ALCHEMY! REVIEWS! ALIGNMENT! POLITICS!

ISSUE 1 SEP . '06 AMPAIGN UILDER'S UIDE

A COMMUNITY-WRITTEN E-ZINE FOR OGL GAMING



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STAFF CREDITS

Publisher: The Campaign Builder's Guild Editor-in-Chief: Elven Doritos Associate Editor: Natural 20 Graphic Designer: E.W. Morton

Contributing Authors: R.D. Heesen, Ishmayl, Jon A. Roberson, Witchhunt

Contributing Artists: Iron Swan Press Cover Art: Elven Doritos Campaign Builder's Guide #1 September 2006

⊲ Alchemy!

↓ And More!





The thing about being the host of such a communal site, with such a friendly guild, is that I very rarely have time anymore to work on the projects that got me hooked on the guild in the first place! Oh sure, every now and then I write up a few questions here and there, and update my campaign setting, but mostly I sit back and "admin." When asked to participate in this new project, even in the capacity of simply writing an opening editorial, I was thrilled. To have my name set up beside the giants of the site who contribute so much was too good a chance to pass up. I hope I do the Guide justice. With that being said...

Welcome to the premier issue of the Campaign Builders' Guide. As many of you well know, this has been a long time in the making, starting in concept as nothing more than a page-long newsletter. Its completion marks a milestone for the CBG, a culmination of articles and mechanics - written originally by your fellow "CBEers" - that can be used (hopefully) to help anyone run wonderful and epic campaigns.

This is possibly the largest and most expansive team project the CBG has worked on. Many hours of labor and love have gone into its completion, and many more hours of waiting have gone into its appearance. It had a rocky start, and it took a very long time to finally reach a point in which we could say, "There... we did it."

Eldo, as the Editor-in-Chief, has performed admirably in Xathan's wake, with a steadfast determination that can only be called true dedication. The host of other authors - including Turin, WitchHunt, and many other familiar names from the site – have written truly unique and original pieces that could easily be featured in any published magazine. And man, check out that front cover art!

With work already beginning on the second issue, it seems obvious that we have here a beginning of something amazing. Obviously it's just a step – not the first step, nor the last step – but an important step nonetheless, to moving this guild forward as one of the most prominent sites on the 'net for the building of RPG campaigns and worlds. There will be many more issues to come, and there will be many more writers, contributors, authors, artists, and editorialists, but just take a moment to soak it in here. This is the beginning, and you were here to witness it. Enjoy, and please send your thanks to Eldo, Meeps, and all the others who spent so much time and energy to get this project where it needs to be.

CHEERS! -ISH



New Alchemical Skills, Feats, and Items from the World of Altvogge by Jon A. Roberson



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"An alchemist would cut his own head off if he thought it'd make him live longer."

-- Terry Pratchett

Long the forgotten stepchild of the d20 rules, alchemy is much overdue for a visit from its fairy godmother. The following rules variants for the alchemy skill, and its associated feats, are easy to drop into any d20 campaign. Gone is the assumption that an alchemist must be of an arcane class to follow this unique path to power and riches.

The expert and loremaster classes in Altvogge gain Philosophy of Alchemy as a bonus feat, but almost any class in a d20 campaign can be retooled to include this feat and the alchemy skill as a class feature. Some parts of this article are designated as Product Identity, while the remainder of the article is Open Game Content, as detailed below. A copy of the Open Game License appears at the end of this publication.

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All this legal text makes Jack a dull boy. All this legal text makes Jack a dull boy. All this legal text makes Jack a dull boy. All this legal text makes Jack a dull boy.

• SKILLS

CRAFT (ALCHEMY) (INT; TRAINED ONLY)

One must have taken the feat, Philosophy of Alchemy, to add this skill to your list of class skills. Alchemy – whether hobby or obsession or profession – is an exacting craft. Only the highest quality of ingredients will yield the required results. A crucible appropriate to the rank of the alchemical product is necessary to succeed on a craft check.

A basic *crucible primus* will cost at least 100gp in materials and a Craft (alchemy) check with a DC of 20 to construct. Some such items are available for sale.

An *imperium vium*, needed for the creation of *Royal Road Vials and Vessels*, will cost in excess of 2,000 gp to construct, at a Craft (alchemy) DC of 30. These items are never available for sale; they must be hand-crafted.

An *adinfinitas*, the crucible needed for the creation of the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life, will cost close to 10,000 gp in materials to construct and has a Craft (alchemy) DC of 40. These items are never available for sale; they must be personally crafted.

Failing a craft Check when constructing any type of crucible ruins the materials. Nothing can be salvaged for the next attempt.

WILDCRAFT (WIS)

The wildcraft skill represents the knowledge and expertise to properly harvest plants in the wild, and to recognize when they desired properties of plants are at their height.

Domesticated plants and crops may also be wildcrafted, the skill check for such common flora being significantly lower than for wild plants.

FEATS

PHILOSOPHY OF ALCHEMY [GENERAL]

You have learned the fundamental principles of alchemy.

Prerequisites: Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Benefit: Your study of this esoteric art allows you to add Craft (Alchemy) to your list of class skills.

Normal: Without this feat, you cannot access Craft (Alchemy) as a class skill.

PHILOSOPHY OF ESSENCE OF PURITY [GENERAL]

You have learned several advanced principles of alchemy.

Prerequisite: Philosophy of Alchemy. Crafted at least one of every type of Primal and Master Ranked Alchemic items

Benefit: Your practical applications of the philosophies of alchemy allow you to begin crafting the series of Royal road alchemic vials.

Normal: Without this feat, the Royal Road is closed to you.

PHILOSOPHY OF IMMORTALITY [GENERAL]

You have learned the most advanced principles of alchemy,

Prerequisite: Philosophy of Essence Purity. You must have crafted and ingested the full series of Royal Road vials.

Benefit: You have now prepared yourself to create the Philosopher's Stone, and achieve immortality.

Normal: Without this feat, it is impossible to craft the Philosopher's Stone or the Elixir of Life.

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Alch	emical Item	S
Item	Market Price	Craft DC
Adinfinitas	n/a *	Alchemy 40
Antitoxin	50 gp	Alchemy 30
Asperliquor	200 gp	Alchemy 35
Castacidus	10 gp	Alchemy 20
Crucible Primus	n/a *	Alchemy 20
Elixir of Life	n/a *	Alchemy 100
Feracera	150 gp	Alchemy 30
Fumavirga	20 gp	Alchemy 20
Imperium Vium	n/a *	Alchemy 30
Implipedifolliculus	50 gp	Alchemy 30
Integerignus	20 gp	Alchemy 20
Lapistonitron	30 gp	Alchemy 30
Philosopher's Stone	n/a *	Alchemy 75
Poculumplenum	275 gp	Alchemy 20
Solavirgus	2 gp	Alchemy 30
Urramulus	1 gp	Alchemy 20
Vessel Primis	n/a *	Alchemy 50
Vessel Zenith	n/a *	Alchemy 50
Vial Fautor	n/a *	Alchemy 40
Vial Princeps	n/a *	Alchemy 40
Vial Quadrons	n/a *	Alchemy 40
Vial Tertius	n/a *	Alchemy 45

* This item is not normally available for sale.

Alchemical Items

PRIMAL RANK ALCHEMY

Primal rank alchemical items each require a crucible primus to craft.

Castacidus: This alchemical corrosive liquid is found in nature in varying degrees of potency. An alchemist's acid distillation always does maximum damage.

Integerignus: Also known as "eye-eye", alchemist's fire is fairly common.

Fumavirga: The smokestick is a common alchemical product.

Urramulus: The tindertwig is one of the common alchemical products. **Poculumplenum:** This silver alchemist's cup produces pure water upon command, up to one gallon per character level per day.

MASTER RANK ALCHEMY

Master rank alchemical items each require a crucible primus to craft.

Antitoxin: This thick sweet smelling thin liquid will reverse the course of most poisons, including asperliquor.

Asperliquor: This poisonous alchemic liquid is easily recognized my its pungent metallic smell and highly reflective qualities. It is difficult to dilute.

Feracera: This polish, when put on metal, repels rust monsters. A rust monster will seek to avoid this material at all costs. In the presence of Feracera, a rust monster is considered panicked. A weapon coated in Feracera can strike a rust monster and avoid the effects of its rust special ability.

Solavirgus: The ubiquitous sunrod.

Implipedifolliculus: The vulgar name is the Tanglefoot bag.

Lapistonitron: The Thunderstone, as it is called by some.

ROYAL ROAD VIALS AND VESSELS

Royal Road vials and vessels each require the Philosophy of Essence Purity feat and an *imperium* vium to craft.

The Royal Road vials and vessels are part of the process of alchemical self-improvement that prepares the alchemist's body for the ultimate purifications, the Culminant Resultants.

All effects, save the damage incurred by Vial Tertius, of the vials and vessels are permanent, unless taken out of order or twice. See below for



more details about these items and their properties.

The following is the proper order in which to prepare and ingest the Royal Road Vials and Vessels:

- 1. Vial Princeps
- 2. Vial Fautor
- 3. Vial Tertius
- 4. Vial Quadrons
- 5. Vessel Primis
- 6. Vessel Zenith

Voluntarily ingesting a Royal Road vial or vessel out of the above order or ingesting the same royal road vial more than once will cancel the effects of all such vials and vessels that have already been consumed and cause damage equal to the ingester's class level x d4 (no save).

Vial Princeps (DC 40): Also called the Murderous Hawk. You gain a competence bonus of +1 on initiative, reflex saving throws, and appraise checks.

Vial Fautor (DC 40): Also called the Reborn Crow. You choose either +2 skill points, or you may transfer up to four skill points between your class skills only.

Vial Tertius (DC 45): Also called Laughing Scorpion. You gain a bonus to +4 to dexterity, and take voluntary damage of (total of class levels +2) d4.

Vial Quadrons (DC 45): Also called the Silver Swan. You gain a +4 bonus to intelligence.

Vessel Primis (DC 50): Also called the Solar Vessel of the White Queen. You receive bonuses of +2 to constitution and +2 to charisma. You gain a +2 competence bonus to craft (alchemy) and heal checks.

Vessel Zenith (DC 50): The Lunar Vessel of the Red King. You receive a +2 bonus to strength and a +2 bonus to wisdom. You gain a +2 competence bonus to craft (alchemy) and diplomacy checks.

CULMINANT RESULTANTS

Culminant Resultants require the Philosophy of Immortality feat and an *adinfinitas* to craft.

Philosopher's Stone (DC 75): This blood red stone is the size of a pea and, if swallowed, will allow you to transmutate base metals into precious metals with a Craft (alchemy) DC of 5, once per day each for silver, gold, and platinum. The Stone becomes part of your body and can only be removed by swallowing another Philosopher's Stone, which negates the effects of the original and deals a d6 worth of voluntary damage for every class level you have.

Once per day you can convert up to one pound of pure iron into a pound of silver, a pound of pure lead into a pound of gold, and a pound of pure copper into platinum. Using impure bases will make the check fail automatically.

Elixir of Life (DC 100): (Requires having ingested a Philosopher's Stone to craft.) Your current age category assignment becomes permanent, the aging process stops completely. Heal 1 hit point per round permanent ability, not affected by antimagic field.

Voluntarily ingesting the Elixir of Life twice, or without having previously ingested a Philosopher's Stone, deals 2d6 points of damage for every class level you have (no save).

DEFILANTS

Defilants are similar to poisons, but the victim/user of a defilant craves more of the agent that is harming him. Delay poison and neutralize poison can end the effect of a defilant, but they will not restore lost vitality/wound points or ability score damage.

Intentionally defiling oneself negates both saving throws for initial and secondary effects. A character affected by a defilant, whether

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intentionally or not, must make a Fortitude save or else become addicted to the defilant. If the character cannot obtain more of the infecting agent by the end of the slaking time then they take the Spiral damage indicated for that defilant. After taking the Spiral damage, another Fortitude Save is made. Failing this one means they must again either obtain more of defilant within the slaking time or suffer more Spiral damage. Succeeding on a Fortitude Save after taking Spiral damage ends the defilant addiction.

Crafting a defilant requires either the Wildcraft skill (detailed below) or the Alchemy skill. The specific skill and its difficulty check are noted in the statistics bloc for each defilant. A successful craft check allows you to create one dose, plus one additional dose for every four points by which you exceed the craft check.

A creature suffers from system strain if more than one dose of a defilant is introduced into their body within the slaking time.

BLAZEROOT

A slow growing spreading perennial herb, blazeroot has cylindrical roots and no true stems. The roots must be carefully harvested from the living herb, as it only reproduces by spreading its roots. A quarter of an ounce of fresh root, properly wildcrafted, makes one dose.

Type: Ingested DC 25

Damage/Consequence: Initial – 1d4 points of Wisdom damage; Secondary – 1d3 enhancement bonus to Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma.

Drift Effects: 1 point of Intelligence damage.

System Strain: 1d2 Intelligence damage, 3d6 points of vitality damage. A successful Fortitude save (DC 25) reduces the system strain damage by half, rounded down. Slaking Time: 1 day. Fortitude DC: 35 Spiral Damage: 1d4 Str, 1d4 Dex, 1d4 Con, 1d4 Int, 1d6 Wis.

Craft DC: Wildcraft DC 30 Price per Dose: 500 gp

GESHAM

Gesham, also known as Fey Jasmine, has beautiful light pink flowers. The twining stems often run under ground and these rhizomes are collected and dried to produce the Gesham defilant. Six ounces of rhizomes produce a half ounce dose. The powder produced is mixed with water and has a sweet taste.

Type: Ingested DC 15

Damage/Consequence: Initial -+4 bonus on saves against fear effects for 12 hours, +2 enhancement bonus to Constitution for 12 hours, 1d2 points of Intelligence damage; Secondary - 1d4 points of Intelligence damage.

Drift Effects: Euphoria and pain suppressant reduces damage taken by 25% for six hours. +2 Enhancement bonus to Charisma for twenty-four hours.

System Strain: 1d4 points of damage.

Slaking Time: 2 days. Fortitude DC: 12 Spiral Damage: 1d3 Con, 1d3 Wis, 1d6 Dex.

Craft DC: Alchemy DC 15. Price per Dose: 50 gp.

MEDDA

The stalks of the medda plant are weak and often lie along the ground, rarely standing up to their full eight feet in height. The stalks are prickly and pale, and the thin roots are reddish in color. The dried root powder, which is inhaled nasally, leaves a tell tale red stain on the fingers and nostrils. One ounce of root renders one eighth of an ounce dose.

Type: Inhaled DC 15

Damage/Consequence: Initial – 1d2 points of Charisma damage, 1d2 points of Intelligence damage; Secondary – 1 point Wisdom damage, 1d6 enhancement bonus to Strength for 1d6+6 hours.

Drift effects: +2 alchemical bonus to Intimidate checks for six hours.

System Strain: User/victim nauseated for 1d4 hours.

Slaking Time: 1 day. Fortitude DC: 30 Spiral Damage: 1d6 Con, 1d4 Int.

Craft DC: Alchemy DC 25 Price per Dose: 100 gp.

RISTARUE

A common weed, also known as Stinking Dragon (for the unique root shape), with a root that affords a sweet, viscid juice. Six ounces of fresh roots can be rendered into a two ounce dose of this defilant.

Type: Ingested DC 15

Initial Damage/Consequence: Initial – 1d4 points of strength damage; Secondary – 1d6 enhancement bonus to Charisma for twelve hours, 1d4 points of Wisdom damage.

Drift Effects: For twelve hours the user/victim takes a -4 penalty to Willpower saves.

System Strain: None.

Slaking Time: 7 days. Fortitude DC: 8 Spiral Damage: 1d2 Wis, 1d4 Int.

Craft DC: Alchemy DC 20 Price per Dose: 10 gp.



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VERAZLIK

These five petaled red flowers are reminiscent of the rose, save for the three inch long bluish thorns. Verazlik thorns are only a potent defilant when they are properly harvested at dusk. One Verazlik thorn, properly wildcrafted, delivers one dose. Verazlik is both euphoric and tonic.

Type: Injury DC 15

Damage/Consequence: Initial – 1d4 points of wound damage; Secondary – 1d2 points of Wisdom damage.

Drift Effects: Any damage taken for six hours is reduced by half. A slight stupor for twelve hours results in a -4 penalty to all initiative rolls.

System Strain: 1 point of Dexterity damage. 1 point of Constitution damage.

Slaking Time: 1 day. Fortitude DC: 10 Spiral Damage: 1d4 Dex, 1d2 Wis.

Craft DC: Wildcraft DC 15 Price per Dose: 7 gp.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

A Review of the Book of Exalted Deeds and the Book of Vile Darkness by WitchHunt



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There is a fair bit of conflict everywhere you look in the *Dungeons and Dragons* world, especially about alignment. People are always stating that "Lawful Good acts like this" or "Chaotic Neutral is insane" or some other nonsense that tends to build foundations for long, unresolved arguments. But a while back, two bastions of hope in the sea of uncertainty were released by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. with pretty "WARNING!" labels in the top right corner.

These two sourcebooks were fair attempts at setting the standards for how good and evil manifest, and The Book of Exalted Deeds and the Book of Vile Darkness are both published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. as part of that company's Dungeons and Dragons line of products. Wizards of the Coast and Dungeons and Dragons are both registered trademarks belonging to Wizards of the Coast.

The Book of Exalted Deeds was written by James Wyatt, Christopher Perkins, and Darrin Drader; it was published in 2003. All of the chapter headings and game elements from the Book of Exalted Deeds that are mentioned herein, as well as the book itself, are ©2003 by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

The Book of Vile Darkness was written by Monte Cook; it was published in 2002. All of the chapter headings and game elements from the Book of Vile Darkness that are mentioned herein, as well as the book itself, are ©2002 by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

The illustrations for this article are not taken from either of the books being discussed.

how the pure and the vile act. The two books were released at different times (one before the appearance of *Dungeons and Dragons version 3.5*, one after); both were greeted with mixed feelings and a brand-new Mature Forum on the Wizards of the Coast message boards to support their "adult" content.

Content was reorganized somewhat for the second of the two sourcebooks, but for the most part the two mirror each other in what the next chapter presents. These sourcebooks were the *Book of Vile Darkness* and the *Book of Exalted Deeds*.

• CHAPTER 1 NATURE OF GOOD, NATURE OF EVIL

From the beginning of the first chapters, these two books delve into the ideals of good and evil. They explain what acts are considered good in the world of the *Dungeons and Dragons* game, as well as the how and why behind their reasoning. Admittedly, if you are not well-versed in Western culture, some of these ideals may seem a little off. Topics included: Greed, Murder,



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Vengeance, Betrayal, Charity, Personal Sacrifice, and Healing, among others.

The books go on to detail ways of life and actions taken that help define alignment, as well as certain mental conditions and fetishes that may be common in one side or the other. The books then detail examples of various types of good and/or evil archetypes before straying from mirroring each other and speaking of evil locations (in the Book of Vile Darkness) and exalted adventures (in the Book of Exalted Deeds).

It is interesting to note that the Book of Vile Darkness has a small section at the start of Chapter 1 dealing with the most basic natures of good and evil in any game: the Subjective and Objective Approaches. These two different sides of the game approach drastically affect the way your campaign world appears and the way in which it is played. This is definitely one of the most useful bits in either of the two supplements, and something every gamer should consider reading.

The overall usefulness and realism of the first chapters in the Book of Exalted Deeds and the Book of Vile Darkness is iffy, however. While the earliest topics in the *Book of Vile Darkness* are very useful for defining a campaign world, and the example archetypes for villains and heroes in both books are notable, most of the material in the first chapters is dismissible. A large portion of the material that addresses good and evil deals with very subjective topics that may be thought of differently from reader to reader. That said, the books do bring up some good points, including those of good characters sometimes fighting good characters, and evil fighting evil.

There are races and deities in the *Book of Vile Darkness* that someone running a game may feel are not appropriate for his campaign, but these themes, origins, and racial twists may inspire a world builder to create something equally wicked on his own.

CHAPTER 2 VARIANT RULES

In Chapter 2 of both books we start to see more crunch. The *Book of Exalted Deeds* begins its second chapter with Channeling, while the *Book of Vile Darkness* starts off with Possession. These

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opening rules are almost identical except for the fact that Channeling's host is willing to accept another force in his body. Possession is definitely going to be a favorite for all of those out there who enjoy the notion of fiendish corruption and exorcisms in their games. Channeling brings to the table the option of truly heroic characters "merging" with higher powers to gain incredible strength and prowess to better combat the worst villains.

The second chapters of these books continue with various optional rules such as Sacrifice (neat, but more of a cinematic feature than anything), Curses (for those villains who just never give up), Diseases (for those heroes who just never give up), Heroic Sacrifice and Martyrdom (very nice effect to help make a game seem especially epic), Mercy/Prisoners/Redemption (a sort of mirror to the torture rules that appear in the Book of Vile Darkness), Sainthood (really makes the possessor of the title feel altruistic, but the limited choice of exalted feats makes it a little harder to achieve the template without losing something potentially vital to a character), and Words of Creation/Dark Speech (the opposed languages of great powers, which bestow nifty capabilities upon anyone who can actually manage to speak them). Most of these variant rules are easily adaptable to any game, but shine like the brightest of days when your adventures feature a horde of religious endeavours and holy conquests.

• CHAPTER 3 EXALTED/EVIL EQUIPMENT

These two chapters definitely have a lot more to offer in terms of numbers. The Exalted Equipment chapter mostly features new types of weapons and their effects, as well as Ravages and Afflictions (evil-targeting sicknesses that can really turn that vile cult upside down). A new type of item in the *Book of Exalted Deeds*, the Relic (an item with particularily sacred history or purpose), is also present. The Book of Vile Darkness in turn presents Torture Devices, Execution Equipment, Drugs, another list of Poisons, and various other materials that mirror Chapter 3 of the Book of Exalted Deeds. These materials each come with their own rules for use, just in case your players are ever hung or crucified.

These chapters are among the more useful chapters in the two book because it bestows material that is capable of quickly being inserted into a game with little or no explanation. It is expected in most campaigns that there are already such things as holy relics and hallucinogenic plants lurking about, and Chapter 3 in each of these books give you rules for them so you don't have to come up with such rules on your own.

CHAPTER 4 FEATS

There is actually not much to say about the feats section in the *Book of Exalted Deeds* and *Book of Vile Darkness*. Both give the players and individuals running games the use of many new abilities to combat evil or corrupt good. Sacred vows, deformities, exalted buffs, spell-altering feats: most everything you could expect in the Feats chapter of a book about the holiest of the holy or the wickedest of the wicked is present.

I will say, however, that there are several feats in the Book of Exalted Deeds that must be praised. The series of Vow feats add a new perspective to the game, and in the case of Vow of Poverty, the effects are extreme. A character who possesses any of these feats is in for a very different gaming experience. All of these feats require that some part of "normal" gaming be given up - be it the types of creatures that you may assault, the freedom from orders from superiors, or even the wealth and weaponry that many adventurers collect in the course of their careers. In return a character is granted many benefits that can help fill the newlyopened gaps in a character sheet; but even so, adventures change a good deal when one or more players take one of these Vows.



Many prestige classes are to be found in the fifth chapters of these two sourcebooks. Countless new paths are present for players and NPCs alike to pursue. But there is a problem: most paths are too specific to be instantly usable. They owe allegiance to very individual areas or conditions, or greater powers, be they deities, angels, or fiends. Prestige classes such as the Warrior of Darkness, Cancer Mage, Demonologist, Anointed Knight, Exalted Arcanist, and the Risen Martyr are not bound to any world-specific power, and are easily adapted to most campaigns. If you have the perfect place for others of the presented prestige classes, though, there is no saying you cannot modify them to fit your needs. There are many such classes with powers that may fit different unholy or pure organizations or circles of worship. Overall, this chapter is best for someone who is running a game that is short on a number of religiously-based prestige classes and organizations for the players to encounter.

CHAPTER 6 MAGIC

There is not much to say about the Magic chapters of these books. Both add new domains, a plethora of new spells, and a new type of spells (Sanctified in one book, Corrupt in the other), as well as powerful (and sometimes gruesome) new items and artifacts. (The Angelwing Razor from the Book of Vile Darkness is especially terrible and is one of my favorite items in either of the books). Many of the spells, particularly the evil ones, have less-common uses for the average character and only come into play at very specific times. They are very attractive ability-wise, and appear to be well thought-out, but may be difficult to use.

CHAPTER 7 CELESTIAL PARAGONS/LORDS OF EVIL

These chapters introduce several planar figures of power that may influence a game in one way or another. Lords of Evil was one of my favorite reads, as the infernal politics interest me. Plus, the whole chapter gives great ideas for making your own planar powers for the races and monsters to worship. Within the great variety of arch devils, demon lords, and celestial paragons there are a multitude of powers, methods of worship and sacrifice, agendas, and histories that anyone who is suffering writer's block should read. A reader may even find some, if not all, of these published beings to their liking, perfect additions to their world.

CHAPTER 8 MONSTERS

Monsters appear in the final chapters of each book (though the *Book of Vile Darkness* has an appendix), and these chapters leave the reader with a large amount of crunch to add to his or her campaign. The *Book of Exalted Deeds* features a new creature type (Deathless, which is very similar to Undead), a exemplifying new template (the Saint), many new celestials (including the Throne Archon, Equinal, and Shiradi), and a host of other interesting and strange creatures (the Hollyphant, Sacred Watcher, and a series of Swarms). This section is vital to giving the heavens new warriors to battle the evils that can be found in the *Book of Vile Darkness*.

The Book of Vile Darkness also brings many effective additions to the table. It includes new, creepy demons and devils like the Shadow Demon (that can be used to strike fear into the players), Kythons (evil reptile-like creatures bred to kill and eat), and some new templates (such as the Bone Creature, Corpse Creature, and Corrupted Creature, which show the evil and hate that plague a creature, be it undead or simply defiled). There is, however, a creature called the Eye of Fear and Flame that seems as though it was written as filler and without much real interest, as its description includes mannerisms that should be expected of the majority of evil beings such as fiends and intelligent undead. This chapter, like its counterpart, is definitely a must-see for anyone who wants even more horrifyingly malignant things to assault the sanities of his players.

APPENDIX (BOOK OF VILE DARKNESS)

A feature missing from the *Book of Exalted Deeds*, the appendix features discussions on evil players, evil campaigns, and conflicts between evil characters and evil and good characters. Inevitably, someone running a game is going to want to see information on topics such as these, and the appendix helps those game masters along somewhat when it comes to deciding how to handle such things. The appendix details difficulties parties may experience if one or more of their members are of evil alignment, methods for avoidng detection by pesky paladins or nosy priests, and things that can motivate evil characters and evil parties.

Overall Rating - 9 out of 10

The Book of Vile Darkness and the Book of Exalted Deeds are great sources to have if you are unsure on what good and evil mean to you, or if you need something to really define them in your setting and make them known to your players. Both have all manners of resources to make use of in ways you never thought you would even address before in your setting. They are definitely worth having if you have the cash, even if you don't agree with some of what either book says about the alignments with which they deal.

Can you use one without the other? Yes and no. The Book of Vile Darkness is definitely the more useful of the two overall (unless you're playing an angelhunting game, in which case they're about equal), with its large amounts of new curses and variant rules. With it, you can execute innocents, infect nations with diseases, create truly diabolical adversaries, place abhorrent curses, and torture the truth out of victims with mercilessness. Plus, it asks important questions of the game master early on to help define an entire setting quickly, and at the end gives advice on turning the campaign upside down. The *Book of Exalted Deeds* is not needed to aid the heroes in defeating these dark powers, but it certainly helps.



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An Essay on the Relations between Real World Politics and Alignment by R.D. Heesen

Like so many others, I have frequently found myself discussing alignment, be it in a discussion thread or at the gaming table. For me and my players, interpreting the ethical axis (which puts law against chaos) has given the most problems. In this short essay, I will try to give a new view on law and chaos using real-world politics. The similarities are not perfect, but the goal is to help explain law and chaos to those who are confused about it, thus making it easier for players to decide their character's ethical alignment, and for GMs to adjust it where necessary.

First of all, I state moral alignment has no connection with politics (that is, good and evil are not obviously associated with modern political views). While one may think his own favourite political party is more "good" than others, I think moral

alignment is much more personal, and a person can be good or evil regardless of his political ideas. Whether you are oppressive or altruistic has to do with ethics (and I always wondered whether the names "moral" and "ethical" for the axes are right), but not with politics.

Second, I think a definition of terms is in order. In my own little country (the Netherlands), the terms I plan to use have the meanings detailed below.

Liberal: In the Netherlands, this corresponds with a right-wing, conservative political view. Liberals are about personal *freedom*, *individualism* and personal development. They say the government should try to influence society as little as possible, and if everyone works for himself as best he can,



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the best overall outcome will be reached. The philosophical groundwork was laid by John Locke, though other philosophers have been important for liberalism as well.

Socialism: This corresponds with a left-wing, progressive political view. This is about *equal rights* for all, by evenly distributing wealth and power. The government should *actively* make certain this comes true, by distributing wealth and power itself. This is really communism in a polished form, so Karl Marx is an important figure. There are others of course, but Marx is the main philosopher behind socialism.

Now, let's take a look at the descriptions of law and chaos given in the rules. We'll look at the most



straightforward one (that is, in this theory) first. (The emphasis in the following paragraph is mine.)

"Chaos" implies FREEDOM, adaptability and flexibility. On the downside, chaos can include recklessness, resentment toward legitimate authority, arbitrary actions, and irresponsibility. Those who promote chaotic behaviour say that ONLY UNFETIERED PERSONAL FREEDOM allows people to express themselves fully and lets society benefit from the potential that its INDIVIDUALS have within them.

This clearly overlaps with the liberal view: freedom is the keyword, and the government must act as withdrawn as possible. The emphasized words and sentences in the quote also struck me as particularly liberal.

Now I will try and relate lawful characters to leftwing politicians, starting with the description of lawfulness given in the rules. (Again, the emphasis in the follow paragraph is mine.)

"Law" implies honor, trustworthiness, OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY and reliability. On the downside, lawfulness can include close-mindedness, reactionary adherence to tradition, judgmentalness, and a LACK OF ADAPTABILITY. Those who consciously promote lawfulness say that only lawful behavior creates a society in which people can DEPEND ON EACH OTHER and make the right decisions in full confidence that others will act as they should.

This is somewhat tougher to explain, but I think a socialist viewpoint includes many of these values. The fact that people must depend on each other, as stated in the above quote, corresponds to the socialist view of protecting the weak, as opposed to the liberal fend-for-yourself view. Strict governmental control, obedience to the law and an expansive set of laws are necessary parts of the socialist society. In the communist Soviet Union we also saw closed-mindedness and a lack of adaptability resulting from the planned economy, which is also mentioned in the "downsides" section of the above quote. A very important factor is conformism. A lawful character will try to conform to those around him in society; this was also a necessity for Chinese and Russian people in these countries' respective communist periods.

With freedom opposing conformism, I think we have a very good match in comparing the lawchaos axis of alignment to the left-right distinction in real-world politics. The similarities are not perfect, of course, but alignment and politics themselves aren't perfectly divided in two opposing sides. To me, this system seems very workable, and I will try to use it when new players in my campaign ask me whether their characters are lawful, neutral or chaotic. I would very much appreciate your views on this subject, as well as any reasons why you might think that the moral alignment-axis has a connection with politics, or why the alignment-politics relation should actually be reversed.

Thanks for your suggestions, R.D. Heesen

Reactions: turinthemormegil@gmail.com.

Disclaimer: I have tried as best I could to keep my own political views out of this essay. I do not say that one alignment or political point of view is superior. I just try to explain a relation between these two things I perceived. I do not intend this to become a discussion about politics, I merely try to explore the possibility of using real-world politics in my game, and if so, how they relate to the game generally, and alignment specifically.

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Open Game Content: The game definitions of chaos and law are Open Game Content, as defined in the Open Game License version 1.0a, Section 1(d), to the fullest extent permitted by law. THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NAMES

by R.D. Heesen

This article consists of two parts. First, I present a short list of non-player characters (NPCs) that your player characters (PCs) might encounter in a situation where they just talk to the first person they see ("I say to the first person that walks by..."). These characters should be used to give this random NPC that is being talked to at least a little background. Dorian and Findall are most suitably encountered on the countryside, while Gan, Kinde and Dina are likely found in a city of at least moderate size.

Second, I give you lists of names. These serve to alleviate another improvisational problem: when the PCs ask for the name of something or someone you hadn't named. Alternatively, they can serve as inspiration to name the doubtlessly numerous places and people you need to name as part of the creation of your campaign setting. I hope these will find their uses in your games.

Happy gaming!

Reactions: turinthemormegil@gmail.com.

Common Folk

DORIAN MINDO

Hum Com2 (7 hp) Str 12 Dex 12 Con 13 Int 11 Wis 12 Cha 6 Atk +2 melee (1d3+1 fists (nonlethal) or 1d6+1 pitchfork), AC 11 Skills: Handle Animal +3, Profession (farmer) +6, Ride +6

Dorian is a thirty-five year old farmer who lives on the countryside. He has been a farmer all his life. He used to have a wife (Lelia) but she died in childbirth five years ago. Dorian has five children: Germin (male, 13 years old), Fala (f, 12), Hido (m, 9), Jeena (f, 7) and Dorian (m, 5). Dorian never really got over the loss of his wife, and tries to forget his pain by working hard. With the help of his children, his farm prospers. His stock consists mainly of cows. Dorian does not take kindly to strangers; he prefers to be left alone. If you really annoy him, he sends his dogs at you. Only when you offer him a drink or when you display knowledge of cows and cow-herding is he prepared to talk.

FINDALL TOREN

Hum Exp1/Com1 (8 hp) Str 12 Dex 14 Con 9 Int 12 Wis 13 Cha 15 Atk +2 melee (1d3+1 fists (nonlethal) or 1d4+1 dagger or 1d6+1 club) or +3 ranged (1d4+1 dagger), AC 12 Skills: Appraise +5, Craft (woodworking) +6, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +2, Knowledge (history) +2, Knowledge (local) +3, Knowledge (nature) +3, Knowledge (local) +3, Knowledge (nature) +3, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +2, Listen +3, Profession (carpenter) +6, Profession (farmer) +3, Search +5, Sleight of Hand +3, Spot +3

Findall is a farmer's son who grew up in the city. His father's business did well and he was sent to the city for basic education and to learn a craft. Following his dreams and his talents, he was trained to become a carpenter. Unfortunately, his father died in a ploughing accident when Findall was sixteen. Being the eldest son, he was sent for to take over his father's farm. He is now a twentythree year old farmer, married to Gina ("one of those backwards farmer's daughters") and father of Kell (m, 1). He's not happy about his new life, but he retains his positive attitude. He'll welcome strangers to his home, especially when they can make intelligent conversation or bring news from the city. Jealousy still stings when he sees someone who has made it in the city, and he might try to steal from the PCs when given the chance.

GAN FRODOR

Hum Rog4 (18 hp)

Str 9 Dex 16 Con 11 Int 13 Wis 8 Cha 15 Atk +2 melee (1d3-1 fists (nonlethal) or 1d4-1 dagger) or +6 ranged (1d4-1 dagger), AC 13 Skills: Appraise +8, Bluff +9, Climb +6, Diplomacy +6, Hide +10, Intimidate +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +10, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +12, Spot +6 Special: sneak attack +2d6, evasion, uncanny dodge, Improved Initiative, Persuasive, Run

Gan (short for Ganimon) is a well-known beggar in this city. He claims to be thirty-one years old and live alone. He can be found at the marketplace in the morning, and in various other places in the city during the rest of the day. He always speaks kindly to any that pass, quite willing to make conversation with those who give him money (unlike most beggars). His friendly face and innocent way of making a living hide a dark secret, however. Gan leads a small criminal network that operates in the city at night (when using this plot hook, adapt the particular crime they perform to your campaign's needs: they could be responsible for a string of unsolved murders or simple thefts/robberies) and has never been caught. On the few occasions he is almost caught, he simply lies down on a bench and it will seem to the guards that he, as a beggar, has every reason to be there sleeping and has nothing to do with the crime that just happened.

KINDE DORIM

Hum Com3 (4 hp) Str 12 Dex 14 Con 9 Int 10 Wis 6 Cha 9 Atk +2 melee (1d3+1 fists (nonlethal)), AC 12 Skills: Perform (string instruments) +1, Profession (shoemaker) +4, Search +1

Kinde is a simple shoemaker in the city. He is fourty-six years old, married to Juga (42), and has ten children: Adire (f, 22), Edon (m, 21), Sine (f, 19), Dimen (m, 17), Sumen (m, 17), Badel (f, 14), Ginder (f, 12), Hude (m, 9), Jala (f, 8), Opin (m, 5). He is most likely encountered walking around the city on a shopping trip or in a tavern. He'll gladly talk to the PCs for a while, preferably about music, though he'll also share rumours if he has heard any. He tends to become quite upset about the news, be it local or global. He owns a lute and fancies himself a decent player (which he isn't). His dream is to become a famous lute player, though he is old enough to realise that's not going to happen anymore.

DINA GERES

Hum Com1 (3 hp)

Str 9 Dex 14 Con 9 Int 15 Wis 10 Cha 15 Atk -1 melee (1d3-1 fists (nonlethal)), AC 12 Skills: Diplomacy +4, Handle Animal +6, Knowledge (local) +4, Listen +4, Profession (household keeping) +4, Spot +4

Dina is twenty-one years old. She married Hindor Geres (27) almost a year ago and is two months pregnant of their first child. She doesn't care for Hindor very much: she was pressured into the marriage by her parents and even now hardly knows her husband, who is one of the most successful, and thus one of the most busy, doctors in the city. She can be found in the city on various errands, such as shopping or delivering a message to a patient of her husband. She often takes her dog Fide (m, 1) with her on such trips. She also occasionally drinks a glass of wine in a tavern when her husband is not at home for the night. She'll readily talk to anyone her age, though adventurers frighten her a little.

There's a Name for Everything

Below are common names for human males (and human females, respectively) in the focus area of the Orden's Mysteries campaign setting. They are followed (on the next page), by naming conventions for various people and palces.

Common Male Names: Ganimon (Gan), Tarongli (Tali), Eron, Prenas, Geren, Egromin (Rom), Latir.

Common Female Names: Silla, Berinis (Bes), Zarine (Zee, Zar), Vileng, Gredol, Adiel.

Na	mes of Famous NPCs
d20	Name
1	Borgannon the Strong
2	Kormindan the Old
3	Numin Kinsod the Wise
4	Tes Din Gur Lorin the Mad
5	Leddorvan the Great
6	Dève of House Chéson
7	Longin of House Dimne
8	Torin Numgadel
9	Vendin Wis
10	Kincaid Delirian
11	Durgon Hammerhand
12	Kordek Whiteblade
13	Graddon Bow-wielder
14	Kurdag Shieldbearer
15	Lottak Lutist
16	Milwë Aradin
17	Silwen Rutinin
18	Lawë Mindun
19	Morgastu of Tiron
20	Zundar of Misting

BO

	Names of Lakes	
d20	Name	
1	The [Color] Lake/Water	
2	Salda	
3	Lovton	
4	Moas	
5	Toran	
6	Nomdi	
7	Littu	
8	Domi	
9	Dustor	
10	Lartul	
11	Gimol	
12	Fistwa	
13	Fultin	
14	Pors	
15	Pruntmarg	
16	Sottinlawa (possibly Elven)	
17	Aelindos (Elven)	
18	Marinlo (Elven)	
19	Nen Mundin (Elven)	
20	Surrim (Elven)	



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N	ames of Towns/Cities
d20	Name
1	Throng
2	Boden
3	Rogamilos
4	Sakis
5	Nudan
6	Bekanno
7	Meden
8	Nelos
9	Gony
10	Yandir
11	Uden
12	Merbolsit
13	Thandris
14	Solivi
15	Tabronn
16	Xiles
17	Oberton
18	Minston
19	Tovrinton
20	Loston

	Names of Forests
d20	Name
1	The [Color] Forest
2	Wood of X
3	Fundissa
4	Grambish
5	Forwin Forest
6	Wolton Wood
7	Pondink
8	Starkwin Forest
9	Northwin Forest
10	Lingeld
11	Mas Dorton
12	Nuin Diphtul
13	Borgilanas
14	Timulanas
15	Noralanas
16	Eglantawar (Elven)
17	Taur-en-Emil (Elven)
18	Taur-en-Pendrath (Elven)
19	Dolltawar (Elven)
20	Brûnglad (Elven)

Names of Mountains	
d10	Name
1	The [Color] Mountains
2	Mountains of X
3	Rodinel
4	Dorwanian Mountains
5	Gorivere
6	Mountains of Lanors
7	Dummista
8	Khalabân (dwarven)
9	Zaddakum (dwarven)
10	Nagrand (dwarven)
the second second	<u> </u>

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