them were four or five more, in heavy plate and wielding large maces and huge tower shields. Finally, a singular man in gleaming golden plate mail and a flowing white cloak took the lead, marching straight up to Rothric. Rothric heard Filch slam the peep hole shut behind him.

"I am Damovar Whiteshield, of the order of the golden helm. You have stolen a relic from my sisterorder, the order of the bronze shield. Surrender it now, and your life will be spared."

Rothric flung the scepter onto the ground and collapsed to his knees "Please, spare me!"

One of the crossbowmen approached the white-cloaked man. "Er...Sir Damovar, Sir, we have orders to rid this bandit camp of outlaws. We're to take no prisoners."

"Fine, then. Kill the others, if you must, but this one has yielded. I will be responsible for him."

The soldiers moved past Rothric, kicking in the door and shouting out "Come out in the name of the iron blade! Your pillaging days are at an end!" Rothric heard the twang of firing crossbows, and fainted.

Introduction

Knightly orders are an almost unavoidable part of the fantasy genre, and in some ways, even serve to define what a knight really is. While knights-errant riding off on their own (or with a party of not-so-knightly adventurers) are at least as common, and perhaps lend themselves more to the sword-and-sorcery style of game, where heroes have no roots, and live outside of civilization, there are few fantasy settings that don't boast at least one, if not more, orders or organizations of chivalrous knights, oath-sworn to battle evil, or protect the kingdom, or to some other noble, valiant task or ideal.

This is hardly surprising, considering just how much of a fascination society has with actual, historical knightly orders. While the most famous of these, by far, is sure to be the Knights Templar (whose fame may, admittedly, have less to do with their order itself and more to do with mysteries about its secrets, its dissolution, and its supposed hidden treasure), there are many other knightly orders, such as the Knights Hospitaler, or the Knights of the Round Table, for example.

This trend was captured well with the cavalier class presented in the Advanced Player's Guide, which included a class feature that associated the cavalier with one of many different cavalier orders, granting various benefits and imposing edicts—behavior by which the cavalier must live—depending on which one was chosen. Not only did this serve to make the cavalier a much more diverse and varied class, with lots of options already built in, but it also served to help give the cavalier an identity, tying him into a larger organization of cavaliers with similar beliefs, ideals, and ethical values.

Unfortunately, very little information about these orders is given. The cavalier need not really interact with other members of his order, and he doesn't seem to need to actually be accepted into the order by any existing members. If there is an organization—places where cavaliers of a certain order gather, whether to combine their might for more impressive tasks, or simply to provide aid and succor for their various members, it is not mentioned, and no support is given.

At its heart, this book is an attempt to create a cavalier order which has that kind of background information and support, and to provide it as a resource for players and GMs who would like a character's membership in a knightly organization to mean something. This order, actually three separate orders in one, is known as the knights of the crucible, and is devoted to the protection of all the lands and people in which it operates, and is further subdivided into the order of the iron blade, which protects the road and the countryside from bandits and monsters; the order of the bronze shield, which serves as guardians of important relics or persons; and the order of the golden helm, a group of elite warriors who embark on exceptionally dangerous and deadly quests for the good of all.

Though the knights of the crucible, as an organization, was designed with cavaliers first in mind, members of any class can find acceptance in the knights of the crucible, and they welcome any who would lend their skills. While wizards and rogues are rare in the organization, its ranks are filled not just with cavaliers, but with fighters, paladins, rangers, and the like.

This book will detail the organization of the knights of the crucible, providing you with information on how it operates, and what sort of life its members can expect. It will also give you information on how to incorporate the knights into your game, and ways in which they can be used in various adventures. To aid with this, information and statistics will be given for a handful of different sorts of members of the organization—some notables, but others more generic and likely for the PCs to meet on their travels. The book also provides some new character options, including a new cavalier order for each of the orders within the knights of the crucible, and new archetypes for a variety of classes that represent the order's approach and outlook.

The Knights of the Crucible:

The knights of the crucible are a group of knights and soldiers devoted to protecting the peace and upholding order everywhere in which it operates. As an organization, it has met with a fair amount of success, and its accomplishments have earned it the respect and admiration of a good number of people, allowing the knights to grow and expand into a nation-spanning entity, with fortresses and strongholds in a variety of places, great numbers of knights and other members, and three distinct and separate suborders, each of which approaches the organization's overall goals of promoting and maintaining peace in different ways.

History

The knights of the crucible were originally created by Prince Albert Tanareth, who was famed for both his incredible personal honor and chivalry, and also for his prowess in battle. At the time, the organization was a very small affair—only a dozen knights, all of whom were personal friends and vassals of the prince.

Albert was the youngest of four brothers, and so was very unlikely to succeed to the throne, but had grown up watching the internal politics of the C castle, as his three brothers attempted to jockey and vie for position, and various nobles and others in the palace engaged in petty schemes and plots as well. He had little patience for such things, and so envisioned an order of knights that were apart from the politics of the nation: not beholden to any king or lord, but devoted instead to the realm's actual well-being. Albert gathered his closest friends around him-most of whom were knights with just enough standing to be considered noble, but with little in the way of actual lands or titles-and shared this vision with them. Together, these thirteen men swore oaths to protect the land and keep the peace, without regard for who sat upon the throne, and so the knights of the crucible, a mighty tool that would be used to forge a better and brighter future, was

born.

Albert himself would go on to be killed in battle not a decade later, but the order that he envisioned lived on. As time passed, and the deeds of the knights of the crucible became better known, more and more knights began to come to the organization, looking to join. For the most part, those who joined the organization were the poorer knights, those with lesser status and little hopes of inheriting great titles. The knights of the crucible also became popular with third- and fourth-born sons of noble families, who saw it as a way to make a name and a place for themselves in the world, and whose siblings and parents saw it as an excellent way to occupy them.

The Creation of the Bronze Shield

As the knights of the crucible continued to grow, its members continued their adventures to protect the realm. For the most part, this included travelling about the realm, seeking out tales of problems besetting the lands or people, and finding ways to resolve them.

Members rarely met with one another, except each year on the winter solstice, when all the members would gather together and share tales of their adventures and of the great deeds that they had done.

One year, at such a meeting, a knight by the name of Gaius Harthram arrived with terrible news: one of the organization's members, Lionel d'Raust, had encountered a strange sword called the *Voidblade*, made of an unknown black metal that did not reflect the light, and when he had taken it up, it had clouded his mind and caused him to turn evil. He had been rampaging the countryside with an army of monsters, and needed to be stopped. The royal army was already on its way, but even if the wayward knight was slain, if the sword were picked up by another, it would all just happen again. The knights needed to act, and quickly.

The knights moved post-haste, and went to

confront Lionel and the evil blade he wielded. The battle was terrible, for the *Voidblade* had granted the knight great power, and many died that night, but the blade was recovered, its hold on Lionel shattered.

The knights of the crucible did their best to destroy the blade, but all attempts proved useless, and they were unable to so much as scratch it. They knew that they could not simply bury it, or otherwise hide it, for such things had a way of ensuring that they were eventually uncovered again, usually sooner, rather than later. The knights were unsure of what to do. They couldn't take it with them on their travels, either, for the blade's evil power was strong, and it would be too easy for one of them to be corrupted, or killed in battle, and the blade once again found in the wrong hands. Nor was there anyone to whom they could trust the blade, for the nation's nobility had only grown more corrupt in the time since Albert had formed the organization.

Eventually, a knight by the name of Edward Uricht, who was known for his distinctive bronze armor and shield, volunteered to take the *Voidblade* as his own burden, and to retire from the life of an adventurer to ensure that the blade never fell into the wrong hands again. As time went on, whenever a knight came across a relic that needed to be kept safe, it would be handed over to Edward, until he eventually passed away, and another took his place. Over time, the number of relics being guarded was great enough that some knights began to worry what would happen if its guardian was slain, and so more knights were sworn to protect them, and then the relics were split up into more than one vault in order to minimize the danger should one of them be compromised, until eventually these guardians became an order all their own, with whole fortresses manned by dozens of knights to protect the countless artifacts within.

These safeholds became known for their great security, and eventually the order of the bronze shield began being approached by those who needed their belongings kept in a safe place. The order politely refused at first, explaining that they were not a bank, but when they began to be approached by churches and temples concerned for their sacred relics, and other things of great and vital import, they agreed, and, over time, their vaults have become far more full of things given over to them for safekeeping than dark relics that needed to be kept away from the world at large.

The Creation of the Iron Blade

About two centuries after the knights of the crucible were first formed, the nation in which it resided was struck by a terrible civil war, which was one of the most bloody and terrible wars of that nation's history. The battle was fought between two brothers, Isaac and Artur, both of whom had been left half of the kingdom by their father, and both of whom were unsatisfied with this arrangement and desired the lands and holdings of the other. The war was particularly

Sidebar: The Order in Three Parts

By default, the order of the bronze shield, the order of the golden helm, and the order of the iron blade are all parts of a larger organization, the knights of the crucible. While each of these organizations does, to some extent, work in concert with the others, they are written to be largely autonomous organizations. This is so that GMs who are so inclined can choose, if they wish, to divorce the three orders, making them into entirely separate entities, or perhaps determining that only one or two of the orders even exist in their campaign world. GMs who are inclined to divide the orders in this way should feel free to do so, though it is important to ensure that your players are apprised of the change, and to take the time to listen to any concerns that players have about such a change, especially if the player is strongly invested in one or more of the orders (such as if he wants to be a member of one, for example).

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brutal, and whole cities were razed to the ground.

Both of the brothers appealed to the knights of the crucible for aid, for by now the organization had grown to an impressive size, and came close to rivaling either army for its overall members, but the knights were sworn to protect the kingdom, and not to get involved in petty politics, and both sides were declined. Instead, the knights spent the entire 25 years of the war protecting the various villagers and townsfolk of the realm, and attempting to drive any fighting away from occupied areas.

The knights began to build fortresses and castles around heavily populated areas, and would marshal their forces in defense of any city or town that became threatened by either of the brother's armies. On many occasions this forced the knights to go into battle against both of the brother's armies, though never without first attempting to parley and ask the army respectfully to go elsewhere. During this time, these fortresses also served to protect the local people from the predation of bandits and deserters from the various armies, who would otherwise have made the situation even worse than it already was.

These actions caused a great surge in public opinion in favor of the knights of the crucible, which in turn caused more and more men to join up with their cause, until their numbers swelled beyond those of either of the two brothers. There was even talk at the time that the leader of the knights—Lord Commander Ferdinand Jorvosa, a stern, no-nonsense man who was said to be able to see into a man's soul—should become the next king. Ferdinand was sorely tempted to do so, if only to put an end to the war once and for all, but determined that doing so would break his oaths as a member of the knights of the crucible, and undermine everything that they had worked for.

The war would not, in fact, come to an end until one of the country's neighbors, an aggressive empire, decided to take advantage of the civil war and the disruption in order to attempt to conquer the country for itself. They made great headway at first, and had nearly reached the nation's capital before the two brothers agreed to set aside their differences and work with the knights to repel the invaders. Together, their combined strength proved enough to win back the lands that were lost and free the people from foreign invaders.

As luck would have it, both of the brothers died during that campaign, one from a stray arrow, and the other when his horse was brought down and he cracked his skull. Only Artur had left an heir, and so peace was finally restored to the realm.

The knights, in the meantime, had built an infrastructure of fortresses and keeps throughout the nation, which had proven highly successful in keeping the peace and repelling invaders, and what's more, had learned not to trust that the king's armies would always be working for the benefit of the people. The heads of the knights of the crucible decided that, while it was not what their founder had envisioned, they should maintain their standing army, and the keeps that they had built during the war. Of course, many of the knights did not want to give up the questing and wandering that had been a part of the organization before, and so, like the order of the bronze shield, this military wing of the knights grew to become an order all its own, the order of the iron blade.

After this, what was left of the original organization adapted over time, continuing to fill a role as elite knights who could be sent to handle great crises and threats to the realm as a whole. They eventually came to be known as the order of the golden helm, after the golden, winged helm that was traditionally worn by their commanders as a symbol of office.

The Spreading of the Knights

Now that the knights of the crucible had thoroughly divorced itself from the crown of the nation in which it was born, there was little reason for the organization to remain entirely within its bounds. This was not immediately apparent at first, and no one amongst the knights had much of a desire to expand it to other nations, but after seeing the success of the organization, especially the order of the iron blade, whose keeps and fortresses kept the roads safe and the woods free of bandits, neighboring countries began to envy the protection that the knights could provide.

The first entreaties from other nations for the knights to expand its borders were innocuous: towns and villages just on the other side of the nation's border, but still within a close ride of one of the organization's keeps, would begin to send messengers there for help, instead of to their local lord. Eventually, as these people came to depend on them, the knights would build new keeps and fortresses closer to where they were.

The rulers of these nations were skeptical—in many cases alarmed—at first, and worried that this was just a pretext for invasion, but they could not deny that the knights were doing good work and reducing the predation of bandits, and so, for the most part, they allowed them to continue.

The knights of the crucible did not truly prove itself as an international force until the next time its nation went to war, however—a punitive attack made against the empire which had invaded them during the civil war, a decade or so before. By this time, the organization had no less than seven citadels within that empire's territory, but rather than take up arms to aid their home nation, the knights instead took up arms against the attackers—albeit, only so far as



to ensure that they did not loot, pillage, or otherwise attack any towns, farmsteads, or villages.

After that, the knights of the crucible was accepted with open arms in nearly every nation, and has come to be looked upon as an organization one can turn to for protection, no matter how dark things become.

Operations

The knights of the crucible is divided into three distinct orders, each of which operates differently and somewhat autonomously from the other two. Each of the orders is run by a single lord commander (sometimes with the aid of a council or other ruling body), and these three lord commanders collectively meet to rule on matters which affect the entire organization. Though each branch of the organization is technically run and managed completely independently of the other two orders, this tribunal of the three lord commanders helps to ensure that the knights of the crucible as a whole continues to work towards the same overall vision, and that each branch remains true to the organization's overall aims and goals.

Though each of the three lord commanders gains that rank by different means, depending on their particular sub-order, any two lord commanders can force the third to step down if they feel that he is unable or unwilling to manage his order in a way that benefits the larger organization of the knights of the crucible. This happens only very rarely, and to date has occurred only twice, but helps to ensure that the order remains firmly under the care and guidance of the tribunal.

Because each of the three sub-orders operates largely independently of the other two (despite a certain amount of coordination and shared resources), the operations of one sub-order can be notably different than those of the other two. Each sub-order is described separately, in its own section.

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Order of the Bronze Shield

The order of the bronze shield is primarily comprised of a number of isolated fortressvaults, each of which operates largely independently of the others. In the center of each of these fortresses, defended by several layers of walls, locks, magical wards, and several dozen sworn guardians, is a vault, whose defense is the primary concern of the order. Most members of the order of the bronze shield spend their entire lives in a single one of these strongholds, and every member of the order is sworn to defend his stronghold's contents with his life. Even the stable grooms, scullery maids, and other seemingly non-combat staff in the stronghold are expected to take up arms in the event that the stronghold is raided, or else to escape with the vault's contents, taking them to the next nearest stronghold.

Initiation: Most members of the order of the bronze shield come from relatively close to the fortress-vault that they join, and they almost universally begin as cooks, stable hands, servants, or other menial laborers. Those with a noble or knightly background, or who show particular promise, might begin as squires, but no one is allowed to be fully initiated into the order without first serving for at least a year, and giving the members of the stronghold time to get to know the applicant. Attempts have been made in the past to infiltrate the order in order to gain access to the relics it guards, and the order members are wary of all who pass through their doors. In most cases, a member will serve for five years, or perhaps a full decade or more, before having a chance to be raised into the order proper, and even then many remain as servants.

When a fortress's abbot feels that it is time for a certain individual to become initiated, he will invite that person to take the oath of service and become a fully-fledged member of the order. There is no shame in refusing, for this oath is for life, and desertion is punishable by death, if the deserter refuses to repent and rejoin the order. If the person agrees, then a public ceremony is held, where the initiate receives a decorative, bronze-plated shield, and swears to protect the order's wards with his life, if necessary, and ensure that they never fall into evil hands. Because it is impossible for the entire population of the fortress-vault to attend the ceremony at any one time (as this would leave the fortress too poorly defended), this ceremony is generally held between two and four times, and every member of the fortress attends at least one. Afterwards, there is much feasting and celebrating.

Daily Life: The order of the bronze shield is usually the most peaceful of the three orders, though that doesn't mean that its members have an easy life. Those who have yet to take the oath of guardianship spend their time laboring as servants and squires for the fully initiated members, and the work is grueling. Even full members aren't immune to hard labor, though they spend notably more of their time on guard duty, whether on the walls of the fortress, on the lookout for all who approach; or at the fortress gate, carefully inspecting and questioning any who would enter the compound; or deep with the fortress vault, directly guarding its precious contents.

In general, each fortress-vault is run like a military stronghold in the middle of a war, when an attack could come at any moment. Members of the order are expected to be ever vigilant and ready for assault at all times. Both full members and the uninitiated squires and servants are expected to do combat drills and weapon training on a regular basis, so that should the fortress ever fall under attack, every man, woman, and child can fight for the defense of the fortress. In actuality, most abbots are more likely to send children and non-fighting women away if it seems likely the fortress will fall, but in the few cases where one of the order's fortresses have fallen, as often as not its inhabitants all fought to their last to defend it from attackers, including scullery maids and young children.

Most fortress-vaults, though not all of them, boast a group of members known as custodians. These members differentiate themselves from guardians (as the majority of the order is called, when contrasted with the custodians) in that, in addition to protecting the contents of their vaults, they also seek to study them, and better understand how they work, and how their threat can either be neutralized, or, if the items are not inherently evil, how they can be better put to the use of good. These tend to be among the more academically-minded members of the order, and primarily include wizards and clerics. While the custodians are not officially set apart as a different branch or order, and technically nothing separates a custodian from any other member of the order, most abbots will allow custodians to take some time away from their martial training or, occasionally even guard duties, in order to spend more time researching and learning about their wards.

While it is true that most members of the order never leave their fortress-vaults, and that, due to restrictive rules on who is allowed to enter these vaults, they rarely receive any contact with the outside world except through the merchants that bring in supplies, this is by no means the case for all of them. The order is also routinely called upon to provide protection for important political figures, and order members are often "loaned out" in cases where the order (or at least the abbot of that in particular fortress-vault) feels that it is in the greater good to see the person protected. These guardians rarely return to their fortress-vault while their ward continues to need protection, instead spending all of their time with the person they are guarding.

Other exceptional order members are entrusted with business that takes them beyond the walls of their fortress. This could include escorting or recovering important relics, serving as a liaison between several nearby fortressstrongholds, or any number of other activities.

Leadership: While there is a centralized leadership for the order of the bronze shield, to most members it is remote, and has little to do with their day-to-day lives. Each fortress-vault is governed by an abbot or abbess, who acts both both as spiritual advisor and military commander for the entire vault. As long as an abbot's decrees do not fly in the face of any of the commands from the order's overall leadership, and the fortress-vault's contents remain safe, the abbot can manage the fortress as he sees fit, without any interference from any other members of the order.

The order as a whole is governed from the Vault of Heaven, which is said to be the first vault that served as the foundation of the order, and which still contains the darkest and most dangerous of the relics that the order has been tasked to guard. This fortress-vault is much larger and better defended than many of the other, newer vaults, and boasts no less than 500 fully-fledged guardians (primarily fighters, paladins, and clerics), plus roughly 100 more custodians (primarily clerics and wizards), and 800 servants, squires, and similar hangers-on. The Vault of Heaven is governed both by the lord commander of the order, and by the Council of Twelve.

The current lord commander of the order of the bronze shield is Bernard Stambholdt (human cavalier 18), a man said to be as hard as steel, and who is tempered only by his faith. The position of lord commander is less influential in the order of the bronze shield than in the other orders, however, and while Bernard's word carries a good deal of weight within the order, this has more to do with his force of personality than it does with his actual position. Any decisions which affect the order as a whole are actually made by the Council of Twelve.

The Council draws its members primarily from the most successful and renowned of the various abbots and abbesses who govern the other vaults, and from among the most promising members stationed in the Vault of Heaven itself. If a member of the Council is lost, the other members collectively appoint a replacement, and they also collectively appoint the lord commander when a new one must be raised. Any decrees which are to affect the entire order (such as, for example, the decree issued a century ago which forbade abbots from preventing guardians from marrying, and explicitly stating that every member of the order is free to pursue marriage and a family, so long as he continues to fulfill his duties), must meet with at least a two-thirds majority amongst the Council of Twelve.

In addition to this, and overseeing the dayto-day operations of the Vault of Heaven, the Council is also the only appeal for members of the order who feel that their abbot has overstepped his bounds, and if they feel the situation warrants it, they can remove an abbot from office and appoint a new one in his stead. Finally, the Council also sees to matters that transcend a single fortress-vault: they might write to an abbot asking him to loan one of his most promising defenders to a special task (such as escorting a relic in transport, or serving as bodyguard to an important political figure), or they might arrange a transfer of relics from one fortress-vault to another, and so on.

In the Game

At first glance, it seems difficult to come up with ways for the order of the bronze shield to have a major impact on one's game. After all, they mostly keep to themselves, holed up in their fortress-vaults, and generally try to minimize their contact with the world at large. That said, with a little bit of effort, there are plenty of interesting ways to integrate the order of the bronze shield into your game, and, if done properly, they can provide a very rich and fun role-playing experience.

Player Characters in the Order: The order of the bronze shield provides a variety of different adventure hooks for a party with one or more members who belong to it. For the most part, though, it is important to realize that, in the average campaign, any PC members of the order will be the exception, rather than the rule. While it is certainly possible to run a campaign where all the members of the party belong to the same fortress-vault, and have adventures that largely center around that fortress vault (travelling into the nearby countryside to investigate rumors of nearby relics, tracking down and bringing justice to a deserter who absconds with one or more of the vault's possessions, or even remaining entirely in the fortress, investigating a series of murders or other strange happenings and uncovering a conspiracy as evil works from within to weaken the fortress before an assault), most parties will include only one member of the order, and will likely involve a fair amount of travel.

Thankfully, there are other activities that members of the order of the bronze shield can engage in that allow them to serve the order without having to stay stuck in their vault. Most commonly, they are acting as a bodyguard and protector to someone else, either another party member (if there is a member of the party who seems like they would warrant such protection, and if both players feel that this would be a fun and rewarding experience), or else an NPC, either one that happens to be travelling with the party, or, at higher levels, perhaps a cohort or follower of the order member, gained with the Leadership feat. Alternatively, the PC might have been tasked by his abbot to retrieve a stolen or lost relic, or to investigate rumors of such a relic, and, if it's not entirely clear where he should look for it, he could very well fall in with a group of adventurers, trying to do some good as he keeps an ear to the ground for the real reason he is adventuring.

Whatever the reason the character is adventuring instead of remaining in his fortress-vault, it provides a built-in hook for various side-quests. If the character is protecting an individual, then assassins could suddenly come looking for that person, and the order member would not only need to fight them off, but would then need to find out who sent the assassins and put a stop to the problem. Meanwhile, if the character is in search of an artifact, then rumors of that artifact would serve as a great motivator (though if they do retrieve the artifact, you'll want to be careful to ensure there is a good reason they don't simply return home and stay there).

Beyond that, though, association with the order can provide other hooks which can be used as the start of adventures. For example, the character might receive word that while he's been away, his fortress-vault is under attack, and might rush back to try and defend it, or, if it's already fallen, to find out who was behind the attack and retrieve whatever they've stolen. Alternatively, it may turn out that the party needs one of the relics stored in the character's own fortress-vault, and he must either convince his abbot to lend it to them, or else be forced to choose between his order and his party, and possibly help them to break into the very place he was sworn to uphold. Alternatively, the abbot might order the character to return to his fortress-vault and cease adventuring, also inducing a difficult conflict of loyalties. In this case, though, it is advised that you ensure that, even if the character does agree to return, he is not forced to leave the group. It is possible that the recall is temporary, and the rest of the party can come along for an adventure centered around the fortress, or it may be that the abbot is corrupt, and the character (or entire party) must confront him.

The Order As NPCs: Even if no one in the party is a member of the order of the bronze shield, it can still serve as a useful plot hook in your game. If a fortress-vault knows that it's going to come under attack, but can't get word to the rest of the order in time for reinforcements (or is otherwise afraid to send for help—either because the other fortress-vaults are likely to have problems of their own, or because the abbot fears that someone within the order may be behind the attack), they may send out a call for any heroes in the area to come to their aid. Along similar lines, the abbot of a bronze shield fortress-vault might very well put out a call for heroes to recover relics that have been stolen, or ones which do not yet belong to the order, but which have recently been discovered, especially if his fortress is currently under-manned for whatever reason.

The order can serve as an adversary to the party, as well. For example, the party might find that they need one of the relics that is under the care of the order. This could be because they actually need the item itself, whether as a focus



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focus for a powerful and important ritual, or because they need to use it directly for some noble (or perhaps ignoble) purpose, or because they have reason to believe that the item is not safe where it is, and that the fortress-vault will be infiltrated and the item stolen from under the order's nose. Whatever the reason, the abbot of the fortress-vault is unlikely to allow them access, and while Diplomacy might be an option, more likely the party will be forced to attempt to steal the item themselves, bypassing an entire fortress of well-meaning but incredibly zealous guardians.

Alternatively, the order may lay claim to a relic that is not currently within their possession, and which the PCs also have an interest in. If your party is in search of a relic or artifact of some sort, they might run into a party of bronze shield members, who seek the same artifact, and intend to see it locked safely away in their fortress-vault. The PCs then find themselves in the unenviable position of having to race to the treasure and always stay one step ahead of their rivals, lest the artifact be claimed first. In fact, the PCs might already possess the relic, for one reason or another, and the order may track them down, and declare that they claim guardianship over it, and that it must be handed over to them. If the PCs don't acquiesce, the order members might try using reason, explaining that the relic is dangerous, or they might try bribery, or, depending on the nature of

the relic and the party, they may simply attack, not willing to allow the relic to remain in the PCs' hands.

Finally, it's possible that the source of conflict with the order isn't about a relic or other object, but rather about a person. Perhaps one of the PCs is prophesied to perform some great deed, and rather than let him wander about facing the regular dangers of adventuring, the order might determine it would be best if he was kept safe within the walls of a fortress-vault, by force, if necessary, until it is time for him to fulfill his destiny. Alternatively, it could be that one of the party's enemies—perhaps a local lord or prince—has earned the protection of the order, and so the PCs cannot slay him without earning the ire of this organization, and fighting their way past his elite bodyguards. These order members might be unaware of whatever wrongdoing (if any) the villain has committed, or they may be entirely aware, and simply not care, knowing that even if he himself is reprehensible, he governs well, and removing him could cause chaos and turmoil. Whatever the case, if the PCs do manage to slay the man, they will have made lifelong enemies of the order of the bronze shield, and even if they do not retaliate directly, it is likely that word will pass to both of the other orders, who will do their best to bring justice down on the party.

Archetypes

The following section provides two new archetypes and one new cavalier order. While these archetypes are designed for characters who belong to the order, not all members of the order who belong to these classes necessarily take these archetypes, nor are all characters who have these archetypes are members of the order. A character might have been trained in fighting by the order, and then left, taking their skills and fighting style with them, for example.

Bronze Shield Guardian (Fighter Archetype)

Like the cavaliers of their order, fighters that belong to the order of the bronze shield are trained in defensive combat and generally serve as bodyguards or protectors of either relics or of important individuals. Though they are somewhat less rigid about their code of conduct than cavaliers of the order are, most bronze shield guardians still take their oaths and duties quite seriously, and will defend their ward with their dying breath, if need be.

Steadfast (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, a bronze shield guardian gains a +1 bonus to his CMD. This bonus increases by +1 for every four levels beyond 2nd. This ability replaces bravery.

Protective Armor (Ex): At 3rd level, a bronze shield guardian learns to make the most of his armor. As long as he is wearing medium or heavy armor, he gains an additional +1 competence bonus to his AC. At 11th level, this bonus increases to +2. This ability replaces armor training.

Defensive Position (Ex): Beginning at 5th level, the bronze shield guardian can take a stance as a swift action to defend an adjacent creature. The affected creature gains a +1 circumstance bonus to AC, and any creature the bronze shield guardian threatens that makes a melee attack against the target of this ability provokes an attack of opportunity from the bronze shield guardian, who gains a +1 morale bonus to both the attack and damage roll for that attack. These bonuses (both the circumstance bonus to AC and the morale bonus to attack and damage) increase by an additional +1 at 9th level and every four levels thereafter. Beginning at 9th level, the target of this ability cannot be flanked as long as the bronze shield guardian maintains this stance. Beginning at 17th level, the bronze shield guardian cannot be flanked as long as he maintains this stance. This ability replaces weapon training.

Armor Familiarity (Ex): At 7th level, a bronze shield guardian can choose a single kind of armor (such as full plate, half plate, etc). He can move at his normal speed while wearing that armor. Additionally, he reduces the armor check penalty associated with that specific type of armor by -1. At 15th level, the bronze shield guardian can don that armor in half the normal amount of time it would usually take to do so, and suffers no penalty for donning that type of armor hastily.

Bodyguard (Ex): At 20th level, a bronze shield guardian can position himself to take blows meant for another. As an immediate action once per round, he can use this ability to force an attack made against a creature adjacent to him to be made against himself, instead. The bronze shield guardian must declare that he is using this ability before the attack roll is made. The attacker rolls the attack roll as normal, comparing the result to the bronze shield guardian's AC. If the attack misses, nothing happens. If the attack hits, however, the bronze shield guardian rolls with the blow, reducing the damage he suffers: he takes only half the damage it would normally deal (rounded up). This ability replaces weapon mastery.

Order of the Bronze Shield (Cavalier Order)

Cavaliers of the order of the bronze shield are zealous defenders of holy relics, ancient tomes, symbols of power, and, occasionally, important individuals. They are sworn to protect these treasures on behalf of the greater order of the crucible, and for the benefit of all mankind. While they do not often leave the order's fortress-vaults, they occasionally are sent on missions to recover or escort such relics to safety, or in rare cases to recover those that were lost. Those who serve as bodyguards to important individuals also travel and see much more of the world.

Edicts: An order of the bronze shield cavalier must protect the wards that the order has seen fit to place in his care, with his life if necessary. In the case of relics or other objects, the cavalier is expected to destroy the ward rather than let it fall into truly evil hands. In all cases, though, he should be prepared to defend his ward to the death if need be.

Challenge: Whenever an order of the

bronze shield cavalier issues a challenge, he receives a +1 morale bonus to his AC and the cavalier's choice of Fortitude or Will saving throws. These bonuses only apply to attacks, combat maneuvers, and abilities of the target of the cavalier's challenge. This bonus increases by +1 for every four levels the cavalier possesses, and lasts for 1 minute.

Skills: An order of the bronze shield cavalier adds Heal (Wis) and Perception (Wis) to his list of class skills. Whenever the cavalier uses Perception to oppose a Stealth check, he receives a competence bonus on the check equal to 1/2 his cavalier level (minimum +1).

Order Abilities: An order of the bronze shield cavalier receives the following abilities as he increases in level.

Depths of Devotion (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, an order of the bronze shield cavalier can call upon hidden reserves of determination to aid him in battle. As a standard action, he gains a number of temporary hit points equal to twice his cavalier level. These bonus hit points last for 1 minute before fading. The cavalier can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 1 + his Constitution modifier.

Defensive Stance (Ex): At 8th level, an order of the bronze shield cavalier learns how to take up a more defensive position. He gains a +2 bonus to his CMD against any effect which would cause him to move from his square (such as the bull rush combat maneuver, or the push or pull monster abilities), as well as against the overrun combat maneuver. Additionally, whenever he makes an attack of opportunity that was triggered by a creature leaving a square he threatens, the cavalier gains a +4 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls for that attack.

Warding Bond (Ex): Beginning at 15th level, an order of the bronze shield cavalier can create a warding bond with a single creature or object. This requires a short ritual which takes 10 minutes and requires a relatively peaceful environment. Thereafter, the bonded creature or object receives a deflection bonus to AC and a



Additionally, the target takes only half of any damage that would normally be dealt to it, the other half being dealt to the cavalier, instead. Finally, the bond causes the warded creature or object to be affected as though by the spell status, granting the cavalier knowledge of the target's direction and distance, as well as the ward's condition. All of these abilities function regardless of the distance between the cavalier and his ward, as long as the two remain on the same plane of existence. Either the cavalier or the ward can end this ability at any time by willing it, but otherwise the effect is permanent. A cavalier can only have one warding bond at a time.

Sacred Custodian (Cleric Archetype)

Sacred custodians are devoted to the protection of various artifacts and other powerful, magical relics, especially those with strong religious significance to their deity. These clerics take it upon themselves to either seek out such relics and ensure that they are properly cared for and protected, or else to stand watch over them, and ensure that nothing happens to them—or, in the case of evil relics, that they don't do anything to others.

Devoted Custodian: At 1st level, a sacred custodian must choose one of the following as one of her domains: artifice, knowledge, or protection. She can select any of these three domains, even if her deity would not normally grant her access to them. She may not substitute any of the subdomains for this domain. She selects her second domain as normal.

Spellcasting: A sacred custodian gains one less spell per day of each spell level she can cast, except for o-level spells. If this would reduce the number of non-domain spells she can cast to o, she can only cast spells of that level if her Wisdom score is high enough to grant her a bonus spell of that level.

Channel Energy: This functions as the cleric ability, but instead of increasing the amount of damage healed or inflicted by 1d6 at 3rd level and every two levels thereafter, it increases the amount of damage healed or inflicted at 4th level and every three levels thereafter (2d6 at 4th, 3d6 at 7th, 4d6 at 10th, etc.).

Charge Magic Item (Su): Beginning at 6th level, a sacred custodian's focus on magic items allows her to mix her own magic with theirs. By expending three daily uses of her channel energy class feature as a swift action, the sacred custodian can imbue a single magic item she is holding with a number of temporary charges equal to her Charisma modifier (minimum 1). These charges function identically to the item's normal charges, and are automatically used before any other charges the item possesses. The charges last for 8 hours, or until they are expended, whichever comes first.

The item in question must be one that normally has charges, and these charges must not renew automatically (*for example, it could be used on wands or staves, but not on an item with three charges that renewed each day at dawn*). Further, the item's maximum number of charges must be at least 10. Finally, this ability has no effect on artifacts, or on items whose market price is greater than what the sacred custodian's level allows, as indicated on the table on the following page.

Expanded Spell List: A sacred custodian's close connection to magic items and other relics teaches her to expand her magic in ways that few clerics do.

Table 1-1: Charge	Magic	ltem
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Level	Maximum Item Price
ıst	150 gp
2nd	400 gp
3rd	900 gp
4th	1,600 gp
5th	2,500 gp
6th	3,600 gp
7th	5,000 gp
8th	6,500 gp
9th	8,000 gp
10th	10,000 gp
11th	12,000 gp
12th	14,000 gp
13th	17,000 gp
14th	20,000 gp
15th	23,000 gp
16th	26,000 gp
17th	29,000 gp
18th	33,000 gp
19th	38,000 gp
20th	45,000 gp

At 8th level, she adds alarm, identify, and magic aura to her spell list as 1st-level spells. She also adds arcane lock, misdirection, and phantom trap to her spell list as 2nd-level spells, and she adds explosive runes, nondetection, and shrink item to her spell list as 3rd-level spells. In the case of misdirection and nondetection, the version of the spell learned by the sacred custodian can only be used on objects, not living creatures.

At 14th level, she adds *fire trap* and *minor creation* to her spell list as 4th-level spells. She also adds *mage's private sanctum* and *secret chest* to her spell list as 5th-level spells, and she adds *analyze dweomer* and *disintegrate* to her spell list as 6th-level spells. In the case of *disintegrate*, the version of the spell learned by the sacred custodian can only affect objects, and has no effect on living creatures.

Finally, at 20th level, she adds *teleport* object to her spell list as a 7th-level spell. She also adds *polymorph any object* to her spell list as an 8th-level spell, and she adds *mage's* *disjunction* to her spell list as a 9th-level spell. In the case of *polymorph any object*, the version of the spell learned by the sacred custodian can only affect objects, and has no effect on living creatures.

Bond Item (Su): At 12th level, the sacred custodian is able to forge a mystical bond between herself and a single magic item. This process requires an hour of meditation, during which time the sacred custodian must have uninterrupted physical contact with the item she is to be bonded to. Once the ritual is complete, no one besides the sacred custodian is able to access the item's magic, and it will not function in the hands of any other creature unless that creature succeeds on a Use Magic Device check (DC 10 + 1/2 the sacred custodian's cleric level + the sacred custodian's Charisma modifier). In the case of items that have non-magic functions, they can still be used in a mundane capacity, so a +1 longsword would function as an non-magical longsword, and a bag of holding could be used as a mundane sack.

Further, the sacred custodian is always aware of the direction and relative distance (within a mile or so) of the item she is bonded to. A sacred custodian can be bonded to only one item at a time, and can sever such a bond as a full-round action.

Finally, the bonded item affects the sacred custodian's spellcasting, granting all the same benefits and drawbacks as the bonded item version of a wizard's arcane bond class feature. Note that while the sacred custodian can end her bond at any time and create a new bond to a different item many times in one day, she must be bonded with an item for 24 hours before she can use it to cast a spell.

Order of the Golden Helm

The order of the golden helm is the smallest of the three branches of the order of the crucible, though it is arguably the best known, and for the most part, when a non-order member thinks of the knights of the crucible, he will be thinking of a member of this branch, unless he happens to live in the shadow of one of the other two branches' fortresses. The order of the golden helm forms an elite task force for the knights, and for the forces of good the world over. Its members are said to be the best of the best: the most daring and capable heroes, dedicated to protecting peace and stability. The order operates out of the Citadel of Heroes, a massive fortress which flies majestically through the air.

Initiation: As an elite branch of the knights of the crucible, the order of the golden helm is very selective about who is allowed to join its ranks. In order to even have a chance of joining, the applicant must first be sponsored by an existing member, which can make the process difficult. For the most part, new members tend to come from one of three sources.

The most common way for someone to enter the order is to be the child or relative of an existing member. This isn't precisely nepotism, as the applicant must still endure the same trials and prove him- or herself worthy, the same as any other applicant, but there's no denying that the son or daughter of an existing member will find it much easier to find a sponsor within the organization than an outsider will.

The next most common way for an applicant to become sponsored is to stand out in service in one of the order of the crucible's other branches. The order of the golden helm rarely works alongside the other two branches directly, but often calls upon them for support or aid, and members of those orders who impress a member of the golden helm with their promise and potential may find themselves invited to take the trials. Similarly, members of either of the other orders who show a reckless and adventuresome bent, and who demonstrate sufficient skill, may be recommended to the order of the golden helm by their superiors.

Lastly, it is possible for an adventurer unaffiliated with the knights of the crucible to receive an invitation to take the trials and join the order. This does not happen often, but is not unheard of. Typically, this occurs when an adventurer makes a name for himself by completing the kinds of daring adventures that the order of the golden helm usually undertakes, and rumors of the adventurer's exploits reach the ears of the order. Sometimes, though, a member of the order will encounter other adventurers working towards the same goal as he is, and, if they are capable, they may impress him enough that, when the quest is over, he may be willing to sponsor their entry. Generally, paladins, cavaliers, and fighters are the most likely to receive such an invitation, but the order of the golden helm accepts characters of all sorts, and recognizes the value of a powerful wizard or cleric, as long as he has a strong sense of personal honor.

Once an applicant has been sponsored, he must undergo a series of challenges to prove his worth. Traditionally there are three challenges, but it is not entirely uncommon for a different number to be selected, especially if it is one particularly great challenge. In theory, these challenges should test the applicant both for his ability to survive dangerous quests and for his moral fiber, though they are always specially tailored for the individual in question, so if those administering the tests are more concerned about the applicant's ability than his ethics, the tests will focus more on dangerous situations and foes, whereas if the applicant's morals are in question, but not his skill, it's conceivable that the entire series of tests may be moral and ethical challenges.

As a general rule, the challenges that the applicant faces are not administered in the Citadel of Heroes. Common challenges involve retrieving lost artifacts, slaying powerful evil creatures, and generally performing the sorts of quests that members of the order routinely take on. For challenges with a more moral bent, members of the order may pose as various passersby that the applicant meets on his quest, asking for aid or presenting other moral quandaries which the applicant must navigate, or, more rarely, they may simply resort to asking the applicant a series of moral and ethical "what ifs," using detect thoughts to gauge the truthfulness of his answers.

Daily Life: For the most part, active members of the order of the golden helm live on the Citadel of Heroes, whenever they are not engaged in some grand quest or another. The citadel is huge, built on a palatial scale and featuring every sort of luxury. It is fully staffed with highly-skilled servants, and, for the most part, is one of the most lavish places to live. It also boasts a great number of trophy halls, and statues or other pieces of grand artwork depicting some of the more grandiose and fabulous exploits of its members over the years. Order members usually spend their time feasting, swapping tales of their exploits, and sparring with one another, but, for the most part, those residing in the citadel are free to pursue whatever activities suit them. At any given time, the Citadel of Heroes generally holds about 500 members, with another 1,000 to 2,000 members out on various quests. The citadel generally houses about 800 permanent servants, and a fairly large stable of griffins, pegasi, and other flying mounts.

The only break from these Valhalla-esque activities comes when word reaches the order of some great wrong which needs to be set right. The order maintains a small staff of diviners who constantly search for situations requiring the order's attention, and, beyond that, whenever the citadel flies over a major city or town, it always stops for a bit, and sends a few members down to inquire about such things, as well. When such a potential quest or other endeavor is found, it is announced throughout the citadel, and members are allowed to volunteer. In the case of guests that receive too many volunteers—usually those that seem particularly glorious and honorable-the lord commander, or someone he designates, selects those who will be allowed to take the quest from amongst them.

In the case of those with not enough volunteers—typically because most members feel the quest is not exciting enough—the Lord Commander chooses members from amongst those in the citadel. Those who routinely fail to volunteer for any quests quickly become the subject of derision and mockery from the other members.

Of course, some members of the order choose not to spend their time in the Citadel of Heroes, either because they don't enjoy the atmosphere there, or because they feel that they can do more good on the ground. These heroes wander the land on their own, constantly in search of wrongs to right and good deeds to do. Though they rarely spend much time with others in the order, they don't hesitate to use the order's name in order to command the authority they need to get things done, and if they find a problem that is too large to solve on their own, such members will often contact the Citadel of Heroes and request aid.

Leadership: The order of the golden helm is very loosely led. The lord commander, currently Andrew Brighthearth (human cavalier 20), is primarily responsible for ensuring that things on the Citadel of Heroes run smoothly. He delegates day-to-day administrative tasks, like keeping the larders filled and managing the hiring of servants, to his chaplain, and instead focuses on resolving disputes between members of the order, ensuring that each quest the order takes up is handled by an appropriate number of order members, and so on. The lord commander is also responsible for determining the course that the Citadel of Heroes takes through the sky, and for liaising with the other two branches of the knights of the crucible (sending heroes to aid them when necessary, and calling upon the other orders for aid when armies or relics seem to be required). It is no secret that Lord Commander Brighthearth did not really want the position, and would rather be out adventuring. As such, he takes every opportunity he can to go upon adventures himself.

The position of lord commander is good for only a year in the order of the golden helm, and after that a new one is selected by vote from amongst all the members of the order. There is no campaign, speeches, or nomination process: every member of the order is eligible, and it is generally considered inappropriate to attempt to sway others' votes through any means. There is no minimum number of votes necessary to win: whoever gets the most votes becomes the head of the order. In one case, the votes were so spread out that the newly-selected lord commander had only been voted for by five individuals.

In the Game

The order of the golden helm essentially serves as an "adventurer's club," which serves to provide the greatest of heroes with a place that they can rest, bask in the glory of their previous accomplishments, and be rewarded for their heroics, while at the same time ensuring them a steady stream of new and even more deadly and dangerous challenges to overcome.

Player Characters in the Order: While, on the one hand, the order of the golden helm is best suited to the average PC's play style, and requires more or less zero commitment from the player, who will be considered to be a member in good standing if he simply roams the countryside and vanquishes evil, this also makes it the most difficult order to really set apart as a unique and interesting experience for a PC member.

There's certainly something to be said for a campaign where the PCs are all members of the order of the golden helm, and they make the Citadel of Heroes their base of operations, venturing out on grand quests to slay dragons, topple necromancer-kings, rescue damsels, and other clichés of high fantasy, returning to the citadel between quests for a few accolades, a little resting, and of course, a new quest. On the other hand, besides the fantastic scenery, this set-up doesn't differ that much from most other campaigns, though, certain steps, such as having NPCs treat the PCs as celebrities, and ensuring that the quests they receive are slightly overthe-top in scope can help this immensely, and, in fact, centering a game around the order helps to encourage an "epic" approach to high fantasy.

One way to make the order of the golden helm interesting for PC members is to play up the one-upmanship aspect of it. Each day, in the Hall of Heroes, where the great and elaborate feasts are held, the various order members recite tales of their great and grand deeds. The halls are filled with statues and plaques devoted to the greatest and most noble heroes that the order has ever seen. Most members of the order, in one way or another, are concerned about their own personal glory. It would be an exaggeration to say that the members don't truly care about doing good in the world, but that doesn't mean they wouldn't rather do something that will put them in the history books. Let your players develop a friendly (or perhaps not so friendly) rivalry with other members of the order, and engage in a constant competition to see who has outperformed the other since they last met. Let the PCs actively seek out adventures with more glory, and finding a suitable dragon, wizard, or so on might prove an adventure unto itself. Perhaps a truly glorious, world-saving adventure comes along, and the PCs find themselves actively competing against other guild members who don't want to have to share the glory with the party.

The order might also call a grand joust, or some other form of tournament. Between



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other, unrelated adventures, the PC who is a member of the order receives word from a messenger that this tournament will be taking place on the Citadel of Heroes, and the PC, as a member, is invited to attend, and bring his friends with him. There will, of course, be fabulous prizes, and even if the PC isn't using the citadel as his "home base," if he's not doing anything else at the moment, there's little reason not to go. From there, anything goes. A mighty force of evil might see the tournament as a perfect time to strike back at the order, or it's possible that one of the order members could be cheating, or might not be who he says he is, but rather an impostor acting as a member of the order. Or the tournament might just unfold normally, allowing the PCs to compete with some elite warriors for a great prize. Whatever the case, non-member PCs who come along for the ride will likely be invited to join if they perform well.

In fact, it's important to remember that joining the order is actually an adventure in and of itself—usually three, in fact—and so even if the PCs aren't members of the order, but want to be, they can begin the difficult process of becoming members. This could either be initiated by the player or players themselves, if they're familiar with the order and want to join, or by the GM, by having the PCs encounter a member of the order, who is impressed by their skill and mettle and invites them to apply. Of course, in order for the latter to be believable, the PCs should probably be at least 5th level, and probably more like 11th level or higher, but exceptions are made for those who show great potential.

The Order As NPCs: The most important thing not to do with the order of the golden crown is allow them to completely overshadow the PCs. No player wants to be rendered obsolete by what essentially amounts to the high-fantasy version of the super friends, and having order members rush in at the last moment to defeat the bad guys that are "way too powerful for you guys," is not going to lead to a very happy group of players.

Of course, there are ways to flip that kind of behavior on its head. The boastful, selfaggrandizing, too-perfect, glory-hog hero (or party of heroes) could make for an excellent "rival" to the PCs. They storm the lich-lord's tower, slay his guardians, and defeat him in combat, and then the other guys show up, break the urn labeled "my phylactery," and claim all the credit. Worse still, they might show up in the middle of the adventure, or the beginning, and declare to the PCs that they should "stand aside, citizens." Whether the PCs are there for the same reason, or are perhaps after something entirely separate (such as a piece of treasure in the dragon's hoard, rather than necessarily slaying the dragon, for example), the order members set themselves up in opposition, and insult them as being "bystanders" or "civilians," to boot. Just make sure that the PCs are at least capable of outperforming these rivals and winning in the end-otherwise, you're still just stealing their spotlight.

It is also possible for the PCs to work in tandem with the order of the golden helm, as long as they don't feel overshadowed. While the order rarely operates in a supporting role, that doesn't mean that they need to steal the spotlight from the PCs: the two might split up to work on separate objectives (I'll take down the lich's magical barrier, and you confront him—or, if you make it challenging enough and are confident that the party won't feel cheated, perhaps the reverse, with the party serving an important and dangerous role taking down the guardians protecting the barrier, and the order members slaving the lich). Alternatively, the order members could always become incapacitated in the middle of the adventure—either dying, or staying behind to "hold them off, while you finish the mission!" In this capacity, the order members serve primarily to lend a certain amount of gravitas to the adventure, especially if you build them up in advance. If the PCs know they're working with elite members of a powerful organization for good, then they also know that this quest must be both important and dangerous to have attracted their attention, and they also know that anything that can kill a member of the order is a threat to be taken seriously.

Finally, the order has a very clear and obvious place in campaigns where the party is wicked. Not simply campaigns where the PCs, being PCs, do evil things, or happen to have evil members in the party, but that one special kind of campaign, where the PCs take on the roles of villains, and actively go about spreading chaos and suffering, or plotting world conquest. In these campaigns, the order of the golden helm—or similar organizations—serve as superb antagonists, serving to try to thwart the party's evil schemes and bring them to justice.

Archetypes

The following section provides two new archetypes and one new cavalier order. While these archetypes are designed for characters who belong to the order, not all members of the order who belong to these classes necessarily take these archetypes, nor are all characters who have these archetypes members of the order. A character might have been trained in fighting by the order, and then left, taking their skills and fighting style with them, for example.

Glorious Berserker (Barbarian Archetype)

Glorious berserkers are mighty warriors who fight for personal honor and glory, as much as for any other reason. Glorious berserkers love to rise to great and seemingly impossible challenges, and to perform deeds which will ensure that they live on forever in myth and song. Their rages and furies are the things of legend, as are their feats of skill and especially brute strength.

Incredible Strength (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, as long as she is raging, a glorious berserker adds 1/2 her barbarian level on all Strength checks she makes. This applies only to Strength checks, and not to other checks based on Strength (such as the Climb skill or attack rolls, for example). This ability replaces trap sense 1. Improved Carrying Capacity (Ex): Beginning at 6th level, the glorious berserker treats her Strength score as though it were 10 higher for the purposes of her carrying capacity, including the amount of weight she can lift over her head, lift off the ground, or push/drag. This ability replaces trap sense 2.

Impervious (Su): Beginning at oth level, the glorious berserker can call upon hidden reserves of strength to resist the combat maneuvers of her foes. As an immediate action, she can roll 1d20 and add the result to her CMD for the purposes of a single combat maneuver being made against her. The glorious berserker can use this ability a number of times per day equal to her Constitution modifier. Effects that temporarily increase the glorious berserker's Constitution (such as her rage class feature) do not affect the number of times per day she can use this ability, but ones that continuously increase it (such as a belt of physical perfection) do, as long as they've been worn for at least 24 hours. This ability replaces trap sense 3 and 4.

Titan Grip (Ex): Beginning at 15th level, the glorious berserker can wield a weapon made for a creature one size category larger than herself. The weapon is still wielded in the same way (a two-handed weapon is wielded in two hands, a one-handed weapon is wielded in one hand, etc.), but the glorious berserker suffers a -2 penalty on all attack rolls made with the weapon.

At 18th level, as long as the glorious berserker is raging, she suffers no penalty for wielding a weapon in this way.

This ability replaces trap sense 5 and 6.

Golden Helm Crusader (Paladin Archetype)

Golden helm crusaders are paladins who have taken the oaths of the order of the golden helm, and chosen to make its cause their own, using their divine powers to aid in the various grandiose quests that the members of the golden helm regularly engage in. Such crusaders feel that their powers are best put to use on these large-scale, high-profile cases, and relish the opportunity to cast down dark tyrants and save whole nations from rampaging dragons.

Challenge (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, a golden helm crusader can issue a direct challenge against a single creature. As a swift action, the golden helm crusader selects a single creature within sight to challenge. The crusader gains a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls made against the target of her challenge. This bonus increases by +1 for every four paladin levels she possesses. The effects of the challenge last for up to 1 round per paladin level she possesses, or until the target is slain or otherwise subdued, whichever comes first. The paladin may use this ability a number of times per day equal to twice her Charisma modifier. This ability replaces lay on hands and channel energy.

Glorious Charge (Ex): Beginning at 3rd level, a golden helm crusader becomes exceptionally adept at charging into the fray, confident in her faith and her own abilities to protect her in battle. Whenever she uses the charge action, she gains a +1 morale bonus on all damage rolls made as part of the charge. This bonus increases to +2 at 9th level, and again to +3 at 15th level. Additionally, at 6th level and 12th level, the AC penalty that the golden helm crusader suffers for charging is reduced by 1 (to -1 at 6th level and no penalty at 12th level). This replaces the mercy class feature.

Inspire Valiance (Ex): Beginning at 4th level, a golden helm crusader's allies who can see and hear her gain a +1 morale bonus to attack and damage rolls made against the target of the golden helm crusader's challenge. This bonus increases to +2 at 11th level, and again to +3 at 18th level. This ability replaces spellcasting, and only functions as long as the golden helm crusader is conscious.

Greater Aura (Ex): Beginning at 18th level, the bonuses that the golden helm crusader's aura of courage, aura of resolve, and aura of righteousness grant to her allies are doubled. Additionally, the range of those auras is extended to 60 feet (instead of 10 feet).

Order of the Golden Helm (Cavalier Order)

Cavaliers from the order of the golden helm are the elite warriors of the greater order of the crucible, and are those called upon by the order to go upon grand and glorious quests of great importance. It is these cavaliers who storm the dragon's lair and rescue the princess being held for ransom, and it is these cavaliers who overturn every stone in search of a lost holy relic.

Edicts: An order of the golden helm cavalier must accept the tasks set before him by the order, regardless of how dangerous or difficult such a task might be.

Once such a quest has been accepted, the cavalier must see it through to its conclusion, or die trying. An order of golden helm cavalier makes no excuses, and if he has failed in his task he accepts full responsibility and does everything in his power to right the situation. An order of the golden helm cavalier who is currently involved in a quest is allowed to refuse other quests until he finishes the one he is currently engaged in.

Challenge: Whenever an order of the golden helm cavalier issues a challenge, he gains five glory points, which last for one minute. An order of the golden helm cavalier may spend a glory point as a swift action. If he does, he gains a +2 bonus on all attack rolls made against the target of his challenge until the beginning of his next turn. This bonus increases by +1 for every five levels the cavalier possesses (to a maximum of +4 at 20th level).

Skills: An order of the golden helm cavalier adds Knowledge (nobility) (Int) and Perform (oratory) (Cha) to his list of class skills. If the cavalier has ranks in both Perform (oratory) and either Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate, he gains a competence bonus on both of those skills equal to 1/5 his cavalier level, rounded down (minimum 1). If the cavalier has ranks in more than one of Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate, then each of those skills receives the bonus, but Perform (oratory) only gains the bonus once, no matter how many of those skills the cavalier has ranks in.

Order Abilities: An order of the golden helm cavalier receives the following abilities as he increases in level.

Glorious Resilience (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, an order of the golden helm cavalier receives a number of glory points each day equal to 3 + his Charisma modifier. He can spend these glory points (as well as those granted by his challenge) as an immediate action to gain a +1 bonus to AC or to a saving throw of his choice (Fortitude, Reflex, or Will). The cavalier must declare that he intends to use this ability before learning the result of the attack roll if the bonus is to AC, or before rolling his saving throw if the bonus is to a saving throw. The benefit lasts until the beginning of his next turn. The bonus granted increases by +1 per four cavalier levels he possesses (to a maximum of +5 at 20th level). A cavalier cannot spend more than one glory point in a given round, so a cavalier who already spent a glory point to gain a bonus on an attack roll, for example, could not spend a glory point to increase his AC until the beginning of his next turn.

Glorious Strike (Ex): Beginning at 8th level, an order of the golden helm cavalier can spend 4 glory points and make a single melee attack as a standard action. If the attack hits, the target must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 the cavalier's level + the cavalier's Charisma bonus) or be dazed for 1d4+1 rounds.

Glorious Success (Ex): Beginning at 15th level, an order of the golden helm cavalier can spend a glory point as a swift action to gain a morale bonus equal to his Charisma score to the next skill check he makes that round. Additionally, the order of the golden helm cavalier gains 2 glory points whenever he slays or subdues the target of his challenge. These glory points remain until they are spent or until the next day, when the cavalier gains new glory points for the day.

Order of the Iron Blade

The order of the iron blade is easily the largest branch of the knights of the crucible, and in many ways, it is the one that is most likely to have an effect on the peasants, townsfolk, and other citizens of the various realms in which they operate. Overall, the order of the iron blade functions as a standing army, but one not beholden to any single crown or country, instead dedicated to serving the greater good. They put up forts and strongholds anywhere that is heavily troubled (and where the local populace welcomes such attention), and generally make it their mission to push back the darkness, and bring civilization, peace, and order to every inch of the world. As a result, their main function is to put a stop to banditry and other threats (such as wandering monsters) which plague the wild areas of the world.

Initiation: Joining the order of the iron blade is not a difficult task. By its very nature, this branch of the knights of the crucible is always looking to expand. This constant expansion means that the order is also always in need of new recruits, and even though it receives a steady stream of volunteers, it often finds its garrisons undermanned. No special skills are needed to join: the order has drillmasters who can teach even the greenest farmer which end of a sword or spear to stick in their foes. All that's required is a willingness to follow orders.

Any adult of sound mind and body can sign up to join the order at any of their garrisons or forts, and it's not uncommon for the order to actively send recruiters to towns and cities in the hopes of convincing people to join up. When a character joins the order, he essentially signs a contract, and is bound to remain in service to the order for the duration of the contract. These contracts (sometimes referred to as a "tour of duty," or a "stay," within the order), are never for less than a year, and can be for one year, two years, five years, or ten years.

Because the knights of the crucible spans several nations, and can't rely on the authority of any given crown, they do not treat deserters the same way that most armies do. They do not, as a general rule, execute deserters, nor do they typically even go through the trouble of capturing them, usually simply letting them go. The real way that they keep their men from deserting is through their pay: until an order member's term of service is complete, he receives almost nothing in the way of pay, receiving the bulk only after he has completed his stay. Since deserters forfeit the pay that had been being reserved until the end of their term, relatively few leave early.

Daily Life: The order of the iron blade, even more than the other two branches of the knights of the crucible, is a military organization, and life in the order is a military life. Order members drill and practice, they stand guard, and, most of all, they patrol the area around the place where they are stationed.

The average order of the iron blade garrison is a crude affair, with a wooden palisade surrounding a yard, a few scattered barracks, a stable, and a command tower, all also made of wood. Garrisons that have been around for some time are often eventually upgraded to stone structures, but it can be decades before this occurs. Each garrison holds somewhere from 200 to 1,000 men, depending on the region, the amount of expected difficulty, and how undermanned the order currently is. Each garrison is responsible for protecting and maintaining the peace in the surrounding area, usually for something like an area of 20 miles in each direction, but possibly as much as 50 miles, or, in areas where the order is particularly sparse, perhaps as much as 100 miles. These areas sometimes overlap with those of other garrisons.

Members of a specific garrison are generally trained in teams of 4 to 8 members, who work and operate together. Patrols through the territory the garrison covers follow a set schedule, and teams are sent on patrols through specific areas. Some garrison commanders try to have each team go to the same area over and over, in order to better learn its ins and outs, while other garrison commanders prefer each team is somewhat familiar with the whole territory, and deliberately rotate teams through the areas.

In addition to regular patrols, if a garrison commander receives word of a specific incident that requires the order's attention (bandit attacks in a particular area, for example, or an invading army), he will send one or more teams to deal with the situation, depending on what the situation warrants.

For the most part, the order treats the lives of outlaws and bandits as forfeit, and they will not go out of their way to offer a chance to surrender, though they will typically accept a surrender, if offered. In places where the order is near civilization, they become more lenient in this regard, taking prisoners to nearby authorities to be properly imprisoned and tried. If the garrison is in the wilderness, however, or if the local authorities are not willing to work with the order (perhaps because it is those authorities that the order is working against, and they are an unjust and tyrannical authority), then they are far more likely to simply kill outlaws, especially if the garrison they are working out of does not have much in the way of a prison. In such cases, it isn't uncommon for those who have surrendered to be returned to the garrison for a quick trial and execution.

Luckily, the order does not attempt to replace the local law enforcement authorities, whatever they may be, in the area they operate. Local peasants accused of theft, or, for the most part, even murder, need not fear that the order will come breaking down their door.

Leadership: The order of the iron blade is the best organized of the three branches of the knights of the crucible, having a single command structure that extends all the way from the lord commander, a position currently held by Sir Thomas Blackburn (human cavalier 16), all the way down to the team leaders of each and every patrol team. In essence, the various regional commanders, each of which oversees a huge region, usually several hundred or even a thousand miles across, each answer to the lord commander. Answering to the regional commanders, each of which oversees a huge region, usually several hundred or even a thousand miles across, each answer to the lord commander. Answering to the regional commanders are regional-subcommanders, of which there are usually four or five for each region, and who oversee specific sub-regions within a given region. These have lieutenantsubcommanders, who oversee somewhere between five and eight garrisons, each of which has a garrison commander. The men in the garrison are generally divided into four or five companies, which are further subdivided until one reaches the individual teams.

Each team has a single team leader, who is responsible for making any decisions that need to be made while on a patrol. Though the team leader is encouraged to receive input from other team members on such decisions, when appropriate, all members of the team are expected to defer to the team leader and abide by his decisions. The position of team leader is very temporary, and it is not uncommon for it to change between patrols, especially if the team's superior feels that one member of the team will be particularly well-suited to make decisions about a particular aspect of the mission (for example, a ranger might be more likely to be team leader on a mission to hunt down bandits, while a cleric would be more likely to be team leader on a mission to track down the lair of an evil cult, and a druid would be the most likely team leader to investigate why there have been so many wolf attacks in a certain area lately).

As a military organization, the order of the crucible frowns on insubordination, and is not above imprisoning or, in some cases, even executing those who fly in the face of commands, if their insubordination takes the form of something that would brand them an outlaw.

In the Game

The order of the iron blade is generally a stabilizing force anywhere it goes, bringing relative peace and quiet. In many ways, this is anathema to the average adventuring party, whose members not only thrive on chaos and strife as the source of their adventures, but also tend to create it in their wake. Despite this, and in some ways because of it, the order of the iron blade can add a lot of richness and depth to a campaign, whether the PCs are members of the order, or not.

Player Characters in the Order: On the surface, the order of the iron blade seems a little too rigid and militaristic to be a good organization for PCs, denying them the freedom they need to go on exciting adventures. Further, the relatively localized nature of the order means that it's unlikely that any PC members will be travelling to far-off and distant lands in their various adventures.

If only one member of the party is a member of the order, this can certainly be true. The rigid, military lifestyle described above leaves little time (or, for that matter, inclination) to go on further adventures, especially with people who aren't members of the order. On the other hand, not all garrisons are created equal, and it's possible that the garrison where this particular character is based in is more relaxed about such things, instead allowing its members to patrol the area as they please. For that matter, the garrison might have fallen or been destroyed, or the PC might be a sort of "one-man garrison,"



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sent ahead or into an area that the order can't or won't properly occupy, and taking it upon themselves (with the aid of other adventurers) to protect the area.

If the entire party is comprised of members of the order, then a campaign becomes much easier. The PCs are a team unto themselves (if you prefer, there can be NPCs in the team, as well, but that might complicate things). The adventures that they go on generally begin on patrol: the party might see a set of huge animal tracks, and have to follow them to hunt down a dangerous predator, who may be lairing in a deep dungeon. Or the PCs might be sent to deal with bandits in the area, etc. As time goes on, and the PCs eliminate various threats, they can watch as nearby towns prosper and grow, roads get paved, more trade comes through the area, and the wilderness frontier that they were stationed at grows to become a peaceful, civilized area. This sort of campaign should provide them with plenty of places, people, and things that they can grow attached to, who they can watch grow and change, and who can occasionally be threatened. If done right, this can be a very rewarding kind of campaign.

Similarly, the order is large enough to act as a kind of army, and has done so before. If one or more of the PCs is stationed in a garrison on the border of two nations, it might be in a prime place for the PCs to get involved in stopping a war of aggression as one side tries to invade the other. Alternatively, a coup might lead to a tyrant (or even a demon or dragon) on the throne of the PCs' nation, and the national armies suddenly become the enemy of the local man. In such trying times, the order wouldn't refuse help from able-bodied adventurers, even if they do refuse to join, and the PC member of the order might be appointed as an official liaison with the rest of the party, for example.

The Order As NPCs: If the PCs aren't members of the order, then the order of the iron blade may serve as useful allies, or they may instead be enemies, depending on the PCs' actions. Most adventuring parties, at some point or another, find themselves on the wrong side of the law, and as a result, they may wind up making themselves enemies of the order. Of course, they also tend to be well-meaning, and will likely be trying to fight the same sort of evils that the order is fighting.

As allies, the order will likely serve primarily as a source of information. The order is always on the lookout for dangers and threats in the area, and can't always handle them on its own. While they often call upon the order of the golden helm for aid in these cases, no garrison commander in his right mind is likely to turn down adventurers who want to take a stab at the local dragon, and so PCs might stop by the garrison to find out if there's anything that needs heroes in the area. If the PCs aren't from the local area, and are just passing through, these garrisons also serve as a great place to find out a little bit about the local wilderness, and many have an inn or some other form of hospitality for travelers, as well, either run by the garrison, or else by an ambitious third party, who wants to take advantage of the safety the fortress provides.

The order can also serve as back-up for the PCs, if they can convince the local garrison commander to trust them, and they have need of larger numbers of troops, for whatever reason. If the PCs find themselves needing to quarantine a town to keep a zombie or plague infestation from spreading, for example, the order of the iron blade will be there—provided the PCs can offer proof of their claims. Similarly, the order might work in tangent with the party, assaulting a particularly large bandit camp while the PCs act as an elite force, using the chaos to slip in to the bandits' half-giant leader and take him out of the fight.

Of course, if the PCs are scofflaws, then the order can prove to be a truly implacable enemy. Because the order is a single, unified organization, they are able to spread word of their encounters with the party. And because they cover such large expanses of territory, it's entirely possible that the fugitive PCs will be wanted criminals over an entire continent, instead of just a single kingdom, or, more likely, a single town, as most such organizations tend to be confined to. This can make the order a recurring foil for the PCs, which can either make for a series of fun adventures as they must constantly stay one step ahead of the law while doing whatever it is they do, or can serve as a potent warning that actions have consequences (in which case the PCs should be able to clear their names by turning themselves in, being handed over to some other kind of authority, and allowed to pay a fine or serve a relatively short prison term, unless you want the campaign to end). To better personalize things, one single member of the order might make it his personal goal to see the PCs brought to justice, and he might follow after them, working in tangent with the local garrison to hunt them down.

Of course, it's also possible that the PCs might run afoul of the order without actually doing anything to deserve it. Their enemies might spread slanderous tales about them, or there might simply be a misunderstanding as a patrol stumbles across the PCs' camp, both sides mistake the other for bandits, and before long blades are drawn and things go downhill from there. The PCs might not find out that the people they killed were members of the order until after the survivors have fled to the local garrison and returned with backup.

Archetypes

The following section provides two new archetypes and one new cavalier order. While these archetypes are designed for characters who belong to the order, not all members of the order who belong to these classes necessarily take these archetypes, nor are all characters who have these archetypes members of the order. A character might have been trained in fighting by the order, and then left, taking their skills and fighting style with them, for example.

Iron Blade Legionnaire (Fighter Archetype)

The iron blade legionnaires are the rank and file of the order of the iron blade, and, as such, make up the largest group of individuals in the entire order of the crucible. It is these brave and stalwart soldiers who man the walls of the various fortresses and keeps that the order erects and uses as bases of operations in the countryside, and it is they who routinely patrol the king's highways and other major roads in search of bandits and other dangers, and, in the rare times when the order needs to mobilize for war, it is the iron blade legionnaires who make up the bulk of its armies.

Skills: An iron blade legionnaire adds Knowledge (local) (Int) and Perception (Wis) to his list of class skills, but does not count Knowledge (dungeoneering) (Int) or Knowledge (engineering) (Int) among his class skills.

Dedicated (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, an iron blade legionnaire gains a +1 bonus on Will saves against charm effects. This bonus increases by +1 for every four levels after 2nd. This ability replaces bravery.

Iron Blade's Quarry (Ex): Beginning at 5th level, an iron blade legionnaire can, as a swift action, declare a single creature within 6o feet to be his quarry. He gains a +1 morale bonus to attack rolls and a +2 morale bonus to damage rolls made against his quarry, as well as a +2 morale bonus on Perception and Sense motive checks made against his quarry, and on Survival checks made to track his quarry. These bonuses increase at 9th level and every four levels thereafter, granting an additional +1 to attack rolls and an additional +2 to damage, Perception, Sense Motive and Survival.

An iron blade legionnaire can have only one quarry at a time. Once he has named a creature as his quarry, that creature remains his quarry indefinitely. If his quarry is slain or otherwise subdued, he can choose to "dismiss" the quarry as a free action, at which point he can declare a new quarry as a swift action, as normal. Otherwise he must spend a full-round action to mentally "let go" of his old quarry in order to be able to select a new one.

At 20th level, an iron blade legionnaire

automatically confirms any critical threats made against the target of his quarry, and these critical hits have their critical multiplier increased by 1 (x2 becomes x3, for example).

This ability replaces weapon training and weapon mastery.

Iron Reeve (Ranger Archetype)

Iron reeves are the elite trackers and specialists of the order of the iron blade, and generally serve as scouts and guides. Unlike most rangers, they do not train themselves in magical arts, and do not take animals as companions, choosing to conquer the wilderness rather than embrace it. They are the scourge of bandits and outlaws everywhere, and are also instrumental in helping to track down dangerous wild beasts.

An iron reeve does not gain spellcasting.

Trapfinding (Ex): Beginning at 3rd level, as long as an iron reeve is in one of his favored terrains, he adds 1/2 his class level on all Perception checks made to find traps. This bonus stacks with the +2 bonus granted by the favored terrain class feature.

Alert Allies (Ex): At 4th level, an iron reeve is able to effortlessly keep his allies apprised of dangers. As long as the iron reeve is in one of his favored terrains, he grants all allies that can see him and are within 6o feet of him a +2 bonus to their initiative and Perception checks. This ability replaces the hunter's bond class feature.

At 6th level, he also grants allies within 6o feet that can see him a competence bonus equal to the iron reeve's Wisdom modifier to AC and saving throws versus the effects of traps.

At 9th level, or if the iron reeve has uncanny dodge from another source, he grants all allies within 6o feet that can see him the ability to retain half of any AC bonuses that they would normally lose when flat-footed, rounded down, even when they have not yet acted in the combat (for example, a character with a +3 Dexterity bonus to AC and a +4 dodge bonus to to AC would still have a +1 Dexterity bonus and a +2 dodge bonus, even when flat-footed). Such characters are still considered to be "denied their Dexterity bonus to AC" for the purposes of abilities such as sneak attack, however.

Danger Sense (Ex): At 6th level, an iron reeve gains a competence bonus equal to twice his Wisdom modifier to AC and saving throws versus the effects of traps.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Starting at 9th level, an iron reeve can react to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. He cannot be caught flat-footed, nor does he lose his Dexterity bonus to AC if the attacker is invisible. He still loses his Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized. An iron reeve with this ability can still lose his Dexterity bonus to AC if an opponent successfully uses the feint action (see Combat) against him.

If an iron reeve already has uncanny dodge from a different class, he automatically gains improved uncanny dodge (see below) instead.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): An iron reeve of 13th level or higher can no longer be flanked.

This defense denies rogues the ability to sneak attack the character by flanking him, unless the attacker has at least four more rogue levels than the target has ranger levels.

If a character already has uncanny dodge (see above) from another class, the levels from the classes that grant uncanny dodge stack to determine the minimum rogue level required to flank the character.

Order of the Iron Blade (Cavalier Order)

Cavaliers of the order of the iron blade are tasked with keeping the roads, wilderness, and countryside safe and protected from the various bandits, demi-humans, and worse threats which endanger travelers and communities alike. Such cavaliers typically operate out of a keep or fort run by the order, but sometimes they operate alone. In either case, they patrol large swathes of land, rooting out any dangerous elements in their territory and either driving them off or bringing them to justice.

Edicts: An order of the iron blade cavalier is sworn to protect a large area of land, and he must be ever vigilant about this protection, scouring the land for threats and ensuring that the weak and innocent are safe within his lands. If the cavalier can arrange for someone capable to take over his duties for a time he can leave the area or pursue other matters, but otherwise he must remain in the area he is responsible for and ensure its safety.

Challenge: Whenever an order of the iron blade cavalier issues a challenge, he receives a +1 morale bonus on attack and damage rolls made against the target of his challenge. This bonus increases by +1 for every four levels the cavalier possesses, and lasts for up to 1 minute. The bonuses to damage stack with the additional damage already provided by the cavalier's challenge class feature. Unlike other orders, when an order of the iron blade cavalier issues a challenge, the -2 penalty to AC applies to all attacks, including those made by the target of his challenge. **Skills:** An order of the iron blade cavalier adds Perception (Wis) and Survival (Wis) to his list of class skills. Whenever the cavalier uses Perception or Survival to find or follow tracks, he receives a competence bonus on the check equal to 1/2 his cavalier level (minimum 1).

Order Abilities: An order of the iron blade cavalier receives the following abilities as he increases in level.

No Escape (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, an order of the iron blade cavalier is better able to harry his opponents. He gains Step Up as a bonus feat, and additionally gains a +1 morale bonus to attack rolls for attacks of opportunity. This bonus increases by an additional +1 for every five levels the cavalier possesses (to a maximum of +4 at 17th level).

Familiar Territory (Ex): By 8th level, an order of the iron blade cavalier is familiar enough with his territory that he starts to know it like the back of his hand. He gains a +2 bonus on initiative checks, and on Knowledge (geography), Perception, Stealth and Survival checks made within his territory, as well as on any Diplomacy checks to gather information in his territory, Knowledge (local) checks regarding information

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Sidebar: Marking Territory

The order of the iron blade cavalier's player should work with the GM to determine the exact boundaries of his territory. Generally speaking, the cavalier's territory should be large enough that there are several places to adventure there, and an opportunity for the cavalier to make good use of the benefits he gains while in his territory, while at the same time being small enough that the scope of the campaign is likely to draw the cavalier out of his territory from time to time. A good aim would be to have somewhere between 2/3 and 3/4 of all adventures take place at least partially within the cavalier's territory, and somewhere between 1/3 and 1/2 of them taking place entirely within the cavalier's territory.

Depending on the scale of campaign the GM has in mind, this might make the territory as small as the area surrounding a few villages, or as large as an entire kingdom. If worst comes to worst, the cavalier should be able to change territories (for example, if it eventually becomes clear that the campaign will no longer involve his original territory). This process requires at least 30 days for the cavalier to adjust to his new territory before he starts receiving benefits from it.

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in the territory, or Sense Motive checks used on anyone who has lived in the territory for at least one year. These bonuses increase by +1 at 12th level, and every four levels thereafter (to a maximum of +5 at 20th level).

Deadly Challenge (Ex): At 15th level, whenever an order of the iron blade cavalier issues a challenge, in addition to the normal effect, he is also treated as having the Improved Critical feat for any weapon he is wielding, and, additionally, increases the critical multiplier of that weapon by 2 (so a weapon that normally had a critical multiplier of x2 would have one of x4).

Rank and Membership Status

The knights of the crucible—a diverse collection of knightly orders devoted to the overall peace and prosperity of all realms—is an excellent place for the average PC to seek employment. Even casual association with the organization can have some benefits for player characters, providing them with side jobs to perform between grand adventures, as well as cheap room and board when they happen to be in town, a wealth of potential NPC contacts, and so on. PCs who really devote themselves to the organization, however, will find their efforts rewarded with a number of tangible benefits, as outlined below.

Membership Scores

The knights of the crucible uses a membership score to track each member's overall standing in the organization. This score is based on a number of factors, including how well the person matches the ideals of the organization, how capable they are of performing their duties for the knights, and any number of specific deeds they have performed which either work for or against the organization's interest. Membership scores are abstract: no member has a record of each character's "membership score," penned feverishly onto parchment and tucked away in a hall of records. Rather, like class levels and hit points, it is a convenience for players and GMs, and is designed to give a good indicator of how the faction as a whole regards the character in question. There are two things which can influence a character's membership score: the character's traits and the character's deeds.

Traits: Certain traits (skill at arms, specific alignments, mastery of certain weapons) that a character does or doesn't possess have an impact on how favorably his faction views him. Each of the three sub-orders of the knights of the crucible has a different set of traits which they are interested in, and these are outlined on the following tables, along with the effect they have on the character's membership score. A character either has a trait, or doesn't: he can't gain extra benefit from having the same trait twice (such as having 10 ranks in Spellcraft, for a member of the order of the bronze shield, or having Weapon Specialization with two different weapons, for a member of the order of the iron blade). Further, if the character ever loses the trait which is granting the bonus (or penalty), he also loses the appropriate adjustment.

Deeds: Unlike traits, deeds are things a character does, as opposed to things a character simply is. Like traits, there are certain deeds that cause a character's faction to think more highly of him, and other deeds which cause that faction to think less of him. Unlike traits, however, a character who performs the same deed multiple times will find that its effects are cumulative. For example, a member of the order of the golden helm will receive a +2 bonus for each quest he undertakes, rather than simply gaining two points for the first one and then never gaining another point. Note that some deeds carry restrictions on how often the bonus (or penalty) can be applied. Unlike traits, bonuses and penalties from deeds cannot be directly "undone." If a character receives a penalty to his membership score for fleeing from a battle, the penalty doesn't just go away if he doesn't run away during his next battle. The only way to counteract a bonus or penalty from a deed is to either prove that the deed in guestion did not really occur, or to gain a similar bonus or penalty from other deeds (or training oneself to have more traits, etc.).

The tables here list some of the most common traits and deeds which have an effect on a character's membership status with the various sub-orders of the knights of the crucible. This list is by no means all-encompassing, and GMs are free (and, in fact, encouraged) to use this table as a guideline to adjudicate other traits and deeds which might have an impact on a character's standing in the organization, as such issues arise in the game.

Table 2-1: Bronze Shield Membership Scores

Me	mbership Bonus
Traits and Deeds	Adjustments
Traits	
Base Attack Bonus	+1/2 bonus
Spellcraft 5 or more ranks	+1
Use Magic Device 5 or more rat	nks +1
Base Will save 6 or higher	+1
Has a CMD of 20 or higher	+1
Can cast detect magic , or detec	et evil, or use
them as spell-like abilities.	
Lawful Good alignment	+1
Non-lawful alignment	-1
Not proficient with heavy armo	or -1
Non-good alignment	Dr -1 -2
Not proficient with at least one	e martial
weapon	-2
Deeds	
Remain a member for 6 month	s ¹ +1
Finds and recovers a relic for	+1 per 10,000 gp
the order's vaults	in relic's price
Provides new information about	it an
item in the order's possession	+1 to +3
Is instrumental in preventing a	theft
from the order's vaults	+3
Endangers the security of the	1992 1
order's vault in any way	-1 to -4
Allows a ward he was personal	ly
responsible for to be killed or s	tolen ⁻³
Steals an item from the order's	
This is suggestative. Each size suggest	a of month out him

1 - This is cumulative. Each six months of membership grants this bonus again.



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Table 2-2: Golden Helm Membership Scores

	Membership Bonus
Traits and Deeds	Adjustments
Traits	
Base Attack Bonus	+1/2 bonus
Perform (oratory) 5 or mor	e ranks +1
Any skill 15 or more ranks	+1
Base Fortitude, Reflex, or V	Vill save
8 or higher	+1
Has Weapon Focus with an	exotic
weapon	+1
Has an animal companion,	mount, or
familiar, or the Leadership	feat +1
Has the Diehard feat	+1
Good alignment	+1
Not proficient with heavy a	rmor -1
Evil alignment	-1
Not proficient with at least	one martial
weapon	-4
Deeds	
Perform a quest granted by	the order, or
another authority figure ¹	+2
Slays a creature whose CR i	s +1 per point of CR
higher than his level in sing	1 1
combat ²	level
Deals more than 50 points	
damage in a single attack ²	+2
Gets a result of 50 or highe	r on a
skill check ²	+2
Suffers more than 100 point	ts of
damage in a round and live	+2
Fails in a quest he has acce	
Loses a battle against an op	
CR is at least 2 below his le	
Flees from the field of battl	
1 - Up to four times per month	-0
N N N	

2 - No more than once per month

Rank and Membership Benefits

As a character's membership standing with his or her faction increases, he or she has the opportunity to advance in rank, gaining access to better membership perks and features in so doing.

Table 2-3: Iron Blade Membership Scores

Membership Bor	nus
Traits and Deeds Adjustme	
Traits	
Base Attack Bonus +1/2 bo	nus
Knowledge (local) 5 or more ranks	+1
Survival 5 or more ranks	+1
Base Fortitude save 6 or higher	+1
Has Weapon Focus with a martial	+1
weapon	+1
Has Weapon Specialization with	+2
any weapon	12
Is proficient with medium or heavy armor	+1
Good alignment	+1
Not proficient with any armor	-1
Evil or chaotic alignment	-1
Not proficient with at least one martial	-2
weapon	- 10
Deeds	
Remain a member for three months ¹	+1
Provides proof of slaying ten	
outlaws, monsters, or other threats,	
whose individual CRs are no less	+1
than his level -2 ²	
Provides proof of slaying a single	
creature of the aberration, animal,	
or magical beast type, or the giant	+2
subtype, whose CR is at least 1	
higher than his level ²	
Is responsible for saving the life of	
an innocent bystander ²	+2
Is caught neglecting his duties ³	-1
Spends more than a month outside of his	
territory, for any reason	-2
Is caught aiding or abetting outlaws or	
other potential threats to the area	-3
1 - This is cumulative. Each six months of membership	
grants this bonus again.	
2 - No more than once per month	

3 - No more than once per week

The following tables outline the different ranks available in the various sub-orders of the knights of the crucible. An explanation of the tables' entries is listed below.

Rank	Entry Requirements	Quests Granted	Influence per Quest	Other Benefits and Duties
Sentry	Non-chaotic, non-evil alignment	Minor	1	Must fulfill oath of protection, and obey orders of abbot
Protector	Base attack +3, Medium Armor Proficiency, membership score 6	Average	1	+1 faction bonus on Spellcraft and Use Magic Device checks
Guardian	Base attack +5, membership score 12	Important	2	+2 faction bonus on Spellcraft and Use Magic Device checks
Sentinel	Base attack + 7, membership score 25	Dire	3	+4 faction bonus on Spellcraft and Use Magic Device checks
Abbot	Base attack +10, Leadership, membership score 30	Administrative	1	Effective leadership score +5, benefits and duties of running a stronghold

Table 2-4: Bronze Shield Rank and Membership Benefits

Rank: This indicates the names of the various ranks included in the table. Depending on the order, this may be the title by which other members of the order refer to the character, or it may be more of an honorary title, used only during special occasions and on official documents, rather than in everyday use.

Entry Requirements: This indicates the various requirements that the character must have to attain the listed rank. If a membership score is listed, the character must have a membership score in the appropriate sub-order of the listed number or higher. If a character ever ceases to meet the prerequisites for his rank, he is immediately stripped of it, and demoted to the next-highest rank for which he meets the prerequisites.

Quests Granted: This indicates the type of assignments that are generally given to members of this rank in the organization. In general, the higher a character's rank, the more important the tasks he is given become, and the more responsibility he is trusted with. There are several categories of quests, as outlined below.

Minor: These are routine quests, and those of relatively minor significance. They might include carrying mundane messages, transporting important but non-critical goods, scouting territory that isn't expected to be particularly hostile, patrols and guard duty, and dealing with problems that are more nuisance than threat. While quests in this category aren't busywork, and need to get done, they aren't glamorous, and failure is unlikely to result in far-reaching consequences.

Average: These are the sorts of tasks that are generally reserved for capable, adept members who have proven that they can be entrusted with a certain degree of responsibility, and are not handed out to just anyone. They might include protecting an important shipment, scouting enemy positions and formations along the border, negotiating a potentially lucrative settlement, or dealing with a non-critical threat. Such quests, in the aggregate, are the lifeblood of the organization, and while it will carry on if such a quest is failed, there will likely be a certain amount of fallout from the failure.

Important: These are quests reserved for those who stand out as being a cut above the rest, and are more crucial to the organization's goals than the average task. They might include

Rank	Entry Requirements	Quests Granted	Influence per Quest	Other Benefits and Duties
Honored Warrior	Base attack +7 or able to cast 4th-level spells, non- evil alignment	Average	1	Must take at least 1 quest per month
Heroic Defender	Base attack +10 or able to cast 6th-level spells, membership score 8	Important	1	+2 faction bonus on Diplomacy checks
Righteous Paragon	Base attack +13 or able to cast 8th-level spells, membership score 15	Dire	2	+2 faction bonus on Intimidate checks
Valorous Exemplar	Base attack + 16, membership score 30	Epic	2	Starting attitude of good- aligned characters is one higher than normal
Immortal Champion	Base attack +20, Charisma 16, membership score 45	Epic	3	Effective leadership score +8

Table 2-5: Golden Helm Rank and Membership Benefits

ensuring the delivery of an important and urgent message, protecting or rescuing an important agent or ally, gathering valuable intelligence from within enemy territory, or dealing a serious blow to a powerful opponent. Being selected for such a quest should be a mark of respect and trust, and should such a quest fail, the organization will surely suffer for it.

Dire: These are quests which are of top priority, and can have a huge impact on the organization as a whole, or on the things it stands for. Such quests might include brokering an alliance or deal which will be necessary for the survival of the organization, recovering a powerful magic item, dealing a crippling blow to the organization's main opponent, or protecting a vital shipment of supplies which is certain to fall under attack. Only the best of the best are selected for such a quest, as the consequences of failure—just like the benefits of success—are high.

Epic: These are quests on which the very future of the organization—or, in some cases, entire kingdoms, continents, or even planes—hang in the balance. Preventing massive wars, stopping evil mages from attaining godhood, and preventing a natural disaster

which will sink an entire continent are all examples of such a quest. In short, when such an issue arises, it is everyone's top priority, and those in charge won't settle for anyone but the absolute best to perform the job. Failure is simply not an option.

Administrative: Administrative tasks tend to run the gamut from minor to epic, but are almost always restricted to non-field work. An administrative task involves little risk to life or limb. It might involve research, or diplomacy, or it could actually be administrative: attending to the day-to-day affairs and banalities of keeping an organization running.

Note that a quest's category is not directly related to how difficult it will be, nor does it have anything to do with the challenge rating or DCs of anything associated with the challenge. It is entirely possible for a routine patrol to stumble across very un-routine hostiles, and negotiating a settlement can often be far more of a challenge than slaying trolls.

Also note that the listed category of quests is the norm for that rank in the organization. By nature of being player characters, most PCs are outside the norm, so it's entirely possible for

Rank	Entry Requirements	Quests Granted	Influence per Quest	Other Benefits and Duties
Recruit	None	Minor	1	Must perform regular patrols and obey orders of captain
Soldier	Base attack +1, Light Armor Proficiency, proficiency with a martial weapon, membership score 3	Average	1	+1 faction bonus on Knowledge (local) and Survival checks
Lieutenant	Base attack +3, Weapon Focus with any weapon, membership score 10	Important	2	+2 faction bonus on Knowledge (local) and Survival checks
Captain	Base attack +6, Leadership, membership score 18	Dire	3	+4 faction bonus on Knowledge (local) and Survival checks, benefits and duties of managing 3 to 5 five- man teams
Garrison Commander	Base attack +10, Leadership, membership score 25	Administrative	1	Effective leadership score +5, benefits and duties of running a stronghold

Table 2-6: Iron Blade Rank and Membership Benefits

them to receive somewhat more important missions than is average for their rank. Further, the ranking of the quest is an abstract system unknown to NPCs, and so characters of a given rank are likely to receive some quests that would belong in a higher rank and some that would belong in a lower rank. Should a crisis arise that requires a particular set of skills which makes one or more of the PCs the best candidate, they will almost certainly be the ones chosen for the quest. Similarly, even though members in leadership positions are often relegated to administrative tasks, that doesn't mean they can't finagle their way into getting into the front lines from time to time.

Influence Per Quest: Performing various quests, tasks, and assignments is the primary way of gaining influence in the knights of the crucible. Distinct from a character's membership score, a character can amass influence and then spend it in exchange for a number of different benefits. The mechanics of influence are described in full below. This entry lists the amount of influence which is gained with each successful contract.

Other Benefits and Duties: This entry lists any additional benefits or duties which are applicable to characters of the given rank. A character gains all the benefits and duties of his own rank, and those of each lower rank (though note that some of these benefits may not stack).

Influence and Perks

As a character gains more and more influence in a faction, he finds that the faction becomes more willing to offer him goods or services it reserves only for those members it finds worthy. Like membership scores, influence is an abstract number, which represents a variety of factors in-game. Some chapter houses may have a "point" or "reward" system which functions similarly to influence, but in many cases influence is not so institutionalized. A character with high influence may simply come to the attention of the powers that be as someone who is of value to the guild, or may just be well-liked by the various service providers, who appreciate the character's hard work and service.

Regardless of the exact in-game nature of a character's influence, mechanically it is handled in the same way: the character may spend his influence to gain privileges, benefits, training, or other services from the organization, called perks. Spending influence in this way reduces a character's influence with the organization by some amount, as indicated on the organization's table, below, but the character can always earn more influence, and so procure more benefits and perks.

In general, there are two types of perks: the first, **privileges and benefits**, are various onetime effects that represent goods or services being offered to the character. There are generally no limits on how often a character can take a privilege or benefit, as long as he has the necessary amount of influence to spend. By contrast, **training** represents special knowledge or extensive training that the character has taken, and typically grants the character one or more feats, skills, or special abilities, inherent to his person. A character cannot take more than one training perk per week of game time, and unless the specific perk indicates to the contrary, he cannot take a specific training perk more than one time.

The various types of perks offered by the various sub-orders of the knights of the crucible are included here. They are listed in alphabetical order, but have been divided into two sections: the first for privileges and benefits, the second for training.

Sidebar: Benefits and Duties of Leadership

Eventually, members of some of the sub-orders of the knights of the crucible may advance to a rank where they attain leadership of a force of men and/or an entire stronghold. This is obviously a very complicated situation, which threatens to monopolize time at the table, and bog down gameplay. We believe that this can still be a fun and rewarding roleplaying opportunity, but it is beyond the scope of this book to create in-depth rules for governing a faction. For the purposes of this book, we recommend characters that become chapter heads use the following simplified rules for running their chapter:

- Each month, make a special supervisor check (your leadership score versus DC 35).
- If you succeed, you gain 1 point of influence with the order (for your good work). For every ten points you exceed the DC, you gain an additional point of influence.
- If you fail, you lose 1 point of influence for every 5 points by which you failed to meet the DC.
- Additionally, you have an income based on the success of your guild from month to month. You should negotiate this with your GM, but in general we recommend a starting point of roughly 300 gp per class level, and ranging from nothing (for very poor management) up to 1,000 gp per class level (for exceptional management of a rapidly expanding and already substantial chapter).
- Finally, successful management should result in the character's faction flourishing, allowing for improved facilities, increased staff, better services, and so on. On the other hand, poor management might cause the faction to collapse around the character. Players should work with GMs as to the direction they would like to see their faction evolve, and GMs should be sure to show the ways that the character's management is affecting the faction, even if only through brief statements, the addition or subtraction of NPC members, etc.
Privileges and Benefits

Borrow Magic Item: The organization agrees to loan the character the use of one or more magic items that belong to the organization. The character does not own the item, and is expected to return it eventually. Borrowed magic items are never consumable (such as potions, scrolls, or wands), and the value of the borrowed magic item cannot exceed 500 gp per rank the character has in the organization (so a character in the organization's 3rd rank could receive a magic item worth up to 1,500 gp). More expensive magic items can be borrowed by spending greater amounts of influence at once (so the same character could spend twice as many points of influence to receive a magic item worth up to 3,000 gp).

There may be a specific deadline after which the character must return the item (such as, after one month), or the character may be able to borrow it indefinitely. Either way, once the item is returned, as long as it is returned in the same condition as it was borrowed in, the character regains 1/2 the influence spent to acquire it (rounded up). If the item is destroyed, sold, or lost, or the character is otherwise unable or unwilling to return it, the spent influence is lost, and the character suffers a -1 penalty to his membership score.

Political Pressure: The character can ask his organization to intercede with someone on his behalf, making it clear that the organization supports the character and would like to see his requests granted. In essence, the organization makes a Diplomacy or Intimidate check (depending on the situation) on the character's behalf, with a total bonus equal to 5 plus an additional 5 for each rank the character has attained in the organization (so a character in the organization's 2nd rank would have a +15 bonus). Bonuses or penalties might be applied to this check based on the organization's relative position in the area: in situations where the organization has a great deal of control, they might receive as much as an additional +5 to their check, while in areas where they have little control or are virtually unknown they might

Table 2-7: Bronze Shield Perks

Benefit	Cost
Privileges and Benefits	
Requisition weapons and armor	1
Spellcasting services	1
Recharge magic item	2
Requisition manpower	2
Borrow magic item	3
Training	
Armor training	2
Class skills	2
Combat defense training	2
Magic item creation	3
Magic item identification	3

Table 2-8: Golden Helm Perks

Benefit	Cost
Privileges and Benefits	
Requisition weapons and armor	1
Political pressure	2
Requisition manpower	3
Training	
Armor training	1
Class skills	2
Combat defense training	2
Combat maneuver training	3
Weapon training	3
Greater armor training	4
Martial adept training	4

Table 2-9: Iron Blade Perks

Benefit	Cost
Privileges and Benefits	
Requisition weapons and armor	1
Political pressure	2
Set bounty	2
Requisition manpower	3
Requisition legion	10
Training	1221
Armor training	1
Class skills	2
Combat maneuver training	3
Weapon training	3
Martial adept training	4



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as much as a -5 penalty. If the character is asking the organization to exert pressure on subjects that the organization does not support, or even opposes, the price in influence should be doubled or tripled.

Recharge Magic Item: The character can have the charges in a magic item that uses charges (such as a staff or wand) restored. This process takes 24 hours, and the value of the charges to be restored cannot exceed 300 gp per rank the character has in the organization (so a character in the organization's 4th rank could regain 1,200 gp worth of charges). In order to find the value per charge of an item whose charges typically can't be recovered (such as a wand), divide the total price of the item by the number of charges a newly-created item of the type possesses. In order to find the value per charge of an item whose charges can be restored by expending spells (such as a staff), use the price of spellcasting services of a spell whose level is equal to that of the level of spell that must be expended to recover one of the item's charges.

Requisition Manpower: The organization is willing to apply other agents to specific tasks that the character requests. In most cases, this does not put the requisitioned agents under the direct command of the character, and even when they are, such characters should be treated as distinct individuals with their own goals and loyalties, rather than simple followers. The type of agents that can be requisitioned, and the sorts of activities that they can perform, depend on the organization involved. Note that these are simply guidelines, and that depending on circumstances, and the organization's interests, the cost for this benefit might increase or decrease, as might the quality or nature of the agents.

• Order of the Bronze Shield: The character can requisition the use of 1d8 2nd-level characters (typically fighters or cavaliers) to act as guardians, protecting a specific person, place, or object. These guardians will act as escorts and bodyguards, and guard their ward from assault, but will not accompany characters into dungeons or otherwise be involved in seeking out trouble. The guards continue their duties for one week for each time this perk is taken.

 Order of the Bronze Shield: The character can requisition the use of a single 4th-level character (cleric or wizard) to research or identify magic items. The requisitioned character is capable of casting detect magic, and has a +11 bonus on Spellcraft checks. The requisitioned character can also use the following skills at a +8 bonus: Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (history), and Knowledge (religion). The requisitioned character is assumed to have access to a library granting a +2 bonus to such checks, which is already included above. The requisitioned character will devote one week to researching whatever the character requests for each time this perk is taken.

• Order of the Golden Helm: The character can requisition the use of a single character whose level is the same as that of the requisitioning character (any class). This agent will gladly undertake dangerous situations, such as accompanying the character into a dungeon, but will expect an even share of any treasure found, and should also receive a share of any experience gained. The requisitioned character remains for one week or until a single adventure or quest is completed, whichever is longer. • Order of the Golden Helm: The character can requisition the use of a single flying mount (a hippogriff, pegasus, or griffon) who serves the character as a trusty steed for one month. The character must have attained the rank of heroic defender in order to select a pegasus, and he must have attained the rank of righteous paragon in order to select a griffon.

• Order of the Iron Blade: The character can requisition the use of 2d4+4 3rd-level characters (typically fighters, rangers, or cavaliers). These soldiers are generally used to guard or patrol an area, but they can also be used more offensively, as long as the use is one that is appropriate for soldiers of their skill (for example, they will gladly aid in an assault against a bandit camp or thieves' guild which isn't likely to possess many combatants whose CR is higher than 4, but will be resistant to helping face a CR 10 dragon, or to aid in plumbing a trap-filled tomb solely to find treasure). The requisitioned characters remain for one week for each time this perk is taken.

Requisition Legion: The character is able to influence the deployment of a small army. This perk allows the character to convince the organization to devote a significant force of manpower towards a specific goal. This goal should be one that an army is appropriate for, such as protecting an entire small city or region, or fighting another army. Note that requisitioning forces for purposes which are not of interest to the organization, or which the organization actively opposes, may double or triple the cost of this perk, or make it impossible to purchase for that purpose.

• Order of the Iron Blade: The character can requisition the use of 200 3rd-level soldiers, 100 5th-level soldiers, 50 7th-level knights, and 300 1st-level hangers-on. The soldiers are a mix of fighters and rangers, while the knights are a mix of cavaliers, fighters, and paladins. The hangers-on are all commoners and experts, and serve to provide basic services and necessities to the soldiers and knights. The character in no way has direct control over these forces, but may be able to influence their commander as to how they are deployed. The commander works towards whatever goal the force was requisitioned for to the best of his judgment until the task is complete or until one month has passed, whichever comes first. Extending this time past one month requires taking the perk again. A character must have attained at least the rank of captain in order to select this perk.

Requisition Weapons and Armor: The organization gives the character one or more weapons or pieces of armor, which is his to keep, at no charge. The total cost of the weapons or armor cannot exceed 200 gp per rank the character has in the organization (so a character in the organization's 3rd rank would receive up to 600 gp in weapons and armor). More expensive weapons and armor can be purchased by spending greater amounts of influence at once (so the same character could spend four times as many points of influence to receive 2,400 gp worth of weapons and armor, enough to purchase a +1 weapon). Once an item is gained in this way, it cannot later be returned to regain influence, though it can be sold as normal.

Set Bounty: The character convinces the organization to offer a bounty for the capture or death of a specific individual. The value of this bounty cannot exceed 400 gp per rank the character has in the organization (so a character in the organization's 4th rank could place a bounty of up to 1,600 gp). Higher bounties can be created by spending greater amounts of influence at once (so the same character could spend twice as many points of influence to set a bounty of 3,200 gp). The organization also automatically offers a bounty for information about the target equal to 1/10th the bounty for his capture. The character cannot collect a bounty he himself set, although this bounty might lead to information about, or the capture of, the individual in question.

The higher the bounty placed, the more likely that a capable bounty hunter will become interested. Rather than track the activities of numerous bounty hunters, however, use the following table to determine how high a bounty must be set in order to attract suitably-proficient bounty hunters. If a suitably high bounty is set, there is a 50% chance per week that the target will be captured or killed. For each CR above the target that the bounty is placed, this chance increases by 5%, to a maximum of 90%. If a character is particularly difficult to track down (such as a doppelganger, or a master of disguise, for example), he may be treated as one or more CRs higher than he actually is for this purpose. Characters whose CR is 13 or higher typically can't be caught or killed in this way, as this is the province of true adventurers.

Table 2-10: Bounties

Target's CR	Bounty Required
1	260 gp
2	550 gp
3	800 gp
4	1,150 gp
5	1,550 gp
6	2,000 gp
7	2,600 gp
8	3,350 gp
9	4,250 gp
10	5,450 gp
11	7,000 gp
12	9,000 gp

Further, there is a 20% chance each week that information about the target's location or habits surfaces. This chance occurs regardless of the bounty set, but any bonuses to the chance of the target being captured or killed due to the price of the bounty also apply to this 20% chance (so if a character's bounty were high enough that there was a 60% chance he would be captured or killed, there would also be a 30% chance of receiving information about him).

Spellcasting Services: The character can receive spellcasting services free of charge. Each time this perk is chosen, the character receives an amount of spellcasting services worth up to 200 gp per rank the character has in the organization (so a character in the organization's 2nd rank could receive spellcasting services worth up to 400 gp). More expensive spellcasting services can be had by spending greater amounts of influence at once (so the same character could spend twice as many points of influence to receive spellcasting worth up to 800 gp).

Training

Armor Training: The character is trained in the use of armor and shields. The character chooses a single feat from the following list, which he gains as a bonus feat: Heavy Armor Proficiency, Light Armor Proficiency, Medium Armor Proficiency, Shield Proficiency, or Tower Shield Proficiency. The character must meet all the prerequisites for the chosen feat. This perk can be taken multiple times, choosing a new feat each time.

Class Skills: The character is trained in the basic elements of a certain skill, and they treat it as a class skill from then on. Each time this perk is chosen, the character can choose a single skill from among a list of skills offered by their organization to treat as a class skill. This perk can be taken multiple times, choosing a new skill each time.

- Order of the Bronze Shield: Characters in the order of the bronze shield can be trained in Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (religion), Perception, Sense Motive, Spellcraft, and Use Magic Device.
- Order of the Golden Helm: Characters in the order of the golden helm can be trained in Acrobatics, Climb, Handle Animal, Perform (oratory), Ride, and Swim.
- Order of the Iron Blade: Characters in the order of the iron blade can be trained in Climb, Handle Animal, Knowledge (local), Perception, Ride, Sense Motive, Survival, and Swim.

Combat Defense Training: The character is trained to be better at resisting combat maneuvers, and gains a +1 faction bonus to his CMD. This perk can be taken multiple times, but no more than once per rank the character possesses in the organization. Each time the perk is taken, the faction bonus to CMD increases by 1. Combat Maneuver Training: The character is trained to be better at implementing combat maneuvers, and gains a +1 faction bonus to his CMB. This perk can be taken multiple times, but no more than once per rank the character possesses in the organization. Each time the perk is taken, the faction bonus to CMB increases by 1.

Greater Armor Training: The character is trained to be particularly comfortable and maneuverable in a single type of armor. The character must choose a single type of armor with which he is proficient: from now on, he suffers only 1/2 the normal armor check penalty while wearing that armor. This feat can be taken multiple times, but each time a new type of armor must be selected.

Magic Item Creation: The character is trained in the creation of magic items. The character chooses a single item creation feat, which he gains as a bonus feat. The character must meet all the prerequisites for the chosen feat. This perk can be taken multiple times, choosing a new feat each time.

Magic Item Identification: The character is

trained to identify magic items, even if he is not a proficient spellcaster. By spending ten minutes studying an item, the character is able to tell whether or not it is magical, and can make a single Spellcraft check to identify the item, as though he were studying it with detect magic. If used in conjunction with detect magic, or a similar ability, this training instead grants a +5 enhancement bonus on any Spellcraft checks made to identify the properties of magic items.

Martial Adept Training: The character is trained in the secrets of martial combat. He is treated as a fighter whose level is equal to 1/2 his Hit Dice for the purpose of qualifying for feats which require a certain number of levels in fighter as their prerequisite (such as Weapon Specialization).

Weapon Training: The character is trained in the use of weapons. The character chooses a single feat from the following list, which he gains as a bonus feat: Exotic Weapon Proficiency, Martial Weapon Proficiency, Simple Weapon Proficiency, or Weapon Focus. The character must meet all the prerequisites for the chosen feat. This perk can be taken multiple times, choosing a new feat each time.





NPC Gallery

The following section provides a series of stat-blocks for various types of NPCs amongst the knights of the crucible with whom PCs might be likely to interact. The NPCs are divided based on the sub-order they belong to: those belonging to the order of the iron blade, the most commonly encountered order, are included first, followed by those belonging to the order of the bronze shield, and finally those belonging to the order of the golden helm.

Note that for the first two orders, the stat-blocks are generic, and represent roles, rather than individuals. Players will likely have the opportunity to meet many iron blade sentries, and for the most part those NPCs can have identical stat-blocks. Amongst the order of the golden helm, however, there are no "generic" members, and so each of the three NPCs presented for that order is a specific character, with information about that character's personality.

For some entries, such as the iron blade legionnaires and the sacred custodians, there are more than one stat-block. These indicate similar characters at different levels of experience and skill, and so allow these characters to be useful at a wider range of levels than if only a single stat-block were presented.

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Iron Blade Legionnaires

IRON BLADE SENTRY

XP 600

Male or female human iron blade legionnaire 3 LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor) hp 25 (3d10+9)

Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; +1 vs charm (dedicated 1)

Defensive Abilities armor training 1

OFFENSE Speed 20 ft.

Melee masterwork halberd +7 (1d10+3/x3) Ranged longbow +3 (1d8/x3)

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8 Base Atk +3; CMB +5; CMD 15

Feats Alertness, Athletic, Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Focus (halberd) **Skills** Climb -1, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +7, Sense Motive +1, Survival +5,

Swim -1

Languages Common

NPC Gear arrows (40), longbow, masterwork banded mail, masterwork halberd, 2d20 sp

Iron blade legionnaires are the most commonly-encountered members of the knights of the crucible, and can often be found patrolling roads and highways on the lookout for bandits and others who would prey on travellers. They are the rank and file of the order of the iron blade, and are also often called upon to act as guards or peacekeepers in troubled areas, and to guard anything that the order of the iron blade deems worth protecting.

As with any army, iron blade legionnaires are a varied sort, with a wide array of personalities. Nearly all members will have had a strong sense of discipline beaten into them, however, and they will have an ingrained respect for the chain of command, insisting on taking matters above their pay-grade before a superior, rather than try to handle such decisions themselves.

IRON BLADE VETERAN

XP 2,400

CR 2

Male or female human iron blade legionnaire 7 LN Medium humanoid (human) Init +4; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+9 armor, +1 dodge)

hp 59 (7d10+21)

Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; +2 vs charm (dedicated 2)

Defensive Abilities armor training 2

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +*i* halberd +11/+6 (1d10+5/x3) **Ranged** longbow +7/+2 (1d8/x3)

Special Attacks iron blade's quarry

STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8 Base Atk +7; CMB +9; CMD 20 Feats Alertness, Athletic, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lunge, Toughness, Weapon Focus (halberd), Weapon Specialization (halberd)

Skills Climb -1, Knowledge (local) +10,

Perception +12, Sense Motive +2, Survival +10, Swim -1

Languages Common

NPC Gear +1 halberd, arrows (40), longbow, masterwork full plate, potion of cure light wounds (2), potion of expeditious retreat, potion of see invisibility, potion of true strike, 3d10 x 10 gp

Tactics: Iron blade legionnaires are cautious fighters, but not cowards. If they begin combat at a range, they will attack with their bows, and continue to do so as long as that remains effective. If they are having difficulty at a range, or their opponent closes the distance, they will switch to their halberds, forming up in a defensive line, if possible, to keep from being flanked.

Veterans employ good use of their Lunge feat to catch foes off-guard, and aren't afraid to use the potions they're issued, using the potion of expeditious retreat to catch those who run from them.

Iron Reeves

IRON BLADE TRACKER

XP 1,600

Male or female human iron reeve 6 NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; Perception +10 DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +1 Dex); +2 competence vs traps (danger sense)

hp 39 (6d10+6)

Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +3; +2 vs traps (danger sense)

Defensive Abilities danger sense

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee masterwork falchion +8 (2d4+1/18-20) **Ranged** masterwork composite longbow +9/+4 (1d8+1/x3) or masterwork composite longbow +7/+2 (1d8+5/x3) or masterwork composite longbow +5/+5/+0 (1d8+5/x3)

Special Attacks favored enemy (humanoid [human] +4, humanoid [orc] +2)

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 8 Base Atk +6; CMB +7; CMD 18

Feats Deadly Aim, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Climb +10, Escape Artist +3, Perception +10, Stealth +12, Survival +10, Swim +10 Languages Common

SQ alert allies, favored terrain (local* +2), track +3, trapfinding +3, wild empathy +5

NPC Gear +1 flaming arrows (10), +1 studded leather armor, arrows (60), backpack, bedroll, masterwork composite longbow (+1 Str), potion of cat's grace, potion of invisibility, potion of true strike (2), 6d10 gp

*The iron blade tracker should be assumed to have taken favored terrain in whatever terrain type is predominant in the area where he is stationed, other than urban or another plane.

Elite trackers and huntsmen, iron reeves act primarily as scouts in the order, though they are sometimes tasked with retrieving escaped criminals, and so on. They are well-trained with bows, and make great use of that training, to deadly effect.

IRON BLADE HUNTER

XP 4,800

CR 5

Male or female human iron reeve 9 NG Medium humanoid (human) Init +6; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 dodge); +2 competence vs traps (danger sense)

hp 58 (9d10+9)

Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +4; +2 vs traps (danger sense)

Defensive Abilities danger sense, evasion,

uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee masterwork falchion +11/+6 (2d4+1/18-20) **Ranged** +1 composite longbow +13/+8 (1d8+2/x3) or +1 composite longbow +10/+5 (1d8+8/x3), or +1 composite longbow +8/+8/+3 (1d8+8/x3)

Special Attacks favored enemy (humanoid [human] +4, humanoid [orc] +2)

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 8 Base Atk +9; CMB +10; CMD 23 Feats Deadly Aim, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (longbow) Skills Climb +13, Escape Artist +4, Perception +13, Stealth +15, Survival +13, Swim +13 Languages Common SQ alert allies, favored terrain (local* +4, local*

+2), swift tracker, track +3, trapfinding +3, wild empathy +5

NPC Gear +1 composite longbow (+1 Str), +1 flaming frost arrows (10), +1 studded leather armor, arrows (60), backpack, bedroll, potion of cat's grace, potion of invisibility, potion of levitate, potion of true strike (2), 3d10 x 10 gp *The iron blade hunter should be assumed to have taken favored terrains in whatever terrain type is predominant in the area where he is stationed, other than urban or another plane.

Tactics: Iron reeves typically use both Deadly Aim and Rapid Shot, unless doing so makes it too difficult for them to hit their target.

Iron Blade Captain

IRON BLADE CAPTAIN

XP 4,800

Male or female human cavalier 9 LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; Perception +0 DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 23 (+10 armor, -1 Dex, +4 shield)

CR8

hp 58 (9d10+9)

Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +3

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., 50 ft. while mounted Melee +1 lance +14/+9 (2d8+8/x3) or +1 lance +18/+13 (3d8+12/x3) when charging, or masterwork longsword +13/+8 (1d8+3/18-20) when not mounted Ranged masterwork composite shortbow +9/+4 (1d6+3/x3)Special Attacks cavalier's charge, challenge (+3 attack, +12 damage, -2 AC; 3/day), no escape STATISTICS Str 16, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12 Base Atk +9; CMB +12; CMD 21 Feats Coordinated Defense APG, Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Shield Focus, Shield Wall^{APG}, Spirited Charge, Step Up, Toughness, Weapon Focus (lance) Skills Diplomacy +14, Handle Animal +14 (+18 on mounts), Intimidate +14, Perception +0 (+4 to find tracks), Ride +7, Sense Motive +13, Survival +o (+4 to follow tracks)

Languages Common

SQ banner, expert trainer, familiar territory* (+2 bonus), mount (horse), order (iron blade), tactician (coordinated defense, shield wall; 2/day)

NPC Gear +1 full plate, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 lance, arrows (40), masterwork composite shortbow (+3 Str), masterwork longsword, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of protection from arrows, 3d6 x 10 gp

*The iron blade capatain should be assumed to be in her familiar territory when encountered, unless she is specifically being encountered outside of her favored territory.

IRON BLADE CAPTAIN'S HORSE Male or female horse mount N Large animal Init +3; Perception +12 DEFENSE AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+1 Dex, +10 natural) hp 68 (8d8+32) Fort +10, Ref +9, Will +3; +4 vs enchantment (devotion) **Defensive Abilities** devotion, evasion OFFENSE Speed 50 ft. Melee bite +12 (1d4+6), 2 hooves +11 (1d6+3) Special Attacks multiattack STATISTICS Str 22, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6 Base Atk +6; CMB +13; CMD 26 Feats Armor Proficiency (heavy), Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Run, Weapon Focus (hoof) Skills Perception +12 SO link

Iron blade captains command small units of 5-10 men, and are almost always knights of some kind, often but not always with a family background in knighthood or nobility. Their personalities may vary, but no iron blade captain retains his post for long without the ability to make tactical decisions and keep his or her men in line.

Tactics: While many iron blade captains are eager to enter battle, most will usually delegate combat to those under their command, rather than foolishly jumping at the first opportunity for lethal combat. That said, if the situation calls for them to get involved, an iron blade captain will rarely hesitate to do so.

Iron blade captains generally prefer mounted combat, where they can take advantage of their Ride-By Attack and Spirited Charge feats. When fighting on foot, they use their tactician class feature to form a defensive shield wall with their men, slowly pushing their foe into a corner and beating them into submission.

Bronze Shield Guardians

BRONZE SHIELD SENTRY

CR₄

XP 1,200

Male or female human bronze shield guardian 5 LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +0; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 25 (+9 armor, +1 competence, +1 dodge, +5 shield) hp 37 (5d10+10)

Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +3

Defensive Abilities defensive stance +1,

protective armor +1, steadfast

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee masterwork trident +7 (1d8+4) Ranged masterwork trident +5 (1d8+4; 10 ft.), or sling +5 (1d4+2) without shield

STATISTICS

Str 15, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8 Base Atk +5; CMB +7; CMD 19 Feats Alertness, Dodge, Iron Will, Shield Focus, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (trident), Weapon Specialization (trident) Skills Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Perception +10, Sense Motive +2 Languages Common NPC Gear bullets (20), masterwork full plate, masterwork tower shield, masterwork trident,

sling, 2d4 x 100 gp

Bronze shield guardians make up the majority of the order of the bronze shield, and are the image most people think of when they think of the order. Primarily, a bronze shield guardian's duties involve standing watch on the walls and towers of their fortress-stronghold, although as they become more and more experienced, and are granted more and more responsibility by their abbot, they spend more time guarding the vaults and inner sanctums directly.

As a general rule, bronze shield guardians are mistrustful of anyone from outside of their fortress-stronghold, and view anyone they don't know well to be a potential threat to the stronghold's safety. At the same time, however, they are often eager for news and information BRONZE SHIELD GUARD CR 7 XP 3,200 Male or female human bronze shield guardian 8 LN Medium humanoid (human) Init +o; Perception +13 DEFENSE AC 29, touch 12, flat-footed 28 (+10 armor, +1 competence, +1 dodge, +7 shield) hp 60 (8d10+16) Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +5 Defensive Abilities defensive stance +1, protective armor +1, steadfast OFFENSE Speed 30 ft. Melee masterwork trident +11/+6 (1d8+5) Ranged masterwork trident +8 (1d8+5; 10 ft.), or sling +8/+3 (1d4+3) without shield STATISTICS Str 16, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8 Base Atk +8; CMB +11; CMD 24 Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Greater Shield Focus, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Shield Focus, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (trident), Weapon Specialization (trident) Skills Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Perception +13, Sense Motive +2 Languages Common SQ armor familiarity (full plate) NPC Gear +1 full plate, +1 tower shield, bullets (20), cloak of resistance +1, masterwork trident, potion of blur, potion of protection from arrows, sling, 2d4 x 100 gp

about the outside world, and so are typically more wary of outsiders, rather than outright hostile towards them.

Tactics: Bronze shield guardians fight defensively, aiming primarily to hold foes at bay until enough reinforcements arrive to overwhelm them. Unless they are firing on an opponent from the wall of their fortress-stronghold, or similar, they prefer to engage in melee combat, where they can put their shields to full use. If help or aid is likely to come, a bronze shield guardian will usually begin combat by sounding the alarm, then proceed to fight defensively until help arrives.

Bronze Shield Sacred Custodians

BRONZE SHIELD RELIC KEEPER

XP 19,200

Male or female human sacred custodian 13 LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init -1; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 10, flat-footed 25 (+11 armor, +1 deflection, -1 Dex, +4 shield)

hp 84 (13d8+26)

Fort +11, Ref +3, Will +11

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 merciful flail +10/+5 (1d8+1d6 nonlethal)

Special Attacks channel energy 4/day (DC 17, 5d6)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +16)

At Will—aura of protection (+2 deflection, energy resistance 5; 13 rounds), lore keeper,

remote viewing (13 rounds)

6/day—resistant touch (+3)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 13th; concentration +16)

7th—repulsion ^D (DC 20)

6th—animate objects (DC 19), antimagic field ^D 5th—break enchantment, flame strike (DC 18), true seeing ^D

4th—death ward , dimensional anchor , greater magic weapon , spell immunity ^D

3rd-dispel magic , invisibility purge ,

nondetection , protection from energy ^D, wind wall

2nd—arcane lock, detect thoughts ^D (DC 15), hold person (DC 15), make whole, zone of truth (DC 15)

1st—bless , comprehend languages ^D, detect evil , obscuring mist , shield of faith

o-detect magic , guidance , light , mending

^D domain spell; **Domains** Knowledge,

Protection STATISTICS

Str 9, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 17, Cha 12 Base Atk +9; CMB +8 (+14 to disarm); CMD 18 (20 vs disarm) Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Greater Disarm, Greater Spell Penetration, Spell Penetration, Toughness, Weapon Focus (flail)

Skills Knowledge (religion) +17, Perception +16, Spellcraft +17, Use Magic Device +14

Languages Celestial, Common

SQ bond item, charge magic item, expanded spell list

NPC Gear +1 merciful flail, +2 full plate, +2 heavy steel shield, ring of protection +1, potion of gaseous form, 2d12 x 100 gp

BRONZE SHIELD SANCTUAR

CR 15

XP 51,200

CR 12

Male or female human sacred custodian 16 LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init -1; Perception +20 DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 10, flat-footed 27 (+12 armor, +1 deflection, -1 Dex, +5 shield) hp 104 (16d8+32)

Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +17

OFFENSE Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 vicious merciful flail +13/+8 (1d8+1d6 nonlethal plus 2d6 nonlethal vicious) Special Attacks channel energy 4/day (DC 19, 6d6)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +20) At Will—aura of protection (+5 deflection,

energy resistance 10; 16 rounds), lore keeper, remote viewing (16 rounds)

6/day—resistant touch (+4)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 16th; concentration +20)

8th—holy aura, mind blank^D

7th—destruction (DC 21) repulsion ^D (DC 21),

symbol of weakness (DC 21)

6th—animate objects (DC 20), antimagic field ^D, blade barrier (DC 20)

5th—break enchantment , flame strike (DC 19), mage's private sanctum , true seeing ^D 4th—death ward , dimensional anchor , freedom of movement , greater magic weapon , spell immunity ^D

3rd—dispel magic , invisibility purge , nondetection , protection from energy ^D, wind wall

2nd—arcane lock, detect thoughts ^D (DC 16), hold person (DC 16), make whole, zone of truth (DC 16)

1st—bless , comprehend languages ^D, detect evil , obscuring mist , shield of faith

o—detect magic, guidance, light, mending ^D domain spell; **Domains** Knowledge, Protection

STATISTICS

Str 9, **Dex** 8, **Con** 10, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 12 **Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +11 (+17 to disarm); **CMD** 21 (23 vs disarm)

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Greater Disarm, Greater Spell Penetration, Shield Focus, Spell Penetration, Toughness, Weapon Focus (flail)

Skills Knowledge (religion) +20, Perception +20, Spellcraft +20, Use Magic Device +17

Languages Celestial, Common

SQ bond item, charge magic item, expanded spell list

NPC Gear +1 vicious merciful flail, +3 full plate, +2 heavy steel shield, cloak of resistance +3, ring of protection +1, 2d12 x 1,000 gp worth of gems and small art objects The sacred custodians of the order of the bronze shield are the ones directly responsible for the care, upkeep, and research of the various magical artifacts and relics that are left in the order's care. They take this responsibility incredibly seriously, and, like most members of the order of the bronze shield, will die before allowing their wards to be seized.

Tactics: Sacred custodians rely on their spells in order to keep their relics safe. They use *dimensional anchor* to prevent thieves from escaping via spells like *teleport*, and use spells such as *nondetection*, or, in the case of sanctuars, *mage's private sanctum*, to keep the vault from being magically scouted. Spells like repulsion, or, for the more powerful sanctuars, *blade barrier* and *symbol of weakness*, are used to hold intruders at bay until more guardians arrive. Against spellcasters, sacred custodians use *antimagic* field, betting on their ability to subdue their foe with force of arms. As a last resort, they use *animate objects* to have their wards come to life and aid them in the fight.

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Bronze Shield Bodyguard

CR 10

BRONZE SHIELD BODYGUARD

XP 4,800

Male or female human cavalier 11 LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; Perception +14 DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 24 (+10 armor, +1 deflection, -1 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield) hp 82 (11d10+22)

Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +6

Defensive Abilities depths of devotion (22 hp;

1/day) OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., 50 ft. while mounted

Melee +1 dwarven waraxe +16/+11/+6 (1d10+4/x3) or +1 dwarven waraxe +20/+15/+10 (1d10+4/19-20)

x3) when charging

Special Attacks cavalier's charge, challenge (+11 damage, +3 AC, +3 CMD, +3 Fort/Will; 4/day), mighty charge, no escape

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 8, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12 Base Atk +11; CMB +14; CMD 23 Feats Back to Back, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Improved Back to Back, Improved Initiative, Improved Shield Focus, Iron Will, Shield Focus, Toughness, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe) Skills Handle Animal +15, Intimidate +15, Perception +14, Ride +13, Sense Motive +14 Languages Common SQ banner, defensive stance, expert trainer, mount (horse), order (iron blade), tactician

(back to back, improved back to back; 3/day) **NPC Gear** +1 dwarven waraxe, +1 full plate, +2 heavy steel shield, cloak of resistance +1, potion of cure serious wounds, 2d6 x 100 gp

Bronze shield bodyguards are likely the most well-traveled members of the order, and in many ways the most public-facing members. These elite guardians are chosen to guard not relics kept in a tightly-guarded vault, but rather to safeguard and protect important individuals, and ensure that they come to no harm. For the most part, these lucky individuals are those who seem likely

BRONZE SHIELD BODYGUARD'S HORSE Male or female horse mount N Large animal Init +3; Perception +13 DEFENSE AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+1 Dex, +10 natural) hp 76 (9d8+36) Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +4; +4 vs enchantment (devotion) **Defensive Abilities** devotion, evasion OFFENSE Speed 50 ft. Melee bite +12 (1d4+6), 2 hooves +11 (1d8+3) Special Attacks multiattack STATISTICS Str 22, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6 Base Atk +6; CMB +13; CMD 26 Feats Armor Proficiency (heavy), Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Improved Natural Attack (hoof), Run, Weapon Focus (hoof) Skills Perception +13 SQ link

candidates to fulfill prophecies, or who have portentious signs surrounding their births, or otherwise seem fated or destined for important things. On the other hand, they are also often important political figures, especially monarchs and their heirs, whose death could potentially lead to great turmoil. On rare occasions, the individual in question may be of little import, but simply have had something the order needed. Whatever the case, bronze shield bodyguards are unquestioningly loyal to their charges, and will allow no harm to come to them, even if they personally dislike them.

Tactics: A bronze shield bodyguard's first priority in combat is to ensure that his ward is safe. If his ward is, himself, martially-inclined, the bodyguard uses his tactician class feature to use Improved Back to Back, fighting alongside him. Otherwise, he charges into combat, hoping to distract his foes long enough for the person he is protecting to get away safely.

Uthengar the Bold

UTHENGAR THE BOLD

XP 38,400

Male human cavalier 14 CG Medium humanoid (human) Init +1; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 12, flat-footed 25 (+11 armor, +1 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 shield) hp 133 (14d10+56)

Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +4 Defensive Abilities glorious resilience (+4; 1

glory point)

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., 50 ft. while mounted **Melee** +1 vicious flaming falcata +21/+16/+11 (1d8+6 plus 1d6 fire plus 2d6 vicious/17-20 x3) **Ranged** +1 composite longbow (+5 Str)

 $+16/+11/+6(1d8+6/x_3)$

Special Attacks cavalier's charge, challenge (+14 damage, 5 glory points; 5/day), demanding challenge, glorious strike (+1 attack, +14 damage; 3 glory points) mighty charge

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12 Base Atk +14; CMB +19 (+23 to sunder); CMD 31 (33 vs. sunder)

Feats Bleeding Critical, Coordinated Defense, Coordinated Maneuvers, Critical Focus, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (falcata), Greater Sunder, Improved Critical (falcata), Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (falcata)

Skills Handle Animal +18, Intimidate +20, Perception +13, Perform (oratory) +20, Ride +18 Languages Common

SQ banner, expert trainer, mount (horse), greater banner, order (golden helm), tactician (coordinated defense, coordinated maneuvers; 3/day)

NPC Gear +2 full plate , +2 heavy steel shield , +1 vicious flaming falcata , +1 composite longbow (+5 Str) , cloak of resistance +1 , potion of bull's strength , potion of cat's grace , potion of cure serious wounds , potion of fly , potion of energy resistance , 5d6 x 100 gp

HALIFAX, UTHENGAR'S STEED

Male horse mount N Large animal

Init +4; Perception +16

DEFENSE

CR 14

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+2 Dex, +12 natural) hp 114 (12d8+60)

Fort +13, Ref +13, Will +5; +4 vs enchantment (devotion)

Defensive Abilities devotion, evasion

OFFENSE Speed 50 ft.

Melee bite +15 (1d4+6), 2 hooves +14 (1d8+3) Special Attacks multiattack

STATISTICS

Str 23, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6 Base Atk +9; CMB +16; CMD 30 Feats Armor Proficiency (heavy), Armor Proficiency (light), Armor Proficiency (medium), Improved Natural Attack (hoof), Run, Toughness, Weapon Focus (hoof) Skills Perception +16 SQ link

Sir Uthengar the Bold is a particularly daring and courageous member of the order of the golden helm, whose name comes from his willingness to take on any quest, no matter how grave or perilous, and regardless of whether or not there is anyone to aid him.

In truth, Uthengar is in love with the image of himself as a great and fearless hero, and is could rightly be called foolish, rather than bold, though his ability to come out on top in every encounter his boldness has gotten him into so far speaks in favor of his prowess. That said, he is quick to rush into danger that he may not be able to get out of, and often overestimates his own abilities.

Tactics: Uthengar prefers simple and straightforward tactics that rely on overwhelming force. He is quick to issue challenges, and just as quick to expend glory points in order to bring fights to swift conclusions. He always uses Power Attack, even if it makes it difficult for him to strike his opponent, and he charges whenever possible.

Sir Damovar Whiteshield

SIR DAMOVAR WHITESHIELD

CR 16

XP 76,800

Male human golden helm crusader 16 CG Medium humanoid (human) Init +1; Perception -1 Aura courage (10 ft.), faith (10 ft.), justice (10 ft.), resolve (10 ft.) DEFENSE AC 29, touch 13, flat-footed 28 (+11 armor, +2

deflection, +1 Dex, +5 shield)

hp 152 (16d10+64)

Fort +16, Ref +10, Will +13

Defensive Abilities divine grace (+3); **Immune** charm, disease, fear

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 merciful vicious longsword +23/+18/+13/+8 (1d8+6 nonlethal plus 1d6 nonlethal plus 2d6 vicious nonlethal/17-20 x2) Special Attacks challenge (+4, 16 rounds; 4/day), glorious charge (+3 damage, no AC penalty), inspire valiance (+2), smite evil (+3 attack and AC, +16 damage; 6/day) Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +19)

At Will-detect evil

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 16 Base Atk +16; CMB +20; CMD 33 Feats Critical Focus, Improved Critical (longsword), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Shield Focus, Staggering Critical, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword) Skills Perform (oratory) +19, Sense Motive +18 Languages Common SQ aura of good, divine bond (weapon +4) NPC Gear +2 full plate , +2 heavy steel shield , +2 merciful vicious longsword , boots of the winterlands , cloak of resistance +2 , potion of cure critical wounds (3), potion of fly (2), ring of protection +2, 2d4 x 100 gp Sir Damovar Whiteshield is among the most respected and honored members of the order of the golden helm, and of the knights of the crucible in general. He is well-beloved outside the order, as well, for his heroic efforts in slaying the dragon tyrant Nysthalvitar, and for singlehandedly saving the great port city of Wellspring from being destroyed by an angry kraken. For the most part, however, he has not let his fame affect him, and he is always on the lookout for a few good wrongs to right.

Tactics: Damovar is a cautious fighter, and, when battling mortal opponents, prefers to avoid combat at all, announcing himself and giving his foes a chance to surrender. With truly evil creatures, however, such as undead, evil dragons, and the like, he shows no mercy, deactivating the merciful property of his sword.



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Osric the Mighty

OSRIC THE MIGHTY

CR 18

XP 153,600

Male human glorious berserker 18 CG Medium humanoid (human) Init +8; Perception +20 DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+7 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, -2 rage) hp 243 (18d10+108+36)

Fort +19, Ref +11, Will +9; +4 vs. enchantments Defensive Abilities impervious (4/day), improved uncanny dodge; DR 5/-; Immune frightened, nauseated, shaken, sickened

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee +1 vicious flaming frost Large-size greataxe +30/+25/+20/+15 (3d6+15 plus 1d6 cold plus 1d6 fire plus 2d6 vicious), and bite +23 (1d4+5)

Special Attacks rage (42 rounds/day), rage powers (animal fury, fearless rage, increased damage reduction, internal fortitude, no escape, powerful blow, renewed vigor [4d8+4], surprise accuracy [+5 bonus], unexpected strike), titan grip

STATISTICS

Str 30, Dex 18, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12 Base Atk +18; CMB +28; CMD 44 Feats Blinding Critical, Critical Focus, Diehard, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greataxe)

Skills Acrobatics +25, Climb +31, Perception +20, Survival +20, Swim +31

Languages Common

SQ fast movement, improved carrying capacity, incredible strength, tireless rage

NPC Gear +1 vicious flaming frost Large-size greataxe, +4 studded leather armor, amulet of natural armor +1, belt of physical might +4, cloak of resistance +1, potion of bear's endurance, potion of bull's strength, potion of cat's grace, potion of fly, ring of protection +1, 3d6 x 100 gp Osric comes from a tribe of savage barbarians in the frozen north, who were forced to serve cruel and evil white dragons as though they were gods. When Sir Damovar Whiteshield travelled to that region to slay the dragons, he and Osric were forced into battle, and entered a wrestling match which took three days. The battle ended in a draw, as Damovar convinced Osric to join him against the dragons, and together they defeated them and freed Osric's people. Damovar was so impressed by Osirc's prowess that he invited him to join the order, and Osric has put his inhuman strength to the cause of good ever since.

Tactics: Osric is a vicious and savage fighter, and he offers no quarter, using brute strength and raw ferocity to overwhelm any who would dare stand in his way. Armed opponents who do not surrender to him unconditionally are brutally slain without remorse, and Osric never flees, always fighting to the death.



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*The above stats are for Osric when he is raging.



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Three Orders. Countless Possibilities.

Knightly orders-groups of brights bound together by common paths, beliefs, and goals-are a fun and exciting part of fantasy lore with deep roots in actual history. The Advanced Player's Guide tapped in to this vein of flavor with the cavalier class, which includes a variety of cavalier orders as one of its class features. Though these orders are flavorful and evocative, and also mechanically interesting, they left one thing to be desired: there was no information about the actual orders themselves, as organizations.

Knights of the Crucible presents a somewhat more in-depth look at three new knightly orders, each of which falls within the larger organization of the knights of the crucible. These orders, the order of the bronze shield, the order of the golden helm, and the order of the iron blade, not only include mechanical information for cavaliers who join the order, as well as archetypes for various other classes that might be interested in joining, but also have letailed information on the way the organization operates, its goals, and its members, as well as specific information on how to implement the order into your game, whether as an organization one or more PCs are a part of, or as NPCs, both allies and enemies.

The book also contains letailed mechanics for membership in the order, including ways to rise in status and rank within the order, and various benefits and perks which high-ranking and influential members can gain through association with the order. Finally, the book concludes with a gallery of sample NDCs and stat-blocks for various members of the orders, in order to make implementing the orders into your game that much easier.

While, at heart, Knights of the Crucible presents three new cavalier orders, in reality, it does far more, providing three unique and detailed organizations for player characters to join, ally themselves with, or fight bitterly. No matter what you need, the knights of the crucible can be a valuable addition to fantasy games of any sort.

ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

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