Runeblades

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Owen K.C. Stephens

CREDITS

Author: Owen K.C. Stephens
Editing: Rogue Genius Games
Illustration: Valery Sibrikov
Project Management and Planning: Lj Stephens
Graphic Design and Layout: Lj Stephens
Bon Vivant and Planning: Stan!

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Runeblades

"Hither came Krona, the Merciless Night and Midnight Serpent, from the drowned lands of Dom'daiel now long lost to memory. At her hip swung Shadowclaw, the soul-drinker, a blade older than the knowledge of humanity. None could say which controlled the other, but all who faced them perished."

—From the "Book of Ungol"

Runeblades are among the most powerful weapons ever forged by mortals, though the secret of their construction is nearly lost. They are empowered by ancient true runes, sigils of ineffable power that have defined the nature of reality since long before any language or society existed to try to understand them. A character may find a runeblade linked to their destiny early in their career, even have said weapon be the cause of the circumstance that makes them

The existence of runeblades is well understood by scholars and sages, but their true nature is not. They are generally considered little more than unusually powerful magic items, perhaps on the scale with lost relics and ancient artifacts. In truth runeblades are more than that in one crucial aspect. Unlike other powerful rune-empowered weapons (such as the Sword of Kings, or Soul Swords), runeblades don't just use runes, they attempt to alter them.

Each runeblade has a themed name that represents the runes that it primarily draws power from, but also has a purpose. Each purpose is a function the runeblade tries to carry out or create. The weapons are not intelligent (as most people understand that term), but instead their very nature causes them to try to alter the universe around them. This is a result of each runeblade being a warp in the fabric of runes, a lens that twists and bends the reality around it to match it's own runic existence. While runeblades are not normally sentient or sapient, they do have a drive of PURPOSE, which their innate nature attempts to enforce on both their wielder's actions, and the universe around them.

To create a runeblade you create the name first, then add a purpose. Each runeblade has an effective level, though how that is determined varies based on how the GM decided to add runeblades to a campaign (see Runeblade character Options, near the end of this product).

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Gythus tore a chunk of bread off the loaf with his teeth, but kept his eyes locked on the pulsating darkness at his companion's hip. Even in the reflection of his eyes, light by the campfire, that sword was a spindle of total darkness.

"If it's so ancient, why is called Shadowclaw? Did its makers think to foresee what language we would use today?"

One corner of Krora's mouth quirked upward slightly, but it would be too generous to call the expression a smile.

"If Shadowclaw was made by creatures capable of what we would recognize as thought, they certainly did not spare any for us or our language. But you are asking the wrong question. It is not, why does this ancient weapon carry a name we recognize in our tongue. It's why did Shadowclaw and its fellow runeblades mold our language to match its name?

"And even if we knew the answer to that question, I doubt we would like it."

—From the "Book of Ungol"

Each runeblade has a name, which is the best-possible translation of its runic existence into a common tongue. In any language the name is at best an approximation of the true moniker of a runeblade, but anyone touching it (including those struck by it) know the closest their native language can get to its true name.

Runeblade names (and thus themes and secondary powers) are drawn from either iconic names representing emblems (runic symbols to be admired and emulated, often seen as positive or intimidating traits) or foes (things to be fears and killed, with names designed to suggest the foes are doomed in the in the presence of the runeblade). Whether a runeblade is built around an emblem name or a foe name, the steps for building one are the same. You can roll randomly (roll 1d20, 1-10 emblem name, 11-20 for foe name), or just decide if you want a given runeblade to be representation and inspirational, or dreadful and threatening.

Once you know if the weapon has an emblem name or foe name, you determine a prefix and suffix, which define the runeblade's final name,

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and 2/3 of the runeblade's minor, moderate, and major powers. As a GM you can just select these, or determine each element randomly by rolling 1d6 and consulting the appropriate table. If you are a player who had the GM's permission to begin play with a runeblade as one of the Runeblade Character Options (see that section, toward the end of this product) you should propose what runeblade name and themes you would like to have as part of your character (but ultimately, the GM has final say over what runeblades are allowed into a campaign).

Once you have the runeblade's name, 2/3 of its powers are set. While the powers of each name element are set and based on the meaning of that part of the name, you can alter the actual name to match your vision of the runeblade. Each prefix and suffix has a number of suggested alternatives listed in parenthesis after the main name element (and if you wish to be truly random, you can roll 1d4 to determine which of the 4 listed name elements you use). You can also replace name elements with elements that make more sense for your campaign – if dragons don't exist but kaiju are common, having *Kaijusong* as a runeblade makes more sense than *Dragonsong*.

With any suffix, you may wish to make the name two words, or even place a possessive 's on the prefix. Thus you can have the foe runeblade name *Dragondoom*, *Dragon Doom*, or *Dragon's Doom*. The same is true of the alternate prefixes and suffixes. That same weapon could be *Drakebane*, *Sphinx's End*, *Wyrm Fall*, or any combination of those elements.

Any name element powers that allow a saving throw have a DC of 10 +1/2 runeblade's effective level + wielder's highest ability score modifier. Any that needs a caster level or effect level uses the runeblade's effective level unless it says otherwise. Any spell granted by the runeblade is a spell-like ability unless it says otherwise.

Emblem Name Prefixes

EMBLEM NAME PREFIXES		
1	Dragon	drake, sphinx, wyrm
2	God	angel, demon, devil
3	Pyre	ash, fire, flame
4	Shadow	nightmare, secret, shade
5	Tide	lake, sea, water
6	Twilight	black, dark, night

1. Dragon (drake, sphinx, wyrm)

POWERS

Minor: Select one energy damage type (acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic). When you attack with the runeblade, you can choose for half of it's damage to become this energy type.

Moderate: You gain a breath weapon of the same energy type as for the runeblade's minor power. Choose for it to be a 30-foot-cone, or a 60-foot-line. It does 1d6 damage per 3 effective levels of the runeblade, and allows a Reflex save for half damage. Once you have used this ability, you cannot do so again for one hour.

Major: Select one of the following benefits. Once this choice it made, it cannot be changed until you gain a new character level.

> *Tail:* You gain a tail. It has reach, and can be used to make natural attacks as a secondary attack. The base damage is 1d6 per 4 effective levels of the runeblade or your unarmed strike, whichever is greater. Whenever you hit a foe with your tail, you may immediately make a trip attack as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity or risking being tripped, and treat yourself as one size larger. You may make one attack of opportunity with your tail each round, in addition to any other attacks of opportunity you are allowed.
> *Wings:* You gain a 60-foot flight speed.

2. God (angel, demon, devil)

POWERS

Minor – Select 3 0-level spells from a divine spell list. You may cast these at will.

Moderate – Select two spells from the same divine spell list that have a spell level no greater than ¼ the runeblade's effective level and do not have a target of personal. You can cast these spells a total of twice per day (each spell once, or one spell twice). You can change the selected spells whenever you gain a level, or the runeblade gains an effective level.

Major – Select a spell from the same divine spell list that your moderate power spells came from, that has a spell level no greater than 1/2 the runeblade's effective level and does not have a target of personal. You can cast this spell once each day.

3. Pyre (ash, fire, flame)

POWERS

Minor: You can choose for anything you damage with the runeblade to take 1d4 fire damage the following round. Nothing takes this damage more than once per round. This lights easily ignitable materials.

Moderate: The runeblade becomes a *flaming burst* weapon.

Major: You may choose to have anything you reduce to 0 or fewer hit points with the runeblade (including things that have already been killed or broken but still have a physical form, such as a corpse) that is flammable to turn to ash and blow away, as if destroyed by a *disintegrate* spell.

4. Shadow (nightmare, secret, shade)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a competence bonus to Stealth checks equal to half the runeblade's effective level (minimum +3).

Moderate: You can a constant *nondetect* spell.

Major: You can cast *shadow walk* at will as a swift or move action. It has a maximum duration of 1 round.

5. Tide (lake, sea, water)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a swim speed of 20 feet, and attacks with the runeblade suffer no penalties to attack or damage rolls underwater.

Moderate: You gain the aquatic subtype, but can still breathe and move normally on land (if you could do so previously). Your swim speed increases to 60 feet. You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls if you are in contact with water, and a +1 bonus if your target is in contact with water. These bonuses stack.

Major: You can transform into a vortex of swirling, churning water once every 10 minutes. This ability functions identically to the whirlwind ability.

6. Twilight (black, dark, night)

POWERS

Minor: You gain low-light vision and darkvision. If you already had low-light vision, you instead gain scent which only functions in dim or no light. If you already had darkvision, add 60 feet to its range.

Moderate: You can cast *darkness* five times per day. It acts a spell with a level equal to half the runeblade's effective level.

Major: You can cast *curse of night* once per day. Your runeblade is *bane* against any creature within its own *curse of night*.

Foe Name Prefixes

FOE NAME PREFIXES		
1	Dragon	foe, horror, monster
2	God	angel, archon, demon, devil
3	Giant	king, hero, titan
4	Mage	curse, hexer, sorcery
5	Shadow	night, secret, thief
6	Sword	axe, claw, weapon

1. Dragon (foe, horror, monster)

POWERS

Minor: The first time each day you take acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic damage, you gain resistance to that energy type equal to half the effective level of the runeblade (minimum resist 1) for the rest of the day. This applies to the damage that triggers this ability.

Moderate: The runeblade is *bane* against dragons, and grants SR 10 + the runeblade's effective level against the spells of all creatures of the dragon type, and spellcasting classes with draconic or dragon in their class or archetype name, or the name of any selection they make for any class feature (such as a draconic bloodline sorcerer).

If the GM uses this name element to represent some other type of creature, this benefit can apply to creatures of that type and spellcasters linked to those creatures.

Major: The runeblade is *vorpal* against the creatures it is bane against, and it's SR applies to any supernatural abilities of such creatures.

2. God (angel, archon, demon, devil)

POWERS

Minor: You gain the benefits of *protection from evil*, but rather than alignment it applies to all outsiders and creatures able to cast divine spells.

Moderate: As a swift or move action you can choose to extend your minor benefit to all allies within 20 feet of you.

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Major: You can cast *banishment* one per day. It is considered to come from a tier 10 mythic source, and runeblade acts as a rare object or substance that the target hates, fears, or otherwise opposes.

3. Giant (King, Hero, Titan)

POWERS

Minor: You can cast *enlarge person* on yourself (regardless of your creature type) as a swift or move action three times per day.

Moderate: You can cast *reduce person* on any creature larger than yourself once an hour. The spell works on creatures of any type (rather than just humanoids), and they do not gain a bonus to Dexterity, AC, or attack rolls (due to being unusually awkward and spindly in their new size).

Major: Every time you damage a target with your runeblade, you can also target it with a *ray of enfeeblement* as a free action. (remember these penalties do not stack, only use the highest total Strength penalty for any given creature).

4. Mage (Curse, Hexer, Sorcery)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a resistance bonus to saving throws against spells and supernatural abilities equal to ¼ the runeblade's effective level (minimum +1).

Moderate: You gain SR equal to 10 + the runeblade's effective level.

Major: You gain SR equal to 12 + the runeblade's effective level. When a creature you can see and hear casts a spell on you, as a swift action or reaction you may choose to allow the spell to affect you without overcoming your SR.

5. Shadow (Night, Secret, Thief)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a competence bonus to Perception checks equal to half the runeblade's effective level (minimum +3).

Moderate: You can cast *glitterdust* as a swift or move action at will.

Major: You are always allowed a saving throw whenever an illusion or shadow spell would affect you (even if the spell does not normally allow a saving throw). On a successful save, the spell has no effect on you.

6. Sword (Axe, Claw, Weapon)

POWERS

Minor: You gain DR X/– with a value equal to ¼ the runeblade's effective level.

Moderate: You gain the first feat from this list you do not otherwise have as a bonus feat, without needing to meet its prerequisites: Improved Sunder, Greater Sunder, Sundering Strike, Relic Breaker, Smashing Style (with runeblade only).

Major: When used to make a sunder combat maneuver, the runeblade acts as though it was an adamantine weapon, it's enhancement bonus increases by +2, and it deals +2d10 damage.

Emblem Name Suffixes

EMBLEM NAME SUFFIXES		
1	-Bringer	beacon, caller, kin/kith
2	-Claw	fang, roar, talon
3	-Edge	blade, fist, might
4	-Dawn	light, morning, sun
5	-Elder	ancient, progenitor, source
6	-Song	storm, thunder, voice

1. -Bringer (beacon, caller, kin/kith)

POWERS

Minor: Once per day you can cast *summon monster* or *summon nature's ally* of a spell level no greater than half the runeblade's effective level. Regardless of what you summon, it takes an appearance similar to and gains any type and subtype appropriate to the runeblade's name (*Dragon Bringer* summons creatures that look like dragons and are of the dragon type, *God Bringer* summons outsiders that look like divine servants, *Pyre Bringer* summons creatures with the fire subtype, and so on).

   You can change what spell this ability uses once per day with 10 minutes of meditation.

Moderate: You can now use your summoning ability twice per day. You can expend two uses of this ability to cast the spell as a standard action. All the creatures you summon share one language of your choice.

Major: You can now use your summoning ability four times per day. You can expend four uses of this ability to cast the spell as a swift or move action.

2. -Claw (fang, roar, talon)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a bonus to your CMD against any combat maneuver targeting your runeblade equal to its effective level (minimum +5).

Moderate: When you attack the same target more than once with the runeblade in the same round, the runeblade gains an additional +1 enhancement bonus and does an additional +1d6 damage for each previous hit. This resets at the beginning of each round.

Major: The runeblade becomes a weapon of *speed*.

3. -Edge (blade, fist, might)

POWERS

Minor: Your runeblade counts as a force effect.

Moderate: Your runeblade functions as being made of any metal, and doing any physical damage type (bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing) for purposes of bypassing DR, ending regeneration, or triggering vulnerabilities.

Major: Once you have your runeblade in your close proximity for at least 24 hours, as a move action you can teleport your runeblade to you as if it cast *plane shift* or *greater teleport*. This ability ceases to function if some other creature qualifies to use it. Additionally the runeblade is immune to *dispel magic, greater dispel magic*, and *mage's disjunction*, and heals 1 hp per minute if damaged.

4. Dawn (light, morning, sun)

POWERS

Minor: You can cast *light* at will. It is treated as a spell with a spell level equal to half the runeblade's effective level.

Moderate: The runeblade's *light* spell is sufficient to trigger the penalties for creatures with light sensitivity and light blindness unless it is negated.

Major: The runeblade is *bane* and *ghost touch* against creatures with vulnerability or sensitivity to light (such as vampires and wraiths), as well as creatures of the dark folk, drow, kyton, nightshade, or wayang subtype.

5. Elder (ancient, progenitor, source)

POWERS

Minor: You make all Knowledge checks as if you were trained in the skill, and had it as a class skill. You gain a bonus to knowledge skills equal to 1/3 the runeblade's effective level (minimum +1).

Moderate: You are immune to fear effects. If you are already immune to fear effects, you can grant this immunity to a single creature within 30 feet of you that you can see and hear. The immunity lasts until you grant it to an additional creature.

Major: You can cast *true seeing* as a spell-like ability twice per day as a swift or move action. You no longer take penalties to abilities scores due to age, and have no maximum age.

6. -Song (storm, thunder, voice)

POWERS

Minor: You gain a competence bonus to Diplomacy checks equal to half the runeblade's effective level (minimum +3).

Moderate: The runeblade becomes an *invigorating thundering* weapon.

Major: You are immune to language-depend effects and anything that can be counter with bardic countersong or that does not affect deaf creatures. As a move action you can set your runeblade to making a special noise (often a roar or song) which gives you tremorsense with a range of 60 feet for 5 rounds.

Foe Name Suffixes

FOE NAME SUFFIXES		
1	-Death	gallows, grave, tomb
2	-Doom	bane, end, fall
3	-Master	king/queen, lady/lord, tyrant
4	-Slayer	hunter, killer, knight
5	-Smasher	crusher, hammer, smiter
6	-Wraith	echo, ghost, memory

1. -Death (gallows, grave, tomb)

POWERS

Minor: You can use your runeblade to perform a *coup de grace* as a standard action. The target must still be a legal target of a *coup de grace*.

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Moderate: When the runeblade damages a target, it must succeed at a Fortitude save or its regeneration and fast healing stop for 1d4 rounds, and it cannot benefit from magic healing for 1 round.

Major: Whenever your attack roll with your runeblade is a 15 or greater (the d20 shows a 15-20), and the attack hits and damages your target, the attack deals an additional amount of bleed damage equal to half the runeblade's effective level.

2. -Doom (bane, end, fall)

POWERS

A Doom weapon has a specific creature type (or similar category) as its antithesis, as determined by its name prefix and defined below:

1. Dragon (dragons), **2. God** (outsiders), **3. Giant** (humanoids), **4. Mage** (spellcasters and those with spell-like abilities of a spell level at least ¼ the runeblade's effective level), **5. Shadow** (undead), **6. Sword** (constructs, siege weapons, structures, traps)

Minor: Against attacks and effects from your runeblade's antithesis, you gai a +1 circumstance bonus to your AC and saving throws. This increases to +2 when the runeblade's effective level reaches 10 or higher.

Moderate: When you score a critical hit with the runeblade against its antithesis, you can force the target it to make a Fortitude save. On a failed save, you can either cause it to be unable to use any spells, spell-like abilities or supernatural abilities for 1d4 rounds, or reduce its DR and Hardness (if any) by half until it is fully healed.

Major: When you have been attacked (as defined in the invisibility spell) by your runeblade's antithesis within the past minute, as a standard action you can cast on yourself *greater restoration, regenerate,* or *heal.* If your runeblade's antithesis kills you, there is a 50% chance your runeblade casts *breath of life* on you on your next turn. This power can be used twice per day, but not more than once a minute.

3. -Master (king/queen, lady/lord, tyrant)

POWERS

Minor: You can cast *command* twice per day as a move or swift action. Any creature with an Intelligence of 3 or greater and that knows any language is subject to this, and is considered to understand the language you use for your *command.*

Moderate: You have a permanent *zone of truth* that only affects creatures damaged by your runeblade in the past day.

Major: Once per day, you can cast *demand* on a creature you damaged with your runeblade in the past 24 hours.

4. -Slayer (hunter, killer, knight)

POWERS

Minor: The runeblade is *keen.*

Moderate: The critical threat range of the runeblade (after all other increases) increases by 1.

Major: Once per day when you damage a target with your runeblade you can force it to succeed at a Fortitude save or die. This is a death effect.

5. -Smasher (crusher, hammer, smiter)

POWERS

Minor: Your runeblade can do its normal damage type, or bludgeoning damage. If it already does bludgeoning damage, it deals extra damage equal to 1/4 the runeblade's effective level (minimum +1). Three times per day, when you do bludgeoning damage to a target with your runeblade, you can force it to attempt a Fortitude saving throw. If it fails, it is staggered for 1d3 rounds.

Moderate: When you do bludgeoning damage with your runeblade, if your attack roll exceeds the target's AC by 3 or more, you may knock it prone.

Major: You can use the combat maneuver option of the *telekinesis* spell at will. You may choose to use your Wisdom or Strength bonus (rather than Intelligence or Charisma) if you wish.

6. -Wraith (echo, ghost, memory)

POWERS

Minor: You can cast vanish as a move or swift action three times per day.

Moderate: You can cast *blink* as a move or swift action three times per day.

Major: You can cast *ethereal jaunt* as a move or swift action twice per day.

SPECIAL PURPOSE

Gythus swore as Hrulden Hel's head went flying, severed from the fat sorcerer's body by one blow of Krona's accursed weapon.

"You fool! We needed to question him."

"Oh yes, we did." Krona held Shadowclaw at full arm's length, and for the first time Gythus saw some reflection in the blade. The light flickered faintly, but the face of Hrulden Hel could be made out in the light, expression shocked, mouth agape in a silent scream.

"And I suspect he'll be much more cooperative this way."

–From the "Book of Ungol"

Each runeblade has a special purpose which grants powers in addition to its thematic powers drawn from its name elements, but also imposes an onus on the wielder. A runeblade wielder can fight this onus, but in time it nearly always wins out, at least in part, unless the wielder finds the strength to put down the blade and walk away.

When an onus calls for a saving throw to resist its compulsion, the DC of the save is 17 +1/2 the runeblade's effective level. Some actions that allow a character to avoid of fulfil such an onus note they have specific alignment descriptors, such as being described as an evil act. Undertaking such an act has the same consequences as any act of that type—a single evil act will not change your alignment, but a GM and player may need to have a conversation about a character's alignment if such actions occur regularly.

You can select an appropriate purpose that matches the runeblade's overall description, or you can roll 1d6 to determine its purpose randomly.

PURPOSE DESCRIPTIONS

TABLE: RUNEBLADE PURPOSES	
1	Gate-Crasher
2	Luck-Bender
3	Siege-Breaker
4	Soul-Drinker
5	Spell-Breaker
6	Vampiric

Each purpose, along with is powers and onus, are described below.

1. GATE-CRASHER

A gate-crasher runeblade wishes to tear down and destroy defenses. It gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls against foes that have shield or cover bonuses to AC. You lose this bonus, and take a -1 penalty to all your attack rolls, if you benefit from a cover bonus or shield bonus against an attack that misses you. The lasts until the end of your next round.

Minor: When you make sunder attacks with your runeblade, they do not provoke attacks of opportunity. If your sunder attacks already do not provoke attacks of opportunity, your successful sunder attacks deal an additional 2d10 damage.

Moderate: You can use your base attack bonus, rather than your Strength modifier, as the bonus for Strength ability checks (though not other Strength-related checks).

Major: Your runeblade ignores the hardness of structures, and of vehicles at least two sizes larger than you. Your runeblade can score critical hits against objects. If it scores a critical hit against a structure under circumstances where stress or distraction would normally prevent you from taking 10 on a skill check (such as combat), it's critical damage multiplier increases by an additional 3 multiples (from x2 to x5, or x3 to x6, for example).

Onus: If a foe has a shield, vehicle, or defensive position, the wielder must attempt to damage, disable, or remove it at least once every other round of combat. Ignoring this onus requires a Will save, with the DC increasing by 1 each time the wielder ignores it. Anytime you fulfill the onus, the DC of Will saves to resist it resets. If you successfully resist the onus, you take a -1 penalty to AC until you successfully damage a non-ally's shield, vehicle, or defensive position.

Damaging a non-ally's shield, vehicle, or defensive position for the sole purpose of removing this AC penalty is an evil act.

2. LUCK-BENDER

A luck-bender runeblade exists to see unlikely things happen. This both causes it to reward dangerous, irresponsible behavior, and (sometimes) give assistance when the wielder would normally fail at a task. The wielder may choose to invoke the runeblade as a free action at the beginning of their round as a free action. Roll 1d12. On a 1-6, the wielder gains a +1 luck bonus to all attack rolls,

skill and ability score checks, and saving throws. On a 7-9, the wielder gains no bonus. On a 10-12 the wielder takes a -1 penalty to the same rolls and checks and cannot spend a luck point from the runeblade that round.

The wielder has a pool of luck points. These reset to one luck point each day, and the pool can have a maximum number of luck points equal to ¼ the runeblades effective level (minimum 1), plus the wielder's Charisma bonus (minimum +1).

You can spend luck points using the powers of the runeblade, and gain them under specific circumstances as detailed below.

- If you have less than a 25% chance of succeeding at an action that has significant consequences if you fail (see onus, below), you gain one luck point for attempting it as long as you do not spend any luck points on the attempt.

- If you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll, skill check, or saving throw while attempting actions that have significant consequences if you fail (see onus, below), you gain 1 luck point.

- If a foe confirms a critical hit against you, you gain 1 luck point.

You can spend all current luck points to reroll any one result that is entirely random (not affected by level, ability scores, skill ranks, and so on, such as there being a 50% chance a given town has a cleric in it.)

Minor: You can spend a luck point to add 1d8-4 (minimum +0) to any skill check or ability check. You make this decision after you know your die roll total, but before you know the result of the roll.

Moderate: You can spend a luck point to add 1d8-4 (minimum +0) to any saving throw you make. You make this decision after you know your die roll total, but before you know the result of the roll. Additionally, you skill check luck bonus becomes 1d6-2 (minimum +0).

Major: You can spend a luck point to add 1d8-4 (minimum +0) to any attack roll you make. You make this decision after you know your die roll total, but before you know the result of the roll. Additionally, your saving throw luck bonus becomes 1d6-2 (minimum +0).

Onus: The owner of a luck-bender runeblade is consistently pressured to take risks. Each day if the owner does not attempt one attack roll, skill check,

or saving throw that requires a roll of 15 or better on the d20 to succeed, the maximum number of luck points available from the runeblade is reduced by 1 until the owner does attempt such a check. Such a roll must be one with real potential consequences as defined by the GM, such as when fighting a level-appropriate foe or making a check failure of which results in noteworthy damage or penalties.

A character can take needless risks to fulfill this requirement and reduce their chance of success on a check to only functioning if the roll is 15 or higher—making a fancy behind-the-back weapon attack, adding an unnecessary flip to a jump, mumbling an insult every few sentences during a negotiating, and so on. Doing so is a chaotic act.

3. Siege-Breaker

A siege-breaker runeblade exists to change the odds of an outnumbered, defensive force. It encourages bold assaults against large numbers of foes, and leaving allies and defenders behind to directly assault the heart of an opposing force. You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to AC against attack from the second and subsequent creatures each round to attack you.

Minor: You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to AC against attack from the third and subsequent creatures each round to attack you.

Moderate: When you are outnumbered by foes within 30 feet of you, and have no allies within 30 feet of you, you gain a +2 insight bonus to attack rolls and AC.

Major: As long as you are not mounted or carrying an ally, you take no AC penalty when you charge, can charge to any square able to attack your foe, can charge through difficult terrain and allies creature's spaces, and do not have to charge in a straight line. You still must end your charge within a melee attack against a foe.

When you are outnumbered by foes within 30 feet of you, and have no allies within 30 feet of you, you gain fast healing 2, and under these circumstances immediately heal a number of hp equal to a target's HD or level when you kill a foe or knock them unconscious.

Onus: If the wielder cannot attack and be attacked by multiple foes, and there is a position from which the wielder can attack and be attacked by multiple foes, the wielder must take at least a move action

each round to move toward that position. This onus can be resisted with a successful Will saving throw. If you resist this, you suffer a -1 penalty to Reflex and Fortitude saves until you do take a position where you can attack and be attacked by multiple foes.

Starting a fight with group of creatures specifically to lift the onus penalty is an evil and chaotic act.

4. Soul-Drinker

A soul-drinker runeblade takes some vital spark of animation from the soul of creatures it is used to kill. It does not drink their entire soul—their spirits can still be found as normal in the afterlife, but a crucial element of their soul that attaches them to the knowledge and concerns of the mortal realm is removed.

A creature slain by a soul-drinker runeblade cannot be turned into an undead or returned to life without a successful caster level check (DC 1 + runeblade effective level). When you gain the runeblade's minor power, this increases by +4, when you gain its moderate power by an additional +5, and when you gain its major power by an additional +5.

Minor Power: Once per day you can use *speak with dead* to ask one question of the last creature slain by the runeblade. This functions as if the creature's entire corpse was available, and you automatically share a language with the creature. If its alignment is within one step of yours it does not answer cryptically (though it is still brief and may not know the answer), and even if it receives and succeeds at a save against the effect it gives you at least a hint or clue to the question's answer.

Once you have asked a specific slain creature one question, you cannot ask it more questions at a later date using this minor power.

Moderate: As the minor power, but you receive on question per 2 effective levels of the runeblade.

Major: Once each week you can cast *speak with soul* targeting any creature you have slain with the runeblade.

Onus: If you go 7 days without killing a sentient, sapient creature with the runeblade, you suffer a -5 penalty to all skill checks until you do so. Each additional day that passes, your penalty increases by 1, to a maximum of -10.

Killing a sapient, sentient creature purely to satisfy the runeblade's onus is an evil act.

5. Spell-Breaker

A spell-breaker runeblade specifically wants to end magic effects and harm spellcasters. It gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls against any creature with spells or spell-like abilities. The wielder also gains a +1 bonus to all saving throws against spells and spell-like effects, and a -1 penalty to all other saving throws.

SPELL-BREAKER RUNEBLADE POWERS

Minor: As a full-round action you can attempt to sunder an adjacent ongoing spell effect with your runeblade by succeeding at a combat maneuver check. For any effect other than one on a creature, the CMD for the combat maneuver check is 15 plus the effect's caster level. To sunder an effect on a creature, you must succeed at a normal sunder combat maneuver against the creature's CMD + 5, ignoring any miss chance caused by a spell or spell-like ability. If successful, you suppress the effect for 1 round, or 2 rounds if you exceeded the CMD by 5 to 9. If you exceed the CMD by 10 or more, the effect is dispelled.

Moderate: You gain the Disruptive and Spellbreaker feats as bonus feats.

Major: You can cast *mage's disjunction* once per day.

Onus: If there is a spell aiding foes or harming or hindering allies, the wielder must attempt to break it if the wielder is capable of doing so. This includes if the wielder can reach a place where a spell-break attack against it is possible by running, charging, or taking a full turn of any movement form the wielder has. If the wielder cannot get within such range in a turn, they must at least take a move action to get closer to being able to do so, if that is possible. A successful Will save allows the wielder to overcome this onus, but all saving throws against all effects thereafter suffer a -1 penalty until the weapon is used in an attempt to spell-break.

Ignoring good tactics or a plan agreed upon with allies just to appease spell-breaker is a chaotic act, as is needlessly working to find a spell that aids foes or harms or hinders allies.

Alternatively a spellcaster wielding a spell-breaker runeblade can sate its desire for destroying spells by sacrificing their highest-level spell slot or prepared spell to it each day, as long as that is of a spell level at least 1/3 the wielder's character level. This is also a chaotic act.

Runeblades

6. Vampiric

A vampiric runeblade specifically wants to taste bloody wounds. It gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls against living creatures able to bleed, and a -1 penalty to attack rolls against anything else (including inanimate objects, things immune to critical hits, things without blood (or a near facsimile such as ichor) and anything specifically immune to bleeding.

VAMPIRIC RUNEBLADE POWERS

Minor: Whenever your attack roll with your runeblade is a 15 or greater (the d20 shows a 15-20), and the attack hits and damages your target, the damage dealt cannot be healed with magic healing without a successful caster level check against the runeblade's effective level.

Moderate: Whenever your attack roll with your runeblade is a 15 or greater (the d20 shows a 15-20), and the attack hits and damages your target, you recover 1d6 hit points per 5 levels of the runeblade (minimum 1d6), to a maximum number of hp equal to the damage dealt to the target.

Major: You are immune to death effects, energy drains, level drains, and bleed effects.

Onus: Once the blade is drawn, it cannot be sheathed again until it has tasted deep blood. Any successful attack made against a creature that is not an ally that does lethal damage and made to the best of the wielder's ability qualifies as deep blood. Otherwise, the wielder must cut themselves before sheathing the blade, taking maximum damage from the weapon (not counting any benefit of the wielder's own strength or abilities).

A successful Will save allows the wielder to overcome this onus, but all attack rolls made with the runeblade thereafter suffer a -2 penalty until it next tastes deep blood.

Attacking a creature just to satisfy this need, or keeping a creature as hostage or prisoner in case there is a need to satisfy it later, is an evil act.

Runeblade Powers By Level

Krona leaped back from the giant's mighty hammerblow, disappearing into a deep shadow cast by the evening sun across the old keep's ruins. Gythus clenched his teeth, and raised his shield. Despite years of partnership, even time she left his sight in a battle, he feared this was the time she would truly abandon him.

But as the misshapen King of Basalt Tor advanced on him, iron hammer the size of a tree raised about its head, Gythus saw Krona dash out from a different shadow, dozens of feet from where she disappeared, and bury Shadowclaw into the giant's ankle. Blood sprayed, and the monstrosity's skin toon on a shadowy paleness he has seen many times before. It fell to its knees, its eyes an expression of shock, and then collapsed onto its side, motionless.

Gythus marched up to the victor, and the woman who wielded it. He did not entirely lower his shield's guard.

"Since when can it do that? Carry you from shadow to shadow?"

Krona shrugged. "Just now? This month? A week? The important thing is, the Keep of Basalt Tor is ours!"

Gythus was convinced she did not include him in that declaration of plural ownership.

—From the "Book of Ungol"

A runeblade has powers defined by its name elements and purpose, and granted over time at different levels. How to determine the runeblade's level depends on which runeblade character option you select (see below), but the following table shows which powers are gained when.

A runeblade can be any weapon type, but normally finds its way into the hands of a creature able to wield it with great skill (a GM generally should make a runeblade a weapon the character receiving it is most proficient with, and allow a player taking a runeblade as part of their background to select what kind of weapon it is).

RUNEBLADE POWERS BY LEVEL

Level 1: The runeblade is a masterwork weapon, considered magic for purposes of penetrating DR, but does not give a magic enhancement bonus to attack of damage rolls.

Level 2: Minor Power from Name Prefix

Level 3: Minor Power from Name Suffix

Level 4: The runeblade becomes a *+1* magic weapon.

Level 5: When wielding the runeblade, you gain a +5 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks made to demoralize.

Level 6: Moderate Power from Name Prefix

Level 7: Moderate Power from Name Suffix

Level 8: The runeblade becomes a *+2* weapon.

Level 9: The runeblade is immune to magical effects that would not affect and artifact.

Level 10: Moderate Power

Level 11: The runeblade becomes a *+3* weapon.

Level 12: Major Power from Name Prefix

Level 13: Moderate Power from Name Suffix

Level 14: The runeblade does an additional +1d6 damage with every successful attack. This damage is multiplied normally on a critical hit.

Level 15: The runeblade becomes a *+4* weapon.

Level 16: The runeblade's bonus damage increases to +2d6.

Level 17: Major Power from Name Suffix

Level 18: The runeblade becomes a *+5 weapon*.

Level 19: Major Power

Level 20: The runeblade counts as an epic weapon for purposes of bypassing DR, and it treated as a tier 10 mythic power.

RUNEBLADE CHARACTER OPTIONS

Krona slumped in her throne, her drunken eyes wandering aimlessly through the great hall. Dancers danced, revelers drank and sang, but none of it touched her heart. Her remaining withered, liver-spotted hand rested lightly on Shadowclaw's pommel, one long, gnarled finger gently tapping on it.

With speed none expected, she leaped to her feet and swung the deadly weapon in an arc that ended a hair's breadth form the neck of a young jester, who crouched motionless in wide-eyes chock where he had been when he dared touch the weapon.

Krona's voice was a growl. "For a thousand years, this curse has found the blood of my family to serve it. And you think you can just take it? Make the horrid thing yours? Then you may have it, fool!"

There was no sounds in the hall as Krona shoved the unshining, black blade at the hapless servant, who raised his hands up and way from it, falling away from her onto his backside, scrambling to escape as quickly as he could by kicking his legs and scooting awkwardly across the floor."

"No? Don't want it after all?! Does anyone?"

The hall was silent. Krona sat once more, but slowly, in obvious pain.

"But yet, perhaps it is time. Perhaps my sentence is served. Gythus!"

The elderly man approached, alone of all those in the hall to not show open fear. His long white beard was braided, his head bald and pale as an egg."

"Yes, my queen?"

"You have found them?"

He nodded. *"Five girls, with vastly distant but true ties to your bloodline, all between the ages of 17 and 27. The first, Elrykka, is training to be an alchemis..."*

Krona silenced him with the wave of her hand.

"I shall decide what they are to be. Bring them all to me. Now."

Gythus bowed once, then turned and walked from the throne.

"Sing, damn your hides." Krona grunted. "Dance! Bring me mead!"

Runeblades

Nervously, but not without energy, the hall burst into movement again.

Krona returned to the same posture on her throne, the same finger tapping the ebony pommel.

"Or, I suppose You shall decide what they are to be, Old Devil. One of them, anywise."

*–From the "*Book of Ungol*"*

Runeblades are similar enough to the *Sword of Kings* and *Soul Swords* (see the eponymous books describing those weapons) to use the same methods of determining its effective level as those runic weapons do. However, runeblades are also classically an integral part of a character concept from the character's origin. Whether the runeblade is an inheritance from a bygone age, a gift to the family from the gods, or is considered the true "player character," with the actual PC presented as a meat puppet, some character concepts work better if a runeblade is part of the character's class features from the jump.

And that can be done with the Runeblade Wielder archetype, designed for any Pathfinder character class.

Runeblade Wielder Archetype

If you want to allow a character to begin play with a runeblade as an integral part of their theme and class, you can use the Runeblade Wielder archetype. This archetype can be added to any pathfinder character class. It follows all the same rules for archetypes detailed in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game: Advanced Class Guide*, except in regards to how they replace the features of the applied class.

This archetype always replaces class features at one or more of the following levels: 1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, and 20th. The list of Pathfinder Roleplaying Game classes and the abilities they replace at the indicated levels is provided below. If you are a GM using Third-Party classes (and let's face it, if you're allowing a runeblade wielder archetype there's likely a lot of other stuff you've added to you campaign), use these lists as guidelines to help you determine what other classes must replace to gain a multiclass archetype.

Runeblade Class Feature

You gain a runeblade at 1st level. Its form is that of a weapon of your choice that your class gives you proficiency with. It's effective level is equal to the effective level of the class you add this archetype to. If the runeblade is lost or destroyed, it somehow returns to your or is rebuilt when you next gain a level, or 91 days later, whichever comes first.

Powers Lost or Modified

If you add the runeblade wielder archetype to your character, you lose the listed abilities (generally organized by class).

ALL

No matter your class, if you take this archetype, you do not get any free traits at character creation. Instead, you have a runeblade.

ALCHEMIST

1st: mutagen, alchemist cannot select mutagen as a discovery; 3rd: bomb gained at 3rd level; 7th: bomb gained at 7th level; 12th: discovery gained at 12th level; 17th: bomb gained at 17th level; 20th: grand discovery.

ARCANIST

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: reduce the number of points in the arcanist's arcane reservoir at the start of each day by 1; reduce the number of spells the arcanist can cast per day at each spell level by 1.

BARBARIAN

1st: fast movement; 3rd: trap sense; 7th: damage reduction gained at 7th level; 12th: rage power gained at 12th level; 17th: tireless rage; 20th: mighty rage.

BARD

1st: bardic knowledge; 3rd: inspire competence gained at 3rd level; 7th: inspire competence gained at 7th level; 12th: soothing performance; 17th: lore master gained at 17th level; 20th: deadly performance.

BLOODRAGER

1st: fast movement; 3rd: blood sanctuary; 7th: damage reduction gained at 7th level; 12th: bloodline feat gained at 12th level; 17th: tireless bloodrage; 20th: mighty bloodrage.

BRAWLER

1st, 7th, 12th, 20th: martial flexibility; 3rd: maneuver training gained at 3rd level; 17th: bonus combat feat gained at 17th level.

CAVALIER

1st: challenge gained at 1st level; 3rd: cavalier's charge; 7th: challenge gained at 7th level; 12th: demanding challenge; 17th: master tactician; 20th: supreme charge.

CLERIC

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: reduce the number of domains the cleric receives by one; reduce the number of spells the cleric can prepare per day at each spell level by 1.

DRUID

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: nature sense; reduce the number of spells the druid can prepare per day at each spell level by 1.

FIGHTER

1st: bonus feat gained at 1st level; 3rd: armor training gained at 3rd level; 7th: armor training gained at 7th level; 12th: bonus feat gained at 12th level; 17th: weapon training gained at 17th level; 20th: weapon mastery.

GUNSLINGER

1st: deadeye deed and gunslinger's dodge deed; 3rd: gunslinger's initiative and either pistol whip deed or utility shot deed (gunslinger's choice); 7th: dead shot deed and startling shot deed; 12th: bonus feat gained at 12th level; 17th: gun training gained at 17th level; 20th: true grit.

HUNTER

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: reduce the number of spells the hunter can prepare per day and the number of hunter spells known at each spell level by 1.

INQUISITOR

1st: domain; 3rd: teamwork feat gained at 3rd level; 7th: judgement gained at 7th level; 12th: teamwork feat gained at 12th level; 17th: slayer; 20th: true judgement.

INVESTIGATOR

1st: trapfinder; 3rd: trap sense; 7th: investigator talent gained at 7th level; 12th: studied strike gained at 12th level; 17th: investigator talent gained at 17th level; 20th: .

KINETICIST

1st: infusion gained at 1st level; 3rd: infusion gained at 3rd level; 7th: expanded element gained at 7th level; 12th: utility wild talent gained at 12th level; 17th: infusion gained at 17th level; 20th: omnikinesis.

MAGUS

1st: greater spell combat, spell combat gained at 14th level; 3rd: magus arcana gained at 3rd level; 7th: knowledge pool; 12th: magus arcana gained at 12th level; 17th: bonus feat gained at 17th level; 20th: true magus.

MEDIUM

1st: spirit surge is only usable while channeling a marshal spirit, marshal spirit doesn't add spirit bonus to spirit surge rolls; 3rd: haunt channeler; 7th: connection channeler; 12th: spirit bonus gained at 12th level; 17th: spirit power (supreme); 20th: astral beacon.

MESMERIST

1st: mesmerist trick gained at 1st level; 3rd: touch treatment gained at 3rd level; 7th: bold stare gained at 7th level; 12th: mesmerist trick gained at 12th level; 17th: manifold tricks gained at 17th level; 20th: rule minds.

MONK

1st: bonus feat gained at 1st level; 3rd: fast movement gained at 3rd level; 7th: ki pool (ki strike's ability to treat unarmed strikes as cold iron or silver for overcoming DR); 12th: abundant step; 17th: timeless body; 20th: perfect self.

OCCULTIST

1st: reduce number of implements by 1; 3rd: focus power gained at 3rd level; 7th: focus power gained at 7th level; 12th: binding circles; 17th: focus power gained at 17th level; 20th: implement mastery.

ORACLE

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: reduce oracle level by –2 (minimum 0) when determining when the oracle learns mystery spells; reduce the number of spells the oracle can cast per day at each spell level by 1.

PALADIN

1st: detect evil; 3rd: divine health; 7th: smite evil gained at 7th level; 12th: mercy gained at 12th level; 17th: aura of righteousness; 20th: holy champion.

PSYCHIC

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: phrenic amplification gained at 1st level; reduce the number of spells the psychic can cast per day at each spell level by 1.

RANGER

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th: favored enemy; 20th: master hunter.

ROGUE

1st: trapfinding; 3rd: trap sense; 7th: sneak attack gained at 7th level; 12th: rogue talent gained at 12th level; 17th: sneak attack gained at 17th level; 20th: master strike.

RUNECASTER

(See *Master Class: Runecaster*. A runecaster with this archetype might actually represent a character forging a new runeblade for the first time in generations.)

1st: Reduce runes known 1 by at all levels, 3rd: treat runecaster level as 2 lower when determining logos class features, 7th: treat runecaster level as 4 lower when determining logos class features, 12th: no runic mastery, 17th: treat runecaster level as 6 lower when determining logos class features, 20th: no runic mastery.

SHAMAN

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: spirit's spirit animal ability; reduce the number of spells the druid can prepare per day at each spell level by 1.

SHIFTER

1st, 3rd, 7th, 17th: shifter's claws; 12th: defensive instinct gained at 12th level; 20th: final aspect.

SKALD

1st: bardic knowledge; 3rd: rage power gained at 3rd level; 7th: versatile performance gained at 7th level; 12th: rage power gained at 12th level; 17th: versatile performance gained at 17th level; 20th: master skald.

SLAYER

1st: track; 3rd: sneak attack gained at 3rd level; 7th: stalker; 12th: slayer talent gained at 12th level; 17th: slayer's advance gained at 17th level; 20th: master slayer.

SORCERER

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: reduce sorcerer level by –2 (minimum 0) when determining when the sorcerer learns bloodline spells; reduce the number of spells the sorcerer can cast per day at each spell level by 1.

SPIRITUALIST

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: shared consciousness; reduce the number of spells the sorcerer can cast per day at each spell level by 1.

SUMMONER

1st: summon monster, reduce number of points in eidolon's evolution pool by 1; 3rd: reduce number of points in eidolon's evolution pool by 1; 7th: reduce number of points in eidolon's evolution pool by 1; 12th: greater shield ally; 17th: reduce number of points in eidolon's evolution pool by 1; 20th: twin eidolon.

SWASHBUCKLER

1st: any two 1st-level swashbuckler deeds; 3rd: any two 3rd-level swashbuckler deeds; 7th: any two 7th-level swashbuckler deeds; 12th: bonus feat gained at 12th level; 17th: swashbuckler weapon training gained at 17th level; 20th: swashbuckler weapon mastery.

VIGILANTE

1st: social talent gained at 1st level; 3rd: social talent gained at 3rd level; 7th: social talent gained at 7th level; 12th: vigilante talent gained at 12th level; 17th: social talent gained at 17th level and stunning appearance; 20th: vengeance strike.

WAPRIEST

1st: major blessings, gain minor blessings at 10th level; 3rd: bonus feat gained at 3rd level; 7th: sacred armor; 12th: fervor gained at 7th level; 17th: fervor gained at 17th level; 20th: aspect of war.

WITCH

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: hex gained at 1st level; reduce the number of spells the witch can prepare per day at each spell level by 1.

WIZARD

1st, 3rd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 20th: Scribe Scroll; reduce the number of spells the wizard can prepare per day at each spell level by 1.

True Artifacts

Faferdra adjusted the heavy wait of the dratted sword once more, trying to find a comfortable position for the strap that held it over her shoulder.

"Are you sure you want that thing?"

The big northern woman smiled at the tiny woman Grayheldkin, whom she had traveled with so many miles already.

"It bought my aunt a kingdom didn't it?"

"A kingdom now in awash in blood and flames."

Faferdra shrugged. "She wasn't a very good queen. Left no heir, barely left her throne room the past few years. I'd have you to help me be better."

Grayheldkin shot her a dubious look.

"Besides," Faferdra continued as if she hadn't noticed. "It whispers to me in my sleep."

"Is that supposed to make me feel better?"

"It should! Because its whispers tell me my aunt never found it's true potential. It's great now, yes. But it could be... more."

–From the "Book of Ungol"

The runic weapons in the January 52-in-52 releases – the *Sword of Kings*, *Soul Swords*, and runeblades are among the most powerful weapons likely to fall into PC hands, but in generally they fall short of being as powerful as true artifacts. They can be boosted to minor artifact status by just giving them their 15th-20th level powers without requiring a character to pay any price for that benefit. But if you want to take them to the next step of true artifacts, you may wish to combine two such weapons, and then add the general guidelines for artifacts (which may be indestructible, or only have one way they can be destroyed, be beyond the effect of any mortal spell, weapon, or ability and so on).

You can also create a rock-paper-scissors situation if you wish. The *Sword of Kings* might be beyond the power of any other item... except the rune-warping purpose of runeblades. Runeblades, in turn, can ignore the effects of nearly every device and item, but are themselves subject to the soul-fueled power of *Soul Swords*. *Soul Swords* can survive and recover from nearly any damage or effect, except the might of the *Sword of Kings*.

This is a purely narrative choice on the GM's part, but it's a fun way to add some depth and potential plot concerns to a campaign that use these powerful weapons, and can lead to its own narrative possibilities if the players decide they must seek one such weapon to deal with another.

52-IN-52