

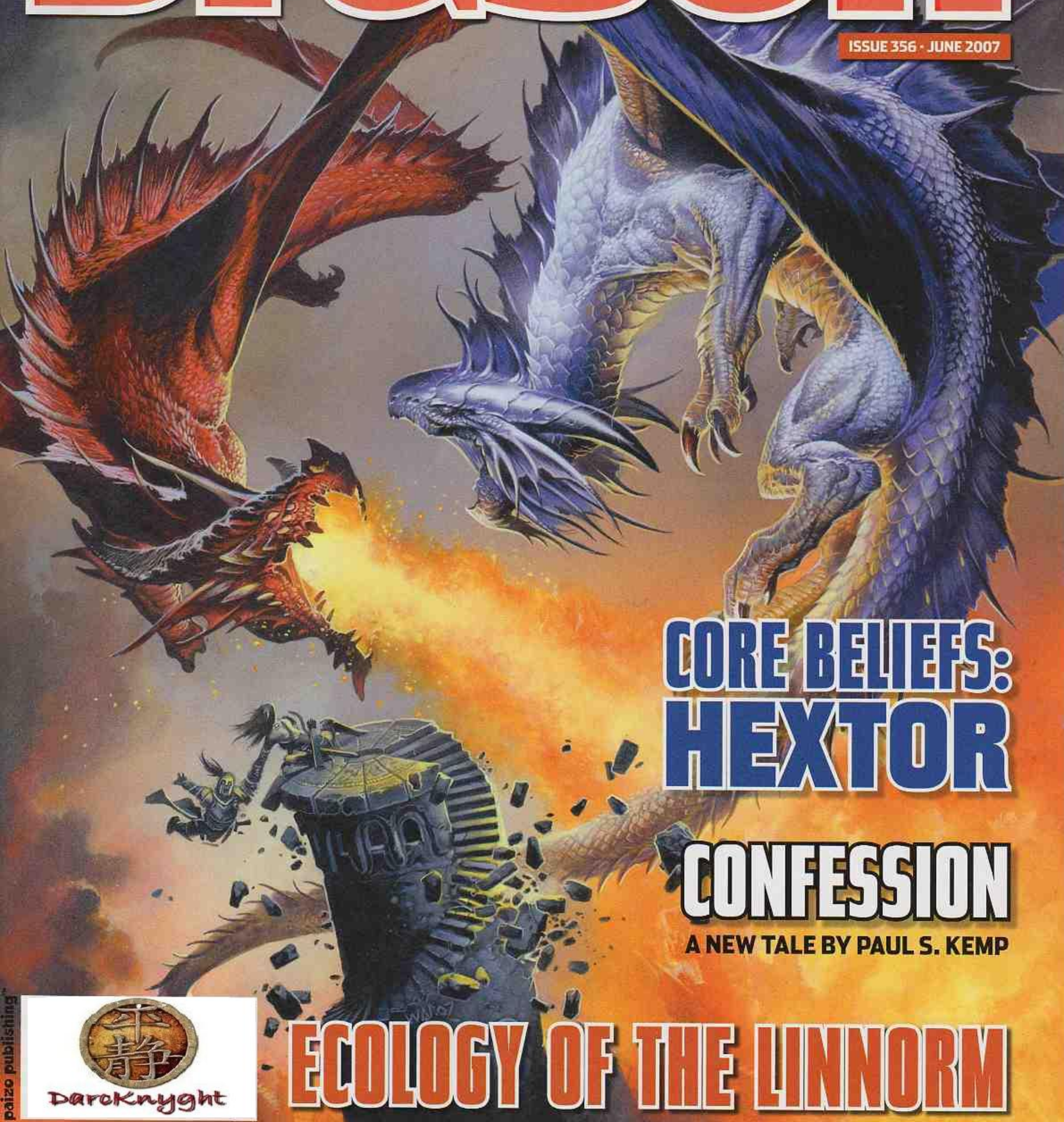
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Dragon[®]

ISSUE 356 • JUNE 2007



**CORE BELIEFS:
HEXTOR**

CONFESSION

A NEW TALE BY PAUL S. KEMP

ECOLOGY OF THE LINNORM



DarkKnight

Dragon

VOL. XXXII NUMBER 1
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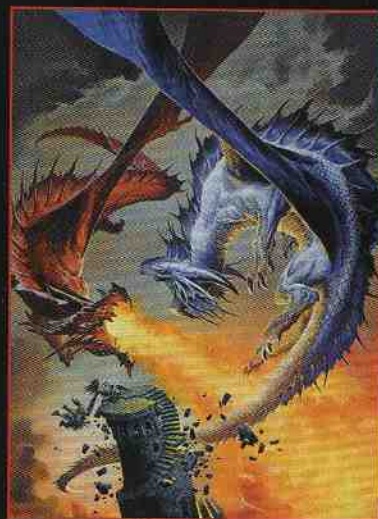
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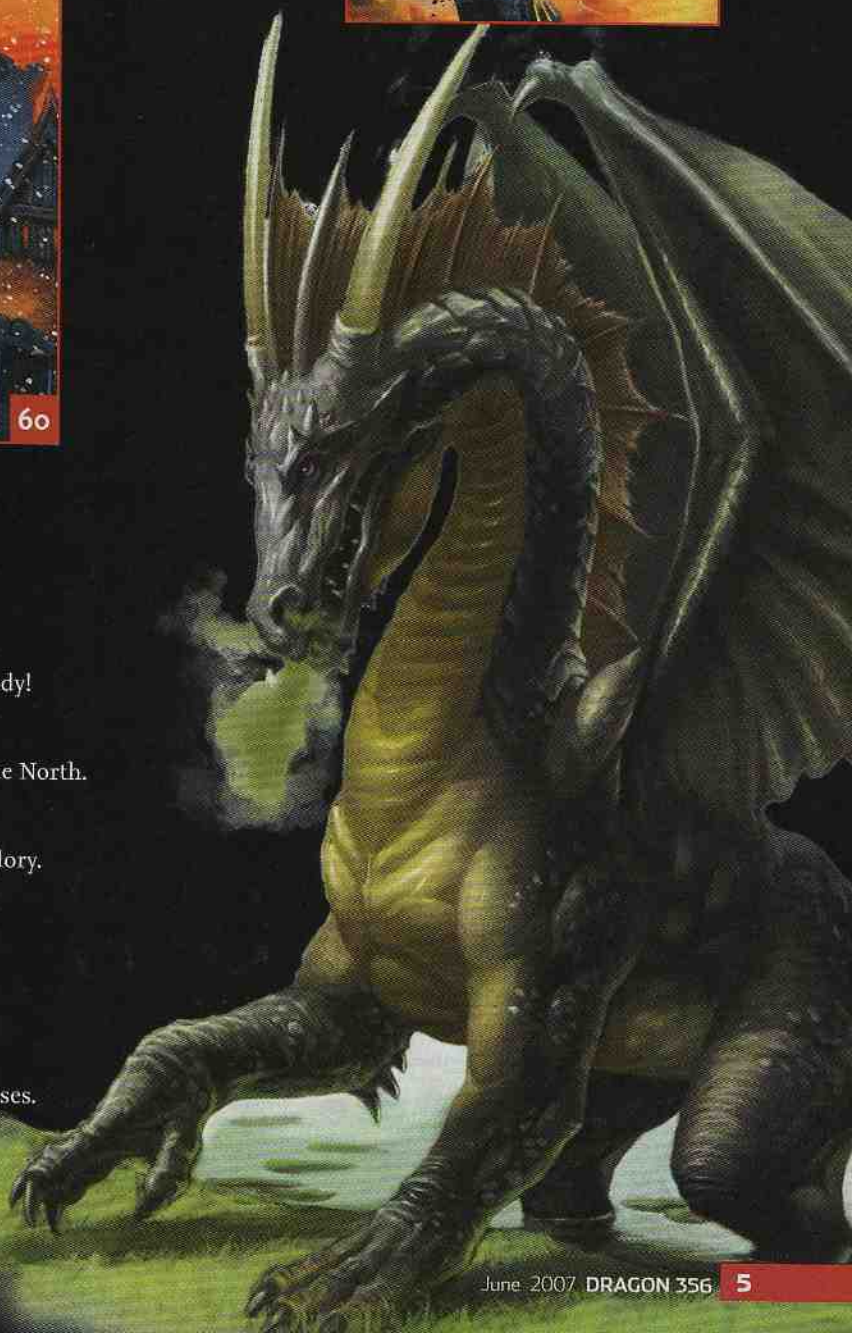
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THE END IS NIGH

Near as I can tell, I've written about 96 DUNGEONS & DRAGONS editorials since taking the helm of POLYHEDRON magazine in 1999, and I'm sorry to say that this one has been the most difficult. So here it is: Wizards of the Coast has decided not to renew Paizo Publishing's license to produce DRAGON and DUNGEON magazines. After the August issues (DRAGON #359 and DUNGEON #150), DRAGON and DUNGEON will cease publication as printed magazines. Wizards of the Coast plans to move content similar to that produced in these magazines online, though at presstime details remain hazy. Over the next three months we'll stay on top of the story and bring you as many details as we can about their plans, as well as plans of our own.

I've only been DRAGON's Editor-in-Chief for two-and-a-half years, but I've been a reader most of my life. When I first picked up the magazine, Kim Mohan was in charge, during what many readers consider DRAGON's golden age. After Kim, Roger E. Moore assumed control, bringing a sense of fun and personality to the magazine that still lingers on our best days. When I finally achieved my dream job of working on D&D for a living eight years ago, Dave Gross was at the helm, and it was great to see him in action. Throughout the magazine's thirty-one-year history, those guys and others have been my editors-in-chief, and I've been honored and humbled to be yours these last few years.

The next two issues of this magazine (the last two issues, in fact) will contain a special "Publisher's Statement" that will describe how Paizo will reimburse subscribers for credit remaining after the August issues, and readers who simply can't wait are encouraged to visit paizo.com/transition for all of the details.

Paizo remains on good terms with Wizards of the Coast, which has been an excellent business partner throughout our five-year partnership. In fact, Wizards extended our current licensing agreement by a few months to ensure that the Savage Tide Adventure Path (and "Savage Tidings" in this magazine) reached their natural conclusions. Both companies are currently discussing options for additional collaboration, and I think there are some very exciting possibilities looming. I'd like to express a personal note of thanks to Christopher Perkins, Ed Stark, and especially Rich Redman. If it has seemed as though DRAGON and DUNGEON fit perfectly with D&D material from Wizards of the Coast, those guys deserve a lot of the credit.



Paizo Publishing has no intention of folding up shop simply because the magazines are going away. We've recently hired three new employees, and we look forward to focusing

on our own line of GameMastery RPG accessories, including a series of monthly stand-alone full-color 32-page adventures set for a June debut. We'll soon announce a flagship product connected to that line that is sure to interest DRAGON readers—visit paizo.com for more details, which will surely show up in these pages before all is said and done. We've got a new line of classic fantasy and science fiction novels in the form of our recently announced Planet Stories imprint, and the first two deluxe boardgames from our Titanic Games line have been enjoying strong success. In short: We're not going anywhere.

So we've got three more issues of DRAGON and three more issues of DUNGEON to blow your socks off, and there's nothing like a looming deadline to push an editorial team to the heights of creativity. Before we're done here we'll see new installments of both Core Beliefs and the Demonomicon of Iggywil. It's likely the next three issues will include special posters, and the final issue of DRAGON will contain a huge feature on the "Unsolved Mysteries" of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS—a snapshot of the kinds of topics we'd have focused on indefinitely if given the opportunity.

The last five years have represented a tremendous opportunity for Paizo Publishing, and I'd like to thank you, the reader, for joining us on this journey. I can promise with authority that the path ahead is just as exciting as the ground we've covered. I hope you join us on the journey.

ERIK

Erik Mona
Editor-in-Chief
erikm@paizo.com

SCALE MAIL

Tell us what you think of this issue. Send an email to scalemail@paizo.com. Please include your name, city, and state.



THANK YOU

I'm still here. I still have my issues of *DRAGON*, numbered in the low twenties. I still have my original *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide*. I've been to lands, fantastic and ordinary. I've taught my sons and daughter (my very own princess) to release their imaginations with a firm grip on a d20. I've played and I've DMed, and oh the things I've learned. My favorite class is the paladin.

In 2008, I too will celebrate my 30th anniversary of a union made while in service to my country aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ranger, CV 61, and floating around in the Indian Ocean.

I've laughed with close friends when they skillfully roll a clutch "oo" on a d%, and I screamed at them when they trashed the new campaign I spent months building.

I've read the works of many great minds, like Tolkien, Lovecraft, Donaldson, Salvatore, Weis, Hickman, Gygax, and Greenwood. I've seen truly great artists like Elmore, Parkinson, Caldwell, Spencer, Prescott, and Horsley.

I've even been here when my beloved D&D went digital.

From TSR to Wizards and beyond, I've been here and I've got a pretty firm grip.

Thank you. I salute you, Sirs!

Steven A. Wilson
Wichita, KS

*It's a complete coincidence that this letter arrived in the same month we announced the end of *DRAGON* magazine as we know it, and I suspect the letter columns of the next few issues will be filled with similar memories. Please take a moment to visit our messageboards at paizo.com and share what*

DRAGON and DUNGEON magazines have meant to you throughout the years. We'd love to hear from you, and we may print some of the best memories in our final issues.

REBUTTAL TO #354

I am writing via snail mail to comment on C. Searing's letter in *DRAGON* #354 (April, 2007) and Erik's response. First off, I've been playing D&D for about 26 years now and I've played with literally hundreds of different people with different playing styles in many different campaigns. One thing is certain—anyone who has played more than just a few sessions has heard of *DRAGON* magazine. It is as foundational to the game as the dice we use: I have little doubt that without *DRAGON*, the roleplaying game genre would not have survived (if it survived at all) into what it is today—a worldwide phenomenon that enjoys a never-before-higher-number of enthusiasts, thanks in part to the amazingly well-meshed dichotomy of diversity and continuity exemplified by *DRAGON*.

Like C. Searing, I don't have immediate computer access, since I am an inmate, and I don't get to play all the super-cool online games or the miniatures tournaments or go to any cons. Which makes *DRAGON* more valuable to me than ever, almost regardless of content. Anything's better than nothing, eh? So C. Searing's rant struck me as not only narrow-minded and unappreciative of the nature of D&D, but also about as dumb as he says the Sage Advice questions are. Mr. Mona and both teams at *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON* do an enviably wonderful job, on the whole.

However (and you just knew that was coming, I bet), Mr. Mona said (and I quote), "...our wizened old Sage answers the questions he receives, no matter how

dumb or obvious they might be to some readers." Well, that's not true. I myself have submitted a series of questions to Sage Advice numerous times, via email and snail mail, and I've never gotten even a whisper of an answer. I've been submitting these same questions for about two years now, with nothing answered in the column, no responses via email or any other kind of mail. So my question is: What's up with that? Is Andrew Hou's illustration of a sleeping Sage more than just humorous fancy? Or perhaps a doppelganger has infiltrated your ranks, intent on gaming-world domination?

Anyway, all in all, with outstanding creative and professional writing and truly superb artwork, thank you for keeping the game alive and thriving. Gold stars for all! Except for the old Sage—tell him that, apparently, his *headband of intellect* has been disjoined; without a requisite Intelligence score of 15 or higher he'll not be able to answer questions with the *dream* spell any more.

Sean Malis
Vacaville, CA

As you might imagine, Sage Advice receives more questions than the Sage can possibly answer. In fact, the Sage receives in one week enough questions to fill a month's column. So what happens to the questions he receives the other three weeks a month? Well, those go into a series of folders that divvies them up by general subject. I'm not exaggerating when I say that even if nobody ever sent in another question for the Sage we have enough questions to continue to run the column for another 100 issues (assuming the Sage answers about 14 questions per column). So you see, the Sage isn't ignoring you. It's overwhelmingly likely he

GAMEMASTERY GIVEAWAY

DRAGON TALK

Being a Dungeon Master isn't easy. It takes loads of rules, books, charts, and devious plots to take on those endless droves of PCs. Fortunately, Paizo Publishing's GameMastery line of roleplaying aids, accessories, and adventures is here to help. This month, Paizo is giving away 10 prize packages loaded with GameMastery gear, including:

Adventures: Featuring *Do: Hollow's Last Hope* (signed by the authors) and *D1: Crown of the Kobold King*.

Item Cards: The invaluable *Adventure Gear* deck and boxes of both the new *Dragon's Trove* and *Elements of Power* sets.

Critical Hit Deck: Add a little carnage to your crits!

Flip-Mats: The original Flip-Mat and the new bar-brawlin' Flip-Mat Tavern.

GameMastery Combat Pad: Never lose your initiative again!

And Several Secret Extras!

All you have to do to enter is send an e-mail to contest@paizo.com with your address and the subject line "GameMastery Giveaway" by July 1st. We'll choose and announce all 10 winners in September's issue, #359, and get those 10 lucky DMs all the gaming gear they can handle. Let GameMastery handle the rules and get back to gaming!



just hasn't seen your question, even if you've sent it a handful of times!

And, in light of Erik's editorial, from this point forward all Sage Advice questions should go to askdnd@wizards.com.

—Mike McArtor

MORE MODRONS, PLEASE

I have been a loving fan of the modron race since I first read about them back when I DMed second edition *PLANESCAPE*. I just want to ask you guys to keep up the good work because you've made this D&D player nearly tear at the sight of converted modrons and very compelling new events that are transpiring with them.

My only problem is the lack of the entire modron race. There are fourteen to detail in stats and while I commend you on converting the first five (and introducing the modron as a PC race), I currently am unable to fully utilize the modrons for my games. I am sure others are in a similar position.

Being a lawful race, and the way they function, it's necessary to have them all converted to 3.5. Especially when my campaign ends up in the higher levels, they'll have to face more powerful modrons as adversaries. I remember see-

ing the tertian converted in *DUNGEON* #144, so I assume that leaves just eight more modrons to convert.

Is there a way to see the rest of the modron race converted real soon or sometime in the future? It'll satisfy a wide customer base that loves or will love the modrons and you guys won't have to worry about the modrons again until fourth edition.

Please grant us this wish and convert the rest of the modrons for us! I will do anything required to make this happen soon!

Thanks again for the modrons! Hope to see more of them!

Luis Oyola
Via Email

*One thing I can say for certain is that the world is full of modron-lovers. Luis's letter was just one of dozens we received asking for the rest of D&D's lawfully-minded shape-creatures, so readers can definitely consider this one "on the front-burner" for a future issue. Whether or not we'll make it in time for #359 is something of an open question, but I know Primus himself will be disappointed if we don't polish them off before we close the doors on *DRAGON* magazine. Anything else would be unlawful.* —Erik Mona

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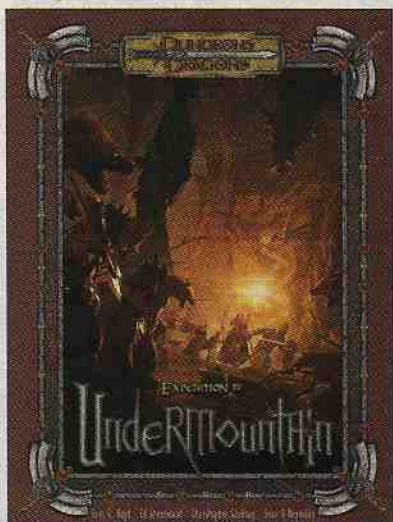
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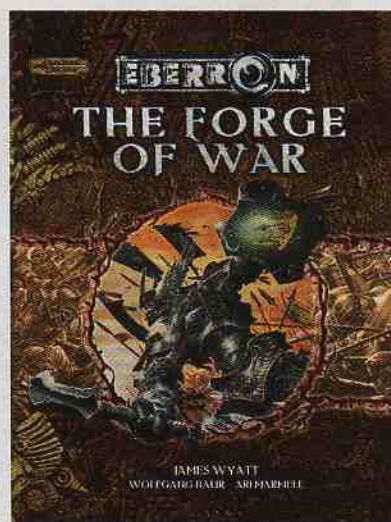
NEW RELEASES



Get your spelunking gear and delve into Undermountain, the massive, killer dungeon of the FORGOTTEN REALMS. Part campaign, part adventure, *Expedition to Undermountain*, by authors Ed Greenwood, Christopher Lindsay, Eric L. Boyd, and Sean K Reynolds, is ten dungeons worth of traps, monsters, and dungeon features, ready to implant into any campaign. FORGOTTEN REALMS creator Ed Greenwood says the appeal comes from "Being given handfuls of 'what you might meet down there' to drool over, hints of what treasures await, and glimpses of (at last!) some of the true deep secrets of Undermountain."



In *The Sinister Spire*, the second adventure in the series that began with *Barrow of the Forgotten King*, PCs descend into the subterranean reaches to discover a drow city ravaged by plague and confront four dangerous factions, each struggling for control. Designers Bruce Cordell and Ari Marmell include plenty of encounters beyond the typical drow, from assassins and aberrations to the undead. Cordell also warns that, in the depths, "people you talk to might not be who they seem." Whether run as a sequel or a stand-alone adventure, *The Sinister Spire* offers challenges for any party of 4th- to 6th-level characters.



The Forge of War details EBERRON's Last War, the anvil upon which the current setting was struck. Designers Wolfgang Baur, James Wyatt, and Ari Marmell explore the war's history, campaigns, famous characters, legends, and more. Baur hints, "It's loaded with military-style adventure hooks, and with lots of violent conflict carried into present-day grudges." Players can now place their character's scars, recount heroic battles, and delve through the riches-laden battlefields of the Last War. Maps also detail the changes war wrought on various countries' borders, showcasing the conflicting claims on the land and new sites for adventure throughout Khorvaire.

NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON #357



DEMONICON OF IGGWILV: DEMOGORGON

by James Jacobs

Face the twin evils of the Prince of Demons himself: Demogorgon. Discover the depravity of his murderous cult, multiverse-spanning machinations, and the fell servants warped to his insane dual whims.

DEFILED CREATURES

by Nicolas Quimby

Resist the rage of nature despoiled. Beast wraiths, deadwood revenants, and bloodlances—unicorns whose

horns have been stolen—all seek their righteous revenge.

FUR AND FEATHER

by Hal Maclean

Take your animal companions to a new level. New details, allies, and equipment for characters with furred friends and feathered familiars.

PLUS

The Ecology of the Titan, Volo's Guide, Dragonmarks, Savage Tidings, Class Acts, Comics—including Order of the Stick—and more!

HAIL THE KOBOLD KING!

This month, Paizo Publishing (paizo.com) releases the first adventure in their new series of GameMastery Modules. In the premiere adventure, Nicolas Logue's *D1: Crown of the Kobold King*, heroes delve into the heart of a trap-laden monastery infested with maniacal kobolds. As with each subsequent full-color, 32-page GameMastery Module, *D1* features full-color art and maps, four ready-to-use PCs, and total OGL compliance.

In celebration of Free RPG Day, Paizo is also releasing a free preview adventure, *Do: Hallow's Last Hope*, by Jason Bulmahn and F. Wesley Schneider, which can tie directly to *D1*.

Look for a new adventure from Paizo every month!



THE NIGHT IS COMING

Get ready for another delve into the darkness next month with the release of the thirteenth set of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* Miniatures: *Night Below*. This minis-based expedition into the Underdark uncovers more than just the horrors of the depths, with the plastic appearance of several familiar heroes. Of particular note come miniature incarnations of *DRAGONLANCE*'s dark-souled archmage Raistlin and Drizzt Do'Urden's barbarian companion Wulfgar. Oversized figures, like the Frost Giant Jarl—and his icy clear plastic sword—also push the boundaries of what it means to be size Large. Check out more previews of *Night Below* right here next month or every Thursday online at wizards.com/minis.



Raistlin



Large Chaos Beast



Frost Giant Jarl

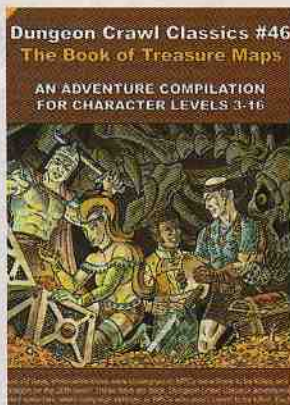
THE STUFF OF HEROES

Lone Wolf Development (wolflair.com) has released the latest version of *Hero Lab* character creation software. The program offers real-time updates, so users can try out different options and a rules validation system that alerts users to conflicts while allowing "house rules" customizations.

"There haven't been many software tools for RPG characters that have been worthwhile investments," said Lone Wolf's Rob Bowes. "This is exactly the kind of software I've always wanted as an RPG player."

Designed for use with the d20 ruleset, *Hero Lab* will also feature expansions that support other systems, including *RuneQuest*, *Mutants & Masterminds*, and the *World of Darkness*.





X MARKS THE SPOT

Dungeon Crawl Classics. #46, *The Book of Treasure Maps*, from Goodman Games (goodman-games.com), presents six different stand-alone, treasure-map-based adventures, ready to drop into any campaign. "Treasure maps have been a staple of great fantasy adventures for generations," said Joe Goodman of Goodman Games. "The traditional 'pirate's booty map' is represented, of course, and we've also taken some steps forward on the concept of 'treasure map'—including one map that, after assembly by the DM, resembles a giant 20-sided gem."



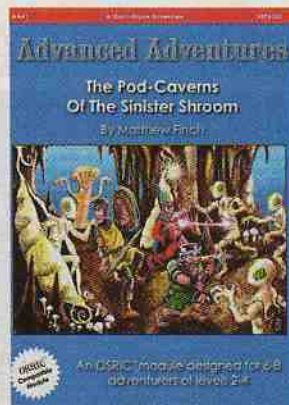
BAR FIGHT!

Take your game mat out to the bar! Paizo's Game-Mastery Flip-Mats can take either dry- or wet-erase markers and never stain. Not even the dreaded permanent marker can withstand the *paper towel of cleansing* when used on a laminated Flip-Mat. And while it's certainly durable, it's also ready to be played on. This month's addition, *Flip-Mat Tavern*, features a classic, two-story tavern, complete with stables, sleeping quarters, and even a hidden meeting room. The flip side features rolling grassland, ready for any adventure you can draw. Check out the whole line of Flip-Mats at paizo.com.



DOOM FOR FREEPORT

This summer, Green Ronin Publishing (greenronin.com) takes an excursion back to the rowdy pirate city of Freeport. *Dark Wings Over Freeport* is an adventure designed by Rob Vaughn for 9th-level characters. "It's a fun and disturbing scenario incorporating a fallen demon, missing beggars, and one of the city's most infamous crime lords," said Robert J. Schwalb of Green Ronin. "As the first adventure to use the revised *Freeport* setting book [*The Pirate's Guide to Freeport*, which also releases soon], it was imperative that *Dark Wings* established the tone we were looking for, and I have to say, it nails it."



THE OLDEST SCHOOL

With *Expeditious Retreat* Press's (xrps.shop.citymax.com) new line of Advanced Adventures, you can go back to gaming like it's 1974. Taking a cue from first-edition D&D, these 16-page modules use the OSRIC System (Oldschool System Reference and Index Compilation, see knights-n-knives.com/osric), a free rules set that is fully compatible with the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS's rules. AA#1 *The Pod Cavern of the Sinister Shroom*, AA#2 *The Red Mausoleum*, and AA#3 *The Curse of the Witch Head* are all available now with more to come.

THIS MONTH IN DUNGEON #147



THE AUNDARIAN JOB

by Craig Shackleton

Do you have what it takes to rob a bank and steal from a fiend? Learn that things can never be too safe when rakshasas are concerned in this *EBERRON* adventure for 5th-level characters.

DREAD PAGODA OF THE INSCRUTABLE ONES

by Stefan Happ, Stephen S. Greer, B. Matthew Conklin III, Tom Ganz, and Ashavan Doyon

Atop a distant mountain peak,

the last taint of the Far Realm lingers in the clutches of an unlikely cabal of monstrous magic-users. The final installment of the three-part *Seeds of Sehan Campaign Arc*, a D&D adventure for 10th-level characters.

INTO THE MAW

by Robert J. Schwalb

In order to rescue a friend, the PCs must infiltrate the personal prison of the Prince of Demons. A *Savage Tide Adventure Path* scenario for 15th-level characters.

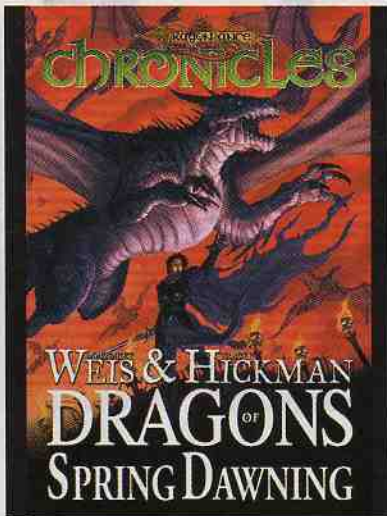


WAR GAMES

Soldiers from Camp Adder/Tallil Air-base in Iraq are holding Ziggurat Con, the first roleplaying and anime convention to be held in a warzone.

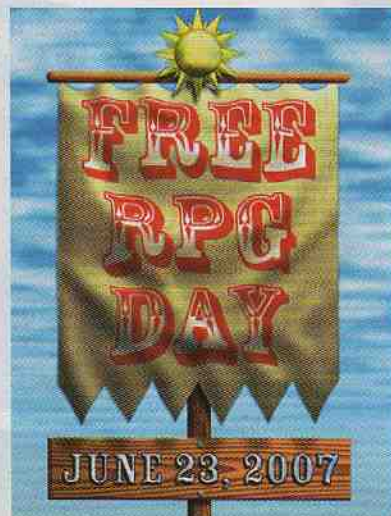
"As there are no D&D stores on post, the convention relies heavily on support from the manufacturers," said SPC David Amberson, lead organizer of the convention. Already, Sovereign Press, Final Redoubt Press, Goodman Games, Steve Jackson Games, and Paizo Publishing are among those contributing products to these dedicated gamers in uniform.

Open to all Allied military personnel and civilian contractors in Iraq, the June 9 event will be showing anime from 1200 to 2100 hours and offer door prizes for the first fifty attendees.



DEVIL'S DUE FANTASY

Devil's Due Publishing (devilsdue.net) expands their already sizable collection of fantasy comic adaptations this month with the trade paperback edition of Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman's *Dragonlance Chronicles Volume 2: Dragons of Winter Night*. Also debuting is the fourth installment (of twelve) of the *Dragons of Spring Dawning* monthly limited series. Meanwhile, fans of the FORGOTTEN REALMS should keep an eye out for the third and final issue of R.A. Salvatore's *Streams of Silver*, which also releases this month, with the trade paperback edition of the collected comics scheduled for release in August. The trade paperback edition of the first book in Salvatore's *Demonwars Saga*, *The Demon Awakens*, releases in July.



FREE RPG DAY

Who says you can't get something for nothing? Saturday, June 23rd marks the first annual Free RPG Day, a celebration of gaming being held across the United States in more than 90 participating hobby stores. "The goal is to get consumers inspired to play a new RPG," said Aldo Ghiozzi, owner of Impressions Advertising & Marketing, the organizers of the new holiday. All Free RPG Day giveaways will be of new material, such as RPG Quickstart Rules and Adventure Modules—no overstock, retail-priced, or "dead" product. Participating publishers include Goodman Games, Green Ronin, Paizo Publishing, Troll Lord Games, White Wolf, and more.

To see if your local gaming store is participating, visit freerpgday.com.

RPGA REPORT by Chris Tulach

If you've been looking for new adventures with the RPGA, you won't want to miss Origins or Gen Con Indy.

First up is the Undermountain Adventures campaign, which utilizes material from the new *Expedition to Undermountain* super adventure. Start a character at Origins and play the first part of this four-part series, then finish the final three parts at Gen Con Indy. What's more, if you play at the "big two" conventions this summer, you'll earn exclusive rewards that can be applied to one of your existing LIVING GREYHAWK or XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS characters!

Also at Gen Con Indy, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Open has been expanded to include a separate competition for high school teams! If you or someone you know is between the ages of 13 and 18, get together your team to represent your gaming group at the big show. Winners of the first High School Open will receive special trophies and lots of great D&D gaming material.

Gen Con Indy also sees the return of STAR WARS! Blast off to the start of the Dawn of Defiance campaign with the first adventure, "Prelude to Defiance." The campaign utilizes the new Saga

rules system, and is set in the tumultuous time between Episodes III and IV. Be the first to try this sneak peek of the new campaign that begins this fall. In addition, test your mettle as you race against the clock in STAR WARS: Rebel Run. Try to escape the clutches of the Empire before it's too late!

Gen Con Indy is also the place to learn what's in store for the RPGA in 2008, so you won't want to miss Saturday's members' meeting for news on our next big project. Keep an eye on rpga.com for information and see you this summer!



Top 10 Most Wanted Dragons in D&D

by Tim Hitchcock and Nicolas Logue • special thanks to artists Brom, Clyde Caldwell, Jeff Easley, Phil Foglio, Todd Lockwood et. al.

Of all the dragons that have terrorized PCs throughout D&D's history, it is difficult to narrow down the memorable and the infamous to the ten most feared, most dangerous, and most wanted. Aside from the obvious choices

of the dragon gods on high, Tiamat and Bahamut (whose deadliness staggeringly outweighed all others), the following earned their infamous place by burning, shocking, freezing, poisoning, and corroding their memories into the hearts of gamers everywhere.

10 BORYS OF EBE

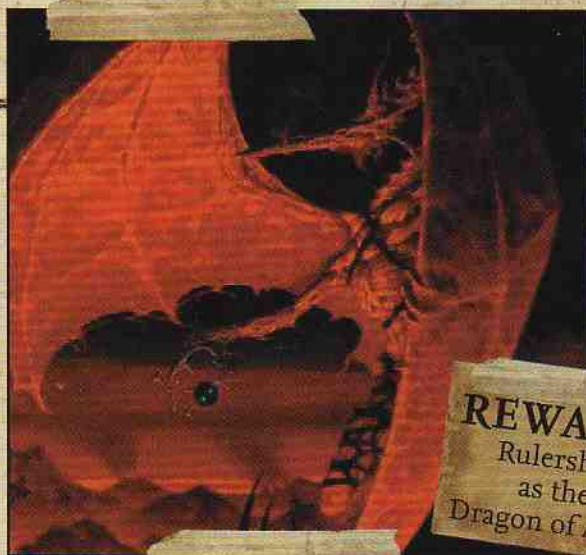
Known Aliases: The 13th Champion of Raajat, Butcher of Dwarves, the DARK SUN Dragon.

Notable Characteristics: The first dragon of Athas, a tyrannical sorcerer-king who transformed himself into a dragon.

Known Lairs: City State of Tyr, Founder of Ur Draxa.

Wanted For: Overwhelming power, slaying the last dwarven king of Kemalok, beheading Rajaat loyalists, demanding 1,000 slave sacrifices annually, and practicing defiling magic.

Reported Sightings: DARK SUN Campaign Setting, *The Cerulean Storm*.



REWARD:
Rulership
as the
Dragon of Athas



Sub-adult
12 ft

REWARD:
5,000
GP

9 UTRESHIMON

Known Aliases: The Blue Dragon in the Moathouse.

Notable Characteristics: Young blue dragon, smells like a moat.

Known Lairs: The Moathouse outside the village of Hommlet.

Known Associates: Rats, frogs, and gray oozes.

Wanted For: Massive number of TPKs, loitering near Hommlet, and being a dragon in a low-level adventure.

Reported Sightings: *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*.

Eyewitness Accounts: "There's a dragon in there!"

Don't wanna be going there."

—ol' Del

8 GROWF!

Known Aliases: A Sure-Fire Snow Remover, Organic Marshmallow Toaster, Cuddly Bar-B-Q Starter, Art Nouveau Road Flare, or Friendly Flame Thrower.

Notable Characteristics: Little, purple, goes "growf!"

Known Associates: Phil and Dixie.

Wanted For: Numerous counts of arson and general combustion mayhem!

Reported Sightings: *What's New With Phil and Dixie, DRAGON* from 1980 to 1983 and 2000 to 2003.

Warning!: Armed with blast-o-flame breath and a winningly purple personality. Do Not Add Water!



REWARD:
One
Growf
Dragon

7 CHRONEPSIS

Known Aliases: The Silent, The Watcher.

Notable Characteristics: Colorless form, unblinking dragon's eye holy symbol.

Known Lairs: The Mausoleum of Chronepsis, the Outlands.

Known Associates: His fellow dragon deities.

Wanted For: Being the draconic god of fate and judging the spirits of all dragonkind in death.

Reported Sightings: *Draconomicon*, *Monster Mythology*, *A Player's Primer to the Outlands*.

Warning!: Blessed with the Death, Dragon, and Knowledge domains.



REWARD:
Godhood

6 ASHARDALON

Known Aliases: None.

Notable Characteristics: Great wyrm red dragon, scar over heart.

Known Lairs: The Bastion of Broken Souls.

Known Associates: Ammet the advanced half-dragon balor.

Wanted For: Being a CR 27 dragon in an adventure for 18th-level PCs and related TPKs, replacing his heart with a demon, and ascending to godhood without a license.

Reported Sightings: *Bastion of Broken Souls*.

Warning!: Do not approach unless you are epic level.



REWARD:
200,000
GP

5 KLAUTH

Known Aliases: Old Snarl, Guardian of the Words of Power.

Notable Characteristics: Great wyrm red dragon, extremely paranoid of other dragons.

Known Lairs: Klauthen Vale along the Sword Coast.

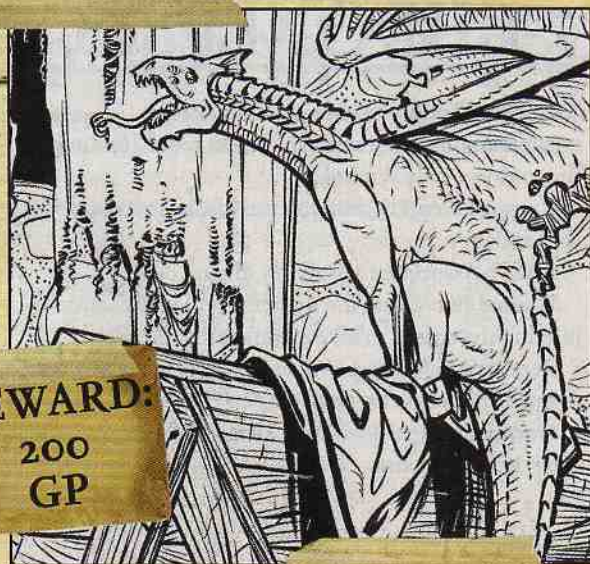
Wanted For: Attacking the Tower of Twilight, egg-knapping, unrelenting cannibalism, dabbling in Netherese magic, and moonlighting in video games.

Reported Sightings: *DRAGON* #244, *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*, and *Neverwinter Nights*.

Eyewitness Accounts: "Don't go near him early of mornings; he's apt to be a right Klauth until he's had a mug or two."
—Ed Greenwood, *DRAGON* #244



REWARD:
400,000
GP



REWARD:
200
GP

4 CALCRYX

Known Aliases: That little white dragon!

Notable Characteristics: Wyrmling white dragon, as adorable as he is deadly.

Known Lair: Formerly room 15 of the Sunless Citadel, now room 37.

Known Associates: Meepo the Dragon Keeper.

Wanted For: Proving small dragons can still pack a wallop, claw/claw/biting 1st-level PCs, and being the first third-edition dragon encounter.

Reported Sightings: *The Sunless Citadel*.

Eyewitness Accounts: "The cat-sized white dragon that was just too cute to want to kill, but dished out so much damage, you had to think about it."

—Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel

3 FLAME

Known Aliases: The *DUNGEON* Dragon.

Notable Characteristics: Avaricious, bloodthirsty, death-defying tenacity.

Known Lairs: Crystal citadel in the Western Mountains.

Known Associates: Githyanki wizards.

Wanted For: Hoarding gold, the ruthless slaying of dozens of adventurers, and terrorizing the pages of *DUNGEON* for decades.

Reported Sightings: "Into the Fire," *DUNGEON* #1; "Up from the Ashes," *DUNGEON* #17; and "Old Embers Never Die," *DUNGEON* #100.



REWARD:
600,000
GP

2 CYAN BLOODBANE

Known Aliases: K'rshinthintl, Steed to the Master of Past and Present, Glaucous: Regent to the Speaker of Stars.

Notable Characteristics: Great wyrm green dragon (now a dracolich), vehement hatred for Silvanesti elves.

Known Lairs: Tower of Shalost, Neraka.

Known Associates: Skie, Khisanth, Pyros, and dozens of other DRAGONLANCE dragons.

Wanted For: Service to the Dark Queen, attempted elven genocide, conspiracy, impersonating a mortal, and dracolichdom.

Reported Sightings: DL10: *Dragons of Dreams*, DRAGONLANCE *Chronicles*, and *Dragons of a Fallen Sun*.



REWARD:
800,000
GP

1 DRAGOTHA



REWARD:
1,000,000 GP
and hoard that takes
full page to describe

Known Aliases: The First Dracolich.

Notable Characteristics: Red dragon dracolich, tattered wings, and fearsome (paralyzingly so) gaze.

Known Lair: Avernus (formerly), Tabernacle of Worms.

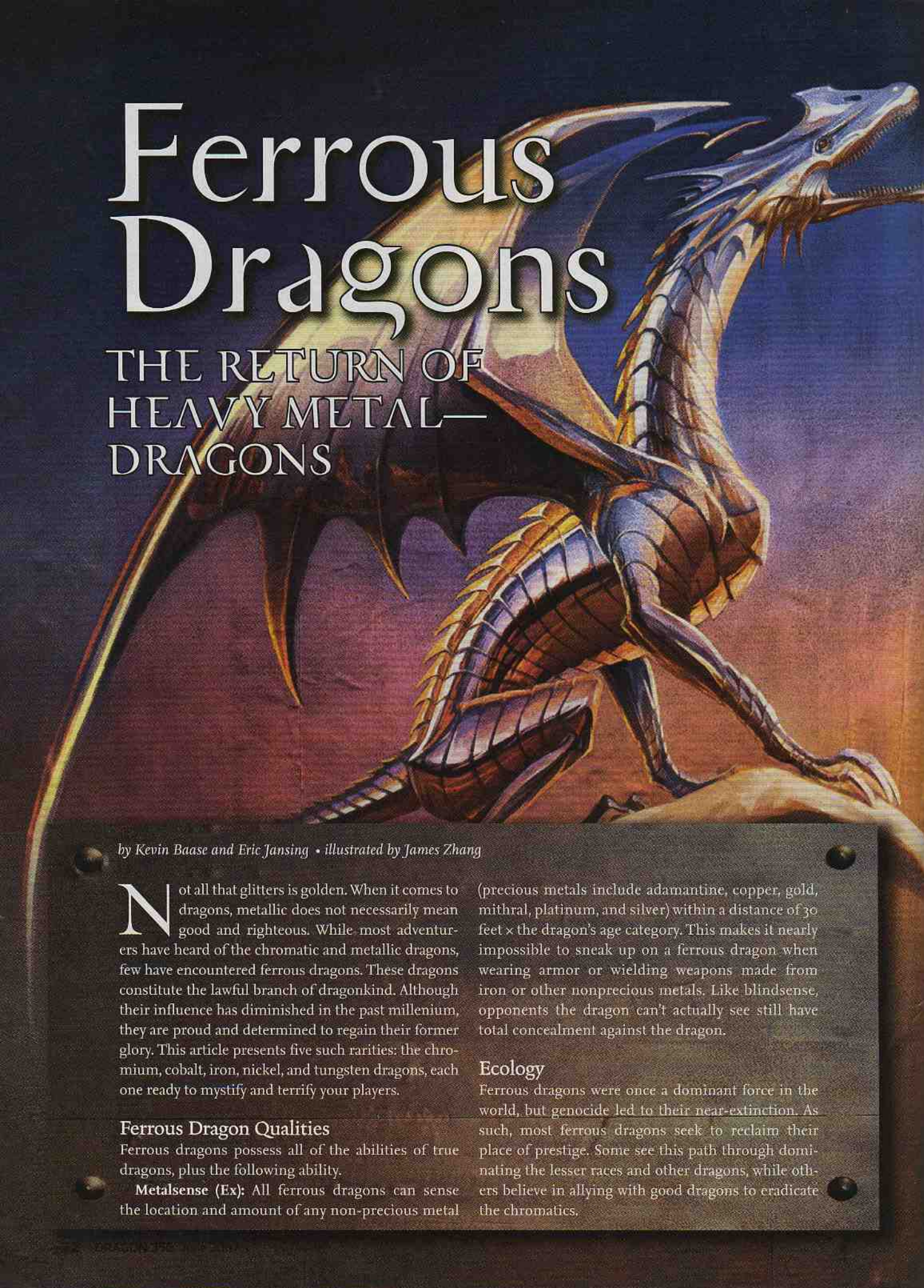
Known Associates: Tiamat (former lover, harsh breakup), Lashonna, Mahuudril, Venk, and Kyuss.

Wanted For: Dracolichdom, more TPKs than any other encounter in the *Age of Worms* Adventure Path, usurpation of the Writhing Sanctum, war (worm?) crimes, pushing the CR limit to the extreme in a non-epic DUNGEON adventure, aiding and abetting an

evil god in a conspiracy to bring about a worm-filled apocalypse, and Unholy Toughness.

Reported Sightings: *White Plume Mountain*; "Legends & Lords," DRAGON #134; and the *Age of Worms* Adventure Path, finally appearing in "Into the Wormcrawl Fissure," DUNGEON #134.

Warning: Armed with quickened, clinging 22d10-point fire damage breath; death wind breath; and devastating damage-dealing feat combos like Power Attack married to Arcane Strike (with 8th-level sorcerer spell slots at his talon-tips).



Ferrous Dragons

THE RETURN OF HEAVY METAL— DRAGONS

by Kevin Baase and Eric Jansing • illustrated by James Zhang

Not all that glitters is golden. When it comes to dragons, metallic does not necessarily mean good and righteous. While most adventurers have heard of the chromatic and metallic dragons, few have encountered ferrous dragons. These dragons constitute the lawful branch of dragonkind. Although their influence has diminished in the past millenium, they are proud and determined to regain their former glory. This article presents five such rarities: the chromium, cobalt, iron, nickel, and tungsten dragons, each one ready to mystify and terrify your players.

Ferrous Dragon Qualities

Ferrous dragons possess all of the abilities of true dragons, plus the following ability.

Metalsense (Ex): All ferrous dragons can sense the location and amount of any non-precious metal

(precious metals include adamantine, copper, gold, mithral, platinum, and silver) within a distance of 30 feet $\times$ the dragon's age category. This makes it nearly impossible to sneak up on a ferrous dragon when wearing armor or wielding weapons made from iron or other nonprecious metals. Like blindsense, opponents the dragon can't actually see still have total concealment against the dragon.

Ecology

Ferrous dragons were once a dominant force in the world, but genocide led to their near-extinction. As such, most ferrous dragons seek to reclaim their place of prestige. Some see this path through dominating the lesser races and other dragons, while others believe in allying with good dragons to eradicate the chromatics.

Ferrous dragons have a higher concentration of iron in their blood than most creatures. They are consequently drawn to metal, able to innately sense it, and many can subsist entirely on it.

Society

All ferrous dragons are lawful, and they follow a strict hierarchy. Each dragon is part of a family, with two or three families grouped together in a single clan. Each clan is led by its most powerful member, and a sovereign great wyrm of each species leads all of the clans of a given kind of ferrous dragon. These sovereigns report directly to Gruaghlothor, the Supreme Dragon (see sidebar). Additionally, Gruaghlothor has assigned a hierarchy between the species, from highest to lowest: iron, chromium, cobalt, tungsten, nickel. Although a member of one species has no claim to leadership over one of another, dragons lower on the hierarchy defer to the wisdom and judgment of those of higher rank and equal or greater age.

Although the tungsten dragons and the three species of evil dragons loathe each other, they abide by Gruaghlothor's wishes and avoid fighting one another in most cases. The survival of the species as a whole is his main focus, so in-fighting is not tolerated.

Evil ferrous dragons see the metallic dragons as abominations that must be destroyed, while good ferrous dragons see them as metal at its purest. Neutral ferrous dragons consider the good dragons metallic only in name, and therefore have no use for them. Ferrous dragons, regardless of alignment, nearly universally revile the chromatic dragons. They generally get along with gem dragons, particularly amethysts and emeralds.

Most ferrous dragons do not serve deities. None have innate access to domain spells like some of their metallic and chromatic counterparts. Those who do worship deities tend to venerate Astilbor, Chronopsis, Io, or Lendys. Tungstens sometimes follow Tamara, and a few follow Bahamut. No ferrous dragon ever openly serves Tiamat, and only the bravest do so in private for fear of drawing the wrath

of the omniscient Gruaghlothor. See *Draconomicon*, page 30, for details on the draconic deities.

Advanced Ferrous Dragons

Like all true dragons, ferrous dragons advance by age category. Those who take class levels usually become sorcerers. Ferrous dragons have the following level adjustments.

Chromium, tungsten: wyrmling +2; very young +3; young +4; juvenile +4; others —.

Cobalt: wyrmling +4; very young +4; young +6; others —.

Iron: wyrmling +4; very young +5; young +6; others —.

Nickel: wyrmling +3; very young +3; young +3; juvenile +4; others —.

CHROMIUM DRAGON

Always LE dragon (cold)

The dragon's face is smooth and reflective. A frill lined with long spines runs from its snout to the tip of the tail. It has a mane of shiny horns and wings that are wide and sleek. Its scales gleam like liquid metal, catching the reflection of the nearby terrain.

Breath Weapon (Su): A chromium dragon has two types of breath weapon, a line of solid ice (cold) and a cone of freezing crystals. Creatures within a cone of freezing crystals take 1 point of Dexterity damage per age category of the dragon (Fortitude half).

Flesh to Crystal (Sp): A great wyrm chromium dragon can use this ability once per day. It is similar to a *flesh to stone* spell, except that the victim is turned into a crystalline statue rather than stone (DC 17 + the dragon's Cha modifier). As a crystalline object, it is especially vulnerable to effects that damage crystal, such as a *shatter* spell. This is the equivalent of a 7th-level spell.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*pass without trace* (ice and snow only, young or older); 2/day—*ice shape* (as *stone shape*, but applies to ice instead of stone; adult or older), *wall of ice*

FERROUS?

Although some of the dragons presented in this article are not named after ferrous metals, they are still collectively known by this title. Ferrous dragons first appeared in "The Dragon's Bestiary: Give your campaign some heavy metal—dragons, that is," DRAGON #170, by Jason M. Walker.

FERROUS HALF-DRAGONS

Ferrous half-dragons can be created using the half-dragon template presented in the *Monster Manual*. They possess different breath weapons and immunities as described on the following table.

Dragon Variety	Breath Weapon	Immunity
Chromium	Line of solid ice (cold)	Cold
Cobalt	Line of pulsing magnetic energy (force)	Electricity
Iron	Cone of superheated sparks (electricity)	Fire
Nickel	Cone of corrosive gas (acid)	Acid
Tungsten	Cone of blasting sand (fire)	Fire

(old or older); 1/day—*gelid blood** (ancient or older, *Frostburn*, 96).

*If you are not using *Frostburn* in your campaign, replace this spell with *eyebite*.

Skills: Appraise, Bluff, and Jump are considered class skills for chromium dragons.

Chromium dragons, also occasionally referred to as chrome dragons, are greedy beasts matched only by red dragons in their obsession with acquiring treasure.

Strategies and Tactics

Chromium dragons enjoy toying with their prey, much like a cat with a mouse. They are cruel and merciless, trying to inflict as much pain as possible. A chromium dragon prefers to attack from the air, employing its breath of freezing crystals to slow its opponents' reflexes, followed by a deadly barrage of melee attacks once the opponents appear weakened. It uses its spell-like abilities to cut itself off from tough opponents.

Ecology

Chromium dragons often have territorial disputes with both white dragons and silver dragons. A chromium dragon can almost always dominate a white dragon, but the silver dragon is the chromium's deadliest adversary. The similar appearance of chromium and silver dragons has led to the death of many an unprepared adventurer.

Although they prefer meat, chromium dragons can eat anything, even surviving on nothing more than ice and snow.

Environment: Chromium dragons live in subterranean or mountainous arctic climes, often creating caves for lairs. A chromium dragon's favorite defense is a pit filled with sharp icicles covered by a thin layer of ice designed to break with the smallest amount of pressure.

Chromium dragons sometimes settle in more idyllic settings such as hills or plains, provided there is enough snow around to mask their presence.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A wyrmling chromium dragon's scales resemble tarnished silver. Upon reaching adulthood, the scales brighten to take on the appearance of polished silver. As a chromium dragon reaches old age, its scales become shiny like chrome.

Sample Chromium Dragon

VIRICHROTUULAAR

CR 19

Female old chromium dragon

LE Huge dragon (cold)

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses, low-light vision, metalsense 240 ft.; **Listen** +35, **Spot** +35

Aura frightful presence (240 ft., DC 28)

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Giant, Infernal, Undercommon

AC 34, touch 8, flat-footed 34

(-2 size, +26 natural)

hp 337 (27 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Immune cold, paralysis, sleep

SR 25

Fort +21, **Ref** +15, **Will** +20

Weakness vulnerability to fire

Spd 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.; Hover, Wingover

Melee bite +36 (2d8+11/19-20/x2) and

2 claws +34 each (2d6+5) and

2 wings +34 each (1d8+5) and

tail slap +34 (2d6+16)

Space 15 ft. **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +27; **Grp** +46

Atk Options Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Power Attack, Snatch

Special Actions breath weapon, crush (2d8+16, Reflex DC 29)

CHROMIUM DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/		Fort	Ref	Will	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence (DC)
									Grapple	Attack	Save	Save	Save		
Wyrmling	S	6d12+6 (45)	15	10	13	12	13	12	+6/+4	+9	+6	+5	+6	2d8 (14)	—
Very young	M	9d12+18 (76)	17	10	15	12	13	12	+9/+12	+12	+8	+6	+7	4d8 (16)	—
Young	M	12d12+24 (102)	19	10	15	14	15	14	+12/+16	+16	+10	+8	+10	6d8 (18)	—
Juvenile	L	15d12+45 (142)	21	10	17	16	17	16	+15/+24	+19	+12	+9	+12	7d8 (20)	—
Young adult	L	18d12+72 (189)	25	10	19	16	17	16	+18/+29	+24	+15	+11	+14	9d8 (23)	22
Adult	H	21d12+105 (241)	29	10	21	18	19	18	+21/+38	+28	+17	+12	+16	11d8 (25)	24
Mature adult	H	24d12+120 (276)	31	10	21	18	19	18	+24/+42	+32	+19	+14	+18	12d8 (27)	26
Old	H	27d12+162 (337)	33	10	23	20	21	20	+27/+46	+36	+21	+15	+20	14d8 (29)	28
Very old	H	30d12+180 (375)	35	10	23	20	21	20	+30/+50	+40	+23	+17	+22	16d8 (31)	30
Ancient	G	33d12+231 (445)	37	10	25	22	23	22	+33/+58	+42	+25	+18	+24	17d8 (33)	32
Wyrmling	G	36d12+288 (522)	39	10	27	24	25	24	+36/+62	+46	+28	+20	+27	19d8 (36)	35
Great wyrmling	G	39d12+312 (565)	41	10	27	24	25	24	+39/+66	+50	+29	+21	+28	21d8 (37)	36

CHROMIUM DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Init	AC	Special Abilities	CL	SR	CR
Wyrmling	40 ft., fly 100 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.	+0	16 (+1 size, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16	Immunity to cold, vulnerability to fire	—	—	3
Very young	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	18 (+8 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 18		—	—	5
Young	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	21 (+11 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 21	<i>Pass without trace</i>	1st	—	7
Juvenile	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	23 (–1 size, +14 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 23		3rd	—	9
Young adult	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	26 (–1 size, +17 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 26	DR 5/magic	5th	20	12
Adult	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	28 (–2 size, +20 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 28	<i>Ice shape</i>	7th	22	15
Mature adult	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	31 (–2 size, +23 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 31	DR 10/magic	9th	23	17
Old	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	34 (–2 size, +26 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 34	<i>Wall of ice</i>	11th	25	19
Very old	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	37 (–2 size, +29 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 37	DR 15/magic	13th	26	20
Ancient	40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.	+0	38 (–4 size, +32 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 38	<i>Gelid blood</i>	15th	28	22
Wyrmling	40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.	+0	41 (–4 size, +35 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 41	DR 20/magic	17th	29	23
Great wyrmling	40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.	+0	44 (–4 size, +38 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 44	<i>Flesh to crystal</i>	19th	31	25

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 11th)

- 5th (5/day)—*hold monster* (DC 20), *wall of force*
- 4th (7/day)—*dimension door*, *greater invisibility*, *solid fog*
- 3rd (7/day)—*displacement*, *fireball* (DC 19), *heroism*, *lightning bolt* (DC 19)
- 2nd (7/day)—*bear's endurance*, *gust of wind* (DC 18), *resist energy*, *scorching ray* (+25 ranged touch), *touch of idiocy* (+36 melee touch)
- 1st (8/day)—*mage armor*, *magic missile*, *protection from good*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+25 ranged touch), *shield*
- 0 (6/day)—*acid splash*, *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 16), *light*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *ray of frost* (+25 ranged touch), *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (+36 melee touch)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)

- 3/day—*pass without trace* (ice and snow only)
- 2/day—*ice shape* (as *stone shape*, but applies to ice instead of stone), *wall of ice* (DC 19)

Abilities Str 33, Dex 10, Con 23, Int 20, Wis 21, Cha 20

Feats Flyby Attack, Heighten Spell, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Maximize Spell, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch, Spell Focus (evocation), Wingover

Skills Appraise +35, Bluff +35, Concentration +26, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +5 (+9 acting), Intimidate +39, Jump +45, Knowledge (arcana) +35, Listen +35, Search +35, Sense Motive +25, Spellcraft +39 (+41 scrolls), Spot +35, Survival +5 (+9 following tracks), Swim +19, Use Magic Device +25

Possessions hoard valued at 183,000 gp

Breath Weapon (Su) 100-foot line, once every 1d4+1 rounds, damage 14d8 cold (solid ice); or 50-foot cone, damage 8 points of Dexterity damage; Reflex DC 29 half.

Crush (Ex) Area 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Small or smaller opponents take 2d8+16 points of bludgeoning damage, and must succeed on a DC 29 Reflex save or be pinned.

Skills A chromium dragon has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

COBALT DRAGON

Always LE dragon (air)

This dragon's face bears a large muzzle, its lips curling in a sneer and displaying pronounced canines. Two small horns jut from its head, just above its glowing red eyes. Its tail is long and thin, almost ratlike in appearance. It is covered in midnight blue scales of varying brightness.

Breath Weapon (Su): A cobalt dragon has one type of breath weapon, a line of pulsing magnetic energy. Creatures within the area take force damage (Reflex half). Additionally, creatures within the area are considered bull rushed by the dragon (with a check result equal to

the damage dealt). A cobalt dragon has immunity to the breath weapons of other cobalt dragons.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*entangle* (juvenile or older), *minor image* (adult or older), *snare* (old or older); 2/day—*plant growth* (ancient or older); 1/day—*summon monster V* (great wyrm).

Water Breathing (Ex): A cobalt dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking), Hide, and Jump are considered class skills for cobalt dragons.

Cobalt dragons attempt to dominate every creature they encounter. These creatures are so diabolical that other ferrous dragons avoid them. Cobalt dragons only gather together to mate or when called to meetings by their clan leaders or the cobalt sovereign.

Strategies and Tactics

A cobalt dragon generally avoids direct combat until it has an opportunity to alter the battlefield to its advantage. It prepares cunning traps, using its spell-like abilities to accentuate them. It then waits in ambush, using magic or minions to bait the trap. Once it joins a battle, it uses its breath weapon as often as possible, trying to keep powerful melee combatants at bay.

Ecology

Although normally solitary, cobalt dragons sometimes mate for life. These cruel tyrants make surprisingly good parents. A cobalt

dragon takes excellent care of its young until forcing them out of the lair when they become juveniles.

A cobalt dragon spends its time preparing traps to catch intruders or hunting within its territory. It utilizes falling trees, deadfalls, rock slides, and pits, relying on illusions to mask them before they are sprung.



COBALT DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/ Grapple	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Wyrmling	T	5d12+5 (37)	15	10	13	12	13	12	+5/-1	+9	+6	+4	+5	2d4 (13)	—
Very young	S	8d12+8 (60)	17	10	13	12	13	12	+8/+7	+12	+7	+6	+7	4d4 (15)	—
Young	M	11d12+22 (93)	19	10	15	14	15	14	+11/+15	+15	+9	+7	+9	6d4 (17)	—
Juvenile	M	14d12+28 (119)	21	10	15	14	15	14	+14/+19	+19	+11	+9	+11	7d4 (19)	—
Young adult	L	17d12+51 (161)	23	10	17	16	17	16	+17/+27	+22	+13	+10	+13	9d4 (21)	21
Adult	L	20d12+80 (210)	27	10	19	16	17	16	+20/+32	+27	+16	+12	+15	11d4 (24)	23
Mature adult	H	23d12+115 (264)	31	10	21	18	19	18	+23/+41	+31	+18	+13	+17	12d4 (26)	25
Old	H	26d12+130 (299)	33	10	21	18	19	18	+26/+45	+35	+20	+15	+19	14d4 (28)	27
Very old	H	29d12+174 (362)	35	10	23	20	21	20	+29/+49	+39	+22	+16	+21	16d4 (30)	29
Ancient	H	32d12+192 (400)	37	10	23	20	21	20	+32/+53	+43	+24	+18	+23	17d4 (32)	31
Wyrm	G	35d12+245 (472)	39	10	25	22	23	22	+35/+61	+45	+26	+19	+25	19d4 (34)	33
Great wyrm	G	38d12+304 (551)	41	10	27	22	23	22	+38/+65	+49	+29	+21	+27	21d4 (37)	35

COBALT DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Init	AC	Special Abilities	CL	SR	CR
Wyrmling	40 ft., fly 100 ft. (average)	+0	18 (+2 size, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 18	Immunity to electricity, water breathing	—	—	3
Very young	40 ft., fly 100 ft. (average)	+0	19 (+1 size, +8 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 19		—	—	5
Young	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	22 (+12 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 22		—	—	7
Juvenile	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	25 (+15 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 25	Entangle	1st	—	9
Young adult	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	27 (–1 size, +18 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 27	DR 5/magic	3rd	19	11
Adult	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	30 (–1 size, +21 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 30	Minor image	5th	21	14
Mature adult	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	32 (–2 size, +24 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 32	DR 10/magic	7th	23	16
Old	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	35 (–2 size, +27 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 35	Snare	9th	25	19
Very old	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	38 (–2 size, +30 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 38	DR 15/magic	11th	26	20
Ancient	40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	41 (–2 size, +33 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 41	Plant growth	13th	28	22
Wurm	40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	42 (–4 size, +36 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 42	DR 20/magic	15th	29	23
Great wurm	40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	45 (–4 size, +39 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 45	Summon monster V	17th	31	25

Cobalt dragons are believed by some to be the main progenitors of the kobolds. Indeed, the two creatures bear much in common, including their love of traps, their sadistic tendencies, and their choice of habitat. A cobalt dragon often dominates a large tribe of kobolds to help defend its territory.

A cobalt dragon feeds on its territory's abundant wildlife, but it can eat anything just as other dragons.

Environment: Cobalt dragons like dwelling among the trees of deep, dark forests or thick jungles. Although cobalt dragons sometimes dwell underground, the entrances to their caves are always within wooded areas. Green dragons often share the same environment as cobalt dragons, and the two dragon kinds view one another as intruders and enemies.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A wyrmling cobalt dragon has midnight blue scales with small patches of varying brightness interspersed throughout. Its scales remain the same color its entire life, although the patches of the different hue grow in size as the dragon ages.

Sample Cobalt Dragon

AZUCOMITHIUS

Male adult cobalt dragon

LE Large dragon (air)

Init +4; Senses blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses,

low-light vision, metalsense 180 ft.; Listen +28, Spot +28
Aura frightful presence (180 ft., DC 23)

Languages Common, Draconic, Sylvan, Undercommon

AC 30, touch 9, flat-footed 30

(–1 size, +21 natural)

hp 210 (20 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune electricity, paralysis, sleep

SR 21

Fort +16, **Ref** +12, **Will** +15

Spd 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +27 (2d6+8/19–20/x2) and

2 claws +25 each (1d8+4) and

2 wings +25 each (1d6+4) and

tail slap +25 (1d8+12)

Space 10 ft. **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +20; **Grp** +32

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Trip

Special Actions breath weapon

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 5th)

2nd (5/day)—invisibility, misdirection (DC 15)

1st (7/day)—expeditious retreat, grease, obscuring mist, ventriloquism (DC 14)

0 (6/day)—dancing lights, detect magic, ghost sound (DC 13), mage hand, prestidigitation

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th)

3/day—entangle (DC 14), minor image (DC 15)

Abilities Str 27, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 16

SQ water breathing

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Multiattack
Skills Appraise +3 (traps +5), Concentration +17, Craft (trapmaking) +23, Diplomacy +5, Escape Artist +18, Hide +19, Intimidate +26, Jump +30, Listen +28, Sense Motive +26, Spot +28, Use Magic Device +26, Use Rope +0 (+2 bindings)

Possessions hoard valued at 51,000 gp

Breath Weapon (Su) 80-foot line, once every 1d4+1 rounds, damage 11d4 force (magnetic energy, bull rushed by dragon), Reflex DC 24 half.

Water Breathing (Ex) A cobalt dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

IRON DRAGON

Always LN dragon (fire)

The dragon's head is almost shovel-shaped, with a pointed snout. Its scales are metallic black with flashes of silver. Large plates, which look like shark fins, run down its neck and back.

Alternate Form (Su): An iron dragon can assume any animal or humanoid form of Medium size or smaller as a standard action three times per day. The dragon can remain in its animal or humanoid form until it chooses to assume a new one or return to its natural form.

Breath Weapon (Su): An iron dragon has two types of breath weapon, a cone of superheated sparks (dealing half electricity and half fire damage), and a cone of sleep gas. Creatures within a cone of sleep gas must succeed on a Will save or fall asleep, regardless of HD, for 1d6 rounds plus 1 round per age category of the dragon.

Flesh to Iron (Sp): A great wyrm iron dragon can use this ability once per day. It is similar to a *flesh to stone* spell, except that the victim is turned into an iron statue rather than stone. As an iron object, it is vulnerable to rust attacks, such as that of a rust monster or a *rusting grasp* spell. This condition can be reversed by *stone to flesh* and similar effects. This is the equivalent of a 7th-level spell.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*heat metal* (young or older); 2/day—*stone shape* (juvenile or older), *detect thoughts* (adult or older), *transmute rock to mud* (ancient or older), *wall of iron* (old or older).

Skills: Disguise, Gather Information, and Jump are considered class skills for iron dragons.

The most powerful of the ferrous dragons, iron dragons desire to make dragonkind the rightful rulers of the world. As such, iron dragons travel in assumed forms to learn what goes on in the world around them.

Strategies and Tactics

Iron dragons generally avoid combat, preferring to use diplomacy or intimidation to gain the information they seek. If drawn into battle, an iron dragon prefers to use its sleep gas breath weapon. It supplements this with spells and spell-like abilities that incapacitate or subdue foes. An iron dragon is not without mercy, but it expects payment in return for such kindness, usually in the form of information.

Ecology

Iron dragons hoard raw iron ore greedily, as it is needed for their reproductive cycle as well as for food. Although this leads to disputes with dwarves and other races that mine iron ore, such conflicts are nothing compared to the vicious contests between iron dragons and red dragons. These two breeds of dragon are bitter enemies and unyielding in their hatred of one another. The red dragon considers the iron a pathetic interloper, while the iron dragon feels the red has ruined dragonkind's reputation.

Intruders into an iron dragon's lair are usually quickly subdued but rarely killed outright. Iron dragons prefer to extract as much information as possible from such interlopers before making meals of them.



IRON DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/		Fort	Ref	Will	Breath	Frightful
									Grapple	Attack	Save	Save	Save	Weapon (DC)	Presence DC
Wyrmling	M	7d12+14 (59)	19	10	15	14	15	14	+7/+11	+11	+7	+5	+7	2d10 (15)	—
Very young	L	10d12+30 (95)	23	10	17	14	15	14	+10/+20	+15	+10	+7	+9	4d10 (18)	—
Young	L	13d12+39 (123)	27	10	17	16	17	16	+13/+25	+20	+11	+8	+11	6d10 (19)	—
Juvenile	L	16d12+64 (168)	31	10	19	18	19	18	+16/+30	+25	+14	+10	+14	8d10 (22)	—
Young adult	H	19d12+95 (218)	33	10	21	18	19	18	+19/+38	+28	+16	+11	+15	10d10 (24)	23
Adult	H	22d12+110 (253)	35	10	21	20	21	20	+22/+42	+32	+18	+13	+18	12d10 (26)	26
Mature adult	H	25d12+150 (312)	35	10	23	20	21	20	+25/+45	+35	+20	+14	+19	14d10 (28)	27
Old	G	28d12+196 (378)	37	10	25	22	23	22	+28/+53	+37	+23	+16	+22	16d10 (31)	30
Very old	G	31d12+248 (449)	39	10	27	24	25	24	+31/+57	+41	+25	+17	+24	18d10 (33)	32
Ancient	G	34d12+306 (527)	41	10	29	26	27	26	+34/+61	+45	+28	+19	+27	20d10 (36)	35
Wyrmling	G	37d12+370 (610)	43	10	31	28	29	28	+37/+65	+49	+30	+20	+29	22d10 (38)	37
Great wyrmling	C	40d12+400 (660)	47	10	31	30	31	30	+40/+74	+50	+32	+22	+32	24d10 (40)	40

IRON DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Init	AC	Special Abilities	CL	SR	CR
Wyrmling	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	16 (+6 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 16	Alternate form, immunity to fire, vulnerability to cold	—	—	4
Very young	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	18 (–1 size, +9 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 18		—	—	5
Young	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	21 (–1 size, +12 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 21	Heat metal	1st	—	7
Juvenile	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	24 (–1 size, +15 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 24	Stone shape	3rd	—	10
Young adult	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	26 (–2 size, +18 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 26	DR 5/magic	5th	19	13
Adult	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	29 (–2 size, +21 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 29	Detect thoughts	7th	21	15
Mature adult	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)	+0	32 (–2 size, +24 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 32	DR 10/magic	9th	23	18
Old	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	33 (–4 size, +27 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 33	Wall of iron	11th	24	20
Very old	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	36 (–4 size, +30 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 36	DR 15/magic	13th	26	21
Ancient	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	39 (–4 size, +33 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 39	Transmute rock to mud	15th	28	23
Wyrmling	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	42 (–4 size, +36 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 42	DR 20/magic	17th	30	24
Great wyrmling	40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy)	+0	41 (–8 size, +39 natural), touch 2, flat-footed 41	Flesh to iron	19th	32	26

Environment: An iron dragon prefers to build its lair deep beneath a great hill or high mountain near a deposit of iron ore. It most often lairs in temperate regions but can tolerate much warmer climes. An iron dragon's territory often overlaps with that of a red dragon's, frequently resulting in deadly conflicts.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A wyrmling iron dragon has flat black scales that take on a glossy texture as it matures. As an adult, an iron dragon has

metallic black scales, which continue to take on silvery highlights as it ages. Great wyrms are said to have scales that look like moonlight reflecting on a rippling pool.

Sample Iron Dragon

ORTIMAZE

Female very old iron dragon

CR 21

LN Gargantuan dragon (fire)

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses, low-light vision, metalsense 240 ft.; **Listen** +41, **Spot** +41

Aura frightful presence (240 ft., DC 32)

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Ignan, Infernal, Terran, Undercommon

AC 36, touch 6, flat-footed 36

(-4 size, +30 natural)

hp 449 (31 HD); **DR** 15/magic

Immune fire, paralysis, sleep

SR 26

Fort +25, **Ref** +17, **Will** +24

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Spd 40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy); Hover

Melee bite +41 (4d6+14/19-20) and

2 claws +39 each (2d8+7) and

2 wings +39 each (2d6+7) and

tail slap +39 (2d8+21)

Space 20 ft. **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +31; **Grp** +57

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Power Attack, Snatch, crush, tail sweep

Special Actions breath weapon

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 13th)

6th (5/day)—chain lightning (DC 22), greater dispel magic

5th (7/day)—cone of cold (DC 21), hold monster (DC 21), mind fog (DC 21)

4th (7/day)—charm monster (DC 20), dimensional anchor, enervation, ice storm

3rd (8/day)—hold person (DC 19), lightning bolt (DC 19), protection from energy, slow (DC 19)

2nd (8/day)—eagle's splendor, glitterdust (DC 18), Tasha's hideous laughter (DC 18), pyrotechnics (DC 18), resist energy

1st (8/day)—charm person (DC 18), hypnotism (DC 18), mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement

0 (6/day)—dancing lights, daze (DC 17), detect magic, flare (DC 17), light, mage hand, message, prestidigitation, read magic

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th)

3/day—heat metal (DC 19)

2/day—detect thoughts (DC 19), stone shape, wall of iron

Abilities Str 39, Dex 10, Con 27, Int 24, Wis 25, Cha 24

SQ alternate form

Feats Combat Expertise, Heighten Spell, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (heat metal), Snatch, Spell Penetration

Skills Concentration +28, Diplomacy +43, Disguise +41, Gather Information +43, Intimidate +41, Jump +50, Knowledge (arcana) +37, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +20, Knowledge (history) +37, Knowledge (local) +20, Listen +41, Search +41, Sense Motive +41, Spot +41, Survival +7 (+11 underground or following tracks), Use Magic Device +41

Possessions hoard valued at 261,000 gp

Alternate Form (Su) An iron dragon can assume any animal or

humanoid form of Medium size or smaller as a standard action three times per day. The dragon can remain in its animal or humanoid form until it chooses to assume a new one or return to its natural form.

Breath Weapon (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, either a 60-foot cone, damage 18d10 (half electricity and half fire damage), Reflex DC 33 half; or a 60-foot-cone, fall asleep for 1d6+8 rounds, Will DC 33 negates.

Crush (Ex) Area 20 ft. by 20 ft.; Medium or smaller opponents take 4d6+21 points of bludgeoning damage, and must succeed on a DC 33 Reflex save or be pinned.

Tail Sweep (Ex) Half-circle 30 ft. in diameter; Small or smaller opponents take 2d6+21 points of bludgeoning damage (Reflex DC 33 half).

NICKEL DRAGON

Always LE dragon (water)

This dragon is squat and muscular. Its crocodilian face has raised eyes and a long, toothy snout. Two smooth horns sweep back and down from its head. Its scales are metallic gray, with patches of white. The smell of stagnant water is strong in its presence.



NICKEL DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/ Grapple	Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Wyrmling	T	4d12+4 (30)	13	10	13	7	11	7	+4/-3	+7	+5	+4	+4	2d4 (13)	—
Very young	S	7d12+7 (52)	15	10	13	7	11	7	+7/+5	+10	+6	+5	+5	4d4 (14)	—
Young	M	10d12+20 (85)	17	10	15	9	11	9	+10/+13	+13	+9	+7	+7	6d4 (17)	—
Juvenile	M	13d12+26 (110)	19	10	15	9	11	9	+13/+17	+17	+10	+8	+8	7d4 (18)	—
Young adult	L	16d12+48 (152)	23	10	17	11	13	11	+16/+26	+21	+13	+10	+11	9d4 (21)	18
Adult	L	19d12+76 (199)	27	10	19	11	13	11	+19/+31	+26	+15	+11	+12	11d4 (23)	19
Mature adult	H	22d12+110 (253)	29	10	21	13	15	13	+22/+39	+29	+18	+13	+15	12d4 (26)	22
Old	H	25d12+125 (287)	31	10	21	13	15	13	+25/+43	+33	+19	+14	+16	14d4 (27)	23
Very old	H	28d12+168 (350)	33	10	23	15	17	15	+28/+47	+37	+22	+16	+19	16d4 (30)	26
Ancient	H	31d12+186 (387)	35	10	23	15	17	15	+31/+51	+41	+23	+17	+20	17d4 (31)	27
Wyrmling	G	34d12+238 (459)	37	10	25	17	19	17	+34/+59	+43	+26	+19	+23	19d4 (34)	30
Great wyrmling	G	37d12+296 (536)	39	10	27	19	21	19	+37/+63	+47	+28	+20	+25	21d4 (36)	32

NICKEL DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Init	AC	Special Abilities	CL	SR	CR
Wyrmling	60 ft., fly 100 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.	+0	15 (+2 size, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15	Immunity to acid, water breathing	—	—	3
Very young	60 ft., fly 100 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.	+0	17 (+1 size, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 17		—	—	4
Young	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	19 (+9 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 19		—	—	5
Juvenile	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	22 (+12 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 22	Resist energy	1st	—	7
Young adult	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	24 (-1 size, +15 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 24	DR 5/magic	3rd	17	9
Adult	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	27 (-1 size, +18 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 27	Mass irritation	5th	18	11
Mature adult	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	29 (-2 size, +21 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 29	DR 10/magic	7th	21	14
Old	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	32 (-2 size, +24 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 32	Entangle	9th	22	16
Very old	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	35 (-2 size, +27 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 35	DR 15/magic	11th	23	18
Ancient	60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.	+0	38 (-2 size, +30 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 38	Gaseous form	13th	25	19
Wyrmling	60 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.	+0	39 (-4 size, +33 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 39	DR 20/magic	15th	26	20
Great wyrmling	60 ft., fly 200 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.	+0	42 (-4 size, +36 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 42	Confusion	17th	28	22

Breath Weapon (Su): A nickel dragon has one type of breath weapon, a cone of corrosive (acid) gas.

Mass Irritation (Sp): An old or older nickel dragon can use this ability twice per day to irritate the skin of living opponents by creating a field of corrosion. Some creatures, such as elementals, have no skin and are immune to this effect. Others, such as most oozes and plants, are not affected by irritation to their skin. This is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell. Targeted creatures must be within 30 feet per age category and

must succeed on a Fortitude save or suffer the listed effects. The nickel dragon can choose from one of the following effects.

Itching: The nickel dragon can affect a number of creatures equal to its age category with an intense itching sensation. This itching imposes a -4 penalty on Armor Class and a -2 penalty on attack rolls and Dexterity-based checks for 1d4 rounds. Additionally, an affected creature must succeed on a Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level) to cast a spell. An affected creature

can spend a full-round action to scratch itself, thereby ending the effect.

Rash: The nickel dragon can cause a number of creatures equal to half its age category to break out in red welts that cause severe itching. These welts impose a -1 penalty on Charisma-based checks and a -1 penalty on Dexterity-based checks. Each day, the rash spreads, imposing an additional -1 penalty on Charisma-based checks (to a maximum penalty of -10). The effect is permanent but can be dispelled or removed with a *remove disease* spell or similar effect.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*entangle* (old or older), *gaseous form* (ancient or older), *resist energy* (juvenile or older); 1/day—*confusion* (great wyrm or older).

Water Breathing (Ex): A nickel dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Skills: Bluff, Hide, and Swim are considered class skills for nickel dragons.

Nickel dragons are deceptive, tenacious, and vicious enough to make up for their relative weakness. Although the weakest of the ferrous dragons, they are more than a match for most creatures that share their territory.

Strategies and Tactics

A nickel dragon generally strikes from ambush, first unleashing its breath weapon to catch as many foes as possible. It employs its spell-like abilities to distract and slow opponents. Known for employing hit-and-run tactics, nickel dragons use their water breathing and swim speed to great effect.

Ecology

Nickel dragons prey mostly on swamp creatures such as giant lizards but have been known to travel to humanoid settlements to raid them for treasure or simply frighten the local populace. As nickel dragons frequently share the same habitat as black dragons, the two creatures often have bloody battles, as neither dragon's breath weapon can harm the other.

The lair of a nickel dragon is a perfect match for its personality—swampy terrain with numerous dead ends and switchbacks. A cave is more often a place for treasure and laying eggs. The dragon itself dwells somewhere nearby, hoping to trap would-be treasure hunters inside.

Environment: Nickel dragons dwell in swamp and marshland, usually in shallow caves near water.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A wyrmling nickel dragon's scales are charcoal gray in color. The scales lighten as the dragon grows, becoming a more metallic gray upon reaching adulthood. By the time a nickel dragon reaches the great wyrm stage, its scales shine a bright metallic white.

SAMPLE NICKEL DRAGON

FIVNIKAMA

CR 5

Female young nickel dragon

LE Medium dragon (water)

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses, low-light vision, metalsense 90 ft.; **Listen** +13, **Spot** +13

Languages Draconic

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19

(+9 natural)

hp 85 (10 HD)

Immune acid, paralysis, sleep

Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7

Spd 60 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +14 (1d8+3) and

2 claws +11 each (1d6+1) and

2 wings +11 each (1d4+1)

Base Atk +10; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Flyby Attack, Power Attack

Special Actions breath weapon

Abilities Str 17, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 9

SQ water breathing

Feats Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Bluff +8, Diplomacy +1, Disguise -1 (+1 acting), Hide +9, Intimidate +1, Jump +15, Listen +13, Search +12, Spot +13, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks), Swim +19

Possessions hoard valued at 8,000 gp

Breath Weapon (Su) 30-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 6d4 acid (corrosive gas), Reflex DC 17 half.

Water Breathing (Ex) A nickel dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Skills A nickel dragon has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

TUNGSTEN DRAGON

Always LG dragon (fire)

The dragon's head is almost insectile, with numerous small horns dotting its face. Its wings look nearly identical to the large sail that rises from its back. Its scales are a dull, flat green.

Breath Weapon (Su): A tungsten dragon has one type of breath weapon, a cone of blasting sand that deals half bludgeoning damage and half fire damage.

Immolation (Su): Once per day a great wyrm tungsten dragon can target up to three creatures within 30 feet per age category with an immolation attack. The targets immediately burst into flames, taking 6d6

points of fire damage. Additionally, targets catch fire, taking an additional 2d6 points of fire damage each round until the flames are extinguished. A successful Fortitude save halves the damage and prevents the target from catching on fire. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Sand Cloud (Sp): This ability is similar to a *fog cloud* spell but with swirling sand instead of fog. These fine grains of sand smother unprotected flames and can even choke protected flames (50% chance). The swirling sand also makes it difficult to cast spells. Casters within a sand cloud must succeed at a Concentration check or the spell is lost (DC 15 + spell level). An old or older tungsten dragon can use this ability twice per day. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell.

Spell-Like Abilities: 2/day—*plant growth* (ancient or older); 1/day—*discern lies* (young or older), *dispel evil* (old or older).

Skills: Gather Information, Spellcraft, and Survival are considered class skills for tungsten dragons.

Tungsten dragons dedicate themselves to the cause of goodness, but they occupy most of their attention with the defense and development of their own domains. They deal harshly with intruders, unless the trespassers can convince them that they are acting in the interests of good.

Strategies and Tactics

Tungsten dragons are relentless in the pursuit of good. Although they operate within the bounds of law and good, they use whatever means are available to defeat evil opponents. They believe that good must use any resources and methods available to stop evil from triumphing, as long as no innocents are harmed in the process. They favor magic and breath weapons over melee attacks, preferring to employ spells such as *banishment* or *baleful polymorph* to quickly dispatch foes.

Ecology

Tungsten dragons spend most of their time in search of evil intruders to punish and wrongs to set right. They band together when needed to mercilessly destroy the blue dragons that share their habitat. The arrogant tungsten dragons are not fond of neighboring brass dragons, which they consider careless and ill-mannered.

Just as any other dragon, a tungsten dragon can eat almost anything, but has a fondness for desert plants. take great care to maintain the balance of the local ecology, though.

Tungsten dragons are very family-oriented, providing great care for their young. Upon reaching the juvenile age category, their children can choose to remain with the family or start one of their own.

Environment: Tungsten dragons live in arid deserts and steppes, and occasionally lair in dry plains in temperate or warmer regions.

Typical Physical Characteristics: A wyrmling tungsten dragon's scales are deep forest green with brown flecks. As an adult, the flecks disappear and the scales take on a metallic sheen that gleams as the dragon grows. As a tungsten dragon grows into an adult, the scales begin to lose their shine until they become a dull, flat green.

SAMPLE TUNGSTEN DRAGON

VOLFRAMILON

CR 8

Male juvenile tungsten dragon

LG Medium dragon (fire)

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses, low-light vision, metalsense 120 ft.; **Listen** +6, **Spot** +6

Languages Draconic

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 22

(+12 natural)

hp 110 (13 HD)

Immune fire, paralysis, sleep

Fort +10, **Ref** +8, **Will** +9

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Spd 60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor); Hover, Wingover



TUNGSTEN DRAGONS BY AGE

Age	Size	Hit Dice (hp)	Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha	Base Attack/ Grapple	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Breath Weapon (DC)	Frightful Presence DC
Wyrmling	T	4d12+4 (30)	13	10	13	9	11	10	+4/-3	+7	+5	+4	+4	2d6 (13)	—
Very young	S	7d12+7 (52)	15	10	13	9	11	10	+7/+5	+10	+6	+5	+5	4d6 (14)	—
Young	M	10d12+20 (85)	17	10	15	11	13	12	+10/+13	+13	+9	+7	+8	6d6 (17)	—
Juvenile	M	13d12+26 (110)	19	10	15	11	13	12	+13/+17	+17	+10	+8	+9	7d6 (18)	—
Young adult	L	16d12+48 (152)	21	10	17	13	15	14	+16/+25	+20	+13	+10	+12	9d6 (21)	20
Adult	L	19d12+76 (199)	25	10	19	13	15	14	+19/+30	+25	+15	+11	+13	11d6 (23)	21
Mature adult	H	22d12+110 (253)	29	10	21	15	17	16	+22/+39	+29	+18	+13	+16	12d6 (26)	24
Old	H	25d12+125 (287)	31	10	21	15	17	16	+25/+43	+33	+19	+14	+17	14d6 (27)	25
Very old	H	28d12+168 (350)	33	10	23	17	19	18	+28/+47	+37	+22	+16	+20	16d6 (30)	28
Ancient	H	31d12+186 (387)	35	10	23	17	19	18	+31/+51	+41	+23	+17	+21	17d6 (31)	29
Wyrms	G	34d12+238 (459)	37	10	25	19	21	20	+34/+59	+43	+26	+19	+24	19d6 (34)	32
Great wyrms	G	37d12+296 (536)	39	10	27	20	21	20	+37/+63	+47	+28	+20	+25	21d6 (36)	33

TUNGSTEN DRAGON ABILITIES BY AGE

Age	Speed	Init	AC	Special Abilities	CL	SR	CR
Wyrmling	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+0	15 (+2 size, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 15	Immunity to fire, vulnerability to cold	—	—	3
Very young	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (average)	+0	17 (+1 size, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 17		—	—	4
Young	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	19 (+9 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 19		1st	—	6
Juvenile	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	22 (+12 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 22	Discern lies	3rd	—	8
Young adult	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	24 (-1 size, +15 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 24	DR 5/magic	5th	18	10
Adult	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	27 (-1 size, +18 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 27	Sand cloud	7th	20	12
Mature adult	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	29 (-2 size, +21 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 29	DR 10/magic	9th	22	15
Old	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	32 (-2 size, +24 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 32	Dispel evil	11th	24	17
Very old	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	35 (-2 size, +27 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 35	DR 15/magic	13th	25	19
Ancient	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)	+0	38 (-2 size, +30 natural), touch 8, flat-footed 38	Plant growth	15th	27	20
Wyrms	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)	+0	39 (-4 size, +33 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 39	DR 20/magic	17th	28	21
Great wyrms	60 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy)	+0	42 (-4 size, +36 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 42	Immolation	19th	30	23

Melee bite +17 (1d8+4) and

2 claws +15 each (1d6+2) and

2 wings +15 each (1d4+2)

Base Atk +13; Grp +17

Special Actions breath weapon

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 3rd)

1st (6/day)—magic missile, protection from evil, true strike

0 (6/day)—detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)

1/day—discern lies (DC 15)

Abilities Str 19, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12

Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Blind-Fight, Hover, Multiattack, Wingover

Skills Concentration +18, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +17, Jump +16, Listen +6, Search +5, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +13, Spot +11, Survival +14 (+16 following tracks)

Possessions hoard valued at 27,200 gp

Breath Weapon (Su) 30-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds, damage 7d6 (half bludgeoning and half fire), Reflex DC 20 half. ☐



HEXTOR



BY SEAN K REYNOLDS

illustrated by Andrew Hou • cartography by Robert Lazzaretti



Hextor is the patron of war—war for power, territory, conquest, bloodshed, or simply for its own sake. The Lords of Evil granted him six arms so he could best his half-brother Heironeous and all other opponents. Not an indiscriminate killer like Erythnul or obsessed with death like Nerull, Hextor uses war to chew up the weak and unfit, salvaging the strong and worthy so they might serve him and expand his reach. Amoral soldiers, evil mercenaries, and those who seek profit in conflict serve him, as does anyone willing to lift a blade for evil.



CORE BELIEFS: HEXTOR

Hextor (HECKS tor) is a brutal and effective warmonger, seeking to bring all lands under his dominion and destroy his half-brother, Heironeous. Mighty, yet unfavorably compared to his sibling, he willingly chose to serve evil as a means to greater power. Served by many blackguards (particularly fallen paladins who once served Heironeous) and assassins, Hextor gathers followers to himself like a charismatic and corrupt king. Not without honor, he is thoroughly evil and does not let morals or ethics stand in the way of a potential victory—he is above the law, and all others must obey him. In the lands that were once part of the old Great Kingdom his religion controls numerous layfolk and politicians, but his influence is much less outside those corrupt countries. Unlike his brother, his cult is not widespread or favored by many nonhumans other than militaristic tribes in the Great Kingdom.

Hextor is proud and sure, never succumbing to rash action or attempting risky strategies unless the only other option is failure. The only real limit to his success is his unwillingness to acknowledge other deities as his equals or betters, even in small ways that would let him utilize their strengths to complement his own. This arrogance explains why his reach among mortals has not expanded much beyond the borders of the Great Kingdom except in isolated pockets, as his own followers are reluctant to trust or value members of other religions.



THE BASICS

Hextor is a lawful evil deity. Most of his faithful are lawful evil, with about one-tenth neutral evil and less than a hundredth lawful neutral. These numbers do not count those worshipers forced to pray to him as part of a public religion, which includes many oppressed peasants and common folk in Hextor-controlled lands, nor does it include lay soldiers who pray to him but have no spellcasting abilities. Formal attire is a black robe with white skulls or gray visages over chain or scale mail—as a war god, even his ceremonial attire is battle-functional. Adventuring clerics and holy warriors prefer chainmail or scale mail with a spiked buckler, although any sort of metal armor is acceptable. They prefer wielding bows, crossbows, flails, morningstars, or scimitars and they carry spiked shields of any size. His symbol is the Symbol of Hate and Discord, six red arrows facing downward, sometimes bound by a chain or held in an iron gauntlet (only worshipers of 9th-level and higher may use red arrows in their symbol; all others use gray). He is called the Champion of Evil, Herald of Hell, and Scourge of Battle. His realm is the Champion's Fortress in Acheron, although he travels the planes searching for his brother. His portfolio is war, discord, massacre, conflict, fitness, and tyranny. His favored weapon is the flail, although he also wields a scimitar, military fork, and morningstar as well as two spiked shields. Most of his devout worshipers are clerics, fighters, blackguards, or assassins. His domains are Destruction, Evil, Law, and War.

Hextor is usually shown as a handsome fair-skinned man bearing a strong resemblance to Heironeous, with jet-black hair and eyes—his original form before he gained the blessings of the Lords of Evil. He may hide or manifest four additional human arms from his torso whenever he desires. His true form has gray skin, lank hair, red-rimmed eyes, and a hideous face, and his extra arms are always present (usually holding two bucklers, a military fork, scimitar, flail, and morningstar). In his handsome form he is articulate and intelligent, wearing armor or fine clothing, but in his monstrous form he is always armored and his only desire is to fight and slay. Church depictions of him show whichever form is appropriate—if ruling over peasants or inspiring the faithful to great acts he is usually shown handsome,

but in battle or when intimidating his opponents his terrifying form is most common.

Hextor is a war god and is single-mindedly devoted to that cause. Everything he does is related to violent conflict, and some believe he won't be satisfied until his faith has conquered all of Oerth. Unlike Heironeous, he has no protector aspect, and although rogues and assassins worship him he does not promote stealth or thievery except as it pertains to armed conflict. Officers and strategists pray to him for advice when creating battle plans. He dislikes needlessly wasting the lives of his warriors (they are a resource that might be used elsewhere at another time) but is willing to allow the deaths of hundreds or even thousands of his own troops if it is the only means of securing victory. Daring and valor are of no use for him unless they turn the tide of a battle or cement a victory. He prefers

HOLY TEXTS

The holy texts of Hextor are carefully monitored and controlled by the faith. While most clerics and blackguards are expected to study these books and know them intimately, many of his other faithful pride themselves on their knowledge of them.

The Book of Hextor: This is the key book of the faith, telling the story of Hextor's youth and his decision to foil Heironeous the Unworthy. As required reading for all clerics, they must be able to quote entire chapters by memory before being ordained. It is a very old manuscript, with all original copies written in Old Oeridian and any translations into other languages (including Common) dating back no more than two hundred years. Obsessive efforts by the church have eliminated all known copies with different wording, proclaiming them the work of amateur scribes or heretics, although fragments appear every few decades hinting at lost chapters or fables with different outcomes.

The Celestial Grindwheel: This collection of scrolls was declared a heresy a century ago when a Hextoran monk penned it after weeks of meditation. Only a few copies are known to exist, some of them passed on orally and written from memory. The scrolls cover the basic origins of Heironeous and Hextor, annotating the story with revolutionary ideas about the nature of the multiverse and what role the conflict between the brothers plays. In short, the monk believed the war helps sort out the spirit-matter of the mortal world into positive and negative sides, keeping balance between the two and preventing the destruction of the world by the accrual of too much good or evil. The part that outraged the church is the idea that Heironeous and Hextor are two aspects of the same being or perhaps a single entity split into incomplete halves, and their battles are a cycle of rising and falling power between them. The keepers of this belief are a strange group of lawful neutral monks who worship both brothers equally. By necessity they keep their true faith hidden from all outsiders.

a cautious and certain approach to a risky endeavor with the possibility of disaster.

His faith is most popular in the fractured states of the Great Kingdom, and is the official religion there, with many government officials being part of the church. In these lands, they force the commonfolk to worship him despite any inclination toward another faith. His clergy hates all other religions and gives them no respect. Most of his worshipers are human, with the rest consisting of various humanoid tribes drawn to his strength or enslaved as battle troops.

Hextor teaches that the world is a dark and bloody place where the strong rule the weak because they are

the only ones fit to rule. Power is its own reward, and you must endure hardships to prevail. It is often necessary to be cruel and merciless in the pursuit of your goals, and achieving them can have harsh consequences. It is the duty of the faith to forge order out of chaos and law out of anarchy. You must obey the forces of tyranny and oppress or destroy those who dissent. In Hextor's eyes, the ends do justify the means, and might makes right—if the only way to prevent the

enemy from retreating is to burn a civilian village to the ground, so be it. Hextor believes that those unwilling to fight are unworthy of power, and while he accepts that inherited titles (including the nobility) are necessary to preserve order in the eyes of the common people, he is pleased when powerful mortals vie for these titles with sword, scheme, and forked tongue. Many dismiss him as a simple war god, but he is the patron of all conflicts, even if the participants never draw a blade—or do so only in the dark of night. He laughs at the "convenient idea" of pacifism, pointing out that it is the sheep who bleat peacefully but huddle near the shepherd when the wolves approach.

Because of this harsh code, an enemy who surrenders to a Hextoran might be spared and taken prisoner (if it is convenient and useful to do so), enslaved for labor or war, or simply killed despite



the request for mercy; it depends on the needs and goals of the Hextoran at the time. The Scourge of Battle is a lawful god, however, and he keeps his word when it is given and expects the same from his followers. They must keep the oaths they make and not try to escape them with sly words or other trickery, although not to a suicidal extent. For example, if a blackguard promises she won't kill a prisoner, she can't get around that promise by having some-



one else kill the prisoner, but if the prisoner later attacks her she can defend herself and kill the prisoner if she feels it is necessary.

Services to Hextor include chanting, iron instruments and weapons used as percussion (shields especially), shouts, and screams. The faithful give offerings in the form of their enemies' broken weapons and armor to an idol of the god, and in rare cases they might sacrifice valuable prisoners in his name. A paladin or paladin's special mount is a rare and valued offering (especially given the difficulty in capturing a paladin's mount). Small-scale sacrifices involve bloodletting with an arrow or holy symbol (representing the person's willingness to shed blood or die in Hextor's name), loyalty oaths, or promising acts of cruelty or killing before an upcoming battle.

Armor and weapons line the walls of his temples, sometimes enspelled to attack intruders. These items are fully functional (one typical acolyte

task is to clean and polish them) and are often donated from the gear of heroes and martyrs. The church awards these items to promising young champions of Hextor, a sign of great status if the previous bearer was famous or had a high rank. Because of this omnipresent gear, a temple usually doesn't have a separate armory unless a magical or legendary item is present and needs to be kept extraordinarily secure. The hanging items also make it difficult to climb or creep along the walls without making noise. Most temples

THE GREAT KINGDOM

On Oerth (the original world of Hextor's faith), more than 700 years ago the armies of the country of Aerdy defeated those of the land of Nyronid, successfully adding the latter to the former's territory. This eventually became known as the Great Kingdom, which covered much of the civilized world. In the intervening centuries, the Great Kingdom's power has waned and its territories cleaved to form independent countries. About 160 years ago, agents of Ivid of House Naelax assassinated Overking Naelif of House Rax, and Ivid proclaimed himself Overking, which resulted in a nine-year civil war called the Turmoil Between Crowns. In league with fiends and touched by madness, the victorious Ivid was a worshiper of Hextor and appointed a Hextoran priest to be his high cleric, establishing the church's role as the major player in Aerdy theopolitics. Ivid's Malachite Throne was carved from a single gemstone and is a symbol of the country's wealth and power.

In recent years, unknown agents assassinated the current Overking (Ivid V), but Hextoran clerics revived him as an animus, a lichlike undead creature (see *DRAGON* #339), although his transformation was flawed and left him in a diseased state, weakened and unable to heal. Unwilling to serve an undead madman, the nobles seceded and formed daughter states to the north and south of the capital. Soon after, a Hextoran patriarch declared Ivid to no longer be the Overking and an unknown magical attack ruined much of the capital, leaving Ivid the Undying ruler of a cursed no-man's land. The church of Hextor

remains strong in both daughter states of the Great Kingdom (both claiming to be its true successor). Many folk believe it is Hextor's influence that keeps the two from attacking each other militarily, as the god does not want to see his own followers dying on both sides of a battle.



are built on the sites of great battles, particularly where the Hextorans killed numerous enemies, especially Heironeans.

Hextor's role as the god of discord only refers to war, not to music, noise, or lack of agreement between individuals. Hextor has no interest in music except as a means to keep marchers in time and other simple military uses such as boosting morale. As a lawful evil tyrant he oppresses those who oppose him, so supporting any sort of social discord is anathema to him—he expects absolute loyalty to himself (although conflict between others as they vie for power is acceptable).

Hextor's church is organized like an army, with each temple part

of an overall hierarchy and a clear chain of command for his followers. Promotions in the church are based on experience, skill, and military achievements (and occasionally assassinations). Due to this structure, it is possible (although uncommon) for a higher-level person to be subordinate to a lower-level one. One mitigating factor in promotions are the Feats of Strength—tests of might the faithful must pass to earn a new rank for which they qualify. Failure to pass the test means the applicant must wait a year before trying again, although completing a new qualifying achievement gives the follower the opportunity to test for the rank he missed earlier and for the new rank. For example, a



APHORISMS

The everyday sayings and adages of Hextor's faithful are used as chants and battlecries. These three are among the most common.

Doom to the Archpaladin. This cheer is normally used when fighting the armies or agents of Heironeous. It is also used when a member of the church realizes an opponent is of the rival faith, the shout serving as a warning and a rally to bring down a hated enemy.

Might Makes Right. Although cliché, this is a firm belief of the faith. If you are more powerful than someone else, that is evidence you have the favor of Hextor and the other does not. All who do not serve the Scourge of Battle must be subjugated, and their weakness proves their lack of worth. This is generally used as an answer to questions about motives or methods rather than a battle cry.

By Blood and Blades I Swear It. This is one of the greatest oaths a person of the church can swear, for it not only links his own blood and Hextor's blood, but also the weapons his god wields in battle. This version is actually a shortening of the full oath used in important religious ceremonies, such as gaining a rank in the church or the knighting of a new blackguard: "May my bones and blood turn to dust, may my blades break, and may the doors to hell shatter ere I turn from service to my lord Hextor, Scourge of Battle. May his strength fill me so that I become like him in all things, mortal and eternal."

blackguard captain in Hextor's army causes a rout in a battle that saves the day but fails his duel against a cleric to gain the promotion and must wait a year before dueling again. If the blackguard assassinates a ranking member of a Heironean temple he can ask to duel again before the year's end and if he wins he can move on to the next test, possibly rising two ranks in a short period of time. Most tests involve combat against other experienced members of the faith, although low-ranking tests might be simple duels against slaves, gladiators, or monsters.

A character's class has little to do with his rank in the church. Several senior officials are fighters rather than clerics, although in most cases these non-spellcasting church officers are not involved in decisions requiring knowledge of magic. A minor branch of the church deals with assassination and is primarily led by rogue/fighters and assassins. Senior members of the church demand obedience from lower-ranked members. Failure to

comply is grounds for a lashing, branding, or other punishment (including death, although it is a rare punishment unless the transgression is major). Temples usually have a small supply of magic arrows, scrolls to enhance weapons, or means to summon devil messengers or reinforcements.

The church sponsors several military orders, most of them named after a particular sacred battle relic (such as something worn by a divine minion or an item owned by a martyr of the church). These orders have high morale, are well-trained, and make extensive use of magical support (whether from clerics or blackguards). Example orders are the Company of the Twin Shields, the Order of the Six Severed Hands, the Gray Knights of the Great Skull, and the Legion of the Unholy Bloodshield. Hextor also has an order of monks, called the Brotherhood of the Gray Hand, devoted to preserving

the heritage of the Oeridian people and opposing Heironeous (particularly monks serving Heironeous).

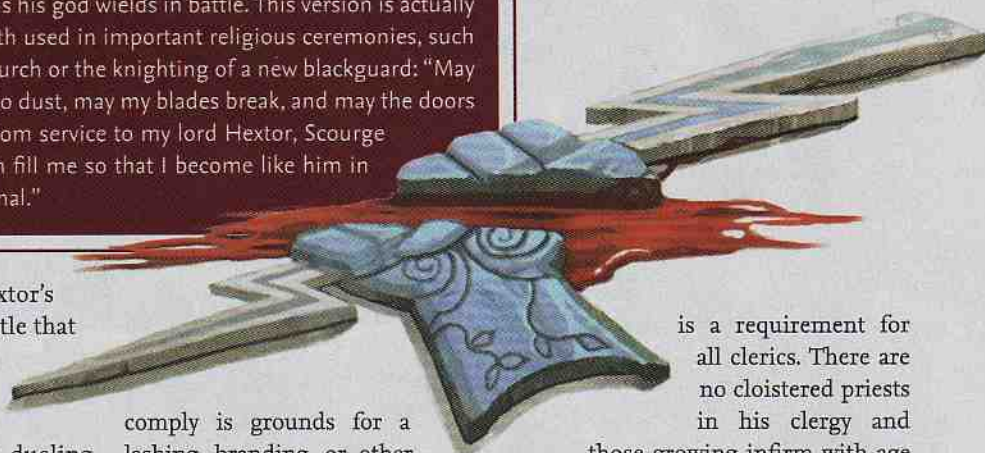
A CLERIC'S ROLE

Hextor's priesthood functions like a military organization and clerics must obey orders from superior ranks. Clerics study military tactics and historical warfare as part of their basic training. Given the many weapons Hextor uses in battle it is unreasonable to expect a cleric to learn them all, but many try to become familiar with at least one martial weapon. Fitness and combat prowess

is a requirement for all clerics. There are no cloistered priests in his clergy and

those growing infirm with age either rely on magic to bolster their strength or request field duty so they can "die with their boots on." Some turn to necromancy or pacts with devils to extend their lives further and prolong their usefulness in the mortal world.

Some clerics work in temples or offsite as teachers to younger students, orphans, and children of other clerics, educating them in practical, historical, and spiritual matters. Despite the general evil nature of the teachers, this schooling tends to have a very positive long-term effect on the prosperity of these children, which enhances the church's reputation and status in the community. In the Great Kingdom, some churches support themselves with stipends from wealthy nobles who want their children to be taught by some of the most ruthless and brilliant military minds among humankind.



Experienced clerics of Hextor serve as military officers or as advisors to them. Likewise, they often take positions in government, where their skills are most useful. Novice assignments include outpost duty (maintaining order in unruly frontier settlements), military field duty (as combatants or healers), or as wandering "enforcers" backed by soldiers (investigating crimes, rebellious activity, or rumors of dangerous monsters). In war they take leadership roles and the senior priests expect all clerics to show courage and skill in battle as an example for the common troops. All are expected to wage war, suppress those who would rebel, and serve worthy tyrants or rule as one themselves.

Clerics should not take unnecessary risks in battle. A planned, orderly assault is more effective than a mad rush, and to act otherwise implies Hextor's adherence to law and control is somehow flawed. When outnumbered or facing a superior force clerics should not throw away their lives uselessly, although if ordered to as part of a larger strategy (such as a diversion) they must obey. Hextor's faith has several prominent martyrs whose deaths allowed their allies to turn the tide of battle, and some of them are active as supernatural messengers of the faith (such as answering *commune* spells on the god's behalf).

Clerics might play any role in an ongoing battle—healer, melee combatant, or aggressive spellcaster. This is primarily because Hextor's dislike of other deities means they are usually the only kind of cleric on their side of the battle—they cannot afford to specialize in one area and neglect other aspects of their traditional roles. Because of this, any particular cleric usually has a mix of prepared attack, defense, self-enhancing, and healing spells (as most of his clerics are evil and cannot spontaneously convert prepared spells to *cure* spells).

A typical day for a cleric involves waking for prayer, breakfast, a period of study, battle practice (sometimes as short as a few sparring matches against a similarly skilled opponent), then whatever daily assignments his superiors require. Simple board games recreating past battles are a favorite pastime among the church, as they allow clerics to practice large-scale combat strategy. Some temples sponsor tournaments for these games, although they are always careful to ensure that devotion to the games does not surpass martial or spiritual interests.





CORE BELIEFS: HEXTOR

BLOOD GOLEMS OF HEXTOR

For clerics of Hextor, there are few greater prides than being gifted with the ability to create a blood golem of Hextor. These machines of war are little more than an animated mass of blood encased in a hulking metal shell with six morningstar or flail "arms." Blood golems of Hextor first appeared in the "Enchiridion of the Fiend Sage" in *DRAGON* #292 and were reprinted in the *Fiend Folio* on page 84. They were also made into a miniature in the *Unhallowed* set of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* Miniatures.



The church's crusading efforts are ongoing. Just as with good churches, it is in their best interest to kill or rout thieves or monsters. In some cases, news of such things turns into a competition between the church and its rivals to see who can reach and eradicate the problem first. It is not unheard of for Hextorans to deal with the matter, then lie in wait to ambush and kill their rival faith's agents.

Clerics pray at dawn, either alone or as part of a larger service led by a ranking church official. Unlike many evil churches, spell preparation takes place after morning prayers—the better to serve the needs of the coming battles, which normally take place during the day. Low-ranked clerics might have assignments at many different posts and tend to develop a reasonable familiarity with the areas they serve. They're open with this knowledge to other members of the faith, recommending good restaurants or other leisure activities, things to avoid, local customs, and so on. While most truly good folk dislike Hextoran clerics because their god is evil, many commoners can't help but feel thankful for his stern but effective priests who arrive, deal with a threat and then leave—allowing them to get back to their normal lives.

Church ranks are (in ascending order) scourge of the third rank,

scourge of the second rank, scourge of the first rank, champion of tyranny, knight terrible, knight horrible, knight malevolent, and knight tyrant. Senior clerics gain the title patriarch (or matriarch for females), and those in charge of church armies are called patriarch-generals. Knights and patriarchs of the church may grant the title of "battlescourge" to a member of the faith (in the same way royalty are responsible for knightng soldiers worthy of recognition), although this is traditionally only done for persons with levels in the cleric, fighter, or blackguard classes.

Clerics should have children so the ranks of the faithful grow. Curiously, there is no provision against having children you cannot support yourself—the church has facilities for dealing with orphans, and part of Hextor's devotion to fitness implies that weak or unfit children fail and strong ones find a way to survive.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CORE RELIGIONS

Hextor is dismissive of all other deities, even those in his own pantheon. He believes he is superior to them and will eventually rise to lead them all. He knows better than to be openly antagonistic, as this might encourage

his enemies to band together and attack him, but he does not go out of his way to interact with other deities (although if approached with an interesting plan he would not turn away automatically). His attitude is slightly softer toward his mother, the demigoddess Stern Alia, although she has little influence on him. He sees Erythnul as a humbled thug trying to maintain status among those he once terrorized, but is ultimately not worth talking about.

Only Heironeous is worthy of Hextor's attention and the one at whom he focuses all of his anger. He has alliances with a few archdevils, greater devils, and at least one of the Lords of the Nine, as he appreciates their well-disciplined armies.

AN ASSASSIN'S ROLE

Hextor has no objection to the use of assassination, even in wartime, especially if it can eliminate key opponents and help secure an overall victory. Therefore, the church welcomes assassins and other stealthy characters who do not actually have levels in the assassin prestige class. They don't normally serve as spies or double-agents, as they are most useful when murdering opposition leaders, poisoning an army's food and water supply, or other activities requiring quiet footsteps and a willingness to kill. Hextoran assassins are usually cool-headed intense people, although they might adopt other, more rambunctious personas to throw people off their trail (nobody expects the friendly man buying drinks for everyone to be a cold-blooded killer). Many assassins do mercenary work in addition to killing for the church, some creating a separate identity so their employers don't know their religious affiliation. A few multiclass as clerics for healing or the ability to use wands.

A BLACKGUARD'S ROLE

Blackguards are to Hextor's church what paladins are to Heironeous'—exemplars of the faith, a perfect meld of martial prowess and holy power. They have essentially the same duties as clerics, only with a stronger emphasis on combat. Blackguard officers are a matter of prestige for a temple or army, and a famous blackguard joining a temple or unit lends status in the eyes of others. Soldiers serving a blackguard easily fall into hero worship.

While most blackguards belong to one of Hextor's military orders, they consider themselves part of an informal elite that transcends these mundane organizations, and in rare times when the rivalries between orders become heated it is usually the blackguards who step in to defuse tensions, often with a joust or duel (preferably not to the death, as Hextor considers losing a champion in this manner wasteful). Nonlethal competitions between blackguards are fairly common, as they work to establish a hier-

archy of power. Likewise, brawls and duels with common or elite troops are a regular occurrence used to keep the blackguards fit, test the strength of the other faithful, and keep morale high (even when a common soldier loses, he is happy he got to duel a local hero, especially if he managed to get in a lucky hit).

Just like paladins, blackguards quest for the glory of the church and lead its troops into battle. Although their personal magic is tailored for the battlefield, some blackguards are skilled strategists or orators and engage in planning attacks, the machinations of warfare, and recruitment of others to the faith. They are especially suited to be the sword-arms of the church, but can just as easily be its mind, voice, or heart. In most cases, they are content to be in the thick of war, taking point in great charges or single-handedly defending a fortification against waves of enemies. Although they have a sense of honor, their hearts are just as cold as their god, and if the situation requires massacring innocents to

ensure victory, the blackguard is the first to volunteer for the privilege.

Like clerics, blackguards pray for spells in the morning, followed by a meal. The rest of the day is spent training, dueling, questing, drilling with troops, or traveling to their next assignment. Exemplars of warfare, they live and work hard, sleeping soundly despite committing murder or what others would call atrocities. Guilt and regret are for the weak in body and spirit. The blackguards know their deeds are in the name of Hextor and are therefore beyond reproach. They are prone to dreams of tyranny, just like clerics, and many have become famous as cruel yet effective stewards of frontier settlements.

HOLIDAYS

The church has about one major holiday each month, usually a feast celebrating heroes of past battles. Individual temples might have additional minor holidays for local heroes.

Blooding: This event takes place in the week of Growfest (a spring

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Temple to Hextor



One Square = 5 feet

holiday) and originates in an old practice of blood sacrifice before war begins in the spring and summer months. The faithful hold exhibitions of strength, fitness, and martial prowess, including arena battles. Some zealots cut themselves and offer their own blood to the god, but most temples prefer to sacrifice war prisoners held over from the last campaign, usually by simultaneously hanging and impalement through the chest.

The Fist of Eternal Malachite: This takes place on Midwinter's Day and symbolizes the battles fought by Hextorans to gain ascendancy in the Great Kingdom during the Turmoil Between Crowns, which resulted in Ivid (a member of the church) claiming the Malachite Throne. Officially, this celebrates the rise of

Hextor in the Great Kingdom over all other faiths; in other lands this holiday is a remembrance of battles fought in the name of a local ruler. With the division of the Great Kingdom and the destruction of the old capital, this holiday is shifting more toward these regional aspects than the unified Aerdyn tradition.

THREE MYTHS

The myths perpetuated by Hextor's clergy always cast their deity in a superior role. While this is not uncommon among many faiths, it is especially true for Hextor's.

The Lords of Evil: The legends state that when Heironeous chose to serve good, Hextor opted to serve evil. Because the powers of good gave his brother gifts, the Lords of Evil blessed Hextor with

two additional pairs of arms so he could best Heironeous and all other opponents. These Lords of Evil are unnamed and are rarely mentioned in any other literature, but Hextor is obedient (although not subservient) to them. Priests rarely use this myth for teaching, although a few point to it as an example that every creature has a superior that must be obeyed (reinforcing church doctrine that the strong should rule the weak).

The Battling Brothers: The precise origin of the two brother-gods is lost to history (sages know Stern Alia is their mother, but who their fathers are is unclear), but even the fragmentary stories of their early lives shows them competing with each other in all things. At first this rivalry was friendly, but over time Hextor realized that while he worked

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Hextor's clerics and blackguards often use their spells to summon multiple creatures at once so they can practice their tactical skills in the heat of battle. They can use *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells.

Summon Monster III

Vargouille (LE)

Summon Monster VI

Achaierai

Nightmare (LE)

Summon Monster VIII

Young blue dragon*

Young green dragon*

* This creature has the extraplanar subtype but otherwise has the normal statistics for a creature of its kind.

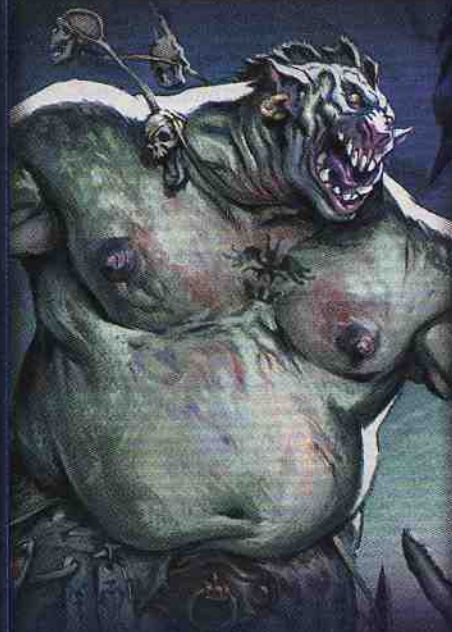
hard at every task, Heironeous was victorious almost without effort (due to innate skill and assistance from the powers of good) and therefore did not appreciate what he had. When the powers chose Heironeous as their champion, Hextor realized if he also chose good he would forever be playing second to his own brother. The thought of an eternity in that bright shadow was too much, so he chose evil in order to oppose and foil his brother for all time. As Heironeous's primary rival, Hextor would finally get the recognition and appreciation he deserved, Heironeous would taste the bitter ashes of defeat, and the few victories he might accomplish would be hard won at great cost. Refusing to let others choose his place for him at his brother's side, Hextor chose his own place as his brother's enemy and humbler. The church uses this myth to teach that one must recognize and seize one's own destiny from a position of strength. Only the weak submit meekly to the rule of others and in so doing prove their unfitness to rule. Furthermore, this myth counters the commonly-believed story that Hextor fell in with evil because

he was unworthy or inadequate to serve good—he chose evil from a position of strength.

The Scourge and the Many: Hextor has a long-standing rivalry with Erythnul, god of hate and slaughter. In more primitive days, Erythnul was the war god of the Oeridian pantheon, representing all kinds of large-scale battles. When Hextor became a god and began to establish himself, Erythnul rightly saw the young champion as a threat and potential rival for the portfolio of war. Time and again Hextor battled the senior deity to a stalemate using superior tactics. In time, as Erythnul's grasp on the powers of war began to slip, Hextor's tightened, and eventually the young god wrested the mantle of war god from the elder. Neither god has forgotten this, and despite Erythnul's vows to reclaim what was stolen from him he has declined in power so they are now approximately equal. To the faithful, this proves Hextor's supremacy over all other gods—even as a new deity he claimed the domain of a much stronger god and held it in an iron grip. Furthermore, the myth teaches that even a seemingly weak opponent can become a

DESCENT

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SEAN K REYNOLDS

CORE BELIEFS: HEXTOR

serious rival if the circumstances are right, so you should never underestimate an enemy.

PRESTIGE CLASS SUGGESTIONS

Most followers of Hextor who choose an elite path become blackguards (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, 181) regardless of their standard classes. Other popular choices are cavalier (*Complete Warrior*, 19), dragonrider (*Draconomicon*, 124), fist

wore it as part of a complete suit of armor, leading many battles in the god's name before being disintegrated by a Heironean deva-sorcerer's well-placed spell, leaving behind only his armor. The helm provides a +5 profane bonus to AC to anyone who wears it, fully protects the wearer against decapitation, and has all the powers of a *helm of telepathy*. If the wearer is a worshiper of Hextor he also gains a +3 insight bonus to AC. An especially devout wearer can communicate with the lingering spirit of

Norem once per day for tactical advice or historical knowledge (treat as *commune*, but only when asking knowledge about

battle or history).

The remaining pieces of the armor are lost, but church elders believe they retain magic and have greater powers when recombined with others in the set.

Trumpet of Acheron: This item sometimes appears as an ivory horn and sometimes as a brass trumpet, but it is always decorated with arrow symbols and a simple grid pattern on part of its outer surface. This item is another gift from the Lords of Evil and normally carried by Hextor himself, but he sometimes awards it to worthy champions or places it in the mortal world to confound the forces of good. Once every six days, its bearer can blow the horn to call 6d10 human skeletons to serve him for 1 hour (they crumble if destroyed or if this time elapses). Every six years it can instead be used

to summon 6d100 human skeletons and 3d100 zombies, which serve for 24 hours. Hextor normally sends the horn to the mortal world when this greater power is available, usually to some aspiring warlord. If the person blowing the horn has a good alignment, the conjured undead attack him rather than serve him.

Unholy Bloodshield: This +4 mithral spiked buckler drips blood and trails gray energy whenever the wielder is angry or severely wounded. Its spikes are actually six iron arrows projecting through the metal of the shield (paralleling the design of Hextor's holy symbol). On command it changes to a +4 mithral spiked light shield and the spikes gain the wounding property (the spikes are not useable unless in light shield form). For many years, this item was stored in the Battlehall of the Unholy Bloodshield in the palace at Rauxes (which was also the headquarters of the legion sharing the item's name), but it vanished around the time of the mysterious attack that ruined the capital. It has been missing ever since, with no signs or even any substantiated rumors placing it in the hands of anyone else. The shield (in either form) counts as a holy symbol of Hextor for anyone who casts divine spells.

NEW DIVINE SPELLS

The spells of Hextor's faithful are almost entirely designed to aid in battle or the subjugation of those who oppose his will.

Battlearms

Evocation

Level: Cleric 4, Blackguard 4

Components: V, S, DF

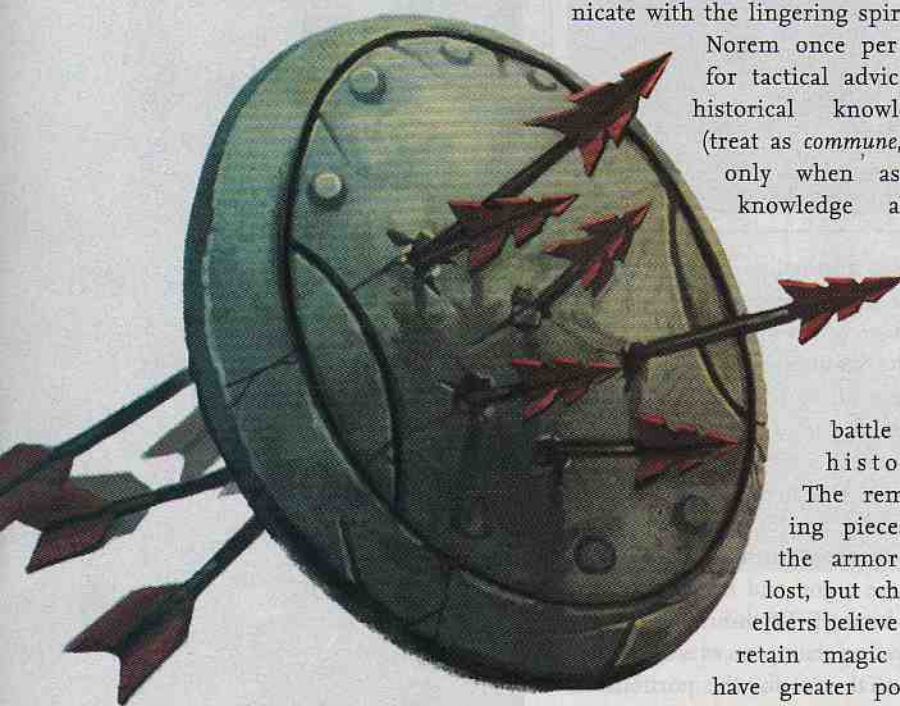
Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/level

Calling upon the power of Hextor, you imbue yourself with skill in combat and create extra arms. Your base attack bonus becomes equal to



of Hextor (*Sword and Fist*, 18), and fiend-binder (*Tome of Magic*, 220). Those with an affinity for dragons might become dragon lords (*Dragon Magic*, 38).

RELICS OF THE FAITH

The relics of Hextor are few but powerful and many have been seen on some of the most important battlefields in recent history.

Norem's Helm: This polished steel bascinet helm has a moveable dull gray steel visor resembling a stylized hideous face. It is named for the Hextoran champion who

your character level (which might give you additional attacks), you gain 1 temporary hit point per caster level, and you grow a pair of extra arms from your torso. You may use these extra arms to make unarmed strikes or wield weapons. If you use these extra limbs to attack, attacks with your primary hand are at -6, the three other hands are at -10. If you have the Two-Weapon Fighting feat, the penalty on attacks with all of your hands drops to -4. At 12th level, you grow an additional pair of arms.

These extra arms cannot cast spells. You cannot cast a spell and make an attack with these arms in the same round. On the round you cast this spell, each new arm may draw one of your weapons as a free action. On any later round you must use a move action to equip weapons in one or more of your extra hands. The arms are a neutral gray color and barely human. They cannot hold any items other than weapons, help climb or swim, or engage in any activity other than combat.

Hextor's Fiery Eyes

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Evil, Language-Dependent, Mind-Affecting]

Level: Cleric 5, Blackguard 4

Components: V, DF

Targets: One creature each round

Duration: 1 round/level

This spell functions like *command*, except you may affect one creature per round as a swift action and the activities continue beyond 1 round. At the start of each commanded creature's turn after the first, it gets another Will save to attempt to break free from the spell. You do not have to give each creature the same command (on the first round you can command a creature to approach, on the second round force a creature to fall prone, yet another to flee on the third round, and so on).

The duration of the effect of this spell is limited by the overall spell duration, not when an individual was affected. For example, if the spell has a 9-round duration and you affect a target on round 8,

it only obeys for 1 round, at which point the spell ends and the compulsion no longer affects them.

When you cast this spell your face distorts into a hideous gray visage with bulging red-rimmed eyes.

NPC CONTACTS FOR CLERICS OF HEXTOR

Not all of Hextor's faithful are enemies to be fought. As a lawful god, many of the Scourge of Battle's followers can be quite helpful to those prepared to deal with them.

Daligos the Hammer (LE male human wizard 3/expert 2) is an eccentric craftsman whose main duty is maintaining the armored metal shells of the blood golems (see Blood Golem sidebar). Only marginally skilled in magic, he has an intuitive sense for diagnosing and repairing the golems. He gets his name from the metal hammer always hanging from his belt. He is poorly socialized from spending most of his time with barely-sentient silent monsters and often latches on to anyone who shows him actual interest or treats him particularly well. With his specialized skills and few other talents he is frequently sent out to far-flung temples to check on the golem guardians.

Dal is skinny, average height, with fair skin and black hair. He wears simple brown robes but usually ties a butcher's apron over them to prevent excess spillage from the messy golems (which leak blood every time they move). He carries a bag of sophisticated tools and bits of scrap metal to work on his charges. Part of his job is to test the golems' workings, so he knows their commands to start and stop attacking. Like most people who work alone, he often talks to himself or to the golems as if they can answer him.

Dal is a good contact for low-level parties. He is low-ranking but important enough that he has a few privileges, and thus is a good per-

son to have on your side when you need information or a friendly face. Characters who know him might end up on escort duty as he goes to another city. He would also make a good cohort for a PC interested in item crafting.

Scourge of the First Rank Vorlin (LE male human cleric 10 of Hextor) is a tragic figure. Formerly a cleric of Heironeous but captured and tortured as part of a cruel experiment by the church of Hextor, he now venerates the Scourge of Battle. Part of this torture was physical pain he had to suffer, but much of it was horrible evil acts he was forced to do under mind control and possession. Eventually, this wore down his will and caused a mental collapse, at which time the clerics built him back up and indoctrinated him as a cleric of Hextor. He remembers his former life but considers all of that the misguided actions of a foolish boy who could not see the cruelties of the world for what they are. He now embraces Hextor's faith willingly and zealously, thanking his superiors for letting him see the truth of the world. As a former cleric of Heironeous he understands that faith's traditional tactics and "foolish" world view and is often consulted on basic matters or called to teach acolytes about their rival faith.

Tall and thin, Vorlin is gaunt-faced with limp black hair and cool blue eyes. Scars from whips and brands mark his chest, back, and the forward parts of his legs and arms. He normally dresses to cover these when among layfolk (as he knows they are disturbing) but doesn't care if someone of the faith sees them, for he is proud of his "trial by fire." He wears battle-hardened full plate in combat, otherwise preferring simple traditional church robes.

Vorlin is a good contact for mid- or high-level PCs. For a equal-level party he can provide healing, battle magic, or simply advice, even joining the group if under orders



CORE BELIEFS: HEXTOR

from a temple. For a higher-level party he makes a good cohort to a Hextoran fighter, blackguard, or other character without strong spellcasting. As it is possible that long-term peaceful exposure to followers of Heironeous might erode his brainwashing, he should avoid neutral PCs that have regular interactions with good churches unless the players can handle a redemption-oriented storyline concerning him.

PLANAR ALLY

Hrinnom is a stubborn and atypically courageous nightmare stallion, easily distinguished by a dully glowing blaze on his forehead in the shape of a cluster of six arrows. Lawful evil rather than neutral evil, he is utterly loyal to Hextor or any of the god's supernatural minions, sometimes ferrying them through the planes or carrying messages across infernal battlefields. Young for his kind but bold and willful, he never allows himself to be saddled or bridled and considers himself the equal of any rider rather than a subservient mount. He can speak Common, Ignan, and Infernal but rarely does so unless relaying a message. To intimidate lesser creatures he sometimes stamps sparks from his feet and breathes bursts of sulfurous smoke.

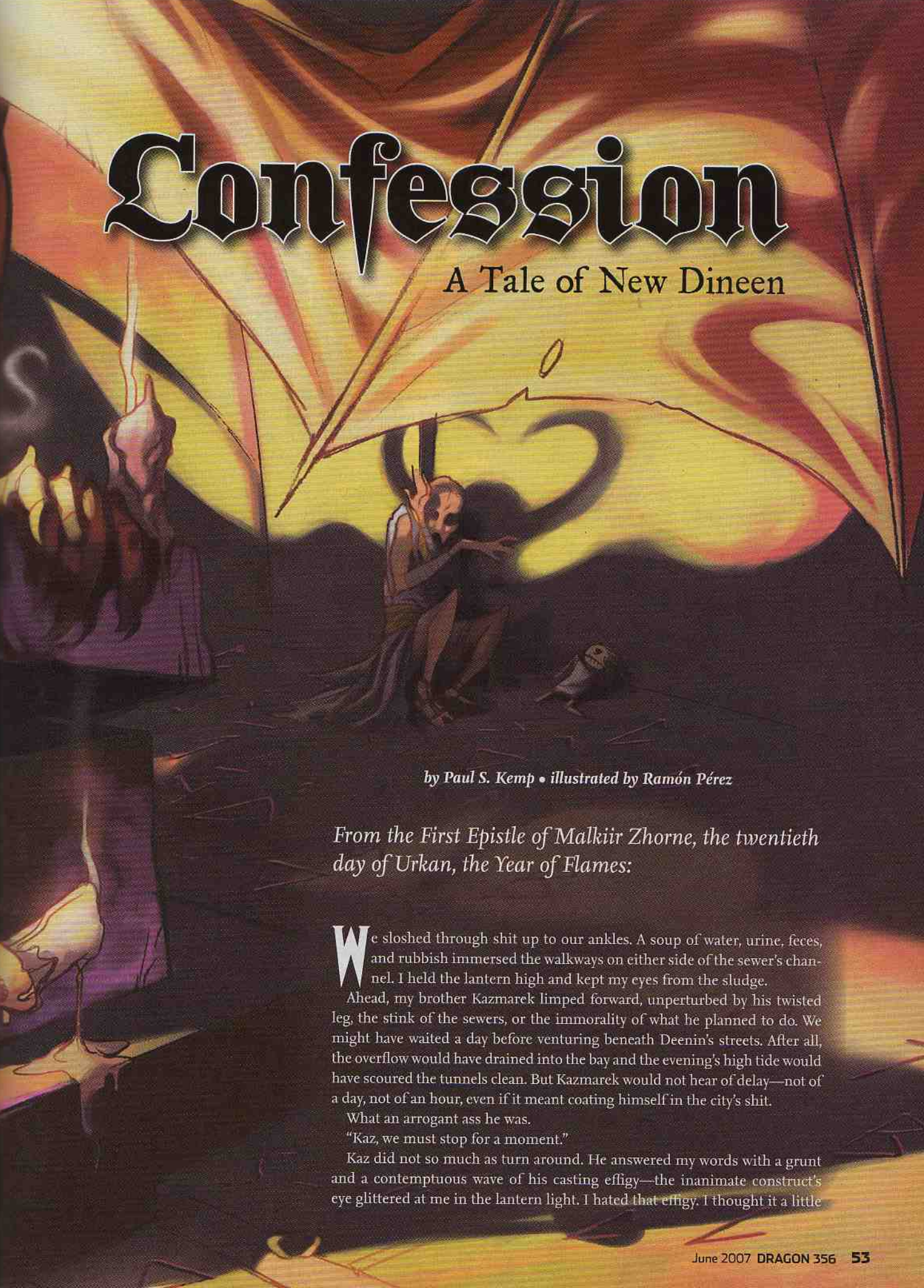
Other than his alignment he is typical of his kind. He considers himself a light warhorse and hopes to eventually gain enough power to enhance his body and spirit to become a cauchemar. When in battle with a rider he usually lets the rider dictate where to go, but if he spots an old enemy or an opponent wounds him he might seek out and kill that creature despite orders to the contrary.

Hrinnom has little use for material things as he lacks the hands to use them, but when summoned by mortals he accepts payments of magical horseshoes (which he inadvertently melts over time), ioun stones, enhancing tomes, and other items that don't require humanlike hands. He also enjoys the sacrifice of especially fine mares or stallions in his name, which

serve him on his native plane or directly add to his power and status. He doesn't mind serving as a mount (especially if the mortal is very charismatic and powerful) as long as the rider understands their relationship is a partnership. He has been known to dump such a partner deep in the Astral or Ethereal Plane if he feels he is unappreciated. ■







Confession

A Tale of New Dineen

by Paul S. Kemp • illustrated by Ramón Pérez

From the First Epistle of Malkiir Zhorne, the twentieth day of Urkan, the Year of Flames:

We sloshed through shit up to our ankles. A soup of water, urine, feces, and rubbish immersed the walkways on either side of the sewer's channel. I held the lantern high and kept my eyes from the sludge.

Ahead, my brother Kazmarek limped forward, unperturbed by his twisted leg, the stink of the sewers, or the immorality of what he planned to do. We might have waited a day before venturing beneath Deenin's streets. After all, the overflow would have drained into the bay and the evening's high tide would have scoured the tunnels clean. But Kazmarek would not hear of delay—not of a day, not of an hour, even if it meant coating himself in the city's shit.

What an arrogant ass he was.

"Kaz, we must stop for a moment."

Kaz did not so much as turn around. He answered my words with a grunt and a contemptuous wave of his casting effigy—the inanimate construct's eye glittered at me in the lantern light. I hated that effigy. I thought it a little

devil who whispered depravity in my brother's ear.

I can admit now that my brother was mad. Madness had led him to take the Thaumaturgic Oaths and craft the casting effigy of a thaumaturge; madness had led him into the sewers to find a demon. For my part, I could never have made the sacrifices required by the Oaths. I remained only a minor practitioner—a hedge wizard, my brother called me. In truth, I often thought myself little more than my brother's familiar, a filial imp, as much a fetish as the effigy he carried. In my more generous moments, I thought of myself as my brother's conscience.

"Kaz..."

He turned to face me. His one good eye burned red in the lantern

Kaz had seen the possibilities immediately—a bound demon brought power. He'd shared his find with another thaumaturge of his order, but the colleague had scoffed at Kaz's claims. So Kaz had turned to me. When he had told me of the map, I tried to dissuade him by repeating what he must have already known—consorting with demons led to insanity. Kaz, of course, had dismissed my caution as cowardly.

How wrong he had been.

At length we found a corridor that opened off the main sewer channel. He started down and I followed, the thickening essence of evil slicking my skin like sweat. The corridor narrowed and sloped upward. The walls smoothed. Ahead, an archway loomed.

The arcane characters crawled over the surface of the floor and collected around the altar like expectant penitents.

light. The other socket was an empty hole.

"We're near. I can feel it."

I felt it, too: a heaviness in the air, an oiliness on my skin—evil given corporeality. It had been hours since we had passed beneath a street sewer grate, hours since we had seen any light other than that of the lantern. We were in a part of the sewers beneath Old Town, an area the city's channel-sweeps had long ago surrendered to the rats.

And to the demon.

Kaz had learned of the fiend by accident. He had been researching a ritual in a Plague Era tome he'd found on a dusty, forgotten shelf in Deenin's High Library. He'd turned a page and a yellowed piece of parchment had fallen from the tome and fluttered to the floor. Inked in blood, it described a demonic cult and showed the location of an unholy shrine in the city's sewers.

Kaz hurried forward, giggling the while. "Here. This is it."

An open archway stood before us, a black maw exhaling the breath of evil. The elaborate jambs seemed the embodiment of madness, with faces of demons carved in relief from the stone, leering, snarling, promising.

The lantern light did not reach beyond the doorway guarded by those diabolical visages. An impenetrable curtain of darkness blocked it.

"Warded," Kaz said, as though I couldn't see that for myself.

Kaz held forth his effigy while he hissed the words to a counterward. His brow furrowed as power gathered. "There!"

The ward gave way with an audible pop. The magical darkness obscuring the doorway dissipated and the demonic faces built into the jambs took flesh. Long necks stretched as the creatures lunged part way from the stone. Fanged maws snapped

at Kaz. He bounded backward but one nipped his forearm. Hissing with pain, he shouted a binding spell.

As suddenly as they had formed, the demons retracted into the jambs, stone once more.

"Burn me," I oathed, and tried to control my hammering heart.

"I am all right," Kaz said, daubing at the wound on his forearm.

We stepped through the door and into the round chamber that lay beyond. Runes of power scored the otherwise smooth stone of the floor. The runes faced this way and that, with no discernable order to their placement, the inscrutable scrawl of a mad demonologist. Kaz knelt over each in turn, running his fingers over the power-laden lines the way another man might lightly brush the skin of a lover.

A featureless block of obsidian sat in the center of the room: a binding altar. The demon was bound within it. Atop the altar sat two wrist-thick candles, their gray wax no doubt made from melted human flesh.

Kaz stepped to the altar and spoke a word of command. The candles sputtered to life and spat rancid black smoke.

"This is where it sleeps," Kaz said. My brother's eye had that distant look that I knew well. Kaz was planning what he would do with the power granted him by the demon.

I tried to demand that he not do it, but I swear that my mouth, clotted with the very essence of evil, could not form words.

May Lathan forgive my weakness.

Kaz took his casting effigy in hand and began the ritual.

The spellchant rang off the walls. I struggled to draw breath as the power gathered. I backed away from the altar as far as I could. When I felt the cold wall against my back, I slid to the floor. My vision blurred.

"Do not do it," I finally managed, but I knew it was already too late.

Kaz's voice grew in volume. The runes in the floor began to glow, then to move. To move!

The arcane characters crawled over the surface of the floor and collected around the altar like expectant penitents. Darkness congealed over the obsidian block. Gradually, horrifyingly, it took shape—smooth red skin lined with black veins, sinewy muscles, membranous wings, and unforgiving coal-black eyes.

I cradled my knees to my chin and began to rock, as helpless as a babe.

"Don't, Kaz, don't," I repeated, my own incantation an ineffective counter to my brother's spellchant.

Kaz's voice rose in ecstasy as the demon manifested fully. The creature issued a challenge in a tongue so vile it struck me like a blow. When my brother answered in the same tongue, I vomited down the front of my robe.

How could my brother speak such things? What had he become?

Then something unexpected happened.

The demon laughed.

Kaz answered with a shouted command.

More laughter from the demon. My bowels turned soft.

The demon mouthed more villainess, its tone commanding. Kaz, his arrogance effaced, began to plead, then to whimper. I covered my ears; I had never before heard my brother make such sounds. It pleased me (Lathan forgive me) and terrified me all at once. I glanced up to see Kaz slumped on the floor before the demon, gibbering nonsense. His effigy lay on the floor beside him, staring accusations at me.

The events that follow are a blur. I next recall running out of the summoning chamber and down the sewer tunnel, screaming.



Abbadon stared at the wall of the meditation cell and choked down disappointment. He had failed—again.

Once more, his entreaties had not reached his god; once more he had failed to achieve the soulbond.

He remained only an aspirant, separated from the grace of Lathan.

"Forgive me," he whispered, and meant it, but Lathan provided no answer.

Other aspirants of the Order spoke of sometimes hearing Lathan's soft voice in their ears; it was known that senior priests routinely heard the guiding voice of their god. Abbadon feared he never would.

A flash of anger rose in him and he quickly rebuked himself for it. He knew it was that very anger—a remnant of the man he once had been—

I also write these words as cautionary tale to others, or to myself.

that prevented the soulbond. Lathan was a god of peace; Abbadon was a man of war. Or had been, once. That fact was the divide that separated man from god.

A soft knock on the door interrupted his thoughts.

"Enter."

The door opened, flooding the cell with the light of the setting sun and framing the thin, stooped body of Prior Nis. As always, the elderly Prior wore his blue robes, his gray beard, and his soft smile.

"Forgive me for intruding, Abbadon. I heard speaking and assumed you must have completed your meditations."

"I have," Abbadon answered, and offered nothing more.

The Prior regarded him with knowing eyes. The silence stretched.

At last the Prior said, "I presume the soulbond eludes you still?"

The words were barely a question. Abbadon's jaw tightened.

"It does. I hear no voice. Lathan does not speak to me."

The Prior put a fatherly hand on his shoulder.

"Your past and your guilt are a wall, Abbadon. Before Lathan can offer you forgiveness, you first must forgive yourself. Break down the wall."

Abbadon felt his cheeks flush, nodded. The Prior had said such things to him before.

"I am guilty of things, Prior. Terrible things. You know what I was."

The Prior nodded but his eyes held no judgment. "I know what you told me when you arrived. You were a dreamleaf addict and a one-time soldier. You killed, sometimes without justification. But all men are guilty, Abbadon. Soldiers and cobblers and even priests. You must release your guilt and approach Lathan with nothing hidden."

Abbadon nodded to please the Prior, although he feared he could never break through the walls of his guilt. His past was a beast within him, squirming, creeping up his throat to try and get out from behind his teeth. Only the wall in his soul held it at bay and kept it hidden. He wanted his god to absolve him sight unseen.

"I do not know if I can do it, Prior," Abbadon said, and his eyes welled.

"You will do it." The Prior took him by the shoulders and looked at him gently. "One has come seeking, Abbadon."

It took Abbadon a moment for the import of the ritual words to register. When it did, Abbadon felt his legs grow weak.

Abbadon looked up into the Prior's gentle eyes. "A Trial? But I am only an aspirant, Prior. I—"

"One has come seeking, Abbadon," the Prior repeated, more forcefully.

Abbadon blinked, pronounced the ritual answer.

"And in seeking one has found. How may I be of service?"

The Prior smiled.

"You are different from any of our other aspirants, Abbadon. More burdened. I think a Trial may free you to let go of what is within you.

It is unusual for an aspirant to take a Trial, true, but... Follow me. A man has come. He asked for you."

That stopped Abbadon. "Asked for me? By name?"

The Prior nodded. "He says he knew you before... before you came to the Priory."

Abbadon's heart thumped. He imagined a brother of some forgotten man he had killed, some terrified woman he had violated.

"Prior, I cannot—"

"It will be all right," the Prior said. "You must face your past. It is the only way."

The two men stared at each other. Finally Abbadon nodded and dared ask,

"Has Lathan spoken this course to you, Prior?"

The Prior looked away. "Come, Abbadon."

They walked to the small waiting room off the main worship hall. With each step, Abbadon's body grew heavier. By the time they reached the door of the waiting room, he felt as if he were made of lead.

The Prior opened the door.

From the First Epistle of Malkiir Zhorne, the twentieth day of Urkan, the Year of Flames:

I ran until I stumbled, then stumbled until I crawled. By the time I'd exited the sewers, sweat and stink covered me.

When I once more stood in the sun, a peculiar exhilaration came over me. Kazmarek was dead, presumably consumed by the demon. I was alive. Kazmarek had failed and I was alive.

You consider me horrible for thinking such things, no doubt. But you must understand that I had stood in the shadow of my brother for a lifetime. To exult in his failure was human. Or so I told myself.

Free of my twin's domineering presence, I found I had an appetite for all manner of pleasures. Like a man once starved, I now feasted on life. My tastes moved from peculiar to debauched,

from debauched to depraved. Eventually I sought stimulation not in sex and narcotics but in violence. I joined a mercenary unit—me, a hedge wizard!—and tried to find satisfaction in war and pillage. But even war did not satisfy me. I will not write here of the bloody deeds I committed while I wore the uniform of a soldier. I will write only that my puissance in the violent arts surprised both myself and my fellows. I soon learned the reasons, and my surprise turned to dismay.

I threw him to the ground and punched him, bit him, kicked him until he was insensate. Finally I retrieved my knife and cut his throat.

A bald man in the ochre robes of a thaumaturge waited at the polished wooden table. His dark eyes scoured Abbadon's face. Abbadon did not recognize the man but that meant nothing. He had spent years in a dreamleaf haze.

Abbadon cleared his throat. "Greetings, Seeker. You are to be my Trial. I, your servant."

The Prior excused himself from the room and closed the door. Abbadon stepped to the table. The seeker's eyes never left his face.

"Abbadon?" the thaumaturge said, as Abbadon sat at the table. "Is it you? I have sought you a long while."

Abbadon's stomach churned.

"You know me but I do not remember you..." He fell back on ritual to hide his nervousness. "Tell me what you seek. I am here to serve."

"You would not remember me. We have never met. You knew my brother. And that was a few winters ago. Do you remember now? In Dineen?"

Abbadon shook his head. The scar on his forearm ached.

The thaumaturge nodded. "You are far gone. As for what I seek, I have found it." He leaned forward. "I know what you are."

Abbadon's skin went gooseflesh. He knew what he was too and the guilt within him, the thing he kept hidden behind the wall of his will, began to pound against the bars of its prison.

The seeker took something out from under his robes and laid it on the table. When Abbadon saw it, the world fell in on him.

From the Second Epistle of Malkiir Zhorne, the fifteenth day of Coram, the Year of Flames:

I already had begun to suspect that much of what I thought I remembered was false. My First Epistle might be a lie. Be warned, reader.

My memory began to fade within days after I exited the sewers. New knowledge filled my mind, fearful knowledge. The process was gradual—unnoticeable at first, but inexorable. I began to know things that I should not have known—how to wield a blade, advanced necromantic arts, the art of torture. I feared I was going mad. The truth was worse.

On the streets of Dineen in the early evening hours of the fifteenth day of Thulsil in the Year of Plagues, I learned all of it.

Someone was following me—a bald thaumaturge in the ochre robes of Kazmarek's order. I knew his face,

but his name was lost to me. He bore his casting effigy on a necklace about his neck.

I ducked into an alley and lay in wait for him. When he entered, I pounced, slamming him against the wall of a building.

"You are following me," I said.

I saw fear in his eyes. He stuttered and I shook him to show my strength.

"Is this about my brother Kazmarek?" I demanded.

The fear in his eyes turned to puzzlement.

"Your... brother? Your brother Kazmarek?" He studied my face. "Do you... remember me? My name is Toorgan."

I did not, and shook my head. But given my failing memory, it was possible that we once had known one another.

He continued to stare at me and I saw realization dawn in his eyes.

"What? What is it?" I asked.

He shook his head and looked me in the eye. "What is your name?"

The question made me pause for some reason. "My name is Malkiir Zhorne. Brother to Kazmarek, once of your Order."

"Malkiir," he said, testing the word. "Well... Malkiir, the Arch Magister of the Order demands you attend him for questioning."

I had heard stories about how the Order "questioned" people. I declined, but he insisted. We scuffled. I was the stronger and threw him to the ground. My bloodlust rose in me, then. I drew my eating knife and advanced on him.

He tried to flee but I grabbed him by the robes and held him down.

"What do you really want of me?" I asked. "Speak."

I put the knife to his throat and that pruned loose the truth.

"You told me of your planned trip to the sewers," he stuttered. "I followed you. I saw the ritual. I know what happened. So does the Order. And the Arch Magister wants what you have."

"What I have?"

I stood and stepped back from him; the knife fell from my hand.

"Yes, what you have," he said. He rose and stepped toward me. "Come with me."

I shook my head. "You lie. I told no one of our trip to the sewers. Kazmarek would have taken my heart had I betrayed his secret."

The thaumaturge held the effigy about his neck up for me to see. I saw then that it was Kazmarek's effigy.

"Your memory is a lie. You are Kazmarek. You summoned the demon."

I heard truth in the words and my world began to spin. I shook my head over and over. "No. My

*Eventually I sought
stimulation not in
sex and narcotics
but in violence.*

brother summoned the demon. I escaped the chamber."

I backed away but the thaumaturge followed, his words a relentless series of hammer blows.

"You are a thaumaturge, Kazmarek. Malkiir is the name of your effigy. This effigy. You did not escape. You fled past me, screaming. The summoning chamber was empty. The demon is gone."

"That is not possible," I said.

He pressed. "You carry it within you. I see him behind your eyes. You invented a past to wall off the truth. Somehow it is also walling off the demon. We can free him."

I backed up, stumbled. He lunged for me. Instinct—or something else—took control of me.

I grabbed him by the robes and spat denials into his face. I threw him to the ground and punched him, bit him, kicked him until he was insensate. Finally I retrieved my knife and cut his throat.

After that, I fled Dineen.

A small effigy of cloth, bone and wood lay on the table. The chip of its single onyx eye stared accusingly up at Abbadon. One of its legs was bent askew. One-eyed and crook-legged. Like Kazmarek.

How did Abbadon know that name?

"Do you remember?" the thaumaturge asked, an eager gleam in his eye. "He is exactly as you... remember him, no? My brother was Toorgan. Do you remember that name?"

From the Third Epistle of Malkiir Zhorne, the first day of Fel, the Year of Flames:

This is the last I will say on this matter. I write it down because my memory continues to fade and I cannot trust that I will remember it tomorrow. I also cannot trust that what I remember is truth.

I was a demoniac. That explained my fading memory and burgeoning knowledge of forbidden things. Strange that I had not realized it sooner. But that is nature of possession. It is subtle.

Eventually I learned the demon's name: Abbadon.

For a reason I still cannot explain, the demon was bound within me. I was its prison, as much as the altar had been. Perhaps, back in the stinking sewers under Dineen, I repented of my course and resisted his attempt to possess me; instead, I possessed him, or we possessed each other. The truth no longer matters.

I struggled to control the demonic proclivities that sometimes arose in me but it became increasingly difficult. I sought help. I had never been a religious man, but I finally found solace when I committed myself to a faith. I hope to find forgetfulness in faith, too. I write these words now to capture my memories as they exist as of this date, for I expect them to fade just as have

all others. I also write these words as cautionary tale to others, or to myself.

Abbadon could not breathe. He did remember; at least snippets. The haze that lingered over much of his past parted, revealing clear images of blood, sex, violence, and death. He saw further back, to the day he had traveled alone into Dineen's sewers to summon Abbadon, the demon that now writhed within him. He was Kazmarek Zhorne, a thaumaturge. He had no brother, only a dark past, a darker soul, and a mind full of memories—some real, some false, some those of a man, some those of a demon.

"I found your letters in the High Library of Dineen," the thaumaturge said. "Your effigy I found among my brother's things, along with his notes. I wondered why you would write those letters and leave them in the High Library if you did not want to be found? You even described my brother's attack on you. Then I realized it: Abbadon wanted to be found. It was he who wrote the letters."

Kazmarek clutched the table as his mind whirled. Abaddon writhed within him, tried to squirm free, to squeeze through the cracks of Kazmarek's will.

"I see him in your eyes," said the thaumaturge. "Let him out." He lurched to his feet. "Let him feed. Here, Kazmarek. This entire monastery. I can bind him to my will. To our will."

Abbadon snaked up Kazmarek's throat, past his tongue.

Kazmarek thought of the Prior, the aspirants, the clerics, the monks. He fought and held the demon in.

"Not here," he said through gritted teeth.

Abbadon railed within him. Kazmarek calmed the demon with a promise. When his soul quieted, he said, "We did want to be found. We can free him but it will take two of us to bind him. We cannot do it here."

Ambition gleamed in the thaumaturge's eyes. "I know a place of privacy."

Men blind for power always show the same failings. We believe that others see the world the way we do, through the lens of our ambition. So when I intimated that I wanted the demon out and bound to our service, the thaumaturge believed me. He could believe nothing else.

I took him unawares in his home and there kept my promise to Abbadon. The demon served me well: I caused the thaumaturge pain until he told me the location of my letters and those of his brother. After retrieving them, I burned both letters and man in a conflagration that left the house in ruins. That evil, too, I will bear.

I still feel Abbadon within me. I still use his name rather than my own; it reminds me of my purpose. I reside still in the monastery, praying, meditating, trying to forget. The monastery is my home, the abode of my guilt. I know I will never form a soulbond with Lathan. The darkness I wall off within me prohibits it. I try to convince myself that there is nobility in what I do but I know that is a lie. I do it because I can do nothing else.

I have come to believe that my real intent in writing the letters was not to warn others but to save myself through confession. It failed of its purpose, of course. Some transgressions cannot be absolved through confession, and some sins can never be expiated. In the end, some men are meant to bear burdens. I hope there is salvation in that.

I believe I burned all my letters but cannot be certain. The uncertainty troubles me and I fear another seeker might someday arrive. I sometimes sense that Abbadon is laughing within me, and his laughter reminds me of the words of one of my letters, words that haunt me still, words that make me wonder who controls whom: Possession is subtle.

Be warned, reader. ☐

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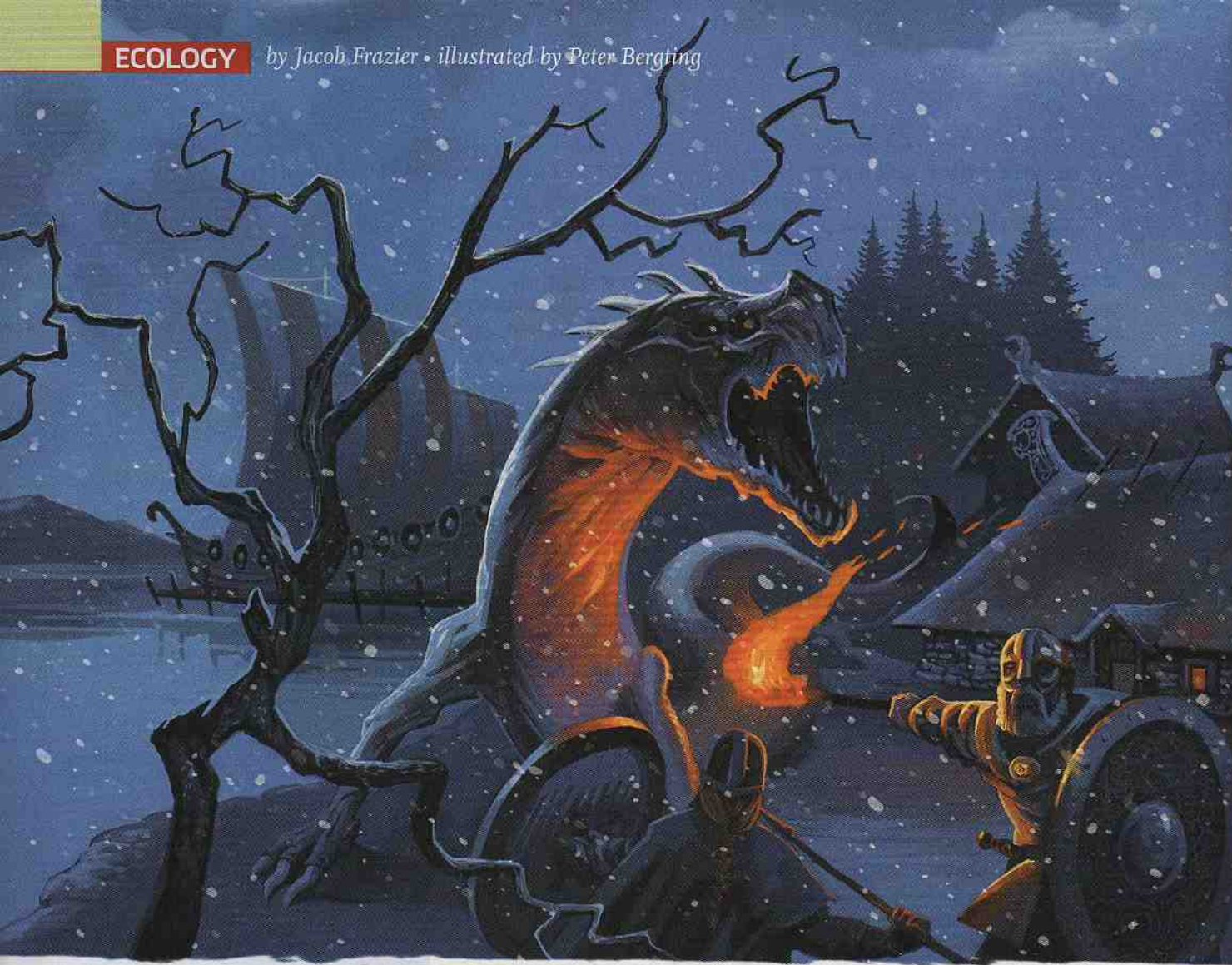
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THE ECOLOGY OF THE Linnorm

"Thor shall put to death the Midgard Serpent, and shall stride away nine paces from that spot; then shall he fall dead to the earth, because of the venom which the Snake has blown at him."

—Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda* (Brodeur translation)

Although many true dragons are storied to be covetous, deadly creatures, there are those who balance the depravity of their evil brethren, wyrms who exemplify the virtues of honor, charity, and self-sacrifice. Yet not all breeds of dragonkind possess such balancing agents. Born of dark legends and apocalyptic myths, linnorms are dragons of

ruin, covetous monstrosities that care nothing for their kin, the world, or the devastation they bring to all things.

HISTORY OF THE LINNORM

Scholars believe linnorms are evolutionary members of the dragon family—lesser serpents evolved from a common ancestor of dragons. The physical anatomy and behavioral characteristics of a linnorm are similar enough to a dragon's that this is widely accepted among the scholarly population. Researchers also claim linnorms are on the precipice of extinction, and the fact that younger linnorm sightings occur infrequently adds weight to the hypothesis.



Some sages tell a different story, though, declaring these theories pure drivel—pretexts manufactured to keep the heritage of these god-defying creatures hidden. These sages assert that linnorms instead originated from the far side of the Corpse Gate in Niflheim, the layer of the Gray Waste of Hades where the goddess Hel courts the dead. There, in the boiling spring of Hvergelmir, the primeval ancestors of linnorms bred among themselves in an orgy of debauchery and incest.

Chief among them was Nidhogg the Dread Biter, the vile corpse-sucker who gnaws one of the roots of Yggdrasil, forcing the great ashen World Tree to know true suffering. Nidhogg is not alone in Hvergelmir—other serpents thrive there and help the great corpse-tearer rot away the roots of the World Tree. There are the serpent brothers Goin and Moin and their father

Grafvitner the Gnawing Wolf. There live Grabak the Gray-Back, Grafvollud the Field Gnawer, Ofnir the Entangler, Svafnir the Sleep-Bringer, and countless others.

How the linnorms broke free of their vile breeding nest and into the realm of mortals remains a point of contention. The popular theory speculates that the World Tree's roots have decayed enough so that a twig has fallen away, allowing the lesser serpents to wriggle through to the Material Plane. A more radical view claims that Odin's cataclysmic imprisonment of Hel's older brother Jormungandr, the immense World Serpent, created a planar rift that allowed the linnorms to extend their uncle's hatred to the Material Plane. Either way, what was thought to be locked away by the deities themselves have found a way to envenom the realms of mortals.

Whether they are draconic stepchildren or godly progenies, linnorms are among the most despicable of all dragonkind. Rumors of their capacity for meting out destruction precede them, and most who encounter these dread wyrms dearly hope the scholars—those who proselytize the coming end of the linnorm race—are right.

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE LINNORM

Although linnorms draw frequent comparisons to dragons, their anatomies are more suggestive of serpents, with elongated bodies that lack wings and rear legs. Linnorms live longer than dragons and never stop growing, reaching ages of 4,000 years, lengths of 70 feet, and masses of 2 tons. Unlike dragons, however, they do not gain new abilities and powers as they age.

Sporting a flexible skeleton containing hundreds of vertebrae, a

KNOWLEDGE OF THE LINNORM

The following table shows the results of a Knowledge (arcana) check as it relates to linnorms. Dwellers of the frigid Northlands, dragon hunters, and worshipers of the Norse pantheon most often possess this information. Linnorms appear on page 140 of the *Monster Manual II*.

Knowledge (arcana)

DC	Result
10 + CR	Many different breeds of linnorms exist and you have enough passing familiarity to identify this one's name and behavior. This result reveals dragon traits and the special qualities of linnorms.
15 + CR	All linnorms are cunning creatures with a variety of magical abilities, the gray and corpse tearer varieties even cast spells as clerics do. Linnorms can speak Abyssal and Draconic, though some know other tongues.
20 + CR	Linnorms are fiercely territorial and tolerate no other intelligent creatures in their domains, including other linnorms. They defend their habitats using their imposing size, powerful physical attacks, and deadly breath weapons (this result reveals information about the linnorm's breath weapons).
25 + CR	Linnorms are cold and calculating, never entering battle before studying their foes and formulating a plan. When they do strike, it is quick and deadly. This result reveals all the linnorm's spell-like abilities.
30 + CR	The oldest linnorms are insane, made so by centuries of solitude and the obsessive gathering of power and wealth. They keep and aggressively defend sizable treasure hoards. This result reveals all the linnorm's unmentioned special attacks.

linnorm grows large trunk muscles that allow for rectilinear locomotion—digging into the ground with the scales of its underbelly and pushing forward with its ribs. Only two front legs facilitate movement as its hind limbs, or anal claws, have been lost to atrophy due to elongation of the body. The forelegs end in sharp, razorlike claws.

A narrow skull with locked jawbones contains roughly three-dozen teeth that curve back toward the throat, making escape difficult once it bites into its prey. Unusually long saliva glands in its upper jaw store an enormous amount of toxins or other compounds, which many linnorms utilize to poison their enemies or create their deadly breath weapons.

A linnorm has a central nervous system and a developed brain. Its internal organs are compact—it is missing its left lung and has the ability to shift its three-chambered heart to one side, allowing it to swallow food within the narrow confinement of its body. During digestion, by-products pass to the cloaca, where the body reabsorbs water and

excretes the rest through an opening at the base of the tail near the internalized reproductive organs.

Cold-blooded, a linnorm can survive for a full year without sustenance by allowing its body temperature to drop. This efficiency has proven serendipitous, as a linnorm often depletes the food supply of its surroundings. In warmer climates, a linnorm pants so that the water in its mouth evaporates, which causes a cooling effect that helps to regulate its overall body temperature.

A linnorm interacts with its environment using superior sensory systems. It lacks external ears but has eardrums below its eyes that allow it to pick up low frequencies and vibrations. It constantly flicks its tongue to gather information about its surroundings, as it has highly developed taste buds that intercept airborne chemicals and a specialized organ in the roof of its mouth that processes this information. A linnorm's head bears small pits that contain heat-sensing cells that convert the infrared spectrum to nerve impulses that transmit to the brain,

allowing the linnorm to detect creatures in even total darkness.

Rough, dry scales serve to retain body moisture and prevent the linnorm's internal organs from drying out due to loss of water. The underlying skin determines these scales' pigment and varies among the many different linnorm breeds, ranging from dull grays to bright oranges. Once a year, a linnorm's eyes gloss over, indicating that it is ready to shed—a new layer of skin growing beneath the old causing the scales' color to become dull. Eventually, the linnorm hooks its lip on a tree or rock and squirms out of its old, dead skin. Many scholars and trophy hunters prize the cast-off skins of linnorms and might pay up to 12,000 gp for an intact find.

Out of the many different breeds of linnorms, the gray linnorm, dread linnorm, and corpse tearer are the three most extensively documented.

Gray Linnorm: Grays are the smallest of the linnorms, reaching lengths of only 20 feet. They use their trunk muscles exclusively for locomotion without the aid of their front legs. At birth, their scales are jet black and fade to dull gray with age. Unique to gray linnorms are a rear poison gland and curved stinger at the tip of their tails that drip with deadly venom.

Sleeker than most of its brethren, a gray linnorm must take care when swallowing its food. To this end, its saliva glands store a black corrosive fluid that it can breathe as a deadly weapon, allowing the gray to begin the digestion process before swallowing to lessen its chances of choking.

Dread Linnorm: Not only are these linnorms unique in that they sport two separate heads, they are also the largest of their kind, reaching lengths of up to 70 feet. Two serpentine necks extend from the main trunk of their bodies, each ending in a massive head adorned with a blotchy, rancid mane that hangs below the jaw. Their scales are pitch-black upon hatching but seem to rot with age, turning a variety of sickly gray and brown shades. A dread linnorm reflexively flushes its

ORIGIN OF THE LINNORM

The lindworm, or lindwurm, has Germanic linguistic roots, meaning "dragon" or "wingless dragon." Norse mythology contains numerous references to these serpents in the *Codex Regius* of the *Poetic Edda*. The Vikings believed lindwürms feasted upon their dead, inherent in their creation myth, *Völuspá*, regarding the corpse tearer Nídhögg. Jörmungand, the linnormlike Midgard Serpent that encircles the world consuming his own tail, is one of the centerpieces of Ragnarök, the end of the world, when he and Thor are fated to kill one another. Another tale gives the account of Fáfnir, the giant who murdered his brother and then turned himself into a great serpent to hoard his stolen gold.

The introduction of lindwürms into *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* came in 1991 with the release of the *Vikings Campaign Sourcebook*. Although rather concise and containing few game mechanics, the linnorm entry set the tone for Jean Rabe's compelling two-part article, "The Vikings' Dragons," that appeared in the pages of *DRAGON* 15 years ago in *DRAGON* #182 and *DRAGON* #183. These articles greatly expanded the linnorm by detailing ten different breeds and were the basis for all material that was to come thereafter.

scales depending on its mood, causing them to darken as its temper sours.

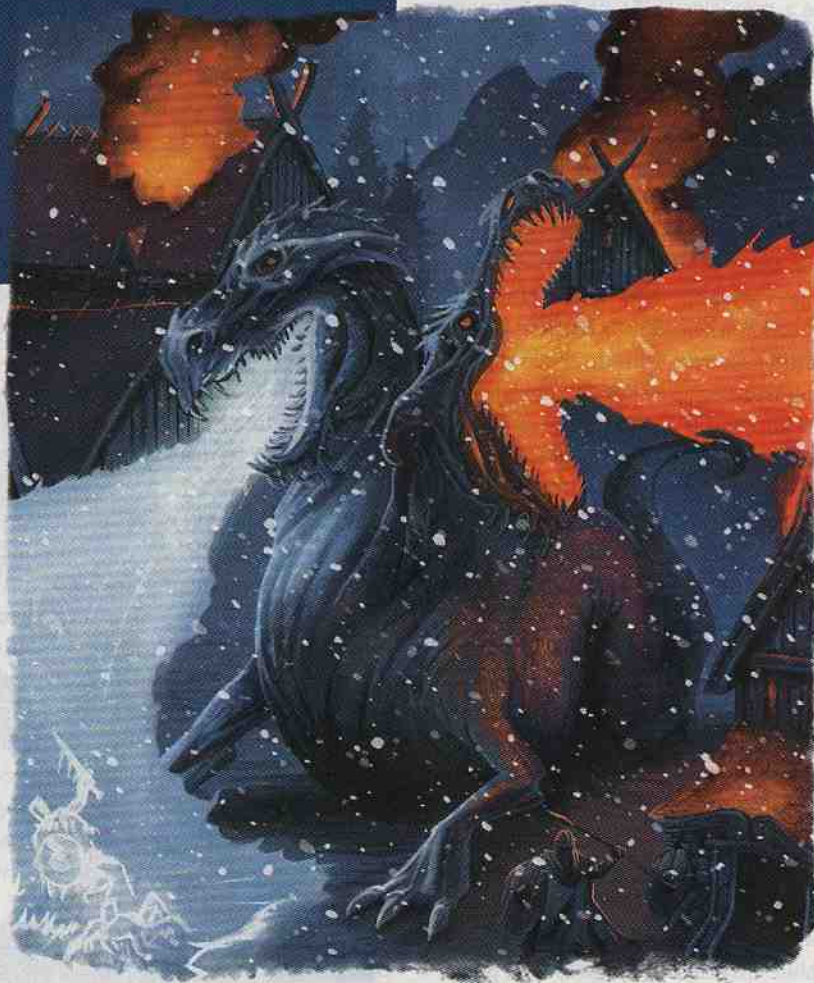
Two volatile compounds are stored in a dread linnorm's saliva glands, which combust with explosive force when they make contact with air. The first compound bursts into flame and the second freezes instantly. Using their enormous lungs, a dread linnorm's two heads can blow forth either compound with sustained force.

Corpse Tearer: Corpse tearers are the most revolting of all linnorms, exuding a stench of death so overwhelming it is impossible to ignore. Having a splotched, brownish hue, corpse tearers sprout patches of hair seemingly at random, giving them the appearance that they were once covered in hair but large clumps of it have since fallen out. Moss and slime hang from their scales, which they use to camouflage themselves, making them resemble enormous dead trees while still. Their claws are broken off at the ends, with nothing remaining but soiled shards that are jagged and deadly.

These horrific serpents can spit two deadly toxins. The first is a magic-infused venom that can paralyze any living creature and the other is an airborne disease called linnorm fever that attacks the central nervous system.

abandonment as a hatchling, centuries of solitary living, selfishly putting its own agenda before all others, and refusing to trust anyone—especially other linnorms. This ultimately takes its toll on the minds of linnorms and once they reach their venerable ages they are quite insane with rampant paranoia.

A linnorm has one sole purpose in life, driven by instinct: to amass wealth and power at all costs. They are



PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY OF THE LINNORM

There is no empathy or compassion in linnorms' spiteful hearts. They care nothing for the life or death of other intelligent races and would not even lift a claw to save their own race if threatened. The attitude of a linnorm boils down to very basic terms: it is the linnorm against the world. This single-mindedness results from

loners, usually refusing to ally with any living thing. When they do, they turn upon their collaborator as soon as they achieve their goals. They make their lairs in deep tunnels and outfit them with elaborate traps so they can stash their hoards away from the world. A linnorm spends long, forlorn centuries coveting and guarding its treasure, calculating its value and memorizing its contents.

Linnorms have no societal structure to speak of and do their best to ensure that their territories do not encroach upon one another—an unusual event in most regions considering these creatures' rarity. The only contact among the species occurs during mating. Once every decade, a female linnorm releases pheromones tuned to the heightened senses of a male, indicating that she is ready to breed. Potentially, the breeding of linnorms is a repulsive sight, as they engage in a "mating ball," entangling each other with their long bodies until observers cannot determine where each begins or ends. More often than not, though, this instinctual call goes unanswered.

Should mating occur, soon after, the female lays her clutch of eggs and cares for them until they hatch, abandoning the young to their fates immediately thereafter. The life of a hatchling is often short and cruel, with the weakest perishing from exposure or the predations of its kin. This is ultimately the cause of the race's scarcity and aggressive behavior.

A linnorm doesn't hesitate to raze the landscape out of spite, and intruding upon linnorm territory is the quickest way to draw its attention. Linnorms study their foes from a distance to plot their attacks, which are often quick and decisive. They exploit their strengths to the utmost advantage, raining destruction down upon their enemies while targeting the strongest foes, moving in close when they deplete their magical and long-range attacks. Even then, linnorms only directly engage in battle when they have a clear and decisive advantage. A wounded linnorm usually retreats, as none are gallant enough to have pride.

Gray Linnorm: Grays are the most spiteful and hostile of all the linnorm breeds, reveling in deception. They make their lairs in elevated locations so they can see any fool who dares approach. Paranoid to an extreme, grays assume any intruder to be after their hoard and attack on sight.

Grays love to kill with their claws and tail stingers, and frequently close with enemies after initial batteries of long-range attacks, preferring improvisation

OTHER LINNORMS

Aside from the commonly described linnorms, at least seven others are storied to exist.

Flame Linnorm: Radiant, fire-breathing beasts, these linnorms lair in deep caverns and dote over massive treasure hoards.

Forest Linnorm: Like gigantic snakes, these linnorms possess no limbs, slithering through the wildness and tricking prey with their ability to mimic noises.

Frost Linnorm: Incredibly territorial, these furred, blue-white linnorms employ strange magics and attempt to freeze any creature that ventures into their domains.

Land Linnorm: Greedy in the extreme, these hill-dwelling linnorms are the most likely to manipulate humanoids into their service.

Midgard Linnorm: The direct offspring of Jormungandr, the Midgard Serpent, this powerful, elusive linnorm—possibly the only of its kind—has incredible control over water and lairs upon the ocean floor.

Rain Linnorm: Arrogant land and swamp-dwelling dragons, these weather-manipulating linnorms exhibit incredible greed, even for members of their covetous race.

Sea Linnorms: Cold and vicious, sea linnorms terrorize the waves of the deep ocean, seeking to keep sentient creatures confined to their tiny continental homes.

to planning. They often take a wounded foe into the deep tunnels of their lairs, where they play a cruel game of "escape the dragon" before finishing off the poor soul.

Exceptions to their species, gray linnorm parents remain together until their hatchlings can fend for themselves, pairing to mate again in another 30 years.

Dread Linnorm: None of the linnorms bear more of an irrational hatred for humanity than dread linnorms. These linnorms make their lairs as far from human settlements as they can, typically in dangerous and barren climates. Nevertheless, history has recorded several incidents of dread linnorms completely annihilating towns or villages and making their lairs in the resulting devastation. Thankfully, these occurrences are few due to the rarity of the breed.

A dread linnorm considers everything around its lair to be under its rule, which usually consists of laying everything to waste so it can plunder the spoils. It spends much of its time afterwards surveying the devastation, scanning for intruders. If someone does encroach upon its domain, or worse, steals some of its treasure, the linnorm stops at nothing to locate the trespassers and exact horrific retribution.

A dread linnorm accumulates wealth solely from instinct and does not feel the stir to catalog its hoard

or put it to use. While other linnorms might alter their combat strategies so that no harm comes to their foes' loot, a dread linnorm thinks nothing of unleashing the full force of its fury. On the other hand, this lack of regard does not extend far—like all linnorms, a dread linnorm spends most of its days defending its hoard.

Corpse Tearer: Thought by some to be direct descendants of Nidhoggr, corpse tearers are the most feared of the linnorms, and rightly so, as few other serpents or dragons are powerful enough to oppose them. Having developed a taste for rotting flesh, these linnorms make their lairs deep beneath ancient burial sites and battlefields, leaving the surface to the desecrations of other linnorms. Defending their underground lair are countless undead minions, stirred from their eternal sleep by corpse tearers' excavations or the remains of fallen adventurers brave or foolish enough to have once challenged the linnorms.

Always striving to increase their wealth, corpse tearers send their minions out to raid graveyards and human settlements, the undead invaders returning with ever-increasing numbers and more treasure. All manner of undead form the morbid society of a corpse tearer's abode—skeletons, wraiths, wights, banshees, vampires, and even the animated corpses of dragons and other linnorms.

SEA LINNORM

A massive snake, finned and frilled in all the colors of the angry sea, splits the waves in a spray of stinging salt water. From above a mouth full of sharklike fangs, a pair of pupilless, ruby eyes narrow menacingly.

SEA LINNORM

CR 21

Always LE Gargantuan dragon (aquatic)

Init +0; Senses blindsight 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +23, Spot +23

Languages Aquan, Draconic, Infernal

AC 42, touch 6, flat-footed 42

(+36 natural, -4 size)

hp 403 (26 HD); DR 30/magic

Immune all enchantment spells, paralysis, sleep

SR 36

Fort +24, Ref +15, Will +20

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 80 ft.

Melee bite +36 each (4d6+14) and 2 slams +34 (2d8+7) and tail slam +34 (2d8+21)

Space 20 ft.; Reach 20 ft.

Base Atk +26; Grp +52

Atk Options Awesome Blow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Snatch; breath weapon, capsize, tail sweep (2d6+21)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th):

At will—fog cloud, water breathing

3/day—control water, gust

of wind (DC 17), reverse

gravity, solid fog

1/day—shapechange

Abilities Str 38, Dex 10,

Con 29, Int 14, Wis

20, Cha 21

Feats Alertness,

Awesome Blow,

Cleave, Great Cleave,

Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder,

Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch

Skills Appraise +11, Bluff +23,

Diplomacy +27, Gather

Information +23, Hide +6*,

Intimidate +25, Knowledge

(arcana) +18, Knowledge

(geography) +20, Listen +23,

Sense Motive +21, Spellcraft

+22, Spot +23, Swim +51

Advancement 27–40 HD

(Gargantuan); 40–53 HD

(Colossal)

Keen Senses (Ex) A sea linnorm sees

four times as well as a human in low light conditions and twice as well in normal light.

Breath Weapon (Su) 60-foot cone of

caustic acid droplets, once every 1d4 rounds; damage 24d6 acid, Reflex DC 32 half; only effective above water.

The save DC is Constitution-based.

Capsize (Ex) A submerged sea

linnorm that surfaces under a boat or ship less than 30 feet long capsizes the vessel 95% of the time. It has a 50% chance to capsize a vessel from 30 to 70 feet

long and a 20% chance to capsize one more than 70 feet long.

Tail Sweep (Ex) This special attack allows a sea linnorm to sweep with its tail as a standard action. The sweep affects a half-circle with a radius of 30 feet, extending from an intersection on the edge of the linnorm's space in any direction. Creatures within the swept area are affected if they are four or more size categories smaller than the linnorm (Small size or smaller for a sea linnorm). A tail sweep automatically deals the indicated damage plus 1-1/2 times the linnorm's Strength bonus (round down). Affected creatures can attempt DC 32

Reflex saves to take half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills A sea linnorm has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

*Sea linnorms have a +8 racial bonus on Hide checks when submerged.



Maritime tales speak of mighty sea serpents that are large enough to capsize galleys. These seafaring linnorms are exceedingly vindictive and seek retribution for the harm done to the ocean's marine life. The sea linnorm traverses both land and sea with ease, terrorizing shipping lanes and fishing villages. Accounts told from shell-shocked survivors tell of a whirlwind fury of dreadful fogs, crushing fins, and a haze of acid lingering behind the barely glimpsed form of a terrible serpent slithering back out to sea.

Sea linnorms speak Aquan, Draconic, and Infernal, although some have been known to learn Common. 



Into the Abyss

By Robert J. Schwalb • illustrated by Ben Wootten

As the Savage Tide sweeps into the Abyss, this article series presents you, the player, with the tips, tricks, and tools you need to avoid drowning in its treacherous waters. While the pages of *DUNGEON* present the DM with every cunning plot twist and vile monster needed to run the Savage Tide Adventure Path, *DRAGON* offers details and options to better resist its deadly undertow. This month's installment gives you information on Demogorgon, tips for picking up replacement characters should the unthinkable happen,

ADVENTURE TIE

This installment of *Savage Tidings* links to "Into the Maw," the ninth episode of the *Savage Tide* Adventure Path, presented in *DUNGEON* #147.

updates on affiliations describing their interests in the planes, and a planar marketplace to acquire useful goods for your perilous adventure into the Maw.

What Do You Know: Demogorgon

Of all the demon princes said to rule in the Infinite Layers of the Abyss, none are as feared or as reviled as the Prince of Demons himself, the Sibilant Beast, the dreadful Demogorgon. Like his rivals, Demogorgon's

Savage Tidings



history is checkered with violence and madness, aborted attempts at conquest, and despicable acts of such wanton cruelty that mortals speak his names only in whispers lest they attract his wretched gaze. Although he claims the title Prince of Demons, he does not sit easy on his self-declared throne and ever watches for the conspiracies of his sworn enemies—Graz'zt and Orcus. But more importantly, he must be vigilant against those intrigues he perpetrates against himself.

The layer of the Abyss Demogorgon dominates reflects his confusing and belligerent nature. The 88th layer of the Abyss is as divided as Demogorgon is himself. Nearly half of the sprawling layer consists of turbid seas, clotted with filth and oil fed to it by the great Abyssian Ocean. Piercing the foul waters are numerous islands, nearly always in pairs, looming over the crashing waves as if they were long necks craning to examine all that passes beneath them. These are not havens: They are foul pillars of wickedness, home to flocks of cruel demons, exiled demon lords, and plotting fiends, watchful for the chance to increase their esteem in the eyes of their master.

In stark contrast to the vast seas, the rest of the layer consists of a dark continent, blanketed by dense jungle and pierced by the occasional craggy mountain. There, filthy humanoids gather in tribes to worship Demogorgon, prostrating themselves to the east where the master of the Maw is believed to reside. This is a place of near constant war, with tribes setting upon one another, intent on butchering their foes and committing unspeakable rites upon the corpses of those they slay.

Replacement PCs

A descent into the Infinite Layers of the Abyss is dangerous for even

the hardest of adventurers, and those who fall prey to the countless tricks, traps, and terrifying abominations that call this plane home can face madness, maiming, or—most likely—death. There are not many places in the Abyss where worthy heroes linger; those planar travelers who brave the dangers of this plane often have nefarious objectives and care little for the plight of the Material Plane. Still, there are a few opportunities for new adventurers to join the group and replace those who have fallen along the way.

Planar Inhabitants: The Abyss is obviously home to the tanar'ri, a race of evil outsiders bent on utter destruction and spreading suffering and death wherever they go. Few demons would be suitable long-term allies, but with your DM's permission, you might play a fiend servicing one of Demogorgon's many rivals. Both Graz'zt and Orcus despise the Prince of Demons, and they might be willing to dispatch a servant to aid the player characters in thwarting his plans. Tieflings, half-fiends, succubi, and dretch could all provide interesting additions to a desperate or morally ambiguous party.

Planar Travelers: The mercane attract powerful individuals, and to deal with these masterful merchants,

good or neutral travelers might descend to some of the darkest corners of the planes. Characters of nearly any class and race might be encountered at these trader's traveling planar marketplaces, overhear the PCs discussing their mission, and volunteer their services as guides, cohorts, or perhaps allies.

Planar Prisoners: There's always the possibility of freeing a prisoner held by demons. It might be true that demons are more likely to kill their captives than keep them in shackles, but powerful prisoners could have useful information or might be used as currency in filthy bargains. Such prisoners might find a way to escape, swimming up from the depths of a myrmixus's bone palace or escaping from some other prison in a desperate attempt to find a way out of the Abyss. These characters gladly pair up with the PCs if it means escape from this horrifying plane.

Planar Marketplace

Once you descend into the Infinite Layers of the Abyss, there are few opportunities to re-equip spent provisions or acquire new or improved equipment. Those watchful for signs of commerce though, might just find useful tools to help in surviving the perils of this plane.

The following magic items are just some of the wares you might encounter on your journey.

Agony Sais

Price (Item Level): 20,642 gp (15th)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 10th

Aura: moderate; (DC 20) necromancy

Activation: —

Weight: 2 lb. (for the pair)

Both sais are identical, being crafted so the center blade resembles a serpent. Green leather covers the handle and the tines are fashioned to look like recoiling vipers, fangs bared.

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Agony sais are always sold in pairs. Each one functions as a +2 *silver sai*. Whenever the wielder strikes a living creature with both sais in the same round, she can leave one or both weapons buried in her opponent's flesh, wracking the target with terrible pain. Such targets take 1d6 points of damage per sai each round and function as if under the effect of the *slow* spell. Removing a sai is a standard action and both must be removed to end the *slow* effect.

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *slow*, *wracking touch*.

Cost to Create: 10,000 gp (642 gp for two masterwork alchemically silvered sais), 800 XP.

Arrow of Glory

Price (Item Level): 500 gp (4th)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 12th

Aura: strong; (DC 21) conjuration and evocation

Activation: —

Weight: —

This unusual arrow has a white shaft and fletching and is inscribed all along its length with tiny lettering, prayers to the good gods to guide the arrow to its mark.

An *arrow of glory* is a +3 *evil outsider bane* arrow. Whenever it strikes a creature, it explodes in bright white light, dazzling all creatures within 20 feet for 1d6 rounds unless they succeed on a DC 20 Fortitude save. In addition to the normal bane effects, should these arrows strike an *evil outsider*, the target must succeed on a DC 20 Fortitude save or be prevented from running or charging for 1d6 rounds.

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *radiance*, *summon monster I*, creator must be good.

Cost to Create: 246 gp, 5 sp (plus 7 gp for masterwork arrow), 20 XP.

Beastfriend Collar

Price (Item Level): 17,500 gp (14th)

Body Slot: throat

Caster Level: 14th

Aura: strong; (DC 22) conjuration and transmutation

Activation: 1 immediate action

Weight: 1 lb.

This wide brown leather choker features crude images of an eagle, wolf, cat, and toad.

Upon placing the *beastfriend collar* around your neck, the item grants a +4 competence bonus on Handle Animal and wild empathy checks.

If you have an animal companion or familiar, the range of your share spells ability extends to 5 feet per two character levels.

Also, as an immediate action, you can exchange places with your animal companion or familiar so long as the creature is within range of your share spell ability. You must wait 5 rounds between each use of this ability.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *benign transposition*, animal companion or summon familiar ability.

Cost to Create: 8,750 gp, 700 XP.

Brilliant Jewel

Price (Item Level): 24,500 gp (15th)

Body Slot: —

Caster Level: 16th

Aura: strong; (DC 23) universal

Activation: see text

Weight: 1 lb.

This diamond changes color before your eyes, drifting from red to green to blue and back to red.

A character wielding a *brilliant jewel* gains a +1 luck bonus on all saving throws.

The *brilliant jewel* can store magical energy to augment spells and spell-like abilities cast within the radius of its light. You may cast any spell or spell-like ability into the jewel, causing it to flare with rainbow colors. It illuminates out to a 30-foot radius with bright light and 30 feet further with shadowy light. The *brilliant jewel* remains illuminated for a number of rounds equal to the spell or spell-like ability cast within it. Once activated, all spells and spell-like abilities you cast of a school corresponding to the spell cast into the *brilliant jewel* are cast at +2 caster levels.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *Heighten Spell*, *limited wish*.

Cost to Create: 9,750 gp (plus 5,000 gp for diamond), 1,080 XP.

Demonfoe

Price (Item Level): 21,335 gp (15th)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 12th

Aura: strong; (DC 21) conjuration and transmutation

Activation: —

Weight: 6 lb.

This bastard sword sits in a black leather sheath. When drawn, it sheds a soft green light from the green steel of the blade. Matching black leather winds around the handle and the pommel resembles a beautiful angelic face.

This weapon is a +2 *evil outsider bane* bastard sword.

As a swift action, you may suppress the *evil outsider bane* ability to gain damage reduction 5/— for 1 round. You can only use this ability three times per day.

When used against an *evil outsider*, you may make a single attack as a full-round action. If the attack hits and deals at least 1 point of damage, you may immediately make a second attack using the same attack modifier

Savage Tidings

as the first. Further successful strikes do not grant additional attacks.

When drawn, *demonfoe* sheds light as the light spell.

Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *haste*, *light*, *summon monster I*.

Cost to Create: 10,500 gp (plus 335 for masterwork bastard sword), 840 XP.

Demonhair Shirt

Price (Item Level): 26,000 gp (16th)

Body Slot: Torso

Caster Level: 13th

Aura: strong; (DC 21) conjuration and enchantment

Activation: —

Weight: 3 lb.

This filthy black garment is woven from coarse black hair. The knots and flecks of unspeakable grime make wearing, let alone, handling the shirt unpleasant.

When wearing a *demonhair shirt* you gain immunity to fear.

If you have the *rage* class feature (or a similar ability), you may spend two of your daily uses of *rage* at once to become overcome with demonic fury, gaining a +6 profane bonus to Strength, +2 profane bonus to Armor Class, and a +10 profane bonus to speed. While under the effects of demonic fury, your natural weapons and weapons you wield count as chaotic for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. In exchange for these benefits, you take 2 points of non-lethal damage each round. Once activated, the demonic fury lasts for a number of rounds equal to your improved Constitution bonus (minimum 1 round). This benefit stacks with *rage* (and *frenzy*). At the end of this time, you become fatigued for 1 hour.

Good characters take no penalty for wearing this shirt unless they abide by a code of conduct. Wearing this item violates codes of conduct for both good and lawful characters.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *rage*, *summon monster IV*, *caster* must have 16 ranks in Craft (weaving), *caster* must not be good.

Cost to Create: 13,000 gp, 1,040 XP.

Figurine of the Ivory Champion

Price (Item Level): 20,000 gp (15th)

Body Slot: —

Caster Level: 13th

Aura: strong; (DC 21) transmutation

Activation: 1 standard action

Weight: —

The figurine is a miniature statuette of an armored knight adorned with symbols of good deities. It stands two inches tall.

When the figurine is tossed to the ground and the command word spoken, it expands in size, taking the form of a Large knight carved from ivory. The construct obeys and serves you.

If the figurine is broken or destroyed in statuette form, it is forever ruined. If slain in construct form, it instantly reverts to a statuette and cannot be used again for 1 week.

The figurine may be used once per day for up to 1 hour at a time.

Prerequisites: Craft Construct, Craft Wondrous Item, *animate objects*.

Cost to Create: 10,000 gp, 800 XP.

IVORY CHAMPION

CR 13

N Large construct

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +0, **Spot** +0

Languages understands owner's commands

AC 28, touch 10, flat-footed 27 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +18 natural)

hp 130 (20 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 15/adamantine

Immune construct traits

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)



Melee +1 *holy greatsword* +22/+17/+12 (3d6+10/19–20 plus 2d6 against evil)

Melee 2 slams +21 (1d6+7)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +26

Atk Options aligned strike (good), magic strike

Abilities Str 25, Dex 12, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

SQ item bound

Feats Improved Toughness^B

Skills Jump +11

Aligned Strike (Su) The natural weapon attacks of an ivory champion count as being good for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

Magic Strike (Su) The natural weapon attacks of an ivory champion count as being magic for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

Shadowstealer's Cloak

Price (Item Level): 18,000 gp (14th)

Body Slot: shoulders

Caster Level: 11th

Aura: moderate; (DC 20) illusion

Activation: — (see text)

Weight: 2 lb.

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This long black cloak absorbs any light that falls upon it.

A shadowstealer's cloak grants a +10 competence bonus on your Hide checks. Creatures with the see in darkness ability gain no special benefit to perceive you, allowing you to make Hide checks normally.

If you are using a magic item that increases your Dexterity score (such as *gloves of dexterity*), you may spend an immediate action to gain concealment (20% miss chance) for 1 round. You must wait 5 rounds between each use of this ability.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *blur*.

Cost to Create: 9,000 gp, 720 XP.

Might Stone

Price (Item Level): 28,800 gp (16th)

Body Slot: —

Caster Level: 15th

Aura: strong; (DC 22) transmutation

Activation: 1 swift action (see text)

Weight: 1 lb.

This smooth gray stone features a round black depression on its surface.

You gain a +2 luck bonus on saving throws against spells and spell-like effects.

A spontaneous caster (bard, sorcerer, favored soul, and so on), a character who uses invocations (dragonfire adept or warlock), or a psionic character can invest a known spell, invocation, or power into the *might stone*, temporarily removing it from his knowledge for 1 day. For a number of times per day equal to the spell level invested, you may, as a swift action, activate the *might stone*, gaining any one of the following features.

- Increase the save DC of a spell or power of the same school or discipline by +2.
- Add an extra 1d6 points of damage (of the same type) to an eldritch blast or breath weapon.

- Gain a +2 bonus on checks made to overcome the spell or power resistance of a target creature.

Imbuing the spell takes 1 minute of concentration. You may imbue just one spell into the *might stone* per day.

Prerequisites: Craft Universal Item, Craft Wondrous Item, *bestow power*, *spell matrix*.

Cost to Create: 14,400 gp, 1,152 XP.

Starry Score

Price (Item Level): 17,000 gp (14th)

Body Slot: — (held)

Caster Level: 17th

Aura: strong; (DC 23) enchantment

Activation: 1 full round action

Weight: —

This scroll is made from soft white vellum. When unrolled, it reveals dense silver writing in an unknown language.

The *starry score* is a portion of a great opera performed by the eladrin to please their mistress, the Queen of Stars. A good-aligned bard who spends a use of bardic music can discern the words and notes recorded and perform them as a full-round action by making a Perform check. All evil outsiders who can clearly hear the bard perform and are within 30 feet must succeed on Will saves (DC equals the bard's perform check result) or be physically pained, taking a –5 penalty on attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and checks. Conversely, all good outsiders gain a +5 sacred bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and checks. Both effects last for as long as you continue to perform and for 3 rounds thereafter.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *crushing despair*, *good hope*, caster must have 16 ranks of Perform (sing), *caster must be good*.

Cost to Create: 8,500 gp, 680 XP.

Affiliation Updates

The affiliations the PCs might have joined in Sasserine and elsewhere during the campaign continue to

have to have a role in the events of the *Savage Tide*. The following entries cover those affiliations described in *DRAGON* #348, offering ways for your characters to stay connected.

Church of Whirling Fury: Lady Silvermane is interested in any expedition into the Abyss, for those who brave the dangers stand to learn much of the demonic plot against the Material Plane. She suspects there are eladrin held somewhere in the Gaping Maw, and freeing those prisoners could reveal much of the Sibillant Beast's plans. Furthermore, she requests you to watch for any clues and retrieve any information you can about the demon prince and what he intends for the Material Plane.

Releasing any celestial prisoners to the Material Plane earns you a +1 affiliation score bonus with the Church of Whirling Fury. Learning about Demogorgon's plot and reporting it to Lady Silvermane grants you a +2 affiliation score bonus with this affiliation.

Dawn Council: Word of Lavinia Vanderboren's exploits against the Crimson Fleet has made her an attractive candidate to join the Dawn Council. While some members are reluctant to share their powers with one such as she—Vanthus has done much to sully the Vanderboren name—most believe that her presence on the council would inspire the people of Sasserine and help the city claim its rightful place as the pre-eminent port of call for all sorts of exotic goods.

Returning Lavinia to Sasserine grants you a +2 affiliation score bonus with this affiliation.

Emerald Crest: An expedition into the Abyss should prove to be exciting, giving you many opportunities to accumulate new tales of your exploits. You enter uncharted waters, so keeping a keen eye on the sights you see and places you explore could improve your standing upon returning home. Of course, there's also the matter of

Savage Tidings

this *wakeportal*—undoubtedly, your employers would be pleased to inspect such a device.

Upon returning to the Material Plane, regaling the Emerald Crest with tales of your adventures grants you a +1 affiliation score bonus with this affiliation. Any charts of the Gaping Maw you provide increase this bonus to +2. Finally, if you give the *wakeportal* to your affiliation, you gain an additional +2 bonus.

Olman Tribes: The people of the Isle of Dread care little for the Abyss, save for the taint that infects their home. Members of the Olman Tribes should be on the lookout for ways to remove this influence.

The Scarlet Brotherhood: A masked father approaches you while in Scuttlecove, having learned of your intent to venture into the Abyss. The father has heard of the prison of Gaping Maw and he would be very grateful if you brought back as much

information as possible about its construction and defenses, both mundane and magical.

Giving the information to this mysterious father in Scuttlecove grants you a +1 affiliation score bonus with this affiliation.

The Seekers: Descending into the Abyss nearly guarantees coming across something of interest to the Seekers. You should do your best to collect such objects to donate to your affiliation when you return.

Any unique or unusual magic items brought from the Abyss and donated to the Seekers upon your return grants you an additional +1 affiliation score bonus with the Seekers above the normal +1 for each 5,000 gp donated. You can earn no more than an additional +3 bonus to your affiliation score in this way.

Witchwardens: A high priest of Wee Jas from the distant and recently beleaguered city of Cauldron sends

you a disturbing message via a *dream* spell. The high priest suspects that there is celestial activity in the Gaping Maw and requests a full report upon your return. You need not see him in person; you can report to any Black Dagger in your organization.

Finding and reporting evidence on the celestial activity in the Gaping Maw grants you a +1 affiliation score bonus with the Witchwardens.

Zelkarune's Horns: The Abyss is home to countless horrors, all of which are in need of killing. Such an adventure promises you the chance to prove your mettle in combat and gain glory for your deeds.

Killing a creature of CR 14 or higher in single combat and returning to the Material Plane with its head grants you a +1 affiliation score bonus with Zelkarune's Horns. This bonus increases to +2 if the creature is a well-known, unique individual. ☐

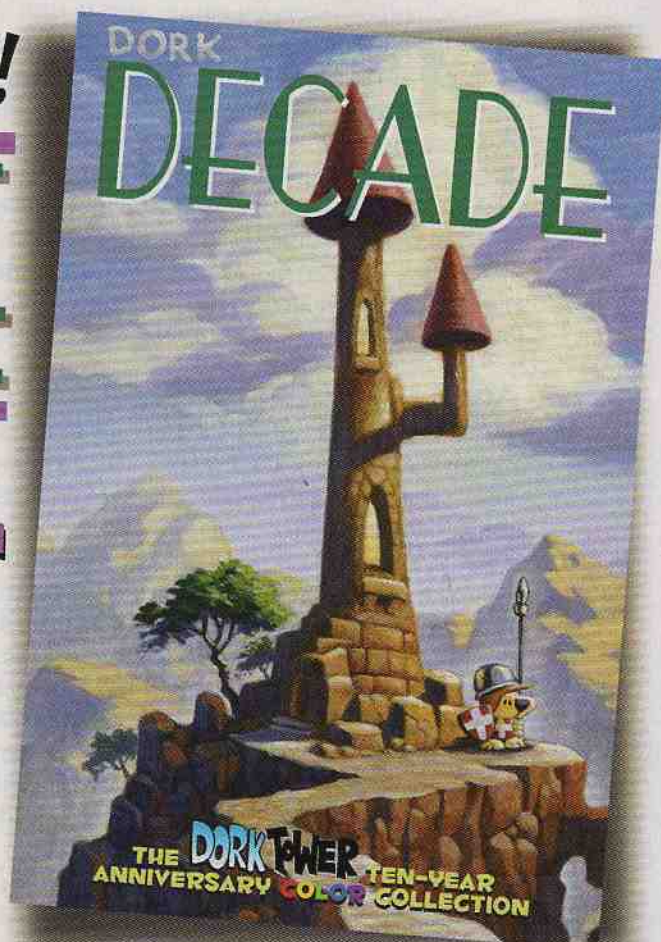
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Volo's Guide

Wyrms of the west, east, and south

Well met once more, gentle readers!

Yes, 'tis Volothamp Geddarm, the peerless and fearless wayfarer across all the Realms, refined diner and gallant escort to many ladies fair, known to all Faerûn that matters as "Volo," at thy service.

Accept no other as the foremost guide to details, little secrets, and perilous mysteries of life in the Realms.

Wherefore, 'tis high time to speak of dragons, those creatures were mention of which never fails to set tavern patrons, those gathered at firesides, and goodwives gossiping over fences to excited chatter—or rapt (not to say awed) listening.

We can none of us get enough of dragons.

They blaze in our dreams like great bright fires, they set grim veteran knights to pale-faced quaking, they inspire bards and lesser minstrels to ring piffle about maidens mating with dragons, kings being turned into dragons, and castles being built on the backs of sleeping dragons; name me a realm, and I'll tell you a dozen tales tied with it, even if I have to do what most folk do: make up half or more of them on the spot.

 Volo

FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Brian Cortijo, with special introduction by Ed Greenwood
illustrated by James Zhang

Much has been said in the past of the Wyrms of the North, those two dozen or so dragons made famous by the scribblings of Volothamp Geddarm—so much so that one might think that all dragons of import make their lairs and focus their interest in the Sword Coast and Western Heartlands (see *Dragon Annual* #3 or the collected and updated "Wyrms of the North" articles on wizards.com). Not to be forgotten, though, are the dragons who lair at the other extremes of the compass rose.

ACUAKVACAESIN, A WYRM OF THE WEST

Hidden on the isle of Gwyennath, in the Moonshaes, a rather peculiar being lives among the trees on the southeastern shore of the Myrloch. Walking among the creatures of the Myrloch Vale, a wood elf known as Caesin is, of all things, a peculiar green dragon named Acuakvacaesin (LN mature adult green dragon sorcerer 8), drawn to the Moonshae Isles by the peace the lake and its environs promise.

Acuakvacaesin came to the Moonshaes in search of a quiet, forested area where he could safely abandon the natural depredations of his race and enjoy the beauty of the natural world. After a number of near-fatal encounters with both the Ffolk and Northmen of the Isles, he

witnessed several parties of elves observing him from afar—but not venturing to challenge his presence directly. Following the fifth such spying, the dragon decided to turn the tables and spy on the elves himself.

Using magic to adopt the form of a young wood elf, he called himself Caesin—the Draconic word for "forest"—and approached the band that had been spying on him. Acuakvacaesin learned that the Llewyr (as the elves called themselves) were observing the strange green dragon with great interest; although challenged by humans on several occasions, he had neither demanded tribute from nor slain any of the foolhardy lesser creatures. This led the elves to believe that, despite his evil nature, the dragon was at the very least disinterested in the sentient inhabitants of the Moonshaes.

After several seasons of discussion with the elves, Caesin learned more of their homeland and the band's leader, Numira. The elves hailed from just to the southeast, in the hidden kingdom of Synnoria. Numira revealed to Caesin that she had long since seen through his disguise but had concealed this from both him and the other elves, to prevent conflict and to safeguard him against attack from the secretive Llewyr. Since that time, Caesin has been permitted to walk freely among the trees and homes of Synnoria, provided that he brings no other visitors with him.

Caesin makes his lair in a well-hidden cave within sight of the shore of the Myrloch. Keeping only a small mound of copper and silver coins as his hoard, he arranges his home more like a humanoid's than a dragon's. Using the coins as a sort of bed, he prefers to slumber in elven form, or in the form of one of the many woodland animals he often masquerades as while spying on human intruders in the vale.

Despite his relative poverty compared to other dragons, Acuakvacaesin possesses a number of magic items. In addition to a *cloak* and *boots of elvenkind*, he also carries a +3 *holy dragonbane longsword*, which he keeps both as a guard against others of his kind, and as a safeguard should he ever fall back into the evil of his race. Numira and a few other Llewyr have been fully informed of the powers of the sword, in case they ever need use of it.

Acuakvacaesin pays homage to neither Bahamut nor Tiamat, choosing instead to venerate the Earthmother aspect of Chauntea, both out of respect for the land he inhabits (and her undisputed mastery of it), and in the hope that, in time, she might grant his heart's wish of a more permanent transformation to elvenkind. For years, he has harbored a secret love of Numira, but refuses to introduce any draconic blood—to say nothing of the abomination of adding an evil dragon's blood—into the waning elven population of the Llewyr.

In his various guises as a dragon, an elf, or as one of many fey and animal forms, Acuakvacaesin patrols the forests and foothills of the Myrloch Vale looking for hidden evils and nosey adventurers searching for a way into Synnoria. While he warns off seemingly weaker humanoids, any sign of drow, orcs, or evil dragons sends him into an almost blind rage, causing him to reveal his true form and unleash his spells, snatching up the offending parties and dropping them into the lake (this has happened twice). When fighting to subdue rather than to slay, Acuakvacaesin avoids lethal attacks as long as possible, preferring spells that tire opponents or deal ability damage, like *ray of enfeeblement* and *waves of fatigue*. If faced with more persistent foes he does not wish to kill, he uses *enervation* to cripple them without risking their lives.

RHYAEXTHADARSH, A WYRM OF THE EAST

In the northern reaches of the Sunrise Mountains, a few miles south of where the foothills rise up into frosted peaks, lairs the scarred dragon Rhyaexthadarsh (CE ancient white dragon). Smarter and more foresighted than most of her breed, Rhyaexthadarsh spends much of



her time rearranging her horde and preying on passing caravans and choice deliveries of foolhardy adventurers.

Rhyaexthadarsh's enhanced intelligence comes from a *headband of intellect +6* she recovered from a wizard some six centuries ago. Slipping it onto one of her talons as a sort of ring, the dragon slowly realized that her thoughts had more depth and consideration behind them and that—while still motivated by draconic instincts like hunger and greed—she was no longer dominated by baser motivations. She could plan now, and plot, and observe the creatures around her to better influence her domain.

Beginning with the mountain peaks, Rhyaexthadarsh eliminated two young silver dragons who laired nearby. A decade later, she claimed dominion over a small clan of frost giants that had taken up residence in the southern Sunrise Mountains. When they rebelled against her, the dragon slew the entire clan and began looking for lesser creatures to carry out her will: remorhaz, winter wolves, and eventually a frost worm deeper in the mountains.

Bored with the domination of lesser creatures, Rhyaexthadarsh began to ignore her "subjects," focusing her attention on the caravans that crept past the northern end of the Sunrise Mountains every spring and summer. Picking off a few, she discovered that these traveling merchants carried trinkets and goods that she could add to her hoard. The vast collection of silks, exotic coffers, and books of various languages is testament to her love of the materials the caravans carried; most of the larger mounds of coin in Rhyaexthadarsh's lair are capped with silk or fine textiles of some sort.

At first, Rhyaexthadarsh killed the members of these caravans fairly indiscriminately, eating their mounts and pack animals, torturing (and then eating) the humanoids, and claiming all the wealth and goods the wagons carried. In time, the travel slowed, then eventually stopped, as merchants determined that the time saved by cutting across the foothills was not worth the danger of a rampaging dragon. Realizing this, Rhyaexthadarsh stopped her killings for nearly a century, waiting for trade to begin again.

Once the caravans resumed, the dragon began attacking again, but took a more reasoned, careful approach to her killings. In more recent years, Rhyaexthadarsh has established the following pattern: eastbound caravans she attacks swiftly, freezing the humanoids and picking off most of the horses for her own food. After directing a pack of winter wolves to attack the remaining creatures, she returns to the site and picks through one or two wagons for choice goods. The remainder she leaves as a warning to other travelers: not that there are dragons present, but that wolf packs roam the foothills, requiring extra horses and defenders (extra food for dragons, that is).

For westbound caravans, Rhyaexthadarsh's pattern changes. She kills or drives off any living thing—slaying whatever intelligent creatures she finds, but leaving horses and other unintelligent beasts for her wolves—and claims all nonliving material for her hoard.

Rhyaexthadarsh responds to powerful opposition or unexpected resistance with evasion tactics and careful observation until she can determine the best means to eliminate the threat. Outside her caverns, Rhyaexthadarsh is often accompanied by a small pack (1d4+2) of winter wolves, and she unleashes her breath weapon and spells to confuse her prey and inhibit action, such as *slow* and *solid fog*. When encountered in her lair, she often protects herself with *resist energy* (fire), employs her breath weapon, then unleashes attacks with a *helm of brilliance* she has hidden in the roof of her ice cave.

SVERNIGNARNGIX, A WYRM OF THE SOUTH

An exceptionally gregarious brass dragon, even compared to others of his kind, Svernignarngix (NG old brass dragon) makes his home in the salt flats of the Calim Desert. Always hungry for news about the human settlements of Calimshan, and often disappointed at what he hears, he spends much of his time seeking ways to influence the future of the country he calls his

home without resorting to violence or direct confrontation with the syl-pasha and his agents.

Svernignarngix's need for attention and conversation is nearly constant, and he goes to great lengths to find excuses for discussion and haggling when dealing with the rare adventurer or trader who comes across his path. The notoriously close-lipped nomads of the desert find his hospitality and good-natured story-seeking somewhat charming—if a bit childish—and indulge him insofar as time allows.

In the Year of the Misguided Archer (1080 DR), Svernignarngix's patience with the Calishite practice of slavery and the coin-driven nature of its civilization reached an end. At first, he resorted to attacks on slaving caravans and traveling traders along the Trade Way. While the attacks sated a certain draconic bloodlust and relieved his frustration for a short time, Svernignarngix soon realized that there were surer ways to influence societies, and that his random attacks amounted to little more than wholesale slaughter and abandonment of onetime friends.

To that end, the dragon began observing human relationships to determine the means of their success and development. Despite the Calishites' utter lack of compassion, charity, and common sacrifice, he concluded that family—specifically, the use of offspring to achieve results and leave a lasting legacy—was the greatest means to affect lasting change.



OASIS OF BRASS

This small, moving camp of tents is home to the youngest and oldest of Svernvignarngix's clan, as well as a stopping-point for many of his most powerful offspring, who come to seek guidance, direction, or magical aid. While the dragon does not receive all visitors personally, he does provide what assistance he can to those who seem good-hearted, if they are willing to work toward a better Calimshan.

The camp itself is ruled over by Joth (NG female half-brass dragon janni cleric 8 of Tyr), a tall, copper-skinned woman of exceeding beauty, kind manners, and impeccable dress. Outside her own tent, Joth wears long, flowing robes that conceal all but her hands and face. Inside her tent, she removes her head covering but retains the long-sleeved protective outer robe she normally wears. Viewers are normally struck by her long, dexterous fingers and the slitted, brass-hued eyes they encounter on first meeting her, until she explains that she is the daughter of the dragon.

In nearly all cases, Joth speaks on behalf of her father, offering healing, minor potions, and hints at ruins or lost magic in the Calim Desert. Although it is often stumbled on by wandering adventurers, the first sight most have of the Oasis of Brass is from the inside of one of its tents, after being rescued by one of the camp's inhabitants from thirst and heat stroke.

For greater aid than mere lifesaving, Joth demands deeds—gold or promises of magic do not suffice. This normally involves the liberation of slaves or the recovery of a specific item of magic from one of the ruins across the desert.

After accomplishing at least one assignment for the Oasis of Brass, adventurers are introduced to Svernvignarngix, who usually dwells down a tunnel concealed by one of the camp's many tents. There, he engages his visitors in conversation, offers them fresh drinks (filling their bottles from his *decanter of endless water*), and asks to know more of their doings than most are willing to share. Adventurers who offend Svernvignarngix's clan or his hospitality often find themselves transformed (through the use of *baleful polymorph*) into *lautum* (a small, hamsterlike rodent found in the Calim Desert) and stranded in one of the dragon's caves for a time—although never permanently.

In those rare occasions when the dragon or his clan come under attack, his rage is extreme and unrestrained. After using *control winds* to kick up sands and obscure the tents, he begins attacking with claw and flame, employing his cone of sleep gas only when he believes that information is more important than the elimination of the threat. ■





DRAGONMARKS

THE GATHERING STONE

by Tim Hitchcock • introduction by Keith Baker • illustrated by Tyler Walpole

War and vengeance are bitter lovers. I saw three Cyran youths beating an old goblin today, cursing the man for "stealing their homeland." I chuckled, even while sending a message on the wind to my friends in Daask. Their homeland. Tell that to the foundations of Sharn,

a citadel that stood against the hordes of Xoriat. Tell it to the blood on the Gathering Stone. Bemoan the deeds of Lhesh Haruuc as loudly as you like, children of Craftar. It is you who live on stolen land, and the heirs of Dhakaan who seek justice.

—Tasker, Excoriate of House Sivik

In the lowlands of the Northern Plains of Darguun, about a hundred miles north of Rhukaan Draal, rests the heart of the Ghaal'dar nation: a massive obelisk worn down from a single piece of uplifted shale known as the Gathering Stone. A remnant of a darker, earlier age, the Gathering Stone remains the inveterate site for goblinoid tribes to congregate and trade, find spouses, drink, fight, and talk politics.

Following the final collapse of the Dhakaani Empire, the Gathering Stone became vital to the survival of the savage goblin tribes. In those dark times, the stone marked a centralized gathering place for orphaned refugees and weaker clans to seek the safety of others. There, smaller tribes merged, adopting stragglers and absorbing them into their midst. Conversely, remaining too long at the stone became a dangerous proposition for those without the support of a strong tribe. The stone became a hunting ground for emerging warlords who relied on slave labor to provide food and equipment for their growing armies. During this time, warlords enslaved many of the weaker goblin tribes, although this practice slowed in later years.

As tribes expanded, they began infringing on each other's territories. Frequent skirmishing forced neighbors into crude intertribal alliances, spawning loosely organized hordes. Again, the stone became a pivotal location where warlords formed and broke treaties based on fierce competitions and ritual displays of fortitude dedicated to their many deities. Eventually, the hordes

solidified, giving rise to the stabilizing force of the Ghaal'dar. Still, warlords nursed bitter rivalries, supporting martial endeavors by continually demanding tribute from weaker tribes. To assuage their random pillaging, weaker tribes made pilgrimages to the stone to leave the warlords tributes. Most paid in valuable metals, weapons, and grain, while others performed elaborate ceremonies that included the live sacrifices of both livestock and slaves. Even today, the custom of leaving tribute to display fealty remains, and while Lhesh Haruuc (the leader of Darguun) staunchly denies that his people practice humanoid sacrifice, it still occurs in small covert ceremonies keeping with the ancient tradition.

Currently, the Gathering Stone functions as a mammoth exchange where almost anything can be purchased or traded. Throughout the year, thousands of goblinoids make the pilgrimage to the stone, transforming the site over time into what it is today: a massive disheveled campground draped in a sea of hide tents, mud hovels, and bonfires. The heavy traffic has ruined the surrounding region, leaving a wake of trampled ashen soil.

Tribes territorially claim their ancestral sites, maintaining them throughout the year or returning to them season after season. The constant flux of congregants makes finding precise locations near the stone impossible, so the concept of an ancestral site pertains more to a tribe's relative proximity to its neighbors than to an actual place.



Pathways marked by torches fashioned from pitch-filled skulls divide the campsite. Refuse and filth collect in large piles, despite the dozens of upturned stumps filled with brutal stinging fire ants that act as garbage disposals. Pocking the ground, shallow pools collect rain and waste, their stagnant murk croaking with bloated carrion-eating frogs. Hunting the frogs has become a favored pastime of goblin children, who consider the small creatures a delightful snack and often trade them as currency. The remaining earth is lifeless, eerily highlighted by flecks of bone that glimmer in the moonlight like seashells on a beach.

Closer to the stone, the throngs draw tighter, devolving into a swirling chaos of putrid, sweat-drenched goblins all pushing and clamoring their way toward the center. The ceaseless ruckus of the crowd thrums like a sour harp from war chants and howling children. Even miles away, the echoes of distant martial music—the low-pitched bellowing of horns and the fevered drumming on husks of felled

trees, burnt hollow and skinned with hairless hides—carries on the wind.

At the nucleus of the excitement stands the storied Gathering Stone. Black flies swarm the slick, russet shellac of dried blood that reaches halfway up the fin-shaped stone. Wrapped around its perimeter lie dozens of grisly piles of bones, skins, and scalps left as tributes in homage to the strength of the hundreds of goblin tribes swearing fealty to Lhesh Haruuc.

In recent decades, the Gathering Stone has seen a new development. In 970 YK, House Deneith established a fortress near the great stone, a center for recruiting and training goblinoid mercenaries. While some dislike the presence of humans so close to this sacred site, Deneith brings considerable wealth to Darguun, and service with House Deneith provides good steel and a chance to shed the blood of outsiders.

THE KURMAAC

The goblinoids of Dhakaan were a civilized people who placed great value on order and discipline, yet their

powerful nation was shattered by the daelkyr and the hordes of Xoriat. In the end, it was the orc druids—always considered to be superstitious savages by the Dhakaan—who brought an end to the Xoriat incursion. As the crippled nation collapsed into chaos, a new tradition arose: the druidic path of the Kurmaac. Although inspired by the orc mystics, the Kurmaac were also influenced by the horrors of the daelkyr war, and they adopted a darker path, combining the way of the druid with blood sacrifice and brutality.

For millennia, the Gathering Stone remained under the capable guardianship of the Kurmaac tribe. When Lhazaar and Malleon the Reaver came to Khorvaire, they drove the bulk of the goblinoids into the mountains and beneath the earth. But many among the Ghaal'dar remained true to the Kurmaac traditions. Following the liberation of Darguun, the descendants of the Kurmaac returned to the Gathering Stone and resumed their role as guardians. While the Kurmaac pay respect to Lhesh Haruuc,

RUNNING A CONTEST

The imagination of the sentinels seems limitless when devising contests. While contests primarily exist to settle disputes, they also serve as entertainment for the crowds. Dull contests meet with violent protests and heated rioting. Contests must also fit their crimes, so to speak, so inappropriate contests that do not fit also provoke negative crowd response. Prior to a contest, all participants must state their names and tribes before making accusations and giving testimonies. Three popular contests are listed below.

Darts: In this contest, the two accused stand face-to-face, each painted with a large bulls-eye. They take turns throwing darts at each other and the winner is the one with the highest score. Overt displays of pain result in forfeiture. Sentinels determine what constitutes an overt display by petitioning the crowd's opinion. As a result, contestants are just as likely to aim for the eyes as they are for painted targets.

Pig in the Circle: Sentinels place the contestant into a large dirt circle with his leg shackled to an angry razor boar. A contestant earns justification by slaying his boar before it kills him or injures bystanders. The harsher the accusation the longer the chain, as shorter lengths prevent the boar from charging. In a similar fashion, the accusation determines the type of weapon allowed (if any).

Torches: In this popular event, sentinels paint both contestants with pitch and lard. Each is handed a lit torch and the first to set his opponent on fire wins. Oddly, this contest often results in a draw.



their first allegiance is to the stone and their ancient traditions, as interpreted by the tribe's spiritual leader, or *mogruut*—a title that loosely translates as “supreme sentinel.” The tribe's current *mogruut* is a feral hobgoblin who has forsaken his former life, family, and name to bear the auspicious title.

The Kurmaac people maintain little contact with other tribes beyond the limited exchanges that accompany their work at the stone. One exception appears to be the Kech Volaar clan, with whom they frequently exchange lore and other information. Conventional accounts purport the two tribes likely share several common ancestors. Others speculate the Kurmaac form a covert sect of the Kech Volaar, maintaining the ruse of independence to create the illusion that it upholds tribal neutrality. The dirge singers of the Kech Volaar say they are intrigued to learn about the history of the fallen goblins, but that the Kurmaac are

primitives who have abandoned the traditions of the empire for orc mysticism. If the Kech Volaar do wish to spread their Dhakaani traditions among the modern goblins, however, recruiting the guardians of the Gathering Stone would be a vital first step.

The Kurmaac are not bound to a single bloodline. They evolved from remnants of many shattered tribes. Most secretly loath the Rhukaan Taash, the powerful tribe of Lhesh Haruuc, because of Haruuc's efforts to move away from the past, including his support for the Sovereign Host. Despite their ties to the Kech Volaar, the Kurmaac are likewise largely hostile towards the emerging Dhakaani clans. The Kurmaac believe that the Dhakaani Empire was flawed and deserved its fate. The path that will truly lead the people of Darguun to greatness is the way of the Kurmaac, and the druidic cabal at the heart of the tribe intends to wrest power from Lhesh Haaruc and restore

Daargun to its proper path. While they lack the necessary forces to do so, their influence at the Gathering Stone allows them to encourage the lesser tribes of the Ghaal'dar to return to ancestral law and politics.

THE BLIND FORUM

In order to assuage negative accusations that a central leadership encourages the degradation of clan tradition, Lhesh Haruuc instituted a policy sanctioning any individual accused of a crime or demanding a legal settlement the choice to demand resolution under the ancient law known as blind forum. Individuals agreeing to settle disputes through blind forum forgo a civilized trial and instead partake in competitive skirmishes or brutal ordeals that settle petty arguments, territorial disputes, trade and hunting rights, and even marriages. Sentinels orchestrate the blind forums, first listening to all

contested disputes individually and then arranging contests accordingly.

Once the sentinels choose a contest, those involved are bound to complete it or face immediate execution. Under the ancient tradition, a winning contestant isn't perceived as innocent. Instead, the victory proves the individual's actions justifiable, even those that contemporary law considers atrocious. Aside from the Rhukaan Taash clan, most goblinoids

eschew contemporary trials, favoring the age-old dispute-settling contests used by the Kurmaac.

Political speech also falls under the jurisdiction of the blind forum. While Kurmaac law encourages all to speak freely within the radius of the stone, theoretically bestowing political asylum to those who speak against Lhesh Haruuc or other powerful tribe leaders, charges of treason are quickly levied against such individuals as soon as

they leave the campgrounds. To avoid such a fate, the individual may request a contest to prove his speech justified. While such a ruling does little to prevent the assassin's dagger, it successfully prevents immediate and public execution. The only other safe option for those engaging in brash politicizing is to remain within the jurisdiction of the Gathering Stone. As a result, the grounds host a small but permanent colony of political antagonists. ■

GRAFFITI

Centuries of ancient graffiti mar the stone's soft shale surface. The bulk of it consists of etched names, bragadocio, and off-color poems easily read by anyone with knowledge of the Goblin tongue. In contrast, hidden within the crude scratches lie clues to forgotten secrets, locations of lost kingdoms, and the true names of primordial demons. The passing seasons have weathered nearly all of them beyond elucidation, but to those skilled at interpreting such writings, the stone becomes an invaluable tool. Strict law protects the graffiti and forbids additional material. Embellishment is punishable by the loss of hand—at the very least.

Anyone studying the stone for at least an hour can attempt a DC 20 Decipher Script check to discover and interpret a random piece of unique and ancient graffiti. Roll 1d20 and consult the table below to determine its nature.

d20 Graffiti

- 1 Scratches reveal a fragmentary map exposing the location of the ruins of a Brelish billet near Marguul Pass.
- 2 Scrawls examined in inverse provide a command word that opens one of the seals of a powerful bugbear chieftain's tomb.
- 3 Strange runes describe the details of establishing a pact with an infernal entity, apparently a tradition embraced in desperation during the war against the daelkyr.
- 4 Enigmatic pictographs reveal several covert techniques used by swordsages at Iron Heart (see *Tome of Battle*).
- 5 A series of seemingly unrelated symbols unlocks a private library of arcane lore deep in the subterranean vaults of Volaar Draal.
- 6 A bizarre star chart turns out to be a crude translation of the scriptures of Tog-Maakru, an ancient Kech Volaar text whose omens predict planar cycles.
- 7 Chipped in ancient Dhakaani, a poetic saga describes the location of a great warrior's tomb... a tomb hidden in the Dhakaani foundations of the city of Sharn.
- 8 A strange word turns out to be the true name of a barghest who comes seeking tribute from any individual correctly pronouncing the name three times.

- 9 Etchings name the locations of seven passages in the Demon Wastes that lead to Khyber.
- 10 Disguised in seemingly innocuous graffiti are several harsh accusations concerning the Lhesh Haruuc's role in the mysterious deaths of several of his closest allies and advisors.
- 11 Several clues hidden in a series of prayers to the Mockery combine to form an ancient word of power.
- 12 A series of icons reveal themselves as the brands of an ancient warlord used to designate the hierarchy of his tribe members and slaves.
- 13 A cryptic message calls for the scattered descendants of a lost tribe to rally against the heirs of the Rhukaan Taash chieftain who perpetrated genocide upon them.
- 14 Odd mathematical formulas reveal themselves as map coordinates to a location deep in the Mournland. Near the formula, a message in Dhakaani reads "Cousin Nogmuor, our forces gather at the Fhuurlani City-State."
- 15 Cribbed script holds a detailed account of a tortuous, firespitting warmachine designed by a half-mad hobgoblin sorcerer.
- 16 A strange geometric diagram insinuates that the Gathering Stone is only one of a series of ancient menhirs scattered following the collapse of the Goblin Empire. If reassembled properly, the stones form a mammoth dolmen capable of channeling intense amounts of eldritch energy.
- 17 A list of exotic reagents, including rakshasa blood, turns out to be a vile recipe for inducing pregnant goblins to spawn psionic blues (see *Expanded Psionics Handbook*).
- 18 A violent and graphic description of cannibalistic acts turns out to be a lost ritual once used by goblin priests to bless their strongest warriors before battle.
- 19 A seemingly insane rant forces a list of dates into an elaborate calculation predicting an impending apocalypse following the rise of a powerful goblin king.
- 20 A series of seemingly innocuous cracks in the stone's surface connect to individual letters in various names. When read in succession, they form a secret password used by Dhakaani revolutionaries.

OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

This month, the Sage tackles a variety of questions related to critical hits, damage, and healing.

If a character rolls a threat for a critical hit and does not desire to perform such a lethal attack, can he opt to not confirm that threat, in a way similar to voluntarily failing a saving throw?

No, the rules don't allow a character to voluntarily refuse to confirm a critical threat.

A character who wants to "pull his punch" should choose to deal nonlethal damage rather than lethal damage with the attack.

How is the bonus damage from a paladin's smite evil ability calculated on a critical hit? Is it multiplied or added on at the end?

Critical hits multiply all damage dealt by an attack except for extra dice of damage (such as sneak attack, the flaming weapon property, and so forth). Smite evil adds a flat damage modifier, so it would be multiplied on a critical hit.

Does bonus damage based on an ability score, such as the swash-buckler's insightful strike (*Complete Warrior*, 12) follow the same rules as bonus damage from Strength (1-1/2 times ability score with two-handed weapon and 1/2 ability score with off-hand weapon)?

No.

This rule applies only to the wielder's Strength bonus, not to any other ability score bonuses he is allowed to add to the damage roll.

If a character fights a devil with a +1 lawful-outsider bane evil-outsider bane longsword, do the two bane powers stack?

The rules don't come right out and say it, but multiple bane properties shouldn't stack. The weapon either is or isn't bane to your target—it can't be "more bane than bane."

Of course, the extra damage from bane stacks normally with any other extra damage—a +1 holy shock evil-outsider bane longsword would deal an extra 5d6 damage when used against a barbed devil (2d6 from holy because it's evil, 1d6 electricity from shock, and 2d6 from bane because it's an evil outsider).

Does a flaming weapon deal damage on a trip attempt when using a trip weapon (spiked chain, flails, and so on)? What if the trip attempt would be a sneak attack—can my rogue add his sneak attack dice to the damage dealt?

No.

Trip attempts don't deal damage, so you don't get to add any bonuses to damage at all.

If my natural weapon deals nonlethal damage, can I still make a sneak attack with it?

The rules state that you can deliver a sneak attack for nonlethal damage with a sap or unarmed strike. It seems reasonable to extend this to any other natural attack that deals nonlethal damage.

Is the fire damage dealt by a +1 flaming sap nonlethal damage? What about the extra damage dealt by a +1 holy sap?

As odd as it might seem, the Sage recommends that you treat all damage dealt by a sap (or any other attack normally dealing nonlethal damage) as nonlethal damage. You could create an intricate set of rules for which parts of the attack were lethal and which were nonlethal, but that's a headache that doesn't really help the game.

When a normally lethal-damage weapon is used to deal nonlethal damage, does its damage type change? If so, what is the difference between a mace's lethal and nonlethal bludgeoning damage? Does this also apply to natural weapons?

The rules don't say anything about the damage type changing, so it should remain the same whether you're dealing lethal or nonlethal damage. This is equally true of manufactured and natural weapons.

The ability to use any weapon to deal nonlethal damage is an abstraction of reality, so it doesn't pay to worry too much about exactly what's happening "in the real world."

The Weapon Focus feat states you may select grapple instead of a weapon or unarmed strike. Does the +1 bonus on attack rolls apply only to the touch attack to initiate the grapple or to grapple checks (which are akin to attack rolls)?



Technically, it should only apply to the touch attack made to initiate the grapple, since a "+1 bonus on attack rolls" wouldn't help on a grapple check (since that isn't an attack roll).

If you have Weapon Specialization (grapple), does the bonus on damage rolls apply on attacks made while grappling ("attack your opponent") or to damage dealt as a result of a successful opposed grapple check ("damage your opponent")?

The latter.

Weapon Specialization states that you gain "a +2 bonus on all damage rolls you make using the selected weapon." That clearly indicates that any damage roll made by your "grapple" weapon would gain the bonus.

The "attack your opponent" option involves using a weapon or unarmed strike (not the grapple itself), so you wouldn't add any bonus from Weapon Specialization (grapple) to those damage rolls.

If a rogue with Cleave drops a foe with a sneak attack, does he also get to sneak attack the extra attack granted by Cleave?

No, unless that attack also qualifies as a sneak attack.

As noted in the FAQ (wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/er/20030221a), the extra attack granted by Cleave doesn't get any of the situational bonuses on the attack roll that wouldn't apply. The same is true of situational bonuses on damage rolls—if the bonus wouldn't normally apply to the extra attack, you don't get to add it just because of Cleave.

You only add sneak attack damage against a flat-footed or flanked enemy. If you drop a foe with a sneak attack and you take an extra attack against a foe who is neither flat-footed nor flanked, that isn't a sneak attack.

If a spellcaster takes damage while casting a spell, but all the damage is dealt to his temporary hit points, does he still need to make a Concentration check to avoid losing the spell? If someone takes more than 50 points of damage to nothing but temporary hit points, would he still need to make a massive damage check?

Yes and yes.

Temporary hit points are still hit points, and damage dealt to them isn't treated any differently than normal damage.

A wizard with 10 temporary hp from *false life* who takes 5 points of damage while casting a spell would still need to make a Concentration check as normal to avoid losing the spell. A fighter with 57 temporary hit points who takes 52 points of damage from an attack would still have to succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save to avoid being killed by massive damage.

If a creature with fast healing has both lethal and nonlethal damage, which is healed first? What if the fast healing comes from a spell?

The rules are silent on this issue. The Sage recommends allowing the creature to choose which type of damage is healed first, with any excess fast healing being applied to the other type.



The *Player's Handbook* states that when "a spell or magical power cures hit point damage, it also removes an equal amount of nonlethal damage." That suggests that fast healing derived from such a source would heal equal amounts of lethal and nonlethal damage each round.

When do fast healing and regeneration occur during a creature's turn?

If an effect doesn't specifically state when it occurs (such as "at the end of your turn" or "at the start of your turn"), you're free to apply it at any time during your turn.

In most cases, it's easiest to apply fast healing and regeneration effects at the start of your turn. That said, if a monster doesn't have any damage at the start of its turn but takes damage during its turn (perhaps by provoking an attack of opportunity), it might choose to apply these effects at the end of its turn instead.

If a creature has fast healing and regeneration, which effect goes first?

Unless an effect states otherwise, you're free to apply them in the order you desire.

Does damage reduction apply against falling damage?

No. As noted in the *Monster Manual* glossary, damage reduction applies to "weapons and natural attacks." A fall off a cliff, even into a pile of swords, isn't a weapon attack, so damage reduction wouldn't apply.

Is there a cap to the damage dealt by a falling object? Would a four-ton object falling on a character really deal 40d6 points of damage?

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* doesn't list a maximum damage dealt by a fallen object, but at a certain point the DM's judgment must take precedence over a simple equation. If you feel that your group is abusing this guideline (such as by dropping enormous objects onto their enemies rather than battling them in a traditional fashion), feel free to cap the damage at 20d6.

How much damage should you take if you accidentally charge head-first into a wall of force? Are there rules for this?

The rules are (unsurprisingly) silent on this issue, which suggests that the game doesn't consider the situation worth worrying about. D&D is a game about teams of heroes, not about trios of stooges, so the Sage recommends that most campaigns not concern themselves with such trivialities.

That said, the DM determined to find the answer (and proficient in some basic physics) could extrapolate from the falling rules to see what a "realistic" house rule might be. Let's try that.

A character who runs into an object is likely moving at a "hustle" speed—either charging or taking a move action on his turn in conjunction with a standard action or another move action. Effectively, his velocity during that action is twice his normal speed. For a character with speed 30, he's effectively moving at a velocity of 60 feet per 6 seconds, or 10 feet per second (fps).

Now, 10 fps sounds pretty fast, but it translates into just under 7 miles per hour, which is hardly a blistering pace. A character who simply blunders into a wall, such as someone walking down a hallway in a non-combat situation, would be moving half as fast, or a mere 5 fps, or about 3-1/2 mph, while a running character would be moving twice that fast (or 1-1/2 times that fast in heavy armor).

A falling object, on the other hand accelerates at 32 feet per second per second. This means that after a single second it has fallen 16 feet (see the FAQ's answers regarding falling distance) and it's now moving at a velocity of 32 fps, or more than three times as fast as a hustling character. If that object hit the ground at that instant, it'd take roughly 2d6 points of damage (assuming the DM rounded 16 feet of falling up to 20 feet). By comparison, the character moving one-third as fast might expect to take roughly one-third that amount damage, or a whopping 2.3 points.

No wonder the rules ignore this situation—it turns out that it's pretty trivial after all. ■

Dragon

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BARD GUIDE

This guide employs charts, rules clarifications, suggestions, and rulebook references to enhance and ease the playability of the bard.

BARDIC MUSIC

A bard may use his bardic music ability once per day per bard level. Each bardic music ability requires a minimum bard level and minimum ranks in Perform. A masterwork musical instrument grants a +2 circumstance bonus on Perform checks that involve its use.

Some of a bard's abilities are mind-affecting, so unintelligent creatures, constructs, oozes, plants, and undead are immune to them. Some bardic abilities are enchantment (compulsion) effects, against which elves and other creatures gain bonuses. Some bardic abilities are language-dependent, which means only creatures who can hear and understand the bard are subject to the ability's effects.

Feats: Skill Focus (perform) (*Player's Handbook*); Arcane Accompaniment,

Arcane Flourish, Battle Dancer (*Player's Handbook II*); Chant of Fortitude, Devoted Performer, Disguise Spell, Extra Music, Green Ear, Ironskin Chant, Lingering Song, Lyric Spell, Subsonics, Versatile Performer (*Complete Adventurer*); Captivating Melody, Melodic Casting (*Complete Mage*); Chant of the Long Road, Chord of Distraction, Epic of the Lost King, Sound of Silence, Warning Shout (*Complete Scoundrel*).

Prestige Classes: Fochlucan lyrist, virtuoso (*Complete Adventurer*); seeker of the song, sublime chord (*Complete Arcane*); evangelist (*Complete Divine*); lyric thaumaturge (*Complete Mage*); war chanter (*Complete Warrior*).

BARDIC MAGIC

A bard spontaneously casts arcane spells, and most bard spells have a verbal component. A bard can apply metamagic feats to his bard spells, but doing so changes their casting time to 1 full-round action. For spells with a longer casting time, it takes an extra full-round action to cast the spell. This makes the Quicken Spell feat useless for bards. Finally, bard spells cannot be modified with the Silent Spell feat.

BARDIC MUSIC EFFECTS

Bardic Music	Minimum Bard Level	Minimum Perform Ranks	Save
Countersong	1	3	Special*
Fascinate	1	3	Perform check
Inspire courage	1	3	None (harmless)
Inspire competence	3	6	None (harmless)
Suggestion	6	9	10 + 1/2 bard's level + bard's Cha modifier
Inspire greatness	9	12	None (harmless)
Song of freedom	12	15	None (harmless)
Inspire heroics	15	18	None (harmless)
Mass suggestion	18	21	10 + 1/2 bard's level + bard's Cha modifier

*Any creature affected by a sonic or language-dependent magical attack and within 30 feet of the bard may use the bard's Perform check result in place of its saving throw.



Adding more than one metamagic feat to a spontaneously cast spell does not increase its casting time further. See *DRAGON* #352's "Sorcerer Guide" for a list of metamagic feats and their spell-level adjustments.

A bard can cast bard spells while wearing light armor without incurring the normal arcane spell failure chance.

Feats: Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Focus, Greater Spell Penetration, Spell Focus, Spell Penetration (*Player's Handbook*); Arcane Thesis, Arcane Toughness, Arcane Consumption, Vatic Gaze (*Player's Handbook II*); Extraordinary Concentration, Extraordinary Spell Aim, Mobile Spellcasting (*Complete Adventurer*); Arcane Defense, Arcane Mastery, Arcane Preparation, Battle Caster, Extra Slot, Extra Spell, Obtain Familiar, Ranged Spell Specialization, Touch Spell Specialization (*Complete Arcane*); Arcane Disciple, Spell Focus (Chaos, Evil, Good, Law) (*Complete Divine*); Cloudy Conjuration, Dazzling Illusion, Energy Abjuration, Favored Magic, Fearsome Necromancy, Insightful Divination, Metamagic School Focus, Piercing Evocation, Ranged Recall, Rapid Metamagic, Somatic Weaponry, Toughening Transmutation, Unsettling Enchantment, all reserve feats (*Complete Mage*); Arcane Strike (*Complete Warrior*).

Prestige Classes: Daggerspell mage, Fochlucan lyrist, virtuoso (*Complete Adventurer*); alienist, blood magus, fatespinner, geometer, green star adept, mindbender, sublime chord, wild mage (*Complete Arcane*); abjurant champion, lyric thaumaturge, nightmare spinner, unseen seer, wild soul (*Complete Mage*).

SKILLS AND BARDIC KNOWLEDGE

Bards possess one of the most comprehensive skill lists, as well as a considerable 6 skill points per level. The bard is one of the few classes to have Use Magic Device and all Knowledge skills as class skills and the only one with Speak Language as a class skill.

Bardic Knowledge Check: 1d20 + bard level + Int modifier.

BARDIC MUSIC QUALIFIERS

Bardic Music	Mind-Affecting	Enchantment (Compulsion)	Language-Dependent
Countersong	No	No	No
Fascinate	Yes	Yes	No
Inspire courage	Yes	No	No
Inspire competence	Yes	No	No
Suggestion	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inspire greatness	Yes	No	No
Song of freedom	No	No	No
Inspire heroics	Yes	No	No
Mass suggestion	Yes	Yes	Yes

PERFORM

DC Performance

10	Routine performance. You earn 1d10 cp/day.
15	Enjoyable performance. In a prosperous city, you can earn 1d10 sp/day.
20	Great performance. In a prosperous city, you can earn 3d10 sp/day.
25	Memorable performance. In a prosperous city, you can earn 1d6 gp/day.
30	Extraordinary performance. In a prosperous city, you can earn 3d6 gp/day.

BARDIC KNOWLEDGE

Bardic Knowledge DC	Type of Knowledge Gained
10	Common, known by at least a substantial minority of the local population.
20	Uncommon but available, known by only a few people in the area.
25	Obscure, known by few, hard to come by.
30	Extremely obscure, known by very few, possibly forgotten by most who once knew it, possibly known only by those who don't understand the significance of the knowledge.

USE MAGIC DEVICE

Task	Use Magic Device DC
Activate blindly	25
Decipher a written spell	25 + spell level
Use a scroll	20 + caster level
Use a wand	20
Emulate a class feature	20
Emulate an ability score	Check result -15*
Emulate a race	25
Emulate an alignment	30

*The check result minus 15 becomes your ability score in the appropriate ability required to activate scrolls (Int for wizard spells, Wis for divine spells, and so on). If you already have a high enough score in the appropriate ability, you don't need to make this check.

Feats: Acrobatic, Agile, Athletic, Diligent, Magical Aptitude, Negotiator, Skill Focus, Stealthy (*Player's Handbook*); Combat Acrobat, Keen-Eared Scout, Leap of the Heavens, Master Manipulator, Tumbling Feint, Vatic Gaze, Wanderer's Diplomacy (*Player's Handbook II*); Appraise Magic Value,

Improved Diversion, Jack of All Trades, Obscure Lore, Open Minded, Versatile Performer (*Complete Adventurer*); Magic Device Attunement, Melodic Casting (*Complete Mage*).

Prestige Classes: Exemplar, Fochlucan lyrist, spymaster (*Complete Adventurer*); sublime chord (*Complete Arcane*). 

OCCULT MUTATIONS



Mortal flesh is such a fragile conduit. Occult forces of spirit and energy trace its shadows and creep from its pores. Spellcasters corral these forces, fertilizing the corporeal form and perfecting its flow.

Yet like all things, perfection is a balance—one that flagrant abuse, reckless manipulation, or accidental overexposure can blight.

Those careless with their craft or just plain unlucky can suffer arcane backlash or overload, inducing occult mutations. Surges of eldritch power blister and transform layers of skin, evocations bleach pupils, and dark rituals painfully sculpt living tissue. Occult mutations weave power into mortal flesh, ultimately leaving its owner to determine whether the results are a boon or a curse.

Occult mutations alter both a spellcaster's appearance and physiology, allowing a player to add a level of uniqueness to a character. These mutations are character traits, as introduced in *Unearthed Arcana*. A character trait offers a benefit but it also comes with a drawback, thereby retaining game balance. Character traits can only be taken at 1st level.

While *Unearthed Arcana* specifies that a character can have two traits, a character may only have one occult mutation from this article.

AMPHIBIOUS

You unlocked the secrets of your craft by studying forbidden texts of kuo-toan magic. Unfortunately, the

deviant who gave you the text didn't make you aware of its horrid side-effects. As you toiled over its pages, your hair slowly fell out and your skin paled, becoming saggy and semi-translucent. Now your flesh hangs loosely between your joints, giving your digits, armpits, knees, and elbows a webbed appearance.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Swim checks and you can hold your breath for a number of rounds equal to 3 times your Constitution. You also gain Kuo-Toan as a bonus language.

Drawback: You must drench your body in at least 3 gallons of water as part of the process to regain your spells.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this trait might constantly seek out water, dumping it on their heads or bathing (as appropriate) whenever they can. They might also complain about hot or dry days or locations, staying far from deserts.

BLEACHED PUPILS

Improper channeling of one of your evocation spells caused an explosive arcane backlash that would have blinded a typical mortal. Instead, the volatile glare bleached out your pupils, giving you an unnerving appearance.

Benefit: Your pupilless eyes grant you a +1 bonus on Intimidate checks and a +3 bonus on all saves made to resist gaze attack effects.

Drawback: You are light sensitive: bright sunlight and the *daylight* spell dazzle you. If you are already light sensitive, you gain light blindness instead: sunlight and the *daylight* spell blind you for 1 round; thereafter you are dazzled for as long as you remain in the affected area.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this trait might wear large hoods or darkened lenses to both protect and conceal their eyes, or they might constantly try to make uncomfortable eye contact with people.

CORPSE FLESH

Extensive use of the necromantic arts has left your outer layer of skin deadened and bloodless. It appears pallid and is cold and stiff to the touch.

Benefit: It is difficult to make your deadened flesh bleed, granting you DR 2/slashing.

Drawback: Your deadened flesh resists magical healing. Spells from the healing subschool and supernatural abilities that cure hit point damage or ability damage cure or restore 1 point less per die rolled. For example, a *cure moderate wounds* spell cast by a 5th-level cleric would only heal you of 2d8+1 points of damage, while a *lesser restoration* would only restore 1d4-1 points of ability damage.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this trait might fearlessly wade into melee battle, confident in their protection, or they might avoid confrontations, hoarding curative magic—as they need much more than usual.

LIDLESS EYES

As a child, you were haunted by terrible spirit visions so intense you ripped off your own eyelids to rid yourself of the images. Desperate to save your sight, you sought the aid of a mysterious cleric whose strange magic covered your eyes with clear membranes similar to those of a lizard.

Benefit: Your unblinking lidless gaze grants you a +2 bonus on Search and Spot checks.

Drawback: Because you cannot close your eyes, you take a -2 penalty on all saving throws made to resist gaze attacks and cannot close your eyes to avoid them.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this trait might stay to the shadows in order to shade their eyes, becoming mysterious watchers who see more than they admit.

MIDNIGHT PUPILS

You survived a magical mishap involving sun-bright blasts of light that distended your pupils, causing intense hemorrhaging that left your irises swollen and black. Your sight

permanently altered, you now see only reflections of colorless shades of gray.

Benefit: You gain darkvision to a range of 60 feet. If you already have darkvision, the range increases by 60 feet.

Drawback: You can only see through your darkvision, meaning you see everything in black and white and you take a -2 penalty on Search and Spot checks made in areas brighter than shadowy illumination.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this trait might squint a lot or pretend to be blind or extremely nearsighted.

RUNE-SCARRED

To attain arcane secrets, you underwent a painful ritual during your studies. Something went terribly wrong along the way, and as a result the unleashed magical energies seared your flesh and left you within a hairsbreadth of death. Clerics eventually roused you, but they could do nothing about the horrible runic scars covering your body, nor the ceaseless pain those scars cause.

Benefit: The runes flash with bright magical energy whenever you are struck by magical energy attacks. These flashes grant you cold and electricity resistance 2.

Drawback: The constant pain dulls your senses slightly, causing you to suffer a -2 penalty on Listen, Spot, and initiative checks.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this trait might constantly grimace in pain and wear long-sleeved clothing to cover their scarred flesh.

TOAD WARTS

Thick, brown, warty bumps cover your body, giving your flesh a toad-like appearance. Some sages speculate that poor bindings with toad familiars cause this mutation. Others suspect it to be a side effect of using slaadi magic.

Benefit: Your thick, warty skin grants you a +1 natural armor bonus.

Drawback: The same thick skin that protects you also slows you and

makes you hideous to the eyes of others. You take a -1 penalty on Reflex saves and Charisma-based skill checks.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this trait tend to cover themselves in loose, concealing clothing. They might be moody loners, constantly harassed for their appearance.

UNNATURAL AURA

You acquired your powers by infusing yourself with the supernatural essence of a magical beast. The creature had a scent, aura, or other emanation so potent that it infused your very being. While most creatures barely notice your aura (even if they are affected by it), animals are extremely sensitive to it and find it disturbingly threatening.

Benefit: You possess an unnatural aura. You gain a +2 bonus on all Intimidate checks and to the DC of spells from the fear subschool that you cast.

Drawback: Your unnatural aura disturbs creatures of the animal and vermin types, imposing a -2 penalty on any skill checks or wild empathy checks you make dealing with them.

Roleplaying Ideas: Characters with this trait might be brooding loners, constantly walking apart from their comrades and cursing their solitude. ☞

GAINING MUTATIONS

Each mutation offers one example of how it might have formed, but other ways might exist.

Arcane Birth: Your mother had some form of occult mutation or otherwise contacted arcane energies when you were still in the womb. You might have the same mutation as her or not.

Exposure to Artifact: The playthings of deities, artifacts can have terrible effects on mortals. At some point in your past you got too close to one, altering your body, mind, and soul.

Magical Misfire: Magic is as much art as science, and sometimes spell effects can interact in strange ways. You once were caught in just such an interaction, changing you forever.

AZTEC MYTHOS III

In the place of spirits lived a woman who was constantly hungry. She had mouths on her wrists and elbows and mouths on her ankles and knees. The spirits could not feed her, so Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca carried her down to the endless waters below and stretched out her body. They made forests from

Huitzilopochtli, their divine patron. Once, while Coatlicue swept, a tuft of feathers fell down beside her. She picked it up and tucked it into her skirt. When she had finished sweeping, she looked for the feathers but couldn't find them, and after that she was pregnant. Coatlicue had uncountable children already, and when they found out about her pregnancy they were ashamed and angry. The eldest sister, Coyolxauhqui, convinced her siblings that they must kill their mother before she gave birth. As they approached, however, Huitzilopochtli was born in an instant, full-grown and dressed for war. He slew Coyolxauhqui quickly, and his other siblings he killed or routed.

The Aztecs were relative newcomers to the highlands. They journeyed from the north at the behest of their patron god, Huitzilopochtli, who spoke to them through a wooden idol. A number of city-states already called the Valley of Mexico home when the Aztecs arrived there. These established tribes were dismissive of the outsiders and forced the Aztecs to live on swamplands considered unsuitable for settlement. For a time, the Aztecs worked as mercenaries and developed a fearsome reputation in the region. Yet, Huitzilopochtli felt they had become complacent.

On the command of their god, the Aztecs approached the king of Colhuacan and asked for his daughter to be Huitzilopochtli's wife. The greedy king readily agreed. Yet, when they brought the princess to their temple, the priests sacrificed her. They flayed her skin and dressed a boy in it, as Huitzilopochtli instructed, and invited the king to make offerings to his daughter, the goddess. The room was dark when the king began

her hair and lakes from her eyes. From her shoulders they made mountains, and from her nose they made valleys. But her mouths were still everywhere and she still cried out for food. When it rains she drinks. When flowers shrivel, trees fall, and people die she eats. But she is never full.

The Central American highland people, like people everywhere, worshiped the earth in various guises. The Mesoamerican earth goddess, though, was no beneficent Mother Earth. Cihuacoatl, as the Aztecs called her, was both producer and consumer.

She has another name as well: Coatlicue, the mother of



to make his offerings, but when he lit the incense he saw what the Aztecs had done. Infuriated, the king brought his army against the Aztecs, who fled to an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco.

On the island, Huitzilopochtli gave them a sign: They came upon an eagle, perched on a cactus, eating a snake. This was the sign that they had reached their new home.

For more information about the Aztec pantheon, see the first two articles in this series, covering Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca in *DRAGON* #352 and Chalchihuitlicue and Tlaloc in *DRAGON* #354.

CIHUACOATL

Intermediate Goddess (Neutral)

Cihuacoatl (Snake Woman; Coatlicue, "Skirt of Serpents;" the Hungry Woman) is the earth from which all living things spring. She is also the earth which consumes the dead. As spirit of the fertile earth, she acts as the patron of mothers and farmers, but she also serves as the spirit of barren rock and the swallowing cave, and in this aspect mourners and miners worship her.

Most depictions of Cihuacoatl show her as a woman with a necklace of severed hands and a skirt of live snakes. Sometimes she has the head of a snake.

According to the teachings of the Cihuacoatl, the earth is the womb which births all things, and the grave to which all things inevitably return. No one owns the land, nor can one use a plot of land forever; after a time one must let the land lie fallow.

Portfolio: Earth, birth, death.

Domains: Animal, Death, Earth, Plant.

Favored Weapon: Pick.

Cleric Training: Clerics of Cihuacoatl are taught to recognize the will of the earth goddess. They must be able to determine the best place to plant and hunt, as well as to know when a piece of land can no longer support crops or game.

Quests: Typical quests include taking an offering to a distant

crevasse, exploring a cave system for treasure, and defending a mountain village from lowland invaders.

Prayers: Worshipers pray to Cihuacoatl for abundant crops and healthy children or to reveal buried treasures. An offering of food for the Hungry Woman goes a long way toward gaining the goddess's attention.

Temples: Natural caves typically house temples dedicated to Cihuacoatl. Otherwise, they are dark and claustrophobic buildings reminiscent of caves.

Rites: Clerics of Cihuacoatl celebrate births and often act as midwives. They also oversee ceremonies made at beginnings, such as when plowing fields, opening mines, and interrupting the dead.

Herald and Allies: People traveling in the countryside at night might hear the frightful moan of Cihuacoatl's herald, an 18th-level human ghost cleric. Allies are Medium, Large, and Huge earth elementals.

HUITZILOPOCHTLI

Lesser God (Lawful Evil)

Huitzilopochtli (Hummingbird of the South) is a young god and the primary deity of the Aztec people. The god of war and conquest, he urges his chosen people to make war. The Aztecs fight not to destroy their rivals, but to subdue them: collectively (forcing defeated cities to pay tribute) and individually (gathering prisoners for sacrifice).

Although the patron of the Aztecs, Huitzilopochtli's influence is mostly confined to the region around Tenochtitlan. Conquered city-states pay lip service to the Aztec god, but few worship him. That said, all know Huitzilopochtli is the impetus behind the Aztec warmongering and rightly fear him.

The central tenet of Huitzilopochtli's church is "might makes right." He teaches his followers that strength in battle leads to temporal success. He also tells his chosen people, the Aztecs, that they are des-

tined to dominate the world through military might.

Portfolio: War, conquest, Aztecs.

Domains: Evil, Law, Strength, War.

Favored Weapon: Macahuitl (stone-edged longsword).

Cleric Training: All clerics of Huitzilopochtli are trained to fight and many travel with armies, providing divine assistance while fighting alongside warriors. Others officiate over the sacrifice of hearts to Huitzilopochtli and other gods.

Quests: Quests for Huitzilopochtli involve war and conquest. Typical quests include inciting war between two nations, defeating the minions of other gods, and leading an army in conquest.

Prayers: Blood is the central component of Huitzilopochtli worship. The war god ignores prayers not sanctified with blood—whether from the petitioner or a sacrificial victim.

Temples: Temples of Huitzilopochtli are built atop very steep zigurats (aside the temple of Tlaloc, the rain god). Priests force prisoners of war to ascend these stone steps to the altar: a circular stone stained with the blood of many sacrifices. The largest of these temples stands at Tenochtitlan, and rumors persist that the original wooden idol of Huitzilopochtli that spoke to priests and led his people is housed there.

Most Aztec garrisons include a small shrine to the war god.

Rites: Huitzilopochtli demands the hearts of warriors as sacrifices to give him the strength he needs to fight the spiritual enemies of the Aztecs. His loyal worshippers capture many of their foes to sacrifice in this way. Even when there are no real battles to fight, they stage mock battles called Flower Wars, and those captured by the rival team are sacrificed to the war god.

Herald and Allies: Huitzilopochtli's herald is an 18th-level fiendish human fighter. Allies include bearded devils, barbed devils, and pit fiends. ■

MERCENARY COMPANIES



The Renaissance hardly seemed less violent than the Europe of the Middle Ages. As advances in science and the arts occurred, the art of war changed as well, with hard-fighting foot soldiers upsetting the old ways of battle. The Age of Chivalry, dominated by mounted knights, encountered a revival of the professional infantryman who challenged the dominance of the cavaliers until the knights' demise with the proliferation of gunpowder weaponry. Using the affiliations rules from *Player's Handbook II*, the famous Scots-Irish *galloglas* and German *landsknechts* are presented below for incorporation into any historical or (with little need for adaptations) fantasy campaign.

SCOTS-IRISH GALLOGLAS

The end of the Viking Age witnessed the genesis of a strong Anglo-Norman monarchy that eventually brought most of the British Isles under English rule. During this Celtic twilight, fierce fighters emerged who borrowed from a mixed heritage of Gaelic, Norse, and English traditions and tactics—the *galloglas* (“foreign young warrior”). Firmly established in Ireland during the 14th century adventures of Robert and Edward Bruce, the axe-wielding *galloglas* continued to influence internecine conflicts between Irish and Anglo-Irish lords for the next two hundred years. Families of professional warriors emerged, such as the MacDonalds, MacDowells, and MacRorys. The upper-class *galloglas*, while still quite mercenary, held noble ranking comparable to the aristocratic knights of the Middle Ages, but they

chose to fight as heavy footmen instead of chivalric horsemen.

The *galloglas* families influenced the medieval politics of Ireland alongside its Gaelic and English nobility, their military prowess guaranteeing them a share of power. They fostered family rivalries due more to their individual ambitions than any happenstance of serving antagonistic employers. As Renaissance warfare in England and the western Celtic kingdoms turned more toward pike formations and firearms, the role of the brave and hardy *galloglas* diminished until they disappeared from the battlefields of Ireland in the early 1600s.

A *galloglas* primarily fought with a greataxe or greatsword. Side arms included the longsword, shortsword, and dagger. He commonly wore a chain shirt or chainmail.

SCOTS-IRISH GALLOGLAS AFFILIATION

Symbol: Each *galloglas* clan has its own symbol, usually involving animal motifs. Clans typically have a specific tartan pattern they use in articles of clothing as well.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: The *galloglas* clans value honor, loyalty, and prowess in battle more than anything else. They readily involve themselves in the constant warfare of their homelands. No simple mercenaries, these power brokers generate respect akin to knights, their noble counterparts.

Enemies and Allies: *Galloglas* clans share intense rivalries with each other, and they seek out enemy clans on the battlefield. They treat non-*galloglas* (employers, foreigners, and so on) with friendliness or enmity on a case-by-case basis depending on the situation.

Type: Tribe (Racial)

Scale: 9 (Regional/barony)

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
Base attack bonus +10 or higher	+1
Barbarian or fighter	+1
Power Attack feat	+1
Defeat enemy of your level or higher one-on-one	+1/4 enemy's HD
Assist clan in great battle	+2

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: As you advance through your clan's ranks, you gain influence over its members.

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	No affiliation or junior member with no benefits.
4–10	Clan Warrior: Your chieftain gives you a masterwork greataxe or greatsword. –4 penalty on attempts to influence the attitude of members of enemy affiliations.
11–15	Hero: +4 circumstance bonus on Intimidate checks. +2 racial bonus on attack rolls when charging on foot.
16–22	Champion: +4 racial bonus on attack rolls when charging on foot*. You are accompanied by two kerns (1st-level warrior attendants from lower-classes). Must defeat any member of an enemy clan in single combat once per month or reduce affiliation score by 4.
23–29	Sub-Chieftain: Inspire courage (supernatural ability) 1/day, as a bard of same character level. Must donate 10% of treasure to affiliation.
30 or higher	Clan Chieftain: Gain four bodyguards (6th-level barbarians or fighters). Must defeat a CR 13 enemy of affiliation in single combat once per year or reduce affiliation score by 20.

*Does not stack with the +2 racial bonus on attack rolls when charging on foot.

Executive Powers: Raid, Terrorize, War.

GERMAN LANDSKNECHTS

Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519 CE) created the *landsknechts* ("servants of the land") in response to the amazing Swiss mercenary units of pikemen and halberdiers that began to appear in major conflicts throughout Western Europe. The companies of German *landsknechts* typically worked as mercenaries until their demise in the 16th Century. Like the Swiss, they sought employment throughout Western Europe and worked hard to prove they were just as brutally effective. They had one unwritten code: *landsknechts* should not fight against the Empire. Germans who opposed *landsknechts* in imperial service expected no mercy from their brethren.

Doppelsoldners, "double soldiers," were veteran mercenaries paid twice the normal wage for their experience and dangerous duties. Armed with *zweihanders* (two-handed swords) or halberds, they charged enemy units and used their weapons against their foes' pikes.

GERMAN LANDSKNECHTS AFFILIATION

Symbol: *Landsknecht* companies utilize a variety of heraldry devices and designs.

Background, Goals, and Dreams: Nominally, the *landsknechts* serve the German land and people, but like many mercenaries, they could prove quite predatory. A *landsknecht* company might pursue a foe of the empire with religious fervor, pillage any village it comes across, or open itself up to negotiations with any number of rival factions.

Enemies and Allies: The *landsknechts* fight whomever they are paid to fight, but they reserve their hatred for fellow *landsknechts* who sell their services to enemies of the empire.

Type: Fighting Company.

Scale: 10 (Regional). Individual company scale varies according to its size and employer (prince, emperor, and so on).

Criterion	Affiliation Score Modifier
Character level	+1/2 PC's level
Base attack bonus +10 or higher	+1
Fighter	+1
Assist the company in major battle	+1
Weapon Focus (awl pike, greatsword, or halberd)*	+1
Weapon Specialization (awl pike, greatsword, or halberd)*	+2
Disobeys superior officer	–10

*You may earn this affiliation modifier bonus up to three times (once with each weapon listed). For more information regarding the awl pike and other polearms, see "The Point of Pole Arms" in *DRAGON* #331.

Titles, Benefits, and Duties: As you advance through the ranks of this affiliation, you grant benefits to allies and gain more powerful abilities for yourself as well.

Affiliation Score	Title: Benefits and Duties
3 or lower	No affiliation or junior member with no benefits.
4–10	Landsknecht: +2 bonus on attacks against mounted opponents and their mounts. +2 bonus on opposed rolls against mounted overrun attempts. –2 penalty on attempts to influence the attitude of any character not belonging to a fighting company.
11–15	Master At Arms: If you have Weapon Focus (awl pike, greatsword, or halberd) you gain Weapon Specialization in that weapon.
16–22	Sergeant: May use the aid another action as a move action. +2 circumstance bonus on Will saves against fear effects.
23–29	Captain: Allies within 30 feet receive +2 bonus on Will saves.
30 or higher	Great Commander: Allies within 60 feet receive +4 bonus to Will saves. Gain immunity to fear effects.

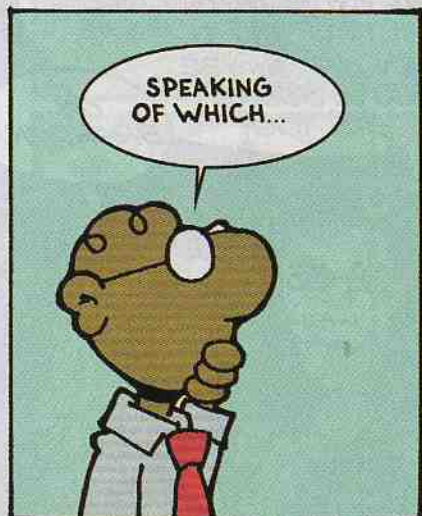
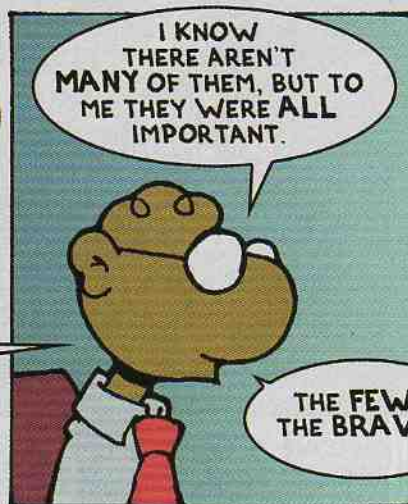
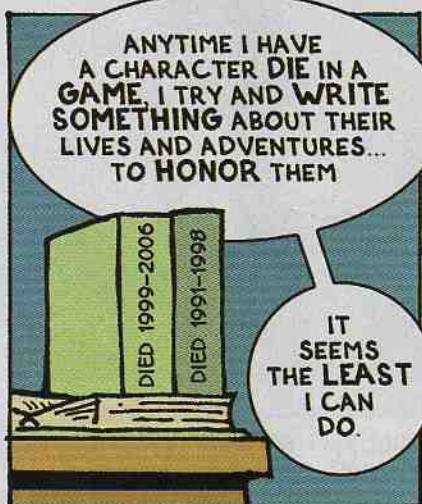
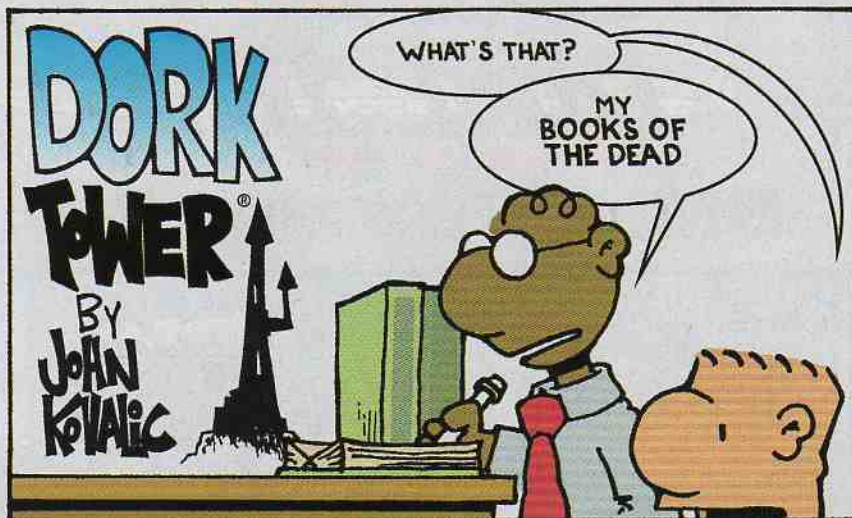
Executive Powers: Crusade, Plunder, War. 🏹

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

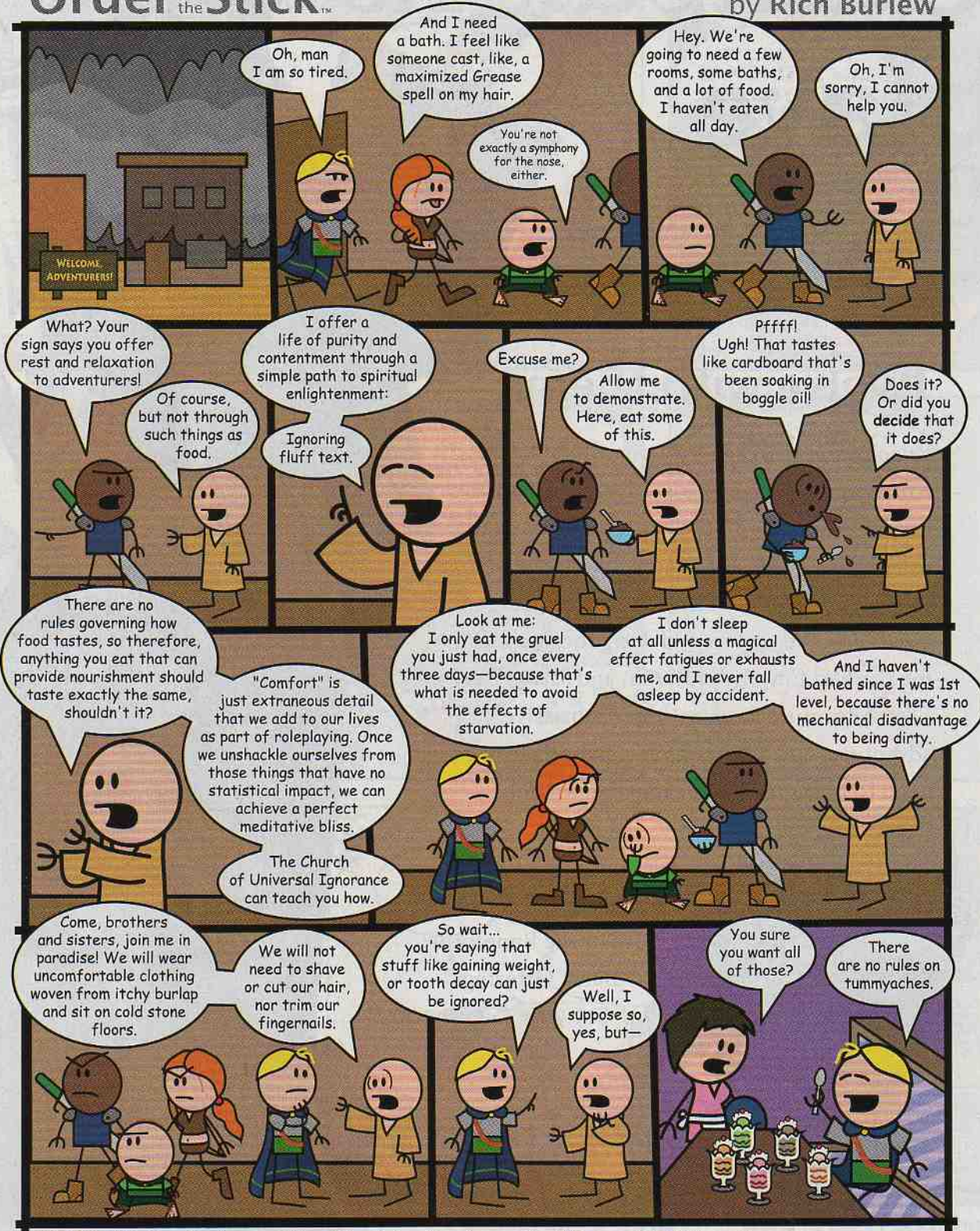
Half of what I know will be obsolete in five years; I'd just like to know which half.





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