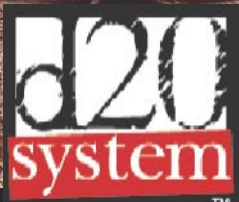


d20zine

Issue 4, March 2003



d20zine

Volume 4, March 2003

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Random Rolls and Off Tangent Thoughts

Welcome to the Spring issue of *d20Zine!*, which is the first issue of this new year. With the year being only three months old, there have been enough current world events to normally fill an entire year, let alone the little time that has passed. We've seen our nation on the brink of war, Mother Nature sent those of us who live in areas prone to snow a little wake-up call, and regrettably, we lost the space shuttle *Columbia* for unknown reasons. One can't help but think about the ancient Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times."

On a more positive note, what do you think about our cool cover? **Michael Loh** is the force behind that picture and I have to say that he is one talented individual. You can see more of his work at Renderosity.com under the screen name of "Mwklöh". Michael does computer graphics work with the programs Vue d'Esprit and Poser along with Photoshop. Michael has graciously agreed to do the covers for *d20Zine!* from now on, so be on the watch for new and really awesome artwork by him.

This issue is filled with great material. John Wommer has written an article on converting almost any collectible card game into a d20 character class. This article has been several months in the making and long hours were spent writing it and rewriting it in order to make it compliant with d20 system rules and not infringe on anybody's product identity. Anna Dobritt edited the article and she deserves a big thank you for that monumental task. We also have an article featuring prestige classes for the *Three Kingdoms* campaign setting and short fiction by writer Bret Boyd. Besides a slew of product reviews, I also give my take on computers in gaming and the use of computer mapping tools like Campaign Cartographer 2 Pro and Fractal Mapper.

The business side of the role-playing industry continues to be good to my writing partner, Kevin Ruesch, and myself. Sales of *Pale Designs: A Poisoner's Handbook* by Bastion Press have been very good and continue

to be steady. Kevin and I are on the verge of wrapping up our latest project for Bastion Press called *Torn Asunder: Critical Hits*. The book's title says it all, but I will say that there will be a large section of the book devoted to healing also. Recently, I was in **Grand Haven, Michigan** for a weekend for a book signing session at **West Michigan Sportscard Connection**. I also got the privilege of meeting fellow Bastion Press freelance writer, Ken Marable. Ken has contributed to several Bastion Press products including *Danger in Deadwood* and *Oathbound: Domains of the Forge*. The two owners of the store went out of their way to make me feel welcome and I can truly say that it was one very enjoyable weekend. The number of enthusiastic gamers was impressive and good to see. If you live near the Grand Haven area, I encourage you to stop by their store and check it out.

Finally, I have assumed the mantle of **Playtesting Coordinator** for Bastion Press. Anyone interested in participating in the playtesting process should email me at creech@bastionpress.com with the "Playtesting" in the subject header. If you are serious about providing constructive feedback to future Bastion Press products, we would like to hear from you. All playtesters who follow the instructions will have their names included in the playtest credits of the relevant Bastion Press product or products.

Be sure to drop us a line and let us know what you liked or didn't like about this issue. When we get a letter, we'll post it in the following issue under our "*Raves and Rants*" section (which you will notice is absent this issue. No mail means no column). So get off your duffs and let us know what you think of the magazine by emailing us at ghost.wind@verizon.net or by leaving your comments in the *d20Zine!* section of the **d20 Magazine Rack** forums.

-Steve Creech, Executive Chairman

From The Fast Lane

By Steven Creech

Author's Note: From the Fast Lane presents capsule reviews of smaller-sized RPG products. You won't find in-depths reviews here, but rather, my quick assessments and impressions of the products themselves. At the end of each capsule review is a scoring assessment that mirrors the same format we use for the Critic's Corner and Fast Tracks review columns on the d20 Magazine Rack site.

Lock & Load: Iron Kingdoms™ Character Primer

Written by Douglas Seacat and J. Michael Kilmartin

Published by [Privateer Press](#)

64 pages, \$12.99

Privateer Press first stormed on the scene with the highly acclaimed *Witchfire* adventure trilogy that introduced the gaming world to the *Iron Kingdoms*. Late last year, they followed up with the very impressive monster book, *Monsternomicon*. Now those who have been diligently waiting for the first of the campaign books have another resource to add to their collection. *Lock & Load* is essentially a player's handbook for the *Iron Kingdoms* setting. The book contains descriptions regarding the different regions, their relations, and the men who inhabit them. Demihuman races are present including dwarves, elves, half-elves, winter elves, and new races like goblins, bogrin, ogrun, and trollkin. The standard character classes are represented although the *IK* twist has been added to them.

One of the things that separate the *IK* setting from typical fantasy settings is that firearms exist along with a form of steampunk, or mechanized machines. This makes for a more tough and gritty setting but also one that doesn't appeal to everyone. This is a setting where racial prejudices run strong and the monsters that exist are formidable. Even the dragons that live in this setting are not to be trifled with. Privateer has really showed considerable imagination in the development of this campaign world with each release being exceptionally sound in terms of game mechanics, balance, flavor, and even artwork. I like the style of the world and want to convince my gaming group to give it a try (if we can ever get together again). *Lock & Load* is not for everyone but it is certainly worthy of taking a serious look at. I recommend it and feel it is one of the best offerings on the market today.

Fast Tracks Score (Maximum 5 pts. per category)

Open Game Content: 3.5 (Game related material and rules are open content.)

d20 Compliance: 5.0

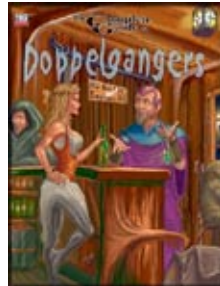
Originality: 5.0

Playability: 4.5

Value for the Dollar: 5.0

Overall Score: 4.60

Final Grade: A+



The Complete Guide to Doppelgangers

Written by Keith Baker

Published by [Goodman Games](#)

32 pages, \$11.00

The Complete Guide to Doppelgangers takes a more in-depth look at the world of shapeshifters. Their society, culture, myths and subraces are all covered, as are rules for doppel characters. The strong points to this book lie in the wealth of ideas that are presented, especially under the section on urban doppelgangers and the turf wars that may result between shapeshifting and non-shapeshifting factions or gangs. Keith does a good job getting into the psychology of doppelgangers and even gives us a couple of sub-species, a new prestige class and doppelganger-centered feats and skills. The book is well written and interesting but does have limited application. Not only is it primarily a GM-only book, but its narrow focus means there must be a need for the book. If you are a GM who loves using shapechangers in your campaign, this book is certainly worth a serious look.

Fast Tracks Score (Maximum 5 pts. per category)

Open Game Content: 1.5 (Only the introduction and physiology sections on pages 2-5.)

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 5.0

Playability: 3.5 (GM only tool)

Value for the Dollar: 4.5

Overall Score: 3.90

Final Grade: B+



Nyambe: Dire Spirits

Written by Chris Dolunt

Published by [Atlas Games](#)

48 pages, \$12.95

Dire Spirits is the first published adventure for the Nyambe campaign setting. It is designed for 1st level characters and would make a good introduction for players making their first start in Nyambe. Without giving away the plot, I will say that the characters must stop an ancient evil spirit from reclaiming what was once his. The storyline is both interesting and challenging but can quickly lead to the demise of the entire party if they do not plan carefully. The treasure acquired during this adventure will likely see a lot of use during the course of the adventure in order to help the group survive. In short, if you loved Nyambe and are looking for a way to bring your players into this world, this adventure fits the bill nicely.

Fast Tracks Score (Maximum 5 pts. per category)

Open Game Content: 4.0

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 5.0

Playability: 4.0 (Nyambe only.)

Value for the Dollar: 4.0

Overall Score: 4.40

Final Grade: A-



Splintered Peace

Written by David Chart

Published by [Atlas Games](#)

110 pages, \$26.95

Splintered Peace is a campaign sourcebook that combines the material you would find in a supplement with an adventure. Centered around the city of Marchion, this book focuses on politics, intrigue and racial hatred between orcs, demihumans and humans. It is definitely a role-play heavy book that GMs can build an entire campaign around. Besides details of the city, there are 31 NPCs that make up key players. While they lack full d20 stats, they do have colorful backgrounds.

The concept of *Splintered Peace* is interesting, but GMs should be prepared to put in some real work to make it a more fluid storyline. This is not a typically formatted adventure that has boxed text, but neither is it

a regular supplement. I like the product and its intent but whether it is successful relies on the players being willing to make the investment to become members of Marchion and use it as an ongoing base of operations. In short, they must develop a vested interest in the town or nearly everything in this book is for naught. If your group is primarily a transient hack-n-slash group, then *Splintered Peace* isn't a book for them.

Fast Tracks Score (Maximum 5 pts. per category)

Open Game Content: 2.5 (Only a few highlighted areas that cover game mechanics.)

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 5.0 (Very original.)

Playability: 3.5 (GM book for role-play heavy groups.)

Value for the Dollar: 4.0

Overall Score: 4.00

Final Grade: B+



The Complete Guide to Wererats

Written by Keith Baker

Published by [Goodman](#)

[Games](#)

32 pages, \$11.00

The Complete Guide to Wererats is a sourcebook completely devoted to wererats. Keith Baker does a fantastic job presenting an underworld society that is filled with as much political intrigue and backstabbing as a typical day in Congress. Wererat society tends to be made up of broods, which are further subdivided into warrens. This makes for a surprisingly logical and pragmatic about their lives and standing within the warren and brood.

New rules for wererat characters classes are presented. These rules are interesting, as are the new skills and feats. However, they are best used for NPCs rather than players. There is a fair amount of open content with much of it game-related. Overall, this is a very interesting book and GMs looking for something to weave a long-term subplot into their campaign would do well to look at this book. It's one of the better books in the *Complete Guide* series.

Fast Tracks Score (Maximum 5 pts. per category)

Open Game Content: 3.0

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 5.0

Playability: 3.0 (GM only.)

Value for the Dollar: 4.0

Overall Score: 4.00

Final Grade: B+



The Complete Guide to Treants

Written by Joe Crow

Published by [Goodman](#)

[Games](#)

48 pages, \$13.00

The Complete Guide to Treants does one thing exceptionally well; it capitalizes upon the popularity of the Ents from the movie *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. That movie really shows audiences how formidable walking trees can be. This book takes that same flavor and vein of belief and runs with it. Treants are so much deeper (no pun intended) with the information in this book. The social structure and cultural habits show why a treant is usually so wise and insightful. After all, they have hundreds of years to ponder things and finally come to a decision.

When the need to act arrives, treant combat strategies, character classes (NPC only – I can't really imagine a player as a treant), new magic and even evil variations are all covered. The treant classes are good as are the templates, but the spells really stand out. Very cool. Suggestions and tips for working treants into your campaign are also presented. All in all, if you liked *Treebeard*, you will love this book. I recommend it.

Fast Tracks Score (Maximum 5 pts. per category)

Open Game Content: 3.5 (Essentially, game mechanics only.)

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 5.0

Playability: 3.5 (Mostly GM only.)

Value for the Dollar: 4.5

Overall Score: 4.30

Final Grade: A-



Spell Decks: Mysteries of the Arcane

Published by Paradigm Concepts

\$24.99

Spell Decks are Paradigm Concepts' answer to carrying around several books filled with your favorite spells. This box of 350+ cards lets you create a spellbook for your character. Just select the spells your sorcerer or wizard knows and you're all set. Besides the *Player's Handbook*, sources include *Arcana: Societies of Magic*, *Broadsides!*, *Codex Arcanis*, *Forged in Magic*, *Gar'Udok's Necromantic Artes*, and *Twin Crowns*.

Each card has a particular graphic icon for the spell school, the stats, a description of the spell, and a reference back to the original source. Physically, the card is a little longer than a typical trading card but fairly close in overall size. With other spell collections like Green Ronin's *Pocket Grimoire* series, *Spell Decks* isn't a product for everyone. However, they can certainly add some unique flavor by having your character carry his very own personal deck of spells.

Fast Tracks Score (Maximum 5 pts. per category)

Open Game Content: 5.0

d20 Compliance: 5.0

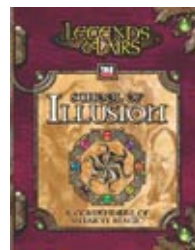
Originality: 4.0 (Was originally done back in 2nd edition D&D.)

Playability: 3.5 (Wizards and sorcerers only.)

Value for the Dollar: 4.0

Overall Score: 4.30

Final Grade: A-



School of Illusion

Written by Kevin Wilson

Published by Fantasy Flight Games

64 pages, \$14.95

School of Illusion is the latest in Fantasy Flight Games' softcover *Legends & Lairs* series. As the title suggests, the focus of the book is on the magical school of illusion itself and sets out to really define

it in such a way that you will want to make a new illusionist character. There is a high degree of “crunch” in this book with over 60 new spells, 9 prestige classes, 5 new feats, new equipment, new magic items, and an illusionist core class.

The level of quality that I’ve come to expect with Fantasy Flight is reflected in this book. Not only are the new classes well balanced, but they are interesting and sound like something you would want to play. The core illusionist class is certainly a very potentially powerful class with the ability to cast powerful illusionary spells. My favorite prestige classes are the Dread Lord and Unseen Master. The new spells show imagination and range from 0 to 9th level.

School of Illusion is a handy little book for players and GMs who really enjoy the illusory school. Armed with a book like this, the player whose character is a gnome-illusionist will have great fun choosing the path to follow and showing off the fancy new spells he’s picked up along the way. It does have limited application, but it is well written and worth money in my opinion.

Fast Tracks Score (Maximum 5 pts. per category)

Open Game Content: 3.5 (The open game content consists of the rule-related material but not the descriptive text.)

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 4.5 (Very original take on the school of magic.)

Playability: 3.5 (Limited class application.)

Value for the Dollar: 4.5

Overall Score: 4.20

Final Grade: A-



**Dragonstar:
Galactic Races**

Written by Michael Ferguson, Scott Gearin, Darrell Hardy, Lysle Kapp, Lizard, and Kevin Wilson

Published by *Fantasy*

Flight Games

64 pages, \$14.95

The galaxy just got a whole lot more crowded. *Galactic Races* is the latest in the *Dragonstar* line of books and it is a symbol of the growth that the campaign setting has experienced. In this book, you find sixteen new player races that include centaurs, derro, kobolds and lizardfolk

as well as new races like elems, oruk, and ulb. There are also three recognizable races that were originally featured in the *Legend & Lairs* book, *Mythic Races: Eleti, Pevishan, and Siarran*. Each racial description includes at least one feat that is exclusive to that race but applicable in the *Dragonstar* world. Wrapping up the book are seven templates that can be applied to any race. These are: amphibious, high-g, low-g, night-adapted, space-hardened, arctic, and desert.

The descriptive text of the races is quite flavorful and shows how they fit into the campaign setting quite well. Most of these new races do carry an ECL adjustment factor, which is listed in the stats. The open game content consists of the rules-related material only and not the descriptive text. Overall, this is a book that *Dragonstar* players will enjoy. It will be even better if the book becomes approved for use in the *Living Dragonstar* campaign.

Fast Tracks Score (Maximum 5 pts. per category)

Open Game Content: 3.5 (The open game content consists of the rule-related material but not the descriptive text.)

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 4.0

Playability: 4.0 (*Dragonstar* campaign setting.)

Value for the Dollar: 4.0

Overall Score: 4.10

Final Grade: A-

Imperial Advisors

By Ramon Arjona

ramonarjona@hotmail.com

Introduction

The history of the Empire is rife with political conflict. Throughout the centuries dynasties have grown old and corrupt, opening the way for new dynasties to seize power. People of sufficient merit, backed by the will of the people and the Mandate of Heaven, could rise from simple peasants to great rulers during these times of upheaval.

Great rulers, however, need great advisers. Throughout the history of the Empire, those who sought to obtain or to hold onto power searched for men and women of learning and virtue for the counsel they gave. Weak or corrupt rulers gave power to their cronies or to sycophants, ensuring their downfall. Strong and pious rulers gave power to men of merit, ensuring the longevity of their rule and the rule of their house.

The Mystic Sage

Among those most sought after for their advice were the Mystic Sages. Through the study of the works of classic texts, these men and women obtained nearly supernatural abilities to predict the future, influence the weather, and extend their lifespan well beyond normal mortal limits. Their esoteric knowledge and precognitive ability made them invaluable aides to any ruler who could secure their services.

The Sage, however, does not hire himself out to just anyone. Having transcended

worldly concerns long ago, the Sage can only be swayed to serve a man of virtue. Only a person who gives proper respect to the ancestors, to the Empire, and to his or her parents can hope to be found worthy of a Sage's allegiance, and even these may not be deemed sufficiently virtuous. For instance Liu Bei, hero of The Romance of Three Kingdoms, was probably one of the most virtuous men in all history. Yet even he had to travel three times to meet the sage Kongming before finally gaining an audience with him.

Sages can be found anywhere, but they frequently prefer rural and undeveloped locations, far removed from any clusters of human civilization. They spend their time cultivating their gardens, contemplating the heavens, and enjoying life outside of mainstream culture. They sometimes gather in small groups to share insights they have gained, or just to share each other's company.

As the Sage grows in wisdom and understanding of the Tao, or Way, he or she becomes less and less attached to the world, until hardly a part of it at all. The sage may appear lazy, undisciplined, or licentious to others—but in reality odd or abnormal behavior is a sign of the sage's awareness of the true workings of the Universe.

Shamans and wu jen are most likely to undertake the path of the Sage. Other spellcasting classes, such as sohei and shugenja, have little patience for the esoteric nature of the mystic sage's study and so rarely adopt

this prestige class. Non-spellcasters may not adopt this class.

Requirements

Alignment: any lawful

Knowledge (Tao): 8 Ranks

Knowledge (History): 8 Ranks

Knowledge (Literature): 8 Ranks

Scry: 10 Ranks

Class Skills

The Mystic Sage's class skills (and the ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (any) (Int), Profession (any) Int, Scry (Int, exclusive skill), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The mystic sage does not gain any weapon or armor proficiencies

Spells per Day: The mystic sage continues to advance in magical ability while gaining the abilities of her new class. Thus, whenever she add a new mystic sage level, she gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in whatever spellcasting class she belonged to before becoming a mystic sage.

I Ching Mastery (Ex): At first level, the sage has attained a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of the Universe and the laws that govern Heaven. She gains a +5 competence bonus to all Scry checks.

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells Per Day
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	I Ching Mastery	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Knowing The Way	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Swerving Not From The Right Path	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Living The Way	+1 level of existing class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Pious Soul	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Becoming Unattached	+1 level of existing class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Experience of Freedom	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Taoist Immortality	+1 level of existing class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Perfect Knowledge	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Taoist Sainthood	+1 level of existing class

Knowing the Way (Sp): At second level, the sage has deepened her understanding of the Universe so much that she no longer needs spells or magic items to peer into the future. Once per day per 2 sage levels, she may use augury as a spell-like ability.

Swerving Not From The Right Path (Ex): At third level, the Sage is attuned to the path of law and cannot be swayed from it. She is immune to all mind-influencing spells and effects, such as *sleep* or *charm person*.

Living the Way (Ex): The sage's studies lead her to accrue a great deal of esoteric and obscure knowledge.

This is identical to the bardic knowledge special ability (see the Player's Handbook, pg. 29). The sage adds her level and her intelligence modifier to the Knowledge check.

Pious Soul (Su): At fourth level, the sage becomes a living embodiment of Heaven's law. Once per day per class level, she may *smite chaos* as per the spell.

Becoming Unattached (Su): Having plumbed the depths of the Universe's structure and order, the sage begins to see beyond it. Her new perceptions allow her to transcend normal senses, allowing her to become *invisible* as per the spell, once per day per class level.

Experience of Freedom (Su): The sage's understanding is now nearly perfect. She transcends the law of gravity, and may *fly* as per the spell, once per day per caster level.

Taoist Immortality (Su): The sage is now unaffected by the passing of time. She no longer ages, and she cannot be magically aged. All age-related penalties already in place still apply. Age-related bonuses still accrue, and the character dies of old age when she reaches the maximum lifespan for her race.

Perfect Knowledge (Ex): The character now has nearly every detail of the Universe's working contained within her mind. Once per day, she may gain the affects of a *legend lore* spell as an extraordinary ability.

Taoist Sainthood: The character now possesses such extensive and esoteric knowledge of Heaven and the Universe that she can no longer be properly called human. She gains damage resistance 20/+1 and her type changes to outsider. As an outsider, she is subject to spells that repel enchanted creatures, such as *protection from law*.

The Imperial General

Great rulers also require great generals. Without capable men and women to command the armies of the Empire in battle, a dynasty is sure to fall. Only through the support of his or her commanders can an Emperor be ensured of the stability of his reign.

Powerful individuals would go to great lengths to obtain the services of such people, sometimes even adopting them into their family as honored children or siblings. The powerful prime minister Dong Zhuo, for instance, adopted Lu Bu as his son. This cemented Dong's hold on power for a time, but ultimately led to his downfall as Lu Bu and his adopted father came into conflict over the affections of a woman. Liu Bei, in *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*, adopted Zhang Fei and Guo Yuan as his brothers, and their strength and wisdom was crucial in shaping Liu Bei's rise to power.

Imperial Generals can come from any walk of life, so long as they possess a requisite amount of fighting skill and tactical knowledge. Some value the rule of law as the will of Heaven, while others see it only as a means to their own selfish ends. Imperial Generals only gather in groups when serving the same lord. Frequently, this lord will be the Emperor, but during times of strife imperial generals flock to the banners of influential warlords. Sometimes, a general serves a warlord in the hope of supporting the rightful ruler, or toppling a wicked and corrupt regime. Just as often, however, a general will support a warlord because he or she wants to be on the winning side of a conflict. It is not unheard of for generals to switch sides, either because the lord they serve is not virtuous enough, or just because they got a better offer from someone else.

The general wields significant might on the battlefield, inspiring confidence in his troops and bringing his tactical acumen to bear in any conflict. The general is also supported by the resources of his lord, and as he or she grows in power and influence the general can obtain nearly any piece of military equipment he needs to attain his strategic goals.

Samurai and fighters are most likely to become imperial generals. Monks also sometimes adopt this class, but usually cannot be distracted from their more spiritual pursuits. Barbarians typically lack the patience for disciplined military service.

Spell-casters frequently lack the requisite combat experience, but sohei occasionally take up the path of the imperial general.

Requirements

Alignment: any lawful

Feats: Leadership

Base Attack: +7

Diplomacy: 5 ranks

Ride: 6 ranks

Class Skills

The class skills of the imperial general and the key ability for each skill are Bluff(Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge(any) (Int), Listen(Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spot (Wis).

Class Features

Know yourself: At first level, the Imperial General has mastered one of the first precepts of strategy: know yourself. He is intimately acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of any force that is under his command. He grants allies within 30 ft. a +1 circumstance bonus to attack rolls and Will saves. The commander communicates to his troops using a system based on drums and war banners. If allies cannot hear the drums and cannot see the banners, this bonus is negated.

Leadership: The General gains a bonus to his Leadership level (character level + cha bonus) when attracting cohorts.

Improved Mount (Su): The imperial general has begun to attract the favor of Heaven. He is able to summon a horse with extra-planar qualities. If he is evil, he summons a fiendish horse, if good he summons a celestial horse. If neutral, the general may choose whether to summon a fiendish or celestial horse. The horse will remain with him as an animal companion (as per the ranger and druid special ability) but cannot be replaced if lost or slain.

Know your enemy: The General has mastered the second precept of strategy: know your enemy. He knows every detail of the fighting force that opposes him, including their strengths and weaknesses. He now grants his allies a +2 circumstance bonus to allies within a 60 ft. radius. The commander communicates to his troops using a system based on drums and war banners. If allies cannot hear the drums and cannot see the banners, this bonus is negated

Imperial General

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+1	+1	+1	Know Yourself, Leadership + 1
2 nd	+1	+2	+2	+2	Improved Mount
3 rd	+2	+2	+2	+2	Know Your Enemy, Leadership +2
4 th	+3	+2	+2	+2	
5 th	+3	+3	+3	+3	Heaven's Will
6 th	+4	+3	+3	+3	Know the Terrain, Leadership +3
7 th	+5	+4	+4	+4	Imperial Sanction
8 th	+6	+4	+4	+4	Imperial Support, Leadership + 4
9 th	+6	+4	+4	+4	Legendary Mount
10 th	+7	+5	+5	+5	In the Name of the Emperor, Leadership +5

Heaven's Will (Su): The general continues to gain the favor of Heaven. Once per day, he may reroll any single die and take the more favorable of the two results.

Know the terrain: The General has mastered the second precept of strategy: know your enemy. He knows every detail of the ground on which he is fighting, and knows how best to use this to his advantage. He now grants his allies a +3 circumstance bonus to allies within a 120 ft. radius. The commander communicates to his troops using a system based on drums and war banners. If allies cannot hear the drums and cannot see the banners, this bonus is negated.

Imperial Sanction: The general brings with him the full might of the organization to which he belongs. He gains a circumstance bonus to Intimidate and Diplomacy checks equal to his class levels while in the sphere of influence belonging to his organization. If his master is the Emperor, then this bonus applies throughout the Empire. If his master is a warlord or provincial governor, for instance, this bonus only applies within the lands controlled by his master.

Imperial Support: The Imperial General can draw upon the vast reserves of the realm in order to support his campaign. He can requisition equipment and supplies, up to a limit of 3,000gp X class level X Charisma bonus. Thus, a 10th level general with Charisma 18 could have up to 90,000gp of equipment on loan to him.

Equipment should be returned eventually. Equipment continues to count against the general's limit until it is returned or replaced.

Legendary Mount (Su): At 9th level, the general attracts the highest favor of Heaven.

He may summon a legendary horse (see *Masters of the Wild* for more information about legendary animals). The horse will remain with him as an animal companion (as per the ranger and druid special ability) but cannot be replaced if lost or slain.

In The Name of The Emperor: At 10th level, the general is able to spur his troops on to make the ultimate sacrifice. Any allies within 30 ft of him continue to fight without penalty until they reach -10 hit points and die.

In Your Campaign

What if you aren't running an Oriental Adventures campaign? What if you are running an Oriental Adventures campaign in a setting not quite suited for the Sage and the General?

Both the Mystic Sage and Imperial General belong to a certain time and place. They can be altered to fit nearly any campaign by taking the importance of time and place into consideration.

If you want to work these classes into your campaign, consider the following options:

- An invading army is led by a powerful general, who owes allegiance to a godlike Emperor in a distant land. The army is accompanied by a group of strange, quiet individuals who always seem to know where the opposition will be and what they will do.
- Campaigns based in different Oriental Adventures setting could have a role for powerful generals and mystic sages. Simply change the names of the classes and their special features. For instance, in *Kara-Tur* the imperial general might be renamed

shogun, and his Heaven's Will Ability might be renamed "Will of the Kami". In a campaign based on India or South East Asia, the names of the mystic sage's abilities might be drawn from the Diamond Sutra, for instance "Leaving The Boat Behind" for "Becoming Unattached", and "Dharmic Mastery" for "I Ching Mastery"

- The general and sage class could be refigured to support humanoid settings—for instance, a strange race of elves lives on a far off island, ruled by a military dictator (the imperial general) and a counsel of ascetic monks (the mystic sages). Their customs are much more rigid and formal than is normal for elves; in fact they hardly seem elvish at all.
- In a modern-day type of campaign (for instance, *Greyhawk 2020*), the general could be updated to have a tricked-out armored car or plane instead of a horse. The mystic sage could be changed into a kind of New Age guru, seeking out the wilderness and shunning the encroaching corruption of civilization as antithetical to the Way.

Collectable Card Game d20

By John Wommer (wombatworld@hotmail.com)

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Author's Note:

About a decade ago, *Wizards of the Coast* introduced a card game that would both start a whole new genre of games (collectable card games, or CCGs,) and would put *Wizards* on the business and game map for years to come. Though the mechanics behind it were reasonably easy, this game – *Magic: the Gathering* – would capture the imagination of gamers and fantasy buffs from its introduction until today.

In the decade since, many other games would be introduced into the CCG community. Mostly licensed with a popular movie, television or comic book franchise, some of these would be extraordinarily good, some very, very bad. The games that would most become associated with CCGs, however, tended to have specific ideas or backgrounds in common. The player was a single combatant capable of summoning creatures to fight in an arena or battlefield at their behest. They would bring special energies to play to summon these creatures, have special cards that could enhance the creature or its tactics, and could bring others items or abilities to bear to turn the tide against their opponent.

When *Wizards* purchased TSR (until then the producer of *Dungeons & Dragons*) there was much consternation among both the RPG and CCG communities. “Was D&D going to go to card-based spell casting or combat resolution?” “Would MtG see Rust monsters and Flumphs?” “Would Pikachu come to rule hell?” There was happily little change in either genre, except for the better.

With the introduction of 3rd Ed D&D, and more importantly the OGL, I saw a chance to do the one thing that many in both camps saw as both their greatest fear, and perhaps hope – a Collectable Card game RPG.

What I have set down here is strictly guidelines. Opinions among players of the various CCG titles (let alone the players within a particular CCG) is too great for any one person to declare which cards are “best”, “most powerful”, or – dare I say it – “better”. So with these rules I have tried to give you – the CCG/RPG player – the tools to create your own CCG RPG based on d20 rules. Much of what I've written is based solely on my personal interpretation – please see fit to change it as you see it to make a game of CCG d20 a fun experience for you and your players.

The Setting

The setting for CCG d20 is one of fantasy, though with a little retooling it could just as easily be a futuristic setting with creatures collected and released from electronic devices, ancient artifacts, or are holographic creatures fighting in arenas.

Cardacia is a place of constant turmoil. Using ancient decks of powerful cards and gems of mystic power, beings of immense abilities stride through other worlds looking for allies or servants to aid them in winning contests of domination. Beside the normal folk, these beings – Card Carriers – are as gods. And yet the gods war against each other. And sometimes, just sometimes, they war against even greater foes.

Instead of gathering the natural forces of Cardacia to themselves, the Magi who summon and control forces and beings do so by wandering the alternate planes of the universe – making pacts and alliances, and gathering conduits into the mystic gem powers of other worlds. Cardacia is their home, their battlefield, their meeting place. Here they are the masters, but their power lies “out there”.

The following 5 sections lay out the main components of CCG d20. First is character information, including the Card Carrier class, and explanations of their abilities. Second is Magic and Mystic Power, while section three introduces new Feats and skills. Section 4 visits Magic items in CCG d20, and section 5 is devoted to “Creatures” – essentially anything summoned by the Card Carriers to aid them.

Characters

Hit Points & Wound Points

CCG d20 uses both Hit Points and Wound Points. Hit points essentially work the same as the system found in the *Players Handbook*, with some exceptions noted below. Wound Points are an additional tier of defense for the character or Creature.

While Hit Points (hps) represent the intangible elements that are involved in a Creature's survival (dodging, shrugging off damage, quickness, and vitality for example), Wound Points (wps) represent the “pure” physical form of the Creature. As such wps are slow to change and heal when lost. Wound points are based on the Creature's

physical well being (as represented by their Constitution score).

Hit Points function as described in the *D&D Players Handbook* with one exception – a Creature which no hps but which has wps remaining is knocked unconscious- there is no “negative” hps. A Creature which reaches zero wound points dies.

Wound Points can be lost to certain spell's which cause direct damage (as described in the spell description), to some Creature's special attacks, or to critical strikes from opponents. Under this system, all critical hits (see *PHB*) do direct damage to the target's wps. Critical hits *do not* multiply under this system, causing normal rolled damage directly to the target's wps. All other mechanics of critical hits remain the same as those described in the *PHB*.

Also, loss of ¼ of a target's full hps in one strike results in a loss of 1 wps. Every 25% lost results in such a loss, so a Creature which takes a strike to their hit points equal to ¾ their total loses ($3 * \frac{1}{4} = 3 * 1 \text{ wp}$) 3 wps.

Wound Points are recovered much slower than hps. Specialized healing spells, Creature abilities, and extended rest are required to regain lost points. If healing naturally, a single wound point takes 5 days minus the Creature's CON modifier days to recover. (I.e. a Creature with a CON modifier of +2 would recover one wp every [5-2] 3 days.). This assumes complete rest, with no more strenuous activity than a slow walk or easy ride, no lifting, combat, or spell casting (or Calling).

For each wound point suffered, the character applies one of the following (roll randomly for each point lost):

Roll d6

1. Lose one point of Strength (temporary)
2. Lose one point of Dexterity (temporary)
3. Lose one point of Constitution (temporary)
4. Lose 6 hit points from maximum, these cannot be healed, character cannot go below 1 hp from this roll (temporary)
5. Suffer -2 to Fortitude saves
6. Suffer -4 to all Skill checks involving “physical” Skills (those with Str, Dex, or Con as their key ability)

Record the order in which such loses is taken. As wound points are healed, penalties are “turned back” in the order in which they were received.

Determine hps as described in the *PHB*. For wound points use the following formulae:

Creature	Wound Points Equal
Called Creature	Constitution score as a base, adding in their Strength modifier.
Native Race	Constitution score plus Strength modifier
Native Creature	Constitution score

For Called Creatures of CCG d20, hit points represent the energies that allow them to stay on Cardacia. Once these are depleted (if before the Call's duration is expired) the Creature returns to their plane of origin). Wound points represent the Creature's true physical form – loss of these represent “true” damage, and to be reduced to zero wps causes a true & permanent death (that particular Creature may never be Called again).

New PC class: Card Carriers

With a hardened stare and concentrated effort, the very energies of magic form a brief opening in-between the planes of reality. Through this breach steps a fantastic Creature from another world, ready to fight on behalf of its summoner. The Card Carrier is the master of this power, and the commander of the Creatures he Draws forth. Reshaping these magical energies, the Card Carrier then hurls bolts of mystic energy at his opponent and her Creatures, joining an ancient circle of command and conquer that has defined the history of Cardacia.

Card Carriers are individuals who have mastered the powers of the ancient Taron Deck and Taron Gem. They have traveled through the Portals to explore and experience the alternate planes of reality. There, they create links to the native Mystic Gems in areas of power from which they can Draw magical energies called Mystic Power. Using this Mystic Power the Card Carrier can bring Creatures from these same planes (through use of the Taron Cards) onto the Prime plane of Cardacia to fight, advise and defend the Card Carrier. They can use Mystic Power to cast spells & activate ancient artifacts.

Adventures: The Card Carrier returns from their extra-planar expedition with the ability to Call Creatures through use of the Cards, but with little experience or power. Adventuring allows the Card Carrier to hone their skills,

to earn a reputation among their peers and adversaries, and to discover artifacts of power, which can give them the critical edge in the duels that will define their lives.

Good Card Carriers seek to help those with whom they interact along the way, while evil Card Carriers seek to dominate, control, and conquer.

Characteristics: A Card Carrier is aware of the nuances of reality moreso than any other. Their inherent ability to reach out to other planes makes them more aware of this one. From this, they are more aware and conscious of their place in the world; a place they feel should be very close to, if not at, the top. Using their natural abilities, they will carve out their place in the world, or topple those already seated there.

Masters of the planes able to Draw the magically charged Mystic Power from other worlds and with it Call in beings and Creatures of fantastic powers; to create fantastical magical effects; or fuel the artifacts of the Old Ones, the Card Carrier is the epitome of magical might on the world of Cardacia. And they know it. In this world devoid of Gods and their faiths, and with little in the way of native arcane arts, the Card Carriers are looked upon as saviors and villains, menace and champion, guardian and conqueror.

In preparation of their travels upon other worlds, Card Carriers are trained in the martial arts and are able to use armors of medium measure along with a modest assortment of weapons. The use of armor does affect The Call and spell casting abilities, giving the same percentage chance of failure as Arcane spells suffer.

Alignment: Card Carriers always have an element of neutrality in their alignment. They will dedicate themselves to one ideal then pursue it with vigor, usually to the exclusion of anything else. Each, however, is ultimately pursuing their “destiny to lead” so Lawful or Chaotic Neutral tend to be the most favored alignments.

Religion: The world of Cardacia has no priests, and some question the existence of Gods. If there are such, then the argument is made that they must work through Card Carriers, for no others exhibit powers such as Gods are reputed to grant excepting some Heretics, who are known to cavort with Devils. The Card Carriers themselves have some better understanding of Gods, having

been to planes upon which such entities rule. Most Card Carriers choose to believe that they themselves are the vessels of the Gods (if they exist) or are Divine themselves.

Background: Most Card Carriers come from families of previous Card Carriers or other nobility. Though there are occasional Card Carriers taken from the “lower” classes, this is rare and generally only occurs for those who exhibit the strongest gifts. Once chosen, the Card Carriers spend 3 to 5 years in training learning martial arts and studying the nuances and information about the alternate planes they'll explore as well as the mystic techniques necessary to Draw Mystic Power and Call Creatures through use of the Taron Cards & Crystal. Once this training is complete, they report to a Portal Master who begins them on their journey.

Most Card Carriers accompany a more senior Card Carrier for their first journey or two, and then begin to direct their own explorations. While on the alternate worlds, the Card Carriers are creating supernatural bonds between themselves and the Mystic Gems of particular, magically potent areas of those worlds, as well as negotiating with (or commanding through the Taron Deck's powers) the world's inhabitants to join in the spiritual bonds necessary for their future Calling as warriors, advisors, and servants of the Card Carrier on Cardacia.

Races: As there are few races other than human and human derivatives on Cardacia, most Card Carriers are human. Note that while Card Carriers often interact with a multitude of intelligent races as Called Creatures, very few of these races are capable of use of the Taron Deck themselves, or of Drawing Mystic Power with which to do so. Discovery of an alternate world race not derived from Cardacia which is capable of Deck use, Drawing, and Calling is both the dream and the nightmare of Card Carrier “society”.

Other Classes: On Cardacia, the Card Carrier is seen as the elite class among classes. They view other classes simply in terms of supportive roles to aid them in accomplishing their own goals. The sole exception is the “Sorcerer” class, called the Heretic class on Cardacia. These spell casters, who Draw directly on the magic energies of Cardacia, are seen as a bane to all right thinking people which most believe should be silenced at best, exterminated at worst. Other spell casters

such as Bards, Paladins, and Rangers do exist, and are seen as “tainted” for their own use of heretical magics, though they are often tolerated because of the greater services they can provide to the Card Carriers and society. Creatures with other classes are acceptable, because as “Creatures” they are naturally inferior.

Game Rule Information

Abilities: Charisma determines how many Mystic Power points the Card Carrier can have, as well as setting the DC for most spell saving throws (DCs are equal to 10 + Card Carrier level + Chr modifier), and many of the class skills for Card Carriers. Dexterity (for AC) and Constitution (for hps & WPs) are essential, and Intelligence aids in many Card Carrier skills.

Alignment: Any alignment with one neutral component.

Hit Die: d4

Class Skills

Skill points at first Level: (2 + Int modifier) x4

Skill points at each additional level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

Weapon & Armor Proficiency: Card Carriers are proficient with all simple weapons, plus 2 from the following list: short sword, long sword, short bow, long bow, battleaxe, rapier, scimitar, or warhammer. Card Carriers are proficient with armor up to medium armor types. Note that armors have a chance of disrupting the Drawing of Mystic Power and the Calling of Creatures. The percent chance of failure of either of these acts while in armor is equal to the percentage chance of arcane spell failure listed in the PHB.

The Draw: The Card Carrier is able to Draw into their Taron Crystal magical energies from alternate planes called Mystic Power. This energy, siphoned from the very magics of foreign lands, then is used to enable the Calling of Creatures from these alternate planes, to fuel spells, and to activate and energize ancient artifacts of power.

Class Skills

Dexterity	Constitution	Intelligence	Wisdom	Charisma
Ride	Concentration	Alchemy, Disable Device, Knowledge (all), Heraldry, Scry, Speak Language, Spellcraft, Use Magic Artifact	Intuit, Direction, Spot	Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate

The maximum amount of Mystic Power the Card Carrier can Draw into their Taron Crystal at one time is limited, and is called their Mystic Power Reserve (MPR). The Mystic Power Reserve increases each level as listed on [Chart 1: Card Carrier abilities by level](#).

Add the Card Carrier’s Charisma modifier times their current level to the base number listed for their level to get the total amount of Mystic Power available to them.

The Mystic Power points in a Card Carrier’s MPR are considered to be in their “potential” state (that is, Mystic Power points which have yet to be Drawn). Such MPR points are referred to as “Clear” in that they have not had Mystic Power applied to them, so they have no dedicated color.

As Mystic Power is Drawn in by the Card Carrier he designates a color for the Mystic Power, based on the Mystic Gems he is tapping for power. The MPR points thus filled “become” that color Mystic Power, and remain so until used and the Card Carrier Draws again. Even if the Card Carrier Draws the same colors every day, the MPR points remain Clear until some special circumstance forces them to become dedicated. Certain Feats, artifacts, and spells which increase the amount of Mystic Power the Card Carrier can Draw often causes a number of Clear Mystic Power to become dedicated only to one specific color type – usually permanently.

It takes 5 minutes per Mystic Power Point to Draw Mystic Power, with a maximum Draw time of 1 hour (at which point all remaining Mystic Power Points are filled).

For more on Mystic Power, its colors and their various uses, see *Mystic Power* below.

The Call: Just as Card Carriers can siphon off magical energies from alternate planes, so too can they bring inhabitants, Creatures, monstrosities, machines, and beasts from those lands to fight, advise, and labor for their benefit. The Call is the magical technique of bringing such Creatures to Cardacia from their native plane through use of the Taron Deck. (Note here that “Creature” refers to any being or thing living, unliving, animate or not that is Called through this ritual process- be

it human, humanoid, mechanized, elemental, undead, bestial, or otherwise.)

Creatures cost Mystic Power to Call. Most Creatures exact a specific amount of colored Mystic Power to Call, this being listed with their individual descriptions. Mystic Power may be paid as well to activate any additional special powers or class abilities the Creature may have... Many times Card Carriers and others will refer to Creatures as a certain type or color of Creature - this reflects the Mystic Power required to Call that Creature/Creature type.

Creatures that are Called appear immediately, but are *stunned* for one full round from the act of being summoned, and are unable to attack or defend for this time period.

From the round that they can first act, Called Creatures can only “exist” for one minute per level of the Card Carrier who Called them before being sent back to their own plane. When a Called Creature is reduced to 0 hit points, or it’s Calling duration time expires, it returns to its plane of origin. This is referred to as being “discarded”. If a Called Creature is reduced to 0 wound points, the Creature is permanently dead, and cannot be Called again. This is commonly referred to as being “sent to the graveyard”.

Many Called Creatures have special abilities, properties, and some can even Call others or produce Mystic Power which the Card Carrier can use. For details on such Creatures, see *Creatures*, below.

Spell Casting: The Card Carrier also uses Mystic Power to fuel unique spells. The number of spells the Card Carrier has access to at any given level equals the number given in Chart 1 under Spells Known, plus their Intelligence modifier. *This modifier is only added at first level, not every level.*

The Card Carrier spell list is given under the Magic header. Note that Card Carrier magic does not have levels as other spell casting magic does – it is strictly Mystic Power & knowledge based – if a Card Carrier knows the spell and has the Mystic Power, they may cast the spell.

DCs for Card Carrier spells are determined by adding 10 + Card Carrier Level + Mystic Power Cost.

Artifact Use: Card Carriers gain the skill Use Magic Artifact as a class skill, but more importantly, they may invest Mystic Power into these ancient magical relics and cause

them to function. While the skill aids the Card Carrier in figuring out what the Artifact does, should do, or how it functions, it is the ability to “push” Mystic Power into the artifacts that sets the Card Carrier apart from mere Sages. Any Card Carrier can sense the Mystic Power required to fuel an artifact (roll against a base DC of 20 + using the Card Carriers Wisdom modifier), it takes special training to understand it’s proper function and abilities, hence the skill.

Note that many a young Card Carrier has met an unfortunately grizzly end by blindly pushing Mystic Power into an artifact, only to have the item turn on them, or explode in their faces (often literally). It is safest to use established artifacts, though for many the thrill is worth the risk – and to find that one unique artifact can make or break a Card Carrier reputation.

Creature Types – The Card Carrier has a limited number of Creature types, or categories, from which they can Draw their Callable Creatures. This reflects their mastery of the Taron Deck, and which Card they are best versed in. The types are listed below, in the Creatures section. At first level, the Card Carrier may designate their Callable Creatures from 2 Creature types, at 2nd level from 3, and so on, increasing as the character gains levels.

Callable Creatures – The Card Carrier has a specific number of Creatures from within

their allowed Types with whom they have formed the necessary bond to successfully use the Call upon. The number of such Creatures is listed here.

At 1st level and 1st level only -add to this the Card Carrier’s ability modifier for Intelligence. *This modifier is not applied every level, only at 1st level.* Example: a 1st level Card Carrier has chosen Sylphs as his Creature Type. With an Int modifier of +2, he may choose 3 Sylph types to Call with his ability. He chooses Warrior, Messenger, and Magi.

Dedicated Creature – Each time this ability is gained, the Card Carrier can designate one unique individual Creature from their Callable Creatures whenever the appropriate Call is invoked. This Creature is the same with every Call. If multiple Creatures are Called, the dedicated Creature will always be first in. If the selected Creature ever is sent to the graveyard, then a period of one week must pass before the Card Carrier can attempt to get another. Dedicated Creatures have the advantage of knowing their Caller – their wants and needs, and likely requests.

Magic and Mystic Power

The Card Carrier is master of two ancient artifacts, which allow him to manipulate the powers of magic and the veil of reality through their use. Known as the Taron Deck and Taron Crystal, these artifacts appear as

a simple deck of cards illustrated with well-designed artwork, and a 2-inch quartz crystal ball, neither of which seems the least bit remarkable until wielded by a Card Carrier.

In the hands of the Card Carrier, the Taron Deck & Crystal go beyond mere trinkets and become power artifacts. These items allow Card Carriers to gather Mystic Power from magical gems found on other worlds and to use that power to summon Creatures from alternate worlds, to bring forth powerful magics of old, and to activate other artifacts of tremendous power; all through an act of will and a simple deck of cards and a small crystal ball.

Card Carriers gain Mystic Power using the process known as “The Draw”, or “Drawing”. They have a specific number of Mystic Power points they can use per day, referred to as their Mystic Power Reserve (MPR). When they invoke The Draw, they fill these points with Mystic Power of a specific color, designated at the time of The Draw.

Once Drawn this Mystic Power color cannot be changed excepting through spell use, artifact ability, or special Creature effects – all of which are very rare. The Card Carrier can elect to not fill all of their MPR, but cannot replenish nor add Mystic Power anew until their next replenishment period.

The “potential” Mystic Power in a Card Carriers Reserve is considered Clear, and can

Chart 1: Card Carrier abilities by level

Level	Base Attack	Ref	Fort	Will	Special Abilities	Base MPR	Creature Types	Callable Creatures	Spells Known
1	-	+0	+0	+2	The Draw, The Call, Spell Casting, Artifact Use	5	2	3	2
2	+1	+0	+0	+3		8	3	4	3
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Dedicated Creature	12	3	5	4
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Additional Summoning or Metamagic Feat	17	4	7	4
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Dedicated Creature	23	4	9	4
6	+2	+2	+2	+5		30	5	11	5
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Dedicated Creature, Additional Summoning or Metamagic Feat	38	5	13	5
8	+3	+2	+2	+6		47	6	16	6
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Dedicated Creature	57	6	18	6
10	+4	+3	+3	+7	Additional Summoning or Metamagic Feat	68	7	20	7
11	+4	+3	+3	+7		80	7	24	7
12	+5	+4	+4	+8		95	8	28	8
13	+5	+4	+4	+8	Additional Summoning or Metamagic Feat	110	8	32	8
14	+6	+4	+4	+9		125	9	36	9
15	+6	+5	+5	+9		140	9	40	9
16	+6	+5	+5	+10	Additional Summoning or Metamagic Feat	160	10	45	10
17	+7	+5	+5	+10		180	10	50	10
18	+7	+6	+6	+11		200	11	55	11
19	+8	+6	+6	+11	Additional Summoning or Metamagic Feat	225	11	65	11
20	+8	+6	+6	+12		250	12	75	12

be filled with any color Mystic Power during the Draw. Some abilities and feats, however, allow a Card Carrier to “close” their Mystic Power points – that is, they can only Draw Mystic Power of a specific color into those MPR Points that were closed. Usually, a Card Carrier will choose to do this to gain some special ability or extra Mystic Power points, though some cursed artifacts and spells are known to affect a Reserve this way – not always to a Card Carrier’s benefit. A Card Carrier can elect to close points at any time, but once closed Mystic Power Points cannot be made Clear again.

The MPR must be replenished every 24 hours. Mystic Power points do not stay viable beyond this limit. Indeed, after 24 hours of retaining Mystic Power the Card Carrier suffers 1d6 hp of damage per point left in their Reserve. This effect is called “Searing”. Most Card Carriers will spend Mystic Power 15 minutes before they Draw usually by casting spells and allowing the effects to dissipate immediately.

Each color of Mystic Power does have certain associated effects, or is thought of for a particular usefulness. Often these associations occur because of the land from which the Mystic Power is Drawn, sometimes due to the Mystic Power’s common usage. The colors, their associated land areas, and usages are:

Topaz – Drawn from dark and dismal lands, the Mystic Topaz are most often found in swamps, marshes, battlefields after great battles are fought and other areas of decay and death. Associated Creatures and spells are those involving death, decay, disease, and that which consumes. Topaz Creatures are most often vermin, undead, and mindless, death dealing juggernauts.

Ruby – Drawn from lands in which each day is a struggle to survive and battle is the only way of life, Mystic Rubies are most often found in barren wastelands, lands of endless austere mountains, and those of sulfurous, molten lands rife with volcanoes. Associated Creatures and spells are of battle, chaos, and warfare. Ruby Creatures include those who represent brute force, strength of arms over intellect, and survival of the fittest. These include goblins, dragons, ogres and orcs.

Emerald – Drawn from areas of teeming life and vitality, Mystic Emeralds are most often found in thick forests, jungles, and other wooded places. Associated Creatures and spells are those of life, growth, and those

Creatures which live in harmony within areas of abundant natural flora & fauna. Green Creatures include Elves, natural animals such as lions, and sentient plants.

Sapphire – Drawn from the vast oceans, lakes, and other waterways, Mystic Sapphire is most often found deep within the depths of great waterways. Associated Creatures and spells are those of the sea and waters, as well as magic using Creatures. Sapphire is itself the Mystic Power of magic and change, often involving trickery and illusion. Sapphire Creatures includes animals, beasts and races of the waters, and those who use magic themselves – especially arcane spell casters.

Opal – Drawn from the sky and wind swept plains, Mystic Opal is most often found dotting the lands of wide-open plains or seeding the clouds of the sky. Associated Creatures and spells are of protection, movement, healing, defense, and light. Opal Creatures include mounted warriors and plainsmen, centaurs, sylphs, and griffons.

Diamond (Clear) – This is Mystic Power in its purist form, usable to any. The term is also used for the potential in a Taron Crystal’s MPR. A *source* of this power, from which the Card Carrier could chose the Mystic Powers’ color at the moment of use, is the dream of every Card Carrier. Many have perished, or spent their lives wandering alien planes searching for such a fabled source. Diamond has very few, and very rare associated creatures, and a small selection of spells.

Spells and Magic in Cardacia

Card Carrier spells are Mystic Power based, making them quick to cast and quickly resolved in most instances. Most spells have a casting time of 1action, duration of instantaneous or 1 round, and cost the Card Carrier Mystic Power from their Reserve. The Card Carriers’ spell list is highly focused on spells that effect Mystic Power, Called Creatures, the defense of the Card Carrier, and fast - usually single target - attacks.

Card Carrier spells are considered arcane, even if they duplicate a divine spell effect.

D20 Spells

There are a small number of “regular” spells that work well for Card Carriers. Given below is a list of such, along with their color & cost.

Use the spells “as is” from the PHB, dropping components, and spell school; add the Mystic Power cost and classify by color.

Heretics of Magic

The “other system” of magic on Cardacia is actually a taboo subject in most areas. There are those who are able (or *claim* to be able) to tap directly into the magic of Cardacia itself. In ancient, ancient legends such practices were said to occur, but in many cultures there are myths and legends of such use of magic that always end in catastrophe, blood, and devastating warfare. It was a result of one of these conflicts, which was said to involve the entire world of Cardacia, which resulted in the Practice and Code of the Card Carrier. In the lands of Cardacia, this “type” of magic has been labeled by most as Heretical and users of these practices are often hunted down and put to death.

Most Creatures are thought to use Heretical magic or a derivative of it, but this is acceptable due to the fact that Called Creatures return to their own world after a brief period of time on Cardacia. Those native individuals that use such magic are well hidden and rare.

Heretical magic is highly versatile and of greater potency than that of Card Carriers. In game terms, a Heretic uses the same rules as the Sorcerer (see the Player’s handbook) excepting that their usable spells may come from either the “arcane” or “divine” spell lists. While this may seem unbalancing, remember that they are a highly despised and hunted group on this world.

Note that classes which only gain spells at higher levels can usually mask the use of Heretical magic these classes gain under the auspices of innate powers granted by their training. No individual can have both Card Carrier and Heretical magic abilities.

Cost codes are as follows Topaz "T", Ruby "R", Emerald "E", Sapphire "S", Opal "O". If any color can be used, the "C" for clear is used. This does not indicate a need for the allusive Diamond/Clear Mystic Power.

Name	Color	Cost
Alarm	Opal	1 O
Analyze Dwenomer	Sapphire	2 S
Animal Growth	Emerald	3 E
Antimagic Field	Multi	3 O, 4 S
Bestow Curse	Multi	3 T, 1 R
Blur	Sapphire	2 S
Break Enchantment	Opal	4 O
Bull's Strength	Ruby	2 R
Cat's Grace	Emerald	2 E
Charm Monster	Sapphire	4 S
Contact Other Plane	Multi	3 O, 2 S
Contingency	Sapphire	4 S + set spell's Mystic Power
Cure Light Wounds	Emerald	2 E
Cure Minor Wounds	Emerald	1 E
Cure Moderate Wounds	Emerald	3 E
Destruction	Multi	5 T 5 R
Detect Magic	Sapphire	1 S
Dimensional Anchor	Opal	3 O
Disintegrate	Topaz	3 T, 1 R
Dismissal	Topaz	4 T
Dispel Magic	Sapphire	1 per 3 levels of opposing spell's caster
Displacement	Opal	3 O
Dominate Monster	Multi	3 T, 2 S
Endurance	Emerald	2 E
Enervation	Topaz	5 T
Enlarge	Emerald	2 E
Enthrall	Sapphire	4 S
Entropic Shield	Topaz	3 T
Feeblemind	Multi	2 T 2 S
Fire Shield	Ruby	2 R
Fly	Opal	3 O
Forbiddance	Opal	4 O
Freedom	Multi	2 T 2 O
Geas	Multi	3 T 3 S
Greater Dispelling	Sapphire	2 per 3 levels of opposing spell's caster
Greater Magic Weapon	Multi	4 R 2 S
Haste	Emerald	2 E

Hold Monster	Multi	3 O 3 S
Hold Person	Multi	2 O 2 S
Imprisonment	Opal	5 O
Identify	Sapphire	1 S
Insanity	Ruby	3 R
Invisibility Purge	Multi	2 S 1 T
Lesser Geas	Multi	2 S 1 T
Levitate	Sapphire	1 S
Locate Creature	Opal	1 O
Mage Armour	Opal	2 O
Magic Circle against Good/Evil/Law/Chaos	Opal	3 O
Magic Jar	Multi	3 S 3 T 1 R
Magic Weapon	Multi	2 S 1 R
Maze	Sapphire	5 S
Meteor Swarm	Ruby	5 R
Mirror Image	Sapphire	2 S
Mordernkainen's Disjunction	Sapphire	5 S 2 T 2 R
Negative Energy Protection	Opal	2 O
Permanency	Multi	3 S 2 O
Polymorph Other	Emerald	4 E
Protection from Elements	Opal	3 O
Protection from Good/Evil/Law/Chaos	Opal	1 O
Protection from spells	Multi	3 O 2 S
Ray of Enfeeblement	Topaz	2 T
Reduce	Multi	1 T 1 E
Remove Curse	Multi	1 S 2 O
Repulsion	Topaz	3 T
Resist Elements	Opal	1 O
Resistance	Opal	1 O
Sanctuary	Opal	1 O
Scrying	Sapphire	3 S
Slow	Emerald	2 E
Spell Turning	Multi	3 S 2 O 1 T
Status	Multi	1 S 1 E
Temporal Stasis	Multi	5 T 3 E 3 S
Tongues	Multi	2 S 2 O
True Seeing	Opal	4 O
True Strike	Ruby	2 R
Water Breathing	Sapphire	3 S

For those who wish to offer a larger selection, or wish to have a more organized spell cost list, then try the following guidelines (note that costs listed above do not conform to these guides, as they are balanced to a smaller, tighter list).

Spell level	Mystic Power cost*	Spell Type	Color Mystic Power	Other properties	Color Mystic Power
0 - 2	1 to 3	Abjuration	Opal	Area Offensive	Ruby
3 - 4	2 to 4	Conjuration	Sapphire or Ruby	Healing	Emerald
5 - 7	4 to 8	Divination	Opal/Sapphire	Information Gathering	Opal
8 - 9	9 or more	Enchantment	Topaz	Magic Affecting	Sapphire
		Evocation	Sapphire or Emerald	Primarily defensive	Opal
		Illusion	Sapphire	Primarily offensive	Ruby
		Necromancy	Topaz or Emerald		
		Transmutation	Sapphire or Emerald		

* - Mystic Power cost is total number of Mystic Power points, these can be "paid" in all the same color, or a number of different colors

New Spells

Given below is a small selection of generic spells for use by most Card Carriers. At the end of each spell's description is a listing of the name used for that spell dependant upon the color Mystic Power used to invoke it. If no color is listed, then that spell has no equivalent for that Mystic Power type. Multicolor spells generally have but one name, used by both colors.

Within the MtG CCG, there is a large number of spell cards which do essentially the same thing, albeit often with a slight twist or variation. For the CCG this keeps things interesting, allows variation on basic strategy, and gives a greater chance that the spell will appear in a player's hand so as to be played.

In a RPG, having repetitive spells that are often redundant to each other is somewhat wasteful. Therefore the Sample New Spells given here are rather generic in nature. They are meant to be guides for the players and GMs to use to create or interpret their favorite MtG cards spells into D20 RPG game terms.

Enhance Creature (Offense)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium
Effect: Target
Duration: d4 + 1round / Level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell increases the combat effectiveness of the Creature designated. It only effects Creatures Called from another plane, and has no effect on "native" creatures or individuals.

The Creature affected gains a +2 enchantment bonus to both attacks rolls and damage rolls.

Color	Mystic Power Cost
Topaz	3
Sapphire	4
Emerald	3
Ruby	2
Opal	4

Enhance Creature (Defense)

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium
Effect: Target
Duration: d4 + 1round / Level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell increases the Armor Class of the Creature designated. It only effects Creatures Called from another plane, and has no effect on "native" creatures or individuals.

The Creature affected gains a +2 enchantment bonus to its Armor Class.

Color	Mystic Power Cost
Topaz	5
Sapphire	4
Emerald	3
Ruby	3
Opal	2

Enhance Resistance

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium
Effect: Target
Duration: d4 + 1round / Level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell increases grants a bonus to saving throws made by the Creature designated. It only effects Creatures Called from another plane, and has no effect on "native" creatures or individuals.

The Creature affected gains a +2 enchantment bonus to a Saving throw type (Reflex, Fortitude, Willpower) designated at the spell's casting. This spell can be stacked with itself, but each casting must affect a different saving throw type.

Color	Mystic Power Cost	Notes
Sapphire	3/2	Cost of 2 for Willpower, others are 3
Emerald	3/2	Cost of 2 for Fortitude, others are 3
Ruby	3/2	Cost of 2 for Reflex, others are 3

Siphon Mystic Power

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium
Effect: Target
Duration: Instant
Saving Throw: Fortitude Negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell leeches away Mystic Power points. For every point of Mystic Power spent by the caster *in addition to the cost of the spell* the target losses 2 points of Mystic Power of a color designated by the caster.

If the target has no Mystic Power of that color in their Reserve, they lose Mystic Power of the same color as the Caster has spent to siphon points (not the spell cost) on a 1 to 1 basis.

If the target has no Mystic Power in their Reserve of either color, then they lose randomly chosen Mystic Power on a 1 to 1 basis.

If the target has no Mystic Power left in their Reserve, then the caster suffers Searing as if they retained Mystic Power at the time of

The Draw (see above) equal to the amount of points they designated to siphoning cost. (This damage is 1d6 points of damage per Mystic Power point.)

Color	Mystic Power Cost
Topaz	2
Sapphire	3
Ruby	3

Refresh Mystic Power

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Effect: Self
Duration: Instant
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

Use of this spell restores a number of Mystic Power points to the Card Carriers MPR equal to the Card Carrier's Charisma modifier. Points restored must be point colors already used subsequent to the last Replenishment (this spell cannot be used to change Mystic Power color by burning some off and restoring them as different color Mystic Power points.)

Color	Mystic Power Cost
Sapphire	1
Emerald	1
Ruby	2
Opal	2

Suspend Mystic Power Use

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Short
Effect: Target
Duration: 1 round
Saving Throw: Will Negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell blocks the target Card Carrier, Artifact or Creature from accessing their Mystic Power Reserve for one round. Artifacts and constructs requiring Mystic Power to power them fall inert during this period; though no other direct damage is caused (indirect damage as a result of a failed ability is possible). Creatures cannot access most Supernatural or Spell-like abilities, and Card Carriers cannot Call or spell cast for this period.

Color	Mystic Power Cost
Topaz	3
Sapphire	3
Ruby	4
Opal	4

Counter Call

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Short
Effect: 1 Creature
Duration: Instant
Saving Throw: Will Negates
Spell Resistance: No

This spell counters the Call made by another Card Carrier. The targeted Creature must have been Called within the previous or current round, and have not recovered from its Summoning Shock. The Card Carrier who called the Creature gets a Willpower save – success indicates this spell failed; failure sends the Creature back to its plane, though the Calling Card Carrier still spends the Mystic Power for the Call normally.

This spell will counter Calls for groups, treating them as a single Creature.

Color	Mystic Power Cost
Sapphire	3
Emerald	3
Ruby	4
Opal	2

“Direct Damage”

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Short
Effect: Target
Duration: Instant
Saving Throw: Reflex Halves
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell deals 1d6 damage per 2 levels of Card Carrier to the selected target. This damage is half Mystic Power energies, and half damage from related energies (by color) as listed below. Most forms of this spell create some weapon or image that “attacks” the target, the caster must make a ranged touch attack for the spell to hit. Once it does, the spell delivers its damage.

Color	Mystic Power Cost	Notes
Topaz	2	Decay damage
Sapphire	4	Ice damage
Emerald	3	Mutation damage
Ruby	2	Fire damage
Opal	5	Petrification damage

Self Protection

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Effect: Self
Duration: 1 round / level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell grants a +2 deflection bonus to the Card Carrier's AC.

Color	Mystic Power Cost
Sapphire	3
Emerald	3
Ruby	2
Opal	2

Replenish Mystic Power Stone

Casting Time: Special
Range: Touch
Effect: Target
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell recharges the Mystic Power Reserve in a Mystic Power Stone or Artifact. The Mystic Power cost for this spell is special, in that it requires the shown number of Mystic Power points plus 1 Sapphire Mystic Power to cast. The time to cast this spell is equal to the amount of time it would take to recharge the stone normally during the Card Carriers time to Draw Mystic Power. All rules which govern Mystic Power Stone recharging apply to this spell as well (must be filled to maximum, Mystic Power color must be declared when recharged, etc).

Color	Mystic Power Cost	Notes
Topaz	3	Plus 1 Sapphire Mystic Power
Sapphire	3	
Emerald	3	Plus 1 Sapphire Mystic Power
Ruby	3	Plus 1 Sapphire Mystic Power
Opal	3	Plus 1 Sapphire Mystic Power

Maximized Creature

Casting Time: 1 action
 Range: Special
 Effect: 1 Creature
 Duration: Permanent
 Saving Throw: None
 Spell Resistance: No

This spell must be cast in conjunction with a use of The Call. The next Creature brought through with The Call has maximum hit dice & hit points for a Creature of its type and species. As well, one of its key abilities is maximized for its race (ability limit of 18 plus or minus 2 per size category away from medium). If a Creature with a class is Called, then it has maximum hps for its level.

Color	Mystic Power Cost
Topaz	4
Sapphire	4
Emerald	3
Ruby	2

Mystic Power Wall

Casting Time: 1 round
 Range: Long
 Effect: 10 ft sq per level or 3 +1 per level
 Duration: 1 min per level
 Saving Throw: Special, Special
 Spell Resistance: Yes

An immobile, iridescent curtain of shimmering Mystic Power energy springs into existence. One side of the wall, selected by the character, sends forth waves of Mystic

Mystic Power Wall

Color	Mystic Power Cost	Notes
Topaz	5	Special effect: Those passing through this wall must make a Fort. save (DC 15 + caster level) or contract a random disease. Creatures Damaged: Elves
Sapphire	5	Special effect: All artifacts or magic items passing through this wall cease to function for 2d6 rounds. This includes Taron Decks & Crystals. The caster must make a Will save (DC 15) if this fails, one such item permanently loses its abilities. Creatures Damaged: Goblins
Emerald	5	Special effect: This wall causes unnaturally fast production of new cellular growth resulting in 2d8 damage plus a temporary loss of 1d4 Con points. A successful Fortitude save (DC 15) negates the Con loss. Creatures Damaged: Merfolk
Ruby	5	Special effect: Those passing must make a Will save (DC 20) or fall into a berserk rage lasting 2d6 rounds during which they will blindly attack friend or foe. Once finished, treat the target as if a barbarian recovering from a Rage of twice the actual duration. Creatures Damaged: Sylphs
Opal	5	Special effect: Gale force winds assail those near and passing through the wall. They must make a Strength check (DC of 15 plus the caster's level) to successfully pass through the wall. Creatures Damaged: Undead

Power related energies dealing 2d4 points of damage to creatures within 10 feet and 1d4 points of damage to those past 10 feet but within 20 feet. In addition, each Mystic Power color invokes an associated condition that may further harm or deter any who are close by or passing through the wall. These special conditions are presented below by Mystic Power color.

The wall deals its damage when it appears and each round that a creature enters or remains in the area. In addition, the wall deals 2d6 points of damage +1 point of damage per caster level (maximum +20) to any creature passing through it. The wall deals double damage to specific creature types (by color) – this too is noted below.

If the character evokes the wall so that it appears where creatures are, each creature takes damage as if passing through the wall. Each such creature can avoid the wall by making a successful Reflex save. (If the creature ends up on the active side of the wall, it takes 2d4 points of damage, as normal.)

If any 5-foot length of wall takes 20 points of damage or more in 1 round, that length dissipates.

Variant form: Hemisphere: The wall takes the form of a hemisphere whose maximum radius is 3 feet +1 foot per caster level. Thus, a 7th-level caster can create a hemisphere 10 feet in radius. The caster can designate

whether the interior or exterior “wall” of the sphere radiates damaging affects. On this side, it deals damage normally to those within its confines, and those who pass through.

The character can attempt to create the hemisphere so that it traps one or more creatures, though these creatures can avoid being trapped by the hemisphere by making successful Reflex saves

Repel Creature Type

Casting Time: 1 action
 Range: Short
 Effect: 10 ft Radius emanation
 Duration: 10 min / level
 Saving Throw: Will Negates
 Spell Resistance: Yes

An invisible barrier holds back Creatures of the designated Type. A Creature with less than one-third the character's level in HD cannot penetrate the barrier.

A Creature with at least one-third the character's level in HD can penetrate the barrier if it succeeds at a Will save. Even so, crossing the barrier deals the Creature 2d6 points of damage, and pressing against the barrier causes pain, which deters less aggressive Creature.

The Mystic Power color required for this spell is dependant upon the Creature Type it is used against.

Color	Mystic Power Cost	Notes
Topaz	3	Repel Opal or Emerald
Sapphire	3	Repel Emerald or Ruby
Emerald	3	Repel Sapphire or Topaz
Ruby	3	Repel Sapphire or Opal
Opal	3	Repel Topaz or Ruby

Mystic Power Storm

Casting Time: 1 round
 Range: Medium
 Effect: 1 10 ft cube per level
 Duration: Instant
 Saving Throw: Reflex Halves
 Spell Resistance: Yes

When a Mystic Power Storm is cast, the area designated by the caster is infused with the raw power of the Mystic Power type being used.

- This energy creates the following affects:
- 2d6 damage per level of caster to Creatures of opposed color to that of the Storm.
 - 1d6 damage per level of caster to Creatures of neutral color to that of the Storm

- 1d4 points healed per level of caster to Creatures of the same color as that of the Storm.

All Mystic Power Storms require Sapphire energy as part of their casting. The Mystic Power color of the Storm, however, is determined by the caster and requires the most points from that Mystic Power source. (I.e. a Ruby Mystic Power Storm would require 4 Sapphire plus 8 Ruby to cast).

Color	Mystic Power Cost	Notes
Topaz	8	Requires an additional 4 Sapphire, opposed colors: Opal or Emerald
Sapphire	8	Requires an additional 4 Sapphire, opposed colors: Emerald or Ruby
Emerald	8	Requires an additional 4 Sapphire, opposed colors: Sapphire or Topaz
Ruby	8	Requires an additional 4 Sapphire, opposed colors: Sapphire or Opal
Opal	8	Requires an additional 4 Sapphire, opposed colors: Topaz or Ruby

Feats and Skills

Feats

Card Carriers may choose from all general category feats listed in the *PHB*. Meta Spell feats that change spell effects, for the most part, do not modify Card Carrier spells (but see *Overpower Spell* below).

The two Metamagic feats Silent Spell and Still Spell are also available for Card Carrier spells. Under normal D20 rules, these Meta Magic feats increase the level cost of the spell to enhance it with the feat. For Card Carrier spells, substitute this increased level for an increased Mystic Power cost as follows: for every “step” up in level, increase Mystic Power cost by itself again. A 3 Mystic Power spell that is Stilled (2 steps up in level) costs 3(base) plus 3 (first step) plus 3 (second step) or 9 Mystic Power points.

There are a number of feats that are unique to Cardacia.

Listed here are feats for the Card Carrier’s Mystic Power based spell system, for using the Call, and new feats found on Cardacia. There is also a new category, *Meta Summoning*, which features feats designed to aid the Card Carrier with abilities affecting The Call, and Creatures who are summoned through it.

Additional Callable Creature

Meta Summoning

Benefit: Card Carrier gains one additional Callable Creature from the chosen Types they have.

Normal: Card Carriers have an available number of Callable Creatures as determined by their level.

This Feat may be taken up to three times.

Additional Creature Type

Meta Summoning

Benefit: Card Carrier gains one additional Creature Type from which they can choose their Callable Creatures

Normal: Card Carriers have an available number of Creature Types as determined by their level.

This Feat may be taken up to three times.

Brew Mystic Power Potion

Metamagic

Prerequisites: Card Carrier level three

Benefit: This feat allows the Card Carrier to create potions empowered with Mystic Power, or with a spell ability. The character can create a potion of any spell costing (their current level plus 1) Mystic Power or less that the character knows and that targets a creature or creatures. Brewing a potion takes 1 day. The caster’s MPR must be sufficient to cast the spell in question and at full strength at the time of creation. The base price of a potion is its Mystic Power cost plus three, multiplied by 50 gp Potions which simply grant the restoration of Mystic Power Points cost twice the amount of Mystic Power that is empowered I to the potion – once to Create, once to “store”. To brew a potion, the character must spend 1/25 of this base price in XP and use up raw materials costing half this base price.

When the character creates a potion, the character makes any choices that the character would normally make when casting the spell. Whoever drinks the potion is the target of the spell.

Xp Cost: See Benefit for base cost. Any potion that stores a spell with a costly material component or an XP cost also carries a commensurate cost. In addition to the costs derived from the base price, the character must expend the material component or pay the XP when creating the potion.

Cannibalize Body

General

Benefit: This feat allows the Card Carrier to Draw from their body enough Mystic Power to cast a spell, or perform a Call. To do so, characters trade two Wound Points for 1 Mystic Power point. This Mystic Power can be designated as any color at the time of the Drawing. A Card Carrier may not Draw off their last Wound Point.

Normal: Card Carriers cannot Draw Mystic Power from their own physical form.

Craft Mystic Power Stone

Metamagic

Prerequisites: Brew Mystic Power Potion

Benefit: The character can enchant a gemstone to hold Mystic Power which supplements their Talon Crystal’s MPR. This supplemental energy can fuel The Call or Spells, but never artifacts unless created as part of that Artifact.

Crafting a Mystic Power Stone takes 1 day for each 1,000 gp in its base price. The gem used must match the Mystic Power type that is to be retained (i.e. a ruby for Ruby Power, topaz for Topaz, etc). For every Mystic Power point the stone may holds the cost of the gem used costs 2,500 gp per point. All enchanted points are considered dedicated.

To craft a Mystic Power Stone, the character must spend 1/25 of its base price in XP and use up additional raw materials costing half of its base price.

Recharging Mystic Power Stones must take place during the Card Carriers time to Draw Mystic Power. Mystic Power held in a stone is indefinite until used. There is no Searing which results from unused Mystic Power Stone points. Time to Draw Mystic Power into a Stone equals 5 minutes per point – unlike The Draw, there is no upper end to the time this can take (thus a mammoth 30 point Stone

– if such existed – would take 30x5 or 150 minutes to recharge).

Stones must be recharged to maximum, and cannot only be partly filled at the time of the Draw. Stones that have been partially depleted can be replenished back to their maximum before they're exhausted, but the remaining empty points must be filled entirely (taking the Stone back to maximum) or the recharge fails. Failure to fully refill a Mystic Power Stone causes all Mystic Power to be lost from the Stone for 24 hours.

Some magic Mystic Power Stones incur extra costs in material components or XP as noted in their descriptions. There is reputed to be a method to Craft a Clear Diamond stone, but such a method is the stuff of legends, and if discovered would easily increase the costs and times involved in it's crafting by a factor of 10, 20, or more.

Create Artifact

Metamagic

Prerequisites: Create Minor Artifact

Benefit: The character can create a Minor Artifact of any spell that uses a combined total of 20 Mystic Power or less that the character knows. Enchanting an Artifact takes 1 day for each 1,000 gp in its price. Artifacts generally cost 100 gp times the spells' combined Mystic Power cost times 100.

To enchant an Artifact, the spell caster must spend 1/25 of the item's price in XP and use up raw materials costing half of this price.

The character can also mend a broken Artifact if it is one that the character could make. Doing so costs half the XP, half the raw materials, and half the time it would take to enchant that item in the first place.

Some Artifacts incur extra costs in material components or XP as noted in their descriptions. These costs are in addition to those derived from the item's base price. The character must pay such a cost to create an item or to mend a broken one.

Create Minor Artifact

Metamagic

Prerequisites: Create Mystic Power Stone

Benefit: The character can create a Minor Artifact of any spell that uses 5 total Mystic Power or less that the character knows. Crafting a Minor Artifact takes 1 day for each 1,000 gp in its base price. The base price of a Minor Artifact is its caster level multiplied by the spell Mystic Power cost multiplied by 750 gp. To craft a Minor Artifact, the character must spend 1/25 of this base price in XP and use up raw materials costing half of this base price.

A newly created Minor Artifact conations enough Mystic Power to cast the spell 50 times. Minor Artifacts cannot normally be

recharged without spells or by Creatures that can specifically do so.

Any Minor Artifact that stores a spell with a costly material component or an XP cost also carries a commensurate cost. In addition to the cost derived from the base cost, the character must expend fifty copies of the material component or pay fifty times the XP cost.

Create Portals

Metamagic

Prerequisites: Create Artifact

Benefit: The character can create a Portal, a specialized Artifact of great power. Enchanting a Portal takes 1 week for each 2,000 gp in its price. Portals generally cost 20,000 gp per person that may pass through it, plus 10,000 for each minute of continuous operation it can perform.

To enchant a Portal, the spell caster must spend 1/50 of the item's price in XP and use up raw materials costing half of this price.

The character can also mend a broken Portal if it is one that the character could make. Doing so costs half the XP, half the raw materials, and half the time it would take to enchant that item in the first place.

Some Portals incur extra costs in material components or XP as noted in their descriptions. These costs are in addition to those derived from the item's base price. The character must pay such a cost to create an item or to mend a broken one.

Dedicated Mystic Power

Metamagic

Benefit: This feat allows a Card Carrier to trade, on a 1 to 1 basis, a point of Clear Mystic Power for an extra point of "closed" Mystic Power (Mystic Power which can only be filled by a particular color). For example, a Card Carrier could gain an extra point of Ruby Power if one "normal" Mystic Power point can only be Ruby thereafter (it is now "closed" excepting to Ruby Mystic Power). Hence, a Card Carrier with 5 Clear Mystic Power that takes this Feat for 1 Sapphire would end having 4 Clear and 2 Sapphire (start with 5 Clear, convert one to Sapphire to gain one additional Sapphire). This feat can stack up to three times *per color*.

Normal: Normally, Mystic Power points in a Card Carrier's Reserve are considered "Clear" until filled with Mystic Power of the Card Carrier's choosing.

Increased Creature Duration

Meta Summoning

Benefit: Extends the duration of a single Creature type which the Card Carrier can Call by 50%. This feat may be taken multiple times, each being applied to a different Creature type. It cannot stack on the same type.

Normal: Creatures normally stay for the duration of 1 minute per Card Carrier level.

Intensify Spell

Metamagic

Benefit: This Feat allows the Card Carrier to designate one of three components of a spell – Duration, Range, or Damage dealt – and doubles it by doubling the number of Mystic Power point they pay for that spell.

The Feat's use stacks, with each application adding the cost of the spell onto the total cost again. (I.e. a spell costing 3 Ruby has its damage doubled costing 3R base + 3R to double for a total of 6 Ruby. If the Card Carrier also doubled the range, then the cost goes to 3R base + 3R double damage + 3R double range for a total 9 Ruby cost) Each of the components may only be doubled once, so that subsequent uses of the Feat may only double a different component.

Mystic Power Cost: Special – each application of this Feat adds the base cost of the spell again to the overall cost.

Quickened Call

Meta Summoning

Benefit: The Card Carrier selects one Creature type from they may Call. All Creatures of that type Called are treated as if they have the ability Haste, even if not a natural ability of that Creature.

Normal: Only Creatures with the Haste ability naturally can act on the round they're Called.

Mystic Power Cost: 2 Sapphire in addition to cost of Calling the Creature.

Specialized Land Link

Metamagic

Prerequisites: Dedicated Mystic Power (twice to same color)

Benefit: In her travels, the Card Carrier has linked to an especially powerful magical area which grants a specialized, associated ability as well as making normal Mystic Power of the appropriate color available to Draw upon.

In the process of receiving this Feat, the Card Carrier forfeits one Clear Mystic Power point from their Reserve, and gains one dedicated

Mystic Power point of the appropriate color as well as the associated ability.

The ability gained is color dependant. The game master should decide what would be appropriate for the character, level of play, and their campaign. Some example abilities are:

Normal: Normal links do not cause Mystic Power color changes, nor grant any special abilities beyond the use of the Mystic Power Drawn.

Mystic Power Cost: Varies, see chart.

Skills

Knowledge (Alternate Plane)

(Int, Trained Only)

Class Skill: Card Carrier, Heretic

Cross Class Skill: Monk

This skill grants special Knowledge about an Alternate Plane of the Card Carriers choice. This is normally a plane that the Card Carrier visited during their travels to gain their abilities.

Check: Answering a question about general conditions of the Plane (major geographic features, political entities, climate and terrain) has a DC of 10. Questions about specific facts of a small region have a DC of 15; about groups or strong individuals in a small location (city, town, etc) has a DC of 20.

Retry: No. The check represents what you know – thinking more about it doesn't grant any more insight or knowledge.

Special: An untrained Knowledge check is simply an Int check. Without training a character only knows "common" knowledge.

Knowledge (Artifacts & Constructs)

(Int, Trained Only)

Class Skill: Card Carrier, Rogue, Bard

Cross Class Skill: Heretics

This skill grants special Knowledge about the Artifacts and Constructs both Ancient and modern.

Check: Determining the general nature of a magical Artifact has a DC of 10, for a Technological Artifact this is 15. Questions about basic specific functions has a DC of 15 (Magical) or 20 (Technological). Specific and detailed questions about the artifact may be answered against a DC of 25 for Magical Artifacts, DC 30 for Technological.

Add 5 to the DC for any Artifact or Construct Creature, +10 if such is sentient. Add +5 if the Artifact is a rare or unique Ancient Artifact.

Color	Granted Ability	Mystic Power cost to use
Topaz	All attacks made by target touched are +2 damage for 1 round per level of Card Carrier	3 Topaz
Topaz	Cause Disease by touch	4 Topaz
Topaz	Create Total Darkness (as Darkness, but no vision possible)	2 Topaz
Sapphire	Breathe Water (as spell)	2 Sapphire
Sapphire	Fly (as spell)	5 Sapphire
Sapphire	True Sight (as spell)	3 Sapphire
Emerald	Growth (as spell)	2 Emerald
Emerald	Pass without Trace (as spell)	3 Emerald
Emerald	Nature's Son - Emerald Familiar gained*	5 Emerald
Ruby	All attacks made by target touched are +2 to hit for 1 round per level of Card Carrier	3 Ruby
Ruby	Rage (as 1 st level Barbarian ability)	4 Ruby
Ruby	Warfare – Card Carrier gains +4 to hit & damage, -4 AC and Will saves	5 Ruby
Opal	Protective Shield : +3 force bonus to AC	3 Opal
Opal	Healing Touch : heal 2d6 hps or 1 WP	5 Opal
Opal	Pure Light : Produce light to 60 feet equivalent to sunlight in strength, effect	4 Opal

* - an "Emerald" familiar is treated as normal Sorcerer Familiar, excepting it "carries" 2 Mystic Power points which can be used by the Card Carrier.

Note: Touch effects are treated as *Touch Attacks* (PHB pgs.125)

Retry: No. The check represents what you know – thinking more about it doesn't grant any more insight or knowledge.

Special: This skill cannot be used Untrained, there is no common knowledge available about these items. Note that this skill conveys Knowledge about the object only, the skill Operate Artifact (see below) must be employed to use an Artifact or Construct.

Knowledge (Creature Type)

(Int, Trained Only)

Class Skill: Card Carrier, Heretic, Fighter

Cross Class Skill: Paladin, Ranger, Rogue, Monk

This skill gives special knowledge about the nature of one Type of Creature from the Card Carrier list.

Check: Answering a question of a general nature about a Creature within the Creature Type known has a DC of 10 (for easy, broad questions), 15 (for basic combat or ability questions), or 20 (for specific questions about a specific Creature).

Retry: No. The check represents what you know – thinking more about it doesn't grant any more insight or knowledge.

Special: An untrained Knowledge check is simply an Int check. Without training a character only knows "common" knowledge.

Knowledge (Taron Artifacts)

(Int, Trained Only)

Class Skill: Card Carrier

This skill grants special Knowledge about the Taron Deck and the Taron Crystal. It allows Card Carriers to recognize Creatures summoned by another Card Carrier, to estimate the types of Mystic Energy contained in a Taron Crystal, and to decipher the uses of unfamiliar "found" cards.

Check: Answering a question about cards which are contained in the Card Carrier's own deck (even if not yet usable) has a DC of 10. Questions about related cards, which the Card Carrier has not seen before, or identifying Mystic Power contained in another's Taron Crystal has a DC of 15. Questions about unique, lost, or ancient unique cards or identifying Mystic Power contained in another's Taron Crystal as seen from a distance has a DC of 20.

Retry: No. The check represents what you know – thinking more about it doesn't grant any more insight or knowledge.

Special: An untrained Knowledge check is simply an Int check. Without training a character only knows "common" knowledge.

Operate Technological Construct

(Int, Trained)

Class Skill: Card Carriers, Rogues, Bards

Cross Class Skill: Heretics

This skill allows an individual to successfully activate and operate a Technological Construct of the Old Ones. If magical, then the user must be able to supply the necessary Mystic Power or actuate the Technological Constructs Mystic Power supply (this generally requires a second use if this skill). If strictly technological, then the user must also know something of the Technological Constructs nature to decipher the correct operations of the Technological Construct (generally through a Knowledge: Artifacts & Constructs roll).

Check: DCs for magical Technological Constructs and Technological Construct Creatures is equal to (15 + caster level + a construct's level – if sentient), for Technological Constructs the DC is 20 + Technological Level.

Retry: A retry may only be made if a successful

Special:

Disable Device

Card Carriers may use this skill to disable ancient artifacts, artifact constructs, and technological devices as well as its normal use. See PHB for details.

Check: To disable a magical artifact requires overcoming a DC equal to (10 + the artifact caster level); technological artifact or construct creatures require overcoming a DC equal to (15 + the creators level + the construct's level – if sentient); technological Artifacts have a base DC of (20 + TR).

Artifacts & Constructs

"Artifact" is the general term used to describe magical items in the world of Cardacia. Most are relics from a bygone civilization known only as the Old Ones. These Old Ones were highly advanced in the ways of both magic and technology, advancing these dualistic forces both separately and together. Most Artifacts of the Old Ones therefore have elements of both magic & technology as a part of their makeup, though in modern times the term Artifact is generally applied to those of primarily magical nature.

Note that if CCG d20 is being adapted for a more modernized game, then use of such items may be more common, or even necessary to the Card Carrier.

Talismans and Conduits: These are the magical items created by, or modeled after those of, the Old Ones. They most often perform one of two functions: they either allow the Card Carrier to store and use Mystic Power to fuel magical abilities or spells; or they act to enhance or focus the users Mystic Power into a specific spell, task, or purpose.

The former type of Artifact is simply referred to as a Talisman, while the latter is most often called a Conduit.

Talismans can come in many forms, from the traditional wand, staff or amulet to small mechanical devices, enchanted mirrors, or constructs.

Conduits are most often wands, staves, rods, rings, or stones. Most of these were formed by the Old Ones, or more modern Artificers following the Old Ones plans. Few Conduits today can equal the Old Ones' in sheer power or versatility.

Magical Artifacts are created under the same d20 rules as "normal" magical items in terms of required Feats, costs, and materials needed. For details on those feats specifically designed for use with the Mystic Power system, see the Feats section above.

Most magical item special qualities from the d20 magic item abilities list are acceptable, as are most of the Magic items listed. One obvious difference is that most magic items/Artifacts for Cardacia have a Mystic Power Battery with stored points – few items are "permanently" enchanted as they are in non-Cardacia worlds.

Items that have enough of a battery store that they are in a continual recharge/expenditure cycle can be considered "permanent", though this would require the cost in Mystic Power for one dedicated use plus that amount multiplied by 24 (in Mystic Power points) to work – making such Artifacts rare and expensive.

To use "regular" d20 magical items, assume that a magical item that normally is considered a "permanent" Minor has enough Mystic Power to function for 3 individual uses or 3 hours duration as appropriate; Medium lasts 6 uses/hours, and Major lasts 12 – 18 uses/hours. Artifacts created to be truly

“permanent” increase the market value by 50 to 100 times the base cost or more.

Magical items that have a set number of uses per day have enough Mystic Power to perform that spell the listed amount of times. If multiple functions can be achieved, assume that the Mystic Power contained within is dedicated only to that task. (I.e. such items work as normal.)

Current Card Carriers can use the Feats *Create Minor Artifact* and *Create Artifact* to produce magical Artifacts modeled upon those of the Old Ones, though they cannot reach the same power levels as their predecessors. While just about any magic item is available from the generic D20 list, those with spell affects above 5th level spells, or Card Carrier spells with a cost of 20 Mystic Power or more, can only be purchased or found in Ancient’s treasures. Artifacts of these power levels are beyond the abilities of modern Card Carriers.

Heretics can use the Feats *Brew Potion*; *Scribe Scroll*; *Forge Ring*; and *Craft Feats for Arms & Armor* and *Wands*. The creation of other magical items is considered “lost arts” and few if any Heretical spell casters have this knowledge. Many, however, quest for this knowledge, as it would give them a definitive edge over the Planewalking elite.

When creating Artifacts for CCG D20, one must keep in mind that Artifacts are Mystic Power-based. As such, they have additional considerations such as those listed below which can be added to their base cost in GPs.

Effect Name	Item or Ability*	Base Price
Mystic Power Battery	Ability	Points stored x 2500
Mystic Power Conduit	Ability	Maximum points allowed x 5,000

Mystic Power Battery Like the Mystic Power Stone (which is a dedicated Mystic Power Battery) this ability allows an Artifact to store, use, and regenerate Mystic Power points. These points are all considered dedicated, and may not be changed without destroying the Artifact. Mystic Power Batteries normally recharge at a rate of 1 point per hour, though most can be recharged as part of the Card Carrier’s replenishment.

Time to Draw Mystic Power into a Battery equals 5 minutes per point – unlike The Draw, there is no upper end to the time this can take

(thus a mammoth 30 point Battery – if such existed – would take 30x5 or 150 minutes to recharge).

Mystic Power Conduit This ability allows the Artifact to use external Mystic Power to create a spell effect, to manipulate Mystic Power flowing through it, or to generate other magical effects. The Conduit most often takes the form of a wand, gemstone, or ring. The user “feeds” Mystic Power into the Conduit, which then manifests the desired effect, modifies the Mystic Power into a different state (most often changing color), or enhances the Mystic Power or a spell cast through the Conduit.

Additionally, there are three unique magic items properties that are common to Cardacia Artifacts. These items take many forms, so guidelines to their creation are presented, as well as some example items.

Call Enhancement The Call Enhancement feature grants the Card Carrier the ability to Call more, or more powerful, creatures than usual. An Artifact with this ability allows the Card Carrier to Call :Creatures as though he or she were 1 level higher. This does not affect Type number, Mystic Power points, spells available, or another level dependant variable. *Caster Level: 5th Level, Prerequisite: Craft Artifact or Craft Minor Artifact, Cost to Create (Item cost) plus (Mystic Power Conduit cost) plus 25,000 gp.*

Calling Device These items generally appear as enchanted statue versions of the Type of Creature that they can call. Each may allow the Card Carrier to Call the Creature Type depicted, as though the Card Carriers had that Creature Type and that specific Creature on their availability.

To operate, the Card Carrier funnels the required Mystic Power through the statue while invoking a Call for the Creatures depicted. Costs for Calling such Creatures are the same as if the Card Carrier was exercising his Call ability normally. If the Statue depicts a Creature Type the Card Carrier is already familiar with then the Card Carrier may funnel his Call through the Statue and reduce that Creature’s Mystic Power cost by 1/3, round down. *Caster Level: 7th Level, Prerequisite: Craft Artifact or Craft Minor Artifact, Cost to Create (Item cost) plus (Mystic Power Conduit cost) plus 75,000 gp.*

Mystic Power Resistance (Item) Most often found as Rings or items of clothing,

Artifacts of Mystic Power Resistance grant Spell Resistance towards Spells or effects generated from certain Mystic Power types.

Generally, for every 3 Mystic Power points of an opposing color placed into the object, the object grants an SR of 10 towards the designated color for 1 Hour. So a Ring of Opal Mystic Power resistance would require 3 points of Topaz or Ruby Mystic Power to activate, and would grant SR 10 versus Opal spells for one hour. *Caster Level: 3rd Level, Prerequisite: Craft Artifact or Craft Minor Artifact, Cost to Create (Item cost) plus (Mystic Power Conduit cost) plus 25,000 gp.*

Following are three examples of Artifacts:

Item 1 – “The Goblin Sentry” This Artifact, a talisman, appears as a goblin soldier standing at attention, polearm in hand. When a Card Carrier places 2 Ruby Mystic Power into the Statue, a goblin appears and stands guard over the Card Carrier and any the Card Carrier designates for 1 hour plus 30 minutes per Card Carrier level. The Goblin sentry combines the qualities of a Calling Device (Goblin), a Mystic Power Conduit, and a Call Enhancement (Duration). *Caster Level: 7th Level, Prerequisite: Craft Artifact or Craft Minor Artifact, Cost to Create (Item cost of 25, 000) plus (Mystic Power Conduit cost of [2 x 5,000] 10,000) plus 25,000 gp or 60,000gp.*

Item 2 – “The Ruby of Alakor” A Mystic Power stone, the Ruby of Alakor holds an amazing 5 points of colorless mana, plus an additional 50 points of Ruby Mystic Power. *Caster Level: 5th Level, Prerequisite: Craft Mystic Power Stone, Cost to Create (Item cost of 175,000gp) plus (Mystic Power Battery cost of 187,500gp) plus 25,000 gp or 387,500 gp.*

Item 3 – Wand of Peaceful ways. This Conduit Wand allows the Card Carrier to manifest one of two effects: Ruby or Topaz Mystic Power may be altered into Opal Mystic Power within the Card Carriers Reserve at a ratio of 3:2. That is, for every 3 Mystic Power points of Ruby or Topaz fed into the wand from the Card Carriers Reserve, the Card Carriers Reserve receives 2 points of Opal Mystic Power.

By speaking a command and placing 3 Opal Mystic Power into the wand, the wielder may gain a SR of 10 versus either Ruby or Topaz Mystic Power spells for the duration of 1 hour.

If 6 Opal Mystic Power points are paid, then the SR 10 applies to both Ruby and Topaz sources of magic. No more than 6 points may be spent in one hour, nor may one Mystic Power color be raised to SR 20 through over payment.

Caster Level: 9th Level, *Prerequisite:* Craft Artifact, *Cost to Create* (Item cost of 250,000gp) plus (Mystic Power Conduit cost of 75,000gp) plus 25,000 gp or 350,000 gp.

Constructs

Constructs are those items of a mechanical nature, often comprised of hundreds and thousands of pieces large & small, many of which compose internal “clockwork” mechanisms and devices. These most often provide motive force, flexibility of motion, and empower articulated actions. Many constructs run on, or are augmented by, magical energies of some kind, though there are many such devices that are strictly mechanical - these are known as Technological Constructs (see below). While many of the complex or powerful Constructs -- from the time of the Old Ones -- are also relics, many are the product of the modern age. Though often weaker in terms of magical force or technological advancement, the modern Constructs cover a wide range of forms and uses.

Technological Constructs and Devices: Some Constructs require no Mystic Power to operate, using strictly mechanical, technological, and scientific methods to power and operate themselves. These are given a Technological Rating (TR) which aids in determining how difficult it is for the Construct to be identified, operated, or disabled.

Generally, age, complexity, and use are the primary factors in determining a Construct or Device’s TR. The “scale” goes from one to 20, though some massive complex systems may go beyond this (these are theorized, but none have been found to exist or to have existed). Many non-magical, ancient Constructs and Devices fall into this category.

The TR of a Construct or Device establishes the base DC for skills that identify, allow the use of, or allow one to disable a Technological Construct/Device, with further situational modifiers being applied as seen fit by the DM.

Constructs are treated as a template that can be applied to most any of the following kinds of Monsters or Creatures – Aberration, Animal,

Beast, Dragon, Fey, Giant, Humanoid, Magical beast, Monstrous humanoid, Outsider, Plant, Vermin. There are currently four Templates from which a Construct can be built – Bronze, Silver, Steel, and Adamantine. Each step in this list becomes more expensive, rare, and more complex. Other metals are used as well, though generally they are but variations of one of these four. The complexity of the clock works and mechanical workings of the Construct are determined by the metal type, monster type, size and special features (i.e. magical abilities, mechanical qualities, etc.).

Construct Templates

Bronze

Hit Dice: Increase to d10

Speed: Ground movement is reduced to 75% of the base creature’s, flight and swimming allowed by enchantment only, usually at 50% the base creature’s rate.

AC: gains +2 natural

Attacks: Same as Base Creature

Damage: +2 to melee damage, but not missile nor magical attacks

Special Attacks: None unless additional enchantments are introduced during creation

Special Qualities:

Construct -A construct is immune to mind-influencing effects and to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. Constructs cannot heal damage on their own, though they can be healed. Constructs can be repaired in the same way an object can. A construct with the regeneration and fast healing special qualities still benefits from those qualities.

A construct is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). A construct is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, it is immediately destroyed. Since it was never alive, a construct cannot be raised or resurrected.

Magical Qualities - Many Constructs have enchantments laid upon them granting them special magical abilities. These vary greatly from individual to individual.

Saves: Fort +4; Ref -2; Will -2

Abilities:

Str +2 to Base Creature

Dex --

Con +3 to Base Creature

Int 0

Wis 0

Chr 0

Skills: As base Creature (these are performed due through magical or engineering chicanery)

Feats: As base Creature (these are performed due through magical or engineering chicanery)

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Any

Advancement: If Artifice (see below) then by class, otherwise none.

Base Technological Rating: 9

Silver

Hit Dice: Increase to d12

Speed: Ground movement is reduced to 75% of the base creature’s, flight and swimming allowed by enchantment only, usually at 50% the base creature’s rate.

AC: gains +3 natural

Attacks: Same as Base Creature

Damage: +2 to hand-to-hand damage, but not missile nor magical attacks

Special Attacks: None unless additional enchantments are introduced during creation

Special Qualities:

Construct -A construct is immune to mind-influencing effects and to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. Constructs cannot heal damage on their own, though they can be healed. Constructs can be repaired in the same way an object can. A construct with the regeneration and fast healing special qualities still benefits from those qualities.

A construct is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). A construct is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, it is immediately destroyed. Since it was never alive, a construct cannot be raised or resurrected.

Magical Qualities - Many Constructs have enchantments laid upon them granting them

special magical abilities. These vary greatly from individual to individual.

Saves: Fort +2; Ref +1; Will -4

Abilities:

- Str +1 to Base Creature
- Dex +2 to Base Creature
- Con +1 to Base Creature
- Int 0
- Wis 0
- Chr 0

Skills: As base Creature (these are performed due through magical or engineering chicanery)

Feats: As base Creature (these are performed due through magical or engineering chicanery)

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground
Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Any

Advancement: If Artifice (see below) then by class, otherwise none.

Base Technological Rating: 12

Iron

Hit Dice: Increase to d12

Speed: Ground movement is reduced to 50% of the base creature's, flight and swimming allowed by enchantment only, usually at 25% the base creature's rate.

AC: gains +4 natural

Attacks: Same as Base Creature

Damage: +3 to hand to hand damage, but not missile nor magical attacks

Special Attacks: None unless additional enchantments are introduced during creation

Special Qualities:

Construct -A construct is immune to mind-influencing effects and to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. Constructs cannot heal damage on their own, though they can be healed. Constructs can be repaired in the same way an object can. A construct with the regeneration and fast healing special qualities still benefits from those qualities.

A construct is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). A construct is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, it is immediately

destroyed. Since it was never alive, a construct cannot be raised or resurrected.

Magical Qualities - Many Constructs have enchantments laid upon them granting them special magical abilities. These vary greatly from individual to individual.

Spell Resistance - Iron Constructs gain an SR 5 resistance to magical effects.

Saves: Fort +2; Ref +1; Will -4

Abilities:

- Str +3 to Base Creature
- Dex -- to Base Creature
- Con +2 to Base Creature
- Int 0
- Wis 0
- Chr 0

Skills: As base Creature (these are performed due through magical or engineering chicanery)

Feats: As base Creature (these are performed due through magical or engineering chicanery)

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground
Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Any

Advancement: If Artifice (see below) then by class, otherwise none.

Base Technological Rating: 15

Adamantine

Hit Dice: Increase to d12

Speed: Ground movement is reduced to 50% of the base creature's, flight and swimming allowed by enchantment only, usually at 25% the base creature's rate.

AC: gains +6 natural, DR 10/+1

Attacks: Same as Base Creature

Damage: +3 to hand to hand damage, but not missile nor magical attacks

Special Attacks: None unless additional enchantments are introduced during creation

Special Qualities:

Construct -A construct is immune to mind-influencing effects and to poison, sleep,

paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. Constructs cannot heal damage on their own, though they can be healed. Constructs can be repaired in the same way an object can. A construct with the regeneration and fast healing special qualities still benefits from those qualities.

A construct is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). A construct is not at risk of death from massive damage, but when reduced to 0 hit points or less, it is immediately destroyed. Since it was never alive, a construct cannot be raised or resurrected.

Magical Qualities - Many Constructs have enchantments laid upon them granting them special magical abilities. These vary greatly from individual to individual.

Saves: Fort +2; Ref +1; Will -4

Abilities:

- Str +3 to Base Creature
- Dex -- to Base Creature
- Con +2 to Base Creature
- Int 0
- Wis 0
- Chr 0

Skills: As base Creature (these are performed due through magical or engineering chicanery)

Feats: As base Creature (these are performed due through magical or engineering chicanery)

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground
Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Any

Advancement: If Artifice (see below) then by class, otherwise none.

Base Technological Rating: 18

Artifices

One final entry is for rare entities, Artifices. Artifices are those Artifacts or Constructs that have achieved sentience beyond simply

Class	Cost per level	Class	Cost per Level
Fighter	1R	Heretic (Sorcerer)	3 Various
Paladin	2R 1O	Cleric	2O
Ranger	2R 1E	Bard	1E 2O
Barbarian	3R	Wizard	2 Various
Rogue	1R 1T	Card Carrier	4 Any
Monk	1R 2O	Merchant	2 Any
Druid	3E	Sage	2O
Ability 18+	1 Any per +		

programmed or enchanted abilities. Most often these are “Golems”, artificial creatures that generally resemble humanoid races. If there is an art to creating Artifices, it is long lost. Many grow gradually aware, leading some sages to speculate that given enough time most complex Artifacts or constructs could develop personalities and eventually “live”. It is believed that even the Old Ones could not intentionally create Artifices. The Base Technological Rating of an Artifice is believed to begin at 20, regardless of the material it is constructed from.

Creatures

“Creatures” is the term that refers to just about anything brought to the Card Carrier by The Call. This includes living, non-living, undead, sentient, non-sentient, organic, inorganic, and almost any other form of “being”. The Creatures used by Card Carriers are many and varied, and they can come from a thousand thousand worlds. Regardless of the nature of the Creature Called, all Creatures are considered as an “Outsider” for those non-Mystic Power spells that normally affect such beings. (Hence Protection spells, Diminish, and the like affect *all* Creatures Called.)

Each Creature Called drains Mystic Power from the Card Carrier’s MPR. Each Creature has its own combination of colored Mystic Power necessary to Call it. Most Creatures have a single color of Mystic Power, which is required (or is the highest component) to Call the Creature. Creatures are often referred to in terms of this color Mystic Power (for example Sylphs, almost always require Opal Mystic Power to be Called. Sylphs are referred to as Opal Creatures.)

Many Creatures Called have special abilities, natural or supernatural, which make those Creatures more powerful, more versatile, or otherwise more desirable to the Card Carrier. In most cases, such special or unique properties also demand additional Mystic Power be paid to their Call. In short, more powerful Creatures = more Mystic Power cost.

Invoking the Call

Calling a Creature equals one action. The Creature Called acts as though stunned for the first combat round after it is Called. This is called *Summoning Shock*, and affects (almost) all Called Creatures. During the round of

Summoning Shock the Creature can defend itself (though it is flat-footed) but cannot attack or engage in spell casting. Note that the effects of The Call surround the Creature for that first round, and only spells directly affecting that Creature’s summoning or are designed to operate during the act of The Call itself can affect the Creature (essentially, the Creature is immune to magical effect until it has fully “arrived”).

Creatures that are Called remain for 1 minute per level of Card Carrier. They can be dismissed by the Card Carrier before this duration expires. If the Card Carrier wishes to extend the duration of a particular Creature they may do so by paying the cost of the Creature again, plus 1 Mystic Power of any color *per level of caster*. Hence, a 5th level Card Carrier who wishes to extend a 5 Mystic Power Sapphire Creature would have to pay the Creature’s cost (5 Sapphire) plus 5 Mystic Power of any color for an additional 5 minutes duration. Creatures can also be dismissed through use of spells, artifacts, or another Creature’s special ability.

A Called Creature’s hit points represent the energies that allow them to stay on Cardacia. Once these are depleted (brought to 0 before the Call’s duration is expired) the Creature returns to their plane of origin. Remember Wound Points represent the Creature’s true physical form – loss of these represents “true” damage, and to be reduced to zero WPs causes a true & permanent death (that *particular* Creature may never be Called again).

Among Card Carriers, Creatures which have been dismissed or reduced to 0 hps are often (jokingly) referred to as being “discarded”, and Creature’s which suffer permanent death are said to be “sent to the graveyard”. These phrases refer to an ancient code of Card Carrier conduct and Calling, and are kept as an amusing nod to the Card Carriers’ roots.

Creatures can be Called in multiples. All such Creatures Called must have one of two things in common: Color or Type. Thus, 2 Ruby Creatures (of any type) could be Called, or 2 Sylphs (even if their Mystic Power cost (color) varied). This is referred to as the Rule of Commonality. The maximum number of Creatures that may be Called together depends on the Creatures Called and the Card Carrier’s level. A Card Carrier may Call any number of Creatures together that follow the “commonality” restriction as long as their total

Mystic Power cost does not exceed the Card Carriers level +3. A 5th level Card Carrier, for example, could bring in 2 Sylphs of 4 Mystic Power cost each, or 3 Ruby Creatures of Mystic Power cost 5, 2, and 1 respectively. Note that all other rules and restrictions to Creatures apply, such as summoning shock, duration, extending duration, etc. Costs or rules such as duration treat the multiple Creatures as one for cost. Even if a Creature from a group is lost, the Card Carrier would have to pay against the full group cost to affect the remainder. The entirety of the “group” is treated as one Creature for most game mechanics.

Creatures Called are often themselves beings of some power, and many carry their own Mystic Power (which can be used by the Creature or by the Card Carrier who Called it), some can cast spells (usually using standard D20 classes & game mechanics), and some can Call upon other Creatures (this is most often a natural ability, often uncoupled from the ability to store Mystic Power. Such Creatures require the Card Carrier to supply Mystic Power in order to “activate” this ability). Abilities such as a MPR or The Call are most often natural abilities, and increase the cost of that Creature. Spell use is normally reflected through class levels. Creatures’ special quality types – Extraordinary, Supernatural, and Spell Like also apply, and often create (or are a part of) higher cost Creatures.

Creature Types and Classes

Card Carriers must choose general Types of Creatures from which they can choose the specific Creatures that will answer their Call. Appendix 1 lists some of the more common classifications of Creature Types to be found.

Creatures with Classes:

Most Creatures which also have a class are accessed both the Mystic Power cost of the base Creature and a cost for the class’s abilities. Humans, as the baseline race, cost no points except for the individual class unless they also possess exceptional ability scores (13+ ability, skill, etc).

Creatures that have classes (including most Humanoid and Demi-human races) pay an additional cost for additional classes and their level. These costs are:

Creature Abilities

Many of the Creatures Called has abilities that are Extraordinary, Supernatural, or Spell Like in nature. Listings in the DMG and Monster

Manual cover the majority of these, and the DM is encouraged to assign appropriate Mystic Power costs to cover Creatures not listed here.

Special Quality/ Ability	Suggested Mystic Power Cost
Ability score loss	3 Topaz
Antimagic	2 Topaz, 1 Sapphire
Blindsight	1 Emerald
Breath weapon	Varies, 3 to 6 points by color
Charm compulsion	2 Sapphire
Cold	2 Sapphire
Constrict	1 Emerald
Damage reduction	2 Opal per point
Darkvision	1 Topaz
Death attacks	5 or more Topaz
Disease	2 Topaz
Energy drain	5 Topaz
Etherealness	3 Sapphire
Evasion	1 Opal
Improved evasion	3 Opal
Fast healing	2 Opal, 1 Emerald
Fear	1 Topaz
Fire	2 Ruby
Frightful presence	2 Topaz
Gaseous form	2 Sapphire
Gaze attacks	1 Topaz plus 2 points by color
Improved grab	2 Ruby
Incorporeality	2 Sapphire, 2 Opal
Invisibility	3 Sapphire
Low-light vision	1 Emerald
Paralysis hold	2 Emerald, 1 Topaz
Poison	3 Topaz
Polymorph	3 Sapphire
Rays	3 Sapphire
Regeneration	5 Emerald
Resistance to energy	5 Opal
Scent	1 Emerald
Sonic attacks	2 Sapphire
Spells	Varies, Sapphire
Spell resistance (SR)	3 Opal per point
Swallow whole	3 Emerald
Trample	3 Ruby
Tremorsense	2 Emerald
Turn resistance	2 Topaz, 2 Opal

Most Supernatural or Spell like abilities are based on d20 rules rather than Cardacia's Mystic Power system, making the use of these magics Heretical. As most such Creatures which wield these powers are seen as little more than beasts or inferiors this is generally overlooked, but can cause some consternation if the Creature is sentient, and stays longer than a few moments (or becomes a Dedicated Creature). Most Creatures of intelligence bristle at the notion that their magic is "substandard".

Many Creatures have abilities or feats which are new or need to be modified for the CCG d20 setting. A listing of existing abilities is given here with suggested costs. Common new and modified abilities are listed below, with suggested Mystic Power cost.

Some special abilities are only activated if the Card Carrier pays an additional cost when Calling the Creature. Such abilities have the cost described within the abilities or Creature text. Such abilities are referred to as "Enhancers". Enhancer abilities are most often noted in Creature descriptions with a (En) after the ability to indicate an additional fee must be paid. If the summoner cannot or does not wish to pay the Enhancer, the Creature arrives without access to that ability.

Advanced Flight (Ex) – Grants flying Creatures additional abilities

Benefit: Flying Creatures gain the ability to fly at extraordinary speed, to lower its AC through aerial maneuvers, or to improve its maneuver class. Each time the Mystic Power cost is paid, the Creature can increase its base speed by 50% of normal, better its maneuverability class by one step, or gain a +2 move bonus to its AC.

Normal: Creatures which can fly gain listed speed and maneuverability class.

Mystic Power Cost: 2 Opal per bonus, can stack (be paid) 3 times.

Battle Aura (Su) - Creature's aura induces bonus to attacks

Benefit: The Creature has a natural aura, charisma, or other ability which induces those around it to perform attacks with more effectiveness. This is reflected in a morale bonus of +1 to +3 to attack and damage rolls for allied Creatures or individuals within 20 feet of the Creature.

Mystic Power Cost: 2 Ruby plus 1 Ruby per bonus point.

Haste (Ex) – Allows Creature to act on round it's Called

Benefit: The Creature may take a partial action on the round it's Called. The following round it rolls initiative as normal and joins the combat.

Normal: Creatures Called are normally *stunned* for one round after being Called.

Mystic Power Cost: 2 Opal

Mystic Power Alteration (Sp) – Creature can convert Mystic Power's color

Benefit: Mystic Power stored in the Card Carrier's MPR can be converted on a one to one basis for Mystic Power of a different color. Most often, the "output" color is always the same (i.e. put in 2 Ruby & 1 Opal, get out 3 Sapphire).

Mystic Power Cost: 2 Sapphire

Mystic Power Damper (Su) – Creature's presence deadens Mystic Power

Benefit: The Creature radiates a constant aura that deadens Mystic Power nearby. No spells will from any artifacts functions, no Creatures may be Called within 20 feet of the Creature. Called Creatures do not disappear if they enter this area, but magical abilities cease to function. Creatures with this ability are rarely Called intentionally, normally being a mishap of the Call.

Mystic Power Cost: No standard

Mystic Power Enhancer (Su) – Creature's presence increases Mystic Power's potency

Benefit: The Creature causes all Mystic Power to increase within 20 feet. For the duration of the Creatures presence, the Card Carriers (any Card Carriers) MPR increases by 50% (of current amount, **not** total points unless untapped).

Mystic Power Cost: 3 Sapphire

Mystic Power Suppressor (Su) – Creature's presence suppresses Mystic Power in area

Benefit: The Creature causes all Mystic Power to decrease within 20 feet. For the duration of the Creatures presence, the Card Carriers (any Card Carriers) MPR decreases by 50% (of current amount, **not** total points unless untapped).

Mystic Power Cost: 1 Sapphire 1 Topaz

Mystic Power Reserve (Su) – The Creature carries with it a strong magical aura, from which Mystic Power can be Drawn.

Benefit: The Creature's natural aura is strong enough that the Card Carrier can tap it for Mystic Power energy. Most Creatures

have an associated Mystic Power type, and cannot change their Mystic Power color. Most naturally occurring MPRs regenerate at a rate of 1 point per 4 hours, or entirely within 24 hours if left untapped for that period. Tapping a Creature's Mystic Power takes a partial action. This ability has never been known to be coupled with The Call in any race save Cardacia Humans.

Normal: Most Creatures do not generate a Mystic Power laden aura.

Mystic Power Cost: 1 point for every 2 in the Creature's Reserve.

Protective Aura (Su) – Presence of the Creature adds to AC of Card Carrier

Benefit: The Creature radiates a protective field that adds a +2 deflection bonus to the armor class of the Card Carrier.

Mystic Power Cost: 3 Opal

The Call (Su) – The Creature has an innate ability to Call others of its kind, or associated Creatures.

Benefit: The Creature can Call other Creatures as specified in its descriptive text. These Creatures can be others of its kind, or Creatures associated with the Called Creature. Having the ability to Call is useless without a MPR; hence many Creatures with this ability cannot invoke it without direct aid (in the form of Mystic Power points) from the Card Carrier. This ability has never been known to be coupled with MPR in any race save Cardacia Humans.

Normal: Most Called Creatures cannot Call others.

Mystic Power Cost: 3 of any color, plus cost to Call second Creature.

Costs for calling Creatures

As explained at the beginning of this section, every Creature has a cost to Call. To calculate this cost, the GM may refer to the following table.

Explanation of Chart Columns

Type: The Creature Type of the Called Creature.

Hit Die: The Hit Dice of the Called Creature

Attack Bonus: The Attack Bonus gained by the Called Creature by Hit Dice.

Good Save: Which save does the Called Creature have the most advantage in?

Skill Points per Hit Die: How many skills points does the Called Creature gain per HD?

Feats per extra HD: How many Feats does the Called Creature gain per extra HD above normal?

Commonly Associated Mystic Power: The color Mystic Power most closely associated with the Creature Type listed. Note that the abilities or special powers for individual creatures may cause different colors to be used or added onto the cost of the Called Creature.

General Cost per HD/CR: The number and color of required Mystic Power points to Call this Creature. The number is based primarily on HD, though a much higher or lower CR may factor cost as well. Finally, GM interpretation plays a large part in the final number and color choices for a given creature. Note that the abilities or special powers for individual creatures may cause different colors and costs to be used or added onto the final cost of the Called Creature.

Special Qualities: Does this Type of Called Creature normally possess Supernatural, Extraordinary, or Spell-like abilities?

General nature: A very brief description of the Creature Type.

For those GMs who wish to incorporate some d20 favorites into their game, I have included the following chart which shows my costs for summoning some of the "top 100" d20 baddies (and a few goodies just for show).

The opportunities for role-play in the world of Cardacia are many, and I have had a great time designing and play testing these rules. Just remember that much of the rules here were designed to be guidelines to help you convert you own favorite CCG into an RPG. I have tried to keep it generic enough that with a minimum of "tweaking" a game master could use the system for spiky-headed artifact wearing kids with cards, baseball cap wearing kids with electronic gizmos, wizards who don't use cards at all, or spiky-headed-when-they're-not-wearing-their-baseball-caps-wizard-kids-with-electronic-gizmo-cards. The choice, as they say, is licensed... err, yours. Enjoy!

Type	Hit Die	Attack Bonus	Good Save	Skill Points per Hit Die	Feats per extra HD	Commonly Associated Mystic Power	General Cost per HD/CR	Special Qualities?	General nature
Aberration	d8	HD x 3/4	Will	+2	1 per 4	Topaz	3	Always	Misshapen anomalies of nature
Animal	d8	HD x 1/2	Fort / Ref	+1	1 per 6	Emerald	1	Never	Any natural mammalian Creature of the wild
Artifact	d10	HD x 1/2	Fort	+2	1 per 4	Sapphire	3	Usually	A magically created and maintained Creature
Beast	d10	HD x 1/2	Fort / Ref	+1	1 per 5	Emerald/Sapphire	2	Usually	Any class of natural Creature with extraordinary or magical abilities
Birds	d6	HD x 1/4	Ref	+1	1 per 6	Sapphire	1	Never	Any natural Creature of the Air
Construct	d12	HD x 1/2	Fort	+2	1 per 4	Topaz	3	Usually	An artifice, created, or synthetic being
Demi-Human (Dwarf)	d8	HD x 3/4	Fort	+3	1 per 4	Ruby	2	Sometimes	Diminutive warrior race, renown craftsmen
Demi-Human (Elf)	d8	HD x 3/4	Ref	+4	1 per 4	Emerald	2	Sometimes	Fey residents of the woodlands, fierce scouts and fighters
Demi-Human (Gnome)	d6	HD x 1/2	Fort	+4	1 per 4	Emerald	2	Sometimes	A small race, of woodland defenders
Demi-Human (Halfling)	d6	HD x 1/2	Fort	+4	1 per 4	Opal	2	Sometimes	A small race, known for stealth and mercantile
Demi-Human (Merman)	d8	HD x 3/4	Will	+3	1 per 3	Sapphire	2	Usually	An aquatic race of Fishmen
Demon/Devil	d12	HD x 1	Will	+4	1 per 3	Topaz	3	Always	The recognized, traditional races of "Evil"
Dragon	d20	HD x 1	Will	+4	1 per 2	Varies by Dragon	6	Always	The great Dracos, champions of Mystic Power
Elemental	d12	HD x 3/4	Fort	+2	1 per 4	By Element	3	Always	A Creature comprised of, or living in, a "pure" element plane
Fey	d6	HD x 1/2	Fort	+4	1 per 4	Sapphire	1	Always	Mythological mystic creatures of the woodlands
Fish	d6	HD x 1/4	Ref	+1	1 per 6	Sapphire	1	Never	Any natural non-mammalian Creature of the sea
Giant	d10	HD x 3/4	Fort	+1	1 per 4	Ruby	3	Rarely	Any number of exceptionally large humanoids
Human	by class	HD x 3/4	by class	by class	by class	Special	by class	Sometimes	Base line race
Humanoid (Gnoll)	d8	HD x 3/4	Fort	+2	1 per 4	Ruby	2	Rarely	Elite hybrid Beastmen warriors
Humanoid (Goblin)	d6	HD x 1/2	Fort	+1	1 per 5	Ruby	1	Rarely	Short & numerous, war like race
Humanoid (Kobold)	d4	HD x 1/4	Ref	+1	1 per 5	Topaz/Sapphire	1	Rarely	Stealthy and occasionally magical scavengers
Humanoid (Monstrous)	d8	HD x 1	Will/Ref	+2	1 per 4	Ruby/Topaz	2	Rarely	Most often war like and combative, humanoids with "more then human" features
Humanoid (Orc)	d8	HD x 3/4	Fort	+3	1 per 3	Topaz	2	Rarely	Brutish and cruel barbarian race
Insects	d6	HD x 1/4	Ref	+1	1 per 6	Topaz	1	Never	Any distinct insect, arachnid, or similar Creature
Ooze	d10	HD x 3/4	N/a	N/a	Blindsight	Topaz	1	Sometimes	Any one of a number of mindless colony creatures
Plant	d8	HD x 3/4	Fort	N/a	N/a	Emerald	1	Sometimes	Creatures or Beings composed of plant material
Reptiles	d6	HD x 1/2	Fort / Ref	+1	1 per 6	Emerald	1	Never	Any reptilian, amphibious, or related Creature
Shapechanger	d8	HDx3/4	All	+1	1 per 4	Sapphire	2	Always	Beings who can transform their own shape
Sylphs	d12	HD x 3/4	Will	+4	1 per 3	Opal	3	Always	Winged humanoids of righteousness
Spirits	d6	HD x 1/2	Will	+3	1 per 3	Topaz	3	Usually	Disembodied souls of once living beings
Undead, Greater	d10	HD x 3/4	Will	+3	1 per 3	Topaz	3	Usually	Intelligent, Sentient undead Creatures
Undead, Lesser	d8	HD x 1/2	Fort	+1	1 per 5	Topaz	2	Sometimes	Skeletons, Zombies, mindless or controlled undead Creatures
Vermin	d4	HD x 1/4	Ref	+1	1 per 6	Topaz	1	Never	Rodents, swarming insects, and other "common" natural Creatures

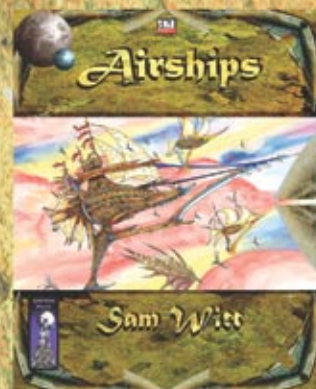
Monster	Type	Mystic Power Cost	CR	HD
Aboleth	Aberration	9 Topaz, 7 Sapphire,	7	8d8+40
Ankheg	Beast	5 Emerald, 1 Ruby	3	3d10+9
Basilisk	Beast	5 Emerald, 7 Sapphire	5	6d10+12
Blink Dog	Beast	5 Sapphire, 3 Emerald	2	4d10
Bugbear	Humanoid (Goblin)	3 Ruby	2	3d8+3
Bulette	Beast	13 Emerald, 3 Ruby, 2 Sapphire	7	9d10+45
Cel., Astral Deva	Sylph	24 Opal, 6 Sapphire, 6 Ruby	14	12d8+48
Cel., Hound Arch.	Sylph	12 Opal, 3 Ruby, 3 Sapphire	4	6d8+6
Cel., Lantern Arch.	Sylph	2 Opal, 1 Ruby	2	1d8
Centaur	Humanoid (Monstrous)	10 Ruby, 2 Emerald	3	4d8+8
Demon, Bebilith	Demon/Devil	30 Topaz, 3 Ruby, 3 Sapphire	9	12d8+48
Demon, Vrock	Demon/Devil	20 Topaz, 3 Ruby, 1 Sapphire	13	8d8+24
Devil, Imp	Demon/Devil	8 Topaz, 1 Sapphire	2	3d8
Devil, Osyluth	Demon/Devil	12 Topaz, 3 Ruby	6	5d8+10
Dire Badger	Animal	2 Emerald, 1 Ruby	2	3d8+12
Dire Bear	Animal	10 Emerald, 2 Ruby	7	12d8+48
Dire Rat	Animal	1 Emerald	-2	1d8+1
Dire Wolf	Animal	6 Emerald	3	6d8+18
Doppelganger	Shapechanger	8 Sapphire	3	4d8+4
Drag., Topaz, YA	Dragon	30 Topaz, 10 Ruby, 8 Sapphire	8	16d12+48
Drag., Sapphire, YA	Dragon	30 Sapphire, 12 Topaz, 8 Ruby	10	18d12+72
Drag., Brass, YA	Dragon	20 Ruby, 15 Opal, 6 Sapphire, 4 Emerald	9	16d12+48
Drag., Bronze, YA	Dragon	15 Ruby, 20 Opal, 10 Sapphire	11	18d12+72
Drag., Copper, YA	Dragon	35 Ruby, 10 Opal, 10 Sapphire, 5 Emerald	10	17d12+51
Drag., Gold, YA	Dragon	50 Opal, 10 Ruby, 20 Sapphire	13	20d12+100
Drag., Emerald, YA	Dragon	30 Emerald, 20 Topaz, 10 Ruby	10	17d12+68
Drag., Ruby, YA	Dragon	40 Topaz, 30 Ruby, 10 Sapphire	12	19d12+95
Drag., Silver, YA	Dragon	40 Opal, 25 Sapphire, 7 Ruby	12	19d12+76
Drag., Opal, YA	Dragon	20 Topaz, 10 Ruby, 10 Sapphire, 2 Opal	7	15d12+45
Drider	Aberration	15 Topaz, 3 Ruby	7	6d8+18
Dwarf	Demi-Human (Dwarf)	2 Ruby	-1	1d8+1
Elem, Air, Med.	Elemental	9 Sapphire	3	4d8+8
Elem, Earth, Med.	Elemental	9 Topaz	3	4d8+12
Elem, Fire, Med.	Elemental	9 Ruby	3	4d8+8
Elem, Water, Med.	Elemental	9 Sapphire	3	4d8+12
Elf	Demi-Human (Elf)	2 Emerald	-1	1d8-1
Ettin	Giant	18 Ruby, 2 Topaz	5	10d8+20
Fungus, Shrieker	Plant	2 Emerald	1	2d8+2
Gargoyle	Beast	5 Emerald, 2 Sapphire, 1 Ruby	4	4d10+16
Genie, Djinni	Elemental	18 Sapphire, 3 Opal	5	7d8+14
Genie, Efreeti	Elemental	24 Ruby, 6 Topaz	8	10d8+20
Giant Bee	Vermin	3 Topaz	-1	3d8
Giant Beetle, Stag	Vermin	6 Topaz, 1 Ruby	4	7d8+21
Giant Owl	Beast	4 Emerald	3	4d10+4
Giant, Frost	Giant	30 Ruby, 6 Opal	9	14d8+70

Giant, Hill	Giant	36 Ruby	7	12d8+48
Gnome	Demi-Human (Gnome)	2 Emerald	-1	1d8+1
Goblin	Humanoid (Goblin)	1 Ruby	-2	1d8
Golem, Clay	Artifact	20 Sapphire, 10 Ruby, 3 Emerald	10	11d10
Griffon	Beast	8 Sapphire, 4 Emerald	4	7d10+21
Halfling	Demi-Human (Halfling)	2 Opal	-1	1d8
Harpy	Humanoid (Monstrous)	10 Topaz, 4 Ruby	4	7d8
Hell Hound	Elemental	12 Ruby	3	4d8+4
Hobgoblin	Humanoid (Goblin)	2 Ruby	-1	1d8+1
Hydra (5 heads)	Beast	10 Emerald	4	5d10+25
Invisible Stalker	Elemental	20 Sapphire, 4 Topaz	7	8d8+16
Kobold	Humanoid (Kobold)	1 Topaz	-4	1/2 d8
Lammasu	Beast	10 Emerald, 2 Sapphire, 2 Topaz	8	7d10+21
Lizardfolk	Humanoid (Monstrous)	2 Ruby, 2 Sapphire	1	2d8+2
M Centipede, Huge	Vermin	4 Topaz	2	4d8
M Scorpion, Med.	Vermin	2 Topaz	1	2d8+4
Manticore	Beast	10 Emerald, 2 Sapphire	5	6d10+24
Medusa	Humanoid (Monstrous)	10 Topaz, 2 Ruby	7	6d8 +6
Mephit, Air	Elemental	9 Opal	3	3d8
Mephit, Earth	Elemental	9 Topaz	3	3d8+3
Mephit, Fire	Elemental	9 Ruby	3	3d8
Mephit, Water	Elemental	9 Sapphire	3	3d8+3
Naga, Guardian	Aberration	11 Topaz, 11 Sapphire, 11 Ruby	10	11d8+44
Ogre	Giant	10 Ruby, 2 Topaz	2	4d8+8
Ooze, Topaz Pud.	Ooze	10 Topaz	7	10d10+60
Orc	Humanoid (Orc)	2 Topaz	-1	1d8
Owlbear	Beast	10 Emerald	4	5d10+20
Pegasus	Beast	4 Emerald, 4 Sapphire	3	4d10+12
Phase Spider	Beast	2 Emerald, 8 Sapphire	5	5d10+15
Purple Worm	Beast	20 Emerald, 12 Sapphire	12	16d10+112
Rakshasa	Demon/Devil	18 Topaz, 3 Sapphire	9	7d8+21
Rust Monster	Aberration	10 Topaz, 3 Emerald, 2 Sapphire	3	5d8+5
Sahuagin	Demi-Human (Merman)	3 Sapphire, 1 Topaz	2	2d8+2
Satyr	Fey	4 Emerald, 1 Sapphire	2	5d6+5
Shadow	Undead	9 Topaz	3	3d12
Shambling Mound	Plant	8 Emerald	6	8d8+24
Skeleton, Medium	Undead	2 Topaz	-2	1d12
Stirge	Beast	2 Emerald	-1	1d10
Tarrasque	Beast	50 Sapphire, 30 Emerald, 20 Ruby, 20 Topaz, 10 Opal	20	48d10+576
Treant	Plant	8 Emerald	8	7d8+35
Troll	Giant	16 Ruby, 2 Sapphire	5	6d8+36
Unicorn	Beast	6 Sapphire, 2 Opal	3	4d10+20
Wererat	Shapechanger	2 Sapphire, 1 Topaz	2	1d8+1
Weretiger	Shapechanger	12 Sapphire	5	6d8+18
Will-o'-wisp	Aberration	15 Topaz, 6 Sapphire, 6 Emerald	6	9d8
Winter Wolf	Beast	4 Emerald, 8 Sapphire	5	6d10+18
Wraith	Undead	15 Topaz	5	5d12
Xorn, Average	Elemental	21 Topaz	6	7d8+14
Zombie, Medium	Undead	4 Topaz	-1	2d12+3



NEW FROM BASTION PRESS

Airships provides all the rules necessary to bring flying ships into any campaign setting. Construction rules, combat, aerial and 3D movement, and other essential information is all covered. Also included are deck plans and specifications for a number of ships. Airships will bring new heroes to the fore when a village under siege cries "Look! Up in the sky!"



BAS-1009; March



This 96-page supplement provides new rules and a new understanding of fey monsters as well as many new faeries for your d20 games. Players can learn more skills, spells, magical artifacts, and secrets from the fey, including how to play fey PCs. Meet new monsters and fey legends that cross many worlds and cultures, from Old Man Winter to the Lady of the Lake. Best of all, the world of Faerie, a world as close as a dream and as magical as its denizens, comes alive with its legends and lore for the Game Masters and can easily be linked to all d20 worlds.

BAS-1010; April

Friends & Familiars is a great book for players and GMs alike. Give your heroes sidekicks, cohorts, unique animal companions, or rare familiars with this collection of characters and critters. Whether you need a helpful character to fill out an incomplete gathering of adventurers, or simply a quick and easy familiar with a unique personality and history all its own, this book is sure to come in handy.



BAS-5001; May

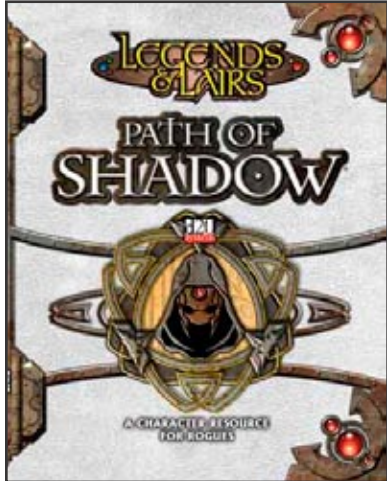


Reviews From The Critic's Corner

Each issue of *d20Zine!* brings new product reviews from the staff at the **d20 Magazine Rack**. This issue is no different as we take a look at products from Bastion Press, Fantasy Flight Games, Green Ronin, Mongoose, and Wizards of the Coast.

Path of Shadow Review

By Steven Creech



Sizing Up the Target

Path of Shadow is the third offering in the *Legends & Lairs Path* series by [Fantasy Flight Games](#). The writing/design team is large and consists of Mark Chance, David Chart, David Lyons, Michelle Lyons, James Maliszewski, Mike Mearls, Rick Neal and Brian Patterson. Interior artwork is by Mitch Cotie, David Griffith, Eric Lofgren, Hian Rodriguez, and Tyler Walpole. This 176-page hardcover carries a retail price of \$24.95.

First Blood

Path of Shadows is a resource book for rogues. It is filled with new prestige classes, legendary classes, variant core classes, new equipment, weapons, magic items, feats, and organizations. Prestige classes include the Acolyte of Chance, a combination rogue and “sort-of” cleric. The Aerialist is an expert in aerial acrobatics (tightrope walking, trapeze artistry, etc.). Ebon Links track down and steal magical devices and spells. A Falconer serves as courier, messenger and when needed, smuggler.

Halfling Clanwardens are protectors of halfling villages, using their stealth and guile to compensate for their size. They serve as a kind of “nightwatch”. A Myste specializes in

using magical devices to supplement his own abilities. Night Hunters are hunters of evil lycanthropes and eventually become immune to their curse. (*I really like this prestige class – very cool!*)

The Noble Decoy acts as a guard for those who fear assassination. An Ossorus serves as an avenger in a holy order of spies. Packrats are obsessive collectors of everything and always carry more than they need. A Psychic Interloper develops psionic powers that make him a more effective rogue. The Queen’s Coronet is a master spy sworn to serve crown and country.

Questioners represent the ultimate detective, solving mysteries and punishing criminals who would otherwise get away. The Royal Assassin acts as an agent for good kingdoms, eliminating evil threats. A Sail Master is an expert sailor and welcome on any ship. Shadow Hunters seek out and destroy agents of evil and their creations. The Unblinking Eye is the consummate spy, able to blend in anywhere. A White Rose is a master of the blade and will use it against the enemies of her people. Finally, Windriders are desert dwellers who represent the concept of “survival of the fittest”.

As in previous *Path* books, each prestige class is accomplished by an organization that suits that particular class. Their purpose, leader and current activities are all addressed. Also included are notes for integrating the organization into your campaign.

Legendary classes also get there due here. This section is what defines and sets apart FFG’s *Path* books from all other character builder books. The Abyssal Infiltrator is truly an evil force, hating all things good and gaining abilities like Deadly Precision and Unseen Assassin. A Blood Thief is a kind of grim shaman with abilities like Sense Blood and Steal Blood. A Fortune’s Fool is incredibly lucky, gaining powers such as Lucky Shot and Insight of the Fool. Grey Hands are perhaps quintessential assassins. Their death dealing qualities are reflected in abilities like Murderous and Shadow of Death. The Hand of the Reaper is a true professional assassin, dispensing death with no emotion or compassion and gaining powers like Master of Deception and Reaper’s Touch.

Incantors don’t bother with stealing gold or jewels, they pluck arcane and divine magic from the very air as it is put into play by the

caster. They possess abilities such as High Arcane Knowledge and Steal Magic. A Jack-of-Knives is a master of the knife with powers like Deadly Speed and Crippling Accuracy. A Jack O’ the Green is a hero to the oppressed. Much like *Robin Hood*, he rises up against tyrannical rule to free the peasants. His Merry Band and Wilderness Expert abilities are but a sample of what he can do.

A Master Burglar doesn’t go for petty theft but rather view priceless art objects, magical artifacts and religious relics as worthy of her attentions. She gains abilities like Blood of the Spider and Bane of Locked Doors. A Queen of Shadows takes the shadowdancer class to new levels. She uses powers like Darkvision, Powered by Shadow and Shadow Sentinels to command the darkness but yet respect the light. Rogue Princes represent the axiom “honor among thieves” and gain the respect of all rogues. They possess abilities like Center of Balance and Platinum Tongue. A Savant is a diviner of secrets, reading people’s thoughts by their body language, words and actions. He has abilities like Discerning and Voice of Reason. The Silver-Tongued Devil survives more by wit and words than weapon. His powers include Inscrutable and Prodigious Charm.

Variant core classes are another mainstay to the *Path* books and this one is no different with four new options. The Chameleon is a master of disguise and subterfuge, deceiving many with ease. The Con Artist is much like its stereotype with powers such as *fascinate* and *inspire competence*. Delvers are researchers and explorers, traveling to remote areas for hidden treasures. The Psychic Thief uses his psionic abilities for stealth, deception and thievery.

Chapter four is a compilation of new game material “crunchies” for the rogue classes. New equipment and tools kick things off followed by new weapons and magic items. New uses for existing skills cover Decipher Script, Disguise, Gather Information, Use Magic Device, and Use Rope. Thirteen new feats round out the chapter. There are several really useful feats listed, including Hamstring, Quick Death Attack and Stealth Mastery.

Chapter five addresses schools and organizations. There are eight distinct schools where a rogue may train and ten organizations that he may join (if he has what it takes). All

of these are well detailed and may be dropped into a campaign with little work.

Critical Hits

The diversity of options in this book really stands out. The classes offer more flavor than just being “a better thief.” Some of the prestige classes are better suited for NPCs but are still playable in primarily urban campaigns. The amount of open content is a positive note with clear designation of what’s open at the beginning of each chapter.

Critical Misses

Game balance is more of an issue with this particular book than the other three. Several prestige classes have abilities that are just crossing the line on overpowered. GMs will want to monitor things closely. The only other complaint is the wafer-thin table of contents. It would have been nice to see a better developed one.

Coup de Grace

Path of Shadows serves as an excellent resource for players looking to get more out of the rogues. It shows imagination and continues the precedent of quality that I’ve come to expect from Fantasy Flight Games. This book will serve both player and GM well and comes highly recommended.

The Critic’s Rating (Maximum 5 points per category):

* **Open Game Content Score: 4.0** (All game mechanics and a good share of descriptive text are open game content.)

* **d20 Compliance: 4.5**

* **Originality: 5.0**

* **Playability: 4.0**

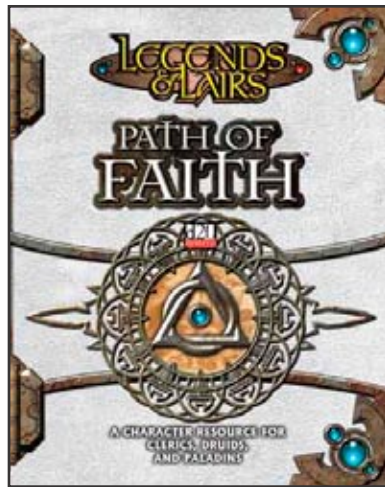
* **Value for the dollar: 5.0**

Overall Rating: 4.50

Final Grade: A

Path of Faith Review

By Steven Creech



Sizing Up the Target

Path of Faith is the fourth and final book in the *Path* series by *Fantasy Flight Games* and is written by Wil Upchurch, Shawn Cashman, Lizard, James Maliszewski, Brian Patterson and Sam Witt. Illustrations are provided by Mitch Cotie, Scott Drouin, Jesper Ejsing, David Griffith, Alex Oliver and Hian Rodriguez. The book is 176 pages in length, hardcover bound and retails for \$24.95 in price.

First Blood

Path of Faith is a resource supplement for clerics, druids and paladins. The book is filled with new prestige classes, organizations, variant core classes, legendary classes, feats and other “crunchy” tidbits.

Up first are prestige classes for the faithful. The Child of the Wood is a natural extension for druids (due to the *wild shape* prerequisite). This is probably the best “flavored” prestige class that I’ve seen for a druid yet. A Daughter of Storms can be taken by characters capable of casting 4th level divine spells (along with a few other requisites). Nothing like being able to summon a storm or use lightning against your foes, is there? Dervish are essentially holy warriors who are near unstoppable with their chosen weapon. The Exorcist is a powerful enemy to undead and extraplanar creatures, capable of banishing and trapping the extraplanar into a small vessel like a jar.

The Faith Guardian is an exceptional healer that still retains her divine spellcasting as she progresses in levels. Druids may choose to become a Hound Master and have a

relationship with a canine companion like that between a paladin and his mount. The Inquisitor is part criminal investigator and part devout follower. He uses his abilities to solve church-related crimes (*think CSI meets the Vatican*). Keepers of the Black Flame are evil individuals who follow a dark and forgotten god, holding a fragment of his power within themselves. A Priest of the Djinn believes that djinn are actually divine creatures. Because of his faith, he gains an elemental companion and other special abilities. Sin Eaters track down and destroy vile beasts that are particularly inimical to his religion. The Succedaneum endures particular hardships and punishments in return for divine favors. True Crusaders are your stereotypical knightly missionaries on a quest. The Valore must always maintain a peaceful demeanor, refuting emotions like rage, revenge and eny.

Nearly each of these prestige classes is followed by a description of an organization suitable for that class. A brief outline along with the name of the current leader is given. Current activities are addressed in detail as are the suggestions for campaign integration. Many organizations are ripe for use in any campaign setting.

Path of Faith continues the Legendary Classes tradition that gamers have lovingly embraced. First up is the Avatar. This class represents the true essence of divine perfection. Avatar abilities include such powers as Voice of Truth, Hands of Power, Divine Invulnerability, and Divine Sight. Beacons of Faith are lawful good actively fight against undead and chaotic evil opponents. Her abilities include Enhanced Wisdom, Enhanced Charisma, Divine Spellpower, and Banish Evil. The Divine Channel serves as a conduit through which his god funnels power. His abilities include Will of God, Channeled Might, Furious Vengeance, and Invoke Name. Divine Forgers are master dwarven craftsmen. Their abilities include Enhanced Wisdom, Legendary Creator, Channeling of Faith, Knowledge of Destruction, and Will of Mithral.

A Knight Lord basically represents the ultimate paladin. He stands in the path of ultimate evil and perseveres. His abilities include Enhanced Charisma, Invincible Aura, Legendary Turning, Unrivaled Grace, Divine Spell Power and Defying Death’s Embrace. The Wystic seeks out knowledge and hears

the whispers of her god. Her abilities include Enhanced Intelligence, Well of Knowledge, Power of Faith, and Secrets of Arcane Hostility. Paragons are pillars of righteousness. They exist to smite evil with prejudice. His abilities include Divine Wisdom, Armor of God, Helm of Salvation, Positive Energy Reservoir, and Wrath of God. Soultamers seek to corrupt the servants of other gods. His powers include Stunning Aura, Crushing Faith, Bind Soul, Ring of Power, and Voice of Command. The Plague destroys life and seeks to scar and wither the land. His powers are Hand of Vermin, Aura of Decay, Venomous Touch, Poison Knowledge, and Carrier of Disease. Finally, the Wild Master serves the land and its denizens. She is totally devoted to nature. Her abilities Legendary Allies, Nature's Charge, Child of the Wood, Blessing of the Goddess, and Power of Nature.

Fantasy Flight's *Path* series also provides new variant core classes. This has been another strength to the series. The Faith Caster represents a living extension of her god's will more so than the standard cleric. Faith Casters do not need to memorize/prepare their spells each day like clerics; she can select them from her list, as she needs them. The Thaumaturge is the divine equivalent of a wizard making their spells more effective than regular clerics.

Chapter two (*yes, we're only up to chapter two*) addresses tools of faith. This chapter gives us seventeen new feats and an interesting section devoted to holy symbols and making them more powerful. A new type of feat is presented, channeled energy. These feats use positive or negative energy to assist the character in accomplishing certain things. Notable ones include Fuel Spell, Harm Undead and Holy Glow. Holy symbols are divided into three basic types (normal, greater, legendary), which sets the foundation for assigning specific powers such as an energy bonus and spell-like abilities.

Cults and small gods is the subject of chapter three. Small gods are lesser beings who are capable of granting spells and abilities to the followers. There are creatures like animal totem spirits and angels. They are essentially divine versions of creatures found in the core rules (*divine kobolds, anyone?*). There are also new rules and a template for creating a divine avatar. Cults are given a good treatment that includes rules for developing your own cults.

Faith organizations get their due with chapter four. Here is information on disciplines of faith and schools that can instruct the faith-based classes in ways to further influence the world with their divine will. Each organization has a brief description about itself and master along with step-by-step lessons and the benefits they pass on. There is also a template for creating your own organization.

Chapter five looks at gifts of the divine and the effects of channeling positive or negative energy. The chapter also addresses faith ceremonies for various races. The book concludes with a treatise on improving the paladin's special mount. The mount gains certain abilities provided the paladin is willing to spend the experience points.

Critical Hits

The book does two things extremely well. First, it gives you game mechanics and information that really hasn't been covered in other products (*as in chapters 3 and 4*). Secondly, the wide range of choices with the prestige classes and variant classes offer something for everyone who plays a character with divine faith. The legendary class option is a real strength and is worth using in your campaign.

Critical Misses

Game balance may be upset due to the granted powers of a couple of prestige classes. Many of them are certainly tailored to a high-powered/high fantasy style of game. Nearly all of the new feats are slanted towards clerics and paladins. The druid doesn't get a lot of attention in this book, which is unfortunate since it is one of the more interesting classes to work with.

Coup de Grace

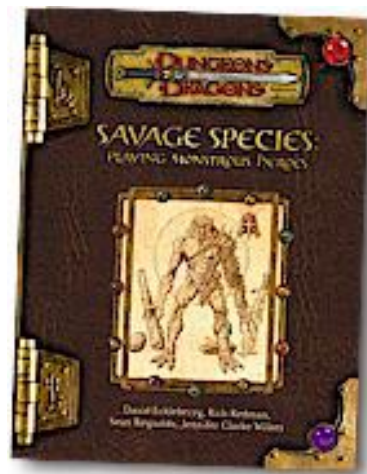
Path of Faith succeeds on many levels and outshines the other publishers' books that focus on similar topics (especially *Wizard of the Coast's Defenders of the Faith*). While you should monitor and examine the material before allowing it in your game, it does show consistent balance and thought out game mechanics. It is a good book (which is something I've come to expect from Fantasy Flight Games) that should be a part of your collection along with the other "Path of..." books.

The Critic's Rating (Maximum 5 points per category):

- * **Open Game Content Score: 4.0** (All game mechanics and a good share of descriptive text are open game content.)
- * **d20 Compliance: 4.5** (A couple of minor balance issues.)
- * **Originality: 5.0**
- * **Playability: 4.0** (Class-oriented)
- * **Value for the dollar: 5.0**
- Overall Rating: 4.50**
- Final Grade: A**

Savage Species

By John Grigsby



Sizing Up the Target

Savage Species is a hardcover release for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game from [Wizards of the Coast](#). Written by David Eckelberry, Rich Redman, and Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, it weighs in at 224 pages and retails for \$29.95. The cover is done in the style of Core Rulebook I (with a picture of a troll by Jeff Easley) with several big names contributing to the interior art (including Sam Wood).

First Blood

If you're a player of D&D3E, this is the book you've been waiting for. This is the one that will let you (with your DM's permission) play monsters as player characters. If you're a D&D3E DUNGEON MASTER™, this is the book you've been waiting for. This is the one that will make creating monstrous opponents with character class levels much easier. To put it more succinctly, if you play D&D3E, this is the book you've been waiting for.

A quick show of hands among the players out there; who hasn't, at some point, wanted to play a monstrous character (be it a troll, a pixie, a dragon, or some other "unattainable" creature)? Okay, you can put your hands down now. I'd wager that most, if not all of you, raised your hand. I know that I'm guilty of it, and so are most of my players. Obviously, given the release of *Reverse Dungeon* near the end of 2E, even the designers of D&D have given it due consideration, but it's always been so difficult to manage. Back in 2E, you were pretty much locked into a mold, so that your monster really wasn't that much different than the others in the *Monstrous Compendium*. The release of 3E made it a little better by permitting certain monsters to take character class levels, but there were still attendant problems.

Even as a DM, I've been stymied by this process. How many character levels was a troll worth? If I wanted to add two levels of rogue to my ogre, how would I handle racial skill sets (the base skills that every ogre has)? Does a troll fighter use their base attack bonus based on hit dice, or on fighter level? Even among the designers, answers differed, often wildly. There were no easy, hard-and-fast rules... until now.

Savage Species addresses all of these points, as well as a few you probably didn't anticipate, and does so in a logical and concise manner. There are two ways to handle monsters as player characters. The first assumes that you choose a race and then tack on class levels, and this is, by far, the easier of the two methods. It involves a little math and some ECLs, but generally is a lot simpler and more satisfying.

The monsters that are recommended as player characters are grouped into three categories: introductory (monsters that adapt easily, such as goblins), novice (monsters that present a moderately complex adaptation, such as the ogre mage), and advanced (those that can truly shake up a campaign, such as elementals). And there are some common sense rules about using monsters as PCs. Potential player character races should have ability scores higher than 3 (particularly Intelligence), they must not be sessile (unable to move), they should be able to communicate with fellow party members, and considerations such as size, alignment, and general disposition towards tasty humanoid

racers should also be considered. I don't know of many parties that would be comfortable having a predator race accompany them into unknown and potentially dangerous locales, and dragons, while powerful allies, tend to draw a lot of attention (not to mention that most are pretty big).

There are some much-needed clarifications in *Savage Species*, including how a monster goes from a member of its race to the status of individual, and some hints on how to approximate ECL. Designers who create their own races will find this of particular interest. It also tackles the subject of *awakened* plants and animals as player characters.

The second method of building a monster as a player character is reminiscent of the days of Basic D&D (more specifically, the *Creature Crucible* (or "PC") series). It takes the idea of player character monsters two ways; first, as characters to which you add class levels, secondly as classes unto themselves. Each monster is now considered to be a class unto itself (so minotaur is a class now). Sound confusing? It really isn't. As the monster gains levels in its monster class, it gains special abilities, hit dice, skills, and other relevant features. A 1st-level minotaur, for example (a calf?) only has the ability to gore (for 1d4 points of damage), one feat, and a +2 to natural armor. Saves and BAB are similarly reduced and it has only 1d8 for hit dice. As the minotaur gains experience, it accumulates new abilities and increases to attributes until it reaches it's maximum potential at 8th level. A monster may not take any levels in character classes until it has reached the maximum level of monster progression. Thus, our minotaur may not take a level of rogue (or any other class) until it has reached full maturity as an 8th-level character (and thus minotaurs have an ECL of +8).

If this were all there were to the book, it would still be a fine product, but there's so much more. *Savage Species* provides 68 new feats, primarily aimed at monsters, but a few are usable by more mundane characters. Player characters beware, with feats like Dust Cloud, dragons become a whole lot more dangerous (in fact, I can't think of a reason any self-respecting dragon **wouldn't** take this feat) and I'd never want to encounter a troll with the Detach feat. Two new types of feat introduced in this work are monstrous feats (which may only be taken by characters with

certain special abilities) and background feats (which are dependent on the creature's terrain/climate entry).

So now how much would you pay? Well, don't answer yet, because I haven't even gotten to the 18 pages of monstrous equipment. From the mundane to the unique to the magical, everything from weapons of varying size to weapons favored by certain races to some new (and really cool) magical items that are usable by monsters and standard player characters. There are some very inventive items found here, such as the snake chain, which allows a medusa a close-range melee attack in addition to her gaze and shortbow, or the tail club or tail spike, that tailed monsters will find attractive.

There's also a selection of new spells, most of which are interchangeable enough to suit both types of character, monstrous and mundane. And if 'standard' player characters can have prestige classes, then why can't monstrous ones? Ten new monstrous prestige classes are detailed in *Savage Species* and though several are rather race-specific (such as the slaad brooder of the illithid savant), a few are open to any monstrous race (and, with the DM's permission, even to mundane PCs).

There's a brief chapter on monster-oriented campaigns and some useful notes on advancing monsters, then 17 new templates are detailed. Some are very interesting (the insectile creature and the gelatinous creature both caught my eye), some are obvious and should have been made available long before now (such as the wraith), and some are old news (the tauric creature is a repeat from the *Monster Manual II*). Particularly enlightening and useful is the section on combining templates, which is something that I've often considered.

What if you already have a character and you'd just like to **become** a monster? If monsters are classes, then couldn't you just take up a monster class like you would any other? No, it's not quite that easy. Other than the more traditional methods of going about this change (such as getting your buddy to slap a *polymorph other* on you), you need a magical ritual to effect the transformation (the other option is to have something that spawns creatures of its own type kill you, but that's hard on the body). A few rituals to help you along this path are included.

Finally, there are some "new" creatures given (most are familiar to veterans of the

D&D game). The half-ogre is a new player character race, the desmodu, the loxo, and the thri-kreen are new monsters, and the anthropomorphic animal is a new template (although it isn't referred to as such). These last, in particular, have already proven invaluable to me in the creation of my "furry" campaign for D20 MODERN, and I'm sure that DMs with similar tastes will find them useful in the same regard. It's nice to see that the thri-kreen finally made it back into print as well.

As a whole, the rules in *Savage Species* expand D&D to the max by removing the final limitations on the game. There has always been a barrier between a character and a monster, but with the addition of this book to the rules, that blockade is eliminated, permitting characters to take that last step. Some will find this exciting, some will find it annoying, but I think there will be relatively few who have no opinion whatsoever.

The authors have done an excellent job in balancing the conversions and in making this so much more than just a book about how to play a monster as a player character. The extras offer a lot even to DMs who have no plans to permit their players to portray monstrous characters and this is definitely a book no DM should be without.

Critical Hits

All of the rules in this book appear to be designed per D&D 3.5E, the upcoming rules upgrade, and this is a good thing. I think that the changes that 3.5 will bring about will be positive and I'm looking forward to perusing the books when they come out. That new products are already supporting the new format shows that this is not a minor undertaking. Wizards obviously intends to support this in the fullest.

There's a lot of good stuff in here. The dual means of developing monstrous characters makes it easy for players who just want to play an orc barbarian to do so, while the complexity of the "monsters as a class" method permits the DM to bring lower-powered monsters into play. It makes it interesting when I can design a lair of fire giants that include adults, adolescents, and children, without having to

resort to a lot of troublesome decisions about how to handle the immature creatures. With this book, I just build the adolescents as 9th level creatures and the youths as 4th level creatures.

DMs will likely want this volume, even if they've no intent of letting their players portray monsters, to get access to the wealth of feats and new equipment described herein, not to mention the new templates, which really add a lot to existing monsters. Mummies, for example, are a staple of Egyptian-style campaigns, but it's well known that the Egyptians mummified animals as well. So imagine the looks on your player character's faces when they face not only a mummy, but its two mummified guard dogs to boot!

Critical Misses

The biggest problem I had with this book were the prestige classes. Designed to be for monstrous characters, they seemed far too restrictive. Three of the ten, the illithid savant, the slaad brooder, and the yuan-ti cultist, are race-specific. Of the remaining seven, only two do not have special requirements that limit their usefulness to a certain class of creature. The emancipated spawn, for example, must be an intelligent undead created by another undead using its create spawn ability. The siren must possess an innate, sonic, mind-affecting ability. Why not just put "harpy" on there and be done with it? The waverider is limited to aquatic sub-types and the scaled horror limited to aquatic or reptilian sub-types, so that isn't quite as limiting, but it's still a very specific type of creature that would qualify. While I believe that there should be certain prestige classes for certain types of creatures, I would also like to have seen some more general examples that nearly any creature could qualify for.

The second thing I noted was that not all creatures were developed as classes. Now, I understand that this could take the better part of a book itself, and they do give you a lot of examples and notes to handle this yourself, it still means that you're going to have to do some work yourself, and that can mean some heavy variations between DMs. If, for example, I wanted to create a lair of basilisks

containing hatchlings, I'm pretty much on my own.

Last but not least, there is no Open Game Content in this book. While this is typical of Wizards, I think that, in this instance, it might have been an error and I hope that at least basic information from this manual is added to the SRD. There's just too much potential for it not to be opened to other publishers and I'd like to see it happen.

Coup de Grace

DMs will want this book, if for no other reason that the extra goodies that it contains. There is a wealth of crunchy bits in here, including new feats, new magic, and new creatures. PCs will want this book if they can convince (or connive) their DMs to let them make use of it. In either case, I predict that it will be a high seller. Don't be fooled by its small size; this work packs a lot of good information into a confined space.

This being a Wizards of the Coast product, there is no Open Game Content and d20 Compliance is as high as can be expected. This isn't the first time that rules for playing monstrous characters have been produced for D&D (Mongoose has been doing it for some time with their *Slayers* series), it is the first time it has been addressed officially and on such a grand scale. Whether a DM or a player, you'll get your money's worth out of this one. I give it a 4.5 for playability only because some DMs will not want their players making use of it.

If they had relaxed a little on OGC and if they had been a little less exclusive with the prestige classes, I'd have gone with an A+. At it is, it's an outstanding work (perhaps the best to date since the release of 3E) and certainly worth adding to your collection.

The Critic's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)

Amount of Open Game Content: 0.0

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 4.5

Playability: 4.5

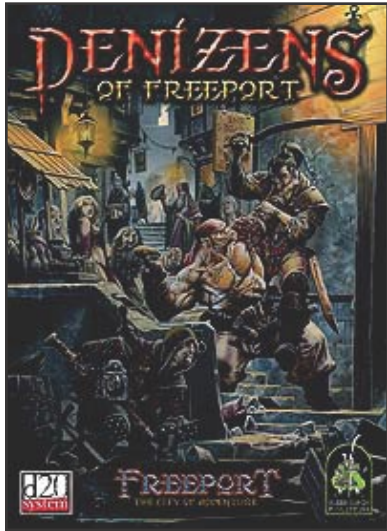
Value for the dollar: 4.5

Overall Rating: 3.70

Final Grade: A

Denizens of Freeport

By Brad Mix



Sizing Up the Target

This review is for *Denizens of Freeport*. It is published by [Green Ronin Publishing](#), is 96 pages long and retails for \$18.95. Many different people contributed to this book with the editing being done by Christopher Wilkes.

First Blood

At first look this is just another book of NPC's with the promise of with a little tinkering it can be used for any setting. It turns out that it a great resource for the City of Freeport campaign setting. All the background information is specific to that campaign. This allows the GM to tailor the information based on what a character knows. Each character starts out with the stat block information including languages, skills/feats, possessions, and background. Most of the information is well balanced and skills are appropriate for the class and level listed. I noticed that some characters had more languages than should be allowed. Like one human with eight languages know but only had a 14 INT. Most descriptions are fit to one page, which makes for easy reading and reference.

Critical Hits

Each character offers several plot hooks that could start a party of on a new adventure. I

really like this feature for game nights when everyone does not show up. Just pick an NPC for the remaining party members to meet and you can still have a productive and fun session.

Critical Misses

The first thing I noticed was this book has no index or any way to reference a certain class or occupation. If you want to find a sage or monk you'll have to flip through the book till you find it. A good table should include the name, profession or class, and page number.

One of my pet peeves is artwork that does not match the character. I'm not saying it has to be perfect but a little accuracy would be nice. A basic understanding of the character should be known before the portrait is done or assigned to a character. Take for example Alhild, Nothlander Sea Reaver. From the name and title I expected a barbarian pirate and that is what is listed. Unfortunately that is where the match up ends. The action portrait has her with the horned small helmet, swinging a giant 2 handed battleaxe and a brazier better suited to the pages of a Victoria's Secret catalog. Going to the skills she has Weapon Focus longsword and shortspear. Her possessions include a +2 large shield of arrow deflection, and a +3 breastplate. All I am asking for is a little consistency.

Coup de Grace

Overall the book accomplishes what it sets out to do, give you some NPC's to use in the Freeport campaign setting. A good assortment of races and classes are included. The white space is kept to a minimum but the black and white artwork is average at best. A good assortment of alignments makes this useful for more than just another villain to slay.

The Critic's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)

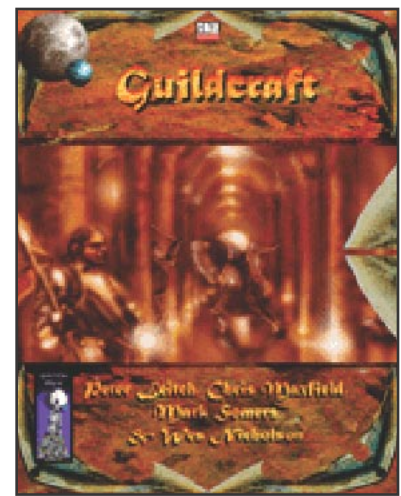
- Amount of Open Game Content: 4.0
- d20 Compliance: 4.5
- Originality: 4.0
- Playability: 3.0 (Freeport specific)
- Value for the dollar: 3.5

Overall Rating: 3.8

Final Grade: B+

Guildcraft

By John Grigsby



Sizing Up the Target

Guildcraft is a 96-page supplement from [Bastion Press](#). It is penned by Peter Leitch, Chris Maxfield, Mark Somers, and Wes Nicholson, with a cover by Michael Orwick. Interior artwork is by Andrew Baker, Andy Blase, Ginger Kubic, Mark Jones, and Michael Orwick. It retails for \$24.95.

First Blood

Guilds; I don't know about you, but they don't tend to see a lot of use in my game. In the past, the thieves' guild was the only guild that had any practical applications (that being primarily to trouble strangers muscling in on their territory). Sure, the other classes had guilds (or colleges, or temples), but they weren't good for much beyond flavoring. Since there was no tangible benefit, you were assumed to pay your dues in the background and were a member in good standing. This book seeks to change all of that.

A guild is, of course, an organization of like-minded individuals formed primarily to protect mutual interests and maintain standards. A modern labor union is a good example of a guild. But your character is likely a bold warrior or a wily wizard who earns a living by looting innoc...er...recovering treasures from foul monsters. Is it possible that mediating labor disputes could present a greater challenge than facing down a dragon?

Well, maybe, but that's not what these guilds are all about. *Guildcraft* examines guilds with a critical eye, asking that very same question. Why would a character want

to join a guild? What benefits does it offer to them? If there is a membership fee, then the characters will rightly expect tangible returns, else why join? But a good guild will offer something beyond mere crunchy bits; it will also offer opportunities for role-playing and character development. In fact, a guild may be the perfect way to get that hack-and-slasher in your group more involved in the role-playing aspect.

Guildcraft examines several types of guilds, beginning with the most obvious; those based on class. Each of the guilds in *Guildcraft* is developed along similar structure; a description of the organization, membership requirements, how to join the guild, size and scope, structure and advancement, benefits of membership, disadvantages of membership, affiliations, how to leave the guild, prominent NPCs (such as the guildmaster), notes on adapting the guild to your campaign, adventure hooks, and variations on the theme (other guilds of a similar nature). That's a lot of detail given over to each guild and a total of 17 guilds are described in the book.

Class-based guilds are those based around a particular class. Not all of these are guilds in the traditional sense, but all fit the definition more than adequately; nor are the guilds class-exclusive. Take as an example, the barbarian horde.

The horde is not so much a guild as a loose organization of warriors of like minds. The barbarian horde notes that on occasion, rangers and druids may bolster their ranks. Since most barbarian societies operate on a barter system, there are no physical dues; instead, rank is determined by the experience of the individual. By spending 500 xp (just as a wizard would do when creating a magical item), a barbarian horde member that has single-handedly defeated at least three opponents in one battle can take the position of a Chosen One. This provides certain benefits in addition to those that membership in the horde grants. Further advancement may lead to the title of War Leader, Chieftan, or even Warlord. While each of these titles carries tangible rewards, more so is the prestige that is earned with them. This system of exchanging experience points for advancement within the guild is predominant throughout the book.

Druids, also not likely to form guilds in the traditional sense, form cabals. Monks tend to gather into schools. Paladins converge into

orders, where a group of like-minded clerics may come together as a council. All of these fit the definition of a guild, but the semantics give each a distinct personality that is further built upon by the wealth of detail allotted to them.

There are other sorts of guilds that find a place within a campaign, as well, such as those whose members share a talent or calling. Neric's Avengers, a mercenary company, is an example of just such a guild, as is the Shondak Weaponsmith's Guild. And there are guilds that form simply to create or strengthen relationships between people, such as the Clover Union. Each bears its own benefits of membership, guild ranks, and the like, just as with the class-based guilds and they are given just as much detail.

While all of this is well and good and there's a nice selection of sample guilds provided, some DMs will be looking to create their own unique guilds, or perhaps a player would like to have their character begin a guild of their own. The last chapter of the book considers this prospect and describes in detail the format used to create the sample guilds, taking the reader through the steps required to create his or her own guild. Each element of the sample guilds is broken down and examined, with the hows and whys plainly laid out. If you get stuck, a set of random tables might be just the thing to provide a nudge in the right direction. You could even generate an entire guild at random (though I personally would advise against it; something of this importance in a campaign should have DM input).

Finally, *Guildcraft* presents a new feat; Feint (which can result in an opponent being flat-footed for your next attack), a new use for the Diplomacy skill, and two new prestige classes (the avenger and the seeker). The former is a warrior driven by force of will as opposed to sheer strength, while the latter are scouts employed by a specific guild (though easily adaptable to any campaign). While the prestige classes are very guild-oriented and may see limited use in a campaign, the feat and the new ways of looking at Diplomacy are well thought-out and will add to any campaign easily enough.

Critical Hits

Guilds have long been an unrecognized part of the fantasy campaign and I think that this book is long overdue. As I said in the opening paragraph, I've never really used them to their

full potential and it was as much because I really didn't know how as I had no desire to. *Guildcraft* is a good, in-depth look at a subject that can enhance any campaign, particularly those which feature urban adventures.

Does that mean it won't be of any use to those of you who consider cities and towns mere bases of operations between forays into the dungeon? Of course not; the characters have to be doing something during their time between adventures, so why not let them take membership in a guild? It offers tangible benefits to them and it gives you some strings to pull. For the truly ambitious DM, a guildwar could be a very interesting campaign hook.

I liked that each class was given a "guild," demonstrating that even those characters you would not expect to be part of such an organization could be. Frankly, I had always figured that barbarians would never consider joining a guild, but when you view it as a horde, it makes sense. Same with druidic cabals; it just makes good sense the way the guilds are designed to suit the nature of the classes.

Another problem I've always had with guilds in my campaign is the benefits that are provided. Too much, and it seems like you're giving the PCs something for nothing; too little, and they have no incentive to join. In the past, my experimentation with guilds had used membership dues to control access to ranks, with higher-paying members getting the better benefits, but it always seemed artificial (if realistic). *Guildcraft*, by using XP for that purpose, has found an excellent compromise for differing levels of membership. Not that there aren't guilds that bear a physical price for maintaining rank (such as the Golden Blades), but the XP cost makes it feel like the character is earning the privilege, not being handed it because they have wealth.

The seeker prestige class will be of particular interest to those who feel that the ranger is front-loaded or otherwise "broken." As a prestige class, it's not bad, but it could easily be adapted as a base class and serve as an excellent replacement for the ranger. The seeker shares the ranger's use of divine spells and favored enemies, but isn't quite so limited nor loaded up at 1st level. In addition, several of the seeker's later abilities make more sense than those inherited by the Drizzt-influenced rangers given in Core Rulebook I. Wizards

would do well to carefully examine this class for their upcoming 3.5E revisions.

Critical Misses

In my perusal of the book, no glaring problems jumped immediately to my attention. Bastion Press has always been very good about editing and game balance and they seem to maintain this high standard the more products they release. Guild memberships are well-balanced both through membership costs and disadvantages. The prestige classes seem to be fairly well balanced and the new feat will easily drop into an existing campaign with little or no difficulty.

The one thing that DMs will need to be alert for here is the potential for, well, the polite term is power gaming. Despite the fact that the guild rewards are balanced, a determined character could easily gain an edge over the rest of the party by devoting themselves to climbing the echelon of guild membership. It's nothing that a good DM can't monitor and prevent, but the fact that the opportunity is there needs to be called attention to.

Coup de Grace

What's the bottom line? If you've ever considered adding guilds to your campaign, this is the only way to do it. If you haven't considered adding guilds to your campaign, take a look; this just might change your mind. This book is definitely more about role-playing than roll-playing.

Bastion (as is their style) has designated everything except the artwork and graphic elements as Open Gaming Content, so I should hope to see other publishers expanding on this work and producing some very interesting guilds of their own that utilize the *Guildcraft* format. D20 compliance remains at a high-level and I have to admit that the idea of a book on guilds is a very original topic. I don't think I've ever seen anything like it before.

DMs will get more out of the book than players, but both groups stand to benefit, if the DM permits guilds in his or her campaign. I recommend the book for anyone who wants to interject a little more role-playing into their sessions. Guilds present a great opportunity for doing just that. It isn't for everyone, but if you're looking for something different, this might well provide the diversion you seek.

The Critic's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)

Amount of Open Game Content: 5.0

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 5.0

Playability: 3.75

Value for the dollar: 4.5

Overall Rating: 4.65

Final Grade: A+

Pale Designs: A Poisoner's Handbook

By Brad Mix



Sizing Up the Target

This review is for *Pale Designs: A Poisoner's Handbook* published by [Bastion Press](#). Written By Steven Creech and Kevin Ruesch, this 96 page softbound book details a wide array of poisons and how to use them in any campaign.

First Blood

Back in the good old days just the mere mention of a poisoned needle trap would send shivers down back of any thief. But now a second thought to it is rarely given. The rogue just has the cleric heal the damage and life goes on. That is why *Pale Designs* is so useful. The introduction starts off with options to create tension and respect for poisons. Delay the die roll for the save and make sure everyone knows what the roll is for. This will add a little tension and importance for the check. Poisons aren't all deadly either. Some can cause a loss of ability scores as well. By varying the kind of poisons the party runs into you can make each check important.

A variant rule is offered that will really affect a character. The variant damage optional rule can take out even the most powerful character, if a couple of saves are missed. Each poison

is given a toxicity rating. This rating makes it easy to determine how powerful a poison is. For example is a toxicity rating of 15 is pretty low but makes the character deal with the poison on a long-term basis. If two saves are missed then the character takes 15 damage the first round and then 14 the second round and 13 the third round, all the way to 1 damage then the poison is gone. In this example 120 points would be taken in 15 rounds if nothing were done to stop the poison. This can be very deadly and so a great deal of caution is recommended before killing off the entire party.

Poisons of all types and makes are what this book focuses on though. With hundreds of both new and some that are OGC. Some poisons are used with permission from Mystic Eye Games and White Wolf. Tables give a brief rundown of each poison. It is broken down into type, DC, Toxicity, initial, secondary, and variant damage and gold piece value. A good description of each poison is also given. Drugs are given a mention as well. These are more interesting ways to deal with characters that snoop around too much. These drugs range from hallucinations to permanent ability score loss.

Equipment and weapons is next and offers basic supplies to anyone wanting to delve into such pursuits. A few interesting items also make the list. The wash-away ring has the poison on the ring and when submersed into water or other liquid, the "jewel" dissolves. This could be handy for a servant to place in the masters' bathwater. Swirl the hand around a bit and leave the metal ring still on her finger. A few poison specific weapons are offered. Like the spring loaded needle gun and the Manticore tail whip. Several weapons are listed on the table but I am not sure why. They don't seem to be related to anything dealing with poisons. Like the bastard sword, Dwarven war axe, and two-handed sword.

What good would a book of poisons be if it didn't include some traps to put them on. Like the traitors hilt that only activates when it hits a hard target and releases a mechanism that plunges a needle into the users hand.

Critical Hits

Besides all of the different poisons themselves several monsters are provided. The Carnifex are a race that have taken torture to a new level and in their eyes, art. A cruel race of outsiders who are sometimes summoned by

evil wizards to administer their unique style of questioning. The fang golems are made in the shape of other poisonous creatures. In their dormant form they look harmless and actually look like ordinary objects. But when activated they unfold into their true nature. Instructions for creating a Vile Shambler are also given. Vile Shambler is a template that can be applied to any corporeal creature that was killed by poison. This also turns the creature type to undead.

Critical Misses

One of the first things I noticed when I opened the book was the font used for chapter headings and subheadings. I like books that look a little different but not at the expense of readability. It was kind of hard to read at first but I was able to figure it out. This is not good when flipping through the book to find something. A table of contents is included but does not give all of the subheadings. Some examples include upside down and backward “e” and upside down “a” I took me a while to figure out that one letter was actually a “w”. The actual text is in normal print.

Nine new prestige classes are offered. Eight of which seem out of place. They seem out of place in a book about poison and its uses. The only related ability is Poison Use. While the different prestige classes are good overall they just don't fit the theme of the book. Like the Psi-Slayer would be better suited to a book related to psionics. Only the Trapmaster is a good fit for this book. He is skilled at making deadly traps and gets paid very well for his services.

Coup de Grace

Overall I am a fan of the book. It delivers on what it promises. It offers a lot of good information on how to use poisons in your campaign. Anything that can add a little fear and suspense to a game is worth getting.

The Critic's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)

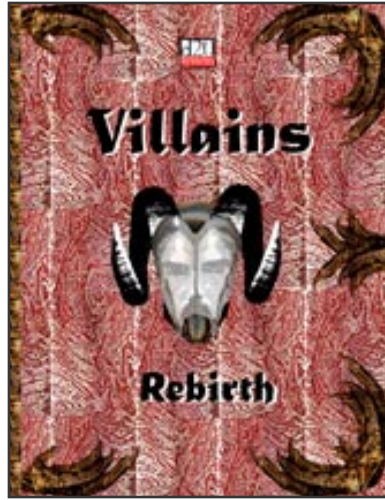
- Amount of Open Game Content: 4.0
- d20 Compliance: 4.5
- Originality: 5.0
- Playability: 3.0 (intended for the GM)
- Value for the dollar: 5.0

Overall Rating: 4.30

Final Grade: A

Villains:Rebirth

By John Grigsby



Sizing Up the Target

Villains: Rebirth is a d20 sourcebook from *Bastion Press* by James Jacobs, with artwork produced by Ginger Kubric and Todd Morasch. It is available as an electronic PDF from *RPG Now* for only \$9.99 and consists of 110 full-color pages, both with and without border (for ease of printing).

First Blood

Villains: Rebirth is an electronic reprinting of the popular *Villains* product released by Bastion Press. It contains all of the material from the original work, as well as the bonus materials included in *e-Villains*. Not having seen either of these works, I will be reviewing *Villains: Rebirth* from the standpoint of an original work.

I run my campaign (as I'm finding out that a lot of GMs do) much like a television show. Each session is an episode and enough episodes strung together make a season. One thing that every good television show (and campaign) needs is a recurring villain. You know the kind I mean. One episode they're in a fiery plane crash and then, next season, they're back with a new plot to destroy the machinations of our heroes, the "reports of their demise greatly exaggerated," to borrow a phrase.

Villains: Rebirth is a book of NPCs, but they aren't the kind of NPCs that you feature in a single adventure and then never see them again. Oh, they could be. Sure, you could reach into this book, grab a villain, build a quick adventure around them, and then toss

the book into one of your storage folders and forget about it until you're cleaning up your hard drive, but then you'd be missing out on some really good opportunities. These are the kinds of villains that just keep coming back. The party only **thinks** that the bad guy was buried under a ton of rock when his castle collapsed. They didn't know about the secret exit that was there. And for a few months, life goes on peacefully. Then one day, out of the blue, here comes their old nemesis, meaner than ever, with a new grudge!

The villains, 24 in all, are ordered by name (and each name in the Table of Contents is hyperlinked to the appropriate entry (a very nice touch in a PDF product!). Each is then laid out in a format that makes it easy to see how the villain was constructed (and to make changes by the GM to fit their individual campaign much simpler) and provides all relevant details at a glance, including attack data, saving throws, and armor class. All villains below CR 16 were built on a 28-point buy, making them just a little tougher than the average hero. Those of CR 16 and above were built on a 32-point buy, making them exceptionally tough opponents (which is as it should be). This also means that they will be balanced to most campaigns. The CR of the villains described herein range from 1 to 25.

The crunchy parts are followed by flavor bits, where the villain's appearance, history, motivations, and lair are described. Besides serving to make each villain into an individual, these also tie the villain to the setting, and provide helpful hints for using the villain in the campaign, regardless of the level differential. Even a high-level villain can fit into a low-level campaign and this section demonstrates how this can be done. A full-color portrait of the villain accompanies the write-up.

Finally, most of the villains in this book have many dozens of minions at their beck and call. With each villain is included a stat block description and brief history/personality write-up for a favored minion, serving both as an example of the type of minion this villain draws and to serve as a trusted aide de camp and lieutenant. Naturally, these minions are of lesser power than their masters (which may make them suitable as foes for the PCs, while still tying the master villain to the plot).

All too often, a book of NPCs of the same archetype can get stale, particularly when all

are created by the same author. Mr. Jacobs has skillfully avoided this pitfall, insuring that each villain is an individual meant to be taken seriously. No two villains in this work are alike, and even those which seem a bit predictable take on a surprising twist. The range of Jacobs' imagination shines through in each character and even those of low level prove interesting enough for use in a high-level campaign.

Many of the villains herein have created their own unique spells and magical items, and all of these are detailed in the appendices, which adds to the value of the book by providing a DM with a plethora of fiendish new devices with which to bother hapless player characters. The appendices also describe a few new ways to use the Heal skill. I'm sure that your PCs will find it most enlightening. Heh heh.

And if you're just looking for some new stuff to enhance your campaign, you should know that four new prestige classes are described herein. These prestige classes are intended for villains only and the requirements and benefits reflect that. The bloodtracker is a bounty hunter elite, the dinosaur cultist, well, you can guess who he venerates. The gutter stalker is an urban barbarian, and the sea reaver is a nasty breed of pirate that lives on the seas. Finally, a new monster (the ahazu, a mountainous evil outsider) is described.

Critical Hits

The big selling point of *Villains: Rebirth* is, for me, the variety of the villains herein. These individuals are carefully crafted to fit into any campaign and while some are not nearly so vile as others, all are equally ambitious and villainous. The campaign notes makes it easy to drop them into a campaign of any level with minimal difficulty, whether for a one-shot adventure or as the focus of an entire campaign. Even villains that rely on divine powers are described in the most generic terms possible (e.g. "she follows the god of dark magic"). You should have no trouble introducing them into your own milieu as needed.

Even if you don't need new NPCs (and really, who doesn't?), the addition of four prestige classes, seven new spells, ten magical items, three minor artifacts, and a major artifact can make the purchase price worthwhile. But really, if you aren't looking at this book for the value of the villains, you're looking at it for the wrong reasons.

Critical Misses

No real gripes, here. I did notice a few minor editing flaws (just what is a *ring of uumping* [jumping], anyway?), but nothing that detracts from the usefulness or enjoyment of the product. The artwork is well-done, though much is in Todd Morasch's own unique style and that may not agree with some people. The main villains themselves are not in stat-block format, but the format that is used makes adjustment for individual campaigns easy and I don't consider that a flaw.

Coup de Grace

This is a book for DMs only. Players won't find anything of use to them in here, nor should they be looking inside (unless the DM is permitting them to play the bad guys). As is the usual case with Bastion Press, everything except the artwork has been declared Open Game Content, which means that my online players should beware (bwahahahaha!). Though NPC collections (even villainous NPC collections) are pretty common, I believe that a DM that is looking for some vile new NPCs to add to their campaign will get not only what they desire, but some extras as well, making it well-worth the purchase price.

The Critic's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)

Amount of Open Game Content: 5.0

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 4.0 (some very original villains)

Playability: 3.0 (intended for DMs only)

Value for the dollar: 4.5

Overall Rating: 4.3

Final Grade: A+

Ultimate Feats: Supplementary Rulebook I

Ultimate Prestige Classes: Supplementary Rulebook II

By Bruce Boughner



Sizing Up the Target

Ultimate Feats and Ultimate Prestige Classes are 256-page hard cover accessories published by Mongoose Publishing. Compiled by Alejandro Melchor (Feats) and Paul Tucker (Prestige Classes), with a host of contributing writers, the cover is by Scott Clark and is in the tome-like style of the 3rd edition books. Both books retail for \$34.95.

First Blood

These books are compilations of several publishers' works, with some new stuff from Mongoose thrown in. Publishers included in the works are: Wizards of the Coast, Firey Dragon Productions, Sword & Sorcery/White Wolf, Fantasy Flight Publishing, Alderac Entertainment, Mystic Eye Games, and Green Ronin in *Ultimate Prestige Classes* and these plus: Avalanche Press, Bastion Press, Chaosium, Sovereign Press, Atlas Games

Holistic Designs, Pinnacle Entertainment, Quicklink Interactive, Natural 20 Press, and Thunderhead Games in *Ultimate Feats*. Some of the best in the field from some of their best works. The complete list of source tomes is listed in the d20 license agreement and would best be examined there as the list in the feat book is well over 2 pages long!

Both books open with an introduction Chapter on the nature of feats and prestige classes and how to use them in your campaign. Then the books diverge, *Ultimate Feats* goes on to expound on how to develop feats for the characters and *Ultimate Prestige Classes* goes into how to create prestige classes and develop them into viable, workable additions to the game. Then each book splits their topic into the various core classes, warrior, rogue, cleric, wizard, psionics and monsters. *Ultimate Feats* includes an Index with a short prerequisite summery chart of the feats also broken down by class.

Ultimate Prestige Classes has the prestige classes shown in the same format that Mongoose has used in its *Quintessential* series and adds a shaded block section with advice on how to integrate the class into play. The intro to the class is not direct from the original source, but all of the nuts and bolts are, requirements, feats, skills and charts are exactly as they first appeared.

Some of the more familiar prestige classes are here like *Berserker*, *Knight*, etc. But some of the more unique and the some of the best prestige classes of the last few years are gathered into one volume. The *Reef Warrior* from *The Seafarers Handbook*, the *Stonegaard* from *Hammer and Helm*, the *Seeker* from *Hunt-Rise of Evil* among others.

Ultimate Feats, having smaller subjects covers a wider amount of sources, pulling in from the *Quintessential* series and the *Encyclopedia Arcane* among others. General feats like Quick Draw and Blind Casting to the more esoteric ones like Natural Smith (dwarf), Juggernaut (minotaurs) and graft bones (trolls). They are in the same format that they appeared in.

The artwork in both books is top notch and most generally matches the subject of the page they appear on. A lot of people skim books and think, "that's neat" or "cool art", but more importantly if the art adds to the flavor of the page by being topical and appropriate to the subject, enhances the book and give a

mnemonic device of reference. Pretty handy for the harried DM who might remember that important feat is on the page with the drawing of the pilgrim character. The art is an important part of the entire package and both books come through with appropriately placed drawings and if there is not a drawing on the page, the icon from the cover is inset under the text of the page.

The true draw of these books is the fact that they compile from a good number of sources, stay truthful to the original appearance and make a decent reference source for your game table. Rather than having a mountain of texts to knock over or be in the way, it's here, at your fingertips, for you and your players.

The fact that Mongoose compiled plays to something I like see, inter-company co-operation. The list of companies and the books drawn on as sources are some of the best of the last year or so, drawing everything together makes it two neat packages to have, combine these with **Paradigm Concept's Spell Decks** and the core books and dice are the only other references you may need at your table. Like the OGL Inter-Link Products this is the coming together of a worldwide community brought into 2 books. The top d20 producers are featured here in a user-friendly format with subjects that DM's and players alike can use to enhance their games.

Mongoose has gotten a bad rep for a more is better business style, flooding the market with products like the *Quintessential* series and the *Encyclopedia Arcane* series among others. The difference is most of their material IS the crunchy bits I look for as both a DM and a player, good prestige classes and feats, new spells and the like. They may not be setting the bar but they are not far off the mark. It's nice to see they value the other work out there as well.

Critical Hits

You can't get much better than this. Most of the most desired prestige classes and feats of the past two years are here in two volumes. They stay true to the original appearance, they're gathered and sorted by core class and race and they are handsomely presented.

Critical Misses

What's missing is MORE. There are other companies producing work equal to the ones listed here. Newer works like *Masters of Arms* by **Second World Simulations**, a good

number of **Bastion Press'** work and *Iron Kingdoms* by **Privateer Press** are not here and should be.

Coup de Grace

I hope there will be further volumes in this manner. **Mongoose** did this one. Maybe **Green Ronin** or **Sword & Sorcery** should do volumes III and IV. There is certainly no dearth of new prestige classes and feats out there. Over 1000 prestige classes was a figure I had heard recently and probably triple that in feats. These works are one of co-operation and let's see more like it.

The Critic's Rating: (maximum 5 pts for each category)

Amount of Open Game Content: 5.0

d20 Compliance: 5.0

Originality: 3.0

Playability: 5.0

Value for the dollar: 4.5

Overall Rating: 4.5

Final Grade: A+

Computers and Gaming

By Steven Creech

In today's times, computers have taken on a substantial role in gaming and gaming preparation. While we are not quite to the point where laptops are a regular part of everyone's game, computers are being used extensively for game preparation. Character generation, weather generation and campaign management are just a few of the types of programs available for use.

Campaign Suite is a comprehensive campaign management tool for the d20 system that comes from the design team at [Twin Rose Software](#). One of the benefits of this program is its ability to be customized. You can create and enter your own data without needing to know a computer language (JAVA – see PCGen) or have a strong understanding of databases (Access – see *E-Tools*). It carries a retail price of \$24.95.

Campaign Suite is very robust and offers expansions from companies like Mystic Eye Gems, Bastion Press, and Ambient Entertainment. Character generation is simple and intuitive once you've configured the generator to your specifications. Characters are limited to 20th level due to the limitations imposed by the Open Gaming License. With the *Arms and Armor* expansion you can equip your characters with new weapons or give your clerics access to new domains from *Norse Gods*. Some of the expansions are free (*Arms & Armor*, *Norse Gods*, *Wild Spellcraft*, *MapPack I*) but others are available at an extra cost. *Nightmares & Dreams Data Collection* is \$10.00, *Interludes: Brief Expeditions to Bluffside* is \$5.00, *Librum Equitas Vol. 1* is \$5.00, and *Librum Equitas Vol. 2* is \$5.00.

The built-in mapping tool is certainly not Campaign Cartographer 2 or Fractal Mapper but it is an effective dungeon mapper, even if it's not the prettiest in the world. It is also simple to utilize once you figure it out with trial and error. Interestingly enough, *Campaign Suite* is set up to handle hotlinks from Campaign Cartographer 2, so you may not even need the built-in mapper.

The biggest pluses to *Campaign Suite* are the fact that it is so customizable and it is heavily supported. There are new revisions and updates to the program available on almost a weekly basis. Twin Rose is certainly making every effort to ensure that this software is consistently one of the best available.

On the other hand, perhaps the biggest drawback is the complete lack of an integrated

manual or tutorial. There is a separate help file, but many times it failed me in looking for answers. Another issue I have with the program is its tendency to crash. I've worked extensively with Twin Rose on this issue and it sounds as though it may be a conflict between Windows XP and *Campaign Suite* on my machine. It's a lot more stable than it used to be, so I am confident we are finding a solution, but the problem still remains.

Overall, however, I think it is a solid program and, based upon the opinions of other people that I spoken to who use it, probably the best campaign management tool and character generator put together.

Kami's Weather Generator (KWG) is the brainchild of [Faenworks](#). This program, like *Campaign Suite*, is ideal for real time gaming laptop use. KWG allows a GM to input different variables and generate a complete weather forecast that includes special weather conditions, temperatures, and even a place for campaign notes for each day. The interface is easy to use and fairly intuitive with the ability to generate weather for a single day, week or even month. With the establishment of templates, you can have weather created for *Faerun* or Earth-like conditions (the folks at Faenworks are working on a *Dragonlance* template with the multiple moons). The template files are in XML format, so you astronomy buffs and engineers should have a heyday coming up with interesting stuff.

The generated weather forecast gives you the day followed by the stats for that day: state of light (sunny, cloudy, or partly either), times of sunrise and sunset, the state of the moon, times of moonrise and moonset, the time period when it will be dark, the temperature range, expected amount of precipitation (and the kind), any special weather (such as a blizzard), the game rules effects as they apply (this is a nice feature), and as I mentioned previously, a place to include relevant notes. There is also the option to print out player's sheets containing the weather info to use as handouts.

There are a few known bugs in the program with the biggest one being the overly generated amount of cloudy days in a forecast and the need to restart the program every time you want to switch templates. Faenworks is addressing these and the other bug issues by switching over from MS Visual C++ to Borland C++ Builder Professional. All in all,

Kami's Weather Generator is a great little program for GM preparation or even during gameplay with a laptop. It carries a current pricetag of \$29.95, but the folks at Faenworks also told me that that price was likely to be dropped to a lower one, possibly around the \$15.00 range very soon.

E-Tools is a generator program offered by [Wizards of the Coast](#) and developed by [Fluid Entertainment](#). This is a program with a long and highly controversial history. Initially called **Mastertools**, this program was looking to be exactly what gamers wanted. However, development and personnel changes along with philosophical differences saw the scope of the project become severely scaled down in size and functionality, which ultimately led to the new name *E-Tools*.

E-Tools is a character generator with some added abilities. You can generate treasure for encounters, give monsters class levels, and even enter your own custom monsters, items and races (provided you have an understanding of Microsoft Access). In theory, this makes for a great program, but in reality it has some real problems. The program as a whole is completely rife with bugs and errors with the most common being inaccurate skill point assessments and failure to include certain feat bonuses into the calculations.

The program was designed (and purported) to contain all of the necessary *Dungeons & Dragons* core rules for 3rd edition rules. However, one of the aspects that really stand out is that the templates from the *Monster Manual* are missing! There are many other issues that constitute a very long list of bugs. A beta patch was produced by Fluid that corrected many of the bugs but not without creating some of its own. Recently, [Code Monkey Publishing](#) and Wizards reach an agreement where CMP would take over support of *E-Tools* and provide a patch that effectively worked and further data expansions sets (at a minimal cost). The patch is due sometime in May. With luck, it will cure the issues.

E-Tools is set up for random generation of characters, monsters, and treasure. The treasure generator is great for the impromptu need to determine treasure that a group may have found or for when the GM doesn't have time to generate everything by hand. The monster generator is great for standard monsters but when you increase the Hit Dice,

the stats do not change. Character generation is straightforward and works fairly well except for the tendency to have the incorrect skill points.

Overall, *E-Tools* has great potential and should the bugs be properly fixed the program will definitely be a contender for one of the best out there. It is in need of many fixes, the very least is an interface that is improved in look and function. The lack of an instructional manual is also a huge negative. I keep hoping for someone to come through with the equivalent of the promised *Mastertools*. Perhaps Code Monkey can pull it off with Wizards' blessing.

PCGen is perhaps the most used and supported character generator by the gaming public. Written in JAVA and available for free, this program provides a large amount of character generator sources drawn from open content. While far from the prettiest interface, PCGen has made vast improvements and shows considerable promise for its future. What started out as a volunteer effort and included many files that were not open game content, PCGen has grown up to become a fully compliant and Wizards of the Coast supported program. With the inclusion of a large amount of open content from other sources, this is a character generation program that really delivers.

The strengths to this program come in the form of almost weekly updates and improvements and the presence of a very large Yahoo! discussion group that can provide support. Gamers looking to generate characters for non-D&D games like Spycraft will find PCGen quite useful. This also applies for other campaign settings such as Iron Kingdoms and Dragonstar.

The negatives to the system include the fact that it is resource heavy, running very slow on my computer and that its customizability is limited to the point where you must know JAVA in order to create your own modified files. Also the choices of available output templates for printing the character sheets have yet to produce a decent one. This has been one of the more consistent complaints about PCGen. A personal problem with the program that I have is that the newest versions require the latest update to the JAVA Plug-in in order to run. Normally, this would not be an issue, however, I have several other programs on my system that is not equipped to handle

the newer JAVA Plug-in. The fact that I have to install/uninstall the JAVA update if I want to run PCGen is highly annoying.

PCGen is now a [Code Monkey Publishing](#) supported product, with the company promising to deliver files for that platform that are not a part of the open gaming license, such as the Wizards of the Coast Builder series of books (*Sword and Fist*, *Tome and Blood*, etc.). As with the data expansions for *E-Tools*, these will be available for a minimum charge. A lot of work has went into PCGen over the years and its near-cult following ensures it should be around some time to come.

[NBOS Software](#), maker of *Fractal Mapper*, has recently put forth a new product in the RPG market, *ScreenMonkey*. *Screenmonkey* (not to be confused with Code Monkey above) is a program that allows you to play pen and paper RPGs online and carries a retail price of \$34.95. Essentially it is a server program that allows the GM to manage the gaming session while the players participate through a standard web browser. Live chat is supported and the program comes with a built in announcement system to let your players know where to find you. Actual play shows an interactive map that allows both the players and the GMs to move the miniatures making it easy to show moves, marching order, and incredible acts of stupidity committed by players.

The graphic interface is clean but don't expect something out of *Neverwinter Nights*. This is a very simple program that does not rely on high-end graphics that could slow things down. The built-in help manual is up to the standards that you expect with NBOS. It is an asset and will take you through the entire program step by step in order to get up and running. Another asset is that *Screenmonkey* interfaces with *Fractal Mapper*, allowing you to create custom maps for use with *Screenmonkey*.

In practical application, I found that the program did achieve what it set out to do despite some minor issues regarding proper set up and early play that I am attributing more to "newbie" experience than any actual bugs. The program's most obvious benefits allow for gaming groups that are separated by distance to get together and play over the Net and for folks looking to get a quick night of gaming in when it's only a couple of people. It is rough and a little on the crude side, but you can't top what it has set out to accomplish. With a few

more refinements, the program should be a big hit among gamers.

In summation, there are many other computer programs tailored for gamers that I did not touch upon such as, DM Familiar, Heroforge, PCProfiler, Rolemaster, Campaign Sage, DM Screen, and so on. Many are merely the product of a single person sitting down and writing a little Excel spreadsheet or simple little stat tracker macro or program. Some of them are very good, others are crude at best, but many I simply have not had an opportunity to examine due to time constraints. I encourage you to examine the ones I've talked about here today and see if they fit your needs. You might be surprised...

Gobie's Magical Emporium

By Tom Gafkjen

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Walking into a dark alleyway you wonder if the town guard was pulling your leg that a magical shop would be located down here. It was a spot more situated to be the den of a thieves' guild. Keeping an eye out for a possible ambush you stride deeper into the darkness until a small illuminated sign on a door catches your interest. It's a simple sign that grows brighter the closer you get; it reads 'Gobie's Magical Emporium'. You decide this must be the place and open the door.

Inside your senses are assaulted by various smells and noises. The room is lit up but no light sources can be discerned. Wisps of smoke come from incense burners that float in the air about the room. Cages holding various animals and creatures are carefully positioned about the room and the creatures all seem to be chattering to each other. A large table is set up in the middle of the room and on it weapons of various kinds are displayed. Chests and sacks of all sizes are neatly stacked here and there. A large stone statue is positioned to the left of the door and several globes of energy can be seen floating by the ceiling towards the back of the room.

A bald, middle-aged human dressed in red robes stands on the other side of the table. He watches you as you enter and grins as you take in your surroundings.

"Hail and well-met, traveler." He speaks, "let me introduce myself, I am Gobie, trafficker of magical curiosities and today is your lucky day. I have just received some new items for you to peruse and hopefully take off my hands. Come over here." He waves you up to the table.

"First let me show you this fine blade. It was delivered to me by an adventuring priest who decided to settle down." He pulls the blade from its sheath and surprisingly you can see through it. It appears to be a solid hilt with a misty blade.

"The priest told me physical strength isn't enough for this blade, you have to have strength of will. Then you will be able to wield it properly. From your look, I can see weapons might not be what you came for." He glances about the room and walks over to a small bag. Reaching inside he pulls out a pouch.

"How about some magic dust? Oh, I know what you are thinking, what am I to do with dirt. Well let me tell you, sprinkle this dust over an area and it will reveal all magic that it comes in contact with. Very handy to someone who cannot cast spells, wouldn't you agree.

Also, along those lines, I have some Firestones that you might be interested in." He slides his hand back into the sack and this time he pulls out a small coffer.

Gobie opens the coffer and inside, resting on black felt, are three deep red stones. "You have to be careful with these. One hard impact and BOOM instant fireball." He chuckles, "usually surprises your enemies when they think you are just throwing rocks at them. When one of these go off, the look on their faces is priceless."

"I see you are looking at a few of the creatures. Might that be what you are interested in? Here, let me show you a couple." He brings you over to a large cage. Contained within is a small greenish creature that has a humanoid torso, bat wings and an impish face. It doesn't possess any legs, but has a long tail that is wrapped around a perch.

"This, my friend, is a Grisham. He flew in one day and stayed. So I paid a sage to tell me what it is and he told me that these creatures are attracted to magic using beings. They offer their services just to be around magic but it is not known where these creatures came from. He speculated they were brought here when a magical rift opened up from another plane. He seems friendly enough."

"Now if you need a spy," Gobie states as he pulls out a necklace and points to a spot in the rafters. "A Mardain is what you are looking for."

You barely make out a small creature. It stands about 18 inches tall, with a 25-inch wingspan, claws and large canine fangs. A set of ivory horns grows out of its head. It seems to blend into the background behind it.

"A Mardain is an artificial creature created by paranoid wizards to be used as spies against their enemies. Each one is bound to a piece of jewelry upon creation, so whoever wears the item has control of the creature," he states fingering the necklace.

"So what say you, anything catch your fancy?"

New Magic Items



Soul Sword: This +1 weapon appears as a hilt with a misty blade. This weapon uses characters wisdom instead of strength when

determining to hit and damage bonuses (even if strength is better).

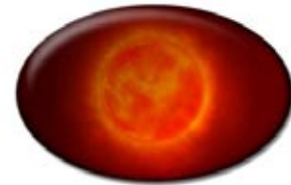
Caster Level: 7; Prerequisites: Craft Arms & Armor; Market Price: +2 Bonus.

Dust of Magic Detection: This gray dust, when sprinkled over a 10x10x10 foot area reveals all magical auras. This includes, but not limited to, magic items, illusions, glyphs, symbols, spell like effects, etc.

Caster Level: 3; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, Detect Magic; Market Price: 300gp; Weight: -.

Firestones: These dark red stones are about 2 1/2 inches in size. They feel warm when handled. Once a day they can release a fireball (6d6) when struck against a hard surface.

Caster Level: 6; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, Fireball; Market Price: 7200gp; Weight: -.



New Creatures

GRISHAM

Small Outsider

Hit Dice: 3d8 (14 average hp)

Initiative: +2 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft. Flying (Good)

AC: 15 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: 1 slam

Damage: 1d2 slam/1d4 constriction

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. /5 ft.

Special Attacks: Constriction

Special Qualities: Smokepuff (Ex), SR15

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 10

Skills: Hide +5, Spot +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Knowledge (Arcana) +3, Knowledge (Planes) +3

Feats: Improved Initiative

Climate/Terrain: Any Land

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: N

These small greenish creatures have a humanoid torso, bat wings and an impish face. They do not have any legs, but possess a long tail.

These creatures are attracted to magic using beings. They offer their services just to be around magic. Some wizards use these

creatures for familiars, in which case they can give their master their magic resistance when in contact with him. These creatures fly like a hummingbird. They do not need to rest and can fly all day long. When they do land, they prefer perches so they can wrap their tails around for balance.

It is not known where these creatures came from. Some think they were brought here when a magical rift opened up from another plane.

COMBAT

These creatures do not like to fight. If they are forced to, they fight by slamming into the individual for 1d2 damage. On a successful hit, they automatically wrap their tail around the neck of its target and begin squeezing; doing 1-4 hit points a round.

Smokepuff (EX) - They possess a unique ability of limited teleport. They can teleport up to 100 feet away at will. When this happens, a small popping noise is made followed by a puff of smoke at the spot of the teleport and the destination. They must know where they are going or it is limited to line of sight.

MARDAIN

Tiny Construct

Hit Dice: 2d10 (11 average hp)

Initiative: +2 (+2 Dex)

Speed: 20 ft. /50 ft. Flying (Good)

AC: 20 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural)

Attacks: 2 Claws (+1), 1 Bite

Damage: Claws 1d3, Bite 1d2

Face/Reach: 2 1/5 ft. by 2 1/5 ft. /0 ft.

Special Attacks: Poisonous Bite

Special Qualities: Camouflage Skin, Darkvision 60 ft.

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 14, Con -, Int -, Wis -, Cha -

Skills: Hide +14, Listen +6, Move Silently +10

Feats: None

Climate/Terrain: Any Land

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: N

These small creatures have dull-gray leathery-like skin. They stand about 18 inches tall; have a 25-inch wingspan, claws and large canine fangs. Ivory horns grow out of their heads.

Mardain are artificial creatures created by wizards to be used as spies against their enemies. Each one is bound to a piece of jewelry upon creation, so whoever wares the item has control of the creature. It can telepathically communicate with the owner of its item to a range of 480 yards, and empathic messages can be sent from beyond that range.

COMBAT

These creatures do not like direct combat and will avoid it at all costs. If they can get the surprise on something, they attack with two claw attacks (1d3) and a poisonous bite (1d2 + poison).

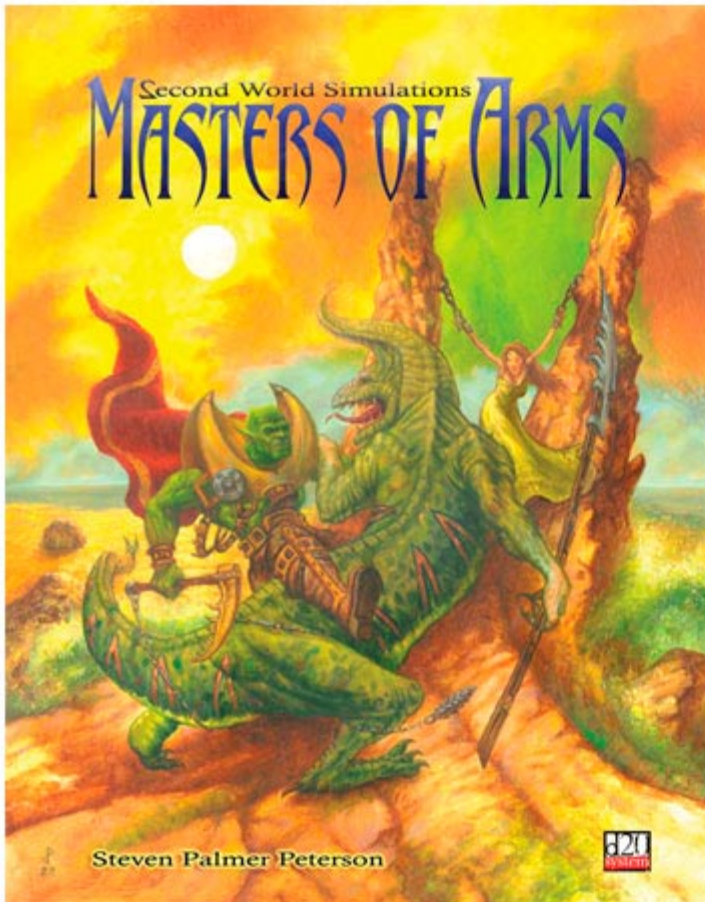
Poisonous Bite (EX) - Fort save DC 18. Poison does temporary Strength damage 1d2 first round and 1d4 second.

Camouflage Skin (EX) - They have a natural camouflage ability to help them remain unseen (+14 Hide).

Construct: Mardain are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, energy drain or death from massive damage.

CONSTRUCTION

The creation of a Mardain is similar to creating a Homunculus, except for the following differences, 3500gp total cost to create. A Craft (Jewelry) check (DC 12) is also needed. And the ritual drains 50 experience points from the creator.



"Here then, is that next step in the d20 rules revolution." – Jeff Ibach, Game-Play News

"I really have to give Masters of Arms the thumbs up." – Alan "Psion" Kohler, ENWorld Staff Review (5/5)

"Author Steven Palmer Peterson wields one of my favourite writing styles in the entire industry. Peterson's style is great at getting across flavour and detail clearly and succinctly." – Gamewyrd (8/10)

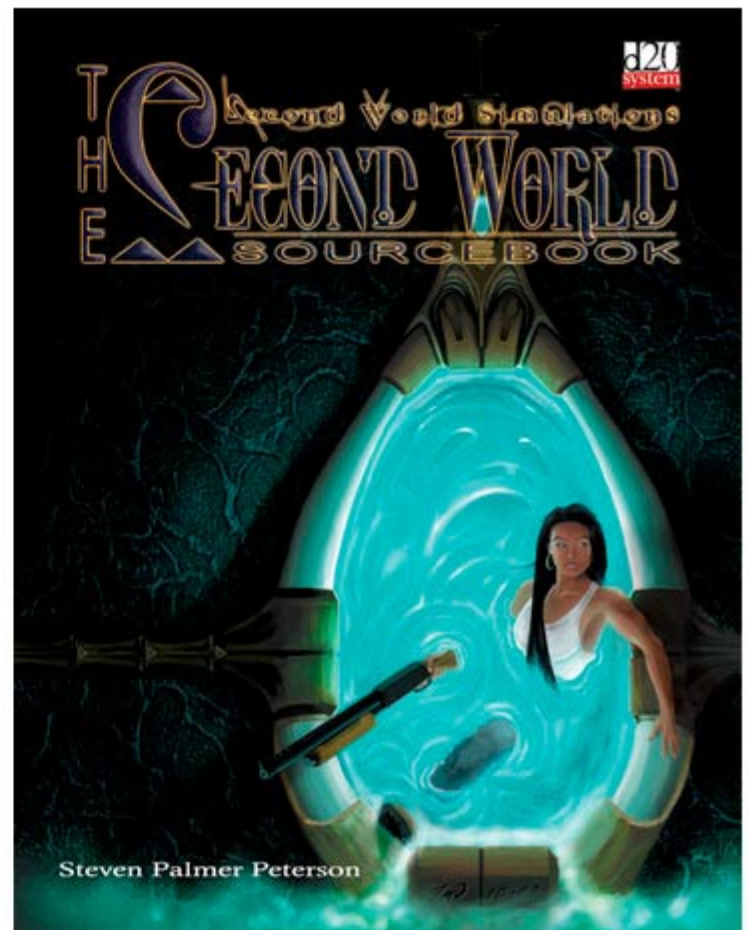
"A very well done accessory indeed..." Bruce Boughner, d20 Magazine Rack Staff Review (A)

"This is a good book guide to someone who wants to add a little spice and flavor to combat with a fair mechanical basis." - Wayne Tonjes, Gaming Report (4.5/5)

"I think with wardens and warden powers, Steven Palmer Peterson has again shown his unique talent to twist the d20 System rules in unique and compelling ways." - Alan "Psion" Kohler, ENWorld Staff Review (4/5)

"It's really quite easy to see The Second World Sourcebook becoming the seminal advanced d20 product." - Gamewyrd (9/10)

"The writing style is fairly unique - at times it has the ambience of a Charles De Lint novel, before switching through an academic-style discourse on metaphysics to an informal chat about game mechanics and occasionally into raw creative flow. At times its annoying, sometimes confusing; mostly its damn impressive." - Simon Collins, ENWorld Staff Review (4/5)



Sorcerous Blood: Bloodlines

By Duane Nutley (maransreth@optushome.com.au)

Sorcerers have magic in their blood. It is due to this that they do not have to study as a wizard as magic comes easy to them. But where exactly does the blood come from to get this magic? It has been suggested that sorcerers carry the blood of dragons and this enables them to learn magic instinctively. But what if it is not just dragons? There are many creatures in the multiverse, to whom magic comes easy. And many of these are able to assume humanoid form and thus carry on their bloodline. This series of articles looks at sorcerers gaining their magic from a variety of sources. It should be easy to adapt these rules to an existing campaign or even to change these rules to something that the reader prefers.

This series of articles will look at ways to give more depth to sorcerers. I have always thought that the sorcerer was not given enough options. Yes they can cast more spells than a wizard per day, but they are so limited in the spells they can choose. This first article will be about sorcerers knowing more spells and feats that only sorcerers can take depending on bloodline. The next article will look at prestige classes that sorcerers are able to take depending on bloodline, and roleplaying tips and how to integrate the articles into a campaign.

To use these game mechanics, when a sorcerer is chosen, the player must decide which bloodline to choose. If the player does not decide for himself, it is up to the GM to decide a bloodline, and it will be the GM that makes the choices of extra spells known and if the player can take one of the bloodline feats. So in all fairness, the player should choose and spare the GM more paperwork and decisions. The list of bloodlines to choose from is as follows: Celestial, Dragon, Elemental, Fey, Fiend, Lycanthrope and Outsider. Once the bloodline has been determined it cannot be changed. It is from this bloodline that the player will make certain decisions. This article will look at the first decision – one extra spell known per spell level. I never liked that fact that sorcerers know so few spells so decided to take a leaf out of the shugenja from *Oriental Adventures*. In that sourcebook shugenja get to choose one extra spell per spell level depending upon a certain school. The list of spells to choose from is as below and is determinate by bloodline.

Celestial

- 1 Protection vs Evil, Mage Armor, Comprehend Languages
- 2 Glitterdust, Hypnotic Pattern, See Invisibility
- 3 Dispel Magic, Magic Circle vs Evil, Fly
- 4 Remove Curse, Minor Globe of Invulnerability, Resilient Sphere
- 5 Dismissal, Wall of Force, Dream
- 6 Globe of Invulnerability, Greater Dispelling, Analyze Dweomer
- 7 Delayed Blast Fireball, Sequester, Word of Chaos
- 8 Binding, Sunburst, Ethereality
- 9 Gate, Refuge, Wish

Dragon

- 1 Endure Elements, Burning Hands (issues from mouth), Cause Fear
- 2 Detect Thoughts, Resist Elements, Alter Self
- 3 Fly, Greater Magic Weapon, Protection from Elements
- 4 Stoneskin, Polymorph Self, Fear
- 5 Cloudkill, Cone of Cold, Stone Shape
- 6 Legend Lore, Acid Fog, True Seeing
- 7 Spell Turning, Limited Wish, Delayed Blast Fireball
- 8 Protection from Spells, Iron Body, Mind Blank
- 9 Meteor Swarm, Foresight, Shapechange

Elemental

- 1 Endure Elements, Burning Hands, Obscuring Mist
- 2 Resist Elements, Flaming Sphere, Whispering Wind
- 3 Protection from Elements, Gust of Wind, Stinking Cloud
- 4 Stoneskin, Wall of Fire, Solid Fog
- 5 Wall of Stone, Cone of Cold, Cloudkill
- 6 Chain Lightning, Flesh to Stone*, Control Weather
- 7 Planeshift, Delayed Blast Fireball, Statue
- 8 Iron Body, Incendiary Cloud, Protection from Spells
- 9 Meteor Swarm, Gate, Elemental Swarm

Fey

- 1 Charm Person, Reduce, Sleep
- 2 Detect Thoughts, Mirror Image, Tasha's Hideous Laughter
- 3 Fly, Haste, Suggestion
- 4 Improved Invisibility, Emotion, Hallucinatory Terrain
- 5 Mind Fog, False Vision, Mirage Arcana
- 6 Mass Suggestion, Mislead, Programmed Image
- 7 Power Word: Stun, Mass Invisibility, Phase Door
- 8 Mind Blank, Irresistible Dance, Mass Charm,
- 9 Wish, Foresight, Dominate Monster

Fiend

- 1 Cause Fear, Protection vs Good/Chaos/Law, Chill Touch
- 2 Darkness, Invisibility, Scare
- 3 Magic Circle vs Good/Chaos/Law, Dispel Magic, Deeper Darkness
- 4 Phantasmal Killer, Fear, Bestow Curse
- 5 Dominate Person, Magic Jar, Nightmare
- 6 Transformation, Circle of Death, Disintegrate

- 7 Planeshift, Limited Wish, Insanity
- 8 Horrid Wilting, Trap the Soul, Greater Planar Binding
- 9 Gate, Weird, Energy Drain

Lycanthrope

- 1 Change Self, Expeditious Retreat, Mount
- 2 Alter Self, Cat's Grace, Bull Strength
- 3 Haste, Nondetection, Displacement
- 4 Polymorph Self, Polymorph Other, Contagion
- 5 Teleport, Animal Growth, Seeming
- 6 Eyebite, Mass Haste, Transformation
- 7 Repulsion, Insanity, Sequester
- 8 Animal Shapes, Maze, Binding
- 9 Shapechange, Temporal Stasis, Dominate Monster

Outsider

- 1 Mage Armor, Expeditious Retreat, Protection from x
- 2 Darkness, Daylight, Mirror Image
- 3 Blink, Phantasmal Steed, Displacement
- 4 Scrying, Dimension Door, Arcane Eye
- 5 Teleport, Telekinesis, Magic Jar
- 6 Antimagical Field, Repulsion, True Seeing
- 7 Simulacrum, Teleport without Error, Shadow Walk
- 8 Antipathy, Ethereality, Horrid Wilting
- 9 Gate, Foresight, Teleportation Circle

Once determined these spells cannot be changed. These spells are just from the System Reference Document. A GM can change what spells are available on a list as they will. If there are more spells available in your campaign and a certain spell seems better choice than something else of that level for a certain bloodline, then change it.

For Example, Jiraca is a first level human Sorcerer. Her player decides she has an Elemental Bloodline. Her extra spell known for 1st level will be *endure elements*. So at 1st level she will know 4 cantrips, 2 1st level spells and *endure elements*. When she reaches 4th level, her player decides on *flaming sphere* as her extra 2nd level spell known, etc.

The next part will look at feats that sorcerers of certain bloodlines are able to take as they progress in levels. These feats will give a sorcerer abilities that are similar to the bloodline in question.

Now that a bloodline has been chosen and extra known spells have been determined, it is time to decide whether the sorcerer will know any bloodline feats. These feats are only available for those of a certain bloodline. There are a number of feats that are similar between bloodlines and some require the usage of spell slots to power them. Please obtain approval from a GM, if a player, to see if these feats are allowed. If you as the GM are reading this, decide whether you will

allow these feats for your players. Some feats may just need slight adjustments before they are allowed. A number of feats might seem unbalancing, but please remember these need unused spell slots to power the feat. No spell slots left means no access to the feat.

These feats can be taken:

- Normally when a character can choose a feat every 3 character levels. Eg. 1st, 3rd, 6th, 9th, etc.
- Can take a feat in place of a sorcerer class ability. As the only class ability is Summon Familiar, this is the only time a feat can be chosen this way.
- The sorcerer can permanently lose access to one spell slot to power one feat. This is determined in the description of the feat. But usually it is a spell slot two spell levels higher than a spell the feat duplicates.

All prerequisites must be met before the feat can be chosen, just like other normal feats. The list of feats is listed below, depending on bloodline.

Celestial

Celestial Healing [Bloodline]

You are able to heal wounds like a divine spellcaster.

Prerequisite: Celestial Bloodline, Heal 3 ranks, Cha 13+.

Benefits: You are able to cast *cure light wounds* up to 3 + Cha mod per day. Each time you use this ability, you lose 1 point of temporary Con damage. This can only be healed through normal non-magical means.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

Holy Wings [Bloodline]

You are able to convert unused spell slots into flight.

Prerequisite: Celestial Bloodline.

Benefits: With this feat you can expend unused spell slots into short bursts of flight. Each spell slot level expended can power the person in flight for 10 minutes per spell slot. During this time, the person can walk, move, etc normally, but they have the ability to fly if they so choose. The flight ends once the allotted time is up.

The speed one can fly at is twice their normal movement rate.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 5th level spell slot.

Celestial Magics [Bloodline]

You have a natural affinity for magic and can cast more cantrips a day than a normal sorcerer.

Prerequisite: Celestial Bloodline, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefits: Pick 3 cantrips. You can cast each of these cantrips twice per day. Note that these cantrips do not count towards how many cantrips a sorcerer can know or cast each day.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Life Protection [Bloodline]

You are able to resist life draining forces by using unused spell slots.

Prerequisite: Celestial Bloodline, Con 15+, *magic circle against evil*.

Benefits: By using unused spell slots, the sorcerer is protected against level drain and ability damage for as long as unused spell slots are used. For each spell level used, the protection lasts 2 rounds. Eg. Justona knows a number of undead are around so drops a 5th level spell to power her Life Protection to last for 10 rounds or 1 minute.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 5th level spell slot.

Heaven's Rage [Bloodline]

You can bring down the fires of heaven onto your enemies.

Prerequisite: Celestial Bloodline, Cha 15+, Spell Focus (Evocation).

Benefits: By using unused spell slots you can convert this energy into a harmful force to your enemies. Choice an element type: fire, cold, lightning, acid when you wish to use this power. Each spell level used to power the feat deals 1d6 points of damage of which half is the element chosen and the other half is divine power.

The feat has a range of 50 ft + 5 ft/level. It deals damage to all within a 10 radius centred on a target.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Draconic

Dragon Breath [Bloodline]

You can convert spell levels into a form of dragon breath.

Prerequisite: Draconic Bloodline, Spellcraft 4 ranks

Benefits: With this feat you can convert unused spell slots into a form of dragon breath. To convert spell slots into dragon breath is a move-equivalent action and the type of breath must be chosen as well as how many spell slots to be converted as well. Fire, cold, electric and acid are the types that can be chosen. Each spell slot level used deals 1d6 damage of the type chosen and has a cone range of 10 foot/spell slot. The breath originates from your mouth.

For example, if a 3rd level spell slot is chosen, the player will deal 3d6 points of damage to all within the range of a cone of 30 foot. Using this ability is quite draining on the body and can only be used 3 + Con mod times per day.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Eyes of the Dragon [Bloodline]

You can see nearly as well as a dragon

Prerequisite: Draconic Bloodline.

Benefits: A person with the feat gains Darkvision 60 foot. This is a permanent ability. A person who already has Darkvision increases their sight distance by 60 foot.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

Dragon Wings [Bloodline]

You can fly like a dragon without the need of wings.

Prerequisite: Draconic Bloodline, Ability to cast 2nd level arcane spells.

Benefits: With this feat one can expend unused spell slots into short bursts of flight. Each spell slot level expended can power the person in flight for 10 minutes per spell slot. During this time, the person can walk, move, etc normally, but they have the ability to fly if they so choose. The flight ends once the allotted time is up.

The speed one can fly at is twice their normal movement rate.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 5th level spell slot.

Dragon Magic [Bloodline]

You have a dragon's affinity to magic.

Prerequisite: Draconic Bloodline, Spellcraft 5 ranks

Benefits: Like a dragon, you have a natural affinity to arcane magic. Select three cantrips. You can cast each of these two times per day. Note these cantrips do not count towards the number of cantrips a sorcerer can cast or know.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Dragon Resistance [Bloodline]

You share some of the resistances that a dragon has.

Prerequisite: Draconic Bloodline, Con 13+, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefits: This feat simulates the dragon's resistance to some elements. Choose one type of energy: fire, cold, electric or acid. You gain that resistance 5. That is the first 5 points of damage that you are exposed to of that type do not affect you.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

Elemental

Elemental Resistance [Bloodline]

Able to withstand elemental damage.

Prerequisite: Elemental Bloodline, Con 13+.

Benefits: When this feat is taken, choose one type of energy: fire, cold, electrical or acid. You gain resistance 5 to this type of damage.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

Elemental Power [Bloodline]

You can expend unused spell slots into a burst of energy.

Prerequisite: Elemental Bloodline, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefits: With this feat you can convert unused spell slots into a form of energy. To convert spell slots into elemental energy is a move-equivalent action and the type of energy must be chosen as well as how many

spell slots to be converted as well. Fire, cold, electric and acid are the types that can be chosen. Each spell slot level used deals 1d6 damage of the type chosen and has a cone range of 10 foot/spell slot.

For example, if a 3rd level spell slot is chosen, the player will deal 3d6 points of damage to all within the range of a cone of 30 foot. Using this ability is quite draining on the body and can only be used 3 + Con mod times per day.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Elemental Healing [Bloodline]

By fully immersing yourself in one type of energy, you can heal wounds.

Prerequisite: Elemental Bloodline, Elemental Resistance, Con 15+.

Benefits: By fully immersing yourself into one type of substance, determined by the type of energy that you have Elemental Resistance against, you can heal yourself. For each 4 hours spent fully immersed and uninterrupted, you are healed of 1d8 + class level (max 10 levels) hps of damage. The list below details the element to be immersed in depending on the elemental resistance gained.

Fire – Fire
Cold – Water
Electricity –
Acid – Earth

For this ability to work, the entire body must be immersed, even the face. This would normally result in the death of a person due to suffocation, etc, but the bloodline of the person protects that person as long as they meet the requirements of this feat.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 6th level spell slot.

Elemental Summoning [Bloodline]

When casting a summoning spell, the creature summoned is either an elemental or an animal with the elemental template.

Prerequisite: Elemental Bloodline, *summon monster III*

Benefits: Whenever you cast a summon monster spell, you summon either an elemental animal or an elemental, depending on the spell level. In all other regards, the spell acts normally.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 5th level spell slot.

Elemental Familiar [Bloodline]

When summoning a familiar, the animal gained comes from one of the elemental planes.

Prerequisite: Elemental Bloodline, ability to summon a familiar, Cha 13+.

Benefits: If this feat is taken before the caster has ever summoned a familiar, the familiar summoned is an animal with the elemental template*. When the caster reaches a certain level and they summon a familiar, the familiar summoned is an elemental whose size depends on the caster level. The type of elemental chosen is determined by the caster.

5th level – small elemental
10th level – medium elemental
15th level – large elemental.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

(* The elemental template can be found in the second article of this series).

Fey

Sprite Wings [Bloodline]

You can flit around like a winged faerie.

Prerequisite: Fey bloodline.

Benefits: With this feat one can expend unused spell slots into short bursts of flight. Each spell slot level expended can power the person in flight for 10 minutes per spell slot. During this time, the person can walk, move, etc normally, but they have the ability to fly if they so choose. The flight ends once the allotted time is up.

The speed one can fly at is twice their normal movement rate.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 5th level spell slot.

Fey Willed [Bloodline]

You are able to resist spells cast by fey.

Prerequisite: Fey Bloodline, Base Will Save +5.

Benefits: A person with this feat is immune to all enchantment spells cast by creatures with the fey subgroup.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Dryad's Beauty [Bloodline]

You can charm someone with a look.

Prerequisite: Fey Bloodline, Cha 13+

Benefits: When casting *charm person*, the DC to resist the spell is increased by your Cha mod. Also you gain the ability to cast *charm person* 1/day, which does not count towards the number of spells a sorcerer can cast each day. However, this spell-like ability can only be used upon someone of the opposite sex and only in a non-threatening situation. Therefore it cannot be used in the middle of combat.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

Fey Sight [Bloodline]

Able to see as a faerie sees.

Prerequisite: Fey Bloodline.

Benefits: With this feat, you gain Lowlight vision. If you already had lowlight vision, then the distance viewable is doubled.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Fey Invisibility [Bloodline]

You can expend unused spell slots into a glamour that makes you invisible to all.

Prerequisite: Fey Bloodline, ability to cast 2nd level arcane spells.

Benefits: By expending unused spell slots, one can turn invisible like the 1st level spell. Each spell slot level used makes the invisibility last for 1 minute. By halving the time it lasts, one can make the invisibility act like *improved invisibility*.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 6th level spell slot.

Fiend

Demon's Presence [Bloodline]

You cause others to flee in panic at your sight if you will.

Prerequisite: Fiend Bloodline, Cha 13+, Intimidate 3 ranks.

Benefits: You can attempt to *cause fear* in others. By looking at someone in an aggressive manner and invoking this power, a person has to make a Will save, DC 10 + half your level (rounded down) + Cha modifier, or

flee in terror for 1d6 rounds. A person who makes this save is immune to any other *cause fear* attempts you make.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Bat Wings [Bloodline]

Shadow bat-like wings extend from your back allowing flight.

Prerequisite: Fiend Bloodline

Benefits: With this feat one can expend unused spell slots into short bursts of flight. Each spell slot level expended can power the person in flight for 10 minutes per spell slot. During this time, the person can walk, move, etc normally, but they have the ability to fly if they so choose. The flight ends once the allotted time is up.

The speed one can fly at is twice their normal movement rate.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 5th level spell slot.

Devil's Breath [Bloodline]

You can breathe out a special gas that will weaken those caught in its depths.

Prerequisite: Fiend Bloodline, *stinking cloud*

Benefits: As a move equivalent action you can draw in your breath in a certain way to prepare it to be expelled. As a standard action you can expel your breath and all in the cone shape area (25 ft + 5ft/level) must make a Fort save against DC 10+ half your sorcerer level + your Cha mod or lose 1d6 temp Str damage as the gas affects their body. You can do this 3 + Con mod per day.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 5th level spell slot.

Mephisto's Magic [Bloodline]

You have a natural affinity for magic and can cast more cantrips a day than a normal sorcerer.

Prerequisite: Fiend Bloodline, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Benefits: Choose 3 cantrips. You can cast these each 2 times per day. Knowing these cantrips or casting them does not count towards the daily limit a sorcerer can normally cast.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Fiend's Curse [Bloodline]

You can fly into a rage during combat if your blood is drawn.

Prerequisite: Fiend Bloodline, Con 15+, *endurance*

Benefits: If your blood is spilt by a weapon in combat, you must immediately make a Will save against DC damage dealt + opponent's Cha mod. If you fail the save, you immediately enter into a rage, similar to the barbarian's ability to rage. You can +4 to Str and Con. Like the ability you cannot cast spells or use missile weapons. You must enter into melee combat. If you wield no weapon, your hands turn into large black claws which with you can attack, dealing 1d6 slashing damage. While the claws last, you do not deal subdual damage and do not provoke an attack of opportunity for attacking unarmed.

The rage lasts until all opponents are defeated or 1 round/class level.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

Lycanthrope

Shift Form [Bloodline]

You can change your form to that of one specific animal.

Prerequisite: Lycanthrope Bloodline, *polymorph other*, Con 13+.

Benefits: With this feat you can change your form, not just your appearance to that of one animal. You can do this only 3 + Con modifier per day as it is very taxing on the body. When this feat is taken choose one large or smaller animal. This is the form you can take. To change form takes one full round action that attracts an attack of opportunity. Anything on the body, eg. Clothes, weapons, backpack or items, falls to the ground at the feet of the creature. Upon taking the form, the caster heals hit points equivalent to his caster level. Upon taking humanoid form, the caster heals his caster level in hit points again.

The caster can use all abilities of the creature as if he had used them since birth. The change lasts as long as wished but no longer than 24 hours or death, upon which the caster reverts back to humanoid form.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 6th level spell slot.

Animal Claws [Bloodline]

Your hands change to that of an animals for a short period of time.

Prerequisite: Lycanthrope Bloodline

Benefits: After taking this feat, the caster can shift the form of his hands to the claws of a beast to attack. The ability can be used as many times a day as wished, but lasts only 1 round/level. The change takes a move-equivalent action that does not draw an attack of opportunity. While the shift lasts, the caster can deal 1d6 points of slashing damage and is considered to have the feat Improved Unarmed Attack.

Normal: Without this feat, the caster could attack unarmed in melee for 1d4 points of subdual damage that would draw an attack of opportunity.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Thick Hide [Bloodline]

Normal weapons cannot harm you.

Prerequisite: Lycanthrope Bloodline

Benefits: A person with this feat gains damage reduction 5/silver. That is for the person to take damage from a weapon, the weapon must deal more than 5 points of damage in a single blow, or be at least a silver weapon.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

Quicksilver Speed [Bloodline]

You are faster than a normal person.

Prerequisite: Lycanthrope Bloodline, Dex 15+,

Benefits: When in light armor or not carrying more than a medium load, you add 10 foot to your base movement speed. Eg a human sorcerer wearing no armor and only carrying a light load has a base speed of 40 foot. You also get a +2 haste bonus to Initiative when under the same conditions as above.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

Magic Fang [Bloodline]

You are able to hurt creatures with your bare hands that have damage reduction.

Prerequisite: Lycanthrope Bloodline, Animal Claws, Thick Hide, *greater magic weapon*.

Benefits: When your hands have shifted to animal form when using the Animal Claws feat, you are able to strike creatures that have damage reduction as if you had a magic weapon. Creatures with damage reduction up to +5 can be damaged.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 5th level spell slot.

Outsider

Outsider Presence [Bloodline]

You can use your presence to influence others.

Prerequisite: Outsider Bloodline, Cha 13+.

Benefits: You can a +2 heritage bonus on all Diplomacy, Gather Information and Intimidate skill checks.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Skin of the Unknown [Bloodline]

Your skin is tougher than those from the Prime Material Plane.

Prerequisite: Outsider Bloodline, Con 13+, *mage armor*.

Benefits: You gain a +1 natural armor bonus due to the hardness of your skin. As you progress in power as a sorcerer, your skin thickens even more. For every 5 levels in sorcerer you attain, add another +1 to your natural armor. Therefore at 5th level you would have +2, increasing to +5 at 20th level.

However as your skin thickens, it becomes more noticeable and thus influences the way others perceive you. At 10th level you receive a -1 Cha for all skill interactions. This does not affect your spellcasting in anyway. This bonus increases by -1 for each bonus to natural armor you receive after 10th level. Eg at 15th level, a sorcerer would have a +4 natural armor bonus, but also a -2 to all Cha based skill checks. The only way to negate the penalty is to use magic to disguise your skin, or go out dressed in such a way so that no part of your skin, even your face is visible.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 4th level spell slot.

Otherworld Magics [Bloodline]

You have a natural affinity for magic.

Prerequisite: Outsider Bloodline

Benefits: You pick up simple magics easily. When this feat is taken, choose 3 cantrips. You can cast each of them twice per day. Note these cantrips do not count towards the number a sorcerer can normally know or cast per day.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 3rd level spell slot.

Outsider Resistance [Bloodline]

Spells affect you less often that other Prime Material Planers.

Prerequisite: Outsider Bloodline, Otherworld Magics

Benefits: Whenever you have to make a saving throw against a magical effect, you add a +2 heritage bonus to your saving throw. If a spell normally has no saving throw, you are allowed to make a saving throw to determine if the spell affects you.

Eg *enervation* usually has no saving throw. With this feat, you would be allowed to make a Will save (with the above +2 bonus) to avoid the effect. Also other spells which normally require a ranged touch attack to affect you, will also require a Reflex saving throw to see if the spell affects you.

Special: This feat can be chosen by meeting the prerequisites and permanently using up a 5th level spell slot.

This ends the first article on creating an alternate sorcerer by providing bloodlines from which to choose from. It shows extra known spells and some feats they can choose depending on the bloodline they choose. The next article will look at prestige classes sorcerers can take, depending on bloodline, and roleplaying tips on how a sorcerer will act differently depending on bloodline. If you have any comments or suggestions, feel free to email them to me at the address listed at the beginning of the article.

Computer Tools and Mapping

By Steven Creech

Gamers love maps. However, many Gamemasters run homebrew campaign worlds where pre-printed maps are not really sufficient. That's where a computer mapping program comes into play. The two most popular programs are Campaign Cartographer from *ProFantasy Software* and Fractal Mapper from *NBOS Software*. Let's take a look at what each has to offer.

Campaign Cartographer 2 Pro is arguably the most universally recognized mapping program. It offers the ability to make professional quality maps that vary in scope and size from entire worlds to interior floor plans like dungeons and towns. The program is based upon FastCAD, an architectural design

engine used in high-end design software. CC2 Pro itself offers a solid selection of templates and the ability to generate overland maps. The program itself carries a retail price of \$79.95 with the add-on expansion programs carrying additional costs.

The major drawback to CC2, and perhaps its most common criticism, is that it requires a very high learning curve. The program does come with a 188-page manual that is a vast improvement over previous edition's manuals. The manual itself has been written as a kind of tutorial designed to take a user from designing their very first map, to designing whole worlds. There is no built-in tutorial on the

program itself, but the manual helps take care of that.

The real strengths of CC2 lie in the available add-on software packages that extend its usability. ProFantasy offers the following add-ons: *City Designer 2* (\$39.95 retail), *Dungeon Designer 2* (\$36.95 retail), *Fantasy Floorplan symbol sets* (\$19.95 retail), *Fantasy Overland symbol sets* (\$19.95 retail), and *Fractal Terrains* (\$39.95 retail). All of them add a vastly greater set of options that will certainly enhance your mapping techniques. Additionally, ProFantasy offers a *Character Artist* program (\$29.95 retail) and *CC2 cut out/fold-up Dioramas* (\$36.95 retail).



When you run the program for the first time, the layout is certainly intimidating and I can see where it might frighten the weak at heart. There are more buttons and icons than you can shake a stick at. They all serve a specific function, but the presence of so many toolbars at one time is a bit daunting. After spending a little time getting to know the various functions and buttons, here is what I came up with in approximately 30 minutes of drawing.

Creation of the continental land mass was done with fractal lines as were the rivers. The rest of map was created using various icons that you just clicked and placed on the map where you pleased. The Undo button is a definite godsend for the beginning mapper as it allows you to go backwards as many moves as you need. As you can see I didn't go the extra mile of inserting text or going crazy with symbols. Rest assured, however, that you could certainly do that and more.

To really understand the full potential of Campaign Cartographer 2 Pro, one only has to visit ProFantasy's [library of images](#) that other CC2 users have created. The work is truly astounding. Furthermore, buyers of Campaign Cartographer are instantly given access to a Yahoo! run mailing list that boasts a huge support community. Additionally, ProFantasy lists [links](#) to the websites of people that show a strong presence of CC2 maps. In short, the support structure is first rate.

Fractal Mapper is another mapping utility that retails for \$34.95 and includes a global mapping program called *Fractal World Explorer*. In many ways Fractal Mapper is quite similar to CC2. However, one distinct difference is the lack of an owner's manual with Fractal Mapper. There is a built-in manual along with a tutorial to help you learn the program. While Fractal Mapper doesn't offer as many options as Campaign Cartographer, it does have a lot of things included in the program that is separate from CC2. In addition to doing overland maps, this program also lets you construct dungeons, continents and starship deckplans. There are a considerable number of symbols available, although not quite the number that is present in CC2.

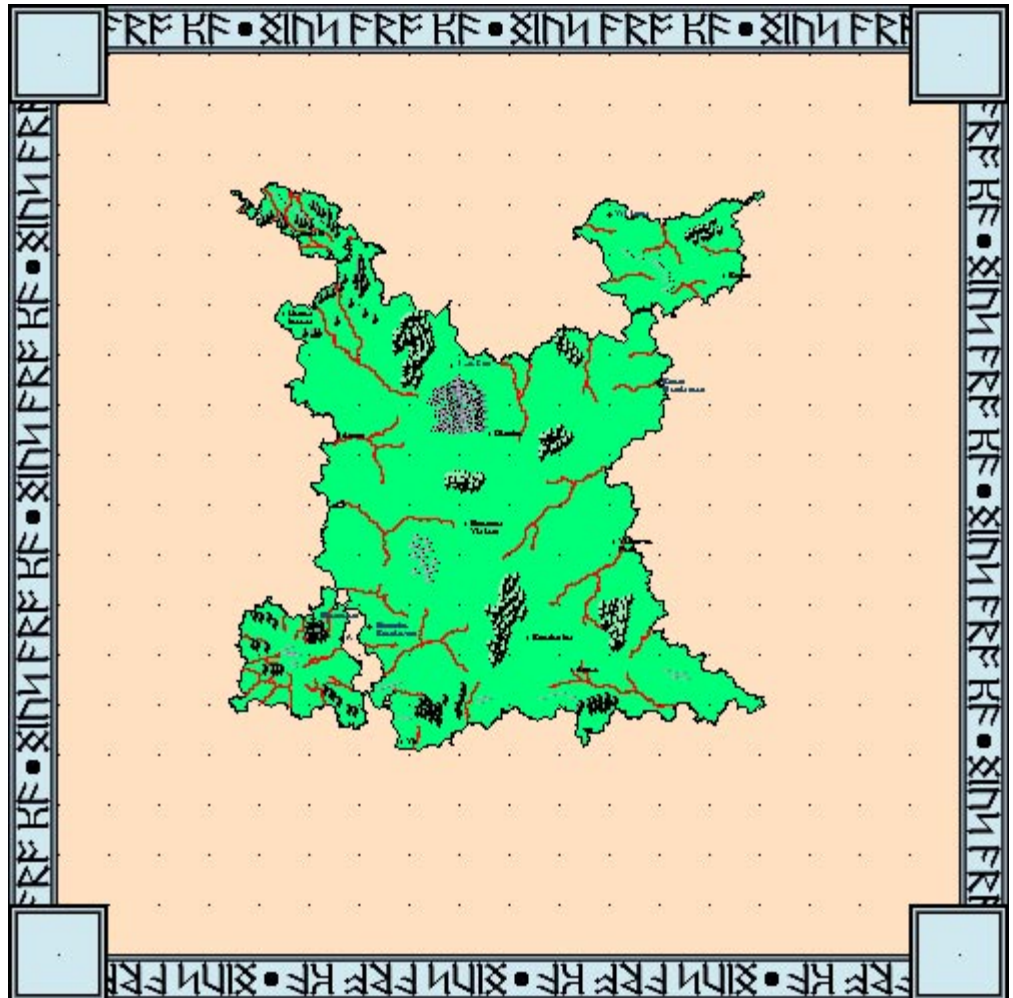
The tutorial program is a very strong selling point to Fractal Mapper. In just a few minutes you can create relatively detailed maps from the tutorial alone. You can generate a continent in only 5 minutes from the tutorial.

Besides being able to easily place objects, Fractal Mapper will also generate cities randomly and generate information about that city. The information includes statistics such as: population (complete with racial breakdown), current ruler, primary deity worshipped, chief industrial products, churches, schools, taverns, fees, and any weapons laws. There is also a brief sentence or two describing the city and its citizens in general along with plausible adventure hooks.

When you compare and contrast the two mapping utility programs, they both have significant strengths that make choosing difficult. Campaign Cartographer 2 Pro is the more robust of the two programs with the ability to generate some very professional looking maps. The downside of CC2 Pro is its especially high pricetag, the extra cost involved for its various expansion supplements, and its high learning curve that can frustrate anyone in no time at all.

Fractal Mapper generates more randomness in their fractal lines giving landmasses a more realistic feel. The learning curve is much

lower and the options of being able to generate dungeons and generate cities make this a very appealing product. When you compare all of this with the lower price, Fractal Mapper comes out slightly ahead of CC2 for the beginner. Both programs are outstanding and I would have to recommend Fractal Mapper for those who are just starting out. However, when the user outgrows Fractal Mapper, Campaign Cartographer 2 Pro is the next logical step. They both see use in my campaigns right now, but I have a feeling that CC2 will start to be used more often once I fully learn all of its features.



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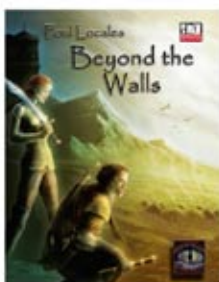
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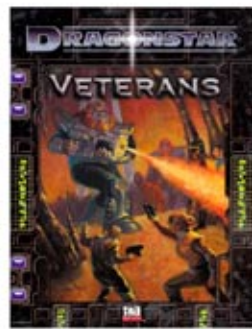


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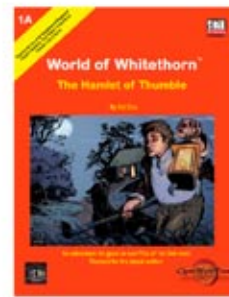
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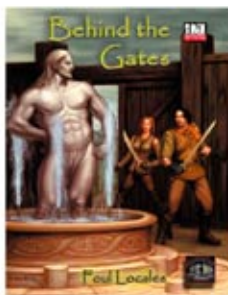
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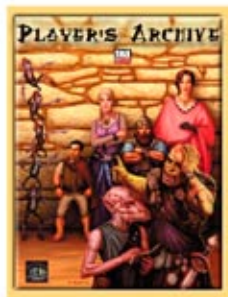
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Broadsides! vs. Seas of Blood: A Comparison

By Anna M. Dobritt

With so many sourcebooks out there, it's time to compare two of them. Today we're going to look at:"

Broadsides! Naval Adventuring

Published by Living Imagination

And

Seas of Blood - Fantasy on the High Seas

Published by Mongoose Publishing

Both books are 128 pages in length and the price is the same at \$19.95(US). Each book has good artwork and well laid out.

As their names imply, everything in Broadsides! and Seas of Blood are about adventuring on the high seas. Whether you want to be a common sailor working your way up to captain or an everyday adventurer traveling by ship, these books have the information you need.

The biggest difference between the two books, however, is Seas of Blood has basic deckplans for various ships and boats that are mentioned in the text, while Broadsides! doesn't. Broadsides! does give more game statistics for ships, including hit points for the masts, Acceleration and Deceleration rates, types and number of armaments and where these would be located on a ship.

When it comes to naval combat, Broadsides!, provides several diagrams showing how vessels can move during a round and other information for conducting combat at sea. Broadsides! also includes hit points for the sails of a ship.

Seas of Blood contains a chapter on Trade and Commerce, which Broadsides! lacks, but Broadsides! does has an excellent chapter for Nautical Equipment which includes information on Surgical Supplies.

Broadsides! and Seas of Blood cover underwater adventuring and combat and both books have new monsters. Each book has new spells for seafaring magic-users; along with new feats and prestige classes.

If you crave high sea adventure, you can't go wrong buying either book.

Getting the Most Out of Your Minor Foes

By Bret Boyd (DMBretB@comcast.net)

When characters have moved beyond the fragile nature of low levels, GMs tend to also leave behind those monsters previously used as challenges for them. Goblins, kobolds, and orcs soon become the fodder that more powerful foes position as mere diversions. It seems hard to imagine that these less powerful humanoids recently held the position of major nemeses for the PCs. They aided in defining the adventurers young careers. Should they so soon be discarded as a teen casts off childhood toys?

The GMs desire to use new and more powerful creatures is only natural and a healthy thing for any campaign. But too often, the villains of yesterday are never brought back into focus. It's true that, in game terms, monsters such as the humanoids mentioned above are not to be used against PCs of over 8th level. It is also true that adventures designed for characters over 3rd level rarely use these foes. There's plenty of good life left in these classics. This article examines the options that these humanoids have available to them.

Ability Scores and General Roles

Let's look at the average bare bones statistics for these humanoids. Goblins are quick (Dex 13), have average intelligence (Int 10), and are weak (Str 8). Their skills favor stealth and a good awareness of their surroundings. Kobolds are just as dexterous, have the same intelligence, but are even weaker (Str 6). Their skills favor stealth, with an emphasis on hiding, as well as the ability to construct traps. Orcs sit at the top of this little humanoid power structure with average quickness (Dex 10), slightly below-average intelligence (Int 9), and a powerful frame (Str 15). They generally have no skills to rely on.

Because of these strengths and deficiencies, a GM can easily determine where these creatures belong in a combat. Orcs are the definitive foot soldier, able to take the most punishment and dole out the most amount of damage. Goblins are more akin to scouts. They should begin by shadowing foes and then striking by surprise with one or two ranged attacks before moving into melee. Kobolds are quite fragile and should stick with ranged attacks whenever possible. A prudent tactic would be to fashion a trap that, while it might not incapacitate a PC, delays him long enough to pummel him with crossbow bolts. Kobolds should strike from a secure hiding place and then secretly change the location

they fire from after each attack to conceal their numbers.

Combat Options

Not every monster requires a new feat, spell, or prestige class to make it fresh and interesting. Listed below is a run down of the more common combat actions that any creature can attempt. Each one is looked at to see if our three archetype races can use it effectively.

Aid Another—Equally usable for any creatures involved in melee combat. This action provides a bonus to either a comrade's attack roll or AC. Considering the poor durability of these creatures, it is more prudent for them to cut down a foe quickly rather than attempt to outlast him. This action is especially useful to these low-level humanoids because all they need to do is succeed at an attack against an AC 10 to provide the bonus. Aiding another should be used when flanking is impossible or too dangerous.

*Bull Rush**—Orcs are best suited to this melee tactic because it requires a high strength check. It is best used in conjunction with a charge. Goblins and kobolds suffer a hefty -4 size penalty and should not attempt this unless there is another factor involved (see the "terrain" below).

*Charge**—Since a charge ends in a melee attack, the +2 it affords is wasted on kobolds and provides only a minor bonus for goblins because of their low strength scores. Orcs can again better utilize this tactic, especially if followed up with a bull rush.

*Disarm**—While the greatest chance of success for disarming rests with the strong orc, all of the humanoids could benefit greatly from an opponent with no weapon. Kobolds in melee have nothing to lose and should attempt this on the first combat round. Goblins are a bit heartier and can afford to wait a round or two before trying to disarm.

Flanking—In any melee, the importance of a flanking bonus must never be overlooked by any of these races. One loses nothing by using

this action and a +2 counts for a lot for any of our three humanoid races.

Fight Defensively—Not an option. This action lies somewhere between attack and retreat and all three races are simply too underpowered to make it work effectively. Higher level creatures can afford to sacrifice their attack bonuses for an extra armor edge, but these creatures cannot. They should either fight or retreat, but not try to do both with this action.

*Grapple**—Yet another strength-based action that should only be attempted by orcs. Goblins and kobolds are at an added disadvantage because of their negative size modifiers.

*Trip**—Like grappling, strength plays a vital part of this action and a size modifier puts goblins and kobolds again at a disadvantage.

Total Defense—Any of the humanoids can effectively utilize this tactic. An adequate armor class bonus accompanied by a standard move make this the perfect retreat action. For surprise value, have all humanoids involved in melee use this action at the same time. It may give the PCs pause as they try to figure out if the monsters are up to something.

There is a mitigating factor with the actions marked by an asterisk above (*). Should kobolds or goblins come under strength boosting effects such as the *bull's strength* spell, they would be able to take advantage of these on a more even scale. It is not out of the realm of possibility for the humanoid tribe's shaman to concoct such a potion or bestow the spell on a lucky warrior. However, this enhancement should be used sparingly due to the limited resources of a tribe and that it does not represent an "average" creature (see the "Adding Character Levels" sidebar above).

Terrain

When encountering the weaker humanoids, an advantage that should not be underestimated is the terrain. Goblins, kobolds, and orcs all have a home turf that is rarely, if ever, strayed from and they know it well enough to use it in

Adding Character Levels

This is, by far, the easiest way of making a weak monster more powerful. The third edition of the D&D game provides adequate and relatively quick guidelines for using this kind of enhancement. Unfortunately, it has limited use within the confines of this article. A 15th-level kobold sorcerer, for example, is not just unlikely in one's game, it is a stretch of credibility to the in-game world. As a result, such refined examples of their respective races should be used sparingly. Adding character levels defeats this article's purpose of examining how to use weak monsters more effectively as a whole and not just as individuals.

Underground—Each of our archetypal races frequently calls the underground home and there is no shortage of adventurers ready to snoop around within it. Whether inside or surrounding a lair, each race is intelligent enough to recognize any natural protections present. Deep chasms can be cleverly disguised or hidden. Unstable caverns can be made to look very inviting by places shiny trinkets and glowing fungi inside it. Chambers filled with natural gas stand to surprise those PCs that stride through with burning torches; the resulting explosions would act as both an assault and an alarm. Particularly narrow corridors could be rigged to collapse on unsuspecting characters.

Land—With the exception of the forest-dwelling kobolds, any type of land can house these numerous humanoids. There are many types of natural defenses a race can use for defense—marshes, steep mountains, ravines, and plateaus all offer areas of danger. Aboveground habitats are also subject to the region's weather conditions. Muddy flats, snow drifts, icy roads, and other hazards can be exploited by the humanoids as lair guardians.

The natural dangers inherent in any habitat can be forced upon characters when the humanoids make use of combat actions from the previous section. Bull rushing becomes an option for any humanoid if it means pushing a character into quicksand or over the edge of a cliff. Humanoids using total defense while retreating may draw PCs into an even more dangerous situation if they lure them into a dragon's lair (or the home of another potentially evil force).

Tactics

As a general rule of thumb, the GM should refrain from keeping his monsters too close together unless they're ganging up on a foe. Our archetypal humanoids have fought enough adventurers to know that a well-placed spell can easily incapacitate or slay a concentrated collection of creatures. If using a mixture of the races being discussed here, have them attack in waves. While orcs charge head-on, the remaining goblins and/or kobolds use their ranged weapons. The next round then sees the ranged support moving in to flank foes already engaged in melee. Any remaining ranged support can concentrate their fire on a PC when he slays his opponent.

Not every humanoid has to fight until death takes him. When a humanoid is struck in melee, have it fall to the ground as though slain. Ideally there are other foes for the slaying PC to move on to. When he moves past the "corpse," have the humanoid rise to attack from behind. It could even wait until that PC was in combat and then gain a flanking bonus as well as surprise.

Humanoids have limited means of constructing and maintaining equipment. Whenever the opportunity arises, one of these creatures should take a PC's weapon or piece of equipment (whether magical or mundane). Maybe an orc grapples a PC to the ground and is able to snatch a dagger or potion from his person. No matter what the item might be, the humanoid should not hesitate to use it against the PC, as it is undoubtedly of better quality. Have it drink the potion, use the wand, or attack with the dagger. Depending on the item, the PC may ignore obvious threats in an attempt to retrieve his property (an opportunity the GM should have his humanoids take advantage of if possible).

Conclusion

In a game of ever-increasing options and add-on rules, the GM must not forget the basics outlined in this article. The advice herein reaches beyond the three races compared and applies to any monster with above-minimum intelligence. Refresh the old standby creatures without unnecessary numbers crunching and funky new powers. Surprise players by presenting creatures as not just dangerous, but clever.

Fantasy World Proposals

By Andy Christian (Thaak13@aol.com)

Island in the Ice

(Untamo's Dream)

1. Core Ethos Sentence: Prescient dreams of a sleeping god portend the heroic martyrdom of outcasts trapped amidst the dynamic struggles of two decadent and moribund societies.

2. The Heroes: Ironically, despite the two primary societies' history of heroic survival, the heroes often do not originate within the mainstream of either. Rather, the heroes are comprised mostly of *Regressives* (a child born with recessive, non-human racial traits), pure-strain barbarians, and disillusioned citizens – the outcasts and downtrodden. The mainstream citizens are hybrids of various ancient racial crossbreeds, while pure-strains (elves, dwarves, et. al.) retain their ancestral pedigree. Despite their social station, the heroes will often distinguish themselves in the realization of Untamo's dream.

3. What the Heroes do: Due to the decadence of the aristocracies, both societies have become rife with complacency. It's rare for a citizen to take individual initiative against evil. The dangers inherent in confronting evil usually impose themselves on the heroes and it is up to the heroes to ensure the continued survival of the people who have spurned them.

4. Threats, Conflicts, Villains: The two primary societies, known collectively as The Two Peoples, are xenophobic cultures. Fortunately they are divided geographically by a near impassable mountain range. The few times they do come into contact, however, skirmishes usually ensue. The Two Peoples both derive from unique circumstances. Both cultures sought safety, a dubious prospect at best, from racial extermination. For a while the Island in the Ice provided the seclusion they needed. In recent history, a group of pure-strain elven Hunters found the Island in the Ice. The Hunters, claiming altruistic reasons, preyed upon The Two Peoples. Today, the pure-strain elves maintain a low profile, but still patiently hunt when chance allows. The island itself is also a threat. Extreme amounts of geothermal heat create unstable, porous bedrock. It is quite common for geysers to form nearly anywhere, occasionally wiping out entire villages. The island also has many pure elemental flows. These flows cause interesting magical effects such as

a fairly large desert in the middle of a fog enshrouded plateau. Genie-kin and various other Elemental Lords use these flows as tools for their various insidious machinations.

5. Nature of Magic: The Island in the Ice setting has fantastic legends of elemental pockets and a sleeping god. To some degree both are true. The myths from the before time indicate that Untamo was a man who became a great hero after he battled the ancient evil Shannow for 100 unsleeping years. Upon his victory he fell asleep and ice encompassed the world. It was ages later during a fitful nightmare that Untamo rolled over in bed and the mountains exploded with fire. The fires of Untamo's nightmare melted the Island free again, and The Two Peoples arrived to pay Him homage. Today, church dogma says that Untamo, the god of sleep and dreams, rests deep within the earth under the mountain where His bed is positioned over a magma-heated airflow just within the border ethereal. The Island in the Ice is sometimes referred to as Untamo's Dream. The divine subconscious has created a connection between the border ethereal and the dreams of all on the island. Consequently, a virtual dream world exists overlapping the real world. It is from the inherent divine magic of this dream world, of Untamo, that spell casters and psionicists harness the power for their spells. Furthermore, because of the connection to the ethereal, various Elemental Lords have created conduits for elemental flow on the island. These elemental flows are alternate sources of power for aspiring sorcerers and wizards, but those who would use the elements rather than *the dream* are often cast out as pariahs or heretics.

6. New & Different: The Island in the Ice setting is unique in several ways. A) First and foremost is the climate of the Island. The island sits under the middle of a giant glacier where geothermal heat has melted away the ice and created a temperate, albeit steamy, environment. The entire island is enshrouded in fog, mist and steam on a constant basis. This has necessitated the perfection of various fog-based skills and magic. B) The source of magic represents the second major difference. The dream realm is really the sleeping consciousness of Untamo. Consequently, Untamo's priests are the most powerful magic users on the Island. There are those who seek to know Untamo by physically

traveling into the dream realm. When Tsalo Sakiir, the first of these travelers, returned, he created The Waking Dream Monastery where he instructs those who would learn the art of dream walking. C) The last major difference is the use of traditionally heroic races (i.e. pure-strain elves) as the villains. The entire atmosphere of the Island is one of misunderstandings, prejudices, hatreds, and fears that cause strife throughout the history of the Island.

Andrew T. Christian

“They Make The Strangest Couple...”

In February, the **d20Magazine Rack** ran a contest in the spirit of Valentines Day. The object was to come up with two racially different individuals who were deeply in love. Not only did the proper d20 stats have to be created, but an interesting backstory had to be written also. The end results were quite intriguing with Tom Gafkjen, David Jones, and Chris Sims all submitting entries. The winner was Chris Sims, who received autographed copies of *Pale Designs: A Poisoner's Handbook* from Bastion Press and *Denizens of Freeport* from Green Ronin. Congratulations, Chris!

Kindred Spirits

By Chris Sims (chris@donkeyfeather.com)

Panting, she loped through the frigid forest. Around Cleestuk, fog lay like a blanket of crystal cold illuminated by the pale light of the moon. New snow, rare here, hindered her passage. With a deep breath, she stopped and listened for anything. The yapping sounds of her pursuers soon became evident, echoing hollowly in the mist.

“This can't go on,” thought Cleestuk, “I'll freeze or be killed by Aratuk and her band. Why must I run? I was never part of the tribe anyway. Only my power kept me safe, and now Aratuk thinks I've let her father die.”

“Don't despair, little daughter, you are protected from the cold, your path is hidden, and soon your flight will end,” the spirit of Cleestuk's great grandmother, a kobold witch herself, whispered in the stillness, “Someone is coming to meet you.”

Cleestuk lashed her tail in frustration and pressed on. In the back of her mind, she hoped whomever she was to meet was not one of the shaggy, horned giants that roamed these hills—the hokraa as her people called them.

As if in answer to her nightmarish musings, Cleestuk rounded the curve in the path and leaned against the rock face of the cliff to her right. She was looking over her shoulder when, from above, there came a snort. Her heart froze as she looked slowly toward the sky. Towering above her was a hokraa, his horns blotting out the ghostly moon in the mist.

The kobold sorceress, insignificant in the night-shadow of the giant beast man, made to speak. She knew the language of the giants.

“Remember your promise to me,” hissed the chameleon spirit that was the newest of Cleestuk's totems.

Cleestuk's heart quailed, but she lied anyway, crying, “Hold great hokraa! I am here to protect you against those that hunt you! I cannot bear to see you harmed! The spirits cast you from every eye!”

Cleestuk danced a circle around the hokraa as it watched her in bewilderment. She sang and rattled her bone-bag, watching the spirits shroud the giant in unsight. She then turned her back on the monster, preparing for swift death.

After a moment, “Y-you protect hokraa? Hokraa is me?” came a deep, disembodied voice, “Why?”

“Because, I...,” she searched for something appropriate, “I love you.”

Cleestuk thought the rival hunting her that night would slaughter her, and then that the minotaur she chanced to meet in the forested hills would do the same. Yet, those who truck with spirits and magic find strange serendipities in their lives. So, neither happened.

Hokraa, as the minotaur came to call himself, immediately took kindly the little sorceress, believing she intended to protect him, even though she was clearly puny. Unlike the minotaurs from other parts of the world, his people did not crave slaughter and destruction. They were merely capricious and dangerous wanderers in the hills and mountains near Cleestuk's home. Hokraa himself was a lone male with no band and no territory, and thus Cleestuk's words struck some chord in his feral heart that night.

When Aratuk's party did show up, having heard Cleestuk's outcries and spellcasting, they thought the shaman would be easy prey. Those that survived Hokraa's attacks did so only by fleeing. Now, though she no longer lives with them, the kobolds of Cleestuk's old tribe still speak of the witch who summoned the “spirit-giant” that slew their greatest sorceress. They tell their young ones that if they don't live up to kobold ways, Cleestuk will come for them with her hokraa. Cave paintings in the kobold warrens record the story for anyone who dares look there.

Cleestuk healed Hokraa's wounds and found her lies had made her a friend. Over the course of weeks, Hokraa doted on his tiny friend, hunting for her and making sure she was warm and protected. The kobold found

genuine affection growing for Hokraa very quickly, as she was never accepted by anyone amongst her tribe due to her strange powers and queer behavior.

She taught Hokraa how to speak the True Language (Draconic) and many secrets of spirits and survival. In return, Hokraa gave her confidence, protection, and care. The two complimented one another very well. Her lying tongue became that of a prophet, for Cleestuk found that she did come to love Hokraa, and her love was returned. (She never had the heart to tell Hokraa she lied at their first meeting, but that hardly matters now.)

To Cleestuk's chagrin, her emotional ties to the minotaur started her producing eggs regularly. She began to wish she could find a way, through spirits or magic, to transform herself into a minotaur permanently. One evening, when Cleestuk went into her regular trance, the spirits showed her she had been thinking too small. Together, she and Hokraa could be the creators of a new race, superior to kobolds and minotaurs. One had only to find the means. Hokraa was delighted with the idea, being a simple creature with basic desires. To him, such a transformation will make his relationship to Cleestuk “complete”.

Thus, Hokraa follows Cleestuk in their quest for unique togetherness. To this end, they wander the world, far from lands known to men and elves. One day, perhaps, the search will force them to seek “civilized” aid. Maybe there's an insane or whimsical deity watching their progress, waiting for the right moment to create a new form of life.

Adventures

Cleestuk and Hokraa have done a variety of things, befitting their changeable natures. Notably, they've worked as mercenaries for a hobgoblin kingdom deep in remote mountains, during which time they acquired some of their items as pay. There also, Cleestuk worked with a hobgoblin wizard to produce some of her own magic items. With the help of the odd couple, a hobgoblin strike force managed to root out and defeat a small enclave of hill giants that had been giving them trouble for years.

Yet, the end of the equitable and lucrative alliance came when Cleestuk decided it was better to defend a group of winter nymphs (great nature spirits themselves, CN) from the iron claw of the hobgoblin king. Instead of making an enemy of the hobgoblins, Hokraa

and Cleestuk slew all in the band attacking the nymphs. Thus, the warband sent to destroy the fey never returned, and the hobgoblins think their mercenaries dead as well. The nymphs rewarded the shaman and her partner with some items to protect them from the cold and aid their lonely quest.

Now Cleestuk is driven to find ancient sites and clues to magic that can change her and Hokraa into something greater. In their adventures, they've become a powerful force and acquired some unique baubles. How an encounter with more "heroic" types might turn out is anyone's guess.

Characters

Game notes and statistics for the characters mentioned above follow. Descriptions of

items marked with a "†" are found elsewhere in this article.

Cleestuk

Typical for a female kobold, Cleestuk is 3 ft. 2 in. tall and 38 lbs. at age 28. She's dusky-skinned and smooth featured. The four horns on her head are bone colored and symmetrical and her thin, crocodile-like face is well formed, even, and usually occupied by a drowsy expression. It's the kobold's sharp eyes that tell an observer this is no vapid monster. Cleestuk's hands, tail, and feet are permanently tattooed a dark red like dried blood, the designs ranging onto her forearms and calves like licking fire. Her nose sports a similar line of stylized fire that is drawn to between Cleestuk's hairless brows. Fiery

wisps of the design encircle the shaman's eyes, making a cross-like configuration.

Observant and quiet, Cleestuk's eyes always move like a feral animal's might. She considers things only for a moment before acting, relying on her great destiny and spiritual allies to aid her. Caring only for plans regarding herself and those in her care, Cleestuk likes a hand-to-mouth existence. She is untrustworthy and untrusting, for whimsy and spirit whispers can make her mind change quickly, and only a very few have accepted her strange, selfish ways. Her emotions are intense, and she follows them, though one single humor doesn't take precedent for long. Love of her great-grandmother, Hokraa, and Aaszu are major driving forces in Cleestuk's life. Lying, cheating, stealing, and murder

Cleestuk, female kobold Shaman 7/Sor 4: CR 11; Small humanoid (reptilian); HD 7d8+7 plus 4d4+4; hp 57; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (19 w/ Dodge) (touch 13 (14), flat-footed 15); Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6-1, +1 *ghost touch quarterstaff*), or +11/+6 ranged (1d4-1, +1 *returning dart*), or +11/+6 ranged (1d4-1, masterwork dart); SA Rebuke spirits (7/day); SQ Alertness (within 5 ft. of familiar), darkvision (60 ft.), *detect spirits* at will, light sensitivity (-1 to attack in bright sun/*daylight* spell), spirit familiar (+2 to Reflex Saves); AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +12; Str 7, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12 (14 w/mask), Wis 16, Cha 18.

Languages Spoken: Common, Draconic, Giant, Kobold.

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +9, Heal +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4 (+5 *chameleon mask*), Knowledge (nature) +5 (+6 *chameleon mask*), Knowledge (spirit world)[†] +6 (+7 *chameleon mask*), Listen +3 (+5 w/ familiar), Perform +6, Profession (herbalist) +8, Speak Language (Common), Spellcraft +6 (+7 *chameleon mask*), Spirit Empathy[†] +7, Spot +3 (+5 w/familiar), Swim +1*, Trance[†] +7, Wilderness Lore +7. **Feats:** Craft Fetish[†], Dodge, Great Fortitude, Large Familiar[†]. *See weight penalty in "Possessions".

Shaman Spells Known: (6/5/4/3/2 per day, base save DC 14 + spell level) 0—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *know direction*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *prestidigitation*; 1st—*burning hands*, *cause fear*, *change self*, *cure light wounds*, *endure elements*, *pass without trace*, *protection from spirits*[†]; 2nd—*darkness*, *ghost touch*[†], *identify spirit*[†], *invisibility*, *produce flame*; 3rd—*cure moderate wounds*, *magic circle against spirits*[†], *nondetection*, *resist elements*; 4th—*ethereal projection*[†], *confusion*, *wall of fire*.

Sorcerer Spells Known: (6/7/4 per day, base save DC 14 + spell level) 0—*detect magic*, *flare*, *mage hand*, *ray of biting darkness*[†], *read magic*, *shadow play*[†]; 1st—*dark daggers*[†], *mantle of shadows*[†], *ray of enfeeblement*; 2nd—*alter self*.

Totems[†]: Spirit (great grandmother), Fire (serpent), Trickery (chameleon).

Taboos[†]: Always wear a red cross like fire points on the face, covering eyes as well as have red hands, tail, and feet. The first thing said upon first meeting any creature must be a lie.

Possessions: +3 *leather armor*, +1 *ghost touch quarterstaff*, +1 *dart of returning*, *chameleon mask* (lesser), darts (3, kobold masterwork), silver dagger (masterwork), clay pot (red paint), bone bag (contains materials, fetishes: *darkness*, *cure light wounds* (2), and *wall of fire*), *boots of the winterlands*, wolf fur cloak (10 lbs., -2 to Swim checks).

Aaszu, feather lizard spirit familiar: CR 11; Medium-size animal (incorporeal); HD 3d12+9 (treat as 11 for HD-related effects); hp 28; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect), swim 30 ft.; AC manifested: 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 10), materialized: 16 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+4, bite); SA Manifestation, materialization, touch; SQ Alertness (within 5 ft. of mistress), empathic link, naturally ethereal, improved evasion, share spells, share saves, speak with mistress, speak with reptiles, turn resistance +7; AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +12; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: As mistress, Balance +10, Hide +7, Listen +4 (+6), Spot +4 (+6).

Notes: A feather lizard is a giant lizard with warm blood and covered with grey feathers from Cleestuk's temperate forest home. Males have bright plumes of yellow, red, or orange, but Aaszu is a female manifestation.

SA—Manifestation (Su): At will, Aaszu can make herself visible to corporeal beings. She is still treated as incorporeal.

SA—Materialization (Su): As a move-equivalent action, Aaszu can materialize fully as a solid creature allowing her to interact with other corporeal things.

SQ—Incorporeal: Can only be harmed by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better weapons, or magic with a 50% chance to ignore damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects. Always moves silently.

SQ—Naturally Ethereal: Like a ghost, unless Aaszu is manifested or materialized, she is considered ethereal (invisible and incorporeal, unable to interact with the material world).

SQ—Turn Resistance: Aaszu gains a bonus against the rebuke attempts of other shamans equal to Cleestuk's shaman class level.

are all within Cleestuk's ability and morality, especially where protecting or caring for any of these other creatures is involved.

Hokraa

Hokraa's 8 ft. 6 in. frame is massive with 556 pounds of solid muscle, thick, grey fur and black horns. His face is somewhat bovine, set with an eternally furrowed brow, black eyes that are often lined with the red of rage or passion, and the teeth of a creature that can eat anything, including prominent, sharp canines. The only clothes he bothers to wear are those of practical application (armor and baldrics). Cleestuk washes Hokraa, plaits his mane, and paints his hands, face, tail, and hoofed feet red with her personal dye. The design is like that of Cleestuk's tattoos. The minotaur is younger than Cleestuk (21 years old), though neither of them knows this.

Hokraa is calm (for a minotaur). He allows Cleestuk to take the lead in any interaction they face, besides battle. When she is threatened, Hokraa is a demon of "might makes right" who will not hesitate to kill or destroy. During a conversation, Hokraa makes his own ideas known by growling, grunting, or some appropriate body language. He speaks rarely. The minotaur, if left to his own devices, is likely to choose the physical solution to any problem. Strangely, he cares more about Cleestuk than he does himself. When the two sleep, he's restless unless she's nestled near him, safe and sound. Unbeknownst to Cleestuk, Hokraa is a bit jealous of Aaszu, especially when the shaman chooses to ride the spirit lizard.

Skill Notes from Other d20 Sources

You'll notice Hokraa has some unusual skill bonuses and an unusual feat bonus. First, it's been suggested in the *D&D FAQ* that a character may use its Strength modifier for Intimidate if the intimidation utilizes a show of brute force and physical aspects to the implied threat. Secondly, other sources (such as Sean K. Reynolds) suggest that the Skill Focus feat should provide a +3 bonus to the appropriate skill. The logic behind this seems to be other feats that provide +2 to two specific skills (such as Stealthy from *d20 Modern*). On also notes the presence of a feat in non-OGC games (such as *Star Wars*) that does just this. Hokraa benefits from this alternate; lower his Wilderness Lore skill to +7 if you object.

Hokraa, male minotaur Bar 6: CR 10; Large monstrous humanoid; HD 6d8+12 plus 6d12+12; hp 90; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 19 (touch 14); Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (1d10+10/crit 19-20, +1 *ghost touch heavy flail*), or +18/+13/+8 melee (2d6+9/crit 19-20, masterwork greatsword), or +12/+7/+2 ranged (1d8+4/crit3, mighty masterwork composite longbow); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Charge 4d6+9; SQ +4 Search Spot, and Listen, fast movement, scent, natural cunning, rage (2/day), uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL CN; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 22, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 11.

Languages Spoken: Giant, Draconic.

Skills: Climb +10, Intimidate +8 (+14 using Strength mod), Jump +10, Knowledge (spirit world) +0, Listen +7, Search +7, Speak Language (Draconic), Spot +7, Swim +6*, Wilderness Lore +8. **Feats:** Cleave, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Track. *See weight penalty in "Possessions".

SA—Charge: On a charge, Hokraa can choose to gore for 4d6+9 points of damage.

SQ—Natural Cunning: Hokraa is immune to *maze* spells, and he can't become lost or be caught flat-footed.

Possessions: +1 *mithral shirt*, +1 *ghost touch heavy flail* (+2 to disarm attempts, may be used to trip and dropped to avoid a counter-trip), composite longbow (hobgoblin masterwork, mighty (Str 19)), greatsword (hobgoblin masterwork), *fey quiver* (169 arrows), *ring of warmth*, cave bear cloak (50 lbs., -10 to Swim checks).

Shaman Notes

Of Spirits

According to Green Ronin's *The Shaman's Handbook*, anything that is an outsider or naturally incorporeal (such as some undead) can be considered a spirit and affected by magic and abilities that affect spirits. In my campaign, I extend the definition of spirit to fey creatures as well. This broad definition of "spirit" fits well with the cosmology of the shaman and makes such a character a potent ally against the supernatural. It may seem to make the shaman too powerful, but the class is actually limited in many other ways. Some of Cleestuk's abilities are generally defined below. For more information see *The Shaman's Handbook*.

Rebuke Spirits

Cleestuk can rebuke and command spirits as an evil cleric rebukes and commands undead. This includes the ability to bolster spirits against turning and resist another shaman's rebuking attempts. Shamans can also use their rebuke ability in other ways not delineated here.

Skills

Cleestuk has a few new skills (Hokraa has one). The basic function of Knowledge (spirit world) is like that of any other Knowledge skill in reference to its subject. Spirit Empathy functions a lot like Animal Empathy, except it allows one to influence spirits. Finally,

there's Trance, which allows the shaman to sleep despite distractions (DC 5-10), slow her breathing to half normal (DC 10), ignore pain (DC 10 + damage taken), maintain awareness of her body when outside it (like *ethereal projection*, DC 15 - any damage taken), heal twice as fast when resting (DC 20), or feign death and delay poison (DC 30). Trance checks are made once per minute.

Feats

The feat Craft Fetish works just like creating a scroll, except the result is a small token containing the spell. Other divine spellcasters can attempt to use the fetish if they meet normal requirements for using a spell completion item and they make a successful activation check. Non-shaman characters treat their divine spellcasting level as one-half normal for determining whether they may use a fetish without a check and for the check itself. (See *DMG, Chapter 8, Scrolls* for more information.)

Large Familiar simply allows one to choose a Medium-size animal as a familiar. The actual effects of doing so vary by animal type. Cleestuk's giant lizard is also a spirit animal (utilizing the Spirit template from *The Shaman's Handbook*.), which is a special feature of shaman familiars (and a new feat for other spellcasters).

Totems

Totems are like domains in that the shaman gains access to domain spells. The totem grants no other benefit, but it comes from a specific spirit animal (noted in parenthesis in Cleestuk's statistics).

Taboos

The spirits require the shaman behave in certain ways. If the shaman fails to do so, she loses her powers for a day. If she repeatedly defies the spirits, her powers may be lost for good or at least until she has an *atonement* spell cast on her behalf.

New Spells

Here are explanations of the new spells for Cleestuk as well as a few required by the new items in the article. Spells marked with a "†" are from *The Shaman's Handbook* (by Green Ronin), those marked with a "‡" are from *Magic* (by Alderac Entertainment Group), and *mantle of shadows* comes from *Spells and Spellcraft* (by Fantasy Flight Games). The rest are from the SRD (*secret chest*) or are my creations. All of the spells are modified for clarity, so as to be most useful with just this article as reference and to comply with legal issues.

Acumen

Transmutation

Level: Brd 2, Clr 2, Shaman 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M/DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The spell grants an enhancement bonus to Intelligence of 1d4+1 points.

Dark Daggers ‡

Evocation (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft. per level)

Target: One creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

You create 1 shard per caster level (maximum 10) of two-dimensional blackness, capable of slicing through anything. The daggers move in a straight line toward the intended target, against whom you must make a single ranged touch attack for the daggers to hit. If struck,

the victim takes 1d4 points of damage per dagger.

Detect Spirits †

Divination

Level: Shaman 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 ft.

Area: Quarter circle emanating from you to the extreme of the range

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute/ level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You can detect the aura that surrounds undead. The amount of information revealed depends on how long you study a particular area or subject:

1st Round: Presence or absence of spirit auras.

2nd Round: Number of spirit auras in the area and the strength of the strongest spirit aura present. If the you are of opposite alignment to he detected spirit, the strongest spirit aura's strength is "overwhelming" (see below), and the strength is at least twice your character level, you are stunned for 1 round and the spell ends. While you are stunned, you can't act, you lose any Dexterity bonus to AC, and attackers gain a +2 bonus to attack you.

3rd Round: The strength and location of each aura. If an aura is outside your line of sight, then you discern its direction but not its exact location.

Aura Strength: The HD of the spirit determines the strength of the aura:

Strength	HD
Dim	Lingering aura
Faint	1 or less
Moderate	2–4
Strong	5–10
Overwhelming	11+

Length Aura Lingers: How long the aura lingers depends on its original strength:

Aura Strength	Duration
Faint	1d6 minutes
Moderate	1d6 x 10 minutes
Strong	1d6 hours
Overwhelming	1d6 days

Note: Each round, you can turn to detect things in a new area. The spell can penetrate barriers, but 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common

metal, a thin sheet of lead, or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks it.

Ethereal Projection †

Necromancy

Level: Shaman 4, Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

Saving throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You project your spirit into the ethereal plane, leaving your body in a death-like trance. Your ethereal body has all of your normal abilities and ethereal duplicates of everything you carry (except for living creatures, like a familiar). Your body suffers all of the damage your spirit does, and vice versa; if either is killed, you die.

Fey Sleep

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Brd 3, Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One creature

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You put one creature, no matter what its HD, into a comatose slumber. Sleeping creatures are helpless. Slapping or wounding awakens affected creatures, but normal noise does not. Awakening a creature is a standard action.

Fey sleep does not target unconscious creatures, constructs, or undead.

Ghost Touch †

Transmutation

Level: Shaman 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: One creature or object touched

Duration: 1 minute/level or 1 round/level (see text)

Saving throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

The creature or item touched is granted the *ghost touch* ability for the duration of the spell. Thus, the creature or object may affect incorporeal creatures as if they were solid (and vice versa). Single items retain the ability for one minute per level of the caster, but entire creatures maintain it for only one round per level of the caster.

Cast upon an incorporeal creature, that creature must make a Will save or be treated

as corporeal for the duration of the spell. Incorporeal creatures with the ability to become ethereal (such as a ghost or spirit) may still do so as normal, but are treated as corporeal if they manifest at any time during the duration of a *ghost touch* spell against which they failed a Will saving throw.

Identify Spirit †

Divination

Level: Shaman 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 ft.

Target: One spirit

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You cast this spell and indicate one spirit you can sense within range. If the spirit fails its Will save (and you overcome its SR), you learn its type and subtypes, or that it is not a spirit. If the spell is resisted, you learn nothing.

Magic Circle against Spirits †

Abjuration

Level: Brd 3, Clr 3, Law 3, Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Area: Emanates 10 ft. from touched creature

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Spell Resistance: No (see text)

This spell wards all creatures in the area from attacks by spirits, from mental control, and from summoned or conjured spirits. The subjects get a +2 deflection bonus to AC and a +2 resistance bonus on saves. Both of these bonuses apply against attacks made by spirits.

The barrier blocks any attempt to possess the warded creature or to exercise mental control over the creature. The protection does not prevent a spell or effect that grants mental commands from being cast on the warded creatures, but it prevents the caster of such a spell from mentally commanding them. If the warding effect ends before the mental control effect does, the caster of the controlling spell would then be able to mentally command the affected creature. Likewise, the barrier keeps out a possessing life force but does not expel one if it is in place before the spell is cast. This effect works regardless of alignment.

The spell prevents bodily contact by summoned or conjured spirits. This causes the natural weapon attacks of such creatures to fail and the creatures to recoil if such attacks require touching the warded creature. The protection against contact by summoned or

conjured spirits ends if the warded creature makes an attack against or tries to force the barrier against the blocked spirit. Spell resistance can allow a spirit to overcome this protection and touch the warded creature.

This spell has a special function that you may choose when casting the spell. A magic circle can be focused inward rather than outward. In this case, it serves as an immobile, temporary magical prison for a summoned spirit. The spirit cannot cross the circle's boundaries. You must beat a creature's SR in order to keep it at bay, but the deflection and resistance bonuses and the protection from mental control apply regardless of enemies' SR. If a creature too large to fit into the spell's area is the subject of the spell, the spell acts as normal for that creature only.

This spell is not cumulative with any other *magic circle against* or *protection from* spell.

Mantle of Shadows

Illusion (Glamer)

Level: Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

Components: S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You cover the target in swirling shadows, through which it can see. The shadows grant the target one-quarter concealment (10% miss chance) and a +4 circumstance bonus to Hide checks in shadowy or dark areas.

Protection from Spirits †

Abjuration

Level: Shaman 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: No (see text)

This spell wards a creature from attacks by any creatures classified as spirits, regardless of alignment, from mental control, and from summoned or conjured spirits. It creates a magical barrier around the subject at a distance of 1 foot. The barrier moves with the subject and has three major effects.

First, the subject gets a +2 deflection bonus to AC and a +2 resistance bonus on saves. Both these bonuses apply against attacks made by spirits.

Second, the barrier blocks any attempt to possess the warded creature (as by a *magic jar* attack) or to exercise mental control over the creature (as by a vampire's supernatural domination ability, which works similar to dominate person). The protection does not prevent a vampire's domination itself, but it prevents the vampire from mentally commanding the protected creature. If the protection from evil effect ends before the domination effect does, the vampire would then be able to mentally command the controlled creature. Likewise, the barrier keeps out a possessing life force but does not expel one if it is in place before the spell is cast. This second effect works regardless of alignment.

Third, the spell prevents bodily contact by summoned or conjured spirits (including incorporeal ones). This causes the natural weapon attacks of such creatures to fail and the creatures to recoil if such attacks require touching the warded creature. The protection against contact by summoned or conjured spirits ends if the warded creature makes an attack against or tries to force the barrier against the blocked spirit. Spell resistance can allow a spirit to overcome this protection and touch the warded creature.

Ray of Biting Darkness

Evocation (Shadow)

Level: Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Ray

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

A ray of darkness projects from your pointing finger. You must succeed at a ranged touch attack with the ray to deal 1d4+1 points of damage to a target. Sunlight, a *daylight* spell, or some equivalently bright and pure light can block the ray, causing it to dissipate harmlessly. Shadow creatures are healed 1 hit point by the ray, instead of taking damage.

Secret Chest

Conjuration (Summoning)

Level: Sor/Wiz 5

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: See text

Target: One chest and up to 1 cu. ft. of goods/caster level

Duration: 60 days or until discharged

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You hide a chest on the ethereal plane for up to 60 days and can retrieve it at will. The chest can contain up to 1 cubic foot of material per caster level (regardless of the chest's actual size, which is about 3 feet by 2 feet by 2 feet). If any living creatures are in the chest, there is a 75% chance that the spell simply fails. Once the chest is hidden, you can retrieve it by concentrating (a standard action), and it appears next to you.

The chest must be exceptionally well crafted and expensive, constructed for you by master crafters. The cost of such a chest is never less than 5,000 gp. Once it is constructed, you must make a tiny replica (of the same materials and perfect in every detail), so that the miniature of the chest appears to be a perfect copy. (The replica costs 50 gp.) You can have but one pair of these chests at any given time—even *wish* does not allow exceptions. The chests themselves are non-magical and can be fitted with locks, wards, and so on, just as any normal chest can be.

To hide the chest, you cast the spell while touching both the chest and the replica. The chest vanishes into the ethereal plane. You need the replica to recall the chest. After 60 days, there is a cumulative chance of 5% per day that the chest is irretrievably lost. If the miniature of the chest is lost or destroyed, there is no way, not even with a *wish* spell, that the large chest can be summoned back, although it could be found by going to the ethereal plane.

Living things in the chest eat, sleep, and age normally; and they die if they run out of food, air, water, or whatever they need to survive.

Focus: The chest and its replica.

Shadow Play †

Illusion (Figment)

Level: Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft. per level)

Effect: Up to four illusory shadows, all within a 10 ft. radius

Duration: 1 minute

Saving throw: Will disbelief

Spell Resistance: No

You create up to four moving, two-dimensional shadows that can have any shape you wish. These shadows must stay in a 10 ft. radius in relationship to one another, but may otherwise move as you direct. No concentration is required and the shadows may move 100 ft. per round. They disappear

if the distance between you and them exceeds the spell's range.

New Items

Fey Quiver: This ornately and whimsically carved oak and silver quiver appears to be a typical arrow container capable of holding about 20 arrows. Examination shows that it has an extradimensional space allowing it to store up to 169 (13 x 13) arrows. On a roll of 20 on a d20 when drawing an arrow from the quiver, that arrow is enchanted like a pixie arrow, causing the effects of a *fey sleep* spell in any that fail a Fortitude save (DC 15), regardless of the victim's Hit Dice.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *fey sleep*, *secret chest*; *Market Price:* 3,500 gp; *Weight:* —.

Chameleon Mask: This multicolored mask appears to have large scales and bulbous eyes. It grants a +2 enhancement bonus to Intelligence, and the wearer may cast *blur* three times per day as a 5th-level caster.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *acumen*, *blur*; *Market Price:* 13,000 gp; *Weight:* —.

The Woodcrafter

By Tom Gafkjen (tgafkjen@scicable.net)

Palmer was a simple man. He liked simple things, from the way the dew dropped from the leaves in the morning to the feel of a piece of wood. He lived by himself on the edge of town, a place he inherited when his parents passed away several years ago.

He made his living in shaping wood into small figurines, chairs or whatever the wood told him it wanted to be. His few friends told him it was a magic talent he possessed to produce such fine quality items but he just shrugged it off and said shaping wood made him happy.

Hertam was one such friend. He was a local druid and would often stop by with some fine pieces of wood he would collect on his daily walks through the forests. It was Palmer's ability with wood that Hertam choose him.

The druid was walking through the woods when he had caught the smell of smoke. Nervously he headed towards the scent until he could see the billowy gray clouds coming from the clearing ahead. Several orcs had chopped down a few large trees and were starting the forest on fire. Feeling nature's fury at this, he called upon this anger and pulled

lightning from the sky to incinerate these offenders. The lightning did its job but the fire remained. Summoning strength from nature, he calmed the winds so they wouldn't fan the fire. Walking closer to it, he summoned water to douse the flames and once again to make sure the flames wouldn't start again.

That is when he heard the crying. Thinking someone was hurt, Hertam quickly moved to where he could see the source of the noise. That is when he paused. Before him, sitting with her back against a badly damaged oak tree, was a beautiful tan skinned female with green hair cascading down her shoulders. He knew her as Ce'Dara and approached the Dryad. She looked up and he could tell that she was in pain.

"I'm dying." Was all she said.

Knowing what he had to do, he replied, "I will be back Ce'Dara, with help." He again summoned on the power of nature and transformed into a falcon. With the speed of wings, he quickly flew to where he new he could get help.

Palmer was on his porch gazing at a small wooden hound dog he held in his hands. He had just finished and was admiring the lines of the wood when a falcon landed nearby and transformed into his friend Hertam. Surprised to see his friend appear this way, he called out, "Welcome Hertam. I made some tea. Care for some?"

The druid strode up to the porch and said, "I need your help. A friend of mine is in trouble and I think you are the only one able to make sure she doesn't die."

Shocked at such a quick revelation, Palmer grabbed his cloak and followed the druid. They kept a quick pace. After traveling several miles, they came across the clearing again and moved to where the dryad was now laying by the tree. She looked to be in bad shape.

Palmer took one look at her and fell in love. He knew he had to help her no matter what trouble she was in.

Hertam stepped up to the burnt tree and commanded, "Here place your hands next to mine on the tree." Palmer did so.

"Now feel the tree like you do your crafting." They both started to feel the life of the tree ebbing. Hertam began to manipulate the life force of the tree and Palmer. He used the human's talent and began to weave new life into the dying tree. The female let out a low groan as she could feel the change.

Palmer felt something strange and looked down to see the beautiful female smiling at him. He renewed his efforts in helping the druid and the tree began to sprout new growths. Hertam let loose of the magic he was manipulating as he new it worked. They saved the tree and as such, saved the dryad. He stepped back and watched as Palmer and the dryad start talking with each other. He felt sadden at what he did to his friend but knew it was for the best. He tied Palmer's life to the tree and the dryad.

It has been several years now and Hertam still visits. Now he visits Palmer by the recovering oak tree, since his friend moved to the clearing shortly after the incident and built a small but simple dwelling there. Palmer has kept himself busy with his wood. Crafting lifelike images of his beloved dryad. The druid, as of late, began to notice a slight bulge around the belly of the wood nymph as she lovingly caresses the small images of herself and gazes admiringly at the crafter.

Two Worlds

By David Jones (djjones@epicworld.gotdns.com)

As Leana leaned back in her chair, casually looking over the fields while the morning sun's light kisses the land for the first time today; she heard the small steps running thru the house. With each moment, growing closer and closer, the pace almost picking up as it comes closer as if on some hunt. A smile crossed her lips as Leana's mind counts the many ways she is lucky and fortunate for the life she has to live. In the distance she views a couple walking between the fields, appearing perhaps to close to be just staff though to far away to exactly tell who. The patting of feet comes to a sudden stop outside the archway to the room, almost complete silence except for the heavy breathing from a small mouth and lungs struggling to be quiet. Leana could feel the small presence creeping behind her with the stealth of a small herd of horses as she struggled to keep from laughing.

Leana suddenly turns in her chair and screams "Roarrrr" as the little girl before her shrieks and laughs. Leana reaches out and scoops into her lap the little girl, her pride, her joy and her daughter then kissing her forehead.

Rachel peered her head up looking out the window, spying on the distant couple as she

Ce'Dara, Dryad: CR 1; Medium Fey ; HD 2d6; hp 7; Init +6; Spd 30ft; AC 12; ATK Dagger +1 melee; DAM Dagger 1d4; SA Spell-like abilities; SQ Symbiosis; SV - Fort 0, Ref 5, Wil 5; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18

Skills: Animal Empathy +9, Knowledge (Flora) +6, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Sense Motive +7, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +7

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Improved Init

Personality: Ce'Dara is like other dryads. She minds her own business unless something invades her part of the forest. Since the incident with the orcs, she has become magically bound with Palmer. She has decided that she likes that fact and has fallen in love with him.

Palmer, male human Exp3: CR 2; Size M (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 3d6+3; hp 17; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Attack +2 melee, or +4 ranged; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4; AL NG; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 13.

Skills: Alchemy +5, Animal empathy +7, Concentration +3, Decipher script +5, Hide +2, Jump +6, Craft (Woodworking) +10, Knowledge (Flora) +9, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +1, Move silently +2, Open lock +3, Perform +7, Search +9, Spellcraft +9, Spot +1.

Feats: Iron Will, Skill focus (knowledge(flora)), Skill focus (Craft (Woodworking)).

Possessions: Masterwork Padded Leather Armor; Masterwork Sling; Silver Dagger; 12 Sling Bullets; Potion of Cure Light Wounds; Potion of Hiding; Oil of Timelessness (x2); Masterwork Artisans Tools; 118 gp

Personality: Palmer is a simple man, only wanting what is his and is content at whittling the day away. He loves the feel of wood and has a special knack with it. Palmer cannot believe the fate the gods have dealt him and feels he is blessed. He is totally in love with Ce'Dara and wouldn't have it any other way.

pointed and bluntly questioning, "Is that Aunt Lorissa?"

Leana smiled down to her daughter, "Yes it is"

Rachel giggled slightly as she proclaimed, "I can't wait for the wedding!" turning her head back and looking to her mother, "How did they meet mother?"

Leana looked down at her daughter stating, "You have heard that story 100 times young lady" knowing the answer that will soon follow.

The daughter smiled with a glow as her lips tried to pout outward, "I know mom but I like it so much"

Leana pulled her daughter into her lap holding her close, almost whispering to her as she recited the tale for Rachel's eager imagination.

It was about a year and a half ago, you were so young, finally learning the world had more to offer then what was in the house in the city. Outside the city was dangerous though, the bandits and raiders were fierce and terrorizing the countryside. Many of the noble families were being slaughtered; their investments and estates outside the city would be taken and ransacked. Anything of value would be seized by the bandits; they sometimes even made the farmers finish plowing their fields so

the crops could be taken, the wicked bandits had that much control over the surrounding lands. The city guard seemed to be no threat and the officials could find no way to stop the madness, it was truly a dark period for the city. Some thought it was only a matter of time before the bandits actually attacked the city! Your aunt was the last of our family, there were no men to carry on the family name and most just wanted to marry into money but your aunt had hope, she dreamed one day someone would come and be different then the boys that all wished to court her. Aunt Lorissa can be quite the dreamer when it comes to her desires.

She continued coming out here even thru all the troubles and ensuring tasks on the estate were completed. Finding hired hands at that time was a little tough and things were more prone to walk away. Your father would always insist that she went with guards and even sometimes provided them for her when she was being a little too stubborn for her own good. On one such occasion, they road into an ambush by some bandits. The guards fought as well as anyone with a blade to give your aunt time to escape, she pushed her horse as fast as possible thru the woods until an arrow sunk deep into and sending Lorissa helplessly to the ground. She laid there for a moment stunned

and in disbelief of the impact she felt. As sense returned, she remembered the reason she was riding so fast in the first place and wondered why they were not upon her yet. The sounds of metal clashing against metal were heard ringing. Lorissa turned as she slowly turned and started to move to her feet, looking about to see what danger she was to evade first. Standing almost above her was a figure, the sun above his head blinding her causing her to not see anything beyond the vague figure, his sword he swung though seemed to shine even greater than the sun. Pulling her own dagger from her boot, knowing this could be only chance for an escape, plunged it into the back of the figure. Almost seeming to glance off him however she felt the warmth of blood flow, she must have hit him she thought to herself as she scrambled backwards gaining distance from him. While back up, Lorissa for the first time was able to see everything that happened, the man she just stabbed was defending her!! She counted no less than 6 bandits lying dead or wounded and a 7th soon joining them. In the midst of battle, seeing the chaos she could feel an aura of warmth and holiness emanating from him, calming her deep within herself. As he turned, facing her, offering her a hand Lorissa for the first time had a good look at her hero, he stood just over six feet tall, not bulky however noticeably muscular; his hair blonde with an almost silver tint, ears partially pointed as that of an elf and his eyes, she marveled at his eyes, a bold glimmering silver. From that very moment there was a magical spark between them, in his eyes she found peace and for him he was not judged for his appearance by her. Her beauty was far beyond her flesh, it was within her personality. From that very first sight, they both knew fate and destiny had brought their two paths together for more than a chance encounter or a brief moment, these two different paths were to be two no longer; instead become single enriched path full of love and happiness that two can share and give to each other.

Leanna's tale was cut short the echoing sound of her husband calling to his girls to join him for the trip back into the city. There was much to be done for the events to come and much joy to be shared by all.

Personality: Valisar has roamed the world twice in his lifetime thus far, has had one mate before Lorissa. She was slain by red dragon though and Valisar took to wandering

Valisar D'mar Mature adult half-celestial silver dragon: CR 18; Huge Outsider (Air, Good, Lawful); HD 25d12+175; hp 337; Init +5; Spd 40 ft, fly 150 ft (poor); AC 34 (+1 Dex, -2 size, +25 natural); Melee bite +34 (2d8+11), 2 claws +29 (2d6+5), 2 wings +29 (1d8+5), tail slap +29 (2d6+16); SA breath weapon, frightful presence, spell-like abilities, half-celestial spell-like abilities; SQ +4 save vs. poison, cloudwalking, immunities, DR 10/+1, blindsight, keen senses; Face/Reach 10 ft by 20 ft / 10 ft; SR 24; AL LG; SV Fort +21, Ref +15, Will +21; Str 33, Dex 12, Con 25, Int 22, Wis 25, Cha 24.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +32, Concentration +32, Diplomacy +32, Escape Artist +26, Jump +36, Knowledge (arcana, geography, history, planes, religion) +31, Listen +32, Scry +31, Search +31, Sense Motive +32, Spellcraft +31, Spot +32; Hover, Flyby Attack, Power Attack, Cleave, Snatch, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (Evocation). **SA-Breath Weapon (Su):** Cone of cold, 50 feet long, every 1d4 rounds; damage 14d8, Reflex half DC 29. This dragon can use a cone of paralyzing gas instead, paralyzing subjects who fail a Fortitude save for 1d6+7 rounds.

SA-Frightful Presence (Ex): Dragons can unsettle foes with their mere presence. This ability takes effect automatically (radius 210 ft) whenever the dragon attacks, charges, or flies overhead. A potentially affected creature (one with less than 25 HD) that succeeds at a Will save (DC 29) remains immune to that dragon's frightful presence for one day. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with more than 5 HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Dragons ignore the frightful presence of other dragons.

again until he met Lorissa. When he seen her helpless, he felt deep within his heart she was the answer to him being alone. Even as she struggled to escape, she had beauty and presence about her. He knew at that moment, this was his chance again, could he protect her where he failed before. Then with all he had, he proved to himself and her, he could protect her from harm so that she might see the joy of the world again. Valisar has found many interesting things living among humans and does not tire of the always constant moving

SA-Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day-polymorph self, fog cloud; 2/day-feather fall. A silver dragon's polymorph self works just like the spell, except that each use allows only one change, which lasts until the dragon assumes another form or reverts to its own (which does not count as a use of this ability).

SA-Half-Celestial Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day-protection from evil, holy aura; 1/day-bless, aid, detect evil, cure serious wounds, neutralize poison, holy smite, remove disease, dispel evil, holy word, hallow, symbol, summon monster IX (celestials only), resurrection.

SQ-Cloudwalking (Su): The dragon can tread on clouds or fog as though on solid ground. The ability functions continuously but can be negated or resumed at will.

SQ-Immunities (Ex): Immune to cold, acid, disease, electricity, sleep, paralysis.

SQ-Blindsight (Ex): Dragons can ascertain creatures by nonvisual means (mostly hearing and scent, but also by noticing vibrations and other environmental clues); this dragon's range is 210 feet.

SQ-Keen Senses (Ex): Dragons can see four times as well as humans in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. They also have darkvision (range 700 feet).

Spells Known (cast 6/8/8/8/5; as a level 9 sorcerer): 0-detect magic, resistance, detect poison, read magic, dancing lights, ghost sound, mage hand, open/close; 1-endure elements, mage armor, divine favor, cure light wounds, shield; 2-bull's strength, cat's grace, blur, endurance; 3-haste, dispel magic, protection from elements; 4-spell immunity, dimension door.

Possessions: Has a number of smaller magical items to choose from however outside the city will always have his +5 Holy Long sword

about. Lorissa is seldom out of his sight and if you see one, the other is not far away. Only Lorissa knows his true race and probably will be one of the few that ever does. He loves Lorissa with his complete being and soul. He is starting to focus his attention on how prolong Lorissa's life to match his own, he desire to live with her for as long as possible.

Personality: Lorissa is a kind hearted woman who is noted for her deeds helping the poor and less fortunate in the city. With the death of her parents she has dedicated herself to

Lorissa Sintzeer, female human Nob2:

CR 1; Size M (4 ft., 11 in. tall); HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Attack +2 melee, or +2 ranged; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +7; AL LG; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 18.

Languages Spoken: Aquan, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +8, Bluff +6, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +6, Gather information +9, Hide +1, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Listen +6, Move silently +1, Sense motive +8, Speak language +5, Spot +11, Swim +3; Alertness, Skill focus (diplomacy).

Possessions: Always dressed in fine clothing though sometimes the style is not common for the city. Usually wearing between 400 and 1000gp in jewelry and if outside the city will always have her +3 *keen dagger* with her.

managing the family name and holdings; nothing in her personal life is done without thought as to the effect it could have upon it. She is all that remains of her family's name and will is not going to marry and lose it, she also knew most would marry her just for money and position, not for love. This placed Lorissa in a very difficult situation. She was content with pushing off offers for marriage even if that meant being alone, just too safe guard her father's life work. Then she met Valisar, her life changed. She had heard what love would feel like; her mom had told her so many times, she would know when it struck her. There would be no doubt or indecision and she was right, from the very moment she laid eyes upon Valisar, he was the one and since that first moment he has done nothing to prove only how right her mother was. With Valisar's guidance and love, the family estate and holdings has prospered, Lorissa for the first time has learned to listen, not just with her ears but also with her heart and trusts Valisar with everything she holds dear to her.

When Valisar revealed his true form to her, her very feelings were tested but in the end she found great honor and could see in his eyes what she felt for him, he also felt for her. Valisar being a dragon neither mattered nor was important, together they could resolve anything, together anything was possible. As the day of her wedding will soon come, she is working towards her new direction in life, raising a family.

Give Us Your Best Hero

In January, the **d20 Magazine Rack** ran a contest for people to develop and draw an original superhero. Each entrant provided a description of the character, their personality, background and an outline of his or her powers. We received three submissions from Ben Richards, Cindy and Scott Moore, and SD Anderson. It was a tough decision, but Ben Richards won out and for his efforts he received a copy of *Mutants & Masterminds* by Green Ronin and *Silver Age Sentinels* by Guardians of Order. (Rather, he will receive it. Since he lives in New Zealand, the package is still on a boat making its leisurely way there.)

The Red King

By Benjamin D. Richards

(eslashnz@yahoo.co.nz)

The Butterfly, Jennifer Lee and the Red King are copyright 2003 by Benjamin D. Richards.

Who is this man who strides without fear through the dark belly of a city lost to crime? Who can withstand his powerful fists or his lightning kicks? And why does he never speak?

The Red King (*top illustration*), as he is known, is a martial artist without compare, using an unidentifiable style. His costume is armored in strategic points, allowing maximum flexibility and minimum vulnerability; he can reflect bullets with his wrist guards (although this is risky, and he's been known to take the occasional shot to the torso when he wasn't fast enough), and is generally unfazed by all but the most powerful blows (he's shrugged off metal bats and pistol whippings). He never uses weapons, and never acts in concert with the police or other heroes; in fact, he's regarded as a dangerous vigilante because he leaves his foes mangled and broken, in a state where they cannot think of committing more crimes.

His modus operandi is to drop into the midst of a group of criminals, and dispatch them all with brutal efficiency and complete silence. Nobody has ever heard the Red King speak, not even to grunt in pain when he takes a bullet. He focuses his attacks on gangsters of all stripes, whether solo criminals or organized crime rings that rule entire neighborhoods. And while he sometimes suffers setbacks, he always comes back to finish the job.

Less obvious to the public is the Red King's healing power. Although he's been left for dead several times, Red King is always back

the next day unwounded and ready to kick evil butt. It's only a matter of time before someone puts a bullet in his head to make sure of matters, but that doesn't seem to bother him. He can also climb buildings at breakneck speed, perhaps using special abilities of his suit; it has never been torn, although bullets can puncture it. Nobody knows what the Red King's skin looks like, but he's bled a lot - good red blood.

The Red King isn't the sort of hero to face major-league supervillains, but on the rare occasion he does so, he's tenacious enough to put up a good fight. In one particularly large meeting of superhumans, he was put through a building - and they couldn't find his body when they swept up the rubble. A mysterious



female hero finished off the villain that did it, and she hasn't been seen since. Nevertheless, the Red King was back on the streets that night.

Opinions are divided as to whether the Red King is actually a superhuman or not. Detractors say it's the suit that enables him to withstand that much punishment, and that any incredibly talented martial artist could do the

same. Proponents point out his recuperative abilities as evidence of something more than human, perhaps a mutant or an ex-cop with DNA splicing to enhance his natural healing.

The truth is far stranger, of course.

Bookish, timid Jennifer Lee (Jenni to her friends) is a student studying small-scale engineering and design at a nearby college. She's reclusive and shy, and lives by herself in a small apartment in a good neighborhood. She seems quite unaware that she's beautiful, and definitely doesn't dress to take advantage of it, preferring loose jeans with capacious pockets (and puffy jackets when the weather grows cold).

Jenni is shy to the point of running from conversations, and is even more terrified of physical contact (she screamed when someone brushed against her in a corridor). She occasionally sits just staring off into space, during which episodes she's dead to the world (although nobody's been crude enough to shake her out of it yet). But those who've managed to talk to her know that she's got a good heart, and wants to make the world a better place through the application of portable technology to such areas as irrigation and power generation.

Jenni doesn't have any family in town. She's always indoors, locked away studying, before nightfall, so she's remained safe on streets that have seen better days. She remains optimistic in the face of a cruel world, and is very generous in lending her possessions to people.

But Jenni hides a secret. In fact, she hides two, but the one most people would like to discover is that she is the Red King. For the Red King isn't a person; he's a psionic construct embodying Jenni's yang (masculine essence). When she manifests the Red King, her consciousness inhabits the construct and she goes almost catatonic, but his yang essence employs different methods to her yin essence, so their personalities are quite dissimilar. She deliberately made the Red King unable to speak, because when she tried to speak through him, her voice came out. Because the Red King is made anew every time she sends him out, all his wounds (even mortal ones) are forgotten.

Jenni's other secret is far more important, although nobody knows to search for it...

Jennifer Lee (*bottom left illustration*) is herself just an illusion, a public front, a

cloak worn by the Butterfly (*bottom right illustration*). While the Red King is yang, Jenni is yin, and when the separated forces are joined the result is the Butterfly.

The Butterfly is an astral predator. Her people roam on a distant plane of existence, where they rule the populations of many worlds with their formidable psychic powers. They think themselves the unchallenged rulers of all they survey, and often use their subjects as mental - or physical - food. And in recent years, they have been expanding into other planes of existence.

The Butterfly was born with the same instincts for domination and superiority that are instilled in all her race, but her mind was unusually sharp, and she realized that the way of her people was evil. She fled beyond the borders of her realm, because she knew she would be seen as weak by the other predators, and probably killed.

In her flight, she landed on Earth, but was weakened by her voyage and was barely capable of changing her appearance to mimic that of the Himalayan monks who found her. They took her in, nursed her back to health, and taught her of our world, thinking she (he, as they saw her) was an amnesiac, lost in a blizzard on the mountain. She also learned their arts of self-defence, and the philosophy of yin and yang.

She was saddened to learn that Earth was a warlike planet where many people wanted for the basic needs of life. When she left the monastery, she traveled to the United States of America, the most powerful nation on the planet, hoping to learn more and find a way to improve the lot of her new people (and maybe prepare them for the inevitable coming of her people); there, she adopted the identity of Jennifer Lee.

Jennifer was composed almost entirely of yin. If the Butterfly had remained in balance, she was certain her predatorial nature would assert itself and begin to wreak havoc on Earth. To maintain balance, she occasionally manifests the Red King as a yang safety valve; his unbridled yang still serves a purpose, hunting down criminals, and with these brief exposures the Butterfly is learning to control her yang.

The Butterfly controls mighty psychic abilities. She can create illusions, read minds, and project psychokinetic force at will (which her natural form can use to fly). It takes her

a bit more effort to do so, but she can create ectoplasmic objects (such as the Red King) and travel between planes of existence. The full extent of her powers is as yet unknown even to herself; her people simply fly around killing things, but with the many philosophies of Earth the Butterfly is learning new things every day.

Not just a butterfly dreaming of being a man, Jennifer Lee knows that her people could reshape space itself with their powers. She simply hopes she's got enough time to fortify Earth against their coming.

Energy Star

By Cindy and Scott Moore (scott.moore@IngramMicro.com)



Tonya Eileen Fields was born in Cheektowaga, NY to Gordon James and Eileen Tow Fields on June 26, 1968. Gordon was a professional football player who had retired shortly before Tonya's birth due to a game-related injury. Following his football career, Gordon had become a successful music producer and ended up making more money in that profession than he ever did as an athlete. Tonya's mother was content to stay at home and play the role of full-time mother and supportive housewife. As a result of having her home all the while she was growing up, Tonya and her mother became extremely close. Tonya was devastated when, after a brief illness, her mother passed away quite unexpectedly. Tonya was only ten years old.

Within three years, Tonya's father remarried. His new wife, Trisha Shepard, already had a son, Alex, from a previous

marriage. Suddenly, Tonya had to share her father's affection with a new stepmother and older brother. Although he loved Tonya dearly, Gordon had always wanted a son, and loved Alex as his own, much to Tonya's chagrin. Unlike his stepfather, Alex did not care much for sports, but instead had a strong interest in science. He converted a room off the finished basement of the family's home to a workshop and spent endless hours down there tinkering.

One day when she was 16, Tonya decided to snoop around her stepbrother's workshop while he was out. Intrigued by a locked cabinet Alex kept in the basement, Tonya's attempt to investigate it was abruptly cut short when the cabinet exploded, hurling Tonya back across the workshop as she attempted to open it.

Tonya was hospitalized and spent three months in a coma, during which time Alex, and the contents of the cabinet, disappeared. Shortly after her release from the hospital, Tonya began to manifest strange abilities, with little control over their effects. In her presence, lights would occasionally dim and small objects would temporarily become unusually heavy. During an argument with her boyfriend during this period, she also discovered that while under stress her merest touch could cause temporary paralysis in another person. With much practice, Tonya eventually learned to keep these abilities under control and manifest them only when she desired.

Nearly a year after her release from the hospital, Tonya and her father were contacted by Alex, who wished to meet the two of them in a public park and explain his disappearance as well as what was in the cabinet that Tonya attempted to open. Just as Tonya and Gordon made contact with Alex in the park, the family was beset by a group of armed men-in-black. During the fight, which quickly ensued, Tonya manifested her powers to defend her father and stepbrother, but was knocked unconscious. When she awoke, she was still in the park, but her father, stepbrother, and the men-in-black were gone. Unbelievably, there were no witnesses who reported seeing anything. Tonya has not heard from Gordon or Alex since.

In the ensuing years, Tonya became something of a street-level vigilante. Concealing her identity, she occasionally

assisted the local police and used her powers to fight crime and the underworld in hopes of discovering some clue to the fate of her father and stepbrother. During this same period, Tonya also managed to obtain a college degree in broadcast journalism and become something of a local celebrity as an investigative reporter for a local television station.

Eight years ago, Tonya learned of a group of costumed superheroes that had arrived in the area and were interested in founding a permanent team. This motivated her to don a more colorful, costumed appearance and select the name Energy Star for herself. Her hope was to be noticed and accepted by the other heroes and gain their assistance in tracking down her missing family members.

Recently, Tonya has received information that Gordon and Alex had been working together as part of a sophisticated weapons design team for parties unknown at the time of her accident. This seems wholly inconsistent with what Tonya knew of her father, but she is continuing to investigate this lead in hopes of getting closer to the truth.

As a result of the accident, Energy Star possesses a paralyzing touch, which she can use even through several layers of material, such as heavy gloves. In addition, she also has limited control over light and gravity. Energy Star can manipulate these effects to produce blinding flashes, focused laser blasts, illusions, hypnotic effects, levitation of herself and others, flight, density control, and the ability to generate gravitic force bolts.

Jackhammer

By SD Anderson (sdanderson4_5@yahoo.com)

Powers

Toughened Body: Acts as natural armor and Damage Resistance, Nuisance Effect (Weight doubles when DR is 'on')

Reputation (Trustworthy)

Powers

Super Speed (Mach 1/3rd or thereabouts (260 mph) - Initiative bonus

Decrease Density No 'Insubstantial' effects. Only for lifting/throwing Touch Only (Game effect: Able to lift objects far heavier than his Strength shouldn't allow. Example, a 3-ton object, normally what would be his maximum carrying capacity for his Strength, effectively weighs 1/20th

of what it does. 6000 pounds becomes 300 for lifting. The drawback is for combat purposes it hits like a 300-pound object before it reverts to its normal mass after he's not longer touching it.

Vibratory Attack

Disadvantages

Bad Sight (Correctable: Wears glasses/ Prescription goggles)

Honorable

Requires (Alchemical Elixir). Must be taken daily or lose powers.

Secret Identity

Skills

Alchemy, Boxing, Computer, Criminology, Driving, Gardening, Judo, Karate, Language (Spanish), Law, Mathematics, Occultism, Patent Search*, Professional Skill: Library Systems*, Research*,

* In some, perhaps most, systems these three skills may be considered to be aspects of the same skill.



Jackhammer

Background

Burt McVicar might have been an up and coming football star but a rotator cuff injury sidelined him his freshman year at a junior college. It wasn't really until his senior year that the injury had recovered and by that time he was A) well on to getting his degree without

a football scholarship B) Football season was pretty much over that year already and C) No college football program wanted to bring in a latecomer when they had talent to build up for future seasons.

So McVicar became a librarian and then a paralegal and most recently a patent searcher. In his spare time, he messed around with things he considered curiosities. One of them dealt with an allegedly super being who lived in early to middle 18th century Californian, Pete Le Vesamie. Le Vesamie claimed to have been born in Missouri in 1795 and the Census of 1800 lists a Peter among the Le Vesamies family in the St. Louis area. No other US document survives to support his existence however.

By 1817, Pete was in the Big Bear lake area in Southern California, living as a trapper. He reputedly helped the rebels in the Mexican War of independence, allegedly defeating a squad of Spanish soldiers single-handedly in 1820, rushing them as they emptied their muskets at him and beating them senseless. (Not quite true, they emptied their muskets into the rest of Pete's band of rebels; the only ball that hit him didn't do that much damage to him) He then went back to his mountains. A warrant for his arrest on a murder charge was filed by authorities in 1828 and a second warrant issued for killing several men sent to arrest him was subsequently issued. No record of his ever being arrested or tried exists. And no further Mexican documents concerning the man are known to exist.

Around 1853 in the gold rush territory, a Paul Le Vesamie turned up. He looked remarkably like the man he said was his father. Living out in the outdoors didn't help LeVesamie's apparent age. He may have been the son or the father going just on his appearance. He was recognized by an older Los Angeles resident and charged with the old crimes. An absence of witnesses after 25 years and a general favoritism showed to Americans over Mexicans in the courts got the man off on the murder charges.

"Paul" Le Vesamie wound up working for the railroads until death from a combination of cancer and tuberculosis claimed in 1874. He'd married, learned to read and write and had two daughters. On his deathbed, he claimed he really was Pete Le Vesamie, Paul having died shortly after birth. He claimed he'd learned how to brew a special potion, taught to him

by a medicine man he'd wintered with on the route he'd taken to California. It made him as strong as a bear, far faster than a horse and tough enough to shrug off bullets as if he wore a breastplate. He wrote down the method of making it. Reportedly his daughters tried the elixir without getting any abilities.

Burt managed to obtain a copy of the elixir formula Le Vesamie left. Needless to say, he tried it and it didn't work. But he thought of a few reasons why it might not have worked. Pete learned a lot of ingredient names from his teacher, an Indian from an unnamed tribe, but wrote down the ingredients in English for his daughters. Obviously, his teacher likely used names from his own tongue to identify them. Over the years, he'd probably learned the Spanish and English names of the ingredients, since he probably had to trade for some of them every so often.

It was McVicar's suspicion that one or more of the ingredients listed were wrong. Le Vesamie had gotten the name wrong. Not that unlikely, 'Oregano' here in America was really Mexican sage, for instance. He went over the list ingredients and found several that had corresponding substances sharing the names he had. Too many, in fact. But by this time too stubborn to quit, he hired an assistant who understood Spanish and went through records at the Mission San Bernadino, learning Spanish as he went along. They found several mentions of Le Vesamie and included a couple of trade transactions involving a plant whose name in Spanish

often was mistranslated to one of the ingredients on his list. Paying his researcher, he spent several months experimenting with the concoction using the correct ingredient and several possible other substitutes.

The bottom line was he didn't reinvent the magical potion. He perfected it. Pete's version only provided Super running that topped out near 100 mph. McVicar's speed is better than 250 mph and he's far tougher than a breast plate when it comes to bullets.

Burt keeps 1d+4 doses of the elixir at hand when possible. He grows many of the ingredients in his back yard herbarium.

Superheroes and Role-Playing

A review of *Mutants & Masterminds* and *Silver Age Sentinels*

By Steven Creech and Brad Mix



The d20 system has opened up many choices in the types of genres that one can play. Besides the typical fantasy campaign, one can now play a modern, futuristic science



fiction, pulp, or even a superhero campaign. One of the two top superhero games is *Silver Age Sentinels* from *Guardians of Order*.

Silver age Sentinels originally was offered in GOO's Tri-Stat game format. With the success of the d20 system, within a very short time it was also being offered as a d20 book. The book weighs in at 336 pages, is hardcover and carries a retail price of \$39.95.

Silver Age Sentinels offers gamers a superhero RPG that focuses on the ideals set forth in the Silver Age of comic books; where a definite line between good and evil existed. Heroes and villains were defined by their actions. There were no shades of gray, no *Punisher*, *Spawn* or *Preacher*. In fact, the beginning part of the book is a very detailed history of comics that runs up the last couple of years, which exemplifies this very point.

Character creation is involved and the book even recommends having the GM involved as a part of that process. Players choose from Acrobat, Adventurer, Costumed Fighter, Costumed Wizard, Gadgeteer, Powerhouse, Psychic, Skulker, or Speedster. There are several necessary new mechanics that have been added that must be kept track of. One of these is Power Modifier Values (PMV), which allow players to customize their

characters' Attributes, making them unique to the character. A significant part of the book is filled with a listing of different Attributes, each heavily detailed. Essentially, the Attributes are what make your character unique and super-powered. Among those listed, you will find powers like Alternate Form, Flight, Force Field, Organizational Ties, Sidekick, Superstrength, and Teleport.

Like any d20 game, skills are an important part of creating characters and this book is no different. Players must choose from skills such as City Knowledge, Power Usage, Seduction, and Sports. Everyone superhero has an Achilles Heel with this game being no exception. Players may select different "defects" for their character like Diminutive, Famous, Sensory Impairment, and Unreliable Power.

Game mechanics are covered next with many changes to the d20 system happening out of necessity. This section is a "must-read" by both player and GM. Movement works a bit differently as does damage and defending. Rules for weapons and vehicles are also included but don't expect a lot of them. There are no vehicle chase rules, rather it is more of a listing of available equipment.

Playing and GMing superheroes are the next subjects of interest. There are eight facets to giving your superhero substance and a background that comprise a theme that serves to define him. Tips and suggestions for players are given their due as are helpful suggestions for GMs on how to run campaigns and design adventures. The GM chapter is very well written and gives novices all of the tools they need.

Now that you, as a GM, have the basics down, it's time to start talking about building the world for your superhero campaign. GOO provides a default setting to adventure in called "Empire City", but you can just as easily build your own if you want to make the time investment. Factors to consider when building your world include: sources of power (alien, magic, psionic, high technology), the world's history, societies, laws, and locations of points of adventuring interest. You also need to build a credible supporting cast of characters such

as reporters, love interests, faithful assistant, politicians, and whole organizations.

Creation of a villain is also a necessity. That villain will need defining motivations as to why she is evil and what her level of power is compared to the heroes' powers. Does she use traps and if so, what kinds? How does she escape the clutches of the heroes only to resurface another day? All of these factors need to be considered to make a reoccurring villain that the players will love to hate.

The remainder of the book details the history and world of Empire City, the default world for *Silver Age Sentinels*. It is a comprehensive section and unless you, as a GM, have a different world in mind, makes for an ideal starting place for playing. Of course, no campaign book would be complete without key NPCs. The only thing is, these NPCs are super-powered. My personal favorites are Red Phoenix, Iron Duke and Alice, Queen of Hearts (who looks suspiciously like the Marvel comics character Domino).

So what's hot about *Silver Age Sentinels*? Several things qualify. First off, it does a fantastic job at capturing that good vs. evil feel that is missing from so many comics today. In *SAS* the good guys wear a white hat and the bad guys wear a black one, period. Secondly, while not one hundred percent d20, it does make a commendable effort at staying as true to the system as possible under the constraints of what the book is really about. Finally, it's just plain cool.

But what's the downside? After all, every book has some issues and problems. The biggest problem is that combat is slowed down considerably because of all of the different combat modifiers that have to be taken into consideration. There are a lot of things to keep in mind when running a combat and it will certainly be intimidating to beginning or novice GMs. Another "issue" is the lack of feats. There are no feats in *SAS*, only skills and powers. This is certainly a sticking point to some, but definitely not all, d20 gamers.

Is it worth the money? That depends on your preferences on hero archetypes. If you grew up on comics from the Silver Age era and appreciate the original versions of *Superman*, *Captain America*, *Silver Surfer*, *Spider-Man*, and *Tarzan*, then you will want to take a look. As I stated, there is a definite line between good and evil. Shades of gray aren't handled well and are actively discouraged.

Mutants & Masterminds is a new superhero book from the developers over at [Green Ronin Publishing](#). Written by Steve Kenson and Erik Mona, this d20/OGL superhero book is also a hardcover format but only 192 pages in length and costs \$32.95. *Mutants and Masterminds* (M&M) is a superhero role-playing game that is in the style of old four-color comics. Four-color was back in the day when comics were printed using only red, blue, yellow and black, in different proportions. Heroes were good and villains were bad. Heroes like Captain America and the Fantastic Four were born and villains like Red Skull and Doctor Doom had to be defeated. It was a simple time in which the morals of the country did not allow for any gray area. This style and genre is the backbone of M&M.

There are several differences that the book discusses that are different from the standard d20 game. First is that there are no classes. Characters have combinations of abilities and powers. No alignments give the character complete freedom of action. Although the character is still a hero, it is up to the player to determine how that is accomplished. Only 1 d20 is used for all rolls in the game. This streamlines the rolling process and avoids looking for the elusive d12. Attacks of opportunity are also gone. This helps the character make daring and sometimes dangerous attacks. When I saw that no hit points were involved I got a little worried. Each attack has a DC and a save is made against that. The roll determines the effect on the character. Hero points are also earned that can be spent to raise ability scores for a short time, or add to a die roll. The game also does not use the d20 logo but uses a lot of the mechanics of the OGL.

Character creation is pretty straightforward. Stats are rolled and powers are picked. Many templates are offered as a guide but characters are free to pick a template and tweak it to their individual tastes. Skills are the next major section in the book. Some new skills are offered for the modern timeframe with computers, demolitions, drive, and pilot being a few of the options.

Feats are what you will need to be really effective in combat. Feats like Aerial Combat, Chokehold, and Move by Attack all add to what the character can do in combat. Careful consideration of the fighting style needs to be taken. A bad choice here can make for a

character that will only be good for taking a whuppin'.

The super powers section is really what this book delivers on. With over 90 powers to choose from it makes it easy to make a unique character. Creating new powers allows the player and GM to come up with new powers. It breaks down the different parts of the creation process and costs. I pulled out one of my old *Marvel Superheroes* (Advanced, not original) characters and tried to convert him to this system. It was nice to see Boomer again and went through the character creation process. Since he used sonic energy for his power there wasn't a lot listed in this book. I made up a few powers and adapted a few of the existing ones and was pretty happy with the results. *Champions* characters could also conceivably be converted if one so desired.

A downside to *M&M* is that there are a lot of game rule options presented in the book. Normally, options are good but having so many makes it hard to remember which ones are being used and could cause some consistency issues. This is especially true in the combat section. Variant rules like massive damage and knockback are good and should have been included in the core d20 rules. There is also an option for adding hit points to the battle, which takes away from the style all ready presented.

Some of the abilities can become overbalanced. Power levels that max out are outrageously powerful. Like ESP at 20th level gives a range of "Anywhere in the universe." A character with Super Strength can carry 200,000 tons. Running and Super running would allow the character to run at 54 Million miles per hour. Needless to say that is pretty fast. Granted these are maxed out abilities, but the potential for overbalancing the game is there if GMs are not careful with their "munchkin" players.

M&M does a good job of trying to recreate the superhero style of the 50's and 60's. Given the new popularity of superhero movies, this makes for a great opportunity to introduce some people to RPG's that may not otherwise be interested. The game mechanics and combat are a little cumbersome but with some practice it gets better. The end of the book includes a character sheet and a great index. Most of the tables are reprinted as well for easy reference. The artwork throughout the book is a nice

addition. Although not done in four color ink it adds to the book.

So which book is better? They both have some very strong qualities and unique properties. I'd have to give the edge to Green Ronin for the simplest game mechanics they use that really speed combat up. If you could only buy a single book, *Mutants & Masterminds* would be my choice. However, *Silver Age Sentinels* does a better job at capturing the comic book feel of the Silver Age and their Empire City setting is quite solid. They both carry a healthy price tag, but if you can afford it, I would buy them both. There is stuff you can use in each book with ease. My final grade? Both books receive a grade of 'A' and rightfully, deserve it.

MONSTERS OF THE Endless Dark

The Wanderers Guild Guide to Subterranean Organisms

*Life, in its abundance, never ceases to amaze.
Even here, miles from sunlight,
in a realm bereft of green plants and nourishing rains,
nature thrives. Tiny, luminous fungi flourish
in the footprints of a ravaging brath. Mystic kezmarin frolic
amid crystal chasms, while the massive golshuda
ravages dwarven strongholds.
Indeed, life does not simply thrive down here;
it shapes the very stones we tread*

-From the Journals of Bessimus Camfor

This tome, the first in a series of guidebooks by the legendary Wanderers Guild, is a collection of essays and expositions by renowned Minesweeper Bessimus Camfor. Bessimus draws upon the experience and wisdom gained by decades of exploration and danger to bring this comprehensive guide to life. Here you will find detailed narrative and remarkable depictions of dozens of subterranean beasts and the realms in which they thrive.

Beautifully designed and illustrated by celebrated Guild illuminator Andy Hopp and translated from Bessimus' original manuscripts by master scribe Jon Pollom, this d20 system monster manual is the foundation of a legacy designed to edify, inform, and equip generations of explorers who would venture into the unlit realms of earth and stone.

Emerging March 2003



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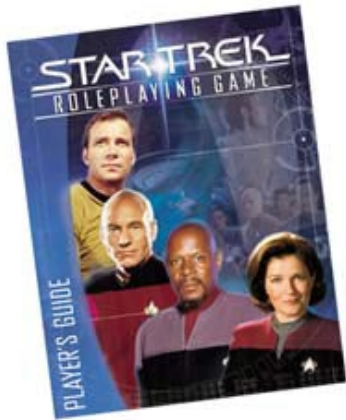
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Star Trek: The Roleplaying Game

A review by Steven Creech

Last year, *Decipher Studios* released a brand new version of one of the more popular licensed science fiction settings, the *Star Trek Roleplaying Game*. To date, only three products have been released, the *Player's Guide*, the *Narrator's Guide* and just recently, the *Narrator's Screen*. Let's take a more in-depth look at each of these products.



The *Player's Guide* begins by giving a summary of the thirty-five years of *Star Trek* that covers the original series right up to *Voyager*. Character species are focused upon next as a part of the character creation process. Most of your favorite more common species are available for play including: Bajoran, Betazoid, Cardassian, Ferengi, Human, Klingon, Ocampa, Talaxian, Trill, and Vulcan. Each race has its own special abilities to consider as well as some possible disadvantages.

The various profession descriptions are up next with chapter three. There are nine playable professions that a character may begin with (Decipher has promised more in future supplements). The choices are diplomat (Ambassador Sarek), merchant (Cyrano Jones), mystic (Kai Winn), rogue (Harry Mudd), scientist (Dr. Richard Daystrom), soldier (Genera Martok or Constable Odo), and starship officer (you already know these people). Each profession description is highly detailed and is broken down into three tier levels of proficiency.

Attribute scores is the next consideration for character creation. Attributes in the *Star Trek Roleplaying Game* consist of: Strength (Str), Intellect (Int), Agility (Agl), Vitality (Vit), Presence (Prs), and Perception (Per). These are very similar to other existing systems so other rpg system players should be able to adapt easily. Emphasis on certain

attribute scores can help define the "role" of the character for play.

Chapter five's subject of character development contains some of the real meat of this book. Here is where you develop the character's personal and professional background. Skills, Edges, and Flaws are touched upon which lead directly into the next three chapters of Skills, Traits, and Characteristics. There is a lot of information in these chapters and d20 system players will recognize the structure and format quite easily.

Character advancement rules follow in chapter nine. Each time a character earns 1000 experience points, she undergoes one advancement (or level) and may make five picks from the advancement table. The advancement choices vary in point cost with the least costly being improvements to skills while the costliest being health or attribute improvements. If a character meets certain qualifications, she may select an elite profession (*think prestige classes, folks*). Elite professions include: Adept (Vulcan *Kolinahr* Master), Ambassador (Sarek), Assassin (Tal Shiar agent), Envoy (Neelix), Explorer (Lily from *First Contact*), Free Trader (Quark), Inventor (Zephrim Cochrane), Mercenary, Smuggler (Harry Mudd), Spy, or Weaponmaster.

All of your favorite equipment is available in chapter ten including communicators, EVA suits, tricorders, hyposprays, hyperspanners, phasers, Bat'leths, Lirpas, and Mek'leths. Where appropriate, entries for both 23rd and 24th century versions are included. Chapter eleven gives a quick breakdown of starship interior areas and points of interest with one page descriptions of the more famous ones.

The final three chapters address adventuring, the *Star Trek* galaxy and the Federation itself. One of the real strengths to this version of the game that other publishers have failed to do in the past is provide a way to pick any *Star Trek* setting or time period to play in. If you like the original series the best, it's not a problem to run scenarios there. If you want to have second or third generation characters, they can adventure in current Starfleet time period and fight in the Dominion Wars or be aboard the *Enterprise* when she travels to Romulas and engages Shinzon after he has assumed the role of Praetor for the Romulan Empire. You could also be aboard a science vessel in the Gamma

quadrant or follow in the footsteps of *Voyager* and be lost in the Delta quadrant. As the Vulcans say, the possibilities are endless...



The *Narrator's Guide* is broken down into three main sections: Series Creation, Episodes, and Narrator Resources. In the *Star Trek Roleplaying Game* adventures and scenarios are referred to as 'episodes'. In the *Star Trek* game, several episodes that are connected sequentially and are tied together by a common cast, setting and idiom constitute a 'series'. With the tools in this book, you can construct a series in any of the *Star Trek* settings from the latest, *Enterprise*, to *Star Trek: The Original Series* to the more modern ones like *Star Trek: Voyager*.

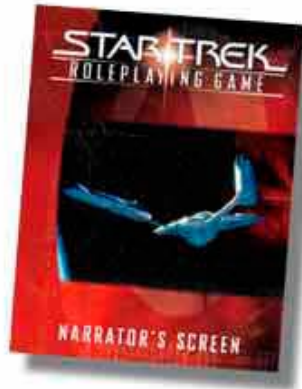
Chapter two addresses how to build the setting by establishing some common ground for your players such as a base of operations (be it starship or space station), a crew, the level of technology, and the things that form the adversity and diversity your players will encounter. As this chapter points out, a single name can carry deep connotations for the type of series the players will likely expect. For example, serving aboard the *U.S.S. Issac Newton* might lead players to believe their episodes are likely to be more of the exploratory nature, while being stationed aboard a distant outpost nicknamed *Hell's Rim* can put a whole different perspective on things. Chapters three through five further expand on this, giving you the necessary tools to construct episodes and even whole seasons that have the elements and flavor of a good *Star Trek*.

Chapter six goes into explanation of the game mechanics behind the roleplaying game itself. Decipher uses a rules system known as *CODA*, which bears a lot of similarity to the d20 system with the exception that *CODA* uses two six-sided dice instead of a

twenty-sided die. This is the meat of the rules and Narrators will want to spend a lot of time digesting this chapter along with the two that follow, which tackle starship operations and player rewards.

The remaining part of the book makes up the Narrator Resources section. Chapter nine is all about starships and the technical aspects of them. Here you find rules for ship classification, construction (*yeah, you can build your own starship*), traits and defects, and operational systems. Chapter ten gives the reader a treatise on the galaxy. Its features, anomalies, sectors, star systems, and rules on planetary design are all covered. Chapters eleven and twelve give you the aliens and creatures you've come to love and hate through the years, including the rules for creating your own. Chapter thirteen provides the rules for using personal and ship hazards in your campaign. After all, there's nothing like a good ion storm to shake a ship's systems up just before you're set to engage the Cardassians in what's sure to be more than a minor skirmish...

One comment that I must make about these books is the quality of the layout. Decipher has set a standard that few publishers come close to regarding the professionalism of their layout. Not only do the books come filled with photographic stills from the various series, but the text is laid out in such a way that it is extremely easy to read and even locate a specific heading. As I said in my review of *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* in the December issue of *d20Zine!*, Decipher really need to give their graphics layout team a raise. They deserve every penny.



The *Narrator's Screen* is the latest release from Decipher for the *Star Trek Roleplaying Game*. It includes a four-panel screen, eight full color character sheets (*Kinko's, here I come...*), all essential charts and tables, and various forms for the Narrator to use in construction of his series. The image on the screen is a rear shot of the *Enterprise-E* as she orbits what looks to be Earth. Very nice, to say the least...

So what's the final verdict regarding Decipher's rendition of the game? In my opinion, it is a true hit. Anyone who is a *Star Trek* fan and has dreamed of playing in that universe has perhaps the best system done yet at his fingertips with these books. The price of each of the core books is no more than what you normally pay for a hardcover campaign book (\$29.95) and if you shop around, you can probably find them for less. The *Narrator's Screen* carries a price of \$14.95, which is also in line with similar products. Decipher's *CODA* system is not difficult to learn and is commonly referred to in the d20 end of the industry as 'd20 lite' due to the similarities

in game mechanics. In short, it is a simple, easy to use game system that allows you to focus on creating your worlds and not spend so much time on looking up rules. Now if I can only convince my gamers to take a break from fantasy and boldly go where they have not gone before...

Star Trek: The CCG (2nd Edition)



Customizable card games are one of the hottest things going today. The success of *Pokemon* and *Magic: The Gathering* has spawned countless others card games with most failing quickly. One of the major players in the business is Decipher with two licensed properties that they have developed into card games: *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Trek*.

Recently, [Decipher](#) released the second edition of their *Star Trek* card game. Set primarily during the period of 24th century *Star Trek* (*The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager*), the events depicted on the cards encompass the latest *Star Trek* movie, *Nemesis*. Each card has a photo still from a recognizable *Star Trek* scene.

A starter deck consists of 60 cards and retails for approximately \$10.99 each. Each deck is made up of three rare cards, five mission cards, 20 dilemma cards and the remainder being various playable cards. Choices among the starter decks include two different Starfleet decks (Picard and Sisko), a Klingon deck (Gowhron) and a Romulan deck (Shinzon).

The game requires a minimum of two players and ends when one of the players accumulates 100 points. The basic idea is to complete the missions, which earn you points. Each mission lists a set of conditions that must be met. As a player, you build your crews for your starships. In order to accomplish a particular mission, the skills and information listed on the crew cards must equal or surpass the mission parameters. The mission is considered a success if this happens and the player gains the points listed.

Other players attempt to block mission attempts by using dilemma cards that may remove crew members from that attempt or even from play completely. The number of

dilemma cards that may be used is dependent upon the number of crew on the opposing player's ship. It is possible for a player to have multiple ships and attempt more than one mission or even use two or more ships together on a single mission. Ship-to-ship combat is also possible with this game (although beating the *Scimitar* takes a couple of *Sovereign* class ships).

Overall, I found the *Star Trek Second Edition CCG* to be quite enjoyable and fun to play. I grew up on the original series and have enjoyed the other incarnations through the years (yes, I even like *Enterprise*). The rules for play aren't as complicated as those for *The Lord of the Rings* TCG and with the available booster packs, you can build and design your own deck for play. You can build a "race" deck that focuses on Humans, Romulans, Klingons, Remans (although there are not as many choices), and even non-aligned worlds. You can also go for the various factions like Starfleet, the Klingon Empire, the Romulans, or even Cardassians. Another option is building a "series" deck of either *The Next Generation* or *Deep Space Nine*. To my knowledge, there are not enough available cards to do the other series yet unless you utilize first edition cards. Decipher does provide conversion rules to use first edition decks if you so desire.

Decipher was kind enough to send me an ample supply of cards which contained some really awesome rare cards (including the *Enterprise-E* and the Reman ship, *Scimitar*). I'm looking forward to making my own custom deck and playing again soon. *Star Trek* fans will definitely enjoy this game. I recommend it to any fan...

Roleplaying in the World of The Lord of the Rings

By Steven Creech



The success of *The Lord of the Rings* movies has kindled a whole new generation's interest in the world of J.R.R. Tolkien. Roleplaying in that world is an attraction to gamers everywhere. Last year, *Decipher* published *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook (see the October, 2002 issue of *d20Zine!* for a review) but just prior to that, an introductory game was released.

The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Adventure



Game: The Fellowship of the Ring allows you to relive the movie (or book) by letting you play the main characters. Included in this box set are fast-play rules, an introductory guide to Middle Earth, character sheets with the nine members of the Fellowship, maps, game tokens, and an adventure that takes the players into the mines of Moria.

While it doesn't go into the depth that the *LOTR* core rulebook does, the game mechanics involved are explained quite well, making this a good introductory game for people who may have never played a role-playing game before. One of the facets I really like

is that the adventure is not necessarily linear to the story we all know. In this adventure, Gandalf doesn't necessarily have to die in the encounter with the Balrog. However, there is also every possibility that Frodo may. This uncertainty should add an element of drama that mirrors what was seen in the movie if the Narrator approaches it right.

If you've never played a role-playing game before, this is a good introduction to that genre considering its \$29.95 price tag. Experienced gamers might want to skip it, but diehard fans will likely want it just to play the Fellowship.



The follow-up to *The Fellowship of the Ring* is, of course, *The Two Towers*. In this game your players assume the roles of Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, and Gandalf in their quest to free Merry and Pippin and save Helm's Deep. Just as in the previous box set, this one includes rules for fast-play, pregenerated character sheets, three beautiful maps and a 56-page adventure that follows the events of the story. The adventure does a decent job capturing the feel of the armies clashing at Helm's Deep.

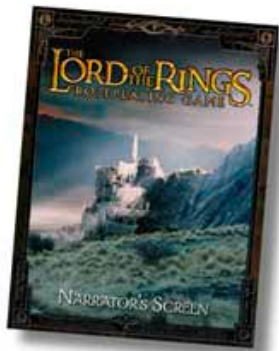
The Two Towers does not require playing *The Fellowship of the Ring*. It is, in fact, a completely stand-alone product and carries the retail price of \$29.95. Some of the rules are more complicated than those of its predecessor (especially when dealing with the mass combat of the armies), but fans and moderately experienced gamers should get hours of enjoyment joining the forces of Rohan against the armies of Saruman.

So after playing both box sets and deciding to make your own heroes to adventure in *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*, what's

next? Unfortunately, there are no adventure supplements available from Decipher. However, they have recently released two products that will help make the Narrator's job a little easier.



First up is *Maps of Middle Earth*, a \$29.95 box set filled with six maps and a 32-page guide to Middle Earth. Each map measures 17" x 22" and has been drawn by Daniel Reeve, the artist responsible for the maps seen in the movies. The maps show a specific area of Middle Earth and detail The Shire, West Gondor, East Gondor, Rohan, Eregion and Mordor. The 32-page guide includes keys to these maps. The cartography is stunning and one could easily frame each of these maps. However, at \$29.95, the price is a bit on the steep side for what you are getting. Loyalists or those who are severely impaired when it comes to map-making will likely want this product the most.



Next, we have *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game Narrator's Screen*, which retails for \$18.95. In addition to the four-panel screen, six full-color character sheets and a 16-page original adventure are included. The character sheets are fantastic and worth the

trip to Kinko's to have more made. The screen itself contains just about every table a Narrator might need during play complete with the page number of the original location for reference. There was supposed to be two full-color Grimoire sheets included but apparently they were left out. Decipher has posted a pdf download of the sheets, but it would have been nice if they were included since you are paying \$18.95.

The included adventure is designed to introduce characters to the setting by sending them on a recovery mission. The players must discover the whereabouts of a missing Ranger. It is the first chapter in *The Shadow of the North* chronicle, which is mentioned in the core rpg book. It is more or less the jumping off point for players.

The inclusion of the adventure and character sheets makes the price of this product more palatable, but it remains steep. Narrators who dislike flipping through a book to find a specific table will benefit the most. Overall, it is a good product, but not one that everyone must own.

Fans of *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* have cause to cheer some with the release of these products. It's not everything they want, but between fan-created chronicles on websites such as [Valinor](#) and the ideas that can be spawned from these releases, there should be enough to keep them happy for now. Decipher has a hit on their hands and just needs to support it with more timely releases to make it even better.

Short Stories

by Bret Boyd (DMBretB@comcast.net)

A Fistful of Greed

Nestled in the foothills at the base of the Kharliin Mountains is the town of Maelosh. A young thief has journeyed to this small town in search of a mentor that might help him hone his thieving abilities. On a tip from a friend, Beljuril Helviiryn headed for the Gator's Gullet Inn in search of...

"Galen Bluegem? Yes, that's me."

The thin man rose from his seat and offered his hand in greeting. Beljuril took and grasped it warmly. Galen gestured to the chair on the opposite side of the table and both sat down. Beljuril studied this reputed "master thief." Galen Bluegem couldn't have been over thirty winters old. His long black hair was unkempt, a strong contrast to Beljuril's own short red hair. Both thieves wore the leather armor customary among men of their profession. In addition, they each carried a steel sword at their sides and many pouches attached to their belts.

Beljuril could see that Galen was making a similar survey of him so he broke the other's concentration by beginning, "So, you are the renowned Galen Bl—"

"Yes, yes," Galen interrupted, "and ye're Beljuril Helviiryn, a young thief looking to make a reputation for himself. Oh, don't look so surprised. Ye don't become 'renowned' without knowing your competition, no matter how insignificant they might seem."

Ignoring the insult, Beljuril resumed his questioning, "Does this mean that you will take me under your tutelage?"

"Of course, my boy! I've been looking for someone to pass my considerable talent and knowledge to. By the way," he added with a wink, "I'm not as young as ye might believe. I stole a magic poultice of longevity from a wizard about thirty years ago. I'm actually sixty, but have the body of a thirty-year old. Wonderful, isn't it?"

"Er, yes," Beljuril replied, somewhat befuddled by the exclamation, "Your expertise would then be twice as valuable. When do we begin?"

Galen smiled like a cheek-less angor cat and replied, "Follow me."

"If ye're going to steal something, steal big, my boy," whispered Galen.

The duo was concealed in some thick shrubbery at the side of the road outside of Maelosh. They were waiting for something, that much was certain. Galen, however, had refused to say what or whom they waited for. *Maybe this mentor stuff isn't all I thought it was*, thought Beljuril, shifting his crouched form slightly. Suddenly, a cart wheeled around the bend up the road. A fat bearded man was driving and the cart's contents could not be seen until it was almost in front of them. An open bag dispelled any doubts Beljuril had about Galen's thinking, for it was filled with gold coins.

The young thief's eyes widened at what he thought was their objective. His whole body tensed to spring but Galen laid a calming hand on his shoulder and whispered, "Not yet, the real catch is coming soon."

Not yet!? What in the Hells is he waiting for? Two carts full of gold? Beljuril could not believe what he just allowed to drive by unmolested. He would probably not get another chance like that in his lifetime.

Near midday, another form came around the bend. A man with a thin white beard and adorned in red robes floated along the road on a patchwork carpet. "Sweet Telbos, that's a spellwielder," murmured Beljuril. At the man's side was a small, bulging, black bag.

"This is it, Helviiryn. Prepare yourself," Galen said, drawing his sword.

Beljuril drew his own sword but could not believe what they were about to do. He was going to warn Galen about how these mystical figures could rip the souls right out of men like them, but then kept quiet as the carpet was about to float past them.

"Now!"

Galen jumped from the bushes, followed closely by a shaky Beljuril. The man on the carpet was so startled that he jumped backward right off of the carpet, which silently floated onward without him. Galen leapt upon the rug and screamed, "Get on!"

Beljuril ran for the carpet as the robed man regained his footing and called forth the powers of magic in a single word, "Durak!" A blue bolt of light shot over Beljuril's shoulder and struck Galen full in the chest. The thief flew from the carpet, bolts of energy rippling over his body, and landed on the ground as Beljuril hopped on and took his place.

That's it, Beljuril's mind raced, *It's over*.

He was even more shaken by the sound of Galen's voice, "Grab the bag and run!"

Beljuril did as he was told and leapt from the floating carpet into the line of bushes at the roadside. He turned to see Galen, apparently unharmed, rising to his feet as the wizard began chanting a more complicated spell. Galen's ring glowed with the same blue magic that the wizard's bolt had possessed. Lifting the ring and pointing it at the chanting figure, the elder thief allowed the magic to shoot from it into the wizard. The man's entire form lit up with blue light as he was flung backward to land in a crumpled, smoldering heap in the middle of the road.

Wiping the dust off himself, Galen joined his young accomplice at the roadside. "So, what do we have?" he asked, as calmly as if he was requesting a mug of ale. Beljuril's mouth was hanging open—not used to these fast-paced, magic-filled encounters—as he numbly removed the bag's contents: a few rings and potions which faintly glowed with magical energy and a rolled-up scroll. Galen inspected the rings and potions while Beljuril opened the cracked parchment and studied its contents.

After a minute, Beljuril was again shaky, but this time it was due to joy, not fear. "Look at this," he said, "This says that great treasures lie in wait within the Maelosh Caverns."

"I see," said Galen, ripping the scroll out of the youth's hands. "But no one has ever found the entrance to the Caverns. It's one of many such legends concerning the Kharliins."

"As I was going to point out," Beljuril said retrieving the scroll and turning it over, "Here's a map that might help us."

"By the gods!" whooped Galen. "This shows the exact location of the Cavern's entrance. And it's only half a day's walk from here. It must've been what ol' Khyndri here was up to. We can be there by sunset."

"But the writing on the scroll speaks of some sort of guardian..."

"Bah," scoffed Galen, rolling up the scroll and tucking it in his belt, "there's always some sorta mumbo-jumbo about monsters. Scares normal folk away, but not people like us."

Beljuril was not convinced. "But if the treasure does exist, don't you think that this guardian thing would too?"

"All the better, my boy. Make ye work fer yer pay."

At that statement, Beljuril stepped away from the old thief. Maybe Galen wasn't the type to heed ominous warnings, but Beljuril thought they should at least discuss it. "You're crazy," he stated, trying to stop his companion.

Galen didn't even break stride. "Not crazy, just greedy. Come on. We're leaving now."

Beljuril took a step and then stopped, "But what about all this magical stuff?" he asked, gesturing to the items that Galen had dropped when he seized the scroll.

"Leave them. If this map is accurate, we'll have enough money to hire people to make magic items for us."

Beljuril breathed a sigh, rolled his eyes, and followed his mentor, leaving the magical rings and potions littered along the roadside. Maybe Galen was right and there was nothing to worry about. Or maybe they were both about to make a terrible mistake.

"Shouldn't we have seen something by now?"

Beljuril's words echoed through the dark cavern. The only light came from the torches that each thief carried. Galen, who was leading the way, turned and replied, "If ye only learn one thing from me, boy, let it be that ye must have some patience in these situations. Are ye expecting the treasure to jump on us?"

Galen spun around to continue, tripped, and fell to the floor. "What in the Five Hells..." he began. Then he saw what he had tripped over: a large stone hump within the entrance to a large chamber. Galen got to his feet and saw the faint glimmer of coins at the edge of the torches' light.

"We're here," he exclaimed, "Come on, Helviiryn, before I take everything myself!"

Beljuril had, until now, been caught up in the search. But this was not his first treasure hunt and he knew that getting the prize was never this easy. Galen ran into the spacious room as Beljuril studied the hump that Galen had tripped over. It seemed to be part of a statue and had a scale-like pattern sculpted into it. It tapered to a point near the left of the entrance. But to the right...it grew.

Beljuril stepped inside as Galen reached the coins and began rummaging through them in the middle of the circular room. The hump thickened considerably as it stretched to the right, eventually joining a larger bulk. The whole statue looked as though it rested against the wall and was the length of half the room's boundary.

"Helviiryn!" Galen called, "Come here, quick!"

Beljuril crossed the room to find Galen prying at one of the two fist-sized rubies set into part of the vast stone statue.

"Help me pry these rubies out. One for ye and one for me."

But Beljuril kept looking at the great statue. The rubies rested an arm's length apart and were set into this end of the statue, probably the front. The limited amount of flickering light made it difficult to see the entire thing clearly. Then Beljuril noticed the snout-like protrusion that his obsessed mentor was sitting on. And it soon began to make sense as he remembered what the scroll had said about the guardian of the treasure.

"Galen, those aren't rubies, they're eyes!"

"What are ye talking about, boy? Who cares, just help me pry 'um."

The rubies began to glow with an inner light and became as bright as the thieves' own torches. Beljuril looked back at the entrance to the room and sharply inhaled. The hump at the door was missing. He looked to the wall and heard a barely audible growl. The statue's body was rising and falling slowly, as if taking in breath.

Galen, too busy prying, noticed nothing.

"Run!" cried Beljuril, "Dragon!"

The young thief dashed for the entrance but the stone dragon's tail slammed down in front of him, causing the very earth to shake. The dragon's head snapped upward, tossing Galen to the ground like a child's plaything. The wiry thief quickly leapt to his feet and yelled, "Oh no ye don't! Those gems are mine!"

The dragon focused its attention on Galen and said in a deep grating voice, "No one steals from me and lives."

"Come on Galen! It's not worth it!" Beljuril called.

A crazed look came over Galen's face before he screamed, "I will have those gems!" and ran for the monster's neck, his sword swinging wildly in his hand. The dragon moved to the left and sucked in a gulp of air. By repositioning itself, its tail had slipped away from the doorway and Beljuril was free to escape.

Galen hacked at the fearsome beast's hide with his sword. The dragon, unaffected by the puny weapon, reared its head and spouted a stream of fire at the doomed thief. Galen Bluegem was engulfed in an inferno of reddish-orange light. His pained and terror-filled screams bounced around the room and brought Beljuril out of his watching trance.

The young thief turned from the gruesome sight of Galen's melting body and ran as fast as he could to the corridor that would lead him outside to safety. On the way out, he scooped up a small brass scroll tube that was lying near the entrance.

"At least it won't be a total loss," Beljuril huffed, "Might as well die like a thief."

He entered the corridor a second before the dragon's snout rammed into the wall at the room's entranceway. The angry beast howled before growling, "Let this be a lesson, thief." Beljuril neither paused nor looked back, running as fast as his legs allowed back to the open air of freedom.

It was late into the night when Beljuril Helviiryn made a campfire roughly a mile from the Maelosh Caverns. The loss of his mentor didn't bother him in the least. As a thief, it was all too common to lose comrades while on such dangerous forays. It was also common to not grieve over those comrades since they were, at heart, no more than competitors for the same prize. There would be other challenges, challenges that he would meet alone, and probably come out better because of it. Sighing, he took out the scroll from the stolen case and opened it:

"In the desert of Basrah lies the kingdom of Asram. Treasures to tantalize the eyes and terrors to freeze the soul wait for the hearty adventurer to find them."

A map under the writing showed the location of Asram.

Beljuril studied the scroll for a minute, looked back toward the Maelosh Caverns, and then crumpled the scroll and threw it into the campfire. The young thief chuckled to himself, "Not today, I think."

He then reclined against a rock, hands clasped behind his head, and drifted into much-needed slumber.

Redemption

Elron Blackbane lifted his rapier higher to appear more menacing. “Coins locked up in vaults aren’t doing anyone any good,” he commented.

The dwarven guard grunted and hefted his own weapon, a double-edged hand axe, in challenge. Elron knew that dwarves weren’t exactly the diplomatic type, especially when it came to guarding treasure. Another mark against the thief was the fact that he was an elf. The two races tended to mix as well as fire and smoke powder. This would be a challenge to get out without bloodshed, much less with the gold coins he had come for.

“Ye’ll have to kill me to get ‘em,” the dwarf replied matter-of-factly. Elron watched the shorter creature’s movements, carefully judging whether his stance indicated attack or defense. When he couldn’t tell either way, the elf lunged forward. He knew that he had to get this theft over with before more guards came nosing about.

Elron went in high, hoping to knock the stocky dwarf off-balance. His opponent parried, the two weapons clashing loudly, and backpedaled to keep on his feet. Elron lunged a second time, again at the dwarf’s head. But when the expected parry came this time, the thief swept his long leg behind the dwarf’s and pulled it out from under him. The stout guardian fell backward with a startled oath.

Elron was on him in a heartbeat, the hilt of his rapier connecting with the dwarf’s jaw. After a few more punches for good measure, Elron confirmed that the dwarf was unconscious. The rest was an easy matter. No more guards appeared. The lock on the vault was no match for him and there were no traps to speak of.

Within the treasure chamber were ramshackle heaps of coins. It didn’t take long for the thief to fill his three pouches to capacity and make a discreet exit. Elron glanced at the dwarf as he stepped past him. He was groaning and would soon return to lucidity.

“You there! Stop!”

Elron didn’t even pause to look toward the voice’s owner. He darted down the opposite hallway, turned right at the next corner, and proceeded out the kitchen door. His rope hung from the far wall of the villa’s backyard. The alarmed cries from inside the house only spurred him on more quickly. By the time any guards had entered the yard, Elron was already rushing down the grassy hill on the other side of the wall.

Even though he was faster than the villa guards and had a good head start, he couldn’t help but feel as though he was being watched. Several times during his run, Elron glanced behind to see a shadow, which quickly vanished after the elf blinked. If there were a danger, he thought, it would surface soon enough.

To comfort himself, Elron began humming a catchy battle song he had heard a few days ago. The guild lords of Marepp would be pleased at his success. Not so much for the gold he was bringing, but for the fact that he had not failed them. This would please them more than money. He always pleased them.

It was only when the distant lights of Marepp came into sight that Elron stopped to rest. Normally, elves could run great distances without stopping. But those elves weren’t weighted down with a backpack, sword, and three belt pouches of gold, thought Elron. “Elves,” Elron

said aloud, “When will the other races figure out that we are no better than them? My people. Hmph.” No, he had jogged for hours and it was time to rest. The shadowy pursuer had not shown itself, so Elron was not concerned.

The elf removed his equipment and stared blankly at the distant city. His thoughts became one with his surroundings—silent. Soon, Elron drifted into the elven form of sleep called reverie. This was a state which, although still aware of one’s surroundings, allowed the elf to rest, and to dream.

Unfortunately for the thief, his reverie constantly took him back to relive the defining moment of his childhood that had turned the elf away from his own people. This night’s reverie was no exception...

Not yet twenty-three, the child that was Elron chased a gray squirrel through the forest near his home. The elven village of Moss’whyn was only a few minutes away. Elron knew not to stray too far from home, for the threat of bandits was always present. The squirrel he was pursuing dove into a thick tangle of sticker plants. Elron began to circle around the pointy foliage when, suddenly, the animal emerged on the same side it had entered. Elron turned to watch the squirrel sprint away.

The young elf squinted in an expression of incomprehension. And then he heard the movement of several larger creatures behind him. Beyond the stickers, a number of beings were moving quickly toward his position. The smell of feces drifted into his nostrils. The intruders had dark red skin and pig-like snouts. He recognized the hated creatures as orcs and broke into a run. His footsteps were silent and quick, not disturbing any leaves or twigs on the ground. As he hurried up the final ridge before Moss’whyn, the elf’s pointed ears picked up the noises of combat.

The sound of steel ringing on steel washed over the hill and Elron knew that his village had already discovered the evil humanoids’ presence. The orcs that he had first seen now moved past him on the right. They were laughing and snorting to themselves. Elron could barely contain his anger, for he was certain that they were laughing at the expense of his people.

The young elf dropped to his stomach and crawled to the top of the ridge. He peered through the bushes into the small valley that held Moss’whyn. Most of the elven huts were burning and the inhabitants were moving into the forest on the side opposite Elron. He noticed that the village warriors were still fighting, guarding the retreat of the women and the young, who had been evacuated first.

Elron’s anger and frustration at the events abruptly turned to fear as he looked toward his own home near the center of the village. It, too, was burning. The small window to his room was coughing up smoke and ash. There was no sign of his parents. “Where are they?” he whispered.

When he couldn’t spy them through the smoke, the young elf lost all common sense and charged down the hill. He broke through the blue-flowered crois bushes that marked this edge of Moss’whyn and screamed, “Mother! Father! Help me! Where are you?!”

A nearby elven defender disarmed his opponent and crushed the evil thing’s skull with a wooden cudgel. As the orc dropped to the earth, he turned in Elron’s direction. The young elf recognized him as Lorellen, Moss’whyn’s aged chief priest. Elron began to run toward the priest when a tall form suddenly blocked his path.

“Well, well,” said the orc, “look’s like I got miself a little present.”

Elron backed away from the club-wielding creature. He thought he heard Lorellen call to him, but would never know for the orc swung his weapon and connected with Elron's head. The young elf spun violently from the blow and landed roughly in the dirt. The sounds of battle dimmed and the last thing he heard was his orc attacker's grotesque laughter...

Elron's eyes snapped open. He took several deep breaths, shocked out of his reverie as usual. The events after his capture raced through his blurred memory. The orc bandits, recognizing the inherent worth of a young and impressionable elf, sold Elron to the local thieves' guild. The guild masters used the elf as a slave for years to come until they believed they had permanently suppressed his "annoying elven beliefs." However, the elf would bet good money that the masters were still skeptical.

Elron remembered wondering why Lorellen had not saved him. Or why his parents, or any of the Moss'whyn elves, had failed to come after the orcs following the raid. And as days turned into weeks, and weeks into months, Elron's hostility toward his people's inaction grew to the point where he simply rejected them altogether. In defiance of his elven heritage, he even took a human last name—Blackbane.

But that was in the past. Forty-five years, to be exact. Now in the prime of youth, Elron was an up-and-coming thief of the Marepp guild. Last night's activities marked the successful completion of his eleventh theft. The next one would elevate him out of the novice rank and into the rogue category. With this in mind, Elron shouldered his pack and began the short run back to the guild house.

Marepp was the second largest city in the south. Its station as a port city afforded it a thriving populace and diverse culture. Businesses of every type could be found to those who looked hard enough. Elron entered the city and moved nimbly through the late summer throngs of merchants and shoppers. The thief's tight black shirt and dark blue pants were a bit out of place on this sunny day, but not odd enough to draw unwanted attention.

When he arrived behind a certain confection shop called Dandy Candy, Elron rapped on the back door. Two sets of double taps followed by a triple tap were all that was required to gain entrance. A short boy by the name of Damann opened the door cautiously. The youth, Elron knew, was a recent addition to the guild. Homeless from birth, the boy was taken in and given the same duties as Elron had been saddled with when he had been accepted.

"Hi Blackrain," Damann said cheerfully.

Elron inwardly grimaced. How the boy could manage to forget the elf's name upon every meeting was, to say the least, annoying. Elron merely nodded and walked past him. Damann closed the door and pointed to the stairs leading to the basement.

"They waitin' for you," he explained.

Elron unfastened the sacks of gold around his waist and proceeded down. As expected, the three guild masters were conferring around a triangular table. This symbolized that no master held position above the others. The sight sat well with Elron, who believed in a healthy balance of all things.

A single table lantern cast the only dim light in the room. Elron knew without looking that at least six heavily armed guards lurked within the basement's deep shadows. Anyone attempting to harm the guild masters would not find their task as easy as it appeared.

As Elron approached the table, the masters looked up from their discussion. Without preamble, the elf threw his stolen bags of coin onto the table. One gold piece leapt from a bag on impact and rolled off the edge of the table. The closest guild master deftly snatched it out of the air. Holding the coin between his index and middle fingers, the man examined it closely.

"It appears old Nanz is dealing with Galdatrain after all," said the white haired master. "The coin is from the city of sands." After his pronouncement, he tossed the coin back onto the tabletop.

The master to his right, the only female at the table, locked her amber eyes onto Elron. "You've done well Blackbane. This confirms that Eulias Nanz has been trading goods within Galdatrain."

"Indeed," chimed in the third master, "Elron has performed admirably." This master had wild red hair and a thick goatee. His voice was thick with an accent that Elron could not identify.

"Admirably, but not perfectly," said the first master. "Blackbane, when you faced the dwarven guard, you had the

opportunity to eliminate him. Why didn't you?"

Elron was surprised by the master's accusation. How could they know? Wait. The shadowy figure he thought he had seen. It must have been someone sent to spy on him. This did not sit well with the elf. "Why did you feel it necessary to shadow me?" he countered. "If the masters find me untrustworthy, I think I deserve to know why."

The third master let out a booming laugh that echoed about the stone basement. "Untrustworthy? You are a thief! Of course you're not trustworthy. But that was not why we sent the shadow. We were curious to see how you would fare against this particular mark."

"Yes," added the female master, "this was your first assignment against so heavily guarded a mark. The coins were not the main concern. How you handled the situation was."

"Which leads us back to my question," concluded the first master. "Why did you not kill the dwarf?"

Elron shrugged. "It wasn't necessary. And it doesn't give Nanz a good reason to track down the thief. If I had murdered the dwarf, the crime would have become that much severe. Nanz would have alerted the authorities and the probability of my return would have decreased sharply. But since I let him live, Nanz will not inform the regional peacekeepers because such an investigation would uncover his illegal drug trades. Which, I believe, is why you were so interested in the type of coin I returned with."

The second master nodded approvingly. "That is good reasoning," she complemented. "But never forget that every thief has to kill at some point in his career. Be it for himself or for the guild. Because you have managed to avoid it for the eleven missions you've been given, do not think that it will always be so."

Elron bowed in acknowledgment. Although he was still irritated at having been shadowed, it was still comforting to know that the masters had a genuine interest in him. He was confident that if he had gotten into dire trouble within the Nanz villa, the thief shadowing him would

Elron knew without looking that at least six heavily armed guards lurked within the basement's deep shadows. Anyone attempting to harm the guild masters would not find their task as easy as it appeared.

have assisted. It was this loyalty to each other that set the guild apart from his former elven family.

“Do you have any other assignments?” asked Elron. After this conversation, he was eager to prove himself and, more importantly, to put his novice rank behind him.

The first master smiled. “As a matter of fact, we were discussing that very thing before you entered. Have you ever heard of the Autumn Spire?”

Who hadn’t, thought the elf. The storytellers of Moss’whyn constantly spoke of the secret wonders within Autumn Spire, one of the only elven structures to survive since the First Age. To the masters, he simply replied, “Yeah?”

“Good,” said the third. “Because you’re going to break in and steal the spire’s weather controlling crystal.”

Until this point, Elron had always been impressed with the masters and their directives. This was a group that knew exactly what to do, how to do it, and who was best for the job. But the Autumn Spire’s crystal was just an elven myth. Not unlike the tales of elven superiority in art, battle, and everything else whispered among humans about his race.

“The crystal,” scoffed Elron, “is just a myth. Since when does the mightiest guild in the region go chasing after legends?”

The first master stroked his white goatee thoughtfully. “Since we learned that it is reality,” he replied. “The fierce storm that swept over the south two weeks ago left only destruction in its wake. Lives and property were lost wherever it went. Except for the Ghelgin Woods. All reports indicate that the forest was spared even though the farms around it were destroyed. The only explanation is the lone structure within the woods.”

“Autumn Spire,” concluded Elron. The logic was sound to the elf. But there was still one concern. “Why me?”

The second master leaned back in her chair. “Think of it as another test,” she said casually. “The tower is an elven refuge, at least in the legends surrounding it. This makes it a test of convictions. If you have truly rejected your people, then it shouldn’t be a problem for you to penetrate the spire and deal with anyone that might try to stop you.”

“If you fail,” continued the third master, “don’t bother coming back. This is the mission that will move you up the ladder to rogue status. It is the only chance you’ll get. Not returning with the crystal will mark you as a traitor to the guild and, as such, you will have to be neutralized. While the information you hold about us is minimal, it is not inconsequential.”

Elron nodded. “Right. Have I ever failed you before?” When no one disagreed, Elron knew that this was it. He would soon become a force to be reckoned with in the guild or, if he failed, he would become just another mark for a guild novice. His resolve strengthened. Nothing would stop him from succeeding. Nothing.

The legends surrounding Autumn Spire were elaborate and numerous. Elron was pooling the information he thought most likely to be true. The many defenses, both magical and mundane, were probably true. Elron also thought it likely that the crystal wasn’t so much a weather controller as it was a weather stabilizer. It would

assure that earthquakes, hurricanes, and other destructive phenomena did not touch the area around the spire.

The journey to the Ghelgin Woods had taken the better part of a week on foot but it was this part of each mission that Elron liked best. The open air, the free will to tackle the mission as he saw fit, and the knowledge of his past accomplishments all spurred him onward.

It didn’t take long for the elf to follow a deer trail through the wood until he reached the familiarly marked path of elves. Whenever his people controlled a large section of woods, they would mark their routes with the feathers of a roz. This particular bird blended in with the surrounding foliage and so the feathers were only detectable by those actually searching for them.

The feather that caught Elron’s eye was at waist level and plastered to the trunk of a large elm by a thin film of dark green paste. To the right, about five yards, was another feather, and then another beyond that one. All too easy, thought the thief.

Elron quietly followed the marked path for another hour before reaching a small clearing. The forest was silent here as if in reverence to the structure that stood nestled within the far edge of the clearing. The dull gray stone tower that was Autumn Spire stood

silent vigil over the area. It was as tall as the trees behind it and as wide as ten of the thickest ones bunched together.

The thief’s ears tingled slightly; indicating that something unnatural was close at hand. Elron drew his rapier and spun around. Only the darkness of twilight greeted him under the trees. He barely breathed as a chill swept through his body.

He turned around again, this time more slowly. What he saw was not inspiring.

“Identify yourself.”

Standing, or rather floating, in the clearing ahead of him was a ghostly form. Its pointed ears and angular face marked the thing as an elf. Except this elf was transparent. Faint white wisps swirled eerily around its frame from an unfelt breeze. The only features not in white were the elf’s eyes, which glowed with a dull green color. The twilight redness that bathed the clearing made the apparition even more unsettling, at least as far as Elron was concerned.

“My name is Elron.”

The wraith drifted closer, its cold aura penetrating deeper into the thief’s soul. A sharp pain pricked Elron’s forehead and then disappeared. But in that instant, he felt as though the ghost had peered into his mind and saw his deepest desires, and his darkest fears.

“Identify your family,” the wraith intoned. Its voice was high pitched but every syllable was monotone. If it had discovered his objective here, it did not show concern.

Without thinking, Elron replied, “Blackbane.” Even if he had used his birth name, he felt that this thing would know it to be his no longer.

The wraith’s green eyes glowed bright with his response. Elron gripped his rapier tightly, ready for action.

“Are you an enemy of the People?”

The “People” described the elven race in general and Elron, even though he had turned his back on them, did not consider himself a blood enemy. “No. No I’m not,” he replied. This had gone on long enough.

“But never forget that every thief has to kill at some point in his career. Be it for himself or for the guild

Elron wanted to get moving. His impatience fueled his courage as he stated, "Look, if you're going to stop me from entering Autumn Spire, then let's have at it. Otherwise, let me pass."

The wraith drifted slowly away from the elf and its eyes dimmed to pinpricks. As it moved away, he felt its grip on his mind recede as well. The thing would make an effective interrogator. He would have to include it in his report to the guild masters when he returned. Perhaps they could find a spell wielder able to control it.

"You may pass, Elron Blackbane." The wraith departed much as it had arrived, quickly and silently. When the last trace of it blew into nothingness, Elron sheathed his sword and moved to the spire. There was one arched entrance on this side but Elron knew it would be heavily guarded on the immediate inside. And then a thought occurred to him. One of the legends about the spire maintained that there was a back door to be used for escape by the priests inside.

"There's one to every structure," the thief said to himself. "No intelligent race would construct a building without a back door." He circled the spire and, as sure as a dwarf's beard was long, he detected a slight imperfection in the stone wall. A dent in the shape of an atala leaf had deliberately been etched faintly into the structure. Elron pushed on the design with two fingers and a doorway slowly opened with a loud grinding noise.

"Ta-da!"

This was certainly easier than he had expected. There were no lights on the inside that he could see so he relaxed his eyes long enough to let them slip into the sensitive vision that all elves possessed. The cold corridor ahead ran into the spire about twenty feet before stopping at a dead end. Before leaving on this mission, Elron had purchased some favored items while still in Marepp. He unconsciously ran a hand over these possessions—a bag of sharp wooden caltrops and a spring-loaded dagger within his left wrist sheath—to confirm their presence.

It required only a few steps to submerge the elf in darkness as he entered the spire. He saw only a cold stone corridor that soon turned into a dead end. The thief put a hand forward to check the wall for more secret panels, when he felt his hand snag onto something sticky and thick. Elron tried to draw his hand back, but it was too late.

Apparently, a spider had decided to make its nest here and he had just tipped it off to his presence. The elf drew his rapier with his off hand and began to slice through the strong webbing. A clicking noise drew his attention upward. The spider responsible for this mess was just about at Elron's head, its mandibles clicking with excitement at its newest prey. The beast was at least as wide as Elron was tall and gave no sign that it was just there to cordially welcome him.

Elron frantically slashed the last of the webbing off of his hand and went into a backward somersault. The huge spider pounced, landing where he had just been. Now clicking wildly, it skittered forward on its skinny legs. Elron was back on his feet in no time, sword in his fighting hand. "Come on!" he yelled, "Come at me!"

The giant insect complied and took a small jump to bite at his midsection. The elf sidestepped and stabbed downward at its eyes, expecting an easy kill. His thrust, however, was quickly parried to the side. One of the spider's far legs had anticipated his maneuver and blocked him! How could this be, he worriedly thought. Now the

thing had him just about pinned to the wall. It turned to strike with its mandibles once again, and Elron was forced to change tactics.

"Uh, nice spider. So sorry to have interrupted your nap. I'll just be going now." As if in response to his desire to leave, the secret entrance he had opened began to slide shut. In seconds, there would be nowhere to run. The spider lunged forward again. Elron sprang above its mandibles and onto its back. The monster immediately began shaking from side to side and the elf fell atop the creature before he could jump again to the ground.

Elron started to regain his feet but found that the back of his head was stuck to a glob of webbing on the spider's back. He moved his rapier up to cut himself free, but one of the spider's legs again smacked the weapon, this time causing it to fly from the thief's grasp to clatter onto the floor many feet away.

The thief pulled harder and harder to get his head free, but each pull only brought more and more tears to his eyes from the pain. A rush of air suddenly hit his face and he felt weightless for a moment. By the time he realized that the spider had just leaped into the air, the impact of its landing jarred his entire frame. The insect leapt again, this time coming dangerously close to the ceiling. It knew the elf was trapped and was now trying to crush him.

Ignoring the pain as best he could, Elron again tried to rip himself free of the sticky webbing. Like before, there was no progress. The spider jumped a little higher this time, and Elron plastered himself flat on its back. The cold ceiling rushed to meet him and the thief regretted that this would be his last mission, brought to an abrupt end by an oversized arachnid. He closed his eyes and felt the ceiling scrape against his nose. And then they were falling back to the earth, the impact rattling every bone in his thin body.

By now, the back door entrance had been sealed. Elron began to panic. "Let me go," he screamed. "Damn you back to the hells you came from!" The monster's only response was to leap into the air once more. As before, however, the ceiling only brushed the thief. The spider must have reached the maximum height it could jump. After this landing, Elron smacked his left fist into the creature's back in rage. While it did nothing to the spider, it reminded Elron of what was on that left wrist.

The thief quickly jerked his hand backward to release the spring-loaded catch for his dagger. As he did so, the spider skittered down the short corridor toward the back door. "Now what are you...oh no."

Elron saw that the ceiling here was slightly lower than where the spider made its lair. He felt the creature bend low to prepare its final leap. The small dagger was at his head one second and slicing through his short hair the next. The spider rocketed toward the ceiling as Elron rolled off its back and onto the floor. The next thing he heard was a sickening thud as the spider hit the stone above.

Without pausing, Elron sprinted away from the falling creature toward his sword. The dazed spider hit the floor at an odd angle, its misplaced weight snapping two of its legs like twigs. Elron rushed at it, regained rapier held high, and thrust his blade into the spider's eyes, right above the mandibles. The creature screeched in agony for several moments and then slumped to one side.

"There's one to every structure," the thief said to himself. "No intelligent race would construct a building without a back door."

The elf took a few deep, steadying breaths. He had always assumed that he was going to be killed by a rival thief, much later in his career of course. But this night he had nearly been snuffed out by a spider, albeit the biggest spider he had ever seen. After complaining to the masters about shadowing him on the previous mission, he wished that this time the shadow had been there for him. But the masters must have acquiesced to his wishes and the scenario was now his alone to complete.

Elron looked at the spider's cooling form and sighed. This was his first kill. In all of his missions, this was the first living being to fall to the thief's blade. And although it was only a spider, it had been taught to the elf that all sentient life was precious unless it was proven to be evil. The spider was no more evil than he was; yet he could have done nothing differently. In this case, it had been a matter of survival.

The masters, Elron recalled, had undertaken extensive measures to purge him of all elven influences. But maybe there were some things that couldn't be erased or forgotten. He could no more change his feelings toward killing than he could change the fact that he was an elf. How would his parents react to—

"No," he stated to himself. "I'm not here to find my past, I'm here for the crystal." The thief returned to the spot he had first been stuck in the webs. Above him, where the spider had emerged, was a shaft leading upward.

His elven vision detected more web strands crisscrossing the area. The shaft extended at least forty feet, as far as Elron could tell. There was no possible way to climb up the wall without snagging himself on the webbing. Since he would require both hands to climb, he wouldn't be able to free himself from the webbing when he became stuck.

There had to be a way into the rest of the spire. Why put a secret door in a structure that led to a dead end? Detecting no more spiders or other danger, Elron removed the wooden stump that occasionally served as a torch as well as some flint and steel. Within moments, a steady orange glow filled the end of the corridor. As he suspected, a worn iron ladder against the far wall ran from the floor to the top of the shaft.

Elron began his ascent, making sure to stay as close to the wall as possible so as not to brush against the webbing nearby. When he reached the top of the ladder safely, the thief found himself on a small ledge in front of yet another dead end.

"Not this time," he said. Within moments he detected the outline of a secret door and had it opened. Light assaulted his eyes from the other side. It seemed to radiate off the very walls until his eyes adjusted. And then he realized that it was coming from the walls. Magical light was not something he understood but could appreciate. Elron stomped out his torch and set it onto the ledge before walking through.

A cold stone corridor ran ahead. It smelled like powdered jana leaves, the kind used by elves in many sacred ceremonies. Hearing nothing to indicate other humanoids in the vicinity, the thief walked down the hall. Each step was silent; the first rule in thievery. If a thief wasn't quiet, he would not enjoy a long, much less prosperous, career.

There should be someone here, he thought. The last time he crept into a structure this quiet was on his second mission. The masters had targeted a rogue agent for termination. This was to be Elron's first kill.

When he expertly penetrated the thief's household, everything was quiet. No traps waited for him. No guards ambushed him. Elron thought he had broken into the wrong house before he found his mark lying in a pool of his own dark blood. The rogue had already been killed. He discovered later that an independent bounty hunter had taken his kill. Although the masters weren't particularly pleased, Elron had never mentioned that he couldn't have been happier. The thought of murdering another did not sit well with the elf even back then.

Elron passed by several oaken doors as he moved down the corridor. He didn't even bother checking the rooms beyond, for he knew that the crystal would only be kept on the spire's top level. Searching anything else would only delay his mission and raise the risk of detection.

It wasn't long before Elron found himself in a small square chamber. A spiral staircase wound its way through both floor and ceiling. There was a door on the far wall, but the thief's goal was up. As he ascended, Elron found it increasingly disturbing that no elven guards had yet challenged his presence. Maybe it was their day off, he thought sarcastically.

Or maybe not. The upper chamber was identical to the one he had just left except for the stern-looking elf standing at the side of the stairs. The guard was outfitted in the finest chain mesh armor that the thief had ever seen. The magical light from the walls glinted off its many ringlets so that the armor seemed to radiate with power.

Complementing the armor was the elf's *tichral*, an elven sword whose tip was spliced so that the weapon actually had two tips instead of one. Elron knew that when the weapon struck an enemy, it would inflict damage as if it had struck twice. He had heard of elven weapon masters fell giants with a single expertly placed strike from such swords.

"Who are you?" asked the guard, speaking in elvish. "And what are you doing on this sacred level?"

It had been many years since Elron had spoken the language of the People, but it was a simple matter to slip back into his birth tongue. Besides, he had already planned for such an encounter.

"Where is the high priest?" he countered. "I bear an urgent message."

"The *wheln*," replied the guard, using the ancient word for chief priest, "is praying in the nave. Why did you not leave your message with one of the acolytes downstairs?"

Elron was surprised to hear that more than a handful of elves resided here. He assumed that Autumn Spire would be minimally staffed, as the magics that prevent non-elves from entering were predominant in the legends about it. Still, there was nothing the thief found more exhilarating than working impromptu.

"The acolytes were praying, too. And if you took your post seriously, you would realize that one such as I would never dream of disturbing them."

The guard crossed his arms over his chest and sneered slightly. "Then I suppose you must wait until the *wheln* is finished with evening prayer as well before you speak to him."

Elron bowed in acknowledgment. To the People, protocol and tradition were everything. He would comply with the guard's order. It would certainly be easier to steal the crystal with no one in the nave.

The masters, Elron recalled, had undertaken extensive measures to purge him of all elven influences. But maybe there were some things that couldn't be erased or forgotten. He could no more change his feelings toward killing than he could change the fact that he was an elf.

Now he needed to think of an appropriate message that would get the two off of this upper level.

Elron stepped back to consider his next move when a voice from the past, his past, spoke from the now open doorway to his left.

“Who wishes to speak with me?”

It was Lorellen, former high priest of Moss’whyn. Like any good thief, Elron was always prepared for any situation; except this one. Not now. His acceptance as a true guild thief, the final break from the People by stealing the crystal, it all depended on this mission. If he didn’t come up with something good, it would all end this night.

Elron forced a smile and said, “Lorellen. I had not thought to see you alive after Moss’whyn’s destruction. Er, how’ve you been?” That last bit was pathetic, but it would have to suffice.

Despite the small stature of the elven race, Lorellen was a good head taller than Elron. He had not aged well since last they met, the wheln’s many wrinkles attesting to a life of duty and obligation. Lorellen returned the thief’s smile, weakly.

“Elron, my child. You have finally returned.”

“Returned? Then you knew that I’d been captured and not killed by the orcs?”

Lorellen’s sigh spoke of many restless hours concerning this subject. The wheln dismissed the guard, who had been watching the exchange with rising curiosity. When the sounds of the guard’s footfalls faded, Lorellen pressed a hand to the glowing stone wall and offered a prayer to Xamissa, one of the more powerful gods of the elvish pantheon.

Immediately afterward, a shelf grew from the wall at waist height. “Have a seat,” the elder elf waved, “There is much to discuss.”

The thief pursed his lips in thought. By confirming he knew of Elron’s survival, Lorellen had told him everything that he needed to know. His people had abandoned him. White-hot rage leapt like an angry candle within him. Elron didn’t need to discuss anything.

“Step aside, Lorellen. I’m not here to reminisce. I was just passing by the spire and thought I’d pay my respects to the weather lords.”

The wheln stepped in front of the doorway that led to the nave. Although there appeared to be no weapons beneath the elf’s green-brown robes, Elron knew that Lorellen would not hesitate in unleashing the power of the gods if he felt there was a danger to the spire.

“I know why you’re here,” he replied. “Or at least I can guess. You’re the thieving guild’s latest attempt to steal the crystal of protection.”

Elron’s ire became mixed with surprise. “You know my status as a guild member?”

“Yes. We have been keeping an eye on you for the last forty years.”

The thief’s rage returned tenfold. “That’s right; forty years! Why didn’t the People come for me right after I was taken? Where were your elven ideals of unity and freedom then?”

The wheln dipped his head in shame. “After the orc attack, it was discovered that your family had perished. Since I was the last to see you, I claimed the *elvorra*.”

Elron could not stop his jaw from dropping. Although he had assumed his parents had been killed, that assumption was not nearly as painful as the corroboration. And the *elvorra*? He was not aware of that ancient rite ever being used in modern times.

It allowed the elf that invoked it sole responsibility for the welfare of another elf, the latter usually infirmed or orphaned at the time. The subsequent bond between the two elves lied between close friend and parent. The closest approximation was the human term godfather.

“My claim for *elvorra* was immediately recognized,” continued Lorellen, “and so I sent runners to track your captors. The orcs stopped to rest a day’s ride south of Marepp. I decided that then was the best time to recover you. I formed a strike band of seven, including myself.”

Lorellen shook his head, the apparently painful memory of those events now living and breathing in his mind’s eye. “It was foolish. I did not take the time to gather further information on the enemy before we attacked. During the time between the runner’s report and the time to gather a party and return to the site, two other orc raiding groups had joined the first. They were all within an abandoned cabin. We were outnumbered four to one and each of us had suffered wounds during the initial attack. Only three of us survived.”

Lorellen massaged his temples. “It was foolish,” he repeated.

Elron took it all in. Every word. Every gesture. The wheln was his godfather, at least by elven tradition. But if Elron recalled that tradition correctly, the *elvorra* required the consent of both elves involved in order

to be binding. Still, elven lives had been lost for his sake. This should have made a difference. But Elron had accomplished so much in the outside world. He needed time to think all of this through. Elf? Thief? Which world did he belong to?

“I’ve lived longer among humans than elves. I’m making a name for myself.”

“As what?” accused Lorellen, his senses returned to the present, “A thief?”

“As someone that can be depended on. Not as someone who gives up because the odds are against him. Or because there is danger. You had numerous opportunities to come for me after that.”

Lorellen’s face became an unreadable mask. The feelings displayed during his recounting were past. Elron’s refusal to acknowledge the *elvorra* was a slap to the face of the elder elf and reduced the thief back to the status of intruder.

“The safety of the People was at stake. We were refugees, our resources dwindling. We had to move on. No more rescue attempts were possible. You have been monitored, as I said, and knew you would be sent here eventually. I can’t apologize for doing what I thought was right.”

Elron returned the wheln’s stony visage. “And I can’t forgive the people that abandoned me,” he replied.

Lorellen pointed to the thief’s belt. “So, Elron Blackbane. You carry a weapon. Are you intent on using it?”

The thief fingered the hilt of his rapier and then released it. “It’s for self-defense. Despite my anger, I have no wish to destroy life. Even yours.”

Lorellen’s features grew softer. “Then there is hope for you,” he intoned quietly. “The People would welcome your return. No matter what you have become.”

More than anything the two had just spoken of, this shocked Elron the most. An offer of amnesty? Elron realized that this was not just a token offering. For once an elf left the People or remained apart voluntarily for great lengths of time, that elf was forever shunned, his name no longer spoken in public. It must have been the elvorra that made this redemption a possibility. Even back then, Lorellen had foreseen this.

But there were too many consequences to be thought through on the spot. Too many possibilities still left to him among the outside world. And now that he had gotten a taste of them, he wanted more. He needed to become more than the elf he was born as.

Deep inside him, the anger remained. It was not as strong as before, but it was still present. It would have to be dealt with before a return to the People would even be possible. Until that day, he would follow his own path.

Elron turned his back on the wheln. Taking a step toward the staircase, he said, "Others will try to steal what I have not this day. You would do well to seal the old tunnel."

Lorellen's voice held disappointment, but also understanding. He, too, knew that Elron had much to think about; four decades of bitterness to overcome. "Indeed. It will be done."

Elron moved down the stairs and then stopped again to add, "I don't believe we'll meet again."

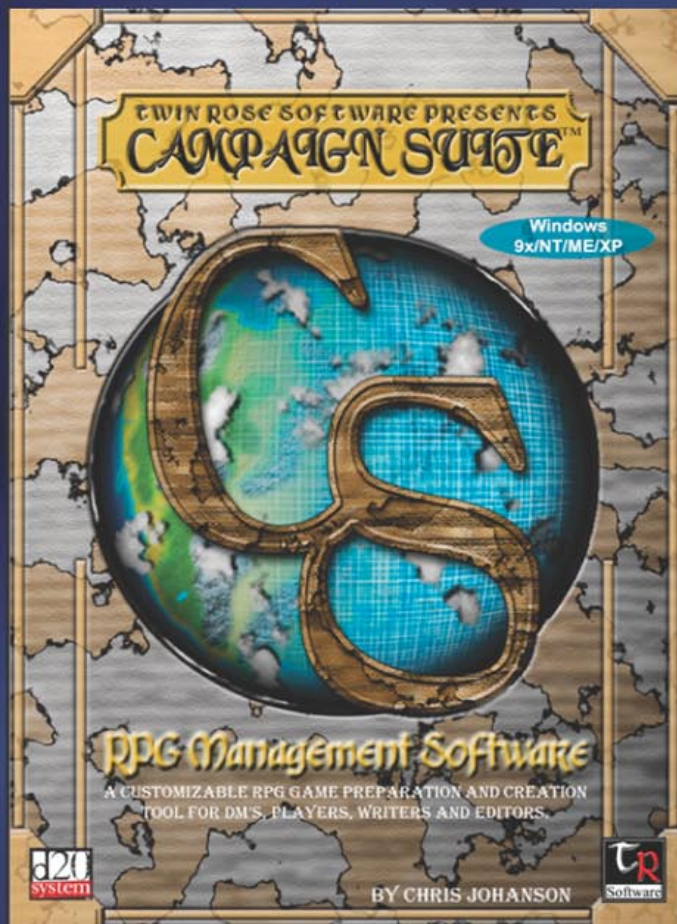
"Perhaps," came the response. "But know this, Elron, that as long as I draw breath, the offer to return to the People remains. Safe journey."

Elron took the staircase to the next floor. But instead of exiting through the escape tunnel as he had entered, he proceeded to the ground level. Numerous acolytes greeted him as they tended to their evening activities. He nodded to each one. The acolytes seemed so young to him. Or was it that he felt a little older? No matter. That was something else he could ponder as he began his journey.

There was no going back to Marepp. The masters had made it clear what to expect if Elron failed to capture the crystal. He could now look forward to a life of constantly looking over his shoulder. Somehow, that was alright. He would find some friends out there in the world. People that would appreciate his skills instead of using them to further their own ends.

A new path was at hand. One that provided endless opportunities. And, like a smart thief, Elron Blackbane intended to follow up on every one.

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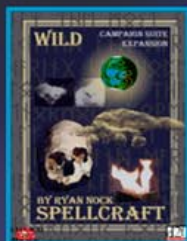
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