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FEBRUARY 2004

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DRAGON TALK

UNEARTHED ARCANA
It's back and on the shelves this month! If you have fond memories of the original, or if you missed it, you should check out this version. It's not a rehash of old ideas, though. *Unearthed Arcana* is chock full of new concepts and variant rules for the D&D game. Remember, the first *Unearthed Arcana* was the origin of many ideas now central to D&D—the barbarian, *beads of force,* gods for nonhumans, the *ring of shocking grasp,* and cantrips, to name a few. The new *Unearthed Arcana* promises to be full of even more innovations with variant core classes, alternative weapon proficiency rules, alternative damage rules, and new spellcasting systems!

APE SHALL NOT KILL APE
Lawgiver preserve us! Another version of *Planet of the Apes* releases this month on DVD! This time it's the 35th Anniversary Edition. This pressing boasts more special features than you can shake a club at, including three commentary tracks, outtakes, costume sketches, documentaries, and Roddy McDowall home movies. Alas, Charlton "From My Cold, Dead Hands" Heston is absent from the commentary tracks, but perhaps he's tired of watching people in monkey suits beat him up. Of course, Matt never tires of watching that. He's had the DVD on preorder for four months.

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HIGH NOON . . . TARANTINO STYLE
Haven't slaked your thirst for excessive bloodshed this month? Then prepare to be drenched by the second volume of Quentin Tarantino's film trilogy, *Kill Bill.* This time, the wholesale slaughter goes Western with Samuel L. Jackson joining Uma Thurman, Lucy Liu, Daryl Hannah, Vivica Fox, Michael Parks, and, expectedly, more of David Carradine than just his hands. The bloodbath begins February 20th.

WYRM'S TURN

FROM THE EDITOR
SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED

I have a crackpot theory that you can tell a lot about people by the actor they prefer as James Bond. It says something about how they prefer their heroes and in turn, how they'd like to see themselves. In thinking about the theme of this issue and my new role as editor-in-chief, I asked the former *Dragon* editors that I've worked with which Bond they liked best.

Dave Gross: "I want to say David Niven or George Lazenby is the best James Bond. I want to be the cool kid who makes the oddball choice, but that would be a lie. My favorite has always been Sean Connery. No matter who plays 007, we know the guy has a license to kill—but with Connery's Scottish burr, we know he's capable of unacceptable behavior. You can believe that he'll slap a woman to shut her up, let an innocent die rather than lose sight of his goal, or torture a prisoner for information. Unlike the other Bonds, Sean Connery's is actually dangerous."

Jesse Decker: "I choose Robert Redford. *Spy Game* beats the pants off of any movie in the Bond series. The Bond films' cartoon-like approach to the spy genre has never appealed to me, and there's no better evidence of its failings than the Austin Powers films. As true as the jokes aimed at 007's foibles ring in Austin Powers, there's no doubt that the James Bond character is full of holes."

Chris Thomasson: "For my money, there's no better Bond than Sean Connery. Sure, he was a hairy SOB, but Connery's Bond was suave, devious, arrogant, and athletic, and he could switch between genial party-goer to stealthy, cold-hearted sneak in an instant. Connery portrayed the perfect spy blend—shaken, not stirred—that no Bond actor since has been able to match. Sure, Dalton's Bond was more cruel, and Moore's seemed to be the biggest lady-killer, but Connery was the complete 007 package. Oh, and he has the benefit of most of the best Bond villains: Dr. No, Oddjob, Goldfinger, and various agents of Spectre."

Me? I prefer Timothy Dalton. Ian Fleming described Bond as having "dark, rather cruel looks" and as a man "with a cold and ruthless streak" but still passionate, still human. That's my favorite James Bond, the spy as Ian Fleming envisioned him: as an antihero. Come to think of it, with the exception of Flash (Ah-ah!) Gordon, all my favorite heroes dally with their dark sides. If my theory is right, that says something about me, and perhaps it also says something about where *Dragon* is headed.

With each new editor-in-chief, the magazine has changed bit by bit. I don't think the changes have been drastic or terribly dramatic, but certainly each editor brought his own style and vision to the 007 of gaming magazines.

This editorial could have been about cold sweat and blind panic. I could have talked about stress and the constant pressure to perform—but then you might think this editorial was about spies. After all, my first few days as editor-in-chief seemed as fraught with peril as any James Bond movie. Deadlines closed in from all sides, empty editorial calendars gaped open beneath my feet, and a crushing load of editing fell down upon my shoulders. Yet when things looked most bleak, I remembered that I had seen men of action in such positions before. They dodged bullets, leapt pitfalls, and took trouble on the chin—and somehow they came through it all without a spot on their suits. Of course, I'm not talking about the various versions of James Bond. I'm talking about the editors I've watched in command of the magazine you hold in your hands.

Over the past four years, I've had the privilege of working with some of the best editors in the business, and after seeing their takes on the editor-in-chief role, I'm ready to give it my own spin—just as soon as my tux gets back from the cleaners.

Matthew Sernett
Editor-in-Chief

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EXOTIC HEROES

Races of Eberron
by Mat Smith
See how the D&D races differ in EBERRON, learn about some of the setting's unique creatures, and play one of EBERRON's new PC races: the shifter!

Xenophilia
by Dean Poisso
Tired of elves? Bored with dwarves? Check out four new PC races that give your campaign character and make your PC unique.

Urban Druids
by James Jacobs
The druid class's nature gets civilized in this article presenting the urban druid. With buildings as their trees and streets as their rivers, these druids as jealously protect cultural centers as their wilderness-bound brethren guard a grove.

Truenames and Fetishes
by Phillip Greely
Words have power, and names are the key. Learn how to cast spells using the power of your truename, but beware the dangers using such power brings.

Power Components
by Jim Bishop
Cast spells with style and flair using power components. Never pay XP for spellcasting or magic item creation again!

Body of Knowledge
by Kent Purvis
Brains, bones, and blood—they're all malleable and mere playthings for the spellcasters in this article.

Beasts of the Sun
by JC Alvarez
Witches, giants, dragons, sprites, and sky spirits—all with a Central American style. Let these monsters storm out of myth and into your game.

PLUS, "Faiths of Faerûn," "DM's Toolbox," "Dungeoncraft," "Under Command," "Silicon Sorcery: D&D Heroes," "Class Acts," and more!

SCALE MAIL

READERS TALK BACK
DRAGONS, DWARVES, & A SQUID

Dragon Dreams

I've been reading *DRAGON* for years, and I just picked up issue #314. I enjoyed the previous issue, especially the "Ghost Elves" article. I can't wait to try one in a game soon. What really caught my attention in issue #314 was the heading on next month's issue—articles from the other campaign worlds. I can't wait! Please tell me COUNCIL OF WYRMS will be updated sometime soon. I'm interested in reading James Wyatt's KARA-TUR article. Hopefully he will give samurai the treatment they deserve. I remember 1st edition, when they had the kai yell at 1st level, were only surprised with a 1 on 1d6, and were immune to all types of fear. There was none of that in 3rd-Edition *Oriental Adventures.* My signature character is a 17th-level samurai of KARA-TUR that I converted over. His abilities were from 1st edition, at the DM's behest, and the rest was a more-or-less straight-over conversion. Hopefully, this article will launch a FORGOTTEN REALMS KARA-TUR setting.

I have another question: What are the chances of seeing a *DRAGON* periodical where each issue is devoted entirely to a particular setting? One issue could be all FORGOTTEN REALMS, the next could be all DRAGONLANCE, the next all RAVENLOFT, and so on. All the while, *DRAGON* runs its normal course regularly. I'm not saying this "campaign periodical" should be monthly, but just packed with enough goodies that each issue could be bimonthly or even quarterly. Give it some thought.

Vaughn Allan
Address withheld

As you might now have discovered, COUNCIL OF WYRMS didn't make it into issue #315. Keep an eye on future issues, though. We have an article in the works for next year that might suit your fancy.

James Wyatt is updating Oriental Adventures *for D&D v.3.5 in issue #318, but I don't think you'll see the samurai suped up the way you're thinking. As the designer of* Oriental Adventures *for 3rd edition, I doubt he'll be retooling the core class, but we'll see.*

As to your "campaign periodicals" concept . . . well, we like the idea, but twelve issues a year is hard enough. It's possible that a popular enough campaign might be the theme for a future issue, but at the moment, we have no such plans. One of these days, we'll get enough ducks in a row to offer PDF downloads, and campaign material compilations might be something that we explore. Until then, keep your eye out for more "Campaign Classics" articles. If enough people like the idea, you'll see it in the magazine as an irregular feature (like "Bazaar of the Bizarre" or "Campaign Components").

Matthew Sernett
Editor-in-Chief

It's a Small World After All

What happened? I go away to South Korea for five months and suddenly *DRAGON* isn't even on the Wizards of the Coast website anymore. I feel like I've been lost in the Underdark for five months and returned to discover Lloth has taken over Waterdeep. No offense to Paizo Publishing—I'm sure you're nice people; I'm just in shock.

Originally, all I wanted to do was send a quick message to the editor asking when and if Wizards might come out with a miniature *Player's Handbook*. Namely: get rid of all the images and all the text that "experienced gamers" never use, shrink the print a little bit, and pack it into something that is more pocket-sized.

I don't know about my fellow players, but I'd be willing to shell out an extra $25-$30 just for the convenience of having a handbook that is easier to carry and has "just the facts." Color co-ordinate the edges of the paper according to the chapters so we can find stuff quickly, and it

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would make a good Christmas gift.

While you're at it, make a mini-character sheet too. The standard size tends to get crumpled. I've been laminating mine and using washable fine-tipped markers on them.

Please pass this on to fellow gamers. I am curious to find out if there is a market for a "Pocket *Player's Handbook,*" and if so, can I pre-order?

Charles Moffat
Jeonju, South Korea

"Let me explain. . . . No, there is too much; let me sum up."

While you were in South Korea, some enterprising folks created Paizo in order to publish DRAGON *and* DUNGEON *as licensees. To boil it down: Wizards of the Coast was looking to streamline its focus on producing books and games, and the periodicals department at Wizards saw an opportunity to help the company do that by splitting off as a separate publisher. The magazines are still official D&D publications; each issue goes through an approval process more rigorous than the magazines went through before the transition. We play D&D and D&D miniatures with designers, editors, and other* DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *R&D folk every week, and we talk with them almost every day.* DRAGON *is no longer a house organ, but it's still the best place to get new official D&D rules and an insider's look at the gaming industry—and delivered monthly to your mailbox to boot.*

Matthew Sernett

Dark Dwarves

I've been a loyal player and DM since 1985, and I immensely enjoyed issue #313 and the editorial that mentioned some of the great classic monsters that are rarely used. I believe that duergar fall into that category. There have been almost no mention of the origins of the gray dwarves. The *Monster Manual* entry and a couple of bits in various books say that they were enslaved by illithids, just like the gith, but why hasn't there been a fuller treatment of the duergar? Mention duergar to a group of players and they'll say, "Ah, the skinny grayish dwarves." But I think they are more than that. Their cunning, spell-like abilities, and dwarven racial abilities should make them more than a match for most PC parties. Please consider doing an article in *DRAGON* for all the duergar fans out there.

Jorge Rodriguez Jr.
Address withheld

I think it's the -4 to Charisma: They're grumpy, irritable, and just not very personable. They also worship Laduguer, a "joyless god who demands constant toil." The Monster Manual *specifically states that they dress in drab clothing, and that if they wear jewelry, it is always kept dull. Not to mention that they're all bald—even the women.*

To put it bluntly: Duergar have an image problem. It's easy to make drow look good—ebon skin, ivory hair, cherry red eyes, and black leather—but imagine Drizzt Do'Duergar, and you get a short, skinny, bald man with a raggedy beard who blends in with his own clothes.

Seriously though, we'd love to print a great duergar article in DRAGON *. . . we just haven't seen one yet. Overcoming their "just like dwarves, but boring" image seems too much of a challenge.*

Matthew Sernett

Polly Want a Kraken?

I think Chris, in his issue #313 editorial, is on the right track. We don't use iconic races as much as we should, not only because they intimidate us, but also because we seek the perfect opportunity and therefore miss our chance. I think the major reason for this is the huge

number of different monsters D&D offers, with many DMs trying to find the perfect occasion for every monster. This leads to the following problems: Iconic races aren't used because the *right* moment never shows, and the PCs never get a feel for the campaign because of constant refocusing on new monsters.

I think that we have to narrow down the numbers of races in each campaign and work with that material instead. For example, give a goblin some barbarian levels and he can do the same havoc as a minotaur. This would give the positive effect that both ordinary monsters and iconic races can be the main villains to the PCs over several levels. Sometimes it's fun to put in a group of mind flayers, but the fights to remember are those with just two.

In order to succeed in this narrowing of races we need more background material. A huge effort has been made to make different prestige classes and class combos for all races, but the background is mostly forgotten. I think three races have been given a base from which a DM can build: the githyanki (*Dragon* #309), the drow (*Dragon* #298), and the yuan-ti (*Dragon* #305). So please print more of those articles.

On the question of which races I think have been forgotten, I will say the slaad and the krakens.

Knut Sahlström
Stockholm, Sweden

Issues like the ones you mention and Dragon*'s "Ecology" articles help to create a campaign with depth by providing more information about a particular creature. Of course, some monsters aren't suitable to provide a theme for a whole issue. While an issue about krakens might appeal to some folks, an in-depth look into the life of the eight-armed assassins of the deep is best as a single article.*

Rather than limiting the number of monsters in your game, try crafting the world and adventures such that a large variety of monsters exist and act in your world. Then your players' choices for adventure decide the foes they meet. After all, the perfect time for the players to fight an iconic monster like a mind flayer or dragon is when they choose to fight one (or when their choices force the monster to confront them). Remember that depth and development of monsters is great, but it's fun for players to fight something different each week.

Matthew Sernett

Variety is the Spice

Let me start by telling you how much I love your magazine! Although I've only been reading it for about a year, I have to say, your magazine is simply amazing! The art is great, and the articles are even better!

Now, I just have to comment on issue #313: I absolutely loved it! My favorite part had to be the ghost elves. That got me thinking: What about ethereal dwarves? Maybe some variant halflings would be fun too! I want to see more variant races! Another thing I'd like to see more of are new monsters. The "Elder Serpents of Set" article was also great; now I have a few more nasty variant snakes to toss at my players!

Benjamin D. Wandio
Alberta, Canada

Variant races are a lot of fun. Some people complain that there are too many kinds of elves, and they might be right, but we thought that the ghost elves were too cool an idea to pass up. We're glad you agree. If you like variant races, keep checking the pages of Dragon*. Issue #317 will have some, and we're sure to print some more. Until then, think about using templates to*

BY TONY MOSELEY

create variant races. For instance, perhaps all kobolds in your game are half-dragons.

Matthew Sernett

Echo, Whoa

I am writing to largely agree with a letter written by Max Robitzsch, published in issue #314's "Scale Mail." I have been faithfully reading (and enjoying) *Dragon* from cover to cover since buying issue #274 along with the 3rd Edition *Player's Handbook* at GenCon 2000, but . . .

I think there has been a trend lately to include new prestige classes, spells, feats, and so on at the expense of content that isn't available d20 from publishers. The most annoying issues in this regard have been #310, #311, #312, and #314.

Dragon should focus on it's strengths: more general articles about new ideas, optional rules, new ways to use existing rules, "The Play's the Thing," "DM's Toolbox," "Sage Advice," some fiction, and the all-important cartoons! In other words, the stuff you can't get anywhere else! Of course, prestige classes, spells, feats, magic items, equipment, and so on should find their way into the magazine as well, but not in such great supply.

Despite my complaints, I am still a big fan of *Dragon*, and appreciate all the work that goes into each issue. Thanks.

Brent Evanger
Geneva, IL

We talk about the "fluff vs. crunch" concept that pervades online discussion groups, but it's not an issue that dominates our decision-making process. When deciding the content that goes in the magazine, we try to strike a balance, but mainly we try to collect great articles that will make people's games more fun. After all, "fluff" (advice, idea generators, background information, fiction, cartoons) and "crunch" (feats, spells, prestige classes, monsters) aren't opposing forces. Some readers prefer some of those things over others, but preferences change with the needs of a character or campaign.

We're happy you love Dragon. *Thanks for being such a loyal reader. Stick with us for future issues; the great pendulum of gaming content is sure to swing your way again.*

Matthew Sernett

CAPTION CONTEST

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UP ON A SOAPBOX

THE SPELL GONE AWRY

THE EXPLOITS OF ROBILAR

by Rob Kuntz

The original GREYHAWK campaign had many participants, not least of which was the mighty Lord Robilar, as played by myself. Robilar's penchant: subduing dragons and sacking their lairs.

Although he preferred green dragons, Robilar sought out others. Such was the case when he subdued a large female white dragon. Having no room for it at his castle, Robilar decided to sell his prize at the City of Greyhawk.

When he found no buyer for the dragon, Robilar wracked his memory. "Ah! Perhaps the notorious Wizard of the Tower would be willing to purchase the beast."

Robilar rapped upon the wizard's front door with his guantleted hand and bellowed upwards at the second-floor balcony for several minutes. Finally, the wizard's apprentice appeared, seemingly disturbed, upon the balcony. Robilar immediately ordered the man to seek his master for dealing with him regarding the purchasing of yonder dragon. Infuriated at being dealt with in such a degrading manner, the apprentice cast *charm person* on Robilar. Unknown to the mage, Robilar always wore a *ring of spell turning*. The spell was reflected in greater part back upon the apprentice. However, both targets missed their saving throws.

As each participant now viewed their former antagonist as their most trusted and valued friend, what followed was, in Gary's eyes (who DMed this escapade), very hilarious indeed.

Warlock: "Yes I'd be willing to purchase your dragon, my good friend. Say . . . 50,000 gold? Is that enough?"

Robilar: "Tosh! You are too kind, even for a friend; and the beast is but a sorry example of its species. Say . . . 750 gold? Is that too much?"

Warlock: "Nay! Nay! Do you think it my birthday? I would never allow you to accept anything less than 55,000 gold for the frost breather, which appears to be an exemplary specimen of its kind!"

Robilar: "You must think it the anniversary of the day we met! I am an adventurer for riches, for sure, but your generosity pushes the limits even of my greed. I wish only 500 gold for the loathsome wyrm. That is fair, is it not?"

Warlock: "Certainly that price is so low as to be insulting to both of us! My master's tower is overflowing with wealth! And I do recall him mentioning many months ago that we were in need of a dragon. Take advantage of these facts, my friend, and accept the 60,000 gold I now offer you!"

At that moment, the lesser portion of the spell which had affected Robilar wore off, and as if shaking off a daydream, he responded to the apprentice's last offer by immediately agreeing to it.

Overjoyed, the apprentice turned from Robilar and hurried into the tower, shouting, "Master! Master! I have made a most splendid purchase for you!"

There were faint but sharp words exchanged and then Robilar heard, "Dolt!" followed by an audible cracking sound and then a grunt. Moments later, the Wizard of the Tower appeared upon the balcony, armed with an impressive staff and with apprentice in tow, the latter now rubbing his head and stumbling a bit.

The Wizard leaned over the railing to Robilar. "Ah, Lord Robilar. I see that your ring is still functioning." He looked sidelong at his apprentice and added, "At least for buffoons."

When it was all said and done, Robilar accepted an offer of 5,000 less than he was asking for the dragon.

Although Robilar had won this encounter, it had been close. If not for a spell gone awry in his favor, he would have lost much for his endeavor. Later he would almost lose his life and his closest associate, Otto, during an encounter where another spell went awry, but that is another story. D

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Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
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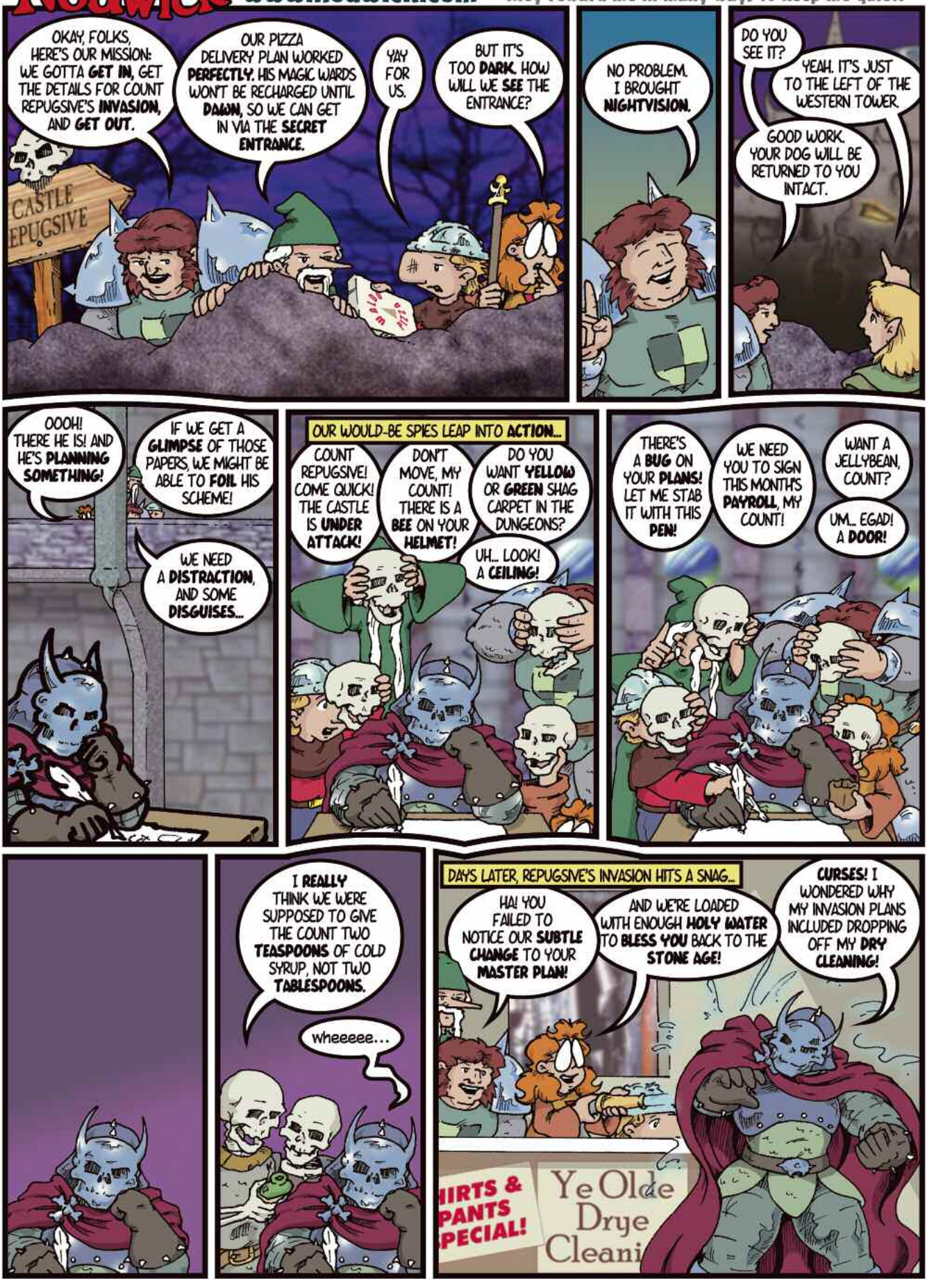
As I learn the innermost secrets of those around me, they reward me in many ways to keep me quiet.



RYMON 03

LICENSE TO KILL

Players in the Great Game

by Evan Michael Jackson • illustrated by James Ryman and Mike May

Information: Everybody wants it, and only a few know how to get it. Still, battles are won, lives are destroyed, and entire kingdoms toppled on its accuracy. For this reason, knowledge can be a commodity more precious than gold or even life, and many will not hesitate to sacrifice one, the other, or both to obtain it. There will always be those who weigh heavily the prospect of riches against risk, seeking adventure in what they call the Great Game, espionage.

Enter the spy, a dashing figure of legendary stature who lives in the shadows—the least acknowledged and most valuable of heroes. Her existence is recorded in many ancient texts, including the Bible, and the mere mention of the word "spy" calls to mind thoughts of money, intrigue, excitement, and desire—all the makings of a truly grand adventure.

Simply put, espionage is the art of acquiring information that other people don't want you to have. Spies earn their keep by obtaining that information. Operating by means fair or foul, they answer questions their employers didn't even know to ask. As information is vital to almost all endeavors of scale, the spy campaign is both a highly accessible and exciting option in any adventure setting, either as a continuing backdrop or a refreshing change of pace.

CLASSIC CHARACTER TYPES

Spies, as portrayed in popular culture, are larger-than-life figures who somehow manage to save the day at the last possible moment and look good while doing it. A spy like this is a highly perceptive individual—endlessly resourceful while simultaneously methodical, cool under pressure, and utterly convincing. She is knowledgeable on diverse subjects and capable in any situation. For this reason, the perfect spy character has well-rounded, above-average ability scores and a wide repertoire of abilities.

When deciding where to place high scores, strive for balance, with emphasis first on Charisma. Spies get by on their strength of personality. Skills like Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, and Gather Information are the bread and butter of the fantasy secret agent. However, she is continually dependent upon Wisdom-based skills like Sense Motive, Listen, and Spot to decipher clues and tie together the plots going on around her. A high Intelligence score is a must—all those diverse skills have to come from somewhere—and she's going to need Dexterity-based skills like Hide, Move Silently, and Open Lock for the sneakier side of her work. Of course, if all else fails, the value of the combat bonuses and extra hit points afforded by high Strength and Constitution scores become invaluable.

When it comes to the disposition and outlook of a spy, the alignment of the character involved in espionage will probably tend to reflect a certain moral flexibility and willingness to break the rules. Spies don't get the job done by saying please and thank you. Above all else, they see themselves as players in a game. Other people are pawns for them to move and manipulate in order to reach their goals.

Of course, there are plenty of reasons why characters of all alignments might get involved in espionage. While the personal code followed by lawful neutral characters might supply the necessary discipline for espionage, a good-aligned character could definitely be a spy—if he felt his actions served the greater good. Chaotic good characters might appreciate the opportunity to serve their cause without legal restrictions on their actions. In theory, a lawful good character might even be willing to compromise some of his ideals in order to overthrow evil, but it's a good bet such a character—in the role of the spy—will be put in positions that will test his convictions. On the other hand, evil characters with any modicum of patience will likely revel in the treachery and deviousness of their schemes, while more impulsive ones will probably rebel at the subtlety and methodical nature of the game.

DEVELOPING THE SPY CHARACTER

Spies deal in other people's secrets. Although their trade requires them to cultivate the habit of protecting any information that can be used against them, this does not mean that spies do not have secrets of their own. To the contrary, among a spy's most closely guarded secrets will be those of his own past and desires. The following are a few things you should consider when creating your spy character.

Background

Where does the spy come from? There is no textbook life story for a spy before he begins his espionage career. Spies can come from any background, as long as they have the necessary skills and an affinity for the work. Chapter 6 of the *Player's Handbook* lists some guidelines for developing a character's background.

Chiefly, you want to consider that spies are unusual individuals. That begs the question of how your character first entered his line of work? Was he born gifted on a farm, wasting away unacknowledged and unchallenged in the country until fate crossed his path with that of an imperial talent-spotter? Or perhaps your character began life as a noble, but traded his life of pomp and pageants for one with no attachments to escape an arranged marriage?

Spies are a tricky lot, and their secrets often lead to deeper, more carefully guarded secrets. Remember that choosing a life in espionage often means a complete break with the past. Does your spy ever regret the choice he made? Does he wish he could return home? Maybe he chose a life of anonymity because of some event in his past, and he can't go home because it would put himself or his family in danger. Maybe every once in a while, your master spy checks in on his family to make sure they're doing well, and to see if they ever miss him.

Alternatively, a spy character might have no life beyond his work. Maybe he was trained from birth by a secret cabal of spymasters to be the perfect agent with no personal ties to anyone or anything. Perhaps the king's intelligence service "adopts" a certain number of orphans each year for that express purpose. Again, it's up to you to take this idea a step further and see what deeper secrets can come out of this. Does your character really have no personal ties? Perhaps he doesn't remember anything or his memory was erased by magical means just before he was inducted into the cabal. Or maybe he harbors a single dark memory: the death of a loved one at the hands of a mysterious enemy, or the faces of the parents he never actually knew.

Motivations

Consider what exactly a spy gets out of her work and what that work has made of her. In the end, it is impossible to live among the shadows and not be affected by them. For the men and women whose commitment to a cause is so deep that they will do anything necessary to preserve it, the personal cost can be great. The naive and gifted patriot seduced by the thrill of espionage will learn to become detached and professional. Repeated betrayal and loss will teach her to discard all emotional attachments—they serve only to slow her down—and live in near-constant paranoia. If a spy lives long enough to reflect on the past, a lifetime of questionable choices, made while pretending to be someone else, and being used as a tool in a struggle that seems to have lost its meaning could leave her alone and empty, with little faith in anything anymore.

Individuals facing this reality come to terms with it in different ways. Most develop a certain cynicism; others lose their taste for the game in some way, although some part of them might continue to feel loyalty to the causes they once believed in. Some turn against their former masters and use their training to crusade against any perceived corruption. Still others might simply go rogue, selling their services to the highest bidder. In the end, a spy learns to suspect everyone; nothing can be taken at face value. Subjected to that kind of stress, a mind can easily begin to break down.

The life of a spy is full of difficult decisions, and great roleplayers will play these opportunities for all they're worth, even if it means the beginning of an alignment change or risking their whole career by going rogue. A spy's conscience is heavy, and many spend their whole lives struggling to deal with the consequences of their actions. This is part of the drama of a great spy adventure, and a good DM rewards players who plunge into it.

Loyalties

Finally, decide who your spy works for. Your DM might have some suggestions that work well with his campaign or rules about initial organizational affiliations, so you'll want to check with him before you decide on this part of your character's story. Does she work for the ruling class, or is she a folk hero for an underground movement? Are her organization's goals mercantile or political? Maybe she works as the right hand of a scheming noble or the king himself. Maybe she's part of a secret detachment the army maintains to quietly handle "special" problems.

Also, consider whether or not your spy shares the same goals as the organization she serves. Is she simply a mercenary who has no moral qualms regarding where her next paycheck comes from? Perhaps she joined the ranks to support a particular cause, but over time has begun to feel disillusioned or betrayed. Perhaps she was never really loyal to her masters but only joined to find out the answer to some other mystery that still haunts her.

SPY ARCHETYPES

Subject to the forces examined thus far, characters in spy stories have traditionally taken the form of various archetypes. Listed below are several of these classic character types. PC spies would be well advised to look out for these characters. You might even want to consider modeling your own agents after one or more of them.

The Artist

While most agents who live long enough to gain some experience grow to view espionage as a game, there is no spy who embraces that metaphor more deeply that the artist. His primary motivation is to play the game better than anyone else—indeed, to be the best player that ever lived. While some artists

begin their careers to serve their country or a cause, the importance of ideals fades quickly with the first taste of the adventure and thrill espionage has to offer. The game, in and of itself, becomes the end instead of the means.

This single-minded devotion demands greatness from a spy. The artist is the kind of agent who can walk into a ballroom wearing nothing but his undergarments and still walk out with the king's secret plans. Whether preplanned or thought up on the spur of the moment, the schemes favored by the artist are of such brilliance and intricacy that his exploits—when successful—frequently become legend. His strength is his versatility under extreme pressure. His weakness is his recklessness and overconfidence, which if not controlled, can be a deadly liability.

Combat: Danger is the name of the game for the artist—the more the better. He needs to acquit himself against overwhelming odds—or at least pull off an unbelievable escape.

Recommended Classes: Bard, rogue.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Arcane trickster, duelist, spymaster (*Song and Silence*).

Recommended Feats: Combat Expertise, Deceitful, Dodge, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Jack of All Trades (*Song and Silence*), Weapon Finesse.

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Forgery, Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nobility and royalty), Sense Motive, Speak Language, Use Magic Device.

Goals: The artist lives for adventure and recognition. In fact, even if he knows what to expect, the artist might not create a plan of attack in advance, just to make sure the mission is a reasonable challenge. He plays a dangerous game, but no one can argue with his results. In order to maintain his edge, the artist must constantly train to improve his skills and seek out new equipment or items to help him pull off the impossible.

The Enforcer

Situations arise in the course of an espionage mission in which those in command rely on agents who are willing to do things that make other spies uncomfortable. These agents are known as enforcers, and their main occupation is to make problems go away. Occasionally, enforcers are also called upon to use their expertise to protect someone (whether the subject is willing or not). Whether operating under deep cover or making only a brief appearance, when an enforcer is done, whatever impedes an espionage operation—be it person, place, or thing—no longer stands in the way.

Combat: More than any other type of spy, the nature of an enforcer's work involves direct confrontation. She specializes in killing and intimidation.

Recommended Classes: Barbarian, fighter, rogue.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Assassin, blackguard, dwarven defender, nightsong enforcer (*Dragon* #293), ninja of the crescent moon (*Sword and Fist*), vigilante (*Song and Silence*).

Recommended Feats: Power Attack, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Weapon Focus, Whirlwind Attack.

Recommended Skills: Hide, Intimidate, Move Silently.

Goals: Most enforcers have similar goals to professionals, although some are looking to take out a deep-seated rage on their victims. The source of this rage can come from any number of past experiences, such as the loss of a family or a history of abuse.

The Freelancer

One class of spy is not loyal to any particular state or group. This expert

of espionage sells his services to the highest bidder as an independent contractor. These mercenaries, however, learned their craft somewhere, and most were affiliated with one or more organizations at some point in their careers and left for a reason they'd usually rather not share. It is possible, however, that one freelancer might train another, creating an entirely independent spy from the start. About the only thing two freelancers have in common is that they're unlikely to have anything in common. They can come from any background, and pursue their goals through any combination of skills and abilities.

The career of a spy is rife with difficult situations compounded by difficult choices. While any connection to a spy's actions might be publicly disavowed, a former agent's training and knowledge of sensitive information can have devastating consequences if allowed to fall into enemy hands. Thus, if a rogue spy cannot be persuaded to return to the fold, he becomes a liability that must be eliminated. Such is the life of the freelancer, a spy running not only from his enemies, but also his former friends.

Combat: The freelancer might or might not possess a great deal of combat training, depending on what his specialization was before he went rogue. In any case, he will probably avoid public battles that might draw attention or tip off his former masters to his current whereabouts.

Recommended Classes: Any.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Any.

Recommended Feats: Any.

Recommended Skills: Any.

Goals: Living much of his life on the run, the freelancer tends to be motivated by survival and self-interest. A freelancer who does not get too greedy just might make a good life for himself, but he is always looking over his shoulder, making sure the past isn't creeping up on him. Like the professional, the freelancer is rarely motivated by idealistic causes and quickly learns to scorn any attachments that might make him vulnerable or jeopardize a quick escape, although he might not be averse to joining an adventuring party to earn some money or keep his head down.

The Ghost

Where the artist is obsessed with flair and heroics, the ghost is concerned only with subterfuge and anonymity. For the ghost, an assignment is most successful if it is completed without anyone ever realizing she was there. The nondescript servant lighting candles, the quiet drunk nursing her drink in the corner, or the senile old woman no one pays any mind to—all are possible covers for the ghost. She is without distinguishing characteristics of any kind and completely forgettable, existing only long enough to collect a few important details before disappearing like a shadow before the rising sun.

A ghost's tactics are methodical; caution is her primary rule of operation. If she does her job right, her exploits rarely reach the status of legend—and the ghost prefers it that way. At best, she is known in dark circles by some mysterious epithet, like "the Razor Shadow." She is a fairy tale scheming nobles tell their subordinates in order to scare them into the habit of maintaining the strictest privacy.

Combat: Direct confrontation is contrary to the methods of a ghost. When forced into a combat situation, she favors tactics that end the encounter as quickly and quietly as possible.

Recommended Classes: Bard, rogue, sorcerer, wizard.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Shadowdancer, ninja of the crescent moon (*Sword and Fist*), soulknife (*Psionics Handbook*).

Recommended Feats: Blind-Fight, Dodge, Mobility, Skill Focus (Disguise, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Spot), Silent Spell, Stealthy, Still Spell.

Recommended Skills: Balance, Climb, Disguise, Hide, Listen, Move Silently.

Goals: In her own way, the ghost might take as much delight in deceiving others as the artist. However, her main priority is to complete her missions flawlessly without being noticed. She is always on the lookout for new and more effective ways of accomplishing her task, whether with magic items or more mundane tricks of the trade.

The Magician

Despite the myriad connotations typically associated with his name, the magician might or might not have spellcasting ability. His title actually refers to the array of seemingly magical gadgets that enable him to "pull a rabbit out of a hat" when things seem their worst, much like the prestidigitators of the same name.

The use of gadgets, of course, is not exclusive to the magician. Many an artist, professional, or other spy might use specialized mechanisms to supplement their work. The epithet of magician is usually used to denote a spy who is fascinated with the operation of such devices and relies primarily on their use to carry out his missions.

Combat: Magicians rely on their gadgets in a fight, either to disable opponents or to make a quick escape.

Recommended Classes: Cleric, rogue, sorcerer, wizard.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Archmage, arcane trickster, loremaster, mystic theurge.

Recommended Feats: Any item creation feat.

Recommended Skills: Craft (alchemy, any smithing, trapmaking), Knowledge (any), Spellcraft.

Goals: When not actively engaged in an espionage mission, many magicians adventure to acquire more tools of their trade. Alternatively, they adventure to gather funds, which they will usually put toward acquiring more gadgets.

The Professional

Somewhere between the grandeur of the artist and the invisibility of the ghost is the professional. Like the artist, the professional prides herself on her ability to carry out any assignment. Thus, she spends a great deal of time focusing on expanding her own capabilities. She is more disciplined than her flamboyant colleague, however, scorning all thrill-seeking tendencies.

This does not mean that the professional hesitates to take risks when necessary. Ultimately, her priority is the mission. She never jeopardizes its completion needlessly for any reason. If reaching her objective means distracting the king's entire train with unparalleled charm and grace, the professional can and will do it. If a more subtle route is required, she is perfectly willing to become as invisible as a ghost.

Most professionals have been in the espionage game for some time, and if it was once a source of excitement, experience has taught them to be more pragmatic. Let the artists have their glory; fame can get you killed. The professional is a loner, avoiding any emotional attachments that might slow her down or compromise her judgment. Detached and lethal, she gets the job done, whatever it takes.

Combat: If combat is necessary, the professional is trained to make a clean kill. She doesn't hesitate to fight if it results in a quick resolution to her mission, unlike the ghost, who turns to combat only as a last resort.

Recommended Classes: Bard, fighter, monk, rogue.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Assassin, eldritch knight, nightsong infiltrator (*Dragon* #294), spymaster (*Song and Silence*).

Recommended Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Negotiator, Jack of all Trades (*Song and Silence*), Silent Spell, Spring Attack, Stealthy, Still Spell.

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Hide, Knowledge (any), Move Silently, Sense Motive.

Goals: The professional's main aim is to get better at what she does. New items, equipment, and spells are all effective ways of accomplishing this.

The Raven/Swallow

When it comes to achieving their objectives, spies have a wide selection of weapons at their disposal. Among the most dangerous of these tools is the passion of their opponents. Some agents, however, seem to favor this often double-edged sword as their weapon of choice.

A raven (male) or swallow (female) is a master of divining what qualities will be most attractive to a given target and then utilizing those qualities to ensnare the heart or libido of the subject. Once charmed by an agent's wiles, a target's judgment is easily influenced or distracted, allowing a raven or swallow to carry out a mission at leisure.

Some of the most scandalous of these agents are utterly ruthless, leaving a trail of broken hearts and destroyed lives behind them wherever they pass. Others are more dashing figures, leaving only smiles and the charming thrill of intrigue when they fade into the night. More than a few carry a heavy conscience over an affair that could have gone somewhere had circumstances been different. But most ravens and swallows have a hard time forming close relationships, because they feel a need to protect others from themselves, especially those they care about.

Combat: The bedchamber is the battlefield of the raven and swallow. If forced into combat, a raven or swallow would rather flee to the relative safety of a seduced victim, or flee and survive rather than stand and fight against superior combatants.

Recommended Classes: Bard, enchanter, rogue.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Duelist, spymaster (*Song and Silence*), virtuoso (*Song and Silence*).

Recommended Feats: Combat Expertise, Negotiator, Skill Focus (Bluff).

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Perform, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Speak Language.

Goals: Ironically, spies who use passion as a tool tend not to actively pursue the pleasures of the flesh, which has become devalued in their eyes. They adventure for the same reasons as the artist or the professional.

The Saboteur

One class of spy specializes in mayhem and disruption. This agent is called when an organization needs to collapse a bridge, taking the main body of an invading army with it. This expert can take out a key support in a castle wall, bringing it down and halting construction

on a key outpost, or find a way to burn half of the duke's fleet in the harbor.

Saboteurs use a number of different tactics to do their job. Sometimes they work as moles for extended periods of time within an organization, waiting for the perfect moment to wreak havoc on a large scale. Other times, they're called on for quick, in-and-out raids that don't involve cover identities. The longer a saboteur is at work in a single location, however, the more likely it is that his actions are going to get the attention of his targets. As a result, they don't tend to work at a single task for too long, unlike the raven or swallow. People tend to notice when their plans are continually thwarted by an unbelievable string of bad luck, and the results of a saboteur's work are rarely as insidious and subtle as her more socially minded counterparts.

Combat: The nature of a saboteur's work is covert, and therefore causes him to avoid confrontation whenever possible. However, the amount of time he spends behind enemy lines makes the ability to take out an opponent quickly and quietly very useful. If discovered, a saboteur probably has one or more escape routes already prepared and will make his way to friendly territory as quickly as possible where his allies can support a more direct engagement.

Recommended Classes: Monk, rogue, sorcerer, wizard.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Arcane trickster, nightsong infiltrator (*Dragon* #294), thief-acrobat (*Song and Silence*), shadowdancer.

Recommended Feats: Nimble Fingers, Skill Focus (Disable Device), Skill Focus (Craft [trapmaking]).

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Craft (alchemy, trapmaking), Disable Device, Disguise, Hide, Knowledge (architecture and engineering), Move Silently, Profession (engineer), Search.

Goals: Saboteurs are a rebellious lot. More professionally minded ones place priority on the mission, but many are angry individuals, possibly even fanatics, who are willing to unleash mass destruction in support of whatever organization they serve. Generally, all saboteurs appreciate the opportunity to make things fall apart, burn down, and when possible, blow up.

The Scout

Not all intelligence work is done in civilized areas, especially in times of war. Troop movements, supply routes, and the strength of the enemy outpost—all can be discerned through the work of covert agents specializing in wilderness-based espionage.

Scouts, the spies who garner this valuable information, carry out many different kinds of assignments, from traveling ahead of the main force to warn of impending danger, to infiltrating military camps and spying on enemy battle plans. Whenever possible, those who command troops in battle rarely proceed without first hearing the reports of as many scouts as possible.

When back at the barracks, scouts tend to be a solitary lot, keeping to themselves and associating primarily with other scouts.

Combat: Like the ghost, if a scout does her job right, her presence is never discovered by the enemy. Still, traveling from camp to camp with the army while regularly undertaking dangerous missions in the wild means that most scouts learn a thing or two about combat.

Recommended Classes: Barbarian, druid, ranger, rogue.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Darkwood stalker (*Dragon* #292), ghostwalker (*Sword and Fist*), prairie runner (*Dragon* #292), shadowdancer.

Recommended Feats: Endurance, Natural Spell (druid only), Self-Sufficient, Stealthy, Track.

Recommended Skills: Hide, Knowledge (nature), Listen, Move Silently, Spot, Survival.

Goals: Scouts adventure for the same reasons as rangers or professionals. Their career allows them to spend a great deal of time outdoors and protect their allies in the wilderness.

PC ROLES

Once you've decided on your spy type, you can think about how to play your new PC. Spies are tools of the powerful. To put an even finer point on it, a PC affiliated with a spy network likely gets his assignments through an officer called a "handler," the individual in charge of coordinating and providing support for all the spies that report to her. An agent can expect his handler to take care of things like arranging new identities, providing equipment, and supplying clean-up crews or escape routes when the spy's cover is blown. Contact between handlers and agents is often maintained through seemingly unrelated middlemen and couriers known as a "cut-outs."

Generally speaking, the assignments an agent gets will be oriented around discerning a piece of information, concealing a piece of information, or taking direct action to neutralize an identified threat. Since there are many kinds of information and as many ways to go about acquiring them, it follows that the daily involvements of an active spy will likewise be diverse and variable, depending on the specialization of the PC in question.

Asset Development

Some spy organizations find it important to manipulate the actions of high-ranking or importantly placed individuals for their own ends. Bringing the duke's majordomo, the city tax collector, or the king's stablemaster under your influence can be quite useful. If dissatisfied with the treatment they receive from their current employer or sore over some other grievance, these "assets" might be quite willing to join up, happily using their position to gain access to vital information or even sabotage a target's efforts. Other officials will require alternative means of convincing. This might involve bribery, or less savory methods including threats of violence, blackmail, or the abduction of loved ones. Spy PCs might be assigned to infiltrate an organization and find out who is in a position to be useful or how they might be persuaded to help. Afterward, these assignments might be followed up with the enacting of an appropriate plan to elicit the subject's compliance.

NPCs might approach the party, either personally or through an intermediary, requesting help. Agents thus employed must use a gentle touch with their contacts. A paranoid asset who

loses faith in his new "friends" can become one of the spy's most dangerous liabilities.

Many operations are simply short-term, in-and-out missions designed to develop a network of assets for use by a spy's superiors. Developing assets requires agents to spend minimal time in the field. Thus, asset development work is appropriate for low-level characters.

Deep Cover

Higher-level agents who are successful in assignments like asset development will begin to receive their first deep-cover projects. These are long-term assignments working inside targeted organizations (enemy and ally) to protect interests by gathering intelligence, manipulating opponents' decisions, and sabotaging threatening activity. While this might involve developing assets as well, the real goal of this kind of work is to infiltrate the highest levels of an organization by convincing the enemy you're on their side. Missions like this are highly dangerous, and the survival rate of an agent whose cover has been blown is extremely low. Compounding this danger is the fact that most governments will disavow any knowledge of espionage activities if a spy is caught, which means a spy is on her own if someone discovers who she really is.

Generally, handlers continue to oversee the work of deep-cover agents with communication through the usual channels. Handlers might even become highly involved with an agent's day-to-day efforts, depending on how they perceive the mission is progressing. Conversely, they might allow experienced deep-cover operatives a relatively free hand, offering advice and equipment only when requested. For this reason, deep-cover work helps develop independent agents, and is appropriate for mid- to high-level characters.

Spymasters

Later in his career, when he has proven his competence and loyalty to his superiors (and assuming he's still alive), a high-level spy character might be allowed to design and operate his own network as a handler. At that point, he will be expected to use his own agents and assets to discover threats and subsequently organize actions to eliminate them. His responsibilities will include assembling information from multiple sources and drawing conclusions that can be used to serve the aims of his superiors.

Day-to-day activities of the handler revolve around maintaining the networks of informants that are his lifeblood. This includes supplying equipment and funds as needed, keeping an eye on new recruits, and occasionally taking on deep-cover assignments too dangerous or important to entrust to a subordinate.

Drawn primarily from the ranks of talented "retired" field agents, handlers generally have no families of their own and take the responsibility of managing their spies very seriously. Crisis ensues when an agent gets into trouble or goes missing while on a mission, and all available resources will be turned to bailing out the lost spy. When one of their own goes to the other side, it is a handler who faces the grim duty of eliminating the threat.

At the highest levels of an espionage organization, spies are powerful and usually brilliant individuals. Although their government leaders might know the true nature of the work these individuals undertake, such spies might lead double lives as members of the court or private council. Drawing on information from vast networks spanning multiple courts and organizations, these spymasters walk in the highest circles of statecraft, helping to plan battles, organize policy . . . and further their own goals.

Going Rogue

Some spies do not operate within the confines of an organized group, particularly if they have been disavowed by their governments or have gone rogue. These characters, now freelancers, might fall in with a party of adventurers for any number of reasons. They could be running from some unfinished business from their organized spying career, such as previous assets they've betrayed or old allies who want to eliminate them because they know too much. Even if an agent is able to resolve these problems, she must still always be on her guard. The Great Game rarely lets its players go easily.

Unaffiliated spies might share their true identities with their companions or not, but they will most likely make a living using their training as spies to acquire secrets and sell them for profit. They gladly adventure and benefit from their allies' abilities as long as they can keep a low profile and continue to profit by trading information. Many spies' skill choices allow them to perform a lot of the same functions that are normally fulfilled by a rogue in an adventuring party. Likewise, information is as vital to the enterprises of adventurers as it is to anyone else. Thus, spies can flourish in any campaign, even when out of their element.

PC CLASSES

Naturally, the balance and malleability of the rogue and bard classes, especially their skill options, make them strong choices for a beginning spy. However, if your interest lies in playing other classes, that's unlikely to be a problem.

Barbarian

Sometimes, no matter how good a spy is at what he does, there's just no way to avoid a fight. When this is the case, the ability to carve through enemy lines can be quite useful. The less than subtle, brawn over brains approach favored by barbarians, however, might make the class unwieldy in a field characterized by patience and discipline. On the other hand, a multiclass rogue who started his career as a barbarian and constantly had to struggle to keep his wild nature under control might make a fascinating character that would also be challenging to roleplay. Furthermore, deep cover spies frequently need "muscle" for back-up—combat specialists who do the dirty work of intimidating, abducting, and eliminating targets to supplement the agent's work.

Bard

Featuring a repertoire of skills rivaling the rogue, and even more versatile, the wild-card disposition of the bard makes for an excellent spy. She is a jack-of-all-trades who can move men's hearts or fight her way out of a corner, with magic to supplement her other abilities. Additionally, the nature of a bard's work allows her to get into all kinds of places ordinary folks can't.

Cleric

Clerics considering becoming spies must first ask themselves whether or not doing so will serve the interest of their deities. Some deities, like Olidammara, thrive on secrecy and encourage their clergy to become spies. Secret societies throughout history and popular culture have often been founded on the basis of religious goals or grievances. Celestial beings often have need of those willing to infiltrate the most evil and dark places of the world as any organization at war, and cleric spies often fill this role in various ways.

Druid

Like any other organization, a secret society that unites many druids has interests that it will act to protect. Many activities of state, like wars, mining, and

the construction of castles can be devastating to the environment, and the druid collective takes great interest in knowing what's going to happen in the lands it protects. A druid that engages in espionage does so to safeguard the natural world, often at the behest of other natural powers.

Fighter

Fighters can easily serve as muscle for spy organizations in the same manner as barbarians. Their limited skill options can hamper their viability for deep cover work, but a fighter's access to feats makes him a potent and dangerous agent. A high intelligence score can offset the small skill selection, creating a spy suitable for infiltrating military units or the palace guard.

Monk

Possessing formidable combat prowess, even in situations when their cover prevents them from carrying weapons, monks make great spies. They have a more well-rounded skill selection than fighters, and many of their special abilities are well-suited for infiltration. Years of training in isolated monasteries provide them with extensive discipline and a useful degree of anonymity in the outside world.

Paladin

The game of espionage is populated by people whose morality is questionable, at best, when compared with that of the paladin. Of all the classes, they have the hardest time adapting to espionage. A paladin desperate to right some terrible wrong could feasibly undertake a mission of espionage, believing it served the greater good, but the hard decisions faced by spies are hardest for the paladin, and it might be necessary to seek *atonement* afterward. Only truly great roleplayers dare undertake the paladin spy.

Ranger

Similar to druids, the rangers' interest could lie in protecting the wild. She is less concerned with the urban centers where statecraft-related espionage is more likely to take place. The ability to move freely in the wild and take advantage of its resources, however, is quite valuable in certain kinds of field work, like scouting. Rangers are adept at tracking troop movements and infiltrating enemy camps.

Rogue

The rogue's job is to get into places and acquire things that people try to protect. Their range of skill options and special abilities make them uniquely suited for spy work. Players choosing to play other classes as spy characters should strongly consider taking a couple of rogue levels to expand their repertoire of skills.

Sorcerer

As a class, sorcerers tend to be rebellious spirits who like to play outside the rules. Given the right incentives and spell selection, a sorcerer can make a capable spy. A number of spells, for instance, duplicate or augment rogue and bard skills. The value of mind-reading spells in discerning information is obvious, as is the ability to toss a *lightning bolt* or two when a situation gets deadly.

Wizard

A wizard's spellcasting ability accords him the same advantages sorcerers have in espionage activities, but with greater flexibility. More disciplined in their magical studies than their intuition-driven counterparts, seeking knowledge comes naturally to the wizard.

COVERT OPS

Espionage in Your Game

by Evan Michael Jackson · illustrated by Howard Lyon

A good spy campaign exists in the shadows. It lives beneath everything else that's going on in your game world, and its purpose is to explore life in those dark places. Generally set in populous areas with established power structures, an effective spy adventure carries with it all the themes of the film-noir genre: corruption, loss of innocence, and mystery.

While D&D in its many incarnations has grown in complexity over the years, many traditional campaigns are largely structured according to a certain archetype: The world is afflicted with an evil that the PCs must destroy to restore the natural order. Whereas the mythic world can be seen as an ideal of utopian wonder in the setting, the spy campaign tends to paint it as a dystopia, where good and evil are not so readily identifiable. The struggle of the heroes is how to exist in a world dominated by greed and ambition that is often brutal and unsettling, and where the right thing is not always the good thing.

Psychologically, the spy archetype appeals to us because spies are shapeshifting tricksters with the freedom to live outside the bounds of normal society and bring about change. They are also tied to the parts of the self we repress and fear, normally represented in the D&D game in the form of monsters. In this respect, spies represent the struggle to bring the psyche into balance.

> *There are five kinds of spy: The local spy, the inside spy, the reverse spy, the dead spy, and the living spy. . . .*
>
> —Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Spies are profoundly lonely, outlaw figures. And yet, despite the personal distance they are trained to maintain, there is one element of the human experience that always seems to work its way into pulp espionage stories. That element, simply put, is sex.

To the men and women who play the game of espionage, life is not easy. Whether it is merely an effort to stave off loneliness for a brief time or an attempt at some deeper sort of human connection, a spy story just isn't the same if it doesn't at least touch on the desire for physical contact.

Even more dangerous—and infinitely more interesting—is when the object of a spy's affections is somehow involved in his work. What happens when a spy falls in love with someone he's ordered to eliminate? Or worse, with another spy?

All of the above elements affect the traditional D&D campaign structure. Listed here are some elements of a "typical" campaign and how they might work or change in the spy campaign.

Dungeons

Since espionage activity tends to be centered in cities, dungeons in a spy campaign are primarily used as bastions guarding important records or as secret bases of operations for spy organizations. They are guarded in all the usual methods (traps, trained monsters, and so on) in addition to any personnel on site. Like normal dungeons, spy-

campaign dungeons are designed to be difficult for outsiders to both get in and out of.

Additionally, infiltration of various non-dungeon locales, such as dark castle corridors, secret rooms beneath a warehouse, or networks of back-alley streets, can easily simulate dungeoncrawl adventuring. In a spy campaign, it's often fun to imagine any location the PCs are exploring that has multiple areas, guardians, and a villain lurking in the shadows as a dungeon environment.

Magic

Magic is a highly effective tool in the hands of a spy. Items that conceal, confuse, or disguise the true nature of an agent and his work will be the most common devices encountered and used by a spy character. Equally important are items that enable the user to read minds, enchant assets, or escape danger. Spells that achieve the same effects are common.

Since a spy can spend a good deal of time undercover in places where carrying a weapon or wearing armor would draw attention, a healthy supply of offensive and defensive spells has kept more than one agent alive in a pinch. Of course, finding time to secretly prepare spells or meditate can sometimes be difficult when undercover, particularly if one's cover identity has no spellcasting ability. For this reason, scrolls, *rings of spell storing*, or similar items are highly prized by spies. Similarly, "passive" or wearable items that don't draw attention, like *rings of protection* and the like, are valuable to those engaged in espionage. Spellcasting spies will also favor feats like Still Spell and Silent Spell for obvious reasons.

Monsters

Those with secrets guard them as aggressively as those who hide treasure in dungeons. It is therefore feasible that a spy infiltrating an enemy center of operations could run into just about any kind of bestial opposition. While many intelligent monsters have natural abilities that would benefit a career in espionage, they generally face a common problem in that it's difficult to disguise their monstrous natures for long periods of time. If this situation could be remedied by magical means (with a *hat of disguise* or an *alter self* ability, for instance), many of your favorite monsters could make highly effective spy allies or opponents, and provide a set up for truly unexpected reversals if their true form is discovered. Below are just a few possibilities of how this device might be employed in your game.

Dragons: Perhaps the most formidable creature the PCs will ever encounter, a dragon who takes interest in humanoid affairs might become involved in a spy campaign. Some, like silver dragons, delight in changing form and mingling with civilized races. A gold dragon might infiltrate an espionage organization in order to overthrow a political injustice of some kind. A bored red dragon on the other hand, might kill time for a few years by manipulating statecraft to create chaos on a large scale.

Rakshasas: Armed with natural shapechanging abilities and inclined toward the finer things in life, a rakshasa could easily impersonate a member of the aristocracy to enact any number of malevolent acts. Using its *detect thoughts* ability, a rakshasa is often a step ahead of its opponents and prefers to use deception rather than engage enemies directly, another trait that makes them eminently suitable for an espionage adventure.

Vampires: Effectively immortal and bored by virtually all endeavors other than the pursuit of power, vampires have more than enough patience to pull strings and manipulate events toward achieving their dark aims. Although barred from working in daylight, a vampire using its domination ability would make an excellent master spy or dark handler whose servants could extend its influence during the day. Undead creatures in general (intelligent ones, anyway), particularly those that were spies in life, make interesting monstrous spies. Spies who were betrayed and killed by their masters could return as undead seeking justice.

Mind Flayers: Entire illithid inquisitions are formed for the express purpose of divining secrets. The psionic abilities of mind flayers make them highly capable spies so long as they can mask their true appearances.

Others: Additional monsters appropriate for the spy campaign include, but are not limited to: beholders, doppelgangers, half-dragons, half-fiends, invisible stalkers, lycanthropes, medusas, nymphs, tieflings, sphinxes, vampire spawn, and yuan-ti. Sylvan creatures, such as dryads or satyrs would make fascinating scouts (see "Players in the Great Game" in this issue) given the proper motivation.

The Quest

The quest in the spy campaign is often replaced by the "mission." Spies who travel with traditional parties of adventurers, however, are likely to have to adapt the use of their skills to serve the group's interest, which probably means gathering information to help achieve certain epic goals. See Designing Spy Adventures for more details.

RUNNING THE GAME

Introducing spy campaign components into most games is fairly easy. Whether confidantes of the king, in the employ of a wealthy merchant house, or just looking for a way to get out of the clink, PCs often find themselves in situations where proving their usefulness to those in power could suddenly become very important. Yet, as with any choice regarding the direction of your campaign, you'll want to take some time to make sure your party is adequately prepared to handle the challenges they're going to face.

Take a look at the suggestions for character generation in the "Players in the Great Game" article to make sure that spy adventures will be appropriate for your PCs. If you're starting a new campaign from scratch, encourage them to read that article and make choices accordingly. Try not to interfere too much in the character creation process, however. Remember, choosing the kind of character you want to play is one of the most fun parts of the D&D game. Additionally, the maxim of "know your players" most certainly applies here. Adding a flavor of espionage to your ongoing game for variety could really help flesh out your campaign world, but if you know your players are devoted to hack-and-slash monster slaying, don't try to force them into a game you know they're going to hate. They'll have a miserable time, and you're not going to have much fun either.

Getting into the Game

So now that you've got the perfect spy party, what are you going to do with them?

Spies enter their field any number of ways. The easiest is to simply have the PCs recruited. Organizations that engage in espionage might employ "talent spotters" for this purpose, local inhabitants like barkeeps and streetwise merchants who keep an eye out for people who might be of use in furthering the group's goals. The process begins when a talent spotter alerts the organization, which then investigates the potential agent. During this period, clues that an unknown party has taken an interest in the PCs might turn up (glimpses of shadowy figures tailing them, strange individuals questioning their associates, various indications that a mysterious someone is arranging tests of their abilities, and so forth). If the PCs attempt to pursue these leads, the trails probably seem to vanish into thin air.

If they measure up, the PCs might be approached and asked to per-

form some menial task involving the passing of information to test their discretion. Maybe they are informed someone wishes to purchase the use of their special talents in a very important and secret matter.

In any case, due to its covert nature, the world of espionage generally imposes itself unexpectedly. Perhaps a secretive individual who knows something vital, a classic damsel in distress, falls into the PCs lap and desperately needs their help to avoid capture or worse. A high-status NPC agent might mistake a member of the party for an important contact or deadly enemy, sweeping everyone up into a confusing and deadly game of cat and mouse until the real enemy or the real contact surfaces. If your game has been going on long enough for the PCs to make some enemies, a villainous master spy could impersonate one or more party members and perpetrate any number of misdeeds in their names, earning them infamy and contempt among previously loyal friends. Once the PCs get to the bottom of the strange events that are sure to result from these scenarios, NPCs on all sides can reappear as friends or foes in further adventures, and your spy campaign can run as long as desired.

Dealing with Spy Organizations

In their adventures, PCs might want to contact spy groups for a variety of reasons. If they are in the service of a prominent member of the government, they might be asked to contact an organization specializing in espionage to obtain some valuable information. It is also possible that the PCs want to seek out the espionage community of their own accord. This might happen if the characters have acquired marketable information through some combination of events, or if they want to exploit information-gathering services for their own ends. Some players might simply have their hearts set on playing the master spy.

These attempts might meet with success or failure as you see fit, but finding a spy network with any degree of competence should never be an easy task. Remember that this organization's continued existence depends at least partially on its ability to remain secret. In fact, the best way to make contact might be to put out the word that the PCs are interested in doing so. Then, if the spy organization in question is interested, it will open a dialogue on its own terms. Another way would be for the PCs to seek out some piece of information interesting to the organization they seek, then wait for the group to contact them.

Communication between PCs and spy organizations, if it occurs at all, will be done through middlemen with no discernible connection to espionage. If a meeting is desired, it will likely be arranged suddenly and held at a secret location.

Designing Spy Adventures

Once involved in intelligence work, PCs will spend their time engaged in the activities outlined in PC Roles in "Players in the Great Game." Do some planning ahead of time and think about each of the important NPCs the party is likely to come into contact with, especially the PCs' handler and any assets relevant to the plot of the adventure. Make a short list for each, denoting their true loyalties, deep desires, secrets, and any grievances they might be harboring. That way, when a PC on assignment makes Gather Information checks or gets someone talking about what they really want in life, you'll have plenty of material on hand for them to exploit toward creating assets.

Most players, however, will probably find it more exciting to don a disguise and personally infiltrate an organization, a la James Bond, rather than getting NPCs to do the spying for them. While this is less common in the real world than pop culture would have us believe, there is no reason why such methods cannot be the norm in your game world. It is a good idea, however, to start them off with smaller, more controlled assignments that allow them to learn the techniques they will need to pull off bigger assignments later. This is relatively easy to gauge, as these assignments come down to PCs through their handlers.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following sources were used writing this article, and can provide further ideas for use in an espionage campaign.

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A compilation of historical means of secret communication, spanning from ancient times to the present. Plenty of ideas for PC or NPC use.

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A biography of the English Renaissance queen. Includes details on a number of the intrigues and exploits of her spymaster Sir Francis Walsingham, who uncovered numerous plots during her controversial reign.

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A reference text devoted to the history of espionage. Some entries are a little short, but overall the book is quite informative and the historical events are a great source for campaign ideas.

Fleming, Ian:

The Spy Who Loved Me
Casino Royale
Goldfinger
The Man with the Golden Gun
Live and Let Die
Dr. No
From Russia with Love
For Your Eyes Only
You Only Live Twice
On Her Majesty's Secret Service
Moonraker
Thunderball
Octopussy
The Living Daylights

The original Bond serials. Currently, they are published by Coronet, but a trip to a second-hand bookstore might turn up earlier editions. Perhaps farfetched and sensational, they remain the definitive blueprint for the pulp spy archetype. Readers interested in the "brooding hero" spy archetype may want to check out Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan novels for a more modern look at espionage, but nobody quite matches the flair of 007.

Sun Tzu (translated by Thomas Cleary). *The Art of War.* Boston, Shambhala Publications, Inc. 1988.

An ancient Chinese text on warcraft, including a chapter on the use of spies.

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A writing manual on the use of mythic archetypes in cinematic storytelling based on the work of Joseph Campbell. Useful in constructing adventures for spy campaigns or any other setting.

Treat handlers in your game like other NPC mentors or patrons who maintain a close personal relationship with the party. Handlers won't allow agents to undertake assignments that are likely to get them killed—that would be a waste of valuable resources. Attempts to garner tougher assignments by agents who aren't ready for them will meet with flat denials to careful distractions designed to get the PCs on the path the handler—and by extension, you—wants them to be on. Once the PCs have mastered various methods of acquiring assets and influencing others' behavior, their handler (and you) should feel comfortable giving them their first deep cover assignment.

Regardless of the assignment you choose, you can always use another as a subquest if one or more of your PCs has nothing to do. Alternating between the two missions can even be a handy way to manipulate the level of tension in your campaign. Acquiring assets can be fairly slow and calculated, while maintaining cover requires the kind of quick-witted roleplaying that makes the spy genre so exciting.

Tests and Reversals

Testing a character's cover isn't difficult. When under deep cover, anything that can go wrong often does so at the worst possible moment. Perhaps a PC has been allowed through the city gate, but the captain's dog won't stop barking at her. Maybe halfway across a crowded dancehall, a spy in disguise sees a door swing open, and a bitter enemy who knows her face steps through to join the party, leaving her with a dilemma as to how to escape with the secret documents she just purloined. Events like these can easily turn comical. A PC who convinces the court that he's from a backwater region of the kingdom might be asked to demonstrate the unique dancing style of his homeland, or a professed wine connoisseur might be asked to strike up a conversation on the native spirits of the area.

The situation can be further compounded if the character has an accomplice present who actually knows something about the subject in question and then must somehow secretly guide the player through the dialogue by mime or some similar means. You should have fun with these difficult situations, pushing your players' roleplaying skills to the limit and possibly even going as far as to require players to physically perform any secret exchanges. Keep your players on their toes, but this is a device to make the game more fun, and it would be unfair to torture or flat out kill a spy because of these scenes. Remember, a spy hero always escapes by a hair's breadth and pulls off the impossible when a situation is at its worst. If you sabotage your PCs and set them up repeatedly in situations so they're doomed to fail, you're doing your players and your game a disservice. At the same time, keep the element of danger alive. Don't hesitate to threaten the characters' lives when necessary. The element of danger is as much a part of the spy genre as intriguing social situations.

A spy is no stranger to reversals. Keep in mind that those involved in espionage activities often see themselves as players in a game looking for an advantage. Furthermore, they all have secrets. In this world, nothing can be taken at face value. Figuring out who's playing whom and for what end is not an easy task.

Set in this environment, no one in your game has to be who they say they are. Enemy agents will seek to infiltrate the PCs' organizations for the same reasons PCs want to infiltrate their enemy's. If the characters are betrayed in a critical moment, the betrayal is all the more profound if it comes from a trusted friend. Even worse, if the traitor is a handler or similar officer, they might find they have unwittingly been made a tool of the enemy or even branded traitors by the organization they thought they were serving. Entire missions can be created around rooting out such moles if the PCs find indications that one exists. Another possible reversal in this situation is when the PCs discover that the traitor doesn't exist at all, but that they were victims of a "notional mole" ploy by the enemy to sow confusion and disarray, perhaps while a large-scale plan was going into effect unnoticed.

Additionally, spies often get outside help for their endeavors by means of

a "false flag" ploy, in which they approach a third party and claim to be connected to a group to which the third party is loyal. Once convinced, the third party uses its position to pass on information or perhaps take a more proactive role, all the while thinking it is serving its own cause. If this ploy is used by an enemy, it is possible for PCs to discover that they're working for the wrong side entirely.

The flip side of that coin is that reversals need not always work against the PCs. Help can come as easily as treachery from unexpected places. The bandit organization that always seems to know where to hit royal caravans might actually turn out to be fighting a corrupt member of the court. The man the players are certain is the mole saves their lives in a critical moment and provides crucial information, shattering their understanding of recent events. Alternatively, if the PCs do discover a mole, they could turn her into a double agent and construct a reversal of their own. Such an agent might be used as a spy or to feed false information, including the construction of a national mole ploy. Just keep in mind that this reversal can just as easily be pulled on the PCs using one of their own agents or assets. Early in a spy campaign, you might need to provide some insight into these convoluted spy games through NPCs until your players get the hang of the intricacies involved. Once they get the hang of it, you might even have trouble keeping up with them yourself.

When designing reversals, the possibilities are endless; just be sure to organize them such that they put the PCs in a tight spot. Joining the other side can be difficult if the PCs are approached by an agent who has killed people they considered friends, even if they've been betrayed by their former masters. What about old friends who still work for the PCs' former employer? Are they enemies now? Or can they be turned?

Tough decisions are a factor of everyday life for the spy. Activities like blackmail and assassination don't sit well with some alignments, but that doesn't change the fact that those assignments can be given to good-aligned characters. Don't let your players off the hook in these situations; require them to roleplay their way through difficult choices. If they can come up with a viable scheme to somehow stay true to their beliefs and do their duty, then a nice fat experience point award is probably due. Alternatively, if their actions warrant the beginning of an alignment change, then so be it.

Furthermore, remember the PCs' opponents are also subject to the same anxieties. Many of them began their careers with good intentions but were changed by the shadows they lived in. Like PCs, NPCs who play the espionage game quickly learn not to trust anyone. Many are motivated by paranoia or self-interest. Others are simply unable to reconcile their actions and choose to abandon all belief in morality rather than go mad. This last sort of individual might become the most dangerous of opponents for the PCs because they acknowledge no accountability, are well-trained veterans of espionage, and generally are not particularly happy people.

Even if your players choose to avoid immersing themselves in these sorts of roles, some of their allies are likely to fit them like gloves. Once again, the door is open to construct great reversals. The PCs might be assigned to track down an old comrade who has gone rogue. How will they react when faced with the difficult task of deciding between their duty and personal loyalty? Do they take down an old friend? Do they secretly try to discern the agent's motivations and aid in his escape, perhaps changing sides or becoming rogues themselves in the process? Later in the campaign, the former ally could resurface once more, bringing the very same questions back to haunt the PCs.

Romance and Reversals

As mentioned in Essential Elements, espionage and sex often go hand in hand. This is part of the flair of the spy genre, and you should indulge the romantic element of the genre by throwing in a lady in red or ruggedly

handsome scoundrel every once in a while. It's just not as fun to play the fantasy remake of James Bond if your dialogue can't be rife with double-entendre. Just keep your players on their guard here, as well. Like everything else in the espionage game, passion can be a tool. People don't act rationally when preoccupied with an intriguing member of the opposite sex. Spies are well aware of the dangers in mixing these desires with their work, but they often do it anyway in literature and film. These people have a certain craving to see how close they can get to a fire without getting burned. For this reason, seduction is often a tool used by spies to bend others to their will. If a subject is totally enthralled, they might be willing to do anything for the object of their attraction. In other cases, evidence of an illicit affair can be used to induce cooperation through blackmail. The spy genre is filled with victims of such "honey traps."

Even more dangerous than sex in the world of espionage is love. If people get irresponsible when it comes to animal attraction, they get downright reckless when it comes to matters of the heart. Therefore, sex and love make great wild cards in the spy genre. A great femme fatale can upend everything in a spy story. When two people whose very way of life does not permit them to trust enter into a relationship, elaborate games of who is playing whom begin that are uniquely thrilling and dangerous. These can result in any number of outcomes, which makes them all the more attractive. Can two spies ever learn to open up to one another, or does one always have an ulterior motive? If they do let down their defenses, will they be able to stay together, or will their professional allegiances eventually cause a break?

A well-constructed spy adventure involving romance will have PCs guessing until the last minute. In the climactic moment, will the spy choose to carry out his mission or trust his heart? Perhaps the mysterious woman finds herself unable to kill the man she loves, giving up her one chance to escape with the royal seal, or even sacrificing her own life to protect him. Maybe the blue-eyed man gets away with the documents but leaves clues to his whereabouts where only his rival—and true love—can find them. Who knows what will happen next time?

Running Opposing Spy Networks

Since the espionage game takes place in the shadows, the actions of its players are subtle. You might even say that you know you have a good spy campaign running when you can't see it. This doesn't mean that things aren't happening. Like PC spy organizations, NPC spy groups also view espionage as a game and are constantly making quiet moves to obtain an edge over their opponents.

As the DM, you play the role of the PCs' opponents. Use their resources as effectively as possible when engaging the characters. This, of course, must be tempered by the fact that you will often know the PCs' plans. Just remember that a spy network is not a passive organism. While the PCs are attempting to carry out their schemes, their opponents will be carrying out their own. Part of the PCs' job is to figure out what those plans are and foil them so that their own efforts can proceed unhindered.

Players who encounter moles are likely to become suspicious of any new NPCs you introduce into the campaign. A good way to get around this is to introduce them in groups. A new unit of the guard might be called from the frontier and stationed at the castle, or perhaps the duke requests that all the neighboring lords dispatch ambassadors to his court to discuss an important matter. Any infiltrator then becomes one new face among many and is not as easy to finger. This technique can be reversed too: A mole the PCs already believe they know might construe evidence so as to implicate a newcomer. If the characters end up believing the planted lead, they'll waste time pursuing dead ends while the real villain executes his schemes.

CHARACTER GENERATION

All things considered, spies are some rather uncommon individuals. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* contains rules for rolling up high-powered characters as well as other generation options. You might want to consider using these rules or some variation if you feel your usual method won't produce the kind of PCs suitable for the campaign you want to run.

Alignment

Due to the unique stresses experienced by those engaged in espionage activities, alignment tends to be a bit more fluid in the spy campaign than in other games. Keep close track of your players' alignment choices and make sure they roleplay through the difficult positions they are likely to encounter. Also, be sure to reward players who commit to this enterprise. For better or worse, their characters will grow a great a deal.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

In case you are unsure how to incorporate espionage into your campaign, the following adventure ideas can point you in the right direction.

The Abduction

As the private council is struggling with an important decision, the mistress of a married high-ranking official has been kidnapped. He has received a message demanding that he reverse his position on the issue at hand or the woman will be killed and his reputation ruined. He asks for the PCs' help and discretion. Investigation ultimately reveals that the mistress was actually a spy from an organization hoping to influence the negotiations, and that the kidnapping was a ruse by a clever handler looking to retrieve his agent and simultaneously get a favorable decision in the council.

The Puppet Master

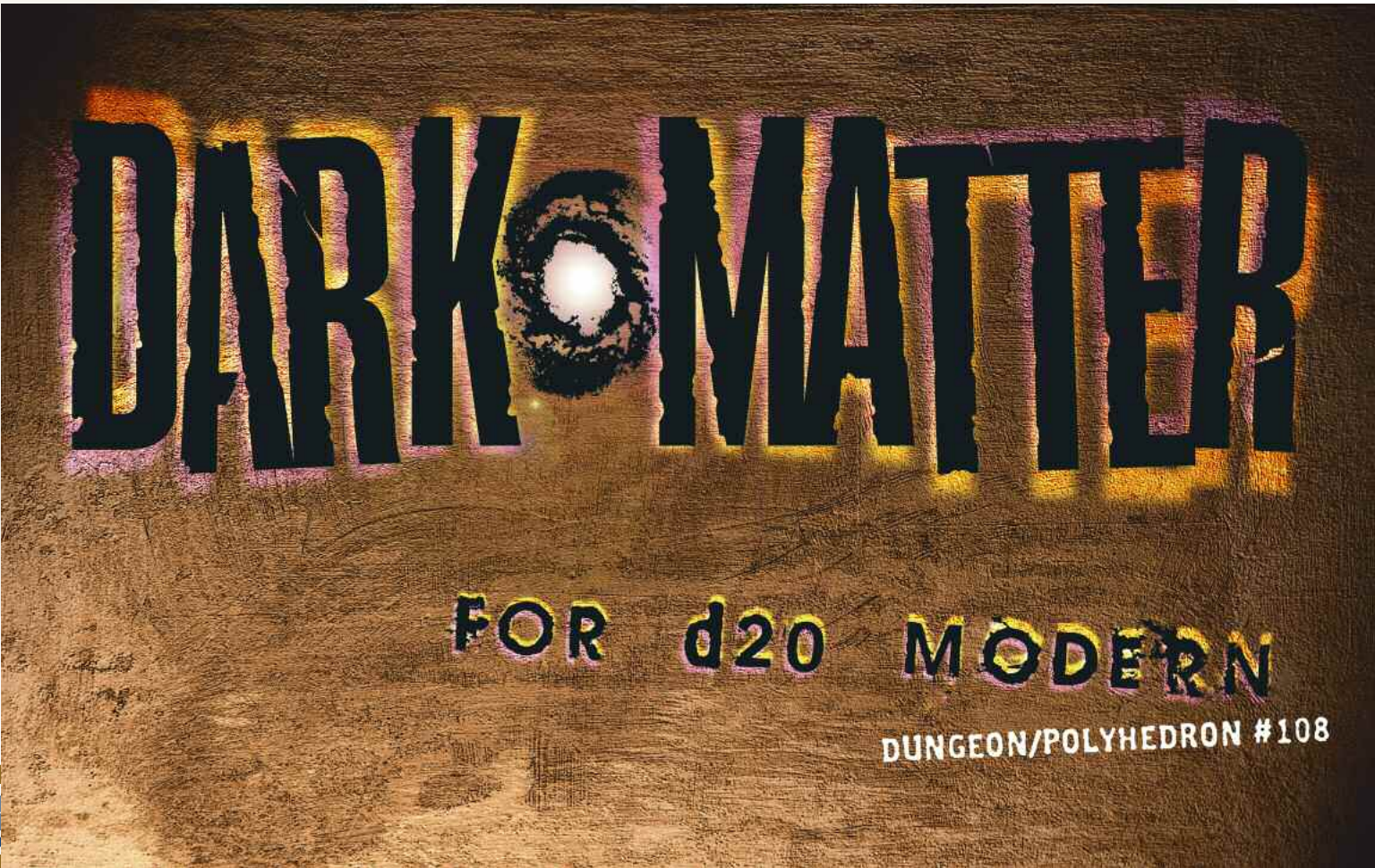
A grievously wounded ally of the PCs stumbles into their midst and warns them that a mole has infiltrated the court (or a similar group the PCs are associated with). As the PCs work to discover the identity of the mole, evidence begins to point to not one, but two moles. More and more allies are discovered working against the party until it seems that everyone is an enemy. The origin of the conspiracy turns out to be a magically disguised mind-flayer using its mind-controlling abilities to control the court. This same scenario would be equally effective with a beholder using its charm person ray or a vampire and his dominate person ability.

The Trade War

The PCs work for a kingdom with a strong sea trade. Word is received that a wealthy merchant is buying up a great deal of smaller shipping companies for an unknown reason. After infiltrating various small businesses and eventually the merchant house in question, the PCs learn that the merchant is working as a middleman for a rival kingdom. When the PCs infiltrate the rival court and associated trade circles, it turns out that the rival king is paying the merchant to purchase a fleet in order to create a blockade, upsetting the balance of trade and forcing the characters' sovereign to lose most, if not all, of his ocean trade.

Life in the game of espionage is as exciting as any adventure. You never know what might happen next. That is both the thrill and the peril for those who dabble as spies. Let your PCs think they've got everything under control. Lull them into security with great training, disciplined comrades, and the best equipment . . . then turn the world on its head.

Your players will love you for it.



CLOAK & DAGGER

Gear, Gadgets, and Gizmos for Your Game

by Eric Cagle and Evan Michael Jackson · illustrated by Chuck Luckas

The spy genre, made famous in literature and movies, is filled with daring bravado, double-crosses, and clandestine meetings in back alleys. But what would an espionage adventure be without a pile of wonderful gadgets to get the hero out of a jam? After all, a good spy never goes anywhere without a few tricks up his sleeve.

This article describes several new tools, weapons, and magic items that can be used in an espionage-oriented campaign. Also featured are a few special, premade "kits" that can be bought off the shelf from a character's local spy-supply house.

D&D MEETS JAMES BOND

Many of the items in this article straddle the dividing line between the pseudomedieval technology of D&D and the high-tech gadgets of the modern world. Even with the inclusion of magic in the mix, some of these items could stretch players' credulity, since they resemble modern technology more than they do standard equipment from a different, older time. However, if the DM and players can find a way to rationalize such equipment, then the group's espionage-themed adventures might feel more true to the genre.

SPECIAL SUBSTANCES AND ITEMS

Spies often find the following alchemical items useful.

Catstink: Given the penchant of the powerful to guard their estates with dogs, more than one spy has had to make a quick getaway pursued by a pack of barking canines. A dose of catstink (which is actually an alchemical compound, not the urine or musk of felines) on your trail temporarily confuses the scent ability of any creature. The creature must make a successful DC 15 Survival check to regain the scent of any target it pursued before exposure to the catstink. Catstink does not prevent a creature with scent from using the ability in any other way (such as to detect or pinpoint a hidden creature); it only makes it more difficult for the creature to track by scent.

Slumberweed: When dried and ground to a powder, the leaves of this plant induce a sleeplike state resembling death for 8 hours if ingested or inhaled. Sometimes spies pack a dose of slumberweed into specially made necklaces with holes on either end that can act as an impromptu blowgun (usable only for delivering the powdery toxin). At other times, slumberweed is ingested by the spy himself, for the purpose of feigning death. A successful DC 12 Fortitude save negates the sleep.

Spy Button: Several versions of these specially designed buttons exist. They can be fancy or plain and are made to blend in with the clothing that they are sewn onto. To use a spy button, the wearer must rip it free from the article of clothing to which it is attached (no Strength check required) and throw it against a hard surface. The most common types of spy buttons are as follows.

Flash: This button creates a brilliant burst of light on impact. If a flash button detonates within 5 feet (1 square) of a creature, it must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be dazzled for 1d3 rounds. Sightless creatures are not affected.

Smoke: This button produces a cloud of impenetrable black smoke that fills a 10-foot cube. It dissipates in 2 rounds, or a single round if affected by moderate or stronger winds.

Thundering: This button mimics the effect of a thunderstone, as described in the *Player's Handbook.*

Tongueloose: When ingested, usually dissolved in a drink or sprinkled over a meal, a vial of this powder induces a

lethargic state for 1d3 hours, during which the subject is highly susceptible to suggestion. A successful DC 14 Fortitude save negates this effect. Anyone interacting with someone who has failed the save against a dose of tongueloose receives a +4 circumstance bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks against that person.

MUNDANE EQUIPMENT

Although magic items usually produce the most efficient results, characters engaged in espionage sometimes wish to make use of more mundane items to get the job done. Not only do these tend to be much cheaper, but they also have the advantage of easier concealment, since they don't detect as magical. Because of their unique (and questionable) nature, many of these items must be tailor-made, and the character making the request would be wise to pay a bit of extra gold to keep the craftsman's mouth shut.

Weapons

The following items are specialized weapons useful to spies.

Disguised Dagger: This weapon is a dagger with a stiletto-like blade disguised to look like an ordinary object, such as a ladies' hair comb or an ink pen. In addition to being easy to smuggle into well-guarded areas, a character receives a +5 bonus on Sleight of Hand checks to conceal the weapon, in addition to the dagger's usual +2 bonus. Dedicated spies even have masterwork or magical disguised daggers made for them.

Folding Bow: This bow has a joint in the middle that allows it to fold in half when unstrung, making it easier to conceal. A character can make a Sleight of Hand check to conceal a folded folding bow as if it were a small object. Only non-composite bows can be made into folding bows. Assembling or disassembling a folding bow is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity.

Garrote Ring: The wearer of this large, ostentatious ring can detach the gem atop it and pull forth a length of extremely fine, tough wire that can be used to strangle an opponent. Pulling out the wire is a free action, but rewinding it requires a full-round action. For more information on using garrotes, see the Garrote Attacks sidebar or the description of garrotes in *Song and Silence.*

Modular Weapon: Extremely popular with assassins and spies alike, a modular weapon can be carried on the owner's person without drawing attention. A modular weapon is made up of several tiny and innocuous-looking components that snap, twist, or screw together to make a fully functioning weapon. Any simple or martial melee weapon that weighs 5 pounds or less may be made modular, as can hand crossbows, darts, and slings.

A modular weapon has two modular components for each pound of its weight. Each component is designed to appear as an article of clothing, jewelry, or almost any other ordinary wearable object. To recognize parts of a modular weapon, an observer must make a DC 20 Intelligence check. A +1 bonus applies to this check for every two components of the modular weapon that the viewer can see. Assembling or disassembling a modular weapon takes 1 minute. Redistributing the individual pieces into their proper, disguised locations after disassembly requires 1 additional minute. If any components are missing, the weapon cannot be assembled.

Extremely popular with assassins and spies alike, modular weapons can be carried without drawing attention.

Because they are not whole and solid, modular weapons tend to fall apart when subjected to serious abuse. Whenever the wielder rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll with the weapon, it breaks and falls apart, dealing no damage for the attack.

Poison Ring: This large but stylish ring has a reservoir that can hold a single dose of poison (injury only). To deliver the poison, the wearer must flip down a tiny, hollow needle so that it protrudes from the palm side of the ring, then make a successful touch attack against her target. Locking the needle into place requires a standard action, but the wearer tends to look rather suspicious fussing with her ring. Alternatively, the wearer can attempt to position the needle one-handed with a DC 15 Dexterity check, but failing by 5 or more indicates that she has pricked herself with the needle and is subject to the poison. An observer can notice the needle protruding from the wearer's palm with a successful DC 30 Spot check.

The ring deals 1 point of damage on a successful touch attack, plus the poison's normal damage. The victim may have to make a DC 10 Wisdom check to recognize the source of the attack if not in combat.

Spring Dart Boots: The heels of these boots are slightly oversized so that each can accommodate a small, spring-loaded dart launcher equipped with a single dart. Firing the dart requires a full-round action. Because the dart deals only minimal damage, most users either coat it with poison (which must be purchased separately) or use the attack as a distraction.

Miscellaneous Items

The following items are miscellaneous ordinary objects and articles of clothing that have been altered to fit the special needs of a spy.

Climbing Boots: Built onto the insole and front of each of these sturdy, low-cut leather boots is a set of small, broad blades, which remain hidden until the wearer trips a special latch that causes them to spring forth and lock into place. These blades grant the wearer a +2 bonus on Climb checks made to climb wooden or stone surfaces. They do not hinder movement in any way, but they are too short to deal damage in combat. Deploying or retracting the blades requires a standard action. An observer must make a DC 15 Spot check to spot the blades when they're out or a DC 20 Search check to notice anything unusual about the boots when the blades are retracted.

Collapsible Grappling Hook*: This small grappling hook has flat, retractable tines that fold out. Because

it can be collapsed to a small size when not in use, the DC for Search checks made to find it when it is folded and hidden among a person's garments increases by +4.

*This item first appeared in the *Dungeons & Dragons Arms and Equipment Guide.*

Cord Shirt: This cleverly designed long shirt is made of a single piece of strong, flat, silk cord. It is stitched together in such a way that a tug in the right place unravels it into a 30-foot length of silk rope. Fully unraveling a cord shirt requires a full-round action. It cannot be restitched after it has been used in this manner.

Drop Sheath: This sheath affixes to the arm, allowing the wearer to conceal a light weapon in a sleeve and draw it quickly. The sheath gives the wearer a +5 circumstance bonus to Sleight of Hand checks to conceal a light melee weapon. In addition, the wearer can draw this weapon as a free action as if he had the Quick Draw feat (for this weapon only while sheathed in the drop sheath).

False Scabbard: This device is simply a scabbard that is made to be longer than the blade it holds. Concealed in the extended space is a secret compartment that serves a purpose similar to hollow boots (see below). A DC 20 Search check is required to reveal the sheath's hidden space.

Glass-Cutting Ring: This appears to be a normal diamond ring, but the stone is attached to a special hinge that allows it to be flipped in its setting, revealing a point that can be used to cut panes of glass (up to 1 inch thick) for the purposes of breaking and entering. Cutting glass can be a time consuming process. It takes 1 minute per quarter-inch thickness to cut a hole large enough for a Medium character to slip through.

Hollow Boots: The standard form of these boots employs a swiveling heel, inside of which small items can be concealed and secretly carried from one place to another. Using this means, maps, documents, and even small weapons (a garrote, for instance) can be smuggled into or out of restricted areas. Someone searching the wearer of hollow boots must succeed at a DC 24 Search check to discover the hidden compartments.

Hollow boots have also been used as a means of communication between agents and their handlers. The agent ostensibly leaves a pair of boots with a shoemaker to be repaired, secretly containing a message to be relayed to the handler. The handler drops off a similar pair of boots and the shoemaker, working as a cutout, then switches the two pairs, effectively concealing the exchange of information.

Infiltrator's Outfit: This set of tight-fitting, matte-black clothing includes a long-sleeved shirt, trousers with numerous pockets, soft black shoes, and a black face mask or scarf that can be wrapped around the head. It also includes a cloth bandoleer that supports up to 5 pounds of equipment. Nonmetallic ties ensure secure attachment of items in a manner that minimizes noise.

Keymaking Set: Sometimes a spy devises the means to acquire a key necessary to his work, but must return it later in order to avoid arousing suspicion. Making copies of keys allows a spy continued access to restricted areas without fearing that the locks will be changed. This set includes all the tools necessary for a spy to make a working copy of a key in his possession or of which he has obtained an impression. All keymaking sets include two wax impression blocks (see below), as well as an assortment of small, incredibly sharp knives, blank keys, tiny files of all shapes, and polishing cloths of different coarseness. A character attempting to use the set must still make a DC 20 Open Lock check to make a key. Masterwork keymaking sets grant a +2 bonus to this check.

Making a key requires 10 minutes of uninterrupted work. For every 5 points the check exceeds the DC, it takes 1 minute less to copy the key.

Listening Cone: This simple cone is typically constructed of brass or a similarly inexpensive metal. When used to listen at a door, wall, or similar obstacle, the user receives a +5 bonus to Listen checks to hear through the obstruction. The user suffers a -2 penalty to any other Listen checks made as long as he listens at the door. The cone has the added benefit of protecting the user from defenses that may not be visible to the naked eye, such as contact poison.

Using this means, maps, documents, and even small weapons can be smuggled into or out of restricted areas.

Smuggler's Belt: Both smugglers and spies routinely use this wide cloth belt to hide small items beneath their clothing. A smuggler's belt can hold up to 1 pound of small items, such as papers, coins, or even a slender dagger. Anyone searching the wearer needs a successful DC 20 Search check to notice the presence of a smuggler's belt.

Spider: Also known as a housebreaker's harness, this standard climbing harness can be worn over light armor and comes with up to eight straps of leather attached to it. These straps vary in length but are generally up to 2 feet long and have metal rings attached at the ends that can be used for myriad purposes. Pieces of equipment can be hung on them for use while climbing, and ropes can be strung through one or more rings in such a way as to allow the climber to ascend but not descend, allowing her to let go of the rope without fear of falling. Additionally, climbing spikes can be hammered through the rings of two straps on either side of a window, giving a spy extra leverage to effect a break-in or simply observe whatever transpires inside.

Spider Wire: This extremely fine wire is typically stretched low across passageways to trip passers-by, or up high to cut the neck of anyone unlucky enough to blunder into it. For either application, the user must take a full-round action to secure each end of a length of spider wire to a solid object.

Any creature that enters a square equipped with low-slung spider wire must make a DC 15 Reflex save or trip over it. Creatures with more than two

GARROTE ATTACKS

The following rules were originally presented in *Song and Silence*. A garrote attack uses the grappling rules from Chapter 8 of the *Player's Handbook*, with a few additions.

Attack of Opportunity: A garrote attempt provokes an attack of opportunity from the target. If the attack of opportunity deals damage, the garrote attack fails.

Getting the Garrote in Place: To attack with a garrote, you must first loop the weapon over your opponent's head and work it into place around his neck. You must be able to reach the target's head, so you normally cannot garrote an opponent two or more size categories larger than yourself. However, if such an opponent is sitting or lying down, or you are attacking from overhead, a garrote attack might still be possible.

To begin a garrote attack, you must make a successful melee touch attack to grab your opponent. Unlike a normal melee touch attack, you do not ignore all your opponent's armor, since you might not be able to place the garrote properly if your foe's neck is protected. To determine the opponent's AC against a garrote attack, apply the appropriate modifiers from the table below.

Armor Type	AC Modifier Against Garrote Attack
Natural armor	Normal protection
Full plate	+4 armor bonus
Leather collar*	+4 bonus
Gorget*	+10 bonus

*Described in *Song and Silence.*

If you fail to hit with your melee touch attack, your garrote attack fails. If you are entitled to multiple attacks in a round, you can attempt to place the garrote multiple times.

Strangle: Make a grapple check. You do not automatically lose the grapple check if your opponent is two or more size categories larger than you are.

If you succeed, your opponent is considered grappled and has started to strangle. You immediately deal damage appropriate for the particular garrote you are using (see *Song and Silence* for details). Your Strength modifier applies to this damage, and if that modifier is a bonus, you get one and one-half times that bonus if you use both hands in the attack. If you fail the grapple check, you legs receive a +4 bonus to this save. A creature that moved at least 50 feet that round also takes 1d3 points of damage, plus 1d3 points per 10 feet of movement beyond 50. Locating a spider wire trip wire requires a DC 15 Spot check under normal lighting conditions.

Any creature that enters a square equipped with a neck-height spider wire must make a DC 15 Reflex save or take 1d6 points of damage, provided that the wire is positioned at the correct height to make contact with its neck. A creature one size category smaller than the intended target can pass freely under the wire, and a creature one or more size categories larger is affected as if by the trip wire version. For each 10 feet of movement beyond 30 that the creature moved, it takes an additional 1d6 points of damage. Noticing a spider wire placed at this height requires a DC 10 Spot check under normal lighting conditions.

Spider wire comes on a spool in a 10-foot length. It has hardness 2 and 2 hp, and only slashing weapons can damage it. It has a break DC of 16. Spider wire can also be used to make a garrote attack (see the Garrote Attacks sidebar).

Tracing Dust: Ordinarily invisible to the naked eye, this powder adheres to anything it touches (or that touches it). When sprayed with an accompanying solution, a chemical reaction causes the powder to turn bright blue. Spies sprinkle this powder over various items in order to track who has handled them. When someone touches a treated item, the dust sticks to their hands and can be revealed if sprayed with the revealing agent. Tracing dust is sold in small jar-shaped containers with perforated lids that function like saltshakers.

Tracing Vellum: This finely crafted vellum is so thin as to be almost transparent, and it comes in 1-foot square sheets. Spies use tracing vellum to copy maps and other sensitive documents quickly.

When placed over a map, book, or other writing, a sheet of this paper allows the user to trace the image with great precision. The time required for tracing varies, but it usually takes 1 minute for a simple image, 10 minutes for an image of moderate complexity, and 1 hour for a complicated drawing. Tracing vellum grants a +2 circumstance bonus on Forgery checks made to reproduce text, maps, or pictures.

The price of tracing vellum reflects the difficulty inherent in creating such thin, fine sheets.

This kit is designed to load down the spy with enough hidden weapons and gadgets to accomplish any mission.

Wax Impression Block: When a key is pressed into this block of soft wax, a qualified craftsman can use the impression to make a working copy without having the actual key in hand. Since using a keymaking set requires special equipment and skill, it is often more cost effective to pay an outside party to craft a copy. In other cases, it is simply inconvenient for a spy on a deep cover assignment to carry a keymaking set without arousing suspicion. The wax impression block allows a spy to carry the shape of a key to a location of solitude where the key itself can be created.

ESPIONAGE KITS

A spy can purchase any of the following prebuilt "kits" for use during particular kinds of missions. In general, the best kits are those that allow the spy to blend in with the local populace. For example, the most effective way to infiltrate a smithy is usually to appear as a blacksmith. Any weapons provided with the kit are of standard quality, although the purchaser may replace them with others of his choice by paying the full cost of the desired weapons.

Deceiver's Kit: The deceiver's kit is designed to load down the spy with enough hidden weapons and gadgets to accomplish his mission while making him appear to be an ordinary person. The three different types of deceiver's kits are as follows.

Artisan's Deceiver Kit: This kit allows a spy to impersonate an artisan of the desired sort but still carry hidden weapons and other spy gear. It includes an artisan's outfit, masterwork artisan's tools of the appropriate type, spring dart boots, a spool of spider wire, a garrote ring, and a modular short sword.

Commoner's Deceiver Kit: This kit comes with a peasant's outfit, two spy buttons (one thundering and one smoke) of plain styling, a modular long sword, a dagger, a quarterstaff, a pair of climbing boots, and a smuggler's belt.

Courtier's Deceiver Kit: This kit comes with a noble's outfit equipped with three elaborately styled spy buttons (one flash, one smoke, and one thundering), a poison ring, a signet ring, a modular hand crossbow, ten hand crossbow bolts, a cord shirt, three sheets of tracing vellum, ink pen and ink, and a pair of spring dart boots.

Infiltrator's Kit: While most spies rely on their charm and ability to bluff to get them into secure locations, sometimes a covert entry is required. This kit comes with an infiltrator's outfit, a spool of spider wire, a bag of caltrops, a collapsible grappling hook, and 50 feet of black silk rope. This kit costs 50 gp.

Second-Story Kit: This kit is designed for spies who need to access targets high off the ground. A second-story kit comes with an infiltrator's outfit, a spider, 100 feet of black silk rope, a collapsible grappling hook, a pair of climbing boots, ten pitons, a hammer, and a set of masterwork thieves' tools (for getting through locked windows at the top of the climb). This kit costs 216 gp.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Always looking for an edge, spies are happy to use magic to aid their endeavors. Below are some items your DM might make available to PCs. Spies prefer magic weapons that are neither flashy nor large. The best weapons are those that allow the wielder to get out of a scrape as quickly as possible. However, such items do detect as magical, so most spies take care to mix a few mundane items into their gear so as not to be deprived of all their tricks in case of detection.

Forgetful: This property can be placed only on a bludgeoning weapon. On a critical hit, a creature struck by a forgetful weapon must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save, or the creature also loses all memory of the events that occurred within the previous hour, including faces, actions, and names. The creature may defend itself normally and does not lose prepared spells because of this ability, regardless of when they were prepared.

Moderate enchantment; CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *modify memory*; Price +1 bonus.

Amulet of Authority: Spies who routinely attempt to bluff their way into heavily guarded areas find this amulet especially useful. Three times per day, the user can change the appearance of the amulet, causing it to appear as any symbol or badge that he has seen before. When so disguised, it grants the wearer a +10 bonus on Bluff and Intimidate checks made to pass himself off as a person of authority in an organization that the opponent is familiar with. If the user attempts to pretend he is a member of a group that the opponents are not familiar with, the amulet provides only a +5 bonus. For example, if a user tries to pass himself off to a Royal Guard as a fellow member of that organization, he gains the full +10 bonus. But if he tries to tell the guard that he is a member of the Secret Police (which the guard has not heard of), the bonus is only +5.

Faint transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *glibness, silent image;* Price 6,250 gp.

Amulet of Dramatic Death: This powerful item activates when the wearer sustains enough damage to nearly kill her (reduced to -1 hit points or less). When activated, the amulet negates enough of the damage from the attack to bring the wearer to 0 hit points. In addition, the wearer instantly gains the benefit of the *mislead* spell, except the illusory double appears in place of the wearer, falling prone in a convincing display of death. The wearer is instantly teleported 30 feet away in a random direction, invisible (per *mislead*) and now able to limp away to safety. The teleport effect never places the wearer in danger, so if she reaches -1 hit points in an environment with no safe area within 30

Spies prefer magic weapons that are neither flashy or large, and that allow them to get out of a scrape as quickly as possible.

don't start strangling your opponent or dealing damage. Instead your opponent slips free and is no longer considered grappled.

Move in: Unless you used a locking garrote (see *Song and Silence*) to make your attack, you must move into the target's space in order to maintain the strangle. Doing so provokes attacks of opportunity from threatening enemies, but not from your target.

Maintaining a Garrote Attack: Once you have a garrote in place, have won the grapple check, and have moved into your opponent's space, you can continue to deal garrote damage with successful grapple checks as often as you are entitled to attempt them. If you can make multiple attacks in a round, you can use them to attempt grapple checks to deal damage. The garrote remains in place until you release your opponent or until it escapes your hold.

Unless you used a locking garrote to make your attack, you and your opponent are considered grappled while you maintain the attack. You cannot attempt to pin your opponent during your garrote attack, nor can you attack with another weapon.

While You're Being Garroted: Being garroted is just like being grappled, except that you take normal damage. You can attempt to escape the garrote by making a successful grapple check on your turn. You can also attack with a light weapon. Spellcasting is difficult, since you cannot use any verbal or somatic components. You may cast spells requiring only material components or focuses if you already have them in hand. If the spell is one that you can cast while being strangled, you must still make a Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level) to avoid losing it.

Cutting a garrote from your own throat is possible, but difficult. When buried in your neck, the garrote is AC 21. In addition, you take a -4 penalty on your attack, since you must try to avoid cutting your own neck. You cannot use the disarm action against an attacker who has a garrote wrapped around your neck.

feet, the mislead effect begins but with the wearer occupying the same space as her illusory double. Any ability that would normally penetrate *mislead* automatically pierces the illusory effects of the amulet.

An *amulet of dramatic death* is built with three charges. An amulet found as part of treasure typically has 1d2 charges remaining.

Moderate illusion; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *mislead, teleport;* Price 70,000 gp; Weight —.

Chime of Secrecy: When struck, this plain metal chime not only produces no sound, but it also dampens other noise within the area. Once per day, the user can strike the chime to produce a *zone of silence*. In addition, while this effect is active, the user becomes aware of any scrying attempt as if affected by the *detect scrying* spell.

Moderate divination and illusion; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *detect scrying, zone of silence;* Price 12,600 gp.

Clockwork Messenger: This intricate, clockwork device resembles a full-sized raven. The messenger has a small, concealed hollow within its body that can accommodate a Fine object, such as a folded map or vial. According to legend, spies of an ancient gnome culture that relied on intricate machines to befuddle enemies created the first *clockwork messengers*.

On command, the *clockwork messenger* animates, becoming a construct with the same ability scores as a raven (see *Monster Manual,* page 278), except that it has no Constitution score. In this configuration, the clockwork messenger can memorize a spoken message that takes up to 1 hour to recite. Once the message is complete, the user names the location of the intended recipient. The *clockwork messenger* then takes wing and flies nonstop until it reaches the named destination, taking the most direct route possible. Upon arrival, the *clockwork messenger* repeats the message in its activator's voice. Once per day, a *clockwork messenger* may use *freedom of movement* (caster level 7th). It does so to escape capture or impediments.

The *clockwork messenger* cannot attack. It has a +5 natural armor bonus, hardness 10, and 1 hit point.

Moderate divination and transmutation; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *animate object, find the path, freedom of movement, message;* Price 4,500 gp.

Diplomatic Pouch: *Diplomatic pouches* are coveted items among nations that have agreed to a certain degree of diplomatic immunity for one another's representatives. The *diplomatic pouch* is a large, finely crafted leather purse, complete with a metal clasp and lock that can hold items weighing up to 10 pounds. It is typically embossed with the symbol of the nation that owns it, and arcane sigils cover the outside edges and the entire interior. Despite its fragile appearance, the pouch has damage reduction 10/magic, acid resistance 10, and fire resistance 10. The lock (Open Lock DC 30) resists *knock* and *dispel magic* spells as if it had spell resistance 15. A failed Open Lock check made to pick the lock releases a powerful shock that deals 5d6 points of electricity damage.

Strong abjuration; CL 9th; Craft Wondrous Item, *arcane lock, resist energy, shocking grasp, spell resistance;* Price 30,000 gp, Weight 2 lb.

The messenger has a small concealed hollow within its body that can accommodate a folded map or vial.

Elixir of Perception: Consuming this liquid enhances the imbiber's senses for 1 hour, granting the drinker a +4 bonus on Open Lock and Disable Device checks, and a +4 bonus on Spot, Search, and Listen checks.

Faint transmutation; CL 3th; Craft Wondrous Item, *cat's grace, fox's cunning, owl's wisdom;* Price 1,000 gp.

Eyepiece of the Clear Wall: This hollow metal cone is 6 inches long and 4 inches across at the wide end, which is fitted with a clear crystal. Anyone who places the wide end against a solid object, such as a wall or chest, can peer through the narrow end and see what is on the other side of the intervening barrier. The eyepiece allows the user to peer through up to 6 inches of stone or masonry, 1 foot of wood, or 1 inch of metal. If the barrier exceeds those limits, the viewer sees only darkness. The eyepiece is usable three times per day, and the effect lasts for as long as the eyepiece is pressed against the object.

Faint divination; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience/clairvoyance;* Price 15,000 gp.

Earpiece of the Hollow Wall: The *earpiece of the hollow wall* looks like the eyepiece of the clear wall, except that the wide end is covered with a thin, durable skin. Anyone who places the earpiece against a wall or door can hear sounds as if he were standing on the other side of the intervening barrier. The earpiece has the same thickness lim-

ESPIONAGE EQUIPMENT

Item	Cost	Weight
Special Substances and Items		
Catstink	250 gp	—
Slumberweed	500 gp	—
Spy button		
Flash	50 gp	1/2 lb.
Smoke	30 gp	1/2 lb.
Thundering	40 gp	1/2 lb.
Tongueloose	150 gp	—
Mundane Equipment		
Climbing boots	25 gp	1 lb.
Collapsible grappling hook	3 gp	2 lb.
Cord shirt	20 gp	5 lb.
Drop sheath	600 gp	—
False scabbard	15 gp	1 lb.
Glass cutting ring	500 gp	—
Hollow boots	15 gp	2 lb.
Infiltrators outfit	6 gp	2 lb.
Keymaking set	50 gp	1 lb.
Masterwork	110 gp	1 lb.
Listening cone	10 gp	—
Smuggler's belt	4 gp	—
Spider	50 gp	3 lb.
Spider wire	10 gp	—
Tracing dust (with agent)	20 gp	—
Tracing vellum (1 sheet)	10 gp	—
Wax impression block	5 sp	1/2 lb.
Espionage Kits		
Deceiver's kit		
Artisan	341 gp	13 lb.
Commoner	266 gp	14 lb.
Courtier	501 gp	6 lb.
Infiltrator's kit	50 gp	13 lb.
Second-Story kit	216 gp	24 lb.

itations as the *eyepiece of the clear wall* (see above).

Faint divination; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *clairaudience/clairvoyance;* Price 15,000 gp.

Homing Bag: When the command word for this item is spoken, the *homing bag* and any items contained within are magically teleported to a specific location. About the size of a large coin purse, *homing bags* are used by spies to send messages and important items back to their employers. Alternatively, a *homing bag* might be created in order to transport an item into a well-guarded location. The destination must be within ten miles of the *homing bag* for the magic to work. The bearer of the bag can set a new destination for items in the bag once per day, as a standard action. A *homing bag* can hold up to 20 pounds of items.

Strong transmutation; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, *teleport object;* Price 55,000 gp.

Mantle of the Mundane: This cloak makes the wearer appear completely commonplace. In fact, he looks so average that he receives a +10 bonus to Hide checks while wearing it and attempting to blend into a crowd. In addition, those attempting to place or remember the wearer later must make a DC 14 Will save to actually remember any details about the individual, including hair or eye color, dress, possessions, height, weight, or even gender.

Faint illusion; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *invisibility;* Price 10,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Necklace of Inflection: This slender gold choker is set with a small emerald, which covers the center of the wearer's throat. When worn, the necklace allows the wearer to understand and speak any language she hears spoken. In addition, if the wearer spends 1 minute listening to a particular creature, she may choose to precisely mimic its speech patterns, gaining a +10 bonus on Bluff checks made to pass herself off as that creature. The necklace of inflection is most commonly worn with a disguise.

Faint transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *glibness, tongues;* Price 160,000 gp.

On command, the scabbard and weapon inside it take on the appearance of an innocuous, non-weapon item of similar size.

Scabbard of Deception: This unadorned and slightly battered scabbard appears to be the correct size to accommodate a longsword, but it can grow or shrink to hold any straight-bladed weapon, from a dagger to a greatsword sized for a Large creature. On command, the scabbard of deception and the weapon inside it take on the appearance of an innocuous, nonweapon item of roughly the same size, such as a walking stick, a tool, or a scroll case (user's choice). This illusion remains in effect for as long as the scabbard is in the owner's possession, or until the weapon is drawn. In addition, the scabbard of deception and the weapon it holds are protected by a *Nystul's magic aura* effect to make it seem nonmagical.

Faint illusion; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *major image, Nystul's magic aura;* Price 16,000 gp.

Vellum of Copying: *Vellum of copying* is made from the same superior material as tracing vellum (see above) and comes in the same 1-foot square sheets. When placed on top of a document, book, or map, *vellum of copying* reproduces the text and images with near-perfect clarity (a viewer can detect it is a copy with a DC 30 Forgery check). *Vellum of copying* can also copy the text from magic scrolls and spellbooks, though none of the actual magic is transferred. Thus, the spells so reproduced cannot be cast or memorized from the vellum, but a spellcaster can use *read magic* to discern their nature. Copying a page of text with the vellum requires a full-round action.

A single sheet of vellum can store up to fifty pages of copied text, which the user can access with a mental command. Once the storage capacity has been reached, the next attempt to copy text destroys the *vellum of copying*. Copied text may not be erased or replaced with new text.

In addition to the above functions, the vellum can act as a translating device. The user may choose to "expend" two pages worth of text capacity to cause one page of copied text to appear in any one written language that he knows.

Faint illusion; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *comprehend languages, illusory script;* Price 13,500 gp. D

ESPIONAGE WEAPONS

Weapon	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range Increment	Wt.	Type
Light Exotic Weapons							
Garrote ring	50 gp	1d6*	1d8*	18-20	–	–	S
Spring dart boots	65 gp	1d2	1d2	20	10 ft.	2 lb.	P
Light Melee Weapons							
Disguised Dagger	+50 gp	**	**	**	**	**	**
Poison ring	45 gp	1	1	20	–	–	P
Special							
Folding Bow	+75 gp	**	**	**	**	**	**
Modular Weapon	+150 gp	**	**	**	**	***	**

*Damage is per round of successful grappling.

**As base weapon.

***Total weight as base weapon. Each individual component weighs 1/5 of the total weapon weight.

2003

SMOKE and MIRRORS

Divinations in D&D

by Michael Mearls • illustrated Kennon James

The necromancer cackled with glee. His diabolic plans were in motion, and his undead army stood ready to carry out his commands. Here in the ancient tomb of Edlasmirge the Mighty, he should be able to focus and control his necromantic powers with the finesse of a god.

Suddenly a blinding flash filled the room—the residual effect of a teleport *spell. Before the necromancer could reach for his spell component pouch, the heroic paladin Sir Winston and his adventuring companions Malchior Spellmaster, Huxley the Swift, and Gutboy Barrelhouse were upon him. After a few moments, the necromancer lay dead in a pool of his own blood. The adventurers sheathed their weapons, pleased with their victory.*

"Well, that's our third one today," said Sir Winston. "Malchior, can you cast teleport *at least once more? I'd like to break Tuegan Irongrip's record if we could."*

The wizard pulled a gleaming mirror from his backpack. "Hold on a second," he said. "I need to get a fix on that criminal mastermind who's been plaguing Waterdeep. I have that cloak we tore off of him when he escaped us last week. What say we go after him next?"

If your D&D adventures often play out this way, then your players have probably learned how to use divination spells to their best advantage. If you're one of the many DMs who relies on surprise and misinformation to keep players on their toes, the extensive use of divinations can not only put a serious crimp in your style, it can also decrease the level of player enjoyment in the long run. After all, half the fun of dungeon crawling is never having a clear idea what lies beyond the next door. That sentiment goes double for urban adventures, which generally focus on role-playing and investigation. Even wilderness adventures tend to rely on the unknown, since adventurers always risk becoming lost and having to wander the land aimlessly until they can regain their bearings.

To retain an element of surprise, you as DM must be prepared to deal with the ramifications of spells such as *find the path, scrying,* and *locate object.* Although these spells are not terribly powerful on their own, they constitute a new kind of end-the-adventure magic when combined with *teleport* and similar travel-enhancing spells. When used in the proper combination, many of the divination spells have the potential to turn an exciting adventure into an exercise in boredom. The information presented here can help you account for the presence of such spells in the game and prepare for their use. In addition, the tips offered below on how to maximize the utility of divinations can improve the survivability of PCs and NPCs alike.

USING DIVINATION SPELLS

Players who are new to D&D often underestimate the power and utility of the divination spells. Hammering an opponent with *fireballs* seems far more exciting than watching him with *scrying,* but a well-timed divination can put a spellcaster in an excellent position to blast away at an opponent with flashier magic.

Knowledge is Power

Spells from the divination school provide characters with extra information, and there is no better tool for planning strategy. In general, the more you know about a hazard or an opponent, the more effectively you can deal with it.

One of the most useful aspects of divination spells is that they allow you to choose the time and place of a confrontation. For example, if your spells reveal that a powerful villain is hiding at a nearby inn, you can arrange to ambush him when he's at his weakest, rather than attacking

him when he has all his protections in place. With surprise on your side, you can take the time to fortify yourself with short-duration spells that improve your fighting ability (such as *bull's strength*) while denying your enemy the same opportunity.

Forewarned is Forearmed

Divination spells can also keep you out of trouble. If you can peer around a corner or spy on a powerful opponent, you can find out about traps, ambushes, and other threats before you stumble into them. The easier it is to handle an encounter, the more hit points, spells, potions, and scrolls you can reserve for dealing with the next.

The ability to spy out an enemy's defenses is also incredibly valuable. It's bound to ruin your day if you've loaded up on fire spells only to learn that the troll king wears *+1 chainmail of greater fire resistance* or carries several potions of *protection from energy (fire).* Had you known that up front, you could instead have readied spells and attacks that employed acid to overcome his regeneration.

COMMON DIVINATIONS

This section offers advice and commentary about several of the most commonly used divination spells. These entries include tips and ideas on how DMs can use these spells to lead a party astray, as well as the shortcomings of the spells that NPCs might use to avoid the worst of the divinations' effects.

Detect Chaos/Evil/Good/Law

Because these spells can quickly reveal an NPC's true nature, they can be particularly useful tools when dealing with strangers. On the other hand, they are by no means foolproof in determining the advisability of association with a particular NPC.

For example, an evil character might be willing to work with a good party against a mutual enemy, while a good NPC might have selfish reasons for tricking others. For example, a good cleric who wants to recover an artifact for his church because he knows of specific good works that his superiors could do with it might intentionally offer misleading information about its location to others. A *detect good* spell shows that he has a pure heart, but it cannot show the motivations behind his actions. By the same token, an assassin might slip a PC some information about a crime lord who works with slave traders. Although a divination might accurately reveal him as evil, his childhood experiences as a slave might nonetheless compel him to battle against the crime lord in question. The moral is that although the various detect spells are useful tools, it's unwise to place too much faith in them.

Detect Scrying

While this spell cannot prevent a creature from spying on someone, it does alert the target to the attempt. It can also afford the target character the opportunity to peek at the spy. The description of this spell does not provide a means for the viewer to detect its use, so unless the caster of the *scrying* spell is also using *detect magic,* she might well remain ignorant of the fact that she has been caught spying. Such an edge gives the subject a chance to feed the spy false information or mask his presence with *invisibility* or a similar spell.

Discern Lies

While this spell might seem like a good tool for use against captives and others whom the PCs wish to question, it is useless against NPCs who do not know the truth or who believe false information to be true. A villain might intentionally plant false stories with his underlings just to throw investigators off his trail. Thus, while this spell can prove useful, never rely on it as a foolproof solution.

Discern Location

This spell provides a precise, verbal description of a single creature's location. The key drawback is that a verbal description might not be useful without research. If the creature is hiding on another plane, for example, days or even weeks of work might be needed to uncover a usable map or a description of its geography. In many ways, this spell is a good starting point for an investigation, but it can serve as a direct bridge to an opponent only if the caster is familiar with that creature's hiding place.

On the other hand, *discern location* is an excellent tool for keeping track of a creature over the course of a few days or even weeks. Repeated uses can give the caster an idea of the target's plans based on its movements. Furthermore, once a pattern of movement has been established, it's a relatively easy matter to predict the enemy's path and move to intercept.

Find the Path

The perfect spell for dungeon and wilderness expeditions, *find the path* can save PCs a lot of grief and speed them past difficult mazes and other obstacles. However, while a spell that alerts the user to traps, gives away passwords to *glyphs of warding,* and overcomes other barriers might seem perfect, it has one potentially crippling drawback: It always points out the shortest route, which might not be the best option. The path it indicates could bypass a long, hidden passage that leads around a dragon's lair, or it could lead characters along a well-traveled route that is rife with monsters and guards.

A particularly clever villain, anticipating that heroes might use *find the path* to reach her inner sanctum, could easily create a simple, direct path to it for the spell to find. Of course, that path would lead through a chamber filled with poison gas or an area guarded by a swarm of deadly, ethereal monsters. In fact, the chances are excellent that the shortest path to any well-guarded destination also has the heaviest defenses, whether or not the enemy actually anticipates the use of this spell. For that reason, *find the path* is best used to escape a location rather than to penetrate an enemy stronghold.

Locate Creature/Object

Because these spells have relatively short ranges compared with *scrying,* they are most useful for nailing down the exact position of a person or item once its general location is known. In addition, villains could easily use running water or thin coats of lead to mask an object or person from it.

Like *find the path, locate creature* and *locate object* are best used to help characters escape a situation or dangerous area. For example, *locate object* is a great tool for finding a ladder or stairway out of a dungeon. However, it's not very useful for finding a stolen object unless the caster has the time and resources to use it multiple times,

since the task might well require canvassing a large area.

A character who can cast *locate creature* or *locate object* several times, however, could use it to track an object as it moves. For example, a character assigned to guard something could use this spell to track the movements of any thieves or kidnappers who snatch the protected person or item.

Scrying

Perhaps the most useful and flexible of the divination spells, *scrying* allows the caster to uncover additional information about a creature that she might have seen only briefly. Since the target gets a Will save to resist, the spell is best used against fighters, strong but dim monsters, and other opponents that lack magical ability. Not only do such creatures usually have poor Will saves, they also lack access to *detect scrying* and other countermeasures that could cause the spell to backfire.

If the desired target is a spellcaster, consider watching one of his minions or henchmen instead. For example, a necromancer might keep several blackguards as bodyguards. The observable area for a *scrying* spell extends 10 feet around a target, so the caster could still watch the necromancer if his bodyguards remain close to him. Even if they don't, watching a bodyguard's movements might allow the caster to infer the necromancer's location. Such an indirect use of this spell can foil many of the usual countermeasures while revealing information that is almost as useful as direct observation. And if the target creature does save against *scrying*, the caster can simply work her way through a list of the target's associates and allies. Since this spell transmits both sounds and images, the user might overhear an important clue about her actual target as well.

Scrying can also be used to check in on an ally. A friendly target can forgo his save against its effects, allowing the caster to watch over him and possibly establish communication through the use of additional spells such as *message.* An ally under the effect of *scrying* could enable the caster to observe an opponent simply by moving close to him. This tactic doesn't counter *detect scrying,* since that spell reveals all *scrying* sensors within its range, but it can prove useful against monsters with high spell resistance and good Will saves.

By the same token, *scrying* is an excellent tool for tracking down kidnap victims and other creatures that need rescuing. If a villain demands a ransom, you can view the captive to ensure that he is being treated well, and perhaps to gain a clue as to his prison's nature and location.

When using *scrying,* pay attention to minor clues that can help provide context for a viewing. One jail cell is much like any other, but its construction or design might provide an important clue. Sunlight, for example, indicates an above-ground location. If an area is utterly dark even when viewed at noon, it is probably either underground or far enough away that the sun has yet to rise there.

Scrying forms a potent combo with *teleport.* A wizard who can study a foe's location can simply transport herself and her allies directly to that spot and attack him. In the same way, she can go right to the place where a kidnap victim is being held and whisk the captive away with a second spell. This tactic can be risky, since *teleport* relies on the caster's familiarity with the target location to function properly. Leaping into an unknown, dangerous area could prove fatal—the

blank stone walls viewed through *scrying* could be in the middle of a barracks or in a heavily trapped area. On the other hand, the advantage of surprise could very well make the attempt worth the risk.

Like any other divination spell, *scrying* does have its limitations. The fact that *scrying* also transmits sound (see official *Player's Handbook* errata) can make it difficult to gain useful information in some circumstances. For instance, a character who knows he is being watched could simply wander into an area with a lot of sound or other commotion and whisper warnings to his friends that would be difficult to overhear.

DM ADVICE

Planning for PC use of divination spells can be a headache when designing adventures and managing a campaign. If the characters have the ability to uncover every surprise and trick you have in store for them, the game can quickly become dull and predictable. Thus, you must learn how to craft situations in which divinations are useful but do not give all the answers. The following tips can provide some guidance in bringing divinations under control.

The Dungeon Master's Golden Rule

Never design adventures that simply nullify the characters' abilities. Measures that prevent the characters from using their benefits make the game less fun for the players. After all, they designed their characters with specific ideas and goals in mind, and they expect to be able to use the abilities that they've given up other options to acquire. If you simply deny them those benefits, they might grow bored with the game and even come to resent your DMing style. A D&D campaign is not a competition between the DM and the players, nor is it a theatre in which the players sit back and watch the DM's performance. It is a group activity in which everyone can have fun.

The above advice does not mean that you should pull any punches when designing monsters and NPCs. They too should have a fair chance to use their abilities. An evil cleric should bolster his undead followers, and a smart fire giant can acquire magic items to protect him from cold damage. By the same token, intelligent opponents should prepare for the party's *scrying* attempts. For example, a powerful NPC wizard might cast *detect scrying* each day. That spell does not prevent a *scrying* attempt, but it does put the characters at a disadvantage because their enemy knows they're watching him and has a chance to scry them in return. Just be sure to account for his use of that spell each day.

Villains who know the characters' abilities should take steps to counter them. As long as you remain within the game rules, you're doing your job if you take pains to prepare appropriate challenges for the PCs. Thus, it pays to spend an NPC's gold piece allotment for magic items intelligently. Gold that you spend to equip him with defensive items takes away from his offensive abilities, and vice versa, but that's as it should be. An NPC's gear value (see page 127 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) is balanced for his level and the party's. If you arbitrarily award him immunities or extra magic items, you risk throwing your game out of balance. Keep it fair and account for your villains' benefits honestly, and you should be able to keep your campaign both exciting and fun.

Divination Spells and Adventure Design

Give your NPCs access to the same benefits the PCs have, and use them just as intelligently. As the PCs gain access to *scrying* and other powerful divinations, their opponents should as well. Look over the advice given above about using specific divination spells to best advantage and apply it to your villains. For example, an evil wizard who has tangled with the characters in the past and expects to fight them again might choose to keep watch over the party's fighter or rogue to track the characters' movements.

Don't allow the PCs to control the tempo of the game. The NPCs are just as capable of using divinations to chase down opponents and catch them by surprise as the PCs are. For instance, an evil wizard might use *teleport* to assault the characters while they sleep. Or he could watch while they prepare to attack him and ready an unexpected surprise, such as additional guards or followers disguised so as to conceal their true abilities and plans. A smart villain capable of pinpointing the party's location could dispatch waves of opponents to wear them down before arriving to finish them off. Alternatively, he might wait until he sees that the characters are injured or in a difficult situation, such as traveling down a narrow path along a cliff, before launching an attack.

Any NPC, regardless of level, can take a number of mundane precautions to prevent effective spying. Since *teleport* draws on familiarity with an area's distinctive features, a cunning villain could make the basic design of all his rooms the same and order his servants to move his furnishings around periodically or use *invisibility* to cloak them. In that case, a party using the *scrying/teleport* combination could arrive in any one of dozens of spots in the villain's lair.

Most high-level wizards, especially those with many enemies, should keep *detect scrying* active at all times. After all, a spellcaster should have good reason to worry about unwanted intrusions. Some casters might prefer to carry scrolls containing the spell, while others might simply prepare and use it on a regular basis. Wizards of 7th-10th level might not want to use it all the time, but a 15th-level or higher caster is important enough to have enemies and has a large enough spell allotment to use *detect scrying* each day without seriously diminishing his combat capacity.

Gathering items, hair, and other tokens from opponents provides a significant edge in scrying, and there are many ways to accomplish this task. A PC archer might think twice about firing more arrows at opponent if the fellow picks up one that missed and runs to deliver it to his master. Alternatively, an evil spellcaster could use *charm monster* or some other means to bind an ethereal filcher to his service for the express purpose of gathering objects to use with *scrying*. If the PCs stay at an inn, a spy in the employ of their enemy could easily slip into their rooms after they have left and collect hairs from their pillows. A corrupt innkeeper could even establish a black-market business in trading personal items that he collects from people who have stayed at his establishment.

Tracking Information Over Time

When villains use divinations against the PCs, keep track of what they learn. A wizard might watch an enemy fighter every day for a month to study his tactics and see whether he relies heavily on a specific weapon or combination of feats. Because *scrying* covers a reasonable area, the wizard might also be able to keep tabs on the rest of the party at the same time. Or, if he has time and enough spells, he might also attempt to view a few characters who are more likely to resist or detect the spell.

Keep track of the times that a spellcaster observes the party. You can assume that an NPC keeps a reliable schedule for his scrying attempts, or you can roll to determine randomly when an attempt begins. If you choose the latter method, roll 1d12 and 1d6 for each attempt. If the d6 result is 4 or higher, add 12 to the 1d12 result. The result is the hour in military time that the *scrying* begins.

PC Saves Against Scrying

The characters' Will saves against scrying should be handled in such a way that merely making them does not clue the players in to what's happening. Otherwise, the players might become suspicious and take actions against observation. After all, even the best players sometimes have trouble separating what they know from what their characters know.

There are two ways to manage the saving throw process to throw off player suspicion. One is to make the characters' saves yourself, in secret. The other is to ask for ten Will saves from each character at the start of the game session. Write down each player's results on an index card and randomly pick one from the list when you need it, applying any additional situational modifiers (such as benefits from spells or circumstances) that the character would be entitled to at the time you use the save. Remove the results you have used from your list as the session progresses. This method allows you to use saving throws in secret with a minimum of fuss, and it is especially effective if you occasionally make a mark on your list for no reason at all.

NPC Uses for Divinations

Divination spells can combine with *dominate person* in interesting ways. The latter spell's range entry applies only to its initial casting; thereafter, the telepathic bond has infinite range. The first order a villain might issue to a *dominated* victim is not to resist any *scrying* attempts against him (that is, to forego his save). Then, while observing his victim, the villain can command her pawn to ruin the party's plans or put his comrades in grave danger. For example, a character might be compelled to dump a potion on the ground, or refuse to attack a monster. *Dominate person*'s long duration allows the enemy spellcaster to maintain control of her subject for an extended period, during which she can wreak havoc with the party's defenses. Since *protection from evil* (a relatively low-level spell) suppresses this effect, the villain might wait until an opportune moment to issue such commands. Otherwise, the PCs might be able to figure out what's going on with Sense Motive checks and protect their friend until they can break the spell.

The successful use of divinations does not have to result in direct attacks. A villain could instead employ them to learn about a character's family and friends and then use that information against her. A crusading warrior might have to think twice about attacking a villain who holds her parents captive. In the same vein, a devious spellcaster could unearth plenty of weaknesses in his enemies. If the characters or their friends habitually use passwords and hand signs to gain access to restricted areas, for example, an evil spellcaster could simply use *scrying* on the doorman and listen in on his conversations.

Plan Ahead for PC Divinations

Scrying is not a magic bullet that always delivers the truth. It merely grants a short-term, limited vision that can easily be misinterpreted. The PCs still have to analyze the information they uncover in order to make use of it. Thus, if you know that the characters are likely to use *scrying* to check on suspicious NPCs, engineer a situation designed to give watchers the wrong impression. For example, if the PCs suspect that a certain innkeeper is behind the recent disappearance of a paladin and use *scrying* to watch her, you could let them see her meeting with a known kidnapper. When they descend upon her, they discover that the kidnapper was holding her daughter captive, and she met with him to negotiate a ransom.

You can also use the PCs' divination spells to help drive the campaign's plotline. If you know that the players like to use *find the path,* for example, plan on giving them an important clue through that spell.

Of course, you need not always take steps to make divination spells less useful. After all, the clever use of a spell should result in a reward for the PCs, just like the clever use of any other ability. If they know that an evil cleric uses a particular enchanted mace in battle, the characters could use *locate object* to track down the villain without alerting him. Such an action gets around the *detect scrying* spell that the cleric's sorcerer minion employs and might even reveal an easier path to the villain's inner sanctum.

CONCLUSION

Divination spells can be problematical in a campaign, and sometimes it seems as if they take some of the fun out of the game, but with a little advance planning, the players shouldn't be able to catch you off guard with such spells. Of course, the players might come up with an especially smart use of a divination, for which they should be rewarded. Like anything else in the game rules, divination spells are a tool—not an all-powerful solution.

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by Dean Poisso · illustrated by Marc Sasso

Spies Like Us

Stealth for Stumblers

It's not an uncommon scenario: Your party must find a way to infiltrate an enemy stronghold but has no stealthy character available to do it. Perhaps your group's most tongue-tied fighter needs to find a way to pass through a heavily guarded checkpoint. Or maybe your highly conspicuous sorcerer is needed on the other side of a regularly patrolled corridor in the castle. Neither has any training as a rogue, so sneaking would be tough. What next?

In D&D, stealth matters and strategy is king. Woe to the fighter who tries to prowl about in his plate mail, or the cleric who attempts to fast-talk a guard into believing he's paying a simple house call to the castle's tyrannical overlord. Most non-rogues have precious few skill points to expend on the stealth skills that can make or break a group—especially on a cross-class basis. But a party might have no rogue at all, or get caught without access to the rogue's skills. In such situations, infiltration comes down to an intricately played team effort in which guile, strategy, and roleplaying are closely intertwined.

INFILTRATION: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Rogues can sail through the most tightly held strongholds with little interpersonal contact, usually on the strength of stealth alone. Few others, especially at low levels, can duplicate this trick. However, even heavily armored fighters and clerics can infiltrate a tightly guarded stronghold with the right ruse. It's all in the preparation. With a little wit and good roleplaying, even the most overt PC can become a master of infiltration. Stealthiness, after all, doesn't necessarily mean not being seen. It can also mean being seen but not recognized.

All standard infiltration techniques are designed to achieve one goal: Minimize the random outcomes that can occur during a mission. A character attempting to infiltrate an enemy stronghold must try to prevent eventualities such as meeting a prepared wizard, running across a magic trap that his party can't disarm, or crossing blades with a guard who is more highly skilled than the party's fighter. The best infiltration plans rely upon the entire skill set of a balanced party. To carry out a successful infiltration, an adventuring party must gain as much information about the target as possible and come up with a plan that includes a good cover story.

Casing the Joint

Planning is the key to a successful infiltration. Before a party can make an attempt at breaking into an enemy fortification, at least one member must obtain an accurate lay

of the land. A rogue with ranks in Gather Information or a wizard or sorcerer equipped with plenty of divination spells should be able to get enough information to create a good cover. In addition, a skilled rogue can scout the area for guard positions, patrols, and the like, so that party members who are less suited for infiltration can avoid unnecessary encounters that could blow their covers (or worse).

Whatever means the PCs employ to gain foreknowledge of what they face, the character casing the target should try to acquire the following information.

Number and Positions of Guards: The allocation of guards reveals which quarter of a stronghold has the heaviest protection and is therefore most likely to snag a PC whose story isn't convincing enough. The area with the least guards is most often the optimum point of entry.

Learning such details about a particular stronghold requires a successful Gather Information check. A wizard or sorcerer can obtain this information by scrying, and any character who can observe the stronghold firsthand can do it with a successful Spot check. Each PC equipped with this information can approach the structure based on foreknowledge of the guard positions and thus approach when listeners are far away or when keen-eyed guards are busy with some other task.

Disposition and Readiness of the Guards: Are the guards alert? Are they expecting interlopers? Are they lazy? Does their disposition change at certain times of the day or night? All this information is vital if your party is to avoid trouble.

Successful Sense Motive checks should allow a character to learn the best times to get past any given set of guards. Any PC equipped with such information can play upon the guards' concerns by interacting with them, possibly gaining a circumstance bonus to Bluff checks.

In addition, PCs can almost always play upon certain characteristics of guards to gain entry. Most guards are nothing more than paid employees, and not terribly bright ones at that (people of intellect and ambition likely hold a higher rank). As such, they are usually trusted with only a limited amount of information. Although their orders might be clear, a clever PC can almost always get guards to wonder whether an exception should be made. No guard wants to cause a scene with an important person who could make waves with his superiors, and the potential for personal embarrassment or even dismissal are quite high if he makes the wrong decision. Thus, guards rarely question individuals they believe to be of superior rank—not just militarily, but socially. If they have doubts about a visitor who appears to be an important person, they are quite apt to pass her up to someone with greater decision-making power—and that someone is usually inside the keep.

Type and Level of Civilian Interaction: Do ordinary citizens have access to the target structure? A truly locked-down stronghold is rare—and a dangerous nut to crack. Typically, infiltration of such a place must be reserved for high-level PCs who have powerful magical aids at their disposal. Most strongholds deal with the outside world to some extent, and their need for supplies, workers, and mundane services can literally and figuratively open the door to enterprising PCs.

From visiting dignitaries and religious leaders to work teams and porters, a multitude of outsiders crosses the threshold of a typical stronghold at some point. Castles rely heavily upon peasants who fish the moat, grow crops, and make deliveries throughout the day. Such an arrangement affords many opportunities to enter in the guise of a peasant. Alternatively, a stronghold of thieves might use a business, such as an inn or tavern, as a cover for its activities, allowing PCs to pass themselves off as patrons or employees. Whatever their nature, civilians moving in and out of a building make for easy cover.

A successful Gather Information check allows a character to discern whether or not specific civilians have access to the target location. For example, perhaps only porters from the Tumbling Barrel brewery are allowed into the inn after a certain hour; that's crucial knowledge for the PCs' attempt to bluff their way inside.

Amount of Outside Interaction: Do any outside organizations commonly interact with the infiltration target? Perhaps a nearby temple has clergy stationed there, or perhaps a local organization, guild, or noble sponsors the business or owns the location. Such situations open up numerous possibilities for access.

A successful Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (local) check can reveal whether any known religious order has influence in or access to the target location. If the castle the party wants to infiltrate is under the subtle influence of some religious organization, a priest with the right religious knowledge could teach fellow party members the proper procedures, thus enhancing their disguises. Or if a secular guild holds sway over the target location, a character with the right Profession skill could use her knowledge of the proper guild protocols to gain access for her party.

A Way Out: A detailed plan for getting into the target stronghold is vital, but equal attention must be given to an escape plan. A party should ideally exit a stronghold the same way that it entered, but this is not always possible. Complex ruses can require multiple guises to cover an evacuation. Without careful planning and consideration of departure routes, a failed infiltration attempt can easily lead to a total party kill.

Winning From Within

The time-honored tactic of securing inside help is usually quite effective in engineering an infiltration. An ally inside the target stronghold can provide writs, uniforms, and possibly other disguises as well, up to and including the clothing from the lord's own closet in some cases. Often, such turncoats can not only help the PCs gain direct entrance, but also give them a safe means of exiting.

This tactic works best when the PCs can find an actual turncoat in the target organization, but what if the stronghold's retainers are all loyal? In such a case, it might still be possible to get one of them to betray his fellows through blackmail, intimidation, or even diplomacy. Achieving such a goal requires finding out the target individual's habits and vices, either via Gather Information checks or by the time-honored method of surveillance.

If the target doesn't have any vices, the PCs can try to create some.

Buying the stronghold's steward a few too many drinks at a tavern or getting him into a situation that would compromise his reputation might provide some useful blackmail evidence. Alternatively, wining and dining the target should allow even the most stumble-tongued fighter to garner at least a +2 bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks made to gain the person's cooperation. Should those tactics fail, a successful Intimidate check coupled with threats of violence or worse might coerce the target into cooperating.

Cover Story

Prior to any infiltration attempt, each party member should concoct a plausible cover that takes advantage of her particular skill set. A cover might have several facets, but it almost always includes a bluff and a disguise.

A good cover usually includes a story that explains exactly why the character is there and offers solid proof of benign intent in case of questioning. This story amounts to an elaborate bluff. If several party members need to gain access to the target, they might all use the same story, or each might use a different one. A fighter's cover story might differ completely from a druid's, for example, since each would logically have a different reason for being there.

Bluffing is really little more than outright lying. PCs who have invested heavily in the Bluff skill can often pass off the most ludicrous claims with ease. Most PCs, however, do not have enough ranks in Bluff to make even white lies easy. Most players that have a PC that lacks ranks in Bluff never even bother to attempt a Bluff check because they assume that such a ploy has little or no chance of success. Properly couched, however, a good bluff can work even for the most inept speaker.

A good bluff always has an element of truth—the more truth, the better. A PC with a few ranks in Bluff can go a long way toward infiltrating a stronghold, as long as her lies are reasonable and properly padded with truth. For example, suppose a lowly, 2nd-level cleric needs a cover to get into a local baron's keep. Knowing that most guards are wary about causing a scene with a man of the cloth, he pretends to be a clergyman of significant rank in the baron's faith, accompanied by his acolytes (the rest of the party members). If the guards challenge the party, the cleric must roleplay his "authority" to full advantage, possibly calling upon someone else within the party who has several ranks in Bluff to reinforce his demand for entry.

A bluff such as this one is a winner because it includes everyone in the party and relies upon the guards' unwillingness to risk confrontation with an important person. Truly ingenious PCs can increase their chances for success by preparing full-blown disguises and magical illusions (see Magical Means, below) to reinforce their cover for as long as they remain inside the stronghold.

A good bluff for unskilled PCs is one that makes the targets want to believe the story so that they never bother to question the veracity of the party's claims. At her own discretion, the DM can impose up to a -5 penalty on Sense Motive checks made to oppose Bluff checks that the target wants to believe. The cover selected can be a key element in the target's attitude, so choose carefully.

A GOOD BLUFF ALWAYS HAS AN ELEMENT OF TRUTH. THE MORE TRUTH, THE BETTER.

Hiding in Plain Sight

The other aspect of a good cover is a disguise. An effective disguise is subtle, not overt. A fighter need not disguise himself as a damsel waiting to pay court to a noble if he could just as easily claim to be a wandering knight seeking hospitality. A cleric need not be disguised as a prince if he could play the part of a bishop seeking to pardon a robber baron in his own stronghold. Disguises that play to a character's strong points make it easy to hide in plain sight.

A PC with ranks in the Disguise skill can easily create a reasonable disguise based on obvious attributes. A fighter could be disguised as a military commander or a bodyguard, whereas a cleric could be disguised as a wandering apothecary or a seer who has come to visit a noble with an entourage of sycophants (the rest of the party). A real bard might travel with his "band" in tow, although such a ploy works better if the other party members also have ranks in Perform.

The best disguises are those that require little, if any, acting. A PC who adopts a basic disguise that requires only minimal physical changes gains a +5 bonus on her Disguise checks. Furthermore, the DM may impose a hefty penalty on the Spot checks of guards who are expecting someone that the PC resembles.

Props can do wonders to enhance a disguise. Since low-level guards rarely question anyone who seems important, PC disguises should boast appropriate symbols of authority. Bribery also goes a long way toward getting characters inside the gates, since guards are often underpaid and interested in a bit of extra income. In some cases, bribes are actually expected.

Most characters can fill any of several obvious roles when pulling off a simple ruse. In most cases, PCs other than the apparent leader do not need to say anything, thus avoiding complications caused by lack of specific knowledge.

Bards

Bards are usually quite adept at adopting other personas and charming their ways past opposition.

Master Entertainer: Everyone loves a bard, and bards are welcome throughout civilized nations. A bard can easily disguise himself as an entertainer of nearly any kind, and the rest of the characters can pose as his bandmates. Alternatively, if the party can afford to hire real entertainers, the other PCs might pose as the journeymen who carry all the gear.

Noble: Bards are quick-witted and understand the ways of high society. Thus, a bard typically has no difficulty passing himself off as a noble, and the rest of the party as his entourage. Wizards can pose as advisors to the

"noble," fighters as captains of the guard or bodyguards, and rangers as royal scouts.

Barbarians

Although they are not known for their subtlety, barbarians actually have several options for disguises.

Prisoner: Face it, a barbarian sticks out like a smashed lip in civilized society. Thus, unless the location the party is trying to infiltrate is dominated by barbarians, clamp the party barbarian in irons. If he comes in as a prisoner, he's less likely to be shot on sight, and the rest of the characters can easily pass themselves off as allies of those in the keep.

Slave: The slave ruse operates on the same premise as above. A barbarian slave in chains implies a situation that is under control, and most guards won't give such a slave a second glance.

FACE IT, A BARBARIAN STICKS OUT LIKE A SMASHED LIP IN CIVILIZIED SOCIETY.

Porter/Servant: Barbarians make excellent porters, and few guards are interested in frisking the help. Furthermore, porters often carry large objects in which weapons and armor can easily be stashed.

Clerics and Monks

Characters affiliated with religious orders have a number of options, including the following.

Seer: While not necessarily the best ruse, the role of the wandering seer can work for clerics, monks, and even druids. If the ruler of the target stronghold has any spiritual inclinations, he may listen to the portents of a wandering sage and his troupe of acolytes (the rest of the party).

Advisor: A cleric who poses as an advisor from a famous center of knowledge can often gain entry to places where adventurers would be unwelcome. A cleric of a war god, provided that his rank is high enough, should be able to win a consultation with a ruler easily.

Druids

Druids have more difficulty than most characters adopting roles that fit into civilized society. However, possibilities do exist.

Animal Handler: A druid can put her nature skills to use by playing a stable master, dog handler, falconer, bird handler, or the like. After all, a stronghold requires knowledgeable servants to run smoothly, and in many places they are not easy to come by.

Fighters and Rangers

Characters of these classes have a wide range of options from which to choose, since keeps always have need of retainers who can fight.

Military Officer: The officer role is always a good ruse for the right fighter. Clean-cut fighters with real skill should have no problem masquerading as high-ranking officers.

Rangers make outstanding provincial lords and military men. The rest of the PCs can serve as personal guards.

Mercenary: If the stronghold in question hires mercenaries, a fighter character is practically a shoo-in.

Bodyguard: Fighters are obvious choices as bodyguards for other party members who have better ruses. Playing a bodyguard allows the fighter to stay close to the action without having to interact and possibly blow everyone's cover.

Hunter: Strongholds that require a lot of food often employ professional hunters. Rangers and some fighters can gain easy access to a stronghold in such a capacity.

Wizards and Sorcerers

Characters who use magic are more common in civilized areas, but most keeps have use for at least a few educated individuals.

Alchemist/Sage: These specialists are usually more than welcome in a stronghold whose leader is up to no good. The lord might be seeking a recipe for an explosive compound or the key to a lost crypt. A wizard or sorcerer in the guise of a sage can claim to have the requisite knowledge, and one in the guise of an alchemist could even say that she knows how to turn lead into gold. Such a claim is almost certainly enough to get a character through the front door.

Scholar: If someone at the stronghold requires specialized knowledge, a wizard posing as a scholar can offer to provide it.

Rogues

Rogues have even more options than bards when it comes to adopting other roles. In fact, their options are nearly endless.

Anyone: A rogue with the right skills truly can stand in as anyone. Most rogues can get into a keep on stealth alone, without needing a ruse at all. If the party is to succeed, however, a rogue acting as the centerpiece of the ruse minimizes the chances for error by less skilled party members. For instance, a rogue could play a noble and do all the talking, leaving the others in the background.

MAGICAL MEANS

Magic is the great equalizer for characters who do not possess infiltration skills. A simple *alter self* spell can turn a frumpy party wizard into a dashing captain of the guard who can escort his "new recruits" past the security points inside a castle. A properly prepared wizard or sorcerer can manage an infiltration as easily as the best rogue.

The value of enchantment magic for infiltration should not be underestimated. A *charm person* spell cast on the right guard can give the PCs advantages up to and including the keys to the kingdom, providing that the PCs treat him well. *Invisibility, fly, knock, alter self, minor image,* and *major image* can all allow an arcane caster to bypass most mundane security.

Magic items can also be of tremendous value in infiltration. *Cloaks of elvenkind, rings of invisibility, rods of beguiling,* and *eyes of charming* are all quite useful. Mid- to high-level parties often employ more subtle gear, which can provide better benefits, but often at the cost of higher risk. Imagine a *portable hole* filled with PCs who breathe from a *bottle of air* they pass around! Only one character is needed to carry the entire party into the stronghold, so only one cover is necessary. Upon arriving at the destina-

tion, she opens the hole and the rest of the party leaps out, ready for trouble. Dozens of such possibilities exist, all usable in conjunction with the various strategies provided here.

The downside to relying upon low-level arcane magic for infiltration is that it's usually an all-or-nothing proposition. The moment the *invisibility* spell ends or someone disbelieves a *major image* spell, the alarm goes off unless the PCs are either very lucky or prepared with another plan. For this reason, low-level PCs should rely primarily on mundane means of infiltration, supplemented by magic when it's available.

SCENARIOS

The following scenarios demonstrate how both low-level and high-level PCs can make use of the infiltration fundamentals discussed above. You can use these scenarios as guides to develop ways for typically nonstealthy characters to gain access to places they could not normally penetrate.

LOW-LEVEL PCS SHOULD RELY PRIMARILY ON MUNDANE MEANS OF INFILTRATION.

The Delivery

The PCs must sneak into a warlord's stronghold and pass a scroll containing important information to the seneschal.

The Setup: The stronghold is a converted manor house fitted with battlements and surrounded by a freshly dug moat.

Factors: A judicious Gather Information check reveals that the stronghold is in need of lumber, produce, or some other material.

Strategies: Once the characters know what supplies are needed, they can work quickly to ensure that they are part of that delivery, using the time-honored "Trojan Horse" strategy if desired. Little or no bluffing is required, since the materials are expected. For example, a wagonload of ale barrels delivered to the front gate of a keep can provide outstanding cover for PC infiltrators, whether they disguise themselves as teamsters, hide in the barrels, or both.

If the stronghold is self-sufficient, the PCs might need to try a different tactic. To pull off such a ploy, the PCs must find a brewer, vintner, or other local entrepreneur who wishes to gain favor with the lord of the castle. They suggest that the businessman present the lord with a gift, such as a wagonload of wine casks, and offer themselves to make the delivery. The PCs can then deploy themselves as above.

In a similar ploy, one party member might present himself as a weaponsmith or armorsmith of great renown and offer to make an item for the lord. This ruse could allow the party to enter the stronghold as his assistants, ostensibly to take measurements for the crafting of the item or to actually help prepare the item itself.

The Party

In this scenario, the party needs to break into a local baron's keep.

The Setup: The keep is an old family residence consisting of a manor house and several outbuildings inside a protective wall with a single gate. Guards are posted around the clock.

Factors: The PCs determine through Gather Information that the baron is currently hosting festivities in honor of his guest, a countess from a neighboring kingdom. The countess has brought her own entourage, including personal bodyguards, and the baron has called for extra security at the keep during her stay.

Strategy: A quick trip to the tailor produces copies of the guard uniforms worn by the countess's troops, and a few additional gold pieces buy the tailor's promise of silence. With such disguises in hand, the PCs can concoct whatever cover story they need to get inside. Most guards would not think twice about allowing the guards of a visiting dignitary to pass, nor would they find it unusual to see one in a place where he shouldn't be. After all, it's not uncommon for visitors to get turned around in a foreign keep—it's probably happened to the baron's own guards when he has taken them on journeys. Thus, provided that the PCs can bluff their way past any challenges, the party should have no problem gaining access to the keep for a limited time.

Castle Infiltration

In this scenario, the PCs need to break into the main keep of a castle.

The Setup: Three curtain walls and a moat surround the main keep, and a heavily patrolled bailey yard separates the outer wall from the secondary wall and gate. The front of the castle sports a massive barbican with manned breastworks over a portcullis and drawbridge. A deep moat surrounds the whole.

In front of the moat stand four guards armed with pikes, covered by four archers on the crenellated barbican behind them. Manning the gate and drawbridge within the barbican are six guards armed with swords and bucklers.

Factors: Through judicious use of the Gather Information skill, the PCs determine that the guards in front of the castle change every 4 hours. The characters spend some gold and learn that out of the six rotations, three of the guards have gambling debts within the city, two are drunkards, and one has been stealing small valuables from the keep and fencing them in town. They also learn that the captain of the guard is a brewer of exceptional ability and brother to one of the town's inn owners. Finally, they discover that the seneschal is having torrid relationships with several ladies in town, and that when the lord of the manor is away (which he is at present), the seneschal sometimes invites his ladies to the castle.

Strategies: This castle is just what it appears to be: nearly impregnable to an army. Thankfully, the PCs are just trying to get inside it, not destroy it. Armed with the aforementioned information, even a low-level party can use any of several options.

Lady Friend: The PCs could pay one of the seneschal's lovelies from town to make a "surprise" visit to the castle. If they cannot afford a bribe, one PC could attempt a Bluff check, telling her that the seneschal has someone else up at the castle right now. In either case, the PCs offer themselves as her escorts. Not

NEW SPELLS

The spells presented below are examples of the magic used by those who know the value of stealth as a strategy.

GREATER KNOCK

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Targets: Doors, gates, boxes, chests, or other secured items, no two of which can be more than 20 ft. apart
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You open all stuck, barred, locked, *held,* or *arcane locked* doors or gates within the spell's area. Secret doors as well as locked boxes and chests and containers with trick openings also spring open. The spell loosens welds, shackles, and chains, provided they serve to hold closures shut. *Greater knock* dispels *arcane lock* immediately. In all cases, the door does not relock itself or become stuck again on its own. *Greater knock* also raises barred gates and similar impediments such as portcullises, but it does not affect ropes and vines. Each casting of the spell can undo as many as three means of preventing egress. Thus, if a door is locked, barred, and *held,* the spell can open it, but if there is another lock on the door, an additional casting is necessary.

PHANTOM OBJECTS

Illusion (Glamer)
Level: Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Targets: One willing creature per two levels, no two of which can be more than 30 ft. apart
Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will disbelief (if interacted with)
Spell Resistance: No

You create an illusion that the targets are finely crafted pieces of furniture, art, or statuary of the appropriate size. A target must remain still for 1 full round to activate the illusion. If it moves thereafter, the illusion is negated until it stops again and remains motionless for 1 full round. At that point, the illusion reactivates.

Anyone testing the "furniture," inspecting the "art," or otherwise interacting with a subject receives a saving throw to detect the hidden individual.

Material Component: A swatch of silk and a piece of polished granite.

wanting a scene in the front of the castle, the seneschal is sure to let them in, if only briefly. The situation could get sticky if the seneschal really does have another lady there, but that's all part of the adventure.

Bribe: Bribing the guards who have gambling problems is an excellent infiltration tactic. A guard who needs gold so badly should be an easy mark for a bribe. If the party gains his cooperation, the guard can sneak the group through the salley port during a shift rotation.

Drunken Party: A couple of party members loiter near the gate, bottles of liquor in hand, until one of the drunkard guards comes on patrol outside the walls. A friendly greeting and a tip of the tankard later, the drunkard has forgotten his duties and soon loses the shirt off his back, along with the rest of his uniform. In such a situation, the PCs might even be lucky enough to corner two guards and get both uniforms.

The two "new" guards can then attempt a bold tactic, such as bringing in a gang of "poachers" (the other PCs), or they can let the party in through another gate during a shift change.

Collectors: As above, the PCs can attempt to bribe any of the guards who have gambling debts. With the proper disguises and props, however, the characters might be able to pass themselves off as collectors and bribe the other guards to let them in so they can collect from their debtors without creating a scene in front of their superiors.

My Girl: A spell from one of the party's arcane spellcasters allows a character to assume the form of the seneschal's favorite girlfriend. She can then attempt to enter the castle with the rest of the party in tow as her entourage. Once the PCs get the seneschal alone, they can force him to quietly provide access to the main keep.

The Gift: The characters can arrange for a huge wagonload of ale, dancers, and jugglers to converge on the castle, courtesy of the guard captain's brother. It's unlikely that the guards would turn away such a gift, especially if it seems to come for their superior. Dressed as porters, the PCs can carry casks of ale into the castle's pantry and then steal away quietly when no one is looking.

Foreign Visitor: If the magic or money is available, one PC could dress up as a foreign dignitary who has come with her entourage to pay homage to a fellow ruler. The seneschal might not allow the group to stay for long, but he certainly wouldn't turn away someone of substance. The character playing the dignitary should seem fairly worldly, be equipped with the accoutrements of wealth, and have some diplomacy skills.

Mission Impossible

The PCs need to get into the castle of an avowed enemy, a villainous warlord on the lookout for foes.

The Setup: The castle is heavily defended and manned by alert guards on the lookout for trouble.

Factors: The PCs have used spells or Gather Information checks to discover that the guards aren't allowing anyone in the castle due to the recent capture of a spy inside. The whole place is locked down as though ready for a siege, and everyone seems on pins and needles.

Strategies: Even the strongest defense has weak points. Taking advantage of them simply requires figuring out what they are.

Wounded Friends: If the PCs can acquire the right disguises, they can pose as wounded messengers sent by an ally of their enemy. The guards at the gate are likely to allow the entrance of allies, and claims of being wounded by their warlord's enemies make it even more likely they'll gain acceptance. The warlord will be eager for news from friends, and the PCs can entrench the warlord in his fears by bringing the message that they learned that a spy was to be sent to the warlord's castle. Of course, an ambush on the road delayed their message. . . .

Playing Dumb: If the PCs learn the origin of the captured spy, they can disguise themselves as a group of merchants from a nation or group associated with the spy. When the PCs come calling at the castle, the suspicious warlord will undoubtedly order them brought inside. The PCs can truthfully say they do not know the spy and were not sent to retrieve him, but suspicion that the PCs were meant to be unwitting bearers of the spy's information should get the warlord to keep them around for a while.

THE BLACK DWARF MINE

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by David Day

The countryside due east of Waterdeep consists of open grazing land, long denuded of trees and bushes by Waterdhavian military decree—and kept that way by foragers in search of any firewood they can sell to citizens in the often chilly and fog-shrouded port city.

An endless succession of caravans and driven livestock keeps the terrain of the "Bare Hills" close-cropped and muddy. The topography of this stripped land is obvious to the casual eye: a series of small, rolling hills whose sides occasionally break into rocky outcrops and faces, known as tors.

For years small children in search of baubles and adults in search of mineral wealth have chipped away at exposed rock here and there on these tors, creating several small, shallow caves. These often serve foxes or wild dogs as dens and occasionally shelter more dangerous beasts—until word spreads and soldiers sally forth from the city to "cleanse the holes" again. Some six summers back, persistent probing of the hills began. The prospectors were a handful of dwarves driven from the Sunset Mountains by Zhentarim attacks.

These dwarves couldn't accept that the stones of so many hills could hold nothing of value. They spent three years digging holes, into which enterprising Waterdhavians promptly began dumping more embarrassing sorts of refuse (such as corpses and stolen items too easily identified to be salable). Eventually the dwarves worked their way to a point about 7 miles east of Waterdeep. There they found a long, low ridge whose roots held an extensive and very pure vein of iron ore, and what's come to be called the Black Dwarf Mine began its legitimate operations.

The name comes from the chief trade negotiator among the five dwarves, Aldurghen Stormhammer (N male dwarf War 3/Exp 6). Gruff-voiced but often joking, he is distinguished by two things: crude, black, homemade armor (a knee-length mail shirt studded with armor plates and an iron helm) and an ankle-length and always-filthy beard. Stormhammer is seldom seen in Waterdeep without his armor, but when he does doff his helm, he reveals a face that is equally blackened (either permanent pig-mentation or the result of never washing)—hence his nickname: the Black Dwarf.

Stormhammer comes to Waterdeep accompanied by at least two dwarves, whose backbreaking labor has left them not only strong but with a very low tolerance for pranksters and thieves. Not that many folk have the strength to steal from them: They typically sell pig iron and cast-iron pots, pans, fire screens, clothes irons, bootjacks, door "dragons" (ornamental weights that hold doors open), and trivets. They transport these wares in a handcart, the finished goods stored under a braced bottom weighed down by hundreds of pounds of pig iron. At the end of a trip to Waterdeep, the cart is instead filled with smoked sides of meat and several kegs of strong drink, leaving behind the cargo of iron—and words muttered in a few shrewdly chosen ears by Stormhammer about what's "in back" of his mine (described below).

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

The Black Dwarf Mine comprises a series of tunnels bored into the western upper face of a bare rock ridge, with gravel paths linking them to a heap of tailings and a furnace. The dwarves work the mine with pickaxes and tip-carts, carrying ore and stone rubble out of the tunnels to the furnace or the tailings heap, respectively. Two other paths lead away from the mine: One connects to a drovers' trail running down to that Waterdeep-bypass spur of the Trade Way known as "the Run," and the other winds westward across the hills to a limestone quarry.

There are also two large, ramshackle wooden sheds with watertight roofs. One just below the furnace covers the casting trough into which molten iron is poured. The other—off to one side—stores charcoal, carts, and piles of raw materials. The dwarves do not use it for shelter; in wet weather, they sleep with their finished iron in one of the worked-out tunnels. Only exhaustion, not storms, can stop the near ceaseless forge-work.

The furnace is a squat stone chimney lined with firebrick beside a spring of rushing waters that turn a water wheel. The wheel's axle in turn drives two vertical wooden pistons through a series of cranks. The pistons rise and fall inside cylinders that look like oversized, straight-sided kegs, although with far heavier strapping; the cylinder tops have flap valves that let them "breathe" in and out. The pistons force air through pipes into a mixing chamber, and thence via a tapering copper pipe into the depths of the bulbous furnace, to keep its fire hot.

The dwarves tip cartloads of iron ore, limestone from the nearby quarry, and charcoal into the furnace from above through the "maw," a hole in the side of the chimney above the fire. The limestone serves as flux: During smelting, it combines with nonmetallic parts of the ore to make glassy slag (waste tailings). The dwarves buy charcoal from the busy human and halfling woodcutters along the fringes of the High Forest. They know very well how to burn charcoal for themselves, but their forge-work simply doesn't allow them time.

Day and night, the dwarves "feed the maw," dumping successive layers of ore, then flux, and then charcoal atop the air-blasted fire. Two and a quarter tons of ore, a ton and a half of flux, and a hundred handcarts of coal make a ton of Black Dwarf iron (in less-rich ore deposits, two and a half tons of ore and 150 carts of charcoal would be needed). The stack can't be more than about 35 feet high, or the weight of ore crushes the charcoal and chokes off the fire.

The metal melts and runs down to the bottom of the furnace into a small crucible, the "hearth," where it builds up behind a clay plug. The dwarves open a large cinder hole just above the hearth hourly to rake out the slag from atop the molten iron. The plug is broken every 12 hours or so to let the liquid iron run out. It flows out into a channel dug in the deep sand under the adjacent shed, into a long central trench (the "sow") that branches, like the veins of a leaf, into rows of smaller side cavities (the "pigs"). When these are all filled, the hearth-dam is plugged again. After the bubbling, smoking metal cools and hardens, the dwarves use hammers to break the pigs apart from the sow, then lift the smelted iron with hooks to prepare the trenches for the next pour. A pig of Black Dwarf iron weighs 75 pounds, and a sow 250 pounds.

Smaller tappings of the hearth fill fire-hardened clay molds buried in the surface of the sand to make pots and pans, or run into a clay-lined casting ladle set into the sand. A casting ladle is a long-handled pan with a beaklike spout on one side, which is lifted out when full to pour the iron into smaller, more delicate molds.

Pig iron is hard and brittle because it contains a lot of carbon. Producing malleable wrought iron requires removing the carbon, and the dwarves of the Black Dwarf Mine have begun doing this too. Directly north of the furnace they have built three smaller forges—open fireboxes that burn charcoal with forced-air drafts from another trio of water wheel-and-cylinder assemblies.

Many dwarves consider all of this backbreaking but simple work too crude for their skills ("leave such to the gnomes" is a common dwarven expression), but these landless outcasts don't seem too proud for it, and they obviously enjoy their forays into Waterdeep. They incur no shipping costs, so they can undercut the prices of all other ironworkers and thus capture the market.

In just a few seasons the Black Dwarf five have become very wealthy—not just from their iron, but also from their work "in back."

"IN BACK"

In its first year of operations, many folk of Waterdeep dropped by the Black Dwarf Mine out of curiosity—and suspicion. After dark rumors of "walking metal men" and other dangerous weapons swept through the Dock Ward, they wanted to see for themselves what the dwarves were up to.

Most came away with the impression that Stormhammer and his fellows work far too hard to be up to anything. So drenched with sweat that they often stagger into the millstream to drink and cool themselves at the same time, the fire-blackened dwarves toil nonstop with their hammers and tongs, in austere surroundings resembling a cave more than a building, and in heat and din so fierce that humans must peer at what's going on from a fair distance.

However, the mine does indeed have a very profitable secret sideline: discreet, short-term, high-fee storage of "hot" goods and other items folk want swiftly hidden. This is what the Black Dwarf five refer to as "in back." Valuables are stowed in the worked-out back caverns, often behind temporary walls of heaped rubble that look for all the world as if the digging ended there. Corpses, monster body parts, and more dangerous goods are often buried under the slag heaps (covered by an overturned tip-cart if such treatment would harm them).

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

Ye should be aware that what makes Aldurghen Stormhammer's armor and skin black is not the iron at all, but a grimy preservative oil in which he regularly submerges both his tools and his armor. This edible but horrible-tasting oil, called "thaolet" by dwarves, is a mixture of specific stone dusts and oils derived by boiling particular plants. It serves two purposes: to drive out dampness, and to dissolve rust and tarnish by undoing what ye call the "oxidification" that occurs when air, water, and most metals meet. Many dwarves keep a small open barrel of thaolet on a worksite to stand tools in, or to wash away the blood of foes from weapons after battle.

Most dwarves prefer not to look like wet coal-heaps when dealing with humans, and wash thoalet away with clear oils before donning their armor for "public viewing," but Aldurghen cares not. Humor and whimsy rule him, although he's shrewd behind his jests and air of wide-eyed deviltry. Let not his act conceal from ye a mind as sharp as honed steel and a gaze that misses nothing.

As for what's "in back" at the Black Dwarf mine, all I'll say is: Ye'll be surprised.

ALDURGHEN STORMHAMMER

Aldurghen Stormhammer, Male Dwarf War 3/Exp 6: CR 8; HD 3d8+6d6+27; hp 62; Init +0; Spd 15 ft.; AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +7; Grp +10; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4, *+1 warhammer*); Full Atk +11/+6 (1d8+4, *+1 warhammer*); AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +5, Craft (armorsmithing), +8, Craft (blacksmithing) +4, Craft (weaponsmithing) +6, Climb +5, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +7, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Profession (iron worker) +13, Use Rope +4.

Feats: Endurance, Great Fortitude, Neogotiator, Skill Focus (Profession (iron worker)).

Languages: Common, Dwarf.

Possessions: Masterwork spiked chainmail, *+1 warhammer*, *+1 dagger*, *bracers of armor +2*, 2 *potions of bull's strength*, 47 gp.

THE BLACK DWARF MINE

1. Behind several slag heaps are shallow caves (mine shafts abandoned early). The dwarves use these to store tip-carts, replacement water-wheel buckets, chains, pulleys, and other valuables they don't want stolen.

2. If the dwarves need to hide contraband in a hurry or anticipate a search, they typically scoop a hole in one of their paths (built up from tailings), bury the loot, and then replace the path. They then resume their mining, pushing a stream of heavily laden tip-carts of ore, flux, and charcoal right over whatever's hidden.

3. More than one dishonest merchant of Waterdeep has been induced to confess or impart secrets after sweating out hours suspended head-down from a pulley in one of the hot, smoky, noisy forges. The Black Dwarf five terrify such captives by moving them to hang directly over molten metal or an anvil where their hammers are thudding down.

4. This disused passage is full of empty ale barrels brought back from the city. The dwarves, wasting nothing, sell these to traders who wish to reuse them (or hide contraband in them).

Expanded Psionics Preview #2
Psionic Feats

BY BRUCE R. CORDELL

If you missed the recent psionics update article, the *Psionics Handbook* is due for some revisions. These changes, due in April 2004, will debut in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook.*

The *Psionics Handbook* for D&D v.3.0 assimilated the psionics rules given in earlier editions into the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS core rules, presenting the benefits as level-based powers instead of ad hoc power acquisition. While this update was incredibly useful, we aim to do even better with the *Expanded Psionics Handbook.*

The last preview article for this new book discussed the new player character races introduced there and detailed an all-new race called the synad. This article focuses on psionic feats.

PSIONIC FEATS

The *Psionics Handbook* v.3.0 introduced the concept that psionic feats were special in that only characters and creatures with some sort of psionic ability could take them. Some, such as Mental Leap, required a certain power point reserve. Others, such as Deep Impact, actually required that a character expend power points to gain their benefits.

In hindsight, it seemed peculiar that some psionic feats required the expenditure of power points, since that's how psionic powers work. The power point reserve model seemed more reasonable because it evoked the feeling that a character was actually getting a benefit from having his mind charged up with psionic potential.

Yet requiring a reserve of power points imposed unintended restrictions on some characters, while others who had power points to burn had no restrictions at all. The psychic warrior was hindered the most because to continue making use of his best feats, he had to avoid spending power points on psionic powers. Furthermore, once he spent beyond a certain threshold, he was locked out of his psionic feats for the day. Such a situation seemed unduly punishing, especially since nonpsionic characters are rarely locked out of their feats. While it might be true that psionic feats are slightly better than nonpsionic general feats, that advantage is little recompense for the psychic warrior who is one Deep Impact away from winning a battle.

To resolve these issues, we had to capture the flavor of a mind fizzing with psionic power, account for the fact that psionic feats are somewhat better than general feats (and thus require some limitation), and still keep psionic feats available to characters all day long. The development team eagerly took on the task. At that point, the team consisted of Rich Baker, who requires no introduction; Andrew Finch, the Development Manager; and Michael Donais, a developer I had the great fortune to work with following the preliminary design of the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*. It was Michael who came up with the answer—psionic focus.

PSIONIC FOCUS

Some psionic feats in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* require a character to maintain psionic focus; others require him to expend it. The difference is that feats requiring only maintenance can be used with no interruptions to regain psionic focus, and feats requiring expenditure cannot. A few psionic feats, such as Autonomous and Boost Construct, do not require psionic focus at all.

Expending psionic focus does not require an action; it is part of another action (such as using a feat). If a character expends psionic focus, it cannot be used for any purpose other than the one for which it was expended on that action. For example, a character who uses the Deep Impact feat (which requires the expenditure of psionic focus) cannot use the Psionic Weapon feat for the same attack because he expended his focus to use Deep Impact.

Becoming psionically focused requires a special use of the Concentration skill (see sidebar). A character not

engaged in combat can take 20 (and 2 minutes) to become psionically focused automatically if her Concentration bonus is not up to snuff. A character in combat can spend a round in the midst of a conflict to regain her psionic focus, although such an attempt could be dicey if her Concentration bonus isn't reasonably high. Characters wishing to make regular use of psionic focus might want to take the Psionic Meditation feat, which shortens the time needed for an attempt to gain psionic focus to a move action. Narrow Mind, which grants a +4 bonus on any Concentration checks made to become psionically focused, is also a good choice. Some of the other feats in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* might also help a character to gain psionic focus more efficiently.

Some might worry that the DC 20 check to become psionically focused is overly onerous, but internal playtesting has revealed that since psionic feats are generally better than nonpsionic ones, the balance is just about perfect. With the concept of psionic focus in play, a psionic character can make use of above-average feats all day long, but in a fashion that negates the possibility of overuse and balances their application perfectly within the paradigm of the psionic character.

PSIONIC FOCUS

AN *EXPANDED PSIONICS HANDBOOK EXCERPT*

The following excerpt from the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* details the method for becoming psionically focused.

Gain Psionic Focus: Merely holding a reservoir of psionic power points gives psionic characters a special energy. Such characters can put that energy to work without actually paying a power point cost—they can become psionically focused as a special use of the Concentration skill.

If you have at least 1 power point available, you can attempt to become psionically focused via meditation (Concentration DC 20). Meditating is a full-round action that provokes attacks of opportunity. Once you are psionically focused, you remain so until you expend your focus, become unconscious, go to sleep (or enter a meditative trance, in the case of elan), or when your power point reserve drops to 0.

At any point while you are psionically focused, you can expend that focus to improve your chance of succeeding on a Concentration check. This option functions like taking 10 on a skill check, except that the number you add to your Concentration modifier is 15 instead of 10. Alternatively, you can expend your focus to activate a psionic feat of the sort that requires such expenditure.

Psionic Focus and Metapsionics

In a similar vein, psionic focus can now be applied to metapsionic feats to decrease the power point cost of their use. For example, if quickening a power would normally cost 8 power points, a psionically focused character can achieve the same effect by spending 6 power points and expending his psionic focus.

In addition to the obvious benefits of lower cost and less drain on power point reserve, spending fewer points on a psionic power also means that a character is not affected by the power point limit to the same degree. (The power point limit means that a character can spend a maximum number of power points equal to his manifester level on a psionic power.) Thus, when using v.3.5 metapsionic feats, a psionic character can enlarge, quicken, maximize, and empower any given power one level earlier than he could using the *Psionics Handbook* v.3.0.

PSIONIC FEATS

None of the feats introduced below are actually taken from the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* (except for Ghost Attack, but that's here just because including it allows us to showcase the new Greater Ghost Attack feat). The feats in the book aren't detailed here because come April, you'd

end up seeing the very same ones again upon getting your copy of the *Expanded Psionics Handbook.* As mentioned in the last preview article, it's much better to showcase entirely new material that highlights the changes described above but also has the added benefit of being unique.

Ghost Attack [Psionic]
Your deadly strikes against incorporeal foes always find their marks.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +3.

Benefit: When you make a successful critical hit with a melee or ranged attack, the attack is treated as if it had been made with a ghost touch weapon for the purpose of affecting incorporeal creatures. (That is, you are not subject to the normal miss chance for an incorporeal target.) Your weapon or natural weapon actually appears to become briefly incorporeal at the moment the attack is made.

You must maintain psionic focus to use this feat.

Greater Ghost Attack [Psionic]
Your deadly strikes against incorporeal foes always find their marks.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +3, Ghost Attack.

Benefit: When you make a successful melee or ranged attack, the attack is treated as if it had been made with a ghost touch weapon for the purpose of affecting incorporeal creatures. (That is, you are not subject to the normal miss chance for an incorporeal target.) Your weapon or natural weapon actually appears to become briefly incorporeal at the moment the attack is made.

You must expend your psionic focus to use this feat.

Instinctive Consummator [Psionic]
You always make good on your threats.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +3, Instinctive Dispatcher.

Benefit: Whenever you threaten a living foe with a critical hit on a melee attack, you can choose to confirm the critical automatically.

You must expend your psionic focus to use this feat.

Normal: Any hit that threatens a critical must be confirmed with an additional successful attack roll.

Instinctive Dispatcher [Psionic]
You are more likely than normal to slay your foes in combat.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +3.

Benefit: Once per round, when you reduce a living foe to negative hit points through any means, you can perform a coup de grace against that foe as a free action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

You must expend your psionic focus to use this feat, and you must have a free action available at the time. (Normally, you can take only one free action per round.)

Normal: The coup de grace action normally requires a full-round action and provokes an attack of opportunity.

Phrenic Blast [Metapsionic]
Foes damaged by your power are also mentally blasted.

Benefit: When you deal damage with a phrenic blasting power to any creature that is subject to mind-affecting effects, the target is also stunned for 1 round. Using this feat increases the power point cost of the power by 2 (maximum cost equals your manifester level).

You must expend your psionic focus to use this feat.

Phrenic Leech [Metapsionic]
Psionic foes damaged by your power are also mentally drained, which bolsters you.

Benefit: When you deal damage with a phrenic leeching power to any creature that possesses power points and is subject to mind-affecting effects, the target also loses 1d6 power points. You gain 1 power point from this drain. If you are already at your full power points, those drained from the target are lost. Using this feat increases the power point cost of the power by 4 (maximum cost equals your manifester level).

You must expend your psionic focus to use this feat.

Psionic Feedback [Psionic]
You gain insight from failed psionic assaults against other psionic characters or creatures.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (psionics) 8 ranks, Psymbiot.

Benefit: Whenever at least one psionic creature within 30 feet of you successfully saves against a psionic power (whether manifested by you or not), you automatically transform the wasted energy of that power into a +4 insight bonus to your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma score (your choice). This benefit lasts for 1 full round. You gain no feedback benefit from personally succeeding at a saving throw against a psionic power, whether manifested by you or someone else.

You must maintain your psionic focus to use this feat.

Psymbiot [Psionic]
You gain benefits when you are near other psionic characters or creatures.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (psionics) 8 ranks.

Benefit: Whenever at least one psionic creature stands within 30 feet of you so that you have an unobstructed line of sight to it, you are empowered by its unconscious psionic aura. This benefit grants you a +2 enhancement bonus on all your ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws.

You must maintain your psionic focus to use this feat. D

Under Command
Mushroom Archery
Using the Mushroom Tangle Tile

by Jesse Decker and Michael Donais · illustrated by Jason Engle

As every DM knows, keeping the players interested requires new ideas, new monsters, and new types of encounters. The D&D miniatures have been out for a few months now, and whether you use them for D&D, the new skirmish system, or both, sets like the *Dragoneye* expansion help keep things interesting. Although new monsters and figures combine to form the DM's best tool for keeping things fresh, new types of encounters help too. One of the best ways to change the feel of an encounter involves changing the terrain and making sure that it affect play. This month's "Under Command" article focuses on a new terrain tile and the tactics that exploit its effects. The new terrain tile, the Mushroom Forest, combines well with D&D encounters that include archers and makes a great addition to the terrain selection of an archery-oriented warband.

D&D: MUSHROOMS

The Mushroom Tangle terrain tile is easily incorporated into any underground D&D encounter. Simply place the tile on the table on top of your battle mat, and build or draw terrain around it like you normally would. The mushrooms count as light undergrowth and therefore slows the movement of most creatures that pass through it (see page 87 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for complete details of light undergrowth and its effects on movement). Although slowing the movement of creatures as they cross the battlefield can be a dramatic change by itself, three exotic types of mushrooms, any of which can change the feel of a battle and add excitement to an encounter, are described below.

If you use the terrain in a D&D encounter, any or all of the mushroom-covered squares on the Mushroom Forest terrain tile can be filled with the following hazards. In the skirmish game, the mushroom-covered squares count as difficult terrain, making the tile ideal for archery-oriented warbands like the one described in the second section of this article. In addition, you can easily include these hazards in a game even if you don't use the terrain tile.

Concussion Fungus (CR 3)

Concussion fungus is a distracting and annoying underground obstacle. Imbued with supernatural energy, concussion fungus can release a blast of force capable of stunning many creatures. The effects of concussion fungus are temporary and easily avoided by experienced underground travelers. Although the fungus poses little danger on its own, its presence can often mean terrible danger because it often marks the outskirts of a drow guard post. Drow sentries often cultivate fields of concussion fungus along the paths leading to their guard post. As creatures approach, the blasts of the fungus alert the guards and stun intruders.

Whenever a creature of Tiny size or larger moves within 5 feet of a patch of concussion fungus, the fungus releases a blast of concussive force. This blast of force does not damage creatures or objects, but it is capable of temporarily stunning most creatures. All creatures within 5 feet of the fungus when it releases a concussive blast must make a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw or be stunned for 1d4 rounds. A 5-foot by 5-foot patch of concussion fungus can release only one such blast per hour.

Identify: A character can identify a patch of concussion fungus with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check.

Sluggard Fungus (CR 4)

Sluggard fungus poses little threat on its own, but its ability to release clouds of spores that slow most creatures can make it a dangerous obstacle in the midst of an underground encounter.

Whenever a creature of Tiny size or larger moves within 5 feet of a patch of sluggard fungus, the fungus

releases a cloud of spores. The spores cause the movements of nearby creatures to falter and slow. Creatures within 5 feet of the fungus when it releases a cloud of spores must make a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw or be slowed as the *slow* spell. Although the effects of the fungus resemble the *slow* spell, they are not magical in nature and spell resistance does not apply. The effects of sluggard fungus last for 2d4 rounds. Each 5-foot by 5-foot patch of fungus can release one cloud of spores per hour. Creatures immune to poison are immune to sluggard fungus.

Identify: A character can identify a patch of sluggard fungus with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check.

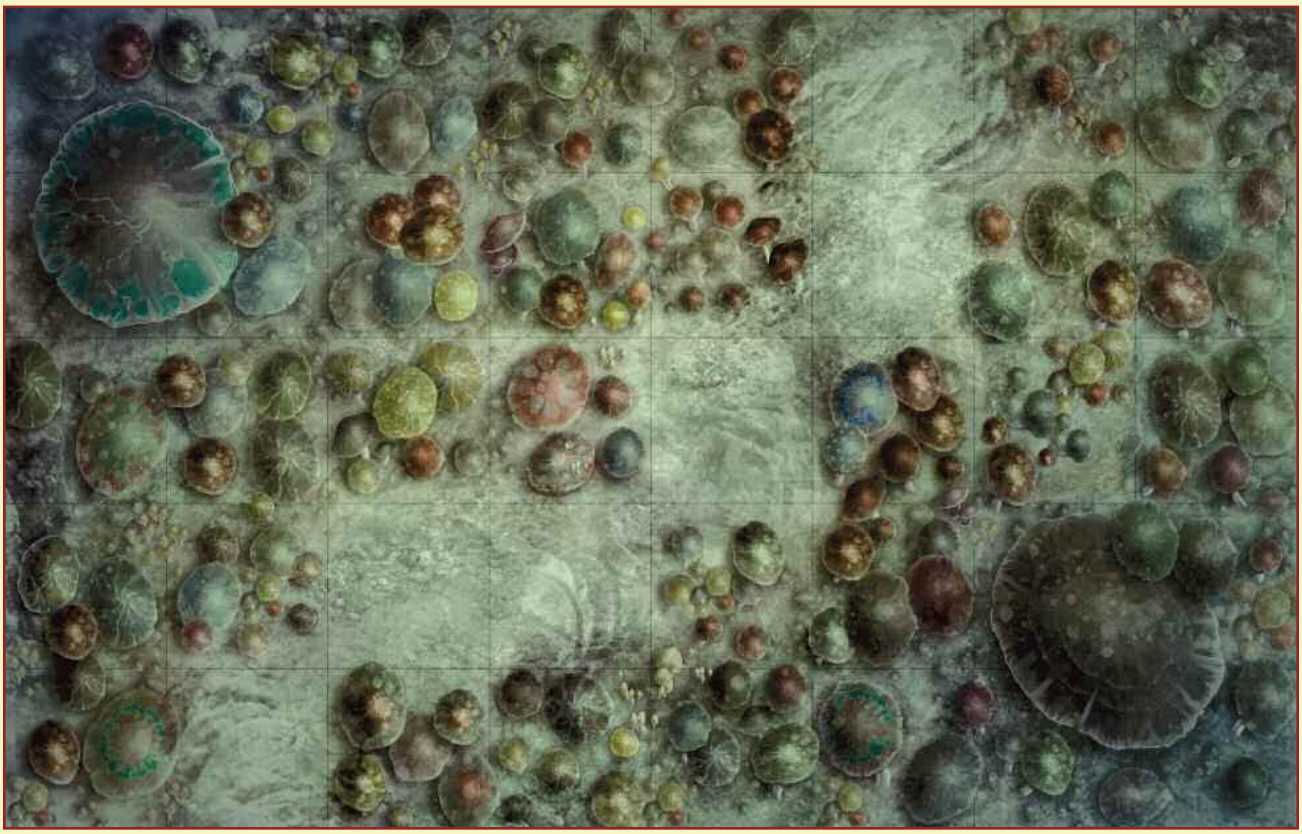
Frenzy Fungus (CR 5)

Because of its resemblance to a normal species of fungus and its ability to cloud the mind, frenzy fungus can pose a significant threat to unprepared explorers. Although it looks like an innocuous patch of fungus, the spores of frenzy fungus can cause creatures to fly into a blind rage and even turn on their allies.

Whenever a creature of Tiny size or larger moves within 5 feet of a patch of frenzy fungus, the fungus releases a cloud of spores. The spores cloud the minds of nearby creatures, sending affected creatures into a fearful rage and preventing them from distinguishing friend from foe. All creatures within 5 feet of the fungus when it releases a cloud of spores must make a DC 15 Will saving throw or fly into a frenzy. The spores of frenzy fungus are a mind-affecting effect, making constructs, elementals, oozes, and undead immune to the effect. Creatures immune to poison are immune to the spores, as well. Each 5-foot by 5-foot patch of fungus can release one cloud of spores per hour.

Frenzy: The frenzy grants a +6 bonus to the Strength score of each affected creature. Affected creatures also take a -4 penalty to Armor Class and take 2 points of nonlethal damage per round. The frenzy lasts for a number of rounds equal to three plus the affected creature's Constitution modifier. To end the frenzy before this duration expires, an affected creature may attempt a DC 20 Will save once per round as a free action.

During a frenzy, the frenzied creature must attack nearby creatures to the best of her ability. Should she run out of enemies before her frenzy expires, her rampage continues. She must then attack the nearest creature (determined randomly if several potential foes are equidistant) and



MUSHROOM TANGLE

To use the Mushroom Tangle tile in the D&D Skirmish system, simply use it like any other terrain tile. The areas covered with mushrooms count as difficult terrain, and they are marked with the triangle difficult terrain symbol. In D&D encounters, the mushrooms can slow movement or have a number of other effects. See the D&D: Mushrooms section for some ideas.

fight that opponent without regard to friendship, innocence, or health (the target's or her own).

When a frenzy ends, the affected creature is fatigued (-2 penalty to Strength, Dexterity, unable to charge or run) for the duration of the encounter.

Identify: Because of its rarity and its resemblance to regular harmless fungus, identifying a patch of frenzy fungus requires a successful Knowledge (nature) check (DC 25). Failing this check by 5 or more results in the incorrect identification of the frenzy fungus as a harmless and inert patch of normal mushrooms.

D&D: Archery

Archery proves an effective attack form in many D&D encounters, but one aspect of archery common to historical warfare and common depictions of fantasy warfare, the massed fire of many skilled archers, is not easily simulated by the D&D rules. The Coordinated Archery feat that is described below and the special combat action that it allows provide an in-game incentive for using this powerful historical tactic without reducing the effectiveness or importance of the single skilled archer.

Coordinated Archery [General]

You are trained at coordinating your ranged attacks with other trained individuals.

Prerequisite: Base attack +1.

Benefit: If you are adjacent to an ally who also has the Coordinated Archery feat, you can use the special coordinated archery action in combat.

Coordinated Archery Combat Action

This special combat action requires the Coordinated Archery feat to use. Unlike other combat actions, you cannot use the coordinated archery action by yourself; you can take the action only in a round during which an adjacent ally who also has the Coordinated Archery feat also takes the action. To take this action, the ally with the highest initiative must use the delay action until just before his ally's action in the round. Both characters then announce that they are going to use the coordinated archery action. The two characters must then make at least one ranged attack (not a spell) against the same group of foes.

Larger groups of coordinated archers are possible. If there are more than two adjacent allies with the Coordinated Archery feat, the groups of coordinated archers can make their attacks in any order, but all of the attacks coming from the group of coordinated archers must be aimed at the same group of foes, no two of which can be more than 30 feet apart.

Ranged attacks made in this manner gain a +2 to hit and +1 to damage.

The Arcane Archer is by far the coolest archery commander, as she can take out most enemies before they even reach her.

D&D Miniatures Skirmishes: Archer Warband

In *D&D Miniatures,* there are a lot of different styles of warbands, and one of the most challenging warbands to build and to play is the Chaotic Good warband that focuses on ranged combat. When building such an army, you must choose each model carefully as well as each terrain piece, and you must play it much differently than you would any other warband.

Commanders

There are three reasonable options for commanders of the Elven Archers: the Cleric of Corellon Larethian, the Elf Ranger, and the Arcane Archer. The Arcane Archer is by far the coolest of the three. As the only model in *Harbinger* with 3 attacks, the Arcane Archer can take out most enemies before they can even reach her. She only does 5 damage, but it is magic damage, and she has a good chance to hit any creature that she attacks. However, since she is so expensive, you have the problem of too many points concentrated in one miniature. If you take one of the less expensive commanders, you can spread out your points more—an important advantage that is addressed below.

The Arcane Archer and the ranger both give a bonus to ranged attacks, so they seem like obvious choices, but the Cleric of Corellon Larethian has the *bless* spell, which gives a bonus to your entire warband. Since the cleric also has *hold person* spells to slow down attackers, the cleric works better than one might expect. The cleric's two *magic weapon* spells help to deal with enemy warbands that rely on DR for protection against low-damage attacks. Overall, they are all great choices for different reasons, but for the strategy below, you are best off with the Cleric of Corellon Larethian.

Followers

There are two directions to go with followers. One is to maximize your archers and units that make your archers better. If you have the Arcane Archer, you want to take a lot of units that can benefit from her +2 ranged attacks commander effect. The second option is to take a lot of ranged attackers and a few units that can provide a screen for them.

If you decide to go with screening units, their goal is to slow down the enemy so that your archers can get more shots off. The screening units need to do enough damage that the enemy will not just run past them, ignoring their attacks. You also want them to have good defense so that they will stand up to the enemy for a few rounds while your archers fill the enemy with arrows. If these same units also have ranged attacks, then they will synergize well with the rest of your army (gaining bonuses from your Arcane Archer's commander effect by shooting the enemy as they approach). The best screening units that also have bows are the Wild Elf Barbarian and the Human Wanderer. The best screening units that don't have bows are the Thri-Kreen Ranger and the Axe Sister. The Thri-Kreen Ranger has an unusually high AC for a chaotic miniature, and the Axe Sister is expensive but has a

ton of hit points and deals great damage. She can even help out against enemies with DR. If you are playing with *Dragoneye* miniatures, then the Drunken Master will provide an excellent screen. Depending on your strategy, you might not want a screen at all.

After deciding on the screen, you will want to decide on who your archers will be. Your commander is your first ranged attacker. If it is the Arcane Archer, half of your points are already spent. If it is the Cleric of Corellon Larethian, then she will be using *hold person* to slow down incoming attackers. The rest of your warband should consist of Lidda, Halfling Rogue, and as many Elf Archers as you can afford. The Elf Archers deal the most damage at range for the lowest point cost. The Wood Elf Skirmisher has Precise Shot but costs 8 points more. If you are playing with a high number of melee creatures, then the Wood Elf Skirmisher's Precise Shot ability is more important, but that's a different strategy, not the ranged attack centered strategy we're focusing on.

Terrain

You need to keep the middle of the battlefield clear, and slow down the enemy as much as possible. Archers don't have many good choices right now for terrain. The Rubble Room tile is good because it will slow down the enemy without blocking too many shots. The perfect tile for archers would contain a lot of rubble and no walls at all. Check out the Mushroom Tangle in this issue of *Dragon* for an example of ideal archer terrain. The Shrine is also an obvious choice because not only does it give your archers a bonus to attack while the enemy is rushing at you, it also gives you a way to deal with DR. You should use the Assembly tile without the statue because it lets you set up on the outside edge, possibly shooting on your first round if the enemy isn't careful.

Once you have the Rubble Room, the Shrine, and the Assembly Tile, you are left with only one choice to make. Consider the Treasure Room and the Abattoir. The Treasure Room is nice because you can set it up against a wall (with one entrance facing the wall), and the enemy can't really hide in it. If you choose something like the Corridor, the enemy might be able to use it as cover as he approaches. The Abattoir is the other reasonable choice because you can shoot almost anywhere on the Abattoir if someone is trying to hide in it. They will get cover but at least you have targets.

Use the Treasure Room or the Mushroom Tangle as your fourth terrain tile choice.

Tactics

To know how to play this warband, you need to understand what kills it. When advancing on the archer army, two different tactics are used. One is to put someone in front with DR or with a very high AC. Everyone else runs up behind this high-defense figure, and everyone gets cover whenever possible. The solution to DR is to use *magic weapon* from the Cleric of Corellon Larethian or to kill the target with your Arcane Archer. In addition, you have the Shrine terrain tile to help you get through DR. If your commander is the Elf Ranger, then the Shrine is your only chance in that fight, but it isn't too bad of an option if you have set up the terrain carefully.

The other method that people use to approach is by hopping from cover to cover. Often the terrain ends up in such a way as to allow for enemy models to run from one spot of cover to the next without ever exposing themselves to you. If this is the case, you need to spread out.

Spreading out is often the most important tactic that a ranged army can learn. Spreading out helps in two different ways. By spreading out, the enemy can't advance on you so easily without exposing some of his guys to some of your guys. Any shots you get at this point are free shots that you wouldn't have gotten if you were all bunched up, because it is much easier to hide from one bunch of archers than from a wide spread of archers. The second advantage of spreading out is that, when a unit finally chases down and kills the first archer, he will be far away from the other archers. This gives them more time to shoot down the attackers before they have to engage in melee.

Spreading out is often the most important tactic that a ranged army can learn.

There are a few things to remember, though, if you are using the tactic of spreading out your archers. One is that your Commander effects won't be affecting as many units. Try to maximize your commander effect when it is convenient, but don't worry about it if you can't accomplish both goals. The second disadvantage is that someone with a lot of fighters might be able to spread out and attack all of your archers. Hopefully your concentrated fire up to this point has whittled him down enough that he can't do this.

Eventually, you will learn when to spread yourself out, and when you need to stay together either to benefit from a Shrine to kill an enemy with DR or to benefit from a Commander effect. The nice thing about the Cleric of Corellon Larethian is that his *bless* spell gives your whole warband +1 attack whether you are in range of his commander effect or not.

Another important thing to learn is when to shoot twice with your Elf Archer or when to shoot once and then move away. Often it is worth it to move away, especially if you are luring your attackers even further away from the rest of your army.

human barbarian

halfling bard

dwarven cleric

Countdown to EBERRON

Creating the Heroes

by Mat Smith · illustrated by Dana Knutson, Steve Prescott, and Mark Tedin

In the wake of the Last War, conflicts between the twelve nations of Khorvaire still smolder in the shadows and remote regions of the continent. Diplomacy and espionage go hand-in-hand as governments, merchant houses, and other factions vie for power. Uncharted regions and ancient secrets await discovery. Every corner of the cinematically exciting world of EBERRON is filled with pulp/noir action, intrigue, and opportunity for those bold enough to seek it out.

As the July release date for the EBERRON Campaign Setting draws closer, many of you will be faced with one of the toughest challenges every roleplayer must overcome—deciding what you're going to play. Fortunately, you've got some time to mull it over. For the most part, you've already got a good chunk of the information you'll need to start narrowing down your choices. That's because the *EBERRON Campaign Setting* is designed to incorporate all things D&D—things like the character classes you've been playing all along.

FAMILIAR BUT DIFFERENT

The *EBERRON Campaign Setting* isn't reinventing the D&D wheel, it's just giving it an all-new place to take a spin. So, while you'll find all the standard classes from the *Player's Handbook* running around EBERRON, each one will have a new look, feel, and flavor that fits nicely in the setting. You'll discover variant rules, alternate abilities, and additional options available for several of the classes, including a wide array of places from which each might hail. Here's a quick glimpse at just a few of the features that make each of those classes fit into the *EBERRON Campaign Setting*:

Barbarian

Even though an advanced civilization dominates much of the main continent of Khorvaire, barbarians of every standard character race (and others) can be found tucked away in the wilder regions of EBERRON. Several of the feats (such as the Dragon Rage feat; see the Sample EBERRON Feats sidebar) and prestige classes introduced in the *EBERRON Campaign Setting* are of particular or exclusive interest to barbarian characters.

gnome druid

warforged ranger

human rogue

Bard

Whether explorers, emissaries, scouts, or spies, the magical and musical skills and talents of bards are indispensable to governments, merchant houses, and adventuring companies alike. One of the more intriguing options bards will find in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* is the ability to customize their bardic music by taking special bardic feats, such as Haunting Melody (see the Sample Eberron Feats sidebar).

Cleric

Eberron is home to several organized churches and a pantheon of deities to which many clerics dedicate their lives. Other clerics have no specific allegiance, but instead draw divine power from the ever-present spiritual force that pervades the world around them. The selection of churches, deities, and the array of new domains offer clerics in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* intriguing new options.

Druid

With a history that stretches back 15,000 years to a time when a circle of orc druids, instructed by a powerful black dragon, were the saviors of the continent of Khorvaire, the druids of Eberron often fill the role of guardians of their homelands and the balance of nature in general. Their ancient history, animalistic background, and strong ties to their home regions are reflected in the array of feats and selection of animal companions available.

Fighter

As the dust from the Last War settles, the ubiquitous fighter will find many roles to fill throughout the land. Whether as a soldier, elite commando, chivalric warrior, city guardsman, mercenary, or bold adventurer, the fighters in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* will find great benefit in the selection of feats that grant new uses for their action points.

Monk

The religious traditions of monks in Eberron provide them with training as both scholars and martial artists. Strong religious organizations offer monks well-defined backgrounds as well as access to an array of feats that include unique fighting styles, such as the Flensing Strike feat (see the Sample Eberron Feats sidebar). Another exciting option is the Monastic Training feat, which enables a monk to learn new skills and abilities by circumventing the usual restrictions against multiclassing.

Paladin

Much like clerics, the paladins of Eberron are most often allied with one of the churches, such as the Church of the Silver Flame. A selection of feats that enhance a paladin's ability to use action points in combat and prestige classes, such as the Exorcist of the Silver Flame, are a few of the options open to these champions of faith and justice.

Psionic Classes

The rules for psionics and psionic-using characters have always been an optional feature in the Dungeons & Dragons game. While using the various classes and other rules you'll find in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* is still considered an option, the *Eberron Campaign Setting* provides an integrated background for characters and monsters with psionic talents and abilities—psions, psychic warriors, egoists, soulknives, nomads, and kineticists are most commonly found in the lands of Riedra and Adar. (Next month, you'll get a little glimpse at one of the new races in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* that manifests psionic power as a racial ability.)

Ranger

Rangers in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* can be found traversing the wilderness or trekking through an urban landscape. Many interesting choices among several feats (like Urban Tracking) and prestige classes (such as the Eldeen ranger) give them the opportunity to make their own unique mark in Eberron. Much like the druids of the setting, the selection of animal companions available to rangers differs according to the region they have chosen to call home.

Rogue

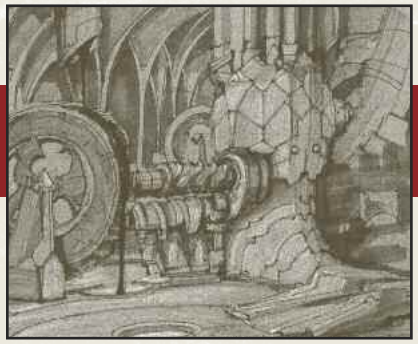
With no shortage of dense urban landscapes and plenty of ways to get in and out of town in a hurry, rogues of all stripes thrive in the *Eberron Campaign Setting*. Whether a part of a criminal organization, a freelance inquisitive, diplomat, spy, or treasure-hunting adventurer, several feats and prestige classes, such as the master inquisitive (featured later in this article), are well-suited to the rogue's array skills and talents.

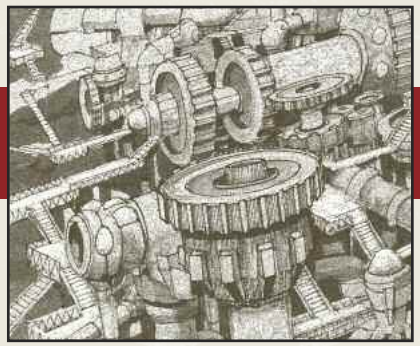
Sorcerer

The dragon blood flowing in the veins of sorcerers in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* gives them strong ties to the world around them, ties that range as far back as the creation of the world itself. Many feats and prestige classes offer sorcerers additional flexibility and power, but their most intriguing options involve the mystical dragonmarks (which you'll find out more about in a few months).

Wizard

While many individuals in the world of Eberron might dabble in the arcane arts, wizards stand apart by virtue of their power and sheer versatility. Their study and pursuit of arcane secrets gives wizards more reason than any other class to explore and discover the lost secrets of the ancient lands of Xen'drik. Several prestige classes and feats offer wizards greater versatility and the ability to create potent magic items.





INTRODUCING THE ARTIFICER

The magically infused world of EBERRON has also given rise to an entirely new character class—the artificer. These highly skilled characters have a knack for creating, repairing, altering, augmenting, and employing magic devices, items, and constructs. Their remarkable talents make them potent allies, dangerous adversaries, and an indispensable part of any adventuring party.

Artificer

In EBERRON, magic is almost technology. There are spellcasters who specialize in certain forms of that technology, and then there are artificers. Artificers are not spellcasters, but they understand magic at a different level from spellcasters, tinkering with its fundamental workings. They have an amazing facility with magic items and constructs, and in many ways, they keep the magical world of EBERRON running.

Adventures: Artificers adventure for a variety of reasons. They seek deposits of rare minerals and dragonshards to use in their creations. They search for hidden arcane secrets relating to making magic items or constructs. They face danger to acquire wealth to buy or make magic items. Like any other adventurer, they might also be motivated by a desire to fight evil or gain power, or any of a host of similar reasons.

Characteristics: Artificers are perhaps the ultimate magical dabblers. They can cast just about any spell from a wand or scroll, empower ordinary items with temporary eldritch power, repair damaged constructs (including warforged), alter the function of existing magic items, and craft magic items, constructs, and dragonshard items. They have a limited list of their own spell-like augmentations that they can apply to objects, and can also work with any of the spells on other classes' spell lists. Their magic is neither arcane nor divine, and they are not bound by that divide: their trade is magic in its most abstract (they might say purest) form.

Alignment: If artificers have a tendency toward any alignment, it is neutral. They are more interested in their work than in its moral implications. Of course, some artificers create magic items for the common good, while others seek to create items of tremendous destructive power.

Religion: Some artificers revere the god Onatar, Lord of Fire and Forge. Many more are too preoccupied with mastering magic—including divine magic—to worry about the gods who might or might not be its source.

Background: Like wizards, artificers learn their craft through long years of hard study. They share a sense of camaraderie with others who have endured similar training. They view other artificers as either colleagues or rivals. Rivalry might take a friendly form as the artificers try to outdo each other in their creations and accomplishments, or it could turn deadly, with artificers sending construct assassins after each other.

Races: Humans excel as artificers, having no natural attachment to the aesthetics of magic as elves do, or knack for a particular expression of magic as gnomes do. Their analytical minds make them well suited to the artificer's task of reducing magic to its component pieces and reassembling it in a new form.

Warforged also make fine artificers, having a particular affinity for the creation of other constructs. Dwarves and gnomes, with their skills in mundane craft, show equal skill in the magical craft of the artificer. Halflings, elves, half-elves, half-orcs, kalashtar, shifters, and changelings do not have strong traditions in this class and generally choose different magical pathways.

Other Classes: Artificers work best when providing magical support to members of other classes. Although they are quite versatile, their talents lie in enhancing the items—weapons, armor, wands, and other gear—used by all the members of an adventuring party. They think of every party member as components of a machine, encouraging better teamwork within a group and sometimes providing strategy and tactics afforded by their unique mindset.

Role: Artificers have a range of roles in a typical adventuring party revolving around magic items. They bring an unparalleled flexibility to both using and creating such items. Although they can fight reasonably well, few are inclined to full melee combat. In a party that doesn't include a druid, for example, an artificer can use (or scribe) a scroll of *barkskin* or wield a *staff of the woodlands*.

Game Rule Information

Artificers have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Charisma is the most important ability for an artificer because several of his augmentations rely on his ability to make Use Magic Device checks. Intelligence is also important because it determines the effectiveness of his augmentations, but it plays a lesser role than for most other spellcasters. A high Dexterity improves the artificer's defensive ability.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d6.

Class Skills

The artificer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Int), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (Int), Knowledge (the planes) (Int), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Spellcraft (Int), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

In Eberron, magic is almost technology. Artificers specialize in that technology.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the artificer.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Artificers are proficient with all simple weapons. They are proficient with light armor, medium armor, and with shields, except tower shields.

Augmentations: An artificer is not a spellcaster, but he does have the ability to imbue items with magical augmentations. Augmentations are neither arcane nor divine; they are drawn from the artificer augmentation list (see the Artificer Augmentation List sidebar; note that in this article, the list only include augmentations up to 3rd level). He can imbue an item with any augmentation from the list without preparing the augmentation ahead of time. Unlike a sorcerer or bard, he does not select a subset of the available augmentations as his known spells; he has access to every augmentation on the list that is of a level he can imbue into an item.

It is possible for an artificer to learn augmentations that are not on the normal artificer augmentation list. These might include ancient augmentations he finds in the ruins of Xen'drik, secret augmentations known only to the members of certain guilds or organizations, or inspiration from the Traveler, the self-appointed divine patron of artificers. When he encounters such an augmentation, an artificer can attempt to learn it by making a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level). If this check succeeds, he adds the spell to his augmentation list. If not, he can try again when he gains another rank in Spellcraft, assuming he still has access to the new augmentation.

To imbue an item with an augmentation, an artificer must have an Intelligence score equal to at least 10 + the augmentation level (Int 11 for 1st-level augmentations, Int 12 for 2nd-level augmentations, and so forth). Augmentations never allow saving throws.

Like other spellcasters, an artificer can imbue only a certain number of augmentations of each augmentation level per day. His base daily augmentation allotment is given in the Artificer Advancement table. Note that while in this article the table caps at 5th level, the artificer that will be presented in the *Eberron Campaign Setting* is a full 20-level class. In addition, he receives bonus augmentations per day if he has a high Intelligence score (see Table 1-1: Ability Modifiers and Bonus Spells in the *Player's Handbook*).

An artificer's augmentations are never cast on a living target—only imbued into an item or cast upon a construct. He cannot, for example, simply cast *bull's strength* on an ally. He must instead imbue that ability into an item his ally is wearing. The item then functions as a *belt of giant strength* for the duration of the augmentation. He can, however, cast *bull's strength* directly upon a construct or character with the living construct subtype, and spells such as *repair light damage* and *iron construct* function only when cast on such characters. He can use *permanency* only to make a spell permanent on an object or area.

Many augmentations have long casting times, often 1 minute or more. An artificer can spend 1 action point to imbue any augmentation in 1 round (like a spell that takes 1 round to cast).

Like a spellcaster, an artificer can learn item creation and metamagic feats and apply them to his augmentations. Like a sorcerer, an artificer can apply a metamagic feat to an augmentation spontaneously, but this requires extra time. An artificer can craft alchemical items as though he were a spellcaster.

An artificer can never automatically use a spell trigger or spell completion item because the spell appears on his augmentation list. For example, an artificer must still employ the Use Magic Device skill to use a *wand of light*, even though *light* appears on his augmentation list.

Craft Reserve: The artificer receives a pool of points he can spend instead of experience points when crafting a magic item. Each time the artificer gains a new level he receives a new craft reserve; left over points from the previous level do not carry over. If they are not spent, they are lost. An artificer can use the craft reserve to supplement the XP cost of the item he is making, taking a portion of the XP cost from his craft reserve and a portion from his XP.

Disable Trap: Like rogues, artificers can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. A magic trap generally has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it.

Item Creation (Ex): An artificer can create a magic item even if he does not have access to the spells that are prerequisites for the item. The artificer must make a successful Use Magic Device check to emulate each spell normally required to create the item. The DC of this check is 20 + caster level. Thus, in order to make a 1st-level *wand of magic missile*, an artificer would need a Use Magic Device check of 21 or better. In order to create a *bottle of air* (caster level 7th), he would need a check of 27 or better to emulate the *waterbreathing* prerequisite.

The artificer must make a successful check for each prerequisite of each item he makes. If he fails a check, he can try again each day until the item is complete. If he comes to the end of the crafting time and he has still not successfully emulated one of the powers, he can make one final check—his last-ditch effort—even if he has already made a check that day. If that check also fails, then the creation process fails and the time, money, and XP cost for crafting the item are lost.

For purposes of meeting item prerequisites, an artificer's effective caster level equals his artificer level +2. If the

item duplicates a spell effect, however, it uses the artificer's actual level as its caster level. Costs are always determined using the item's minimum caster level or the artificer's actual level (if it is higher). Thus, a 3rd-level artificer can make a *scroll of fireball*, since the minimum caster level for *fireball* is 5th. He pays the normal cost for making such a scroll with a caster level of 5th: 5 x 3 x 12.5 = 187 gp and 5 sp, plus 15 XP. But the scroll's actual caster level is only 3rd, and it produces a weak *fireball* that deals only 3d6 points of damage.

The artificer can also make Use Magic Device checks to emulate non-spell requirements, including alignment and race, using the normal DCs for the skill. He cannot emulate skill or feat requirements, however, including item creation feat prerequisites. He must meet the caster level prerequisite, including the minimum level to cast a spell he stores in a potion, wand, or scroll.

An artificer's augmentations do not meet spell prerequisites for creating magic items. For example, an artificer must still employ the Use Magic Device skill to emulate the *light* spell to create a *wand of light*, even though *light* appears on his augmentation list.

Artisan Bonus: An artificer gains a +2 bonus on Use Magic Device checks to activate an item of a kind that he has the prerequisite item creation feat to create. For example, an artificer with Craft Wand gains a +2 bonus on checks to cast a spell from a wand.

Bonus Feats: An artificer gains every item creation feat as a bonus feat near the level at which it first becomes available. Thus, he gets Scribe Scroll as a bonus feat at 1st level, Brew Potion at 2nd level, Craft Wondrous Item at 3rd level, Craft Magic Arms and Armor at 5th level, Craft Wand at 7th level, Craft Rod at 9th level, Craft Staff at 12th level, and Forge Ring at 14th level.

In addition, an artificer gains a bonus feat at 4th level and every 4 levels thereafter. The artificer must choose a metamagic feat or a feat from the following list for each of these bonus feats:

Attune Magic Weapon, Exceptional Artisan, Extra Ring, Magical Artisan, Maximize Magic Weapon, Reduce Spell Failure, Wand Mastery.

An artificer does not gain Craft Construct automatically, but he can choose it as a bonus feat.

Craft Homunculus (Ex): At 4th level, an artificer can create a homunculus as if he had the Craft Construct feat. He must emulate the spell requirements (*arcane eye, mirror image,* and *mending*) as normal for making a magic item, and he must pay all the usual gold and XP costs (although he can spend points from his craft reserve). An artificer can also upgrade an existing homunculus that he owns, adding 1 Hit Die at a cost of 1,000 gp and 80 XP.

If an artificer gives his homunculus more than 6 Hit Dice, it becomes a Small creature and advances as described in the *Monster Manual* (+4 Str, -2 Dex, damage increases to 1d6). The homunculus also gains 10 bonus hit points for being a Small construct.

An artificer can never have a homunculus that has Hit Dice that are more than 2 less than his own. No matter how many Hit Dice it has, a homunculus never grows larger than Small.

Retain Essence (Su): At 5th level, an artificer gains the ability to salvage the XP from a magic item and use it to create another magic item. The artificer must spend a day with the item, and he must also have the appropriate craft feat for the item he is salvaging. After a day, the item is destroyed and the artificer may add the XP it took to create the item to his craft reserve. These points are lost if the artificer does not use them prior to gaining his next level.

Metamagic Spell Trigger (Su): At 6th level, an artificer gains the ability to apply a metamagic feat he knows to a spell trigger item (generally a wand). He must have the appropriate item creation feat for the spell trigger item he is using. Using this ability expends additional charges from the item equal to the number of effective spell levels the metamagic feat would add to a spell.

For example, an artificer can Quicken a spell cast from a wand by spending 5 charges (4 additional charges), Empower the spell by spending 3 charges, or trigger it silently by spending 2 charges. The Still Spell feat confers no benefit when applied to a spell trigger item.

An artificer cannot use this ability when using a spell trigger item that does not have charges, such as *prayer beads*.

Metamagic Spell Completion (Su): At 11th level, an artificer gains the ability to apply a metamagic feat he knows to a spell completion item (generally a scroll). He must have the appropriate item creation feat for the spell completion item he is using. The DC for the Use Magic Device check is equal to 20 + (3 x the modified level of the spell). For example, applying the Empower Spell feat to a scroll of *cone of cold*, creating a 7th-level effect, has a DC of 20 + (3 x 7) = 41. An artificer can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Intelligence modifier.

Skill Mastery: At 13th level, an artificer can take 10 when making a Spellcraft or Use Magic Device check, even if stress and distractions would normally prevent him from doing so.

ARTIFICER Advancement

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Craft Reserve	—Augmentations per Day— 1	2	3	4	5	6
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Disable trap, item creation, artisan bonus, Scribe Scroll	20	2	–	–	–	–	–
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Brew Potion	40	3	–	–	–	–	–
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	Craft Wondrous Item	60	3	1	–	–	–	–
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Craft homunculus, bonus feat	80	3	2	–	–	–	–
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Craft Magic Arms and Armor, retain essence	100	3	3	1	–	–	–

*Note that although this chart shows only five levels, the artificer class is a full 20-level class.

This circumvents the normal rule that a character may not take 10 on a Use Magic Device check.

Artificer Starting Gold: A 1st-level artificer begins play with 5d4 x 10 gp (average 125 gp).

ARTIFICER AUGMENTATION LIST

Augmentations with an asterisk (*) are described in the *Eberron Campaign Setting*. Note that the artificer class has six levels of augmentations; the list was abbreviated for this article.

1st-Level Augmentations

Armor Enhancement, Lesser*: Armor or shield gains special ability with +1 bonus market price modifier.
Energy Alteration*: Item using one kind of energy uses another instead.
Enhancement Alteration*: Magic shield's enhancement bonus applies to shield bash attacks, or magic weapon's enhancement bonus applies to Two-Weapon Defense.
Inflict Light Damage*: Deals 1d8+1/level damage (maximum +5) to a construct.
Light: Object shines like a torch.
Magic Stone: Three stones gain +1 on attack rolls, deal 1d6+1 damage.
Magic Vestment: Armor or shield gains +1 or better enhancement bonus.
Magic Weapon: Weapon gains +1 enhancement bonus.
Repair Light Damage*: "Cures" 1d8+1/level damage (max +5) to a construct.
Resistance Item*: Item bestows +1 or better resistance bonus on saving throws.
Shield of Faith: Aura grants +2 or higher deflection bonus.
Skill Enhancement*: Item bestows circumstance bonus on skill checks.
Spell Storing Item*: Store one spell in an item.
Weapon Augmentation, Personal*: Your weapon gains special ability with +1 bonus market price modifier.

2nd-Level Augmentations

Align Weapon: Weapon becomes good, evil, lawful, or chaotic.
Armor Enhancement*: Armor or shield gains special ability with +2 or +3 bonus market price modifier.
Bear's Endurance: Subject gains +4 to Constitution for 1 min./level.
Blades of Fire*: Your melee weapon deals +1d6 fire damage for 1 round.
Bull's Strength: Subject gains +4 to Strength for 1 min./level.
Cat's Grace: Subject gains +4 to Dexterity for 1 min./level.
Chill Metal: Cold metal damages those who touch it.
Eagle's Splendor: Subject gains +4 to Charisma for 1 min./level.
Fox's Cunning: Subject gains +4 to Intelligence for 1 min./level.
Heat Metal: Makes metal so hot it damages those who touch it.
Inflict Moderate Damage*: Deals 2d8+1/level damage (maximum +10) to a construct.
Owl's Wisdom: Subject gains +4 to Wisdom for 1 min./level.
Repair Moderate Damage*: "Cures" 2d8+1/level damage (maximum +10) to a construct.
Weapon Augmentation, Lesser*: Weapon gains special ability with +1 bonus market price modifier.
Toughen Construct*: Grants construct +2 (or higher) enhancement to natural armor.

3RD-LEVEL AUGMENTATIONS

Armor Enhancement, Greater*: Armor or shield gains special ability

SAMPLE EBERRON FEATS

The *Eberron Campaign Setting* introduces a huge number of new feats. While many of them can be pulled straight out of the book and used in any D&D game, several have been designed to feel particularly at home in Eberron. Among the more than fifty feats in the book, you'll find a number of them created to augment and amplify the abilities and talents of particular character classes (and races).

ACTION BOOST [GENERAL]

You have the ability to alter your luck drastically in dire circumstances.

Benefit: When you spend an action point to alter an attack roll, a skill check, an ability check, a level check, or a saving throw, you roll d8s instead of d6s and add the result to the d20 roll.

DRAGON RAGE [GENERAL]

You call upon the power of your dragon totem to enhance your barbarian rage.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +4, Dragon Totem, ability to rage or frenzy, region of origin Argonnessen.

Benefit: When you enter a rage or frenzy, your natural armor improves by +2. In addition, for the duration of your rage you gain resistance 10 to the energy type associated with your dragon totem (total of resistance 15 while raging).

FLENSING STRIKE [GENERAL]

You have studied a martial style practiced by monks devoted to the Mockery, which has taught you to cut your opponent's skin in a very painful way.

Prerequisite: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (kama), Weapon Focus (kama).

Benefit: Using flensing strike is a full attack action. Flensing strike causes a living, corporeal foe damaged by your attack with a kama to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Wisdom modifier), in addition to dealing damage normally. The DC is increased by +2 if you are wielding two kamas (creatures wielding more than two kamas gain no additional bonuses). The target adds his natural armor bonus, if any, as a special bonus on this saving throw. A target that fails the saving throw is wracked with pain, receiving a -4 penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks for 1 minute. Constructs, oozes, plants, undead, incorporeal creatures, creatures immune to critical hits, and creatures with a special immunity to pain are not susceptible to this feat.

Special: An evil monk may select Flensing Strike as a bonus feat at 6th level if she meets all the prerequisites.

HAUNTING MELODY [BARDIC]

You can use your music to inspire fear as well as courage.

Prerequisites: Bardic music ability, Perform 9 ranks.

Benefit: When you sing or use some other Perform skill, you can unnerve enemies within 30 feet of you. Affected creatures must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 your bard level + your Charisma modifier) or become shaken for a number of rounds equal to your ranks in Perform. This is a mind-affecting fear ability.

Using this ability counts as a use of your bardic music ability.

ADVENTURERS IN EBERRON

"The world of EBERRON supports two basic types of adventurers. First there are earnest, boldly heroic individuals who want to do the right thing, whether that's fighting evil or reclaiming ancient lore for the good of civilization. This is characteristic of the pulp genre, and these characters are likely to have good alignments. Then there are the cynical, world-weary characters that usually need a well-greased palm to get started on the road to adventure. This is more characteristic of noir and the neutral alignments—although when push comes to shove, a gruff exterior might hide a good heart. As EBERRON is a blend of both genres, there is no reason that a party has to share the same alignment; the streetwise ex-guardsman or former guild enforcer might be able to handle certain situations with a little more finesse than the noble paladin.

"Regardless of alignment, player characters in EBERRON should always be treated as remarkable individuals. There are a number of ways to handle this. Most of the friendly NPCs should use NPC classes instead of regular classes. This gives the players something to offer right away; even a low-level artificer can perform tasks that are beyond the most advanced magewright. Player characters are simply more versatile than most NPCs. As a result, the characters' services will often be sought by powerful patrons and factions. When the Wayfinder Foundation wants to recover an ancient artifact from the deserts of Xen'drik, the player characters really are the best people for the job. Of course, this emphasis on NPC classes doesn't apply to the villains, which is another reason the players are important. Only they possess the skills required to match wits and blades with the agents of evil!

"Needless to say, there is nothing to prevent players from running evil characters, if that is what they and the Dungeon Master want to do. Perhaps they want to play a team of thoughtstealers from Riedra, or work for one of the crime guilds of Sharn. But in general, EBERRON is designed for heroic action."

—Keith Baker

with +4 or +5 bonus market price modifier.
Construct Energy Ward*: Construct gains resistance 10 to specified energy type.
Inflict Serious Damage*: Deals 3d8+1/level damage (maximum +15) to a construct.
Magic Weapon, Greater: Weapon gains +2 or better enhancement bonus.
Metamagic Item*: Imbue spell trigger item with metamagic feat.
Power Surge*: Charged spell trigger item gains temporary charges.
Repair Serious Damage*: "Cures" 3d8+1/level damage (maximum +15) to a construct.
Stone Construct*: Construct gains DR 10/adamantine.
Suppress Requirement*: Item that requires class feature, race, ability score, or alignment to function to its fullest potential no longer carries that requirement.

PRESTIGE CLASSES THAT BELONG

As you explore the *EBERRON Campaign Setting*, you'll notice that the prestige classes have a particular style and feel about them. That's because each one was created to reinforce a character's place in the world of EBERRON, whether it provides a specialized use of action points, highlights the abilities of one of EBERRON's unique races, empowers a character's existing dragonmark, or some other particular ability. Of course with a few adjustments, often just a cosmetic change to the background, the prestige classes you'll find in EBERRON can be used in any D&D campaign setting.

PRESTIGE CLASSES IN EBERRON

"With EBERRON, both the campaign setting book and future products, we're really trying to make sure that the prestige classes are an integral part of the setting. We're giving a little more space to each one so that a character with a prestige class can feel a little more like a part of something larger—not just a guy who wears a certain name, but a part of an actual organization in EBERRON, and something unique to EBERRON. So in EBERRON, you're not just a sacred exorcist, you're an exorcist of the Silver Flame, and as part of a specific church, you've got a defined place in the campaign setting."

—James Wyatt

Master Inquisitive

The master inquisitive takes the art of investigation and deduction to the ultimate level, rising to the top of the field. The master inquisitive could be an elite freelance investigator or a master detective working for a recognized law-enforcement organization somewhere in Khorvaire. He might be an investigative chronicler digging up details on corruption and conspiracies. Whatever his role, the master inquisitive specializes in solving mysteries and shedding light on the darkest secrets.

Many dabblers in the field call themselves inquisitives, but only a select few attain the status of master. The master inquisitive is the quintessential investigator with a reputation for tenacity and success that is very well deserved. The best in the field often come up through the ranks of rogue or bard, but members of every class with an insatiable curiosity and a need to solve mysteries can achieve the title of master inquisitive.

The master inquisitive's intuition and insight becomes so fine tuned as to appear supernatural and, indeed, he manifests a few spell-like abilities to help him in his search for truth and the solutions to the mysteries he confronts on a regular basis.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the master inquisitive.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The master inquisitive gains no proficiency with any weapons, armor, or shields.

***Zone of Truth* (Sp):** At 1st level, once per day, a master inquisitive can use *zone of truth* as a spell-like ability, duplicating the effect of the *zone of truth* spell. The master inquisitive can spend two action points for each additional use of this ability per day.

Bonus Feats: At 2nd and 4th level, the master inquisitive gains a bonus feat. The bonus feat must be selected from the following list, and the master inquisitive must meet all of the prerequisites of the feat to select it: Alertness, Deceitful, Heroic Spirit, Improved Initiative, Investigator, Iron Will, Negotiator, Persuasive, Recognize Imposter, Research, Toughness, Track, Urban Tracking.

Contact: A master inquisitive of 2nd level and higher cultivates associates and informants. Each time the master inquisitive gains a contact, the DM should develop an NPC to represent the contact. The contact must be of an NPC class, either an adept, aristocrat, commoner, expert, magewright, or warrior.

Contacts might be informants, criminals, chroniclers, shopkeepers, coach drivers, household servants, or others who can pro-

MASTER INQUISITIVE Advancement

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	*Zone of truth*
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Bonus feat, contact (3rd level)
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	*Discern lies*
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Bonus feat, contact (6th level)
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	*Trueseeing*

MASTER INQUISITIVE Requirements

To qualify to become a master inquisitive, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Feats: Investigate.

Skills: Gather Information 6 ranks, Search 3 ranks, Sense Motive 6 ranks.

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MASTER INQUISITIVE Class Skills

The master inquisitive's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Decipher Script (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Listen (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis).

Skill Points per Level: 6 + Int modifier.

vide limited aid and information pertaining to a master inquisitive's endeavors.

A contact will not accompany a master inquisitive on missions or risk his or her life in any overt manner. A contact can, however, provide information, develop leads, or render a service (make a specific skill check on behalf of the inquisitive).

At 2nd level, the master inquisitive gains a 3rd-level contact. At 4th level, the master inquisitive gains a 6th-level contact.

The master inquisitive can't call upon the same contact more than once per week. When he calls on a contact, compensation will be required for the services rendered. Professional contacts, such as adepts, aristocrats, and magewrights, require favors in return, usually calling on the inquisitor when the need arises. Criminal or working-class contacts, including commoners, experts, and warriors, usually demand money for the services they provide. Prices for a contact's services are based on the contact's class and level, as shown below. Unlike hirelings, the inquisitive personally knows and has a longstanding relationship with his contacts.

Contact's Class Cost for Services Rendered

Adept	1 gp/level or favor in return
Aristocrat	Favor in return
Commoner	2 sp/level
Expert	5 sp/level
Magewright	1 gp/level or favor in return
Warrior	5 sp/level

Discern Lies **(Sp):** At 3rd level, once per day, a master inquisitive can use *discern lies* as a spell-like ability, duplicating the effect of the *discern lies* spell. The master inquisitive can spend 2 action points for each additional use of this ability per day.

True Seeing **(Sp):** At 5th level, once per day, a master inquisitive can use *trueseeing* as a spell-like ability, duplicating the effect of the *trueseeing* spell. The master inquisitive can spend 2 action points for each additional use of this ability per day.

The exciting, new *Eberron Campaign Setting* hits the shelves of your favorite bookstore or hobby shop in July. Until then, we'll keep showing you more of what you can expect to see inside. Next month, you'll get a quick look at how and where standard D&D character races fit into the world of Eberron, and you'll get your first look at three of the new character races that are unique to the campaign setting—changelings, the kalashtar, and shifters.

DM's Toolbox

CHARACTER INTELLIGENCE VS. PLAYER INTELLIGENCE
PLAYING IT SMART

by Johnn Four

DM: [gleefully rubbing her hands together] "The sphinx finishes singing the riddle and looks at you expectantly. 'What is your answer, foolish traveler?' she asks."

Player: "My character has an Intelligence score of 17. He's almost a genius, so he figures it out."

DM: "Er, okay, he can try. Make an intelligence check—DC 20."

Player: "Ha! Made it! I solve the riddle. 'Let us pass, oh foul creature,' says my character. 'We won fair and square!'"

DM: [sighing deeply] "So much for that puzzle."

Refereeing a game that involves highly intelligent characters can be a tricky business. Some players want to figure out puzzles and riddles themselves, but others feel that their characters have the right to solve their own problems. Thus, there's often a conflict between the players who demand their characters solve riddles that the players can't or won't, and those who want to roleplay out every detail of solving the puzzles and problems that their PCs face. This dichotomy in how players approach "intellectual" problems means that Dungeon Masters are never sure whether they should spend time planning out fun puzzles and setting up devious dilemmas, since their work might be brushed aside in a few moments of dice rolling. Arbitrating between players who disagree about the player versus character intelligence issue often frustrates DMs as well, and the campaign as a whole can suffer for it.

The classic "character memory versus player memory" conflict is a related problem that creates many of the same dilemmas and arguments. Many players think that their characters should be able to recall important names, facts, and clues, even though the players themselves cannot because they haven't played the game in days or even weeks. Is it the players' or the characters' job to remember important campaign information? And who should decide the answer to that question?

Unlike physical abilities, intelligence is an intangible character attribute. The game rules are clear on how a character's Intelligence score affects character creation, advancement, and skill checks, but they do not provide instructions for dealing with the tricky issue of what exactly a character knows or remembers. No single solution can satisfy every player and DM, but the following advice, general guidelines, and specific tools for handling this issue in your games might help you decide what to do.

TOOL 1: DM STYLE

As Dungeon Master, you are in the best position to prevent arguments on this issue as well as others. You can't force players to change the way they think, but you can change your style of designing encounters and even your DMing technique so that high character intelligence does not become a major issue. You can approach the problem from inside or outside the game itself, or even from both angles at once. The options detailed below offer several techniques for achieving this purpose.

Make a Policy and Stick to It

Before the next game (or the next time the argument arises), set a public policy about how you're going to handle player and PC intelligence. You can (and should) solicit player preferences on the issue and factor those into your decision, but avoid time-consuming discussions. A flexible policy that allows characters to solve problems some of the time and players to solve them the rest of the time is fine if you let the group know this is how you'll be running the game. Once your policy is set, be sure to enforce it fairly and consistently from that point forward, and be prepared to explain concisely how you arrived at decisions if they are questioned.

Use the Situation as an Opportunity

Don't panic or get angry when players want their genius PCs to solve puzzles in the adventure with die

rolls. Instead, look at the situation as an opportunity to reward a player who applied a good die roll to his PC's intelligence score instead of to Strength or Dexterity. Gamers enjoy playing characters who have abilities that they don't, and roleplaying those differences should be interesting and fun. Logically, a character who is smarter than the player should have the ability to think his way out of some situations even when the player can't.

Genius PCs also present an opportunity to pack more story into your game sessions. Using the information you reveal through them, the group can reach decisions faster, become aware of more plot hooks, and stay on track with your plans and designs.

Design Situations, Not Mechanics

What do you really want to accomplish with those few, precious hours you've allotted to getting together with your friends at the gaming table? While it can be lots of fun to design puzzles with intricate mechanisms and mysteries that have subtle clues, investing too much game time in exhaustive investigation and the gathering of minutia can lead to player boredom. That time might be better invested in telling more of the story, fitting in more action, and getting on with the adventure. Consider adapting your design style to offer more situations that don't require detailed mechanics to resolve. You don't have to avoid puzzles with such a style, but you can eliminate a certain degree of detail without losing the flavor of the game.

For example, suppose a word puzzle bars the way to a new portion of the dungeon. Rather than designing the intricacies of the puzzle's mechanism, just inform players with smart characters that it appears they must press letters embedded near the door's lock in a certain order to gain entry. If a player wants to make an Intelligence check to see whether her character can determine what the exact sequence is, fine. If the players want to figure it out in their own heads, that's fine too. Either way, the game moves on smoothly, whether or not the characters manage to solve the puzzle. You haven't wasted any design or game time, and the fun factor is still high because the puzzle is an interesting event.

Player Puzzles Versus Character Puzzles

Puzzles designed for players are often quite different than those designed for characters, and they require different handling during a game.

Player puzzles typically require props, handouts, and real-world knowledge of such topics as vocabulary, math, or science. Requiring an in-character solution for this type of puzzle not only breaks your players' sense of disbelief, it also tends to invalidate skill choices and character development decisions that the players have made. Such puzzles can constitute a welcome break for jaded players who are tired of the same old campaign grind, but they are best employed sparingly.

Character puzzles involve knowledge that the PC has but the player doesn't or knowledge garnered by both player and character during play. This type of challenge is appropriate for a wide variety of game situations. Since such puzzles usually give both characters and players a fair crack at finding a solution, they can be used liberally in a game.

Intelligence is a Means to an End

Let your players make Intelligence checks to find solutions when they ask to do so. You're there to play a game, and arguing about who can know what can slow down the action dramatically. Even if you'd rather they solved the puzzle themselves, the dice mechanic might allow the players to avoid getting bogged down and keep the game moving.

If you think your players are overusing Intelligence checks, then design situations in which a successful check won't solve the entire problem. One method is to include more dilemmas in which no solution comes without a cost, forcing the players to decide which cost is the most palatable. Another is to create roleplaying problems in which Intelligence checks can reveal possible solutions, but carrying them out requires parley or additional skills. Multitiered problems also tend to mitigate the benefit of Intelligence checks because even a smart character will fail one eventually.

> You're there to play a game, and arguing about who can know what can slow down the action dramatically.

Actions Have Consequences

Instead of designing complex problems to defy smart PCs, spend more time determining the consequences of potential solutions and character actions. Smart characters should be able to anticipate consequences with greater precision than their less intelligent friends, just as chess masters think further ahead than rookies do. Conveying the potential consequences of a proposed solution to the players of smart characters can challenge them in ways that a roll can't entirely resolve.

Conversely, even promising solutions can have unexpected complications—that's part of what makes adventures interesting. If a smart character decides that knocking out the dam to flood the valley and wash away the goblin army is the best solution, it's reasonable to assume that one of the intelligent enemy leaders has foreseen such a tactic and guarded against it. Perhaps the dam is particularly

well guarded, and some additional precautions are needed to carry out the plan successfully. Let the player make an Intelligence check to come up with a good solution if he wishes, but ensure that the group still faces plenty of challenges in implementing the chosen solution, particularly when the action involves an important or climactic scene.

You might also consider adopting a freeform DMing style in which game plans remain dynamic and the results of PC actions are not fixed. Such a style allows you to change consequences on the fly so that smart PCs are rewarded for anticipating consequences. Allow for the fact that a player might anticipate results as well. After all, when consequences that a smart PC's player has predicted actually come to pass, the gap between player and character intelligence seems considerably smaller.

Prepare For A Faster Pace, More Story

Some novels pack a lot of action and plot development into a single paragraph, while others can take several pages just to convey a single event. In a similar manner, problem-solving via Intelligence checks can provide the opportunity for accelerated storytelling. Since the characters require less time to bypass certain challenges, you can tell more of the story during each session—and you should be fully prepared to do so. Create additional NPCs, harvest new plot threads from character actions, flesh out the campaign setting a little more, and have a few background world events up your sleeve to throw into the mix. You might be surprised at how rewarding this fast-paced style of gaming can be compared to spending days solving long and intricate problems.

> The characters have far more life knowledge and experience within your world than the players do.

Use Genius Foes

Make your villains just as smart as the player characters—or even a bit smarter. This tactic keeps the game challenging for players who prefer to solve mental problems with Intelligence checks.

What's the best way to keep your villains one step ahead of the party? First of all, let them use their high Intelligence scores in the same way that the PCs do. If PCs can make Intelligence checks to solve problems, their foes can too. Roll often to see whether foes anticipate the player characters' actions, and then change their plans accordingly. You can also listen to player banter and incorporate any good ideas they come up with into your villains' plans. Or you can poll other DMs on the Internet before the game, asking them if they have any good ideas for tactics and strategy based on the current situation in your campaign.

Allow Player Kibitzing

Let others provide ideas and advice to the player with the smart PC. Two heads are better than one, and several heads are sometimes better still. This technique lets the player retain control over her character and also allows you to continue devising entertaining puzzles and challenges.

Create Uncertainty

Dice rolls are dramatic devices because they create a possibility of failure, and such uncertainty helps to keep interest high. You can make the outcome uncertain even for genius PCs and their dice-rolling players by incorporating an element of risk into all possible solutions. A successful Intelligence check might reveal the method most likely to be successful in solving a given problem, but it doesn't guarantee the outcome.

TOOL #2: DESCRIPTION

When dealing with differences between player and character intelligence, put your narrative style to work. Good description combined with interesting challenges can often persuade players to try solving problems for themselves. Even if they still want to roll dice, strategic use of description allows you to integrate Intelligence checks into the action without overtaxing their sense of disbelief and disrupting their enjoyment of the game.

Don't Be a Bottleneck

You are the source of all the sensory information that characters receive about your game world, so don't be an information bottleneck for the players. The characters have far more life knowledge and experience within your world than the players do, but the more you can narrow that gap, the more information the group has with which to make decisions. So put yourself in the PCs' shoes, clearly envision the current action, and try to convey as much relevant detail as you can in an entertaining way.

Key Your Descriptions to Character Intelligence

Describe situations and events through the lens of each character's intelligence. Whenever possible, give each player a different description of an event, ensuring that the smarter ones make more observations and get more clues than their less intelligent counterparts. When using this technique, it's best to start your descriptions with the least intelligent character and progress from there. You'll find it easier to add more details as you go than to subtract something you've already made part of the description,

and players of dumb PCs will better understand what their characters do and do not know.

This technique ensures that the information each character has to work with is constrained by his character's intelligence. Use this style not to replace Spot, Sense Motive, and other perception-based skill checks but to enhance game play and simulate different rates of information processing. Once you have described the situation to everyone separately, all the players can bring their characters' skills to bear to gather more knowledge if the situation allows it. Otherwise, each player must act on the information his character has.

Video Game Style

Many video games boost the lethality of foes by letting them work outside of the game rules that bind the players. Feel free to provide this same boon to genius PCs. Provide them with extra information, solve portions of mysteries for them, and give them amazing amounts of detail that will leave dumb PCs scratching their heads in wonderment. This technique satisfies the players' need for smart PCs to gain some benefit, but it also helps you plan your encounters effectively, since you can control which critical insights you reveal.

The key to making this technique work is in the way you describe situations. If you present critical information as flashes of insight, breathtaking leaps in deductive logic, and deep feelings of intuition, the players are likely to accept and enjoy your enhanced storytelling flair.

> A character can be smart in some ways and stupid in others.

Increase Scope and Awareness

To ensure that the effects of PC intelligence are obvious during the game, increase the scope and depth of information you supply to smart PCs. Try to include knowledge beyond the immediate situation whenever possible. For example, if the party runs into a guard patrol, you might tell a player what his genius PC knows about recent troop movements, current foreign relations, and background world events as they might possibly pertain to the encounter. Such information might help the players roleplay better and possibly aid them in resolving the encounter to their advantage, but it does not reduce the encounter's threat.

Although awareness is often coupled with wisdom, it also pertains to intelligence in the sense of perceiving, understanding, and coping with information. For example, a PC with a high Intelligence score might perceive relationships between separate bits of knowledge that characters of lower intelligence do not. Whenever you describe a situation to the player of a smart PC, be sure to draw some accurate conclusions, provide several options for action or resolution, and associate some previously unlinked clues.

TOOL #3: ROLEPLAYING

Good roleplaying is another way to resolve the tricky issue of player versus character knowledge. A player's intelligence might not be as high as that of her brilliant character, but a few roleplaying tricks and techniques can make it seem that way. All these methods can help players do a credible job roleplaying characters who are far smarter than themselves.

Set a Good Example

If you want players to roleplay their smart characters well, show them how it's done by making an extra effort to roleplay NPCs and monsters according to their intelligence. Players who experience a wide range of smarts among their foes might be inspired to play up or play down to their own characters' intelligence. If all the PCs are not portrayed as having the same intelligence, the bright ones tend to seem even brighter in comparison to their Neanderthal friends.

Reward Good Roleplaying with Modifiers

Respond to players who try hard to roleplay their genius PCs properly by granting them bonuses on skill and ability checks. This type of reward system helps smart characters succeed more often without forcing their players to understand the specifics of what's being accomplished. A bonus between +2 and +4 on a given check is an appropriate reward.

Allow for Different Types of Intelligence

Because there are many aspects to intelligence, a character can be smart in some ways and stupid in others. If a player consistently makes his smart PC do stupid things, chalk it up as a personality flaw of the PC. Perhaps the character is book-smart and has a good memory but is often hasty and prone to act without thinking things through.

Manage In-Character Versus Out-Of-Character Information

Make it clear to your players that you want them to differentiate between what they know as players and what their characters know. Ask them not to take advantage of knowledge their PCs wouldn't have during game play, and issue reminders when they forget. ("Remember, your PC on guard duty doesn't know what's going on inside the building.")

This technique helps players run intelligent characters by increasing the contrast between party members. It's hard to feel smart if your friends

mysteriously act on information that only you should have been able to figure out, and it's especially frustrating if they act on it first! Feel free to use one-on-one meetings or notes to transfer information in secret if you feel that some players might have difficulty separating PC knowledge from their own.

Gauge the Intent, Not the Plan

Ask each player to impart the spirit of his character's actions and intentions, then decide whether the PC is actually smart enough to make and execute a successful plan. This technique removes the onus for actually coming up with a solution from the player.

TOOL #4: SKILL & ABILITY CHECKS

Changing the manner in which you handle skill and ability checks is another good way to manage smart characters. Whether or not you allow characters to make Intelligence checks to remember information or solve problems, consider the following house rules and suggestions.

Smart Doesn't Have to Mean Right

The mere fact that a character is a genius doesn't mean she's always right or perfect, so it's up to the other players to decide whether their characters will trust the party's Brainiac in any given situation. If the other players don't know what the smart one has or has not learned, they have to trust that the PC knows what she's doing because she's smart, not because the DM said something was so.

When using this technique, communicate often to the smart character's player what the PC has learned or figured out, but do not impart that information to the other players. You can decide what information to give by making Intelligence checks in secret or having the player make them in your presence only. Then impart the information gained via notes, private meetings, or other forms of one-on-one communication. It's a good idea to place players with smart characters close to you at the table to facilitate such private communication.

Tie Clues to Intelligence Bonus

If a player tries to solve a problem himself rather than using an Intelligence check, you can give him a number of clues equal to his character's Intelligence bonus. Alternatively, you could give as many clues as the smart character's player requests, but reduce the encounter's EL (and hence, its XP award) by one for each clue provided. Conversely, you could award bonus XP if a player solves a problem personally rather than just making an Intelligence check for it.

To aid players of smart characters in remembering important facts, consider allowing a number of free memories per game session (or encounter) equal to the character's Intelligence bonus. Retrieving an additional memory requires an appropriate skill or ability check.

Encourage Skill Checks

Encourage skill use as a substitute for Intelligence checks. Unless solving a particular problem requires purely abstract reasoning, ask the player to make a relevant skill check rather than a raw Intelligence check. The D&D rules support this tactic by giving smart PCs extra skill points at character creation and with each subsequent level attained. Use of this technique tends to encourage players to spend skill points on various Knowledge skills rather than the usual sensory and action-based skills. In turn, this emphasis on diverse skills can improve the level of roleplaying and the depth of story you can achieve.

Impose Time Limits

Make time a factor in problem-solving. Stress can negatively impact the ability to think, so feel free to apply penalties to Intelligence checks made during combat and other time-pressured situations.

If a player wants to try solving something herself, give her a time limit based on her PC's Intelligence—perhaps 1 minute + 1 minute per point of Intelligence bonus. Alternatively, you can give the players of smart PCs a head start on solving puzzles or problems by presenting them to those individuals privately before introducing them to the rest of the group.

CONCLUSION

For some, the choice of allowing players to use their own knowledge and abilities to solve problems or to have their characters do so through die rolls is not an issue. For many groups though, an unresolved debate rages on this issue because there is no single, universal solution guaranteed to satisfy everyone. Some gamers who stress realism feel that rolling for a solution is best because it's the character doing the thinking. Others prefer to tackle puzzles and riddles personally because they enjoy doing it. Everybody wants to have fun, so start with some group communication outside the game, and discuss the ideas and options presented in this article. Put together a menu of solutions that satisfies as many people as possible, then test them out until your group hits a sweet spot on the spectrum of player versus character intelligence.

Sage Advice

EQUIPMENT AND COMBAT OFFICIAL ANSWERS

by Skip Williams

This month, the Sage considers the ins and outs of things you can buy in the D&D game, but first, the Sage pauses to expand on some old advice. Send your questions to **sageadvice@paizo.com**.

Back in issue #313, you talked about Bob the fighter, who was unconscious and later woke up, prone, to find Grog the orc standing in his space. You said Bob has to stay prone so long as he remained in Grog's space, and that Bob would provoke an attack of opportunity upon leaving that space. Suppose Bob made a grapple attack on Grog? He can grapple Grog, can't he? Bob would suffer a penalty for being prone but would not provoke an attack of opportunity, would he? Assuming Bob establishes a hold on Grog, how long does the prone penalty last?

Sure, Bob can grapple Grog. Bob's initial grab attack provokes an attack of opportunity from Grog unless Bob has the Improved Grapple feat or some other circumstance prevents Grog from threatening Bob (for example, Grog would not threaten Bob if Grog were wielding a reach weapon). If Grog deals damage to Bob with an attack of opportunity, Bob's grapple attempt is over.

If Grog doesn't damage Bob, Bob's initial touch attack would suffer a -4 penalty for being prone. If the grab succeeds, Bob is still prone and still suffers the -4 penalty for being prone for the ensuing opposed grapple check. (Some DMs I know would give Bob an offsetting bonus for being able to wrap himself around Grog's ankles, but I don't recommend doing so; it's pretty easy to kick loose from somebody lying on the ground when you're standing up).

If Bob manages to get a hold on Grog, he normally would have to move into Grog's space to maintain the hold. This movement would provoke attacks of opportunity from foes that threaten Bob. However, Bob is in Grog's space already, so he doesn't have to move to maintain the hold, and he's spared attacks of opportunity from Grog's allies.

You can move when grappling (see page 156 in the *Player's Handbook*). Normally you drag foes along with you when you move during grappling, but there's no reason why Bob can't just use a move action to stand up in Grog's space once he has hold of Grog. Bob has to win an opposed grapple check against Grog (still at -4 for being prone) to stand up. This doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity from Grog (who doesn't threaten Bob or anyone else while grappling), but it does from Grog's allies if they threaten Bob (see page 143 in the *Player's Handbook*). Once on his feet, Bob can keep grappling without the prone penalty, or just let Grog go. If Bob lets go, he can leave Grog's space with a 5-foot step and not provoke any attacks of opportunity (getting up is a move action, but its not "movement" for purposes of taking a 5-foot step because Bob isn't actually moving any distance, see page 144 in the *Player's Handbook*).

I'm unclear about the exact cost of adding enhancements to a cold iron weapon. Page 284 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* says any magical enhancements to a cold iron item cost an additional 2,000 gp. I am unclear as to whether this is a one time cost or if it applies to each enhancement. For example, would a *+1 cold iron frost longsword* cost the same as a *+2 cold iron longsword* (10,330 gp) since both are "+2" weapons, or would it cost 12,330 gp (2,000 extra for the +1 enhancement, and 2,000 extra for the frost enhancement)? Also, is the extra cost (whatever it might be) added to the magic item's base (so that it takes longer to make a cold iron item), or just to the total price?

You pay +2,000 gp each time you enhance the item, not for each magical property. When you first create the item, you add +2,000 gp on top of the cost of all other enhancements you add to the weapon, and that 2,000 gp increases only the item's market price. So your example *+1 cold iron frost longsword* would have a market price of 10,330 gp

Borders Illustrated by David Wahlstrom

(30+300+8,000+2,000). The cost to create the sword would be 6,330 gp (30+300+4,000+2,000) and 320 xp (1/25th of the 8,000 gp cost for the enhancements). The sword would take 8 days to make (the 8,000 gp divided by 1,000).

If you later went back and added another +1 enhancement, you would have to pay the extra 2,000 gp again.

When using a Ride skill check to claim cover from your mount, exactly when do you start claiming cover from your mount? When must you stop claiming cover? The skill description says you react instantly to claim cover, and it doesn't take an action. Does that mean you can do so anytime, even when it's not your turn? The skill description says you can't attack or cast spells while claiming cover. Why is that significant if you can claim cover anytime without using an action?

You can make a Ride check to claim cover from your mount anytime, even when it's not your turn. Make the check before your opponent makes his attack roll. If your check succeeds, you have cover against your opponent's attacks. If several different opponents attack you during the same place in the initiative order, one Ride check determines if you have cover against all those attacks. If you're attacked again, you must make another Ride check to claim cover again. You cannot claim cover while you're casting a spell or making any kind of attack. So, for example, if you cast a spell while mounted you can't use your mount as cover against any attack of opportunity you might provoke. Nor can you claim cover from your mount while making a charge attack (not even during the movement portion of your charge).

You can make a Ride check to claim cover from your mount anytime, even when it's not your turn.

The section on using a weapon to make trip attack on page 159 of the *Player's Handbook* says some weapons can be used for tripping, and then lists a few weapons. Is this the complete list of weapons that you can use to make trip attacks, or are there others that are not on the list? Can a character use, say, a quarterstaff to trip?

The list on page 159 is not intended to be a complete list; there are several weapons described in Chapter 7 that you can use for trip attacks, and new weapons get added to the game from time to time. To determine if any particular weapon is useful for tripping, read the weapon's description. If you can use the weapon to make trip attacks, its description will say so. If a weapon's description does not specifically say you can make trip attacks with it, you cannot make trip attacks with it. Weapons from the *Player's Handbook* you can use to make trip attacks are: Bolas, spiked chain, dire flail, heavy flail, flail, guisarme, halberd, gnome hooked hammer, kama, scythe, sickle, and whip.

You cannot use a quarterstaff to make a trip attack, because tripping isn't one of a quarterstaff's properties.

In the D&D game, a trip attack involves grabbing a foe and somehow yanking him off balance. All the *Player's Handbook* weapons that allow trip attacks have some kind of hook that can snag a foe or some flexile portion that you can wrap around an opponent's limb or body.

Suppose I have a weapon that is bane vs. constructs and it is not made of adamantine. If I attack an iron golem with this weapon, does the weapon bypass the golem's damage reduction? In general, will a bane weapon bypass damage reduction when you use it to attack a designated foe?

The bane property doesn't bypass damage reduction. If you hit a designated foe, however, the extra damage you deal will help you overcome any damage reduction the foe has. For example, if you have a Strength score of 16 and you hit an iron golem with a *+1 construct bane longsword*, you'll deal 1d8 + 1 (base damage from the +1 sword) + 2 (extra enhancement bonus against your designated foe from the bane property) + 3 (Strength bonus) + 2d6 (bonus damage against your designated foe). On average you'll deal 17 or 18 points of damage to the golem, which is enough to get a few points of damage past the golem's damage reduction of 15/adamantine.

You can get a host of benefits from wielding a two-handed weapon, such as 1-1/2 times your Strength bonus to damage (and twice your damage bonus from the Power Attack feat) and a +4 bonus to your opposed attack roll if someone tries to disarm you. So when is a weapon "two-handed?" For example, a lance is a two-handed weapon, right? But you can wield it in one hand when you're mounted. Since the weapons table shows that a lance is a two-handed weapon, I get all the two-handed benefits no matter how I wield the lance, right?

Wrong. Table 7-5 in the *Player's Handbook* lists weapons as light, one-handed, or two-handed strictly as a matter of convenience. These categories are always relative to the wielder's size, as explained in some detail in the section on weapon size on page 113 in the *Player's Handbook* (also see next question).

When the combat rules speak of "two-handed" weapons, they're referring to how the weapon is being used. A Medium character using a Medium longsword in two hands is using a "two-handed" weapon. The same character using a Medium lance in one hand while mounted is using a one-handed weapon. Light weapons are an exception. If you wield a light weapon in two hands you get no advantage on damage (see page 113 in the *Player's Handbook*). Likewise, you always take a -4 penalty on your opposed roll when you're wielding a light weapon in a disarm attempt (when someone tries to disarm you or you try to disarm someone) regardless of whether you wield it one- or two-handed.

Exactly when is a weapon light, one-handed, and two-handed? And when do you take the -2 penalty for using a weapon of the wrong size? How does the system of weapon sizes work with exotic weapons such as the bastard sword and dwarven waraxe, which are one-handed exotic weapons, but two-handed martial weapons? If my dwarf wants to use a dwarven waraxe in one hand, how big a dwarven waraxe can she wield? Suppose my dwarf wants to fight with two weapons and use a dwarven waraxe as a light weapon in her off hand. How big a dwarven waraxe can she use then?

When you're talking strictly about a weapon's size (as opposed to how one uses the weapon, see the previous question), the designations light, one-handed, and two-handed depend on the kind of weapon and on the size of the wielder for which the weapon was made. According to page 113 in the *Player's Handbook*, a weapon has a size category, such as Small or Medium, that indicates the intended wielder's size. So, a Medium longsword is a longsword made for a Medium wielder. When a weapon's size category matches the wielder's size, Table 7-5 shows whether it is light, one-handed, or two-handed for that wielder. When the intended wielder and the actual wielder aren't the same size, you have to compare the two creature sizes to determine how the actual user can wield the weapon. If the actual user is much bigger or smaller than the intended user, she can't use the weapon at all. The Weapon and Wielder Size table shows weapon sizes vs. user sizes.

For example, a frost giant (a Huge creature) collects a greataxe, a warhammer, and a light hammer made for a dwarf (a Medium creature). The greataxe is a two-handed weapon for the dwarf, but the giant treats it as a light weapon. The giant suffers a -4 penalty when using the greataxe. The giant cannot use the warhammer (a one-handed weapon for the dwarf) or the light hammer (a light weapon for the dwarf).

For the example character to wield a dwarven waraxe as a light weapon, the waraxe would have to be made for a Tiny character, and the dwarf would have a -4 attack penalty.

As noted in the previous question, you can decide to wield a one-handed weapon in two hands and get the benefits of a two-handed weapon in combat. To do so, the weapon has to be designated a one-handed weapon for

WEAPON AND WIELDER SIZE

WEAPON	WIELDER Fine	Diminutive	Tiny	Small	Medium	Large	Huge	Gargantuan	Colossal
Fine Weapon									
Light	L	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
One-handed	1-H	L (-2)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Two-handed	2-H	1-H (-2)	L (-4)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Diminutive Weapon									
Light	1-H (-2)	L	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
One-handed	2-H (-2)	1-H	L (-2)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Two-handed	–	2-H	1-H (-2)	L (-4)	–	–	–	–	–
Tiny Weapon									
Light	2-H (-4)	1-H (-2)	L	–	–	–	–	–	–
One-handed	–	2-H (-2)	1-H	L (-2)	–	–	–	–	–
Two-handed	–	–	2-H	1-H (-2)	L (-4)	–	–	–	–
Small Weapon									
Light	–	2-H (-4)	1-H (-2)	L	–	–	–	–	–
One-handed	–	–	2-H (-2)	1-H	L (-2)	–	–	–	–
Two-handed	–	–	–	2-H	1-H (-2)	L (-4)	–	–	–
Medium Weapon									
Light	–	–	2-H (-4)	1-H (-2)	L	–	–	–	–
One-handed	–	–	–	2-H (-2)	1-H	L (-2)	–	–	–
Two-handed	–	–	–	–	2-H	1-H (-2)	L (-4)	–	–
Large Weapon									
Light	–	–	–	2-H (-4)	1-H (-2)	L	–	–	–
One-handed	–	–	–	–	2-H (-2)	1-H	L (-2)	–	–
Two-handed	–	–	–	–	–	2-H	1-H (-2)	L (-4)	–
Huge Weapon									
Light	–	–	–	–	2-H (-4)	1-H (-2)	L	–	–
One-handed	–	–	–	–	–	2-H (-2)	1-H	L (-2)	–
Two-handed	–	–	–	–	–	–	2-H	1-H (-2)	L (-4)
Gargantuan Weapon									
Light	–	–	–	–	–	2-H (-4)	1-H (-2)	L	–
One-handed	–	–	–	–	–	–	2-H (-2)	1-H	L (-2)
Two-handed	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2-H	1-H (-2)
Colossal Weapon									
Light	–	–	–	–	–	–	2-H (-4)	1-H (-2)	L
One-handed	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2-H (-2)	1-H
Two-handed	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2-H

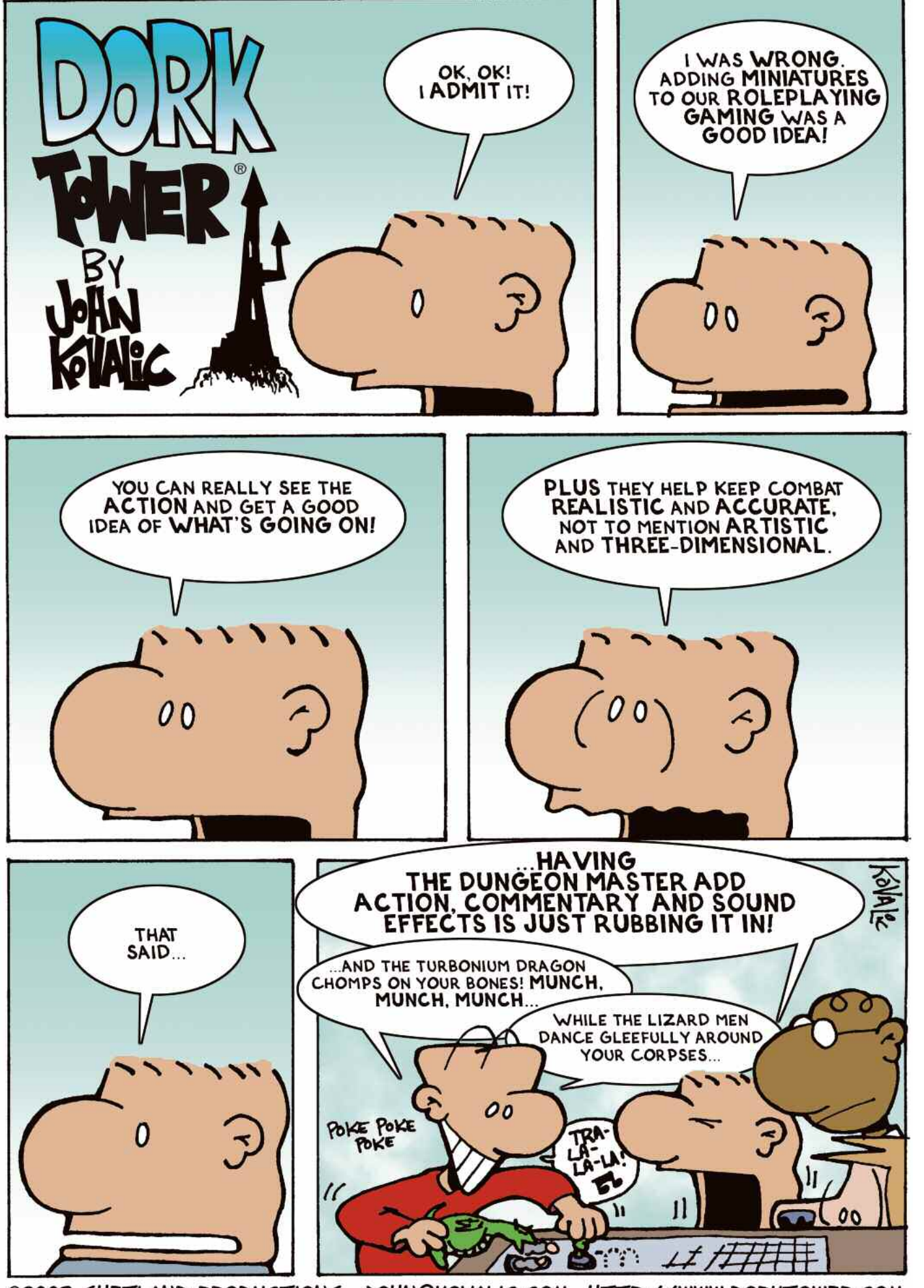
L: The user treats the weapon as a light weapon.
1-H: The user treats the weapon as a one-handed weapon.
2-H: The user treats the weapon as a two-handed weapon.
–: The user is too big or too small to use this weapon.

you. The fire giant in the previous example could not get two-handed weapon damage with the dwarf's greataxe because that weapon is a light weapon for the giant.

The bastard sword, lance, and dwarven waraxe are all two-handed weapons that can be used in one hand under the correct circumstances (the bastard sword and dwarven waraxe are shown on Table 7-5 as one-handed exotic weapons, but they're really two-handed weapons). Treat all three of these weapons as two-handed weapons when determining who can use them and how. For example, a Small character cannot use a lance or bastard sword made for a Medium creature, even when mounted (in the case of a lance) or when the Small character has the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword) feat. (This reverses the advice the Sage gave about bastard swords and Small characters in issue #281.)

The description of the magical bashing property for shields says it can only be added to light or heavy shields. Does this exclude shields with shield spikes? That is, can you have a *+2 spiked light shield of bashing*?

You can add the bashing property to a spiked shield. If you do, you use the bashing damage or the spike damage, as you prefer. The example *+1 spiked light shield of bashing*, if made for a Medium character, would deal 1d4 points of damage from the spike or from a bash (normally a light shield bash deals 1d3 points of damage, but the bashing enhancement increases that to 1d4). If you use the spike damage, you're using a piercing weapon, and the spike has no enhancement bonus (but you could enhance the spike separately). If you use the bash, you're using a bludgeoning weapon that has a +1 enhancement.



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