

# LEGENDS & LAIRS™

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system

# DARKNESS & DREAD™



A HANDBOOK OF  
HORROR AND DARK FANTASY

Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.® This product utilizes updated material from the v3.5 revision.

# DARKNESS & DREAD

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the world of horror roleplaying. Other games focus on horror set in different time periods, such as the modern day or earlier eras. This book assumes that you play and enjoy fantasy games but want to inject some horror elements into them. This book is structured so that you can make your fantasy game slightly darker and more horrific. You can pick and choose the background material and rules to add a touch of horror to an existing campaign. Alternatively, you can use all of the optional rules to fundamentally change the basic rules of your campaign, transforming the game from high heroism and adventure to one of desperate struggles, madness, and doom.

## WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

If you are an experienced fantasy RPG player, this section is meant to highlight the differences between the rules presented here and the ones given in the core rules. Note that not all of these differences necessarily come into play. The rules material in this book is optional, and everything is designed under the assumption that you plan to cleave as closely to the core rules as possible. However, the optional rules require no conversion or alteration of existing material. They are designed to seamlessly enhance, modify, or replace portions of the core rules.

With that in mind, here are the core differences between a normal fantasy game and a dark fantasy one. Note that these differences cover play style and how the game works, not necessarily any rules differences.

The characters are heroes because of what they do, not what they can do. In a dark fantasy game, your character must choose to be a hero. The PCs' spells, weapons, and items are rarely powerful enough to defeat the monsters they face. Instead, self-sacrifice, clever thinking, and good planning play a much larger role. You cannot simply draw your +4 keen greatsword while the wizard unleashes *meteor swarm* when a monster shows up. Characters receive fewer spells that are less potent in combat, while even combat-centered characters have far fewer feats. Finally, PCs receive far fewer magical items. Rather than rely on the dice or your class abilities, roleplay and good tactics are the keys to triumph.

Monsters are terrible threats, not mere annoyances. The creatures that characters face in dark fantasy games are usually unknowable, powerful, and malevolent. They rarely have human emotions or goals. Instead, they crave destruction for its

own sake. The human cultists that serve them are often mad or driven by unknown motives. Some of the opponents in this type of game can be defeated with weapons and spells, such as cultists or minor creatures, but the most powerful creatures are beyond the power of mortal arms and magic. A knowledgeable scribe who can research an ancient incantation needed to bind and trap a monster might prove more useful than a knight in full plate. In terms of the game system, the creatures you face may have CRs that are four or five points higher than the party's level.

Characters are more vulnerable, placing a premium on non-combat options. Fighting should be your last resort in a dark fantasy game. Characters have fewer hit points (or are easier to defeat if you use the optional rules), granting luck a much bigger role in a fight. A single, lucky hit can take down even the most experienced character. If you find yourself in a situation where combat is your best option, you may have made a terrible mistake.

Death is a common event. Characters die or descend into madness with a frightening regularity in dark fantasy games. Try not to get too attached to a PC—his next encounter could be his last. This high lethality helps keep the tone of horror and fear in place while reminding you that the world of dark fantasy is a dangerous place. The new classes for dark fantasy only go up to level 10 to reflect this high level of lethality. While this might seem daunting, it makes surviving to high levels a truly triumphant achievement.

## WHAT'S THE APPEAL?

With these changes in mind, you might be puzzled as to why dark horror gaming is enjoyable. We play games to have fun, not to watch as our characters succumb to ultra-powerful monsters. The key to a horror game is that you must use your own planning, inventiveness, and quick thinking to survive. You cannot simply rely on an optimal selection of feats or magic items to pull through an adventure. Roleplay becomes much more important, while good tactics trump class abilities and spells.

In some ways, horror gaming is more "pure" in that you'll find less help from the rules to allow your characters to survive. Successful players use the environments around their characters to succeed. Rather than simply kick down a door and defeat the monsters behind it, you need to rally the village's peasants to burn down the thing's lair, research a spell in a library to find a ritual that can trap it, or lead it into the valley where your friends can destroy a small dam and drown it. Horror gaming presents problems that are more open-ended than in other games where combat is usually the best way to overcome an obstacle.

The other appeal of dark fantasy gaming depends on the presentation skills of a good DM. If you like horror movies, then you understand how a good scare can be a fun experience. One of the major points in horror games is the emphasis on the unknown. The monsters are strange and difficult to understand. Combat and any encounter with powerful monsters are deadly, making it uncertain that the characters can survive. This simmering fear adds an edge to horror gaming that few other types of RPGs can duplicate. If you like edge-of-your-seat action, horror RPGs have it in spades.

## WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

This book provides a plethora of new rules, options, and ideas that you can use to start a dark fantasy game or add horror elements to an existing campaign.

Chapter 1 provides options and information for characters. It gives DMs advice for each of the core character classes, discussing how they fit into a horror campaign, and then provides an alternate class system that casts the PCs as commoners, laborers, and other average people who must contend with grim powers beyond their reckoning.

Chapter 2 provides new rules that you can use to alter the core game and make it more amenable to dark fantasy and horror gaming. It includes rules for sanity and alternate health systems that make characters more vulnerable to harm.

Chapter 3 provides rules on research and tomes of foul magic. In many horror games, the characters spend as much time researching the horrors they face in libraries as they do delving into dangerous areas. These rules expand the role of investigation and research.

Chapter 4 gives alternate rules for magic. It introduces the rules concept of black magic, spells that are so powerful and utterly evil that casters risk their souls by using them. It also introduces the concept of demonic pacts, agreements whereby a character can gain power at the cost of his immortal soul.

Chapter 5 introduces two new monster types that you can use to create foul beasts and other threats to menace the player characters.

Chapter 6 is a primer for DMs who have never run dark fantasy and horror games before. It carries you through a step-by-step process for adventure design.

Finally, Chapter 7 gives you two sample adventures and the foundation for an entire horror campaign. Putting the advice from Chapter 6 into action, this section serves as a model for building horror adventures that have a bleak, dark tone. The adventures in

this chapter are designed to take up an evening or two of gaming, providing you with a break from your regular campaign or giving you the groundwork for a new one.

## THE OPEN GAME LICENSE

All game rules and statistics and all concepts, elements, and text derived from the d20 System Reference Document are designated as Open Game Content. The following text is specifically designated as Open Game Content:

- The text of chapters one, two, and five
- Rules for the Knowledge skill, tomes, and libraries
- Rules for pacts and names and descriptions of specific pacts
- Rules for black magic and forbidden spells, including spell lists
- Descriptions of magic item special abilities

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## CHAPTER ONE

## CHARACTERS

Character classes are in many ways the foundation of most games. They dictate the length and breadth of the characters' abilities. In the core game, class abilities represent a wide variety of core abilities and determine the game's balance. For example, *fly* is a 3rd-level spell that becomes available to arcane casters at 5th level. Thus, as a designer or DM, you can assume that a party cannot fly until its members reach that level. As described in the introduction, dark fantasy campaigns have a much different feel compared to the typical sword and sorcery campaign. By altering how the character classes work, you can help enforce the feel of a horror campaign and help make it distinct from the standard fantasy adventures you have run in the past.

This chapter focuses on providing advice on how you can use the existing core classes in a horror campaign. It also presents a wholly new selection of character classes that you can use to replace fighter, wizard, and the other standard classes in your horror campaign.

## A NOTE FOR DMS

This chapter assumes that you want to run a campaign that places an emphasis on dark horror and fear. It assumes that you want to present monsters and situations to the party that they cannot overcome with spells and physical attacks. A key attribute of horror RPGs is that the party's foes are daunting because the PCs cannot simply charge into combat against them. If you are an experienced DM or if you feel you have a strong com-

mand of the system, then you can probably use the advice presented for modifying the core classes. On the other hand, if you want to simply leap into a dark fantasy game without tinkering with the system, go ahead and use the dark fantasy core classes.

THE CORE  
CLASSES IN DARK  
FANTASY

A dark fantasy game has a markedly different tone than the typical world of swords and sorcery found in RPGs. This section addresses the core character classes and gives you advice on how they can work (or how they may fail to work) in a game with a focus on horror. For DMs, creating a horror campaign starts with figuring out the characters' abilities and potential. The core classes are designed for heroic gaming, making them perhaps unsuited for a horror game.

**Barbarian:** A barbarian is a whirling hurricane of destruction. This class's ability to rage, its high hit points, ability to evade traps, and its damage reduction make it a daunting foe in combat. Barbarians work well in a horror game because they are at their best for only short periods of time. When unable to

rage, either because they have run out of daily uses of the ability or its duration ends, they are at best a step behind a fighter or paladin. In the face of an overpowering monster, the barbarian's damage reduction provides little protection. Generally, barbarians fare best against weaker foes who cannot overcome their DR. Finally, their poor Will saves make them vulnerable to fear-based effects. Overall, you can use the barbarian as written without injecting too much of a heroic feel into a horror game.

**Bard:** Bards are supporting characters who have few abilities that make them superior to other characters. They are at their best when using their music ability to improve the efforts of fighters and other characters. Their spells are far from overpowering, and they fare poorly in direct combat. The bardic music ability does provide some protection against effects that rely on saving throws, particularly fear-based ones. For this reason, bards could rob a horror game of some of its feel. If you rely on the mechanical effects that monsters bring into a horror game (as outlined in Chapter 2) then bards may be a bad fit for your campaign. You may wish to rule that any bonuses to saves provided by a bard do not apply to fear-based effects.

**Cleric:** You may need to make several changes to the cleric class in order to create a tone of fear and dread in a horror game. This class's ability to turn undead can all too easily nullify a classic antagonist in horror games and stories. With a single action, a cleric can remove undead creatures as a threat, an outcome that can ruin the atmosphere. Imagine a horrific vampire leaping from the shadows to terrorize the characters, only to see the cleric send it howling in terror towards the nearest exit. You have a few options in this situation. You can grant all undead turn resistance +2 (or increase existing resistance by 2) in order to make them less vulnerable to that ability. On the other hand, this still reduces weaker undead to a minimal threat. This option works fine if you are only concerned with making tougher undead creatures difficult or impossible to turn. As another option, you could assess a -2 penalty to the attacks, checks, and saves for turned creatures. This optional rule makes turning a useful option without rendering the undead pitifully weak or too vulnerable to clerics.

The cleric's healing also presents a potential problem in maintaining a creepy, horrific atmosphere. If every time a character sustains an injury the cleric steps in and cures him, monsters lose some of their dangerous edge. In a normal fantasy campaign, this healing ability is key to keeping the game balanced. Otherwise, the party would have to rest for weeks after each battle. On the other hand, horror games place less emphasis on heroic combat and more on desperate, difficult struggles. The PCs should not stride into battle with a blasé attitude. The cleric's access to plenty of healing magic can wreck the feel

of a horror game by giving the party a reliable method for countering the injuries that befall them. Unless you plan on running an action-adventure horror game, you are probably better off removing the cleric as a character option. As an alternate, you can use the acolyte class described later in this chapter.

**Druid:** In some horror campaigns, the druid may be a good replacement class for the cleric. Both classes are divine casters, but druids lack the cleric's flexibility when it comes to healing. Their other class abilities, such as *wild shape*, are useful in combat but do little to go against the feel and tone of a horror game. If you want to give the characters access to healing magic without rendering combat anti-climactic or doing too much to remove the threat of death from your horror game, the druid may be a good replacement for the cleric class. Furthermore, since druids have no special ability over the undead, you can use such monsters in your campaign without fear of the party's cleric nullifying the entire encounter with a single roll of the dice.

**Fighter:** Fighters are perhaps the characters best suited to horror campaigns. They excel in close combat, which puts them at a disadvantage against very powerful creatures that have the hit points, AC, and magical abilities to stand against them. Furthermore, fighters rely on magical weapons, enchanted armor, and wondrous items at higher levels. Without them, their attacks, damage, and defenses lag when compared to wizards and clerics. If you took each of the core classes at 20th level and stripped them of their magical items, the fighter would come in a distant last in terms of power. Thus, you can easily keep a proper gap between fighters and the horrific monsters needed for a dark fantasy game purely by limiting the party's access to magical items.

**Monk:** The monk presents an interesting problem to any DM who wants to design a dark fantasy campaign. Monks are at their best in a few specific cases. They excel at avoiding attacks and knifing into a mob of enemies to defeat a spellcaster or another creature with plenty of magical abilities but few physical defenses. In addition, monks are perhaps the most resilient character class in the game. Their innate abilities mean they can survive without magic items, while their good saves, high speed, and defensive abilities allow them to survive even overwhelming encounters.

While this may seem surprising, the monk is the worst suited character class for horror gaming. True, their combat abilities pale when compared to fighters or arcane spellcasters. However, they can all too easily evade encounters and survive situations that would overwhelm other characters. If a player wants to run a martial artist, he can use a fighter with the Improved Unarmed Strike feat.



If you want to use monks despite their prodigious defensive abilities, be sure to design encounters that can provide a necessary level of danger against them. Flying creatures and other mobile opponents with good attacks can counter many of the monk's defensive abilities. Even the fastest monk cannot hope to outrun a flying beast, especially in dense terrain. You run the risk of focusing too much on a monk character if you use this advice. Keep in mind that horror games are difficult enough without a DM specifically choosing monsters to nullify a PC's advantages. In most cases, you may find yourself spending too much time worrying about the monk's defensive abilities. Unless you are an experienced DM or if you have run plenty of games with monk characters, you are still probably best off without this class in a horror game.

**Paladin:** At first blush, paladins might seem antithetical to a horror campaign. After all, they are the living embodiment of heroism and valor. They can stand resolute against the most horrific monsters, while their ability to heal and defend their allies and smite evil make them powerful foes of villainous creatures. However, in some ways the presence of a paladin in a horror campaign adventuring group adds even more opportunities for roleplay and gripping plots. A paladin must always do the right thing, and many of them are willing to sacrifice their lives for the greater good. These pledges

become even more compelling when the characters face overwhelming evil. The key to making this class a better fit for a horror game lies in removing the aura of courage class ability. An immunity to fear effects could cause too great a shift in the party's dynamics, as a paladin is proof against many of the fear and horror mechanics presented in Chapter 2. That ability is the sole sticking point in making this class work in a horror game. You could potentially leave it in place, but it could cause too great a gap between the paladin and the rest of the party.

The one other argument against including paladins in a horror game lies in the tone you wish to evoke. The presence of paladins in the campaign may indicate that selfless, heroic individuals can be found across the land, battling evil and defending the innocent. In a dark, gritty campaign, that type of selfless crusader may run counter to the feel you wish to give your game. In a setting where dark forces lurk behind every corner, where corruption and greed drive every action, bands of heroic paladins may stick out like sore thumbs. This situation can work very well if you want to present a strong contrast between the heroes and the rest of the world, but it can prove jarring if your game emphasizes shades of gray.



# DARK FANTASY CHARACTER CLASSES

**Ranger:** The ranger character class is a good fit for horror games. It has a fair mix of combat skills and spells, while its access to plenty of skill ranks and a good selection of class skills make it useful in a variety of situations. Rangers are a bit like bards in that they work best as supporting characters rather than a group's primary combatant or main spellcaster. Their poor AC and relatively few hit points for a fighting class leaves them vulnerable to monsters that have overpowering melee attacks. They can heal injuries, which can sometimes undermine the tone of a horror campaign, but they receive few spells and cannot spontaneously cast *cure* spells as can clerics. Thus, you can use the ranger class as presented without modification in a horror game.

**Rogue:** Like the fighter, the rogue is an ideal character class for a horror campaign. With their copious skill ranks and long list of class skills, they can handle a wide variety of situations and are adept at handling problems with non-combat solutions. Their sneak attack ability is deadly, but it works best when used in concert with another character's efforts. Furthermore, many of the classic monsters of horror games, such as undead, are immune to this ability. Thus, the rogue class can work as presented in a horror game.

**Sorcerers and Wizards:** Arcane casters present several problems to a horror campaign. The overwhelming power they can call upon can quickly turn even the most ferocious monster into a trivial threat. *Resilient sphere* can render a beast harmless, while *magic missile* provides an unerring source of damage against any monster. While spell resistance can compensate for this strength, a well-designed character can get around it. Too many of the arcane spells have a strong heroic fantasy slant, such as *fireball*, *ice storm*, *meteor swarm*, and other spells that allow a lone caster to cut down dozens of enemies. The apprentice career presented later in this chapter provides you with a good middle ground between an overpowering archmage and a caster that is too weak to serve as a viable adventurer. That class's spell list is tailored to prove useful in horror encounters without giving the party an easy out against a powerful foe. If you want to use the core wizard or sorcerer, the apprentice's spell list serves as a handy guide to showing you the sorts of spells that prove useful in a horror campaign without ruining the tone or feel of a dark fantasy campaign.

The character classes presented in the core rules are not always the best fit for a dark fantasy or horror campaign. Part of the appeal of horror gaming is that the characters can be otherwise unremarkable people. Only the intrusion of the strange or terrifying into their lives makes them any different from the people around them. This section introduces alternate rules for character classes. These guidelines assume that the PCs are otherwise average people drawn into horrific circumstances. Rather than play valiant rangers, crusading paladins, and mighty wizards, the characters are instead merchants, blacksmiths, or members of the local militia who must face down horrific creatures. The players must draw on their own cunning and make inventive use of their characters' talents rather than simply overwhelm their foes with *magic missiles*, *holy smite*, or *+3 keen greatswords*. A smuggler who knows where to find a rare herb needed to repel a werewolf might be far more useful than a monk who can break a stone in half with his bare hands.

The classes presented here work a bit differently from the standard ones in the core rules. Each class has five or 10 levels of advancement, and it is assumed that characters in a horror game either switch between professions as they gain experience or they never achieve high level. Horror games usually result in a high mortality rate, and with the focus on overpowering creatures, gaining levels is less important than making smart use of your character's abilities. Also, keep in mind that your DM may use a variety of optional rules presented later in this book, especially ones pertaining to hit points. While the rules here assume that you use hit points as per the core rules, your DM might use an alternate system.

Unless otherwise noted, the professions given here work just like any other class. While they lack flashy powers and only run for a few levels, they operate just like the classes from other games.

## DM'S NOTES: MULTICLASSING

Since the classes presented for use in horror games only reach 10th level at the highest, multiclassing is a common option for dark fantasy characters who manage to survive to such levels. If your campaign places greater emphasis on action

and dark fantasy than horror and lethality, it makes sense that the characters will leap from class to class. In many action horror movies, the protagonist starts out as an ordinary guy or gal who quickly learns to use weapons and magical tricks against alien horrors. The PCs may begin play as merchants and beggars, only to leap into the soldier or medium classes as they uncover and defeat horrors. For this reason, characters never count their professions for purposes of determining if they suffer an XP penalty due to having multiple classes.

However, entering classes is a bit harder in a horror game than in a standard fantasy campaign. Many of the professions listed in this chapter have entry requirements. If a character wants to gain levels in them after he has gained one or more levels in other classes, he must fulfill those requirements. Most of the classes have roleplaying and background requirements rather than game mechanics prerequisites.

## ADVANCING TO HIGHER LEVELS

While most dark fantasy characters will not see the other side of 5th or 10th level, in some campaigns it may make sense for PCs to advance to higher levels. In that case, you have a few options. The characters can advance in prestige classes, particularly spellcasters who want to learn new spells, or you can simply extrapolate a class's advancement. If a player wants her character to gain a level beyond 5th or 10th, simply continue her current class's skill rank, Hit Die, and saving throw progressions. Characters cannot gain new class abilities after exhausting the ones listed here, but they can otherwise gain the other class benefits. You can easily extrapolate advancement or consult the core rules for how base attack bonus and saving throws progress. Simply find a class that has the same advancement or consult the generic class progression table to determine how the class should advance.

## PROFESSION CATEGORIES

The various profession classes are divided into four categories that reflect their basic natures. Some jobs require a strong back and tireless muscles, while others call for a winning smile and a talent for persuasion.

As an optional rule, you may require the players to randomly determine their characters' starting professions. Each player picks one of the profession categories, rolls d%, and determines his character's current profession. You can use these tables when there are long gaps between adventures to determine what the characters were up to during their down time or at other points in which a player is not sure what his character does for a living. The

tables are slanted to make some professions more common than others. For example, there are far more servants and workers in a city than veteran soldiers, grave robbers, and bounty hunters combined.

The profession categories have a few effects in play. Some feats are available only to characters with one or more levels in a profession from a specific category. In addition, each category has a generic list of class skills. For ease of reference, the classes are presented in alphabetical order after the general description of each category.

**Academics:** These careers focus on learning and knowledge. Characters with a penchant for learning and research fall into these vocations. They learn about a variety of topics, but rarely develop their physical skills.

In addition to the skills and abilities listed under the specific classes, all academics have the following class skills: Concentration (Con), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Profession (Wis), and Speak Language.

d%	Profession
1–5	Acolyte: A low-ranking priest recently initiated into his faith.
6–10	Alchemist: A researcher skilled with chemicals.
11–15	Antiquarian: An expert on ancient artifacts and other historical relics.
16–25	Apprentice: A student (or ex-student) of a wizard.
26–35	Engineer: An expert in construction, stonework, and traps.
36–40	Herbalist: A master of creating herbal remedies and poisons.
41–50	Physician: A student of anatomy and a skilled healer.
51–100	Sage: A master of a wide variety of academic topics.

**Experts:** These professions require a mix of physical skill and mental acuity. A blacksmith counts as an expert. She uses her strength to forge metal tools, but she must study a variety of methods to master her art.

In addition to the skills and abilities listed under the specific classes, all experts have the following class skills: Craft (Wis), Knowledge (local), and Profession (Wis).

d%	Profession
1–40	Artisan: An expert in a particular art or craft.
41–50	Kennelmaster: An expert animal trainer and handler.
51–70	Merchant: The owner of a small business

- or a trader.
- 71–80 Prospector: A treasure hunter and outdoorsman.
- 81–90 Thief: One who uses illegal means to make a living.
- 91–100 Tracker: A scout, hunter, or woodsman.

**Laborers:** Relying on strength and endurance, laborers earn a living through hard, physical work. This category includes soldiers and others who use weapons for a living.

In addition to the skills and abilities listed under the specific classes, all laborers have the following class skills: Climb (Str), Jump (Str), and Swim (Str).

**d% Profession**

- 1–5 Grave Robber: Common henchmen of necromancers.
- 6–20 Pit Fighter: A warrior who uses his skill at arms in illegal arena battles.
- 21–40 Sewerjack: A laborer who toils in sewers and other repellent quarters.
- 41–60 Veteran: A soldier, such as a mercenary or a militiaman.
- 61–100 Worker: A laborer who uses his physical tools to earn a living.

**Orators:** These professions draw people who have a way with words or are skilled in working crowds. They can range from a minstrel who entertains others with his songs to a grifter whose schemes fleece the unwitting of their fortunes.

In addition to the skills and abilities listed under the specific classes, all orators have the following class skills: Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), and Intimidate (Cha).

**d% Profession**

- 1–40 Beggar: A street person who sees much more than others suspect.
- 41–50 Gambler: An expert risk taker who excels at judging others' thoughts.
- 51–60 Grifter: A confidence man and swindler who tricks others of their wealth.
- 61–70 Medium: A mystic who has the mystic ability to delve into an object or location's past.
- 71–100 Minstrel: A skilled storyteller and performer.

# CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

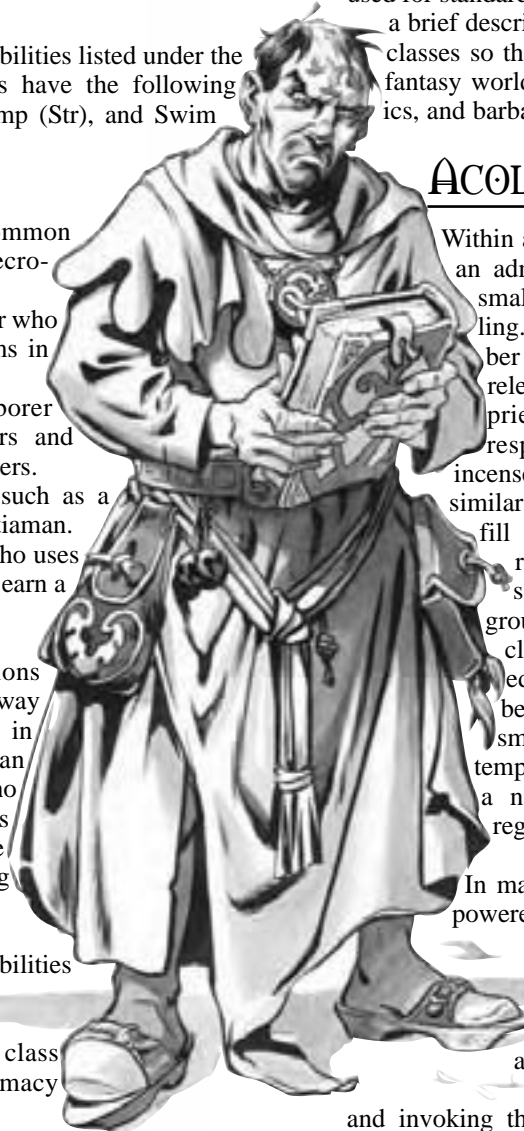
The professions available to dark fantasy characters are described below in a format similar to the one used for standard classes. In addition, each class has a brief description of its relationship to the core classes so that a DM can integrate them into a fantasy world alongside fighters, wizards, clerics, and barbarians.

## ACOLYTE (ACADEMIC)

Within a religious hierarchy, the acolyte is an administrator, a priest assigned to a small village, or a similar minor underling. He is not yet a full-fledged member of his order, or perhaps he has been relegated to a dead end role as the priest to a small village, a clerk responsible for keeping track of incense stores or temple budgets, or a similar administrative position. Acolytes fill out the vast bulk of a temple's ranks, tending to the commoners' spiritual needs, leading prayer groups, and keeping the inner sanctum clean and properly blessed. At the edge of civilization, an acolyte might be an important figure in town. A small village might not warrant a full temple, leaving the acolyte in charge of a nearby shrine or serving as the region's spiritual leader.

In many ways, the acolyte is an underpowered cleric. To better reflect the desperate terror of a dark fantasy campaign, the acolyte class has reduced combat and spellcasting abilities. However, this class is skilled at managing worshippers and invoking the political and social power that comes with its station to achieve goals and ends.

**Characteristics:** Acolytes gain access to a small portfolio of divine spells. In addition, they have a smattering of knowledge concerning the supernatural and possess a limited power over the undead. In desperate times they can fight, but, unlike clerics, they receive little formal martial training. The acolyte is the bespectacled priest who hands out soup and bread in the city's slums rather than an armor-clad crusader.



## ACOLYTE

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Ward the unholy (1/day)
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Ward the unholy (2/day)
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Tend to the flock
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Ward the unholy (3/day)
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Ward the unholy (4/day)
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Strength of the faithful

## ACOLYTE SPELLCASTING PROGRESSION

Level	Caster Level				
	0	1	2	3	4
1st	0	1	—	—	—
2nd	1	1	0	—	—
3rd	1	1	1	—	—
4th	2	2	1	0	—
5th	2	2	1	1	—
6th	3	2	2	1	0
7th	3	3	2	1	1
8th	4	3	2	2	1
9th	4	3	3	2	1
10th	5	4	3	2	2

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Acolytes have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Wisdom and Charisma are the acolyte's two most important abilities. Wisdom is used to determine the potency of their spells and class abilities, while Charisma aids in their ability to handle worshippers and assert their leadership abilities.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Acl.

**Starting Gold:** 1d4 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the acolyte class after 1st level, a character must gain the sponsorship of a religious organization and complete training in its basic tenets. The DM can waive this requirement if a player has played his character as exceptionally religious and pious. In this case, a character might gain the favor of his deity or enter the priesthood without any additional work if his background supports such a decision.

## CLASS SKILLS

The acolytes's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Speak Language.

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the acolyte.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Acolytes are proficient with the club, dagger, staff, and the light and heavy crossbow. They are proficient with light armor but not with shields.

**Spellcasting:** Acolytes gain access to a small number of divine spells. These blessings are much more limited in scope than a cleric's lists, as they tend to focus on daily necessities and conveniences rather

than smiting evil. Acolytes prepare and cast spells as clerics. They use Wisdom to determine their spells' save DCs, the highest spell level they can cast, and any bonus spells they receive. If the acolyte has a 0 listed for a given level, add any bonus spells he receives to determine the total spells per day he can prepare and cast for that level. In essence, the acolyte cannot use spells of that level unless he gains bonus spells. Note that, unlike clerics, acolytes cannot spontaneously cast *cure* spells.

**Ward the Unholy (Su):** While acolytes lack a cleric's ability to blast the undead out of existence, they can call upon their gods' power to hold supernatural creatures at bay. Once per day, an acolyte can invoke his god's power to protect himself and his allies from fell monsters. He calls upon a divine blessing that grants him and all allies within 30 feet a +1 sacred bonus to AC and a +2 morale bonus to Will saves. To use this ability, the acolyte must have 5 gp worth of incense, holy water, and other religious paraphernalia on hand. These items are consumed when the acolyte uses this ability. Usually, it is easiest to total up the gp value of the acolyte's holy water and similar items and subtract 5 gp from them after each use of this ability. If the acolyte has less than 5 gp of these items on hand, this ability fails to function.

The acolyte gains an additional daily use of this ability at 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels.

**Tend to the Flock (Ex):** Acolytes frequently spend much of their time tending to the needs and fears of the commoners who fill the temples each week. While clerics and other members of the religious hierarchy are often too busy to bother with trivial details of their followers' lives, such concerns represent many of the acolyte's daily tasks. This exposure and extensive work grant the acolyte the ability to act as a leader in times of danger.

By spending a full-round action chanting prayers and benedictions, the acolyte can calm others and steady their nerves. All allies within 60 feet of the acolyte who are 3 or more levels below the acolyte's total level gain a +4 morale bonus to Will saves, a +2 morale bonus to attacks, and a +2 morale bonus on all ability and skill checks. The acolyte can use this ability twice per day and its effects last for 5 rounds + the acolyte's Charisma modifier. The acolyte is skilled at managing large crowds and leading mobs of commoners and other folk who adhere to his faith.

**Strength of the Faithful (Ex):** At 10th level, the acolyte is perhaps one of the most accomplished members of the church hierarchy. He has witnessed many miracles and seen the holy power of his god. His faith is unshakeable in the face of the horrors that lurk just beyond the knowledge of mortal men. He gains a +4 morale bonus on all saves against

fear-based effects. In addition, once per day he can choose to automatically succeed at a single Will save against a fear-based effect.

## ACOLYTE SPELL LIST

### 0-Level Acolyte Spells

Create Water  
Cure Minor Wounds  
Detect Magic  
Detect Poison  
Guidance  
Inflict Minor Wounds  
Light  
Mending  
Purify Food and Drink  
Resistance  
Virtue

### 1st-Level Acolyte Spells

Bane  
Bless  
Bless Water  
Cause Fear  
Command  
Comprehend Languages  
Cure Light Wounds  
Curse Water  
Deathwatch  
Detect Chaos/Evil/Good/Law  
Detect Undead  
Divine Favor  
Doom  
Endure Elements  
Inflict Light Wounds  
Magic Weapon  
Remove Fear  
Shield of Faith

### 2nd-Level Acolyte Spells

Aid  
Align Weapon  
Augury  
Calm Emotions  
Cure Moderate Wounds  
Darkness  
Delay Poison  
Eagle's Splendor  
Enthrall  
Find Traps  
Gentle Repose  
Hold Person  
Inflict Moderate Wounds  
Make Whole  
Owl's Wisdom  
Remove Paralysis  
Restoration, Lesser  
Spiritual Weapon  
Status

### 3rd-Level Acolyte Spells

Contagion

Create Food and Water  
 Cure Serious Wounds  
 Daylight  
 Deeper Darkness  
 Dispel Magic  
 Glyph of Warding  
 Helping Hand  
 Inflict Serious Wounds  
 Invisibility Purge  
 Magic Vestment  
 Obscure Object  
 Prayer  
 Remove Blindness/Deafness  
 Remove Disease  
 Stone Shape  
 Water Breathing  
 Water Walk  
 Wind Wall

## ALCHEMIST (ACADEMIC)

In laboratories scattered across the land, alchemists toil over bubbling cauldrons, finely crafted beakers and flasks, and a bewildering array of strange herbs and rare substances to craft a variety of useful, near-magical items and tools. Alchemists learn to unlock the secrets hidden within mercury, dragon's blood, and other rare materials. They learn their art largely through experimentation, pushing the boundaries of knowledge through trial and error.

In terms of the core rules, alchemists have a smattering of arcane spells combined with a variety of Craft (alchemy)-based abilities that allow them to defeat monsters if they have enough time and the proper tools and work space to complete their research. In many ways, they are like primitive scientists who apply a body of knowledge to help solve the mysteries of the world around them.

**Characteristics:** Alchemists excel at creating strange materials, researching evidence left behind by creatures and weird monsters, and creating formulas that can repel or poison monstrous beings. They are invaluable for their ability to research the nature and origin of any strange substances they unearth. An alchemist can determine a monster's basic nature by analyzing scraps of its fur or a sample of its blood. With sufficient time, alchemists can formulate poisons and other substances that can prove baneful to the monsters they face. They also master a small range of spells to aid them in their research.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Alchemists have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Intelligence is an alchemist's most important ability. It determines this class's talent with the Craft (alchemy) skill and also plays a key role in the alchemist's spellcasting abilities.

**Hit Die:** d4.

**Abbreviation:** Acn.

**Starting Gold:** 2d4 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the alchemist class after 1st level, a character must work as an apprentice to a master of this art. The character must spend 1d4 months working as the master's servant. After this time, he may advance in this class as normal.

### CLASS SKILLS

The alchemist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Profession (Wis), Speak Language and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.  
 Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

### CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the alchemist.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Alchemists are proficient with daggers, clubs, staves, and heavy and light crossbows. They have no proficiency with armor or shields.

**Spellcasting:** Alchemists prepare and cast spells as per the wizard class. They gain an additional spell in their books with each level gained in this class. Intelligence determines the alchemist's maximum spell level, bonus spells, and spell save DCs. The core rules have complete details on spellbooks and how casters learn and prepare spells. If the alchemist has a 0 listed for a given level, add any bonus spells he receives to determine the total spells per day he can prepare and cast for that level. In essence, the alchemist cannot use spells of that level unless he gains bonus spells.

**Master of Alchemy (Ex):** The alchemist never needs to spend skill ranks on Craft (alchemy). He gains 4 ranks in this skill at 1st level and one additional rank in it for each level gained in this class. However, the alchemist cannot violate the standard rules for determining the maximum ranks a character can have in a skill. Any ranks gained from this ability that would violate that cap are lost.

In addition to the bonus ranks gained in the Craft (alchemy) skill, the alchemist develops several unique abilities that he can use to investigate strange creatures and develop counters against them. When

using these abilities, the alchemist must have access to a fully stocked alchemist's lab. Rather than use his Craft (alchemy) skill, he makes an alchemy research check:  $1d20 + \text{twice the alchemist's class level} + \text{his Intelligence modifier}$ . Alchemical training is much more detailed than merely studying the Craft (alchemy) skill. By gaining levels in this class and acquiring its spellcasting abilities, the alchemist learns to develop talents that require far more dedicated research and study than simply learning how to craft tanglefoot bags and similar goods.

**Research Creature:** If the alchemist can gain more than a handful of material from a creature, such as blood, fur, spoor, or other samples, he can attempt to analyze them to determine some basic facts about it. This process takes a long time and might result in misleading findings, but it can prove invaluable if you face an unknown or strange creature.

In order to research a sample, you must spend one full day in an alchemist's lab working on it. At the end of each day, your DM makes a secret alchemical research check on your behalf. The DC is determined by the creature's type and a DC modifier chosen by the DM.

Creature Type	Base Research DC
Aberration	10
Animal	2
Construct	10
Dragon	10
Elemental	7
Fey	8
Giant	5
Humanoid	3
Magical beast	5
Monstrous humanoid	4
Ooze	7
Outsider	10
Plant	4
Undead	10
Vermin	2

Your DM may modify the base DC according to the creature's relative rarity. Common creatures have a  $-5$  DC modifier, rare ones a  $+5$  modifier, very rare ones a  $+10$  modifier, and unique ones a  $+15$  modifier.

For each day you spend studying the sample, you may make an alchemical research check with a  $+1$  for each consecutive day you have spent studying the material. Your DM makes this check in secret. If you succeed, you learn a useful piece of information about the creature. If you fail your check by 10 or more or your DM rolls a natural 1 on the check, you learn false information. For each check that leads to false information, you suffer a  $-2$  penalty to future checks. If you suspect a piece of information is false, you can attempt to research it again to make sure you are right. If you fail this check, you learn

nothing new. If you succeed, you either confirm or correct your information. In either case, if you opt to confirm a piece of information, you lose any bonuses for consecutive days of research and must start this bonus over at 0. You also lose this bonus if you break your consecutive days of research. You must have access to an alchemist's lab.

Each time you make a successful check or learn incorrect information, your DM rolls on the following table to determine what you learn. If you roll a topic that you have already researched, you gain a new result for that topic based on the result of your check. It is up to you to decide if any change of information warrants stopping your work to confirm a piece of information.

**DM's Note:** When giving the players information provided by this ability, try to avoid describing them in terms of rules. For example, rather than describe a creature as having 15 HD, tell the players the creature has the mass of several ogres or a single giant.

#### d% Information Uncovered

- 1–15 **Creature Type:** You learn the creature's type, such as beast, outsider, and so forth, along with any subtypes.
- 16–30 **Hit Dice and Size:** You learn the creature's total Hit Dice and its size.
- 31–45 **Attacks:** You learn the physical attacks the creature can use and your DM gives you a rough estimate of the damage each one inflicts.
- 46–60 **Special Attacks:** Your DM picks one of the creature's special attacks at random and gives you a brief description of it.
- 61–85 **Special Qualities:** Your DM picks one of the creature's special qualities at random and gives you a brief description of it. This information could prove very useful in defeating a creature, such as indications of its DR or SR ratings.
- 85–100 **Ability Scores:** Your DM gives you an estimate of  $1d3$  of the creature's ability scores.

**Analyze Material:** In some cases, an alchemist can study a material and learn something about its properties and uses. A researcher could discover venom smeared on an assassin's dagger. With the use of his tools and training, he could determine the poison's strength and the symptoms it induces.

An alchemist must spend one day studying a material and must then make an alchemical research check by rolling  $1d20 + \text{his class level} + \text{his Intelligence modifier}$ . The DM determines the DC of this check based on the substance's rarity and makes this check in secret. On a check that fails by 10 or more or that has a result of 1, the alchemist learns incorrect or misleading information. He may try again to confirm or

# ALCHEMIST

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Master of alchemy
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	

## ALCHEMIST SPELLCASTING PROGRESSION

Level	Caster Level				
	0	1	2	3	
1st	0	1	—	—	
2nd	1	1	0	—	
3rd	1	1	1	—	
4th	2	2	1	0	
5th	2	2	1	1	
6th	3	2	2	1	
7th	3	3	2	1	
8th	4	3	2	2	
9th	4	3	3	2	
10th	5	4	3	2	

refute his findings. An alchemist gains a +1 bonus for each consecutive day he spends researching a material.

Rarity	Research Check DC
Ubiquitous	5
Common	10
Uncommon	15
Rare	20
Exotic	25
Unique	30

On a successful check or misleading result, the alchemist learns the material's origin, its basic effects if ingested, and its basic uses. For example, if researching a poison, the alchemist learns an estimate of its save DC, delivery method, and the damage or effects it causes. Other materials reveal information based on the DM's judgment. In some cases a material may be inert or useless, leaving the alchemist with the opportunity to learn of its origin and nature but little else.

*Brew Mixture:* In addition to the items from the core rules that an alchemist can craft, members of this class can also create specific poisons and repellents that prove useful against the creatures they

research. If an alchemist successfully studies a sample from a creature at least twice and spends at least three consecutive days researching it, he can attempt to produce a poison that has an effect on the object of his study.

First, the alchemist must select one of the following effects that the poison will have. All poisons produced in this manner affect only the target species and must be applied to a weapon in order to affect a creature.

Poison Effect	Description
Ability Damage	The creature suffers 1d3 temporary damage to an ability score of the alchemist's choice.
Damage	The creature suffers 1d6 points of damage per the alchemist's level in this class.
Drowsiness	The creature staggers and moves sluggishly, suffering a -2 penalty to attacks, checks, and saves for one hour.
Sleep	The creature falls asleep for 1d6 minutes.

The alchemist makes an alchemical research check



by rolling 1d20 + his class level + his Intelligence modifier, with a bonus to this check equal to the number of successful analyze material attempts. The alchemist suffers a -5 penalty for each uncorrected mistaken piece of information he gained during his research. Subtract the material's research DC-10 from this result. The total is the Fortitude save DC to resist the poison's effects. The DM should make this check in secret. If the total DC is 0 or lower, the poison has no effect on the creature.

### ALCHEMIST SPELL LIST

#### 0-Level Alchemist Spells

Arcane Mark  
Detect Poison  
Detect Magic  
Flare  
Light  
Mage Hand  
Mending  
Prestidigitation  
Read Magic

#### 1st-Level Alchemist Spells

Acid Splash  
Detect Secret Doors  
Enlarge Person  
Erase  
Expeditious Retreat  
Feather Fall  
Grease  
Identify  
Jump  
Obscuring Mist  
Reduce Person  
Unseen Servant

#### 2nd-Level Alchemist Spells

Burning Hands  
Continual Flame  
False Life  
Fog Cloud  
Glitterdust  
Pyrotechnics  
Shatter  
Spider Climb  
Summon Swarm  
Touch of Idiocy

#### 3rd-Level Alchemist Spells

Acid Arrow  
Arcane Sight  
Dispelling Magic  
Gentle Repose  
Keen Edge  
Stinking Cloud  
Tiny Hut  
Water Breathing  
Wind Wall

## ANTIQUARIAN (ACADEMIC)

Antiquarians are experts in artifacts, relics, and other items from ancient eras. Many of them work as sages or hire their services to sorcerers and other spellcasters, drawing on their knowledge of history and ancient lore to research magical items and provide insight into long lost cultures.

Some antiquarians operate as merchants and traders, plying their knowledge of rare items into a profitable business. These antiquarians specialize in uncovering rare objects and selling them at a tremendous profit. Though others might call them treasure hunters or looters, these opportunists consider the windfalls generated by their knowledge fair recompense for their long years of study.

Compared to the standard core classes, antiquarians are somewhere between bards and rogues. They have an unmatched skill in employing magical items, despite their lack of arcane or divine casting ability, while their knowledge of the ruins and tombs that hide the items they research allows them to find and defeat traps.

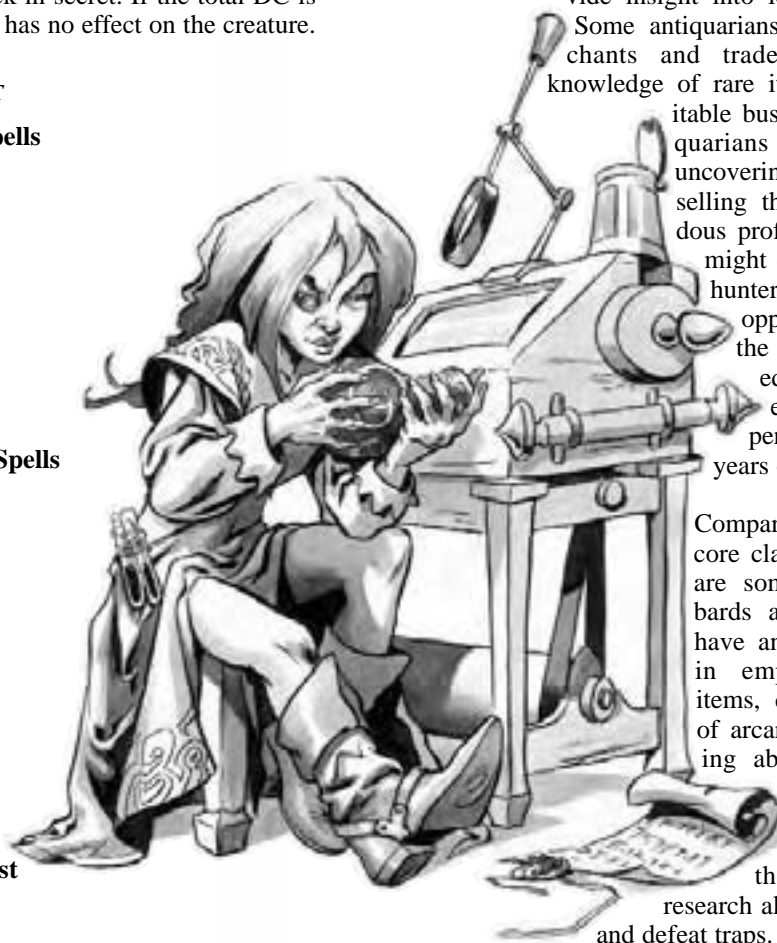
**Characteristics:** Antiquarians can identify magical items and relics, while their study of such items' use and construction gives them bonuses with the Use Magic Device skill. They have a broad range of skills, including Open Locks, Search, Disable Device, and other abilities that makes them useful in exploring ruins and other trap-laden areas.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Antiquarians have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Dexterity and Intelligence aid the antiquarian's ability to overcome traps and find hidden items. Their Intelligence also dictates their proficiency with Use Magic Device, as one of their class abilities allows them to use that score rather than Charisma with that skill.

**Hit Die:** d6.



# ANTIQUARIAN

Level	Base	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
	Attack Bonus				
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Item lore
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Arcane expert
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Catalog of knowledge

**Abbreviation:** Ant.

**Starting Gold:** 1d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the antiquarian class after 1st level, a character must establish his skill with ancient relics. He must have his character level + 3 ranks in Knowledge (history) and Use Magic Device.

## CLASS SKILLS

The antiquarian's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Decipher Script (Int), Disable Device (Int), Forgery (Int), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), and Use Magic Device (Int or Cha).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the antiquarian.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Antiquarians are proficient with the club, dagger, staff, light crossbow, and heavy crossbow. They gain no proficiency with armor or shields.

**Item Lore (Ex):** Antiquarians spend many long hours researching the manufacture and design of ancient relics, magical items, and other rare treasures. They gain several benefits from this training. They may use Intelligence, rather than Charisma, to modify their Use Magic Device skill. When employing enchanted items, they draw on their knowledge and training rather than their force of will or a blind exertion of their personality to activate them.

Antiquarians can also research and study items to learn more of them. They may make Appraise checks to learn of an item's abilities, history, ori-

gin, and nature. The antiquarian can spend one day researching the item. After this period of work, he may make an Appraise check with a DC equal to the item's gp value divided by 200. For each additional day of work, divide the item's value by 200 again, to a minimum of DC 1. On a successful Appraise check, the antiquarian learns the same amount of information as if he successfully cast *identify*.

**Arcane Expert (Ex):** At 3rd level, the antiquarian further hones his ability to manipulate and activate magical items. He gains the ability to re-roll up to three Use Magic Device checks per day. The antiquarian's knowledge and experience gives him insight that allows him to halt his efforts when he is on the verge of making a critical mistake. The antiquarian must opt to use this ability after rolling his check but before learning its result.

**Catalog of Knowledge (Ex):** At 5th level, the antiquarian's knowledge of magical items and rare artifacts allows him to use his item lore ability with increased speed. He now divides an object's gp value by 400 to determine his Appraise DC and he may make his first check after only one hour.

## APPRENTICE (ACADEMIC)

All great wizards must take those first few steps on the path to greatness wearing the shoes of an apprentice. Apprentices must take care of the daily, boring tasks required to complete arcane research. From sweeping the lab to dusting the library, they toil under the usually cruel, critical eye of a master, absorbing bits of magical lore here and there. After many long years of virtual servitude, an apprentice can finally take up the staff or wand of a wizard. Many would-be magicians give up their quest for a better paying or more practical career, seeking easier work and more comfortable conditions. These ex-students never manage to learn even the simplest spells. Other apprentices manage to pick up a small amount of magical training, usually by raiding tomes of eldritch lore while their masters are otherwise occupied. These apprentices usually strike out on their own, content to utilize the few spells they have learned without interference from a cruel or trying master.

The apprentice fills the wizard's role in dark fantasy games. This class has access to fewer incantations and has a slow spell progression when compared to the core classes, but it has superior arcane abilities when set alongside the other professions detailed here.

**Characteristics:** Apprentices are masters of magic. They can cast more spells per day than other classes and have access to a wider selection of spells. They can also invest skill ranks in Knowledge, Decipher Script, and other useful skills.

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Apprentices have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Intelligence is the apprentice's most important ability score. It determines the potency of his spells and serves to modify his most important skills, such as Decipher Script.

**Hit Die:** d4.

**Abbreviation:** App.

**Starting Gold:** 1d6 x 10 gp.

### Entry Requirements:

In order to enter the apprentice class after 1st level, a character must serve a wizard and learn arcane lore from him. The character must spend 1d4 months working as the master's servant. After this time, he may advance in this class as normal.



## CLASS SKILLS

The apprentice's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Profession (Wis), Speak Language, Spellcraft (Int), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 2.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the apprentice.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Apprentices gain proficiency with the club, dagger, staff, and light and heavy crossbows. They gain no proficiency with armor or shields.

**Spellcasting:** Apprentices prepare and cast spells as wizards. An apprentice must maintain a book of spells and gains a tome with 3 + the apprentice's Intelligence modifier 1st level spells and all 0-level ones. Intelligence determines the apprentice's bonus spells, spell save DCs, and maximum spell level.

## APPRENTICE SPELL LIST

### 0-Level Apprentice Spells

Acid Splash  
Arcane Mark  
Dancing Lights  
Daze  
Detect Magic  
Detect Poison  
Flare  
Ghost Sound  
Mage Hand  
Mending  
Message  
Open/Close  
Prestidigitation  
Ray of Frost  
Read Magic  
Resistance  
Touch of Fatigue

### 1st-Level Apprentice Spells

Animate Rope  
Burning Hands  
Cause Fear  
Charm Person  
Chill Touch  
Comprehend Languages  
Detect Secret Doors  
Detect Undead  
Disguise Self  
Endure Elements  
Enlarge Person  
Erase  
Expeditious Retreat  
Feather Fall  
Floating Disk  
Grease  
Hold Portal  
Hypnotism  
Identify  
Jump  
Magic Aura  
Obscuring Mist  
Ray of Enfeeblement  
Reduce Person  
Shield  
Shocking Grasp  
Silent Image  
Sleep

# APPRENTICE

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Spellcasting
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	

Level	Caster Level	0	1	2	3	4
1	1	2	1	-	-	-
2	2	3	1	-	-	-
3	3	3	2	-	-	-
4	3	3	2	1	-	-
5	4	4	3	1	-	-
6	5	4	3	2	-	-
7	6	4	3	2	1	-
8	6	4	4	3	1	-
9	7	4	4	3	2	1
10	8	4	4	4	2	2

Unseen Servant  
Ventriloquism

### 2nd-Level Apprentice Spells

Acid Arrow  
Arcane Lock  
Command Undead  
Continual Flame  
Darkness  
Darkvision  
Daze Monster  
Detect Thoughts  
Eagle's Splendor  
Fog Cloud  
Fox's Cunning  
Ghoul Touch  
Glitterdust  
Gust of Wind  
Hideous Laughter  
Hypnotic Pattern  
Knock  
Levitate  
Minor Image  
Misdirection  
Obscure Object  
Owl's Wisdom  
Phantom Trap  
Pyrotechnics  
Resist Energy

Scare  
See Invisibility  
Shatter  
Spectral Hand  
Spider Climb  
Summon Swarm  
Touch of Idiocy  
Web  
Whispering Wind

### 3rd-Level Apprentice Spells

Arcane Sight  
Blink  
Clairaudience/Clairvoyance  
Deep Slumber  
Dispel Magic  
Flame Arrow  
Gentle Repose  
Halt Undead  
Heroism  
Hold Person  
Illusory Script  
Keen Edge  
Major Image  
Nondetection  
Phantom Steed  
Protection from Energy  
Rage  
Ray of Exhaustion

Secret Page  
 Sepia Snake Sigil  
 Shrink Item  
 Sleet Storm  
 Slow  
 Stinking Cloud  
 Suggestion  
 Tongues  
 Vampiric Touch  
 Water Breathing  
 Wind Wall

#### 4th-Level Apprentice Spells

Animate Dead  
 Arcane Eye  
 Bestow Curse  
 Black Tentacles  
 Confusion  
 Contagion  
 Crushing Despair  
 Detect Scrying  
 Dimension Door  
 Dimensional Anchor  
 Enervation  
 Enlarge Person, Mass  
 Fear  
 Fire Shield  
 Fire Trap  
 Geas, Lesser  
 Globe of Invulnerability, Lesser  
 Hallucinatory Terrain  
 Ice Storm  
 Illusory Wall  
 Locate Creature.  
 Minor Creation  
 Phantasmal Killer  
 Polymorph  
 Rainbow Pattern.  
 Reduce Person, Mass  
 Scrying  
 Shadow Conjuration  
 Shout  
 Solid Fog  
 Stone Shape

## ARTISAN (EXPERT)

In cities, towns, and villages across the land, artisans work to create a vast array of tools, trinkets, and works of art. From a painter who receives commissions to create portraits of the wealthy to a woodworker who carves small toys for her customers, artisans work with different materials and craft objects for different aims. This career can cover anything from a skilled artist who produces beautiful objects to a tinker who patches buckets and makes simple tools from wood and stone.

The artisan's closest analog amongst the core classes is the rogue. An artisan gains a wide variety of skills and can use them to aid a party in many situ-

ations, but (unlike the rogue) the artisan has minimal combat abilities.

**Characteristics:** Artisans can produce items that they sell for profit. They can also craft unique items that the party may need to defeat a monster, such as a ceremonial dagger or a binding circle needed to keep a creature captive. The artisan might not have the mystical knowledge needed to complete such projects, but under the guidance of a friend or ally he can render such useful constructs. In addition, artisans can establish themselves in a community and win trust and friendship by practicing their trade and developing relationships with others.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Artisans have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Intelligence is the artisan's most important ability as it contributes a bonus to the Craft skill. Charisma also proves useful, as the artisan can use it to establish friendly relationships with customers.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Art.

**Starting Gold:** 2d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the artisan class after 1st level, a character must have total ranks in a skill equal to his level + 3.

### CLASS SKILLS

The artisan's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Craft (Wis), Diplomacy (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Knowledge (local), Profession (Wis), and Sense Motive (Wis). In addition, the artisan can pick two additional skills as class skills to reflect the wide range of experiences he accumulates in the course of his career.

Skill Points at 1st Level: (8 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 8 + Int modifier.

### CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the artisan.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The artisan gains proficiency with the dagger, club, staff, and light and heavy crossbows. The artisan is not proficient with any armor or shields.

**Master Craftsman (Ex):** The artisan maintains a variety of skills in a number of areas. Every painter knows the basics of mixing colors,

## ARTISAN

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1	+0	+0	+0	+2
2	+1	+0	+0	+3
3	+1	+1	+1	+3
4	+2	+1	+1	+4
5	+2	+1	+1	+4

### Special

Master craftsman

Man about town

preparing brushes and other tools, and similar skills. An artisan gains the Skill Focus feat for any two Craft skills. In addition, when using a Craft skill for which the artisan has Skill Focus, he may make two Craft checks per week to determine progress made in crafting an item rather than one.

**Man About Town (Ex):** As an artisan practices a trade in a town or village, the locals slowly begin to trust him based on the quality of his work and the services he renders to his neighbors. If an artisan practices his art in a village, town, city, or similar bastion of civilization for a number of weeks equal to 6 – his Charisma modifier, he gains a +2 competence bonus to all Bluff and Diplomacy checks made against residents of that area. His reputation as a skilled craftsman allows him to easily win his neighbors' trust.

## BEGGAR (ORATOR)

Across the world, wherever towns and cities arise, beggars find a home. Outcasts, cripples, madmen, and others who lack the physical and mental means to provide for themselves are forced into this sorry lot, reduced to pleading for alms from passing merchants and commoners. Some amongst these folk are fully capable of finding more respectable work, yet they have discovered that a simple disguise that cloaks them in an infirmity can net them more coins per day than hours of toil.

Beggars are such a part of the urban landscape that many folk pay them little mind, allowing them to collect rumors and secrets like a vast web of spies. Life on the streets is by no means easy, and those who follow this profession must develop the skills to survive if they want to see an old age.

In terms of the core classes, beggars resemble rogues and bards. Their reliance on convincing others to hand over coins makes them good at reading people they meet and talking their way to their goals, while their experience in the urban environment gives them the ability to blend into the background with ease.

**Characteristics:** Beggars excel in urban envi-

ronments. Drawing on their knowledge of life on the streets, they can fade into crowds and develop contacts amongst the street folk to uncover rumors and stories that might evade even the most experienced investigator.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Beggars have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Dexterity and Charisma are the beggar's two most important abilities. Dexterity improves this class's chances of evading detection and sneaking up on others, while Charisma grants a bonus to the skills they use to talk their way past trouble and dig up useful information.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Bgr.

**Starting Gold:** 2d6 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the beggar class after 1st level, a character must spend at least four weeks living on the streets of a town or city. He must beg for money and scavenge shelter in alleys. At the end of this period, he is eligible to enter this class.

### CLASS SKILLS

The beggar's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (begging) (Int) [Profession (beggar) XX], Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (begging) (Cha), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

### CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the beggar.

# BEGGAR

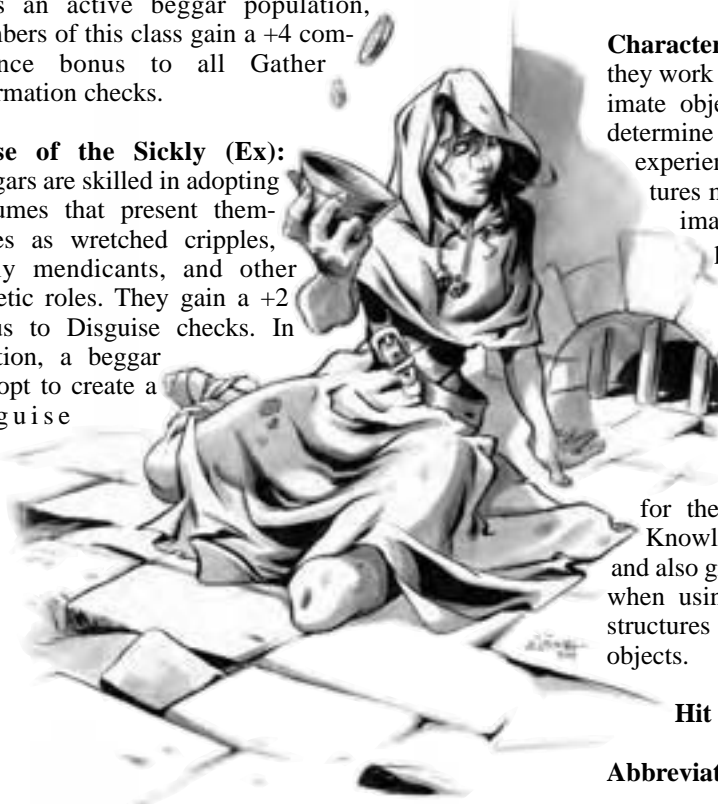
	Base			
Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1st	+0	+2	+2	+0
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+0
3rd	+1	+3	+3	+1
4th	+2	+4	+4	+1
5th	+2	+4	+4	+1

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Beggars are proficient with the club, dagger, staff, and light and heavy crossbow. In addition, life on the street demands that they learn how to brawl over scraps of food and coins. They gain the Improved Unarmed Strike feat for free.

**Fade into the Background (Ex):** Beggars are so ubiquitous in urban environments that many folk simply do not see them. When attempting to use Hide or Move Silently in an urban environment, beggars gain a +2 competence bonus to their checks. This bonus increases to +4 if a beggar attempts to hide or move amongst others who practice his craft.

**Streetwise (Ex):** As beggars can be found almost everywhere, they are an excellent resource for information. They see things that other folk overlook and can prove to be a valuable font of secrets and rumors. When in a village, town, or city that supports an active beggar population, members of this class gain a +4 competence bonus to all Gather Information checks.

**Guise of the Sickly (Ex):** Beggars are skilled in adopting costumes that present themselves as wretched cripples, sickly mendicants, and other pathetic roles. They gain a +2 bonus to Disguise checks. In addition, a beggar can opt to create a disguise



## Special

Fade into the background

Streetwise

Guise of the sickly

that temporarily imposes a -2 penalty to all Charisma-based skill checks aside from Disguise. In return, the beggar's Disguise bonus increases to +4.

# ENGINEER (ACADEMIC)

Engineers are masters of building structures. They learn how to design arches, construct anything from simple houses to lofty cathedrals, and build stout fortifications that can withstand sieges. By the same token, they also learn how best to collapse or destroy such structures. Many engineers hail from a military background where they served as sappers and siege engine specialists. Their knowledge can prove useful in adventures, as they can erect barriers to hold monsters at bay or determine just the right point to strike at an unholy altar.

Engineers are a little like rogues in that they have a variety of skills and work best as support characters rather than combatants.

**Characteristics:** Engineers are at their best when they work to construct barriers, smash through inanimate objects, or otherwise use their training to determine the weakest point in a structure. Their experience in building and demolishing structures makes them best suited for handling inanimate objects that are barriers to the party's progress or crafting fortifications to hold a monster at bay.

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Engineers have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Intelligence is a critical skill for the engineer. It provides a bonus to the Knowledge (architecture and engineering) skill and also grants bonus skill points. Strength is useful when using the engineer's skills to batter down structures or exploit weak points in stone or wood objects.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Eng.

# ENGINEER

Level	Base			
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1

## Special

Engineer's eye

Rapid construction

Demolitions expert

**Starting Gold:** 2d4 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the engineer class after 1st level, a character must work with a master engineer in order to learn this craft. He must spend 6 months aiding the master. At the end of this term of service, the character may gain levels in this class.

## CLASS SKILLS

The engineer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Int), Knowledge (architecture and engineering) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Speak Language, and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the engineer.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Engineers gain proficiency with the club, dagger, staff, light crossbow, heavy crossbow, hand axe, warhammer, and with light armor.

**Engineer's Eye (Ex):** With their skill in handling stone and wood combined with their knowledge of how best to put a structure together, engineers excel at finding weak points and vulnerable spots in objects. With a successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 15), an engineer gains a +5 bonus to damage against an object with hardness or a construct. If the check result is 30 or higher, the engineer gains a +10 bonus. Using Knowledge (architecture and engineering) in this manner is a full-round action.

**Rapid Construction (Ex):** Engineers prefer to spend time carefully planning a fortification and determining the materials they need to create it,

but in times of stress (such as when a horrid monster crawls towards a dungeon door) they can throw together a durable but temporary barrier. With five rounds of work and a DC 20 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check, the engineer can either increase a 10-foot section of wall, a door, or similar structure's hardness by 1d4 or increase its hit points by 3d6. An object can receive either bonus only once. Thus, an engineer could either improve a door's hardness or its hit points, but not both. The DM must judge whether sufficient construction materials are available to complete this work. If the engineer has help from one or more characters, reduce the time needed to complete this reinforcement by two rounds. Additional helpers only get in the way.

**Demolitions Expert (Ex):** The engineer excels at tearing down structures and delivering smashing blows against stone altars and similar objects. When making attacks against constructs or objects with hardness, the engineer gains the benefits of the Power Attack feat. If the engineer already has this feat, double the bonus damage it grants when he uses a one-handed weapon. When using a two-handed weapon, the engineer triples rather than doubles his bonus damage.

# GAMBLER (ORATOR)

Gamblers thrive on outthinking others in games of chance, such as cards or other methods of wagering. While these skills may seem limited, they can prove useful in a wide variety of situations. A gambler might notice when a cultist lies or tells the truth while the party interrogates him, or she could spot details and important features that others overlook. Gamblers are above all else observers. Not only do they juggle the odds in their minds, but their eyes and ears draw in every detail and texture of their surroundings to help them paint a clear picture of the barriers that stand before them.

Gamblers are like bards in that they excel at handling other people. They can talk their way out of many situations and keep a careful, running tally on the attitudes and tendencies of the people they meet. When walking into a dangerous situation, the gam-



# GAMBLER

	Base			
Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1

## Special

Weigh the odds

Gambler's luck

Work the angles

bler keeps the odds in mind and finds hidden advantages that turn them in her favor.

**Characteristics:** Gamblers excel at reading situations, judging how events are likely to develop and how people will react based on such scant information as their bearing, the words they use, and the stresses and variations in their voices. Gamblers also seem to have good luck. When the chips are down, they seem to have a talent for pulling out just the right card or picking the right option.

## Game Rule Information

Gamblers have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Charisma and Wisdom are the gambler's most important abilities. Judging risks involves assessing an opponent's demeanor and character, while a gambler with a strong personality can bluff his way out of almost anything.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Gam.

**Starting Gold:** 3d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the gambler class after 1st level, a character must have ranks in Profession (gambler) equal to his total character level +3.

## CLASS SKILLS

The gambler's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the gambler.

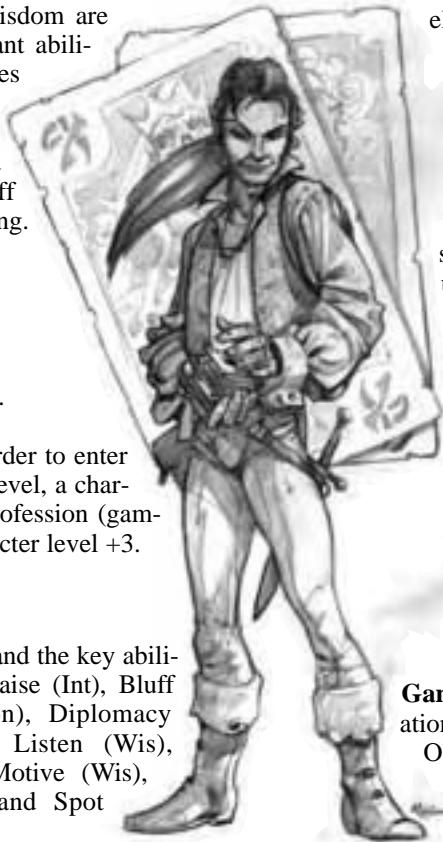
**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The gambler is proficient with all simple weapons and the rapier.

**Weigh the Odds (Ex):** Gamblers excel at judging the difficulty of a task at hand. Three times per day, a gambler can opt to force an opponent to make his opposed check before the gambler takes her action. The DM announces the total result of this check. The gambler may then decide to take her action as normal and oppose the result or do something else. In the former case, the announced result serves as the opponent's total. In the latter, ignore the result. The gambler may instead take a different action.

For example, Sheera the gambler wants to use Bluff to trick a dockworker into allowing her into the strange chapel she knows is aboard the ship he guards. She uses weigh the odds to force him to make a Sense Motive check, the skill normally used to oppose Bluff. The DM announces that the total result is 10. Sheera's player decides that she likes those odds, so the gambler goes ahead with her Bluff check. If the result had been 26, Sheera's player may have decided to instead leave the dockworker alone or try to distract him while her friends tried to move in behind his back.

**Gambler's Luck (Ex):** Regardless of the situation, things just seem to go a gambler's way. Observers believe that they have incredible luck, but gamblers simply know how to play the odds. Once per day, a gambler may choose to re-roll a single d20 roll for an attack, check, or save before she learns if she succeeded.

**Work the Angles (Ex):** Gamblers learn to



read their opponents, learning the tendencies to put together a game plan that takes advantage of their weaknesses and avoids their strength. If a gambler can speak with a person for 5 – her Wisdom modifier minutes (minimum 1) and make a successful Sense Motive check opposed by her target's Bluff skill, she learns some important information about his tendencies and mood. She gains a +2 competence bonus on all Bluff, Sense Motive, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks made against him for the next 24 hours. Since this advantage is based partly on the target's mood and current state of mind, it represents only a temporary advantage.

## GRAVE ROBBER (LABORER)

Throughout the land, necromancers, magicians, and others who delve into arcane lore seek to uncover the secrets and mechanisms of life. Their research is invariably suppressed if discovered, as it frequently calls for the examination and dissection of the recently dead. Most religions profess some level of respect for the deceased, whether that means they are set aside in cemeteries, given places of honor in burial tombs, or cremated. Grave robbers are the muscle behind any illicit efforts to recover corpses for research or to simply loot burial chambers of gold and jewels. In the course of their work, they encounter many strange creatures and sites. The undead and other supernatural creatures are not merely horrifying monsters but occupational hazards for grave robbers, leaving them well-equipped to handle encounters with such threats.

The grave robber occupies a unique position when compared to the standard core classes. It functions as a combination of the fighter and rogue, as it offers some skill with traps and (compared to other careers) has a half-decent selection of weapons. The grave robbers' ability to resist fear-based effects makes them unique but very useful characters in dark fantasy campaigns.

**Characteristics:** Grave robbers have some skill with traps, uncovering hidden treasures, and evading guards. Their primary feature is their ability to handle frightening events without losing their composure. It takes a certain kind of person to become a grave robber, one who has no com-

punction about infiltrating graveyards and digging up coffins. This mindset, combined with the experiences accrued in following this profession, makes them well suited to coping with the supernatural.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Grave robbers have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Grave robbers find almost all of the ability scores useful. They can handle a number of weapons, making Strength handy in combat, while their skills rely on Dexterity, Intelligence, and Wisdom.

**Hit Die:** d8.

**Abbreviation:** Grv.

**Starting Gold:** 2d4 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the grave robber class after 1st level, a character must assist a necromancer, physician, or similar person who requires fresh corpses for his work for at least one month. Alternatively, a character can rob graves on a freelance basis for three months to enter this class.

### CLASS SKILLS

The grave robber's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Disable Device (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (religion), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), and Swim (Str).

**Skill Points at 1st Level:** (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

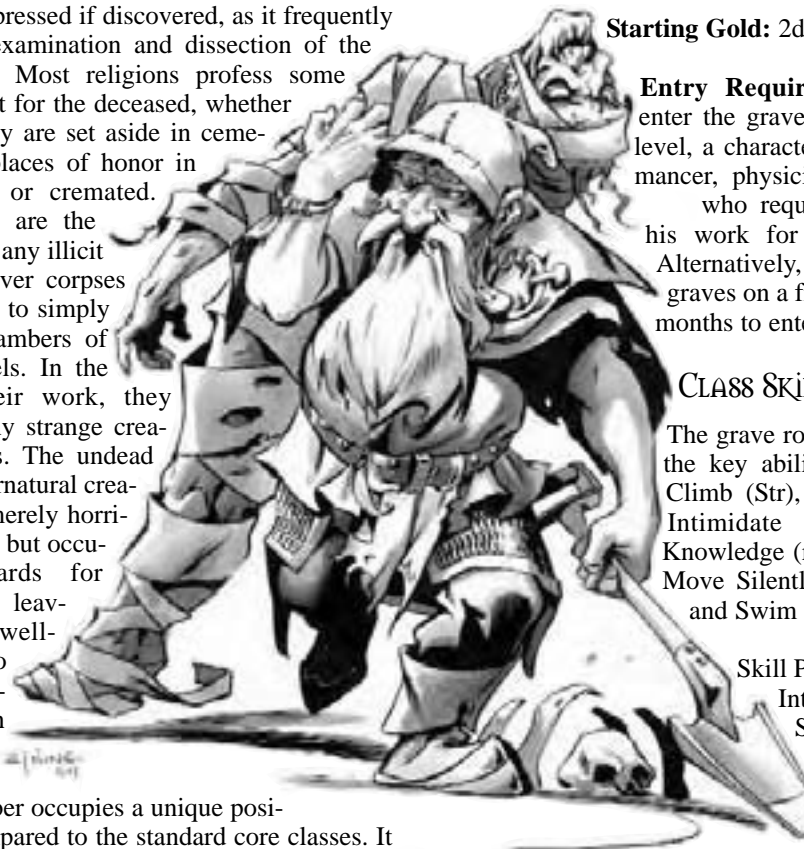
**Skill Point at Each Additional Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

### CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the grave robber.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Grave robbers are proficient with all simple weapons and light armor.

**Nerves of Steel (Ex):** Grave robbers witness many strange things during the course of their work. The necromancers and researchers they work for frequently delve into unwholesome studies and engage in blasphemous practices. Many of them experience



# GRAVE ROBBER

Level	Base			
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3
4th	+3	+4	+1	+4
5th	+3	+4	+1	+4

encounters with ghouls, zombies, and other undead creatures. These experiences grant them steady nerves, giving them a +2 bonus to all saves against fear-based effects.

**Calm of the Dead (Ex):** The grave robber's calm demeanor allows him to absorb the sharpest psychic shock with seeming disinterest. While others panic, the grave robber goes about his duties without fear. Once per day, a grave robber can opt to delay the onset of any fear-based effects by a number of rounds equal to his Constitution bonus. At the end of this interval, the fear-based effect functions as normal.

**Necromantic Lore (Ex):** Due to their repeated exposure to many strange events and bizarre magical effects, grave robbers gain an almost intuitive insight to the workings of dark magic. They can make Knowledge (arcana) checks as if they had ranks in that skill equal to twice their level in this class. If the grave robber already has that skill, he gains the bonus ranks up to a maximum of his current level + 3. In addition, once per day a grave robber can gain a +10 insight bonus on such a skill check. The grave robber recalls a specific detail from past experiences that gives him an important revelation about the topic at hand.

## GRIFTER (ORATOR)

While most people make their way through the world using their in-born talents and the skills they have learned, some folks are happier making others do work for them. Grifters have a gift for speech that gives them the ability to bend others to their will. They are experts at phrasing their arguments in just the right way and playing on a target's fears, desires, and secrets to compel friendship, obedience, and even blind service from others. They are masters of constructing elaborate schemes that rob others blind, all while convincing their victims that their plans are in the marks' best interest.

Compared to the core classes, grifters are similar to bards in that they can alter attitudes and actions of other people with nothing more than a few carefully chosen words.

### Special

Nerves of steel

Calm of the dead

Necromantic lore

**Characteristics:** Grifters excel at tricking others out of their valuables, and they are experts at presenting themselves as someone or something they are not. They gain expanded uses of the Diplomacy and Bluff skill that allow them to alter a person's actions and attitudes in much the same way that a spellcaster can bend and warp their actions to their will. While grifters only rarely enjoy an ironclad control over others, their ability to manipulate the people they meet is second to none.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Grifters have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Charisma is easily the most important ability score for grifters. It determines their ability to influence and manipulate others. Intelligence allows them to concoct plans and schemes, while Wisdom gives them insight into the marks they set their sights on. Dexterity can improve their defenses in case their schemes backfire and they need to quickly escape a situation, but a good grifter has no need for the other ability scores unless something goes terribly wrong.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Grf.

**Starting Gold:** 2d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the grifter class after 1st level, a character must be experienced with manipulating others and skillfully navigating social situations. The character must have a number of ranks in Bluff and Diplomacy equal to his total character level + 3.

### CLASS SKILLS

The grifter's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), and Speak Language.

Skill Points at 1st Level:  $(4 + \text{Int modifier}) \times 4$ .  
Skill Point at Each Additional Level:  $4 + \text{Int modifier}$ .

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the grifter.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Grifters are proficient with the club, dagger, staff, and the light and heavy crossbow.

**Gilt Tongued (Ex):** Grifters are experts at tricking others into taking foolish actions or overly trusting in their words. By using the Bluff skill, they can force others to take simple actions that put them at a disadvantage. A grifter may make a Bluff check opposed by his opponent's Sense Motive or Will save—the opponent chooses which one to use. If the grifter's check succeeds, he can force his opponent to believe a lie he offers until the victim sees evidence to the contrary for the next 24 hours. After that time period, the grifter must make another check to maintain the deception. The target gains a bonus to his Sense Motive check or Will save based on the plausibility of the grifter's lie as per the standard description for Bluff.

The victim of this ability continues to believe this lie unless given concrete evidence to the contrary. In addition, the target takes no special actions after this ability's duration ends unless he is given direct evidence of the grifter's deception. For example, a grifter tells a thug guarding a blasphemous temple that she is a minor priestess of the faith. The guard believes her, and for 10 minutes she searches the area and carries off a few minor items. Since such behavior is normal for a priest, the guard pays no attention to her. The guard might not even mention her actions to the high priest, and unless someone tells him otherwise he continues to treat her like a priestess for the next 24 hours.

**Pernicious Influence (Ex):** Grifters are masters of manipulating others, allowing them to take weak-willed or gullible folk under their guidance and using them for financial support, favors, and other services. This ability reflects the grifter's ability to build a network of lies and scams that make someone fall under her spell.

If a grifter can establish a long-term relationship with someone, she can slowly gain power over him. The grifter must choose a target and make a Diplomacy check opposed by the target's Will save or Sense Motive check (target's choice). The grifter can make this check once per week against a given target. Each week, the grifter can use this ability against a total number of targets equal to  $3 +$  the grifter's Charisma modifier. She must spend at least 10 hours per week with each target in private or social situations.

The greater the difference between these two checks, the more control the grifter can exert over her mark. The grifter gains influence points equal to the grifter's Bluff result – the target's Sense Motive or Will save result (the difference may be negative). With each week, a grifter's influence points against a person can rise and fall based on the result of each check. Add up the points gained (or lost) during a week to the grifter's running score against a target. The more points a grifter has against someone, the greater control she can exercise over him as summarized in the table below.

The target's allies can attempt to counter the grifter's influence. Once per week, the target's friends can attempt a Diplomacy check with a DC equal to the grifter's influence points. One ally makes the check, while the rest assist. The grifter may oppose this check with a Bluff check of her own. If the Diplomacy check succeeds, the grifter loses influence points over her target equal to the Diplomacy check result – her Bluff result. The grifter must spend at least 10 hours with the target to make this Bluff check. Otherwise, her check result counts as 0. The grifter's influence cannot be reduced to less than 0 due to these actions. If a grifter loses contact with a mark, his friends can quickly counter her influence until she returns to him.

Influence	Description
Less than 0	The grifter's scam has been exposed. The target is immune to all Bluff checks by the grifter and cannot be targeted by her use of this ability.
1–10	The grifter gains some level of confidence from her target. She gains a +2 circumstance bonus to all Bluff and Diplomacy checks against him.
11–20	The grifter's target is so enthralled with her that he automatically fails any Sense Motive checks against her. The grifter can gain 5 gp/level in this class from a target in coins or goods each week, though the victim must of course have access to sufficient wealth for her to take advantage of this ability. The grifter must spend at least 10 hours per week with a target from whom she gains money, and she cannot fleece more than 1 victim + her Charisma modifier per week in this manner.
31–40	The grifter's target treats her like a close, trusted friend and confidant. He confers any secrets he holds to her and acts as if he is under the effects of <i>charm person</i> or <i>charm</i> .

# GRIFTER

Level	Base			
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4

## Special

Gilt tongued

Pernicious influence

Confidence artist

*monster* as appropriate. The grifter can gain 10 gp/level in this class from a target as explained above.

41+ The grifter's victim becomes utterly blind to any damaging actions she may take. In addition to suffering from the effects of *charm person* or *charm monster*, the victim willingly risks his life for her, though he still refuses to take any obviously suicidal actions. The grifter can gain 25 gp/level in this class from a target as explained above.

**Confidence Artist (Ex):** At 5th level, the grifter can spend influence points to gain favors and special actions from those under her influence. She learns how to push her thralls to provide her with additional favors, financial support, and assistance. This ability may weaken her long-term hold on a mark, but she can gain important, short-term benefits from him. The following table summarizes the influence point costs she may pay for various benefits. Once the grifter spends her influence over a person, immediately subtract those points from her total. The grifter cannot spend points that would reduce her score with a given person to 5 or lower. The grifter can spend influence points from a single NPC only once per week.

Influence Cost	Benefit
5	The grifter doubles the gold she receives from her thrall for the week.
5	The grifter convinces her thrall to commit a dangerous act.
5	The grifter convinces her thrall to commit a minor crime, such as petty theft.
10	The grifter convinces her thrall to commit a crime, such as theft.
10	The grifter triples the gold she receives from her thrall for the week.
20	The grifter convinces her thrall to commit a serious crime, such as assault.

20	The grifter quadruples the gold she receives from her thrall for the week.
30	The grifter quintuples the gold she receives from her thrall for the week.
30	The grifter convinces her thrall to commit a suicidal action.
30	The grifter convinces her thrall to commit a capital crime, such as murder.

## HERBALIST (ACADEMIC)

The herbalist specializes in using rare plants and other natural ingredients to produce useful potions, unguents, and poultices. Many of the products they create are useful in curing injuries, purging toxins from the body, and treating diseases. The same training that allows them to banish ills also gives them insight into producing mixtures that enhance strength, toughness, and speed.

Herbalists are similar to druids in that they have a special talent for plants and herbs, though they lack that class's magical abilities and divine casting talents.

**Characteristics:** Herbalists can create a variety of potions and healing draughts. They can use the Brew Potion feat to duplicate many spells, though they lack the ability to use magic. Instead, they create a spell effect through a clever combination of herbs and plants.

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Herbalists have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Wisdom is the key ability for herbalists, as it serves as a modifier to the Profession (herbalist) skill. Intelligence also provides additional ranks to spend on their many useful skills.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Hrb.

# HERBALIST

Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Craft herbal mixtures
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Improved potion creation
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Supreme potion creation
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	

## HERBALIST RECIPE/SPELLS KNOWN

Level	0	1	2	3
1st	3	1	—	—
2nd	3	3	—	—
3rd	3	3	1	—
4th	4	3	2	—
5th	4	4	3	1
6th	4	4	3	2
7th	5	4	3	3
8th	5	5	4	3
9th	5	5	4	3
10th	6	5	4	4

**Starting Gold:** 2d4 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the herbalist class after 1st level, a character must serve as an apprentice to a master of this profession. The character must spend 1d4 months working as the master's apprentice. After this time, he may advance in this class as normal. Alternatively, a character with ranks in Profession (herbalist) equal to his total character level + 3 can enter this class.

## CLASS SKILLS

The herbalist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Profession (Wis), Profession (herbalist) (Wis), Speak Language, and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the herbalist.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The herbalist is proficient with the club, dagger, staff, light crossbow, and heavy crossbow.

**Craft Herbal Mixtures (Ex):** At 1st level, herbalists gain the ability to produce potions and healing unguents using herbs and plants that they gather in the wilderness. This ability works like the Brew Potion feat. The herbalist gains the ability to use that feat with spells chosen from the herbalist spell lists. For purposes of creating a potion, an herbalist's caster level equals his class level. He gains spells based on his level and counts as possessing them for purposes of creating potions. The herbalist cannot cast these spells. These spells instead represent specific recipes and mixtures he can create.

**Improved Potion Creation (Ex):** As an herbalist gains levels, he learns to make due with fewer exotic ingredients. As he gains new insights into his craft, he learns new methods and processes. The gp cost that the herbalist must pay for his potions is the spell's level x caster level x 40 gp.

**Supreme Potion Creation (Ex):** At 10th level, the herbalist gains new insights and mastery of his art. The gp cost that the herbalist must pay for his potions is the spell's level x caster level x 30 gp.

## HERBALIST RECIPE/SPELL LIST

**0-Level Herbalist Recipes/Spells**

Cure Minor Wounds  
Guidance  
Purify Food and Drink  
Resistance  
Virtue

**1st-Level Herbalist Recipes/Spells**

Comprehend Languages  
Cure Light Wounds  
Endure Elements  
Enlarge Person  
Expeditious Retreat  
Jump  
Remove Fear  
True Strike

**2nd-Level Herbalist Recipes/Spells**

Aid  
Bear's Endurance  
Bull's Strength  
Calm Emotions  
Cure Moderate Wounds  
Darkvision  
Delay Poison  
Gentle Repose  
Owl's Wisdom  
Remove Paralysis  
Restoration, Lesser  
See Invisibility

**3rd-Level Herbalist Recipes/Spells**

Arcane Sight  
Cure Serious Wounds  
Heroism  
Rage  
Remove Blindness/Deafness  
Remove Curse  
Remove Disease  
Water Breathing

## KENNELMASTER (EXPERT)

Animals play an important role in human society, from dogs used to tend herd animals, horses that pull wagons of goods across continents, to cattle that provide milk and beef. The kennelmaster is an expert at animal husbandry. He uses his talents to raise animals from birth, training them to fulfill a variety of useful roles. While this class's name usually relates to raising and training dogs, these experts handle a wide variety of ani-

mals. Not only can they train beasts in a variety of tricks and abilities, but they form an emotional bond with their animals that make them a strong combination in combat.

Kennelmasters are a bit like druids and rangers. They have a talent for handling animals, but they lack any special stealth skills, divine casting ability, or any other class features based on magic.

**Characteristics:** Kennelmasters are experts at handling, training, and raising animals. They can fight alongside them with superior coordination, while the beasts they raise are braver, tougher, and better trained than normal.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Kennelmasters have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Charisma is one of the kennelmaster's most important attributes, as it aids in his ability to handle and train animals. Wisdom also aids the use of their class skills and gives them a bonus to Handle Animal checks. Since kennelmasters usually fight alongside their charges, good scores in Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution serve them well.

**Hit Die:** d8.

**Abbreviation:** Knm.

**Starting Gold:** 1d6 x 10 gp, plus one dog.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the kennelmaster class after 1st level, a character must have ranks in Handle Animal equal to his total level + 3.

### CLASS SKILLS

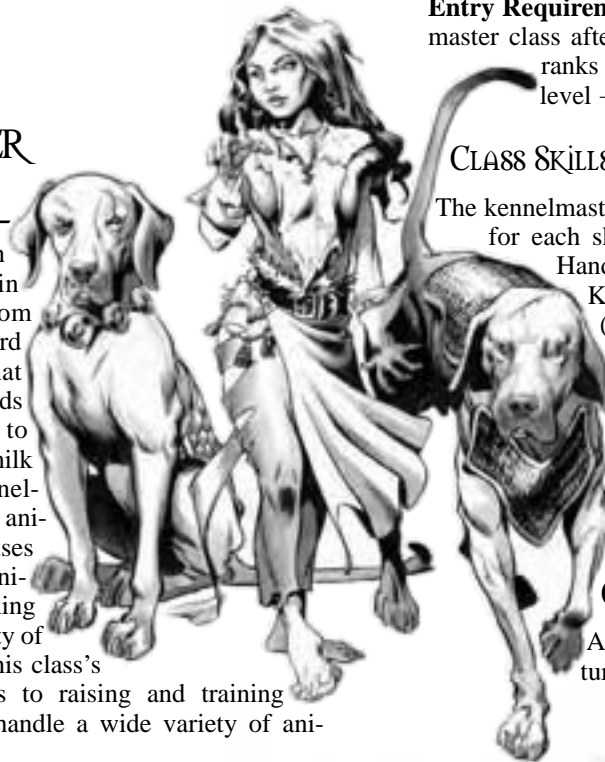
The kennelmaster's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Wis), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

### CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the kennelmaster.



## KENNELMASTER

Level	Base			
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1

### Special

Animal husbandry

Calm animals

Feral bond

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Kennelmasters are proficient with all simple weapons, light armor, and light shields.

**Animal Husbandry (Ex):** Kennelmasters gain a +2 competence bonus to all Handle Animal checks. In addition, they may add their Wisdom bonus to all Handle Animal checks in addition to their Charisma modifier. A kennelmaster can teach an animal a trick in one day rather than one week, but he suffers a -10 modifier to his Handle Animal check when he attempts to do so.

**Calm Animals (Ex):** So long as the kennelmaster does not suffer the negative consequences of a fear-based effect, he may replace the Will save result of any animal he has taught at least one trick with a Handle Animal check. The animal must be able to see and hear the kennelmaster and it must be within 60 feet of him.

**Feral Bond (Ex):** Kennelmasters form close, emotional ties to the animals they train. When they see their charges in danger or otherwise threatened with harm, they gain a +2 morale bonus to attacks and a +4 morale bonus to Will saves against fear-based effects.

**Characteristics:** Mediums are the masters of using their finely honed senses to look into the past, sense the presence of strange creatures, and communicate with the dead. Some sages believe that they merely sense subtle variations in pressure, temperature, and other environmental factors to form their visions. Others claim that they have genuine, magic talents, though these skills are poorly refined when compared to arcane casting abilities.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Mediums have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Wisdom and Charisma are the medium's two most important attributes. Both play a role in this class's key skills, such as Sense Motive. Otherwise, mediums have no special need for high scores in other areas.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Med.

**Starting Gold:** 1d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the medium class after 1st level, a character must have ranks in Sense Motive equal to her total character level + 3. In addition, she must have failed at least one Will save against a fear-based effect created by an undead creature or an outsider. Exposure to the supernatural is sometimes key to awakening a person's innate abilities.

## MEDIUM (ORATOR)

Many folk believe that a few, special individuals have the ability to pierce the psychic veil. ESP, object reading, and other talents are granted to a limited few by right of birth, an astrological sign, or some other marker. Unlike wizards and other spellcasters, these talents develop their abilities naturally. They may practice and study to refine them, but their abilities are as much a part of their natural talents as an athlete's ability to run or a sculptor's talent with clay. Mediums, whether through finely honed senses or an innate magical ability, can delve into the past and pierce the veil of death to speak with the departed.

Compared to the core classes, mediums are most like sorcerers. They have in-born abilities that develop independently of any special training, though their skills are much more focused and specialized than a sorcerer's spell selection.

### CLASS SKILLS

The medium's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spellcraft (Int), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.



# MEDIUM

	Base				
Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Sense the unseen
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Sixth sense
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Pierce the veil

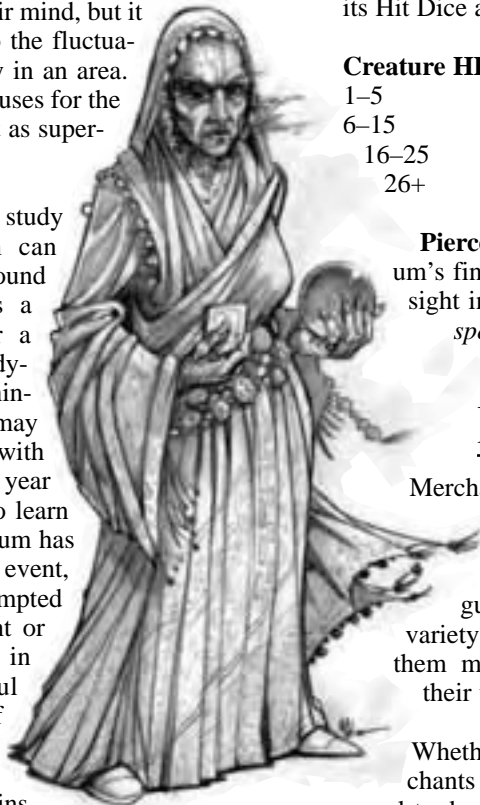
## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the medium.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** The medium is proficient with the club, dagger, staff, light crossbow, and heavy crossbow.

**Sense the Unseen (Su):** Mediums can sense the ebb and flow of emotions in others. This gives them not only an insight into how other people view them or what might be on their mind, but it also makes them sensitive to the fluctuations of emotions and energy in an area. A medium gains several new uses for the Sense Motive skill that count as supernatural abilities.

**Area Reading:** With quiet study and meditation, a medium can sense the emotional background of a specific area such as a room, a forest clearing, or a short section of road. By studying an area for a peaceful, uninterrupted hour, the medium may make a Sense Motive check with a DC equal to 15 + 5 per year since the event she wishes to learn about took place. If the medium has no specific knowledge of an event, treat this check as if she attempted to learn of the last important or traumatic event at the spot in question. On a successful check, the medium learns of the event's basic emotional feel or mood. If she beats the DC by 5 or more, she gains hazy, incomplete mental pictures of the event. She gains a general sense of what happened, but does not learn any specific details of the people involved. If she beats the DC by 10 or more, she gains a perfect mental snapshot of the proceedings. However, in this case she suffers any fear-based effects of spotting any of the creatures that appear within her vision.



**Object Reading:** This ability functions as per the area reading ability except it focuses on a specific object, such as a dagger or article of clothing.

**Sixth Sense (Su):** At 3rd level, the medium gains a constant, intuitive sense of the flow of psychic energies around her. Whenever an outsider or undead creature moves within 100 feet of her position, she may immediately make a Sense Motive check opposed by the creature's Will save. If her check succeeds, she senses the creature's relative position. In addition, she gains insight into its power based on its Hit Dice as per the table below.

Creature HD	Sixth Sense Reading
1-5	Faint, minor, weak
6-15	Moderate, disturbing, independent
16-25	Strong, powerful, intelligent
26+	Overwhelming, mighty, malevolent

**Pierce the Veil (Su):** At 5th level, the medium's finely honed senses allow her to cast her sight into the land of the dead. She may cast *speak with dead* once per day as a caster of her total character level.

## MERCHANT (EXPERT)

Merchants travel across the world, seeking markets eager to pay well for the goods they offer. They learn the customs of dozens of realms, foreign languages, and the nature and history of a variety of different trade goods, all to help them maximize the profits they enjoy from their voyages.

Whether journeying by land or sea, merchants face a variety of dangers. Bandits prowl trade routes, while in many lands unscrupulous nobles and trade guilds threaten to fleece the unwary. While the dangers a merchant faces may pale compared to a hungry demon or angry dragon, they require him to develop an array of useful skills and abilities. The merchant makes his way through the world with his skill at words and his knowledge of markets and goods. While these talents may not seem as impressive as

swordsmanship or spellcasting, they can prove just as useful.

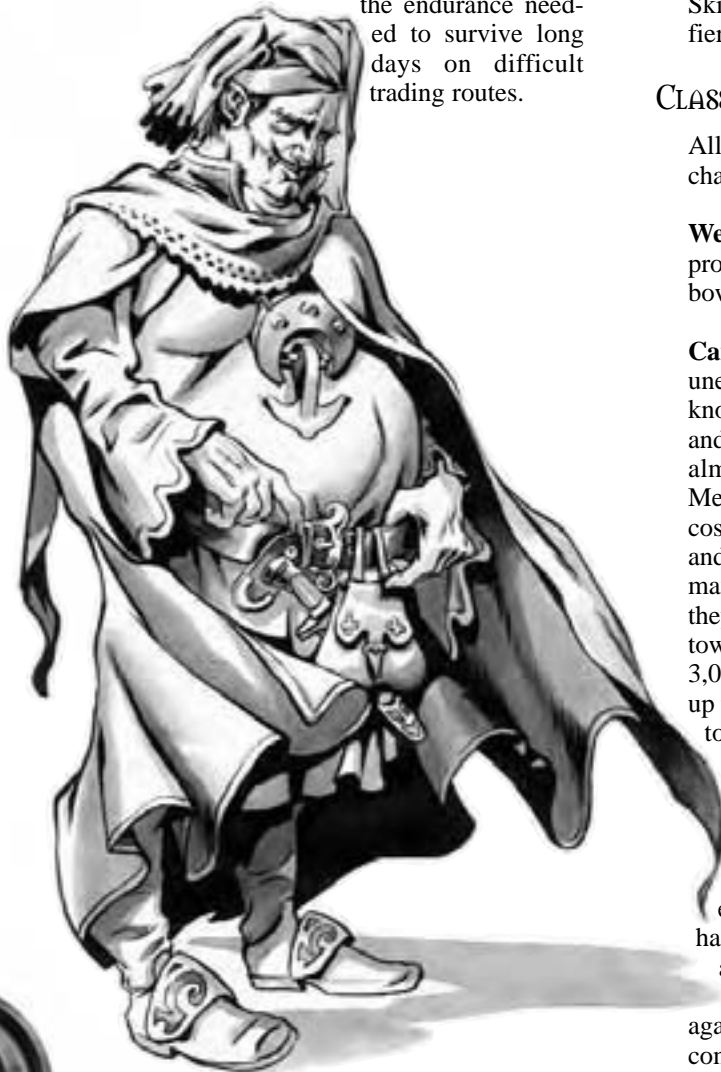
The merchant is closest to the rogue in terms of this class's abilities and flexibility. Merchants must face a staggering variety of hurdles in their travels, forcing them to cultivate a wide array of talents. They have one of the broadest selections of skills amongst the classes given in this book, and they receive many skill ranks per level.

**Characteristics:** Merchants have a talent for finding rare items and difficult to buy goods. They also are experts in dealing with others, as they must often travel to foreign lands and deal with alien cultures in pursuing their business deals.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Merchants have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Charisma is the merchant's most important ability, as it improves his talent for dealing with other people. Wisdom gives him insight into how other people operate, while Constitution gives him the endurance needed to survive long days on difficult trading routes.



**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Mer.

**Starting Gold:** 3d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the merchant class after 1st level, a character must establish himself as a businessman by trading goods and negotiating sales. The character must spend 1d4 months working as a merchant or assisting one in his business.

### CLASS SKILLS

The merchant's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Wis), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language, and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (8 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 8 + Int modifier.

### CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the merchant.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Merchants are proficient with clubs, daggers, staves, light crossbows, and heavy crossbows.

**Canny Businessman (Ex):** Merchants have an unerring sense for a bargain. By drawing on their knowledge of markets, using their trade contacts, and bargaining with the right people, they can find almost any item at the best price available. Merchants receive a 25% discount for any item that costs less than 100 gp, including weapons, armor, and magical gear. They also double a settlement's maximum gold piece value to determine the goods they can find in a town or city. For example, in a town where the most expensive item available costs 3,000 gp, the merchant can shop for items that cost up to 6,000 gp. A merchant can also spend one week to track down an item that costs up to five times the settlement's listed maximum item value. A merchant can only seek one item at a time in this manner.

**World Traveler (Ex):** Merchants are experienced at brokering deals with strangers. They have a good sense for the common desires, fears, and prejudices that mark most humanoid creatures. Merchants can use the Diplomacy skill against humanoids with whom they do not share a common language. Through pantomime and other

# MERCHANT

	Base				
Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Canny businessman
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	World traveler
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Versatile traveler

gestures, the merchant can put his message across. The merchant suffers a -5 penalty to these checks, as this mode of communication pales compared to the spoken word.

**Versatile Traveler (Ex):** With their wide range of experience, merchants pick up bits of information here and there that can prove useful in their adventures. When faced with a difficult task, a merchant can recall bits of an overheard conversation, a legend from a distant land, or some similar bit of useful information. Other times, he simply draws on a hidden reservoir of strength and toughness cultivated by years spent on the road. He may make a single check using a skill of his choice as if he had ranks in it equal to his total class level + 3. This can be any skill, including one in which the merchant had no previous training. A merchant can use this ability 1 + his Intelligence modifier times per day.

## MINSTREL (ORATOR)

Wandering the land, living off nothing more than their wits and talent for entertaining others, minstrels are storehouses of rumors, legends, folktales, and other lore. Their songs and poetry can lift even the darkest heart, while the many weeks they spend on the road have taught them to fend for themselves in a hostile world. Minstrels are handy with a sword, skillful, and knowledgeable of many obscure topics.

Minstrels are the equivalent of bards, though they do not learn spells and their musical abilities are more limited in scope. They can support their comrades with song, but their greatest asset is their knowledge of legends and tales that sometimes contain a nugget of information critical to overcoming a monstrous threat.

**Characteristics:** Minstrels are fair combatants, though their greatest asset is the broad range of lore that they accumulate in their travels. Minstrels frequently exchange stories, poems, and songs with each other, while many of them make an effort to learn the folktales and stories of the areas they travel through. This collected folk wisdom can provide insights into the monstrous beasts and terrors that they sometimes face.

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Minstrels have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Charisma is the minstrel's most important ability. Dexterity also aids this class's abilities, particularly the minstrel's combat prowess. Finally, Intelligence affects the minstrel's ability to recall legends and stories that may provide useful hints in his adventures.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Min.

**Starting Gold:** 1d4 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the minstrel class after 1st level, a character must have ranks in Perform equal to his total character level + 3. He must also spend at least a month on the road singing or telling stories at taverns, gathering local tales and legends, and living off the funds generated by his performances.

## CLASS SKILLS

The minstrel's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nobility and royalty) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the minstrel.

## MINSTREL

	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
Level	Bonus			
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Minstrels are proficient with all simple weapons, light armor, and light shields. They are also proficient with two martial weapons of their choice.

**Inspiring Song (Ex):** Minstrels know a wide range of songs. When faced with a dire situation, they can draw on their knowledge to perform a suitably inspiring or energetic song that lifts their companions' spirits. Once per day per level in this class, a minstrel can tell a story, sing a song, recite a poem, or make some other use of the Perform skill to inspire his allies as a full-round action. After completing this action, all allies within 60 feet of the minstrel gain a +2 morale bonus to all saves and a +1 morale bonus to attacks. This effect lasts for as long as the minstrel can continue to perform.

**Treasure Trove of Knowledge (Ex):** Minstrels pick up a wide range of stories and legends in their travels. By drawing on this storehouse of knowledge, they can sometimes uncover clues and important hints in the poems and myths they have learned. When encountering a strange creature or a magical item for the first time, a minstrel may make a DC 15 Intelligence check with a bonus equal to his level in this class. If he succeeds, he recalls something about the creature or item's background. If his check result is 20 or higher, he recalls 1d3 of its specific abilities or features. If the check is 25 or higher, he remembers one of its specific weaknesses or command words, gaining a +5 competence bonus on Use Magic Device checks with it if applicable.

**Captivating Performer (Ex):** At 5th level in this class, the minstrel can render a performance that captivates a large audience. He may make a Perform check opposed by a single Will save for a group of individuals who have 5 or fewer HD. If the group fails its save, the minstrel catches its attention with his music. He can control the group's general actions, inciting it to attack a subject, dictating its movements, causing it to break up, or keeping it calm. This ability does not work against a hostile crowd, and the minstrel must perform for at least 5 uninterrupted rounds before this ability takes effect. The minstrel can influence only those members of the crowd who are within 100 feet

### Special

Inspiring song

Treasure trove of knowledge

Captivating performer

of him and who can hear and see him. The crowd does not take suicidal actions, nor does it blindly follow the minstrel's urgings. Instead, treat the crowd as if it sees the minstrel's counsel in the best possible light as if he were a close friend or ally. The crowd also gains the benefits of the minstrel's inspiring song ability, though using this ability does not count as one of his inspiring song ability's daily uses.

## PHYSICIAN (ACADEMIC)

While the art of medicine is primitive at best in a world of dark fantasy, the relative scarcity of divine magic forces most people to seek out experts who have studied anatomy and have the knowledge needed to set bones, mend cuts, and treat illnesses. Physicians usually settle down in a single village or town and practice their craft for their neighbors, building up a steady stream of clients. Others who follow this career travel the land, seeking out areas that need their talents the most due to warfare, plagues, and other calamities.

Physicians are similar to clerics in that they offer healing and restoration to the rest of the party. However, they lack the cleric's divine casting ability and power over the undead. Instead, they use mundane methods and training to tend to the injured.

**Characteristics:** Physicians can heal injuries, cure diseases, and relieve other conditions that can hinder a character. They gain access to new uses for the Heal skill that expand its utility and allow them to heal characters faster than normal.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Physicians have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Wisdom is the physician's most important attribute, as it dictates their talent with the Heal skill. Intelligence also gives them a bonus to Knowledge checks.

**Hit Die:** d6.

# PHYSICIAN

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Healing hands
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Restore health
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Master healer

**Abbreviation:** Phy.

**Starting Gold:** 2d4 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the physician class after 1st level, a character must have ranks in Heal equal to his total character level + 3.

## CLASS SKILLS

The physician's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Profession (Wis), and Speak Language.

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the physician.

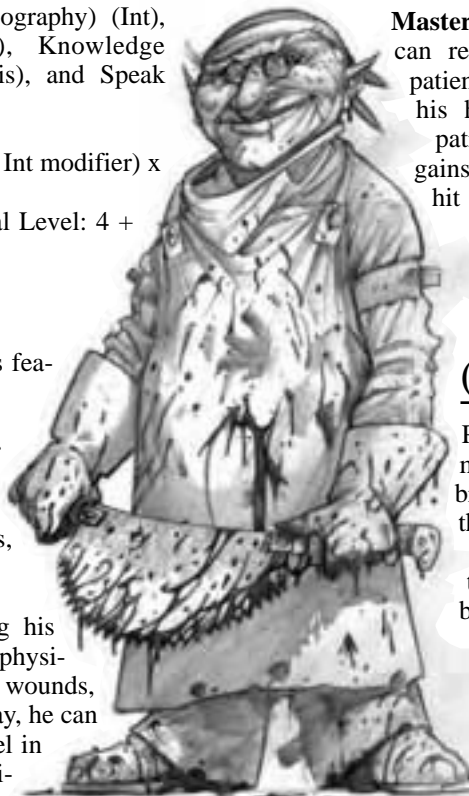
### Weapon and Armor Proficiency:

Physicians are proficient with clubs, daggers, staves, light crossbows, and heavy crossbows.

**Healing Hands (Ex):** Using his knowledge of medicine, the physician can mend injuries, bind wounds, and set broken limbs. Each day, he can heal damage equal to his level in this class x his Wisdom modifier x 2. To tend to a patient's wounds, the physician must spend 30 minutes binding his wounds with bandages, stitches, and other supplies. A physician without these materials cannot heal injuries.

**Restore Health (Ex):** At 5th level, the physician learns advanced techniques that allow him to restore a patient's strength, quickness, or mental acuity. If the physician tends to a patient for an entire day, he can spend 10 points of his healing hands ability to cure 1 point of temporary ability score damage. In addition, when treating poisons or disease with the Heal skill, he can exchange 5 points of healing for a +2 bonus to his check. A physician can spend 10 points of healing for a +4 bonus, 15 points for +6, and so on, up to the total healing he has available.

**Master Healer (Ex):** At 10th level, a physician can remove blindness or deafness from a patient by spending 10 points each day from his healing hands ability and treating a patient for 1d4+1 days. In addition, he now gains a +4 bonus to Heal checks for every 5 hit points worth of healing he uses to improve his ability.



## Pit Fighter (LABORER)

Pit fighters are gladiators who fight for money, fame, and glory. They lack the broad range of training and experience that a veteran soldier possesses, but they make up for it with their sheer ferocity and tenacity. Pit fighters are anything but subtle in combat. They pound their enemies with heavy weapons, overwhelming them with brutal strikes.

Pit fighters are analogous to barbarians. Though they are not as powerful as that class, they fulfill a similar role. Over the course of a fight they are less skilled than other warriors, but for brief bursts they stand head and shoulders above their comrades.

## Pit Fighter

Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Frenzy
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Dirty fighting
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Fearless frenzy

**Characteristics:** Pit fighters are the second-best characters in battle, behind only veterans amongst the classes given in this section. Their frenzy ability allows them to boost their physical capabilities while ignoring mind-affecting effects, an important edge in battles against otherworldly creatures and horrifying demons.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Pit fighters have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Strength is the pit fighter's most important ability score, as it improves their attacks and allows them to deal more damage. Dexterity aids their AC, as they rarely wear heavy armor, while Constitution lets them withstand attacks and remain in the fight for longer periods of time.

**Hit Die:** d10.

**Abbreviation:** Ptf.

**Starting Gold:** 1d20 gp, along with a suit of studded leather armor and one simple or martial weapon worth 50 gp or less.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the pit fighter class after 1st level, a character must have a base attack bonus of +3. He must also spend one month training in gladiatorial combat (either legitimate or illegal) to gain the necessary experience to enter this profession.

### CLASS SKILLS

The pit fighter's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Escape Artist (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.  
Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

### CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the pit fighter.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Pit fighters are proficient with simple and martial weapons, light armor, and all shields.

**Frenzy (Ex):** Once per day, a pit fighter can enter a berserk fury that grants him enhanced strength and toughness at the cost of his defenses. This frenzy lasts a number of rounds equal to 5 + the pit fighter's Constitution modifier. During the frenzy, the pit fighter gains a +2 bonus to Strength and Constitution, a +4 bonus on all saves against fear and mind-influencing effects, and a -2 penalty to AC. When the frenzy ends, the pit fighter's AC penalty continues until the current encounter is over.

**Dirty Fighting (Ex):** In the blood-sport arenas, warriors use any tactic that proves useful even if it goes against the popular conception of chivalry or proper behavior. Pit fighters bite, kick, aim for the groin, and otherwise do whatever it takes to overcome their enemies. If a pit fighter attacks a flanked opponent or one who has lost his Dexterity bonus to AC, he gains +1d6 bonus damage. The rules for applying this bonus damage are identical to those for sneak attacks.

**Fearless Frenzy (Ex):** At 5th level, the pit fighter gains an additional daily use of his frenzy ability. In addition, while in a frenzy he gains immunity to all fear-based effects.

## PROSPECTOR (EXPERT)

Throughout the world, there are those whose love of wealth and gold outweighs their fears of the darkness that lurks at the edge of civilization. Prospectors usually seek out veins of gold and other precious metals, but many of them also delve into forgotten ruins in search of lost treasures and valuable relics from the earlier era of the ancients. Prospectors guard their finds with a bulldog's tenacity, as those who grow unwary fall victim to bandits and robbers who seek to steal the prospectors' hard earned wealth.

Prospectors are similar to specialized rogues, those who focus on handling traps and uncovering hidden treasures. Prospectors' experience with seeking lost

# PROSPECTOR

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Trap mastery
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Oiled reflexes
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Danger sense

treasures—many of which are protected by traps—and their own use of snares to protect their claims makes them well suited to handling such threats.

**Characteristics:** Prospectors excel at uncovering traps, setting snares to catch the unwary, and uncovering rumors of hidden treasures and lost mines, temples, and other potential treasure troves.

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Prospectors have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Dexterity and Intelligence are the prospector's two key ability scores. Dexterity improves this class's ability to open locks and evade many traps. A high Intelligence makes it easier to uncover hidden tripwires and panels and disarm the trap mechanisms they can activate.

**Hit Die:** d8.

**Abbreviation:** Prp.

**Starting Gold:** 2d4 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the prospector class after 1st level, a character must have ranks in Search and Disable Device equal to his character level + 3.

## CLASS SKILLS

The prospector's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Climb (Str), Craft (Wis), Disable Device (Int), Jump (Str), Knowledge (local) (Int), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) x 4.  
Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

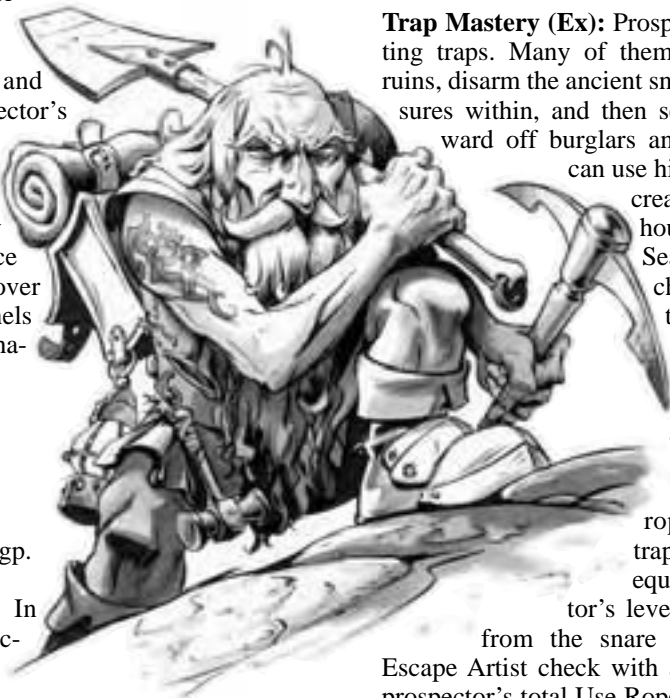
All of the following are class features of the prospector.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Prospectors are proficient with all simple weapons and light armor.

**Trap Mastery (Ex):** Prospectors are experts at setting traps. Many of them must enter tombs and ruins, disarm the ancient snares that protect the treasures within, and then set traps of their own to ward off burglars and thieves. A prospector can use his Disable Device skill to create a trap. It takes two hours to create a trap with Search and Disable Device check DCs equal to 10 + the prospector's total Disable Device bonus.

A trap can inflict damage according to the prospector's level or it can bind a victim in a rope snare. A damaging trap has a base attack bonus equal to twice the prospector's level in this class. Escaping from the snare requires a Strength or Escape Artist check with a DC equal to 10 + the prospector's total Use Rope bonus. A victim caught in a rope snare cannot move from the spot where he triggered the trap. If the prospector reduces the trap's Disable Device and Search DCs by 5, the snare suspends its victim 10 feet in the air, increasing the Strength and Escape Artist DCs by 5.

In addition, a prospector can use this skill to conceal a pit or other danger as long as the DM rules that he can find enough materials and create a reasonable plan to hide it. As a rule of thumb, the typical trap consumes 10 feet of rope, a half-dozen sharpened stakes or piercing weapons, and



## SAGE

Level	Base			
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4

### Special

Encyclopedic knowledge

Master of forgotten lore

Brilliant insight

leaves, dirt, or other camouflaging material. Damaging traps deal damage based on the prospector's class level.

Prospector Level	Trap Damage
1st	1d6
2nd	1d8
3rd	2d6
4th	3d6
5th	4d6

**Oiled Reflexes (Ex):** Prospectors have a keen sense for traps, allowing them to halt their efforts to disarm them a split second before making a potentially fatal mistake. If a prospector would trigger a trap due to a failed Disable Device attempt, he may immediately make a second skill check. If this check also fails badly enough to spring the trap, the trap activates. Otherwise, if this check succeeds, the trap fails to trigger. The prospector does not use the second check's result to disarm the trap.

For example, a prospector tries to disarm a poison needle. His first check fails by 8, a wide enough margin to trigger the trap. He then uses this ability to make a second Disable Device check. If this check succeeds, the trap is still active but the prospector manages to prevent it from triggering. He must still disable it to safely pass it by.

**Danger Sense (Ex):** With their experience in dodging traps and keen eye for a dangerous spot, prospectors always manage to remain one step ahead of danger. A prospector can re-roll a failed saving throw a number of times per day equal to his Intelligence modifier + 1, with a minimum of one use per day.

## SAGE (ACADEMIC)

The world is an ancient place, and while civilization has repeatedly risen from savagery, achieved an apex of glory, and fallen into ruin once again, the accumulated knowledge of man continues to build.

Cities may burn and civilizations collapse, but some fragments of lore pass on from one generation to the next.

Sages are masters of knowledge of all sorts. They study ancient tomes and copy them into modern languages, while others work with researchers and inventors to record their discoveries and theories. A sage may seem an odd choice for an adventurer, but many powerful beasts have vulnerabilities and weaknesses that only a learned sage or scholar can recall.

Sages have no real analog amongst the standard, core classes. They prove that maxim that knowledge is power, as they have the tools and skills needed to uncover the weaknesses and tendencies that may prove useful in defeating monstrous demons and other threats.

**Characteristics:** Sages are treasure houses of knowledge. Their long hours spent copying ancient texts, learning a variety of languages, and delving into philosophy and history make them well equipped to uncover the secrets of the dark things that lurk within the cosmos. Unfortunately, as academics they are physically weak, unable to handle a sword, and easily overwhelmed in melee.

### GAME RULE INFORMATION

Sages have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Intelligence is the sage's most important ability, as it dictates the breadth of his knowledge and aids in his attempts to uncover forgotten lore concerning strange monsters, bizarre cults, and other blasphemous threats.

**Hit Die:** d4.

**Abbreviation:** Scr.

**Starting Gold:** 1d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the sage class after 1st level, a character must have ranks in any three Knowledge skills equal to his total character level + 3.



## CLASS SKILLS

The sage's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Knowledge (Int), Profession (Wis), and Speak Language. In addition, sages tend to acquire an eclectic range of skills and abilities. They may select any 10 skills as class skills.

Skill Points at 1st Level:  $(8 + \text{Int modifier}) \times 4$ .  
Skill Point at Each Additional Level:  $8 + \text{Int modifier}$ .

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the sage.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Sages are proficient with the dagger. They have training with no other weapons or armor.

**Encyclopedic Knowledge (Ex):** Through their studies and work, sages gain access to a staggering range of lore. At 1st level, the sage selects a number of Knowledge skills equal to his Intelligence modifier + 1. The sage immediately gains 4 ranks in those skills, and for each level gained in this class he gains an additional rank in each of them. However, the sage can never go above the maximum ranks allowed in a skill based on his total level. Any skill ranks gained from this ability above this limit are lost.

**Master of Forgotten Lore (Ex):** Even if a sage has no formal training in a field of knowledge, he still picks up bits and pieces of information from almost every area of study. A sage can choose to make a Knowledge skill check as if he had ranks in it equal to double his level in this class, even if he normally has no ranks in that skill.

**Brilliant Insight (Ex):** Once per day, a sage may treat a Knowledge skill check as if his die roll were a natural 20. This ability may only be used with Knowledge skills in which the sage has at least 4 ranks.

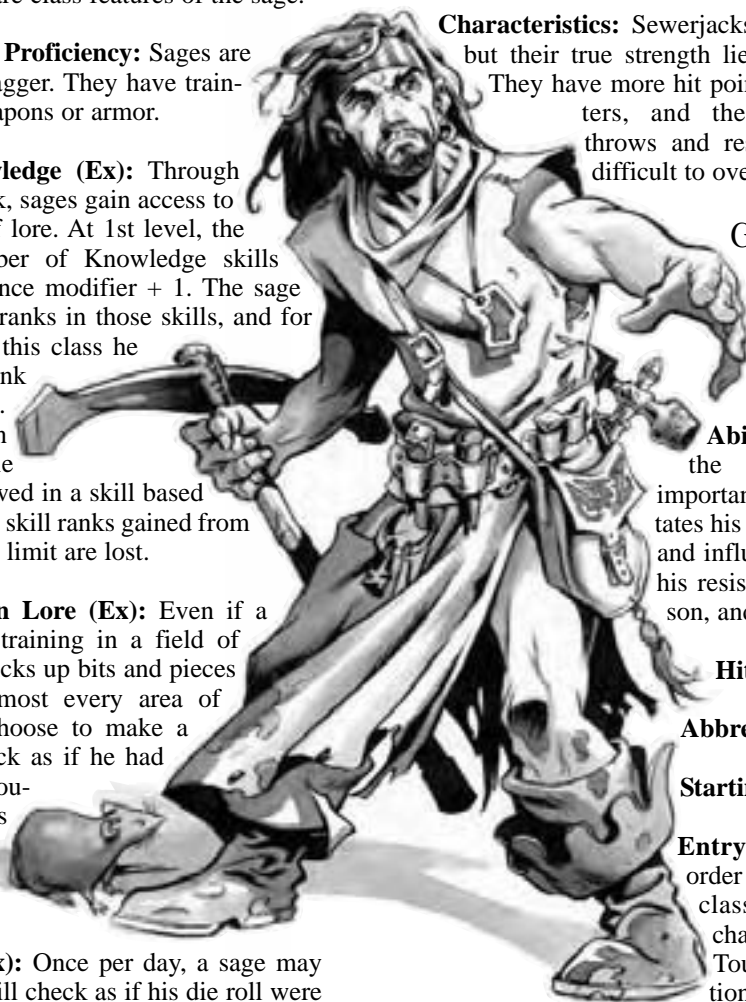
## SEWERJACK (LABORER)

In order for civilization to function properly, it needs those who shoulder jobs and occupations that most people find repellent. From those charged with collecting the dead to workers who must dig sewer channels and burn refuse, there are a variety of

vocations that feature repellent working conditions. The sewerjack handles one such position. Responsible for making repairs on the sewers of sprawling, ancient cities, the sewerjack learns to endure cramped spaces, sickening odors, and the dangerous beasts that lurk in dark, rotting places. While sewerjacks offer few subtle skills, they are tough, hardy, and able to shoulder conditions that overwhelm lesser men.

Sewerjacks share some resemblance to the monk character class, as they are difficult to defeat through force of arms, traps, or spells. They have good saving throws and are resistant to a variety of effects.

**Characteristics:** Sewerjacks are decent fighters, but their true strength lies in their toughness. They have more hit points than other characters, and their excellent saving throws and resistances make them difficult to overcome.



## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Sewerjacks have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Constitution is the sewerjack's most important ability score. It dictates his saving throw bonuses and influences the strength of his resistance to disease, poison, and other hazards.

**Hit Die:** d12.

**Abbreviation:** Sjk.

**Starting Gold:** 1d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the sewerjack class after 1st level, a character must have the Toughness feat. In addition, he must work in a city's sewer system as a laborer for at least two months. After this time, he acquires the experience and endurance necessary to enter this class.

## CLASS SKILLS

The sewerjack's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Profession (Wis), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at 1st Level:  $(4 + \text{Int modifier}) \times 4$ .

## SEWERJACK

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+2	+2	Tough as leather
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+3	
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+3	Resiliency
4th	+3	+4	+4	+4	
5th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Disease immunity

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the sewerjack.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Sewerjacks are proficient with simple weapons and light armor. They also have proficiency with weapons that resemble the tools they commonly use: light hammer, hand axe, light pick, battleaxe, heavy pick, warhammer, and greataxe.

**Tough as Leather (Ex):** Due to their persistent exposure to filth, fouled air, and other hazards, sewerjacks gain a bonus on all saves against poison and disease. They receive a +4 bonus on all saves against these effects and grant a +4 bonus to anyone who makes a Heal check made to treat such conditions that affect them.

**Resiliency (Ex):** While sewerjacks can absorb a lot of punishment, they are also tough enough to throw off any effects that take hold of them. They may suffer the first symptoms of an illness, but they can soon overcome the infection. A sewerjack may re-roll a failed saving throw a number of times per day equal to his Constitution modifier. This ability may be used with any type of save, but a given attempt can only be re-rolled once. The sewerjack must accept the results of the second save.

**Disease Immunity (Ex):** At 5th level, sewerjacks gain immunity to all mundane and magical diseases. They have been exposed to such a staggering variety of illnesses, contagions, and infections that their bodies have developed the ability to snuff them out before they pose a threat.

## THIEF (EXPERT)

As civilization grows, trade, commerce, and material production all expand by leaps and bounds. With such a tremendous bounty of money and goods moving through a city or nation, it is inevitable that some clever individuals arise who learn

how to bend, abuse, or fleece the system for tremendous profits. Thieves have no regard for the law. Instead, they care only for their own profit and well being. While they are only rarely worthy of trust, their skills can prove useful to anyone who needs to sneak into a cult's compound or steal a valuable but dangerous idol or magical item.

Thieves are similar to rogues, though they have a slightly smaller selection of skills and receive fewer special abilities.

**Characteristics:** Thieves are flexible and adaptable. To make their living through illegal means, they master a variety of useful skills that make it easier to rob, cheat, and steal the money they desire.

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Thieves have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Dexterity is the thief's most important ability, as it plays a role in Sleight of Hand, Hide, Move Silently, and other skills that this class finds useful. Intelligence also expands on a thief's total available skill ranks, granting broader access to this class's many skills.

**Hit Die:** d6.

**Abbreviation:** Thf.

**Starting Gold:** 1d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the thief class after 1st level, a character must master the fundamental talents that this class possesses. The character must have ranks in Hide, Move Silently, Open Lock, and Sleight of Hand equal to his total level + 3.

## CLASS SKILLS

The thief's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Wis), Diplomacy (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Knowledge (local) (Int), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search

# THIEF

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Sneak attack +1d6
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Sneak attack +2d6
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Sneak attack +3d6

(Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (8 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 8 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the thief.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Thieves are proficient with all simple weapons, plus the hand crossbow, rapier, shortbow, and short sword. Thieves are proficient with light armor, but not with shields.

**Sneak Attack (Ex):** If a thief can catch an opponent when he is unable to defend himself effectively from his attack, he can strike a vital spot for extra damage.

The thief's attack deals extra damage any time his target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the thief flanks his target. This extra damage is 1d6 at 1st level, and it increases by 1d6 every two thief levels thereafter. Should the thief score a critical hit with a sneak attack, do not multiply this extra damage.

Ranged attacks can count as sneak attacks only if the target is within 30 feet.

With a sap (blackjack) or an unarmed strike, a thief can make a sneak attack that deals nonlethal damage instead of lethal damage. He cannot use a weapon that deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage in a sneak attack, not even with the usual -4 penalty.

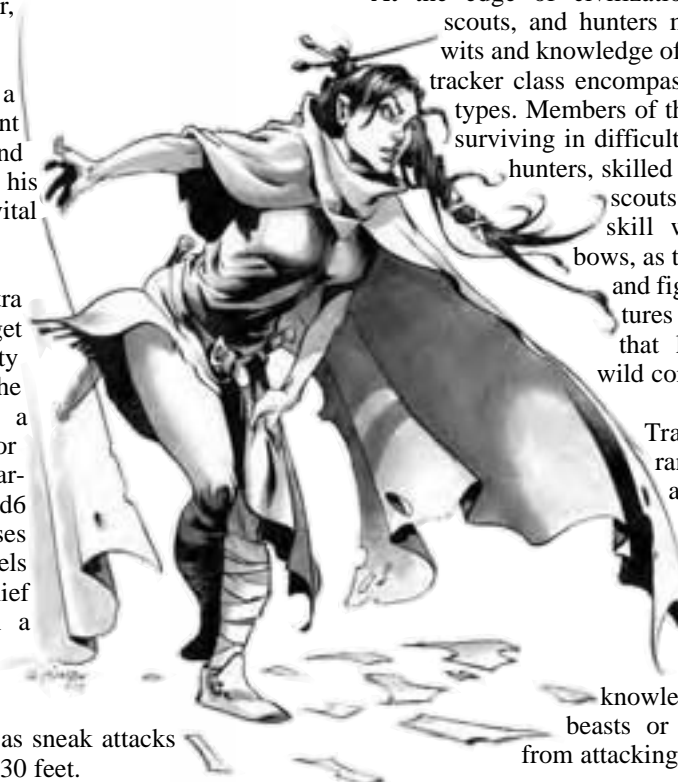
A thief can sneak attack only living creatures with discernible anatomies—undead, constructs, oozes, plants, and incorporeal creatures lack vital areas to attack. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is not vulnerable to sneak attacks. The thief must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. A thief cannot sneak attack while striking a creature with concealment or striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond reach.

## TRACKER (EXPERT)

At the edge of civilization, tough woodsmen, scouts, and hunters make a living on their wits and knowledge of the natural world. The tracker class encompasses all of these archetypes. Members of this class are masters of surviving in difficult terrain. They are able hunters, skilled explorers, and talented scouts. They have moderate skill with arms, especially bows, as they must hunt for food and fight off the strange creatures and savage humanoids that lurk within the dark, wild corners of the world.

Trackers are similar to rangers. They have the ability to survive in the wilderness for extended periods of time with few supplies and no ready shelter. They can also handle animals, using their knowledge to calm frightened beasts or prevent wild animals from attacking.

**Characteristics:** Trackers are experts at wilderness survival. They have many skills that aid in exploring the outdoors, while their class abilities allow them to flourish in forests, deserts, and other wilderness regions.



# TRACKER

Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	Bonus feats
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0	
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1	Hunter's eye +1d6
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1	
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Hunter's eye +2d6

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Trackers have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Wisdom is the tracker's most important ability, as it modifies skills that are important to this class's goals, such as Survival, Spot, and Listen. Dexterity aids a tracker in combat, as this class emphasizes proficiency with the bow.

**Hit Die:** d8.

**Abbreviation:** Trk.

**Starting Gold:** 1d8 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the tracker class after 1st level, a character must have some talent for surviving in the wilderness. He must have the Track feat and ranks in Survival equal to his character level + 3. In addition, a character must spend at least one month in the wilderness, relying on nothing more than the supplies he can carry and his ability to survive off the wilds.

## CLASS SKILLS

The tracker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Wis), Handle Animal (Wis), Heal (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) x 4.  
Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the tracker.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Trackers are proficient with all simple weapons, as well as the shortbow, longbow, composite shortbow, and composite longbow, and with light armor.

**Bonus Feats:** Trackers gain several bonus feats to reflect their experience in the wilderness. They gain Track, Endurance, and Skill Focus (Survival) as bonus feats at 1st level.

**Hunter's Eye (Ex):** Trackers are expert hunters. They can bring down a wild animal with a single arrow, drawing on their knowledge of anatomy and experience as hunters to put a shot precisely on target. A tracker gains the sneak attack ability as per the thief class when using ranged weapons. He gains +1d6 damage at 3rd level and an additional +1d6 at 5th level.

## VETERAN (LABORER)

Whether they are mercenary warriors seeking a bigger payday, warriors mustered out of the land's armies in the aftermath of a great war, or local militiamen seeking to turn their training into a profitable skill, veterans are warriors who have left military service behind. They are most comfortable in a suit of stout chainmail while bearing a thick shield and a sharp sword. They are not flashy warriors, but their talents and training allow them to overcome many foes with good tactics and consistent fighting skill.

Veterans are similar to fighters. Both classes receive many feats, though a veteran does not have quite as many bonus feats nor does he start with Heavy Armor Proficiency.

**Characteristics:** Veterans are skilled warriors who, with practice and experience, can become experts in the use of weapons and armor. While the monstrous threats that lurk beyond the world are too powerful to be overcome with simple weapons, a veteran can cut through cultists and minions with his steel.

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Veterans have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Strength is the veteran's most valuable ability, as it improves his skill in melee and improves the damage he inflicts with his weapons. Constitution improves his hit points and toughness,

# VETERAN

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bonus feat
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Bonus feat
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Bonus feat
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Bonus feat
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Bonus feat
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	

while Dexterity makes him harder to hit and improves his archery skill.

**Hit Die:** d10.

**Abbreviation:** Vet.

**Starting Gold:** 2d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the veteran class after 1st level, a character must establish his skill with weapons and armor. He must have light and medium armor proficiency, along with proficiency with any three martial weapons. In addition he must have a base attack bonus of at least +1.

## CLASS SKILLS

The veteran's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 2.  
Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the veteran.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Veterans have proficiency with simple and martial weapons, light and medium armor, and all shields, including the tower shield.

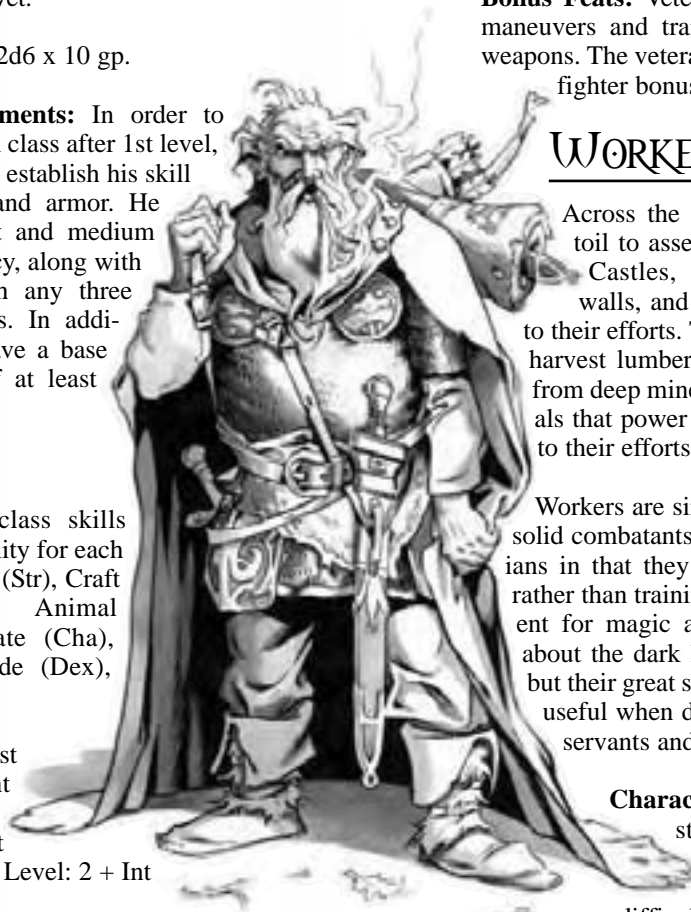
**Bonus Feats:** Veterans learn a variety of combat maneuvers and train to become masters of their weapons. The veteran may select any feat listed as a fighter bonus feat.

## WORKER (LABORER)

Across the world, vast legions of workers toil to assemble the blocks of civilization. Castles, cathedrals, dams, defensive walls, and other great structures arise due to their efforts. They chisel stone from quarries, harvest lumber from forests, and extract gold from deep mineshafts. Many of the raw materials that power civilization are gathered thanks to their efforts.

Workers are similar to fighters in that they are solid combatants, but they also resemble barbarians in that they draw on their physical talents rather than training. Workers have no special talent for magic and they rarely know anything about the dark horrors that threaten the world, but their great strength and toughness can prove useful when dealing with a dark god's mortal servants and cultists.

**Characteristics:** Workers are tough, strong, and durable. As they gain levels, they improve their physical attributes and prove more difficult to overwhelm through brute force. On an adventure, they are steady and reliable contributors who can overcome a variety of mundane obstacles.



# WORKER

Level	Base			
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1

## Special

Bonus feat, broad back

Broad back

Broad back

## GAME RULE INFORMATION

Workers have all the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Strength is the worker's key ability. He develops his physical abilities as he gains experience, as he puts himself through the hard work needed to raise buildings, erect thick castle walls, and chisel and drag rock from a quarry's walls.

**Hit Die:** d10.

**Abbreviation:** Wrk.

**Starting Gold:** 1d6 x 10 gp.

**Entry Requirements:** In order to enter the worker class after 1st level, a character must have a Strength score of 13 or higher. He must also spend at least one month toiling as a laborer on a major public works project, a lumber camp, or a similar site.

## CLASS SKILLS

The worker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Jump (Str), and Swim (Str). In addition, workers acquire a variety of skills owing to their broad, varied backgrounds and experiences. A worker may choose any four skills to treat as class skills.

Skill Points at 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Point at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

## CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the worker.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Workers are proficient with simple weapons and light armor. They also have proficiency with weapons that resemble the tools they commonly use: light hammer, hand axe, light pick, battleaxe, heavy pick, warhammer, and greataxe.

**Bonus Feat:** At 1st level, the worker gains an additional feat to reflect his background and

experiences. He must choose this bonus feat from the following list: Alertness, Athletic, Deft Hands, Endurance (Die Hard), Great Fortitude, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, and Toughness.

**Broad Back (Ex):** Workers become stronger, tougher, and even more agile as they pursue their difficult work. At 1st, 3rd, and 5th level, a worker gains a +1 bonus to his choice of Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution. This is a permanent bonus that reflects the worker's developed physique and superior strength and toughness he develops by working long, tough hours under difficult conditions.

# MAGIC ITEMS

One of the key balancing forces in the core rules lies in the average gold pieces characters have at each level. This measure allows you to estimate the magic items that a character can have depending on his experience, and it also dictates the most powerful item available to the party. Usually, a PC can afford an item that duplicates a spell usable by a wizard one or two levels lower than the character's current levels. For example, a 5th-level wizard can use 3rd-level spells. That means that at around 7th level characters can afford items that duplicate those effects. Since magic items directly translate into expansions to a character's abilities and talents, keeping control over them is another way that you can limit the characters' abilities to keep them in line with the tone and feel of a horror campaign. Chapter 4 has notes on awarding magic items in a horror or dark fantasy game.

For players, keep in mind that the reward in a horror game is usually survival. If you can develop a character past 5th level, you have done a good job of playing your PC and avoiding the dangerous situations that lurk around every corner in a horror game. Unlike high fantasy games where death is a threat once or twice per adventure and rewards come in the form of nifty magical items, horror games place a greater emphasis on overcoming obstacles and gaining experience. A character's innate abilities are his true assets.

## CHAPTER TWO

# HORROR CAMPAIGNS

The core rules encourage a particular style of play. You might not think of it that way, but consider some of the game's rules and how they affect a session. Anyone who has played a fighter keeps a careful eye on her character's hit point levels. When you have a lot of hit points you can take risks and charge into battle. When your character is injured, you need to fight cautiously and avoid prolonged battles. Spellcasters gain progressively more powerful spells, allowing them to easily destroy large numbers of weak creatures with a single *fireball*.

The rules assume that characters have a minimum level of wealth at each level, which translates into a range of magic items that a character should have access to. The challenge rating system is calibrated to provide characters with appropriate threats. It assumes that the PCs usually face monsters that are at or near their power level.

Dark fantasy and horror games work against some of these assumptions. In a horror game, combat might not be as important. The core hit point rules allow PCs to absorb a few attacks without disrupting their abilities. In contrast, most horror movies and stories present overwhelming, immediate threats that can slay even the toughest hero with a single blow. Magic, monsters, and other aspects of the core rules may not match the tone and feel that you want to evoke in your dark fantasy game. This chapter, along with chapters three and four, present a variety of new options you can use to modify the core rules.

## THE TEMPLATE APPROACH

In many ways, these new rules work like templates that change the entire game. A monster template allows you to take an ogre and make it a half-demonic beast, or transform an evil wizard into a spellcasting vampire. The rules options given in the following chapters work the same way. By altering the rules of the game, you can change how the players approach scenarios and how the world works. If no one has many hit points, then heroes cannot stand alone against powerful monsters or dozens of opponents. If destructive spells wear away a caster's soul, only the most diabolic wizards, sorcerers, and clerics will use them.

If you want to run a gritty dark fantasy game, you should start by using the optional rules for hit points and the new rules for black magic. In addition, read the advice on magic items in Chapter 4 and incorporate it into your game. With those changes, you can transform the core rules into a system that has a high level of danger, strange forbidden magic, and a greater emphasis on avoiding combat and using tricks, stratagems, and good planning to overcome enemies.

The insanity rules given in this chapter allow you to add an element of horror to your games. Simply encountering powerful creatures—never mind fighting them—can destroy the characters. Madness and instability plague anyone who pokes at the bizarre creatures and strange beings that lurk at the edge of reality.

The investigation rules from Chapter 3 give you expanded options for Knowledge skills and give you ideas for optional rules that could be handy in dark fantasy and horror games. With the characters less reliant on combat and powerful spells to overwhelm their enemies, they may need to dig through eldritch tomes to uncover their enemies' weaknesses or discover the clues they need to foil a villain's plot.

## CHARACTER HEALTH AND MORTALITY

One of the key elements of fantasy RPGs is that characters can sustain multiple injuries before they are defeated. Hit points allow them to fight against overwhelming odds and go toe to toe against powerful monsters. A mighty barbarian can leap into a mob of drow warriors, absorb dozens of crossbow bolts, and hack his way through an army of orcs, all thanks to the tremendous number of hit points he has built up due to his high level and Constitution score.

In a dark fantasy game, such events undermine the idea that powerful, overwhelming monsters lurk just beyond the feeble light of civilization. Characters with mountains of hit points can take on powerful enemies and shrug off terrible wounds. While this works great for a heroic game, it undermines some of the strengths of a dark fantasy campaign. The optional rules presented here offer several new systems for health. They also include commentary on how you can use the core rules as written without injecting too much action-adventure heroism into a dark fantasy game.

### CONSTITUTION AND HEALTH SYSTEM

The first optional rule set addresses one of the basic problems that hit points pose in a dark fantasy game. With each level the characters gain, their hit points advance steadily upward. Fighters and barbarians can have more than 100 hit points by

8th or 9th level, perhaps even earlier for characters that have good Constitution scores.

On the other hand, hit points are easy to keep track of, your players already understand how they work, and all of the monsters, NPCs, and classes in the other RPG books you own make use of them. At first glance, it might seem simple enough to limit the characters to lower numbers of hit points, but this move can cause some unforeseen complications. For example, if you alter hit points so that the characters have lower totals, how does that change things for monsters? Do ogres, trolls, and other beasts have the same number of hit points as before? If hit points no longer represent a combination of endurance, energy, toughness, and luck, what do they represent?

The health system is very similar to hit points. A creature's health is a numerical value that declines as the creature takes damage. Attacks, spells, and other effects inflict the same damage under both systems. There is no need to convert anything. However, health is calculated in a much different manner than hit points. A creature's Constitution score and its size are much more important factors in determining health when compared to the hit point rules. The formula is as follows:

Health = (Constitution score x size factor) + Hit Dice or level

*Constitution:* A creature or character's Constitution is the basic building block for its health score. Most PCs' health equals their Constitution.

*Size Factor:* Logically, bigger creatures should be able to absorb more punishment than smaller ones. To account for this, a creature multiplies its Constitution score by a size factor to reflect its greater body mass, thicker bones, and denser muscles. Look up a creature's size on the size factor table and multiply that factor by the creature's Constitution.

Creature Size	Size Factor
Fine	1/8
Diminutive	1/8
Tiny	1/4
Small	1/2
Medium	1
Large	2
Huge	3
Gargantuan	4
Colossal	5

*Hit Dice or Level:* A creature's Hit Dice play a minor role in determining its health. Regardless of the creature or character's Hit Die type (d4, d8, and so on), a creature gains +1 health for each Hit Die it has. Hit Dice allow you to introduce some variation in creatures' health ratings, since this system tends



to give creatures with the same size roughly the same health rating. They also still play a role in determining a monster's attack bonus, saving throws, and so on. In addition, remember that PCs gain one Hit Die per level. Thus, after multiplying a character's Constitution by his size factor, add his total level to the result to determine his health rating.

**Examples:** To guide you in calculating a creature or character's health rating, here are a few examples to show you how this system works.

*Example 1:* A 1st-level human fighter with a 15 Constitution would have 16 health. The fighter is size Medium, for a size factor of 1.  $15 \times 1$  is 15. Adding +1 for the character's level, the total is 16.

*Example 2:* A centaur has a Con of 15, size Large, and 4 Hit Dice. The size factor for Large is 2. Con times size factor is  $15 \times 2$ , or 30. Adding its Hit Dice of 4 results in a total health of 34.

*Example 3:* A gnome rogue has a Con of 13, size Small, and is level 4. The size factor for Small is  $1/2$ . Con times size factor is  $13 \times 1/2$ , or 6.5, rounded down to 6. Adding the gnome's level of 4 results in a total health of 10.

**Health in the Game:** In game play, health works exactly like hit points. If a character takes damage, subtract it from his health rather than his hp. If a character goes to 0 health or less, treat him exactly as if he was reduced to 0 or fewer hit points. Spells and magic items that restore hit points restore health in the same manner.

**Using These Rules:** Health reflects a creature's physical toughness and endurance more closely than hit points. While hit points are an abstract measure of skill, toughness, and size, health is a closer representation of the punishment a creature can sustain before it falls unconscious or strays close to death. Thus, creatures have lower health scores than hit points, though lower-level PCs and monsters with few Hit Dice sometimes have more if they have good Constitution scores.

However, in the long term, a PC's health score barely inches upward. A high-level character has a health score that is perhaps only 10 points higher than a neophyte opponent. The ramifications are important in a gritty, dark fantasy game. Experience levels are no shield against death. A 10th-level character has barely more health than a common peasant, making any fight a challenge. A dozen town guardsmen with crossbows are just as much a threat as a rampaging dragon. This additional divide between the player characters and powerful, dangerous monsters helps enforce the tone and feel of dark fantasy games by clearly showing the players that their characters cannot hope to stand and fight



against powerful monsters. Best of all, since health works almost exactly like hit points, experienced players can instantly see the changes these new rules create for the entire game. If they think of health in terms of hit points, they understand that even a single swipe of an ogre's club or a 2nd or 3rd-level spell can instantly kill a PC.

**Monsters and Health:** The main focus of these rules is on the player characters. Smaller creatures and those with few Hit Dice are hurt the most by it, while in some cases creatures may have higher health ratings than hit points. This exception applies primarily to Large and Huge creatures that have few Hit Dice or very high Constitution scores. In most cases, you can safely use a monster's hit points. The goal of this system is to make the characters more vulnerable than normal, robbing them of the safety net that hit points provide without making them too easily defeated or removing any options for creating tough PCs from the players' hands.

However, it sometimes makes sense to use a single system and stick with it for all creatures. Some monsters may end up with so many hit points that it strains consistency within the game. On the other hand, Medium creatures end up with much fewer hit points. In some cases, otherworldly, strange, and monstrous creatures should use hit points rather than health to reflect their supernatural strength and vitality. The list below gives you a basic guideline on the monsters that should use health and the ones that should use hit points.

*Health:* Aberrations, animals, dragons, giants, humanoids, monstrous humanoids, vermin.

*Hit Points:* Constructs, elementals, fey, magical beasts, oozes, outsiders, plants, undead.

Generally speaking, magical, strange, and otherworldly creatures should use hit points to reflect their monstrous nature. In addition, this divide provides you with another tool to help enforce the feel of horror and fear in a dark fantasy game. If you have watched horror movies, you know that the relentless, monstrous creature that can withstand dozens of bullets and horrific injuries is a classic element of the genre. If the characters see that their weapons and spells have little effect on supernatural creatures, you can increase the horror, fear, and tension in your games. Standing up to a flesh golem with a longsword is virtual suicide if the PCs use health scores and the monster has its full complement of hit points. A dragon's breath can incinerate an entire band of experienced adventurers, while even a 5th-level wizard's *fireball* can deal enough damage to annihilate the party.

## WOUND LEVELS AND INJURY PENALTIES

These optional rules allow you to simulate how the punishment and injuries that characters sustain can hinder their efforts. A sword blow not only pushes a character closer to death, it also causes pain that distracts a PC, breaks his concentration, and makes it more difficult for him to use his abilities. These rules make combat deadlier, as characters can only suffer an injury or two before they become worse at fighting. These penalties serve as a stark reminder to the players that combat is a dangerous proposition. They can defeat a few opponents, but as their injuries mount they lose their ability to fight and defend themselves.

In game design terms, this progression is known as a death spiral. The more injuries the characters sustain, the more likely they are to suffer more of them. In simple terms, if a character starts a fight with an AC of 20 and his AC goes down each time he suffers a hit, he takes more hits and injuries each round. By the same token, if a character's attack bonus goes down with each injury, he has less of a chance of hitting and defeating his foe. Inflicting the first injury in a battle becomes more important under this system. In one-on-one duels, the more skilled combatant, luckier one, or the one who can gain bonuses (such as flanking) has a huge advantage. Those initial edges not only give him a better chance to hit, but they impose penalties on his foe as the damage he inflicts accumulates.

These mechanics also make fights where the characters are outnumbered more difficult than normal. In most of these conflicts, the PCs are more skilled than their enemies are. However, the injury penalty rules help nullify this edge. A mob of creatures has more opportunities to roll a 20 and automatically strike a character regardless of his AC. As these lucky hits pile up, the characters' ability to fight diminishes. Even if the monsters' need an 18 or higher to hit a PC, they can score one or two hits a round if they have 10 attacks to use against a character. As the fight progresses, the PCs' steadily lose their edge over their opponents and can quickly suffer defeat.

**Game Rules:** Under the injury penalty system, characters suffer penalties to various actions as they endure injuries. Spellcasters must focus to cast spells successfully, while warriors are easier to hit and less dangerous themselves, as they cannot dodge as well and cannot put the same power behind their attacks.

Note that this system can be applied to either health or hit points, depending on the level of danger and grittiness in your campaign. Specific guidelines for

using these rules with the health system are offered below.

There are four different health levels, listed from the least injured to the most: healthy, staggered, injured, and critical. A character moves through these injury states as he loses health. Each of the four conditions is described below. Note that the modifiers listed under each health level do not stack. For example, a character in critical condition does not also suffer the penalties for being injured or staggered.

*Healthy:* A healthy character is in perfect physical condition. He has no major injuries, aside from perhaps a few cuts, bruises, and scrapes. A healthy character suffers no special bonuses or penalties to his checks. A character remains in this state until he has lost a quarter of his health.

*Staggered:* A staggered character has sustained one or more notable cuts and bruises. He may have strained muscles or sprained joints, a cut that bleeds into his eyes, or other non-life-threatening but hindering injuries. A staggered character suffers a -2 penalty to attacks, checks, and saves. A staggered spellcaster must make a DC 10 Concentration check to cast a spell. If a character must otherwise make a Concentration check to cast a spell, either use DC 10 or the check's normal DC, whichever is higher. A character is staggered when he has lost a quarter of his maximum health but has not yet lost more than half.

*Injured:* An injured character suffers from wounds that directly hinder his ability to act, such as a cracked bone, a concussion, a wrenched knee, and similar injuries. An injured character suffers a -2 penalty to attacks, checks, and saves. In addition, he suffers a -2 penalty to Strength and Dexterity. An injured spellcaster must make a DC 15 Concentration check to cast a spell. If a character must otherwise make a Concentration check to cast a spell, either use DC 15 or the check's normal DC, whichever is higher. A character is considered injured if he has lost half his health but still has more than a quarter remaining.

*Critical:* A character in critical condition suffers from severe wounds. He has suffered torn ligaments, broken bones, shattered joints, or other serious injuries. He may linger on the edge of death. An injured character suffers a -2 penalty to attacks, checks, and saves. In addition, he suffers a -4 penalty to Strength and Dexterity. Each minute, there is a 10% chance that he loses an additional health point until his total drops below zero. As soon as the character is no longer in critical condition or if he receives healing of any sort, he no longer loses hit points in this manner. A critical spellcaster must make a DC 20 Concentration check to use a spell. If a character must otherwise make a Concentration check to cast a spell, either use DC 20 or the check's

normal DC, whichever is higher. A character is in critical condition when he has 25% or less of his maximum health points remaining.

A character suffers the penalties for a given health level immediately upon taking enough damage to drop him to that level. For example, on its action an ogre fighter attacks a PC twice for 8 and then 5 points of damage. If the first 8 points would drop the character to a lower health level, apply those new penalties before assessing the effects of the 5 point hit.

**Keeping Track of Health Levels:** The easiest way to keep track of a character's health levels is to divide his health or hit points into four groups and place them each into four separate tracks. Divide a character's health points by 4. A character has this many points in each of the four conditions: healthy, staggered, injured, and critical. If you have a remainder after dividing by four, put an extra point into healthy, then staggered, then the injured total until you have allocated the entire remainder. For example, if you have a remainder of one point, place that point in the healthy total. If you have a remainder of three, put one point into healthy, one into staggered, and one into injured.

To keep track of a character's health level, subtract damage he suffers from the healthy total first. When those points are exhausted, take points out of the staggered total, and so on. Once a character has lost any point from a wound level's total, he suffers its negative effects. Healing works in the opposite manner. A PC who receives healing restores hit points to the lowest health level in which he has lost hit points. When that track is fully healed, apply any extra damage to the next highest one.

For ease of reference, the players can list the various penalties for each of the states on their character sheets.

*Example:* Dethrek the half-orc fighter has 27 hit points. To figure out how many hit points he has in each health category, divide his hit points by 4. The result is 6 with a remainder of 3. According to the rules above, Dethrek distributes one hit point into his healthy, staggered, and injured totals. He thus has 7 hit points in his healthy level, 7 in his staggered one, 7 in his injured one, and 6 in his critical level.

During an adventure, Dethrek comes under fire from a mob of goblin archers. He takes 5 points of damage, reducing his healthy level's hit points to 2. So far, he takes no penalties. He then gets hit again for 2 points of damage. He no longer has hit points remaining in his healthy level. However, since he hasn't lost any points from his staggered level, he does not yet take any damage penalties. Later, he suffers another injury for 11 points

of damage. This completely eliminates the hit points he has at his staggered level and reduces his injured level by 4. Thus, he suffers the penalties listed under the injured level, since he lost hit points from that total.

If Dethrek receives 4 points of healing, he would restore the damage he lost from his injured hit point total. He would no longer suffer the penalties listed for the injured state, since his hit point total in that category is back to full, but he would suffer the penalties for the staggered level. As you can see, one sword blow can reduce Dethrek to staggered level and leave him with penalties.

**Using Health:** Since health works pretty much like hit points, save that it is calculated differently, you can easily use these rules with that optional system. Divide a character's health into the different wound levels and assess penalties as described above. Combining the two systems makes the game doubly lethal, as characters die faster due to serious injuries but those who manage to survive are in a tough position to keep fighting. On the other hand, if you want to run a lethal, gritty dark fantasy game, combining both of these rules can produce exactly the feel you want. Even against town guards or cultists, the characters face a very real chance of defeat.

**Using Health Levels with Monsters:** Some monsters are too tough, otherworldly, or strange to suffer from penalties due to injuries. For example, zombies fight on despite the sword blows and axe injuries they sustain. The following creature types do not suffer penalties from health levels: constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, and undead. In addition, creatures that are immune to critical hits do not suffer these penalties. The idea behind this system is that injuries can slice tendons, crush joints, and break bones. Creatures that lack mundane anatomies are immune to such attacks since they simply lack the organs, bones, and other structures that can sustain such injuries.

**Health Levels and Powerful Characters:** If you use the standard classes as presented in the core rules and the characters advance to high levels, the penalties inflicted by the various health levels may seem too low to have any effect on the characters' actions. If the party fights monsters with CRs at or above their average level, the penalties should have a tangible effect on their ability to score hits in battle, resist spells and effects, and so on. The DCs and ACs they need to hit are high enough that even a -2 penalty can make a difference.

However, against large numbers of weaker foes the party might not even notice these hindrances. As an optional rule, you can simplify the health level rules and make them more applicable to all types of encounters, both easy and difficult, by making some alterations to how they work. Ignore the

penalties listed for each health state. Instead, a character suffers a -1 injury penalty to attacks, checks, and saves for every 10 hit points he loses. As a character regains hit points, his penalty from injury diminishes.

For example, Thurget the half-orc barbarian has 120 hit points. During the course of an adventure, he drops to 78 hit points, a loss of 42 points. These wounds result in a -4 injury penalty to attacks, checks, and saves. Later, the party's cleric heals him of 28 points of damage. Thurget now has 106 hit points, a loss of 14. He now suffers a -1 injury penalty to attacks, checks, and saves. If additional healing brought him to 111 hit points, he would no longer suffer a penalty since his total hit points lost are less than 10.

These optional rules may seem easy to use and balanced at first glance, but there are some important issues you need to consider when using them. As penalties mount, the characters are quickly reduced to a state in which they cannot effectively defeat opponents with CRs near their average level. In addition, characters with high hit point totals, such as barbarians and fighters, can quickly become unable to hit their foes in melee. Since these characters are the ones most likely to suffer attacks from monsters that can dish out plenty of damage in only a few hits, the party might be regularly forced to retreat from a fight after a few rounds. The rate of character death remains the same, since PCs can still escape from battle, but the party may instead run away after the group's main fighter takes 30 or 40 points of damage.

Generally speaking, it is best to use this variant rule with the optional health rules given earlier in this chapter or in campaigns where the characters will attain 10th level at the highest. Once the party attains higher levels, these rules can slow the game down and make it less enjoyable for everyone. The more hit points a character has, the higher the injury penalty he can sustain, a condition that can erode the PCs' abilities to the point of rendering them inept while still leaving them with plenty of hit points left over.

## FEAR, TERROR, AND MADNESS

In horror RPGs, madness has long been the traditional path to destruction for player characters. Otherworldly creatures bend and shatter the structure of reality, exposing adventurers who meet them to mind-warping events and sights that leave them gibbering madmen. Horrific events, such as a fellow



adventurer's gory death or the discovery of a gruesome murder scene, wear away at a character's resolve and push him towards an emotional and mental breakdown. In many ways, demons, devils, and other horrific monsters have a better chance of shattering a character's sanity than tearing him apart with their claws and fangs.

Rules for sanity and madness help remind the players that their characters' weapons and spells are of only limited use against the terrible creatures from beyond. An enchanted blade can do nothing to ward away fear, while even the mightiest spells are useless to a mage whose mind has been splintered by madness. These rules shift the focus of the game away from physical combat and place a greater emphasis on caution, fear, and the alien nature of monsters and creatures. The characters can still use their weapons and abilities to defeat mundane threats, such as cultists, evil wizards, and other evil humanoids, but the greatest powers, the dark monsters that seek to overwhelm the world, become a completely different sort of threat. Even if the characters manage to amass the weapons, armor, spells, and artifacts to physically defeat these creatures, they still face defeat if they lack the nerve and emotional strength to stand against them.

This section presents three different systems for resolving the effects of emotional duress, fear, and

madness. Each of the systems is designed to work independently of the other, allowing you to choose one that fits your campaign the best. However, they are also designed to work together if you choose to use that option.

## TERROR AND FEAR

The terror rules present a set of Will save DCs that characters must make in order to keep their nerve in the face of horrific creatures. Every creature has a fear rating (FR) based on its type, size, and an arbitrary rating selected by the DM to reflect its appearance, nature, and reputation. When confronted with a creature, characters must make Will saves with a DC equal to the monster's FR. Characters that succeed at this save maintain their nerve and fight on. Characters that fail by a small margin are unnerved and take penalties to their actions, while those who fail by a wide gap may flee, freeze in horror, or otherwise take random actions.

**Mechanics:** When a character comes within 100 feet of a creature that has a fear rating (FR), he must make a Will save with a DC equal to the creature's FR. A character must only make this save if he can see or otherwise perceive the creature. Furthermore, if a character uses spells or a magical item to observe a creature with the



same clarity as if it stood within 100 feet of him, he must also make a save. For example, a wizard who uses *clairvoyance* to view a monster on the other side of a door must make a save, as the creature is visible to him as if it were within 100 feet.

If the Will save is successful, the character suffers no ill effects. If it fails, a character suffers penalties based on the difference between his total save result and the creature's FR. The effects of a failed FR save persist for 10 rounds – a character's Wisdom modifier, with a minimum of 5 rounds.

A fear save counts as a mind-affecting, fear-based effect. Creatures immune to mind-affecting abilities do not need to make these saves, while creatures that gain a bonus against fear may use it on saves against FR.

A character need only make a saving throw once per creature type per encounter. For example, if the party encounters five demonic trolls that are FR 14, they only need to save once, not five times. If they ran into five demonic trolls and three half-fiend gnolls, they would save once for the trolls and once for the gnolls. Apply the least favorable saving throw result to each character. For example, if a character sees a creature with FR 10 and another with FR 13, he must save against both. If one leaves him shaken and the other panicked, he suffers from panic.

If a character who suffers from the effects of a failed save encounters new creatures with FR, he must make new saves. If he fails any of these saves and suffers a worse result than his current condition, he gains that condition. When a character becomes more afraid in this manner, the duration of the fear effect resets. He sustains his new condition for 10 rounds – his Wisdom modifier, with a minimum of 5 rounds.

Note that a worse result is defined as one that occurs with a greater margin of failure when compared to another result. For example, frightened is a worse result than shaken.

If there is ever a situation in which a character automatically fails his save to resist a creature's FR, such as a curse or some other magical effect that causes saves to fail, treat the character's roll as a 1. If the character's Will save modifier would push the total result above the creature's FR, treat the character as shaken. This rule also applies when a player rolls a natural 1, a result that normally counts as an automatically failed saving throw.

Creatures that have a fear rating are much harder to scare than mortal men are. They are accustomed to horrific sights and do not easily lose their nerve. A creature with an FR score adds it to any Will saves it must make to resist fear. If the creature's FR is

higher than its opponent's it does not need to save to resist fear.

#### Will Save

#### Failed By Result

- 1–5 **Shaken:** A shaken character takes a –2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.
- 6–10 **Frightened:** A frightened character flees from the source of his fear as best he can. If unable to flee, he may fight. A frightened character takes a –2 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks. A frightened character can use special abilities, including spells, to flee.
- 11–15 **Panicked:** A panicked character must drop anything he holds and flee at top speed from the source of his fear, as well as any other dangers he encounters, along a random path. He cannot take any other actions. In addition, the character takes a –2 penalty on all saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks. If cornered, a panicked character cowers and does not attack, typically using the total defense action in combat. A panicked character can use special abilities, including spells, to flee.
- 16–20 **Cowering:** The character is frozen in fear and can take no actions. A cowering character takes a –2 penalty to Armor Class and loses her Dexterity bonus to AC (if any).
- 21+ **Overwhelmed:** The character is so utterly overwhelmed with terror that he loses his grip on reality. He acts at random as per the spell *confusion*.

**A Bookkeeping Note:** Any rules that require you to determine the difference between the result of the save and a DC can prove cumbersome—doing the math during a session can slow things down. Before running an adventure, you can determine the various DCs for each level of fear. In essence, you do the math once to complete all the work before the encounter. When a character makes a save, find the lowest DC that he fails to equal or beat to determine the fear effect he suffers. The math is simple enough that you could even take a moment to figure it out before an encounter starts.

Fear State	DC
Shaken	FR
Panicked	FR + 5
Frightened	FR + 10
Cowering	FR + 15
Overwhelmed	FR + 20

### OPTIONAL RULE: FEAR IMMUNITY

Unlike normal saves, the Will save to resist a creature's FR does not automatically fail on a roll of 1. In this case, add the character's Will save modifier as normal and check to see if the save is successful. Some characters have the mental toughness and fortitude needed to face down some creatures. This rule works best for dark fantasy games with a heroic slant or if you want to incorporate these rules into a standard fantasy game with a horror theme. If you think that it is silly that a 15th-level fighter might be shaken by an FR 1 creature that would have trouble spooking a peasant, this rule is for you.

### OPTIONAL RULE: COMBINING FEAR RATINGS

As an optional rule, you can combine multiple fear ratings to represent the effect of viewing multiple terrifying monsters. Treat the creatures' FRs as challenge ratings and combine them as if you were calculating an encounter level. The result is the group's combined fear rating. This optional rule has two effects on the game. Rather than make several saves, the characters only make one. This change reduces the effect bad luck has on the PCs. The more saving throws the characters need to make, the greater the chance that they suffer from bad luck and fail one. On the other hand, the saving throw DCs are higher for this one save, making it more likely that PCs with poor Will saves may flee or cower in terror. In general, using this optional rule helps characters with good Will saves. They need to make fewer saves, reducing the chance that they roll poorly, and the save DCs do not climb so high that they eclipse their save bonuses.

**Calculating Fear Rating:** A fear rating represents a creature's appearance, its size, and its reputation. Appearance has an obvious effect on how the characters might react to a monster. A beast covered in slimy tentacles and wreathed in a cloak of moaning, human faces is much scarier than a seemingly normal dwarf. By the same token, a creature that towers above the PCs has an innately scarier, more intimidating appearance. Finally, reputation has a major impact on how adventurers regard a beast. From the example earlier in this paragraph, the tentacled beast with the ghastly cloak may be well known as a minor demonic creature. While it has a horrific appearance, a few sword strokes can send it back to the hell that spawned it. On the other hand, that innocent dwarf may match the description of Braggi Stonehands, a well-known murderer who drank a mighty potion that rendered him impervious to mortal weapons. With that information in mind, the characters are much more likely to lose their nerve around the dwarf than in the presence of the demon.

Determine a creature's fear rating with the following formula:

FR = half challenge rating + size modifier + appearance + reputation

**Challenge Rating:** This measure serves as a base guide for how scary a creature should be. Tougher creatures are more fearsome because they are usually stronger than other beasts, they have a wider range of magical powers, and they have fearsome reputations. Use the creature's challenge rating as listed in its description divided by 2. If dividing a creature's CR drops it below 1, count it as 0. As usual, round down any fractions.

**Size Modifier:** Larger creatures are innately scarier than smaller ones. While this rule is not absolutely true (a poisonous spider is far more intimidating than a cow) it serves as a reliable rule of thumb. Use the size rating table to determine how a creature's size affects its fear rating.

Size	Fear Rating Modifier
Fine	0
Diminutive	0
Tiny	0
Small	0
Medium	0
Large	2
Huge	4
Gargantuan	8
Colossal	16

**Appearance:** A creature's looks go a long way to determine how others react to it. The stranger and more alien a creature appears, the more likely it unnerves the characters. By the same token, creatures with gory, horrific visages obviously strike fear into mortals' hearts. A creature's appearance modifier is based on its type or an arbitrary rating selected by the DM to reflect the creature's looks. If you want to quickly generate a monster's fear rating, use the modifiers given for the creature types and subtypes. Add the modifier for both the creature's types and any subtypes it may have. Otherwise, use the guidelines given to select an appropriate rating. Do not use both values, as that may drive a creature's fear rating too high.

Creature Type	FR Modifier
Aberration	5
Animal	0
Construct	2
Dragon	4
Elemental	2
Fey	4
Giant	2
Humanoid	0
Magical Beast	3
Monstrous Humanoid	2
Ooze	3
Outsider	6
Plant	0

Undead	6
Vermin	2

Creature Subtype	FR Modifier
Air	0
Aquatic	0
Chaotic	2
Cold	1
Earth	0
Evil	3
Fire	2
Goblinoid	1
Good	0
Incorporeal	4
Lawful	0
Reptilian	1
Shapechanger	1
Water	0

Instead of using a creature's type and subtype, you can also determine its FR modifier based on your judgment of its appearance. Use the appearance table to determine the overall modifier that presents a best fit for a creature. Use this method for creatures that go against the general tendencies of the types and subtypes, or use it to assign scores to particularly gruesome and frightening monsters.

Appearance Modifier	Description
0-5	A creature with a moderately frightening or disturbing appearance, such as a skeleton, a vampire, or a poisonous spider. These creatures are natural in origin, are created by minor magical spells, or closely resemble a normal creature save for a few details.
5-10	Creatures with disturbing appearances and otherworldly or magical origins fall into this range. These creatures resemble no natural creature or have alien body forms. Imps, quasits, zombies, and ghosts fall into this range.
11-15	Powerful outsiders, creatures with revolting appearances, and monsters that have gory, bloody, and horrific appearances fall into this category. This includes greater demons, powerful undead, and similar beasts.
16+	Blasphemous monstrosities whose very existence defies the fundamental nature of the cosmos. These beings can shatter an observer's nerves as they warp and twist minds by their mere presence. Creatures from beyond reality or



from truly alien realms qualify for these modifiers.

**Reputation:** This modifier is a sort of X factor that allows you to account for creatures that do not fit into the categories given above. For example, a vampire does not look frightening but everyone knows that it is a dangerous creature. The reputation modifier to FR is based solely on your judgment. You can use it to account for local folklore, cultural bias, and recent events in an area. For example, in a land where mummies are wholly unknown, such creatures might not initially arouse much fear. You can later elevate their FRs as word of their horrific strength and magical disease spreads. Use the table below as a guideline for assigning reputation modifiers to fear ratings.

#### Reputation Modifier

Reputation Modifier	Description
Less than 0	The stories concerning the creature describe it as weak, easily defeated, or include some common, effective method for defeating it.
0	The creature's reputation is not especially frightening. It is known as a vicious monster, but it is not any more or less fearsome than creatures of a similar size and CR.
1-5	Stories, rumors, and legends commonly paint the creature as vicious, deadly, and difficult to overcome.
6-10	The creature is commonly known to torment victims before slaying them, to inflict fates worse than death such as imprisoning its opponents' souls or eating them alive. Otherwise, it is commonly known to use fearsome tactics or follow gruesome practices. This also applies to creatures that can kill an opponent with a single use of a special attack, such as petrifying breath.
11-15	This rating is best applied to particularly fearsome individuals who have carved out a terrible reputation, such as specific dragons, powerful vampires, and similar creatures of dreaded stature.
16+	Creatures with this modifier are so terrifying that no one dares speak their names aloud for fear that they will overhear and answer the call to them. Mighty individuals that play roles in important myths and legends fall into this category.

**NPCs and Fear Ratings:** When first reading over these rules it may seem that fear ratings are useful only for monsters, undead beings, and other supernatural threats, but you can also use them with fearsome wizards, dreaded necromancers, and other mortals who have gained a widespread reputation. The mere name of the mighty sorcerer-king who commands legions of skeleton warriors might be enough to cause a tense silence to descend over a tavern. The rules also give you a convenient tool to differentiate between run-of-the-mill monsters and noted individuals, powerful beasts, and legendary creatures that play a major role in your campaign's background. A prime candidate for a fear rating could be a dark lord who conquered much of the land and who, according to rumor, was never defeated but instead slumbers and waits to return and reclaim his conquests.

**Assigning Fear Ratings:** As a rule of thumb, any creature that looks significantly unnatural should receive a fear rating. If a creature closely resembles a real-world animal, its appearance is probably not strange enough to warrant a fear rating. Use the FR summary for creatures from the core rules as a guide. Note that the values given for these monsters are by no means canonical. You can alter them based on appearance and reputation based on your campaign's background, a monster's role in your game, and any changes you made to the creature's appearance and history.

**Non-Creature Events and Fear Ratings:** While horrific monsters are the most common source of fear rating saves, characters can also encounter terrible scenes and bizarre events that trigger them. For example, the characters might stumble across the remains of a cult's sacrificial altar. The blood-spattered monument caked with skin, bone fragments, and other grim reminders of its purpose can send a temporary shock through the characters. You can use these checks to simulate the horrific environments and terrible events that can befall the characters independent of the creatures they battle.

The site and event table gives you guidelines for assigning FRs to a variety of events and sites that the PCs may encounter in the course of their adventures. Generally speaking, the more active or immediate an event the higher the FR will be. In other words, witnessing an event as it unfolds has a higher FR than finding its aftermath. In addition, any personal connections to the events increase the FR. Seeing a companion or friend transformed into a gibbering, boneless lump of flesh is a more powerful blow than witnessing the same thing happening to a total stranger. Both events are traumatic, but the former has a greater, more direct emotional impact.

## SITE AND EVENT FEAR RATINGS

Site/Event	FR
A mildly disturbing scene, such as a profane altar covered in gore	10
The aftermath of a bloody death or injury, such as a horribly mutilated corpse	15
A bloody death as it happens, such as a person eaten alive by a monster	20
A horrible event that befalls a friend or ally, such as a companion eviscerated by a horrid demon	25
An apocalyptic vision, such as the bloody death of hundreds	30

## FEAR RATING GUIDELINES

Level	Good Will Save	Bad Will Save	Low FR	Medium FR	High FR
1	+2	+0	10	12	17
2	+3	+0	10	13	18
3	+3	+1	11	13	18
4	+4	+1	11	14	19
5	+4	+1	11	14	19
6	+5	+2	12	15	20
7	+5	+2	12	15	20
8	+6	+2	12	16	21
9	+6	+3	13	16	21
10	+7	+3	13	17	22
11	+7	+3	13	17	22
12	+8	+4	14	18	23
13	+8	+4	14	18	23
14	+9	+4	14	19	24
15	+9	+5	15	19	24
16	+10	+5	15	20	25
17	+10	+5	15	20	25
18	+11	+6	16	21	26
19	+11	+6	16	21	26
20	+12	+6	16	22	27

**General Notes on Fear Ratings:** Since a fear rating is essentially a Will save DC, it is a good idea to look at the party's composition and the characters' Will save bonuses when using monsters. A single creature with an overwhelming FR can defeat the party if the PCs are rendered helpless by its mere appearance.

To help guide you in selecting monsters and assigning FRs at various character levels, the above table summarizes average Will saves for level 1 to 20 and gives suggested values for low, medium, and high FR values. A low FR value represents a creature that has only a 50% of having any effect on any of the PCs. A moderate one has a good chance of affecting weak-willed PCs and about a 50% chance of causing fear in PCs with good Will saves. A high FR value almost always has an effect on a PC with a poor Will save and has a 75% or greater chance of affecting a PC with a good Will save.

As a reminder, any class that has a Will save modifier of +0 at 1st level has a bad Will save, while one that starts with a +2 bonus has a good one.

The values listed on the table should serve as a general guide for FRs at various levels. As a rule of thumb, use low FRs for common encounters, such as thugs, cultists, and minor demons and monsters. Medium FRs are a good fit for milestone encounters and tough creatures that lead up to the important villains and creatures that form the basis for a campaign or adventure. Those climactic encounters should use the high FRs, as they make important encounters suitably difficult and lend them a sense of horror since most characters suffer the effects of failed saves against FR.

**Sample Fear Ratings:** Appendix I gives a complete list of sample FRs for many of the creatures found in the core rules. Use the sample ratings as a guide to assigning reputation and appearance modifiers to creatures of your own invention or ones drawn from non-core monster books. The sample list also excludes creatures that should not normally have an FR value, such as mundane beasts and monsters that resemble normal animals.



## MADNESS POINTS: LONG-TERM INSANITY

As humans and other mundane creatures encounter the supernatural, their minds slowly collapse under the repeated strain. Alien monsters, creatures from other dimensions, blasphemous tomes, and horrific sites place an ever-increasing burden on the minds of those who view them. One of the appeals of dark fantasy gaming is this sense of growing, inevitable dread. The party's successes are that much more exciting and rewarding because they come in the face of inevitable doom. A mighty warrior could be whole in body, his skills with the sword and bow as sharp as ever, but as his mind disintegrates he slowly becomes unable to adventure. He sees fluttering, ominous shadows at the edge of his perception. In the face of otherworldly terrors, he collapses into a weeping, quivering heap. The threat of madness perhaps weighs greater than the prospect of death at the tentacles, fangs, and talons of a demon or rampaging monster.

These rules use some of the elements presented in the fear rating system given earlier in this chapter. The two systems complement each other, but you can opt to use either or both at the same time. While they draw on each other, they are not intrinsically

bound. The fear rating system handles a character's mental state in a particular encounter. When the party meets a horrifying demon or vicious devil, some of its members may lose their nerve for a brief period. Granted, this might be long enough for the demon to feast on a PC and rip him limb from limb, but if a PC survives an encounter a failed save against FR has no long-term consequences.

The madness point system changes this situation, introducing rules that keep track of a character's mental health over a long period of time. Keep in mind that these rules are designed for use in a game. They make no effort to model our modern understanding of mental health, but instead aim to make dark fantasy games more fun and interesting by incorporating an element featured in some of the most popular horror RPGs.

The madness point system represents psychic and emotional damage that characters sustain when they fail Will saves to resist a creature or event's fear rating. As characters fail saves against FR, they gain madness points. As a character's madness point total increases, he suffers penalties to further checks to resist fear and develops symptoms of mental instability. A character may launch himself into battle with a reckless sense of doom, leading him to throw his life away with reckless tactics. A wizard may delve into esoteric areas



of magical lore, leading him to lose himself in abstract, nonsensical theories. In essence, as a character's madness score mounts the player loses control over that character. Normally, a player has full control over his PC. The madness rules change that, as a character begins to make decisions based on strange, irrelevant, or insane criteria.

## MADNESS SCORE

A character's madness score works a lot like an ability score. Just like Strength or Wisdom, it provides a modifier to actions, but unlike the normal ability scores it hinders a character as it increases. The higher a PC's madness score, the more difficult it is for him to resist the effects of fear. In addition, he gains drawbacks that hinder his actions and cause him to act in ways that a player may not want.

All characters start with a madness score of 0. This represents the average level of mental stability. Most NPCs have a score between 0 and 10. Once a character's madness score increases to 10 or above, he starts to take penalties to certain saves and may develop mental disadvantages. Most of the time, a character's madness goes up because of encounters with horrific creatures. A character's score increases if he fails his saving throws against fear ratings. In some cases, creatures or sites are so terrifying that they increase a character's madness score even if his saving throw succeeds.

*Fear Save Modifier:* Whenever a character must make a saving throw against a fear-based effect, including saves to resist a creature or scene's FR, he takes a penalty to his check equal to his current madness score divided by 10. The easiest way to remember the penalty is to simply use the tens digit of the character's madness score as his penalty. For example, a character with a madness score of 67 would have a -6 penalty to his saves against fear effects.

*Insanity:* As a character's madness score climbs higher, he slowly grows insane. When a PC's score reaches 100, he becomes utterly mindless, entering a catatonic state or perhaps relentlessly attacking all around him in a psychotic rage. Before that point, a PC might develop strange idiosyncrasies that slowly develop into full-blown madness. The insanity table lists the number of mental disadvantages that a character accumulates as his madness score climbs higher. At each level of madness, the insanity table lists the total number of quirks and disorders that a character has accumulated. Quirks and disorders work a bit like negative or disadvantageous feats. They range from minor to critical hindrances that afflict a character due to his decaying sanity. Quirks, disorders, and madness are explained later in this section. These afflictions can be assigned by the DM's choice or via a random method.

# GOAL-BASED MADNESS POINT LOSS

<b>Action</b>	<b>Madness Loss</b>
Save several lives, foil a dangerous local plot, defeat a minor evil spellcaster.	1-5
The party averts a disaster that could destroy a village.	6-10
The party thwarts a monster or event that would destroy a town or small city.	11-15
The characters save a city or permanently defeat a powerful evil being.	16-20

<b>Madness Score</b>	<b>Insanity</b>
0-10	None
11-20	1 quirk
21-30	1 quirk, 1 disorder
31-40	2 quirks, 1 disorder
41-50	3 quirks, 1 disorder
51-60	3 quirks, 2 disorders
61-70	4 quirks, 2 disorders
71-80	4 quirks, 3 disorders
81-90	5 quirks, 3 disorders
91-99	5 quirks, 4 disorders
100	Madness

## GAINING MADNESS POINTS

Characters gain madness points when they fail their Will saving throws against a creature or event's fear rating (FR). FR is explained earlier in this chapter. Use the rules given there to determine a creature or event's FR, along with the notes for how characters make saves against it. You can combine these rules with the effects for failing saves against FR given earlier in this chapter or you can use only one system or the other.

When a character makes a saving throw against a creature's FR, he gains madness points based on whether the save succeeded or failed and the FR he had to save against. Creatures with high FRs inflict more madness points than monsters with lower ones. Some creatures are so horrifying that even characters who make successful Will saves against them still gain madness points.

<b>Fear Rating</b>	<b>Failed Save Madness Points</b>	<b>Successful Save Madness Points</b>
1-5	1d2	0
6-10	1d3	0
11-15	1d4	0
16-20	1d6	1
21-25	1d8	1d3
26-30	2d6	1d4
31-35	2d8	1d6
36-40	3d6	1d8
40+	3d8	2d6

## LOSING MADNESS POINTS

While encountering terrible creatures can drive a character's nerves to the breaking point, defeating

those same beasts can give him a sense of peace and closure. When a character defeats a monster that has a fear rating, he reduces his current madness point total by a small number of points. A character can never lose a quirk or disorder by reducing his madness point total. Once a PC's psyche has suffered an injury, its scars remain forever. However, the penalty a character suffers to saves against fear effects does go down with his point total.

A character can reduce his madness score by defeating a monster by slaying it, trapping it forever within a magical ward, or otherwise neutralizing its power. The final determination as to whether a monster counts as defeated is the DM's. No matter how many individual creatures of a specific type a PC defeats, he only reduces his madness points once for beating them. For example, howlers have an FR of 18. Borthred the Bold slays six of them during an epic battle. He does not gain a madness point reduction for defeating an FR 18 creature six times. He only gains it once for each distinct creature type overcome, in this case only once for slaying the howlers. If he defeated three howlers (FR 18), a green hag (FR 14), and an iron golem (FR 14), he would lose madness points for defeating an FR 18 foe and two FR 14 creatures since he slew three distinct types of monsters. Since characters only make Will saves once per group of monsters, allowing them to lose madness points for each monster defeated would allow them to easily keep their scores at or near 0.

<b>Fear Rating</b>	<b>Madness Points Lost</b>
1-5	0
6-10	1
11-15	1d2
16-20	1d3
21-25	1d4
26-30	1d6
31-35	1d8
36-40	2d6
40+	2d8

In addition to losing madness points for slaying monsters, the characters can also reduce them when achieving important goals. If the party saves a town from certain doom, foils an evil wizard's plans, or rescues a priest slated for sacrifice



by a diabolic cult, their efforts help settle their minds and mend the trauma they have endured. The madness point reward table on the previous page lists a range of losses and example goals that the PCs can achieve to earn them.

## QUIRKS

A quirk is a minor, eccentric trait that marks a character's first steps towards madness. A DM can assign quirks to characters based on events surrounding the incident of their failed FR saves. In some games, it might be appropriate for the players to pick them out to allow them some freedom in picking hindrances that fit their characters. Alternatively, the players or DM can roll on the random table provided along with the brief overview of the available quirks.

A quirk's defining trait is that it applies only under specific circumstances or it has a constant effect that does not pose a life-threatening risk to a character. You may become an extravagant spender as your mind decays and you learn that life has no meaning. While that attitude makes it difficult to save money for expensive magical items, it does not pose a direct threat to your health. The quirks that do incur penalties on your actions, especially actions in combat, apply only to specific creatures or other conditions.

**General Notes on Phobias:** Many of the quirks given here are phobias (an overpowering fear) against specific types of creatures and obstacles. You can easily change phobias so that they apply to different creature types to add further variation to the list of quirks. For instance, you could use the background and rules information for the dragon phobia and apply it to lycanthropes or other creatures. When the phobia descriptions list creatures such as dragons or aberrations, they refer to the creature types from the core rules. For example, the penalties from a dragon phobia would apply against wyverns (since their creature type is dragon) in addition to the normal dragon types.

## A NOTE ON MODIFIERS

The quirks and disorders described below frequently refer to unnamed bonuses and penalties. Usually, a modifier is described with a keyword such as morale or competence. Bonuses or penalties with the same keyword do not stack. However, penalties and bonuses that lack a keyword always stack with each other and other bonuses. Keep this in mind when assessing the effects of a mental drawback that a character gains through exposure to the supernatural.

d%

1-4  
5-8

**Quirk**

Arrogance  
Bloodseeker

9-12	Lavish
13-16	Miser
17-20	Nervous tic
21-24	Panic attacks
25-28	Phobia: Aberrations
29-32	Phobia: Constructs
33-36	Phobia: Darkness
37-40	Phobia: Dragons
41-44	Phobia: Elementals
45-48	Phobia: Fire
49-52	Phobia: Giants
53-56	Phobia: Heights
57-60	Phobia: Magical Beasts
61-64	Phobia: Oozes
65-68	Phobia: Outsiders
69-72	Phobia: Pain
73-76	Phobia: Undead
77-80	Phobia: Vermin
81-84	Phobia: Water
85-88	Recklessness
89-92	Self-loathing
93-96	Stutter
97-100	Tentative

**Arrogance:** While the horrors of the world are powerful, you survived the experience of encountering them. You are filled with not only faith in your own abilities, but derision for the talents of others. You work poorly with your allies and have an unrealistic opinion of your ability to work on your own.

*Game Rules:* You cannot take part in group skill checks, either by making a check to lend another a bonus or accepting bonuses from other. You cannot use the aid another combat action, nor can others use it to help you. You suffer a -4 penalty on all Diplomacy checks as your arrogance leaves a poor impression with others.

**Bloodseeker:** Once your anger is aroused, you have trouble containing it. When an opponent attacks you, you strike back at him with little regard to your own safety. You hack wildly with your weapon, leaving your guard exposed as you focus solely on the attack.

*Game Rules:* If you take any damage from a melee attack, you suffer a -2 penalty to AC for the next round as you attack your foes with a vicious abandon. Your anger overwhelms you as you attack wildly, leaving your shield dangling by your side or making little effort to dodge blows.

**Lavish:** Life is short, painful, and miserable, or so you have learned through firsthand encounters with horrid demons and other monsters. You make the most of your time on earth by spending money on the best creature comforts you can find. You lavish coins on the purveyors of fine meals, and the clothes and gear you buy simply must be top of the line. You quickly fritter away your cash, leaving you few

coins to purchase useful goods.

**Game Rules:** Whenever you gain a sum of money, subtract 10% from its total value. This loss represents money you spend on rich food, foppish clothes, and gifts for passing friends and acquaintances other than your fellow player characters. Even if you sell an item and immediately try to purchase something else with the full value, you still lose that 10%. Perhaps you ask for unnecessary embellishments on the item you intend to buy, or you set a few coins aside for a luxurious dinner. In addition, if you are presented with several items that all have the same basic function, you always buy the most expensive one that you can afford. For example, if you stop for the night at an inn you rent the nicest room available.

**Miser:** Life is short and miserable, but if you are prepared you can survive anything. You hoard your treasure, preparing for that terrible day when you'll need all of it to buy your way to safety or bribe the horrors that will come for you.

**Game Rules:** Subtract 10% from the total value of any coins you find or gain. You take this treasure and hide it in hidden caches, refusing to divulge their location even under pain of death. Sadly, your madness leads you to often forget the location of these stashes. You cannot regain money lost in this manner. In addition, you refuse to buy any item that costs more than half the total gold pieces you possess.

**Nervous Tic:** Your encounters with the bizarre have left your mind mostly intact, but your body is a different story. You have slight muscle spasms and tics, undoubtedly the result of residual, subconscious mental trauma inflicted on you in the course of your adventures. You have trouble with any actions that require fine motor coordination.

**Game Rules:** You suffer a -2 penalty to all Dexterity checks and checks made with Dexterity-based skills. This penalty increases to -4 when you attempt Open Locks and Disable Device checks.

**Panic Attacks:** At times, the memories of your encounters with the bizarre surge from you subconscious and overwhelm your other thoughts. You fall into a deep panic, leaving you unable to take any complex actions and ruining your efforts in high stress situations.

**Game Rules:** You suffer a -4 penalty to all initiative checks and a -2 penalty to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma-based skill checks made during combat.

**Phobia (Aberrations):** Aberrations, with their alien bodies and bizarre thought patterns, strike a deep terror within you. The sight of them reminds

you of the blasphemous monsters you have encountered, sending fresh tendrils of fear down your spine.

**Game Rules:** You suffer a -4 penalty on all Will saves to resist aberrations' FRs. Even if your save succeeds, you still count as shaken and gain an additional madness point. You do not take any additional penalty on a failed save, but you do gain an additional 1d4 madness points.

**Phobia (Constructs):** Mechanical life, from animated objects to golems, is anathema to the natural world. Life flows in blood and rests in flesh and bone, not cold merciless stone, iron, and dead flesh. You are filled with a deep loathing and hatred for these creatures, as you see in them the mortality, endurance, and toughness that your pitifully fragile body lacks, yet so desperately needs to withstand the horrors you have witnessed.

**Game Rules:** You gain a +2 bonus on attack rolls against constructs, but suffer a -4 penalty on attacks against all other opponents while a construct is present. In addition, once you attack a construct you must fight it to the death as per the bloodlust disorder described below. Finally, you suffer a -1 morale penalty to attacks and skill checks while clad in anything less than medium or heavy armor. The metal and leather of that gear puts you at ease, but lesser protections make you tense and nervous.

**Phobia (Darkness):** The creatures of your nightmares lurk in the darkness. They advance close by, ready to snuff out your life in an instant. You need light at all times, lest your fears come to life and arrive to bear you off to Hell. When in areas of darkness, you panic and devote all your attention to finding light.

**Game Rules:** You suffer a -2 penalty to all attacks, checks, and saves while in total darkness. In addition, you must make a Will save (DC 15) to do anything other than try to illuminate the area (light a torch or lantern, cast a light spell, etc.). If you do not carry a lantern, torch, or other light source, you must either seek one out or remain in one place, gripped in deep fear.

**Phobia (Dragons):** Your sundered mind sees dragons as the ultimate life form. It is only a matter of time before the true wyrms and their cousins expunge all life from the world and seize their place as rulers of the cosmos. You can only hope to disguise yourself as kin to the dragons. Perhaps they will overlook you in the purge if your deception is successful.

**Game Rules:** You suffer a -4 penalty to attacks against dragons and on saves against their spells, supernatural effects, and spell-like abilities. You must spend ranks to learn



Draconic at the earliest opportunity. You speak this language at all times, using others only when communication is otherwise impossible. You sometimes hiss like a lizard and brag of your draconic heritage, giving you a  $-2$  penalty on all Diplomacy checks due to your bizarre behavior.

**Phobia (Elementals):** The matter of the world is a tenuous thing. Elementals lurk within everything, ready to emerge from almost any item when its constituent parts manifest their elemental nature. Earth elementals hide within swords and rocks, while even the smallest puddle contains a water elemental ready to spring forth and drown you. Your nerves remain on edge at all times, the accumulated stress leaving you strung out and frazzled.

*Game Rules:* You suffer a  $-2$  penalty to all initiative checks and a  $-1$  penalty on all Reflex saves, as your reaction times are dulled by your uncertainty and paranoia. While others act, you flinch from the fear that constantly haunts you.

**Phobia (Fire):** Flames can devour your soul, you are certain of it. While a physical death usually unleashes your psyche to seek out a better, happier place in the afterlife, fire consumes you in utter annihilation. Even a burn is a permanent stain on your immortal form. You avoid fire at all costs.

*Game Rules:* You suffer a  $-4$  penalty on Will saves to resist the FR of creatures with the fire subtype. If you stand within 10 feet of an open flame, you suffer a  $-1$  morale penalty on all attacks, checks, and saves as the damning flame distracts your thoughts.

**Phobia (Giants):** A towering giant strikes terror into your heart as it reminds you of the futility of all effort. What can men hope to accomplish in the face of such creatures that stand above them? All efforts are hopeless, a toiling drudgery in the face of the vast emptiness of the cosmos.

*Game Rules:* The presence of larger humanoids in the world reminds you that all human effort is tiny and insignificant. You cannot take 20 on actions, as the sustained effort in such a short period of time is beyond you. You suffer a  $-2$  penalty on all Will saves to resist a giant's FR.

**Phobia (Heights):** Your exposure to the horrid realities and beasts that lurk just beyond mortal sight has triggered something in your mind. You can feel a malevolent presence within, one that pushes you to self-destruction. This presence gains weight and gravity when you are high above the ground. You can feel it pushing you to throw yourself over the edge. If your concentration ever lapses, you know that you will lose control and plunge to your doom.



**Game Rules:** You suffer a -4 penalty to all Climb checks and cannot take 10 or 20 on them. While climbing, you move at one-eighth your speed rather than one-quarter. If you stand within 10 feet of a ledge that is higher than four times your height, you suffer a -1 penalty to all attacks, checks, and saves. If you hang from the air for any reason, such as if a roc plucks you from the ground, you must make a Will save (DC 20) each round to take any actions. If you fail this save, you lose your actions but are not considered helpless.

**Phobia (Magical Beasts/Animals):** You have seen the strange, supernatural powers that some creatures possess and have come to realize that any animal may possess them. An innocent rat could harbor a virulent, magical disease, while a snake might sprout wings and attack you at any moment. You are reluctant to fight either magical beasts or animals as they may disguise terrible powers behind innocent facades.

**Game Rules:** When fighting magical beasts and animals, you hold your attacks. Instead, you concentrate on keeping your guard up to defend yourself against the bizarre, horrific abilities they undoubtedly have at the ready. If you stand in a square threatened by a magical beast or animal, even a friendly one, you do not threaten any areas. You may still attack as normal, but you turtle up and refuse to take advantage of attacks of opportunity. In addition, this passive stance makes it more difficult for you to aid you allies. You cannot flank an opponent while an animal or magical beast threatens you. Your allies ignore you when determining if they flank an opponent.

**Phobia (Oozes):** Oozes hold all that is unclean in the world within their pulsing, liquid forms. They are disease incarnate, the pure filth of the cosmos given life. You have an overpowering compulsion to avoid these creatures at all costs. Every second you remain close to them you can feel their raw essence slowly wearing away at your body and soul.

**Game Rules:** You have an overpowering compulsion to remain far away from all oozes. If you end your action while in an area an ooze threatens, you suffer a -4 penalty to attacks, checks, saves, and AC as you are seized by overwhelming panic. You can take all actions as normal against an ooze, but if you remain close to it for more than a brief moment you quickly lose your cool.

**Phobia (Outsiders):** Demons, devils, and other creatures from beyond the mortal world are the epitome of all that is unwholesome in the universe. Their mere sight is enough to rend your mind and destroy your soul. You can feel their essence leaking into you when you gaze upon them, their psychic tendrils grasping at your soul.



**Game Rules:** When in the presence of an outsider, you suffer a 30% miss chance on all of your attacks, as you shield your eyes from everything in the area for fear that an outsider could snatch your soul away and bear it off to another world.

**Phobia (Pain):** Every sensation of pain, from the merest stubbed toe to a vicious cut received in battle, heralds your own mortality. When you feel any sort of pain, your first reflex is to flee from the danger you face.

**Game Rules:** Whenever you take damage, you must make a Will save as if you saw a creature with an FR equal to the damage you have taken. During an encounter, this FR increases as you suffer more damage. Once the encounter ends, the FR resets to 0. For example, Clorix has this phobia. On the first round of combat, she suffers 5 points of damage and must save against FR 5. On the next round, she takes 4 more points of damage and must save against FR 9. Resolve this as a standard save against a creature's FR.

**Phobia (Undead):** In the undead, you see the story of your own fate. After all, the living dead were once just like you. Within them all walks the soul of a person who was once very much like you. You have an overwhelming compulsion to avoid injuring the undead. You are not only



terrified of the walking dead, you are terrified with the certainty that you, too, shall stand amongst them.

*Game Rules:* When fighting the undead, you suffer a  $-2$  penalty to attacks and a  $-4$  penalty to weapon damage rolls. Your strikes against them are weak and tentative, as you battle your inner urge to leave them unharmed and flee from them in hopes of escaping your inevitable fate.

**Phobia (Vermin):** Poison, disease, filth, pestilence—the vermin of the world carry all of these things. Rats, insects, and other tiny pests can crawl into your armor, under your clothes, and into your skin. Their mere physical presence fills you with horror and revulsion, while the slightest contact with them drives you into a panicked frenzy for fear that their tiny spawn will nest within the folds of your shirt.

*Game Rules:* You suffer a  $-2$  penalty on all saves to resist the FR of vermin. In addition, each time a vermin hits you in melee you suffer a  $-1$  penalty to attacks and checks you make on your next action. If this penalty is  $-5$  or greater, you must make a Will save (DC 15) to do anything other than swat at your clothes and recoil from the vermin in a blind panic.

**Phobia (Water):** With its amorphous shape and suffocating, liquid substance, water holds a fate far worse than death for you. You know that should you tumble into the waves, they will grasp you in a deathless eternity of boundless agony. The water surges toward you, seeking you out and thirsting for your soul. You shy away from all water sources, never remaining close to them for fear of drowning in their murky depths.

*Game Rules:* You suffer a  $-2$  penalty to all attacks, checks, and saves while in the water and a  $-1$  penalty on all attacks, checks, and saves while you are within 10 feet of a container or body of water that is the same size or larger than you are. You suffer a  $-2$  penalty to all Swim checks, for a total penalty of  $-4$  when in the water.

**Recklessness:** The horrors you have witnessed have taught you that life is short, cheap, and worth little in the grand scheme of things. Why proceed with caution and give up a chance at glory when you have at most a few more decades ahead of you? You fling yourself into situations with a reckless bravery, sometimes taking needless risks simply for the emotional rush you gain from danger.

*Game Rules:* You throw yourself into danger with such abandon that you leave yourself vulnerable to attacks. Your opponents gain a  $+2$  bonus to hit you with attacks of opportunity. In addition, if you want to use the fight defensively or total defense combat options, you must make a Will save (DC 20) to employ them. Otherwise, your heedlessness prevents you from focusing on defense.

**Self-Loathing:** Your terror has shown you that your inner character has little worth. You rarely take the initiative to complete actions, and you have trouble finding value in anything that you do. While others act, you prefer to sit on the sidelines and bemoan your wretched fate.

*Game Rules:* You suffer a  $-2$  morale penalty on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma-related skill checks and ability checks. You suffer a  $-2$  morale penalty on all Will saves against mind-influencing effects, as your poor self-image leaves you relatively easy to manipulate via magical means.

**Stutter:** While the psychic trauma you have undergone has not left any obvious marks on your personality, its subconscious effects have manifested as a physical symptom. In times of stress and fear, you are unable to talk. You sputter, stutter, and gasp for words.

*Game Rules:* In combat or in any other situation that the DM judges as dangerous or stressful, you have difficulty speaking clearly. If you want to say anything regarding the game situation or speak in-character during these times, you must make a Will save

(DC 15) each round or remain silent. Spellcasters must make Concentration checks (DC 15 + the spell's level) in order to focus and speak an incantation's words of power.

**Tentative:** Your experiences with the horrors of the world have left you overly cautious and fearful. You hesitate before acting, self-doubt and lingering fears overwhelming your ability to make quick decisions. You act after others and in stressful times have a tendency to briefly freeze or hesitate.

**Game Rules:** You suffer a -2 penalty to all initiative checks. When you are caught flat-footed, you suffer a -2 penalty to AC as you freeze up in fear. If you are caught by surprise, you must make a Will save (DC 15) or you may only use a move action on your next turn.

## DISORDERS

Disorders are persistent, troubling mental drawbacks that hinder a character in most aspects of his daily life. In combat, they can at times have deadly consequences. A delusional wizard may mistakenly use *magic missile* to blast his paladin ally, while a rogue might freeze in a catatonic state when confronted with a fearsome opponent. Compared to quirks, disorders are much more dangerous. However, a disorder is usually not enough on its own to kill a character. With help from his allies and good planning, a PC with a disorder can account for it and function almost normally.

You cannot typically gain the same disorder more than once. The one exception to this is enhanced phobia. If you gain it a second time, it applies to a different creature type.

d20	Disorder
1	Addiction
2	Amnesia
3	Bloodlust
4	Delusions: Disease and Filth
5	Delusions: Doom
6	Delusions: Hallucinations
7	Delusions: Insight
8	Delusions: Invulnerability
9	Delusions: Might
10	Delusions: Paranoia
11	Delusions: Self-Flagellation
12	Depression
13	Maniacal obsession
14	Nightmares
15	Obsessive compulsion
16	Overindulgence
17	Phobia, enhanced
18	Seizures
19	Senility
20	Terror attacks



**Addiction:** To help blot out the pain and terror of your encounters with the supernatural, you have taken to overindulgence in alcohol or narcotics. Without your chosen poison, you are an emotional wreck gripped by fear and uncertainty. However, when you do indulge you suffer poor reflexes, impaired judgment, and other drawbacks commonly associated with alcohol.

**Game Rules:** Each day, you must consume at least 5 gp worth of alcohol. If you do so, you suffer the effects of inebriation. You take a -2 penalty to Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, and Wisdom. If you cannot indulge your addiction or you choose not to, you suffer from withdrawal symptoms. In addition, the emotional troubles that you try to drink away come back all the stronger. You suffer a -2 morale penalty to all attacks and checks. In addition, you take 2 points of temporary damage to Dexterity and Wisdom. You can take a maximum of 4 points of damage in this manner at any give time, though if you heal the damage caused by this disorder you may suffer more from it.

**Amnesia:** The horrors of the world can sometimes cause the mind to partially shut down, destroying a smaller part of itself rather than risk the death of the whole. Amnesia degrades your abilities, robbing you of some of the talents that you have gained during your adventuring career.

**Game Rules:** You lose a number of skill ranks equal to two times your current level + 3. You may remove these ranks from any skills of your choice, taking all the ranks from one skill or spreading the loss as you see fit. You permanently reduce the number of skill ranks you gain per level by 2 (minimum 0).

**Bloodlust:** The terrors from beyond have shown you that all life, not just your own, is fragile. The best way to survive is to slay your enemy before it can kill you. In the midst of battle, you lose control of your emotions. They carry you away in a red haze of murderous rage, pushing you to attack your enemies until you or they are dead.

**Game Rules:** Once you damage an enemy, you must attack that foe to the exclusion of all other actions in combat. You can use melee or ranged strikes, spells, magic items, or special attacks to injure your opponent. You cannot run away from the battle, stop to heal another character, or stop to heal yourself. Your bloodlust consumes you to the point that you lose sight of all other objectives. Once your opponent falls to 0 or fewer hit points, you can act as normal. If your opponent attempts to flee, you must pursue him or continue to attack until he escapes beyond your sight or hearing for at least 3 rounds. After that time, you can act as normal.

**Delusions (Disease and Filth):** You see evidence of the strange, horrifying creatures that infest the world in everything. Their filth and refuse covers everything, including your clothes and food. After all, such monsters are a fundamental part of creation. They influence everything, and most food and drink is tainted with their poison. You refuse to eat or drink anything other than a few, rare items. When they are not at hand, you consume only the smallest quantities needed to survive. In time, your body slowly wastes away as you starve yourself.

**Game Rules:** You suffer a permanent -2 penalty to Strength as your body withers due to your negligence and paranoia. You never eat food unless you prepare it yourself, and you restrict yourself to selected foods that your damaged mind sees as pure and safe. You can sometimes eat other things, but you restrict yourself to small portions.

**Delusions (Doom):** The world is coming to an end, and all you can do is rage against the demise of all that is worth fighting for as it all comes crashing down. You have seen the terrors of the cosmos, the strange beings that hail from beyond space and time, and in them you see an inevitable doom. All of your actions are tinged with a mix of sorrow at the world's fate and rage at the futile inevitability of your actions to prevent it. You swing from morose depression to hotheaded anger.

**Game Rules:** At the beginning of each day, roll

1d10 to determine your current mood. On a 1-5, you sink into a deep depression. On a 6-10, you overcome with an angry, sour mood that can lead to bursts of fury.

During bouts of depression, you suffer a -2 morale penalty on all ability and skill checks and a -1 morale penalty to attacks. You suffer a -1 morale penalty to AC as you can barely muster the energy to fend off attacks. During fits of anger, you gain a +1 morale bonus to damage but are unfocused and jittery, giving you a -2 competence penalty to all attacks and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma-based skill and ability checks. In addition, while in your angry mood you must make a Will save (DC 15) each round of combat to avoid using a standard action to make a ranged or melee attack against the nearest opponent. You can opt to make a ranged attack with a rock or similar bit of debris if you do not have a bow at hand. All that matters is that you vent your anger towards your foe.

**Delusions (Hallucinations):** Your encounters with the bizarre have caused your grip on reality to become unhinged. During times of stress, your mind conjures phantom images that distract your efforts and lead you away from the true dangers you face. You might mistake a friend for a foe, or see a flowing river of blood that surrounds you and prevents you from moving.

**Game Rules:** In combat or other stressful situations, there is a 10% chance each round that you suffer hallucinations. Your DM makes this check in secret. You declare your intended actions before committing them, and your DM may alter their outcome depending on the hallucination you witness. Several example mishaps are given below. Your DM is free to invent new ones that fit the situation. You do not take any additional actions based on your hallucinations. Your DM can only modify ones you decide to take. For example, if you are adjacent to an opponent and decide to attack him, your DM cannot make you move and then attack an ally due to your hallucinations. If you had to charge your opponent and then strike, your delusions could force you to move and attack an ally or even an inanimate object.

**Attack:** You strike your nearest ally or a random target from those available, as you confuse friend and foe. Alternatively, you could lash out at a chair, table, or similar object.

**Move:** You remain rooted in place or take a circuitous route that can provoke up to one attack of opportunity as your mind creates hallucinatory obstacles in your intended path.

**Spell:** Your hallucinations cause you to mistakenly target a random ally rather than a foe or vice versa, depending on the spell you cast. You might also blast a rock or other object.

**Delusions (Insight):** Exposure to the horrors of the world has slightly skewed your view of reality. You harbor a variety of strange, incoherent theories on the workings of the cosmos. Many of these ideas are strange but ultimately harmless, but in hazardous situations your odd ideas can put you and your allies in greater danger. For example, when confronted with a deadly giant lizard, you might sheathe your sword and throw dirt in its mouth because you are convinced that the element of earth is poisonous to the creature.

*Game Rules:* In combat and other stressful, dangerous situations, there is a 10% chance each round that you waste your action on some nonsensical, bizarre idea. You might shout nonsense words in the mistaken belief that you can cast a spell, or you may stare into your opponent's eyes in a vain effort to hypnotize him. You may not attack or cast spells during your action. Otherwise, you may act as normal.

**Delusions (Invulnerability):** While the monsters you have encountered have devoured other folk and driven them mad, you shrugged off the terror they spread and lived to tell the tale. Obviously, you are utterly invulnerable to danger. Perhaps you are a god given mortal form, or some higher power looks over you. In any case, you are convinced that you have nothing to fear from physical threats. While others proceed with caution, you stride forward oblivious to the risks at hand.

*Game Rules:* You suffer a -1 penalty to AC and a -2 penalty to all Reflex saves as you react to danger a second slower than normal. Your insane confidence in your abilities is so great that you stand and absorb attacks that other adventurers would try to dodge.

**Delusions (Might):** The strength of ancient heroes flows through your body, a supernatural blessing that allows you to easily sunder wood, iron, and even magical ore. In battle, your enemies fall beneath your attacks as you batter them aside with ease. You are convinced that you are a powerful hero, even though the physical evidence does not support that view. While your body may look puny and weak, you know that the divine might of the gods is within you.

*Game Rules:* You suffer a -2 penalty to damage rolls and all Strength checks and Strength-based skill checks. You make little effort to put any force into your blows, as you prefer to coast on your supposed divinely inspired strength. If you could use a move action to approach a foe and attack him, you must do so rather than make a ranged attack or cast a spell. You cannot move farther away and then make a ranged attack or use a spell. In essence, if an enemy is within one move you can't cast a spell or use a ranged attack on your action. Your delusions push you to demonstrate your great might.



**Delusions (Paranoia):** You see enemies behind every rock and tree. They lurk in the shadows, ready to leap forth and slay you. You see their influence in all of your failures, from mundane events to the grand, important plans you have made throughout your life. Your efforts have been in vain only because a shadowy cabal of enemies dogs your every step. Unfortunately, these enemies are phantoms conjured by your mind. You waste a tremendous amount of time and energy obsessing over foes that do not exist.

*Game Rules:* You are frequently distracted by the enemies you have created in your mind. In stressful situations, such as combat, you can set aside your delusions and take care of the task at hand, but in the absence of a direct threat you are distracted and flighty. Outside of combat, you suffer a  $-2$  penalty to all skill checks and saves. In addition, you slowly build up suspicious feelings towards those around you. In order to give an item you own to anyone else or cast a spell on them you must make a Will save (DC 20) to overcome your innate mistrust of others. You always demand an equal share of all treasure found. If you are shortchanged, you attempt to steal from your allies to ensure you gain your proper share. If an ally is in position to flank you with an opponent or another ally in combat, you must move to a “safer” position before taking any other action for fear of betrayal. You do not suffer this drawback when two foes flank you.

**Delusions (Self-Flagellation):** The terrors of the world are spawned by the raw stuff of the cosmos. Your body, in turn, is an artifact of the same material world that created those horrors. Thus, you see in yourself the same building blocks and the raw essence of the sickening creatures you have faced. In secret, you cut your flesh, batter your body, and otherwise inflict wounds on yourself as a means of lashing out at the utter blasphemy of reality or purging yourself of the taint in you.

*Game Rules:* At the start of each game day, you suffer damage equal to your total Hit Dice. This damage cannot reduce your hit points to less than 1. You inflict his damage in secret, such as by cutting yourself while others aren’t looking or sneaking away from camp to lash yourself with a whip or scourge. You do not disclose this damage to others nor can you use healing magic or items until you have suffered other injuries from an opponent.

**Depression:** Your experiences with the supernatural have sapped the joy of living from you. Everything is drudgery, from the simplest task to the important work that you have ahead of you. Getting out of bed can be a challenge, and in the face of any sort of resistance or difficulty your energy quickly wanes. You are moody, irritable, and difficult to provoke to action.

*Game Rules:* You suffer a  $-2$  penalty to all initiative checks. You take twice as long with all skill checks, with those that require standard actions requiring full-round ones and so forth. You cannot gain any morale bonuses to your actions, as your bleak disposition prevents you from taking any joy or inspiration from the work of others.

**Maniacal Obsession:** You have become fascinated with a minor, irrelevant, or otherwise trivial topic. You spend hour after hour immersed in this activity, either participating in it or conducting academic studies of it. For example, a wizard may delve so deeply into the study of languages that he neglects his arcane work. A fighter might spend so much time oiling and polishing his armor that his combat skills become rusty and forgotten.

*Game Rules:* The effects of this disorder depend on the nature of the character who is afflicted by it. Your DM selects one of these effects depending on your character’s area of expertise.

Characters that excel at fighting, primarily those whose base attack bonus increases by  $+1$  per level gained in their primary character class, suffer a  $-2$  penalty to all attacks. They become so enamored with their obsession that they neglect their combat training.

Spellcasters lose one spell slot or prepared spell per day for every three caster levels. The spell or spell slot must be of the highest level the character can cast. These characters waste time on their obsession while preparing their spells. Characters who cast spontaneously use their magic for trivial reasons related to their obsession.

Characters with many skills suffer a  $-4$  penalty to a number of skills equal to half the skill ranks they gain per level. You can only choose to apply this penalty to skills in which you have a number of ranks equal to your level. Otherwise, you must devote it to the skills in which you have invested the greatest number of ranks. Like characters that focus on combat, these adventurers neglect the study and practice of their talents.

For characters with more than one class, use their highest-level class to determine an appropriate set of symptoms.

**Nightmares:** Sleep has become a terrible trial for you, as your experiences have left scars on your psyche that take the form of terrible nightmares. Each night when you slip off to sleep, you endure terrible visions of death, destruction, and misery. You never awake fully rested unless you sleep for much longer than usual. Physically you remain in good health, but mentally you are continually fatigued and drained.

**Game Rules:** You are in a continual, mental fog that makes it difficult for you to take quick, decisive actions. In addition, your strung-out, tense state makes it difficult to focus your concentration. You suffer a  $-2$  penalty to all Reflex and Will saves. You suffer a  $-4$  penalty to all Concentration checks. When casting a spell, there is a 10% chance that your poor rest habits cause it to fail. Your great weariness makes it more difficult to properly prepare spells. Even spontaneous casters, such as sorcerers, feel the weight of mental exhaustion that dulls their arcane abilities.

**Obsessive Compulsion:** In a world that utterly lacks meaning, you construct some of your own by creating elaborate rituals that you have a compulsive drive to complete. For example, you might slap your sheath six times before drawing your sword. A spellcaster may mumble a set of nonsensical words and draw triangular patterns in the air before completing a spell. While normally harmless, these rituals can distract you from important work. In addition, you must complete them or your become so distracted and uneasy that all your efforts suffer.

**Game Rules:** All standard actions you attempt count as full-round actions, while move actions now count as standard actions and free actions count as move actions. You waste time with your rituals and motions to the point that even the simplest maneuver takes precious additional seconds in combat and other stressful situations. If you choose to ignore this restriction, you suffer a  $-4$  morale penalty to attacks, checks, and saves for 2d6 minutes. This penalty applies to the action that you chose to commit without completing your rituals.

**Overindulgence:** The terrible sights you have witnessed have pushed you to indulge in rich foods and stout drink. Given that all living things will one day die, you see little value in taking care of yourself. Instead, you live for the day and eat to excess. You have neglected the physical conditioning needed to maintain your health, especially in light of the dangers and rigors of adventuring. You suffer from poor physical health, and you are also more prone to ankle sprains, pulled muscles, and other mundane injuries caused by overexertion.

**Game Rules:** You suffer a permanent  $-2$  penalty to Constitution. In addition, after each encounter you must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 points of nonlethal damage due to minor pulled muscles, twisted limbs, and other injuries brought on by vigorous, athletic activity.

**Phobia, Enhanced:** Something that produced a mild or even severe fear reaction can now put you into a near catatonic state if you draw too close to it. Your mind has placed the blame for the terror and fear that you have experienced squarely on one specific type of creature or thing. This defense mecha-

nism allows you to cope with life rather than be crushed under a suffocating weight of dread, but the fears that lurk within your mind burst forth when you encounter the object of this insanity.

**Game Rules:** Roll on the following table to determine the creature type that this phobia applies to. If you roll a creature that you already have a quirk-level phobia against, you may either re-roll or accept the result but gain a new quirk to replace the phobia. Since these rules augment the quirk-strength phobia, having it as one of your character's quirks in essence gives you one fewer quirk than you should have for your madness total.

d10	Creature Type
1	Aberrations
2	Constructs
3	Dragons
4	Elementals
5	Giants
6	Magical Beasts
7	Oozes
8	Outsiders
9	Undead
10	Vermin

In addition to the drawbacks of the quirk version of your phobia (see above), you must struggle to control your actions while in the presence of the creatures that arouse such fear and dread in you. Each round, you must make a Will save with a DC equal to the creature's FR + 10. If you face more than one creature that you have a phobia against, select the highest FR. If you succeed, you may act as normal. If you fail, you lose control and must attack, flee, or cower in fear for 2d6 rounds. Roll on the phobia result table to determine the effect. Make this Will save in addition to any required for the creature's FR, applying the results of both.

#### d4 Phobia Result

- 1 You attack the nearest creature that your phobia applies to.
- 2 You attack the nearest creature, friend or foe.
- 3 You stand frozen in place, losing you Dex bonus to AC.
- 4 You flee, moving as fast as possible to escape the object of fear.

**Seizures:** You suffer temporary paralysis and a violent loss of bodily control as your psychic damage manifests as physical symptoms. While outwardly your personality seems intact, the stress and trauma of the horrors you have witnessed translate into physical reactions. Your mind's control over your body slowly slips away as your grip on reality wanes.

**Games Rules:** You suffer a permanent  $-2$  penalty to Dexterity. In addition, at the start of each encounter there is a 10% chance that



you suffer partial paralysis. You take an additional  $-2$  penalty to Dexterity for 2d6 minutes as the stress of battle triggers this disorder's severe symptoms.

**Senility:** Your encroaching madness slowly wears away at your memory and personality, leaving your ability and reason permanently damaged. You have trouble recalling basic facts and sometimes lapse into a glassy, dazed state.

**Game Rules:** You suffer a permanent  $-2$  penalty to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. This damage cannot be repaired in any way, as it represents the steady degradation of your intellectual capacities.

**Terror Attacks:** The stress and continuing emotional strain of the psychological stress you have endured sometimes overwhelms you. You can hold your emotions at bay for long periods, but when they overwhelm you they leave you in a catatonic, rigid state. Usually, you lose control in stressful, dangerous situations such as combat.

**Game Rules:** If you roll a natural 1 on an attack or skill check, the stress and pressure you feel to struggle on despite the terrors you have faced proves too much to handle. You can take no actions for 1d6 rounds and are considered helpless. For an additional 1d10 minutes, you suffer a  $-2$  morale penalty to all attacks, checks, and saves.

## MADNESS

The sad, ultimate fate of many adventurers who venture against the darkness at the edge of the world, madness signals the end of a character's adventuring career and most likely the end of his life. Some characters that go over the edge can be rescued, but they remain shattered, hollow shells of their old selves. Their minds have been opened to the true horrors of the world, and they can no longer cope with the rough and tumble life of an adventurer.

When a character reaches 100 or more madness points, he immediately loses his grip on reality and enters a deep state of insanity that manifests in one of several different ways. Some characters may become raving lunatics as their minds shatter into a thousand pieces. Others become cold-blooded murderers as paranoia overtakes them. They see deadly intent in the most innocent gestures and begin to plot the murder of their friends. To these poor, twisted souls, their friends planned all along to kill them. Thus, in the grips of madness, the paranoid victims think it best to kill their comrades before they can complete their nefarious plans.

Unlike quirks and disorders, madness recedes when a character's madness point total drops below 100. However, a character who escapes madness in this manner receives a new disorder to reflect the permanent, mental strain that overcame him. In addition, once a character has gone over 100 madness points his total can never drop below 80 points. The process of descending into madness leaves permanent, indelible scars that resist all attempts at healing. Thus, characters that go completely insane usually remain too fragile to engage in further adventures. A single, traumatic incident can send them back over the brink.

When a character reaches 100 or more madness points, immediately roll on the table below to determine the nature of his insanity. The other characters may not notice this event, as some of these forms of insanity are subtle and potentially dangerous to those around the affected PC.

### d4 Result

- 1 Bloodthirsty Fury
- 2 Catatonia
- 3 Delusional Fantasies
- 4 Psychotic Paranoia

**Bloodthirsty Fury:** The battering, corrosive effects of all the events you have witnessed and sanity-blasting creatures you have encountered finally destroy your mind. Your natural fight-or-flight reflex goes haywire, throwing you into a psychotic fury. You attack everyone around you, including your friends, and turn into raving, murderous wild animal.



**Game Rules:** You immediately enter a bloodthirsty rage. You gain +4 Strength and Constitution and a +2 morale bonus on all Will saves at the cost of a -2 penalty to AC. In addition, you cannot use any skills other than those based on Strength during this violent episode. Your rage lasts for 2d6 minutes. During this time you attack the nearest living creature whether friend or foe. After your rage ends, you Intelligence drops to 2 and you act as a wild animal. If you are somehow restrained and brought back to civilization, there is a 5% chance per month that your personality and intellect return. In this case, your madness score drops to 99. Otherwise, you seek out a lair and hunt for food like a beast of the wilds until the end of your days.

**Catatonia:** The horrors of the world overwhelm your senses. Your mind literally shuts down, leaving you a helpless vegetable. You still breathe and can eat and drink with assistance, but are otherwise utterly helpless.

**Game Rules:** You are considered helpless and are unable to move, take any actions, or defend yourself. This state remains until you somehow lose madness points or enough time passes for your psyche to heal. There is a flat 5% chance per month that you snap out of this state. In this case, your madness point total drops to 99.

**Delusional Fantasies:** With reality presenting such a grim, stark picture, your mind snaps and decides to produce a new version of the world to enjoy. You lose touch with all but the most basic aspects of the environment. You might stand in the midst of a dusty, ruined castle, but your mind's eye sees it as a majestic, gleaming citadel. You walk through life as if you were in a dream as your mind utterly rejects the world.

**Game Rules:** You lose your grip on reality. There is a 90% chance each round that you make an inappropriate or nonsensical action. In battle, you might try to strike up a conversation with the ogre that you mistake for your valet. While the ogre batters you with its club, you remain oblivious to your physical

condition. There is a 5% chance per month that you escape this world of illusions. If you do so, your madness score drops to 99.

**Psychotic Paranoia:** As the final layers of your sanity peel away, you achieve a twisted insight into the world. You realize that your supposed friends are in truth hidden enemies. All of them plot against you, and the hour of your doom is at hand. You must quickly ready yourself for this day of reckoning. If you can eliminate your allies before they strike you down, you might be able to survive.

**Game Rules:** You immediately lose all of your quirks and disorders as you see the world with a new, albeit twisted, clarity. You dedicate yourself to tracking down and slaying your former comrades. You may try to trick them into thinking you are still an ally, all while plotting to kill them. You might ally with their enemies, secretly concoct plans that take weeks or months to come together, or even simply attack them in a psychotic fury. In any event, your delusions of paranoia and persecution are so strong that nothing can sway you from your goal. Perhaps you believe that your friends are monsters in disguise, or that they have all gone insane and must be stopped. You eventually withdraw from the world, cutting off all contact with others as you see the taint of evil in the heart of everything.

This is perhaps the most difficult form of madness to run in a campaign, and at the DM's option, you may ignore this result and pick another one. Some players may think that plotting amongst the party is a fun diversion, while others may see it as an obstacle to a good time. The thought that one of the characters plots against the rest of the party adds a layer of suspicion and scheming to the campaign, but inexperienced players may take such actions personally. It is best to poll the players and ask how they feel about this option before using it. As another alternative, a player could lose control of a PC who falls to this form of madness. The character can then become a recurring villain, one who is all the more dangerous because of his knowledge of the party's abilities and methods.

## CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH AND  
INVESTIGATION

Horror and dark fantasy games can place a greater focus on research and investigation than the typical fantasy campaign. Many of the powerful monsters that the characters face might prove too strong to defeat with swords and spells. Instead, the characters must uncover some stratagem to overcome the monster or learn of its weaknesses.

In other horror games, separate skills might cover a character's ability to research at a library or make contacts in academia that can provide insight into a creature, myth, or strange event. This chapter focuses on the Knowledge skills, providing expanded rules that reflect the greater utility they present in a horror game. The characters' ability to find an important clue or track down a rare book that holds an important spell might prove far more important than their base attack bonuses or known spells.

RESEARCH AND  
KNOWLEDGE

This section discusses each of the Knowledge skills and presents new rules for using them during long-term research. In the core rules, the Knowledge skill represents the trivia, learning, and collected facts that a character has managed to collect. A check represents the facts revealed with a moment of concentration. Since the strange creatures, ritu-

als, and other threats the characters will encounter in a horror game are usually rare, weird, and relatively unknown, chances are that even the most studious character has never heard of them. Instead, the PCs need to research in libraries, dig through their collection of rare books and strange tomes, and consult with sages and other specialists. A Knowledge skill check can represent a character's ability to sift through obscure books to find a single, pertinent page or his efforts to contact a network of experts who might provide him with a few critical clues to aid in his search.

## AREAS OF STUDY

The core rules provide a list of Knowledge specialties such as dungeoneering or geography. When a character takes the Knowledge skill, he must specify the area of study that his skill covers. For example, a scout who patrols the frontier might have Knowledge (nature) while a wizard may have the Knowledge (arcana) skill.

In a game that focuses on knowledge and investigation, this specialization might prove to be a hindrance. With so many Knowledge skills available to the characters, it is possible that they may lack the specific area of study they need to complete an adventure or uncover an important skill. In addition, as a person learns more about a subject he naturally tends to pick up a working knowledge of other areas. For example, a wizard who studies arcana may learn about nature based on his studies of

herbs, plants, and animals used in magical research. A character that masters history may also learn of the etiquette and protocols developed at the royal court.

To make the Knowledge skill easier to handle and to cut down on the confusion inherent in trying to pick the right type of Knowledge, these optional rules condense all the sub-skills down into one. When you put ranks into Knowledge, you now gain a wider breadth of topics. The more ranks you spend, the more topics you learn.

**Knowledge Topics:** The different types of Knowledge skills are ranked from the most common to the most obscure. For example, anyone who lives in an area for more than a few months can gain the Knowledge (local) skill. Learning the roads, history, legends, and rumors of a town is relatively easy. If you go to the market square each day to shop and stop in a tavern once or twice a week, you can learn plenty about the local gossip and news. On the other hand, Knowledge (arcana) represents a rare, strange body of knowledge that few sages other than spellcasters can master. You could spend your entire life wandering around town, and you would never develop even the most basic knowledge of magic. In this case, the Knowledge skill represents a rare, difficult to obtain level of training.

To represent this continuum of Knowledge, the various topics from the core rules are given below in order from the easiest to obtain to the most difficult. The sub-skills were ranked primarily on the ease of acquiring them. For example, any observant person could build a working knowledge of geography by studying maps or even wandering an area. Areas that required special training, such as access to books or sages, were given higher ranks. Knowledge (nature) might require more training than Knowledge (history), but gaining a working understanding of the natural world requires only an experienced druid, ranger, or herbalist. A thorough training in history, on the other hand, demands access to books, sages, and other special resources.

### AREA OF KNOWLEDGE RANKINGS

1. Local: Legends, personalities, inhabitants, laws, customs, traditions, humanoids.
2. Geography: Lands, terrain, climate, people.
3. Nature: Animals, fey, giants, monstrous humanoids, plants, seasons and cycles, weather, vermin.

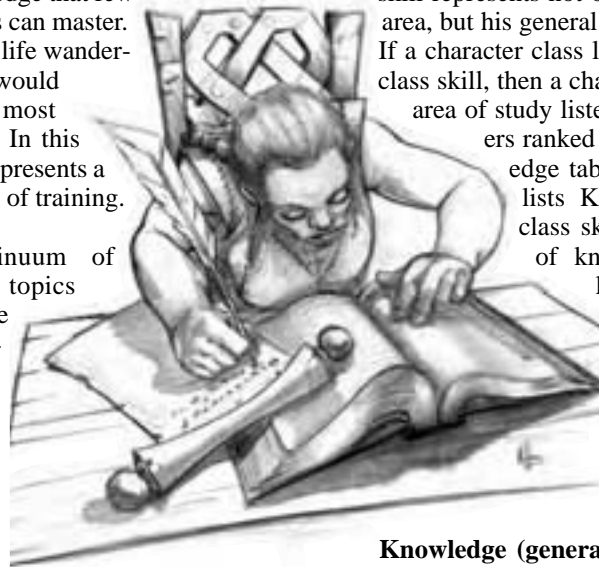
4. History: Royalty, wars, colonies, migrations, founding of cities.
5. Nobility and Royalty: Lineages, heraldry, family trees, mottoes, personalities.
6. Religion: Gods and goddesses, mythic history, ecclesiastic tradition, holy symbols, undead.
7. Architecture and Engineering: Buildings, aqueducts, bridges, fortifications.
8. Dungeoneering: Caverns, caves, spelunking, ruins.
9. Arcana: Ancient mysteries, forgotten cults, magic traditions, arcane symbols, cryptic phrases, monsters.
10. The Planes: The Inner Planes, the Outer Planes, the Astral Plane, the Ethereal Plane, outsiders, elementals, magic related to the planes.

The rankings of the areas of study allow us to simplify and expand the Knowledge skill. The following optional rules combine all of the Knowledge topics into one skill.

Spending ranks on your character's Knowledge skill represents not only his mastery of a specific area, but his general learning and mastery of lore. If a character class lists the Knowledge skill as a class skill, then a character can gain access to any area of study listed as a class skill and all others ranked lower on the areas of knowledge table. For example, a class that lists Knowledge (the planes) as a class skill grants access to all areas of knowledge. One that granted local, nature, and religion would allow access to religion and all areas ranked below it. In this case, Knowledge (religion) is the highest-ranked skill amongst the class's offerings.

**Knowledge (general):** When a character spends ranks on the Knowledge skill, he improves the total sum of his learning. He gains expertise not only in a single, specific area, but in several disparate fields of study. Learning never takes place in a bubble. While a character might never master every area of knowledge, he can acquire a working understanding of them. To reflect this, all characters with the Knowledge skill gain access to a new sub-skill: Knowledge (general).

Under these optional rules, all characters with the Knowledge skill have a general rating they use with all Knowledge checks and bonuses relating to the areas of knowledge listed above. This rating is covered by Knowledge (general). A character's bonus in Knowledge (general) applies to all the Knowledge checks he makes, though he still cannot make checks for areas to which he does not have access.





In concrete terms, a character has a general bonus for all Knowledge checks. For the areas of study, he has additional bonuses. For example, Keth the Elder has Knowledge (general) +8; he has a +4 bonus in arcana and a +2 bonus in local. He has Knowledge (arcana) as one of his class skills, allowing him to make checks for it and any area ranked below it. Checking the rankings, you can see that only Knowledge (the planes) lies beyond the scope of his studies. He could make all of his Knowledge checks with a +8 skill bonus. When he makes a Knowledge (local) check he has a total bonus of +10, while his Knowledge (arcana) checks have a +12 bonus.

A character with the Knowledge skill keeps track of his total ranks in Knowledge and the ranks he has in each area of study. When you spend ranks in Knowledge, you increase both your general learning and your mastery of specific areas. In general, your bonuses for the areas of knowledge are much lower than normal, but your Knowledge (general) bonus makes up for this.

**Spending Ranks:** Half the ranks you spend on the Knowledge skill go into your Knowledge (general) bonus until it reaches the maximum bonus based on your character level, as detailed below. The other half may be allocated to your areas of study as you see fit. Remember that you only have access to the areas that you count as class skills or those

ranked lower. You can still spend ranks on higher-ranked areas, but you only get half the bonus as normal for the ranks you spend.

You do not gain access to areas of study ranked above your highest class skill and below sub-skills that you spend cross-class ranks to gain. For example, Torgred counts Knowledge (nature) as a class skill. He spends ranks on Knowledge (arcana), gaining half the bonus as normal for picking up a cross-class skill. He still cannot make Knowledge checks for areas ranked above Knowledge (nature) except for arcana unless he spends ranks on them.

When spending ranks, it is a good idea to keep a running tally so you know when you have to put ranks into Knowledge (general) and when you can spend them on areas of study. Remember, half of your ranks go into Knowledge (general) and the other half go into the specific topics.

**Knowledge Ranks and Level:** Since these optional rules essentially split the Knowledge skills into two halves, Knowledge (general) and the areas of study, the maximum skill ranks and bonuses you can gain from them work a bit differently. The maximum number of ranks you can have in Knowledge (general) equals the maximum ranks you can have in a cross-class skill rounded *down*. For the areas of study, the ranks you can have in one category equal

the maximum ranks you can have in a cross-class skill rounded *up*. This difference in rounding ensures that at any given level, your total ranks in an area of study (i.e., your ranks in Knowledge (general) and your ranks in the area) equal the maximum number of ranks you could have in any other skill.

Remember that when purchasing cross-class skills, you gain a +1 bonus for every 2 full ranks you spend. This limit applies to Knowledge skills under these optional rules.

Level	Maximum Ranks	
	Knowledge (general)	Area of Study
1	2	2
2	2	3
3	3	3
4	3	4
5	4	4
6	4	5
7	5	5
8	5	6
9	6	6
10	6	7
11	7	7
12	7	8
13	8	8
14	8	9
15	9	9
16	9	10
17	10	10
18	10	11
19	11	11
20	11	12

**Synergy Bonuses:** The synergy bonuses listed in the core rules still apply as normal, but the rules for qualifying for them are slightly different. If a Knowledge skill is specifically listed as one of your class skills, you gain its synergy bonus when the total of your ranks in the area of study and your Knowledge (general) skill equals the ranks needed for the bonus. You must have at least 3 ranks in an area of study to qualify for its synergy bonus, regardless of your Knowledge (general) ranks.

If a Knowledge skill is not specifically listed as one of your class skills, you must have at least 5 ranks in it to qualify for the synergy bonus, even though you count it as a trained, class skill when making skill checks and allocating ranks.

These special cases are in place to preserve the balance inherent in the synergy bonuses. Without them in place, it is trivial for characters to gain a host of bonuses to a wide range of skills.

**Notes on These Rules:** These optional rules make the Knowledge skills a bit easier to obtain and use, but in some DMs' eyes they make it too easy. Keep in mind that in a dark fantasy game, the characters are likely to draw upon research and study far more

often to defeat an opponent than in a typical swords-and-sorcery setting. If you choose to adapt these rules to a non-dark fantasy game, you should also use the research rules from the next section to keep them balanced. Under the core rules, it is rather easy for a character with a host of Knowledge skills to identify monsters or gain useful hints with a single skill check. The research rules force even the most erudite scholar to spend some time in a library or consulting with sages before finding an answer. The new rules for Knowledge DCs balance the greater ease of utilizing this skill and make it worthwhile for wizards and clerics to build up libraries of old tomes.

## RESEARCH, LIBRARIES, AND GATHERING CLUES

The emphasis on exploration, investigation, and research in horror games means that the characters will spend a lot more time flipping through books and asking questions than swinging swords and dishing out spells. This section introduces some optional rules that you can use to simulate the difficulties and planning involved in tracking down scraps of hard-to-find information. It also includes expanded rules for the Knowledge skill, allowing you to reflect the importance of libraries, ancient tomes of knowledge, and other resources. This section is broken down into three primary topics.

*Tomes of Lore* covers rules for ancient texts or more recent works that provide insight into the workings of the supernatural. An unholy tome might give you an important clue into a monster's weaknesses, but the terrible rituals it describes might wear away at your emotional stability.

*Libraries* gives rules and ideas for using sages, archives, and other repositories of knowledge to help track down useful clues in defeating monsters.

*The Art of Investigation* gives rules for and ideas for creating mysteries in a game. It discusses how to plant clues and information that the characters can uncover to solve mysteries.

### TOMES OF LORE

A mad cultist scribes his fevered dreams into a battered journal each day, his paranoid ramblings punctuated with important insights into the nature of the strange monster that he will soon summon and unleash upon the world. A

wizard uses his magic to call demons, meticulously recording each step of the process to ensure that he follows the proper methods each time he prepares a ritual. A lone witch hunter records his observations in a catalog of the bizarre creatures and cults he has encountered so that future generations will stride into battle armed with the weapon of his experience.

A tome of forbidden lore may lack the flash and thunder of an enchanted blade or a mighty staff, but it can prove to be the most important item the characters can find in seeking to defeat a strange creature from beyond space and time. Knowledge is power in a horror game, and there is no better source of lore than a battered tome created by a frantic writer who had firsthand contact with the dark at the edge of the world. However, many of these tomes are difficult to decipher, feature rambling and at times incoherent passages, and require some knowledge of magical lore to truly understand. Yet if a character has the skills required to understand a book's contents, he can gain a wide variety of useful talents, knowledge, and insights into the true secrets of the world.

**The Basics:** A book has two basic aspects that you can use to describe it. First, it has traits and qualities that determine how easy it is to read. The book's style, the language the writer used, and any efforts made to cloak or encrypt its contents affect how easily a reader can understand it. Think of these qualities as the barriers that a character must overcome to get to the goodies inside the book. Those "goodies" cover all the benefits (and drawbacks) a character gains from reading and understanding the book. A volume on demons might grant bonuses in combat against a particular demon, or it could reveal a monster's critical weakness. Other books can grant feats, bonus skill ranks, and new spells. Sometimes, this knowledge comes at a price. A lurid tome that provides intense detail on a horrific monster might drive the reader mad, while other books are rife with misinformation that can impose penalties on certain actions until the reader realizes his error.

**Reading a Book:** To read a book, a character must be literate in the language in which it is written. In addition, the complexity and nature of the writing within it may also require a skill or Intelligence check. For example, a book on advanced magical theory might be gibberish to anyone who lacks ranks in Knowledge (arcana).

It takes a full day of study to make an Intelligence or skill check to decipher a book. Thus, taking 20 on this attempt requires a full 20 days of time to thoroughly study and analyze a book's contents. Some books might require more time, particularly long ones or those that consist of multiple volumes.

### Intelligence

Check DC	Description
0	A book written specifically to convey information, featuring a clear, direct style.
5	A writing style with jargon, confusing references, or complex language.
10	The typical academic book, written by an expert for another expert. Thick, dense, with frequent references to other sections of the tome.
15	A very poorly written work that requires analysis and constant work to decipher the author's meaning. This book could also be written in a cipher designed to mask its true contents.
20	A rambling, almost incomprehensible tome that departs on frequent tangents and is filled with nonsense mingled with brilliant insights. The typical product of a deranged or damaged mind.

**Skill Checks:** There are several skills that could prove relevant to understanding a book. Craft, Heal, Knowledge, Profession, and Spellcraft are all logical choices for skills that a character may need to possess in order to fully understand a book's contents. For instance, a treatise on biology or disease might require a Heal check to properly understand, as the author makes several references to procedures, herbs, and treatments that only a trained healer would know about. The Decipher Script skill is useful when dealing with books that are written in code or that feature some sort of mechanism to cloak their true meaning. This skill is important enough that it receives its own treatment after this section.

### Skill

Check DC	Description
0	A book written that requires no specific knowledge of an area.
5	A tome that assumes a working knowledge of an area. Anyone with a minimal amount of training understands it, while in the case of an untrained skill a novice can get the gist of the references.
10	The typical specialized, academic book, written by an expert for another expert's use. Makes frequent references to common techniques and advanced topics.

- 15 This book covers advanced topics that only a person with a journeyman's training can fully appreciate.
- 20 The most advanced book that a neophyte can hope to understand. This book deals with theory or delves intently into a single, specific area. With a lot of work, a beginner can eventually understand it.
- 25 Technical in its language and presentation, this book is all but useless to anyone other than a trained expert.
- 30 These books represent the most advanced works assembled on a topic. Only a trained expert could understand it, and even in that case it is wholly beyond a beginner's ability.

**Decipher Script:** This skill proves particularly useful in hiding the true meaning behind a passage. On first glance, the words in a book that require this skill might be utter nonsense, an obvious code, or perhaps a seemingly normal book that has a secret message concealed within its pages. Using Decipher Script in this manner usually requires one full day of reading and work, though some tomes are too long to be fully read in one day. Taking 20 on this check requires 20 days of work to complete all the required research.

The Decipher Script check needed to decode a book depends on which of the three basic modes the book uses, though the DCs and time needed to decode a book remains the same.

#### Decipher Script

DC	Description
20	A simple, coded message.
25	The average cipher.
30	A particularly complex or difficult to master code.

*Nonsense:* In this situation, a nonsensical passage holds a hidden message. Seemingly random words hold a pattern that a character could learn in order to understand a message. The first time a character reads through this book, the DM makes a Decipher Script check on his behalf in secret (DC 20). If this check succeeds, the character notices that a pattern exists in the text, and he must spend time using this skill to decode it. On a natural roll of 1 on the check, the DM must make a Wisdom check for the character in secret (DC 5). If this check fails, the character falsely believes that the gibberish holds a pattern until he makes a successful Decipher Script check to understand it. At that point, he understands that the book is nothing more than gibberish.

*Code:* The book is written in a code. Anyone glancing through it can see that the tome is written in a complex cipher (Intelligence check DC 5) that requires decoding. On a failed check, the person inspecting the book merely assumes that it is pointless gibberish and otherwise ignores it. A character is under no obligation to ignore it, and he can go on to use Decipher Script in an effort to determine if it contains a message as normal.

*Hidden:* This book appears to be a normal tome covering some basic topic. It could be a journal that contains little of note, an academic treatise on fungi, or the budget for a business or other organization. If this book is closely read and studied, a hidden series of ciphers appears within it. The seemingly mundane passages have hidden meanings or form complex, intricate patterns that cloak the tome's true contents. In order to notice the presence of this hidden pattern, a character must make an Intelligence check (DC 12) and spend a day studying the book. A character cannot use Decipher Script to uncover the book's secrets until he first succeeds at this Intelligence check and uncovers hints of the book's secret contents.

**Time and Books:** The base time needed to read and decipher a book's contents is one day. However, some books are more complicated, longer, or so filled with details that they take more time to fully understand. In that case, a book's base time could be longer. In addition, some books require less time to read, as they are short, to the point, or contain only a limited array of information.

Base Time	Description
Half day	A simple pamphlet or a book that covers only limited ground.
1 day	The average tome.
2 days	A complex book or one that is the equivalent of two books.
4 days	A multi-volume set or an enormous single tome.
1 week	A small library of books that, when taken together, functions as a single, unified body of lore.

#### BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS

After reading a book and understanding any secret messages or important lore contained within it, a character might gain several benefits or drawbacks from the knowledge he gains. The book might impart lore on how to defeat a specific type of demon, or it could contain spells that a wizard can learn and add to his repertoire. In some cases, the lore contained within a book can prove baneful. Traumatic events described in agonizing detail shatter the reader's sanity, while incorrect information might leave a character at a severe disadvantage. For example, a book might describe how acid and fire are useless against trolls,



or it could give details on a fencing style that grants an AC penalty. This section lists a variety of benefits and drawbacks that a book can grant to a character.

**Book Prices:** Each trait has a gold piece cost that you can use to calculate a book's gold piece value. To determine a book's overall price, add up the cost listed for its traits.

### USEFUL TRAITS

The knowledge contained within a book can prove useful to the characters. The right advice provides insight into completing an action, new tactics that the PCs might never have considered, and forgotten lore that could bolster a character's skills.

**Combat Bonus:** While fighters might not be the most cerebral characters in the party, strategy, tactics, and planning all play a major part in becoming a master swordsman. The Expertise feat, for instance, requires a character to possess a relatively high Intelligence score. This trait is appropriate for books penned by skilled fencers, brilliant tacticians, great generals, and other skilled warriors. By reading through this book, a character can gain useful insights that improve his fighting style in particular situations or versus a specific opponent.

A character who is proficient with all martial weapons can gain the benefits of this trait if he succeeds at a DC 10 Intelligence check and spends a week studying its contents unless otherwise noted. The book provides one of the following benefits, with a gp cost listed for each.

*Creature Tactics:* The book instructs its reader on how to defeat a specific type of creature, granting a +1 bonus to weapon damage rolls against a creature type. For outsiders or humanoids, choose a specific subtype to which the bonus applies. *Cost:* 1,500 gp.

*Dueling Mastery:* With its clear instruction and precise explanation of a variety of advanced tactics, this book allows a character to master the basics of advanced fighting styles. After studying this book, a character can ignore the Intelligence prerequisite for the Combat Expertise feat. *Cost:* 1,000 gp.

*War Mastery:* This book was penned by one of the greatest military minds of its historical period. Its insights into tactical thinking, strategy, and planning can transform a mediocre thinker into an expert tactician. After studying this book, the attack bonus a character grants when he aids another in combat improves to +4. *Cost:* 1,000 gp.

**Lore:** In addition to the exotic bonuses and magical effects a book can describe, it can also hold relatively mundane information that may prove more important than any ritual or combat bonus. While a



character possesses a book, it can give him bonuses to Knowledge skill checks. By referencing the book and utilizing the information it contains, a character enhances his knowledge and understanding. To gain this bonus, a character must spend 1 hour referencing the book. After this time, all Knowledge checks the character makes within the next hour gain the bonus listed for this trait.

The lore trait usually applies only to a specific area of study for the Knowledge skill, such as arcana or nature. The total bonus this feature provides determines its cost.

Knowledge Bonus	Cost
+2	400 gp
+4	1,600 gp
+6	2,600 gp
+8	6,400 gp
+10	10,000 gp

**Rituals:** A magical tome may contain details on specific rituals that, if properly enacted, can reproduce a spell. A character must study the book for one full week and make a Knowledge (arcana) or Intelligence check (DC 20 in both cases) to fully understand the book's contents. A character that successfully learns from the book can complete the ritual as described within it. Spells up to 7th level may be scribed as rituals. Higher level spells are too complex to cast in this manner. *Cost:* Spell level squared x 2,000 gp.

*Using Rituals:* Casting a spell as a ritual takes more time, requires more expensive components, and carries the risk that the spell may backfire. Any spell can be treated as a ritual, though some are rendered nearly useless by the restrictions that a ritual automatically incurs. A ritual spells takes 10 minutes to cast per spell level. It consumes material components that cost 100 gp times the spell level squared, in addition to those listed under the spell. In addition, completing the ritual requires Knowledge (arcana), Spellcraft, and a Craft check of any type to represent symbols and minor components that need to be created or scribed during the course of the spell's casting. The DC for all of these checks is 15 + the spell level. These checks count as stressful conditions, preventing a character from taking 10. Make one skill check to represent the effort expended during the ritual's complete duration. The ritual's caster may recruit others to make the Spellcraft and Craft checks on his behalf, but the person who learned the ritual must make the Knowledge (arcana) check.

A character can simultaneously complete a number of rituals equal to his Intelligence bonus. When using multiple rituals, you can assume that they complete at the same time or in order of their casting time. In essence, if a caster wants to complete

rituals for a 1st, 3rd, and 5th level spell, he can arrange his work so that they go off at the same time, or he can have them complete after he spends the required time working on them.

If the caster and his helpers succeed in their skill checks, the spell functions as normal. Treat it as if the caster completed the spell as normal and count his caster level as the minimum needed to use the spell. The caster makes any decisions regarding the spell such as its target, area of effect, and so on. If one or more of the skill checks needed to complete the spell fail, the ritual yields potentially disastrous results. If one check fails, the ritual fails to work. The components are consumed, but the caster suffers no ill effects. If two checks fail, the caster suffers 1d3 negative levels with a DC 15 Fortitude save needed to remove them. If all three checks fail, a magical backlash causes an explosion that inflicts 6d6 points of damage in a 60-ft. spread centered on the caster. A Reflex save (DC 15) cuts this damage in half. In addition, the caster and anyone who made skill checks to aid in the ritual's completion suffers 1d3 negative levels with a DC 15 Fortitude save needed to remove them.

**Skill Bonus:** A book's instruction can grant a reader useful advice and insight into using a skill. A book can grant a +1 competence bonus to any Intelligence-based skill in which the reader has at least one rank. Knowledge ranks are treated differently, as per the lore book ability described above. A tome can only improve on knowledge that a character already possesses. There is no substitute for practicing a skill, and a character without practical experience in the form of skill ranks cannot gain anything from a week's worth of reading.

Skill Bonus	Cost
+1	100 gp
+2	400 gp
+3	900 gp
+4	1,600 gp
+5	2,500 gp

**Spells:** Some tomes include arcane or divine spells that a caster can add to his list of known spell without copying it into his book. Usually, the magical notation that describes a spell is highly idiosyncratic. A particular wizard develops his own specific style of writing, one that another mage may be unable to understand. However, sometimes a wizard takes care to use an especially easy to understand or simple set of symbols. In this case, a wizard can read and understand a spell from a book even if he does not already have it in his own spellbooks. To understand a spell scribed in this manner, a wizard must study the book for one day and make a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + the spell level) in order to understand it. He can then prepare the spell from the tome as normal. Sorcerers and other casters who do not use spellbooks or

who use spontaneous casting do not gain this benefit.

Scribing one of these spells to a different spellbook follows all the standard rules. A wizard must still pay the gold cost and make any necessary skill checks to add the spell to his library.

Divine spells may be included in a book in this manner. As long as a cleric possesses the book, he can add it to his list of spells known and may prepare it. *Cost:* This ability has a cost equal to the gp price of a scroll that contains the spell.

## DRAWBACKS

Some books prove the adage that you should not always believe what you read. When wading through the ramblings of a madman, inconsistencies, wild claims, and bizarre narratives can combine to paint a misleading or false picture of reality. By the same token, advice is only as wise as the person who offers it. A treatise on fighting trolls could be filled with half-truths or deliberately misleading counsel. An adventurer who attempts to implement such tactics may suffer penalties until he realizes the errors it contains.

The drawbacks have no gold cost, as they offer no benefit to the characters. They do not reduce a book's cost, as the drawbacks do not make the bonuses any less useful.

**Combat Penalty:** If all the advice offered in tactical manuals or fencing handbooks was perfect, then the world would be filled with masters. Tomes with this trait offer misleading advice that can hinder a warrior. Any character that is proficient with all martial weapons has the training needed to understand this advice. If such a character spends a week studying the book and makes an Intelligence check (DC 10), he notices that the book's tactics are flawed and ignores them. Otherwise, he suffers a -1 penalty on attacks and initiative for a number of encounters equal to 12 - his Intelligence score, with a minimum of 1.

**False Lore:** The lore held within a book could be the product of a damaged or delusional mind, possibly leading anyone who follows it to a gruesome fate. When dealing with arcane lore and the strange mysteries of the world's horrors, it is difficult to decipher the dross from the gold. False lore might be something as simple as information that grants a penalty on Knowledge checks to misleading accounts that could result in the characters' deaths. A book might include false clues that serve as red herrings or disguise a monster's weaknesses. In this case, the players simply learn the information and must decide for themselves if they trust it. Otherwise, when referencing a book a character may suffer a penalty to certain Knowledge skill

areas of study. In this case, a character with the penalized Knowledge skill can determine that the book is useless with a day of study and a successful Knowledge check (DC 20). Normally, this modifier can range from a -1 to -10 circumstance penalty.

**Flawed Spells:** The simple runes and sigils used to describe spells as presented above are rarely used for a good reason. This set of arcane characters lacks the precision of the highly personalized systems employed by individual wizards, making them risky to use on a regular basis. A wizard must study the book for one day and make a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + the spell level) in order to understand it. He can then prepare the spell from the tome as normal. However, if the Spellcraft check's total result is 25 or higher, the caster notices the errors within it. Otherwise, they escape his notice. Each time the character casts the spell, he must make a Spellcraft check (DC 25 + the spell level) or he suffers disastrous results. The spell causes an explosion of arcane energy in a 60-ft. spread centered on the caster that deals 1d6 points of damage per level of the spell. A Reflex save (DC 18) halves this damage. The caster does not gain a save against this effect.

If a wizard is unfortunate enough to scribe this spell into his books before noting its flaws, he must make the Spellcraft check as described above each time he attempts to cast it. The space in the book is essentially wasted.

**Madness Points:** Some books describe strange scenes or blasphemous secrets of the world in such grotesque detail that they leave their readers emotionally traumatized. By reading a book, a character can accumulate madness points as per the optional rules given under the fear and terror sections of this chapter. Typically, the number of madness points a character risks gaining is connected to the lore and knowledge a book contains.

Sometimes, though, the insane babble held in a book is enough to push a reader to the edge without offering any useful insight into the horrors of the world. After studying the book to gain any of its benefits, the reader must make a Will save against the DCs listed below or gain the listed madness points values. A character must make this save only once. Whether he succeeds or fails, the book has no further effect on him.

Will DC	Madness Points (Failed/Saved)	Description
20	1d6/1	Lurid but restrained descriptions of horrors
25	1d8/1d3	The typical blasphemous tome.
30	2d6/1d4	Disturbing, explicit descriptions of horrors.

## THE TOME STAT BLOCK

To help organize a book's varied abilities, traits, and features, the tome stat block summarizes all the key points and statistics you need to keep track of a book and its contents.

The sample tomes given below follow this format: **Name:** Time (skill DCs and notes on finishing the book); traits.

**Name:** The book's title or the name by which it is commonly known.

**Time:** The amount of time needed to read and understand the book, typically one day.

### Skill DCs and Notes:

Some books require skill or Intelligence checks to properly understand their contents. In addition, make a note here if the book is written in a cipher or has a hidden message.

**Traits:** Summarize any special abilities that the book possesses, such as a skill bonus.

In addition, the book should have a brief description of its appearance, contents, and information on any clues or stories it contains that the characters may find useful. The example books list this after the stat block.

## SAMPLE TOMES

The following books illustrate how to use these rules to create interesting, weird books to drop into your game. The flavor text also shows how you can use descriptions and seemingly mundane content to give a book a lot of character.

**The Journals of Tharm, Son of Ingulf:** 2 days (written in Dwarven); Combat Bonus (creature tactics: giants), Knowledge (arcana) +2 bonus; Madness points save DC 25, 1d8/1d3.

**Description:** This battered tome bears damage as if it were slashed, hacked, and torn by a large edged weapon or long, vicious claws. It contains the daily journal of Tharm, a dwarven lord who led his people into the lowest reaches of the mountains. There, they discovered a great temple of the trolls dedicated to some unknown god. The dwarves defeated the

beasts, seized their temple, looted its treasures, and began mining the rich silver lodes near it.

After more than a year of relative peace, a series of gruesome murders struck the settlement. The dwarves discovered that a strange being, a minor godling worshipped by the trolls, still lurked in its former temple. One by one,

it slew the dwarves that desecrated its fane. The dwarves found that the passages leading from their new home were sealed by collapses. When they tried to dig new ones, the earth screeched in agony and bled like a living creature. Tharm was the last dwarf left alive. His last few entries detail his slow descent into madness. Trapped alone in the temple, he fell into a world of delusions and hallucinations. In

the final entry, his dwarf script breaks into an otherworldly writing that defies all attempts at translation, though the handwriting is obviously Tharm's. Thoughtful players may wonder how this book could have escaped a supposedly sealed off cavern...

**The Book of Distant Gates:** 1 day (written in Draconic); Rituals: *dimensional anchor*, *dismissal*, *lesser planar binding*, *magic circle against evil*; Knowledge (the planes) +4; Madness points save DC 35, 2d8/1d6.

This battered, ancient book has a black cover of an unknown material that resembles tough, scaly leather. Many infamous demonologists have owned this book, and it has launched the careers of many budding evil doers. As such, whenever a copy appears a variety of warlocks, inquisitors, and others involved in the conjuration and command of planar beings seeks it out. Oddly enough, sages and wizards seem to frequently copy it. In truth, the dark lords of the outer planes intentionally sow the material plane with copies of it, primarily to lure mortal spellcasters into trafficking with them. No matter how many copies good clerics and adventurers destroy, the forces of darkness produce more and set wizards and sorcerers along the path to damnation.





## LIBRARIES

A wizard hunches over an immense tome, searching through its rambling passages for a single, critical hint to dispelling a powerful spell. A sage searches through an enormous stack of books, intently studying the sketches of demons and devils in each one before tossing it away and reaching for the next volume.

Searching for a critical piece of information in a library or other repository of knowledge can be a trying process. In many collections, card catalogs and other easy reference systems are almost unheard of. In some cases, a librarian or other steward may take care to arrange the various tomes of knowledge in some sort of order. Most of the time, books are arranged in a haphazard manner. In some areas of a collection, a single author's works are kept together. In others, they are grouped by topic. Thus, tracking down a specific book requires a fair amount of knowledge regarding the topic at hand. Unless an investigator wants to read every book from cover to cover, he must have enough training in the area he wishes to research to quickly discard useless tomes and retain those that show a glimmer of promise.

In terms of game rules, libraries function in two different ways. First, they can provide a bonus to Knowledge checks. When faced with a question, a character can refer to a collection of books and research an answer. Second, some issues are so obscure or strange that even a character with a dozen ranks in Knowledge could never hope to answer them off the top of his head. In this case, a question is impossible to answer without access to a well-stocked library.

A library has three attributes to describe it: size, difficulty, and topics.

### SIZE

Size refers to the number of volumes a library contains. Obviously, a big library has more information in it than a smaller one. A library has a size rating just like a creature. It can range from Tiny to Colossal. Larger libraries usually take longer to search through, but they hold a greater breadth and depth of information.

A library's size determines its difficulty and the number of topics it can cover, along with the bonus it can grant for those topics. Both difficulty and topics are covered below.

In addition, some Knowledge skill checks are so difficult or require such precise information that they are impossible without a library of the required size. In some cases, a small library might have such an extensive collection of books on a single topic that it proves an exception to this rule, as described below under topics. Note that while the time needed to search a library doubles with each size category, the maximum Knowledge bonus increases by only +2. As a library grows larger, it tends to have more and more books that merely repeat topics and information covered in other volumes found within the collection. Thus, a bigger library might hold twice as many books as a smaller one contains, but it does not hold twice as much knowledge.

The statistics given for each size are baseline measures you can use when creating libraries of your own. An exceptionally well-organized collection might have a lower difficulty, while even the smallest library may be a chore to search if its books are scattered randomly on the shelves. By the same token, the guidelines given for topics and their bonuses apply to the average case. A small, specialized library might confer a higher bonus to a specific area of study than the largest collection in the region can grant.

To give you a better idea of how the library's size translates into a description of its physical dimension, consult the library size and features tables.

Library Size	Typical Difficulty	Topics
Tiny	4 hours	2, maximum +2 bonus
Small	8 hours	4, maximum +4 bonus
Medium	1 day	6, maximum +6 bonus
Large	2 days	8, maximum +8 bonus
Huge	4 days	All, maximum +10 bonus
Gargantuan	8 days	All, maximum +12 bonus
Colossal	16 days	All, maximum +14 bonus

Size	Description
Tiny	A collection smaller than a single room; a personal library.
Small	A library that fills a single room, perhaps a castle or keep's library.
Medium	A collection that fills three or more rooms, or an entire floor of a larger building. The biggest library in a city.
Large	A collection that fills two or three floors of an average-size building. The biggest library in a region.
Huge	A collection that fills an entire building or part of a very large one. The biggest library in a kingdom.
Gargantuan	A collection that fills one huge building or several smaller, connected buildings. The biggest library in an empire.

**Colossal** A library known throughout the world for its enormous collection. Perhaps one of these places exists on a continent.

## DIFFICULTY

Difficulty highlights the downside to working in a large library, namely that a large collection of books requires a fair amount of time to sift through. A single book on history holds nowhere near as much information as a mammoth collection that occupies an entire mansion. On the other hand, if the book contains the lore you need, it is much easier to find and reference compared to tracking down a single book in a sprawling library.

Difficulty is expressed as the average amount of time needed to find a particular volume in a library. After spending the listed time in a library, a character can make a Knowledge check with any relevant bonuses, as described below. However, a character can make a Knowledge check to see how quickly he finds the information he seeks. Skilled, knowledgeable researchers have an easier time finding the exact information they seek, as they can quickly sift through the stacks of books to find a relevant volume. The Knowledge check made to cut down the time needed for research must use the same skill that a character plans on using to uncover information in the library.

The minimum time needed to research anything in a library is one hour regardless of the collection's size.

Three factors determine a library's difficulty. Its size plays a key role, as a larger library obviously takes more time to search through. However, organization plays the most important role in setting this attribute. Using the difficulties listed by size (see above) as a baseline, a well-organized library has a difficulty about half or even one-quarter the listed time. A disorganized one, or one that has been ransacked, scattered, or otherwise poorly maintained, might require double or triple the time.

After a researcher works in the library for an amount of time equal to the adjusted difficulty (after accounting for the results of a Knowledge check to alter it) he gains the bonus listed for the specific Knowledge skill. From that time on, he needs to spend only an hour in the library to make a Knowledge check with the listed bonus. In addition, if a character wants to gain the benefits of another topic's bonus, he can cut the base difficulty in half before making a Knowledge check to further reduce it.

Knowledge Check	Time Needed
1–5	Double the listed time.
6–15	No change.
16–20	Half listed time.
21–25	One-third listed time.
26+	One-quarter listed time.

## TOPICS

This trait refers to the areas of knowledge found within the library. The royal collection of antiquities may have in-depth coverage of the king's descendants and history, but nothing on the lore of plants and animals. By the same token, a library in a wood elf kingdom might have extensive volumes on trees and beasts of the wood but little concerning the mountain dwarves or the kingdoms of men. The topics list all the Knowledge skill areas of study that gain a bonus when a character has access to the library. The areas of study are arcana, architecture and engineering, dungeoneering, geography, history, local, nature, nobility and royalty, religion, and



the planes. Once a character completes the time needed to search a library (as per difficulty, above) he gains the bonus listed for his chosen area of study whenever he spends an hour in the library researching its collection.

## RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

Sometimes, a seeker needs only to find a specific piece of information that is so precise that a simple Knowledge check could not hope to reveal it. The rules given for libraries thus far concentrate on how a character can use them to improve his overall skill checks or use them to research a general query. If Morthog the Tentacled One threatens to destroy the town, and you need to find out a method for sending it back to its home dimension, you do not need to sift through the entire library to find it. Instead, you only need to find the specific page in a single book that holds the answer you need. You can only use a library in this manner after you have investigated it well enough to gain the topic bonuses it grants. You can now research the weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and history of specific people, places, things, and monsters that you encounter. You must spend an hour in the library and make a Knowledge check. The result determines what you learn. In addition, the library's size (and in some cases its topic bonus) determines what you can learn. Regardless of your check result, a small library might not hold what you seek.

The library research table summarizes the type of information you can learn regarding a particular creature, such as a demonic being or godlike entity. On a successful check, a researcher learns the information given for all the DCs he beats as long as he has access to a library of the size listed. He cannot uncover given for libraries larger than the one to which he has access.

Knowledge DC	Library Size	Information
20	Small	A creature's name, physical description.
25	Medium	The creature's habitat, history, and special abilities.
30	Large	The creature's most common weakness, usually one that has the least chance to defeat it or one that is the most difficult to implement.
35	Huge	Details on the creature's abilities, including how to nullify or resist its attacks.
40	Colossal	The monster's most critical weakness, one that can easily defeat it or that is trivial to exploit.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# BLACK MAGIC

CHAPTER FOUR: BLACK MAGIC

One of the key points from Chapter 1 is that a horror or dark fantasy game can be more effective if you use character classes that are weaker and less flexible than the standard array of fighter, wizard, cleric, and so forth. In a horror game, combat takes a back seat to clever planning and quick thinking. If a fight breaks out and you are caught in the middle of it, you may have done something very, very wrong.

One of the key differences in the new character classes compared to the core classes is that they have access to fewer spells. The incantations they can use typically lack the firepower of such classics as *fireball* and *meteor swarm*. By a conscious design decision, the new classes have spells that tend to be more utilitarian and less combat-focused than normal.

At first glance, this might seem to be a design issue driven solely by the idea that horror characters are usually weaker than heroic fantasy ones. On a few levels, that is true. However, horror games also often incorporate the idea that the most powerful spells are baneful to those who wish to master and use them. Destructive spells are a product of black magic, forbidden lore, and demons. Only a mage who is willing to broker with blasphemous creatures can master the most powerful spells. For this reason, most spellcasters take care to avoid revealing their power. Many of them cling to the simplest, easiest spells that have no risk of demonic taint. A wizard who openly displays his great, destructive power might face a lynch mob intent on punishing him for consorting with dark powers. Even worse, the demons

and devils who provide him with his spells might demand tribute, sacrifices, or service in return for their lore. Double-crossing such powerful creatures is a bad idea, as they have had millennia to formulate plans for dealing with recalcitrant mortals.

This section introduces new rules for magic in horror games. They put forth a few basic ideas, namely that powerful spells are the product of dark beings and horrid monsters. Only casters who wish to consort with such beings can master these spells, and they do so at the risk of their immortal souls. In addition, it gives guidelines for adding traits to magic items to reflect the dark magic that powers them.

## BLACK MAGIC AND FORBIDDEN LORE

The path of magic is long and difficult. Mastering the simplest spell might take months of work. A young fighter knows how to handle dozens of weapons, shields, and types of armor, while a wizard of the same age might know seven or eight spells, the most powerful of which cannot hope to match the force and power of the fighter's sword. Yet, there are shortcuts to power that no sane wizard would admit to considering. The dark powers of the world can offer much to an

ambitious or greedy heart. A shortcut here, a new spell there, and yesterday's apprentice is today's master.

Yet these gains come with a price. Demons, devils, and other unwholesome things are always eager to bind mortals to their will. A single heart turned to the dark side can inflict more harm over a lifetime than a rampaging demon could spread in a century. The first step on the path towards mastering black magic inevitably leads to the second, then the third, and so on until the demon has claimed another soul. Wizards, sorcerers, and other casters have a natural tendency towards egotism and overconfidence. Evil outsiders are all too willing to take advantage of this shortcoming.

The rules in this section simulate the power and skill a spellcaster can gain by entering into bargains with evil beings. In return for sacrifices, evil deeds, blasphemous prayers, and other foul acts, a caster can gain additional spells known, extra spell slots, and other powers. All of the acts required to gain these benefits are utterly evil, though the mages who follow this path frequently blind themselves to the pain and horror they spread.

While the focus of these rules is on spellcasters, any character can gain the benefits (and the many drawbacks) associated with consorting with fell powers. The classic example of a demonologist striking pacts with planar creatures is an enduring part of dark fantasy, but in some settings and campaigns other characters may seek these dark alliances. A barbarian tribe might commune with demons to gain strength and vicious power in battle, while a particularly vicious thieves' guild might require its members to bind themselves to the archduke of Hell who serves as its patron.

## PACTS: UNHOLY ALLIANCES

A character can gain magical power by entering a pact with an evil being. By paying the costs listed for a pact, a caster enters into the agreement. He agrees to commit a foul deed, offer a sacrifice to the demon, or engage in other unwholesome activities. In return, the caster gains expanded power. Pacts work similar to feats in that they give bonuses to characters that meet their requirements. However, a character enters into a personal relationship with a dark being in order to seal pacts. As a character accumulates more of these favors, he slowly falls under his patron's control.

In order to gain a pact, a character must usually find a book or master who can teach him its secrets. Other times, a demon or other powerful, evil being might approach a promising caster and offer him power.

### INTRODUCING PACTS

All pacts derive from a god, demon lord, duke of hell, or similar power. They never simply spring from the ether, conferring power to a character in return for a set cost.

When a character enters into his first pact, he establishes a relationship with a powerful, evil being. As the character takes on more pacts, his relationship with that being expands. Thus, you cannot

introduce pacts to a character or an NPC without first considering the nature of his patron.

A patron is any evil being that can offer pacts to a character. Usually, a patron is a dark god or other evil outsider. In some ways, patrons have a relationship to their followers similar to the bond between a cleric and a deity. A particular god can offer certain domains and powers. By the same token, each patron has access to different types of pacts.

All patrons can be described by the spheres that cover their personalities, magical powers, and the





types of favors they bestow on their followers. There are four spheres.

**Avarice:** Greed drives many evil deeds, as the lust for power, wealth, and love can compel one to justify horrid actions in pursuit of a greater goal. Patrons who offer this power specialize in magic and abilities that offer physical goods.

**Pride:** The most common motivation for spellcasters, pride manifests as an overwhelming sense of skill, accomplishment, and talent. The pacts it offers focus on increasing a person's abilities.

**Sloth:** Laziness and indolence can manifest as a burning desire to force others to assume one's own duties and responsibilities. Spellcasters who enter these pacts gain the ability to dominate and control others.

**Wrath:** Anger and rage lead to mindless destruction, making this path appealing to those who greatly desire power but find themselves weak and unable to fulfill their desires. It offers magic and abilities that can strike down foes and channel destructive energy.

A patron's total power and ability determine the number of spheres he can offer to his followers. The weakest demons can offer but one, while the vilest, mightiest dark gods can offer all four. Allying with a stronger being grants a character more pacts to choose from, but at the cost of putting himself at the beck and call of a creature that could corrupt him and claim his immortal soul.

Lesser patrons can offer one sphere. This category includes minor demons, devils, and other evil outsiders, typically those with CRs of 10 or less. These, the least powerful of patrons, offer access to only one sphere.

Intermediate patrons can offer two spheres. They include evil outsiders of CR 11 to 20. As relatively weak beings, they can only offer access to two spheres.

Major patrons include all archdevils, demon lords, and similar powerful figures in the hierarchies of evil outsiders, along with lesser gods and demigods. They grant access to three spheres.

Mighty patrons cover the most powerful beings. Gods and the mightiest evil outsiders fall into this category. These beings can offer all four spheres.

Patron	Spheres
Lesser	1
Intermediate	2
Major	3
Mighty	4

If a character's patron is somehow destroyed, the character loses all pacts he gained from it and his corruption score falls to zero (see below). He does not lose any of the drawbacks and other penalties he gained from his pacts.

A character can change patrons, but he must always go from a weaker to a stronger one. He loses any pacts that his new master does not offer. Thus, most casters work their way up the infernal hierarchy, serving successive masters who offer similar dark powers to them.

## CORRUPTION

An ambitious wizard is eager to master a difficult spell. After months of work, he makes little progress. Facing humiliation at the hands of his rivals, he enters into a pact with a demon who offers him the skill he needs. Grudgingly, he offers a human sacrifice to his new patron, telling himself that the town could use one less beggar and that the loss is worth the power he stands to gain. A few weeks later, the wizard finds that a magical experiment he hoped to complete lags behind schedule. Though his conscience nags at him, he knows that his patron can help him for a price. Disturbingly enough, he finds the second sacrifice much easier to complete, almost pleasurable. His long slide to evil has begun.

As a character gains more pacts, he accumulates corruption points. The more corruption points a character has, the greater his debt to his unholy patron. A PC might be compelled to take a certain action or he may be forced to endure penalties or permanent damage as his corruption score increases. Usually, patrons lure their followers into taking unwholesome actions, such as betraying a trusted friend or defacing a benevolent god's temple. Over time, a character's personality changes and shifts to reflect his foul actions and his patron's influence. Corruption tracks a character's slow descent to evil. As he gains more points, his alignment slowly changes and he loses the ability to resist the growing stain of evil on his soul.

A character's corruption score serves as a Will save DC. Some of the pacts require a character to make a Will save against his corruption score or commit a specific action or otherwise suffer a penalty. This is known as a corruption save. A character uses his normal Will save bonuses, including all modifiers due to spells and other conditions, as normal. In many cases, even a successful save has drawbacks.

## SAMPLE PACTS

All pacts are described using the following information.

**Name:** The pact's name. In addition, each

pact has its associated sphere listed next to it. If a pact has its sphere listed as “all” any patron can offer it.

**Prerequisites:** The dark powers are eager to bring mortals under their sway, but in some cases a character must have a minimum corruption score or other pacts before he can take a powerful one. Demons and devils take care to restrict their most powerful gifts to those who are well within their grasp. If a character should lose access to any of a pact’s prerequisites, he can no longer use it until he regains them.

Note that the Infernal Oath of Servitude pact serves as a prerequisite for all pacts. A character cannot gain any pacts aside from that one until he completes it.

**Cost:** A character must pay the listed cost in order to gain the pact’s benefits. Usually, a cost is listed in gp, xp, and permanent ability score damage. A character can never heal the ability score or hit point damage he receives as part of paying a pact’s cost. This damage represents a permanent degradation in a character’s body and spirit. In addition, pacts levy a madness point cost (if you use that optional system, as presented in Chapter 2) and an additional drawback, such as a penalty to Diplomacy checks.

**Benefit:** The bonuses, abilities, spells, and other options a pact offers.

#### BOUNTY OF HELL’S SERVANTS (AVARICE)

Your patron grants you material wealth in the form of gold, jewels, and other goods.

**Cost:** You must offer living sacrifices whose total Hit Dice times 100 equals the total gp value of treasure and goods you want to gain. Your corruption increases by 1 for every 500 gp that you gain via this pact. Keep a running total of the items you gain to determine your progressive corruption increase. For example, you could use this pact once to gain 200 gp. Later, if you gain another 800 gp of goods, your corruption increases by 2.

**Benefit:** You may request any mundane goods, magical items, or treasure whose total value is less than or equal to the value you may gain as outlined under the cost above. You can ask for a mix of coins, jewels, and items in any proportion.

**Special:** You may select this pact multiple times, gaining more treasure and goods each time.

#### CLOAK OF UNSHAKEABLE BRAVERY (PRIDE)

Fortified by the power of your dark patron, you can stand in the face of spells, vicious attacks, and other dangers with little fear that you will fail.

Your overwhelming confidence propels you ever forward.

**Cost:** You must spend 2,000 gp on treasure and riches to sacrifice to your patron. In addition, you gain a +2 modifier to your corruption score.

**Benefit:** You gain a +1 bonus on all saving throws as your patron’s dark influence deflects danger away from you.

**Special:** You can increase the bonus offered by this pact by spending additional gold. A +2 bonus costs 4,000 gp, a +3 bonus costs 8,000 gp, a +4 bonus 16,000 gp, and a +5 one 32,000 gp. If you already gain a bonus from this pact, subtract the cost of your current bonus from the price of your new one. Your corruption score modifier equals twice the save bonus this pact grants.

#### EYE OF THE CORRUPTER (SLOTH)

Your magic is imbued with the fell, mind-twisting energy of the dark beings you follow, making them more difficult to resist.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to cast arcane or divine enchantment spells.

**Cost:** You must spend 4,000 gp in material goods as sacrifices. In addition, you must use your spells to slay a good-aligned creature with at least 8 Hit Dice. Once you have completed this pact you must cast at least one enchantment spell per day to charm or control a non-evil creature with Intelligence of 8 or higher. If you fail to meet this requirement, you must make a corruption save the next time you encounter a creature that meets these requirements or automatically cast your highest-level enchantment on it.

**Benefit:** You gain a +1 bonus to the save DC of all enchantment spells you cast.

#### INFERNAL OATH OF SERVITUDE (ANY)

You swear loyalty and faith in a dark god, demon, or devil lord, securing a bond that you can use to extract favors from it in return for your obedience and sacrifices.

**Cost:** To gain a lesser patron, you must spend 100 gp in sacrifices in the form of gems, gold, and other valuables. You gain a corruption score of 5. If you already have a corruption score, it does not change if it is above 5. Otherwise, increase it to 5. In addition, if you have a good alignment you suffer a –2 penalty on all saves to resist corruption as your conscience plagues you.

An intermediate patron requires 1,000 gp in sacrifices and increases your corruption score to 10. You

must be at least 5th level to gain an intermediate patron.

To gain a major patron, you must be at least 10th level and sacrifice 5,000 gp in goods. Your minimum corruption score is 15.

To gain a mighty patron, you must be at least 15th level and sacrifice 10,000 gp in goods. Your minimum corruption score is 20.

**Benefit:** The infernal oath of servitude serves as the initial bond between you and your patron. You may now gain the benefits of any pacts it offers based on its spheres by paying their listed cost. You must still meet any prerequisites it offers.



### FURY OF HELL (WRATH)

You enter a focused stage of bloodthirsty anger. In this state, you give in to your base animal drive for destruction. Your fury becomes energy and strength, allowing you to focus your efforts.

**Prerequisite:** Character level 3+.

**Cost:** You must kill an opponent who has at least as many Hit Dice as you in single combat with melee weapons or your bare hands. In addition, you must perform a ritual sacrifice that requires 1,000 gp in material goods that you dedicate to your patron. You gain +5 modifier to your corruption score. In addition, you must fight and kill at least one Medium

or larger creature each week.

**Benefit:** Once per day, you may enter a murderous rage for a number of rounds equal to 5 + your Constitution modifier. You gain a +2 bonus to Strength and Constitution and a -2 penalty to AC. You may cast spells while in this state and gain a +1 bonus to the save DC of all evocation spells you cast.

### FORBIDDEN LORE OF THE DARK POWERS (ANY)

The limitations of the humanoid mind and body play a role in dictating the progression of a wizard, sorcerer, or cleric's power. Not only must your mind understand and manipulate a magical spell, but your body must have the ability to channel and control it. This pact infuses you with demonic essence, expanding your ability to cast spells.

**Cost:** This ability's cost is determined by the level of the spell slot you gain. Your corruption score increases by the spell level x 4. You must sacrifice a living neutral or good creature with an Intelligence of at least 10 and Hit Dice equal to at least twice the spell level. In addition, you must also offer goods and treasure worth 4,000 gp times the spell level. Three times per week, your DM may require you to make a save against corruption to resist giving in to your infernal nature. On a failed save, your patron directly controls your actions for 1d4 hours. Each time you make this save, the DC for your next save increases by 5 until you fail.

**Benefit:** You gain an additional spell slot of a level of your choice. You may choose a spell level up to the maximum level you can currently cast + 1.

### HELL'S HAMMER (WRATH)

You call upon your patron's essence to fuel your magic, allowing you to burn your foes' flesh from their bones with the unholy flames of Hell.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to cast arcane or divine evocation spells.

**Cost:** You must spend 1,000 gp in material goods as sacrifices. In addition, you must use your spells to slay a good-aligned creature with at least 8 Hit Dice. Once you have completed this pact you must cast at least one evocation spell per day to harm a non-evil creature of size Medium or greater. If you fail to meet this requirement, you must make a corruption save the next time you encounter a creature that meets these requirements or automatically cast your highest-level damaging evocation spell at it.

**Benefit:** When casting evocation spells, you gain a +1 bonus to damage per die rolled. This counts as fire damage. All spells cast in this manner are surrounded by spectral, flickering green flames. The spell's base damage type does not change.

#### OATH OF THE HONEYED TONGUE (SLOTH)

You speak with a demon's veiled beauty, allowing you to deceive others despite your foul motives.

**Cost:** You must sacrifice a creature with a Charisma score of at least 15. In addition, your patron requires the sacrifice of jewelry and gems worth 2,000 gp. Your corruption increases by 2.

**Benefit:** You gain a +4 profane bonus to all Bluff and Diplomacy checks. Your DM might require you to make a save against corruption each time you opt to gain this bonus to avoid using your talents in a destructive, divisive, or otherwise evil manner. This save typically applies in situations where you could bend your words to evil, and your DM can force you to make this save once per day.

#### SECRETS OF BLACK MAGIC (ANY)

Your patron grants you the knowledge of the terrible destructive spells normally harbored by the dark powers. Your bond and obedience are rewarded with arcane lore.

**Prerequisite:** Ability to cast divine or arcane spells.

**Cost:** This ability's cost is determined by the level of the spell you gain. Your corruption score increases by the spell level divided by 2 and rounded up. You must sacrifice a living neutral or good creature with an Intelligence of at least 10 and Hit Dice equal to at least twice the spell level. In addition, you must also offer goods and treasure worth 2,000 gp times the spell level. Once per week, your DM may require you to make a save against corruption to resist casting the spell in a capricious, vicious, or evil way.

**Benefit:** You may add one arcane or divine spell to your spellbook, class list, or list of spells known. You must be high enough level to cast the spell. If the spell lists several classes, it counts as a spell of the highest level listed. You can prepare or spontaneously cast the spell as normal depending on your class.

**Special:** You may establish this pact multiple times, gaining an additional spell each time you complete it.

#### STRENGTH OF THE DAMNED (WRATH)

Your muscles bulge with unnatural energy, granting them unholy strength and power.

**Prerequisite:** Fury of Hell.

**Cost:** To seal this pact, you must offer your patron 8,000 gp in sacrifices. You suffer a -2 penalty to Charisma and your choice of Wisdom or Intelligence. In addition, your corruption score increases by 4.

**Benefit:** You gain a permanent +2 bonus to Strength.

#### TWIST OF FATE'S THREADS (PRIDE)

Your might and power are so great that your patron twists and bends the threads of fate to protect you from the vagaries of chance. Only one as powerful and skilled as you can demand such favors.

**Prerequisite:** Level 5+.

**Cost:** You must sacrifice gold, gems, and jewelry worth at least 4,000 gp. In addition, each week you use this ability, your corruption score increases by 1.

**Benefit:** Once per day, you may re-roll any die result. You may only apply this ability to rolls that you make, and you must decide to use this ability before learning if your result is enough to succeed or fail.

**Special:** You can take this pact more than once, to a maximum number of times equal to your Charisma bonus + 1. Regardless of your Charisma, you can always take it at least once. Each time the pact is taken, you gain an additional use of this ability every day.

#### VEIL OF THE FALSE PROPHET (SLOTH)

Your personality grows in power and magnetism, allowing you to gain the love and obedience of others and perhaps increasing your ability to command your magical abilities.

**Cost:** To gain the demonic aura of beauty and charisma, you must offer your patron 6,000 gp in sacrifices. You suffer a -2 penalty to Constitution, as the infernal nature of this pact corrodes your physical health. In addition, your corruption score increases by 4.

**Benefit:** You gain a permanent +2 bonus to Charisma.

## ADDING PACTS TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

All pacts are struck with a powerful demon, evil god, devil, or some other outsider. This section gives you several sample patrons, with notes on their symbols, plans, and favored methods of cor-

rupting mortals. It also gives you ideas on how you can use pacts in your campaign.

## INTRODUCING PATRONS

All pacts derive from a powerful, intelligent, evil being with which a character establishes a bond. Thus, the costs listed above are not ironclad requirements. A patron may decide to ignore the standard sacrifice to corrupt an otherwise noble person. For example, an opportunistic demon lord could come to a knight during a terrible battle and offer to lend him support in return for his service. You can use patrons in this manner to highlight the risks and perils facing a character in a dark fantasy setting. Not only must the PCs struggle against powerful monsters and fanatic cultists, but they must also resist moral and spiritual corruption from evil beings who offer them an easy way out of their problems.

In some campaigns, particularly ones that tend towards evil and neutral characters, gaining pacts might be a standard part of a character's development. In these cases, the demons and other patrons are likely to insist on the full sacrifices given for each pact. Since these characters are already on the path to damnation, patrons gain no special joy from corrupting them, at least not enough to grant their power at a reduced price.

If you use the lower-powered character classes in Chapter 1, characters may have to turn to pacts in order to gain access to many of the spells commonly used by wizards, sorcerers, clerics, and other core classes. Keep in mind that a character can gain access to any spell via a pact, even ones that normally do not appear on his class's lists. While a character must still have spell slots needed to cast a spell, a pact provides a tempting method for gaining powerful spells.

Obviously, the pacts are an ideal method for improving the power and skill of your villains. Evil wizards, clerics, and others who would have no compunction about dealing with evil creatures might happily rob, loot, and kill in order to please their masters.

## USING THE CORRUPTION SCORE

As an optional rule, you can expand the pitfalls and benefits a character faces when dealing with evil powers. A character's corruption score represents how far along the path to damnation he has progressed. A demon or evil deity might make entreaties and requests to his thrall that fall outside the bounds of the pacts given above. In this case, a character might agree to increase his corruption score, representing his eroding resistance to his dark lord's will, in return for temporary bonuses and other boons. A dark lord expects obedience from his servant in return for such considerations, forcing

him to obey his dictates or make saves against corruption to avoid committing evil acts.

As a rule of thumb, a patron may demand an act from his followers for only short periods of time. A patron may gain full control of his pawn's actions for up to four hours total per week. These actions represent the character's descent into evil rather than mind control, domination, or a similar magical effect. A character can choose to resist this control with a save against corruption. On a successful save, his patron may retract the benefits of any pacts until he fails or forgoes a save. In addition, a character suffers a -1 penalty to saves against corruption for each consecutive save he makes until he finally fails one.

### Corruption Benefit

+1	A +4 bonus to a single attack, check, or save, or the equivalent of a 1st-level spell.
+2	A +6 bonus to a single attack, check, or save, or the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.
+3	A +8 bonus to a single attack, check, or save, or the equivalent of a 3rd or 4th-level spell.
+4	A +10 bonus to a single attack, check, or save, or the equivalent of a 5th or 6th-level spell.
+5	A +12 bonus to a single attack, check, or save, or the equivalent of a 7th-level spell.

Usually, a patron compels his followers to act when he sees an opportunity to increase misery, evil, and pain in the world. For example, a corrupted fighter might refuse to help a village that faces an impending bandit raid. A cat burglar might kill the people who sleep in the homes he breaks into. A wizard may summon evil creatures to spread havoc through the area. In general, think about the patron's personality, style, and tendencies. Based on those factors, decide how he might manipulate his followers.

If a character's patron is destroyed or otherwise defeated, the character can lose the pacts and corruption score he gained from his bond with that patron. In addition, you can allow a character to escape his infernal debts through special quests, acts of self-sacrifice or redemption, or anything else that is appropriate to the character and your campaign.

## SAMPLE PATRONS

The following patrons serve as examples to show you how to create these infernal masters. Like any other NPC in your campaign, they should have fully fleshed out personalities. Patrons are not merely bonus or magical spell dispensers. They are active agents for evil who take a personal role in corrupting mortals to their cause.

**Kordred the Deceiver (Lesser Patron of Avarice):**

This scheming, ambitious vrock seeks to establish a cult in his name to spread his fame and power throughout the planes. He seeds pamphlets bearing the ceremony needed to call his attention throughout the slums of the world, promising the unfortunate wealth undreamed of in return for obedience. Kordred delights in manipulating others and dreams of establishing himself as a god or demon lord. He takes a personal interest in each of his few followers, and taunts them with the gold and riches he can provide for them.

Unfortunately, Kordred steals the items he gives to his followers from a powerful demonic lord. If his theft should be discovered, he faces destruction and his worshippers may find themselves in debt to a far mightier being. Like any good huckster, Kordred offers a few minor treasures to his recruits for free, luring them into depending on him and slowly ensnaring them as dedicated worshippers.

**Set (Mighty Patron of All Vices):** This deceptive, scheming, ambitious deity counts amongst his worshippers a multitude of wizards, priests, assassins, and sorcerers. A trickster and liar, Set is known to take on a staggering variety of guises and symbols to confuse his enemies and keep his followers off balance. He plans nothing short of domination of the entire world, a great, world-spanning theocracy ruled by his obedient followers.

Set commands a multitude of demons who seek out good-hearted folk who could prove vulnerable to his overtures. While he takes joy in dragging down heroic figures, he also takes care to bring the foul villains and black-hearted into his fold. Set is above all else flexible. He probes at potential followers, trying to discover what he must say to compel them to follow him. Most of Set's work takes place through his minions, a variety of evil beings that answer to him. Many of them cloak their true natures, allowing Set to accumulate many followers who never realize whose aims they truly serve.

A character who enters into a pact with Set (or his agents) may be asked to deliver a package to a specific wizard, or kill a seemingly innocent or minor government functionary. While these actions might seem minor, they all tie into this foul god's complicated, elaborate plans.

## FORBIDDEN SPELLS: RARE AND DANGEROUS MAGIC

Not all magic derives from the same source. Some spells craft energies from elementals or the planar winds, focusing them into bolts of energy, using them to alter the moods of others, or forging shields of pure force to protect the caster. Others draw upon the exalted power of good, driving back evil beings, curing the ill, and healing the wounded. Other spells have a darker origin. They delve into the profane energies of demons, foul gods, planar abominations, and other baleful sources. These magics are powerful but dangerous, as they carry both the mighty power of their patrons and the horrific legacy of corruption, mutation, and misery. No good can come of black magic, yet the power it offers proves too tempting for many spellcasters to resist. Why bother with piddling magics that can smooth the wrinkles from a cloak or shed light equal to a torch when a caster could raise undead minions or strike a foe dead with a single incantation? In a dark fantasy game, the temptation to delve into forbidden lore gnaws at the conscience of even the most heroic caster.

These optional rules present the idea that some spells are powered by dark energies that can sap the vitality from a caster's body and soul. A common motif in dark fantasy and horror books and games is the concept that some forms of magic are dangerous to practice. Certain spells offer great power at a



price, namely a caster's sanity or health. Black magic extracts a steep price from its user, but the power it offers more than makes up for it. Under these rules, certain spells from the core rules count as black magic incantations. When cast, these spells inflict ability damage, push a caster to madness, or otherwise have a negative effect on him. These rules allow you to enforce a lower level of magic, as you can categorize many of the more powerful spells in this manner. The characters can still use them, but not without paying a price.

**Using Black Magic:** Black magic is cast in the same manner as any other incantations. Placing a spell into this category does not change its effects. However, the act of preparing and completing the spell wears at a caster's physical and mental health. Each time a caster uses a black magic spell, he suffers negative effects based on its level. These effects are applied immediately after the caster completes any actions needed to use the spell. For example, a spell that has a casting time of 10 minutes would inflict its drawbacks after the casting time is completed.

A spell's effects depend on its level. Some effects are permanent, while others pose only a temporary hindrance. Evil casters do not suffer these penalties. Their villainous souls find strength and power in black magic. If you do not use the optional sanity rules given in this book, ignore references to madness points. The caster gains no save to resist the initial effects or damage. In the case of negative levels, he may attempt saving throws to prevent a permanent level loss.

Permanent ability score damage inflicted by casting black magic cannot be healed by magical means. This damage reflects a fundamental degradation of the caster's physical body.

**Level 0:** -1 penalty to attacks, checks, and saves for 1d4 hours. The caster gains 1 madness point.

**Level 1:** -2 penalty to attacks, checks, and saves for 1d6 hours. The caster gains 1d4 madness points.

**Level 2:** 1d3 temporary points of Constitution damage, -2 penalty to attacks, checks, and saves for 1d8 hours, and 1d6 madness points.

**Level 3:** 1d4 temporary points of Constitution damage, -2 penalty to attacks, checks, and saves for 1d10 hours, and 1d8 madness points.

**Level 4:** 1d4 temporary points of Strength and Constitution damage and 1d8 madness points.

**Level 5:** 1d4 temporary points of Strength and Constitution damage and 2d6 madness points.

**Level 6:** 1 point of permanent damage to Strength

and Constitution along with 1 negative level that may be removed with a DC 16 Fortitude save. The caster gains 2d6 madness points.

**Level 7:** 2 points of permanent damage to Strength and Constitution along with 1d2 negative levels that may be removed with a DC 18 Fortitude save. The caster gains 2d8 madness points.

**Level 8:** 3 points of permanent damage to Strength and Constitution along with 1d3 negative levels that may be removed with a DC 20 Fortitude save. The caster gains 3d6 madness points.

**Level 9:** 4 points of permanent damage to Strength and Constitution along with 1d4 negative levels that may be removed with a DC 22 Fortitude save. The caster gains 3d8 madness points.

## CLASSIFYING SPELLS

Breaking spells down into regular and black magic is a matter of deciding on the tone and feel of your campaign. These rules are most appropriate for campaigns in which PC spellcasters have access to fewer spells or magic that is less destructive in nature. In a heroic game, characters might use *fireball* and *meteor swarm* to blast their enemies to cinders. In a horror campaign, such spells break the mood and give the characters reliable, powerful attacks that could threaten to turn the game into a monster hunt. By pushing spells into the black magic category, you help create a sense that magic is a dangerous tool that poses as much threat to its users as their enemies.

The spell lists given below serve as an example you can use in the standard horror campaign using the classes from Chapter 1. You can freely add or remove spells from the black magic list to better reflect your campaign world. Note that most of the spells that have destructive effects, call upon demons and other powerful beings, or are powerful selections for their level are listed below as black magic. These choices are meant to present black magic as a potent resource that tempts casters into using it.

### BARD SPELLS

#### 1st-Level Bard Spells

Cause Fear  
Charm Person  
Hideous Laughter  
Hypnotism

#### 2nd-Level Bard Spells

Blindness/Deafness  
Darkness  
Daze Monster  
Rage

Suggestion  
Scare

### 3rd-Level Bard Spells

Charm Monster  
Crushing Despair  
Fear

### 4th-Level Bard Spells

Dominate Person  
Shout

### 5th-Level Bard Spells

Mind Fog  
Nightmare  
Shadow Walk  
Song of Discord  
Suggestion, Mass

### 6th-Level Bard Spells

Charm Monster, Mass  
Eyebite  
Irresistible Dance  
Shout, Greater

## CLERIC SPELLS

### 0-Level Cleric Spells

Infllict Minor Wounds

### 1st-Level Cleric Spells

Bane  
Cause Fear  
Command  
Curse Water  
Doom  
Infllict Light Wounds

### 2nd-Level Cleric Spells

Darkness  
Death Knell  
Desecrate  
Enthrall  
Hold Person  
Infllict Moderate Wounds  
Shatter  
Sound Burst

### 3rd-Level Cleric Spells

Animate Dead  
Bestow Curse  
Blindness/Deafness  
Contagion  
Deeper Darkness  
Infllict Serious Wounds

### 4th-Level Cleric Spells

Dismissal  
Divine Power  
Giant Vermin  
Imbue with Spell Ability  
Infllict Critical Wounds

Planar Ally, Lesser  
Poison  
Repel Vermin

### 5th-Level Cleric Spells

Command, Greater  
Flame Strike  
Infllict Light Wounds, Mass  
Insect Plague  
Mark of Justice  
Plane Shift  
Raise Dead  
Righteous Might  
Slay Living  
Spell Resistance  
Symbol of Pain  
Symbol of Sleep  
Unhallow

### 6th-Level Cleric Spells

Animate Objects  
Antilife Shell  
Banishment  
Blade Barrier  
Create Undead  
Forbiddance  
Glyph of Warding, Greater  
Harm  
Infllict Moderate Wounds, Mass  
Planar Ally  
Symbol of Fear  
Symbol of Persuasion  
Wind Walk

### 7th-Level Cleric Spells

Blasphemy  
Control Weather  
Destruction  
Dictum  
Ethereal Jaunt  
Infllict Serious Wounds, Mass  
Refuge  
Repulsion  
Resurrection  
Scrying, Greater  
Symbol of Stunning  
Symbol of Weakness  
Word of Chaos

### 8th-Level Cleric Spells

Antimagic Field  
Cloak of Chaos  
Create Greater Undead  
Dimensional Lock  
Discern Location  
Earthquake  
Fire Storm  
Planar Ally, Greater  
Infllict Critical Wounds, Mass  
Spell Immunity, Greater  
Symbol of Death  
Symbol of Insanity



Unholy Aura

### 9th-Level Cleric Spells

Astral Projection  
Energy Drain  
Etherealness  
Gate  
Implosion  
Soul Bind  
Storm of Vengeance  
True Resurrection

## DRUID SPELLS

### 0 and 1st-Level Druid Spells

No black magic spells.

### 2nd-Level Druid Spells

Fire Trap  
Flame Blade  
Flaming Sphere  
Hold Animal  
Summon Swarm

### 3rd-Level Druid Spells

Call Lightning  
Contagion  
Diminish Plants  
Dominate Animal  
Poison  
Sleet Storm  
Spike Growth

### 4th-Level Druid Spells

Blight  
Command Plants  
Control Water  
Flame Strike  
Ice Storm  
Reincarnate  
Rusting Grasp  
Spike Stones

### 5th-Level Druid Spells

Awaken  
Baleful Polymorph  
Call Lightning Storm  
Insect Plague  
Stoneskin  
Unhallow  
Wall of Fire.

### 6th-Level Druid Spells

Antilife Shell  
Fire Seeds

### 7th-Level Druid Spells

Control Weather  
Creeping Doom  
Fire Storm  
Wind Walk

### 8th-Level Druid Spells

Control Plants  
Earthquake.  
Finger of Death  
Reverse Gravity  
Whirlwind

### 9th-Level Druid Spells

Regenerate  
Shambler  
Storm of Vengeance

## PALADIN SPELLS

None of the spells on the paladin's list count as black magic.

### Ranger Spells

#### 1st-Level Ranger Spells

Charm Animal

#### 2nd-Level Ranger Spells

Hold Animal  
Speak with Plants  
Spike Growth

#### 3rd-Level Ranger Spells

Command Plants  
Diminish Plants

## SORCERER/WIZARD SPELLS

### 0-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Acid Splash  
Ray of Frost  
Touch of Fatigue

### 1st-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Cause Fear  
Charm Person  
Chill Touch  
Color Spray  
Hypnotism  
Magic Missile  
Ray of Enfeeblement  
Reduce Person

### 2nd-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Acid Arrow  
Alter Self  
Blindness/Deafness  
Command Undead  
Darkness  
Darkvision  
Daze Monster  
Detect Thoughts  
False Life  
Flaming Sphere  
Ghoul Touch  
Hideous Laughter  
Scare  
Scorching Ray

Shatter  
Spectral Hand  
Summon Swarm  
Touch of Idiocy  
Web

### 3rd-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Deep Slumber  
Displacement  
Explosive Runes  
Fireball  
Gaseous Form  
Hold Person  
Lightning Bolt  
Rage  
Ray of Exhaustion  
Slow  
Stinking Cloud  
Suggestion  
Vampiric Touch

### 4th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Animate Dead  
Bestow Curse  
Black Tentacles  
Charm Monster  
Contagion  
Crushing Despair  
Enervation  
Fear  
Fire Shield  
Globe of Invulnerability, Lesser  
Ice Storm  
Phantasmal Killer  
Polymorph  
Reduce Person, Mass  
Resilient Sphere  
Shout  
Stoneskin  
Wall of Fire  
Wall of Ice

### 5th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Baleful Polymorph  
Blight  
Cloudkill  
Cone of Cold  
Contact Other Plane  
Dismissal  
Dominate Person  
Feeblemind  
Hold Monster  
Magic Jar  
Mind Fog  
Nightmare  
Planar Binding, Lesser  
Symbol of Pain  
Symbol of Sleep  
Telekinesis  
Teleport  
Waves of Fatigue

### 6th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Acid Fog  
Chain Lightning  
Circle of Death  
Create Undead  
Disintegrate  
Eyebite  
Flesh to Stone  
Globe of Invulnerability  
Planar Binding  
Shadow Walk  
Suggestion, Mass  
Symbol of Fear  
Symbol of Persuasion

### 7th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Banishment  
Control Undead  
Control Weather  
Delayed Blast Fireball  
Ethereal Jaunt  
Finger of Death  
Hold Person, Mass  
Insanity  
Limited Wish  
Plane Shift  
Power Word Blind  
Prismatic Spray  
Reverse Gravity  
Simulacrum  
Summon Monster VII  
Symbol of Stunning  
Symbol of Weakness  
Teleport Object  
Teleport, Greater  
Waves of Exhaustion

### 8th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Antipathy  
Binding  
Charm Monster, Mass  
Create Greater Undead  
Demand  
Horrid Wilting  
Incendiary Cloud  
Iron Body  
Irresistible Dance  
Planar Binding, Greater  
Polar Ray  
Polymorph Any Object  
Power Word Stun  
Shout, Greater  
Symbol of Death  
Symbol of Insanity  
Trap the Soul

### 9th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Astral Projection  
Dominate Monster  
Energy Drain  
Etherealness  
Gate

Hold Monster, Mass  
Meteor Swarm  
Power Word Kill  
Soul Bind  
Time Stop  
Wail of the Banshee  
Weird  
Wish

## MAGIC ITEMS AND BLASPHEMOUS POWERS

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Just as black magic may power many of the more powerful spells available to casters, so too can it course through the enchanted items that the characters may find.

In many cases, you can use the guidelines for cursed items in the core rules to model how a foul magic item may operate. In addition, the rules for intelligent items provide you with a lot of tools to represent malevolent artifacts and other deadly items that could pose a grave danger to characters who try to use them. A magical sword might have a powerful ego that pushes a character to commit evil acts, or the villain the characters face might be the innocent victim of the corrupted, lawful evil armor he wears.

Before continuing with this section, review those rules and consider how you can use them in your campaign. A common trait of dark fantasy is that magical items have powerful, malevolent souls that manipulate their users. A sword might push its wielder to slay his loved ones, while an infernal magical staff could lure the wizard who carries it into striking pacts with malevolent beings.

In addition to those rules, this section lists a few traits you can add to an item in order to reflect its evil heritage. These traits do not alter a magic item's abilities, gold cost, or other characteristics. Rather, they are merely a reflection of the black magic that flows through them.

**Blood-Thirst:** This item only operates if it is drenched in the blood of intelligent humanoid creatures. Once per week, its user must slay such a creature and cover the item in its blood.

**Demon-Haunted:** At one time, a powerful evil being possessed this item. That creature still desires it, or perhaps an evil outsider dogs its owner due to an ancient curse. In any case, each week that a character possesses the item, he is attacked by an evil outsider or a similar horrid creature with a CR equal to the bearer's level.

**Infernal Item:** Crafted in the foul workshops of a warlock or demon, this item resonates with dark energies. Anyone who carries it gains 1 madness point each week for every 1,000 gp the item is worth. Items worth less than 1,000 gp inflict 1 point per week.

**Notorious Legacy:** The item is known as a tool of evil. Perhaps a notorious outlaw carried it, or a murderous nobleman used it to slay his rivals. In any case, its bearer suffers a -4 penalty to all Charisma checks and Charisma-related skill checks when dealing with people who know he carries it. In addition, news travels fast of the item's whereabouts. Once a few people see it in a character's hands, word spreads through the region.

**Psychic Leach:** The black magic that powers the item drains its user's intellect and mental energy. After carrying the item for an hour, its bearer suffers a -2 penalty to Intelligence. The item does not function until its user sustains this penalty. This penalty ends one hour after the wielder stops carrying the item.

**Unwholesome Influence:** A sickly aura of decay and rot surrounds the item. Its bearer is continually surrounded by a cloud of black flies, mites, or similar insects, causing him to suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to attacks, checks, and saves as they bite and buzz around him. In addition, any food or water he carries spoils after 1 day.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## MONSTERS

In a dark fantasy or horror game, the monsters are the stars of the story. Think of the last horror movie you went to. Sure, the hero takes center stage, but the audience fills the theater to see the horrific beast from beyond time and space, or the unstoppable, maniacal killer. They never name horror movies after the hero. They name them after the murderer, or the strange creature that stalks innocent coeds. By the same token, the success of any dark fantasy or horror game can be measured by its villains and horrors. The players expect a scary beast that stands head and shoulders above the creatures they encounter in the standard fantasy campaign. This section covers two basic topics. It presents two new varieties of monsters and advice on how to create and run the monstrosities that will inhabit your games.

ABOMINATIONS  
AND GODLINGS

*Abominations* are beings spawned in dimensions beyond space and time. They have thought processes and intellects unlike any living thing in the planar system. While outsiders might be alien to a particular world or plane, abominations are strangers to the concepts of physical reality that bind the cosmos.

They originate in alternative dimensions where time, space, and thought have different mean-

ings. Their very presence in the material world is a blasphemy against the natural order. The key feature of abominations is that their unearthly nature allows them to break the rules in a few, important ways. For example, since abominations have an utterly alien outlook on reality, they never have alignments.

*Godlings* are mighty beings that are, in essence, powerful abominations. They possess utterly alien intellects that defy comprehension, and their appearance in the material world invariably leads to a great disaster. Mortal petitioners sometimes worship these creatures, as they can grant boons to those who complete rituals in their names. However, most sages believe that the power granted by godlings is merely an accidental byproduct of their nature. In much the same way that a flowing river happens to provide power to a mill, these mighty beings grant spells and abilities to their followers. Once they manifest in the material world, they seem as eager to slay their supposed allies as any sacrificial victims brought before them.

Godlings are very different from other creatures. They do not have stat blocks, and they are all unique creatures. Their descriptions list a few attack forms, strange effects they have on the environment, and the benefits gained by worshipping them. In addition, they have a set of specific weaknesses that address how the characters can defeat them. Defeating a godling is rarely a matter of slicing one with a sword or zapping it with a spell.

## ABOMINATIONS

Hailing from environments, worlds, and space-time continuums distinct from those that yield the typical fantasy world, abominations strain and fray the very fabric of reality. They are utterly impossible creatures, yet they exist and can cross over into the world. Their intellects are impossible to fathom, and their motives and reasoning seem capricious or random at best, yet none can deny their great power and seemingly malevolent desires. Even demons, devils, and other powerful evil outsiders fear these creatures. Most telling of all, abominations have no place in the cosmic moral scale represented by alignment. They are immune to all effects and spells that deal with it, such as *detect evil* or *chaos hammer*. While their actions might seem to fit into one of the alignments, they have no special bond to the moral and philosophical measures that describe all living things.

### CREATING ABOMINATIONS

You can transform any creature into an abomination by granting it the abilities listed below and perhaps modifying its appearance using the notes and tables given later in this chapter. An abomination's CR does not change.

All abominations share the following traits.

**Alien Psychology:** Abominations are immune to all mind-influencing effects, fear-based effects, and all spells from the enchantment school. Their minds work in such strange ways, if they even have minds, that mortal spells and magic cannot hope to alter them.

**Bizarre Physiology:** The forms and bodies that abominations adopt are warped shells spawned by the cosmos to contain the utter blasphemy of their intrusion into the physical world. They tend to take on horrific guises partially because an intelligent mind cannot comprehend their true forms. The cosmos literally spawns a husk of flesh and bone to contain their psychic and physical aspects when they breach the wall into the physical planes. Thus, abominations are immune to critical hits, they cannot be flanked, and they never suffer sneak attack damage. They are immune to disease, poison, stunning and sleep effects, and death effects.

**Unknown Philosophy:** An abomination never has an alignment. As a creature from a wholly alien realm, it has no conception of or need for moral and philosophical values as mortal creatures know them. Any spell, effect, or ability that relies on alignment always fails to affect them. If a spell or ability lists an effect that applies if none of its alignment-specific ones work, use that default result. For example, a magical sword may deal damage to chaotic crea-

tures and blind all others. In that case, the sword blinds the abomination. On the other hand, if the sword's description noted that it blinded chaotic creatures and deafened neutral ones, it would have no effect on an abomination. Any effect or ability that specifies an alignment fails against an abomination.

**Unholy Presence:** Reality shifts and strains its very fiber to accommodate an abomination's presence. By the same token, a mortal creature's mind can barely comprehend the utter blasphemy of reality that an abomination presents. If you use the optional madness point rules from Chapter 2, abominations gain a +10 bonus to their fear ratings for creature type and inflict +1 madness points on either a failed or successful Will save against their FRs.

**Game Statistics:** Abominations determine their feats, ability scores, and other game statistics according to the following guidelines.

**Hit Die:** Abominations use a d8 for Hit Dice. They are about as physically durable on average as a humanoid creature or outsider.

**Attack Bonus:** An abomination's base attack bonus equals its Hit Dice.

**Good Saving Throws:** An abomination has good Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saves. While not all of them are particularly strong, fast, or iron willed, their alien nature makes it difficult for many attack forms to affect them.

**Skill Ranks:** An abomination gains (4 + its Intelligence modifier) x 4 skill ranks for its first Hit Die. For each additional Hit Die, it gains ranks equal to 4 + its Intelligence modifier. If an abomination has no intelligence score, it gains no skill ranks.

**Feats:** An abomination gains feats as per the standard creature progression, unless it lacks an Intelligence score. In that case, it receives no feats.

**Strengths and Weaknesses:** As creatures from an utterly alien world, abominations are invariably vulnerable to some sort of attack, but by the same token some forms of energy have no effect on them. Use the tables below to assign an abomination two weaknesses and two strengths. When assigning abilities, be sure to avoid contradictory abilities. For example, a creature should not have a vulnerability to blunt weapons and DR against them.

### STRENGTHS

1. Energy Immunity: The creature has immunity to a single energy type of your choice.
2. Disturbing Aura: The creature's opponents suffer a -2 penalty on all Will saves while

within 60 ft. of it.

3. Durable: The creature has DR 5 against slashing, bludgeoning, or piercing attacks.

4. Magical Sink: Spells cast at the creature interact with it in a strange manner, feeding its physical form and allowing it to flourish. If the creature succeeds in a save against a spell by 5 or more, it heals 3 hit points per spell level. It still suffers any negative effects that might go with a successful save.

5. Fast Healing 2: The creature derives sustenance from the air, heat, or some other common environmental feature. It gains fast healing 2, or its fast healing ability increases by 2 points.

### WEAKNESSES

1. Easy to Find: +2 bonus to any Spot, Listen, or Survival checks to track or pinpoint the creature.

2. Energy Weakness: The creature takes double damage from one energy type of your choice.

3. Fear: The creature is afraid of one energy type, such as fire or loud noises (sonic). When exposed to it, it must make a Will save (DC 15) or become shaken.

4. Fragile: The creature takes double damage from slashing, bludgeoning, or piercing weapons.

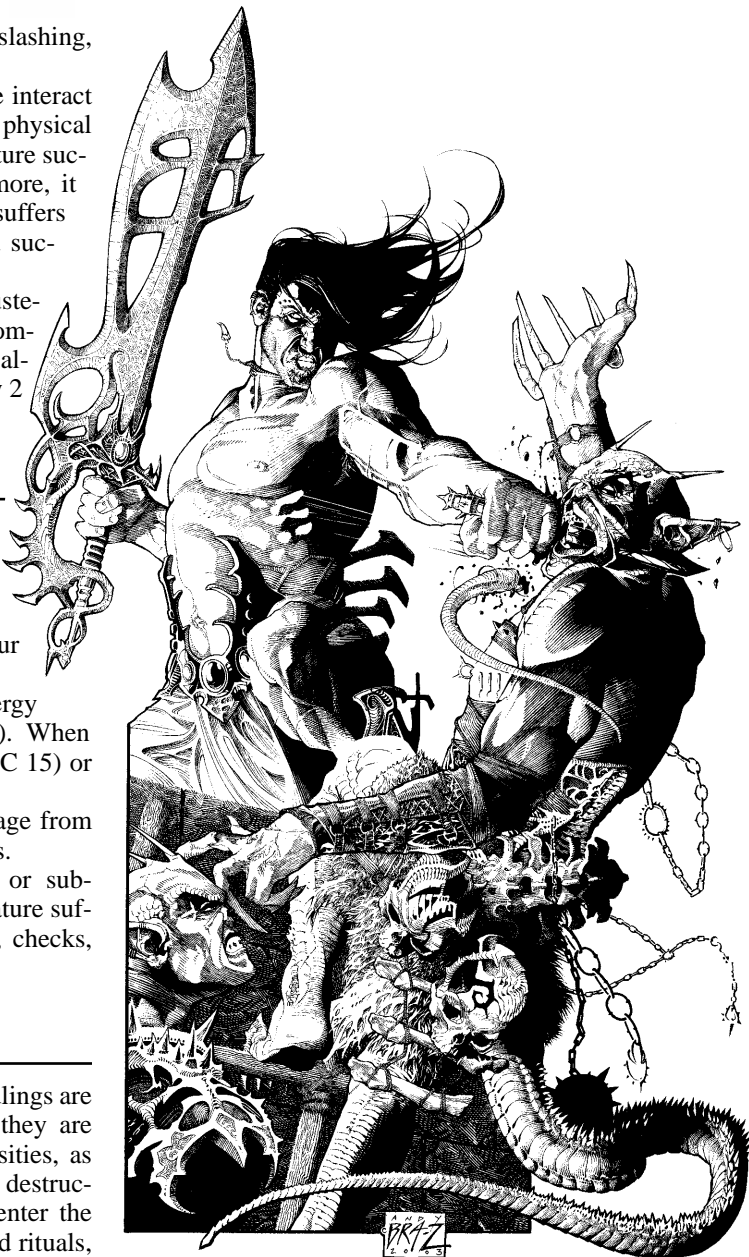
5. Sensitivity: Pick a common material or substance. When exposed to this item, the creature suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to attacks, checks, and saves.

### GODLINGS

Powerful beings of an unknown nature, godlings are similar to abominations. In many ways, they are more powerful versions of those monstrosities, as their appearance invariably results in death, destruction, and ruin. While abominations may enter the physical world through the use of spells and rituals, they never actively court mortals for attention. In contrast, godlings seem to create and maintain a connection to those creatures that offer them prayers and sacrifices. Those favored by godlings gain magical abilities and supernatural powers, yet when their god manifests it could flatten its entire congregation as it writhes and lashes out at the world.

Godlings are radically different in presentation and purpose when compared to other monsters. They lack hit points, ACs, Hit Dice, and other game measures that you might expect. Instead, they have a list of defined abilities, notes on how they affect the environment, abilities they grant to those who worship them, and a set of weaknesses that the characters can expose to defeat them.

Godlings are the logical development of the idea that, in horror games, combat is the worst option



against powerful beings. They are story tools that you can use to menace the world and push the players to use non-combat options to overcome their enemies.

### CREATING GODLINGS

Designing a godling is a relatively simple process. They do not use the standard rules for determining a creature's feats, attacks, and so forth. Instead, they are built purely through DM fiat. You merely decide on the abilities that you want a godling to have and assign them as you wish.

**1. Pick a Concept:** Godlings are best presented as unique, strange, and powerful creatures. Spend some time creating a horrific appearance, charting out its actions when it enters the world, and thinking about how its followers act and why they pray to it.

**2. Attributes:** There are no set rules for creating a godling's attributes. Instead, use the following guidelines for the major abilities you may need in running them.

**Fear Rating:** If you use the optional rules for fear and madness, a godling should have FR 25 at a minimum, with most of these creatures having FRs in the 30s.

**Size:** Define this trait in terms of true physical size or as per the core rules categories, such as Large, Medium, and so on.

**Initiative:** Since godlings lack ability scores, simply pick an initiative value that fits its nature. Slow, ponderous godlings have poor initiatives, and so forth.

**Speed:** Again, simply pick a speed that fits your vision for the godling. As a rule of thumb, keep in mind that a human's base speed is 30 feet. Compare your godling to that average and give it an appropriate value.

**Attacks:** A godling's attacks are usually deadly, with most creatures dying on a successful attack. As a base value, use a base attack bonus of +20 and assign a save DC of 25 to resist the attacks. Create from one to three attack modes, at least one of which should instantly kill or incapacitate a character on a failed save. A secondary attack might inflict up to 1d6 ability score damage, while the third one could deal up to 5d6 damage over a broad area or against a number of creatures.

The monster's attacks might deliver a poison, trap a victim in place, paralyze a foe, and so on. Look over the spell lists and pick out effects that are sufficiently horrific or interesting. Keep in mind that godlings should be strange and terrifying. Be sure to create descriptions for each attack that make them stand out.

**Defenses:** Godlings are immune to all attacks except those noted specifically as weaknesses.

**Weaknesses:** Each godling should have three or four ways in which it can be defeated. Weaknesses might center around energy types or events, such as fire, water, or sunlight. As a rule of thumb, an energy type can dispel or defeat a godling when it inflicts 200 hp of damage. Otherwise, a catastrophic event might disrupt one. A godling that crawls along the ground might be defeated by luring it into a deep pit, trapping it until someone frees it.

If you use godlings in your game, consider adding the new rules for research to the campaign. The characters can use research and investigation to uncover a godling's inherent weaknesses.

**Worshippers:** Godlings often grant special favors and abilities to those who worship them and seek to further their aims. Pick out two clerical domains for their worshippers. In addition, godlings grant their fanatical adherents special abilities based on their Hit Dice and level. A creature gains all the abilities for its total level/HD and all lower listings.

When assigning abilities, you can pick out a spell and alter its description to fit the godling while using the base mechanics to resolve its effects. For example, a fire god might give its followers the ability to breathe a cone of fire once per day. Use the rules for *cone of cold* but change the damage to fire.

Hit Dice/Level	Ability
1–5	At this level, an adherent gains a +2 bonus to an ability score or the ability to cast a spell of up to 2nd level once per day.
6–10	Adherents gain the ability to cast a spell of up to 4th level once per day.
11–15	The adherent gains the ability to cast a spell of up to 6th level once per day. Alternatively, you can grant a special ability that is the equal of a wondrous item worth up to 10,000 gp.
16–20	The adherent gains a +2 bonus to the same ability score that received a bonus at HD/level 1–5. The adherent gains inherent abilities that are the equivalent of a wondrous item worth up to 20,000 gp.

### SAMPLE GODLING: BALOTH THE UNSPEAKABLE

Baloth the Unspeakable is a typical godling, a horrid creature that would devour the world.

**Appearance:** Baloth is a giant pool of loathsome, gray slime that writhes with tentacles, grasping hands, and fanged, snarling mouths. These appendages and orifices rise and fall from his form, appearing briefly to threaten the demon's victims before its mucous form consumes them once again. Baloth is a being of disease, sickness, and decay. His worshippers seek enlightenment and power through revelations given to them as their minds and bodies physically disintegrate.

#### BASE ATTRIBUTES

Baloth use the following basic attributes.

**Fear Rating:** 35

**Size:** Baloth normally forms as a pool of slime 3 ft. deep and 10 ft. in diameter. He can alter his dimensions to spread out over a wider

area or fit within tighter confines. In total, he fills 235 cubic ft. of space.

**Initiative:** +10

**Speed:** 10 ft.

**Attacks:** Baloth has access to the following attack modes.

*Withering Strike:* Baloth may attack each creature within 50 ft. with a tentacle at a base attack bonus of +20 as a standard action. Baloth can strike a creature with only one tentacle, but there is no upper limit to the total enemies it may attack. On a hit, the victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 25) or instantly transform into a pile of putrid, liquefied flesh. This puddle of rot flows towards Baloth and joins its physical form.

*Cacophony of Madness:* Baloth's many mouths can begin a loud, babbling chant that wears away a listener's intellect, eventually leaving its victims drooling idiots. Any creature that hears this chant must make a Will save (DC 25) or take 1d3 points of temporary Intelligence damage. Baloth may activate this ability once per round as a free action.

*Flood of Rot:* Baloth can cause his physical form to extend and swamp the area around him. Characters within 20 ft. of Baloth must make a Reflex save (DC 25) or be caught within its body. Victims take 3d6 points of acid damage each round as they are dragged into his body. For each character killed in this manner, Baloth gains the ability to create one Spawn of Baloth. Baloth regenerates by devouring creatures using this attack. Instead of creating a spawn, he can grow one cubic foot per Hit Die worth of creatures devoured. Baloth may use this attack mode as a standard action.

**Defenses:** Baloth is immune to all spells and attacks except as noted below. He absorbs magical blasts into his form with seemingly no ill effect, while swords, arrows, and other weapons simply pass through his liquid, viscous body.

**Weaknesses:** This demon can only be defeated with rituals and actions that cleanse the earth of its foul presence. As an old one, Baloth can

never be truly destroyed. However, the following actions are enough to temporarily expel him from the earth.

*Cleansing Flood:* The element of water is anathema to Baloth for its ability to cleanse and sweep away his form. If the characters can somehow engineer a swift flood of water in the area Baloth occupies, the demon is swept away. The sudden rush of water breaks up its body and forces it to abandon its physical form. Baloth can take a total of 200 points of damage from water-based spells before he must flee the mortal plane.

*Cleansing Fire:* Similarly, fire burns away Baloth's slime and destroys the godling's physical form. After sustaining 200 hit points of fire damage, Baloth is dispelled.

*Magic:* Any spell that creates a physical barrier of rock, iron, magical force, or other inorganic material can trap Baloth. Otherwise, he can eat through organic materials at a rate of 1 ft. per round.

*Physical Attacks:* Separating Baloth into smaller clumps simply creates duplicates of this loathsome being. However, the smaller masses die after 2d4 hours. If several masses share the same size, randomly determine which one persists.

**Worshippers:** Those who choose to pay homage to Baloth include lepers, those driven mad by a disease of the mind, and others who seek enlightenment through decay. These wretches are known as the plague bearers. Their bodies rot from the inside out, giving them an increasingly bloated appearance. Baloth's followers gain the following benefits based on their total level or Hit Dice. It does not grant access to domains.

**Hit Dice/Level**     **Ability**

1-5

*Strength of Rot:* As their bodies rot from within, Baloth's plague bearers gain a +2 bonus to Constitution. They derive toughness and strength from all forms of sickness.





6–10

*Bestow Contagion:* Once per day, a follower of Baloth can confer a magical disease upon his foes. With a successful touch attack, the plague bearer confers a disease with a Fortitude save of  $10 + \text{half the bearer's HD} + \text{his Charisma modifier}$ . This disease has an incubation period of 1 day and causes  $1d3$  Constitution damage.

11–15

*Aura of Flies:* Insects fly and swirl in a thick cloud around the plague bearer as they feast upon the open, weeping sores that appear across his body. In combat, these flies buzz into the eyes and mouths of the bearer's opponents, disrupting their fighting abilities. All enemies within 30 feet of him suffer a  $-4$  competence penalty to attacks and checks.

16–20

*Stench of Death:* The plague bearer's body becomes ripe with corruption. His stomach bulges with rot and festering sores, while his teeth fall from their sockets and his eyes turn yellow and bulge from their sockets. He gains an additional  $+2$  bonus to Constitution. In addition, the fearsome stench of death that surrounds him forces all opponents who move within 30 feet of him to make Fortitude saves ( $DC 10 + \text{half the bearer's HD} + \text{his Charisma modifier}$ ) or become sickened for  $2d4$  rounds.

## MONSTERS IN THE CAMPAIGN

Adding monsters from the core rules to a horror or dark fantasy campaign, such as harpies or gargoyles, can prove to be a tricky prospect. If the players recognize a monster, it loses part of its mystery and element of danger.

Fear of the unknown is perhaps the greatest fear of all, and if the players are familiar with the monsters you set against them your campaign can lose a lot of its tension.

This section introduces rules for modifying existing monsters to make them more suitable for a dark fantasy or horror game. The key differences between normal creatures and those suitable for dark fantasy include:

Creatures in this type of game are frequently horrific. Their phys-



ical appearance or actions cast them as terrible monsters. They are strange and impossible to classify. Every monster that the characters meet in a dark fantasy game might be new, unique, or previously unknown. These monsters cannot be reasoned with, as they are strange, unknowable, and driven by motivations that are alien to humanity.

These three points might seem hard to fulfill using the existing monsters from the core rules. You might think that you need to create new monsters for every adventure. This section demonstrates that a few, cosmetic changes can transform even the most easily recognized monster into a strange, daunting foe.

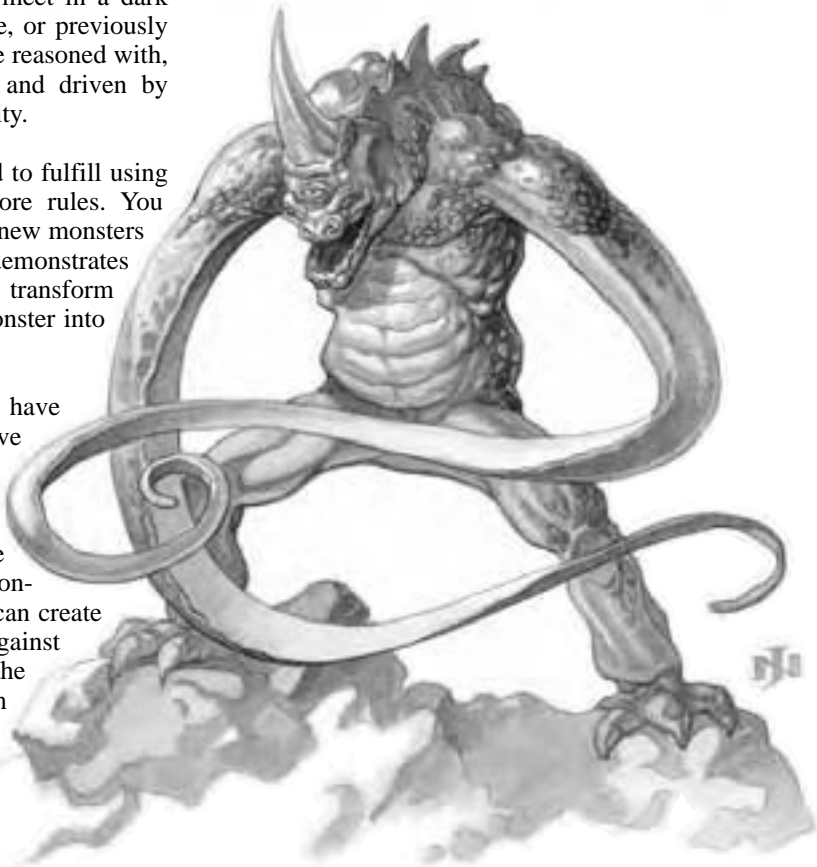
One of the major advantages you have over the players is that only you have access to the numbers and rules that make monsters work. You can easily take an orc, alter its appearance and presentation, but use its game statistics as given. By altering a monster's appearance and actions, you can create a wholly new monstrosity to set against the players. In addition, if you use the rules for fear and madness from Chapter 2, you can increase a creature's fear rating to better reflect its new appearance.

Changing a creature's appearance is simple: Just think up a new look for it. However, it may prove bothersome to create new descriptions over and over again. The following tables allow you to randomly generate a creature's appearance. You can use them to create a creature's appearance from whole cloth or to fill in the details as you go.

Each table focuses on a specific trait or physical characteristic a creature might possess. Use the appropriate tables to flesh out a monster's appearance.

### SKIN

d20	Result
1	Thick fur
2	Sparse, patchy hair
3	Human skin
4	Tough, thick, leathery
5	Bony plates
6	Lizard scales
7	Fish scales
8	Spikes
9	Knobby protrusions
10	Long, tangled fur/hair
11	Weeping sores
12	Outer shell/chitin
13	Drippy, running slime
14	Scars, burns, wounds



15	Bloppy, fat, soft
16	Slimy, covered in mucous
17	Short, bristly hair
18	Thick, stony skin
19	Wrinkled, leathery skin
20	Transparent skin

### FACE

d20	Result
1	Blank, featureless
2	Canine
3	Feline
4	Humanoid
5	Equine
6	Serpentine
7	Lizard-like
8	Fish-like

### ARMS AND LEGS

You can roll 1d4 to determine how many arms or legs the creature has, then roll on the table to create their description.

d20	Result
1	Short, stubby
2	Long, slender
3	Tentacles

- 4 Stingers
- 5 Additional joints
- 6 Long claws or finger nails
- 7 Stiff, unbending
- 8 Clawed paws
- 9 Hoofed
- 10 Bony hooks

## RANDOM COLORS

### d20 Result

- 1 Red
- 2 Orange
- 3 Yellow
- 4 Green
- 5 Blue
- 6 Purple

## MISCELLANEOUS TRAITS

The miscellaneous table allows you to add a variety of strange, odd, or unique traits to a monster.

### d20 Trait

- 1 Fangs
- 2 Watery, bulging eyes
- 3 Antenna
- 4 Prehensile tail
- 5 Insect eyes
- 6 Pincers
- 7 Second head
- 8 Elephantine ears
- 9 Long nose/snout
- 10 Striped or spotted skin
- 11 Mouthless
- 12 Tusks
- 13 Webbed fingers/toes
- 14 Horned
- 15 1d6 eyes
- 16 Headless - face set in chest
- 17 Radial symmetry
- 18 Exceptionally tall
- 19 Small or short
- 20 Fat

## ADDING ABILITIES AND TRAITS

In addition to changing a monster's appearance, you can also grant it new abilities. This section allows you to add supernatural abilities to a creature and adjust its CR to reflect its new talents. This system is by no means comprehensive. *Fantasy Flight's Monster's Handbook* is almost entirely devoted to this subject, but the guidelines here are enough to get you started.

To get started, select a base creature that you want to modify. Then, pick a spell that most closely matches the ability you want your creature to have. Look at the spell's effects to find a match. Your creature does not have to use this ability like a spell. For example, to simulate a breath weapon you could use *cone of cold*. You can change the spell's damage

type, such as swapping cold damage for acid when using *cone of cold*, but be sure to check if a lower level spell has the same effect and the damage type you want to use. Generally speaking, casters in the core rules gain access to fire spells before other types.

After picking a spell, determine the lowest caster level needed to use it. This caster level determines how the ability alters the creature's CR. In addition, decide how often the creature can use the ability per day and apply the listed modifier to the caster level.

Ability Frequency	Caster Level Modifier
Once per day	0
Twice per day	+1
Three times per day	+2
Once every 10 rounds	+3
Once every 5 rounds	+4
Once every 3 rounds	+5
At will	+6

After picking out how often the creature can use the ability, apply the listed modifier to the caster level. Subtract the creature's CR from the modified caster level (in other words, compute CR - caster level) and consult the CR modifier table.

CR-Caster Level	CR Modifier
-1 or less	0
0-2	+0
3-4	+1
5-6	+2
7-8	+3
Each additional +2	Additional +1

You can classify the ability as a supernatural, spell-like, or extraordinary talent as appropriate. Consider how the creature uses the new ability, such as a breath weapon, poisonous attack, and so forth. Treat the creature's modified CR as its caster level to determine its effects, including saving throw. Treat the highest of the creature's Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma as the ability score that modifies the DC.

You can add multiple abilities to a creature to give it a whole new array of talents. Add the creature's most powerful ability first, then add its second most powerful one, and so on. Treat its modified CR as its base CR when determining the effects of its second and third new abilities.

## CHAPTER SIX

HORROR  
ADVENTURES

If you have never run a dark fantasy or horror RPG before, you might be stumped on how to design adventures. The typical scenario of the typical fantasy game involves the characters' delving into ruins, battling fearsome monsters, and heroically defeating legions of enemies. A horror game takes almost the diametrically opposite approach. The heroes are weaker and more vulnerable than their enemies, making a heroic dash into a mob potentially suicidal. While the characters might defeat the mortal cultists and some of the creatures they face, the most powerful beings they encounter are simply too strong to overcome with brute force. Flip to Chapter 5 and look at the godlings to gain a perspective on the "boss monsters," the most important creatures that characters will face during an adventure.

This section gives you advice and ideas on how to create adventures using this book that fit the tone of a horror game. Desperate plans, fear, cautious investigation, and combat as a last resort replace the typical fantasy game's kick in the door, defeat the monster, and seize its treasure model. Part of the appeal of a horror game is that it provides a change in pace from the typical RPG experience. This section shows you how to do that.

THE ICONIC  
HORROR  
ADVENTURE

In many ways, horror and dark fantasy adventures can be boiled down to a simple, iconic formula. The idea behind the iconic adventure is that by studying this formula, you can learn how to create good dark fantasy adventures in a minimum of time. Best of all, once you master the formula you can then change it to add some variety to your games. Think of the iconic adventure plot as a blueprint that teaches you how to build a house. After you have constructed a few buildings using it, you have developed the tools and experience needed to push the blueprint aside and start with your own designs from scratch.

The iconic dark fantasy adventure can be described in a single paragraph. A terrible creature, or its agents, take some sort of action that captures the party's attention. This action is somehow related to a ghastly plot that could cause a severe disaster if it comes to fruition. The characters must piece together evidence that illuminates the creature's or cultists' plans and determine how to stop them. With this knowledge in hand, the PCs must foil the being's or agents' efforts.

The iconic adventure is vague in its details. You could use that summary to describe an adventure in which the party must find a vampire who lairs somewhere in the city, or one that pits the characters against a madman who wants to summon a monstrous being into the world. It follows a rather basic formula that you can break down into a few specific scenes and events. Each sentence covers one important part of the adventure.

## THE STAR OF THE ADVENTURE

Before you can work on producing an adventure, remember that monsters are the main stars of a dark fantasy game. Think of all the horror movies named for the monsters that appear in them. The villain determines many of the important plot points and scenes in your adventure. Before you can work on creating a scenario, pick out a creature that serves as the main antagonist. Some of the classic horror monsters from the core rules include vampires, werewolves, ghosts, evil wizards or clerics, doppelgangers, and ghouls.

Once you select the monster, consider its goals. This could range from a simple desire for food (usually in the form of innocent victims) to the destruction of the local region or an attempt to summon and control a powerful being.

You should also consider the monster's followers, if it has any. A vampire might recruit mortals to help it capture and feed on innocents, perhaps offering to make them vampires and thereby grant them immortality. Cults frequently spring up around powerful creatures that have the intelligence to organize and lead others. With their power and supernatural natures, monsters can convince greedy, foolish, and ambitious people to aid and obey them in return for nebulous promises of power and glory.

Think about how the monster and its followers might work to meet their goals. A power mad wizard might try to summon a monstrous being, such as a godling (see Chapter 5), to ravage an area and destroy his enemies. A vampire might only want a steady stream of victims, using her charms and looks to lure victims to her mansion or relying on thugs and brutes to drag captives to her dungeon.

**“A terrible creature, or its agents, take some sort of action that captures the party’s attention.”**

Before an adventure can begin, you need to consider how you can involve the characters in it. Under the iconic adventure, a strange event draws the party's interest. This event is the byproduct of the adventure's main villain. For example, the characters could hear about a corpse found drained of its blood. They could be hired to investigate the murder by the victim's family or friends, or they might even

know the victim. You face a few decisions at this point that will color the tone and plot of the rest of the adventure. The key point to consider is whether the characters have a personal stake in the plot. If so, then the strange event or action should directly involve the PCs or their friends and family. Otherwise, the characters might be hired or asked to look into matters that they would otherwise overlook. Keep in mind that this step usually requires an active effort on your part to include the PCs in the adventure. You cannot expect the players to seize on the cues you provide. If you give them a good reason to become involved in the adventure, then they will launch themselves into it without any prodding.

Generally, the best method for dragging the characters into an adventure is a personal event or something that relates to their characters' goals and pasts. For example, a murder victim might be an old friend. Large numbers of people could disappear in a character's hometown. The PCs might find evidence that an old enemy is involved in a strange event. A good friend of the characters may ask them to look into strange events as a favor. In addition, horror might come to the characters rather than the other way around. The PCs might accompany a sage to an archaeological dig only to find that the workers have unearthed a deadly mummy. One of the PCs could match the description of the person a cult needs to sacrifice in order to open a portal to a dread god's domain.

**“This action is somehow related to a ghastly plot that could cause a severe disaster if it comes to fruition.”**

Once you have set the stage for the adventure, the opening scene must provide a clear bridge to the rest of the action. If the characters witness a murder or see a bizarre monster shambling through the city's alleys at midnight, they need some sort of thread of clues to push them to continue with the adventure. The adventure hook is what draws the characters into an adventure. This step is the payoff, the revelation or clue that makes them want to delve further into the source of the events. For example, you might use an unexplained murder to pull the characters into the adventure. The PCs head to the crime scene, but find nothing there that indicates anything strange is afoot. The evidence you provide should spark their imaginations and give them a hint that something strange or unwholesome is afoot.

The easiest way to explain the importance of this step is to draw an analogy between an adventure and a movie. Imagine a movie scene in which a man walks into his apartment and sits down to read a newspaper. After a few minutes, he gets up to head back out. As he reaches his door, he remembers that he left his watch in his bedroom. He opens the door, and the murderer who was hiding there leaps out and kills him. If the movie is



well done, the scene might startle you as the killer leaps in to the scene, but after a few moments that feeling passes. Now, consider the same scene where you previously saw the killer, on the run from the police, break into the apartment and hide in the bedroom. Now, each movement the victim makes is pregnant with tension. You know that the murderer lurks just off screen, and at any moment he could appear. When the man heads to the door, you might think he is about to escape, but when he turns to the bedroom you know that he is doomed. Rather than compress all the excitement of the scene into a single moment, the second scenario stretches it across the entire scene.

By the same token, if you provide the players with hints and clues that something strange is afoot from the beginning of a scenario, you give them a good reason to remain tense, nervous, and ready for anything throughout the session. More importantly, it gives them a good reason to investigate further and progress into the adventure.

A sudden, unexpected attack by a monster can provide a quick spike of a fear and surprise, but try not to rely on such ploys as the main source of tension in your adventures. Ideally, you could use such a sudden event as the first evidence that something strange is afoot. A slow build up lets the players worry about the terrors the characters may face. It increases your margin of error by placing less emphasis on a single event. Instead, it spreads it over several events or encounters. If one or two of those instances fails to work well, the entire adventure still retains its tone. On the other hand, if you bank on a single, startling scene to put the adventure over the top, a number of things could unravel your plans. One of the players could make a joke at the wrong time, or someone might want to get up for a soda. The pizza delivery guy could show up just as your scene reaches its peak, or the phone could ring. All of these random intrusions have a much reduced impact if you work to establish the presence of horror and the supernatural early on in an adventure rather than try to use sudden, single event.

With all that advice in mind, try to work the first few hints of the dangers to come into the opening scene. Ideally, you should leave three clues that the characters can follow up. For example, if the characters investigate a murder that involves a vampire, they might discover that the corpse has been drained of blood and has fang marks on its neck, the victim clutched a shred of purple fabric with part of a symbol sewn on it, and a few witnesses saw a bald man with several scars on his face in the area before the body was discovered. The first clue gives the characters information about the monster behind the crime, that it either drinks blood or collects it. It alerts the characters that something strange is going on, and they should follow up on the clues to prevent any more killings. The second clue also relates

to the killer, as the cloth might have been from his clothes or from the crime scene. The final clue could relate to the killer himself or someone connected to him. In all three cases, the characters have avenues to begin their investigation. They can research monsters that drink blood, find a symbol or crest that matches the one on the cloth, and find more information about the bald man. They have a clear idea that something strange and monstrous is behind the crime, and the clues provide them with a few directions to start looking for more information.

**“The characters must piece together evidence that illuminates the creature’s or cultists’ plans and determine how to stop them.”**

Once the characters have first come into contact with a strange event and have been given a good reason to follow up on it, you need to consider how the party’s investigation will progress. This step is perhaps the hardest one to design. The advice given above talks about how spreading tension out over time is a good way to add fear and horror to an adventure. By the same token, if you drag out the adventure for too long the fear can dissipate and lead to boredom. On the other hand, if the characters go from the opening scene to the final confrontation, you might not be able to build up tension and the players might find the adventure a bit dull and too easy. Ideally, at this phase the characters make steady progress through a series of interesting scenes that build up to the final showdown.

Designing investigations is a complex enough topic that it receives its own section later on. For now, keep in mind the scenes that the characters need to go through to reach the final part of an adventure. There could be battles, chases, interrogations, roleplaying scenes, and other events that the characters must handle before they can reach the adventure’s end. Each of these scenes should be interesting and fun to handle, and each of them should bring the party one step closer to completing the adventure.

For battles, focus on strange opponents and interesting venues. Give the cultists strange weapons and feats, such as flails, Blind-Fight, or whips, and make sure they use them properly. A group of thugs with Blind-Fight might grab the party’s torch and douse it during a fight. An assassin with a whip might trip a character, allowing his rogue cohorts to leap in, grapple him, and gain sneak attack damage. After the characters defeat their foes, they might discover an important clue amongst their belongings. Try not to count on the characters’ taking an opponent prisoner. Many players forget that this is even an option. If you want the characters to interrogate an opponent, perhaps the foe begs for mercy or offers to surrender. Just remember that a critical hit might send your potential captive to –10 hit points with a single blow and prepare a contingency plan just in case.

For roleplaying scenes, work on making each of your NPCs memorable. Add a characteristic or trait that makes an NPC different from the others that the characters have met. This trait should be an obvious characteristic that comes up from the PCs’ first meeting with him. For example, an exceptionally ugly or beautiful character would stand out from the crowd, as would one with a stutter, an eye patch, or a terrible cold.

Ideally, the resolution of each scene sets the characters one step closer to reaching the adventure’s conclusion. Try to avoid the temptation to design a single correct or proper way to handle a situation. Instead, be flexible. If the players do something unexpected but inventive, reward them with the clue, hint, or information that they would gain for “solving” the encounter. If you remain too rigid, the players might become bored and frustrated as they fail to see your solution. One of the golden rules of DMing is that the players never do what you expect. Use this to your advantage by avoiding the compulsion to create too much detail or to plan things out.

A great method for keeping an adventure moving is to design several of your encounters as wild cards. Most DMs attach an NPC or event to a location. Wild cards can work anywhere. A bandit ambush is the classic example of a wild card. You can spring it on the characters if they are on the road to a city, if they walk through a rough part of town, or even while they are exploring an abandoned house. In this case, you turn the NPCs into an active group that seeks to initiate the encounter instead of waiting on the PCs to do it. To keep wild cards plausible, consider how and why an NPC might seek out the characters. The villain could send a hit squad to take them out, or a repentant cultist might want to give the characters an important clue to help them. Focus on coming up with the NPCs’ stats and motivations, and try to consider how they would act in the places and situations the characters are likely to enter.

An even easier method for crafting wild card encounters is to completely ignore the setting in which they take place. If you want the characters to meet a raving prophet who provides a few clues they need, they bump into him whether they walk to the city’s north gate, remain in the inn all day talking over their plans, or head into the sewers in search of clues. In any situation, the prophet fits into the scene. He could be delivering a rambling speech near the gate, he might enter the inn to beg for food, or he could keep a small home in an unused channel in the sewers.

Designing encounters that take place regardless of what the characters do might grate on your sense of realism. You might also think it takes power out of the players’ hands, since it renders some of their decisions pointless. The key

lies in how you use these encounters. At their best, they keep the game moving and provide the players with a sense of progress and action. At their worst, they reduce the game to a heavily scripted series of events that happen without any input from the characters. First off, while you can alter where and when an encounter takes place, always allow the players to determine how they handle it. Keeping in mind the advice given above on staying flexible, scripting an adventure should never extend to dictating exactly how an encounter plays out. By using wild cards, you only ensure that the encounter takes place. More importantly, as long as you do not abuse this method the players should never notice that you use it. Unless they have a habit of peeking at your notes, they have no way of knowing that the burglar they cornered in an alley would have shown up at the tavern or the bazaar, depending on where they wanted to go.

**“With this knowledge in hand, the PCs must foil the being’s or agents’ efforts.”**

After piecing together the clues and evidence, the characters finally determine the source of the trouble. They must take steps to foil its plans, probably drawing up a plan that draws on the clues and knowledge they have learned. This part of the adventure represents the climax that all of the other encounters built up to. The horrors that the PCs suspected they would face now come to light, possibly pitting them against mighty creatures that could be far beyond their power. The characters might need to research methods to defeat these threats or prevent their appearance in the world by defeating the madmen who wish to summon them. In many ways, their success in doing research and gathering clues in the early part of the adventure plays a major role in their chances to defeat their enemies.

The final part of an adventure usually takes place at the villain’s lair or at the site where the villain’s plans come to fruition. The characters confront their opponents and take whatever steps are necessary to bring the plot to an end.

There are many ways in which you can bring an adventure to a gripping conclusion. The characters might have to sneak into the villain’s lair, making their way past guards to penetrate an inner sanctum and halt a ritual or slay the main bad guy. The characters might have to engineer a malevolent group’s downfall, perhaps through combat or other, indirect means. For example, the PCs might have to destroy a dam to flood the valley where a powerful being is going to manifest and destroy the countryside. The flooding may swallow several villages, but it can also destroy the being before it can devastate the region.

Usually, the characters have a chance to confront the villain or at least derail his plans. The exact

nature of this confrontation depends on the plot you have designed and the opponents you set before the characters.

## DESIGNING INVESTIGATIONS

Investigations and clues might be the most difficult things for a DM to design. When creating a combat encounter, you can use the rules to balance the monsters’ CRs against the party’s level. When creating NPCs, you can sketch out personalities and judge appropriate responses to the characters’ actions. When creating an investigation that requires the PCs to string together a series of clues, it is impossible to predict how the players might react to the information you give them. In all too many cases, players seem to have a talent for either missing the blatantly obvious or easily guessing at a difficult problem that was supposed to puzzle them for several sessions. The basic problem you face is that puzzles or clues that you see as easy or difficult might draw an entirely different response from the players. You might expect the players to remember that the party’s old friend Gragnar the sage can read Old Dwarven, but the players might forget all about him. You might craft an intricate riddle that you expect requires a few sessions of research and adventure for the PCs to finally solve, only to discover that the same riddle appeared in an obscure fantasy novel that everyone else in your group read. This section presents advice on creating investigations that challenge your players without overwhelming them.

### BEGINNING AT THE END

The first step to designing an investigation is to consider how it is going to end. You cannot map out a journey until you know where you are heading. In the case of the iconic adventure plot given above, an investigation should usually yield information needed to stop or defeat a monster or a group of cultists who have set in motion a horrific plan. The characters might learn the secret location of a cult’s temple, or they could determine the identity of the masked serial killer who menaces the city.

Write a brief, perhaps five or six sentence description of the menace or creature that the characters face. This description should cover all the key details about your adventure’s main threat. Note the main participants, such as cultists or monsters, their base of operation, their goals, and the plans they have put into motion. You should also note how the group formed (or at least how it started on the road to villainy) and what its past actions have been. With that description, you have not only summarized the villains, but you have encapsulated the characters’ goals. In an investigation, the party needs to uncover information about their foes piece by piece. Finally, once they put together the com-



plete picture, they can uncover and defeat them. Your description neatly outlines the information the party needs to foil the villain's plans.

**Example:** To help you understand the concepts put forth here, a running example outlines how to complete each stage of the design process. The sample scenario pits the characters against a vampire and his minions. Here is the basic background information:

Count von Strachen arrived in the city four months ago aboard a gray barge along with his henchmen. Driven from his homeland by a crusading priest, he seeks refuge in the city and plans to unleash a plague that will kill everyone in town and transform them into undead servants. He and his servants—thugs, mercenaries, and black-hearted opportunists—have taken over an abandoned temple outside of the city. The count's men have begun excavating pits in the sewers that serve as arcane nexuses for the foul ceremony that will cause the plague. He has tested out this ritual, causing a minor outbreak of plague and the rise of zombies in the poorest part of town.

From that paragraph, here are the key clues that the characters need to uncover in order to track down von Strachen. First, a recent outbreak of plague in the slums is connected to the appearance of undead creatures there. These creatures in turn have a link to strange, arcane sites recently built in the sewers. The men who erected these sites are connected to a strange, foreign nobleman who recently entered the city. This noble is in fact a vampire who keeps a lair outside of town. By following that progression of facts, notice how you can draw a single, local event into a chain that leads to the villain.

## BUILDING SCENES

At this point, you already have the basic skeleton of the adventure sketched out. Now, you need to add

some detail to it. Wrap the key clues and pieces of information from your summary around different types of encounters, ideally a mix of combat, role-play, and problem solving. At this point, forget about linking all the encounters together. Just concentrate on how the characters might learn each of the facts you put together.



For each clue, think about the NPCs who might hold the information or the location where characters might travel in order to investigate it. Those factors set the scenes for you adventure and help you figure out the NPCs and enemies you need to develop. Chances are, some of the clues lend themselves to much more interesting scenes than others. Make a pass through each of the clues and try to think of two or three ways that the PCs could learn of it. Do not worry about creating interesting encounters, just look at the clues with an eye towards forming an idea of how the adventure could progress. The point of this exercise is not to come up with the final adventure outline. Instead, think of it as a rough draft to get yourself thinking.

Let's take the Count von Strachen example:

First, a recent outbreak of plague in the slums is connected to the appearance of undead creatures there. Picture this event in your mind: people in the slums are falling sick, and when some of them die they arise as undead monsters. This clue serves as a great way to draw the characters into the adventure. Maybe the PCs are hired to investigate the illness, perhaps by a temple that tries to contain it. They could be attacked by one of the undead, or one of their friends could contract the illness.

The disease and the monsters have a link to strange, arcane sites recently built in the sewers. This clue forces the characters to delve into the sewers to uncover the nexuses, giving you an opportunity to put them into a dark, wet, twisty, and above all else dangerous environment. This part of the adventure should involve some exploration, probably a few encounters with horrific monsters, and the discovery of the weird sites that serve to channel the magical energy behind the disease.

The men who erected these sites are con-



nected to a strange, foreign nobleman who recently entered the city, Count von Strachen. Learning this information could require two different sorts of actions. The characters could capture or interrogate one of the count's minions, or they could follow them, learn about them, and ask around town.

This noble is a vampire who keeps a lair outside town. This is the big clue. It puts the entire adventure into focus and ensures a showdown between the PCs and a powerful vampire. The characters could learn of it in many of the same ways they drew the connection between the people responsible for the strange ritual sites in the sewers and the count.

### COMPLICATIONS ARE THE SPICE OF GAMING

With the basic outline in your mind, now you should consider ways in which you can add some flavor, unexpected developments, and other complications. You have built the adventure's basic frame, now you can add all the cool details, color, and features that make it stand out. This section presents thirteen ideas for complications you can introduce to an encounter. Remember, these only serve as a starting point. When thinking over an encounter, try to cast yourself as the director for a movie. What would happen that would make a scene more interesting?

Use the examples given below as guides to answering that question.

**The Best Intentions:** Not every opponent the characters face wants to do them harm. A misguided investigator might think they are agents of evil. If the characters can restrain themselves and calm down their "opponent" they might find a willing ally or someone who can give them an important clue.

**Building Tension:** The characters might face a time limit on when they must complete some action. When time expires, something nasty happens or they lose their chance to gain an important advantage.

**Lies and Deceit:** Not everything the characters learn is true, and sifting through falsehoods might reveal an important clue they need to move on to the next part of the adventure. For example, an innkeeper might lie to give a merchant an alibi. Once the characters learn about this falsehood, they have a good reason to investigate the merchant. After all, why would he ask the innkeeper to lie if he had nothing to hide?

**Misdirected Suspicion:** Not only could NPCs use lies to hide their guilt, they could also try to put the characters on a wrong trail. By the same token, the PCs might face accusations that they are in league with dark powers. If they break into a graveyard to track down a necromancer, the town guard might

catch them and charge them with the recent series of tomb robberies.

**The Power Behind the Throne:** Sometimes, the characters might face opponents who have power and influence in government. A squad of town guardsmen might interfere with the characters' efforts, dogging their steps and intervening when they are close to making an important find. The villain might be in league with anyone from a single, corrupt guardsman who patrols a neighborhood to a powerful noble who has servants through the kingdom.

**Rivals:** The characters might not be the only people after their goals. For example, they might need to find a jade idol to gain entrance to an ancient tomb. A treasure hunter who recovers and sells artifacts might be after it solely for its monetary value, or a group of cultists might seek it to unleash some dark, ancient power.

**Stealth:** Some situations might require the characters to proceed without drawing attention to their actions. An evil high priest might plan to summon a demon into the world at the height of a great festival that has drawn hundreds of his followers. The characters must sneak through the celebration, or perhaps they must pose as cultists, in order to make it close enough to the priest to foil his plot.

**Strange Venues:** The setting in which an encounter takes place might be enough to transform an otherwise mundane encounter into an exciting one. Facing down a werewolf in the middle of a crowded market square has a much different feel than pursuing one through a thick forest at the dead of midnight. Adding details to an encounter's surroundings can make it a distinct, memorable place. A foul temple might have walls built from human skulls and bones. The trees in a haunted forest might bend and twist to swat at travelers.

**This Time, It's Personal:** The easiest way to draw the characters into an encounter is to give their characters a direct, important stake in it. If you give a personal, direct connection to an encounter, the players have a good reason to put their characters into dangerous situations and you make the plot more interesting and compelling. The sacrificial victim a cult plans to use might be a character's wife, husband, sibling, or friend. The mad wizard who plots to cast a spell of eternal night could have instructed one of the characters in the basics of magic. One of the characters could face certain death if a villain's plan comes to fruition, such as if he creates a curse that strikes down the PC's ancestor and all his descendants. You might reveal that a PC's grandmother was a notorious witch known to consort with dark powers. Perhaps the taint on her soul has somehow passed through the generations, condemning one of the characters to a terrible fate unless he can somehow remove it.

Not all of the connections between the PCs and an encounter have to run so deep. One of the character's friends might turn out to be a member of a strange cult. This friend might be a diehard fanatic, or he could merely be a hapless dupe. In either situation, the party might not be so cavalier about using violence when their opponents could be old friends.

**Turning the Tables:** One of the classic hallmarks of horror movies and books is the sudden transformation of a seemingly innocent person or event into something sinister. The old, bent woman turns out to be a shambling zombie cloaked under a thick shawl. The body sprawled at the end of an alley leaps to attack as the characters draw near. The seemingly innocent book conceals a daily log of a necromancer's ghastly experiments. You can help put tension and fear into your game by sometimes introducing monsters or other terrible events in the midst of seemingly mundane events. Keep in mind that if you use this complication too often, it loses its effect over time.

**Unexplained Phenomenon:** Strange sights, apparitions, weird noises, flickering lights, and other events can lend an air of the supernatural to any encounter. While traveling through the forest, the PCs might find strange tracks that match no known animal. The walls of a haunted house might drip with blood. This complication does a good job of increasing the tension and mystery of a scene, but sometimes it can backfire. If the weird events you use in an adventure are too interesting, the players might focus on them to the detriment of the adventure. Generally, it is a good idea to tie any weird, inexplicable events or manifestations into the supernatural creatures or events tied to the adventure.

**The Unwitting Pawn:** Not everyone who works against the characters does so knowingly. A sorcerer might hire a courier to deliver packages to several priests in town. When opened, these parcels unleash demons that devour their victims. The courier might be an innocent dupe in the scheme, but the characters could wrongfully believe that he plays a vital, sinister role in the sorcerer's conspiracy. This complication can serve as a red herring, or you can use it to show the players that their enemies are hidden behind a veil of lackeys and pawns.

**Wolf in Sheep's Clothing:** Sometimes, it helps to present a villain in a context other than a direct confrontation. Not all villains are simply mindless, destructive monsters. Some of them hide behind a cultured, civilized, and even benevolent facade. Other times, a villain may simply have too many powerful friends for the characters to directly confront him. The court wizard may be known as an eccentric but harmless genius. The characters know that he seeks to slay the king, adopt his form, and rule the land, but they lack the evidence needed to turn others against him. The

characters might have to endure royal functions where the wizard socializes with them and their allies, perhaps even charming NPCs with his wit and personality. Perhaps the wizard knows the PCs are on to his plans, making for a tense conversation between the two sides.

**Example:** Going back to the example adventure plot, we have a few basic encounters that we need to complicate.

To start with, we need a good way to involve the characters in the outbreak of plague in the slums. Looking over the list of complications, making this a personal mission would be a good bet. Perhaps one of the characters contracts the plague. The PCs must trace the disease to its source to find a cure.

The ceremonial sites in the sewers offer a great venue for weird events, such as a carpet of dead rats floating in the water (they fell victim to the plague), strange sigils and runes carved into the walls, and rotted corpses of the dead. Perhaps the undead creatures spawned by the illness congregate down here. Finally, Count von Strachen's men might bribe a few constables to patrol the common sewer entrances, threatening anyone seen near them with arrest.

Once the characters reach the ceremonial sites, they must fight von Strachen's thugs in a half-flooded sewer channel while a legion of zombies (the disease victims) close in around them. They face a time pressure to quickly defeat the men and search the area for clues.

The final act takes place at the count's castle. This could require stealth, as the count frequently hosts gloomy, debauched parties in his lair's ruins. He casts himself as an eccentric, artistic genius, drawing to him many of the city's artisans and members of the nobility who support the arts. The characters cannot simply storm the place. Instead, they must sneak in, find the count's resting place, and defeat him when he is at his weakest.

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

Now that you have a series of complex, interesting encounters, you need to figure out how to link them all together into a coherent whole. This step is perhaps the hardest part of designing horror and investigation adventures. All too many times, the players seize on a red herring or even invent a clue in their heads and pursue it to the exclusion of everything else. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a DM who dictates the progression of events to the PCs or offers only one viable path between encounters renders the players' actions irrelevant. Finding a happy medium between the two represents the ideal situation, but realistically you may find yourself swaying between both extremes during an

adventure. This section gives you advice on how to keep an adventure on course and what to do when things go wrong.

If you go back to the example from the last section, you should notice that there are no links or connections between the encounters. A few obvious ones might occur to you, but so far the encounters remain separate. In most investigation/horror style adventures, the characters need to find a clue in one scene that leads them to another. In the Count von Strachen adventure, the PCs might find a note on a thug they defeat that lists the count's orders. That message shows the PCs that the count is behind the plague and it tells them to head to his lair to stop him. As mentioned above, things can easily go awry with this method. The PCs might not defeat the thug who carries the note, instead allowing him to get away. They might forget to search his pockets, or they could misinterpret the message. At that point, you might be stuck without any easy way to point the characters in the right direction.

The key to building connections between the scenes and encounters you have in mind lies in flexibility. If there is no single correct answer to the question "How do the characters go from encounter A to encounter B?" you never need to worry about scenarios that grind to a halt. Instead of casting an answer or solution in stone, think of two or three different ways that the characters can move from one encounter to the next. Try to define them in general terms, keeping the exact details to a minimum. This might sound like a bit of work, but in reality it is simple, easy, and a good way to remain flexible in the face of players who never seem to do what you expect.

The first step to building effective links between encounters is to consider the basic purpose of the bridge between two scenes. Look at the scene or place the characters need to go to, and come up with two or three reasons why they might proceed there. In the Count von Strachen example, the characters at some point need to delve into the sewers to find the profane sites built within them. Perhaps the characters hear rumors about strange men entering the sewers. They could research the disease and learn that it is magical in nature and requires nearby, underground magical nexuses. They could follow a group of shambling undead that wander into the sewers. You might notice that several of these reasons draw on the villains' actions or make logical assumptions based on the adventure's plot. Since the bad guys are active in the sewers, they could easily be seen entering and leaving them. This might be the clue the characters need to proceed to the next scene.

In some cases, one scene logically leads to another. The characters know what to do without seeking out clues or putting together the information they have

to point them in the right direction. In the Count von Starchen example, the PCs do not need any clues to know that the disease is magical in nature. As they make the simplest investigation into it, it should become obvious that a disease that can spawn undead monsters is far from normal. In these cases, you do not need to worry about keeping the characters on track. They should be able to see their next steps without piecing any information together.

At this point, the key lies in figuring out what sort of actions would logically give the characters the chance to uncover the information they need. A lot of DMs create a single clue, idea, or course of action the characters must pursue. Instead, try to evaluate the characters' actions in terms of how the adventure has developed or the situation surrounding it and then decide if their actions warrant a clue, hint, or anything else that leads them to the next scene. This might seem to be a bit daunting, or a strange way to design an adventure, but consider it in terms of how your game can proceed. If an entire investigation relies on the players' correctly identifying and interpreting a specific clue, the adventure can turn into a guessing game. If the players fail to interpret the clues and signs you set before them in the way you expect, the adventure quickly grinds to a halt. In the end, you need to either give them an extra hint or push them along the path you want. In that case, the players are no longer active participants in the adventure. Instead, they simply follow the plot you put in front of them.

This method does not mean that whatever the characters do, they come closer to defeating the villain or uncovering the plot. You still need to think about the characters' actions and decide if they pay off in the party's favor. When thinking about clues and investigation, here are a few basic types of actions that characters might take to learn more about something.

#### **Conflict:**

While this category includes combat, it can also include threats, intimidation, and other aggressive tactics. In this case, the characters find someone they think has a connection to the plot and literally or figuratively beat him into submission. As DM, you can also push this style on the characters by using ambushes or attempted assassinations to throw the characters into a combat encounter. Clues from this method might come from interrogations or notes or messages found on defeated enemies.

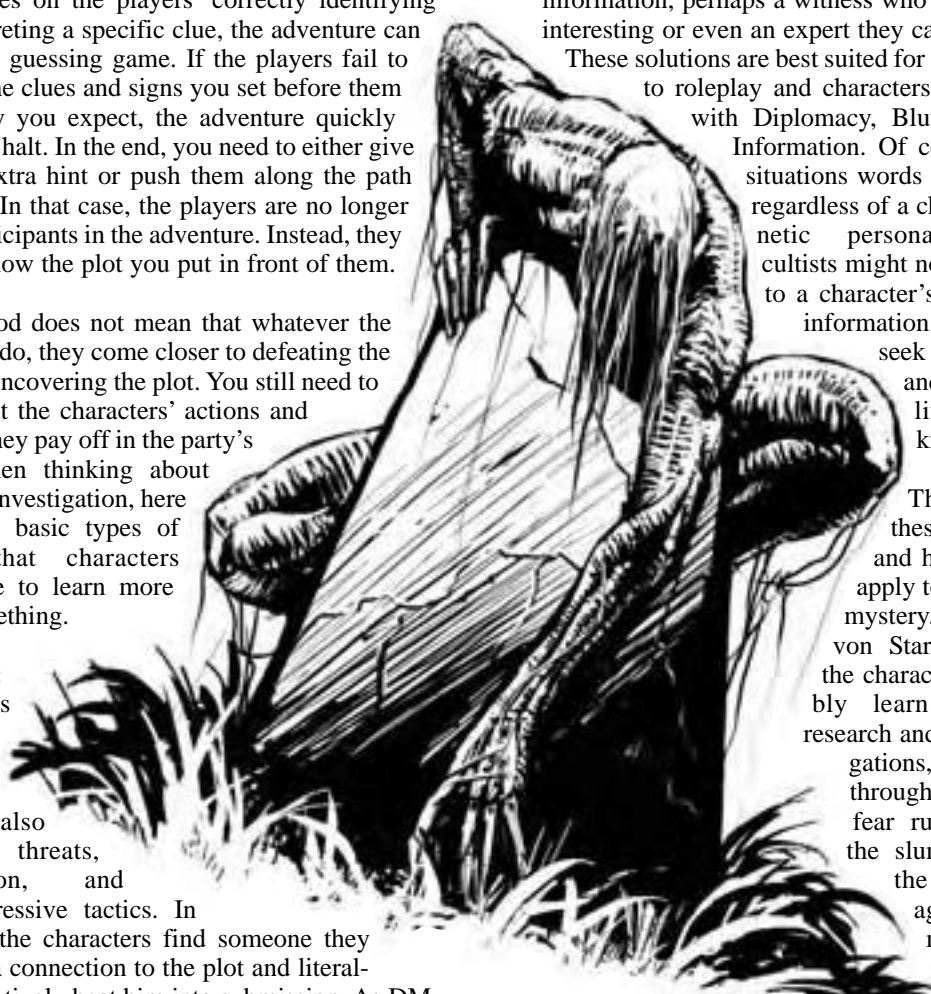
**Research:** Scholarly characters might delve into a local library or consult with a sage to find lore pertaining to a situation they face. They could seek a fearsome monster's weaknesses and vulnerabilities, or they could attempt to solve a pressing mystery. Characters with many ranks in Knowledge might choose this route, especially if you use the new rules for research, libraries, and the Knowledge skill given in this book. This method works best for topics and areas that would logically have a fair amount of lore written about them. Usually, it is a bad option when looking into current historical events unless your campaign world features societies that make an effort to catalog information on crimes, population statistics, and other information. For example, a kingdom with an elaborate, sprawling bureaucracy might have extensive records on everything pertaining to government business.

**Social:** In some cases, the characters might decide to ask questions around town. They might hope to find someone who can provide them with more information, perhaps a witness who saw something interesting or even an expert they can consult with.

These solutions are best suited for groups that like to roleplay and characters who are good with Diplomacy, Bluff, and Gather Information. Of course, in some situations words are not enough regardless of a character's magnetic personality. Fanatic cultists might not stop to listen to a character's words, or the information the characters seek could be so old and rare that no living person knows it.

Think about these basic tactics and how they might apply to each part of a mystery. In the Count von Starchen example, the characters can probably learn a lot with research and social investigations, but not much through conflict. With fear running high in the slums because of the plague, an aggressive party might end up in a few fights while scar-

ing off anyone who has any useful information. Asking around for help might turn out people eager to give useful information, especially if they think the PCs want to end



the plague. Research can also prove useful, since the PCs might be able to find information on the plague and its magical origin that points to the activities within the sewers.

This approach does not remove the role that normal clues and hints provide. You can still present the players with mysteries and puzzles that require them to put together a few important pieces of information and hints, and then decide on a course of action. For example, if you want to run a murder mystery then you could still decide ahead of time who the murderer is. However, you can use this method as the characters seek out hints and clues or if the game grinds to a halt. The key to this method lies in its flexibility. Rather than demand that the characters commit certain actions to move the game forward, you instead create the clues then reward them based on the general tone of their actions and their plans. You can reward good thinking or particularly inventive ideas with more clues, while bad ideas gain little or nothing.

To implement this method, you need to make sure that you have a set of clues and scenes that the characters encounter to move the plot forward. A clue could be something as simple as a note that describes part of a villain's plans to tracks that lead to a hideout.

Here is an example to illustrate how this approach works. While looking into the murder of a wizard, the characters discover that he was slain with poison. They decide to bring samples of the poison to a sage who could identify it. In a normal adventure, the DM may have never thought about this approach. He expected the players to seize on the scrap of red cloth they found at the crime scene. Under this method, the DM improvises and gives the characters the clues or information they would have found if they followed up on the red cloth. The game keeps moving, and the players are rewarded for finding out the poison's source, likely place of manufacture, and maybe information on who in town has been buying it lately.

**Realism:** You might think that the idea of altering an adventure as the characters play through it runs counter to how RPGs should work. After all, it is not very realistic for the characters to learn the same information if they ask a sage about the poison used to slay a wizard or investigate the scrap of red cloth left by his corpse. Creating a strictly detailed set of inflexible clues can be fun, but it can turn the game into a boring session. If the players simply fail to see the clues in the light you expected them to the game can drag to a halt.

Remember that this method does not mean that the characters make progress regardless of their decisions. They must still come up with reasonable, logical, and sound ideas. The basic concept is

that good thinking should be rewarded. There might be times when you want to challenge the characters with a puzzle that has a single, unalterable solution. That type of obstacle can be fun to solve and it gives the players a sense of accomplishment, but for run of the mill situations or clues that should serve to move the game forward, the improvisation method can help keep the players involved while rewarding their actions.

## COMBAT IN DARK FANTASY GAMES

One of the goals of a dark fantasy or horror game is that combat is not always the best option. In many situations, the characters face monsters that are too powerful to overwhelm through force of arms. Thus, the players must find other solutions to complete an adventure. As DM, you should consider how to design encounters that clearly show the characters that they are outclassed. If the players never realize that a creature is too tough to defeat, they may charge ahead to certain death. This does not mean that you should stop the players from making bad decisions. However, it is important that they have enough information to make an informed decision. Imagine if whenever a combat encounter came up, the characters had no chance to see their enemies before deciding to run or fight. At that point, the choice becomes a random decision. As DM, you need to make it clear to the players that some encounters are going to be beyond their abilities.

There are two ways you can approach it. When starting a dark fantasy game, either as a campaign or a single session, be sure to outline the changes noted in this book's introduction. If the players know to expect certain key differences, they are much better equipped to respond to the game.

In terms of adventure design, it is usually best to amplify a monster's description to emphasize its power and strength. Use creatures that the players can recognize as powerful, such as demons, powerful undead, and so on. When using these creatures, be sure to give the characters' an opportunity to escape or overcome the monster through good planning. Keep in mind the advice given for investigations, that a single, correct answer to defeating a monster might prove frustrating. Come up with some basic ideas and thoughts on what the characters must do, but remain flexible when evaluating the plans the characters come up with. You should give the characters a way to escape, along with some ideas on how to use non-combat means to overcome a creature. Research can reveal a variety of ways that the party can defeat the monster with-

out resorting to combat. Here are a few ideas you can use:

- The monster has been summoned. Destroying the altar or runes that bind it sends it back to its home plane.
- A specially crafted weapon can defeat the monster with a single blow.
- A particular chemical or mixture of ingredients creates a deadly poison that can slay the creature.
- The monster appears in an area where the environment can be turned against it. A collapsing cavern, a sudden flood, a massive fire, or similar event could destroy it.
- The monster is bound to the cultists who summoned it. Slaying them dispels it.
- The creature can be caught within a pentagram or similar set of mystic symbols. Once trapped, it can be destroyed.
- If the characters complete a ritual they found in an old, moldy book, they can force the creature back to its home plane.
- The creature is vulnerable to a common substance, such as salt or sunlight. The characters must discover this weakness and find a way to exploit it.
- The creature is linked to a magical item or similar focus. Destroying that item disrupts the creature.

In most cases, powerful monsters serve to show what is at stake in an adventure while giving you the opportunity to hit the characters with some madness points (if you use that optional system). Usually, a monster with a CR at least 4 or 5 points above the characters' level serves as a good deterrent to combat. Such monsters can easily overcome the characters. Watch out for creatures with many powerful ranged attacks, especially if you use the optional rules to reduce the characters' hit points. A powerful monster might be able to destroy the party before they have a chance to flee or seek cover.

While the characters may have to face powerful creatures, you can also include fights that are on par with the characters' abilities. These encounters should be designed like standard high-adventure combats, with CRs or ELs at or near the party's level. Your best bet in these encounters is to use monsters that the characters can recognize as weak or stick to humanoid NPCs such as thugs, cultists, and others. In the latter case, you can keep a clear divide between human opponents, who are within the characters' range of power, and strange monsters.

# REWARDS IN DARK FANTASY GAMES

The treasure, experience, and other rewards the characters earn in a dark fantasy game should have a slightly different tone and a much-reduced role than in the standard action-adventure campaign. If you give the characters the same level of magic items, they can quickly become powerful enough to take on the menacing, strange monsters that are supposed to push them to use non-combat solutions. In addition, if the characters overcome the powerful monsters they face they could quickly gain several levels. Remember, defeating higher CR monsters gains the characters proportionally more XP.

As a rule of thumb, the characters should earn treasure at 10% of the rate listed in the core rules. In other words, at a given level dark fantasy characters should have 10% of the listed, standard total value of treasure. This rule change ensures that the characters do not rapidly accumulate magical items to blast their way through encounters.

Cursed or evil items are an exception to this rule. An item that has several drawbacks can make the game more interesting while highlighting the nature of black magic in a dark fantasy game. Do not count such items against the character's total treasure, though even in this case try to restrict the group to one or two such magic items at a time. In some cases, you might want to introduce magic items that have a specific purpose or are tied to a single adventure. Once the adventure is over, the item serves no further purpose. Either design it so that its powers only work in certain situations or be sure to give it drawbacks such that once the party has no direct need for it, they stop using it. In addition, items could be linked to the creature or menace that the characters overcome. Defeating their foes robs the item of its power.

If you use the standard rules for awarding experience, the characters might rapidly progress in power as they overcome powerful monsters. As a rule of thumb, award the characters XP so that they gain a level with each adventure they complete rather than give them individual awards after each session. The core rules are built around the idea that the characters progress through each encounter as a single, discreet obstacle. In a dark fantasy game, adventures are designed around investigations that have definite goals or end points. The characters should be rewarded for meeting those end points rather than following the path that leads to it. You might give bonus XP to players who come up with good ideas or novel solutions to prob-

lems, but you are better off using story-based rewards rather than breaking down each encounter by EL. If you do use the standard rules, count defeating a monster through non-combat means as an encounter that has an EL equal to the party's level, with a +1 or +2 EL modifier for encounters that are important to the adventure.

If you use the optional rules for madness points, reducing a character's total can be an important reward. Remember that the PCs can take actions to stabilize any shocks to their psyches by defeating horrid monsters and turning back the efforts of cultists and other malevolent schemers. In a long-term dark fantasy campaign, rewards that reduce a character's madness point total may be critical to keeping the PCs going from adventure to adventure.

## CHARACTER DEATH

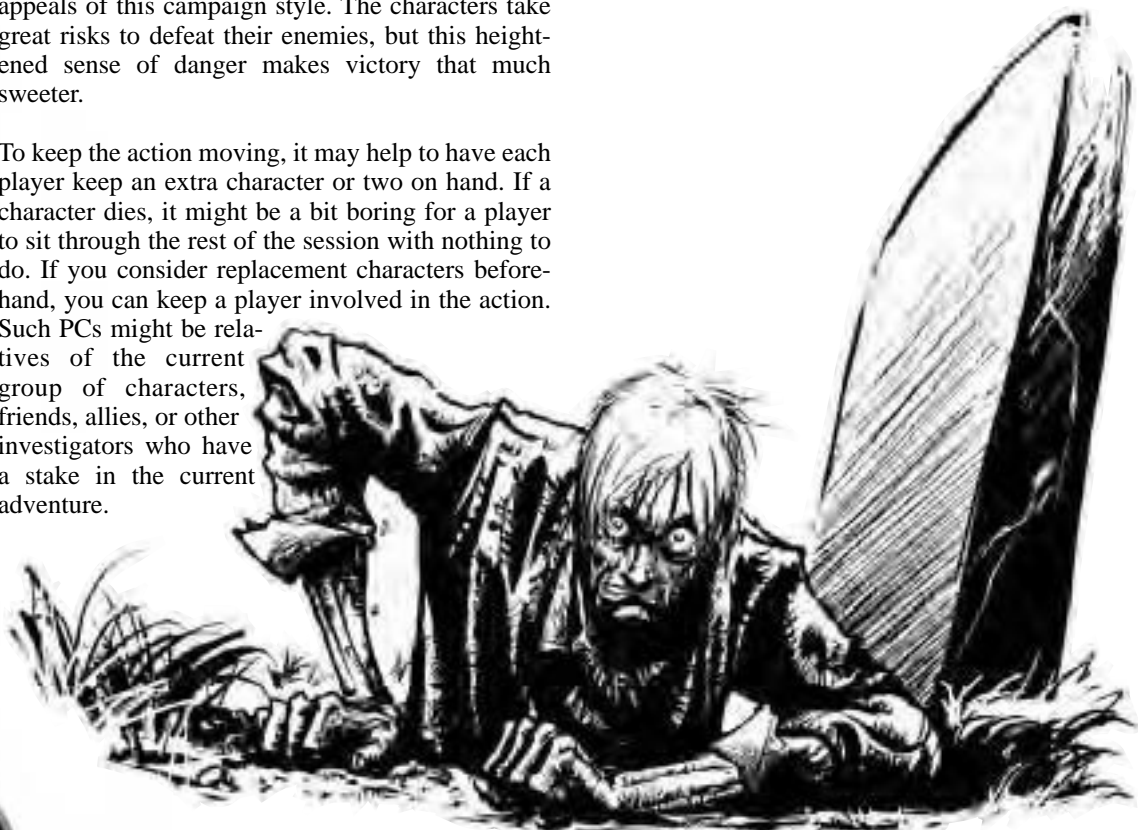
Given that the characters must frequently face off against creatures that are far more powerful than normal, and further keeping in mind that they have fewer magic items and resources compared to the core classes, you probably will have more characters than normal die in a dark fantasy campaign. Remember that the high fatality rate is one of the appeals of this campaign style. The characters take great risks to defeat their enemies, but this heightened sense of danger makes victory that much sweeter.

To keep the action moving, it may help to have each player keep an extra character or two on hand. If a character dies, it might be a bit boring for a player to sit through the rest of the session with nothing to do. If you consider replacement characters beforehand, you can keep a player involved in the action. Such PCs might be relatives of the current group of characters, friends, allies, or other investigators who have a stake in the current adventure.

While dark fantasy adventures are more dangerous than normal, try to avoid creating encounters with the express goal of killing PCs. Arbitrary situations and inescapable encounters can grow dull. Try to always include room for clever players to escape their doom, though it does not have to be easy or simple to survive an encounter.

**Glorious Death, An Optional Rule:** Sometimes, it makes sense for a heroic character to give his life so that others may live or to destroy a terrible threat to the world. A player who throws himself into his role and sacrifices a character for the greater good, and the success of the entire group, should be rewarded. As an optional rule, you can declare any character's death as sufficiently glorious and self-sacrificial that the player gains a bonus for his next character.

When the player's new character enters the game, he gains one of the following benefits: a +2 bonus to one ability score, a bonus character level, or 1,000 gp in starting equipment. You can pick a benefit that fits your campaign or allow the player to choose. This rule lessens the sting of losing a character and makes self-sacrifice a viable option for a player without forcing him to the sidelines or penalizing him compared to the other characters.





## CHAPTER SEVEN

# NORTHWALL

CHAPTER SEVEN: NORTHWALL

Northwall is an example of how a dark fantasy setting works and what one might look like. This setting is a bit different from the typical RPG game world. Rather than detail an entire continent or draw out the setting on a grand scale, it presents a smaller area of a world and includes only vague notes on the lands that lie far from it. You can add material to Northwall to fit your campaign world, molding it to suit the direction your game takes.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Before this chapter launches into the description and background of Northwall, here is an overview of the key traits that make it dark fantasy.

The world is coming to an end. Reality's fabric slowly frays as the world winds down to Armageddon. Everything in society tends towards chaos and decay. This process is not a social tendency or the byproduct of humanity's choices. As the world winds down to its end society slowly falls to pieces. This theme is a major key to the setting.

By the same token, as the world ends the reign of man ends with it. Insanity and madness run rampant, as subtle fluctuations in the fabric of reality unfurl everything from physical structures to the emotional and mental processes of all living things.

The world's impending end seems to be somehow connected to the rise of the lords of entropy, power-

ful gods from unknown dimensions that represent the power of chaos, death, and annihilation. These beings have won followers and priests amongst the decadent, insane, and power hungry. Perhaps they are the source of the world's ending. Perhaps their appearance is mere coincidence. Perhaps they always existed within the world, patiently waiting for the end of time to manifest and effect the end of the world. None can say, but what is apparent is that these beings are somehow tied to the collapse of reality. Their blasphemous prayers echo in the babbling of madmen, their unholy icons appear in blood-splattered symbols scrawled in the skin of a murderer's victims.

The characters can only hope to push back the tide of nihilism and doom for a short time. True victory against the impending end of creation is beyond their power. The gods seem to care little for the fate of man. They offer divine spells but take no active role in mortal affairs. The most powerful wizards have long since left for other worlds, using their knowledge of esoteric lore to save themselves. Those who remain know little of the doom at hand, but they can see that everything in the world has inexorably lurched towards ruin. The characters could be professional adventurers or they might be everyday commoners who seek great fortune through treasure hunting. Some parties might simply be laborers and other common folk forced to take up weapons against the encroaching horrors of the world.

Keep these key points and themes in mind when reading about the Northwall setting and designing adventures set here. Even if you do not want to use this material in your campaign, look to it for ideas on what makes a dark fantasy campaign different from heroic swords and sorcery gaming.

## OVERVIEW

Northwall is a small city established far to the north of civilization. In the generation past, the mighty Theros Empire managed to drive back encroaching hordes of orcs, goblins, and other evil humanoid to the utter fringes of habitable land. Northwall was established at Theros's northerly border. It is a military base standing sentinel over the snow-capped mountains and shadowy forests where many of the dark things of the world fled. As the world begins its sudden, downward spiral to destruction, the cycle of decay and madness has reached its peak in this once proud city. The last emperor of Theros, Arrogance XVIII, slaughtered the royal family in a psychotic frenzy before committing suicide. In the immediate aftermath of this act, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and other disasters struck. Overnight, the dreaded plagues of ages past reappeared.

In the face of such sudden, widespread destruction, the imperial government collapsed. Riots and rebellion tear through the sprawling metropolises of the south, as dueling nobles struggle to claim the throne while carving out stable, safe strongholds in a world gone suddenly mad. Insanity spreads as demons and other outsiders manifest in the world. The dark things that Theros once defeated have returned as heralds of the apocalypse. They gladly take their vengeance on elves, dwarves, and humans as they set aside their old deities and embrace the worship of the Lords of Entropy. Many of the empire's great cities are burnt out, dead husks, their ruins now haunted by pitiable groups of refugees who survive at the mercy of the bickering warlords and the wandering bands of demons and monsters that ravage the countryside.

Not all is lost in the world, as some areas have escaped these disasters. A few cities have survived, most notably gleaming Atrreas and its holy spires, fortified and walled Garrenhold and its ruler the Iron Duke, and last, but not least, distant Northwall, final outpost of civilization in the forbidding north. Even in these cities, the encroaching hand of destruction claws at the mantle of civilization. Madness and insanity creep through the populace, as asylums and poorhouses find themselves overwhelmed. Corruption riddles the trade guilds and noble families, as old rivalries and greedy desires erupt into murderous plots and bitter infighting. The cities' walls, houses, and other structures fall into disrepair despite best efforts made to

keep them whole. The world's ending unravels not only the minds of men and beasts but also the very physical structure of the world.

## HISTORY

Northwall has stood for over a century, with its fortunes waxing and waning depending on the support it received from the south. The city was originally conceived as a military outpost designed to hold back any future invasion from the north. As the empire grew, its armies drove back humanoid tribes, monsters, and other threats to peace and stability. These creatures suffered death in battle or were pushed northward again and again. Eventually, the empire's supplies lines grew too thin to maintain an extended crusade against these beasts. Fearful that the humanoids would nurse their strength and grow to menace all they had built, Theros's generals decided to maintain a strong military presence in the empire's northern reaches. Thus, Northwall saw its genesis in a crude, hastily erected camp built by several legions of imperial footmen.

In time, this crude camp grew into a city. Castle Hammerfall, named for a Therosian military hero, provided a central defensive point. Once constructed, it proved to be the lynchpin for Northwall's growth. With several thousand bored soldiers living in or around the castle, the southern merchants saw Northwall as a market ripe for their goods. A great rush of settlers streamed to the north, and in time the city's Veiled Bay was thick with galleys and sailing ships that bore rich foods, fine cloth, and great stores of other comforts of civilization. These ships returned to their home harbors with lumber, furs, and stories of the great fortunes that canny traders could make in Northwall's burgeoning market.

After several decades of explosive growth, the city settled into an extended cycle of slow growth punctuated by hard times. Much of Northwall's prosperity stems from the large military garrison it supports. During times of relative peace, the garrison grows large and receives a high level of support from the south. Ambitious military officers court assignments here, as they seek out the chance to lead expeditions to the wild northern forests and mountains. These lands have never been fully explored, as war parties of orcs, goblins, giants, and worse still lurk amongst them. Thus, when the empire is at peace with its neighbors the best way for a junior officer to gain the attention of his superiors is by winning glory on the frontier.

While the forests and mountains beyond Northwall are rife with monsters, they hold many alluring secrets. Primary amongst these are the ruins of the forerunners, ancient stone cairns, funeral vaults, and in some cases entire cities that still hold lost treasures, ancient traps, and forgotten lore. Many of the

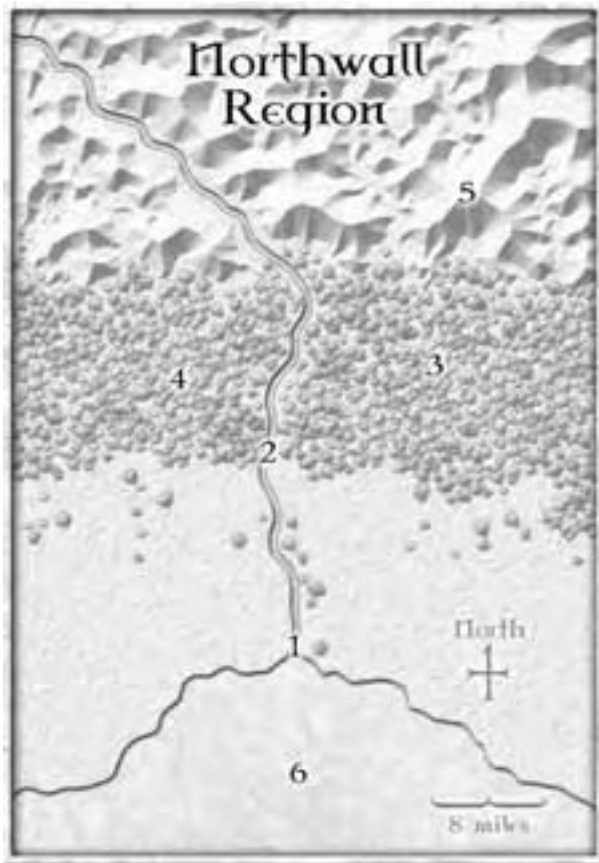


beasts driven northward now nest amongst them, their primitive grasp of magic, metallurgy, and trade preventing them from doing anything more than collecting these finds as shiny baubles. For years, military expeditions embarked from Northwall in search of such treasures. Many returned with a small amount of gold, jewels, and trophies taken from slain giants, hydras, and other beasts. A few returned back empty handed, while a tiny percentage never marched back to Northwall's gates. For years, the military maintained their hold on the north through political pressure on the emperor. Since the treasures found in the ruins, including magical items, became property of the legions, they insisted that only they had the legal right to explore there. Granting others access to the region would open the door to the empire's foes gaining rare and potent magic. In several cases, expeditions returned with powerful relics that proved useful to the imperial college of magic.

For many years, a vibrant black market thrived in Northwall. Renegade treasure hunters evaded imperial patrols, orc tribes, giants, and other threats in search of these lost treasures. Private individuals paid vast sums of money for these rare goods. Several cartels grew to control this trade, with powerful crime lords struggling for supremacy. In what is known as the Week of Red Streets, a small

alliance of petty kingpins banded together to systematically murder every competing cartel and the treasure hunters and criminals associated with them. This group came to be known as the Guild, and with its monopoly in place it reaped staggering profits. With money came influence, and with influence came power. Slowly but surely the military lost its iron grip on the north. As Theros and its neighbors fell into an extended period of peace, new laws opened up the north to freelance explorers.

The Guild secretly backed these developments, funding political movements, granting loans to nobles who backed the cause, and using spies to discredit the military commanders who opposed them. Taking a long-term view of the issue, the Guild knew that it relied too heavily on the illegal status of its trade. Once it was legalized, other, legitimate mercantile concerns could muscle in on its territory. Thus, by controlling the process behind legalization it was in an excellent position to go legitimate. Flexing its contacts with established black market dealers and treasure hunters, the Guild established itself as a trade organization for all who wished to venture into the north in search of ancient ruins and forgotten riches. In the space of a few years, it went from an underground, illegal organization to the trade group responsible for policing its once illegal practices on the government's behalf.



Since that time, the Guild has grown to become Northwall's most powerful group. Its members have become the town's mayors, councilmen, and other prominent political leaders. The military remains important, as its soldiers still provide a ready market for trade goods, but in many ways it has become subservient to the Guild's desires.

For many long decades, Northwall remained a bustling trade port. In times of war, its garrison diminished and brought the city's trade prospects down with it. The demand for rare goods from the northern ruins fluctuates depending on the vagaries of fashion and taste. Northwall seemed destined to remain a moderately prosperous, backwater city until the fabric of the world slowly began to unravel. Spared from the spate of natural disasters that wracked the south, its strong military garrison has kept the city safe and secure. Already, though, trouble brews within and outside its walls. A steady stream of refugees arrives via ship, the government forcing them to establish a temporary camp to prevent the spread of plague within Northwall. Expeditions to the north report strange creatures in the forests. Demons, devils, and unearthly monstrosities that tower above the trees are said to walk the world. Fewer and fewer treasure parties return to the city, and at night ghostly, demonic lights can be seen in the distant forests and peaks. Outlying farms suddenly vanish, their fields overtaken by the forest overnight, their inhabitants disappear-

ing without a trace. Patrols discover the inhabitants of small villages and manor houses slaughtered to the last man, the rare survivor reduced to a catatonic madness or sent into a psychotic fury. While the city fathers claim that raiders and bandits are behind these attacks, the legionnaires must ponder the mystery of valuables left behind, untouched despite their obvious value.

Northwall is a city on the verge of doom, though few of its inhabitants have pieced together the clues of the world's destiny. With the south in chaos, the empire crumbled, and the terrors of the north on the move, it hangs suspended in a key moment before history's final chapter is written.

## ROLEPLAYING IN NORTHWALL

The city of Northwall is designed to support a variety of dark fantasy adventures. Its background and current situation are rife with tension. The few refugees who could gain access to a berth aboard a ship stream to its gates, with even this small fraction of the south's battered survivors pushing the city to its limits. Outlying farms fall to mysterious, horrific attackers, slowly putting increasing pressure on the region's food supply. The military agitates for action, the ambitious and aggressive officers that command its ranks eager to make a name for themselves by marching to the south and rescuing the empire from its dire straits. Heedless of the ominous signs from the savage north, they have yet to comprehend that the reign of man is at its final end. Rumors of plague, of strange cults that meet in secret places and conduct blasphemous rites to new, unholy deities, echo through the streets. Some folk see hope in these new gods, while others hoard food and other supplies to prepare for the coming hard times.

Below are several campaign ideas that you can use to get a dark fantasy game rolling. In addition, this chapter includes two short adventures that both provide a night's entertainment. You can use those scenarios as a starting point or as a model to creating your own.

*New Kids in Town:* The characters fled to Northwall in search of a safe haven. They may seek out friends and family in the refugee quarter in a slim hope that they, too, survived the first waves of the apocalypse. They may have been forced to part with much of their material wealth to buy passage north, leaving them with a few coins, a couple changes of clothes, and perhaps a dagger or sword.

The first phase of the campaign focuses on the characters' efforts to carve out a place for themselves in the city. Their old friends and family may have arrived before them, giving them an immediate connection to a variety of adventures. An old friend

may have fallen under the sway of one the new cults in town, and they may face death on a sacrificial altar. The search to find a missing loved one could put the characters on the trail of a dreaded cult led by a fanatical high priest. With the city watch overwhelmed with the refugee problem, they might be unable or unwilling to track down the cultists for the characters.

If the characters have no connections to people in the city, they still need to earn money to buy a roof over their heads and put food on the table. With so many refugees in town, only the most dangerous and risky jobs are still available. The characters could be pressed into service as scouts, giving them the chance to venture into the wilderness to track down the strange monsters and twisted cultists who have preyed on outlying settlements and homesteads. They could also go to work for the Guild, putting their skills to work as treasure hunters. In either case, they can quickly stumble onto the trail of a variety of loathsome plots and cults. As treasure hunters, they might uncover ruins that show signs of recent sacrifices and obscene rites. As scouts, they might have to foil a madman's attempt to summon a cosmic monster to the area that could ravage the entire city.

*The Odyssey:* The characters might become involved in determining Northwall's future. With the military eager to send an expedition to the south, the characters could captain a ship and lead a party of explorers and warriors to learn more of the situation. The seas could boil and run red with blood, while monstrous sea serpents prowl the waves. Once they make land fall, they find a variety of horrors. Some cities are untouched but utterly empty, their inhabitants seemingly vanished into thin air. In other areas, great throngs of utterly insane cultists openly worship the Lords of Entropy. The characters find themselves surrounded by mobs of madmen who eagerly fight to the death at the behest of their cult leaders. The characters could visit a variety of strange locations in this bitter, horrific journey. In the end, they learn that the empire is little more than a dying husk. Worst of all, when they return home they may find that Northwall has met a similar fate in their absence.

*Conspiracies:* The characters might find clues that point to a deadly conspiracy within the city. Perhaps some of Northwall's leaders, driven to the edge of sanity, have struck a deal with the humanoid tribes that lurk outside the city. In exchange for important information on the city's defenses or aid in opening the main gate, the invaders will spare those who help them. The characters might have to defeat opponents who have the political pull to throw them in jail if they are rash or foolish. For example, the mayor could place a bounty on the characters' heads if he suspects that they know too much of his plans to save himself.

*Treasure Hunting:* If the PCs are native to Northwall, they might work as explorers and treasure hunters for the Guild. They might discover the first mysterious raids on outlying settlements firsthand. For example, an adventure could start as a typical expedition to a recently discovered tomb. The PCs leave town and pass through a few small villages, sack the tomb as their first adventure, then travel back to find that the settlements have been raided and news of the calamities to the south has just arrived. The characters might find evidence that cultists and monsters seek several rare or unique artifacts for some unknown purpose, forcing them to race against time to find and destroy those items before they fall into the wrong hands.

*The Dark Beneath the World:* The characters are part of a small team of workers, engineers, and scouts assigned to investigate a crumbling section of the sewers and make plans to repair and refurbish it. While down in the tunnels, they uncover hideously mutilated bodies and signs that strange cults have established chapels within the tunnels. The PCs may have trouble convincing anyone to believe them, especially if the city faces much larger problems in the empire's disintegration and the massive influx of refugees. This campaign concept is a good way to introduce the alternate character classes from Chapter 1. It provides a viable reason why engineers, laborers, and other commoners would take up arms against the lurking horrors of the world, and it can underscore the struggle between mundane folk and bleak monstrosities in a dark fantasy setting.

## NORTHWALL GAZETTEER

This section provides a brief overview of the areas in and around the city of Northwall. The details given here focus on generalities and key components that make Northwall different from the average fantasy setting.

**1. Northwall:** This city is the major economic, social, and military power in the region. More information on its layout is given below.

**2. Southfall:** This small town is an important cog in the Northwall region's trading network. Many of the barges from the north stop here to unload goods meant for the farmers who dwell north of the city. The barges then take on foodstuffs, cattle, and other goods bound for the south. While Southfall cannot rival Northwall in terms of size and population, it remains a key outpost to the north and the second most important settlement in the region.



**3. Ageron's Stand:** This great, expansive, gloomy forest consists of old growth trees draped with moss, and gnarled, long branches that crowd against their neighbors. It is named for the druid Ageron, who foretold that one day the forest would rise up and destroy Northwall. He led an unsuccessful assault on the city by goblins, gnolls, and other humanoids and was tried and executed as a traitor. In many areas, the forest's edges have been cleared by loggers, leaving behind scrub, underbrush, and tree stumps. The forest's inner areas are dense and foreboding. The air is thick, dusty, and gloomy, as little sun reaches the ground. Rumors speak of feral elves, gnolls, kobolds, and worse that lurk here. Some say that the forest regards all humans with malevolent intent, and stories circulate of trees that shift to distort or erase common paths and trees that grab and crush travelers with their branches. Regardless of the truth of such stories, at least a few teams of loggers go missing each year.

**4. The Standing Stones:** For years, this spot has baffled sages and kept away all but the most curious travelers. Located within Ageron's Stand, this site was supposedly the rallying point for the evil druid and his followers. It consists of eight sets of large, green stones driven into the ground. They are separated into four pairs, each with a long, thick stone stretching between them. The stone is of

an utterly unknown variety, and is smooth and reflective like glass despite its exposure to the elements. Some believe that this place is a planar conduit, and that at certain times of the year evil fey and other creatures spill into the world to enact Ageron's revenge on any civilized folk they encounter. Travelers sometimes report strange, cackling laughter from the woods around this place. Rumors tell that when people go missing in the woods, their eyes and teeth are found neatly stacked beneath the towering rocks, but none can confirm these stories.

**5. World's End Peaks:** These mountains gain their name from the belief that they marked the utter edge of the world. While most sages scoff at this notion, an expedition has yet to ascend the highest peaks. All reports tell of ever-higher mountains that stretch further to the north. The howling winds that sweep over these mountains seem exceptionally strong and cold, and legends tell that the one group that did make it the farthest north simply found a vast, endless night sky that extended before them. The sun disappeared, and an eternal night stretched to infinity.

**6. The Great North Sea:** The primary route for traffic heading to and from Northwall, the Great North Sea is infested with monstrous squid, water elementals, and other threats. In some areas, sahua-

gin raiders prey on ships. The passage is never easy even during the best of times, but as long as ships remain close to the coast they remain safe. No one has yet to sail much farther north or west across the sea's trackless waves.

## LOCATIONS AND SITES IN NORTHWALL

**1. Harbor District:** Ocean-going trade is Northwall's lifeblood, and the constant buzz of activity at the docks attests to that fact. The harbor hosts ships from across the world, as the demand for rare artifacts and other materials from the northern ruins draws a variety of customers and clients. The town guard keeps a strong presence here, primarily to maintain a welcoming facade for visiting merchants, but by night this is a rough and tumble place.

During the day, the docks bustle with workers who unload supplies, work on ships kept in dry dock, and transport goods back and forth from the city. At night, those same workers head to the local taverns and bars with the same energy and gusto that they use to attack their jobs. The light of lanterns from the pubs twinkle until dawn, when the folk of this district rouse themselves from bed and prepare for another long day of work and a night of carousing.

As the crisis in the world grows worse, the harbor district takes on a sinister, dangerous tone. In happier times, it was the first place to find a good time in the city. As tensions rise and more sailors flee here in search of a safe harbor, things take a turn for the worse. Fights break out on a regular basis, with several murders each night as some sailors turn to fighting with cutlasses and knives. With many of the sailors here uncertain of their friends' and loved ones' fates, they grow increasingly desperate and angry. Reports of devastation and destruction from across the world push the district to a fever pitch, with small riots erupting as fights spill into the streets. Some of the sailors may organize along national or regional lines and make plans to seize a ship and sail back to their homes in a desperate—though doomed—bid to save their homelands.

**2. The Grand Plaza:** This great square greets the vast majority of travelers who come to the city. A statue of the city's founder, Lord Eberston, stands at its center. The statue depicts him as a tall, bearded man clad in plate armor and bearing a broad-bladed, two-handed sword.

The plaza is constantly abuzz with activity, even on the coldest days of the year. It remains crowded from just after dawn to shortly after nightfall, though in the evening and late at night travelers, revelers from nearby taverns, and streetwalkers gather here. During the day, many of the city's beggars gather in the square, pleading for alms from



passing travelers and merchants. Many of these unfortunates are treasure hunters and explorers who lost limbs or were otherwise maimed during their adventures. Without the money to heal their injuries, they have been forced to beg for coin. As the world winds towards its end, more and more madmen gather here, ranting grim prophecies of doom and even openly preaching the worship of the lords of entropy. The plaza can remind the characters of the dangers in exploring the northern ruins, while this place becomes more and more crowded with the desperate and insane as time passes.

This place serves as a grim reminder to the players of the fates that await their characters. Perhaps they meet old adventuring friends or acquaintances who have fallen on hard times. The very real threat of death and madness plays a major part in the feel of a dark fantasy game. The plaza gives you an opportunity to illustrate it.

**3. Trade District:** This area is dominated by merchants and traders. They gather here to live and work while they reside in Northwall. In many areas they set up small shops and stalls to trade goods with individual buyers and households, usually specializing in goods and equipment that appeals to a smaller subset of the buyers found in the city. While the market district hosts farmers and others who deal in daily supplies and goods, the sellers here focus on higher-end goods.



As the situation in town worsens, this place becomes both more crowded yet emptier of goods. Merchants from the south who have trade contacts in Northwall use them to gain access here, though primarily to escape the crowding of the refugee quarters. Few of them have goods to sell, and most of them are desperate for work. In time, the trade district goes from a boisterous, active area of commerce to a crude shantytown little better than the camps outside of the walls.

Here are a few noteworthy shops and locations within the district.

**3a. Feingren's Metalworks:** This large shop is a permanent fixture of the district. The surly, cigar-smoking dwarf Feingren (male dwarf Exp15, N) may snap at his customers and swear like a sailor, but his finely crafted goods and cheap prices (10% less than list) attract many customers.

**3b. The Gilt Clover:** This pawnshop is merely a front for the notorious fence Therlenn Moneyhooks (male human Rog4, LN), so named for his persistent, bulldog-like style of negotiation. Therlenn is a miser. He wears cheap, torn clothes and rarely, if ever, spends coins on soap and hot water. His smell and greasy, filthy appearance are legendary. He keeps a small fortune hidden in a heavily

trapped vault beneath his shop. While a distasteful character, he can sell the characters almost anything they're looking for.

**3c. Madrigan's General Store:** One of the largest businesses in the district, Madrigan (female half-elf Exp6, N) is a third-generation owner of this place. She specializes in offering gear for adventurers and explorers. She makes a small portion of her profit in sharing rumors and news of expeditions heading from the city. With competition fierce amongst prospectors and treasure hunters, she is a valuable source of information on hot leads, general trends, and news on who has made important finds.

**3d. The Grotto:** Originally built as an underground tavern for visiting dwarves and gnomes, this place has since grown to be one of the more popular eateries in the district. The owner, Vola Stonerose (female gnome Brd3, NG), is the daughter of a high-ranking member of the Guild. As such, many important meetings are held in the private rooms here. Newcomers to the treasure hunting life are encouraged to rent rooms here, while merchants seeking to do business with the Guild's members also frequent this place. The Grotto is a series of domed chambers carved from the bedrock beneath a three-story building that houses a wilderness outfitter's shop and the Guild's trade district offices.



**4. Market District:** Placed between the Market Gate and the harbor, this area is the primary market place for the commoners and households in Northwall. Farmers from the fields north of the city bring their goods here each day in search of buyers, with small herds of cattle, goats, chickens, and other animals milling about next to carts laden with apples, wheat, and other crops.

This area is similar to a maze. As farmers come and go, they establish temporary stalls or build simple shops from logs and raw timber. A few permanent structures dominate the area, primarily warehouses and other buildings that hold goods before they are sold in the market or carried south to the docks and to the world beyond. The streets here are little more than muddy, churned strips of earth.

As the apocalypse looms, this place is a crowded, bustling area alive with activity. Housewives and servants vie to bring home the highest quality goods, while farmers, tradesmen, and merchants haggle over prices. Anyone walking through here must take care to watch themselves, as carts lurch down the narrow, muddy lanes, and shoppers laden with goods hurdle through the crowds.

Once the crisis sets in, the market district becomes a mirror for the city at large. The crowds take on a desperate, angry tone as food starts to run short. A few farmers and merchants, eager to make a killing in sales, meet grisly ends as frenzied crowds raid their stalls or even lynch a few of the more oily salesmen. As the end looms near, the threat of plague and the slow dwindling of food and supplies turn this place into a ghost town. A few farmers offer stunted, withered goods for sale, and the crowds shrink to half their former size. The city's leaders maintain a strong military presence here to quell riots, and small skirmishes between desperate commoners and legionnaires break out on a regular basis. Agitators have a field day inciting crowds to violence, as rival merchants settle old, bitter scores by turning the mobs against each other.

**5. Gate District:** Warehouses, inns, and taverns dominate this area. The main roads to the fields, homesteads, and manors lead to this gate, making it the primary arrival point for travelers coming from points north of the city. The many taverns and inns here cater to travelers who used the overland routes to Northwall, while the warehouses hold the many goods brought to the city before they are put up for sale in the market district.

The gate district is normally an active place during the fall, summer, and spring, though in winter it winds down into a near ghost town. The taverns and pubs are busy at all hours, though they lack the boisterous energy of their cousins in the harbor district. As the situation in the world worsens, the gate district undergoes several sharp transformations. As

attacks outside of the city increase, this place becomes a ghost town. Travel slows to a trickle, with none aside from a few brave merchants eager to make a killing in the city's markets staying here. In time, though, as the wilderness becomes more dangerous the gate district sees a slow but steady tide of refugees. The hostels and inns fill to capacity, and soon entire families camp in the streets. As the place becomes more crowded, the city fathers mandate that the north gate be closed. A small refugee camp springs up outside the walls, and a major riot could break out as the increasingly desperate folk stuck there clamor for access to the supposed safety of Northwall.

**6. Temple District:** Located just across the bridge from the gate district, Northwall's important religions and sects maintain their chapels and cathedrals here. The temple district serves as a buffer zone between the slums to the north and the working class residences to the south. You can use deities from your own campaign to flesh out this area, or simply use the gods from the core rules.

Regardless of the deities found here, the temple district is quickly overwhelmed with crowds as the end times approach. Services are mobbed with worshippers, all desperate for some divine relief from the forces that threaten the world. At first, these gatherings are peaceful. With the events of the south so far off, a comfortable veneer of isolation and peace keeps the crowds in hand. However, as the troubles of the south filter to the north the temple proceedings take on a more frenzied, apocalyptic tone. Facing large, unruly crowds desperate for answers to their troubles, some of the temples devolve into messianic sermons laced with venomous attacks against unpopular groups. Some churches rail against the vices of the world, laying the blame for the disasters on prostitution, drinking, and gambling. While more moderate voices continue to call for calm and constructive efforts to maintain civilization, other priests use the crisis as a convenient excuse to grab power and popular support. As the situation deteriorates, opportunistic and greedy members of the various clergies attempt to leverage popular support into true political power. The priests urge the crowds to question the city's leaders, laying blame for the encroaching crisis squarely on their shoulders. If these radical elements are left unchecked, they could herald an open revolt and civil war within Northwall even while much more pressing issues bear down on the city.

**7. Slums:** This corner of the city has slowly but surely become home to the poorest and most desperate citizens of Northwall. Isolated from the rest of town by two walls and the temple district to the south, it slowly grew into the home of the most desperate citizens. The buildings here are old and rundown, while gangs and criminal cartels flourish. Many of the folk who live here

work as simple laborers, while a fair number engage in the black market and other illegal trades. Northwall's relative prosperity has helped it maintain a good standard of living for most of its inhabitants. Many of the folk found here suffer from addictions to alcohol and other drugs. Others are simply down on their luck and unable to regularly find work.

In any case, the slums are perhaps the one section of town that suffers the least obvious pressure from the events of the end of the world. As more refugees stream into the city, they become more crowded and dangerous, but the folk here are used to a difficult life. If anything, once the gates close many of the people here filter to the camps in the gate district. The folk who stream into the city have a natural suspicion and fear of Northwall's rougher sections, deterring them from seeking shelter here.

The major difficulty faced by those who live in the slums lies in the hidden threats that arise here. The dark cults that spring up around the Lords of Entropy find many willing cultists here, particularly among the criminals and the disenfranchised outcasts. With ready access from the Summerflow River, agents from the north can infiltrate the slums with relative ease. Cults can afford to operate in the open, as the city guard pays little attention to what happens here. With the crisis growing, they are too busy in other areas to note the new cult's open recruitment and creation of small chapels to their deities. As the crisis develops, the slums undergo only a few changes, but the seeds of chaos and unrest planted here spread through the town in due time.

**8. Commons District:** Dominated by boarding houses, small shops, and dwellings for the many merchants, traders, and other skilled workers in the city, this area has undergone steady growth throughout the years. As the city has grown over the years, much of that expansion has taken place here. There is typically little that can interest the characters in this section of town, as it consists of street after street of residential buildings.

As the apocalypse approaches, the commons district bears the brunt of the pressure. The folk who live here are used to a high standard of living, and their comfortable lifestyle quickly falls by the wayside as trade dries up. Some flee for summer homes outside the city, while others believe that their wealth and connections can buy them a safe haven in town. In time, it becomes apparent that neither option presents a viable solution. The areas outside of the city slowly become overrun with monsters, strange beasts, and insane cultists, while the city decays from within as riots and unrest tear it apart. As the situation develops, the commons quickly falls into decay. Houses stand empty, while in many areas refugees worm their way past overtaxed guard

patrols to find shelter here. In many ways, the commons district mirrors the status of Northwall as a whole like a canary in a coal mine. As this place slowly empties, it marks the flight of those who can afford passage from town. As the refugees swell into the area, it heralds the government's slow but inevitable loss of control over the growing influx of immigrants.

**9. The Hill:** Northwall was founded as a military outpost, and the castle that forms the center of its military power remains the most important location in the city. The richest families in town own mansions in this area, a testament to the social and economic prestige attached to the military in town. Military officers, both active and retired, represent a fair portion of the most influential and prosperous folk in town. While the salary an officer draws from imperial coffers is rarely enough to support an extravagant lifestyle, most high-ranking officers in Northwall become important players in trade and commerce. An officer in the right position can ensure that a particular merchant's treasure hunting parties receive escorts to the edge of the scouting parties' range. He can pull strings and ensure that important finds are declared imperial property and are guarded by a heavily armed and armored squad of soldiers. It is an open secret that every officer makes a significant portion of his income by trading in such favors, and as long as Northwall's defenses remain intact the high command pays little mind to such abuses. In recent years the trend has become only stronger, as years of peace have left Northwall's garrison bored and eager to seek out extracurricular opportunities.

Castle Eberston stands atop the hill, with barracks surrounding it in all directions. The richest neighborhoods in town are set to the southwest of the castle's walls, while parks and other open spaces make this one of the most pleasant quarters in town to visit. In addition, the strong military presence discourages criminals and troublemakers. Guard patrols move through the area every half-hour, as soldiers from the castle train to march and move in formation by parading up and down the Hill's streets. The gate leading to this part of the city closes at sundown and opens at sunrise. Only those visitors who bear a pass marked by one of the noble family's seals or those on official military business are allowed admittance to the Hill during the hours it is closed.

As the city slides into chaos, the Hill largely remains an island of peace and security in a sea of madness. The strong military presence here allows the Hill to repel most attacks, while its tight security even during times of peace keeps out most cultists and others who would topple it from within. Still, nothing in this world is proof against the corrosive stain of entropy.

Some of the richest nobles in town have embraced a sybaritic lifestyle, throwing themselves into pleasure above all else. As the end approaches, they teeter on the edge of insanity. Forming a small cult known as the Sect of Shadow, they slowly subvert the Hill from within. With bribery, intimidation, and blackmail, they slowly set the military command and the town's leadership against one another. The Sect is dedicated to the worship of the Lords of Entropy, though the vast majority of its members believe that they are members in a secret society given to debauchery and sexual liberation. The strange chants and rites they perform before, after, and during their decadent celebrations are simply color that add to the festivities. In fact, they perform rituals that help summon minor demons and other creatures. As the situation worsens, the cult's numbers grow. In the face of the horrors of the apocalypse, the nobility turns to pleasure and decadence to assuage their fear. In time, the sect's leaders will use their influence to throw open the gates and welcome in the beasts and monsters from the northern forests, and the cult's members will learn of the strange pleasures and terrible pains such creatures can inflict upon them before they perish.

**10. The Refugee Camp:** In the time before the apocalypse, this area was a parade ground and barracks for the city. During times of war or when the generals decided that legions needed maneuvers to keep their skills sharp, extra units deployed in the city would stay here. When this area is not in use, a small detachment of soldiers watches over it and maintains the barracks, warehouses, and storage facilities kept here. As refugees stream to Northwall, the government houses them in these buildings. At first, the miserable throngs find space enough in the barracks, but in a matter of days this entire area becomes a sprawling shantytown.

If Northwall's commons district is a barometer for the city's health, this area is a guidepost for its decay and eventual fate. The camp spreads westward along the coast. At first, the city fathers try to provide shelter for the unfortunates stuck here, but as time goes on more and more of the folk who settle here are completely or at least partially insane. In a few cases, entire ships crewed by madmen lurch towards the city, with the navy forced to sink them before they attempt to rush the town. Riots become commonplace, and the military eventually refuses to take any hand in policing the area. The refugees prey on each other for food, and even the simplest comforts, such as a pair of shoes, become the object of life or death struggles. Fires break out in the camp and burn for days, as the refugees are incapable of handling such a crisis due to the continuing interference of madmen and the splintered nature of the people here. Few of them trust each other and most break into camps based on their date of arrival in the city.

Gangs form in the camp, first as a means of support and protection, later to intimidate and harass newcomers. Prophets and cultists of the lords of entropy quickly infiltrate these groups, slowly turning them to their own ends. Rabble-rousers turn the crowds against the city, decrying it for shutting out the refugees while its citizens dine on luxurious meals and enjoy comfortable quarters. Despite the deteriorating conditions within the city, the crowds see it as a safe and secure haven from the world's troubles.

The characters might have to visit this place for a number of reasons. As time passes, the city authorities quickly give up any attempts to catalog and register the survivors who gather here. Anyone looking to find a refugee must search through the camp and hope for the best. The chances of finding a specific person are rarely good. The refugees tend to keep to themselves, and the rate of madness amongst them makes it possible that the friendly, talkative person who is eager to help the party could be deluded or in league with thieves or cultists.

Anyone seeking information about the south must sift through the dozens of contradictory, nonsensical, and bizarre stories that the refugees have to offer. Some of them may elaborate their tales and try to add details that seem to appeal to any questioner in hopes of winning money, food, or a warm place to stay. The characters may be hard pressed to separate the liars from those with useful information to offer, as even the truthful stories may be too horrific or strange to have any sheen of believability.

If the characters investigate strange cults and other events in the city, many of their leads may push them to investigate the camp. With the outside government taking little interest in events within it, the camp slowly becomes stratified along gang and cult lines. The characters may find that their questions about fanatical priests receive only hard, angry stares in response. The rule of law quickly pulls its hand away from the camp, leaving the residents to dole out justice as they see fit. The characters could find themselves surrounded by an angry lynch mob incited by the cult leader or criminal they seek. Stealth and discreet questions may win them far more progress than a bold, direct plan of action.

**11. Summerflow River:** This wide, shallow, and slow-flowing river has long been a critical path from Northwall to the surrounding wilderness. Barges laden with timber and other raw goods make their way along its current to drop their cargoes off at the city and return northward with food, supplies, and other trade goods for the frontier outposts. The Summerflow is so named because in the winter months a great sheet of ice covers it, cutting off river travel and forcing many of the larger settlements to the north to wait until spring for any supplies they may need. The late fall

sees heavy traffic on the river as far-flung outposts stock up for the long, cold, dark months ahead.

The two bridges spanning the river are high, arched structures designed to allow barges to easily pass below. The river's banks are dotted with channels and passages that lead to the sewers, and during the hot summer days the stench near them can be unbearable. In the years when the recovery and sale of ancient artifacts was illegal, smugglers used hidden portals dug near the river to sneak their goods into town. Many of these passages remain, along with subterranean vaults and secret hideouts attached to them. Many of these passages lead into the city, and as cults rise in power they may seek these places out and use them as bases or shrines. While the city has made efforts to root out these chambers and destroy or seal them, smuggling has become too minor an issue for the town guard to uncover them all. The characters may find creatures and cultists from the north using these passages to hide within the city and prey on its population.

## NORTHWALL'S FATE AND THE CAMPAIGN

The description of Northwall and its environs assumes that events slowly wind towards the end of the world, with reality slowly but surely collapsing and taking the lives and sanity of the city's people along with it. A sense of inescapable doom infests dark fantasy, but this does not have to be the case in your campaign. The city of Northwall may need heroes who can turn its fortunes and save it from the encroaching tide of destruction. On the other hand, characters battling an inevitable fate might appeal to you and your players. In this case, all that matters is how long the characters hold out and how they manage to survive.

Northwall's fate is an important question you should consider before starting a campaign. There are two basic options for you to use.

**Northwall Is Doomed:** In this case, the characters' efforts mean nothing. The fun in this game lies in how different it is from the standard heroic fantasy adventure. The PCs are doomed to failure, which can be surprisingly liberating for some players. If your game group knows their characters are doomed, they may be more willing to take greater chances, throw themselves into risky situations, and play out characters who tend closer to shades of gray. Tentative or cautious players suddenly

become daredevils in search of a wonderful blaze of glory to consume their characters. This style of game is best used when you want a campaign that lasts a few sessions. You should also try to make it clear to the players that the game centers on the end of the world. This revelation helps them leap into their characters with a fatalistic, gung-ho attitude. If they have no idea that the world is slated to end despite their actions, they might be frustrated that things always seem to become worse no matter what they do.

In this campaign, the city progresses as described above in a rapid descent towards its death. Riots and the open worship of strange new gods that demand bloody sacrifices spring up overnight. The desperation and savage violence of the refugee camps spill over the walls, until a visitor has a hard time discerning the "safe" portions within the city from the ragged camps and shanties of the newcomers. Monsters swim down the river and clamber over the banks to feast on the townsfolk, with the town guard paying less and less mind to these attacks as time drags on. Within a few weeks, the Hill remains the last bastion of civilization in the area, and even that decays from within as the military and the civilian leaders struggle for power. Cults established within the Hill's walls work to erode its security, and in time the hordes of monsters and cultists overrun its precincts.

With this rapid decay as a backdrop, the characters might simply try to survive. They could pick through the city's remains, seeking out supplies and other useful goods to last the coming winter. They might search for old friends and family in hopes of a last reunion before the world collapses, or they could even be freebooters and mercenaries trying to pick civilization's corpse clean of whatever treasures they can find. If you ever wanted to run a game with evil characters this option works great. Every faction the players meet could be utterly selfish, cruel, and greedy, as mankind's basest traits rise to the top in the face of civilization's collapse. Any thoughts of nobility or heroism die in the food riots, rebellion, and desperate attempts at survival that herald the apocalypse.

**Northwall Might Be Doomed:** Under this option, Northwall's fate is far from sealed. The end of the world does not lie in the future. Rather, it has already come to pass. While conditions within the city might become worse, they can improve if a group of heroes rises to the occasion. The PCs must defeat cult leaders, drive monsters out of the city's sewers, restore order to the north, and find a long-term solution to the shortage of food and shelter in order to bring stability and safety back to the city. With each victory, the characters move one step closer to preserving the domain of man. With each defeat, they push it one step closer to the precipice.



One thing to keep in mind when using this option is that one of the major appeals of horror games lies in its high character mortality. In many games, the PCs have no real chance of failure. Sure, a character might die or the entire party could be lost, but the world is not doomed to die if they do. In the Northwall campaign, things could not be further from the truth. Use events in the city to illustrate to the characters how things change in response to their actions. A disease ravages the slums, pushing the city fathers to cut off access to them. Once the characters defeat the evil sorcerer who has been poisoning the wells there, word should spread of the miraculous recoveries, the disease's sudden disappearance, and the renewed hope and energy that flow through the city. Town guardsmen stand and fight the aquatic creatures that emerge from the Summerflow River, where a few days before the characters' inspiring victory they would have panicked, run, and left the commoners to their fate. By the same token, the characters' defeats hasten the city's demise. Riots break out in the refugee camp, while sinister cult leaders rise to prominence thanks to their gilded lies and boundless ambition.

When designing a campaign with this model, try to come up with a timeline of developments in Northwall, marking each important event in its fall. Go back to the city's description for ideas on how it

can change, and draw on any disaster movies or apocalyptic fiction and TV shows you like. For each major event, make notes on how the characters can avert it or soften the blow, and tie those actions into the adventures you design. For example, a gang of wererats might ally with a group of cultists who keep a chapel in the sewers. The wererats plan to help foster an outbreak of the plague. If the characters defeat the cultists and their lycanthrope allies, the plague is easily contained. Not only does the town avoid a catastrophe, but later when raiding barbarians descend upon it the town's army is near its full strength and can repel the attack. Each of the PCs' victories can resonate through your timeline of calamities, delaying the city's demise, removing bad events from the future, and eventually even allowing Northwall to recover from the series of disasters and regain its strength.

## BRINGING THE CITY TO LIFE

Part of the challenge of running a game in Northwall lies in reflecting the city's troubles in your campaign. A simple trip to an outfit-

ter's can prove to be an adventure as riots break out, fires erupt without any organizing force to combat them, and monsters emerge from a cult's summoning circle to spread havoc. While the characters are in town, you can use the following events to depict life in a city on the brink of madness. In addition, optional rules taken from *Cityworks* give you the tools to use large crowds and massive fires in your Northwall-based adventures. Since riots and fires are likely to spring up as authority collapses, you may find these rules useful for adventures in the crumbling city.

**Riots:** Shortages of food, anger over the government's actions, and fear driven by the chaos and violence that have overrun the world provide ample fuel for a riot. A demagogue amongst the commoners, eager to displace the city's leaders with a wave of popular support, may whip a crowd into a frenzy. Cult leaders, eager to destabilize Northwall, spread rumors that established churches are responsible for heralding the end of the world, or that the people of the Hill are sitting on vast stores of food that they are unwilling to share with the common folk. The simmering anger and fear can lead to mass violence and uprisings, with mobs storming buildings, setting fires, and looting shops and warehouses. The city's bottled-up emotions could explode in a night of fury, with rioters turning on each other while the city guard remains behind the Hill's walls, content to allow the fury and violence to burn themselves out. The characters could be caught in a riot, forced to take cover as society reverts to utter savagery for a day or more. Fighting against the crowd is a sure way to meet a painful end, as PCs who try to restore order might be targeted by dozens or even hundreds of rioters. The characters could lose their homes, possessions, and the supplies they may have worked hard to build up as the rioters overrun buildings and carry off anything they can get their hands on.

**Fires:** Fire looms as one of the greatest dangers facing any city, as it can quickly consume an entire quarter if it is left unchecked. Worse still, the cramped, poorly maintained shacks built by the refugees are particularly vulnerable to it. A simple cooking fire could easily run out of control, sparking a conflagration that could consume a significant portion of the refugee camp. The characters might have to battle the blaze, rescue people trapped within it, or work to contain it by destroying buildings that lie between it and populated areas. Of course, if agents of evil are behind the conflagration they may choose to attack or stage some other disturbance as the inferno rages.

**Starvation:** While keeping track of food might seem a bit dull for a game of adventure and excitement, starvation is a very real threat if society completely unravels in and around the city. Raids on the farms north of town could destroy crops and leave cattle dead or led away as loot. The PCs

may need to find a reliable source of food, as taverns and inns slowly cut back and eventually discontinue their menus as stores run low. Of all the pressures the city faces, this one is the most likely to spark riots and unrest. The characters might be used to facing down obviously evil cultists and monsters. A mob of innocent, starving commoners ready to use violence to find food and water for their families is a different matter altogether. The PCs cannot simply attack the crowd. Instead, they must find some way to mollify it before the situation rages out of control. Perhaps the residents of the Hill really do hoard food like misers, just as the agitators claim. The characters might have to lead a limited uprising, perhaps one focused on quietly removing a few key, greedy elements from the city. If the official in charge of the stores went insane, his madness might drive him to refuse food to everyone in the city or to even lie to his superiors as he sells food meant for the commoners on the black market.

**Severe Weather:** As the fabric of the world twists and bends in the wake of the cataclysms to the south, strange weather patterns could emerge. Winter might strike early, ruining crops in the field and causing a severe food shortage. In addition, an early freeze might trap barges bringing food to the south or carrying expeditions northward. A flood could rage through the city, sweeping through the streets and destroying homes. While the Summerflow is dammed along its banks through town, it could rise so high that it crests them or floods outside of the city. Lighting storms could spark fires, while howling winds might carry ghosts, demons, and worse to attack the city. *Portals & Planes* has a multitude of planar effects that would serve nicely as the byproducts of apocalyptic storms and atmospheric disturbances.

**Strange Phenomena:** Toads rain from the sky. The rivers run red with blood. Massive numbers of dead, rotting fish wash up on shore. A building simply disappears over night, leaving behind a circular, flat-bottomed pit and no sign of its inhabitants. With the end of the world approaching, all manner of strange events could come to pass. Perhaps the fabric of magic twists and frays, causing weird phenomena that defies explanation. Even in a world steeped in arcane and divine energies, much of creation works in predictable, relatively normal ways. You can really drive home the idea that all is not well with the world by introducing strange events and disturbing variations on every day occurrences. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Strange fires, gold and blue hued, burn in the hills north of town. Dancing figures and strange chanting can be heard through the night. In the morning, the site of the fires shows no sign of disturbance, but diligent investigation (Search DC 20) turns up a bloody human skull buried just below the ground. The dirt has obviously not been disturbed in ages,

## CROWD DENSITY

Density	Cover	Speed	Sight
Light	One-quarter	-0 ft.	normal
Moderate	One-half	-5 ft.	60 ft.
Heavy	Three-quarters	-10 ft.	30 ft.
Packed	Nine-tenths	-20 ft.	10 ft.

and the small portion of the skull that was exposed to the air is weathered and worn, though the rest is covered in blood and flecks of skin and sinew.

A high pitched, whistling sound is heard at night along the streets. The sound moves about as if a creature created it, but as soon as anyone draws near it increases in volume and suddenly stops when a light is shined near it. No type of magic or darkvision reveals its source.

All calves born in the area have strange deformities. They are missing limbs or have extra ones. Perhaps patterns on their hides mimic holy or unholy symbols.

All of the major religious icons in the city, such as altars, statues, and large holy symbols that mark temples, crumble into dust at the same exact moment.

## NEW RULES

The following rules are taken from *Cityworks*. They should prove useful in running some of the many calamities that could beset Northwall.

**Crowds:** With the great number of people within a city and the teeming throngs that could show up to shop in a market or attend an important religious service or festival, the characters may find themselves battling a villain in the midst of a large group of innocent bystanders. These rules cover fights that occur in a crowd.

The crowd provides cover to those who stand within it depending on how dense it is. Furthermore, the crowd's density limits movement and line of sight. The listed cover applies to all targets that are in the crowd, even adjacent ones. The press and push of the crowd makes most attacks difficult. The speed modifier applies to all creatures within the crowd, though no character's speed can be reduced to less than 5 feet. The sight distance is the maximum range at which characters can see any targets. Beyond that, any creature of the same size or smaller than the members of the crowd is impossible to see. Larger creatures can be sighted as normal, as they loom above the crowd.

As an optional rule, the crowd's density automatically drops one level per round once a fight breaks out. The people in the crowd panic and try to move away from violence. If the crowd density is light, it drops to nothing.

Sometimes, panic can cause a crowd to run out of control. Increase the crowd's density by one category, as the crowd becomes more active and frenetic. Each round, characters in a panicked mob must make either a Strength or Balance check (DC 10) to avoid being knocked prone. Prone characters suffer 1d6 points of nonlethal damage per round due to trampling. Standing up requires a Strength or Dexterity check (DC 10). Unconscious characters continue to suffer damage until they are killed. If the characters engage in a fight within a crowd, there is a 10% chance per round that the crowd panics. Any loud, spectacular spell effects increase this chance to 50% during the round in which they were used. Effects that have an obviously deadly effect on a crowd, such as *cloudkill*, automatically cause a crowd to panic.

**Fire:** Fire is a major threat in most fantasy cities, as the wooden buildings within them can quickly go up in flames. Without magical support, fire fighting is a difficult task at best. In most cities, arson is a capital crime.

Characters at risk of catching fire are allowed a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) to avoid this fate. If a character's clothes or hair catch fire, he takes 1d6 points of damage immediately. In each subsequent round, the burning character must make another Reflex saving throw. Failure means he takes another 1d6 points of damage that round. Success means that the fire has gone out. (That is, once he succeeds at his saving throw, he's no longer on fire.)

A character on fire may automatically extinguish the flames by jumping into enough water to douse himself. If no body of water is at hand, rolling on the ground or smothering the fire with cloaks or the like permits the character another save with a +4 bonus.

Those unlucky enough to have their clothes or equipment catch fire must make Reflex saving throws (DC 15) for each item. Flammable items that fail sustain the same amount of damage as the character.

Within a burning building, there is a 10% chance per round that a random character is struck by falling debris. The character must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or suffer 1d6 points of damage and make a Reflex save to avoid catching fire as described above.

Smoke presents a much greater danger than flames. Each round a character stands within a burning building he must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 points of damage. In addition, with each failed save the character suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to all additional saves against smoke inhalation made during that encounter.

As floorboards burn, they weaken and may send a character plunging to his doom. There is a 5% chance each round that a randomly determined character falls through a wooden floor. He takes falling damage as normal and most likely falls into a roaring fire.

A character standing within flames suffers 1d6 points of damage per round and automatically catches fire. This damage is in addition to the damage suffered for catching fire.

As an optional rule, animals and NPCs must make Will saves (DC 15) to remain calm during a fire. On a failed save, they do nothing on their action but make a double move in a randomly determined direction to escape the flames. Panic creatures move to avoid obstacles and flame. If they encounter either of them, randomly determine the direction they move to avoid them.

## ADVENTURES

The following short scenarios serve several purposes. You can use them to run adventures in Northwall or a dark fantasy setting of your own design. They also provide you with examples of how to create your own stories, and all of them include notes on the key traits that make them horror scenarios rather than sword and sorcery or heroic fantasy. In addition, you can loot them for NPCs, locations, monsters, and other material that you can transfer to adventures of your own creation. The adventures presented here are:

*Threads of Madness:* A mad wizard seeks to craft a living creature from the body parts of others. Blinded by ambition, he threatens to unleash a horrific threat on the city.

*The Misplaced Mask:* The characters discover a useful magical item that allows them to uncover hidden secrets. Unfortunately, the *mask of doors* secretly calls monsters from a horrific realm, but it cannot banish them.

**Special Note:** The adventures presented here have as little background information that ties them to a setting as possible. Ideally, you can use them in any setting. References to cities, deities, and other material specific to a campaign world are deliberately vague. In addition, each adventure ends with a short checklist on material from your campaign world that you may need to properly adapt it.

## THREADS OF MADNESS

In this adventure, the abominable wizard Venderthal Nightstar enters a pact with a demonic patron to gain the knowledge he needs to craft a flesh golem. The demon, Malzurberan, is eager to corrupt Venderthal. It offers to aid him in the golem's creation, but he must harvest body parts from people the demon chooses. Venderthal agrees and begins his horrific work. He claims victims from the city's slums, unwittingly slaying popular folk known for their good deeds. The characters have little trouble tracking the wizard, but he has prepared for unwanted visitors. He has left his tower through a secret passage, leaving behind traps and guardians for any unwanted visitors. The characters must piece together clues that point to a hidden laboratory in the city's graveyard. There, Venderthal works to complete his golem. Unfortunately, while Malzurberan promised him a golem, he did not pledge that it would be a faithful servant. The golem goes on a rampage through town, killing many innocents, unless the PCs can stop it.

This adventure draws on the advice given in Chapter 6. It creates an adventure using the formula outlined there. Think of it as a complete example of horror scenario design. In addition, throughout the scenario hints and tips point out the design process that went into it.

### SCENE ONE: MURDER MOST FOUL

Venderthal does his grim work in the city's poorest sections. The characters could learn of his deeds in a variety of ways. Perhaps a friend of theirs is killed. Since Venderthal targets priests and others who engage in charity work at the behest of Malzurberan, any good-aligned PCs might hear of the killings through their church, temple, or similar connections.

The PCs can learn the following clues by asking around the slums or by investigating the murder scenes:

- The victims were all known for doing good works in the slums. They include priests, charity workers, and simple folk who helped out others.
- The victims were badly burned. A Spellcraft check (DC 15) reveals that a fiery spell (Venderthal's *scorching ray*) was responsible.



- All of the bodies were missing different parts, such as arms, legs, and internal organs. A Heal check (DC 15) reveals that the limbs were removed with surgical precision.
- In addition to the murder victims, several other people have gone missing.
- An elderly, balding man has been seen in the slums lately. If the characters ask around, they learn that he stood out because he always carried a large, burlap sack over one shoulder and hobbled along with the aid of a staff. This is Venderthal.

The murder victims are Jerrain, a priest found missing his head, Thurlen and Gorten, twin brothers who broke up an extortion ring and were found missing their arms and legs, and Gethred, a town guardsman known to treat the folk of the slums with respect and who had solved several murders in the slums that would normally go without investigations.

At this point, the evidence should point to the involvement of a wizard who seems to be collecting body parts for some unknown purpose. Notice how this section focuses on the general clues, rather than the details of examining a body or a specific crime scene. The characters should have a fresh corpse to investigate, and you can include other clues to help them. For example, the area around the latest victim might be scorched from Venderthal's spells, or he may have left traces of the material components he used.

*Notes:* Before play, you should determine how the characters enter the adventure, the location of the murders, and any rumors surrounding them. Perhaps the local folk are convinced that a powerful fire demon stalks the streets, perhaps causing the characters to worry that they face a mighty foe. You should also create any NPCs that you think may need to interact with the PCs, such as town guardsmen, important figures in the slums, and so on. Draw on your campaign world for such figures, or create a list of names and personalities and assign them to roles as the adventure progresses. If the characters want to talk to the cleric of a temple in the slums, choose his name and personality from your list.

## SCENE TWO: FINDING VENDERTHAL

Tracking down Venderthal is difficult but not impossible. The other wizards in town think of him as a bit of an outcast. He has several strange theories of magic that he tries to press on others, a forgivable social foible if he was not so passionate about them. Thus, he has a well-known reputation.

If the characters try to contact other spellcasters in town, such as a wizard's guild or a similar organization, they can track down Venderthal if they are polite and perhaps offer a consulting fee to cover the time they require. The wizards they speak with tell

them that Venderthal is a harmless old coot. They have trouble believing that he could be involved with anything sinister. The wizards that the characters talk to can provide them with an address, or at the very least know someone who can point the characters in the right direction.

Venderthal's primary belief is that arcane magic is the basis for all forces in the universe. He thinks that he can find spells to replicate the spark of life that drives all creatures, and that there exists a spell that can duplicate almost anything that the gods or other beings have accomplished. Many sages believe that the world consists of a multitude of forces, and the idea that everything can be boiled down to a single motive power has long since fallen out of fashion.

If the characters manage to win over one of the wizards they speak with, they can learn more about Venderthal's tendencies. He believed that if he could create life, he could take the first step to proving his theories. None of the sages or wizards in town believe Venderthal could ever attain such power, and they find his entire mission quixotic at best.

If the characters pursue other avenues of investigation, they can discover that a man matching Venderthal's description has bought the entire stock of a rare, strong thread from a cloth merchant in town, Amiago Sternden. The thread is imported from a distant land (insert a location from your campaign world) and is said to be perhaps the strongest type available.

If the characters research the signs of Venderthal's work, they can determine that he wants to build a flesh golem or at least a similar construct. Harvesting the body parts indicates such activity, and the additional clue about the thread narrows it down to that possibility.

*Notes:* If you are used to more structured adventures, this section may seem a bit lax in its treatment. Keep in mind that the players could go in a multitude of directions with their work. The wizard they speak to could be an old conjurer drinking in a bar or he could be the head of the local conclave of wizards. In your adventures, focus on the clues and information that the characters can find rather than extraneous information on NPCs and locations that serve little purpose other than to deliver information to them. Remember, in play a lot of the detail that might seem important has no effect on the game. Flesh out a few urban locations from your campaign or use ones given in the description of Northwall.

## SCENE THREE: THE WIZARD'S WORKSHOP

Once the characters find Venderthal's home, breaking in is a relatively easy task. Unfortunately, Venderthal has already aban-



done this place. He left behind some guardians to watch over it, gifts from his infernal ally, but he now does his work in the city's cemetery. This section gives a description of Venderthal's dwelling, the clues found there, and the neighbors around it.

Venderthal lives in a middle class area in town. His small mansion is surrounded by the homes of merchants and other business owners. If the characters ask around the area, they can learn that Venderthal is a bit eccentric but harmless. The locals have never noticed anything strange about his home, and he rarely talks to his neighbors.

Since he abandoned his home to work in the graveyard workshop that Malzurberan told him of, Venderthal has left several minor demons to watch over his home. The windows are barred shut (DC 15 Disable Device or Strength check to open) while the exterior doors have high quality (DC 20 Open Locks) locks.

The mansion is wooden with a stone foundation. It is painted a light red, and appears to be well kept. Venderthal pays a handyman to paint and clean the exterior.

Two dretches, a quasit, and Venderthal's servant Rhellus watch the mansion. Rhellus was a homeless man who witnessed one of Venderthal's

murders. Always slightly mentally disturbed, the killing pushed him over the edge. He now worships Venderthal like a god and faithfully obeys his edicts. Malzurberan ordered the wizard to keep him as a servant, though not before removing his tongue and using it to complete the golem.

The dretches and quasit keep watch over the basement work area and the upper floor. Rhellus stays on the first floor. The inhabitants' tactics are listed with the description of each floor of the house.

**First Floor:** This area is used for cooking, eating, and study. Rhellus stays here most of the time, as he was ordered to leave the demons alone. He is wracked with terror now that his master is gone, and he flees from the characters if they enter the house. Luckily, he is too afraid to leave and can be cornered. He spends most of his time in the kitchen (area 3) and runs into the study (area 2) and hides in the closet there. As he lacks a tongue, he can offer the characters little information. His meek act may convince them that he is an innocent dupe, and if the characters find the notebook on the golem's creation he points to his severed tongue and to the beast's mouth, indicating that Venderthal took his tongue to complete his work. If the PCs find out where Venderthal has gone, he follows them like an eager puppy. When the quasit or dretches appear, he panics and cowers in terror. He wants nothing more

than to reunite with his master. Of course, once the characters find Venderthal he turns on them.

**Rhellus, male human Rog3:** CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 3d6; hp 14; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d4+2, dagger) or +4 melee (1d3+2, unarmed); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 8.

*Skills:* Bluff +6, Climb +8, Hide +11, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +9, Sleight of Hand +9, Tumble +9.

*Feats:* Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stealthy.

*Possessions:* Ragged clothes, dagger.

**1. Sitting Room:** This place is almost utterly bare, dusty, and underused. A pile of rags and cloth piled in the northwest corner serves as Rhellus's bed. Venderthal never has visitors, leaving him with no reason to use this place.

**2. Study:** Similar to the sitting room, this chamber is bare save for an old wooden desk and a battered chair. The closet in the northeast is empty, though Rhellus hides there if the PCs enter the house.

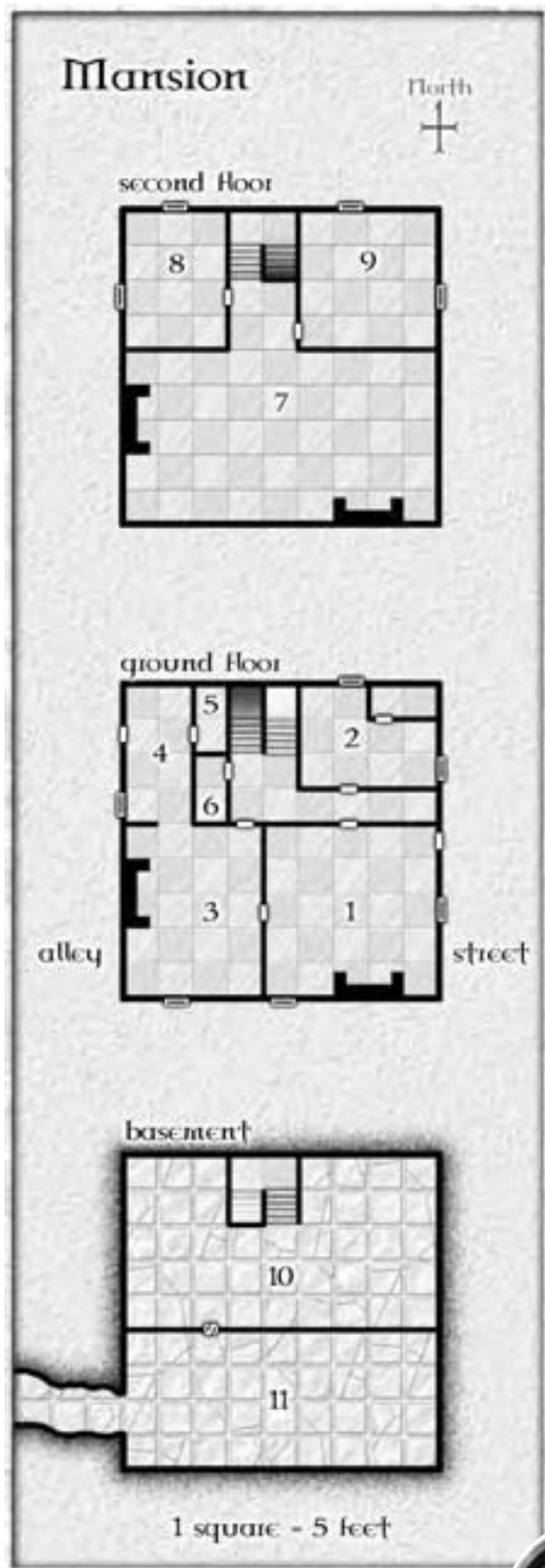
**3. Kitchen:** This kitchen appears normal. The food kept here—cheese, a loaf of bread, and a sack of potatoes—shows the first signs of growing stale. Teeth marks cover the food, as if a wild animal has eaten parts of it and left the rest for later. Those signs are from Rhellus, who lacks the skill and clarity of mind to do anything other than gnaw on the raw food here.

**4. Pantry:** This room smells of rotting meat, as Venderthal left a side of beef here for several days. The meat has gone bad, and maggots and flies buzz around it.

**5. Closet:** This chamber once served to hold cloaks, boots, and other clothes from visitors and servants. It has not been used in a long time.

**6. Closet:** This storage area holds a broom, mop, bucket, and other tools used for cleaning. They have not been used in some time.

**Second Floor:** This place serves as Venderthal's primary work area. His library and personal bedroom are here, along with his alchemical supplies and other tools. This area is a front, as Venderthal did little of the work relating to his current scheme. He did contact Malzurberan here, using several scrolls with the appropriate spells. Currently, a dretch hides in the laboratory (area 7). It uses its magical abilities to scare off intruders, resorting to attacks only as a last resort. If the PCs flee down-



stairs, it attempts to hide amongst the shelves and stacks of books to attack with surprise.

Consult the core rules for full stats on the dretch.

**7. Laboratory and Library:** This chamber appears to be nothing more than the standard work chamber for a wizard of moderate skill and experience. Books line the walls to the east and west, while two fireplaces serve as bookends for a long, wooden table covered in beakers, test tubes, and other tools. The characters can find a few valuable components here: gold dust worth 50 gp, diamond dust worth 100 gp, and a small bag of 10 red gems each worth 25 gp. In addition, the tools count as an alchemist's lab.

The characters can find several clues here with a thorough search (Search DC 20). The wooden floor shows faint signs of the sigils and symbols used to summon Malzurberan. A Spellcraft check (DC 20) can successfully identify them as runes used to summon powerful outsiders. In addition, a map of the city graveyard is rolled up on the worktable. One of the tombs is circled in red ink, indicating the spot where Venderthal now conducts his work. He made this map to find his new lab, but forgot about it after making several trips there.

**8. Spare Bedroom:** This place is bare of furnishings.

**9. Venderthal's Bedroom:** This place holds a large bed with a pile of tattered blankets piled upon it. An armoire holds simple clothes, robes, and a spare set of boots. A thorough investigation of this room (Search DC 20) turns up the following items of interest: a tome written in Infernal that outlines the habits and bargaining tendencies of demons tucked within a false bottom in the armoire, and a dagger forged from cold iron hidden beneath the bed's mattress. The book has the following statistics:

*The Golden Path:* 1 day (written in Draconic); Knowledge (arcana) +2 bonus; Ritual spells: *contact other plane*, *dismissal*; Madness points save DC 25, 1d8/1d3. This tome is apparently the journal of an unnamed wizard. It outlines his efforts to contact a being named Malzurberan. The journal's last entry details the writer's efforts to prepare his summoning attempt.

**The Cellar:** This place was the site of Venderthal's primary experiments. The outer room is a facade that hides his secret laboratory. A quasit and a dretch hide here, ready to pounce on anyone who stumbles into the secret chamber.

**10. Storage:** This dusty, dark area is filled with old crates and furniture. When Venderthal first moved into this building, it came with furnishings that he promptly stowed down here. Conveniently,

these crates also serve to hide his hidden lab. The door to the southern room was once a standard, wooden entrance. Venderthal covered it with gray mortar and pushed several empty crates in front of it. If the characters inspect the boxes, they can easily note that the empty ones are clustered in front of the secret door. Finding the door is relatively easy (DC 10 Search check) as the characters can discover its wooden frame by touch.

**11. The Secret Lab:** This grisly place is an awful sight to behold (FR 20, 1d6/1). A stone, blood-covered slab dominates the center of this room. An *everburning torch* dangles from a chain set in the ceiling above it. Rancid, rotting body parts litter the floor around the slab, grisly remnants cast aside by Venderthal as he completed his work. To the west, a passage has been burrowed into the earth. If the characters follow it, they find it leads to a sewer channel that opens into the city's sewer system. A wooden table with scalpels, knives, bone saws, and other tools is set against the northern wall. Judging from the tools there and the pattern of stains, someone recently gathered up many of them (DC 20 Search check to notice this). A pile of bloody rags occupies the southeast corner of the room.

The quasit and a dretch hide here. The quasit listens for approaching intruders and hides using its magical abilities. It tries to close with a tough-looking character to deliver a dose of its poison. The dretch hides in the rags and uses its magical abilities to drive away characters clad in armor or carrying large weapons before lunging to attack any remaining foes. Consult the core rules for these creatures' statistics.

*Notes:* After exploring the house, the characters should have a clear idea of where Venderthal can be found. They might also have an idea that he traffics with infernal creatures, and they likely can at least guess at the nature of his work. The clues found here serve to explain enough of what has happened to make the characters leery of confronting Venderthal a final time.

## SCENE FOUR: THE MONSTER ARISES

With the map and the grisly scene they found at the mansion, the characters must track Venderthal to a forgotten tomb in the city's graveyard. There, he strives to complete his masterpiece. Remember, Rhellus plays the role of a terrified, simpering fool until he finds Venderthal. Then, he attacks the characters with a vicious intensity. If the characters abandon him or drive him off, he follows them from a discreet distance (make Hide and Move Silently checks for him as appropriate) and ambushes them once they find his master.

If the characters miss several important clues, you can push them back on track if they make an effort

to gather information about Venderthal. Perhaps a beggar saw him and his golem as they fled through the sewers to the graveyard. After all, the golem is not yet complete and the wizard carried a large case of tools and other gear. The characters might also find gravediggers or even a repentant tomb robber who have seen the flickering lights of Venderthal's lanterns as he works to complete his construct.

Venderthal does not realize that his golem will actually house the soul of a long dead necromancer whose soul was pledged to Malzurberan. The demon wants to animate the golem, wresting the soul from one of his infernal rivals, then tear it free so he may claim it. As a result of this trauma, the golem enters a berserk state. Unless the PCs can stop it or prevent its completion, it slays several dozen commoners before the guard finally puts it down.

The action in this scene is driven by the characters' decisions. Venderthal is consumed in his work. But roughly three days after the adventure begins, the golem will rise. You can change this so that he is on the verge of completion as the characters approach, lending an additional level of tension to the scene. Of course, if the characters have no idea how close Venderthal is to completion, you cannot take advantage of that tension. Perhaps the wizard shouts to his guards that he is on the verge of success.

In any case, if the golem animates, it spends 5 rounds without taking actions as Malzurberan completes the soul transition.

After that time, it attacks the nearest creature, perhaps slaying its creator.

Venderthal works within the tomb of the necromancer whose soul Malzurberan wishes to claim. The place is splattered with blood and bones. Venderthal's golem lies on the crypt's sarcophagus. He uses its flat, stone top as a crude workbench. In a grim reminder of the awful work that Venderthal has pursued, he has chained several victims in the northwest corner of this place. He killed one of these unfortunates to salvage a spare bone for his creation. The dissected corpse has been tossed down

the steps leading to the sarcophagus, spattering them with gore. The remaining two captives, a pair of innocent townsfolk, huddle in terror, bound and gagged.

The golem resembles a large, muscular human male who lacks his outer skin. Organs shift, throb, and beat beneath thin layers of muscle, tendons, and sinew. The stitches that hold it together crisscross its body. A rough, husk of skin is neatly folded at the golem's feet. Venderthal plans on attaching it to his creation once it is complete. In his madness, he may attempt to wear it as a suit of armor to ward off the characters' attacks.



In addition to Venderthal, three toughs guard the crypt along with wizard's owl familiar. The guards have yet to enter its interior, but Venderthal pays them enough to keep their curiosity in check. One sits in the tree to the north of the crypt, the other two stand by the front door. The watcher in the tree is an old rival of the other two, and they try to avoid each other. Venderthal hired them without knowledge of their shared past. If the characters approach him without attacking, they can convince him to leave (Diplomacy DC 15, +1 bonus to the check for every 5 gp offered). If the total check result is 25 or higher, he tells them of the secret door in the back of the crypt.

The owl flies through the air around the crypt. If it spots anything unusual, such as an approaching band of armed adventurers, it swoops back to the crypt to warn the wizard. He readies any spells as appropriate, such as *mage armor*, but does nothing to warn his guards. His familiar then lurks above the crypt's entrance.

If Venderthal has time, he casts *vampiric touch* and waits for his owl to deliver it before casting anything else.

This secret door is positioned 5 feet off the ground, making it difficult to find (Search DC 25, +10 competence bonus if the characters specifically look above eye level). The interior door is easier to find (DC 10) and Venderthal is aware of it. Depending on how the battle goes, he attempts to escape through it.

*Development:* Venderthal works furiously to complete his creation, relying on his guards to hold off intruders. If the characters slip into the crypt, he uses his spells against them, starting with *scorching ray* and reserving *expeditious retreat* for his escape. If cornered he tries to take one of his hapless victims hostage. He has no intention of being taken alive, and if he cannot escape he tries to go down in a literal blaze of glory, dousing himself in alchemist's fire.

*Design Notes:* This encounter is a fluid environment, as much of the action depends on the PCs' plans and actions. Remember to stay flexible. Evaluate the players' ideas in terms of their originality and intelligence and roll with them. An important point to consider lies in Venderthal's spell list. Notice the lack of *fireball* and similar spells that could easily annihilate the entire party. A *scorching ray* might instantly kill a character, but it doesn't drag the entire scenario to a halt. When using spell casters, try to avoid spells and abilities that could bring the adventure to an end with a single casting.

Horror is seeing an adventuring companion burnt to cinders. Boredom is the entire party getting blown to pieces, ending the session and killing all the tension. Ideally, the players are afraid of what a caster might use next, but they are never all instantly snuffed out in a single action. Remember, the more you can stretch things out the better.

**Venderthal, male human Wiz5:** CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d4; hp 14; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +2; Grp +1; Atk +1 melee (1d4-1, dagger) or +4 ranged (1d4-1, thrown dagger); SA Spells; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 6.

*Skills:* Concentration +11, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (history) +11, Spellcraft +11. Speaks

*Feats:* Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge (arcana)), Skill Focus (Concentration).

*Possessions:* Daggers (2), robes, alchemist's fire (3), spellbooks, rope (50 ft.), scalpels, bone saws, needles, and thread.

*Spells Prepared* (Save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*daze, mage hand, ray of frost, resistance*; 1<sup>st</sup>—*animate rope, burning hands, expeditious retreat, mage armor*; 2<sup>nd</sup>—*hideous laughter, protection from arrows, scorching ray*; 3<sup>rd</sup>—*summon monster III, vampiric touch*.

*Spell Book:* 0—All; 1<sup>st</sup>—*animate rope, burning hands, charm person, expeditious retreat, feather fall, mage armor, summon monster I*; 2<sup>nd</sup>—*darkness, hideous laughter, mirror image, protection from arrows, scorching ray, see invisibility*; 3<sup>rd</sup>—*gentle repose, slow, summon monster III, vampiric touch*.

**Owl Familiar:** CR —, Tiny animal; HD 1d8; hp 7; Init +3; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +0; Grp -11; Atk +7 melee (1d4-3, talons);

Space 2-1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SQ Deliver touch spells, improved evasion, low-light vision, speak with master; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 4, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4.

*Skills:* Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Spot +6.

*Feats:* Weapon Finesse.

**Thugs, male human War1:** CR 1/2; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 6; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, short sword) or +2 ranged (1d4, sling); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8.

*Skills:* Intimidate +1, Listen +3, Spot +3.

*Feats:* Alertness, Dodge.



**Possessions:** Short sword, sling, leather armor, light shield, 4 torches, flint and steel.

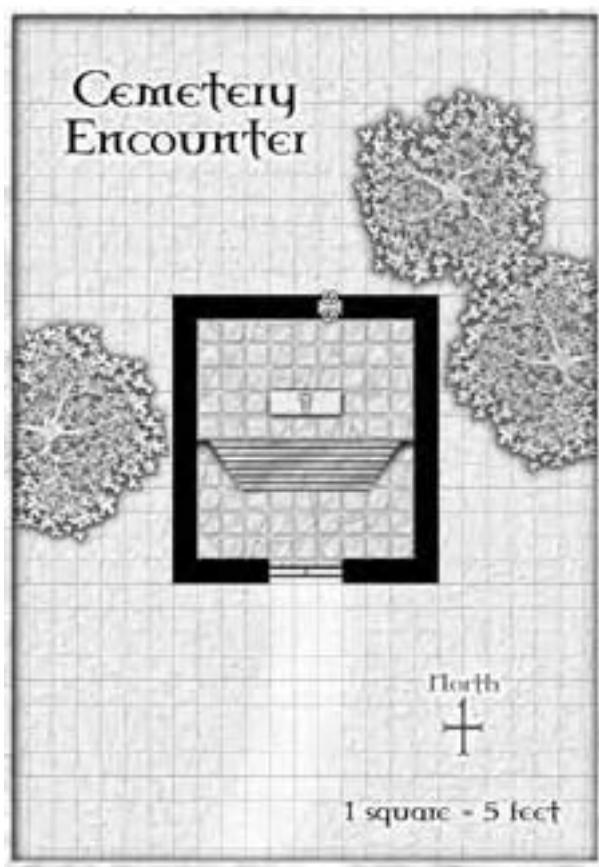
**Finishing the Adventure:** Once the characters have defeated Venderthal (or fallen to his magic), they face several loose ends. The golem must be destroyed if it is active, a daunting prospect for low-level characters. If Venderthal escapes, he may swear vengeance against the PCs. Branded as an outlaw, he may move further into league with Malzurberan. Even if the PCs defeat the wizard, his demonic patron may be angry with them. After all, if the golem remains incomplete they have foiled his chance to reclaim a soul pledged to him. The PCs might find cultists or minor demons sent to assassinate them.

## THE MISPLACED MASK

In *The Misplaced Mask*, the characters come across the *mask of doors*, a powerful magic item that allows them to peer through walls, learn when a person lies, and note magical auras. However, the *mask* has a horrific secret. When worn, it partially transports the user into a shadowy realm that lies between the material world and the outer planes. He can perceive things that would normally escape his sight, but the rift the mask causes allows strange creatures to slip into the world. These monsters appear up to a mile away from the mask's bearer, making it likely that the PCs allow a number of these strange horrors to escape into the world before they realize what they have done.

This adventure is more of an episode or side excursion you can insert between longer sessions. It can also develop over the course of several other adventures. For example, the characters could gain the *mask of doors*, use its powers during a few adventures, then learn of the horrid monsters they have unleashed. Unlike a more scripted scenario, this adventure provides information on the mask, details on a few NPCs who want it, statistics for the monsters that it allows to enter the world, and a few scenes that you can insert into your game to develop its story.

**The Mask of Doors:** This strange magical item appears to be a mask crafted from soft, brown leather. When donned, it changes its size and shape to adapt to the wearer's face and remains in place despite its lack of a strap. While worn, the *mask* automatically allows its user to cast the following spells at will: *detect magic*, *detect scrying*, *detect thoughts*, *read magic*, *see invisibility*. In addition, the user may cast *scrying* once per day. All of these spells operate as if cast by a 20th-level wizard and immediately end if the character removes the mask before the spell's duration expires. The mask also allows its wearer to see cackling perceptors, strange monsters that are linked to the *mask's* magical powers.



While any of those spell effects operate, the user suffers a -2 penalty to all Spot checks and his vision operates in black and white. The mask's power alters the user's sight, giving him a glimpse into the underlying workings of reality. If you use the optional madness point system from Chapter 2, the user must make a Will save (DC 13) each time he activates the mask's abilities or gain 1 madness point. After a character has lost 5 madness points in this manner, he no longer needs to make this save. The strange vision it grants becomes familiar and less disturbing over time.

The mask weakens the bonds between the planes. Every day that its abilities activate, it creates a rift in the planar bindings that allows a cackling perceptor to slip into the material plane. This creature is described below. It appears at midnight on the day the mask was used in a spot 1d3 miles away from the mask's bearer. The mask was crafted using the essence of a walker. Its arcane abilities draw on the strange energies and material of the perceptors' home dimension, allowing them to move into the world when it functions.

Despite the number of times the characters activate the mask, it calls one perceptor into the world for each day they use it. If a day passes without the mask's activating, it does not call a perceptor.

**Introducing the Mask:** The characters

could come across the *mask* in a number of ways. A courier delivers the *mask* to them. This error could be an honest mistake, with the courier given a vague description that happens to match one of the characters. In this case, the characters might want to track down the intended recipient once they discover that the mask harbors a dark secret. Someone could intentionally send the *mask* as a “gift” to complicate the characters’ lives or link them to its evil nature.

The characters might simply discover the mask while exploring an old ruin, or it could be in the possession of a villain they defeat. In this case, the characters may have already witnessed its useful traits without learning of its drawback.

In the course of gathering lore on how to defeat an opponent, the PCs could learn of the mask. It can prove especially useful against invisible enemies, making it a valuable tool during an investigation.

**Events Surrounding the Mask:** Keep track of each time the characters use the mask, as they slowly summon more and more cackling perceptors to the world. In wilderness areas or other isolated places, the perceptor’s presence probably draws little attention. It may prey on local creatures for a time before returning to its home dimension. However, if the characters employ the mask in a town or city the perceptor they call stays in the area, observing the locals and preying upon them. Its presence causes isolated outbreaks of madness, as its babbling madness ability spurs random assaults and other bouts of seeming insanity. In heavily populated areas or in the midst of large crowds, such outbreaks could lead to riots or large brawls, especially if a confused creature attacks others at random. Here are a few ideas for the characters’ encounters with the perceptors they summon.

While using the mask, a character could see a perceptor loping down the street or stalking its latest victim. These creatures know nothing of the *mask* or its abilities. Thus, the character who employs it might inadvertently spot these horrific beasts peacefully moving through town amidst the crowds. Even worse, the rest of the party cannot see the monsters. If possible, sow some doubt amongst the players that the *mask* is merely cursed or revealing a false image. Have the *mask*’s user make a Will save before describing the perceptor, or ask for a Spot check. You can magnify this effect if an NPC uses the mask, sees the creatures, and approaches the PCs for help. The characters could ignore their friend’s claims, only to later hear of horrific murders and outbreaks of madness. The characters might have to wander through the city while wearing the mask. If a perceptor notices that the PCs seem to be able to follow it, it tries to hide amongst a large crowd. After all, if the characters attack an invisible creature in the midst of a

market square, the town guard might arrest them for inciting a riot or assault in the confusion.

The perceptor’s confusion abilities could cause a sudden surge in random murders and outbursts of insanity. The characters might witness one of these eruptions first hand if a person affected by a perceptor’s *confusion* ability attacks them or otherwise acts strangely around them. If a character inspects the poor victim with the *mask*, he might see the perceptor lurking nearby.

As the perceptors in an area stalk and kill victims for food, the sudden wave of murders and their grisly nature could draw the characters to investigate them. In turn, this development could push the PCs to use the *mask* more often in hopes of learning more clues. They could stumble across a perceptor while investigating a corpse. Even without the *mask*, the trail of slime and blood that a perceptor leaves in its wake makes them easier to track. The characters could find signs that one of these monsters moved through a crowded area without drawing any attention, perhaps giving the party the idea that their quarry is invisible.

The perceptors may have some strange, sinister purpose in their visits to the material world. They could sacrifice the souls of their victims to create a gateway that allows a blasphemous entity to enter the world. With the god’s arrival, the perceptors could return home, or perhaps they want to call a powerful being for reasons that a living creature could not possibly hope to comprehend.

Wizards and cultists might seek out the characters in hopes of seizing the *mask* from them. They might come to worship those strange beings, and could believe that the *mask* is a sacred relic unfit for the hands of the foul non-believers. The characters could face agents who foil their attempts to defeat the perceptors, who might provide them with false clues, or who could lead them into traps or other dangerous situations. The perceptors could be very useful as assassins and spies in the hands of a skilled spellcaster, making it likely that the PCs may face mortal enemies as they seek to stamp out the *mask*’s legacy.

It is well within the bounds of possibility that the characters never make the connection between the *mask* and the creatures it summons. The perceptors may be drawn to it, as its magical aura could remind them of their home dimension. If one or more of these monsters shadow the characters steps, they may find that the murders, outbreaks of madness, and other calamities the perceptors cause seem to follow them wherever they go. This clue could provide an important link between the perceptors and the *mask* while also getting the characters in trouble. If other folk notice this connection, the characters might be regarded as prime murder suspects. In par-



ticular, characters who are known to delve into things best left alone might be wrongfully accused of consorting with the demons and monsters responsible for the killings.

**Researching the Mask:** The characters might decide to delve into the *mask's* background. A Knowledge (arcana) check can reveal the following about the mask, based on the DC the characters exceed. Consult Chapter 3 for full rules on research.

DC	Library	Result
10	—	The <i>mask</i> is said to grant magical sight to anyone who wears it. Its design and form clearly suggest that it has some sort of divinatory use.
15	—	The <i>mask</i> functions by allowing its wearer to peer into the layers of the universe. Magical objects radiate energy that we cannot normally see because it exists on a layer our eyes cannot perceive. The mask changes that.
20	Small	The <i>mask</i> has turned up in several texts over the years. Many wizards have owned it, though for some reason none of them hold on to it for long.
20	Medium	All of the <i>mask's</i> owners complain of occasional hallucinations of strange creatures that lack an outer skin and have long arms that end in pincers. These creatures come up again and again in notes written by its owners.
30	Large	The <i>mask's</i> appearance has always been connected to a rash of strange murders. The victims were always found with their skull's opened, their brains missing, and their corpses dismembered.
35	Huge	One of the <i>mask's</i> owners tried to destroy it. He burned it, but wrote that this only temporarily banished it from this world. He described horrific creatures that are linked to it, and apparently committed suicide due to the extreme guilt he felt over the monstrosities he had unwittingly let loose upon the world.

**Resolving the Adventure:** Once the characters discover that their *mask* has repeatedly called strange, hostile creatures into the world, they face several important decisions. They might decide to never use the *mask* again, perhaps going so far as to destroy it. Though the mask can be burned or destroyed by physical means, in time the magic that formed it spawns a new one. The *mask* exists on several dimensions and planes at once, a fact that the char-



acters can learn with a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 25) and a day of work spent inspecting it. Destroying its physical form merely disperses it and allows it to eventually reform. The *mask's* previous owners usually tried to dispose of it in this manner, with few of them realizing that this action merely removed it from the world for a short time.

The characters' first order of business might be tracking down and slaying the perceptors they let loose on the world. Recruiting others to help them in this cause might be fruitless, as the authorities might not be eager to let the public know that invisible, deadly monsters lurk in their midst. In addition, an overeager magistrate may attempt to charge the characters with murder or otherwise implicate them in the perceptors' crimes. As the killings mount, the city's fear and anger slowly boils over. Vigilantes might stalk the streets with torches and clubs, while wizards, vagrants, and anyone else at the fringe of society might face persecution or even a lynching at the hands of an angry mob. Opportunistic demagogues and rabble-rousers could use the murders as an excuse to whip their followers into a righteous frenzy.

This state of fear and panic compounds the problems the characters face in defeating the perceptors. If the characters battle on in a public place, the town guard is likely to take a keen

interest in what looks like their involvement with supernatural forces, especially if it is obvious to onlookers that the party battled an invisible foe. The characters might have to conduct their work in secret for fear of drawing unwanted interference to their work.

As was mentioned above, there is a good chance that the characters might never fully understand the connection between the perceptors and the *mask of doors*. In this case, they might never be able to truly resolve this adventure. They might defeat the perceptors in one area, only to find evidence of the same murders and strange events in other places they have visited. They could even mistake the perceptors' activity for a full-blown invasion from another dimension or some grand conspiracy guided by a loathsome cabal.

## ACKLING PERCEPTOR

### Medium Abomination

**Hit Dice:** 8d8+8 (44 hp)

**Initiative:** +4

**Speed:** 30 ft. (6 squares)

**Armor Class:** 20 (+4 Dex, +6 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 16

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +8/+12

**Attack:** Pincer +12 melee (1d8+4)

**Full Attack:** 2 pincers +12 melee (1d8+4) and bite +8 melee (1d6+2)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Babbling madness

**Special Qualities:** Abomination qualities, cosmic awareness, damage reduction 5/, darkvision 60 ft., dimensional slip, immunity to acid, fire, and poison, spell resistance 21

**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +15

**Abilities:** Str 19, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 28, Cha 20

**Skills:** Climb +15, Jump +15, Listen +20, Move Silently +15, Spot +20, Tumble +15

**Feats:** Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack

**Environment:** Any

**Organization:** None

**Challenge Rating:** 6

**Fear Rating:** 20 (1d6+1/2)

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** None

**Advancement:** 9–14 HD (Medium); 15–20 HD (Large)

*This creature's organs and muscles lie bare on its skeleton. The tattered rags of skin and flesh that hang from its frame suggest that it was perhaps flayed alive. Rivulets of blood and ichor flow down its legs to form small puddles wherever it steps. Its bird-like head turns to gaze at you, its insect-like, multi-faceted eyes reflect your visage back at you a hundred-fold times. Its small beak clacks and snaps as a hoarse, lunatic's cackle issues from it.*

Cackling perceptors are typical of abominations, if that class of creatures could be said to share any common traits. They issue from worlds beyond mortal comprehension, and the forms they take resemble no living creature. Instead, they appear to be something crafted by a madman's fancy. They have vaguely humanoid bodies, with long legs and slender arms that end with clawed pincers. Their internal organs throb and bubble, as little more than scraps and shreds of skin hang from their bodies. Perceptors can see into the folds and bends of reality, allowing them to move through a great distance with a single step and duck into a sub-dimension of reality that allows them to hide from sight.

The greatest danger perceptors pose lies in their ability to alter the thought processes of mortal creatures. With their strange, cackling voices, perceptors can affect a creature's mind and cause it to take apparently random actions. Sometimes, a perceptor may hide within a heavily populated area, causing its victims to seemingly fall into madness for short periods of time. The perceptor can spread fear and death merely by its presence, as its tittering laughter bends and alters the minds of those it contacts.

## COMBAT

When faced with an opponent, a cackling perceptor slips between the known dimensions, allowing it to effectively become invisible. In this state, the perceptor prefers to remain hidden until its foes leave the area. If an opponent continues to attack, the perceptor lashes out with its pincers, tearing its enemies limb from limb.

While perceptors are usually passive, preferring to merely observe the world around them, they require the brains and bone marrow of intelligent creatures (Intelligence score 5 or higher) in order to survive. A perceptor uses its dimensional abilities to pounce on its prey, appearing next to a potential meal while invisible, seizing him, and then slipping back through the dimensional eddies to a quiet place where it can feed in leisure. Victims are usually found with their skulls cracked open and emptied, their limbs cleanly severed from their bodies, and the marrow sucked from several of their larger bones.

**Babbling Madness (Su):** A cackling perceptor makes strange, gibbering sounds that resemble a madman's laughter. Any creature that comes within 60 ft. of one of these monsters must make a Will save (DC 15) or act as if under the effects of *confusion* for 2d10 rounds. This noise results from the perceptor's attempts to communicate with other beings. Their cosmic insight into the nature of reality allows them to alter and manipulate the psyches of other creatures with sound, though there is no apparent reason or order in the actions they compel others to commit. This is a mind-influencing effect.

**Cosmic Awareness (Ex):** The perceptor's supernatural insight into the material world makes it almost impossible to take by surprise. It sees into time, space, emotion, and other dimensions that humans cannot fathom. It counts as taking 20 in all Listen and Spot checks and its sight and hearing extend up to 200 feet in all directions despite any physical barriers that surround it.

**Dimensional Slip (Ex):** Using its strange sight, a perceptor can spot folds in reality that allow it to move to a distant spot with a single step. It can also slide into strange dimensions that interact with the real world but do not cross it. The perceptor can cast *dimension door* at will. In addition, the perceptor can gain the benefits of *improved invisibility* at will. While this talent duplicates spell effects, it is not magical in nature. Instead, the perceptor manipulates reality in a manner that other creatures simply cannot perceive or understand. Activating either of this ability's uses counts as a standard action.

## WEAKNESSES

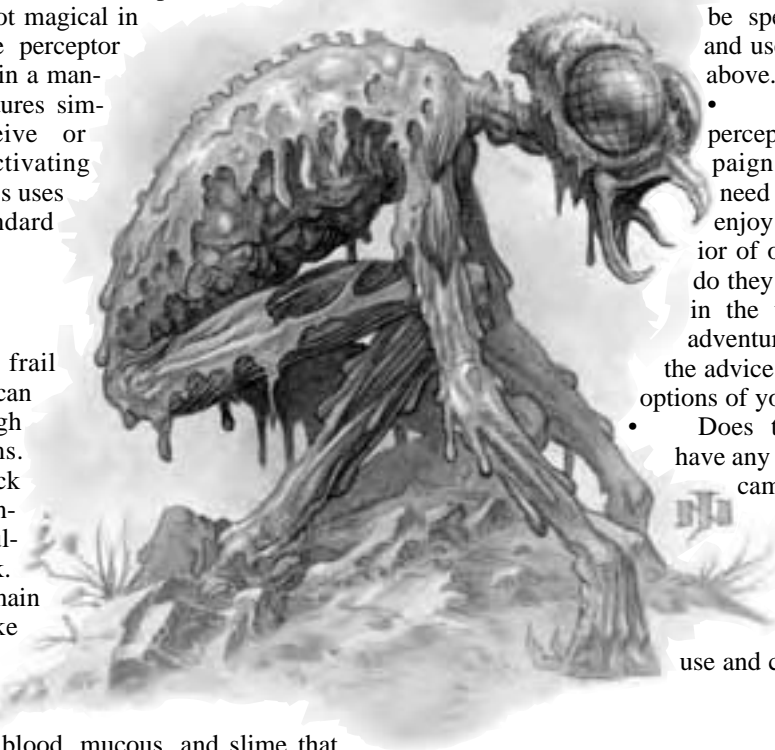
Perceptors are frail enough that they can be defeated through the force of arms. While they are quick and strong, their skinless bodies are vulnerable to attack. Their ability to remain invisible can make them daunting foes, but the small splashes of

blood, mucous, and slime that they leave in their wake make them easy to locate and track. Anyone attempting to locate a perceptor gains a +2 bonus to any Spot, Listen, or Survival checks to track or pinpoint one.

Perceptors are sensitive to sand, dirt, and other abrasive materials. While they can walk across them with ease, as their feet are coated in slime and blood to protect them, they suffer extreme pain if their exposed organs are ground with such materials. A perceptor coated in dirt, mud, flour, or a similar material becomes partially visible, as the material sticks in its blood and slime, and the creature howls in pain. It gains concealment (30% miss chance) rather than invisibility, and the great pain it suffers grants it a -2 circumstance penalty to attacks, checks, and saves.

**Campaign Checklist:** To adapt this adventure to your campaign, you need to come up with the following elements:

- NPCs might arrange for the PCs to find the mask, or others who might want to take it from them.
  - Something for the PCs to do as they slowly learn of the mask's abilities. This adventure works best if it functions as a backdrop to other adventures.
  - NPCs who could interact with the perceptrors, from victims of their attacks to mayors, town guard commanders, and others who would take steps to deal with their raids. Others might be spellcasters who bind and use them, as discussed above.
    - Ideas for how the perceptrors act in the campaign. Given that they need to hunt and seem to enjoy altering the behavior of other creatures, what do they do while they dwell in the world? Re-read the adventure notes and consider the advice given here or create options of your own.
    - Does the *mask of doors* have any special place in your campaign's history? If its connection to the perceptrors is well known, the characters might face competition for its use and control.



# SAMPLE FEAR RATINGS

Listed below are fear ratings for the creatures from the core rules. Each of the creatures has its FR broken down to give you example values for appearance and reputation. Remember that since appearance and reputation are judgment calls based on your campaign world's background, use these values as guides rather than inflexible judgements. Remember that FR uses half a creature's CR rounded down, not the full value. If you add up all the listed factors, they should not equal the FR given for a creature.

In some cases, creatures have appearance ratings marked with stars (\*). This means that the creature in question has an appearance that is outside the normal range for its type and subtypes. For example, a belker is an elemental, but it more closely resembles an evil outsider. Thus, it uses the outsider type and evil subtype modifiers. When assigning appearance ratings for your own creatures, you can use the ratings listed for the various types and subtypes to find a best, closest estimate.

Templates have their FRs listed as a bonus. Add this bonus to the base creature's FR to determine the template creature's total FR.

Creature	FR	CR	Size Modifier	Appearance	Reputation
Aboleth	16	7	4	5	4
Achaierai	13	5	2	9	0
Allip	13	3	0	10*	2
Ankheg	8	3	2	3	2
Barghest	14	4	0	10	2
Basilisk	13	5	0	3	8
Behir	14	8	4	3	3
Belker	16	6	2	9*	2
Bodak	18	8	0	9	5
Chaos Beast	17	7	0	8	6
Chimera	12	7	2	3	4
Choker	9	2	0	5	3
Chuul	14	7	2	5	4
Cloaker	12	5	2	5	3
Cockatrice	12	3	0	3	8
Darkmantle	5	1	0	3	2
Demon, Babau	18	6	0	11	4
Demon, Balor	33	20	2	11	10
Demon, Bebiliith	24	10	4	11	4
Demon, Dretch	13	2	0	11	1
Demon, Glabrezu	26	13	4	11	5
Demon, Hezrou	22	11	2	11	4
Demon, Marilith	26	17	2	11	5
Demon, Nalfeshnee	24	14	4	11	2
Demon, Quasit	13	2	0	11	1
Demon, Retriever	17	11	4	6*	2
Demon, Succubus	11	7	0	6*	2
Demon, Vrock	20	9	2	11	3
Derro	9	3	0	2	6
Destrachan	15	8	2	5	4
Devil, Barbed	18	11	0	9	4
Devil, Bearded	15	5	0	9	4
Devil, Bone	19	9	2	9	4
Devil, Chain	15	6	0	9	3
Devil, Erinyes	15	8	0	6*	5
Devil, Hellcat	17	7	2	9	3
Devil, Horned	23	16	2	9	4
Devil, Ice	22	13	2	9	5
Devil, Imp	12	2	0	9	2
Devil, Lemure	9	1	0	9	0
Devil, Pit Fiend	31	20	2	9	10

Devourer	24	11	2	9	8
Dinosaur, Tyrannosaurus	11	8	4	0	3
Dragons, True	See dragon sub-table				
Ethereal Marauder	6	3	0	3	2
Ettercap	9	3	0	5	3
Ettin	9	6	2	2	2
Frost Worm	15	12	4	3	2
Gargoyle	10	4	0	6*	2
Genie, Efreeti	18	8	2	8	4
Genie, Janni	10	4	0	6	2
Ghost	+14	+2	-	13	0
Ghoul	15	1	0	9	6
Giant, Cloud	14	11	4	2	3
Giant, Fire	14	10	2	4	3
Giant, Frost	12	9	2	3	3
Giant, Hill	10	7	2	2	3
Giant, Stone	11	8	2	2	3
Gibbering Mouther	11	5	0	5	4
Golem, Clay	13	10	2	2	4
Golem, Flesh	15	7	2	6*	4
Golem, Iron	14	13	2	2	4
Golem, Stone	13	11	2	2	4
Gorgon	17	8	2	3	8
Hag, Annis	13	6	2	2	6
Hag, Green	14	5	0	6*	6
Hag, Sea	21	4	0	13*	6
Harpy	12	4	0	4	6
Hell Hound	13	3	0	9	3
Howler	18	3	2	11	4
Hydra	Half CR + 13	Varies	4	3	6
Kraken	23	12	8	3	6
Lich	+13	+4	-	6	5
Lycanthrope	+4 and half CR mod	Varies	1	3	
Manticore	11	5	2	3	4
Medusa	14	7	0	2	9
Mimic	14	4	2	5	5
Minotaur	10	4	2	2	4
Mohrg	21	8	0	9	8
Mummy	20	5	0	12*	6
Naga, Dark	16	8	2	5	5
Naga, Spirit	16	9	2	5	5
Night Hag	19	9	0	9	6
Nightmare	16	5	2	9	3
Nightshade, Nightcrawler	32	18	8	9	6
Nightshade, Nightwalker	29	16	4	9	8
Nightshade, Nightwing	27	14	4	9	7
Ogre	7	3	2	2	2
Ogre Mage	13	8	2	2	5
Ooze, Black Pudding	15	7	4	3	5
Ooze, Gelatinous Cube	13	3	4	3	5
Ooze, Gray	11	4	0	3	6
Ooze, Ochre Jelly	13	5	2	3	6
Otyugh	12	4	2	5	3
Phase Spider	11	5	2	3	4
Purple Worm	20	12	8	3	3
Rakshasa	19	10	0	6	8
Rast	15	5	0	6	6
Ravid	10	5	0	6	2
Remorhaz	14	7	4	3	6
Roc	17	9	8	0	5
Roper	15	12	2	3	4
Rust Monster	12	3	0	6	5

APPENDIX 1: FEAR RATINGS

Salamander, Flamebrother	10	3	0	8	1
Salamander	15	6	0	8	2
Salamander, Noble	20	10	2	8	2
Shadow	15	3	0	9	5
Shadow Mastiff	11	5	0	6	3
Skeleton	6 + half CR	Varies	–	+6*	0
Spectre	20	7	0	13	4
Spider Eater	9	5	2	3	2
Troll	11	7	2	2	4
Umber Hulk	12	7	2	5	2
Vampire	+13	+2	–	+9	+3
Vampire Spawn	14	4	0	9	3
Vargouille	16	2	0	9	6
Wight	15	3	0	9	5
Will-O'-Wisp	14	6	0	6	5
Wraith	15	5	0	9	4
Wyvern	12	6	2	4	3
Xill	13	6	0	6	4
Yeth Hound	12	3	0	9	2
Zombie	10 + half CR	Varies	–	9	1

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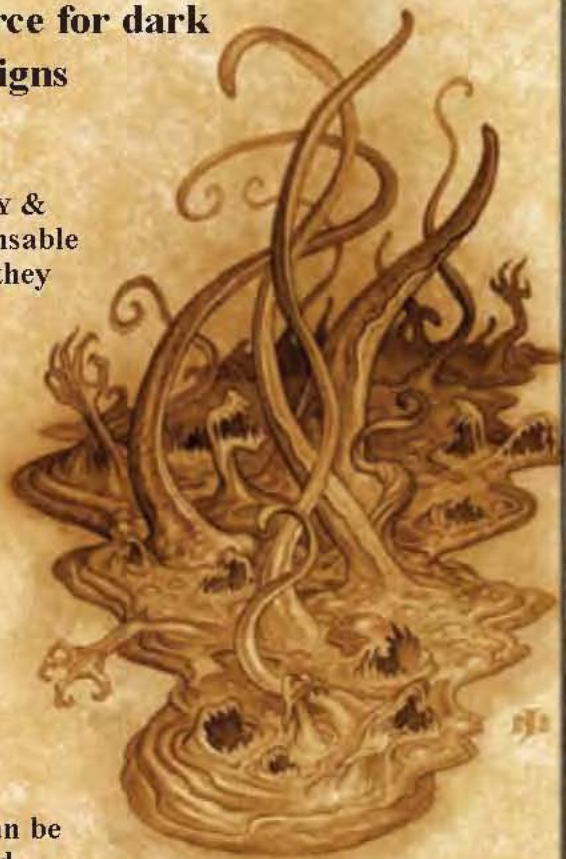
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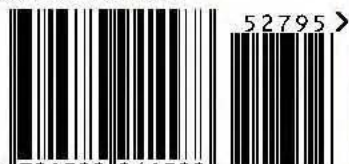
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