

## LEVEL ADVANCEMENT

As a character completes adventures, he practices his skills and becomes more talented. Characters earn experience points (XP) that allow them to progress in level.

DCC RPG takes a different approach to experience points than the historical precedent and its modern interpretation. There is certainly a strong case for the historical approach which the author calls a “fiddly” system – a calculation-based method that accurately captures the abilities of a creature in a final XP-based number. There is also a case for an “encounter calculation” system – such as that used in 3E – that scales the XP awarded for each encounter based on the relative power of the characters and provides an ability to calculate the appropriate challenge rating of a set of opponents.

Another perspective is provided by Appendix N. The heroes of Appendix N did not always face enemies suitable to their power level nor did they proceed on a predictable path to greater competencies. Occasionally, they fled their enemies – better to stay alive and fight another day. And as they advanced in power – for example, from wanderer to mercenary to king – they never quite knew exactly when the next opportunity for advancement would present itself.

The author has made one last consideration in his choice of XP system. As gamers grow older and must squeeze their sessions into complicated lives involving families, jobs, and other time commitments, the most enjoyable elements of the game must rise to the top. Bookkeeping related to XP tracking is not one of those elements.

Therefore, DCC RPG uses an extremely simple XP system. If this system is not to your liking, the author encourages you to adapt one of the many “fiddly” systems existing from prior and current editions. However, I urge you to give this system a try, as I suspect it will ease your game play experience considerably.



**Basics of the XP System:** The DCC RPG experience system works as follows:

- All character classes use the same advancement table.
- Each *encounter* is worth from 0 to 4 XP, and those XP are not earned merely by killing monsters, disarming traps, looting treasure, or completing a quest. Rather, successfully surviving encounters earns the characters XP in DCC RPG. A typical encounter is worth 2 XP, and the system scales from 0 to 4 depending on difficulty.
- All characters that participate in the encounter receive the same XP.
- The judge determines how much XP is awarded.
- Characters level up when they reach the XP threshold for the next level.
- The level thresholds become progressively higher. The number of “average adventures” required to advance to each subsequent level is higher than the preceding level.

**The XP Table:** The table below shows the experience points required for each level.

As an optional rule, consider allowing any 0-level characters that survive their first adventure to automatically advance to 1st-level and 10 XP. Zero-level adventures are a harrowing, deadly experience with particularly high fatality rates. As long as each player controls a portfolio of multiple 0-level PCs, such a play style can be fun. However, too many games with a 0-level character exchange novelty for enforced cowardice.

A 1st-level character retains his hit points from level 0, and gains new hit points according to his class. All characters of 1st-level or higher thus have their class hit dice *plus* 1d4 hit points from level 0.

**TABLE 1-4: XP LEVEL THRESHOLDS**

Zero-level characters start at 0 XP. The indicated level of XP is necessary to achieve each new level. For example, a 0-level character becomes a 1st-level warrior when he reaches 10 XP, a 2nd-level warrior when he reaches 50 XP, a 3rd-level warrior when he reaches 110 XP, and so on.

Level	XP Required
0	0
1	10
2	50
3	110
4	190
5	290
6	410
7	550
8	710
9	890
10	1090



## CHOOSING A CLASS

What man calls free will is but the options remaining after destiny and the gods have made their plays. If your character survives to 1st level, you can choose a class. Your free will is constrained by the fatalism of the dice; pick a class that suits your randomly determined strengths and weaknesses. The demi-human classes of dwarf, elf, and halfling may only be selected by characters whose 0-level occupation was of that race.

The following terminology is introduced in the class descriptions:

**Hit points:** Each class uses a certain die to determine hit points. Note that all characters receive 1d4 hit points at 0 level, and their class hit points are *in addition to* the 1d4 hit points from 0 level. For example, a cleric has 1d8 hit points per level, so a 1st-level cleric actually rolls 1d4+1d8 to determine hit points. When that cleric achieves 2nd level, the player rolls another 1d8 hit points and adds it to the prior total.

**Weapon training:** Each class is trained in a certain list of weapons. Characters use their normal class action die when attacking with these weapons. When using other weapons, they roll a lower die (according to the dice chain).

**Action dice:** Action dice are used to make attacks, cast spells, and use skills. The most common use of an action die is to attack; most characters roll 1d20 for their attack rolls because they have a 1d20 action die. As characters ad-



vance in level, they may gain additional action dice. Typically, these start as additional dice of lower facings (i.e., a d14 instead of d20) to reflect that the character's secondary attacks are not as effective as his primary attacks. Character classes with spellcasting ability, or specialized skill uses, may be able to use action dice to cast additional spells or use additional skills rather than make attacks, as described in the class descriptions.

**Title:** Titles are included for characters of levels one through five. These titles reflect the most common terms for characters of that power level. In some cases, these titles are tied to formal orders; in other cases, they are generic terms. Formal orders (such as those noted in the thief and warrior descriptions) may have different titles. Characters of 6<sup>th</sup> level and above are extremely rare, so much so that no generic titles exist. Players are encouraged to develop their own titles for such levels using Appendix T for inspiration as needed.



# THIEF



You are a hulking, skulking thug waiting for your next victim, a dexterous wall-climber cozening treasures from ostensibly impenetrable vaults, a fleet-footed cutpurse outrunning shouting pursuers through a crowded market, or a brooding killer stalking a difficult target.

Thieves can be big or small, fast or slow, tall or thin, but they all have one thing in common: they survive not by sword or spell, but by stealth and cunning.

**Hit points:** A thief gains 1d6 hit points at each level.

**Weapon training:** A thief is trained in these weapons: blackjack, blowgun, crossbow, dagger, dart, garrote, longsword, short sword, sling, and staff. Thieves are careful in their choice of armor, as it affects the use of their skills.

**Alignment:** Although thieves have little regard for the laws of civilization, they are not necessarily chaotic.

Lawful thieves are ubiquitous, and they belong to institutions of organized crime: guilds of beggars who feign illness to fleece the generous, pirate gangs that hijack innocent travelers, or organized brigands who charge "protection fees" for certain routes. They are fences who dispose of stolen goods, enforcers who maintain the pecking order of the underworld, and petty burglars who work their way up to become mob bosses.

Chaotic thieves operate as independent agents. They are assassins and con artists, swindlers and sociopaths, or outright murderers and killers. They acknowledge no master aside from the glint of gold.

Neutral thieves are double agents: the kindly housekeeper who filches valuable baubles while the master sleeps, the "inside man" who leaves the vault unlocked one night, or the urban spy who sells secrets to his court's enemies.

**Thieves' Cant:** Thieves speak a secret language called the cant known only to members of their

class. This is a spoken language with no written alphabet. Teaching the cant to a non-thief is punishable by death. Certain double-entendre phrases in Common have an alternate meaning in the cant and are used by thieves to identify their brethren covertly.

**Thieving skills:** A thief learns certain skills that aid his illicit pursuits. A thief can pick locks, find and disable traps, sneak silently, hide in shadows, climb sheer surfaces, forge documents, pick pockets, handle poison, and read languages.

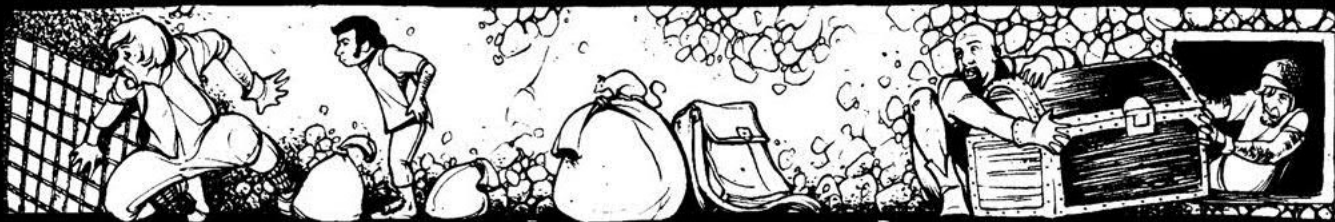
The thief's alignment determines his interests, and those interests determine his rate of advancement in the various thieving skills. The thief receives a bonus to his skills based on level and alignment, as shown on table 1-9.

To use a thief skill, the player rolls d20 and adds his modifier. He must beat a DC assigned to the task at hand. An easy task is DC 5, while an extremely difficult task is DC 20 – for example, picking an extraordinarily well crafted lock, or picking the pocket of an alert guard. In some cases, the judge may make the roll for the character, and the result will not be known until some trigger event occurs (e.g., a forged document may not be truly tested until presented to the king's commissary).

A thief needs tools to pick locks, find and disable traps, climb sheer surfaces, forge documents, and handle poisons. A 1st-level thief must purchase a set of thieves' tools that allows him to use these skills.

Success when using a thief's skill means the following:

**Backstab:** The most successful thieves kill without their victims ever being aware of the threat. When attacking a target from behind or when the target is otherwise unaware, the thief receives the indicated attack bonus to his attack roll. In addition, if he hits, the thief automatically achieves a critical hit, rolling on the crit table as per his level (see page 37). Typically, backstabs are combined with checks to sneak silently or hide in shadows, such that a thief at-



tacks with surprise and is able to backstab. Certain weapons are particularly effective with backstab attempts and do additional damage, as noted in the equipment list. Backstab attempts can only be made against creatures with clear anatomical vulnerabilities.

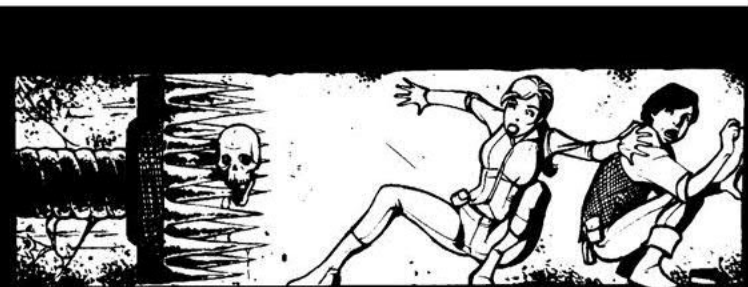
*Sneak silently:* A thief never makes an opposed check to sneak silently; that is, the check is never made against the target's attempt to listen. The thief rolls against a hard DC, as noted below, and success means the thief did indeed sneak silently. With the exception of demi-gods and extraordinary magic, the thief's movement cannot be heard. This skill is often used to sneak up on unsuspecting guards and make a backstab attempt. The base DC for moving across stone surfaces is DC 10. Cushioned surfaces, such as grass or carpet are DC 5; moderately noisy surfaces, such as creaking wooden boards are DC 15; and extremely noisy surfaces, like crackling leaves, still water, or crunchy gravel are DC 20.

*Hide in shadows:* A successful hide in shadows check means the thief cannot be seen. As with sneaking silently, this check is never opposed, and is often used before a backstab attempt. The thief can attempt to hide in broad daylight should he be so bold! The base DC for sneaking down a hallway with moderate cover (chairs, bookcases, crevasses, nooks and crannies, alcoves, etc.) is DC 10. Hiding at night or in a shaded or dimly lit area is DC 5; hiding under a full moon is DC 10; hiding in daylight but in a dark shadow or behind a solid object is DC 15; and hiding in broad daylight with minimal obstruction is DC 20.

*Pick pocket:* The thief surreptitiously takes an object off a target's person. This skill also includes other feats of legerdemain such as card tricks, minor magic tricks, and so on. Stealing from an unaware target with a loose pocket and an unsecured coin pouch is DC 5; picking the pocket of a target that is actively watching and monitoring his or her belongings is DC 20; and the varying degrees of watchfulness in between define other check thresholds.

*Climb sheer surfaces:* As one would expect, DC 20 is a perfectly smooth surface with no visible handholds. A normal stone wall is DC 10.

*Pick lock:* A mundane lock is DC 10. An extremely well crafted lock is DC 20. Some locks of legendary manufacture and notable difficult are DC 25 or higher.





*Find trap and disable trap:* A large, bulky trap is DC 10. This would include traps like a pit in the floor, a spring-loaded axe, or a dropped portcullis. More subtle traps are DC 15, DC 20, or even higher. A natural 1 on a disable trap check triggers the trap.

*Forge document:* The DC varies with the complexity and originality of the source document, ranging from DC 5 to DC 20.

*Disguise self:* The degree of change determines the DC. The thief can transform himself to resemble someone of the same basic race and physical dimensions with a DC 5 check. Changing significant facial features requires a DC 10 check. Changing physical traits, like mannerisms and height, requires a DC 15 check. Fooling someone close to the target (such as a parent or spouse) requires a minimum DC 20 check.

*Read languages:* Interpreting simple meaning requires a DC 10 check. Interpreting anything more detailed is DC 15.

*Handle poison:* Any time a thief uses poison he must make a DC 10 safety check. On a failure, he accidentally poisons himself! This check is made each time poison is applied to a blade or other surface. Additionally, on a natural 1 on any attack roll with a poisoned blade, the thief automatically poisons himself, in addition to any fumble results.

*Cast spell from scroll:* Provided a spell is written on a scroll, a thief can attempt to read the scroll and cast the magical spell. The spell check DC is as standard, but the thief rolls

the indicated type of die to attempt to beat that DC. The thief may not attempt spellburn.

**Luck and Wits:** Thieves survive on their luck and their wits, and the most successful thieves live a life of fortune on guts and intuition. A thief gains additional bonuses when expending Luck, as follows.

First, the thief rolls a luck die when he expends Luck. The luck die is indicated on Table 1-7: Thief. For each point of Luck expended, he rolls one die and applies that modifier to his roll. For example, a 2<sup>nd</sup>-level thief who burns 2 points of Luck adds +2d4 to a d20 roll.

Second, unlike other classes, the thief recovers lost Luck to a limited extent. The thief's Luck score is restored each night by a number of points equal to his level. This process cannot take his Luck score past its natural maximum. For example, a 1st-level thief with starting Luck score of 11 attempts to disable a trap and fails by 2 on his check. He burns 2 points of Luck to add 2d3 to his result, allowing him to succeed. His Luck is now 9. Because the thief is 1<sup>st</sup> level, his Luck score will be restored by 1 point on the following morning, bringing it back up to 10. Then, 1 additional point will be restored on the following morning, bringing it back to 11. The thief's Luck score cannot increase past 11.

**Action dice:** A thief uses his action dice for any normal activity, including attacks and skill checks.

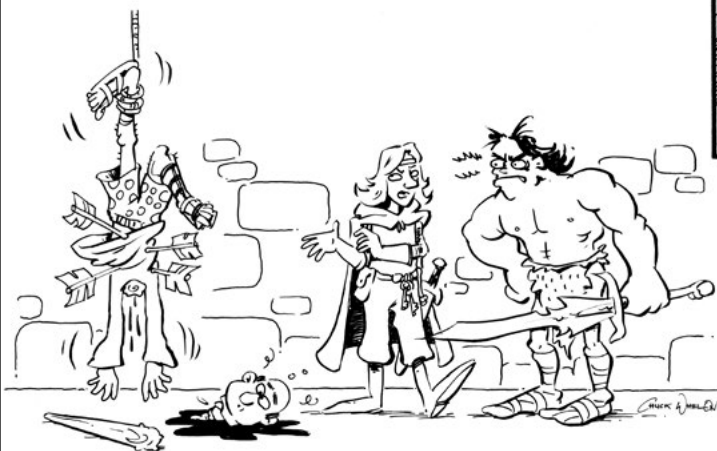
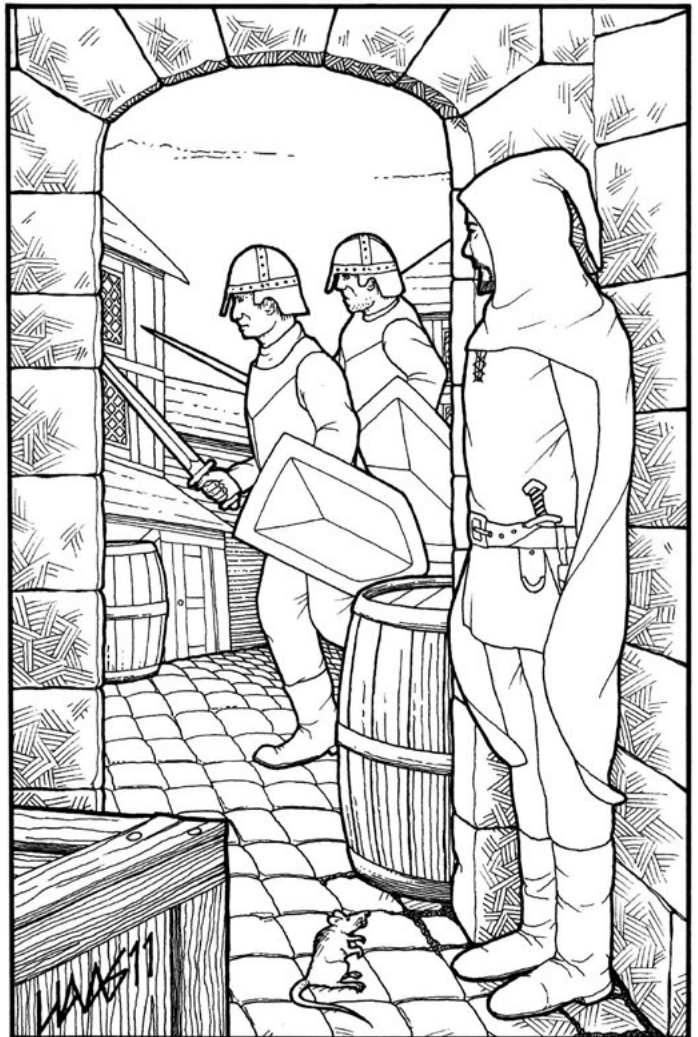


**TABLE 1-7: THIEF**

Level	Attack	Crit Die/Table	Action Dice	Luck Die	Ref	Fort	Will
1	+0	1d10/II	1d20	d3	+1	+1	+0
2	+1	1d12/II	1d20	d4	+1	+1	+0
3	+2	1d14/II	1d20	d5	+2	+1	+1
4	+2	1d16/II	1d20	d6	+2	+2	+1
5	+3	1d20/II	1d20	d7	+3	+2	+1
6	+4	1d24/II	1d20+1d14	d8	+4	+2	+2
7	+5	1d30/II	1d20+1d16	d10	+4	+3	+2
8	+5	1d30+2/II	1d20+1d20	d12	+5	+3	+2
9	+6	1d30+4/II	1d20+1d20	d14	+5	+3	+3
10	+7	1d30+6/II	1d20+1d20	d16	+6	+4	+3

**TABLE 1-8: THIEF TITLES**

Level	Title by Alignment		
	Lawful	Chaotic	Neutral
1	Bravo	Thug	Beggar
2	Apprentice	Murderer	Cutpurse
3	Rogue	Cutthroat	Burglar
4	Capo	Executioner	Robber
5	Boss	Assassin	Swindler



"Yes, well, you can't expect me to detect ALL the traps ALL the time..."

**TABLE 1-9: THIEF SKILLS BY LEVEL AND ALIGNMENT**

Skill	Bonus for LAWFUL Thieves (Path of the Boss)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Backstab	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Sneak silently*	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Hide in shadows*	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Pick pocket*	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Climb sheer surfaces*	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Pick lock*	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Find trap†	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Disable trap*	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Forge document*	+0	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
Disguise self‡	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9
Read languages†	+0	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
Handle poison	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9
Cast spell from scroll†	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d14	d16	d16	d20	d20

Skill	Bonus for CHAOTIC Thieves (Path of the Assassin)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Backstab	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Sneak silently*	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Hide in shadows*	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Pick pocket*	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9
Climb sheer surfaces*	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Pick lock*	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Find trap†	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Disable trap*	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9
Forge document*	+0	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
Disguise self‡	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Read languages†	+0	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
Handle poison	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Cast spell from scroll†	d10	d10	d12	d12	d14	d14	d16	d16	d20	d20

Skill	Bonus for NEUTRAL Thieves (Path of the Swindler)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Backstab	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9
Sneak silently*	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Hide in shadows*	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Pick pocket*	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Climb sheer surfaces*	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Pick lock*	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Find trap†	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Disable trap*	+1	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13
Forge document*	+3	+5	+7	+8	+9	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15
Disguise self‡	+0	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
Read languages†	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9
Handle poison	+0	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
Cast spell from scroll†	d12	d12	d14	d14	d16	d16	d20	d20	d20	d20

\* The thief's Agility modifier, if any, also modifies checks for these skills.

† The thief's Intelligence modifier, if any, also modifies checks for these skills.

‡ The thief's Personality modifier, if any, also modifies checks for these skills.







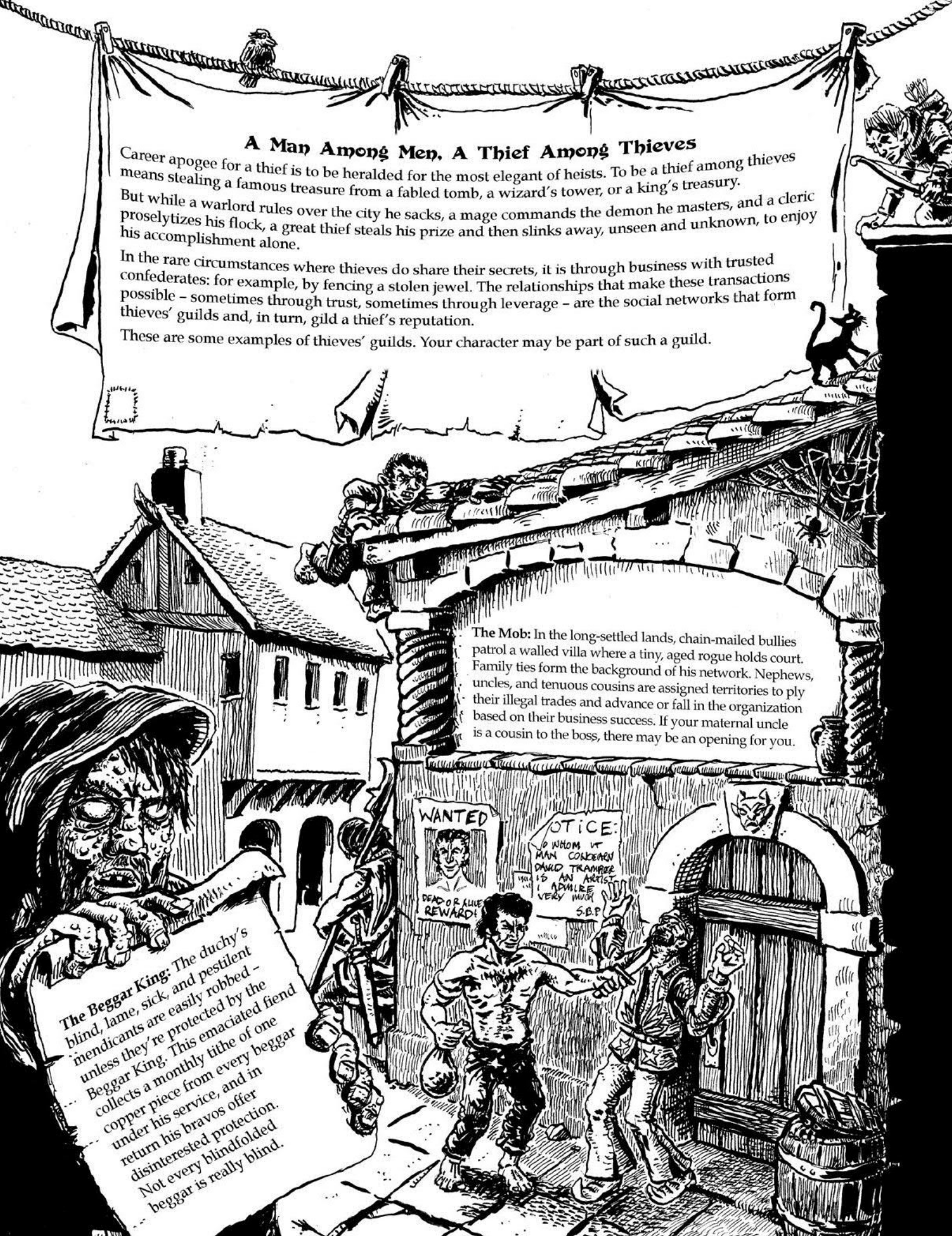
## A Man Among Men, A Thief Among Thieves

Career apogee for a thief is to be heralded for the most elegant of heists. To be a thief among thieves means stealing a famous treasure from a fabled tomb, a wizard's tower, or a king's treasury.

But while a warlord rules over the city he sacks, a mage commands the demon he masters, and a cleric proselytizes his flock, a great thief steals his prize and then slinks away, unseen and unknown, to enjoy his accomplishment alone.

In the rare circumstances where thieves do share their secrets, it is through business with trusted confederates: for example, by fencing a stolen jewel. The relationships that make these transactions possible – sometimes through trust, sometimes through leverage – are the social networks that form thieves' guilds and, in turn, gild a thief's reputation.

These are some examples of thieves' guilds. Your character may be part of such a guild.



**The Mob:** In the long-settled lands, chain-mailed bullies patrol a walled villa where a tiny, aged rogue holds court. Family ties form the background of his network. Nephews, uncles, and tenuous cousins are assigned territories to ply their illegal trades and advance or fall in the organization based on their business success. If your maternal uncle is a cousin to the boss, there may be an opening for you.

**The Beggar King:** The duchy's blind, lame, sick, and pestilent mendicants are easily robbed – unless they're protected by the Beggar King. This emaciated fiend collects a monthly tithe of one copper piece from every beggar under his bravos offer return his blindfolded. Not every blindfolded beggar is really blind.


WANTED



DEAD OR ALIVE  
REWARD!

NOTICE:

TO WHOM IT  
MAY CONCERN  
DAVID TRAMER  
IS AN ARTIST  
I ADVISE  
VERY MUCH  
S.B.P.



The Warren: It has been decades since invaders last threatened the city's battlements, and outside the walls is now a warren of tents, shacks, shanties, and unkempt alleys known as the Warren. There are some legitimate businesses here, aye, as toothless women sell stunted turnips and day laborers lurch to work on uneven legs, but much of the Warren's population is sustained by brothels, taverns, slaving, opium dens, and other unsavory endeavors. Order (of a sort) is maintained by a pecking order of pilfering, with pimps, barkeeps, slavers, dealers, and petty thieves paying tribute up the ladder in a hierarchy of bosses and sub-bosses. A vault-like building down by the marsh is where the bosses meet. There are only rumors about who's at the top, but the system maintains order if not justice, and bucking the structure has been known to be dangerous.

The Twelve Spider-Assassins: A neighboring baron disputed the duke's claim to his throne. On his next siege hunt, the baron collapsed from his horse with no apparent wound. The dispute was dropped and the duke ascended. At the baron's public funeral, where the old woman of the land lamented his early death, all remarked on the strange spider-shaped scar above his temple, almost like a wound from a strangely-lanced arrow or dart. It must have been a coincidence that he scraped his head as he fell from his saddle. The twelve dark-cloaked men with hidden faces who made up the end of the funeral procession were remarked upon, as no one could identify them or their role. But, as of late, they have been seen in midnight audiences with the duke, who seems all the more harrowed now that he has a new throne.

S.B.P.