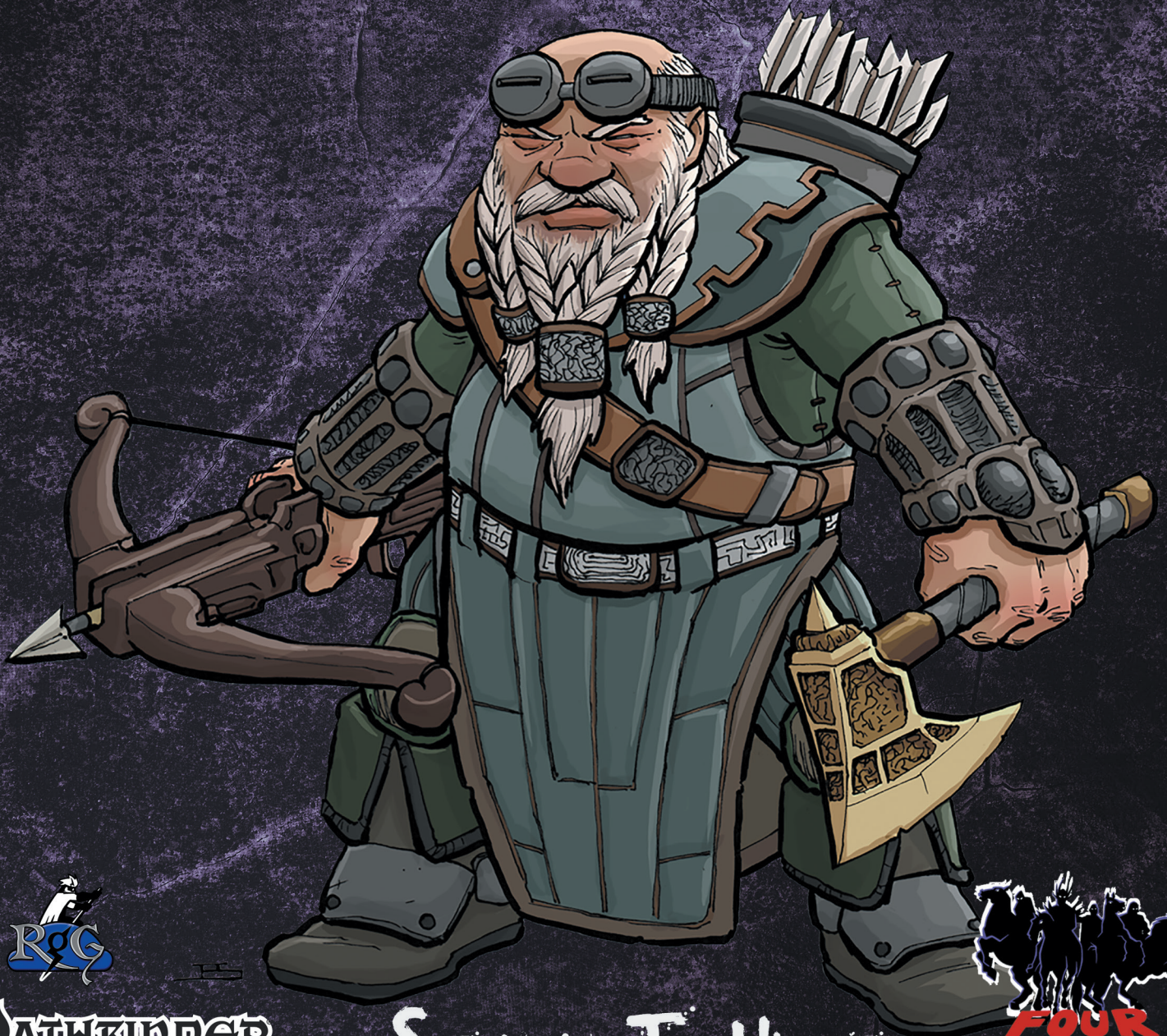


FOUR HORSEMEN PRESENT

MATURE CHARACTER OPTIONS



D&D
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

STEVEN T. HELT



FOUR HORSEMEN PRESENT

MATURE CHARACTER OPTIONS

For many, roleplaying games are a type of theater—a novel or television show where the players act the parts they choose over the course of a campaign. As such, roleplaying games make one of the best vehicles for learning teamwork and diversity. Since a party of characters in a *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* campaign showcases disparate classes and builds, it makes sense to explore this diversity through characters of a different alignment, background, faith, or gender than a player's normal taste for her starring role.

A character's age is an important consideration when preparing to tell a story. Any mortal character experiences significant changes in abilities, beliefs, and responsibilities over time, providing inspiration for textured stories. *Four Horsemen Present: Mature Character Options* examines some of the roleplaying opportunities afforded when a game takes advancing years into account. Also available are optional rules and mechanics that expand options for characters pursuing these themes. The traits, archetypes, feats, and spells within are all created specifically to compliment adventurers with the experiences of more mature adults.

MATURE THEMES

Certainly there are elements of stories not suitable for younger characters. Maturing or middle-aged characters are perfect for exploring topics that a more seasoned adult can appreciate. Whether a PC grows older during a campaign, or begins a game older than compatriots, mature characters might experience betrayal, a broken heart, crippling defeat, a crisis of faith, humiliation, loss, parenthood, true love, and more.

Some of these themes deserve special attention in any discussion regarding mature and middle-aged adults. The topics below provide building blocks for development of an older character's story. Does she adventure between romantic interludes with a lover she can never commit to? Does a past mistake haunt her, despite the intervening years? Each of the following topics clarifies how life experiences shape a maturing character over time. Each comes with a campaign trait to help encourage use of the theme in character creation.

FORTY IS THE NEW TWENTY

Most campaigns start with younger, low-level characters with healthy bodies and an energetic anticipation of what the future holds. However, some of the best films and literature assume middle-aged characters to be just as physically capable. Characters reaching middle age employ more than physical strength and rigorous training. Their experience at court and in battle is a weapon younger adversaries can never wield. More importantly, the life of each of these characters models the development and texture that makes a great Pathfinder character.

ENMITY

Over a long adventuring career, an adventurer (or group of adventurers) might acquire one or more long-term enemies. Such antagonists are more than simple recurring villains with a few quick quips and an escape plan. Real adversaries aren't content to defeat one another when plots intersect. Long-term rivals have a bitter desire to utterly ruin their bitter enemy. The best nemesis is acquired over time and throughout several conflicts, and often has a grudging respect for his enemy earned over a long career.

Unfinished Business: You've been troubled by one or more specific rivals over the years; who plot against you regularly. When you use your smite evil or other smite class feature against an enemy, that smite does not end until the object of your smite dies. If your smite deals additional damage to your target because of creature type, it deals that damage the first attack each time you encounter it. You may only have one smite continually active in this way at one time.

FAITH

Faith can strengthen or weaken over a lifetime of challenging events. Divine spellcasters see firsthand the very real power of gods and divine principles. However, even those who witness miracles can question whether a given deity hears their prayers, faltering when faith is tested. For maturing PCs, whether the energy invested in faith seems to be returned by a god's favor dramatically shapes a character's alignment, conviction, and personality.

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The same character may barely hold on to belief, weary of her god's apparent lack of interest, or she might become a conduit for divine energy even if she isn't a spellcaster.

Favored: Your body and soul willingly accept divine intervention. When targeted by a divine spell, you may use an immediate action to make the spell's caster level 1 higher for the purposes of any spell effect affecting you. You may use this ability a number of times per day equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1).

NOTORIETY

It's a simple enough thing to encounter fame and fortune as an adventurer grows older. Wealth, stature, and political favors all come to seasoned vagabonds naturally. However, not all fame is desirable. An early mistake might hound a wizard's reputation among academics, or a costly victory might result in silent judgment from a general's peers. Perhaps he was shrewd in battle but a friend died, or a pacified people remember his brutality. For an aging character, notoriety can be fame tied to guilt or misunderstanding. Strangers who know the character by repute may either praise or fear him, depending on which side of his story they land on.

War Hero: Whether a decisive victory or costly mistake, your reputation for past exploits precedes you. You choose either the Diplomacy or Intimidate skill. You gain a +2 trait bonus on rolls made with that skill, and always count that skill as a class skill. You take a -1 trait penalty on rolls with the other skill. The bonus or penalty applies only for rolls made involving creatures that share your type and any subtypes you might possess.

PARENTHOOD

Nothing changes an adult's perspective like parenthood. Though every culture approaches childrearing differently, having children is an exercise in caution and patience. A middle-aged character likely has reared at least one child and launched her into the world with a mixture of concern and pride. Along the way, parents learn valuable lessons about the principles that guide him, and spend years teaching his family. A PC parent may have children growing up at home, may have older children following in his footsteps, or may have children waiting at home to see for the first time. Keep in mind that the decision to not have children is equally shaping for a character's adult years. Finally, a popular trope to explore is the advent of what society



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might call illegitimate children, from the bastard of a high born noble, to the suspicious arrival of a long-lost child come to claim his birthright.

Pep Talk: You're used to coaching your family in the basics of a chore or skill. If you have at least one rank in a skill, you can use the aid another action so long as you have line of sight to your ally and the ally you are aiding can hear you. If the skill is based on a physical ability score and you are coaching instead of physically helping, you use your Charisma modifier on the skill check instead of the normal ability modifier.

ROMANCE

Love, passion, and romance shape characters as much as anything else. A quest for true love or a relationship that crosses cultural barriers defines a character in ways nothing else can. How an aging character changes throughout this process tells an important part of that character's story, and even shapes how he interacts with future characters. He may have feelings for another that his duties don't allow him to pursue, or may have lost his first love early in life. The sort of things that happen as people pair off, mate, and age together have a profound impact. Romance should be addressed, for better or worse, in every character's story.

Jaded: You have experienced the betrayal you feel inevitably disrupts all love stories. As a result, you have hardened your heart and mind against attempts to compel or woo you. You gain a +2 morale bonus on saving throws against charm effects and effects that rely on gender or attraction to affect you.

TRAGEDY

Unforeseen events sometimes shape the way a character views the world. A tragic fire in a large city or the terror campaign of a ravaging dragon changes not only the character who survived such events, but everyone else involved. An entire town could dry up after a severe drought, or a sudden earthquake could reduce a major city to a pile of rubble occupied by orphans and helpless public servants. When real tragedy strikes, the spirit of a community is challenged. An aging character remembers how her family gave everything to help those around him survive, or how spirits were broken by relentless plague. Those experiences might inform a familiar situation when a similar calamity occurs, or might steel him against a life of lesser suffering. How a

character endures tragedy is important, as is how he perceives another person's response to hardship.

Unfazed: You've withstood great sadness and loss in life. These experiences galvanized you into a true survivor, hardening your body and mind against hopelessness and panic. You reduce any penalty from a morale or fear effect you are suffering by 1 (minimum 0).

MATURE ARCHETYPES

Character usually naturally age as they gain class levels, with healing, politics, travel, and other dynamics absorbing a significant amount of time. While some campaign might assume some aging by the time the story accounts for high-level play, few options in the game address the impact aging has on a career. The following archetypes incorporate age into their design.

DRIFTER (GUNSLINGER)

Some loners are inconvenienced by corrupt locals during their travels. Their battered firearm and intimidating stare becomes the accidental ally of more timid residents.

Humorless (Ex): At 4th level, attempts to influence or scrutinize the drifter meet with silent hostility. When any creature attempts to use the Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Sense Motive skills against the drifter, he makes an Intimidate check and can choose to use the check result as the DC of the opposing check. This replaces the bonus feat gained at 4th level.

Practiced Reflexes (Ex): At 7th level, the drifter reacts calmly and violently to anyone attempting to get the drop on him. Whenever the drifter notices with a Perception skill check a creature that is invisible or attempting to hide using the Stealth skill, he can take an attack of opportunity with a held melee or ranged weapon. If the target is invisible, the drifter can make this attack despite the creature's concealment, but suffers a miss chance normally. If the drifter hits an invisible creature, the foe's invisibility is dispelled (unless the effect is natural invisibility or aggressive actions don't dispel the effect, as with the *greater invisibility* spell). If the drifter successfully hits the hidden target, the creature's Stealth check

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fails and the creature becomes apparent to everyone who witnesses the attack. This ability replaces the startling shot deed.

Deeds: A drifter swaps a deed for the following. The new deed description includes information on which deed from the gunslinger class feature this new deed replaces.

Recovering Fire (Ex): The drifter gets his wind back by trading blows with his enemies. Beginning at 11th level, whenever he takes damage in melee from a critical hit or from other precision damage such as sneak attack, he can make an attack of opportunity as an immediate action with a loaded firearm he is wielding. This attack does not draw an attack of opportunity. If he deals hit point damage to his attacker in this way, he reduces the damage dealt by the provoking attack by 1/2 the amount of damage he deals. This replaces the expert loading deed.

GENERIAN (ALCHEMIST)

In pursuit of immortality, an alchemist might learn secrets to restore youth or steal it from his enemies.

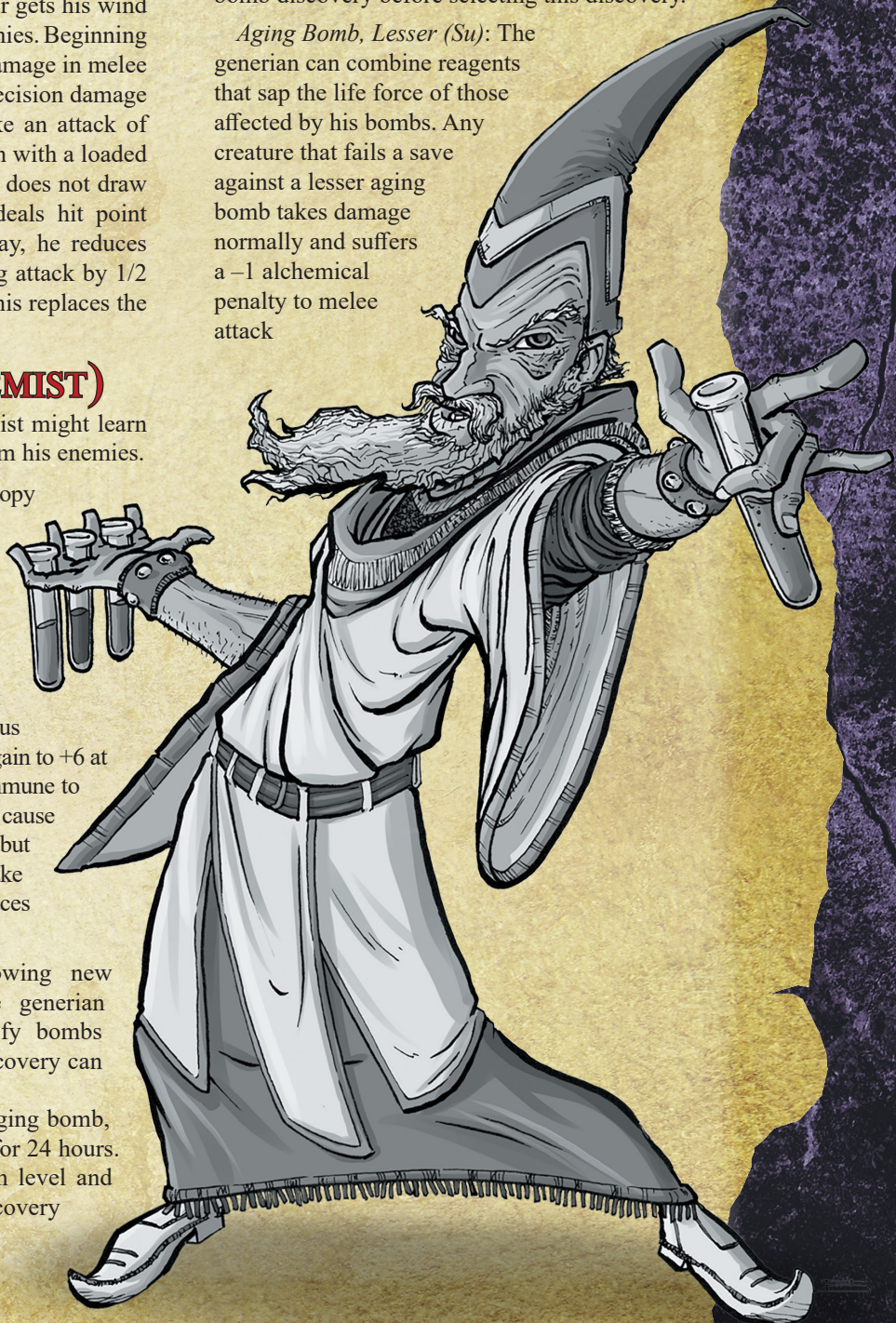
Hale (Su): The generian resists entropy and other magical forces that whither his body. At 2nd level, he gains a +2 bonus on saves to resist spells or effects that alter his age or cause damage to his physical ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution). This does not include saves against disease or poison effects. This bonus increases to +4 at 5th level, and then again to +6 at 8th level. At 10th level he becomes immune to magical aging effects and effects that cause damage to his physical ability scores, but still gains the benefits of spells that make his body younger or heartier. This replaces poison resistance.

Generian Discoveries: The following new discoveries can be taken by the generian alchemist. These discoveries modify bombs and do not stack. Only one such discovery can be applied to an individual bomb.

Aging Bomb (Su): As a lesser aging bomb, except the penalty is -2 and lasts for 24 hours. An alchemist must be at least 8th level and have the lesser aging bomb discovery before selecting this discovery.

Aging Bomb, Greater (Su): As a lesser aging bomb, except the penalty is -3 and lasts for 24 hours. At the end of this 24 hour period, the target must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC equals the bomb save DC) or the duration of the penalty becomes permanent until removed. An alchemist must be at least 12th level and have the aging bomb discovery before selecting this discovery.

Aging Bomb, Lesser (Su): The generian can combine reagents that sap the life force of those affected by his bombs. Any creature that fails a save against a lesser aging bomb takes damage normally and suffers a -1 alchemical penalty to melee attack



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rolls, damage with melee and thrown weapons, and Strength and Dexterity-based skill and ability checks. This penalty lasts for one hour. The penalties from multiple aging bombs do not stack. A successful saving throw halves the damage normally, and negates the penalty. This is a magical aging effect. This effect can be removed with a *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish* spell, with the generian alchemist's level as his caster level. An alchemist must be at least 4th level before selecting this discovery.

IDEALIST (MEDIUM)

An idealist uses his own imagination and memory to channel the best conceivable version of himself.

Spells: Remove the following spells from the idealist's spell list: 1st—*summon monster I*, 2nd—*summon monster II*, 3rd—*summon monster III*, 4th—*summon monster IV*. Add the following spells to the idealist's spell list: 1st—*sands of time*^{UM}, 2nd—*lesser age resistance*^{UM}, 3rd—*age resistance*^{UM}, 4th—*greater age resistance*^{UM}.

Self-Channeling (Su): An idealist channels his own perceptions of his capabilities, real or imagined. He might remember a day when he was exceptionally strong or conjure a mental image of what life as an archmage would be like for him. Instead of a seance, an idealist meditates on memoirs or keepsakes, and focuses his thoughts on his ultimate potential for 1 hour. Allies cannot participate in this self-channeling, but he otherwise channels a spirit (albeit his own) normally. An idealist can lose himself in this focused aspect, so he still barter influence with his perfected self. This modifies the spirit class feature.

Variant Defense (Su): Beginning at 2nd level, whenever the idealist meditates to channel his potential for the day, he can choose to change his strong saving throw to Fortitude or Reflex saves. If he chooses one of those two saves, his base Will save is reduced to a weak save to reflect his ideal focus for the coming day. Once his strong saving throw for the day is chosen, the choice cannot be changed again for 24 hours. This replaces shared seance.

Once and Future Self (Su): At 3rd level, the idealist adopts either the strength of his youth or the wisdom of his twilight years. When he meditates on his ideal potential, he chooses a single ability score. For 24 hours he gains a +1 bonus on ability checks and skill checks related to the type of ability score he chooses. Once chosen, this decision cannot be changed until he meditates on his potential the next day. At 10th level, this bonus increases to +2. This replaces haunt channeler.

Timeless Body (Su): At 18th level, an idealist no longer takes penalties to his ability scores for aging and cannot be magically aged. Age bonuses still accrue, and the idealist still dies of old age when his time is up. This replaces spacious soul.

VETERAN (FIGHTER)

Experience is the greatest teacher in combat. A veteran warrior compensates for his aging body with stoic resolve and superior tactics.

Officer Training: A veteran benefits from training that focuses on leadership and combat management more than individual martial prowess. His base attack bonus changes to $\frac{3}{4}$ his class level (like a cleric or



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rogue). He gains 4 skill points at each level instead of 2 and has strong Fortitude and Will saves. He adds Diplomacy, Perception, Sense Motive, and Stealth to his list of class skills.

Calming Presence (Ex): The veteran's long experience inures his companions to distracting emotions during combat. Beginning at 2nd level, the veteran and every ally within 30 feet reduces any penalty associated with fear or any other emotion effect by -1. The penalty decreases by an additional -1 at 10th level, and again at 18th level. This replaces bravery.

Teamwork Feats: At 2nd level, the veteran gains a bonus feat, selected from the list of teamwork feats. Whenever the veteran makes an initiative roll for combat, he can select an ally who shares a language with him. Until the end of combat, that ally gains the use any single teamwork feat the veteran fighter possesses. At 10th level, he can select an additional ally to grant his teamwork feat to. This replaces the bonus feat normally gained by a fighter at 2nd level.

STORY FEATS

The *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Ultimate Campaign* introduces the concept of story feats—feats that define a character's motives during a campaign and offer an initial benefit. Paying off the motivation over the course of the campaign improves the feat's benefit as a major milestone in the character's story increases her personal power or teaches her some valuable lesson.

Mature characters are ideal for this sort of approach to character design. An adult or middle-aged character has already survived a number of experiences throughout her adventuring career, and gleaned wisdom from long relationships and grueling trials. The following are some additional story feats to help craft and tell a fulfilling story.

ECUMENICAL (STORY)

Your life experience taught you to soften your beliefs or made you aware of commonalities among other faiths.

Prerequisite: You must have professed belief in a specific deity or set of divine principles, and had those beliefs challenged.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Diplomacy, Knowledge (religion), and Sense Motive checks when dealing with members of similar faiths (meaning deities or principles within one step of your own alignment).

Goal: Gain 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (religion), and either become friendly with a different faith, or remain friendly with members of a faith you abandoned.

Completion Benefit: The bonus on skill checks increases to +4. Additionally, choose an alignment within one step of your alignment along either the good/evil or chaos/law alignment axis. You count as your alignment or the chosen alignment for the purposes of all spells and effects, whichever is the most beneficial. If your alignment ever changes, you may select a new alignment within one step of your new alignment for this effect.

LOST SIBLING (STORY)

You were separated from one or more family members at a young age. Your desire to make your family whole drives you to follow leads and find them at any cost.

Prerequisite: You must have discovered you have a missing close relative. Despite the name of this feat, your missing family can be anyone in your immediate family: siblings, children, parents, or grandparents, or even a childhood friend close enough to be considered family.

Benefit: You become sensitive to family connections and information networks. Whenever you make a Diplomacy check to gather information, you gain a +2 bonus. If your attempt is related to your missing family, the bonus increases to +4.

Goal: You must locate and encounter your sibling, revealing your connection and establishing a rapport with them. If your family member is in peril or perished before her time, you must rescue or avenge her.

Completion Benefit: You can share spells with a personal range or target of "you" with your lost sibling so long as she is within your reach when the spell is cast. If your lost sibling is deceased or incapable of travelling with you, you can select a single ally in her place. Once this ally is chosen, he cannot be changed or replaced.

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MENTOR (STORY)

You seek to invest experience into younger apprentices the way your tutors invested in you.

Prerequisite: Wisdom 13+.

Benefit: Once per day, you can recall a helpful bit of training as an immediate action. You roll 1d6 and add the total to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw.

Goal: You must complete an adventure or mission (or series of related missions) during which you gain multiple levels. At least one companion on this journey must take a level in your favored class. Your level in this class must be higher than your mentee's level.

Completion Benefit: You gain Leadership as a bonus feat.

POLYMATH (STORY)

You excel at multiple unrelated disciplines.

Prerequisite: Levels in two or more base or prestige classes.

Benefit: You gain a second favored class, and may choose a prestige class as a favored class (gaining either +1 hit point or +1 skill point for each level in the prestige class taken). The benefits of this feat are retroactive.

Goal: Have four or more levels in three different classes.

Completion Benefit: Any favored class option that awards a fractional use of one of your class features (such as 1/6 of a rogue talent or 1/2 hp to a paladin's lay on hands result) has the fractional denominator reduced by 1 (so a rogue talent would be gained for every 5 rogue levels or you would add 1 to lay on hands results for each paladin level taken). These benefits are retroactive and may result in immediate changes to the indicated ability.

WASTED YEARS (STORY)

You intend to recapture the health and vigor of your lost youth.

Prerequisite: Constitution 13+, middle aged for your race.

Benefit: You take no ability score penalties for being middle age. Instead, once you become old, you take penalties for being middle age. When you become venerable you take penalties for being old. You still accrue aging bonuses normally and die when your time is up.

Goal: Live to old age, as determined by your race.

Completion Benefit: You become immune to harmful aging spells and effects, and only take half the normal penalties (rounded down) for being old or venerable.

MATURE MAGIC

Pathfinder has no shortage of spells and affects that manipulate the aging process. The following domains and spells assist older characters or apply the effects of aging or youth aggressively. Spells marked with an asterisk are provided in this book.

MORTALITY SUBDOMAIN

Associated Domain: Death

Replacement Power: The following granted power replaces the death's embrace ability of the Death domain.

Before Their Time (Su): You cause your enemies to suffer from painful joints and a failing heart. Whenever you channel negative energy to harm living creatures, you add your Wisdom modifier to the DC of the saving throw to reduce the damage dealt instead of your Charisma bonus. In addition, you add your Wisdom bonus to the total damage for channeled negative energy or inflict spells, before any saving throws are made.

Replacement Domain Spells: 1st—*ray of enfeeblement*, 6th—*acrogéria**, 8th—*greater age resistance^{UM}*.

VIGOR SUBDOMAIN

Associated Domain: Strength

If you are middle age or older (as determined by your race), your age penalty to Strength does not reduce your Strength when determining how much you can carry and lift, including how much weight constitutes a light, medium, heavy, or maximum load.

Replacement Power: The following granted power replaces the strength surge ability of the Strength domain.

Muscle Memory (Ex): As a standard action, you can make best use of your strength with a lifetime of training and experience. If you wield a two-handed melee weapon, you add double your Strength bonus on damage rolls. If you wield a single one-handed melee weapon, you add 1½ your Strength bonus on damage rolls with that weapon as if you wielded it in two hands. If you fight with

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two weapons, you deal your full Strength bonus on damage rolls with both weapons (instead of half damage with your off-hand weapon). You add double your Strength bonus to damage rolls made with thrown weapons. This effect lasts for 1 minute. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier.

Replacement Domain Spells: 1st—*ant haul*^{APG}, 4th—*lesser age resistance*^{UM}, 6th—*age resistance*^{UM}, 7th—*greater age resistance*^{UM}.

MATURE SPELLS

ACROGERIA

School necromancy [evil]; **Level** antipaladin 4, cleric 6, druid 6, occultist 5, psychic 6, shaman 6, sorcerer/wizard 6, spiritualist 5, witch 5

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (an eyeball with a cataract)

Range close (25 ft. plus 5 ft./2 levels)

Target one living creature (see below)

Duration 2 rounds (see below)

Saving Throw Fortitude negates (see below); **Spell Resistance** no

Your target experiences visible rapid aging. On the first turn, the subject takes 1 point of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution damage. At the beginning of its next turn, the affected creature can attempt a new saving throw to end the effect. On a failed save, it takes an additional 2 points of damage to its physical ability scores. At the beginning of the third turn, the subject can attempt a final saving throw to end the effect, with failure resulting in a final 3 points of damage (for a total of 6) to each ability score. The spell ends after this third saving throw and any effects are resolved. The target returns to its normal age slowly, healing 1 point of damage to each ability score normally.

Effects that increase the duration of *acrogeria* don't require additional saving throws or subject its target to additional ability damage beyond the third save. *Acrogeria* does not affect aberrations, dragons, oozes, or outsiders.

ACROGERIA, MASS

Level cleric 9, druid 9, occultist 6, psychic 9, shaman 9, sorcerer/wizard 9, spiritualist 6, witch 8

Target one living creature/level, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart

This spell functions like *acrogeria*, except as noted above.



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ATHANASIA

School necromancy

Level alchemist 6, cleric 8, druid 8, psychic 8, shaman 8, sorcerer/wizard 8, witch 8

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (an etched platinum urn worth 1,000 gp)

Range touch

Target one living creature

Duration permanent

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

Your target stops aging and becomes immune to aging magic. Ability score modifiers or other penalties that affect the character when the spell is cast remain in place, but new ability score modifiers and penalties associated with age do not accrue. The subject still gains positive modifiers attained by aging normally. The subject gains no special immunities to disease, poison, or other effects that might befall her during that time. The subject lives in relatively good health (barring illness or other hazards) until the maximum age for her race, at which point she dies, regardless of health or other magical aid. *Athanasia* ends if the subject's creature type permanently changes.

GREENHORN

School enchantment (compulsion)

Level bard 2, druid 3, mesmerist 2, psychic 3, shaman 3, sorcerer/wizard 3, witch 3

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (a sapling branch)

Range close (25 ft. plus 5 ft./2 levels)

Target one creature/4 levels

Duration 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

The spell's targets forget much of that they've learned in their respective fields. Each subject takes a penalty on all skill checks equal to half its total Hit Dice. If this penalty exceeds the number of ranks a subject has in the skill, the subject is considered untrained in that skill for the duration of the spell.

RESPECT FOR ELDERS

School enchantment (compulsion)

Level bard 3, cleric 4, inquisitor 3, medium 3, mesmerist 3, sorcerer/wizard 4, spiritualist 3, summoner 3, witch 4

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S, M (bark from a 100-year-old tree)

Range close (25 ft. plus 5 ft./2 levels)

Area 30-ft. radius emanation

Duration 1 hour/level

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

Affected creatures afford their elders respect, deferring to them in social matters and avoiding impertinent language. Middle aged creatures gain a +2 bonus on Intelligence-, Wisdom- and Charisma-related ability and skill checks within the spell's area of effect. Old characters gain a +4 bonus to these checks, and venerable characters gain a +6 bonus.

Creatures not defined by humanoid age categories still gain bonuses for advanced age. True dragons gain a +2 bonus on the indicated checks for each age category over juvenile. Undead, outsiders, and other dragons gain a +2 bonus for every 6 HD to a maximum of +6 at 18 HD. Constructs and mindless creatures are unaffected by *respect for elders*.

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