

Heathcliff, the Blood Knight

"I will accept nothing less than the best."

Deference and respect are the privileges of noble birth. Few know this better than the man who calls himself the Blood Knight, yet equally well does he know that such things are not always freely given where they are due. And in those cases, it's the burden of the nobly born to correct the error, and to take by force that which is their right.

Heathcliff was born in Taldor with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth, son of a wealthy but relatively minor noble house. As a boy, he showed remarkable affinity for both physical activities—especially the martial pursuits—and the ins and outs of courtly etiquette and intrigue. Though both traits made him quite popular with the peerage—especially the young ladies of the court, necessitating more than one woman being shuffled off to a nunnery on a nine-month “vacation”—Heathcliff's wealth and natural abilities also gave him an excessively healthy sense of self-importance, sometimes getting him into trouble that would have crippled a man of lower station. By the time Heathcliff's father realized that the cane-scarred whipping boy might not be the most effective means of corralling his youngest son, Heathcliff was already near grown, and thoroughly convinced of his own competence in all things.



Though Heathcliff regularly dismissed such noble studies as literature and linguistics he could never get enough of bards' tales of battle and bloodshed, often keeping the minstrels at his favorite taverns playing late into the night. Excel as he might at the joust or the ritualized combat of the nobility, he longed for the primal exultation of war, where his mastery over his fellow men would not just be avowed or lauded, but proved undeniably by the blood on his sword, as clear as the red-dripping talons of an eagle.

True warfare has little in common with heroic ballads, and there are few who see its raw, naked face and come back unchanged. Certainly this was true for Heathcliff. Yet where some men learn wisdom in the wrack, at last understanding the price of a life and the senseless ease with which it's taken, Heathcliff learned something else. In the clash of spears and the screams of horses, the man who had been a trumped-up merchant's son became an elemental force of destruction, cutting down swaths of men who were never his enemies, but merely opponents to his liege lord. Though he became rich in his own right for serving his patron well, Heathcliff cared only for what the rewards represented: that here was a man whose worth was proven, in fire and iron.

Thanks to his prowess on the battlefield, warriors are often drawn to his lord's banner to fight at his side, and to Heathcliff's secret surprise he's developed quite a knack for leading them, issuing gruff and decisive commands. These companions are almost always cohorts rather than friends—though Heathcliff does a fine job of managing his troops and urging them on to ever-greater feats, long experience has taught him that soldiers are a short-lived lot, and hence he sheds few tears when it's time to pay the butcher's bill.

In truth, whether leading soldiers in a suicidal charge or booting serving girls out of his bed in the morning, Heathcliff cares little about the people around him. More than money, love, or lust, Heathcliff cares about the prestige of his realm. Even more than that, however, he strives with every encounter to increase his own legend, whether as a scoundrel or a saint.

Heathcliff the Blood Knight

Male human cavalier 12 (daring champion)

N Medium human

Init +9 (+11 with Aldori dueling sword); **Senses** Perception +2

Languages Common

DEFENSE

AC 39, touch 23, flat-footed 29 (+12 armor, +2 deflection, +7 Dex, +3 dodge, +1 insight, +2 natural, +2 shield)

hp 122 (12 HD)

Fort +13, **Ref** +14, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities dizzying defense, dodging panache +2, nimble, subtle blade

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee *Glimmer* +21/+16/+11 (1d8+9/19-20) or

Glimmer +21/+16/+11 (1d8+21/19-20) with Challenge or Precise Strike, or

Glimmer +21/+16/+11 (1d8+33/19-20) with Challenge and Precise Strike

Ranged +1 *darkwood composite longbow* +20/+15/+10 (1d8+1/×3)

Special Attacks challenge 4/day (+12 damage, +4 AC), champion's finesse, demanding challenge, for the king, lion's call, precise strike, superior feint, targeted strike

STATISTICS

Abilities Str 10 (+0), Dex 24 (+7), Con 14 (+2), Int 13 (+1), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 14 (+2)

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +12 (+21 with Aldori dueling sword); **CMD** 35 (36 vs. bull rush/reposition)

Feats Aldori Dueling Disciple, Aldori Dueling Mastery, Combat Reflexes^B, Duelist of the Roaring Falls, Duelist of the Shrouded Lake, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Aldori dueling sword^B), Outflank^B, Precise Strike^B, Quick Draw, Slashing Grace (Aldori dueling sword), Weapon Finesse^B (light or one-handed piercing melee weapons only), Weapon Focus (Aldori dueling sword)

Skills Bluff +17, Diplomacy +17, Handle Animal +17, Intimidate +17 (+19 to demoralize opponents or +21 whilst in a duel), Knowledge (local) +13, Sense Motive +17

SQ banner, champion's finesse, dizzying defense, greater tactician (9 rounds), panache (2), order (lion), swashbuckler initiative

Combat Gear darkwood durable arrows (20), *potions of cure serious wounds* (2); **Other Gear** +1 *darkwood composite longbow*, *amulet of natural armor* +2, banner (can be worn as a cape, worth 20gp), *belt of incredible dexterity* +4, *cloak of resistance* +3, *dusty rose prism ioun stone* (imbedded), *Glimmer* and *Sheen* (+1 *mithral menacing Aldori dueling sword* and +4 *burnished mithral celestial plate armor*, respectively), *jaunt boots*, *ring of protection* +2, tender (50pp, 10gp)

Encumbrance light 33 lb., medium 66 lb., heavy 100 lb.; **Weight Carried** 28 lb. 2 oz. (excluding tender)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Banner (Ex) As long as your banner is clearly visible, all allies within 60 feet receive a +5 morale bonus on saving throws against fear and a +4 morale bonus on attack rolls made as part of a charge. The banner must be at least Small or larger and must be carried or displayed by you or your mount to function.

Burnished Armor Your armor has been polished to reflect light in your enemies' eyes. In areas of bright light, all enemies within 30 feet that can see you must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC = 10 + your base attack bonus) or be dazzled for 1 round. Regardless of the result of its saving throw, a target may only be affected by this armor modification once per day. Polished armor imparts a –10 penalty to Stealth checks made in areas of bright or normal light and weighs 5 pounds more than normal.

Challenge (Ex) Four times per day, you can challenge a foe to combat. As a swift action, you choose one target within sight to challenge. Your melee attacks deal extra damage whenever the attacks are made against the target of your challenge and you receive a +3 dodge bonus to your AC against attacks made by the target of your challenge. This extra damage is equal to your cavalier level. Challenging a foe requires



much of your concentration causing you to take a –2 penalty to your Armor Class, except against attacks made by the target of your challenge. The challenge remains in effect until the target is dead or unconscious or until the combat ends.

Champion's Finesse (Ex) You gain the benefits of the Weapon Finesse feat with light or one-handed piercing melee weapons, and you can use Charisma in place of Intelligence for the purpose of combat feat prerequisites. You also count as having the Weapon Finesse feat for the purposes of meeting feat requirements.

Demanding Challenge (Ex) Whenever you declare a challenge, your target must pay attention to the threat you pose. As long as the target is within your threatened area, it takes a –2 penalty to its AC from attacks made by anyone other than you.

Dizzying Defense (Ex) While wielding a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon in one hand, you can spend 1 panache point to take the fighting defensively action as a swift action instead of a standard action. When fighting defensively in this manner, the dodge bonus to AC gained from that action increases to +4, and the penalty to attack rolls is reduced to –2.

Dodging Panache (Ex) When an opponent attempts a melee attack against you, you may spend 1 panache point as an immediate action to move 5 feet; doing so grants you a dodge bonus to AC equal to your Charisma bonus against the triggering attack. This movement doesn't negate the attack, which is still resolved as if you had not moved from the original square. This movement is not a 5-foot step; it provokes attacks of opportunity from creatures other than the one who triggered this deed. You can only perform this deed while wearing light or no armor, and while carrying no heavier than a light load.

For the King (Ex) As a swift action, you can grant a competence bonus equal to your Charisma modifier on all attack and damage rolls to all allies within 30 feet. This bonus lasts for 1 round. This ability can be used once per combat.

Greater Tactician (Ex) You receive two teamwork feats as bonus feats. You must meet the prerequisites for these feats. Three times per day, as a swift action, you can grant these feats to all allies within 30 feet who can see and hear you. Allies retain the use of this bonus feat for 3 rounds plus 1 round for every two cavalier levels you possess. Allies do not need to meet the prerequisites of these bonus feats.

Lion's Call (Ex) As a standard action, you can give an encouraging speech which grants all allies within 60 feet a competence bonus on their saving throws against fear equal to your Charisma modifier and a +1 competence bonus on attack rolls for a number of rounds equal to your cavalier level. If an ally within range is under the effect of a spell or ability that causes him to be frightened or panicked, he can immediately make another saving throw to resist the effect (if allowed).

Nimble (Ex) You gain a +3 dodge bonus to AC when wearing light or no armor and carrying no more than a light load.

Panache (Ex) At the start of each day, you gain a number of panache points equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). Your panache goes up or down throughout the day, but usually cannot go higher than your Charisma modifier (minimum 1), though feats and magic items can affect this maximum. You spend panache to accomplish deeds (see below), and regain panache in the following ways.

Critical Hit with a Light or One-Handed Piercing Melee Weapon: Each time you confirm a critical hit with a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon, you regain 1 panache point. Confirming a critical hit on a helpless or unaware creature or a creature that has fewer Hit Dice than half your character level doesn't restore panache.

Killing Blow with a Light or One-Handed Piercing Melee Weapon: When you reduce a creature to 0 or fewer hit points with a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon attack while in combat, you regain 1 panache point. Destroying an unattended object, reducing a helpless or unaware creature to 0 or fewer hit points, or reducing a creature that has fewer Hit Dice than half your character level to 0 or fewer hit points doesn't restore any panache.

Precise Strike (Ex) While you have at least 1 panache point, you gain the ability to strike precisely with a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon (though not natural weapon attacks), adding your cavalier level to the damage dealt. To use this deed, you cannot attack with a weapon in your other hand or use a shield other than a buckler. You can even use this ability with thrown light or one-handed piercing melee weapons, so long as the target is within 30 feet of you. Any creature that is immune to sneak attacks is

immune to the additional damage granted by precise strike, and any item or ability that protects a creature from critical hits also protects a creature from the additional damage of a precise strike. This additional damage is precision damage, and isn't multiplied on a critical hit. As a swift action, you may spend 1 panache point to double your precise strike's damage bonus on the next attack. This benefit must be used before the end of your turn, or it is lost. This deed's cost cannot be reduced by any ability or effect that reduces the amount of panache points a deed costs (such as the Signature Deed feat).

Subtle Blade (Ex) While you have at least 1 panache point, you are immune to disarm, steal, and sunder combat maneuvers made against a light or one-handed piercing melee weapon you are wielding.

Superior Feint (Ex) While you have at least 1 panache point you can, as a standard action, purposefully miss a creature you could make a melee attack against with a wielded light or one-handed piercing weapon. When you do, the creature is denied its Dexterity bonus to AC until the start of your next turn.

Swashbuckler Initiative (Ex) While you have at least 1 panache point, you gain a +2 bonus on initiative checks. In addition, if you have the Quick Draw feat, your hands are free and unrestrained, and you have any single light or one-handed piercing melee weapon that isn't hidden, you can draw that weapon as part of the initiative check.

Targeted Strike (Ex) As a full-round action you can spend 1 panache point to make an attack with a single light or one-handed piercing melee weapon that cripples part of a foe's body. You choose a part of the body to target. If the attack succeeds, in addition to the attack's normal damage, the target suffers one of the following effects based on the part of the body targeted. If a creature doesn't have one of the listed body locations, that body part cannot be targeted. Creatures that are immune to sneak attacks are also immune to targeted strikes. Items or abilities that protect a creature from critical hits also protect a creature from targeted strikes.

Arms: The target takes no damage from the attack, but it drops one carried item of your choice, even if the item is wielded with two hands. Items held in a locked gauntlet cannot be chosen.

Head: The target is confused for 1 round. This is a mind-affecting effect.

Legs: The target is knocked prone. Creatures with four or more legs or that are immune to trip attacks are immune to this effect.

Torso or Wings: The target is staggered for 1 round.