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DASTOW GAMES

PLAYER'S GUIDE TO GITH



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PLAYER'S GUIDE TO GITH

*Racial traits and expanded bonds
for githyanki and githzerai player characters*

by DASTOW Games

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Introduction

You've seen them in the *Monster Manual*—or in the *Fiend Folio* if you've been playing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS long enough. The githyanki and the githzerai, gaunt warriors from the planes beyond, make great adversaries...but they can make even better protagonists.

The *Player's Guide to Gith* gives you the rules and background you need to make a githyanki or githzerai PC come to life at your gaming table. In here, you'll find everything from racial traits to roleplaying advice to an expansion on the bonds presented in Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook*.

The gith have been part of D&D for more than 35 years, and no player's guide could hope to capture them as they've been expressed in dozens of rulebooks and countless *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazine articles across that time. As we wrote this book, we surveyed all the gith information we could find, but we relied most heavily on two sources: the *Fiend Folio* monster book, where the world met the githyanki and the githzerai for the first time, and the 5th edition *Monster Manual*. What you're getting here is an approach that's old-school in terms of flavor, but up to date in terms of rules.

Readers with particularly high Wisdom (Perception) checks will notice that in a couple of cases, we opted for the *Fiend Folio* option rather than what's in the 5th edition *Monster Manual*. We like our gith to be descended from humans, and we like *zërth* to mean a githzerai fighter/wizard. Those aren't exactly huge variations, so we figure you'll indulge us.

We also take a more expansive approach to the gith's iconic weapon: the *silver sword*. As described in the *Monster Manual*, the *silver sword* is a +3 *greatsword* that deals extra psychic damage and can end astral projections...but only in the hands of its githyanki creator. We think the githzerai deserve *silver swords*, too (they had 'em in the *Fiend Folio*), and we think it's more interesting if the *silver sword* is a powerful weapon in anyone's hands. That just makes the gith even more keen to get a missing *silver sword* back by any means necessary.

Who Is DASTOW Games?

DASTOW Games is an indie publisher devoted to sharing high-end (and often high-concept) RPG material. Composed of *Princes of the Apocalypse* designer David Noonan and *Princes* editor Stacey Janssen, DASTOW is committed to creating exciting, story-driven games that help push the industry forward.

If you liked *Player's Guide to Gith*, give it a review! For a glimpse at our D&D line, visit dastowgames.com.

Gith

Here's a truth that stretches across the planes: Nothing inspires unity like a common set of shackles. When the mind flayers had us in bondage—slaves and food supply in equal measure—all gith yearned for freedom in unison.

Here's another, more obvious, truth: "Freedom" and "unison" don't mix. Once we paid for our freedom in blood and horror, we kept fighting...fighting each other. Pile vendetta upon vendetta, and you get two races that hate each other as only siblings can. Say what you will about the mind flayers, but they certainly taught us to hate...

—Th'Nakuur, Myrmidon-Sage of the Ebon Star

The gith were once human—but centuries of mind flayer experimentation followed by millennia of exposure to the outer planes have rendered them distinct—and imposing to behold. Proud warriors, the gith still hunt mind flayers whenever they can, their enmity undimmed by the toll of years.

The gith also reserve a special hatred for each other. After escaping the clutches of the mind flayers, the gith split into two cultures: the warlike, evil githyanki and the solemn, pragmatic githzerai. Floating cities of the githyanki launch astral warships full of githyanki warriors in baroque armor bearing magic *silver swords*. Their fleets assault the fortress-monasteries of the githzerai, islands of order in the chaos of limbo. Whatever the outcome, the victors leave none alive among the vanquished.

Driven to Succeed. The gith are a driven people, profoundly ambitious and capable of focus that borders on the monomaniacal. As slaves of the mind flayers, their ancestors endured horrors that other races can scarcely imagine, and the sacrifices required to win their freedom left little in the way in the way of kindness or more pleasant virtues. While exceptions exist, the typical gith is grim

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and devoted to the task at hand. “Relaxation” is a foreign concept—or a weakness that other races display. The githzerai in particular are famously humorless, while githyanki humor tends to be sarcastic or caustic.

Psionic Talents. One consequence of their time as chattel of the mind flayers is a psionic birthright that all gith share. The mind flayers bred their ancestors to be psionically aware, and the gith developed their talents in secret as they plotted the overthrow of their illithid masters. Now every gith has a modicum of psionic power, and some develop mental abilities that would astound even the mind flayers themselves.

Imposing Presence. Gaunt figures with skull-like faces and unnatural strength, the githyanki inspire fear wherever they go. Even a rank-and-file githyanki warrior stands out on the Material Plane, bedecked in elaborate armor and wielding a greatsword polished to a brilliant sheen. Arrange those warriors on the deck of an astral ship, give them a fighter/wizard commander with a massive *silver sword*, and watch their foes quail in terror.

As for the githzerai, they’re imposing for the opposite reason: their fearsome calm and relentless austerity. A githzerai wastes no motion, no word, no thought. Everything is efficient and crafted with purpose. Others find that intense focus unnerving and may lose their composure in the face of a githzerai’s imperious stare.

Gith Names

Gith use only a personal name, and they take care to make it unique among living githyanki or githze-

rai. The mind flayers denied the gith individual names, and now that they’re free, a unique name is of great cultural importance. The Gith language tends to be flexible in terms of phonemes and syllables, so speakers of Common sometimes find their names challenging to pronounce.

Among the githyanki, apostrophes are common; they indicate a contraction, not a glottal stop. The name Th’nakuur, for example, is short for Thauhir-inakuur. Both githyanki and githzerai have a tendency to use double vowels, even the unusual *aa*, *ii*, and *uu* combinations.

Githyanki Names: Th’nakuur, Y’ele, Zan’kiri, Quanajiir, Chan’durak, Na’wrokirr, Seli’kasim, Di’rikhe, Xau’huri, Zuri’kanan, Indak’ala, Tauurilon.

Githzerai Names: Vaukanaan, Rotaa, Eredeskri, Pyraul, Bantoorak, Aurizon, Cheliost, Anarratha, Muurtanna, Endreila, Paushuu, Gherendaam.

Sobriquets and Appellations: While the gith eschew family names, they’re fond of sobriquets like “The Dread Th’nakuur” or “The Austere Cheliost.” They also put appellations after the name, such as “Th’nakuur of the Ebon Star” or “Cheliost the Unforgiving.”

Gith Traits

Your gith character has certain characteristics in common with other gith—especially those of your culture, githyanki or githzerai.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 2.

Age. The gith age at the same rate humans do, though their exposure to the strangeness of the Astral Plane (if githyanki) or Limbo (if githzerai) means that a few have unnaturally long lifespans.

Alignment. Githzerai are almost always lawful and tend to be ambivalent and pragmatic on matters of good and evil. The githyanki, on the other hand, are generally evil and lean toward the lawful (or in their case, the tyrannical).

Size. A typical gith is more than 6 feet tall and weighs between 160 and 170 pounds. Whatever your physical ability scores, you have a lean, almost gaunt frame.

Speed. Your base land speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision. You have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can’t discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Resilient Mind. You have advantage on saving throws that would prevent you from being stunned or that would end a stun early—a gift from your ancestors who won their freedom from the mind flayers.

A Gith-tory Lesson

The githyanki and githzerai began as entries in a monthly UK magazine column, “Fiend Factory.” TSR, makers of *Dungeons & Dragons*, compiled monsters from “Fiend Factory” into the second major monster book for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (which we now call 1st edition): *Fiend Folio*.

Maybe it was the fierce-looking githyanki on the cover of the *Fiend Folio*. Maybe it was that the gith had levels in PC classes—a rare phenomenon. Maybe it was the psionics or the *silver swords*. Whatever the reason, the gith caught the imagination of D&D players, and they’ve been a beloved part of the game ever since.

The 1st edition D&D books didn’t always do the greatest job of identifying individual contributors, but *Fiend Folio* was an exception because most of the monsters came from the “Fiend Factory” articles. Flip to the back of your 1981 *Fiend Folio*, and you’ll see the githyanki and githzerai credited to Charles Stross—submitted as a teenager, long before he became a Hugo Award-winning author.

Stross borrowed the name “githyanki” from a 1977 novel, *The Dying of the Light*. The githyanki in that novel merit only a brief mention, and they aren’t like D&D’s githyanki. And *The Dying of the Light*? It was George R. R. Martin’s first novel. When you roll up your gith character, know that you’re standing on the shoulders of some fantasy/sci-fi greats.

Psionics. You have an innate spellcasting ability based on your subrace (see below). You can innately cast a number of spells that increases as you gain levels, requiring no components.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and Gith. (The gith in the *Monster Manual* don't speak Common, but it's more fun for everyone at the table if your character does.)

Subrace. The divide between the two gith cultures, githyanki and githzerai, is a gulf of seething hatred—a feud that spans the planes. Choose one of the two subraces, and learn to hate the other.

Githyanki

The word “githyanki” means “children of Gith,” and you trace your lineage to Gith herself, the revolutionary leader who organized the uprising against the mind flayers. Since then, your people have done whatever it took—no matter how grievous or appalling—to maintain your freedom and carve out a place in the cosmos.

Among your people, a sort of pragmatic wickedness is a virtue. Some might question whether the githyanki have become akin to the mind flayers they hate so much, but that sort of dissent would never be tolerated by your civilization's leader, the lich-queen Vlaakith.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 1.

Psionics. Your spellcasting ability is based on your Intelligence. You can innately cast the following spells, depending on your level:

1st level: *mage hand* (the hand is invisible) at will, *jump* 3/day
3rd level: *misty step* 3/day
5th level: *nondetection* (self only) 1/day
9th level: *telekinesis* 1/day
13th level: *plane shift* 1/day

Githzerai

The sage Zerthimon questioned Gith's fitness to lead her society when it became apparent the gith would win their freedom from the mind flayers. Revolutionaries don't always make the best civilization-builders, he reasoned, and Gith's ruthless warmongering was exposing a tyrannical side that Zerthimon abhorred. Zerthimon's followers called themselves the githzerai, a compound word that honored Gith's struggle, but Zerthimon's wisdom. They retreated to the entropic disorder of Limbo, where they study and train both body and mind. Some githzerai have even made an uneasy truce with the mind flayers—which the githyanki see as an unforgivable betrayal.

Your culture is a solemn, austere one, and it tends to look inward both collectively and individually. Your people have had to raise walls of all sorts to keep the chaos of Limbo at bay (to say nothing of rapacious githyanki), and the ideal githzerai is a fortress of mind, body, and soul.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

Psionics. Your spellcasting ability is based on your Wisdom. You can innately cast the following spells, depending on your level:

1st level: *mage hand* (the hand is invisible) at will, *jump* 3/day
3rd level: *shield* 3/day
5th level: *see invisibility* 1/day
9th level: *phantasmal killer* 1/day
13th level: *plane shift* 1/day

Design Notes: Gith Traits

We designed the gith with the githyanki and githzerai of the *Fiend Folio* open on the desk, and that has influenced the decisions we made. Those original gith could advance as fighters, magic-users (what we now call wizards), or a multiclass combination of both. Githyanki could also be anti-paladins, and githzerai could also be monks. All had psionic powers that weren't directly tied to their mental ability scores, though the *AD&D* psionics rules generally gave more power to those with high Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores.

More broadly, there's something cool about gaunt, almost skeletal creatures possessing the sort of strength we associate with bulky muscles, so that's why all gith get a Strength bonus. Beyond that, the original githyanki were quintessential fighter/wizards, so they get an Intelligence bonus, and the githzerai get a Dexterity bonus to make them better monks. If you want to split the gith races further, you could make the githyanki +2 Str, +1 Int and the githzerai +2 Dex, +1 Wis. That makes githzerai good (maybe too good?) as monks. Give githzerai fighter/wizards a try, though! They're as old school as they come.

For the basic psionic abilities, we diverged from the gith in the *Monster Manual* to tone down the gith's power to bypass low-level hazards and encounters. The basic githyanki warrior in the *Monster Manual*, for example, can cast a self-only *nondetection* three times a day. Because *nondetection* lasts 8 hours, that's tantamount to permanent *nondetection*. But we adhered to the overall thrust of the monster design (and it's one that previous editions have employed, too), granting further powers as the gith advances in levels.

We also made most of the higher-level abilities 1/day rather than 3/day. When you accumulate a number of 3/day abilities, it can overshadow the actual spellcasting you get via your class. We want higher-level gith characters to feel like wizards (or other spellcasters) first and psionic users second.

How Expanded Bonds Work

During character generation, you'd ordinarily roll or choose a bond (presented in Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook*) as part of your character's background. The gith have such a rich racial heritage, though, that it makes sense to offer bonds that have deep roots in githyanki or githzerai culture.

That's where the idea of expanded bonds began. Rather than having a bond that's a single sentence—like "I pursue wealth to secure someone's love" or "my loyalty to my sovereign is unwavering"—we're broadening the idea to include an expanded bond as a page you'll present to your DM, with suggestions on how that bond can be woven into the story of your D&D campaign.

Player Advice. No spoilers here; your DM will have a hand in the narrative arc, and even though you've read the expanded bond, you won't know exactly what twists and turns are in store for your character. The expanded bond is a tacit agreement between you and your DM. You're saying, "This is something important to my character's story arc, and here are some ways it might play out." In turn, your DM is probably cackling like an archvillain, thinking of ways to integrate the expanded bond into the (probably sinister) plans every DM makes.

The expanded bonds are written more for your DM than for you. That's intentional, because after you've selected an expanded bond, you'll give your DM the expanded bond page. The DM uses the expanded bond as a blueprint for future character developments—some you'll find rewarding and some you'll find challenging.

DM Advice. When a player hands you an expanded bond, the player is essentially telling you, "Here are some things that will make me happy." The implementation is up to you. We've crafted each expanded bond to give you lots of options—enough that the player won't know how the narrative arc will play out. If you're a DM, you're a natural storyteller and you're probably thinking of

your own plots and schemes already.

The overall idea is that an expanded bond gives you ideas for tailoring your narrative to match (and sometimes dramatically thwart) a player's desires. It shouldn't overshadow the broader story you're telling with the whole table, of course. The bullet points in the expanded bonds can spice up the adventure you're already playing, or they provide story seeds for the adventures you create.

You can encourage other players to give you expanded bonds, too. This technique isn't just for the gith! If every player tells you the kinds of stories they're hoping to see for their characters, then building a campaign means weaving and combining those narrative threads into a tapestry that gives everyone—including you—a moment in the sun, dramatically speaking.

Race	Expanded Bond
both	Bearer of the Silver Sword. My soul stirs whenever a <i>silver sword</i> is near, and I hope to earn one and master its use.
both	Mind Flayer Hunter. The illithids are an existential threat to all gith and the denizens of the Material Plane. They must be stopped by any means.
both	The Clasped Hand. I support a secret society devoted to an impossible task: the reunion of the githyanki and githzerai.
both	Gish/Zerth. I am devoted to both sword and spellbook, keen to master both the martial and the arcane arts.
githyanki	Red Dragon Rider. Since I was a child, I dreamed of becoming a mighty githyanki warrior astride a fearsome red dragon.
githyanki	Rebel in Exile. My eyes have been opened to the wickedness of my people, and I can never truly go home.
githzerai	Limbo Contemplative. As I meditate before the chaos of Limbo, my mind sees deeper truths—truths worth exploring.

Design Notes: Expanded Bonds

In our experience, bonds work better when they're chosen, not rolled randomly. (In a one-shot or a limited convention experience, of course, it's a different story.) That's why we aren't presenting six expanded bonds for githyanki and six for githzerai. We're hitting the high points of each race, but we aren't trying to force a strict parallel. For whatever reason, the githyanki have a little more drama built into them, so they've got a couple more expanded bonds.

As with many things we do, expanded bonds are an experiment. We think they might be useful beyond the context of the gith. If you like them—and especially if you use them at your table—let us know in the comments section of this product on DM's Guild. That helps us immensely as we plan future content to share.

Bearer of the Silver Sword

Githyanki or githzerai

_____’s bond: “My soul stirs whenever a silver sword is near, and I hope to earn one and master its use.”

The *silver sword* is the signature weapon of the gith, ensorcelled with their magic and particularly effective against interlopers on the Astral Plane. It’s also important to them culturally, symbolic of their power now that they’re free of the mind flayers’ clutches. Almost every painting or sculpture of a gith in battle includes a prominent *silver sword*, and many a gith child plays with wooden swords painted silver, dreaming of the day when that sword will be real.

The *silver sword* is of critical importance to the githyanki, but the githzerai revere them, too. They’re almost always greatswords, convenient for fighter/wizards who can hold them in one hand when they’re spellcasting with the other hand.

The Silver Sword Arc

- ▶ Early in the campaign, give the gith PC an opportunity to see a *silver sword* in action and deliver some *silver sword* exposition to the D&D table.
- The PCs get in over their heads, and a friendly gith bearing a *silver sword* comes to their rescue.
- The gith PC faces off against an antagonist gith (of the opposite race) with a *silver sword*. If the gith PC wins, friendly gith arrive to keep the *silver sword* safe from the overwhelming reprisal everyone expects.
- The gith PC has a older friend or mentor who bears a *silver sword* and intends to pass it on to the “most worthy” friend or protege upon death or retirement.
- ▶ The gith PC earns a *silver sword* to wield.
- A powerful patron within the gith leadership gives the PC a *silver sword* in a ceremony honoring the successful conclusion of a recent adventure—preferably one that advanced the patron’s interests.
- The gith PC loots a *silver sword* from an antagonist gith and decides to keep it, despite the certainty that the other gith faction will try to get it back.
- The gith PC discovers the instructions, blueprints, and magic rituals necessary to craft a *silver sword*—but the smithy is guarded. This can be a solo adventure you run before or after the regular game session.
- ▶ The *silver sword* comes with complications.
- The gith PC is the target of periodic attacks from the other gith faction. They want the *silver sword*,

and they have a habit of showing up at the most inopportune times.

- The *silver sword* is a sentient magic item (as described in Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*), and its personality comes into increasing conflict with the gith PC.
- The *silver sword* is haunted...by the souls of those slain when the sword severed the astral cord connecting the astral body to the physical one. Those souls have returned as incorporeal undead, and they want vengeance against the sword—and by extension its wielder.
- ▶ The stakes go up as a special version of the *silver sword* is on the line.
- A rival gith of the same faction as the gith PC emerges as a full-fledged antagonist...and the rival has a special *silver sword* with powers that outstrip the typical *silver sword*. Whether the conflict is a full-fledged adventure or a one-on-one duel, it ends in a swordfight for the ages.
- The gith PC’s *silver sword* urges the PC (either directly if the sword is sentient or indirectly through brief prophetic visions) to a special location on the Astral Plane. There lies a floating tomb with an undead githyanki knight at its center—and a special *silver sword* thought lost forever.
- A great gith NPC—possibly a mentor or patron—has fallen, and a *silver sword* of singular quality is in the hands of the other gith faction. The gith PC must lead an epic reprisal raid into the heart of enemy territory (Limbo or the Astral Plane, depending on the faction) to get the sword back... no matter what the cost.

Key NPCs. A mentor or patron with a *silver sword*, a rival within the same faction who covets a *silver sword*, and one or more antagonist PCs with *silver swords* from the opposite faction.

Rewards for the PC. The *silver sword* itself is the biggest reward. As described in the *Monster Manual*, a *silver sword* is a +3 *greatsword* that deals an additional 3d6 psychic damage on a hit. It’s your campaign, though, so feel free to adjust the power of the sword to a level you’re comfortable with. The complications that come with owning a *silver sword* should give the gith player some reluctance about the weapon—but on balance, it should be worth it.

At the climax of the arc, an even better version of the *silver sword* comes into play. This is a chance for you to let out all the stops and make a weapon your players will mention along with classic swords like *Excalibur* or *Stormbringer*.

Mind Flayer Hunter

Githyanki or githzerai

_____’s bond: “The illithids are an existential threat to all gith and to the denizens of the Material Plane. They must be stopped by any means.”

The mind flayer is a classic D&D villain. They’re schemers and slavers, plus they’ve got tentacles and eat brains. What’s not to love?

A player who picks this expanded bond would love to see mind flayers appear in the campaign—because their appearance will fuel the PC’s hatred. With this bond, you’ve got a built-in recurring villain that scales well, no matter the players’ level and no matter where the campaign takes you. It’s also a chance to amplify the gith PC’s racial background and explore what it means to hunt the creatures that once enslaved your people.

This expanded bond functions particularly well if your campaign involves the Underdark or similar locations known for a mind flayer presence. Other PCs at your table can certainly have their own reasons for hating the illithids, which improves party cohesion—unity against a common foe.

The Mind Flayer Hunter Arc

► Early in the campaign, establish an extra reason for the gith PC to hate mind flayers, beyond the ordinary antipathy all gith feel for the illithids.

- The gith PC spent some time as a prisoner of the mind flayers and witnessed their mind-bending horrors firsthand.
- A friend or relative of the gith PC was captured by the mind flayers and hasn’t been seen since.
- The mind flayers are targeting the gith PC for reasons they refuse to explain.

► Introduce a particular mind flayer—or a small group of them—to use as a recurring villain.

- A mind flayer slaver has established a lucrative business in selling unusual slaves—often important NPCs the gith PC interacts with.
- A mind flayer has been experimenting with psionics and can transfer its consciousness from one body to another. Even if the PCs defeat it, it might escape into the body of a bystander to wreak havoc later.
- A particular clutch of mind flayers uses brains not just for sustenance but for power, effectively “leveling up” by killing important victims.

► Throughout the campaign, reintroduce mind flayers periodically, adding complications to the gith PC’s conflict.

- A rival mind flayer hunter, probably from the other gith faction, has a habit of appearing at the most inconvenient time.
- The mind flayers seek revenge and capture the gith PC. Play out the escape as a brief solo adventure before or after your normal game session.
- The gith PC learns that the mind flayers are the proverbial “power behind the throne” for a key antagonist...or worse, for a key ally.

► As the campaign nears its climax, give the gith PC a chance to earn a lasting victory against the mind flayers—perhaps at a cost.

- The gith PC gets a chance to assault a mind flayer stronghold and confront the giant elder brain that rules the illithids. Facing an elder brain means facing all sorts of horrors, both physical and mental.
- A means to end the mind flayer threat emerges, perhaps through magic ritual or psionic discovery. But to use it, the gith PC must undertake actions that others find reprehensible. This option is particularly good for non-evil githyanki PCs, because it mirrors the decisions the first githyanki made...decisions that turned them to evil.
- The gith PC discovers an entire culture enslaved by the mind flayers and leads them to freedom, echoing the heroic path of the original Gith herself.

Key NPCs. The most important NPC is a recurring mind flayer villain—one with the wherewithal to escape death the first few times the PCs encounter it. A specific mind flayer puts a name to the gith PC’s conflict—it makes it more personal. Beyond that, you can have fun with NPCs who’ve been subjected to the mind flayers’ mental control, whether they’re captives or hidden thralls of the illithids.

Another useful recurring NPC is a rival hunter—either from the same gith culture or its opposite. (And if one rival falls by the wayside, maybe both!) That hunter can either be someone the gith PC emulates, someone the PC wants to supplant, or an up-and-comer who’s determined to be the younger, better version of the gith PC.

Rewards for the PC. After the gith PC has faced the illithids’ mind blast a few times, a magic item that improves Intelligence saving throws will be welcomed with open arms. Beyond that, consider magic items that thwart classic mind flayer powers like telepathy, *detect thoughts*, and *dominate monster*...or items that duplicate them, if you want to play with the notion of a hunter becoming more like the hunted.

The Clasped Hand

Githyanki or githzerai

_____’s bond: “I support a secret society devoted to an impossible task: the reunion of the githyanki and githzerai.”

If the mind flayers are the githyanki’s greatest enemy, then the githzerai are a close second—and the githyanki are #2 on the githzerai’s enemies list, too. Each side of the gith divide sees the other as a betrayal of what it *really* means to be gith. But there is a secret society among both githyanki and githzerai devoted to reuniting all gith under one banner. The Clasped Hand (*Sha’sal Khou* in the Gith language) wishes to repair the rift that tore the great heroes Gith and Zerthimon apart.

To the rest of mainstream githyanki and githzerai society, the Clasped Hand is treasonous, and its members know they face permanent exile at best and a death sentence at worst. Yet the vision of a reunited gith society is compelling enough to be worth the personal risk. The Clasped Hand’s numbers are small, but so were the first revolutionary cells that eventually freed the gith from enslavement. Who’s to say the Clasped Hand can’t ignite a similar revolution?

The Clasped Hand Arc

► Early in the campaign, have the gith PC establish an interest in the Clasped Hand, then introduce the secret society.

- A member of the other gith faction rescues the gith PC from danger, then explains the Clasped Hand and recruits the player.
 - The gith PC finds forbidden writings that lay out the reasoning behind the Clasped Hand, then tracks down the author.
 - While pursuing an unrelated adventure, the gith PC stumbles upon a Clasped Hand meeting, hears what they’re saying, and is intrigued enough to join.
- Give the gith PC a brief taste of githyanki/githzerai cooperation.
- Githyanki and githzerai are stranded together in a remote place and must band together against a common threat.
 - A mind flayer city is under siege from separate githzerai and githyanki forces, but the Clasped Hand is secretly coordinating their attacks to make the siege more effective.
 - The gith PC helps the Clasped Hand secure a hidden base within either a githyanki or a githzerai community.

► Conventional githyanki and githzerai forces turn up the pressure on the Clasped Hand.

- An inquisition begins to arrest Clasped Hand members, one by one.
- One of the gith factions (probably the githyanki, as it’s more their style) introduces a double agent within the Clasped Hands’ ranks.
- The Clasped Hand is branded as collaborators with the mind flayers, and only a daring assault on the illithids—with no help from conventional gith forces—will prove that the Clasped Hand isn’t in league with the gith’s greatest enemy.

► The Clasped Hand has a chance to flourish—if it isn’t wiped out.

- A change in leadership in one of the gith factions is a chance to install a leader that openly tolerates the Clasped Hand, but there are rival candidates...
- The Clasped Hand establishes a Material Plane enclave for exiled gith from both factions to call home, but the githyanki and githzerai establishment attack it.
- The mind flayers have relics and writings from the days of Gith and Zerthimon that may change how the gith see their own history. If the Clasped Hand can assault an illithid city and reclaim that history, perhaps that new perspective will make a reunion possible.

Key NPCs. Introduce two NPCs within the Clasped Hand to act as mentors and sounding boards for the gith PC: one from each faction. Beyond that, show some “churn” in the ranks of the Clasped Hand by introducing new members...and arresting or killing the old ones. As for recurring villains, an inquisitor devoted to hunting down the treasonous Clasped Hand is a natural.

With this expanded bond, it’s more important than most what you actually *do* with the NPCs. The gith PC’s relationships with githyanki and githzerai NPCs should mimic on the micro scale the blood feud that’s engulfed the two cultures. Create frequent opportunities for the gith PC to mediate disputes between githyanki and githzerai, whether they’re within the *Sha’sal Khou* or not. Those interpersonal conflicts shine a light on the difficulty of ending a centuries-long cycle of vendettas.

Rewards for the PC. One of great rewards of this expanded bond is the chance to have a secret base free from the prying eyes of both githyanki or githzerai. The gith PC (and friends) should have largely unfettered access to a “Batcave” of sorts where the Clasped Hand gathers and plans their upcoming missions.

Gish/Zerth

Githyanki or githzerai

_____’s bond: “I am devoted to both sword and spellbook, keen to master both the martial and the arcane arts.”

The **gish** are githyanki fighter/wizards, striding into battle with ornate armor and casting spells one moment, then swinging their greatswords the next. The **zerth** are the githzerai equivalent, dressed more austere but no less lethal. (Remember that we’re adopting the *Fiend Folio* convention for zerth; they aren’t monks.)

Both gish and zerth receive great acclaim among their respective societies. They’re almost distinct castes, equivalent to attendees of modern-day military academies. They represent the “best and brightest” among the gith—and they’re asked to accomplish great things for the glory of their people.

If your campaign starts at 1st level, then the PC can’t begin as a gish, and this expanded role assumes that the PC is a fighter first, probably reaching 3rd level before taking a wizard level. If you’re starting with higher-level characters or your player takes a more roundabout multiclassing path, adjust the pacing of the events below to compensate.

The Gish/Zerth Arc

- ▶ Early in the campaign, the gith PC is a fighter who becomes curious about the arcane arts.
 - Wizards notice the gith PC’s high Intelligence, but say that choosing the martial path has closed off the arcane one. “Only the gish/zerth can master both...”
 - The PC acquires a spellbook during an adventure and starts studying it, more than a little surprised that it’s starting to make sense.
 - The gish/zerth trainers reject the PC, who is determined to master the martial and magical arts through self-study, if that’s what it takes.
- ▶ At 3rd level, the PC takes the eldritch knight archetype and casts spells for the first time.
 - The PC takes part in a grand ceremony in the gith faction’s capital, meeting powerful NPCs and taking the first steps into the political arena.
 - The PC has a sudden breakthrough on the battlefield: Those spells he or she has been trying to cast actually work!
 - Before revealing the last secrets of true spellcasting, a gish/zerth instructor demands the PC undertake an initiation quest. Play this out as a short solo adventure before or after the main D&D session.

- ▶ As the PC’s magic power grows, gith society expects more.
 - The PC attacks on the other gith faction and crosses swords for the first time with a gish or zerth from the other faction.
 - The mind flayers—or the other gith faction—capture a famous gish or zerth, and the PC must plan and execute the rescue.
 - This varies from gith canon, but perhaps in your world the gish or zerth are all but extinct, and the PC is a curiosity—“the first gish/zerth in decades!”
- ▶ The PC earns the title of gish or zerth and leads other gith into battle.
 - One or more apprentices seek to learn the secrets of the gish or zerth, and the PC becomes their master.
 - The PC gains a retinue of fighters to lead into battle on behalf of the githyanki or githzerai.
 - Earning the title demands the PC win a political struggle among rivals in the faction’s leadership.

Key NPCs. Because this expanded bond is all about personal growth, a gish/zerth mentor is the most important NPC. This NPC can be gish or zerth, but it’s not mandatory. Most start with fighter levels and then transition into wizard levels, so a single-class wizard mentor makes sense, too.

Rewards for the PC. Fifth edition D&D is particularly kind to fighter/wizards: Casting in armor is okay, and the eldritch knight archetype smooths out the spell progression. As with many multi-class characters, fighter/wizards have to have a strong spread of ability scores, so magic items like *gauntlets of ogre power* or *headband of intellect* are particularly welcome. No self-respecting gish or zerth would say no to a *silver sword*, of course...

Perhaps the biggest reward for a gish or zerth, though, is the chance to lead other gith in battle. As the player ascends in level, provide opportunities to call on a retinue or bodyguard of generally loyal githyanki or githzerai. As long as the PC’s activities don’t actively flout the desires of their culture, a squad of troopers will do whatever the gish or zerth asks. Becoming the quintessential hero of your people should have its privileges after all.

When you are running a combat with gith NPCs helping the PCs, don’t spend too much time figuring out the exact details of NPC-on-NPC combat. We don’t know much about your game, but we’re pretty sure the real-life friends at your table aren’t NPCs. Just balance realism and drama, then get on to the good stuff—stuff that involves the players.

Red Dragon Rider

Githyanki only

_____s bond: "Since I was a child, I dreamed of becoming a mighty githyanki warrior astride a fearsome red dragon."

The githyanki have a centuries-old pact with a bloodline of red dragons. In exchange for food and treasure, the red dragons willingly bear the greatest githyanki into battle on the Material Plane. This is an old pact, and it's survived through the years because of red dragon greed and githyanki warmongering—not because either side is particularly honor-bound. Githyanki commanders know that if they want the red dragons' help during a foray onto the Material Plane, the gith had better deplete their treasuries.

While the githyanki leadership considers this a mercantile transaction, for the rank-and-file githyanki it inspires awe. Seeing their greatest heroes fly overhead, seemingly in command of such a fearsome beast, a typical githyanki knows that victory is inevitable.

The Dragon Rider Arc

► Early in the campaign, give the player contact—but not necessarily conflict—with a red dragon or githyanki who knows about the pact.

- A powerful red dragon shows mercy on the githyanki PC (and by extension the other PCs) because of the pact; that way the whole table learns about it.
- A group of githyanki on red dragons do a fly-by, and one of the githyanki is a friend of the githyanki PC. Enable a brief interaction and foreshadow the dragons' importance.
- The PCs discover the aftermath of a githyanki/red dragon attack, and conversations with the survivors provide the exposition.

► The githyanki PC gets to ride a dragon—for the moment.

- Near the climax of an adventure, a group of githyanki aboard red dragons joins the battle. When a githyanki rider falls, the githyanki PC can finish the battle atop a dragon.
- The githyanki dragon riders actively recruit the githyanki PC...if the PC can pass the "trials" atop a dragon. Play this out as a short solo adventure, perhaps before or after the main game session. Success means the PC is "next in line" to become a dragon rider.
- The PCs, laden with treasure, encounter a red dragon willing to honor the pact in exchange for some of that treasure. The dragon knows of a

nearby mutual enemy (something the PCs can polish off in one session), so if it goes well, everyone comes out ahead.

► The githyanki discovers a dark side to the red dragon pact. The PCs hear reports—at first fragmentary, but then more and more detailed—that both the red dragons and their riders are becoming more active...and more cruel. But why?

- In the first ride on the red dragon, the githyanki PC got a sense that the dragon's mind was probing the PC's mind. Further interactions with dragon riders reveal that the force of a red dragon's personality can overwhelm a githyanki's mind, and that the dragons are seizing control of the pact.
- The dragon riders are building a secret fortress on the Material Plane, and they plan to overthrow the githyanki's lich-queen leader, Vlaakith.
- Red dragons want to end the pact. Perhaps the red dragons participating in the pact want to break it, or perhaps other red dragons want to end such undragonlike "collaboration" with humanoids.

► In a final conflict, the githyanki PC earns a more lasting dragon steed—or changes the pact forever.

- The githyanki PC takes to the air once more as part of a breakaway group of dragon riders (including the other PCs), setting up a titanic battle of dragon riders versus dragon riders.
- The githyanki PC challenges a powerful red dragon—with the existence of the pact on the line.
- The pact between the githyanki and the red dragons has a mystical aspect that must be periodically renewed: a quest requiring one rider and one dragon to undertake it. A host of enemies, including githyanki betrayers and red dragons who want the pact broken, stand in the PC's way.

Key NPCs. A red dragon the PC will ride, a friendly githyanki dragon-rider, a more hostile dragon-rider, a red dragon that opposes the pact.

Rewards for the PC. Periodic access to a red dragon. To keep the game in balance, attach a significant cost to getting a dragon's help; you're essentially duplicating the overall githyanki-dragon pact on a smaller scale. Over time, you can make obtaining a dragon steed less costly because the PCs are more powerful and the presence of the dragon won't overshadow others at your table.

As for the mechanism, a magic item such as a battle-horn might be able to summon a red dragon under certain conditions. If the githyanki PC is a spellcaster, a custom ritual spell would do the trick.

Rebel in Exile

Githyanki only

_____’s bond: “My eyes have been opened to the wickedness of my people, and I can never truly go home.”

Githyanki society is a place where the strong prosper—on the backs of anyone weaker. Intrigue and betrayal are practically a currency among the leading factions, and any means justify the ends of acquiring power and holding it close.

Not every githyanki feels that way, but the githyanki populace is inculcated with such values from birth, so the life of the githyanki exile or rebel is a lonely one indeed.

The Rebel in Exile Arc

► Before the githyanki character joins the campaign, work out with the player what event caused the break between character and githyanki society.

- The character’s clan was dishonored—fairly or unfairly—and the character saw firsthand how cruel githyanki can be to those they see as inferior.
- The character spent time in another society, perhaps undercover or as a prisoner, and witnessed altruism and other ordinary civic virtues.
- The character had frequent contact with an outsider who became a mentor of sorts, pointing out the evils and cruelty of githyanki society.

► Early in the campaign, the githyanki character comes into contact with traditional githyanki values.

- The PCs interrupt githyanki raiders pillaging a settlement on the Material Plane, and the raiders expect the githyanki PC to join in.
- A githyanki patron approaches the githyanki PC and offers a quest—but one accomplished with evil deeds.
- The githyanki invite the the PC back into githyanki society to participate in a ceremony (such as marriage, political promotion, or coming of age). Play this out as a solo adventure you play out before or after the regular game session. The PC’s presence is controversial, and intrigues among the githyanki threaten to engulf the PC and ruin the ceremony.

► Some time later, an outsider expects the githyanki character to behave like the rest of his or her race.

- A traditional enemy of the githyanki, such as a githzerai or a mind flayer, targets the githyanki

PC and seems to show up at the most inconvenient times.

- A githyanki NPC offers advice and assistance from time to time, but with sinister strings attached.
- An NPC finds a *silver sword* and gives it to the githyanki PC, knowing that it’s unwise for a non-gith to possess a *silver sword*. The githyanki PC must negotiate with the war party that arrives afterward, seeking the sword—and troubled by the very idea of a githyanki living in exile.

► Eventually, the character confronts githyanki society and has a chance to change it.

- The githyanki PC has a chance to act as a mentor for a young githyanki, probably a relative, who is also struggling with the morality of githyanki society.
- The githyanki PC’s exploits draw the attention of other githyanki exiles, and the PC has a chance to found a community of githyanki who have rejected their society’s evil ways. Reprisals from traditional githyanki are guaranteed, of course.
- A power struggle emerges among the githyanki, and the PC becomes a possible leader—an outsider beholden to no faction and thus an acceptable compromise candidate. This puts the PC in the difficult position of leading a society that doesn’t initially share his or her values. Can the PC pull the githyanki away from cruelty and evil, or will the PC become a tyrant by necessity?

Key NPCs. Create at least two recurring githyanki NPCs who act as sounding boards for the githyanki PC. One is sympathetic to the exile’s plight and agrees—at least to a point—with the PC’s misgivings about githyanki society. The other NPC is personally sympathetic to the PC but an ardent defender of “traditional githyanki values”—wickedness and tyranny, in other words.

Rewards for the PC. One key reward that makes this expanded background come to life at the table is a magical means to contact—and at higher levels visit—the githyanki on the Astral Plane. This can be *sending stones*, a psionic device enabling *astral projection*, or another item you create. The githyanki PC should know, though, that asking the githyanki for help comes with significant strings attached.

It’s also interesting to give a rebel githyanki a *silver sword* at some point—however temporarily. By doing so, you’re subverting the symbolic value of the *silver sword* and building another reason for the rebel githyanki to come into conflict with githyanki society.

Limbo Contemplative

Githzerai only

_____’s bond: “As I meditate before the chaos of Limbo, my mind sees deeper truths—truths worth exploring.”

D&D’s Outer Planes are strange and otherworldly (that’s the point, right?) but none are as weird as Limbo where, as the *Dungeon Master’s Guide* puts it, “the whole plane is a nightmarish riot.”

That’s one of the genius bits of the githzerai’s backstory: They’re intensely lawful people, recently freed from bondage...and they decide to make their home in the most chaotic environment possible. It takes great focus indeed to meditate on reality when it’s crumbling all around you.

This expanded bond is for a githzerai PC who embraces the disparity between inner order and outer disorder. The Limbo contemplative discovers that gazing into the chaos of Limbo isn’t just a meditation challenge. It can be actively dangerous.

The Limbo Contemplative Arc

► Early in the campaign (or even as backstory), the githzerai PC meditates while staring at the chaos of Limbo, despite a mentor’s warning.

- The mentor’s concern is the githzerai’s sanity: “By studying the chaos without, you invite the chaos within.”
- The mentor’s concern is that unknown powers will tempt the githzerai: “Limbo is home to malign presences—presences who will lead you astray.”
- The mentor’s concern is more pragmatic—a physical attack against the githzerai PC and the monastery: “To the predators of Limbo, you are a beacon of vulnerability.”

► The PC explores Limbo, finding answers—and danger.

- The githzerai PC sees something out in the chaos that connects to a mystery in the ongoing campaign. Venturing out (and battling the denizens of Limbo), the githzerai PC gets a prophetic clue before having to retreat.
- The githzerai PC glimpses slaadi massing nearby, perhaps for an attack. Moving quickly to disrupt them, the githzerai engage in battle. One slaad says something cryptic about the githzerai PC being “kindred” before dying.
- A mysterious robed githzerai beckons the PC into the chaos of Limbo, leading a chase. After a brief conversation with prophetic overtones, the robed githzerai disappears and the PC must fight his or her way back to safety.

► The chaos of Limbo invades other aspects of the githzerai PC’s life.

- Temporary portals to Limbo open when the PC is nearby, often at inconvenient times. Also inconvenient are the monsters that pour through them.
- A particular slaad starts hunting the githzerai PC down, acting as a recurring villain.
- This option takes a particularly cooperative player and is more work on your part, but the payoff is great: The githzerai PC has periodic “episodes” under great stress that affect either body or mind. The PC’s body might become a flowing, amorphous mass, or the PC might briefly act insane. Try to set it up so that these episodes make the PC different, not weaker.

► The PC journeys into the heart of Limbo in an attempt to master chaos itself.

- A mad githzerai has been plotting the downfall of githzerai for centuries, and subverting the PC is key to his plans. Only by journeying to the “Impossible Fortress” can the githzerai PC end the threat.
- A chaotic evil demigod wants to extend Limbo’s reach to the Material Plane and intends to use the githzerai as “carriers”—almost like a virus. The githzerai PC is uniquely able to navigate Limbo to track down the demigod.
- The githzerai PC discovers the location of the Spawning Stone, a creation of the modrons that makes it possible for the githzerai to tame Limbo near their enclaves—but also spawning the slaadi. After battling to reach the Spawning Stone, the githzerai PC must choose whether to destroy the Stone, which will end the slaadi threat forever, but wipe out the githzerai’s enclaves across Limbo.

Key NPCs. The mentor who initially warns about the dangers of Limbo can be an important recurring NPC who sets up any number of Limbo-based adventures. Beyond that, this extended bond is rich with opportunities for recurring villains who exude chaos, whether they’re slaadi, mad githzerai, demigods, or terrors of Limbo you invent yourself.

Rewards for the PC. As the githzerai gains levels, consider playing with the optional rule on p. 61 of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*: Power of the Mind, which lets a creature temporarily alter the reality of Limbo. As a reward, you could grant the githzerai PC a bonus on Intelligence checks to reflect special training and familiarity with the chaos of Limbo. When the PC reaches higher levels, you could even extend this ability beyond the plane of Limbo. It’s as if the PC’s ongoing contemplation of Limbo has granted insight into the nature of reality itself.

Gith Feats

Ordinarily feats aren't tied to race—for very good reasons. But in the absence of full-fledged psionics rules, we wanted to introduce some simple ways for psi-curious players to give their gith mental powers a little extra oomph. If you have non-gith running around with similar racial abilities, these feats should work for them, too.

Psionic Prodigy

You are capable of calling upon reserves of psionic energy to use your powers more frequently than your peers, and you've always been a quick study in the mental arts.

- Increase your Intelligence or Wisdom score—whichever one you based your psionic abilities on—by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You are treated as one level higher than your actual level for purposes of acquiring psionic powers.
- If a psionic power of yours was usable 1/day, it's now usable 2/day.

Forbidden Psionics

You've taken it upon yourself to learn mental techniques of the enemy gith faction.

- Increase your Intelligence or Wisdom score—whichever one you based your psionic abilities on—by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You know the psionic abilities on both the githyanki and the githzerai list, though they share a common frequency of use. For example, at 3rd level you can use *misty step* and *shield* a total of 3 times per day (two *shields* and one *misty step*, for example).

Gith Treasures

We know this is primarily a book for the player, but we'd be remiss if we didn't write up the *silver sword* as a magic item—and provide some other gith-themed weapons. Make sure your DM knows you've got stats for these magic items, and you never know. You might find them in a treasure chest somewhere...

Silver Sword

Weapon (greatsword), very rare

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When you hit a living creature with it, that creature takes an extra 3d6 psychic damage.

If you score a critical hit against a target in an astral body (as with the astral projection spell), you cut the silvery cord that tethers the target to its natural body, instead of dealing damage.

Silver Sword, Lesser

Weapon (greatsword), rare

This version of the *silver sword* breaks canon a bit, but it's useful in campaigns where a +3 weapon would be too powerful. (And yes, the githyanki and/or githzerai will still chase down a missing *lesser silver sword*, no matter what.)

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When you hit a living creature with it, that creature takes an extra 1d6 psychic damage.

Fedifensor

Weapon (longsword), legendary (requires attunement by a creature who is neither chaotic nor evil)

A creation of the gray elves for the paladin Boyd de Thalion, *Fedifensor* was lost in battle and drifted through the Astral Plane until a githyanki war party found it. It remains locked in a githyanki armory, waiting for a day when it gains a new wielder who will let it slay demons once more.

You get a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. It has the following additional properties.

Paladin Affinity. In the hands of a paladin, *Fedifensor's* attack and damage bonus increases to +3.

Demon Antipathy. When it hits a demon, *Fedifensor* deals an additional 14 (4d6) damage.

Hunter of Evil. While you hold the weapon, you are aware of the presence of demons, devils, and undead within 120 feet.

Dispel Magic. *Fedifensor* can cast *dispel magic* on you three times per day. It decides when to cast the spell and does so as if it were a spellcaster equal to your level.

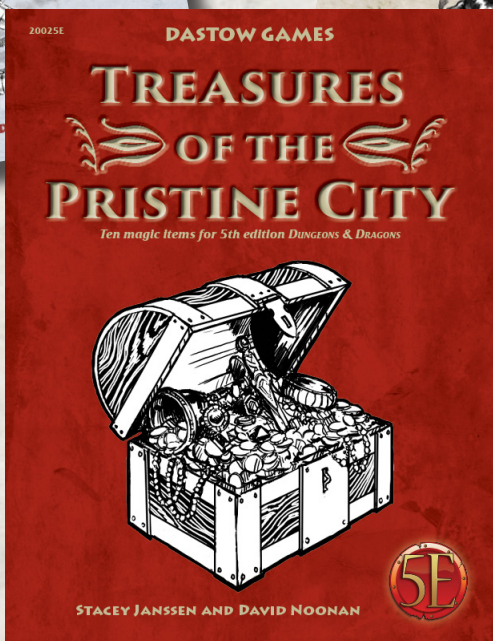
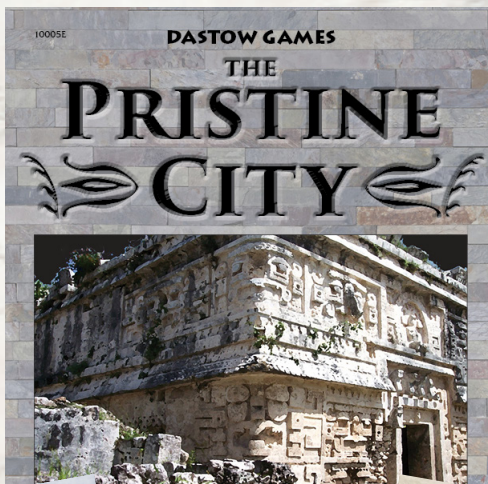
Sentience. *Fedifensor* is a sentient lawful good weapon with an Intelligence of 17, a Wisdom of 17, and a Charisma of 18. It has hearing and darkvision out to a range of 120 feet.

The weapon can speak, read, and understand Abyssal, Common, and Gith, and can communicate with its wielder telepathically.

Personality. *Fedifensor* has been sitting disused in a githyanki armory for centuries, and it desperately wants to be unsheathed so it can spill demon blood once more. It would prefer to be in the hands of a paladin, of course, but it will be grateful to any wielder that frees it from what amounts to captivity among the githyanki.

Game History. *Fedifensor* was the titular magic weapon of a D&D adventure by Allen Rodgers back in 1982. It was the first adventure to feature travel to the Astral Plane, and you guessed it—the githyanki were the bad guys.

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