

- A R C A N A - SOCIETIES • OF • MAGIC



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Requires The Dungeons & Dragons® Player Handbook For Use

Arcana:

Societies of Magic

A d20[®] System Sourcebook

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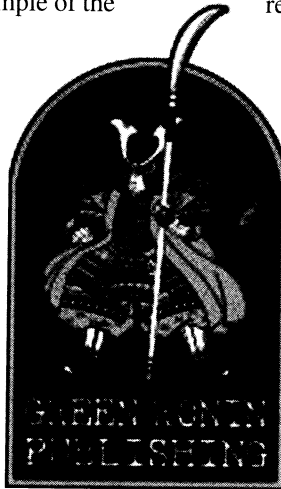
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Introduction

Welcome to *Arcana: Societies of Magic*, a toolkit for Gamemasters seeking to add a bit of magical spice to the campaigns. That's because this book focuses on—as the title says—magical societies. Each society employs magic to achieve its ends, but not all of them do so in traditional ways. Magic doesn't have to be restricted to bearded wizards in secluded castles poring over hoary tomes. Magic can just as easily be diabolical martial artists wielding weapons forged from the very essences of evil outsiders or dragonspawn Mafiosi dealing in illicit drugs and artifacts. *Arcana: Societies of Magic* is intended to broaden the horizons of magic in D20 fantasy campaigns by showing that, with only a little work, a GM can make his players re-evaluate what they think they know about the topic.

The societies presented in this book were written with flexibility in mind. They can be dropped into any D20 fantasy setting (or even other games if you're so inclined), with a minimum of effort. Rather than provide every detail imaginable, we focused on the *core elements of each group*, along with a few useful extras (such as fully-fleshed out NPCs and location maps) that allow the group to be used without much preparation. This approach gives GMs the basics they need to use the societies in their campaigns, while still allowing the customization many settings demand.

Every society described here was also designed to be able to play a major role in your campaign. While they could appear as mere background color or as an adversary for a single adventure, most will shine most brightly as long-standing adversaries – or patrons – of the player characters. Because we've taken care of the tedious legwork, GMs can

concentrate on using these societies in ways that add flavor and depth to their own games.

In addition, the societies described should open up new possibilities even for GMs. Want to know what evil druids and rangers do? Check out the Servants of Decay. Need a reason why evil wizards don't rule the world? The Tribunal of Arcane Law will help to stop them — without eradicating all a setting's evildoers in the process. Your sorcerer needs a family? Can't find a better "family" than the criminal Dragon Gang. You won't find an archetypical wizard's guildhall in here. *Arcana: Societies of Magic* is about expanding how magic and magical items are used in D20 fantasy games.

This book also includes a number of new D20 game mechanics that you can use even if you choose not to introduce one of these societies in your campaign. As you progress through this book, you'll find:

- a theory of how magic works in D20 system games;
- advice on how legal systems and police regulate spells;
- rules for binding outsiders into magic weapons;
- rules for drug use and abuse;
- a new player character race, the drakeling;
- four new prestige classes;
- a divine avatar template;
- a wide variety of new feats, spells, and magic items.

So enjoy! We hope that *Arcana: Societies of Magic* will help players and Gamemasters alike think of new ways to use magic and magic-users in their fantasy adventures and campaigns.

Publisher's Introduction

Allow me to date myself. Twenty-two years ago when I started to play **Dungeons and Dragons**®, there wasn't a whole lot of life outside the dungeon. Oh, sure there was the occasional tavern or once in a while you'd be dragged in front of a king as a prelude to getting back to the matter at hand: killing monsters and taking loot. It didn't take that long for people to begin to ask questions. Who was this king? What land does he rule? Who built this dungeon? And why a 10 foot pole?

Once you start exploring a world that hunger for detail never abates. Enter the book in your hands. *Arcana: Societies of Magic* gives you six new organizations that allow you to explore the role of magic in the world. And what world is that? Well, whatever world you use in your home campaign. Like our Freeport series, this book is intended for use in any d20 campaign setting. References to ancient empires and the like can be easily altered to fit the setting at hand, allowing you to maximize your utility of *Arcana*.

So put a little magic into your campaign. You'll find both friends and foes for your PCs here, and enough crunchy bits to make any gamer happy. Be sure and drop by our website too. In addition to our usual goodies like Focus on Freeport, we'll be offering a free enhancement to *Arcana: Societies of Magic*.

Enjoy!

Chris Pramas – Seattle, WA

The Abbey of Green Steel

The betterment of oneself through physical and mental discipline is an ancient and honorable vocation in many lands. Great monastic schools have taught the secrets of self-improvement for centuries, providing a place for those who wish to achieve the particular kinds of enlightenment that they offer. In the process of doing so, many of these monasteries create formidable warriors, individuals whose bodies and minds have been made keen through the rigors they have undergone in pursuit of perfection.

Perfection is a mutable concept, changing with the perspective of the one considering it. While most monasteries encourage their adepts to seek illumination at the expense of nothing but their own ignorance, this is not a universally held principle. Rare though they may be, there are nevertheless monasteries whose masters teach their students that perfection can only come at the expense of others. The Abbey of Green Steel is such a monastery. Under its diabolical master, Galardoun, its monks pursue a dark path that leads to the very mouth of Hell itself.

Worse still, the Abbey defies other traditions of the monastic pursuit, diluting the pure waters of contemplation with the study of eldritch sorcery and black magic. As abhorrent as this may seem to traditional devotees of monkish ways, it is all in keeping with Galardoun's horrid plans, for he believes that true perfection consists in imitating evil outsiders – the devils – whose power shakes the very planes of existence. Of course, Galardoun's ambitions extend beyond mere imitation of the devils; he seeks to *become* one. The course on which he has placed the Abbey of Green Steel all but guarantees that its monks shall be a threat to the forces of good for years to come.

Inside the Abbey

The Abbey of Green Steel is a force for evil; there's no question about that. Galardoun takes pride in how well he has molded his disciples into a regimented, orderly, and thoroughly corrupt army – Hell on earth. The Master has taken the lessons he has learned over the years and applied them vigorously. Anyone who earns the right to enter the Abbey can be assured to acquiring the discipline and dark knowledge necessary to begin his own descent into devilry.

Hierarchy

Galardoun began his life as a soldier. Even now, he retains a soldier's mindset. He expects – and receives – nothing less than the total obedience of those under him.

He also believes that discipline is a source of immense power. The Master points to the Nine Hells as proof of his assertion. Ever since he first learned of Hell's vast armies and mighty weapons, Galardoun knew he wanted to emulate them. He runs the Abbey as if it were an outpost of Hell itself.

At the pinnacle of power within the Abbey is Galardoun, addressed simply as "Master." Galardoun does not believe in ostentatious shows of his authority, preferring simply that his underlings obey him and carry out his wishes. Anything more offends his austere sensibilities.

Beneath the Master is Imane, Galardoun's lieutenant and "daughter." She acts as the Master's spokesperson, chief emissary, and, if need be, his enforcer. At the same time, Imane also heads the Abbey's training program. She oversees the instruction of all new postulants, personally testing those who reach higher levels of aptitude. No one advances beyond the rank of Initiate without Imane's express approval.

The Council of Nine advises Galardoun. It is a board composed of the nine most adept monks in the Abbey. Each councilor oversees a particular area of the order's activities, such as recruitment, relations with the outside world, and weaponsmithing. Councilors are known by their area of expertise, so that Dethomasis, who oversees contacts with the dukes of Hell is known simply as "The Pit." These men and women are all extremely powerful and ambitious; several aim to replace Galardoun as Master if they can find a means to do so.

Councilors are served by one or more Oblates, who act as their servants. Oblates have achieved a high degree of proficiency in their monastic skills and are assigned to a Councilor based on their area of specialty. No one reaches the rank of Oblate without first having been approved by Imane.

Ordinary members of the Abbey, who make up the bulk of its membership, are Initiates. They achieve this rank by first defeating another Initiate (or, rarely, an Oblate) in single combat. Initiates receive training under the direction of Oblates and Councilors, with Imane taking an interest in anyone who shows particular promise.

Postulants are would-be Green Steel monks. They come to the Abbey from all over, some traveling hundreds of miles to earn the chance to study here. While most postulants are human, the Abbey attracts occasional members of other races, particularly dwarves. Elves and Half-Orcs are rare postulants because of their chaotic natures. Other races are almost unheard of.

Beyond the monks themselves, the Abbey maintains a staff of soldiers, clerics, and wizards to assist them in

their activities. The soldiers (called *shivano*, an Infernal word meaning “fists”) are mostly 1st to 3rd-level Warriors, led by Fighters of higher level. Clerics typically serve Lawful Evil deities with some connection to the Nine Hells, while the wizards specialize in crafting magic arms and armor. No non-monk above 9th level exists in the Abbey, due to Galardoun’s unwillingness to depend heavily on anyone who has not devoted themselves wholeheartedly to his evil philosophy.

Activities

The Abbey of Green Steel engages in four primary activities. The first is the most straightforward: to provide a secluded locale in which evil men and women can improve themselves bodily, mentally, and spiritually until they can transform themselves into evil outsiders – devils. Galardoun’s teachings (described at greater length below) stress that the whole of reality, both the Material and Outer Planes, is a training ground that rewards only ruthless discipline and unrestrained cruelty. Failure to realize this and to adapt oneself to it can only result in a lifetime – or an eternity – of suffering at the hands of those who have. The Abbey promises to train mortals so that they not only crawl to the top of the heap in this dimension, but also after death as well.

To achieve that end, the monks engage in two of their other main activities: acquiring dark knowledge and forging devil weapons. The acquisition of diabolic knowledge serves multiple purposes. On the purely practical level, it gives the monks an edge against devils, their servants, and

anyone else who might oppose the Abbey. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of a pit fiend, for example, has many applications. Galardoun has authorized the selling of parts of this knowledge to wizards and scholars in exchange for services, as well as monetary compensation. Even the Abbey needs funds to maintain itself.

The forging of devil weapons is a similarly multi-faceted endeavor. By creating inexpensive but powerful magical items that derive their power from a bound outsider, the monks augment their own natural abilities. They likewise have yet another source of funds, since more than a few individuals and groups who’d love to have access to these items. Finally, the process of forging further reinforces the monks’ understanding of devils and their abilities. To bind a devil into a sword, one cannot help but understand it – a source of immeasurable strength.

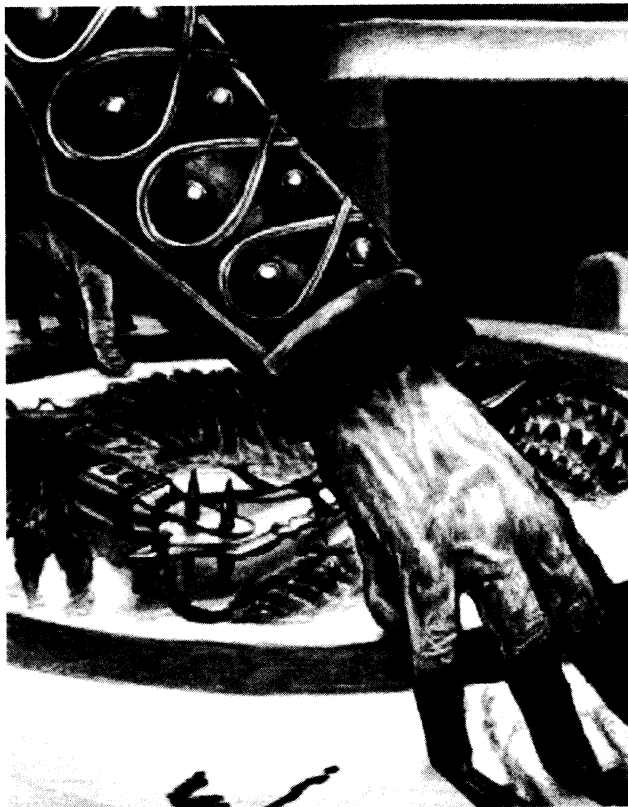
The fourth activity of the Abbey is the acquisition of power. Galardoun sees himself and his monks as the superiors of the “cattle” who exist elsewhere in the world. A true tyrant, the Master believes it right and fitting that he and his servants should rule over all. That’s why Green Steel monks act as *agents provocateurs* far and afield. Their goal is to seize power, whether overtly or covertly, in order to expand Galardoun’s influence and that of the Abbey. Monks arrange coups and support insurgencies, but rarely operate in the open. The Abbey is better served by the monks’ working as puppet masters from the shadows.

Objectives

As noted above, the Abbey of Green Steel has only one objective: to aid its members on their quest to become devils. Everything else it does – forging magical weapons, seeking out dark knowledge, etc. – is simply a means to this end. This objective makes the Abbey both easier and more difficult to confront than many other evil groups.

It’s easier because, it’s a fundamentally selfish goal. Green Steel monks care mostly for their own survival and descent into devilhood. If a band of adventurers threatens their hold over a town, for example, they’ll pull back and cut their losses if it looks like they’ll lose their lives in the process. Of course, they’re also disciplined and obey Galardoun without question. If he orders them to fight the adventurers, they’ll do so – but that’s rarely the case. More often than not, Green Steel plots are peripheral to its ultimate goals, and so its monks abandon anything that goes awry, like a gangrenous limb that threatens to infect the entire body.

This attitude also makes it more difficult to defeat the Abbey permanently, because its ultimate plans are largely removed from everyday experience. Whereas a power mad Orcish chieftain or necromancer’s goal can be thwarted by directly confronting their evil armies and toppling them from power, stopping the monks’ quest for diabolic enlightenment is harder. Green Steel monks don’t even have to be in the Abbey to pursue their descent into outsider status.



Outsider Weapons

The term "outsider weapons" describes a category of magic weapons that derive their power from an extraplanar creature whose essence is bound into the weapon itself. Because the bound outsider provides a "power boost" to the crafting process, they are much less expensive to create (both in terms of gold and experience costs) than comparable weapons. In addition, outsider weapons possess special abilities deriving from the nature of the outsider used to power them. However, outsider weapons come with a price tag: the possible enmity of the outsider so bound. At the very least, outsider weapons are generally less permanent than other magical items and lose their special abilities once the outsider is freed (or breaks free) from the weapon into which it is bound.

Outsider Weapon Creation

The process of creating an outsider weapon begins with summoning an outsider. This can be accomplished through a variety of means, most notably spells like *gate* or *summon monster*. After that, the summoner must bind the summoned demon by means of spells such as *lesser planar binding* or *greater planar binding*.

Equally important to the process is the attitude of the outsider toward its summoner. If the outsider is at least Helpful, then it will accept being bound into a weapon without too many qualms. If it's actually Friendly, it not only accepts being bound but has a good reason for doing so, such as to aid the summoner in a great quest. Any other attitude indicates that the outsider is hostile and may attack the summoner after the binding has expired.

By their nature, outsider weapons are almost always intelligent. The Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores of the weapon are based on respective scores of the outsider that's bound into the weapon. Thus, a weapon that derives its power from a bound chamagon (*Legions of Hell*, p. 15), for example, would have 11 Intelligence, 9 Wisdom, and 15 Charisma. The weapon's alignment is likewise the same as that of the bound creature (Lawful Evil in the case of the chamagon).

An outsider weapon's ability to communicate with its wielder is similarly determined by its ability scores.

Outsider Weapon Communication and Ability Scores

Communication

Semiempathy
Empathy
Speech
Speech, Telepathy

Ability Scores

Two ability scores at least 10+, one 8+
Two ability scores at least 12+, one 10+
Two ability scores at least 14+, one 12+
Two ability scores at least 16+, one 12+

Outsider weapons capable of speech speak as many languages as the creature bound into them. In the case of a devil weapon, for example, they would speak Celestial, Draconic, and Infernal, in addition to any bonus languages based on their Intelligence scores. In cases of extremely weak outsiders whose ability scores do not meet any of the requirements listed in the table above, the weapon is not intelligent and cannot communicate with its wielder.

An outsider weapon's magical attack bonus derives from the Hit Dice of the creature bound into it.

Outsider Weapon Hit Dice and Attack Bonus

Hit Dice

1-3
6-9
10-12
13-15
16+

Attack Bonus

+1
+2
+3
+4
+5

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Outsider weapons can use the spell-like abilities of the creature bound into them. Abilities that affect only the outsider do not affect the wielder. Hardness and hit points are as per the weapon type. Caster level is equal to the hit dice of the outsider bound into the weapon. Breaking the weapon (by means of the Sunder feat, for example) frees the outsider, as does *dispelling* the spell binding it into the weapon. Outsider weapons do not have the ability to summon other outsiders, even if the creature bound into it does.

Outsider weapons can manifest special abilities just like other magic weapons. Unlike other magic weapons, however, the abilities are largely determined by the nature of the outsider bound in them. Additional abilities may be added, just like other weapons, but these take longer and require the standard prerequisites (spells, etc.). The attraction of outsider weapons is that the crafter need not meet all the prerequisites to add special abilities deriving from the creature bound into them, since they're a function of its nature.

Even outsider weapons have a gold and experience point cost. Binding an outsider into a weapon cuts down on those costs, but it does not eliminate them entirely. Thus, a crafter must still pay for every enhancement and ability he activates during the binding process. It should be noted that further abilities may not be added after the initial binding, even if the outsider possesses more abilities than the crafter takes advantage of. Once the binding is done, the weapon is complete and cannot be enchanted further.

The costs associated with outsider weapons depend on how long the crafter intends the binding to last.

Outsider Weapon Binding Costs

Binding Length	Cost
1 week	25% normal
1 month	50% normal
1 year	75% normal

Any binding of an outsider into a weapon for a period of more than one year costs the normal amount of gold and experience.

In addition to gold and experience points, the crafter must possess the metamagic feat Craft Magic Arms and Armor. He must also have a masterwork weapon into which he (or the summoner, if it's a different person) will bind the outsider. Nothing less than a masterwork weapon will suffice. He does not have to possess the prerequisites for the abilities he adds to the weapon; they derive their power solely from the outsider.

Outsider Weapon Abilities

Most of the abilities a weapon can derive from its bound outsider are apparent from reading a monster's description, such as wounding for a barbazu weapon or energy drain for a succubus. Poisonous outsiders might make the weapon function like a *dagger of venom*. Alignment-based abilities (such as lawful, chaotic, holy, unholy, etc.), as well as elemental ones (like flaming, frost, shock, etc.) are obvious choices in many cases. The GM must adjudicate correlations between outsider and magic weapon abilities when they are not obvious. Here are a few sample associations to show how additional abilities might be created:

Acidic

Upon command, an acidic weapon is sheathed in a burning, corrosive acid. The acid does not harm the hands that hold the weapon. Acidic weapons deal +1d6 points of bonus acid damage on a successful hit. Bows, crossbows, and slings so enchanted bestow the acid energy upon their ammunition.

Caster Level: 8th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *melf's acid arrow* or *acid fog*
Market Price: +1 bonus.

Acidic Burst

An acidic burst weapon functions as an acidic weapon that also explodes with acid upon striking a successful critical hit. The acid does not harm the hands that hold the weapon. Acidic burst weapons deal

+1d10 points of bonus acid damage on a successful critical hit. If the weapon's critical multiplier is x3, add +2d10 points of bonus acid damage instead, and if the multiplier is x4, add +3d10 points of bonus acid damage. Bows, crossbows, and slings so enchanted bestow the acid energy upon their ammunition.

Caster Level: 12th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *melf's acid arrow* or *acid fog*
Market Price: +2 bonus.

Special Examples

Quasit: The weapon functions as a *dagger of venom*. The wielder can cast *change self* at will and alter the weapon type (change from dagger to longsword, for instance).

Succubus: As *life-drinker*; also allows user to comprehend languages at will.

Bebelith: *Web* 4/day; poison as *dagger of venom*; *magic circle* at will.

Retriever: Retrievers are constructs and so cannot be bound.

Vrock: This weapon has the *thundering* ability.

Glabrezu: The weapon can continually *detect magic* and use *true seeing*. It may or may not communicate this to the wielder, depending on its relationship to him.

Optional Rule

Outsider weapons are a dangerous application of magic. Some GMs may prefer to highlight this fact with the following rule: Each week the bound outsider has a 1% chance to break free of the binding. Such a creature is unlikely to look kindly on the weapon's wielder.

That means that heroes who wish to undermine Galardoun fully have quite a task ahead of them. The dark beauty of his plans is that they advance the cause of evil on an *individual basis*. Many good-aligned people and groups are unwilling to hunt down individual monks, or even large numbers of them, who seek nothing more than a twisted version of self-perfection. This is the Abbey's greatest defense and the reason it readily detaches itself from its other activities: nothing should stand in the way of its monks' achieving their transformation into devils.

Teachings

The Abbey of Green Steel functions according to the teachings of Master Galardoun. These teachings are a reflection of his time as a soldier, the years he spent studying under Ducayet, and his personal reflections on the world. In brief, they consist of the following axioms:

- The strong dominate the weak; this remains true even after death.
- Discipline can make even the weak strong.
- Outsiders are the ultimate expressions of strength, devils especially so.
- Discipline can also enable mortals to become outsiders.

Taken together, these four axioms sum up Galardoun's philosophy and the *raison d'être* of the Abbey. The first axiom is the simplest to understand, for it's shared by many groups of Lawful Evil bent. It's a justification for tyranny and authoritarianism, a mindset in which might makes right. The only new wrinkle that Galardoun adds is his belief that this situation does not change with death. Even in the afterlife, the strong continue to dominate the weak.

Galardoun teaches that discipline can make even a weak person a strong one. While inherent physical strength is a powerful asset, it's insufficient to defeat a truly disciplined person. That's why the Abbey teaches an unforgiving regimen that strengthens the soul and awakens its inner qualities. By submitting to the Green Steel way, a person can hone his body, mind, and spirit into a potent weapon that few can challenge.

The ultimate expressions of strength, as seen by Galardoun, are outsiders. These beings transcend ordinary categories and defy reality with their abilities. They are what all beings should aspire to be. For the Master, devils are particularly worthy of praise, since their society is one of ultimate order and discipline – the pinnacle of strength.

Finally, Galardoun believes that the Abbey's regimen is so mystically potent that it can transform a mere mortal into a devil or other outsider. For Galardoun this is absolutely vital. Normally, a Lawful Evil soul goes to

Green Steel Monk

Monks are the most obvious candidates for entry into this prestige class, although fighters and rangers may qualify if they have the proper feat selection. Rogues and clerics likewise might qualify with careful decisions about their choice of feats. Sorcerers, and wizards have some difficulty meeting the Green Steel Monk's requirements, but they are welcome additions to the Abbey's inner circle. Barbarians, bards, druids, and paladins may not join because of alignment restrictions.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a Green Steel Monk, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

- **Alignment:** Lawful Evil.
- **Base Attack Bonus:** +3
- **Knowledge (The Planes):** 4 ranks.
- **Feats:** Deflect Arrows, Endurance, Improved Unarmed Strike.
- **Special:** The aspiring Green Steel Monk must have gained entry into the Abbey by defeating one of its current Monks in single combat. The combat need not be to the death, although Master Galardoun believes firmly in the survival of the fittest.

Class Skills

The Green Steel Monk's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Alchemy (Int), Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge [Arcana and the Planes (Int)], Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency

The Green Steel Monk is proficient with all simple and martial weapons.

Spells

Beginning at 1st level, a Green Steel Monk gains the ability to cast a small number of arcane spells. To cast a spell, the Monk must have an Intelligence score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a Monk with an Intelligence of below 10 cannot cast spells at all. Green Steel Monk bonus spells are based on Intelligence, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + Intelligence modifier. When the Monk gets "0" spells of a given level, the Monk gets only bonus spells. A Monk without a bonus spell for that level cannot yet cast a spell of that level. For the purposes of determining spell effects, a Monk's caster level is equal to her prestige class level. No other classes are considered for this purpose, even other spellcasting classes. A Green Steel Monk has access to any spell on that list and need not prepare those spells ahead of time; she casts spells just as a sorcerer does.

Green Steel Monks choose their spells from the following list:

1st—*burning hands, chill touch, inflict light wounds, magic missile, shocking grasp, true strike.*

2nd—*death knell, ghoul touch, hold person, inflict moderate wounds, Melf's acid arrow.*

3rd—*fireball, inflict serious wounds, keen edge, lightning bolt, vampiric touch.*

4th—*contagion, enervation, inflict critical wounds, poison.*

5th—*dismissal, hold monster, slay living.*



Monk Abilities

A Green Steel Monk has the unarmed damage, AC bonus, and speed of a monk equal to the number of levels she has in Green Steel Monk plus her monk levels (if any).

Speak Infernal (Ex)

At 1st level, the Green Steel Monk gains the ability to speak Infernal. If she already possesses this ability, she may select another outsider language (such as Abyssal or Celestial instead).

Magic Touch (Su)

At 2nd level, the Green Steel Monk can cast a spell through her body as she attacks with it. This is a free action. The spell so cast counts against the daily limit of spells granted by the prestige class and it can't have a casting time of longer than 1 action. Spells from other spellcasting classes, including those included on the Green Steel Monk spell list below, are not eligible to be cast in this way. A Magic Touch spell targets the creature hit by the Monk's blow. If the spell would normally target more than one creature, Magic Touch limits its effect to the single opponent attacked. If the unarmed attack misses, the Magic Touch spell is wasted. If it succeeds (and any applicable saving throw has failed), the Monk may add the effect of the spell to any unarmed damage she deals.

Devil Skin (Ex)

Through a regimen of meditation and self-improvement, the Monk slowly acquires skin like that of a devil, granting a +1 natural armor bonus. At every three levels beyond 3rd (6th and 9th), this bonus increases by +1.

See in Darkness (Su)

At 4th level, a Monk can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, even that created by *deeper darkness* spells.

Unarmed Sunder (Ex)

The Green Steel Monk's body has been trained to find weaknesses in objects as well as people. At 5th level, she gains the feat Unarmed Sunder (see sidebar) for free, even if she does not possess the prerequisites for it.

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Cold and Acid Resistance (Ex)

At 7th level, the Monk gains cold and acid resistance 20.

Spell Resistance (Su)

At 8th level, the Green Steel Monk gains spell resistance. The resistance equals her character level +5. In order to affect her with a spell, a spellcaster must roll the Monk's spell resistance or higher on 1d20 + the spellcaster's level. The +5 enhancement stacks with any other spell resistance the Monk may have from other classes, if doing so would make it higher than the spell resistance gained from this ability. Otherwise, the Monk uses this ability instead of the other.

Diabolic Ascension (Su)

At 10th level, the Green Steel Monk completes her transformation into a devil, becoming an outsider. From this point on, she is treated like any other outsider rather than as a humanoid. For example, *charm person* does not affect her. Additionally, the Green Steel Monk gains damage reduction 20/+1. This means she ignores the first 20 points of damage from any attack unless the damage is dealt from a weapon with a +1 enhancement bonus (or better), by a spell, or by a form of energy (fire, cold, etc.). As an outsider, the Green Steel Monk is affected by spells that repel enchanted creatures, such as *protection from law*.

Class Table: Green Steel Monk

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per day				
						1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
1 st	+0	+2	+2	+2	Monk abilities, Speak Infernal	0				
2 nd	+1	+3	+3	+3	Magic Touch	1				
3 rd	+2	+3	+3	+3	Devil Skin+1	1	0			
4 th	+3	+4	+4	+4	See in Darkness	2	1			
5 th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Unarmed Sunder	2	1	0		
6 th	+4	+5	+5	+5	Devil Skin +2	2	2	1		
7 th	+5	+5	+5	+5	Cold and Acid Resistance	3	2	1	0	
8 th	+6	+6	+6	+6	Spell Resistance	3	2	2	1	
9 th	+6	+6	+6	+6	Devil Skin +3	3	3	2	1	0
10 th	+7	+7	+7	+7	Diabolic Ascension	3	3	2	2	1

Hell upon death, transformed into a lesser devil, such as a Lemure, to be tortured and abused until it proves itself worthy of a higher station. The Abbey seeks to avoid the ignominy of such a state by achieving outsider status *before* death. The idea is that a Green Steel monk can speed his achievement of greater diabolic status by beginning it before he dies.

In short, Galardoun teaches a gospel of self-interest, in which submission to him and his tyrannical goals is the key to personal power in the afterlife. When combined with the obvious benefits gained by Green Steel monks (such as spellcasting abilities), it's a potent mixture. It's little wonder he's been so successful in attracting some of the most evil and disciplined beings in the world to his cause.

Personalities

Master Galardoun

Male human Ftr1/Mnk5/Wiz5/Gsm9; CR 20; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 1d10 + 14d8 + 5d4+ 60; hp 142; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improve Initiative); Spd 70 ft.; AC 25 (+3 natural armor, +2 Monk bonus, +2 Wisdom, +4 Dexterity, +4 *bracers of armor*); Atk +17/+12/+9 melee (1d8+6/crit 19-20, +2 *barbazu longsword of wounding*) or +13/+10/+7/+4 melee (1d12+3, unarmed strike); SA Stunning attack, evasion, still mind, slow fall, magic touch; SQ Disease immunity, cold and acid resistance 20, spell resistance 25; AL LE; SV Fort +16, Ref +15, Will +16; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 16.



Skills: Alchemy +7, Balance +11, Climb +8, Concentration +8, Craft (Armorsmithing) +7, Craft (Weaponsmithing) +12, Diplomacy +7, Escape Artist +9, Forgery +4, Gather Information +6, Hide +9, Jump +10, Knowledge (Arcana) +8, Knowledge (Religion) +7, Knowledge (The Planes) +10, Listen +7, Move Silently +10, Search +5, Spellcraft +8, Spot +7, Swim +5, Tumble +14; **Feats:** Alertness, Blind-fight, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Leadership, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Unarmed Sunder.

Wizard Spells (4/3/1): 1st—*change self, expeditious retreat, mage armor, spider climb.* 2nd—*darkness, invisibility, mirror image, protection from arrows.* 3rd—*haste.*

Green Steel Monk Spells (4/3/2/1): 1st—*chill touch, inflict light wounds (2), true strike.* 2nd—*hold person, inflict moderate wounds (2), Melf's acid arrow.* 3rd—*inflict serious wounds, lightning bolt.* 4th—*contagion.*

Possessions: +3 *barbazu longsword of wounding*, 3 *potions of heroism*, +4 *bracers of armor*.

+2 *barbazu longsword of wounding:* (Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 10, Lawful Evil). Causes fear in those hit by it as if cast by an 8th level Sorcerer (DC 11). Speaks Infernal, Abyssal, and Common.

Galardoun is the Abbey's founder and unchallenged master. He began his life as a simple mercenary, one of thousands of soldiers who fought for pay rather than devotion. During a forgotten conflict decades ago – even Galardoun does not say which one – he was mortally wounded and would surely have died had it not been for an aged monk named Ducayet, who saved his life. Ducayet was the master of a remote monastery and Galardoun expressed his gratitude by taking its habit and living as its members did. He quickly became one of Ducayet's greatest students, although he retained the mercenary detachment he displayed before his near-death experience.

As Galardoun became initiated into the deeper mysteries of Ducayet's order, he learned of the Outer Planes and the beings that inhabited them, particularly the devils, whose ordered society appealed to the former soldier. Ducayet warned him that outsiders could be powerful tools and allies, but even worse enemies. He counseled against trafficking with them, lest one's soul become corrupted. Galardoun scoffed at the old man and undertook the study of vile sorcery to manipulate the hellspawn. When Ducayet objected, Galardoun slew his master without a thought. He then left the monastery with a few likeminded disciples and founded the Abbey of Green Steel. His quest for mastery over himself – and Hell – has continued ever since.

Imane

Female human Mnk6/Gsm7; CR 13; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 13d8+39; hp 104; Init +3 ; Spd 70 ft.; AC 21 (+2 natural armor, +2 Monk bonus, +2 Wisdom, +3 Dexterity, +3 *ring of protection*); Atk +13/+8

melee (1d8+4/crit 19-20, +2 *erinyes longsword*) or +11/+8/+5 melee (1d12+2, unarmed strike); SA Stunning attack, evasion, still mind, slow fall, magic touch; SQ Disease immunity, cold and acid resistance 20; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +13, Will +12; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +4, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +7, Gather Information +3, Heal +4, Hide +6, Jump +9, Knowledge (Arcana) +6, Knowledge (The Planes) +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Search +3, Spellcraft +4, Spot +6, Swim +3, Tumble +10. **Feats:** Ambidexterity, Alertness, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Unarmed Strike, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Unarmed Sunder.

New Feat:

Unarmed Sunder [General]

You are skilled at destroying others' weapons.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +3 or higher, Improved Unarmed Strike, Str 15+

Benefit: When you strike at an opponent's weapon with an unarmed strike, it does not provoke an attack of opportunity. The normal rules for weapon hardness and hit points apply, just as they do for Sunder.

Spells (4/2/1): 1st—burning hands, inflict light wounds (2), shocking grasp; 2nd—ghoul touch, inflict moderate wounds; 3rd—fireball

Possessions: +2 erinyes long sword, +3 ring of protection, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, boots of striding and springing.

+2 erinyes longsword: (Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 20, Lawful Evil). Charms those hit by it as if cast by a 12th level Sorcerer (DC 16). Speaks Infernal and Common.

Some call Imane “Galardoun’s daughter,” but “Galardoun’s experiment” would probably be a more apt description of this evil woman. While raiding a city renowned for its learning, Galardoun came upon a young girl, her parents slain by his own Green Steel monks. Rather than dispatch her, he took her with him to the Abbey, believing he could make her the perfect embodiment of his dark ideals. Galardoun named her Imane, an Infernal word meaning “Weapon,” which is exactly what she has become – a living weapon honed by more than two decades of intensive training under the direction of the Abbey’s master.

Imane serves as Galardoun’s strong right hand, as well as his closest confidante. He has trained her in all the arts that distinguish the Abbey from other monasteries, including the secret of forging devil weapons. Imane frequently leaves the Abbey on missions of import to her master, whom she reveres as a father. She is Galardoun’s greatest student, which is a source of both pride and anxiety for the older man. He remembers all too well that he was once Ducayet’s greatest student. Whether Imane realizes this fact is yet to be seen.

The Shivano

Shivano, Male Human Ftr2/Mnk2: CR4, Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d8+2d10; hp 20; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 Wis); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, siangham) or +3 melee (1d6+1, unarmed); SA Stunning attack, evasion, flurry of blows; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 11.

Skills: Balance +7, Climb +7, Craft (weaponsmithing) +5, Escape Artist +5, Heal +3, Hide +7, Intimidate +1, Jump +8, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Move Silently +10, Swim +4, Tumble +7, Use Rope +4. *Feats:* Blind Fight, Cleave, Deflect Arrows, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Improve Unarmed Strike, Power Attack.

Possessions: Sinagham, Kama, 2 potions of cure light wounds

The Shivano represents the Abbey of Green Steel’s first line of defense. Trained in a combination of martial arts and traditional fighting, he challenges the Abbey’s enemies while improving his mind and body toward Master Galardoun’s idea of perfection.

The Motherhouse

The Motherhouse is the first Abbey of Green Steel established by Galardoun after he founded his evil monastic order. Located high on a mountain plateau, it is well-defended against outside attack and remote enough to discourage all but the most dedicated initiates from reaching its walls. This is in keeping with Galardoun’s philosophy: only the strong-willed and the powerful are worthy of the insights the Abbey offers.

Galardoun’s Chamber

This Spartan room is home to the Master of the Abbey, holding his few personal possessions and artifacts. The chamber connects to a tower overlooking the mountain valley below where Galardoun frequently meditates. There’s also a secret staircase that allows the Master to move freely from the Abbey without having to use the main gates—useful in case he needs to escape.

Imane’s Chamber

Even more Spartan are Imane’s living quarters at the opposite end of the Abbey from her Master. Unlike Galardoun, she has no escape route, which is exactly as she wishes it. Imane would rather die than flee the Abbey, especially if doing so would preserve Galardoun’s life.

Monk’s Cells

These small rooms are home to the Abbey initiates, both recent and experienced.

Summoning Chamber

Here Galardoun and the Abbey’s wizards summon outsiders to bind into weapons. The chamber is protected with magical wards and glyphs, lest the angry outsiders escape to wreak havoc elsewhere.

Smithy/Alchemy Lab

An adjunct to the Summoning Chamber, this room is where the weapons are forged and enchanted to prepare for their becoming receptacles of outsider power. The monks also brew potions and poisons here when the need arises.

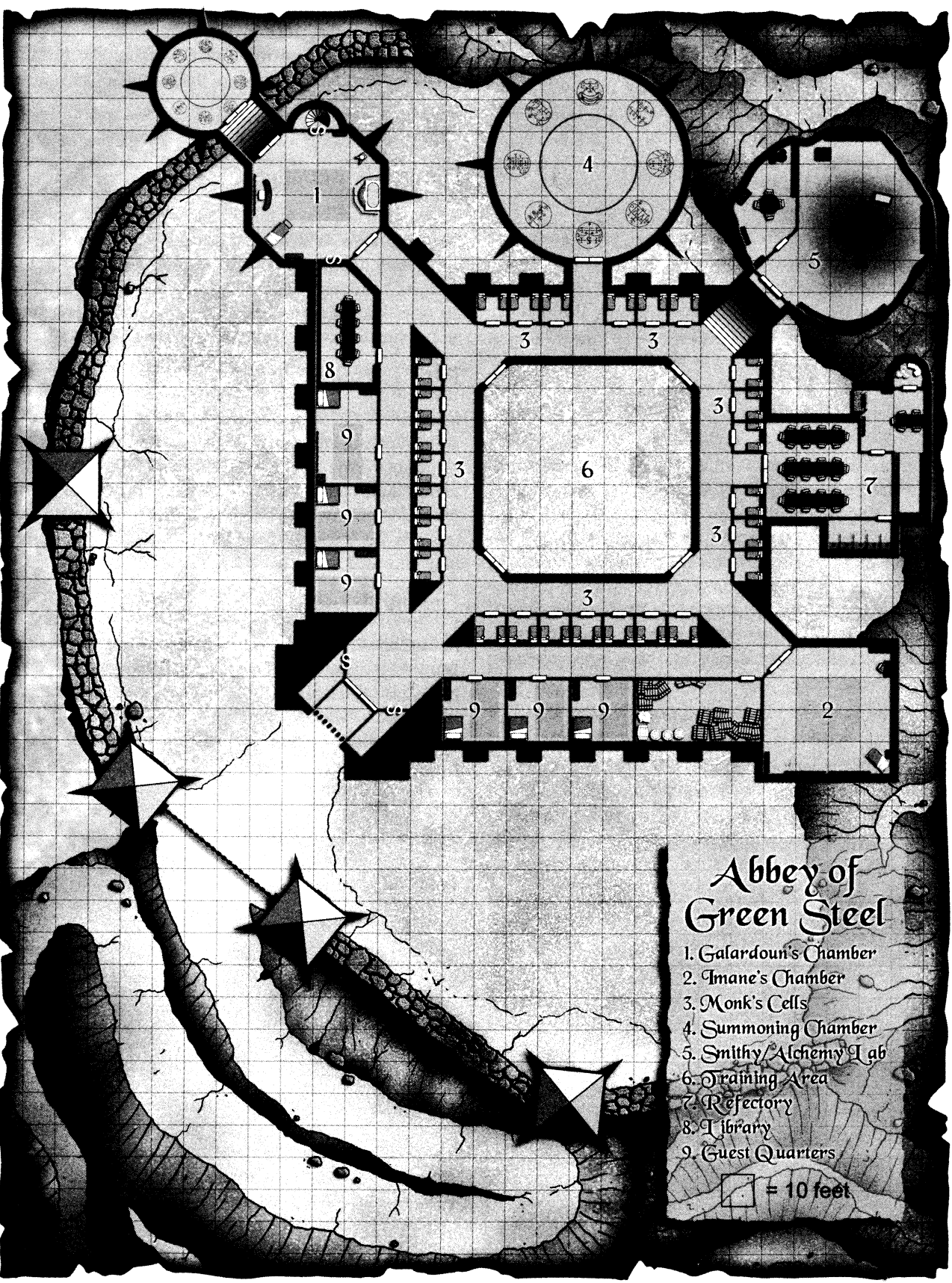
Training Area

This large central area is where the monks engage in tests of physical prowess under the watchful eye of Imane and other high-level monks of the Abbey.

Library

This small chamber contains a limited collection of tomes and librums for study by the monks. The books focus mostly on esoteric philosophy and diabolical lore. More advanced students who transcend these volumes are taught directly by the Master himself.

The Abbey of Green Steel



Abbey of Green Steel

- 1. Galardoun's Chamber
- 2. Amane's Chamber
- 3. Monk's Cells
- 4. Summoning Chamber
- 5. Smithy/Alchemy Lab
- 6. Training Area
- 7. Refectory
- 8. Library
- 9. Guest Quarters

□ = 10 feet

Refectory

This room houses the monks' communal eating area.

Guest Quarters

Visitors occasionally travel to the Abbey, mostly dignitaries of evil nations and organizations. When they do so, they stay in one of these rooms.

Campaigning

The Abbey of Green Steel is a surprisingly multifaceted group. Although clearly antagonistic to the cause of good, they are nevertheless a far cry from being one-note enemies lacking in depth or personality. Consequently, there are many ways a GM can integrate them into an ongoing campaign, only the most obvious of which is as an overt threat to the player characters.

At base, the Abbey's philosophy is a fundamentally selfish one, predicated on the desire to leapfrog into a more powerful position in the afterlife. Thus, Green Steel monks are motivated by supreme self-interest. Sometimes, that means cooperating with non-evil characters and groups in missions of mutual significance. If, for example, there's evidence that a powerful wizard has obtained a book of diabolic lore, the Abbey might offer its services in finding that wizard and destroying the book – after they've had a chance to peruse its pages. While many nations and groups might be unwilling to treat with the Abbey, some might not have such qualms.

In a similar vein, the Abbey supports itself and its mission through the creation, sale, and distribution of devil weapons. Its mastery of this peculiar process is second to none, as is the power of its weapons. That creates a demand for the Abbey's products that keep its coffers overflowing. At the same time, it also creates a fierce rivalry between the Green Steel monks and other magic item producers – not to mention the devils they use as raw materials for the weapons!

The Abbey can be as shadowy an organization as the GM needs it to be. Since there's only one Abbey, secluded high in the mountains, the Green Steel monks can easily be hidden opponents, striking for their mysterious base and leaving behind clues as to their origins and activities. They could just as easily be an important faction within a nation, a martial arts school with a unique fighting style. Indeed, the Abbey might well fit into an established tradition of fighting academies that dabble in politics and diplomacy for their own purposes.

Finally, the Abbey presents the GM with another way to frame the relationship between inhabitants of the Material and Outer Planes. Too often, outsiders are distant beings of vast power that make mere mortals appear insignificant and impotent. The Abbey turns that appearance on its head by providing an example of mortals who use outsiders as

means to *its end* rather than the other way around. That can be either empowering or frightening, depending on the spin a GM wishes to give the group. Does it make humanity great that it uses outsiders as pawns, or does it show its ultimate depravity? That either could be the case shows the multifaceted nature of the Abbey of Green Steel.

Sample Scenarios

Ducayet's Revenge

Galardoun's betrayal of his old master is a sin for which he has yet to atone. When he left Ducayet's monastery, he did not destroy it. Some of its devotees may yet nurse a grudge against Galardoun and the Abbey of Green Steel, creating the possibility of a war between the rival schools, one made all the more urgent by their thirst for vengeance.

Fifth Column

A rebellion against a nearby kingdom is gaining momentum, thanks in part to the devil weapons that the Abbey has provided the rebels. Of course, the Green Steel monks didn't aid the insurgents because of sympathy for their cause. They expect to have a role to play after the realm is toppled – one commensurate with the resources they allocated to its success.

Deal with the Devil

An ambitious Duke of Hell has decided to lay claim to lands on the Material Plane and local forces are incapable of defeating him. However, the abilities of the Abbey are well known, including their facility with devils. Could a bargain be struck to gain the Abbey's help in repelling the devils. What would the Green Steel monks ask in return?

As an alternative...

Just Misunderstood

Perhaps the Abbey isn't *actively* evil. Perhaps they don't seek to sup with devils to gain personal power. Perhaps instead their goal is to contain the forces of Hell – within themselves and within devil weapons – to weaken them before a final apocalyptic battle between good and evil. This alternative allows the Abbey to have good intentions, even if the consequences of their actions have dire results.

Outsiders Be Gone!

The Abbey could have an even broader interest in crafting outsider weapons. In this alternative, the Green Steel monks view all outsiders – good and evil – as dangerous interlopers on the Material Plane. They seek to limit their power (and gain weapons to fight them) by binding outsiders into weapons. These activities attract unwelcome attention from many extraplanar beings, which could easily spill over into the unsuspecting world around the Abbey.

The Dragon Gang

Crime pays.

In every city, in every land, there are always things the rulers don't want the population to have. Or perhaps they don't mind, as long as they can get a suitable cut of the action. Sometimes the restrictions are for noble purposes, sometimes not. Either way, whenever something is forbidden or restricted, there are those who will be willing to supply it . . . for the appropriate price.

The Dragon Gang is happy to provide the services you need in a rough city. For a fee, they can insure that no thief will harass you or steal your property; and if one should, rest assured that your property will be recovered or replaced and the unfortunate thief will never bother anyone again. Need an emergency loan? They can help. The local mages won't tell you the right incantations to level several city blocks? The Dragon Gang can find you a spellbook that just happened to fall off a cart. Looking to make an enemy disappear? Just say the word. Looking to go into similar business for yourself? Promise them a 50% cut, do them a few favors from time to time, and they might let you do it and live.

Over the centuries since the Dragon Gang was formed, it has steadily tightened its grip on the city's underworld. Occasionally, the city's rulers have tried to eradicate the Gang, but every time they've ended up backing down or disappearing. For the most part, the rulers have ended up adopting a "live and let live" attitude. When a leader gets too uppity and can't be bribed or eliminated, the Gang will arrange a meeting with their godfather. That's usually enough. The Dragon Gang doesn't go by that name because they're tough, you see. They call themselves that because their leader is a dragon. And as far as they are concerned, crime pays very well.

Inside the Gang

The Dragon Gang came into existence about five hundred years ago, when Skrazargul the Dragon realized that there was a better way of gathering treasure than the usual routine of knocking over castles, kidnapping princesses, and so forth. The most effective way, he realized, was to get other people to collect the treasure for him. As an added bonus, he might be able to remove the annoyance of dealing with heavily-armed adventuring parties tromping through his home and trying to kill him (although the adventurers were an excellent source of treasure in their own right).

Skrazargul gathered up his half-dragon children and offered them something they never had had much of: a family. He would lead them, support them, and teach them how to use their powers. In return, they would bring

treasure and get wealthy in their own right and not incidentally get some measure of revenge on the society that had rejected them. They moved into the city and easily eliminated the old crime lords and took control.

Working for the Dragon Gang

The Dragon is the undisputed ruler of the Gang, the *capo di tutti capi*. Outsiders are deliberately given the impression that the title of Dragon is passed down from leader to leader. The truth is that Skrazargul is always the Dragon. His rule is absolute, in part because he can simply eat anybody who threatens him. However, these days Skrazargul takes only a limited interest in actually running the Gang; his interest shifts more towards arcane matters with advancing age. This is likely to continue, and at some point Skrazargul may leave the Gang behind for other pursuits.

Beneath the Dragon are the Drakes. The Drakes (there are normally three) are usually half-dragons, although there is the occasional drakeling (see sidebar, page 22) in their rank. They are responsible for running most of the day-to-day operations of the Gang. The Drakes are often the real leaders of the Gang, as Skrazargul may sleep for years at a time (or lose interest in the Gang for a while). During these periods, the Gang may continue to function smoothly if the Drakes form a triumvirate, or it may splinter into factions if they begin to oppose one another. If the gang splinters, the situation will usually get very ugly. Skrazargul doesn't appreciate power struggles in his family, so it's very important to make sure that the conflict is over before he wakes.

The Hands of the Dragon, the next rung down, are in charge of the Gang's many rackets. Each Hand is

New Feat: Draconic Bloodline

You are distantly descended from a dragon. Although you may show no outward signs of your draconic heritage, sorcery comes more easily to you than to others.

Benefit: You may choose one energy descriptor (fire, acid, electricity, or cold). You receive a +1 on all saves against attacks with this descriptor. In addition, Sorcerer is always a favored class for you, in addition to the class granted by your race.

Special: You may only take this feat as a 1st level character.



responsible for ensuring that their area of responsibility is profitable and does not overly attract the attention of the city rulers.

Below the Hands are the Claws, who are the lowest rank in the Dragon Gang proper. To become a Claw, a person must have at least some dragon blood running through his veins (in game terms, the character must have the Draconic Bloodline feat).

Simply having dragon blood doesn't automatically make you a Claw, though. To reach that status, you have to have proven yourself to the Gang. Nobody is considered for Claw status unless they are vouched for by at least two members of Claw rank or higher. In most cases the prospective candidate must also have committed a serious crime, most likely murder, at the behest of the Gang. The crime must be serious enough that no servant of justice could justify committing it merely to penetrate the Gang.

Below the Claws, at the very bottom, are people connected to the Gang. Most people involved with the Gang's activities fall into this category. Becoming affiliated with the Gang is a simple matter. All you have to do is make contact with a Claw, who will either hire you directly (for a few silver a day) or let you operate as a semi-independent for a cut off the top (like half). Criminals who are affiliated with the Gang are allowed to operate in the city without having their legs broken. If they prove themselves reliable, they may eventually be allowed to join in more profitable and risky operations.

At higher levels, being a member of the Gang can be very profitable. Each level typically skims off half of the profit generated by the level below. In practical terms, that means that for every 16 gold pieces earned by the Gang, Skrazargul gets one. Beyond that, the Gang will protect you to the best of its ability against harassment by the city guard, provide access to magical training for members who choose to develop their sorcerous abilities, and generally take care of any problems you may have. People who bother you will be encouraged strenuously to stop whatever activity they are pursuing that you might find offensive.

Rackets

The Gang imports and distributes illegal drugs into the city and manufactures magical drugs. The Gang itself only handles the major shipments of the drug, often cutting it with inert non-magical (and usually but not always non-poisonous) ingredients before selling the shipment to outsiders who will sell it on the streets. The end result is usually much less powerful than the original, uncut drug.

While gambling is often legal, rulers usually expect to be paid taxes. The Gang can avoid that unpleasant necessity, as well as making sure that short-term, high-interest loans are readily available. Beyond the usual mainstay games like king's palace, sword-shield-hammer, and za'this, though, the Gang also arranges gladiatorial battles. At the lower end, this may involve two fighters punching each other out in an alley or the back room of a

Drugs

Drugs are similar to poisons, but they can have desirable (although not necessarily beneficial) side effects and can cause addiction. Drugs typically have an initial effect (which occurs on ingestion), a duration (in rounds, minutes, or sometimes in hours) and a secondary effect after the drug expires. In addition, repeated use of most drugs carries a risk of addiction.

Drug Characteristics

The table on the next page lists the statistics for the typical drugs presented in this section. Note that any of these drugs can easily be renamed and the characteristics tweaked to fit the exact needs of a specific campaign.

The **type** of the drug indicates how the drug is applied (usually ingested, although it may be inhaled, applied through contact with the skin, or in rare cases injected into the bloodstream) and the difficulty of the Fortitude save necessary to avoid the **initial effects** of the drug. If this save is made, the character does not have to later save to avoid the secondary effects of the drug.

The **duration** indicates how long the initial effects of the drug last. Once the duration expires, the character must roll a second Fortitude save to avoid the secondary effects of the drug. The **secondary effect** (generally temporary ability score damage and/or subdual damage) must be healed normally.

In addition, drugs have an **addiction save** DC. Characters must make this save the day after a drug's use to avoid addiction, unless noted otherwise. An addicted character must take the drug on a daily basis or begin to suffer the effects of withdrawal. Characters going through withdrawal suffer the secondary damage effects of the drug every day until they make the addiction save or begin to take the drug again.

The **price** of a drug is the typical cost for one dose of the substance. Needless to say, this price is in no way fixed and can vary wildly.

Drug Use and Abuse

Drugs may be cut with other substances so that they operate at less than full strength, if marketed by less-than-honest sellers (which is just about all of them). The gamemaster may represent this by lowering the difficulty of the saves to avoid the primary and secondary effects as well as addiction. A cut drug is *not* typically cheaper.

Neutralize poison works normally against drugs. *Greater restoration*, *restoration*, *miracle*, *lesser miracle*, *limited wish*, and *wish* can be used to cure an addiction.

Long-term, repeated use of drugs tends to have nasty side effects. This is left up to the GM to resolve if necessary. In most cases, a long-term addict should suffer permanent ability score loss equivalent to the Secondary Damage inflicted by the drug.

Typical Drugs

Afiki

This drug is popular among orcs and other humanoids because it causes a barbarian-like rage. Afiki is a reddish powdery substance that can be smoked or snorted. You receive a +1d4 increase to Strength and Constitution and a +2 morale bonus on all Will saves. Once the drug wears off, however, you suffer a -2d4 penalty to Strength and Dexterity — it's common to see Afiki users collapse in the middle of a battle.

Icefire

Icefire is a thin watery fluid with a luster like mother-of-pearl that is applied to the hands and face of the user. Also known as "cold essence," it magically chills the blood, giving you immunity to all normal cold effects and 5 points of resistance to damaging cold effects. However, the magical freezing of the blood makes it dangerous

continued on page 18

continued from page 17

to touch others, and you inflict 1d4 points of cold damage on any creature you touch. Icefire users feel like they are suffering from frostbite as the drug wears off and their body seems to be covered with fiery pinpricks.

Dreamgrass

Dreamgrass is a long, thin leaf that can be smoked or eaten. It produces a feeling of comfort and well-being and tends to produce mild hallucinations. It is not strongly addictive; a save should be required for each week of regular use.

Elven Wine

According to the elves, Elven wine is the most powerful alcoholic drink known, with powers other, lesser forms of alcoholic beverages could never reproduce. As most other races know, elves are serious lightweights when it comes to serious drinking. The DC of all saving throws for the effects of Elven wine are increased by 5 for elves. Elven wine is not sufficiently addictive to require an addiction save for each use. A save should be required every month a character drinks it on a near-daily basis. It is usually legal.

Fearbane

Fearbane is a black, oily liquid that tastes hot and spicy when drunk, leaving a bitter aftertaste. It makes the user rash and headstrong, causing them to take insane risks and making them immune to all *fear* effects. After it wears off the user is typically unable to think clearly and suffers from exhaustion.

Narawdwi

Narawdwi is a purple leaf with oily-colored streaks running through it. When smoked, it allows the user to create a minor illusion (figment) of an object, person or force. Observers of the illusion can make a Will save at DC 14 to disbelieve in the illusion if they interact with it. The illusion cannot be more than 10 feet in any dimension, it cannot stray further than 25 feet from the user, and it cannot make any noise.

Zombie Dust

This bitter yellow powder can be eaten or smoked. On ingestion, it places you into a dreamy, suggestible haze. You must make a Will save at a -10 penalty to avoid taking any action suggested to you that will not place you in immediate danger. (If the suggestion is dangerous, the Will save is at a -5.) You tend to be slow and sluggish while under the influence of zombie dust. It is extremely addictive and is sometimes used by slavers to keep slaves from causing trouble.

Drug Table

Drug	Type	Initial Effect	Duration	Secondary Effect	Addiction Save	Price
Afiki	Ingested DC 18	Rage	1 min	-2d4 Str, -2d4 Dex	DC 15	100 gp
Dreamgrass	Ingested DC 12	Hallucination	5 min	1d4 subdual	DC 12	2 gp
Elven Wine	Ingested DC 5	-1d2 Wis	15 min	1d3 subdual damage	DC 5	1 gp
Fearbane	Ingested DC 16	-1d4 Wis, immune to fear	30 min	-1d4 Int, -1d4 Con	DC 14	50 gp
Icefire	Contact DC 16	Immune to cold, chill touch	4 hours	-1d4 Con, 2d6 subdual	DC 15	200 gp
Narawdwi	Inhaled DC 15	Create illusions	3 min	-1d2 Int, -1d2 Wis	DC 16	75 gp
Zombie Dust	Ingested DC 18	-1d4 Dex, -10 to Will saves	8 hours	-1d4 Wis, 1d6 subdual	DC 20	150 gp

Magic and the Law

Most countries place some form of restrictions on the magic that can be taught to wizards. After all, 40-foot wide balls of fire really do have very few socially responsible uses. Many spells are really only usable in battle. Many others probably shouldn't be used at all. Even some of the weakest spells in a wizard's arsenal are very easily abused. Any reasonable government will want some guarantees that spell use will be restricted to prevent possible abuses. In addition, crimes committed using magic are likely to be punished more harshly.

The gamemaster will have to determine exactly what restrictions are appropriate on magic use for each nation in his or her campaign world. However, some general guidelines can be given. While almost all spells can be used for ethically questionable purposes, (as your typical adventuring party can prove, given a chance) some spells really can only be used for evil.

Spells not discussed below have at least some potential legitimate uses (such as for self-defense) that they are unlikely to be specifically illegal. Other spells may be illegal under specific circumstances (for example, some theocracies may make it a crime to conceal your alignment).

Charm spells

Charm spells, and other spells that compel people to act in a fashion desired by the spellcaster (such as *command* and *demand*) are likely to be illegal to use. The potential for abuse from even a low-level spell like *charm person* is immense. Certainly, it is hard to force someone to do things that they would not ordinarily do, but how many people would not lend close friends money if they needed it? As a rule, using charms to compel actions will be treated as if the actions were taken under threat of physical force. *Geas* spells are different, as they can be used to enforce oaths and control lawbreakers. However, they should only be used on willing subjects or when ordered by legal authority. More powerful spells of this type, such as *dominate person*, are likely to be illegal to use.

Divination spells

Divination spells, though they seem harmless, have the potential to cause a great deal of trouble. They have the potential to strip people of any sense of privacy, as wizards can see literally anything they want to. Fortunately, most of the spells that allow this are too difficult for apprentices. While most places have laws against inappropriate use of divination magic, it's usually difficult to prove anything. The best solution is to conduct private business in protected places or to make sure that nobody has any reason to spy.

Necromantic spells

Necromantic spells are very likely to be banned outright or highly restricted if they allow the creation of undead, grant the caster powers using negative energy, or spread disease. In good or neutral countries, knowledge of these spells may be a crime.

Military Spells

Military spells are those spells which unlikely to be used in anything other than in fights against large numbers of people. Damage-inflicting spells like *acid fog*, *cloudkill*, and *fireball* fall into this category, as well as other spells with a large area of effect (such as *hallucinatory terrain*). Because of the military value of these spells, they are actually likely to be relatively freely available. In times of war, it's actually useful to have many wizards with access to these spells. The drawback is that governments are likely to keep close track of anyone who does know spells like this so that they can draft them as needed.

Summoning/Gate Spells

Summoning/gate spells grant powerful outsiders access to the Prime. These spells are likely to be legal (although nations with strong alignment preferences may ban the summoning of oppositely-aligned outsiders). However, all countries will hold the summoner responsible for any actions taken by the summoned creature.

Unholy spells

Unholy spells (such as *desecrate* and *unhallow*) are likely to be legal or illegal depending on whether evil churches are legal or illegal.

New Spell: Locate Owner

Divination

Level: Sor/Wiz 2, Clr 2, Pal 2

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Long (400 ft + 40 ft/level)

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

As *locate creature*, except that you do not have to know which creature you are looking for. It is sufficient to have an item formerly possessed by the creature. The creature must have carried the item for 10 days minus their Charisma modifier. (Keep in mind that subtracting a negative number leads to an increase, so a creature with a negative modifier must possess an item for more than 10 days). Creatures with a strong personality tend to imprint that personality on their possessions quickly.

Focus: An item belonging to the target.

tavern. The higher end often involves magical duels or monster-baiting. Monster fights are usually arranged with a magical circle around the fighting area. A sorcerer then summons the monster into the circle. The fighter wins if the spell expires and the monster returns to its home plane or if he kills the creature. Because the summoner controls the creature, these battles rarely result in the death of the fighter.

Not all of the criminal activity in the city is controlled by the Gang. The Gang doesn't care about a limited amount of amateur theft as long as it stays within certain bounds. Frankly, it's not worth their time and effort to hunt down every petty thief that might pick up a few coppers here or there. That's what the city guard is for. The Gang gets their cut by controlling the fences. Typically, a fence will purchase a stolen item for about 10% of its real value. The fence will then resell it for around 50-75% of its nominal value if it's a relatively standard item, or for whatever the market will bear if it's unique. Half of the fence's profit goes to the Gang.

Freelancers do, however, have to be careful whom they steal from. A lot of the smaller merchants in the city are paying protection money to the Gang. If they get robbed, they go to the Gang, not the city guard. The Gang makes a policy of repaying the loss in full and makes a further policy of guaranteeing that no similar loss will occur in future. On first offense, the malefactor is generally allowed to live, but will be properly "educated" and will be expected to repay the Gang's loss at ruinous rates of

interest (returning the item will reduce the payment but not eliminate it). A repeat offender gets to feed the fishes.

The Dragon Gang is also willing to provide access to magic and sorcerers who will provide questionable magic services. These services typically involve violating some or all of the precepts mentioned under the Magic and the Law sidebar. Prices for these services are generally at least twice the normal rates for spell casting.

The gang also maintains a few assassins. The formal group is under the control of Thjostolf. In addition to the usual killing for profit, the group may be ordered to eliminate threats to the Gang, such as enemies within the city government, uppity adventurers, or rival crime groups. Each of the Drakes usually maintains at least some contact with some assassins so that they can deal with potential threats inside the gang as well.

The Gang has a powerful grip on the city government. Several major figures in the government are permanently on the Gang payroll. Many guardsmen are also being bribed by the Gang, and even the ones who aren't are poorly motivated to investigate the Gang—both because of the negative consequences of annoying the Dragon and because the Gang keeps random crime from getting out of hand.

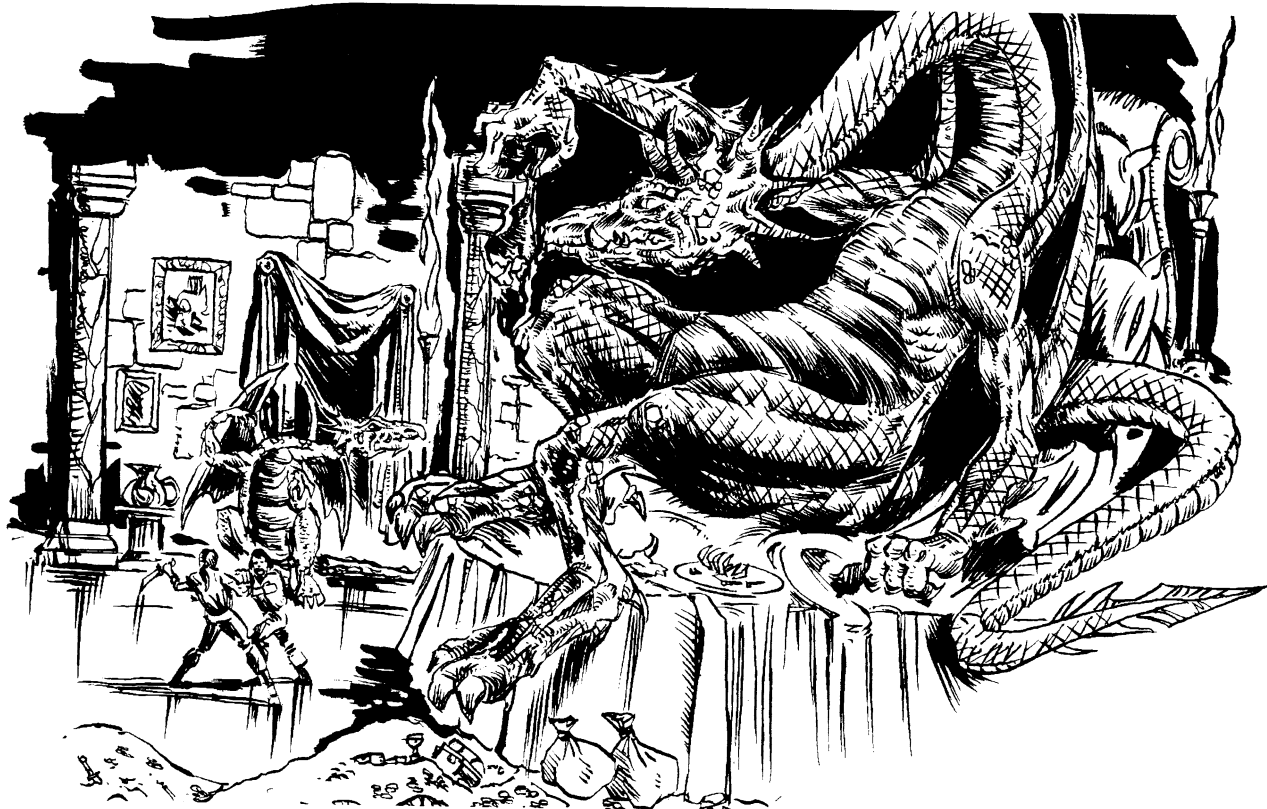
Personalities

Skrazargul the Dragon

Ancient green dragon: CR 20; Gargantuan Dragon (Air); HD 32d12+224; hp 432; Init +3 (-1 Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft, fly 200 ft (clumsy), swim 40 ft; AC 36 (-1 Dex, -4 size, +31 natural); Atks +38 melee (4d6+10, bite), +33 melee (2d8+5 [x2], claws), +33 melee (2d6+5 [x2], wings), +33 melee (2d8+15, tail slap); SA Breath weapon (20d6), frightful presence, spell-like abilities, spells (as 13th lvl sorcerer); SQ Blindsight, DR 15/+2, immunities, keen senses, water breathing; Face/Reach 20 ft by 40 ft / 15 ft; SR 27; AL LE; SV Fort +25, Ref +17, Will +22; Str 31, Dex 8, Con 24, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 18.

Skills: Appraise +32, Diplomacy +32, Gather Information +32, Innuendo +32, Knowledge (local) +32, Listen +38, Search +35, Sense Motive +32, Spellcraft +35, Spot +38.
Feats: Hover, Flyby Attack, Power Attack, Cleave, Snatch, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Alertness, Wingover.

Spells Known (6/7/7/7/7/6/4): 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, detect poison, daze, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st—*charm person, comprehend languages, identify, message, true strike*; 2nd—*detect thoughts, locate object, misdirection, obscure object, whispering wind*; 3rd—*dispel magic, haste, lightning bolt, nondetection*; 4th—*improved*



invisibility, lesser geas, polymorph self, scrying; 5th—dominate person, leomund's secret chest, teleport; 6th—greater dispelling, true seeing.

Skrazargul has been the undisputed leader of the Dragon Gang for the last 467 years. In that time he has fathered 34 children, almost all of whom have risen to take up prominent positions in the Gang. However, he has no full-dragon children, something that is coming to weigh ever more heavily on his mind. His original intention in founding the Gang was to gather enough treasure to attract a mate, and the realization that money itself may not be sufficient is an unpleasant one.

Skrazargul lives in a large house in the wealthiest portion of the city. A large gymnasium allows Skrazargul room to transform and live comfortably in his draconic form. The rest of the house is used to meet visitors and house a small number of servants. The building includes an escape route to the sewers. There is also a connection to an underground river. In his draconic form, Skrazargul can swim downriver to the sea if need be (and does on occasion, when he feels the need to wander around as a dragon).

When not brooding on his single status, Skrazargul's interests now drift towards the arcane and the occult. He has begun to lose interest in running the Gang, instead letting the Drakes do most of the work. He often orders the Gang to get copies of arcane works for him. Burglaries of expensive works are on the increase as a result within the city, and the tolerance the Gang used to enjoy is fading.

Skrazargul may be losing interest in the Gang, but that doesn't mean that he's ready to pass control of it over to anybody else. Within a few years, it is likely that one of the Drakes may try to wrest control of the Gang from the Dragon, and the safest way to do that will be to let adventurers do the work.

When adventurers confront Skrazargul, the gamemaster should keep in mind that the dragon has made a career of avoiding direct conflicts. With a normal dragon, the adventurers should burst into its lair to confront the beast, hissing and spitting, while a near-naked princess (or prince) is tied to a stake. Skrazargul, though, would transform the princess into his likeness (and himself into hers), magically compel her to fight the adventurers, and let the adventurers rescue him. Then he would poison the drinks at the victory party.

Thjostolf the Dagger

Male Drakeling Rog 4/Sor 3/Asn 2: CR 10; HD 6d6+3d4; 37 HP; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +4 Studded Leather); Atk +9 Melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, rapier) or +9 Ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +3d6, death attack, spell-like ability (*cause fear* 1/day); SQ Uncanny dodge, evasion, poison use, poison resistance, acid resistance 10; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +12, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 18, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 16.

Skills: Balance +11, Bluff +6, Climb +7, Concentration +4, Disable Device +9, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +7, Gather Information +7, Hide +11, Listen +7, Move

Drakelings

Drakelings are the descendants of dragons. While many creatures carry a small amount of dragon blood, the drakeling has a dragon somewhere in his or her recent ancestry (rarely more than three or four generations back). Drakelings still have some mark of their draconic ancestry readily visible, such as scales on their shoulders, back and hands, small non-functional wings, or sharp teeth and claw-like nails. They also have some of the personality traits of dragons, and are usually arrogant and a little greedy. While drakelings can be of any alignment, even the best of them are capricious enough that others are reluctant to trust them.

Racial Abilities

Drakelings have the following traits:

- +2 Strength, -2 Wisdom, +2 Charisma. Drakelings are strong and have forceful personalities, but their heritage makes them impulsive and prone to find others beneath their notice.
- Medium-size.
- Drakeling base speed is 30 feet.
- *Cause Fear (Sp)*: Drakelings can use *cause fear* once per day as cast by a sorcerer of their character level.
- Select one energy descriptor (acid, cold, fire or electricity). The drakeling has resistance 10 against attacks with that descriptor. In addition, the drakeling may modify any spell with an energy descriptor to use that energy instead. This decision must be made when the spell is memorized. The range, area of effect, and all other qualities (including secondary effects, and damage not caused by energy such as impact damage) of the spell remain the same—only the energy type changes.
- Darkvision up to 60 feet.
- Automatic Languages: Common, Draconic. Bonus Languages: Any (except secret languages such as Druidic).
- Favored Class: Sorcerer.
- Level Adjustment: +1. Drakelings should be treated as being one level higher than their class totals for determining their effective character level.

Silently +12, Open Lock +8, Search +5, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +3, Spot +5, Tumble +9. *Feats*: Alertness, Brew Potion, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (Rapier).

Sorcerer Spells (6/6): 0—*detect magic, mage hand, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st—*detect secret doors, sleep, true strike*.

Assassin Spells (1): 1st—*change self, spider climb*.

Possessions: *dagger of venom, potion of nondetection, +1 studded leather of silent moves, vest of escape*.

Thjostolf the Dagger is the Hand of Assassins and a great-grandson of Skrazargul. He grew up within the Gang and it was always expected that he would find a place within it. He did, and an important one at that, but he is far from satisfied. He has an intense sense of entitlement. He deserves to be the best, he deserves

the rich rewards that have been denied him, and he knows it. By extension, if he doesn't have those things, it can only be because others are deliberately denying him his just reward. Other people are only there to be stepped on. He really can't believe that anybody else wouldn't do the same.

As an assassin, Thjostolf is a cool professional. Killing has no emotional impact on him. It can't be said that he enjoys it. He most often kills from a distance, shooting a poisoned crossbow bolt at his target and abandoning the crossbow at the scene. Any weapon used in an assassination is freshly purchased and dumped after the assassination to make sure that it cannot be traced back to him.

Thjostolf's goal is to gain power. He doesn't really care whether it's in the Gang or not. He's begun cultivating the adherents of the God of Murder,

reasoning that religious fanatics can probably be usefully directed against his enemies without implicating him. The one thing stopping him from a campaign of murder against the leaders of the Gang is Skrazargul. He has no idea how to assassinate a great wyrm—but he's thinking about it very hard.

Vartan Nine-fingers

Male Human Rog4/Sor2: CR6, Medium-size humanoid (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 4d6+2d4+12; HP 31; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 ring of protection); Atk +8 (1d6+4/crit 19–20, sword of subtlety); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Alchemy +7, Appraise +10, Bluff +8, Concentration +2, Diplomacy +6, Forgery +8, Gather Information +6, Hide +4, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +9, Move Silently +8, Pick Pocket +8, Search +6, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +4, Spot +9, Use Magic Device +4. **Feats:** Alertness, Dodge, Leadership, Draconic Bloodline (+2 on saves vs. acid).

Possessions: sword of subtlety, +2 ring of protection..

Sorcerer Spells (6/4): 0—detect magic, detect poison, mage hand, open/close, read magic; 1st—magic missile, unseen servant.

Vartan Nine-fingers is a Claw controlling the petty extortion and street crime in foreigners' district of the campaign city (or in other words, whatever part of the city that adventurers are most likely to hang out in). He makes a useful foil for low-level parties.

He is a big, beefy man, covered in dragon tattoos. He is generous with his subordinates but will punish his enemies ruthlessly, figuring that any sign of weakness will make him appear vulnerable. His greatest weakness is an overconfident streak—he will tend to try to bring everything in his area under his personal control, and is unlikely to tolerate a group of toughs wandering about in his area of the city unless he has an arrangement with them.

Second Story Man

Male Human Rog1/Sor1: CR2, Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d6+1d4+2; HP 11; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 armor); Atk -1 melee (1d6-1/crit 19–20, short sword) or +2 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +1d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Balance +6, Climb +3, Concentration +2, Disable Device +5, Hide +4, Jump +3, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Search +5, Spellcraft +3, Spot +6, Tumble +2. **Feats:** Alertness, Draconic Bloodline (+2 on saves vs. acid), Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll.



Possessions: leather armor of silent moves; scroll of detect secret doors, feather fall, jump, spider climb, invisibility; 4 sleep bolts.

Sorcerer Spells (5/4): 0—detect poison, mage hand, open/close, read magic; 1st—animate rope, sleep.

The Second Story Man is a typical burglar working for the Dragon Gang and may sometimes act as an assassin against low-risk targets. He prefers to avoid combat whenever possible.

Campaigning

Characters who get involved with the underworld will be forced to deal with the Dragon Gang. This is likely to prove very frustrating for them, which is always good for adventure. Characters without draconic ancestry (meaning just about all of them unless they have at least taken the Draconic Bloodline feat) may join the Gang, but they will not ever be allowed to take on any positions of importance. Ever. No matter how powerful they get, they will always be taking orders. Oh, and they'll be expected to hand over half of their earnings in perpetuity to the Gang.

They can quit, of course. The Gang does allow people to retire up to a point. However, you will always be "on call." Someday, down the road, you'll have a spell they need, or be able to take out an enemy for them, and when that day comes the Gang won't be hesitant to come knocking on your door. They'll pay you back, of course. But you better not refuse the Dragon. So, you can almost

guarantee PCs who work with the Dragon Gang will eventually come into conflict with them, simply because sooner or later they'll get tired of following orders.

The Gang may also hire adventurers with a flexible moral code on contracts. The Gang will probably offer about 50% of what they would charge for the same work, but might go as high as 75%. Typical contract work might include robbery (of magic items, spellbooks, or artifacts), assassinations, and so forth. Adventurers may also partake of some of the Gang's services, such as purchasing illegal spells or magic items.

Characters who oppose the Gang can also end up doing so in a variety of ways. They might have to recover items stolen by the gang or prevent an assassination, have a loved one fall victim to drug use, or be hired to rescue a kidnap victim. The Gang is unlikely to bother holding grudges against adventurers simply for foiling its operations, although a particular Claw or Hand might do so for personal reasons. The Gang will only consider people to be enemies if they either attack the Gang on a regular basis (as adventurers often do) or defeat some important scheme of the Gang's in a way that publicly damages the reputation of the Gang (ditto).

Sample Scenarios

Let My Tavern Go

All adventurers rely on the local tavern. Without it, where would mysterious hooded patrons know where to find them? What would they do with the loot they drag back from dungeons? Now, however, their favorite barkeep is under pressure to cough up protection fees, and some thugs go in to show him why he needs "insurance". Naturally, they show up while the adventurers are enjoying their drinks...

There's Romance in the Air

Ever wondered why dragons collect gold and gems? After all, there's no evidence that they ever spend it on anything. The reason is simple. It's the same reason male peacocks grow giant tail feathers: because dragons rate the suitability of potential mates based on their ability to gather cold, hard cash. Skrazargul has spent centuries getting ready for the dragon equivalent of prom night.

This will not make the Dragon Gang happy. After all, most of them have been pretty devoted to the family business, and it's a little — alright, it's *very* — demeaning to realize that the entire reason you exist was to help Daddy get a little nookie. Knowing that Skrazargul no longer needs the Gang is likely to cause a lot of stress in the gang membership.

Gang War

There's only so much money that can be made in one city. After due consideration, Skrazargul has that the time has come to expand his markets. The Dragon Gang is going to move into another city: the one that the adventurers happen to call home, of course. If the city already has a Thieves Guild, the Dragon Gang will start their campaign by killing off a few key members and sending in magically shape-changed replacements. Eventually, they will remove the guildmaster as well, and the Dragon Gang will be in charge with nobody the wiser.

Of course, at some point the process will break down. As the Dragon Gang gains control of the guild, they will begin to force out the "old guard", bring in members of the Family, and in general impose their own structure on the new city. The old guard will resist, angry at being cut out of the loop by the boss's new friends, and violence is almost certain to break out. Adventurers can easily get involved in the conflict as enforcers or bodyguards for either side, if they have a sufficiently flexible code of ethics. They may also be asked to investigate the situation by the city government to bring the situation under control. After all, bodies turning up on the streets daily is not something that helps tourism...

As an alternative...

Skrazargul Doesn't Exist

Maybe he never did, or maybe he lost interest in the actions of the Gang a long time ago. In either case, he's gone, and the Drakes are actively involved in a cover-up. They need the myth of the Dragon to help knit the Gang together and because they realize that the rumors about the Dragon help protect them from the city government. Access to Skrazargul is very limited, and if it is necessary to have somebody meet the Dragon, the Drakes will use magic to fake Skrazargul's presence. Exposure of this secret would probably cause the Gang to collapse.

Skrazargul's Master Plan

The Gang might be more than a loot-collecting machine to Skrazargul. His goals might be relatively petty, like using the Gang as a springboard to gain power, to a multi-century plan to reshape human society—but whatever they are, the Gang is just a small piece of them.

The Ends Justify the Means

In an evil city, the Dragon Gang might be a very different organization. Revolutions cost money: money to buy weapons, bribe the authorities, and support the families of people martyred for the cause. In such an environment the Gang might have turned to crime to get the funds they need, reasoning that anything that upsets the existing social structure can be justified. If this is the case, Skrazargul should be a good or neutral dragon.

The Servants of Decay

Humans and demihumans alike pride themselves on their power and sophistication, as if they were the very pinnacles of creation. Their religions and philosophies reinforce this arrogant notion, fueling belief in their mastery of nature. Certainly some take a more balanced view, namely that they are stewards of nature and should guard it and protect it, for anything that affects the natural world may eventually affect them as well. Ultimately, even this view speaks more about the self-importance of humans and demihumans than it does about their proper respect for the awesome power of nature.

Worse still, it betrays a fundamental ignorance about the true order of things. For while many beings recognize that nature can be as violent as it is gentle, as destructive as it is nurturing, few suspect that it hides a darker force inimical to both mortals and gods. Few realize that what they call “nature” is but the mask worn by an ancient reality – Preternature – whose mind-rending power once reigned supreme in the cosmos and may do so again one day.

Those who realize the truth are a strange lot. Equal parts geniuses and madmen, they believe that the preternatural world can – and will – reassert itself and in doing so will wipe away the petty accomplishments of humans and elves, dwarves and halflings. There is no escaping this fate. The best that intelligent beings can hope for is to embrace the destruction that Preternature will inevitably bring, for true safety can only be found in accepting one’s insignificance in the face of this reality, which predates even the gods themselves. Those who accept this fate are known as the Servants of Decay and represent a threat unlike any seen in untold millennia.

Among the Servants

The true origins of the Servants of Decay are lost to history. This is not because the Servants have attempted to hide their origins – although they have – but because they are a truly ancient cult. Some Servants, such as their leader Mailcon, have implied that the group even predates the present age, being vestiges of a time before the gods reshaped the ancient preternatural world according to their wishes. During this bygone time, the world was not as mortals now know it, and neither were the creatures that inhabited it. Instead of the familiar beasts and animals that exist today, there was an entirely different class of creature – the preternaturals.

The preternaturals existed in what the Servants consider to be a simpler time, when the competing moralities of narrow-minded deities and the limited comprehension of mortals did not interfere with the natural cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death. The preternaturals had no need for the trappings of civilization and readily accepted that

all things must pass away. They reveled in the decay and destruction of all things, for they saw in them the potential to give birth to newer and greater things. To the preternaturals, this is the way of the world. Nothing – neither gods or mortals – could stand in its way.

The gods and their worshippers tell a very different story about Preternature’s ascendancy, namely that those times were replete with destruction and a lack of concern for the well-being of individuals. They were dark times and the preternaturals were worse than the beasts of the wild, rabid creatures suffused with chaos and amorality – utterly alien in their nature and outlook. The preternaturals stood in the way of the gods’ efforts to remake the world for the benefit of their mortal faithful and had to be destroyed. Even the most evil of the gods recognized this fact and joined with their benevolent brethren in wiping out all traces of Preternature and its servants.

Or so they thought. Seemingly victorious, the gods used the defeated Preternature as the “template” on which they rebuilt the world according to their own designs. They twisted and warped it into a reality suitable for mortals and anchored this new reality with the gift of civilization, whose power to inspire and uplift further weakened Preternature’s hold. The preternaturals then retreated to hidden places, the forgotten nooks and crannies of the cosmos. Yet, like a poorly executed palimpsest, traces of the old reality can be seen amid the gods’ work, creeping in where civilization has little sway, and it is from here that the Servants of Decay plot its downfall.

The Servants believe that only by hastening decadence and decay can mortals hope to achieve the enlightened perfection that the preternaturals enjoyed in their day. A central premise of the Servants’ beliefs is that the original order of reality, Preternature, is neither good nor evil and that this fact “frees” them from the constraints imposed by mortal or godly morality. Strength, power, and ultimately enlightenment come only through an emulation of nature’s uncaring and sometimes brutal lessons. Once one has accepted these truths, it becomes possible to rend the veil that separates the present illusory reality from the true one the Servants are fighting to restore.

The Superstructure of Reality

The preternaturals exist now – as they always have – in a place that few gods admit exists, and yet it does. Underlying the cosmos in all its variety is Preternature, older and more alien than mortals can easily comprehend. This reality underpins what people commonly call “nature” without realizing that they use the term incorrectly, for the truly natural world is not the ordered structure the gods have imposed but the amorphous, chaotic madness of Preternature.



Preternature exists just beyond the perception of mortals. If one has not been taught how to seek it, one cannot see it or its denizens. Yet, it surely exists, lying beneath the placid and orderly surface of the everyday world. Many ordinary objects have reflections in the preternatural world and vice versa, creating a strange bond between the two realities that even the gods could not destroy, try as they might.

This bond manifests itself in nexuses, invisible and incorporeal doorways that connect the two realities. Preternatural creatures freely use these nexuses to pass between worlds while on their incomprehensible activities. Because of the peculiar relationship between the two realities, travel in the preternatural world proceeds faster than travel in its ordinary counterpart, although it does not seem so from its perspective. Only when mortals return to their own reality do they realize that they have traveled 7 miles for every 10 minutes they traveled in the preternatural realm. Unsurprisingly, the Servants of Decay use nexuses as a convenient way to move both quickly and covertly over great distances in the ordinary world.

Such travel is not without its complications. For one, recognizing nexuses is a difficult matter if one has not been taught to do so. Most inhabitants of everyday reality can sense nexuses only with great effort.

A successful Spot check (DC 40) reveals the presence of a nexus if the character is within 30 feet of the dimensional doorway. Spellcasters may apply their ranks in Knowledge (Arcana) and Knowledge (The Planes) as a synergy bonus to the check. Otherwise, only *true seeing* reveal its presence (lesser spells like *see invisible* are inefficacious).

More frighteningly, the composition of Preternature produces ill effects in creatures from ordinary reality, devouring their minds and souls.

For every 10 minutes a creature remains within the preternatural world unprotected, it must make a Will save (DC 20) with a Wisdom modifier or lose 1d4 Wisdom and 1d4 Intelligence temporarily. When either the creature's Wisdom or Intelligence is reduced to 0, it is consumed by the preternatural world's alien energies and ceases to exist permanently. Not even a *wish* or *miracle* can restore the creature to existence.

Because mortal understanding of Preternature is so rare, only eccentric sages and scholars know the few spells or magic items that can protect a creature against its soul-devouring nature.

While within the preternatural world, characters can see and interact with any creatures they encounter there. This means that preternatural creatures' natural invisibility and incorporeality are negated for the duration of a character's time within this alternate reality. The character can see into ordinary reality to a limited extent, but it appears hazy and indistinct. Sight and hearing into the normal realm are limited to 30 feet. While in the preternatural world, the character cannot interact with ordinary reality in any way, including attacking or casting spells. However, the character is likewise intangible to ordinary creatures that do not have a specific power that grants them the ability to interact with the preternatural realm.

The War against Civilization

The Servants of Decay exist to break down the barriers that prevent Preternature from re-asserting itself. The greatest of those barriers is the gods' greatest gift to mortals – civilization. Broadly defined, “civilization” is any type of orderly mortal progress, including belief in the gods, arcane magic, and cities. Each of these and a hundred other elements weakens the power of Preternature, rendering it less able to impinge upon ordinary reality. Civilization is likewise a balm against decay. By providing a structure that transcends the lives of any single living creature, civilization transmits values and beliefs from one generation to the next. This forever traps mortals at a certain level of advancement, limiting their options and their ability to grow. Therefore, the Servants seek to undermine civilization as the means to free mortals from stagnation and initiate the next stage in their growth.

One might think the Servants' hatred of civilization would make them powerful among elves, dwarves, and other long-lived races, but that is not the case. Although long-lived races are often bastions of civilization and order, they tend toward stagnation. They neither grow nor decay, remaining forever trapped at a certain level of development. Humans, on the hand, are restless and dynamic. Moreover, humans are widespread and powerful, controlling more outposts of civilization than even the elves – which is why the Servants court human assistance. It is humans who stand against the ravages of nature, in defiance of Preternature.

Consequently, the Servants work hard to recruit humans to their cause. To date, they have had the most success among rural dwellers, particularly those who live close to the land, like farmers. These humans are more likely to be open to the idea that civilization has served mortals poorly. Over time, these rustics are initiated into the deeper mysteries of the cult, by which time they are totally devoted to its cause. Yet, it is city-dwellers who hold the greatest interest to the Servants. They need the assistance of urban humans, if they are to infiltrate and undermine civilization successfully.

What's Their Alignment?

Throughout this section, the Servants of Decay are presented as “beyond morality,” having no concerns about the ethics and philosophies of mortal society. They claim Preternature has no need for such narrow concepts. So, what does that mean in terms of their alignment?

The GM may choose to adopt one of two solutions. The default position (which is used throughout this section) is that the Servants belong to several different alignments, depending on their most common actions, with the most common being Neutral and Neutral Evil. For example, a Servant who regularly infects crops with disease as a way to wage war against civilization would

probably be Neutral Evil while one who simply recruits farmers might be Neutral. In the default position, alignment is a purely descriptive element of the character rather than a prescriptive one. It stems from *how* a character acts rather than *why* he acts that way.

Another option is to presume that the Servants have no alignment. Being devoted to an uncaring reality, they transcend notions like good and evil, law and chaos. In this option, they are immune to spells like *detect chaos/evil/good/law* and *protection from chaos/evil/good/law*. This is an unorthodox solution, but it does emphasize the Servants' alien nature and defiance of the bounds of ordinary reality.

Of course, the GM has final authority on this matter. He should make his decision based on the needs of his campaign, as well as how he views the question of what alignment represents.

The Power of Civilization

As noted earlier, many creatures and objects within normal reality often cast “reflections” within Preternature. Cities and other large settlements cast some of the greatest reflections of all. These reflections inhibit the ability of the preternatural world to impinge upon the ordinary world. No one, not even the Servants of Decay, knows precisely why, although theories abound. The most convincing is that cities generate a metamagical aura of stability and orderliness, which is so at odds with the chaotic nature of Preternature that it impedes its action. This theory is borne out by the fact that nexuses never form within the boundaries of cities, as well as other effects detrimental to the Servants.

Chief among these is that large centers of civilization possess Preternatural Resistance that must be overcome if a preternatural creature or Servant is to use any of its supernatural abilities, including spellcasting. This Preternatural Resistance functions as a type of “magical armor class” versus preternatural magic and creatures. To overcome the Preternatural Resistance, a Servant or creature must make a caster check (1d20 + caster level) against a DC determined by the number of people in the settlement who do not follow the ways of the cult.

Preternatural Resistance Table

Settlement Population	Preternatural Resistance DC
10-100	5
101-500	10
501-1000	15
1001-2500	20
2501-5000	25
5001-10,000	30
10,001-20,000	35
20,000+	40

The Servants of Decay may lower the Preternatural Resistance of a settlement by either an outright decrease in its population (through violence, disease, etc.) or by converting large numbers of its inhabitants and thereby effectively decreasing its numbers. A special ability of higher-level Servants (described below) can also lower the Resistance temporarily.

The Front Lines

The Servants wage their war against civilization on several fronts. At the lowest level, they seek to gain adherents among the mortal population, because it is through conversion to the service of Preternature that cities and towns begin to decay – and their Preternatural Resistance is lowered. When conversion does not work or is impractical, the Servants turn to more violent – though no less subtle – means. These include spreading disease and poisoning wells, as well as razing buildings by fire. Anything that lowers the population of a city is fair game, since ultimately this enables the Servants to act more openly and with greater force.

The initial goal in any attack against a city is to establish a nexus within its boundaries. Nexuses do not regularly form within large settlements, for the same reason that other preternatural effects do not function there. Only through the intercession of the Servants can a nexus form and even then only if they can overcome the settlement's Preternatural Resistance. Once created, though, the Servants use the nexus to bring in allies from Preternature, with which they ruin a city and terrorize its inhabitants. The cult act like twisted termites, seeking out the tiniest hole through which to enter a center of civilization and then bore their way deep into its heart.

By wiping out cities and scattering their populations, the Servants undermine the anchors the gods created to keep out Preternature. They believe that, with enough destruction, they may cast off the illusion the deities have constructed and usher in a new age, one in which chaos and turmoil enlighten mortals even as they eliminate the weak and undeserving. Truly it will be a Golden Age.

Personalities

Mailcon

Female Elf Drd 10/Sod 8: CR 15; Medium Humanoid (Elf); HD 18d8; hp 94; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 23 (+2 Dex, +7 +4 *hide armor*, +2 +1 *wooden shield*, +2 *ring of protection*); Atks +16/+11/+6 Melee (1d6+4/crit 18-20, +3 *thundering scimitar*); SA Nature sense, woodland stride, resist nature's lure, preternatural sight, nexus travel; SQ Venom immunity, trackless step; AL NE; SV Fort +14, Ref +8, Will +18; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 14.

Skills: Alchemy +8, Animal Empathy +8, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +5, Heal +10, Hide

+8, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (Arcana) +8, Knowledge (Nature) +14, Knowledge (Religion) +8, Knowledge (The Planes) +8, Listen +9, Move Silently +8, Scry +8, Spellcraft +8, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +16. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat Casting, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Track.

Druid Spells (6/6/6/6/4/4/3/3/2): 1st—*detect snares and pits, entangle (x2), magic fang, obscuring mist, pass without trace*. 2nd—*barkskin, charm person or animal, chill metal, fire trap, flame blade, summon swarm*. 3rd—*call lightning, contagion, diminish plants, greater magic fang, snare, stone shape*. 4th—*control plants, dispel magic, flame strike, giant vermin, rusting grasp, spike stones*. 5th—*ice storm, insect plague, tree stride, unhallow*. 6th—*antilife shell, fire seeds, stone tell, wall of stone*. 7th—*creeping doom, harm, wind walk*. 8th—*finger of death, sunburst, whirlwind*. 9th—*shambler, shapechange*.

Possessions: +4 *hide armor*, +1 *wooden shield*, +3 *thundering scimitar*, +2 *ring of protection*, scroll of *protection from elements*, 2 *Quaal's feather tokens (tree)*, gray bag of tricks

Mailcon is ancient; she has led the Servants for as long as any can remember. Even the oldest member of the cult has no memory of a time before Mailcon led them. Disturbingly featureless in her appearance, she has clearly been touched by the alien energies of Preternature. Mailcon is polite, diplomatic, and even charming to friends and foes alike, but she is an exemplar of the Servants' beliefs. She looks upon everyday reality as a sham, a hoax perpetrated by the gods to limit the vision of mortals and to imprison them within a cage of narrow-minded morality. Mailcon believes this wholeheartedly and has renounced everything to bring about the return of the preternaturals and enlightenment to mortals.

Few realize just how much the diminutive Servant has given up for the cult. Mailcon belongs to elven royalty; her parents were the rulers of the long lost kingdom of Sarenthinar, from which all other elven kingdoms claim descent. She rejected the luxury into which she was born and considered her people fools. Mailcon hoped elves would understand that the present reality is not the only one; they did not. She then turned her back on her people and concentrated the cult's efforts on humanity, whom she deems the perfect tool by which Preternature can reassert itself and mortals' eyes can be awakened to its wonders.

Drust

Drust, Male Human Rgr 8/Asn 3: CR 11; HD 8d10+3d6+22; 79 hp; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 +2 *studded leather*); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+4/crit 17-20, +1 *keen longsword*) or +15/+10 ranged (1d8+2, longbow); SA +2d6 sneak attack, death attack, favored enemies (humans, shapechangers), poison use, track, uncanny dodge; SQ +1 save vs. poison; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 15(17), Con 14, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +7, Climb +7, Craft (Trapmaking) +6, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +5, Hide +11, Intuit Direction +2, Jump +6, Knowledge (Nature) +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Profession (Guide) +1, Search +4, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +3. *Feats:* Alertness, Far Shot, Great Fortitude, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Track.

Assassin Spells (1): 1st—*spider climb*.

Ranger Spells (1): 1st—*pass without trace*.

Possessions: +2 studded leather, +2 longbow, +1 keen longsword, 3 potions of cure serious wounds, cloak of elvenkind, +2 gloves of dexterity.

Drust is Mailcon's personal bodyguard, serving his mistress in any capacity she requires. Primarily, he protects the leader of the Servants from those who would destroy her (and there are many), although he also performs other tasks, such as messenger, spy, and assassin. Drust's skills as a ranger are sufficiently broad that he can take up missions in a wide variety of environments, including within cities, where he frequently acts on behalf of the Servants.

Originally a simple woodsman, Drust became convinced of the awesome reality of Preternature when he encountered a preternatural wolf pack deep within his native forest. Saved from destruction by Mailcon, who saw in him the potential to become a mighty warrior, Drust abandoned his former way of life to join the Servants. He is completely devoted to Mailcon, whom he reveres as a living embodiment of a reality he does not fully understand. Nevertheless, he would willingly give his life for her or for the cause of the Servants – although he would much rather take someone else's.

Campaigning

Given their unusual – and somewhat unsympathetic – nature, the Servants of Decay are more likely to serve as enemies rather than as patrons or allies. After all, even the most dedicated rangers and druids are unlikely to sanction a war against civilization, especially one based on the premise that nature is a mask for a cruel and uncaring reality opposed to both gods and mortals. That is exactly as it should be, since the Servants are meant to make both players and GMs uncomfortable. They represent the flipside of the usual fantasy tropes regarding the sanctity and benevolence of nature.

As enemies, the Servants provide numerous several interesting elements to the GM. First and foremost, they introduce a hidden reality that lurks behind what the characters experience every day. The Servants' ability to interact with that reality makes them particularly dangerous foes. Secondly, the cult are a shadowy enemy, one whose small numbers prevent them from acting openly. Unlike the traditional dark lord with his horde of orcs, the Servants of Decay are stealthy opponents, who plot their path to victory from the darkened angles of reality, where they cannot be seen. This introduces paranoia – another valuable tool for the GM. Finally, the Servants throw many



Servant of Decay

The Servant of Decay is a prestige class available only to the most dedicated members of the cult. Druids are the most likely to become a Servant, although clerics of the appropriate alignment may do so as well. Rangers of high enough level might also become Servants. Paladins and monks cannot enter this prestige class because of the alignment restrictions. Other classes may become Servants if they acquire an additional class that grants them the ability to cast divine spells. Otherwise, they too are unable to enter this class.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a Servant of Decay, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

- **Alignment:** Any non-good and non-lawful.
- **Knowledge (Arcana):** 4 ranks
- **Knowledge (Nature):** 8 ranks
- **Knowledge (The Planes):** 4 ranks
- **Feat:** Alertness
- **Spells:** Ability to cast 3rd-level divine spells.
- **Special:** Prior contact with a Servant of Decay or a preternatural creature.

Class Skills

The Servant of Decay's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Alchemy (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Cha), Knowledge [Any (Int)] and Move Silently (Dex).

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency

The Servant of Decay is proficient with simple, light armor, and shields.

Spells

The Servant of Decay continues to gain divine spells as she advances in the service of the preternaturals. Thus, when a new Servant of Decay level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in the spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic, or item creation feats, and so on). This essentially means that she adds the level of Servant of Decay to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines the spells per day and caster level accordingly. Note that this ability only affects *divine* spellcasting ability, not arcane. If a character had more than one spellcasting class before she became a Servant of Decay, she can add her levels of Servant of Decay only to a class that casts divine spells, whether it be cleric, druid, or ranger. In the event she has more than one class within divine spellcasting ability, she must choose to which class she will add each level of Servant of Decay for the purposes of determining spells per day.

Preternatural Sight (Ex)

By means of this ability, the Servant is capable of seeing any preternatural creatures or nexuses that are within a 100-foot radius of her. This ability negates a preternatural creature's natural invisibility, although it still remains incorporeal.

Summon Preternatural

Whenever the Servant casts any conjuration (summoning) spells, such as *summon monster* or *summon*

nature's ally, she instead summons a preternatural version of the creature, meaning that it possesses the preternatural template in addition to its normal abilities. If the creature would otherwise be celestial or fiendish, the preternatural template is used instead.

Preternatural Touch (Su)

The Servant gains the ability to interact with preternatural creatures as if they were creatures like any other, negating their natural incorporeality.

Nexus Travel (Ex)

At 3rd level, the Servant gains the ability to withstand the soul-devouring nature of Preternature for up to one hour. She (and any objects she is carrying) can enter any nexus she can see and use it to travel quickly from place to place in the ordinary world. For every 10 minutes traveling in the preternatural world, she can travel 7 miles in the ordinary world. Alternately, she can simply hide within the nexus to escape attackers or anyone else she wishes to avoid.

Spell Circle

Because of their rarity, the Servants have developed an affinity for working together, especially when casting their spells. When two or more members of this prestige class (of 4th level or higher) work together, they may combine a portion of their characters levels to increase the effective spellcaster level of one of their number at the expense of casting time. At this level of ability, the spellcaster may increase his effective level by $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total spellcaster levels (rounded down) of any Servants of Decay who join him in casting the spell. However, the spell's casting time increases by four, during which time breaking the concentration of any member of the Spell Circle ends the spell. For example, a 12th-level druid/8th-level Servant of Decay is casting *transmute rock to mud*. He is joined in a Spell Circle by two other characters, a 8th-level cleric/4th-level Servant and a 9th-level druid/5th-level Servant. The caster may add $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total spellcaster levels of his assistants $[(12 + 13)/4 = 6]$ to his class levels, for a total of 26 levels. Of course, the spell takes four times as long to cast in exchange for its increase in efficacy.

Improved Nexus Travel (Ex)

As Nexus Travel, except that the Servant may take with her a number of additional creatures no more than 100 lbs for each level in Servant of Decay the character has. Because this ability is first gained at 5th level, 500 lbs is the minimum additional weight the Servant can bring with her. These additional creatures are protected from the effects of the preternatural world's madness in the same way as the Servant. However, the duration of this protection is still one hour.

Create Nexus (Su)

At this level, the Servant may create a permanent nexus, which functions in every way like a naturally occurring nexus. To do so successfully, the Servant must make a successful Wisdom check (DC 20) and spend 3200 XP. If the Servant attempts this in an area with Preternatural Resistance, she must first overcome that before she can create the nexus.

Overcome Resistance (Sp)

When working together as a group, two or more Servants of 7th level or higher may temporarily lower the Preternatural Resistance of a settlement by 5 for every additional Servant beyond the first one. For example, three 7th level Servants work together to create a nexus in a city with a population of 10,000. Normally, the city would have Preternatural Resistance of 30, but in this case it is only 20, because there are two additional Servants beyond the creator of the nexus. This ability is usable only three times per day. Assisting another Servant to use her ability counts against these three times.

Greater Spell Circle

As Spell Circle, except that it increases the spellcaster's effective level by $\frac{1}{2}$ of the total spellcaster levels of the Servants assisting him.

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Timeless Body

At 9th level, the Servant no longer suffers the penalties for aging and cannot be magically aged (see Aging rules in the PH). Any penalties she may have already suffered, however, remain in place. Bonuses still accrue, but the Servant fades away into the hidden reality she served when her time is up and can never return.

Preternature (Su)

At 10th level, the Servant passes beyond ordinary reality and becomes a preternatural being. Her type becomes "outsider," which means that she is no longer affected by spells that specifically affect humanoids, such as *charm person*, but she can be hedged out by a *magic circle* spell against her alignment. Additionally, the Servant gains damage reduction 20/+1 and cold resistance 20.

Class Table: Servant of Decay

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per day
1 st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Preternatural Sight, Summon Preternatural	+1 level of existing class
2 nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Preternatural Touch	+1 level of existing class
3 rd	+1	+3	+1	+3	Nexus Travel	+1 level of existing class
4 th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Spell Circle	+1 level of existing class
5 th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Improved Nexus Travel	+1 level of existing class
6 th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Create Nexus	+1 level of existing class
7 th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Overcome Resistance	+1 level of existing class
8 th	+4	+6	+2	+6	Greater Spell Circle	+1 level of existing class
9 th	+4	+6	+3	+6	Timeless Body	+1 level of existing class
10 th	+5	+7	+3	+7	Preternature	+1 level of existing class

tried and true elements of traditional fantasy out the window, such as the notion of compassionate druids. This keeps the characters on their toes, uncertain what to expect next.

Of course, it is possible to use the Servants as patrons or allies. Some characters may find their goals intriguing and worth supporting. Barbarians, druids, and rangers (especially those with an evil bent) might hold similar views about the uncaring aspects of nature. Others, such as wizards or sorcerers, might seek to increase their own power and enlightenment by embracing Preternature. Many other options are possible, particularly in campaigns in which the characters either oppose civilized society or exist on the fringes of civilization, ever watchful for the means to increase their own power.

Using Preternature

On first glance, Preternature might seem an especially difficult concept to integrate into an already-existing campaign setting. In fact, that is not the case at all. For the most part, Preternature is no different than any other plane of existence. Indeed, it bears a lot of resemblance (both mechanically and conceptually) to the Ethereal Plane, described in spells like *ethereal jaunt* and *etherealness*. If the GM has little difficulty

understanding and utilizing the Ethereal Plane, he should likewise have few problems with Preternature.

Preternature may present two problems that bear some thought. The first is that its existence presupposes the gods were not the creators of the world but merely its shapers, using the amorphous chaos of Preternature as their clay. If this contradicts elements of a setting's background, the GM must find another way to explain its existence. Making another plane is perhaps the simplest solution, although it does some violence to the notion that Preternature is the "original" reality of which all others are but pale reflections.

The second problem is that, as described here, Preternature is ubiquitous, underlying everything that exists – a kind of ancient subspace with connections to all things. That in itself is not a problem for most settings. What could be a problem is that, once the player characters learn of its existence, they may use it regularly, circumventing the need for overland travel and spells like *dimension door* or *teleport*. GMs concerned about this possibility should feel free to have the characters attract the attention of the Servants of Decay or powerful preternatural creatures. Likewise, the soul-devouring nature of Preternature should be enforced, making journeys through it hazardous in the extreme.

Sample Scenarios

Bad Crops

A series of inexplicable crop failures brings the characters to investigate several rural communities, all of which provide much needed sustenance for a large city. The characters meet with little help from the farmers, who seem wary of outsiders, especially ones who “ask too many questions.” Have the Servants converted entire communities to their blasphemous faith, or do they hold them in their grip through some more subtle means? Either way, the characters must confront the Servants and their plan to destroy civilization by starving a major city.

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

A prominent merchant finds himself harassed by unknown assailants who seemingly can walk through walls and attack invisibly. He has no idea who his adversaries are or why they would attempt to kill him. The truth is that the merchant was a former ally of the Servants who has since repented of his ways. Now, Mailcon has ordered him eliminated before he can reveal the cult's plans. Can the characters stop these attacks – and will the merchant reveal what he knows?

Into the Dark

A magically gifted youth stumbles upon a preternatural nexus and disappears. Now, the characters must brave the weird reality that exists just beneath their apprehension to find the youth and return her to safety. Of course, the Servants do not take kindly to the uninitiated entering their domain. Can the characters enter, find the girl, and avoid death before the Servants discover their presence?

As an alternative...

The Servants are Deluded

The Servants do not have to be *correct* about the true nature of reality. Because of the peculiar nature of their beliefs, many GMs might actually *prefer* the possibility that they are deluded or otherwise wrong. That is a perfectly reasonable way to approach the cult, but it begs the question: how do they get their power? And what are the preternatural creatures they command? There is no single answer that fits all campaigns, so ultimately the GM must decide. Some possibilities include:

- The preternaturals are a cover for an evil (and presumed dead) deity to wreak his revenge on the other gods.
- The preternaturals are an unknown type of outsider using the Servants to gain a foothold on the Material Plane.
- The preternaturals are invaders from an alternate Material Plane, one whose physical and magical laws differ from that of the characters.

Preternatural Template

“Preternatural” is a template that can be added to any corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the “base creature”). The base creature's type changes to “outsider.” It uses all the creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here. When a creature from ordinary reality views a preternatural, it appears similar to its normal counterpart, except with a distinctly “diseased” character. This manifests in a variety of ways, from peeling flesh to oozing ichor to foaming mouths. In addition, a preternatural possesses an obvious malevolence as well, as if it has nothing but contempt for other creatures.

Special Attacks: A preternatural retains all the base creature's special attacks.

Spells: The preternatural can cast any spells the base creature can cast.

Special Qualities: A preternatural retains all the base creature's special qualities, gains those listed below, and also gains the outsider type.

- Cold and fire resistance (see the table below)
- Damage reduction (see the table below)
- SR equal to double the creature's HD (max 25).

Special Qualities

Hit Dice	Cold, Fire Resistance	Damage Reduction
1-3	5	5/+1
4-7	10	5/+2
8-11	15	10/+2
12+	20	10/+3

Incorporeal: Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently.

Natural Invisibility (Ex): This ability is constant, allowing the preternatural creature to remain invisible even when attacking.

Challenge Rating: Up to 3 HD, as base creature; 4 HD to 7 HD, as base creature +2; 8+ HD, as base creature +3.

Treasure: None.

Alignment: Neutral (or Neutral Evil).

Saves, Abilities, Skills, Feats, Climate/Terrain, Organization, and Advancement: as base creature.

Temple of the Living God

Even gods can die – or so say mystics who have meditated upon the mysteries of divinity. While the average believer might scoff at such a notion, the mystics may be correct. Deities clearly possess powers and abilities far beyond those of mere mortals. They wield magic the likes of which are not seen on the Material Plane. Gods are great forces of history, inspiring lesser beings to acts of heroism or depravity. Their worship forms the basis of entire cultures and civilizations, for good and for ill. Many would call the contemplation of their deaths blasphemy of the highest order.

And yet there is truth in the notion. Students of history recognize that some gods were once more influential and that their cults have since fallen from the heights of power. Some scholars even dare to suggest that the gods *need* mortals to maintain their divine essence, somehow drawing power from the collective devotion of those who believe in them. Because no mortal can truly comprehend the nature of deific existence, scholars and pedants, priests and theologians continue to debate the matter, each offering theories rather than definitive statements. Without firsthand knowledge of the situation, that is the best they can offer.

From time to time, however, events conspire to provide details that mere theory cannot. Such is the case of the Temple of Viraxis, popularly known as “The Temple of the Living God.” Previously known only to a core of devoted followers, the Temple is slowly growing in power and influence, the result (some say) of the direct involvement of Viraxis himself. His worshippers claim that Viraxis has come to the Material Plane to lead his people and regain the power lost to him long ago. If true, mortals may soon understand far more about the true nature of godhood than any thought possible.

Inside the Temple

The worship of Viraxis is ancient, older than many present-day kingdoms and empires. Once, temples dedicated to the Lord of Mysteries were commonplace. Wizards and sorcerers alike paid him homage and throngs of priests attended his arcane rites. Rulers beseeched him to hide knowledge of their realms’ weaknesses from enemies, and the common folk sought his aid in keeping their own small secrets. Arcane spellcasters implored the Shadow King to assist them in wresting secrets of magic from the hidden places of the cosmos, for the priesthood of Viraxis taught – and many believed – that it was this deity who first blessed mortals with spellcraft.

Times change and religious beliefs along with them. As mortal society grew more sophisticated and complex, the need for secrets did not wane – but the need for Viraxis

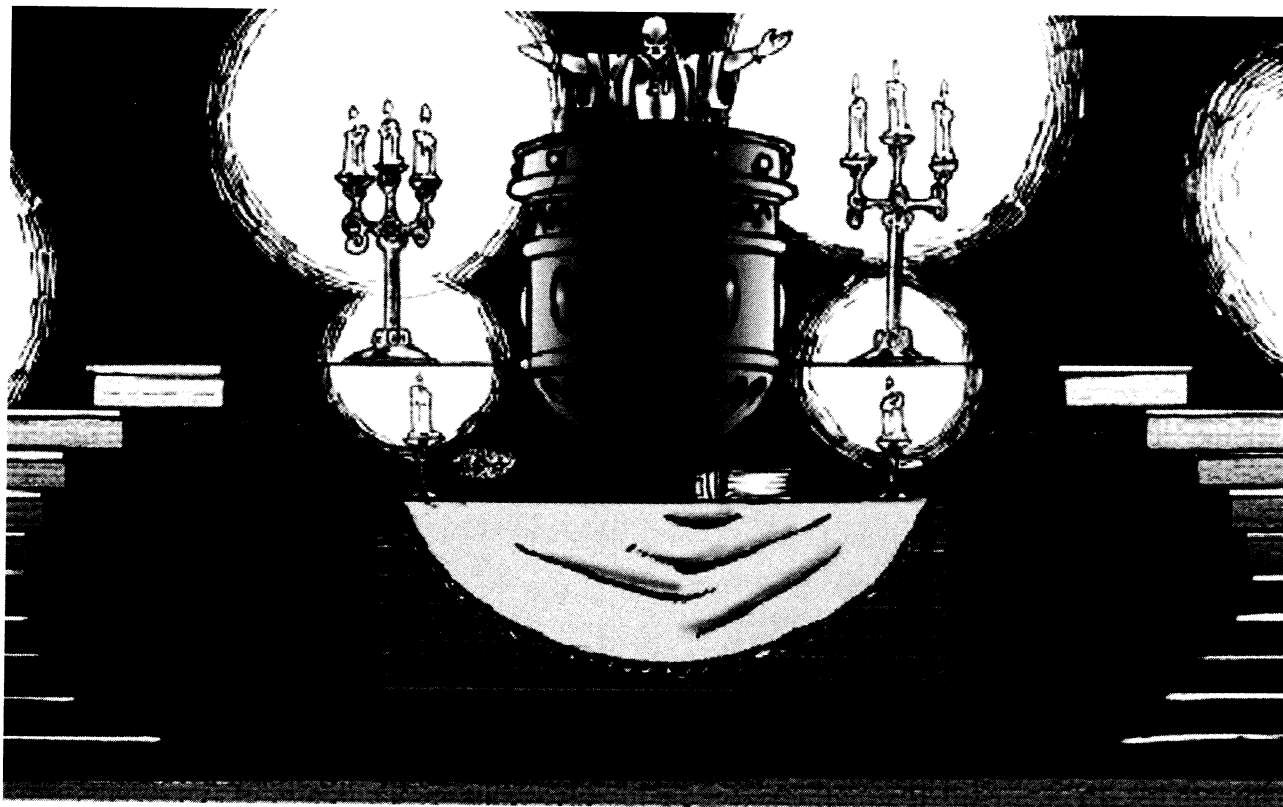
did. Wizards and sorcerers, who had previously relied upon the benefices of the Hidden One, relied increasingly on their own abilities to fashion new spells and magical items – the first blow to the deity’s place in the pantheon. Others would follow, as, one by one, another segment of society found it no longer needed or desired what the Lord of Mysteries offered his devotees. Formerly one of the greatest of the gods, commanding knowledge no one else possessed, Viraxis slowly faded into obscurity, seemingly cast from the sky as his worship dwindled to nothing.

The Hidden One’s worship did not disappear entirely. True, his temples became fewer in number until at last only one remained, nestled high on a mountain plateau and attended by only a handful of dedicated priests and true believers. Somehow Viraxis survived his fall from the heavens. Somehow the Lord of Mysteries clung on to that spark of divinity that distinguished him from the mere mortals who worshipped at his altar. Yet the god of secrets was but a shadow of his former glory, a divine echo that could be heard only by those who strained to listen. Bereft of most of his power, Viraxis might surely have ceased to be had it not been for the faith of Davur Matras, the high priest of his last remaining temple.

Before his godly essence dissipated forever, Viraxis entered the body of Matras, fusing his remaining divine power into the old man’s body. Once ailing and infirm, Matras was reinvigorated and changed, becoming an avatar of the Shadow King – a living god. Using the high priest as his vessel, Viraxis has begun to rally his followers and seeks to reclaim his former position among the gods. His worshippers consider themselves blessed to live during the time of their lord’s return and hope to aid him in his ascent into the heavens once more. Traveling the world as itinerant preachers and wonderworkers, they attempt to redress past wrongs and restore the Lord of Mysteries to his former state. How could they do anything less?

The Temple Today

The Temple has great need of assistance. Even with the zeal that Matras generates among his followers (and converts), their numbers remains too small to effect the change the Hidden One needs to reclaim his lost power. Consequently, the Temple is always on the look out for individuals whose natural inclinations would make them servants of the Lord of Mysteries: loremasters, spies, diplomats, councilors, and anyone else who either seeks out or wishes to hide valuable information. Among the most sought after converts are wizards and sorcerers, whose rejection of the faith so long ago precipitated the Shadow King’s current sad state of existence. By gaining



these and other worshippers, Viraxis hopes to rebuild his power base and with it his place among the gods.

The Hierarchy

Within the Temple there is a strict hierarchy of command. At its pinnacle is of course Davur Matras, the avatar of Viraxis. Despite the spark of godhood within him, he rules the Temple with a light hand. He does so for pragmatic reasons. Firstly, Matras prizes innovation and cleverness, as does the deity whose essence dwells within him. To re-establish the Temple as a major force in mortal affairs will take unusual thinking. The methods of the past have clearly not worked or else Viraxis would not have fallen from the heavens. In this environment, Matras sees little point in micromanaging his minions, as that may impede the innovative approaches the Temple needs at this desperate hour. The high priest instead prefers to set general policy and to lead the Temple in communal worship – one of the means by which Viraxis gains strength. The remainder of his time is spent unlocking ancient secrets and plumbing the depths of knowledge.

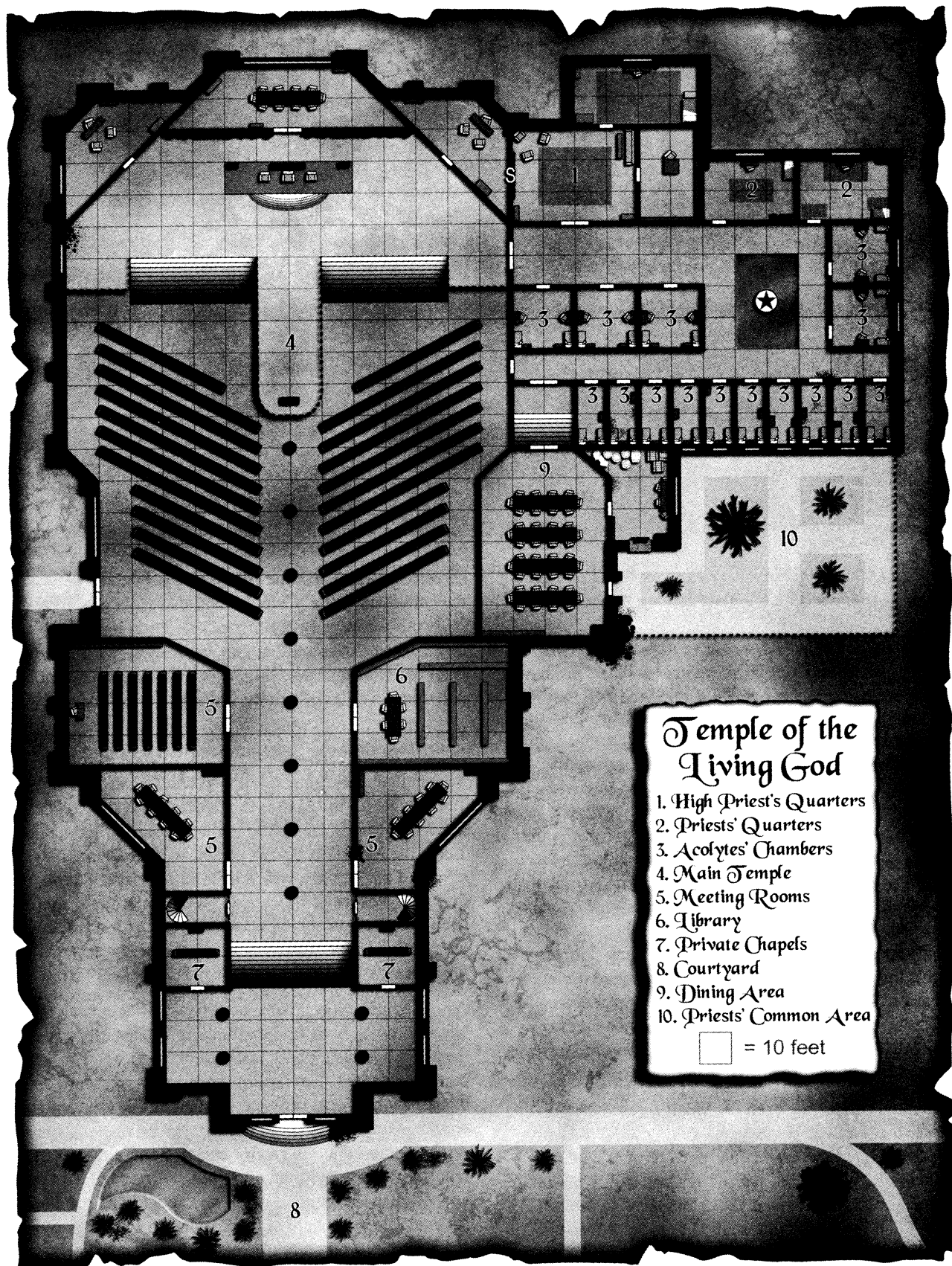
Secondly, containing even the small fragment of divine power that he does places great strain on the old priest. His frail body may have been reinvigorated by the presence of Viraxis, but it also tires him out. A mortal frame was never intended to contain such awesome power and every day that Matras does so without lengthy rest brings him closer to death. If he could do so, Viraxis would choose another vessel for his godly power. The process of fusing the mortal and the divine requires there

be certain strong affinities between the two elements of the combined being. Chief among these is a powerful faith and devotion in the mortal chosen to become the god's avatar. At present, no one but Matras possesses that level of commitment to the Hidden One's cause and the deity must make do with the old priest's frailties.

Beneath Matras are two assistants, Eyvindur Boman and Rannva Taalle, each with their own spheres of influence. Boman concerns himself with the spiritual affairs of the Temple. He assists Matras in the celebration of rites honoring Viraxis, as well as in the research of hidden lore. Taalle meanwhile concerns herself with the temporal affairs of the Temple, which is, in many ways, the more important sphere of influence. "Temporal affairs" include such things as preaching and teaching, the means by which the Temple attracts new worshippers – and increases the power of Viraxis.

As one might expect, there is some rivalry between the two assistants, with Boman thinking Taalle little more than a glib huckster and Taalle thinking Boman a pompous pedant. The rivalry rarely spills over into open disputes – let alone violence – since Matras (and Viraxis) would never allow it to go that far. Nevertheless, there is little question that the rivalry exists. Boman and Taalle regularly try to outdo the other in the service of Viraxis, with Boman taking the lead in this activity. At present, for example, he is hard at work trying to use his command of secret lore to develop new arcane spells to use as a "lure" for would-be converts among the ranks of wizards and sorcerers. Boman believes that adding more

Temple of the Living God



Temple of the Living God

1. High Priest's Quarters
2. Priests' Quarters
3. Acolytes' Chambers
4. Main Temple
5. Meeting Rooms
6. Library
7. Private Chapels
8. Courtyard
9. Dining Area
10. Priests' Common Area

□ = 10 feet

magic-users to the cult would redress the past injustice these groups did to the Hidden One in the past – as well as being a sure way to win favor at the expense of Taalle.

Thus far, the Temple has yet to attract very many arcane spellcasters, many of whom see little to distinguish Viraxis from many other deities except that the others are infinitely more powerful. If the Lord of Mysteries is so great, they ask, why was his worship abandoned long ago? Could it be that Viraxis was more concerned with *keeping* secrets than he was in *sharing* them with his followers? This is why Boman has placed such a high priority on his efforts. He believes that it holds the key to increasing the Shadow King's power. By providing a tangible benefit – new arcane knowledge – to his worshippers, Viraxis might be able to regain the ground he lost when he fell from the favor of mortals. Taalle laughs at his efforts as an even worse form of hucksterism than her street corner evangelization, a charge that rankles Boman. For his part, Matras – and Viraxis – have encouraged both efforts, believing each offers benefits to the Temple.

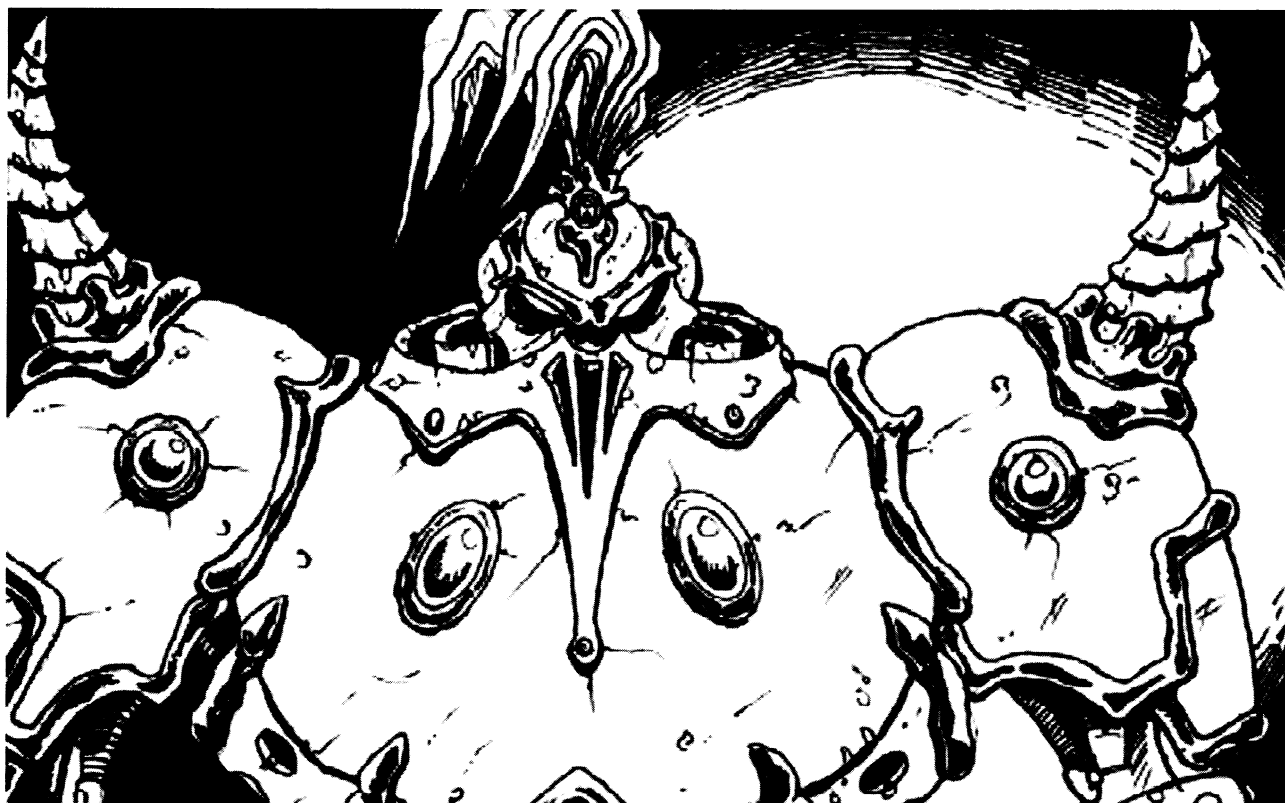
Beneath each assistant are a number of lesser priests. The bulk of them are ordinary clerics of between 1st and 3rd level, with a handful having levels as high as 5. In addition to the clerics, there are an even smaller number of bards, sorcerers, and wizards, including some who have multiclassed as clerics of Viraxis. Even so, it is rare for a worshipper of Viraxis to have a character level higher than 10. Matras, Boman, and Taalle are far and away the most powerful members of the cult – another reason they will be amenable to skilled individuals who

wish to enlist themselves in their noble cause.

Beneath the lesser priests are average believers, although no one at the Temple would call them such. The vast majority of these believers are scholars, pedants, and sages, who are attracted by the cult's promise to aid them in their own efforts to uncover – or hide – information. In addition, there is the occasional bard, rogue, or wizard who seeks out the faith of Viraxis. Thus far, few common people have much interest in the Temple, being more concerned with their crops and their family life than with plumbing the depths of hidden knowledge. This fact has hampered the growth of the cult, which is why Taalle has taken the faith to the streets with sermons about the benefits to be had by "ordinary folk." Boman belittles these efforts and believes no good will come of it, but Matras has offered words of subtle encouragement – perhaps evidence of the Hidden One's approval?

The Colossus

The game of one-upmanship that Boman and Taalle play may be far from violent, but it does threaten to undermine the stability of the Temple. In his quest for innovative ways in which to aid Viraxis, Boman has stumbled upon a book called the *Libram of the Colossus*, an ancient text penned by a high priest of the Hidden One from the days when the god was worshipped openly by mortals. The *Libram* contains within it arcane lore of various sorts, including instructions for creating an unusual type of iron golem. This golem, the *Libram* claims, is a fit vessel to contain divine power, the means



Divine Avatars

A divine avatar is an unusual fusion of a mortal being with a divine essence. At any given time, there may be no more than one divine avatar for each domain a deity commands. More mortal than divine, the avatar nevertheless possesses shards of a god's powers, making him a formidable opponent or valuable ally. Divine avatars frequently rise to prominence in the service of their deity, leading cults, armies, and even nations. The avatar retains his own personality and will, although he understands the wishes of the deity with whom he is joined.

Being chosen as a vessel for a god's power is a rare gift granted only to the truly devout, mortals who have given their lives to the service of their deity. At minimum, such mortals must possess at least 18 character levels in classes favored by the deity (as determined by the GM), in addition to an alignment identical to that of the god. Clerics and druids are the most common candidates for this gift, but other classes are far from impossible.

Although a divine avatar gains many benefits from his close association with his patron deity, there are drawbacks as well. Besides drawing the attention of enemies of the god (who seek out avatars as a way of striking at the deity), the process of housing the divine essence is physically taxing. Each 8-hour period during which an avatar is active requires a Constitution check (DC 20) or become exhausted. Exhausted characters move at half normal speed and suffer an effective penalty of -6 to Strength and Dexterity. After an hour of complete rest, the effective penalty is reduced to -2, but another 8 hours of complete rest is needed to eliminate that penalty.

Divine Avatar Template

"Divine Avatar" is a template that can be applied to any divine spellcaster (referred to hereafter as "base creature"). It uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Special Qualities: A divine avatar retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Damage Reduction: 10/+2

Mind Blank (Su): A divine avatar is constantly protected by a *mind blank*.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *bless/curse water, consecrate/desecrate* and *detect chaos/evil/good/law*. Once per day, the avatar may freely cast one divine spell from each level 0 through 9 as a spell-like ability. These spells must be chosen on a daily basis, just like any other divine spell, but different spells may be chosen on each day.

Spell Immunities (Su): A divine avatar is immune to all forms of Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting] spells.

Spell Resistance: 30

Abilities: A divine avatar gains a +5 bonus to the two abilities most closely associated with the deity, as determined by the GM.

Skills: Because he gains limited access to the knowledge of the deity whose power imbues him, a divine avatar gets a +10 circumstance bonus on all Knowledge and Craft checks related to the domain the avatar represents, as determined by the GM.

Climate/Terrain: Same as the base creature.

Organization: Same as the base creature.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +5.

Treasure: Same as the base creature.

Alignment: Same as the base creature.

Advancement: Same as the base creature.

by which a god could manifest himself on the Material Plane – in short, a substitute for mortal avatars!

Boman believes that, by constructing this golem, or Colossus as it is known, he can free Matras from the burden of bearing the essence of Viraxis. In turn, the Shadow King can operate more freely, using the mechanical body of the Colossus to lead his Temple without concern for the health of his high priest. In this way, both Viraxis and Matras would gain, as would the Temple, who would benefit from its high priest's not becoming exhausted by his avatar status and its god being able to manifest more directly.

Boman has begun construction on the Colossus. He is near completion and hopes that Matras will approve of his efforts. He has kept them to himself, fearing that Taalle might find some way to use them against his cause. Boman worries that his rival might view the construction of the Colossus as a bid for greater power within the Temple. While he does not see it that way, there is no question that it is proof that his ultimate loyalties lie with his god, not his high priest. Boman will do anything to enable Viraxis to ascend from his lowly status to mightier levels of prestige, even at the cost of stability within the Temple. The Colossus is thus symptomatic of Boman's growing obsession and its potential to wreak havoc among the followers of the Lord of Mysteries.



Temple of the Living God

monster II, undetectable alignment. 3rd—daylight, dispel magic (x2), glyph of warding, locate object, obscure object, summon monster III. 4th—dimensional anchor, divination, imbue with spell ability, lesser planar ally, restoration, status, summon monster IV. 5th—ethereal jaunt, flame strike (x2), greater command, plane shift, scrying. 6th—banishment, etherealness, geas/quest, planar ally, summon monster VI. 7th—dictum, greater scrying, holy word, refuge, resurrection. 8th—antimagic field, discern location, greater planar ally, holy aura, symbol. 9th—astral projection, gate, miracle, soul bind, summon monster IX.

Possessions: +2 dagger, +2 amulet of natural armor, +5 bracers of armor, rod of absorption, scroll of heroism.

Davur Matras was born into a traditional family that had long had ties to the Temple of Viraxis. They were diehard members of the faith whose traditionalism was so great that they barely acknowledged that the Lord of Mysteries was no longer a major deity. Moreover, few within the cult can remember a time when at least one Matras was not a priest of the Shadow King. This made it almost inevitable that Davur—a quiet, bookish sort as child—would be enrolled in the priesthood as soon as he was old enough to undertake the initiation trials. Matras not only took the tests but also excelled at them, doing better at its collection of puzzles and conundrums than any candidate in hundreds of years. He began his career as a Temple

Personalities

Davur Matras

Male Human Clr 13/Lor 6: CR 24; Medium Humanoid; HD 13d8+ 6d4; hp 81; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge trick, +2 *amulet of natural armor*, +5 *bracers of armor*); Atks +13/8/3 melee (1d4+1/Crit 19-20, +2 *dagger*); SQ Bardic knowledge (lore) +12, damage reduction 10/+2, greater lore, mind blank, spell immunities, spell-like abilities, spell resistance 30; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +19; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 22, Wis 23, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +6, Concentration +10, Craft (Bookbinding) +19, Decipher Script +15, Diplomacy +8, Forgery +11, Gather Information +13, Knowledge (Arcana) +30, Knowledge (History) +11, Knowledge (Religion) +28, Knowledge (The Planes) +9, Scry +14, Search +9, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +15, Spot +9.

Feats: Brew Potion, Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Skill Focus [Knowledge (Arcana)], Spell Focus (Divination).

Cleric Spells (8/8/7/7/6/5/5/5/5): 1st—*bles*, *command*, *comprehend languages*, *divine favor*, *magic stone*, *magic weapon*, *sanctuary*, *summon monster I*. 2nd—*augury*, *enthral*, *find traps*, *lesser restoration*, *make whole*, *speak with animals*, *summon*

New Feat: Secret of Spellcraft

You have gained access to secret, hidden, or forgotten lore that assists you in the research of original spells.

Prerequisites: Spellcaster capable of casting 4th-level spells or higher, Knowledge (Arcana) 6+

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to Spellcraft checks but only for the purpose of researching new spells.

Special: You may only take this feat after having been taught the secret by the Temple of Viraxis or a similar cult or secret society.

priest auspiciously, with high hopes that he might one day do something of import. No one suspected what the Hidden One truly had in store for him.

Matras' devotion to Viraxis, as well as his quick mind, won him many supporters within the tightly knit Temple. It came as little surprise that he was elected high priest before his thirtieth summer. In the fifty years that followed, he led the Temple on a series of ambitious projects designed to increase their numbers, such as offering the cult's aid to scholars and historians seeking to find forgotten knowledge. While these moves offended some within the Temple (who still blamed wizards and sorcerers for the decline of the faith), they achieved positive results, bringing in new blood, like the headstrong bard Rannva Taalle. Although Matras had clearly not healed the Temple's ancient wound, he had at least staunched the flow of blood.

It was into this situation that Viraxis chose to place himself. With his power waning and his very divine existence at stake, the god of secrets sought out his one remaining high priest and infused his essence into his ancient body. The resulting avatar preserved Viraxis from oblivion and rejuvenated Davur Matras in ways other magic could not. Under the influence of the Lord of Mysteries, Matras has inspired the Temple and now leads it with vigor into the unknown future that awaits it.

Eyvindur Boman

Male Human Clr 7/Wiz 3: CR 10; HD 7d8+3d4-10; HP 34; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +2 *ring of protection*, +2 *cloak of protection*); Atk +7/+2 melee (1d4+1/Crit 19-20, +1 *dagger*); SQ None; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills: Alchemy +5, Concentration +5, Craft (calligraphy) +6, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +3, Heal +8, Knowledge (Arcana) +12, Knowledge (Religion) +9,

Listen +4, Spellcraft +11, Spot +5. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Extend Spell, Secret of Spellcraft, Skill Focus [Knowledge (Arcana)], Spell Focus (Divination).

Cleric Spells (6/5/4/3): 1st—*comprehend languages, deathwatch, divine favor, identify, obscuring mist, shield of faith*. 2nd—*find traps, silence, locate object, undetectable alignment, zone of truth*. 3rd—*invisibility purge, locate object, obscure object, speak with dead*. 4th—*divination, illusory wall, tongues*.

Wizard Spells (3/2): 1st—*detect secret doors, identify, Nystul's magic aura, spider climb*. 2nd—*detect thoughts, locate object, see invisible, tasha's hideous laughter, whispering wind*.

Possessions: +2 *ring of protection*, +2 *cloak of protection*, +1 *dagger*, *scroll of silence*, *scroll of cure light wounds (x3)*.

A stocky and unattractive man, Eyvindur Boman believes himself to be the Temple's "truest servant" as opposed to Rannva Taalle, whose position within the Temple he questions. Like Matras, Boman was born into a family of traditionalist devotees of Viraxis. His faith is strong and he has no doubt that the efforts of the Temple will restore the Shadow King to rightful place among the gods – or *his* efforts within the Temple anyway.

Boman sees the true work of the Temple to be the research of forgotten lore, the obscuring of facts best left unknown, and the development of new spells. As a wizard of minor note, he has little time for plans to include "lesser sorts" within the cult's fold, such as spies, diplomats, and common people. Boman dreams of the day when Viraxis is once again worshipped by spellcasters everywhere – the return to the glory days of the cult when the Shadow King was their undisputed patron. His obsession with the restoration of Viraxis makes him increasingly unstable and perhaps a danger to the very cause he so ardently supports.

Rannva Taalle

Female Human Brd 2/Clr 8: CR 10; HD 2d6+ 8d8-10; HP 40; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 *amulet of natural armor*); Atk +7/+1 melee (1d4+1, +1 *dagger*); SQ Bardic music, bardic knowledge; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will 11; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +6, Diplomacy +13, Gather Information +6, Heal +3, Innuendo +6, Knowledge (Arcana) +11, Knowledge (History) +4, Knowledge (Religion) +11, Listen +6, Perform (Ode) +11, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +6, Spot +5. **Feats:** Alertness, Dodge, Heighten Spell, Skill Focus [Knowledge (Arcana)], Skill Focus (Perform), Spell Focus (Divination).

Bard Spells (3) 1st—*detect secret doors, erase, identify*.

Cleric Spells (6/5/4/4): 1st—*comprehend languages, deathwatch, divine favor, identify, obscuring mist, shield of faith.* 2nd—*find traps, silence, speak with animals, undetectable alignment, zone of truth.* 3rd—*invisibility purge, locate object, obscure object, speak with dead.* 4th—*discern lies, divination, illusory wall, tongues.*

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather, +1 dagger, masterwork longsword, *potion of charisma*, +1 amulet of natural armor.

Unlike Davur Matras, Rannva Taalle was not born into the worship of Viraxis. Instead, she began her life as a bard dedicated to a popular god of knowledge. She spent her time seeking out lost arcane knowledge, hoping one day to find the location of the mysterious *Book of Secrets*, an artifact wherein all wisdom – both human and divine – can be found. Frustrated that her bardic allies who believed the quest for this mythical book pointless, Taalle turned to increasingly esoteric sources of information. Eventually, she found the lonely Temple of Viraxis.

Matras welcomed her and explained that the *Books of Secrets* did not exist at all but was a debased recollection of his master, Viraxis, Lord of Mysteries, long abandoned by mortals. Matras offered her the chance to learn the secrets of the world (and to hide them) if she would follow the Shadow King. This she did without question, becoming a fervent believer in his teachings. Now, Taalle is the “public face” of the Temple, spearheading its missionary efforts among spellcasters, diplomats, and common people alike.

Campaigning

The Temple makes an attractive patron or ally for many types of characters. Most obviously, adventurers belonging to any of the traditional groups associated with the worship of Viraxis – spies, diplomats, rogues, loremasters – might jump at the chance to serve a deity devoted to the finding and hiding of secrets. Likewise, the myth that Viraxis is the origin of mortal magic may prove compelling to arcane spellcasters, who might be drawn into the Temple by Boman’s promise of unimaginable assistance in the development of new spells and magic items.

Of course, mere interest in the Temple’s teachings may not be enough to involve many characters in its plans. Some may see assisting the cult as the means to work side by side with a god before he regains his full divinity. That fact alone will have a great deal of appeal to both the mystical and the venal. After all, would not a fallen deity reward those who aided in his ascension? Others may have more pure motives, such as taking part in an experience few mortals have had. How many people can truthfully claim to have rubbed shoulders with a god? Such an experience occurs once in a lifetime and Viraxis



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may understand more about the nature of life and death, creation and destruction than the greatest of mortal sages. Who would pass up such an opportunity?

On a more practical level, the Temple often employs adventurers and other mercenaries to undertake missions for its cause. Examples include recovering ancient tomes from lost cities, acquiring components for a new spell or magic item, and attempting to make contact with other surviving cells of the cult. If employed in such endeavors, the Temple does not expect the adventurers to be devoted to Viraxis or his cause, only that they do their job and not interfere with its goals. This may be easier said than done in some cases, since the Temple regularly seeks out knowledge and items that might be of interest to outsiders. Could adventurers resist the temptation of grabbing the legendary *Oracular Lens of Hebdomad* for themselves?

Finally, there is also the possibility that Boman and Taalle’s disputes with one another might turn violent, as each tries to outdo the other in the eyes of their divine master. In such circumstances, it is conceivable that one or the other – although Taalle is far more likely – might turn to outsiders for assistance. Should she discover the existence of the Colossus, for example, the priestess might well seek assistance to save her Temple. Under such circumstances, the characters might find themselves in the midst of a religious civil war, with the avatar of a god as the referee! Many would back away from such a situation, but others would relish the opportunities to affect both the Temple and perhaps even history itself.

Sample Scenarios

Book of Secrets

What if the legendary book that drew Taalle to the Temple really is more than a metaphor for Viraxis himself? What if she finds evidence that there is a powerful artifact that contains all the secrets both men and gods wish to hide? Mounting an expedition to

recover the *Book* would be a monumental undertaking and one sure to attract rivals and opponents. Even more importantly, what would the existence of such an artifact say about the status of Viraxis? How can he be the Lord of Mysteries when there is a book that contains secrets even he does not know?

A Simple Job

Even in its weakened state, lots of people covet the knowledge that the Temple supposedly possesses. Many would be quite willing to pay for that information. Perhaps the characters are hired by such a person to break into the Temple and steal “a small item” – a book, a letter, a key – in exchange for a fair bit of cash. But what if they are caught? Is it really wise to steal items from the home of a god?

Blood of the Gods

The true nature of Matras is unknown to many outside the Temple, but it is possible someone realizes he is the avatar of Viraxis. Because such a thing occurs so rarely, it will undoubtedly attract the envy of scholars, theologians – and would-be tyrants. What megalomaniacal villain would not want to have the power of a god under his control? Eventually, someone is bound to try to steal the essence of Viraxis for his own selfish ends. Is such a thing even possible and, if so, is it something the characters would want to allow to occur?

As an alternative...

The Temple is a Sham

There is no Viraxis. Maybe there was once, but he disappeared long ago. He certainly has not decided to incarnate himself within the body of Davur Matras. Instead, Matras and his followers are magical con men who use the Temple’s supposed knowledge of secret lore and knowledge to steal other people’s secrets to sell to interested parties. Information brokers of the highest order, Matras and his followers are not actually divine spellcasters but wizards, sorcerers, and bards who do their best to mask their true nature for the benefit of their con.

Viraxis the Villain

Perhaps Viraxis has become so enraged by his current status that his only interest is in exacting revenge upon those who betrayed him. The Temple would thus be the center of a cult dedicated to destroying wizards, sorcerers, and other practitioners of arcane magic. Instead of seeking to discover secrets and share them with the worthy, the Temple intends only to hide ancient lore and keep them from falling into the hands of “unworthy” spellcasters.

Viraxis

The god of secrets and hidden lore, Viraxis is neutral. His titles include the Lord of Mysteries, the Shadow King, and the Hidden One. Viraxis once ruled over all types of secrets, from knowledge that had been lost to that which had been deliberately hidden. His few remaining followers claim that he wrested the secrets of magic from the other gods and granted them to mortals.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Viraxis was once worshipped throughout the world, but his followers slowly turned away from him in favor of other gods and his cult faded into the mists of history. At his height, he was associated with the domains of Knowledge, Magic, and Secrets. His favored weapon is the dagger.

New Domain: Secrets

Granted Power: Free Skill Focus (Knowledge [Arcana]).

Secrets Domain Spells

- 1 Identify.** Determine single feature of magic item.
- 2 Locate Object.** Senses direction toward object (specific or type).
- 3 Obscure Object.** Masks object against divination.
- 4 Illusory Wall.** Wall, floor, or ceiling looks real, but anything can pass through.
- 5 Leomund’s Secret Chest.** Hides expensive chest on Ethereal Plane; you retrieve it at will.
- 6 Legend Lore.** Learns tales about a person, place, or thing.
- 7 Vision.** As *legend lore*, but quicker and strenuous.
- 8 Discern Location.** Exact location of a creature or object.
- 9 Screen.** Illusion hides areas from vision, scrying.

The Tribunal of Arcane Law

Magic is a wondrous thing. In the hands of a priest of the Earth Mother it can cure the sick and raise the dead. A wizard can use it to weave subtle illusions, view events occurring hundreds of miles away, or teleport across continents.

However, magic can also bring great dangers. Some of the lesser dangers are known by all: destructive spells that can exterminate entire villages, summoning spells that can expose the caster to fiends beyond their abilities to control, swords that can control the actions and even the thoughts of their wielders. Adventurers, who are more than happy to thwart evil for a sufficient helping of cold hard cash, can deal with these kinds of routine problems.

However, some threats to the peace, order, and good government of the world are too great to be dealt with in anything less than an organized fashion. When a gladiator in the Dune Pits of Karkeem is seen carrying N'Gralash and G'rone'lassh, the Devil Sword and Shield of Tyranny; when the Seven Wanderers in the night sky align, raising Zhmuda from the watery depths; when the Faceless Lord manages to retrieve the Book of Nightmares from the City of Forlorn Mists, it's too much of a risk to just hope that a group of adventurers will be handy to save the world—even assuming that the adventurers aren't the problem. At such times the Tribunal of Arcane Law has to step in.

Inside the Tribunal

The Tribunal exists to regulate the use of magic. They will not get involved in all crimes committed by wizards, just those that are so serious that they threaten to turn people against magic or transcend national interests. If the Faceless Lord wants to send his orcish armies to sack the peaceful elvish kingdom of Sylvania, the Tribunal will let him. If he summons devils to help his forces, the Tribunal will still do nothing. However, if he tries to open a permanent gate to the fifth circle of Hell so that armies of devils can spew forth onto the Prime, then the Tribunal will act. Even so, they will be more interested in making sure that the gate is never opened than in defeating the armies of the Faceless Lord. If General Grak manages to knit the armies back together after the Faceless Lord is captured—well, the world is safe from the outsiders, and that's good enough for the Tribunal.

The Tribunal does not exist primarily to make the world a better place (although some of its agents would like to do just that). Its real purpose is to help safeguard the practice of magic. Even the most reclusive and self-involved wizards know that if there was no group prepared to act, powerful evil wizards would either

manage to take control of the world (in which case they would seek to eliminate all potential rivals) or bring the practice of magic into such disrepute that its practitioners would be hunted down and persecuted.

As a secondary matter, they take a strong interest in controlling the spread of information regarding spells of mass destruction and in tracking artifacts. The Tribunal is very concerned by major artifacts with a will of their own, and with spells that have the capability to kill hundreds or thousands of people.

The Tribunal was formed over 350 years ago, after the Shadow Man moved the city of Solodovintsy into the shadow world. With an entire city wiped from the map and its population turned into undead, the mages who founded the Tribunal, including such luminaries as Prasutagus Toadmaster, Balesio of the White Spirit, and Semyon the Hermit, decided that radical action was necessary. Of the seventeen mages who initially formed the Tribunal, eight were killed in the effort to bring the Shadow Man to justice. The survivors concluded that there was a need for a permanent body to respond to such incidents, and furthermore that the agents of that body should be someone more expendable than themselves. Since then, the Tribunal has operated quietly in the background. Most practitioners of arcane magic have heard of it. Very few ever expect to attract its attention.



The Tribunal is a self-appointed body and sets its own rules for what is and is not considered a crime worthy of its attention. The Tribunal maintains close ties with the church of the God of Magic, and priests of the church have often sat as judges. The Tribunal is also allied with the rulers of most civilized countries, as they give at least lip service to the idea that magic needs to be limited for the benefit of all. Opponents of the Tribunal include most devilish and demonic cults, evil wizards seeking worldly power, and any other group likely to gain its attention.

Working for the Tribunal

Constables are typically warriors or rogues. This may seem unusual for a wizardly organization, but the Tribunal has found in the past that mages are prone to succumbing to temptation when paraded past a seemingly endless supply of powerful artifacts and forbidden lore. In addition, warriors and rogues can make extensive use of antimagic to neutralize the powers of wanted mages, where wizards would have to overcome them by brute force. The Tribunal usually only has a small number of working constables at any one time (typically 5 or 6). Most of their time is spent in the field, investigating rumors of magical activity and tracking the movement of major artifacts.

Judges are selected from the world's most august and law-abiding mages. To be considered for a seat, a candidate must receive unanimous approval of all sitting judges. As a general rule, only the most powerful mages are invited, as there is a real risk that they will become targets for any aspiring dark lord.

Crimes Against Wizardry

To understand the role of the Tribunal, it's important to realize that it doesn't try to prosecute all crimes committed by wizards. Most routine matters, including compelling people using *charm* magic, murder by magical means, and other, similar crimes of limited scope, are handled by local authorities. Most of these authorities will impose harsher sentences for crimes committed using magic.

The Tribunal limits itself to what it calls "crimes against wizardry." This includes, but is not limited to, 1) using magical spells calculated to cause unnecessary suffering; 2) wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity; 3) seizing, destroying, or willfully damaging historic monuments, works of art and learning, or institutions dedicated to religion, charity, or education; 4) using magic for enslavement; 5) granting indiscriminate or uncontrolled access to the Prime by extra-planar entities; 6) indiscriminate use of necromantic magic; 7) sacrificing souls to extra-planar entities; 8) participating in actions intended to suppress the learning of magic.

If a spellcaster is suspected of committing a crime against wizardry, a constable will quietly investigate the matter. The purpose of the investigation is to gather sufficient evidence to lay charges against them. Only after charges have been laid will a constable be authorized to make an arrest (although in emergencies this minor detail is sometimes overlooked). Once charges are laid, a magical message will be sent to the accused notifying them of the decision and informing them that they must appear to stand trial. The Tribunal is perfectly willing to conduct trials *in absentia* if necessary.

During the trial, the judges will question the witnesses directly. There is no prosecutor and no attorney for the defense. The questioning will continue until the judges determine that they have enough evidence to come to a conclusion. It is very rare for an accused defendant to be acquitted by the Tribunal, as the arrest is not usually made while matters are still in doubt. The rare exceptions tend to occur when the defendant was possessed or under magical compulsion.

Sentencing is typically harsh and takes into account that most of those accused of crimes have supernaturally enhanced lifespans or are effectively immortal. The Tribunal uses *trap the soul* to imprison the malefactor (a century is likely to be the *minimum* sentence, and sentences lasting a millennium or more have been handed out on several occasions). Executions are generally avoided as there are simply too many ways to restore somebody to life once you let their soul get away from you.

Personalities

Anjomi Greenstone

Female Human Rog10/Ws15: CR 15, Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 10d6+5d10+30; HP 96; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft, AC 22 (+5 armor, +3 shield, +4 Dex); Atks +17/+12/+7 melee (1d8+4/crit 19–20 masterwork adamantite longsword); or +19/+14/+9 ranged (1d8+6/crit 19–20 mighty composite longbow, +3 arrows) SA Sneak attack +5d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge, slippery mind, detect magic, smite spellcaster, dispel magic 2/day, nondetection, hamper spellcasting; AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +12, Will +9; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 14.

Skills: Balance +10, Bluff +6, Climb +10, Decipher Script +9, Disable Device +12, Escape Artist +12, Gather Information +14, Handle Animal +6, Hide +12, Intimidate +6, Jump +9; Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +13, Open Lock +8, Ride +6, Search +10, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +8, Spot +8, Swim +4, Tumble +14, Use Magic Device +8, Use Rope +6.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Critical (composite longbow), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Shot on the Run.



Onyx the Cat

Small magical beast, CR ½, HD ½d8, hp 4, Init +2, Spd 30, AC 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +7 Familiar); Atk: 2 claws +4 (1), bite -1 (1); SQ: Improved Evasion, speak with animals of its type, SR 18; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1. Skills: Balance +10, Climb +5, Hide+17, Listen +4, Move silently +9, Spot +4, Weapon Finesse (claw, bite).

Possessions: collar of friends (identical to a bracelet of friends), amulet of speech.

Onyx is an ordinary shorthaired black tomcat—who can talk. Onyx was the familiar of Bedrosian of the Swarming Powers. Onyx survived Bedrosian's death and has become Anjomi's new partner. While many of his familiar abilities were lost with the death of his master, Onyx is still smart enough to be very effective.

Onyx pretty much knows that he's tough enough to control any territory he happens to be in, and he's gotten used to being the boss cat. With humans, he's generally friendly and laid-back. He looks underfed (although he isn't) and is not the least bit shy about wandering around and begging for food from old ladies or anyone else who might provide it (when dealing with nobles and such, he usually proceeds to suck up to the kids). He's perfected the kind of affability that makes almost everyone like him, even people who aren't normally fond of cats. This makes him an almost perfect spy. Although Onyx can talk, he generally won't except to a trusted few.

Possessions: +2 leather armor, masterwork adamantite longsword, arrows +3, necklace of fireballs (type VII).

Anjomi Greenstone is the Tribunal's most experienced and effective constable. She was recruited after a necromancer transformed the inhabitants of an entire village (including her parents) into an undead army. She helped a Tribunal judge, Bedrosian of the Swarming Power, hunt down and capture the necromancer. She and Bedrosian worked closely together for several years until he fell under the influence Bune, the Duke of Eloquence (see *Legions of Hell*) and attempted to use the Tribunal's secrets in an attempt to gain power. Anjomi was forced to kill him.

Since Bedrosian's death, Anjomi has preferred to work with Onyx rather than take on a new partner. She will hire adventurers to perform missions for her if necessary, but will generally try to set things up so that she can keep an eye on them and will tell them no more about what is going on than strictly necessary. As a rule, she would prefer that the foe's first warning of her presence is a sense of drowsiness as the drugs take effect (the second warning should be waking up in the Citadel). It's rarely that neat, of course. She prefers to minimize collateral damage but will do whatever is necessary to complete a mission.

Anjomi is a tall (5'10"), dark-skinned, broad-shouldered woman. She is the kind of woman that often is called "handsome," with a square face, straight shoulder-length brown hair, and a wide smile. She has a sarcastic sense of humor, which she often uses to keep people at a distance, and a talent for bursting inflated egos. After Bedrosian's betrayal, she usually takes some time to warm up to people. As a rule, she gets along better with men than she does with other women. She is generally prone to bluntness, but still has a great deal of empathy for those who are suffering. When concentrating on something (or feeling impatient), she has a tendency to hum tunelessly.

She prefers using stealth to open battle. After all, she usually is outnumbered. Her *antimagic ring* and natural abilities are generally enough to get her past human and magical defenses (keep in mind that all magical alarms will not function when the ring is activated). If she can't sneak in somewhere, Onyx certainly can, and then he'll summon her with the *collar of friends*. Since the antimagic field prevents any spells from affecting her and suppresses all supernatural and spell-like abilities, it tends to severely hamper her enemies while having very little effect on her.

If surrounded, she will cheerfully make use of her *necklace of fireballs*—after all, once the beads on the necklace get outside the *antimagic field* they will work just fine, thank you, and the field keeps her safe from the explosions.

New Magic Items

Here are a few new magical items mentioned in the description of the Tribunal and it's personalities.

Antimagic Ring

This ring is usually made from adamantine and is etched with an array of magical sigils. On command, this ring allows its wearer to cast *antimagic field*.

Caster Level: 11th; *Prerequisites:* Forge Ring, *antimagic field*; *Market Price:* 118,000 gp; *Weight:* —.

Amulet of Speech

This amulet is typically hung on a collar. When worn by an animal or magical beast, it grants that creature the ability to speak and to understand a limited vocabulary appropriate to its intelligence. The creature can effectively communicate with anyone as if they were using a *speak with animals* spell.

Caster Level: 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *speak with animals*; *Market Price:* 12,000 gp; *Weight:* —.



In a fight, Onyx will dive for cover and stay there—after all, anything that's a threat to Anjomi is certainly not something he can handle! If he can't get far away from the battle he will stick close enough to Anjomi to benefit from her antimagic. If it looks like she's in serious danger, he will either use his *collar of friends* to summon her away from the fight (if she isn't using her *antimagic ring*) or to summon in assistance. The collar is also useful on missions—a sufficiently determined cat can go almost anywhere, and after all, he's just a cat...

Odd Littlestick

Gnome male Wiz6/Lor6/Rog2: CR14, Small Humanoid (3 ft. 6 in. tall), HD 2d6+6 (Rog) plus 6d4+18 (Wiz) plus 6d4+18 (Lor); hp 76; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +1 Size, +1 Dodge trick); Atks +10/+5 melee (1d4+2/crit 19–20, +3 dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion, bardic knowledge +10, greater lore; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +11; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 21, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills: Alchemy +21, Appraise +9, Concentration +9, Craft (trapmaking) +17, Decipher Script +9, Disable Device +9, Forgery +9, Gather Information +2, Hide +9, Innuendo +9, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +19, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +15, Listen +7, Move Silently +5, Open Lock +5, Scry +9, Search +9, Spellcraft +15, Spot +5, Tumble +5, Use Magic Device +6. *Feats:* Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus [Knowledge (arcana)], Spell Penetration, Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring.

Spells (4/6/5/5/4/4/2): 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, mage hand, mending, open/close, read magic.* 1st—*alarm, comprehend languages, endure elements, expeditious retreat, hold portal, identify, protection against chaos/evil/good/law, reduce, tensor's floating disk, unseen servant.* 2nd—*arcane lock, blur, locate object, magic mouth, misdirection, obscure object, resist elements, rope trick, see invisible.* 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, explosive runes, magic circle against chaos/evil/good/law, nondetection, protection from elements.* 4th—*detect scrying, dimensional anchor, dimension door, minor globe of invulnerability, rary's mnemonic enhancer, remove curse, otiluke's resilient sphere, scrying, stonewall.* 5th—*contact other plane, dismissal, fabricate, leomund's secret chest, lesser planar binding, magic jar, permanency.* 6th—*antimagic field, minor globe of invulnerability, greater dispelling, guards and wards, legend lore, planar binding, true seeing.*

Note: Odd has access to the Tribunal library and can have any additional spells the gamemaster deems appropriate.

Possessions: Highly variable. Odd keeps very little stuff for himself, so if encountered he will only have whatever

Wizard Slayer

Wizard Slayers (abbreviated Wsl) are individuals who specialize in the hunting and elimination of arcane spellcasters. They may want to kill them, or merely capture them, but in either case they are one of the most feared enemies a mage can have. The sheer power of their foes forces them to adopt a more stealthy and cautious approach than a typical warrior.

Wizard Slayers are most often fighters or rogues, although paladins and clerics may take up the task of eliminating dangerous wizards. Classes that make use of arcane magic may not become wizard slayers.

NPC wizard slayers who are found acting alone may be obsessed with revenge, hunting a particular target, or bounty hunters. When acting as part of a group, they most often ally with law enforcement agencies, acting to bring criminal mages to justice.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To qualify to become a wizard slayer, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

- **Alignment:** Any.
- **Base Attack Bonus:** +5
- **Knowledge (arcana):** 4 ranks.
- **Spellcraft:** 4 ranks.
- **Special:** Character must not be able to cast arcane spells or use arcane spell-like abilities.

Class Skills

The Wizard Slayer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Knowledge [Arcana] (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Jump (Str), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Swim (Str) and Tumble (Dex).

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency

The wizard slayer is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light, medium, and heavy armor, and shields.

Detect Magic (Sp)

At 1st level, the wizard slayer may *detect magic* at will, as per the spell.

Smite Spellcaster (Su)

Once per day, a wizard slayer of 2nd level or higher may attempt to smite an arcane spellcaster with one normal melee attack. This ability is usable against any creature that has the ability to cast arcane spells. She adds her Charisma modifier (if positive) to the Wizard Slayer's attack roll and deals 1 extra point of damage per level. If the Wizard Slayer accidentally smites a creature that cannot cast arcane spells, the smite has no effect but it is still used up for that day.

Dispel Magic (Sp)

At 2nd level, the wizard slayer may cast *dispel magic* once a day, as a sorcerer of the same level. This ability may be used twice a day when the wizard slayer reached 4th level, and three times a day at 6th level.

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Dismissal (Sp)

At 3rd level the wizard slayer gains the spell-like ability to send an extraplanar creature back to its home plane. This works as the *dismissal* spell with one important difference: the wizard slayer must hit the target with a touch attack to successfully use the ability. A wizard slayer can use this ability once per day per class level, as if cast by a sorcerer of the same level.

Nondetection (Su)

At 5th level, it becomes much harder to detect the wizard slayer by use of divination spells such as *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *locate person*, and *detection* spells. This ability also prevents location by such items as crystal balls. The caster of the divination must succeed at a caster level check of DC 15 + the wizard slayer's class level.

Suppress Spellcasting Ability (Su)

Once per day, a wizard slayer 7th level, the wizard slayer gains the ability to suppress the ability of a target to cast arcane spells. The wizard slayer must make a successful touch attack against the target to use this ability. If the attack fails the ability is used up for the day. If the attack is successful and the victim fails a Will save (DC30), the target may not cast arcane spells for 2d6 minutes.

Spell Resistance

At 8th level, the wizard slayer gets a spell resistance (SR) of 15 + Wizard Slayer level. In order to affect the wizard slayer with a spell, the spellcaster must roll the Wizard Slayer's spell resistance or higher on a roll of 1d20 + caster level.

True Sight (Su)

At 9th level, the wizard slayer gains the supernatural ability to see through magical effects as if she was under the effects of a *true sight* spell. The wizard slayer must concentrate to use this ability (this counts as a standard action but does not provoke an attack of opportunity).

Disrupt Arcane Magic (Su)

At 10th level, the wizard slayer gains the supernatural ability to disrupt all spells operating within 30 feet of her. The caster of the spell must make a caster level check against a DC of 15 + the wizard slayer's level. If this check fails the spell is affected as if by an *antimagic field*. Divine magic, magic items, supernatural abilities, and summoned creatures are not affected, although spell-like abilities and spells cast by wands or from scrolls are. Using this ability is a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Class Table: Wizard Slayer

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+1	+0	+0	+2	Detect Magic, Smite Spellcaster
2 nd	+2	+0	+0	+3	Dispel Magic 1/day
3 rd	+3	+1	+1	+3	Dismissal
4 th	+4	+1	+1	+4	Dispel Magic 2/day
5 th	+5	+1	+1	+4	Nondetection
6 th	+6	+2	+2	+5	Dispel Magic 3/day
7 th	+7	+2	+2	+5	Supress Spellcasting
8 th	+8	+2	+2	+6	Spell Resistance
9 th	+9	+3	+3	+6	True Sight
10 th	+10	+3	+3	+7	Disrupt Arcane Spellcasting

prototypes he is working on.

Odd is one of those people who looks a little bit like he was assembled out of spare parts. People are generally able to guess that he's a gnome. After all, he seems to have the usual unhealthy interest in the inner workings of magic items and machinery, but he looks strange enough that it's hard to be certain. Odd is short and thin and wears a pair of oversized glasses held together with sealing wax and string. His ears have no really discernable shape, and his dark black hair might be curly if he took any care of it at all.

Odd is generally festooned with a mix of hammers, screwdrivers, tongs, assorted gewgaws and doodads, and at least one healing potion for when experiments go badly. His arms and hands are covered with little notes to himself, mystic symbols, and equations. He is usually clean, but that's only because he has to wash off noxious chemicals on a daily basis. He also talks to himself in a high, nasal voice.

Odd is also a magical genius. This is why the Tribunal is happy to keep him around. His current favorite topic of research is the nature of antimagic, a subject that the Tribunal is eager to learn as much as possible about.

Odd's Theory of Magic

The Ethereal Plane is the plane of possibility. The Prime was carved out of the inchoate mists of the Ethereal at the beginning of time, as the gods changed what could be into what was. When cast, a magical spell creates waves in the ethereal, spreading out from the caster to the point of impact. The spell then may alter the ether in the target area so that it manifests as a single reality, or briefly "etherealize" the reality that is already present, causing it to flow into a different form.

There are exceptions to this pattern. Some spells call on planar energies from other sources. For example, summoning spells typically link to the astral plane. Other spells may contact the elemental planes, the plane of shadow, and so forth. However, the energy to power these spells is still drawn from the ethereal and a wave is still created there.

Outsiders do not actually travel to the Prime. Rather, the spell creates a body from ether for the soul of the outsider to inhabit. This is why outsiders slain while summoned to the Prime do not die permanently but are banished. The act of destroying the created body creates a disruptive resonance that prevents the creature from returning to another created body for a period of time (typically a century).

This theory of waves is critical to understanding the nature of countermagic and antimagic. Countermagic works by overlaying another, exactly opposite, wave

over the wave created by the original spell. The two waves cancel each other out, leaving nothing behind. This is why counterspells must be identical to the spell they are countering. *Dispel magic* works by adapting itself to exactly counter the wave of the other spell—however, the wizard casting the spell must be able to determine the exact nature of the spell being countered or the spell will fail.

Antimagic, on the other hand, generates something akin to "white noise," disrupting the functioning of all spells within its area of effect. The wave pattern of the spell is suppressed but not damaged. The body created for outsiders (who have been summoned) has its pattern suppressed, but the standing wave will begin to function again as soon as the antimagic disruption passes by.

Planes other than the Prime may have no direct contact with the Ethereal, but magic continues to work there. This is because other planes are in a sense less "real" than the Prime (that is, after all, *why* it is the Prime). These alternate planes represent incarnations of very specific aspects of reality, such as the elements, or particular moral and ethical structures. They exist as building blocks from which the reality of the Prime is constructed. In other words, they are halfway between the raw, unformed potentiality of the Ethereal and the manifest form that is the Prime, and the "matter" of these planes is subject to direct magical manipulation.

The Citadel

The Citadel serves as the headquarters of the Tribunal, as a storehouse for artifacts and ancient tomes, and as the place to hold trials and imprison those convicted. The Citadel can be located anywhere the gamemaster wishes: on a remote island, deep beneath the surface of the earth, on top of a cloud, or on another plane entirely. The important thing is that that it should be inaccessible by normal means. Random groups of travelers will never stumble across it. The only practical way to get to the Citadel is to travel there magically.

Holding Cells

Holding cells are required to keep prisoners captive until the time of their trial. The holding cell is enclosed in an antimagic field, which prevents any magical spells, transportation, or communication from passing through the cell to the outside and prevents any magical attempts to damage the cell. There are 12 cells, with one cell sized to hold a gargantuan creature.

Courtroom

The passage between the holding cells and the courtroom is enchanted with an antimagic field, as is the courtroom itself. The judges are seated along one wall of the courtroom. The prisoner dock is off to one side.

New Spell: Mists of Undeath

Necromancy

Level: Sor/Wiz 8

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft + 10 ft/level)

Effect: 25 ft. + 5 ft./ 2 levels radius cloud, up to 20 ft. high

Duration: See text

Saving Throw: See text

Spell Resistance: Yes

Mists of undeath is a particularly vile necromantic spell invented by Garoa of the Ethereal Tongue. When the spell is cast, black mists that smell of rot and decay billow forth from a point specified by the caster.

The mists kill any living creature with 3 or fewer HD (no save) and cause creatures with 4 to 6 HD to make Fortitude saves or die. Living creatures above 6 HD and creatures who make their saving throws take 1d10 points of damage each round while they breathe the mists.

The mists move away from the caster at 10 feet per round, rolling along the surface of the ground. The mists are not heavier than air, so creatures in sinkholes or below ground may not be affected.

The bodies of any creatures slain by the spell are turned into zombies which remain under the caster's control indefinitely. The caster may control a maximum of 2 HD of undead created by this spell per caster level, leaving the remainder uncontrolled. The statistics of the zombies are dependent on the size of the creature when it was alive.

The mists last for 1 minute per caster level. The zombies created by the spell are permanent until slain.

Material Component: The last breath of a murderer.

Judge's Chambers

Each judge has a small room set aside for their own personal use. The rooms are protected against divination and scrying. Decorations range from the ascetic to the luxurious, although none of the judges ever resides in the Citadel.

Constable's Quarters

Each constable has a small living area to themselves, with a bedroom, additional living space, and an arrival room. Right now there are six constables, but the Citadel has space for ten. Each constable's room is decorated in whatever style the constable chooses, but like the judges the constables are rarely present in the Citadel unless they have specific business there.

Arrival Rooms

Each constable and each judge has a private arrival room. The arrival room guarantees that there are never any accidents when a constable magically transports into the building. The largest arrival room is big enough to accommodate a dragon.

Gymnasium

A chamber where the constables can exercise, practice their sword-fighting and archery, and so forth. There is a small weapon rack for practice weapons.

The Lab

This is where Odd carries on his experiments in antimagic. The room contains a plethora of strange, half completed devices, including such things as: a glider concealable in a backpack which can be activated at the touch of a button; a clockwork lockpicker; giant automated rapid-fire crossbows; steam-powered plate armor; and so forth. The lab is blast-reinforced for those occasions when Odd's experiments go explosively wrong.

Odd's Chambers

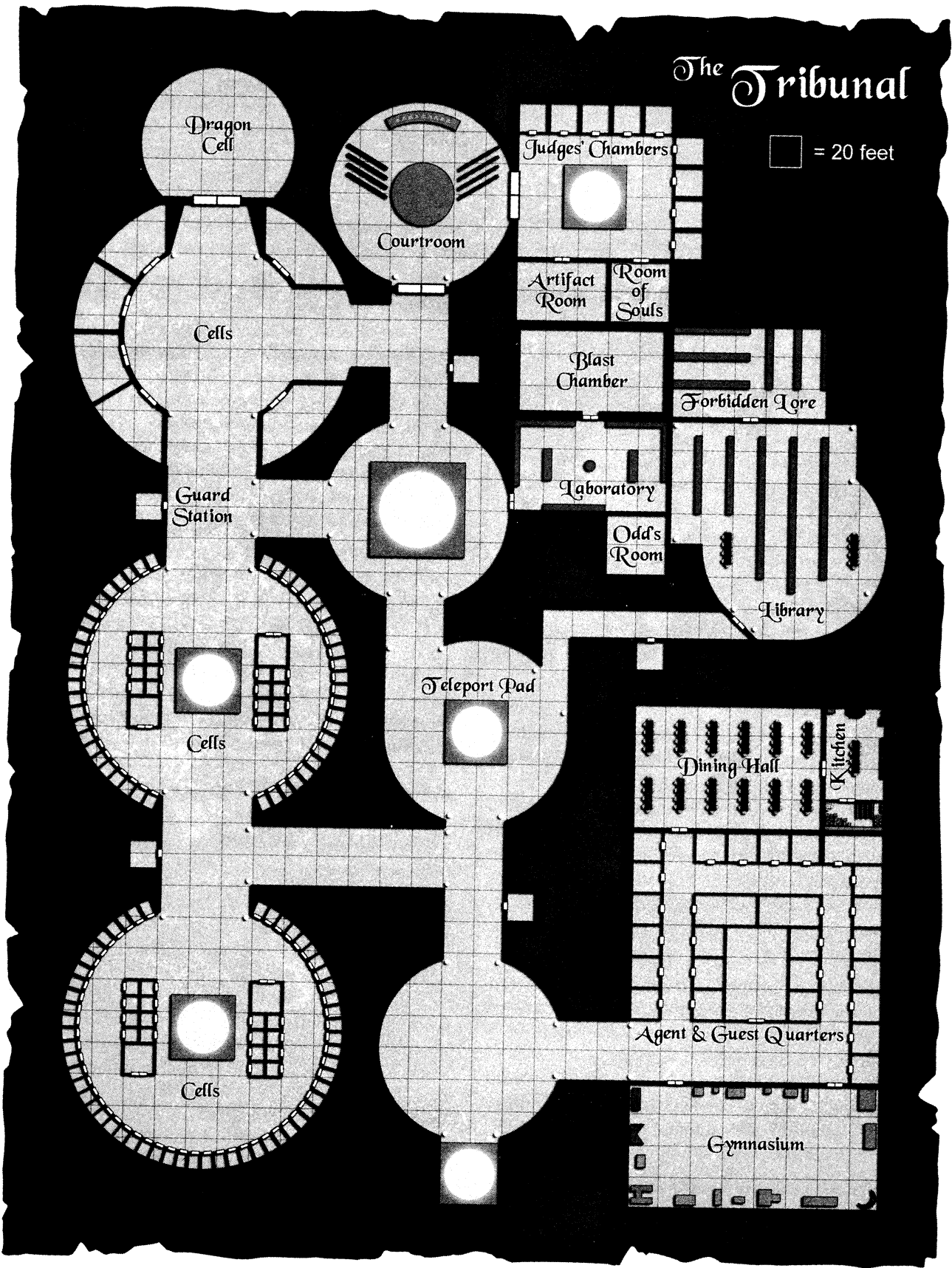
Odd Littlestick's chambers are very much like Odd. They emit a faint, vaguely unpleasant smell that comes from unwashed dishes sitting out on the table for weeks on end. Inside, the room is actually free of insects, because Odd has managed to invent a device that fires a toothpick at any vermin it detects. This can be somewhat disconcerting to visitors, of course – not that Odd minds that particularly. Books, papers, small devices, and clothing are scattered more or less at random about this room. It's a wonder even Odd can find anything in all of the mess.

Library

The library is both more and less than one might expect from a group like the Tribunal. It contains only general works on magical theory, and very little in the way of spellbooks. However, it is probably the world's foremost collection of dark and forbidden lore, as it contains all such tomes from wizards imprisoned by the Tribunal. Ever since Bedrosian was seduced by the works held in the library, mages may only review the works under the supervision of a constable.

The Tribunal

□ = 20 feet



Room of Souls

This is where the prisoners are kept. Each gem is kept in a locked metal box with the prisoner's name and the date the sentence will end engraved on the front. No magical effects of any form may penetrate the walls of this room, although magic is not suppressed inside the room.

Chamber of Artifacts

This room is where magical artifacts are kept under lock and key. Although the room is suffused by an antimagic field, this is not always enough to suppress the magical effects generated by the artifacts. To prevent incidents, no person is allowed to enter the room alone.

Campaigning

In their default role, the Tribunal serves best as a patron that can be used to get the PCs into an adventure. It will often hire adventuring parties (although only ones with a reputation for reliability—parties with paladins or clerics of lawful good deities are generally preferred) to seek out major artifacts and books of forbidden lore. The agents of the Tribunal are too few to risk on dungeon crawling missions, after all. The adventurers will generally be offered fair payment for the artifact. Of course, any other treasure they get is theirs to keep. The Tribunal will also at times offer rewards for the capture of a wanted criminal.

Gamemasters need to be careful with groups like the Tribunal, as if misused they can make players feel like their characters are largely irrelevant. After all, if they fail to stop the forces of evil, there's no harm done, as the Tribunal will just step in. Another problem that can come up is the "glued to the chair" syndrome, where by all logic a powerful NPC *should* assist the player characters, and in fact *could* do so with fairly minimal effort, but won't because said NPC apparently has something more interesting to do.

For the most part, adventurers will probably prefer to keep a certain distance from the Tribunal. Their liberal use of antimagic works reasonably well for them, largely because it inconveniences their enemies even more than it does them. However, most adventurers are very dependent on magic, and would certainly not be pleased to regularly be deprived of the use of their cool toys.

The Tribunal can also be used to handle PCs who have gotten hold of a severely unbalancing magic item. Keep in mind that while the Tribunal has good intentions, they are not concerned with making the world a utopia. They are concerned with keeping powerful magic and outsiders from disrupting the world.

Keep in mind when using the Tribunal that they have access to some very powerful magic indeed. For instance, antimagic severely tips the balance of a game in favor of warriors and rogues if they are willing to dispense with their toys (although many players will be unable to get over that psychological barrier).

Sample Scenarios

The Book of Tears

A mysterious woman comes up to the adventurers in a bar. She tells them of a lost treasure that she wants them to recover...

The Prison Break

The Citadel is the world's greatest repository for magical artifacts, spells of mass destruction, forbidden lore, and agents of evil (or rarely, good). Rather than hunt through obscure riddles in lost tomes to track down the location of the city of City of Forlorn Mists, some aspiring dark lord will eventually figure out that the Citadel is the best place to get cool stuff. When they do, they will have to begin looking for a way in.

A successful prison break is quite possibly the greatest disaster that could befall the world. Inside the Citadel are tomes detailing spells of mass destruction, artifacts powerful enough to level cities, and servants of evil with the knowledge to use them. There is no real danger that the prisoners inside the Room of Souls could ever learn to co-operate with each other, but their raw power is great enough to plunge the world into a new dark age.

As an alternative...

The Tribunal is Duped

If the GM chooses to use this version, one or more of the Judges has also been corrupted by Bune, and sacrificed Bedrosian in order to conceal his change in alignment from the rest of the Tribunal. In this scenario, the Judge will use the Tribunal to eliminate potential competitors to his master and deliberately point them away from Bune's activities. He will also try to expand the Tribunal to bring in as many of the world's heroes as possible (probably including the PCs), with the intention of learning as much as possible about their strengths and weaknesses. When the time is right, Bune will strike, eliminating most of the heroes who would otherwise try to stop him...

Other Alternatives

While the Tribunal as presented here is essentially a good organization, there is no reason a group like this has to be. The Tribunal might be actively evil, using the same tactics to eliminate the champions of good.

The School Beyond the Veil

The School Beyond the Veil

In recent years, chapters of an institution calling itself the “School Beyond the Veil” have begun to spring up across the civilized lands. Started by a group of retired adventurers a quarter century ago, the schools are the best place for a warrior to go to learn the art of man-to-man combat. Frequented by gladiators, adventurers, elite guards, and generals, the Schools have also become the place for the socially ambitious to hang out to prove their prowess. Many of these will choose to spend some time as acolytes of the School, trading a term of service for the near-guarantee of a prestigious post in the military or city guard.

Each School Beyond the Veil trains warriors in the rudiments of battle magic. The Schools don’t teach magic that replaces the traditional warrior arts—trainees will not learn how to summon lightning or hurl bolts of arcane energy. Rather, they learn how to use magic in subtle ways to enhance their own fighting skills, how to cast magic spells while wearing armor, and how and when to use it in battle.

Inside the School

The Schools Beyond the Veil are a front for a far more sinister organization—the Moon Wraith Sect. The Moon Wraith Sect is a secretive group of warriors who are devoted to gaining power across several nations. Their adepts can be found among royal guardsmen, generals, and bodyguards of important figures. Where they can, they are prepared to work behind the scenes to control events. Where they cannot, they lead military coups. They are also working to find adepts among the humanoid tribes, with the intention of building an army when the time is right.

Three thousand years ago, the Moon Wraiths were the elite warriors of the Hakshuqan Empire. From their capital in Saqallya, the Princes of Wisdom ruled what had been the greatest empire the world had ever seen (at least until that date), until the Empire began to fall into decline. A series of succession crises and weak leaders allowed the barbarian tribes on the fringes of the Empire to invade her borders. As the Empire collapsed, the leader of the Moon Wraith Sect, Ksathra of the Three Fires, overthrew the Princes and instituted military rule. For a few short years he even seemed to be winning—but the great barbarian hero Jasha put an end to that, penetrating the headquarters of the Sect and killing Ksathra in a battle that has been immortalized in the epic poem *The Tale of Jasha the King*. The Sect and the Empire collapsed and were largely forgotten to history. Thirty years ago, however, Ksathra of the Three Fires once again made his presence felt in mortal affairs and the Moon Wraith Sect returned (see **Ksathra**, page 56).

The “Veil” is commonly assumed by the uninitiated to be the veil that separates the past from the future. It’s not. The veil is the veil between life and death. The Moon Wraiths

believe that the art of the warrior is fundamentally entwined with death. Many would agree with that, but the Sect then concluded that the next logical step is for a warrior to embrace death without compunction or restriction. Again, not unprecedented—except that by “embrace death” they mean “practice the necromantic arts”. The Moon Wraith Sect focuses its efforts on divination and manipulation of negative energy. Its most powerful members learn to transform themselves into undead. The Moon Wraith Sect does not practice necromancy *per se*. Their interest does not lie in raising the dead, but rather in tapping the negative energy that powers unlife for use in battle.

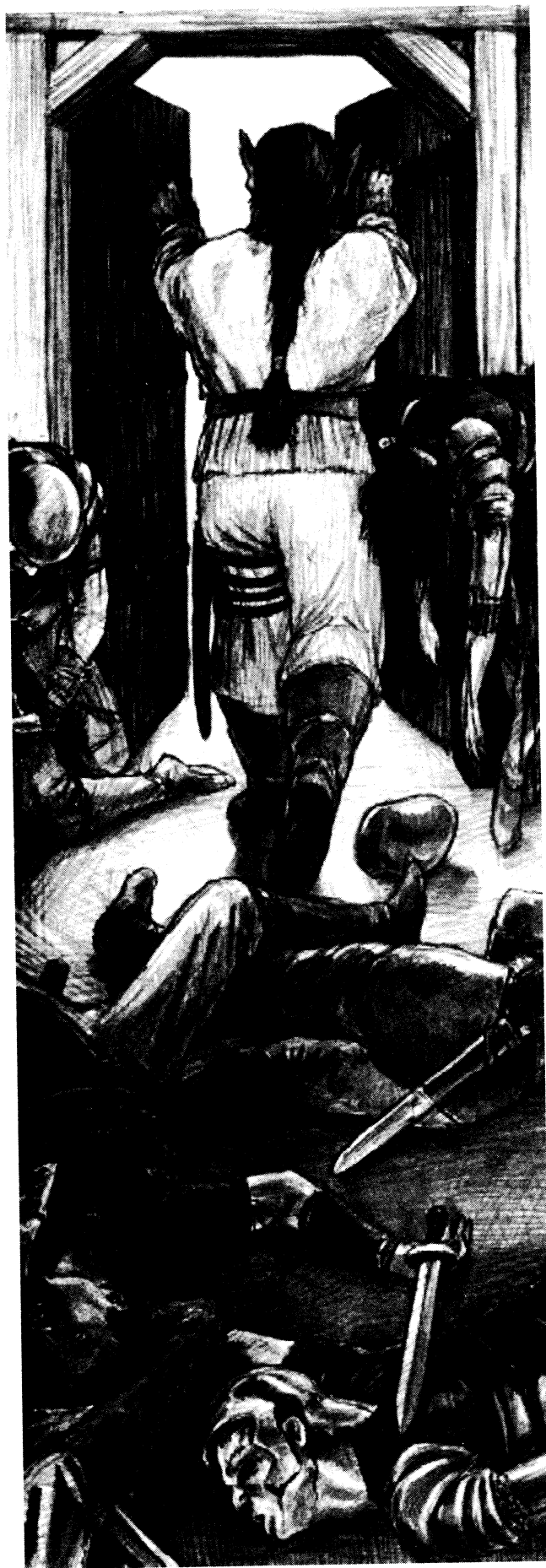
According to the sect’s teachings, matter becomes alive through the introduction of positive or negative energy. Of the two, negative energy is clearly the more powerful, as all things eventually die, but positive energy keeps finding new entrances into the world. Given a choice between the “weak but numerous” and the “powerful but few”, however, the Sect argues that the latter is clearly better for the individual.

Hierarchy

Trainees make up the lowest level of the School’s hierarchy. The trainees are the humans, demihumans and humanoids who come to the School to learn specific fighting techniques and military discipline, as well as the gladiatorial fighters under contract to the school. Most trainees live a strictly regimented life during their time at the school, rising at the crack of dawn and engaging in drills, exercises and meditation until shortly before sundown, with one day a week granted for rest. Occasionally, an aristocrat or wealthy warrior may come to the school for training in a specific technique without being put through these paces.

Above the trainees are the **acolytes**. Acolytes have begun to learn the specific secrets of the Moon Wraith Sect but are kept unaware of the purpose behind the Sect and its history. Acolytes are sent on minor missions for the Sect in order to prove themselves to the leadership. If they don’t impress the local schoolmaster, they will simply never be fully initiated into the Sect. To progress, an acolyte must demonstrate fearlessness, discipline, ruthless obedience to the dictates of the Sect, and an arrogant conviction that the Sect’s fighting style is the best in the world.

Initiates begin to study the real secrets of the Sect. They will be sent to the temple in order to study under Ksathra’s tutelage for a time. Once he is satisfied that they are sufficiently skilled and loyal to the Sect and the ideals of Hakshuqan civilization he will send them back out into the world. They will be assigned to schools to assist in



infiltrating the power structure of a city or to train as potential schoolmasters themselves. Initiates begin to learn the art of *awanatawi* (see **Teachings** on the next page)

Disciples are the highest level in the Sect below Ksathra (so far, he has not been willing to teach the secrets of the final level of mastery to any member of the Sect). Disciples are generally given a free hand to carry out the objectives assigned to them as they see fit, whether that be to found and run a School, to persuade the ruler of a kingdom to hire humanoid mercenaries, or to overthrow a paladin king and replace her with a weak-willed inbred aristocrat. Disciples are taught the inner secrets of the Sect, beginning with the power to rise from the grave after being slain in battle.

Activities

The School Beyond the Veil

Schools are established in major cities, each under the direction of a schoolmaster. The schoolmaster is always a Moon Wraith Adept and is responsible for directing the infiltration of the power structures of that city as well as getting the school off the ground.

The first step in the infiltration process is the establishment of the school itself. A suitable building must first be purchased or built. At the same time, a group of potential warrior candidates must be identified. The strategy for accomplishing this varies, but may include purchasing the candidates as slaves for use in the gladiatorial arenas, striking a deal to train the army or a mercenary company, or simply recruiting on the streets. The School always makes a point of working with groups that are likely to attract the power-hungry and disciplined, without looking like it is trying to assemble a private army. In fact, the Schools are doing nothing of the sort—they are trying to identify promising candidates to become adepts. As a school begins to graduate adepts, it will use its abilities to place its agents into the military of the city, in positions of power in the city guard, and other places of influence.

Among the Humanoids

The humanoid tribes are where the Sect goes to raise private armies. Their method of infiltrating a tribe is much more forthright than it is in the cities. They simply walk up to the chief (demonstrating their martial prowess along the way as much as necessary) and offer to train the tribe's warriors in return for the tribe swearing allegiance to the Sect. If the chief rejects the offer, it will be repeated shortly thereafter to his successor. The Sect is careful to limit their activities to well-ordered and organized tribes.

Once the offer is accepted, the tribe will be required to construct a training area, similar to a typical school. Groups of tribesmen will be taken to the training area and given one month of training. Those that show promise will continue their training, while the others will return to the tribe. The Sect typically gathers the entire fighting

strength of the tribe together at least once a month in order to get them used to fighting together as an army.

A weakness of the Sect's approach is that they take little effort to conceal their presence in the wilderness. The tribes they work with typically become more disciplined, resulting in more effective raiding of civilized lands and unwelcome attention from adventurers. In a way, this feeds into the Sect's master plan. Eventually, they hope to use the influence gathered by adepts in the Schools to have the tribes hired by other countries as mercenary guards.

Objectives

The overall goal of the Sect is total world domination in order to save the world from the scourge of barbarism. Far from being the natural state of mankind, the Sect sees barbarism as the greatest limit to growth. Only in the context of a civilized state can one begin the quest for self-perfection that is the hallmark of the truly great. It is the responsibility of those who do not have the strength of character to find self-perfection to support those who do.

The secondary goal of the Sect is to restore the glory that was Hakshuqa. It hardly matters that none of them remember Hakshuqa, or even know much about it. What this really means is a regimented society in which warriors and wizards make up the top of the social pyramid, with the Sect uniting the two at the apex, working to perfect their bodies and souls.

These two beliefs allow the Sect to justify its work among the humanoid tribes. They see their work as civilizing potential barbarians, teaching them to respect and try to participate in the lost glories of the past. Furthermore, since almost all of the other races have forgotten Hakshuqa, or at the very least do not participate in its ideals, the Sect sees the humanoids as only marginally worse.

Ksathra has a third, hidden objective. He wants to restore Hakshuqa—not as an ideal, or as a recreation, but to bring the people of the empire back from the dead and have them walk the earth again. This will require necromantic magic more powerful than any known. It's an insane goal—but that will not stop Ksathra from trying.

Teachings

The School teaches three distinct fighting styles to its students. The first two can be learned by anyone who attends the school, but the third is only available to members of the Moon Wraith Sect.

Awshawi

The most basic, *awshawi* or “the art of active defense”, was once taught to the bodyguards of the Princes of Wisdom. It has become the basic style taught to trainees and gladiators, laying the foundation for more advanced techniques. Awshawi uses a single weapon in the fighter's primary hand, leaving the off hand free for grappling,

New Combat Feats

Improved Subdual Damage

You have been trained to render opponents unconscious rather than killing them.

Prerequisite: Expertise.

Benefit: You do +2 subdual damage.

Minor Combat Magic

You have been trained by the School Beyond the Veil in some of the basics of spellcasting.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 10+

Benefit: You may cast the 0-level arcane spells *guidance* (self only), and *mage hand* once per day each. You suffer the normal arcane spell failure chance for any armor you may wear. These spells are cast as a 1st level sorcerer unless you have a higher arcane spellcasting class level.

Special: This feat is only taught to students of the School Beyond the Veil.

Opportunity Knocks

You have been specially trained to recognize moments when your opponent's guard is down, allowing you to strike when others cannot.

Prerequisite: Combat Reflexes

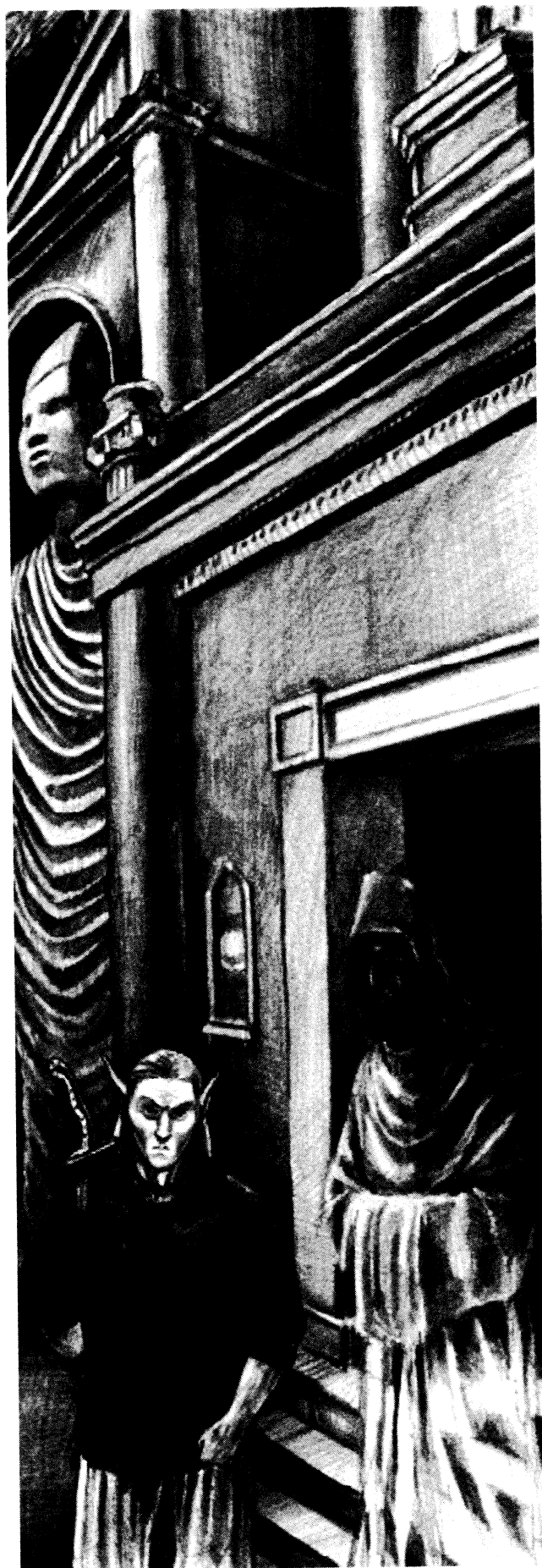
Benefit: You may make an attack of opportunity when an opponent moves through your threatened area, even when the opponent has a feat, skill, or extraordinary ability that normally prevents this (e.g. a character with the Spring Attack feat moves through your threatened area). This does not provide you with an additional attack of opportunity in a round beyond those allowed by the Combat Reflexes feat, nor in situations that do not normally allow attacks of opportunity (such as being charged by a foe).

Special: This feat is only taught to students of the School Beyond the Veil.

disarming, and arcane gesturing. Skilled practitioners can often win battles without having to fatally wound their opponents, leaving them free to be questioned later.

Awshawi teaches the following feats and skill: Dodge; Expertise; Improved Disarm; Improved Trip; Sense Motive: 2 ranks.

A character who learns the above requirements receives the Improved Subdual Damage feat (see sidebar) for free.



Awchamwaqa

The next style, *awchamwaqa* or “the art of awareness” begins the initiation of the student into the use of minor arcane abilities. It focuses on prediction of the enemy’s actions. The Schools teaches this art to potential initiates. They must learn to size up an enemy’s abilities and predict his actions using both gut instinct and spells.

Awchamwaqa teaches the following feats and skill: Combat Reflexes; Improved Initiative; Opportunity Knocks; Minor Combat Magic; Concentration: 4 ranks.

A character who learns all of the feats and skills listed above receives the Combat Casting feat for free.

Awanatawi

The final style of the Sect, *awanatawi* or “the art of death” represents the true style of the Moon Wraith Sect. It is only taught to those who have been initiated into the Sect and makes use of negative energy to grant the adept powers. It is incorporated into the moon wraith adept prestige class on the facing page.

Personalities

Ksathra of the Three Fires

Male Human (ghost) Mnk6/Ftr4/Mwa10: CR 22, Medium-size Undead (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 20d12; HP 133; Init +9 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd fly 30 ft (perfect); AC 22 when manifested, 19 when ethereal (+4 monk, +5 Dex); Atks +20/+15/+10 melee (1d8+2/crit 20, unarmed); SA Corrupting touch, corrupting gaze, *chill touch* at will; SQ Undead qualities, malevolence, rejuvenation, +4 turn resistance, unarmed strike, stunning attack, evasion, foretell results 3/day, uncanny dodge, energy drain; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +18, Will +16; Str 13, Dex 20, Con –, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills: Balance +12, Climb +8, Concentration +12, Hide +20, Jump +12, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (Hakshuqa) +12, Listen +15, Move Silently +8, Search +12, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +6, Spot +13, Tumble +20.

Feats: Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Subdual Damage, Improved Trip, Minor Combat Magic, Mobility, Opportunity Knocks, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Weapon Focus (Unarmed Attacks), Weapon Specialization (Unarmed Attacks), Whirlwind Attack.

Spells (cast 4/4/3/2/2): Ksathra knows all spells available to a moon wraith adept.

Possessions: none.

Until thirty years ago, Ksathra’s ghost walked the halls of the now desolate temple of the Moon Wraith Sect, bemoaning his failure and plotting to slay those who had brought him down. That all changed when a small group

Moon Wraith Adept

Fighters and rangers are the most likely to join the Moon Wraith Sect in order to enhance their already formidable combat abilities. Paladins may not join the sect due to alignment restrictions, although some who have strayed from the path of justice may find the discipline of the Sect appealing. Rogues rarely join as the rigid self-control required of an adept is difficult for them. The same problem should hold true for barbarians, but in fact the Sect tends to go out of its way to recruit them. Some spellcasters with a particularly martial bent may find their way into the Sect, although few have the interest in personal combat necessary for an effective Adept.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a moon wraith adept, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

- **Alignment:** Any non-good and non-chaotic.
- **Sense Motive:** 4 ranks
- **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Minor Combat Magic
- **Special:** The moon wraith adept must have trained at a School Beyond the Veil and must have become an acolyte in the Sect. Aspiring adepts are generally assigned a task to complete by the Sect before they will be permitted to learn the secrets of the moon wraith adepts.

Class Skills

The Moon Wraith Adept's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Concentration (Int), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge [Any (Int)], Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Swim (Str) and Tumble (Dex).

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency

The Moon Wraith Adept is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, light armor, and shields.

Spells

A moon wraith adept casts arcane spells. The moon wraith adept casts these spells without needing to memorize them beforehand or keep a spellbook. Moon wraith adepts receive bonus spells for high Intelligence, and to cast a spell a moon wraith adept must have a Intelligence score at least equal to 10 + the level of the spell. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a moon wraith adept's spell is 10 + the spell's level + the moon wraith adept's Intelligence modifier.

The moon wraith adept may choose two spells from the following list for each level gained in the prestige class.

1st—*cause fear, cure light wounds, chill touch, expeditious retreat, feather fall, jump, magic weapon, ray of enfeeblement, remove fear, silent image, sleep, true strike, ventriloquism.*

2nd—*blur, bull's strength, cat's grace, cure moderate wounds, endurance, ghoulish touch, lesser restoration, levitate, minor image, misdirection, scare, spectral hand, undetectable alignment, zone of truth.*

3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, cure serious wounds, displacement, gentle repose, greater magic weapon, haste, halt undead, keen edge, major image, nondetection, vampiric touch.*

4th—*arcane eye, charm monster, contagion, cure critical wounds, death ward, detect scrying, enervation, fear, greater magical weapon, restoration, scrying, stonewall.*

5th—*animate dead, contact other plane, false vision, magic jar, prying eyes, slay living.*

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Opportunity Knocks

At 1st level, the moon wraith adept receives the Opportunity Knocks feat for free.

Foretell Results (Su)

At 2nd level, the moon wraith adept gains the supernatural ability to foretell the outcome of any skill check or attack roll once per day. You must state that you are using this ability before you begin to resolve the action. After making all rolls associated with the action (such as the skill check, attack roll and damage roll) you may choose to keep the results or choose another action to perform instead. The moon wraith adept may use this ability twice per day at 4th level, and three times a day at 6th.

Evasion (Ex)

At 2nd level, a moon wraith adept gains evasion. If exposed to any effect that normally allows him to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage (such as a fireball), he takes no damage with a successful saving throw. The evasion ability can only be used if the moon wraith adept is wearing light armor or no armor.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex)

Starting at 3rd level, the moon wraith adept gains the extraordinary ability to react to danger before his senses would normally allow him to even be aware of it. At 2nd level and above, he retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. (He still loses any Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.) At 5th level, the moon wraith adept can no longer be flanked, since he can react to opponents on opposite sides of him as easily as he can react to a single attacker. This defense denies rogues the ability to use flank attacks to sneak attack the moon wraith adept. The exception to this defense is that a rogue at least 4 levels higher than the moon wraith adept can flank him (and thus sneak attack him). At 10th level, the moon wraith adept gains an intuitive sense that alerts him to danger from traps, giving his a +1 bonus to Reflex saves made to avoid traps. If the moon wraith adept has another class that grants the uncanny dodge ability, add together all the class levels of the classes that grant the ability and determine the character's uncanny dodge ability on that basis.

Initiation

The School Beyond the Veil will teach acolytes up to 4th level as a Moon Wraith Adept. Beyond that point it is impossible to advance further in this class without becoming a full-fledged initiate of the Sect. Once formally inducted, the initiate becomes immune to being surprised and may always take a partial action in a surprise round. Following initiation, the student will begin learning awanatawi. The powers of this fighting style are detailed below. Awanatawi is not a group of feats, like the other fighting styles, but rather a set of supernatural abilities learned by the adept as he advances in level through the prestige class.

Chilling Touch (Sp)

At 5th level, the moon wraith adept may use *chill touch* at will. This is a spell-like ability.

Disciple (Su)

On reaching 7th level, the moon wraith adept becomes a disciple. A disciple is fully initiated into the sect, and is taught the secret of rising after death. If a disciple is slain, the body will rise as a moon wraith at the next full moon. This will not occur if the body is destroyed.

Negative Plane Protection (Su)

At 8th level, the moon wraith adept is no longer affected by attacks that drain experience levels or ability scores.

Energy drain (Su)

On reaching 9th level, the moon wraith adept gains the ability to drain 1d4 temporary experience levels from an opponent using a touch attack. This is a supernatural ability and may be used a number of times per day equal to the adept's Intelligence modifier (if positive) +1.

Master (Su)

On reaching 10th level, the moon wraith adept is guaranteed immortality until all their worldly tasks are complete. The master transforms into a Moon Wraith, a form of undead. Apply the Moon Wraith Template (see sidebar). A master will rise as a ghost if his body is somehow destroyed.

Class Table: Moon Wraith Adept

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per day				
						1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
1 st	+1	+0	+2	+2	Opportunity Knocks	1				
2 nd	+2	+0	+3	+3	Foretell Results 1/day, Evasion	2				
3 rd	+3	+1	+3	+3	Uncanny Dodge	2	1			
4 th	+4	+1	+4	+4	Foretell Results 2/day, Initiate	2	2			
5 th	+5	+1	+4	+4	Chilling Touch	2	2	1		
6 th	+6	+2	+5	+5	Foretell Results 3/day	3	2	2		
7 th	+7	+2	+5	+5	Disciple	3	2	2	1	
8 th	+8	+2	+6	+6	Negative Plane Protection	3	3	2	2	
9 th	+9	+3	+6	+6	Energy Drain	3	3	2	2	1
10 th	+10	+3	+7	+7	Master	3	3	3	2	2

of looters who had followed the clues in *The Tale of Jasha the King* finally managed to locate the ruins of the temple. On encountering them, Ksathra offered to teach them his fighting skills if they would serve him. They agreed, and the Moon Wraith Sect entered the world again, disguised as the School Beyond the Veil.

Ksathra is obsessed with world domination; this desire has sustained him in undeath and remains all he can think about. He really has no other interests and will never do anything that he doesn't think will help him achieve his goal. His only fear is that Jasha will somehow return to defeat him. Ksathra is aware that many years have passed since the fall of the Sect but has only a limited understanding of the changes that have happened in the world. Eventually, he will realize that his ghostly status makes it effectively impossible for him to really rule the world, since he cannot leave the Temple.

Tintuviel Ilerthian

Male Elf Bbn9/Mwa7: CR 16, Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 9d12+9 (Bbn) plus 7d8+7 (Mwa); HP 107; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft, AC 20 (+4 bracers of armor, +3 ring of protection, +3 Dex); Atks +24/+19/+14/+9 melee (2d6+8/crit 17–20, +3 spell storing greatsword); SA *Chill touch* at will; SQ Fast movement, uncanny dodge, rage 3/day, foretell results 3/day, evasion, immune to sleep, +2 to saves vs. enchantment magic, low-light vision; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +8; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +14, Climb +14, Concentration +8, Handle Animal +4, Hide +10, Intimidate +8, Jump +14, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Listen +10, Ride (horse) +10, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +6, Swim +14, Tumble +10, Wilderness Lore +3. **Feats:** Cleave, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Minor Combat Magic, Opportunity Knocks, Power Attack.

Spells (cast 3/2/2/1): 1st—*cure light wounds, feather fall, jump, true strike*; 2nd—*bull's strength, ghoul touch, levitate, undetectable alignment*; 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, haste, keen edge, nondetection*; 4th—*cure critical wounds, fear*.

Possessions: *Boots of speed, gloves of arrow snaring, +3 ring of protection, +4 bracers of armor, +3 spell storing greatsword.*

Tintuviel has been a thief, a raider, a privateer, a guardsman and a general—everything except a King. Perhaps one day he will be that, too. He is in charge of the school in the campaign city. He rarely attends the school itself, leaving the place to be run by his assistant. He stops by for a few days a month to look in on the students and pick out any especially promising candidates for initiation into the Sect.

Tintuviel lived in an elven village that was wiped out by orcs. This taught him that the strong survive by crushing the weak and drinking beer to celebrate. Tintuviel has nothing but contempt for those weaker than himself. He generally forces his subordinates to match his own punishing pace. He believes that other elves are soft and weak, having respect for races that admire strength like dwarves, humans, and humanoids.

School Trainee

Male Human Mnk1/Ftr1: CR2, Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d6+1d10; HP 14; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 Wis); Atk +2 melee(1d6+1/crit 20, unarmed) or +4 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, masterwork light crossbow); SA Evasion, stunning attack, flurry of blows; AL Any (usually non-good); SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +6, Hide +6, Jump +5, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +4, Tumble +6. **Feats:** Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm.

Possessions: Masterwork light crossbow, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, 1 *potion of cat's grace*, 1 *potion of heroism*.

The School Trainee is typically taught awshawi as the first stage in the learning process. Awshawi students can be found in the gladiatorial arenas or working as bodyguards for rich merchants.

A Typical School

The layout of each school varies, but as a general rule, they will each contain all of these elements. The neighborhood around the schools typically are filled with businesses of interest to warriors, including smithies, taverns, and warehouses.

Schoolmaster's Quarters

These are decorated in whatever style is preferred by the local schoolmaster. The room is generally comfortable but is never opulent. The schoolmaster is provided with a bed, closet, weapon rack, and a small area to exercise privately in. Tintuviel's room includes a grisly exhibit: the skulls of those of his enemies who gave him a particularly hard time in battle.

Office

The schoolmaster's office is used to store any payments collected by the school. The payments are kept in a safe to avoid theft. The safe usually contains about 1,000 gold pieces.

Exercise/Training Area

This open space allows the trainees to learn the skills taught by the school. Typical training devices include:

- An arrow-dodging range. Characters practicing here must make a Reflex save (DC 20) each round or be struck by a padded arrow for 1d6 subdual damage.
- A set of beams, organized into four adjacent squares. Each square is 10' long per side. The beams are six inches wide and set 5 feet above the ground. A character who makes a successful Balance check at a DC of 15 may move along the beams at half speed. Making a DC of 20 allows the character to move normally. Failing the check

means that the character cannot move, while failing by 5 or more causes the character to fall. While fighting on the beams characters do not get a Dexterity bonus to AC unless they have 5 or more ranks in Balance. If they take damage they must make another balance check to avoid falling.

Spell Range

This is where the acolytes and others practice casting and evading spells.

Barracks

Acolytes of the school live in these barracks, as may trainees if they choose. The barracks can hold up to twenty people, each of whom gets a bed and a storage locker.

Infirmary

This area allows people injured in training or in the arenas to heal. The School often avoids magic healing as an incentive for trainees to avoid injury, reasoning that ready access to magic healing makes one careless in battle. There are usually likely to be a few people recovering in this area.

Armory

This room stores all of the practice weapons used in training by the school, as well as any real weapons used by the gladiators. An armorer is usually on duty in order to check weapons in and out, as well as to perform minor repairs, remove nicks and scratches, and so forth.

Campaigning

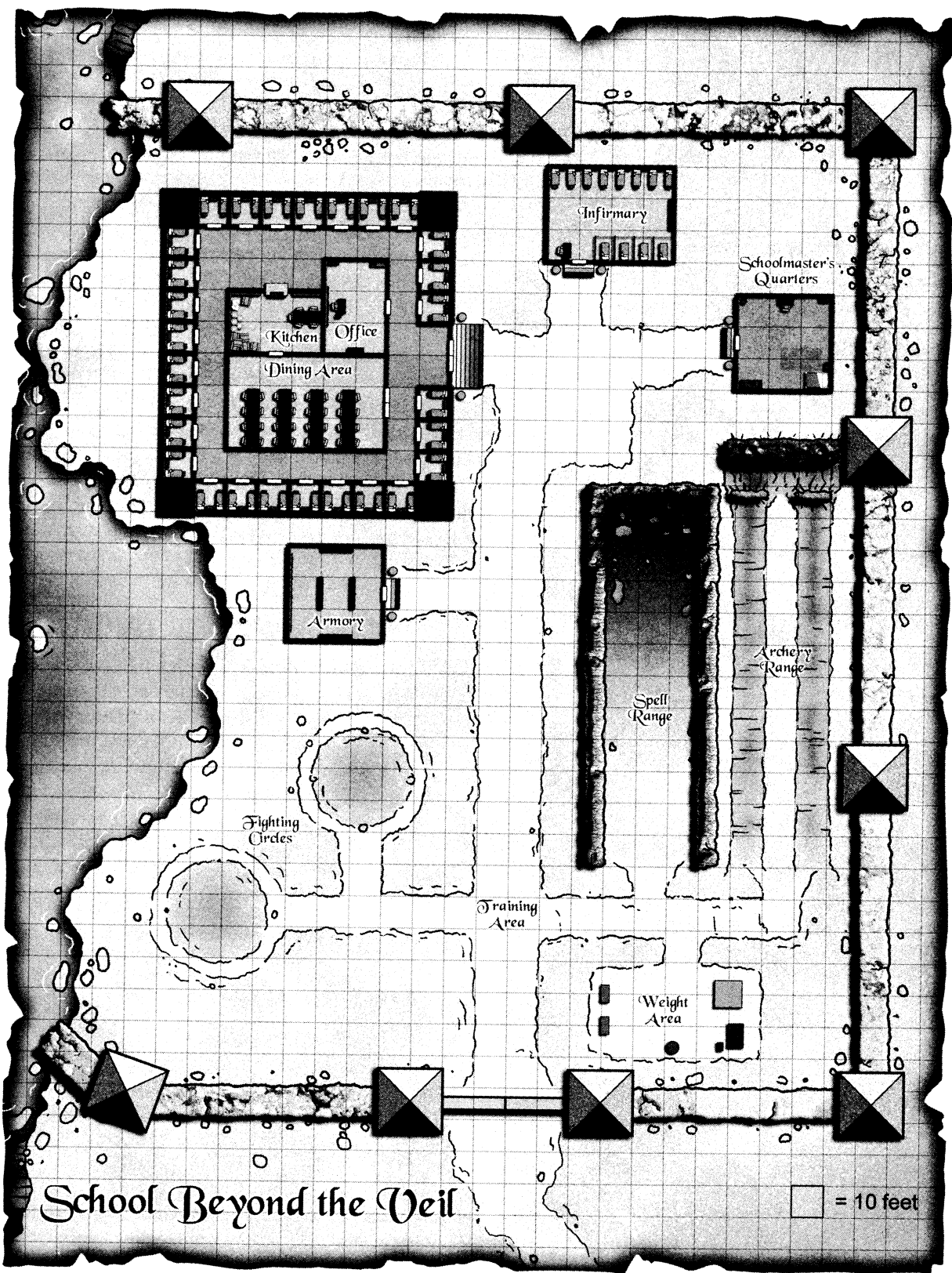
The idea behind the Schools is to throw your players a bit of a curve ball. When evil organizations are manipulating politics behind the scenes in fantasy settings, it's automatically assumed that the wizards are behind it.

If the School and the Sect are to play a major role in the campaign, it's best to introduce them slowly and separately. The Schools can be introduced into a city in the campaign area. The characters may run into people trained by the School, or even pursue training there themselves in order to take advantage of the special feats taught by the school.

In a civilized kingdom, the Sect's first choice will always be to rule behind the scenes. They find this easiest to achieve with weak rulers or those who are highly dependent on their military, and the Sect is certainly not above arranging that situation by causing untimely deaths or border problems if need be—another situation where humanoids come in handy. As their plans progress, the Sect will be willing to take more radical actions, including regicide and coups, to secure power.

In the wilderness, the local humanoids will become increasingly well organized. They will begin to pick up

The School Beyond the Veil



School Beyond the Veil

= 10 feet

more warrior and fighter levels, and some may even join the Sect. The gamemaster may use the Sect to justify local humanoids advancing in level at a rate matching that of the player characters. Eventually, the characters will notice that the humanoids keep getting better and should investigate. Particularly clever characters may

even notice that the humanoids are making use of the same fighting style as the School!

The characters may find it difficult to defeat the Sect completely, as the individual schools will deny any knowledge of one another's actions as it becomes necessary to do so.

Moon Wraith Template

“Moon wraith” is a template that can be added to any humanoid creature (referred to hereafter as the “base creature”). The base creature’s type changes to “undead.” It uses all the base creature’s statistics and special abilities except as noted here. Note that despite their name, moon wraiths are not incorporeal.

Hit Dice: Increase to d12.

Speed: Same as the base creature.

AC: The moon wraith has +2 natural armor or the base creature’s natural armor, whichever is better.

Damage: Creatures without natural weapons gain a touch attack that uses negative energy to deal 1d8+5 points of damage to living creatures; a Will save with a DC of 10 + 1/2 moon wraith’s HD + moon wraith’s Charisma modifier reduces the damage by half. Creatures with natural attacks can use their natural weaponry or use the touch attack, as they prefer.

Special Attacks: A moon wraith retains all the base creature’s special attacks.

Spells: The moon wraith can cast any spells it could cast while alive.

Special Qualities: A moon wraith retains all the base creature’s special qualities. He also gains those below and the undead type.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A moon wraith has +2 turn resistance.

Immunities (Ex): Moon wraiths are immune to cold, electricity, polymorph, and mind-affecting attacks.

Saves: Same as the base creature.

Abilities: A moon wraith, being undead, has no Constitution score.

Skills: Same as the base creature.

Feats: Same as the base creature.

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground.

Organization: Solitary.

Challenge Rating: As the base creature + 1.

Treasure: Standard.

Alignment: Same as the base creature. Typically evil.

Advancement: By character class.

Sample Scenarios

The Tale of Jasha the King

This ancient poem is read by few today, mostly scholars who question whether the events described in it ever really happened. Bards know bits and pieces of it, which they usually incorporate into stories of more popular and better known figures. If adventurers ever piece together the original tale, they will find that it contains a detailed description of the teachings of the Sect, a description of the location of the Temple, and most of all the location of Jasha’s tomb. Jasha’s tomb is heavily trapped to ward off potential robbers, and disturbing it is likely to raise the guardians of the tomb from their undead sleep. However, if the adventurers can convince the guardians that the Sect has returned, they will be allowed to take Jasha’s sword, *Deathbane*. Ksathra believes that *Deathbane* can kill him, and since he believes it, he’s right. *Deathbane* is a +3 *keen undead bane ghost touch* bastard sword with a of 98, 335 gp. It is a black steel sword with a simple wooden hilt. It has faint markings which suggest that runes were carved along the blade in the past. It looks ancient but is still razor sharp.

My Kung Fu is Better than Yours

The adventurers get hooked up with a fighting school in the campaign city, possibly as instructors. All seems to be going well until the students start getting beaten up in the streets by students of the School Beyond the Veil. The School is becoming concerned about the presence of a potential rival and must make it clear that the adventurers are teaching an inferior style. Eventually, attempts to persuade the School to back off will fail, and the adventurers must face the Moon Wraith Adepts in a battle to determine who’s style is best.

As an alternative...

Conspiracy? What Conspiracy?

There need not be any connection between the Moon Wraith Sect and the School Beyond the Veil. Or if there is, it’s a tenuous one. Perhaps the School was formed by a distant descendant of a member of the Moon Wraith Sect whose family had preserved a dim echo of the style. If you decide to go this route, you should try to create the appearance of a link between the two groups so that the players spend a lot of time chasing red herrings. The Moon Wraith Sect is actually focused on building humanoid armies and the School Beyond the Veil on training gladiators.

A Force for Good

Another option is to make the Sect good guys. A heroic version of the Sect would focus more on training and reduce its involvement in the gladiatorial arenas. They would also behave very differently when dealing with humanoids, as they would openly promote the civilizing aspects of their mission.



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