



Grim HOLLOW



THE PLAYERS GUIDE





THE SEA OF TURMOIL

CINDERCAST

VOLGEN

FORT KENTIGERN

BORGUND

COLD IRON KEEP

TYBURN

THE VALIKAN CLANS

KANDAR

THRULL

HRIST

SOLHEIM

FROSTMERE

SHADOW STORM GULF

GRARJORD

HALSEJORD

SUMMERHELM

RUNEHEIM

SKARFANES

ERLEFORT

NORDENLAND

MT. VENGEANCE

CASTALORE

THE BURACH EMPIRE

LANDHAUS

GRAFENDAM

RAEVO

ABENDLAND

DUESENBERG

ULSTENBURG

GRABENSTEIN

FALLOWHEART

THE OSTOYAN EMPIRE

THE BLACKMIRE

WALSTEIN

DUESENBERG

ULSTENBURG

GRABENSTEIN

FALLOWHEART

THE OSTOYAN EMPIRE

THE BLACKMIRE

RAVENCOURT SANCTUARY

LAKE OSSA

UNTERLAND

THE GREY SPINE

ALTENHEIM

RAULAND

VOLLENDORF

BURROWFELL MINES

CROWSBEND

GREAT EASTERN SEA

CASTLE MARTORIUS

ROCK-TEETH MOUNTAINS

STEHLENWALD

BESION

THE GROVE MAZE

STILLBORN FOREST

SOMA

RIVEN

THE EMERALD SEA

LIESECH

TOL LEVEMIL

CASTLE LAMESDHONNEUR

CAMONT

VOROS

LUNSK

NOV OSTOYA

VOYD

CHARNEAULT KINGDOM

TOL KERDYWEL

BONNESEAUX VILLAGE

THE THOUSAND RIVERS

HOUVILLE

MORENCIA

TOLETUM

COROVA

CASTINELLAN PROVINCE

DARK OAK GROVE

THE TEMPLE OF MIST

MONT DE LANCEY

THE SHADED HAVEN

GULF OF LIONS

FARO

SHATTERED PEAKS

EMBER CAIRN

THERPENA

SANTE VIEGRE



THE PLAYERS GUIDE



GHSTFIRE
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This cover illustration by Marius Bota features a band of four adventurous heroes facing unspeakable foes from the deepest shadows of Etharis.



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Chapter 1: Introduction

Welcome to Grim Hollow! Or welcome back, if you were one of the backers or players who helped make our first book, *Grim Hollow: The Campaign Guide*, a success. If you've read the *Campaign Guide*, you know what Grim Hollow is all about. If you haven't, lock your doors and draw your shutters. Gather 'round the campfire, but keep an eye on the underbrush. It's a full moon tonight!

Dark fantasy and horror have long been a favorite genre of storytellers – not to mention story listeners. From the earliest humans gathered around fires, making up stories of the monsters that inhabited the dark, the wilderness, the seas, and the spaces between the stars, we've never lost the thrill of being thrilled, the adrenaline rush of being scared out of our wits, while knowing – or at least hoping – that we're safe from any true danger.

Grim Hollow and its world of Etharis offer roleplaying game fans the ability to partake in the thrills of a dark fantasy setting. Whether the terror comes in the form of nature's most reddened teeth and claws, or the fear spread through mortals' actions when they're driven by the lust for power, or the horror of lifeless monsters shambling through the moonless nights longing to extinguish the bright lights of life, Etharis teems with threats perfect for many different styles of horror-based, dark-fantasy campaigns.

More importantly, the rules in this book provide the means to allow players to experiment with their characters, who face the most terrible fate of all: succumbing to the darkness and being changed by it. The existential terror of becoming a monster can make fighting monsters seem pale by comparison.

We thank the 9,138 backers who supported us in creating *Grim Hollow: The Players Guide*. Your overwhelming trust gave us the means and the motivation to make this book everything it could be. We hope you find in this book, whether you're a player or a GM, the ideas and the rules to create a campaign that captures deeply the feel of people staring into the darkness, hoping to survive but dreading what might come out of it – or out of themselves.

Playing a Dark Fantasy Campaign

Classic tabletop roleplaying games often see the adventurers striding boldly across the countryside, tracking evil to its lair and vanquishing it in the name of wealth and glory, protecting the world and its people for another day.

Dark fantasy tells a different story, and the world of Grim Hollow invites participants to imagine narratives tinged with shadow, fear, and the drama of despair.

In the world of Etharis, the roles are reversed from a typical high-fantasy campaign. It is the good who cower in their fragile bastions of civilization while evil stalks freely across the land. Adventurers skulk furtively through the shadows, always aware of the danger that follows closely behind them – or the danger lurking within their bodies and souls. Welcome to Grim Hollow!

THE WORLD IS LOST

Etharis is a world on the brink of total destruction. The gods are dead, coldfire threatens to consume the world, the City Below stands poised to flood the world with unearthly dangers... any one of a hundred events could be the spark that sets the world aflame.

In such a world, how can heroes exist? What does victory even look like? Players in such a setting should take these factors into consideration when tackling character creation and during gameplay itself.

Character backstories in fantasy rarely revolve around happy and mundane events. In dark fantasy, those backstories are generally even more dark and dramatic.

What motivates and shapes dark fantasy protagonists? The loss of a loved one. Betrayal by those closest to them. Disastrous events that the character felt powerless to stop. Inscrutable and irrepressible powers reaching out and molding the lives and personalities of the characters with a cold and malevolent disregard.

The world of Etharis is defined by these horrible events, and it stands to reason that the characters within it follow suit. How would these circumstances and events lead to a life as an adventurer, braving the dangers that most flee from in terror? Did your character become bitter and cynical, only looking out for their own interests? Did they rally and push back against despair, resolving to fight for the last glimmers of light that remain? What is your character fighting for?

These themes also work their way into the game itself. With the world in ruins, various elements of normal roleplaying get turned on their heads. Safety becomes a relative term, so spells such as *alarm* or *arcane lock* might be more useful than in traditional high fantasy settings. The monsters that stalk the wilds have successfully taken down entire civilizations, making it important to carefully pick your battles. Maybe not every battle or encounter is worth the cost of risking the entire war against darkness.

DARKNESS IS A CHOICE

Demons walk the land of Etharis, twisting mortal fates to their whim. Misshapen abominations skulk in the shadows, waiting for their opportunity to strike. Darkness seeps from every corner and every crack in the world's façade, whispering promises of great power to those willing to answer... and to sacrifice. One enduring truth defines the tenebrous forces at play in Etharis: there is always a price for the aid of dark powers.

Part of making a character in Grim Hollow is acknowledging the power of the forces of darkness. This setting offers a number of options for incorporating those powers into your character. Rather than merely picking up a Transformation Boon or the use of sangromancy like you would with an additional skill proficiency, these options work best when tied to specific character events. Perhaps you gladly accept these powers as a means to exact the revenge that your character seeks, or maybe it was an unwilling accident on the night of a full moon. Does your character regret these events or choices? Or do they fully embrace the power they have gained?

Once taken, these abilities are notoriously difficult to handle. When dealing with other humanoids, revealing your true nature can cause serious problems. As your power grows, its nature becomes harder and harder to conceal and control, and therefore harder to avoid the ramifications of your choice. It might be worth investing in disguise kit proficiency or abilities such as *disguise self* in order to better blend in among normal people.

Alas, even that might not be sufficient if circumstances force you to use your powers around others. Be warned. When you become as feared as the dark forces you oppose, natural agencies, like the business end of a farmer's pitchfork, can be just as dangerous as supernatural ones.

THE GODS ARE DEAD

Quite possibly the greatest cataclysm to strike Etharis was the disappearance of the gods. Few people know the truth of their downfall, with the exception of the human pantheon, but all are aware that praying to the gods brings no aid and no relief. The divine magic that always offered healing and protection to those in need vanished, and now few remain who can remember that golden age.

As a player, the extreme scarcity of divine magic offers certain challenges to those wishing to play a cleric or paladin. Your very existence is a notable event, and you should discuss with your GM how you retain your magic and what effect that is likely to have on the world as a whole. The requirements for multiclassing are even steeper, and should be worked into the story as a major plot point.

The death of the gods has serious consequences, even for those who don't wish to partake in a divine class. Clerics, paladins, and religious organizations in general are often the main source of healing and curative magic in a roleplaying game, so their absence offers a major challenge. Diseases, curses, and other conditions are far more serious when you can't just stroll into the nearest temple and donate a hefty gold fee to cure them.

Similarly, resurrection is a near impossibility. Players should be aware that lives are all the more precious in Etharis. Even the more mundane services offered by clergy, such as giving blessings and selling holy water, are rare. The helpful items for fighting the legions of darkness are valued greatly, and their value becomes even greater, meaning they should be seen and used sparingly.

MAGIC IS MISTRUSTED

With the disappearance of divine magic, arcane spellcasters on Etharis found themselves the target of hatred and mistrust. A magic inquisition started in the Castinellan Provinces, bureaucracies sprang up to regulate and control mages elsewhere, and mobs hunted down those the common folk blamed for the gods' absence. Where once they delved into the mysteries of the universe, now wizards and their kin must seek to ensure their very survival.

As a player making an arcane spellcaster, whether a wizard, sorcerer, or warlock, you face a superstitious and

hostile populace. Many of the regions in Etharis have instituted licensing schemes in order to regulate magic, so a valid license is an important piece of equipment for those seeking to practice magic legitimately. Wizards are the primary licensed spellcasters, while warlocks are almost never part of a magical organization or academy. With their innate abilities, sorcerers fall between the two, with as many fugitives as licensed practitioners.

Decide which category your character falls in, and work with your GM to determine any restrictions that may apply to your spellcasting license. Even licensed spellcasters are not wholly exempt from the resentment of the common folk, so brandishing a wand and spellbook in the middle of a crowded tavern may not be the wisest decision.

If you're not playing a spellcaster, you should consider how you feel about magic as a character. Did you grow up in the Castinellan Provinces, under the stern gaze of the Watchers of the Faithful? Or were you from the Nordenlands, where magic is as much a fabric of everyday life as the forests and rivers? Regardless of how you feel about arcane magic at the start of your adventuring career, you should also consider how that opinion changes over time. Was your mistrust of arcane magic foolish as you now see it wielded by good and noble casters? Or do your personal interactions with arcane casters teach you that the fear of the arcane that you wrote off as superstition was instead a wise and prudent choice?

TRAVEL IS DANGEROUS

Adventurers in roleplaying games are travelers. It's an integral part of the job and of the game as a whole. Normally travel occurs along a well-maintained and patrolled system of roads, with occasional forays into the natural wilderness in search of some vile creature upsetting the normal order of the world.

In a dark fantasy setting, messengers and patrols cannot be relied upon, and anyone who goes outside the safety of the town walls takes their life in their hands. Nighttime is especially dangerous, for any light serves as a beacon to the creatures waiting in the inky darkness. Travel in Etharis is not for the faint of heart, and may provide challenges equal to any story's climax.

As a character braving the wilds of Etharis, the first thing to learn is that there is no such thing as a safe campsite. When night falls, everything becomes fair game, so it's best to be prepared. Setting watches alone may not be sufficient, and you should always have a plan for awakening your allies to deal with the inevitable complications. Spells can aid in this regard, whether it's *alarm*, *magic mouth*, or any of the various sonic spells that can be heard hundreds of feet away. Darkvision can be especially useful for those standing watch, to avoid advertising your presence with a torch or campfire. But even then, darkvision is not perfect, and its limits can give certain threats an upper hand. Warding and protection spells, such as *tiny hut* or *rope trick*, are valuable in surviving long treks across dangerous territory.

One additional consequence of the state of social isolation in Etharis: information travels very slowly. With no reliable messengers and limited magic, adventurers are sometimes the main source of communication between settlements. This can lead to problems, but can also work to the characters' advantage if they don't want news of their exploits spread.

HUMANITY IS CRUEL

When faced with difficult circumstances, there are those who rise to the occasion and act out of charitable intentions and seek to help those in need. In a dark fantasy setting, most people fall on the other side of the coin. Etharis is populated mainly by those who look out for themselves, often to the detriment of others. Whether it's scheming nobles living in the lap of luxury on the hard work of others or superstitious townsfolk doing whatever is necessary to keep from drowning in the terrible ocean of poverty, the people of Etharis are always looking at what they get out of any agreement. In this world, xenophobia, paranoia, and plain cruelty are the order of the day.

Dealing with NPCs is a cornerstone of roleplaying, but the aforementioned conditions make it an especially dicey proposition in Etharis. Help is not something given freely by the strangers you meet in the world. Even an easy smile and a honeyed tongue have their limits, so be prepared to deal with people on less charitable terms.

Bribery, intimidation, coercion, and sometimes outright blackmail are more common than appeals for mercy or sympathy. Knowing what the other person wants is a valuable piece of information when trying to come to some sort of arrangement, so wisdom is just as important as charisma. Spells such as *charm person* may seem like an easy answer, but the fear and hatred of magic in Etharis are amplified when used to usurp a person's will. And those spells do wear off.

This mistrust and paranoia in Etharis make some abilities, afterthoughts in other types of campaigns or settings, extremely valuable. Boons provided by your background abilities, for example, may save your life as much as a quick weapon or a *fireball*. Being able to rely on friends for a meal and a safe shelter can be some of your most powerful tools when dealing with other people, especially in a low-charisma party. The ability to find at least one friendly face in a new town may be the difference between life and death.

LEGENDS ARE NOT BORN

Despite the many abilities, magical items, and other advantages an adventurer has over the common citizen of Etharis, characters still face an uphill battle. The threats arrayed against them are legion, and many are strong enough to rip the very fabric of reality asunder. As a result, characters must be aware that they are not at the top of the food chain. The danger is very real, and death is a constant possibility. Those who rise to great heights do so only after a long and difficult struggle — and the fall from those heights is all the more dangerous.

What this means in game terms is that the player characters are relatively weaker than in traditional fantasy roleplaying campaigns. Progression to higher levels often requires greater effort and greater sacrifice than some players are used to. This is an element of dark fantasy and reflects the theme of constant danger. When building a character, it's wise not to take progression for granted and focus more on immediate viability. A character that will only come into its own after it gains four levels to pick up that one spell or feat you need is a character that will likely not survive through four levels.

Long-term planning is definitely an option, however. Many of the options presented in this book are designed with continual progression in mind. The key is not to rest all your hopes on the assumption of future levels. With danger all around, the future becomes a very uncertain prospect, and it's often more helpful to focus on surviving the present.

VICTORIES ARE EARNED

A knight stands, chest heaving, amid the remains of an undead legion. Around her are bodies not just of the creatures she fought, but also her fallen comrades. She stands perfectly still, though she feels the wound in her side beginning to fester. Behind her the villagers begin to peek out from their hovels to see that disaster has been narrowly averted.

These are the types of victories to be found in Etharis. Hard-fought battles, won at a steep price, but worth the cost nonetheless. Success is not guaranteed. Victories have very real costs, and in some cases those costs are the very morals and ideals of the "heroes" who pay them.

A dark fantasy setting is one in which good does not always vanquish evil, and the players are not always the heroes. There is no great final battle between the forces of light and darkness, the victories that occur are temporary and fleeting. They are battles rather than wars. But they are still victories.

Being a player in Etharis is to be a character willing to sacrifice for their goals, and who realizes that each victory is still cause for celebration. Deciding your character's motivations and goals in this world often means narrowing your focus. There is little glory to be found, so personal stakes are more appropriate. Whether it be to heal your sick sibling or to finish the work of your departed mentor, Etharis lends itself to these short-term, attainable goals. The grand adventures against impossible odds to save the world from the evils that surround it... those are stories for a later time.

THERE IS LIGHT WITHIN THE DARKNESS

Despite the dire circumstances facing the world, hope still remains. It may be scattered, dimmed, assaulted on all sides, but it has not been extinguished. A farmer stands against the oncoming soldiers, giving his friends and family time to flee. A merchant, with a kindly smile, hands a loaf of bread to a poor beggar. A paladin, the last of his order, continues his quest to rid the world of a

demon-prince. Across Etharis, small acts of kindness, of bravery, of charity, all stand out amid the dark backdrop. Few and far between, their scarcity only serves to make them more special.

Characters in Grim Hollow should know that these events are not the norm. An act of selflessness should be properly recognized as the unusual event it is. How would your character react to such a display? Those of good heart may be galvanized and reinvigorated to continue doing what is right. A cynical character might view the event with pity or contempt. Regardless, these flickers of hope should not go without comment.

Players should also realize that the characters they meet do not expect any sort of charity or kindness by their characters. Such acts are usually met with suspicion, and the players must be prepared to act accordingly. One might challenge the NPCs' expectations, seeking to sway them to your cause. Alternatively, a player's character might disguise their charity in order to avoid any conflict that might complicate the matter, such as slipping extra coin into a delivery so that it seems accidental.

ACTIONS MATTER

These suggestions are intended to help guide players through the dark fantasy world of Etharis, but they remain merely that: suggestions. Your actions are ultimately yours to decide. As you make these choices and face challenges throughout your journey, know that each path you take will have consequences, for good or ill. How you face the situations presented will define your character and the story surrounding them. People can change based on their experiences, and a player should take into consideration everything their character has done in deciding how they will react to things in the future. Some extreme events may shift alignment, change motivations and goals, or alter a character's bonds, ideals, and flaws in surprising ways. Accepting the direction your character takes, even if it isn't one that you had planned on, often results in a more rewarding experience.

Your decisions will also shape your version of Etharis. Characters you meet may show up later to influence important moments in the story. Word of your deeds spreads, albeit slowly, between settlements. GMs may set the overarching plot for a campaign, but your actions provide the building blocks they use in the future. In this way, the characters and the world around them reinforce one another to form a complete, cohesive narrative. Etharis is, above all else, a world of difficult choices and serious consequences. Choose wisely.





Handwritten text on a piece of parchment, likely a letter or document, written in a cursive script. The text is partially obscured by the man's hand and the desk's edge.

Chapter 2: Exotic Races of Etharis

Most of the standard fantasy races have a place in the world of Etharis: humans, elves, dwarves, and halflings do their best to make their way amid the tumult.

Several more exotic races called Etharis their home. These people strive and suffer along with the other mortal races—but their existences are touched with the same wonder, and trouble, that make Etharis unique.

Wechselkind

A mother hears a sound in the night and worriedly checks on her sleeping toddler. Nothing appears amiss, but weeks later the glamour fades and the true horror is revealed: the child has been stolen by the faerie, and a wechselkind is left in its place. The faerie are callous and unchanging beings, so nothing sparks their fascination (and their envy) more than the malleable, bright spark of a young human child.

A wechselkind is a construct crafted of wood, clay, and ceramic in the form of a small child, animated by faerie magic and concealed in a glamour that makes them appear identical to a stolen mortal babe. Once the glamour fades and the lie is revealed, the wechselkind is often cast out by its foster family, if not destroyed.

Occasionally, though, a family takes pity on the poor creature and attempts to raise it as they would a child, only to find that while their mind develops normally, a wechselkind is forever bound in the unchanging form of a childlike doll.

Whether nurtured or shunned, the wechselkind eventually finds itself an outcast in the world and must fend for itself as best it can. With few physical needs, the wechselkind often wanders from place to place, watching the people it encounters with envious eyes, hoping for a place to finally fit in.

The residual magic of its faerie glamour allows it to conceal itself in the guise of a human child, and a lone wechselkind often takes to begging by the side of the

road or doing odd jobs around an isolated farmhouse, searching for some scraps of acceptance or a small trinket or two to take with it when it must inevitably move on.

Recently, with the advent of the Weeping Pox, the wechselkind have started to emerge from hiding and be recognized as a separate race of creatures. With their immunity to disease, a number of wechselkind have offered their services as nurses and doctor's assistants in plague-stricken regions, gaining recognition and praise from those able to see beyond their tragic beginnings. These wechselkind are grateful for a sense of purpose and a place to belong, but remain wary. Once their usefulness is at an end, they know they may be cast out once more.

WECHSELKIND TRAITS

Constructed of sturdy materials and enchanted with powerful faerie magic, wechselkind possess several traits that distinguish them from the other races of Etharis.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 2 and your Charisma score increases by 1.

Age. As constructs, the wechselkind do not age as normal creatures do. They are forever trapped in the doll-like body of a stolen child. As such, their maximum age is more a function of natural erosion and damage than of time, occasionally needing to replace or fix body parts when needed. You are immune to magical aging effects.

Alignment. Faerie are as close to the embodiment of chaos as most mortals are likely to see, and their creations usually follow that trend. Although some tend towards mischief, more wechselkind lean towards good than evil.

Size. Built to resemble a child, wechselkind are between 2 and 3 feet tall and weigh between 35 and 55 pounds. Your size is Small.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 25 feet.

Artificial Form. As a constructed creature, your body functions differently than a normal person. You have advantage on saving throws against being poisoned, and you have resistance to poison damage. You are immune to disease. You don't need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe. You are still considered humanoid.

Faerie Glamour. When the faerie leaves a wechselkind in place of a mortal child, they cover it with a glamour to make it appear identical to the child that was stolen. Over time this glamour fades, but a wechselkind can still call upon it in times of need. You may cast the *disguise self* spell once with this trait, but only to take on the appearance of the child you were intended to replace, and you regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

Childish Agility. You can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than yours. You gain proficiency in the Acrobatics skill.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Sylvan and one other language of your choice.





Laneshi

Deep beneath the waves lies the Llana'Shi Empire. An ancient race, the laneshi straddle the line between life and death, communing with spirits for guidance and unafraid to meet death on the battlefield. Pale humanoids with manes of kelp-like hair, they seek the underlying duality of everything they encounter. A laneshi is more likely than not to view matters in absolutes and react accordingly. Friend or foe. Day or night. Acceptance or rejection. All things must have their place, and to this end they have developed a rigid caste system.

The mystic caste comprises all those laneshi who are born as twins, a very common occurrence. When this happens, the first-born of the pair is inducted into the mystic caste, while the other twin is consecrated as his or her sibling's spirit guide. Using a powerful necromantic ritual, the second twin is sacrificed and its soul bound within the body of the other. Each member of the mystic caste is therefore possessed of two souls: one living and one dead. This grants them vision into the spirit world and heightens their necromantic abilities. Mystics are in charge of all things that possess no life, and are therefore in charge of funeral rites, crafting, construction, recordkeeping, and food preparation. Heavier duties are usually performed with the aid of undead labor.

The second caste, the warrior caste, is in charge of all things relating to the living. This includes not only

The Brothers Part 1

Smoke rose into the night as two brothers fled the burning village of Kolyat. They ran as fast as their feet could carry them, stopping after hiding themselves in the brush. Only then did they look back.

The sparks from their home lit up the darkness, a mockery of shooting stars. Screams and inhuman growls drifted toward them, warning them that the danger hadn't passed.

Mischa touched his elder brother's shoulder. "Laszlo? Are Papa and Mama...?"

Laszlo hid his face in his hands. "I-I'm sorry, Mischa," he sobbed. "I'm sorry. I wanted to go b-back, but Papa ordered me to keep you safe."

Mischa had rarely seen his brother weep. Laszlo was the strong one, the one their parents relied on, who drove the bullies away. Yet now, he was broken. They both were.

Count Branimir. The name lit a dark flame in Mishca's mind. Their father had refused the Count's offer to buy their land for a tenth of its value. More, their father convinced the entire village not to sell. For their defiance, the Count's vampires extracted a terrible price.

Mischa held his brother tightly. "Branimir will pay," he whispered, tracing a symbol over his heart. "By Lady Vengeance's name, I swear: we will make him pay."

They gathered themselves and stumbled toward the road. Raevo lay 80 miles away.

To be Continued...

warfare, but also ruling, diplomacy, farming, the raising and educating of children, and so forth. The warrior caste is roughly double the size of the mystic caste and is structured as a meritocracy, with great deeds leading to greater status. The laneshi are constantly at war with their deep-dwelling neighbors, and use their ability to speak with the marine wildlife to find opportunities for heroism and advancement.

Despite this, the rulers of the Llana'Shi Empire have recently turned their eyes toward the surface for unknown reasons. Perhaps some new and greater threat is stirring in the dark depths of the sea, and the Laneshi seek aid from their air-breathing cousins. Or perhaps the rumors of mysterious visitors to the royal palace and blasphemous compacts with ancient evils are true, and the laneshi king is looking for new lands to conquer to appease the hunger of his unnamable master.

LANESHI TRAITS

The strict laneshi caste system governed your early training, and you also inherit certain fundamental traits due to your parentage.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1, and your Wisdom score increases by 1.

Age. Laneshi mature quickly, reaching adulthood at around 14, and live up to 150 years old.

Alignment. Laneshi have a strong tendency towards law, as is reflected in the regimented society and caste system. They don't show any particular leaning in regards to good and evil, however, with both showing up among their ranks in equal numbers.

Size. Laneshi are about the same size and build as humans. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet. You have a base swimming speed of 30 feet.

Darkvision. Born in the depths of the ocean where little light penetrates, the laneshi are at home in the dark. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern colour in darkness, only shades of grey.

Amphibious. You can breathe both air and water.

Beast Whisperers. You know the *speak with animals* spell. You can cast it once per day with this trait, regaining the ability to do so upon the completion of a long rest.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Laneshi and one other language of your choice.

Subrace. The circumstances of their birth determine which caste a particular laneshi belongs to, and therefore the rituals and training which govern their early life. The warrior caste involves rigorous physical training, weapon skills, and mounted combat. The mystic caste are born as twins, and contain the bound soul of their departed sibling bound within themselves.

LANESHI WARRIOR

Laneshi warriors bear traits informed by their heritage and training.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by an additional 1 (total of 2).

Skirmish Tactics. When you hit a hostile creature with a weapon attack, you may take the Disengage action as a bonus action until the end of your turn.

Laneshi Weapon Training. You gain proficiency with spears, tridents, javelins and light armor. You also gain proficiency in the Animal Handling skill.

LANESHI MYSTIC

Laneshi mystics are changed by the circumstances of their birth.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by an additional 1 (total of 2).

Duality of Spirit. You have undergone the Rite of Tann'lia, and the soul of your dead twin is now bound to your own. You have resistance to psychic damage, and you have advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saves against magic. The first time this trait activates after a long rest, you must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. If you fail, your twin's spirit attempts to wrest control away from you, leaving you stunned until the end of your next turn.

Laneshi Magic. You know one necromancy cantrip of your choice. At 5th level, you learn an additional necromancy cantrip of your choice. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for it.



Ogresh

The populous races of Etharis all have stories about the ogresh, although few have seen them in person. Stories describe them as solitary wise men and women who serve as founts of information and advice for the nearby communities. Adventure tales abound where the protagonist receives counsel from an ogresh before setting off on their quest, and yet others describe royal advisors with a distinctive set of wide features. Regardless of the veracity of such tales, the ogresh still exist across the continent, viewed as something of an exotic oddity.

In truth, the scarcity of the ogresh is a result of their particular biology. Young ogresh mature slowly, and during their extended youth, which may last decades, they are driven by a deep-seated sense of wanderlust. This feeling compels them to travel in search of a suitable area to settle, consisting of ample natural resources, a local population of sentient creatures, and a lack of other ogresh nearby. Once they decide upon

an area, an ogresh enters the second stage of their life, which is marked by a drastically increased appetite and a mostly sedentary lifestyle. More than a single ogresh could easily deplete the surplus of a small village, so the reason for their wanderlust is a simple case of biological necessity.

Given their reliance on other species, it comes as no surprise that the ogresh are masters of social interaction. Each individual is born with an inherent ability to read body language and vocal cues helpful in discerning the attitude of others. Indeed, the vast stores of knowledge often attributed to the ogresh is a reflection of their uncanny ability to glean information about an individual through these subtle clues. Even a casual conversation could end up revealing far more than one would intend to these keen observers, and the ogresh are smart enough to capitalize on such information.

OGRESH TRAITS

Ogresh possess inborn traits that contribute to their reputation as master communicators.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 2 and your Constitution and Wisdom scores increase by 1.

Age. Ogresh reach maturity around age 25 and can live as long as 300 years.

Alignment. In order to fit in with the societies they attach themselves to, ogresh are usually flexible when it comes to ideas of alignment, meaning that most of them tend towards neutrality.

Size. While only a little taller than a human, around 6 to 7 feet tall, an ogresh has a distinctively wide build which makes them significantly heavier than humans, even before they enter the sedentary portion of their life. A young ogresh usually ranges between 200 and 300 pounds, while an older, settled ogresh can get upwards of 700 to 800 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Takes One to Know One. You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed.

Powerful Build. You count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity and the weight you can push, drag, or lift.

Gift of Gab. You gain proficiency with two of the following skills of your choice: Persuasion, Insight, Deception, and Performance.

A Friendly Ear. Once per short rest, you can attempt to charm a non-hostile creature you are conversing with if you converse with them for at least one minute. The creature must make a Wisdom saving throw, the DC for this saving throw equals 8 + your Charisma modifier + your proficiency bonus. On a failed save, the target becomes charmed by you for one hour, and you learn one piece of information that the target knows that relates to the topic of your conversation, at the DM's discretion. Regardless of whether or not the target makes the save, they remain unaware of your attempt.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write three languages of your choice.



The Downcast

With the end of the Gods' End war, the Arch Seraphs of each deity descended upon the world, each taking upon their own shoulders the burden of imposing order on a world cast into disarray. These Arch Seraphs were the most powerful lieutenants among the angelic hosts, strong enough to retain a semblance of their power following the tragedy. The lesser angels were not so lucky. Many found themselves wholly bereft of their powers, cast down to Etharis to live out their now-mortal lives amidst the lesser races.

The downcast, as they have come to be called, are far fewer in number than when they first arrived, with a great number of them succumbing to despair and sickness after their fall from grace. Of those who

remain, some still serve the Arch Seraphs in their twisted crusades, hoping to reclaim what they have lost. Others have turned their backs on their former comrades to seek their own goals, fully embracing mortal life. Lastly are those who feel embittered by their fall and have been gleefully accepted by the Arch Demons as agents to spread fear and destruction.

Physically, the downcast still possess the beauty of their angelic forms, although they no longer shine as brightly as before. The mark of the divine still remains as a visible glow within their eyes, and faint markings on their skin mimic Celestial runes.

There is also variation based on the deity that each served in the past. Those who follow Maligant are physically stronger, Galt's host are hardy and resilient, Ulmyr's are possessed of a keen intellect, and Aurelia's kin have softer features and soothing voices.

Over time, the downcast have learned to tap into the small shreds of divine power that lie sleeping within their blood. That power still remembers the downcast's former purpose and can be harnessed in times of great need to aid those who once called upon the gods for their power. This ability is as dangerous as it is powerful, for there are many who would seek to take it by force. Fallen clergy who seek to drain the downcast in order to restore their own failing powers, vampires seeking to drink from a fountain of the tainted divine, even those who treat with powerful entities alien to this world, are all potential predators to a fallen angel. Indeed, there are some who have already discovered this secret and are willing to go to any lengths in order to obtain it.

DOWNCAST TRAITS

Downcast still bear the marks of immortality that have been robbed from them.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 2.

Age. Stripped of their immortality, the downcast nevertheless possess incredibly long lifespans, rivalling even those of elven blood. A downcast reaches maturity at the same age as a human, but can live up to 800 years old.

Alignment. Former servants of the gods, most downcast retain their good alignment, and the particular god they served dictates whether they are more likely to be chaotic or lawful. Galt's servants are strongly aligned with law, while Ulmyr's were just as strongly aligned with chaos. Aurelia and Maligant did not imbue their hosts with strong tendencies in either direction, and so they are more often neutral.

Size. Downcast are similar to humans in size, most ranging between 5 to 6 feet tall. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Divine Learning. You gain proficiency in the Religion skill and you know the *thaumaturgy* cantrip.

Divine Sangromancy. The blood of angels flows in your veins, and you can tap into that blood to boost the power of divine magic. Whenever an allied creature within 30 feet of you regains hit points, you may spend a hit die and add the result to the amount of hit points gained.

Lingering Divinity. You have resistance to necrotic damage.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Celestial and one other language of your choice.

Subrace. Downcast are divided into four distinct varieties based on the divine they served. These different types of downcast still retain some of the abilities and traits granted to them by their former patron deity.

AURELIAN

Aurelians exhibit traits linking them to their former master Aurelia.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 1.

Hand of Aurelia. You may cast the *cure wounds* spell at 1st level once with this trait, and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

ULMYRITE

Ulmyrites exhibit traits linking them to their former master Ulmyr.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 1.

Ulmyr's Sight. You may cast the *detect magic* spell once with this trait, and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest.

MALIGANTI

Maliganti exhibit traits linking them to their former master Maligant.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Fury of Maligant. You may cast the *branding smite* spell once with this trait, and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

GALTIAN

Galtians exhibit traits linking them to their former master Galt.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 1.

Galt's Bulwark. You may cast the *shield of faith* spell once with this trait, and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest.





Dreamers

History repeats itself. Even before the humans had their Eras of Expansion and Descent, other races had built empires on Etharis. The elves and the dwarves both had their time, and other, older races did as well. Where the dwarves of Stehlenwald live today was once the seat of an ancient empire that surpassed any that have come since. The name of this empire has been lost, and only fragmented remains of the oldest stories even hint at the grand heights that race once reached.

What can be gleaned from the histories of the elves and dwarves is that at one point a horrible calamity befell the land, wiping clean any trace of this ancient empire. The disaster came suddenly and without warning, and it was believed that nothing survived. Something did.

When the humans rose to power and began threatening the elves and dwarves, the Stehlenwald dwarves were forced to dig deeper into their mountain strongholds in order to withstand the siege. Deep in the dark, even below the adamantine that proved to be their salvation, the dwarves found sealed chambers dating back to before the cataclysm. With the seal broken, an ancient spell was lifted and the chambers' inhabitants began to stir from their millennia-long slumber.

In the days before the calamity wiped out their civilization, a group of these "dreamers" foresaw the danger and came up with a plan to survive it. Time

passes differently in dreams, and the ancients sought to use that fact to free themselves from the flow of time. Suspended between reality and dreams, sealed deep underground, they could live in a state of perpetual slumber for as long as necessary and outlast the disaster that would wipe out the rest of their kind.

The plan worked, but living for so long within the dream-world had unforeseen consequences. Upon waking, the dreamers found that they could no longer differentiate between dreams and memories, with both fading quickly from their minds. The result was the emergence of a new race with no knowledge of their own history, only half-formed images and dream-like impressions of a place and time that may or may not have existed.

Now the dreamers struggle to adapt in a world that seems like a waking nightmare. Whatever their history, they have proven to be quick-witted and strong, able to learn new tasks and execute them well. Their long slumber has left them strangely energized and able to work even beyond the legendary endurance of the dwarves. Even so, sleep is where the dreamers still feel most at home, and they have a habit of quickly dozing off whenever no immediate task presents itself.

DREAMER TRAITS

Dreamers' connections to the dream world change their mortal forms.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 2 and your Constitution score increases by 1.

Age. Dreamers mature at the age of 18 and can live up to 250 years old. The magic that kept them in stasis during their long slumber has also served to preserve their bodies from natural aging.

Alignment. Existence in the timeless sleep of the dream-realm makes most dreamers feel detached from the rest of the waking world, so many tend towards neutrality.

Size. You are roughly the same height and build as a human. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Dreamwalking. While asleep, a dreamer can reach out and touch the dreams of others within 1 mile.

Additionally, after finishing a long rest, and provided you slept during that time, you may choose one skill or tool proficiency. Until your next long rest, you may add a bonus equal to your proficiency bonus to any rolls you make using the selected skill or tool.

Even in Sleep. While asleep, you do not suffer penalties to Perception rolls utilizing senses other than sight.

Power Nap. When taking a short rest, you may choose to sleep for 1 hour. If you do so, you may reduce your exhaustion by one level and regain one hit die in addition to the other benefits of a short rest.

Darkvision. Acclimated to the pitch black tunnels beneath Stehlenwald, you can see in dim light within 60 feet as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Dream-speak, Dwarven, and one other language of your choice.

The Disembodied

To cast one's mind out amongst the outer planes is the dream of many an arcane spellcaster. In recent memory, none have come closer to that dubious honor than the lost city of Ulmyr's Gate. Founded by a group of ambitious wizards who chafed under the limitations imposed upon them by government bureaucracy, Ulmyr's Gate boasted free study for all mages who sought sanctuary within its walls. The Great College quickly became a lodestone for mages of every stripe from across the empire, and for a brief moment there existed a golden age of magic.

That dream came crashing down one night when the founding mages of Ulmyr's Gate attempted a massive conjuration ritual intended to part the veil and create a permanent portal to the Ethereal Plane. It didn't work. Instead their magic caused a massive rift in the very fabric of reality, and in an instant the entire city tipped into the void between worlds. The entire city was presumed dead, the Arcanist Inquisition railed against the hubris of those tampering in things man was not meant to know, and life in the Empire moved on.

Years later, stories surfaced of strange people being sighted in the region where Ulmyr's Gate once stood. These people seemed oddly blurred or indistinct, and some reports said they vanished right in front of witnesses' eyes. Gradually it became clear that these poor souls were the survivors of the Ethereal Rift, now trapped between worlds and trying to retain their tenuous grasp on the Material Plane.

DISEMBODIED TRAITS

You possess certain traits as a result of the magical mishap that trapped you between worlds. The disembodied are a collection of races that were in Ulmur's Gate when the accident occurred. Because of this, you can choose what race you appear as. This also affects some features below, such as your height. Unless specified, you do not gain any racial features from your origin race.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 2 and your Dexterity score increases by 1.

Age. The disembodied mature at a much slower rate than their humanoid equivalent, and their life expectancy is drastically higher, with not a single disembodied having passed due to old age.

Alignment. The disembodied tend towards no particular alignments.

Size. You still possess the height of your former humanoid self, but your nearly insubstantial nature has drastically reduced your weight to a quarter of your original weight. Your size is the same it was before the accident.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Fade Away. On your turn, as an action, you can fade from the Material Realm and disappear into the ethereal plane. While you remain faded away, you cannot interact with the Material Plane, and effects on the Material Plane

cannot interact with you, including spells and creatures. However, you can move and hear as normal, and see everything in shades of grey.

This effect lasts for 1 minute, or until you use a bonus action to end it. When the effect ends, you reappear in the Material Plane, in the closest unoccupied space you disappeared from. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you complete a long rest.

Planar Outcast. You may cast the *feather fall* spell once per day, targeting yourself only. When you reach 3rd level, you may cast the *blur* spell once per day. When you reach 5th level, you may cast the *blink* spell once per day. Intelligence is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

Arcane Origins. You gain proficiency in the Arcana skill.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write two languages of your choice.





Chapter 3: The Lands of Etharis

The world of Etharis, like most worlds, is divided into nations. These political entities give stability to the world, while at the same time posing threats – sometimes to one another, and sometimes to their own citizens.

A campaign set primarily in one nation or another will differ in tone or content, while a campaign that sees characters traveling between nations taps into the different styles of play and themes.

Welcome, adventurers, to Etharis.

I would rather you had arrived here at a happier time, when civilization was still at its height, when there were still gods who watched over this land's denizens. Those days are long past, and we all must somehow carry on.

Etharis has changed. It is a land haunted by restless dead and unspeakable monstrosities. Its people have grown colder, insular, superstitious, partial to violence and murder.

I cannot say it is a good time for adventurers, so I share this guide with you to help you find your bearings faster in Etharis and increase your chance at survival. Know that some of the writers have paid great personal costs to acquire their knowledge. I hope you will put what you find here to good use.

Perhaps you are destined for greatness. Or perhaps you will very quickly know the number of your days. Etharis will test your mettle. Regardless, I pray you will live an interesting and worthy life, that I may one day record your exploits in my journals.

May you thrive here, adventurers. Till we meet in brighter times.

– Odis Tremain, Historian of Sarmar Academy

The BÜRACH Empire

LANGUAGES: IMPERIAL NORM, VALIKAN, RAULISH, DWARVEN, AND ALL IMPERIAL DIALECTS
CURRENCY: BÜRACH CROWN

Occupying the central region of Etharis is its largest and most powerful nation. The BÜRACH Empire arose when four gods formed a pantheon that united the four kingdoms of Abendland, Nordenland, Rauland, and Unterland. When the assassination of Emperor Leopold I drove these gods mad, they killed each other in a cosmic war known as the Gods' End.

Since then, a great unease has festered in the heart of the BÜRACH people. Ostoya continues to threaten its eastern borders, while restive Valikan Clans challenge their power from the north. Meanwhile, an entity known as the Great Beast stalks the countryside, killing indiscriminately and creating aberrations born from nightmares. The Hearthkeeper Church is using all its powers to destroy the Great Beast while simultaneously suppressing all talk about it.

"Imagine four terrified halflings standing atop each other and masquerading as a tall king, and you'll get an idea of what the BÜRACH Empire is like."

— Ingmar Harkon, Erlefurt Grand Librarian

Still, the BÜRACH Empire clings to a vestige of power. It still commands the largest army in Etharis, its spellcasters remain the envy of other nations, and its currency, the BÜRACH crown, is recognised everywhere in the continent except Ostoya.

The BÜRACH is divided into four distinct provinces, each separated by religious and political ties.

ABENDLAND

RULER: ARATRON I AND THE HOLY ORDER OF THE HEARTHKEEPERS

Nowhere else can one experience the height of BÜRACH culture—as well as the depth of its debauchery—than in Altenheim, the City of Joy, capital of Abendland and the Empire itself.

The Gods' End left a terrible wound on the BÜRACH Empire, and perhaps this is most felt in Abendland. The people in the City of Joy have thrown themselves into enjoying every moment they have. Music fills the city morning and evening, and even at midnight, the city is aglow.

While Abenland is the seat of Imperial rule, it is clear that the Holy Church of the Hearthkeepers is the power behind the throne. The Hearthkeepers maintain order by preaching fidelity to the tenets of the late goddess Aurelia: kindness, humility, and temperance. Newcomers may find this odd, considering the wild, drug-fueled parties that occur every night in the city. One finds that the citizens of Altenheim are able to worship fervently each day and still not lose sleep over breaking every law of the goddess at night.

There isn't a desire or whim that can't be sated in the City of Joy. With its trade routes and acres of farmland, Abendland is one of the richest provinces in Etharis. The Silverstream Markets offer goods from as far north as Grarjord to as far south as Sante Viegre. Those eager to sample the culture of the BÜRACH Empire can visit the Bard Colleges and the famous Starhold Theatre. For the more religiously inclined, they can learn much from the priests of the Grand Temple of Aurelia. Finally, those looking for a good time can hardly do better than the many-storied Caledan Inn, open at all hours and usually booked full.

The Brothers Part 2

"Are you sure about this, Mischa?"

Now sixteen years old, Mischa stood with his brother on the Castalore pier, near the boat that would bear Mischa away to an island across the sea. There, in the Ravencourt Sanctuary, he would train to be a mage.

"Yes, I'm sure," Mischa said. "Remember our vow?"

Laszlo regarded him sadly. His elder brother had inherited their father's eyes; it was as if Papa was looking at him, urging him on his mission.

"I remember," Laszlo finally said.

"What about you? Are you sure about joining the Order?"

Laszlo nodded. "They have the strength of arms and training I need if I'm to help our country." He paused. "Their fort is just a few miles outside of Castalore. You could visit, if you like."

Smiling, Mischa shook his head. "We both know I can't leave the Sanctuary for several years, brother. We won't see each other for a long time."

Laszlo's shoulders dropped, then he looked up again, smiling. "That won't mean we won't be together again. You're my only family, Mischa. I'll find you, no matter what."

Mischa moved to embrace him. "I love you, brother. Till we meet again."

To be Continued...





Newcomers to Abendland and the Empire would do well to familiarise themselves with the laws of the land. One recent law stands out: it is a crime to talk of the Great Beast. The Hearthkeepers deny any such being exists and forbid any discussion of it. Gossip of this threat is considered a grave insult to the Church, doubtlessly landing the speaker behind bars. Yet simultaneously, the Hearthkeepers made it a serious crime to withhold any information regarding the Beast. All encounters with the entity must be reported to the Hearthkeepers, and all its monstrous progeny must be destroyed. Failure to do so may arouse suspicion that you are in league with the unmentionable entity.

NORDENLAND

RULER: ARCHDUCHESS MAELFA, WEST NORDENLAND
PATRIARCH ALFRIC, EAST NORDENLAND

Long been named as the focal point of magical studies in the Empire, Nordenland is politically split down its center. West Nordenland has declared itself loyal to the Bürach Empire, while East Nordenland has taken advantage of the Empire's distraction and declared itself an independent state. Two capital cities exist: Erlefurt in the West, and Ulmirac in the East.

While an uneasy truce reigns between the two factions, the schism remains as deep as ever, with both

sides maintaining troops at their borders. Travellers, and especially adventurers, have trouble crossing the border between East and West, as both sides are quick to suspect strangers of spying for the other side.

Politics isn't the only thing the Norden are clannish about. They are also split in terms of magical education. Indeed, arcane education is the primary export of the province, with both sides relentlessly training their own brand of magic-users.

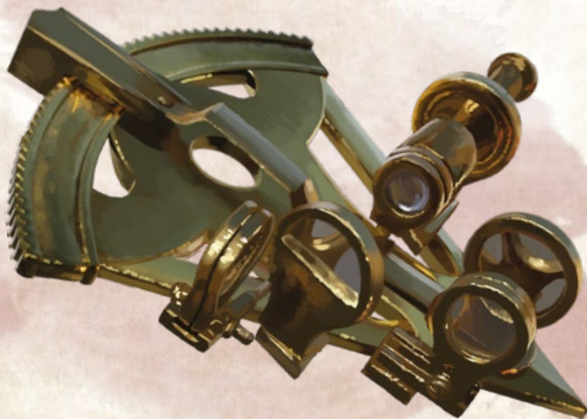
West Nordenland specializes in arcane magic. The city of Erlefurt began as a mage college, training wizards for many years before growing into a city. A total of eight wizard schools have since arisen in Nordenland, and while graduating from one is considered a great honor, Erlefurt's Magister College is considered the foremost institution for arcane magic, rivalled only by the Ravencourt Sanctuary in Ostoya. Scrolls, spellbooks, and various magic items abound in the shops along Viternas Lane. Archduchess Maelfa and her magistrate focus on training more mages to cement her importance to the Imperial family and to hold the East in check.

Meanwhile, East Nordenland draws magic entirely from the natural world. The capital city of Ulmirac houses the Order of the Golden Bough, the most powerful druid sect in the Empire. Nearly everything worth learning about nature can be found in their Library of Trees. Potions, ingredients, and herbs of all kinds may be found in the Silverine Market.

Alfric, Patriarch of the Oaken Circle, maintains order while encouraging his citizens to live in harmony with the natural world. Thus, the Circle maintains protective magical boundaries on the forests of East Nordenland, but even these are failing due to the power of the Great Beast.

Indeed, the only thing keeping the Norden from all-out civil war is the ongoing threat of the Beast. The entity seems more active in Nordenland than in any other province, with large sections of forests having been turned into a twisted hellscape populated by corrupted monstrosities.

Unlike Abendlanders, the Norden recognize the threat of the Beast and prioritize its destruction. To this end, they offer riches and magical secrets to any who can help recover the lost Imperial artifacts that have birthed this monstrosity.



The Laws of Bûrach

Here is codified the crimes that are punishable within the boundaries of the Empire. As it is written, let it be so.

Crimes against the People

FIRST TIER

Murder
Arson

SECOND TIER

Aggravated Assault
Sexual Assault
Robbery and Theft
Kidnapping

THIRD TIER

Assault
Trespassing
Pickpocketing
Smuggling
Disorderly Conduct
Littering
Damage to Property
Resisting Arrest

Crimes against the Hearthkeeper Faith

FIRST TIER

- Blasphemy against the Four Divines
 - Practicing necromancy
- Allying with the Beast or its progeny

SECOND TIER

- Theft of holy property
- Assault or grave threats against members of the Hearthkeeper Church

THIRD TIER

- Vandalism of temples and shrines

Crimes against the State

FIRST TIER

- Sabotage, Espionage and theft of state secrets

SECOND TIER

- Bearing false charges against an official

THIRD TIER

- Impersonating government officials
 - Forgery of official documents



RAULAND

RULER: ARCHDUKE
ULRICH EISENERZ

As visitors enter Rauland, they notice lumber yards stretching across denuded hills and plains. Eventually, they spy a dark cloud hovering over the mountains of Hermansdatt, only to realize it is a dense plume of smoke from the city on the slopes. This is Stehlenwald, crown jewel of Rauland.

Rauland is the seat of the Empire's arms and crafts industry. People from all over the continent come to Stehlenwald in hopes of learning from its schools of architecture, woodwork, stonework, and most of all, smithing. The fortunate few who show talent (and the majority with good social connections) may apprentice under a maestro, eventually founding their own shop in Rauland or elsewhere. Such a craftsman would find themselves in great demand all over the continent.

The loss of the god Galt has brought down the quality of Raulish goods but has not completely tarnished their reputation. Rauland still leads Etharis in terms of craft skill and raw materials. At the Stehlenwald Grand Market, buyers have a choice of fine steel weapons, armor, jewelry, and sundry items — all well crafted and equally expensive.

Despite its perennial bustle, a pall hangs over Stehlenwald. Its once majestic buildings are covered in soot, and its weary-eyed citizens stare blankly from their windows at newcomers. Workers trudge joylessly from their shops to their home. And at nightfall, the bells toll to warn others not to loiter after dark. Despite these warnings, guards often find yet another body in the gutter with its face and skin flayed off — the leavings of the Beast and its monstrous spawn.

UNTERLAND

RULER: LORD GENERAL VASSILY ROEMER

East of the Empire, Unterland guards the border of the Grey Spine Mountains. Under the guidance of the god Maligant, the Unters rose to become the premier warriors of the Bûrach Empire.

Unterland is a haven for warriors. In their capital of Olstenberg, the Unters train a host of new fighters, paladins, and rangers. Students of war find a treasure trove of reading material in the Ironblood Archives, while those seeking to prove their skill and win fame may participate in wargames held at the Imperial Arena.

Finally, those from outside Unterland who aim to be warriors of great renown spend every available coin to join the famous Academy of Swords. Attendance in the Academy is free and mandatory for capable Unter citizens; each person takes two years of rigorous military training, an achievement they wear with honor.



Ostoya

LANGUAGES: OSTOYAN, IMPERIAL NORM

CURRENCY: LEURA (ROUGHLY 1 BÜRACH CROWN)

East of Grey Spine Mountains, surrounded by forests of pine and cold, pale mists, Ostoya stands in challenge against the BÜRACH Empire. It's a testament to the magnitude of the Ostoyan threat that despite the Empire's extensive military, they are reluctant to wage a full-scale invasion against their neighbor.

Ostoya is a haunted nation, steeped in necromancy and secret, unholy pacts. Beneath the surface of the land lies a vast sunken metropolis, the City Below, through which untold hordes of undead roam and often reach the surface. This undead plague has created the Crimson Court, the vampire aristocracy that now rules the southern province of Soma, and have thus far held all challengers to their power at bay.

The northern border of Ostoya is similarly formidable. Raevo is a secessionist province that has defied the Crimson Court with the help of powerful allies: the mages of the Ravencourt Sanctuary and the undead hunters of the Order of Dawn.

Despite their efforts, the wilds of Ostoya still teem with undead that boil up from the City Below. Its necrotic power has covered the skies with black clouds that block sunlight. And after sunset, Ostoya is even more dangerous.

SOMA

RULER: GRAND DUKE DRAGO KOSHEVEK
AND THE CRIMSON COURT

The southernmost province is entirely under the thumb of the Crimson Court, a cabal of vampires that have ruled the land for centuries. From their capital of Nov Ostoya, the Court projects their power across its borders, backed with undead soldiers and necromancy.

Nov Ostoya sits at the southeastern end of the province. A natural harbor, it was once a popular port for trade ships. However, an Empire blockade currently prevents most trade to and from the city, so Nov Ostoya must do with what raw materials the outlying towns can extract from their mountains and forests.

Nov Ostoya is a walled city, known for its tall spires, stained glass windows, pointed arches, and stone gargoyles. The tallest structure, Blackharbour, is the fortress stronghold of Grand Duke Drago Koshevek. The Karstein Market serves as a central hub for goods and services, but one will be hard-pressed to find weapons and armor of quality – most of these have been co-opted by the nobles for their own armies. Other places of note are the docks, where a local unit of the Ebon Syndicate operates, and a small temple devoted to Solyma, goddess of righteous vengeance.

Newcomers are warned to avoid the now-desecrated Vosantra Cathedral. Apart from being haunted, the

A warning to all travellers in Ostoya: Bürach crowns are not welcome in either the province of Soma or Raevo. Likewise, the Ostoyan gold currency, leura, is not welcome anywhere in the Empire. One must clandestinely trade with underground dealers like the Ebon Syndicate in order to obtain the right currency before entering or leaving Ostoya.

Cathedral houses the Grand Duke's greatest weapon, a monstrous bat known as the Chiropteran Behemoth. The Behemoth's presence has long deterred the Bürach navy from attempting an assault by sea on Nov Ostoya.

Soma's wealth is concentrated in the capital; each day, the goods from farms, workshops, forges, and fishing boats wind up here, as do taxes from all provincial towns. An underground economy does exist – the Ebon Syndicate does brisk business here when it comes to smuggling and human trafficking, but even they are obligated to pay a cut to the nobility.

The Court's vampiric nature is universally known by the citizenry but never spoken of, especially not to outsiders. In fact, despite the prodigious cloud cover blanketing Ostoya, which allows vampires to walk about for short periods during the day, neither the Grand Duke nor his Crimson Court is often seen in public. Instead, the aristocrats prefer to hold lavish masked balls every few months.

Any adventurer of high renown certainly receives an engraved invitation to one of these gatherings. The festivities are a form of test, a way for the nobility to see what use they can extract from these heroes. Doubtless, the adventurers will be asked to undertake a task in exchange for the aristocrat's favor. Depending on the noble, these tasks may carry a suitable reward, but the attention rarely ends well for adventurers in the long run.

The further one goes from the capital, the more the wilds take over. The lush forest runs rampant along the hills and even up the mountainsides of the Grey Spine. One finds fortified towns with farms, lumber yards, and mines – all mired in grinding poverty.

The Ostoyans are not ones to question their lot in life. They remain loyal to the nobility who protect them and their families and who keep them safe from the dangers the Soman nights bring. And if anyone thinks of the aristocracy as oppressive, they do well to keep that opinion to themselves.

ADVICE OF FARMER LASLO OF CROWSBEND

If you should wander into one of our towns or farmsteads, stop by. Have a drink with us, and listen to a tale. Then move on. Keep to the path when in the woods. Do not let night catch you before you make it to the next town. Travel in large groups, carry weapons with magic or forged with silver. If you must camp, circle your wagons and post a watch at all times. Never let the fire go out.

If you should meet someone among the trees after dark, never speak with them, not even if they call you. If you should find a large hole that goes deep into the earth and hear a voice from within pleading for mercy, hurry onward.

Remember, you are in Ostoya now, and there is no word for mercy in our language.

RAEVO

RULER: MINA TALIESIN, THE LADY OF MASKS

The northern province of Ostoya is steeped in magic. Their wizards rival the abilities of the members of the Erlefurt Imperial Colleges and the elves of the Charneault Kingdom. In the fortress city of Castalore, the mageocracy of Raevo stands in opposition to Soma's Crimson Court.

Castalore is known for its magical crafts, among the finest in Etharis. The Raevan wizards have perfected the art of golems, such that they have pioneered ways to manufacture constructs made of diamonds, orichalcum, and other exotic materials. The Shaper Guild employs the foremost crafters of magical items in Raevo, constructing staves, potions, and spellbooks by the thousands each year.

All magic in Raevo was learned from one source – the fabled wizard academy of the Ravencourt Sanctuary, located on an island southeast of Castalore. Travelling there on your own is impossible – not only does an enchanted mist hide the island, but the ocean surrounding it is also roiling with sea monsters eager to swallow intruders. The only way to get across is by invitation.

A boat arrives at the Castalore dock once every seven years, bearing the names of those deemed worthy to cross over. Of every ten candidates who go, only nine ever return. The last one, it seems, remains on the isle, and the Ravencourt wizards never reveal why this is done or the fate of those left behind.

Raevo holds plenty of opportunities for enterprising adventurers. First Minister Mina Taliesin continually seeks out talented operatives to spy on and sabotage the Soman Aristocracy, offering rewards to those who serve her. Meanwhile, General Artemios Dulka, Ostoyan dissident and leader of the Order of Dawn, seeks to destroy the undead plague and the vampire aristocracy through whatever means necessary. He seeks out those of like mind and strong in arm. Doubtless, adventurers who can stomach his rhetoric find ample opportunities in his employment.





The Valikan Clans

LANGUAGES: IMPERIAL NORM, VALIKAN AND ITS DIALECTS

CURRENCY: BÜRACH CROWN, BARTER TRADE

Grarjord, the northernmost province of Etharis, is a land of pines, tundras, glaciers, and the forbidding cold. To survive, the warring Valikans must fight not just each other but the unforgiving environment, rampaging elementals, and the ongoing threat of coldfire.

Since the Schism, the six Valikan Clans have been divided into two nations: Thrull and Kandar. Both of these factions are in a deadlock for control of Grarjord.

THRULL

RULER: THE PRISMATIC CIRCLE;
CHIEF NOLGR MAGUSSON

To this day, the people of Grarjord fear Gormadrag, the legendary Prismatic Wurm that sleeps in the northern oceans and whose waking could bring about the end of the world. An order of druids known as the Prismatic Circle dedicate themselves to stopping this from happening. Through sacrifices of blood and war, they believe they can prevent the awakening of Gormadrag, and thus keep the world safe. Three Valikan tribes—Rune, Syr, and Volgr—supported this belief, forming the theocratic province of Thrull.

Thrull covers most of western Grarjord, which is mostly tundra, mountains, and islands. With little farmland, its inhabitants have turned to raiding and pillaging to sustain themselves.

These raids originate primarily from the Thrull capital of Tyburn, a coastal town for longships that prowl the coastline. Tyburn is largely composed of wooden longhouses and huts, some with thatched roofs. Where wood is scarce, many families have to make do with turf and sod roofs, and animals often climb atop homes to feed on stray grass.

Tyburn's economy runs on captured laborers. Prisoners are brought via longships to the city, where most are sold to work in fields or in rich households. The more able-bodied are put to work in mines or operating the bellows of a forge.

The most unfortunate are handed over to the druids, where they are ritually sacrificed to the Wurm, their bodies skinned and hung on the branches of sacred trees. The blood that seeps into the soil is said to warm the earth, deepening Gormadrag's slumber.

Tyburn itself is controlled by the largest tribe: Clan Volgr. A tribe of devoted warriors, the Volgr are the muscle of the Prismatic Circle and responsible for raiding. The other clans maintain a presence in the city as well. Clan Syr is most adept at forging and supplying weapons to the Thrull army, while the powerful magics of Clan Rune keep their enemies at bay.

Being isolationists, Thrullfolk see all foreigners as meddlers with imperialistic aims. Any who show up on their lands without clearance from their clan leaders are met with violence and likely enslaved.

Currently, Chief Nolgr Magnusson of the Volgr leads the three clans. His goal is to project Thrull power across all of Garjord, hence their docks are full of new longships and his clans continue to train more raiders.

Thrull is also known for their expertise in elemental magic. Here, Clan Rune are without peer. Their mages are adept at fashioning runestones containing powerful and destructive spells.

The rest of Garjord have learned to fear the Thrull raids. First come torrents of lightning and fire, destroying homes and creating havoc among the town's defences. Then follows a deafening war cry as the Volgr berserkers rush into battle, wielding Syr-made magical axes and shields. Such an assault has made even the most stalwart defenders falter.

KANDAR

RULER: QUEEN ANDREA HELSING

With the threat posed by Thrull, the remaining clans of Mithra, Limri, and Morgong banded together to defend themselves against wicked incursions. The nation of Kandar opposes the barbaric tenets of the Prismatic Circle and embraces a progressive approach to other nations. Unfortunately, Kandar does not possess the same fervent unity of Thrull; the leaders tend to bicker over everything, including how to best handle the matter of survival.

Kandar's capital of Hrist lies in the center of Valikan lands. Despite the strategic benefit this provides, Kandar fights battles on many fronts. In the west, they must deal with incursions from Thrull; to the east, they must contend with coldfire emanating from across the sea. Now that the Bürach Empire is making offers of protection in exchange for some Kandar's sovereignty, a bitter argument has arisen among the clan leaders—surrender part of their freedom for an alliance, or forge ahead on their own?

The fortified city of Hrist features architecture that is more akin to those of other nations than its own Valikan roots. Thick stone walls and towers surround the thatched houses and wooden buildings with steep, multi-layered roofs. The seat of government, Hajra, features a circular inner wall and a keep made up of several large longships fitted one atop the other. The sails have been changed into windmills to power the keep's granary.

Hrist thrives on trade with other lands. Located at the very end of the Caravan Way trade route is Caravaner's Rest, a sea of tents and kiosks where traders ply their wares and hunt for bargains. Most anything can be found and bought here—as it turns out, foreign traders are willing to give up good money for dried dream leaves, a powerful narcotic found only in the mountains of Garjord. The overwhelming demand for this addictive substance, and the current flagging state of Kandar's economy, has left the government with little choice but to control its trade through heavy taxation.

ON THE COLDFIRE CRISIS

At the core of all Valikan legend is the great Prismatic Wyrn, Gormadraug. A powerful elemental god, it was slain by the hero Kentigern and his six companions, which led to the rise of the Six Clans. Yet the fall of this primordial entity created a strange phenomenon that has plagued the Clans for centuries: coldfire.

Every Valikan fears coldfire. Even places as far south as the Castinella Provinces have heard of it. And while the Bürach Empire downplays the risk of coldfire ever reaching their lands, their outposts keep a wary eye on their northern border, watching for hints of blue flame among the forests.

Coldfire originates from the far northern region of Volgen. It burns bright blue while giving off no heat. It can "burn" on ice and snow. While it is slow to spread on ice and water, once it touches organic material, it rapidly and voraciously consumes plant and animal matter, turning them into ice. Coldfire then grows and spreads rapidly in a blue conflagration. It has been observed consuming flesh, leather, grass, wood, moss, and bones. There was once a forest north of Solheim; now it is just a garden of tree-shaped ice. Even mortal creatures immune to cold cannot escape the curse of coldfire. Their flesh merely slows down the coldfire, but they eventually also turn to ice.

Once it starts burning, coldfire is very difficult to stop. Intense heat is the only known countermeasure against it, such that the scouts of Fort Kentigern have employed burning oil and even fire spells in attempts to stop its spread.

Standing against the coldfire threat are the monks of the Order of St. Kentigern. Named after the First Hero who defeated the Great Wyrn, the Order's main function is to guard against the spread of coldfire. Their main strategy is to confine it at its source—Volgen, the island said to contain Gormadraug's heart. To that end, they keep an eternal watch on the northern lands, employing sled dogs, scouts, and ice drakes to find and fight any instance of coldfire on land and sea.

The Order has lost many members over the years, and it seeks more to replenish their ranks. Knowing the danger involved, precious few have heeded their call.

By Odis Tremain





The Castinellan Provinces

LANGUAGES: IMPERIAL NORM, CASTINELLAN
CURRENCY: VIRNA (ROUGHLY ONE GOLD CROWN)

The southernmost nation of Etharis, the Castinellan Provinces, are found on a peninsula marked by scorching winds and dry heat, reflecting the turmoil of the citizens that live there.

Castinella is composed of three main provinces: Toletum, Faro, and Therpena. Originally ancient enemies, the warlord Montego Valieda rose to power and united the warring provinces under the banner of the Arch Seraph Empyreus. Valieda proclaimed himself the Uniter, and those that defied him faced torture and death.

Now a fully militaristic theocracy, Castinellans take their faith deadly seriously.

THE ARCANIST INQUISITION

As Valieda attempted to maintain unity among the three provinces, he found that he needed something more powerful than the promise of peace to keep the provinces under his control. In time, he found a convenient scapegoat: those gifted with magic. He consequently formed the Arcanist Inquisition, which sowed a deep mistrust of magic among the populace and imprisoned those who carried even a spark of the

arcane. Their actions have earned the ire of many arcane factions—chiefly, the powerful Thaumaturge.

A recent pushback by the provinces against the Inquisition's abusive practices did nothing to temper the theocracy's actions. Those possessing magical gifts, children included, were burned alive by the Inquisitors. Arcane spellcasters passing through the Castinellan Provinces are advised to disguise their abilities or find a different route. As the Castinellan clerics often say, the climate of their land isn't agreeable to mages.

The Arcanist Inquisition is currently headquartered in the Cathedral of Embers, located in the Shattered Peaks of Therpena province.

TOLETUM

The seat of government for the Castinellan theocracy, the province of Toletum is the nation's military nervepoint. Located southeast of the Charneault Kingdom, the province serves as a gateway between the Castinellan Provinces and the rest of Etharis.

Toletum possesses a proud military tradition, one that matches Būrach's own province of Unterland. Per the teachings of Empyreus, the theocracy emphasizes readiness for war and strength in battle. As such, even a child as young as seven knows the rudiments of the bow and spear.

Various military schools have been established outside of the city, each one competing in annual games to gain prestige and attract more students. Those who choose to enroll receive membership to a mercenary

company, as well as gain access to the best weapons training outside of the Academy of Swords.

Supporting this militaristic stance is a highly developed smithing industry. It is said that the fires of the Ember Forge never go out, not with the continuous flow of coal and ore from the nearby Corova Mountains and the provinces' appetite for a righteous war.

Toletum strictly adheres to the teachings of Empyreus as codified in the theocracy's laws. The laws themselves are absolute, as citizens that espouse other beliefs are accused of heresy. The Inquisition's influence is most potent here. A reward awaits those who inform on arcane spellcasters foolish enough to enter the city.

FARO

Visitors entering the Castinellan Provinces by sea most likely enter through Faro. Located at the fork of the Salves River, the harbor city of Faro projects their naval power not just in the Castinellan Provinces but across the whole continent.

As the economic powerhouse of Castinella, Faro provides an enormous food supply for the Provinces, largely sourced from a superbly fertile land called the Blessing. With the fine produce from the Blessing's farms, the bountiful fish from the Salves, and the presence of wild game from the surrounding forests, Faro has more than enough to feed its citizens and trade with other nations.

The Farosi are great sailors, having traveled and traded throughout the continent. Those fortunate enough to be allowed into the Great Arsenal can witness how this massive shipyard constructs the ships that make up the Mighty Farosi Fleet. Those seeking work as sailors won't find a better place to gain experience than serving in Faro's navy.

THERPENNA

The third Castinellan Province, located at the southernmost tip of Etharis, is known for three things: expensive fine wines, elite cavalry, and the Arcanist Inquisition.

Therpena's vineyards, located in Sante Viegre, dot the temperate mountain slopes. Sante Viegre wines are prized everywhere, but the Castinellan theocracy has a monopoly on its industry. A black market for Sante Viegre wines bustles away from the Inquisition's watchful glare.

Therpena is also home to the High Cavalry School, making Therpenan riders renowned for their racing and mounted combat. Under the tutelage of the Red Horse, Aban Dahlrum, the High Cavalry School produces unparalleled light cavalry and heavily armored coursers.

Lastly, the province of Therpena holds the Ember Cairn, the ancestral home of the dragonborn and headquarters of the Arcanist Inquisition. The Age of Expansion saw human armies raze the Ember Cairn, driving the dragonborn from the Shattered Peaks. Years later, Valieda the Unifier returned their homeland, allowing dragonborn to rebuild the Ember Cairn. In turn, dragonborn abandoned their gods in favor of Empyreus's teachings. Therpenan dragonborn are the most zealous inquisitors, functioning as the Cathedral of Embers' protectors.

THE BOX

"Please, she's only a child!"

Her mother's voice carried from the front door to Aliora's room, where she hid as soon as they'd seen the red banners approaching. Her father was out in the vineyard — he couldn't help.

Aliora huddled deeper into her closet and did the only thing she could when she was scared — she conjured the image of a wooden box around her. It had served her well during games of hide-and-seek.

She couldn't hear her mother anymore. Heavy footsteps thudded on the stairs. Aliora covered her mouth with both hands, but she feared they would hear her heart drumming madly in her ears.

Then a calm voice on the other side of the closet door chanted a prayer. The footsteps approached her closet, and someone yanked the doors open. "Here she is," the tall woman in armor called.

Aliora's fear momentarily gave way to confusion. No one had ever been able to find her in her box before. An arm reached through her illusion and grabbed her arm. "Come with me."

The armored woman dragged Aliora down the stairs and out into the bright sunshine. Beside a mule cart resting on the dusty road stood two men with swords. Their breastplates gleamed with the symbol of the Arch Seraph: two fists breaking chains. At their feet lay the body of her mother. It didn't move.

A sob constricted Aliora's throat, letting a whimper escape. "None of that," said the woman, dragging her to the cage resting on the cart. Aliora was shoved behind the cold iron bars, she could only stare at her captors as they moved to close the door.

Then they stopped. The curtains flapping in the open windows of the house froze on the paused breeze. A bird in midflight hung suspended in mid-air.

Aliora blinked. A robed man appeared before her as if he'd stepped out the breeze. He wore a fiend's mask: a white face, red horns, and black tear stains streaked down porcelain cheeks. The cage door swung open at his slight gesture.

"The life you know is gone," he whispered. The mask didn't muffle his voice; it came from deep within her head. "There is nothing you can do about it. You may run, and if you do, you'll run all your life. The Inquisition never stops pursuing."

"Or, you may come with me. I have need for people like you — gifted with magic. If you wish to find a new way of life, follow me."

He reached his hand to her. Aliora looked at it, then at the bleak sky, at the red-clad Inquisitors frozen in time. She looked at the body in the dust — her mother, who taught her to pray to Empyreus, to follow the tenets of the Arch Seraph. To believe in a world that believed in justice.

Slowly, she reached out to take the masked man's hand.



The Charneault Kingdom

LANGUAGES: ALL ELVISH DIALECTS, IMPERIAL NORM
CURRENCY: ARMILE (ROUGHLY 1 GOLD CROWN)

To the uninitiated, the nation beyond the enchanted forest called the Grove Maze seems like a promised land of magic, fairy tales, and unbounded natural beauty. Here, the Spirits of Nature can still walk in physical form and communicate with mortals. Yet darkness and corruption now grows in the Charneault Kingdom, driven by the lingering enmity between elves and men.

The Charneault Kingdom covers a vast expanse of land in the southwestern portion of Etharis. Its name comes from the elvish *Caer Neiada*, which means “land of a thousand rivers.” The Kingdom stretches from the Grove Maze in the northeast to the Thousand Rivers to the south. The Rock-Teeth Mountains form a barrier against the *Bürach* Empire in the north.

The Charneault Kingdom began with much promise. King Aymeric Noblecouer ended a generation-spanning war between humans and elves and brought peace across the Thousand Rivers. Aymeric forged the Pact of the Sacred Lands, which hinged on two special tasks. The elven king would bring his first daughter to the enchanted

Temple of Mists, where she would learn the ways of the shamans and help keep the balance with nature. The humans would maintain order across the land through the establishment of Knight Chapters, organizations founded on honor, virtue, and a vow to vanquish evil. With this agreement in place, both sides lived in peace and prosperity.

That is, until the dark elves’ curse.

THE MISTS

It starts as a thick mist, moving unnaturally fast across the ground or water, enveloping everything it touches. No matter the time of day, the mists are always the color of charcoal, almost like smoke. Where it goes, sunlight fades, warmth dissipates, and nightmares abound. All are warned – at first sight of the Dark Mists, flee.

The Dark Mists originate from the Temple of Mists, located to the south of the Kingdom. From ancient times, this temple was a sacred site where powerful elven druids, the Bondmakers, would come to enact secret rituals and commune with the land’s nature spirits. Thus the Bondmakers maintained peace between mortals and spirits. So important was this bond that, without fail, each of the elven kings would send their firstborn daughter to the Temple to join the Bondmakers, ensuring the continuity of the rituals.

All this changed with the coming of the dark elves. Stoking the vindictiveness of elves who felt humans had taken their territory, the dark elves evoked evil magic to bring about another war between the two races. To this end, they kidnapped the daughter of King Thibault, Princess Tiphane, and brought her to the Temple of Mists to be used as the focus of an unholy ritual. But their plans were thwarted when her beloved knight, Ser Guilhem, came to her rescue. He managed to disrupt the ritual, but half a ritual is worse than a full one. A dark curse was released, affecting the mists surrounding the temple.

Thus the Dark Mists were created, and where it goes, it creates abominations: monsters, unholy knights, and dark elvish sorcerers that plague the settlements of the Thousand Rivers. As for Ser Guilhem, Princess Tiphane, and the sorcerer Diyanthar, their spirits are trapped in the endless mists, waiting for their chance at freedom.

CHARNEAULT KINGDOM

RULER: KING THIBAUT DE SAUVETERRE

The Charneault Kingdom came into prominence with the founding of the Pact of the Sacred Land. The peace it forged between humans and elves opened the doors to prosperity. Tall castles appeared among the many branching rivers of the land, the greatest of which is Castle Lamesdhonneur, seat of government and residence of the current king, Thibault de Sauveterre.

The Kingdom's economy thrives on fishing and agriculture. Being a floodplain, crops thrive on the rich soil of Charneault. While fish is plentiful, hunting is limited to appease the spirits of nature. The kingdom also trades with the elves for ore from the Rock-Teeth Mountains.

Charneault is known as the Kingdom of Knights. Several famous Knight Chapters have arisen in this kingdom, and they hold great power, as kings are chosen from the masters of these organizations.

One of the most influential Chapters currently is the Knights of the Severe Templar. A highly militarized organization that promotes law and order, they grew in power when the dark elves corrupted the Dark Mist and brought misery to the land. They have since openly condemned the elven nation, abhorred mystic oaths and bonds with nature, and pushed for a return to war with the elves. Rumors abound that their Chapter master, Hermand le Severe, plots to take over rulership of the land.

On the opposite end of the spectrum lie the Vermiel Guards, whose members swore a sacred duty to the elven shamans and help them maintain peace with the nature spirits. Those who join must whole-heartedly believe in the union between elves, humans, and nature, and be true to the Sacred Pact. As such, only the most virtuous and devoted of knights are allowed into the Chapter. In return, these knights gain extraordinary powers from their shaman counterparts.

All the Chapters welcome new applications into their organization, but becoming a knight of Charneault is no easy feat. As a squire, one must don weapons and

armor and go on a quest. They carry a blank shield until they have performed an act of bravery. Only then may they wear a coat of arms signifying their deed. And if a knight should prove their prowess and bravery well enough, they may be invited to join the Royal Council and directly serve the king.

As of now, King Thibault is preoccupied with searching for heroes powerful and knowledgeable enough to rescue his daughter Tiphane and Ser Guilhem from the Dark Mists.

TOL LEYEMIL, CITY OF ELVES

RULER: ACHEN ELAVAIN

Nestled among the southern foothills of the Rock-Teeth Mountains, the most ancient elven city of Etharis stands as a monument to a proud race. Here, one can see elven architecture that predates even the Bûrach Empire. It's impossible to tell precisely how long the city has been standing, as the archives of Tol Leyemil are closed to non-elves. However, elves of all origins and subraces are welcomed and accepted here, like wandering children returning to their ancestral home. Thus, Tol Leyemil has been called the Last Free Elven City, the final stronghold of the Fair Folk.

Tol Leyemil employs an unusual system of government. The city is ruled by an elven assembly known as the Achen Elavain, which is composed of members drawn from the city's populace. While they are not part of the council, the Bondmaker shamans also have a say in the government's decisions, as they represent the will of nature itself.

Tol Leyemil maintains an alliance with the Charneault Kingdom, but relations have since soured with the dark elf curse. Racial enmity has flourished once again on both sides, affecting bilateral agreements. Some of the more radical human knights have accused the elves of tightening their supply of ore, which in turn has impacted Charneault's supply of weapons. Meanwhile, a growing sector of elves are demanding that humans return lands they claim have been stolen from their nation. No violence has occurred yet between these two sides, but with these escalating provocations, that may not hold true for long.



Tol Kerdwyl

To the southeast of the Charneault Kingdom is a cursed place that no one approaches: Tol Kerdwyl, the Dead City. Here, skeletal trees feed off of poisoned waters, corrupted nature spirits are at their strongest, and the Dark Mist prevails over all. Tol Kerdwyl is the bastion of Thaelkinei, the Lich Princess.

Centuries ago, Thalkinei was a sorceress whose beauty and power had no rival. She was not content with this, so she sought terrible magic that would provide her with greater power. The ritual she enacted gave her the ability to command reality itself.

It took the combined might of all the elven sorcerers to stop the Lich Princess, and even then all they could do was make her fall into an endless slumber. While the world is safe from her, Tol Kerdwyl remains corrupted with evil magic. Only monsters and dark elves haunt its twisted forests and black springs.

MORENCIA

RULER: DOGE LORENZO FLABENICI
AND THE MORENCIAN SUPREME COUNCIL
LANGUAGES: IMPERIAL NORM, MORENCIAN
CURRENCY: DIMA (ROUGHLY 1 GOLD CROWN)

The city-state of Morencia is located on a small island in the Gulf of Lions, west of the Castinellan Provinces and south of the Charneault Kingdom. Morencia has maintained its independence for centuries, resisting the might of the Bŭrach Empire and, more recently, the Castinellan Provinces.

The most important topographical feature that enabled this defense are the Misty Reefs. Enchanted long ago by the city's founders, the reefs create a maze-like water hazard that only the city's guild navigators can traverse. This barrier has prevented nearly every naval attack on Morencia, giving the City Council complete control over those who go in and out of their territory. Thus, merchants enter through guild guidance, stay for a limited time and in a specific district, and leave the same way they came.

With their skill in navigation and their powerful ship-building capability, Morencia was able to establish a trading hub whose reach spanned the continent. This fortune allowed them to put up the Bankers Guild, which includes clients from among the most powerful nobles and government officials in Etharis. Eventually, the Augustine Trading Company established its headquarters in Morencia, gaining a controlling interest in both the Bankers Guild and the Supreme Council.

Those seeking to enter Morencia must do so with the guidance of a Morencian Guild Navigator. Otherwise, they lose themselves in the endless fog and quite possibly run aground on a sandbank or shatter their boat against a treacherous reef. Those who manage to enter the city-state marvel at its plethora of canals, bridges, ships, historical buildings, and of course, its markets brimming with goods from all over Etharis.

KOLYHS "THE BLAZING BRAIN", PRIVILEGED SPEECH TO THE MORENCIAN SUPREME COUNCIL

"My friends, let me pose a question to you: What is the source of Morencia's great wealth?"

"Trade, some of you may say. But Morencia produces little of value in and of itself. We are fifth in Etharis in fishing, fourth in craft goods, and second in ship production. We have no mines or farmland to speak of. Any weapons we have must come from trade."

"Loans, some of you may say. But from whence came these enormous reserves of gold in our banks?"

"Is it shrewd investments? Keen business acumen? The backing of a merchant guilds? No. Business can only be done if you have something to sell."

"But we do have something to sell, my fellows, something the other nations would take from us if they could. We have the *illusion of security*."

"Over centuries, we have convinced all of Etharis that this tiny plot of land in the middle of a lagoon is the safest place for them to keep their gold. We have counted kings, clergy, men and women of great power among our clients. And they trust us because they believe in an *invincible Morencia*. A city that will never fall, whose coffers will never be plundered by invaders."

"Our recent victory against the most powerful navy in Etharis has cemented this aura of invincibility. And we cannot stop there! We must capture every foreign spy, execute every traitor, repel every despoiler. I tell you, the instant that we lose this facade, our city is finished. We must do all within our power to maintain the illusion, or we have nothing."

"Help me try."

Keep in mind: Morencia is not without its dangers. Rumors swirl that a monstrous cult has gained a foothold in the city. Many a moonless night has seen a dead body floating in the canals, ritually killed. The murders have become so infamous that they have been dubbed the Dread of Moonless Night, and the City Council has offered up a bounty to those who can put an end to it.

LIESECH

RULER: COUNTESS ANALITA VON RAIZA
LANGUAGE: IMPERIAL NORM
CURRENCY: BŪRACH CROWN

Liesech is a city in crisis. Once a thriving, wealthy trading hub that ruled over Bite Bay, it's being eaten alive by a mysterious and deadly disease known as the Weeping Pox. Despite both the Bŭrach Empire and the Charneault Kingdom's efforts to contain the malady within the city, the Pox has spread to their lands.

STRANGE TIDES

The rise and fall of Liesech began with its founders, the Bouwengracht family. When Liesech was nothing more than a sleepy fishing town, the patriarch, Otto

Bouwengracht, encountered a strange entity known as the Filth Gazer. The creature offered Otto a bargain: she would give him the means to turn Liesech into an immeasurably wealthy city, and in return, she would be allowed to feed from its refuse, including its dead bodies. Otto agreed, and with their contract, Liesech began to thrive. At the same time, Otto began a cult to worship and feed the creature's bottomless hunger.

Leveraging its sea access and location between Bûrach and Charneault, Liesech grew on trade and cultural influence. As the years passed, its territory expanded as it constructed a system of channels and ditches that controlled flooding and aided its merchant fleet. Soon, Liesech ships dominated the entire western Etharis.

So great was the wealth that flowed into Liesech that it attracted the attention of the Bûrach Empire, which desired to add this jewel to its collection. To this end, they conscripted a captive vampire, Countess Analita von Raiza, to enter Liesech and use her powers to bend the Bouwengracht family under her will. With their influence, the city would let itself be annexed by the Empire.

But the Empire had underestimated the Countess's power and desire for vengeance. On the day of the annual celebration of the Nurturing Sea, she slaughtered the entire Bouwengracht family, a heinous crime that became known as the Red Morning. With that, Analita usurped control of the city.

THE BATTLE OF BITE BAY

The Filth Gazer was not done with Liesech, however. Rather than have the city fall to the vampire, the creature infected the corpses of the Bouwengracht with a new and fatal disease: the Weeping Pox. Within days, the Pox had infected the populace by the thousands.

Realizing that only one of them could control the city, Analita rowed to the middle of the gulf in order to deal with the creature once and for all. In the terrible battle that ensued, a strong gale hit the city, followed by enormous waves that laid waste to the port. After a day passed, Analita returned, alive but grievously wounded.

None can say who won the duel or if the Filth Gazer still exists. As for the Countess, she has barricaded herself in the High Belfry at the center of the city and has not been seen since. Her Cult of the Black Lady tends to her and handles her affairs in the city.

In the meantime, the uncontrolled Weeping Pox ravaged Liesech. Despite being a new territory, Bûrach could do nothing for the citizens and instead blocked all paths to Liesech. Unfortunately, it was a few days too late: the Pox was spreading through the Empire as well.

Liesech is now dying. Not only is it still reeling from the Pox, but the quarantine imposed by Bûrach has decimated its economy. Currently, the only faction capable of treating the Pox is the Morbus Doctore. However, this cult-like organization is more keen on torturous experiments and will surely extract a high price for a cure. The Liesech City Council continues to seek help from any good-hearted souls willing to save their city.

Languages in Etharis

Languages in Etharis divided the world as much as political borders do. The common citizenry of Etharis speak the tongue of their nations, and rarely anything else. Only those who travel extensively have the need or the means to speak a language other than that of their village and their neighbors.

The races have their own language as well, but even then they're only learned and spoken if they're the predominant language in an area. Established dwarven families in one of the nations like Ostoya, for example, may never speak Dwarven, favoring Ostoy instead. Racial hubs within a nation, however, would definitely speak both the racial tongue and the national language.

Since there is no Common tongue that unites the civilized world, translators are highly valued and respected. Adventurers, as well as those who make a living by moving from place to place, often take the time to learn as many languages as they can.

The following languages are most used in Etharis:

Charneault: The dominant language of the Charneault Kingdom.

Castinellan: The dominant language of the Castinellan Provinces. This language is also used for most of Etharis's religious texts. It was until recently considered a crime to translate the teachings of the Seraphs into a language other than Castinellan. Castinellan is also predominantly spoken in Morencia, making it the most common language used in trade.

Valiki: The dominant language of the Valikan Clans. Each of the clans speaks a slightly different dialect of Valiki, but each dialect is similar enough to make themselves understood.

Ostoy: The dominant language of Ostoya.

Lower Bûrach: The commoner's dialect in the Bûrach Empire. It is more heavily accented than Higher Bûrach, making the general population of the nation harder for foreigners to understand.

Higher Bûrach: The highborn dialect in the Bûrach Empire. Most formal writings are in this dialect as well, such as religious texts, laws, royal decrees, plays and poems, etc. If a foreigner learns Bûrach, this is the dialect they learn.





Chapter 4: Magic of Etharis

In Etharis, “magic” is a catch-all term for a power outside of mortal ability, a means of altering reality altogether. In truth, there are three separate forms of magic, each with their own mystical sources: arcane, divine, and nature.

Arcane Magic

ON MAGICAL THEORY

The mage in his school, the travelling wizard on his quest, the archmage in his sanctum—all three personas rely on a latent force that exists everywhere in Etharis, a power they call magic. Yet despite the uncountable

number of books written on the subject, the source of this power is not very well understood.

By far, the greatest authority on the nature of arcane magic was a man named Raakan el-Adakar. An archmage who lived during the early Age of Expansion, Raakan built an impressive library on the nature and origins of magic.

He was the first to determine that arcane magic emanated from a dimension parallel to the Material Plane, a place suffused with latent energy that could alter reality. He named this plane Numena and the energy itself “numen.” Magic, according to Raakan, is merely using numen to give the magician’s will physical shape and form.

According to his research, when mages cast spells, they slightly weaken the border separating Numena from the Material Plane in order to draw numen. Like

a magnifying glass focusing a ray of sunlight, they turn numen into the magical effect of their choice.

Several theories have been put forth on what Numena actually is. One theory states that it's the original abode of the gods and formed the source of their power.

Another one says that Numena is itself a living entity attempting to shape our dimension to match its own.

Sadly, Raakan did not live to enjoy the fruits of his labor. For his final magical experiment, he opened a portal to allow himself to physically enter the realm of Numena. He returned through that portal five years later, driven completely mad and speaking an unknown language. He spent his last days confined in Coldiron Keep.

Colleges of Magic

An ability as potentially dangerous as magic is kept under control by certain authorities, and magic users who attend a college have long been taught to respect this hierarchy.

ERLEFURT COLLEGES

Western Nordenland is the center for arcane learning in the Bûrach Empire, and certainly, they wish to keep it so. The capital of Erlefurt has the highest number of magical colleges anywhere in the continent, with the Magister College being the oldest and most venerable of all.

It's difficult for an aspiring mage to enter an Erlefurt College, but the Magister College proves itself to be exceptionally stringent. The Magister chooses only the best among its applicants – not merely those with high magical aptitude, but also those most likely to bring greater honour to the school.

The Erlefurt Colleges see magic as a force that must be harnessed with wisdom, the kind that only those trained in the way of the Erlefurt mages possess. As such, all students must swear to follow a set of rigid laws, listed in a tome called the Magician's Codex.

The primary laws in the Codex include the following:

Only wizards that pass their final tests of the Erlefurt Colleges may carry the title of Erlefurt mage.

An Erlefurt mage shall defend their College against all who would despoil them or steal their secrets.

Only the Erlefurt Colleges may train a student. All students must be registered and approved by the Colleges.

All magical experiments must be registered and approved by the Colleges.

Any Erlefurt wizard who breaks this code of laws is hunted down by the Enforcers, a group of elite abjurers highly adept at subduing one of their own. Once captured, they are taken to the magician's court and judged by the Grand Mage. If found guilty, transgressors may be magically imprisoned or even executed. As for other arcane institutions who don't subscribe to these tenets, they are treated with contempt and even outright hostility.

As there are no established magical colleges in the Grarjord, the Valikan Clans send promising students to Erlefurt for tutelage.

RAVENCOURT SANCTUARY

East of Raevo's shores, hidden among the mists of its enchanted isle, the Ravencourt Sanctuary trains its mages in its own academy.

Unlike its rival, the Magister College, the Sanctuary believes that magic may only grow through freedom. Thus the Ravencourt Sanctuary has few laws to guide the actions of its mages. Their primary rule is that the mages must keep all the secrets of the Sanctuary safe. Apart from that, a wizard who successfully graduates from the Sanctuary is free to do what they will and teach whom they want.

Despite their seeming lack of laws, the punishment for breaking the primary rule is both harsh and unequivocal. Before they leave the Sanctuary, a Ravencourt wizard swears a vow to protect their academy's secrets. They write their name on a page of an enchanted book and leave a drop of their blood on it. This creates a highly potent curse: if they should break the vow, the page tears itself from the book and burns. The wizard consequently dies an unspeakable death.

Due to the politics of the times, the mages of Erlefurt and Ravencourt Sanctuary are technically at war. Mages from either side have standing orders to annihilate each other on sight, though this is rarely practiced.

SARMAR ACADEMY

Having lived for thousands of years as a people, the elves are no beginners when it comes to magic. In their capital of Tol Leyemil, they have established their own college for wizards: Sarmar Academy, famous for its abjurers, mystics, and war magi.

The Sarmar mages believe that magic is learned and controlled through careful observation. By watching and listening to the natural world, the elves first learned to summon and shape numen. Thus they teach their students to pay close attention to detail and focus on what they can sense. The emphasis on patience makes teaching slow. Often, education at Sarmar can last decades. For elves, of course, that's a short period of time.

Being an entirely elven city, only elves may enroll in Sarmar Academy proper. The exception is Aemanyir House, a branch of the Academy located outside the city limits. This program was begun decades ago by an elven mage named Alren Corynthios as an experiment



in teaching the elven way of magic to non-elves. Most of the Sarmar academicians consider this a waste of time, but Alren's persistence and connections with the elven nobility have kept the school going for many years, if just barely.

RENEGADE COLLEGES

There are several unrecognised colleges in Etharis that purport to teach magic. As they tend to produce subpar mages, they're looked upon with scorn by the established colleges. At worst, they're viewed as potential sources of magical mishaps, as without proper guidance, these mages may cause irreparable harm to the reputation of all mages – or worse, bring about a magical catastrophe.

The Erlefurt wizards have made it their protocol to capture any "renegade" wizards and bring them to Erlefurt for processing and possible reeducation. Those who refuse this polite entreaty are viewed as enemy combatants.

Societal Mistrust

Society is divided in its view of arcane magic. In the Bürach Empire, for instance, it was considered a means to maintain order, project power, instill obedience, gather information, and maintain the status quo.

However, with the coming of the Great Beast, magic is now treated with greater suspicion, as some have come to suspect that the entity was the result of an arcane experiment gone horribly wrong. The Hearthkeepers have not denied this notion, as it deflects their own culpability on the matter.

The Ostoyan view of magic is more varied. In the province of Soma, the lower classes fear magic as something they're incapable of understanding. They also stay clear of it to avoid inciting the jealousy and ire of the nobility. The Crimson Court believes that the use of magic is theirs by right; anyone else who uses it must either become their servant or be destroyed as a potential threat. Thus one often finds mages under their employ in their war against Raevo and the Bürach Empire.

In the province of Raevo, magic is by and large an accepted part of daily life. The workshops and markets of Castalore are teeming with wizards and magical constructs, all under the watchful eye of the Ravencroft Sanctuary.

In the Charneault Kingdom, the elves treat magic as an integral part of their lives. They hold skilled mages in high esteem, even as they warn of the costs of seeking greater magical power.

The dark elves have no such restraint; they plumb the deepest secrets of magecraft with hardly a thought to the dangers involved. While they have attained great power, the price is often paid by the entirety of the kingdom, as is the case with the Dark Mist.

In the human-controlled lands of the Charneault, attitudes vary greatly. Mages are treated with respect in more learned circles, but among Knight Chapters they are treated with suspicion, and in the case of the Severe

Templars, outright hostility. They hold elven magic accountable for the suffering endured by the populace and forego all arcane abilities in favor of strength in arms and divine fervor.

It is worth noting the Castinellan Provinces in particular when it comes to magic for the specific stance they've chosen: deplorably, the theocracy is hostile to all forms of arcane magic. It is the will of Empyreus, they claim, that their people wage a righteous war against all magic-users and those who harbor them. To undertake this task, the Arcanist Inquisition has assembled a host of knights and common soldiers under the command of clerics and paladins. Backed by the power of belief, they call on divine magic to locate arcane mages and neutralise them.

As such, magic-users must be careful when entering the Castinellan Provinces, lest they be arrested, imprisoned, and very likely put to death by the Arcanist Inquisition. Mages cannot even expect sympathy from the common folk; most peasants hold all magic as witchcraft and devilry, the power of demons brought to Etharis.

The Castinellans have yet to move against nations that employ magic, such as the Bürach and the Charneault Kingdom. But should the theocracy grow more powerful, a "righteous war" would certainly be in the cards.

The Brothers Part 3

"It can't be."

Mischa gazed at the staff in his hand as he stood with the rest of the Sanctuary's mages. Today was their final day, their graduation. Their crystal staff would glow when it was time for their departure.

Only his did not light up.

"You've been chosen to remain," the Keeper whispered in his mind. "One life for the knowledge you've all attained."

"No," Mischa said. But his classmates were already teleporting away, nodding to him in commiseration. They left him alone all the same.

"I refuse!" Mischa shouted. "It can't be me! It can't!" His brother's face drifted through his mind. He dropped his staff, ready to fight or flee.

The Keeper appeared before him, wrapped in robes and silence. He raised a skeletal hand. "What binds you to the outside world?"

Mischa gasped as memories invaded his mind. The death of his parents. The burning of Kolyat. The screams. It was all too much—he fell to his knees in horror.

The Keeper lowered his hand. "I have chosen well." After a pause, the Keeper continued. "I have an offer. Stay five more years, and you will have all the knowledge and power you desire. What do you say?"

Mischa gazed into the dark void of the Keeper's hood. "Why help me?"

The Keeper said nothing, but Mischa believed he was smiling.

To be Continued...

The Divine in Etharis

THE AETHERIC WAR AND THE GODS' END

At the start of the Age of Antiquity, the gods came into being. They opened their eyes to behold a universe of wonder and chaos, and they were enamored by it. They wanted to shape it into something that resembled them. But to do that, they needed to impose order.

The gods, good and evil alike, banded together to form a pantheon. They shaped the firmament and the seas, then the land and all the creatures that followed. They named the land Etharis and created the races to populate it.

As these newborn mortals turned their minds to their creators, the gods found an endless font of believers. Their worship lifted the gods to greater heights, securing their ability to turn the wheel of the universe.

But the gods were not alone. At the fringes of their ordered realm lurked the Aether Kindred – incomprehensible beings of pure chaos who predated the gods themselves. The Kindred were mostly content to remain uninvolved, though occasionally the gods would find a piece of reality in disarray – a star gone missing, an ocean dried up, an entire city disappearing into the void.

When the entire race of the Sommerkin vanished one day, the gods decided they'd had enough. The Aether Kindred were an active threat to their power.

The gods feared that one day all they had built would be stripped away. They had to strike now, while they still had the faith of their followers and stood at the height of their powers.

Thus, all the gods, good and evil alike, banded together as a host and launched an assault on the Kindred. This became known as the Aetheric War.

None can say precisely what happened to the gods who participated in the war. Some historians say it was a slaughter. Others believe the gods were consumed by the eldritch horrors they tried to defeat. Others state that some gods retreated from this plane to someplace the Kindred could not reach them. While nothing is certain about what happened to the gods thereafter, it is quite certain they were utterly defeated.

Of the great pantheon, only the four youngest survived: Galt the Builder, Maligant Warclad, Ulmyr the Wise, and Aurelia of the Hearth. Perhaps out of caution or fear, they held back from the Aetheric War. Thus, they were the only ones left to pick up the pieces, becoming responsible for the fostering of Etharis's future.

If there was any silver lining to the Aetheric War, it was that the Kindred never showed themselves afterward. It's believed these horrors slept deeply after destroying so many of the gods, perhaps requiring rest to heal from their wounds. But once they have regenerated, they will likely take revenge on the rest of the gods' creations.

Whatever the reason, this left the Four Divines to their own devices. As the surviving gods left to guide the mortals of Etharis, they decided to band together.



Their idea was to create an ideal empire, the “one above all” to act as a shining beacon for all mortals to emulate. This idea became the Būrach Empire. Its first emperor, Indorius I, would be the lightbringer for all the nations of Etharis. To this end, the Four Divines gifted him with four holy artifacts that would enable him to rule wisely and protect his empire.

For a time, all was good. Unfortunately, this method of salvation carried the seeds of its own destruction. The Būrach Empire so loved their emperor that they decided to keep his bloodline eternally pure. The Church of the Hearthkeepers imposed the Edict of Eternal Blood, mandating that only those of the line of Indorius I may ascend to the throne. With that, they forced his descendants to intermarry, weakening their blood. The wretched outcome of this practice finally manifested in the Mad Emperor, Leopold.

When Leopold touched the divine artifacts, his mind and soul were instantly connected with the Four Divines – and it drove them all to madness. Galt, Maligant, Ulmyr, and Aurelia warred among themselves, each vying to reign as the One True God of the universe. This culminated in the Gods’ End, when these last remaining deities destroyed one another.

Etharis carries on as a godless world. While divine power remains, it constitutes but a shadow of its former glory.

ARCH SERAPHS AND ARCH DAEMONS

In the absence of the gods, Arch Seraphs and Arch Daemons took up their mantle. While these beings are lesser divinities, they inherited part of their deity’s power, making them the source of divine magic in Etharis.

The Arch Seraphs each correspond to a virtue.



EMPYREUS

The Arch Seraph of Valor is the former servant of the war god Maligant. A favorite of holy warriors, he is the patron of courage and strength, as well as all who seek to wage a righteous war. Due to his uncompromising nature, his followers tend to become zealots in the pursuit of righteousness. Empyreus is traditionally opposed by the Lord of Fear, Beleth. Although of late, Beleth seems to have gotten the better of him, as some of Empyreus’s followers have tended to use terror to enforce their beliefs.



ZABRIEL

The Arch Seraph of Truth was once the librarian of the goddess Typharia. Zabriel abandoned her mistress’s neutral stance and instead sought to bring an end to the lies that support tyrants and oppressors. She is loved by scholars and truth seekers, and she is opposed directly by Venin, the Great Deceiver.



APHAELON

The Arch Seraph of Temperance holds sway over the domains of peace and spirituality. A patron of monks, clerics, and peacemakers, Aphaelon is honored by those who seek enlightenment. Once a servant of Myria, goddess of joy, he has since decided there is little joy to be found in Etharis, and he has therefore taken to becoming the saint of those who seek spiritual balance. Those who follow his ways find freedom from addictions and worldly desires. He is opposed by the Arch Daemon of Hedonism, Sitri.



SOLYMA

The Arch Seraph of Justice, she has remained faithful to the ways of her former master and seeks to destroy the Aether Kindred who killed him. She is the patron of good judges, vigilantes, and hunters of eldritch abominations. She often foils the schemes of Gorodyn, the Daemon of Avarice.

While she is known as the Great Judge, Solyma has gained another epithet from her worshippers in Ostoya: Lady Vengeance. The bloodiest family vendettas have thus been waged in her name.



MORAEI

The Arch Seraph of Sacrifice holds power over the domains of Heroism and Compassion. Unlike the other archangels, he is actually an aspect of his former mistress Vetara, the goddess of love. He is the patron of martyrs and those who aspire to be great heroes. He represents hope for a better tomorrow that comes by making sacrifices, both great and small. He offers strength to those who must surrender themselves for a great cause. He is opposed by Malikir the Proud.



MIKLAS

The Arch Seraph of Mercy, her domain is healing and freedom from suffering. She does not have the power of Aurelia, goddess of protection; she can only offer aid to those already sick, wounded, or in distress. It is said that this new dark age offers no rest for Miklas the Merciful. She is opposed by Tormach, the new Lord of War.



BELETH

The Arch Daemons each correspond to the cardinal sins. None have remained faithful to their erstwhile masters. The Arch Daemon of Fear goes by other names: the Trickster, the Laughing Man, and Blackjester. Beleth's goal is

to spread fear throughout the world, and in this regard he has far surpassed his former master. Beleth derives pleasure from torturing mortals with their worst fears. He's the patron of tyrants and oppressors everywhere, but Beleth's cruel practical joke is that every one of these people end up fearing the very people they oppress. To him, it's eternally funny.

Beleth has no fear of Empyreus, and any who mentions the Arch Seraphs causes Blackjester to smirk, as if from a private joke.



VENIN

The Arch Daemon of Deceit is known as the Great Deceiver, Dusktongue, and Hooded. She is the master of illusion, lies, and insanity. Venin is capable of giving her followers power over

illusions and deceit, but eventually even they lose track of what is truth and fiction. Venin hates Zabriel and rewards those who assassinate the Arch Seraph's followers.



SITRI

The Arch Daemon of Hedonism, who is also called Bloodrose and the Tempter, lures mortals to give in to gluttony, lust, and the basest worldly desires. Those who follow Sitri eventually lose themselves to their addictions. Sitri's most prized possessions are the souls of

Aphaelon's followers who backslide into their desires. Sitri enjoys taunting the Arch Seraph with these mortals the most.



GORODYN

The Arch Daemon of Avarice is often called the King of Red Coins. He's a corrupted follower of Jezra, god of commerce. In his boundless treasury, he counts the souls of those who have given themselves to hoarding wealth

by whatever means necessary, leaving hunger and poverty for the rest of the world.

Gorodyn fears Solyma, as he owns so much there is very little he can do to defend it all. He has taken to bribing mortals and other beings to fight her in his stead.



MALIKIR

The Arch Daemon of Pride prefers the title "God". As the most powerful of the Arch Daemons, her domain is tyranny and the abuse of authority.

She is known to corrupt heroes who start out as goodhearted but eventually give in to pride. Inevitably, her followers meet a terrible fall.

Malikir considers her counterpart, Morael, as a weakling and not even worth mentioning.



TORMACH

The Arch Daemon of Wrath goes by names such as Manslayer and Marauder, as he has taken over the domain of the war god Maligant.

He is a patron and source of strength for evil-aligned warriors.

Unfortunately, he cannot offer strategy or wisdom, only mindless butchery and violence. For Tormach, winning comes second to dealing as much suffering and death as possible. Privately, even the other Arch Daemons consider him the weakest of their number.

Though he has tried time and again, Tormach has failed to defeat Miklas the Redeemer, a fact that infuriates him to no end.

PLAYING AS A CLERIC OR PALADIN

The gods' presence has waned. Divine power is rare in Etharis. As a cleric or a paladin, you are a rarity, and your patron calls upon you to project their power into this world.

Remember that Etharis has entered into a Dark Age, the likes of which has never been experienced. Its people are starved for guidance and want to believe in a power greater than themselves. As a wielder of divine magic, you may use that hunger to bring hope and light to the world, or you could twist it to your advantage. Rarity is a form of power, after all.



Nature Magic in Etharis

GORMADRAUG, THE PRISMATIC WYRM

In the beginning, when the gods created the world, they had no idea of the power they would imbue into it: it was, after all, their first attempt at creation. Thus they imparted too much of their power into the substances they made and accidentally breathed life into. This act is how the Primordials came to be.

Chief of the Primordials is a being known as Gormadraug, a tiny being that carried a spark of the gods' divinity. Gormadraug amused the gods so they kept it as a pet. Over time, their treatment became abusive, using Gormadraug for hunting sport, slaying and resurrecting him over and over. Finally, when they tired of him, they abandoned him on the newly formed Etharis.

For millennia, Gormadraug devoured everything he could see: rocks, ice, lava, and air. With every century, he grew larger, until finally, he emerged as a colossal Wyrms with power over all the elements. He was so powerful that he could spawn his own children, themselves powerful Primordials.

However, he never forgot his treatment at the hands of the gods. He nursed his hatred for a millennia. The final straw was when the gods declared that the new race of mortals would inherit all of Etharis. Gormadraug sought his revenge by sending his Primordials to war against the gods.

Despite his numerous spawn, they were not powerful or plentiful enough to achieve his goal. The gods handily defeated the Primordials. Gormadraug survived, however, and went into hiding.

This setback did have one upside for the Great Wyrms: it emboldened the gods to believe they could fight the Aether Kindred as well. The debacle that followed left Etharis with only four remaining gods.

Gormadraug wasted no time: he created four new spawn that he would use to fight a new war on the gods and their mortal children. These Primordials were Alondo of the Deep, Morrakesh the Burning Lady, Citrolach the Living Mountain, and Ilhara the Queen of Air and Shadow.

This time, Gormadraug aimed to win. He became as cruel to his children as the gods were to him. To strengthen them, he forced them to compete with each other endlessly, killing each other in an arena of death and resurrection.

The four Primordials endured centuries of this treatment, each one aching to be free of their sire. They found their opportunity from an unexpected source: a man named Kentigern and his six companions, seeking to tame the northern wilderness for habitation.

Alondo convinced his siblings to betray their sire and take the adventurers under their wing. Morrakesh and Citrolach formed powerful magic weapons that could pierce Gormadraug's flesh. Ilhara composed for them a magic song that would put the Wyrms to

sleep. Alondo taught them enchantments that would keep them alive, and he also told them where to strike Gormadraug's heart.

Thus, Kentigern and his companions were able to slay Gormadraug. His body was destroyed, save for his indestructible heart, which was thrown into the northern sea and formed an island. Subsequently, the four Primordials divided Etharis among themselves and formed their own realms. Citrolach and Morrakesh settled along the equator, while Alondo and Ilhara resided closer to the poles.

Yet all four Primordials know that their sire had not truly perished, but merely slumbered in a state of hibernation. Even now, mortals obtain command over the elements from the Prismatic Wyrms. The day may come when Gormadraug would awaken and wreak his vengeance across Etharis. They continually seek ways to prevent this from happening. Yet with the appearance of coldfire, it seems the Prismatic Wyrms' resurrection is coming ever closer.

THE PRIMORDIALS

LADY MORRAKESH

The Burning Lady, Red Queen, and Emberheart are among her many names. The Primordial of fire holds court in her dimension of Flamebourne. She commands azers, efreeti, and fire giants in her army.

Morrakesh suffered the worst under Gormadraug, as the Wyrms saw her as his most destructive weapon. As such she is highly capricious and easy to anger; she may reward you with great riches as easily as she can turn you into a cinder. Great care must be taken in petitioning her.

Those who would summon Morrakesh for favors must first burn a sentient being alive as a sacrifice.

ALONDO

Lord of the Deep and ruler of the Endless Sea, Alondo controls the denizens of lakes and seas. He is worshipped by merfolk, water elementals, and the mighty leviathans.

Aside from Kentigern, Alondo has no love for mortals and wishes to be left alone. That said, he is the most conscientious of his ilk, working diligently to prevent the return of Gormadraug. Still, rumours persist that he has something to do with the outbreak of coldfire plaguing Etharis.

Those who would invoke Alondo must first slay one of his hated enemies and hurl its heart into the sea.

CITROLACH

The Living Mountain masters over all those who pledge themselves to earth and stone: earth elementals, deep dwarves, and gnomes, as well as all who dwell in his underground realm of Stonereach. His power extends to plants and the denizens of the forests.

To summon Citrolach, one must surrender a fortune in gems and gold, all of which is returned by the Primordial to the ground from where it was taken. Take care, however. Notoriously stubborn, Citrolach holds to a particular stand for centuries. The saying goes that it is easier to move a mountain than convince Citrolach to change his mind.

ILHARA

The Queen of Air and Shadow is the most ambitious Primordial of all. She sends her army of djinn, sylphs, and air elementals abroad to find secrets from among mortals and spirits alike. Her ultimate aim is to be powerful enough to fill the void left by the dead gods.

Ilhara requires that a dark secret be whispered into the air before she can be summoned.

GORMADRAUG

The Great Prismatic Wyrm is also a powerful source of nature magic, though he doesn't know this in his current state. There is no known way to invoke him. Moreover, worship of the Wyrm is illegal throughout the Valikan

Clans. The Primordials also warn that drawing power from Gormadraig may even awaken him, and readily smites any druids or rangers who try.

PLAYING A DRUID OR RANGER IN ETHARIS

There are three important centers in Etharis for learning nature magic: the druid circles of the Valikan Clans, the Order of the Golden Bough in Eastern Nordenland, and the elves of Tol Leyemil. These are not the only places for learning, but druids and rangers that emerge from here are considered to be among the elite.

As a druid or ranger, you must keep in mind that your power is derived from the Primordials—including Gormadraig. These beings have taken over the realm of gods in terms of nature magic. They each serve their own interests and are not bound by mortal notions of good and evil. They are, however, hostile to all that threatens that power. This includes the possible awakening of Gormadraig, the corruption of nature caused by the Dark Mist, and the arrival of the Great Beast. The Primordials require druids and rangers alike to fight these forces wherever they encounter them.





Chapter 5: New Subclasses

Adventurers specialize in their abilities and outlooks based on the culture in which they train and advance. Characters in the world of Etharis are influenced by dark and sometimes malevolent powers, delving into areas others might avoid.

The subclasses here reflect back onto the heroes the world in which they live and fight. Some absorb into themselves the dangerous but powerful forces they fight. What that acceptance of terrible power means on

the psyches of the adventurers can be varied; however, one cannot deny that delving into the darkness to find strength often comes at a steep and sometimes fatal cost.

As you play with these subclasses, reflect on how the common folk that the characters interact with accept and react to them. Are these powers visible to bystanders when they are used? If so, do they mimic or even outright exemplify the types of powers used by the monsters that the commoners fear?



Barbarian Primal Path

Path of the Fractured

Barbarians are defined by their rage, channeling emotion to unleash brief but potent destruction on their enemies. A rare few study esoteric psychological techniques that split their rage off from the rest of their psyche, dividing their identity into two parts: ego and id. When their ego is in control, the Fractured — as these barbarians are known — are capable of a degree of self-control and cunning few other barbarians are. When they allow their id to take control, their countenance turns monstrous and their bodies swell with the power of rage made physically manifest.

FACE OF RAGE

Starting at 3rd level, when you enter your rage, your features distort and your body swells such that your appearance completely changes. Creatures who don't witness your transformation and have not witnessed it in the past do not recognize you. In addition, while raging, you gain the following benefits if you aren't wearing heavy armor:

- You can roll a 1d8 in place of the normal damage of your unarmed strike, and your unarmed strikes count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.
- When you use the attack action with an unarmed strike and are not wielding a shield, you can make one unarmed strike as a bonus action.
- You count as one size larger when determining who you can target and who can target you with grappling, and your reach with unarmed attacks increases to 10 feet.

MASK OF CIVILITY

Also at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with one of the following skills of your choice: Arcana, History, Investigation, Medicine, Nature, Persuasion, or Religion. In addition, you gain proficiency with one artisan's tool kit of your choice or learn to read, speak, and write one language of your choice.

BRAINS AND BRAWN

At 6th level, while you are not raging, you have resistance to psychic damage. While you are raging, you have resistance to all damage except psychic damage.

CUNNING AND BRUTAL

At 10th level, while you are not raging, you can take a bonus action on each of your turns to take the Disengage or Help action. While you are raging, your unarmed strikes score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

BETTER HALF

At 14th level, when you take damage that would reduce you to 0 hit points, you can use your reaction to drop to 1 hit point instead and gain temporary hit points equal to half your maximum hit points. In addition, if you were raging your rage ends, and if you weren't raging, you enter a rage (even if you have no remaining uses of your rage). You lose all remaining temporary hit points after 1 minute.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.



Barbarian Primal Path

Path of the Primal Spirit

Many barbarians are in tune with the natural world, but few are as mystically intertwined with it as those who walk the Path of the Primal Spirit. These barbarians forge powerful connections with the beasts and natural spirits of the world, inspiring such ethereal beings to manifest and journey with them on far-flung adventures.

Barbarians who follow this path have a deep reverence for the ecological cycle of the natural world. Such barbarians are as likely to accept quests and pleas for aid from local wildlife as they are other humanoids. This respect for animals doesn't cross into naivety — no barbarian better understands the circle of life and the delicate balance between the needs of predator and prey better than those who walk the Path of the Primal Spirit.

PRIMAL COMPANION

At 3rd level, you gain a primal companion, a spirit that accompanies you on your adventures and instinctively fights alongside you. Select either the Guardian or Striker, and one of land, sea, or sky. Its in game statistics found below, which uses your proficiency bonus (PB) in several places.

You determine your companion's appearance; however, this does not affect its game statistics. Despite taking on a physical form, your primal companion does not need to breathe, eat, or sleep. You and your primal companion can communicate with one another telepathically while you are both on the same plane.

As an action, you can temporarily dismiss your primal companion or summon it within 30 feet of you. In combat, your primal companion shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It can move and use its reaction on its own, but the only action it takes on its turn is the Dodge action, unless you use a bonus action on your turn to command it to take another action. That action can be one in its stat block or some other action. If you are incapacitated, your companion can take any action of its choice.

You can spend one minute per short rest caring for your primal companion. When you do, the spirit regains 2d6 hit points. Your primal companion regains all lost hit points at the end of a long rest. If your primal companion dies, the spirit manifests in a form of your choice the next time you finish a long rest.

SHARED RAGE

Also at 3rd level, while you are raging, your primal companion has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

KIN TO BEASTS

At 6th level, you can cast the *animal friendship* and *speak with animals* spells using Constitution as your spellcasting ability. Once you cast a spell using this feature, you can't cast either spell until you finish a short or long rest.

SKINRIDER'S TRANCE

At 10th level, you can use an action and choose your primal companion or one beast currently under the effect of your *animal friendship* spell to enter a trance. For the duration of this trance, you possess the chosen creature.

While possessing a creature, you sense the world through the target's senses, you have total control over its movement and actions, you use the beast's physical

statistics and abilities instead of your own, and keep your mental attributes. This possession ends if you choose to exit the trance (no action required by you), the beast you're possessing is reduced to 0 hit points, or you and the beast are on different planes of existence.

While in this trance, you are blinded and deafened in regard to your own senses and cannot move or take actions. You can remain in the trance for a number of hours up to half your level in this class + your Constitution modifier. Once you use this feature to enter the trance, you cannot do so again until you finish a long rest.

SHAPE OF THE WILD

At 14th level, you can use a bonus action on your turn to choose a new form for your primal companion, causing it to transform instantaneously. When you cause your primal companion to transform in this way, its current hit points change to its new maximum hit points.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

PRIMAL GUARDIAN

Medium (Large if Land or Sea) beast, neutral

Armor Class 12 plus PB (natural armor)
Hit Points 5 + six times your barbarian level
Speed 30 ft.; fly 45 ft. (Sky only); swim 45 ft. (Sea only)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 4 (-3) | 12 (+1) | 6 (-2) |

Saving Throws Str +2 plus PB, Con +3 plus PB
Skills Athletics +2 plus PB, Intimidation -2 plus PB x 2, Perception +1 plus PB
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11 plus PB
Languages Understands your languages but cannot speak.
Challenge equal to your PB

Resilient Rage. When the guardian's hit points fall below half its maximum, it's enraged for 10 minutes, gaining temp hit points equal to half of its maximum.

Vigilant. The guardian can't be surprised.

ACTIONS

Natural Weapon. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 plus PB, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1d4 + 2 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (based on form chosen).

REACTION

Body Block. When an ally within 5 feet of it is hit by an attack, the guardian takes the damage instead.

**Proficiency Bonus (PB)*

PRIMAL STRIKER

Medium Beast, neutral

Armor Class 12 plus PB (natural armor)
Hit Points 5 + four times your barbarian level
Speed 40 ft.; fly 60 ft. (Sky only); swim 60 ft. (Sea only)

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 15 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 4 (-3) | 12 (+1) | 7 (-2) |

Saving Throws Dex +2 plus PB, Wis +1 plus PB
Skills Perception +1 plus PB, Stealth +2 plus PB
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11 plus PB
Languages Understands your languages but cannot speak.
Challenge equal to your PB

Flyby (Sky Only). The striker doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Aquatic Assault (Sea Only). While the striker is submerged in water it has advantage on natural weapon attacks made against other creatures without a swim speed submerged in water.

Enraged Strikes. While you are raging, the striker's natural weapon attacks gain a damage bonus equal to your Rage Damage.

ACTIONS

Natural Weapon. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 plus PB, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1d8 + PB bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (based on form chosen).

REACTION

Harry (Land Only). When a creature within 5 feet of the striker is attacked, the striker gives that attack roll advantage.

**Proficiency Bonus (PB)*



Bard College College of Adventurers

Bards from the College of Adventurers learn from heroes of old and stories of legend. Bards are jacks of all trades, and for the College of Adventurers this statement rings ever true. They combine all the useful skills of their companions into one, allowing them to be versatile and supportive. While not having a direct goal, many adventurer-studying bards live to tell tales of other heroes or seek to create their own. Stories of heroic deeds, tales of cunning, magical anomalies, or godly might fuel the life-blood of these bards.

TALENTED ADVENTURER

Starting when you choose this bardic college at 3rd level, you gain an adventurer's talent of your choice. Your adventurer's talent options are detailed at the end of this bardic college description. You gain an additional adventurer's talent of your choice at 6th level and again at 14th level.

PARTY PLANNER

Also at 3rd level, while a creature has one of your Bardic Inspiration dice, it can use a bonus action on each of its turns to take the Help action.

WELL-ROUNDED

At 6th level, choose one skill, tool, and language. You gain proficiency in the chosen skill and with the chosen tool, and you can speak, read, and write the chosen language.

IMPROVISATIONAL TALENT

Starting at 14th level, when you finish a long rest, you can choose one adventurer's talent you know and replace it with one you don't.

ADVENTURER'S TALENTS

The following adventurer's talents are listed in alphabetical order.

Barbarian. You've learned to fight with primal ferocity. On your turn, you can enter a rampage as a bonus action. While rampaging and not wearing heavy armor, you have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage. You can't concentrate on spells while rampaging. Your rampage lasts for 1 minute but ends early if you are knocked unconscious. Once you have rampaged, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

Cleric. You've gained the ability to channel divine energy directly from the gods, emboldening your allies and sanctifying their attacks. As a bonus action, you choose a creature within 30 feet. The chosen creature gains temporary hit points equal to your Charisma modifier + half your level in this class for 10 minutes. While a creature has temporary hit points granted by this spell, they can choose to lose these temporary hit points when they hit a creature with an attack, dealing additional radiant damage equal to the temporary hit points they lost. Once you use this talent, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

Druid. You can cast the *polymorph* spell without expending a spell slot. If you cast the *polymorph* spell with this trait, you can only transform yourself into a beast with a CR less than half your level in this class. Once you cast the spell with this trait, you must finish a long rest before you can do so again.

Fighter. You gain proficiency with martial weapons and shields. You also choose and learn one of the Fighting Styles available to the Fighter class.

Monk. While you are wearing no armor and not wielding a shield, your AC equals 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your Charisma modifier. In addition, you can use Dexterity instead of Strength for the attack and damage rolls of your unarmed strikes and you can roll a d6 in place of the normal damage of your unarmed strike. When you use the Attack action and only make attacks with unarmed strikes on your turn, you can make one unarmed strike as a bonus action.

Paladin. When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can expend one spell slot to deal radiant damage to the target, in addition to the weapon's damage. The extra damage is 1d6 for a 1st-level spell slot, plus 1d6 for each spell level higher than 1st, to a maximum of 5d6. The damage increases by 1d6 if the target is an undead or a fiend, to a maximum of 6d6. You can do this a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all uses of this feature at the end of a long rest.

Ranger. You've learned the *hunter's mark* spell, which counts as a bard spell for you but does not count against your bard spells known. You can cast this spell without expending a spell slot as if you had expended your highest spell slot. Once you cast the spell using this talent, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

Rogue. You've adopted the quick thinking of clever heroes that outsmart their foes. You can take a bonus

action on each of your turns in combat to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Sorcerer. You have 2 sorcery points and learn one of the following Metamagic options available to the sorcerer class: Careful Spell, Distant Spell, Empowered Spell, Extended Spell, Quickened Spell, or Subtle Spell. In addition, you can use an action and expend a spell slot to gain sorcery points equal to the level of the spell slot expended. When you finish a long rest, you reset to 2 sorcery points. When you gain a level in this class, you can replace the Metamagic option you know and replace it with another Metamagic option from the list.

Warlock. You learn one eldritch invocation of your choice. If an eldritch invocation has a level requirement, you use half your level in this class to determine your eligibility. When you gain a level in this class, you can choose one of the invocations you know and replace it with another invocation that you could learn at that level.

Wizard. You learn any two spells from the wizard spell list that are of a level you can cast. These count as bard spells for you but do not count against your number of bard spells known. When you gain a level in this class, you can choose one of the wizard spells you know and replace it with another spell from the wizard spell list of a level you can cast.

The Brothers Part 4

"You can't win."

Surprised, Laszlo nearly didn't catch the next sword blow with his shield. "Yes I can!" he shouted, raising his sword.

His sparring partner, Major Wingard, deflected his strike. "You can't win unless you're giving your all, which you aren't."

Laszlo fought harder. Yet with every blow from his master, he was forced to give ground.

"You have yet to surrender your might and will to a cause," Wingard continued. "And without a great cause, you're no match for a powerful enemy."

Roaring, Laszlo slammed his shield against her breastplate. Wingard fell to the floor, and Laszlo's sword found her throat. "Yield," he growled.

The Major lashed out with her foot. There was a crunch as Laszlo's ankle buckled. Agony shot up his leg, and he hit the ground with a cry.

"I'm neither stronger nor faster than you," Wingard said, picking herself up. "What I have is a great cause. My mind and body are one. I acknowledge no defeat. I feel no fear. Tell me now, if you have a great cause of your own."

Gritting teeth, Laszlo cried, "I will purge Ostoya of all undead!"

Magic coursed through his body, and the pain vanished as his bones knit back together.

"Arise, knight," said Wingard. "Welcome to the Order of Dawn."

To be Continued...



Bard College College of Requiems

Performing a macabre melody filled with grief-stricken chords with a mournful refrain, the funerary songs of the College of Requiems stir the very bones of the dead. The Requiem bard weaves necromantic magic into their repertoire to control and empower a host of undead minions.

CHILLING MELODY

At 3rd level, you learn two necromancy cantrips of your choice from any class spell list. These count as bard spells for you, but don't count against the number of cantrips you know.

PLUCK THE HEARTSTRINGS

Beginning at 3rd level, you gain the ability to use your Bardic Inspiration to pluck at the tethers of life within a creature. A creature with one of your Bardic Inspiration dice can expend it when dealing damage with a weapon attack, dealing additional necrotic damage equal to the die result.

Additionally, when a living creature that has your Bardic Inspiration die is reduced to 0 hit points, it can expend that die as a reaction to be reduced to 1 hit point instead.

STIR THE BONES

At 6th level, you learn the *animate dead* spell. It counts as a bard spell for you, and it doesn't count against the number of Bard spells you know.

When you give a creature one of your Bardic Inspiration dice, choose a number of undead creatures equal to your proficiency bonus under your control and within 60 feet of you. Chosen creatures each gain a Dirge die, which they lose if they do not spend within the next 10 minutes. Dirge dice can be spent the same way and under the same circumstances your Bardic Inspiration dice are. You can also issue mental commands to undead creatures under your control as part of the same bonus action.

When an undead creature you control expends a Dirge die on an attack roll that hits, it can also apply the result to the damage roll.

DANCE OF THE DEAD

Starting at 14th level, when you cast a necromancy spell that targets only one creature, you can have it target a second creature within range. This does not consume additional components.

Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.



Cleric Divine Domain

Eldritch Domain

Even the most benevolent divine beings operate outside the bounds of mortal comprehension. These eldritch forces sing a siren song that calls out for mortal worshippers through lucid dreams and the whispers of dead gods. The Eldritch domain empowers the devoted followers of unknown and distant forces of chaos, divine entities of eldritch oblivion, and dead gods.

ELDRITCH DOMAIN SPELLS

| CLERIC LEVEL | SPELLS |
|--------------|--|
| 1st | <i>hideous laughter, sleep</i> |
| 3rd | <i>detect thoughts, see invisibility</i> |
| 5th | <i>fear, tongues</i> |
| 7th | <i>confusion, phantasmal killer</i> |
| 9th | <i>contact other plane, dream</i> |

ELDRITCH EFFECTS

| D8 | EFFECT |
|----|--|
| 1 | The creature cannot speak or cast spells that have verbal components. |
| 2 | The creature takes 1d8 psychic damage at the start of each of its turns. |
| 3 | The creature is disoriented. It immediately falls prone and falls prone again at the end of each turn it moves 5 feet or more. |
| 4 | The creature is distracted by visions and voices and has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) ability checks. |
| 5 | The creature is unsure of itself. It can move or take an action on its turn but not both and it cannot use reactions. |
| 6 | The creature is reckless. It has advantage on attack rolls and attack rolls against it have advantage. |
| 7 | The creature is deafened and cannot see objects or creatures further than 30 feet away. |
| 8 | The creature is frightened of you. |

UNPREDICTABLE INSPIRATION

At 1st level, choose any cantrip. The chosen cantrip counts as a cleric spell for you but does not count against the number of cleric cantrips you know. Each time you finish a long rest you can replace the chosen cantrip with any other cantrip of your choice.

In addition, you gain proficiency in a skill of your choice. Each time you finish a long rest you can replace the chosen skill with another skill of your choice.

ELDRITCH CONTAGION

Starting at 1st level, you've been gifted with the ability to impart a fleeting taste of the unknowable on others. When you cast a spell with a spell slot of 1st level or higher that targets one or more creatures, you can use a bonus action on the same turn to force one of the spell's targets to make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, roll on the Eldritch Effects table and the creature suffers that effect for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, the creature can make another Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success. This effect ends early if you use this feature again.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: PROPHECY OF DOOM

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to speak a prophecy, inducing visions and hallucinations in nearby creatures.

As an action, choose a point within 120 feet of you that you can see and roll on the Eldritch Effects table. Each creature in a 15-foot-radius sphere centered on the chosen point must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or suffer the temporary effect for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, an affected creature can make another Wisdom saving throw, ending the temporary effect on a success.



OTHERWORLDLY CALM

Starting at 6th level, you gain resistance to psychic damage and advantage on saving throws against being charmed and frightened.

Additionally, any creature that attempts to read your thoughts find them incomprehensible. The attempt automatically fails and they must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your cleric spell save DC or take psychic damage equal to your cleric level.

POTENT SPELLCASTING

Starting at 8th level, you add your Wisdom modifier to the damage you deal with any cleric cantrip.

SING THE SONG THAT ENDS THE WORLD

Starting at 17th level, creatures who fail a saving throw against your Prophecy of Doom feature take 10d10 psychic damage. Once a creature has taken damage in this way, it can't take damage from this feature again for 10 minutes.

The Brothers Part 5

"Is there no other way?"

Mischa stood before the Black Tome, a book of rituals for the darkest forms of magic. Across the table, the Keeper shifted in his voluminous robes.

"There are many ways," the mage intoned. "All of them doomed to failure. You seek revenge against a vampire lord, do you not?"

"Yes but—"

"An immensely powerful creature who commands a horde of undead. Do you think you can defeat him as you are? What other being can challenge him—except a lich?"

Mischa could not reply.

"The path to lichdom is exceedingly harsh. You must tear your soul from your body and place it in a phylactery. And the only way to do so..."

The Keeper stood and drifted closer. "But if you prefer your moral code, if you'd rather retreat to your seasonless world with your quest unfulfilled, then leave the book. Abandon your vow."

A skeletal hand reached out for the tome, but Mischa snatched it away.

"I am an Ostoyan. My vengeance is forever."

"Then you know the price." The voice was filled with satisfaction. "Raise an army worthy of the dark. And kill that which is dearest to your heart."

To be Continued...



Cleric Divine Domain

Inquisition Domain

The Inquisition domain reflects the order of the multiverse and the rejection of tainted magic—at least so far as certain celestial powers see it. Only the divine casters are pure and fit for use. Since arcane magic is strong enough to challenge the gods, divine beings of this domain, such as the Arch Seraph Empyreus, demand magic-using mortals are kept in check. Most zealots root out all arcanists, while some strike fragile truces when complete removal isn't feasible.

INQUISITION DOMAIN SPELLS

| CLERIC LEVEL | SPELLS |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| 1st | <i>detect magic, identify</i> |
| 3rd | <i>see invisibility, silence</i> |
| 5th | <i>dispel magic, remove curse</i> |
| 7th | <i>arcane eye, locate creature</i> |
| 9th | <i>creation, hallow</i> |

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

At 1st level, you gain proficiency with martial weapons and heavy armor.

WITCH HUNTER'S STRIKE

At 1st level, when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can deal an additional 1d8 force damage. If the creature is concentrating on a spell, you deal an additional 2d8 force damage instead. If a creature fails its saving throw to maintain concentration as a result of taking damage from this feature, you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to the extra force damage dealt by this attack. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (a minimum of once), regaining all uses upon completion of a long rest.

At 14th level, this damage increases to 2d8, and 3d8 if the creature is concentrating on a spell.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: SPELL SHIELD

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to bestow a temporary resilience to arcane harm.

As a bonus action, you present your holy symbol and choose a creature you can see (including yourself) within 30 feet. The chosen creature gains temporary hit points equal to 1d10 + your cleric level. While a creature has temporary hit points granted by your spell shield, it has resistance to damage from spells and advantage on saving throws against spells. The creature loses any remaining temporary hit points after 1 hour.



REBUKE INVOKER

Starting at 6th level, as a reaction when a creature you can see within 60 feet casts a spell, you can force the creature to make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes force damage equal to 1d8 per level of spell slot expended casting the spell + your Wisdom modifier. Cantrips are considered first-level spells for this ability. On a successful save the creature takes half as much damage instead.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (a minimum of once), regaining all uses upon completion of a long rest.

DIVINE STRIKE

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon strikes with the power of celestial order. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 force damage to the target. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

SUPERNAL SAFEGUARD

Starting at 17th level, when you use your Spell Shield feature, you can choose a number of creatures up to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 2) instead of choosing only one.



Druid Circle

Circle of Blood

The Circle of Blood is a keeper of old ways. They remember how ancient druids performed sacrificial rituals under a blood-red moon to appease the uncaring forces of nature. The Circle of Blood druid trades blood for life in a delicate balance to bolster their allies and destroy their enemies.

CIRCLE SPELLS

At 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level you gain access to the spells listed for that level in the Circle of Blood Spells table.

Once you gain access to one of these spells, you always have it prepared, and it doesn't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day. If you gain access to a spell that doesn't appear on the druid spell list, the spell is nonetheless a druid spell for you.

| DRUID LEVEL | SPELLS |
|-------------|--|
| 3rd | <i>hold person, sense lifeblood</i> |
| 5th | <i>blood bond, sanguine poppet</i> |
| 7th | <i>circle of scarlet, dark sacrament</i> |
| 9th | <i>dominate person, mortality</i> |

BLOOD BOON

When you choose this circle at 2nd level, when a creature you can see within 60 feet of you dies, you can use your reaction to claim the last vestiges of its vitality. You regain one previously spent Hit Die. When you do, you can grant a creature you can see within 60 feet of you a number of temporary hit points equal to your druid level.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier, regaining all expended uses at the end of a long rest.

RITE OF THE BLOOD MOON

At 6th level, you learn a rite that invokes the power within a creature's blood. As an action, you can expend one use of your Wild Shape class feature to drive yourself or a willing creature within 5 feet of you into a blood frenzy which lasts for 1 minute. The affected creature gains the following benefits:

- It gains resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage against weapons which are not magical.
- It gains darkvision to a range of 60 feet and advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.
- It can roll a d8 in place of the normal damage of its unarmed strike. When it takes the Attack action on its turn, it can make one attack with its unarmed strike as a bonus action.
- Its speed increases by 10 feet.
- It can't speak or cast spells.

Only one creature at a time can be affected by your Blood Rite. If you use the Rite of the Blood Moon on another creature, the effects of the Rite end for any other creature.

BLOOD LUST

Starting at 10th level, those under the effect of your Blood Rite can sacrifice a piece of their own vitality to enhance their capacity for destruction. Once on each of its turns when a creature under the effects of your Rite of the Blood Moon feature makes a damage roll, it can expend a hit die and add the result to the damage roll.

CREATE BLOOD ELEMENTAL

Starting at 14th level, when a creature you can see within 60 feet of you dies, you can use your reaction to fully exsanguinate its corpse, conjuring a **water elemental** composed of its blood and bound to your service.

Roll initiative for the elemental, which has its own turns. It obeys your verbal commands. The elemental remains in your service for 1 hour or until it is reduced to 0 hit points, at which point it collapses into a pool of blood.

Once you conjure an elemental with this feature, you can't use the feature again until you finish a long rest.



Druid Circle Circle of Mutation

Druids of the Circle of Mutation believe that nature should be improved in order to compete with the unnatural world. Their order hides in the darkest corners of swamps and forests, conducting experiments to warp the structure of their domain. They go unheard from for months on end, emerging from the wild with twisted vines and mutated creatures at their side. These druids have earned the scorn of other circles, discredited as those who have lost their way. In the eyes of a mutation druid, those who wish to preserve nature as it is simply fear what change brings.

MUTATE SHAPE

Starting when you choose this circle at 2nd level, you can use a bonus action to use your Wild Shape.

In addition, while you are transformed by Wild Shape, you can use a bonus action to expend a spell slot and gain a number of mutation points equal to the level of the spell slot expended. These mutation points last until they are spent or your use of Wild Shape ends. While you are in your beast shape you can expend one or more mutation points (no action required by you) to select a mutation from the list below. When you do, your physical body contorts and changes in a gruesome display.

Chosen mutations last for the duration of your Wild Shape.

Creature of the Sea. For 1 mutation point, you can breathe air and water and gain a swim speed of 30 feet. For an additional 1 mutation point, your swim speed increases to 60 feet.

Creature of the Sky. For 3 mutation points, you gain a fly speed of 30 feet. For an additional 2 mutation points, your fly speed increases to 60 feet.

Darkvision. For 1 mutation point, you gain darkvision out to a distance of 60 feet.

Echolocation. For 4 mutation points, you have blindsight out to a distance of 30 feet while you are not deafened.

Enchanted Attacks. For 1 mutation point, your attacks count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Enlarge. For 1 mutation point, your size increases by one step (from Medium to Large, for example). You can spend an additional 2 mutation points to increase your size by two steps instead (from Medium to Huge, for example).

Multiattack. For a number of mutation points equal to $2 + 2 \times$ your beast form's CR, whenever you use your action to make a natural weapon attack, you can make two natural weapon attacks instead. Creatures that already have multiattack can take one additional natural weapon attack.

Natural Armor. For 1, 2, or 3 mutation points you increase your AC by an equal amount.

Reduce. For 1 mutation point, your size decreases by one step (from Medium to Small, for example). You can spend an additional 2 mutation points to decrease your size by two steps instead (from Medium to Tiny, for example).

Unnatural Voice. For 1 mutation point, you can speak as normal, even if your beast shape lacks the anatomy for such vocalizations. This does not allow for spellcasting while in Wild Shape form.

Venomous Attacks. For 2 mutation points, attacks you make with your natural weapons deal an additional 1d4 poison damage.

CIRCLE FORMS

Also at 2nd level, your ability to transform into dangerous beasts is enhanced. Starting when you gain this feature, you can use your Wild Shape to transform into a beast with a challenge rating 1 or lower. You ignore the Max CR column of the Beast Shapes table, but must abide by the other limitations there.

Starting at 6th level, you can transform into a beast with a challenge rating equal to or less than your druid level divided by 3, rounded down.

UNNATURAL AND UNNERVING

Starting at 6th level, you gain proficiency with the Intimidation skill if you don't already have it. If you are already proficient in Intimidation, you gain proficiency in one skill of your choice from the following: Athletics, Acrobatics, Perception, Stealth, or Survival.

In addition, you have advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) ability checks you make while you are in your beast shape and have at least one mutation.

ENDLESS EVOLUTION

At 10th level, when you enter your Wild Shape you gain a number of mutation points equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1). Unspent mutation points are lost when you leave your beast shape.

In addition, you can use an action to touch a beast and expend a spell slot, causing it to mutate to your liking. You gain a number of mutation points equal to the level of the spell slot or the CR of the beast, whichever is lower. As part of the same action, you must spend all mutation points on mutations which manifest in the beast. Unspent mutation points are lost. Mutations remain indefinitely until the same beast is targeted by a different use of this feature or the *dispel magic* spell, *remove curse* spell, or similar magic.

APEX PREDATOR AURA

Starting at 14th level, beasts that begin their turn within 30 feet of you must make a Wisdom saving throw with a DC equal to your druid spell save. On a failure, the creature is frightened for 10 minutes. On a success, the creature is immune to this effect for the next 24 hours. An affected creature can use its action on each subsequent turn to steel themselves and repeat the saving throw, ending and becoming immune to this fear effect for the next 24 hours on a success.

You can use an action to cause this aura to affect chosen creatures within 30 feet, instead of only beasts, until the start of your next turn. Once you use this special action, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

The Brothers Part 6

"There's nothing to be done," said Lt. Galvek.

Laszlo stared out over the wooden walls at the mother and child running for the safety of the fort. Close at their heels was the encroaching zombie horde, hands and teeth ready to rend their flesh.

"We can't operate the gate fast enough," Galvek reiterated. "If we try, the zombies will come swarming in and kill the townsfolk in the fort. We can't save everyone. There is no way."

Laszlo gave him a hard stare. "There's always a way." He drew his sword and shouted, "Open the gates! Warriors of the Order, follow me!" With that, he leaped down from the palisades to come between the woman and the zombies. His squad followed.

Together, with swords and arrows and divine power, they held off the horde long enough for the heavy gates to open, offering them all a retreat.

The mother and child were saved. But when Laszlo turned to the eight knights who followed him, he saw only three had returned alive.

When Major Wingard led the Order to rescue the people in the fort, she found Laszlo with his head in his hands, in tears.

To be Continued...





Fighter Martial Archetype

The Bulwark Warrior

Those who learn the fighting prowess of the Bulwark Warrior protect their allies from certain death. Bulwark Warriors maintain control on their enemies to keep them focused on themselves. Endurance and strength are primary skills of these warriors, they are prepared to take lethal strikes for their compatriots.

PROTECTIVE TAUNT

Starting at 3rd level, once per turn whenever you make a melee weapon attack against a creature, you can taunt them into attacking you. When a creature you've hit since the start of your last turn attacks someone other than you, you can use your reaction to force them to attack you instead. This effect ends early if they move more than 5 feet out of your reach, you become incapacitated, or you die.

WEATHER THE STORM

Also at 3rd level, you have grown accustomed to being battered and bruised. As a bonus action, for the next minute at the end of each of your turns, you can gain temporary hit points equal to your fighter level. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

LIVING SHIELD

When you reach 7th level, you can quickly protect allies from attacks. As an action, all creatures of your choice within 30 feet that can hear you must make a Wisdom saving throw with a DC equal to 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus. Each creature that fails the save has disadvantage on all attack rolls that do not target you until the beginning of your next turn. Additionally, you can gain a number of hit points equal to your Constitution modifier for each failed saving throw. You can use this feature twice, regaining all spent uses at the end of a long rest. You gain an additional use of this ability at 15th level.



AGGRESSIVE DEFENCE

At 10th level, you learn to wait for the perfect moment to strike. Once per turn when you have temporary hit points and hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can expend up to half your fighter level in temporary hit points to deal that much additional damage to your target.

IMPROVED SECOND WIND

Starting at 15th level, your endurance is unrivaled in battles. When you gain health from your Second Wind feature, you can also gain temporary hit points equal to the amount healed.

HALT THE ASSAULT

Starting at 18th level, when a creature within 5 feet of you takes damage, you can use your reaction to use your temporary hit points to reduce the damage taken by the target by the amount of temporary hit points forfeited.



Fighter Martial Archetype Living Crucible

Fighters who become Living Crucibles have discovered an external means of power. While most other fighters train in martial traditions or study the art of war, Living Crucibles hone their craft of alchemy and prepare their body to endure compounds poisonous to others. In exchange for this rigorous physical and mental preparation, these fighters are able to temporarily push their bodies past their natural limits. Under the influence of their alchemical compounds these fighters can see in darkness, enhance their speed, inure themselves to magical attacks, and more.

COMPOUND CREATOR

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you learn to create alchemical compounds toxic to others but empowering to you.

Creating Compounds. You learn three compounds of your choice, which are detailed under “Compounds” below. You can create any number of these compounds you know by using alchemist’s supplies and spending 10 minutes to create them. These compounds remain potent until the end of your next long rest, after which time they become inert and have no effect.

You learn two additional compounds of your choice at 7th, 10th, and 15th level. Each time you learn new compounds, you can also replace one compound you know with another one.

Consuming Compounds. As a bonus action you can consume a single compound using this feature. You can safely consume a number of compounds up to

1 + your Constitution modifier (minimum of 1). Each compound you consume after that causes you to gain a level of exhaustion. When you finish a long rest, you regain the ability to safely consume compounds. You can benefit from multiple compounds at the same time, but taking the same compound more than once provides no additional effects.

The benefits associated with each compound apply only to you. Any other creature that consumes one of your compounds must succeed on a Constitution saving throw (DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Intelligence modifier) or become poisoned for 1 minute.

STUDENT OF ALCHEMY

Also at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with alchemist's supplies. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check that uses this proficiency.

QUICK CREATION

At 7th level, once per long rest you can use a bonus action to quickly create and consume one compound that you already know how to make. This does not count against your daily limit of consuming compounds.

LIVING CAULDRON

At 10th level, the number of compounds you can safely consume increases to 3 + your Constitution modifier (minimum 1).

COMPOUNDS

Compounds are presented in alphabetical order.

Adrenal Injection. For the next minute, your movement speed is increased by 10 feet and your jumping distances are tripled.

Allsense Injection. For the next minute, you have blindsight out to a distance of 30 feet.

Arcane Eye Oil. For the next hour, you can sense magic as if you were under the effects of the *detect magic* spell.

Draught of Bull's Strength. For the next 10 minutes, you have advantage on Strength ability checks and saving throws.

Draught of Cat's Grace. For the next 10 minutes, you have advantage on Dexterity ability checks and saving throws.

Draught of Bear's Endurance. For the next 10 minutes, you have advantage on Constitution ability checks and saving throws.

Draught of Fox's Cunning. For the next 10 minutes, you have advantage on Intelligence ability checks and saving throws.

Draught of Owl's Wisdom. For the next 10 minutes, you have advantage on Wisdom ability checks and saving throws.

Draught of Eagle's Splendor. For the next 10 minutes, you have advantage on Charisma ability checks and saving throws.

At 18th level, the number of compounds you can safely consume increases to 5 + your Constitution modifier (minimum 1).

TOXIN TRANSMUTATION

At 15th level, you can use a bonus action to end one effect causing you to be poisoned. When you do, you gain temporary hit points equal to your level in this class.

LIVING CATALYST

At 18th level, when you finish a long rest you can choose to replace one compound you know with another one.



Elfsight Oil. For the next 8 hours, you have darkvision out to a range of 120 feet.

Fleshknit Phosphate. For the next minute, if you have at least 1 hit point, you heal a number of hit points equal to your proficiency bonus at the start of each of your turns.

Ironmind Injection. For the next hour, you have advantage on saving throws made against being charmed or frightened.

Liquid Courage. You gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution ability score plus twice your level in this class. You lose any remaining temporary hit points from this compound after 1 minute.

Liquid Rage. For the next minute, your weapon attacks deal an extra 1d4 damage.

Presto Powder. For the next 10 minutes, you have advantage on ability checks made to determine initiative and you can use a bonus action on each of your turns to take the Dash or Disengage action.

Spellshine Ointment. For the next minute, you have resistance to damage from spells.

Steelskin Ointment. For the next minute, you have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Tenmen Tincture. For the next hour, you count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity, and you ignore the heavy property of weapons.



Monastic Tradition

Way of the Leaden Crown

In contrast to the esoteric ideals of other monastic traditions, monks of the Way of the Leaden Crown have practical aims: the self-governance of humanoid peoples. These monks see the history of the world as a series of clashes between groups of powerful beings, where humanoids were at best collateral damage and at worst disposable pawns. To break this cycle of dependence and destruction, monks of the Way of the Leaden Crown master mental powers to fight back against the otherworldly powers of the multiverse and protect humanoid sovereignty.

One component of this plan involves training to do battle with powerful outsiders. The other equally important component is ensuring that humanoid societies are prepared to overthrow those powerful outsiders already dominating them. To that end, these monks seek political positions that place them in or near decision-making roles where they can influence humanoids to fight back against arch seraphs, arch daemons, and primordials.

SUBTLE HAND

Starting at 3rd level, your martial arts are enhanced by a capacity for telekinetic strikes. On your turn your reach is 10 feet when you make unarmed attacks. In addition, when you make an unarmed strike this way, it deals force damage instead.

PSIONIC PROWESS

Also at 3rd level, your psychic powers have manifested in the ability to cast certain spells. You gain the *mage hand* cantrip if you don't already know it. When you cast the spell, the spectral hand is invisible.

In addition, you can cast certain spells by expending ki. You can use an action and spend 1 ki point to cast *detect evil and good* or *protection from evil and good*. You can also use an action and spend 2 ki points to cast *hold person*, *levitate*, or *shatter*. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for these spells and you do not need to provide material components when casting them in this way.

UNSUBTLE STRIKE

At 6th level, when you hit a creature with an unarmed strike or monk weapon, you can force it to make a Strength saving throw against your ki save DC. On a failure, you can choose to push or pull the creature 10 feet. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until the start of your next turn.

PSYCHIC CRUSH

Starting at 11th level, each time you hit a creature with an unarmed strike it gains a pressure point. A creature loses all pressure points if you give a different creature a pressure point or 1 minute after the last time it gained a pressure point. As a bonus action on your turn, you can spend 1 ki point to telekinetically crush a creature with 1 or more of your pressure points.

When you do, the creature must make a Strength saving throw against your ki save DC. On a failure, the creature takes 1d8 force damage per pressure point they have and they are restrained until the end of your next turn. On a success, they take half as much damage and aren't restrained. Either way, the creature then loses all pressure points.

PSIONIC MASTERY

At 17th level, you have mastered the psionic disciplines necessary to defend mortals from outsiders. As an action, you can spend 5 ki points to cast *dispel evil and good*, *hold monster*, *telekinesis*, or *wall of force*. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for these spells and you do not need to provide material components when casting them in this way.



Monastic Tradition

Way of Pride

Monks of the Way of Pride value themselves above all others. These monks focus on mastering their form, ego, and destructive power. They use their monastic traditions publicly, with the intention of gaining the respect and admiration of “lesser beings.”

The prideful traditions of this order include adorning oneself with jewelry, hiding their scars from prying eyes, and commanding respect from those that would oppose them.

TALL TALES

At 3rd level, you have gained a knack for telling embellished tales of your past achievements. You gain proficiency in your choice of one of the following skills: Deception, Intimidation, Performance, and Persuasion.

BRUISED EGO

At 3rd level, your ego bolsters your vitality, strengthening as you fight to prove your vigor. Whenever you expend a ki point, you can also choose to gain temporary hit points equal to your Proficiency Bonus. While your current hit points are equal to or less than half your maximum hit points, you can also add your Wisdom modifier to the amount of temporary hit points gained.

ASSERTIVE ATTACKER

At 3rd level, while your current hit points are equal to or less than half your maximum hit points, your Martial Arts die counts as being one higher than normal.

For example, if you are a 6th-level monk, your Martial Arts die goes from a d6 to a d8. At 17th level and higher your Martial Arts die goes from a d10 to a d12.

IRRATIONAL RETALIATION

Beginning at 6th level, damage dealt to you is damage dealt to your pride, and that is something you simply cannot allow. Whenever a creature deals damage to you, you can use your reaction to expend 2 ki points to target that creature. Until the end of your next turn, all attacks you make against the target creature have advantage.

REDOUBLED EFFORTS

Additionally at 6th level, while your current hit points are equal to or less than half your maximum hit points, you can roll one additional Martial Arts die when determining the extra damage dealt by a critical hit.



EVER PRIDEFUL

At 11th level, your muscle memory takes over. When your hit points are reduced to 0 you are not knocked unconscious, but you must still make death saving throws and suffer all the normal effects of taking damage while at 0 hit points. At the beginning of each of your turns whilst in this state you can spend 1 ki point to remain in this state. If you do not spend a ki point at the start of your turn whilst at 0 hit points you suffer all the normal effects of being reduced to 0 hit points.

The following also apply:

- You cannot speak.
- You cannot cast or concentrate on spells.
- Critical hits against you in this state count as one failed death saving throw instead of 2.

EGOTISTICAL

Beginning at 17th level, you gain the benefits of this subclass' features that state 'while your current hit points are equal to or less than half your maximum hit points' whenever you are below your hit point maximum instead, provided you have been damaged by a hostile creature within the past minute.



Paladin Sacred Oath

Oath of Pestilence

Clad in grime-soaked armor and wielding rusting weapons, the Oath of Pestilence paladin spreads corruption, disease, and filth. Bound by an oath which infests their bodies with all manner of plagues, these heralds of decay lumber forward with unholy toughness and grim resolve.

TENETS OF PESTILENCE

The tenets of the Oath of Pestilence emphasize the role of disease as a purifying element in the cycle of life.

Strength in Resilience. Surviving hardship and plague make you stronger. Spreading these things causes strength to flourish.

All Things Must Pass. Death is the natural conclusion of life. There is nothing unnatural or immoral about the ending of life.

Might Makes Right. The laws of mortals mean nothing to poxes and plagues, they go where they wish and take what they want. So should you.

OATH SPELLS

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed in the Oath of Pestilence Spells table. See the Sacred Oath class feature for how oath spells work.

| PALADIN LEVEL | SPELLS |
|---------------|--|
| 3rd | <i>bane, inflict wounds</i> |
| 5th | <i>acid arrow, ray of enfeeblement</i> |
| 9th | <i>flash fever, stinking cloud</i> |
| 13th | <i>blight, confusion</i> |
| 17th | <i>contagion, insect plague</i> |

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following Channel Divinity options:

Debilitating Fever. Your touch inflicts disease. Make a melee spell attack against a creature within your reach that isn't a construct or undead. On a hit, the creature becomes diseased and is incapacitated for 1 minute. At the end of each of the diseased target's turns, the target can make a Constitution saving throw. On a success, the target is no longer diseased, and the effect ends.

Since this ability induces a natural disease in its target, any effect that removes a disease or otherwise ameliorates a disease's effects apply to it.

Entropic Infection. You can use your Channel Divinity to weaken a creature against entropic energies. As an action, you can force a creature of your choice that you can see within 30 feet of you to make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, for the next minute the creature takes an additional 2d6 damage the first time it takes necrotic damage each turn. During this time, the creature loses resistance to necrotic damage if it has it.

AURA OF RAMPANT SICKNESS

Starting at 7th level, you emit an aura of contagion and virulence to a range of 10 feet. When a creature within your aura makes an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw you can give that roll disadvantage as a reaction.

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

DISGUSTING RESILIENCE

At 15th level, when you take damage which would reduce you to 0 hit points, you can choose to expend any number of Hit Dice. Roll those dice and subtract the result from the damage taken. If this reduces the damage to 0, you don't take any damage.

In addition, if you are killed your corpse violently explodes in a shower of pus and gore, dealing 8d6 necrotic damage to creatures within 20 feet of you that fail a Constitution saving throw.

PLAGUEBRINGER

At 20th level, you become an avatar of plague, which gives you the following benefits:

- You have resistance to necrotic damage and are immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition.
- Your hit point maximum can't be reduced.

Creatures of your choice who start their turn within 5 feet of you, or who move within 5 feet of you on their turn, take necrotic damage equal to your Charisma modifier. Once a creature takes damage from this ability, it can't take damage from it again until the start of its next turn.





Paladin Sacred Oath

Oath of Zeal

The Oath of Zeal is taken by paladins consumed by hatred for a specific group or ideology. Zealots, as these paladins are sometimes called, pursue an inquisition against their enemies at all costs. They abandon compassion and honor as impediments to the more important work of ridding the world of those they deem dangerous or heretical.

TENETS OF ZEAL

The tenets of the Oath of Zeal are serious and severe, as are those paladins who choose to take them.

Uncover Corruption. Darkness cannot abide the light of day. Wickedness must be revealed before it can be destroyed.

Purge the Heretics. Heresy is a tumor that spread through the hearts of the innocent. Cut it out at the source.

No Mercy. The righteous path requires unwavering conviction and unflinching resolve.

By Any Means Necessary. There is no sacrifice too great when it comes to defeating the wicked.

OATH OF ZEAL SPELLS

| PALADIN LEVEL | SPELLS |
|---------------|--|
| 3rd | <i>detect evil and good, hunter's mark</i> |
| 5th | <i>detect thoughts, knock</i> |
| 9th | <i>fear, tongues</i> |
| 13th | <i>divination, locate creature</i> |
| 17th | <i>insect plague, scrying</i> |

CHANNEL DIVINITY

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options:

Mark of the Heretic. You can use your Channel Divinity to mark a creature as a heretic. As a bonus action, choose a creature you can see within 30 feet and a weeping symbol appears on it. For the next minute, your weapon attacks against the chosen creature score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20, and each time the creature's turn starts you can use your reaction to make one weapon attack against it.

Inquisitor's Eye. You can use your Channel Divinity to open your senses to hidden signs of corruption and malfeasance. As a bonus action, you grant yourself advantage on Intelligence (Investigation), Wisdom (Insight), and Wisdom (Perception) ability checks for the next 10 minutes. During this time, you can't be surprised.

AURA OF CLARITY

Beginning at 7th level, you and friendly creatures within 10 feet of you can't be blinded while you are conscious. Additionally, creatures and objects of your choice within this range can't benefit from being invisible.

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

COMPEL CONFESSION

Starting at 15th level, you can cast the *zone of truth* spell without expending a spell slot. When you cast the spell with this feature, creatures who succeed on their saving throw take 1d4 psychic damage at the start of each of their turns while they remain within the affected area.

APOCALYPTIC REVELATION

At 20th level, as an action you can reveal the true nature of your enemies to all for 1 minute. During this time, you gain the following benefits:

- You have truesight out to a distance of 120 feet.
- Creatures who start their turn, or move within, 5 feet of you must make a Constitution saving throw against your paladin spell save DC. On a failure, the creature is blinded until the start of its next turn.
- As a bonus action on each of your turns you can choose a creature within 60 feet and reveal its weaknesses for all to see. Attacks made against the chosen creature have advantage until the start of your next turn.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.





Ranger Archetype Green Reaper

Green Reapers specialize in a school of assassination that specializes in harvesting and catalyzing the toxic elements of flora and fauna. These rangers often work as killers for hire utilizing their extensive knowledge of toxins to end their marks' lives discreetly or with gory panache, depending on the poison used and the client's wishes. Green Reapers exhibit a morbid curiosity when encountering a toxic substance they're unfamiliar with, typically followed by an enthusiastic application of the toxin on the next foe they encounter.

GREEN REAPER MAGIC

Starting at 3rd level, you learn an additional spell when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown in the Green Reaper Spells table. The spell counts as a ranger spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of ranger spells you know.

GREEN REAPER SPELLS

| RANGER LEVEL | SPELL |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 3rd | <i>detect poison and disease</i> |
| 5th | <i>hold person</i> |
| 9th | <i>bestow curse</i> |
| 13th | <i>greater invisibility</i> |
| 17th | <i>cloudkill</i> |

ENVENOMED ATTACK

At 3rd level, you can use your poisoner's kit as a bonus action to coat a weapon or up to 20 pieces of ammunition with a dose of toxic poison. For the next minute, each time you deal damage with the weapon or ammunition, you deal an additional 1d4 poison damage. You can do this a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and expended uses of this feature are recovered at the end of a long rest.

At 11th level, this additional damage increases to 2d4. Also, the expended uses of this feature are recovered at the end of a short or long rest.

TOXIC TRADECRAFT

Also at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with poisoner's kits. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check that uses this proficiency. Additionally, when you gain this feature, you also gain a poisoner's kit. If you ever lose this kit, you can spend 8 hours creating a replacement by collecting toxic flora and harvesting venomous fauna.

As a final benefit of this feature, once per turn when you hit a creature with a weapon or ammunition enhanced by your Envenomed Attack feature, you can spend a spell slot to apply a magical toxin to the attack. The toxin deals an additional 1d6 poison damage and the creature is poisoned until the end of your next turn. The toxin has additional effects based on the spell slot expended casting the spell. These additional effects are detailed at the end of this subclass description under Toxin Effects, and they last to the end of your next turn unless otherwise noted in the description.

TOXIN EFFECTS

1ST-LEVEL EFFECTS

When you expend a spell slot of 1st level or higher to create a toxin, choose one of the following effects to add to the toxin.

Attenuate. While a creature is poisoned by this toxin, it has disadvantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws.

Befuddled. While a creature is poisoned by this toxin, it cannot speak, read, or write any language and it has disadvantage on saving throws made to maintain concentration on spells.

Uncoordinated. While a creature is poisoned by this toxin, it cannot take reactions or the Disengage or Dodge action.

2ND-LEVEL EFFECTS

When you expend a spell slot of 2nd level or higher to create a toxin, choose one of the following effects to add to the toxin.

Debilitate. The creature can't regain hit points for the next minute.

Potent. If the creature has resistance to poison damage, it loses that resistance for the next minute.

Suffer. For the next minute, the first time the creature takes poison damage each turn it takes an additional 1d6 poison damage.

3RD-LEVEL EFFECTS

When you expend a spell slot of 3rd level or higher to create a toxin, choose one of the following effects to add to the toxin.

Lingering. Instead of ending at the end of your next turn, the creature continues to be poisoned for 10 minutes. At the end of each of the creature's turns it can make a Constitution saving throw using your

POISON CONTROL

At 7th level, you gain resistance to poison damage and have advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.

In addition, you can cast the *protection from poison* spell without expending a spell slot. You can do so a number of times up to your Wisdom modifier, regaining all uses when you finish a long rest.

VARIEGATED VEXATIONS

At 11th level, when you apply the toxin granted by your Envenomed Attack feature, you can choose to change the additional damage to acid or necrotic instead of poison.

PAIN TOLERANCE

At 15th level, you've learned to quickly inure yourself against harm. After you take damage from an attack, you can use your reaction to gain temporary hit points equal to the damage. You lose all temporary hit points gained from this feature at the end of your next turn.

ranger spell save DC. If the creature accumulates three successes, which do not have to be consecutive, the poisoned condition ends early.

Supernatural. When you deal damage with a weapon attack that has been dosed with this toxin, the creature loses immunity to the poisoned condition if it has such an immunity. In addition, instead of ending at the end of your next turn, the creature continues to be poisoned for 1 minute. At the end of each of the creature's turns it can make a Constitution saving throw using your ranger spell save DC, ending the condition on a success.

4TH-LEVEL EFFECTS

When you expend a spell slot of 4th level or higher to create a toxin, choose one of the following effects to add to the toxin.

Flesh Eating. While a creature is poisoned by this toxin, it takes 2d6 acid damage at the start of each of its turns.

Insensate. While a creature is poisoned by this toxin, it is also blinded and deafened.

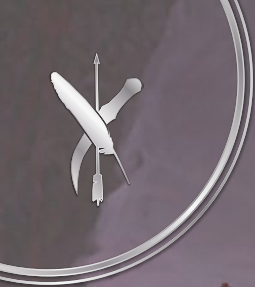
Paraplegia. While a creature is poisoned by this toxin, its movement speeds become 0 and it has disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws.

5TH-LEVEL EFFECTS

When you expend a spell slot of 5th level or higher to create a toxin, choose one of the following effects to add to the toxin.

Enhanced. Choose an option for this toxin off of the 4th level effects list an additional option off of the 1st or 2nd level effects list.

Stinging Application. When you hit a creature with a weapon attack that used this toxin, the attack deals an additional 5d6 damage. This additional damage's type is your choice of acid, necrotic, or poison.



Ranger Archetype

Vermin Lord

Vermin Lords cultivate loyal hordes of disease-bearing rodents to help them in their efforts to stem a greater evil. For many of these rangers, that greater evil is some kind of societal ill, but a rare few see their fellow humanoids as an infestation that threatens the natural world. Regardless of their goal, they make their homes in sewers, slums, and other forgotten places, where they are free to plot against their enemies and tend to their vermin kin.

VERMIN LORD MAGIC

Starting at 3rd level, you learn an additional spell when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown in the Vermin Lord Spells table. The spell counts as a ranger spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of ranger spells you know.

VERMIN LORD SPELLS

| RANGER LEVEL | SPELL |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| 3rd | <i>consumption</i> |
| 5th | <i>animal messenger</i> |
| 9th | <i>flash fever</i> |
| 13th | <i>freedom of movement</i> |
| 17th | <i>contagion</i> |

VERMINKIN

At 3rd level, you can comprehend and verbally communicate with vermin (mice, rats, and other rodents determined by your DM).

Additionally, you can use an action and expend a spell slot to summon rodent hordes. When you do, you summon a number of **swarms of vermin** equal to the level of spell slot expended. Each swarm is summoned to a space you can see within 30 feet. This feature recharges after a short or long rest.

Swarms summoned in this way go on your initiative, starting on your next turn. These swarms obey your verbal commands (no action required by you), defending themselves by taking the Dodge action if you do not give them a command. Your vermin swarms flee the area and disperse after 1 minute.

SEPTIC STRIKES

At 3rd level, you leave a septic filth behind to fester in the wounds caused by your and your verminkin's attacks. As a bonus action, you can choose any number of creatures within 60 feet of you that took damage from a weapon attack made by you or your swarm of vermin this turn. Chosen creatures take 1d4 necrotic damage.

FILTH AND FORTITUDE

By 7th level, the time you've spent with plague-bearing rodents has rendered you immune to disease. Additionally, you gain proficiency with Constitution saving throws.

INFECTIOUS SPREAD

At 11th level, when you use your bonus action to deal the damage granted by your Septic Strikes feature, each creature that takes damage must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC equal to your ranger spell save DC. On a failure, the creature becomes poisoned until the start of your next turn.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum once). You regain all expended uses of this feature when you finish a long rest.

STRENGTH OF THE SWARM

At 15th level, while you have a swarm of vermin summoned with your Verminkin feature, you can call on your rodent minions for defense. When you take damage while one or more of your swarms of rats are within 5 feet, you can use your reaction and choose one of those swarms to take the damage instead.



SWARM OF VERMIN

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 9 plus PB (natural armor)

Hit Points 9 + 5 x your ranger level

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 9 (-1) | 13 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 2 (-4) | 10 (+0) | 5 (-3) |

Saving Throws Dex +1 plus PB, Con +1 plus PB

Skills Acrobatics +1 plus PB, Perception +0 plus PB, Stealth +1 plus PB

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses Darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10 plus PB

Languages –

Keen Smell. The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny beast.

ACTIONS

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* your spell attack modifier to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 2d6 + 1 piercing damage.

**Proficiency Bonus (PB)*

The Brothers Part 7

Laszlo stared, thunderstruck, at the report in his hands. "This must be a mistake. This is impossible."

"I'm afraid it's true," replied Magroch. The Order's spymaster rarely had to defend information he'd already verified; if he said something was true, it was. "The necromancer responsible for last month's zombie attack is your brother, Mischa. Grash, his fellow student from the Ravencourt Sanctuary, identified him."

Laszlo looked down at the report with unbelieving eyes. His younger brother, whom he once had to lift up in order to pick fruits from a bough. Dear, sentimental Mischa, who had sworn an oath to Solyma herself.

Laszlo lifted his eyes to Major Wingard. The woman gazed back from her place by the window. "I know it's hard for you. I'll send Miriam to handle the matter. She'll bear Answerer—"

Laszlo's blood ran cold. "No. He is my brother. I will go."

Magroch and Wingard exchanged a look, but the Major nodded and opened the chest next to her, retrieving their holy sword, Answerer.

Accepting the artifact, Laszlo said, "I swear, I will redeem him,"

"Not with a sword" was Wingard's reply.

To be Continued...



Rogue Archetype Highway Rider

Stalking the backroads, the Highway Rider strikes fear into the heart of every traveler and penny-pinching merchant. They run down their prize astride a swift and loyal steed – and then make a quick getaway.

HAIR TRIGGER

Starting at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with blackpowder pistols. Also, when you roll for initiative, you can immediately use your reaction to take one of the following actions:

- Make one weapon attack with advantage
- Move your speed, or your mount's speed, without provoking opportunity attacks
- Take the Dodge action
- Interact with an object or use an item

TRUSTY MOUNT

At 3rd level, you can cast the *find steed* spell. When you do, its creature type remains beast rather than changing to your choice of celestial, fey, or fiend. Once you cast this spell using this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

RIDE THEM DOWN

Also at 3rd level, you gain an additional way to use your Sneak Attack: you don't need advantage on the attack roll to use your Sneak Attack against a creature if you or your mount moved at least 20 feet this turn, and you don't have disadvantage on the attack roll. All the other rules for Sneak Attack still apply.

HORSE LORD

At 9th level, you can spend a minute grooming and caring for your mount, at the end of which time it gains temporary hit points equal to twice your level in this class.

In addition, your cunning extends to your steed. While you are controlling a mount, it can spend a bonus action on its turn to take the Dash, Disengage, or Dodge action.

TRUE GRIT

At 13th level, you gain proficiency in Constitution saving throws. In addition, when you are subjected to an effect that allows you to make a Constitution saving throw to take only half damage, you instead take no damage if you succeed on the saving throw, and only half damage if you fail.

DESPERADO

Starting at 17th level, when you are reduced to 0 hit points, you can use your reaction to take one of the actions listed in your Hair Trigger feature immediately before you fall unconscious.





Rogue Archetype

Misfortune Bringer

You've matched your penchant for illicit activities with the ability to mark your enemies for mishaps and misfortune. Whether your mother was a hag, you were imbued with magical powers by spending time among the fey, or you learned the art of cursing from a long line of hedge wizards before you, you are a Misfortune Bringer. Although not universal, many Misfortune Bringers have eyes of two different colors, using only one when glaring at the targets they intend to curse.

EVIL EYE

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain the ability to place a minor curse on others with a glance. As a bonus action on your turn, choose a creature you can see within 60 feet. The chosen creature must succeed on a Charisma saving throw against your misfortune save DC or be marked by your evil eye. While a creature is marked by your evil eye, you can use your Sneak Attack against the creature even if you don't have advantage on the attack roll, but not if you have disadvantage on it.

The creature remains marked by your evil eye for 1 minute or until you mark a different creature with your evil eye, whichever comes first.

MISFORTUNIST

Also at 3rd level, you learn misfortunes that you can inflict on those marked by your evil eye.

Misfortunes. You learn two misfortunes of your choice, which are detailed under "Misfortunes" below. You learn an additional misfortune of your choice at 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you finish a long rest, you can replace one misfortune you know with a different one.

Jinx Points. You have four jinx points. When you spend a jinx point, it is no longer available to you until

you regain it. You regain all spent jinx points when you finish a short or long rest.

You gain two additional jinx points at 13th level.

Saving Throws. Your evil eye, and some of your misfortunes, require your target to make a saving throw to resist their effects. The saving throw DC is calculated as follows:

Misfortune save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

STEAL LUCK

Starting at 9th level, when a creature you can see within 30 feet of you makes an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw with advantage, you can use your reaction to remove advantage from the roll. When you do, you regain an expended jinx point. Once you use this feature, you must finish a short or long rest before you can do so again.

MISFORTUNES

The misfortunes are presented in alphabetical order.

Curse of the Befuddled. As an action you can spend 2 jinx points, and the creature marked by your evil eye is charmed for 10 minutes. When you do, the creature is no longer marked by your evil eye, and the charmed condition ends early if you or your allies deal damage to the creature or cause it to make a saving throw. After the 10 minutes have elapsed, the creature knows you used magic to influence its mood and disposition towards you.

Curse of the Clumsy. When a creature marked by your evil eye moves 5 feet or more, you can use your reaction and spend 3 jinx points to cause the creature to fall prone and have its movement speed reduced to 0 until the end of the turn. When you do, the creature is no longer marked by your evil eye.

Curse of the Debilitated. When a creature marked by your evil eye takes damage, you can use your reaction and spend 1 jinx point to roll 1d12. The creature takes necrotic damage equal to the result.

Curse of the Doomed. After you miss with a weapon attack against a creature marked by your evil eye, you can use your reaction and spend 1 jinx point to make an additional weapon attack against the creature as part of the same action.

Curse of the Fearful. As an action you can spend 2 jinx points, and the creature marked by your evil eye is frightened for 1 minute. When you do, the creature is no longer marked by your evil eye, and it can make a Wisdom saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending this misfortune early on a success.

Curse of the Inept. After a creature marked by your evil eye makes an ability check or attack roll, but before the DM declares whether or not it is successful, you can use your reaction and spend 1 jinx point to make the creature reroll and use the lower result.

Curse of the Insensate. As an action you can spend 3 jinx points, and the creature marked by your evil

CURSE CASTER

At 13th level, you can use an action and spend 3 jinx points to cast the *bestow curse* spell. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

IMPROVED STEAL LUCK

At 17th level, you can use the Steal Luck feature three times, regaining all uses when you finish a short or long rest.



eye is blinded and deafened for 1 minute. When you do, the creature is no longer marked by your evil eye, and it can make a Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending this misfortune early on a success.

Curse of the Maimed. When you hit a creature marked by your evil eye with a weapon attack, and the die result was 18 or 19, you can use your reaction and spend 2 jinx points to turn the hit into a critical.

Curse of the Marked. As a bonus action on your turn, you can spend 2 jinx points to enhance the effects of your evil eye on a creature you have marked by it. When you do, the duration increases to 24 hours or until you mark a different creature with your evil eye, whichever comes first. Additionally, while the creature is marked by your evil eye, you always know the direction and distance to the creature, provided you are on the same plane.

Curse of the Plagued. When a creature marked by your evil eye regains hit points, you can use your reaction and spend 1 jinx point to halve the amount of hit points regained. When you do, the creature can't regain hit points until the start of your next turn.

Curse of the Ruined. After a creature marked by your evil eye makes a saving throw, but before the DM declares whether or not it is successful, you can use your reaction and spend 2 jinx points to make the creature reroll and use the lower result.

Curse of the Somnolent. As an action, you can spend 3 jinx points, and the creature marked by your evil eye becomes drowsy. Roll a number of d10 equal to your level in this class and add 15 to their total. If the creature's current hit points are equal to or less than the total, it goes unconscious. The target regains consciousness after 10 minutes, or when it takes damage or another creature uses its action to rouse it.

Curse of the Unlucky. As a bonus action on your turn, you can spend 3 jinx points to put a pox on a creature marked by your evil eye. Whenever the creature makes an attack roll or saving throw, you roll 1d4 and subtract the result from their total. This pox ends when the creature is no longer marked by your evil eye.



Sorcerous Origin Haunted

Unlike many other sorcerers, the circumstances of your birth were mundane and you have no arcane inheritance passed down from strange ancestors. Instead, you gained your sorcerous powers after you managed to survive an experience that left you on the brink of death. Since that experience you've had a preternatural sense for danger and a ghostly companion that either can't or won't leave you alone. Some Haunted, as sorcerers who share your origin are called, develop cordial relationships with their phantom, while others find their spectral companion to be a relentless nuisance.

HAUNTED SPELLS

You learn additional spells when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown on the Haunted Spells table. Each of these spells counts as a sorcerer spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of sorcerer spells you know.

When you cast a spell you know from the Haunted Spells table, you can cast it by expending a spell slot as normal or by spending a number of sorcery points equal to the spell's level.

| SORCERER LEVEL | SPELL |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1st | <i>unseen servant</i> |
| 3rd | <i>see invisibility</i> |
| 5th | <i>speak with dead</i> |
| 7th | <i>death ward</i> |
| 9th | <i>little death</i> |

PHANTOM COMPANION

At 1st level, you learn the *find familiar* spell and can cast it as a ritual. The spell doesn't count against your number of spells known.

When you cast the spell, you can only choose the form of a **specter**, which becomes your phantom companion. Instead of a celestial, fey, or fiend this familiar's creature type is undead.

As an action, you can command your phantom companion to turn invisible until it attacks or you cast a spell through it. While invisible, it leaves no physical evidence of its passage, so it can be tracked only by magic. Any equipment or objects it is holding remains visible.

Additionally, at 3rd level, when you take the Attack action, you can forgo one of your own attacks to allow your familiar to make its Life Drain attack with its reaction.

SIXTH SENSE

Starting at 1st level, when you make a Dexterity ability check to determine initiative, you gain a bonus to the roll equal to your Charisma modifier.

STRENGTH OF SPIRIT

At 6th level, your bond to the specter summoned by your Phantom Companion feature empowers it further. You gain the following benefits:

- Your specter's maximum hit points increase by four times your level in this class.
- Your specter can deliver spells of any range, not just touch. Apart from this change, it follows all the normal rules of casting a spell through your familiar.
- When you use your action to cast a spell, you can use a bonus action on the same turn to command your specter to use its Life Drain attack against a creature within range of your choice.

DEATHLY PALLOR

Also at 6th level, you gain resistance to necrotic damage. In addition, when you cast a sorcerer spell that deals damage, you can choose to change the damage type dealt to necrotic.

PHANTOM POSSESSION

At 14th level, as an action you can direct your phantom companion to attempt to possess and enter a humanoid of your choice within 5 feet of your phantom. Creatures immune to the charmed condition are immune to this feature. When you do, the creature must succeed on a Charisma saving throw against your spell save DC or be possessed by your phantom for 1 minute. During this time your phantom cannot be affected by spells or abilities, take actions, or interact with in any way.

While the target is possessed, you have a telepathic link with it as long as the two of you are within 100 feet. You can use this telepathic link to issue commands to the creature while you are conscious (no action required), which it does its best to obey. If the creature completes the order

and doesn't receive further direction from you, it defends and preserves itself to the best of its ability, taking the Dodge action if it has not used its action already.

Each time the target takes damage, it makes a new Charisma saving throw against the possession. If the saving throw succeeds, the possession ends and your phantom companion reappears in the closest unoccupied space.

Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a short rest.

BECOME DEATH

At 18th level, you can transmute your physical form into a spectral one when you near death. When you take damage that would reduce you to 0 hit points, you drop to 1 hit point instead and gain temporary hit points equal to half your maximum hit points. At the start of each of your turns, you lose 5 temporary hit points and all creatures of your choice within 30 feet take 5 necrotic damage. While you have any temporary hit points granted from this feature, you have resistance to all damage, a fly speed of 30 feet, and can move through creatures and objects provided you end your movement in an unoccupied space.

Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

The Brothers Part 8

"Brother..."

Seeing Laszlo remove his helm, Mischa marveled at how little he'd changed. Still that gentle face and noble gaze. For a moment, Mischa felt his resolve waver. Then he recalled the flames consuming his home, and his hatred roared back to life.

"I didn't want to believe it," Laszlo said, gazing up at the zombie soldiers manning the fortress walls.

"I was hoping someone else would come," Mischa remarked, "but of course it would be you. How the fates despise us."

"Why, brother?"

"I made a vow."

"Don't hide behind your damn vow! None of this was necessary! You didn't have—"

"Yes, I did. That's the difference between us, Laszlo. I knew that to achieve anything, one needs power. Which is what I have."

"This is not you, brother."

"Isn't it?" Mischa's eyes narrowed. "What of you, Laszlo? Have you forgotten our vow, our revenge? Why haven't you faced the Count? Why fight instead for peasants and townsfolk?"

"We were those people once, Mischa!"

"But no more." Mischa's eyes glowed poisonous green. "Will you aid me now, brother? Will you join me in fulfilling our vow?"

"No. I swore I'd redeem you. And I will."

"I thought not." Mischa pointed his staff at a nearby mountain. "Meet me tomorrow on that summit. Let's settle our business at last."

To be Continued...



Sorcerous Origin Wretched Bloodline

With every promise made to a fairy, contract signed with a devil, and pact with the unquiet dead, there's a chance someone doesn't keep their end of the bargain. The vengeance of immortal beings lasts much longer than one lifetime, and the lingering magic of these curses can affect the mortal's descendants.

These inherited magical afflictions may manifest as a plague, deformity, or aversion to the sun. In such families, a child may be born that learns to master the latent magic within their inherited curse, turning their bloodline's bane into a personal boon—these sorcerers are known collectively as the Wretched.

BAD LUCK CHARM

Starting at 1st level, you have mastered the ability to temporarily cast a small fragment of your curse onto another. You can use a bonus action to choose a creature you can see within 30 feet. The chosen creature has disadvantage on the next ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes. Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest, unless you spend 1 sorcery point to use it again.

BLOOD TIES

At 1st level, your senses easily attune to the supernatural forces that caused your inherited affliction. You know the *detect evil and good* spell and can cast it without expending a spell slot. This spell counts as a sorcerer spell for you but does not count against your number of spells known. Once you cast this spell without expending a spell slot, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

In addition, choose one of the following creature types as the being who cursed your ancestor: fey, fiend, or undead. While you are concentrating on the *detect evil and good* spell, creatures of the chosen type have disadvantage on attack rolls against you, and you cannot be charmed, frightened, or possessed by such creatures.

WRETCHED CURSE

Also at 1st level, you suffer from a curse inherited from an ancestor who failed to uphold their end of a bargain with an otherworldly power. Choose one of the following curses that was passed down to you.

Hulking. Your ancestor was cursed with a hulking frame. You have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks made to move quietly. In addition, your maximum hit points increase by 1 and increase by 1 again each time you gain a level in this class. Finally, you count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity and the weight you can push, drag, or lift.

Nocturnal. Your ancestor was cursed to shun the light of day. You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) ability checks made to see while you are in sunlight. In addition, you have darkvision out to a distance of 120 feet and can see through magical darkness within that range.

Plaguebearer. Your ancestor was cursed with physical symptoms of a plague. You have disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) ability checks made against humanoid creatures who are not blinded. In addition, you are immune to disease and have resistance to necrotic damage.

SHARE THE BURDEN

At 6th level, you learn the *bestow curse* spell. This spell counts as a sorcerer spell for you, but it doesn't count against your number of sorcerer spells known. When you cast the spell, you can choose to cast it by spending 3 sorcery points instead of a spell slot. If you cast the spell using sorcery points, its range changes to 60 feet for that casting and your concentration can't be broken as a result of taking damage.

TERRIFYING VISAGE

Beginning at 14th level, you can use a bonus action to adopt the terrifying visage of the being who cursed your ancestor for 10 minutes. During this time, you can use an action on each of your turns to cause each creature who can see you within 30 feet make a Wisdom saving throw against your sorcerer spell save DC. On a failure, a creature is frightened of you until the end of your next turn.

In addition, while you have adopted the terrifying visage, you gain an additional benefit based on the creature type chosen with your Blood Ties feature.

Fey. You can use a bonus action to teleport up to 30 feet in any direction.

Fiend. You have resistance to cold and fire damage.

Undead. When you take damage that isn't radiant, you can use your reaction to reduce that damage by an amount equal to half your sorcerer level.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

VENGEFUL SUMMONS

Beginning at 18th level, your magic has become powerful enough that you can call and command a servant of

those that cursed you. Choose one of the following creatures as a representative for your curse based on the choice you made with your Blood Ties feature: **lamia** or **troll** (fey only), **barbed devil** or **incubus/succubus** (fiend only), **ghost** or **wraith** (undead only).

You can use an action and spend 5 sorcery points to summon your chosen creature. The creature appears in an unoccupied space you can see within 60 feet, and disappears when it drops to 0 hit points, you use this feature to summon another creature, or after 10 minutes have passed.

Roll initiative for the creature, which has its own turns. When you summon it and on each of your turns thereafter, you can issue a verbal command to it (requiring no action on your part), telling it what it must do on its next turn. If you issue no command, it spends its turn attacking any creature within reach.

The Brothers Part 9

The mountain air burned with the smell of iron and sulfur. Scorch marks cut through the grass and the soil, and toppled trees lay burning near the cliff's edge.

Mischa stared down at Laszlo's body. His brother's armour was scorched black by magic, though the longsword he held still shone in the morning light. Laszlo had fought like a demon, impervious to pain and seemingly driven by will alone.

In the end, Mischa was forced to use his strongest spell, stopping time to buy him a moment to drive a poison dagger through a joint in Laszlo's armour. Only then did the warrior fall.

Mischa had won—he had fulfilled the requirement of lichdom. But he felt no victory. Only an unrelenting sickness, a black pit opening in his core.

He reached for his brother's helm to take one last look, but the longsword sprang from Laszlo's hand. Mischa shrieked as the blade sizzled through the air, cutting through the phylactery around his neck and plunging deep into his chest.

He collapsed to the ground next to Laszlo's body form. Gasping, feeling his life drain away, he reached out for his brother's hand.

"Laszlo," he whispered, "you kept your promise, after all. Forgive me..."

Overhead, the sun rose in the sky, and a hawk's cry echoed throughout the mountain.

To be Continued...





Warlock Patron
The First Vampire

You have made a pact with a powerful vampire cursed by the gods or born as a creature of the night. Hundreds of haunted beings serve this vampire, so why enter a pact with you? Because you can act in the light of day unhindered? To cull weaker vampires?

EXPANDED SPELL LIST

The First Vampire lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

| SPELL LEVEL | SPELLS |
|-------------|---|
| 1st | <i>false life, bane</i> |
| 2nd | <i>alter self, levitate</i> |
| 3rd | <i>conjure animals (bats, rats, or wolves only), gaseous form</i> |
| 4th | <i>dominate beast, greater invisibility</i> |
| 5th | <i>dominate person, seeming</i> |

NOCTURNAL PREDATOR

At 1st level, as a predator of the night you have been blessed with enhanced vision in darkness. You have darkvision out to a range of 60 feet. If you already have darkvision, increase the range by 60 feet.

DRAIN LIFE

Starting at 1st level, you gain an innate power to drain life from the living. When you use the Attack action or cast a spell, you can use a bonus action on the same turn to make a melee spell attack against a creature within 5 feet of you. Your attack deals necrotic damage equal to 1d6 + your Charisma ability modifier on a hit.

When you hit a creature with this feature, you can expend a warlock spell slot to deal an extra 1d8 necrotic damage to the target, plus another 1d8 per level of the spell slot. When you expend a spell slot to enhance the attack in this way, you regain hit points equal to the total damage dealt.

CREATURE OF THE NIGHT

At 6th level, you can use your action to cast *polymorph* on yourself, transforming into a **bat** or **wolf**. While you are in either of these forms, you retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier, regaining all spent uses upon completion of a long rest.

ELDRITCH APPETITE

Starting at 10th level, when you reduce a creature to 0 hit points with your Life Drain feature, you can use your reaction to consume the last of their fleeting mortality. When you do, you regain one of your expended pact spell slots. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

ETERNAL NIGHT

At 14th level, your vampire patron grants you a taste of true immortality. You no longer age, and you gain resistance to necrotic damage.

Additionally, once per long rest, you can use a bonus action to gain the following effects for one minute:

You regain 1d6 hit points at the start of your turn if you have at least 1 hit point and aren't in direct sunlight or running water. If you take radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of your next turn.

When using your Drain Life feature, you can use it as if you were expending a 1st-level spell slot.



Otherworldly Patrons

The Parasite

Your patron is a cosmic parasite, draining the vitality out of whole peoples and worlds. Upon forging a pact with such a patron, you become host to one of its nascent offspring. As you grow in power, the boundary between your identity and the parasitic larva within you blurs.

SPELL SIPHON

Starting at 1st level, your patron has taught you to siphon magic from your enemies and make it your own. When a creature you can see within 60 feet casts a spell of a level you can cast with your pact magic spell slots, you can use your reaction to force them to make a Charisma saving throw using your warlock spell save DC. On a failure, the spell is cast as normal and you siphon the knowledge of the spell. While the spell is siphoned, the creature cannot cast the spell again and you can cast it as if it was a warlock spell you know by spending a pact spell slot as normal. Once you cast it, the spell is no longer siphoned and you no longer know the spell.

You can siphon a number of spell levels up to 1 + your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). If you exceed this maximum, a spell of your choice that you have previously siphoned is no longer siphoned. A spell is no longer siphoned if you go unconscious or die.

PHYSICAL SPECIMEN

Starting at 1st level, your patron has enhanced your physical form to improve your utility as a host and pawn. When you finish a long rest, choose a number of the following benefits up to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). You gain these benefits until your next long rest.

- Your maximum hit points increase by 1 for each level you have in this class.
- You gain darkvision out to a distance of 60 feet. If you already have darkvision, its range increases by 30 feet.
- Each of your movement speeds increase by 5.
- You have advantage on saving throws against disease and poison.
- Your jump distances are tripled and you gain a climb speed equal to your walking speed.
- When you make a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) ability check you can use your reaction to add a bonus to the roll. This bonus is equal to your Charisma modifier.

SYMBIOTIC SENTINEL

Starting at 6th level, your patron remains alert to all threats to its host at all times. You cannot be surprised and you have advantage on Dexterity ability checks made to determine initiative. You also gain advantage on saving throws against being charmed and frightened.

SPAWN PAWN

At 10th level, you learn the *dominate person* spell. It counts as a warlock spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of spells you know. You can also cast it once without a spell slot, and you regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest.

When you cast this spell, your patron enhances the magic, dealing psychic damage equal to your warlock level if the creature succeeds on a saving throw to end the spell. In addition, damage can't break your concentration on this spell.

LARVAL REGENERATION

Starting when you reach 14th level, when you die, a larval parasite bursts from your corpse the next turn on your initiative. You control the parasite, which disappears after 24 hours. The parasite is a Tiny creature, has an AC of 14, maximum hit points equal to half your maximum hit points, and a walking speed of 30 feet. It otherwise uses your statistics but cannot cast spells.

As an action, the parasite can cause a humanoid within 5 feet of it to make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw (your choice) against your warlock spell save DC. On a failure, the parasite burrows into the creature dealing piercing damage equal to your warlock level. While burrowed inside a creature, the parasite cannot take any actions, cannot be targeted by attacks, and is immune to all damage except psychic damage.

On each of the creature's subsequent turns it can use its action to make a Constitution saving throw against your warlock spell save DC. If the creature succeeds, the parasite is ejected from its body and into an unoccupied space of the creature's choice within 5 feet of it. If the parasite is still burrowed inside the creature when its turn ends, the creature takes necrotic damage equal to twice your warlock level. If this damage reduces the creature to 0 hit points, it immediately dies, the parasite disappears, and you take over the body of the humanoid as if you had been targeted by the *reincarnate* spell and rolled the race the humanoid had been.

If you are returned to life, such as by the *revivify* spell, your parasite immediately disappears. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

The Brothers Part 10

"What do you want to do when we get to Castalore, Laszlo?"

The two teenagers kept pace with each other as they followed the dirt road through Raevo. Laszlo grinned at his brother. "I'll join the Order of Dawn and be a great knight. I'll wear armour and learn how to use a sword. Then I'll head south and kill all the vampires!"

Mischa nodded. "I'm sure the Order will take you. You're much stronger than me."

"They'll take you too if you ask!"

"No." Mischa gazed ahead. Beyond the trees, the seashore beckoned. "I want to study magic. There's a mage college in Castalore, I think."

"Magic?" Laszlo looked at him quizzically. "Why magic?"

"Because vampires fear it more than swords. One day, I'll be so powerful they'll fear me too." His eyes darkened. "Then they'll pay."

Laszlo was quiet for a moment, then said, "Mischa, does this mean we'll get separated?"

"I-I don't think so. At least I don't want us to."

"Me neither," Laszlo replied. "But...if that does happen..."

"Yeah?"

"I'll come find you. I'm your brother, Mischa. I promise, I'll always look out for you."

"I believe you, Laszlo."

The two brothers hurried on, racing to reach town before nightfall.

The End







Wizard Arcane Tradition Plague Doctor

Blending spellcasting with science, you distill your magic into concoctions that harm or heal. Plague Doctors often wear grotesque masks protecting them from toxic ingredients. Many regard the mask with fear as a sign of pestilence, making Plague Doctors a source of both hope and trepidation.

POTION CRAFT

Beginning when you select this arcane tradition at 2nd level, you gain proficiency in Medicine and with alchemist's supplies and herbalism kits.

Additionally, you have learned to create magical concoctions. You can create any number of concoctions using your alchemist supplies or herbalism kit for 10 minutes, expending a spell slot for each concoction created. When you do, for each concoction created, choose a spell from your wizard's spell book that targets only one creature. The chosen spell must be of an equal or lower level than the expended spell slot.

When a creature consumes the concoction, it becomes the target of the spell as if you had just cast it. If the spell requires concentration, the creature that consumes the potion must concentrate on it to maintain the effect. Concoctions created this way lose their magical effect at the end of your next long rest.

GOOD MEDICINE

Also at 2nd level, when you craft a concoction, you can choose to expend a spell slot without choosing a spell, instead creating good medicine. When a creature consumes your good medicine, you roll 1d8 per level of the spell slot expended casting the spell, and the creature regains an equal number of hit points. If you expended a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you also end all diseases afflicting the creature.

BAD MEDICINE

Starting at 6th level, when you craft a concoction you can choose to expend a spell slot without choosing a spell, instead crafting bad medicine. When you create a dose of bad medicine, choose one effect per level of spell slot expended.

- The creature is poisoned.
- The creature's movement speeds are halved.
- The creature takes an additional 1d4 necrotic damage the first time it takes damage each turn.
- The creature takes 1d6 poison damage each time it takes an action.
- The creature takes acid damage equal to the level of the spell slot expended at the start of each of its turns.

As an action, you can hurl a dose of bad medicine at a point you can see within 30 feet. Creatures within 10 feet of that point must make a Constitution saving throw against your wizard spell save DC. On a failure, the creature suffers all of the chosen effects for the next minute.

As an action, the affected creature can attempt another Constitution saving throw to end any effects early.

BREATHE IT IN

Beginning at 10th level, being persistently exposed to the most deadly ailments known has given you some small measure of resistance to them. After you take necrotic or poison damage, you gain temporary hit points equal to the damage. In addition, you are immune to disease and have advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.

MEDICINAL MASTER

Starting at 14th level, when you heal with your Good Medicine or deal damage with your Bad Medicine, roll an additional 2d8 to determine the amount of hit points regained or an additional 1d6 to the damage dealt.



Wizard Arcane Tradition School of Sangromancy

You study an uncommon subschool of magic known as sangromancy or blood magic. Despite its dark reputation, there's nothing inherently evil about the practice of sangromancy, though its demands on its practitioners are gruesome. As a sangromancer, your chosen magic demands more than knowledge—it demands sacrifice as well. Other wizards may view you with skepticism or even outright hostility, but none can deny the potency of your art.

SANGROMANCY SAVANT

Beginning when you select this arcane tradition at 2nd level, all sangromancy spells are added to the wizard spell list for you. In addition, the gold and time you must spend to copy a sangromancy spell into your spellbook is halved.

FULL-BLOODED

Starting at 2nd level, you gain a pool of d12s that you can expend instead of a hit die when you cast sangromancy spells. The number of dice in the pool equals 1 + your wizard level.

Your pool regains all expended dice when you finish a long rest.

SANGUINE VIGOR

Starting at 6th level, your hit point maximum increases by 6 and increases by 1 again whenever you gain a level in this class.

In addition, when you cast a sangromancy spell, you regain a number of hit points equal to the level of the spell.

BLOOD FOR BLOOD

At 10th level, when you deal damage to a creature with a spell you cast, you can expend and roll a hit die, or a d12 from your Full-Blooded feature, to add its result to the damage dealt to that creature.

RED RENEWAL

Starting at 14th level, when you finish a short rest, you can choose expended hit dice to recover. When you do, choose a number of expended hit dice equal to half your wizard level and regain them. You regain an equivalent number of dice from your Full Blooded feature. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.



Chapter 6: Transformations

Many creatures hunt the nights of Etharis. While many are twisted beasts of hatred born from darkness, some were not always so. The following ruleset provides characters the means to become grim monsters of the dark themselves. From dread-inducing werewolves to all-powerful liches, the following transformations are available to characters who meet the prerequisites.

While transformations make for great roleplay opportunities, at no point do they provide an acceptable excuse to hurt the enjoyment of other players at the table. If you want to create a conflict between two player characters, it's imperative that you discuss this with the table (and particularly your GM) first.

Beginning a Transformation

Individuals rarely choose to transform into beings of the night. Instead, they have it forced upon them. Foul curses, horrific experiments, and the diabolical machinations of fiends, vampires, and other dark agents are all examples of how a character might start a transformation. However, there are times when a character may wish to begin a transformation of their own volition. Perhaps they have succumbed to the lure of power, or they see it as the only way to achieve a greater goal.

Regardless, the first step in any transformation should be a discussion with your GM. Make your intentions clear, as the transformation may not be suitable for the setting or story your GM is running.

The next step in a transformation is to ensure you meet all the prerequisites of the transformation. There are 2 types of prerequisites: mechanical and roleplay prerequisites. Mechanical prerequisites can be ability score, spellcasting, and other feature requirements. Roleplay prerequisites are the in-game actions required by a character to start a transformation. It is recommended that this milestone be reached within the game rather than through a backstory. However, you may wish to discuss alternative avenues to pursue a prerequisite with your GM.

A BLESSING OR A CURSE?

Within the dark fantasy world of Etharis, Transformations are representative of the gothic and body horror elements of the world. As a result, they should increase a character in power but ultimately be rooted in tragedy, as the setting demands. However, if you are not playing in a dark fantasy setting or you want your Transformation to feel more like a blessing than a curse, discuss with your GM the possibility of removing some or all the flaws associated with your Transformation. Alternatively, feel free to tinker with the boons and flaws with your GM. Transformations should suit the needs of your campaign, not the other way around.

BOONS AND FLAWS

When you have achieved all the required prerequisites of a transformation and reached your first transformation level, you gain all the boons and the flaw of the first level. These constitute the beginning of the changes from the transformation. The boons and flaws of these iconic monsters come from folklore, pop culture, and our own imagination. If they differ from an existing trope or stat block, it is because they represent a variation unique to Etharis.

LEVELING UP

Characters that have successfully completed a transformation can continue the process by increasing their transformation level. The character must achieve a milestone before gaining a transformation level. Each type of transformation has an example list of possible milestones that are thematically unique. Talk with your GM to come up with applicable milestones for your campaign and how you can achieve them.

When you increase your transformation level, you choose one boon from that level, or a lower level, provided you meet that boon's prerequisites. You gain the new level's flaw as well.

UNIVERSAL MILESTONES

The following milestones are examples that can apply to all (or most) transformations:

- Undertaking an exceptionally evil (or good) act
- Completing an ancient ritual
- Obtaining a powerful artifact
- Being cursed by a dark agent
- Being exalted by a patron or god

SUGGESTED CLASS LEVEL TO TRANSFORMATION LEVEL

While transformations are milestone achievements and each level comes with a flaw, transformations still represent a significant increase in power. For this reason, it's recommended that players and GMs use the following level table as a guide for when players should be able to level up a transformation. After all, only the strongest survive such an ordeal. This table is a guide however, and cannot be applied to all Transformations equally. Transformations such as the Lich are much more powerful and should only be available at higher levels of play.

| TRANSFORMATION LEVEL | RECOMMENDED CLASS LEVEL RANGE |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | 1-4 |
| 2 | 5-10 |
| 3 | 11-16 |
| 4 | 17-20 |



Not all transformations can follow these recommendations due to prerequisites. In this case, characters can reach higher transformation levels at higher class levels.

REMOVING A TRANSFORMATION

Reversing a transformation is an incredibly difficult process. The changes that have occurred in a character have fundamentally altered their biology, and perhaps their mind. However, anything is possible in a magical world. To cure a transformation, treat it as a curse from the curses section. The curse level of a transformation is equal to the character's transformation level.

Rather than casting *remove curse* with the cure components, the *regenerate* spell must be cast with the cure components instead. A character that has reached the 4th level of a transformation, or that has been transformed for longer than one year, can only be cured by a *wish* spell. If a character is killed and resurrected, the GM decides if they are resurrected with transformation levels.

ADDITIONAL BOONS AND FLAWS

The following Boons are new options for existing Transformations found in *Grim Hollow: The Campaign Guide*.



Aberrant Horror

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

TRANSFORMATION BOON

UNEARTHLY SENSES

Starting at 2nd level, you may use a bonus action to enhance your body's sensory organs, or grow entirely new ones. While this effect is active, you may choose one of the following Adaptations:

Keen Senses. Your eyes bulge, your skin tingles, and your nostrils flare. You gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight, hearing, or smell.

Darkvision. Your eyes take on the appearance of a cat's, growing to fill the upper half of your face. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray. If you already possess darkvision from another source, the distance extends to 120 feet instead.

Third Eye. Another eye emerges from your forehead, granting you the ability to see invisible creatures and objects as if they were visible.

These Adaptations last until you become unconscious, use a different one of these Adaptations, or use a bonus action on your turn to end the Adaptation. Once you reach Transformation Level 4, you may choose two of the listed Adaptations instead of one.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

TRANSFORMATION BOON

SHIFTING FORM

Your body has begun to lose its cohesion, softening and shifting like thick jelly. You take no extra damage from critical hits due to the shuffling of your internal organs. Whenever you make a melee or ranged attack using your Eldritch Limbs, you deal an additional 1d6 acid damage. You gain resistance to acid damage.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

TRANSFORMATION BOON

AMORPHOUS FLESH

Prerequisite: Shifting Form

Your body has continued to dissolve into a corrosive slurry of flesh and bone similar to an ooze. You are able to move through gaps as narrow as 1 inch wide, and you are immune to the grappled, prone, and restrained conditions.

In addition, whenever you take 10 or more points of bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, you may choose to continue splitting along the wound, separating into two distinct parts that reform into versions of yourself

that are one size smaller than the original, each with one half of your current hit points. If you have an odd number of hit points, you choose which segment gets the additional 1 hp. As you split you may choose how your armor and other equipment is split between the two.

On your turn you may move with each form and you may also take one action with each form. You may only take one bonus action and one reaction per turn, although you may choose which segment you want to act when you do so.

You may reform into a single body as an action, which may be taken by either segment when they are both within 5 feet of one another. If you do so, you regain hit points equal to the number of hit points your other form has, and you become your normal size. Your second body lasts for one hour before dissolving into nothingness.



TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

TRANSFORMATION BOON:

BRAND OF THE SLAVER'S LEASH

As an action, a flaming whip appears in your hand and lashes out at a creature you can see within 10 feet of you. That creature must make a Dexterity saving throw against your Transformation Save DC. On a failed save, the creature takes 2d4 fire damage and is inflicted with a searing brand.

While branded in this way, the creature is tied to you with a wreathing leash of flame and cannot use its movement to move more than 10 feet away from you. On your turn, you may use a bonus action to drag the creature up to 10 feet in any direction. You may also use your reaction to prevent any event that would take the creature out of range. For example, if the branded creature uses the *misty step* spell to move out of the 10 feet radius, or an ally of the target attempting to physically drag their ally out of the leash's range, the attempt fails.

Spells that have the ability to teleport multiple people, like *dimension door*, work as intended for all involved except for the branded creature.

A creature remains branded this way for 1 minute. The brand disappears if the creature is knocked unconscious, enters hallowed ground, is targeted by the *remove curse* spell, or if the creature is more than 10 feet away from you at the end of any turn.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

TRANSFORMATION BOON

INFERNAL SUB-CONTRACTOR

Your mastery of the infernal laws allows you to utilize the benefits of two Gifts of Damnation simultaneously. In addition, you may change gifts on a short rest instead of a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

TRANSFORMATION BOON

LOOPHOLE

As an expert in the magic of binding and the formation of magical contracts, you gain insight into the workings of summoning spells and how to interfere with them. Whenever you encounter a summoned creature, you are immediately aware it was summoned. As an action, you may wrest control of a summoning spell away from the caster. The spellcaster must make a Wisdom saving throw against your Transformation Save DC. On a failure, you gain control over the spell and any remaining creatures as if you had cast the spell, including concentration for any remaining duration. You may use this ability a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1), and you regain all uses of this ability when you finish a long rest.



phylactery, you have immunity to that damage type. In addition, your phylactery is more resilient than normal. Your phylactery's AC becomes 20 and its hit points increase to 120.

Your phylactery's nature is hidden from casual observation, and an observer must make an Intelligence (Arcana) check against your Transformation Save DC in order to identify your phylactery.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

TRANSFORMATION BOON

ENHANCED PHYLACTERY

Prerequisite: Phylactery Bond

Your bond with your phylactery strengthens, granting additional benefits:

- If you aren't wearing armor, your base Armor Class is 15 + your Dexterity modifier. Your phylactery's AC is increased by 2.
- Your spell save DC and spell attack bonus each increase by 2.
- You and your phylactery have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

TRANSFORMATION BOON

SOUL REFLECTION

Prerequisite: Enhanced Phylactery

You have learned to utilize your bond with your phylactery to its greatest effect. While wearing your phylactery, whenever you are targeted by a spell, if you are the only target, you can use your reaction and spend charges from your phylactery equal to the spell's level. If you do so, the spell reflects and instead targets an appropriate target of your choice within range of the spell as if you cast it. For the purpose of using this feature, cantrips are considered 1st-level spells.



Lich

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

TRANSFORMATION BOON

PHYLACTERY BOND

You share an especially strong bond with your phylactery and gain benefits from keeping it on your person. You may choose to craft your phylactery into an amulet, a ring, a brooch, or some other form of jewelry. When you finish a short or long rest and you are wearing your phylactery, you may choose a damage type other than radiant damage. As long as you wear your



Lycanthrope

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

TRANSFORMATION BOON

HEART OF THE WILD

The spirits of nature speak to you through your bestial side, offering you guidance and knowledge. You may now cast and concentrate on spells in hybrid form. Additionally, you can speak, read, and write Sylvan, and you have advantage on Wisdom and Charisma checks to interact with fey and beasts.



TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

TRANSFORMATION BOON

CALL THE PACK

Prerequisite: Hunter's Howl

When you use your Hunter's Howl ability, up to three allies you designate within 60 feet of the target also gain the benefits. Your Hunter's Howl also grants those allies advantage on attack rolls against the target if another affected ally is within 5 feet of the creature and not incapacitated.

Additionally, when a hostile creature afflicted by your Hunter's Howl dies, you regain hit points equal to twice your Strength modifier.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

TRANSFORMATION BOON

BLOOD FRENZY

Prerequisite: Bestial Savagery

Your bite attack damage increases to 2d8. If you hit a creature with a bite attack, you can force the creature to make a Strength saving throw against your Transformation Save DC or be grappled. While the target is grappled in this way, you have advantage on attack rolls against them and deal additional damage with your natural weapons equal to your Strength modifier.



Seraph

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

TRANSFORMATION BOON

DIVINE PROTECTION

When you or an allied creature you can see within 30 feet is targeted by an attack, you can use your reaction to shield them with holy light. The target gains a +4 bonus to AC against the attack. You may use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1). You regain all uses of this feature when you finish a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

TRANSFORMATION BOON

HOLY BULWARK

You may use your action to steel yourself against the tactics of your most hated adversaries, gaining one of the following benefits:

Stand Against the Infernal. You gain resistance to fire damage.

Cleanse the Undead. You gain resistance to necrotic damage.

Ignore Fey Trickery. You are immune to the charmed and frightened conditions.

This effect lasts until you use this feature again.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

TRANSFORMATION BOON

AURA OF CELESTIAL RESILIENCE

You emit an aura of stalwart conviction. This aura radiates up to 20 feet from you while you are conscious. When you or an ally within range of your aura fails a saving throw, they can choose to succeed it instead. Once a creature has benefited from this feature, they cannot benefit from it again until they have completed a long rest.



Vampire

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

TRANSFORMATION BOON

NIGHT STALKER

You gain proficiency in Stealth. If you already have proficiency in Stealth, then your proficiency bonus is doubled when making Stealth ability checks.



Additionally, you can attempt to hide even when you are only lightly obscured, including dim light.

You also gain a climb speed equal to your walking speed. You can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

TRANSFORMATION BOON

IMPROVED SHAPECHANGER

Prerequisite: Shapechanger

When you use your Shapechanger ability, you may also take on the form of a **dire wolf**. While in dire wolf form you gain the following features:

Your movement speed changes to 50 feet. If you have sunlight hypersensitivity, it is reduced to sunlight sensitivity: while in sunlight, you have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks, but take no damage from direct contact with sunlight.

While in dire wolf form, you can't speak. Any object you are holding or armor you are wearing merges into your wolf form or immediately drops to the ground. The GM may decide if they feel the object cannot merge.

If you become unconscious in dire wolf form, you revert back to your vampiric form.

Additionally, you gain the ability to use Fanged Bite while in animal form. The piercing damage for your Fanged Bite changes based on your form. While in bat form you deal 1 piercing damage, and while in dire wolf form you deal 2d6 piercing damage.

While in mist form you may cast the spell *fog cloud* once without expending a spell slot and without using verbal, somatic, or material components. You regain the ability to cast this spell when you finish a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

TRANSFORMATION BOON

INNATE SANGROMANCY

Prerequisite: Sanguine Magic

You know all Sangromancy Spells. When casting a spell using Sangromancy, you may use FP instead of spending hit dice. Treat these FP as 1d12 hit dice. When you cast a spell in this way you do not generate FP from Sanguine Magic and you may choose a single effect to apply to the spell by spending additional FP:

Beguiling Spell (2 FP). When a creature fails their saving throw against this spell, they are also charmed by you until the end of your next turn.

Shadow Spell (2 FP). When a creature fails their saving throw against this spell, they are unable to perceive you until the end of your next turn, except by magical means.

Withering Spell (3 FP). When you cast a spell that deals necrotic damage, it deals an additional 1d8 necrotic damage per spell level. A creature damaged by this spell cannot take reactions until the end of your next turn.

Vampiric Spell (3 FP). When you cast a spell that deals necrotic damage, you heal for up to half the amount of damage dealt.

New Transformations

The following are new transformations, functioning in the same way as described previously in the *Grim Hollow: The Campaign Guide*.



The soft strumming of a harp draws the children ever deeper into the dark wood. As they reach a moonlit clearing, they see a beautiful maid dressed in a gown of starlight. She turns her soft gaze upon them at the sounds of their gasps and calls to them, "Welcome, little ones, be not afraid. Step into the ring so we may dance and play."

An elfin man with pale blue skin leans his forehead against the dying tree. As he softly hums, the shriveled leaves turn green once again, and the ancient bow begins to straighten. The man lets out a sigh of relief, which momentarily chills the air.

The fey are changeable beings of great power and even greater danger. No two fey are quite alike, but their tie to the natural world is universal. Mortals cannot comprehend the level of true freedom the faerie people feel. To know such freedom is to change entirely.

BECOMING A FEY

Becoming a fey requires a direct connection to the faerie realms. Most creatures who become fey are forced to do so when they are stolen from the material realm as a child. These children, known as changelings, rapidly transform after only a few days trapped in the realm of faerie. A changeling's transition is often painful or strange, for a child altered in this way does not have a say in what type of fey they ultimately become.

A creature who voluntarily seeks to become a fey can strike a deal with an arch fey or beseech the court of one of the faerie queens. These pathways to transformation are as dangerous as the realms of faeries themselves, and it requires a quick wit and sharp awareness to get the best of the fey kind.

TRANSFORMATION FEATURES

A fey has the following transformation features:

PREREQUISITES

Ability Scores: Charisma 13 or higher

Roleplay: You must have sworn fealty to one of the fey courts, been raised in the realms as a changeling, or have some other plausible reason to have become a fey. Discuss with your GM how you can achieve this in the game.

Some of your abilities require your target to make a saving throw to resist their effects. The saving throw DC is calculated as follows:

Transformation Save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

LEVEL MILESTONES

The following are examples of possible level milestones for the Fey:

- Striking a bargain with a greater fey
- Performing a great deed in the name of one of the faerie queens
- Establishing a new faerie ring or bridge to the fey realms
- Defeating a powerful agent from your rival court
- Earning a domain or title in the realm of faerie

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 1

Starting at 1st level, you gain the following Transformation Boons and this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

FEY FORM

Your Charisma score increases by 2 and your Dexterity score increases by 1. An ability score cannot be increased beyond 16 this way. You also become a fey in addition to any other creature types you are. Spells that affect humanoids still affect you. However, you're immune to effects that only affect a creature of your new type of a specific CR.

When you gain this ability, you must also choose which Fey court fuels your transformation. Choose one of the following:

The Summer Court. The summer court embodies the bounty and warmth of the growing season. The fey of summer tend towards joviality, fickleness, and vanity. Creatures of summer often hide their cruel intentions behind beautiful facades.

The Winter Court. The winter court embodies the stillness and darkness of the coldest season. The fey of winter tend to be serious, cruel, and reflective. Creatures of winter are often terrifying to behold but very direct about their intentions.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

TWILIGHT STEP

As a bonus action, you can magically teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space you can see. Your twilight step also gains an additional feature depending on which court you chose for your Fey Form ability.

Summer. Immediately after using your Twilight Step, one creature of your choice that you can see within 5 feet of you takes fire damage equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of 1 damage).

Winter. Immediately after using your Twilight Step, one creature of your choice that you can see within 5 feet of you takes cold damage equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of 1 damage).

You can use the Twilight Step feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of once). You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

PLANAR BINDING

Your body and soul are bound to one of the faerie realms. You have disadvantage on death saving throws as the realm attempts to pull you back to it. If you would be killed, your soul is taken back to a plane of existence of the GM's choice. This plane is your new home, and you become an NPC under the GM's control.

If you are in the faerie realm responsible for your transformation, this flaw has no effect.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

At 2nd level, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

TWO-FACED

You can choose to transform your face into a vision of enchanting loveliness or horrifying ugliness. Any non-fey creature within 30 feet of you when you transform your face must make a Wisdom saving throw or be affected for 1 minute.

Summer. Any creature that fails the saving throw becomes charmed. This effect ends early on a creature if you or an ally deal damage to it or take other harmful actions.

Winter. Any creature that fails the saving throw becomes frightened of you. This effect ends early if a creature affected by this ability ends its turn out of your line of sight.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of once). you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

SPRITE SERVANT

A fey sprite binds itself to your service. The sprite is a floating ball of light, considered to be a Tiny creature which cannot be harmed or affected in any way. The sprite has the following characteristics:

- The sprite has a fly speed of 40 feet.
- The sprite cannot speak verbally, but it can telepathically communicate with you as long as it is within a mile of you. The sprite understands all languages you do.
- The sprite can become invisible at will. Otherwise, it sheds dim light in a 10-foot radius. As a bonus action, you can command the sprite to shine more brightly. When following this command, the sprite can shed bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

MAGIC TRICKS

Your transformation grants you innate power, which manifests as the ability to cast a small number of spells. You learn one illusion or enchantment cantrip.

In addition, choose one 1st-level and one 2nd-level illusion or enchantment spell. You can cast each of these spells once without expending a spell slot. You regain the ability to cast them in this way when you finish a short or long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells. When you finish a long rest you can replace your 1st or 2nd level spell with a spell of the same level which must also be an enchantment or illusion spell.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

QUEEN'S COMMAND

The fey court lends you its power, and in exchange you must pay regular tribute to maintain your freedom. Twice a year, at the winter and summer solstice, you must deliver a treasure or other significant tribute to the winter or summer queen (whichever you pay allegiance to). If you do not provide a tribute by the appointed day, your queen pulls you immediately to her faerie realm.

Once pulled in this way, you must remain in the faerie realm for 100 years, or until you strike a bargain with the queen to let you return to the mortal plane. Your GM will tell you what constitutes an appropriate tribute to the court. Some fey queens prefer magic items while others wish for long kept secrets, the capture of fey criminals, or humanoid servants.



TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

At 3rd level, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons or pick a boon from a lower level that you meet the prerequisites for. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

FAERIE MANTLE

You can use an action to wrap yourself in the majesty of the faerie for 1 minute. During this time, you project an aura of blinding beauty out to a distance of 30 feet. When creatures of your choice start their turn or move into this aura, they must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or be blinded for 1 minute. A creature blinded in this way can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the blinded condition on a success. Once you use this action you cannot do so again until you finish a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

MADE OF MAGIC

Your transformation into a fey has changed the fundamental nature of your body. You gain resistance to damage from Spells.

In addition, when you make a saving throw against a spell you can use a reaction to gain advantage on the roll. Once you use this reaction, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

COURTLY GRACES

You gain proficiency in two skills determined by your court. If you are already proficient in one or both of these skills, then your proficiency bonus is doubled for ability checks using that skill. If you have or ever gain double your proficiency bonus in one or both of these skills, you gain an additional +2 for that skill.

Additionally, your fealty to a fey court offers you protection from certain emotions associated with the court. You gain a benefit based on your court.

Summer. You gain proficiency in Performance and Persuasion, and you are immune to being charmed.

Winter. You gain proficiency in Deception and Intimidation, and you are immune to being frightened.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

BOUND BY WORDS

The fey choose their words carefully for they are bound by them, and so too are you. When you give your word to a humanoid creature (such as by making a promise or pledge, entering into a contract, or coming to a verbal agreement) the commitment becomes magically enforced. If you fail to fulfill your part of the agreement, you lose the benefit of all of your fey transformation boons until you surrender an additional tithe to the summer or winter queen, as described in your Queen's Command flaw. This tithe is in addition to those required by that flaw.

Importantly, you are bound by the letter of any agreement you make, not by the spirit. If you promise you will not lay a hand on the prince, for example, there would be no consequences if you kicked him (provided your hand didn't touch him in the process).

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

You can pick one of the following Transformation Boons or pick a boon from a lower level that you meet the prerequisites for. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

GREATER MAGIC TRICKS

Prerequisite: Magic Tricks

Choose an enchantment or illusion spell of 3rd, 4th, and 5th level. You can cast each of these spells once without expending a spell slot and regain the ability to cast them in this way when you finish a long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells. When you finish a long rest you can replace your 3rd-, 4th-, or 5th-level spell with a spell of the same level, which must also be an enchantment or illusion spell.

Additionally, you can cast the 1st and 2nd level spells from the Magic Tricks Boon twice per short or long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

MISDIRECTION

Light and magic bend strangely around you, making you difficult to hit. All attack rolls against you have disadvantage. If you are hit by an attack, this trait is disrupted until the end of your next turn. This trait only works while you are conscious.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

TWILIGHT GLAMOUR

As an action, you can become invisible. Anything you are wearing or carrying on your person is invisible as well. The invisibility ends if you choose to end it, if you attack, or if you cast a spell. Once your invisibility ends in this way, you cannot use this feature again for 1 minute. This trait only works while you are conscious.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

SEASONALLY AFFECTED

Your connection to the fey courts has granted you tremendous power but also an esoteric fragility: you gain a weakness towards cold damage if you are in the summer court, or fire damage if you are in the winter court.

If you were normally resistant to this damage type, it instead affects you normally. If you are normally immune to damage of that type, you are resistant instead. In addition, whenever you take damage of that type, your maximum hit points are reduced by an equal amount. When your maximum hit points are reduced by this effect, they return to normal after you finish a long rest.



Primordial

The city dwellers raise their eyes to a floating figure barely glimpsed through the smog-filled sky. Their cries ring out as the figure, wreathed in flame, clenches a fist, causing the earth to tremble violently. The crushing weight of water is the last sensation the people know, as their filthy streets are washed clean.

The primordial throws her head back as she exhales a gout of flame. Her charred skin rapidly heals as she wades free of the molten lava, laughing all the way. Her companions look on in horror as she calls to them, "I have heard it. I heard the song of creation!"

Primordials are born when a humanoid absorbs a spark of primordial chaos. The primordial forces are the purest building blocks of creation, and a fostered spark quickly grows to an all-consuming flame. Mastering the elements requires unlearning the limitations of mortality, a process that spurs rapid transformation.

BECOMING A PRIMORDIAL

There are several ways for a mortal to consume a primordial spark, but continuing to become an elemental takes concentrated effort. A mortal might be born with an elemental spark, gifted one, or they could gain one by consuming the power of an elemental. Once acquired, one must spend a great deal of time contemplating and understanding the spark to unlock its full potential.

The process of attaining elemental mastery is dangerous. The slightest slip in control can cause devastation on a massive scale. Such facts are why isolated individuals like druids, monks, or rangers are most likely to see the transformation through to its end.

TRANSFORMATION FEATURES

A Primordial has the following transformation features:

PREREQUISITES

Ability Scores: Constitution 13 or higher

Roleplay: Either through ritual, defeating a greater Elemental being, or some other means, you must consume a Primordial Spark.

Some of your abilities require your target to make a saving throw to resist their effects. The saving throw DC is calculated as follows:

Transformation Save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Constitution modifier.

LEVEL MILESTONES

The following are examples of possible level milestones for the Primordial:

- Defeat and absorb the power of a greater elemental
- Claim an elemental node
- Make an alliance with a being from one of the elemental planes
- Use your powers to defeat an encroaching civilization
- Free an imprisoned or indentured elemental creature



TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 1

Starting at 1st level, you gain the following Transformation Boons and this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

ELEMENTAL FORM

Your Constitution increases by 2 and your Wisdom score increases by 1. An ability score cannot be increased beyond 16 this way.

You become an Elemental in addition to any other creature types you are. Spells and abilities that affect Elementals of a specific CR do not affect you.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

PRIMORDIAL AFFINITY

While able to control all elements, your Primordial birth was sparked by one particular element: your Primordial Affinity. Your body is infused with malleable elemental



energy. You must choose an element below and gain all the benefits of that element:

Air. You have resistance to lightning damage. In addition, you can channel the air currents around you to guide a ranged attack. Once on each of your turns, when you make a ranged weapon or ranged spell attack, you can make that attack with advantage. If you are in a location without an air current - such as underwater - this feature has no effect.

Earth. You have resistance to poison damage. In addition, whenever you gain temporary hit points, you gain that many plus your proficiency bonus instead.

Fire. You have resistance to fire damage. In addition, whenever you deal fire damage, you can add your Constitution modifier to the damage dealt.

Water. You have resistance to cold damage. In addition, whenever a creature regains hit points due to a spell or feature you control, you can imbue them with healing elemental energy. The creature regains additional 1d6 hit points. Only one creature who regains hit points from the spell or feature can benefit from this.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

PLANAR BINDING

Your body and soul are bound to a primordial plane of existence. You have disadvantage on death saving throws as the plane attempts to pull you back to it. If you would be killed, your soul is taken back to a plane of existence of the GM's choice. This plane is your new home, and you become an NPC under the GM's control.

If you are on the primordial plane responsible for your transformation, this flaw has no effect.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

At 2nd level, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

DUAL NATURE

You can choose to add a second elemental source from the Primordial Affinity Boon to add to your form. When you do so, you gain the associated benefits of your new element.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

ELEMENTAL SURGE

You can channel pure elemental energy into a concentrated bolt of an element of your choice. On your turn, as an action you can choose one of the below choices:

Lightning Strike. You can make a special ranged attack targeting a creature within 60 feet. You are proficient with this attack, which uses your Constitution modifier. On a hit, this attack deals 3d8 + your Constitution modifier lightning damage. You can then use a bonus action to target another creature with 30 feet of the first target with the same attack. Increase the damage by 1d8 for each transformation level above 2.

Earth Shard. You can force a creature within 30 feet to make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes bludgeoning damage equal to 3d6 + your Constitution modifier, or half as much on a successful save. Increase the damage by 1d6 for each transformation level above 2.

You also gain temporary hit points equal to half the damage dealt.

Flame Wave. Each creature in a 15-foot cone originating in your square must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, creatures in the area take fire damage equal to 2d8 + your Constitution modifier. Increase the damage by 1d8 for each transformation level above 2.

Aquatic Rejuvenation. Choose a creature you can see within 60 feet of you. The creature regains a number of hit points equal to 2d8 + your Constitution modifier. Increase the amount of hit points regained by 1d8 for each transformation level above 2.

You can use these features a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier, regaining all expended uses upon completing a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

CALL THE FOUR

You can use your action to summon or repel elemental forces around you, causing one of the following effects of your choice:

- You create a 15-foot radius globe of breathable air around you. Creatures can pass freely in or out of the globe, but other elemental forces like water or fire cannot. Alternatively, you can choose to banish all air from inside the globe. This globe lasts for 10 minutes, and you must concentrate on it (as per concentrating to maintain a spell).
- You can conjure up to 50 pounds of loose earth at a point within 30 feet of you. Alternatively, you can shape the earth and stone within 15 feet of you. If affecting dirt or stone on the ground, you can cause it to become difficult terrain.
- All flammable objects not worn or wielded within 30 feet of you to burst into flame for 1 minute. Alternatively, all nonmagical flames within 30 feet of you are immediately extinguished.
- You can conjure up to 10 gallons of water at a point within 30 feet of you or cause the water to fall like rain in a 30-foot area for 1 minute. Alternatively, you can choose to repel water within 15 feet of you. This ability has no effect on living creatures but repels mist, rain and creates pockets of air if submerged in water.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

ELEMENTAL APPEARANCE

Your appearance has grotesquely transformed. Your eyes might be smoldering embers, water could continuously pour from your mouth or nose, your extremities may crumble like sand, or patches of your skin might fade to transparency. Regardless of your true form, you

are horrific to behold. You can suspend this form and manifest the appearance of the humanoid you once were, but this is taxing and requires concentration.

This form is not permanent, and moments of stress are likely to reveal your true nature. Your true form is revealed in the following situations:

- Concentrating on a spell.
- Gaining the unconscious condition.
- Choosing to reveal yourself.
- In events of extreme emotional or physical stress, a GM may call for a Constitution saving throw with a DC of their choosing to see if you maintain your humanoid form.

Non-chaotic creatures that witness your true form become hostile to you, unless the GM decides otherwise.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

At 3rd level, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons or pick a boon from a lower level that you meet the prerequisites for. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

PRIMEVAL BODY

Your transformation to an elemental form has changed your body entirely. You no longer need to sleep, breathe, or eat. You also gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

AURA OF AWAKENING

You emit an aura of power that awakens the elemental forces in your companions. When you first gain this feature, choose one of the options below. You may change the aura you emit upon completing a long rest.

Light as Air. Whenever you or a friendly creature within 10 feet of you makes a Dexterity saving throw, the creature gains a bonus equal to your Constitution modifier. You must be conscious to grant this bonus.

Forged in Fire. While you are conscious, whenever you or a friendly creature within 10 feet of you deals damage with a melee weapon attack, they deal additional fire damage equal to your Constitution modifier. You must be conscious to grant this bonus.

Heart of Stone. At the beginning of your turn, you and each creature of your choice within 10 feet of you gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier. While a creature has temporary hit points gained in this manner and are not incapacitated, they cannot be moved or knocked prone, unless they choose to be. You must be conscious to grant this bonus.

Spring of Life. Each unconscious, non-sleeping creature of your choice within 10 feet of you regains 1 hit point at the beginning of their turn. You must be conscious to grant this bonus.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

MASTER OF MANY

Prerequisite: Dual Nature

You can choose to add a third elemental source to your form. When you do so, you gain the associated benefits of your new element from Primordial Affinity in addition to your current source benefits.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

FORCE OF NATURE

You are losing your connection to societal norms. The needs of civilization, community, and morals pale in comparison to the elemental chaos roiling within you. Whenever you complete a long rest, if you are within civilization, you do not regain any hit dice or lose any levels of exhaustion. In these circumstances, the GM decides if a location is considered civilized or not. Alternatively, the GM can decide that a park or grove within a city is sufficient.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

You can pick one of the following Transformation Boons or pick a boon from a lower level that you meet the prerequisites for. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

POTENT AURA

Prerequisite: Aura of Awakening

Creatures of your choice within 10 feet of you gain resistance to lightning, fire, poison, and cold damage.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

ENERGY FLOW

As a bonus action, you can burst into a shower of elemental material then materialize somewhere else. You magically teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space you can see, along with any equipment you are wearing or carrying. Moving in this way does not provoke opportunity attacks. After teleporting, you can choose one of the following:

Swift Assault. You can immediately make a weapon attack. If you make a ranged attack, you do not have disadvantage if a hostile creature is within 5 feet.

Spark Storm. Each creature within 10 feet of you must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save creatures take 2d6 fire damage.

Boulderous Hide. Choose a damage type. Until the start of your next turn, you have resistance to that damage type.

Sea Mother's Tether. A thin tether of water links you to a creature within 30 feet for 1 minute. While tethered, if the creature would take damage, you can choose to take that damage instead. Additionally, if you

would be damaged, the tethered creature can choose to take that damage instead. This damage cannot be reduced or prevented in any way.

You can use this ability a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier. You regain all expended uses at the end of a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

ELEMENTAL MASTERY

Prerequisite: Master of Many

You gain the fourth elemental source to your form. When you do so, you gain the associated benefits of your new element from Primordial Affinity.

Additionally, you can summon the four elements to wreath you in power. Whenever a creature hits you with a melee attack, you can use your reaction to force it to make a Dexterity saving throw, taking 8d6 damage of a type of your choice from cold, fire, lightning or bludgeoning, or half as much on a successful save. Until the end of your following turn, your Primordial Affinity feature has one of the following additions:

Air. You have advantage on all ranged weapon and ranged spell attacks instead of only one.

Earth. At the beginning of your turn you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to your character level.

Fire. At the beginning of your turn, each creature of your choice within 5 feet of you takes 2d6 fire damage.

Water. Whenever a creature regains hit points due to a spell or feature you control that creature regains an additional number of hit points equal to your character level.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier, regaining all uses upon completing a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

PULL OF CHAOS

Your new native plane attempts to pull you to it, laying claim to your form. Whenever you roll a natural 1 on a saving throw against a magical spell or ability, you take 1d6 force damage per two character levels in addition to any other damage or effects you would suffer, as your native plane attempts to unbind you from the Material Plane. For example, a 6th-level character would take 3d6 force damage. This damage ignores resistances and immunities.





Specter

A lithe figure dashes between buildings, their body becomes luminous and ghostly, held together in tatters as the being disappears into a wall. The ghostly shape reappears on the rooftops, emerging from the solid slate. They turn, eyes luminous and haunted, and unleash a cry of the dead, beckoning all who hear to the afterlife.

A living person becomes a specter either by touching the realm of the dead or by means of magic that breaks the body's ties to material reality and time. The transformation tears at the substance of body and mind, until what is left is a spiritual shadow. Specters have a tenuous grasp on reality, and some fade into oblivion while others become monsters that sow the same. Few cursed with this transformation have the fortitude to remain whole.

BECOMING A SPECTER

Methods of becoming a specter vary, and few find their way willingly. Contact with the forces of death is the most common—a would-be hero is corrupted by the force they wanted to fight. Sinister rituals can also infuse a body with the powers of unmaking. Alongside beings and magic of death stand entities that exist in a reality untethered from the material world as mortals understand it. These others and their minions, manifestations of otherworldly chaos, can infuse a person with that chaos, making the victim's ultimate home a dream of cosmic horror.

SPECTER FEATURES

A specter, no matter their origin, has the following features.

PREREQUISITES

Ability Scores: Dexterity 13 or higher

Roleplay: You must have contact with the world of the dead, either through an encounter with a monstrous and incorporeal undead creature or through contact with the afterlife. Some magical rituals can infuse mortals with this energy. Alternatively, you have had contact with an entity or force that has caused your material form to start to slip out of existence.

Transformation Save DC: Some of your transformation abilities require a target to attempt a saving throw. For those abilities, the saving throw DC is **8 + your proficiency bonus + your Dexterity modifier**.

LEVEL MILESTONES

The following are possible level milestones for becoming a specter.

- Defeat a powerful, ghostly undead and absorb its power. Or defeat an aberration of similar might that has powers over space, time, or death.
- Use a ritual that infuses your body with the forces of death or primordial chaos.
- Survive a near-death experience caused by a ghostly undead creature or an aberration, especially one in



which your hit point maximum is reduced, such as by a wraith's life drain, or in which you drop to 0 hit points.

- Kill a significant foe with necrotic or psychic damage, or by using necromancy magic.
- Infuse other willing people with the power that corrupts you.
- Deal with ghosts and similar spirits, or beings of other realities, perhaps as a conduit between them and other mortals.
- Open a gate or path to places of the dead or the dreams of the Aether Kindred.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 1

Starting at transformation level 1, you gain the following Transformation Boons and the level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

SPECTRAL PRESENCE

Your Dexterity increases by 2 and your Charisma increases by 1. No ability score can increase above 16 in this way. If your transformation is due to contact with the afterlife, you become Undead in addition to any other creature types you are. If your transformation is due to an abnormality with reality, you become an Aberration in addition to any other creature types you are. Spells that affect humanoids still affect you. However, you're immune to effects that only affect a creature of your new type of a specific CR.

Also, you cease aging and cannot be aged magically.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

SPECTRAL MOVEMENT

Your walking speed increases by 10 feet. In addition, you can move through other creatures and solid objects as if they were difficult terrain and you can move through difficult terrain as if it were normal. If you end your turn inside a creature or object, you're shunted back to where you entered and take 1d6 force damage per 10 feet (rounded up) you travel in this way. Objects that have been in your possession less than 1 minute cannot move through creatures and objects with you.

As a final benefit of this boon, due to your incorporeal nature, during your turn you have resistance to all nonmagical bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage from sources you can see.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

CLOSE TO DEATH

Your body and soul have a tenuous grasp on existence. You have disadvantage on death saving throws as the pull of a peaceful death calls out to you. If you would be killed, the GM chooses whether you die permanently (unable to be restored by magic) or you transform into an incorporeal undead or aberration under the GM's control. If you are on the Ethereal Plane, this flaw has no effect.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

When your transformation reaches this level, you can choose one of the following transformation boons. You also gain this level's transformation flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

ETHEREAL PHASING

You can cast the *blink* spell without expending a spell slot. Once you cast the spell using this boon a number of times equal to your Transformation level, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

SPECTRAL FLIGHT

You gain a fly speed equal to your walking speed.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

HORRIFYING VISAGE

As an action, you can force each creature of your choice within 30 feet of and able to see you to make a Wisdom saving throw. Targets that fail the saving throw are frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if you are within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. You can use this boon a number of times equal to your transformation level. You regain all uses when you finish a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

HAUNTING APPEARANCE

Your true form is ghostly and haunting, whether due to your connection to death or your tenuous ties to material reality. Although your appearance isn't necessarily scary, your spectral form seems unnatural to normal creatures who might believe you to be a ghost or other sort of spirit. You can manifest as the humanoid you once were, but doing so requires concentration on your part. Moments of stress, such as the following, reveal your hideous appearance.

- Using concentration, as if on or on a spell
- Becoming unconscious
- Entering hallowed ground
- Choosing to reveal your hideous appearance
- In events of extreme emotional or physical stress, the GM can call for a Constitution saving throw with a DC of their choosing to see if you reveal your hideous appearance.

When you reveal your hideous appearance, how viewers react is up to the GM. They might treat you as a ghost or another monster in disguise. Hostility and fear are likely reactions in these cases.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

When your transformation reaches this level, you can choose one of the following transformation boons. If you wish, you can select a boon from level 2 instead. You also gain this level's transformation flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

SPECTRAL BODY

Your body fades further into the immaterial, giving you certain benefits and abilities:

- You are immune to disease, exhaustion, and poison.
- When you take damage other than force, you can use a reaction to gain resistance to the triggering damage and reveal your Hideous Appearance.
- You no longer require air, food, water, or sleep.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

LIFE DRAIN

Your touch disrupts the life force of other beings. As an action, you can choose a creature within 5 feet to make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 8d8 necrotic damage, and you gain half as many temporary hit points. If this damage causes the creature to drop to 0 hit points, the creature automatically dies and you regain an expended use of this boon.

You can use this boon a number of times equal to your Transformation level. You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

HAUNTING JAUNT

Prerequisite: Spectral Flight

You can use a bonus action to choose an unoccupied space within 120 feet then you fly in a direct line from your current space to that chosen space. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks. Each creature you pass through as part of this movement must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 3d6 + your Dexterity modifier psychic damage and be frightened of you until the end of your next turn.

Once you use this boon, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

UNTETHERED MIND

Your mind starts to follow your body in its dissolution. Less significant memories of your existence before your spectral transformation start to fade like they're dreams you've awakened from. The GM can claim you can't recall something from your living past when it's dramatic or might disadvantage you. Also, you have disadvantage whenever you attempt an Intelligence check to recall information.

This lack of connection to your previous self can cause personality changes. You might forget old grudges or traumas, which can change your personality traits or alignment for the better. It's more likely that you cling to any vestige of your old self, amplifying their importance, nursing resentments and gloomy thoughts. You might come to hate those who have a normal existence, taking a turn toward evil.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

When your transformation reaches level 4, you can choose one of the following Transformation Boons or a boon from levels 2 or 3 instead. You also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

CALL OF UNMAKING

As a bonus action, you reveal your Hideous Appearance and give a mournful wail or otherwise set up a wracking vibration. This sound has no effect on constructs and undead.

All other creatures of your choice within 30 feet of you must make a Constitution saving throw. Creatures that can't hear you have advantage on the saving throw. On a failed save, the creature bears the mark of unmaking for the next minute. While bearing this mark, a creature takes an additional 1d6 necrotic damage each time it takes damage. Once you use this boon, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

POSSESSION

As an action, you reveal your Hideous Appearance and enter the space of a humanoid or beast and force that creature to make a Charisma saving throw. If the target fails, you disappear, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. You control the body without depriving the target of awareness.

While possessing a target, you can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect. You retain your alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and any immunity to being charmed and frightened. Otherwise, you use the possessed target's statistics but don't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, and proficiencies.

The possession lasts until the possessed target drops to 0 hit points, you end it as a bonus action, or until you are forced out by an effect that ends possession. When the possession ends, you reappear in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the body. You can use this boon again only after you finish a short or long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

ETHEREAL DENIZEN

You can sense invisible creatures and objects, and those in the nearby Ethereal Plane, as if you are always under the effect of the *see invisibility* spell.

Additionally, you can use an action to cast the *etherealness* spell without expending a spell slot. Once you cast the spell using this boon, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

PULL OF OBLIVION

Dissolution pulls on your body and soul. Whenever you roll a natural 1 on a saving throw against an effect that deals you damage, you lose 1d6 hit points per two levels you have as the afterlife or your lack of reality pulls you toward nothingness. If you die, your body disappears, and you can be raised from the dead only with a *wish* spell or *true resurrection* spell. If you and the GM agree, you might instead become an NPC monster under the GM's control, such as a wraith or a bizarre space-time aberration.



Chapter 7: Backgrounds

Backgrounds are a great tool for making characters that feel like an organic part of a campaign setting and world. A normal background provides the information about what the character was before they became an adventurer, setting up a foundation on which the character is built.

Grim Hollow: The Campaign Guide provided a new and different concept for backgrounds: advanced backgrounds. These types of backgrounds not only fulfilled the role of backgrounds in providing that foundation, it also allowed characters to grow within those backgrounds even as they evolved as adventurers.

Advanced backgrounds are a great tool for a campaign; however, some GMs and players may want to consider using normal backgrounds. Most backgrounds that apply to typical fantasy campaigns also fit nicely into a Grim Hollow campaign. With that in mind, we provide some new normal and advanced backgrounds here to fit your preferences.

Normal Backgrounds

ONE OF THE TAKEN

On the fringes of the civilized world, parents warn their children not to wander away from their homes, especially at night. The many creatures that haunt the forests, from the faerie-folk to the minions of the Great Beast, spell doom for the innocent who stray too far into the darkness.

You failed to heed your parents' warnings, and you were taken. In fact, those who know of your experience use that word to describe you: Taken. You do not remember what happened to you while you were away, but through some mysterious and possibly fortunate circumstances, you wandered back into town after months or years of going missing. Maybe the fairies whisked you off to some magical realm. Maybe evil cultists of an Arch Daemon held you prisoner, planning to sacrifice you to their dark leader when the time was right, and you found a way to escape. Maybe one of the Beast's warped and feral minions took a liking to you and kept you as a pet. Whatever your story, you can't remember your time away. But that doesn't mean you weren't changed by it.

Skill Proficiency: Nature, Survival

Tool Proficiencies: Tinker's tools or woodcarver's tools

Languages: Any one common language

Equipment: One set of artisan's tools, 20 gp

FEATURE: INSIGHTFUL FLASHBACKS

While you don't remember your time away from the civilized world, you occasionally have glimpses of what happened. When you are making an ability check to know or remember something about a monster or some other piece of lore, you can reroll a check that gave you no information. If the new check provides information, you cannot use this ability again until you gain a level. This represents your subconscious mind reminding you of details you witnessed while you were lost.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

As one of the Taken, your experiences changed and shaped you even if you cannot remember the exact details. Even more dramatically, how you were treated upon your return by those around you

| D6 | PERSONALITY TRAIT |
|----|--|
| 1 | I am easily startled, jumping at the slightest sound. |
| 2 | Other people irritate me, but I love the company of animals. |
| 3 | I cannot abide silence, so I surround myself with noise whenever possible. |
| 4 | I often forget what day or month or year it is. |
| 5 | I use the attention of my time missing to make myself important and noticed. |
| 6 | I am restless, never satisfied with what I have or what I am, always seeking more. |

| D6 | IDEAL |
|----|--|
| 1 | Innocents need protection. I won't let what happened to me happen to others. |
| 2 | That which does not kill you makes you stronger. Conflict begets strength. |
| 3 | The world is a cruel place. In the end we are all ground down to dust. |
| 4 | Mysteries abound, and the point of life is to solve as many of them as possible. |
| 5 | The only way to avoid being a victim is to be the aggressor. |
| 6 | Passing on your knowledge and wisdom to others ensures you will live forever. |

| D6 | BOND |
|----|---|
| 1 | You were taken with another, and that person was returned as well. You are bound to them forever. |
| 2 | You were found with a strange object in the woods. That object never leaves your possession. |
| 3 | While others shunned you on your return, your pet never left your side. This unusually long-lived pet means the world to you. |
| 4 | When you returned, the community rallied around you to care for you. You guard that community fiercely. |
| 5 | An elder who was also taken as a child listens to you and helps guide you on your path forward. |
| 6 | A faerie grove in the forest near you is the only place where you are truly at peace. |

| D6 | FLAW |
|----|--|
| 1 | I suffer nightmares that I cannot recall when I wake, and the lack of sleep makes me prone to fits of anger. |
| 2 | I seek money and power regardless of the cost to my soul. |
| 3 | I am rude to others as I tend to speak what's on my mind rather than filtering myself. |
| 4 | My quest for justice sometimes interferes with my common sense. |
| 5 | I am indifferent to the suffering of others. |
| 6 | I believe lies, which makes me easily duped by those with ill intent. |

POX-TOUCHED

When you fell ill with the Weeping Pox, you assumed you would die from it, as had so many before you. Your neighbors shunned you, fearing that you would spread the disease to them and their families.

Then a miracle happened. A stranger came to you and offered to help. The stranger brought forth strange medicines, providing you with curative draughts and elixirs. And just as the disease reached its worst stages, the symptoms began to vanish. Before long, you were cured of the disease. The sores and scars of the disease, however, still play across your body – an unobtrusive reminder of the terrible scourge you faced.

The stranger left you after the treatments concluded, but you retained some of the knowledge that the healer used while caring for you. Those who marvel at your recovery also fear you: they harbor some suspicion that you made deals with dark powers to drive away the disease.

Skill Proficiency: Intimidation, Medicine

Tool Proficiencies: Herbalism kit

Languages: Any one common language

Equipment: Herbalism kit, 10 gp

FEATURE: MEDICAL MARVEL

Your dramatic and sudden recovery from the Weeping Pox – as well as the physical changes to your appearance because of the disease – has made you a marvel to the people around you. Though you may be treated differently as a strange oddity, your new status does have potential perks. You can ask for small favors, from meals to places to rest, and find the common folks willing to oblige, even if they are slightly afraid of you.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

As one of the Pox-Touched, you faced down a terrible fate and lived to recount the experience. Such a terrible experience, and the joyful escape from that fate, leaves a lingering effect on those who go through it.

| D6 | PERSONALITY TRAIT |
|----|--|
| 1 | I'm overly conscious of what the Weeping Pox did to my countenance. |
| 2 | I hear the voices of all those who died from the disease, and I speak on their behalf. |
| 3 | I have come to deeply respect the work of the alchemists and potion-makers of the world. |
| 4 | I fear disease after having almost succumbed to one. |
| 5 | I process everything I see and experience verbally. |
| 6 | I prefer darkness and solitude to light and company |



| D6 | IDEAL |
|----|--|
| 1 | Death is powerful and wonderful, a transformation rather than an ending. |
| 2 | We should be judged for how we treat the powerless, not the powerful. |
| 3 | Knowledge is the key to defeating any problem. |
| 4 | Discipline and rigor are the best tools against the chaos of the world. |
| 5 | Self-reliance is the key to survival. Others may let you down. |
| 6 | One person's ideal is another's flaw. Ideals should be malleable. |

| D6 | BOND |
|----|---|
| 1 | I do what I do for all those suffering from horrible maladies. They deserve respect, empathy, and assistance. |
| 2 | The book of cures that my doctor left me is incomprehensible to me, but I carry it with me everywhere. |
| 3 | My pet was with me during my recovery, and it reminds me of all that I have. |
| 4 | My parents never gave up on me, and I visit them whenever I can. |
| 5 | I have a twin who I cannot stand but would do anything for. |
| 6 | I owe my life to the itinerant healer who healed me. |

| D6 | FLAW |
|----|---|
| 1 | Cleanliness is the most important virtue, and no one around me is ever clean enough. |
| 2 | One of the herbs that helped heal me is something I must take every day or I feel terrible. |
| 3 | I'm easily distracted. |
| 4 | When innocent people are being hurt, I fly into a blind rage that's hard to control. |
| 5 | Since the Weeping Pox could not kill me, I'm obviously indestructible. |
| 6 | My appearance means more to me than it should. |

LAPSED INQUISITOR

You spent years traveling the countryside as a member of the Arcanist Inquisition, seeking out heretics and blasphemers, daemon and arcanist. Your work uncovered hidden evil that likely saved the lives of countless innocents. However, on more than one occasion the zeal of yourself or others brought low individuals who were themselves innocent.

After a crisis of conscience, you left the ranks of the inquisitors. Leaving those ranks is itself a dangerous prospect, but you could no longer abide. Maybe someone you love and care for starting showing arcane affinities that would have led to their destruction. Maybe you did. Maybe the last investigation you performed opened your eyes to new realities.

Now you are living with a target on your back. Your former peers don't take kindly to people leaving their ranks. Those whom you persecuted have not forgotten your deeds. But life must still be lived, and there's more than one way to find and destroy the evil in the world.

Skill Proficiency: Arcana, Religion
Tool Proficiencies: Land-based vehicles
Languages: One of the following: Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal
Equipment: A holy symbol, diplomat's pack, 10 gp

FEATURE: THE INQUISITOR'S STARE

You've seen more fear and pain each day that most people see in a lifetime. With a mere glance, you can tell if someone is hiding something, if they are in pain, and if they are about to succumb to injuries. Once per day, you can automatically succeed on a Wisdom (Insight) check or know if a living creature is at less than 10% of its maximum hit points.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

You find yourself in constant conflict between your old mind set and your new life. The motivations and beliefs that led to your inquisitorial pursuits were strong, and the feelings and experiences that turned you from that path were equally strong.

| D6 | PERSONALITY TRAIT |
|----|--|
| 1 | Whatever I believe is true at the moment is the only truth. |
| 2 | The various realities you have seen make it hard for you to know what is true and what is not. |
| 3 | I feel great shame over my actions as an inquisitor. |
| 4 | I believe that my enemies are waiting around every corner. |
| 5 | When I get tense, I like to dance and pray to relieve the tension. |
| 6 | No matter what you've seen or done, I can top that. |

| D6 | IDEAL |
|----|---|
| 1 | The arcane <i>is</i> dangerous and evil, but it must be conquered with compassion rather than violence. |
| 2 | The unexamined life is a blessing that should not be overlooked... or overanalyzed |
| 3 | Life is too short to not live it to its fullest. |
| 4 | Progress is an arch daemon's playground. |
| 5 | Nothing means anything. Life is futile and uncaring. |
| 6 | Children are the only ones who can make the world right. |

| D6 | BOND |
|----|---|
| 1 | The person who made me see the error in my inquisitioning ways keeps me grounded. |
| 2 | My old amulet of office never leaves my neck, a reminder of what I was and what I can never become again. |
| 3 | I adopted the pet of one of my former victims. I care for it as penance for all the lives I destroyed. |
| 4 | My former assistant left the Inquisition with me, and I feel beholden to lead them on a better path. |
| 5 | The spirit of someone who died at my hands has become my friend and confessor. |
| 6 | Although I have left the Inquisition, my former mentor still holds an important place in my heart. |

| D6 | FLAW |
|----|---|
| 1 | I still exhibit some of the fear and hatred that drove me as an inquisitor. |
| 2 | When things don't go my way, I sulk and pout. |
| 3 | The terrors of my past occupation make others likely to fear and hate me. |
| 4 | I have a difficult time remaining calm when I know someone is lying to me. |
| 5 | I can be quite a coward when I don't have the upper hand in a conflict. |
| 6 | I keep close watch on my finances and never forgive a debt. |

FEY-BLESSED

The powerful and fickle fey-folk of your area have taken note of you, and your existence pleases them. Whether you were born under a lucky star, had a favorable run-in with a nature spirit, or simply were in the right place at the right time, the nature spirits favor you with small gifts and boons. You find small trinkets in your shoes when you wake up in the morning. Beasts of the forest and field are more receptive to your presence and your training. Will this blessing somehow turn into a curse later in your life? That remains to be seen!

Skill Proficiency: Animal Handling, Nature

Tool Proficiencies: One musical instrument

Languages: Sylvan and one other common language

Equipment: One musical instrument, 20 gp

FEATURE: FORTUNE OF THE FOREST

When you find yourself in the areas of the world outside of civilization, your blessed nature in the eyes of the fey come in handy. When you are lost, or in need of food or water, or trying to build a fire or a makeshift shelter, there's a 50% chance that you gain assistance from a creature of the wild. This might take the form of a squirrel leading you to a sheltered cave or a fresh, clean spring.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

The blessing of the fey may have been granted because of who you are, or you may be who you are because of that blessing. While the blessing is often a boon, those who have the attention of the fey often find that it sometimes comes with some unpredictable and not always positive consequences.

| D6 | PERSONALITY TRAIT |
|----|--|
| 1 | My grace and joy at the wonders of life are infectious and raise the spirits of those around me. |
| 2 | My mood changes to match the weather in my area. |
| 3 | I spend every second of my free time playing tunes that I hear in my dreams. |
| 4 | I have the personality that matches one of the wild beasts that live in the area. |
| 5 | I find my solace in the small times of peace and solitude in an otherwise chaotic world. |
| 6 | There is always hope, even when the dread and evil are at their worst. |

| D6 | IDEAL |
|----|---|
| 1 | Nature, and the creatures in it, must be protected at all cost. |
| 2 | The blessing of the fey that I received is a power, and like any power it is meant to be exploited. |
| 3 | Everything in the world is in balance, and anything that breaks that balance must be destroyed. |
| 4 | Individuality is the most important part of life. Those who aren't free aren't really alive. |
| 5 | We don't know what others have been through. Judge not. |
| 6 | The only beauty is perfection. |

| D6 | BOND |
|----|---|
| 1 | I care for a small forest creature that is always nearby. It is my best friend. |
| 2 | I have a small, tightly knit group of friends that mean the world to me. |
| 3 | An older relative has always been my guiding light in this dark world. |
| 4 | The love of my life passed on, but I keep a token from them close to me at all times. |
| 5 | My commitment to an ideal is the only bond I need. As long as I'm true to that, I'm true to myself. |
| 6 | One of my adventuring campaigns is my closest ally. After all, they are the people I must trust to survive. |

| D6 | FLAW |
|----|--|
| 1 | I'm special, and everyone should know it. |
| 2 | I often forget what I'm doing and start daydreaming about a far-off paradise. |
| 3 | I know the correct answer to all of life's problems, and I'm happy to share my wisdom with everyone. |
| 4 | I overindulge in some of the less healthy habits. |
| 5 | I hold others to high expectations that I could never reach myself. |
| 6 | I have trouble deciding on the best course of action, especially in tense situations. |





Advanced Backgrounds

These advanced backgrounds are a tool for giving some added flavor, flexibility, and power to a normal background. These are meant to provide deeper immersion into the setting as well. Unlike regular backgrounds, advanced backgrounds allow characters to advance in their chosen background as they also advance in their class.

It's suggested that if one character uses advanced backgrounds, all should. This helps maintain both a roleplaying and a power balance between all the characters in the party.

To use advanced backgrounds, first choose one of the backgrounds listed below, and then choose one of the professions provided with the background.

PAUPER

Any structured society has those who fall through the cracks. Misfortune is no stranger to Etharis, and those who suffer under its hand have to make do any way they can. Some attempt to survive by begging or turning their hands to whatever jobs they can find, while others are cast out to wander from place to place through the unforgiving wilds.

This background is a good fit for characters who want to use adventuring as a way to escape their unfortunate circumstances or for those who possess character flaws relating to debt or misfortune. Their views on wealth and material goods are undoubtedly a primary feature of their adventuring career.

Skill Proficiency: Choose one from Deception, Insight, Perception, Persuasion, Stealth, or Survival.

Languages: Choose one standard language.

Tool Proficiency: Choose one gaming set.

Equipment: A worn blanket, a set of ragged clothing, a sack, and 10 copper pieces.

BEGGAR

Many who fall on hard times have no other option than begging for coppers. Considered the lowest rung of society, beggars are looked down upon in either pity or contempt by other members of society, when they deign to notice them at all. For their part, beggars see people at their best and at their worst, a more honest representation than they show their peers or superiors.

Skill Proficiency: Persuasion

Additional Equipment: A begging bowl or tin cup for collecting coins, a crutch, spare scraps of cloth, and a small stick of grease paint.

FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

Upon spending an hour speaking to other beggars and making a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check, you can manipulate the underground currents of information that flow throughout the city. This allows you to manipulate the mood of the lower classes for or against a specific individual, group, or decision. The unrest caused may manifest itself in a number of ways, at the GM's discretion.

RANK 1 — STREET BEGGAR

Driven by desperation, you are forced to the streets to earn what you need to survive. Poor decisions or bad luck drained away whatever funds you managed to scrape together, and you have no real home to return to. As an adventurer you have certain alternatives not available to most, but between forays into the wilds the fact remains that you have no steady occupation and no place to call home.

Holdings

- A spot in an alley that you have managed to stake out and must defend against newcomers.
- The name of a sympathetic merchant with space in a high-traffic area of the city.

Progression

Gain the friendship of a local business owner by performing odd jobs or doing some other service.

RANK 2 — MENDICANT

A common sight to locals, you have moved up to a better location in a busy street or plaza. You no longer have to fight for your place and have gained the tolerance of the guards and the friendship of other local beggars. By this time you have established a begging “pitch” designed to attract attention without inconveniencing those passing by. This could be a persona or some sort of script that you devise in order to amuse or elicit sympathy from the general populace.

Holdings

- A safe place to sleep near a merchant stall or building.
- Friendship with local beggars and a few local traders, who may offer you some spare coin, food, or odd jobs from time to time.

Progression

Split a significant windfall with other beggars, earning their loyalty.

RANK 3 — GUTTER BARON

You have risen to a position of prominence, such as it is, among the beggars in your city. You are able to direct the actions of a number of other paupers and split the rewards in a far more efficient manner than they could do alone, and they respect and defer to you in important decisions.

Holdings

- Squatter’s rights in an abandoned building.
- A handful of other beggars who defer to your authority and aid you in gathering money and information.
- Knowledge of an illicit deal that took place in an alley in the dead of night, which implicates a minor noble.

Progression

Perform a great service for the poor of the city either by thwarting the plans of a ranking noble or leveraging your influence to gain a powerful aristocrat patron.

RANK 4 — BEGGAR KING

You have become the undisputed master of the city’s destitute population, and none of them act without

your knowledge. Having control of such a wide-ranging network of informants and agents puts you at the center of the city’s political power struggles. Even leaders of criminal organizations know that you are not someone to be trifled with.

Holdings

- A comfortable hideout hidden in the slums or sewers.
- A network of beggars, informants, and criminals that keep you informed of all illicit activity within the city.
- Influence with at least one major player in local crime or politics.

VAGABOND

Those paupers who choose to leave their past behind and take to the open road are known as vagabonds. Some do so in an attempt to flee whatever painful memories caused their descent into poverty, while others hold out hope of starting a new life in another city. Most don’t survive outside the protective walls of a guarded settlement, but those that do often find little welcome in the cities they visit. Vagabonds must therefore work hard to gain trust and forge what connections they may have in each place they visit, and invariably they must move on before they wear out their welcome.

Skill Proficiency: Insight

Additional Equipment: A walking stick, an old wool cloak, and an iron pot.

FRIENDLY FACE

Upon spending an hour in a town or other settlement and making a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check, you can track down an ally that you made on a previous visit during your wandering. This ally begins as friendly to you and will answer questions you have regarding the town, its services, and its inhabitants.

RANK 1 — OUTCAST

For whatever reason, you can’t go home again. Bereft of family, property, and support, you are now cut loose to wander and survive as best you can. You stand out more as a stranger in smaller settlements, where people shun you as if you have the plague, but even in larger cities you are viewed with suspicion by the local authorities.

Holdings

- A tarnished compass.
- A posting from a town seeking able-bodied workers to deal with a recent disaster.

Progression

Survive a major storm on the road or participate meaningfully in a town’s internal disputes.

RANK 2 — DRIFTER

You have gotten used to life on the road and now travel aimlessly from town to town. At each stop you take on odd jobs, greet familiar faces, and then move on. Outside your small group of friends spread across Etharis, others are beginning to recognize you as a frequent visitor.

Holdings

- News from far parts of your current region that are not public knowledge.
- A letter or package that one of your contacts asked you to deliver to another town.

Progression

Save the life of one of your contacts.

RANK 3 – SEEKER

Your aimless wanderings have taken on a new purpose. Competent in the rigors of the road and dealing with suspicious villagers, you travel from place to place in search of a new life or new direction. For good or ill, you are recognized as you travel, much as a caravan leader or traveling merchant.

Holdings

- A lightweight tent and bedroll.
- The ability to send messages across long distances through your network of contacts.

Progression

Play a major role in the downfall of a prominent member of society.

RANK 4 – WANDERER

You now travel the world not out of necessity, but choice. Your deeds have garnered you an almost mythical reputation, and whispers follow you whenever you enter a new city or settlement. As a champion of righteousness or a walking plague, everyone knows that even the best laid plans are uncertain when you arrive.

Holdings

- A respected or feared reputation in any settlement you visit.
- Information about major events across Etharis that has not yet made its way to your current location.

PIT FIGHTER

Unterland was the first of the provinces to host blood sport arenas, back in the days before the formation of the Bûrach Empire. Since then the practice has been driven underground, but, like poison spreading silently throughout a healthy body, it has infiltrated nearly every major city.

Ostensibly illegal, you can almost always find small groups of desperate individuals putting their lives on the line for the amusement and enrichment of others. This hidden network of arenas has recently organized into the self-proclaimed Fighter's Guild and developed a series of coded phrases and symbols to identify its members. Following the unspoken rule of Etharis, it is a place where only the strong survive.

Skill Proficiency: Intimidation

Additional Equipment: A pair of tough leather gloves, one gaming set of your choice, and a mess kit.

STREET TOUGH

While you are in a large town or city, you may spend an hour and make a DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation) check. If you do, your tough demeanor and familiarity with the Fighter's Guild attracts attention from the local members. You learn the location of any underground prize-fighting rings, guild friendly businesses, and the names of upper-class arena patrons. You also learn of any minor jobs being offered to street toughs, such as bodyguard positions or debt collection.

RANK 1 – SCRAPPER

Life on the streets has toughened you, and now you have started down the path of an illegal underground fighter. You have yet to make a name for yourself, but your training is starting to pay off. All you need is a chance to prove yourself.

Holdings

- Room and board at a guildhouse near an underground arena.
- An invitation to an exhibition match that will be attended by promoters and scouts for the Fighter's Guild.

Progression

Attract the notice of a patron among the various underground fight handlers of the Guild.

RANK 2 – PRIZE FIGHTER

You've made your debut and are now a part of the Fighter's Guild. As part of a small stable of up-and-coming fighters, you are mostly booked for minor tournaments and as warmups for some of the bigger names in arena fighting.

Holdings

- A mentor in the form of a handler, trainer, or promoter who helps organize and book your fights.
- Access to a small training area equipped with dummies and frequented by potential sparring partners.

Progression

Enter a fight with a high-ranked fighter and either last three rounds or knock your opponent out.

RANK 3 – CONTENDER

Recognized as one of the most promising fighters in the Guild, you are now eligible for entry into major tournaments for ever-increasing amounts of prize money. Most of the money goes to your handlers, but your standard of living has increased dramatically along with your value.

Holdings

- A private room at a high quality inn or other establishment.
- Several admirers among the arena patrons, willing to ingratiate themselves with gifts or bribes.

Progression

Win a major championship bout.



RANK 4 – ARENA CHAMP

Being champion of an underground tournament makes you a major figure within the Fighter’s Guild. As your fights draw greater and greater crowds, your duties are lessened and you live in relative luxury. Admired by some, envied by others, you nevertheless command respect among those in your line of work. Even your patron is willing to bend to most of your wishes, out of fear that you will defect to another noble or trainer.

Holdings

- A collection of toadies and sycophants, eager to follow your wishes.
- Job offers and party invitations from various nobles and criminals aware of your status.
- A fancy championship trophy, which can take the form of a belt, cup, or some other trinket.

CLAN MEMBER

The major kingdoms of Etharis are far from the only bastions of culture to stand against the current darkness. From the frozen north to the Gulf of Lions, numerous tribes have chosen to keep to their traditional lifestyle, living in harmony with the spirits of the wild. Where hunting and gathering aren’t sufficient to support their population, many have turned to raiding the more “civilized” regions. This has garnered the tribes a reputation as barbarians and savages, but this ignores a rich history and a deep, abiding respect for nature.

Clan members are generally more at home traveling through the wilds than their urban counterparts. Their close ties with nature and the spirits of the wild also gives them a unique perspective on many problems, and they are less quick to condemn things they are unfamiliar

with. Those that leave the tribe often make good guides, trackers, and mercenaries.

Skill Proficiency: Choose one from Athletics, History, Nature, Perception, Religion, or Survival.

Languages: Choose one standard language.

Tool Proficiency: Choose one tool proficiency.

Equipment: Basic clothing, a basket, a hatchet, and 10gp.

RAIDER

You have been trained as a warrior with the specific aim of raiding other clans or settlements. Raiding parties must be able to move quickly, strike hard, and carry off enough goods to help support the tribe. The coordination to do all this requires intense training and forges a strong sense of comradery between raiders. Part of this comradery involves a strong sense of competition, each raider vying to perform daring acts or to carry back the best loot. The aftermath of a raid often involves raucous singing, drinking, and revelry, an adrenaline high buoyed by the plentiful food and drink obtained from the raided settlement.

Skill Proficiency: Intimidation

Additional Equipment: A tankard, a sack, a whetstone, and several torches.

DISPLAY OF STRENGTH

Upon spending an hour in a tavern, inn, or restaurant, and succeeding on a DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation) check, you can win the respect and friendship of a local ally through drinking, carousing, boasting, and various contests of strength and skill. This ally begins as friendly to you and can provide you with information about military organizations, the local guard, and any recent battles or combat that has occurred in the area.



RANK 1 – SHIELD BEARER

You are a junior warrior, serving as support for more senior members of the raiding party. Your tasks involve maintaining weapons and armor, tending to wounded warriors, and carrying loot from the raiding site. Should members of the raiding party be unable to fight, you may be called upon to take their place.

Holdings

- Lodging with other warriors.
- An ailing mentor and knowledge of a particularly rich target for raiding.

Progression

Take the place of a missing raider and prove yourself in combat.

RANK 2 – PILLAGER

As a full member of the raiding party, you are trained to strike hard and fast, then escape with whatever loot you can find. Common tactics involve sowing confusion by setting fires or releasing livestock, or drawing the attention of the defenders to allow for easier plunder elsewhere. Your tribe depends on you as a main source of food and supplies, and your comrades depend on you to watch their backs in the chaos of a raid.

Holdings

- A younger warrior assigned to maintain your equipment and carry your loot.
- Your pick of the goods seized on raids, in order of seniority.

Progression

Perform deeds of notable bravery and be promoted by a warlord or chieftain.

RANK 3 – RAID LEADER

Through a number of raids you have proven yourself cunning, ruthless, and skilled at combat. As a raid leader you are tasked with not only gathering as much as you can from your targets, but ensuring that your warriors return alive. Your underlings look to you for the tactics to use during the raid, and you must reign in the more reckless raiders lest they go too far.

Holdings

- A fine dwelling within the village, showcasing trophies from prior raids.
- Command over a raiding party and a voice at any war council.
- First pick of any goods seized during a raid.

Progression

Save a chieftain's life or defeat a sworn enemy of the tribe in single combat.

RANK 4 – WARLORD

Your deeds are legendary. When you speak, chieftains listen, and you direct policy as much as raiding. More to the point, you are the one who decides where and when to raid and how the military might of the clan will be brought to bear.

Holdings

- Authority over at least three raiding parties within your tribe.
- Access to war councils and peace negotiations.
- The ability to requisition goods and recruit new raiders.

SHAMAN

You are responsible for the spiritual well being of the tribe and its members. Depending on the nature of your tribe's belief system you may serve to commune with the spirits of the wild, with departed ancestors, or merely act as a faith healer and dealer in superstition. All shamans possess certain common characteristics, including insight into something greater than themselves, knowledge of the various rituals and ceremonies of their people, and deep ties to the natural world.

Skill Proficiency: Religion

Additional Equipment: A totem representing a spirit important to your clan, a clay jug, and a tinderbox.

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Upon spending one hour petitioning the spirits and succeeding on a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check, you may commune with the patron spirits of your tribe. These spirits may be departed ancestors or spirits of the wild itself. Should the spirits deign to respond, you may ask them for guidance on a single decision or course of action. The spirits do not offer any concrete information about the future, but do indicate their approval or disapproval of the relevant action.

RANK 1 – DABBLER

You have begun your training under the shaman of your tribe. Your initial tasks involve gathering ingredients and learning the various rituals passed down by your master. Much of this lore is accompanied by myths and fables to aid in their retention.

Holdings

- Lodging with your master on the outskirts of your clan.
- A complicated formula for a spirit amulet, requiring a number of rare ingredients.

Progression

Promotion by your master.

RANK 2 – HEDGE WITCH

Clan members now come to you for advice on minor matters. Your master remains in charge of the major rituals and ceremonies, but you are granted the authority to dole out minor blessings on an individual basis. Part of your duties also includes the telling of cautionary tales to the younger members of the tribe.

Holdings

- A small hut set on the outskirts of your clan, near your master's dwelling.
- A following within the tribe's youth who are willing to aid you in minor matters.

Progression

Be selected as shaman for a new camp or inherit your master's position after their death or retirement.

RANK 3 – WITCH DOCTOR

You have taken over the majority of the rituals and ceremonies of the tribe. People come to you for advice

with their problems, both physical and spiritual, and you are treated with deference for your position.

Holdings

- Respect and deference from the majority of your tribe, which occasionally manifests itself as gifts and offerings.
- A large hut, well stocked with the various tools of your trade.
- The secret herbs and chants required to complete a vision quest.

Progression

Successfully guide an important decision by consulting the spirits for a chieftain.

RANK 4 – SAGE

You are considered the voice of the spirits and repository of your tribe's oral history. Even those from outside your tribe have heard of you and seek you out from far and wide. You are invited to preside over all cultural ceremonies and direct the tribe in matters of spirituality. This includes advising the chieftain on nearly all important decisions.

Holdings

- High ranking tribe members and chieftains put great value on your advice and consult with you before important decisions.
- Apprentices and pupils that carry out the majority of the mundane tasks associated with your position.
- The ability to designate holy or forbidden sites and limit tribal access to those areas.

TRIBESPERSON

Life in a small tribe is, by definition, more close-knit than living within a city. Tribespeople work together daily and depend on one another to survive, treating each other as one step away from family. Making up the majority of the tribe, they work at all the necessary jobs to maintain their way of life, from gathering food, crafting weapons and tools, or governing disputes among tribe members.

Skill Proficiency: Survival

Additional Equipment: One tool kit of your choice and a waterskin.

TRIBAL FAMILIARITY

By spending an hour in an area of natural wilderness and making a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check, you can identify signs of other humanoid activity in the area. You can determine the direction of any nearby settlements and if you are familiar with the area, you know what tribe or group they belong to and their general disposition towards outsiders.

RANK 1 – TRIBAL MEMBER

You are a member of one of the tribes of Etharis. Given the dangers of the wilderness, your tasks keep you within the camp or village that your tribe calls home. Simple craft work and maintaining the tribal dwellings are the main tasks allotted to you, but should you prove

yourself able and willing, the elders may see fit to grant you greater responsibilities.

Holdings

- Food and lodging within the tribe, either in a modest home or in a communal dwelling.
- Tales from a traveler that outline a spot in the wilds with good hunting or other resources.

Progression

Gain permission from an elder to venture out into the wilds on your own.

RANK 2 – HUNTER-GATHERER

The elders of your tribe have granted you permission to venture outside the boundaries of your settlement. As a hunter-gatherer, you are responsible not only for procuring food, but also dealing with minor threats to the tribe and exploring for new resources and possible locations for expansion.

Holdings

- The tools to perform your duties, including basic hunting and fishing gear, materials, and aid from local craftsmen.
- The ability to recruit other tribe members to aid you in retrieving goods from the wild or helping to set up small camps outside your home territory.

Progression

Display excellent leadership and aid the tribe during a crisis.

RANK 3 – ELDER

Elders oversee many of the day-to-day issues within a tribe and advise the chieftain on matters of importance. Your actions on behalf of the tribe and your good judgment have earned you a place among them. The words of an elder carry great weight within the tribe, and an elder has the power to decide minor matters unilaterally. When issues require greater consideration, a number of elders may consult on the matter before rendering a decision.

Holdings

- Authority over the vast majority of tribe members.
- A fine dwelling and free access to tribal goods and services.

Progression

Serve the tribe wisely in times of trouble.

RANK 4 – CHIEFTAIN

By election, trial, or some other method, you have been selected as the leader of your tribe. At home in your tribe, others may advise you, but your word is law. Where multiple tribes band together, you speak for your people.

Holdings

- Counsel from the elders, warlords, and spiritual leaders of your tribe.
- Final authority on all tribe decisions and disputes, and complete authority over all tribe members.
- The grandest house in the camp or village, which doubles as a meeting place for important meetings and visiting dignitaries.

Talents

Applied Leverage – When you make a Strength (Athletics) check to force open a door or container, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Common Folk, Criminal, Militarist, Sea Farer)

Camper – When you make a Wisdom (Survival) check to construct a temporary shelter, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Outlander, Common Folk)

Charity Case – When you make a Charisma (Performance) check to fake an illness, injury, or other condition, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Common Folk, Criminal, Sea Farer)

Looter – When you make an Intelligence (Investigation) roll to find hidden valuables, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Criminal, Militarist)

Pitiable – When you make a Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince an Aristocrat, Criminal, Militarist, or Clergy that you are not a threat or beneath their notice, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Academic, Common Folk)

Solidarity – When you make a Charisma (Persuasion) check and you are interacting with members of your background, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Clergy, Common Folk)

Sticky Fingers – When you make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to snatch something quickly, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Criminal)

Temperature Tolerance – When you make a Constitution saving throw to avoid exhaustion due to extreme temperatures, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Outlander, Sea Farer)

Tree Springer – When you make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to ascend, descend, or travel between trees, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Outlander)

Vacant Expression – When you make a Charisma (Deception) check to feign ignorance and you are interacting with an Academic, Aristocrat, Clergy, or Militarist, you may add your profession die to the roll. (Add to Common Folk, Criminal)

TALENT LISTS

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Pauper | Presence | Camper |
| Calloused Hands | Pitiable | Disciplinarian |
| Camper | Solidarity | Drunkard |
| Charity Case | Sticky Fingers | Gambler |
| Drunkard | Urban Sprinter | Hard - Working |
| Elusive | Vacant | Local Historian |
| Flamboyant | Expression | Looter |
| Presentation | Clan Member | Menacing |
| Forecaster | Applied Leverage | Presence |
| Gambler | Beast Whisperer | Solidarity |
| Gut Feeling | Biologist | Temperature |
| Hard-Working | Botanist | Tolerance |
| Menacing | Calloused Hands | Tree Springer |
| | | Wayfarer |





Chapter 8: Archetypes

An archetype is a common or typical representation of an idea or a form. In the case of characters in roleplaying games, an archetype is the representation of an ideal form. A character that conforms to an archetype has a certain set of internal motivations and personality traits. Archetypes are themes that recur in narratives from mythology to modern books, comics, movies, games, and other forms of media.

USING CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

Choosing a character archetype can help you decide how your character acts. The GM can use archetypes for how an NPC acts as well. An archetype can give you an idea about who a character is at the start, and it lets you plot a roleplaying course for your character through gameplay. Archetype works with race, class, and background to give you ways to roleplay your character.

Archetypes also offer guidance for building and playing your character from models for the archetype and thoughts on building and growing your character to new traits you can choose instead of those from your background. A soldier with a rebel archetype is quite different from one with the icon archetype, just as a criminal with the ambitious archetype is different from one who takes the redeemed variant of the fallen archetype.

No archetype can fully represent a character's nature. The archetype is a starting point. If you want to, mix and match with the inspiration you find here.

If you prefer, you can roll d100 on the following table to choose an archetype, a variant, or more than one.

| D100 | ARCHETYPE | GOAL |
|--------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1–4 | Ambitious | Victory |
| 5–8 | Ambitious—Avenger | Victory over foes |
| 9–12 | Disregarded | Self discovery |
| 13–16 | Disregarded—Lost | Self recovery |
| 17–22 | Explorer | Freedom, personal discovery |
| 23–26 | Explorer—Philosopher | Intellectual freedom and discovery |
| 27–30 | Fallen | Survival |
| 31–34 | Fallen—Redeemed | Survival and redemption |
| 35–39 | Giver | Order through direct intervention |
| 40–43 | Giver—Creator | Order through creation |
| 44–48 | Giver—Leader | Order through direction or control |
| 49–53 | Icon | Leave a mark |
| 54–58 | Icon—Visionary | Use knowledge to leave a mark |
| 59–63 | Icon—Warrior | Fight to leave a mark |
| 64–68 | Individualist | Enjoy life |
| 69–73 | Individualist—Partner | Enjoy life with others |
| 74–78 | Ordinary | Preserve the normal |
| 79–84 | Ordinary—Hero | Fight for the normal |
| 85–89 | Scoundrel | Rebellion |
| 90–92 | Scoundrel—Miscreant | Destruction |
| 93–96 | Unaffected | Stability |
| 97–100 | Unaffected—Innocent | Flexibility and stability |

Ambitious

An ambitious character wants a successful legacy, like the icon archetype. However, an ambitious individual's personal goals outweigh care for others. Ambitious archetypes pursue those ambitions at all costs. The need for success overshadows even the impression that undertaking leaves on the world.

Willing to do anything to succeed, the ambitious character faces internal and external conflicts. Failure or difficulties spawn despair. Victims of those successes shun the character, causing isolation. Pyrrhic victories take a toll. Unforeseen consequences of success leave the ambitious one with nothing to show for the victory, much like someone with the fallen archetype.

AMBITIOUS VARIANT: AVENGER

Vengeance is a special form of ambition—the aspiration to make someone pay for past wrongs. For some characters, retribution has a specific target, such as a rival or a villain. Other characters take payback to another level, aiming to thwart or destroy a whole class of opponents, such as all criminals or anyone who dares to harm the weak or innocent.

AMBITIOUS MODELS

Cautionary tales feature characters that fit the ambitious archetype. To overemphasize one desire is to lose sight of other important parts of life. Ambition can lead to villainy. Ambitious characters, along with vengeful ones, include Beatrix “the Bride” Kiddo, Cleopatra, Daenerys Targaryen, Frank “the Punisher” Castle, Icarus, Medea, and Negan.

AMBITIOUS FEATURES

Ambitious characters focus on the means to their end. They seek skills, abilities, companions, and tools that help bring about the ambition's goal. This single-mindedness can make an ambitious person overly specialized.

AMBITIOUS CHARACTERISTICS

An ambitious character might have the following traits.

| d6 | IDEAL |
|----|---|
| 1 | Aspiration. I must make something of myself, and that means achieving my ambition. |
| 2 | Control. Managing my life and its contents, from friends to routine, is key to achievement. |
| 3 | Growth. Change is inevitable, but I can anticipate and channel it to gain what I need and advance my goals. |
| 4 | Knowledge. I must learn what I need to assure nothing is left to chance or ignorance. |
| 5 | Power. With power comes all other things, including my goal. |
| 6 | Self-Improvement. Body, mind, and spirit need to be honed and focused to meet my ambition. |

| d6 | FLAW |
|----|--|
| 1 | Aggressive. I say what needs to be said and do what needs to be done, no matter who or what stands in the way. |
| 2 | Callous. I'm unconcerned with how most people feel about what I do and how I do it. |
| 3 | Driven. My ambition requires full attention. Other issues must take care of themselves. |
| 4 | Escapist. I distract myself from my ambition by giving in to pleasurable pursuits. |
| 5 | Greedy. I'll need resources to accomplish my goals, so I'll acquire as much as I can. |
| 6 | Self-Righteous. I am certain of my ambition and its worth. Its pursuit is right. |

Disregarded

The disregarded are disenfranchised by societal norms, personal issues, or both. “Norms” may be unjust or enforced in an unfair manner. Unacceptable traits can be recognized and integrated to begin a journey of self-discovery and acceptance. Once their journey begins, a disregarded can establish connections to others, following an arc of liberation from the shackles of societal rejection.

DISREGARDED VARIANT: LOST

The lost character is disconnected from norms rather than merely excluded. A lost individual might exist outside typical social spaces, such as with many orphans or other marginalized characters. Such a character might lack a past or any memory of one. A lost person's goals are like other disregarded people, but those objectives start with recovering a place in the world, then transcending limitations and reconnecting to life.

DISREGARDED MODELS

Disregarded characters include those marginalized by their society or their relations. These people often experience prejudice due to disabilities or shortcomings, real or perceived. The disregarded and lost must often overcome the belief that they deserve their unfair exclusion. Disregarded and lost characters include Evey Hammond, Jane “Eleven” Hopper, Leonard Shelby, Quasimodo, Tyrion Lannister, and Yennifer of Vengerberg.

DISREGARDED FEATURES

A disregarded character is marked either by a desire to fit in or a desire to remain apart. Some try to conform to societal values and pursue skills that help with that end. Others reject convention and cultivate capabilities, as a character of the individualist or scoundrel archetypes might. A few maintain a middle ground to switch between fitting in and rebelling.



Explorer

An explorer wants the personal freedom to discover the world and themselves in relation to it. This journey is spiritual and intellectual as much as physical. The exploration doesn't need to be far-flung, but an explorer wants to get out to do and see things, and to learn. An explorer doesn't need any external motivation to go on this trip.

The biggest fears for an explorer are constraint and oppression, but missing out and failing to live a full life isn't far behind. Explorers might be spiritual seekers, literal wanderers, or something in between. Whatever the case, to an explorer, the journey is the goal, which can lead some to aimlessness or nonconformity encouraged by the journeying spirit.

EXPLORER VARIANT: PHILOSOPHER

Knowledge is a realm of exploration, and the philosopher is an explorer of that space. That's not to say a philosopher is always to be found reading or experimenting. These sagely types also seek truth, and finding the truth can mean going out into the world and risking your neck. A mystery intrigues a philosopher, whose greatest hope is to see through the illusions of life. But a philosopher can fall hard in their exploration of consciousness, such as to mind-altering substances. Philosophers can also be removed from the real world, becoming aloof, critical, dogmatic, or even cruel.

EXPLORER MODELS

Explorers abound because so many stories are about, at least in part, discovery. Someone must drive the desire for seeing more of what's out there, and explorers do that. They also boldly go despite threats and other

challenges. Explorers include Dr. Henry Walton "Indiana" Jones, Jr.; James Tiberius Kirk; Jane "Lady Greystoke" Porter, and Nausicaä. Sages include Enola Holmes, Galadriel, Michael "Mikey" Walsh, Sherlock Holmes, and Spock.

EXPLORER FEATURES

Explorers pursue skills that help them explore the things they want to learn more about. They also choose careers that enable their pioneering side. A philosopher might prefer a lab and mystery-solving science, such as forensics, while a pure explorer wants a "go and dig in the dirt" science, such as archeology. Explorers are adventurous in their pursuits, although those pursuits might be more cerebral for a philosopher.

Fallen

A fallen person is on a descent or has already hit bottom. The descent, or fall, can be from grace, power, wealth, or well-being – or some combination of these. The most common fallen character is one descending into corruption or wickedness. A queen embraces her cruelest impulses, a criminal moves deeper into organized crime, a warlock delves into secrets mortals weren't meant to know, or a normal person makes a deal with evil or gives in to moral or spiritual decay.

Falling in this way can occur due to a desire to leave a mark or meet a goal. But just as often, a person falls due to a personal flaw, such as hedonism, greed, or wrath. Malevolent forces might exploit a virtue, such as filial loyalty to a crime family, to cause someone to fall. The valorous willingly face evil, but one who fights monsters must take care not to become one.

FALLEN VARIANT: REDEEMED

A character can start out fallen, never to claw their way back from that gloomy start. Others fall but rise again. Redemption is a heroic arc, a spiritual journey during which a character atones for past wrongs. This path entails intention and sacrifice. Few truly redeem themselves with a great deed done at death's door.

FALLEN MODELS

A fallen character might be a villain or on track to become one, perhaps despite that person's intentions. Sometimes, no good choices exist. In other instances, the forces of evil overwhelm those who are vulnerable to them. Fallen characters include Cersei Lannister; Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West; Gollum; and Michael Corleone. Redeemed characters can be the likes of Jim Hopper, Regina Mills, Sansa Stark, Theon Greyjoy, and Zuko.

FALLEN FEATURES

A fallen character either has skills and traits that support a fallen state or acquires those qualities as the fall develops. Some features or bits of knowledge, such as spells, might be evidence of corruption (or redemption). But a fallen person can instead appear quite normal for their role in society or the world.

FALLEN CHARACTERISTICS

A fallen individual might have these characteristics.

| d6 | IDEAL |
|----|--|
| 1 | Connection. Loyalty to my friends, family, and allies means the most to me. |
| 2 | Fame. People will remember me, that I can promise. |
| 3 | Honor. I live by a code, and I expect others to respect that. |
| 4 | Liberty. People should be free to do what they please without judgment. Especially me. |
| 5 | Might. Those with the power can do what they want, and I want that power. |
| 6 | Passion. Life is about fulfilling your desires, so live it up while you can. |

| d6 | FLAW |
|----|--|
| 1 | Bellicose. I like confrontation, and if it rises to violence, all the better. |
| 2 | Distrustful. I expect others to be as bad as I am (or was). |
| 3 | Hedonist. Eat, drink, love, indulge—you might have no way to do so tomorrow. |
| 4 | Insatiable. I can't get enough of anything. More! |
| 5 | Pessimist. Loss, failure... evil. It's all inevitable. Why fight it? |
| 6 | Secret. I have done things vile enough that others would reject me if they knew. |



Giver

A giver seeks to give order to the world through personal investment. At a basic level, givers are “treat others as you want to be treated” types. They genuinely want to help others. Some givers achieve this goal through direct altruism, compassion, and generosity. Others aim to set up structures that support fairness or to tear down systems that enforce imbalances.

Although givers are motivated by compassion or empathy, they do what they do because of the personal satisfaction it gives. A giver is prone to enable weakness in others, to place too much emphasis on self-sacrifice, to give too much, and to be unable to say no. In a word, martyrdom. Selfishness and ingratitude can catch a giver off guard, leading to bitterness at being exploited. A giver can also be overbearing and paternalistic, expecting their good graces and advice to be heeded and valued.

GIVER VARIANT: CREATOR

A creator is the sort of giver who focuses on making something from nothing, order from chaos. The goal is to create ideas and objects of enduring value, raising society to a new level. A creator is an inventor or artist, an imaginer, which can include many mages. Creators fear mediocrity and failure, whether in vision or execution. Therefore, creators overwork and can tend toward perfectionism. A creator can also cling to an idea that has proven faulty, hoping the next experiment will prove the idea right.

GIVER VARIANT: LEADER

A leader is one who takes a role of authority to impose the giver's desire for structure on the world from the scale of a family to that of a nation or the world itself. The leader is a giver variant because a real leader must make decisions with the understanding that more than personal values, desires, and property are at stake. Leaders make decisions that affect others and profoundly so. A good leader desires power for noble purposes, but the cliché that power corrupts exists for a reason. Bad leaders see power as an end not a means and do what they can to hold onto authority. Leaders might fear chaos, overemphasize their need for control, and fail to delegate responsibility or authority.

GIVER MODELS

Givers are common heroic characters who serve well as mentors and sidekicks. As the leader variant shows, givers are also willing to take direct action and point the way for others. Sometimes the giving is by example or through an artistic message, as with the creator. Giver characters include Charlotte A. Cavatica, Samwise Gamgee, Mary Poppins, and Oskar Schindler. Creators include engineers, inventors, and artists such as Dr. Henry Jekyll, Shuri of Wakanda, Naomi Nagata, Tony “Iron Man” Stark, and Willy Wonka. Anakin “Darth Vader” Skywalker, Calanthe

“the Lioness” of Cintra, Leia Organa, Miranda Priestly, and Steve “Captain America” Rogers exemplify leaders good, bad, or in between.

GIVER FEATURES

A giver focuses on support. Sometimes that’s literal, from healing to shoring up weaknesses or reinforcing strengths. Leaders choose capabilities that emphasize their style, whether leading from the front, by example, or with tactical and strategic acumen. Or with an iron hand. Creators support through inspiration and providing other benefits that might be tangible or intangible.

Icon

Those of the icon archetype want to be known as a champion or star, someone worthy of remembrance. A person who has the icon archetype might be altruistic and brave, but the root of their behavior is the desire to prove their worth and leave a mark on the world. The simplest such legacy is an enduring reputation, but changing the world for the better (or worse) is another possible goal.

The icon archetype is one of personal achievement. An icon seeks skill mastery that allows them to pursue and accomplish goals. Icons are on the lookout for someone to rescue, a worthy cause to support, or a foe to oppose. Some characters fit this archetype but lack virtue. Others are virtuous but, despite believing or desiring otherwise, virtue isn’t their primary motive.

ICON VARIANT: VISIONARY

The visionary stands between the typical icon and the next variant, the warrior. A visionary wants to change the world while achieving personal mastery, hoping that one feeds into the other and back again. Visionaries seek to know the world (or universe) and pass that understanding to others to create a new state. That desire makes some visionaries noble, but some visionaries want changes no one else does.

ICON VARIANT: WARRIOR

Only slightly different from an icon or visionary, a warrior still wants to leave a mark, but a warrior’s motivation is more internal. A warrior seeks mastery and uses power based on personal goals and beliefs. Leaving a legacy is secondary or a side-effect of this personal quest for self-perfection. For the icon warrior, the fight is also secondary to fighting well.

ICON MODELS

Countless figures from myth and fantastic fiction fit the icon archetype. Icons and warriors include Aragorn, Bruce “Batman” Wayne, Buffy Summers, Conan, Diana “Wonder Woman” Prince, Heracles, Joan of Arc, Madmartigan, and Xena. Iconic visionaries include Gandalf the Grey, Imperator Furiosa, Melisandre the Red Priestess, and Thanos.

ICON FEATURES

A character who has the icon archetype values skill and competence. An icon treasures features that get them noticed and remembered. A visionary wants knowledge that then helps change the world, while a warrior seeks skills that improve personal capabilities. Subtlety rarely fits into any icon’s personality unless the goal is to be famous for finesse.

ICON CHARACTERISTICS

An icon might have the following traits.

| D6 | IDEAL |
|----|---|
| 1 | Ambition. What I accomplish matters more than who I am or what I do to reach my goals. |
| 2 | Courage. Bravery is doing what needs to be done despite the odds. |
| 3 | Glory. What people think of my successes means more than the deeds themselves. |
| 4 | Mastery. Skill and competence are the gateways to success. Mastery is its own reward. |
| 5 | Power. I need strength of body, mind, and spirit to be a hero, and it’s my right to use my power. |
| 6 | Self-Reliance. I must be ready for anything, so I think things through and prepare. |
| D6 | FLAW |
| 1 | Arrogant. When action is needed, my abilities and ideas have more weight than those of timid souls. |
| 2 | Driven. I take it much too hard if I fail, which can drive me to extremes. |
| 3 | Mistrustful. I appreciate competence and help, but I won’t count on either being there. |
| 4 | Overconfident. I can do anything I set my skills to, and my foes are no match for me. |
| 5 | Rescuer. I’m always on the lookout for deeds that allow me to prove myself. |
| 6 | Stoic. I’ll do just about anything to avoid appearing scared, weak, or vulnerable. |

Individualist

An individualist is out to live life to the fullest. *Fullest* might mean with or without restraint, but the individualist often acts without inhibition. The individualist is a free spirit. Living life in the moment is part of the individualist’s goal, but the real aim is to connect to others through enjoyment. An individualist doesn’t take life too seriously, but is unlikely to do so in a naive way.

Individualists tend to be personable and likable. However, they can be tricksters and liars, doing what they must to get what they want. Some are transgressive or hedonistic, breaking norms to seek pleasure. Most individualists are so focused on living in the now that they risk falling into indolence and trivial or silly diversions. Individualists are often rebels but seldom so much so that they become scoundrels. Avoiding boredom doesn’t require a bad attitude.



INDIVIDUALIST VARIANT: PARTNER

It might seem like an irony, but many individualists want to be with another or others that appreciate them. These individualists not only seek joy but seek to please others. This relationship-seeking stance is less about caregiving in a self-sacrifice sense and more like “we’re in this together, so let’s make the best of it.” A partner is an enthusiastic supporter of those close to them. But in their fear of being unwanted, they risk being too much a social chameleon, losing themselves to the passions of others.

INDIVIDUALIST MODELS

The individualist, as the name suggests, has many faces. Few conform to the expectations of their society but fewer go so far as to fall into ill repute. Most either fit in as the odd but lovable scamp or find a place in a counterculture. The more rigid the society, the more likely the individualist is to fit in but in a slightly rebellious way. Characters who fit this mold, counting partner types, include Austin Powers, Commander Shephard, Dr. Harleen “Harley Quinn” Frances Quinzel, Elizabeth Bennet, Kamala “Ms. Marvel” Khan, Lisbeth Salander, Meriadoc “Merry” Brandybuck, Remy Etienne “Gambit” LeBeau, and Tigger.

INDIVIDUALIST FEATURES

An individualist chooses skills and capabilities that make it easier to enjoy life. But each individualism has preferences that define enjoyment. A partner type is more likely to have abilities that support others. Most individualists have methods of catharsis, comic relief, or other releases. When the individualist shares these techniques, they can be helpful for everyone.

Ordinary

Exceptional circumstances can push normal people to do remarkable deeds. It can be a one-time thing. A terrible situation demands that an ordinary person rises to an unexpected challenge. But some people find themselves thrust into a new course in life when conditions dictate that change. It’s not what they chose, but it is something they face nonetheless.

The ordinary archetype is one of connection. It’s the everyday person realizing they struggle for something more than themselves. A character with the ordinary archetype doesn’t act the hero or even want to be noticed as unusual. Instead, they do what they must to ensure the surviving and thriving of the normal, from home and hearth to an idyllic or pastoral landscape.



ORDINARY VARIANT: HERO

Sometimes an ordinary person faces extraordinary circumstances more willingly and readily than others. These people break the “ordinary” mold intentionally. Such a character doesn’t act for self-betterment the way a character if the icon or warrior archetype does. Others might call this person a hero, but they don’t label themselves that way. An ordinary hero takes the forefront to fight for what they love—for connection.

ORDINARY MODELS

Many would-be heroes start in ordinary circumstances, with an ordinary outlook pushed to extremes by unusual challenges. Ordinary protagonists, along with some heroes, include Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, Ellen Ripley, Luke Skywalker, Mulan, Rick Grimes, and Sarah Conner.

ORDINARY FEATURES

Ordinary characters often develop heroic skills and traits as part of their story. At the start, they lack such features and instead possess skills and abilities that are more mundane. Ordinary characters often choose the practical over the flashy.

ORDINARY CHARACTERISTICS

An ordinary character might have these traits.

| D6 | IDEAL |
|----|---|
| 1 | Connection. The people in my life matter most, and I do what I can for them. |
| 2 | Freedom. People should be free to live without fear or tyranny. |
| 3 | Generosity. I’ll share what I have, from my skills to my money, with those in need. |
| 4 | Honesty. Speak the truth, keep your word, and do to others what you’d want done to you. |
| 5 | Normalcy. A simple, normal life, as I once lived, is worth protecting... so I can get back to it. |
| 6 | Tradition. Community and customs have value and must be preserved and practiced. |

D6 FLAW

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Fascinated. Everything is beyond my experience. It’s interesting and a little overwhelming. |
| 2 | Hesitant. I feel out of my depth, so I can be overcautious and fail to act swiftly. |
| 3 | Lazy. I’ve worked hard enough in my life, so I can take it easier now, and I will. |
| 4 | Meek. I’m quiet- and gentle-natured, and so bold action and violence don’t come naturally to me. |
| 5 | Provincial. I adhere to traditional ways and conventional thinking, and I trust my gut more than facts. |
| 6 | Unsophisticated. I’m used to a simple life, and my lack of experience translates into poor judgment or gullibility. |

Scoundrel

The scoundrel archetype fits a character who exists outside the norms and doesn’t like conventional rules or traditions. This is the archetype for iconoclasts, misfits, outsiders, radicals, rule breakers, and scallywags of all sorts. The scoundrel aims to misbehave. A scoundrel avoids connection, either due to old wounds from past relationships or because connection means responsibility the scoundrel doesn’t want to take, or both.

But most scoundrels also have something to prove. They want to be lauded by the right people for their actions. Those “right people” are often other mavericks the scoundrel associates with to avoid normal or virtuous people. Life has a way of showing a scoundrel what’s important, forcing real connections, despite the scoundrel’s efforts to remain detached.

SCOUNDREL VARIANT: MISCREANT

The typical scoundrel has a moral compass. Others lack this feature, having further lost their way due to awful circumstances or self-destructive tendencies. Such people are prone to be ruthless and to further avoid connection. A miscreant can end up being heroic, but only due to a very personal hook.

SCOUNDREL MODELS

Scoundrels have a way of being dragged into doing the right thing and then sticking to it with their usual defiance of convention. Some scoundrels, though, are real reprobates. Scoundrel characters, along with a few plain miscreants, include Anne Bonny, Camina Drummer, Eldaya “Elida” Al-Feyr, Han Solo, Joel Miller, Kara “Starbuck” Thrace, “Mad” Max Rockatansky, Peter “Star-Lord” Quill, and Selena “Catwoman” Kyle.

SCOUNDREL FEATURES

Each scoundrel has their own approach to problem solving. A scoundrel chooses skills and tools that give an edge, all the better if that edge is unfair. Deceit, stealth, and efficiency are hallmarks of scoundrels, and a few put style before substance.

SCOUNDREL CHARACTERISTICS

Scoundrels could have the following personality aspects.

| d6 | IDEAL |
|----|---|
| 1 | Adaptability. You got to roll with the punches and be ready for anything. |
| 2 | Change. If things are going to change, it's up to me to help them along. |
| 3 | Fairness. Everyone deserves their shot. I treat others as they treat me. |
| 4 | Improvement. This can't be all there is. I want more and better. |
| 5 | Liberation. I won't live by someone else's rules. Everyone should be able to do what they please. |
| 6 | Notoriety. I'm the best in these parts, and before I'm through, everyone's going to know it. |

| d6 | FLAW |
|----|--|
| 1 | Aloof. I don't need anyone or anything, and I want to be in no one's debt. Connection is a weakness. |
| 2 | Cynical. I expect the worst, and I don't bother hoping for anything more. |
| 3 | Profligate. I'll use and spend what I must to enjoy my life. Saving is for suckers. |
| 4 | Grasping. You got to get yours while the getting is good. Coin in the pocket, as they say. |
| 5 | Rebellious. Rules are made to be broken, and most leaders are tyrants. Fight the power! |
| 6 | Thrill-seeking. Risk makes life worth living. But never tell me the odds. |

Unaffected

Some folks are wholly themselves, or they think they are—always being who they are without seeking change. Striving to maintain their identity doesn't mean the character likes who they are, but change is seen as a threat. An unchanging nature is often stagnation, but in a stressful life, such as the adventuring one, this ethos requires immense will. Attachment to identity can act as an anchor, a stabilizing force in life.

UNAFFECTED VARIANT: INNOCENT

Many unaffected people have a hard or callous persona, maintaining this toughness as a life preserver. They are rocks in life's stream. Others, though, are plants in the same current. Instead of resisting, an innocent mind bends then returns to its former shape, often with an enthusiastic and optimistic, or childlike, outlook. Innocents are different from givers and individualists in that their entire focus is on remaining who they are despite events.

UNAFFECTED MODELS

An unaffected character maintains a strong core identity—good, bad, or indifferent—no matter what. When life throws something tough or intense at such a person, they might feign agreement, compliance, or obedience. But all the while, the unaffected holds on to their core. Unaffected or innocent characters include Amos Burton, Alex DeLarge, Dana Scully, Chrisjen Avasarala, Kaywinnet Lee “Kaylee” Frye, and Peregrin “Pippin” Took.

UNAFFECTED FEATURES

A lot of unaffected people maintain a practical outlook. They develop skills and powers most likely to get them what they want, according to their core identity. The more innocent an unaffected person is, the less this practicality remains true.

UNAFFECTED CHARACTERISTICS

Unaffected people might have varied temperaments.

| d6 | IDEAL |
|----|---|
| 1 | Accomplishment. I need to stay true to myself to achieve my goals. |
| 2 | Constancy. Things that happen to me and feelings that I have mustn't be allowed to change me. |
| 3 | Devotion. I'm dedicated to my beliefs, so I do what I can to live up to them. |
| 4 | Joy. A life without happiness isn't worth living. |
| 5 | Loyalty. I'm someone others can rely on, no matter what. |
| 6 | Strength. My core is my strength, and all other might and power comes from that core. |

| d6 | FLAW |
|----|--|
| 1 | Amoral. Good and evil matter less than doing what I want for me and mine. |
| 2 | Impulsive. I act when action is called for, especially before anyone can get the drop on me. |
| 3 | Naive. I'm honest with my words and feelings, and I expect others to be that way, too. |
| 4 | Prideful. What's best for me is most important. |
| 5 | Rigid. I know what's right, and that's what I'll get. Let others compromise. |
| 6 | Unimaginative. Look for the simplest answers and the obvious solutions. They're usually right. |



Chapter 9: New Spells

PRESENTED HERE ARE 42 NEW SPELLS.

* denotes a sangromancy spell

BARD SPELLS

CANTRIP

Calling Card (illusion)

1ST-LEVEL

Creeping Touch (transmutation)

Ghost Light (evocation)

Neutralize Aura (abjuration)

2ND-LEVEL

Fiend Flesh (transmutation)

3RD-LEVEL

Sanguine Poppet (transmutation)*

Suffocate (conjunction)

5TH-LEVEL

Incite Riot (enchantment)

6TH-LEVEL

Crown of Radiance (evocation)

8TH-LEVEL

Wall of Gloom (conjunction)

CLERIC SPELLS

1ST-LEVEL

Ghost Light (evocation)

Neutralize Aura (abjuration)

2ND-LEVEL

Bloodletter (necromancy)

Fiend Flesh (transmutation)

Wrack (necromancy)

4TH-LEVEL

Consume Mind (necromancy)

5TH-LEVEL

Spirit Swarm (necromancy)

6TH-LEVEL

Crown of Radiance (evocation)

8TH-LEVEL

Flense (necromancy)

Red Rain (conjunction)

9TH-LEVEL

Phoenix Flames (evocation)

DRUID SPELLS

CANTRIP

Hunter Sense (divination)

1ST-LEVEL

Blood Rush (transmutation)*

Consumption (evocation)*

2ND-LEVEL

Sense Lifeblood(divination)*

Theft of Vitae (transmutation)*

3RD-LEVEL

Blood Bond (enchantment)*

Flash Fever (necromancy)*

Reanimate (necromancy)*

4TH-LEVEL

Ride the Lightning (conjunction)

5TH-LEVEL

Investiture of Venom (transmutation)

6TH-LEVEL

Crown of Radiance (evocation)

Earth Worm (transmutation)

7TH-LEVEL

Arboreal Curse (transmutation)

9TH-LEVEL

Phoenix Flames (evocation)

PALADIN SPELLS

1ST-LEVEL

Neutralize Aura (abjuration)

2ND-LEVEL

Bloodletter (necromancy)

Wilting Smite (transmutation)*

4TH-LEVEL

Supernal Smite (evocation)

RANGER SPELLS

1ST-LEVEL

Blood Rush (transmutation)*

2ND-LEVEL

Bloodletter (necromancy)

Sense Lifeblood(divination)*

5TH-LEVEL

Investiture of Venom (transmutation)

SORCERER SPELLS

CANTRIP

Calling Card (illusion)

1ST-LEVEL

Consumption (evocation)*

Creeping Touch (transmutation)

Ghost Light (evocation)

2ND-LEVEL

Fiend Flesh (transmutation)

Sanguine Shield (abjuration)*

Sense Lifeblood(divination)*

3RD-LEVEL

Suffocate (conjunction)

4TH-LEVEL

Circle of Scarlet (evocation)*

Ride the Lightning (conjunction)

5TH-LEVEL

Incite Riot (enchantment)

Magic Mirror (abjuration)

Mortality (transmutation)*

6TH-LEVEL

Heartseeker (evocation)*

9TH-LEVEL

Phoenix Flames (evocation)

WARLOCK SPELLS

CANTRIP

Calling Card (illusion)

1ST-LEVEL

Creeping Touch (transmutation)

Crimson Lash (conjunction)*

2ND-LEVEL

Fiend Flesh (transmutation)

3RD-LEVEL

Flash Fever (necromancy)

Sanguine Poppet (transmutation)*

Serpent Tongue (transmutation)

Suffocate (conjunction)

4TH-LEVEL

Circle of Scarlet (evocation)*

Consume Mind (necromancy)

Dark Sacrament (evocation)*

5TH-LEVEL

Incite Riot (enchantment)

Little Death (necromancy)

8TH-LEVEL

Creeping Death (necromancy)*

Red Rain (conjunction)*

9TH-LEVEL

Steal Immortality (transmutation)*

WIZARD SPELLS

CANTRIP

Calling Card (illusion)

1ST-LEVEL

Consumption (evocation)*

Creeping Touch (transmutation)

Crimson Lash (conjunction)*

Ghost Light (evocation)

2ND-LEVEL

Fiend Flesh (transmutation)

Sanguine Shield (abjuration)*

Theft of Vitae (transmutation)*

3RD-LEVEL

Serpent Tongue (transmutation)

Suffocate (conjunction)

4TH-LEVEL

Consume Mind (necromancy)

Dark Sacrament (evocation)*

Ride the Lightning (conjunction)

5TH-LEVEL

Incite Riot (enchantment)

Spirit Swarm (necromancy)

6TH-LEVEL

Earth Worm (transmutation)

Heartseeker (evocation)*

8TH-LEVEL

Creeping Death (necromancy)*

Flense (necromancy)

Wall of Gloom (conjunction)



ARBOREAL CURSE

7th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 ft.

Components: V, S, M (a cup of sap)

Duration: Until dispelled

You attempt to turn one creature that you can see within range into wood. If the target's body is made of flesh, the creature must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it is restrained as its flesh begins to harden into bark. On a successful save, the creature isn't affected.

A creature restrained by this spell must make another Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If it successfully saves against this spell three times, the spell ends. If it fails its Constitution saving throw three times, it is turned into a tree and subjected to the petrified condition for the duration. The successes and failures don't need to be consecutive; keep track of both until the target collects three of a kind.

If the transformed creature is burned, chopped down, or otherwise destroyed while petrified, the creature is slain.

A creature remains transformed unless the effect is reversed within one year with *greater restoration*, *wish*, or similar magical effects. If the creature spends one year and a day as a tree, the transformation becomes permanent, and nothing can return the creature to its original form.

BLOOD BOND

3rd-level enchantment (*sangromancy*)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a rag soaked in your own blood)

Duration: 1 hour

As part of casting this spell, you must expend three hit dice or the spell automatically fails. If you do, roll the expended hit dice, and the creature gains an equal number of temporary hit points.

For the duration of the spell, you know the direction and distance to the creature at all times, you and the creature can speak to one another telepathically (provided the creature has an intelligence score of 3 or higher), and you can target the creature with spells you cast that have a range of Self or Touch. These benefits are suppressed while you and the creature are not on the same plane.

At any point, a creature affected by this spell can choose to end the spell early. If it does, the creature loses all remaining temporary hit points granted by this spell and takes necrotic damage equal to the temporary hit points lost.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th or 6th level, its duration is 8 hours. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 7th or 8th level, its duration is 24 hours. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 9th level, its duration is 7 days.

BLOODLETTER

2nd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You touch a nonmagical weapon. Until the spell ends, the next creature hit by the weapon must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or receive a festering wound. A creature with a festering wound takes 2d6 necrotic damage at the beginning of its turn for the remainder of the spell's duration. A creature can only have one festering wound at a time.

Receiving at least 1 point of magical healing closes a festering wound, ending the recurring damage and the spell.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you can increase the damage dealt by a festering wound by 1d6 for each slot level above 2nd.

BLOOD RUSH

1st-level transmutation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: S

Duration: Instantaneous

As part of casting this spell, you must expend a hit die or the spell automatically fails. If you do, roll the hit die and regain a number of hit points equal to the result + your spellcasting ability modifier.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you can expend and roll an additional hit die for each slot level above 1st.

CALLING CARD

Illusion cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: S, M (a stamp carved like the mark left by your calling card)

Duration: Until dispelled

You touch a corpse and mark it with a magical mark. You can choose to make it a visible mark that appears as a rune or word written on the flesh, or you can choose to make it an invisible mark. Creatures who specifically examine a corpse for a calling card automatically detect one, whether visible or invisible.

CIRCLE OF SCARLET

4th-level evocation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a piece of parchment with a

circle drawn in humanoid blood)

Duration: Instantaneous

As part of casting this spell, you must expend four hit dice or the spell automatically fails. If you do, choose a point on the ground within range and roll the expended hit dice. A crimson pillar erupts from the ground in a 15-foot radius and 100-foot high cylinder centered on the point you chose. Each creature within the cylinder must make a Constitution saving throw. On a success, the creature takes necrotic damage equal to the total of the expended hit dice. On a failure, the creature takes necrotic damage equal to the total of the expended hit dice and must expend and roll four hit dice of its own, taking additional necrotic damage equal to the result.

For each creature who fails the saving throw against this spell, you gain 5 temporary hit points.

CONSUME MIND

4th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a 1-ounce fresh or magically preserved portion of another creature's brain)

Duration: 1 hour

You consume the brain of another creature's corpse, gaining its memories and knowledge. The corpse must have a brain and can't be undead. The spell fails if the corpse has been dead (and not preserved) for more than three days.

Until the spell ends, you can attempt to recall any important fact known to the creature—family history, recent events, building layouts, passwords, details of the creature's death, and similar information. To recall a piece of information, you must make an ability check using your spellcasting modifier. The DC is equal to the corpse's Intelligence score.

Once the caster rolls to determine whether they recall a fact, they cannot attempt to recall it again.

CONSUMPTION

1st-level evocation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a malnourished leech)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

As part of casting this spell, you must expend a hit die or the spell automatically fails. If you do, choose a creature within range and roll the hit die. The creature loses a number of hit points equal to the result.

For the duration of the spell, the creature must make a Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns. On a failure, roll the hit die expended to cast this spell again, and the creature loses hit points equal to the result. On a success, this effect ends for the creature.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, choose an additional target for the spell for each slot level above 1st.

CREEPING DEATH

8th-level necromancy (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

As part of casting this spell, you must expend eight hit dice or the spell automatically fails. When you do, roll the eight hit dice expended to cast this spell and total them to determine the creature's creeping death threshold. While the spell remains active, if the creature's current hit points ever equal or are less than the creeping death threshold, the creature immediately dies.

As a bonus action on each of your turns while this spell is active, you can force the target to make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, roll 2d6 and add the result to the creature's creeping death threshold. On a success, add half the result instead. If the creature succeeds on three saving throws, which do not have to be consecutive, this spell ends early.

CREEPING TOUCH

1st-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You detach your hand at the wrist, transforming it into a **spider**. While the spider is within 100 feet of you, you can communicate with it telepathically. Additionally, as an action, you can see through its eyes and hear what it hears until the start of your next turn. During this time, you are deaf and blind with regard to your own senses.

If the spider is killed or prevented from returning to you, your hand is restored, but you take 1d6 points of psychic damage. If you command the spider to return, it crawls back to your wrist, and the spell ends.

CRIMSON LASH

1st-level conjuration (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: S

Duration: 1 minute

As part of casting this spell, you must expend a hit die or the spell automatically fails. If you do, a writhing lash of coagulated blood springs from your hand.

This magic weapon lasts until the spell ends. It counts as a simple weapon with which you are proficient, and it has the light, finesse, and reach properties. You can choose to add your spellcasting modifier, instead of your Strength or Dexterity modifier, to attack and damage rolls with this weapon. Its damage die is equivalent to

the hit die expended casting this spell, and the damage dealt is necrotic. Each time a creature takes damage from this magic weapon, its maximum hit points are reduced by an amount equal to the damage it took.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd or 4th level, when you take the Attack action, you can make two weapon attacks, provided both are with this magic weapon. When you use a spell slot of 5th level or higher, when you take the Attack action you make three weapon attacks, provided all are with this magic weapon.

CROWN OF RADIANCE

6th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: 10 minutes

A flaming crown of holy light adorns your head until the spell ends. Any fiend, fey, or undead that moves within 20 feet of you or begins their turn within 20 feet of you takes 2d8 radiant damage.

The crown of radiance sheds bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light for an additional 30 feet.

DARK SACRAMENT

4th-level evocation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a dagger encrusted in jewels worth at least 100 gp)

Duration: Instantaneous

As part of casting this spell you must expend four hit dice or the spell automatically fails. If you do, make a melee spell attack against a creature within 5 feet using the material component of this spell. On a hit, roll the hit dice expended casting this spell plus an additional 4d8 and deal necrotic damage equal to the result. If this damage causes the creature to be reduced to 0 hit points, it immediately dies and you gain one of the following dark blessings of your choice.

Unassailable. You have advantage on all saving throws.

Unbreakable. Your size increases by one category (from Medium to Large, for example), you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum 1) at the start of each of your turns, and your weapon attacks deal an additional 1d4 damage.

Unerring. Your proficiency bonus increases by 2.

Your dark blessing ends after 10 minutes or when you are reduced to 0 hit points, whichever happens first. When you take radiant damage while you have a dark blessing, you take an additional 1d4 damage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the melee spell attack damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 4th.

EARTH WORM

6th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 ft.

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You transform the earth into a wormlike maw at an unoccupied point on the ground within range. When you cast the spell, you can make a melee spell attack against a creature within 5 feet of the worm. On a hit, the target takes piercing damage equal to $3d8 +$ your spellcasting ability modifier. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or be swallowed by the worm. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the worm, and it takes $6d6$ bludgeoning damage at the start of each of your turns.

Each round on its turn, a creature trapped within the worm can use an action to attempt to repeat the Dexterity saving throw to escape. A creature that succeeds this saving throw is regurgitated and falls prone in a space within 10 feet of the worm.

As a bonus action on your turn, you can move the worm up to 20 feet and repeat the attack against a creature within 5 feet of it.

FIEND FLESH

2nd-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a handful of sulfur)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You touch a willing creature. Until the spell ends, the target's skin has a red, scaly appearance, and the target has resistance to cold, fire, and lightning damage. For the duration, they also gain immunity to poison damage.

FLASH FEVER

3rd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (flint and steel)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

A living creature you choose within range breaks out into a cold sweat and must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the cold sweat breaks into fever as the creature's skin becomes flushed and hot to the touch, and the creature takes $1d6$ fire damage at the start of its next turn. On a success, the spell immediately ends.

While the spell persists, you can use a reaction at the start of an affected creature's turn to force the creature to take fire damage again, increasing by $1d6$ each time. The creature can use its action to attempt to cool itself, allowing it to attempt the Constitution saving throw again. On a success, the creature's fever breaks and the spell ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the initial damage increases by $1d6$ for each slot level above 3rd.

FLENSE

8th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 ft.

Components: V, S, M (a scalpel)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You target a creature you can see within range, using necromantic force to slice the skin from its body. Make a ranged spell attack against that creature. The target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw, taking $8d6$ necrotic damage on a failure or half as much damage on a success. On each of your turns for the duration, you can use your action to force the same target to make another Constitution saving throw and repeat the damage. The spell also ends if the target is ever outside the spell's range, if the target is reduced to 0 hp, or if it has total cover from you.

GHOST LIGHT

1st-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a clear marble)

Duration: 1 hour

You touch one object that is no larger than 10 feet in any dimension and specify any number of creatures you can see within 10 feet. Until the spell ends, the object sheds bright silvery light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet. This light is only visible to the creatures you specified during the initial casting of the spell; all other creatures perceive the area affected by the ghost lantern as they regularly would.

HEARTSEEKER

6th-level evocation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 300 feet

Components: V, S, M (a ruby worth at least 100 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

As part of casting this spell you must expend six hit dice or the spell automatically fails. When you do, blood flows from your body then crystallizes into a barbed arrow, which launches at a creature of your choice within range. Make a ranged spell attack against the chosen creature. On a hit, roll the hit dice expended to cast this spell, and the creature takes piercing damage equal to the result.

Once lodged in the creature, the bloody arrow begins to burrow toward its heart, rendering it vulnerable to further attacks. At the start of the creature's next turn, it must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure,

attacks against the creature score critical hits on a 19 or 20 on the attack roll.

At the start of each of the creature's turns after that, it must repeat the Constitution saving throw or the critical hit range on attacks against the creature increases by 1 again. If the creature succeeds on three of these saving throws (these successes do not need to be consecutive) this spell ends. The increased critical hit range ends when the spell does.

HUNTER SENSE

Divination cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You touch one willing creature. While this spell is active, the target's senses are heightened. If the target rolls a 9 or below on the die when making a Wisdom (Perception) check, they instead act as if they rolled a 10.

INCITE RIOT

5th-level enchantment

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 ft.

Components: V, S, M (a red handkerchief)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

When you cast this spell, you wave the red handkerchief used as the material component and choose any number of creatures within range that can see you. Each target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be charmed by you until the spell ends or until you or your allies do anything harmful to it. While charmed in this way, it must use its turn to make unarmed strikes against the nearest creature (other than you) or use its turn moving to the nearest target.

At the end of each of its turns, an affected target can make a Wisdom saving throw. If it succeeds, this effect ends for that target.

INVESTITURE OF VENOM

5th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

Until the spell ends, your veins bulge and become visibly green beneath your skin, your eyes weep constantly with liquid poison, and you gain the following benefits:

- You are immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition.
- When you choose a creature you can see within 30 feet, you know if it has poison resistance or immunity, as well as if it is immune to the poisoned condition.

- You can use a bonus action on your turn and choose a creature within 30 feet. That creature must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature loses any resistance or immunity it has to poison damage or the poisoned condition until the end of your next turn.
- You can use your action to launch a geyser of toxins in a line 15 feet long and 5 feet wide extending from you in a direction you choose. Each creature in the line must make a Constitution saving throw or take 4d6 poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails its save against this effect is also poisoned until the end of your next turn.

LITTLE DEATH

5th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: S, M (an item of personal sentimental value worth at least 1 sp)

Duration: Up to 8 hours

When you cast this spell, you drop to 0 hit points and die. At the start of your next turn, you become a **ghost** occupying the same space as your corpse. You use the ghost's game statistics, retaining your alignment and personality.

While you are a ghost, you can only use abilities detailed in the ghost's game statistics. In addition, you add your proficiency bonus to your attack rolls and the DC of saving throws your ghost abilities force others to make.

Your DM secretly rolls 1d8 at the time of casting. After a number of hours have passed equal to the result, the spell ends. The spell ends early if you are reduced to 0 hit points as a ghost or you use an action to do so. If the material component used to cast this spell remains on your corpse, you return to life with current hit points equal to half your maximum hit points. If the material component used to cast this spell is no longer on your corpse, you must make death saving throws as normal.

If your body is destroyed or damaged beyond the capacity to survive while you are under the effects of this spell, its duration becomes indefinite and you remain a ghost until you are reduced to 0 hit points, destroyed by any other effect, or your body is targeted by an effect that returns the living to the dead such as *raise dead* or *resurrection*.

MAGIC MIRROR

5th-level abjuration

Casting Time: 1 reaction, which you take when you are targeted by a spell

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a polished silver marble)

Duration: Instantaneous

A momentary bubble of iridescent energy shimmers in the air between you and the caster of the triggering

spell. The spell is redirected to a creature of your choice that you can see within 60 feet. If the spell is 5th level or lower, you are no longer a target of the spell and the chosen creature is instead. If the spell is 6th level or higher, make an ability check using your spellcasting ability. The DC equals 10 + the spell's level. On a successful check, you are no longer a target of the spell and the chosen creature is instead. On a failed check, you remain the target of the triggering spell.

MORTALITY

5th-level transmutation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (the skull of a humanoid encrusted in gems worth at least 200 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

As part of casting this spell you must expend five hit dice or the spell automatically fails. When you do, choose an aberration, celestial, elemental, fey, or fiend within range and condemn it to a taste of mortality. The creature must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or have its current and maximum hit points reduced. Roll the hit dice expended to cast this spell to determine the amount the creature's current and maximum hit points are reduced by.

Additionally, for the duration of the spell, a creature that fails the saving throw loses all damage immunities and resistances, its creature type changes to humanoid, and takes an additional 1d4 necrotic damage each time it takes damage.

If a creature affected by this spell is reduced to 0 hit points, these changes become permanent and the creature dies. This final effect of the spell can only be reversed if the creature is restored to life and targeted by a remove curse spell or similar magic.

NEUTRALIZE AURA

1st-level abjuration

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a sprig of sage)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You touch a willing creature and neutralize their aura. Until the spell ends, the target cannot be magically perceived by fey, fiends, celestials, or undead. If the affected creature makes an attack, casts a spell, deals damage, takes damage, or steps within 5 feet of one of the named creatures, the spell ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you can target one additional creature for each slot level above 1st.

PHOENIX FLAMES

9th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You immolate yourself, consuming your body in a searing cloud of holy flames. All creatures within 20 feet of you must make a Constitution saving throw or take 30d6 radiant damage and gain one level of exhaustion. On a successful save, a creature takes half damage and is not exhausted. If a target is killed by this damage, its body is incinerated.

After 10 minutes, you rise from the ashes where you originally cast the spell. You are returned fully to life as if you were affected by a *true resurrection* spell.

REANIMATE

3rd-level evocation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a melange of wilted daisies and other herbal powders worth at least 300 gp, which this spell consumes)

Duration: Instantaneous

As part of casting this spell you must expend three hit dice or the spell automatically fails. If you do, you can touch a creature who has died within the last 10 minutes and return it to life with 1 hit point. In addition, roll the hit dice you expended casting this spell, and the creature gains temporary hit points equal to the result.

At the start of each of the target creature's turns, it loses 1 temporary hit point granted by this spell. While the creature has any temporary hit points granted by this spell it moves with unnatural vigor, gaining a +2 bonus to all ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws. Once it loses all remaining temporary hit points granted by this spell, the creature gains a level of exhaustion.

This spell can't return to life a creature who has died of old age, nor can it restore missing body parts.



RED RAIN

8th-level conjuration (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a sponge soaked in blood)

Duration: Concentration, up to 8 hours

As part of casting this spell you must expend eight hit dice or the spell automatically fails. If you do, over the course of the next 1d6 x 5 minutes the sky darkens and thick droplets of blood begin to rain down everywhere within 5 miles of you.

Creatures within 5 miles of you gain a level of exhaustion every 10 minutes they are directly exposed to the red rain. Each time a creature gains a level of exhaustion from this effect, it takes 2d10 necrotic damage and has its maximum hit points reduced by an equivalent amount until it is no longer exhausted. While a creature has any levels of exhaustion caused by this spell, it automatically fails all saving throws against being poisoned or diseased.

Beasts and plant creatures within the area of effect of this spell must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until they have spent 1 minute or longer outside the area of effect of this spell. Mundane plants within the area of effect of this spell wither and die after being exposed to the red rain for at least 10 minutes.

For each hour you maintain concentration on this spell, roll one of the hit dice expended in the casting of this spell then total the results at the conclusion of the spell. The total equals the number of days before beasts will willingly return to, and plants can begin to regrow in, the area that was affected by this spell.

RIDE THE LIGHTNING

4th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a length of copper wire)

Duration: Instantaneous

You transform yourself into a bolt of lightning and teleport up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space you can see. Each creature within 5 feet of the line created between your starting point and final destination takes 4d6 lightning damage unless they succeed on a Dexterity saving throw to halve the damage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 4th. In addition, you can teleport yourself an additional 10 feet further for each slot level above 4th.



SANGUINE POPPET

3rd-level transmutation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (an object shaped like a creature worth 1 cp or more)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

As part of casting this spell, you must expend three hit dice or the spell automatically fails. When you do, you smear the material component used to cast this spell with your blood. The object shudders and becomes a sanguine poppet under your control.

Your sanguine poppet has an AC equal to 10 + your proficiency bonus + your spellcasting ability modifier and 30 hp. If your sanguine poppet is ever reduced to 0 hp or is more than a mile away, the spell ends immediately. As a bonus action on your turn, your sanguine poppet can walk or climb up to 30 feet, and you can see and hear through them until the start of your next turn.

As an action, you can cause the poppet to self-destruct in an explosion of blood, ending this spell. Roll the hit dice expended casting this spell, and each creature within 30 feet of the poppet must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take necrotic damage equal to the result. Creatures who succeed on the saving throw take half as much damage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, you can expend an additional hit die for each spell slot level above 3rd. Additionally, the duration of this spell increases by one hour for each spell slot level above 3rd.

SANGUINE SHIELD

2nd-level abjuration (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

As part of casting this spell, you must expend two hit dice or the spell automatically fails. You draw lifeforce from those injured around you to create a swirling shield of blood. You gain 5 temporary hit points for each creature within a 30-foot radius that is below its hit point maximum (including you) to a maximum of 15. While you have these hit points, you are considered to be behind half cover for any ranged attack made against you. When this spell ends, all remaining temporary hit points provided by it are lost.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the maximum number of temporary hit points you can gain from casting it increases by 5 for each two slot levels above 2nd.

SENSE LIFEBLOOD

2nd-level divination (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

As part of casting this spell, you must expend two hit dice or the spell automatically fails. If you do, you can sense the lifeblood flowing within creatures you can see. For the duration of the spell, you can sense whether and how two or more creatures you can see are related biologically. In addition, you know whether the creature's current hit points are equal to or below half their maximum hit points and, when you deal damage to such a creature, you roll two additional dice to deal bonus damage. The dice rolled to determine this bonus damage are the same as the two you expended to cast this spell.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell with a 4th or 5th level spell slot, you can maintain concentration on this spell for up to 1 hour. When you cast this spell with a 6th level or higher spell slot, you can maintain concentration on this spell for up to 8 hours.

SERPENT TONGUE

3rd-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 minute

You transform your tongue into a poisonous serpent for the duration. When you cast the spell, you can make a melee spell attack against a creature within 5 feet of you. On a hit, the target takes 1d8 piercing damage and must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. A poisoned creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each turn, ending the condition on a success.

As a bonus action on your turn, you can repeat the attack against a creature within 5 feet of you.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for every level above 3rd.





SPIRIT SWARM

5th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 ft.

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, 1 minute

You invite spirits to take their revenge upon a target. A creature that you can see within range must make a Charisma saving throw. A creature with a Charisma score of 2 or lower can't be affected by this spell. A target takes 8d8 psychic damage on a failed save and is frightened of you until the spell ends. On a successful save, a target takes half damage and is not frightened.

STEAL IMMORTALITY

9th-level transmutation (sanguomancy)

Casting Time: 1 reaction, which you take when a celestial, elemental, fey, fiend, or undead within range that you can see is reduced to 0 hit points

Range: 300 feet

Components: V, S, M (the skull of a humanoid encrusted in gems worth at least 1,000 gp, which the spell consumes)

Duration: Instantaneous

As part of casting this spell, you must expend nine hit dice or the spell automatically fails. If you do, roll the expended hit dice and note the total as your "mortal hit points," then the creature who triggered this spell by being reduced to 0 hp immediately dies. If it would normally return to its native plane at 0 hp, it is destroyed instead. Change your creature type to that of the dead creature.

Whilst changed, you are immune to poison and disease; no longer need to eat, drink, or breathe; resistant to nonmagical damage; and gain a benefit dependent on your new creature type:

Celestial. You have resistance to radiant and necrotic damage and gain a fly speed of 60 feet.

Elemental. You have resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

Fey. You can use a bonus action on each of your turns to turn invisible until the start of your next turn or teleport up to 60 feet in any direction.

Fiend. You have resistance to cold and fire damage and gain a fly speed of 60 feet.

Undead. You are immune to necrotic damage and being charmed or frightened.

Your creature type is retained until you cast the spell again, immediately ending its effects, or you take damage that reduces you to 0 hp, wherein your creature type returns to normal and your hp to the number noted as your mortal hit points.

SUFFOCATE

3rd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 ft.

Components: V, S, M (a leather glove)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You create a pair of grasping hands made from invisible forces. Make a spell attack against one creature that you can see within range. On a hit, the creature is restrained as the hands crush their throat or bodily equivalent.

If the creature requires air to breathe, it begins to suffocate. A suffocating creature can survive for a number of rounds equal to 1 + its Constitution modifier (minimum of 1 round). At the start of its next turn after those rounds are over, it becomes unconscious, and it can't regain hit points until it can breathe again.

A conscious creature restrained by the hands can use its action to make a Strength or Dexterity check (its choice) against your spell save DC. On a success, the spell ends on the target.

SUPERNAL SMITE

4th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

The next time you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack during this spell's duration, your weapon shatters the ambient magic surrounding the creature, and the attack deals an extra 4d6 force damage. If the creature is concentrating on a spell, that concentration is broken.

In addition, any spell of 3rd level or lower on the target ends. For each spell of 4th level or higher on the target, make an ability check using your spellcasting ability. The DC equals 10 + the spells' level. On a successful check, the spell ends.

THEFT OF VITAE

2nd-level transmutation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 reaction, which you take when a creature you can see within 30 feet takes damage

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

As part of casting this spell, you must expend two hit dice or the spell automatically fails. If you do, roll the hit dice and the creature takes necrotic damage equal to the result, then you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to the triggering damage plus this necrotic damage you dealt, to a maximum of 15.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the maximum number of temporary hit points you can gain from casting it increases by 10 for each slot level above 2nd.

WALL OF GLOOM

8th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 ft.

Components: V, S, M (a vial of tears)

Duration: 10 minutes

You create a wall of swirling grey energy, formed of the psychic pain of forlorn loss. The wall appears within range on a solid surface and lasts for the duration. You choose to make them all up to 60 feet long, 10 feet high, and 5 feet thick or a circle that has a 20-foot diameter and is up to 20 feet high and 5 feet thick — the wall blocks line of sight.

The wall radiates dim light out to a range of 100 feet. You and creatures you designate at the time you cast the spell can pass through and remain near the wall without harm. If another creature moves to within 20 feet of it or starts its turn there, the creature must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or become incapacitated for one round as they are overcome with a flood of negative feelings.

A creature can move through the wall, though the attempt is emotionally draining. The first time a creature enters the wall on a turn or ends its turn there, the creature must make a Charisma saving throw, taking one level of exhaustion on a failed save.

WILTING SMITE

2nd-level transmutation (sangromancy)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

As part of casting this spell, you must expend two hit dice or the spell automatically fails. If you do, the next time you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack during this spell's duration, blood flows over your weapon then desiccates into black spores falling onto the attack's target, and the attack deals an extra necrotic damage to the target. Roll the hit dice expended to cast this spell, and the total equals the amount of this extra necrotic damage. Additionally, the creature loses all damage resistances it has until the start of your next turn.

WRACK

2nd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 ft.

Components: V, S, M (a frayed piece of cord)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Choose a creature that you can see within range. The target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or be afflicted with excruciating muscle spasms for the duration. A creature affected in this way has its speed halved and rolls attacks with disadvantage. At the end of each of its turns, the target can make another Constitution saving throw. On a success, the spell ends on the target.



Chapter 10: Advanced Weapons

Peoples of Etharis, especially dwarves and gnomes, have devised complex weapons to combat the nightmarish monsters of the world. Warriors of all stripes have also developed sophisticated techniques, turning weapons of straightforward but precise design more deadly. Advanced weapons comprise both practices, from new weapons to novel ways of using familiar ones. To function as it should, each advanced weapon must be made with exactness, and each one is a masterpiece of the craft required to produce it. Hence, each advanced weapon has a high price. The Advanced Weapon Table summarizes these armaments and their unique uses. Descriptions of these weapons' properties include more details.

Advanced Weapon Training

Mastery of advanced weapons requires military training and skill. To use most weapons' advanced properties, you must be 3rd level or higher and have proficiency with all martial weapons. At 3rd level or higher, if you would gain proficiency with a martial weapon, you can choose an advanced weapon instead.

ADVANCED WEAPON PROPERTIES

The following properties are new or altered for advanced weapons.

Armor Piercing. An armor-piercing weapon is a melee weapon designed to punch through armor and thick hide alike. When you make an attack roll using an armor-piercing weapon, you gain a +1 bonus to the attack roll if your target is wearing armor or has natural armor.

Blackpowder. Blackpowder weapons fire projectiles with ear-splitting noise, shredding armor with deadly force. When fired, blackpowder weapons emit a deafening crack audible 300 feet away. A blackpowder weapon exposed to heavy rain, or submerged or similarly drenched in water, can't fire until dried for 1 hour.

Brutal. A brutal weapon is designed for maximum damage. When you score a critical hit with a brutal weapon against a creature, you can roll an additional die of the weapon's damage dice, adding it to the damage total.

Cumbersome. Cumbersome weapons are difficult to wield but are effective ranged tools for those strong

enough to wield them. When making an attack with a cumbersome weapon, you must use your Strength modifier for the attack and damage rolls.

Damage. An advanced weapon that has the damage property can deal an alternative form of damage. You can choose the type when you attack or when you hit with an attack from any of the damage types mentioned.

Defending. A defending weapon is either made for parrying, has advanced techniques for use in parrying, or both. When you use a defending weapon, you can use your reaction to defend against a melee weapon attack that hits you. If you do, increase your AC by 1d4 against that attack.

Disarming. A disarming weapon can catch a foe's weapon, allowing you to remove it from their grasp. When an opponent misses you with a melee weapon attack, you can use your reaction to attempt to disarm them. Both you and the attacker must make contested attack rolls. If you roll higher, and the weapon is something the target can drop, the weapon falls from the target's grasp, landing within 5 feet of the target in a space you choose. If you score a critical hit, and the attacker did not, you can send the weapon flying up to 15 feet away from the target into a space you choose instead. If you have a free hand when you score a critical hit this way, you can disarm the target so that you end up with the dropped weapon in your hand. If the attacker tied or rolled higher, then nothing happens.

Double. A two-handed, double weapon functions as two light weapons, one in each hand, for two-weapon fighting purposes. If a double weapon has the reach property, you can use only one of these properties during the same turn.

Entangling. An entangling weapon can tie a target up. When you hit with an entangling weapon attack against a target no more than one size larger than you, you can use your bonus action to attempt to grapple the target. (This bonus-action use applies when you throw an entangling weapon because you're throwing with special preparation.) You don't need a free hand – the weapon fulfills that requirement. If you succeed, the target is grappled by you or the weapon if you're no longer holding it.

Until the grapple ends, you can't use the entangling weapon to attack a different target. If you aren't holding the entangling weapon, such as when you throw a gladiator net, the grapple continues, and the target needs to succeed at a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check to escape the weapon.

Guard. Guard weapons allow you to fight defensively, using the weapon's long haft or flat surface for parrying. While you wield a guard weapon, whenever a hostile creature moves within your reach when you didn't move on your last turn, you can use your reaction to make a weapon attack with the guard weapon against that creature. If the attack hits, then it deals no damage, but the target immediately stops moving, and its speed becomes 0 until the end of its turn.

Hafted. A hafted weapon's haft can function well as an off-hand attack. When you attack with only the hafted weapon, you can use a bonus action to make a melee weapon attack with the haft. The haft deals 1d4 bludgeoning damage, and you add your ability modifier to damage as you would for other sorts of two-weapon fighting. If you have feats that mimic this ability, the damage dice becomes 1d8 instead.

Magazine. A weapon with the magazine property also has a number and an ammunition type. The weapon holds that amount and type of ammo, which you can expend before needing to reload the weapon. Removing or loading a magazine counts as your interaction with an object, so doing both in one turn takes an action. A magazine weapon comes with one empty magazine included in the weapon's cost and weight. Loading an empty magazine with ammunition takes 1 minute.

Momentum. Momentum weapons allow you to deliver devastating attacks as part of rapid movement. When you hit a creature with a momentum weapon after you moved 20 feet or more in a straight line during the same turn, upgrade the damage dice to the weapon's momentum dice value.

Monk. A monk gains proficiency with advanced monk weapons at 5th level.

Precise. When you attack with a precise weapon, you can score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20. If a feature or item you have increases the numbers you can roll for a critical hit, a precise weapon increases that range by one. A fighter with Superior Critical, for instance, scores a critical hit on a roll of 17 to 20 with a precise weapon. Any roll lower than 20 must still hit to be a critical hit—it's not an automatic hit as if the roll was a 20.

Reach. Besides the normal rules for this property, if a reach weapon has the double property, you can use only one of these properties during the same turn.

Repeater. Repeater weapons can fire ammo in quick succession, using multiple barrels or quick-reloading mechanisms. When you take the attack action with a repeater weapon, you can use a bonus action to attack again with the same weapon. You add your ability modifier to the damage of the bonus-action shot only if that modifier is negative.

Restraining. Only entangling weapons can be restraining weapons. If you have a target grappled with a restraining weapon, and you succeed on another attempt to grapple the target with the same weapon, the target becomes restrained instead of grappled. The target then remains restrained until the grapple ends. If you stop holding the restraining weapon, the target can escape as if from an unheld entangling weapon.

Returning. A returning weapon allows you to hurl the weapon in such a way that it returns to you. When you attack with a returning weapon, if you roll an even number on the d20, the weapon returns to you by the end of your turn. You can catch the weapon if you have a hand free to do so. If not, the weapon lands at a random point within 5 feet of you. If you roll an odd number on the d20 for the attack roll, the weapon fails to return to you.

Scatter. Scatter weapons can devastate multiple enemies at once. When you take the Attack action and hit a creature with a scatter weapon, measure the weapon's scatter range from the square the target you hit occupies to a point farther from you. Creatures other than the original target that fall within the weapon's scatter range must attempt a Dexterity saving throw (DC of 8 + your proficiency bonus + the ability score modifier you use to determine damage for the scatter weapon). Creatures that fail take damage equal to the ability score modifier you use to determine damage with the weapon (minimum 1). This damage is of the same type you dealt to the original target.

Set. You can use a bonus action on your turn to prepare, or "set," a set weapon against a foe moving toward you. A weapon becomes unset if you move or take any action after setting it. If a target enters your reach while you have the weapon set, you can use your reaction to make a melee attack with the set weapon against that target. If you hit, and your target moved 20 feet or more toward you before the attack, you can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the damage total.

Strong-Draw. An advanced ranged weapon with the strong-draw quality requires great strength to use. You must have a Strength of 13 or higher to use such a weapon, or you make attack rolls using the weapon with disadvantage. You add not only your Dexterity modifier to damage with a strong-draw weapon, but you also add 1 + half your Strength Modifier (rounded down) to the damage.

Swift. Swift weapons help you recover quickly from misses. When you miss with a swift weapon, you gain advantage on the first attack roll you make with the weapon against the same target before the end of your next turn.

Tripping. A tripping weapon allows users to knock targets prone. When you hit with a tripping weapon, you can use a bonus action to force your target to attempt a Strength saving throw, provided the target is no more than one size larger than you. The DC for the saving throw equals 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength or Dexterity modifier (your choice). If the target fails, it falls prone.

ADVANCED AMMUNITION TRAINING

Much as some folk have created advanced weapons and techniques, so too have they created ammunition to deal specialized damage. To utilize advanced ammunition, you must have proficiency in the weapon that uses the ammo, and you must be 3rd level or higher.

ADVANCED AMMUNITION TYPES

Most advanced ammunition is self-explanatory. A few special types are explained here.

DAMAGE TYPES

Advanced ammunition named after a damage type deals that damage type. Arrows and bolts can have wide, slashing heads or heavy, bludgeoning tips. A sling bullet can have piercing facets. All such ammo is heavier than normal, so the weapon's maximum range using it is half normal.

RANGING

Ammunition that has the ranging property is lighter and better made than common counterparts. When you fire ranging ammo, you can increase your weapon's normal range by 50 percent.

WHISTLING

Ammunition with the whistling property creates a high-pitched sound after firing. This sound is audible for 300 feet from the ammo as it flies. Whistling ammo isn't heavier, but it catches the air in baffles to create its sound, so its maximum range is half normal. Whistling ammo deals bludgeoning damage.

ALCHEMICAL ADVANCED AMMUNITION

Alchemical ammunition carries an alchemical payload. Rather than hurling a vial as an improvised weapon, you fire alchemical ammunition from a projectile weapon, using your normal attack bonus with that weapon. Alchemical ammunition deals the ammo's normal damage type in addition to delivering the alchemical effect. This ammo is heavy though, so a weapon's maximum range using alchemical ammo is half normal. The alchemical ammunition is destroyed once used, whether the attack hits or misses.

Acid, Alchemist's Fire, and Holy Water. Other than how you hit a creature using alchemical ammo, these substances have their normal effects.

War Oil. When you fire war-oil ammo at an area and hit AC 10, viscous oil covers the area within 5 feet of a point you target. If you target a creature, you must hit that creature's AC to cover the creature in war oil. But if you hit the creature or AC 10, you can pick a point in or adjacent to that creature's space to determine the war oil's area as if you targeted a point.

War oil's area is difficult terrain. A creature standing in the area when it appears, that starts its turn in the area, or that enters the area for the first time on a turn must succeed at a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

War oil is also flammable. If lit, such as by dealing fire damage to a creature covered in the oil, the oil burns for 2 rounds. Burning war oil deals 2d4 fire damage to any creature ignited in this way. An ignited creature can douse the flames by using its action to make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to extinguish the flames. If the creature ends its turn still aflame, the creature takes 2d4 fire damage. If war oil ignites in an area, a creature takes fire 1d4 damage when it enters the area for the first time on its turn or starts its turn in that area. A creature can take fire damage from war oil only once per round.

War oil dries and ceases to be slippery or flammable after 1 minute.

SPECIALIZED AMMUNITION PROPERTIES

The following advanced ammunition properties impart more effectiveness to ammunition. Each piece of specialized ammunition can have only one of these properties. Because of the crafting skills required to make this ammunition, it is much more expensive.

Armor Piercing. This ammunition works like an armor-piercing melee weapon, but you fire the ammunition as a projectile from a ranged weapon.

Blessed. When you hit a fiend, Fey, or undead with blessed ammunition, that creature's speed is reduced by 10 feet until the end of its next turn. Also the creature can't take reactions until the end of its next turn.

Brutal. Designed to open wide wounds, such as with a broad-bladed arrowhead, brutal ammunition works like a brutal melee weapon.

Incendiary. When you hit a creature with incendiary ammunition, the target takes an additional 1d4 fire damage.

Silvered. Treat attacks you make with silvered ammunition as magical for overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks.

Ammunition

ARROWS AND BOLTS

| NAME | COST | WEIGHT |
|------------------------------|------|----------|
| Bludgeoning (1) | 5 cp | 1/10 lb. |
| Ranging (1) | 1 sp | 1/40 lb. |
| Slashing (1) | 1 sp | 1/10 lb. |
| Whistling (1) | 1 sp | 1/20 lb. |
| Sling Bullets | | |
| Piercing (1) | 1 cp | 1/10 lb. |
| Ranging (1) | 5 cp | 1/20 lb. |
| Whistling (1) | 5 cp | 1/20 lb. |
| Bellows cannister (20 shots) | 5 gp | 4 lb. |
| Dragon shot (20) | 5 gp | 2 lb. |
| Magazine | 5 gp | 1 lb. |
| Paper cartridge bullets (20) | 3 gp | 2 lb. |

ALCHEMICAL AMMUNITION

| NAME | COST | WEIGHT |
|------------------|-------|---------|
| Arrow (1) | 75 gp | 1/5 lb. |
| Bolt (1) | 75 gp | 1/5 lb. |
| Sling Bullet (1) | 55 gp | 1/5 lb. |

SPECIALIZED AMMUNITION

| NAME | COST | WEIGHT |
|-----------------------------|--------|---------|
| Arrows (5) | 100 gp | 1/4 lb. |
| Bolts (5) | 100 gp | 1/2 lb. |
| Paper cartridge bullets (5) | 250 gp | 1/2 lb. |
| Sling bullets (5) | 100 gp | 1/2 lb. |



ADVANCED MELEE WEAPONS

| NAME | COST | DAMAGE | WEIGHT | PROPERTIES |
|------------------------|--------|-----------------|--------|--|
| Catchpole | 500 gp | 1d6 piercing | 5 lb. | Entangling, hafted, reach, tripping, two-handed |
| Cavalry flail | 500 gp | 1d8 bludgeoning | 3 lb. | Momentum (1d10), swift, versatile (1d10) |
| Cavalry hammer | 500 gp | 1d8 bludgeoning | 3 lb. | Armor piercing, momentum (1d12), versatile (1d10) |
| Cavalry pick | 500 gp | 1d8 piercing | 3 lb. | Armor piercing, momentum (1d12), versatile (1d10) |
| Chakram | 500 gp | 1d4 slashing | 1 lb. | Finesse, light, swift, returning, thrown (range 20/60) |
| Claymore | 500 gp | 2d6 slashing | 7 lb. | Brutal, heavy, two-handed |
| Double blade | 500 gp | 1d6 slashing | 5 lb. | Double, momentum (1d10), monk, set, two-handed |
| Double spear | 500 gp | 1d6 piercing | 4 lb. | Double, momentum (1d10), monk, set, two-handed |
| Elite rapier | 500 gp | 1d8 piercing | 2 lb. | Finesse, swift |
| Fighting chain | 500 gp | 1d4 bludgeoning | 3 lb. | Disarming, double, entangling, finesse, monk, reach, tripping, two-handed |
| Fighting chain, brutal | 750 gp | 1d6 slashing | 6 lb. | Brutal, disarming, double, entangling, finesse, monk, reach, tripping, two-handed |
| Fighting chain, hook | 500 gp | 1d4 bludgeoning | 3 lb. | Damage (piercing), disarming, double, entangling, finesse, monk, reach, tripping, two-handed |
| Fighting chain, sickle | 500 gp | 1d4 bludgeoning | 3 lb. | Damage (slashing), disarming, double, entangling, finesse, monk, reach, tripping, two-handed |
| Gladiator net | 350 gp | 1d6 bludgeoning | 5 lb. | Entangling, restraining, thrown (range 5/15) |
| Guardian poleaxe | 750 gp | 1d10 slashing | 9 lb. | Damage (piercing), guard, hafted, heavy, reach, set, tripping, two-handed |
| Knightly lance | 500 gp | 2d6 piercing | 6 lb. | Momentum (2d10), reach, two-handed (unless mounted) |
| Knightly sword | 750 gp | 1d8 slashing | 3 lb. | Guard, defending, precise, versatile (1d10) |
| Military fork | 500 gp | 2d6 piercing | 8 lb. | Hafted, heavy, reach, set, tripping, two-handed |
| Parrying dagger | 350 gp | 1d4 piercing | 1 lb. | Disarming, defending, finesse, light, thrown (range 20/60) |
| Polearm | 500 gp | 1d12 piercing | 12 lb. | Guard, hafted, heavy, reach, set, two-handed |
| Punching dagger | 300 gp | 1d4 piercing | 1 lb. | Armor piercing, defending, finesse, light |
| Returning club | 300 gp | 1d4 bludgeoning | 2 lb. | Light, returning, thrown (range 20/60) |
| Sabre | 500 gp | 1d8 slashing | 2 lb. | Finesse, swift |
| Sheathed staff | 500 gp | 1d6 bludgeoning | 6 lb. | Double, monk, versatile (1d8) |
| Side-handle baton | 500 gp | 1d4 bludgeoning | 2 lb. | Defending, finesse, light, monk, swift |
| Wrath axe | 750 gp | 2d6 slashing | 12 lb. | Brutal, hafted, heavy, momentum (2d8), two-handed |
| Wrath maul | 750 gp | 2d6 bludgeoning | 15 lb. | Brutal, hafted, heavy, momentum (2d8), two-handed |



ADVANCED RANGED WEAPONS

| NAME | COST | DAMAGE | WEIGHT | PROPERTIES |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------------|--------|---|
| Arbalest | 750 gp | 2d6 piercing | 20 lb. | Ammunition (range 80/300), heavy, loading, strong-draw, two-handed |
| Blackpowder pistol | 200 gp | 2d4 piercing | 4 lb. | Ammunition (range 25/100), blackpowder, loading, light |
| Blackpowder rifle | 500 gp | 2d6 piercing | 10 lb. | Ammunition (range 80/300), blackpowder, loading, two-handed |
| Blunderbuss | 750 gp | 2d6 piercing | 10 lb. | Ammunition (range 20/30), blackpowder, cumbersome, loading, scatter (line 10), two-handed |
| Blunderbuss, hand | 500gp | 2d4 piercing | 4 lb. | Ammunition (range 20/30), blackpowder, loading, scatter (line 10) |
| Composite longbow | 750 gp | 1d8 piercing | 2 lb. | Ammunition (range 200/600), heavy, strong-draw, two-handed |
| Composite shortbow | 400 gp | 1d6 piercing | 2 lb. | Ammunition (range 100/400), strong-draw, two-handed |
| Dragon pistol | 350 gp | 2d4 piercing | 4 lb. | Ammunition (range 20), blackpowder, loading, scatter (cone 15) |
| Dragon rifle | 750 gp | 2d6 piercing | 4 lb. | Ammunition (range 30), blackpowder, loading, scatter (cone 15) |
| Flame bellows | 750 gp | 2d6 fire | 11 lb. | Ammunition (range 15), cumbersome, loading, magazine (20), scatter (cone 15), two-handed |
| Repeater crossbow | 750 gp | 1d8 piercing | 7 lb. | Ammunition (range 80/300), magazine (6 bolts), repeater, two-handed |
| Repeater crossbow, hand | 500 gp | 1d6 piercing | 3 lb. | Ammunition (range 30/120), light, magazine (3 bolts), repeater |
| Repeater crossbow, heavy | 1,000 gp | 1d10 piercing | 20 lb. | Ammunition (range 100/400), heavy, magazine (9 bolts), repeater, two-handed |
| Repeater needler | 500 gp | 1 piercing | 3 lb. | Ammunition (range 30/120), light, magazine (6 blowgun needles), repeater |
| Repeater slinger | 750 gp | 1d8 bludgeoning | 9 lb. | Ammunition (range 80/300), magazine (9 sling bullets), repeater, two-handed |



Chapter 11: Magic Items

Like the world of Etharis itself, the magic items in a Grim Hollow campaign tend to be a twisted and dark reflection of the powerful relics in a fantasy world. The same magic that casts a malicious pall over the people and creatures of Etharis is what is harnessed to create magic items.

Like any fantasy world, magic items in Etharis exist that can be picked up and used by anyone, or that can be used after the wielder takes the time to attune to the item. However, some rarer items can be found that respond specifically to individuals who have undergone the Transformation into something beyond their mortal form.

Aberrant Horror Items

FIN SYMBIOTE

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by an aberrant horror)

This tendril of flesh harvested from a living aboleth can be embedded into the skin of an aberrant horror. To attune to this item, you must stitch it onto your skin and leave it for the entire attunement period, during which the fin burrows into your body to bond with your muscular system.

While attuned to this item, you gain a +2 bonus to the saving throw DC of your Transformation Save.

The fin cannot be removed while you're attuned to it, and you can't voluntarily end your attunement to it. If the tentacle is sliced from your body, it grows back in 1d4 hours.

STALK SYMBIOTE

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by an aberrant horror)

This tendril of flesh harvested from a living aberration can be embedded into the skull of an aberrant horror. To attune to this item, you must stitch it onto your scalp and leave it for the entire attunement period, during which the stalk burrows into your skull to bond with your brain.

While attuned to this item, you have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks. In addition, you and any of your allies within 30 feet of you can't be surprised, except when incapacitated by something other than nonmagical sleep.

The stalk can't be removed while you're attuned to it, and you can't voluntarily end your attunement to it. If the stalk is sliced from your body, it grows back in 1d4 hours.

STRAITJACKET

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by an aberrant horror)

This stained grey jacket has arms that reach to the floor and dozens of restraining straps. While wearing the straitjacket, an aberrant horror rolls twice on the Unstable Mutations table and can choose which result occurs.

The straitjacket takes 10 minutes to don or doff. A creature wearing the straitjacket has disadvantage on attack rolls.

STAR METAL RING

Ring, rare (requires attunement by an aberrant horror)

This heavy steel ring is set with a chunk of shimmering star metal. While wearing this ring, your appendages are crusted with iridescent star metal. All your unarmed strikes deal magical damage while you are attuned to this ring.

Fey Items

QUEEN'S TOKEN

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a fey)

This humble acorn is one of the mightiest gifts a faerie queen can bestow upon her subjects. While holding the acorn, a creature can use an action to cast the *wish* spell. After using the acorn in this way, it immediately teleports back to the queen who bestowed it.

If the *wish* spell is used in a way that the queen would perceive as a threat to herself or her realm, the spell does not work. Instead, the creature who made the wish immediately transforms into an oak tree. Only a *wish* spell cast with the queen's token can return a creature transformed in this way to its original state.

IRIDESCENT ARMOR

Armor (breastplate), rare (requires attunement by a fey)

This shimmering breastplate is forged from a giant dragonfly's carapace and adorned with a cape of gossamer fabric. You gain a +1 bonus to AC while you wear this armor.

Once per day, you can use an action to transform the gossamer cape into a pair of dragonfly wings, which grant you a flying speed of 60 feet for one hour. Once the armor is used this way, this property cannot be used again until the following dawn.

FAERIE CROWN

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement by a fey)

This crown is woven of aromatic flowers that attract butterflies. The crown has 1d6+3 butterflies that hover around the crown. When a weapon attack would hit you, you can use your reaction to release one of the butterflies. When you do so, the butterfly interposes itself between you and the attack, taking the hit instead of you. A butterfly used in this way is destroyed.

Once all the butterflies are used, the faerie crown withers and is destroyed.

TOADSTOOL TODDY

Potion, uncommon

This carbonated liquid, a potent distillation of faerie magic, is bright fuchsia and tastes of autumn rain. A fey who drinks this potion can withstand 3 additional days in an urban environment without suffering exhaustion or penalties to rest.



Fiend Items

RING OF HIDDEN DESIRE

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement by a fiend)

This rose gold band is set with an obsidian stone carved in the shape of a heart. While wearing this ring, you can use an action to attempt to learn a creature's darkest desire. Select a creature that you can see. That creature must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, you immediately learn the target's darkest desire. On a successful save, you do not learn anything, and the creature is immune to the effects of the ring for 24 hours. If the creature you choose has an Intelligence of 3 or lower, the creature is unaffected. The ring's power can be used 3 times per day and recharges at midnight.

PROFANE CHARM

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by a fiend)

This charm is a charred feather harvested from a fallen angel, wrapped in silver wire. While wearing this charm, you can enter hallowed ground without triggering your hideous appearance. In addition, you cannot be detected as a fiend by the *detect evil and good* spell or a paladin's divine sense ability.

CINDER COAT

Armor (leather), very rare (requires attunement by a fiend)

This floor-length leather duster is the color of dying embers. You have a +1 bonus to AC while wearing this armor.

The coat has 3 charges. When you hit a creature with an attack, and that creature is not at maximum

hit points, you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 1d10 fire damage to the target. The coat regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

ARDOR

Weapon (battleaxe), artifact (requires attunement by a fiend)

The blades of this axe smolder with an inner light. The dark wooden handle is accented with silver.

When the celestial realm turned back yet another assault from the forces of evil, a fiendish forge master received a vision, allowing them to craft a battleaxe like no other. With the might of Ardor, the fiends now possess a weapon capable of striking down the celestial forces.

Ardor now lies in the fiendish realm's hidden vaults, waiting to be wielded when the forces of darkness make their ultimate strike to consume the world. The fiends don't realize that an equally powerful weapon rests in the hands of the celestials who wage eternal war against them. The fates who inspired the forge master to craft Ardor also sent a vision to a smith of heaven in the interest of maintaining the balance of power.

Axe of Hell. This magic battleaxe grants a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. When you hit with an attack using it, the target takes an extra 3d10 necrotic damage.

Champion of Evil. While holding the battleaxe, you are immune to the charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, and stunned conditions.

Ardor's Pursuit. As a bonus action, you can release Ardor to hover magically in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of you. If you can see the battleaxe, you can mentally command it as a bonus action to fly up to 50 feet and either make one attack against a target or return to your hands. If any effect targets the hovering axe, you are considered to be holding it. The hovering axe falls if the attuned user dies.

Spells. While the axe is on your person, you can use an action to cast one of the following spells (save DC 18): *bane*, *banishment*, *bestow curse*, *branding smite*, or *incendiary cloud*. Once you use the axe to cast a spell, that spell can't be cast again from it until the next dawn.

Destroying the Axe. The only thing capable of damaging the battleaxe is its celestial twin Zeal. A creature wielding Zeal can choose to attack Ardor, which has an AC of 21 and 300 HP. No other creature or object can damage Ardor.



Lich Items

FUNERAL MASK

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by a lich)

This delicate mask is made of thinly beaten copper that molds to the skin when worn. While wearing this mask, you can use an action to alter your appearance



for one hour. You decide what you look like, including your height, weight, facial features, the sound of your voice, hair length, coloration, and distinguishing characteristics. You can make yourself appear as a member of another race, though none of your statistics change. You also can't appear as a creature of a different size, and your basic shape stays the same; if you're bipedal, you can't use this item to become quadrupedal, for instance.

During the hour the mask is activated, you can use your action to change your appearance in this way. While altered in this manner, your hideous appearance is concealed. Once you use the mask, you cannot do so again until the following dawn.

STAFF OF THE SORCERER KING

Weapon (staff), legendary (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

This ebony staff bears a bronze spear tip and additional blades carved to depict a winged scarab. The staff can be wielded as a magic spear that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. You are considered proficient with this weapon while you are attuned to it, even if you aren't proficient with spears. While you hold it, you gain a +2 bonus to spell attack rolls.

Cull Subjects. Humanoids roll at disadvantage to save against spells you cast while attuned to the staff.

Spell Shield. While attuned to this staff, you have

advantage on saving throws against any spell that targets only you.

Cursed. This staff is cursed, and becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. Until the curse is broken with *remove curse* or similar magic, you are unwilling to part with the staff, keeping it within reach at all times. In addition, you have disadvantage on attack rolls made with weapons other than this one.

While you are attuned to the staff, once a day at midnight, you must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, your maximum hit points are reduced by 10 unless you are undead. These hit points can only be restored by means of a *wish* spell. If your maximum hit points are reduced to 0 in this way, you die and immediately rise as a wight.

ROD OF RUIN

Rod, rare (requires attunement by a lich)

This rod is formed of stacked crystal spheres filled with smoke. The rod has 3 charges and regains all its expended charges daily at dusk.

When a creature you can see within 60 feet of you damages you while you are holding this rod, you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge to force the creature to make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature ages 2d10 years and takes one level of exhaustion.

ARMOR OF ZOMBIE FLESH

Armor (hide), rare (requires attunement by a lich)

This armor is formed from the tanned flesh of an animated zombie. While wearing this armor, your AC becomes 16 + your Dexterity modifier. You are considered proficient with this armor even if you are not proficient with hide armor.

Lycanthrope Items

SECOND SKIN

Armor (hide), rare (requires attunement by a lycanthrope)

This harness is woven from the hides of slain lycanthropes. While in your hybrid form, the harness bonds to your flesh like a second pelt, giving you an AC of 18. This AC replaces your usual Transformation AC.

While you wear the harness, you have disadvantage on Charisma checks to interact with other lycanthropes.

CRIMSON MIST

Wondrous item, uncommon

This tiny mist bottle contains a cocktail of prey pheromones, enough for one use. You can use an action to spray the pheromones on one target within 5 feet, and its effect lasts for 24 hours.

When they fail their Lust for the Hunt saving throw, a lycanthrope must prioritize a target affected by crimson mist over any other target.

ROD OF THE PACK MASTER

Rod, very rare (requires attunement by a lycanthrope)

This rod appears to be a piece of driftwood carved with images of wolves and bears. While holding this rod, you can choose any number of willing creatures you can see within 30 feet. The rod can be held in the teeth and is usable in your hybrid or kindred form. You transform each target into a **wolf** or a **bear** (your lycanthrope heritage determines which).

The transformation lasts for 24 hours for each target, until you choose to end the effect, or until the target drops to 0 hit points or dies. A target's game statistics

are replaced by the chosen beast's statistics, though the target retains its alignment and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. The target assumes the hit points of its new form, and when it reverts to its normal form, it returns to the number of hit points it had before it transformed. If it reverts as a result of dropping to 0 hit points, any excess damage carries over to its normal form. As long as the excess damage doesn't reduce the creature's normal form to 0 hit points, it isn't knocked unconscious. The creature is limited in the actions it can perform by the nature of its new form, and it can't speak or cast spells.

The target's gear melds into the new form. The target can't activate, wield, or otherwise benefit from its equipment.

Once the rod has been used in this way, it cannot be used again until the following dawn.

IRON FANGS

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a lycanthrope)

These iron tooth caps are inscribed with magical runes. If you transform into your hybrid form or kindred form while wearing the iron fangs, the magical metal expands to coat your teeth. Your bite attacks count as magical damage. In addition, while you wear the iron fangs, you cannot transmit the curse of lycanthropy through bites.



Primordial Items

BOW OF FOUR

Weapon (longbow), very rare (requires attunement by a primordial)

This white wooden bow is set with four gemstones: a ruby, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. When you hold this bow, you can summon a magical arrow composed of one of the four elements. Conjuring an arrow in this way does not require an action. Each time you summon an arrow, you must choose one of the four options below. If you do not fire the arrow within 1 minute of summoning it, it dissolves.

Arrow of Air. On a hit, the arrow of air deals 2d8 lightning damage.



CRIMSON
MIST



FIN
SYMBIOTE



STALK
SYMBIOTE

FUNERAL
MASK



RING OF
HIDDEN DESIRE



PROFANE
CHARM



Arrow of Earth. On a hit, the arrow of earth deals 2d8 magical bludgeoning damage.

Arrow of Fire. On a hit, the arrow of fire deals 2d8 fire damage.

Arrow of Water. On a hit, the arrow of water deals 2d8 cold damage.

LODESTONE ARMOR

Armor (plate), rare (requires attunement by a primordial)

This plate armor is lined with magnetic lodestone harvested from the plane of elemental earth. While wearing this armor, you can use a bonus action to enhance its magnetic polarity. When you do so, loose stone, soil, and minerals are immediately pulled to the surface of the armor, granting you a +1 bonus to AC but reducing your speed by 5 feet. You can use a bonus action to activate this property each round cumulatively, up to a maximum of +5 AC and a 25-foot reduction in speed.

If 1 minute passes without using a bonus action to activate this property, all magnetized material falls off the armor, ending both AC bonuses and speed reduction.

RING OF RADIATION

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement by a primordial)

This ring is made of braided copper wire. While wearing this ring, your elemental energies are supercharged, allowing them to radiate from your body. When you attack with unarmed strikes, your reach increases by 5 feet.

ROD OF ELEMENTAL STASIS

Rod, rare (requires attunement by a primordial)

This wooden rod is set with four glass spheres that each contain a microcosm of elemental energy.

If an **air elemental**, a **fire elemental**, an **earth elemental**, or a **water elemental** is slain within 60 feet of you while you are holding the rod, the elemental is absorbed into the rod. A creature absorbed in this way occupies one of the four crystals in the rod. If the four crystals are already full when an elemental dies within range, the elemental dies as normal.

As an action, you can present the rod and free one of the elementals contained within a crystal. The freed elemental appears within 5 feet of you and is friendly

to you and your allies. Roll initiative for the summoned elemental, which has its own turns. The elemental obeys any verbal commands that you issue to them (no action required by you). If you don't issue any commands to them, they defend themselves from hostile creatures but otherwise take no actions.

A freed elemental remains for 10 minutes, until you dismiss it, or until it is slain, after which it disappears to its home plane.



Seraph Items

HEAVEN'S HERALD

Wondrous item, very rare

This golden trumpet is never dulled by rust or dirt. As an action, a good-aligned creature can blow the trumpet, which emits a rousing battle song that can be heard up to 600 feet away. The creature blowing the trumpet can choose up to 12 allies within the area to receive the benefits of heaven's herald. An allied creature becomes immune to being frightened and makes all Wisdom saving throws with advantage. In addition, its hit point maximum increases by 2d10, and it gains the same number of hit points. These benefits last for 24 hours. Once used in this way, the herald cannot be used again until dawn.

If a neutral-aligned creature attempts to use the trumpet, no sound emerges, and nothing happens.

If an evil-aligned creature attempts to use the trumpet, the creature must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw as a column of divine fire roars from the heavens to smite the user. A creature takes 8d6 radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

ZEAL

Weapon (warhammer), artifact (requires attunement by a seraph)

The steel head of this warhammer seems to glow with an inner light. The pale wooden handle is accented with white gold.

When the celestial realm nearly fell into darkness, a heavenly smith received a vision allowing them to craft a

hammer like no other. With the might of Zeal, the armies of heaven turned back their foes, restoring cosmic balance.

Zeal now lies in the hidden vaults of the celestial realms, waiting to be wielded once again when the forces of darkness threaten to consume the world.

The celestials don't realize that an equally powerful weapon rests in the hands of the very same armies of darkness that drove them back. The fates who inspired the smith to craft Zeal also sent a vision to a forge keeper of hell in the interest of maintaining the balance of power.

Hammer of Heaven. This magic warhammer grants a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. When you hit with an attack using it, the target takes an extra 3d10 radiant damage.

Champion of Good. While holding the hammer, you are immune to the charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, and stunned conditions.

Zealous Pursuit. As a bonus action, you can release Zeal to hover magically in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of you. If you can see the hammer, you can mentally command it as a bonus action to fly up to 50 feet and either make one attack against a target or return to your hands. If any effect targets the hovering hammer, you are considered to be holding it. The hovering hammer falls if the attuned user dies.

Spells. While the hammer is on your person, you can use an action to cast one of the following spells (save DC 18): *banishment*, *branding smite*, *beacon of hope*, *earthquake*, or *heroism*. Once you use the hammer to cast a spell, that spell can't be cast again from it until the next dawn.

Destroying the Hammer. The only thing capable of damaging the hammer is its fiendish twin Ardor. A creature wielding Ardor can choose to attack Zeal, which has an AC of 21 and 300 HP. No other creature or object can damage Zeal.

RING OF TRUTH

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement)

This golden band is stamped with images of smiling humanoid faces. While attuned to this ring, the wearer continually emits an aura identical to the effects of the *zone of truth* spell. The zone affects a 15-foot-radius sphere centered on the wearer. A successful DC 15 Charisma saving throw allows the target to avoid the ring's effects.

HUMBLE FROCK

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by a seraph)

This rough spawn frock is weather-worn and full of holes. While wearing the frock and no other armor or clothing, a seraph automatically succeeds on checks to conceal their divine appearance.



Spectre Items

ECTOPLASMIC WHIP

Weapon (whip), rare (requires attunement by a spectre)

This whip is made of silver plasma that seems to phase in and out of reality. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

The whip is invisible to non-undead creatures. You have advantage on attacks made with the whip against creatures who cannot perceive it.

BANSHEE BOX

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement by a spectre)

This ivory music box is inlaid with silver decorations depicting tiny scenes of gruesome violence. When a creature attuned to the box opens the lid, they can mentally command the box to make a sound of their choosing. Once the lid is open, the sound continues to play until the box is closed. If the attuned user closes the lid then opens it again, they can mentally command the box to play a different sound. If the attuned user travels more than 300 feet away from the box, the lid closes and the music box ceases to play.

The box can create any soundscape, like haunting piano music, the sounds of a lively party, or a continuous series of screams. When the box is opened, the user can choose whether the sound is audible in a sphere with a 5-foot radius, a 30-foot radius, or a 120-foot radius.

WAND OF THE POLTERGEIST

Wand, very rare (requires attunement by a spectre)

This wand is a swirl of dark and white wood topped with a carved screaming skull. The wand has 7 charges, which are used to fuel the spells within it. With the wand in hand, you can use your action to cast one of the following spells from the wand. The DC for these spells is equal to your Transformation DC: *shatter* (1 charge), *animate objects* (4 charges), or *major image* (3 charges). No components are required.

The wand regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges each day at dusk. If you expend the wand's last charge, roll a d20. On a 20, the wand explodes into splinters and is destroyed.

MORTAL COIL

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement by a spectre)

This ring is composed of hundreds of rose gold wires woven to coil around the finger. While a spectre wears this ring, they can use a bonus action to become completely corporeal. While in this corporeal state, they do not register as undead to any magical effects and can interact with the material world as a typical humanoid. While in a corporeal state, the spectre loses all benefits of their transformation. A spectre can use a bonus action to return to their true form.



Vampire Items

SUN SHADES

Wondrous item, uncommon

These black leather goggles are set with cloudy glass that completely obscures the eyes of the wearer. While wearing these dark lenses, you do not have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks made while in sunlight. You also cannot see in complete darkness while wearing the shades, even if you have darkvision.

BLOOD CAPSULE

Wondrous item, uncommon

This cylindrical flask is etched with necrotic runes. Humanoid blood stored in the blood capsule remains fresh for up to one year. The flask stores enough blood to sustain a vampire for one day.

LIGHT DRINKER

Weapon (longsword), very rare (requires attunement)

This sword's hilt and blade are forged of a single piece of black metal that seems to absorb the light around it. You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made

with this weapon, which deals cold damage instead of slashing damage. While attuned to the sword, you gain darkvision to 60 feet and can see in magical darkness.

As a bonus action, you can cause the sword to emit magical darkness in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet. While the darkness is active, you can use an action to expand or reduce its radius of darkness by 5 feet each, to a maximum of 30 feet each or a minimum of 10 feet each. Darkness created by this sword can only be suppressed by an *antimagic field*.

ANGELSKIN ARMOR

Armor (leather), rare

This leather armor is made from the flayed flesh of angels. While wearing the armor, you are immune to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks. This includes attacks from nonmagical wooden or silvered weapons.

Any celestial that sees this armor becomes immediately hostile against the wearer.

SUN SHADES



Generic Items

WATCHER'S CANDLE

Wondrous item, uncommon

This black tapered candle cannot be lit. When a celestial, fiend, undead, or fey comes within 120 feet of the candle, it lights and burns with a purple flame. Once the candle has caught flame, it burns for one hour, and it cannot be used again.

Watcher's candles cannot function if they are wrapped in packaging or stowed in a container.

SEEING GLASS

Wondrous item, very rare

This ornate silver hand mirror is decorated with a motif of withered roses. The mirror's reflection always shows the true form of any creature viewed in it as if it were seen by the *truesight* spell. You can see invisible creatures, the true form of shapechanger, and the true faces of creatures attempting to disguise their hideous appearance.

If the seeing glass is turned upon a vampire, the glass immediately shatters and is destroyed.

STITCHING NEEDLE

Wondrous item, rare

This black iron needle easily pierces the skin. If a creature's mouth is sewn shut with a stitching needle, it loses the ability to speak or cast spells with verbal components. The creature gains the ability to communicate with telepathy out to a range of 60 feet. A creature you speak to in this manner does not need to share a language with you to communicate, but it must be able to understand at least one language. A creature without telepathy can receive and respond to messages but can't initiate a conversation with you.

Stitching the mouth of a willing, unconscious, or incapacitated creature takes 10 minutes. Removing the stitches takes 1 minute.

HUNTER'S MUTAGEN

Potion, rare

This glowing green liquid sends a creature's antibodies into a hyperactive state. When you drink this potion, you are immune to poison and disease for one hour. You also cannot contract curses like lycanthropy or mummy rot for the duration. At the end of the hour, you gain one level of exhaustion.



JAW KNIFE - WEAPONS CAN BE GRAFTED FROM ANYTHING

Trinkets

One fun and evocative way to understand and highlight the unique nature of Etharis rests in the devilish and bizarre details. In a world where magic is known to corrupt even the most innocent of objects, providing the characters seemingly mundane items that contain a hint of the macabre or grotesque can heighten tension and unease.

The list of trinkets that follows can be used to give the characters something unusual during character creation. These trinkets can also be found on NPCs, who might cling to them with an illogical ferocity.

They can be used to spice up treasure caches, act as decorations in areas that characters explore, or even become the centerpiece of some rumor or tale.

However you choose to use them, never let any detail, no matter how mundane, go to waste as you build your particular version of Etharis or some other dark fantasy world.

GRIM HOLLOW TRINKET TABLE

| D100 | TRINKET |
|------|--|
| 01 | Silver fishhook etched with the name "Bouwengracht" |
| 02 | Hollow marble filled with an unknown red liquid |
| 03 | Spiral shell from the Gulf of Lions |
| 04 | Wooden duck burned with the sigil of a dead deity |
| 05 | Palm-sized stone etched with the image of a spooky house |
| 06 | Pin cushion with a poorly drawn face drawn on |
| 07 | Tiny portrait painting of a family staring skyward |
| 08 | Glass eye that whistles when shaken |
| 09 | Tea candle that burns cold and gray |
| 10 | Intricately designed lead ear cuff melted to a small elven ear |
| 11 | Empty wax-sealed bottle filled with dark condensation |
| 12 | Wooden children's block carved with six indecipherable sigil on its faces |
| 13 | Leather animal collar chewed apart and covered with blood |
| 14 | Small blank scroll that giggles when unrolled |
| 15 | Single large wool mitten that is perpetually damp |
| 16 | Whistle imitating the call of a frog species native to the current area |
| 17 | Small bottle of cologne that everyone but you can smell |
| 18 | Coin purse which vanishes the first coin put inside each day |
| 19 | An ode written to someone who shares your name |
| 20 | Wax impression of an unknown key |
| 21 | Chunk of hardened pine sap encasing a field mouse |
| 22 | Glass bottle filled with moss and moves when heated |
| 23 | Perpetually frozen feather that only thaws when the holder feels great joy |
| 24 | Single playing card from a marked deck |
| 25 | Tiny inkwell filled with mud that refills each morning |

| | | | |
|----|---|-----|---|
| 26 | Lizard foot with a piece of sinew tied around it | 68 | Exotic shell inside which you can hear mournful wails |
| 27 | Satirical replica of a prestigious insignia | 69 | Straw-filled doll with a miniature iron sword piercing its head |
| 28 | Large iron nail bent into a spiral bearing the etching “Rauland” | 70 | Scrap of paper with musical notes that create a discordant tune if played |
| 29 | Wooden stamp that reads “for the swamp” | 71 | Clay bowl with a black-red stain that can’t be removed |
| 30 | Tin container smelling faintly of wet fur | 72 | Brass bull ring decorated with heart and flower shapes |
| 31 | Compass decorated with a mermaid always pointing toward nearest salt water | 73 | Long leather boot lace smelling of mint |
| 32 | Hilt of a sword decorated with fake gemstones | 74 | Small handwritten booklet describing embalming methods with rough illustrations |
| 33 | Silk mask of a seraph that smiles during the day but frowns at night | 75 | Tear-stained letter written by a grieving spouse to their dead partner |
| 34 | Mirror shard that shows a twisted reflection of the holder | 76 | Ivory shoe horn carved in the shape of a forked tongue |
| 35 | Miniature cauldron that emits puff of smoke when owner is angry | 77 | Stuffed possum captured in a snarling, hissing pose |
| 36 | Pitchfork with tines decorated like skeletal fingers | 78 | Writing quill carved into the shape of an elongated finger |
| 37 | Cloth handkerchief with a stain in the shape of a terrible beast | 79 | Seven seeds shaped like skulls from an unknown plant |
| 38 | Figurine of an angelic figure carved from green soap | 80 | Jeweled brooch designed in the image of a sprig of hemlock |
| 39 | Fancy leather boot with a twisted toe still instead | 81 | Burlap sack with holes pierced in it for eyes and a nose |
| 40 | Hammer in the shape of a fish that cannot hit a nail | 82 | Half a recipe for an unknown concoction |
| 41 | Small piece of stained glass that changes color based on the mood of the owner | 83 | Fish-tale hand fan that gives off a faint glow when submerged in water |
| 42 | Fiery red leaf from a kind of tree that no one can identify | 84 | Painting of a cloudy sky that changes based on the breeze |
| 43 | Tiny wooden soldier with a spear that thrusts when button is pushed | 85 | Ring missing its gem that causes a sense of longing when worn |
| 44 | Desiccated and mummified mole | 86 | Small jade lizard statuette whose eyes seem to follow you |
| 45 | Figurine of a dancer carved from the antlers of a moose | 87 | Poorly made clay ashtray with “MOM” carved into the bottom |
| 46 | Charcoal sketch of a woman transforming into a beast | 88 | Brittle burnt leather sling marred by patches of charred flesh |
| 47 | Metal gear etched with the words “for my darling boy” | 89 | Badly damaged black piano key whose inside is red |
| 48 | White powder in a glass vial that disappears when stopper is pulled but then reappears when stopper is replaced | 90 | Coil of chain that rattles faintly when the owner is agitated |
| 49 | Empty quiver that warps the shaft of any arrow or bolt placed within | 91 | Inky purple parchment doll that moves among your belongings |
| 50 | Humanoid femur riddled with thorny bone growths | 92 | Leather pouch of sands that ticks faintly when opened |
| 51 | Silver military medal with all of the engravings filed off | 93 | White-furred rabbit’s foot that was severed by human teeth marks |
| 52 | Piece of crystal sugar candy that never dissolves | 94 | Dried crabapple that bears a striking resemble to a hag’s face |
| 53 | Three-legged milking stool missing two legs | 95 | Tangled mass of baling twine seemingly without a beginning or end |
| 54 | Spherical object wrapped with cloth and tied with a knotted ribbon | 96 | Wig of grey hair that move slightly for a minute at midnight |
| 55 | Turkey call that occasionally emits a high-pitched shriek of horror | 97 | Lead weight in the shape of a bat that drips a single drop of blood on a new moon |
| 56 | Mahogany ring etched with the name “Alfric” | 98 | Sawdust-filled leather ball that never flies true when kicked |
| 57 | Green pennant on wooden stick that flaps even if there’s no breeze | 99 | Hardwood comb that leaves hair damp when used |
| 58 | Rug beater in the shape of a wolf’s head etched with “Altenheim” | 100 | Lute string crusted with unknown white substance |
| 59 | Bronze monocle lacking a lense attached to a gold chain | | |
| 60 | Flat stone bearing a chalk sketch of a cat with a dead mouse in its mouth | | |
| 61 | Two silver religious symbols melted together and twisted into a strange shape | | |
| 62 | Toy bird with oil-soaked feathery wings | | |
| 63 | Set of ivory teeth with the incisors elongated | | |
| 64 | Piece of jerky that has absolutely no taste | | |
| 65 | Crab’s claw etched with the word “Philiandar” | | |
| 66 | Wheel for a wheelbarrow covered in thick mud | | |
| 67 | Brass coin from a land you’ve never heard of | | |





Chapter 12: Inspiration and Corruption

Influence Dice

Though the gods of Etharis are gone, the weave of Fate still governs the lives of its inhabitants. Without oversight, however, that once-indomitable force has become unstable and susceptible to outside influence.

This is where Influence dice come into play. While playing in Grim Hollow, the players and the GM each have a pool of six-sided dice to draw upon in order to shift the fates in their favor. The players' dice are known as Resolve Dice, while the GM's pool consists of Beast Dice.

At the start of a campaign, each pool has a single d6, but events during the game can add or remove dice from each pool. After each session, if one dice pool has at least two more dice than the other then the GM should add an extra d6 to the pool with fewer dice to represent Fate attempting to correct the imbalance.

The dice in each pool can be spent to activate a number of different abilities, representing the ways in which Fate has been altered for good or for ill.

During play, the number of dice in each pool is another factor for the players to consider when plotting their next course of action. For this reason, it is appropriate for the level of dice in the Beast Pool to be

represented in-game, allowing the characters to react without metagaming and breaking immersion.

One way to accomplish this is by interactions with NPCs. News may reach the party of some supernatural phenomenon which has the locals on edge, or the party's local informant warns them of an increase in monster attacks. Other times the party's surroundings themselves change to represent the growing threat. Omens and portents foretell disaster, and the creatures the party encounters take on a more disturbing appearance.

By contrast, the Resolve Pool is best represented by the players themselves. Confidence and good humor can increase when the Resolve Pool outweighs the Beast Pool, but in Etharis such events are rare and fleeting.

THE RESOLVE POOL

The player characters in Grim Hollow are faced with a world of overwhelming odds, and in order to triumph, they must draw upon deep personal reservoirs of courage and willpower. This is represented by the Resolve Pool, a special pool of six-sided dice that the players can use to try and thwart fate and seize victory from the jaws of defeat.



The Resolve Pool starts with a single d6 but different events throughout the game can add dice to that pool, up to a maximum of six d6.

The GM can award dice to the party based on their

actions or at specific plot moments within the game. If a player accurately and faithfully represents their character's bonds, flaws, and ideals in difficult circumstances, it's appropriate for the GM to award a Resolve Die based on their excellent roleplaying.

Furthermore, certain actions may result in the reward of a Resolve Die if they represent events which would bolster the party's determination. Rare acts of self-sacrifice, kindness, or charity may act as a light in the darkness and help the party to forge ahead, as

represented by the addition of a Resolve Die to the pool.

Once there are dice in the Resolve Pool, the party can then draw upon them to activate special abilities throughout the game. Resolve Abilities can only be activated by spending dice from the Resolve Pool, and each ability has a certain cost as detailed in the description. Feel free to come up with your own list of abilities for the players to use their Resolve Dice on, but certain examples may include the following:

Hasty Recovery. Spending one Resolve Die during a short or long rest allows a player to remove a condition or one level of exhaustion. If the player needs to make a saving throw during that rest, such as for a disease or poison, they may roll the Resolve Die and add that number to their saving throw.

Inner Strength. A player may spend a Resolve Die instead of a Hit Die to recover hp during a short rest or to activate any other ability that requires spending a Hit Die.

Final Push. Whenever a player fails a death save, they may spend two Resolve Dice to reroll that save.

I've Just the Thing. A player may spend any number of Resolve dice and roll them in order to immediately gain a single item with value equal to or less than twice the rolled total in gold pieces.

Blaze of Glory. The party may spend all six Resolve Dice to grant themselves superhuman strength and resilience for a single round. During that round all party members have advantage on all rolls, resistance to all damage, and any damage they deal is doubled.

THE BEAST POOL

The Beast is a powerful supernatural entity that stalks the lands of Etharis, and the Beast Pool represents the way that the forces opposed to the party affect the weave of Fate. This pool starts with a single d6, but as things happen during the game, more may be added to represent the growing threat to body and mind.

Whenever the players take actions that darken the tone of the game, the Beast Pool gets another d6. These

events include murder of innocents, acts of selfishness or callousness, and so forth. Other things may add dice to the Beast Pool as well. When the party encounters a particularly strong, evil, or frightening creature, the Beast Pool receives another die. Similarly, the Beast Pool grows whenever the party witnesses something extremely horrifying or disturbing. Anything that would shake the resolve or threaten the psyches of the party qualifies. Actual fear effects associated with spells or abilities have no effect on the Beast Pool.

As the Beast Pool grows, the GM gains access to Beast Abilities. These abilities are ways in which the GM may alter the balance of encounters at critical moments to hinder the party or bolster their enemies. Be warned that these abilities are best used to build tension and raise the stakes of an encounter rather than purely as a means to defeat the party. Some examples of Beast Abilities include the following:

Bitter Disposition. The GM may spend one Beast Die in order to decrease the starting disposition of an NPC from Friendly to Indifferent, or from Indifferent to Hostile.

Death Rattle. When a player is reduced to 0 hp, the GM may spend one Beast Die and roll it. On a 5 or 6, that player immediately fails a death save.

Outnumbered. The GM may spend any number of Beast Dice at the start of an encounter to increase the number of creatures facing the party. For each die spent, the GM may add an additional creature with CR no greater than half the party's average level, rounded down.

Affliction. By spending four Beast Dice, the forces of darkness cause a serious ailment to strike a party member. The GM chooses a Curse or Transformation that afflicts a character of their choice. If using a Transformation for this ability, the possibility should be raised at the start of the game to ensure that such an event is acceptable to everyone at the table.

The Beast. Should the pool reach six, the GM may spend all six dice in order to have the Beast manifest near the players' location. The effects of the Beast's presence are felt throughout the region and vary based on the closest region of the empire: fleshy abominations in Abendland, vicious puppets in Rauland, corrupted beasts and plants in Nordenland, and armor-fused horrors in Unterland. This option may also be used to represent some other major threat based on locations outside the empire, such as an outbreak of coldfire in the Valikan Clans. These events cause serious damage to the local populace and represent a major, continuing threat for the party.

NEUTRAL ABILITIES

Apart from Resolve Abilities and Beast Abilities, there are a set of abilities that can be activated with dice drawn from either



pool. Both the GM and the party have access to Neutral Abilities, which represent more general methods of shaping the whims of Fate in your favor.

Minor Fate. Roll one die and add the total to a single attack roll, ability check, or saving throw.

Bolster. Roll two dice and increase the maximum hit points of a creature by the total for eight hours.

Brutal Strike. Whenever a creature is hit by an attack roll, the attacker may spend two dice and inflict an additional condition on the target for one round. This condition may be bleeding, dazed, prone, or stunned.

Magical Flux. A creature may spend dice to mimic the effects of a spell. The level of the spell may be no greater than the creature's proficiency bonus, and the creature must spend dice equal to one plus the level of the spell to be invoked. Cantrips count as 1st-level spells for the purposes of this ability.

Stroke of Luck. By spending two dice, the GM or a player may cause a minor alteration to the environment, such as adding a small item or feature, moving an existing object five feet, or slightly altering weather conditions or lighting. Examples would be a dropped weapon rolling out of reach or suggesting that phosphorescent fungi might bring a cave's lighting up to dim light rather than total darkness.

DARK BARGAINS

In addition to these abilities, the GM has the ability to propose Dark Bargains to the players. The GM chooses a number of Beast Dice in their pool and proposes a course of action to a player. Should the player accept the bargain, the Beast Pool is reduced by the chosen number of dice and the player then proceeds to follow the suggested course of action. This allows the GM to

introduce story elements and complications that the players may otherwise avoid, through the medium of demonic whispers and alien influences on the characters. This is a particularly useful avenue because it lets the GM leverage a character's bonds, ideals, or flaws.

One example of a Dark Bargain would be a situation where a player discovers a cursed artifact while searching a mysterious assailant for clues. The GM offers the player a bargain: reduce the Beast Pool by two and the player will pocket the artifact for themselves without informing the other party members. The character has a greed-based flaw, so despite knowing that it's a bad idea they accept, setting the stage for the artifact to come into play later.

Optional Rules

As always, these rules are offered as suggestions. We strongly recommend groups expand upon and customize these rules to best fit the themes and playstyle of their game.

One way in which a group may do this is by relaxing the rules limiting Resolve and Beast Abilities to the party and GM, respectively. In certain circumstances it may make sense to allow party members to use abilities listed under the Beast Pool, such as when their actions align with the goals of the villain, and a GM may want to dip into the Resolve Abilities to boost the difficulty of an encounter.

Another method of customization is by altering the abilities themselves. The Outnumbered ability from the Beast Pool, for example, can easily be adapted to summoning spells and moved over to the Resolve Pool. Inner Strength can be used to boost the healing of a fighter's Second Wind ability or to increase the level of a *cure wounds* spell. Summoning the Beast can easily be swapped out for an appearance by whatever villain the GM has set as the primary antagonist of the campaign. All of these are appropriate uses of Influence Dice.

Depending on the actions of the party and the GM, there may be a situation where a pool of dice fills completely and stays there for an extended period of time. One option to prevent this disparity is to allow a trade-off between the two. When a player would gain a Resolve Die, they may instead choose to decrease the Beast Pool by one. Similarly, when the GM would add a die to the Beast Pool, the increase in threat can be represented just as well by decreasing the Resolve Pool by one. This provides for a more fluid interplay between the two pools, acting almost like a tug-of-war on the weave of Fate's tapestry.

As a final note, one bit of warning regarding these rules: in general, pitting party members against one another is something to be avoided. If you want to include this as an option in your game, or if you contemplate using some of these rules to that effect, we strongly recommend discussing this with your group ahead of time to make sure that everyone agrees with the idea. The most important thing is to have fun, and the rules should serve that goal, even if they have to be bent or broken at times.







Chapter 13: Session Zero

What is a Session Zero?

Starting a new campaign is exciting. Everyone is enthusiastic to create their new characters and dive into the story. It's tempting for everyone to create their characters in advance so you can all jump into your campaign the first time you meet.

But, just like charging through a mysterious door without checking it for traps first, starting the game without planning can lead to everyone getting burned.

Session Zero is a term that has grown in popularity and understanding over the years in RPG circles. Session Zero refers to a game session that happens before the first day of game play, where the GM and players meet before a campaign begins to discuss what to expect from the game.

In a Session Zero, everyone shares their hopes for the game, agreeing on some rules to help everyone have a good time. Session Zero can also involve players creating their characters and deciding what binds the party together. Finally, Session Zero is where you work out mundane details like scheduling to ensure the campaign runs smoothly.

Every part of a Session Zero doesn't have to happen in a single sitting. Some of it can be worked out by email or informal means. But every step is important, because it's designed to head off issues that can derail your campaign down the road.

IN ETHARIS, MOST OF ALL

Session Zero is a good idea for most tabletop roleplaying games, but it's especially important for this setting. Etharis is a campaign setting of dark fantasy, but "dark" means different things to different people.

People come to dark fantasy in general, and Etharis particularly, seeking different experiences. Maybe you came to explore the hard choices posed by a world of black-and-grey morality. Maybe you're drawn in by the unsettling mysteries of dark fairy tales. Maybe you seek the chill of encountering horrific deeds and unfathomable monsters. Or maybe you're after the thrill of dispatching those monsters in a spray of blood and viscera.

Some of this may appeal to you, and some of it might turn you off. Dark fantasy can mean playing with ideas that can ruin someone's game session – or worse – if they're handled carelessly. Part of Session Zero is designed to make sure everyone can agree on what they're getting into, and how much is too much.

FIRST, EXPECTATIONS

This is the time for everyone – GM and players alike – to talk about what they want out of the upcoming campaign. At this stage, the GM should be flexible about the arc of the campaign, and players should be flexible about the details of their characters.

New players may not feel equipped to decide what they want out of the game at this point, so don't pressure them. But do listen for what they are especially excited for or worried about.

THEMES

Do players want a gritty, low-magic campaign or one focused on the intrigues of sorcerers and Arch Seraphs? Do they want to navigate the moral conflicts of an evil aristocracy or rise up heroically to overthrow it? Do they want to play good or evil characters? Has somebody always wanted to play a druid, or fight a vampire?

To get at these answers, the GM should ask specific questions like the following:

- What are you excited to do in this campaign?
- What have you never done before that you'd like to try in this campaign?
- What have you done before that you'd like to see more of in this game?
- What aspect of the campaign setting are you most interested in exploring?

Some possible answers may include the following: overthrow a tyrant, explore ruins, slay the Beast of Bürach, wonder who I can trust, hunt (or protect) mages and heretics, solve clever riddles, play a villain struggling toward redemption, play a hero slipping into evil...

It's just as important to find out what people don't want, with questions like these:

- What would you like to avoid in this game?
- What have you done before that you'd like to see less of in this game?
- What aspect of the campaign setting interests you the least?

Some possible answers include the following: getting hung up on inter-party conflict, underground dungeons, zombies, solving riddles, long fights with lots of enemies...

Everyone's answers to these questions should help shape the campaign. This is why the GM shouldn't be too invested in how the campaign will play out before they've seen what the players will bring to the table. Players generate new ideas for the game through what they're excited about. Even with a pre-written campaign, the GM and the players alike doubtlessly have ideas on how to steer the campaign toward the good stuff. Often the GM can find balance between what different players want, making sure there's "something for everyone" in each session.

GAMEPLAY

One excellent way to work through everyone's expectations for the game is by going over [Christopher Chinn's Same Page Tool](#) with your group.

There are many different ways that people play RPGs, from immersive improvisation to number-crunching wargaming and everything around and between. It's easy for people to come to the table with different

expectations, perhaps feeling like other players' preferences for the game are "wrong."

This is where everyone should discuss their preferences about things like powergaming, rules-lawyering, and the GM making or interpreting rules on the fly. Everyone should agree on whether player characters are allowed to betray or fight each other.

Figure out in advance whether everyone's approaches can coexist in a single campaign. There is probably room for compromise here. Players with different perspectives might agree on rules like, "PC-versus-PC conflict is allowed if both players agree in advance," or, "the GM can make up a rule on the fly if I can't find the real rule within 60 seconds."

Unfortunately, not everyone's wants are compatible. Players may realize that they simply aren't interested in the type of game that the rest of the group wants to play. It's better to find this out before the campaign begins than after everyone has already invested time in a game they don't enjoy. Players with very different interests might be happier in separate campaigns with different focuses.

SECOND, BOUNDARIES

As we mentioned above, the setting of Etharis is an opportunity to explore the darker themes of medieval fantasy. It's important to realize that players react differently to different elements of the game. Events or images that send a satisfying chill down one player's spine might spoil another player's fun entirely. Even playing with close friends, it can be hard to predict everyone's reactions without talking about it beforehand.

To keep the game in the sweet spot for everyone at the table, you need to agree on some boundaries. This way, you can all play secure in the knowledge that your adventures in Etharis may frighten or disturb you, but only in the ways you signed up for.

This section talks about players deciding what they are and aren't comfortable with, but don't forget that the GM is a player too! The GM gets an equal chance to set boundaries, and they should be as up-front about those boundaries as the other players.

Rating systems for movies, television shows, and other media can be a useful shorthand for what players are comfortable with. People generally understand how the American movie ratings of G, PG, PG-13, R, and NC-17 correspond to different levels of violence, sexuality, and other content. This kind of language can set a general baseline for what players are comfortable with.

Even with that general guideline in place, though, everyone has certain topics that they find particularly upsetting, whether because of their life experiences or for other reasons. It's best to approach these topics carefully, or to avoid them entirely in the game.

To help everyone explore the darkness on their own terms, it's helpful for the players to discuss in advance what topics they would like to avoid.

By way of example only, here are some common elements that a player may ask to avoid in a game: racism, sexual violence, harm to children or animals, addiction, broken bones, decomposing bodies, Spiders.

[Consent in Gaming is a free PDF from Monte Cook Games](#) that covers this topic in more detail. It includes a useful checklist that you can give players allowing them to give a green light or red light to different topics.

LINES AND VEILS

One popular method for setting specific boundaries for a game that approaches sensitive topics is called “lines and veils.” During Session Zero, the GM should invite players to write down their lines and veils for the upcoming campaign.

Lines and veils were first described by Ron Edwards for his game “Sex and Sorcery.”

LINES

When you “draw the line” at a topic, you agree that it will never come up in play. Perhaps someone draws a line at “slavery” – this means the game should never encounter slaves or slavers in the game, or hear rumors of gnolls enslaving people in a far-off land. It is as if the practice or concept of slavery does not exist in your game world. If the lined topic exists at all, it is off-screen and never mentioned.

Some lines rule out a portion of the setting. If “disease” is a line, the party should never encounter plague doctors or visit the city of Liesch, for example. If those aspects of the setting were going to ruin someone’s experience, it’s best to find that out now. The world of Etharis is wide enough – and full enough of horrors – to provide adventure without exploring every dark crevasse.

BUT THAT’S UNREALISTIC!

You may feel like your world *needs* certain ugly realities in it to be logically consistent. Rest assured that a fantasy world can get along just fine without an off-limit topic.

The world of Etharis, and every other fantasy setting, ignore all manner of things, from the economic impact of adventurers spending large sums of gold to the physical impossibility of a colossal-sized dragon flying by flapping its wings. A world without inflation or the square-cube law is not “realistic,” but we don’t pull on those threads for a simple, very good reason: it lets us play the game we want to play. We focus on the aspects of the game world that we want the game to be about, and we ignore the parts that would get in the way. Sometimes this requires the active suspension of disbelief. More often we just go with it, and everything’s fine.

VEILS

When you “draw a veil” across a topic, it can exist in the game but will not be described or played out in detail. A common example is the way TV shows may “fade to black” when characters engage in sex. At the table, when the veiled topic comes up, you acknowledge it and either skip ahead in the narrative, or you shift the focus elsewhere – the same way you handle the time player characters spend asleep.

Invite everyone to write down their lines and veils. You may even combine these into a single, anonymous list. Doing this lets players set boundaries without having to flat-out tell the group that – for example – they have crippling arachnophobia.

Players may want to draw more or less specific boundaries. For example, a player may be okay with torture happening in the game, but not with the PCs doing it – or not with it happening to PCs or specific NPCs. An arachnophobic player may be okay with spiders as long as they aren’t described in detail, or as long as they’re not too big (or too small).

It’s important to respect each player’s boundaries. Once someone has said that they don’t want something in the game, they shouldn’t have to justify the boundary to the rest of the table. Likewise, boundaries also shouldn’t be up for negotiation. More importantly, a player should be able to add to or change their own boundaries at any time depending on their comfort level. In the next section, we’ll discuss a few ways to handle when something goes too far in the course of play.

Once you’ve established what everyone wants out of the game, and what the boundaries are, you have a large and well-defined play-space of concepts and emotions to explore.

IN-GAME SAFETY TOOLS

Boundaries can change. You may not know how you’ll react to something until the moment it comes up at the table. Depending on your mood when you come to the table, you may have more or less tolerance for upsetting material. Finally, surprises and accidents happen. That’s why it’s also wise to decide how to handle uncomfortable situations that come up in the course of the game.

WHEN YOU MESS UP

A player or the GM may forget an established boundary or cross it without meaning to. The best thing to do in this situation is to pause the action, acknowledge what happened, and apologize. Depending on how everyone is feeling, a short break may be appropriate. When the game resumes, the table can decide whether it’s better to change what happened in the narrative, or simply to move on.

THE X-CARD

The X-Card, created by John Stavropoulos, is one popular mechanic that you can houserule into your game as a safety valve. It’s a simple way for anyone at the table to nix a topic that comes up in play.

In short, the X-Card is a physical card placed on the table. Any player may tap the card or otherwise “activate” it during the game, if the narrative moves in a direction they’re uncomfortable with. The active player or the GM immediately stops and moves the narrative forward, away from the current deeds taking place at the table.

An advantage of the X-Card is that it does not put a lot of pressure on the uncomfortable player to explain exactly what the problem is in the moment. A player may explain why they activated the X-Card after the game, if there is any confusion, when everyone is more comfortable.

THE LUXTON TECHNIQUE

This is a different approach to handling upsetting events in the game. In short, when a player identifies that something in the game is upsetting them, play pauses. The player has an opportunity to explain what the problem is, if they wish. The player then states what they want or need to happen in the narrative—for example, “I need this NPC to survive this encounter,” or, “I need the townspeople not to believe the villain’s lies about what just happened.” The players and the GM then ensure that that the stated result comes about. If the outcome of a die roll (such as an attack roll or a save) would determine the outcome, do not roll—the ultimate outcome should not be in question.

This technique is meant to address situations where it may be more upsetting to skip over the upsetting event or pretend it didn’t happen.

The Luxton Technique was described in detail in a blog post by P.H. Lee, as an alternative to the X-Card.

A variety of other safety tools are available online in the *TTRPG Safety Toolkit*, an online collection maintained by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk.

The Script Change RPG Toolkit by Brie Beau Sheldon is another set of tools that builds on the Luxton Technique and the movie rating metaphor. It provides a range of ways to let players take control of the narrative in the moment.

Not every group needs a mechanic this structured in order to have these discussions, but when it comes to uncomfortable conversations, it can be helpful to err on the side of having more structure than you need.

In any case, the important thing to remember is that each and every person at the table is more important than the game.

THIRD, BUILDING THE PARTY

Once you’ve agreed on the boundaries of the game, it’s time for the players to decide who their characters will be. This can be full character creation, or simply deciding on the characters’ concepts and backstories.

Players should also decide why their characters adventure together. Players can either give their characters pre-existing relationships, or decide how their

personalities mesh once the characters meet for the first time. Figuring this out in advance avoids the “party of loners” situation, where there’s no in-game reason that the PCs keep putting up with each other and risk their lives for each other adventure after adventure.

Use backgrounds and bonds as jumping off points for players to decide how their characters might be connected. A player might ask the table, “Which of your characters might my character have met during his time as a sailor?”

Traits and flaws can serve as seeds for relationships between characters. One player could volunteer, “What if the way your character stammers under pressure reminds her of her younger brother, and so she feels protective of your character?”

Alternatively, “My character steals small items even when it’s a bad idea—does anyone else’s character watch mine especially closely, to make sure she behaves?”

A key part of building relationships this way is that both players should be excited about the new connection. One player should not force a relationship on another player’s character.

Once these decisions have been made, the GM can start making concrete plans about what will happen in the campaign. Part of the joy of running a tabletop game is seeing what characters the other players create, and finding out what those characters do in different situations. Now the GM knows who the PCs are, and what kind of adventures make sense for them—and who the players are, and what kind of adventures will be the most fun for *them*.

FINALLY, THE BORING STUFF

Nobody enjoys scheduling, but working out a schedule is a lot better than constantly cancelling sessions or playing with half a party. Figure out a cancellation policy, including what happens to player characters if their player doesn’t show up to a session.

A good strategy is to decide on a day—like every Saturday, or every other Sunday—that works for everyone most of the time. Players then know what to expect, and they can try to keep that day open. If players can’t make a session, cancel it until next week, but don’t change the day. If you move game day around in the week, chasing the gaps in players’ schedules, you’ll find sessions are unpredictable and far-between, and scheduling them is a never-ending headache. Everyone should also decide how long the campaign should last, so they know how much time they’re committing to it. (Don’t be afraid to start a short campaign. You can always re-up with the same characters if everyone wants to keep going.)

Session Zero is also where you should work out questions like who brings what snacks, and whether you share dice or everyone brings their own. You may also want to work out whether people are comfortable with alcohol and other substances at the table.

When you’re done with all this, you’ll have a solid plan in place to start a great campaign for everyone.



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