

a DOZEN ADVENTUROUS RIVALS

BY PHILIP REED

The treasure of the dungeon calls to all who wish for riches, not just the player characters. In their adventures, it is likely that the party will encounter others who seek fame, glory, and gold, and those fellow adventurers are sometimes already in the dungeon complex that the group has decided to explore today. In such instances, the twelve adventurers described on these pages will help the GM when it comes to describing the opposing adventurers.

As with other works in this series, the characters detailed in these pages are without game statistics. I have offered up character descriptions and suggestions for power level and carried gear, but you will not find detailed game stats for any of the rival adventurers. And to be fair, you often need no more than is included if the party enters into a roleplaying encounter with these characters.

If the meeting results in combat, one very easy way to stat these characters is to make them a near-exact duplicate of one of the player characters. By using the same stats as the characters that are operated by the players, you simplify your workload and can be sure that the opposition is fairly evenly matched to the strength of the heroes.



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Bob Greyvenstein

anatomy OF a RIVAL

1. A title, to help set the mood.
2. Descriptive text detailing the character's history, info on what the character may or may not be doing when met, and some ideas on how to introduce the rival in your campaign session.
3. Each rival includes a single illustration.
4. If the character has any special magic items or valuable treasures, they will be detailed here so that you know what tools the rival may possess.

1 OSBERT TEMRUDI

Human Rogue (Novice)

Temrudi is the son of a merchant and spent his early years traveling the lands with his father. The boy was meant to learn the trade routes, meet partners, and one day grow to take over a part of the business. Temrudi, as his father soon learned, had other wishes and was caught stealing again and again until his father disowned him.

Now in his late teens, Temrudi has left the merchant life behind and set out on his own. The boy (man, he says, if he hears anyone call him a boy) has a natural instinct for the life of a thief and has been slowly improving his skills as he journeys from city to city. When possible, he joins with an adventuring group in an attempt to gain as much knowledge and experience as possible.

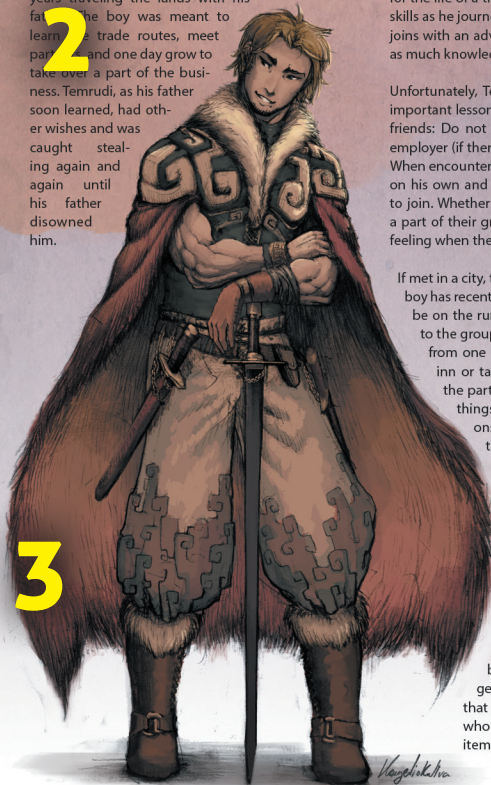
Unfortunately, Temrudi has not yet learned the most important lesson of all for a rogue who wishes to keep friends: Do not steal from your companions or your employer (if there is any chance at all of being caught). When encountered, it is very likely that the boy is again on his own and looking for a new adventuring group to join. Whether or not the adventurers accept him as a part of their group will depend on how kind they're feeling when they meet the boy.

If met in a city, there's also a very high chance that the boy has recently stolen some object or other and may be on the run. You may, if you wish, introduce him to the group by having him try to steal something from one of the PCs when they're resting in an inn or tavern, but that's only going to work if the party is generally a group open to talking things through before drawing their weapons and killing whatever is bothering them.

In a dungeon, Temrudi may be in over his head and need a bit of rescuing when the party first meets him.

Notable Treasure

Temrudi possesses no valuable magic items, though his sword and dagger are of a very fine quality. Both were stolen from one of his father's guards when he left the merchant life behind. Temrudi will often have a ring, gemstone, or other small object of value that he most certainly stole from someone who is now in search of the boy and the item.



a DOZEN ADVENTUROUS RIVALS • PAGE 6

USING THE RIVALS

The characters that follow may be used as random NPCs that the adventurers meet somewhere in the campaign world, as long-time rivals who are often competing with the party for the best rewards, or as friends of the party who will aid them at times or serve as sources of information and supplies.

Rivals are divided into three levels of experience:

- **Novice.** An inexperienced non-player character who is often just starting out in the world. Novice rivals aren't all that challenging, even for beginning player characters, but they can be trigger characters who lead the party to an encounter or adventure. Think of novice rivals as plot points and you'll be all set to use them in your game.

- **Experienced.** These are true rivals to the PCs and should often be of an equal power level to the party. Experienced rivals are those NPCs most likely to be the friendly competition, always looking to clear out the next dungeon and find the treasures before the player characters can get all of the good stuff.
- **Master.** These are NPCs who may be significantly more powerful than the player characters. As with the novice rivals, a master rival may be more useful as a MacGuffin, something that is important to your story but is mostly set dressing and not directly involved in the campaign's action.

Regardless of how you use these characters, I hope that they make your campaign a little more fun for everyone.

a DOZEN ADVENTUROUS RIVALS • PAGE 2

GEGRIM GRAN, THE CLAW OF KELROB

Human Druid (Experienced)

Forty winters of age, Gegrim Gran has spent his adult life in service to the gods and goddesses of nature, doing all within his power to protect the forests as well as the innocent, beautiful creatures that live within the woodlands. He is an experienced adventurer, veteran of countless battles, and explorer of several dungeons, and he is often in the company of those he has befriended in his many years of adventure.

Gran is kind and gentle when not pushed, though he transforms into a barbaric and savage warrior when he or his companions are threatened. In combat, the druid relies on his axe (see below) and is not afraid to engage in melee with any enemies he may encounter. He will use spells to aid his efforts, though he turns to magic only when his axe fails to complete the current task.

If encountered alone and asked, Gran will join the party and aid them if he believes that their plans are just and good. The man will never aid evil and will always, regardless of the danger, take what action he can to defeat evil acts.

Notable Treasure

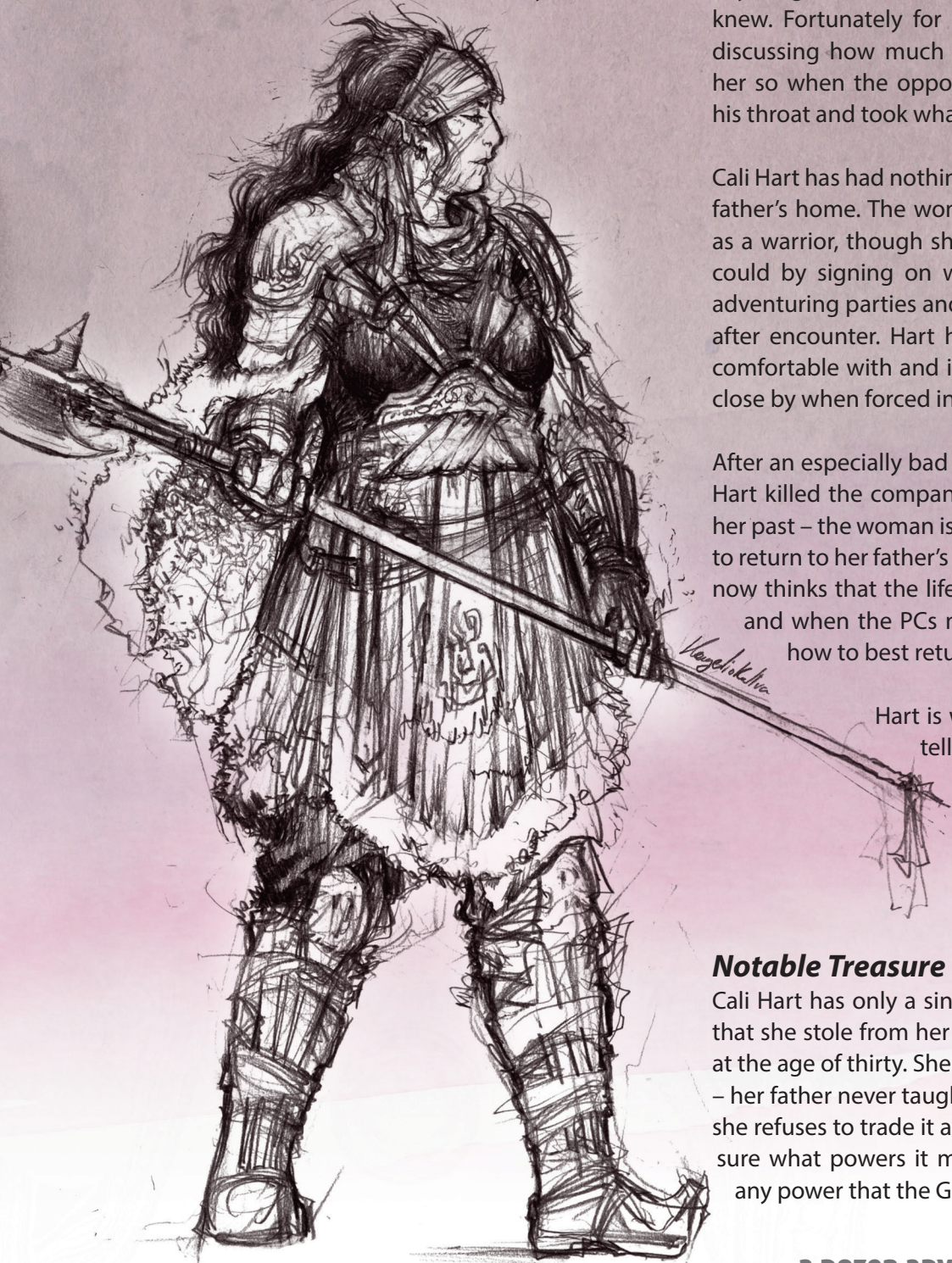
In his travels, Gran has found many treasures, though only two have remained in his hands for over a decade. The druid wears magical fur armor that protects him against attacks and shields him from damage. His magical battle axe, Claw of Kelrob, can sever the head from a goblin in a single blow and augments the druid's own magical powers; once each day, the axe grants the druid the ability to cast any one druidic spell (as selected by the gamemaster).



CALI HART

Human Fighter (Novice)

Before she chose the life of an adventurer, Cali Hart worked at her father's inn at the crossroads of two major trade routes where her head was filled with stories of danger, riches, and adventure. The woman resisted the call of excitement . . . until she turned thirty.



Shortly after her thirtieth birthday, after a fight with her father, Hart ran from home with a handsome, charming rogue who promised that he would teach her how to defend herself and train her as a thief. The man was kindly enough and convinced Hart that a new life was the answer . . . though he had no intention of doing anything more than selling the woman to slavers he knew. Fortunately for Hart, she overheard the rogue discussing how much money he would make selling her so when the opportunity presented itself, she slit his throat and took what things she could.

Cali Hart has had nothing but bad luck since leaving her father's home. The woman has had no formal training as a warrior, though she has picked up what skills she could by signing on with inexperienced, unknowing adventuring parties and by simply surviving encounter after encounter. Hart has no one weapon that she is comfortable with and is willing to use anything that is close by when forced into battle.

After an especially bad experience with her last party – Hart killed the company's mage when he joked about her past – the woman is trying to decide whether or not to return to her father's inn and beg his forgiveness. She now thinks that the life of an adventurer is not for her and when the PCs meet her, she is struggling with how to best return to the inn.

Hart is wary of all others and is slow to tell her story to the adventurers. If they treat her with kindness and don't pressure her, Cali may open up to them and mention her wish to return to her father's inn.

Notable Treasure

Cali Hart has only a single valuable item: A magic ring that she stole from her father when she fled the house at the age of thirty. She is unable to make the ring work – her father never taught her the command word – but she refuses to trade it away or sell it until she knows for sure what powers it may possess. The ring may have any power that the GM wishes.

ALINA SASK

Elven Wizard (Experienced)

Ever since she was young, Alina Sask has been enraptured by the sight and smell of fire. Her parents once caught her trying to set her bed on fire, just to see what it would feel like. As soon as she was of age, Sask signed on as the apprentice to a wizard and did all that she could to learn the power of flame spells. Her entire career as an adventurer has been devoted to studying the fire magicks.

If encountered in the dungeon, Sask is suspicious and guarded, being very careful to keep the PCs in her sight at all times. She won't be the first to attack fellow adventurers, but it takes months – maybe years – for her to fully trust anyone. For that reason, Sask has very few friends and often journeys alone.

Sask wishes to one day visit the elemental planes of fire where she hopes to improve her mastery of flame magic and to find other fire-based magic items. If any of the player characters have spells, scrolls, or magic items that use fire magic, Sask will take an intense interest in the PC and the gear.

Notable Treasure

Sask's most prized possession is the Amulet of the Phoenix, a piece of powerful magical jewelry that gives her the ability to transform into a being of pure flame energy. When transformed, Sask is immune to all fire and flame attacks – magical or natural – and may fire bolts of fire once every combat round; each bolt inflicts 1d4+1 points of magical flame damage and she may fire up to three bolts per round. (As the gamemaster, you should adjust the damage of the magical bolts to better suit your campaign's needs and the power level of the PCs.) The amulet may be activated up to twice each day and gives her the powers for up to 3d6 combat rounds

(it is random and the length of time that the power lasts varies from use to use).

In addition to the amulet, Sask has also located and claimed Gauntlets of the Phoenix. These magical gloves give her claws that also deal fire damage. Between the power of the amulet and the flaming gloves, Sask is a dangerous foe.



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Tanseal Laurel

Human Druid (Master)

Sometimes known as the Wrath of the Woods by those who oppose him, the druid Tanseal Laurel is an ancient warrior who is considered a fairy tale by many who have not met the man. Thanks to wishes made in his youth, Laurel is now over 100 years old and, though he looks old, has the speed and strength of a warrior of no more than thirty winters of age.

Laurel is most likely encountered in a forest and he rarely joins with others on an adventure. The druid has made it his life's work to protect all forests and woodland creatures, and he often travels from forest to forest by means of magical gates that he generates using spells.

PC druids will most certainly be aware of the man's reputation and stories of his adventures, and there's a chance that Laurel will thank a PC druid for their service to the cause if they impress him during the meeting.

In battle, Laurel is a force of nature all his own, using his wand and spells to destroy any who wish him or the forest harm. If the PCs come to his aid in a battle, the druid rewards them with gifts of minor magic items (one-use items, usually a necklace with a single use healing charm that can be activated by touching the item and thinking of the master druid).

Notable Treasure

A belt of strength gives Laurel the strength of a giant, allowing him to shatter rocks with his bare hands and kill opponents with one punch. The belt must be activated (a free action) and works once each day for 1d3+1 rounds. Laurel also carries a wand of destruction that allows him to fire lightning blasts. The wand has 5d20 charges remaining (once those charges are used, the wand will no longer work).

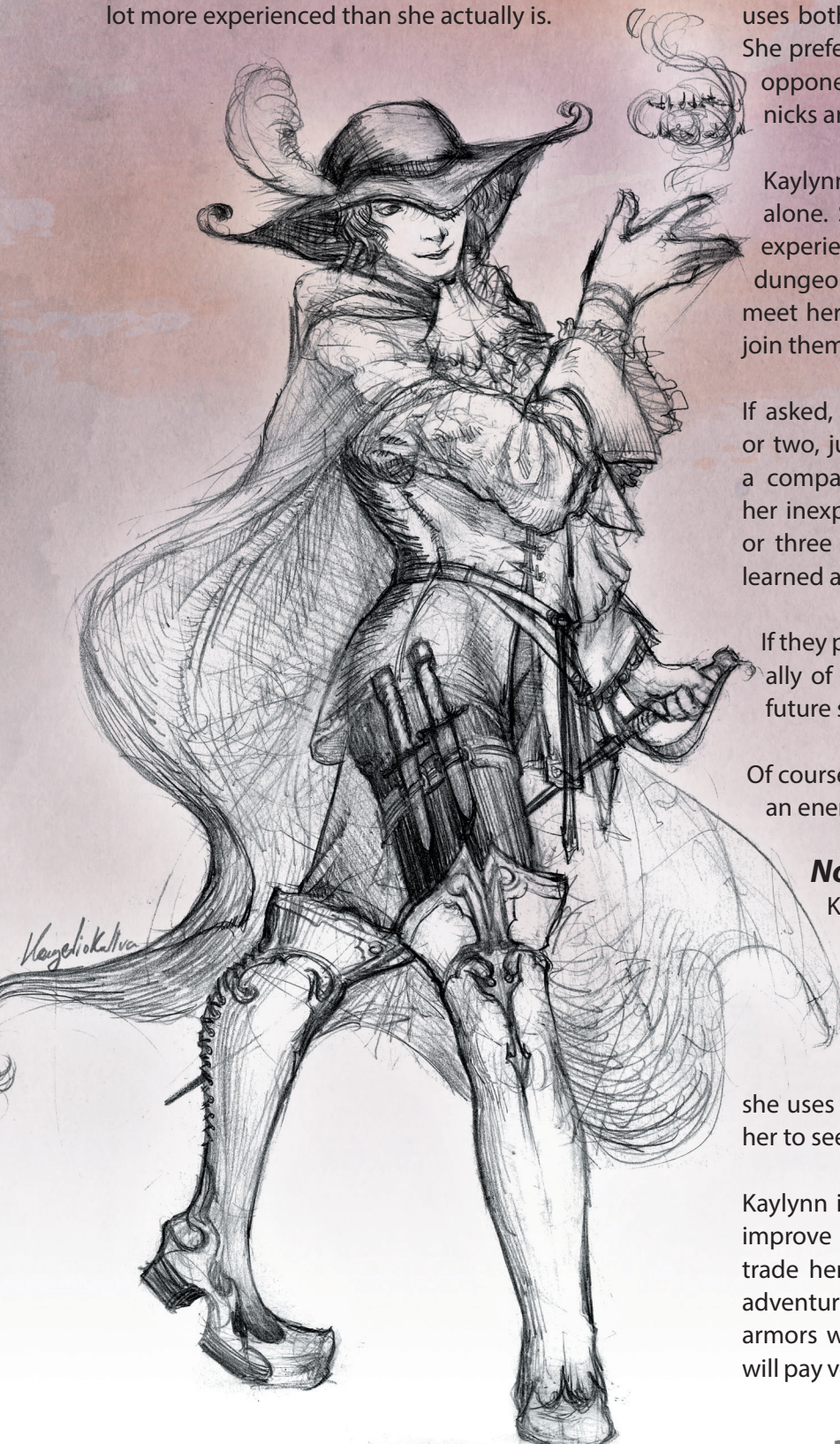
Laurel wears a Crown of Nature, a powerful magic item that was created for him fifty years ago by a friendly wizard who wished to thank Laurel for saving his life. The headgear grants Laurel the power to summon owls and other birds who will perform one small, simple task on command. The crown's power may be used once each day. Laurel also carries several healing potions that he uses as necessary.



KAYLYNN TRUTHSURGE

Human Fighter (Novice)

With less than a year under her belt, Kaylynn acts a lot more experienced than she actually is.



She's an agile, fast fighter who could have been a rogue had she selected a different path in her younger years. As it is, Kaylynn has the dexterity and speed of a thief and uses both of those traits to her advantage in combat. She prefers to close in tight, slashing and slicing at her opponents until they collapse from many, many tiny nicks and cuts.

Kaylynn is unlikely to be encountered in a dungeon alone. She's smart enough to know that she needs experienced, skilled companions before entering a dungeon. That said, it is possible that the party may meet her in an inn or tavern where she'll be happy to join them in a few drinks and trading gossip.

If asked, Kaylynn will join the party for an adventure or two, just so long as they treat her as an equal and a companion and do not try to take advantage of her inexperience. She will stick with the party for two or three adventures before she decides that she has learned all that she can from them and moves on.

If they part on good terms, Kaylynn may be a longtime ally of the group and someone that can return in a future session.

Of course, the opposite is also true: She could return as an enemy if the PCs do not treat her well.

Notable Treasure

Kaylynn prefers light blades – rapiers and daggers – and she wears only light, leather armors so that she can maintain her speed advantage in a fight. She recently found a magic ring that gives her the ability to project a smoke cloud once each day, which she uses to her advantage in combat. (The ring allows her to see clearly through the created smoke.)

Kaylynn is looking for magical armor and weapons to improve her chances in combat and may be willing to trade her services as a fighter for special gear. If the adventurers make mention of the possibility of magical armors when discussing dungeons they know of, she will pay very close attention to whatever info they share.

TRAN BONESHIELD

Human Fighter (Master)

Tran Boneshield has dedicated his life to one thing: his own needs. At an early age, Tran exhibited signs of narcissism and was shunned by those who soon learned that he was untrustworthy and looking out only for himself. Tran fled home when fifteen years of age and joined a mercenary company where some of the soldiers grew to hate the boy so much that they disfigured him, scarring his face, chest, and arms with their daggers.

Tran swore that he would make them pay . . . and he did, eventually, when he played an active role in the destruction of the mercs. Every member was slaughtered by a rival group that Tran personally led to where his former companions were hiding after a dangerous battle that left them weak.

Tran has never had loyal friends and is certainly not loyal to anyone but himself, though he did manage to survive adventure after adventure and is a talented and brutal warrior.

If encountered, he will do whatever he can to benefit from the meeting, going so far as to lie to get what he wants from the PCs. If attacked, he only runs if it looks as if he is certain to be defeated.

Notable Treasure

Tran carries the Fork of Fangs, an ancient magical weapon that was created centuries ago by the dark elves of old. This customized, unusual military fork is one of the strangest pole arms the party may ever see; Tran is a dangerous warrior and has spent years perfecting his skill with this magical weapon. The Fork of Fangs has no special powers; the item merely grants a +4 bonus to hit and inflicts an extra 2d4 points of damage.

Tran wears magic plate armor that was crafted for him a decade ago by an evil wizard. Even though Tran is not evil (he is, at worst, a neutral character who is out for himself and tries to let things like good and evil wash over him), he happily paid for this unusual armor that both grants a bonus to defense and gives him a slight magic resistance.



PEGAN STORMFRONT

Centaur Warrior (Experienced)

Pegan Stormfront is an accomplished warrior and woodsman with decades of experience. The centaur has seen battle as a mercenary, adventure as a dungeoneer, and spent six years as a guard traveling with merchant caravans across the civilized lands.

Stormfront prefers overland adventures to the cramped, dirty dungeons of the world and will only join in on another dungeon expedition if he is promised a greater share of any discovered treasures. The centaur has difficulty in some of the tighter dungeons and may not be able to pass through every door and hallway in a dungeon.

If the party meets Stormfront on the road, he will greet them and invite them to travel with him if they are headed in the same direction. "Safety in numbers," he tells them.

The centaur could make a great friend and ally of the adventurers if they treat him well. He is connected with many adventuring groups across the lands and often has access to valuable information.

Stormfront is seeking adventure and has no plans to settle down until old age forces him to retire. The centaur warrior hates all goblinoids and will go out of his way to assist in defeating a tribe of goblins.

Notable Treasure

Stormfront wears a magical helm and armor that grants him a bonus to resist damage. The helmet, once worn by the elven ranger Heartlimb Windrace, grants him the ability to speak to woodland creatures. Stormfront also wears a belt of giant strength which amplifies his already impressive strength.

In battle, Stormfront prefers to use his magical bow of true aim. The weapon grants a +2 bonus to all attack rolls and may only be used by a character with a high strength (a strength score of 15+ in most systems that use 3d6 to determine character stats is required). Stormfront carries a quiver of endless arrows.



BEHAR BESK

Human Fighter/Mage (Master)

Behar Besk, a master of melee as well as magery, is over forty winters in age and has spent close to 75% of his life either in training, working as a soldier, or exploring the world and its many dungeons. Besk was a member of the Black Heart mercenary company for the earliest years of his life, serving first as a runner for the troops and then – after he was forced to defend himself when the merc camp was raided by orcs – as one of the mercenary company's grunts.

It wasn't until Besk turned twenty that he started to learn the art of magery, studying with one of the merc company's wizards. Besk proved a fast study and continued his training as both a warrior and a mage.

If encountered, Besk is cautious but friendly and is always looking to trade knowledge with others. The man is especially interested in collecting more scrolls and potions – he finds that they make great tools in battle and prefers to use them over taking the time to memorize spells every day – and he will pay well if he runs across a combat potion or scroll that is unusual in some way.

Besk won't sign with any one group, but he can be a powerful ally to those he meets so long as they part on friendly terms.

Notable Treasure

Besk is a powerful, talented fighter and mage who has spent years perfecting his skills. He has also spent that time accumulating magic items that benefit his days as an adventurer. When encountered, Besk will be carrying several magic potions (see *The Book of Unusual Potions* for inspiration), his spellbook, several scrolls, and a magic staff of cold control.

The staff gives Besk the ability to project ice blasts that inflict 2d6 points of damage twice per day. Additionally, once each week, Besk may summon a snowstorm that blankets the immediate area in freezing temperatures and 3d6 inches of snow, regardless of whether or not he is under the hottest summer sun or in the deepest dungeon. The magical snowstorm lasts for only a few moments before it expires.



BARRON CRAAG, THE BLACK HAWK

Human Assassin (Experienced)

Known to most as “The Black Hawk,” the assassin Barron Cragg is a vile, evil man who will take any job . . . so long as the pay suits his needs. The man has no loyalty to anything but himself and his wealth, and he is not to be trusted at any time.

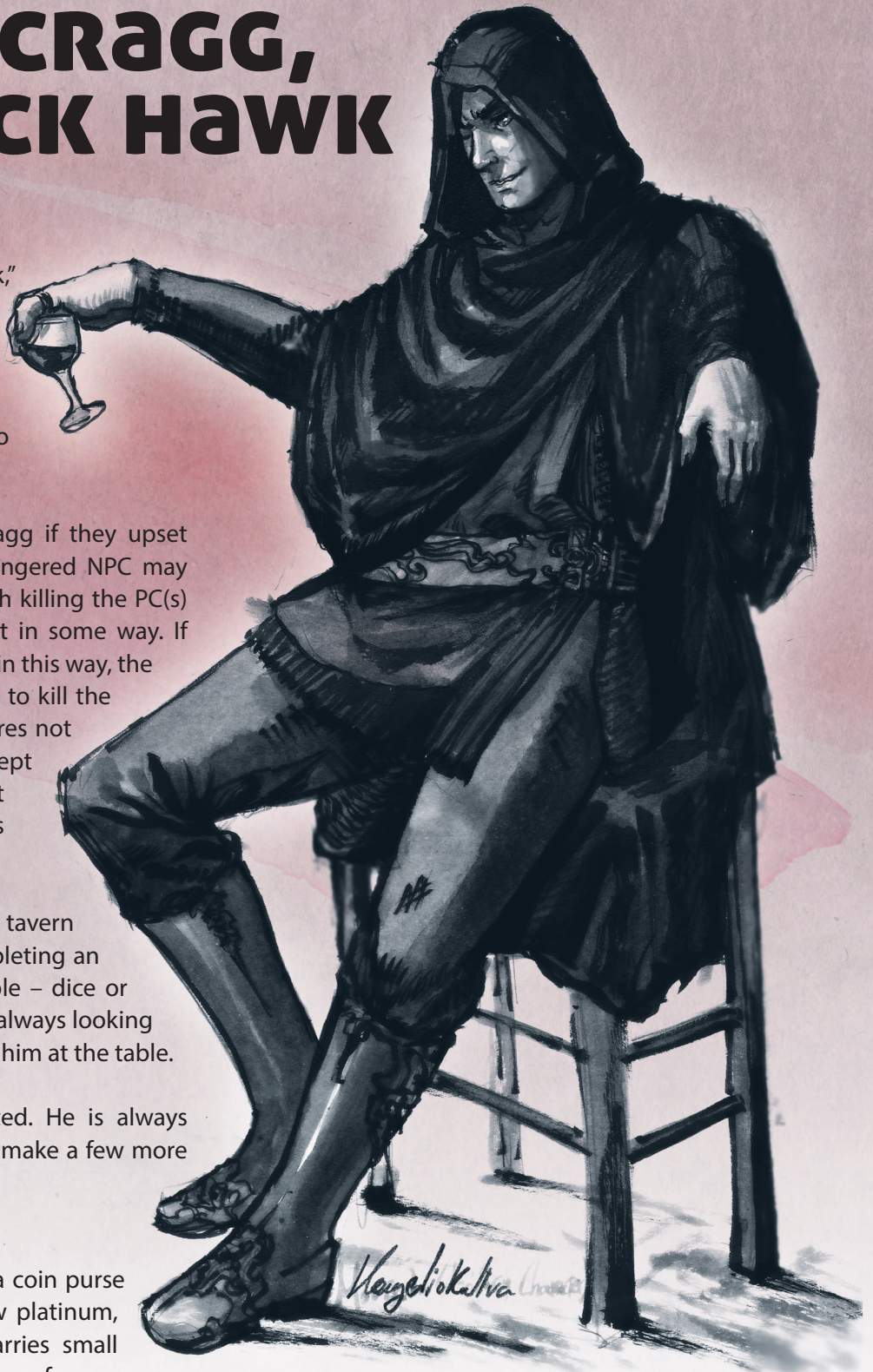
The adventurers may encounter Cragg if they upset a wealthy noble or merchant; the angered NPC may hire the assassin and charge him with killing the PC(s) who slighted the noble or merchant in some way. If Cragg is introduced to the campaign in this way, the adventurers may have no choice but to kill the assassin . . . or pay him off. Cragg cares not for his reputation and will always accept a bribe. (Especially if it is a bribe that reduces his chance of death and ends a transaction quickly.)

The party may also meet Cragg at a tavern or inn where he is resting after completing an assignment. The man loves to gamble – dice or cards, he will take any game – and is always looking for opponents who are willing to join him at the table.

The assassin should never be trusted. He is always looking for the latest opportunity to make a few more gold and has no friends.

Notable Treasure

At most any time, Cragg is carrying a coin purse with several dozen gold coins, a few platinum, and several silver coins. He also carries small gemstones at all times that he uses to pay for more expensive objects and services; there’s a 50% chance that any coin or gem that Cragg uses to pay someone is a fake and actually worthless. He uses his charming personality to convince most that the coins and gems are real. If questioned, he attempts to intimidate the taker into accepting the fake coins/gems.



Cragg uses poisons and will usually have a few different varieties in a pouch at any time. His cloak is a magic item that grants him a bonus against attacks and he uses magical throwing daggers to attack his enemies; the daggers (four of them in total) magically return to his hand one round after they are thrown.

ZILYANA LLORVA

Elven Fighter (Experienced)

Llorva has spent that last thirty years in battle against evil, doing everything within her power to fight the forces of darkness wherever they may be.



The woman has worked as a dungeoneer for most of that time, making it her mission to clear ancient complexes of the evil that spawns within them.

She is especially focused on the undead after a terrible experience with skeletons in her youth. Llorva will go out of her way to attack any necromancer she encounters, ignoring all other enemies so long as a necromancer remains standing and casting dark magicks.

If the PCs meet Llorva in a dungeon complex, she will usually be with 1d4+1 lower level elven warriors and possibly one mage. The woman is a bit of a legend to her people and she will sometimes assemble a party of elves to aid her in her self-assigned missions. Few younger elves refuse her call for assistance, choosing to adventure with Zilyana Llorva so that they have a story to tell their children many years later.

Llorva refuses to work with evil characters, regardless of the circumstances, so if even one PC is of an evil alignment they will not gain her assistance in any task. Additionally, the woman considers anyone working willingly with evil to themselves be of a questionable alignment; she will treat them as enemies.

She is always ready to trade knowledge for supplies, especially healing potions.

Notable Treasure

Llorva wears magical armor that provides a +3 bonus against attacks and grants her a 5% chance to resist any magical assault. Her boots of Elven Agility give her an increased dexterity and in battle she uses the Staff of the Cosmos, a powerful magic item that allows her to cast magical missiles once each round by holding the staff out and aiming it at her target. At will, 1d4+1 missiles fire from the staff and have a 50% chance of striking the target; roll separately for each missile fired that round. The missiles inflict 4 points of damage/each when they hit a target. The staff inflicts normal damage when used to hit an opponent.

OSWAL TRAKOR

Half-Orc Fighter/Thief (Experienced)

A towering, giant of a man, the half-orc Oswald Trakor is as skilled in battle as he is at stealing and picking locks. He has divided his study over the years evenly between the two skill sets, Trakor considers both professions to be equally important to his success as a dungeoneer over the years; he has probably stabbed as many enemies with his sword and daggers over the last decade of adventuring as he has picked pockets and locks.

Trakor is a freelance mercenary, always willing to sign on with an adventuring company so long as they treat him as an equal and give him a fair chance at any discovered treasures. When working with a group, though, Trakor isn't above sneaking a few extra coins from any discovered hoard; so long as he isn't caught by his companions, where is the harm in pocketing the occasional gold piece here and there?

As a half-orc, Trakor is sometimes unable to find a place to sleep or a meal to eat in some of the smaller towns and cities that distrust his kind. In those instances, the half-orc pulls his cloak tight and enters only at night, hoping to pass himself off as a pure human. If he is in a bad mood when rejected because of his race, it is not unknown for Trakor to sneak back late in the night and kill the innkeeper or barkeep who refused to serve him.

If encountered in the dungeon alone, Trakor will agree to join the adventurers if they ask. As is in his nature, he still tries to leave with more treasure than the others.

Notable Treasure

Trakor wears magical leather armor that grants him a bonus to resist damage and, when in the dark, a 25% chance of fading into the shadows and being effectively invisible to anyone, even those with special vision.

His daggers are also magical (+4 to damage) and he carries a magical sword that ignites into a flaming blade on command. When sheathed, the sword's blade vanishes completely, leaving only the weapon's hilt. This makes it light and easy to carry; the perfect weapon for an assassin.

