Introduction to Vaerith

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Introduction

The Purpose of This Document

Welcome to Vaerith! I'm unbelievably excited for this campaign. Over the past few weeks, I've sunk countless hours setting it up as best as I possibly could. Last campaign, I made several big errors that made prep overcomplicated. I ended up spending well over 130 hours on what ended up being 4 sessions! I overcomplicated the world and prevented you from having agency in the story. The amount of lore was too great for anyone to want to do anything, because if you wanted to make an in-universe character, you'd have to read 40 Wikipedia entries!
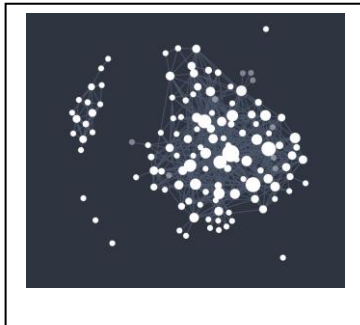
This time, however, things are different. As you can see from the image, the new campaign is about a fourth of the complexity! And, in addition to simplifying things, I'm telling you exactly what your characters would know in advance. This way, your characters can actually have agency! You can have things you want to do, places you want to go, and no wall of lore can stop you! I know this is going to be a bit of a read, but bear with me; it'll be worth it!

Changes to the Campaign's Structure

As you well know, the last campaign was very railroaded. Instead of you forming goals based on your characters and their experiences, I spent far too long crafting overcomplicated stops on a one-way street. I greatly enjoyed writing it, but it took far too long and made things less interesting. This time, the story is in your hands!

I'll still prep sessions, but where you go and why you go there is entirely up to you and your characters. This should simplify things and allow for more regular sessions.

With all of that out of the way, I think it's a great time to introduce you to the world of Vaerith!

Additionally, I'll be operating on the rule of cool; I'll be flexible with the DND rules if what you're attempting is cool.

For example, using "sleep" on a glass of water to make a sleep potion. That's not how sleep works, but it's cool!

My rules, however, are going to be stricter. See "The Code of Conduct" for more information on the new campaign rules.

The World of Vaerith

The Land of Vaerith

The continent of Vaerith is roughly 440 miles long and 176 miles wide. Its latitude ranges from mid-Washington to upper California, making it predominantly temperate in the central region, with rolling hills and sporadic forests.

The mountain ranges in the south block moisture from entering the land, forming harsh rocky deserts. Outside the mountains, however, the southeastern coast bordering the great sea is warm, tropical, and verdant. They have a rainforest esc. climate.

The north, is shielded from the warm southern air by a pair of mountain ranges. The result is a frigid Arctic wasteland akin to the Himalayas.

The most fascinating region of Vaerith is that of the Crescent of Ceres, or rather the 3 regions inside it. Legend has it that millions of years ago a fragment of the moon fell to the earth. The impact was so great that it formed the crater that Covenul and Lunfall occupy, as well as the mountains that make up the Crescent of Ceres.

The crater was filled with a devastating whirlwind of golden clouds. The winds ripped the nearby terrain apart, suspending entire islands in the air. The archipelago of floating islands has come to be known as Lunfall.

The depths beneath the clouds, though, have earned the name Covenul. Covenul is dark, acid-ridden, and riddled with molten metals. It's a horrible place for most everyone except the native species.

Surrounding the crater is the High Forest. It's a colorful rainforest dotted with the remnants of ancient stone architecture. But don't be fooled by its whimsical appearance; it's home to some of the most dangerous flora and fauna out there. Deceptively intelligent, horrifically capable, and older than you'd ever expect; these creatures are benders of reality and some of the last things you'd want to fight. Thankfully, *most* of them are intelligent enough to not be aggressive, but that doesn't even come close to making the high forest safe.

Eterology

"Magic" and Terminology Changes

Magic as you picture it doesn't exist in Vaerith. Spiritism in specific is strictly impossible. All "magic" will therefore be science that people don't understand. With that said, I did create the science for magic, and it will play a massive role in the world. Here are the changes to the terminology:

Original Term	New Term
Magic	Eterology (or) Ether
Spellcaster	Eterologist (or) Ether User
Magic Scientist	Eterologist
Magical	Eterological (or) Ether Infused
Metamagic	Tuning
Spell	Ether Ability
Cast	Use
Spellbook / Tome	Ether Item (or) Ether Book
Magic Item	Ether Item

Origins of Eterology

Power in Vaerith comes not from strength, not from wealth, and not from armies, but from the knowledge of Ether. Dating back to 3500 BCE, eterology is one of the oldest and most volatile scientific disciplines. While its study is common, not everyone uses it—and those who do use it struggle to understand it.

It all began when the ancient, scattered tribes of Vaerith noticed strange occurrences— moments when reality seemed to bend in the favor of one's thoughts or dreams. At first these events were dismissed as coincidences, but one day, by chance, a man noticed the flora and fauna forming matter and energy from nothing. He then questioned if the strange phenomena his tribe had been experiencing had something to do with these animals' abilities. He began experimenting and discovered ether. The world was never the same.

Ether and the Nature of Reality

But what is Ether? Ether is a particle that contains a soup of compressed atoms that have been charged with an idea. Whenever anything of any intelligence thinks, ether particles form as a byproduct. All ether particles are charged with the thought that formed them.

> Fun Fact:
>
> Though not identical, the original concept for Ether originated with fellow DM and good friend Avery Gilmer for his campaign, "Styxas." Thanks, Avery!

But how is this possible? Ether exists due to the dreamlike nature of Vaerith. Instead of the world operating by a strict set of physical laws, it's more like a shared dream, where each participant has their own subtle impact on it. Life produces ether as a manifestation of this influence.

But unfortunately, the laws of physics are still in effect. Ether can't exist! Its very nature violates the laws of existence! So, the instant it's observed, the ether's superposition collapses. The atoms contained within the ether then disperse and attempt to form the idea they were charged with. For example, ether particles charged with the idea "fire" will form fire. More abstract thoughts, however, like "anger," can have more unpredictable results.

Ether Potency

To use Ether, it's important to understand how much Ether you produce and how focused your thoughts are. This abstract measurement is known as your "ether potency," and it's determined by a lot of factors. Your species, the discipline of Eterology you're pursuing, how clear your mind is, the amount of practice you have, your sense of self, your emotional state, your ability to reason, and how rested you are all impact your potency.

Being highly Ether potent means that you produce a lot of highly effective Ether. In other words, you can do a lot, and no matter what you do, you're in complete control. If you produce too little Ether, you won't have much impact. If your thoughts aren't focused, your Ether will be unpredictable.

Ether in Nature

Ether is a byproduct of life, so, consequently, all plants and animals produce *some* ether. Some produce more than others. For example, a dragon would likely produce more than an acorn.

Most plants and animals are unintelligent, so they produce what's called "thoughtless ether." Thoughtless ether is ether that's charged with either no idea or with an easily overwritten one. An interesting quirk of thoughtless ether is that it conducts ideas on contact.

Not all plants and animals are unintelligent, though! Some are extremely ether potent! Dragons, krakens, dragon turtles, beholders, and more are all aware of their ether potency and won't hesitate to use it in combat. Though limited to instinctual ether abilities, they're remarkably dangerous!
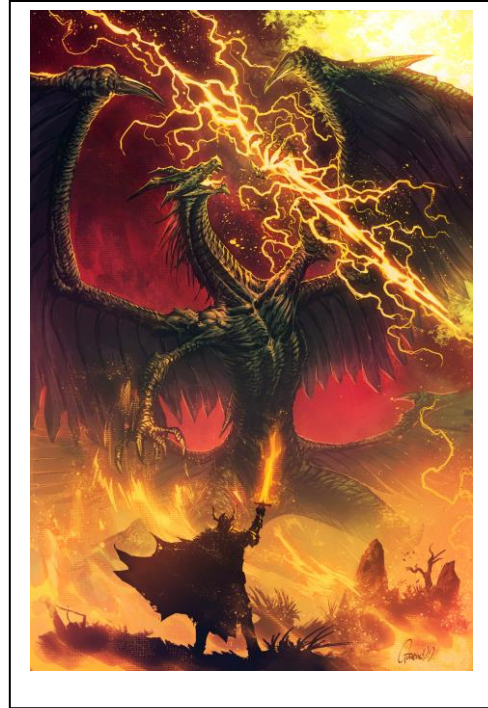
Ether Items and Technology

Remember how thoughtless ether conducts ideas? Well, whatever idea it conducts is what it's going to attempt to manifest.

By controlling what ideas the thoughtless ether conducts before it manifests, you can create a repeatable effect. All you need is something to convey what you want the ether to do.

Eterologists in the past have been known to get creative with their methods of programming; they've fixed power sources around books, paintings, engraved plates, gardens, piles of items, music, preserved brains, and more. Typically, the more specific you are with your programming, the more predictable the effect will be.

The difficult part about making ether items is finding an ether power source. In the past, eterologists have used plants, animals, monsters, cross-bred organic material, slime mold, insect hives, and more. The challenge is keeping the material alive and in control; that's why plants are the most common. The flora in the High Forest is known to be very ether potent, making it very effective for this kind of thing.

Classes of Eterology

These disciplines are for your actual Ether users. They may occasionally dip into the scientific aspects of Eterology, but not always. Like stated earlier, you don't need to understand how it works to use it.

1. Artificers. Ether users that rely on Ether items to supplement their low Ether potency.

2. Bards. Ether users that use music and art as a source of inspiration and focus.

3. Clerics. Ether users that use religion as a means of inspiration and focus. Their religions tend to be life based, often focusing on healing others.

4. Druids. Ether users that are heavily tied to nature.

5. Paladins. Ether users that use religion as a means of inspiration and focus for combat. They're devout warriors.

6. Rangers. Ether users that are more grounded and tied to nature.

7. Sorcerers (alternative: conduit). Ether users that are naturally Ether potent.

8. Warlocks (alternative: fanatic). Ether users that rely on religion as a means of focus and inspiration. Their religions tend to be more outlandish and specific, often focusing on oaths of servitude.

9. Wizards (alternative: scholar). Ether users that earned their Ether potency through academia and discipline.

Branches of Eterology

Not everyone in the world wants to be an ether user, though. The science of eterology itself has split into several core branches that are used all throughout Vaerith. These branches are for your college students, your tradesman, and your scientists. They make or use ether items, since they don't necessarily use ether themselves.

1. Aethotics. The study and application of ether-infused technology.

2. Bioeterology. The study and augmentation of ether in nature, and of ether sources.

3. Ethegrafting. Dangerously implanting objects to increase your ether potency.

4. Ethellurgy. Forging ether potent alloys for tools, weapons, etc.

5. Literography. Scribes that use shorthand and Ether books to convey ideas and produce effects.

6. Somnology. A difficult practice using dreams and unconscious states to enhance ether abilities.

7. Symphology. Using music and art to inspire focus for more powerful ether use.

8. Theochemy. The practice of cooperative ether use. Typically tied to religious practices.

9. Golemancy. Using a preserved brain (or multiple brains) to power artificial bodies using Ether.

World History

Vaerith History

It's 1768, and the continent of Vaerith stands on a slippery slope. The Province of Seraephin (the kingdom of the Aasimar) stands as the apex of innovation; they've surpassed all the kingdoms of Vaerith in a technological revolution.

Just 6 years ago, the Province of Seraephin took part in a series of sudden invasions against the rest of the world. Their technological advantage and their religious fanaticism made the war horribly easy to market to their citizens.

Several kingdoms have been suppressed to near extinction, others have been wiped out entirely. The remaining kingdoms lack the courage (and the might) to challenge the ever-

expanding might of the Aasimar. Though terribly outnumbered, the Aasimar have Vaerith outmatched.

The sudden spike in their power likely has to do with the rumored resource they discovered. Some say it has the power to generate enough Ether to level cities. The reports are unconfirmed, as entry into Lunfall is challenging to say the least.

As long as the nations of Vaerith are cooperating, they can match the Aasimar. The minute they're destabilized, however, the world risks utter destruction.

Where You Come In

But that's not your quest. In fact, Lunfall might not even come up, because this isn't the story of Vaerith, this is the story of a party of random rookie adventurers who happened upon a small town in central Vaerith.

The plains of Elythra are a vast expanse of grassy hills, ponds, and small forests. Dotted throughout the fields and rolling hills lie several small towns and independent kingdoms. Directly north of Helmhorn Lake sits Arbiter's Rest, which is where your adventure will be starting. All of your characters will end up here through whatever means you choose.

The Code of Conduct

Expectations

1. Try your best with your characters. They don't have to be masterpieces, but please put some effort into making characters and playing your characters. This makes the game better for everyone.

2. Keep track of your characters. I don't need your characters on a day-to-day basis anymore, it'd be better if you understood how levelling worked, I'm wasting too much session prep time on your characters, and I'm running out of space to store them. So, from now on, you'll be responsible for your characters. Bring your sheets, and level up your characters out of game.

Rules

#1 The Ephesians 5:3 Principle.
Try to steer clear of perverse, graphic, racist, or other extremely offensive material. Some jokes are fine, but there's a massive gap between a joke and something that'd get you slapped if you said it in public.

#2 Hosting
Let's shoot for a different host every few games. No one should be hosting more than two games in a row.

#3 PVP Combat
If you wish to fight another player, they have to agree to it. If you attack without their permission, the target gets to decide if it hits or not.

#4 Character Creation
Multiclassing is allowed. All characters start at level 1 (unless their backstory warrants 2 or 3). We'll use the standard array for ability scores for balancing reasons.

#5 Using My Setting for Other Sessions
You can use my world, but whatever story you intend to tell has to follow two basic guidelines. First, it can't use any pre-established parties, and second, it can't operate on a scale that could roadblock other DMs in the world. For example, don't threaten the world with a cataclysmic event if the other DMs aren't ok with it.

Consequences

If you *somehow* violate these rules (which is pretty difficult to do), you'll receive an in-universe punishment that'll be decided by your party.

If you *repeatedly* violate these rules, I'm going to have to remove you from the game—especially if it's harming the experience for the other players. It's unlikely you'll be invited back, since you'd have to do something pretty bad to get removed.

The Guide to Character Creation

Introduction to Character Creation

When making your character, you are absolutely allowed to worldbuild in Vaerith. I don't know how much detail you want to go into, but if you want to start with special items or pets, or have altered stats, or set up the history of the town you're from, or make your own species, you're completely allowed to; It's actually encouraged as it gives your characters more flavor! Just message me.

When making your character, you want to keep 3 things in mind: you want to know what they'd do in interactions, in combat, and in exploration (ICE).

The character creation process will probably take you a day or two, especially if you've never done it before, so pace yourself; let your character stew for a while! Don't stress about it, because you've got quite a bit of time to work on them, and I made a step-by-step guide to character creation.

Important References

These references will help you throughout the character creation process:

- All playable classes:
  https://www.dndbeyond.com/classes

- All playable species:
  https://www.dndbeyond.com/species

- Players Handbook (2024): https://online.anyflip.com/rfqfx/bqjt/mobile/index.html

Note:

I'm only providing a link to the digital copy of the Player's Handbook because it's the only sourcebook I own; piracy am I right?

- Printable PDFs for character creation:
  https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vdJD_v4p35XIDNsjohbHdu3pUa_OcW1f?usp=sharing

The player's handbook will likely be the most helpful link here. It's the core rulebook of DND; it contains almost all of the playable classes, and it contains a handful of common species.

> **Note:**
>
> If you choose a species or class from an additional sourcebook, you'll need to track down a pdf or physical copy of it.

The dndbeyond.com links provide comprehensive lists of all the playable species and classes.

The "printable PDFs for character creation" link goes to a folder on Google Drive. It contains your character sheet and 3 optional sheets (inventory, weapon stats, and ether ability (spell) stats). They're not required, but they'd make organization a little easier.

Step 1: Get to Know the Game Well

If you've never done so, I'd strongly recommend reading the first chapter of the Player's Handbook. It goes over most everything you need to play. The other chapters of the book detail the different classes, the different backgrounds, some species, equipment stats, and all of the ether abilities (spells). You'll likely need to reference those chapters during character creation. You don't need to be an expert on how the game works, but a general understanding of the flow of the game would be fantastic and would make the next steps much smoother.

Step 2: Ideation and Basic Choices

In this step, you'll choose your species, class, background, and some basic information for your character. This isn't about knowing all of the specifics; it's about getting a rough feel for how you want your character to operate.

Species. Every species in the game gives you unique traits and abilities that could synergize with your class, background, or character. These are available on dndbeyond.com.

Class. Your class is the backbone of your character. This determines your role in combat and will be closely tied to your character's identity. For brief summaries of all of the playable classes (except artificer; that's in "Tasha's Cauldron of Everything"), go to pg. 34 of the Player's Handbook.

Background. Your background is essentially what your character has been doing up until this point. They're in the Player's Handbook on pg. 178. Think about who your character is when choosing this.

Basic Character Information. I like to start with a character gimmick (lazy, brave, honorable, stupid, lying, etc.). It's something you can always fall back on in roleplay, and it makes the following steps a little easier. Additionally, you can think about their name, age, gender, height, build, appearance, etc.

Level. Your character will be level 1 unless you have a really good in-universe reason.

Step 3: Backstory and Personality

Personality Traits

- What are their flaws?

- What are their quirks or interesting characteristics?

Likes vs. Dislikes

- What morals do they value?

- What attitudes or behaviors do they hate?

- What are they afraid of?

- What do they admire most?

- What makes them angry?

Wants, Goals, and Conflict

- What do they want and what do they want to accomplish?

- Why do they want what they want?

- What drives them to do what they do?

- Are they conflicted?

- What do you (the player) want to do this campaign? Do you want a character arc? Do you want to learn more about your backstory? do you want to get revenge on someone?

Things for Flair

- What's your character's visual motif; what's something that could easily identify them and is central to their style/aesthetic? What are they themed around? (Fire, water, dust, gold, darkness, black and gold, etc.)

- What's your character's theme song? If you want it to play during the campaign, when? Do you want to make a whole playlist?

- Do you want to get custom dice for your character? If so, here are some cheap websites I found (credit to Skyler and Asher for finding these). Go to dnddice.com or easyrollerdice.com. Not sponsored.

Step 4: Simple Stats

This is where things get complicated, and where I'd once again recommend reading the first chapter of the Player's Handbook. We're going to start making your character sheet, so if you don't already have one printed out, I'd do that now. Before anything, fill in your species, class, level, and name.

Ability Scores: Strength, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, wisdom, charisma. Every class in the game has "primary abilities" associated with them. These are the 2 abilities most frequently used by that class. I'd keep those in mind when assigning your ability scores. We're assigning them using the standard array, meaning you can place 15, 14, 13, 12, 10, and 8 in any slot you wish. Your background and (maybe) your species will increase these.

Ability Modifiers: For each ability score, you have an ability modifier. In the small circles beneath your ability scores, please insert the corresponding ability modifier. These make up the basis of pretty much everything your character will be doing.

Number	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	18-19	20
Modifier	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	+0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5

Speed. Your speed is determined entirely by your species.

Proficiency Bonus. Your proficiency bonus is determined by your level and class. I'll save you some time; it's +2. You'd have to be at least level 5 to get anything higher than that.

Initiative Bonus. This is equal to your dexterity modifier.

Passive Perception. This is equal to 10 plus your wisdom modifier.

Step 5: Equipment

Your character starts with some equipment, but if you want to start with different or entirely custom equipment, let me know. I'm sure I'd be fine with it if it ties into your character.

Starting Gear. Determined by your class and background. Write it down in the inventory section of your character sheet or in your inventory sheet.

AC. Your AC (armor class/defense) is determined by your armor. Typically, it'll have a base armor class, and you'll add your dexterity modifier. Go to pg. 220 of the Player's Handbook for the stats of most armors. If you don't have armor, your class might give you unarmored defense. If your class doesn't give you unarmored defense, and you don't have armor, then your AC equals 10 plus your dexterity modifier.

Step 6: Complex Stats

HP. The amount of health you have is determined by your class and your constitution modifier. Every class has a "hit die" that they gain per level. For the amount of levels you have, roll that die. If you're level 1, you can take the highest possible roll. Then, for each level you have, add your constitution modifier. The full formula looks like this: hp = (hit die * level) + (con mod * level).

Proficiencies. Whether you're proficient in a skill is determined by your species, class, and background. Go to each one, find what options you have, and then fill in the circle next to the skill to indicate that you're proficient in it. If you somehow earn expertise in a skill, put an X over the circle next to the skill. If you're proficient with a weapon, tool, or language, add it to the "other proficiencies and languages" section of your character sheet.

Skill Modifiers. Every skill inherits from one of the six ability scores. Your modifier for that skill is going to be equal to the ability modifier it inherits from. If you're proficient in the skill, the skill's modifier increases by your proficiency bonus. If you're an expert in the skill, its modifier increases an additional time by your proficiency bonus.

Saving Throws. Which saving throws you're proficient in is determined by your class. The modifiers for your saving throws are equal to the modifier they're named after. If you are proficient in a saving throw, its modifier increases by your proficiency bonus.

Step 7: Character Abilities

Your species, class, and background (the feat from your background) all give you unique abilities you can use in game. This step just requires a lot of copying. There's no intended way to keep track of these, but here are some suggestions:

- Get some pieces of notebook paper and list them.

- Write down each ability down on an index card and keep a deck.

- Make a small ability booklet and print it out.

If you want your character to have custom abilities, that's awesome! Message me and we can talk about them!

Step 8: Weapons

Every weapon you start with has unique properties that are very important in combat. Having some way to track them is important. There is no intended way to track them, so I'd recommend using the weapon sheet included in the PDFs in references. Here are the stats you need to track:

- The name of the weapon.

- The amount of damage the weapon deals.

- The type of damage the weapon deals (piercing, slashing, etc.)

- The type of weapon (simple melee, simple ranged, martial melee, or martial ranged)

- The properties of the weapon (hit modifiers, heavy, finesse, etc.)

- Any costs or ammo requirements the weapon has (arrows, bullets, etc.)

Step 9: Eterology Exclusive Stats

If you're playing as an artificer, a bard, a cleric, a druid, a paladin, a ranger, a sorcerer, a warlock, or a wizard, you have exclusive stats that need to be tracked. I'd recommend printing out the "non-magic tracking sheet" I included in the PDFs folder in references.

Ether (spell) Ability Modifier. An ability modifier used for your ether. Determined by your class.

Ether (spell) Save DC. Equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your ether ability modifier. This determines how difficult your ether abilities are to avoid.

Ether Ability (spell) Slots. Think of them less like slots and more like ammunition. There are 9 levels of ether abilities, and you have a set number of slots for each level that you can expend each long rest. These are determined by your class and level. You really need to track these.

Ether Abilities. Your class provides ether abilities (spells) for you to choose from. You can only learn a number of ether abilities equal to the amount determined by your class.

Ether Ability Stats. When writing them down, you need to know the name, level, effect, and cost of the ether ability. Note: not all ether abilities have costs.

Step 10: Review and Finalization

Now to double check and finalize everything. Read the rules of your campaign, make any last minute adjustments you'd like, and go over the red/green flags.

Green Flags

- Weird, out-there, or fun ideas. A talking bear, a 9ft orc rogue, a signature weapon that grows in power, a signature vehicle, etc.

- A character with hobbies or passions. What do they do in their free time?

- Knowing exactly how they'd operate in interactions, combat, and exploration.

- Talking to other players ahead of time to plan out your dynamic better. It helps make the game fun for everyone.

- Someone the other players can like. Not just interesting to you, but someone the group could enjoy interacting with.

- Tying your character into the lore of the world.

- Being able to quickly play your character in lots of random situations, even if you're caught off guard.

Red Flags

- The big 4: perverse, violent, antisocial, or perfect. This is often disruptive or unfun.

- Making yourself, but cooler. It's tempting, but more creative characters often feel richer in the long run.

- Planning your character arc out ahead of time. Leave room for organic growth based on what happens, instead of setting yourself up for disappointment.

- Flaws that aren't really flaws (cares too much, works too hard, is too cool) make sure your weaknesses create actual challenges.

- Copy-pasting an existing character. It's fine to take inspiration, but make it your own!

- Lone wolf, shy, brooding, etc. These can make group play difficult.

- Characters that don't fit the campaign setting (Spiderman in a political thriller)

Final Thoughts

Character concepts can evolve over time, and it's totally okay to tweak things after playing a few sessions. If something doesn't feel right, don't be afraid to adjust! When everything's wrapped up, you can send me a quick summary of your character by filling out this form: https://forms.gle/E8XWqjZX6YYZj8YN6

Thank you!

Welcome to Vaerith!