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WATERDEEP: INSIDE THE CITY OF SPLENDORS
WITH ED GREENWOOD • ELAINE CUNNINGHAM • ERIC L. BOYD

Dragon®

ISSUE 335 • SEPT 2005

A MOONBLADE IN WATERDEEP

Forgotten Realms Fiction
from Elaine Cunningham

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 Associate Editor: Jason Bulmahn
 Assistant Editors: Mike McArtor and F. Wesley Schneider
 Graphic Designer: Sarah Robinson
 Advertising Director: Joshua J. Frost
 Director of Operations: Jeff Alvarez
 Prepress Manager: Kelly O'Brien
 Circulation Manager: Pierce Watters
 For Wizards of the Coast: Rich Redman and Ed Stark

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Attila Adorjany, Peter Bergting, Jeff Carlisle, Matt Dixon,
 Vincent Dutrait, Niklas Jansson, John Kovalic, Chuck Lukacs,
 Tony Moseley, David Wahlstrom, Aaron Williams

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Shelly Baur, Eric L. Boyd, William L. Christensen, Joshua Cole,
 Andy Collins, Elaine Cunningham, Jesse Decker, Mike Fehlauer,
 Mike L. Fiegel, Ed Greenwood, Tim Hitchcock, John E. Ling
 Jr., Nicolas Logue, Hal Maclean, Mike McArtor, Mike Mearls,
 F. Wesley Schneider, Amber E. Scott, James Sutter, Troy Taylor,
 Jeffrey E. Thetford, Wil Upchurch, Ben Vandgrift

PAIZO PUBLISHING, LLC
 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200

Chief Executive Officer Lisa Stevens	Chief Operating Officer Keith Strohm
Technical Director Vic Wertz	Director of Operations Jeff Alvarez
Corporate Accountant Dave Erickson	

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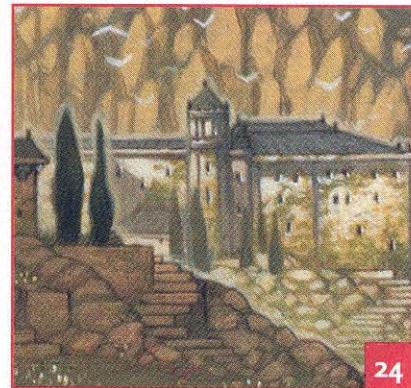

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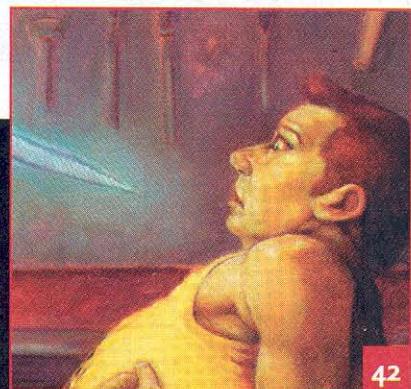


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Letters to the Editor: scalemail@paizo.com

Submissions: dragon@paizo.com

Subscriptions: paizo.com/dragon

Back Issues: paizo.com/dragon

Customer Service:

customer.service@paizo.com

Sage Advice: sageadvice@paizo.com

Advertising: josh.frost@paizo.com

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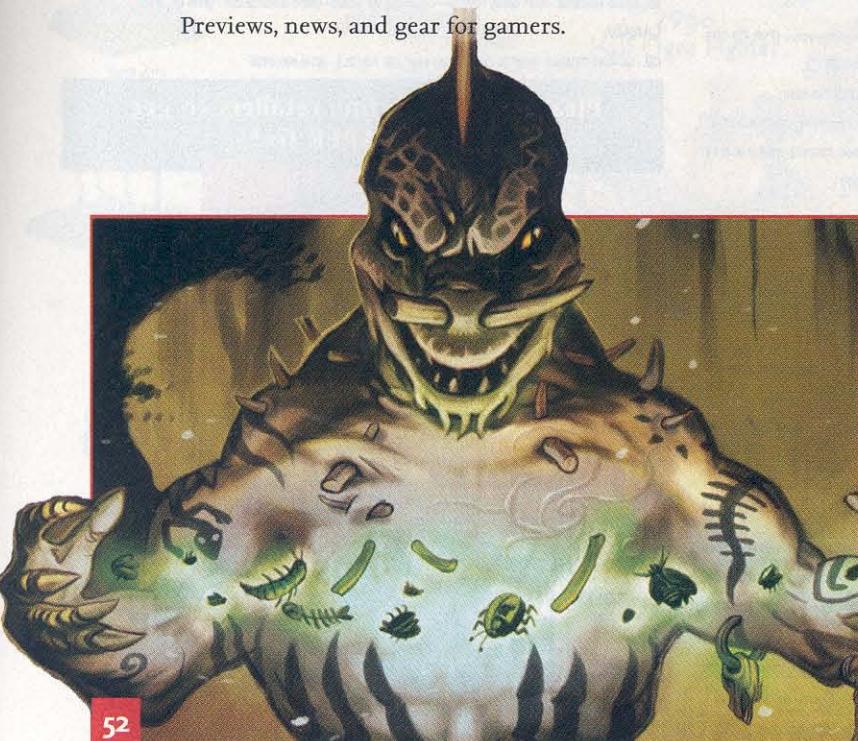
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LUK
AFS

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

As second edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ground on and I found myself playing the game only rarely, I often had difficulty mustering a lot of enthusiasm for a new issue of DRAGON. Sure the columns on how to run a better game were helpful, but I thought I knew everything there was to know about running and playing D&D. Those columns were fine, but they were Not For Me. If I wasn't playing much, I didn't really need new spells and magic items. Thank goodness for the cartoons, or I might have abandoned ship.

But there was one thing that kept me waiting at the mailbox: a coveted and almost impossibly rare article that expanded upon the GREYHAWK campaign setting. My interest in the game (and more importantly my ability to muster a full table of players) had faded, but my enthusiasm for my favorite D&D setting blazed as strong as ever before. This was before the Internet. As far as new game stuff was concerned, it was your own notes and what TSR published in their game products and in DRAGON. Period.

In those days an article on my favorite setting could make or break an issue for me. Standouts included a trio of articles from an unreleased sourcebook, a never-before-seen map of the "rest of the world," an analysis of different fighting techniques from the various nations of the world, and a handful of monsters that seemed like they were designed specifically for my campaign (or at least the one I was imagining in my head) and for my favorite setting.

For a while in the recent past, this magazine attempted to avoid setting-specific articles for rules-focused features tailored to the general audience. The idea goes like this: If you include articles tied to a specific setting, you're automatically "not talking to" a large number of readers, who don't happen to favor that particular setting. In my example above, every time Erik Mona was happy about a GREYHAWK article, a lot more DRAGON readers were upset about an article they "couldn't use," because it wasn't tied to their setting of choice (most likely a world of their own design).

The problem with a DRAGON that doesn't spend any time on the official campaign settings is that the magazine stops talking to a significant percentage of D&D players, who are in it mostly for the settings. Even when time and circumstances don't permit long-term campaigns, many players "keep in touch" with the game by reading about the official settings. For every gamer who can tell you the CR of a chuul there's a guy who can name the last three kings of Cormyr.

So the settings are coming back to DRAGON, with an emphasis on those currently supported by Wizards of the Coast. (We'll revisit the unsupported settings once a year for January's Campaign Classics theme, so don't count out your favorites from the past just yet!) They're coming back because the settings are part of what defines D&D, and they serve as a great example that, at its best, D&D is indeed about exploring dungeons and slaying dragons, but it is also about the world in which those things exist, and the PCs' role within that world.

This month, that world is the FORGOTTEN REALMS. The release of the City of Splendors: Waterdeep sourcebook and the City of Splendors novel by Elaine Cunningham gave us the perfect opportunity to celebrate the foremost city in the Realms with some wonderful features aimed squarely at fans of the world Ed Greenwood debuted in the pages of this very magazine.

Not every issue will contain as much setting content as this one, and future issues won't dedicate quite so much space to a single world (hey, it's Waterdeep we're talking about, here), but let the word go out. The official settings are part of what makes D&D D&D, and they'll be covered here in the pages of DRAGON.

With a vengeance.



Erik Mona
Editor-in-Chief
erikm@paizo.com



LETTERS

Tell us what you think of this issue. Send an email to scalemail@paizo.com. Please include your name, city, and state.

I'LL TAKE IT

I just wanted to write and thank you for taking DRAGON in new directions! I've been a long-time subscriber to DUNGEON, but I've rarely picked up an issue of DRAGON in the past few years. I bought DRAGON #333 for the tie-in with Age of Worms and the "Relics of the Realms" features, and then I read your editorial. I'm really glad that you'll be featuring more of the FORGOTTEN REALMS this coming year. You just can't go wrong with Eric Boyd and Ed Greenwood! Don't get me wrong, I love GREYHAWK material, but I'm truly addicted to the Realms.

Additionally, I have to say that the entire feel of DRAGON has improved—artwork, articles, everything! And with the monthly Age of Worms tie-in and promised Realms material, I decided to leap back in for a subscription! Thanks again, and keep up the excellent work—with both magazines!

John Dencoff
Albuquerque, NM

We hope you like the Realms content in this issue, John. We considered the release of the new Waterdeep products an excellent time for a "welcome back" for those Realms fans who may have stepped away from DRAGON over the last few years, as solid FORGOTTEN REALMS articles seemed more and more difficult to find in these pages. While it'll probably be a long, long time before we do another issue with as much Realms content as this one, we have a lot of exciting things on the horizon, including more cities from Ed Greenwood,

more articles from the likes of Eric L. Boyd, and perhaps even some exploration of the lands beyond Faerûn.

And before the GREYHAWK and EBERRON fans get all up in arms about their settings getting left out in the cold, allow me to say this: There's room in the sandbox for all of us, and fans of the official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign settings will have much to look forward to in the next year. We even plan to revisit some popular settings from the past that haven't seen meaningful support in years.

I'm looking at you, Spelljammer fans. Your beloved giff are only months away!

GRAND THEFT RPG

The other day I was walking out to my car when I couldn't find it. I was sure I was in the right spot and started to fear that my car had been stolen. I kept walking along the street that I thought I had parked on looking for it. During my search I started thinking, "Crap. My school stuff is in my car and finals are next week. Eh, I can borrow books from people to study. No big deal." and, "Damn. Can't easily replace the

car since it's not insured." Next thing that went through my mind was, "All my field gear (I'm a Marine) was in my trunk, so that's gone too. Eh, my unit will replace that. Not my fault my car got stolen." I kept walking, thinking, "What's in my car that's of any other value? ****!!! My D&D stuff is in my car!!! God **** it!!" Various other expletives ran through my head, but I don't want to put them in here, as they're not appropriate. Thankfully, I found my car. Yes, I definitely have my priorities straight.

David Peever
Kent, WA

Yes, but did the thieves make off with your D&D books?

GIRLS LIKE DEMONS

I'm responding to the question you posed in issue #333 regarding the low percentage of female gamers. I myself am a girl, gamer, manga reader, and loyal DRAGON subscriber. I have been playing D&D since I was five years old. Thanks to my overly active imagination and obsession with knowing the rules inside and out so I can twist them to my advantage, I can even come up with pretty good, detailed campaigns off the top of my head. But I'm not e-mailing you to talk about that stuff. Let's see. Where was I...? Ah! Yes.

I have noticed that most of the girls who are into fantasy fiction and might consider playing D&D are also into stuff like demons (the kinds from InuYasha and YuYu Hakusho; not those

We, the Lords of Waterdeep, have gathered to purge our city of an ancient evil.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

What definitive ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS computer game took place in the sewers and labyrinths beneath the city of Waterdeep?

WE GOOFED!

Rob Lazzaretti's map of the city of Crimbor, on page 26 of last month's DRAGON, was missing a few numbered locations listed on the map key on the opposite page. We blame invisible stalkers. You can download a revised version of the complete Crimbor map at paizo.com/dragon.



bug uglies in the *Monster Manual*), alchemy (like in *Full Metal Alchemist*), and ancient magic (*Yu-Gi-Oh!*). Or, they might just want to go on a fun campaign with what a passerby might consider evil intentions but are really just sincere dreams that provide an excuse to help people (*One Piece*). Perhaps if D&D had more of that and a bit less of "the sensitive paladin who wants to make a raft out of enemy and villager corpses" more girls would be more inclined to play. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for carnage, but sometimes the gamers need a little reminder not to take it over the edge.

Sara Pekel
Via Email

I've resisted long, rambling answers to letters on this issue, because I'm most interested in what our female readers have to say on the topic. I think Sara's response is spot-on, however, in that I think the way to getting more women interested in the hobby is far more complicated than simply making the cover pink and changing the name of the books to, oh, let's say "Heartquest." Making our campaigns (and our magazines and sourcebooks) about more than just blood and guts is certainly a critical early step. So what else needs to be done?

MORE MAN-FLESH

I really appreciated Joanne Ellem's letter "In Response to Whoa" in issue #333. I am a gamer girl and what she wrote seems relevant to my experiences. What bothers me most about being part of the 5% of women players is that it feels like the industry isn't doing

anything to change that number (in a higher, double-digit direction). It feels like even DRAGON is letting the perception that RPGs aren't for girls stand. Occasionally the cover of DRAGON features a scantily-clad female character, like the medusa on issue #329. The cover appeals to guys to read the magazine, but it's not a turn-on for me. "Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover" is a fine saying, but if I were to show one of my girl friends who hasn't played D&D before that issue, she'd assume what's inside isn't meant for her. The hunky Mesopotamian demigods Marc Sasso illustrated (also issue #329) should have been on the cover! I don't think the men would be put off by an equal representation of babes of both genders (and to any male chauvinists, I wrote *equal*, not "anti-bikini Inquisition"). If you're serious about encouraging girls to play D&D, try featuring more stuff that appeals to us—my sister loves Mercedes Lackey's novels, but she won't pick up the dice no matter how much I cajole her because she says D&D is fantasy for "nerd guys." If one of Mercedes Lackey's books was featured in "A Novel Approach" it would go a long way toward changing her mind. D&D can also be fantasy for "nerd girls" like me—the system can support almost everybody's ideas about what fantasy is; all that's needed is some broad-mindedness (yes it's a pun, deal with it).

Rachel Hadlock-Piltz
Los Angeles, California

Look for at least one beefcake cover in the next year. We're not above pandering to everyone's base instincts now and again.



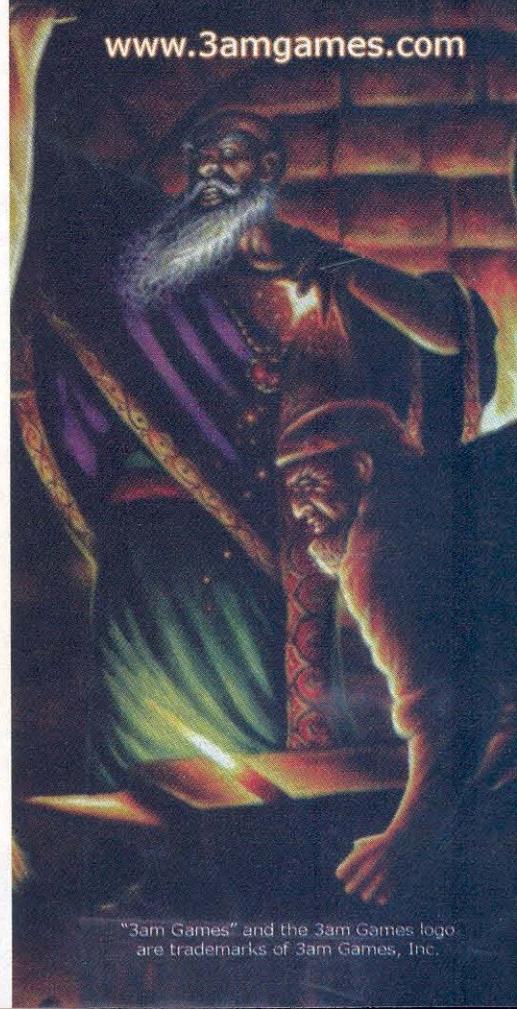
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A Collection
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The latest book from 3am Games features 150 weapons, each with its own history, unique powers, and statistics for low, medium, and high power levels. Every weapon is printed on its own page and beautifully illustrated to add new levels of richness to your campaign.

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Is KEEL HAUL A FEAT?

My fondest dream has come true! Wizards is finally going coastal! I am ecstatic about the new *Stormwrack* book coming out in August, just in time for my birthday on the 23rd! It was like Wizards of the Coast knew how much I wanted to see a seafaring, pirate, swashbuckling, "ALL HANDS ON DECK" supplement!

Ever since reading "Campaign Components: Swashbucklers" from DRAGON Issue #301 (my very first DRAGON purchase) I have been hooked on one day becoming a good-enough DM to have a pirate/colonial type campaign. I am now one of two DMs in my gaming crew that switch off campaigns in an every-other-week adventure. It has been my deepest hope to really pull off a *Pirates of the Caribbean/Master and Commander/Cutthroat Island/Brotherhood of the Wolf* adventure without too many house rules to make it work effectively. I have even gone so far as to start reading the *Master and Commander* book series by Patrick O'Brian. My wife thinks I have literally gone overboard... pardon the pun.

I am writing to y'all to ask... Are you planning on dedicating an issue of DRAGON and DUNGEON to swashbucklers? I know that seems like a lot, but I really need some good maps and ideas and whatnot to really help expand my seafaring adventures. I even went so far as to purchase a couple packs of those small ships from the *Pirates of the Crimson Coast* game in order to have some sea battles too!

Zander Adelstein
Cleric of Thor

We don't have any immediate plans to devote an entire issue to seafaring pursuits, but happily a number of d20 companies can come to the rescue. Have you considered Green Ronin Publishing's "Freeport" series of sourcebooks and adventures? The books perfectly capture the pirate feel. You might also consider Atlas Games' forthcoming Northern

Crown campaign setting, which combines fantasy with colonial America in a way that looks really fresh and exciting. See this issue's First Watch for more details. Lastly, if you're looking for high-quality pirate miniatures, you can't beat Wargames Foundry's offerings. The website is incredibly chaotic, but a good start is wargamesfoundry.com/collections/CUT/index.asp.

3.5 ISSUES

I wanted to collect all the issues of DRAGON and DUNGEON Magazines from the point they switched to 3.5 D&D format. I know there were some issues that gave sneak peeks to the release of 3.5 but I'm more interested in the issues that are completely 3.5. I know the 3.5 *Player's Handbook* came out in 2003, so I figured this is where to start, but I'm not sure. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Jyunmi Hatcher
Via Email

You'll want to begin your collection with DRAGON #309, a spectacular issue focused on battlefield strategies and war campaign themes. That issue also made up half of the DRAGON/DUNGEON "Incursion" publishing event, which staged a githyanki invasion of your campaign world. The other half appeared in DUNGEON #100. These issues and hundreds more are available at paizo.com. —Erik Mona

DRAGON'S HOARD CONTEST



Dragon Talk

McFarlane's Dragons series aren't minis by any stretch of the imagina-

tion, but they're the perfect size for Colossal-sized dragons in D&D and a great way to make your players quake in their ironclad boots. As such, DRAGON and McFarlane Toys are giving away a complete set of McFarlane's Dragons Series 2 (currently slated for general release in December). To win, first answer the following questions:

What are the names of the six different clans from the original McFarlane's Dragons: Quest for the Lost King line?

According to DRAGON #332, what can you make out of a mature adult gold dragon's feet?

Once you know, send an email with your name, answer, and mailing address to contest@paizo.com by October 1st. In January we'll announce one winner from among the participants and send his or her a complete flight of McFarlane's Dragons Series 2.

Also, if you find yourself at McFarlane's website (spawn.com) check out the original McFarlane's Dragons: Quest for the Lost King line and the limited edition repaints available next month. —Mike L. Fiegel

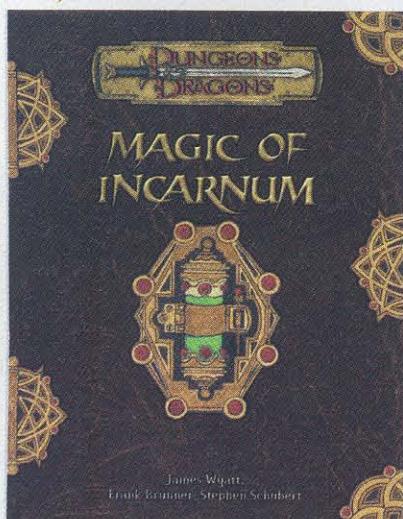


KNOWLEDGE CHECK ANSWER

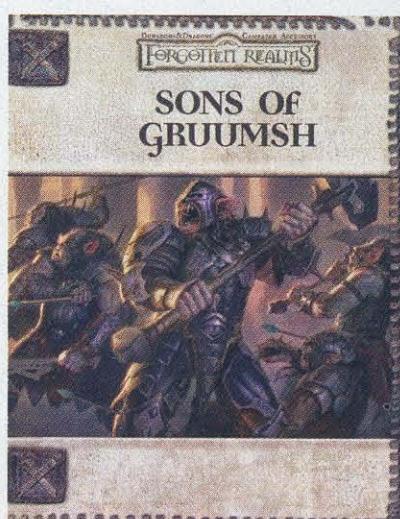
Legends Series Volume 1, *Eye of the Beholder*. Turns out there's a lot more going on below Waterdeep than just Undermountain and Skullport. Watch out for kenku! (And their delicious eggs.)



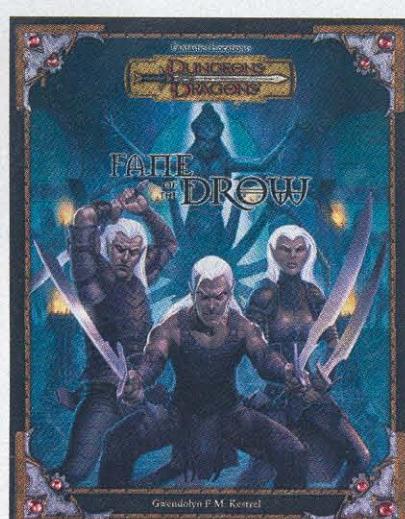
NEW RELEASES



Want to sculpt your magic to suit your every desire? Such is the versatility of the new magic system presented in *Magic of Incarnum*. Shape "incarnum" using soul melds, creating permanent quasi-magic items that you reshape whenever and however you like, or enhance your magic using "essentia," increasing its flexibility and power. Manipulate incarnum with a number of new incarnum-shaping classes and feats, or face its threats in the forms of new monsters, NPCs, and locations. Designers James Wyatt, Frank Brunner, and Stephen Schubert make *Magic of Incarnum* a wholly new campaign option adaptable to any D&D world. —S.B.



Return to the FORGOTTEN REALMS with *Sons of Gruumsh*, a 32-page adventure by Chris Perkins. The first Realms adventure since 2002's *City of the Spider Queen*, *Sons of Gruumsh* is set inside a fully-mapped orc citadel and easily fits into any world that features these traditional foes. Sandwiched between games of intrigue are enough traps, threats, encounters, and full-on combats to advance PCs from 4th to 6th level. The Orog Warlord from the newest DUNGEONS & DRAGON Miniatures set, *Angelfire*, is modeled especially for this adventure, which has been specifically designed to work with D&D miniatures. —S.B.



The talents of veteran game designer Gwendolyn F.M. Kestrel and miniatures expert Rob Heinsoo join forces in *Fantastic Locations: Fane of the Drow*, a complete adventure designed around specific miniatures. Evil machinations and political intrigue in true drow style fill this 10-page adventure, suitable for any 4th-level party. Do battle across four gigantic maps, each depicting grand, open spaces with plenty of room for big climaxes. Miniatures players can also look forward to using these maps in D&D skirmish play and at sanctioned events. —S.B.

NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON # 336



Haunted Houses

by James Jacobs

From unquiet nature spirits to perversions from realms beyond, more than chain-rattling specters haunt the dark corners of the world. These seven new templates each detail a different haunting and are ready to apply to any structure or location.

Birth of the Dead

by Ari Marmell

The *create undead* spell can't be blamed for every ghoul and ghost. Whether hunting them or creating them, learn the genesis of the most terrifying undead threats in D&D.

Bandits in the Path of Fame

by James Lowder

Can a headstrong princess face her inner evils and overcome the ancient tests that ward her ancestral throne?

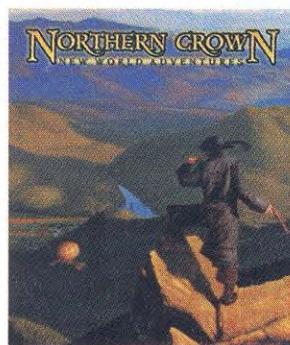
The Demonicon of Iggwilv

by Owen K.C. Stephens

Learn the secrets of the most infamous tome in D&D history.

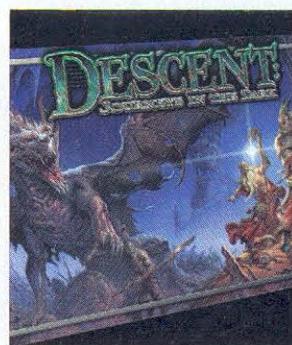
Plus!

The Ecology of the Spawn of Kyuss, Wormfood, Class Acts, Bazaar of the Bizarre, First Watch, Scalemail, Sage Advice, and comics.



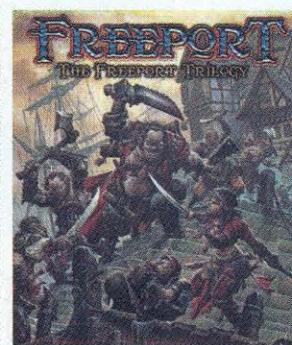
MADE IN AMERICA

From Atlas Games (atlas-games.com) comes yet another gutsy setting drawn from real world history—this time inspired by the folklore of colonial North America. Introduced in *Northern Crown: New World Adventures* and explored further in the *Northern Crown Gazetteer*, this new d20 campaign setting draws players back to a time of pseudoscience, Salem witches, Benjamin Franklin's wizardry, and limitless frontiers. From the Fountain of Youth to the Northwest Passage, monsters and magic abound in this innovative take on the America that might have been. —J.S.



BEGIN YOUR DESCENT

Fantasy Flight Games, the creators of *Runebound* and *Arkham Horror*, set their sights on the world below with *Descent: Journeys in the Dark*. This exciting game of dungeon-crawling adventure pits 1 to 4 characters against the Overlord, an all-powerful enemy who manipulates monsters and untold other perils. The dangers are many, but for those few victorious heroes gold, ancient magic, and mysterious artifacts are the rewards. Numerous scenarios and a tile-based game board makes every game unique. Begin your own journey into the dark at fantasyflightgames.com. —M.L.F.



REBIRTH IN FREEPORT

Death in Freeport, Terror in Freeport, and Madness in Freeport began one of the first and most popular d20 campaign settings. But those adventures have been out of print for years. At least until now. For Green Ronin Publishing's 5th anniversary comes the new, 160-page, perfect-bound tome, *The Freeport Trilogy*. Designed by Chris Pramas, Robert J. Toth, and William Simoni, and with a new cover piece by Wayne Reynolds, this compilation of Green Ronin's first three adventures expands and completes the award-winning campaign as never before. *The Freeport Trilogy* is available now from greenronin.com. —W.S.



THE NEXT BIG THING

Undermountain or Greyhawk Ruins too small for your PCs? Then check out Mammoth Dungeons. Printed on graph paper covered with 10 to 50 squares per inch, Mammoth Dungeons come in three sizes: Standard, Mammoth, and Epic, with 250+, 1,000+, and 6,500+ rooms per level. Cartographers short on time can order single levels or multi-level dungeon complexes, each including its own dungeon encounter charts and creature lair record sheets. Customize your next dungeon delve, deathtrap, or even your entire campaign at mammothdungeons.com. —A.T.G.

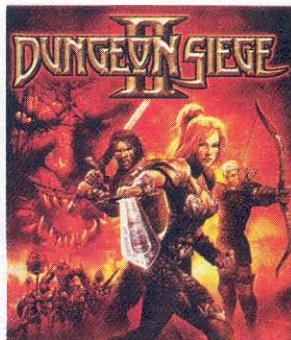


EXALTED DEED

Well known for the art in White Wolf's various Exalted products (white-wolf.com/exalted), it's hardly surprising that UDON Entertainment is producing Exalted's new line of over-the-top comic books. Combining sword-and-sorcery with anime, Exalted seems an obvious fit for UDON, which is perhaps best known for their various Marvel and Capcom comics (not to mention a fair amount of work in DUNGEON and DRAGON). Featuring two stories and brand new game content from White Wolf in every issue, the series debuts in October, with a special #0 preview issue and limited edition art print available at various conventions. —J.S.

**THE GAMESAC**

Finally, furniture designed with gamers in mind! From LoveSac, the new GameSac comes fully equipped with a pocket for controllers, books, dice, or any other essential gaming equipment. Along with an optional SodaSac drink holder and footrest, the unique and incredibly versatile GameSac is guaranteed to keep you comfy through the longest gaming session. At four feet to a side, this massive "Sac" towers over conventional beanbags and two can zip together for even more decadent lounging. Check out lovesac.com and never sit in an uncomfortable folding chair again. —J.S.

**MAINTAINING THE SIEGE**

Tired of getting ganked by other players in your MMORPG? Never fear—*Dungeon Siege II* has heard your pleas. Remaining true to the spirit of games like the original *Dungeon Siege* and *Diablo*, Gas Powered Games's *Dungeon Siege II* allows players to control a party of up to six characters as they return to the civil-war-torn fantasy land of Aranna, either alone or in cooperative multiplayer games. With superior graphics and cinematics to the original, one load time for the whole world, and options for online play let the sword-swinging mayhem begin! Reenter Aranna at microsoft.com/games. —J.S.

**R'LYEH CALLING**

Jack Walters was a good 1920s cop, at least until his commitment to Arkham Asylum. *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*, for the PC and Xbox, casts you as Jack, now an alcoholic private investigator. You continue his downward spiral as he uncovers hidden truths and regains fragments of memory in his search for a lost Innsmouth grocery clerk. A classic sanity-shaking *Call of Cthulhu* game delivered first-person, vertigo and delusional imagery abounds as Jack's fragile ego tries to hold on. *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* releases this month. See callofcthulhu.com for the goods. —M.F.

**WARFORGED AND PEACE**

The much anticipated *EBERRON* real-time PC strategy game, *Dragonshard*, releases this month. The first computer game to bring *EBERRON* to life, *Dragonshard* explores the mysterious continent of Xen'drik. With a story by the setting's creator, Keith Baker, players take up arms as members of the Silver Flame, indigenous lizardfolk, or the Umbragen drow. Yet what sets *Dragonshard* apart from other RTS games is its recognition of D&D roots with small-unit side treks into traditional D&D dungeons. Find screenshots, characters, and more at atari.com/dragonshard. —M.F.

DUNGEON THIS MONTH # 126**Encounter at Blackwall Keep**

by Sean K Reynolds

The PCs join the wizard Allustan on a journey to Blackwall Keep, a militia outpost on the border of a treacherous swamp. But what of the green worms and unkillable zombies plaguing the region, and what fell secret is locked in the keep's forlorn basement? An *Age of Worms* Adventure Path scenario for 5th-level characters.

The Clockwork Fortress

by Wolfgang Baur

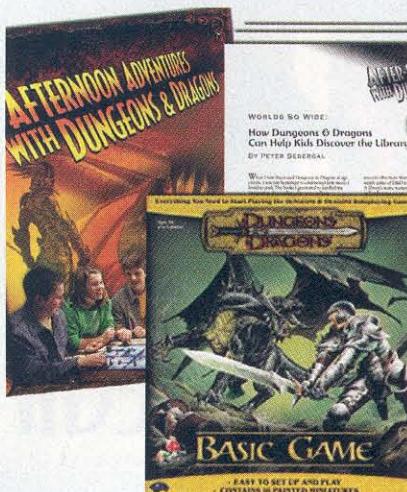
When the mechanical prince of a dead empire discovers that his ancestral fortress

has fallen into the hands of a lunatic derro, he turns to adventurers for aid. Yet something worse than mad derro haunts the Clockwork Fortress' gears. A D&D adventure for 8th-level characters.

Blood of Malar

by Eric L. Boyd

Seductive vampires, hungry werewolves, sinister drug dealers, trouble in the sewers, and an undead beholder? Just another day in Waterdeep! The first adventure in the *Vampires of Waterdeep Campaign Arc*, "Blood of Malar" is a *FORGOTTEN REALMS* adventure for 13th-level characters.



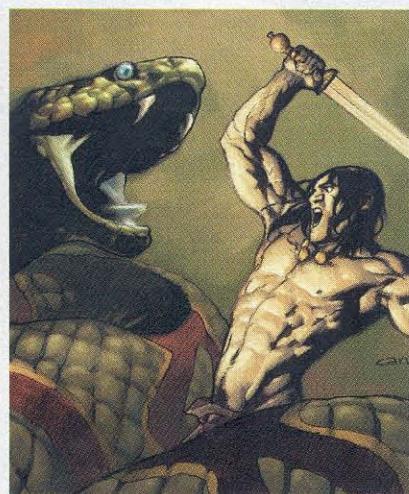
AFTERNOON ADVENTURES

Wizards of the Coast, working with librarians and educators, has created two new outreach programs for young readers and roleplayers. The first, *Afternoon Adventures with Dungeons & Dragons*, provides tools to run D&D games for teens, including the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Basic Game*, instructions for hosting a regular D&D group, recommended reading lists, and other practical resources. The other, *Mirrorstone's Adventures for Reluctant Readers*, employs the Mirrorstone line of books for young adults to encourage reading. Interested educators may contact libraries@wizards.com for more information. —N.P.



MYSTIC PIECES

Put the graph paper away and check out one of the newest and most intricate tools of dungeon depiction ever, *Mystic Blocks*. These super-detailed, pre-painted, 3D blocks depict dungeon terrain in detail like you've never seen before—multiple levels, staircases, dungeon vegetation, and more. They also plug into Dwarven Forge's *Master Maze* pieces perfectly, allowing you to expand your existing collection in a whole new way. Molded from sturdy Excalibur dental plaster, hand-painted, and coated with a clear protective coat for additional durability, they're so tough they'll probably outlast your rulebooks! Check them out for yourself at home.comcast.net/~drakedavis1. —M.L.F.



THE BARBARIAN IS BACK

Everyone's favorite barbarian returns in Dark Horse's *Conan: The God in the Bowl and Other Stories*. Penned by award-winning writer Kurt Busiek and rendered by artists Cary Nord and Dave Stewart, this edition collects issues 9 to 14 from the critically-acclaimed *Conan* series, and introduces the infamous Thothamon and a new female foil, Janissa the Widowmaker. Visit darkhorse.com for a vast variety of Conan material, from dozens of comics and trade paperbacks (including the 24-issue Roy Thomas & Barry Windsor Smith run from the 1970s), a Conan messageboard, downloadable freebies, a manly Conan lunchbox, and much more. —M.L.F.



RPGA UPDATE

by Ian Richards - RPGA Program Manager

As I pen this update we find ourselves immersed deep in the convention season. At this time of year we see a huge increase in activity across the board with sanctioning, reporting, and new players all rising beyond what we predicted. That's great news, but it comes with a few challenges on our overworked processing gnomes. Thus, we've delayed our Herald testing processing. As such, the turn-around time for new memberships has changed from 14 days to 21 days. This doesn't take into account mailing, so please bear with us.

In the last update I mentioned that J.D. Wiker had joined our team here at RPGA headquarters. Many of you might be familiar with J.D. from his involvement with Wizards of the Coast's *STAR WARS* roleplaying products and the Game Mechanics. To say that we're lucky to have someone of his experience helping us edit and develop RPGA adventures is an understatement. Thus, all you RPGA writers should hear or see the benefits of J.D.'s aid fairly soon. This should also prove how serious the RPGA and Wizards of the Coast

are about offering the best quality adventures we can, totally free, to our members.

Finally, I want to mention this year's Worldwide D&D Gameday. There has been a general call for us to do this event again after the overwhelming success of last year. Thus, we're very pleased to sponsor it again, but on November 5th this year. Full information on the upcoming Worldwide D&D Gameday will soon be available at www.rpga.com and right here in future RPGA reports. □

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

WATERDEEP splendor of the city

BY ERIC L. BOYD

illustrated by scott rischer

Although not the largest in population or size, the City of Splendors is the greatest city of Faerûn and the heart of the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting. Like the rest of the Realms, Waterdeep sprang from the fertile mind of the legendary Ed Greenwood as a place to set the adventures of the indomitable Mirt the Moneylender and Durnan the Wanderer.

Waterdeep is a powerful city-state with untrammeled mercantile ambitions but restrained political and military might. It rests atop a great plateau in the shadow of Mount Waterdeep and next to the greatest natural harbor of the Sword Coast. The City of Splendors is ruled by the secretive Lords of Waterdeep, mysterious rulers drawn from all walks of life, and the Open Lord, Piergeiron Paladinson. A mercantile nobility and an extensive system of guilds dominate the economic life of the city, but none of the city's many and varied faiths command the loyalty of a large fraction of the citizenry. Waterdeep is home to many adventurers, who use the Gem of the North as a gateway to the Savage Frontier and as a place to rest and recuperate between expeditions into the city's many dungeons. Ships and caravans visit the city on a regular

basis, bringing an ever-changing mix of creatures to the city's streets. The City of Splendors is aptly named, for it represents the pinnacle of human settlement on the continent of Faerûn.

Waterdeep first saw print in the first edition product *FR1: Waterdeep and the North*, achieving the impossible by giving a good overview of the city and a cursory examination of the North in just 64 pages. This was the infamous product that gave rise to designer (AKA "Realms Traffic Cop") Jeff Grubb's rule, "Thou Shalt Not Use Mouse-Type" in Realms products thereafter, despite the best efforts of Ed and other authors (including myself) to eliminate space wasted on margins and excessively large (i.e., readable) letters. *City System* attempted to conquer Waterdeep's complexity by illustrating the city in 10 massive maps collectively large enough to carpet a room. These two products barely scratched the surface of Waterdeep's culture and society, but they laid out the framework in which many future tales could be told. Most of the NPCs detailed within were Waterdeep's icons and low-level companions for fledgling adventurers.

Ed truly brought Waterdeep to life in *Volo's Guide to Waterdeep*, the first of the infamous "travel guides" published

by that illustrious rogue, Volothamp Gedarm. Steven Schend then knitted the city together in the sprawling, splendiferous *City of Splendors* boxed set. Most of the NPCs revealed in the former source were the shopkeepers, bartenders, and guild members who formed the backbone of the city's daily life, while the latter focused on the movers and shakers of the city—from the Lords of Waterdeep to the noble families and the guild masters.

Beneath Waterdeep's streets sprawls the legendary dungeon of Undermountain. First brought to life in *Ruins of Undermountain*, what we know of Halaster's Halls has continued to expand through such products as *Ruins of Undermountain II*, *The Lost Level*, *Maddgoth's Castle*, *Stardock*, *Skullport*, and *Drizzt Do'Urdan's Guide to the Underdark*. Each of these products has focused on the dark underside of Waterdeep, slowly revealing the complex relationship between the city above and the dwellers below, and those who straddle the divide.

The secrets of Waterdeep and Undermountain were further revealed in the pages of *DRAGON* in articles such as "The Assassin's Run" (#64), "The Ecology of the Mimic" (#75), "Nine Wands of Wonder" (#102), "Open Them, If You Dare" (#106), "Welcome to Waterdeep" (#128), "Lone Wolves" (#172), "Seeing the Sights in Skullport" (#172), "If You Need Help, Ask the Drow" (#176), "The Game Wizards: Volo Goes to Town" (#190), "Part Dragon: All Hero" (#206), "I Sing a Song by the Deep-Water Bay" (#211), "Series Magic" (#213), "The Reports from Undermountain" (#227), "Venturing in the City" (#228), "Claugiyiamatar: Old Gnawbone" (#233), "Gaulauntyr: The Thief-Dragon" (#240), "Jalanvaloss: The Wyrm of Many Spells" (#243), "The Heroes of Selûne's Smile" (#246), "Nymmurh: The Wyrm Who Watches" (#250), "Thornhold: The Harpers at Twilight" (#251), "Dream Spheres" (#259), "Elminster's Guide to the Realms: The Roaring Dragon House" (#320), and "Elminster's Guide to the Realms:

Nurneene's Marvelous Masks" (#321). *DRAGON* has played a critical role in the development of the city, giving extensive detail to small locales and obscure NPCs found within the city and by tying items found in hoards across the realm to the city's history and inhabitants.

The *City of Splendors* also saw print in the pages of *POLYHEDRON*, including "Adversaries: Lady Aridarye Phylund and Lord Urtos Phylund" (#93) and "The Cult of Ao" (#94) and in the pages of *DUNGEON* with "The Inheritance" (#26) and "A Dozen Eggs" (#30). It has made further appearances on the Wizards of the Coast website in the "Magic Books of Faerûn," "Rand's Travologue," "Realms By Night," "Waterdeep Weather" columns, and the "Champions of Ruin Web Enhancement."

Waterdeep has also served as a backdrop for a wide range of tales. Elaine Cunningham depicted the adventures of Arilyn Moonblade, Danilo Thann, and Elaith Craulnober in her *Song & Swords* series (*Elfshadow*, *Elfsong*, *Silver Shadows*, *Thornhold*, and *The Dream Spheres*), and the stories of Liriel Baenre in her *Starlight and Shadows* trilogy (*Daughter of the Drow*, *Tangled Webs*, and *Windwalker*). Troy Denning concluded the *Avatar Trilogy* in the *City of Splendors* in the aptly named *Waterdeep* and returned to the city in *The Summoning*. Mel Odom launched his invasion of the surface lands in Waterdeep with *Rising Tide*. Many of these novels introduced great threats to Waterdeep's continued survival, precipitating the dark times that now beset the city. They also served to show the city's resiliency, with heroes coming to the fore in times of need to defend the Gem of the North.

Waterdeep has also served as the backdrop for "smaller" tales, less epic in scope, that have served to show the countless and varied stories that unfold every day in the *City of Splendors*. Ed Greenwood visited the city in *Elminster's Daughter*, *Hand of Fire*, and *Silverfall*. R. A. Salvatore's characters passed through Waterdeep in *The Halfling's Gem* and *Passage to Dawn*, and

Brian M. Thomsen continued the practice in his *Once Around the Realms*. Short stories and novellas set in the *City of Splendors* include Lynn Abbey's *Hard Choices*; Elaine Cunningham's *Fire is Fire* and *The More Things Change*; Ed Greenwood's *Eye of the Dragon*, *The Keeper of Secrets*, *Ladies Night at the Yawning Portal*, and *Nothing Trouble*; Jeff Grubb's *Smoke Powder and Mirrors*; Roger Moore's *Gunne Runner*; and Brian M. Thomsen's *An Unusual Suspect* and *Shadows of the Past*. These have served to illustrate just how many tales of varying styles can be told in the shadow of Mount Waterdeep.

Undermountain has also been home to many stories, including Mark Anthony's "Escape from Undermountain" and "The Grotto of Dreams," Elaine Cunningham's "The Direct Approach," Ed Greenwood's "A Slow Day in Skullport," Paul Kemp's "Dawn of Night," and Brian M. Thomsen's "Volo Does Menzo." These stories have explored the divide between life in the Realms Above and the dark doings of the Realms Below, giving life to Waterdeep's underworld.

Now the *City of Splendors* has come full circle with Wizards of the Coast's release of the game product *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, an accompanying web enhancement detailing the Environs of Waterdeep, and a novel by Elaine Cunningham and Ed Greenwood this month. Monthly, Matthew Sernett reprises the first level of Undermountain on the Wizards of the Coast website (wizards.com), and look for Steven Schend's *Blackstaff* and Paul Kemp's *Midnight's Mask* next year for further adventures set in the city.

The *City of Splendors* continues to evolve, with new arrivals every day mixing with the long-time inhabitants. New products, such as *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, mesh the established Realmslore of what has come before with new revelations, making such products useful to longtime Realms gamers and new fans of the *City of Splendors* alike. Welcome to the *City of Splendors*, greatest city of the Realms! ■

by Elaine Cunningham • illustrated by Vincent Dutrait

New Olamn Bard College

The Music of Waterdeep



To Storm Silverhand does Danilo Thann send greetings.

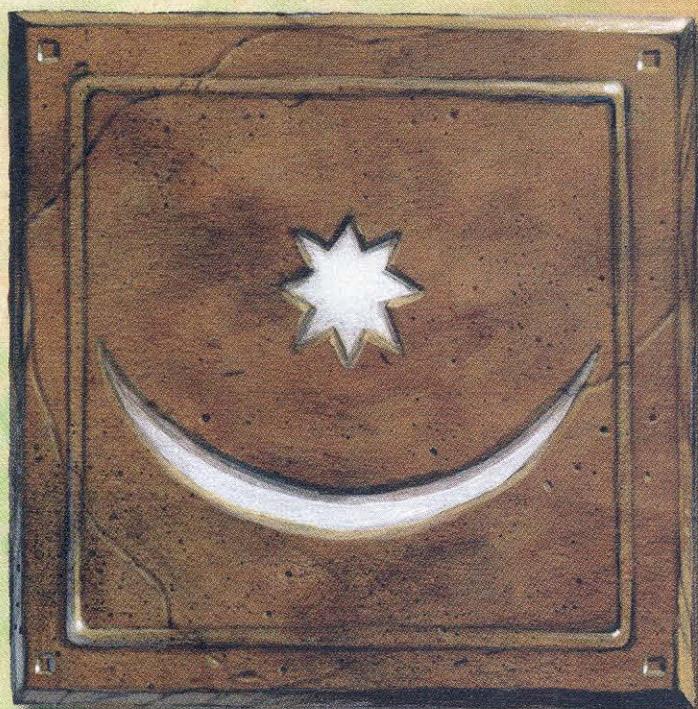
Esteemed lady, it is with great humility that I take quill in hand to address the legendary bard of Shadowdale. I am all too aware of the irony inherent in this missive, which purports to instruct a lady whose knowledge of the bardic arts so greatly exceeds mine. Khelben Arunsun, the archmage of Waterdeep and my kinsman, has requested that I give you a full accounting of my recent visit to the bard college, New Olamn. Of course his slightest wish is my most urgent desire—or more to the point, writing this letter keeps my hands busy and lessens the urge to push my quill into Uncle Khelben's right ear and pull it out his left.

My most recent quarrel with the good archmage is this: He persists in regarding the restored bard college as a sort of stud barn established for the sole purpose of breeding his new brand of Harper. Since it would appear that he has had some success in this endeavor—and since "Harper" and "bard" are words so often spoken in one breath—I will address the Harper schism before moving on to such trifles as music, magic, and scholarship.

The Tel'Teukiira

As you are well aware, Khelben leads a new Harper offshoot known as the Tel'Teukiira, an elven term translated as "Moonstars" or, less commonly, "Silverstars." The archmage's stated mission is to protect people against the myriad hidden dangers of life in Faerûn and to preserve the balance between nature and civilization—not, please note, a desire to meddle in political matters. Waterdeep is abuzz with political and social unrest, and I join those who wonder how long Khelben and his followers will be able to keep their fingers out of so tempting an assortment of pies.

Indeed, I suspect that the creation of the Moonstars—not to mention the rivalry between Khelben's agents and the Harpers who take directive from Berdusk's Twilight Hall—is partly responsible for the upsurge of interest in the bardic arts and, by extension, the rapid growth of New Olamn. I acknowledge the importance of this, despite my impatience with Harper politics, about which I've heard far too much. As I am staying in Blackstaff Tower, I've heard Uncle Khelben sing the Moonstars' praises until I was bleeding from both ears. (Fortunately, I am not speaking literally, for the archmage couldn't carry a tune in a bucket if the fate of Waterdeep depended upon it.)





Garnet and the Riddle Curse

The half-elf bard Iriador (an elven name that's a close variant of the word for "garnet") Wintermist would have been remembered for her bell-like soprano and her heroic involvement in two centuries' worth of Harper causes, had she not had the misfortunate to outlive her normal lifespan—and, alas, her sanity. She lived to see the bard colleges close their doors and the Harpers drift away from their commitment to bardcraft. Her sadness became anger and then obsession, spilling forth in a series of strange attacks centered on the sites of the old bard colleges, connected by a complicated riddle and an obscure form of elven spellsong. Although defeated, Garnet won an unexpected victory. Many bards, sages, and even merchants saw the germ of wisdom in her mad vengeance and began to plan the reestablishment of the bardic colleges.



New Olamn Patrons

The college has several sources of income, but one guild and five wealthy families were largely responsible for founding the college: the Council of Musicians, Instrument-Makers, and Choristers and the noble houses of Crommer, Estelmer, Majarra, Melshimber, and Thann.

In general, the guild is exceedingly pleased by the reestablishment of the bard college, which has caused its membership to soar and its coffers to overflow. The recent death of the long-time guildmaster, Kriios "Old Leatherlungs" Halamabar, has created an opening temporarily filled by Maxeene Rhiosann (NG female Tethyrian human expert 12). The Lady Voice of the Council holds that position until the next election in the Year of the Haunting (1377 DR). This position also carries the title Master Musician, an honor that the leadership of New Olamn would like to incorporate into the bard college. This is a matter of increasing tension between the guild and the college.

Two of the noble families include instrument making among their businesses. House Estelmer deals in brass instruments and has long held the monopoly on horns used by the Watch and City Guard. Brass instruments are usually associated with the fanfare of state occasions or tournaments and are seldom heard in Waterdeep outside of Piergeiron's Palace or the Field of Triumph. The Estelmers see the college as an opportunity to expand their business and they are actively recruiting brass players and calling for new musical compositions. Open-air concerts are regularly held in the garden of Garnet Hall, and the popularity of such instruments as cornetto, glaur, gloon, and sackbut (an early form of trombone) is on the rise as scores of schoolboys eagerly set aside harps and lutes in favor of the more military sound and connotations of brass.

The Majarra family deals in silver and the making of silver instruments. Their flutes, longhorns, and bells are played throughout the Northlands, and they are particularly famed for their Tocken, sets of tuned bells mounted on frames and played with small, round-ended mallets. The popularity of this instrument is rising, for at least two Tocken concerts a day greet those who traverse Mount Melody Walk. The Majarras also deal with harping and harp training, and several members of the family hold teaching positions at New Olamn.

The Melshimber and Estelmer families deal in sage-lore and heraldry, providing information for a price. Both houses are well represented among the instructors of New Olamn, and the college also provides a second place of business, since travelers seeking knowledge often inquire at the bard college. House Estelmer has also been a leading force in the creation of the Font of Knowledge, the new church of Oghma. They donated many books and scrolls to the temple's Great Library, the greatest collections of books found in the City of Splendors.

I find that the Moonstars are almost unknown outside Harper ranks, despite the fact that this particular egg of Khelben's has been long in hatching. He created the Silver Safehold, an extraplanar clubhouse for himself and his followers, some three centuries past, and shortly thereafter linked it with his Waterdeep stronghold, Blackstaff Tower. Khelben's trial at the hands of the Harpers of Twilight Hall and subsequent resignation from the Harpers marked the official foundation of the Moonstars—assuming, of course, that any enterprise so secretive can be deemed "official."

Khelben exerts a level of control over the Moonstars that lead some to regard the group as his personal covert army. Nothing is done except by his express command. Every eight tendays, twelve senior agents convene in the Silver Safehold to report intelligence gathered from their underlings and to discuss matters of concern. These agents direct a second tier of Moonstars, which is divided into two functions: the thirty regional agents who gather news and the twelve field agents who implement actions decided upon by Khelben and his counsel of twelve. Lady Laeral has no official standing in this structure, but all Moonstars understand that she speaks with authority.

A small digression to matters of fashion: The Moonstars do not wear the Harper pin. They have replaced the traditional harp and crescent moon device with Teukiir badges, a magical device that grants access to the Silver Safehold (see Chapter 7 of *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*).

Of all the bards affiliated with New Olamn, perhaps ten are either members of the Moonstars or are being groomed for membership. I was also able to confirm that one student, the daughter of a wealthy Baldur's Gate wine merchant, is acting as an agent for the Harpers of Twilight Hall. This spy is Sondaria Greenglass (NG female Tethyrian human bard 4), an unassuming young woman who



plays the seven-stringed yarting with middling skill. She sings reasonably well and is not uncomely, but neither voice nor visage is remarkable. Indeed, I have never met a woman less likely to linger in memory. Her gift for fading into a crowd is extraordinary, especially for an aspiring bard.

Sondaria is universally described as "friendly," yet seems to have no close friends. Only by close magical observation was I able to link Sondaria with Eather Heilean (LG female Illuskian human paladin of Millil 5/harper paragon 10), recently dispatched from Berdusk to "restore order" among the Harpers of Waterdeep. It is my opinion that Sondaria reports to this Harper paladin, sharing observations about the loyalties and leanings of New Olamn's aspiring bards. Eather has begun to recruit "loyal" Harpers from among the school's graduates. She seeks to create distance between

Those Who Harp and the Moonstars, and I fear that her efforts might undermine the effectiveness—and perhaps endanger the lives—of those bards who follow the Moonstar path. With this in mind, I am taking the precaution of naming some of the Moonstars of New Olamn in a separate message, which I will encode and protect with potent magical wards.

New Olamn

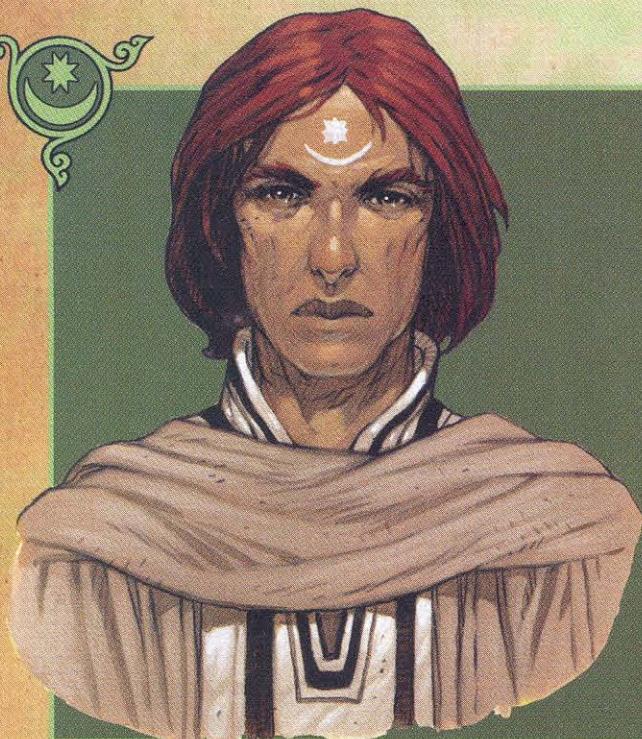
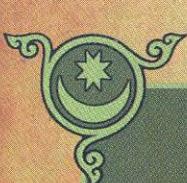
Now, on to the bardic college itself. New Olamn was reestablished in the Year of the Staff (1366 DR). Its original location was the guildhall known as the House of Song. Thanks to the patronage of several noble families, we were able to purchase two Cliffride villas, formerly known as Heroes' Rest and Stormwatch. The former has been renamed "Garnet Hall," in honor of Iriador "Garnet" Wintermist and as a reminder of the perils of forgetting the past.

New Olamn is perched high above the ocean and is accessible either by the Cliffride, a gravel slope that runs along the western edge of Mount Waterdeep's northern spur, or a tunnel through the mountain known as Mount Melody Walk. The former is used mostly for carting in goods and is the only accessible path for riders and carriages. Those who walk to New Olamn invariably take the magically lit and well-patrolled tunnel through the mountain. This is a pleasant walk, for the path is shorter and more level than reality would suggest possible. Soft music fills the tunnel at all times, thanks to the concert series known as the Neverending String of Pearls. A small alcove, curved like a giant oyster shell, has been carved into the rock walls of the tunnel, and bards and minstrels vie for the honor of performing recitals in this venue.

Both of these paths to New Olamn are well traveled, for many people come to study, attend concerts,

Moonstar Agents at New Olamn

More than a few agents or associates of the Moonstars can be found wandering the halls of New Olamn. The following represents some of the more visible members.



Boondor Evenmist

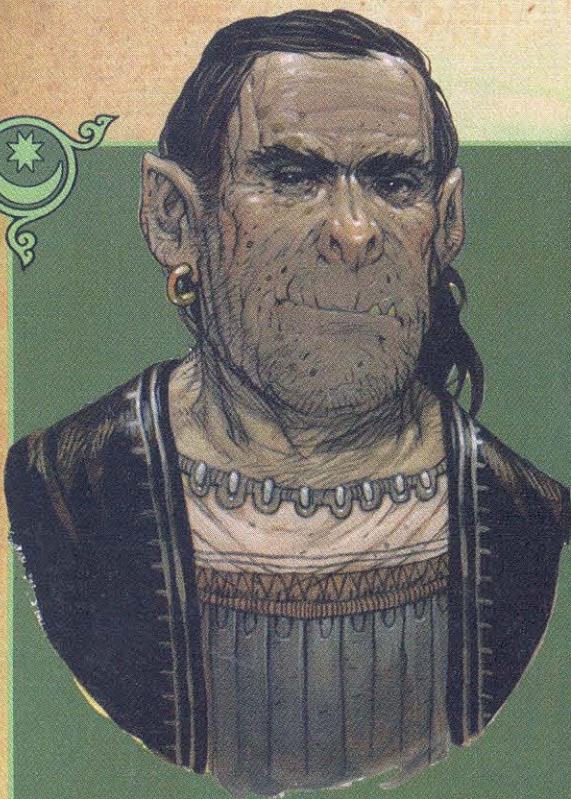
(NG male Illuskan human bard 10). Lord Evenmist is a minor noble from the Moonshaes who took his bardic training from a succession of private tutors, a path commonly employed after the closing of the old bardic colleges. Despite his rank, knowledge, and age—more than forty winters—he enrolled as a student at New Olamn in order to gain the traditional title of Magnus Alumnae. He is extremely well versed in the lore of his native islands, and is a teacher in this specialty as well as a Full Fellow in pursuit of the title Master Bard. His knowledge of ancient cultures and languages drew him into sympathy with the Moonstars' goals. He has taken to wearing no other color than pale gray, a visible tribute to the nearly invisible silver-moon-and-star device tattooed above a pair of remarkably red and bushy eyebrows. Khelben is grooming Lord Evenmist for a high position in the Moonstars, in hope that he will gather the Harpers of the Moonshaes under this new banner.



Taeros Hawkwinter

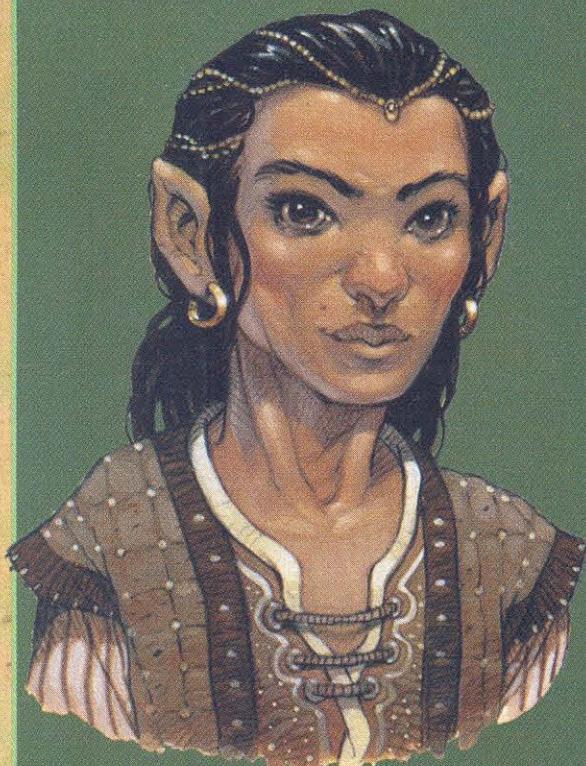
(NG male Tethyrian human bard 3). Young Lord Hawkwinter has a passionate fondness for old tales, an extensive personal library, and, I might add, admirable fashion sense. He has not yet allied himself with the Moonstars, but Khelben has privately expressed interest in recruiting this young nobleman. Taeros is not a Full Fellow, but he is keenly interested in the lore taught at the college, spending many hours at New Olamn and in the library of the new church of Oghma. Taeros is something of a scribbler and his satirical commentaries on all things pertaining to Waterdeep are circulated on broadsheets and posted in popular taverns. Rumor credits him to be the author of *Deep Waters*, a popular collection of Waterdeep tales dedicated to the young King Azoun V of Cormyr. He is also notable for his close friendship with a certain rising young politician, and for his remarkable cloak woven from threads magically spun of amber and gold. He has been entrusted with a *slipshield*, a rare elven magic item that allows him to trade shapes with any sentient being. This magic item is nearly impossible to detect or trace. Created to protect the royal family of Evermeet, several came to Waterdeep after the sahuagin attack, a gift from the elven queen to Piergeiron. They add yet another layer of secrecy as to the identity of the city's hidden rulers. No more than a dozen people in Waterdeep know of their existence, so Taeros's possession of a *slipshield* marks him as someone the hidden powers of Waterdeep consider worthy of trust and destined for greater things.





Ximgrum Swampswallow

(N male half-orc rogue 5). Ximgrum is, depending upon one's point of view, a stunningly handsome orc or a "ruggedly attractive" human. He has a fine baritone voice, but is better known for his athletic ability and enjoyment of an invigorating brawl. Tall and muscular, he is surprisingly light on his feet and is particularly at home in and around water. An expert swimmer, he's also an odds-on favorite in hippogriff water polo—one of the exotic spectator sports currently fashionable among coin-heavy Waterdeep gamblers. His chiseled features and lantern jaw have aged well and still catch many a feminine eye, and he has perfected the art of closing the deal by flashing just a hint of tusk in a bad-boy smile a vampire might envy—always delivered with a bard's flawless timing. His minor fame makes him a sought-after drinking companion to wealthy young Waterdhavians and something of a hero to the city's orc-blooded sell-swords and ruffians, so he's able to insinuate himself into nearly any bit of ongoing mischief.



Vanista Valebright

(NE female gnome rogue 4). One so seldom encounters an evil gnome that Vanista would be remarkable for that fact alone. She is known for her performances on complicated and occasionally eccentric musical instruments of gnomish design, and is a virtuoso hurdy-gurdy performer. Her primary claim to fame is the acerbic wit that has made her a popular guest at festhalls and private parties. Engaging her in conversation is like dancing on the edge of a volcano—no one knows when the lava will spew forth or whom it might scald next—but people take great delight in her biting comments. She is adept at gathering information as many Waterdhavians whisper secrets about their rivals in her ear, hoping she'll make bitter use of them. Vanista is so small and slender she is frequently mistaken for a halfling, but woe betides anyone who voices this observation in her hearing. With her fresh-faced beauty, apple cheeks, and glossy, nut-brown hair, Vanista has the appearance of a miniature milkmaid. Her dainty appearance and amusing conversation are misleading, for her small hands have been bloody more than once. Despite the cruel streak that emerges through her witticisms, only paladins and the very perceptive are likely to perceive her dark nature. Vanista is a passionate advocate for her fellow gnomes, and she supports the Moonstars because she considers them to be far more aware of and responsive to the needs of Small Folk than any other society or government. Her evil nature is a detriment to her becoming a Moonstar, but she could become a valuable contact.

or pick up news from traveling bards and minstrels. These itinerant performers are guaranteed a bed in the former servants' quarters of Garnet Hall, and, if their skills warrant, a chance to perform in one of the mansions' grand halls or smaller salons.

The college currently employs twenty-two faculty members. Hundreds of students pass through New Olann. Most come to the college to learn a bit of lore or music, or to round out their education. Eighty-eight students are currently enrolled as Full Fellows. These are highly talented students accepted to a rigorous course of study that culminates in the title Master Bard and the degree Magnus Alumnae.

Studies at New Olann

Bards have traditionally served kings and princes as advisors and, upon occasion, as the voices of conscience. A thorough knowledge of history, politics, and lore is required of all graduates. They also learn to influence public opinion through performances.

Students at New Olann are expected to attain expert proficiency on their chosen instrument, as well as the ability to play two other instruments with competence. They undergo rigorous memory training and are expected to know hundreds of tunes and commit to memory many songs and ballads. Creativity is also prized, and bards learn to compose new music as well as new arrangements of familiar pieces.

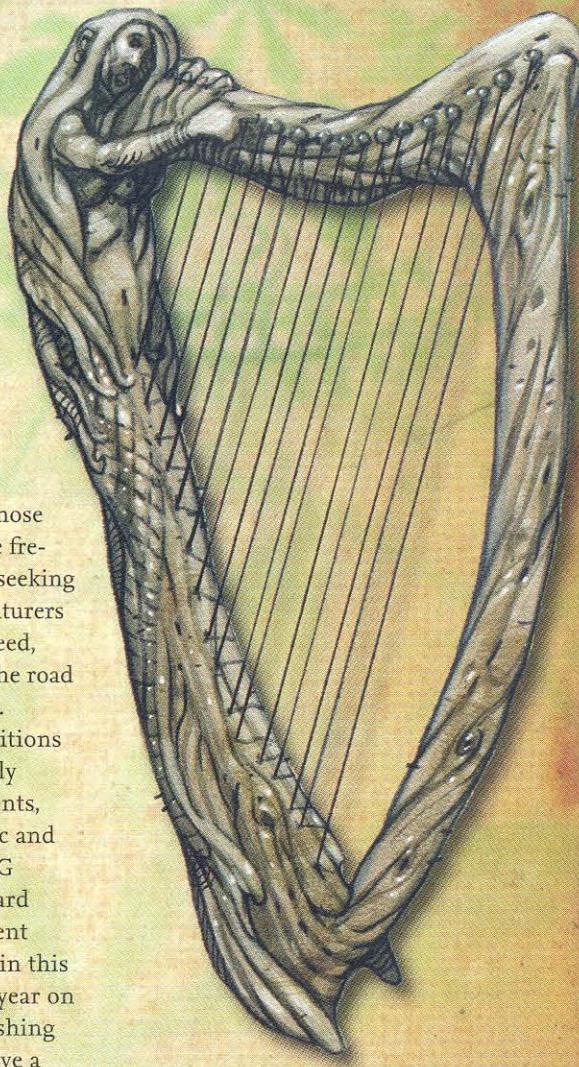
Plans are underway for the first annual Newsong Festival, a competition for new bardic works. The prizes are lavish—in addition to heavy coin purses, the grand prize is *siren strings*, a magical harp fashioned by an eccentric elf. It is hoped that such inducements will attract bards from far and wide, thus enhancing New Olann's reputation and bringing in new students and teachers.

Opportunities FOR Adventure

Life at New Olann is not all study and practice. Thanks to the tunnel passage, all the wonders of Waterdeep are but a short stroll away. Students are encouraged to explore the city. They are required to perform at private parties, festhalls, and taverns, where they learn to deal with people from all walks of life. Those handy with sword and spell are frequently recruited by the glory-seeking noblemen and parties of adventurers they meet in these venues. Indeed, spending at least one year on the road is a requirement of graduation.

The college sponsors expeditions to recover rare items, especially books of lore, magic instruments, and weapons fused with music and magic. Bronwyn Caradoon (NG female Chondathan human bard 7/harper agent 1), a Harper agent with considerable experience in this field, takes several students a year on these excursions. Students wishing to join a treasure hunt can leave a message for Bronwyn at her Waterdeep shop, *The Curious Past*. Alice Tinker, the gnome who presides over this collection of antiquities and oddities, is a shrewd judge of character and decides who among the many applicants accompanies Bronwyn on her next trip. Adventure-craving bards are advised to keep this in mind when approaching the little shopkeeper.

More than a few students at New Olann are agents for various governments and secret societies, so the bard college is also a training ground in the art of espionage. Much of this is harmless gathering of information, but a young bard runs the risk (or the opportunity) of being drawn into deadly intrigues and entanglements. Agents of Twilight Hall, the Kraken Society, and the Zhentarim are thought to walk the halls of Stormwatch and Garnet Hall.



A rapidly growing aspect of New Olann is the research into new music-related spells and musical weapons (see "Songsabers of Waterdeep" on page 74 of this issue). Testing these magics, both in development and in the field, provides opportunity for adventure. Particularly intrepid students might volunteer to test new varieties of singing swords in combat. Other bards explore the possibility of combining the enhancements of multiple harmonizing weapons (Melee weapons crafted to accompany a bard's song, granting a +6 bonus on Perform checks that involve singing. Weapons with this enhancement also extend the effects of bardic music for a number of rounds equal to the bard's Charisma modifier). Bards train in groups of two and three with weapons harmonized with each other as well as their wielders. Early successes are inspiring people to

wonder how else music might be used to combine the power of certain spells and magical items. This is well and good, but I would not like to see such weapons become plentiful and widely known. In particular, I shudder to think what might occur if the Red Wizards of Thay devoted their efforts to the crafting of harmonizing weapons.

Antharissa Nimesin (CG female gold elf fighter 12/bard 10), is currently investigating the possibility of training elven bladesingers at the college. This is a controversial topic among the elves, who for many centuries have traveled to Evermeet to learn this most elven form of magical swordplay. Other elves, however, point out that the Retreat is over, and argue for the return of all aspects of elven culture to the mainland. Another point of contention is the training itself, for it is traditional for an aspiring bladesinger to train with a single master. Many elves consider the notion of a "bladsinger school" ludicrous. A delegation is being formed to make the trip to Evermeet to take this matter before Queen Amlaruil, and perhaps to recruit master bladesingers to the ranks of New Olamn instructors.

Bards from other races have been vastly encouraged by this debate, as well as the gnome devices played by Vanista Valebright. As a result, there has been an upsurge of interest in the music and legends of halflings, dwarves, and many lesser-known races. Students at New Olamn are increasingly electing to travel to such places as Lurien and the Great Rift to study the music and lore of other peoples.

What New Olamn Means to Waterdeep

The restoration of the bard college is a matter of great pride to Waterdhavians. It has had a mild effect on commerce and a much greater impact on Waterdeep's cultural life, not to mention its prestige in the eyes of other, less mercantile cultures.

One aspect of the college worth watching is its impact on communication. For the first time, Waterdeep

has a central source of information concerning the musical, intellectual, and social life of the city. Anyone wishing to publicize a concert, lecture, or tavern performance, a theatre troupe, private recital, or even a street performance can send a message



to New Olamn. Rare instruments, musical weapons, books of lore, and other items related to bardcraft can be advertised, and those who wish to hire bards are welcome to post notices. All this information is consolidated and made available to the citizenry at twelve small plinths newly erected in public areas throughout the city. These are manned by students, all of whom are required to spend a minimum of two bells a day at one of the plinths.

Anyone wishing to plan an evening's entertainment can see at a glance what is available throughout the city, but many other uses can be made of this information. Street vendors routinely check the plinth roles to ascertain the most profitable spots to set up shop. (Outdoor performers might find, to their dismay, that over-ripe fruit is in plentiful supply.) Because of the frequent updates, plinth roles provide a popular method to send hidden messages, to trace the whereabouts of rivals, and—unfortunately—to plot crimes. For a while, false information poured into New Olamn as various factions sought to cover their tracks and confound rivals, but more stringent requirements have cut down on this flow of disinformation. As a result, the plinth roles are rapidly becoming one of the most trusted sources of information in the city.

In closing, I would like to extend an invitation on behalf of New Olamn. We would be grateful and honored if the Bard of Shadowdale would see fit to grace the Newsong Festival with her presence, both as a judge of new competitions and as a guest performer. Long years have passed since Storm Silverhand has been heard in concert and so glittering a prospect would draw many eyes to this new event.

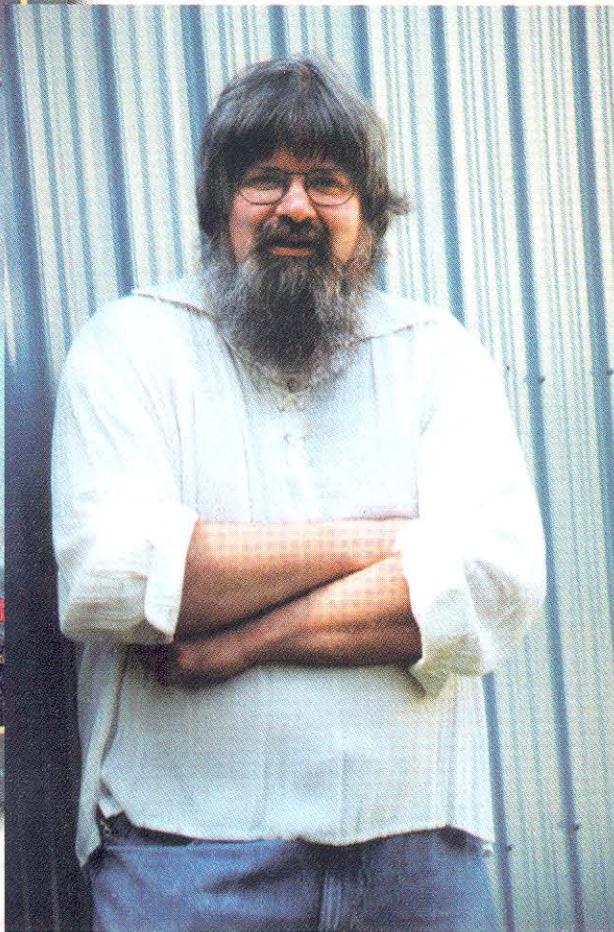
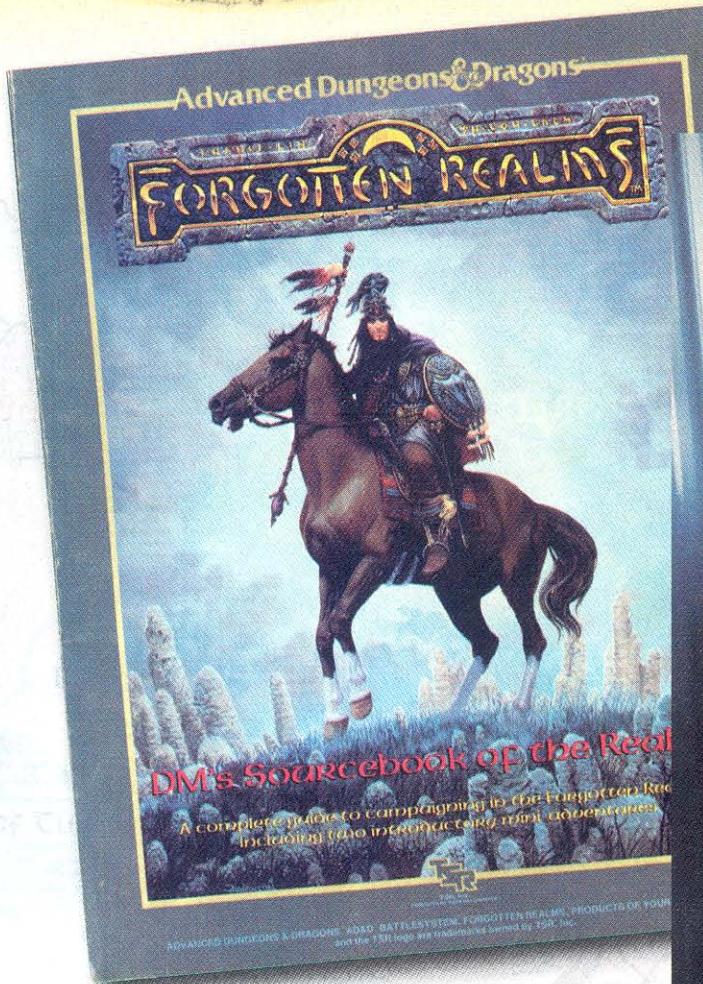
Lord Khelben has entered the room, and, as is his wont, has been reading over my shoulder these last few pages. He advises me to close this missive ere he is obliged to call in the Stablemucker's Guild to shovel out the knee-deep flattery. Lady Laeral also sends her greetings, and asks for your condolences. I trust you require no explanation of her meaning, as you and Khelben are well acquainted.

Ever yours in service to music and Mystra,

Danilo Thann

Danilo Thann

interview conducted by Jeffery E. Thetford



INTERVIEW WITH

ED GREENWOOD

VOLO'S GUIDE TO THE MASTER OF THE FORGOTTEN REALMS

This month, DRAGON presents an interview with Ed Greenwood, creator of Waterdeep and the FORGOTTEN REALMS.

How did you get your start in the writing business?

I've always been "a writer," jotting down tales and scenes and fragments for my own amusement from the moment I could form the letters of the alphabet with a pencil, and writing (pretty awfully at first) stories of "what happened next" to favorite fictional characters by the time I was six (which is why the Realms began when I was seven or eight).

I come from a family of writers and all through my youth worked on school yearbooks, "little" literary magazines, senior citizens' center newsletters, church bulletins,

and magazine articles. I'm Canadian, and at that time the Canadian literary community was a small, cozy family; I had some books of mine published early on.

How I got started in the game writing business was simple: I started writing articles for DRAGON magazine (or *The Dragon*, as it was then—a name I still vastly prefer). They started publishing them (the "Curst" monster in issue #30 was my first), Kim Mohan was impressed by the use of footnotes in my Gates article (in DRAGON #37) and that soon led to a "Contributing Editor" position (which meant they were interested in seeing all of the steady flood of articles I sent them) and lots of appearances in DRAGON. I worked FORGOTTEN REALMS references into my articles to give my players some fun.

These got noticed, and when TSR was looking for a new campaign world setting they contacted me, and the rest, as they say (ahem), is history.

What was the most difficult part of designing the early Realms?

If by "early Realms" you mean before TSR started publishing it (and the most difficult part became the "traffic cop" role of making sure Writer A didn't kill off Character X before the time of Writer B's novel that starred Character X, or destroy a kingdom that Writer B was going to use, and so on), it was finding time enough to give every spot on the ever-increasing maps the same level of rich detail. Even now, the published Realms concentrate on the Heartlands and neglects more distant areas (although the third edition Realms sourcebooks are trying to paint in some of those forgotten corners). I not only had to give the tourist-guidebook details ("That spire on your left is the blah blah blah, and the field on your right is planted with barley"), I had to give the underlying reasons ("Barley sells well in the markets of Sembia, so of course the farmers here plant blah blah blah") and the life of every locale (not just "the Hatfields hate the McCoys" stuff, but which merchant has a covert trade agreement with another merchant, local attitudes toward other villages or the distant ruler or strangers or all gnomes, and so on). I've had a busy life (yes, outside gaming! Imagine!) and have never had quite enough time to do a really satisfying job.

Now, I'm not advocating that all gamers use or need that level of detail, or that folks should feel bound by any "canon" details in their own game. I'm saying that as a writer of imaginary fantasy settings gamers have to pay for, I believe I must provide such a level of detail (to give value for money, if nothing else).

With the advent of third edition and 3.5, what do you think of the direction that the FORGOTTEN REALMS are heading, taking into consideration your earlier vision of what you wanted it to become?

I'm not a fan of endless prestige classes. My ideal Realms sourcebook would have no stat blocks and minimal class and "hard" game notations (it's enough to say that "Roldro is a powerful wizard [perhaps a wizard 12]"), because I want to use the space on the pages to give gamers the maximum amount of usable over-and-over lore ("Roldro collects old maps, and will pay handsomely for any good ones of XXX, but he's not the prissy old collector he

of published stat blocks those DMs can use for such needs.

With that said, I'm happy that Realms sourcebooks are continuing to be published and are continuing to "paint in the map" of the Realms, covering the fuzzy areas and adding more detail. I'm also pleased that Realms novels go from strength to strength in the field, because the more stories going on in the Realms, the more gamers think about the Realms, the more it seems alive, and the more interesting it stays.

In what direction would you like to see DUNGEON & DRAGONS go? Is there an area of the game that has not been explored that you would like to see fleshed out in a book or supplement or module?

I would love to see a sourcebook that deals with merchant shipping, caravans, banking (currency, trade flows, and commerce), heraldry, courts (laws and justice, not just enforcement and sentencing) and Court etiquette ("How do I ask to see the king?"), so that gamers could have a sample business contract in mock-medieval language that they could photocopy and "fill in the blanks," and so on. A book that covers all the neglected stuff, if you will.

Now, a gaming business person will tell you (as many have told me) that something like this would never sell, but I think it's a matter of dressing it up in the right attractive clothing. Stuffing in enough goodies, if you will. Give me photocopy-able handouts DMs can give to players (writs, proclamations of thanks for PC heroism, "Wanted" posters for fugitives, charters for adventuring companies and grants of arms for nobles and the just-knighted, and so on). To use a Realms example, sneak in a simplified Sword Coast "Pirate and Traveler" style board game that gives me a deck of cargo cards that I can draw from. To tell me very quickly "what's in this wagon" or "what's down in this ship's hold besides the slave girls we're rescuing—if they're chained to bombs, I'd like to know that before I go down there with my flaming torch in my hand."



likes to pretend to be. A retired former herald, he's keenly aware of the genealogies of six kingdoms, and very quietly makes a good living identifying lost heirs and throne claimants for every cabal willing to pay for such information—even if it leads to coups and bloody civil wars and shattered thrones. Moreover, Roldro once received *The Tome of Ineffable Magicks* in payment of a debt, and has mastered..."). That sort of stuff is far more useful to DMs trying to spin plots and subplots in their own campaigns than stats for Orc Encounter #36. After all, there are already tons

That's just one idea off the top of my head, of course. Like any gamer, I have many others.

What other games do you enjoy playing?

Lots of games, from board games (like *Arkham Horror*, *Awful Green Things From Outer Space*, *Empires of the Middle Ages*, *Kingmaker*, and *International Oilman*) to roleplaying games (like *Call of Cthulhu* and *Metamorphosis Alpha*). I rarely have time to sit down and really enjoy games these days, but I like simple card games and board games with simple mechanics but strategic difficulties (especially if the board itself is beautiful to look at). Many of the Cheapass Games appeal to my sense of humor and desire for fast-playing, enjoyable games that don't appeal to rules lawyers or are likely to end in furious disagreements over how well they've accurately simulated this or that real-world military detail.

You have said that your gaming group gets together about once or twice a year for a marathon gaming session lasting up to three days. Do you still have these marathon sessions?

Whenever we can, which isn't nearly often enough. Yes, things are falling apart for the home Realms players, which isn't surprising when you consider that we're scattered all over the world now, with busy professional lives and young families of our own. (It's hard to get people to show up for a gaming session when they're on the other side of the world, backpacking alone from ancient monument to ancient monument. It's even harder when they're tenured professors teaching heavy class loads at a large university, trying to stay fit, AND juggling infants at home.) That's the problem with having a group of incredibly bright, imaginative, inquisitive, and handsome people: they can go far in life—and have.

Dragon

The merry month of... Mirtul?

by Ed Greenwood

When I first started DRAGON, and was historically putting together a fantasy world, I found myself looking for some sort of handy justification for a multitude of different months in a year. Months of heroic class, months (including man) could live so close together without causing an immediate suspicion of insanity. Months could be at odds with each other, yet they could be at odds with pirates and goblins, and greedy player characters and their money. Months could be the same everyone (to within a gold piece)—even to the extent of leaving odd piles of loot in ready, dry

An effective answer was to take the months from the calendar of the *Forgotten Realms*. For instance: a rich growing season to ensure prosperity; violent winter to ensure a good harvest; a long summer to make large numbers of people important; short months—thus implying wars to the busy growing season and leisure to the long summer; a perfect time for adventuring; lots of reasons to go to war; lots of reasons to go to peace; lots of reasons to go to war again; everything solved. (Well, you know, almost...)

Out of sync with the seasons, and the customs which accompany them, there needs a calendar. DRAGON's own timeline is great fun to use allow use of our present Gregorian calendar, and the months and names of the Realms are being followed by a colloquial description of the month plus the corresponding month of the calendar.

1. Hammer: Deepwinter. (January)
2. Midwinter
3. Alturik: The Claws of Winter, or The Claws of the Cold. (February)

4. Ches: The Claws of the Sunsets. (March)

5. Mirtul: The Melting. (May)

6. Kythorn: The Time of Flowers. (June)

Midwinter is known officially as the High Festival of Winter, and is a time of feasting, merrymaking, and the like. The lands plan the year ahead, make and renew alliances, and send gifts of thanks to the gods. This is the Day of the Long Night, the midpoint of the year.

Greenwinternight is the official beginning of the year, a time of relaxation. Flowers that have been carefully grown in indoor gardens are sent to the temples, and the winter is

spent in the fields. These are traveling

about on the High Road, as merchants, embassies, and pilgrims make speed are the roads of mud and rivers and streams and rivers.

7. Flamerule: Summertime. (July)

8. Murrsummer

9. Elesail: Highsun. (August)

10. Elaint: The Fading. (September)

11. Highwater

12. Marpenoth: Leaffall. (October)

13. Ultar: The Rotting. (November)

14. The Feast of the Moon

15. 12. Nighthalf: The Drawing Down. (December)

Special days are listed when their occur between the months in regular type. Each day is described in a paragraph following the calendar itself.

There is always food for those coming from the fields. There is much traveling about on the High Road, as merchants, embassies, and pilgrims make speed are the roads of mud and rivers and streams and rivers.

The Feast of the Moon is the last great festival of the year. It marks the end of winter, and the beginning of spring. The dead are honored. Graves are blessed, the Ritual of Remembrance performed, and offerings are made to the gods. Much is sold of heroes and treasure and cities underground.

Highwater heralds the coming of rain and the harvest; it is a heat that often continues for the length of the harvest, so

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An original creature called the curst may have been Ed Greenwood's first contribution to DRAGON [#30], but an article on building fantasy calendars was the first to mention the FORGOTTEN REALMS by name.

Who is the most underrated NPC bad-guy from your home realms campaign? How about from the mercantile Realms?

Manshoon is the most underrated NPC villain in the published Realms, because the TSR Code of Ethics prevented me from showing the Zhentarim as really competent, early on, and I was never able to dwell on the extent and sophistication of Manshoon's Machiavellian plotting and subtle spread of influence. For a man not directly supported by a deity (as, for instance, Elminster is), Manshoon achieved more than anyone else in the current Realms, in matters of acquiring information and in being able to influence others.

He was well on his way to having a Realms-wide network of informants and agents that could persuade a farm-wife in Halruua to purchase this sort of cloth instead of that sort so subtly that she might not even be aware her decision was being influenced. Why does that matter? Well, if you do that to several thousand farmwives, you change entire markets, profiting thereby and ruining rivals. (This is something modern-day multinational business

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Marches

and then have her slowly poisoned, just to see if they notice this guy then. Perhaps if he put on a dragon suit and roared at them...

Now that EBERRON is here, what do you see for the future of FORGOTTEN REALMS? Do you think it will be overshadowed and essentially phased out like GREYHAWK was with the advent of second edition?

We've had a good, long run.

The Realms could quite possibly end up as a fiction-only setting, as DRAGONLANCE did for a time, or even be licensed out to another company. Those aren't my decisions—which is a good thing, because I'd probably be a terrible businessperson.

Under the original Realms agreement, there are conditions under which the Realms "reverts" to me, so I doubt the current copyright holders will let those conditions happen.

I am privy to the very good business reasons for the creation of EBERRON, and agree with them, but the Realms novels are selling so well that it would seem foolish to make the Realms "go away." There's also the proven track

record of the Realms, which has been a profitable financial engine for far longer than most settings in the fantasy gaming world have lasted (popular settings have been "brought back" repeatedly, but that's not the same thing). If you have a winning racehorse and you buy a new one (let's call it, er, EBERRON), you'd better make sure it can win races before you send your proven winner to the glue factory.

However, as a game designer, I'm interested in seeing what's done with EBERRON (I view it as "another platter on the buffet" for all gamers, not as a rival or enemy to the Realms), and the Realms has built up a fandom over the years that will not let the setting die (like Tolkien's Middle Earth and Star Wars and Star Trek and so on). Even if the published Realms ended tomorrow, the Realms will go on—something that pleases me very much. I have friends all over the world because of the Realms, I'm regularly asked what Realms character names mean because people want to apply them to their babies, I get asked to perform marriages as Elminster... so the Realms has a life

of its own, now, far larger than any one person or company.

Elminster is probably the single most recognized NPC from the FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting. How did you create such a living personality?

I needed someone too powerful for lazy roleplayers to have their characters casually slay to shut him up (hence the "has powerful magic" part), who could be an unreliable and cantankerous source of advice (add the "old wise sage with major attitude" part). This gave me someone PC adventurers needed, but couldn't push around or always go running to (because he might be off saving the world somewhere else, so couldn't they handle their scraped knees themselves for once, hmmm?).

This gave me how he had to be. Mostly I wanted an old fart that could bluntly tell the emperor that he had no clothes and always get away with doing so. The guy who causes utter silence at a wild party by saying what everyone suspects but no one dares to say out loud.

From that needed role, the rest of him developed, step-by-step. So he's not a Merlin clone (though that's the

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role he's mostly playing), or a Gandalf rip-off or a Belgarath parody, and he's NOT my alter ego. He's the guy so powerful that he can take your best shot, yawn, and then stand there without retaliating, and calmly say, "Ye seem more hostile than most adventurers who come here seeking to slay me. Why, may I ask? Is thy codpiece too tight? Crown on crooked, this morning? Bored with slaying helpless children? Or just seeking glory and too stupid to think there might be a reason for my reputation? Hmm?"

He's not a munchkin (too tall and too low a voice, for one thing), he's the lover and most trusted servant of the most powerful deity in the world he lives in, beyond all munchkinism. Which lets me use him to examine more important issues than merely chasing power, such as: What do you do with all that power once you've got it? Once you've had it for centuries, and outlived everyone you cared about, and most of their countries, too? What's it like to go insane because you're just so tired of it all, but aren't allowed to just lie down and die? How do you react when you know that's the trap you live in? What keeps you going? What do you still believe in, and care about? And then, when you start the final fall-apart anyway, what do you rush to do in the dwindling time you have left? What does it really mean to love entities (gods, individual people, horrible scaly monsters)? To love ideas? Countries? A world?

If you follow along watching what this Elminster guy does and says, and jot it all down, well—he creates himself, as he goes. Just like real people do.

Did you expect Elminster to become so legendary?

No, I expected Elminster to be the Old Storyteller narrator of the Realms, who introduced us to other characters and their unfolding stories, and then faded away off the page as the harp strings thrummed, and the reader plunged into those stories. I expected him to be the old guy people went to consult (like the oracle at Delphi, whom the reader never directly sees in the old tales), rather than

onstage much. However, the books people at TSR thought differently, so I ended up writing a series of Elminster books. His tale isn't quite done yet, but the Old Mage's legendary status is a perfect illustration of the way commercial writing works: It's not about what you the writer want to say, it's about what your audience wants to hear. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle grew to hate Sherlock Holmes and killed him off—and his readers demanded his return and didn't want to buy anything else by Doyle.

A lot of vocal gamers and readers hate Elminster and want to see him gone—but the sales figures tell the different opinion of the more silent majority.

Was Elminster patterned after you or one of your original gaming group?

No, he isn't me, and was never an echo of any real person (or gaming character, PC or NPC). His speech and mannerisms and character have all developed on their own over the years, making him increasingly unique (despite what some believe). I'm often asked to pick actors I'd like to see portray El in a movie, and I can say that Nichol Williamson's Merlin in the movie *Excalibur* (which came out well after Elminster's character was established, of course) is pretty close in manner of speech, tone of voice, and accent. Ditch the earring and skullcap, and change the red hair to flowing white, of course.

Over the years I've often put on a costume and portrayed Elminster at conventions, but please understand that this is a fat fantasy author playing the Old Mage, not anything like the Old Mage himself.

Is Waterdeep the greatest city in the Realms?

Just as in the real world, the answer to that depends on whether the answerer is a fan of Waterdeep or not. It's currently one of the most important and best-known trading cities of Faerûn, for two reasons: The lumber, mined metals, livestock, and other foodstuffs now flowing out of the Sword Coast North are greatly needed by the rest of the Realms (a trade Waterdeep domi-

nates, for reasons of geography and climate more than anything else), and Waterdeep is a human-dominated cosmopolitan trading city where coins rule, half the creatures of Faerûn rub shoulders, and tolerance is legendary.

That combination of tolerance, variety of goods and skills, and freedom from daily oppression by a strong ruler is hard to match anywhere else in Faerûn. So people keep coming, and the coins keep flowing.

How do all the nobles of Waterdeep get (or stay) so rich? They certainly seem to spend a lot!

The nobles of Waterdeep got that way in part because they were very successful merchant families, usually long ago. In other words, because it's now so hard to become a noble in Waterdeep, the nobility you see now are "old money."

So most of them have extensive crofts (farms) and ranches somewhere in Dessarin Vale or more southerly lands, and have made money from these for decades. All those people crowded inside the walls of Waterdeep have to eat and drink daily, and most nobles own breweries, wagons, and warehouses, so they provide the provender to the city, at city street prices.

The costs of running these country properties are often low because kin of the nobles and loyal servants live on the lands and receive most of their pay as "roof and platter" (room and board, which of course their own daily work provides). In other cases, nobles have far more land than they can work, and rent it out to tenant farmers.

In addition to their primary businesses (listed in various Waterdeep sources over the years), many Waterdhavian noble families also own small—or not so small—fleets of ships carrying cargoes up and down the Sword Coast, and invest in caravan costers. They also invest in hundreds of small Waterdhavian businesses (supporting shopkeepers and craftsfolk who'd otherwise never have coin enough to get started or weather cash flow problems), and most importantly are landlords, getting rent from rooms and buildings in crowded

Waterdeep, and from way-inns they own on the roads outside the city, too!

Houses maintained by most Waterdhavian noble families in Amn, Tethyr, Silvermoon and elsewhere usually have a few "country cousin" kin living there—and working as factors (trade agents) for the family.

A few noble families of Waterdeep have fallen on hard times, but often replenish their coffers by allowing rich, ambitious "wannabe" nobles to marry into their ranks. Nobles also have a few legal rights, and a lot of social influence (including unwritten customs or rules that aren't actually laws) that other Waterdhavians lack, that help them prosper in competition with visiting "outlander" merchants or commoners.

So if nobles wander the streets staggering under the weight of so many coins, why don't they get robbed all the time?

Well, there are such things as bodyguards. More importantly, citizens of Waterdeep know that most nobles don't carry much coin at all. They have their

bills paid for them by their stewards (servants), who "come around" to places the nobles shop at, a day or so later, and settle up.

Nobles are scrupulously honest about settling all accounts, by the way, because if word gets around that a particular family is disputing or denying bills, their reputation is stained—and that ruins their credit, meaning other traders won't deal with them or will demand harder bargains.

So a "wild young blade" of a noble who spends lavishly, gambles, or goes on sprees of breaking things will have his costs covered. Even if the family patriarch or matriarch is enraged (and almost always they've established procedures where they must approve large drafts on the family vaults, so nothing can be hidden from them), they'll pay.

Family spendthrifts are often encouraged to make investments or start sideline businesses to earn their own spending money. Less wealthy nobles usually do this with their children. Wastrels "beyond rescuing" might be publicly disowned, quietly

killed in "accidents," shipped off in virtual slavery (drugged or coerced) to far corners of the world to make their own fortunes, serve as hireswords (in hopes that battle will soon kill them), or even sent on family business far from Waterdeep and there poisoned by hired agents.

So the heads of noble houses decide who gets lavish spending money, and even which family members get to live in the family mansions. They dare not mistreat spouses or heirs in ways the watching city can detect, however, or the family status—and as I said, business opportunities, and therefore, wealth—will be permanently harmed.

So how does the rest of Waterdeep handle, and think about, money?

In lots of different ways, just as with any large group of people. After all, Waterdeep is home to: near-slaves (the 'prentices of cruel masters, lowly servants of the most ill-behaved nobles, those too old or sick to work, and Dock Ward street urchins), a lot of "short-coin" laborers (non-guild workers paid

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by the day or by the task), "guilded" workers, independent (not guilded) shopkeepers, rising or successful merchants (who no longer have to work daily in their own shops, but have hired a staff; who also usually own more than one property; and are becoming landlords or part-owners of businesses other than their own original one, sometimes little shops started by their sons and daughters), established merchants (born into a successful business or who've become a confident and settled landlord or multi-business owner, no longer grasping and clawing for coins), really rich wannabe-noble merchants (who spend coins like water to impress the city, and want to be socially important), and the nobles.

Most Waterdhavians don't want to reveal full details of their wealth, assets, debts, and prospects to anyone—and don't, often taking elaborate troubles to conceal things from tax collectors, business partners and fellow guild members, and even close kin (using trade agents and go-betweens in negotiations, setting up "dummy" companies, and so on).

Folk in Waterdeep love to discuss trade prospects, and "who will probably do what—just you watch!" Such conversations take the place of the weather for casual daily discourse; other usual topics are: "What's hot?" (meaning new products, processes, fads and fashions or "who's buying what?") and "What's the news?" (business feuds and announcements, and the usual city gossip about murders, trysts, weddings, breakups, robberies, scandals, fights and insults, and so on). Waterdhavians want to tell you all about their latest business venture (particularly if they want you to invest in it), but they usually want to limit what they say to just that, and gloss over what else they own, are doing, or how their other business concerns are performing.

Waterdhavians are always looking for a deal, and love getting not just a low price but bargaining shrewdly. Someone who pays high prices for things without question is either a fool (usually in love), an outlander (ignorant

of the proper current "street price"), or a noble or wannabe-noble with money to burn who wants everyone to know how much coin he can afford to waste. Of these, only nobles or wannabe-nobles impress most Waterdhavians, and observers judge if a big spender belongs in one of those two groups by judging manner, speech, dress, and company kept, not just the amount of coins spent. If so judged, you impress, without anyone knowing exactly how much your complete holdings are (which allows con men to operate).

Also, Waterdhavians aren't impressed by someone with large amounts of coin but no assets (property, ships or shares in ships, or goods owned) or investments. They regard such people suspiciously, as thieves, agents of foreign interests up to no good, or fools. So impressing a Waterdhavian always involves more than just a sum of money.

What's it like on the streets of Waterdeep? Are there rush hours?

Crowded, with lots of people walking (many of them wheeling along delivery handcarts), and wagons and horse-riders trying to cleave through all the pedestrians. There are daily rush hours, when the city gates open (almost always at dawn) and before they close (almost always at dusk, though sometimes they're kept open a little later when caravans are assembling outside the city and there are lineups of wagons jammed inside the gates).

Traffic jams may happen due to goods-wagons moving to and from the docks when many large ships are loading or unloading, during festivals, guild parades, large contests at the Field of Triumph, and extraordinary events like the first warm bathing days of a year (everyone heads to Sea Ward to get to the beach), market fairs outside the walls (when multiple caravans arrive and the City Guard keeps them from entering due to crowding, so street vendors and eager shoppers go out to them), or when the city's under attack.

Wagon traffic tends to disappear from Sea Ward and North Ward except during daylight hours, so as long as

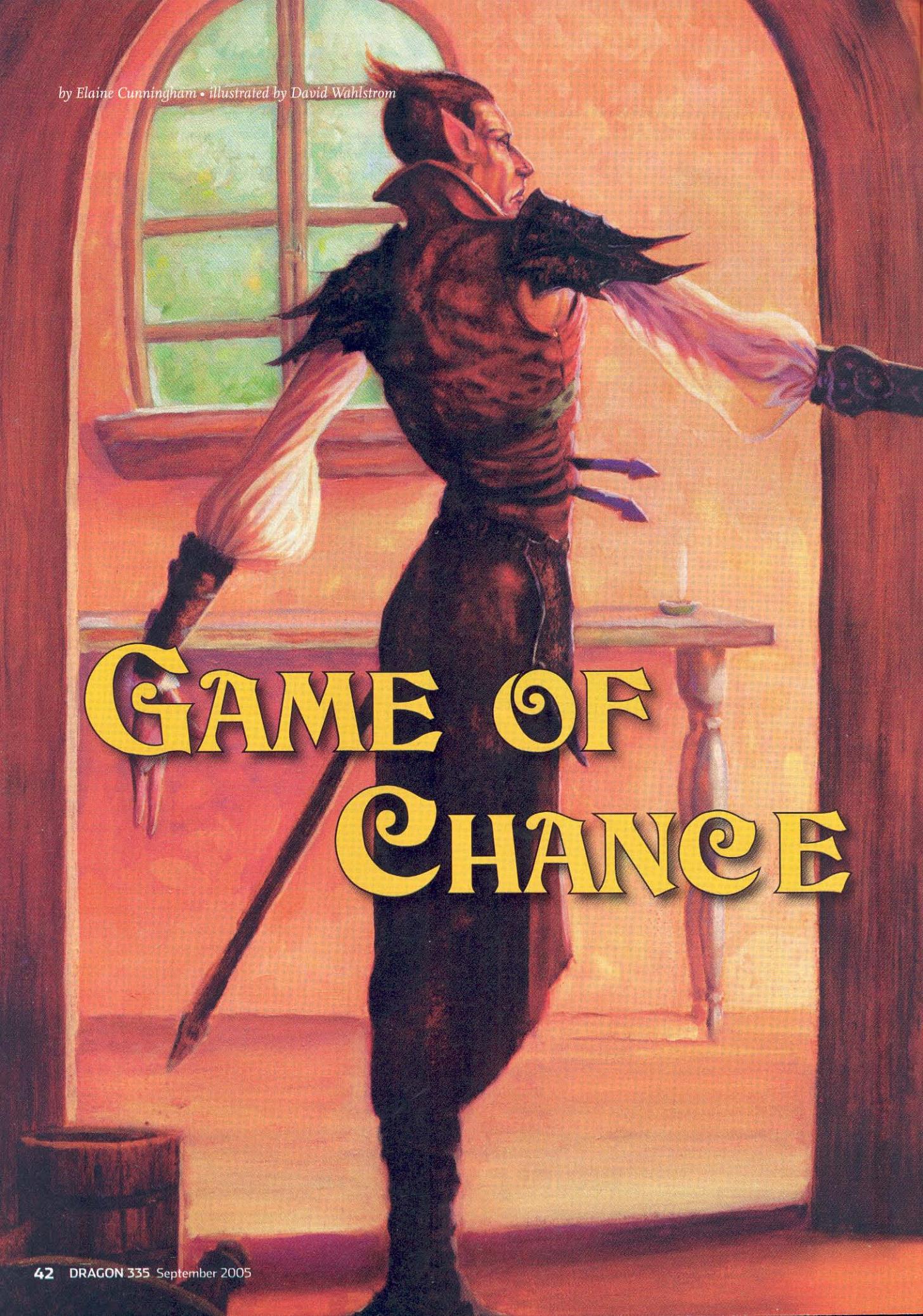
you're nimble enough to avoid nobles' galloping horses and coaches whizzing about, pedestrians can get around easily after dusk. That "easier after dark" rule holds true—if one dares to go out—everywhere in the city except around Caravan Court and right along the docks (though much of Dock Ward can be slow going for someone not large, ugly, obviously well-armed, and walking with a lot of friends).

The City Guard controls access to the city (the various gates, plus a harbor patrol) but the Watch commands the streets, calling in the Guard only when there's a riot or pitched battle. (Their horncalls can also summon Watchful Order "magical reinforcements" when necessary.) The Watch has wagons that trundle arrested persons off to dungeon cells under Castle Waterdeep, where their release can be obtained the next day upon payment of a fine.

The City Guards at all city gates routinely inspect wagons (due to sheer volume of traffic, they can't do every one or search most crates and coffers thoroughly; instead, they spot-check when suspicious). The Watch usually searches only to force someone into moving a wagon they seem unwilling to move ("All right then, Master Thorgund, I guess we'll just have to see what you consider so precious that it can't be moved one wheel-turn! Right, lads, let's have it all out and down onto the cobbles!"). Both the Guard and the Watch have the right to search any handcart or conveyance, at any time. Anything suspicious will be seized, along with the wagon and its tenders, and "brought along" to Castle Waterdeep for a full inspection (under the eyes of grim City Guard types with loaded crossbows, and Watchful Order duty magists irritated at having their card and dice games interrupted).

By the way, few Guard or Watch officers accept bribes, but they will report all attempts to offer such. Nobles get lenient treatment, but outlanders and known troublemakers receive "hard eye" attention. Familiar local carters and peddlers usually get a nod, a wave, and a quick inspection. ■

by Elaine Cunningham • illustrated by David Wahlstrom



GAME OF CHANCE



There were a thousand ways to cheat, and until tonight, Elaith Craulnober thought he knew them all.

The moon elf watched, amber eyes narrowed in speculation, as Oltennius Gondblessed worked his way through Tymora's Fancy, a high-coin gambling establishment Elaith had recently built upon the ruins of a North Ward tallhouse. Oltennius was newly come to Waterdeep, and little was known of the man other than his name and the rather obvious intelligence that he hailed from Lantan.

Oltennius's appearance was typical for a native of that Sword Coast island: gingery hair, large, slightly protruding eyes of an odd pale green, and skin the hue of bleached parchment that's wearing thin and starting to yellow. He was short and vaguely egg-shaped, and his garments, which had been cut to fit a slimmer, taller man, boasted rich fabrics but were rather worse for wear. The seat of his black velvet breeches was smooth and shiny, and many of the threads quilting the yellow silk vest had worked their way free of the stitchery pattern to waft in the scented breezes that cooled the crowded room. Oltennius wore no gems, but he kept close at hand a simple

wooden snuffbox, which he consulted at close and regular intervals.

The threadbare southerner stood out among the glittering Waterdhavian pleasure seekers, and as such was the target of many arch glances and none-too-softly whispered jests. He seemed as unaware of these insults as he was his own shabby finery, for he was entirely focused upon winning.

And win he did. So far this evening, Oltennius Gondblessed had bested the Eagleshield brothers at dice, won three different card games, predicted which rune would mark the end of the Year's Turning Wheel, and guessed which of the white mice or tiny, gem-colored lizards would finish first at the miniature racetrack. For every race.

Elaith sniffed. "Gondblessed" indeed! Not even Tymora, goddess of good fortune, smiled upon her faithful with such a consistent and profitable result.

He glanced across the room to where a gray-skinned illithid stood amid the shadows of a small, fragrant jungle of exotic flowing plants, its long facial tentacles idly toying with the branches. The creature turned blank white eyes to its employer and answered the unspoken question. *No, Lord Craulnober, the Lantanner has no psionic ability, nor any magic that I can perceive.*

The elf grimaced. What, then? How had Oltennius Gondblessed succeeded at the game so many Waterdhavians had played and lost?

"Give it back, I say!" demanded a loud and indignant male voice. "Do you have any idea who I am?"

Elaith glanced toward the front entrance, where a familiar scene played out.

A well dressed, black-bearded young man brandished an empty scabbard at the hostess of Tymora's Fancy, a delicate moon elf maiden who also served as the

establishment's brawl-stopper. Rapidly fading motes of light swirled around the man like tiny, schooling fish. The hostess caught Elaith's gaze and rolled her eyes skyward before turning back to the irate patron.

"Either you're Lord Melshimber or you're a very talented doppleganger," she said sweetly. "The house rules have not changed since you were here last night: no spells, no magic items, no exceptions."

The bearded man shook the scabbard again. "Have you any idea how valuable this sword is?"

"Was," the hostess reminded him. "As you were warned in the forehall—as all are warned every night—Tymora's Fancy offers a fair and level field of play. To that end, all clandestine magical items are disintegrated."

It was a lie, of course. Elaith's warding spells whisked away the magical trinkets Waterdhavians tried to smuggle in, depositing them in a locked box in his back office.

Lord Melshimber accepted his loss with a shrug and sent a sheepish grin in the direction of his two smirking companions. It had become a popular game among Waterdeep's idle wealthy, this quest to bypass Elaith Craulnober's wards and get the better of the infamous Serpent. Elaith didn't mind, as this had swiftly made Tymora's Fancy one of the city's most popular (and profitable) gaming festhalls.

He turned his attention back to Oltennius Gondblessed, who had a large wager on the duel taking place at Clockwork Castle. Blood-battles between living creatures were illegal in Waterdeep, so Elaith had purchased several miniature clockwork knights in full plate armor. Two of these foot-high warriors bashed away at each other with their tiny swords while a ring of spectators cheered and wagered.

An ancient gnome stood by, a priest of Gond Wonderworker in full clerical regalia, hired to certify the equal chances of the clockwork opponents—and to repair them, afterward. Something very like maternal concern was etched into the lines of the gnome's dried-apple face, and he stood wringing his hands as his metal charges battered each other for the pleasure of wealthy humans.

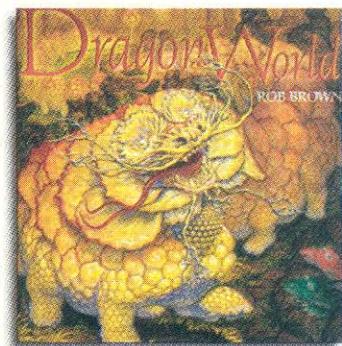
Elaith drifted over, curious about the greeting that had passed between Oltennius Gondblessed and the gnome cleric earlier that evening. The gnome honored the Lantanna with a deep, elaborate bow. Oltennius had responded in kind, dropping to one knee to take up the hem of the gnome's clerical tabard and kiss the runes embroidered there. To Elaith's eye, the two of them looked like a pair of low-rent street thespians enacting an elaborate court greeting between some long-ago prince and high cleric. At the moment, however, both were absorbed in the small drama occurring in the miniature arena.

The little knight in brazen armor was winning, and his golden sword flashed repeatedly as he drove the silver-plated knight back to the stone wall, step by staggering step. The silver knight's helmet had been knocked askew, revealing the gearworks within. On came the brazen warrior, slashing away at this vulnerable spot. Victory—and perhaps demolition—seemed assured.

Elaith caught the look of mute appeal the gnome sent Oltennius Gondblessed. The southerner opened his snuffbox and inhaled deeply, an act that visibly strained the seams of his fraying yellow vest.

Before Oltennius could shut the snuffbox lid, the silver knight dropped into a crouch and then

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into a surprisingly nimble spin. One outthrust metal leg swept at the advancing warrior's ankles, connecting with a tinny clatter.

Clockwork arms milled wildly as the brazen knight strove to regain balance. But the silver warrior was on his feet, barreling in to shoulder-smash his unsteady opponent. The brazen knight crashed to the floor and did not rise, for the victor's sword was at his metal throat.

Elaith cast the simple spell that would detect magic at work. As he suspected, a soft blue glow surrounded the arena.

At least half the spectators groaned, even before the arena master announced, "No winners. Magic-tainted match."

The grumbles of protest were short-lived, and the hall quieted as people pressed in to see who had finally managed to slip magic past the elf's safeguards. They watched in puzzlement as the blue glow faded from the arena, lingering only around the clerics and hired wizards.

Elaith made another small, subtle hand gesture, and the southerner's snuffbox lit up like an azure candle.

Indignation flooded Oltennius's face, but he had the sense to keep silent as two of Elaith's guards, tall men wearing deeply hooded black capes, escorted him to the back office. The elf followed, noting with a sardonic smile the renewed tumult of sound—the good people of Waterdeep, placing loud and grimly imaginative wagers on the Lantanner's fate.

Oltentius Gondblessed allowed the two men to march him into a richly appointed study. As soon as the door shut behind him, he shook off the guards' hands, drew himself

up, and faced down the silver-haired moon elf.

"I broke none of your city laws or your festhall rules," he said, speaking with a dignity befitting the scion of a long, distinguished line. "There is no magic in this box. Your spell might have been silent, good sir, but it told a lie nonetheless!"

"Of course it did," Elaith Crulnober readily admitted, either missing or choosing to ignore the typically ironic Lantanner insult. "If the snuffbox had been magical, it would already be in my possession."

This second admission of wrong-doing set Oltennius back on his heels. Lantanners valued honesty, and an accusation of falsehood was a deadly insult. The only worse charge, short of murder, was theft, and this singular elf had just casually admitted to both!

"May I see the snuffbox?" Elaith asked.

Oltennius hesitated long enough to earn a rib-bruising nudge from a guard's elbow. "Have a care," he cautioned as he handed it over. "It is exceedingly delicate."

The elf flipped open the lid and studied the contents. "I have never seen such tiny or intricate gearworks. Impressive, but not particularly fragrant. Might I then inquire why you felt compelled to sniff it so frequently?"

Oltennius sidestepped the guard's prompting jab and folded his arms in silent defiance.

After a moment, the elf set the box carefully on the floor, straightened, and casually rested one boot on the lid. One silvery brow arched in unmistakable emphasis.

Panic leaped up like bright flame from somewhere deep in Oltennius's gut. "Don't!" he shrieked. "I will tell

you all, only give me the box! It represents my life's sole work, and that of my father before me, and his mother before him, and so on, back to a time before the raising of the Dale Stone!"

The elf studied him in silence, no doubt wondering what sort of work might absorb the full attention of Gond-fearing artisans for over thirteen centuries.

As well he might.

"My ancestor, the first Gond-blessed, was so named for his astonishing skill," Oltennius said, almost babbling in his haste. "He undertook a great challenge: an understanding of magic enabling one to detect, alter, and eventually to produce magic through mechanical means."

"Impossible," snapped the guard with sharp elbows. He brushed down the hood of his cape, revealing a narrow, angular face covered by tiny silver scales. "The human is either mad or lying, or, quite possibly, both."

A half-dragon! Oltennius snapped his gaping jaw shut and averted his goggle-eyed gaze, drawing in a long, unsteady breath as he gathered his wits. For some reason, the sight of this fearful minion brought to mind all the improbable stories he'd heard of Elaith Craulnober, and made them seem suddenly, disturbingly credible.

"No doubt you're right, Tinchoron," Elaith said mildly. "But as we've nothing more entertaining to do at present, we might as well hear him out."

"Gondblessed Manor stands on fertile lands. The income from our tenants provided a comfortable living for my family."

"And how much of that land remains to you?" the elf asked, his eyes skimming Oltennius's ancient, ill-fitting garb.

"Little," he admitted, "and attacks from sea creatures last year wreaked

havoc among my remaining tenants. This device offered me a chance to rebuild my fortunes."

"By cheating at games of chance?"

"By altering magic," he corrected firmly, and launched into a long and highly detailed explanation of the mechanisms involved.

The elf held up one hand to cut him off. "Enough," he said flatly, and there was something in his voice that chilled Oltennius far more than the sight of a man-shaped dragon. "This is madman's prattle, nothing more."

Oltennius tried another path. "Can lightning change to fire?"

"Certainly, if it strikes dry brush or a thatch roof," Elaith said impatiently.

"So one type of power can be transmuted into another, if the conditions are right. Is it possible to know that lightning has struck, even if your eyes don't perceive it nor your ears hear the thunder?"

"Of course. There are subtle changes in the air."

"Deviations on a constant!" Oltennius exclaimed. "The Weave is a constant source of power. Are we agreed upon that?"

The elf conceded with a curt nod.

"Just as your senses can perceive lightning, fluctuations in the Weave—magical items and spells, if you will—can be perceived by a device of sufficient complexity."

"Impossible," the half-dragon repeated.

"Why so?" argued Oltennius. "A simple spell can detect the presence of magic, as your master just demonstrated."

"Let us say, for argument's sake, that it's possible to detect magic with a gear-works device. What then?"

"When magic is present, the device can absorb some of that power and change it to another form. Compare it to spellfire, if you will."

"So it perceives and alters magic. To what end?"

"Whatever I choose," Oltennius said proudly. "It is my belief that the mind works in a manner very similar to lightning, but with thousands upon thousands of tiny flashes, flaring constantly and rapidly. A device of sufficient complexity can mimic, at least in part, these events. To put it in simplistic magical terms, I can 'speak' to this transmuting device like a wizard to his familiar, mind to mind, and tell it how to alter the magic it perceives."

Elaith considered him for a long, silent moment. "How many people know of this new magic?"

The man huffed in exasperation. "It's not magic. Only few gnomes of great age and high clerical rank know of the Gondblessed quest. I am the only living person to know its workings."

The elf glanced at the half-dragon, who promptly pulled up his hood and glided back into the festhall.

The probable meaning of this crept over Oltennius like a winter frost. He clutched the box to his chest. "It is worthless to you! Kill me, and you have nothing but... but..."

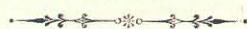
"An ugly corpse to dispose of?" Elaith suggested. "Hardly an appealing prospect. Tell me: If you were provided with sufficient materials and funds, a pleasant place to work, and nothing to distract you, could you make one of these devices for me?"

"You... you would be a patron?" faltered Oltennius.

"A very generous one," the elf assured him.

Pride warred with practicality, but the battle was brief and the victory never in question. Oltennius dropped awkwardly to one knee and gave the traditional pledge.

"My hands, your house," he said stiffly.
"May my work glorify Gond Wonder-bringer and benefit my patron."



The third bell after midnight sounded before Elaith had opportunity to open his safe box. It held the usual assortment of oddities—trinkets and trifles from far corners of Faerûn. Elaith tossed them aside to get to the weapon he'd stolen from young Lord Melshimber. That, at least, had real value. The scabbard Melshimber had been waving around was of elven design, and even the simplest elven blade was a joy to wield.

The weapon was a longsword, very old but well kept. Elaith lifted it and took a few practice cuts, pleased with the weapon's exceptional balance. The new leather wrappings on the hilt were clumsy, but those were easily removed—

Elaith froze, and the leather wrappings fell to the floor unheeded as he stared at the smooth, milky gem set into the sword's hilt. A mixture of wonder and sorrow suffused him as he realized that, for the second time in his life, he held a dormant moonblade.

He turned the blade over and studied the seven runes marking the shining length. He stroked them with tentative fingers, noting that they did not mar the smoothness of the blade; they were not carved into the metal, but seemed to gleam forth from the heart of the sword. He had not taken time to closely examine the Craulnober blade, so stunned had he been by the sword's rejection.

The elf set the moonblade carefully aside. Come morning, he would make arrangements for it to be sent to Evermeet. The swords that had played a part in choosing the royal family were not for such as Elaith Craulnober.

*Nor for the likes of Camaroon
Melshimber.*

A wave of rage, pure and primal, swiftly followed this thought. The elf tossed aside his best sword and thrust the moonblade into its sheath. Snatching up his cloak, he stalked out into the cold autumn night.

It didn't take him long to find the Melshimber manor, and less time to bypass the magical wards on the ornate iron fence. Determining which bedchamber housed the drunken, snoring lordling needed only the sort of spell Elaith had learned in the royal nursery. His rage still burned white-hot when he dragged Camaroon Melshimber from his bed and flung him against the wall.

The elf drew the moonblade and leveled it with deadly intent. He might not be worthy to wield a living blade, but elven law and tradition were clear on this matter. Anyone who knowingly used a dormant moonblade as a common sword, or in any other way deliberately dishonored it, was to be slain with that weapon in fair combat.

"Arm yourself," he snarled at the groggy, sputtering man.

Incredibly, a sly grin curved the young lord's lips, and he lifted one hand to preen his short black beard.

"Aha!" he crowed. "I knew you were keeping the trifles we brought in!"

Trifles!

"And this knowledge," Elaith inquired coldly, "is worth dying to possess?"

Young Melshimber's smirk faltered, then twisted into his usual arrogant expression. Even now, he considered himself untouchable.

Elaith drew his second sword and tossed it at the man, who reflexively grabbed for it. Elven steel flashed, and an expression of profound astonishment crossed the human's

face as blood poured from his slashed throat. His mouth worked for a moment, but only a few choked, gurgling sounds emerged.

The elf waited until Melshimber was quite dead, then he carefully cleaned both weapons and tucked them into his belt. The next cut required a special black knife, one Elaith kept tucked into his left boot for just such occasions. He worked quickly, chanting softly as he carved a necromancer's rune into the man's forehead—an ugly mark that would prevent priest or wizard from inquiring into this man's death.

The sky was fading to smoky sapphire as Elaith left the Melshimber mansion. He had no fear of discovery—a tunnel led from the estate's buttery to a well house three streets over. Knowledge of these hidden byways was one of Elaith's most valuable treasures.

He quickly made his way south to one of the most lavish and secure of his Waterdeep properties—a gated estate in the Castle Ward, not far from Piergeiron's Palace. Therein was his greatest treasure of all: his daughter Azariah, his sole hope for the Craulnober clan's restored strength and reputation.

She was being raised on Evermeet as a ward of the royal court, but the recent attack on the island kingdom had left her shaken and grieving. Queen Amlaruil had urged Elaith to take his daughter for the winter to give her some time and distance.

Elaith found the child at her studies, sitting demurely at her tutor's side, an open book on her lap. Azariah was a pretty child, tall for her age and as leggy as a young colt. She resembled her sun elf mother, a mistress whom Elaith had enjoyed and forgotten. But Azariah was his legal heir, and heir also to the Craulnober moonblade.

The sentient sword had rejected him once, choosing dormancy over an unworthy wielder. By the grace of the gods and the consent of his Craulnober ancestors, the moonblade had been awakened, but Elaith had no illusions. It would never be his, nor should it be.

Nor did he expect Azariah to wield it. Never—not once in the long and brutal history of the moonblades—had a gold elf successfully claimed a sword. But a living moonblade brought honor to the Craulnober house, and would be an attractive dowry. In time, Azariah would wed a moon elf of high family, and if her children bred true, the most worthy among them would inherit the sword.

"Here it is!" the child said triumphantly, stabbing the page with one slender finger. "The law was written by Evermeet's Council of Elders, during the second year of

Lady Mylaerla Durothil's rule as High Councilor."

Elaith's eyebrows rose. This was a pastime more befitting a barrister than a girl of eleven winters.

"An interesting choice, Delaritha," he said dryly, addressing the elven bard he'd employed to continue his daughter's harp studies. "I look forward to hearing it set to music."

Two pairs of feminine eyes flashed to his face, holding identical wary expressions.

"Lady Azariah wishes to know more of her family moonblade," the bard explained.

"It is hers to hold in trust for her children. What more is there to know?"

The child rose to her feet, her face pale but determined. "When I come of age, I will claim the moonblade."

Elaith stared at her, too stunned to hide his astonishment. "What nonsense is this?"

"It is the law. It is my right," she whispered.

A strange and unwelcome insight struck him: little Azariah was a person, with thoughts and plans of her own. But so soon? Surely he could expect her to remain a malleable child for another decade or two?

"Have you learned nothing of the laws of nature?" he demanded. "Elves are not half this and half that. You are your mother's daughter, a gold elf. No gold elf has ever drawn a moonblade and lived."

"What of the Starym blade?" the child persisted.

Elaith sent the bard a look that should have slain her on the spot. "Have you been teaching her this nonsense, or is there someone else who should set her affairs in order before nightfall?"

The girl stepped between her father and her tutor—an oddly

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protective gesture for one so tiny—and dipped into a respectful curtsey. “The fault is mine. During the sea voyage I wished to learn more of the mainland. Another passenger lent me several chapbooks, most of them travel books written by a human named—”

“Volo,” Elaith concluded flatly. “A wandering rogue who tells the truth only upon occasion, and usually by accident. It’s well that you remember that.”

“I will,” Azariah promised. “But is it not true that a half-elf inherited a blade? And she only fifteen winters at the time?”

The girl’s small, pointed chin lifted proudly, and Elaith read in her face the words to come.

“Before you say anything about the worth of a half-breed compared to an elf of noble blood,” he said softly, “you should know the moonfighter’s mother was Amnesia of Evermeet, who was dear to me beyond measure. Her daughter, though half-elven, is a princess of the blood, and I will not hear any word spoken against her.”

“Yes, my lord,” the girl said dutifully.

“Then let’s hear no more of this foolishness,” he snapped. “The matter is finished.”

The color drained from Azariah’s face. She stood her ground, though, and placed one hand on the elven lore book as if to gain strength from its ancient laws.

“With respect, my lord,” she whispered, “the moonblade is mine to claim, and none can deny me.”

“She’s right, you know,” announced an amused voice behind them.

Elaith whirled, angry that someone had managed to slip up behind him. Tincheron leaned against the door post, a smirk sitting oddly on his reptilian face.

The half-dragon was his oldest friend and distant kin, but Elaith was in no mind to be told inconvenient truths. “Haven’t I troubles enough, without you adding to them?” the elf snapped.

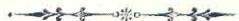
The humor faded from Tincheron’s face. “Azariah’s ambition troubles you? But I thought—”

“Did you?” Elaith inquired acidly.

The half-dragon reached into the hall and dragged Oltennius Gondblessed into the doorway. “I had assumed,” Tincheron said quietly, “that you were testing her resolve. That you had this very contingency in mind when you offered the Lantanner your patronage.”

Understanding flooded Elaith, and his eyes widened in sudden appreciation of this new and wondrous possibility.

“Lady Azariah, may I present to you one Oltennius Gondblessed,” Elaith said softly. “You will be working together for many mooncycles to come.”



To his credit, Oltennius applied himself to his new task with great enthusiasm, working throughout the long winter to adjust his device to the magic of the Craulnober moonblade. Unlike many humans, he did not waste breath bemoaning the “unfairness” of the elven swords. Elaith was glad of this, for he had heard *that* tale told too many times. If some sages had their way, any “worthy soul” would carry a moonblade, be he sun elf or sea elf or, for that matter, a half-orc courtesan with a heart of gold and tusks to match.

By the time Fleetswake rolled around and the worse of the winter snows had past, Oltennius declared his device ready for testing.

This, Elaith had not foreseen.

“Testing?” he demanded. “How, exactly, do you propose to do that?”

“The sword must be drawn. If its magic cannot be altered, we’ll know.”

The elf’s eyebrows rose. “Yes, it’s rather difficult to miss the lesson presented by a blackened, smoking corpse. But have you given any thought to what will happen if the magic *can* be altered?”

It was Oltennius’s turn to be puzzled. “Wasn’t that the entire point?”

“Of course,” Elaith said impatiently, “but what if he who *draws* the sword *claims* it? What of Azariah’s rights? Under normal conditions, there’s a ceremony to complete the bonding, but what if your device alters *that*, as well?”

The Lantanner considered this for a several moments. “Well, that is a bit of a conundrum, isn’t it?”

The soft whisper of metal on wood drew Elaith’s attention to the worktable where the Craulnober blade rested, carefully sheathed. What he saw there froze him for one heart-stopping moment.

Azariah had crept into the room, and she was slowly turning the metal scabbard so that she might take the hilt. The girl had heard them talking, and in her child’s mind, one solution seemed clear: if her moonblade was ready to be drawn, it was ready for her.

She would die—that was a certainty. Even if she might eventually prove worthy of a moonblade, a child was far too fragile a vessel for such power. And since there were two living Craulnobers, the sword would slay an unfit wielder before it went dormant in the hands of the last in the clan.

All of this flashed through Elaith’s mind in one fleeting, horror-struck instant. Then he let out a roar and exploded into action. He dived across

the table, knocking the sword away from the child's grasping hands.

Somehow—it all happened so quickly that later he could not remember just how it happened—the sheath clattered to the floor and the naked sword spun on the table, blade slicing toward the wide-eyed child. Without thinking, Elaith seized the hilt.

Azure light surrounded him, and he stared in astonishment at the sword in his hand—the *living* sword—glowing with faint silvery light, marked with strange sigils that combined Espruar script with something that looked like Draconic runes.

Numbly, Elaith conceded that this made sense. Some of the Cralnobers had been dragon riders—for that matter, he and Tincheron shared a common ancestor.

"Mine," implored Azariah, holding out her hands for the sword.

Anger rose in Elaith unbidden, darker and more powerful than any he had ever known. Foolish child! Even now, she had not the slightest understanding of the power she hoped to grasp!

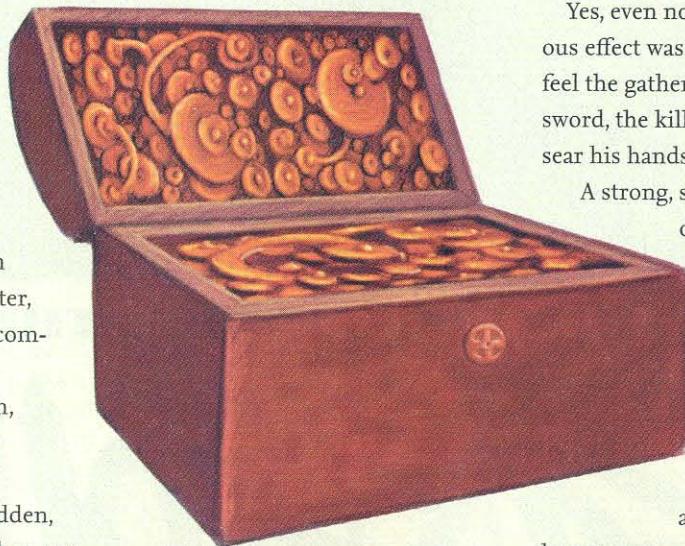
He turned to give her a well-deserved scolding and found himself facing a tiny statue. Azariah stood wild-eyed and frozen, staring at him like a rabbit caught in a raptor's gaze.

Before Elaith could make sense of this, the clattering approaching of servants and guards, coming in swift response to their master's shout, suddenly stopped.

The elf turned toward the open door. In the hall beyond, a score of armed men stood like statues, as pale and terror-frozen as the child.

One of the figures shook himself and crept into the room, his scaly face both awestruck and wary. "Elaith? Cousin? Put the sword down before you kill them all," Tincheron said softly. "They're struck with a dragonfear, and a bad one at that."

But Elaith did not want to put aside the blade. It fit his hand so well, as if fashioned solely for him. The dragonfear, too, was familiar—a natural extension of the rage that was his constant companion, hidden though it usually was by the fragile



sheath of power, wealth, and dry wit.

The elf slowly turned toward the immobile Oltennius, whose plump face was frozen in an expression of triumph. Oltennius Gondblessed had succeeded—and Elaith had failed once again.

With great difficulty, the elf sheathed his anger and dismissed the dragonfear it had summoned. When the Lantanner shook off the effects of the spell, Elaith drew his second sword and handed it to the human.

"Arm yourself," he said quietly, "and face the justice dealt to all those who dishonor the moonblade."

The deed was done quickly. Elaith pried the box—the achievement of a thousand years of ceaseless effort—

from Oltennius Gondblessed's dead hand and hurled it against the far wall. The box shattered, showering the floor with splinters of wood and fragments of metal and wire.

Moonblade still in hand, Elaith turned toward Evermeet and waited to die. It was only fitting, for who had dishonored this sword more than he? He had sought to twist ancient elven magic to suit his own pride. Volo's tall tales, Melshimber's presumption—such things were but a mooncast shadow of his misdeeds.

Yes, even now the device's mysterious effect was fading. Elaith could feel the gathering power in the sword, the killing heat starting to sear his hands.

A strong, scaly hand settled on his shoulder, and Tincheron held out the metal scabbard. His golden eyes held entreaty. "Lord Cralnober," he said simply, but those words held

a world of meaning: honor, responsibility, family.

Despair slipped away to some hidden place in Elaith's heart, where it would no doubt regroup with rage to plot their next return. Elaith slid the moonblade back into its sheath, where it would await its rightful wielder.

The half-dragon gently set the sheathed blade aside and gazed regretfully at the shattered device. "Was that truly a needed thing? What of the Cralnober moonblade, and the Lady Azariah?"

What indeed? Who could say but the gods who had decreed this particular deadly game?

Elaith sent the child a reassuring smile. "When she comes of age," he said quietly, "she will take her chances." □



by Amber E. Scott and F. Wesley Schneider
illustrated by Peter Bergting and Mike Schley



THE ECOLOGY OF THE

LIZARDFOLK

Hidden behind walls of tangled vines, towers of primordial willows, and moats of slow-moving waters brimming with a thousand different deaths, lizardfolk claw out their savage domains. From the hearts of the deadliest swamps, dark places where sinister things crawl and forgotten evils lurk, these reptilian primitives thrive in savage solitude. Often numbered among the evils that stalk such wetland wilds, lizardfolk are far more than simple-minded raiders and territorial murderers—although they are exactly those things too.

HISTORY OF THE LIZARDFOLK

Lizardfolk have a strong oral tradition, and the story of how they came to exist is the first legend taught to hatchlings.

Semuanya, the breeder of all lizardfolk, had a mate in the long ago times. Kecuala and Semuanya lived in harmony together, neither one dominant. Each of them was a Watcher who prowled the primordial jungles, seeking

out their enemies, a Survivor who plucked edible things from the ground and slew wild beasts for their flesh, and a Breeder who bore clutches of soft eggs and buried them in the ground to keep them warm and safe.

While Semuanya settled contentedly into its life, Kecuala did not. Kecuala worked its soft, gray brain with pointless questions. It made no decisions, squatting and thinking while life went on around it. When Semuanya chided Kecuala, Kecuala cried, "How can I watch or hunt or breed without first thinking? The decisions are so many and so great! What if my actions bring trouble? I must be cautious, must be careful, must think things through!"

Semuanya shook its head and went out to hunt, and when it returned it found Kecuala gone. Unable to conquer its indecisiveness, it had split in half and left two smaller Kecualas behind. One of the small new lizardfolk waved its sharp claws in the air, growling its desire to fight



and hunt. The other hid behind its partner, hissing its will to stay home and breed, and to cover its clutch with earth to keep it warm and safe.

Semuanya in its wisdom called the aggressive Kecuala "male" and the passive Kecuala "female" and helped them to build a place to live and breed. Semuanya watched over the Kecualas—which lizardfolk still call themselves to this day—and continues to guard their progeny, hoping that one day Kecuala will stop thinking so much and join its halves together again so it can watch and hunt and breed with Semuanya once more.

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE LIZARDFOLK

While at first glance lizardfolk bodies seem as straightforward as their culture, in reality they are much more complex. Lizardfolk weigh from 200 to 280 pounds and possess powerful builds. Their stout frames stand 6 to 7 feet tall—in addition to 3-to-4-foot-long nonprehensile tails that they use for balance.

Lizardfolk skin is a thin white membrane that grows hard scales

KNOWLEDGE OF LIZARDFOLK

The following table shows the results of a Knowledge (local) check as it relates to lizardfolk. Those who live in or near swamps, hunt the marshes, or have dealings with lizardfolk communities might possess this information.

DC	Knowledge (local)
10	Lizardfolk are monstrous scaled humanoids that stalk swamps and live in small, primitive tribes.
15	As skilled warriors, lizardfolk respect strength and martial prowess, but most seek peaceful existences. Many settlements of lizardfolk live harmoniously alongside communities of other humanoids.
20	Lizardfolk are not amphibious, but they can remain underwater for long periods of time. Separate lizardfolk tribes vary greatly in technological advancement, alignment, physical stature, and racial abilities.
25	Lizardfolk revere an androgynous deity named Semuanya. Their tribal leaders are commonly the most powerful of the tribe's warriors. Lizardfolk almost never count arcane spellcasters among their ranks.

ranging in color from onyx black to olive green to mud brown, sometimes with mottled or even striped patterns. As their eggs have porous shells, the pigmentation of mud and water seeps in during development, determining a hatchling's coloration. This means that if lizardfolk move from one area to another, new hatchlings might possess different colorations than their

parents, although body size, eye color, and the number of serrations on their crests are inherited traits.

The jaws of lizardfolk bear a unique construction of solid bone plates with a serrated front edge. The sharp edge of the jawbone protrudes through the gum line, functioning as canines for ripping meat while molarlike ridges run along the rear of the jawbone.



Crests are another distinctive physiological trait of lizardfolk. Males possess large crests that run from the tops of their heads down between their shoulder blades, while females have two smaller crests running parallel along their heads down to the backs of their necks.

Lizardfolk reproduce sexually. A female lizardfolk lays a clutch of

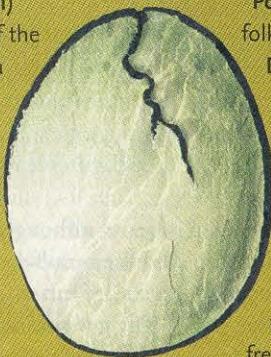
one to three eggs several weeks after mating and buries them in mud and composted plant matter. These eggs, each just larger than a foot in diameter, absorb water and plant matter to feed the growing embryo inside. The fetus does not develop genitalia until approximately a week before it hatches, which develop in response to the type and amount

of nutrients the fetus receives. A prosperous tribe that has an abundance of compost hatches an equal number of males and females. A less well-off tribe that has few scraps to bury its eggs in produces mostly males. This adds valuable hunters to the tribe while reducing the number of needy offspring the next generation hatches. Irregularly, lizardfolk

SEMUANYA

Lesser God (Neutral)

The dualistic deity of the lizardfolk, Semuanya embodies the chief facets of lizardfolk life: hunting and breeding. During times of peace and plenty they speak of Semuanya as "she" and worship her as the Breeder. During times of strife and hardship they speak of Semuanya as "he" and offer sacrifices to him as the Watcher or the Seeker. **Symbol:** A reptile egg.



Portfolio: Fertility, the hunt, lizardfolk, swamps.

Domains: Animal, Plant, Water.

Favored Weapon: Greatclub.

Clerical Training: New shamans learn at the feet of the previous generation's healers, replacing them when they can no longer fulfill their duties.

Quests: Semuanya instructs its worshipers to serve where needed, frequently questing them to aid warbands or recover a tribe's lost eggs.

Prayers: In times of war, prayers to Semuanya take the form of short hisses and reptilian barks made before battle. When a tribe is at peace

there is time for longer chants and epic songs intoned in Draconic.

Temples: Semuanya's only temples are in the hearts and minds of its worshipers. Only the occasional symbol or idol is made as a physical representation of its worship.

Rites: Breeding and battle as they benefit lizardfolk tribes.

Herald and Allies: Semuanya's herald is an 18th-level albino lizardfolk druid called Spirit Scale. Semuanya's allies and those it most commonly sends to fulfill *planar ally* spells are celestial or fiendish dinosaurs, giant crocodiles, hydras, or tendriculoses.

hatchlings are born with both male and female sex organs—neither set functional. Such sterile offspring often possess female crests, unusually complex brains, and correspondingly greater intellects.

Several atypical varieties of lizardfolk exist, the most common being brutish blackscales and the cunning pygmy poison dusks (see the *Monster Manual III*). Each breed exhibits traits suited to the lands it inhabits, as well as customs and practices that vary radically from tribe to tribe. As such, it proves as difficult to predict the temperament and actions of lizardfolk as it would be to do so for humans or elves. Varying breeds of lizardfolk rarely occupy the same areas, but when they do, tribal conflicts prove just as likely as unified societies.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY OF THE LIZARDFOLK

The societies of most lizardfolk tribes seem simple by the standards of non-lizardfolk, but this simplicity has developed as a reflection of their deep-rooted faith. The story of their origins has led most lizardfolk to condemn intelligence as pointless and wasteful. Lizardfolk believe, like their deity Semuanya, that life is meant to be lived and that hunting, fighting, and breeding matter most. Intelligence leads to overthinking situations and to the corruption of their straightforward culture.

The exception to this philosophy comes in the form of the occasional sterile, hermaphroditic lizardfolk hatched with superior intelligence. Often taking up the mantle of shaman, lizardfolk of this uncommon breed advise the tribe but rarely rise to positions of true power. Lizardfolk revere such shamans as touched by the divinity of Semuanya—paragons closer to returning the broken halves of Kecuala to a unified state. As these shamans cannot breed, and lizardfolk females reject mates who display above-average intellects, lizardfolk technology rarely advances.

Survival is of key importance to lizardfolk society, and so the tribe

DOGON TO DUNWATER

References to lizardlike people exist in the mythology of many different cultures. The Dogon tribe of Africa believes that human beings are descended from a race of reptilian aliens called the Nummo. The Hopi tribe supposedly has legends about a race of lizard people who lived on the earth five thousand years ago, and who all died in a rain of fire. In D&D, lizardfolk (formerly lizard men) made their first appearance in 1976's *Supplement I: GREYHAWK*. They are also prominently featured in the first edition adventure *U2: Danger at Dunwater* and more recently in Chapter 4: Saltmarsh of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE II*. Check out the most recent lizardfolk incursion in the Age of Worms Adventure Path adventure, "Encounter at Blackwall Keep," in *DUNGEON #125*.



treats the strongest and hardest males and females with the greatest respect. The most powerful male warrior takes command of the tribe and selects the healthiest and strongest females to mate with. Although exceptional intelligence is disdained, cunning and tactics in battle are highly respected, especially when combined with the prowess to implement such strategies. Thus, many lizardfolk leaders show exceptional canniness in leading their people, both on and off the battlefield. When multiple lizardfolk lay claim to the position of leader—or there is any dispute within the tribe—the feuding parties fight to the death, the victor proving that Semuanya favors him.

Due to their martial culture, most other humanoids view lizardfolk as a violent, cannibalistic, savage race, but in reality lizardfolk tribes vary in their methods of dealing with outlanders. Lizardfolk as a whole have no strong leaning toward any extreme alignment or particular ruling philosophy other than survival of the fittest. They

defend their territories ferociously, but when approached respectfully most tribes trade and negotiate with other races willingly. Some tribes, however, attack strangers on sight—especially those of the primal blackscales tribes—but such aggression usually results from years of fighting off invading races.

Lizardfolk disdain intricate deceptions and politics. If they desire something another race possesses, they might try to trade for it or take it by force. A few nomadic tribes—largely among the poison dusk—prefer stealth and theft over diplomacy or aggression. Each tribe differs, but most broadcast their intentions straightforwardly and openly.

In general, lizardfolk make permanent homes in temperate, swampy lands, although the differing breeds prefer some variations. Some of the more advanced tribes build crude huts, but most find natural shelters in underwater caves containing air pockets or large copes of swamp trees with canopies big enough to shield the tribe from the elements.

ADVANCED LIZARDFOLK

Most lizardfolk tribes adhere to proud warrior traditions. As such, advanced lizardfolk regularly take levels in barbarian, fighter, or ranger. Lizardfolk following the path of the shaman might instead take levels of adept, cleric, druid, or—rarely—sorcerer.

Whether the guard of a tribe's chieftain or the leader of a scout party, the swamp stalker presented here is an advanced version of the lizardfolk presented on page 169 of the *Monster Manual*. The scaled horror prestige class and its example Saebeohrt Rippling Death on page 84 of *Savage Species* presents an even deadlier lizardfolk foe.

SWAMP STALKER CHAKSHAEI CR5
Lizardfolk barbarian 2/fighter 2

Females and children guard the settlement and gather edible roots and plants for the tribe. Males serve as scouts, hunters, and warriors.

LIZARDFOLK IN EBERRON

The best-known lizardfolk in EBERRON are the blackscales, poison dusk pygmies, and twenty-four Cold Sun Tribes of normal lizardfolk living in Q'barra. All three varieties are extremely dangerous, although some of the Cold Sun Tribes have made peaceful overtures toward nonlizardfolk. Many of the Q'barra lizardfolk serve the great black dragon Rhashaak and seek to protect their lands and holy grounds from outsider settlers new to the region. Lately, black-scale raiders have captured numerous residents of Newthrone's outlying lands and even Cold Sun lizardfolk to sacrifice to Rhashaak in the great volcano-city of Haka'toryhak. This especially disturbs the Cold Sun lizardfolk as they fear some dark plot on the part of Rhashaak. In addition, the agents they dispatched to investigate the blackscales' plots have returned with broken minds and terrible mutations.

LN Medium humanoid (reptilian)	Weapon Focus (trident)
<i>Monster Manual</i> 169	Skills Balance +6, Handle Animal +2,
Init +0; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1	Intimidate +5, Listen +5, Jump +6, Ride +3, Survival +3, Swim +8
Languages Draconic	Possessions combat gear, masterwork studded leather armor, spiked heavy wooden shield, masterwork trident, 4 javelins, 2 potions of pass without trace, 39 gp.
AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20; uncanny dodge	Rage (Ex): When he rages, Chakshael has the following changed statistics:
hp 45 (6 HD)	AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 18
Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +1	hp 55 (5 HD)
Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)	Fort +10 Will +3
Melee 2 claws +7 melee (1d4+2) and bite +5 (1d4+1); or mwk trident +9 (1d8+2) and bite +5 (1d4+1)	Melee 2 claws +9 melee (1d4+4) and bite +7 melee (1d4+3); or mwk trident +10 (1d8+4) and bite +7 melee (1d4+3)
Ranged: javelin +7 (1d6+1)	Grp +9
Base Atk +5; Grp +7	Abilities Str 19, Con 18
Special Attack Rage 1/day	Skills Climb +4, Jump +10, Swim +7
Combat Gear Oil of bless weapon, potion of bear's endurance	
Abilities Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10	
Feats Multiattack, Point Blank Shot,	

LIZARDFOLK IN FAERÜN

Large lizardfolk tribes exist in the southernmost reaches of Faerûn, mainly in the swampy areas of the jungles of Chult and Rethild, the Great Swamp, between Halruaa and Dambrath. Rumor has it that a ruined city in the heart of Rethild has had a corrupting influence on the lizardfolk tribes, spawning demonic lizard kings and queens. These half-fiends have united many tribes of their weaker kin and are slowly conquering the enormous swamp (see *Serpent Kingdoms*).

Lizardfolk also populate the warm marshes of the Western Heartlands, most notably the Lizard Marsh and the Marsh of Chelimir. Some lizardfolk have recently started singling out and attacking Zhentarim caravans that pass too close to the Marsh of Chelimir. In response, the Zhents now spread rumors of lizardfolk assaulting and devouring innocent travelers, hoping that someone eliminates the reptilian threat for them.

LIZARDFOLK FEATS

The new feats presented here are frequently used by lizardfolk but might

be suited to any creature that meets the prerequisites.
DEEP BREATHER [GENERAL]
You can hold your breath much longer than normal.
Prerequisites: Con 16.
Benefit: You can hold your breath for double the normal number of rounds before you risk drowning (see page 304 of the <i>DUNGEON MASTER's Guide</i>). For example, a human with this feat can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to four times his Constitution score before he risks drowning.
Normal: A human can normally only hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to two times his Constitution score before he risks drowning.
CHARMELEON BLOOD
Lizardfolk with this feat can slightly shift the color of their scales, aiding them in blending in with dense vegetation.
Prerequisites: Lizardfolk, Cha 14.
Benefit: Lizardfolk with this feat gain a +6 racial bonus on Hide checks made in forested or swampy environments.

REPTILIAN HEALING

Lizardfolk with this feat heal at an increased rate, much like many lesser reptilian creatures.

Prerequisites: Lizardfolk, Con 16, Great Fortitude.

Benefit: Lizardfolk with this feat regain hit points from normal healing at double the normal rate. For example, a full night's rest allows a lizardfolk with this feat to regain 2 hit points per character level or Hit Die, while complete bed rest restores 4 hit points per character level or Hit Die. This ability does not allow a lizardfolk to regenerate or reattach lost limbs.

Normal: A full night's rest normally only restores 1 hit point per character level or Hit Die, while complete bed rest usually only restores 2 hit points per character level or Hit Die.

LIZARDFOLK TACTICS

Skilled guerilla combatants, lizardfolk warriors are experienced at fighting in small hunting parties or warbands. In such groups they make use of a variety

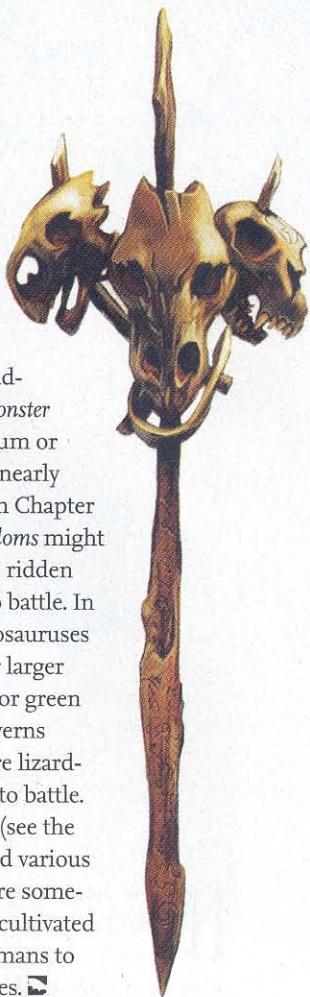
of tactics effective against prey, whatever shape it might take.

Scaled Squads: Obedient to powerful leaders, warbands of six to ten lizard-folk commonly follow commanders with barbarian or ranger levels. Skilled ambushers, frequently only half of a lizardfolk warband charges from cover into melee, leaving a reserve group to attack from range and cover the vanguard's retreat. Lizardfolk rarely fight to the death and commonly withdraw once reduced to half their hit points.

Deep Divers: Lizardfolk prefer to engage enemies in or near water. Using their hold breath ability to hide or retreat underwater, they regularly take advantage of the improved cover wading in water provides (see page 93 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*). Heavily armed lizardfolk often drop their shields to fight underwater, as shields hamper their swimming abilities.

Swamp Stalkers: While the dense vegetation of their swampy homes makes the mounts of other humanoids impractical, lizardfolk frequently

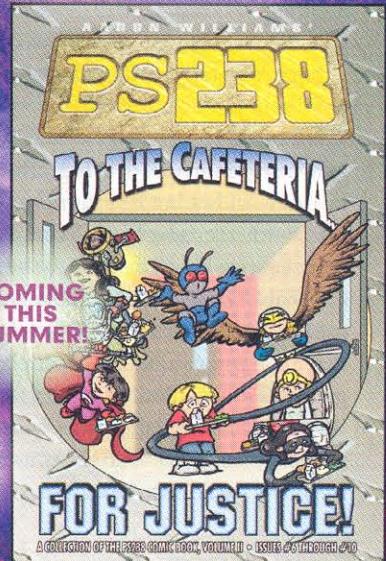
domesticate animals for their cunning in battle. Creatures like crocodiles, deinonychuses, megaraptors, mud-maws (see the *Monster Manual II*), Medium or larger snakes, or nearly any creature from Chapter 6 of *Serpent Kingdoms* might follow or even be ridden by lizardfolk into battle. In addition, tyrannosaurususes or other Huge or larger dinosaurs, black or green dragons, and wyverns might carry entire lizard-folk warbands into battle. Skeletal dragons (see the *Draconomicon*) and various plant creatures are sometimes created or cultivated by lizardfolk shamans to protect their tribes. □



The image shows the front cover of the comic book "Nodwick Adventure Log". The title "Nodwick" is written in large, stylized red letters at the top, with a trademark symbol. Below it, the subtitle "ADVENTURE LOG" is written in a smaller, blue, blocky font. Underneath that, it says "Volume 1" followed by "by Aaron Williams". The central part of the cover features two panels from the comic strip. The left panel shows a knight in armor reading a scroll while a green dragon-like creature sits behind him. The right panel shows a group of characters, including a knight and a wizard-like figure, running away from a large, flaming explosion or fire. At the bottom right corner of the cover, there is a yellow diamond-shaped logo containing the letters "HP".

Read the cartoons that started it all! The Nodwick Adventure Log contains all of the original Nodwick cartoon strips and D&D module spoofs from the pages of Dragon Magazine! Plus, check in on the Wizard-Warrior Wrasslin' Federation as well as Nodwick's spin on the D&D movie! There's also a never-before collected selection of Dragomong cartoons by Nodwick's creator, Aaron Williams! All this and more in full color!

The background is a dark, textured surface resembling a starry night or a nebula. Overlaid on this are several sets of words in a glowing blue and purple font. At the top, 'FANTASY' is written in a large, thin font, followed by 'NODWICK' in a large, bold, blocky font. Below that is 'HUMOR'. In the center, 'SUPERHEROES' is written in a large, bold font. Further down, 'ADVENTURE' is in a large font, and at the bottom, 'PS238' is in a large, bold font. Above 'PS238', the word 'LEGENDS' is partially visible in a smaller font. The overall effect is mysterious and futuristic.



It's the second volume of the collected ps238! Collecting issues 6-10 of the hit super-kid comic book, **"To the Cafeteria... FOR JUSTICE!"** also contains many previously uncollected stories, including the 9-page "Free Comic Book Day" issue tale, "Fracas with the Fleal!" Thrill to the adventures of Tyler, the boy with no powers, as he survives student elections, tales of time travel, and journeys to DIY space stations. All this and an introduction by **Scott Kurtz**, creator of "PvP!"

Wormfoos

SURVIVING THE AGE OF WORMS
ADVENTURE PATH

Now HIRING: Apply Within

While the pages of *DUNGEON* magazine present everything a DM needs to run the Age of Worms Adventure Path, every month *DRAGON* gives the players of that—or any other campaign—tools to enhance their gaming experience.

Diamond Lake produces more than its fair share of the impoverished and the desperate. Aside from mine bosses and their well-paid toughs, most residents wish to leave the lung-clogging, soul-crushing community. For most, such hopes never progress beyond just that—they live and die in Diamond Lake. Others look for a means of escape. Getting in good with a mine boss proves popular with the toughest rowdies, but the more sophisticated in the town (and a few do exist) seek a better life as far from the mines as possible. Ironically, these people often seek their fortunes underground, in the dozens of cairns surrounding the town.

Three such desperate souls have made their desires—and abilities—known. If your character takes the Leadership feat, consider acquiring one of these outstanding citizens as your cohort. Allustan can introduce them to you, if you ask him.

GAR BLITZHAME

Like many dwarves, Gar acts gruff and uncaring toward those he barely knows, but he feels deep compassion for weaker creatures—whether adventuring companions or orphaned owlbear cubs. Despite his connection to the mercantile Greysmere Covenant, Gar seeks to leave Diamond Lake and explore the greater world beyond. Of all the terrible and frightening threats that loom before him on the path he has chosen, none strike greater fear in his heart than that of his uncle, Dulok Blitzhame. While he never explains why, Gar insists on avoiding his uncle's residence and office at all times, and only joins a group if its members swear oaths not to reveal him to Dulok.

A BUNCH OF CHARACTERS

These three characters appear in Erik Mona's Age of Worms playtest game held most Thursdays at Paizo's office. In addition to Daejin, Gar, and Tassilo, the party also consists of "Demon Boy" (played by *DUNGEON* Editorial Assistant Jeremy Walker), Dram Cicaeda (played by "Downer" artist Kyle Hunter), Taan Goldenoak (played by Senior Art Director Sean Glenn), Tyrlandi Scrimm (played by *DUNGEON* Managing Editor James Jacobs), and Vyth (played by *DRAGON* Assistant Editor Mike McArtor). For more information on these characters' ongoing adventures and campaign journals, check out the messageboards at paizo.com.

Gar wields a dwarven waraxe and wears the relatively heavy scale mail armor of a fighter, but he also carries a thick tome he spends hours reading every day. In combat, Gar tends to move to the front of the line, shouting either boastful challenges or fear-inspired curses depending on the nature of the creatures faced. Despite the chance of failure due to his heavy armor, Gar attempts to cast *enlarge person* whenever a battle turns desperate or need otherwise dictates. If a foe proves particularly difficult to hit, Gar turns to *true strike* and *shield* if he seems to fall victim to a disproportionate number of blows. Gar recognizes that he might not survive a battle, and he attempts to impress upon those around him that very realization of mortality. As such, he never hesitates to chastise those who fool around in the heat of battle—sometimes reinforcing his chastisements with physical reminders.

Because his introduction to the arcane mysteries came only recently, Gar has yet to summon a familiar.



Gar's antics in the Age of Worms playtest game come via the talents of *DRAGON* Associate Editor Jason Bulmahn.

GAR BLITZHAME

Male dwarf fighter 2/wizard 2 (transmuter)

LN Medium humanoid

Init +4; Hook "Uh... please don't tell my uncle."

Senses darkvision 60 ft., Spot +1, Listen +1

Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin, Orc, Terran

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17

hp 23 (4 HD)

Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +3; +2 vs. spells, +2 vs. poison

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee dwarven waraxe +6 (1d10+2/x3)

Ranged light hammer +3 (1d4+2)

Base Atk +3; Grp +5

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack

Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds

Spells Prepared (CL 2nd, 25% arcane spell failure):

1st—burning hands (DC 14), enlarge person, shield, true strike

CR 4

0—detect magic, mage hand, message, read magic

Abilities Str 14, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 17, Wis 11, Cha 9

SQ summon familiar (none)

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe)

Skills Concentration +8, Craft (stoneworking) +12, Knowledge (arcane) +6, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +4, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Swim +6

Possessions combat gear, dwarven waraxe, +1 scale mail, pearl of power (1st-level spell), elixir of truth, scroll of identify, 154 gp of coins and gems

Spellbook as above plus 0—all except conjuration and necromancy;

1st—as above plus burning hands, expeditious retreat, magic missile, magic weapon, protection from evil

DAEJIN MOON

Do not mistake her quiet, retiring ways with meekness or submissiveness. Easy going, but easily bored, DaeJin tends to follow the will of

the crowd—until that will turns toward excessive conversation. DaeJin keeps to herself and tends only to speak when spoken to—and then only enough to answer the question posed to her. When she does volunteer to speak she usually expresses her boredom with a quick verbal jab. Allies should prepare themselves for a pointed comment or two about their combat abilities—or lack thereof—once the bloodshed has ended.

Nearly peerless in Diamond Lake or even the Bronzewood Lodge community in archery skill, DaeJin tends to keep away from the general fray at the heart of melee, preferring to fill her foes with arrows. She possesses strong tactical knowledge, and always moves into the best position for delivering ranged attacks. Although she takes her role as support fighter very seriously, helping to set-up effective and efficient battlefield strategies, she has little patience for those who don't—in her estimation—pull their weight in battle.

Sarah Robinson, Graphic Designer for *DRAGON*, plays DaeJin in the Age of Worms playtest game.

DAEJIN MOON

Female half-elf ranger 4

NG Medium humanoid

Init +4; Hook "You're not very good at that, are you?"**Senses** low-light vision, Spot +8, Listen +8**Languages** Common, Elven

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13

hp 26 (4 HD)**Immune** sleep**Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +3****Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Melee** longsword +5 (1d8+1/19–20)**Ranged** +1 composite shortbow +6 (1d6+2/x3)**Base Atk** +4; **Grp** +7**Atk Options** Point Blank Shot**Combat Gear** potion of cure light wounds (2)**Ranger Spells Prepared** (CL 2nd):

1st—pass without trace

Abilities Str 16, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 13,

Wis 14, Cha 9

SQ animal companion (Wolf, *Monster Manual* 283)**Feats** Endurance, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Track**Skills** Climb +7, Handle Animal +4, Hide +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +6, Search +4, Spot +8, Survival +9**Possessions** combat gear, sleep arrows (4), arrows (40), +1 composite shortbow (+2 Str bonus), studded leather, 130 gp**TASSILO VINIESE**

As you might expect from an experienced cleric of Heironeous, Tassilo struggles to balance his actions between strict adherence to regimen and the never-ending need for compassion. He spent most of his life within the quiet confines of Heironean religious enclaves, and only recently did his superiors send him into the larger world to investigate the death of a paladin assigned to his temple. Tassilo does not let his sheltered youth and relative inexperience keep him from sharing his natural wisdom with others, although as a reserved individual he rarely comes across as a bossy know-it-all. He suffers fools now much more easily than he did in his youth, but at times such

CR 4

suffering gets the better of his patience. The biting quips that occur then often instruct as well as castigate—ever with an eye toward the perfect balance of warrior, healer, and teacher.

Tassilo acts in combat as one might expect from a cleric of the god of battle: he uses his superior knowledge of tactics and battlefield positioning to both aid those who fall in battle and support those still standing. He performs a constant balancing act between pressing the attack and tending to the wounded, and he does so almost flawlessly. Tassilo recognizes that occasionally the victor in battle sometimes only wins because he makes the gravest sacrifices. To that end, he shows no fear in placing himself in a position that puts him in immediate danger if by doing so he can assure overall victory. Heironeus, however, obviously favors his devout worshiper, as despite sometimes suffering grievous wounds Tassilo still lives.

F. Wesley Schneider, Assistant Editor for *DRAGON*, breathes life into Tassilo during the Age of Worms playtest game.

TASSILO VINIESE**CR 4**

Male human cleric 4 (Heironeous)

LG Medium humanoid

Init +0; Hook "Keep in mind I do worship the god of war."**Senses** Spot +4, Listen +4**Languages** Common, Dwarven

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14

hp 22 (4 HD)**Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +7****Spd** 30 ft. (6 squares)**Melee** longsword +5 (1d8+1)**Ranged** light hammer +3 (1d4+1)**Base Atk** +3; **Grp** +4**Atk Options** Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm**Special Atk** turn undead (+1, 2d6+5, 9th), spontaneous casting (cure spells)**Combat gear** potion of cure moderate wounds**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 4th):2nd—aid (CL 5th), bear's strength, shield other, spiritual weapon^D1st—bane (DC 15), bless, cause fear (DC 15), protection from evil^D (CL 5th), shield of faith

o—cure minor wounds (2), detect magic, light, read magic

D: Domain spell. Domains: Good, War**Abilities** Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 19, Cha 13**Feats** Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Investigator, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword)^B, Weapon Focus (longsword)^B**Skills** Concentration +5, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +3, Heal +7, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (history) +3, Knowledge (local) +3, Knowledge (religion) +9, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Search +4, Spellcraft +7**Possessions** combat gear, masterwork light hammer, masterwork chain shirt, amulet of natural armor +1, scroll of inflict moderate wounds (2), 149 gp**FOLLOWERS IN DIAMOND LAKE**

It is possible that a particularly heroic or well-funded character could achieve a leadership score high enough to attract a small number of followers.

Followers drawn from the Diamond Lake area might come from any number of sources, including local militia members, junior clergy affiliated with one of the local faiths, experienced miners, or nearby woodsmen. Although skill in the arcane arts and cultural sophistication might be in low supply, followers from this area are hearty, grim fellows, ready to tackle thankless tasks or pass on a bit of ill-gotten information to a loyal patron.

USES FOR THE DM

When present, cohorts should serve an important role in the campaign. If the players miss an important piece of information or lack the motivation to investigate a plot point, a cohort can serve as an excellent tool to drive your story forward. What better motivation to adventure than a friend in need or danger?

If any of these cohorts seem suitable to your campaign, introduce them early and let your PCs get to know them. Cohorts should be friends and allies before signing on with the group. □

The Charlatan

There are those who pretend at power, and there are those who excel at this pretense. Anyone can dress up in an embroidered robe with hocus-pocus symbols on it or toss on a phony holy symbol and play cleric. Anyone might fool a dull-witted guard or a couple of simple peasant folk, but to convince an entire kingdom of your unquestionable arcane might or walk among anointed clerics as one of their own takes a true charlatan.

Wizards and sorcerers spend their lives in pursuit of the arcane secrets that grant them ultimate power. Clerics devote themselves to celestial powers in hopes of someday eternally serving their divine masters. The charlatan mocks both with her uncanny ability at deception, pretending at the power others seek without wasting her time with prayer or dusty tomes of magic. She lives by the age-old adage, "power perceived is power achieved." The charlatan can convince nearly anyone that she is an archmage or a pious cleric of a religious order. Whether the charlatan plays the part for power, profit, general mayhem, or her own inscrutable ends, her talents help her pass for the real thing. By the time anyone realizes otherwise she has long



since moved on, with a faked death or a mysterious disappearance creating yet another legend.

Becoming a Charlatan

Bards and rogues most often become charlatans, snubbing their noses at stuffy uptight spellcasters. Occasionally, sorcerers or wizards who tire of the arduous path to arcane power give up the pursuit of magic and take up the mantle of the charlatan instead. These former practitioners of arcane magic make some of the most successful charlatans, as a little true power can go a long way in convincing others of assumed archmage status. Clerics who have fallen from grace sometimes become charlatans out of scorn for their former brethren. These charlatans use their deceptive tricks to sully the name of the church that turned its back on them. Deities who provide the Trickery domain sometimes even encourage their clerics to become charlatans as a means of causing greater discord. Charisma is the key ability for any charlatan, although a high Intelligence also frequently proves useful.

Class Features

As she gains experience, a charlatan accrues a number of abilities that allow her to convince others of her magical prowess. At later levels she even gains the ability to shut down real spellcasters with nothing but guile. None of the charlatan's abilities are supernatural in any way. They are extraordinary effects and therefore do not need to bypass spell resistance (although saving throws are still allowed) and are not affected by an *antimagic field*, *dispel magic*, or similar effect. The charlatan relies on her skills and natural Charisma to turn the mundane into the seemingly mysterious and magical.

Unless otherwise noted, the save DC for any of the following effects equals 10 + the charlatan's class level + her Charisma modifier.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The charlatan gains no proficiency with any weapons or armor.

ORIGINS/DRAGON PRESTIGE CLASS DESIGN COMPETITION

The charlatan is the winner of the Origins/DRAGON prestige class design contest announced in DRAGON #330. Origins received many entries and narrowed them down to five finalists. From those five the DRAGON staff picked the winner. Nicolas Logue's expert mix of fun-to-read flavor, solid rules mechanics, and proper formatting won out. Congratulations to Nicolas and thanks to everyone who entered the contest!

THE CHARLATAN

Level	Base				
	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	
	Bonus	Save	Save	Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	False reputation, pretender, tricks of the trade
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Feigned casting, fortune teller's eye, steal the credit
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	Fearsome reputation, lesser mind trick
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Distracting dispel, fake healing, master of lies
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Greater mind trick, puppet master

False Reputation (Ex): Every good charlatan knows that her reputation must precede her. Spreading tales of her greatness far and wide, she creates the façade of her legendary stature as a spellcaster. Anyone inquiring after the charlatan with a bardic knowledge, Gather Information, or Knowledge check turns up false tales, gossip, and specific "facts" which corroborate her claim to greatness, unless the check result exceeds the DC (as described in the *Player's Handbook*) by 10 or more.

Pretender (Ex): A charlatan focuses her talents in impersonating arcane and divine spellcasters. She gains a circumstance bonus on Disguise checks equal to her charlatan level when attempting to pass as a spellcaster.

Tricks of the Trade (Ex): A charlatan learns of the creation and implementation of flash paper, smoke powder, and other alchemical mixtures that she can use to emulate the effects of certain spells. These are alchemical in nature, and therefore do not need to bypass spell resistance (although saving throws are still allowed) and are not affected by *antimagic field*, *dispel magic*, or similar effects. The charlatan can use these tricks a number of times per day equal to 1 + her charlatan level + her Charisma modifier, and her effective caster level equals her charlatan level.

At 1st level the charlatan can duplicate the effects of *burning hands* and *flare*.

Charlatan Entry Requirements

Skills: Bluff 8 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 2 ranks or Knowledge (religion) 2 ranks, Perform (act) 4 ranks, Spellcraft 2 ranks.

Feat: Skill Focus (Bluff)



Class Skills (6 + Int modifier per level): Appraise, Bluff, Concentration, Craft (any), Diplomacy, Disguise, Forgery, Gather Information, Hide, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (religion), Listen, Move Silently, Perform, Profession, Search, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Speak Language, Spellcraft, Spot, Use Magic Device.

At 3rd level the charlatan can duplicate the effects of *glitterdust*, *obscuring mist*, and *pyrotechnics*.

Feigned Casting (Ex): At 2nd level, the time a charlatan practices imitating gestures and arcane words pays off, allowing her to pretend to cast any arcane or divine spell (as appropriate to her disguise). Onlookers must defeat the charlatan's Bluff check with an opposed Spellcraft or Sense Motive check to detect the ruse. Those who fail this check believe the charlatan cast a spell, per her desire. The charlatan cannot fake a spell with an obvious visual effect, such as *fireball* or *wall of stone*, but spells such as *detect magic* and *mind blank* are perfect examples. Those who cannot

both see and hear the charlatan gain a +4 bonus on their opposed checks. The charlatan's false spell does not affect its targets and any creature targeted knows the "spell" had no effect.

Fortune Teller's Eye (Ex): At 2nd level the charlatan learns to scrutinize a subject with the trained eye of a con artist. By picking up on a person's attire, bearing, and habits, the charlatan may discern general facts about a subject creature. This requires 1 minute of observation and a successful DC 20 Sense Motive check. If the target attempts to conceal the truths of its nature the charlatan's Sense Motive check is opposed by the target's Disguise check (minimum DC 20). Success allows the charlatan to discern one aspect of the target's alignment, basic class abilities, and relative power (based on level). This ability reveals only general information about the target, such as, "This disciplined fellow nearly always follows the letter and spirit of the law. He is obviously a warrior of some sort, but his skills are not yet developed." The charlatan can feign powers of divination with this ability by stating her mundane deductions as if ascertained through arcane power or divine revelation.

Steal the Credit (Ex): The charlatan learns to convince others that great deeds and earthshaking events are actually her doing. She gains a +4 competence bonus on any Bluff check made to take credit for naturally occurring phenomena (gathering thunderclouds, an earthquake, or even the natural end of a drought or plague) or a deed performed by another.

Fearsome Reputation (Ex): Beginning at 3rd level, a charlatan's false reputation increases in potency as the tales of her power become even more outrageous and terrifying. The charlatan can draw upon the reputation she has created for herself, declaring her power to all around her. As a full-round action, she may make a Bluff check to render anyone who can hear her shaken for 1d4 rounds. A creature can make an opposed Sense Motive check to resist this

mind-affecting language-dependant effect. Any creature succeeding at the Sense Motive check is immune to the charlatan's fearsome reputation ability for one week. The shaken effect does not stack with itself, so a charlatan cannot use it to make a target frightened.

Lesser Mind Trick (Ex): Also at 3rd level, the charlatan gains the ability to convince others that she has cast a spell that affects their minds. Through sheer force of will the charlatan can make a Bluff check as a full-round action to affect her target's mind in a way that duplicates the effect of *charm person*, *command*, *scare* (one creature only), or *Tasha's hideous laughter*. A creature can make an opposed Sense Motive check to resist this mind-affecting language-dependant effect. Any creature succeeding at the Sense Motive check is immune to the charlatan's lesser mind trick ability for one week. The charlatan can use these tricks a number of times per day equal to 1 + her charlatan level + her Charisma modifier, and her effective caster level equals her charlatan level. Spells with durations longer than an hour fade after 1 hour has passed unless the charlatan is present to maintain it.

Master of Lies (Ex): At 4th level the charlatan becomes so submerged in her false reputation that any divination spells cast on her reveal only information appropriate to her assumed identity and nothing about her true self.

Fake Healing (Ex): A charlatan's powers of persuasion are so great by 4th level that she can convince the afflicted that she has cured them. The charlatan can duplicate the effects of *atonement*, *remove curse*, or *remove disease* a number of times per day equal to 1 + her charlatan level + her Charisma modifier, and her effective caster level equals her charlatan level. None of these abilities actually heal their targets, but unless the targets beat the charlatan at an opposed Bluff check (opposed by Sense Motive) they believe the "spell" healed them for 1d4 hours (although they still incur all penalties caused by any "healed" ailments).

Distracting Dispel (Ex): In order to prove herself against true wielders of magic, the 4th-level charlatan learns to use every dirty trick in the book. By preparing a standard action ahead of time, a charlatan may feign a counterspell attempt against another caster. To do this, the charlatan must prepare to counterspell as normal (see *Player's Handbook*, page 170) and make a Bluff check (opposed by her target's Concentration check). The spellcaster gains a +2 bonus on this check if he cannot both see and hear the charlatan and is immune to the distracting dispel if he cannot see or hear her. If she succeeds her target loses the spell being cast as if the charlatan had counterspelled it normally.

As an additional use of this ability, the charlatan can attempt to disrupt the concentration of a spellcaster concentrating on an already cast spell. The ability check is made and resisted in the manner previously described, and a successful Bluff check ends the spell being concentrated on.

Because this ability requires the charlatan to reveal all her tricks, she may only use it (in either form) once per day against any particular spellcaster.

Greater Mind Trick (Ex): At the height of her "power," the charlatan learns to convince others that she has cast more powerful spells. She may cast *bestow curse* (only curses that do not change the target's physical features, such as those presented in the *Player's Handbook*), *crushing despair* (one creature only), *fear* (one creature only), and *suggestion*. The charlatan can use these tricks a number of times per day equal to 1 + her charlatan level + her Charisma modifier, and her effective caster level equals her charlatan level. Spells with durations longer than an hour fade after 1 hour has passed unless the charlatan is present to maintain them.

Puppet Master (Ex): The charlatan's ultimate power allows her to influence the attitudes of whole population centers, bending the wills of the people to love or hate whomever the charlatan wishes. This ability requires one full day of rumor mongering, giving speeches, and assembling mobs of supporters.

At the beginning of the following day the charlatan makes a Bluff check to shift the population center's attitude one step (such as from friendly to helpful or indifferent to unfriendly), so it takes five consecutive days of successes to shift a community's attitude from helpful to hostile or vice versa. The DC for this check equals $15 + 5$ per community size (see page 137 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*). A thorp, therefore, requires only a DC 20 Bluff check to influence, while a large town's DC is 40 and a metropolis needs a DC 55 check.

The DM should set the population center's attitude toward a public figure. In general, unless the target is a known criminal or a hated leader the community's attitude should be no worse than indifferent. If the target of the charlatan's puppet master effect actively attempts to counter the charlatan in appropriate ways the DM can adjust the DC as follows:

Counter	DC
Giving speeches, spreading rumors, assembling mobs	+2
Distributing personal wealth or providing food	+5
Devoting all available time to maintain image	+10

Playing a Charlatan

As a master of deceit, the charlatan walks a dangerous line. Pretending at powers you do not possess provides both a challenge and a thrill. Bluff is intrinsic to a charlatan's survival, but juggling lies is like juggling knives—not entirely safe. If caught in a lie, a charlatan must have the skill to talk in circles and to carry herself with confidence and an air of mystery—even in the face of great danger. Most people never think to question her power, but if they do she always manages to convince them of it.

As with any con artist, confidence is tantamount for a charlatan. She relies upon her skills to see her through and never wavers in the face of a non-believer. Her gift of gab allows her to explain away inconsistencies in her portrayal of a cleric or wizard. A charlatan's potent imagination is her best weapon. When faced with a situation that

threatens to expose her as a fraud the charlatan concocts perfectly plausible excuses for why she can't cast or pray herself a solution to every problem. She talks her way out of using her "powers" whenever able. A true charlatan claims to reserve her potent spells and prayers for only the direst situations. If called to the test she stages elaborate stunts involving hired help, optical illusions, and alchemical equipment to demonstrate her magical might.

A charlatan might gain rewards as great as the magical prowess she pretends to possess. The satisfaction of deceiving an entire town or even kingdom gives her as much reward as gold. A charlatan rarely passes up the chance to pull the wool over someone's eyes.

Combat: Charlatans avoid combat if at all possible. They attempt to stop fights before they start with a display of power or the promise of deific destruction if an opponent dares attack. If a foe is implacable, the charlatan seeks to delay confrontation until such time as she can prepare tricks and stunts to harm enemies or frighten them. When a confrontation looms a charlatan uses her false reputation to curry favor with powerful associates and sway allies to her defense. If all else fails, the charlatan might even fake her death rather than face it at the hands of a foe.

If forced to defend herself, a charlatan falls back on her tricks of the trade and mind trick abilities. If facing imminent defeat in public, she loudly proclaims that her powers are temporarily unavailable to her or have no effect on the attacker for some reason, in hopes of preserving some shred of her false reputation. She uses her Bluff skill to turn foes against one another whenever able.

When facing other spellcasters, the charlatan attempts to convince them they are no match for her superior powers. If forced to duel them she attempts to stage displays of her might and embarrass the enemy caster with her distracting dispel class feature.

Charlatans in the World

The charlatan might appear nearly anywhere: from standing on a street

corner posing as a missionary cleric to sitting by an emperor's side as his personal archmage. Some wander from town to town while others cultivate their reputations in a single place. A charlatan's roots never grow too deep, though. If revealed as a fraud a charlatan prefers to beat a hasty retreat than to face the music.

Organization: Charlatans often live solitary lives and rarely act in concert. As lying is central to their lifestyle, not surprisingly charlatans have a difficult time trusting one another. On rare occasions two or more charlatans might go into business with one another for short periods of time. Such a partnership, while it lasts, creates a terrible force to be reckoned with. Two charlatans working together can hatch all manner of complex and insidious cons, scams, and schemes. A common trick among charlatan partnerships can fleece an entire town by pitting one against the other in a scheme of "good wizard/bad wizard." One charlatan arrives, putting on a show and intimidating the folk, while the other strolls into town a few days later offering to rid the township of the "villainous mage" for a not-so-modest fee. A grand wizards' duel ensues in which the "good wizard" vanquishes the "evil wizard." The victorious charlatan departs town the following day, meeting up with her companion on the road and splitting the reward money.

Although charlatans do not trust one another, an unspoken pact exists among all true charlatans. No charlatan ever publicly exposes another. A charlatan who violates this covenant finds herself hunted by her brethren with frightening vehemence.

NPC Reactions

People never react well to a charlatan revealed as a fraud. Charlatans captured after abusing the trust of a community often do not fare well, facing imprisonment at the least—and in some cases execution.

On occasion, a ruler might spare an unmasked charlatan. Most leaders can always use a good liar and a

powerful patron might intervene to save an exposed charlatan in order to use her to some end. A powerful wizard might even hire the charlatan to act as an evil wizard so he can defeat the charlatan publicly in order to gain notoriety. A cleric of a faith seeking converts might force the charlatan to impersonate a cleric from a rival order and then defeat her to gain more faithful for the flock.

Charlatan Lore

Uncovering truthful information about a specific charlatan almost always proves impossible and such attempts yield only tales of a charlatan's greatness per her false reputation ability. Characters may research charlatans in general and make a Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check to do so. A check reveals all the information for the appropriate DC plus all the information for lower DCs as well.

DC 10: "Charlatans don't really exist. They are only urban legends spread by paranoid wizards."

DC 15: "Charlatans are con artists who pretend to be wizards or clerics. They prey upon small farming communities, fleecing simple folk out of their coin."

DC 20: "Charlatans are skilled tricksters who often succeed in convincing those they meet that they are actually powerful spellcasters. They can even mimic some of the powers of real sorcerers and clerics."

DC 30: "A true charlatan is so skilled that she can even fool those she pretends to be. Some even take part in ceremonies with real clerics, wizards, and sorcerers without being noticed."

Charlatans in the Game

Charlatans allow a DM to throw a curve ball at experienced players by presenting them with an apparent archmage beyond the party's power level to intimidate and embarrass them. Imagine the players' chagrin when they finally discover they've been had, and their subsequent joy at the revenge they take on the offending charlatan.

The charlatan is a natural choice for players who enjoy guile over power, and

who appreciate roleplaying encounters more than straight-up combat. Besides presenting a single player with a challenging and fun option, a charlatan brings unique assets to a group of PCs. With a skilled charlatan in the group adventurers can convince enemies to give them a wide berth and possibly even gain the attention of monarchs, nobles, and other powerful patrons attracted by the charlatan's false reputation. In addition, a charlatan can enhance her powers by including the rest of the party in her schemes. With others helping to stage simple stunts or even pretending to be under the sway of enchantments, the charlatan finds it even easier to convince the public of her power. Charlatans often prove their usefulness in an adventuring party even if their antics get the group into trouble every now and again.

Encounter

Charlatans can be a real thorn in a party's side by stealing the credit for their accomplishments and publicly humiliating them. Few lower-level PCs who haven't pierced the charlatan's disguise dare stand up to her, believing her far too powerful to confront.

EL 9: Rolinda Shroompicker, the only child of a pair of gnome truffle farmers, left home at an early age to seek her own fortune and turned to petty theft and con artistry to get by in the world. While traveling in a human kingdom, her innate gnome illusory abilities caused her to be mistaken for a wizard. She ran with it and ended up making the biggest haul of swindled loot in her life. A charlatan was born.

Now Rolinda travels under the moniker The Grand Le'Shumb. Small in stature and great in arcane power, The Grand Le'Shumb's accomplishments have become hearth tales in more than a dozen kingdoms.

The PCs have just finished driving goblinoids—or some other foe—out of the woods surrounding a small town. When they return to claim their reward they find The Grand Le'Shumb has already taken the credit, and the money. The PCs could try to get it

back... if they dare invite the wrath of the All Powerful Grand Le'Shumb!

Rolinda Shroompicker,

"The Grand Le'Shumb"

CR 9

Female gnome rogue 5/charlatan 4

CN Small humanoid

Init +1; Hook "I am The Grand Le'Shumb! Tremble before me!"

Senses low-light vision; Spot +1, Listen +3

Languages Common, Draconic, Gnome, Goblin

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; uncanny dodge

hp 40 (9 HD)

Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +6; evasion

Spd 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +1 rapier +8/+3 (1d4-1/18-20/x2)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk +6/+1; Grp +0

Atk Options sneak attack +3d6

Special Atk distracting dispel, fearsome reputation, feigned casting, lesser mind trick, tricks of the trade

Combat Gear ring of counterspells

(scrying), wand of fly (20 charges), wand of magic missile (CL 3rd; 25 charges)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):

1/day—dancing lights, ghost sound (DC 14), prestidigitation, speak with animals (burrowing mammals only)

Abilities Str 6, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 14,

Wis 13, Cha 17

SQ fake healing, false reputation, fortune teller's eye, master of lies, pretender +4, steal the credit, trapfinding, trap sense +1

Feats Combat Expertise, Magical Aptitude, Skill Focus (Bluff), Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +22, Craft (alchemy) +14,

Craft (trapmaking) +4, Disguise +15 (+17 acting in character, +21 as arcane or divine spellcaster), Gather Information +11, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +3, Perform (act) +15, Profession (farmer) +3, Sense Motive +13, Sleight of Hand +13, Spellcraft +12, Spot +1, Use Magic Device +17

Possessions combat gear; +1 rapier; fine purple and gold embroidered robes; a dashing red cape; several mundane but mysterious-looking charms, necklaces, bracelets, and rings; and several vials of brightly colored foul-tasting "potions." □

by Amber E. Scott • illustrated by Jeff Carlisle

SWAMP SWAG

Jenaia jumped when the alligator winked at her, and then she realized it was only the reflection of candlelight in the stuffed animal's glass eyes. They seemed to watch her from every corner of the shop: stuffed marsh birds perched in lifelike positions on gnarled branches nailed to the walls, pickled snakes floated in glass jars, and dried fish hung by their tails in bunches.

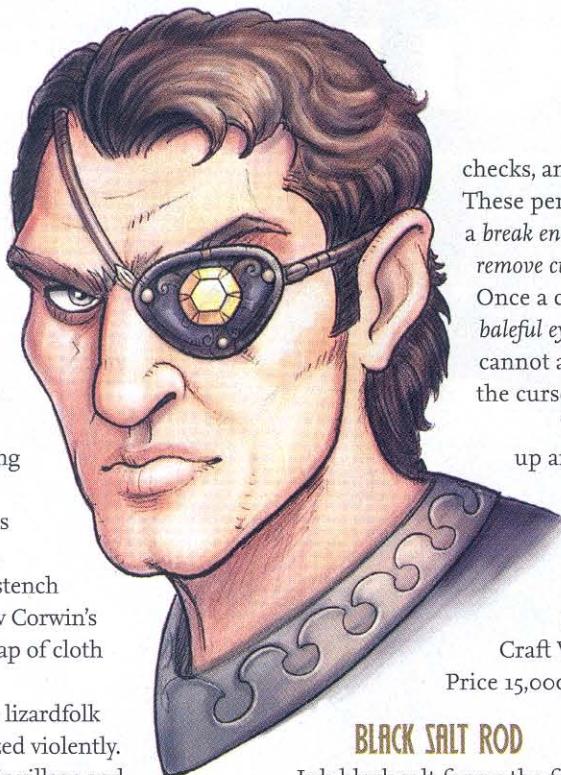
The rest of her group seemed just as uneasy. The shop smelled like pepper, medicine, and the rank, fetid swamp-stench that suffused this whole town. She saw Corwin's nose wrinkle as he approached the heap of cloth behind the counter.

"We're the folks that eliminated the lizardfolk threat for you," he said and then sneezed violently. "We found some curious items in their village and heard that you could identify them for us."

The heap of cloth shifted and the floppy hat, bedecked with beads and feathers and small bones strung on wire, bobbed forward. "Mayhap I can," the old man wheezed. He stretched out a withered brown hand with fingernails like claws. "You find things in the swamp you can't find anywhere else—that's a fact. Let's see what you have, hmm?"

BALEFUL EYE OF BAD JUJU

A multifaceted yellow gemstone sits in the center of this black leather eyepatch. Whoever wears the *baleful eye of bad juju* can activate it once per day to gain a gaze attack for 1 round. During that round, every creature within 30 feet of the *baleful eye of bad juju*'s wearer must make a DC 14 Will save or take a -4 penalty on attack rolls, saves, ability



checks, and skill checks for one day. These penalties cannot be dispelled, but a *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish* spell removes it. Once a creature has succumbed to the *baleful eye of bad juju*, that particular eye cannot affect him again until he breaks the curse.

The *baleful eye of bad juju* takes up an eye lenses/goggles slot on the body. Because it covers one of his eyes, its wearer takes a -2 penalty on Spot and Search checks.

Faint necromancy; CL 5th;
Craft Wondrous Item; bestow curse;
Price 15,000 gp; Weight —.

BLACK SALT ROD

Ink-black salt forms the full length of this 1-inch diameter, foot-long rod. It feels rough to the touch and tasting it confirms that it is indeed made of salt, although its magic construction prevents it from dissolving normally.

The *black salt rod* detects unnatural creatures and protects its bearer from them. If a construct or undead creature comes within 60 feet of the rod's wielder, the rod emits an acrid, briny smell and stains its bearer's hand black (the stain disappears when no constructs or undead are in range or if the bearer stops holding the rod.) The rod detects disguised, ethereal, hidden, incorporeal, or invisible constructs and undead as well as those in plain sight. If the bearer concentrates for a full round, the rod pinpoints the location of the nearest construct or undead within 60 feet and indicates how many are within range (although it does not reveal their exact locations).



The rod can be used in this way three times each day, each use lasting up to 10 minutes. Activating this ability is a standard action. When held, the rod protects its bearer with a *death ward* spell that functions only against attacks that originate from an undead creature's supernatural attacks (and not any abilities they gain from class levels, such as a lich's spellcasting ability).

Strong necromancy; CL 13th; Craft Rod; *death ward, repulsion, true seeing*; Price 40,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

CAPOTE OF DRAGONFLY WINGS

This iridescent cape hangs from the wearer's shoulders and seems formed of thousands of flexible dragonfly wings. It shimmers green, blue, and

gold in the light and despite its delicate look is tough as canvas.

The wearer of a *capote of dragonfly wings* benefits from several special abilities.

First, he is continually protected by a *repel vermin* effect. (Vermin with fewer than 2 HD cannot approach within 10 feet, while vermin with 2 HD or more must make a DC 16 Will save to approach and take 2d6 points of damage in the process.) Second, he emulates the quick, precise movements of a dragonfly, gaining a +4 enhancement bonus to Dexterity. Third, if he possesses the ability to fly (whether naturally or magically), his fly speed increases by 5 feet and his maneuverability improves by one rating (such as from poor to average) to a maximum of perfect.

These bonuses come with a price, however. Wind-related effects (both natural and magical, such as from the *gust of wind* spell) affect the wearer of a *capote of dragonfly wings* as if he were two size categories smaller. Additionally, a constant soft buzz follows the wearer at all times, giving him a -4 penalty on Move Silently checks.

Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item; *cat's grace, fly, repel vermin*; Price 85,000 gp; Weight 2 lb.

EGGSUCKER STAFF

One of the more disturbing items lizardfolk shamans create is the *eggsucker staff*. Small squares of eggshell cover the gnarled staff like mosaic tiles and whole eggs bulge out of the staff like tumorous growths. As the staff's wielder uses up charges the eggs soften and wither, as if being sucked hollow, until their shells break and slough off.

Despite its strange appearance and unglamorous appellation, the *eggsucker staff* is

actually an item of genesis. It allows use of the following spells:

- *Reincarnate* (1 charge)
- *Animate plants* (2 charges)
- *Awaken* (3 charges)
- *Shambler* (3 charges)

Strong conjuration; CL 17th; Craft Staff; *animate plants, awaken, regenerate, reincarnate, shambler*; Price 103,922 gp; Cost 76,921 gp + 14,657 XP; Weight 4 lb.

MUDWALKER RING

While lizardfolk are naturally adept at moving through marshes, they sometimes forge *mudwalker rings* to aid them in ambushes and scouting. A *mudwalker ring* looks little like a standard decorative ring, instead resembling a rough, inch-long tube of dried mud that fits over the finger. The mud is forged in a special magical process that renders it hard as steel.

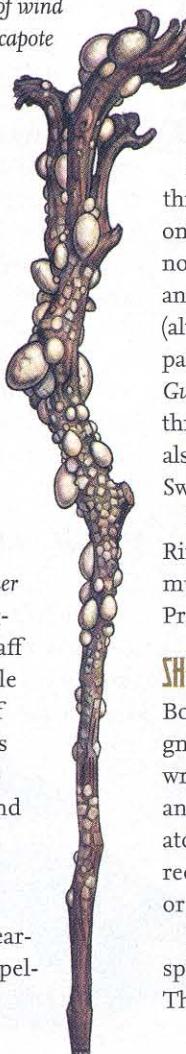
A *mudwalker ring* allows its wearer to move easily in swampy terrain. A person wearing the ring moves through shallow bogs at his standard movement rate and suffers no penalty on Move Silently or Tumble checks. Moving through deep bog squares costs him only 2 squares of movement, he suffers no penalty on Move Silently checks, and he can attempt Tumble checks (although the DC increases by 2). See page 88 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* for more information on moving through marsh terrain. *Mudwalker rings* also grant a +2 competence bonus on Swim checks.

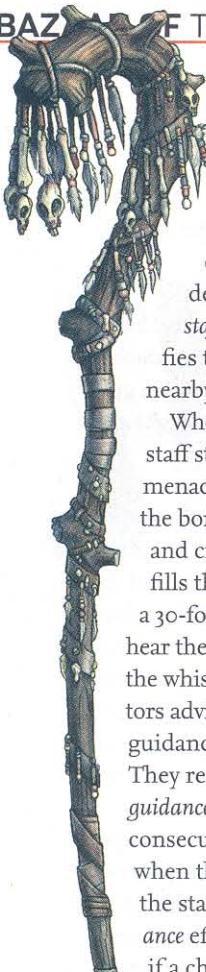
Moderate abjuration; CL 7th; Forge Ring, *freedom of movement*, creator must have 2 ranks in the Survival skill; Price 28,000 gp; Weight —.

SHAKER STAFF OF THE QUONDAM

Bone beads festoon the length of this gnarled staff. They hang in clumps or wrap around it like a snake, rattling and hissing at every move. Some creators dye the bone beads bright yellow, red, or blue, or add tiny rodent skulls or glass beads.

The beads act as a channel, drawing spiritual essences toward the staff. These are not true ghosts, but echoes





of the ancestors of nearby living beings.

In the same way that *speak with dead* calls

on the impression of a dead person, the *shaker staff of the quondam* magnifies the recessive spirits of nearby creatures' progenitors.

When the wielder of the staff stands and shakes it menacingly (a standard action), the bone beads slide together and create a loud rattling that fills the area. All allies within a 30-foot-radius burst who can hear the staff's rattling perceive the whispers of long-dead ancestors advising them, offering guidance and encouragement. They receive the effects of a *guidance* spell every round for 5 consecutive rounds, beginning when the wielder first activates the staff. The multiple *guidance* effects do not stack, and if a character does not use the competence bonus in a round

he loses that round's bonus.

The *shaker staff of the quondam* also functions as a +1/+1 quarterstaff.

Faint divination; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor; *guidance, speak with dead*; Price 9,600 gp; Weight 4 lb.

STAR TORTOISE SHIELD

Lizardfolk make these large, oval shields out of the tough shells of tortoises. The shields are usually dark green, blue, or black with yellow or red patterns radiating out from the center like a starburst. The bearer of such a shield gains both its mundane defense but also some of the tortoise's natural defenses.

A *star tortoise shield* is a +3 heavy wooden shield that also grants its bearer a +1 natural armor bonus. In addition, it renders its bearer immune to the decapitating ability of a vorpal weapon or similar effects.

Moderate abjuration; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor; Price 18,157 gp; Weight 12 lb.

VISARD OF SEMUANYA

Dried streaks of colored mud and patches of cultivated moss adorn this mask. It sits most comfortably on the broad snouts of lizardfolk, but other humanoids can also wear the visard. Lizardfolk shamans create these masks to venerate and emulate their creator, the dualistic deity Semuanya (see page #54). The wearer of such a mask suffers a loss of intellect—which shamans consider a tie to the ancient, instinct-driven ways—but gains bonuses to his nature-based abilities.

The visard of Semuanya imposes a -2 penalty on all Intelligence checks and Intelligence-based skill checks. For this steep price it grants a +4 competence bonus on Knowledge (nature) and Spellcraft checks (the aforementioned penalty offsets this, resulting in a net +2 on those two skills) and a +2 competence bonus on Survival checks. In addition, the wearer of the mask casts all *summon nature's ally* spells at +1 caster level.

Once per day, as a standard action, the mask's wearer can call on the power of Semuanya to aid him. His mind expands and emulates the dual nature of the lizardfolk deity. For 3 minutes, the visard's wearer gains a +4 enhancement bonus to Wisdom and if wearer must attempt a Will save he may roll twice and take the better of the two rolls. He may only reroll a Will save once per day.

Moderate transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item; *bestow curse, fox's cunning, owl's wisdom*; Price 12,600 gp; Weight 1 lb.

VIVIFYING BACALAO

Lizardfolk shamans living in especially swampy areas often create these enchanted dried fish and send them out with scouting parties, the

leaders of such groups sometimes carrying whole bunches of these.

The bacalao appear as flat, silvery fish with black gems for eyes, their scales intact and stretched tightly over their prominent bones.

A *vivifying bacalao* does nothing until its bearer throws it into the water while uttering a command word. At that time it animates and swims rapidly (swim speed 50 feet) to the nearest corpse within 100 feet. (If there is no corpse within 100 feet or within 5 feet of water the bacalao does not activate and can be used again.) In the round after the bacalao reaches its target the corpse animates as a lacedon (an aquatic ghoul, see page 119 of the *Monster Manual*) and devours the fish. The lacedon obeys the commands of character who activated the *vivifying bacalao*.

The lacedon serves its animator for 24 hours or until destroyed, after which it dissolves into a pile of fetid sludge.

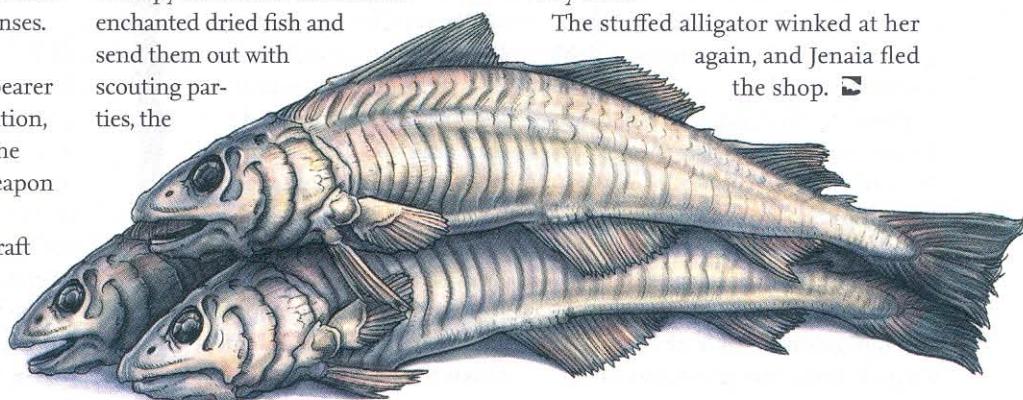
Moderate necromancy; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item; *create undead*; Price 1,150 gp; Weight —.

Jenaia shifted restlessly, wishing they were back at the inn. Swamp muck clung to her clothes and boots, and she doubted she'd ever really get out the smell.

The party strode toward the door. Jenaia's hand was on the rough doorframe when she realized that Corwin had never thanked the strange old sage. She looked back over her shoulder. "Oh... thank you."

The sage tipped his hat brim back and his yellow eyes flashed in the light. "Any time, missssy," he hissed. "Any time."

The stuffed alligator winked at her again, and Jenaia fled the shop. □





From impetuous noble scions to the light-fingered youths of the streets, Waterdeep's younger generations are weaned on tales of daring heroes, quick-tongued rogues, and high magic. In recent months, the reopening of New Olann bard college has attracted many of these thrill seekers, uniting groups of the most unlikely companions in their shared love of art and desire for adventure. From among these collections of brash and bold students one troupe has distinguished itself not just for its exceptional skill in the bardic arts, but for unmatched bravado and a penchant for disruption. Members of this fraternity call themselves Songsabers.

The Songsabers are a coed organization of New Olann's students dedicated to their studies, each other, and their collective desires to one day feature as heroes in the tales they were raised on. To this end, these aspiring adventurers embrace the theatrical and indulge in extracurricular—and often impromptu—competitions of spellcasting and swordsmanship, usually in highly visible public areas. Such displays often interrupt the practice and performances of other students—not to mention the public lives of Water-

deep's citizenry—and have caused many members of New Olann's faculty to condemn the group as upstarts scuffing the college's still fragile name. Secretly, though, several of the college's teachers lend approving winks and nods to the Songsabers, seeing them as the most ambitious of their peers. This encouragement is perhaps best evidenced by the rare magic and unique weapons gifted to—or stolen by—the fraternity, from which they take their name: *songsabers*.

Animate Instrument

Abjuration

Level: Brd 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: One instrument touched

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You imbue a musical instrument with the ability to play at your command. This instrument can play a tune on your behalf even while you are busy with other actions. As long as this spell is in effect you can cause the affected instrument to begin playing as a free action, effectively mimicking and continuing your performance (at the same Perform result as yours, if one has been made). Once the animated instrument picks up the performance, you do not have to continue concentrating to maintain its effect. Thus, you do not need to concentrate to continue a performance or bardic music effect (that relies on the use of a musical instrument) and may cast spells or activate magic items. You may not, however, make further use of bardic music while an animated instrument continues a bardic music effect.

You can animate any nonmagical musical instrument, such as a piano, fiddle, or harp. If the instrument must be carried or held while played, it floats in the air in the square in which you cast the spell. The animated instrument cannot move. The instrument continues to play until the spell expires or a creature succeeds at a touch attack to ruin its tune. An animated instrument's AC is 10 plus any relevant size modifiers (most handheld instruments are Small, giving them a +1 size bonus to AC).

Ever Armed

Conjuration (Creation)

Level: Brd 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 0 ft.

Effect: Rapier and dueling cloak

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: None

Resistance: Yes

Upon casting this spell a well-balanced +1 rapier and brightly colored dueling cloak (see the Dueling Cloaks sidebar) appear in your hands. For the duration of the spell you can use these armaments as normal equipment. The rapier created by this spell gains a +1

Songsabers

Aside from being a group of particularly reckless students at New Olamin bard college (see page 24 of this issue), *songsabers* are also rare magic weapons that grow in power as their bard wielders' skills increase. To most characters, *songsabers* are nothing more than wooden cutlasses, longswords, rapiers, or sabers (see page 97 of the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*). Those using wooden weapons take a -2 penalty on attack rolls and such weapons only deal nonlethal damage. In the hands of a bard, however, these weapons become far more potent.

Constructed as educational tools, not actual weapons, *songsabers* are repositories of bardic lore. Upon the blades of these artfully crafted practice weapons run various complex runes. When wielded by a bard, however, these runes lose their mundane appearance, with one rune glowing brightly for every spell level the bard is capable of casting (thus a 5th-level bard, capable of casting 0-, 1st-, and 2nd-level spells, would cause three runes to glow). These glowing runes (regardless of number) shed shadowy illumination to a radius of 5 feet. A bard who studies one of a *songsaber's* glowing runes for a full day and succeeds at a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + 1 per spell level of the spell held by the rune), reveals a spell from the bard spell list of a level he is capable of casting. Only the spells contained within glowing runes can be revealed. If a bard wielder chooses, he may replace a spell he knows of the same level with the newly revealed spell. This replacement is permanent and the old spell known is lost (although it can be relearned normally). Usually flashy, martial, or heroic in theme, spells held within a *songsaber's* runes are fixed at the time of a *songsaber's* creation and do not change, regardless of its wielder. A sample *songsaber* might hold the following spells (one from each spell level, 0 to 6th): *dancing lights*, *expeditious retreat*, *tune of the dancing weapon*, *ever armed*, *rainbow pattern*, *greater heroism*, *mass cat's grace*. Some of these spells are uncommon bard spells seeing renewed use due to their recent appearances upon *songsabers*. These spells are detailed in this article.

Lesser songsabers also exist, which are the same as normal *songsabers* but only hold spells from 0 to 3rd level.

Songsaber: Moderate (all schools of the spells held within the *songsaber*, most commonly conjuration, evocation, illusion, and transmutation); CL 16th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be a bard, seven spells of differing levels from the bard spell list to be held by the *songsaber*; Price 12,000; Weight 4 lb.

Lesser songsaber: Faint (all schools of the spells held within the *songsaber*, most commonly conjuration, evocation, illusion, and transmutation); CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be a bard, four spells of differing levels from the bard spell list to be held by the *songsaber*; Price 4,000; Weight 4 lb.

enhancement bonus for every three levels you possess above 7th, up to a maximum of +5. Thus, a 7th-level caster would call a +1 rapier into existence, while a 10th-level caster would summon a +2 rapier. The dueling cloak gains no additional enhancement bonus. Casting this spell does not grant you proficiency with either of these items if you do not already possess it. The rapier appears in your main hand and the dueling cloak in your off hand.

If either item leaves your possession, it vanishes. At the end of the spell's duration both the rapier and the cloak vanish.

Harmonic Void

Abjuration

Level: Brd 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 60 ft.

Area: 60-ft.-radius emanation, centered on you

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You create a zone of murmuring, disrupting, arcane harmonies that



New Spells of the Songsabers

A mystery to many among the faculty of New Olann college are the spells frequently put into use in the pranks, forays, and performances conducted by the Songsabers. Obscure, far-flung, ancient, or new, many of the spells Songsaber bards so flippantly cast are uncommon to even master bards. Many believe that one of the college's senior instructors provides the group with their magic through specially made songsabers. Others fear that these spells might be provided by a more sinister source, however, tempting the Songsabers to perform foolhardy deeds and bring about consequences for which they're totally unprepared.

Bard Spells

1st-Level Bard Spell

Loresong: You gain a bonus with one skill and can use it untrained.

2nd-Level Bard Spells

Animate Instrument: Instrument carries a tune for you, allowing you to take other actions.

Tune of the Dancing Weapon: Sword animates and fights for you.

3rd-Level Bard Spell

Ever Armed: A rapier and dueling cloak appear in your hands.

5th-Level Bard Spell

Harmonic Void: Creates a dead zone that makes spellcasting difficult.

Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

1st-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

Loresong: You gain a bonus with one skill and can use it untrained.

2nd-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

Tune of the Dancing Weapon: Sword animates and fights for you.

makes it difficult to cast spells with verbal components. Wizards, clerics, and other spellcasters find that their spells' spoken words become warped, twisted, and blurred, disrupting their efforts. A creature that attempts to cast a spell with verbal components in this area must make a Concentration check ($DC\ 20 +$ your Charisma modifier + the spell's level). On a failed check, the *harmonic void* ruins the spell's spoken component. The spell fails to function, although the caster expends a spell slot as normal.

This spell has no effect on supernatural abilities, magic items, and other magical effects. It only affects spells with verbal components.

Loresong

Divination

Level: Brd 1, Sor/Wiz 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/level

You gain temporary mastery in a skill, even one that you have never studied before. When you complete this spell,

Dueling Cloaks

The Songsabers of New Olarn make regular use of the heavy dueling cloaks predictably featured in daring romances of nimble swordsmen and cavalier swashbucklers. Favored by members of Waterdeep's elite who also feel the need to arm themselves, these short cloaks sling over one shoulder and might be taken in the hand to parry attacks.

A dueling cloak is specially made for combat and is woven of material thick enough to defend a wearer in battle. A dueling cloak is held in your off hand and provides a +1 shield bonus, as its heavy fabric turns aside blows. If you are proficient with light armor you are proficient with a dueling cloak. Although masterwork dueling cloaks can be crafted, these items cannot be enhanced using Craft Magic Arms and Armor. Some rumors suggest, however, that some dueling cloaks (created through the use of the Craft Wondrous Item feat) exist with a variety of flashy and particularly theatrical effects.

Disarm Attacks: By using it as an off-hand weapon, you can use a dueling cloak to disarm an opponent. When using a dueling cloak in this manner, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm opponents (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attack fails). For the purpose of penalties on your attack roll, treat a dueling cloak as a light weapon. If you use a dueling cloak to make a disarm attempt, you lose its AC bonus until your next action (usually the next round).

Armor	Cost	Armor/ Shield Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure Chance	Weight
Dueling Cloak	15 gp	+1	—	-1	10%	3 lb.

select a single skill (other than Speak Language). You gain a +4 competence bonus on all checks with it, with an additional +1 bonus for every 2 caster levels, and you may use it untrained.

Tune of the Dancing Weapon

Transmutation

Level: Brd 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Weapon touched

Duration: 4 rounds

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

You imbue a single weapon with the dancing special ability (described on page 224 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*) for the duration of this spell. The affected weapon immediately begins attacking on its own. After 4 rounds, the weapon drops, as normal for the dancing special ability. □

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OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS



This month, the Sage mines the question file for inquiries regarding special materials and magic items. If you have questions for the Sage, send them to sageadvice@paizo.com.

Is a character proficient with light armor, such as a rogue, considered to be proficient with a mithral breastplate? What about a character proficient with medium armor, such as a barbarian—is he considered proficient with mithral full plate armor?

The description of mithral on page 284 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* is less precise than it could be in defining how it interacts with armor proficiency rules. The simplest answer—and the one that the Sage expects most players and DMs use—is that mithral armor is treated as one category lighter for all purposes, including proficiency. This isn't exactly what the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* says, but it's a reasonable interpretation of the intent of the rule (and it's supported by a number of precedents, including the descriptions of various specific mithral armors described on page 220 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* and a variety of NPC stat blocks).

Thus, a ranger or rogue could wear a mithral breastplate without suffering any non-proficiency penalty (since it's treated as light armor), and could use any ability dependent on wearing light or no armor (such as evasion or the ranger's combat style). A barbarian could wear mithral full plate armor without suffering any non-proficiency penalty (since it's treated as medium armor), and could use any ability dependent on wearing medium or lighter armor (such as fast movement).

The same would be true of any other special material that uses the same or similar language as mithral (such as darkleaf, on page 120 of the *EBERRON Campaign Setting*).

In DRAGON #321 the Sage states, "The ammunition prices for special materials are per piece. A single adamantine arrow costs 61 gp. Twenty such arrows would cost 1,220 gp (not 1,201 gp)." Does that apply to all special materials, or just those that are automatically masterwork, or just those that have an addition to the cost rather than a multiplier?

Unless stated otherwise, any time an item cost modifier is provided for ammunition, it applies to each piece. Each adamantine arrow costs +60 gp. Each cold iron arrow costs 1 sp (twice as much as a normal arrow). Each alchemical silver arrow costs +2 gp.

On page 217 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, it states that "the cost of the masterwork quality and any magical enhancement remains the same" regardless of a creature's unusual size or shape. Adamantine and mithral both state that items made from such material are masterwork quality and the masterwork cost is part of the material cost listed. How much would a set of mithral chainmail barding for my warhorse cost?

A strict reading of the rules indicates that in such a case the masterwork cost for armor should be subtracted from the special material price before

applying the multiplier for any unusual size or shape of the intended wearer.

For example, according to the Armor for Unusual Creatures chart on page 123 of the *Player's Handbook*, a set of chainmail barding for a warhorse (a Large nonhumanoid creature) would normally cost 600 gp (four times the normal cost of 150 gp). A set of mithral chainmail barding would cost 16,000 gp: 600 gp for the chainmail barding plus 15,400 gp (the cost of mithral medium armor [4,000 gp], minus the masterwork cost for armor [150 gp], times 4).

The description of the game effects of thinaun (*Complete Warrior*, page 136) suggests that it would work as long as the person was in contact with the alloy when death occurred. This implies that if (for example) a ring were made of thinaun, and the wearer of the ring died, his soul would go into the thinuan ring. What would the cost of a thinaun non-weapon object be?

The effects of thinaun only apply to weapons touching a creature when it dies. Other items made from thinaun have no effect.

Can magic items be further enhanced or improved after initial creation? The players in my campaign are wondering if they can take a +1 longsword (whether they made or found it) and make it a +1 flaming longsword. If they can, how would we calculate the costs?

"Adding New Abilities" on page 288 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* addresses this issue. Typically, you must pay the difference in gp, XP, and days of time equal to the difference between the two items.

Say a wizard wanted to increase the armor bonus on her *robe of the archmagi*, or improve her *ring of wizardry III* to a *ring of wizardry IV*. How would I figure out the cost for increasing such abilities?

Strictly speaking, neither of these items can be improved in the normal fashion (see previous question), since there aren't any "better" versions of them in the game. Both a +1 longsword and +2 longsword exist in the game and have specific costs, so one can determine the cost difference between them (and thus the cost to improve one to be the other). There's no *robe of the archmagi* with a +6 armor bonus, however, and a *ring of wizardry IV* isn't just a *ring of wizardry III* with more powers (but rather a ring with a different variety of the same kind of power).

That said, a DM willing to allow some leeway in item creation could allow a character to upgrade such an item's capabilities, using the same guidelines as for improving any other item (see previous question). Improving a *robe of the archmagi*'s armor bonus from +5 to +6 is a lot like improving *bracers of armor +5* to *bracers of armor +6* (an 11,000-gp difference).

Changing a *ring of wizardry III* to a *ring of wizardry IV* is a slightly different issue (since the abilities aren't cumulative), but a DM willing to allow this should charge the character the difference between the two items (30,000 gp if she pays another character to upgrade the ring, or 15,000 gp and 1,200 XP if she upgrades it herself). Unlike the previous examples, this actually changes the power of the ring rather than simply adding more powers (it now doubles 4th-level spells but no longer doubles 3rd-level spells).

Are there reductions on magic item prices when the item is restricted to certain classes?

The *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* suggests that a 30% discount may be appropriate for such a restriction (see the sidebar on page 282). Don't overdo discounts for restricted use—a character making a magic item for herself typically only intends for it to be used by her, and a restriction on use can be a lot like getting something for nothing (since the restriction doesn't really penalize the character in any way).

Can sudden metamagic feats (from *Complete Arcane*) be used to scribe scrolls or craft wands that include the metamagic effect? If so, how would you calculate the cost (since sudden metamagic feats don't alter the level of the spell)?

You can use a sudden metamagic feat in item creation; the cost to create the item would be just as if you were using the regular metamagic feat. For instance, using your Sudden Widen feat to create a scroll of widened *fireball* would cost as much as a scroll of a 6th-level spell (which is what a widened *fireball* is). The act of creating the scroll or wand would expend your daily use of Sudden Widen (since the act of creation



triggers the spell, making it unavailable for casting).

The rules for magic item creation permit a character creating an item to use scrolls, wands, or even another caster as the source of the spells to be placed in the item. The rules do not, however, state clearly whether the character crafting the item has to be of a level sufficient to cast a given spell. For example, is it possible for a 3rd-level wizard with the Craft Wondrous Item feat to create items containing any spell (assuming access to the spells by other means), or is he limited to 2nd-level spells?

Unless stated specifically, items never have a minimum caster level as a prerequisite. (The "CL" entry is the default caster level of the item, not a requirement for creation.)

A 3rd-level wizard with Craft Wondrous Item could create a *harp of charming* (even though he's not high-enough level to cast *suggestion*, a prerequisite for creation), as long he had access to the *suggestion* spell during creation (such as from an item or another character).

Can you enhance a pair of gloves as a weapon (such as +1 frost gloves, for example)? What would they cost?

Objects that aren't weapons can't be enhanced as if they were weapons. You can't create +1 frost gloves any more than you could create a +1 frost corncob pipe or a +5 holy orc-bane algebra textbook. You could create a +1 frost gauntlet (since the gauntlet is a weapon described on Table 7-5: Weapons in the *Player's Handbook*).

Is it possible to have a weapon or an item enhanced with magic special abilities and imbued with psionic special abilities at the same time? If so, what would the creation process be like and how would you gauge market value?

Nothing in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook* suggests that such an item couldn't exist. Assuming you were adding both kinds of special abilities at

the same time, you'd just need to meet all the prerequisites (although spells or powers required could be contributed from other sources as normal).

For example, a +1 *keen psychokinetic longsword* would require the creator to have both the Craft Magic Arms and Armor feat and the Craft Psionic Arms and Armor feat, and he would have to supply the *keen edge* spell and the *concussion blast* power. It may well be easier to create one "part" of the item first (for instance, a +1 *keen longsword*), then bring in a second crafter to add the second "part" (the psychokinetic ability).

Several armor and weapon special abilities have fixed prices instead of a bonus equivalency. Do these abilities count toward the maximum +10 bonus in enhancements?

No.

That said, if you're using the guidelines for epic magic items (page 123 in the *Epic Level Handbook*), any fixed-price abilities should count toward the 200,000 gp market-price "trigger" to determine if an item is considered epic.

Can epic-level characters benefit from the Ancestral Relic feat (from *Book of Exalted Deeds*), and if so, what is the maximum relic value for such characters?

Since the rules are silent on the issue, extending the chart beyond 20th level would be purely up to the DM. As long as you're playing epic-level characters, though, the Sage sees no harm in allowing the character to continue to benefit from this feat.

As far as the maximum relic value goes, note that this value is exactly one-half the expected character wealth for that level. Thus, if one were to extend the chart beyond 20th level, the Sage would advise continuing that progression by consulting "Creating Characters Above 20th Level" on page 209 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*. For example, a 21st-level PC with the feat should have a maximum relic value equal to one-half of 975,000 gp, or 487,500 gp. ■

dragon

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by Amber E. Scott



NASTY, BRUTISH, AND SHORT

Stereotypes plague barbarian characters. The typical savage wanderer brings a lot of fun to the table, but players wanting something different might need a little inspiration. The following backgrounds might inspire you, sparking a whole character backstory or fleshing out an otherwise complete history. A small mechanical bonus that your DM must approve is associated with each story.

BLIZZARD

On the third day of your journey, the weather turned foul. Within minutes you were fighting your way through a raging blizzard. You pushed on, knowing that to stop moving in the piercingly cold storm invited death. The winds shrieked and howled around you. The voices in the wind called out directions to you, guiding you first one way, then another. Your limbs numb from the cold, you wanted nothing more than to lie down and sleep, but you forced yourself to press on. You walked for what seemed like hours until finally the winds died, the snow stopped falling, and you found yourself in safety.

Suggested Benefit: You receive a +1 bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist the effects of cold and exposure (see page 302 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*).

BORN AGAIN BARBARIAN

Until adolescence, you were a normal child in a happy, wealthy household. Then your father lost everything. You can only guess that shame—or perhaps a loan shark's threats of broken legs—made him leave town without a word. Your mother did the best she could, but soon died of grief. Alone on the streets, you found yourself with copious free time to contemplate your family's fall from grace. You decided your father's avarice and desire for social standing led to his downfall, and had your family valued the truly important things in life (such as family, personal strength, and

honor) you might all still be together. You renounced the trappings of civilization and went on a personal pilgrimage into wilderness to find yourself.

Suggested Benefit: To reflect your time in civilization, Knowledge (local) becomes a barbarian class skill for you.

RAISED BY WORGS

You don't know what drove your mother to abandon you and your twin. The two of you would certainly have starved in the woods had a worg not happened by. The worg raised you and your sibling to serve her, until a band of human hunters slew the worg and brought you and your twin to civilization. The lure of power the city provided, combined with the twisted teachings of your worg mother, quickly corrupted your sibling. You never felt comfortable in your new home and ran away only a short time later. Despite your pleadings, your twin obsessed over attaining wealth and power—at any price—and refused to leave the city. You had to strike out on your own.

Suggested Benefit: Due to your unusual upbringing, you gain a +1 bonus on Handle Animal checks made against wolves, dire wolves, and other varieties of wolves.

SOUL OF A HUNTER

As the child of the greatest hunter in the tribe, you were raised to appreciate the sacrifice the animals made to feed your tribe. You learned to hunt them respectfully, wasting no part of a kill. One day you came across the remains of a traveler's campsite and discovered the rotting carcass of a doe. You vowed then to travel the less-enlightened lands and teach the people there about true hunting. In the process, you learned of many other animals in the world and vowed to hunt and use them in accordance with your tribe's teachings.

Suggested Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on Survival checks made to provide food. ☐

BARBARIAN

by William L. Christensen



BARDIC MAGIC ITEMS

Abard's musical instrument and attire help define him, acting as conduits of magical power and extensions of his persona. As such, magic items based on either type of object—while suitable for any class—are of particular interest to bards.

BAMBOO FLUTE

One need not be a bard to have a deep appreciation for music, as the monks of the White Cloud Monastery can attest. The members of this gregarious sect believe that a great deal of wisdom comes from music and that by simply playing harmonious melodies one can channel this wisdom to enlighten the soul. The founder of the monastery crafted the first *bamboo flute* long ago and carried it wherever he went, playing melodies throughout his stories and teachings. Contemporary claims called the effect simultaneously calming and enlightening. The monks of the White Cloud Monastery continue their master's tradition to this day, using *bamboo flutes* as teaching tools.

As the name implies, *bamboo flutes* are crafted from bamboo. Many bear simple carvings of apple blossoms and other flowers with lightly painted smatterings of color. The majority of the flute remains untouched so that the simplistic beauty of the natural bamboo reed remains apparent.

Using a *bamboo flute* requires a DC 15 Perform (wind instruments) check made as a standard action. Once per day, the flute's user can cast *owl's wisdom*. Three times per day, its user can cast *calm emotions*. A DC 13 Will save negates this effect.

Faint enchantment and transmutation; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *calm emotions*, *owl's wisdom*; Price 9,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

GYPSY CLOAK

Gypsy cloaks, uncommon even in roving gypsy bands, are awarded as honors to those who fulfill great services for gypsies. These accomplishments include deeds of great heroism and acts of diplomacy that allow safe passage for the roving bands during

dangerous and uncertain times. *Gypsy cloaks* are favored by bards who prefer dancing, harnessing magic through their songs and deliberate movement.

Made of brightly colored silk or fine cotton thread, *gypsy cloaks* shimmer in intricate patterns with each movement of their wearers. These cloaks are sometimes worn like shawls, manipulated by the wearer in undulating dances to bring about a variety of magical effects.

Using a *gypsy cloak* requires a DC 15 Perform (dance) check made as a standard action. A successful check allows the wearer to cast *charm monster* (DC 14), *daze monster* (DC 13), or *enthall* (DC 13), each once per day.

Using the cloak comes with a price, however.

Upon donning a *gypsy cloak* a character must immediately succeed at a DC 15 Will save. Success allows the wearer to remove the cloak as normal; failure activates the cloak's curse, which prevents its wearer from removing it without the use of a *remove curse* spell. The saving throw must be made every time the cloak is put on, not just the first time.

The wearer of a *gypsy cloak* finds that he cannot bear to stay in one place (a small barony, town, or dungeon, for example) for more than a week. Should he attempt to do so, he must succeed at a DC 15 Will save every day following the first week spent in a location. If he fails he must move away from the place in the most efficient way possible (whether running, riding, or teleporting) until he can no longer see the place or he has run to exhaustion (whichever occurs first). He must thereafter attempt a DC 15 Will save whenever he attempts to return to the place in the next the week. After a week of being away the wearer can return without difficulty. The wearer cannot be persuaded to return by nonmagical means, and if forcibly detained he becomes panicked until he is able to flee.

Moderate enchantment; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *charm monster*, *charm person*, *daze monster*; Price 8,000 gp; Weight 2 lb. □

by Jesse Decker



ESSENTIAL CLERIC SPELLS

A cleric's ability to spontaneously cast healing spells means he can generally take more risks with his spell selection than other characters who prepare spells. Keeping this in mind, this article lists the spells from 1st to 3rd levels that every cleric should prepare. Healing is important, though, so remember that having these spells prepared every day is not the same as casting them every day. When necessary, the spells have notes about the level ranges at which they are most effective.

This advice comes from Jesse Decker, lead developer at Wizards of the Coast and former editor-in-chief of *DRAGON*.

1ST-LEVEL SPELLS

Bless: A solid buff spell that affects the whole party, *bless* is especially useful at low levels when other characters are unlikely to have morale bonuses on their attack rolls. At higher levels, it is usually only worthwhile if you can cast it before combat begins.

Divine Favor: Because it provides a luck bonus on both attack and damage rolls, it is perhaps this spell—more than any other—that keeps the cleric close to the fighter in combat ability. Even though errata (found at wizards.com/dnd) has capped its bonus at a maximum of +3, it is an essential spell for any cleric who plans to attack consistently. This spell is especially good at higher levels when the increased bonus makes it more potent. It is also good enough when quickened to justify a cleric selecting the Quicken Spell feat.

Magic Weapon: *Bless* is a much better choice for increasing your own or your allies' chances to hit, but preparing one *magic weapon* spell at low levels allows you to deal more easily with low-CR monsters that have damage reduction. Creatures like the grick, although relatively uncommon, can cause an unprepared party great difficulty. Once the group's primary fighters have magic weapons, prepare a second *divine favor* instead of this spell.

Protection from Evil: One of the best protective spells in the game, *protection from evil* is

amazingly versatile. This spell is useful even at high levels as a cheap way to protect party members with poor Will saves from domination.

2ND-LEVEL SPELLS

Silence: One of the surest and easiest ways to neutralize an opposing spellcaster is to cast *silence* on something that you carry and then to stay adjacent to the caster. Because it prevents you from using verbal components while you're in its radius, make sure the object that holds the *silence* spell is something you can drop as a free action (rather than a shield) and something that you don't need to function at your full ability (unlike your holy symbol or weapon). Carrying a few pebbles for this purpose is a good tactic.

Sound Burst: Although it does relatively little damage, *sound burst* can easily sway the outcome of an encounter because of its ability to stun multiple foes. This spell doesn't do enough damage to warrant casting on just one foe, unless you know that the foe has a low Fortitude save, so use it to hit a group of foes or drop it for healing.

3RD-LEVEL SPELLS

Dispel Magic: This spell deals with so many adverse conditions and situations that it's simply a mistake not to prepare it. As you advance in level and gain more 3rd-level spell slots, it is usually wise to prepare multiple castings of this spell each day.

Magic Vestment: Your 3rd-level spells are valuable resources, so don't cast this on everyone's armor. Use it to enhance your own armor and perhaps shield, but don't bother preparing this spell until you're at least an 8th-level caster: the +1 bonus for a 5th-level caster simply isn't worth the spell slot. □



TIPS FROM THE PROS

In the future we plan to give you further advice from the designers, developers, and editors at Wizards of the Coast. If you would like to see a particular class-related topic covered by one of the pros, let us know at scalemail@paizo.com.



DRUID

TOTEM DRUIDS

Some druids come from tribes with strong ties to a single animal spirit, referred to as the tribe's totem. The animal's spirit guards the tribe and advises its elders and chieftains, and the tribesmen tend to have characteristics attributed to the animal. Druids that come from a totemic tradition are closely linked to their tribe's totem animal.

TOTEM DRUID CLASS FEATURES

The totem druid is a variant druid. Unless otherwise noted, a totem druid advances in the same manner as a druid (same Hit Die, base attack bonus, saving throw bonuses, skill points, and so on). When a character elects to take a level of druid or totem druid, she may not later take levels in the other class. This prevents the character from gaining the benefits of a 1st-level druid twice.

Totem Animal: At 1st level, a totem druid must choose one of the following animals to bind his spirit to: ape, bear, eagle, horse, shark, snake, tiger, or wolf.

Totem Animal Companion (Ex): The totem druid can only choose her totem animal (or its dire form) as her animal companion. The dire eagle appears on page 186 of *Races of Stone*, the dire horse appears on page 75 of the *Monster Manual II*, and the dire snake appears on page 74 of the *Monster Manual II*. Her animal companion gains special abilities as if the totem druid was two levels higher. The totem druid counts as two levels higher for purposes of determining whether or not she can choose a dire animal as her alternative animal companion.

Totem Shape (Su): Totem shape uses the same rules as wild shape, although a druid can only take the form of her totem animal. She gains the ability to change into this shape once per day at 1st level.

Starting at 6th level, the totem druid can choose to take the dire form of her totem animal once per day. The dire form is in addition to her normal usage.

Beginning at 10th level, the totem druid can choose to change into a celestial or fiendish form of her totem animal. Good druids using

the planar totem shape gain the celestial template and evil druids gain the fiendish template. Neutral druids must choose which template to apply upon reaching 8th level and cannot change their choice after that.

At 16th level, the totem druid gains the ability to apply her planar template to her dire form.

Natural Spell: At 2nd level the totem druid gains Natural Spell as a bonus feat.

Totem Speech (Ex): Starting at 8th level, the totem druid can speak any language she knows while in animal form and she can speak with her totem animals as with the *speak with animals* spell.

ALTERNATIVE ANIMAL COMPANIONS

As detailed on page 36 of the *Player's Handbook*, druids can take more powerful animals as their animal companions. Of the animals mentioned in this article, the dire eagle becomes available at 4th level, the dire horse at 7th level, and the dire snake at 10th level. □

TOTEM DRUID

Level	Special
1st	Totem animal companion, nature sense, totem shape (1/day), wild empathy
2nd	Natural Spell, woodland stride
3rd	Totem shape (2/day), trackless step
4th	Resist nature's lure
5th	Totem shape (3/day)
6th	Totem shape (dire 1/day)
7th	Totem shape (4/day)
8th	Totem speech
9th	Venom immunity
10th	Totem shape (planar)
11th	Totem shape (5/day)
12th	Totem shape (dire 2/day)
13th	
14th	Totem shape (6/day)
15th	Timeless body
16th	Totem shape (dire planar)
17th	Totem shape (7/day)
18th	Totem shape (dire 3/day)
19th	A thousand faces
20th	Totem shape (8/day)

by Hal Maclean



CULTURED COMBATANTS II

Practiced hands, disciplined minds. In the struggle between life and death fighters seldom spare a thought on the "nonessential." Locked in the grim dance of combat, with each clang of blade on blade and every ragged breath a sacrament to the gods of bloodshed, they view any distraction as a lethal luxury. Yet some fighters, those who choose to nurture the soul, sometimes find ways to apply their talents—carefully honed in the concert hall or theater—to the field of battle.

This is the second of a two-part series of feats based on specific Perform skill uses. Look for the first part in *DRAGON* #333.

NIMBLE DEFLECTIONS [GENERAL]

Practice with moving your hands deftly on keyboards has taught you how to swiftly change their location. This allows you to position them quickly to deflect blows.

Prerequisite: Dex 13, Perform (keyboard) 7 ranks, Dodge.

Benefit: When wielding a two-handed weapon and using the Dodge feat, you may use your weapon to fend off blows as well as make attacks. You gain a +2 shield bonus to your Armor Class against the opponent you have designated as the target of your Dodge feat. You lose this bonus whenever a condition makes you lose your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class.

Special: A fighter may select Trained Fingers as one of his fighter bonus feats.

SUPREMELY CONFIDENT [GENERAL]

With a sneer, a scornful laugh, and a raised eyebrow you send the message that you are merely toying with your opponents.

Prerequisite: Perform (act) 7 ranks.

Benefit: You may, as a standard action, make a Perform (act) check in place of an Intimidate check made to demoralize an opponent in combat (see page 76 of the *Player's Handbook*). In addition, whenever you

make a successful critical hit you can immediately attempt to demoralize your target as a free action.

Special: A fighter may select Supremely Confident as one of his fighter bonus feats (see page 38 of the *Players Handbook*).

WAR CHANT [GENERAL]

Your rhythmic singing can impress on others the need for haste.

Prerequisite: Perform (sing) 7 ranks.

Benefit: As long as you chant for 3 rounds prior to the start of combat you gain a +2 bonus on your initiative check. In addition, every ally within 30 feet of you who listened to your chanting for the entire time gains a +1 morale bonus on their initiative checks. The +1 bonuses granted by this feat stack with one another (to a maximum of +4), but provide no further benefit to the users of this feat. Thus, a group containing four characters with War Chant grants each member not chanting a +4 morale bonus on initiative checks. Chanting to use this feat requires only a free action to begin and maintain, but the character cannot take any other verbal action while chanting.

Special: A fighter may select War Chant as one of his fighter bonus feats.

WE FEW, WE HAPPY FEW [GENERAL]

Using your natural flair for public speaking your eloquence may bolster the hearts of allies.

Prerequisite: Perform (oratory) 7 ranks.

Benefit: Following a 1-minute speech, you may make a Perform (oratory) check. Any ally who listened to and understood your speech (for the full minute) may use the result of this check as his next Will save if made within the next 10 minutes. The character must decide whether to use the result of the Perform check before attempting his own Will save.

Special: A fighter may select We Few, We Happy Few as one of his fighter bonus feats. ■



CHAOS MONKS

Chaos monks practice an art that supplicates chance and anarchy. Their core philosophy preaches that *ki* is an unbridled energy more potent when untamed. To most, the concept of chaotic monks seems a contradiction, yet those who have witnessed the effects firsthand are loath to deny its power.

Note: The chaos monk is an optional rule that might seriously alter your game. A DM should be comfortable with the concept before allowing it into his campaign.

Prerequisite: Any chaotic.

CHAOS MONK CLASS FEATURES

The chaos monk is a variant monk. Unless otherwise noted, a chaos monk advances in the same manner as a monk (same Hit Die, base attack bonus, saving throw bonuses, skill points, and so on). When a character elects to take a level of monk or chaos monk, she may not later take levels in the other class. This prevents the character from gaining the benefits of a 1st-level monk twice.

Flailing Strike (Ex): Chaos monks practice martial arts with a reckless abandon that shifts drastically from humorously ineffective to frighteningly deadly. At the expense of accuracy, the chaos monk can make a roll (of the die type shown on the chaos monk chart) to determine how many extra attacks she can make (minimum 0). Regardless of the number of attacks made, she suffers an attack penalty on all of them. At 1st level she takes a -2 penalty, at 5th level it decreases to -1, and at 9th level it disappears. Using a flailing strike requires a full-round action and can only be made as part of an unarmed attack or with special monk weapons.

Erratic Advance (Ex): At 5th level, a chaos monk can attempt to daze an opponent with a wild and erratic rush. As part of a charge, a chaos monk can activate this ability, forcing her opponent to make a Will save (DC 10 + chaos monk class level) or become dazed for 1 round. The chaos monk can use this ability a number of times per day equal to her Wisdom modifier (minimum once per day).

Displacing Stance (Sp): Beginning at 7th level, the chaos monk's movements become so wild and unpredictable that she can partially

displace herself for a number of rounds per day equal to half her chaos monk class level (these rounds need not be consecutive). This grants the chaos monk a 20% chance that an attacker misses because of the displacing stance. At 12th level the miss chance increases to 50%. This requires a standard action to enter.

Freedom of Thought (Su): The chaos monk's thought process become so anarchic at 11th level that once per day, should she fail a Will save against a mind-affecting effect, she may immediately reroll her save (with the same modifiers to the roll). She must take the result of the second roll, even if it is worse.

Anarchic Self (Su): Same as perfect self except the monk gains the chaotic subtype. □

CHAOS MONK

Level	Special	Number of Flailing Strikes
1st	Bonus feat, flailing strike -2, unarmed strike	1d4-1
2nd	Bonus feat, evasion	1d4-1
3rd	Still mind	1d4-1
4th	<i>Ki</i> strike, slow fall 20 ft.	1d4-1
5th	Erratic advance, flailing strike -1	1d4
6th	Bonus feat, slow fall 30 ft.	1d4
7th	Displacing stance (20%)	1d4
8th	Slow fall 40 ft.	1d4
9th	Improved evasion, flailing strike -0	1d4
10th	<i>Ki</i> strike (chaotic)	1d6-1
11th	Freedom of thought, greater flailing	1d6-1
12th	Displacing stance (50%), slow fall 60 ft.	1d6-1
13th	Diamond soul	1d6-1
14th	Slow fall 70 ft.	1d6-1
15th	Quivering palm	1d6
16th	<i>Ki</i> strike (adamantine), slow fall 80 ft.	1d6
17th	Timeless body	1d6
18th	Slow fall 90 ft.	1d6
19th	Empty body	1d6
20th	Anarchic self, slow fall from any distance	1d6

by Joshua Cole



PALADIN LORE

Every paladin can detect evil, but only the most skilled ferret out corruption and injustice in the mazelike web of a bureaucracy, where strict adherence to law sometimes does more harm than chaos or evil. Detecting a trace of wickedness in the aura of an official or noble means nothing. The paladin who brings down such a person does so not by announcing ill intent, but by offering proof of unjust actions. Paladins who navigate the uncertain waters of politics and diplomacy quickly learn that proof means more than guilt and knowing how to prove accusations is the only way to bring justice to the wicked.

Fortunately, the paladin's class skills include Knowledge (nobility and royalty)—the holy warrior's guiding light in a venue where words and whispers can be deadlier than swords and claws!

DETECTING CORRUPTION

A paladin can use Knowledge (nobility and royalty) to steep herself in the ever-shifting politics of a royal court. Such a paladin aspires to paragon status in politeness as much as purity, knowing that her virtuous example shines all the brighter for it. In this way, she seeks to instill righteousness in the hearts of the mighty.

Adventuring paladins often serve as the party's first line of defense in social situations as well as combat. Misaddressing the monarch of a rival nation might put the party in as much danger as a combat meant for higher-level characters.

A paladin's Knowledge (nobility and royalty) skill includes insight into the peculiarities of custom and courtesy in a foreign court as well as the names and identifying marks of notable figures. As a general rule, the more distant the land or idiosyncratic the custom, the higher the Knowledge check to recognize it. Likewise, any fool recognizes the emperor of a vast neighboring empire (DC 5)—it takes a well-versed and knowledgeable individual to identify the squire of a minor landholder from a distant land (DC 30). ■

FALL OF THE MIGHTY

Whenever a paladin with at least 1 rank in Knowledge (local) encounters a potential source of official corruption she can make a Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check to recognize hints of wrongdoing. While simply knowing of an injustice doesn't necessarily give the paladin and her companions a means of righting it, it can put them on the right track to doing so.

DC 10: You are familiar with the public record of major officials from your home area and the surroundings—particularly their public foibles. You recognize the most well-known descendants of a famously corrupt mayor or particularly well-known robber baron on sight. You have passing familiarity with the petty criminals in the local nobility's recent history.

DC 15: If local officials have committed public wrongs or ill-concealed private ones, you know about it. You recognize openly corrupt or wicked public figures of the past and probably know some of their contemporary descendants.

DC 20: You can recite public wrongdoing chapter and verse. You know not just history's manipulative viziers, guarded by layers of deception, but also the crimes of their children and descendants. For that matter, you know their victims and what recompense would have been appropriate under the laws of the land at the time.

DC 25: You are a font of information on official vice of the past several centuries. You know who did wrong and how at a glance, and you can identify most scoundrels and criminals simply by knowing the traits they have in common with scofflaws of the past.

DC 30: You possess an encyclopedic knowledge of past transgressions, from the most ancient of wrongs all through history to even the most contemporary crimes. The secret criminal flaws of otherwise beloved figures of history are known to you, as are some of the guarded slips of more current leaders and heroes.



FAVORED ENEMY FEATS

A ranger spends his lifetime learning the nuances of his favored enemies, often banking his livelihood on his ability to track down and neutralize such creatures. It should come as little surprise that rangers expand upon the basic knowledge of their favored enemies and learn new ways to thwart them. These four new feats use applied knowledge of enemy tactics and weaknesses to improve a ranger's abilities against his favored enemies in new ways.

FAVORED DODGE [GENERAL]

Study of your favored enemy's movements allows you to dance away from its most vicious attacks.

Prerequisites: Dodge, favored enemy.

Benefits: Select a favored enemy. When fighting a creature of that type you may add your favored enemy bonus to your Armor Class as a dodge bonus. This bonus applies to your Armor Class against creatures of the appropriate type (only). If you lose your Dexterity bonus to Armor Class for any reason, you also lose this dodge bonus.

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Instead, each time you take the feat you must choose a different favored enemy type.

INTIMIDATE THE ENEMY [GENERAL]

You've learned techniques to quickly and effectively taunt and demoralize your favored enemy.

Prerequisites: Intimidate 3 ranks, favored enemy.

Benefits: Select a favored enemy. You may add your favored enemy bonus on any Intimidate checks made to demoralize a creature of the chosen type in combat. In addition, you can demoralize a creature of the chosen type as a move action. See page 76 of the *Player's Handbook* for more information on demoralizing an opponent.

Normal: Demoralizing an opponent in battle is a standard action.

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Instead, each

time you take the feat you must choose a different favored enemy type.

TACTICAL ADVANTAGE [GENERAL]

Your studies into your favored enemies' tactics has taught you how to better control the battlefield around them.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +5, favored enemy.

Benefits: Select a favored enemy. When fighting a creature of that type you may add your favored enemy bonus on attack rolls and opposed checks made to perform trip, disarm, and bull rush attacks. This bonus applies to opposed checks made against a creature of the chosen type both when you initiate such an attack and when you defend against it.

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Instead, each time you take the feat you must choose a different favored enemy type.

NO THREAT TO ME [GENERAL]

You've learned to safely make a ranged attack when in close combat with your favored enemies.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +7, Point Blank Shot, favored enemy.

Benefits: Select one of your favored enemies. You may make a ranged attack without provoking an attack of opportunity from a creature of the chosen type. Creatures of other types that threaten you can make attacks of opportunity as normal whenever you use a ranged weapon.

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Instead, each time you take the feat you must choose a different favored enemy type. ■

POWER PLAY: DEMORALIZER

A 1st-level ranger with an 18 Charisma who begins his career with 4 levels in rogue, Skill Focus (Intimidate), and Intimidate the Enemy can have an Intimidate bonus of +14 (7 ranks + 4 Cha +3 feat) and can demoralize a favored enemy with a move action. If he takes Supremely Confident (see page 88) at 6th level he can do so as a free action after a critical hit.

by Troy E. Taylor



A SECOND SKIN

Any rogue planning to perpetrate some clandestine activity knows the value of a good disguise. Whether simply masking her true identity beneath hood and cloak or drastically altering her features to give her the appearance of a different age, gender, class, or even race, the techniques of Disguise are essential to the rogue's skill set.

Your DM might want details on how your character alters her appearance and demeanor. Providing such details enhances the roleplaying experience, mainly because everyone at the table can envision the extent to which she has changed. Moreover, you provide the DM with information he might use to adjust DCs. While nothing forces your DM to grant a bonus on the fly, ideally he at least remembers your efforts when handing out those precious bonus experience points.

Whether or not your DM actually grants you a bonus, taking on a new disguise is just plain fun. In some ways it's like having an extra character at the ready, one made especially for infiltrating the ranks of the enemy, eluding pursuers, or even dodging the landlord who has come for the overdue rent.

Grooming: The best disguise is worn all the time. Long hair, a shaggy beard, and a general ill-kept appearance is the easiest to shed. Don't overlook something as simple as a manicure or the cosmetics found in the masterwork disguise kit. The movie *The Mask of Zorro* shows an excellent example of how to effect a convincing change with a bath, haircut, and shave.

Your character can cut locks and facial hair in stages. Men voted multiple times during New York's Tammany Hall days with this trick, subsequently appearing at the polls with a trimmed beard, a goatee, a mustache, and finally with head and face shaved clean. Women's hairstyles can also run the gamut from unkempt to elaborate, long, short, and even bald.

The most dramatic change is the most effective. Because it takes a long time to grow hair, this technique works in reverse—but only with help. For example, a stringy wig and a dirty face enables the bald king to pose as a beggar.

Posture: Beggars are stooped and shuffle, commoners keep their heads bowed and their

feet moving, aristocrats stand erect and walk briskly, and courtesans stroll seductively and bat their lashes. Contrast the affected posture with the character's normal stance and gait for the best effect.

Clothes: A few ranks in Craft (tailoring) can prove handy, especially if an outfit is essential to the disguise. A rogue who plans to pass as nobility can't rely on ill-fitting, secondhand clothes—not when all the well-to-do wear custom-tailored ensembles. Being her own tailor or dressmaker eliminates the problem of paying someone extra to make an outfit, and then paying even more for the tailor to keep quiet about it. This, of course, takes much longer than simply purchasing clothes made for your character.

Getting Caught: Most feudal societies exact strict penalties—fines and even imprisonment—for someone who dresses above her social class. Impersonating the clergy is even riskier, as the church seeks its own form of retribution. If fearful of such repercussions, sometimes it is better to impersonate someone between ranks, such as a merchant or craftsman.

Mum's the Word: Saying as little as possible before taking on a persona is good practice. This lessens the chance someone can pierce your character's cover by matching her voice. It's actually better for your character to alter her voice with an accent or affected form of speech when not in disguise, that way she can confidently use her own voice when the pressure's on. Be warned, however, as this is less effective when disguised as another gender or race. □

IMPROVE DISGUISE [GENERAL]

You can more effectively disguise yourself in a specific way, such as changing your gender, race, age, or social class.

Prerequisites: Cha 13, Disguise 7 ranks, Sense Motive 5 ranks.

Benefit: You do not suffer the -2 penalty for attempting to disguise yourself as another gender, race, or age category. You can also don a disguise in half the normal amount of time.

by William L. Christensen



AQUATIC FEY KIN

Many traditional folk tales speak of water beings and spirits coming to shore and intermingling with land-dwelling people. The products of these dalliances are often shunned or abandoned by their parents and lead difficult lives. Luckily, such offspring often possess supernatural powers granted by their fey heritage. Bloodline feats, introduced in DRAGON #311 and expanded in #325, most easily represent such powers. A character can only have one bloodline feat. Do not confuse bloodline feats with bloodlines as presented in *Unearthed Arcana*. Although different, the systems are not mutually exclusive. A bloodline feat provides a character the bloodline of a particular kind of creature, plus a specific set of extra arcane spells known.

AQUATIC FEY BLOODLINE [BLOODLINE]

Your ancestry contains an aquatic fey creature. The characteristics you display might depend in part on the kind of aquatic fey heritage you have.

Characters with aquatic fey bloodlines vary in appearance, but are almost always strikingly beautiful. Those descended from water nymphs typically have pointed ears, and nonelves often confuse them with elves. Descendants of sirines tend to be wistful, and—like their fey parent—often have a slight yellow or green tinge to their skin and silvery or light-green hair. Fossergrim-blooded characters are usually male, have light hair and striking blue eyes, and exude a rugged masculinity. Those descended from kelpies vary in appearance greatly but almost universally possess evil hearts filled with darkness. While not exactly fey, many believe selkies descended from fey creatures. Characters with selkie blood typically have light gray, blond, or deep red hair, and often have slightly webbed hands and feet.

For more information on the sirine, see the *Monster Manual II*. For more information on the fossergrim, kelpie, and selkie, see the *Fiend Folio*.

Sorcerers with aquatic fey blood have a natural aptitude for casting enchantment spells (particularly those of the charm and mind-affecting descriptors), transmutation spells (as many aquatic fey are known for their ability to shapeshift), and water spells.

Prerequisites: Ability to cast arcane spells without preparation, ability to summon a familiar.

Benefit: Your ancestry gives you a bonus spell known at each spell level, starting at 1st, from the following list.

- 1st—Charm person
- 2nd—Alter self
- 3rd—Water breathing
- 4th—Charm monster
- 5th—Mind fog
- 6th—Control water
- 7th—Control weather
- 8th—Horrid wilting
- 9th—Shapeshift

Special: If a character takes this feat anytime after 1st level and has already learned any of the spells on this list in the class to which she applies this feat, she gains no additional spells known at those spell levels. This restriction does not apply if she learned any of these spells as a member of another spell-casting class.

Characters with this feat cannot learn or cast spells from the conjuration (creation) or conjuration (healing) subschools, and all such spells are removed from the spell lists of all their spellcasting classes.

FEY PRESCIENCE [GENERAL]

On stormy nights, your aquatic fey ancestry grants you the ability to see glimpses of the future.

Prerequisites: Aquatic Fey Bloodline, ability to cast 5th-level arcane spells.

Benefit: You can cast *divination* once per day as a spell-like ability (caster-level equals your level in the arcane spellcasting class that granted you access to this feat). However, you can only cast this spell on stormy nights, as it is your ancestral tie and its link to water that grants you this ability. This ability does not affect your number of spells known or spells per day. ■

DRAGON

by Ben Vandgrift



DISPOSABLE ARCANA

As much as the wizard is feared for the havoc she can wreak from memory, her true deadliness comes from the power she holds in reserve. Any experienced wizard has many low-level spells tucked away in her satchel in the form of scrolls, available at a moment's notice. Disposable arcana need not be rolled up paper, though. Varying a caster's choice of spell storage adds richness and mystery to different arcane cultures.

DESIGNING ALTERNATIVE SCROLLS

Most players imagine a scroll as a spool of paper with arcane writing on it. The wizard unfurls it, speaks a mystic cant, and releases the spell held within. Any single-use magic item with spell-completion activation can serve the same function if balanced against the scroll. If you remove a limitation, you should replace it with something equally inconvenient or remove a benefit. Consider the following when designing disposable arcana.

A rip, flame, or splash of spilled ale can ruin a portable but highly fragile scroll. Only characters with arcane training can use a scroll, and the spell disappears completely once cast. In addition, a wizard may learn spells from scrolls, so whatever alternative you choose must be decipherable via *read magic*, which allows a wizard to copy the spell into a spellbook.

Each type of disposable arcana requires its own feat, functionally equivalent to Scribe Scroll. Knowing how to scribe a scroll doesn't enable you to notch a rune stick, for example. Creation costs should remain consistent with those of scrolls.

STICKS

Ancient Teutonic and Norse magicians didn't have spellbooks or scrolls—their arcane tongue was lettered in runes carved into trees or stone. To store their spells for later use, these primitive casters carefully notched magic words onto thin sticks of sacred wood, 6 to 8 inches long. To use, the spellcaster snaps the rune-stick and speaks aloud the proper ritualized phrase.

Feat: Notch Rune-Stick. The rune-stick must come from ring-free heartwood. Rare herbs and sometimes expensive vital animal essences are made into pastes and rubbed into the notches over time to empower the magic.

JARS

Taking inspiration from Egyptian canopic jars, a desert-dwelling arcanist infuses spell energy into liquids sealed into ceramic vessels, glazed and painted with numerous colorful glyphs. Upon breaking the jar, the wizard frees the essence of the spell held within, awaiting the words of the caster to give it final form.

Feat: Infuse Jar. The purest clays are shaped into small jars upon which hieroglyphs are then painted with fine pigments. Inside the jars are long-stewing infusions of water-herbs and the dew collected from certain savanna flowers.

POWDERS

Frequently used by practitioners of Voodoo and occasionally appearing in the stories and folklore of other cultures, magic powders are underrepresented in D&D. Packets of specific powders and granules can store the magical energy of spells as easily as markings on paper. A wizard uses a powder by sprinkling it, casting it into the air, or blowing it from the hand.

Feat: Mix Powder. The various ingredients (salts, spices, or ground minerals and plants) found in powders naturally account for the greatest part of their cost. Most wizards keep their powders stored in small paper envelopes held within waterproof leather pouches.

USING ALTERNATIVES

A wizard finding a spell jar might not immediately recognize its use. *Detect magic* reveals its magical nature normally and *read magic* gives the wizard the proper instruction to complete the spell. Similarly, a rogue with the Use Magic Device skill may attempt to use the item (DC 20 + caster level) once she deciphers its use (DC 25 + spell level) but likely doesn't recognize the item for what it is. In either case, a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals its true nature. □

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

Senility: The state of mind of elderly persons with whom one happens to disagree.





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ZOGONIA

By Tony

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