

Daren Mott

“Anyone can be a lawless bandit who bullies the innocent. What takes real strength is being the hero brave enough to stop them.”

Honor is strength. It is a maxim that Daren Mott has known since birth, and one whose barbs he still feels deep in his flesh. Yet Mott also knows a deeper truth: that just as a sword must bend to avoid breaking, so too must honor. And the more rigid the steel, the easier it shatters.

Mott was born a retainer on the estate of Lord Daren Hitoshi, just a few days’ ride from the great city of Oda in Minkai. The son of the chief falconer and his wife, Mott quickly proved share many of the features of his sires, emulating their proud and fierce natures.

It was while accompanying his father on one of Lord Daren’s hawking outings that he first came to the lord’s attention. At eight years old, Mott was assigned the honor of being the personal attendant to the lord’s son, Masao, assisting the privileged child with his falcon. All went well until the noble son, still new to the sport, mishandled his bird and nearly lost an eye for his trouble. The furious lordling prepared to kill the falcon then and there, but Mott interceded, explaining the boy’s error. Enraged even further, Masao began beating Mott, drawing the attention of the rest of the hunting party. Though Mott bowed low and accepted the savage blows of his master, he neither cried out nor begged for mercy. When Masao finally tired, Lord Daren himself addressed the bloody servant child, asking him why he had been so bold as to correct his superior. Without faltering, Mott bowed to the lord and said simply, “Because it was the truth.”

From that point on, Lord Daren took the young Mott under his wing, frequently assigning him duties within the manor house, engaging him as a companion for his son, and seeing to his education in matters both martial and intellectual. In time, Mott grew to become a powerful magi, rising to the position of head samurai of the Daren holdings. When Masao died in a drunken duel at the age of twenty, thus depriving Lord Daren of an official heir, the bereaved lord began to look more and more to Mott as a son, even allowing him to take the family name.

Yet Masao’s death was only the beginning of the Daren family’s misfortune. It was shortly after this episode that the Daren estate was visited by Kaneka Yoshiro, a traveling lord and government official with a position high in the Imperial Court. With considerably more prestige and official sway than Daren, Kaneka was received with full honors—yet it quickly became apparent that the guest was interested in more than just hospitality. Within a few days, Kaneka’s cunning insults, lewd advances toward Daren’s wife, and barely concealed challenges to Daren himself left Mott’s lord with no choice. Honor forbade him from allowing the slights to stand unanswered, yet challenging a governmental superior was as good as a death sentence.

In the end, honor won out, just as Kaneka knew it would. Daren challenged Kaneka to a duel, and was quickly slain by the talented swordsman. In recompense for the “insult” Kaneka had suffered, the Imperial Court allotted all the Daren holdings to Kaneka. Daren’s widow, faced with the prospect of a dishonored existence among peasants, had no choice but to accept Kaneka’s proposal of marriage if she wanted to retain her position.

Though the Daren samurai were bound by direct order of the court to honor their new arrangement—and plied with substantial gifts by their new master—Mott saw the theft for what it was. Several nights later, having watched Kaneka’s celebrating guards drink themselves into unconsciousness, Mott crept into his former master’s bedchamber and confronted the usurper even as he lay sleeping with his new wife. Though Kaneka screamed for his retainers, in the end it became clear that his only option was to fight. Taking up the sword that Mott tossed



onto the bed, Kaneka did everything he could to kill the samurai quickly, yet Mott would not be denied his revenge. At last, bleeding from several terrible wounds, Mott succeeded in getting past the noble's guard, ending his short-lived dominion over the Daren estate in a fine spray of blood.

As Kaneka fell to the floor, pink froth spilling from his lips, Mott dropped his cudgel and knelt beside it. Knowing that to attack any lord in this manner—let alone the man the government considered his rightful master—would bring sure execution, he drew his dagger and prepared to die with his honor intact.

A hand on his shoulder stayed his blade. When Mott looked up, he beheld Lady Daren—now Lady Kaneka—in her dressing gown, its yellow silk stained with the blood of her most recent husband. With tears in her eyes, she thanked Mott for avenging Lord Daren and returning the estate to her control. Yet with her next breath, she condemned him forever. Taking his hand in her own—an undreamed-of show of affection and familiarity—the noblewoman forbade Mott from taking his own life. Instead, she snuck him out of the manor and into a carriage bound for Oda, with only a string of coins, his armor, and a command to live as best he could. When the morning sun rose, it found Mott on a caravan traveling north, bound for the icy reaches of the Crown of the World and from there on to the mysterious lands of the Inner Sea.

Now in his mid-thirties, Mott is a hard man who keeps to himself. Though he has long since learned to speak Taldane, he remains terse by nature, feeling that everyone in his new home speaks too much but says too little. He operates as a fearless and talented mercenary—or ronin, as he terms it—for those whose cause seem righteous, yet refuses to bow to anyone regardless of status, saying only that he has had his fill of masters. Mott is loyal to those few friends who can get past his stone-faced demeanor, yet remains secretly tortured by his conflicting senses of honor. To continue living as a masterless samurai—let alone one who has committed a great crime—is shameful, yet to deny Lady Daren's command would be equally shameful. With no clear answer, Mott has temporarily shelved the problem.

Nearly a year ago, he received word that Lady Daren had been killed, her entire estate overrun and laid to waste by an army of bandits. Seeking answers against the world's chaos that threatened to swallow him up in despair—for he also lost his family in the attack—Mott devoted himself mastering his chosen weapon, the staff. He rises early every morning to practice combat maneuvers and constantly strives to master new techniques—particularly those known to be effective against criminals. Excellence with his weapon has become almost symbolic to him; it represents excellence of character, the mending of a broken spirit. When he has achieved perfect mastery of the rigid staff of law, he believes he will then be ready to move on from his disgrace and once again seek out the honor he once knew.

Ultimately, he seeks his destiny in battle; deep in his heart, he harbors a secret hope: that perhaps one day he might raise an army of champions and lead it over the mountains, rooting out the bandit army that raised his Lady's estate and restoring the honor of himself, his family, and the warrior's code he feels he was born to uphold.

Daren Mott

Male human monk 2/magus 3 (master of many styles, staff magus)

LG Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Perception +8

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +3 Dex, +1 Dodge)

hp 45 (5 HD)

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities evasion

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +2 *quarterstaff* +9 (1d6+5) with Arcane Pool, or
mwk dagger +7 (1d4+3/19-20) or
mwk nunchaku +7 (1d6+3) or
unarmed strike +7 (1d6+3)

Ranged mwk dagger +7 (1d4+3/19-20)

Special Attacks arcane pool (4 points, +1 bonus), spell combat, spellstrike, stunning fist (2/day, DC 12)

Magus Spells Prepared (CL 5th; Concentration +8)

1st (4/day) – *enlarge person*, *frostbite*^{UM}, *shield*, *snowball*^{PotN}

0 (at will) – *daze*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *ray of frost*

STATISTICS

Abilities Str 16 (+3), Dex 16 (+3), Con 14 (+2), Int 16 (+3), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 8 (–1)

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +6 (+9 disarm w/nunchaku); **CMD** 20

Feats Crane Style^B, Dodge^B, Dragon Style^B, Improved Unarmed Strike^B, Mobility, Quarterstaff Master^B,
Stunning Fist^B, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff, unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Climb +8, Escape Artist +11, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Perception +8, Spellcraft +11,
Stealth +11, Swim +8

SQ fuse style (2 styles), magus arcana (close range), traits (magical knack: magus, reactionary)

Combat Gear *arcane spell scrolls* (*enlarge person* 2, *shield* 2), *potions of cure light wounds* (3); **Other Gear**
+1 quarterstaff, *+1 mithral shirt*, *cloak of resistance +1*, masterwork dagger, masterwork nunchaku,
pearls of power (1st) (4), spellbook (59 pages left), spell component pouch

Spellbook all 1st- and 0-level magus spells in the *Core Rulebook*, *Advanced Player's Guide*, and *Ultimate Magic* plus *snowball* (from *People of the North*)

Encumbrance light 58 lb., medium 116 lb., heavy 175 lb.; **Weight Carried** 23 lb. (excluding tender)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Arcane Pool (Su) You have a reservoir of mystical arcane energy that you can draw upon to fuel your powers and enhance your weapon. This arcane pool has a number of points equal to ½ your magus level (minimum 1) + your Intelligence modifier. The pool refreshes once each day when you prepare your spells. You can expend 1 point from your arcane pool as a swift action to grant any weapon you are holding a +1 enhancement bonus for 1 minute. These bonuses can be added to the weapon, stacking with existing weapon enhancement to a maximum of +5. This ability counts as the Arcane Strike feat for meeting any prerequisites. Multiple uses of this ability do not stack with themselves. These bonuses do not function if the weapon is wielded by anyone other than you. You can only enhance one weapon in this way at one time. If you use this ability again, the first use immediately ends.

Close Range (Ex) You can deliver ray spells that feature a ranged touch attack as melee touch spells. You can use a ranged touch attack spell that targets more than one creature (such as *scorching ray*), but you make only one melee touch attack to deliver one of these ranged touch effects; additional ranged touch attacks from that spell are wasted and have no effect. These spells can be used with the spellstrike class feature.



Evasion (Ex) You can avoid damage from many area-effect attacks. If you make a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, you instead take no damage. Evasion can be used only if you are wearing light armor or no armor. You do not gain the benefit of evasion when helpless.

Fuse Style (Ex) You can fuse two of the styles you know into a more perfect style. You can have two style feat stances active at once. Starting a stance provided by a style feat is still a swift action, but when you switch to another style feat, you can choose one style whose stance is already active to persist. You may only have two style feat stances active at a time.

Magical Knack Your magus caster level is treated as two higher, to a maximum of your character level.

Reactionary You gain a +2 trait bonus on Initiative checks (included above).

Spell Combat (Ex) You can cast spells and wield your weapons at the same time. This functions much like two-weapon fighting, but the off-hand weapon is a spell that is being cast. To use this ability, you must have one hand free (even if the spell being cast does not have somatic components), while wielding a light or one-handed melee weapon in the other hand. As a full-round action, you can make all of your attacks with your melee weapon at a –2 penalty and can also cast any spell from the magus spell list with a casting time of 1 standard action (any attack roll made as part of this spell also takes this penalty). If you cast this spell defensively, you can decide to take an additional penalty on your attack rolls, up to your Intelligence bonus, and add that amount as a circumstance bonus on your concentration check. If the check fails, the spell is wasted, but the attacks still take the penalty. You can choose to cast the spell first or make the weapon attacks first, but if you have more than one attack, you cannot cast the spell between weapon attacks.

Spellstrike (Su) Whenever you cast a spell with a range of “touch” from the magus spell list, you can deliver the spell through any weapon you are wielding as part of a melee attack. Instead of the free melee touch attack normally allowed to deliver the spell, you can make one free melee attack with your weapon (at your highest base attack bonus) as part of casting this spell. If successful, this melee attack deals its normal damage as well as the effects of the spell. If you make this attack in concert with spell combat, this melee attack takes all the penalties accrued by spell combat melee attacks. This attack uses the weapon’s critical range (20, 19–20, or 18–20 and modified by the keen weapon property or similar effects), but the spell effect only deals ×2 damage on a successful critical hit, while the weapon damage uses its own critical modifier.