

WARLOCK

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ROGUE'S GALLERY

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WARLOCK

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ON THE HUNT

by James J. Haeck

Bounty hunters are easy folk to understand. They may hunt for gold, for justice, or for vengeance, but no matter what their reasons for stalking their prey, the simple fact is that the hunt is all that matters to them. It consumes their thoughts and, all other pleasures of life, all its calming vices, are merely distractions to soothe their fevered minds.

There's a saying among mercenaries of the Crossroads. "Never trust a bounty hunter that smiles. You look into those teeth, and if you're lucky, you'll see the fangs of a hungry wolf, for a wolf hunts because it is the will of the world. Perun help you if you see the teeth of a man, for a man who kills for pleasure knows that good folk is just as fun to bleed as the bad."

The following new backgrounds and subclasses will help you create characters that live for the hunt.

New Backgrounds

Hunting dangerous prey is a calling only the reckless or barbarous pursue for long. As such, those who walk this blood-drenched path tend to come from backgrounds that imbue them with a need for vengeance, a hunger for justice, or a lust for the pure bloodthirsty thrill of the hunt.

FUGITIVE

You are on the run from the law for a grave crime. No common criminal, you were tried

and imprisoned for an offense that has set the law permanently on your trail. Whether or not you actually committed this crime is hardly relevant; the constabulary want your head on a pike regardless.

What crime were you accused of? Did you really commit it, or were you a victim of circumstance, or were you framed? How long were you imprisoned before you escaped, and how long have you been fleeing the law since?

Skill Proficiencies: Deception, Stealth

Tool Proficiencies: Disguise kit, thieves' tools

Equipment: A disguise kit or thieves' tools, a prison brand or tattoo, a set of traveler's clothes, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp.

Feature: *Self-Sufficient*

You spent years fending for yourself in the cruelly indifferent wilderness, evading those that would see you dead. You leave no tracks while traveling alone. Additionally, you can find food and water for you and up to five other people by spending 2 hours during a long rest foraging, as long as the region you are in has fresh water, small game, and healthful vegetation available.

Suggested Characteristics

Some fugitives are legitimate cons, incarcerated for a grave crime, while others are innocent people that were either framed by an enemy or were simply in the wrong

place at the wrong time. Regardless of why you ended up imprisoned, your time behind bars changed you, hardening your eyes and filling you with deep cynicism for humanity. Only true kindness can break down the walls that have risen around your heart.

Personality Traits, Ideals, Bonds, and Flaws

Choose these traits from the Criminal tables, or create your own.

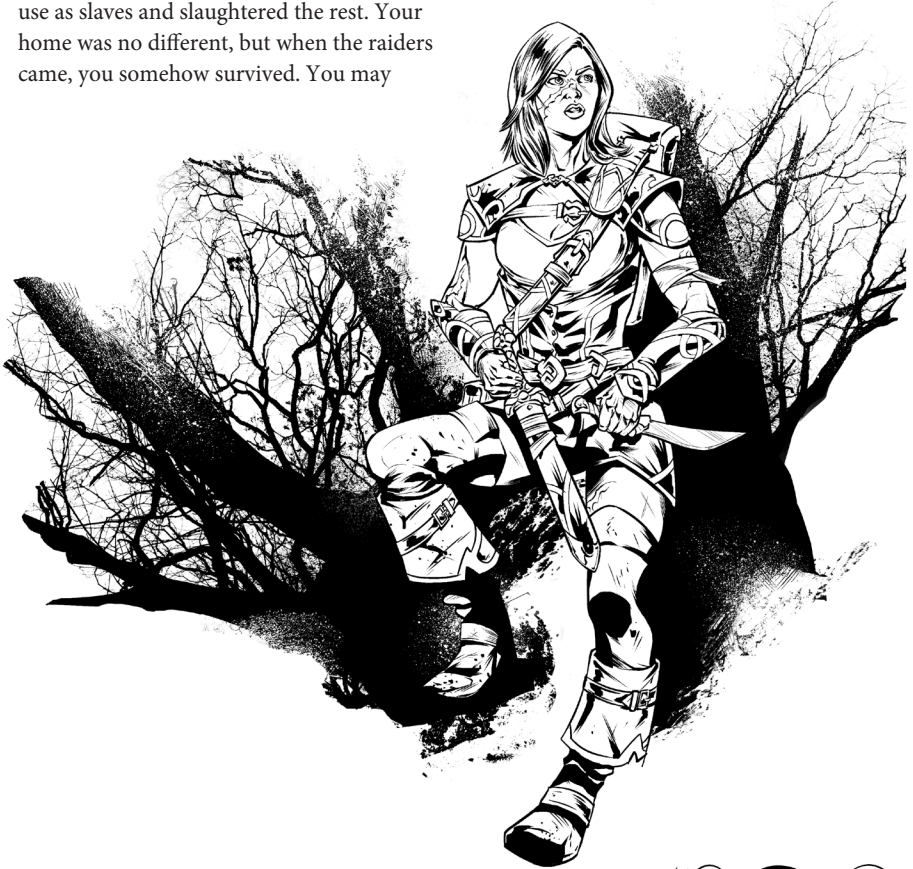
RAID SURVIVOR

When a horde of centaurs descended upon a Karivi caravan, they left nothing but splintered timbers and tattered canvas in their wake. When the armies of the Dragon Empire marched on the Magdar Kingdoms, they took only what prisoners they could use as slaves and slaughtered the rest. Your home was no different, but when the raiders came, you somehow survived. You may

have been orphaned. You may have been taken as a slave. You may have even been the sole survivor the raid, desperately hiding yourself underneath the still-warm corpse of another victim.

What matters is that you survived, no matter what you had to do. Work with your GM to determine who or what launched the raid, where the raid occurred, and who led the raiding party. Who did you lose in the raid, and how long ago did it occur? How did you survive the attack? Did the raid fill you with the undying flames of vengeance? If so, are you content to simply take revenge on the leader of the raid, or do you wish to wipe out their entire company? Their entire race?

Skill Proficiencies: Stealth, Survival



Tool Proficiencies: One type of artisan's tools, healer's kit

Equipment: A set of artisan's tools (one of your choice), a healer's kit, a memento of home, a hunting knife, a set of traveler's clothes, and a belt pouch containing 5 gp.

Feature: A Mind for Faces

You remember the face of everyone you've ever met, especially those of folk who've wronged you. You instantly recognize any creature whose face you can see if you have seen that creature's face before, even if that creature is wearing a nonmagical disguise.

Suggested Characteristics

Some survivors chafe at losing all they had while others never had much to begin with; raiders care little for whether their victims are rich or poor, so long as they bleed. Most raid survivors seek vengeance against those who took everything from them and dedicate their lives to hunting and killing the raiders.

Personality Traits, Ideals, Bonds, and Flaws

Choose these traits from the Outlander tables, or create your own.

TROPHY HUNTER

You hunt the mightiest beasts in the harshest environments, claiming their pelts as trophies and returning them to civilization for a profit or to decorate your lavish abode. You likely were set on this path since birth, following your parents on safaris and learning from their actions, but you may have instead come to this path as an adult after being swept away by the thrill of dominating the natural world.

Many big game hunters pursue their quarry purely for pleasure, as a calming avocation, but others sell their skills to the highest bidder in order to amass wealth and reputation as a trophy hunter.

Skill Proficiencies: Nature, Survival

Tool Proficiencies: Leatherworker's tools, vehicles (land)

Personality Traits, Ideals, Bonds, and Flaws

D8 PERSONALITY TRAIT

- 1 Nothing gets my blood pumping like stalking a wild animal.
- 2 I like things *big!* Trophies, big! Food, big! Money, houses, weapons, possessions, I want 'em big, *big, BIG!*
- 3 When hunting, it's almost as if I become a different person. Focused. Confident. Ruthless.
- 4 The only way to kill a beast is to be patient and find the perfect moment to strike. The same is true for all the important things in life.
- 5 Showering is for novices. I know that to catch my smelly, filthy prey, I must smell like them to throw off their scent.
- 6 I only eat raw meat. It gets me more in tune with my prey.
- 7 I'm a connoisseur of killing implements; I only use the best, because *I* am the best.
- 8 The sight of a beast inspires in me terrible fury. I want nothing more than to slaughter every last one of them!

Equipment: A donkey or mule with bit and bridle, a set of cold weather or warm weather clothes, and a belt pouch containing 5 gp.

Feature: Shelter from the Storm

You have spent years hunting in the harshest environments of the world and have seen

tents blown away by gales, food stolen by hungry bears, and equipment destroyed by the elements. While traveling in the wilderness, you can find a natural location suitable to make camp by spending 1 hour searching. This location provides cover from the elements and is in some way naturally defensible, at your GM's discretion.

D6 IDEAL

- 1 **Ambition.** It is my divine calling to become better than my rivals by any means necessary. (Chaotic)
- 2 **Altruism.** I hunt only to protect those who cannot protect themselves. (Good)
- 3 **Determination.** No matter what the laws say, I *will* kill that beast! (Chaotic)
- 4 **Cruelty.** My prey lives only for my pleasure. It will die exactly as quickly or as slowly as I desire. (Evil)
- 5 **Sport.** We're just here to have fun. Don't get your knickers in a twist! (Neutral)
- 6 **Family.** I follow in my family's footsteps. I will not tarnish their legacy. (Any)

D6 BOND

- 1 I like hunting because I like feeling big and powerful.
- 2 I hunt because my father thinks I'm a worthless runt. I need to make him proud.
- 3 I was mauled by a beast on my first hunting trip. I've spent my life searching for that monster.
- 4 The first time I drew blood, something awoke within me. Every hunt is a search for the original ecstasy of blood.
- 5 My hunting companions used to laugh at me behind their backs. They aren't laughing anymore.
- 6 A close friend funded my first hunting expedition. I am forever in their debt.

D6 FLAW

- 1 I'm actually a sham. All of my trophies were bagged by someone else. I just followed along and watched.
- 2 I'm terrified of anything larger than myself.
- 3 I can't express anger without shooting something.
- 4 I need money. I don't care how much or how little I have, I need more. And I would do anything to get it.
- 5 I am obsessed with beauty in animals, art, and people... and I don't take no for an answer.
- 6 I don't trust my hunting partners, those feckless, glory-stealing freeloaders!

Suggested Characteristics

Most trophy hunters come from an affluent background, often using their parents' wealth to fund their first few hunting trips. These hunters are often skilled hobbyists and find strange relaxation in the tension of the hunt and revel in the glory of a kill. You may find great personal joy in hunting, or you do it for the adoration of peers or simply to make gold by selling pelts and ivory, like a common poacher.

New Subclasses

Bounty hunters are too diverse a group to be captured solely in a single subclass. Some are brutes, choosing the life of the Champion (fighter) while other clever mercenary leaders prefer more tactical maneuvers. Many emulate the Hunter (ranger) and train tirelessly in order to track their quarries to the ends of the earth. Others still are wizards that study the School of Divination to scry upon their targets and strike from afar.

This article presents two new subclasses: the College of Criminology, which encourages bards to gather information to identify the motives and weaknesses of their criminal quarries, and the Oath of Justice, which empowers paladins to overwhelm and incapacitate their foes in the name of the law.

COLLEGE OF CRIMINOLOGY (BARD)

Bards pick up all sorts of information as they travel the land. Some bards focus on a certain type of information, like epic poetry, love ballads, or bawdy drinking songs. Others, however, turn to the shadowy occupation of criminology. These bards use their knack for gathering information to learn about criminals and vigilantes, their tactics, and their weaknesses. Some criminologists work with agents of the law to catch criminals, but shadier members of this college use their dark knowledge to emulate the malefactors they have studied for so long.

Bonus Proficiencies

When you join the College of Criminology at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in the Insight skill and your choice of two of Acrobatics, Deception, Investigation Performance, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth.

Quick Read

At 3rd level, your knowledge of underhanded tactics allows you to gain insight into your foes' strategies. As a bonus action, you can spend a Bardic Inspiration die to make a Wisdom (Insight) check against one creature you can see within 30 feet contested by its Charisma (Deception) check; you can roll the Bardic Inspiration die and add it to the result of your check. You have disadvantage on your check if the target is not a humanoid, and the check automatically fails against creatures with an Intelligence score of 3 or lower. On a success, you gain one of the following benefits:

- The target has disadvantage on attack rolls against you for 1 minute.
- You have advantage on saving throws against the target's spells and magical effects for 1 minute.
- You have advantage on attack rolls against the target for 1 minute.

Bardic Instinct

Starting at 6th level, you can extend your knowledge of criminal behavior to your companions. When a creature that has a Bardic Inspiration die you gave them is damaged by a hostile creature's attack, it can use its reaction to roll the Bardic Inspiration die and reduce the damage by twice the number rolled.

If this reduces the damage of the attack to 0, the creature you inspired can make a single melee attack against its attacker as part of the same reaction.

Hot Pursuit

Starting at 14th level, when a creature fails a saving throw against one of your bard spells, you can designate it as your mark for 24 hours. You know the direction to your mark at all times unless it is within an *antimagic field*, it is protected by an effect that prevents scrying such as *nondetection*, or there is a barrier of lead at least 1 inch thick between you.

Additionally, whenever your mark makes an attack roll or you make a saving throw against one of its spells or effects, you can spend a Bardic Inspiration die to roll it and add or subtract the result from the roll. You can choose to do so after the d20 is rolled but before the GM tells you the outcome of the roll.

OATH OF JUSTICE (PALADIN)

The Oath of Justice is a commitment not the tenets of good or evil but a holy vow sworn to uphold the laws of a nation, a city, or even of a tiny village. When lawlessness threatens the peace, those who swear to uphold the Oath of Justice intervene to maintain order, for if order falls to lawlessness, it is only a matter of time before all of civilization collapses into anarchy.

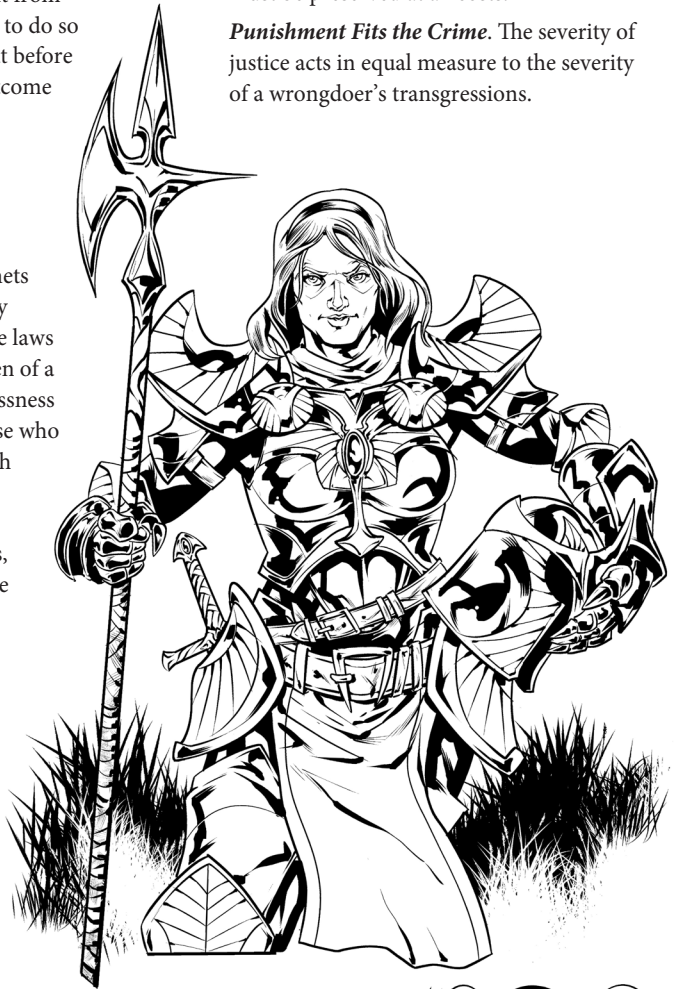
While many young paladins take this oath to protect their country and the people close to them from criminals, some older adherents to this oath know that what is just is not necessarily what is right.

Tenets of Justice

All paladins of justice uphold the law in some capacity, but their oath differs depending on their station. A paladin that serves a queen upholds slightly different tenets than one that serves a small town.

Uphold the Law. The law represents the triumph of civilization versus savagery. It must be preserved at all costs.

Punishment Fits the Crime. The severity of justice acts in equal measure to the severity of a wrongdoer's transgressions.



Oath Spells

You gain spells at the paladin levels listed.

Level	Spells
3rd	<i>color spray, guiding bolt</i>
5th	<i>locate object, zone of truth</i>
9th	<i>lightning bolt, slow</i>
13th	<i>locate creature, locate object</i>
17th	<i>arcane hand, hold monster</i>

Channel Divinity

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options.

Tether of Righteousness. You can use your Channel Divinity to bind your target to you. As an action, you extend a line of energy toward a creature you can see within 30 feet of you. That creature must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, it is tethered and cannot move more than 30 feet away from you. While tethered, the target takes lightning damage at the end of each of its turns equal to your Charisma modifier. You can use your action to make a Strength check opposed by the tethered creature's Strength check; on a success, you can pull it up to 15 feet toward you in a straight line.

As an action, the tethered creature can attempt to make a Strength check against your spell save DC. On a success, it breaks the tether.

Justicar's Celerity. You can use your Channel Divinity to respond to danger with lightning speed. When a creature that you can see is attacked, you can move up to your speed as a reaction. If you end your movement adjacent to the attacker, you can make a single melee attack against it as part of this reaction. If you end your movement adjacent to the target of the attack, you can become the target of the attack as part of this reaction. You can use this feature after you see the attacker's attack roll, but before the GM says if it hits or misses.

Disciplined Pursuant

At 7th level, you have bent the laws of magic to parallel the laws of your civilization. When you reduce a creature to 0 hit points with a spell, you can knock the creature out instead of killing it. The creature falls unconscious and is stable.

Aura of Control

At 7th level, all creatures within 10 feet of you must spend 1 extra foot of movement for each foot they move. If a creature ends its turn in this area, it must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or fall prone. Creatures that are immune to being frightened are immune to this aura.

At 18th level, the range of this aura extends to 30 feet.

Shackles of Light

Starting at 15th level, once per turn when you deal radiant damage to a creature, it must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, it is restrained until the end of its next turn.

Avatar of Perfect Order

At 20th level, you can take on the appearance of justice itself. As an action, you become wreathed in a garment of cold light. For 1 minute, you benefit from the following effects:

- You are immune to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.
- You can use your Justicar's Celerity feature without expending a use of Channel Divinity.
- When a creature you can see takes the Attack or Cast a Spell action, you can use your reaction to force it to make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, it must take a different action of your choice instead.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

THE FANGED FOUR

by James J. Haeck

The underworld of the Crossroads trembles at the mention of the Fanged Four. For the right price, Emblin the Wolf can slay anyone, Rizto the Rat can fool anyone, Valtane the Boar can hunt down any mark, and Lashkan the Tiger can disintegrate anyone with a single word. These four lycanthropes—a werewolf, wererat, wereboar, and weretiger—have recently gathered in the Crossroads, creating one of the deadliest band of mercenaries ever known. They follow no law but their own and will do nearly anything for enough gold, making them enemies of both the lawful and unlawful factions of the Crossroads.

Emblin the Wolf

“You’ve erred gravely, brave pup, and though your foolhardy boldness earns you my sympathy... it does not win you my mercy. I do not need the light of the full moon to slay you. The wolf within me is not my enemy but my faithful servant, and my transformation will only take an instant. Feel free to flee; you will not get far.”

Emblin is a human werewolf born in a tiny village in the Northlands. No record of her village remains, for she slaughtered every last man, woman, and child on a full moon just after her nineteenth birthday. After she returned to her senses, she recalled the wolf that bit her on a hunting trip two weeks earlier and cried out in sorrow. The

pain of mercilessly killing everyone she had ever known broke her.

As the feral young woman wandered the wilderness of Midgard, Emblin came to learn that the only trade she found pleasure in was murder. Over the next few years, Emblin sought out other lycanthropes like herself and cultivated the legend of the Fanged Four: four natural-born lycanthrope assassins who would hunt down anyone for the right price. For a time, Emblin herself was the only member of the Fanged Four and personally killed all manner of politicians, soldiers, spies, and merchants. No one ever realized her deception, and in time, the reputation of her so-called league of assassins spread across Midgard, and other lycanthropes flocked to her, seeking to become one of the Fangs.

Emblin’s once-noble human persona has been completely subsumed by her cruel and megalomaniacal wolfish identity. She now relishes taunting her prey, monologuing at length about how she intends to kill them. Ten years have passed since Emblin founded the Fanged Four. Now she and her three fellow assassins live in an impressive mansion in Zobeck known as Brier House, so called for the thick but well-cultivated brier hedges that surround its grounds. As leader of the Fanged Four, Emblin is the only member that can accept a contract on their behalf.



A powerful warrior in her own right, Emblin's lycanthropic powers only enhance her already impressive martial prowess. Emblin has one deep weakness that she fears above all else: she is not a natural-born lycanthrope, meaning that a well-placed *remove curse* spell could cleanse her lycanthropy in the middle of a battle. Worse still, she fears that her animal instincts are the only thing keeping her from going mad from all the blood she has spilled and that being cleansed could destroy her utterly. Not even the other members of the Fanged Four know that their leader is not a natural-born werewolf, though Rizto the Rat is close to uncovering the truth.

EMBLINE THE WOLF

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 in human form, 16 (natural armor) in wolf or hybrid form

Hit Points 105 (14d8 + 42)

Speed 30 ft. (50 ft. in wolf form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	15 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Int +5, Wis +7

Skills Acrobatics +8, Perception +7, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks not made with silvered weapons

Senses passive Perception 17

Languages Common (can't speak in wolf form)

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Opportunistic Shapechanger. Emblin can use her action to polymorph into a wolf-humanoid hybrid or into a wolf or back into her true form, which is human. Her statistics, other than her AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

While in wolf or hybrid form, Emblin has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of her allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Keen Hearing and Smell. Emblin has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Vicious Mauler (1/Turn). Emblin deals an extra 17 (5d6) damage when she hits a target with a melee attack and has advantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. Emblin makes two bite attacks and two claw attacks, or she makes two light crossbow attacks.

Bite (Wolf or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with werewolf lycanthropy.

Claws (Wolf or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d4 + 5) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Light Crossbow (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Rizto the Rat

"Don't doubt my snout, boss. I smelled our mark on the breeze three days ago. I could track him with my eyes closed."

Rizto has lived in the sewers of Zobeck his entire life, committing petty crimes and cavorting with the ratfolk that live below the Crossroads City. Before joining the Fanged Four, Rizto spent almost every waking hour in his hybrid wererat form to blend in with the ratfolk in the sewers. He earned a reputation for himself as a burglar and spy-for-hire in the sewers and earned a sizeable personal fortune playing both sides of the fence, smuggling information between rival ratfolk gangs.

Rizto was the second lycanthrope to join the Fanged Four and is Emblin's second-in-command. Drawn to the streets of Zobeck by legends of the Fanged Four, he used his prodigious skills as an information-seeker to track rumors back to Brier House—where he was caught snooping by Emblin herself. Rather than killing him where he stood, Emblin was impressed by his skills and offered him the chance to join her growing company of bounty hunters.

RIZTO THE RAT

Medium humanoid (human, shapeshifter), lawful evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. in rat form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Wis +5, Cha +8

Skills Deception +11, Insight +8, Perception +8, Persuasion +8, Stealth +10

Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks not made with silvered weapons

Condition Immunities poisoned

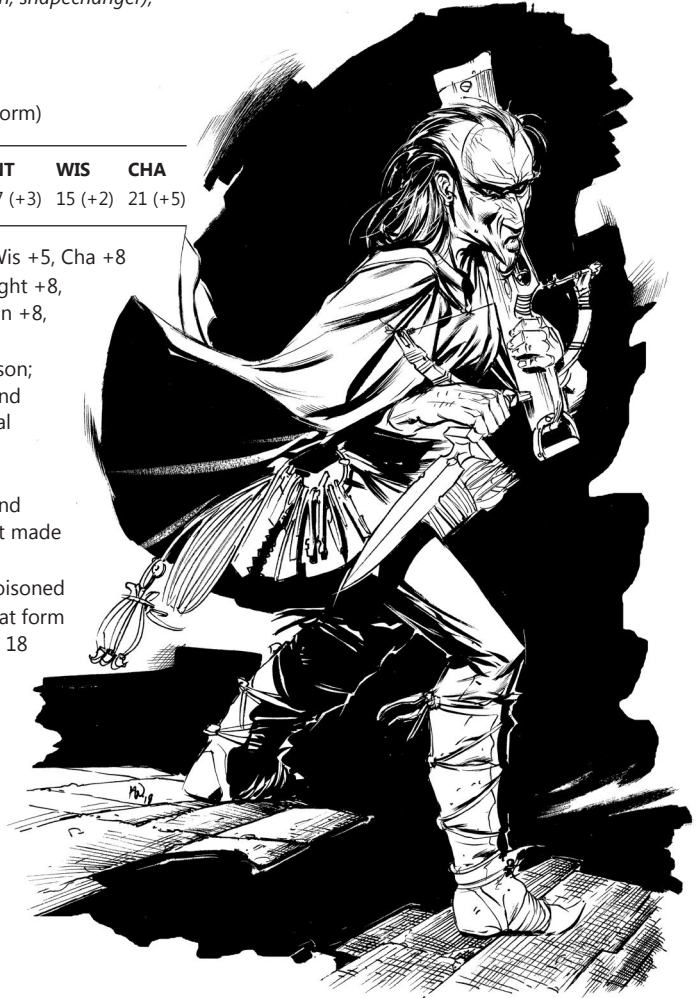
Senses darkvision 60 ft. (rat form only), passive Perception 18

Languages Common, Ratfolk (can't speak Common in rat form)

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Deceitful Shapeshifter. Rizto can use his action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat or back into his true form, which is human. His statistics, other than his size, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Once per turn while in hybrid form, Rizto can make a Charisma (Deception) check and use its result instead of making an attack roll when making a melee attack against a creature that can see him.



Evasion. If Rizto is subjected to an effect that allows him to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, he instead takes no damage if he succeeds on the saving throw and only half damage if he fails.

Keen Smell. Rizto has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Sewerborn. Rizto has advantage on saving throws against poison and disease.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Rizto deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage either when he hits a target with a weapon and has advantage on the attack roll or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of his that isn't incapacitated and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). Rizto makes three attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) piercing damage plus 11 (2d10) poison damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Shortsword (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 11 (2d10) poison damage.

Hand Crossbow (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 11 (2d10) poison damage.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When an attacker Rizto can see hits him with an attack, he can choose to take half damage.

Valtane the Boar

"You don't touch Emblin. You so much as touch her, you lose that hand. You look at her wrong, you lose the eyes. You speak bad of her, and I'll carve out your forked tongue."

Valtane is a natural-born lycanthrope, but she prefers to live life in her dwarf body. Her face may be wrinkled, but she is one

of the Fanged Four's newest members, having joined only two years ago. Before then, she was a dirt-poor fur trader that trapped animals in the Old Margreve Forest and sold pelts in cities across Midgard. She crossed paths with Emblin and Rizto as they pursued a former member of the Fanged Four down the length of the River Argent. (Valtane hadn't known a member of the Fanged Four betrayed her, and Emblin has never told her.)

Valtane got caught up in the skirmish and watched as the rogue werewolf plunged a silver dagger into Emblin's side. Without thinking, the Valtane leapt to Emblin's side, drew the dagger, and plunged it straight between the traitor's eyes. Even she couldn't tell you why she aided Emblin that day, but she suspects that she was destined to protect her.

Emblin survived, and Valtane's heroism earned her not just Emblin's respect but an offer to join the Fanged Four in the place of the betrayer she had killed. Valtane agreed on the spot. She is fiercely loyal to Emblin, and while she is greedy and overconfident, she treats her fellow Fangs like family.

VALTANE THE BOAR

Medium humanoid (dwarf, shapechanger), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (hide, shield) in humanoid form, 18 (natural armor) in boar or hybrid form

Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64)

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. in boar form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +9, Dex +4, Con +8

Skills Athletics +9, Perception +7, Intimidation +7

Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks not made with silvered weapons

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Dwarven (can't speak in boar form)

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Resilient Shapechanger. Valtane can use her action to polymorph into a boar-humanoid hybrid or into a boar or back into her true form as a dwarf. Her statistics, other than her AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

Valtane has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects while in hybrid or in boar form.

Charge (Boar or Hybrid Form Only). If Valtane moves at least 15 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with her tusks on the same turn, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Dwarven Resilience. Valtane has advantage on saving throws against poison.

Goading Defender (1/Turn). When Valtane hits with a melee attack, she can make a Charisma (Intimidation) check opposed by her target's Wisdom (Insight) check. If she succeeds, the target has disadvantage on attack rolls against creatures other than Valtane until the end of its next turn.

Relentless (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). If Valtane takes damage that would reduce her to 0 hit points, she is reduced to 1 hit point instead. This trait also recharges immediately if a friendly creature Valtane can see is reduced to 0 hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Valtane makes three attacks, only one of which can be with her tusks.

Warhammer (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Tusks (Boar or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) slashing damage.

If the target is humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wereboar lycanthropy.

REACTIONS

Selfless Defense. When a friendly creature is attacked by a creature Valtane can see, she can move up to her speed toward the friendly creature. If she ends her movement adjacent to the friendly creature, she can choose to become the new target of the attack. If the attack hits her, she can make a melee attack against the attacker as part of this reaction.

Lashkan the Tiger

"I have traveled on ships swarming with rats and biting fleas. I have been chained in bonds of silver, each second searing my flesh. When I reached Triolo, I knew I had to change my fate. I escaped my bonds and tracked down the man who had thought himself powerful enough to purchase me and display me as an oddity of the savage south. I came to Zobeck and tore his throat out, and I burned his mansion down with a thought."

Lashkan is a human weretiger captured as a child by slavers decades ago near the Southlands' Corsair Coast. He managed to escape bondage in the Seven Cities and swore vengeance on the slavers' master, a depraved collector of curiosities in Zobeck. After traveling thousands of miles for vengeance, Lashkan found himself adrift after finally slaying the man who had destroyed his life.

He was found by Rizto several weeks later. The fire that Lashkan had set after killing the collector may have burned down the mansion, but it did not completely purge the weretiger's scent from the wreckage—at least, not to a nose as keen as Rizto's. Emblin was wary of the weretiger's unpredictable temper but longed to add his magic to her arsenal.

Lashkan is the least loyal of the Fanged Four, and Emblin knows it. The weretiger

is content to serve the Fanged Four for the time being, but he is wary of anyone who would hold power over him. He seeks constantly to undermine his leader and supplant her as master of the Fanged Four.

LASHKAN THE TIGER

Medium humanoid (human, shapchanger), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 in human form, 14 (natural armor) in tiger or hybrid form

Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)

Speed 30 ft. (40 ft. in tiger form)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	21 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +4, Wis +5

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from attacks not made with silvered weapons

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Arcane Shapchanger. Lashkan can use his action to polymorph into a tiger-humanoid hybrid or into a tiger or back into his true form, which is human. His statistics, other than his size, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Lashkan can cast spells while in tiger form, requiring no somatic components. His claws count as an arcane focus.

Keen Hearing and Smell. Lashkan has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pounce (Tiger or Hybrid Form Only). If

Lashkan moves at least 15 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, Lashkan can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Spellcasting. Lashkan is an 11th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights, fire bolt, message, poison spray, shocking grasp, true strike*

1st level (4 slots): *magic missile, feather fall*

2nd level (3 slots): *knock, mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots): *fireball, fly, water breathing*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, dimension door*

5th level (2 slots): *dominate person, insect plague*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). In humanoid form, Lashkan makes two scimitar attacks. In hybrid form, he can make two scimitar or claw attacks.

Bite (Tiger or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with weretiger lycanthropy.

Claw (Tiger or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Scimitar (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach # ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

THE SILENT COUNCIL

by Shawn Merwin

One of the most enduring elements of fantasy cities is the guild. Guilds present player characters with allies who can pay for services rendered, potential foes looking to wield economic or political power, or just good fodder for intriguing and rich stories. And among all of the guilds one might imagine, none has more potential than your friendly neighborhood thieves' guild.

Thieves' guilds may not seem to make sense at first glance. Why would a city suffer the existence of a group inherently conceived to perform illegal activities? The answer is simple: crime is bad but uncontrolled crime is worse. A guild of thieves ensures that the crime is organized and controlled, and if a reckoning is necessary, a hierarchy is in place to carry out any needed punishment.

More than one thieves' guild might come to power at the same time. Wars between hostile trade guilds could turn bloody and devastating if enough wealth and power is at stake. Strife between thieves' guilds is triply deadly.

When a war between two or more rival thieves' guilds spills into the lives of a city's innocent citizens, the civil leaders are often forced to intervene. Putting down the offending guilds with physical force is an option although it rarely ends well for anyone involved. A more reasonable

solution is to create a council with the power and authority to regulate and arbitrate the activities of all guilds.

No matter the details of your city, the Silent Council (presented here) is a useful tool. The Silent Council is a secret organization that handles the interactions between a city's various thieves' guilds, making sure that none oversteps its bounds, keeping the level of crime in the city acceptable.

The Silent Council's Organization

The Silent Council operates independently of the various thieves' guilds. It is overseen by a commander who answers only to the governing bodies within the city. Beneath her are two lieutenants, each handling approximately five units of specially trained investigators that spy on the guilds, intervene when necessary, and even perform assassinations on guild members that cross the line.

The individual units contain 4–6 operatives, each led by a captain who reports to the lieutenants. Captains attain their rank after serving successfully as an operative for at least 4 years, having not only survived the rigors of the job but also proven themselves immune to the bribery and other temptations that come with it.

Operatives are often recruited from the ranks of the City Watch. Watch members who show inherent honesty, an affinity for stealth and persuasion, and a knack for getting out of tight spots through guile might be groomed to become operatives in the Silent Council's employ.

Operatives from a unit, or sometimes full units, are often called upon to go undercover to catch guild members breaking the unwritten rules overseeing thieves' guild operations and interactions.

An antagonistic relationship exists, surprisingly, between other law enforcement agencies and the Silent Council. The Silent Council is not concerned with stopping crime, except in the most extreme cases: treason, murder of a noble, and so on. The thieves' guilds bristle at the existence of the Silent Council, but they are willing to accept the oversight—with the understanding that the Silent Council does not police the “sanctioned criminal activity” of the guilds. And so, Silent Council operatives might have evidence of crimes they witness, but they do not share that evidence with the City Watch, which leads to conflicts.

The heads of each of the thieves' guilds meet at regular intervals with the commander of the Silent Council, though her identity is guarded through magic (see below). In addition to these scheduled meetings, a guild leader with a grievance or concern can also call a special meeting with the commander.



Members of the Silent Council

The head of the Silent Council, appointed and paid by the leaders of the city, is a half-elf called Stiletto. She has proven to be wise, just, incorruptible, and totally ruthless in carrying out her duties. One of the things that has made Stiletto so effective in her job is the fact that she's a doppelganger. No one is aware of this except for the city leaders—even her lieutenants are unaware. This helps her keep tabs on not only the guilds but also on her operatives. More than once, a guild has infiltrated a Silent Council team only to be ferreted out quickly and quietly by Stiletto—and the leader of that guild paid the ultimate price for the treachery.

Stiletto's first lieutenant is a forest gnome who calls himself Brill. He appears mad to those observing him, talking to himself and to unseen creatures. His unruly white hair and disheveled appearance are carefully crafted to reinforce this image. In reality, Brill is a practiced illusionist and strategist who commands the fierce loyalty of those he supervises. He is guarded by three trained wild boars that are under the effects of a perpetual *greater invisibility* spell.

The second lieutenant holding Stiletto's trust is the hill dwarf Connica Ironshard. Originally an adept in the service of the deity of locks and spies, Connica's ingenuity brought her to Stiletto's attention. While Connica has none of the stealth of a rogue, her understanding of engineering, both mechanical and social, makes her invaluable to the Silent Council. Connica keeps her long red hair under a thick leather cap, and her perpetual scowl is indicative of her obsession with her job.

The Silent Council in your Game

The Silent Council can be ported into your ongoing campaign in a variety of ways:

- The adventurers should generally be on the same side of the battle as the members of the Silent Council since they are a force of law and order in the city. Operatives of the group might show up and assist or save the adventurers when a member of one of the thieves' guilds attacks them.
- While the Silent Council might be the "good guys," they are still an espionage organization. Such organizations are generally not above using deception to obtain and work assets toward their cause, even putting those assets in harm's way. The adventurers might be recruited to perform surveillance on

behalf of the Silent Council while not really understanding the true nature of their work. The danger caused by the mission could come back to haunt them later—whether or not the Silent Council responds to that danger is always a question.

- Thieves' guild leaders could try to trick adventurers into attacking Silent Council operatives or even leaders. The guild leaders would provide misleading information, saying that the operatives were a threat. If the adventurers fell for that misinformation, they might quickly find themselves at war with a very irate and vengeful Silent Council. Stiletto would, most likely, investigate the situation herself before doing permanent damage to the adventurers.
- If any adventurers are stepping on the toes of a thieves' guild, the Silent Council might warn them off, describing the tense relationship among the guilds in the city.

STILETTO (DOPPELGÄNGER)

Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral good

Armor Class 18 (studded leather, shield)

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

Skills Deception +12, Insight +6, Perception +6, Persuasion +8, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +8

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Dwarf, Elf, Gnome, Halfling

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Cunning. As a bonus action, Stiletto can Dash, Disengage, or Hide on each of her turns in combat.

Shapechanger. Stiletto can use a bonus action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid she has seen or back into her true form. Her statistics, other than size, are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies. Stiletto does not register as a shapechanger under the scrutiny of magic that would normally detect that.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Stiletto deals an extra 21 (6d6) damage either when she hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Stiletto that isn't incapacitated and Stiletto doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Surprise Attack. Stiletto has advantage on attack rolls against any creature she has surprised. If Stiletto surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) damage from the attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Stiletto makes two melee or ranged attacks.

Short Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Read Thoughts. Stiletto magically reads the surface thoughts of one creature within 60 feet of her. The effect can penetrate barriers, but 3 feet of wood or dirt, 2 feet of stone, 2 inches of metal, or a thin sheet of lead blocks it. While the target is in range, Stiletto can continue reading its thoughts as long as Stiletto's concentration isn't broken (as if concentrating on a spell). While reading the target's mind, Stiletto has advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion) checks against the target.

REACTIONS

Dodge. When an attacker she can see hits Stiletto with an attack, she can use a reaction to halve that attack's damage.

BRILL

Small humanoid (gnome), neutral good

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 66 (12d6 + 24)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Skills Arcana +7, History +7, Nature +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Dwarf, Elf, Gnome

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Gnome Cunning. Brill has advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against magic.

Master of Illusions. When Brill casts an illusion spell of 1st level or higher, he is surrounded by a hazy mist of magical energy until the start of his next turn. While surrounded by the mist, which travels with him, ranged attacks against Brill are made at disadvantage.

Spellcasting. Brill is a 9th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Brill has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, mage hand, poison spray, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *color spray, disguise self, mage armor, magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility, mirror image, phantasmal force*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, major image, fly*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, phantasmal killer*

5th level (1 slot): *mislead*

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

CONNICA IRONSHARD

Medium humanoid (dwarf), neutral

Armor Class 18 (chain mail, shield)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	11 (+2)

Skills Religion +3, Perception +7

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Dwarf

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Dwarven Resilience. Connica

has advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance against poison damage.

Innate Spellcasting.

Connica's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast

the following spells as a 7th-level caster, requiring no material components:

At will: *mending, sacred flame*

3/day: *bless, command, find traps, healing word*

2/day: *hold person, protection from energy, spiritual weapon*

1/day: *revivify*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Connica makes two melee attacks.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.



THICK AS THIEVES

by Richard Pett

Rogues—and particularly groups or gangs of them—make great NPCs. Do you trust them or not? Are they heroes or villains? What shades of gray do they encompass? Their very nature lends them to readily allying with one side or another and then casually moving on, drawn by a fabulous hustle or heist to betray the very people that last week they rescued from the town prison, only to use the skills of those they released for their own greedy ends and then betray them.

Here is a trio of tables to help busy GMs define or give a spark to such groups, which might be useful as a focus for an adventure or simply as a story, rumor, or flavor on the side depending upon your needs. The tables set out a gang or guild or mob in simple terms with a quirky or readily memorable leader, together with the predominant members of the gang identified by race or incentive, and finally a motivation for their activities, many of which indicate why they are where they are right now. You can then add any finishing touches you wish. The tables come without any crunch for levels, alignments, or other specifics, so you can tailor them to fit your campaign at a specific time. This particular set of random tables has its soul in the *Midgard Campaign Setting*. However, you can adjust the campaign-specific quirks easily. For example, substitute the minotaur gang leader for a ghou, drow, or other race more

appropriate to your home campaign.

Use a d20 at each of the following stages, and at the end of the tables, we'll suggest a couple of examples to flesh out these groups into something worthy of friends at your gaming table.

Leader

1. A pipe-smoking, female minotaur with a penchant for poetry and known as Harlequin
2. The Round Man, a vast rogue with a reputation for eating his enemies at elaborate banquets
3. A one-eyed elf pirate known as the Monocle, who has a pet sheep called Capstan
4. An elfmarked clockwork-maker called Abrash who uses her machines to aid her burglaries
5. A colorfully dressed kobold called Mister Rainbow who rides a white pig and is a master lock-breaker
6. A wizard known simply as the Collector who goes from place to place stealing obscure arcane texts
7. The outrageously charming merchant Aquim all-Asfar, who wanders the lands procuring the unique and lovely for his client friends
8. The beautiful Esemлие, the tallest lady with the harshest voice and deadliest blade in the kingdom



9. The Sough Man, a revolting and diseased thing that some say is an ooze or monster that lurks in the sewers of larger settlements and steals wicked objects or unholy texts
10. A schizophrenic dragonkin called M'kash who distrusts everyone and who is obsessed with disguise
11. Conjoined twins known as the Brothers Kinsman who rule their followers through magic and use magic to aid their thefts
12. The Golden Eagle, a master archer and thief said to be a gargoyle although others swear it is simply a guise he uses while wandering the gables of places he has come to rob
13. A legless dwarf called Mistress Cremp who loves fine art and who is carried by her loyal gearforged companion Lord Ravelment
14. The fearful Grempp who rules with an iron fist and his pair of helpers, Mister Terror and Master Hurt
15. A gnoll slaver known as Tobbs who has a talking camel
16. The cultured and magnificent Angelica Hyme, lover of poets, darling of aristocrats, and stealer of fortunes
17. A crooked mite rogue that rides a vulture and who always has a trio of kin with him (their specialty, using rat holes to infiltrate and rob the rich—rat friends are never far away)
18. A wily but quite mad kobold crimelord known as Lord Spider, who plots with his many strange puppets—some of whom have begun to come alive
19. A crooked vampire who obsesses over fine paintings
20. A dispossessed aristocrat known to all as the Gray Fist, renowned for his daring escapades and wooing of local royalty

Motivation

1. Steal religious artefacts, but the gang has been infiltrated by the religious group they are stealing from
2. Revenge—steal the greatest treasures off five sisters of the same noble family living nearby
3. Rob from the rich and give to the poor
4. Carry out elaborate and complex cons on the rich and arrogant, including stealing everything off a vile and local corrupt lord by infiltrating and ultimately removing his entire staff
5. Charged with stealing the wedding cake of some local dignitary about to wed, and return with it intact to a settlement across the hills/forests/mountains
6. Target slavers and their associates, customers, and friends in the settlement as a lesson from a former slave and now gang master
7. Steal from passing adventurers
8. Spread anarchy to bring down the present rulers with a view to removing their guards from keeps onto the streets, thus weakening their defense and ultimately robbing a huge castle
9. Move from one town to the next to ensure they remain anonymous, establish a suitable base, and tyrannize the population for a month or two before moving on
10. Specifically in this location to steal a priceless silver and gold life-size elephant from the local ruler
11. Empty the local prison of villains as cover for removing the notorious Count Grande, an infamous rogue accomplice of theirs due to hang next week
12. Have operated in this settlement for four centuries but recently split into three competing thieves' guilds, all anxious to betray one another to ensure they are the only guild left

13. Here to steal the recipe for the greatest salami sausages in the kingdom from the Royal Sausage Makers Guild headquarters by kidnapping the four cooks who each know a constituent part of the recipe
14. Vengeance upon another group of thieves also operating in this area (perhaps rolling again for the second group) who are pretending to be local priests and stealing gold religious objects
15. Steal a talking holy oracle pig called the Opulent One for a clerical group who believes she is theirs by divine prophecy
16. Rob local merchants
17. In the area to take advantage of the imminent carnival at which hordes of rich wives and widows arrive to show off their jewels and strut about trying to impress their neighbors
18. Here to steal plans for a new clockwork war machine off a cabal of gearforged inventors
19. Attempting to get back a huge tapestry depicting miracles—*The Panoramica Magnificence* (that was stolen from them in the first place and now hangs in the local cathedral)—by emptying the cathedral of its investigative clerical class with a wave of petty thefts from chapels and churches across the settlement first
20. Steal an outstanding local stallion and racehorse called the Shade

Gang

1. A bunch of surly dwarf former miners who were ripped off by their previous boss and intend to dig and sap their way to fortune
2. A group who operate disguised as beggars and tramps to gain confidence and information from the lower classes, spreading hope among them by minor acts of rebellion to disguise their true intentions
3. A group of lay about nobles with nothing better to do
4. An honest and decent group of likeable dwarf rogues with hearts of gold
5. A tough bunch of miners who cover their true colors with religious piety and beautiful hymn singing
6. A group of rogues disguised as nuns
7. Dark-hearted swordsmen who share little love for each other
8. Commoners with extraordinary abilities who lurk in societies' underbelly to carry out thefts of church artefacts and religious objects
9. A group of gnomes disguised as lepers
10. A gang of human and goblin rogues that lurk in the undercity (or undertown)
11. A group of kobolds disguised as children in contemporary festival costumes
12. Multi-raced adventuring troupe who see the presence of other adventurers as great scapegoats for their own crimes
13. A group of nasty former mercenaries who stoop to any lengths to achieve their aims
14. A trio of kobold dandies infamous for wenching and games that risk death
15. A troupe of gnome acrobats and circus performers that have the help of several *awakened* monkey rogues accomplices
16. A clan of extremely agile mites
17. A group of arrogant dragonkin aristocrats who use their incredible charm and intelligence to dupe humans out of their fortunes
18. A pack of *awakened* rats
19. A group of kobold street urchins able to climb and balance on practically anything
20. A bunch of minotaur laborers of incredible strength but little subtlety

This basic trio of points works as a starting place for your group, but they need

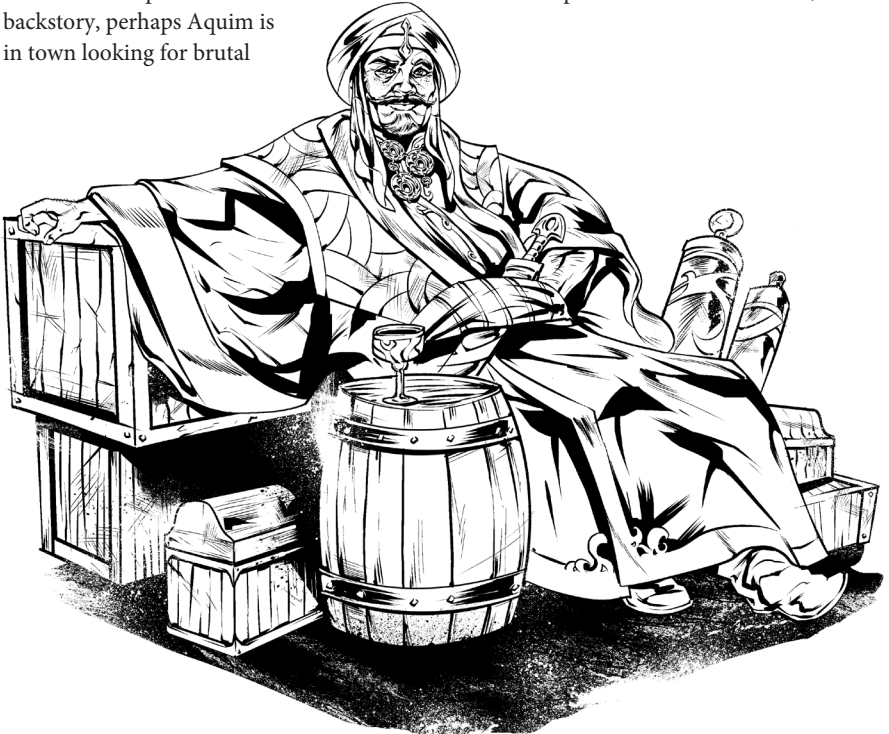
tweaking into a coherent story. Are they potential villains or friends? Perhaps they're little more than a red herring or a group the PCs interact with as part of a wider adventure. Decide their role accordingly, and then move on to building up their tale.

Let's generate an example, using one good gang and one evil gang. Using the tables above, I've randomly generated leader #6, *The outrageously charming merchant Aquim all-Asfar, who wanders the lands procuring the unique and lovely for his client friends.* The motivation is also #6, *Target slavers and their associates, customers, and friends in the settlement as a lesson from a former slave and now gang master.* I'll pick two options for the gang, so we can move this encounter to friend or foe: they are #13, *a group of nasty former mercenaries who stoop to any lengths to achieve their aims* and #4, *an honest and decent group of likeable dwarf rogues with hearts of gold.*

For the first option as our backstory, perhaps Aquim is in town looking for brutal

vengeance on a local slaver known as Lady Quorai who has hired the PCs to protect her, having heard Aquim is working for an old enemy of hers. Quorai's slaving trade could be a secret the PCs may not learn of until further into the adventure if you wish, to give the PCs interesting choices later. This story develops with the PCs working for someone who herself—they may find—has a dark past. As the plot develops, Quorai pushes the PCs to seek out Aquim and his vile mercenaries who by reputation and action are pretty nasty. Here you have an adventure or side trek that effectively has villains at each end with the PCs in the center, free to take what actions they wish.

In the second case, the presence of dwarves with hearts of gold suggests Aquim might be a decent sort—though of course you could decide he's duping the dwarves and have an extra twist. Here, the slaver (again we'll use Lady Quorai) approaches the PCs to protect her from assassins; her



trade is again a closely guarded secret. Only through roleplay do the PCs discover their enemies are thoroughly decent, something that may lead to a complete U-turn in the adventure as the PCs join the “assassins” in seeking vengeance. Perhaps here Aquim is seeking to free the daughter of one of his sponsors or has another motive?

As a simple rumor, the presence of the trouble above in your campaign fleshes it

out, adding realism to your core adventures.

And finally, does the gang have a name? Names strike fear into the hearts of people; reputations precede those who are part of such groups and are useful publicity. It would be easy to create a further table of memorable names like the Grim Street Colliers or the Crooked Blinders, but the joy of a really good name is making it simple and pertinent.

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