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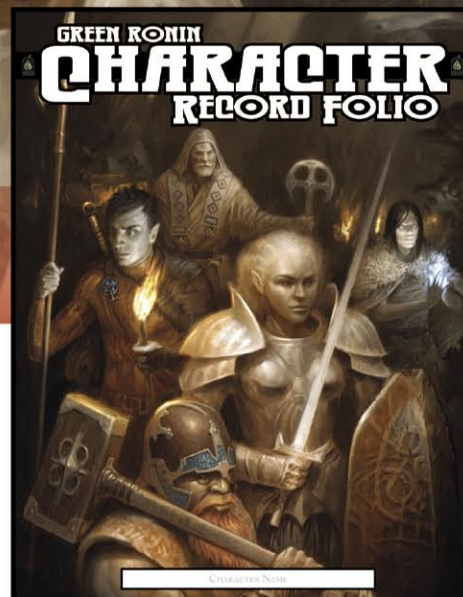
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LEVEL UP • Volume 1, Issue 1 • April 2009
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FROM THE EDITOR

WELCOME TO THE FIRST ISSUE OF *LEVEL UP*, a quarterly magazine devoted to Fourth Edition Dungeons & Dragons. That's right, you read that correctly. I said *devoted* – as in solely committed – to Fourth Edition Dungeons & Dragons. I can't be any more forward or frank than that. This magazine is all about providing you with top-quality 4E material written by both industry professionals and talented freelancers.

Okay, now that I've made it clear where this magazine is headed, let me tell you a little bit about it. In the pages of this issue and those to follow, you will find intriguing new material to enhance your 4E game. You'll discover a ton of crunchy goodness in the form of new monsters, paragon paths, feats, and adventures; but you'll also find plenty of useful fluffy bits, from new gods to great advice articles for both DMs and players.

We'll be presenting a number of reoccurring articles and features in *Level Up*, all focused on offering you new options for your 4E campaign. Here's a little bit more about each of these features, some of which you'll find in this very issue.

Azagar's Advice for Adventurers: In this series, the infamous hobgoblin general dispenses his own hoary brand of wisdom in an attempt to educate "the greatest fools in the Known World" on matters military. Here you'll find new feats, weapons, armor, and all kinds of useful tidbits for the military-minded PC.

Beyond the Bookshelf: This series features additional material from one of the Goodman Games 4E releases. Here, you'll find a wide variety of useful information and crunch that will further expand the material presented in the original product.

Blackdirge's Bestiary: Need more monsters for your 4E campaign? Then look no further. In this series you'll find challenging new monsters to throw at your PCs, complete with stats, lore, tactics, and illustrations. We aim to cover a wide range of levels in this series; from lowly level 1 minions that do little more than make an ugly stain on your armor, to mighty solo monsters guaranteed to scare the hell out of your epic-level PCs.

Dear Archmage Abby: Need some advice on how to manage your unruly gaming group? Or maybe you just need a sympathetic shoulder to cry on. Either way, Archmage Abby is ready to answer your gaming-related questions with wit, charm, and just a dash of absent-minded eccentricity.

Deities of Aereth: Looking for some new gods your expand your 4E pantheon? Let author Jeff LaSala give you the low-down on the various gods of the Dungeon Crawl Classics world of Aereth. Each installment features a new Aerethian deity, and comes with all the information you need to drop the new god right into your own campaign. This feature also presents new crunch associated with each deity, including paragon paths, prayers, magic items, and rituals.

GM Gems: This series is aimed at the poor, beleaguered GM, hungry for new material to add to his existing 4E campaign. In this series you'll find a little bit of everything; from new monster templates to supercharge your existing 4E critters, to useful advice articles aimed on designing monsters, adventures, and campaigns.

Jack's Ultra-Short Reviews: Tired of reading page-long reviews on 4E material? Then let Jack give you what you need shotgun-style with his patented ultra-short reviews. Each ultra-short review is packed full of information about the product, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses with scalpel-sharp precision.

PC Pearls: This series provides players with new options in the form of paragon paths, epic destinies, powers, feats, and just about anything that can make your PC shiny and unique.

A Picture Tells 1,000 Words: In this feature, we take a single fantasy illustration, and then build a short, 1,000-word encounter around it. These short scenarios are generic enough to drop right into your campaign as random encounters or even the precursor to a larger adventure.

Roads to Adventure: Each issue of *Level Up* includes a complete, short 4E adventure designed to easily fit into nearly any existing fantasy campaign. Often the adventure will feature new material, such as monsters, that appear in the same issue. You can expect the talented authors of the Dungeon Crawl Classics line of adventures to make an appearance in this feature, including the illustrious Harley Stroh in this very issue.

So there you have it; the lowdown on a magazine committed to 4E excellence. We hope you enjoy this first issue of *Level Up* and all those to follow. If you have any comments or questions, drop by www.goodman-games.com and let us know what you think of our little magazine. Also, if you'd like to get involved with *Level Up* on a more personal basis, check out issue two for submission guidelines.

Aeryn "Blackdirge" Rudel

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Never Split the Party!

By Andy Collins

If there's a more useful and oft-cited piece of adventuring advice, I don't think I've heard it in my many years of gaming. (Well, other than "Stop annoying the DM.")

Every time a player starts to suggest a seemingly clever plan that involves "you go that way and we'll go this way," the rest of the table inevitably chimes in:

"Dude, you never split the party!"

And you know what? They're usually right.

As clever as these plans may seem at the time, dividing your forces usually sets you up for failure. Among other reasons, this is because the D&D party is made up of specialists, not generalists. Put four to six specialists together and you complement each others' talents, filling in the gaps of your comrades' skill sets. But one or two specialists on their own inevitably encounter situations they aren't equipped (or powerful enough) to handle.

Now it's arguable whether those failed plans are remembered better by the players who carried them out or the DMs who witnessed them...but speaking as a lifetime DM I can attest to how memorable they can be for the guy sitting behind the screen. Here's just one example of a catastrophic party-split that occurred in one of my games.

Back in high school, I put together the mother of all dragon lairs to test the mettle of my players, who were getting just a little too cocky for my taste. They had bested elemental cultists and sinister slavers, mighty giants and vile drow, and even a giant ape named Oonga...but they'd never really faced a dragon on its home turf.

So I spent hours crafting the perfect dragon and the perfect lair. To keep the players on their toes, I chose a relatively unknown dragon type (the obsidian dragon, if I remember correctly, drawn from the pages of *Dragon* magazine). I drew a lair full of twists and turns, giving the dragon plenty of places to spy on the characters as they explored its reaches.

And I gave the dragon some truly nasty spells, including one spiky little number that I'll come back to in a minute.

As you might expect, the party soon tired of the labyrinth and fell back on one of their favorite tricks. The druid used *stone shape* to craft a tiny hole in the wall extending many yards in that direction (assuming that he'd eventually hit another cave). Next, the rest of the characters climbed into their handy *portable hole*, which the druid folded up and put in his pocket. Finally, the druid *wild shaped* into a tiny animal to scurry through the hole he'd created.

Knowing that this result was coming, I had taken the player of the druid aside for this exchange. After a couple of minutes, I returned to inform the rest of the players that, after a longer delay than expected, the *portable hole* finally opened...but instead of fresh air pouring in, they were hit by a torrent of icy water.

Of course the dragon had been watching the whole time.

Of course he was ready at the other end.

Of course he hit the druid with a *dominate person* spell and politely asked him to return to normal form and hand over the *portable hole*.

And yes, of course the dragon opened the *portable hole* at the bottom of a river of glacial melt-off running through his cave.

The shock of the near-freezing waterfall hitting the PCs gave the dragon the precious seconds he needed to unleash an icy breath weapon that turned the entire party into a PCicle. (Or would those be Adventurer Pops?)

Now, the dragon could have been content at that. After all, he'd eliminated the entire threat to his peace and quiet. But as wise dragons know, powerful adventurers often have powerful allies. Who could know how many more pesky interruptions the dragon would have to put up with?

Here's where one of those nasty spells came in: a little number appropriately named *virus charm*. This ingenious spell put a single foe under your mental control, but it didn't stop there: everyone you came in contact with while so enchanted was hit with the same effect. It might have had some maximum number of targets—I no longer remember all the details—but it was plenty potent enough for the dragon's purposes.

After selecting two of the weakest-willed members of the party, the dragon sent them out, carrying his viral enchantment inside their brains, to “get help” for their trapped friends. Wave after wave of proceeding lower-level allies sallied forth to save their comrades from an icy doom...and wave after wave joined them on the dragon's shelf. Things looked pretty grim.

Eventually, however, one of the players came up with his own tricky plan to solve the problem: find an ally who could resist the charm! Being as the campaign was currently set in the Forgotten Realms, they headed to Shadowdale to enlist the aid of the legendary mage known as Elminster. Since the dragon hadn't specified that anyone was off limits, I happily allowed them to exploit this clever loophole.

As they had hoped, the mighty wizard defied the dragon's enchantment, then freed them from its grip. The characters slipped back into the dragon's lair, rescued their now-humbled comrades, and together bested the crafty beast in mortal combat.

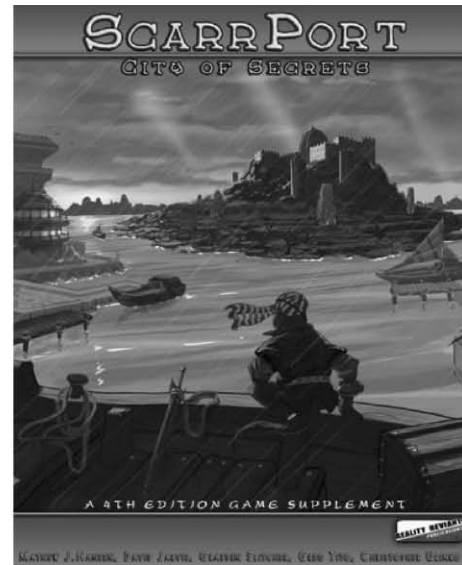
(OK, maybe that technically doesn't count as “splitting” the party, but “Never Put the Rest of the Party in an Extradimensional Space While You Sneak Through the Dragon's Lair” doesn't quite have the same ring to it.)

Nearly twenty years after the fact, the players still dredge up that adventure in support of the most valuable piece of advice in gaming.

Oh, and they don't annoy the DM as much any more, either.



Andy Collins has been taking advantage of too-clever D&D players for over 25 years. Eventually, he put his DM training to use by joining Wizards of the Coast R&D, where he has designed, developed, and edited dozens of RPG products since 1998. A co-designer of the new 4th Edition Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game, he currently manages the RPG development and editing team for Wizards of the Coast. He lives in the Seattle area with his wife Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel, their two cats, and whichever band of hungry gamers happens to be around that day.



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Roads to Adventure: RIFT OF THE HILL GIANT THANE

AN ADVENTURE FOR 7TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

By Harley Stroh

The Rift of the Hill Giant Thane is designed to be a challenging adventure for 5 characters of 7th level. Setting-neutral, the adventure can be easily inserted into any campaign setting, or played as a quick one-shot adventure in a single session.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

In the course of their adventures – be they overland or underground – the adventurers encounter an arcane black rift, literally a tear in the fabric of the multiverse. Exploring the rift, the heroes are catapulted into a series of ancient caverns, ruled

by ancient scaled behemoths from another age. The behemoths have been domesticated by a band of ogres and their hill giant thane. Forced to either fight or puzzle their way through the cave complex, the PCs encounter a cascade of lava, clues to the cave's origin, and finally, the thane himself.

BACKGROUND

Untold years ago, the archmage Xath-Quo succeeded in mastering the art of chronomancy. The wizard used his mastery to travel through time, amassing great treasures from every age. Unknown to the archmage, his travels came at a terrible cost: every time his master spell was cast, it left a tear in the warp and weft of the universe. Creatures from opposing times were drawn together, and in some cases (as in the caverns of the behemoths) entire worlds were drawn through the fabric of time and space, and cast into the future.

Xath-Quo's end came ignominiously. While preparing his master spell, he was drawn through a tear in the universe and cast into a cave complex inhabited by dread behemoths from a forgotten time. Unprepared, the archmage was mortally wounded, but managed to live long enough to hide himself in the bowels of the cave. Collapsing against a cave formation, Xath-Quo died alone, the victim of his own magic.

The caves themselves were drawn through a tear similar to the one that had consumed Xath-Quo, bringing the behemoths and their lairs into the present day, when a band of ogres led by a hill giant chief took the caves for their own. Under the hill giant's direction, the ogres were quick to tame the behemoths, and now use the monsters to spread terror and panic on their raids against the realm.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

DMs can design story hooks specific to their PCs, or modify one of the story hooks listed below:

- In the depths of an arcane dungeon, the PCs fall prey to a pit trap. Rather than hitting bottom, they are drawn through a temporal rift, emerging in area 1-1.
- In the course of their explorations, the PCs discover a black "tear" in the fabric of the universe. The tear is perfectly black and devoid of substance. Reaching into the void catapults the PCs through space, into area 1-1.
- The PCs discover a powerful relic, never realizing its potentially deadly side effects. The first time the artifact is activated, it creates a temporal rift around the PCs. Moments later, they emerge in area 1-1.

PLAYER BEGINNING

Read or paraphrase the following to start the adventure:

In an instant, darkness engulfs you. The world falls away, and a roaring fills your ears. For a sickening moment you are in freefall, rushing headlong towards the unknown. Then a crackling red glow fills your senses and you crash into a rocky slope, tumbling, spinning, and rolling to a bruised and bloodied stop.

Despite their rough entry, the heroes take no damage during their fall. Once the PCs regain their bearings, proceed to area 1-1.

AREA 1-1: SEALED RIFT

Encounter Level 6 (XP 1,150)

SETUP

Ogre Scout
3 Feathered Lizardwolves

Read or paraphrase the following:

You stand inside a low cavern at the base of a steep slope composed of craggy black rock. Above, small boulders and loose rocks continue to fall down the slope. Whatever passage brought you to this cavern has clearly been erased by the collapse from above. The air is choked with dust and dry heat.

Before you, the craggy cavern descends briefly before splitting into two passages. The first pulses with a brilliant red glow. The second is dark and still.



Ogre Scout

Level 8 Artillery

Large natural humanoid

XP 350

Initiative +7

Senses Perception

HP 74; **Bloodied** 37

AC 20, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17

Speed 8

⚔ **Spiked Club** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.

⚔ **War Javelin** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.

⚔ **Gut Shot** (standard; recharge ☞☞☞) ♦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; requires javelin; the ogre shifts 3 squares and makes a ranged basic attack on a single target; +15 vs. AC; 3d10+5 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant

Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 11 (+4)

Con 20 (+9) **Int** 4 (+1) **Cha** 6 (+2)

Equipment hide armor, spiked club, quiver with 15 war javelins, trophy belt, torch.

Feathered Lizardwolf

Level 5 Skirmisher

Medium natural beast (reptile)

XP 200

Initiative +8

Senses Perception +9; low-light vision

HP 62; **Bloodied** 31

AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15

Speed 9

⚔ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+10 vs. AC; 1d10+3 damage.

⚔ **Leaping Slash** (standard; recharge ☞☞☞)
The feathered lizardwolf shifts 9 squares and attacks a single target; +11 vs. AC; 2d8+6 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Pack Hunter

A feathered lizardwolf gains a +1 bonus to damage rolls per feathered lizardwolf adjacent to the target.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Skills Athletics +10 (+15 jumping), Stealth +11

Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)

Con 14 (+4) **Int** 3 (-2) **Cha** 10 (+2)

Shortly after the heroes' inglorious entry, an ogre scout leading a pack of three feathered lizardwolves enters the chamber from the passage leading north to area 1-2. The ogre is an old, cagey hunter, and what he lacks in intelligence, he makes up for in cunning. Sent to investigate the cave-in, the hunter turns the pack of lizardwolves loose. He keeps his distance, hurling barbed war javelins. The lizardwolves sprint towards the closest foe, scrambling up the rocky slope. The ogre retreats when the feathered lizardwolves fall in battle, withdrawing to area 1-2 to alert his allies.

The crumbling, rocky slope favors those on higher ground. Any time an attacker is further south than his foe, the attacker receives +1 on attack rolls. The intuitive lizardwolves try to circle around the PCs to press the attack from above.

Treasure: The aged hunter wears a leather girdle composed of gruesome trophies taken from slain foes. The belt includes a pair of enormous fangs, each over a foot in length. The belt also holds trophies from more recent foes, including a trio of scalps taken from forest elves that fell in recent raids. Finally, a skirt of blackened elfin chain links are belted onto the leather girdle – worn by a Medium-sized or smaller humanoid, the skirt takes up the belt slot and offers a +1 magical armor bonus.

AREA 1-2: COMMON ROOM

Encounter Level 7 (XP 1,050)

SETUP

3 Ogre Savages

If the PCs enter from area 1-1, read or paraphrase the following:

The passage widens before starting up a steep slope. A cleared path wends its way up the slope, climbing to a high, rocky ledge. Light flickers from behind the ledge, and the smell of smoke and singed flesh drifts down the slope.

If the PCs enter from area 1-5, read or paraphrase the following:

The passageway opens into a large common room. The air is thick with smoke and smell of cooked flesh. A fire pit is built up inside a ring of rocks in the center of the chamber. A dozen crude pallets of furs and skins ring the firepit.

Ogre Savage

Level 8 Brute

Large natural humanoid

XP 350

Initiative +4

Senses Perception +4

HP 111; **Bloodied** 55

AC 19; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16

Speed 8

⚔ **Greatclub** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.

⚔ **Angry Smash** (standard; recharge ☞☞☞) ♦ **Weapon**
The ogre savage makes a greatclub attack, but gets two attack rolls and takes the better result.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant

Str 21 (+9) **Dex** 11 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+4)

Con 21 (+9) **Int** 4 (+1) **Cha** 6 (+2)

Equipment hide armor, greatclub, skin bag containing an obsidian knife, 1d20 gp, strips of dwarf jerky, and a handful of "pretty" skulls.

A trio of ogres lurks in the room. If the ogres have been alerted by the scout in area 1-1, the brutes are on guard, watching the exits and preparing an ambush. If the ogres haven't been alerted to the PCs' presence, they are lounging around the fire, roasting the corpse of an elf.

Ambush: Under orders of their thane, the ogres have lined the top of the slope with boulders. If the PCs enter from the south, the ogres roll the boulders down onto heroes advancing up the slope. The ogres roll 1 boulder per round (a standard action); +10 vs. Reflex, inflicts 1d12+6 damage on a hit, and knocks the victim 3 squares down the slope.

The ogres have also taken pains to train their lizardwolf "pets." The lead ogre has a whistle carved from bone that he keeps hanging on a cord around his neck. If the heroes enter from the west, the ogre withdraws from combat and spends a standard action to sound the whistle. The whistle rouses the drowsy lizardwolves from area 1-3; 1d4 of the lizardwolves come scampering into the chamber from the west in 1d6+2 rounds. (See area 1-3 for statistics on the lizardwolves.)

Treasure: The ogres' thane has taken nearly everything of value, leaving the ogres with little in the way of treasure. The loot they have worth plundering is all the result of recent raids. A close search of the chamber (Perception, DC 15) uncovers an ornately detailed platinum ring (worth 120 gp) cast in the shape of a dryad.

A close inspection of the pallets reveals a dozen barbed war javelins in various states of repair, a single great club, and 2d20 hides (made worthless due to the ogres' stench).

A search of the remainder of the chamber turns up a myriad of broken bones (mostly those of elves and orcs). The bones are broken into splinters, the marrow dug out with crude obsidian knives.

AREA 1-3: LAVA FLOW

Encounter Level 8 (XP 1,500)

SETUP

10 Lizardwolves

Read or paraphrase the following:

Waves of scalding heat wash out of the chamber ahead. Shielding your eyes from the blazing heat, you can spy a cascade of molten rock pouring out from a fissure high above. The lava crashes below, splashing throughout the chamber, before spilling out through a narrow passage.

Lizardwolf

Level 3 Skirmisher

Small natural beast (reptile)

XP 150

Initiative +7

Senses Perception +8; low-light vision

HP 45; **Bloodied** 22

AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 13

Speed 8

⬇ **Bite** (standard; at-will)

+8 vs. AC; 1d8+1 damage, and the lizardwolf shifts 1 square.

⬇ **Slashing Kick** (standard; recharge ⓂⓂⓂ)

+8 vs. AC; 2d6+4 damage, and ongoing 2 damage (save ends).

Pack Hunter

A lizardwolf gains a +1 bonus to damage rolls per lizardwolf adjacent to the target.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages —

Skills Athletics +7 (+12 jumping), Stealth +10

Str 13 (+2)

Dex 18 (+5)

Wis 14 (+3)

Con 13 (+2)

Int 3 (-3)

Cha 10 (+1)

A low trench rings the near wall, shadowed from the brilliant glare of the molten lava by a craggy shelf.

This chamber exudes scalding heat. Creatures that begin their turns within 5 squares of the cascading lava suffer 15 fire damage per round. Anyone foolish enough to enter the lava suffers 100 fire damage per round.

The shelf has been built up over the years by cooled splatters of molten rock. It shields the near wall from the direct radiance of the lava — though the heat is still painfully uncomfortable, it doesn't cause damage.

A pack of lizardwolves makes their nest in the shadows of the trench, basking in the lava's radiance. The drowsy lizardwolves are slow to rise if undisturbed. A PC can slip past with three DC 15 Stealth checks. Note that the lizardwolves are not asleep, and any PC closing to attack the resting behemoths instantly draws their ire.

Once roused, the lizardwolves are at -2 to hit for the first two rounds of combat.

Treasure: The lizardwolves have no need for treasure. A thick bed of bones lines the bottom of the trench but there is naught here to interest the PCs.





The Rift of the Hill Giant Thane



AREA 1-4: THE STEAM CHIMNEY

Read or paraphrase the following:

Thick mists, heated to near-scalding temperatures, fill the passageway, obscuring all sight. Condensation soaks you from head to toe, sending stinging rivulets down your back, saturating your clothes, weapons and all your possessions with water.

The mists limit sight to 10 feet, forcing PCs to discover the cavern by slow and cautious exploration. The chamber itself is a large chimney, nearly 75 feet in height, rising to a small chamber (area 1-5). A narrow cleft in the ceiling of the chamber permits ground water to seep into the chimney and run in rivulets down the walls. Reaching the heated rock below, the water turns to steam, where it rises to the peak of the chimney, only to cool and condense back into water, beginning the cycle anew.

Due to the reduced visibility, the true height of the cave ceiling is not intuitively obvious to explorers. Only those specifically searching out the ceiling discover the true nature of the cavern. Characters taking the time to search the entire chamber discover a pair of barrels used by the ogres to collect water.

The craggy base of the chimney makes for an easy climb at first (Athletics, DC 15). After 25 feet, the rock of the chimney wall becomes encrusted with mineral sediment left by condensed water. The crumbly, salt-like sediment is quick to pull away from the rock wall, resulting in a fall for the unprepared climber. After 45 feet, call for a second Athletics check (DC 20), and after 65 feet call for a third and final Athletics check (DC 25).

AREA 1-5: THE WIZARD'S THRONE

Read or paraphrase the following:

The chimney opens into a small chamber encrusted with white, chalky sediment. Everything is slick with water and condensation. Tiny droplets form on the walls, ceiling, and delicate rock formations, joining in thicker rivulets that cascade down the chimney below.

Your heart skips a beat when you realize you are not alone. A skeleton, seated atop a rocky throne, watches you with hollow eyes from across the chamber. The skeleton and throne are entirely covered in the chalky, accreted sediment, making them appear far larger than their actual size.

Bleeding from mortal wounds, the archmage Xath-Quo fled to this chamber to escape the behemoths below. He collapsed atop a rock against the wall and died, his tome still open on his lap. Centuries later, he has become part of the complex that killed him, as minerals slowly ate away his bones, leaving only petrified remains.

Xath-Quo's skeleton is no longer made of bone, but of the same chalky minerals that coat the chamber and chimney below. Most of his items have suffered the same fate, either rotting away or slowly being petrified into rock. The skeleton cannot be removed, but only broken from its perch.

Treasure: Despite the archmage's fate, some of his more resilient items have resisted transformation. A thorough search, either taking an hour or more to excavate the skeleton from the wall or a lucky check (Perception, DC 23), reveals a gold torque (worth 300 gp) cast as a pair of entwined griffons.

A *+2 pact blade* short sword is encrusted beneath the layer of minerals (Perception, DC 15). A Nimorian war dagger, the long, serrated blade does damage as a short sword.

AREA 1-6: PASSAGE OUT OF TIME

If this adventure is to be used as a one-shot, this passage has been closed off by a cave-in. If the DM would like to continue with additional behemoth-themed adventures, the PCs discover a narrow passage through the rubble. Heroes squeezing through the crawlspace discover a vast underground chasm lit by a false sun, and inhabited by all manner of behemoths, both benign and deadly.

AREA 1-7: THANE OF THE RIFT

Encounter Level 8 (XP 1,500)

SETUP

Urgot, the Hill Giant Thane Horned Behemoth

Read or paraphrase the following:

The cavern widens, branching into a pair of rocky tiers. The first tier rises to a low stone wall shielding a large alcove dug into the far side of the cavern. The lower tier wends its way around a bend. From around the corner you spy the unmistakable glare of sunlight, but a trio of large forms seated around a smoldering fire bars the way. Their backs turned towards you, the still figures seem lost in meditation or some fell incantation.

Urgot, the Hill Giant Thane Level 13 Brute
 Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 800

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +7

HP 159; **Bloodied** 79

AC 25; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23

Speed 8

 ⊕ **Greatclub** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
 Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.

 † **Sweeping Club** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Weapon**
 The hill giant makes a greatclub attack against two Medium or smaller targets; on a hit, the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone.

 ⚔ **Hurl Rock** (standard; at-will)
 Ranged 8/16; +15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant

Skills Athletics +16

Str 21 (+11) **Dex** 8 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+7)

Con 19 (+10) **Int** 7 (+4) **Cha** 9 (+5)

Equipment hide armor, greatclub, hide sack containing 12 boulders.

Horned Behemoth (Triceratops) Level 12 Brute
 Huge natural beast (reptile) XP 700

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +15; low-light vision

HP 150; **Bloodied** 75

AC 25; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 22

Speed 6

 ⊕ **Gore** (standard; at-will)
 Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d8+8 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

 † **Tossing Charge** (standard; recharge ☐☐☐☐☐☐)
 The horned behemoth makes a charge attack: +16 vs. AC; 4d8+8 damage, and the horned behemoth makes a secondary attack on the same target. *Secondary Attack*: +13 vs. Reflex; the target slides 1d6 squares and is knocked prone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Str 26 (+14) **Dex** 12 (+7) **Wis** 18 (+10)

Con 20 (+11) **Int** 2 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+5)

The hill giant thane, Urgot, not trusting the ogres to remain loyal, makes his lair above the complex's entrance. He keeps a horned behemoth as a mount to use on raids.

Alerted to the PCs' presence by sounds of combat coming from area 1-2, the thane has been busy preparing for battle. Urgot set straw dummies around the fire, disguising the forms with cloaks.

Urgot waits around the corner to the northeast, astride the triceratops. He waits for the PCs to attack the decoys, then charges around the corner, trampling any hero in his way.

The Upper Tier: Home to Urgot and his triceratops mount, the upper tier is protected by a pair of hidden pits. Covered by canvas and a sprinkling of dust, the pits are 15 feet deep and lined with sharpened wooden spikes (Perception, DC 20 to notice; 1d10 falling damage; Secondary: +5 versus Reflex, 1d12 damage). Urgot carefully avoids the pits, refusing to go down the northern ramp.

Heroes investigating the alcove behind the wall find a bed of moldering furs and skins. Beneath the flea and tick infested pelts, PCs find a trio of large sacks. In the sacks are 596 gp, 123 sp, a sapphire (worth 500 gp), and a topaz (worth 300 gp). In the back of the cavern hidden by a rug covered in rot and mold are several casks of wine (reduced to worthless vinegar), a spoiled flank of mutton, and the corpse of a large boar.

WRAPPING UP

With the death of the ogres and the hill giant thane, the immediate menace to the realm is defeated. However, if you and your players would like to continue with the "lost world" theme, the caverns of the hill giant thane can be used as a departure point for further adventures. You can use the hook presented in area 1-6, and populate the great cavern with more behemoths and even primitive humanoids; or allow the heroes to find another temporal rift, and truly embark on a prehistoric adventure.

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PC pearls

Weapon-Focused Warriors

By Aeryn "Blackdirge" Rudel



The choice of weapon is vitally important to all martial classes. A warrior's weapon can do much more than simply determine how much damage he deals in combat; it can also define his role on the battlefield, and how his allies and his enemies perceive him.

Take the historic example of the English archer in late medieval Europe. These archers were exceptionally skilled with the longbow and quickly rose to dominance on the battlefield. So much so that archers using the longbow became

synonymous with English armies, and the effectiveness of these archers nurtured a strong hatred from other nations whom the English defeated.

The English archer is a fine example of a fighter that has become so specialized in the use of a single weapon that it encompasses his entire identity as a warrior. This example can easily be followed in your D&D game, as players seek to further establish their characters' unique identity in the campaign with their choice of paragon paths.

NEW MILITARY RANGED WEAPON

Weapon	Prof.	Damage	Range	Price	Weight	Group	Properties
Arbalest	+2	1d10	20/40	50 gp	6 lb.	Crossbow	Load move, high crit

The arbalest, or heavy crossbow, is a robust weapon featuring a steel prod (bow) attached to a stock of solid hardwood. It can fire a bolt farther and with more power than a standard crossbow, but is slow to load.

The three martial paragon paths presented in this article feature warriors that have become highly skilled in a single weapon or group of weapons, and who draw their powers and abilities directly from that specialization. The arbalestier is a unique type of ranger that has mastered the crossbow, excelling as both a long-range sniper and a warrior that refuses to shrink from the fray just because he is armed with a ranged weapon. The crimson cleaver, a bloodthirsty fighter, specializes in the use of the axe, and his abilities reflect his weapon's blunt and forceful nature. Finally, the cudgel thug, a brutish rogue, uses the unobtrusive power of the club and mace to take what he wants from his enemies...and his victims.

So when it comes time for you to choose a paragon path for your character, maybe a dour dwarven arbalestier is in your future; or perhaps a rampaging dragonborn crimson cleaver; or maybe a furtive tiefling cudgel thug is more to your liking. Whatever your taste, all three of these paragon paths can take your character in a new direction, and add a bit more focus to your fighter.

ARBALESTIER

"Sure, bows are great when your enemy is armored in nothing but his skin and you don't have to lie down or fire from behind a wall. Give me a nice bit of wood and steel any day, and I'll put a bolt through a mouse's heart at three hundred paces."

Prerequisites: Ranger, archer fighting style;
Feat: Weapon Focus (Crossbow)

You are a master of the crossbow and can send a bolt through the visor of an enemy's helmet from 100 yards away, or puncture shield, armor, and flesh with the power of your weapon at close range. Although your weapon might seem unwieldy against the smooth precision of a longbow, you are no less skilled, accurate, or determined to end your quarry's life than any archer.

ARBALESTIER PATH FEATURES

Arbalestier's Action (11th level): Whenever you spend an action point to take an extra action, you gain a +4 bonus on ranged attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Quick Load (11th level): You may reload a crossbow as a free action, and an arbalest (see sidebar) as a minor action.

Sniper's Quarry (16th level): When you attack a target designated as your quarry that is beyond the first range increment of your crossbow, you ignore the -2 penalty to the attack roll for long range. If you have combat advantage on the target, the extra damage you deal via hunter's quarry increases by one die size (d6s to d8s; d8s to d10s).

ARBALESTIER EXPLOITS

Disarming Shot

Arbalestier Attack 11

You slam a bolt into your opponent's weapon, sending it spinning from his grasp and giving your comrades an advantage in combat.

Encounter ♦ Martial, Weapon

Standard Action Ranged weapon

Requirement: You must be wielding a crossbow

Target: One creature

Attack: Dexterity vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and any weapon the target is holding is knocked from its grasp and slides 1d3 squares away in a random direction. In addition, all adjacent allies gain combat advantage against the target until the end of your next turn.

Miss: Half damage, the target keeps its weapon, and your allies do not gain combat advantage.

Point Blank Power

Arbalestier Utility 12

At close range, your bolts strike with the force of ballista.

At-Will ♦ Martial

Free Action Personal

Requirement: You must be wielding a crossbow.

Effect: When you make a ranged basic attack against a target within a number of squares equal to your Dexterity modifier, you gain a +2 power bonus on the damage roll and score a critical hit on a roll of 19-20.

Probing Shot

Arbalestier Attack 20

Your first shot uncovers a weakness in your opponent's defenses, and each shot thereafter takes advantage of it.

Daily ♦ Martial, Weapon

Standard Action Ranged weapon

Requirement: You must be wielding a crossbow.

Target: One creature

Attack: Dexterity +2 vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.

CRIMSON CLEAVER

"There ain't nothin' better than a big, heavy axe; and that nice, meaty sound it makes when it strikes home... music to my ears!"

Prerequisites: Fighter; Feat: Weapon Focus (Axe)

You're a master of axes, both large and small. You are a blood-soaked killing machine, slaughtering your foes with the unsubtle caress of your weapon, and leaving a swathe of crushed skulls, severed limbs, and battlefields swamped with gore in your wake.

CRIMSON CLEAVER PATH FEATURES

Slaughter King (11th level): When you spend an action point to take another action, any standard action attack you make this turn deals additional ongoing damage equal to your Strength modifier (save ends).

Brutal Cleaver (11th level): When you use the *cleave* at-will power with an axe, enemies adjacent to you take 1[W] damage rather than just your Strength modifier in damage.

Scorn the Weak (16th level): You gain a +2 bonus to attacks rolls against bloodied targets, and bloodied enemies receive a -2 penalty to attack rolls against you.

CRIMSON CLEAVER EXPLOITS

Awesome Charge Crimson Cleaver Attack 11

You charge across the battlefield and deliver a tremendous blow with your mighty axe.

Encounter ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Requirement: You must be wielding an axe. You must use the charge action in conjunction with this power.

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone.

Miss: Half damage, and the target is not pushed or knocked prone.

Swing Hard In Case You Hit 'Em

Crimson Cleaver Utility 12

Who needs precision when your axe weighs 15 pounds?

Encounter ♦ **Martial, Stance**

Minor Action **Personal**

Requirement: You must be wielding an axe.

Effect: You take a -4 penalty to all attack rolls and gain a +4 bonus on damage rolls.

Skullsplitter

Crimson Cleaver Attack 20

You bring your axe down in a single massive blow, splitting your opponent's skull and splattering blood and brains across the battlefield.

Daily ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Requirement: You must be wielding an axe.

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength -2 vs. AC

Hit: 4[W] + Strength modifier damage.

Effect: If you roll a natural 20 with this power against a bloodied target, the target is reduced to 0 hit points immediately.

Miss: Half damage.

CUDGEL THUG

"If you can't lift a purse off a mark all quiet like, just knock him on the back of the head. Then you can take whatever you want while he's facedown in the muck and out cold."

Prerequisite: Rogue; Weapon Proficiency (club or mace)

You are a stealthy brute, striking your foes with bone-shattering strength and uncanny precision. Your weapon of choice is a heavy cudgel or mace, and with it, you can crack skulls, break bones, and knock opponents senseless.

CUDGEL THUG PATH FEATURES

Cudgel Thug's Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you gain a +4 bonus to damage rolls until the end of your next turn.

Thuggish Finesse (11th level): You may use your Dexterity bonus for attack and damage rolls with all melee basic attacks involving a club or mace. In addition, you may use a club or mace with any rogue exploit that calls for a light blade.

Incapacitating Critical (16th level): When you score a critical hit with a club or mace, your target is stunned until the end of your next turn.

CUDGEL THUG EXPLOITS

Coldcock

Cudgel Thug Attack 11

You sneak up on your target and deliver a tremendous blow to the base of his skull, dropping him to the ground, unconscious.

Encounter ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Requirement: You must be wielding a club or mace, and you must have combat advantage on a target to use this power.

Target: One creature

Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target is knocked unconscious (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target is stunned (save ends).

Brutal Scoundrel: The target takes a -2 penalty on all saving throws against ongoing effects related to this power.

Thick Skull

Cudgel Thug Utility 12

Helmets are for sissies.

Encounter ♦ **Martial**

Immediate Interrupt **Personal**

Trigger: You become dazed, stunned, or unconscious.

Effect: You end any of the above conditions that currently affect you.

Bell-Ringer Blow

Cudgel Thug Attack 20

You strike your opponent with skull-cracking force.

Daily ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Requirement: You must be wielding a club or mace.

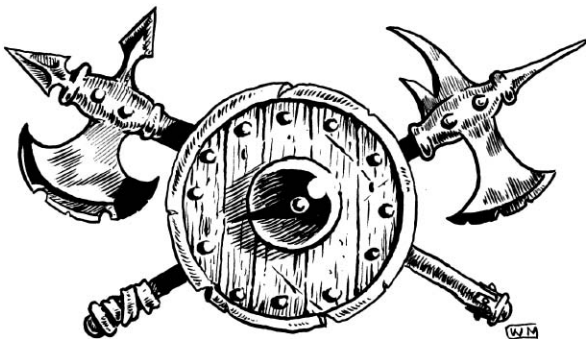
Target: One creature

Attack: Dexterity vs. AC

Hit: 4[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target takes 5 ongoing damage and a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

Miss: Half damage, and the target takes no ongoing damage or penalty to attack rolls.

Brutal Scoundrel: The target takes ongoing damage equal to 5 + your Strength modifier.



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BLACKDIRGE'S BESTIARY

NATURAL BORN KILLERS

By Aeryn "Blackdirge" Rudel

I'm one of those DMs that get a kick out of using real-world monsters to terrorize players. I think sometimes, players forget that our own world has been home to some pretty scary critters through the eons; critters that could give a dragon a run for its money on size, power, and ferocity any day of the week. Of course, when you're thinking about the baddest of the bad in terms of natural beasts, it's hard to go too far wrong with dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs – I mean, behemoths, - are, in my opinion, an integral part of the D&D monster experience. How can you have lost, antediluvian jungles without a few T-rexes or velociraptors running around frightening the natives? Well, you just can't. The big scaly brutes have been with D&D since the beginning, and although the Monster Manual gave us a token few behemoths to work with; it was hardly enough to plan your next visit to Skull Island. This monster article details some favorite dinosaurs from editions past, and gives DMs a good place to start when planning those great, "lost world" adventures.

Now, we all know that 4E uses some naming conventions that are not everyone's cup of tea. I know some of you might balk at the thought of using "behemoths" when plain ol' "dinosaurs" will do. Well, fear not, the dinos detailed below feature both a 4E-style name and the standard, scientific name. That way, your jungle islands can be swarming with packs of feathered lizardwolves or terrorized by pods of deinonychus, as your taste or whims suits you.

— BD

BEHEMOTH

Behemoths are huge reptilian monsters that come in a variety of shapes and sizes. There are both herbivorous and carnivorous behemoths; however, most types are aggressive toward other creatures, and all can be deadly when riled.

BEHEMOTH LORE

A character knows the following with a successful Nature check.

DC 15: Hardskull behemoths are aggressive herbivores with enlarged, bony craniums that they use to batter enemies. They are tractable enough to be trained as mounts, and a number of dwarven clans prize the beasts as battle mounts.

DC 20: Horned behemoths are extremely ill tempered and are likely to attack anything that wanders too close. They live in small herds and are even more aggressive when their young are present.

DC 20: Deathjaw behemoths are apex predators that often prey upon other behemoths. Their jaws are horrendously powerful, and they can easily grind up flesh, bone, or foolhardy adventurers.

DC 25: Earthshaker behemoths are among the largest living creatures in existence. They travel in small herds, stripping whole swaths of forest and jungle of vegetation. Although not overly aggressive, earthshaker behemoths can be nearly unstoppable engines of destruction when riled.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Most behemoths, even the large predatory types, can be found in small groups or herds. In addition, some intelligent humanoid have gained the knack of training these huge beasts.

Level 6 Encounter (XP 1,200)

- 3 dwarf hammerers (level 5 soldier)
- 3 hardskull behemoths (level 5 soldier)

Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,000)

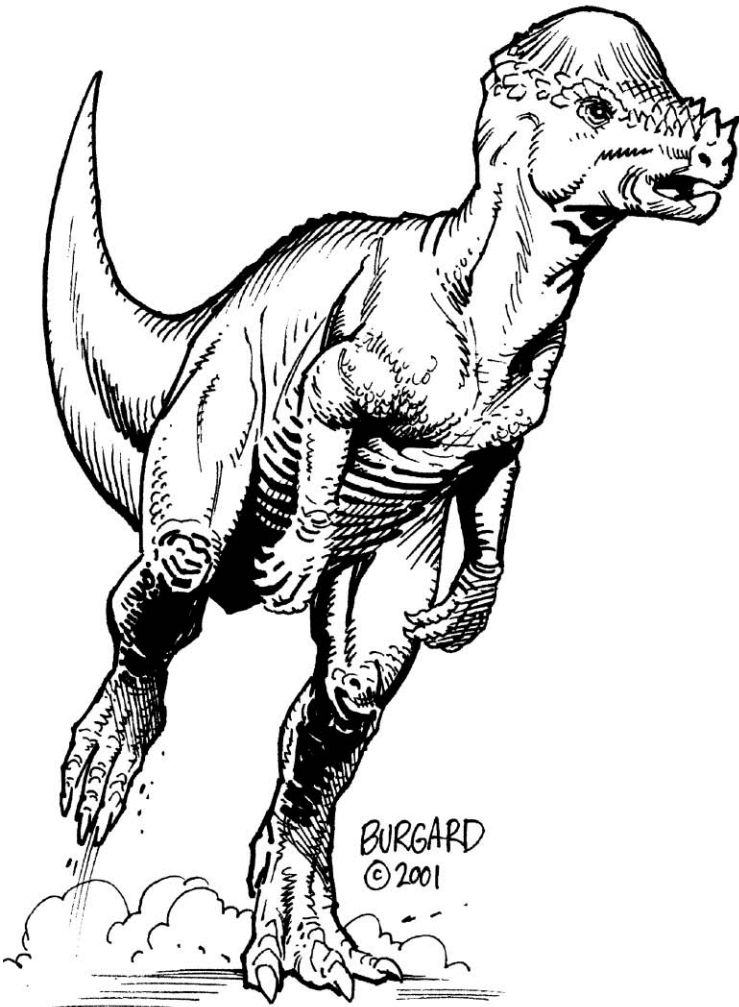
- 1 minotaur cabalist (level 13 controller)
- 3 minotaur warriors (level 10 soldier)
- 1 horned behemoth (level 12 brute)

Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,000)

- 1 deathjaw behemoth (level 18 skirmisher)
- 1 earth titan (level 16 elite brute)
- 4 hill giants (level 13 brute)

Level 25 Encounter (XP 36,300)

- 3 earthshaker behemoths (level 25 elite brute)



HARDSKULL BEHEMOTH

Hardskull behemoths are one of the more tractable species of giant reptile. They are often used as mounts by dwarves, who admire their tenacity and aggressiveness. However, most elves believe it is the hardskull behemoth's thick head that the dwarves truly admire.

Hardskull Behemoth		Level 5 Soldier
(Pachycephalosaurus)		
Large natural beast (mount, reptile)		XP 200
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +9; low-light vision	
HP 66; Bloodied 33		
AC 21; Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 16		
Speed 8		
⊕ Head Butt (standard; at-will) Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 1d10+5 damage.		
⊕ Hardskull Charge (standard; recharge ☼☼☼) The hardskull behemoth makes a charge attack: +13 vs. AC; 2d10+4 damage, and the target is knocked prone and dazed (save ends).		
Mighty Charge (when mounted by a friendly rider of 5th level or higher; at-will) ⊕ Mount The hardskull behemoth adds its Strength modifier to damage rolls on any charge attack made by its rider.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages —	
Str 20 (+7)	Dex 14 (+4)	Wis 14 (+4)
Con 18 (+6)	Int 2 (-2)	Cha 7 (+0)
Description <i>This bizarre animal stands tall on two powerful legs, and is covered in tiny, yellow, pebble-like scales. But the most striking feature of this reptilian beast is its massive, domed skull; a veritable helmet of bone. The stout muscles on the beast's neck make it fairly obvious that its enlarged cranium is nothing short of an organic battering ram.</i>		

HARDSKULL BEHEMOTH TACTICS

A hardskull behemoth attacks by slamming its bony cranium into foes. It begins combat by charging into battle, head lowered to deliver a devastating battering ram attack. This charging attack is powerful enough to knock over and stun even large predators.

HORNED BEHEMOTH

Horned behemoths are cantankerous and ill tempered, making them difficult to train under even the best conditions. However, some clans of minotaur have managed to tame these dangerous creatures, fitting them with howdahs that can carry up to four warriors into battle.

Horned Behemoth (Triceratops)

Level 12 Brute

Huge natural beast (reptile)

XP 700

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +15; low-light vision

HP 150; **Bloodied** 75

AC 25; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 22

Speed 6

⚔ **Gore** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +15 vs. AC; 2d8+8 damage, and ongoing 5 damage.

⚔ **Tossing Charge** (standard; recharge ⓂⓂⓂⓂ)
The horned behemoth makes a charge attack: +16 vs. AC; 4d8+8 damage, and the horned behemoth makes a secondary attack on the same target. *Secondary Attack*: +13 vs. Reflex; the target slides 1d6 squares and is knocked prone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Str 26 (+14) **Dex** 12 (+7) **Wis** 18 (+10)

Con 20 (+11) **Int** 2 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+5)

Description *This huge reptile has a massive head equipped with an armored frill and three long, goring horns. It stands on four pillar-like legs and has a short, stumpy tail. Looking at the beast, you are reminded of nothing so much as a giant, reptilian bull.*

DEATHJAW BEHEMOTH

Deathjaw behemoths are terrifying predators that hunt other behemoths and nearly anything else large enough to feed their huge appetites for flesh. Training these monsters seems an impossible task, and only a few determined tribes of hill giants have managed to rear the beasts successfully.

Deathjaw Behemoth (Tyrannosaurs Rex)

Level 18 Skirmisher

Huge natural beast (reptile)

XP 2,000

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision

HP 174; **Bloodied** 87

AC 32; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 25

Speed 8

⚔ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 3d6+9 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape).

⚔ **Gaping Charge** (standard; at-will)
The deathjaw behemoth makes a charge attack: +24 vs. AC; 3d6+18 damage, and the target is knocked prone and stunned (save ends).

⚔ **Jaws of Doom** (standard; at will)
Grabbed target only; automatic hit; 6d6+9 damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —

Skills Athletics +22, Stealth +18

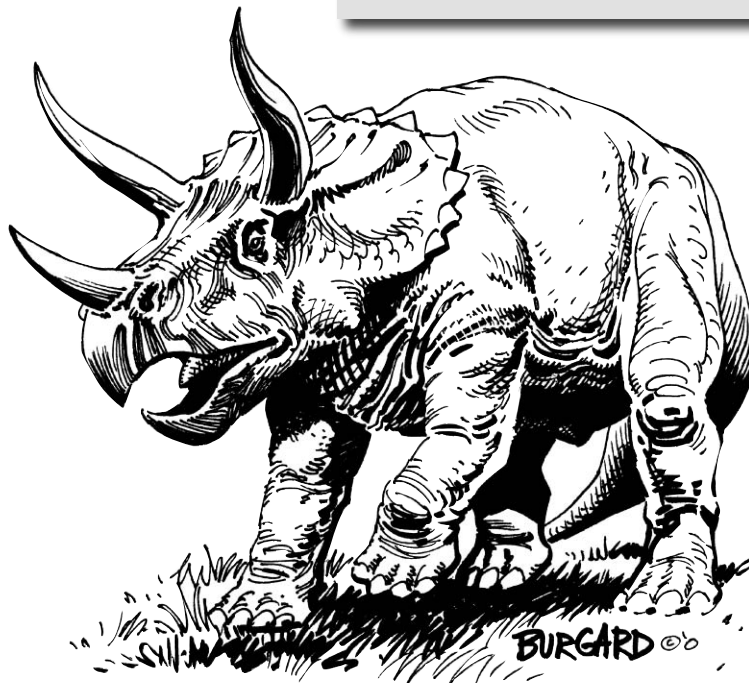
Str 28 (+18) **Dex** 18 (+13) **Wis** 16 (+12)

Con 22 (+15) **Int** 2 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+9)

Description *This towering, reptilian nightmare stands almost twenty feet high on two powerful legs. Its head is fully six feet long, split nearly in half by massive jaws lined with dagger-sized ivory spikes. It moves toward you, not like a lumbering beast, but with the quick, decisive gait of an apex predator.*

HORNED BEHEMOTH TACTICS

A horned behemoth charges into combat attempting to spear its foes on one of its three massive horns. Once an enemy has been gored, the horned behemoth will fling it away with a single toss of its immense head, sending it crashing to the earth up to 30 feet away.





DEATHJAW BEHEMOTH TACTICS

Despite its size, a deathjaw behemoth is a stealthy predator and attempts to close within charging distance of its prey when possible. Once it is close enough, a deathjaw behemoth charges at its target, jaws agape, and slams into the unfortunate victim with the force of a siege ram. After that, if the target still lives, the deathjaw behemoth latches on with its titanic jaws and then crushes, rips, and rends until its prey stops moving.



EARTHSHAKER BEHEMOTH

So massive they almost defy logic, earthshaker behemoths outstrip even the largest dragons in sheer size and power. They are found only in areas with enough vegetation to support their massive appetites; a herd of these beasts can defoliate a small forest in a matter of days. Because they are so large, earthshaker behemoths are all but immune to the attacks of smaller creatures.

Earthshaker Behemoth Level 24 Elite Brute (Argentinosaurus)

Gargantuan natural beast (reptile) XP 12,100

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +21; low-light vision

HP 548; **Bloodied** 274

AC 38; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 32

Resist 10 against effects that target AC

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6

Action Points 1

⚡ **Stamp** (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +27 vs. AC; 4d6+10 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

⚡ **Tail Snap** (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +25 vs. AC; 3d6+10 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).

⚡ **Rear and Plunge** (standard; recharge ☐☐☐☐)
Reach 3; +25 vs. AC; 8d6+10 damage, and the earthshaker behemoth makes a secondary attack on the same target.
Secondary Attack: +23 vs. Reflex; the earthshaker behemoth moves into the target's square, and the target is restrained and takes ongoing 15 damage (save ends both) until the earthshaker behemoth moves or the target rolls a successful saving throw.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages —

Str 30 (+22)

Dex 12 (+13)

Wis 18 (+16)

Con 24 (+19)

Int 2 (+8)

Cha 10 (+12)

Description *This beast is so large that it almost defies imagination. It is a mountain of living flesh well over 100 feet in length from its blunt-snouted head to the tip of its long, lashing tail. It lumbers along on four Cyclopean legs, literally shaking the earth with each mammoth footfall.*

EARTHSHAKER BEHEMOTH TACTICS

An earthshaker behemoth attacks either with stamps of its humungous feet or with a whip-like lash of its colossal tail. Both attacks are enough to cause serious injury to smaller creatures. When pressed, an earthshaker behemoth will rear up on its back legs and then bring its front legs crashing down on a foe with a bone-shattering impact. Creatures that survive this attack are pinned beneath the incalculable weight of the behemoth and slowly crushed to death.

LIZARDWOLF

Lizardwolves are speedy, reptilian carnivores that hunt in packs. They are quite cunning and intelligent for beasts, and the larger species make excellent mounts. Oddly enough, lizardwolves appear to be closely related to birds, and some even sport brightly colored proto-feathers.

LIZARDWOLF LORE

A character knows the following information with a successful Nature check.

DC 10: Lizardwolves are dangerous reptilian pack hunters that can use sophisticated tactics to take down much larger prey. They are quick, agile, and very fast, running at speeds that outstrip a galloping horse. Lizardwolves are distantly related to the great reptilian behemoths found in deep jungles and primeval forests.

DC 15: All lizardwolves use the large, sickle-like talons on their back feet to dispatch foes. These talons can open up horrendous, bleeding wounds.

Lizardwolf (Velociraptor) Level 3 Skirmisher
Small natural beast (reptile) XP 150

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 45; **Bloodied** 22
AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 13
Speed 8
⬇ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 1d8+1 damage, and the lizardwolf shifts 1 square.
† **Slashing Kick** (standard; recharge ⓂⓂⓂ)
+8 vs. AC; 2d6+5 damage, and ongoing 2 damage (save ends).

Pack Hunter

A lizardwolf gains a +1 bonus to damage rolls per lizardwolf adjacent to the target.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —
Skills Athletics +7 (+12 jumping), Stealth +10
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 3 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+1)

Description *This fleet-footed reptilian is roughly the mass of a medium-sized dog. It stands upright on two powerful legs and has a set of long, grasping forearms complete with taloned, three-fingered hands. Its snout is long and narrow, slightly upturned, and filled with curved, knife-like teeth. Its most disturbing feature, however, is the large sickle-like talons on the second digit of each foot.*

LIZARDWOLF TACTICS

A lizardwolf opens combat with a slashing kick, hoping to disembowel its prey with the formidable talons on its feet. It attempts to gang up on larger enemies with other lizardwolves, using pack hunter to deal even more damage.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Lizardwolves are pack hunters and are usually encountered in groups of five or more. In addition, they are often used as hunting beasts, and even mounts, by reptilian humanoid.

Level 4 Encounter (XP 850)

- 2 kobold dragonshields (level 2 soldier)
- 3 kobold skirmishers (level 1 skirmisher)
- 2 lizardwolves (level 3 skirmisher)

Level 6 Encounter (XP 1,170)

- 3 greenscale hunters (level 4 skirmisher)
- 1 blackscale bruiser (level 6 brute)
- 2 feathered lizardwolves (level 5 skirmisher)

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,850)

- 2 troglodyte impalers (level 7 artillery)
- 1 troglodyte curse chanter (level 8 controller)
- 3 dire lizardwolves (level 7 skirmisher)

Feathered Lizardwolf (Deinonychus) Level 5 Skirmisher

Medium natural beast (reptile) XP 200

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 62; **Bloodied** 31
AC 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15
Speed 9
⬇ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+10 vs. AC; 1d10+3 damage.
† **Leaping Slash** (standard; recharge ⓂⓂⓂ)
The feathered lizardwolf shifts 9 squares and attacks a single target; +11 vs. AC; 2d8+6 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Pack Hunter

A feathered lizardwolf gains a +1 bonus to damage rolls per feathered lizardwolf adjacent to the target.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** —
Skills Athletics +10 (+15 jumping), Stealth +11
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 19 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 3 (-2) **Cha** 10 (+2)

Description *This wolf-sized reptile is graceful and bird-like. Its body is covered in a coat of downy feathers, and it stands erect on two powerful legs. The beast has a set of dagger-filled jaws, two long forearms ending in three-fingered hands, and a vicious scythe-like claw on the second digit of each foot.*

FEATHERED LIZARDWOLF TACTICS

A feathered lizardwolf charges its enemies, letting the charge give terrible force to the formidable sickle-like talons on its feet. It then focuses its attacks on wounded foes, teaming up with other lizardwolves to bring pack hunter into play.

**Dire Lizardwolf
(Utahraptor)**

Level 7 Skirmisher

Large natural beast (mount, reptile)

XP 300

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +11; low-light vision**HP** 80; **Bloodied** 40**AC** 21; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 17**Speed** 10

⬇ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 2d6+4 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape).

⬇ **Gutting Rake** (standard; at will)
Grabbed target only; +10 vs. Fortitude; 3d6+8 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Pack Hunter

A dire lizardwolf gains a +1 bonus to damage rolls per dire lizardwolf adjacent to the target.

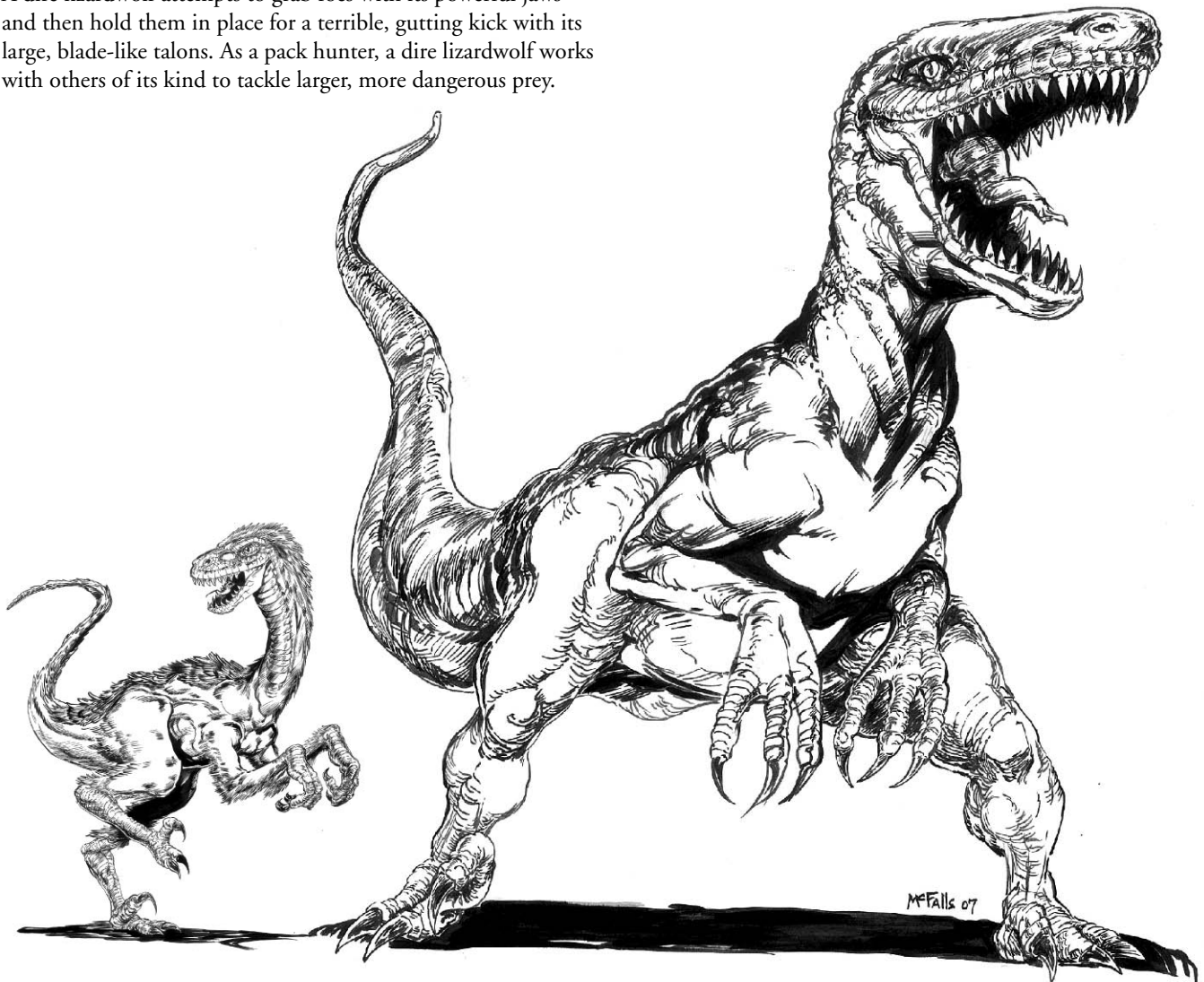
Swift Defense (while mounted by a friendly rider of 7th level or higher; at will) ⬆ **Mount**
When a dire lizardwolf moves more than 1 square on its turn, it grants its rider a +2 bonus to AC.

Alignment Unaligned**Languages** —**Skills** Athletics +12 (+17 jumping), Stealth +13**Str** 19 (+7)**Dex** 21 (+8)**Wis** 16 (+6)**Con** 16 (+6)**Int** 3 (-1)**Cha** 11 (+3)

Description *This large predatory reptile is the size of a draft horse. It is covered in pebbly, slate gray scales, and armed with formidable jaws, grasping talons, and two massive sickle-shaped claws on its feet. The beast moves with economical precision, stalking and alert.*

DIRE LIZARDWOLF TACTICS

A dire lizardwolf attempts to grab foes with its powerful jaws and then hold them in place for a terrible, gutting kick with its large, blade-like talons. As a pack hunter, a dire lizardwolf works with others of its kind to tackle larger, more dangerous prey.



Deities of Aereth

Gorhan

By Jeff LaSala

GORHAN

(GOR-HAN)

*THE HELMED VENGEANCE, THE BRAVE ONE,
HE WHO FIGHTS FIRST*

**LAWFUL GOOD GOD OF WAR,
VALOR, AND CHIVALRY**

Since humanity and its draconic mentors first forged weapons and armor in the earliest ages of the world, the image of a warrior in golden armor striding across the field of battle with a sword in hand has been Gorhan's alone. As a virtuous god of war, his is the name most invoked — and reviled — upon the battlefields of Aereth. Yet only those who take up arms in a worthy cause against the cruel and unjust dare to name the Helmed Vengeance as their patron, for this god of assertive combat does not suffer the lip-service of warmongers and militant tyrants. He is the patron of warriors, soldiers, and any willing to raise weapons against their enemies for a righteous cause. Gorhan holds the powers of war, valor, and chivalry in his grasp, and those who worship him must extol the virtues of his faith by action, not words. An old Gorhanan proverb states: "Speak not, if your deeds may show your heart."

Gorhan is known as the Brave One for his steadfast courage even among gods, and as He Who Fights First for his unwillingness to wait for an enemy's attack. His faith warns against complacency of any kind, for acquiescence — even mere inaction — is one of evil's greatest opportunities: like casting aside one's armor when the enemy is hiding. In the faith of Gorhan, peace remains the foremost objective, but peace must also be ever reaffirmed. A follower of He Who Fights First does not wait for her enemies to muster or plot against her; she takes the battle to them to eliminate the threat. Gorhan's fervent crusade against evil is often criticized by other faiths for being rash, quelling reason in the face of courage. And, indeed, the boldness of Gorhan's clergy frequently outweighs the wisdom of caution and well-advised reserve. For this reason, the goddess Justicia — Gorhan's own wife — often tempers his steely initiative with her more judicial counsel; likewise, followers of Gorhan frequently consult Justicia's clergy. At the same time, Gorhan's overzealous aggression has made enemy faiths wary of regions united under his holy banner.

The epithet by which Gorhan is most commonly referred is the Helmed Vengeance, for the slender, athletic knight in golden armor that he is always depicted as keeps the visor of his helm closed at all times. His face remains hidden in all religious renderings, emphasizing Gorhan's deliberate ambiguity of race. While humans, elves, and dragonborn most commonly revere him, even dwarves, halflings, and gnomes have been known to venerate him in times of desperation or war. When surrender is offered to the guilty and is rebuffed, the Helmed Vengeance becomes the executioner. In the faith of Gorhan, death is mercy for the wicked.

Gorhan is not the only deity in the Sancturn Pantheon whose dominion is **war**, but his is the only faith possessed of the righteousness of the goodly powers of Áereth. He teaches that war is the means to an end, but *never* more than that – followers of Gorhan do not forget that there *must* always be cessation to violence. While war persists, it must be brought swiftly and courageously to victory. It is the beloved, eristic, yet oft-quoted Paradox of Gorhan: The very purpose of war is to end it.

GORHAN IS NOT THE ONLY DEITY IN THE SANCTURN PANTHEON WHOSE DOMINION IS WAR, BUT HIS IS THE ONLY FAITH POSSESSED OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE GOODLY POWERS OF AERETH.

Therein lies the fabled **valor** of the Helmed Vengeance and his disciples, the unflagging discipline to hold against the forces of evil and violence for violence's sake. Clergymen are charged by their oaths to maintain the courage to resist evil even in the face of its worst agents. For this reason, the faith of Gorhan has many martyrs; but for every fallen saint, countless others are rallied to his cause. Even laymen of Gorhan, who are not ordained in the faith and cannot channel divine power, refuse to balk at an enemy's advance, choosing preemptory strategies on the field of battle over defensive maneuvers. Yet Gorhan does not always forbid retreat; survival is required to win the day, even when it must be another day.

Finally, Gorhan requires his followers to observe **chivalry**, an aggregate of knightly traditions and codes that varies within each culture. Not all of the faithful are knights, but even the humblest laymen are expected to emulate those noble men and women who swear such allegiance to Gorhan. Chivalry includes an adherence to a lawful chain of command. Laws are crafted for a reason, and must be obeyed. Without such structure, there is no order, and the resulting chaos would lead inexorably to the depravations of evil. Honor, protection, and most of all, respect is given to all who deserve it — especially elders, the weak, the downtrodden, and members of the opposite sex. Such gallantry is universal to the faith of Gorhan and the simplest of his tenets to observe. The stories, songs, and romance of courtly love are attributed more to Gorhan's faith than to any other in the Known Realms. Chivalry also includes cleanliness of mind and body, for clergymen are called upon to set an example of purity for the common people.

The church of Gorhan is not immune to corruption. His most virtuous servants must struggle not only to oppose evil, but also to halt the spiritual divide within the ranks. The lawful dogma of Gorhan's faith can be stringent, and when respected priests interpret some of its tenets differently, intolerant lines are inevitably drawn. At best, the resulting debates can lead to the formation of opposing denominations; at worst, to cries of heresy. Thus acolytes are taught to be watchful for the corrupting hand of evil agencies, of which there are many. By the time they are ordained, clergymen learn that the need to fight for one's faith is no mere metaphor. As a god of righteous war, Gorhan has earned countless enemies throughout the eons of history — not only the gods of opposing ideologies, but whole kingdoms, organizations, and earthly devils. The days of Áereth have grown darker, and the bastions of the Helmed Vengeance have become fewer. Many temples have been abandoned and fallen into ruin, requiring those that remain to be steadfast against the coming night.



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CLERGY

Some representation of the church, however extensive or scarce, can be found in most civilizations of the Known Realms. Members of the clergy teach skill at arms to peasants and nobles alike, as well as more conventional education, with an emphasis on history and militarism. Priests and priestesses do not merely instruct citizenry on the martial arts, but are active defenders of their realms. In towns and villages, they serve in the militia and lead their fellow men-at-arms in routine prayers. In large cities, they are often members of the watch or even the royal guard. Any warrior who swears allegiance to Gorhan and his ideals can be granted the title of knight by a high priest, whether ordained priest or armor-clad fighter.

Clerics: Not mere military tacticians, clerics are leaders and front-line soldiers in their own right, for Gorhan brings penance straight to his enemies. Adventuring clerics must personify the valor of the Brave One, accepting noble quests to recover relics of the faith or liberating the weak and oppressed. Healing one's allies is as vital to the mission as smiting one's enemies, so clerics use their prayers as often as their weapons in battle.

Paladins: Paladins who favor lance and horseback are often called helmed cavaliers, while those who prefer foot combat and adventuring are known as soulblades (males) or swordmaidens (females). Paladins are called upon to oppose tyranny in all its forms, bringing blade against blade, and to challenge the most dangerous enemies who come before them. While the line between cleric and paladin is blurred within a martial faith like Gorhan's, paladins always serve in the vanguard of any church-sponsored advance. Adventuring paladins exemplify the aggression of the Helmed Vengeance, setting out to destroy creatures of supernatural evil or cripple the strength of enemy faiths.

Monks: Monks who devote their lives in service to Gorhan are commonly known as steel-friars and they favor the use of bladed weapons to unarmed combat. While some monasteries exist, most Gorhanan monks choose a more mendicant lifestyle than other clergymen, accepting a vow of poverty and serving as missionaries of the faith. While adventuring steel-friars decline their share of treasure, they take exceptional care of their chosen weapons, ever seeking to enhance or replace them with greater abilities, even if gold is required to do so.

LAYMEN

Nearly all who follow Gorhan choose a military lifestyle. From laborers and farmers who merely join the local militia to career soldiers in the king's army, laymen from all races and social castes believe that only with a willingness to bear arms can peace be secured. Even adventurers who follow the beliefs of the Helmed Vengeance are aligned to this mindset. Bards relay the epics of Gorhanan legend, composing tales of chivalry and war to bolster

the faithful. Fighters and warlords are the most common of all of Gorhan's followers, carrying out missions in his name or forming the armies of the righteous. Rangers and rogues typically handle reconnaissance for the clergy, while sorcerers and wizards use spellwork in lieu of blades on the battlefield. Such spellcasters know that magic is as effective as steel on the battlefield, focusing their research on military history, arcane combat strategies, and augmentation rituals.

SYMBOL

Gorhan's symbol is that of a longsword, its blade stained or dripping with black blood. The sword represents the god's martial prowess, and the blood represents vanquished fiends. In religious texts, demons are cited as Gorhan's favored enemy, for such creatures of chaos and evil are the antithesis of his nature. The holy symbol of the faith usually takes the form of an embossed steel talisman, blade pointed down and worn on a sturdy metal chain around the neck outside of one's robes or armor. Within temples consecrated to Gorhan and Justicia, his symbol is commonly merged with his wife's, displaying a black-blooded sword set against a many-eyed shield.

TEMPLES

Although a few cities boast traditional churches within the city walls, most temples of Gorhan are defensible keeps erected in the countryside — usually in plain view and constructed so their towers command a panoramic view of the surrounding land. Known as Holy Forts, most are shared temples where the clergies of both Gorhan and Justicia work in concert to spread the teachings and protection of their respective faiths. These fortresses contain barracks, chapels, training facilities, and even prisons, but the entire compound is considered consecrated ground. Some walled cities include a temple to both gods, which serves also as a gatehouse that guards the city proper.

Arguably the most influential temple is Holy Fort Paravus, a massive stone-and-iron citadel built near the borders of three nations. For centuries the temple has remained politically neutral, despite pressures from surrounding sovereignties, offering its seminaries to followers of Gorhan, Justicia, Thormyr, or Aristemis alike. The fort is named after its founding priest, a mighty cleric of Gorhan who built the temple where an ancient gold dragon gave its life in service to the Helmed Vengeance.

The most infamous of Gorhan's temples is the lost Cloister of the Ordocar located somewhere in the Saint's Blood Mountains, where a schism in the church hundreds of years ago set brother against brother in a tide of blood. Some champions of the faith set out to find the Cloister and return it to its former glory — or else purge it of the taint of evil.

Shrines to Gorhan are small, defensible fortifications built in the countryside during times of war, redoubts for the faithful to gather far from home. Even smaller shrines are stone-walled, more vestigial versions erected hastily behind enemy lines. The symbol of Gorhan and the banners of mortal lieges are thereby raised to rally the faithful in times of darkness.

ALTERNATE ASPECTS

Elves know Gorhan by a different name: Shaeth, the Masked Warrior. Clerics hold to his tenets of chivalry, valor, and war as other races do, but Shaeth is an aspect of Gorhan that personifies the single-minded aggression of the faith. To the elven knights devoted to him, Shaeth is an assassin among gods, though he walks openly under sun and strikes against evil without pretense or deceit. Eschewing stealth, these knights (usually paladins, rangers, or rogues) wear cloth-of-gold and black leather armor, donning uniform masks as they set out against their enemies in small strike teams.

In the untamed wilds of *Æreth*, some barbarian tribes worship a god of strength, courage, and battle known as Gornhorim. Depicted as a monstrous bear with lupine features, he grants his favor only to warriors who fight to defend their tribes' land or to destroy those who despoil the earth. Few civilized priests of the Helmed Vengeance doubt that this bestial, if honorable, god may indeed simply be a primal aspect of Gorhan left over from his earliest worship on *Æreth*, a vestige of ancient days.

In recent times, a surprising number of tieflings have embraced the faith of Gorhan. They call him the Blood Avenger, for he brings retribution to those who deserve it. These fiendish-blooded men and women have renounced the bonds of their infernal forebears and seek to use their heritage against their traditional masters, embracing the notion of "fight fire with fire." Tieflings in service to this aspect of Gorhan run the spectrum of classes, joining underground movements and seeking to topple tyrannical regimes. The Blood Avenger is unusually clandestine for a lawful good deity, but the tieflings who serve him are devout in their worship and willing to use their talents in his name. Despite the honorable intents of these devotees, the churches of Gorhan tend to distance themselves from the cultish Blood Avenger.

TEXTS

Several books are considered Gorhanan Scripture, but only one holy text is universally embraced by the faith. Known as the *Analects of Arvenaash*, the book recounts legendary battles from the home realm of the Sancturn Pantheon, where Gorhan's efforts played a vital role before its destruction and the gods' emigration to *Æreth*. The scripture describes combat maneuvers, proverbs of war, and the virtues of law as seen through a lens of compassion. Most generals outside the faith disdain the esoteric *Analects* as nothing more than the theoretical, as the battles described within the book did not occur within the more comprehensible world of *Æreth* in the first place. But Gorhan's faithful know that warfare is as universal as it is inevitable, and therefore study the mythic battles of Arvenaash as well as those of *Æreth*'s history. Once they have shown their mettle on the battlefield, disciples of the Helmed Vengeance often dissolve the doubts of those same generals.

FAMOUS RELICS

Two artifacts of the faith have emerged time and again throughout legend.

The Diamond Carceperis is a gemstone of obscure origin reputed to possess the power of resurrection. Gorhanan Scripture

states that it can summon and restore the life of any person or creature who ever lived — no matter how far in the past — so long as the one who uses it gives up his own life in return. As such, it is a relic that the church has sought to recover; the faith has many great heroes it may one day need to call upon again.

Another relic, named Retribution, is an ancient adamantite rod said to appear only in times of need, to be wielded by the faith's greatest champions. According to most tales, retribution can be transformed by any follower of Gorhan into a *holy avenger*, a *vorpal halberd*, or a *thundering greatclub*, suiting the needs of its wielder and offering its own strategic advice on the battlefield.

VESTMENTS

In religious art, Gorhan is always depicted helmed, visored, or masked, his face concealed from all. It is written in Gorhanan scripture that only in valorous death will any of his followers look upon his true face. In the same fashion, clerics and paladins of Gorhan must wear visored helmets when they enter battle and during religious ceremony.

The everyday vestments of the clergy vary, but they are uniform within each realm. The garments of a priest are usually utilitarian in cut and style, allowing for ease of movement. Cloth, leather, or metal brassards denote each priest's position within the military-styled hierarchy of the church, while badges often mark personal achievements. Most clerics and paladins favor chain mail or plate armor, but only those who have shown steadfast courage in the face of true evil — a judgment made by a high priest — are permitted to wear the symbol of Gorhan upon their armor directly.

ALLIANCES, RIVALRIES & ENEMIES

Among the gods of the Sancturn Pantheon, Gorhan and Justicia are the only ones bound in true matrimony. No two faiths are as closely tied as those of the Helmed Vengeance and the Helmless Vigil, and appropriately, the clergies of both get along quite well with — and compliment — one another. As Justicia crafts her wise and equitable laws, Gorhan carries them out across the planes and enforces them with the ardor of a devoted lord defending his lady.

Gorhan bears an uneasy rivalry with Variag, god of war and winter, for the two share the dominion of war. To Gorhan, the other is a deity of aggression without compassion and knows not when to draw the line. Both Aristemis, demigoddess of strategy, and Thormyr, demigod of honor, consider Gorhan their superior, and in fact, the Helmed Vengeance was the former's sponsor in her ascendance to divinity. Aristemis often accompanies him into battle and serves as his strategist, advisor, and shieldmaiden.

The Helmed Vengeance crusades tirelessly against brutal Klazath, the war god of tyranny. Likewise, followers of Gorhan actively seek out the activities of that god's priests to offer them a second chance: accept the righteousness of Gorhan or die.

Gorhan also holds particular enmity for Yvyn, the evil goddess of insurrection, for she is an instigator of war. Given the austerity of Gorhan's faith, it is a favorite target for agents of Zhühn, the Great Enemy. His soul-corrupting whispers have torn from grace some of Gorhan's mightiest champions, turning them into vile anti-paladins — many without their knowledge.

HOLIDAYS

The most prominent religious holiday in the church of Gorhan is known as the Armistice of Crossed Blades, or simply Armistice. The eight-day celebration observes the mythic marriage of Gorhan and Justicia, which religious doctrine suggests occurred in the earliest days of Aereth's creation. When the two gods were wed, the ideals of valor, war, justice, and mercy were forever united, inspiring their concerted faiths to achieve greater good with strength of arms. During the first four days of Armistice, the faithful of Gorhan are required to lay down all arms and set aside their armor. They are forbidden even to bear weapons or submit to hostilities of any kind. Instead, they work peacefully within the community, serving as supportive carpenters, laborers, and even farmers. The famous gallantry of Gorhan's faith is never more prominent than during Armistice, when men and women alike also indulge in celebration, feast, athleticism, and the pursuits of courtly love. Consequently, it is often a time of betrothals, weddings, and amorous confessions.

During these first four days, the faithful of Justicia become the sole protectors, donning weapons and heavier armor and guarding the followers of Gorhan while obeying the tenets of both gods. When the four days have elapsed, the two clergies reverse roles for the next four, as the servants of the Helmed Vengeance watch over the faithful of Justicia. Many stories are told of agencies that dared to exploit the alleged vulnerability of the church during Armistice, and of the terrible retribution that followed them forever after. Even today, those who consider attacking a Gorhan-Justicia temple during these holy days are well advised to remember that the church maintains allies who are not so inhibited.

The day after Armistice is known as Convergence, when both faiths are considered united within a single vision. On this holy day, across the Known Realms, each temple selects one or more champions to set out on a quest that exemplifies the ideals of both gods. High priests often use these quests to strike against their temple's foremost enemy.

ROLEPLAYING A FOLLOWER OF GORHAN

Take initiative, especially when violence cannot be avoided. Do not wait for your enemies to come to you. Allow others to dig their heels in and prepare their defenses, but not you. Take the fight to your enemies' door, and spare them only if you can secure their incarceration. Do not be afraid to die. Death in valorous battle against evil is a triumph in itself, an opportunity to know the face of Gorhan and join his crusade against injustice in realms you cannot yet perceive. You are an enforcer, not a jailor. Seek out, capture, or destroy your enemies, delivering those prisoners deserving of mercy into the watchful care of Justicia and her clergy. Offense is indeed the best defense. But do not forget that defending your allies is as vital to your mission as your own survival.

FEAT

GORHAN'S RETALIATION [DIVINITY]

Prerequisites: Channel Divinity class feature, must worship Gorhan

Benefit: You can invoke the power of your deity to use Gorhan's Revenge.

Channel Divinity: Gorhan's Retaliation

Feat Power

The Helmed Vengeance grants you or a companion a surge of retribution, an eye for an eye, and a blade for a blade.

Encounter ♦ **Divine**

Immediate Reaction **Personal** or Ranged 5

Trigger: An enemy strikes you or a single ally within 5 squares with a melee attack.

Effect: You or an ally (whoever is hit) may make a melee basic attack as an immediate action against the enemy that struck you or your ally.

Special: You must take the Gorhan's Revenge feat to use this power.

BLADE OF VALOR

The blacksmiths of Gorhan's largest and wealthiest temples frequently craft *blades of valor*, weapons first designed by clerics of the faith long before humans or elves were free to control their own destinies. The blades are given only to those followers — be they clerics, paladins, or laymen — who have performed a service to the church and have exemplified the tenets of Gorhan. Martyrs of the faith have lost many of the most powerful versions of the blades of valor, and temples often hire adventurers to find and recover them.

Blade of Valor

Level 2+

This weapon glows at all times with a soft golden light.

Lvl 2 +1	520 gp	Lvl 17 +4	65,000 gp
Lvl 7 +2	2,600 gp	Lvl 22 +5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12 +3	13,000 gp	Lvl 27 +6	1,625,000 gp

Weapon: Heavy Blade

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1 d6 radiant damage per plus

Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target takes a –1 penalty to all defenses (save ends). While this penalty remains, you gain a +2 bonus on your Will defense.

Special: This weapon grants a cleric of Gorhan proficiency with its use.

Special: Like a *holy avenger*, this weapon can be used as a holy symbol. It adds its enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls and the extra damage granted by its property (if applicable) when used in this manner. You do not gain your weapon proficiency bonus to an attack roll when using a *valorous weapon* as an implement.

PARAGON PATH

REVENANT SAINT

"Forgiveness is beyond you now. Face the judgment of the Helmed Vengeance."

Prerequisite: Paladin, must worship Gorhan

You have been recognized by the church as an avenging saint of Gorhan. In official church records, your name is removed from further mention, and you are given a new one — after one of Gorhan's mightiest angels (e.g. Revenant St. Tamon XII, Revenant St. Azariel VIII). Although your allies know you as the same person, within the church you have been slain and reborn as a mortal Angel of Execution, stripped of worldly identity, and charged with bringing deadly penance to those who offend your god. You are lauded as one of Gorhan's foremost agents within the Known Realms, and are treated with respect — and more than a little fear — by other followers of the faith. When you accept this path of sainthood, your weapons and armor flicker with golden fire whenever you face enemies that are anathema to the faith. Even if you are denied a helmet or mask, whenever you use a feature or power of this path, your visage is concealed by an illusory helm or hood.



REVENANT SAINT

PATH FEATURES

Divine Impetus (11th level): When you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer, you gain a +2 bonus on all attack and damage rolls until the end of your next turn.

Wrathful Surge (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, each enemy within 3 squares suffers radiant damage equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Holy Subversion (16th level): Your attacks ignore the resistances of chaotic evil creatures.

REVENANT SAINT PRAYERS

Binding Judgment

Revenant Saint Attack 11

A ghostly cloud of glowing mist descends upon your foe, holding him in place for righteous retribution.

Encounter ♦ Divine, Force, Implement, Zone

Standard Action Area burst 3 within 10 squares

Target: Each creature in burst

Attack: Charisma vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d8 + Charisma modifier force damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Effect: The burst creates a cloud of ensnaring force that remains until the end of your next turn. Creatures that enter the zone or start their turns there take 1d8 + Charisma modifier force damage and are slowed (save ends). As a move action, you can move the zone up to 6 squares.

Sustain Minor: The zone persists.

Dread Radiance

Revenant Saint Utility 12

You infuse yourself with the overbearing will of your god, forcing others to bend at your command.

Daily ♦ Divine

Free Action

Personal

Effect: You gain an aura of fear and command until the end of the encounter. All adjacent enemies suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls against you. In addition, you gain a +5 power bonus to any Intimidate checks made while the power is active.

Executioner's Strike

Revenant Saint Attack 20

Your faith grants you the skill to make a devastating attack against your chosen foe.

Daily ♦ Divine, Weapon

Standard

Weapon melee

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 4[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). If you score a critical hit with this power, you inflict an additional 2[W] damage (not maximized).

Special: If this attack is made against a chaotic evil creature, you score a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.



Azagar's Advice for Adventurers

Choose Your Weapon: Part I

By Aeryn "Blackdirge" Rudel

From the Journal of Zavius Oakshadow,
Royal Chronicler to His Majesty,
King Ivar Brighthammer

What a very exciting day! His Majesty has afforded me a great privilege. I am to begin a series of interviews with the recently captured hobgoblin Azagar Bloodfist, High General of the Imperial Horde. His Majesty believes that Azagar could offer invaluable advice to the many brave heroes and adventurers throughout the kingdom, and I wholeheartedly agree.

However, it has not escaped my attention that my appointment to this position may have more to do with the blood in my veins than the skill of my pen. Hobgoblins hate elves above all else, and I do not doubt that His Majesty wished to twist the knife of humiliation one last time by choosing me to be Azagar's chronicler.

I only hope that Azagar can overcome his bigotry and let me perform my duty. I would hate to fail His Majesty simply on account of my elven ancestry. However, I fear I will have to develop a thick skin to withstand the company of my hobgoblin subject.

—Zavius

Oh, by the Black God's hairy balls! An elf!? Ivar sends me a prancing, lacy elf!? I knew that bastard had a mean streak, but this is simply cruel. I thought you people had rules against torturing prisoners. Now my whole cell is going to smell like flowers and perfume. Disgusting.

Well, I guess it could be worse, he could have sent an eladrin. Very well, if it keeps the guards from pissing in my soup each day, and slathering my linens with honey and fire ants, then I guess speaking with you is a small price to pay. Oh, don't look so offended. I'm sure if you'd had a choice, you'd have been born something more comely, like an otyugh or a bog hag. Hah!

Okay, sit yourself down at yon table. Oh, don't worry; these chains keep me from reaching that far. So, his royal pain in the arse wants me to relate a bit of the wisdom I've gathered over the years, aye? For adventurers, you say? Good gods! Not even my considerable expertise could help that lot of fools. I mean, what in the world would possess a soul to head out into the untamed wilderness with naught but three or four fellow fools, a sack of food, and maybe a weapon or two? You won't see any hobgoblins engaging in that kind of idiocy. We know our place, side by side with our brothers in the legion. Hell, who wants to bother with mucking about in caves and jungles for gold, when you can lay siege to a city, crack open the walls, and raid the treasury at will?

Oh, fine, don't look so pouty. It makes you even uglier. I'll do my best to give you something useful to write down. Gods know I've fought and killed just about everything that walks or crawls in my sixty years on this plane. And if Brighthammer needs to get a little revenge for all those times I beat the shite out of his Knight Legions, well, I guess I can understand that and put up with the likes of you.

Okay, lets start with the basics: weapons. If there's one thing I know like the back of my hand, its steel and leather, and it's also one thing I've seen adventurers get wrong almost every time. Listen up, pointy ears, and set that pen to moving.

I've killed dozens of adventurers in my day, and often as not the fools could've taken me in a fair fight. But only an idiot fights fair, and only a bigger idiot expects his opponent to fight fair. Gaining that unfair advantage has a lot to do with the type of weapon you wield. You should always pick a weapon that plays to your individual strengths and hides your weaknesses. Most adventurers seem to choose weapons based on gods only know what. Size? The color of the hilt? I don't know; but I've seen some damn poor choices in kit for many of the adventurers I've faced over the years.

Here's what I'll do. I'll give you the full skinny on each group of weapons, so the next time one of your adventurers visits the smith, he can make an informed decision, rather than just picking the sword that's the shiniest.

Hey! Lacy britches! Are you writing this down?

AXE

Axes — from handaxes to battleaxes — do one thing really well. They crush. That's right boys and girls; axes do a lot more crushing than cutting, especially the big ones. It's all about leverage, you see. An axe focuses most of its force on a very small surface, and so it doesn't need to be nearly as sharp as a sword to penetrate armor or flesh. Also, because the head of the larger axes are so heavy, they act like a big mace when they hit, and they don't even need to penetrate armor to cause a lethal wound.

One of the upsides to an axe is that you don't have to be near as accurate with it. A glancing blow from an orc's greataxe is more than enough to cave in your skull, shatter your pelvis, and generally ruin your whole day. Another benefit is that axes can really makes a mess of an opponent's shield. You can reduce even a stout wooden shield to splinters with a single hard blow, leaving your opponent vulnerable to your next strike. Finally, a really strong fighter can propel an axe clean through an opponent and attack some poor, luckless fool standing next to him. I once saw the infamous orc chieftain Barzog Brainsplatter kill six goblins with one blow. He cut five down with one sweep of his greataxe, and the sixth goblin dropped dead of fright. Hah!

Now that I've gone and filled your head with all that's good about an axe, here're the downsides. The biggest problem with axes is that they're slow. I can strike three or four times with my spear in the time it takes to get off one swing with a big axe. Also, since the haft of an axe is usually made from wood, they're vulnerable to a clever fighter with

a stout blade or an axe of his own. Lastly, axes have a nasty habit of getting stuck in an opponent's armor, shield, or even his dying carcass; and while you're trying to tug your axe free from some bastard's guts, his mate is likely to plant a blade in your spine.

So here's the long and short of it. If your going to use an axe, forget the big ones; they're too slow, and they leave you vulnerable after a swing. Pair a good-sized battleaxe with a stout shield, preferably one faced with steel or bronze to keep other axe-wielders from chopping it to kindling. Obviously, any type of axe favors a fighter with a bit of muscle; it's why you don't see many elves using them. Right, skinny shanks? You wouldn't want to strain yourself by lifting something heavier than that pen.

Heroic Tier Feat

SHIELD BITER

Prerequisite: Str 15

Benefit: When wielding an axe, you can make a melee basic attack against an opponent's shield, using the target's normal AC. If the attack hits, you deal no damage, but your opponent loses his shield bonus to AC and Reflex defense until the end of your next turn.

Paragon Tier Feat

GLANCING BLOW

Prerequisite: Str 17

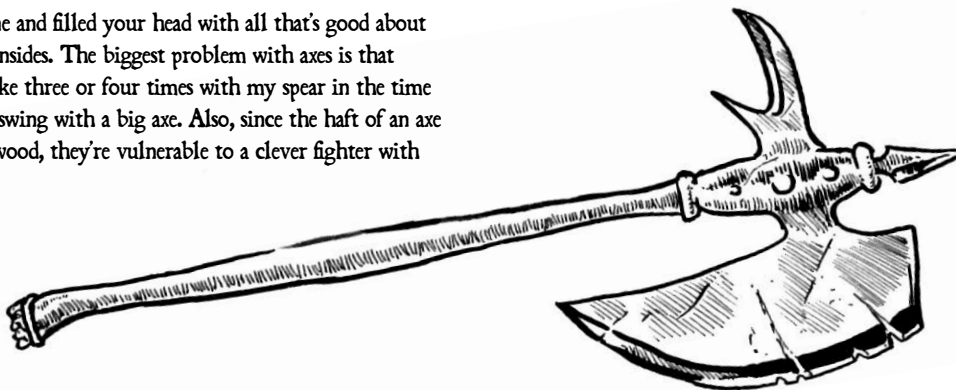
Benefit: When you miss a target with a melee attack with an axe, you still deal damage equal to your Strength modifier to the target.

Epic Tier Feat

MIGHTY CLEAVE

Prerequisite: Str 21, *cleave* fighter at-will power

Benefit: When using the *cleave* at-will power with an axe, you deal 1[W] damage to a single target adjacent to you instead of just your Strength modifier to a single adjacent target.



Flail

As weapons go, flails are mighty overrated. Sure they hit like a giant's fist, but they have a nasty habit of recoiling after landing a solid blow... right back in their wielders' faces. You can always spot the fighters who favor flails — they're missing the majority of their teeth.

Okay, so what is a flail a good for? Well, there are a few nasty tricks that a skilled wielder can use to surprise the hell of an opponent. The first is the ability to reach around a shield. Since a flail is typically a heavy weight on the end of a flexible rope or chain, a skilled wielder can intentionally strike the edge of a shield with the flexible bit, which propels the weighted end right around or over the shield with skull-cracking force. Even the big tower shields can be bypassed like that. The other thing a flail is good for is disarming. If you can wrap the chain or rope of your flail around an opponent's weapon, especially the haft of an axe or hammer, you can rip it right out of the poor fool's hand, usually breaking his wrist as an added bonus. Lastly, I have to admit; a flail is pretty damn intimidating. The sound it makes when you swish it through the air is unnerving as hell, and that's often enough to put your opponent off his game, making him that much easier to kill.

Okay now, the downsides to a flail...well, there's really only one, but it's a bastard to overlook. As I mentioned earlier, flails are a son-of-a-whore to control. If you miss your target, the weighted end can come right around and smash into your ankles, your knees, or even your groin. I once saw an ogre warhulk neuter himself with his spiked flail after a missed strike. Hell and blood, I didn't think an ogre could scream like that; I had to have one of my boys finally put an arrow in the poor bastard's skull to end the suffering. I tell you, my own parts ached for days just for seeing that.

Damn, where was I, tree-humper? Oh, downsides to flails. Right, even if you hit a target, the weighted end of a flail will often bounce back at you, and warriors that use flails have to learn to get out of the way of their own weapons. That's pretty easy to remember on the drill field, but try that with a horde of gnolls bearing down on you.

Here's my advice if you just have to use a flail. Get one of the bigger, two-handed flails. They typically have a haft that's longer than the weight and chain bit. That makes them a lot easier to control, and the shorter chain and longer haft means your body will be out of the way of the recoil.

Heroic Tier Feat

WHIRLING STRIKE

Prerequisites: Str 15, Dex 13

Benefit: When wielding a flail, you can spend a minor action to whirl the flail vigorously over your head. If you then strike a target with the flail in the same round, you gain a +2 bonus to the damage roll.

Paragon Tier Feat

DISARMING STRIKE

Prerequisites: Str 17, Dex 15

Benefit: When you score a critical hit with a flail, make a secondary attack against the target's Reflex defense at the same attack bonus as the initial attack. If the secondary attack hits, the target drops one item it is currently holding (your choice), and grants you combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Epic Tier Feat

WHIRLING HORROR

Prerequisites: Str 19, Dex 15, Cha 13, Whirling Strike

Benefit: When you use the Whirling Strike feat, any target struck by your flail in the same round suffers a -2 penalty to AC and all defenses for the rest of the encounter (save ends).

Hammer

Now we're getting somewhere. A hammer can make a damn fine weapon, if you pick the right one. The thing is, warhammers come in all shapes and sizes; from those short-hafted mallets the dwarves prefer, to the long-handled, pick-backed hammers used by the Knight Legions. Hammers work kind of like axes, in that they focus a lot of energy on a small striking surface. You can crush armor, skulls, and just about anything with a properly weighted warhammer. Hell, I once saw a goblin berserker drive a hammer no bigger than my forearm through the skull of a rampaging hill giant. Problem with hill giants, though, is that brains aren't all that necessary for them to do what they do. That hill giant squashed the goblin flat before the great lummoX remembered to fall over and die.

So what's good about a hammer? Well, a lot, actually. Most warhammers fall into the category of weapons with multiple uses. A good warhammer will usually have a spike on top, and a pick on the opposite side of the hammer. That gives you a weapon that is deadly from just about every direction. You get the option to poke, pick, or smash, and let me tell you, options are always good in combat. And another thing, there are a lot of neat little combat tricks you can pull off with a hammer like that. You can hook an opponent's shield with the hammer bit, yank it down, and then slam him in the face with the spiked top. Or, maybe your enemy has heavy armor. No problem. Just spin your hammer around, and open him up like a can of sardines with the pick.

Okay, you've made a pretty smart decision with choosing a hammer for a weapon. Now, what kind should you get? Well, like my advice on axes, you want to pair a hammer with a shield, so that means sticking with the one-handed varieties. Also, make sure your hammer has a pokey bit on top, and a spike or axe on the other side

of the hammer. Trust me, you'll want those extras, and you'll find uses for them in a hurry in just about any combat.

Keep your knickers on, green sleeves. I was getting to that.

So what about mauls and other two-handed hammers? You might ask. Sure, you can get a two-handed warhammer...if you're short on brains and long on fatalistic desires to die a messy and abrupt death. Two-handed hammers are just like two-handed axes; they're slow, they're heavy, and swinging one for more than a few minutes would leave an ogre panting for breath. Avoid them unless you need to hammer a few tent pegs; they're not good for much else.

Heroic Tier Feat

HAMMER CHARGE

Prerequisites: Str 15, Con 15

Benefit: When wielding a hammer, you gain a +2 bonus to bull rush attempts after a charge, and if the bull rush is successful, you deal damage equal to your Strength modifier to the target.

Paragon Tier Feat

HEAVY HAMMER

Prerequisites: Str 17, Con 13

Benefit: You treat all hammers as high crit weapons.

Epic Tier Feat

MIGHTY HAMMER

Prerequisites: Str 21, Con 17

Benefit: You add 1.5 times your Strength bonus (instead of your normal Strength bonus) to the damage roll with all hammers.

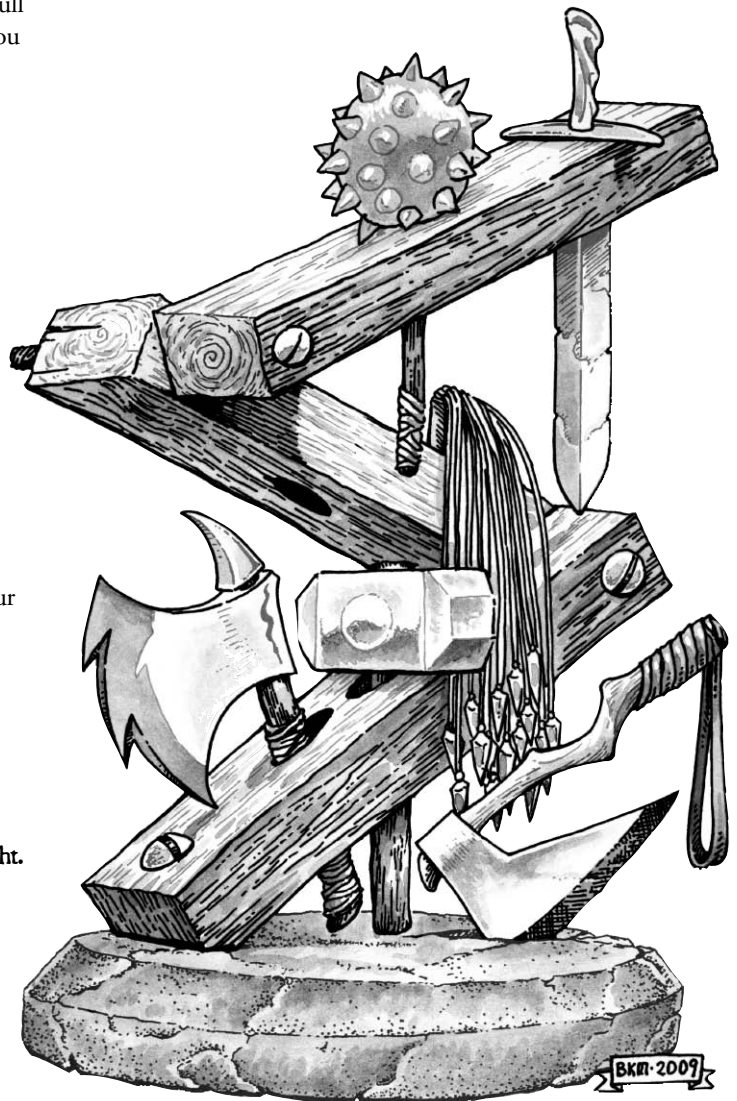
Mace

Maces are, in my opinion, very underrated. Hey! Don't raise your eyebrows at me, leaf eater! I know what I'm talking about. How many monsters have you slain with that pen there? Right, that's what I thought.

Okay, where was I? Oh yes, maces are underrated. Well, they are. You see most fighters look at something as simple as a mace, or its cousins the morningstar and club, as unsophisticated or unworthy of a true warrior's attentions. Nothing could be further from the truth. Maces and clubs are so good because they are so

unsophisticated. Try to fashion a greatsword out of a table leg or make a halberd out of a rock and a stick. Can't be done. But you can make a mace or club in both circumstances. Now that's not to say you should just go and break of a tree limb and call it a day. Any weapon can benefit from some refinement, even something so simple as a humble club.

Right, here's why you should consider a mace as your primary weapon, or at least as backup. First of all, there isn't an easier weapon to use and get good with. You don't have to worry about precision or hitting with the cutting edge or the striking surface. Know why? Maces are all striking surface, even the haft. Here's another good thing about a mace I'll bet you didn't know – they're fast. A properly made mace, one that's been balanced by a good weaponsmith, is every bit as fast a sword. In fact, it's probably faster. You can land a skull-shattering blow with just a flick of your wrist and a slight rotation of your shoulder and hips.



You know, the one thing that's always puzzled me about maces is they're association with clerics. I've been told that a lot of human and elven clerics don't use swords and axes because they're not supposed to spill blood. Well, for starters, that's the most ridiculous idea I've ever heard. How are you supposed to conquer your enemies without getting a little crimson on the carpet? And another thing, any fool that thinks a crushed skull doesn't bleed has never seen a mace used properly.

Anyway, if you're going to use a mace, get a flanged or spiked mace. Those flanges and spikes give you a little more killing capacity with each strike. It's kind of like getting an axe, a pick, and a club all rolled up into one. A good one-handed mace should have a haft that's about two feet in length without the striking head. At that length, you can generate one hell of a lot of power, and still keep the weight to a very manageable level. Now what about two-handed clubs, maces, and morningstars? Well, they're not half as bad as the big axes and hammers, and usually they don't weigh so much that you can't swing one without falling over. I've seen bugbears swing two-handed morningstars with as much speed and accuracy as any human with a bastard sword. However, I'm a shield man myself, and I'm not keen on my weapon working both offense and defense for me, even one that can stave in a minotaur's chest with a single blow.

Heroic Tier Feat

SPEEDY MACE

Prerequisites: Str 15, Dex 13

Benefit: When wielding a one-handed mace, you gain a +1 bonus to initiative checks.

At 11th level this bonus increases to +2. At 21st level, it increases to +3.

Paragon Tier Feat

BELL RINGER

Prerequisite: Str 17

Benefit: When you score a critical hit with a mace, your target is dazed until the end of your next turn.

Epic Tier Feat

CRUSHING RIPOSTE

Prerequisites: Str 19, Dex 15, Speedy Mace

Benefit: When you are wielding a mace, and an enemy makes an opportunity attack against you and misses, you can make a melee basic attack against the enemy as an immediate reaction. If your melee basic attack hits, the target is stunned and suffers ongoing 5 damage (save ends both).

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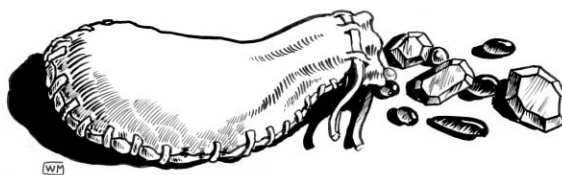
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FIENDISH FOES

By Aeryn "Blackdirge" Rudel

Demons and devils, sometimes collectively known as fiends, invest much time and energy in gaining influence on the Prime Material Plane and among the mortals that inhabit it. Although both races of fiends are quite different in their outlook and goals, they both use fairly similar methods to infiltrate the mortal world. One favored tactic is to mingle the essence of devil or demon with a willing mortal servant. The hybrid offspring this produces are both potent and loyal, and usually command a host of fearsome powers drawn from their fiendish heritage.

However, a blasphemous union between fiend and mortal is not the only way for wicked villains to gain access to the power of the Abyss or the Nine Hells. Many fiends are quite willing to offer power to ambitious mortals through various foul and unholy rites. These rites invest the caster with terrible power, allowing him to taint his soul and bloodline with infernal or demonic energy.

This article presents three templates that allow DMs to create "fiendish" foes from standard monsters and NPCs like those mentioned above. The templates cover a variety of monster roles, and can be used to create challenges for PCs of all levels.

So put the "hell" back in hell hound, and give these fiendish templates a try in your campaign.



DEMON KNIGHT

Demon knights are champions of evil that arise from either a spellcaster enacting a series of foul rites designed to invest an evil creature with demonic power or through the abominable pairing of mortal and demon. Many demon knights serve a particular demon lord, often leading demonic troops into battle against the forces of good.

“Demon Knight” is a template that can be added to any humanoid monster. Evil monsters in the soldier role, such as fomorian warriors, rakshasa warriors, and war trolls make very effective demon knights. NPCs of the fighter and warlord class are a good fit for the demon knight template, as are paladins that have fallen from grace.

Prerequisites: Humanoid, level 11

Demon Knight Elite Soldier (Leader) Humanoid (demon) XP Elite

Senses Darkvision

Defenses +2 AC; +2 Fortitude; +2 Reflex

Resist 10 variable (1/encounter) at 11th level, 15 variable (2/encounter) at 21st level

Saving Throws +2

Action Points 1

Hit Points 8 per level + Constitution score

POWERS

Chaos Weapon ♦ Fire, Lightning, Weapon

A demon knight's melee weapon deals an additional 5 fire and lightning damage. In addition, creatures struck with this weapon suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the demon knight's next turn.

Smite Good

A demon knight gains a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls against good-aligned targets. This bonus increases to +6 at 21st level.

⚡ Storm of Chaos (standard; recharge ⓂⓂⓂ) ♦ Fire, Lightning, Psychic

Close burst 3; level +3 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + Constitution modifier fire and lightning damage, and the demon knight makes a secondary attack on the target. *Secondary Attack:* level +3 vs. Will; 2d8 + Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

EXAMPLE DEMON KNIGHT CHAOS TROLL

Certain demon lords admire the savagery and endurance of trolls, and many have been known to mingle their essence with the foul humanoids to create a devastating demonic hybrid. War trolls, with their martial skill and greater intelligence, are often chosen by such demon lords as breeding stock, and the resulting abomination is known as a chaos troll.

Chaos Troll Level 14 Elite Soldier (Leader) Large natural humanoid (demon) XP 2,000

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision

Regeneration 10 (if the chaos troll suffers acid or fire damage, regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn).

HP 242; **Bloodied** 121

AC 32; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 25

Resist 10 variable (1/encounter)

Saving Throws +2

Speed 7

Action Points 1

⚔ **Chaos Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire, Lightning, Weapon**
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 1d12+7 damage plus 5 fire and lightning damage, and the target is marked and suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the chaos troll's next turn.

⚔ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 2d6+7 damage.

⚡ **Sweeping Strike** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire, Lightning, Weapon**
Requires chaos greatsword; close blast 2; 1d12 + 7 damage plus 5 fire and lightning damage, and the target is knocked prone.

⚡ **Storm of Chaos** (standard; recharge ⓂⓂⓂ) ♦ **Fire, Lightning, Psychic**
Close burst 3; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d8+5 fire and lightning damage, and the chaos troll makes a secondary attack on the target. *Secondary Attack:* +17 vs. Will; 2d8 + 1 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Blood Pursuit (immediate reaction, when a bloodied enemy within 2 squares of the chaos troll moves or shifts; at-will)
The chaos troll shifts 1 square closer to the enemy.

Smite Good

A chaos troll gains a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls against good-aligned targets.

Threatening Reach

The chaos troll can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).

Troll Healing ♦ Healing

If the chaos troll is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it rises on its next turn (as a move action) with 15 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Giant

Skills Athletics +17, Endurance +15

Str 24 (+14) **Dex** 16 (+10) **Wis** 16 (+10)

Con 20 (+12) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 12 (+8)

Equipment plate armor, greatsword

Description *This towering humanoid has bright-red skin and a bestial face with a long, hooked nose and a gaping maw filled with jagged, yellow fangs. It grips a massive sword of blackened steel and is armored in thick plates of hammered iron.*

CHAOS TROLL TACTICS

A chaos troll charges into battle fearlessly, relying on its regeneration and resistances to keep it from harm. It begins combat with sweeping strike to clear the battlefield ahead of it, and then follows up with storm of chaos to further damage and weaken downed foes. After that, it simply wades into melee with its greatsword, focusing its attacks on dazed and wounded enemies. A chaos troll prefers to attack good-aligned foes when possible, using smite good to bring low these hated enemies.

CHAOS TROLL LORE

A character knows the following with a successful Arcana or Nature check.

DC 20: Chaos trolls are the spawn of powerful demons and war trolls. They combine the worst features of both parents, and command a host of abilities that make them mighty champions of evil. Chaos trolls can command the elemental chaos, raining down fire and lightning on their enemies, or simply cut them to ribbons with a chaos-infused greatsword.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Chaos trolls are usually encountered leading other war trolls, lesser demons, and evil elemental creatures into battle.

Level 14 Encounter (XP 5,400)

- 1 chaos troll (level 14 elite soldier)
- 2 war trolls (level 14 soldier)
- 2 fire archon emberguards (level 12 brute)

HELL BEAST

Powerful devils are known to capture natural beasts from the Prime Material Plane and then breed them with minor devils or other fauna native to the Hells. What results is a monstrosity called a “hell beast,” which is then used for a variety of diabolical purposes. Hell beasts are often utilized by the vast infernal legions as mounts or war-beasts, but they may also be found on the Prime Material Plane serving devil-worshipping cultists or simply wreaking havoc at the behest of their evil masters.

“Hell beast” is a versatile template that can be added to any creature with the beast type. It is suitable for a variety of roles and can be effective at any level of play. Large ferocious natural beasts, such as behemoths, drakes, and griffins, make very effective hell beasts; as do beasts with other origins, such as gricks, hell hounds, and fey panthers.

Prerequisites: Beast

Hell Beast Elite Brute, Skirmisher, or Soldier
Beast (devil) XP Elite

Senses Darkvision

Defenses +2 AC; +4 Fortitude

Resist 5 fire at 1st level, 10 fire at 11th level, 15 fire at 21st level

Saving Throws +2

Action Points 1

Hit Points 10 per level + Constitution score (brute) or 8 per level + Constitution score (skirmisher or soldier)

POWERS

Aura of Fear and Flame (Fear, Fire) aura 1 at 1st level, aura 3 at 11th level, aura 5 at 21st level.

Enemies that enter or start their turn in the aura take 5 fire damage. In addition, enemies in the aura take a –2 penalty to attack rolls.

† **Speed of Phlegethos** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire**

A hell beast can make two melee basic attacks against a single target. If both attacks hit the target, it suffers ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). Increase the ongoing fire damage to 10 at 11th level and to 15 at 21st level.

Beast of the Legion

A hell beast gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and all defenses when adjacent to an ally with the devil key word.





EXAMPLE HELL BEAST

AVERNIAN DIRE BOAR

Avernian dire boars are giant boars infused with the essence of the Nine Hells. They roam Hell's first layer in small herds, viciously attacking any non-devil they encounter. They are often tamed and used as mounts by infernal armies; and a charge of devilish cavalry mounted on Avernian dire boars is truly an awesome and terrifying sight to behold.

AVERNIAN DIRE BOAR TACTICS

An Avernian dire boar begins combat by charging the nearest foe, likely knocking the target to the ground. It then focuses its attacks on the prone enemy, slashing and gouging with its terrible tusks. It continues to attack relentlessly until either it or its enemies are slain.

AVERNIAN DIRE BOAR LORE

A character can know the following with a successful Nature or Religion check.

DC 15: Avernian dire boars are giant, ferocious boars found on the first layer of the Nine Hells. They often serve as mounts for infernal legions, and may occasionally be encountered on the Prime Material Plane in the service of devil-worshipping cultists.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Avernian dire boars roam Avernus in small herds, but are frequently encountered with devils and devil-worshipping cultists.

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,752)

- 1 hobgoblin hand of the dark god (level 8 elite soldier)
- 1 Avernian dire boar (level 6 elite brute)
- 1 hobgoblin commander (level 5 soldier)
- 4 hobgoblin warriors (level 8 minion)

Avernian Dire Boar Level 6 Elite Brute
Large natural beast (devil) XP 500

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +2; darkvision
Aura of Fear and Flame (Fear, Fire) aura 1; enemies that enter or start their turn in the aura take 5 fire damage. In addition, enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
HP 160; **Bloodied** 80; see also *death strike*
AC 19; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16
Resist 5 fire
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8
Action Points 1
 † **Gore** (standard; at-will)
 +9 vs. AC; 1d10+4 damage, or 1d10+9 damage against a prone target.
 † **Speed of Phlegethos** (standard; at-will) † **Fire**
 The Avernian dire boar makes two gore attacks against a single target. If both attacks hit, the target suffers ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
 † **Death Strike** (when reduced to 0 hit points)
 The Avernian dire boar makes a gore attack.

† **Rabid Charger** (while mounted by a friendly rider of 6th level or higher; at-will) † **Mount**
 When it charges, an Avernian dire boar makes a gore attack in addition to its rider's charge attack; see also furious charge.

Beast of the Legion
 An Avernian dire boar gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and all defenses when adjacent to an ally with the devil key word.

Furious Charge
 When an Avernian dire boar charges, its gore deals an extra 5 damage, pushes the target 2 squares, and knocks the target prone on a hit.

Alignment Evil **Languages** —
Skills Athletics +17, Endurance +15
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+2)
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+2)

Description *A nimbus of crackling black flames surrounds this enormous boar. Its body is covered in thick red scales, and its head is a nightmare of jagged tusks and blazing red eyes.*

HELLFIRE ADEPT

Mortals who wish to control the forces of the Nine Hells sometimes strike a bargain with infernal powers to gain mastery over a devastating energy known as hellfire. Hellfire both burns and corrupts, and those that command its blasphemous power are known as hellfire adepts. Most hellfire adepts are found on the Prime Material Plane, usually serving their diabolical masters within one of the many devil-worshipping cults.

“Hellfire adept” is a template best suited to an NPC wizard or warlock. Warlocks with the infernal pact are particularly appropriate for this template. However, humanoid monsters with the artillery role, such as archons and efreet, also make effective hellfire adepts.

Prerequisites: Humanoid

Hellfire Adept

Humanoid (devil)

Elite Artillery

XP Elite

Defenses +2 AC; +2 Reflex; +2 Will

Resist 5 fire and necrotic at 1st level, 10 fire and necrotic at 11th level, 15 fire and necrotic at 21st level

Vulnerable 5 cold and radiant at 1st level, 10 cold and radiant at 21st level

Saving Throws +2

Action Points 1

Hit Points 6 per level + Constitution score

POWERS

⚡ **Hellfire Blast** (standard; recharge ☼☼☼) ♦ **Fire, Necrotic**
Close blast 5; level +3 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + Constitution modifier fire and necrotic damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 fire and necrotic damage (save ends). Increase to 3d6 fire and necrotic damage, and 10 ongoing fire and necrotic damage at 11th level. Increase to 4d6 fire and necrotic damage, and 15 ongoing fire and necrotic damage at 21st level.

☞ **Soul Scorch** (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; the hellfire adept deals 1d6 psychic damage to any creature currently suffering ongoing fire or necrotic damage. This damage increases to 2d6 psychic damage at 11th level and 3d6 psychic damage at 21st level.

Born of Fire

The hellfire adept can convert any attack power it has to hellfire, dealing both fire and necrotic damage. Change a power's keyword to fire and necrotic, or add fire and necrotic energy to an attack power that doesn't normally deal energy damage.

EXAMPLE HELLFIRE ADEPT

TIEFLING HELLFIRE ADEPT

All tieflings carry a fiendish taint within their blood. While some rise above the evil legacy of their race, others embrace their infernal blood and seek to curry favor with the terrible powers of the Nine Hells. Some tiefling warlocks who pursue such a path gain command of an energy known as hellfire, blasting their enemies with black flames that both burn and corrupt.

Tiefling Hellfire Adept Level 6 Elite Artillery

Medium natural humanoid (devil)

XP 500

Initiative +8

Senses Perception +6; low-light vision

HP 114; **Bloodied** 57

AC 22; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20

Resist 11 fire, 5 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 cold, 5 radiant

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6

Action Points 1

⚔ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+10 vs. AC (+11 against a bloodied target); 1d4 + 2 damage.

☞ **Balefire** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire, Necrotic**
Ranged 10; +9 vs. Reflex (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d8 + 5 fire and necrotic damage, and ongoing 5 fire and necrotic damage (save ends).

☞ **Serpent Curse** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Illusion, Psychic**
Ranged 10; illusory snakes appear and attack the target; +9 vs. Will (+10 against a bloodied target); 1d6 + 5 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).

☞ **Soul Scorch** (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; the tiefling hellfire adept deals 1d6 psychic damage to any creature currently suffering ongoing fire or necrotic damage.

⚡ **Hellfire Blast** (standard; recharge ☼☼☼) ♦ **Fire, Necrotic**
Close blast 5; +9 vs. Reflex (+10 against a bloodied target); 2d6 + 4 fire and necrotic damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 fire and necrotic damage (save ends).

Cloak of Escape (immediate reaction, when the tiefling heretic is hit by a melee attack; at-will) ♦ **Teleportation**
The tiefling hellfire adept teleports 5 squares.

Infernal Wrath (minor; encounter)

The tiefling hellfire gains a +1 power bonus to its next attack roll against an enemy that hit it since the tiefling heretic's last turn. If the attack hits and deals damage, the tiefling hellfire adept deals an extra 5 damage.

Alignment Evil

Languages Common

Skills Bluff +15, Insight +11, Stealth +15

Str 15 (+5)

Dex 20 (+8)

Wis 16 (+6)

Con 18 (+7)

Int 13 (+4)

Cha 20 (+8)

Equipment dagger

Description *This tiefling warlock wears crimson and black robes covered in swirling infernal sigils. He holds a long, jagged dagger in one hand, and a ball of writhing black flame in the other.*

TIEFLING HELLFIRE ADEPT TACTICS

A tiefling hellfire adept blasts foes with balefire and hellfire blast, following up with soul scorch to immediately inflict further damage on its enemies. It stays out of melee range when possible, using cloak of escape to move away from its foes. A tiefling hellfire adept uses its action point early in an encounter, often to use hellfire blast as soon as the power recharges.

TIEFLING HELLFIRE ADEPT LORE

A character knows the following with a successful History or Religion check.

DC 15: Tiefling warlocks that sell their souls to the dark powers of the Nine Hells sometimes gain the ability to use hellfire. These tieflings are usually part of a cult worshipping a specific lord of Hell, and use their powers to further the aims of their master.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Tiefling hellfire adepts are often encountered among devil-worshipping cultists, although they will associate with any evil creature that serves their purposes.

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,700)

- 1 tiefling hellfire adepts (level 6 elite artillery)
- 2 tiefling darkblades (level 7 lurker)
- 2 hellhounds (level 7 brute)



POWER SKINS

Mayhem in Mirahan

By Aeryn “Blackdirge” Rudel

Your character’s power can do a lot more than just give you more options in combat; with a few tweaks, they can actually add atmosphere and verisimilitude to the entire campaign. In the *Power Skins* series, we’ll explore the idea of repackaging, or “re-skinning” powers to fit specific types of campaigns; and we’ll demonstrate how minor cosmetic changes can make your character’s power fit seamlessly into campaigns ranging from high fantasy to horror.

In this issue we take a look at repackaging at-will and 1st-level fighter powers to fit a campaign that might feature the upcoming adventure *Death Dealer: Shadows of Mirahan* by Goodman Games. *Shadows of Mirahan* allows players to run characters in the grim and brutal world of Frank Frazetta’s *Death Dealer*, and the repackaged powers below reflect the violently graphic and morally ambiguous nature of such a campaign.

Note that in this first feature we’ve given you the entire power description plus the new name and flavor text, so that you can compare it to a standard power and get a clear idea of what a “re-skinned power” looks like. *Hewing strike*, for example, should be considered synonymous with *cleave*. However, in future installments we’ll just detail the new name and flavor text with a reference to the standard power it replaces, giving you double or even triple the amount of “re-skinned” powers in the same sized article.

AT-WILL POWERS

Hewing Strike Fighter Attack 1

Your greatsword hews through your enemy’s flesh in a shower of blood and gore...only to bury itself hilt-deep in another enemy lurking nearby.

At-Will ♦ Martial, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and an enemy adjacent to you takes damage equal to your Strength modifier.

Increase damage to 2[W] + Strength modifier at 21st level.

Unavoidable Doom Fighter Attack 1

Your axe rains down in an avalanche of steel upon your opponent’s defenses. Even when he manages to stave off a blow, the sheer power of your strikes bruises flesh and cracks bone.

At-Will ♦ Martial, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage.

Increase damage to 2[W] + Strength modifier at 21st level.

Miss: Half Strength modifier damage. If you’re wielding a two-handed weapon, you deal damage equal to your Strength modifier.

Blade of Set Fighter Attack 1

Like a striking adder, your blade hungrily seeks out chinks in your foe’s armor, and then sinks fangs of steel into his flesh.

At-Will ♦ Martial, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength + 2 vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] damage.

Increase damage to 2[W] at 21st level.

Giant’s Fist Fighter Attack 1

Your warhammer makes a fist-sized dent in your opponent’s helm; and while he’s reeling, you slam your shield into his face and send him stumbling backwards.

At-Will ♦ Martial, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Requirement: You must be using a shield.

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you push the target 1 square if it is your size, smaller than you, or one size category larger. You can shift into the space that the target occupied.

Increase damage to 2[W] + Strength modifier at 21st level.

LEVEL 1 ENCOUNTER EXPLOITS

Mithras' Shielding Assault Fighter Attack 1

Your blade becomes a living whirlwind of steel, thrusting, slicing, and hammering at your foe in an unstoppable display of martial skill. Only a fool would let his attention wander from such a lethal assault; so while your enemy does his best to deflect your barrage of strikes, one of your companions retreats to safety.

Encounter ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

Standard Action Melee weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and an ally adjacent to the target can shift 2 squares.

Scything Step Fighter Attack 1

You take a two-handed grip on your sword and deliver a mammoth blow to one enemy, then take a step forward, and deliver a vicious backhand strike to a second foe.

Encounter ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

Standard Action Melee weapon

Primary Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you can shift 1 square. Make a secondary attack.

Secondary Target: One creature other than the primary target

Secondary Attack: Strength + 2 vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage.

Knee-Biter Fighter Attack 1

Honor in battle is claimed only by the victor. You remind your foe of this as your axe bites into his knee, sending him tumbling to the ground in crippling agony.

Encounter ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

Standard Action Melee weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you knock the target prone.

Laming Blow Fighter Attack 1

Your opponent circles you with a smirk on his face, obviously confident that his heavy armor and shield will protect him from your attacks. You point out the error of his assumption by sinking the point of your war pick clean through his foot.

Encounter ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

Standard Action Melee weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is slowed and cannot shift until the end of your next turn.

LEVEL 1 DAILY EXPLOITS

Bone-Shattering Blow Fighter Attack 1

You bring your maul down on your opponent like a plummeting meteor, shivering his shield, shattering his armor, and reducing his bones to powder.

Daily ♦ **Martial, Reliable, Weapon**

Standard Action Melee weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage.

Visceral Healing Fighter Attack 1

Your wounds pain you, but sinking four feet of sharpened steel in your enemy's belly has a way of taking the edge off.

Daily ♦ **Healing, Martial, Reliable, Weapon**

Standard Action Melee weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you can spend a healing surge.

This One's Mine! Fighter Attack 1

The first blow against your enemy only whets your appetite for more carnage. With his blood still on your blade, you stalk your foe, battle lust adding unstoppable power to your follow-up attacks.

Daily ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

Standard Action Melee weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and a +4 power bonus to damage rolls against the target until the end of the encounter.

Miss: Gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls and a +2 power bonus to damage rolls against the target until the end of the encounter.



A Picture Tells 1,000 Words: Spurned

An Encounter for Characters of 5th–6th level

By Greg Oppedisano

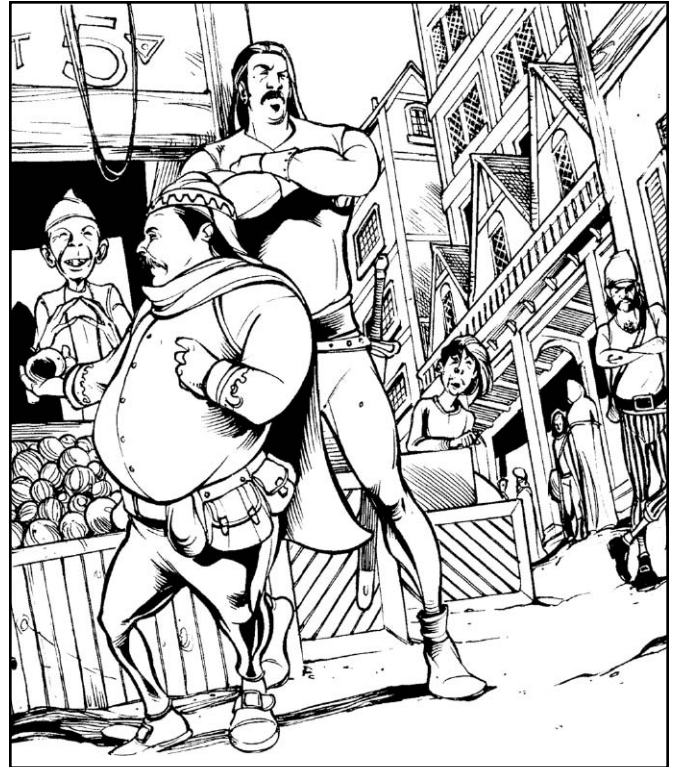
RPGs are full of fantastic, evocative illustrations that can do much more than visually describe a scene or setting. A good illustration can be taken out of its contextual surroundings, and admired on its own strengths; inspiring whole new vistas of creative thought. That's what this feature is all about.

In *A Picture Tells 1,000 Words*, we create a short encounter based on a single fantasy illustration. Each encounter is designed to be easily fitted into nearly any campaign, and can serve as a quick drop in, or even as the beginning of a grand adventure arc. It's all up to you, and we hope that each illustration and encounter inspires you to view fantasy illustrations in a whole new light.

Hired by the Lady Tabitha Wolve, events thrust our heroes into a dangerous assassination attempt in a busy marketplace.

BACKGROUND FOR THE GM

Lord Reyes Wolve has long been a philanderer, a spendthrift and an all round embarrassment to his family and his wife, Lady Tabitha, in particular. Lady Tabitha has decided now is the time to rid herself of her husband and to this end she has hired Teun Izetta and his team of assassins. The idea is to stage an accident, in which the tragic death of Lord Wolve occurs at the hands of an escaped rage drake, during his daily stroll through the market on his way to visit one of his many mistresses. In order to insure the appearance of innocence, Lady Tabitha has hired extra guards – the characters – to testify that they were watching her husband at her request.



The Hook: Playing the concerned wife, Lady Tabitha Wolve hires the characters to follow her husband. She tells them that he has always been unfaithful – but of late one of his mistresses is dangerous company. Tabitha asks the PCs to follow her husband for a couple of days and find out who he is seeing, make sure he doesn't come to harm, and find evidence of his dangerous activities in the hopes that she can confront him and save him from going down this dangerous path.

Encounter Level 6 (XP 1,375)

SETUP

Use the Market Square Map when running this encounter. This Encounter includes the following creatures (*see MM for stats*):

- 1 Rage Drake** (level 5 Brute)
- 1 Dragonborn Soldier** (level 5 Soldier)
- 2 Dwarf Bolters** (level 4 Artillery)
- 5 Human Lackeys** (level 7 Minion)
- Teun Izetta, Human Mage** (level 4 Artillery)
- Lord Reyes, Human Bandit** (level 2 Skirmisher)

The Characters are in the market attempting to follow Lord Reyes as he does some shopping. Complete the *Skill Challenge: Following Lord Reyes Wolve* before starting the encounter. Note the important effects the skill challenge has on placement and initiative for the combat.



**The Skill Challenge:
Following Lord Reyes Wolve**

The PCs must stealthily follow Lord Reyes Wolve as he walks through the market on his way to meet his mistress. In order to succeed in the skill challenge they must succeed on two separate DC 17 checks before they fail two such checks – for each skill challenge below.

- (To the character most skilled in Stealth) “You are following Lord Reyes through the market, make sure your companions are well placed to stay out of sight.” Success means that the characters may place themselves tactically on the map wherever they choose in relation to Lord Reyes. Failure means they start within 4 inches of the edge of the map.
- (To the character most skilled in Bluff) “Lord Reyes looks right at you, act like you are shopping in the market.” Success means that Teun Izetta does not notice Lord Reyes noticing the PCs – and Teun and his crew (with the exception of the rage drake) do not get to act on the surprise round.
- (To the character most skilled in Insight) “You sense something is amiss in the market, take a careful look around.” Success means the party is aware of Teun Izetta’s crew right before they attack and the PCs can act on the surprise round.

Award a 100 XP bonus for each successful Skill Challenge.

When the Adventurers have completed the Skill Challenge, read:

Lord Reyes Wolve waddles through the market, stopping every so often to haggle over a silk scarf here or a gaudy bauble there before stopping to squeeze bright red apples at a fruit stand. Suddenly a rickety old cart with a fierce looking caged beast loses a wheel and the jarring force pops open the cage.

SKILL CHECKS

Perception (DC 20): The driver of the cart is red scaled dragonborn and he makes eye contact with the creature as it emerges from the cage before gesturing towards Lord Reyes and says “Your habits have finally caught up to you old man.”

Nature (DC 15): The creature is a rage drake. “Tame” rage drakes can serve as mounts or guardians and can be trained to attack brutally on command.

TACTICS

Throughout the combat, Lord Reyes covers paralyzed in his original spot (*see map*) – neither moving nor aiding the party – cowering will grant him superior cover (+5) from the fruit stands.

The rage drake will act on the surprise round and use its raking charge to attack Lord Reyes unless one of the PCs moves between the drake and its preferred target. The rage drake will make every attempt to move to attack Reyes – but will not expose itself to opportunity attacks to do so.

If the PCs succeeded in the Bluff skill check then Teun and friends will not act on the surprise round. Once they realize that Lord Reyes has guards, they will act as follows:

The dragonborn soldier will launch himself into combat without pause, targeting any PCs who are impeding the progress of the rage drake towards Lord Reyes. He will go so far as to bull rush opponents if it frees up the drake to attack Reyes. The dragonborn soldier holds his breath weapon in reserve for when more than one enemy is available as a target.

The human lackeys are afraid of the rage drake and do not want to fight beside it. They will position themselves to intercept any PCs that are moving to help Lord Reyes or trying to impede the progress of the drake.

The dwarf bolters will retain their positions of cover and rain fire down upon spell casters and other ranged attackers – once a PC acts to heal someone, they will target them exclusively.

Teun Izetta will move up the street slowly using his ranged attacks on PCs until he can see Lord Reyes – then he will switch targets to Reyes. He holds his Thunder Burst in reserve to make his escape if things go wrong. Teun will flee if the rage drake and the dragonborn soldier are defeated.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light.

Crates, boxes, tables and chairs: These items are waist height; they are difficult terrain and grant partial cover (Jump Check DC 10 to stand on top of them).

Treasure: Each villain has 1d6 gp in loose coins and a single garnet worth 100gp, except Teun who has 3 garnets (note: the garnets are a clue that something is up for suspicious party members – see *Play On*).

Play On: If the characters save Lord Reyes – he is very grateful and offers them a reward of 100 gp – which he gives them if they accompany him to his manor house. Lord Reyes can become a resource for the characters going forward.

It is entirely possible that Teun will have escaped and the PCs can track him to his assassin's guild lair and attempt to root him out – Teun is a coward and will reveal that he is in the employ of Lady Tabitha if captured (the garnets are his evidence of being paid).

If Lord Reyes is dead, a “distracted” Lady Tabitha will direct the constabulary to interview the PCs and confirm that she hired them to protect her husband. If the PCs are not wise to her machinations – Lady Tabitha can become a resource for the characters going forward.

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August 13-16

ARCHON
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October 2-4

WHAT'S HOT FROM GOODMAN?

*Look for these Hot Releases
from Goodman Games!*

MARCH

DCC #62: Shrine of the Fallen Lama (level 10-12)
Wicked Fantasy Factory #4: Fistful of Zinjas (level 4)
Hero's Handbook: Eladrin

APRIL

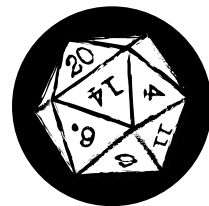
DCC #63: The Warbringer's Son (level 1)
Death Dealer (levels 7-9)
Forgotten Heroes: Scythe and Shroud
(necromancers and assassins!)

MAY

From Here to There
Monstercology: Orcs
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JACK'S ULTRASHORT REVIEWS

New 4E products are constantly being released; but what should you buy? Which products are good...and which products are not so good? Well, Jack is here to help. With Jack's Ultrashort Reviews you no longer need to spend hours plowing through the web for information and reviews about new 4E releases. Jack's Ultrashort Reviews gives you the low-down on the hottest 4E releases and helps you choose which products deserve your hard-earned money.

Every product reviewed is given a star rating from ☆ to ☆☆☆☆☆. Needless to say, the more stars, the safer it is to buy the product.

☆: For the love of God (and I do not even believe in God), do not buy this product.

☆☆: I wasn't impressed, but maybe other people could find it interesting.

☆☆☆: It has some decent things, but overall, there is room for a lot of improvement.

☆☆☆☆: Good solid product.

☆☆☆☆☆: Great product, a must buy. You shouldn't be playing 4E without this.

☆☆☆☆☆☆: If you haven't bought it yet, you are a fool!

BLACKDIRGE'S DUNGEON DENIZENS

GOODMAN GAMES

Overall, I have to say that DD holds a horde of very flavorful monsters, most of which look solid (crunch-wise) and definitely interesting enough to use in my campaign. The art is very 1E-ish, and in general, the monsters are a (good) bit more lethal than monsters of the same level from the 4E *Monster Manual*. Blackdirge really pushes the envelope on how much damage a monster of a given level should deal. As a DM who likes to kill his players (according to them), this is cool by me (yum, yum, greater barghest drains two healing surges!).

Although solid, the book is far from flawless - there are a few notable issues with some of the solos. They are either too weak, or they are way over the top. Grave swarm I am looking at you! However, the editing and crunch mistakes are kept to a minimum, just like we should expect from Goodman Games. The spread of monster by level is good, although it is a pity that there are no regular monsters over level 19, only elites and solos. On the other hand, there are so many cool things (all monsters are indexed by level, by type, and by keyword - just awesome for a DM) in this book that you quickly forget and forgive mistakes.

Interestingly, Blackdirge reintroduces stuff like magic resistance and damage reduction in 4E format. Some are going to love this, while some are going to hate it. He also introduces resistances based on the alignment of the attacker - I can't say that I am huge fan of this, but it will please some people, that is for sure. As a bonus, we also get one of the sweetest curses (disease) that I have yet to see. I can't wait for my players having to eat the flesh from the corpses of sentient beings in order to be able to heal. Cannibal Curse FTW!

Rating: ☆☆☆☆☆

CURSE OF THE KINGSPIRE

GOODMAN GAMES

From what I read, the Master Dungeon series is aimed at challenging expert players and DM's; in other words, noobs need not apply. What starts out as a seemingly routine inspection of a cult in a village propels the players through space and time, trapping them in the middle of an eternal battle and leaving them with a bad case of *Groundhog Day*. Sounds intriguing? Let me assure you that it is. Players used to straightforward dungeons, with one way to go, and a big bad boss to kill at the end, might find themselves doomed (to repeat their mistakes, ha ha), with little chance of finishing the adventure.

Reading this adventure, I found the two halves of the module a bit odd when compared with one another. The first part is a very normal linear story, but with some extremely interesting combats with cool features. The second part has an awesome story, but the combats are not as interesting. Although the windows that shatter and reform as a dragon was fun. Sadly, the end doesn't quite live up to the rest of the module, and there are still the odd, weird editing errors, like a 3.x rule (You do not lose Dex to AC underwater in 4E), or like a skill challenge which aims at bluffing someone, except bluff isn't one of the skills usable in the challenge! But overall, *Curse of the Kingspire* is a very cool module - not your average dungeon romp. I will most definitely run it at some point, just as soon as I have come up with an ending that suits me more. I can't wait to turn a player into a frog (nice witch!) and put on a white wig and go nuts as the Mad Gaoler.

Rating: ☆☆☆☆☆

THE FORGOTTEN PORTAL

GOODMAN GAMES

The latest from Goodman Games is as far as I know, their first adventure written for specifically for 4E. The previous DCCs were all written for 3.5, and then converted. Let me start by saying, it shows. They still like using high level elites and solos a lot, but now they are placed in an interesting environment or include a twist that makes the encounters so much better. For example there is a solo croc that looks quite boring and slightly underpowered, but due to its tactics of dragging victims underwater, it should prove for a very interesting fight. There is also a fight with a T-rex on a huge pile of ever-moving bones that looks like it will be tremendous fun (as in, dangerous for the heroes). The areas are also much bigger, giving the players room to move around and do stuff. No more 10 by 10 rooms and encounters in 5-foot wide passages.

Here's a short synopsis of the adventure. Almost by accident, the heroes are drawn to a cursed village located on an 1800' tall plateau in the middle of the jungle. They set out to find the high priest of the village in order to stop his reign of terror and bloody sacrifices, but instead find themselves having to complete 9 ancient trials, mirroring those a local hero had to endure in ancient times. The endgame (pun intended, you will get it when you read the adventure) is a twist, where the heroes will most likely upset an already fragile balance in place in the area, setting things up for a sequel. An Aztec theme permeates the adventure, and there is a lot of lore to assimilate and use both as background info and as a key part of the adventure. This is by far the best 4E adventure by Goodman Games so far, and while it could use a bit of work in certain areas (1- Some combats could still use some tweaking. 2- Skill challenges are rare and bare-boned. 3 - It would have been nice with a few more opportunities for role-playing), it's a great adventure and has inspired me to add another continent to my homebrew world.

Rating: ★★★★★

HARD BOILED CULTURES

ONE BAD EGG

Hard Boiled Cultures is a DM's guide to making the standard races of your campaign more diverse. The book deconstructs the basics of a race (stats, feats, abilities) and shows us how to twist that into distinct sub-races ready to populate and enrich your campaign world. While OBE uses the PHB races as examples, there is no reason that their theories cannot be applied to any and all 4E races. I think it is a brilliant (trying not to use awesome here) idea that every DM should embrace. Doing so offers true flexibility and choice for your player characters. No longer will every rogue be a halfling, every fighter be a dragonborn, or every cleric be an elf. By creating sub-races using HBC, your players no longer have to choose between making the character

they want and making an "optimized character." The only thing missing (IMO) from *Hard Boiled Cultures* are tables of alternate abilities. OBE tells us how to evaluate each ability and power, but all examples are based on already existing abilities. Which works great, mind you, I just wish there had been a few tables with lists of cool ideas for abilities for each race. It's still an awesome product, though.

Rating: ★★★★★

HEROES HANDBOOK: DRAGONBORN

GOODMAN GAMES

A lot of people have been complaining that 4E lacks fluff, myself included. Well, if it's fluff you want, it is fluff you will get with *Hero's Handbook: Dragonborn*. The dragonborn here are described as an ancient races steeped in tradition and honor. A sort of Samurai/Indian hybrid race, divided into very distinct clans, each with their own history and traditions and their own interpretation of the Code of the Dragon (Courage, Integrity, and Loyalty), the cornerstone of dragonborn society.

Each clan (8 are described in detail) comes with clan-specific paragon path and feats. There is also a whole chapter of feats for any dragonborn character. Overall, it is great stuff, and while there are a few feats and paragon paths you, as DM, might need to take a look at, overall the stuff appears to not be completely unbalanced. Not everything has been the subject to the dreaded power-creep, and there are plenty of options for those who wish to build on their dragonborn character, making him even more distinctly dragonborn.

The book has around 60 pages of almost 100% fluff, 10 pages on how (tables) to make an engaging and interesting family history for your dragonborn, 20 pages of monsters (mostly different dragonborn), and finally around 10 pages of new magical items.

While I am 100% sure you could play 4e without this book, I would definitely not be without it.

Rating: ★★★★★

OPEN GRAVE

WIZARDS OF THE COAST

Open Grave is not just a book about undead, no; it's the undead equivalent of the *Draconomicon*. It's a DM's book. From start to finish of its 223 pages, this book is stuffed with ideas and hooks for your campaigns involving the almost-but-not-quite-dead. It contains 3 different campaign arcs, each broken up for the various tiers (I love the Vampire Kingdom idea - it doesn't get much darker than that); 9 different lairs, each with several encounters (the mausoleum of Ssra-Tauroch looks like an awesome encounter to build an adventure over, with a nasty

level 17 solo yuan-ti mummy at the end); 11 templates, 7 famous undead (OMG, Vecna has an aura that deals 50 necrotic damage – this will really suck if you aren't properly prepared), 8 artifacts, 7 rituals (quite a few must haves for when you explore ancient crypts) and monsters. In fact, there are more than 160 monsters in *Open Grave* (the death tyrant looks nasty, but it's really only one of many that I can't wait to use), most of which look fairly balanced. However, there are definitely a few monsters, like the rotvine defiler, where you wonder if it was just meant to be extremely nasty, and not much else. Either way, while I love dragons much more than I love undead, I must admit that undead do tend to show up a lot more often than dragons. With this in mind, *Open Grave* is a definite a must-have for me.

Rating: ★★★★★

WRATH OF THE RIVER KING

WOLFGANG BAUR, OPEN DESIGN

Wrath of the River King is a tale of greed, love, and revenge, where the heroes start off trying to find the miller's wife, but quickly find themselves embroiled in a game of thrones amongst three factions of fey. The players end up making their way towards the castle of the River King in order to prevent a fey attack on the mortal realm. The adventure is very flexible (sandbox style) and stuffed full of interesting skill challenges, combat, and more than anything else, role-playing encounters and opportunities. The Queen's Birch Fair especially shines in this regard, and is so full of adventure hooks that you can probably use it as the basis for half of a campaign. For the more combat-minded, there is plenty as well. Several of the encounters even look positively deadly. All in all, this is by far the best 3PP adventure written for 4E. And not only is it a great adventure, but it is also an awesome inspiration, and a must have for any DM who ever plans to bring his players to the Feywild.


Rating: ★★★★★

Jack is the alter ego of Chris Kummel, an avid 4E fan and reviewer, who has been reviewing pretty much every 4E product under the sun in his popular EN World blogs, Jack99's Ultrashort Reviews of All His 4E Stuff.


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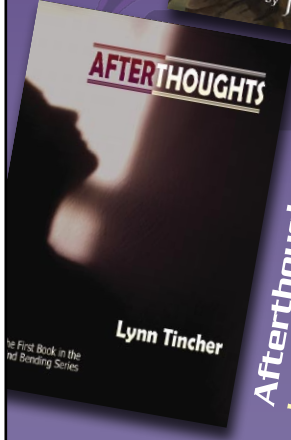
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Adrian at the Goodman Games Booth, Gen Con 2007

D20 QUESTIONS: ADRIAN POMMIER

D20 Questions is a recurring feature in *Level Up* where we interview people of interest to those of us who roll 20-sided dice. This could be writers, designers, game masters, artists, or all of the above.

In this issue, we speak with Adrian Pommier. Adrian is best known as the man responsible for killing dozens of characters every year, whether through the clever yet dangerous adventures he writes, or at the Gen Con Dungeon Crawl Classics Open Tournament that he manages. We'll get to see even more of both his writing and gaming in his new role as Community Events Manager for Goodman Games.

Adrian's credentials among the dice-slinging set include co-writing the ENnie-nominated "Best Adventure" *DCC #51: Castle Whiterock*, writing *DCC #55: Isle of the Sea Drake*, and developing and managing a host of killer Gen Con tournament modules. In tournament play, his Gen Con adventures have killed 153 PCs since 2006, and that's where we'll start the conversation.

Level Up: What's it like knowing that you've ended the careers of 153 characters in the last three years?

Adrian Pommier: We write the tournaments with one eye on the originals – killer dungeons with high bodycounts – that gives us permission to take off the kid gloves.

Also, I played a lot of *Call of Cthulhu* growing up. While any given *CoC* game was likely to end in insanity or death, after all the screaming was over you had a lot of fun. So when I hear that the bodycount was high, I know I've done half of my job well. If the teams had a good time while getting TPK'ed, that's the other half.

LU: You're the brains behind the Gen Con tournaments, both in developing the modules with teams of other writers and in coordinating the many judges who play through them at the show. Since you see the whole process from conception to execution, tell us: once "module meets gamer" live at Gen Con, do things always go as planned?

AP: I can honestly say, "Mostly." Between extensive playtesting and the exemplary writers we use for the tournament modules, we cover a lot of bases. Beyond even that, once the module's "finished," it goes to the Judges for a period of comments. That's where we put the fine polish on the tournament.

If things do go pear-shaped, I have high confidence that the Judges will handle it well. We vet them extensively, and several have been doing this for years.

LU: What's the most unexpected thing that's happened in Gen Con tournament play?

AP: *Palace in the Wastes*, year three. A cave fisher up on a ledge has stuck his super-long tongue to Ulfsek (dwarven paladin) and is reeling him up. Ulfsek just has a flail (so he can't cut the tongue), and he can't get free. Meanwhile, his team is getting worked, and needs him ASAP. The player decides to use the tongue as rope to climb up the ledge and deal with the cave fisher faster.

I don't know why, but I never saw that coming; it was a brilliant move.

LU: Your adventures are known for challenging encounters that force players to be smart or die trying. Where do you get the inspiration for these encounters?

AP: The back of my mind is always looking for inspiration somewhere. Level 15 of *Castle Whiterock* is topographically my living room. The underwater zombies from the book *World War Z* made their way into *Isle of the Sea Drake*. Watching *The Remains of the Day*, I mentally mapped the English estate where Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson worked. The level design in the PS2's *God of War* is outstanding; it makes me want to draw better maps.

I've also been spelunking, spent some time in the desert, climbed Aztec pyramids, hiked Caribbean islands, and toured a few English castles...these were vacations, but it was also research.

LU: What do you enjoy more, writing the adventures or running characters through them?

AP: Hmm. If we're talking about the tournament, then I like writing it more because that's where the challenge lies...you have to anticipate what a tournament team may try and write for it. I mean, you should always do that, but it's doubly-important for the tournament.

If we're talking about casual games or my non-tournament work, then I prefer to run the module. I tend to let the party steer their own course, so when they leave "the script" I get to make stuff up on the fly...and I love that.



Adrian and the Dungeon Crawl Classics Open Tournament judges, Gen Con 2008

LU: It seems like you've been a professional writer for several years now. How many Dungeon Crawl Classics modules include your name as writer or developer?

AP: Umm...I'd have to list them. *Crypt of the Devil Lich*, *The Adventure Begins*, *Palace in the Wastes*, *Chronicle of the Fiend*, *Castle Whiterock*, *Isle of the Sea Drake*, two that aren't released yet (*The Warbringer's Son* and *Citadel of the Corruptor*), and one that's in development. At present, that's about nine.

LU: Of all the adventures you've written, what's your favorite one to date?

AP: I don't have an all-time favorite because I don't think I've written my "perfect" module yet. Right now I'm happiest with *Isle of the Sea Drake* because it's my first solo project, but I'm pretty excited about one I'm working on now, so check back next month and I'll probably have a different answer.

LU: In addition to adventure modules, what other game design projects have you been involved in?

AP: That list is a lot shorter. I wrote a chapter for *Dragonmech's Almanac of the Endless Traders* about a dwarven city that had been left behind by the *Second Age of Walkers*. The Almanac was a setting book, so that chapter was stat-free... a huge change of pace.

LU: Even though you've been interviewed repeatedly about *DCC #51: Castle Whiterock* in other forums, we can't help but bring it up again. A 700-page adventure is something worth mentioning. What's your favorite encounter in *Castle Whiterock*?

AP: The first encounter I came up with for *CW* was the approach into Narborg. It popped in my head whole-cloth during the meeting where it was pitched that I'd join the project. I'd have to say that's my favorite encounter, although the final fight against the dragon is a close, close second.

There are just so many ways that both can go wrong, and both really ask the party to think beyond standard tactics in order to survive.

LU: Every writer has a "dream project," something they'd love to get the chance to work on. What's yours?

AP: I've always wanted to do a war epic. There's this siege at the beginning of *Night's Dark Terror* that I've never forgotten. No other module I've read has come close to that, and I've looked.

LU: Rumor has it you're starting up something called the Dungeon Crawl League. Can we expect more killer dungeons from that?

AP: Heh. Like you had to ask.

SEMI-RANDOM 4E MONSTER NAME GENERATOR

By Adrian Pommier

If you are like me, you've noticed a trend in the names of 4E monsters. No longer do you face Giant Monstrous Spiders, but rather "Deathjump Spiders." Gone is the boring old Stegosaurus... meet instead the "Bloodspike Behemoth!" For those of us out in gamerland who like to make our own monsters, this change can be a difficult one to make.

Take an example homebrew monster: an overgrown, bloodsucking housefly. In previous editions, it might be a Vampire Fly (or maybe a Thirsting Muscivex), but in order to give a monster that 4E special sauce, it needs a catchy, compound-adjectival-noun name that the youngest player can pronounce and the wisest player can instantly grok.

Submitted for your approval, then, is a Semi-Random 4E Monster Name Generator. Now your critters can have flashy names just like the pros make! Just combine a word from Column A with one from Column B. Alternately, if your twelvesiders are feeling unloved, roll 2d12 twice to generate one... just watch out for combinations like Fellfell and Bloodblood!

BONUS: This also works pretty well for magic item names!

COLUMN A

2. Battle-
3. Black-
4. Blaze-
5. Blood-
6. Bone-
7. Crush-
8. Curse-
9. Death-
10. Dragon-
11. Dread-
12. Earth-
13. Fancy-
14. Fell-
15. Fey-
16. Frost-
17. Rot-
18. Rune-
19. Shadow-
20. Storm-
21. Thunder-
22. Vise-
23. Void-
24. War-

COLUMN B

2. -bite
3. -blood
4. -born
5. -chanter
6. -claw
7. -craft
8. -dirge
9. -fell
10. -forged
11. -grip
12. -grove
13. -hammer
14. -hulk
15. -hunter
16. -jump
17. -mire
18. -pants
19. -rage
20. -root
21. -soul
22. -steel
23. -tail
24. -thorn



By Brendan LaSalle

Dear Archmage Abby,

One of the people in my gaming group happens to be my fiancée. Sometimes the other folks we play with accuse me of playing favorites. I try hard not to, but sometimes my other players grumble anyway. How should I handle this potentially game wrecking problem?

Sincerely,
Multiclassed GM/Husband

Dear MGMH,

The Archmage feels your pain, MGMH. You game with your friends, and sometimes you game with your special friends and it's hard to draw the line.

First of all, make double sure you *are* being fair. Listen to what your players have to say – do you cut your bride-to-be breaks? Do you target her less than the others in combat, or make sure that your game has exactly the kinds of situations your fiancée is built to face to the detriment of the rest of the group? Take a hard look at your GMing and make sure you haven't been falling into any of those all-too-easy-to-overlook traps. If you find that you may have let a bit of favoritism into your game then you must make sure it stops for good.

If you decide that your group is just grouching to try to get you to favor the party in the next couple of close calls, then what you need to do is show them that you acknowledge that there is a special relationship between you and your life-mate but that you will not play favorites. Try this: on your next gaming

occasion, say something along these lines to your fiancée in front of the rest of the group: "Darling, I love you but I'm still going to try to kill your character this evening." Then follow through, and go for the throat a few times. A few affirmations like that and your group should let the "special relationship" complaints go.



Dear Archmage Abby,

I'm a D&D freak. Should I go to 4.0 or stay 3.5?

Sincerely,
System Breakdown in South Florida

If the Archmage only had a gold piece for every time she has heard that question...

Ultimately it's the players, and not the rules, that make a game fun. You can have a great game with a terrible system, or a tedious game with the very best rules. Ultimately it comes down to the players and the GM, their chemistry and their ability to tell a thrilling story. Rules are important but the fun comes first.

However, if you are a *real* D&D freak, don't you think you owe it to yourself to at least try 4.0? Think about how much fun all the new character and feat options will be. Listen to the Archmage: give the new system a real, serious try before you make any decision. And who says you can't play both? Try starting a new campaign, but pull your old one out with the old rules on those days when you feel nostalgic.



Confidential to Poison Paladin in Paduka:

Forgive them and move on. Sometimes a venomous purple worm is just a venomous purple worm.



Need some gaming advice? Send queries to Archmage Abby!

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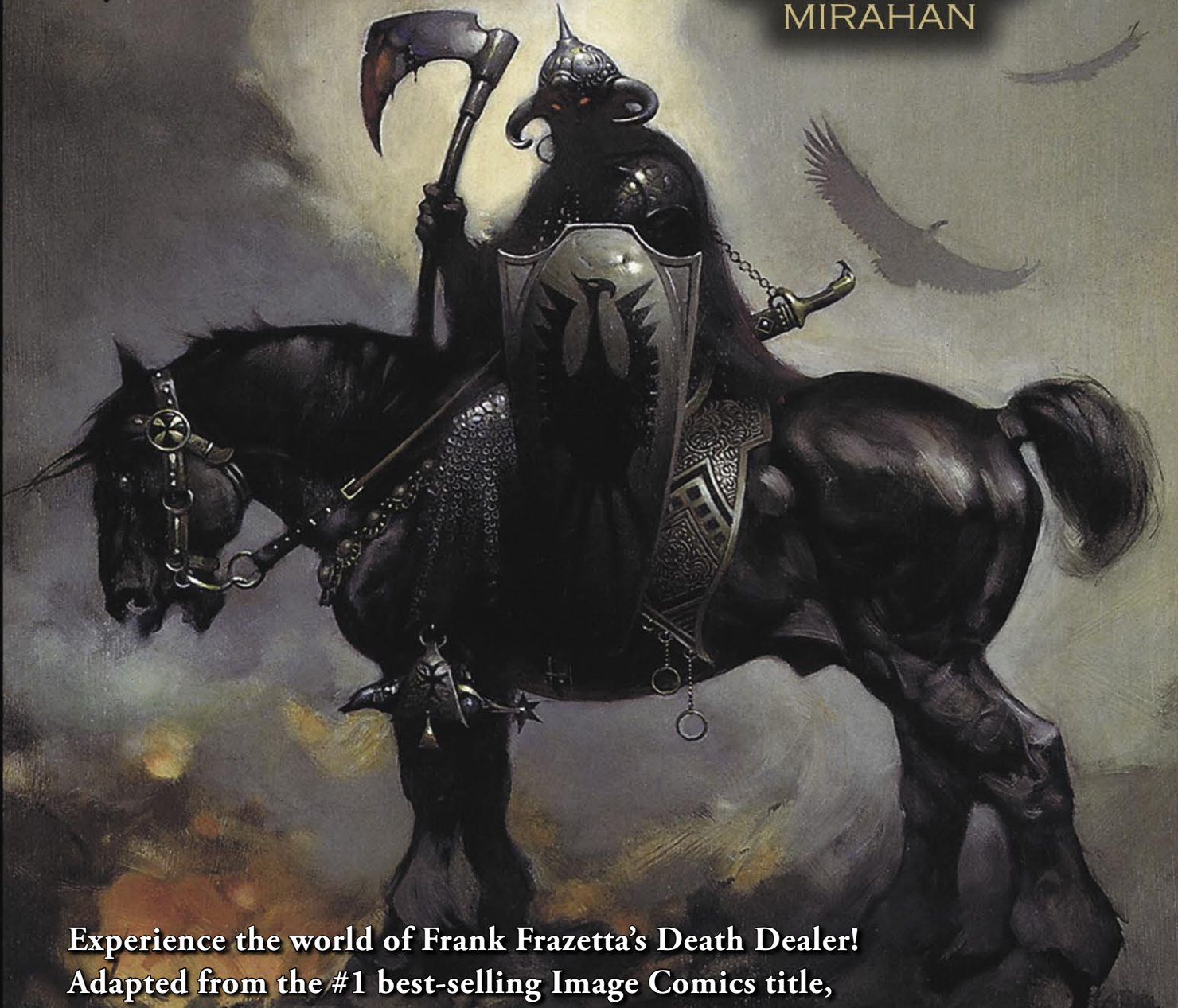
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