STRONGHOLDS & FOLLOWERS

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MCDM

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Dedicated to the 28,918 Kickstarter backers who funded this book and the 3,114 testers who helped make it suck less. We really hope you like this book!

"Big things have small beginnings."

—Robert Bolt, *Lawrence of Arabia* screenplay

FOREWORD

In 1985 I was fifteen and a sophomore at Cypress High School, and I spent the year in my computer science class with Brad Thomas and Chris Steele talking about Elric and the Black Company and the Incarnations of Immortality. They were friends outside of school, part of a larger group, but I was still hanging out with the kids I grew up with in my apartment complex. I knew Chris and Brad played board games and roleplaying games, and I wanted in.

At the end of the school year I signed their yearbooks: "If you guys get together to play games, give me a call." They did. About thirty seconds later, they were my best friends. It changed my life.

We spent that summer playing board games and RPGs and going to the mall, and the arcade, and hanging out at the pool. It's a time and place that has now been immortalized and paid homage to in popular fiction. When I want to connect with my mother's formative years, I watch *American Graffiti*, filmed one town over from where she grew up. Folks looking for that same experience for my generation's formative years watch *Stranger Things*.

It was easy for an adult back then watching us sitting around Dave Miles' pool table rolling strange dice, listening to Rush, and pretending to be elves to imagine we were wasting our time. And not just adults, a lot of our peers felt the same way. But I never did. I knew something worthwhile and remarkable would come out of the hobby: a lifetime of creativity and memories and shared experiences doing something amazing with my friends whom I loved. You don't need YouTube or Kickstarter, it's reward enough just ending up at the end of your life being able to look back on the worlds you created and shared with your friends and the heroic adventures you undertook. The hobby isn't a means to an end, it is an end unto itself. And while the places and events and people and things we create and meet in our secondary worlds are not real, one thing is.

Dreams are not real. Nothing that happens in a dream is real. With one exception. Chris Nolan wrote a whole movie about it.

Inception takes place in dreams but it's about movies. It argues that while all these people and places and events are not real, something in film is. The emotions you feel watching a movie are real. That's what gives them meaning and value. When I watch *Casablanca* I fall in love with Ilsa every time. Generations of kids watched *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and ran outside play-swordfighting. Because the emotions you feel at the movies are real. Inception is using dreams to make a point about movies. And, I argue, RPGs.

Don't let anyone tell you the hobby is a waste of time. Tell your friends you're going to get together and play tonight. Tell them you're going to do something real.

SINE QUA NON

Thanks to Chris Ashton and Phil Robb for running the best game development studio in the business. The work we did together was real and vital.

Thanks to Robert Djordjevich for giving me my first break in video games, and the rest of the Pandemic Group: Austin Baker, Wallace Huang, Chad Nicholas, Larra Paoilli, and Jeff Vaughn.

Thanks to Christian Moore and Owen Seyler for giving me my first job in games and for being great mentors. And thanks to everyone else at Last Unicorn: Ross Issacs, George Vasilakos, Jay Longino, Inman Young, Charles and Tammie Ryan, Jess Heinig, Jeff Tidball, Ken Hite, and Steve Long.

Thanks to Anna and Jerry and Lars for taking a crazy chance on MCDM.

Thanks to Mike Mearls, Chris Perkins, Jeremy Crawford, and the rest of the 5E DevTeam for synthesizing forty years of RPG design into something new and fresh and fun to play and fun to design for.

And, lastly, my original GMs: John Mara, Brad Thomas, and Matt Thomas. The lessons they taught me from '85 to '92 still pay off. And to the rest of The Group: Jim Murphy, Dave Miles, Mark Hobbs, Devlon and Geoff, Chris and Craig, Jeff Houston, Matt Clyker, Paul LaPorte, Robert Harris, Travis Vail.

—Matthew Colville
Irvine, September 2018

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INTRODUCTION

nce upon a time in the dim days of the hobby known as the 1970s, the game assumed you played until you were about 7th level and then built a stronghold. There were no rules for this, nor was any reason given for why the player or their character might want to do such a thing.

For those original players, building a stronghold was a *self-evident good*. It was just neat, and they assumed it would be obvious why you would want to do such a thing. It meant your character was now interested in things besides killing orcs and acquiring gold. Treasure was a means to an end. As your character grew in power, they became more concerned with the state of the world. There were political conflicts and armies and incursions from other dimensions, and a single fighter with a sword, even a very nice sword with its own personality and special purpose, was not enough. You needed an army, or new spells, or extraplanar allies.

The game transitioned from local problems to national problems, to global problems. Eventually, your 7th-level character fought a few wars or invented a spell or two, and then retired. Typically around 13th level. And that was it. The game had an end.

This book seeks to recreate that style of play, but in a modern sense, by giving the players *reasons* to build strongholds. And we got a lotta reasons. 😀

In this book you will find rules for four types of strongholds: **keeps** help you raise armies and improve your fighting ability, **temples** help you summon extraplanar allies to aid you in battle, **towers** let you research new spells, and **establishments** let you collect secrets and generate cash.

Every stronghold also improves your signature class feature, powering up your Bardic Inspiration or your monk's Ki. Strongholds grant **improved class features** because they draw power from the land itself.

The local area around your stronghold is called your **demesne** (deh-MAIN). Within your demesne, your character is now, if not ruler, certainly a very important person, so the power of the land manifests itself in unusual ways in your favor.

Building a stronghold also inspires people, allowing you to **attract followers** by rolling on a chart specific to your class. These followers could be mercenary legions or artisan peasants, foreign ambassadors or fellow adventuring heroes!

Large-scale actions taken by your new army, your stronghold, or your followers sometimes take **months or seasons**. Also, your new abilities eventually run out of juice, after which you must return to your demesne to refresh yourself. This is called an **extended rest**.

To support these new options, the book comes with many new systems, including rules for **warfare**, in which **units** of soldiers clash; rules for **concordance**, which allows any character to plead with their deity for aid; rules for **creating new magic items**; and rules for taking your **retainers** with you into combat without having to run an entire second character.

GM-APPROVED?

Talk to your GM to make sure these new rules are allowed in their game. This book asks a lot of your GM, they are expected to:

- Run NPC followers, including complex and powerful special allies.
- Figure out which neighbors are happy or upset with your growing power in the local area.
- Make combat harder, to compensate for your new combat abilities.

That's a lot of work and your GM may have different plans for their game. They might be okay with some of these rules, but not others!

ALIGNMENT

This book references alignment a lot—don't freak out. It's merely deployed as an organizational tool. A fun way of saying "allied" or "opposed." And a way to categorize allies and monsters dramatically. Paladins oppose chaos and evil, clerics embody good; these are just cool ways of referring to the forces opposing or allied with the heroes.

Feel free to recontextualize these references however you like. If you're playing a...lawful neutral paladin, perhaps opposing chaos is more important or useful to you than good or evil. Or maybe alignment isn't useful at all, in which case the player and the GM can agree to use "allied" or "opposed." Alignment was originally invented as an excuse to yell at players who were backstabbing other players by inventing "teams" and requiring them to pick "our team" if they were going to continue playing, so best not to take it too seriously.

STRONGHOLDS

It's cool to have a place of your own. A headquarters, a base. A castle, a tower, a keep.

It would be even better if your headquarters *did* something cool for you. Gave you some useful ability, preferably in combat, since that's where a lot (not all!) of the game happens. It's certainly where the life and death stuff happens.

It's also nice to have a reason to hoard money. Delving deep into dark dungeons promises three rewards: experience, magic items, and *money*.

Experience is a self-evident good, as it makes your character level up and gain power.

Magic items, likewise. They let you do cool things your character would never normally be able to do.

Money, though? What are we supposed to do with it? At least one edition granted players easy access to creating magic items, a fine way to spend your money. A side effect of this is the assumed presence of shops in sufficiently large cities where you can *buy* magic items.

But the modern edition makes the opposite assumption. Players during the 5E playtest said they wanted magic to be rare, and the dev team listened. Magic is rare and "magic shoppes" are not assumed in the base game.

Strongholds and their upgrades, therefore, give you a good reason to save your money.

TYPES OF STRONGHOLD

There are four types of basic stronghold, one complex stronghold, and many varieties. Any character can build or use any stronghold, although why a non-spellcasting character might build a tower is an exercise left to the reader. Maybe they have a spellcasting NPC ally!

A **keep** is a martial stronghold for characters interested in raising armies and defending the local townsfolk. Barbarian camps and pirate ships are variations on this.

A **tower** is an arcane stronghold for doing spell research and learning battle magic.

A **temple** is a divine stronghold for summoning extraplanar allies and learning battle magic. A druid's grove is a popular variation.

An **establishment** is an espionage stronghold for sabotaging your enemies and generating revenue.

A **castle** combines two or more of the above into a larger complex owned and run by multiple characters, each of whom can gain the mechanical benefits thereof.

Ultimately, the idea that there are four kinds of strongholds (and some variations of each) is completely arbitrary. You could easily have six kinds, or one for each class. Or no "types," just different abilities to buy a la carte. But I find these four get us 90% of what we need, with their variations getting us another 9%. And for those players who want a stronghold not listed here, hopefully the variations are sufficient to help the GM come up with a unique variant without much work.

ACQUIRING A STRONGHOLD

There are three basic ways for the party to acquire a stronghold: they are (in order of most expensive to least expensive) build a new one, renovate an old one, or receive one from a local noble.

Building a Stronghold, Cost and Time

The cost (in gold) and time to build (in days) for each of the four strongholds are listed below. These are not based on any historical numbers mostly because humans were building castles for about 600 years until the invention of gunpowder made them obsolete and there's no reasonable way to translate those costs into a fantasy game. But even were we to pick a historical period as our baseline, there was no time in history that had bands of wizards and warlocks roaming the countryside pillaging dragon hordes and coming back to civilization with tens of thousands of gold pieces.

Therefore any costs we derive must first be based in the economies of a fantasy RPG. **And that means they must cost a lot, but not take too long.** If it takes 10 years to build your stronghold, no PC would ever do it. Keeps and towers, temples and establishments each have wildly different purposes with different costs and different times to build.

Keeps are larger and more fortified for defensive purposes and therefore take longer to build: 150 days.

Temples and **towers** are less fortified but still usually made of stone and take 120 days to complete at 1st level.

An **establishment** serves no defensive purpose, typically existing within a town or city with its own fortifications. But your establishment is still well-constructed with basements, multiple floors, and probably secret passages for you and your allies to escape out of...or in to! They take 90 days to complete.

Strongholds as Fortifications

Keeps, towers, and temples also count as Fortifications in Warfare (see page 231 for the rules on Warfare). These fortifications grant Morale bonuses to the soldiers defending them in battle. They also have a Size representing the die used to track damage done to them, and a Toughness rating representing how hard they are to damage. Because they don't attack, they have no Attack, Defense, or Power ratings.

STRONGHOLD CONSTRUCTION

STRONGHOLD	COST TO BUILD (GP)	TIME TO BUILD (DAYS)	FORTIFICATION BONUS
Keep	10,000	150	+2 Morale per level
Tower	8,000	120	+1 Morale per level
Temple	8,000	120	+1 Morale per level
Establishment	6,000	90	—

SIZE PER LEVEL

STRONGHOLD	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
Keep	6	8	10	12	20
Tower	4	6	8	10	12
Temple	4	6	8	10	12
Establishment	—	—	—	—	—

TOUGHNESS PER LEVEL

STRONGHOLD	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
Keep	22	24	26	28	30
Tower	18	20	22	24	26
Temple	18	20	22	24	26
Establishment	—	—	—	—	—

COST TO UPGRADE (GP)

STRONGHOLD	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
Keep	5,000	10,000	15,000	20,000
Tower	3,000	6,000	12,000	18,000
Temple	3,000	6,000	12,000	18,000
Establishment	2,000	4,000	6,000	8,000

TIME TO UPGRADE (DAYS)

STRONGHOLD	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
Keep	50	100	150	200
Tower	40	80	120	160
Temple	40	80	120	160
Establishment	30	60	90	120

Upgrading Your Stronghold

Once built, your stronghold can be upgraded by taking more time and spending more money, as shown on the charts on the previous page. You can spend more money to build a larger stronghold from the start, but there is no time or cost savings.

Castles: Complex Strongholds

A stronghold belongs to whoever pays for it, and they are its master. If Cail the Wizard builds a tower, he gets to decide who gains its benefits. He may allow his sorcerer or warlock pals to do spell research there... until one or both betrays him! Or he, them! Only one character can gain the benefit of a given stronghold at a time, and each character can only benefit from one stronghold ability at a time.

If multiple characters chip in to pay for a stronghold—or one character just spends a *lot* of money—it is a castle and provides multiple benefits. Complex tasks take proportionally more time and money than simple ones, so a castle costs 10% more and takes 10% longer for every basic stronghold function it incorporates.

> Jess, Anna, and Lars decide to pitch in together and buy a castle. It will contain a keep, a temple, and a tower. It will cost 33,800 gp and take 507 days. That's 10,000 gp for the keep and 8,000 gp each for the tower and temple, 150 days for the keep and 120 days each for the temple and tower. Then an extra 30% on top (multiply time and cost each by 1.3) to account for the extra work necessary to incorporate many functions in one structure.

A castle cannot contain multiple of the same type of stronghold. If you build a castle with two towers, for instance, only one of them grants the benefits of spell research. Also, a stronghold's benefit only applies to one character at a time. A character can switch between which stronghold benefits they receive by taking an extended rest (page 15).

The purpose of the design is, on the one hand, to somewhat model the real world where building a movie theater and automotive plant in the same building would (one assumes) take longer than the time to build each separately. For one thing the different kinds of strongholds have different requirements and therefore it takes more and different kinds of workers to complete them and the more workers you have the harder it is to coordinate them all.

But also, one goal of these rules is to give players things to do in their **downtime**, and this is a period for individual goals and initiative. Usually when one of my players builds a stronghold, everyone hangs out there.

PAYING MORE TO GET IT DONE FASTER

Since building or repairing any stronghold requires a labor force, it's reasonable for players to conclude that hiring more artisans and laborers will speed up the process!

To a small degree this is true, but the rules assume your workers are working optimally, so adding more laborers will, paradoxically, cause it to take longer. **This is a fact as well-documented as it is oft-ignored. The famous (real-world) book** The Mythical Man-Month **details exactly what happens: Beyond a certain point, the larger your network, the more management it requires, the more communication it takes for everyone involved, and the harder it becomes for any single worker to find the answer to their question, get a task approved, or get unblocked (or even know who's blocking them) on a process.**

Therefore, we assume the times represent a group of workers getting the job done in a reasonably fast manner and that adding more people to the team would just complicate things.

All the Avengers hang out at Avenger's Mansion but at the end of the day, Tony Stark built that place and it and Jarvis answer to him and when things go wrong he's on the hook for it.

Finally, don't presume that just because *you* as a player think it would be a good idea for "all of us" to build a stronghold together, that everyone else at the table agrees. In my experience, one or two players may agree, one or two players won't care, but one or two players actually have their own ideas about what should be done with what they perceive as "their share of the treasure." Make sure you've polled the electorate and *listen* to what they say. Folks who disagree often keep their mouths shut just to avoid conflict, and this is a great recipe for breeding unhappy players.

Narrative Reasons for Different Costs and Times

Of course, what seems reasonable to me may seem wildly *un*reasonable to you! Each GM's campaign is different, and different in ways that cannot be predicted or detected by any given designer.

Therefore, feel absolutely free to charge your players more or less, or speed up or slow down the time it takes to fit both your idea of what's reasonable, and the precedents you've established for your game. To make

these decisions seem less like GM fiat and ground them in the rules and your game, consider the following.

Strongholds take more or less time to construct based on the availability of local workers. Maybe recent events in your campaign have made laborers and artisans scarce or plentiful! Whatever local problem the players have recently dealt with, it may have scared many valuable workers away from the area (strongholds take more time). Or, with that problem solved, maybe more workers are available and willing to help our stalwart heroes (strongholds take less time)!

Strongholds may cost more if the local area turns out to be resource poor. It takes wood and stone to make a stronghold, and not just any wood or stone.

"Can't build from this," Arranel the Woodwright says, shaking her head. "Trees are all beech around here. Can't make a proper truss or scaffold with beech. No block or tackle neither. Rope'll chew right through it."

"And the stone here's all got lime running through it. Water table's just a few feet down, I reckon," Galder of Chalk, the stonemason observes. "Gonna have to send to Rest to get some proper granite. Cost a pretty penny, that."

So the costs may be more exorbitant than the rules imply. The reverse is also true!

"No gold, sorry to break it to you. Know you ratcatchers love comin' up gold. But plenty of iron," Zoran Steeleye, foreman of the mine, says. "More'n enough to get you started on a proper keep."

Circumstances both natural and political may conspire to make your campaign's costs different from these. Indeed, in some campaign worlds metal is as rare as...a very rare thing! And we might imagine a stronghold would be a very expensive proposition on that dead world under a black star.

When Is It Done?

Keep in mind that a 1st-level keep is a simple motte-and-bailey and would still appear to be "under construction" when it is actually done. It can act as a defensive stronghold well before it's pretty and all the finishing touches are complete. It may be hard to imagine Camelot being built in a little more than a year, but that's because the structure we imagine with pink walls and pennants flying is what you get long after the place was a functioning castle.

At What Level Should Characters Get a Stronghold?

There's no correct answer to this, it is entirely up to the GM. I've run games in which the PCs started at 1st level playing local nobles complete with strongholds and domains. I've run for groups who at 3rd level cleared out an overrun watchtower and claimed it as their base.

As the GM, you can simply decide it would be fun if the players started with or cleared out their own stronghold at low levels. One of the great moments in any campaign, for me, is just after the players de-orc a ruined keep and realize, "Hey! We could make this place our base!" This is the moment when the players start using the things they find in the world as their own resources. The world feels real to them. They are thinking about things besides killing monsters.

Maybe the question is "At what level can the PCs *afford* to build their own stronghold?" That's easy to figure out. We start by imagining the players want to pool their money together to build a castle for 50,000 gold pieces.

So we scrubbed through the published adventures to figure out: when would the characters be able to afford a keep? Well if they go through the official 5E Big Giant Adventure...the answer is surprising. By 6th level in the Big Giant Adventure, the players **can** have accumulated enough gold to buy a keep. Assuming they find all the gold and roll average on random results.

In practice, however, it difficult to find **all** the gold in an adventure, especially adventures with sandbox elements, or branches. Different groups often come out with wildly different amounts of cash from the same adventure. 7th level, therefore, is a reasonable conclusion.

Do Not Assume the Adventure Will Suffice

Different editions treat gold differently. Some classic 1st Edition adventures award many tens of thousands of gold at low levels (often in copper pieces, on purpose, to make the act of getting the gold back to civilization a challenge in itself). Some adventures have hardly any gold in them at all. Not only does this vary from edition to edition, it varies wildly from one adventure to another *within* an edition.

Therefore, Game Masters who think "my players will want a stronghold" should make sure they dump enough gold on the players to make it possible. The gold you award becomes a knob you turn to adjust when exactly the players can afford a stronghold of their own. Assuming they need to buy the thing at all! There are other options!

Repairing a Ruin

As any druid worth their salt—or any other miner-als—will tell you: nature is pretty aggressive. Without proper upkeep, roots and vines and weather will take their toll and in only a year a stronghold can require so much upkeep to get back in shape that it qualifies as a ruin. Practically, if the keep or tower or temple in your adventure has some crumbling walls and perhaps a few rooms or entire floor exposed to the elements, it is certainly a ruin.

Repairing a ruin saves you half the time and cost of the final stronghold. So repairing a ruined level 1 keep would only cost 5,000 gold and take 75 days.

It's up to the GM to decide whether the ruin is a single-player stronghold or a castle that can serve as a complex that contains some combination of basic strongholds within.

How badly ruined a stronghold is, is purely a judge-ment call by the GM, but here are some guidelines. If it has multiple levels with any intact rooms, **each level** saves another 500 gold in cost and 7 days off the total time. If it has any **wholly intact** levels, each level instead saves you 1,000 gp and 14 days.

If there are several (more than three, including a dungeon level) levels with intact rooms, then this is probably not a 1st-level stronghold. It could be a 2nd-level or 3rd-level stronghold! GMs, remember in your generosity that strongholds cap out at 5th level. Letting players repair a ruin so that they end up with a level 4 or 5 stronghold gives them immense power and little left to strive for.

Awarding a Stronghold

Any local stronghold in good enough shape not to need repair actually belongs to someone. Legally. Some local noble. It might be *currently* overrun by orcs, or even sitting surrounded by forest overgrowth, forgotten. But as soon as the party clears it out, it becomes *un*forgot-ten and the local duke or queen says, "Hey that's mine."

Nobles get really persnickety when a bunch of rat-catchers decide some stronghold in the noble's terri-tory is "theirs." The local nobles start to feel like maybe these itinerant campaigners are trying to muscle in on their cushy gig.

At the same time, nobles are not stupid—though they may well be prideful, fearful, or full of hubris—so they might realize **any mercenary group powerful enough to clear out the orcs would serve better as subjects or allies than enemies.**

So *typically* the local noble will be very thankful and generous. A duke might nominate the most noble and trustworthy party member (favoring lawful good, or lawful, or the same alignment as the noble) and invest them as baron. Congratulations! You're a landed noble!

As democratic and egalitarian as the players may feel, unless your world is *wildly* different from a medieval society, the local noble won't be keen on the idea of an autonomous collective running a stronghold. The *players* may feel like they collectively saved the noble's forgotten stronghold for them, but the noble does not recognize "an adventuring party" as a legitimate form of government.

So while *many* PCs can enjoy the benefits of a castle (i.e. a complex stronghold, one that belongs to many characters) as far as local politics are concerned, *one* PC is responsible for it. When the local noble has a problem, it's that PC who's on the hook.

Furthermore, the local noble can simply *award* the players a stronghold as payment for some service. "Thank you for stopping that local death cult, here's the right and title to a small keep." Now, this may be exactly as it seems and the players just *get* a stronghold, no strings attached. Not very *dramatic* though, is it?

In a situation like that, we expect there's some reason the stronghold is available to be awarded. Maybe it's a ruin, and there may be some costs associated with getting it up and running. Or it's full of goblins. Or...oozes! Yeah that sounds dramatic. A cult of Orcus! Good luck!

Ultimately the rule is there is *always* some "cost." Either in gold or risk. Even a 100% no-strings-attached, no-orc-infestation stronghold will have required the players to do something incredibly risky beforehand, adventure-wise, to earn the local noble's favor.

Political Complications

Something I've enjoyed doing in my own campaign is putting a document granting right and title to a stronghold to whosoever holds the deed. This is, certainly, ahistorical...but it is dramatic!

This throws an interesting monkey wrench into the political landscape, since the dead king wrote this document and therefore technically all the local nobility must abide by it. But...is it really a good idea to have some murderhobos running the show over there?

That kind of "well yes this *document* says the keep is yours but I, and my army *really want it*" conflict makes great drama! With lots of local powers lining up to see who they should ally with, who's going to be on the winning side of any future conflict.

Generally, you'll want to assume that the PCs' actions have **unintended consequences**. When you build or buy or clear out a tower and make it yours, you make allies and enemies. You are upsetting the Steady State World, and have created an Inciting Incident, for which see Running the Game #24[1].

There is typically no cost here—the stronghold is a gift. The cost can be thought of as the risk to life and limb the players undertook. Though the local noble may gift the PCs a stronghold that needs some repair, that's pretty classic. The players imagine Greywall Keep as a Camelot-esque castle with pink walls and strict laws governing precipitation, but when they arrive they will discover the local noble was perhaps not as forthcoming with details as might be desired. Classic.

Certifying Ownership

This is purely a tradition in my campaign, but as soon as the players begin getting a stronghold, I tell them outright: they can spend the money, and it will get built, but they don't gain the benefit of it until they *defend it in battle*, as described more in **Appendix Two: Warfare** (page 231). This is, usually, the first time the players have encountered the Warfare system, but so far over approximately six campaigns, the players have never balked at this condition, and so far they have always looked forward to the battle! Of course, your mileage may vary.

The idea here is that raising the metaphorical flag and saying "this place is mine" sends a signal to local actors who heretofore took no notice of some low-level ratcatchers. But once you'd built a tower, keep, or temple, suddenly you're important enough to fear!

Establishments attract less attention, certainly, but even building a new inn or tavern sends a signal, in which case it is the town itself, not the establishment that comes under attack. Better start building some walls!

1 If you don't know what Running the Game is, have I got a YouTube channel for you! I mean...I do. I literally have a YouTube channel for you.

EXTENDED REST

Strongholds grant special abilities, which quickly run out of uses and must be recharged by taking an **extended rest**. An extended rest requires spending a week at your stronghold, touching base with your subjects and followers, and attending to your affairs.

This rule exists for a couple of reasons. First, it reinforces verisimilitude. It's unreasonable to expect a stronghold to grant its benefits indefinitely. A fighter who hasn't visited their keep in years is indistinguishable from a fighter without a stronghold!

Second, they give players a good reason to return home and that grants you, the GM, the opportunity to advance the politics of your campaign. It's possible, via *sending* or a *diplomats pouch* or just mundane messengers on horseback, to advance your politics without visiting your stronghold and, indeed, some of this should be allowed, but major events and revelations are better handled in person and, should war break out, a lord cannot command their troops from the bottom of a dungeon.

POWER!

Strongholds unbalance the game.[2] A paladin with a fully upgraded stronghold has access to many more abilities than a paladin without one. This is by design. It's fine to let your players get ahead of the power curve; you, the GM, have all the tools you need to challenge them. You have access to all the monsters, and you can make them nastier than usual.

To help rebalance things, we give villains and their minions their own stronghold abilities that are less complex—and therefore easier for an already overburdened GM to use—than the stronghold abilities of the PCs. See "Villain Strongholds" on page 66.

STRONGHOLDS & POLITICS

Strongholds also represent a political framework. Many campaigns tick along nicely without anyone, including the GM, worrying about things like "who's in charge here?" Where "here" is "this area of the map" or "this town" or "the area around the dungeon." This is perfectly fine; many successful campaigns have run for years without anyone needing to worry about this.

These rules change those assumptions. Because a Stronghold is also a symbol of power, it threatens other local lords. Even if your players have no martial ambitions, if they attract a few units of light cavalry suddenly they will start wondering "hey what can I do with these?"

So your world, if you use this book, slowly transforms into one where there are local powers. These "powers" are usually nobility, but they can be any characters with power and an army. A wizard with a tower may only have a small hamlet outside, and that hamlet has its own town council and the wizard doesn't bother them. But if the local Baron needs arcane assistance, it's this wizard he turns to.

These nobles and powerful NPCs rule different areas, they have their own strongholds and armies and their own subjects who work for them and will fight with them.

Local Powers

It's easy to go overboard when worldbuilding and assume you need to have every detail mapped out. Dozens of major and minor players, all the different barons and archmages and bishops and guildmasters can seem an insurmountable task.

So don't do that! You only really need three other local powers; an ally, an enemy, and someone who is neither. We can add more as we play, but we only need the three to get started.

The enemy lord serves an obvious purpose. They are a powerful threat by which the players can test themselves. They are opposed to the players' growing power for whatever reason.

The ally, probably not **as** powerful as the player, but older and more experienced, helps the player understand the nature of the political world they have found themselves in. And, should push come to shove, the allied lord can throw in with the player and contribute their meager army to the cause.

The neutral lord is someone with power, the power to determine who will win in the coming conflict between the player and the enemy lord, but currently on no one's side. Known not to be an ally of the evil lord, but also not on the players' side. It's going to take some negotiation, roleplaying, maybe some favors to sway them.

This small framework of three NPCs gives you everything you need to start a moderately robust political game. These characters do not appear by magic, they are NPCs that need to be introduced and developed like any other.

2 I think 5E is the best-designed edition of the game, but I also think some players overfocus on "balance" because they feel the game is something to be "solved." They expect a level of rigor more appropriate to a wargame or a card game. I don't have those expectations for an RPG.

The Keep

The keep[1] sits on a hill. It may be tall or squat, but it projects power. It protects. It is a symbol. It says "I am here, and this place is mine. These people, this land, is under my protection."

Unless you don't want it to be, of course—it's your keep, do what you want. Put your keep in a valley if you like, hide it in a forest. But notice that the above language makes no *moral* evaluation. A good ruler, an evil one, might each say the same thing but for different reasons.

PEOPLE KNOW IT'S THERE

Let's imagine you want to build a hidden keep—without using powerful magics. This is ahistorical, so if one of my players brought this up, I would explain to them something of the nature and purpose of keeps, and how hard (indeed, I think basically impossible) it is to build *anything* of this size and scale without everyone in the local area knowing.

It takes hundreds of workers months to build a keep, even if you're only repairing an existing fortification. And those workers have homes and families, and while they may eventually move onto your land—perhaps because you are a good ruler, or just because it's convenient to live near where they're spending months working—those people are going to talk about what they're building.

But if, after that, I saw the player still thought it would be cool to build a hidden keep, I would just ask, "Okay, cool, given that it's going to take a lot of people to make it, how do you plan on keeping it secret?" I wouldn't say no; I would just give the player a chance to think about it and be creative. Any answer they give will bring opportunities for drama!

So in general, building any kind of stronghold makes a statement. But a keep is a military fortification. It's not used for researching the mysteries of the universe, or communing with the powers of creation, or raising money and learning secrets, it's about **raising an army**. Giving your army somewhere to live. Protecting your people and enforcing your will abroad. Historically, keeps were built as a defense *against* armies, a safe and easily defensible location. But in all instances the keep is related to war in a way the other strongholds are not.

So, you build a keep because you want to raise an army and give them a place to stay and train.

RAISING UNITS

You can **attract** a unit by rolling on your class's followers chart. Some classes are naturally more martial than others—the fighter and paladin attract units more easily than the Wizard and Sorcerer. But even a fell-countenanced warlock like Graves, the Empty One, from my Shield of Gravesford campaign *could* attract a unit with a good roll. That would be a very interesting army—come to pledge service to a warlock!

Furthermore, you can spend gold to just **buy** a unit. But units not only cost money to buy, they also cost money to maintain, called **upkeep**. Anyone with enough money can maintain an army without a stronghold, it just costs a lot of money. Napoleon did it quite well and would have gotten away with it if it weren't for a plague of typhus.[2]

A keep reduces the cost to buy units by 10% per level, and it also reduces the upkeep of units by 10% per level. This means a 5th-level keep reduces both the cost to buy units and their upkeep cost by 50%.

Upon finishing a keep, you gain units equal in number to 2 plus the keep level. At the GM's discretion, if you're building a keep above 1st level, you could get your first unit when you begin construction, another unit halfway through, and the rest when it's complete. There could be good, dramatic reasons for this, and also it gives you a unit early that you can go annoy your neighbors with. And it's perfectly reasonable to presume the half-finished keep is complete *enough* to house *some* folks.

Which units arrive to pledge service is up to the GM, but there's a handy chart on the next page should they want to leave the choice to fate.

Newly raised units start at Size 1d4. If you get the same result twice[3], just increase the unit's Size by one.

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1 There's a great, by which I mean deeply weird, movie from Michael Mann called The Keep about a bunch of Nazis accidently letting a demon lose in Transylvania while an Eternal Man tries to stop them. This doesn't have anything to do with these rules, but it's my book, you get my weirdness.

2 That's real, by the way. Popularly, Napoleon blundered into Russia and lost because he, an experienced soldier who'd built an army that kept mobile by foraging, somehow forgot about the phenomenon called "winter." But in actuality Napoleon lost 80,000 men *in the first month of the campaign* to typhus spread by lice. I suspect many victorious generals would have had a bad time if they lost 80,000 men to disease in one month.

3 Actually very likely, as some units are simply much more common than others

All units raised are of the same ancestry as the owner of the keep.

Use the rules in **Creating Your Own Units** (page 235) to build the unit cards once you know which unit you've attracted.

Jess's elf cleric Lady Sariel builds a keep, attracts a unit of Regular Light Infantry, and then rolls again, getting another unit of Regular Light Infantry. She still only has one unit, but it's now Size 1d6 instead of Size 1d4.

TRAINING

A keep means an army, and an army requires training! As you train your soldiers, you get better with your own gear, gaining the following bonuses based on the weapons or armor that you use. Choose one of the following training benefits.

You cannot gain the benefit of training from armor, shields, or weapons you are not proficient in. You can change which training you receive during an extended rest (page 15).

Light Armor Training: You have advantage on Dexterity checks while wearing light armor.

Medium Armor Training: You gain 5 feet of extra movement while wearing medium armor. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.[4]

Heavy Armor Training: You learn to present your most heavily armored facing to your foes. Ranged attacks have disadvantage against you as crossbow bolts bounce and acid arrows splash harmlessly (sometimes) off your armor.

Bludgeoning Training: When you score a critical hit, the target has disadvantage on attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks until the start of your next turn.

Finesse Training: When an adjacent enemy damages you with a melee weapon, you may, as a reaction, make a melee attack against them with your wielded finesse weapon.

Piercing Training: You deal an extra 1d6 damage to creatures wearing heavy armor.

Reach Training: If you hit with a reach weapon, you can move the target 5 feet, but they must remain within your reach. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Shield Training: If you succeed in a weapon attack while wielding a shield, you can push your target 5 feet away from you. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Slashing Training: You deal an extra 1d6 damage to creatures wearing light, natural, or no armor.

UNITS RAISED BY KEEP

D100	UNIT TYPE
01–12	Green Light Infantry
13–24	Green Medium Infantry
25–34	Regular Light Infantry
35–44	Regular Medium Infantry
45–46	Seasoned Medium Infantry
47–48	Seasoned Heavy Infantry
49–57	Green Light Archers
58–66	Green Medium Archers
67–72	Regular Light Archers
73–78	Regular Medium Archers
79–86	Regular Light Cavalry
87–95	Regular Medium Cavalry
96–100	Seasoned Light Cavalry

Versatile Training: While wielding a versatile weapon in two hands, you gain +1 AC.

THE BARBARIAN CAMP

Barbarians are famous for keeps! In that under no circumstance would they ever build one. They are why other people build keeps! To a barbarian, the idea of putting all your men in an immobile walled jail seems ridiculous.

Of course, strictly speaking anyone can build any stronghold. And what counts as a "barbarian" has nothing to do with what's on your character sheet. You can easily be a fighter or ranger who looks and behaves in a classical barbarian mode.

BARBARIAN UNITS

D12	BARBARIAN UNITS
1–3	Green Light Infantry
4–6	Regular Light Infantry
7–8	Green Light Archers
9–10	Regular Light Archers
11	Regular Light Cavalry
12	Seasoned Light Cavalry

4 In other words, you can move one more square, and you can choose any one square in your movement that you can leave without provoking.

But if you want a rampaging horde, you want a barbarian camp. Accept no substitutes.

Substitutes for a Barbarian Camp

These rules show how a mobile stronghold behaves based on certain assumptions about a Rampaging Horde. With a little imagination, we can easily picture any number of other strongholds that might use these rules.

A druid might decide to go on the warpath, Awaken the Trees, and lead them to war! Do the Awakened Trees have a permanent stronghold? They could, but they could just as easily have a mobile camp!

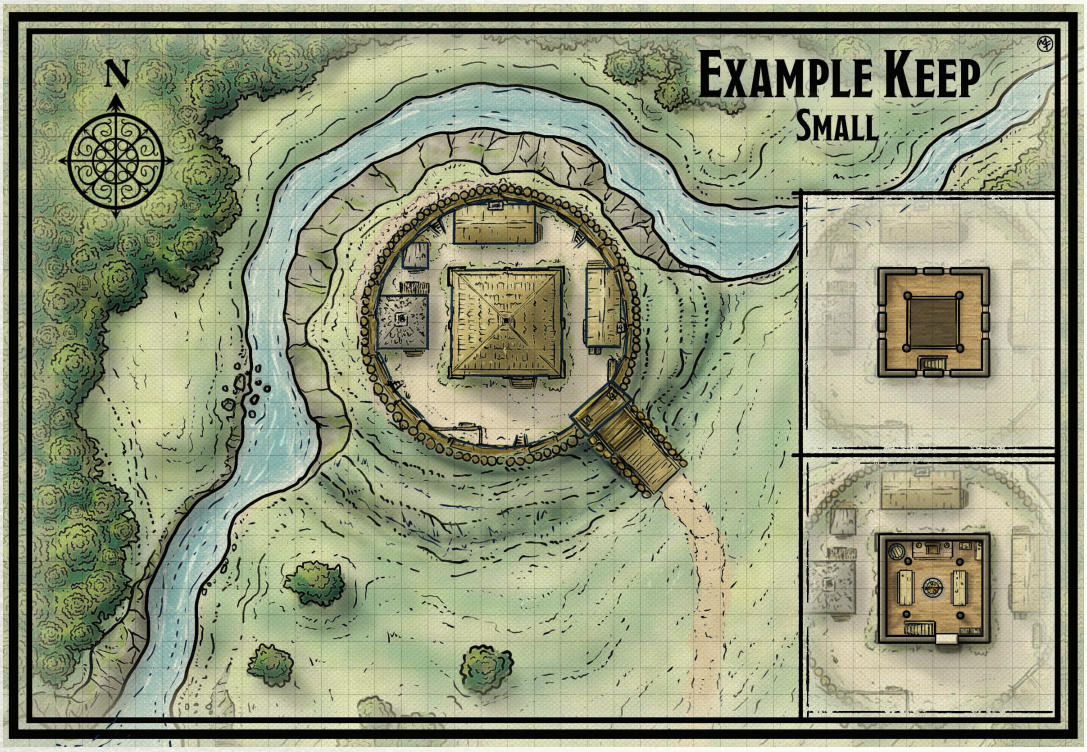
A monk might eschew a permanent stronghold and instead wander the land, inciting the peasantry to take up arms against their tyrannical lords and join her. Did Joan of Arc have a permanent fortification? Or was she basically leading a barbarian horde?

A barbarian camp functions as a keep with the following differences:

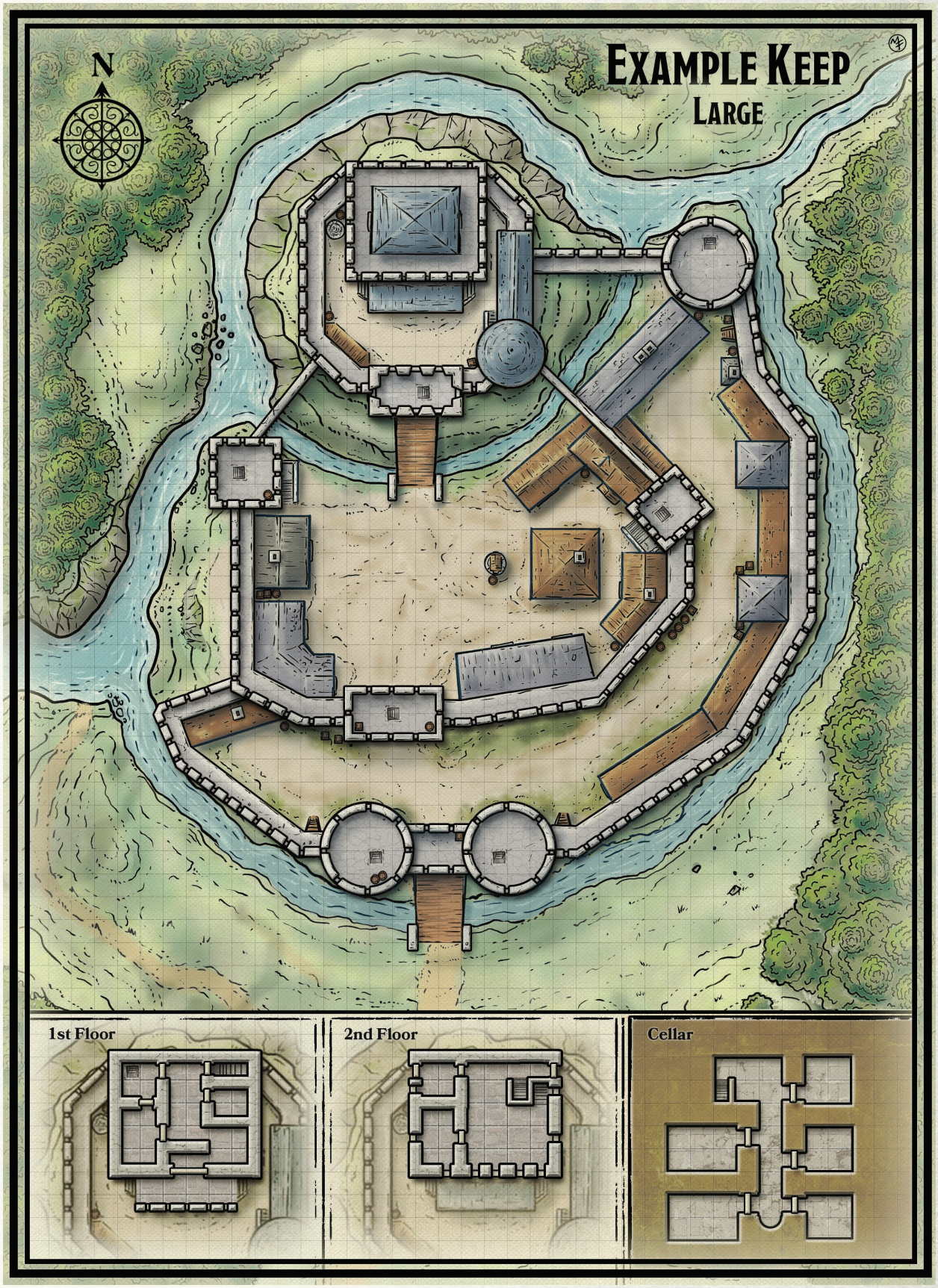
- It still costs gold, but half as much. Temporary wells must be dug, skins for tents must be constantly made and repaired. Weapons and armor still need repairs. Large tents require many wooden stakes. And foraging includes buying food off the locals as well as stealing it. When you're on the move, you basically have to do everything all the time to keep everyone fed and housed. The Mongols had mobile smithies and carpenter shops!
- It raises units just like a keep, but using the Barbarian Units chart on the previous page.
- It grants no discount to upkeep.
- It can *move* a number of provinces[5] per season *inversely proportional* to its size. A 1st-level barbarian camp can move 5 provinces per season. A 5th-level camp, only one. As long as *all* their units are Light, they do not suffer movement penalties for moving in Wilderness. But they do suffer normal movement penalties based on terrain.
- If a Barbarian camp spends one season in a civilized province, the owner of that province must make an Unrest check against DC 13. If the Development Level of the Province is greater than the level of the Barbarian camp, the roll has advantage. If it is less, then the roll has disadvantage.

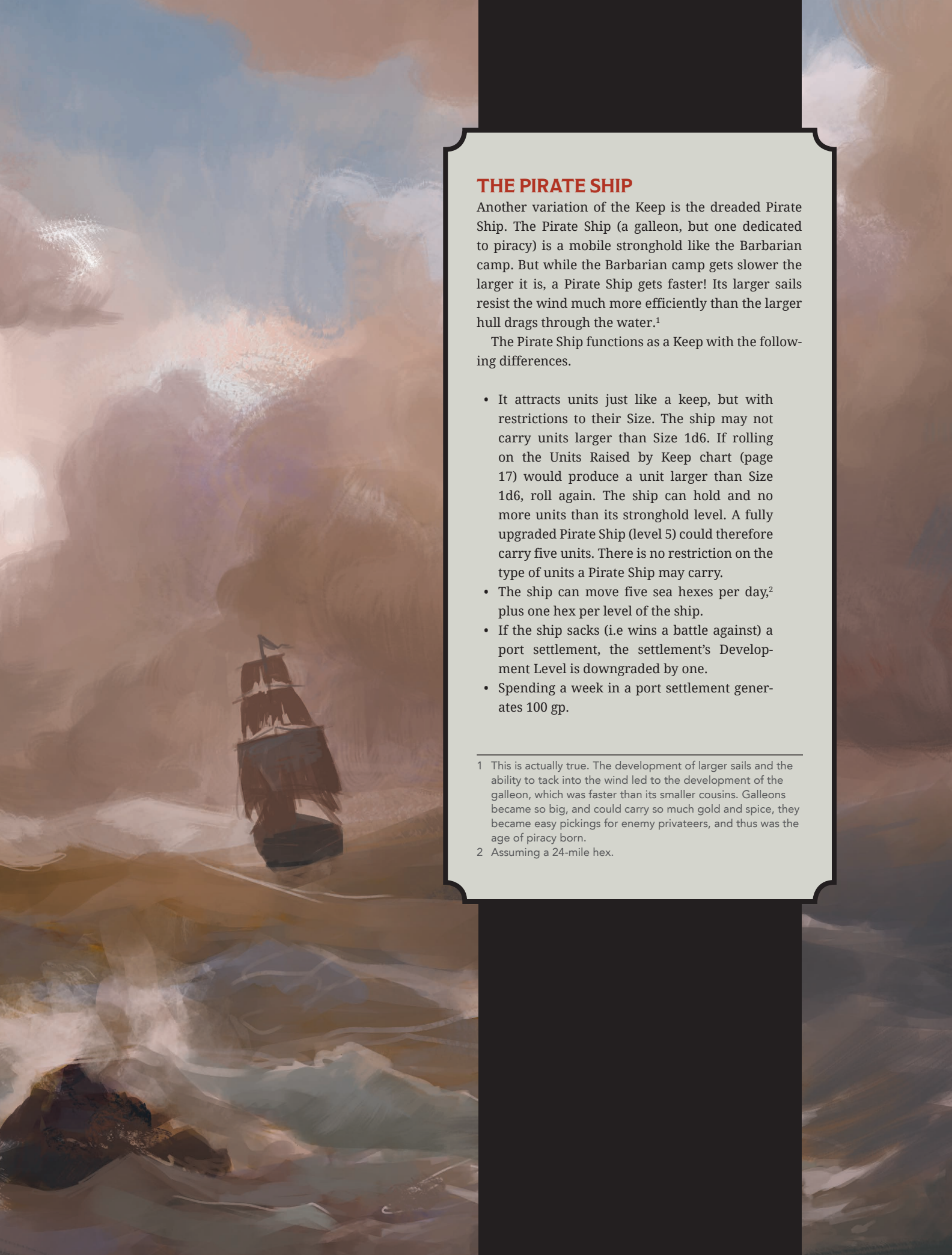
  If the province fails its Unrest check, it loses one development level. If this reduces it to 0 it reverts to Wilderness and no longer produces resources for its owner.

  Of course, spending a season there means withstanding the owner's own armies. We're basically talking about an invasion.



5 Provinces, Unrest, Population Centers, and Development Levels are all in Kingdoms & Warfare. I know it's kinda bogus to put rules in here you can't use yet, but I didn't want the benefits of a Barbarian camp spread out over two books.


N
Example Keep
Large
1st Floor
2nd Floor
Cellar



THE PIRATE SHIP

Another variation of the Keep is the dreaded Pirate Ship. The Pirate Ship (a galleon, but one dedicated to piracy) is a mobile stronghold like the Barbarian camp. But while the Barbarian camp gets slower the larger it is, a Pirate Ship gets faster! Its larger sails resist the wind much more efficiently than the larger hull drags through the water.[1]

The Pirate Ship functions as a Keep with the following differences.

- It attracts units just like a keep, but with restrictions to their Size. The ship may not carry units larger than Size 1d6. If rolling on the Units Raised by Keep chart (page 17) would produce a unit larger than Size 1d6, roll again. The ship can hold and no more units than its stronghold level. A fully upgraded Pirate Ship (level 5) could therefore carry five units. There is no restriction on the type of units a Pirate Ship may carry.
- The ship can move five sea hexes per day,[2] plus one hex per level of the ship.
- If the ship sacks (i.e wins a battle against) a port settlement, the settlement's Development Level is downgraded by one.
- Spending a week in a port settlement generates 100 gp.

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1 This is actually true. The development of larger sails and the ability to tack into the wind led to the development of the galleon, which was faster than its smaller cousins. Galleons became so big, and could carry so much gold and spice, they became easy pickings for enemy privateers, and thus was the age of piracy born.

2 Assuming a 24-mile hex.

The Tower

Magic is dangerous. Unpredictable. But there's something even more dangerous: magical research. This is why wizards and other arcane spellcasters put their towers far away from civilization: so they can experiment, and if they summon something with a number of tentacles and eyeballs that can only be expressed through the use of imaginary numbers, the only person who ends up wearing their organs on the outside is the hapless wizard who failed to say all the right words in the right order.

Mind you, lots of big fantasy cities have towers full of wizards, but I always assume that comes with the danger of occasionally summoning hordes of unspeakable monstrosities from the World Below. I mean, you've got all these knights sitting around, might as well give them something to do!

Founding a tower unlocks battle magic[1] for them and grants the arcane spellcaster the power to research new spells! And if you use our rules, there is a 0% chance things could go wrong. Well, it's close to 0%, I don't know your GM.

SPELL RESEARCH

We know player characters can invent spells—we see them throughout the text of the core game. Famous wizard PCs in the 1970s and the spells their players invented have been with us for the entire history of the game.

So we know it can be done, and it has been done, but back in the day the player would just tell the GM what their idea for a spell was, and the GM would come up with some suitably dangerous and heroic quest to acquire the ingredients and lore for the research, and then, quest complete, the GM would figure out the level of the spell to balance it.

You can still do this and, indeed, you don't really need rules for it. It's the kind of thing you do *because* there are no rules for it.

The core books have rules for creating new spells, but they're in the back and I don't get the sense they're widely used. They also rely on a combination of player initiative (first, think of a new spell that isn't already covered by one of the hundreds in the game) and GM approval (and the GM has to find a way to balance it, which is probably not fun), and if you're already doing that, do you need those rules? They're mostly just guidelines for how much damage spells do at which level.

Spell research should be *fun*, and one of the reasons it's fun is that it's *unpredictable*. My all-time favorite chart is the old Potion Miscibility table, which I wanted to roll on not because really good things could happen, but because really good things *and* really bad things could happen! Sometimes simultaneously! *Any* result was exciting and dramatic, and even if my character exploded, I would have been delighted.

This spell research system is all about rolling on charts, because in my experience as a player, when I see charts like the Potion Miscibility table or the Wild Magic chart, or the old-school Wand of Wonder chart, I just *want* to roll on them.

In this book, all the results of spell research benefit the caster, but not all of them are equally useful, and some of them are Weird. But because these benefits are *rewards* for building a stronghold, there are no bad results.

INVENTING A NEW SPELL

Inventing a new spell from scratch is sort of a pain in the ass and hard to balance and requires a unique combination of player ingenuity and GM balancing that can be a lot of work and not all of it fun.

But *researching* an existing spell? Taking a heretofore boring spell and making it do something extra and neat and maybe weird? Going into your research laboratory and not knowing exactly what you're going to get when you come out? That's *magical*. Here's how it works.

Pick a Spell

You can only research arcane spells, not divine spells—gods get really bitchy if you start trying to monkey with their ineffable Will. This means the spell must be on the spell list of the bard, eldritch knight, wizard, warlock, or sorcerer. 5th Edition doesn't really have the clear division of arcane and divine spells, but you'll notice that it doesn't give clerics or druids or paladins access to spells with someone's name in the title. Named spells are apparently, unique to "arcane spellcasters," and we like that tradition.

1 Described in *Kingdoms & Warfare*.

The GM can, of course, allow a divine character to research spells, and why not. It's just not the default assumption.

You must be able to cast the spell you want to research, and the spell can't have a proper name in it.

You may choose to research a cantrip, but the researched cantrip will be a 1st-level spell (see **Casting the Spell** on page 27).

Pick the Target of the Spell

These categories aren't comprehensive, but broadly applicable. Some spells may fall under multiple categories. "Does damage" applies to many spells that also fit elsewhere on the list. The goal is to let the player choose the category, and the GM interprets the exact target broadly.

The target of the spell can be:

- Yourself or one ally
- One enemy
- All bad guys in an area
- All allies in an area
- The spell does damage

Some spells don't fit into any of these categories, typically ones that bestow knowledge or that summon or create things. For such spells, the above list has enough effects that you could easily choose something from it or even create a unique list by picking and choosing effects below for a player to roll, but **we recommend "yourself or one ally" for spells that don't otherwise fit a category** since presumably the spellcaster is benefitting in some way from the spell.

Research

Researching a spell takes time and money. The money is spent buying arcane materials to use as prospective components. Many potential components must be tested to determine which is the proper one for this new spell. Special tomes must be procured describing the creation of the original spell, pointing the way towards a means to modify it.

The time spent takes 8 hours of every day, six days a week. The arcanist is able to take breaks a few times each day to speak with their lieutenant and command their followers, oversee the construction of their tower, but they spend the required time in research. If this time is interrupted, the new spells slips from their mind and they must start again.

To research a spell, the magic-user must spend 1 month, plus 1 week per level of the spell, minus 1 week per level of their tower.

> Graves builds a tower and calls it the Helltower. He decides it would be nice if his *vampiric touch* spell was better than normal *vampiric touches*. *Vampiric Touch* is a 3rd-level spell, and the Helltower is a 1st-level tower. Thus, researching it will take 6 weeks: the base time of 4 weeks, plus 3 weeks because *vampiric touch* is a 3rd-level spell, minus 1 week because his tower is 1st level.

Find the Chart, Roll or Pick

After picking the spell and its target, and researching it for the appropriate time, the magic-user rolls a d8 on the chart corresponding to its effect to discover the result of their research. This is the default use of these rules and tends to produce the best result.

If the GM and player agree, the player can just choose the effect they want—though this is much more prone to abuse. And, of course, the GM can roll *for* the player. This is a very old-school way of doing things, and while it may seem less satisfying for the player, it lets the GM curate the result.

The GM might, for instance, know or strongly suspect that *one* of the possible results would just be less satisfying for the player and make sure that result doesn't come up. They might still roll! And just pick the next or previous result on the list if they get an unsatisfactory result.

The player spent a lot of their character's money and time to get this, so while some weird results can be fun, and the player should be reminded they can do more research later, the ultimate goal is to give the player a fun reward.

Some of these results are *weird*. This is by design, meant to reinforce the idea that magic is unpredictable. It's not a science. That's why they call it magic.

THE SPELL TARGETS YOU OR ONE ALLY

D8	SPELL EFFECT
1	***Empowering:*** For 10 minutes, a random ability score of the target increases to 20.
2	***Regenerating:*** For the spell's duration, the target regains hit points equal to your spellcasting modifier at the start of each round.
3	***Mindful:*** For 10 minutes, the target may use your spellcasting ability modifier for all saving throws.
4	***Omniscient:*** For 10 minutes, the target grows a third eye that reveals hidden, disguised, and invisible creatures within 60 feet, but not objects on other planes.
5	***Levitating:*** For 10 minutes, the target gains a fly speed of 10 feet.
6	***Invulnerable:*** Until the start of their next turn, the target is immune to all damage.
7	***Topologically Ambiguous:*** For 10 minutes, there is a one-third chance at the start of each round that the target can teleport 10 feet as a bonus action. The odds of teleporting are cumulative (33% chance on the first round, 66% on the second, 100% on the third), but the odds reset each time the target teleports. The target can choose not to teleport, but if they do so, the odds still reset.
8	***Blazing:*** Until the start of their next turn, the target's movement leaves a trail of fire that lasts for the spell's duration and does 3d6 damage (Dexterity save for half) to anyone who begins their turn in it or moves into or through it.

THE SPELL TARGETS ALLIES

D8	SPELL EFFECT
1	***Dexterous:*** For 10 minutes, the targets' movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.
2	***Accelerating:*** For 10 minutes, before taking an action, the targets can move an extra half of their movement.
3	***Energizing:*** Until the start of their next turn, the target adds your spellcasting modifier to their attack rolls and spellcasting DC.
4	***Oracular:*** For 10 minutes, the target can see which items within 60 feet are magical, can see the effects of persistent spells, and can make a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check to know exactly what those items or spells are.
5	***Fated:*** Until the start of their next turn, targets may reroll damage rolls and may take the new roll.
6	***Vengeful:*** For 10 minutes, targets gain a reaction they may use to attack any enemies who damage them.
7	***Revealing:*** Until the start of their next turn, targets always roll natural 20s on Perception checks.
8	***Gloating:*** For 10 minutes, any target who drops an enemy to 0 hit points gains a move action or attack action.

THE SPELL TARGETS ONE ENEMY

D8	SPELL EFFECT
1	***Betraying:*** The target immediately attacks another target of your choice.
2	***Beguiling:*** The target does not recognize you as an enemy. Until the start of your next turn, your attacks against them have advantage, and they have disadvantage on saving throws against your spells.
3	***Distracting:*** On their next turn, the target can move or attack, but not both.
4	***Elucidating:*** The target blurts out a closely held secret.
5	***Stupefying:*** The target's Intelligence decreases to 3 until the start of their next turn.
6	***Illuminating:*** Until the start of their next turn, the target glows, granting advantage on all attacks against them and illuminating any hidden allies standing adjacent to them.
7	***Confusing:*** The target's next attack targets a random legal target. They will use their movement on their next turn to get closer to that target if necessary.
8	***Exposing:*** The target's clothing and armor disappear until the start of their next turn. Adjust AC and abilities accordingly.

THE SPELL TARGETS SEVERAL ENEMIES

D8	SPELL EFFECT
1	***Overwhelming:*** Affected targets are knocked prone.
2	***Thunderous:*** Affected targets are pushed 10 feet back.
3	***Defiling:*** Roll 1d6. All affected targets take that much damage, and you gain temporary hit points equal to the total damage done to the targets.
4	***Immobilizing:*** Roots the targets to their current spots until the start of their next turn. They are grappled.
5	***Blinding:*** Flesh grows over the targets' eyeballs. They are blind for one round per tower level.
6	***Hideous:*** Until the start of their next turn, affected targets' arms mutate into tentacles. They drop their weapons. If they don't have arms, they grow them, flailing ineffectually, missing attacks and failing to cast spells.
7	***Enfeebling:*** Targets gain vulnerability to fire, ice, electricity, or acid—chosen each time the spell is cast—for one round per tower level.
8	***Telekinetic:*** Move all affected targets 10 feet in any one direction. If moved 10 feet up, each target takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage when they fall back down and must make a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone

Does Damage

Find your damage type on the list below.

- (Acid) **Melting**: Objects carried by the target are hit and take damage equal to the spell's damage.
- (Bludgeoning) **Sundering**: For the spell's duration, armor worn by the targets degrades by 2. Sundering effects do not stack.
- (Cold) **Chilling**: Affected targets are grappled until the end of their next turn.
- (Fire) **Incinerating**: Affected targets continue to burn, taking an extra 1d6 damage at the start of each round until they spend an action extinguishing the flames.
- (Force) **Detonating**: Affected targets are knocked prone. On their next turn, they must make a Wisdom saving throw to stand up. On their following turn, they may stand up normally without making a save.
- (Lightning) **Shocking**: Affected targets have disadvantage on all saving throws until the end of your next turn.
- (Necrotic) **Unholy:**[2] 1d4 ghouls rise from the ground, each anywhere you choose within 30 feet. They obey your commands for a number of rounds equal to your spellcasting modifier, then crumble to dust.
- (Piercing) **Puncturing**: For 10 minutes, weapon attacks against affected targets score critical hits on attack rolls of 15 or higher.[3]
- (Poison) **Nauseating**: Affected targets forgo their next turn, spending it vomiting.
- (Psychic) **Hallucinating**: On their next turn, the targets perceive allies as enemies and enemies as allies, and act accordingly.
- (Radiant) **Dazzling**: Each target is blind until the end of its next turn.
- (Slashing) **Wounding**: Each target takes 1d10 damage at the end of its next turn.
- (Thunder) **Concussive**: The targets are pushed 20 feet back.

"I Got a Result I Don't Like"

Alright, look. The whole point of this system is to *reward* your players for spending the time and money (and frankly, just having the desire) to build a stronghold, so if you think there's *any danger* your player might reject the result, maybe just let them pick. Or roll behind the screen for them and make sure they get a result you know they'll like.

The whole point of rolling is to make the result seem like *fate*. Like it came from forces beyond you or your player's control. It helps trick us into feeling like the rules are describing a real world. But that sense of verisimilitude isn't as important as the player feeling like they got a cool reward for their effort.

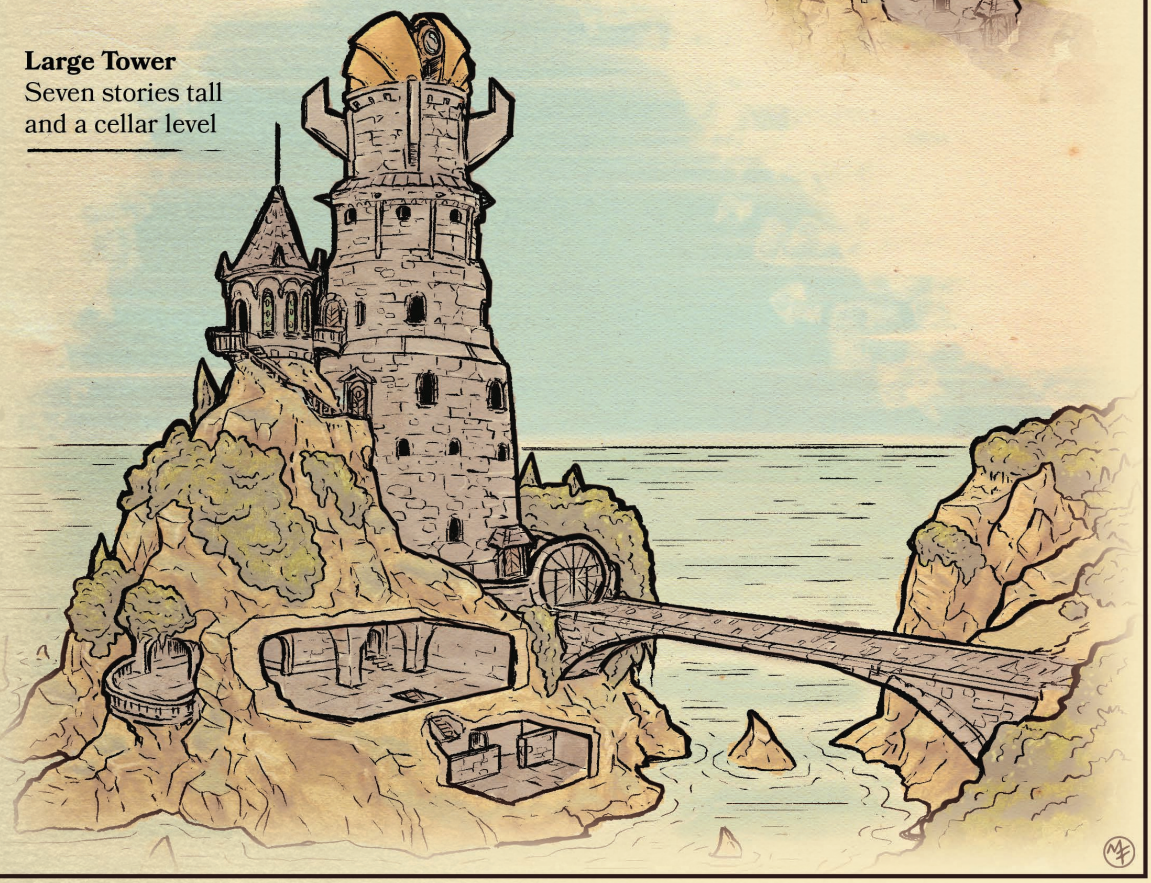
2 Yeah I know some folks don't consider raising the dead to be evil or "unholy."
3 In other words, your spell creates a "weak spot" in the target's armor or hide that others can exploit.

Example Towers

Small Tower
Three stories tall

Medium Tower
Five stories tall

Large Tower
Seven stories tall
and a cellar level



More Research

A given spell can only be modified by research once, and a given magic-user can only modify a number of spells equal to their tower level.

Spell research cannot grant you access to spell levels your class does not have. You may research a 4th-level spell to produce a 5th-level spell you cannot cast yet, but will be able to once you level up—your research shows the spells exists, but you haven't properly mastered it yet. However, you cannot research a 5th-level spell, producing a 6th-level spell, if your class can never access 6th-level spells.

Besides these limits, the player is free to do more research later. The GM should let the player live with the new spell for a while and, if they don't like the result, "forget" that research and work on another spell. The goal is to empower the players and make their stronghold feel powerful and useful!

If the player likes the result, they should be free to **choose the same spell modifier** for subsequent spell research.

> Reginam researches *arcane eye* (spell affects yourself or an ally), rolls on the appropriate chart, and gets a 4. Omniscient! Perfect! She now has *Reginam's omniscient eye*, and the effects dovetail well.

> Upon returning to her tower after adventuring, she decides to research *haste*, and after spending the time researching it, she simply choose to apply *omniscient* to *haste* without rolling, because her player feels like it makes a good combo.

Once a character has a signature spell, especially after they've used it in the wild a few times, rumors of its existence begin to circulate and eventually it's possible, even inevitable, that another spellcaster might reverse-engineer how this custom spell was done and duplicate it. Scrolls of Reginam's omniscient eye might begin circulating. Enemy spellcasters might start using it against the heroes!

Your character is automatically resistant to the effects of any spell you research. Reginam, therefore, has advantage on saving throws against Reginam's omniscient eye. It will still work, even against the wizard who invented it! It's just much less likely to work.

Casting the Spell

Now the magic-user has their own spell! *Velorin's blazing gaseous form*! *Elemein's overwhelming hypnotic pattern!* **The level of the final spell is one higher than the level of the original spell.**

If the target of a spell saves against it, the modifier automatically fails. If the target of a *betraying charm person* makes their Wisdom save against the charm, they do not suffer the "betraying" effect.

The effects of a modified spell cannot be combined with the effects of the unmodified spell. The temporary hit points gained from *mindful enhance ability* do not stack with *enhance ability* for instance. An *enlarged* character cannot be further enlarged by casting *regenerating enlarge*.

Spells that can be cast as a ritual can be modified, but this does not change the duration of their effect. *Empowering Commune* cast as a ritual takes 10 minutes to cast, but the Empowering benefit still only lasts 10 minutes after that.

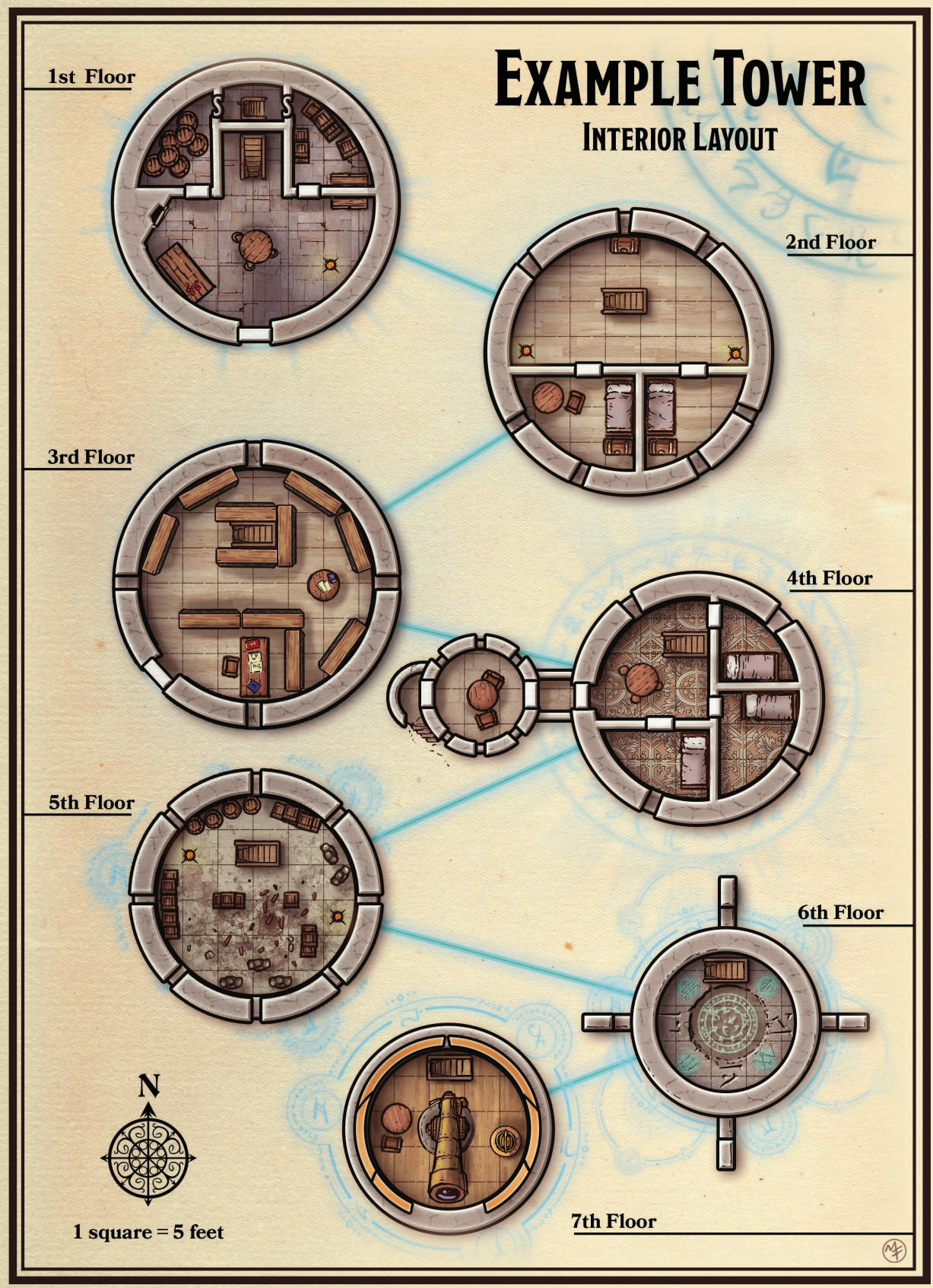
There's one other restriction: the magic-user can only cast the spell a number of times equal to their spellcasting modifier. Once they do, they must take an extended rest if they want to cast the spell again.

Future Use of the Spell

As the magic-user casts the spell and learns its new nature, the GM may discover the spell is perhaps not as useful as everyone might like, or it might be *too* useful. The GM is free to modify the spell over time, adjusting its effects, changing the spell level. This represents the magic-user's changing understanding of the spell. Efficiencies are discovered. Some elements of the arcane formula, once clear, begin to slip from the spellcaster's mind as the spell itself twists and writhes under human attention.

Once the GM deems the spell to be grown up and ready to enter the wide world outside the magic-user and their tower, and presuming the player is also happy with it—remember, balance aside, the final result of this process is a *reward* for the player—the GM may decree that the spell is now well studied and available to other spellcasters to learn, and it can be scribed onto scrolls and copied into spellbooks.

Congratulations, you have added to the growing body of spellcraft knowledge! May the gods have mercy on your victims!


Example Tower
Interior Layout
1st Floor
2nd Floor
3rd Floor
4th Floor
5th Floor
6th Floor
7th Floor
N
1 square = 5 feet

ALTERNATIVE TOWER RULES: TOWERS BY SCHOOL

Here are some simple rules for towers by school, in case you don't like the spell research system.

Upon finishing a tower, the magic-user must dedicate it to one of the eight schools of magic. It is traditional to give your tower a name based on the school—like, if you choose Divination, you might call your stronghold a Tower of Prophecy. Necromancy...well, a Tower of Necromancy is pretty cool, but also the Tower of Death is pretty badass. Or the Black Tower, or the Tower of Pale Flesh. You get the idea.

A magic-user who studies at their tower for a week can prepare and cast spells from their tower's school as if the spell were cast at one level higher. In other words, *fireball*, studied by a 5th-level warlock with an evocation tower, would cast as a 4th-level spell and do an extra 1d6 damage, even though the warlock was using a 3rd-level slot.

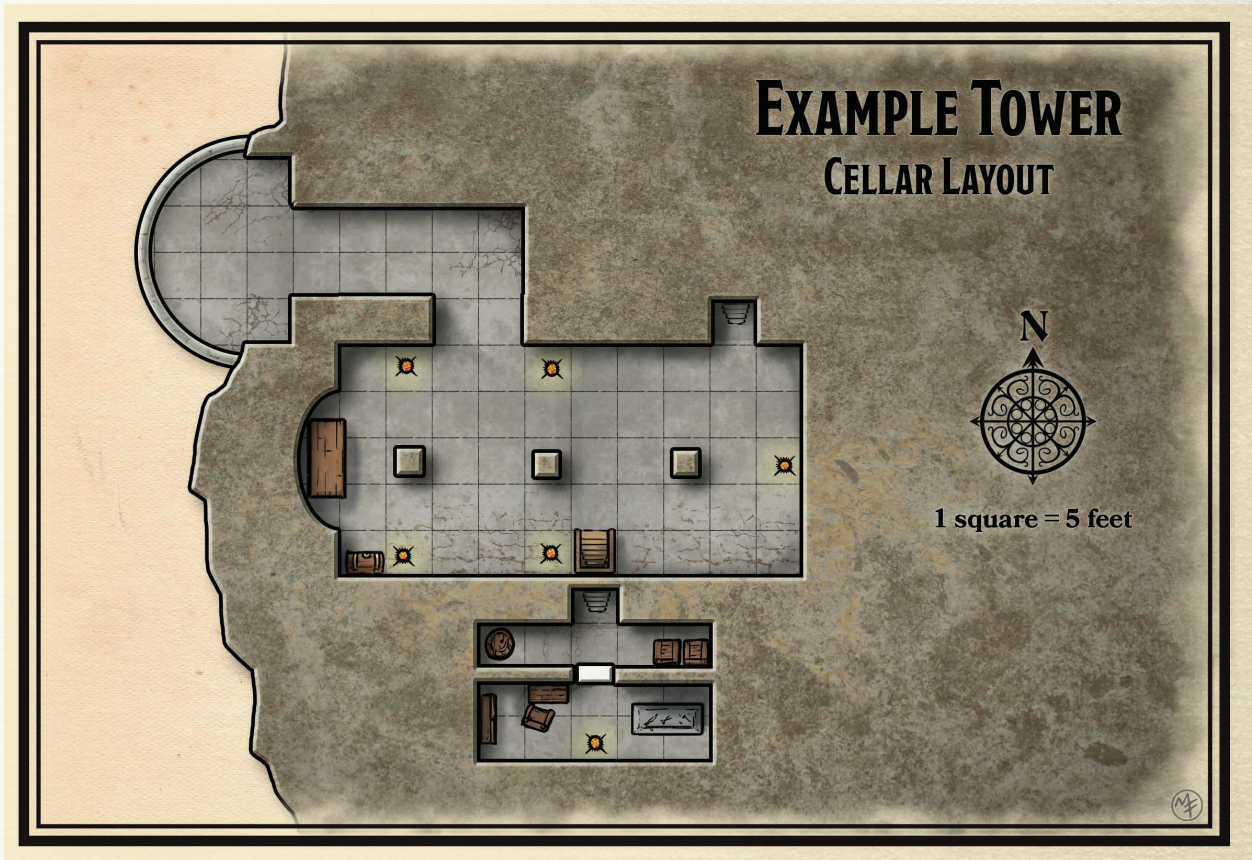
A magic-user can only prepare spells in this way a number of times equal to the level of their tower (so typically once when starting out). After this, they must return home and spend a week researching in their tower.

> Velorin finishes his tower and dedicates it to necromancy. He memorizes *bestow curse* at 3rd level, but when he casts it, it behaves in all other ways like a 4th-level spell, extending the duration to "concentration."
>
> All the necromancy spells he casts that day are cast as though they were one level higher. But because his tower is only 1st level, he cannot prepare his necromantic spells this way again until he spends a week in his tower. After upgrading to a 2nd-level tower, he may now spend 2 days casting necromantic spells at higher level.

You could, of course, decide that towers in your campaign grant both these benefits **and** spell research (see below).

Optional Rule: Effort

Another method I've used and enjoyed allows the magic-user to cast their specialist spells as though they were one level higher with no limit (other than the normal limits of spells by level per day), but **each time they cast a spell at a higher level, they must make a Constitution check of DC 10 plus the spell's level.** If they fail, they suffer one level of exhaustion. A full rest removes **one** level of exhaustion.



The Temple

The priest, the warlock, the druid all share something in common. They do not get their power through knowledge and study alone, but through access to a higher power. A deity, extraplanar being, or force of nature. The telepathic Wild Men of Ix, for instance, worship Bale, the ever-raging tempest-maelstrom that lies in the ocean between Vasloria and Rioja, north of the Ixian island chain. Sages claim the maelstrom is a hole between worlds, but the Ixian stormspeaker shamans call Bale their god. They pray to it...and their prayers are answered with druidic spells and incantations.

Divine spellcasters have little use for a tower or a keep, but they do build temples. Some are mighty churches, some are underground shrines to their dark god, and some are simple pools of crystal water surrounded by green trees and blessed by rays of sunlight.

Though temples come in many forms, they all share the same basic function. They grant the supplicant a direct line to the object of their worship, and the supernatural entity they call on grants them rewards in exchange for faithful service including access to battle magic[1], and the temporary aid of a servitor depending on the character's concordance.

CONCORDANCE

The measure of how pleased your deity[2] is with you is called **concordance**. If your deity is pleased enough to reward you, then you are referred to as "in concordance" with your deity. If they are *not* pleased, then you are out of concordance. Typically, there is no way to know whether you're in or out before you petition your deity. Your concordance is known only to your GM.

Every deed you do that furthers your god's ethos increases your concordance and makes your god more likely to grant you a boon in battle. Failing to uphold your patron's ethos has a similarly negative consequence. A cleric's **Divine Intervention** is a much-improved version of this same ability. Concordance is available to everyone but has a downside and only grants specific rewards. Divine Intervention only works for Clerics, has no downside and can potentially fix any problem.

The gods consider it your responsibility to know right from wrong. If you are tricked by an enemy into doing their bidding, the gods are just as angry at you as they would be if you helped the enemy willingly. They don't pay *very* close attention and don't have time to evaluate the subtleties of situational ethics.

PETITIONING YOUR DEITY

The number-one way to lose concordance is to use it. **As an action, you can petition your deity for aid. The GM[3] rolls percentile dice** and, depending on your character's concordance, you may receive aid, be ignored, or punished for your repeated badgering. The gods can help you, but they get really annoyed when you pester them. Each time you petition your god and make a concordance roll, you lose some concordance depending on the result you get (with no loss if you attract a servitor).

Then there's a temporary penalty based on the number of times you've petitioned in the last week. Anyone can petition their deity and hope to get a reply, but unless you've been busting your ass (or have a temple), there's a good chance you'll be cursed just for being annoying.

Calculating Concordance

Before rolling, the GM calculates the PC's concordance, a measure of how pleased their power is with them. This may be a running tally the GM has kept over the course of the adventure or calculated on the spot. The following bonuses apply to the roll.

Temporary Bonuses and Penalties

These bonuses and penalties only apply to the next roll the PC makes.

CIRCUMSTANCE	BONUS
Desecrated an enemy altar	+10
Thwarted an enemy priest	+5
Converted a follower	+5
Converted an enemy priest	+15
Thwarted an enemy minion	+1
Consecrated an altar	+10
Left an enemy altar intact	-15
Failed to uphold the tenets of the deity	-5
Aided an enemy priest	-10

1 Described in *Kingdoms & Warfare*.
2 Or whatever. I can't keep writing "deity or power or abstract concept," you get the idea.
3 Of course, the GM can let the player roll! Just be aware, a 100 is just as likely as a 1.

Permanent Bonuses

These bonuses apply to every roll.

CIRCUMSTANCE	BONUS
Each Character Level	+1%
Owns a Temple	+15%
Each time the PC petitioned in the last week	-10%
Each servitor type the PC summoned in the last week	-10%

Of course, the GM can just ask the player to keep the running tally. So when they petition their deity, the GM asks, "Okay, what have you done for your god since the last time you called upon them?" The GM is always free to agree, disagree, or add their own bonuses or penalties. Only the GM knows what the gods' *real* attitude is, bonuses be damned.

It is entirely possible to get a concordance over 130% between the roll and your bonus, in which case you get the 130% result. You can have negative concordance, which gives a penalty to your roll, but your result cannot be below 1.

The Servitor Chart

If your concordance result grants you a servitor, determine which servitor arrives by choosing one from the column you rolled.

The servitor you choose must be within your character or deity's purview *and* be approved by the GM. No matter how pious your lawful good paladin is, your god will not grant you a demon, devil, or undead and *probably* nothing from Arcadia or Primordius.

The character who summoned the servitor is informally referred to as the "summoner" or the "petitioner" or more formally "the concordant." The latter term is what the servitors usually use.

THE CONCORDANCE CHART

ROLL	RESULT	ADJUSTMENT
01–20	Cursed! For the next minute, whenever you make an attack roll or a saving throw, you must roll a d4 and subtract the number rolled from the result of your attack roll or saving throw.	–20
21–65	Ignored. Things could have been worse.	–15
66–75	Blessed. For the next minute, if you make an attack roll or a saving throw, you may roll a d4 and add the number rolled to the result of your attack roll or saving throw.	–10
76–84	Type I Servitor	–10
85–94	Type II Servitor	–10
95–104	Type III Servitor	–15
105–109	Type IV Servitor	–20
110–114	Type V Servitor	–25
115+	Type VI Servitor	–30

SERVITORS

SOURCE	TYPE I	TYPE II	TYPE III	TYPE IV	TYPE V	TYPE VI
Court of Arcadia (fey)	Mantis Knight	Orchid Count	Monarchon	Oleander Dragon	Ash Marshall	Sidereal Vizier
The Celestial Host (celestials)	Princip	Authority	Virtue	Dominion	Throne	Seraph
The Elemental Templars (elementals)	Fire Mote	Source of Earth	Pillar of Water	Knight of Air	Storm Magistrate	High Templar of Dust
Court of All Flesh (aberrations)	Baron Malgas	Korsoth Vastikan	The Queen of Bones	Lord Rall	Uursovk	Maladar Dictum
The Inexorables (constructs)	Space	Death	Change	Fate	Time	Nature
Demons (fiends)	Lesser Marilith	Vrock	Oni	Hezrou	Glabrezu	Lesser Balor
Devils (fiends)	Barbed Devil	2 Bearded Devils	Lesser Erinyes	Chain Devil	Bone Devil	Horned Devil
Undead (undead)	Wraith	2 Wights	2 Ghasts, 3 Ghouls	1 Ghost, 2 Ghasts	1 Wraith, 2 Ghasts	1 Ghost, 2 Wights

Picking a Chart for the Player

GMs, one option you have is to let the player roll, but *you* decide which row they're rolling on. The unpredictability of this can be a lot of fun, but be sure to choose thoughtfully. A druid who opposes law (like, roads and civilizations) would obviously be in accord with the Court of Arcadia, but the Court of All Flesh *also* opposes law. Which servitor arrives may say a lot about the character doing the petitioning!

Using Your Servitor

The summoned creature is referred to as a servitor. It arrives ready to fight and die, perhaps resentfully, for the concordant. Regardless of its attitude, a servitor only remains on the same plane as the concordant for **four rounds plus one round per level of your stronghold**, returning to their home dimension forthwith. Servitors who are killed in the Mundane World leave their bodies behind, and their essence returns to their home plane to reform there.

Servitors often bring word from the power the concordant serves, informing them of unknown dangers or otherwise making cryptic pronouncements. Feel free to imbue the servitor with personality and give them the chance, during combat, to interact with the heroes.

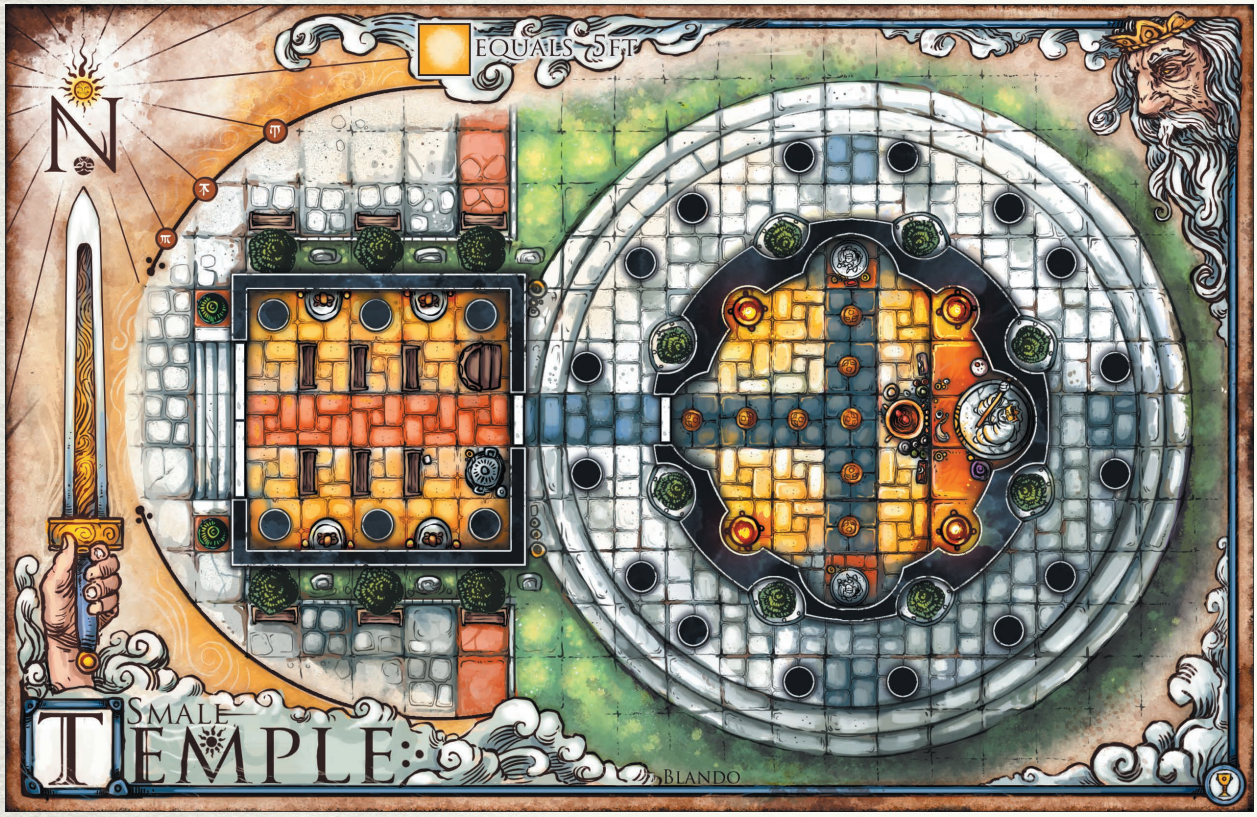
DRUID GROVES

A variant temple, the druid's grove[4] gives up the bonus to concordance for owning a temple in exchange for installing a powerful spell, including spells you don't know or which might not be on the druid spell list, into the grove making it permanent.

The druid chooses one spell from the list below and spends a month in meditation. If the powers that grant them their spells are pleased with their work, they permanently install the spell the druid requested, which can be cast once per period listed in the Grove Spells table.

GROVE SPELLS

SPELL	CASTING LIMIT
Reincarnate	Once per Season
Foresight	Once per Season
Greater Restoration	Once per Month
Heal	Once per Month
Ressurection	Once per Year

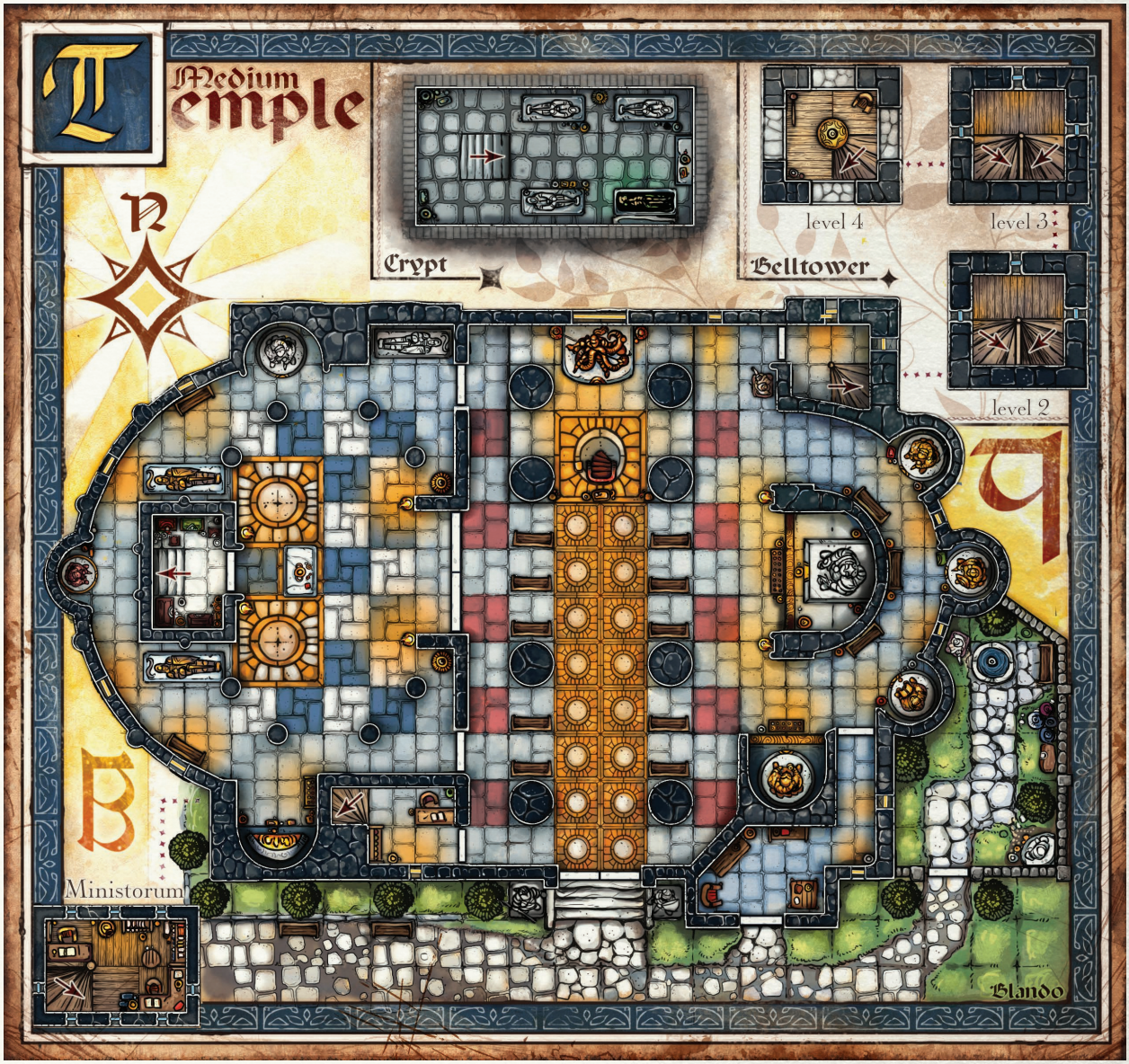


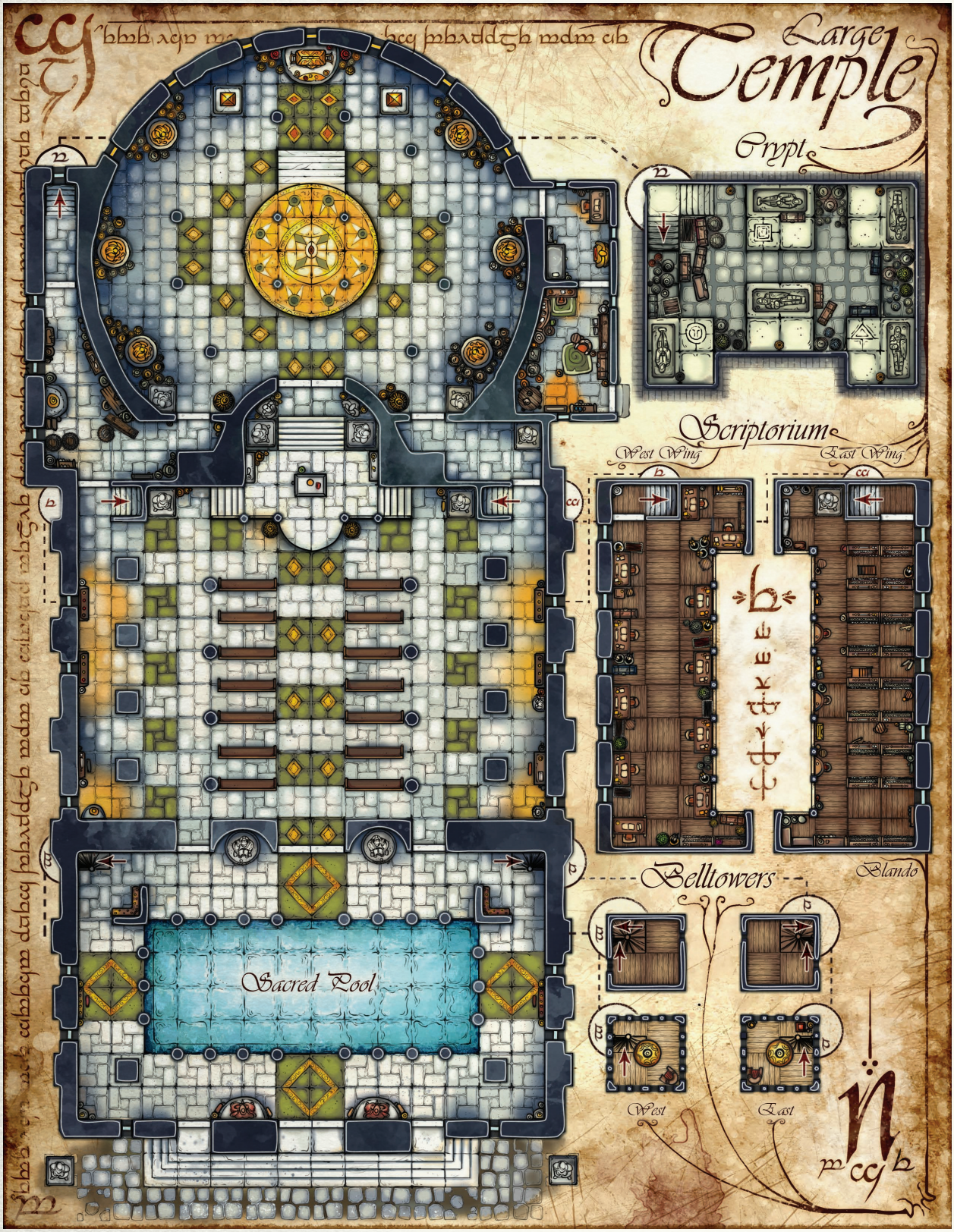
4 We use the term "grove" both for this variant Temple and as a generic, narrative term for a Druid's stronghold later in the book.

The spell belongs to the grove but is cast by the druid. The grove must be continuously tended. Leaving the grove untended for a month causes it to revert to wild nature and the spell dissipates. The Druid who founded the grove doesn't have to be the one to tend it, a lieutenant or follower will do.

The druid may still summon servitors using concordance, they just don't gain a bonus to the roll for owning a temple. The grove uses different rules with different benefits.

The installation of a high-level spell grants the druid who tends the grove power and authority. Local barons and lords may visit hoping the druid will aid them and cast the spell in their benefit. This is a great opportunity for some classical "tit-for-tat" plotting, but now it is the PC who holds the power, and pronounces "I will grant you this boon if you undertake this quest for me," and the NPC cast as the character who must scurry around, trying to earn the favor of our hero!




Large Temple
Crypt
Scriptorium
West Wing
East Wing
Belltowers
Blando
Sacred Pool
West
East

The Establishment

Not all strongholds are mighty fortresses made of stone. If you're a rogue or bard, you have little use for an army, or your own bespoke spell, or...well actually, being able to summon allies in combat *would* be pretty nice, but then you'd have to pledge service to a deity, and you're not really the "follow through with your agreements" type. You prefer people owing *you* favors, not the other way round.

A business is much better! Businesses can be small and lucrative and, best of all, *give no indication of what really goes on there*. A legitimate business that hides your covert operation is called a "front," by the way. But here, we'll call it an **establishment**.

An establishment does two things: it makes money and gathers information, often from the same people it's making money off. Your establishment could be an inn or a general store, both classic examples. Or it could be a blacksmith's shop! Why not? So you don't know anything about blacksmithing, so what? You can hire a blacksmith who will be very happy to have someplace warm and dry and well equipped to do their business in!

Meanwhile, you make it a point to listen to all the interesting things the customers unwittingly reveal to the smith. Or you could stay away from the shop completely, have the blacksmith come to you with your part of the profits and whatever juicy tidbits folks were foolish enough to reveal. The better your front, the more likely folks are to speak openly there.

Revenue

Each season (or every four months, depending on the calendar of your campaign world), your establishment generates 1,000 gp per establishment level.

If your establishment is part of a castle, you can use this money to upgrade your castle, no problem.

RUMORS

During an adventure or in the lead-up to one, you can spend some money and collect some rumors about the quest you're about to go on. The cost is 100 gp per establishment level.

On a successful Gather Intel check (see below), you learn the name of one kind of creature you'll be fighting (goblins, bandits, dragons, oozes, etc.) and roughly how many there will be (a few, a dozen, dozens, a score, scores, etc.). During the adventure, those creatures will be vulnerable to damage from your attacks, for a number of attacks equal to your establishment level.

In addition, the GM can choose to reveal any of the following:

- The location of a secret door or a hidden entrance or exit
- The location and nature of a trap
- A description of one riddle or puzzle
- The location and description of one powerful magic item

It may seem like this is taking the fun out of the adventure, but for the player with the establishment it will seem like the opposite. It will make them feel awesome, and at the end of the day, you can always add more traps and secret doors!

THAT'S A LOT OF MONEY

Yeah! That's sort of the point. But look at it this way: is it substantively more than your character gets from adventuring? Not in my experience. And apart from other things in this book, what exactly is there to spend money on? It's not like gold all by itself makes your character more effective in combat or harder to hit, nor does it solve problems in the dungeon or elsewhere. For many players, simply having a lot of money is a fun fantasy all by itself.

The strongholds are designed so the PCs each have a different kind and they all work together. The rogue can raise money but has no army, the fighter wants an army but an army costs money, etc.

GATHERING INTEL

Investigation allows you to do detective work, learning the whereabouts and activities of individuals, but organizations are larger and more complex. By collecting a little information from everyone who visits, your establishment lets you spy on organizations and people. This is represented by your Gather Intel skill, gained if you own an establishment.

Intel lets you know what your enemies are up to, along with your allies and those organizations—guilds, orders, countries, and such—who claim to be neutral. *What* you learn is up to the GM. It will be useful but highly generalized. For example, "The Monks of White Fire know you recovered the *sword of a million years* and they're planning on taking it from you," or "The king is closing trade across the southern border." Okay, that's good to know, but it's narrative. There's no mechanic tied to these things.

Organizations

An organization is any collection of people who agree to common rules and hierarchy in order to further some agenda, goal, or philosophy. An order of knights, a wizards' college, a thieves' guild, a duchy, a barony, a church—though not a single church building, but the network of priests and acolytes who all believe in the same doctrine.

You don't have to *know* an organization exists to gather intel on it! In fact, that is a classic use of the Gather Intel skill! "I think there's a conspiracy to infiltrate the Knights of the White Hart, but I don't know by whom. Can I make a roll?"

The GM knows the nature of this villainous organization and can set the DC accordingly and let the player roll. If they succeed, they learn the name of the organization and possibly something about its makeup and goals.

Range

Obviously you can't use your establishment to deduce the existence of organizations on the other side of the world. Your establishment is only effective against organizations operating within 24 miles times its establishment level. On many maps, a hex is 24 miles from side to side.

So, a 1st-level establishment could spy on organizations in its hex and in the six hexes around it (a one-hex radius). A 2nd-level establishment could spy on its hex and the 18 closest hexes (a two-hex radius).

Making the Check

Gather Intel is a skill granted by your establishment, and it uses your stronghold level as its maximum bonus instead of an ability modifier.[1] So, a 1st-level establishment would let you make Gather Intel checks at a maximum bonus of +1. You are automatically proficient in Gather Intel if you have an establishment and add your proficiency modifier.

Gathering intel costs money—it's expensive to pay folks to spy on people! It costs 100 gp per level of your establishment. Larger establishments with larger bonuses have more people to pay! For each increment of 100 gp you pay, you gain a +1 bonus to the check. No, you can't pay nothing to roll at +0.

> Jennifer has a 3rd-level establishment (a general store). If she pays 300 gp, she can make a Gather Intel check at +3. She cannot pay 400 gp to get +4, because she is limited by the level of her establishment. But she could choose to pay 200 gp to get +2 to her roll.

You may make a number of Gather Intel checks per season equal to your establishment level, but you cannot make more than one check against the same organization during the same season.

Setting the DC

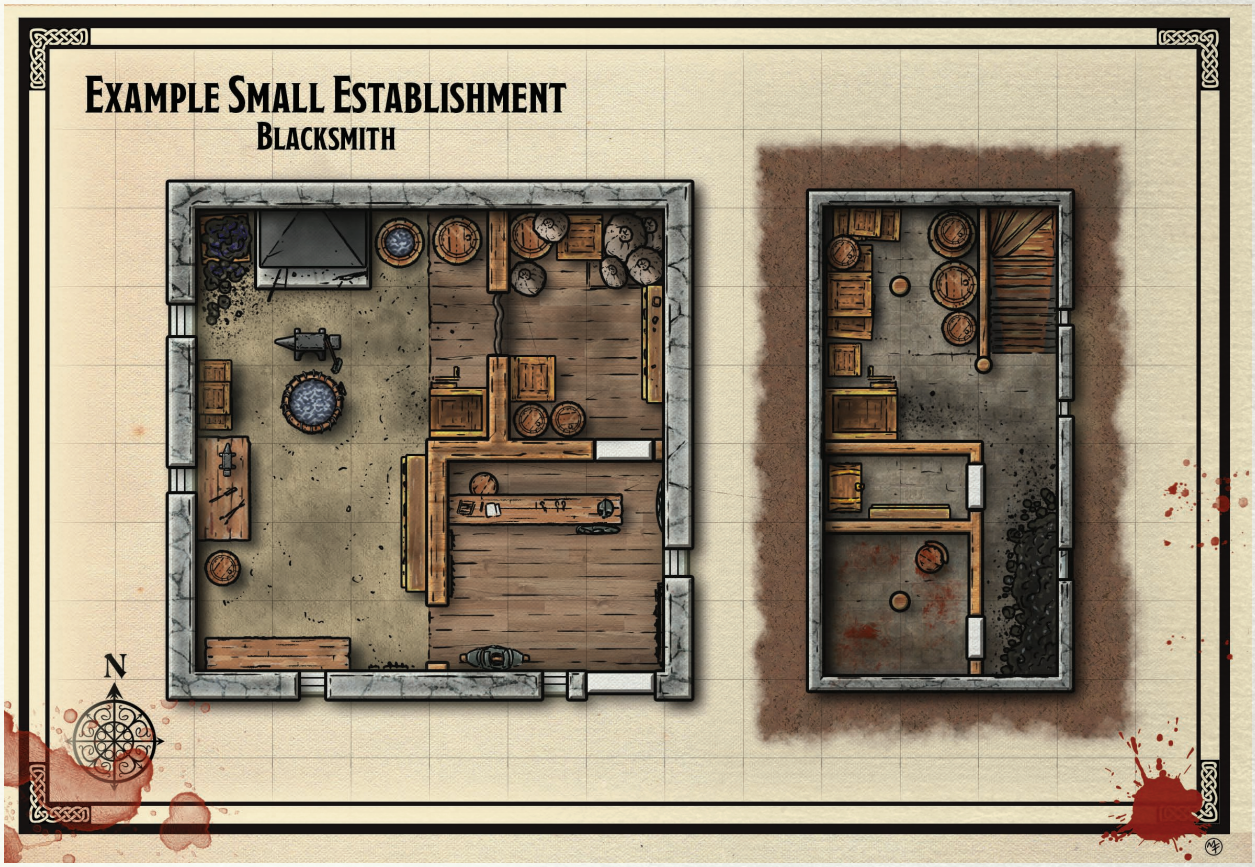
Some organizations are easier to spy on than others! Players, when you specify the organization you're spying on, the GM sets the DC based on the criteria in this section, and you only get results for the organization you named, not the smaller organizations it controls.

Exactly how these factors determine the DC of the Gather Intel check is up to the GM, just as there are no hard and fast rules for what counts as "difficult" lore for character making an Arcana check.

How Big Is the Organization? Bigger organizations are easier to spy on than smaller ones, because large organizations have more members and therefore more opportunities to eavesdrop on, blackmail, or infiltrate them.

Some organizations contain organizations of their own. A church may sponsor a secret order of knights. Spying on the church is easy—it's a big organization that operates out in the open. But that Gather Intel check won't tell you what the covert knights are up to. If you want to know that, you'll have to tell your GM before you roll, and they'll set the DC higher as a result.

1 Because you're not actually there gathering the intel—the establishment and its employees do it while you're adventuring.



Is the Organization Covert? Covert organizations are harder to spy on. They work to hide their operations as a matter of course. Duchies and churches are, as a rule, public institutions, and normal people can expect to at least be able to find and petition their agents, even if such an organization is tyrannical and unlikely to heed any such petition. They're pretty easy to spy on.

In contrast, even large, known covert organizations such as Nine Silver, the guild of spies and assassins in Capital, are still covert. People know they exist! But they have no idea how to contact them or even who belongs to them.

How Protective Is the Organization? Does the organization know they're being spied on? Do they have counterintelligence agents who actively oppose the player's spies? A thieves' guild is much, much harder to spy on than a merchants' guild, and powerful rulers can deploy highly trained agents to prevent enemies from spying on them.

Results

Remember that the benefits of a stronghold are a *reward* for spending money and time. So the results of a successful Gather Intel check should be *useful*, "actionable," meaning they should give information that helps the players make a plan, or develop a strategy, or advance the plot.

Avoid confirming suspicions. In other words, if a player says, "I think the Order of Five Stars is secretly in league with the baron," and they roll well, do not merely say, "Yes that's true." That is deeply unsatisfying, since the player already suspected that.

Instead, give them something to *act on*. "Yes, it seems like they are in league. Your people overheard a conversation that only makes sense if the wizard Luris is selling information to the baron."

Hey now, *that* is actionable. Maybe you just made up that wizard, that's fine! That's your job! But now the player has something to *do*.

Limits

Your players will make a Gather Intel check, and you'll give them some juicy bit of knowledge, but of course you're not going to tell them *everything*. Which means they're going to ask for more. They'll want to drill down on what you said and pursue it. "Where did I get this info? Who told it to me?"

This just makes your life as GM more complicated because we GMs, of course, have no idea *exactly* who their spies heard this from, and if we're suddenly faced with the responsibility of not only inventing an NPC who we didn't know about five seconds ago, but also figuring out the entire signal path of how this NPC knows what they know and who *they* got it from, then we're going to want to ditch this whole system because it just makes more problems than solutions.

So when your players inevitably ask, "How exactly do I know this?" there's one easy answer: "Someone who works for you, someone you trust, overheard it, but they don't remember who said it."

You can even play it out. When the player, out of character, asks, "How do I know this?" You can respond in character. *"Don't know, ma'am. I was workin' the shop and overheard it. Ooh it musta been a week or more ago?"*

The player may not be satisfied by that and may even try to subvert the system by giving orders to their employees to, like, write everything down or keep a journal. At this point, it is perfectly appropriate to tell them, "This is the limit of what your stronghold can do." No point in misleading them—just give it to them straight. They are looking for a degree of specificity this system does not support.

The best character to deliver the results of the Gather Intel check to the PC is the PC's lieutenant. This is the character who runs the establishment while the PC is out adventuring and who is a trusted NPC. When pressed, "how did you get this information?" the lieutenant can shrug and say "I didn't collect it personally, one of the workers we employ overheard it."

If the player is persistent and really wants to dig down and get more details, that may be reasonable, but it might also require more work on your part to invent an answer. In which case that's a good reason to ask for another Gather Intel check.

FAVORS

Back at the start of this chapter we said you probably had little use for an army or a modified spell, but *if you did*, shouldn't you be able to spend a little money, help someone out, and earn a favor from them? According to these rules...yes! You temporarily gain the benefit of another stronghold! Once per season, you may spend 1,000 gp to choose a favor below. To do this, you must know someone with the appropriate stronghold who considers you an ally.

The Keep

You can buy mercenary units equal in number to your establishment level. But because your establishment is not a Keep, upkeep on these units costs 50% more. You can keep these units for as long as you pay the upkeep. The units are housed in temporary barracks[2] outside the city or town your establishment is in.

This is a one-time purchase. If you want to buy more units, you must pay for another favor.

The Tower

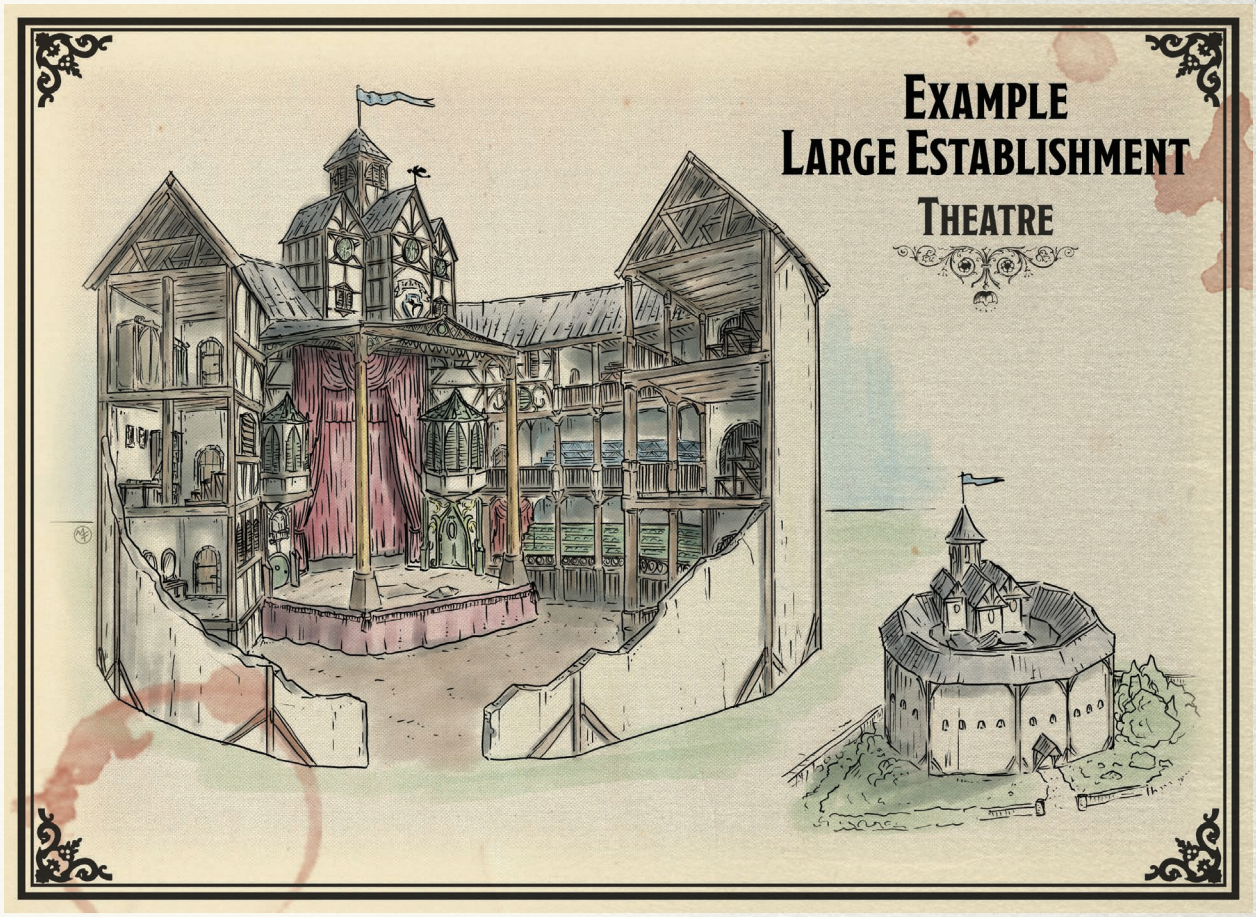
Choose a modified spell researched by an NPC ally or other party member. You can cast that modified spell a number of times equal to your establishment level before you forget it. Once you forget it, you must pay for another favor in order to cast it again.

The Temple

Choose an allied NPC or party member with a temple. You can petition their deity and use their concordance once. If you summon a servitor, it remains for a number of rounds equal to your establishment level.

The money for the favor goes to the ally. A PC ally could refuse to grant the favor but they cannot change how much the favor costs. They may want to negotiate better terms, or get something else in return, but the benefits of the favor originate from the establishment and the power of the network of people in your employ to lie, manipulate, and double-deal so that the folks granting the favor think it was their idea. A PC ally therefore might want to name their own terms, ("I will grant you this favor if...,") but if they accept the payment, the establishment's owner gets the favor. As a rule, an NPC ally will not try to negotiate. They will accept the money and the PCs gains the favor.

2 If you attract a Captain as a follower, they will supervise the construction of a permanent barracks that improves your army regardless of what kind of stronghold you built.


Example
Large Establishment
Theatre

Strongholds by Class

Regardless of whether you build a keep, a tower, a temple, or an establishment, your stronghold improves your signature class ability, and attracts followers based on your class.

The stronghold for each class has a dramatic name—a "bard's theater," a "monk's monastery." But these names are merely examples chosen for flavor, you are free to imagine and name your stronghold in whatever manner seems best to you. Maybe your bard owns a library! Fantastic excuse to get folks coming in and out each dropping off useful nuggets of information. Maybe your barbarian prefers calling it their Horde rather than a camp! It's entirely up to you.

Furthermore, many of the following abilities reference alignment, but that's purely because I'm old-fashioned and prefer the era when paladins fought for good, and I always assume warlocks are sinister. Feel free to reinterpret the abilities so they benefit you and your allies and harm your enemies, however they're defined.

THE RULER AND THE LAND ARE ONE

Owning a stronghold, leading people, inspires you and grants you insight. It also allows you to draw power from the land itself. The land you protect serves you just as the workers who built your keep, and you in turn protect the land just as you protect your peasants and serfs.[1]

This mystical connection manifests in actual power. When your druid takes on the form of a bear and gains *fire breath*, or your paladin's sword cuts through the enemy defenses, this is the power of the land itself coursing through you. Rewarding you for your protection of it.

The ruler feels this and knows when the land is ill. The connection between the ruler and their land is real and palpable.

The area governed by a stronghold is called a *demesne* (deh-MAYNE) and grows as the stronghold does, expanding the owner's rule in a radius of hexes equal to the stronghold level. *Kingdoms & Warfare* will have many more rules for this. The system in both books assumes a 24-mile hex, so all powers affect a 12-mile radius per stronghold level.

DEMESNE EFFECTS AND STRONGHOLD ACTIONS

The power of a stronghold changes the land around it in dramatic and sometimes mechanically interesting ways. As the regent of the land, you'll gain new abilities that only work within your stronghold, the nexus of your power. These stronghold actions are epic! But don't worry, GMs—stronghold actions *only* work inside the stronghold (unless otherwise noted), so there's no danger the player will use them to unbalance your game.

Building a stronghold makes a statement. You make allies, but also enemies. Having some of those enemies attack the player in their stronghold, perhaps infiltrating it under cover of night, perhaps gaining entrance under guise of some diplomatic or trade mission, gives the player a chance to feel *really* badass, which is a core element of this fantasy we're all engaging with.

Whenever a stronghold action or demense effect prompts a saving throw, its DC is the stronghold owner's spellcasting DC, unless otherwise noted.

Players may be tempted to abuse their stronghold actions, using them to show off in inappropriate circumstances. Should they abuse this privilege, they may find the land they serve and which grants them this power has limited resources and even less patience.

CLASS FEATURE IMPROVEMENTS

Founding a stronghold improves your class' signature feature as your new demesne grants you power. Typically this improved class feature has a limited number of uses (based on your stronghold level, usually) after which you must take an extended rest (page 15) to refresh the ability.

Multiclass characters can choose any one of their class abilities to improve, and change this selection after an extended rest.

DIFFERENT CLASSES, DIFFERENT FOLLOWERS

Each class has its own unique follower chart, listed below. These charts make certain assumptions about how the different classes are each perceived by society. Two classes may be equally effective in combat, but that doesn't say anything about how the local artisans or infantry company feel about them.

1 Not *very* egalitarian, but accurate. Besides, the traditional relationship between the lord and the people who worked the land was a lot less exploitative than people think.

Some classes have a wider range of results. Paladins can gain more different followers than Sorcerers. This reflects how *normal people* view the different classes. Paladins and fighters and clerics tend to be respected, trusted. If they have spells, they often use them to help and heal. But peasants don't react well to sorcery, to arcane knowledge Man Was Not Meant to Know!

The follower options for each class reflect this. Martial classes are more likely to get military units, while classes that use sorcery and delve into hidden places or research forgotten lore are more likely to get special allies (page 67).

These cultural assumptions reflect the default Fantasyland campaign setting, but the assumptions of your setting may be very different. GMs, you can adjust these charts to reflect your world's assumptions or even let players roll on a chart for a different class if it makes more sense!

Multiclass characters can roll on any chart for which they have class levels.

The follower charts in this chapter are meant to inspire you, not limit you. They are based on assumptions, some of which you may not agree with! For instance, I tend to think of rangers and rogues as being sneaky, guerilla-type characters, so in this system they cannot attract an agent of law like a paladin. But I don't know your campaign or your characters! By all means, if you think your player's ranger would attract a paladin follower, feel free to change their follower chart. Or just award them a paladin follower. No need to roll!

WHEN TO ROLL

The GM decides when the player gets to roll on a follower chart. Here are some typical times to roll:

- When the PC spends the money for a stronghold and starts construction
- When construction of the stronghold finishes
- When the PC improves (i.e., levels up) a finished stronghold
- When the PC levels up

GMs, you're free to combine these rules, letting the player roll when they improve their stronghold **and** when they level their character up, for example. It's more about pacing than anything else. I think a good pace is one roll to attract followers per 32-page adventure, or once per chapter in a major hardcover adventure.

Multiclass characters can roll on any chart for which they have levels. If you are a multiclass paladin/cleric, for instance, you can roll on either the paladin or cleric chart. You make this decision each time you roll.

WHO ROLLS?

This book assumes **the player rolls on their own chart**. The problem with this, of course, is that the results are random. There may be some results that you know the player wouldn't like, or that you think are a bad fit for your campaign or the current adventure. In this case, you have a couple options.

Make a Unique Chart

There are enough examples here that if you wanted to, say, cut the idea of units entirely, you could just fill in the gap by adding some more followers or expanding some of the ranges on the roll results. If you know some results will be problematic in your world or for your players, you can just cut them, replace them, and/or adjust the numbers.

Ultimately, you could even create an entirely custom chart for a given player. This can be a lot of fun, and hopefully there are enough examples here that you'll feel like you could do this pretty easily if you wanted to.

The GM Rolls

This option solves a lot of problems because you can roll behind the screen and just *choose* a follower for the player, ignoring the roll. This is called *lying*. Don't make that face—*all* of the game is a fiction, and your job as a GM is to curate the experience of it using the rules as a *lingua franca* between you and the players.

Like all such choices, including the choice of what adventure to run, or which monsters to use, or how a given NPC will react, this option gives you the power to curate the experience and pick something you know both the player will like and won't unbalance your game or make your life hard. And if the player believes the die roll was real, all the better.

Of course, the player has to be okay with this. If they feel like it's *their* roll, then taking it away removes some of their belief in the result, and belief is all we have in this business of GMing. You really need to know your players to make this work.

No Rolls, You Just Pick

I have done this, it can work, it just depends on your player and knowing what the juice is for them. If the juice—the reason they built a stronghold—is that they want to *roll on the chart* and see the result and know (or believe, which is just as good for our purposes) that this is the real result, then they need to roll on the chart.

But if it seems like they're not really interested in actually rolling, only in the result, then you can just pick something for them. "As work finishes on your tower, you see an elf standing at the edge of the clearing, watching..." That elf is their new follower! No roll needed!

THE BARBARIAN'S CAMP

The barbarian's camp promises good food and drink as well as contests of strength and bravery, creating one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- Ale within the barbarian's demesne is particularly refreshing, bringing good cheer with no hangovers the next day no matter how much is consumed.
- Wildlife within the barbarian's demesne grows especially large and fierce, migrating as the camp moves.
- Poisons brought into the barbarian's demesne neutralize within the hour. No such cowardly "civilized" forms of death are permitted.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the barbarian takes a stronghold action with one of the following effects. They must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold and cannot use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- You issue forth a mighty "Yawp!" that causes all enemies within 60 feet to become frightened until initiative count 20 on the next round.
- You rage, and your allies gain the benefits of your rage as long as those allies aren't wearing heavy armor.
- You cast *chain lighting*[2] with a DC equal to 8 plus your proficiency modifier, plus your Constitution modifier. You may do this even while raging, and this does not end your rage.

Class Feature Improvement: Chieftain's Rage

Whenever you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points, you can choose to make a second attack or take a free movement. You can do this a number of times equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

A Barbarian's Followers

Barbarians prefer followers who are independent and don't require a lot of oversight. They don't classically attract a large retinue, they don't usually build great keeps to house their staff and servants. A barbarian's follower must be at home in wild places, willing and able to relocate quickly and live by their wits.

BARBARIAN FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–06	Elite Light Infantry (Size 1d8), Unit
07–12	Veteran Medium Cavalry (Size 1d4), Unit
13–15	Regular Light Airborne (Size 1d4), Unit
16–17	Exarch (3th Level), Retainer
18–24	Warlord (3rd Level), Retainer
25–29	Skinwalker (3rd Level), Retainer
30–34	Beast Lord (3rd Level), Retainer
35–41	Necromancer (3rd Level), Retainer
42–47	Swordmaster (5th Level), Retainer
48–52	Diabolist (5th Level), Retainer
53–55	Tracker (7th Level), Retainer
56–60	Blacksmith
61–65	Miner
66–70	Sage
71–75	Hobgoblin Ambassador
76–80	Gnoll Ambassador
81–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

Their followers tend to be martial and savage. Barbarians can attract units, but they tend to be light and Barbarians don't go in much for leading large armies. Big armies require a lot of organization and discipline neither of which barbarians' classically value overmuch.

Barbarian retainers tend to be followers at home with nature, savagery, and chaos. Barbarians look skeptically upon knights, but welcome those who make pacts with dark forces or serve the tempest of nature.

Few artisans are eager to live amongst a barbarian camp, mostly blacksmiths and miners, but barbarians tend to go places and do things other regents would never dream of, making life as a barbarian's servant an attractive prospect for sage.

The ambassadors they attract tend to represent nearby humanoid tribes who do not automatically see a barbarian tribe as an enemy, just because they are led by a human or elf or dwarf. To the local gnolls or hobgoblins, a barbarian camp is just another local tribe, and could make a powerful ally.

2 That's right. Even though Barbarians can't cast spells, nature comes to their aid in their stronghold.

THE BARD'S THEATER

The bard's theater promises drama and entertainment! Poetry and song. But also rumor and intrigue! It creates one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- Whenever the wind blows through the trees in the bard's demesne, music plays. Hooves on roads beat out a complex rhythm.
- Folks who live for a week in the bard's demesne find themselves ending conversations with rhyming couplets.
- Thunder can be counted on to roll whenever someone in the bard's demesne says something dramatic. Ravens obediently alight on nearby branches when it is dramatically expected of them.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the bard takes a stronghold action with one of the following effects. The bard must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold and cannot use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- Until initiative count 20 on the next round, all inspiration dice produce their maximum result when rolled, followed by the sounding of a two-note chord: one root note and another a fifth higher than the root.
- A three-piece band arrives singing your praises. Until initiative count 20 on the next turn, enemies make saving throws against your magic by rolling *three* d20s and using the worst of the three. The band has exceptionally good rhythm and world-class lute fingering, and the singer has an unusually high voice.
- You regain all inspiration dice.

Class Feature Improvement: Encouraging Inspiration

While an ally has unspent inspiration their proficiency bonus increases by +1. This applies to a number of inspiration dice equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

BARD FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–03	Veteran Light Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
04–06	Regular Light Cavalry (Size 1d4), Unit
07–09	Seasoned Light Archers (Size 1d4), Unit
10	Regular Light Airborne (Size 1d4), Unit
11	Enchanter (3rd Level), Retainer
12	Curate (3rd Level), Retainer
13	Healer (3rd Level), Retainer
14–15	Knight-sorcerer (3rd Level), Retainer
16–18	Beast Lord (3rd Level), Retainer
19–20	Knight-sorcerer (5th Level), Retainer
21–23	Illusionist (5th Level), Retainer
24–27	Chaos Mage (5th Level), Retainer
28–31	Cutpurse (5th Level), Retainer
32–34	Thaumaturgist (7th Level), Retainer
35–37	Executioner (7th Level), Retainer
38–40	Shaper (7th Level), Retainer
41–42	Farmer
43–44	Mason
45–46	Blacksmith
47–48	Carpenter
49–51	Scribe
52–54	Sage
55–57	Tailor
58–60	Alchemist
61–63	Spy
64–65	Captain
66–71	Elf Ambassador
72–75	Dwarf Ambassador
76–78	Dragonborn Ambassador
79–84	Gnome Ambassador
85	Orc Ambassador
86–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

THE CLERIC'S CHURCH

The cleric's church is a bastion of faith for believers and adherents to their deity's laws, and a symbol of resistance against those forces that oppose the cleric's god, creating one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- Folks who live in the cleric's demesne are immune to disease.
- The cleric can hear the prayers of those living in their demesne who are in concordance with the cleric's deity.
- While the cleric is hale, the weather in their demesne is fair. If the cleric is wounded or suffering, the weather turns foul. For this effect to happen, the cleric merely has to be on the same plane as their demesne.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the cleric takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The cleric must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold, and can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- All enemies within 30 feet must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or suffer the effects of the *contagion* spell.
- Shafts of golden light stab down from the sky, penetrating walls and ceilings. The beams target all undead, demons, and devils within 60 feet of you, even those hidden or invisible. Targets must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be annihilated.
- You and all allies in the stronghold recover all Hit Dice and gain 30 temporary hit points.

Class Feature Improvement: Manifest Divinity

When using your Channel Divinity class feature, all allies within 30 feet regain 3d8 hit points. You can do this a number of times equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

CLERIC FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–04	Regular Light Infantry (Size 1d8), Unit
05–07	Regular Medium Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
08–10	Seasoned Medium Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
11–13	Regular Heavy Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
14–15	Regular Light Cavalry (Size 1d6), Unit
16–17	Regular Medium Cavalry (Size 1d4), Unit
18–19	Seasoned Heavy Cavalry (Size 1d4), Unit
20	Regular Medium Archers (Size 1d4), Unit
21	Loremaster (3rd Level), Retainer
22	Troubadour-warrior (3rd Level), Retainer
23	Swordmaster (3rd Level), Retainer
24–25	Tracker (3rd Level), Retainer
26–28	Warlord (3rd Level), Retainer
29–30	Knight-sorcerer (5th Level), Retainer
31–33	Mystic (5th Level), Retainer
34–37	Guild Adept (5th Level), Retainer
38–41	Acolyte of the Way (5th Level), Retainer
42–44	Justicar (5th Level), Retainer
45–47	Enchanter (7th Level), Retainer
48–50	Cavalier (7th Level), Retainer
51–52	Farmers
53–55	Mason
56–58	Blacksmith
59–60	Carpenter
61–62	Miner
63–65	Scribe
66–68	Sage
69–70	Tailor
71–75	Elf Ambassador
76–80	Dwarf Ambassador
81–85	Gnome Ambassador
86–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

THE DRUID'S GROVE[3]

The druid's grove is a symbol of nature's beauty and power, creating one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- Local birds and mammals in the druid's demesne can speak Common and Elven. They enjoy talking to new people but will try to find and warn the druid if suspicious strangers enter the demesne.
- Nuts, fruits, and vegetables grown naturally (i.e., not farmed or cultivated) in the druid's demesne grant those who eat them the effect of *goodberry*. If taken outside the demesne, they lose this effect.
- No roads or trails in the druid's demesne last more than a day. However, allies and the units of allies can pass through the demesne as though there were roads.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the druid takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The druid must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold, and can't use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- Grasping vines rise from the ground for 1 minute. Every enemy within 60 feet must make a Dexterity saving throw or be restrained for the duration, taking 3d8 damage at the start of each of their rounds from stabbing thorns. At the end of its turn, an affected enemy can make another saving throw to escape.
- You cast *banishment* on an enemy, sending them to Arcadia on a failed save.
- You summon 1d4+1 shambling mounds who fight for you for 1 minute.

Class Feature Improvement: Savage Shape

When you assume your Wild Shape, choose a damage type of fire, cold, or poison. While in your Wild Shape form, you gain a breath weapon of that type. As a bonus action on your turn, you can exhale gas of the chosen damage type in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a Constitution saving throw against your spell DC, taking 4d6 damage of the chosen type on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. You can do this a number of times equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

DRUID FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–05	Regular Medium Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
06–10	Seasoned Medium Airborne (Size 1d4), Unit
11	Loremaster (3rd Level), Retainer
12	Warden (3rd Level), Retainer
13–19	Elemental Acolyte (3rd Level), Retainer
20–24	Chaos Mage (3rd Level), Retainer
25–29	Conjurer (5th Level), Retainer
30–36	Exarch (5th Level), Retainer
37–42	Spirit Warden (5th Level), Retainer
43–47	Knight of the Green Order (7th Level), Retainer
48–50	Beast Lord (7th Level), Retainer
51–55	Farmer
56–60	Alchemist
61–65	Sage
66–71	Elf Ambassador
72–77	Gnome Ambassador
78–80	Lizardfolk Ambassador
81–85	Roll on the Fey Allies chart (page 67)
86–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

A Druid's Followers

Living between civilization and wilderness, the druid attracts followers willing to put up with a life devoted to the health and well-being of nature, defending it and learning its secrets. Few are willing to walk this path but those who do are totally devoted to the druid's service.

Druids care little for the command and upkeep of large armies, preferring to use battle magic to raise special units when necessary. This being said, they are one of the classes that can attract flying units, often hawkriders or units mounted on giant owls.

Few artisans are interested in a life lived outside civilization, but druids are spellcasters and loremasters so it's natural for alchemists, sages, and scribes to pledge service in exchange for greater knowledge.

Ambassadors who wish to join a druid's retinue are usually fey, or aligned with them, or creatures who prefer the swamps and bogs that druids are naturally attracted to as sources of power. And druids have their own short list of special allies they may recruit from among the fey creatures of the wood.

3 This is a notional, narrative term. It doesn't necessarily mean you're using the alternate temple rules for a druid's grove.

THE FIGHTER'S FORTRESS

The fighter's fortress is a bastion against intruders, and it rewards those who practice their martial training, creating one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- Fortifications in the fighter's demesne grant units defending them an extra +2 Morale bonus.
- Menhirs appear in the fighter's demesne, following anyone hostile to those who call this province home, imposing themselves between intruders and the locals.
- Archers who train in the fighter's demesne find their arrows go farther and strike more accurately.
- Edged weapons in the fighter's demesne are keener and do not dull.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the fighter takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The fighter must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold, and can't use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- Until initiative count 20 on the next round, any enemy who tries to cast a spell in your demesne experiences searing pain. The enemy can choose another action, but if it chooses to cast the spell, it must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 1d6 force damage per level of the spell, and the spell has no effect and is wasted.
- Until the end of your next turn, you and all your allies' weapon attacks hit automatically. Roll anyway, though—you might score a crit!
- You and all your allies are restored to full hit points.

Class Feature Improvement: Fighting Surge

Whenever you attack by using your Action Surge, you automatically score a critical hit. You can do this for a number of surges equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

FIGHTER FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–04	Regular Medium Infantry (Size 1d8), Unit
05–07	Regular Heavy Infantry (Size 1d8), Unit
08–10	Seasoned Medium Infantry (Size 1d8), Unit
11–13	Regular Medium Cavalry (Size 1d6), Unit
14–15	Seasoned Medium Cavalry (Size 1d6), Unit
16–17	Veteran Medium Cavalry (Size 1d4), Unit
18–19	Seasoned Medium Archers (Size 1d6), Unit
20	Seasoned Heavy Archers (Size 1d4), Unit
21	Theurgist (3rd Level), Retainer
22	Spirit Warden (3rd Level), Retainer
23	Diabolist (3rd Level), Retainer
24–25	Justicar (3rd Level), Retainer
26–27	Stormspeaker (3rd Level), Retainer
28	Troubadour-warrior (3rd Level), Retainer
29	Healer (5th Level), Retainer
30–32	Shaper (5th Level), Retainer
33–35	Reaver (5th Level), Retainer
36–38	Alienist (5th Level), Retainer
39–41	Beast Lord (5th Level), Retainer
42–45	Battle Priest (7th Level), Retainer
46–50	Tracker (7th Level), Retainer
51–55	Cavalier (7th Level), Retainer
56–58	Farmer
59–60	Mason
61–63	Blacksmith
64–65	Carpenter
66–68	Miner
69–70	Captain
71–76	Elf Ambassador
77–80	Dwarf Ambassador
81–84	Lizardfolk Ambassador
85–86	Dragonborn Ambassador
87–88	Gnome Ambassador
89	Orc Ambassador
90	Hobgoblin Ambassador
91–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

THE MONK'S MONASTERY

The monk's monastery is a monument to contemplation and self-reliance, creating one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- Creatures age more slowly within the confines of the monk's demesne.
- The temperature in the monk's demesne is always temperate, all year round, all day long.
- Violence of any kind in the demesne has a 15% chance of summoning a Source of Earth, who immediately uses Back to Earth to end the violence. The monk can reverse these effects.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the monk takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The monk must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold, and can't use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- Until initiative count 20 on the next round, your skin becomes diamond. For the duration, you are immune to all but psychic damage.
- You make eight unarmed attacks against an adjacent enemy.
- You regain all ki, as though you had finished a long rest.

Class Feature Improvement: Focused Ki

Whenever you are attacked while you have unspent ki, you can ignore all of its effects except its damage. You can do this a number of times equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

The Scion of Orcus casts *black tentacles*, and Bhaltair the monk is in the area of effect. Regardless of the outcome of Bhaltair's Evasion, he is not restrained by the tentacles because he has unspent ki.

MONK FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–03	Regular Light Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
04–06	Regular Medium Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
07–09	Seasoned Light Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
10–11	Seasoned Medium Infantry (Size 1d4), Unit
12–13	Veteran Light Infantry (Size 1d4), Unit
14–15	Veteran Medium Infantry (Size 1d4), Unit
16	Seer (3rd Level), Retainer
17	Exorcist (3rd Level), Retainer
18	Knight of the Green Order (3rd Level), Retainer
19–20	Shaper (3rd Level), Retainer
21–22	Evoker (3rd Level), Retainer
23	Diabolist (3rd Level), Retainer
24	Theurgist (5th Level), Retainer
25–27	Warden (5th Level), Retainer
28–30	Curate (5th Level), Retainer
31–33	Alienist (5th Level), Retainer
34–36	Conjurer (5th Level), Retainer
37–40	Illusionist (5th Level), Retainer
41–45	Mystic (7th Level), Retainer
46–50	Stormspeaker (7th Level), Retainer
51–52	Farmer
53–55	Mason
56–58	Blacksmith
59–60	Carpenter
61–62	Miner
63–65	Scribe
66–68	Sage
69–70	Captain
71–73	Alchemist
74–78	Elf Ambassador
79–81	Dwarf Ambassador
82–83	Orc Ambassador
84–85	Lizardfolk Ambassador
86–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

THE PALADIN'S CHAPEL

The paladin's chapel broadcasts the power of good and law across the countryside, creating one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- Clear blue skies and warm sun dominate year-round. Rain falls only at night, and thunderstorms avoid the area.
- Evil creatures in daylight have disadvantage on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.
- The paladin is instantly aware of the presence and location in his demesne of any chaotic or evil creature with more than 7 Hit Dice. The range of this awareness is a number of hexes equal to the level of the paladin's stronghold.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the paladin takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The paladin must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold and can't use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- Each chaotic or evil creature (your choice) within 120 feet must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or be bound by gold (anti-evil) or silver (anti-chaos) chains, grappling it until it makes a Strength or Dexterity check as an action against your spell DC.
- Flying creatures within 120 feet must succeed on a Constitution check or immediately land. They cannot take off again for the remainder of combat.
- Choose an ally within sight to gain an AC bonus equal to your Charisma bonus, as their armor becomes gold, for the remainder of combat. Each ally can be affected by this ability only once per day.

Class Feature Improvement: Righteous Smite

Your Divine Smite burns through enemy resistance. Enemies normally resistant to either radiant damage or your weapon damage lose it. Enemies invulnerable to either type of damage are now resistant to it, and enemies without resistance to either divine or weapon damage become vulnerable.

You can do this for a number of attacks equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

PALADIN FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–04	Seasoned Light Infantry (Size 1d8), Unit
05–07	Seasoned Medium Infantry (Size 1d8), Unit
08–10	Veteran Light Infantry (Size 1d8), Unit
11–13	Veteran Heavy Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
14–15	Regular Medium Cavalry (Size 1d6), Unit
16–17	Seasoned Medium Cavalry (Size 1d6), Unit
18–19	Veteran Medium Cavalry (Size 1d6), Unit
20	Elite Light Cavalry (Size 1d4), Unit
21	Mystic (3rd Level), Retainer
22	Acolyte of the Way (3rd Level), Retainer
23	Loremaster (3rd Level), Retainer
24–25	Evoker (3rd Level), Retainer
26–28	Seer (3rd Level), Retainer
29–30	Battle Priest (3rd Level), Retainer
31–33	Troubadour-warrior (5th Level), Retainer
34–37	Thaumaturgist (5th Level), Retainer
38–41	Swordmaster (5th Level), Retainer
42–44	Curate (7th Level), Retainer
45–47	Exorcist (7th Level), Retainer
48–50	Warlord (7th Level), Retainer
51–52	Farmer
53–55	Mason
56–58	Blacksmith
59–61	Carpenter
62–63	Miner
64–65	Scribe
66–68	Sage
69–70	Captain
71–74	Tailor
75–79	Elf Ambassador
80–81	Dwarf Ambassador
82–85	Dragonborn Ambassador
86–89	Gnome Ambassador
90	Winged Elf Ambassador
91–93	Roll on the Special Paladin Mount chart
94–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

Winged Elves

A paladin might attract an ambassador from the Covert Court, the court of the winged elves. This allows the paladin to **buy** Aerial units with winged elf ancestry (see Creating Your Own Units on page 235).

SPECIAL PALADIN MOUNT

D12	MOUNT
01–04	Hippogriff
05–07	Griffon
08–09	Pegasus
10–11	Unicorn
12	Alicorn (see below)

A Paladin's Mount

If you roll really well (91–93), you get a special paladin mount as a follower! This mount replaces the normal horse that you can attract. And, of course, if you roll even higher (94-100) you may attract a dragon. If your dragon is *incredibly* good-natured and well-disposed to you, it may let you ride it, but this is rare, for dragons are proud creatures. That being said, in times of desperation, your allies may come to your aid in combat—especially when defending your realm—and in these times legends tell of great paladins who rode their dragon allies into battle. Probably the dragon versions of these stories tell a different tale.

ALICORN

Natives of Arcadia, the winged unicorn (not to be confused with the horned pegasus) can be summoned by a particularly devout paladin to serve as their mount. They do not particularly like the Mundane World, but they enjoy and find satisfaction in hunting evil and chaos. They will serve as mount and companion to a holy knight only so long as it brings the opportunity to smash evil, a sport they are denied on their home plane.

Alicorn

Large celestial, lawful good

ARMOR CLASS 13

HIT POINTS 76 (9d10 + 27)

SPEED 60 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +5, Wis +4, Cha +3

SKILLS Perception +6

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, paralyzed, poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES Celestial, Elvish, Sylvan, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Charge. If the alicorn moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a horn attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8), Unit piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Innate Spellcasting. The alicorn's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect evil and good, druidcraft, pass without trace*

1/day each: *calm emotions, dispel evil and good, entangle*

Magic Resistance. The alicorn has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The alicorn's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The alicorn makes one attack with its hooves and one attack with its horn.

Hooves. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Horn. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Healing Touch (3/Day). The alicorn touches another creature with its horn. The target magically restores 11 (2d8 + 2) hit points. In addition, the touch removes all diseases and neutralizes all poisons afflicting the target.

Teleport (1/Day). The alicorn magically teleports itself and up to 3 willing creatures it can see within 5 feet of it, along with any equipment they are wearing or carrying, to a location the alicorn is familiar with, up to 1 mile away.

Legendary Actions

The alicorn can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The alicorn regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Hooves. The alicorn makes one attack with its hooves.

Prismatic Barrier (Costs 2 Actions). The alicorn creates a prismatic, magical field around itself or another creature it can see within 60 feet of it. The target gains a +2 bonus to AC until the end of the alicorn's next turn.

Heal Self (Costs 3 Actions). The alicorn magically restores 11 (2d8 + 2) hit points.

THE RANGER'S LODGE

The ranger's lodge is a place of good hunting and security, creating one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- Stags, harts, and other game are always plentiful in the ranger's demesne, but they are larger and fiercer than normal.
- Enemies of the ranger and the locals must make DC 15 Survival checks to navigate the ranger's demesne. On a failure, they are attacked by 2d6 winter wolves.
- Allies treat the ranger's demesne as favored terrain when moving their units. Enemy units treat it as difficult terrain.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the ranger takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The ranger must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold and can't use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- Small targets appear on the vulnerable spots of nearby enemies. Until initiative count 20 on the next round, all enemies within 60 feet have vulnerability to your attacks.
- You summon a fog cloud in a 60-foot radius that lasts for 1 minute. You and your allies can see through this fog as though it were merely a hazy mist that did not obscure vision.
- Until initiative count 20 on the next turn, all of your successful attacks also cause the target to bleed. A bleeding creature takes 3d8 damage at the start of each of its following turns, and can make a DC 18 Constitution save at the end of each of its turns to end the bleeding.

Class Feature Improvement: Chosen Enemy

Your favored enemy has vulnerability to your attacks.[4] You can do this to a number of damage rolls equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

RANGER FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–04	Regular Light Archers (Size 1d6), Unit
05–07	Seasoned Light Archers (Size 1d6), Unit
08–10	Seasoned Light Airborne (Size 1d6), Unit
11–12	Thaumaturgist (3rd Level), Retainer
13–14	Stormspeaker (3rd Level), Retainer
15–16	Warden (3rd Level), Retainer
17–19	Acolyte of Darkness (3rd Level), Retainer
20–22	Healer (3rd Level), Retainer
23–24	Knight of the Green Order (5th Level), Retainer
25–28	Executioner (5th Level), Retainer
29–32	Chaos Mage (5th Level), Retainer
33–36	Exorcist (5th Level), Retainer
37–40	Skinwalker (7th Level), Retainer
41–45	Cutpurse (7th Level), Retainer
46–50	Enchanter (7th Level), Retainer
51–53	Mason
54–56	Blacksmith
57–60	Carpenter
61–64	Miner
65–67	Sage
68–70	Spy
71–74	Elf Ambassador
75–76	Dwarf Ambassador
77–80	Gnome Ambassador
81–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

4 Remember, the goal is players read this and think, "Wow I want to build a stronghold." And the GM sees "Oh this only happens like three times per adventure" and doesn't freak out.

THE ROGUE'S TAVERN

The rogue's tavern is a hotbed of intrigue and information, creating one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion. These rules assume a 24-mile hex, so all powers affect a 12-mile radius.

Demesne Effects

- One ally per level of the rogue's stronghold can hide in the rogue's demesne, and no mundane or magical means will reveal their location. This ability does not work on the owner of the stronghold.
- Creatures trespassing in the rogue's demesne have the overwhelming sensation they are being spied upon.
- When a creature hostile to the rogue and aware of their existence finishes a long rest within the rogue's demesne, roll a d20. On a roll of 10 or less, the creature triggers a hidden trap, taking 3d8 piercing damage.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the rogue takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The rogue must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold and can't use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- All enemies within 60 feet are marked for death. For the next minute, if you hit a marked enemy, you can remove its mark to deal an extra 6d6 slashing damage.
- Enemies within 60 feet are revealed, losing stealth and invisibility.
- You gain a Coin of Fate. Each time you are hit in combat, you may flip the coin. Heads, the attack misses instead. Tails, the attack hits as normal and you lose the coin.

Class Feature Improvement: Satisfying Strike

Damage from your Sneak Attack dice also heals you in equal amount. You can do this to a number of attacks equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

ROGUE FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–04	Seasoned Light Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
05–07	Seasoned Medium Infantry (Size 1d4), Unit
08–10	Seasoned Medium Archers (Size 1d4), Unit
11–12	Theurgist (3rd Level), Retainer
13–14	Swordmaster (3rd Level), Retainer
15–16	Justicar (3rd Level), Retainer
17–19	Exarch (3rd Level), Retainer
20–22	Alienist (3rd Level), Retainer
23–24	Thamaturgist (3rd Level), Retainer
25–28	Stormspeaker (5th Level), Retainer
29–32	Illusionist (5th Level), Retainer
33–36	Diabolist (5th Level), Retainer
37–40	Acolyte of Darkness (7th Level), Retainer
41–45	Shadow Priest (7th Level), Retainer
46–50	Conjurer (7th Level), Retainer
51–53	Alchemist
54–56	Blacksmith
57–59	Carpenter
60–62	Scribe
63–65	Sage
66–68	Tailor
69–72	Spy
73–75	Captain
76–79	Elf Ambassador
80–83	Dragonborn Ambassador
84–87	Gnome Ambassador
91–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

THE SORCERER'S SANCTUM

The sorcerer's sanctum houses a collection of curiousities and antiquities. It creates one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- Curses, blessings, and oaths pronounced within the sorcerer's demesne have a 15% chance of causing the speaker to roll on the Wild Magic table.
- Folks who live in the sorcerer's demesne for a season learn one random sorcerer cantrip. They lose the ability to cast it if they ever leave.
- Raindrops in the sorcerer's demesne cast dazzling prismatic reflections during the day.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the sorcerer takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The sorcerer must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold and can't use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- You cast three spells from your list of prepared spells, using spell slots as normal.
- For the next minute, all of your spells are heightened, as per *heighten spell*. You cannot use sorcery points to heighten an already heightened spell.
- You are wreathed by a *fire shield*. Enemies who strike the shield take 4d8 damage instead of 2d8.

Class Feature Improvement: Source of Magic

While you have unspent sorcery points, if you roll the maximum result on a spell's damage die (including a rerolled die), you can reroll it[5] and add the new roll to the original roll. You can do this for a number of spells[6] equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

SORCERER FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–05	Veteran Light Infantry (Size 1d4), Unit
06–10	Regular Light Airborne (Size 1d4), Unit
11–12	Battle Priest (3rd Level), Retainer
13–14	Shadow Priest (3rd Level), Retainer
15–18	Beast Lord (3rd Level), Retainer
19–23	Guild Adept (3rd Level), Retainer
24–29	Elemental Acolyte (5th Level), Retainer
30–35	Alienist (5th Level), Retainer
36–42	Skinwalker (5th Level), Retainer
43–50	Reaver (7th Level), Retainer
51–54	Blacksmith
55–58	Scribe
59–62	Sage
63–66	Tailor
67–70	Alchemist
71–75	Elf Ambassador
76–80	Dragonborn Ambassador
81–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

A Sorcerer's Followers

Average folks find wizards weird enough, gabbling in strange languages and living up to their eyeballs in books and owl poop. But they, at least, have rules. A sorcerer, on the other hand, gains their power through an innate connection with the forces of magic. No training required. This is even less well understood by normal people. A sorcerer's followers therefore tend to be folks who enjoy being close to raw power and do not fear what they do not understand.

A sorcerer's army is usually light and highly mobile and like other classes that eschew large, slow, heavily armed and armored soldiers, they can attract flying units. Their retainers are almost all spellcasters. Their artisans are folks who enjoy making things and probably hope being in the court of a sorcerer will grant them the opportunity to create magic items. Their ambassadors come from cultures that do not fear sorcery and whose soldiers would have no problem serving under a commander who can conjure fire through sheer will.

5 Sorcerers get exploding dice! Sexy, but statistically it's super unlikely you'll see several dice being rerolled several times, so it sounds awesome and is fun but doesn't cause a runaway cascade effect.

6 If you roll damage and get no maxed-out dice, you don't use a charge of your feature improvement.

THE WARLOCK'S FANE

The warlock's fane is a locus of power committed to a being of alien intelligence. It creates one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- The sun appears as a baleful orb in the sky over the warlock's demesne.
- In the warlock's demesne, constellations in the night sky are strange, and stars occasionally fall from the sky.
- The warlock is immediately aware of enemies in their demesne.
- Once per month, the warlock can summon an *earthquake*, as per the spell, targeting any enemies in their demesne.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the warlock takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The warlock must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold, and can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- You recover all spell slots as though you completed a short rest.
- You fire an *eldritch blast* at each enemy you can see within 60 feet.
- You summon a Type VI servitor (page 31).

Class Feature Improvement: Master Invoker

You qualify for eldritch invocations as though your warlock level were five levels higher. You can do this for a number of invocations equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

WARLOCK FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–04	Regular Light Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
05–08	Seasoned Light Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
09–12	Veteran Light Infantry (Size 1d4), Unit
13–15	Seasoned Medium Archers (Size Unit)
16–17	Spirit Warden (3rd Level), Retainer
18–19	Necromancer (3rd Level), Retainer
20–21	Elemental Acolyte (3rd Level), Retainer
22–24	Seer (3rd Level), Retainer
25–27	Shadow Priest (3rd Level), Retainer
28–29	Knight-sorcerer (3th Level), Retainer
30–33	Reaver (5th Level), Retainer
34–37	Acolyte of Darkness (5th Level), Retainer
38–41	Guild Adept (5th Level), Retainer
42–45	Cutpurse (5th Level), Retainer
46–50	Evoker (7th Level), Retainer
51–55	Executioner (7th Level), Retainer
56–58	Miner
59–61	Scribe
62–64	Sage
65–67	Tailor
68–70	Alchemist
71–74	Dragonborn Ambassador
75–78	Lizardfolk Ambassador
79–80	Gnoll Ambassador
81–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

THE WIZARD'S LIBRARY

The wizard's library is a bastion of knowledge and research best hidden from the mundane world. It creates one or more of the following effects at the GM's discretion.

Demesne Effects

- The library of the wizard's stronghold has a copy of every nonmagical book anyone brings into the wizard's demesne.
- By concentrating for 10 minutes, the wizard can scry on any person or location in their demesne as per the *scrying* spell. The wizard can do this while anywhere, including another world.
- Once per day, the wizard can control the weather in their demesne. The wizard doesn't have to be in their demesne to do this. The effect is otherwise the same as the *control weather* spell.

Stronghold Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the wizard takes a stronghold action to cause one of the following effects. The wizard must be in the same hex or province as their stronghold, and can't use the same effect again until after a short rest.

- You cast a spell from your list of prepared spells. This does not use a spell slot.
- You cast *flesh to stone* on all enemies within 60 feet. This does not use a spell slot.
- You recover all spent spell slots as though you had finished a long rest.

Class Feature Improvement: Spellmaster

You can maintain two spells with concentration at once. You can do this a number of times equal to your stronghold level, after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

WIZARD FOLLOWERS

D100	FOLLOWER
01–03	Regular Light Infantry (Size 1d6), Unit
04–06	Regular Medium Infantry (Size 1d4), Unit
07–09	Regular Light Archers (Size 1d6), Unit
10–11	Regular Medium Archers (Size 1d4), Unit
12–13	Regular Light Airborne (Size 1d4), Unit
14–15	Regular Medium Airborne (Size 1d4), Unit
16	Swordmaster (3rd Level), Retainer
17	Spirit Warden (3rd Level), Retainer
18	Mystic (3rd Level), Retainer
19–20	Acolyte of the Way (3rd Level), Retainer
21–22	Knight of the Green Order (3rd Level), Retainer
23	Elemental Acolyte (5th Level), Retainer
24–26	Guild Adept (5th Level), Retainer
27–29	Skinwalker (5th Level), Retainer
30–32	Battle Priest (5th Level), Retainer
33–35	Cavalier (5th Level), Retainer
36–40	Cutpurse (7th Level), Retainer
41–45	Troubadour-warrior (7th Level), Retainer
46–47	Mason
48–50	Blacksmith
51–53	Carpenter
54–55	Miner
56–57	Scribe
58–60	Sage
61–63	Tailor
64–65	Alchemist
66–69	Elf Ambassador
70–72	Dragonborn Ambassador
73–78	Gnome Ambassador
79–82	Hobgoblin Ambassador
83–85	Gnoll Ambassador
86–100	Roll on the Special Allies table (page 67)

VILLAIN STRONGHOLDS

The villains of your campaign can—and if your players are using these rules, probably should—have their own stronghold, which grants them **villain abilities** which will help them threaten PCs with strongholds. GMs, you are encouraged to play fast and loose with what counts as a stronghold for these purposes. Probably the best answer for this is "wherever the bad guy keeps their treasure."

They also grant the villain's *minions*[7] special abilities under the premise that everyone trains harder and fights better when they have a cool base.

Types of Villains and Minions

We could get very noodly indeed here with many kinds and types of villains and minions, but I want to keep it simple, so we go by the **Rule of Three**. Villains fall into three broad categories—necromancer, shaman, warlord—and minions fall into mindless servants, rampaging hordes, and tactical phalanxes. This covers a lot of ground, but obviously it doesn't cover everything, so feel free to adjust these terms and abilities to fit your adventure.

Although it may seem obvious that a necromancer would command mindless servants, it need not be so. The abilities of the villains and minions aren't designed to synergize in any particular way. A Necromancer may command a Savage Horde, or a Shaman command Mindless Servants. All the abilities will be useful, without any combination turning the encounter into a rout. At least, not on purpose!

Minions require a leader, though that leader need not be present on the battlefield. Like the heroes' stronghold abilities, these villain and minion powers are granted through training and a connection with the land itself. If the party finds itself fighting a band of goblins who seem to be critting more often, it's a sign that they come from a nearby goblin stronghold and serve some villainous leader! Probably a hobgoblin.

This is a dramatic way to introduce a villain and hint to the players that there must be a nearby enemy stronghold! The players fight undead or goblinoids or cultists, or bandits and they seem much more...capable than the normal beasties they're used to fighting. When these enemies charge into battle, they call out something that sounds like it might be a name? Maybe capturing one would be a good idea. Question it. Oops, it didn't survive long enough to spill the beans. Well, all will become clear once the heroes penetrate the enemy stronghold and fight the leader of these creatures

Villain Examples

NECROMANCER

Lady Sariel the Vampire Queen, Cult Leader

Special Ability: As a reaction make a Wisdom check after a minion takes enough damage to kill it. The DC is 8 plus the Hit Dice of the minion. If successful, the minion does not die and drops to 1 hit point.

SHAMAN

Lizardfolk chieftain, Troll Shaman

Special Ability: Minions who can hear you gain advantage on saving throws against magical spells and effects.

WARLORD

Bonebreaker Dorokor, Bandit king

Special Ability: As a reaction, when a minion dies, issue a command to your other minions. Those who can hear you gain a reaction they can use to immediately move again.

Minion Examples

MINDLESS SERVANTS

Undead, Oozes, Constructs

Special Ability: Gain an extra 10 feet of movement.

SAVAGE HORDE

Orcs, Goblins, Demons, Thugs

Special Ability: After moving at least 20 feet, the next attack this minion makes is a critical hit on an 18-20.

TACTICAL PHANLANX

Hobgoblins, Lizardfolk, Devils, Cultists, Bandits

Special Ability: If an enemy's attack kills an ally, all minions adjacent to that enemy gain an attack of opportunity against the enemy.

7 This book assumes a "minion" is any flunky working for a villain. It doesn't necessarily mean "a 1 hp enemy" from the 4E rules, although I am a big fan of that rule.

SPECIAL ALLIES

Congratulations! You rolled well on your follower chart and attracted a special ally! Allies are like followers in that they approve of what you're doing in the world and want to help, but allies are powerful beings, often more powerful than your character. They cannot be ordered around, and they can be unreliable. Find your alignment on the chart below and roll a d12 to see which cool beastie shows up to help you out.

SPECIAL ALLIES

ALIGNMENT	ROLL 1-4	ROLL 5-8	ROLL 9-10	ROLL 11	ROLL 12
Lawful Good	Couatl	Deva	Young Silver Dragon	Adult Bronze Dragon	Adult Gold Dragon
Neutral Good	Cyclops	Stone Giant	Cloud Giant	Young Amethyst Dragon	Adult Sapphire Dragon
Chaotic Good	Treant	Young Brass Dragon	Genie	Storm Giant	Adult Copper Dragon
Chaotic Neutral	Ettin	Ghost	Hill Giant	Young Emerald Dragon	Genie
Neutral	Banshee	Young Sapphire Dragon	Young Topaz Dragon	Stone Giant	Adult Ruby Dragon
Lawful Neutral	Flesh Golem[8]	Young Ruby Dragon	Medusa	Stone Golem	Sphinx (Gynosphinx)
Neutral Evil	Hag Coven	13th Level Drow Ranger	Frost Giant	Young Sapphire Dragon	Adult Emerald Dragon
Lawful Evil	Oni	Young Green Dragon	Fire Giant	Adult Blue Dragon	Roll on the Devil Allies chart
Chaotic Evil	11th Level Human Antipaladin[9]	Lamia	Young White Dragon	Adult Black Dragon	Roll on the Demon Allies chart

DEVIL ALLIES

D12	ALLY
1–3	1d4 Imps
4–6	Unit of Bearded Devils
7–8	Barbed Devil
9–10	Lesser Erinyes
11	Chain Devil
12	Bone Devil

FEY ALLIES

D12	ALLY
1–3	Pixie
4–6	Sprite
7–8	Satyr
9–10	Dryad
11	Unicorn
12	Treant

DEMON ALLIES

D12	ALLY
1–3	Unit of Quasits
4–6	Succubus
7–8	Lesser Marilith
9–10	Glabrezu
11	Herzou
12	Lesser Balor

8 "Who made this thing?? Why did it suddenly show up here? Nono, don't attack it, I think it's on our side. Someone give it a command!"

9 What rules you use for an Antipaladin are up to you, there are many solutions online.

FOLLOWERS

Certainly you don't have to build a stronghold to attract followers. Followers can be a reward for any number of famous deeds or accomplishments. If the heroes save the town or rescue the blacksmith, they might well attract some followers!

Backstories

Attracting followers means lots of new characters in your game, and that can be a lot of work for the GM, inventing backstories for everyone. We've done our best to shoulder some of that burden by giving examples of the many followers someone could attract, but we don't know enough about your setting to describe an orc ambassador, for instance, without making a *lot* of assumptions that would conflict with many settings.

So that means the GM has to invent and describe the warlocks or stone giants who show up, and for some GMs that's a lot of fun! It's neat to have these seeds prompting you to create. "Ooh, a unit of light cavalry shows up! I wonder where they're from?"

But this can also be a pain the butt depending on what kind of GM you are or even what mood you're in. So you can always just *ask the player* who rolled to describe their new follower to you. This can be a lot of fun for them and make them feel more part of the creative process.

Of course, some players won't like this. For some players, if they invented it, then they know it's not real and the illusion of reality fails. As you play with folks you'll learn which players are which.

But it's perfectly legitimate to crowdsource these followers. Ask the player who rolled to describe their follower. Ask *another* player to! Make them part of the process and part of the fun. Of course, you're still the GM, so you'll still have to approve it.

UNITS

A local military company arrives and pledges service to the PC. These soldiers are usually from nearby kingdoms that recently suffered a defeat in battle, or they served a noble who was overthrown, and they're hoping that pledging service to you will lead to long-term employment and new victories.

Your character still has to pay the upkeep for these units, but you don't need to pay the cost to *recruit* them. Units recruited in this way have the same ancestry as the owner of the stronghold. Attracted Airborne units are typically riding griffons or giant eagles, at the GM's discretion.

What Can I Do with Units?

I think the number-one use of military units, at least at first, is *defending your new stronghold* against those who resent this upstart and scheme to take it all from you.

But once that's over with, you can send your new army off to tame local lands or *start* conflicts with nearby regents to acquire new territory and resources. Armies are used to *project power* to take over nearby territories or defend allies. Feel free to be proactive and put your army to work.

RETAINERS

Since your character is an adventurer, it's not at all surprising that other, less famous adventurers hear the tales of your character's deeds and show up pledging service. These are called retainers and have their own rules.

Each retainer must be of lower level than your PC. If your PC built or acquired a stronghold at an unusually low level (say, below 7th), just adjust the result of the roll downward.

> The Baron of Tor awards Sir Razallax the deed to Greywall Keep. Sir Razallax is a 5th-level paladin and, upon completing renovations and defending the keep, he rolls a 49 on the Paladin Followers chart and gets a 7th-level warlord. Because this follower is higher level than Sir Razallax, it is automatically lowered to 3rd level.

Retainers are not PCs. A skinwalker is not a druid, it's an NPC who was taught a very narrow range of druid abilities. It cannot do most of the things a druid can do. If you find yourself regularly expanding a retainer's abilities, if you think this skinwalker should be able to heal, since druids can heal, it's probably better to just use a druid.

Cool, but Not Too Cool!

Remember, this is a lower-level follower pledging service to a regent. They shouldn't have more or better magic items, but they can be *cool*. They can be neat or fun to run. Memorable. You don't want your high-level NPCs to outshine the players and steal their thunder. But a follower who's cool and memorable *validates* the player! "Obviously I am pretty awesome," the player thinks, "if I have a follower like this."

Followers *obey* their regent. They *want* to serve. They do not take the lead. GMs, if you find your player relying overmuch on advice or action from a follower, I recommend you have that follower defer. "Your Grace, you have seen so much more of the world than I. It would be absurd for me to advise you in this matter."

Lieutenants

I think the first best use for your retainer is to act as your lieutenant who runs the show while you are away from your stronghold. Your lieutenant is a trusted advisor whom you can rely on to do your bidding and carry out your orders. Because they are yours to run, lieutenants let you take Demesne Actions even while you're off adventuring[1].

You can also play your lieutenant as a PC should your current one die or if you want to focus on two important things at once.

Troubleshooters

If you attract more than one retainer, you now have a team who can travel your demesne righting wrongs, enforcing the law, and otherwise solving the lesser problems you are now too high level, and too *important*, to deal with personally.

Between your PC, your lieutenant, and any troubleshooters you attract, you could end up with an entire party to yourself to go on adventures with!

Simpler Than Player Characters

Running a PC is actually quite a lot of work compared to almost any other kind of game we play. They're incredibly well detailed, with weapon proficiencies and skills and class abilities and six stats with modifiers, maybe spells, and, by the time they've got a stronghold, over 50 hit points. Fifty is a lot of anything to track, and we don't think of it that way because we're used to it, but it boils down to "You're going to be doing a lot of addition and/or subtraction between now and going unconscious."

But it's *our* character—we want that level of detail. It reflects how important the character is to us and how complexly we view them.

Do we need that same level of detail for a sidekick? For some people, yes, because with that detail comes flexibility and options, and with that comes power. And many players hate the idea that if only they'd spent more time reading what this second character could do, the second character—and maybe the rest of the party—would still be alive.

This system trades power and flexibility for ease of use. Retainers have many fewer options, but they're still pretty useful and, most of all, *easy to run* along with your character. Retainers are *like* their PC counterparts, but with simpler rules.

There is one type of retainer for each class specialty, but these followers are not PCs and do not have PC stats. They sometimes have access to different skills, saving throws, or abilities.

Hard to Kill

You cannot attract a follower equal to or greater than your level, so by definition your followers are always lower level than your PC. Because of this, followers need to be **tougher** than a PC of equivalent level, so they can survive combat alongside their higher-lever buddy. To do this, retainers ignore damage (and therefore healing) below a certain threshold. In fact, retainers don't have hit points at all!

Health Levels, Not Hit Points

When the party cleric asks, "Okay, how much damage has everyone taken," and everybody at the table looks at their character sheet, you know you're in for a ride.

Because depending on the habits of the players, they may already have to do some math. If a player keeps a running total of their current hit points, then they'll have to subtract that from their max hit points to give the cleric an answer.

Then on top of this, the cleric inevitably asks, "Well, okay, but what is that compared to your total?" Because obviously "30 damage" can mean very different things to different characters and at different levels. So the cleric wants to know what *percentage* of your health you have left. But no one ever asks that—that would mean even more math.

In reality, both numbers are important to the cleric! You may have taken a large *percentage* of damage but a low *amount* of damage, and that will inform the cleric's decision on whom to heal.

1 Demesne Actions are another element of Kingdoms & Warfare. The actions your Barony or Thieves' Guild or Wizards' College can take.

Having to *also* do all that same nonsense for your follower is more work than we should need to do just to have a cool buddy. We're busy people.

So, retainers do not track hit points, but rather **health levels**. A retainer has health levels equal in number to their Hit Dice or level. Each time a retainer is hit by an attack, they make a Constitution saving throw. The DC is the **average damage from the attack**[2].

If they succeed, they take no damage. If they fail, **they lose one health level per die of damage** from the attack. If they lose their final health level, they drop unconscious and use the normal rules for dying.

> Our 5th-level exarch is with her 7th-level PC and the rest of the party. They're fighting two earth elementals, which is a reasonable battle for five 7th-level PCs.
>
> The elemental hits our exarch with a slam attack. Its average damage is 14 points, so our exarch makes a Constitution saving throw against DC 14. She succeeds, so nothing happens. Notionally, she's taken some damage, but not enough to worry anyone. If she had failed, she loses one health level and has 4 remaining.

Pretty simple. One roll, check off a health level box if you fail. Move on.

Healing

Retainers regain a health level after each short rest, and each die of healing used on them recovers one health level. We can imagine that any attack that hits a retainer does *some* damage, just not enough to matter—likewise, the presence of abilities like *lay on hands* can recover *some* damage, just not enough to move the needle. So save that healing for your PC friends.

Initiative

Retainers act when you act. If your retainer has higher Dexterity than you, you gain +1 to your initiative rolls.

Armor Class

A retainer has light, medium, or heavy armor. The specific armor they're wearing is a detail below this systems' level of abstraction.

- Light armor is AC 13.
- Medium armor is AC 15.
- Heavy Armor is AC 18.

Abilities

A retainer has a **primary ability**. They gain +4 to any ability checks with primary abilities, and they gain +2 to all other ability checks.

Skills

A retainer has **primary skills**. They gain +5 to skill checks with primary skills, and they gain +2 to all other skill checks.

Saving Throws

A retainer gets +3 to all saving throws, and an extra +3 to saves with a primary ability.

They save against spells just like PCs do, but if they succeed on a save, they lose health levels equal to half the original number of dice. So a retainer who saves against a *fireball* (8d6) loses 4 health levels.

Ancestry, Perception, and Movement

The GM chooses the ancestry (elf, dwarf, human, etc.) of the retainer, which determines their Perception, movement, and special abilities.

Actions

Adventuring followers get all the regular actions PCs do. They can move and act, and they get reactions and bonus actions and attacks of opportunity.

Additionally, all retainers begin with a **signature attack** they can perform each round. If granted extra attacks, these are always their signature attack. As they gain levels, they unlock **special actions** (usually spells for spellcasters). Each special action can only be used once per encounter, and each is limited in the number of times per day it can be used.

The DC of a special or signature attack is listed in its description.

At 7th level, retainers can take two signature attacks per round.

Attacking

Making an attack roll for your follower is just going to slow everything down, and if you want to do that, you don't need these rules—you can just run your follower using PC stats and rules.

If your PC hits an enemy, your follower hits with their signature ability, even if you and your follower are attacking different targets. Your success inspired your follower.

If you miss, or if you simply don't attack on your turn, *then* you make an attack roll for your follower[3]. For

2 This is usually listed in their stat block, but I'm not sure most people use it. Now we have a use for it!

3 This greatly reduces the complexity of running your follower, but they retain their versatility and you're not joined at the hip. If you hit, they hit, but if you miss or don't attack, they still get their shot

these purposes, a spell that deals damage or prompts an enemy to make a saving throw counts as an attack.

Adventuring followers get +6 to hit with their attacks. This doesn't change. At the GM's discretion, you could improve this bonus by 1 at 5th and 7th level.

Spells and DCs

Adventuring followers' spells and actions that require a saving throw start with DC 13 at 3rd level, improve to DC 14 at 5th level, and finally improve to DC 15 at 7th level. If a retainer makes a spell attack, it uses the same +6 retainers get to all attacks.

Gear

Unless provisions are specifically made otherwise, a retainer has the same gear as a starting PC of their class. For example, a berserker has the same gear you would expect to find on a 3rd-level PC barbarian.

Experience

Your retainers level up once every two times your PC levels up, capping out at 7th level. They gain special actions at 5th and 7th level.

Magic

Adventuring followers can use magic items like anyone else! A *+1 longsword* increases their attack and damage by 1, and +1 armor increases their AC by 1.

One happy side effect of having followers is you can always pass your obsolete items on to them. Low-level items, once useless as treasure for high-level characters, now have a use!

Leaders

The character who recruited the retainer is called their **leader**. This term is referenced in various actions and abilities.

BARBARIAN RETAINERS

Reaver

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Strength

SAVES: Strength, Constitution

SKILLS: Athletics, Intimidation

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Invulnerable (Reaction).* The reaver ignores all damage taken from one attack.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Frenzy.* The reaver immediately makes three attacks with their signature attack that score a critical hit on a 18–20.

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Fearful Yawp.* The reaver roars with bestial might. Enemies within 30 feet must make a Wisdom saving throw or become frightened. On each of its turns, a frightened creature must take the Dash action and move away from the reaver by the safest route unless there is nowhere to move. If the frightened creature does not have line of sight to the reaver at the end of its turn, it can make a Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, the condition ends.

Spirit Warden

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Strength

SAVES: Strength, Constitution

SKILLS: Nature, Survival

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY, BONUS ACTION): *Grizzly Resistance.* The spirit warden and their leader have resistance to all damage until the end of the totem warrior's next turn.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY, BONUS ACTION): *Raptor Dive*. The spirit warden uses the Dash action. This movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Ferocious Whirlwind.* The spirit warden immediately makes an attack with their signature attack against all adjacent enemies. Hits deal an extra 6 (1d12) slashing damage.

BARD RETAINERS

Loremaster

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Charisma

SAVES: Dexterity, Charisma

SKILLS: Arcana, History, Performance

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY, REACTION): *Insult.* After a creature the loremaster can see within 60 feet makes an attack, ability check, or damage roll, the loremaster can roll a d6 and subtract the result from that creature's result.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Soothing Song.* The loremaster plays an inspiring tune, allowing all allies within 60 feet to spend a Hit Die in order to roll that die and regain hit points equal to the roll plus the ally's Constitution modifier.

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *fireball*

Troubadour-warrior

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Charisma

SAVES: Dexterity, Charisma

SKILLS: Deception, Performance, Persuasion

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY, REACTION): *Cheer.* After an ally within 60 feet that the troubadour-warrior can see makes an attack, roll a d6 and add the result to the ally's result.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY, REACTION): *Bolstering Praise.* After an ally hits an enemy creature, the troubadour-warrior can convert the hit into a critical hit.

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY, REACTION): *Distracting Taunt.* When a creature the troubadour-warrior can see within 60 feet hits the leader of the troubadour-warrior, the troubadour-warrior can taunt the creature, forcing it to make a Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, its attack automatically misses.

CLERIC RETAINERS

Curate

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Wisdom

SAVES: Wisdom

SKILLS: History, Religion

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *sacred flame*

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *suggestion*

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *nondetection*

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *confusion*

Exorcist

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Wisdom

SAVES: Wisdom

SKILLS: Medicine, Religion

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *sacred flame*

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *scorching ray*

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *fireball*

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *wall of fire*

Healer

ARMOR: Heavy (AC 18)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Wisdom

SAVES: Wisdom

SKILLS: Insight, Medicine

SIGNATURE ATTACK[1]: Orison. As an action, choose an ally the healer can see within 30 feet. On their next attack or saving throw roll, roll a d4 and add the result to the ally's result.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (5/DAY): *Minor Heal.* An ally the healer can see within 30 feet regains 7 (1d8 + 3) hit points.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *revivify*

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *guardian of faith*

1 Not, strictly speaking, an attack but it otherwise obeys all the rules of a signature attack.

Shadow Priest

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Wisdom
SAVES: Wisdom
SKILLS: Deception, Stealth
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *sacred flame*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *pass without trace*
5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *dispel magic*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *dimension door*

Stormspeaker

ARMOR: Heavy (AC 18)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Wisdom
SAVES: Wisdom
SKILLS: Persuasion, Religion
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *shatter*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *call lightning*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *ice storm*

Warden

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Wisdom
SAVES: Wisdom
SKILLS: History, Medicine
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *poison spray*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *spike growth*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *wind wall*
7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *dominate beast*

Battle Priest

ARMOR: Heavy (AC 18)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Wisdom
SAVES: Wisdom
SKILLS: Insight, Persuasion
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *spiritual weapon*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *spirit guardians*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *banishment*

DRUID RETAINERS

Mystic

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Wisdom
SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom
SKILLS: Arcana, Insight
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *poison spray*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *moonbeam*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *call lightning*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *ice storm*

Skinwalker

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Wisdom

SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom

SKILLS: Nature, Survival

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Transform – Dire Wolf.* The skinwalker assumes the shape of a dire wolf for 1 minute. While in this form, the skinwalker's signature attack deals 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. Their movement increases to 50 feet, they gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell, and they have advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the skinwalker's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated. A skinwalker can only be in one form at a time.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Transform - Allosaurus.* The skinwalker assumes the shape of an allosaurus for 1 minute. While in this form, the skinwalker's signature attack deals 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage. Their movement increases to 60 feet, and if they move at least 30 feet straight toward a creature and then hit it with their signature attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone and the skinwalker can make a signature attack against it as a bonus action. A skinwalker can only be in one form at a time.

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Transform - Giant Scorpion.* The skinwalker assumes the form of a giant scorpion for 1 minute. While in this form The skinwalker's armor class increases to 17, their signature attack deals 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage and force the target to make a Constitution saving throw or take 22 (4d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A skinwalker can only be in one form at a time.

Knight-Sorcerer

ARMOR: Heavy (AC 18)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Strength

SAVES: Strength, Constitution

SKILLS: Arcana, Insight

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *shield*

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *thunderwave*

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY, BONUS ACTION): *Spellblade.* The knight-sorcerer casts *firebolt*.

Swordmaster

ARMOR: Heavy (AC 18)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Strength

SAVES: Strength, Constitution

SKILLS: Athletics, Survival

SIGNATURE ATTACK: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d8 + 2) slashing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Gaping Wound.* The swordmaster makes an attack with their signature attack against an adjacent creature. On a hit, the target starts bleeding, taking 3 (1d6) damage at the start of each of its following turns. At the end of each of its turns, it can make a Constitution save to stop the bleeding.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY, BONUS ACTION): *Challenge.* The swordmaster issues a challenge to an adjacent creature. For 1 minute, if that creature attempts to attack a target other than the swordmaster, or attempts to move away from the swordmaster, the swordmaster immediately makes two attacks with their signature attack against that creature, ending the Challenge.

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY, REACTION): *Retaliate.* After being hit by a melee attack, the swordmaster can immediately make three attacks against the attacker with their signature attack.

Warlord

ARMOR: Heavy (AC 18)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Strength

SAVES: Strength, Constitution

SKILLS: Athletics, Intimidation

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d12 + 4) piercing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Commanding Strike.* The warlord takes their signature attack and selects an ally within 30 feet who can see and hear the warlord and has line of sight to the target of the signature attack. That ally makes a weapon attack against the target.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Charge.* The warlord takes a signature attack and selects an ally, who can immediately move up to 30 feet and make an attack or cast a spell.

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Rallying Cry.* All allies within 60 feet gain 3d8 temporary hit points.

MONK RETAINERS

Acolyte of the Way

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Dexterity, Wisdom

SAVES: Strength, Dexterity

SKILLS: Acrobatics, Athletics

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Fists of Fury.* The acolyte makes two attacks with their signature attack. If both attacks hit the same target, the target is knocked back 5 feet.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY, REACTION): *Stunning Follow-up.* As a reaction to taking damage from a creature adjacent to them, the acolyte immediately makes two attacks with their signature attack against their attacker. If they both hit, the attacker is stunned.

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY, BONUS ACTION): *Body and Soul.* The acolyte heals 2 health levels.

Acolyte of Darkness

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Dexterity, Wisdom

SAVES: Strength, Dexterity

SKILLS: Acrobatics, Stealth

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *darkness*

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Shadow Drain.* The acolyte makes two attacks with their signature attack. If they both hit, the acolyte heals one health level.

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Shadow Door*. The acolyte teleports up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space they can see and makes two attacks with their signature attack.

Elemental Acolyte

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Dexterity, Wisdom

SAVES: Strength, Dexterity

SKILLS: Acrobatics, Insight

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Wind.* Intense winds swirl around the ends of the acolyte's weapon, causing their next two attacks to deal an extra 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Water.* The acolyte makes a signature attack and assumes a stance that lets them dodge all incoming melee attacks until the start of their next turn.

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Earth.* The acolyte stomps the ground, dislodging two large pieces of earth, and kicks them toward a target within 30 feet. The target must make a Dexterity saving throw or take 27 (6d8) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

PALADIN RETAINERS

Cavalier

ARMOR: Heavy (AC 18)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Strength, Charisma

SAVES: Strength, Wisdom, Charisma

SKILLS: Athletics, Religion

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) piercing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Radiant Lance.* The cavalier's lance glows with radiant light. The cavalier takes their signature attack and deals an extra 9 (2d8) radiant damage on a hit.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *lesser restoration*

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY, REACTION): *Fight Me, Knave!* If an adjacent ally would be hit by a weapon attack, the cavalier is hit instead, and then the cavalier may make an attack with their signature attack against the enemy attacker.

Justicar

ARMOR: Heavy (AC 18)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Strength, Charisma

SAVES: Strength, Wisdom, Charisma

SKILLS: Intimidation, Persuasion

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Terrifying Strike.* The justicar makes an attack with their signature attack. The target must make a Wisdom save or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *hunter's mark*

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Duel.* The justicar issues a holy decree challenging an enemy to a duel. That enemy must make a Wisdom saving throw. If it fails, it has disadvantage on attack rolls against creatures other than the justicar. On its turn, the enemy can make a Wisdom saving throw to try to move away from the justicar. On a successful save, the duel ends. The duel also ends after 1 minute or if the justicar moves away or attacks any other creature.

Knight of the Green Order

ARMOR: Heavy (AC 18)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Strength, Charisma

SAVES: Strength, Wisdom, Charisma

SKILLS: Insight, Religion

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Twisting Vines.* The knight makes an attack with their signature attack. On a hit, the target is restrained. It can make a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check on its turn to escape. If it escapes, the vines wither and die.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *entangle*

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *moonbeam*

RANGER RETAINERS

Beast Lord

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Dexterity, Wisdom

SAVES: Strength, Dexterity

SKILLS: Nature, Stealth

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Hawk Strike.* A hawk appears and attacks the eyes of a creature within 60 feet. The target must make a Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) slashing damage and be blinded until the end of its next turn.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Wolf Pack.* Spectral wolves appear around every enemy within 60 feet. They grant the beast lord's allies advantage on all weapon attacks until the end of the beast lord's next turn.

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Bear Slam.* A dire bear appears and attacks an enemy within 60 feet. The target must make a Strength saving throw or be knocked prone and restrained. On each of its following turns, the target takes 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage and can make a Strength (Athletics) check to escape. If it escapes, the bear disappears.

Tracker

ARMOR: Medium (AC 15)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Dexterity, Wisdom

SAVES: Strength, Dexterity

SKILLS: Investigation, Survival

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *hunter's mark*

5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *find traps*

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY, REACTION): *Watch Out, Boss!* When a creature the tracker can see enters a space adjacent to the tracker's leader, the tracker may use their reaction to make a signature attack against that creature. On a hit, the attack also knocks the target prone.

ROGUE RETAINERS

Executioner

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Dexterity

SAVES: Dexterity, Intelligence

SKILLS: Deception, Investigation, Perception, Stealth

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) piercing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Garrote.* The executioner whips a serrated wire around an adjacent creature's neck, dealing 10 (3d6) slashing damage on a hit. The creature must make a Dexterity saving throw or be restrained. At the start of the executioners turn, they automatically deal 3d6 slashing damage to the restrained creature. During its turn, the restrained creature can make a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to break the grapple.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Dagger Storm.* The executioner throws a barrage of shadowy daggers at all enemies within 10 feet. Targets must make a Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (4d6) piercing damage, or half as much damage on a successful one.

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Final Strike.* The executioner disappears in a cloud of shadow, reappearing behind a chosen enemy creature within 60 feet. The executioner attacks twice with their signature attack, dealing an extra 14 (4d6) force damage on each hit.

Guild Adept

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Dexterity

SAVES: Dexterity, Intelligence

SKILLS: Acrobatics, Arcana, Deception, Stealth

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Out of Phase.* The guild adept casts *blur* on themselves and their leader.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Who's Side Are You On?!* The guild adept picks two enemy creatures adjacent to each other within 30 feet. Each target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or immediately attack the other.

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Vanish.* The guild adept casts *invisibility* on themselves or their leader. This spell lasts until the end of the target's next turn.

Cutpurse

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Dexterity

SAVES: Dexterity, Intelligence

SKILLS: Acrobatics, Deception, Sleight of Hand, Stealth

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Low Blow.* Using their signature attack, the cutpurse attacks a weak point on an enemy creature, causing them to fall prone. The target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or suffer disadvantage on all attacks they make until the end of their next turn.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Flash Powder.* The cutpurse throws a satchel of powder at a point they can see within 60 feet, and it explodes in a blinding flash. Each creature within 5 feet of the flash must make a Constitution saving throw or be blinded. At the end of each of its following turns, a blinded creature can repeat this saving throw. On a success, the creature is no longer blinded.

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Smoke Bomb.* The cutpurse throws a smoke bomb at a point they can see within 30 feet, and it explodes in a choking cloud with a 20-foot radius. Any creature that enters the cloud or starts its turn there must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 16 (3d10) poison damage, or half as much damage on a successful one. The smoke spreads around corners, and the area is heavily obscured. It lasts for 1 minute.

Thaumaturgist

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Charisma

SAVES: Constitution, Charisma

SKILLS: Insight, Religion

SIGNATURE ATTACK: *fire bolt*

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Fire Breath.* The thaumaturgist breathes fire in a 15-foot cone in front of them. Each creature in the cone must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 9 (2d8) fire damage, or half as much damage on a successful one.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *Dragon's Roar.* The thaumaturgist roars with draconic might. Each enemy within 60 feet must make a Charisma saving throw or become frightened until the end of its next turn. On each of their turns, frightened creatures must take the Dash action and move away from the thaumaturgist by the safest route unless there is nowhere to move.

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *Fire Wave.* A wave of fire radiates in a 10-foot radius out from the thaumaturgist. Each creature caught in the wave must make a Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 16 (3d10) fire damage and is pushed back 10 feet. On a success, it takes half as much damage and is not pushed back.

Chaos Mage

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)

PRIMARY ABILITY: Charisma

SAVES: Constitution, Charisma

SKILLS: Deception, Persuasion

SIGNATURE ATTACK: Roll 1d4: 1 = *acid splash*, 2 = *fire bolt*, 3 = *poison spray*, 4 = *ray of frost*.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): Roll 1d4: 1 = *blur*, 2 = *enhance ability*, 3 = *invisibility*, 4 = *mirror image*.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): Roll 1d4: 1 = *fireball*, 2 = *lightning bolt*, 3 = *sleet storm*, 4 = *stinking cloud*.

7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): Roll 1d4: 1 = *blight*, 2 = *ice storm*, 3 = *polymorph*, 4 = *fire wall*.

WARLOCK RETAINERS

Alienist
ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Charisma
SAVES: Wisdom, Charisma
SKILLS: Investigation, Religion
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *eldritch blast*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *detect thoughts*
5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *black tentacles*
7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *telekinesis*

Diabolist
ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Charisma
SAVES: Wisdom, Charisma
SKILLS: Deception, Intimidation
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *eldritch blast*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *burning hands*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *fireball*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *flame strike*

Exarch
ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Charisma
SAVES: Wisdom, Charisma
SKILLS: History, Nature
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *eldritch blast*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *blink*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *greater invisibility*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *dominate person*

WIZARD RETAINERS

Conjurer
ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Intelligence
SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom
SKILLS: Arcana, Deception
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *acid splash*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *stinking cloud*
5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *conjure elemental*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *insect plague*

Enchanter
ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Intelligence
SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom
SKILLS: Insight, Religion
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *shocking grasp*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *acid arrow*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *fireball*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *confusion*

Evoker
ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Intelligence
SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom
SKILLS: Arcana, Insight
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *ray of frost*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *scorching ray*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *lightning bolt*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *wall of fire*

Illusionist

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Intelligence
SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom
SKILLS: Deception, Persuasion
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *poison spray*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *hypnotic pattern*
5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *slow*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *phantasmal killer*

Necromancer

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Intelligence
SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom
SKILLS: Intimidation, Religion
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *chill touch*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *blindness/deafness*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *vampiric touch*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *blight*

Seer

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Intelligence
SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom
SKILLS: Insight, Investigation
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *fire bolt*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *hold person*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *sleet storm*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *divination*

Shaper

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Intelligence
SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom
SKILLS: Insight, History
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *fire bolt*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *blink*
5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *haste*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *polymorph*

Theurgist

ARMOR: Light (AC 13)
PRIMARY ABILITY: Intelligence
SAVES: Intelligence, Wisdom
SKILLS: Arcana, Religion
SIGNATURE ATTACK: *ray of frost*
SPECIAL ACTIONS
3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY): *pass without trace*
5TH-LEVEL (3/DAY): *dispel magic*
7TH-LEVEL (1/DAY): *banishment*

Artisans

It takes many skilled workers[4] to build a keep or a tower or a theater. Commonly, one of these skilled laborers, impressed with the lord's demeanor, will offer to serve the lord permanently, becoming a member of their retinue, living in the stronghold or the surrounding village after the rest of the workers return to their towns.

Each artisan in the lord's service either grants the lord some benefit or improves the stronghold in some way.

Where Do Artisan Followers Come From?

Newly minted regents inspire people, but they also present an opportunity for other people to fulfill heretofore thwarted ambition.

The mason who sets up shop in a fighter's keep was probably one of the folks who helped build it. It takes several masons to build or restore a keep. One of them naturally assumed a leadership position over the others, was trusted by the nascent lord, and stayed on when the project was done. The mason probably has family in a nearby town. Some of them might move to the village that slowly accumulates around the lord's keep.

A tailor who joins a lord in their wilderness stronghold may be a local townsperson seeking greater glory, the opportunity to serve a baron or a count! Or they may be someone from the nearest big city who's tired of serving folks who don't appreciate their handiwork, hearing tell of a newly landed noble building a keep, and decides it is better to be a big fish in a small pond than a little fish in the great wide ocean. The tailor from the big city brings with them all the prejudices of civilization, but also all the knowledge that comes with it, knowledge of court intrigues and fashion.

ARTISAN SHOP IMPROVEMENT TABLE

LEVEL	COST
1ST	—
2ND	1,000 GP
3RD	1,500 GP
4TH	2,000 GP
5TH	2,500 GP

Your Artisan's Shop

Most artisans come with their own shop, which they set up for free and which starts at 1st level. You can pay to improve it based on the Artisan Shop Improvement Table. This process takes four months (one season), and you cannot pay more to speed this up. The maximum shop level is 5.

Harvesting Organs to Create Magic Items

If you've got a blacksmith, a scribe, or an alchemist waiting back at your stronghold, suddenly the corpses of the creatures you defeat in combat become bags of useful organs! Not just a smelly reminder of your triumph.

With some corpses of magical creatures, normal people with no levels in a spellcasting class can craft magic items, because the files are *in* the computer...er, the magic is *in* the creature, in its organs. A dragon obviously can't fly under its own caloric power, that's ridiculous. It is a magical creature, and by the careful harvesting of its organs, you can distill some of that magic for your own use. In all cases, use the normal rules and requirements for crafting magic items. The artisan follower simply reduces the time and cost.

In each case, a spellcaster is needed to imbue the item with the requisite magical power. The caster isn't using a specific spell, merely the arcane talent and magical knowledge necessary to manifest the item's ability.

THE ALCHEMY TEST: Once a creature dies, its organs begin to decay. You must act *within minutes*[5] of death to harvest anything useful. A monster corpse has four useful components—described below—and each requires an **alchemy test** to harvest.

An alchemy test combines two skill checks: first an **Arcana check** to determine if you know where the organs are and the best way to harvest the component, then a **Medicine check** to extract and preserve the component without destroying it in the process.[6] It's like a mini skill challenge.

The DC of the Arcana check to locate the organs and remember the best way to extract them equals 8 + the challenge rating of the creature you're operating on.

The DC of the Medicine check to perform the surgery and extract enough useful material without destroying it depends on the organ in question and the challenge rating of the creature, as shown in the Alchemy Test table.

4 Not all these followers are *literally* artisans, but I felt "specialist" was too modern and technical.

5 How many minutes? You decide! Even "immediately" is fine!

6 Many are the times one of my PCs failed their check, emerging from their impromptu field surgery covered in blood and brains. "Um, I screwed up."

A given corpse can only withstand one alchemy test before it's unusable.

RECIPES: Crafting a magic item requires a recipe. A *sword, +1* isn't merely a normal weapon with *bless* cast on it during its forging—it requires special metals. For potions, unique admixtures must be chemically prepared. Scrolls require rare inks. In some cases, the item can only be made under special circumstances, like during a specific phase of the moon.

In all these instances, it's assumed your follower knows how to procure *just enough* of these special materials to craft the item in question. How they get these materials is a trade secret, but it typically involves relying on a network of fellow craftsmen they established before joining your employ.

Generally we don't worry too much about *which* recipes an artisan follower has access to. Their job is to save you time and money—all the other requirements must be met normally—but the GM could rule that the artisan comes with a handful of recipes and make finding other recipes part of adventuring!

Goran the Smith offers his services to Lady Halfrid. When she asks what services he can provide, he mentions repairing armor and forging weapons, and he discreetly mentions that if she knows a mage, he has the knowing of crafting *javelins of lightning* passed down from his grandfather's father. A very useful inheritance!

The Alchemist

The alchemist is to the wizard as the blacksmith is to the fighter. Closely related disciplines that nonetheless require so much specialized knowledge it's functionally impossible to be a master at both.

Alchemists are primarily useful for brewing potions, but many are also lorecrafty and well versed in obscure uses for various materials. Yes, an *alarm* spell requires a bell, but do you know what happens if you use a *crystal* bell crafted by an elf maiden? I don't, but your alchemist might!

Many wizards began life as alchemists in service to a lord. Eventually frustrated by the limits of what alchemy can do, they set out to learn proper magic!

THE LABORATORY: The laboratory allows your alchemist to craft potions 10% cheaper and faster than normal per level of the laboratory. The alchemist is not a wizard or sorcerer but understands the principles of magic well enough to duplicate their effects while making potions.

The kinds of potions your alchemist can make depend on the monster organs you bring them!

THE EYES OF THE BEAST: POTION OF INVISIBILITY TO MONSTERS (UNCOMMON)

With the preserved eyes of a creature your alchemist can make a lesser form of the *potion of invisibility*. This is an uncommon potion requiring a spellcaster of at least 3rd level.

The potion takes just as long to craft and costs just as much as a *potion of invisibility* (reduced by the alchemist's crafting bonus), but it only grants invisibility against *exactly* the kind of creature the eyes were harvested from. A black dragon's eyes make *potions of invisibility to black dragons*. Not *all* dragons or even all

ALCHEMY TEST

ORGAN	MAGIC ITEM	CRAFTED BY	MEDICINE DC
Eyes	*Potion of invisibility to monsters*	Alchemist	15
Blood	*Arrows of monster slaying*	Blacksmith	10 + CR
Blood	*Sword of monster slaying*	Blacksmith	10 + CR
Brains	*Potion of monster control*	Alchemist	12 + CR
Heart	*Scroll of protection from monsters*	Scribe	12

evil dragons. A *potion of invisibility to goblins* will not work against bugbears or hobgoblins, and a *potion of invisibility to lizardfolk* will not work against troglodytes. Unless, of course, you are a generous GM.

THE BRAIN OF THE BEAST: POTION OF MONSTER CONTROL (VERY RARE)

If the rarest and hardest of all organs to harvest and preserve—the brain—is brought to an alchemist, they can craft the very rare *potion of monster control*.

This powerful item distills the magics of the spell *dominate monster* into a potion anyone can drink. Crafting this item requires the services of a 7th-level spellcaster.

Consuming the potion acts just like casting the spell, but it only works against the kind of creature whose brain was used to make the potion. Also, the target does not gain advantage if you are fighting it, and its duration is 1 hour.

SAMPLE ALCHEMIST: MORWEN THE WITCH

Of course, Morwen isn't a witch in the strictest sense of the word, but she certainly looks the part and does nothing to discourage the rumors about her. A reputation as a black and midnight hag who curses those foolish enough to disrespect her is almost as valuable as actually being able to curse people!

Morwen knows much local and ancient lore now forgotten. Through her mother's line she knows the lore of the Old Gods now little worshiped and is a surprising source of arcane knowledge.

She is old, bent, with long grey and black unkept hair, and often smells of sulfur. She cackles quite a bit, and though she spends day after day alone in her laboratory blowing glass and distilling alien liquids, she is sociable when approached and full of lewd comments and thinly disguised innuendo. She enjoys poking fun at her lord or lady regardless of their station.

*"Get out! Get out! Oh, it's you. Come in! Come in! I've got the ah—what was I working on? Oh! The potions of healing, thanks to your priest friend. Here, and here. What? Oh, my eyebrows. I lost them when my second try at the potion of fire breath exploded, but I'm sure I've got it now! Third time's the charm, eh? Oh, speaking of charm, here's the philter of love you asked for. I put a little kick in it in case your young friend's enthusiasm is, um, stiffer than his resolve. AH-HAHAHA *cough*cough*cough* Ahem. Hehe."*

The Blacksmith

A skilled blacksmith is one of the most valued and useful members of any town. Metal is difficult to extract from the ground, almost as difficult to process, and the ability to repair metal or beat it into a new and useful shape is akin to sorcery. Indeed, the blacksmith's trade secrets are as closely guarded as any wizard's tome.

A blacksmith is a great help when building your stronghold, but *mostly* for nails! Many stone fortifications benefit from wooden frames to hoist stones or build scaffolding, and these things need lots of nails. The amount of time a smith actually spends on weapons and armor in a normal village can be close to zero. Of course, a PC's blacksmith is a different story...

THE SMITHY: Your blacksmith can forge magic arms and armor. Like with the alchemist, this requires the blacksmith to have some knowledge of the nature of magic, but they don't need to be a wizard, thanks to the incredibly potent arcane power held within a creature's blood.

The smithy allows your blacksmith to craft magic arms and armor 10% cheaper and faster than normal per level of the smithy.

What items your smith can forge depends on which organs you bring!

THE BLOOD OF THE BEAST: ARROWS OF SLAYING

The alchemy test needed to make *arrows of slaying* depends on the CR of the monster in question, as described in **The Alchemy Test** (page 83). The number of arrows you get is also based on the CR of the monster. Very powerful monsters yield only a single arrow. Crafting the arrows requires the services of a 9th-level spellcaster.

If a player asks, "Why there aren't more of these things out in the world?" remind them that there are few people out there with the necessary skill (alchemy), opportunity (adventuring), and resources (stronghold with appropriate follower), and even then, you only get a handful of arrows, and of course they are spent once shot!

You might make the *arrows of slaying* look markedly different from normal arrows. When one of my players found an *arrow of orc-slaying*, I described it as "the White Arrow," and it was made of bone. The player had no idea what it was, but they were fighting lots of orcs!

When they finally faced off against Bonebreaker Dorokor and said, "I fire the White Arrow!" it was a dramatic moment indeed, as the players gasped and waited to see what it might do. And the White Arrow did not disappoint!

ARROWS OF SLAYING

MONSTER CR	# ARROWS
1–5	1D6
6–9	1D4
10–14	2
15+	1

THE SWORD WITH BLOOD IN THE BLADE: SLAYING WEAPONS

At the lord's request, the smith can use vials of monster blood to enhance the bonus of a newly forged magical weapon.

While crafting a magical weapon with the *slashing* property, if the blacksmith quenches the blade of the weapon in the blood of a monster, this produces a *slaying* blade with an extra bonus to damage based on the kind of monster. Crafting the weapon requires the services of a 3rd-level spellcaster.

The alchemy test needed to make a *slaying* weapon depends on the CR of the monster in question, as described in **The Alchemy Test** (page 83). Using the blood of multiple monster types dilutes the formula, giving no bonus against any monster type to the weapon.

Lady Sariel brings her smith, Dyfan, a bladder full of lizardfolk blood. Because Lady Sariel is a cleric, and therefore a spellcaster, she can assist Dyfan in crafting a *sword of reptile slaying* that, when complete, is a *+1 sword* that does an extra 3d6 damage versus lizardfolk and snake men.

EXAMPLE BLACKSMITH: URR THE ONE-HANDED

Technically he's one-armed, but calling him the "one-elbowed," while accurate, would be much less dramatic. Urr is a half-orc smith who learned the trade from his mother's father. The lack of an arm doesn't seem to inhibit his skill. His smithy is littered with frames and devices he's cobbled together to hold items in place and act as his left arm. But typically he's found in his smithy aided by young apprentices. For some reason the boys and girls of the local village love Urr. He treats them like adults and makes small toys for them, and though he barks and scowls they know he feels affection, not malice, toward them.

"I went to visit my father's people once, as a boy. They took my arm as payment for time spent among the men of fields and farms. So if you're plannin' on using it against the orcs of the hills, then aye. I'll make the weapon for you. Beat the dents out of that armor, too. Do whatever you ask because you give me a place to work, and you don't look at me different to anyone else. That earns you my labor."

The Captain

The experienced soldier tired of campaigning abroad, the watch commander sick of fighting endless crime in the big city. Any captain used to command might retire their post when they hear tell of a new lord or lady with a keep or tower to defend.

Like other artisans, captains sometimes come from local villages the heroes saved. More than other artisans, the captain knows how hard an adventurer's job is. Respects them. If you saved the village from the conspiracy of lizardmen in the swamp, the local watch captain may well decide it would be better to serve you, than continue taking abuse from the town council, none of whom have ever lifted a sword. Captains like serving characters who act, rather than deliberate.

A captain can also serve ably as your lieutenant if you haven't yet rolled a retainer. Your captain will serve your domain while you adventure, protecting your interests and negotiating on your behalf to the best of their ability.

Like all followers, the captain is loyal, but unlike the others, there's iron in the glove. With the power and authority to wage war, you may return to find your keep under siege. Its only defense: the strategy and tactics of your captain.

A captain does not automatically come with an army! It's entirely possible to recruit a captain in spite of having no troops, no army for them to lead. This is of little concern to the captain, they're certain you will need an army eventually, especially now that you've raised this lovely stronghold. Captains make excellent lieutenants, running your demesne while you are adventuring abroad.

THE CAPTAIN'S SHOP: THE BARRACKS

The first thing your captain does is supervise construction of a barracks. Your barracks temporarily upgrades the experience level of some number of units by one—Green units become Regular, Regular units become Seasoned, etc.

Your barracks can upgrade a number of units equal to its level. It begins at 1st level (one unit affected) and can be raised using the Improvement rules to 5th level (5 units affected). The units affected are chosen at the start of a battle and cannot be changed until the next battle.

EXAMPLE CAPTAIN: CAPTAIN HORBLACK

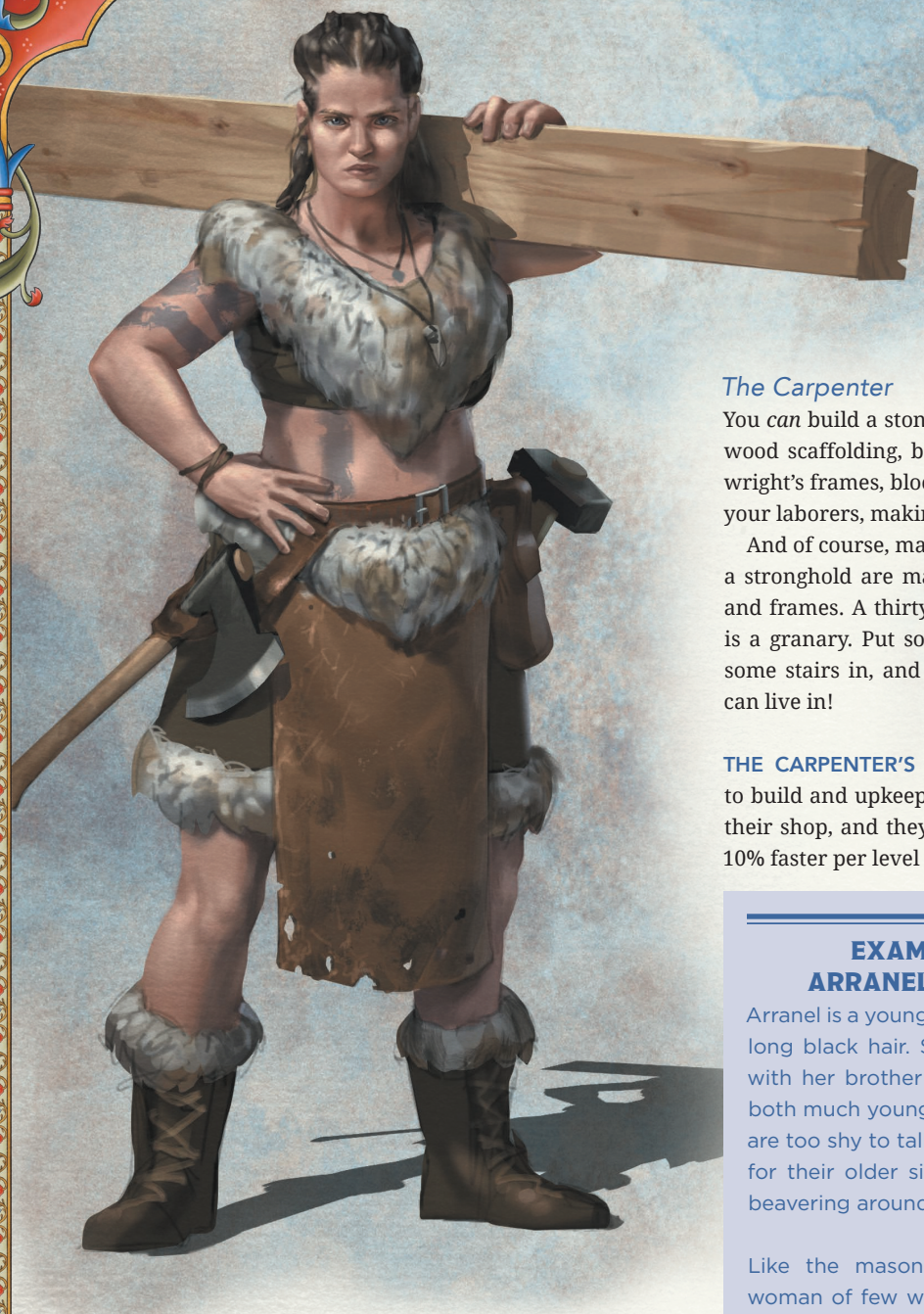
Captain Edmund Horblack served another local lord until he died, leaving no issue, and nearby barons sacked his keep and divided his land.

Now Captain Horblack, veteran of several campaigns, sees the opportunity to throw in with a younger lord who's less likely to fall prey to the machinations of the local nobility.

In his mid-thirties with a short crop of jet-black hair, Horblack is a fit and energetic captain who believes in shouting loudly and drilling constantly. The soldiers love him. "This is proper soldiering," they think.

"I'll whip 'em into shape sire, you leave it to me. Ahh, I've seen worse in Lord Armigen's command and he won three battles, and all in the same day! You got yourself four able companies here, mi'lord. We'll get the herald to make 'em a device. Something to wear, show off the colors. Does wonder for a soldier's spirit, knowin' 'e belongs to a company in the service of a proper lord. Not a mercenary band fightin' for pay.

"I'll run the lot of 'em while you're gone. Leave everything to me, sire. You won't recognize 'em when you get back! They'll be on parade smart and know their drilling and their marching. You'll see, sire. And if anyone should come pokin' around while you're gone, thinking the master's away it's time to play, they'll get four companies of pike in their face and the scars to remember us by!"



The Carpenter

You *can* build a stone keep or castle without the aid of wood scaffolding, but you wouldn't want to. A woodwright's frames, blocks and tackle, scaffolding, all help your laborers, making ten men work like fifty.

And of course, many of the structures in and around a stronghold are made of or use wood in their walls and frames. A thirty-foot-tall hollow cylinder of stone is a granary. Put some joists, frames, two floors, and some stairs in, and now you've got a tower that folk can live in!

THE CARPENTER'S SHOP: Carpenters lower the cost to build and upkeep siege engines by 10% per level of their shop, and they let you improve your stronghold 10% faster per level of the shop.

EXAMPLE CARPENTER: ARRANEL THE WOODWRIGHT

Arranel is a young lady of barbarian descent with long black hair. She arrives at your stronghold with her brother and sister, Caden and Talwyn, both much younger than her. Caden and Talwyn are too shy to talk to strangers but love working for their older sister and can always be found beavering around her woodshop.

Like the mason or blacksmith, Arranel is a woman of few words. Only comfortable talking about her work, she prefers to let her craftsmanship speak for her.

"It'll take a lot of wood, but we're surrounded by forest. This place'll be clear for three miles in every direction by the time we're done. Good though. Make it hard for anyone to sneak up on this place. We'll start with the watchtower. Don't want to get interrupted by Sir Pelliton bringing his Illriggers up here without us knowing it. I'll need a whole team. Hope you brought more than a few coppers out of that ruin."

The Farmer

Build a stronghold, attract a few farmers, and pretty soon you have a village! That's how new towns get started.

As carpenters harvest the trees around your stronghold, exposing fertile earth, farmers come to work the land. They bring with them trade, roads, order. Without farms and farmers, your stronghold is just a mysterious tower in the middle of the forest, little known and avoided by locals. With farmers, it's the beginning of a town. Part of the great network of civilization.

The buildings, shops, and homes we associate with a village begin as a market, temporarily erected by the local farmers at the crossroads by the stronghold. From here they sell their excess production, the taxes of which benefit the lord, which benefits everyone.

THE MARKET: Farmers represent a substantive technological improvement over hunting and gathering. A farm with crops and domesticated animals can produce many times the food required to sustain the farmer's family. The excess is traded via carters who regularly pass through and buy and sell at the local market.

Taxing this commerce provides income for the lord of the stronghold. The stronghold produces 100 gp per season per farmer on your land.

Farmers also enjoy having a place to drink ale, talk, and relax after a hard day's work before they return home to their families. This place is called a tavern, and thus is a small town born.

EXAMPLE FARMER: WILLEM THE BALD

Willem is the aged patriarch of a large family. His wife, five children, and eight grandchildren help him work a large farm with many modest herds of animals (chickens, cows) and several fields of crops. Willem's farm is so large he acts, maybe rightly, as a minor lord of his own. Though in his late seventies, he still wakes with the dawn and works 'til sundown.

"Wolves and the lot, we can handle 'em. We had goblins year before last. The boys took care of them. But these bandits. They're smart. Well supplied. Got mages and priests I hear tell. My lord, I think this is the tip of a spear. They're not testing me and mine. They're testing you. Seein' how you'll react. You want my advice? You hit 'em back. Hard. Teach 'em who rules here."

The Mason

Getting a stronghold built in the first place requires a mason, probably several. It's perfectly natural for one to stay around after the thing is done and continue in the lord's service, going from a hired hand to a permanent fixture.

THE QUARRY: If you attract a mason, there must be a quarry somewhere nearby. This is the equivalent of the artisan's shop. The quarry starts at 1st level, and the lord can improve it like any other shop.

Having a mason on staff means you *pay nothing* to repair your stronghold after a siege. Your mason will make free repairs worth 250 gp per quarry level per week. A 3rd-level quarry therefore makes free repairs worth 750 gp per week (250 × 3 per week).

Like carpenters, masons decrease the cost of improving your stronghold by 10% per quarry level. This cost decrease can be combined with the carpenter's benefit.

Lord Kenway's stronghold has both a 5th-level mason's quarry and a 5th-level carpenter's shop, so he can improve Castle Dalrath 50% faster and 50% cheaper.

EXAMPLE MASON: GALDER OF CHALK

Galder is an old man, blind in one eye, from the nearby town of Chalk. Naturally takes charge of any group of workers. He's easy to get along with, laughs a lot—though typically at other masons' poor workmanship. Galder works hard during the day and expects a pint of ale at the end of it. He likes dwarves and thinks better of a stronghold if there's at least one dwarf around the place. He thinks their presence makes the stones healthier.

"Well now you see this wall here? All fieldstones. Limestone, some sandstone. Travertine. Looks like they started with granite and gave up!" he wheezes, laughing. "Can do some work. Clean the place up. Fixing that tower though, gonna need a proper quarry. Means sending off to Malle near the high city. Take some time, need some workers. Won't be secret. Everyone will know we're fixing this place up. Hope you're prepared for the attention!"

The Miner

If you're lucky enough to place your stronghold near a source of metal—which, it turns out, you did if you attract a miner—such as a natural cave or a valley dug by an ancient river, you can extract metal near the surface.

An experienced miner can survey the terrain in a moment and tell what kind of rock you're on, what kind of ore can be found underneath, and how long it will take and costly it will be to extract. They bring with them their own experienced crew and often their families. As many as thirty men and women could be working your mine by the end of the first season.

THE MINE: The ore extracted from your mine is valuable, and you can sell what you don't use in improving your stronghold and the weapons and armor of your units. A mine produces 500 gp per season.

In addition, a mine improves the Equipment of some number of your units by one level—a Light unit becomes Medium, Medium becomes Heavy, etc. This bonus can be applied to one unit per mine level, as it includes the time and cost of maintaining their improved equipment.

EXAMPLE MINER: ZORAN STEELEYE

The dwarf Zoran Steeleye is famous among his people for his ability to look at a distant hillock, or the way rainwater cuts through a valley, and tell what precious ores—if any—might be found beneath the earth.

"Aye, we'll handle the spalling and the vanning. You've got a nice source of running water here, so if the miller don't put in a waterwheel, we'll set up for a sluice. No, we don't need no guard. We know what kinds of things be found in the pits of the world. Me brother and his family are in on this job, and he and his boys fought goblins, kobolds, all manner of beastie. We'll let you know if there's anything down there we can't handle. Broke through to a tomb, once! That was something to remember.

"You should know, sire: seam like this...it's valuable. Folk will hear tell of it. Every time we strike ore like this, and I mean every time, someone comes to take it. So you best be ready to defend it. You got you a keep, a retinoo. Time you muster some troops. Levies won't do it, sire. Gotta be proper soldiers, or say goodbye to all this precious ore."

The Sage

Every artisan carries with them a long list of skills and traditions that help them craft their wares. But for the sage, knowledge isn't a means to an end—knowledge is an end unto itself.

Each sage is not only an expert in a wide array of obscure subjects, but also part of a large network of fellow sages, scribes, and librarians, a constant and largely secret flow of information going back and forth.

Your sage grants you access to the Sage background ability. If your sage doesn't know the answer to your question, they know where the answer can be found.

THE LIBRARY: Give your sage a week to search the library and cross-reference the various scrolls, tomes, and codices within, and they can give you secret knowledge of the enemies you plan to fight.

Obviously, you'll need to tell your sage what foes you'll soon go up against. If you know exactly the kind of monster you're about to fight, and your sage has the time to do the research, you gain one of the following advantages in combat against that type of creature:

- You have advantage on your next attack roll against such a creature.
- You negate one resistances of such a creature on your next attack roll against one.
- Such a creature has disadvantage on its next saving throw against your spells or abilities.

You can use the chosen advantage on a number of attacks equal to the level of your sage's library, after which you must take an extended rest (page 15) to recharge this ability.

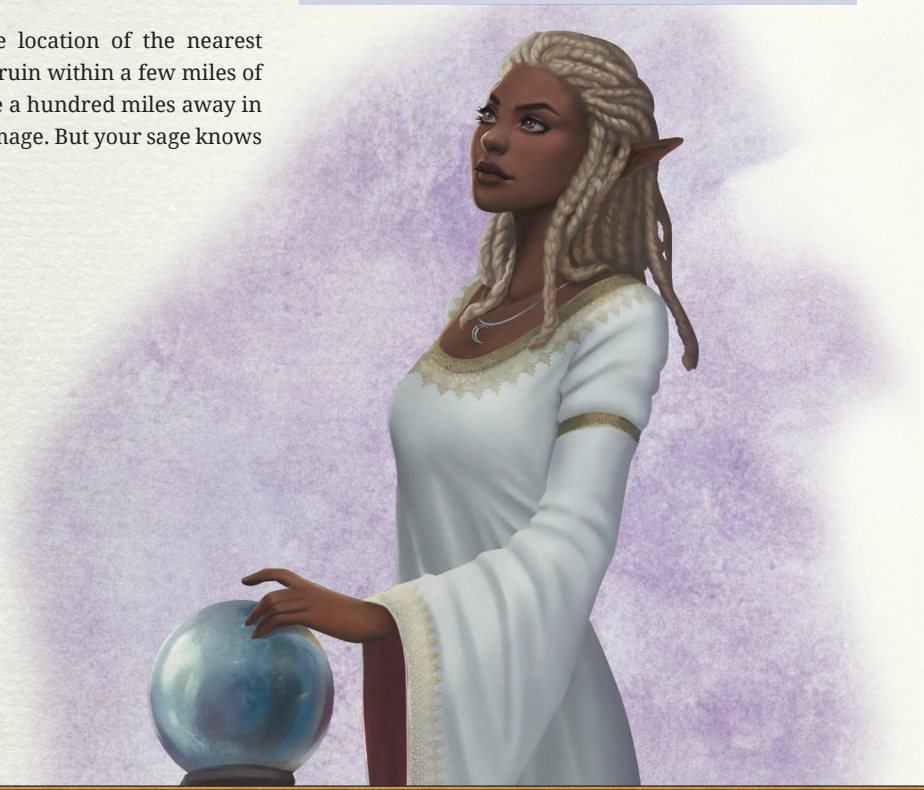
Your sage also knows the location of the nearest *codex*. It may be hidden in a ruin within a few miles of your stronghold, or it may be a hundred miles away in the library of the king's archmage. But your sage knows its whereabouts.

EXAMPLE SAGE: BERYAN TREWARTHEN

Unknown to anyone save her family, the elf maiden Beryan Trewarthen has run away from the Orchid Court of her uncle and aunt and now controversially offers her services to a local lord. Obviously she senses some impending danger which the elven court—typically—ignores. She has left the timeless world of her elf kin to join you and aid you in your quests.

Tall and willowy with long blonde hair, she is easily mistaken for a human woman, and indeed many of the folk in your service take her to be a human like them, seeing her as they do rarely and then only through the window of the tower you built for her and her library.

*"The knowledge you seek exists and moreover I know where it can be found. It is the **Codex Incabulum**, the Tome of Binding Demons. Whosoever holds the **Incabulum** is said to be warded against all demonic violence. It was written by Marcus Gaius Orestes in the 101stst year of the Age of Conquest. It has disappeared and resurfaced several times in the past thousand years, but to my certain knowledge it now resides with the arch vizier of the pharaoh in the Infinite Desert. I also happen to know the desert is not infinite, but that knowledge is less obscure."*



The Scribe

Fingers stained black with ink, the scribe is not an author but a craftsman. Part tanner, part alchemist, the scribe spends their time curing hide for vellum and mixing rare chemicals for inks.

In a pretechnological world, the ability to read and write is neither common nor particularly valued. Heralds post and read proclamations, a constable or reeve might be able to read enough words in the typical legal document to make it out, but otherwise the act of letter-writing is reserved for priests and wizards and educated city-folk.

Scribes therefore also act as aides for diplomatic communications. When the lord wants to send a message to their allies, the scribe is summoned.

Scribes are expected to be conversant in many written languages and capable of translating at least between Common, Elvish, and Dwarvish, sometimes Draconic, and sometimes rare and obscure or dead languages found in the kinds of tomes recovered from ruins and dungeons.

But of course the most valued use of a scribe for the adventuring lord is the crafting of scrolls!

THE TANNERY: Magical scrolls require rare and unique chemicals to make inks as well as special tanning techniques to cure the vellum in a tannery. All parchment is made from cured animal hide, but vellum is especially durable, resistant to both flame and water, and well suited to holding the unique inks used in a magical scroll without running or fading over time. A scribe would never consider inking onto paper. A paper scroll wouldn't survive long in the conditions the typical adventuring lord is used to.

If a spellcaster of appropriate level is present for at least an hour, a scribe can craft a magic scroll in a fraction of the time it would take a wizard or sorcerer to do it alone. The time and cost are both reduced by 10% per level of the tannery.

THE HEART OF THE BEAST: SCROLLS OF PROTECTION AGAINST MONSTERS (UNCOMMON)

If you present your scribe with the heart of a monster, they will be *delighted*. The opportunity to craft a *scroll of protection against monsters* is a rare privilege—it's a chance to pay you back with something that might save your life.

Similar in all other ways to the rare *scroll of protection*, the *scroll of monster protection* only works against the exact species of monster the heart was harvested from. The heart of a black dragon (the recovery of which takes hours) allows for the crafting of a *scroll of protection from black dragons*. Not all dragons or even all evil dragons!

Because the scroll is uncommon, it can be crafted faster and cheaper than its more useful and rarer sibling. Scribing the scroll requires the services of a 1st-level spellcaster.

EXAMPLE SCRIBE: DEMELZA THE BLACK-FINGERED

Well, she has black fingertips, what do you expect? And the sobriquet helps distinguish her from Demelza the Miller's Wife.

Demelza is hardy and stout, a condition she attributes to hours spent in her shop bent over her inks. Her husband is Callum the Baker, and while they are a notoriously happy couple, neither is allowed in the other's shop for fear of one's coated fingers contaminating the other's chemical processes.

"Black gods, where did you come by this lovely? Oh come to mother, darling! Wait don't tell me, let me guess...it's the heart of a...mmm...big, looks like a flying beastie, and you're not a one to kill a griffon or a pegasus. A manticore! Hahah, you killed one'a them flying lion scorpion monstrosities that plague the hills! Well leave it to old Demelza, dearie. I mean, your ladyship. You'll not be bothered next time you come across one of these buggers, I'll tell you that for nothing. I'll boil this one up right away. Have to dust off the cauldron..."

The Spy

An establishment lets you know what's going on in the local area. What the other nobles, guilds, churches, and secret societies are up to. But stare too long into the abyss, and you may notice it stares back.

THE NETWORK: Your spy makes it much harder for your enemies and even your allies to know what you're up to. Your spy increases the DC for agents spying on you by 3 plus 1 per level of your spy's network.

In addition, your spy knows which nearby folk might be interested in signing on to your service. Each time you roll on your followers chart, the spy lets you increase or decrease your roll by up to 3 plus 1 per level of your network. By this method you gain some measure of control over whom you recruit.

EXAMPLE SPY: PICK

Pick is a tall, thin man with burns all down the left side of his face. He habitually spins a plectrum—the pick from which he gets his name—adroitly between his fingers, though he has never been seen with an instrument.

He is cold, efficient, and utterly committed to the destruction of those who would plot against you.

"They know you came up from Ringwell with something. They don't know what and they know you don't know either. They won't try to take it from you—between you and your friends, they know how that gambit would end. So...they're going to make a play for Maiden Trewarthen. They will rightly conclude that if they can neutralize her, your ability to identify the artifact in question will be greatly hampered if not completely eliminated.

"What do you mean, 'What am I going to do?' I'm going to make sure they get what they want. Their assassins will come expecting to find a tall, blonde elf woman in your library. And they will find one, and they will kill her. They'll report back that she's dead, and that will buy us...oh, I should think at least a season's work uninterrupted. By which time the real Maiden Trewarthen will have unlocked the secrets of the artifact in question, and by the time they realize they assassinated a double, it will be too late. This, by the way, will also secure Maiden Trewarthen's safety as, once the secrets are unlocked, she will no longer present a threat. They won't try for her again.

"Don't give me that look. This is why you pay me. So you can sleep at night."

The Tailor

A tailor's job is literally to make you look good. They are experts in fashion and keep up to date on all the latest trends, not just in clothing but also style and taste and manners.

Having a tailor in your retinue means you not only look good, but you also know how to act, know better how to create the reactions you're looking for in your allies and your enemies. Subtle changes to appearance and behavior act as a force multiplier for your natural charisma.

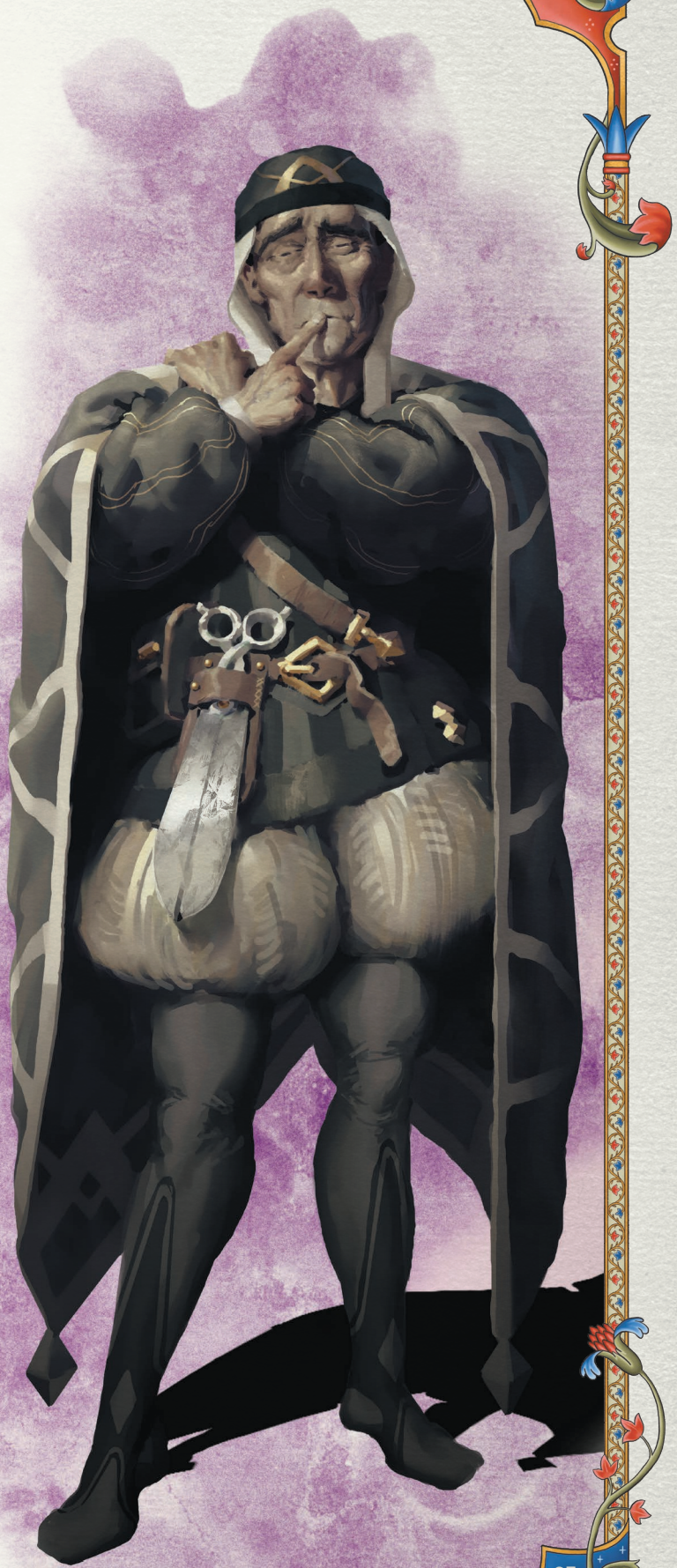
Not every regent yearns for a good tailor. The barbarian considers such finery a sign of the corrupt and decadent cancer men call civilization. But many rulers consider a good tailor a necessity.

THE TAILOR'S SHOP: With a tailor in your retinue, you can, as a reaction, replace the result of any Charisma-based skill check with a 12 (before adding bonuses). This can be done a number of times equal to your tailor's shop level after which you must take an extended rest to refresh this ability.

EXAMPLE TAILOR: MISTER MARKENSWORTH

Mister Markensworth is of average height but gaunt, his skin showing a greyish pallor. He cups his right elbow in his left hand while he speaks, and he often places a finger to his lips as though silencing himself lest he be openly critical of your fashion choices. He is of indeterminate age, could be anywhere from 44 to 74, and for as long as he's been in your service, you've never seen the man eat.

"Mi'lady of course you want to be intimidating and yes we agree that a lightning bolt usually has the last word in such matters, but spells are precious! Or so we've been told. Much less expensive is the right word in the right place, with the right demeanor. Now, for instance, that dress you're wearing. Little better than sackcloth. Yes I know you recovered it from an elven temple, but did you consider it was lying there, disused, for a reason? If you'll only allow us, we'll make you a new outfit with wider shoulders, perhaps some discreet padding here and here, and a cinched waist to reinforce mi'lady's already quite imposing figure. With this dress, mi'lady, your merest whisper becomes an order. They will be compelled."



AMBASSADORS

The rulers of some nearby culture know about you and your new stronghold and demesne, and they want an alliance. That, of course, may take some time and negotiation, so in the meantime they've sent an ambassador!

Ambassadors allow you to purchase units from their ancestry as though they were friendly (see **Ancestry and Attitude** on page 238).

If you are ever awarded units you didn't buy, by rolling on a follower chart or adding a keep to your castle for instance, then the new units can be from the ambassador's ancestry if you wish.

An ambassador is a representative not only of another species, but another *government*. An orc ambassador isn't a representative for all orc-kind—they represent a specific tribe of orcs. Their goal is to eventually sign an accord, either officially or unofficially, but for now they're happy just having a representative in your court who can advise you and ideally pave the way for a more lasting alliance.

These are rewards. Not enemy spies. They are diplomatic opportunities for the player, part of the reward for building a stronghold. Players may be suspicious of this stranger who arrives promising military aid cheap, but you should encourage them, even tell them explicitly if necessary, "This ambassador will work with you."

Of course, this could present some amazing narrative and roleplaying opportunities down the line if events unfold that drive a wedge between the PC and their ambassador, but as long as this is a natural development of events, and the player understands this, it should be fine.

ALLIES

You might end up rolling on the Special Allies chart (page 67) based on your alignment and attract something *really* interesting like a black dragon or a sphinx! Or a stone giant!

Unlike followers, allies don't actually *work* for you, as they are often *way* more powerful than your character. You can't give them orders and expect them to obey. But they are interested in helping you. They are local personalities who've been watching your development, they *approve*, and they arrive interested in doing you a favor.

LATE ONE NIGHT, Lord Gregory Blackflame is awoken from a deep slumber by his captain of the guard.

"Mi'lord, there is something you must see."

Blackflame was immediately awake and scanned the face of his captain for signs of alarm. He sees only concern on his face.

"Are we attacked?" Blackflame asked, rising and looking for his armor.

"I don't...my lord, I was hoping you could tell us." Captain Horblack gestured, and two servants scurried in with Blackflame's armor and sword.

Sensing danger, but seeing his people were not panicking, Lord Blackflame took the time to put on his armor and buckle his scabbard to his belt.

Following his guard captain through the halls of the Blazing Keep, he eventually entered the courtyard, where several pikemen stood in the cold dark under a clear night sky. Their polearms all were pointing in the same direction, up and to the northeast tower, like the petals of some deadly flower seeking a black sun.

Blackflame followed the line of their pikes and saw. There was a creature, a large one, perched atop the northeast tower. It was hunched over—hard to get a sense of its shape, but it was bigger than a horse and all curled in on itself.

"A wyvern, we thought?" Captain Horblack ventured. "A manticore?"

"Nay," Blackflame said. "Either such would attack. Or hide, if wounded. Not perch thus and wait."

"Wait?" Captain Horblack asked.

Blackflame gave his captain a look. "It's being polite," he said.

"Shall I light the torches, my lord?"

"No. Let the beast see we do not fear it in daylight or darkness."

"Very good, my lord."

Blackflame walked forward, motioning for his pikemen to lower their weapons. He cupped his hands around his mouth.

"Announce yourself!" Blackflame called out. "And if ye be not foe, be welcome!"

The beast atop the tower unfurled two great wings, uncurling a serpentine head with frilled ears and ridged horn. It stretched to the sky as if to crow, its jaws opened, and suddenly the courtyard was filled with brilliant white light, casting sharp black shadows, and a detonation of thunder, as a jagged line of lightning stabbed toward the heavens. The dragon snaked its neck back and forth, and the lightning arced and traced a line across the sky.

When the display was over, the eyes of all in the courtyard were useless. Bright green spots were all they saw.

"Consider yourself announced!" Lord Blackflame said, pressing a hand to his eye. The bravado as much for his soldiers as himself. "Be welcome!"

With one massive beat of its wings, the thing launched itself down into the courtyard, gliding over the pikemen. They could smell its heavy musk, like clay and dust. It landed on the other side of the courtyard and stood proud before them.

"A blue dragon!" Captain Horblack hissed. "An adult, by the size of it. It could kill us all."

"It is a guest," Blackflame reminded him. "For the moment."

The Illrigger approached. "I am Count Blackflame and this is the Blazing Keep," he said, gesturing to the castle around them.

The massive reptile sneered. "You are a scavenger. You dig through offal and suck at the marrow of the bones you find."

"Quite rude of you," Count Blackflame said. "Not to give me your name."

"But you do not disagree with my assessment."

"Introductions first," Blackflame said. "Then disagreement."

"Vorsorikax, the Far-Sighted," the dragon said, drawing itself up even further.

"Well met. To your earlier point, I took this place by right of conquest."

"Another human will take it from you."

Blackflame realized he was being tested. "If they try, they will face four units of heavy pike, three of archers and infantry and cavalry besides. All seasoned campaigners and loyal. And the villagers will fight, too. They do not like my methods, but they approve of the security I grant them."

The blue dragon sniffed with disdain.

"But we could not master you!" Blackflame flattered, bowing slightly. "Your magnificence knows no equal here."

"I agree. Perhaps you could serve me," the dragon said.

"I make a poor servant," Blackflame said. "An excellent enemy, but a better ally."

"And Omund?" the dragon asked. "And his bastard corrupted knights?"

"My enemy," Blackflame said.

"There is an egg," the dragon said. "Of sapphire. The Egg of Cytanizaxx. It disappeared an age ago into the Temple of Primordial Chaos. Whosoever holds the Egg is granted powers of the mind that would aid you in holding this place against Omund and his abomination wizard."

"The Temple of Twisted Time," Blackflame said. "I know it. Why would you tell me this?"

"Find the Egg," the dragon said, and with a leap and a scooping flap of its wings it took to the air, "and all will be revealed!"

The dragon was quickly invisible, its dark skin a shadow in the night sky.

Blackflame turned to see his captain and his guards standing, staring up, mouths open.

"Well?! You heard the lady!"

And thus are new special allies recruited.

THE SIEGE OF CASTLE REND

he Siege of Castle Rend is an adventure for the fifth edition of the world's first roleplaying game, suitable for five 5th-level characters. It takes place over four parts, and each part can be completed in one or two sessions of play, depending on your group's playstyle and how long you like to play in a single sitting. If all goes according to plan over the course of this adventure, the player characters will expose an usurping lord, fight orcs, acquire a stronghold, defend it from an invading army, win the admiration of a town filled with potential vassals, and make political connections within the Barony of Bedegar.

Of course, no adventure goes according to plan. The PCs will invariably throw these well-laid schemes into chaos, and they'll have to improvise. But if we know how things *would* have gone if the PCs never showed up (or are cowards), it makes it easier for us GMs to improvise when things go off the rails.

NOTES ON THIS ADVENTURE

One of our stretch goals was an adventure using these rules...and this is it! Some of you may be familiar with it if you've watched my original campaign diaries. They basically begin right before the action in this adventure.

There are several ways to get a stronghold: a local noble awards one, you buy one, or—perhaps the most common: you clear out a ruin and say, "Let's make this our base!" So we use this adventure to show off arguably the most complex iteration of these rules: The players clear out a castle infested with orcs, become embroiled in the local political landscape, and must decide how they're going to use their new stronghold. (Is it a castle with a keep, tower, and temple inside? Or just a huge keep? Not an insignificant question when an enemy army is bearing down on you!)

I wrote the outline for this adventure and had already run it two or three times in my own games, but to minimize the impact on our production schedule, I asked James Haeck to write it. So what you're about to read is a combination of my outline and his ideas. He took Pinna from being a one-line description to one of my favorite NPCs! I can't wait to run her the next time I deploy this adventure. ☺

So thanks to James for the writing and design, thanks to everyone who backed the project and helped us reach the stretch goal for this adventure, and thanks to you reading this now for supporting the work!

The Mundane World

We could have set this adventure in an entirely generic world, and I'm sure some readers would have preferred that, but enough folks seem to like my setting that I decided to use it. It should be *generic enough* for most purposes.

This adventure is set in a region of Vasloria (my analog to medieval Europe) called Aendrim. Its map would show you a series of far-flung baronies connected by disused roads, surrounded by hazardous wilderness. This is my version of the ur-fantasy campaign where low-level characters need to worry about just getting around. Bandits and goblins abound!

Obviously there's oodles of nonsense we call "lore" I could inflict upon you, but really all you need to know is that the local towns and villages look to the local baron to provide security. The barons are the only civilized power in the land now, and some of them are...not *primarily* concerned with the welfare of their citizens.

PREPARING THIS ADVENTURE

Before running this adventure, you'll need the three 5E core rulebooks. If you don't have copies of them, you can also find the basic rules for free online. Whenever the text in this book refers to a statblock for a creature or NPC, its name is written in **bold text**. Most monsters can be found in the 5E basic rules, but creatures unique to this adventure are found starting on page 135. Likewise, whenever this book gives the name of a magic item in *italicized text*, that indicates the creature has statistics found in either the basic rules or in **Appendix: New Items** (page 244).

Before running this adventure, you should also familiarize yourself with the major NPCs and their factions. This will help you improvise when the players do something you don't expect.

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT

This adventure is a story of faction warfare and political maneuvering that may ultimately bestow upon the PCs a noble title and their own stronghold. Not all players care about this stuff. For your sake and theirs, talk to your players and get a sense of how interested they are in a campaign that involves politics, intrigue, commanding armies, and maintaining a keep or castle. As long as some of them are interested in this whole stronghold thing, you should be safe. There's still plenty of dungeon-exploring and orc-slaying in this adventure, after all.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

This adventure begins with the arrival of Sir Pelliton in the Reluctant Pig, Gravesford's tavern. The PCs may be there for various reasons:

- They are returning to civilization after recovering a magic item from a dungeon in the wilderness. One of them heard of a hedge mage named Pinna in a nearby village that can identify magical relics.
- Gravesford is a fine starting town! You could begin a campaign here so that when the players reach 5th level they are well known to the locals. Or the PCs could decamp to Gravesford at any point between 1st and 5th levels.
- They come to a crossroads while traveling along a major roadway in Bedegar. Nailed to the sign is a broadsheet declaring, "FRESH POTIONS FOR ALL AILS, VISIT PINNA'S SHOP IN GRAVESFORD. (WIZARDS WELCOME TO COMPARE NOTES AND EXCHANGE KNOWLEDGE.)"
- An important wizardly NPC asks the party to deliver a package to Pinna: a monthly shipment of minor arcane supplies she can't get locally, along with a nice payment for their troubles. They meet Pinna and retire to the Reluctant Pig for the first hot meal they've had in days when Sir Pelliton and his flunkies kick open the door. Run the **Arrival of Sir Pelliton** event (page 110).

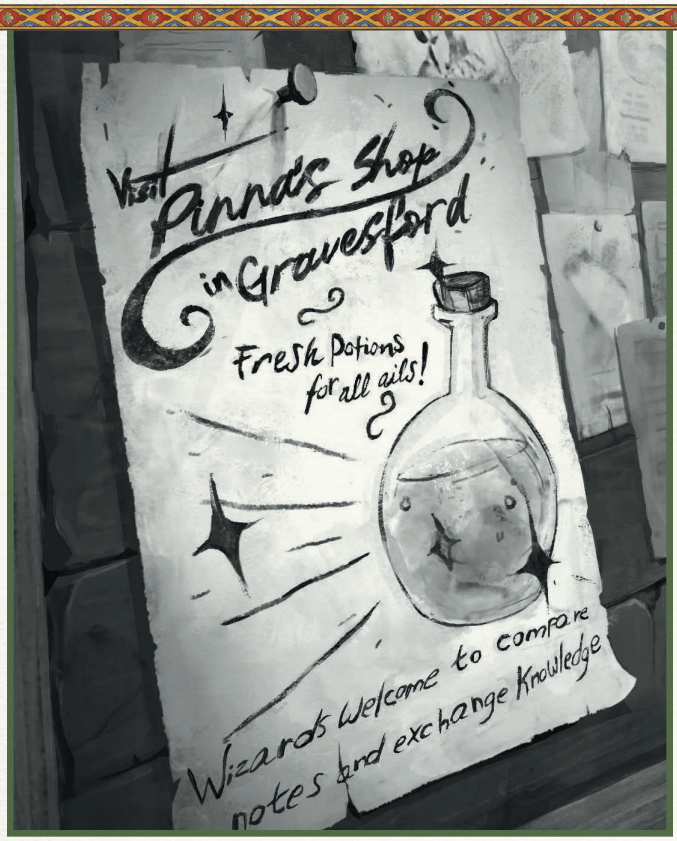
Part 1: The Village of Gravesford

This adventure begins as the heroes arrive in Gravesford or *in medias res* as they awake in the Reluctant Pig, Gravesford's tavern. They will meet both friends and foes in town, such as the eager hedge mage Pinna and the callous Star Knight, Sir Pelliton of the Knights of the Three Roses.

The action begins when orcs of the White Tusk clan from the nearby forest attack Pinna's shop under cover of night and spirit her away[1] for unknown reasons. The characters must pursue the kidnappers and rescue the village's beloved mage.

Part 2: The Forest Rend

The orcs' tracks are easy to follow, but the Forest Rend is dark and dangerous. The PCs may conquer the forest using stealth or steel as they track the orcs back to their hideaway. This part concludes when the characters reach the ruins of Castle Rend, an ancient stronghold that the White Tusk orcs turned into a temporary headquarters.



Part 3: The Ruins of Castle Rend

Having tracked down the White Tusk orcs, the PCs must now infiltrate their stronghold and save Pinna. While exploring the stronghold, they encounter warlike orcs and the restless spirits of the knights that once held the keep, and they learn that Pinna is not the only captive of the White Tusks. A young nobleman named Edmund, son of the dead baron and lost heir to the throne of Bedegar, is being held in relative comfort as a political prisoner.

If they play their cards right, the PCs can negotiate with Bonebreaker Dorokor, the orcs' leader, and rescue Pinna and Edmund without a fight. They may even claim ownership of Castle Rend, gaining a stronghold of their own in the process. If negotiations break down, however, they must fight for their lives and take the castle by force.

Part 4: The Siege of Castle Rend

Hunting the White Tusk orcs, and warned that the PCs are hunting the orcs as well, Sir Pelliton brings Lord Saxton's army to Castle Rend prepared for a siege, unaware the PCs already claimed it. If the characters wish to keep their newly won stronghold, they must defend it and defeat Sir Pelliton and his army.

1 Unless the players manage to stop them!

Conclusion

Having defeated (or parleyed with) the White Tusk orcs and humiliated (or killed!) Sir Pelliton, the PCs return to Gravesford as heroes. The extent to which the people of Gravesford celebrate the PCs' victory depends on how successful they were in their battles, negotiations, and rescue attempts throughout this adventure. Will the characters be remembered as great heroes? Or will they go down in infamy as rogues and scoundrels?

MAJOR NPCS

These are the important characters in this adventure. They each have their own personality traits, bonds, ideals, and flaws that inform their actions throughout this story.

As the GM, you are empowered to change anything about them, including their race and statistics, to better fit your campaign setting or challenge your party.

It should be relatively straightforward to stick this adventure in your own campaign. Here are the broad features you should think about:

- Someone important and well-liked is dead. [The Baron of Bedegar]
- He and his family were killed by a tribe of orcs or other humanoids.
- A power-hungry villain has taken their place. [Lord Saxton]
- The orcs who killed the baron were secretly in the pay of the usurper.
- The leader of the clan secretly took a hostage that could undo the villain's scheme. [Edmund Bedegar]
- The villain's despised lieutenant antagonizes the player characters. [Sir Pelliton]

Lord Saxton

The characters never meet Lord Saxton, the power-hungry lord marshall and regent of Bedegar, in this adventure. However, many NPCs in this adventure obey him, despise him, or are otherwise bound to him.

Shortly before the events of this adventure, Lord Saxton conspired with Bonebreaker Dorokor, leader of the White Tusk orc clan, to kill the Baron of Bedegar and his family. In return, Dorokor would receive an ancient orc talisman, kept by the Bedegar family as a trophy in their crypts.

Now the Bedegars are dead and Saxton sits on the throne of Bedegar Keep, where he is free to impose his tyrannical (and human-supremacist) will upon the people. The common folk of Bedegar are ambivalent to Saxton, but they revile his elite servants, the sadistic Knights of the Three Roses.

One of Saxton's first acts as regent was to double-cross his orcish pawns. When Bonebreaker Dorokor sent a scout to claim the promised artifact, Saxton killed the orc emissary and sent his knights across the countryside, nailing death warrants for Bonebreaker Dorokor and her White Tusk orcs in every tavern in every village they came across.

Motivation: Lord Saxton envied his friend, the old baron, and felt he was better suited to rule. His lust for power turned him into a traitor long ago. He enjoys pitting the people of Bedegar against their humanoid neighbors, reveling in atrocity as long as the victims aren't humans. Thus does he tighten his iron grip on the people of Bedegar.

Sir Pelliton

The despotic will of Lord Saxton is made manifest by the Knights of the Three Roses. There are five of them, but Sir Pelliton, the Star Knight, is the only one who features in this adventure.

Pelliton is despised by the people of Bedegar, and for good reason. The Star Knight[2] is an authoritarian strongman who hides his true cowardice behind a smoke screen of noble status and the power of his superior, Lord Saxton. He also possesses unholy powers thanks to a supernatural bargain he forged with a dark spirit. He is well known in Gravesford as a petty tyrant who's used to taking what he wants, daring anyone to defy him.

Pelliton takes great pleasure in making other people fear and hate him, and whenever someone lashes out in anger, he strikes them down with sadistic glee. He rarely kills his victims, instead preferring to leave them covered with scars and just alive enough to grow his legendary infamy.

Pelliton is tall and thin, but muscular, with an imposing suit of armor emblazoned with the three-flowered symbol of the Knights of the Three Roses. His shield bears the five-starred constellation he took his title from. His skin is distressingly pale, and his shining shaved head and pitch-black goatee can be spotted from a mile off on a clear day.

Motivation: Sir Pelliton makes himself feel powerful by making others suffer.[3] He also wants to curry Lord Saxton's favor to ensure himself higher station and greater rewards in Saxton's regime.

2 In any order of knights, the knights take their own unique titles to pass on. Sir Pelliton took his from the constellation of the Tower, long a symbol of tyrannical strength.

3 The original anti-paladin was described as a knight of capricious cruelty and sneering brutality, and I quite like that image.

Bonebreaker Dorokor

Bonebreaker Dorokor commands the unquestioning loyalty of the White Tusk orc clan. She stands nearly seven feet tall and lifts her wicked greataxe, *Wound*, with ease. Her clan respects her leadership as well as her might. Dorokor is a crafty and strategic warrior. Her plots and schemes are sophisticated—her bargain with Lord Saxton is the first one to backfire, causing her people to question her leadership a little. But her people believe that taking young Edmund, the baron's son, hostage is a feat that shows she thinks much farther ahead than a normal orc.

Her fanatical devotion to Grole[4] is both her greatest strength and her greatest weakness. Her zeal for Grole has driven her to become strong and self-sufficient, but it has also made her exploitable. Lord Saxton manipulated her into slaughtering the Baron of Bedegar and his family by promising her the Sanguineous Oriflamme,[5] an artifact of Grole that the old baron's forebears took from the orcs decades ago.

Dorokor could not resist Saxton's offer. She accepted the deal and mustered her tribe. Saxton's men opened the gates of Bedegar Keep and the White Tusk orcs stormed in, mercilessly slaughtering all within—except one young boy. Dorokor was no fool and could sense that Saxton was a snake. She spared the life of young Edmund Bedegar and spirited him away to Castle Rend, the derelict fortress that the White Tusk orcs call home. She is keeping the young lordling as insurance against Lord Saxton's treachery. She believes—and she is correct—that if she produces the boy at the right place and time, the humans will rebel against the usurper Saxton. She doesn't particularly care who rules, she just wants the Oriflamme.

Despite her cunning, Dorokor knows little of the ways of human diplomacy. She assumes that humans are weak and, should you capture one, they will give up much to recover them. During the adventure, she initiates negotiations in the same way that Saxton dealt with her: she kidnaps a young woman from the nearby town of Gravesford and will only release her if they agree to parley. She reacts with confusion and hostility if the heroes arrive at her keep and attack. Dorokor's Common is simple but fluent. When speaking in Orc, however, she uses grandiose and often poetic turns of phrase.

Motivation: Bonebreaker Dorokor wants to see her clan triumph over all others, including Men and elves. She has ambition beyond any normal bloodchief. She also seeks to honor Grole with glorious victories in combat and is often torn between her desire to protect her clan and her hunger for war.

Roleplaying Dorokor

Alone among the local orcs, Dorokor is developing a growing mastery over realpolitik. She knows how to navigate treacherous waters. In one sense, no other orc bloodchief could have gotten themselves into this problem, but no other bloodchief would think of kidnapping one lone child of the royal family to use as hostage, and no other bloodchief would parley with the heroes.

Dorokor is smart, and she wants to *win*. But victory, for her, means reclaiming the Sanguineous Oriflamme. Here are some examples of her speech:

"Men are weak. Needing laws and paper to rule, this is why you fail, your towns diminish. Orcs care only for strength, and thus does our tribe increase and our power grow."

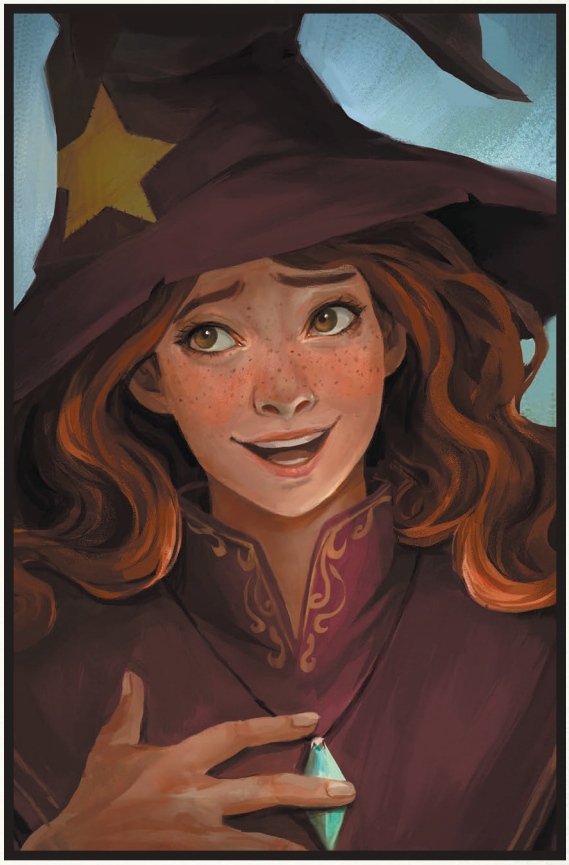
"You have killed many of my tribe to get here. And you think yourself ready to kill us *all* to get what you want. You may win. I know this. But you are surrounded and in my territory. And it will cost you dearly, cost you in *blood*, to get out again. Unless..."

"We can talk. I will talk to you. But words mean nothing without deeds. You wish this boy? You wish my aid? You must give something to *me*. Not a promise, not words. A thing. A thing of power."

"Oh they cannot understand us. Among the White Tusk, only Oregg and I speak your tongue. I have studied my enemy well. We are not so different. You must return to your people with something to show them you are strong, that you triumphed over us. Very well. So be it. I know the ways of the world. But so too must I show my people I triumphed over *you*. Your people will accept paper, 'tree-tees.' Promises. My people are not so easily *fooled*."

4 The god of the orcs in my world.

5 This is an orcish battle standard that, when drenched in the blood of a particular enemy, grants all orcs within 60 feet bonuses against that enemy. Its stats are not detailed herein, but it burns red like a flare while slaked with blood.



Pinna

Pinna is a young woman of seventeen who lives in the village of Gravesford, at the edge of the Forest Rend. She is easily recognizable by her tall, pointed straw hat, curly red hair, and crystal necklace—her arcane focus. Pinna is a country hedge mage, well respected by the people of Gravesford. She often entertains children at festivals and market days by conjuring motes of flame or bouquets of flowers, and she helps the adults in town by supplying them with sleeping tonics and preventatives.

Pinna is a clever woman—one of the few literate people in town—but she feels inadequate compared to her absent master, a wizard named Tace who travels from town to town, tutoring many apprentices just like her across the land. He only comes by once every month or so to judge her progress and give her another tome of theory to read.

Despite Pinna's self-doubt, she is beloved by the townsfolk, who are simply happy to have a real wizard in their midst! Perhaps that is why the White Tusk orcs plan to kidnap her and force a parley with the village...

Motivation: Pinna wants to be respected by someone with high standards. She loves the village folk, but they are overawed by any little display of magic.

Edmund Bedegar

Edmund Bedegar is thirteen years old and the last of the Bedegar line. He is small and his voice is still cracking and peaking, but a perceptive person can see in his eyes the steely resolve of a confident ruler.

Edmund's older brother was to be the next baron, but as is traditional Edmund trained next to his brother in all things. He learned falconry, jousting, how to host a dinner, the proper ways to address a duke, a king, a count, or another baron. He idolized his older brother and expected to serve as his squire this next year, and then become chancellor of his court once his brother ascended to the barony. That was before the White Tusk came.

Now, Edmund is the rightful Baron of Bedegar by birthright, and he knows it. This is a tragedy, something he never wanted. And though he cries at night for his dead family, he staves off despair by focusing on his commitment to upholding the family name, and becoming the leader he knows his family would want. He intends to honor his father and brother, his mother and sisters by ruling where they cannot. This is the steel inside young Edmund.

He knows his station and expects to be treated with the respect his title deserves, but he is not a petulant child. He is a young lord with a kind heart and an ingrained sense of justice. He rightfully fears the orcs that kidnapped him, every night remembering his family dying under their axes.

He continually reminds himself, *I am Baron now, what would my father do?* The health of the barony must come first. And Dorokor would make as powerful an ally as she has an enemy. He wants revenge, but not as much as he wants to be the kind of savvy ruler his father was. When he discovers that his father's friend, Lord Saxton, is the architect of the night his family died, he may set his hatred of the orcs aside and turn his ire upon the true mastermind.

Motivation: Edmund wants to avenge the death of his family by executing their murderer. At the start of this adventure, he believes this to be Bonebreaker Dorokor, but his ire could be turned to Lord Saxton if the truth were revealed to him. He also wants to return to Bedegar Keep so that he may give his family a proper funeral.

PART 1: THE VILLAGE OF GRAVESFORD

"We have discussed the design and function of the interlocking, interdependent parts of the machine; a system under pressure, whether a coiled spring, a rope pulled taut, or a pressurized fluid. Our Ideal Machine's functions depend on this pressure, while simultaneously, constantly, this same pressure threatens to cause everything to fly out of control. Are we not also talking about the State? Society? Even a village? What would we learn, should we take the principles of this book and apply them to a nation?"

— Dhruvadevi XXII
Philosopher-king of Vishkanda
Wonder 336
The Codex Automata

Gravesford is a village situated at the edge of civilization—as far as the Barony of Bedegar is concerned, at least. There's been a bridge across the River Graves, and a town around that, for as long as anyone can remember and as far back as any records go. Folks know, or believe, that the bridge and the Reluctant Pig existed long before any other house in Gravesford, even the church, was built.

As in any countryside town, everyone in Gravesford knows everyone else, and word is quick to spread. If newcomers—like the PCs—arrive in town and spend the night in the local inn, odds are the entire population of two-hundred-odd villagers including nearby farmers will know by mid-morning. The town's two public buildings, the Reluctant Pig and the Church of St. Gaed the Confessor, are large enough for the entire town to crowd into for major celebrations like the harvest-tide feast and candle festival of St. Gaed's Feast.

Gravesford NPCs

MAYOR OSRIC. Cheesewright and baker, owner of the stables and the general store. Osric is in his early fifties, rotund, and fancies himself a captain of industry. He'd like to see Gravesford grow and to become famous for something noteworthy, and sometimes lets these ambitions carry him away. But he is a good man who, when times are hard, cares more for his neighbors than his reputation.

TRACKING TIME IN GRAVESFORD

Time matters in Gravesford. At midnight on the first day, the White Tusk orcs raid the young mage Pinna's shop and attempt to kidnap the hedge mage. If the characters dally, Dorokor returns two days later demanding to parley. Since the PCs only have one day to meet Pinna, it's strongly recommended to give them a chance to encounter her before the orcs raid her shop and attempt to kidnap her.

OSTLER[6] HAMM. A tall thin man who runs the stables for Osric. Is reluctant to sell or lend his horses to anyone he doesn't know. Usually relies on Osric to make the call when strangers need a horse.

MILLICENT AND BELLE. Two sisters in their early thirties who run the store for Osric. Millicent is married to a farmer in the country and is generally a fusspot who wants to make sure customers are well supplied with anything they might need and perhaps one or two things they don't. Belle is happily unmarried and enjoys negotiating with the local carters to make sure the store is well stocked.

JAGO THE SMITH. His smithy is a popular hangout for the men of the town who'd like a spot of ale without having to listen to the farmers relaxing in the inn. Jago has long black hair and enjoys talking—he's always telling a story about the most recent weirdos who passed through looking for someone to straighten a sword or pound out the dents in their armor.

MORGOUSE THE CARPENTER. She was once Morgouse the Weaver until her husband died and she decided to take over the family business. Soft-spoken and industrious, she sees the wooden shops and houses as basically just another kind of fabric, and she can often be found on a roof, or step ladder, repairing water damage or rot without anyone having asked her or her asking payment.

GISELLE AND GOWAN. Owners of the Reluctant Pig. Gowan cooks, Giselle runs the bar, and their thirteen-year-old daughter Brecca takes orders and serves drinks and food. Brecca spends her limited free time learning weaving from Morgouse and hopes to set up her own shop before she's fifteen.

6 "Ostler" isn't his name, it's a title. A job. It means...the dude who runs the stables. :D Now archaic, but part of the fun of the game is learning these things.

The town council is technically Osric, Jago, Morgouse, Giselle, and a farmer named Carroc (see later). Carroc is an ass and lives on his farm, so the others conspire to meet and decide things when they know he'll be busy. Millicent, Belle, and Hamm are villeins[7] of the Baron and have no legal rights to their shops or land, but folks in town tend to forget this, so they're always part of any decision. Gowan can't be arsed to worry about local politics—he's got fowl to braise.

The town has no local law enforcement, but folk do well enough without it; they have a volunteer militia that assembles when ordered by the town council. They pay their taxes to the Baron of Bedegar (or, more recently, to the realm's regent, Lord Saxton) and gain the benefits of trade and roadways that all citizens of Bedegar enjoy. Otherwise, they are a community small enough to take care of themselves.

Gravesford is at the edge of the Forest Rend, a lawless wood where inhuman creatures roam. None dare go deeper into the forest than is necessary to hunt game or chop wood. Legends say that orcs and goblins and other nasty bogeymen lurk in the forest, and that is enough to keep people away.

Gravesford Locations

The small town of Gravesford is filled with common people and their homes. Some of these homes and shops may be of interest to the players and are detailed here. To not overwhelm you with the minutiae of the homesteads of two hundred people, other locations are left blank for you to fill in as needed. These locations are keyed to the map of Gravesford found on the next page.

A1. Farmhouses

About two dozen farmhouses surround Gravesford, each holding a family of five to ten people. Farmers, wives, husbands, children, grandparents, and parents-in-law all fill these houses, working the land as best they are able.

The largest farm in Gravesford is owned by a crass man named Carroc (use **noble** statistics), is occupied by his wife and five boys, and is tended to during the day by a group of four servants who live in town. Carroc enjoys acting like he's the most important person in town, and he may indeed be the most wealthy, but he doesn't *live* in town so the mayor and the rest of the town council tend to ignore him. He enjoys coming to the Pig for a drink once a week, but does not notice that the most important people in town all seem to be at the smith's when he's visiting.

Carroc is pious, tithing more than ten percent each season to the Church of St. Gaed. While Mayor Osric hopes to see Gravesford grow from a hamlet into a proper town, maybe with a wall someday, Carroc hopes to be a landed noble, and looks down on the rest of the town. He has no love for adventurers, as they represent a threat to the natural order of the town. He looks up to the cruel Sir Pelliton and would do anything to become his aide—or to become a knight just like him.

His personal hoard of 500 gp is squirreled away in a locked wooden box hidden beneath the floorboards under his bed. The box can be unlocked with a key kept on Carroc's person, or its lock can be picked with a DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

Other farmers are more sympathetic than "Duke Carroc," as folk might grumble while drinking at the tavern. One farmer in particular, a sun-baked and calloused grandmother named Helanna, is quite fond of adventurers and their stories of danger and distant lands. She doesn't have the money or social power that Carroc's family wields, but she is beloved by all the common folk in Gravesford.

A2. Market Square

In the center of Gravesford is a market square. Most of the week, the square is empty except perhaps for children running about with sticks, pretending to be knights. The PCs, however, arrive in Gravesford on market day. Once a fortnight on this day, the square is transformed into a wild scene of colors and scents. All the artisans and farmers in town—including Jago and Morgouse, and the town's tanners and leatherworkers, woodworkers, stonemasons, millers, bakers, butchers, and others—set up shop in the market square and sell their wares. Just outside of the main market square is Tradesfolks' Way, a small alley where local farmers trade goods to one another. **Any item in the core rulebooks worth less than 10 gp can be purchased from the traders at the Gravesford market.**

Pinna also sets up a stall in the market square, but she is usually too busy conjuring bouquets and playing with the children to actually sell any goods. A sign sits on her (completely unstocked) stall that reads: "OUT PLAYING, FIND ME. LOOK FOR THE HAT. OTHERWISE VISIT THE SHOP AFTER MARKET."

7 Like a serf but has more rights.

A3. Church of St. Gaed the Confessor

The Church of St. Gaed the Confessor is one of the oldest buildings in Gravesford—after the Reluctant Pig, of course. Its wooden beams need repair, but it is still the cultural center of the village, and Gravesford gathers here for all sorts of occasions, not just on holy days. The stained glass window depicting Saint Gaed in black armor smiting the traitor saint, Hylae the Corrupt, is the most astonishing piece of art anyone in town has ever seen. When the sun hits it, it's like a laser light show.

The church is run by Father Belderone, a priest of St. Gaed. He is a city man from Bedegar Keep, and it's reflected in his rapid, matter-of-fact speech, but the villagers treat him as one of their own. While several priests tend to the church, Father Belderone is its only cleric. He uses **priest** statistics with the following changes:

- He is old and growing frail. His Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores are all 8 (–1).
- He does not wear armor, reducing his AC to 9.
- By the grace of St. Gaed the Confessor, he has been granted the ability to cast *death ward* once per day.

If the PCs spend time at the church in prayer, Father Belderone approaches them and kindly welcomes them to Gravesford. He asks if they are planning on exploring the region, and offers to grant them a blessing of protection (his *death ward*) for the journey—if they are able to donate 100 gp to the church, which is in serious need of repairs.

FOLLOWERS OF SAINT GAED

A local priest, like Father Belderone, will be primarily concerned with the people's welfare. Village healers tend not to be foaming fanatics spouting doctrine at everyone. That kind of attitude doesn't survive long when you're living elbow-to-elbow with real people.

So, Father Belderone is likely to spout a lot of folk wisdom first, then some general tenets of Cavall ("Man cannot live where injustice thrives."), then something specific from Saint Gaed only in extreme moments.

Followers of St. Gaed seek the truth hidden in people's hearts and are quick to find conspiracies, secret orders, and cults.

QUOTES OF FATHER BELDERONE:

"The greatest lie is never spoken. It's the one you tell yourself to justify an evil deed."

"The path to redemption begins with a truth spoken."

"A burden shared is a burden halved."

GAED THE CONFESSOR

In my setting and novels, the people do not worship gods directly. Instead, they serve saints who act as interlocutors for the gods. Why this should be so is never explained, but the implication is that gods are ineffable and unknowable, and the saints are their once-mortal translators. Heroes in life, the saints died and joined their gods, who award the priests who serve them with special abilities.

Gaed is a saint of Cavall. Cavall is one of the two "good" gods in this part of the world, and can be easily replaced with any lawful good god from your world who is primarily concerned with justice. Saints, unlike gods, can and do show up in material form to aid their followers, but A: only the most pious followers, and B: only when in great need, unless C: the GM thinks it would be cool for them to show up anyway.

In life Gaed was the chief confessor in a secret order of knights who ferreted out spies within the king's court. Unbeknownst to anyone, the chief of those spies was a fiend, a devil under the command of an evil saint.

Gaed exposed this devil and did battle with it. He lost the battle and his life, but exposed a deadly conspiracy and saved the king and the kingdom. He forced the devil to reveal its true nature, and Cavall canonized him immediately as the Confessor, saint of exposing secrets and foiling conspiracies. It was Gaed who died at the hands of the devil spy. It was Saint Gaed the Confessor, now immortal, who returned and slew the devil.

Based on the events of this adventure, it's unlikely Father Belderone is going to have to go Full-Knob Inquisition on anyone—he's not that kind of priest, but he is a follower of Saint Gaed, and does believe in the truth above all else.

A4. The Reluctant Pig

The oldest building in Gravesford is the Reluctant Pig, a two-story inn with a moss-covered roof constructed from the same stone as the Gravesford Bridge. The sign outside depicts a young pig straining against a leash held by someone we cannot see. The sign has no text, as most people in town and most carters and journeymen cannot read.

The Pig is owned by Giselle and Gowan and their daughter Brecca (page 104). Though the family divides the labor, Giselle is the one who runs the business and attends the meetings of the town council. She tolerates no violence in her bar, keeping a mace by the taps in case of trouble. (She uses **veteran** statistics.) She is, however, terrified of Sir Pelliton and the Knights of the Three Roses, and will not interfere with any quarrel between them and her patrons. She personally knew the vile Star Knight back when his cadre were simply mercenaries known as the Thorns, and still bears the scars from their last two meetings. Her husband, Gowan, is torn between his desire to protect his wife and the sure knowledge that Sir Pelliton would kill him in a moment just to make a point. It is for this reason that Giselle has been careful not to confront Pelliton if her husband is around.

Brecca is good friends with the hedge mage Pinna, and often recommends her shop to travelers. If the PCs are running out of time to visit her before the first day ends (when her shop is attacked), you can have her

show up in the tavern for one of her late-night chats with Brecca.

If the PCs stop in the tavern for more than just a few minutes, run **The Arrival of Sir Pelliton** (page 110). If the PCs spend the night here, run **Abduction in the Dead of Night** (page 111) at midnight.

A5. Gravesford Bridge

The Gravesford Bridge is a small stone bridge over the river at the edge of town. It is old and moss-covered, but sturdy. Two **guards** stand at the far end of the bridge; they are well equipped for country folk, but they are not trained in the ways of war like adventurers or orcs are. The guards are a man named Ryon and a woman named Lenore, and they are tasked with watching over the Forest Rend in case of emergency. The end of the bridge is separated from the forest's edge by about a thousand feet of tall grass, shrubs, and boulders.

If asked what sort of emergencies they're prepared to guard against, Ryon shrugs and says that there's never been any real trouble from the forest in his lifetime. Old Helanna told him and Lenore that the forest is a force of chaos threatening to destroy Bedegar, and that it's filled with evil creatures. Neither Ryon nor Lenore buy it; the worst they've seen come out of the forest is a wounded bear, and all it did was run past town, yowling.

A6. Pinna's Shop

The spicy-sweet scent of boiled licorice and anise seed billows from the smokestack of Pinna's dome-roofed hut. Other medicinal herbs hang by the doorway, like long garlic ropes and branches of flowering barberry. Inside, she keeps a brass cauldron boiling at all times in the center of the room. Unkempt bookshelves overfilled with tomes, scrolls, and bottles line the walls, and both chairs in the house sag under the weight of unwashed clothing.

Pinna's shop is also her one-room house. While at home, Pinna is usually doing at least three things at once—brewing ointments, clipping shoots from herbs, and practicing charms, or any other combination of wizardly activities. She only stops multitasking if another wizard enters her shop, at which point she drops everything and focuses intently on them. Any compliment from a fellow magic-user overwhelms her with joy, reducing her to embarrassed babbling for a few moments, and any mean-spirited condescension utterly devastates her, causing her to close shop for the rest of the day.

Pinna sells dozens of rustic herbal remedies for 5 cp apiece and has four *potions of healing*, which she sells for 50 gp each. She also has the following potions in stock: a *potion of greater healing* (200 gp), a *potion of animal friendship* (250 gp), and a *potion of poison resistance* (300 gp). Whenever she sells a potion, she waves her crystal necklace (her arcane focus) around the potion and mutters a meaningless incantation composed of rhyming doggerel. It's just a habit she picked up to impress the villagers, and she gets embarrassed if another spellcaster calls her on it.

At midnight on the first night after the PCs arrive in Gravesford, a force of White Tusk orcs emerges from the Forest Rend and attacks Pinna's shop under cover of night. Run the **Abduction in the Dead of Night** (page 111) event at midnight that night.

Beginning: Arriving in Gravesford

Ideally the PCs arrive in Gravesford at dusk, seeking food, shelter, and rest. The following timeline describes the order in which events will occur unless the characters intervene:

- **The Arrival of Sir Pelliton (Day 1, Shortly after the Players Arrive).** Sir Pelliton, an agent of Lord Saxton, posts a wanted poster in the Reluctant Pig and causes trouble with the PCs.
- **Abduction in the Dead of Night (Day 1, Midnight).** Orcs from the White Tusk clan abduct Pinna to begin "negotiations." The PCs *may* be able to stop them but will likely be delayed by the orcs' rear guard.
- **Gravesford Rallies (Day 2, Morning).** The citizens of Gravesford decide what to do about the attack and, unless the PCs intervene, elect to send a posse after Dorokor. They begin gathering supplies.
- **The Posse Departs (Day 3, Morning).** A handful of volunteers from around town set off to explore the Forest Rend. If they go off without a tracker, they do not return.
- **Bonebreaker's Bargain (Day 4, Dawn).** Bonebreaker Dorokor and her White Tusk orcs emerge from the forest, prepared to bargain for the life of Pinna, the militia, and—most importantly—Edmund Bedegar.

Lord Saxton
Baron of Bedegar.

in order to secure the welfare of the people of Bedegar, ensure prosperity for every serf, villein, and freedman upon the land and protect the peace of the roads and the trade thereon

Hereby proclaims

that whosoever brings to the seat of the Barony the head of the White Tusk orc clan, they shall be awarded

A **bounty** of 500 golden crowns and invested with a knighthood. The baron also offers 10 golden crowns for the head of any other White Tusk orc.

Praise Adun and his Saint, Gaed. Confessor"

The Arrival of Sir Pelliton

There isn't much to do in Gravesford—it's an unremarkable town—so Sir Pelliton should arrive shortly after the PCs settle in at the Reluctant Pig, kicking off the adventure.

> The door of the Reluctant Pig opens with a crash, and all heads inside the bar turn toward the entrance. A man in heavy armor stands in the doorframe, silhouetted and statuesque, a cloak hanging over his left shoulder, with his right hand grasping the pommel of his sheathed longsword. The knight strides in, with four armored warriors behind him, and surveys the taproom. A squire emerges from behind his cloak, unfurls a parchment, and declares, "Behold Sir Pelliton, Knight of Three Roses! The Star Knight bears a proclamation from your new lord: Saxton, Baron of Bedegar![8] Your lord demands the head of Bonebreaker Dorokor and the White Tusk orcs, the lawless beasts that slaughtered the Baron of Bedegar and his family. The new baron promises the glory of a knighthood and five hundred gold marks to whosoever brings to him the head of the orcs' bloodchief."
>
> Sir Pelliton points sharply to the wall of the tavern, and the squire scurries over to hammer the scroll to the wall, covering up several previous proclamations. The knight now personally strides forth into the taproom. His mouth curls into a venomous smirk. "Now that you have all been duly impressed, let me tell you dirt-eating, dung-bathing peasants one thing: None of you will be knighted and elevated to my station. I shall find these beasts and bring them to justice. I will be the one! And you will continue enjoying your joyless lives."
>
> Pelliton's gaze falls upon you, and he saunters over to your table. Two of his flunkies follow him, while two remain at the door. He looks one of you dead in the eye and says, "Well how now? Ratcatchers with delusions of grandeur. How quaint. Come you seeking coin? I have some. If you would take it from me."

Without breaking eye contact with the PC he is intimidating, Sir Pelliton grabs their mug of ale, swigs what's left of it, and slams the empty mug on the table. "Remember your station, swineherd." He stands and makes to leave. If the PCs rise to his taunting, see **Pelliton's Reprisal** later. If the PCs let him go, Pelliton and his four knights linger in the tavern for ten unbearable minutes, verbally abusing peasants and "appropriating" their food and drink, then depart.

Proclamations. Sir Pelliton's proclamation was nailed over several older proclamations. The most recent was issued by Lord Saxton, and it declared that as lord marshall he would be assuming the duties of regent of Bedegar. Beneath that proclamation is another declaring that the Baron of Bedegar and all his known living relatives were slaughtered by orcs that had forced their way into Bedegar Keep. Even older proclamations beneath those are related to mundane issues of taxes and such.

Townsfolk. This is not the first time Sir Pelliton has boorishly cantered into Gravesford and thrown his weight around, and the people of this town have grown to hate and fear him. They all want him to get his comeuppance, but they do not challenge him because he possesses both dark magic and the protection of the regent, and he has used them both to kill with impunity. No one in town wishes to hunt the orcs because of Pelliton's involvement, and they look askance if the PCs suggest they wish to take on the challenge. One might say, "It's your funeral. Go stock up on potions with Pinna and rest up here. Hope you get to those orc-things before the Star Knight does, or before he finds you chasing after his bounty."

The townsfolk have no idea where the White Tusk orcs live. But they're not stupid, there's really only one place the orcs could be: Forest Rend. "If you're looking for orcs, odds are they've moved into the old forest. Legends say it's always been full of goblins and such. That's why we have two sentries posted on the other side of the bridge these days."

Pelliton's Reprisal. Introducing Pelliton (page 142) like this is literally inviting a fight, and the players will want to smite the dude. He's pretty nasty, though. With his flunkies, they should be too much for the players at 5th level. But he won't kill them—he prefers leaving people defeated and cowed so they will spread tales of his prowess and increase his legend.

Of course it is entirely possible that the PCs kill Pelliton. If they do, just replace him in the hunt and this adventure by one of the other Knights of the Three Roses: Lady Ruth, Lady Morgant, Sir Noth, Sir Anglim, or Sir Barlow. Each of whom is now out for revenge!

Pelliton lives to inflict pain on others, and is always spoiling for a fight. If he is attacked or insulted, he laughs uproariously and shouts for his flunkies (four **veterans** and his squire) to join him: "If you wish to nip at my heels, *dogs*, I shall be happy to discipline you. Servants, to me!"

All bystanders in the bar stand when Pelliton draws his sword, and all run for cover when Pelliton casts *black tentacles* on his first turn in combat. His under-

8 "'Baron?' Hah!" — Some unfortunate farmer about to get a face full of mailed fist.

lings attack the PCs, starting with any restrained by Pelliton's magic. Once the PCs are subdued (or surrender) Pelliton sheathes his sword, spits on the ground, and leaves the bar. "Waste of time. Leave this mess for the peasants to clean up. We have orcs to hunt."

Pelliton leaves the bar and mounts his black destrier (a **warhorse** named Penumbra) and rides northward. His four knights have brown coursers (**riding horses**) outside as well, along with fourteen days' trail rations and other riding gear in their saddlebags. If the PCs try to track Sir Pelliton, one of them must make a successful DC 22 Wisdom (Survival) check to follow his horse's tracks in the hard, dry earth. On a success, they find an abandoned camp that has a crude map of the Forest Rend, indicating the ruins of Castle Rend deep within. Pelliton's tracks away from this camp are all but untraceable, requiring a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Survival) check to follow. If the PCs trail him immediately, night falls by the time they return to Gravesford.

If any of Pelliton's underlings are knocked unconscious, Giselle, the innkeeper, begs the PCs not to kill Pelliton's men, for even should they best the Star Knight, the rest of the Three Roses will make an example out of the innocent townsfolk. Knowing this, Pelliton will view any hesitation as weakness and try to force the PCs into a position where they must surrender or kill him or one of his men.

Abduction in the Dead of Night

A scream and a chorus of bestial roars shatter the stillness of the night. The sounds came from the edge of town—from the edge closest to the forest. As the screams fade into silence, an explosion jolts the entire town into wakefulness, and a towering flame erupts at the southernmost tip of the village.

Just before midnight, a raiding party of twenty White Tusk orcs emerged from the boughs of the Forest Rend. They moved quickly through the scrubland and forded the river on the south end of town. The bridge guard Lenore heard something moving in the tall grass, and bravely traveled half a mile south from her post to investigate. She was shot dead and her corpse was left where it fell. The orcs invaded Pinna's house and knocked her unconscious, but the rear guard accidentally knocked her lamp into a rack of volatile alchemical substances while looting her house (against Bonebreaker Dorokor's orders), igniting the entire house in a violet fireball.

If a creature is inside the house at the time of the explosion (such as if the PCs spend the night with Pinna, just in case), it must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 21 (6d6) fire damage. A successful save halves this damage.

The orcs abducting Pinna had already crossed the river when her house exploded. The rear guard that survived the fireball also fled. If the PCs are in the Reluctant Pig, it takes 2 minutes on foot to reach Pinna's house—by the time they arrive, the rear guard is about to ford the river, and the band of orcs carrying Pinna has already disappeared into the forest, but not without crushing undergrowth beneath their boots, creating a trail that a ranger could track with ease.

Unless the players made explicit plans to be awake through the night, it should take too long for them to suit up and run outside to catch the White Tusk. But it should be *possible* if they've decided, for instance, to stay up all night after dealing with Sir Pelliton.

White Tusk Rear Guard. If the PCs arrive at Pinna's shop within 10 minutes of the explosion, they get there just as the invading orcs' rear guard is about to cross the river. (Remember that it takes time for characters to don their armor, and it takes 2 minutes to reach Pinna's house from the inn.) These orcs turn and attack the PCs to buy time for their main force to flee. The rear guard is composed of 4 **orcs**, 1 **White Tusk bloodrager**, 1 **White Tusk juggernaut**, and 1 **White Tusk warspeaker**. If the PCs arrive any later, the orcs have already completely disappeared into the Forest Rend.

Pinna's Hut. The young hedge mage's house is ablaze and will burn to cinders within 5 minutes unless it is put out by dousing the flames with at least 30 gallons of water. The charred corpses of two orcs are inside, and unless the PCs bought these potions already, a character that makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds the following potions: 2 *potions of healing*, 1 *potion of greater healing*, 1 *potion of animal friendship*, and 1 *potion of poison resistance*. Nearly everything else has been destroyed.

Orc Path. If the PCs cross the river and head toward the forest, anyone who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that the orcs have left a very visible trail in the tall grass. A character who succeeds on a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check sees Pinna's crystal necklace, her arcane focus, buried in a muddy boot print.

If the PCs track the orcs into the forest now, proceed to **Part 2: The Forest Rend** (page 100).

Militia's Arrival. A few members of the militia (4 **guards** and a **scout**) are able to don their armor and arrive on the scene about 10 minutes after the abduction. They inspect the house but realize that Pinna is gone, so they return to their homes. They plan to organize a meeting the next morning.

WHITE TUSK MAIN FORCE

Even if the PCs are somehow able to get to Pinna's house before any of the orcs escape, saving Pinna from abduction is no small task. The White Tusk main force is easily enough to level all of Gravesford if they so desired, and is composed of 10 orcs, 3 White Tusk bloodragers, 2 White Tusk warspeakers, 2 White Tusk juggernauts, and Oregg Steeltwister, lieutenant of the White Tusk clan. One of the juggernauts carries the captive Pinna.

Tracking Pinna

At some point, maybe immediately, maybe the next morning, the players are probably going to try and hunt down the orcs that kidnapped the cool wizard they met. The most direct route is to literally track the orcs using Survival checks (see **Exploring the Forest** on page 114). But the party may not have a ranger or, even if armed with a tracker, they may roll poorly! So we need another valve to release this pressure.

Enter Alyssa Tealeaf. She's a halfling girl, a little older than Pinna in literal years but the same emotional age. Her family are brewers in nearby Tarreton, and Alyssa often comes to Gravesford with her parents and stays with her best friend Pinna, and the two explore and generally get into mischief as though they were much younger girls.

Alyssa is a competent scout and can sort of handle herself in a fight, but like Pinna it's not her specialty. Anyone who travels the roads in these dark days needs to be good with a knife or a sword, or very good at hiding and being unseen.

Treat Alyssa as a **scout** with the halfling Lucky trait.

If the players fail to penetrate the forest, Alyssa arrives with a donkey laden with brew, and upon hearing that her best friend—who she was really looking forward to seeing—has been kidnapped, she vows to help. She will risk her life to find Pinna, because she believes that's what friendship is about.

She's been through the forest before and knows about the castle, though she has no idea it's currently occupied by orcs. As soon as the heroes enter the castle's clearing, she'll exclaim that everything's changed. Expecting it to be overrun with rushes and the castle walls covered in vines, she finds the clearing...cleared, and the vines all pulled down. The orcs have been busy!

Gravesford Rallies

If the PCs spend the night in town without tracking the orcs into the Forest Rend, they awake to the sound of all of Gravesford gathered in the Church of St. Gaed the Confessor to discuss last night's commotion. Mayor Osric, Giselle, Morgouse, Jago, and Father Belderone are here, but so is Carroc, and the richest man in Gravesford has browbeaten the other councilmembers into silence. He believes that if he and the local militia can rout the orcs, he will get the bounty, so he wants to stop anyone else from interfering.

Carroc treats the adventurers with disdain and refuses to let them speak unless he's overpowered by a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check, though he relents if one of the PCs can convince him that they are a noble from Bedegar Keep, requiring a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check.

At the start of the meeting, the few militiamen who investigated the night before reveal that Pinna was kidnapped by unknown assailants. Carroc is organizing a posse of villagers. The villagers are hesitant, but they feel powerless to resist unless the PCs intercede. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check is enough to assess the combat-readiness of these villagers. They are poorly equipped, with little more than padded armor and pitchforks, and even the fighters in the militia are no match for a bloodthirsty horde of orcs.

Once the PCs have the floor, a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check is enough to turn the crowd and the other members of the council against Carroc, defeating him in a majority vote, and winning the PCs the chance to defeat the orcs and perhaps win a knighthood from Lord Saxton.[9] If the PCs don't intervene in this meeting, a posse of 20 **commoners**, 10 **guards**, and 5 **scouts** are assembled from the brave men and women of Gravesford. They find Castle Rend after a day's travel, but none return.

If the PCs convince the council to keep the posse from forming, Father Belderone approaches them after the meeting adjourns and offers to grant one of them a powerful blessing that will protect them on the journey, if they are able to donate 100 gp to the church (see **Church of St. Gaed the Confessor** on page 106).

If the Players Do Nothing

This is deeply unlikely, but I always think if you know what *would* have happened if the PCs never acted, you're much better armed for when things inevitably go off the rails.

THE POSSE DEPARTS

On the second morning after Pinna's abduction, a posse of 20 **commoners**, 10 **guards**, and 5 **scouts** assembles at the edge of the Forest Rend. They refuse the PCs' help, on the orders of Carroc. If the PCs play up the danger of the quest and make a successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) check, the villagers lose their nerve and beg the PCs to embark on the journey themselves. ("Bandits are one thing...but orcs? They're monsters! They'll tear us all apart!") If she hasn't already, Alyssa Tealeaf arrives and volunteers to help (see **Tracking Pinna** on page 112).

STEELTWISTER ARRIVES

At sundown on the third day after Pinna's abduction, a horde of 20 White Tusk orcs sets out from Castle Rend for Gravesford. By nightfall, an orcish horn sounds from the forest's edge, and Oregg Steeltwister (page 140) arrives with 2 **White Tusk juggernauts** and over a dozen other warriors. Oregg has come to parley. His immediate goal is to establish communication with the town, tell them Pinna is alive and being held in Castle Rend. His ultimate goal is to get someone important from the town (he doesn't know the PCs don't qualify, he assumes they are Gravesford natives) to journey with him back to the forest. There, Bonebreaker Dorokor will reveal the treachery of Lord Saxton and show his claim illegitimate by producing the rightful heir to the barony.

Oregg is prepared to fight.

Ideally, though, the players will already be off chasing after the orcs into the forest primeval!

9 This would be weird, but I don't know your players—they might like working for Shakespeare's Richard III.

PART 2: THE FOREST REND

> "The Mundane World lies between Axiom and Primordius, planes of uttermost law and chaos. Philosophers believe our world is a mirror of those two diametrically opposed realms. They describe law and chaos as "leaking" into our world like water through a poorly sealed bladder. But this ignores a fundamental truth: Axiom and Primordius are at war, and our world lies between. These forces do not exist here because of a mere quirk of geometry. They are here because our world is their battlefield."
>
> —Hierophant Prithviraña
> The Codex Terragnosis
> Wonder 738

The Forest Rend once protected the people of Bedegar. It supplied wood for their houses and hearths, food for their bellies, and, most importantly, protection from both monsters and invaders. Over a century ago, Good King Omund's Blue Dragon Phalanx built one of their many fortresses in this forest.

Then Ajax, called Invincible, slew Omund and routed his incorruptible knights. Now the Forest Rend, home to all manner of fell beastie, is an existential threat to Gravesford and Bedegar. The ruins of Castle Rend, a name now forgotten to the people of Gravesford, are occupied by the White Tusk orcs.

The characters must track the orcs through the forest if they are to find their stronghold and rescue Pinna. This forest exploration should be quick, but long enough to show that this forest is deep, dark, and not to be trifled with. If they wish to make this forest less dangerous, they will have the power to do so—once they have their stronghold![10]

Exploring the Forest

If the PCs wish to find Castle Rend, they must track the White Tusk orcs, following the trail they left behind when fleeing Gravesford. The tracks are easy to find, and following them carefully will help the characters avoid encounters with dangerous creatures within the forest. It would normally take a day or more to find Castle Rend, but because the PCs are following the orc trail, the journey takes about 3 hours. **At the end of each hour spent traveling, one character must make a Wisdom (Survival) check at DC 10 for the first hour of travel, DC 13 for the second hour, and DC 15 for the third.** The forest gets thicker as they progress.

If the tracker fails a check, roll on the Forest Rend Encounters chart below, or use one of the pre-rolled encounters below. If the check failed by 5 or more, the encountered creatures ambush the party, gaining a round of surprise at the start of combat.

The characters find Castle Rend once their tracker makes three Wisdom (Survival) checks, regardless of success or failure.

FOREST REND ENCOUNTERS

D12	ENCOUNTER
1	2 **BROWN BEARS** AND THEIR CUB (THEY STOP ATTACKING IF THE PCS PLAY DEAD OR FLEE TO MORE THAN 60 FEET AWAY)
2	12 **GOBLINS** THROW STONES FROM THE TREETOPS, HECKLING THE PCS AS THEY PASS
3	2 **ANKHEGS** AND 6 **GIANT CENTIPEDES**
4	4 WHITE TUSK **ORCS** AND 1 **WHITE TUSK JUGGERNAUT** LOST IN THE WOODS
5	4 **HARPIES** AND 1 **BLACK PUDDING**; THEY USE SONG TO ATTRACT THEIR PET OOZE'S DINNER
6	2 **OGRES** AND 3 HALF-ORC/HALF-OGRE **VETERANS** (THE CHILDREN OF WHITE TUSK DESERTERS)
7	1 **WYVERN** WITH ORC JAVELINS STICKING OUT OF ITS HIDE; ITS HIT POINTS ARE REDUCED TO 75
8	1 **SHAMBLING MOUND**
9	4 **ETTERCAPS** AND 4 **GIANT SPIDERS**
10	5 **WILL-O'-WISPS**
11	1 NEUTRAL **TREANT** THAT WAS RUDELY AWAKENED
12	2 **WHITE TUSK BLOODRAGERS** AND 2 **DIRE WOLVES**

Encounter 1: Hungry Beasts

In the light undergrowth at the edge of the Forest Rend, 2 **ankhegs** messily devour the remains of a White Tusk scout. Its burrowing disturbed a nest of giant insects, and 6 **giant centipedes** are lurking in tunnels beneath the ground waiting to feast on whatever the ankhegs leave behind. They emerge whenever the ankheg burrows back underground, and they attack the first medium or smaller creatures they see on the surface.

Whoever is tracking the orcs must make a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a failure, they do not notice the mounds of unearthed soil dotting the area or the ankhegs devouring an orc's corpse in the undergrowth, and the ankhegs get a surprise round in combat when they ambush the PCs. After they attack on their surprise round, they burrow into the earth, causing the 6 giant centipedes to rise to the surface on their next turn. On a successful check, the tracker notices the ankhegs first. If the PCs wish to sneak past them, they only need to make a successful DC 6 Dexterity (Stealth) check to avoid attracting the distracted ankhegs' attention.

10 The forthcoming *Kingdoms & Warfare* will have rules for civilizing wilderness. And wilding civilization!

Encounter 2: Devouring Wilderness

Deeper in the forest, the constricting trees choke out light until the bright day turns to dim twilight, and no illumination penetrates the forest during nighttime. In this oppressive darkness, a **shambling mound** lurks motionless, ready to devour any creature that steps into its rotting, shapeless body. The only sign that this mound is not what it appears to be are the orc bones jutting out of its mulchy exterior.

Whoever is tracking the orcs must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a failure, they do not notice the signs of combat from the hapless orcs who died here to the slow, shambling attacker. They wander directly into the shambling mound. It gains a surprise round in combat, which it uses to attack and engulf the tracker. On a successful check, the tracker spots the orc bones protruding from the mound and sees the signs of chaos surrounding it before getting within 60 feet of the mound. If the PCs do not disturb the shambling mound, it does not pursue them.

Encounter 3: White Tusk Sentries

The branches of the forest grow thinner, light breaks through the canopy, and the faint chirping of cicadas covers the forest like an aural blanket. The orc tracks here are dense; this area has been heavily trafficked in recent months. As the tracker studies the path to discern the correct way forward, the cicadas are silenced by the snarling of dogs and the plodding of metal boots. A pair of **White Tusk bloodragers** and their 2 **dire wolf** hunting dogs patrol this area.

Whoever is tracking the orcs must make a successful DC 17 Dexterity (Stealth) or Wisdom (Survival) check. On a failed check, the dire wolves catch the characters' scent, and the sentries pursue them with intent to kill for up to 1 mile. On a successful check, the tracker finds a path through the underbrush that helps them conceal their tracks and scent, letting them slip past the sentries. On a failure, the orcs immediately catch up and attack. If any of the orcs are captured and interrogated, a successful DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation) check forces one to reveal the existance of a second human captive, though they aren't super clear on who exactly "the little one" is or why he's important. They unquestioningly believe he *is* important because the bloodchief says so.

After this encounter, the characters find their way to the edge of a forest clearing. Through the thinning tree line, they can see the ancient walls and crumbling crenellations of an ancient fortress. Tall torches burn at the edges of the clearing, illuminating the grounds for the benefit of the orcs standing atop the battlements.

PART 3: THE RUINS OF CASTLE REND

> To the peasantry, goblins and orcs are "demons," meaning nothing more than fell spirits that live in the darkness of the wilds. But there is truth hidden in their folk wisdom, for Grole the One-Handed, Wargod of the Orcs, was once a Lord of Gehennom, a Demon Lord of Hell. But now he and his children call our world home.
>
> — Mahendraditya the Helldiver
> The Codex Incabulum
> Wonder 1121

Castle Rend was once a mighty stronghold of the Blue Dragon Phalanx, but those days are long past. The just law of the Good King has long since crumbled into tyranny and barbarism, just as the once-noble walls of Castle Rend have fallen into ruin.

The White Tusk orcs claimed Rend as their bastion two months ago. Their leader, Bonebreaker Dorokor, moved her nomadic clan into this forgotten keep after she accepted Lord Saxton's offer. She suspected the human would turn on the orcs as soon as they had outlived their usefulness. Her suspicions were vindicated when every bounty hunter from Bedegar to Dalrath suddenly began hunting for the orcs who slaughtered the Baron of Bedegar and his family. Yet she knows this situation cannot last long; her people will not submit to living in stone walls much longer. It is not the orcish way.

Edmund and Dorokor

Dorokor keeps Edmund Bedegar prisoner in a comfortable room near her personal chambers. Comfortable by orcish standards, anyway. On his first day as prisoner, Edmund demanded to face Dorokor in single combat, claiming his right as a fellow chieftain. The other orcs laughed, but Dorokor peered at the young human with suspicion. Did he *know* orcs govern by right of combat? Or did he guess at it?

She indulged him, and stepped into the makeshift cage they created for him. Handing him a shortsword, she faced the young baron without a weapon of her own. A moment later, the boy was on his back, his sword flung far away, and Dorokor's boot on his chest.

The boy would not yield. He sneered and spat at the bloodchief. The other orcs demanded his blood. But Dorokor knew she could not indulge them.

The young lordling had lost the combat but subtly outmaneuvered her. He forced her into a position where she *had* to kill him, but in order to preserve her plan, she could *not* kill him.

To the confusion of her tribe, she relented. Citing her plan to use the tiny human as a bargaining chip, she spared him. But she knew her orcs didn't like it.

Now, she spends a few hours each day sparring with the young lord. She cannot explain why, even to her closest lieutenant.

> Keep it alive yes. Fed, we must. But train it? Teach it our battle ways? What is to be gained? Is it pity? Do you feel sorry for this pup?"
>
> "I do not know, Oregg. I cannot say. Do not press me overmuch. Here, I am feeling my way. We are on unfamiliar terrain, and the world is not much with us since our bargain with Saxton."
>
> "Your bargain."
>
> "Aye, I admit it. But I think there is a path through this wood, and though I fumble like Grole with only one good hand, I think there is yet victory to be grasped. Indulge me in this. It is of little consequence in any event."

If the PCs try to kill their way through the orcs to rescue Pinna, Dorokor will not hesitate to threaten Edmund's life first, or Pinna's, and she means it. She will show some confusion at the PCs' tactics, as she believed that holding captives would force negotiations. The PCs don't know this, but Saxton originally captured Oregg Steeltwister and ransomed him back to Dorokor to force her to the negotiating table, where he pitched his plan.

In a sense, Dorokor is experimenting with civilization. Holding prisoners captive, seeking parley and negotiation. If this fails, if it even seems like it's going to fail, she is perfectly happy to go back to being a chaotic orc.

Arrival

Read this aloud when the PCs first emerge from the forest and see Castle Rend.

> The trees and tall grass end, and the forest opens to a large clearing dominated by a ruined stone keep. This is the once-proud stronghold of the Blue Dragon Phalanx. A fortified wall surrounded this place long ago, but only the eastern and western sections remain intact. The entire upper level of the keep has collapsed. Two towers, one in the northwest, the other in the southeast, acted as lookouts once; now only the northwest tower remains intact. Time has ravaged this place.
>
> The underbrush is clear for sixty feet surrounding the ruin, with lit torches placed every forty to fifty feet. The walls of the keep are as bare as the ground, not overgrown with choking vines

Castle Rend General Features

This once proud dragon-knight stronghold is a shadow of its former glory. Its upper levels have all but completely collapsed, save for a single tower. The collapsed tower is filled with the restless spirits of the Blue Dragon knights that once claimed this keep, and its dungeons are filled with their cursed bones. The orcs stay away from those places.

The orcs captured some of the goblins native to the forest and press-ganged them into service, forcing them to dig pit traps in the keep's grounds and cut down trees, using this timber to reinforce the keep's crumbling architecture. After the goblins finished their labor, their orcish taskmasters executed them to prevent them from revealing the location of their hideaway. Only one, a squeamish runt named Glurpick, managed to escape. He fled for weeks, but after many trials he came into the presence of Sir Pelliton. The Star Knight keeps the goblin chained like a hound and has used him to help plan an attack on Castle Rend, which will be put into motion in **Part 4: The Siege of Castle Rend** (page 100).

Ceilings. The keep's ceilings are 15 feet high unless otherwise noted. The dungeon's ceilings are more cramped at only 10 feet high.

Doors. The keep's doors are unlocked by virtue of the original keys having been lost. The orcs have installed simple wooden bars to block doors they don't want opened. A creature must make a successful DC 17 Strength check to break down a barred door. Doors on the ground level of the keep are made of wood reinforced with iron, while doors on the dungeon level are made of stone.

Floors. Castle Rend's flagstones are cracked and filled with moss. The White Tusk orcs removed some of these stones and excavated the foundation to create hidden pit traps by covering the hole with flimsy wooden planks covered in moss. A pit trap can be spotted by making a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check while within 30 feet of the pit. If a creature weighing more than 50 pounds (including gear) steps on a pit trap, it must make a successful DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or fall in. The pits are 30 feet deep and lined with wooden stakes. A creature that falls into a pit takes 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) piercing damage.

Pit traps are marked on the map of Castle Rend (next page) with a red "X."

Light. Unless otherwise noted, all interior areas are pitch dark. The orcs don't need light to see, and this darkness gives them an edge against most assailants.

The Daily Routine

The orcs live and work in the castle, preparing for war. They are always preparing for war. If the PCs spend hours or a day spying on the keep, possibly using *invisibility* or wildshape to enter the castle undetected, they will witness the following cycle of events.

There are always 4 **orcs** in the watchtower. At any given time, at least half the orcs in the keep are awake.

Morning

The orcs slaughter the game they hunted the previous evening. Dorokor wakes Edmund and they train in the sparring chamber. Orcs who participated in the hunt the previous night go to sleep.

Afternoon

Other orcs use the sparring chamber for ritual combat, resolving grudges, or simple sport. Food is prepared for the evening feast.

Evening

The orcs eat a huge meal at dusk in the great hall, and then sleep for a few hours, waking around midnight to hunt.

Night

The orcs hunt game in the forest. Dorokor occasionally leads the hunt. Metalworkers pound old, scavenged shields, armor, and weapons into something usable.

Castle Rend Exterior Locations

Castle Rend was built in a forest clearing, and its two watchtowers gave it an excellent view of the surrounding area in those days. Now that one tower is collapsed and filled with vengeful spirits, the orcs only have one tower from which to survey the area. If both were in use, the fortress would be all but impossible to sneak up on. However, in its current state, the PCs have two options: attempt to sneak past the orcish sentries surveilling the courtyard and risk alerting the orcs, or brave the dungeon and risk their lives.

B1. Forest's Edge

Tall torches are staked into the ground at forty-foot intervals surrounding the perimeter of the castle. The grass is nearly three feet tall here, and creatures like halflings, gnomes, and wood elves can hide from the sentries in this natural cover by making a successful DC 11 Dexterity (Stealth) check. Taller creatures can crawl on their bellies, but have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in this way. Characters that do not attempt to hide as they exit the tree line are trivially easy to spot by the orc sentries atop the guard tower (area C13).

The eastern wall of the keep has completely collapsed, making it the easiest way to enter the castle's bailey.

B2. Bailey

Castle Rend's bailey has largely been cleared of overgrowth by the orcs and their goblin slaves. The orcs have deposited the goblins' corpses unceremoniously into an unmarked grave on the west side of the courtyard. They've rotted there for nearly two weeks. Other refuse now fills the pit as well.

The orcs atop the guard tower (area C13) do not watch the bailey unless alerted by noise from the courtyard. To cover this blind spot, the bailey is filled with pit traps, covered with thin planks of wood, with the wood covered in mud and grass. The pits do not have spikes, but the boards have affixed chimes made of bone and metal.

A creature that weighs more than 50 pounds (including its gear) falls into the pit if it steps on top of it, and must make a successful DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or fall in, breaking the boards, ringing the chimes, and attracting the attention of the sentries. The pits are 20 feet deep, and a creature that falls into one takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall.

If the chimes ring or another loud noise is made in the bailey, the orc sentries turn to look. Any character in the bailey can use their reaction to fall to the ground and make a Dexterity (Stealth) check with disadvantage. If the result of their check is greater than the result of

the orcs' Wisdom (Perception) check, the character escapes the orcs' notice, and the orcs look back toward the forest.

B3. Main Gate

Castle Rend's main entrance is a thick gate of oak reinforced with bands of iron. An iron portcullis hangs over the gate, but its mechanism is rusted solid, and it can no longer be lowered by anything short of a successful DC 30 Strength check. The doors, however, have only weakened with age. They are barred from the inside, but can be broken down with a successful DC 20 Strength check. Whether this check succeeds or fails, the noise draws the attention of the orcs in the entrance hall (area C3).

B4. Secret Entrance

This trapdoor is overgrown with creeper vines and is unknown to the orcs. It conceals a long, winding staircase that leads into area C25 within the castle basement.

Castle Rend Interior Locations

Noise travels poorly within the plant-choked stone interior of Castle Rend. If a battle breaks out in any room within the castle, only creatures in adjacent areas connected by a doorway can hear the sound of combat. Even then, unless an orc calls for help or the PCs shout a phrase in a language other than Orc, the orcs simply assume that a brawl has broken out. The White Tusk does not fear dying for their chieftain; they only call for help if frightened by supernatural means.

C1. Entryway

The scent of dung and burnt flesh fills the entryway, wafting down the hall from the entrance hall (area C3). The main doors to Castle Rend are barred from this side. By lifting the bar as an action, the doors can be opened at will. If these doors are forced open from the outside, the sound is clearly audible to creatures in areas C2a, C2b, and C3.

C2. Guard Posts

Both of the guard posts (areas C2a and C2b) are unmanned. The orcs lack trained archers to make use of the arrow slits of the keep.

Area C2b also has a lever that controls the portcullis hanging above the castle's main doors. This lever cannot move right now, because the portcullis has rusted shut. Trying to force the rotted wooden lever just snaps it in half.

C3. Entrance Hall

The largest chamber in Castle Rend is now breezy and moss-covered. Its carpets have been shredded by animal claws and rotted by water. A large bonfire burns in the center of this chamber, its smoke pouring out of a hole in the ceiling. Two **White Tusk juggernauts** (see page 136) and their two **dire wolf** pets sit around the fire, gnawing on large hunks of venison. The two juggernauts each carry a *potion of hill giant strength* brewed by the orc shamans in the cauldron room (area C18), and each orc drinks their potion on their first turn in combat.

A treasure chest has been slid against the south wall of this chamber. It is surrounded by animal bones that have been gnawed clean by sharp fangs. This treasure chest is actually a **mimic** that the orcs found and now keep as a pet. It contains 500 gp worth of sapphires inside its gullet.

Developments. This room is connected to many others, so creating a disturbance here causes the orcs in adjacent rooms to investigate. If it is sundown, Bonebreaker Dorokor, Oregg Steeltwister, Pinna, and Edmund Bedegar are likely dining in the Great Hall (area C8). **Bonebreaker Dorokor** and **Oregg Steeltwister** (page 135) attack on sight, suspecting that the characters are Lord Saxton's thugs. Pinna and Edmund hold back and come to investigate on the second round of combat, but if Pinna recognizes the characters from Gravesford, she screams for both sides to stop fighting. See the **Negotiating with Orcs** event (page 125).

Treasure. Each of the juggernauts carries a coin pouch filled with 10 gp. If they were killed before they could drink their potion, each also carries a *potion of hill giant strength*.

C4. Chapel

This chapel was consecrated to St. Gaed the Confessor in the days of the Blue Dragon Phalanx, also known as the Blue Dragonflight. In the middle of the chamber, a shrine to the saint stands with arms outstretched. However, the statue has been desecrated by the orcs. St. Gaed's noble visage is defaced and warped into that of a snarling orc—the image of Grole, the orc god of slaughter and domination.

This affront angered the spirits of the Blue Dragon Phalanx that once protected this fortress, and they rose in anger against the orcs. Their spirits now occupy parts of the dungeon and the collapsed tower—and this chamber! If a creature touches the statue, an electric shock runs through its hand, like static. The room then grows colder and darker. The eyes of the statue begin to bleed, and a ghastly voice rasps, "No living creature shall defile our castle further. Die."

A **wraith** emerges from the floor and attacks the creature who touched the statue. It retreats into the floor once all creatures that were present when it appeared leave the room.

Breaking the Curse. The curse of undeath placed upon this keep can be broken if the chapel is reconsecrated to St. Gaed. Father Belderone from Gravesford can perform a ritual of reconsecration if given 24 hours and 500 gp with which to purchase incense, sacred unguents, and holy water. Casting *hallow* within this chamber will also set the undead to rest, though that spell is likely beyond the PCs' ability to cast.

Secret. A character that succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that the statue is standing on a wooden floor tile. If the statue is moved, a trapdoor is revealed. This trapdoor leads to the knights' crypt (area C21).

C5. Sparring Chamber

Knights once sparred in this chamber, but all the archery targets have rotted away. The White Tusk orcs still use it as a training chamber, and sometimes Bonebreaker Dorokor and Edmund Bedegar spar here. Dorokor has some sense of mercy, but only enough to keep her blows from outright killing "the boy with no hide," as the orcs call him. Edmund has never won a match but has dozens of cuts and bruises to show for his efforts.

Four **orcs** spar here.

Treasure. About two dozen sets of orcish armor and crude weapons are haphazardly stored along the perimeter of this room. A character that makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check or takes 5 minutes to search the armor finds a well-kept suit of studded leather armor and a shining *+1 rapier* with the Bedegar coat of arms inscribed on the pommel.

BACKSTORY: EDMUND AND DOROKOR

"You killed my parents. My whole family! I will see you hung upon the gibbet. I will see justice done upon you and all your foul kind!"

Bonebreaker Dorokor, using her tusks to extract some last marrow from a bone, stops at this. She tosses aside the bone and looks at Edmund as though seeing him for the first time.

"There is steel in Men," she observes quietly to herself. Then leans forward. As her face looms closer, Edmund's courage wavers and he pulls back as much as the shackles will allow.

"You blame me? Blame the knife. I did what I had to for my tribe, just as you would. You think the White Tusk is the matter before you?" She turns and spits on the ground next to Edmund. "Had we not agreed, Saxton would have found others. Your clan would be just as dead. No matter who stormed your stone walls that night."

"Lord Saxton is my...was...my father's best friend."

"Well now you know the difference between Men and orcs." Bonebreaker Dorokor leans back into the once opulent chair at the head of the table. Picks up another bone—human?—from the pile next to the chair, snaps it in half, and begins sucking out the marrow. "Your father had 'friends.' Now your father is dead. I have no use for friends and am still alive. In spite of Men's treachery. Think on that, little one. If you survive this, it will be an important lesson for you, when you are bloodchief."

C6. Armory

The Blue Dragonflight stored their weapons and armor here. None of the armor fits the orcs, and most of it is rusty and corroded by time and water. The crest of the dragon knights is still visible on the chest pieces of the plate armor, though.

Twelve suits of plate armor stand around the walls of this room. Eleven are rusted and pitted, but one still seems to gleam silver, as if it had been polished mere moments ago. This suit of *+1 plate* belonged to Raizorojan, Captain of the Blue Dragon Phalanx, and fits a human with a broad, athletic build. Other creatures will need to have it refitted. Touching the suit of magical plate causes eight of the rusty suits of armor to creak to life as **animated armor** and attack the pillagers until they all leave the room. These enchanted suits of armor have 18 Strength; their slam attacks have a +6 bonus to hit and deal 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage on a hit. These changes increase their challenge rating to 2 (450 XP).

C7. Coatroom

This room once held the ceremonial attire of the knights and had room for guests to hang their coats. All within has been reduced to muck and tattered cloth.

Treasure. Digging through the mold and muck for 5 minutes will yield gold buttons, lapis lazuli cufflinks, and sapphire earrings worth a total of 300 gp.

C8. Great Hall

A stately marble dining table stands before a cold hearth in the center of the great hall. Twelve stone chairs are assembled around it, though all have been chipped, covered with plants, or knocked over. Every

night at sunset, Bonebreaker Dorokor sups here with her lieutenant, Oregg Steeltwister, as well as Edmund Bedegar and Pinna. Lately, they have been planning how best to conduct negotiations with the people of Gravesford.

If the PCs interrupt this meal, **Bonebreaker Dorokor** and **Oregg Steeltwister** (page 135) both leap over the table and attack instantly, suspecting that the PCs are assassins sent by Lord Saxton. If Pinna recognizes them from Gravesford, she instantly calls for everyone to stop fighting. See the **Negotiating with Orcs** event (page 125).

At other times of day, this chamber is usually empty. Orcs can pass through it to get from the barracks to the watchtower when changing guard shifts (see area C13).

C9. Barracks

The orcs have repurposed the Blue Dragonflight's barracks as their own. Areas 9a, 9b, and 9c each contain four bunks. Area 9d has been converted into a holding chamber for Edmund Bedegar and, more recently, Pinna. Young Lord Bedegar has helped soothe the hedge mage's nerves after being kidnapped.

Area 9e belongs to Bonebreaker Dorokor, and its door is decorated with an ornate crest of snapped bones, with an eagle's skull in the center. Her large chamber contains items unusual for an orc, such as a washbasin, parchment, and charcoal. Dorokor has no use for human fineries, and everything within her chamber is worthless by human standards, save for her magical greataxe, *Wound* (see **Bonebreaker Dorokor**, page 141). She keeps this mighty weapon on her person at all times, and rests it at the foot of her cot while she sleeps.

Area 9f belongs to Oregg Steeltwister, second-in-command of the White Tusk clan. He possesses none of Dorokor's cunning or subtlety, but he is madly in love with her. He follows her every order and pretends to understand her schemes in order to win her favor.

C10. Kitchen

This kitchen once produced fabulous meals for the Blue Dragon knights. Now, it is manned solely by whichever **orc** is on mess duty for the day. Game is plentiful in the Forest Rend, and the kitchen is covered in dried animal blood, with the carcasses of deer and wild boars hanging from the ceiling on improvised meat hooks. The orcs have no desire to eat anything but raw meat, so their cook is little more than a butcher.

The orc manning the kitchen today is a coward named Greevil. He does not attack on sight like other orcs, but instead tries to hide when the PCs enter this room. A successful DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation) check can convince him to do the PCs' dirty work, so long as it doesn't involve directly acting against Bonebreaker Dorokor or Oregg Steeltwister. He will tell the heroes about Edmund, or about Dorokor's plan and her desire to parley with the humans, or about the layout of the keep, but he won't disobey Dorokor or attack her or any other orc.

C11. Larder

The orcs do not store or preserve their food, and what provisions remained here have spoiled and rotted away.

C12. Tower Stairs

A stone spiral staircase winds up into the watchtower and down into the stronghold's basement. Characters trying to climb the stairs quietly must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If the passive Dexterity (Stealth) of every character is higher than 10, they automatically succeed on this check. If they fail this check or do not attempt to ascend the staircase quietly, all four **orcs** in area C13 hear their approach and ready an action to attack the next non-orc creature they see.

C13. Watchtower

Four **orcs** stand guard at this fifty-foot-tall watchtower at all times, looking down upon the forest surrounding Castle Rend. A stone brazier holds faintly burning embers for staving off the cold during the night. They pass the time by telling rude jokes.

If attacked in melee, they try to grapple their attackers and hurl them from the tower.

C14. Collapsed Tower

The collapsed south tower is a place of great suffering. Those who once inhabited this castle—the tormented souls of King Omund's knights and priests of St. Gaed the Confessor—keep constant vigil in this tower, and no orc dares enter it. On moonless nights, a spectral flame burns atop its ruined crenellations.

This tower holds a staircase that climbs to its ruined top and descends into area C25 of the keep's dungeons. Climbing the staircase leads to a dead end where the tower has caved in, and any creature who sifts through the rubble must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw as the **ghost** of one of the knights emerges through the wall and uses its Possession ability on them. The ghost fights until it is destroyed.

Sifting through the rubble for 5 minutes reveals a rusted iron lockbox, which is trivial to force open. Inside is an airtight pewter scroll case embellished with silver images of dragons. Inside the case is a small key and a piece of parchment: the deed to this keep, signed by Omund himself. The deed is a historical curiosity, but since both King Omund and the Blue Dragon-

flight are now little more than a memory, the deed is practically useless in this day and age. That is, unless someone convincing and charismatic decided to keep it and declare it valid under the principle that Omund's proclamation was never lawfully rescinded. The scroll case could be sold to a jeweler for 300 gp.

The key within this scroll case is small, made of silver, and embellished with an image of a dragon. It opens the treasure chests in area C19 within the dungeon.

Castle Rend Dungeon Locations

The dungeons of Castle Rend contain the sleeping quarters of the White Tusk clan's lowliest grunts, but they are also home to the clan's shrine to Grole, the clan's warspeakers, and their shamans. Some putrid smell and the acrid stench of smoke fills the dungeons—the orcs' shamans are brewing something foul down here, and there is hardly any ventilation. The stink doesn't bother the orcs, but PCs that enter the dungeon level must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour by the smell. If a PC succeeds on this save, they become immune to being poisoned in this way for 24 hours.

C15. Prison-Barracks

This room was once a prison, but the White Tusk orcs have converted it into barracks for their lowliest grunts.

Whichever **orc** is on watch duty for the night rests here with 2 **dire wolves** at his side. Any combat here instantly draws the attention of any orcs in areas C16a–d and awakens any that are asleep. A poisoned dagger rests on the orc's bedside table. The orc throws this dagger at an enemy on his first turn in combat. On a hit, the target takes the dagger's normal damage and must also make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 31 (9d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Treasure. A small treasure chest is stowed beneath the sentry's bed. It is unlocked and contains a vial of deadly poison. There is enough left to coat one weapon. The next time the poisoned weapon deals damage to a creature, it must also make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 9d6 (31) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

C16. Barracks-Cells

Each of these four rooms contains a bunk that fits two orcs (in fairly cramped conditions). During the day, these orcs are off hunting or patrolling the forest. At night, their inhabitants sleep here. The barred doors of these cells have been ripped off their hinges and lie strewn around the hallway.

Each cell's occupants are:

- *C16a.* Two White Tusk **orcs**.
- *C16b.* Two **White Tusk bloodragers**.
- *C16c.* Two White Tusk **orcs**.
- *C16d.* One **White Tusk juggernaut**.

C17. Warspeakers' Cloister

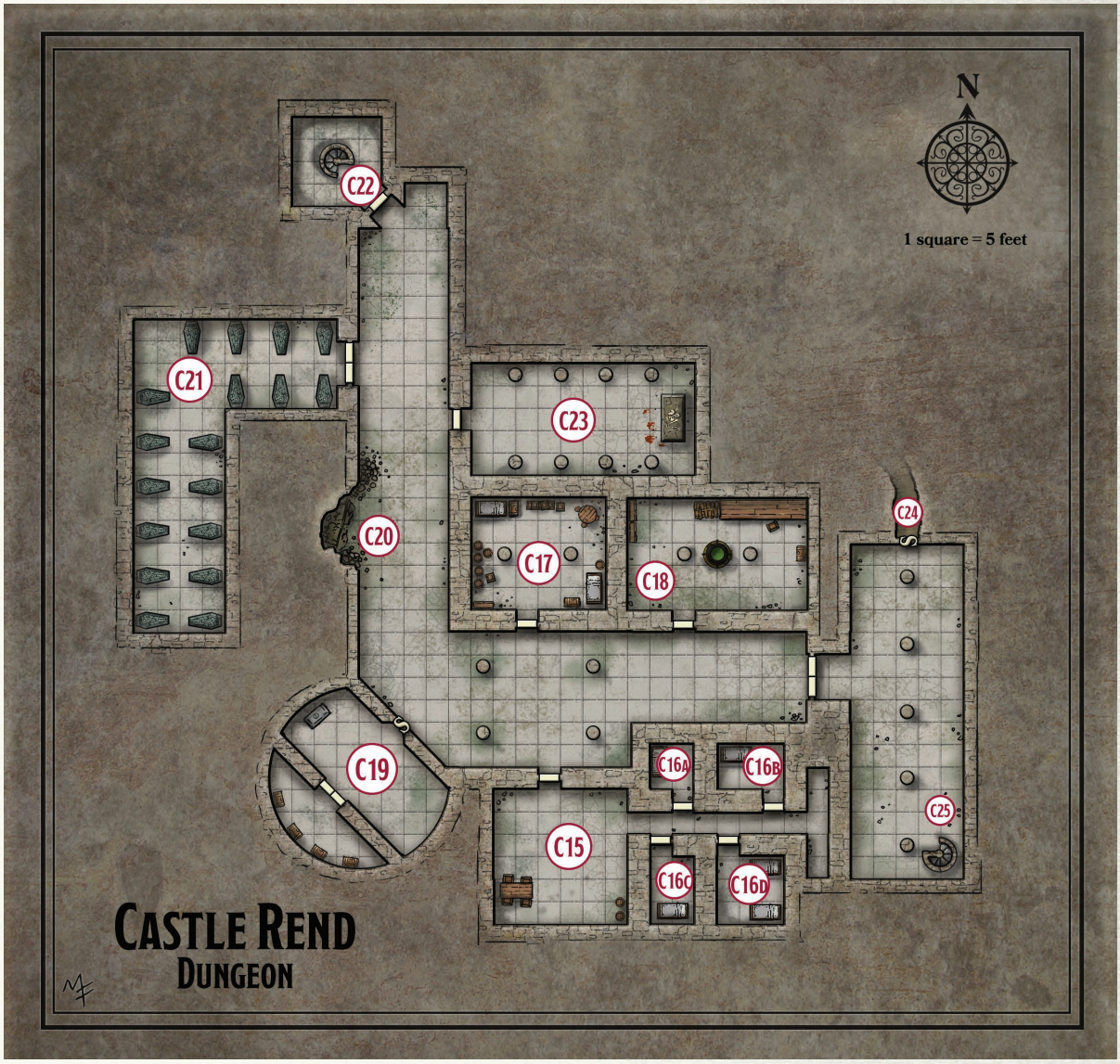
Two **White Tusk warspeakers** of Grole have made this spacious chamber their home. While they tend to the shrine (area C23) during the day, they return here to sleep after nightfall. One has cast an *alarm* spell on this room in case one of the common orcs is foolish enough to try to steal from them, and both warspeakers come running from the shrine if the spell is triggered.

Treasure. Each warspeaker keeps a small chest containing 100 gp underneath their cot. Additionally, one has a stack of three stone tablets that function like spell scrolls. Only creatures that can read Orc can use these stone *scrolls of bestow curse*, *shield of faith*, and *spiritual weapon*.

C18. Cauldron Room

Here, two **White Tusk shamans** brew a foul-smelling concoction in a cauldron suspended over a bed of smoldering embers. On the first turn of combat, one of the shamans uses its Spirit-Bonded Body trait to transform into a wolf and howl loudly as an action. This howling alerts all orcs in the dungeon level to the presence of intruders, so they can't be surprised for the next hour. Additionally, all orcs in areas C15, C16, C17, and C20 come to investigate the disturbance, ready for battle.

Treasure. The cauldron contains a potion that the shamans are brewing to aid their bloodchief in the trials to come. This pungent broth is the base for a *potion of enhance ability* (page <?>). It is currently inert, but its magical effects can be activated by adding a single hair or feather of a certain animal to a vial of this potion. There is enough broth in this cauldron to fill six glass vials. A crate containing twelve vials sits in a corner of this room.



C19. Secret Treasury

The White Tusk orcs have not discovered the secret vault in which the Blue Dragonflight stored their spoils. A secret door disguised to look like the masonry of the hallway protects this vault. However, a creature within 30 feet of the secret door that makes a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check will notice that the cauldron-smoke filling the dungeon is filtering through a tiny crack at the top and bottom of a five-foot section of wall. The secret door can be demolished by making a successful DC 17 Strength check. Otherwise, its hidden lock can be found by making a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check and then picked by making a successful DC 17 Dexterity check with thieves' tools.

Within the chamber is a small, uncorrupted shrine to St. Gaed the Confessor. A silver chalice worth 100 gp rests on it, filled with divine mead that has stayed fresh through the ages. A cleric, druid, or paladin that drinks of this holy mead restores 1 expended spell slot.

The larger room to the west of this shrine contains four treasure chests, each locked and trapped with a poison needle trap. Opening a chest without the proper key (found in the scroll case in area C14) causes a needle to spring out from the lock three inches, delivering a dose of poison. A pricked creature takes 1 piercing damage and 11 (2d10) poison damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. A character who makes a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check will deduce the trap's presence from alterations made to the lock to accommodate the needle. The needle can be removed from the lock, disarming the trap, by making a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Failing to pick the lock triggers the trap.

Each chest contains 500 + 10d6 gp and 50 + 1d10 pp.

C20. Refuse Pit

The orcs have dug a small pit to throw their waste into. Its stench is rank.

C21. Crypt of the Blue Dragon Knights

This solemn chamber contains the remains of the knights that once protected this land. Ten rows of stone sarcophagi form a sepulchral procession down this hall. The leader of the knights lingers here within his sarcophagus on the far west wall of the room as a **wraith**, who vengefully attacks any creature that enters his domain. He speaks Common and is willing to discuss cleansing the shrine of St. Gaed and being set to rest—he demands that the orcs be permanently driven out of the keep before the shrine is reconsecrated—but will only negotiate if the PCs initiate. Otherwise, he attacks indiscriminately.

At the start of each round of combat while in the crypt, two **specters** rise from graves until all 18 specters have risen, threatening to overwhelm the PCs through sheer numbers. All of the undead disperse instantly if the wraith is killed or if the PCs flee this chamber.

Treasure. Within the wraith's sarcophagus is his holy sword, *Grace* (page 144). Another sarcophagus holds the dust of another knight and the *Armor of St. Gaed the Confessor* (page 144).

C22. Tower Stairs

A stone spiral staircase winds up to the main floor of the keep (area C12), and then farther up still to the watchtower (area C13).

C23. Shrine to Grole

The warspeakers of the White Tusk clan created a new shrine to Grole after they realized their error in defiling the statue of St. Gaed in the upper levels. The shrine to Grole in the dungeons is little more than a stone slab covered in carved bone trinkets, but it is enough to satisfy Bonebreaker Dorokor.

Two **White Tusk warspeakers** tend to this shrine. They allow their fellow orcs to pray at this shrine, but attack invaders on sight.

Treasure. A fist-sized sapphire rests on the shrine, a shining stone that one of the warspeakers found while exploring the dungeons. A character that makes a successful DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check discerns that this stone is actually the crystallized heart of a sapphire dragon, and it is probably about a hundred years old. As a stone, it would sell for about 400 gp, but as a magical relic, a wizard would easily buy it for 1,000 gp. It also functions as a medium *psionic crystal* (page 260).

C24. Secret Escape Route

The hidden passage from area B4 in the castle courtyard leads to a long, earthen tunnel that winds downward into this hidden room—a secret back exit for a castle under siege. Long ago, it contained a fully stocked emergency larder and armory, but everything inside has long since rotted or corroded. The orcs know nothing of this secret room, making it a perfect place to rest.

The secret door is clearly marked from this side, but blends into the wall when viewed from the hallway. A creature within 30 feet of the secret door that makes a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check will notice the cauldron-smoke that fills the dungeon is filtering through a tiny crack at the top and bottom of a five-foot section of wall. The secret door can be demolished by a successful DC 17 Strength check, or by finding its hidden lock by making a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check and then picking the lock with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check with thieves' tools.

C25. Collapsed Tower Stairs

These stairs lead upward to the collapsed tower (area C14).

Castle Rend Event: Negotiating with Orcs

When the PCs meet with Bonebreaker Dorokor, she announces: "I am Bonebreaker Dorokor, Bloodchief of the White Tusk. I hold *Wound*. If you are servants of the human Saxton, you will die quickly and painfully."

Facing an orc with two humans hostage, the heroes may just attack. Typical. But if they negotiate with her, she agrees to parley. She demands that the PCs set down their arms and join her at the table. She snarls at Edmund and Pinna to not speak out of turn, and the two meekly oblige. Edmund sits on Dorokor's left, Pinna sits on Edmund's left, and Oregg Steeltwister sits on Dorokor's right.

As part of negotiations, Dorokor explains the situation:

- Lord Saxton kidnapped one of Dorokor's own and arranged a meeting. She was given a sum of gold to kill the Baron of Bedegar and his family so that Lord Saxton could become regent.
- She spared the life of Edmund Bedegar and stole him away just in case Saxton stabbed her in the back. (Spoiler: he did.)
- She wishes to return the boy to human lands and reveal Saxton's treachery so that he may be deposed. However, she has terms she needs met, and she no longer trusts the honor of "civilized folk."

Dorokor is willing to return both Pinna and Edmund and quit the field, leaving the castle with her tribe—especially if she believes the PCs will use Edmund to expose Saxton's treachery (this is, after all, her entire plan). But in order to maintain her control over the clan, Dorokor must come out ahead in these negotiations, and no amount of promises will do the trick. She needs to show the orcs under her leadership that she is stronger than these humans *and that the humans know it*. Only an item of power will suffice.

The flip side of this is that the orcs don't really know what counts as "an item of power," so they can be fooled a little. But Bonebreaker Dorokor is harder to fool. If the PCs are sufficiently persuasive, she'll accept a lesser item and play it up to her tribe as though it's a triumph.

Otherwise, she demands a powerful magic item—a rare or rarer magic weapon (like the holy sword *Grace* found in area C21) would do the trick. As a rule of thumb, the PCs' single most valuable possession is enough to all-but-instantly secure a successful negotiation.

If this negotiation goes well, Dorokor snarls a wide smile. "Take the boy. Take the girl. Take this stone house too, if you wish. Walls are for keeping cattle and pigs. We care not for such things—you can have it. But kill Saxton. He is too treacherous to lead men, and too weak to survive out here. If you agree to this, the White Tusk clan will return to the hills in the north and trouble you no more."

If the negotiations go *exceptionally well*, Dorokor produces a hollowed ram's horn from her belt and hands it to the PCs. "I do not give Men gifts lightly. We have a common enemy: Saxton and his vermin. If you blow the horn, my clan will answer so long as we can hear it."

If negotiations stall or turn sour, Dorokor puts her hostage to work. She grabs Edmund by the neck and levels *Wound* at his throat. "Meet my demands or your true bloodchief dies. And the girl too. You must swear it. Swear with something stronger than your worthless honor." It is clear from the look in her eyes and the edge in her voice that Dorokor never makes empty threats.

If the PCs can't agree on how to negotiate with Dorokor, then it's initiative. If they fail to beat her in the initiative order, she executes Edmund. Or just slits his throat and leaves him for dead, so a PC cleric can heal him later, depending on what kind of GM you are. 😀

If they succeed in negotiating with her, she takes her tribe and leaves in the night, without bothering with sentimental goodbyes.

PART 4: THE SIEGE OF CASTLE REND

"Those who stand closest to the light cast the longest shadows."

— Kālidāsa Dhar
Vizier to the Court of Virmastha
The Codex Umbra
Wonder 67

Whether by blade or by bargain, the characters have gained control of Castle Rend. They now have a stronghold of their very own! However, they won't be truly masters of their domain until they have defended it from invaders. Fortunately, Sir Pelliton intends to give them that chance. His army arrives in one week. The PCs must gather allies, fortify their position, and prepare themselves for Pelliton's attack.

This week will be eventful...

Dorokor's Aftermath

Lots of stuff happens once Dorokor is taken care of, and the players have many opportunities to gather information about their real enemy—Sir Pelliton—and prepare for a battle. In this section, we'll also walk through the steps of deciding what kind of stronghold Castle Rend is, what rewards the players get based on this decision, and how and what kind of units they have available for the coming battle.

Right now, the PCs probably have no idea that Sir Pelliton is on his way. They have other business that they may wish to deal with, such as making sure the White Tusk orcs head off, returning Pinna to Gravesford, and perhaps scheming with Edmund about how to take back Bedegar Keep. That last quest is beyond the scope of this adventure and could even be the basis of an entire campaign. If the players are interested in such a campaign, they should be prepared to invest in their stronghold, gather followers, and become lords with the might to challenge Saxton on his own terms.

Edmund's Reward

Edmund approaches the apparent leader of the group, or the most knightly, or the most lawful, in that order.

> Edmund looks you in the eye. "I do not hold Bedegar Keep. I have no army. I am young—but I am my father's son. I am the Baron of Bedegar, and I owe you my life. Let this be my first act as baron. Kneel. And someone hand me a sword."
>
> Edmund taps the sword on your shoulders, his hands trembling slightly with the weight of it. "Arise, knight of Bedegar. I invest you with this castle, too, just as the knights of Good King Omund held it in elder days."
>
> Ceremony over, the boy becomes a little less formal. "Well, you are now my privy council. What shall we do now?"

Edmund is a natural-born leader, but he is unsure of himself. He will need time and guidance to grow into his role as Baron of Bedegar. The PCs may approach this situation in many ways: Some may wish to help him, serving as powerful advisers to a young baron. Others may wish to have nothing to do with the boy, and would prefer to let him live with Father Belderone in Gravesford in secret until he is ready to take back Bedegar Keep.

Depending on how much the PCs like Edmund, you may make him a major NPC or relegate him to the role of a background character until the time for war with Lord Saxton is at hand.

Setting Up Shop

The players may want to stay here and dispatch one of their own as a messenger back to Gravesford. If they do this, then Willoughby Twobuckle (see **A Cog in the System**, page 129) infiltrates the castle to meet with them.

Twobuckle is a high-level thief, so infiltrating the castle won't be hard for him, but the players may have the means to detect him—an *alarm* spell would do the trick—in which case he doesn't put up a fight. He's only a messenger, after all.

Pinna and Edmund are both willing to go back to Gravesford on their own, but this is exceedingly dangerous as neither of them is a competent adventurer and the forest is still hazardous. Someone from the party should accompany them.

Returning to Gravesford

> "Do you think we could...go home? I couldn't stay in this castle, not yet," Pinna says. "Not after being dragged off by orcs and kept here against my will. Besides, I'm a wizard. I need my supplies, and my potions, and...well, the people of Gravesford need me! Not that I wouldn't like to live in a castle. Real wizards do live in castles...or towers! If that ruined tower were fixed up into a real-life wizard's tower, I don't think I could refuse."

Pinna's kidnapping started this entire quest, and she wants to return home. Returning with her to Gravesford is easy for the heroes now that there aren't any orcs in the way. If you want to slow things down and make the trip feel difficult, roll once on the Forest Rend Encounters chart (page 114), but it's also reasonable to skip the encounter and return to town without the hassle. Edmund also wishes to go, requesting that he not be left alone in the empty, literally haunted castle.

Upon returning to Gravesford and revealing Pinna to be unharmed, the townsfolk welcome the PCs back as heroes and invite them to spend the night in the Reluctant Pig—no charge. All the children in town cluster around the PCs, asking them for stories of their adventures, and the adventuresome grandmother Helanna joins the crowd.

Edmund's Birthright. Keen-eyed Giselle catches sight of Edmund and asks, "Who is the boy?" Edmund glances at the PCs, waiting for them to make the first move. He is bold and noble, but sensible. If his protectors aren't willing to reveal his identity yet, he will oblige. If they choose to conceal his identity, he bides his time. If they do reveal his identity, the villagers are shocked and instantly bow to their baron. Carroc demands proof, but Edmund's ring[11]—the ruby signet of Bedegar—instantly puts him in his place. The greedy farmer is the willing supplicant of the most powerful person in the room, and that is Edmund...for now. Edmund has no real power until he sits upon the throne of Bedegar, and if Sir Pelliton or Lord Saxton comes calling, Carroc will betray the PCs in a heartbeat.

Pinna's Return. Pinna returns to her shop, dismayed to see it practically razed to the ground.

> "There was an explosion! I remember now," she muses, clearly in shock. Seeing the shop's wreckage, she turns to the PCs with a new fire in her eyes. "You own a castle now, don't you? It's time to get started on that wizard tower! Just you wait, I'll be able to make you potions and little charms...and you'll even have visitors from town willing to do business every now and then!"

If the PCs accept her, Pinna is willing to become their stronghold's wizard—their first follower! This won't preclude them rolling on their follower chart. If they manage to put to rest the spirits in the wrecked tower and rebuild it, she will be able to do her own spell research! *Pinna's elucidating hold person!*

Willoughby's Secrets. That night, in the Reluctant Pig, the PCs are approached by a halfling who, judging by his accent, isn't from around these parts. His name is Willoughby Twobuckle, and he comes with vital information for the PCs. See **A Cog in the System** below.

A Cog in the System

"Oh, ah...hey. Good job with that orc lady by the way. Who's this? Looks like the baron's youngest son. Wow. Hey you folks are screwed, you know that right?"

The night after the White Tusk clan is driven from Castle Rend (forcefully or not), the PCs are surreptitiously approached by a halfling named Willoughby Twobuckle. If they are in Gravesford, he slyly approaches them at the inn. If they are in Castle Rend, he slips in and accosts them in the dead of night. His hair is curly and red but is slicked back against his scalp by a thick coat of grease, and he wears leather armor underneath his rustic tunic. Willoughby is an agent (or a Cog) of the Clock, a local thieves' guild with operations across Vasloria.

He speaks in a clipped and sneering accent, and fears nothing. Agents of the Clock have been spying on the PCs since they first arrived in Gravesford, and he tells the PCs that his superior gave him orders to help them out as best as he could without revealing to Saxton that the Clock opposes his regime.

His news is this: Sir Pelliton knows of Castle Rend and is preparing to attack the castle. He does not know that the orcs are no longer there, but if he learns that the PCs have killed or driven them off, he will stop at nothing to destroy the PCs. Pelliton is a deeply insecure

11 None of the orcs had any idea this was anything other than a trinket.

man, and will not allow commoners like the PCs to claim Saxton's reward and stand beside him as equals.

> "So, yeah, I figure you folks got about a week before that pigstain Pelliton shows up at your new castle or whatever. His army ain't big but Saxton has some...nasty friends. You know what a gnoll is? Well you'll see.
>
> "Anyway, the word is out there about you folks and the castle in the forest. And Saxton ain't exactly popular. I know a couple of companies of foot used to work for the old baron will probably come by to help. But it wouldn't hurt to find a few hundred more friends who can fight and take orders...
>
> "Oh...and you're gonna have to kill Pelliton, too, you know that right? 'Cause he's coming for you personal. Pelliton can get into your castle. We don't know how exactly, but we know he got it from Saxton and we *think* Saxton got it directly from Mortum, Ajax's wizard. Fun times."

The players are free to debate what this "way in" is. They will almost certainly include a *teleport* spell in their guesses, which will make them feel smart when it turns out that's exactly what happens.

A Week to Prepare

The PCs have a little time to travel around to nearby villages and recruit allies to help them defend Castle Rend. If the PCs found it, the castle's hidden treasury has a great deal of gold to facilitate the hiring of mercenaries from nearby Tarreton, and there are woodworkers and stonemasons in Gravesford and other nearby hamlets that could be paid to rebuild the castle's crumbling fortifications. Rangers and foresters could also be found to create a guarded road through the Forest Rend connecting Gravesford and the castle, to make travel safer and quicker.

While the players deal with their newfound wealth and title, it's time to figure out whose stronghold this is, how much it's going to cost to fix up, how long it will take, and what rewards the players get from it.

Castle Rend Costs and Rewards

The orcs cleared out all the overgrowth, but they had no capacity, or indeed desire, to repair Castle Rend and restore it to its former glory or usefulness. **If the players spend no money to repair this place, then it can only serve as a 1st-level keep**, in spite of how large this place is. It's just too dilapidated to serve as anything greater.

If the players are willing to spend some of their treasure, even if they're willing to spend some money to get started want the benefits of the place, it's up to them to foot the bill!

Of course, the aforementioned treasury of the Blue Dragon Phalanx would pay for quite a lot of repairs, but that assumes the players have found it. If not, depending on how much cash the heroes have accumulated in their adventures, and how much of it they're willing to part with, they may not be able to afford much renovation.

Before we know how much this place will cost to fix up, we must determine what kind of stronghold Castle Rend will be. This will tell us how much it will cost to repair and what benefits it will give.

A Keep or a Castle?

Rend is certainly a walled fortress, so it qualifies as a **keep**, it has **towers** (and at least one is mostly functional), and there is a **temple** in the dungeon below! But, the word "castle" is right there in the name...

It's just not a very *large* castle. It's a big keep, though! You should feel empowered to put the issue in front of the players: "You can either use this place as a 3rd-level keep or a 1st-level castle."

The players may decide, seeing as how they're about to fight a big battle, that it is currently a keep, but later they might want to add a tower or temple to it, making it a castle. That's fine—it's just going to cost a lot more money and take time (see **Upgrading Your Stronghold** on page 11).

CHOOSING A 3RD-LEVEL KEEP

A 3rd-level keep costs 30,000 gp to build, but since the players aren't starting from scratch, it only costs half that: 15,000 gp. It takes 450 days to build a 3rd-level keep, but since we're starting with a ruin, it takes half that: 225 days (about seven months and two weeks).

Your players don't have 225 days, though—they've got about a week. It's up to you to dole out the rewards, as described below. At the very least, the players should get their unit rewards so they can defend this place.

You might also let the martial characters train in the keep or let someone roll on their follower chart to attract some units, as described below. But it's best to hold off *some* reward for when the construction is complete.

REWARDS FOR CASTLE REND (3RD LEVEL KEEP)

- **Units:** Roll five times on the **Unit Raised by Keep** chart (page 17) to see which units arrive to pledge service.
- **Stronghold Benefit:** At your discretion, characters who volunteer to help train the new units get one of the keep's training benefits (page 17).
- **Followers:** If you're feeling generous, you may let one of the players (they decide which) roll on their Follower chart to see who or what arrives to say, "Love what you're doing, how can I help?" Because this is a 3rd-level keep, you may let them roll once now, again in three months, and then once more when the construction is complete. Or wait until it's all done after 225 days and let them roll three times (because it's a *3rd-level* keep).
- **Class Feature Improvement:** You may decide to hold off on awarding the improved class feature until construction is complete, but it's up to you. You could award units and the improved class abilities now and hold off on training and rolling on the follower charts until construction is further along. If you award the class feature improvement now, they are a reward for every character who helps pay for the renovation. It's also assumed those characters are helping supervise the construction or otherwise actively helping with the work in some way.

CHOOSING A 1ST-LEVEL CASTLE

A 1st-level castle with three strongholds in it—in this case, a keep, a tower, and a temple—costs a total of 16,900 gp and takes 253.5 days to build. That's 10,000 gp for a keep, and 8,000 each for a tower and a temple, +30% for having three strongholds in one castle, then the total is halved because they're not starting from scratch. Likewise, a keep takes 150 days to build, and a tower and temple each take 120 days, then add +30% for three strongholds, then halve it for starting with a ruin.

REWARDS FOR CASTLE REND (1ST LEVEL CASTLE)

- **Units:** Roll three times on the **Unit Raised by Keep** chart (page 17) to see which units show up to help them fight Sir Pelliton.
- **Stronghold Benefits:** If you want to let the players open their presents early, you can let them start using the keep, the tower, and the temple. Normally it takes weeks for spell research; you can enforce that rule or *this one time* let the player roll after only a week's research, assuming that their entire career up 'til now has been research.
- **Followers:** The players will ultimately get to roll three times on the Follower chart—once for the keep, once for the tower, once for the temple. Right now, you decide whether they go to roll at all, or whether they'll have to wait for construction to be further along and word of their deeds to spread. It's probably reasonable to let them roll once now, roll again in 126 days, and roll a final time at the end of construction.
- **Improved Class Abilities:** Anyone who's contributing money to the construction will get the benefits of the Improved Class Abilities, but *when* they gain those benefits is up to you. It's best to save something as a reward for finishing construction, and this is a good candidate. But you could decide that the final Follower roll is the reward for finishing and so grant the players Improved Class Abilities immediately.

Recruiting Units

The players have rolled for their new units. These are standard infantry and missile units. If the players want more, cooler units, they're going to need to use their heads.

This book has no hard and fast rules restricting which player controls which units. Units belong to whoever's paying them, or whoever recruited them, or whoever built the stronghold. During a battle, any player can give an allied unit orders on their turn. There's no narrative connection between the unit they're ordering around and the PC. In this sense, units are like NPCs the players can all order around.

Even if they don't have a keep, even if they don't have any money, there's nothing stopping the PCs from going to the NPCs they've met and helped and just *asking* for aid. We saw Aragorn do exactly this with Théoden in *Return of the King*. Three wizards were sent to Middle-earth to stop Sauron, but the only one who succeeded was the one who spent his time on diplomacy, riding around to all these different factions making sure they were all ready when the war finally came.

So ask the players: "Okay, what else are you going to do to recruit new units?" If they ask you in return, "I don't know, what can we do?" consider just asking them back, "Well, who do you know who might be able to lend aid?"

Of course, I don't know your campaign, but many sample units are included on pages 146, 147, 262, and 263 to help you out. Here are two obvious options:

PEASANT LEVIES

Not only can the players recruit local peasants to help work on repairing the keep, the people of Gravesford and nearby towns *want* to help. Let the players think for a while, but if they're having problems coming up with possible allies, *the peasants volunteer*.

Anytime you're dealing with a large category of people like this, "the peasants," it's a good idea to pick a specific NPC and have them speak for the group—someone from Gravesford who's come up to the ruin to help the heroes.

There's no roll here, because the peasants *want* to help the players. They hate Lord Saxton and Sir Pelliton, and they like the heroes! I hope. So as soon as the players ask, or when the peasants volunteer, give them the Gravesford Levies card (page 146)

This presents the players with an important moral dilemma: Levies take casualties first (see **The Order of Battle**, page 239). This is their job. They act as the "hit points" of your army, soaking up casualties so more powerful units live longer and inflict more casualties on the enemy.

But these are the peasants Castle Rend is ostensibly meant to defend! So now **the players must decide whether to field these units.** They don't have to! Apart from the moral component, there's no real downside to fielding them[12].

BONEBREAKER DOROKOR

What?! Yes! One group of mine went through this scenario and managed to come out with Dorokor as, if not an *ally,* at least not an enemy. And she was convinced by clever negotiation to lend aid in the final battle.

If your players negotiated successfully with Dorokor, and she's still out there somewhere, they could dispatch a herald or one of their own to send an offer. As the players are scrambling around trying to treat with every powerful NPC they've met, I don't make them worry too much about how much time it takes them to get around. We just take it for granted that wherever Bonebreaker Dorokor is, the players can communicate with her.

NEGOTIATION WITH THE BLOODCHIEF

Bonebreaker Dorokor has many reasons not to trust Men, but if the PCs previously negotiated with her successfully *and* they're going to fight Saxton, then she's probably down to help. But this still requires a DC 26 Persuasion check.

If they succeed on the check, Bonebreaker Dorokor will lend aid if the players agree to do the same when it comes time for her to wage war. But as much as she hates Lord Saxton and doesn't think the PCs are a complete waste of good meat, she needs more than assurance from the PCs. She needs a guarantee. She wants leverage.

She wants Pinna.

12 If we were using the Realm Management rules from *Kingdoms & Warfare*, we might decide that losing all their peasants would degrade the local town into a thorpe or a hamlet.

"Me?!" the young wizard exclaims.

Dorokor nods her head toward her shaman. "Shaman blesses the tribes, curses our enemies. This is good. But a *wizard*? Orc tribes have no wizard. You live with us, make us potions. Scrolls."

"Can you...can you read?" Pinna asks timidly.

"Read? What does that have to do with anything?"

"Oh! Um. I dunno. Stupid question now that I think about it, maybe a *wand* or two?"

Dorokor shrugs. "Wand is good too. You live with us for...six months. If giants attack? Gnolls? You will help us, you will call your friends, they will bring their army. Then, you are free to return. Otherwise, when six months pass...you return home. What say you?"

This is politics! Pinna is going to need a little Persuasion, DC 13.[13] Failure means she's simply too terrified to go, doesn't trust the orcs, and refuses to abandon the people of Gravesford. Success means her curiosity gets the best of her, and the orcs agree to let others visit so she can still provide potions and unguents to the people of her town.

The reward is Dorokor's troops.

Inventing New Units

If the players recruit Dorokor's troops, they get about 900 points of units. With their own Levies and fortifications, that's about 1,200 points of forces versus about 850 points of troops from Sir Pelliton. That should result in a heroic victory for the PCs!

If the players don't recruit Dorokor's troops—perhaps because they killed Dorokor—they're gonna need about 900 points of new units. Check out **Creating Your Own Units** (page 235) for rules on assembling your own units. Who these new troops are and why they arrive to pledge service, that's your decision as GM—maybe they're from a nearby barony?

It's probably wise to give the players at least as many units as there are PCs. Having a variety of units, infantry certainly—along with some archers, cavalry, or both—is good. If you've designed the right number of the right kind of units and you're happy with the army that's coming to save the heroes, but its point value is too low, the easiest thing to do is just increase the units' size. Adding more types of units adds bookkeeping, but increasing unit size makes an army more powerful without more bookkeeping.

When all is said and done, the PCs have cleared out Castle Rend, taken it over, started repairs, attracted their own units, and recruited more units. It's time for them to defend what they've taken.

13 Remember, a successful check requires some roleplaying. It's not enough to just ask *which* skill the player will use, but *how* they will use it: "What do you say to Pinna?" Players who are clever, insightful, or inventive in their speech should have advantage on the roll.

An Actual Siege

Risk-averse players might think the best thing to do is take their army and simply stick it inside their new keep and wait for the attacking army to get bored and leave. Or stand on the ramparts and use the crenellations to plink away at the enemy with arrows.

This never works.

There's a great quote from Clausewitz about how the best way to weather a siege is to be on the outside of the castle. Even if you could fit your entire army inside Castle Rend (the average unit is about a hundred soldiers), and even if, through spells and rationing, you could keep them fed and disease-free for a month or whatever, the enemy army is still demolishing your walls from well outside bowshot, and as soon as that begins, the peasantry you're protecting will begin freaking out and trying to leave, which gets them killed, which was the thing you were trying to avoid when you raised an army to stop the enemy in the first place.

The best tool to stop an enemy army is your army. And your army needs room to maneuver, and that means fighting on the field, preferably the field you choose on your terms.

If the players attempt to turtle up inside the walls, explain that **only three of their units will fit in there**, assuming they also want to protect the local peasants who've been helping with the keep. Otherwise, the rest will be exposed. Furthermore, explain that if Sir Pelliton arrives with siege engines (spoilers: he will), their range is much greater than bow or spell, and their new stronghold will soon be a pile of rubble.

The Encounter

This system assumes that every battle (units clashing) happens at the same time as an encounter (heroes clashing with villains).

This encounter takes place either inside the courtyard or on the battlements. Wherever the bulk of the PCs are.

Sir Pelliton arrives with his wizard Curor and six other allies in the flash of a *teleport* spell read from a scroll. The PCs can see the scroll in Curor's hand turning to dust as the magic is expended. He's casting the spell from a scroll because he is not high enough level to know the spell. Here are the enemies in the encounter:

- Sir Pelliton (page 142)
- Curor, his wizard (as a **mage**)
- Riddel, an evil cleric (as a **priest**)
- Faldric, an archer (page 143)
- Four knights (as a **knight**)

The players may want to ignore the encounter and, for instance, try to go outside and take out the catapults themselves.

Doing this means surrendering the defense of the castle, in which case Sir Pelliton opens the gates. The castle no longer provides any Morale bonus to the players' troops but worse, the levies immediately flee (their heroes quit the field!) the orcs leave for the same reason, and all remaining ally troops must make a DC 15 Morale check or suffer one casualty. If the heroes want the benefits of the stronghold as a fortification and its psychological value to their troops, they must stay and defend it.

The Battle

The players have the units they recruited, as well as Castle Rend itself. Sir Pelliton arrives with the following units: Saxton's Riders, Bedegar Archers, Catapults, Bedegar Company of Foot, and Redclaw Demonrunners. The gnolls may be a surprise, but it's merely a sign that Lord Saxton is in league with fell powers.

In the full Warfare rules, units have Commanders: NPC allies to the heroes who command their units on the battlefield and give the units access to many more maneuvers than are presented here.

But the Basic Warfare Rules let the players just run their units without assuming their PCs have any direct control over anything. We assume the units have sergeants commanding them, and the players control the sergeants.

Running the Battle

Pelliton is perfectly happy to focus on the heroes' peasant levies—in fact, this is an excellent way to put down a rebellion. He doesn't have any levies, so casualties go directly to his infantry, but he does have his gnoll allies to soak some damage.

If the players have any archers, he orders his cavalry to attack them. This can be devastating, as archers are squishy and cavalry is...not.

Meanwhile, his catapults hammer the players' castle.

Possible Outcomes

If Sir Pelliton dies, his army surrenders. The gnolls disband and flee into the forest, and Pelliton's remaining allies lay down their arms. They hope, they presume, the PCs will ransom them back to Lord Saxton. How successful that is depends on what kind of villain you think Saxton is.

If Pelliton's infantry is eliminated, the cavalry retreat, and the gnolls disband. The cavalry aren't going to fight without an army, and the gnolls are certainly not going to fight without the knight they made their bargain with.

If Castle Rend falls, the heroes lose their orc allies and their peasant levies, and all remaining units must immediately make a DC 15 Morale check or suffer a casualty.

If the heroes' units are eliminated, Pelliton and his allies gain an extra attack (not an extra attack action) each round as a Morale bonus.

The Fall of Castle Rend

The players might lose this battle. If they fight to the death and are captured, Sir Pelliton puts them in chains and tries to return them to Bedegar Keep to be executed—giving them many chances to escape!

If this happens, Sir Pelliton's army invests the keep, and another Knight of Three Roses, Lady Ruth or Sir Anglim, arrives to command the troops while Pelliton returns to Bedegar.

Otherwise, we hope the PCs win!

CONCLUSION

The heroes rebuffed Sir Pelliton's army and saved Pinna, and Edmund Bedegar is now free from the orcs' clutches! If you are playing using milestone XP rules, each PC advances to 6th level.

More important than XP, however, is Castle Rend! The PCs are now the proud owners of a stronghold of their very own. Using the rules in this book, they can populate and modify it as they see fit, making it their home base between quests. Though this adventure is at an end, the story of the PCs and their stronghold has just begun.

STATS FOR NPCS

The NPCs and monsters found in this adventure are listed below. The White Tusk orcs have minion abilities (page 66), while Bonebreaker Dorokor and Sir Pelliton possess villain abilities (page 66) they can use to bolster their minions in combat.

Minions in the service of a stronghold commander also possess minion traits that represent the skill and discipline that their commander has instilled in them, which they demonstrate even when their commander is not present.

White Tusk Orc

The rank and file of the White Tusk clan pride themselves on being larger and, thanks to Bonebreaker Dorokor's leadership since the investiture of Castle Rend, more devastating in combat than normal orcs.

They are a chaotic evil tribe who care only for strength and the subjugation of their enemies. They delight in cruelty. But Bonebreaker Dorokor is lawful, and has led them to triumph over the humanoids of the forest. So they obey her...for now.

White Tusk Orc

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 14 (studded leather)

HIT POINTS 30 (4d8 + 12)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Dex +2

SKILLS Intimidation +2

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Orc

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

Minion: Savage Horde. After moving at least 20 feet in a straight line toward a creature, the next attack the orc makes against that creature scores a critical hit on a roll of 18–20.

Actions

Battleaxe. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 14 (2d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

White Tusk Juggernaut

The White Tusk orc clan named itself after its hulking warriors who, in addition to their massive bodies, possessed enormous white tusks. White Tusk juggernauts pride themselves not just in their battle prowess but also in the size and sharpness of their monstrous lower canines. Some juggernauts have their tusks pierced and display fearsome jewelry from their teeth, others decorate them with ink or paint, and those who can withstand the pain even have symbols or runes inscribed upon them.

A juggernaut's immense muscles allow them to wield oversized weapons worthy of their bloodlust, and they wear thick metal armor forged together in piecemeal from bits of plate armor scavenged from the corpses of their more knightly victims.

White Tusk Juggernaut

Large humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 20 (plate, shield)

HIT POINTS 95 (10d10 + 40)

SPEED 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	8 (–1)	19 (+4)	7 (–2)	12 (+1)	8 (–1)

SAVING THROWS Str +6, Wis +3

SKILLS Athletics +7, Intimidation +3

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Orc

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

Minion: Savage Horde. After moving at least 20 feet in a straight line toward a creature, the next attack the orc makes against that creature scores a critical hit on a roll of 18–20.

Actions

Multiattack. The White Tusk juggernaut makes one tusk attack and one longsword attack.

Tusk. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Reactions

Horde Protector. When a creature within 5 feet of the orc is attacked by a creature the orc can see and the orc is wielding a shield, the orc can impose disadvantage on that attack roll.

White Tusk Bloodrager

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (breastplate)

HIT POINTS 60 (8d8 + 24)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	9 (–1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +4

SKILLS Athletics +5, Perception +3

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Orc

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Cold Fury (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the orc can enter a cold fury for 1 minute. While in a fury, its melee weapon attacks deal an extra 3 (1d6) damage.

Also, if the orc is reduced to 0 hit points while in a cold fury, unless it was dealt with a critical hit, the orc makes a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 plus the damage taken. On a success, the orc instead drops to 1 hit point and its fury ends.

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

Minion: Savage Horde. After moving at least 20 feet in a straight line toward a creature, the next attack the orc makes against that creature scores a critical hit on a roll of 18–20.

Actions

Multiattack. The White Tusk Bloodrager makes three falchion attacks.

Falchion. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage.

White Tusk Bloodrager

Bloodragers of the White Tusk clan practice the art of death and express their mastery with precise strokes of their dual falchions. They are the most disciplined orcs in the White Tusk clan, and train daily with Bonebreaker Dorokor to hone their Skills.

Through constant training, orcish bloodragers have developed a state of pure focus. In this cold fury, their sword strokes rend flesh with preternatural ease and their powerful bodies simply refuse to die.

White Tusk Warspeaker

Priests of Grole, orcish god of war and slaughter, live for the chance to kill in the name of their bloodstained god. Dressed in war-robes of scavenged leather and mail, these priests bestow the blessing of pain upon their allies, goading them to die gloriously in combat in the name of Grole.

Warspeakers seek conflict constantly, flying into a frothing rage at the slightest provocation. When their clan is at peace, they scheme and search for ways to trick or coerce their chieftain into attacking—and if they cannot, they scheme against their chieftain and convince a more aggressive orc into supplanting their "soft, peace-loving" leader.

White Tusk Warspeaker

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 14 (chain mail scraps)

HIT POINTS 65 (10d8 + 20)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	8 (–1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Wis +5

SKILLS Persuasion +3, Religion +4

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Orc

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

Minion: Savage Horde. After moving at least 20 feet in a straight line toward a creature, the next attack the orc makes against that creature scores a critical hit on a roll of 18–20.

Spellcasting. The orc is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The orc has the following cleric spells prepared:

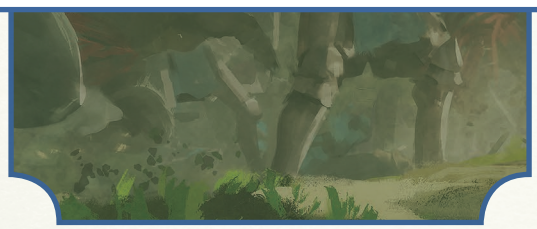
- **Cantrips (at will):** *resistance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
- **1st level (4 slots):** *cure wounds, guiding bolt, inflict wounds*
- **2nd level (3 slots):** *blindness/deafness, spiritual weapon (greataxe)*
- **3rd level (2 slots):** *bestow curse, spirit guardians*

Actions

Multiattack. The White Tusk warspeaker makes a goading lash attack and two spiked club attacks.

Goading Lash. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one allied target. Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage. The next melee weapon attack the target makes before the end of its next turn has advantage and deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage.

Spiked Club. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.



White Tusk Shaman

Medium humanoid (orc, shapechanger), chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 14 (hide armor)
HIT POINTS 52 (8d8 + 16)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (–1)	16 (+3)	8 (–1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +4, Wis +5
SKILLS Perception +5, Survival +5
SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18
LANGUAGES Orc, Primordial
CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

Minion: Savage Horde. After moving at least 20 feet in a straight line toward a creature, the next attack the orc makes against that creature scores a critical hit on a roll of 18–20.

Spirit-Bonded Body (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the orc can transform into a dire wolf for up to 4 hours. The orc can choose whether its equipment falls to the ground, melds with its new form, or is worn by the new form. The orc reverts to its true form when its dire wolf form is reduced to 0 hit points. If this damage would cause its dire wolf form to drop below 0 hit points, the excess damage is done to its true form.

The orc also reverts to its true form if it dies or falls unconscious. The orc can revert to its true form as a bonus action on its turn. When it reverts in this way, it returns to the number of hit points it had before it transformed.

Spirit-Bonded Mind. The orc can cast speak with animals at will, but can only communicate with wolves.

Actions

Multiattack. The White Tusk Shaman makes two blood-searing spear attacks.

Blood-Searing Spear. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/60 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage. This magical poison only functions when the spear is wielded by an orc shaman.

White Tusk Shaman

Most orc clans keep a shaman or two around to interpret the will of the natural world. These shamans enjoy a high status in their clan, even when a tribe such as the White Tusks possess warspeakers who manifest the will of the gods, for there are more powers in this world than that of the gods. The Mundane World itself possesses a sort of consciousness—the whispering of the wind, the babbling of running water, and the quiet grumbling of the mountains; these small gestures of nature are the world speaking to those who possess the skill to listen.

As part of their training, orcish shamans bond with a single animal, typically a dire wolf. When that animal dies, as all things must, the shaman takes that animal's spirit into their own body to make their bond eternal. A spirit-bonded shaman can take the shape of their bonded animal.

Oregg Steeltwister

This orc, the only sorcerer in the White Tusk clan, is Bonebreaker Dorokor's lieutenant and master of discipline. He does not fully understand Dorokor's schemes and games of diplomacy, but follows her instructions dutifully, hoping one day to win not just her favor, but also her heart.

When Dorokor is not around, he grumbles about keeping the human boy Edmund hostage, and resents Dorokor's gentle treatment of the boy. He longs to be free of Castle Rend and to face the bounty hunters tracking their clan head-on. At least then he and his people could die gloriously in battle, rather than living a dreary life within stone walls.

As master of discipline, Oregg's favorite way to get an orc to behave or torture prisoners is to lock them in their own armor and cast *heat metal* to sear their flesh. He has practiced this spell for years, bartering with the druids of other orc tribes to unlock its magical secrets.

Oregg Steeltwister

Medium humanoid (orc), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (chain mail)

HIT POINTS 82 (11d8 + 33)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	9 (–1)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Str +5, Wis +3

SKILLS Arcana +5, Athletics +5

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES Orc, Common

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

Rune-Tattooed. Whenever Oregg casts a spell of 1st level or higher, he gains a number of temporary hit points equal to Xd10, where X is the level of the spell.

Spellcasting. Oregg Steeltwister is a 5th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability modifier is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *firebolt, message, poison spray, true strike*

1st level (4 slots): *magic missile, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *heat metal*

3rd level (2 slots): *fly, fireball*

Actions

Multiattack. Oregg makes two longsword attacks and can cast a cantrip as a bonus action.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage.

Firebolt. Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d10) fire damage.

Poison Spray. One creature within 10 feet of Oregg must make a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 13 (2d12) poison damage.

Bonebreaker Dorokor

Medium humanoid (orc), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 19 (half plate of fire resistance, shield)

HIT POINTS 102 (12d8 + 48)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Str +7, Dex +5, Wis +6

SKILLS Athletics +7, Intimidation +6, Persuasion +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES fire

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Orc

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature it can see.

Wielder of Wound. Bonebreaker Dorokor wields the magical greataxe Wound (page 144).

Actions

Multiattack. Bonebreaker Dorokor makes three weapon attacks, or she makes two attacks and issues a War Cry if it is available.

Wound. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11(1d12 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's maximum hit points are decreased in equal amount to the necrotic damage dealt. The target's hit point maximum does not return to normal until it finishes a long rest or its grievous wounds are soothed by a greater restoration spell.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

War Cry (Recharge 4–6). Dorokor screams an orcish war phrase, spurring her warriors on toward victory. Choose one of the following effects:

Rally: *All of Dorokor's minions within 30 feet that can hear her gain 22 (4d10) temporary hit points.*

Focus: *All of Dorokor's minions within 30 feet that can hear her will have advantage on the next attack roll they make before the end of their next turn.*

Charge: *All of Dorokor's minions within 30 feet that can hear her can move up to their speed as a reaction.*

Reaction

Villain Ability: Warlord. As a reaction, when a minion dies, issue a command to your other minions. Those who can hear you gain a reaction they can use to immediately take another movement.

Bonebreaker Dorokor

Bonebreaker Dorokor is the leader of the White Tusk orc clan, and complements her natural orcish strength with shrewd cunning. She is described in more detail in **Major NPCs** (page 101).

Sir Pelliton

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 20 (plate, shield)

HIT POINTS 76 (9d10 + 27)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (–1)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Dex +3, Int +5

SKILLS Animal Handling +6, Arcana +5, Intimidation +8

DAMAGE RESISTANCES cold, fire, lightning, psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES blinded, deafened

SENSES passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Common

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Mounted Combatant. While mounted, Sir Pelliton has advantage on melee attack rolls against unmounted creatures that are smaller than his mount.

The Star Knight. Sir Pelliton has resistance to cold, fire, lightning, and psychic damage as a sign of his pact, and cannot be blinded or deafened. His hellish rebuke does 20 damage (no roll) to enemies who fail their save.

Innate Spellcasting. Sir Pelliton has gained the power to cast dark magic. All spells he casts with this feature are cast as if using a 5th-level spell slot, and he casts cantrips as if he were an 11th-level warlock. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks).

At will: *acid splash, eldritch blast (3 beams), minor illusion, hellish rebuke*

5/day: *branding smite, black tentacles, counterspell, dimension door, hold person*

1/day each: *cone of cold, eyebite, mass suggestion*

Actions

Multiattack. Sir Pelliton makes three melee attacks or makes two melee attacks and casts eldritch blast.

Frost Brand Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Lance. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (1d12 + 4) piercing damage.

Reactions

Villain Ability: Warlord. As a reaction, when a minion dies, issue a command to your other minions. Those who can hear you gain a reaction they can use to immediately take another movement.

Sir Pelliton

Sir Pelliton, the Star Knight, is one of the frightful Knights of the Three Roses. Before being knighted by Lord Saxton, Pelliton and his Three Roses were a cruel, selfish band of mercenaries known as the Thorns. Knighthood has only magnified his sadism and self-importance.

His pact with an entity of the stars has granted his body strange resistances and imparted upon him the power to wield uncanny magic. In battle, Pelliton often rides a jet-black warhorse named Penumbra.

Pelliton is described in more detail in **Major NPCs** (page 101).

Faldric the Archer

Faldric is a cruel opportunist who rose through the town guard in Bedegar until he attracted Saxton's attention. The former Baron of Bedegar would never have promoted a man like Faldric, but the old Baron is dead, and the new regent has use of a man willing to say "yes" to any order.

Faldric the Archer

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (studded leather)
HIT POINTS 44 (8d8 + 8)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +4 Wis +2
SKILLS Acrobatics +5, Perception +3
SENSES passive Perception 13
LANGUAGES Common
CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Acute Sight. Faldric has advantage on Perception checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. Faldric makes two attacks.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Shortsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Reactions

Pelliton's Archer. When a creature Faldric can see enters a space adjacent to Sir Pelliton, Faldric may use his reaction to make a longbow attack against that creature. If this attack is successful, the target is also knocked prone.

Pinna

Pinna is a young woman of seventeen who lives in the village of Gravesford, at the edge of the Forest Rend. She is easily recognizable by her tall, pointed straw hat, curly red hair, and crystal necklace—her arcane focus. Pinna is a country hedge mage, well respected by the people of Gravesford.

Pinna is described in more detail in **Major NPCs** (page 101).

Pinna

Medium humanoid (human), neutral good

ARMOR CLASS 12
HIT POINTS 13 (3d6 + 0)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	8 (–1)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Int +6, Wis +2
SKILLS Arcana +6
SENSES passive Perception 11
LANGUAGES Common
CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Spellcasting. Pinna is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Pinna has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *minor illusion, mage hand, dancing lights, fire bolt*

1st level (4 slots): *color spray, silent image, identify, magic missile*

2nd level (2 slots): *blur, web*

Actions

Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d4 + 0) piercing damage.

MAGIC ITEMS

The following new magic items appear in *The Siege of Castle Rend*.

Grace

Weapon (longsword), rare, requires attunement

The blade of this longsword seems to glow white, like it is a beam of light hammered into the shape of a sword. Its hilt is gold-plated and has three embedded sapphires. This longsword has a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. Additionally, it gains one charge whenever an attack made with it deals more than 20 damage in a single blow. It can hold up to 3 charges, but all unused charges disappear when you take a long rest.

While the sword holds any charges, it radiates bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an extra 20 feet. As an action, you can expend any number of charges to restore hit points to a creature you can touch with the sword's blade. Expending 1 charge restores 10 hit points, expending 2 charges restores 20 hit points, and expending 3 charges restores 40 hit points.

Armor of St. Gaed the Confessor

This set of magic plate mail covered in silver filigree grants +1 Armor Class to the wearer. Also, once per month, the owner can summon the spirits of the Blue Dragon Phalanx to aid them in battle. The Phalanx serves for 1 hour or two battles, whichever happens first.

The spirits of the Blue Dragonflight will fight your enemies, but if ordered to do anything other than fight in a battle against an enemy army, they stand around looking confused, wondering what's happened to their bodies and the world they once knew.

Potion of Enhance Ability

Potion, uncommon

Starts as a basic gray potion with no effect. However, if a material component is added, it gains one of the following effects:

- *Potion of Bear's Endurance.* You gain 2d6 temporary hit points and have advantage on Constitution checks for 1 hour. Requires a hair from a bear.
- *Potion of Bull's Strength.* You have advantage on Strength checks and your carrying capacity doubles for 1 hour. Requires a tail-hair from a bull.
- *Potion of Cat's Grace.* You have advantage on Dexterity checks and do not take damage from falling up to 20 feet while you are not incapacitated for 1 hour. Requires a cat's claw.
- *Potion of Eagle's Splendor.* You have advantage on Charisma checks for 1 hour. Requires an eagle's feather.
- *Potion of Fox's Cunning.* You have advantage on Intelligence checks for 1 hour. Requires a fox's whisker.
- *Potion of Owl's Wisdom.* You have advantage on Wisdom checks for 1 hour. Requires an owl's feather.

Wound

Weapon (greataxe), rare, requires attunement by a barbarian

The wicked edge of this serrated greataxe is permanently coated in dried blood.

This greataxe has a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. Also, while you are raging, your attacks with this weapon deal an extra 2d6 necrotic damage, and the target's maximum hit points are decreased in equal amount to the necrotic damage dealt. The target's hit point maximum does not return to normal until it finishes a long rest or its grievous wounds are soothed by a *greater restoration* spell.

GRAVESFORD LEVIES

HUMAN LEVIES

COST: 140

ATTACK:	+2	**DEFENSE:**	12
POWER:	+1	**TOUGHNESS:**	11
MORALE:	+0	**SIZE:**	1d6

TRAITS

Courageous. Once per battle, this unit can choose to succeed on a Morale check it just failed.

CASTLE REND

LEVEL 3 FORTIFICATION (KEEP)

COST: 300

ATTACK:	—	**DEFENSE:**	—
POWER:	—	**TOUGHNESS:**	26
MORALE:	—	**SIZE:**	10

TRAITS

Fortification. Units defending this structure gain +4 Morale.

THE BLUE DRAGONFLIGHT

DRAGONBORN SUPER-ELITE SUPER-HEAVY INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+10	**DEFENSE:**	23
POWER:	+12	**TOUGHNESS:**	19
MORALE:	+19	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

The Dragon Phalanx. The Phalanx cannot be diminished.

Lorewise. The Phalanx has advantage on Morale checks against battle magic.

For Omund! (Reaction, Casualty=2) Make a Rally check (DC 15) to increment the casualty die.

Shock Troops. The Phalanx has advantage on the first attack and Power check made against each enemy unit.

WHITE TUSK RAVAGERS

ORC SEASONED MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: 290

ATTACK:	+3	**DEFENSE:**	14
POWER:	+3	**TOUGHNESS:**	13
MORALE:	+3	**SIZE:**	1d6

TRAITS

Savage. This unit has advantage on the first Attack check it makes each battle.

WHITE TUSK BLOODWALKERS

ORC SEASONED LIGHT INFANTRY

COST: 320

ATTACK:	+3	**DEFENSE:**	13
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	13
MORALE:	+4	**SIZE:**	1d6

TRAITS

Savage. This unit has advantage on the first Attack check it makes each battle.

Scouts. This unit cannot be engaged.

THE NEEDLES

ORC SEASONED MEDIUM ARCHERS

COST: 334

ATTACK:	+3	**DEFENSE:**	13
POWER:	+4	**TOUGHNESS:**	12
MORALE:	+5	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Savage. This unit has advantage on the first Attack check it makes each battle.

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SAXTON'S RIDERS

HUMAN REGULAR LIGHT CAVALRY

COST: 234

ATTACK:	+4	**DEFENSE:**	11
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	11
MORALE:	+4	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Courageous. Once per battle, this unit can choose to succeed at a Morale check it just failed.

BEDEGAR ARCHERS

HUMAN REGULAR LIGHT ARCHERS

COST: 230

ATTACK:	+3	**DEFENSE:**	11
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	11
MORALE:	+3	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Courageous. Once per battle, this unit can choose to succeed at a Morale check it just failed.

CATAPULTS

CATPULTS

COST: 150

ATTACK:	+0	**DEFENSE:**	14
POWER:	+16	**TOUGHNESS:**	15
MORALE:	+2	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Siege Engine. This unit can attack fortifications, dealing 1d6 damage on a hit. Reload: 1

BEDEGAR COMPANY OF FOOT

HUMAN REGULAR MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: 220

ATTACK:	+3	**DEFENSE:**	13
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	12
MORALE:	+2	**SIZE:**	1d6

TRAITS

Courageous. Once per battle, this unit can choose to succeed at a Morale check it just failed.

REDCLAW DEMONRUNNERS

GNOLL REGULAR LIGHT INFANTRY

COST: 159

ATTACK:	+3	**DEFENSE:**	12
POWER:	+1	**TOUGHNESS:**	12
MORALE:	+2	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Frenzy. If this unit diminishes an enemy unit, it immediately gains a free attack against that unit.

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APPENDICES

New Monsters

DEMONS

A sufficiently evil character in league with fell powers can use their concordance to summon a fiend of the Abyss. A creature of pure chaotic hate and evil called a Demon. Demons are intelligent, but full an overwhelming desire to destroy those who bind them with summoning.

Fiends, like all creatures, grow in power over time and as a demon collects souls they grow in power. Many demons are listed in the core rules, but two unique to this book are listed below in their lesser forms, still serving their masters, waiting to fulfill their quota of souls and grow into their final forms.

DEVILS

Summoned from the Seven Cities of Hell and the wasted lands that separate them, a variety of devils are also available to the owner of a temple. Most of those devils can be found in the core rules, but the Lesser Erinyes is presented below.

Summoned devils arrive aware of the process that brought them to this world, and ready to make a deal once their time is up. The greater devils are aware of the existence of the *codex incabulum* and greatly desire to bring it to the Seven Cities. They will make any bargain to further this goal.

Lesser Marilith

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 97 (13d8 + 39)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Wis +5, Cha +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Abyssal, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Magic Resistance. The lesser marilith has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The marilith's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The lesser marilith makes three attacks with its longsword and one attack with its tail.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, the lesser marilith can automatically hit the target with its tail, and the lesser marilith cannot make tail attacks against other targets.

Reactions

Parry. The lesser marilith can add 5 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the lesser marilith must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Lesser Balor

Large fiend (demon), chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 123 (13d10 + 52)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Str +9, Con +8, Wis +6, Cha +8

DAMAGE RESISTANCES cold, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Abyssal, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 10 (5,900 XP)

Fiery End. When the lesser balor dies, it explodes. Each creature within 20 feet of it must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 35 (10d6) fire damage, or half as much damage on a successful one. The explosion destroys the lesser balor's weapons.

Singeing Aura. At the start of each of the lesser balor's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) fire damage. A creature that touches the lesser balor or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Magic Resistance. The lesser balor has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The lesser balor's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The lesser balor makes one attack with its longsword and one attack with its whip.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) lightning damage. If the lesser balor scores a critical hit, it rolls damage dice three times, instead of twice.

Whip. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be pulled up to 15 feet toward the lesser balor.

Lesser Erinyes

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (plate)

HIT POINTS 67 (9d8 + 27)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +5, Con +6, Wis +4, Cha +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES Infernal, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Poisoned Weapons. The lesser erinyes's weapon attacks are magical and deal an extra 4 (1d8) poison damage on a hit (included in its attacks).

Magic Resistance. The lesser erinyes has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The lesser erinyes makes three attacks.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. The poison lasts until it is removed by the lesser restoration spell or similar magic.

Reactions

Parry. The lesser erinyes can add 4 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the lesser erinyes must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

THE CELESTIAL COURT

The deva, planetars, and solars are beings beyond the ken of most mortal worshippers. For mortals worthy of aid, for those who pledge their life to defending the helpless and opposing evil, the gods of good and righteousness send lesser servants, the Celestial Court.

The home realm of the Celestial court is unknown in this day, if the ancient empires knew of it, that knowledge has not yet been rediscovered. Modern sages believe each member of the Court exists as a thought in the minds of the gods of goodness and righteousness and when summoned, they are created. In some sense it is known that the Court of Paradise or Court of Heaven as they are sometimes called serve all the worthy gods. These creatures may have no home plane, unlike the other servitors.

These beings are utterly alien. They are the manifest will of the gods, and their nature is unknowable. They can communicate, but their words are a string of open poetry and verseless rhymes. Scholarly consensus is that these words are untranslatable gibberish, but opinions differ. One problem in translation is that each person who hears any member of the choir invisible speak, hears different words. This led sages for centuries to assume that there was nothing to translate, seeing the mortal mind as incapable of holding the thoughts of the Court in its head.

Others, undaunted, argue that this just means more collation is needed, and that if enough listeners wrote down what they heard, and these transcriptions were compared, meaning—perhaps oracular meaning, warnings of catastrophes to come—would be revealed.

All the Celestial Court are angelic beings, and their weapons are considered magical and do bonus radiant damage. They all project an aura of protection against evil.

As far as theologists and philosophers can tell, there's *only one* of each of these beings. So if you summon a princip, for example, and it casts *haste* twice before the battle is over, summoning another princip later that day would summon the same one, and it's only got one *haste* (or *remove curse* or *stoneskin*) left. They cannot be killed by any power less than that which kills gods. Death on our plane is just a failure of their manifold projection into the timescape.

Princip

Herald of the Righteous Power, the Princip arrives ready to crown an ally, bestowing on them a greater destiny, granting them immunity to spells that charm or dominate and raising one ability to god-like levels.

The character so crowned feels a rush of divine power, a tiny fraction of the same energy all the Celestial Court are made of. Apart from the blazing crown over their head, their new power manifests as beams of light shooting from their eyes, their skin flashing to gold in an instant, or their hair turning to blazing, heatless fire. Upon losing the crown, they feel a period of melancholy as their previous greatness flees, leaving them mortal, again, and lesser.

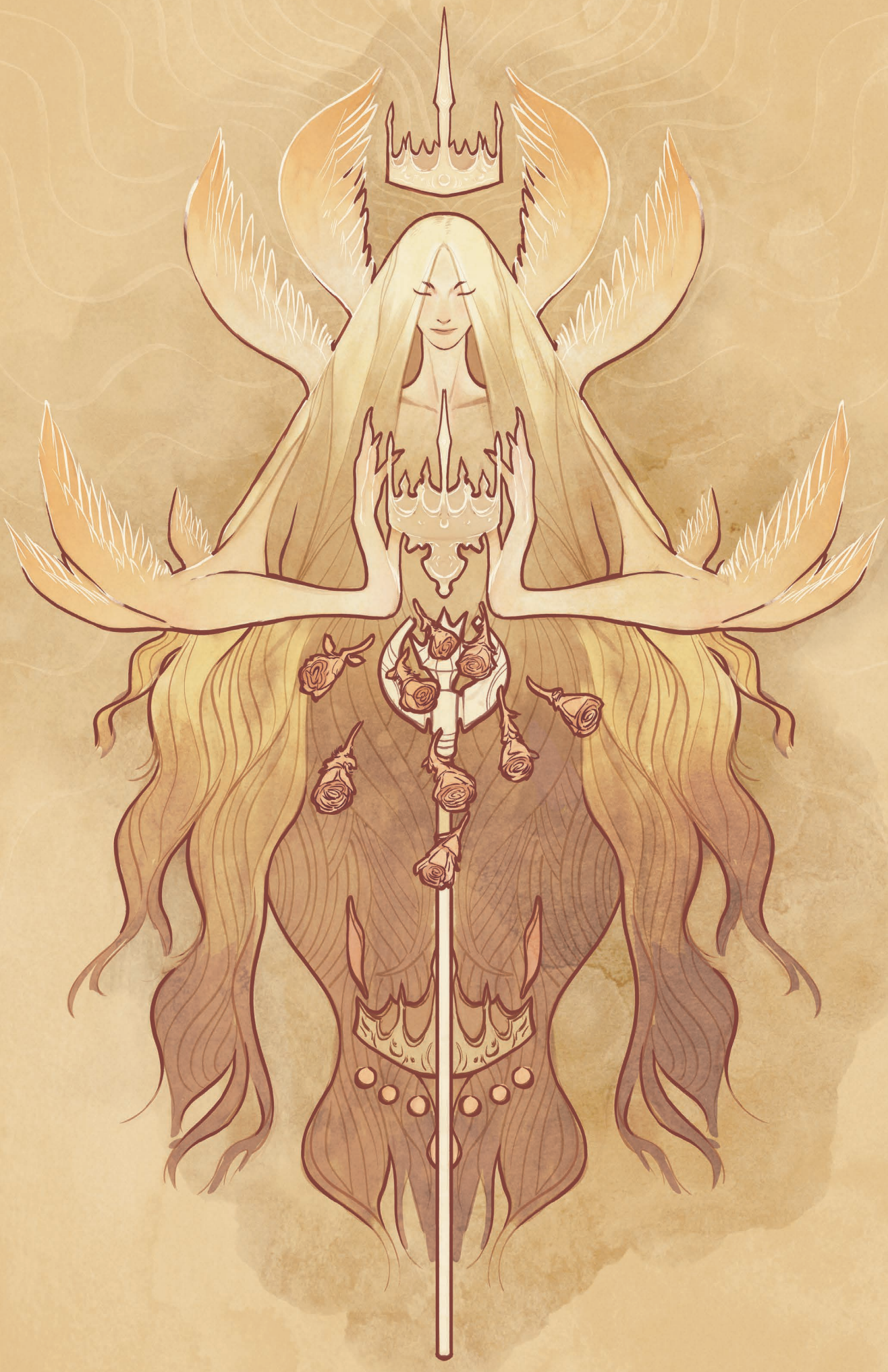
Tactics: The player who summoned the Princip decides who it crowns, which doesn't have to be the summoner. If the player can't decide, or hesitates, the Princip has its own ideas...

The Crown prevents any attempt to force its wearer to behave in any way contrary to their will, so the Princip tends to Crown the character most likely to fail a Wisdom saving throw. The wearer of the Crown chooses which ability they want to raise, but raising Wisdom while wearing the Crown isn't the best use, as you're already basically immune to *charm person* and other mind-dominating spells. That is, unless you use Wisdom for spellcasting, in which case 24 Wisdom is going to rock your enemies for however long it lasts.

Raising Constitution to 24 means you're probably not going to lose the Crown when you take damage. And you'll gain a bunch of hit points, making you less likely to die. But 24 is so high (+7!) that you can even raise your best ability and be even better at whatever you do. So it's a choice between surviving longer and doing your thing better.

Once someone is Crowned, the Princip enjoys wading into battle and smashing things with its scepter. Like all the Court, the Princip prefers to smash evil over neutral monsters, but it tends to try to defend the character it Crowned, even over the character who summoned it. However, if it thinks the Crowned character is now so powerful it doesn't need help, it defaults to the character who summoned it (if they're different people). If neither its summoner or the Crowned needs help, the Princip defends the most vulnerable party member.

While one character is enjoying the benefits of temporary godhood, the Princip dispenses other buffs to the party in an attempt to turn the tide of battle. Which, wow, it's gonna do that. It can cast *haste* three times, which is enough to make a huge difference on its own. Or *stoneskin* for anyone who's getting hammered in combat, and *remove curse* in case the party was in trouble when it arrived.



If the battle lasts long enough, or if the Princip is summoned again after using its daily spells, it hands out *shield of faith* and *enhance ability* to the PCs, giving each of them a little pep talk in its own bizarre fashion. The Princip enjoys proclaiming the heroes' greatness a lot, speaking in flowery prose that doesn't make literal sense but conveys the idea that it thinks the heroes are literally glorious.

"Behold! The power arises! Leaves fall, men die, yet all shall be consumed by the endless river of glory!"

Um, what? The endless what now? Well, it tried. It probably means, "You're gonna do great!" Don't think too hard about it, it'll just give you a headache.

Princip

Medium celestial, good

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 82 (11d8 + 33)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Wis +6, Cha +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES truesight, passive Perception 19

LANGUAGES all, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Angelic Weapons. The princip's weapon attacks are magical. When the princip hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 9 (2d8) radiant damage (included in the attack).

Magic Resistance. The princip has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects from evil characters and sources.

Aura of Protection Against Evil. Evil creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against all allies within 5 feet of the princip. Allies in this area can't be charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil creatures. If an ally is already charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil magic, the ally has advantage on any new saving throw against the relevant effect.

Innate Spellcasting. The princip's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring only verbal components:

At will: *aid, enhance ability, lesser restoration, shield of faith*

3/day each: *haste, remove curse, stoneskin*

Actions

Multiattack. The princip makes three attacks with the Scepter of Celestial Will.

Scepter of Celestial Will. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage and 9 (2d8) radiant damage.

Crown of Glory. The princip selects an ally. A golden crown appears over the ally's head. While the crown remains, the ally cannot be compelled to act in a manner contrary to their will and may choose one stat to raise to 24. Each time the ally takes damage while the crown is on them, they must make a constitution saving throw or lose the crown. The DC equals 10 or half the damage taken, whichever number is higher.

Authority

Pretty much what you'd expect from an angelic being called an Authority. It is the knight of the Celestial Court. What paladins would like to be when they grow up.

The Authority arrives on our plane in heavy armor, armed with the Brightsword and looking for evil to smash. It is responsible for maintaining celestial order, and while it's still absolutely committed to smashing evil, it tends to smash chaotic evil a little more than other evils.

The Authority sometimes appears spontaneously in times when a good king or democratic civilization is facing an existential threat. It seems concerned with the fate of the human race. Whether this represents some kind of political stance on the part of the Celestial Court as a whole, or a priority peculiar to the Authority is a matter of great debate.

Badrashanti Dar, a sage from the Shauraseni Empire speaks of 'an angelic host clad all in golden mail with six wings and a burning helm' who strode across the battlefield of the last Shauraseni emperor, thousands of years ago. This is the earliest known record of the creature that is recognizably the Authority. Dar records the being as pronouncing judgement on the battlefield, saying "Ours is to defend the children of the earth!" But this translation is debated and there are none left who speak the sage's language natively.

If Dar's record describes the Authority, then there is reason to believe the Authority has been a part of every major, decisive battle between good and evil in the last 5,000 years. Sometimes affecting victory, sometimes being overwhelmed. But in each instance allying itself against tyranny and cruelty. The gods, it seems, have hope for the human race and send their greatest servants to bolster that hope among mortals.

Tactics. Well, it finds the biggest, most evil thing and bashes the hell out of it (perhaps literally) with the Brightsword. This thing does 3d6 + 4d8 + 4 damage to evil creatures, which is like 32 damage on average, and it can do this three times per turn. And it has wings and a fly speed of 40 feet, so it can get where it needs to, to do what it must.

Authority

Medium celestial, good

ARMOR CLASS 19 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 97 (13d8 + 39)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +5, Con +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES truesight, passive Perception 19

LANGUAGES all, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Angelic Weapons. The Authority's weapon attacks are magical. When the Authority hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 9 (2d8) radiant damage (included in the attack).

Magic Resistance. The Authority has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects from evil characters and sources.

Aura of Protection Against Evil. Evil creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against all allies within 5 feet of the Authority. Allies in this area can't be charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil creatures. If an ally is already charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil magic, the ally has advantage on any new saving throw against the relevant effect.

Actions

Multiattack. The Authority makes three attacks with the Brightsword.

Brightsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage and 9 (2d8) radiant damage. Evil creatures take an extra 9 (2d8) radiant damage.

Virtue

A collection of mouths and hands that arrives and sings power, which is a totally normal thing to do. The Virtue is the Word of the Gods, and that word is death to evil. **These songs are not spells, so magic resistance does not affect them.** They are divine words spoken by a creature sent by the gods.

That being said, you could just plug your ears (becoming deafened). They are actually songs. If you can't hear them, you are not affected.

Tactics: The Virtue is not a combatant, and it has no attacks. It arrives on the battlefield and hovers 30 feet off the ground, singing. If attacked, it'll move away in a tactical manner, but literally all it does is sing, switching which song is active to suit the situation.

Each song is pretty straightforward:

- Chorus of Succor if the PCs are dealing with poison or other conditions that restrict their movement.
- Chorus of Inspiration if the players are facing creatures with high defenses.
- Chorus of Retribution if the players are outnumbered and taking a lot of hits.
- Chorus of Damnation if the players are facing fiends.

If the players ask about the words to these songs, I recommend looking up a random Yes lyric from *Close to the Edge (1972)*, *Tales From Topographic Oceans (1973)*, or *Relayer (1974)*. Watch:

> Stand the marchers soaring talons
> Peaceful lives will not deliver freedom, fighting we know
> Destroy oppression, the point to reaction
> As leaders look to you, attacking

See? Proper Celestial gibberish!

Virtue

Medium celestial, good

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 97 (13d8 + 39)

SPEED 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)

SAVING THROWS Int +6, Wis +6, Cha +8

DAMAGE RESISTANCES radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES truesight, passive Perception 19

Languages all, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Magic Resistance. The Virtue has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects from evil characters and sources.

Aura of Protection Against Evil. Evil creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against all allies within 5 feet of the Virtue. Allies in this area can't be charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil creatures. If an ally is already charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil magic, the ally has advantage on any new saving throw against the relevant effect.

Actions

Sing. At the start of each of its turns, the Virtue chooses a chorus below and sings it. Only creatures who can hear the Virtue are affected by its chorus. It can only sing one chorus at a time. Any damage it takes forces it to make a Constitution saving throw to maintain the chorus. The DC equals 10 or half the damage taken, whichever number is higher.

Chorus of Succor. While the Virtue sings, each ally may choose one condition they're suffering from at the start of their turn and end it.

Chorus of Inspiration. While the Virtue sings, each ally may add a d6 to the result of any attack roll or saving throw, once per round. The ally can wait until after they roll the d20 before deciding to use the inspiration die, but must decide before the GM says whether the roll succeeds or fails.

Chorus of Retribution. While the Virtue sings, any enemy who deals damage to one of the Virtue's allies immediately takes 5 thunder damage.

Chorus of Damnation. While the Virtue sings, any extraplanar evil creatures have disadvantage on saving throws against spells that would send them to another plane.

Dominion

Now, see? This looks more like a regular angel thing. Why can't they all look like this—why do they have to be wheels and wings and mouths and hands?

The Dominion is the censure of the Celestial Court. It is both enemy to evil and ally of good. They are deeply judgmental and arrive on our plane full of opinions regarding which of your allies are worth helping. They're not the most powerful of the Court, but they act like it.

History records several instances in different ages and cultures when the Dominion arrived without summons. This is rare and when it occurs it is usually to identify and capture some fugitive. Enemies of the great and good who have escaped the justice of the Celestial Host and now jaunt across the timescape looking for aid. The Dominion, in her role as celestial censure, brooks no compromise and will follow the planar outlaw across a million worlds if need be.

It is not unusual for the Dominion to make oracular pronouncements, but given that her speech is a cryptic, stream of consciousness open poetry, it unclear whether anyone has ever properly decoded her intent. Instances where, in retrospect, it seems as though a mortal was able to make sense of the Dominion's pronouncement could have been pure coincidence.

The Dominion is so impressive and the force of her presence so overwhelming it's not unusual for mortal to try and glimpse the face under the veil. As far as history records, no one has done this and retained their sanity long enough to report on what they saw.

Tactics: The great thing about the Dominion is that you don't have to choose whether to attack an enemy or heal an ally. The Ray of Salvation does both, making the Dominion one of the most straightforward servitors you can summon. It flies, it has a pretty good ranged attack, and its resistances mean it's going to be extremely difficult for enemies to deal with. It doesn't do much damage for a CR 8 creature, unless it's fighting evil. 3d6 twice isn't the end of the world, but the fact that it's healing your allies while damaging your enemies means it *will* change the tide of battle. Which is the point of servitors!

Obviously it should focus on those enemies adjacent to one or more of your allies! But it doesn't have to, if a well-placed bolt of light from its scepter would make a difference.

Dominion

Large celestial, good

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 133 (14d10 + 56)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	19 (+4)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +7, Cha +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES truesight, passive Perception 20

Languages all, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Angelic Weapons. The dominion's Ray of Salvation is magical. When the dominion hits with it, the ray deals an extra 9 (2d8) radiant damage (included in the attack).

Magic Resistance. The dominion has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects from evil characters and sources.

Aura of Protection Against Evil. Evil creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against all allies within 5 feet of the dominion. Allies in this area can't be charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil creatures. If an ally is already charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil magic, the ally has advantage on any new saving throw against the relevant effect.

Actions

Multiattack. The dominion makes two attacks with the Ray of Salvation.

Ray of Salvation. Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (3d6) fire damage and 9 (2d8) radiant damage. If the ray does damage, any allies adjacent to the target gain 10 temporary hit points.

Throne

Wat. Okay, well...look, I don't make these things up, the gods do that, and who are we to question them?

The Throne is the jailor of the gods. It quarantines evil by trapping it and burning it. It refers to itself, variously, as the Key and the Cage. It is one of the less communicative in the Court, if that is possible, and has its own motivations, which it does not reveal. It is so dedicated to removing evil from the world that it won't obey its master. It chooses its enemies based solely on their commitment to evil powers, not the threat they pose in combat.

It's not uncommon for a battle to end with a creature imprisoned within the Throne, only for the Throne to return to its home plane *with* the creature, presumably removing it from our world forever. Though...the kind of enemy who can survive that and return to our plane would be a memorable villain indeed.

The Throne is the hereditary enemy of the Order of Desecration (detailed elsewhere). When it imprisons an agent of evil and retreats back to wherever the Celestial Host abide, it takes its prisoner with it. Only the most powerful and experienced rangers of the timescape can even attempt to follow. The tales they tell upon returning are confusing and inconsistent.

Each of those who survive the Throne's imprisonment and return to tell the tale describe the realm of the Celestial Court differently. Some describe an island with green grass and tall white marble columns. Some describe a vast field of wheat where prides of lions lounge under a brilliant blue sky. Or a thick forest with tame woodland beasts and ripe fruit hanging from the trees.

Whether these are different places, the same place with different regions, or some manifestation created from the mind of the imprisoned is not known. Only the Knights of Desolation know the secret of gaining access to that realm, and they will not reveal what they know.

Tactics: It chooses the most evil enemy creature (by whatever metric you want) and attacks it. Once it is imprisoned, the Throne will obey its summoner and attack whomever they want, but not if it would free the evil trapped within.

Throne

Large celestial, good

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 127 (15d10 + 45)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Str +7, Con +7

DAMAGE RESISTANCES radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES truesight, passive Perception 22

Languages all, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

Angelic Weapons. The throne's weapon attacks are magical. When the throne hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 9 (2d8) radiant damage (included in the attack).

Magic Resistance. The throne has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects from evil characters and sources.

Aura of Protection Against Evil. Evil creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against all allies within 5 feet of the throne. Allies in this area can't be charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil creatures. If an ally is already charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil magic, the ally has advantage on any new saving throw against the relevant effect.

Actions

The Burning Wheel. Ranged Spell Attack: +8 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (3d6) fire damage plus 9 (2d8) radiant damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or be teleported into the throne's burning rings. The target is grappled (escape DC 17). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the throne uses Radiant Burn as its first action on each of its subsequent turns. Only one creature can be imprisoned at a time.

Radiant Burn. The wheel spins around the creature grappled by it, dealing 13 (3d8) fire damage plus 9 (2d8) radiant damage.

Seraph

And you thought the Throne was weird! You were right about that, by the way.

The greatest of the Celestial Court, the Seraph devastates anything on the battlefield foolish enough to oppose the heroes, taking special interest in evil creatures, obviously, but also in chaotic beings. It just *vomits* damage onto everything and everyone.

It has the same telepathy the rest of the Celestial Court have, but it rarely uses it for anything other than shouting single-word epithets into people's minds. *"Burn!" "Finish!" "Exult!"*

Tactics: In spite of not having like...a face, or eyes, the Seraph cannot be flanked or surprised. It can use each weapon twice, so you decide if it needs to be in melee or not, and then either make two bow shots each from Alpha and Omega, or two mace attacks each from Good and Law. Alpha heals allies next to enemies it damages, which will help you choose which enemies to get next to.

Seraph

Large celestial, good

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 189 (18d10 + 90)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)

SAVING THROWS Str +8, Con +9, Wis +9, Cha +9

DAMAGE RESISTANCES radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES truesight, passive Perception 23

Languages all, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 10 (5,900 XP)

Angelic Weapons. The seraph's weapon attacks are magical. When the seraph hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 9 (2d8) radiant damage (included in the attack).

Magic Resistance. The seraph has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects from evil characters and sources.

Aura of Protection Against Evil. Evil creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against all allies within 5 feet of the seraph. Allies in this area can't be charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil creatures. If an ally is already charmed, frightened, or possessed by evil magic, the ally has advantage on any new saving throw against the relevant effect.

Vigilant. The Seraph cannot be flanked or surprised.

Actions

Multiattack. The Seraph makes four attacks with any combination of Good, Law, Alpha, and Omega, but no more than two with the same weapon.

Good. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 9 (2d8) radiant damage. If the target is evil and has 25 hit points or fewer after taking this damage, it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be destroyed. On a successful save, the creature becomes frightened of the seraph until the end of the seraph's next turn.

Law. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 9 (2d8) radiant damage. If the target is chaotic and has 25 hit points or fewer after taking this damage, it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be destroyed. On a successful save, the creature becomes frightened of the seraph until the end of the seraph's turn.

Alpha. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) radiant damage. On a hit, all allies adjacent to the target restore 1d8 + 5 hit points.

Omega. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) radiant damage. If the target is chaotic or evil, it suffers the effects of a bane spell until the end of its next turn.

THE COURT OF ALL FLESH

As with all things in Primordius, the Sea of Eternal Change, the favor of the Lords of Chaos is quixotic and fluctuates constantly. Currently, the six members described here hold the favor of the White King and Red Queen. But the only constant in Primordius is change. At any moment the Court of All Flesh could be rearranged or replaced completely. Warlocks and dark priests of old still consider all these courtiers as newcomers on the stage, and they lament the passing in favor of the Unseeing Karras Vor and the Reflection of Mor-Lu, whom they consider greater and more powerful than these lesser beings.

Formerly the Red Prince, Maladar Dictum schemes to regain his position. Lord Rall, his retainer, and the Queen of Bone would both like to see their prince return to his rightful position beside the Red Queen—or better, they would prefer to see him take her place. But more, even more than that, they each scheme to take their *own* place on one of the Thrones of Chaos, awaiting the moment when they will betray their lord.

Unchanging Changers

Members of the Court are beings of pure chaos. Any attempt to force them to change form simply passes through them. There is nothing substantive about them. No quintessence for a spell or ability to manipulate.

Not Evil

The Changing Ones are not evil. Indeed, they arrive in the Mundane World committed to helping the character who summoned them, even dying for them. They care not for good, nor evil—they are opposed to law, to tyranny, to any force that attempts to slow or stifle change.

Baron Malgas

The newest lord of chaos, Malgas clawed and scraped his way into the lowest rank of the Court and is only getting started. His barely disguised contempt for Maladar Dictum doesn't prevent him from coming when called, though. Malgas is no fool.

Malgas enjoys boasting and taunting his enemies. He is a theatrical character, new to power and fulsome in it. He acts as though he is already chief of the Court and openly disparages the other members while they're not around.

"Come Sons and Daughters of Order! And meet your ender!"

Tactics: Malgas is a melee bruiser and enjoys inflicting pain, preferring to match himself against the enemy's melee warriors. But, like all servitors, he will follow the orders of his summoner. He prefers to use his Melt Flesh ability on his immediate enemy, but will deploy it tactically to force a powerful enemy spellcaster to cease casting, or a fighter to drop their weapon, even if he's not currently fighting that character.

Baron Malgas

Medium aberration, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 20 (plate, shield)
HIT POINTS 71 (11d8 + 22)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Str +6, Con +5
SKILLS Athletics +6, Deception +3, Perception +5
DAMAGE RESISTANCES psychic
CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified
SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
LANGUAGES Deep Speech, Primordial
CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Everchanging Changers. The Court of All Flesh are beings of pure chaos. Because their minds are pure disorder, they cannot be driven mad or charmed and any attempts to magically compel their behavior fails.

Formless Shape. The baron is immune to any spell or effect that would alter his form.

Actions

Multiattack. Baron Malgas makes three attacks with his flail. He can use Melt Flesh in place of one flail attack.

Flail. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Melt Flesh. Baron Malgas chooses a target he can see within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or watch as their dominant hand melts into a runny, fleshy lump. It drops whatever weapon it was carrying, cannot hold a weapon in that hand, and cannot cast spells that require somatic components. At the end of each of its turns, the target repeats this saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Casting *mending* on the affected hand also ends the effect. If the target succeeds on a saving throw, the creature becomes immune to the baron's Melt Flesh for the next 24 hours.

Korsoth Vastikan

Once a rival to Maladar Dictum, then-Duke Vastikan was brought low by a mob of ratcatchers. He returned to the Sea of Eternal Change, licked his wounds, and conferred with the ghosts of forgotten sages chasing the lore of formkilling.

Now, armed with this ancient knowledge, Vastikan has clawed his way back into the king and queen's favor. He is a hunter, a thief, and a master of deceit. His voice is a low whisper, a sneer. He does not like the Mundane World, finding it overly suffused with law.

Tactics: It takes a lot to trigger Formkiller. Vastikan must hit a target three times out of four, *and* the target has to fail a Constitution saving throw.

But if they fail, the results are *interesting*. According to the rules, the change lasts only 1 hour. According to the *rules*. According to *these rules* I made up. I mean, all rules are made up, aren't they? How long would Formkiller last if *you* made the rules? It's your game!

For extra spice, consider using the original 1970s *reincarnation* rules. 2% chance of turning into a raccoon! 4% chance of turning into a hawk! 3% chance you're a badger![1]

Korsoth Vastikan

Medium aberration, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 16 (studded leather)

HIT POINTS 78 (12d8 + 24)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +7, Wis +4

SKILLS Acrobatics +7, Deception +4, Investigation +3, Perception +4, Stealth +7, Survival +4

DAMAGE RESISTANCES psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Deep Speech, Primordial

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Everchanging Changers. The Court of All Flesh are beings of pure chaos. Because their minds are pure disorder, they cannot be driven mad or charmed and any attempts to magically compel their behavior fails.

Formless Shape. Vastikan is immune to any spell or effect that would alter his form.

Formkiller. If Vastikan hits a target with three arrows in one round, the target must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or lose its native form. Roll on the Reincarnation table to determine the target's new form. The target reverts to its original form after 1 hour.[1] A target that succeeds on its saving throw becomes immune to Formkiller for 24 hours.

Actions

Multiattack. Vastikan makes four longbow attacks.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Shortsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

1 Or does it?

1 Badger? We ain't got no badger. We don't need no badgers. I don't have to show you any stinkin' *badgers*!

The Queen of Bones

Rival and sometimes companion to Maladar Dictum, the Queen of Bones is the Chaos Priest of the Court of All Flesh. She was once the White Queen, but her husband, the King of Blood, was annihilated in the Battle of Kalas Mithral by the Knights of Axiom under the leadership of the Inexorable Will.

In the eons since, the Queen has risen and fallen and now finds herself allied to Maladar Dictum. Theirs is a marriage of convenience. Each sees the leverage the alliance brings them. Neither expects more from the other than the other will give, and it is perhaps for exactly this reason that neither has betrayed the other in their long years together. What would be the point? Each is already acting in, and only in, their own best interests. They hope, by nurturing this court, to challenge the current King and Queen of Chaos.

The oldest surviving member of the Court, with the possible exception of the madness-flesh Uursovk, the Queen is languid and slow to anger. She looks at her enemies with mild annoyance. They are temporary. Change is eternal. She will show them.

She rides an animation of skeletons harvested from the creatures she's killed. They are not undead, more like a moving sculpture. The Queen is an artist, with bone her preferred medium. Ideally the bones of the living.

Tactics: A powerful spellcaster, the Queen arrives armed with a combination of spells designed to aid the summoner and damn their enemies. *Freedom of movement* will undo many ills, and *stoneskin* or *shield of faith* will help her allies withstand damage. *Death ward* is for those allies close to death. *Dispel magic* is a Swiss army knife of solutions to many problems.

The Queen of Bones

Medium aberration, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 71 (13d8 + 13)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Con +4, Wis +8, Cha +4

SKILLS Insight +8, Intimidation +4, Perception +8, Religion +4

DAMAGE RESISTANCES psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

LANGUAGES Common, Deep Speech, Primordial

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Everchanging Changers. The Court of All Flesh are beings of pure chaos. Because their minds are pure disorder, they cannot be driven mad or charmed and any attempts to magically compel their behavior fails.

Formless Shape. The Queen is immune to any spell or effect that would alter her form.

Spellcasting. The Queen is a 9th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, mending, sacred flame, spare the dying*

1st level (4 slots): *bane, inflict wounds, healing word, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, lesser restoration, magic weapon, silence, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, bestow curse, dispel magic, protection from energy, revivify, water walk*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, death ward, freedom of movement, stoneskin*

5th level (1 slot): *contagion, flame strike, insect plague*

Actions

Multiattack. The Queen makes two attacks with her Bone Bow.

Bone Bow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d8 + 2) damage.

Ossuary. The Queen targets one creature she can see within 30 feet of her and turns its own skeleton into a jail. The target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw against this magic. On a failed save, it takes 14 (4d6) necrotic damage and is paralyzed for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, the target can repeat this saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the target succeeds on the save, or if the effect ends on it, the target becomes immune to Ossuary for 24 hours.

And of course she has many standard offensive spells, including *banishment* for those enemies summoned from other planes by evil priests with their own temples!

The Queen's favorite offensive tactic, of course, is her Ossuary. By taking control of a target's skeleton, she can freeze them in place, imprisoning them with their own bones. On average this is only going to last two rounds, if it works, but that's still two rounds of an enemy doing nothing. Since its DC is Constitution-based, she tends to target spellcasters and glass cannons.

Lord Rall

The Vizier of the Court, Lord Rall is Maladar's personal wizard. Once Lord Rall had a more conventional form, but he forgot it somewhere and never seemed to notice. As he demonstrates in battle, he can reform himself out of any old organs you may have lying around.

Rall is precise and surgical. Tactical. He likes experimenting on his enemies. He is fascinated by creatures with one set form. Creatures who find their identities wrapped up in their *shape*. How strange, Lord Rall thinks. Imagine what a *different* person you would be if you wore your brains on the outside. Or if you had many fewer, or many more, limbs. Only fools fear change.

Rall has no ambition, does not plot or scheme. For this reason he does not rise higher than vizier to this, the lower court. But neither does he need fear betrayal.

Tactics: Rall is a potent wizard. Unlike the Queen of Bone, Rall is not particularly interested in helping his allies, preferring to drop *cloudkill* on his enemies or lock them in place with *black tentacles*.

Lord Rall channels his power through The Staff of Changing[2], molding enemies to suit his terrible whims. Because of his deep understanding of form and changing, he does not need to concentrate on this. He fully expects to be able to turn every enemy in the battle into slimy things, given time.

Lord Rall

Medium aberration, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 12 (15 with mage armor)

HIT POINTS 91 (14d8 + 28)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 10 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Int +8, Wis +5, Cha +6

SKILLS Arcana +8, Deception +6, History +8, Insight +5

DAMAGE RESISTANCES psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES Common, Deep Speech, Primordial

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Everchanging Changers. The Court of All Flesh are beings of pure chaos. Because their minds are pure disorder, they cannot be driven mad or charmed and any attempts to magically compel their behavior fails.

Formless Shape. Lord Rall is immune to any spell or effect that would alter his form.

Shapechanger. As an action, Lord Rall can polymorph into a Small or Medium creature or back into his true form. His statistics, other than his size, are the same in each form. Any worn or carried equipment isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Spellcasting. Lord Rall is a 10th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand, minor illusion, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *mage armor, magic missile, sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *ray of enfeeblement, mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots): *lightning bolt, haste*

4th level (3 slots): *black tentacles, blight*

5th level (2 slots): *cloudkill*

Actions

Multiattack. Lord Rall makes two melee attacks with the Staff of Changing.

The Staff of Changing (Recharge 5–6). Rall's staff remakes a target into any shape he desires. He casts *polymorph* from it as an action. The range is 30 feet, and the Wisdom saving throw has a DC of 16. Lord Rall does not need to concentrate on this spell to maintain it.

Greatstaff. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (2d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage, or 10 (2d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands.

Any Pile of Organs Will Do (Recharge 6). When he drops to 0 hit points, Lord Rall can reform himself from any corpse within 120 feet instead of falling unconscious. Lord Rall does not need to see the corpse in order to use it. The process happens in an instant, and the newly formed Lord Rall appears with only half of his maximum hit points.

2 Like all the servitor items, it possesses no magic of its own, so the players don't suddenly come into possession of a powerful artifact if they kill Lord Rall.

Uursovk

The Mad Oracle, the Madness-flesh, Uursovk may once have been a king or queen of Chaos itself. No one remembers that far back. Rumors are easy to come by, tales of things older than the Thrones themselves. Things of pure changing power, with no minds, no will except to remake the universe in their own terrible fluctuating imageless images.

Uursovk is the only member of the Court who *is* vulnerable to shapechanging magics, lacking sufficient will to prevent it.

Any image of Uursovk is by definition a facile rendering by lesser minds. Gazing upon the Mindwiper, one sees organs and limbs twisting and reshaping. Often one feels one is seeing many sides of the same beast at the same time, or an amalgam of many different creatures each superimposed over the others. But this is no *image*—their limbs meld into each other, twisting in torturous ways. Often the various appendages shudder, as though the creatures who once had these body parts are suffering incredible agony.

The smell itself is enough to choke someone, a rotting abattoir of putrid maggoty meat.

Uursovk is also known as the Oracle of the Court of All Flesh, occasionally making prophetic pronouncements that often come true. Uursovk's madness in no way impairs his second sight.

Tactics: The Madness-flesh broadcasts an Insanity Field that interferes with conscious thought, causing nausea in intelligent creatures. Because its DC is based

Uursovk

Large aberration, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 157 (15d10 + 75)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Str +9, Con +9, Wis +6, Cha +6
DAMAGE RESISTANCES psychic
CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified
SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16
LANGUAGES Deep Speech, Primordial
CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

Everchanging Changers. The Court of All Flesh are beings of pure chaos. Because their minds are pure disorder, they cannot be driven mad or charmed and any attempts to magically compel their behavior fails.

Insanity Field. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of Uursovk must make a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw. On a failure, the creature is poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a success, the creature becomes immune to Insanity Field for 24 hours.

Magic Resistance. Uursovk has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Madness Aura. Enemies within 60 feet who can see Uursovk make a successful DC 16 Intelligence saving throw in order to cast a spell. Once a creature succeeds on this saving throw, it becomes immune to Uursovk's Madness Aura for 24 hours.

Actions

Multiattack. Uursovk makes three attacks with bite or three attacks with bone spine.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Bone Spine. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 60/180 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Meld Flesh. Uursovk targets two adjacent creatures, who must each make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. If both fail, they meld into one gestalt entity, shedding any armor they were wearing. The gestalt entity is Medium and has hit points equal to the sum of their hit points, has ability scores equal to the higher of each score, and inherits any conditions of the targets. The new entity is treated as an individual in combat, but can take any action that either original target could take. At the end of each round, the two targets can make DC 16 Constitution saving throws to revert to their original forms (still sans armor), but both targets must succeed in order to end the effect. Otherwise, the effect ends after 1 hour.

on Intelligence, maybe don't drop this guy next to the enemy magic-user. Fighters and rogues are more likely to fail their saves.

Just the sight of Uursovk ignites its Madness Aura, which blocks enemies' minds from being able to formulate the thoughts required to cast spells. This is a passive ability, though, so you don't have to burn an action to do it.

Uursovk's epic closer is Meld Flesh, which literally melts two adjacent enemies into one gestalt. Not as radical as it sounds, the gestalt creature can do anything the original two creatures could do, but it only gets one turn. This one prompts a Constitution saving throw, so it's a good option for hitting magic-users and glass cannons.

Maladar Dictum

Currently one of the Dukes of Chaos, Lord Dictum serves the Red Queen. He is ambitious and plans to replace both the King and Queen...but so do all the Dukes and Duchesses of Chaos. For now, Dictum bides his time and waits.

Dictum does not enjoy being pulled to the Mundane World and forced to do the bidding of uni-form mortals. The Red Queen knows this, and enjoys dispatching Dictum.

What she may not know is that Maladar has the power, alone of all the servitors, to summon the other members of his court. This means His Grace may have power beyond the Thrones of Chaos. May know something the other members of the court do not. If he summons the rest of his court in some other realm, who knows what new court of Chaos might be established there.

Maladar chafes at his summoning and openly yearns to unleash his power on whatever universe he finds himself in. But...the Red Queen commands, and Maladar Dictum must obey. For now...

Tactics: This dude...you really don't want to damage this guy, it's only going to make things harder for you. Unless he's on your side, in which case absolutely dump him in the middle of a melee and stand back. He

Maladar Dictum

Huge aberration, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 20 (plate, shield)

HIT POINTS 210 (20d12 + 80)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Str +9, Dex +6, Con +8, Wis +4, Cha +7

SKILLS Athletics +9, Deception +7, Insight +4, Intimidation +7

DAMAGE RESISTANCES psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common, Deep Speech, Primordial

CHALLENGE 10 (5,900 XP)

Everchanging Changers. The Court of All Flesh are beings of pure chaos. Because their minds are pure disorder, they cannot be driven mad or charmed and any attempts to magically compel their behavior fails.

Formless Shape. Maladar is immune to any spell or effect that would alter his form.

Reform. Each time Maladar takes damage in combat, his arm grows another limb, increasing the damage of his Smash attack by 1d8. There is no limit to the number of limbs, tentacles, and claws Maladar can grow this way.

Actions

Multiattack. Maladar makes two attacks with Changer plus one smash attack.

Changer (Greatsword). Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Smash. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Lord of Chaos. Maladar Dictum has a 50% chance of summoning a member of his court in an adjacent unoccupied space. If successful, roll a d12 and consult the below chart. Each member of his court may only be summoned once per day in this manner. If the same member is summoned twice, nothing happens.

D12	MEMBER SUMMONED
1–4	Baron Malgas
5–7	Kosrosth Vastikan
7–9	The Queen of Bones
10–11	Lord Rall
12	Uursovk

will, after only one round of attacks, be dealing *outstanding* amounts of damage. He'll have claws and tentacles or eleven-tacles or *twelve*-tacles!

If you really want to see things get out of control very quickly, watch Maladar summon Korsoth Vastikan and stand back as the Duke of Chaos orders his ranger to fire four arrows from Formkiller into *him*. Boom! Instant four extra attacks per round oh my god. Whose idea was this? Madness!

THE COURT OF ARCADIA

Once, these creatures served the kings and queens of the high elves in the Great Wode that covered all Orden. Val, their god, walked the land with them. Then, a War Between the Gods, and in the aftermath Val left the Mundane World and took his closest servants with him to their own realm. Arcadia. A paradise of nature, poetry, song, and art.

Arcadia is a perfect, unchanging realm where art is a mirror held to nature. Its denizens are melodramatic, quick to take offense, and they hold grudges for ages. All their rivalries and jealousies come from the most absurdly small things: Which flowers are best for bees to make honey. Which pool best reflects dawn's light to flatter one's profile. Whether jam or butter is best on toast with tea. It seems a kind of madness, and perhaps it is, for the servants of Val no longer have a world to tend. Arcadia tends itself.

As a result, Arcadians relish returning to the Mundane World—they don't want to leave! They love seeing what Men have done with the place, as gauche and déclassé as everything is. Really? A castle *there*? Is this *really* the alphabet you write with? My word. What's happened to style? Ah well. It's still better than the perfect boring nothing that Arcadia has become since Val moved there permanently. *Technically* it's a realm of perfect natural chaos, but the thing about perfect chaos is...it's so predictable. Yawn.

Servants of Val

The Court of Arcadia were all created by Val to be above his more populous creation, the elves. As such, the Arcadians can command elves and fey with ease. This is in fact their job: to keep the other fey creatures in line and tend the wodes.[3] Elves don't like being reminded of this, so of course the Arcadians take every opportunity to remind them of it.

Law Versus Chaos

The Arcadians are servants of Nature. They exist to glorify her. To them, a road is a wound, a knife-cut through the perfect chaos of the natural world. Farms are a disease, infecting the earth by taming it. Forcing it to serve, while its proper place is to be served. Killing the land, making it a slave to man. This is Law.

They hate civilization and all it brings. This is one reason Val left the Mundane World and took his favored with him. Now, Arcadia is an Edenic representation of everything the Arcadians desire: raw, untamed nature as a perfect art.

Chaos Versus Discord

The servants of Val consider themselves the enemies of both the Knights of Axiom and the Court of All Flesh. Created to serve the high elves, the Arcadians view Nature as a self-evident good. A power they serve above all others.

To them, chaos means freedom, the freedom of a vine to grow where it will and, yes, even destroy and pull down a wall or a gate in time. The low things of the Court of All Flesh are a corrupt, mirror mockery of this. To the Arcadians, the Court of All Flesh represents *discord*. Chaos twisted into an evil, destructive form.

Mantis Knight

The swashbuckling adventurers of the Arcadians, the Mantis Knights love dueling and drinking and terrible poetry. The greatest of them, like Lady Eweshtleth, keep an air of grave dignity about them, because they have known battle across the Myriad Worlds. But most Mantis Knights just want to show up, do something dashing and acrobatic, spit an enemy upon their sword, and then go carousing with the mortals who summoned them.

Tactics: Their armor makes them very hard to grapple, and they enjoy showing this off by taunting enemies who rely on grappling. They bolster the spirits of their allies with *heroism* and *shield of faith*, making mortals almost the equals of an Arcadian! You're welcome!

Otherwise, they enjoy dancing around the battlefield, laying into enemies with their twin rapiers. Simple pleasures.

3 The magical, timeless, elf-haunted forests in my campaign setting.

Mantis Knight

Medium fey, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 71 (11d8 + 22)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Str +6, Wis +4, Cha +4

SKILLS Acrobatics +7, Deception +4, Nature +3, Persuasion +4, Perception +6, Stealth +7, Survival +4

SENSES passive Perception 17

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Sunbeetle Armor. The knight's armor is perpetually slick. Any attempts to grapple the knight have disadvantage.

Fey Ancestry. Magic cannot put the knight to sleep.

Magic Resistance. The knight has advantage on saving throws against magic and other magical effects.

Command Fey. As a member of the Court of Arcadia, the knight can cast *dominate monster* (DC 12) at will on any fey creature or elf.

Innate Spellcasting. The knight's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). The knight can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *heroism, shield of faith*

Actions

Multiattack. The knight makes four attacks with its rapiers, or makes two attacks and casts *heroism* or *shield of faith* on an ally.

Rapier. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Monarchon

The Monarchon is the embodiment of youth and death, spring and fall. It is gay and sprightly and a harbinger of doom. Once, mortals knew that to gaze upon the death's-head skull of the Monarchon spelled the end. Now, it's been so long since last the Arcadians lived in the Mundane World that mortals must learn these lessons all over again.

The Monarchon enjoys speaking with those who summoned her, but she speaks in cryptic, open poetry. This language is perfectly clear to other created fey, the naiads and dryads and centaurs, but is usually opaque to mortals.

"Trees grow roots, but also leaves."
"We were fools to think we could change the stars."
"Something inside has stopped pretending."
"I have tasted your grace, and felt it diffuse around me."
"You came to change directions. Which way do you face now?"

Pretty cringey. But don't say that around the Monarchon—she might turn your face inside out.

When not withering or hypnotizing her enemies, she is pleasant to be around. She is fascinated by mortals. Loves watching the artfully slow decay of their flesh into inevitable death. If she had her way, she'd stick around for the final myocardial infarction and then celebrate your death, possibly by baking your corpse into bread. So weird.

Tactics: The Monarchon can fly—I mean, of course she can, look at those wings. She prefers to fly around the battlefield, casting spells and hypnotizing enemies. The saving throw for her Hypnotic Display is Wisdom-based, so she often targets melee fighters or rogues. She won't bother using it on enemy shamans or priests.

Finally, if she is attacked or otherwise there is great need, she will land and use her Withering Touch. This is something of a last resort—she prefers to use this ability on enemies close to death.

Monarchon

Medium fey, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 110 (13d10 + 39)
SPEED 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Wis +7, Cha +5
SKILLS History +4, Insight +7, Medicine +7, Nature +4, Perception + 6, Religion +4
SENSES passive Perception 20
LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan
CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Magic cannot put the Monarchon to sleep.

Magic Resistance. The Monarchon has advantage on saving throws against magic and other magical effects.

Command Fey. As a member of the Court of Arcadia, the Monarchon can cast *dominate monster* (DC 15) at will on any fey creature or elf.

Innate Spellcasting. The monarchon's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15). The monarchon can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *enthrall, sleep*

Spellcasting. The Monarchon is a 7th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The Monarchon has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, sacred flame1st level (4 slots): bane, bless, command*
2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, zone of truth*
3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, revivify*
4th level (1 slot): *banishment, death ward*

Actions

Withering Touch. Melee Spell Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) necrotic damage.

Hypnotic Display. The Monarchon spreads her wings and their false eyes pulsate with a rainbow of colors, targeting one creature she can see within 30 feet. If the target can see the Monarchon, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or be charmed until the end of the Monarchon's next turn. The charmed target is stunned. If the target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to the Monarchon's gaze for 24 hours.

Orchid Count

The dashing archer-sorcerer of the Court, the Count is often seen flanked by two Mantis Knights, dueling and carousing their way through Alloy, the City of Four Elements, known in some realms as the City of Brass.

Val counts on the Count, the renegade of the Arcadians, to disobey him. He can be found wherever he is told not to go. Tales of his daring midnight raids on Quadranar, the Fourth City of Ordos, are legendary—possibly some of them are true!

"Why how now, mortal? Thy jaw hangeth slack. Hast thou never seen a sunrise before?"

Tactics: The Count relies on his Now You See Me... Now You Don't... combo to get in and out of danger. He uses *blur* to avoid attacks and *Tactical Advantage* to maximize damage. He enjoys harrying spellcasters and using *misty step* to get behind enemy lines and attack whomever the enemy is trying to protect.

Orchid Count

Medium fey, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 16 (studded leather)
HIT POINTS 97 (13d8 + 39)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Dex +7, Con +6
SKILLS Acrobatics +7, Athletics +4, Intimidation +5, Perception +6, Survival +3
SENSES passive Perception 16
LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan
CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Fey Step. The count is unaffected by difficult terrain.

Fey Ancestry. Magic cannot put the count to sleep.

Magic Resistance. The count has advantage on saving throws against magic and other magical effects.

Command Fey. As a member of the Court of Arcadia, the count can cast *dominate monster* at will on any fey creature or elf. To avoid this effect, the target must make a successful DC 13 Wisdom saving throw

Now You See Me.... If the Count teleports next to an enemy, he immediately makes two rapier attacks with advantage against that enemy.

Now You Don't.... (Recharge 4–6). As a reaction, if an enemy the Count can see makes a successful melee or ranged attack roll against him, he casts *misty step*.

Tactical Advantage. If the Count has advantage on an attack roll, he deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage.

Innate Spellcasting. The count's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *misty step, hunter's mark*

3/day: *blur, mirror image*

Actions

Multiattack. The count makes three attacks with his rapier or longbow in any combination.

Rapier. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Oleander Dragon

Nerium the Petal Dragon, known also as the Oleander Dragon, is one of the prize pets of Val and normally slumbers decoratively in one of the courtyards. Its disguise is so perfect, newcomers to the Court often fail to recognize it's not actually a flowering topiary shrub in the shape of a sleeping dragon.

The only true shapechanger in the Court, Nerium enjoys complimenting those who summon her by transforming into a *very* flattering interpretation of them. This has no practical value other than being artful and poetic, which is really the only thing the Arcadians care about.

Nerium very rarely speaks, and when she does it's usually only one word. She's just vastly underwhelmed by the paucity of expression available with language.

Unlike any other dragon...and most creatures, the Oleander Dragon has no physical attack. It has no teeth or claws and considers such things crude. She prefers to be beautiful and would rather awe enemies so overmuch with its perfect glamour as to force them to reconsider the terrible decisions they made in their lives and abandon all violence.

Tactics: Lacking physical attacks, Nerium relies on Implant Nightmare to overwhelm her enemies with fear. She opens combat with the spores from her Pollen Breath, then sings the *song of cestilani*, which can end a battle all by itself.

Oleander Dragon

Large dragon, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 119 (14d10 + 42)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +6, Int +6, Wis +8, Cha +6

SKILLS Arcana +6, Insight +8, Nature +6, Perception +8, Stealth +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES poison, psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23

LANGUAGES Draconic, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Shapechanger. As an action, the dragon can polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any worn or carried equipment isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Magic Resistance. The dragon has advantage on saving throws against magic and other magical effects.

False Appearance. While the dragon remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a shrub or small tree of blooming oleander.

Actions

Implant Nightmare. The dragon reaches into the mind of a target it can see within 60 feet and manifests the target's deepest fear. The target must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target becomes frightened for 1 minute. At the start of each of the target's turns, the target must repeat the saving throw or take 22 (4d10) psychic damage. On a successful save, the nightmare ends.

Pollen Breath. (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales a swirling cloud of pollen and red and purple petals in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature becomes charmed until the end of their next round. Creatures who successfully save cannot be affected by Pollen Breath for 24 hours.

Song of Cestilani. (1/day). The oleander dragon sings a magical song. Each enemy that can hear it must succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw or take 22 (4d8 + 4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Ash Marshal

Tasked with defending and escorting guests to Arcadia, the Ash Marshal is also the only member of the Court to be regularly sent seeking across the planes, dispatched by Val to bring those who would harm his creation[4] to justice. He is Val's timescape[5] hunter and as such carries much deep lore about the multiverse.

The Marshal calls upon Val to aid him and give him power in battle, and Val infuses his hunter with arcane power. His spellcasting relies on his ability to convince Val the need for aid is great.

Tactics: The Marshal assumes that if Val has sent him to aid the concordant, then things must be dire. He surveys the battle and identifies the greatest immediate threat to the character who summoned him, and attacks with the Ashsword, hoping to censure the target, forcing them—or at least strongly encouraging them—to focus on the Marshal instead.

His spells are almost all offensive, but he is always ready with *counterspell* to thwart enemy spellcasters as well as *banishment* in case the enemy has summoned any members of the Court of All Flesh.

4 The elves.

5 "Timescape" is the sages' term for the multiverse, or space-time.

Ash Marshal

Medium fey, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 20 (plate, shield)

HIT POINTS 157 (15d10 + 75)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Str +9, Con +9, Wis +7, Cha +7

SKILLS Athletics +9, Insight +7, Intimidation +7, Nature +6, Perception +8, Religion +6

DAMAGE RESISTANCES fire, lightning

SENSES passive Perception 21

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Magic cannot put the marshal to sleep.

Magic Resistance. The marshal has advantage on saving throws against magic and other magical effects.

Command Fey. As a member of the Court of Arcadia, the Ash Marshal can cast *dominate monster* (DC 15) at will on any fey creature or elf.

Innate Spellcasting. The Ash Marshall's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). The Marshall can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *hunter's mark, branding smite*

1/day: *raise dead*

Spellcasting. The Marshal is a 9th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The Marshal has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, mirror image, gust of wind, misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fly, fireball*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, dimension door*

5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold, hold monster*

Actions

Multiattack. The Marshall makes three Ashsword attacks. If two attacks hit the same target, that target has disadvantage on any melee attacks that don't include the Marshall for the next round.

Ashsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Sidereal Vizier

Val's magus, the Vizier is the most powerful mage in Arcadia. When a concordant petitions the Court for an ally, the Vizier reviews their case and chooses who among the Arcadians to send. Thus, when the Sidereal Vizier arrives on the battlefield, it is because he *chose* to come, deeming the situation dire enough, or the concordant pious enough, to attend to the matter personally.

All the members of the Court of Arcadia are noble, but only the Vizier is an actual celestial, one of the true elves who once lived in the Mundane World but journeyed with Val to attend him in Arcadia. Nine feet tall, perfect in form, the Vizier has skin of a literal starfield. A window into the night sky, constellations recognizable.

The Vizier does not behave like a thing summoned. He takes charge, he runs the battle. When the duration of his summoning is over, he leaves because he *chose* to leave.

"Great power is granted you, concordant. For behold: I arrive."

Tactics: If a spell can solve the problem, the Vizier knows it and has it prepared. The list below is only one possible configuration. The Vizier uses *maze* if there's an obvious enemy boss, and deploys *chain lighting* to deal with mobs of enemies.

Sidereal Vizier

Medium fey, chaotic

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor, 19 with mage armor)

HIT POINTS 152 (18d10 + 53)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	19 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Str +7, Con +7, Wis +8, Cha +8

SKILLS Arcana +9, Insight +8, Nature +9, Perception +8, Religion +9

SENSES passive Perception 22

LANGUAGES Common, Elven, Sylvan

CHALLENGE 10 (5,900 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Magic cannot put the vizier to sleep.

Magic Resistance. The Vizier has advantage on saving throws against magic and other magical effects.

Command Fey. As a member of the Court of Arcadia, the Sidereal Vizier can cast *dominate monster* (DC 17) at will on any fey creature or elf.

Innate Spellcasting. The Sidereal Vizier's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *darkness, dominate person*

1/day: *power word stun*

Spellcasting. The Vizier is a 15th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The Vizier has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, mage armor*, magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, mirror image, scorching ray, misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fly, fireball*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, dimension door*

5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold, hold monster*

6th level (1 slot): *chain lightning*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*

8th level (1 slot): *maze*

*He casts these spells on himself before combat.

Actions

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

THE COURT OF ELEMENTS

The Lady of Brass is a notorious adventurer, who often takes her floating Castle of Fire into other planes to do battle with tyrants. In her absence, she leaves her home plane of Quintessence and its greatest city, Alloy, in the hands of her personal guard, the Court of Elements.

The Court patrol Alloy—the Burning City, the City of Four Elements—and enforce the Lady's law. Beings from across the timescape come to Alloy, and many bring their grudges with them. The Lady has spent eons building Alloy's reputation as a neutral city, open to trade and available for loremasters seeking knowledge not available on their home plane. The Court of Elements enforce this order, ensuring the safety of visitors, unless they come seeking conflict.

Fire Mote

The motes are elemental sprites, tricksters, mischievous imps who enjoy sticking their noses into other people's business, harassing anyone who looks suspicious until the more puissant authorities arrive.

The fire motes in particular enjoy tormenting spellcasters, teasing them, trying to provoke them into using their spells and violating the strict rules of Alloy. Basically, the fire motes try to frame wizards visiting the Burning City. But, the fire motes argue, if these magic-users can be provoked into violence by something as harmless as a mote, what might they do if they became seriously angry? Keep those fingers holstered, spellslinger!

Tactics: The fire mote has an instinctive awareness of which enemies on the battlefield rely on concentration spells and move into their space, making their life as annoying as possible.

Fire Mote

Small elemental, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 13 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 49 (11d6 + 11)
SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +6
DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire
CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
LANGUAGES Common, Ignan
CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

Fire Form. The mote can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there.

Annoying. An enemy in the same space as a mote must make a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check when it moves. On a failed save, the mote moves with it. While in the same space as a mote, enemies have disadvantage on Constitution checks to maintain concentration.

Actions

Multiattack. The mote makes three touch attacks.

Touch. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) fire damage.

Source of Earth

The Sources hover at the crossroads of Alloy pronouncing the Lady's law and reminding citizens of important dates. They can also be depended upon to grant aid to newcomers, including help as mundane as directions. The Sources of Earth seem most to enjoy helping visitors, and while their pronouncements are booming and melodramatic, they are enthusiastic about their task.

"THE CLOSEST SAGE SPECIALIZING IN MIRROR MAGIC CAN BE FOUND ON THE ORRIDAN WAY WHERE IT INTERSECTS HIGH STREET."

The Sources of Earth act as vigilant sentinels, stoning anyone seen committing a crime or running from a representative of the law. They are the hovering, eternal watchmen of Alloy.

Tactics: The Source of Earth hovers over the battlefield, with only 10 feet of movement. It buffs allies with Diamondskin and turns enemies to stone with Back to Earth. It uses Wall of Stone to change the shape of the battlefield, protecting allies or dividing enemies. It's mostly a support unit, but it *can* turn an enemy to stone, with a pretty beefy DC.

Source of Earth

Medium elemental, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 124 (13d8 + 65)

SPEED 10 ft., fly 10 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	9 (–1)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	10 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Str +3, Con +8

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

LANGUAGES Aquan, Auran, Common, Ignan, Terran

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

Foundation of All the World. Allies within 60 feet of the Source cannot be moved against their will or knocked prone.

Actions

Diamondskin. As a bonus action, the Source focuses its gaze on an ally within 30 feet. Diamond crystals emerge from the target's skin, increasing their AC by 2 for 10 minutes, after which the diamonds turn to worthless dust, restoring the target's skin to its previous state.

Back to Earth. The Source focuses its gaze on an enemy within 30 feet. If the target's body is made of flesh, the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature magically begins to turn to stone and is restrained. At the end of its next turn, it must repeat the saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified until freed by the *greater restoration* spell or other magic.

Wall of Stone (1/Day). The Source causes a 30-foot-long wall of solid stone to thrust up through the floor. The wall has six 5-foot-long panels to it, which can be arranged however the summoner of the Source wishes, but each segment must form a line or a right angle with the previous segment. Each panel is 6 inches thick and 10 feet high. Each panel has AC 15 and 180 hit points. If reduced to 0 hit points, a panel crumbles, leaving loose scree that counts as difficult terrain. The wall lasts for 10 minutes, then turns to dust.

If the wall is summoned in a creature's space, the creature is pushed to one side of the wall, chosen by the summoner. If a creature would be surrounded on all sides by the wall (or the wall and another solid surface), that creature can make a Dexterity saving throw. On a success, it can use its reaction to move up to its speed so that it is no longer enclosed by the wall.

Pillar of Water

If the Sources are watchmen of Alloy, the Pillars are the jailors. They spring from the ground, imprisoning those caught violating the law of the Lady. Like the Sources, they have an attitude, but not much actual personality.

In the city of Alloy, the Pillars imprison suspected criminals, awaiting the arrival of a Magistrate. When summoned to the Mundane World, the Pillars obey the commands of the concordant who summoned them. They will release the prisoners they hold at the concordant's demand, granting the opportunity to parley.

The Pillars of Water are generally skeptical of those imprisoned, assuming openly that they must have done *something* to piss off the Sources. They believe anyone they trap must be guilty of something and leave the judging to the Magistrates.

As with the Knights and Sources, there are many different Pillars, not described here. Pillars of Fire, Pillars of Earth. But the Pillars of Water are most common. In times of great distress, when the city of Alloy is threatened, they are known to join together to create a massive gestalt entity to defend this, the most diverse city in the timescape.

During the Battle at the Doors of Morning, when the Lady of Brass lost her greatest general, the Pillars of Water joined the battle by forming the Tidal Wall, a great, unstoppable wave said to be one hundred feet tall. Thanks to this overwhelming display and the work and effort of the rest of the Elemental Court, the city held.

Tactics: The Pillar can imprison up to four creatures, but it doesn't have to. If there's one enemy causing a lot of problems, especially one with low Dexterity, drop the Pillar on them. Remember to use Reform to get the Pillar where it needs to be. The Pillar can also proactively defend allies by using Constant Flood to prevent enemies from getting into melee.

Pillar of Water

Large elemental, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 13 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 149 (13d10 + 78)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	5 (–3)	22 (+6)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Str +7, Con +9
DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison
CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
LANGUAGES Aquan
CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Constant Flood. Enemies beginning their turn within 15 feet of the pillar must make a DC 15 Strength check or be pushed 10 feet away from the pillar. The ground within 15 feet of the Pillar is difficult terrain for all enemies attempting to move toward the pillar.

Geyser. When summoned, the Pillar of Water appears in a 10-by-10-foot space. All creatures in that area must make Dexterity saving throws. On a failure, a creature is suspended in the column of water. On a success, a creature is pushed to an empty space adjacent to the pillar.

Up to four Medium creatures, or one Large creature, can be contained in the pillar. Creatures suspended in the pillar can't breathe unless they can breathe water, are restrained, and take 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of the pillar's turns.

As an action, a restrained creature can make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success, it escapes from the column of water.

Actions

Reform. As a bonus action, the pillar disappears, depositing any suspended creatures on the ground, prone. On its summoner's next turn, it appears again anywhere within 60 feet of the summoner.

Knight of Air

The Knights of Alloy enjoy the privilege of being neutral in the conflicts that rage across the timescape. Because Alloy is neutral ground, the Knights are often seen in the company of visiting members of the Court of Arcadia (especially the Mantis Knights or the Orchid Count) or the Knights of Axiom. Even the unchanging changers from the Court of All Flesh are welcome. The Knights of Fire seem to enjoy the company of Korsoth Vastikan especially.

The Knights keep tabs on the most powerful visitors to Alloy. While within the city walls, they have a sixth sense that alerts them to the presence in the city of newcomers who are able to cause a lot of trouble. Presuming they've sobered up from the previous night's festivities, the Knights will check on the newcomer to make sure they're behaving.

The Knights of Fire make no pretense of hiding while doing this, but the Knights of Air are skilled at following powerful entities without them knowing about it. Should violence threaten, the Knights can instantly summon a Source and a Pillar, though this power is granted them only in the city of Alloy.

Tactics: A Knight of Air is pretty straightforward, relying primarily on The Sword of Clouds, which apart from its cool name has no other extraordinary property. Its spells are situational, with no tactical theme. *Wind wall* will section off the battlefield and pummel anyone caught in it, protecting allies. The Wind Lords, as the Knights of Air are sometimes called, use *gaseous form* to protect an ally.

Otherwise, the Wind Lords use their high Armor Class and crazy-good movement to get where they need to engage enemies in melee, often blowing right past enemies, enduring attacks of opportunity, relying on their plate and shield to survive.

Knight of Air

Medium elemental, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (plate, shield)
HIT POINTS 77 (14d8 + 14)
SPEED 40 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	22 (+6)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +9, Cha +6
SKILLS Acrobatics +9, Stealth +9, Perception +5
DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
LANGUAGES Auran, Common
CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The Knight of Air's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand (the hand is invisible)*
3/day each: *invisibility, misty step, gust of wind*
1/day each: *wind wall, gaseous form*

Actions

Multiattack. The Knight makes three attacks with the Sword of Clouds.

The Sword of Clouds. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Storm Magistrate

The Magistrates of the Burning City are the priests and judges of the Lady of Fire. The motes, sources, and knights are diagnosticians. They identify and evaluate the problem. The Lords of Storm cure it.

Exactly as high and mighty as you would expect them to be, the Magistrates are a cruel and bastardly bunch, enjoying their power, using it casually, some say recklessly. They give no thought to the consequences of their actions—they assume the Sources, Pillars, and Knights have done their jobs and identified a criminal. The Magistrates arrive ready to prosecute.

"You have done nothing of value in your short and meaningless life. Take this opportunity to at least die well."

Tactics: The Magistrates know that when they are called to the Mundane World, it is to aid the concordant and damn their enemies. Many of the Storm Lords' spells help the PCs—*enhance ability*, *mass cure wounds*, *freedom of movement*—but just as many are offensive. *Flame strike* is a classic opening. *Banishment* can handle enemy servitors summoned by evil priests and warlocks.

The Magistrate's deadliest weapon is Storm Strike, which combines *chain lightning* with some radiant damage. Use this as soon as the Magistrate arrives to maximize the number of rolls you'll get on the recharge, increasing the likelihood you'll get to use it again.

Storm Magistrate

Large elemental, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 157 (15d10 + 75)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Int +6, Wis +9, Cha +7

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

LANGUAGES Auran, Common, Ignan

CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The magistrate is a 13th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *enhance ability*

Spellcasting. The magistrate has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, guidance, sacred flame, spare the dying*

1st level (4 slots): *bane, bless, healing word, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *aid, lesser restoration, magic weapon, prayer of healing, hold person*

3rd level (3 slots): *beacon of hope, magic circle, dispel magic, revivify, spirit guardians, mass healing word*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, freedom of movement, guardian of faith, stoneskin*

5th level (1 slot): *flame strike, mass cure wounds, hold monster*

Actions

Multiattack. The Magistrate makes two attacks with its morningstar.

Morningstar. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Storm Strike (Recharge 6). Lighting arcs from the magistrate toward up to three targets it can see within 120 feet. Three bolts then leap from those targets to as many as three other targets, each of which must be within 10 feet of the first target. A creature can be targeted by only one bolt.

A target must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 14 (4d6) lighting damage and 14 (4d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

High Templar of Dust

The High Templars serve the Lady of Brass, but unlike the rest of the Court of Elements they were not created by her. They were the original Elemental Lords who dwelled on the Plane of Quintessence before the arrival of the Lady. Before the construction of Alloy, the City of Brass, began. When Quintessence was a wasteland.

The beings who would become the High Templars were formless creatures then, cursed by primordial forces as punishment for some ancient war they were on the losing side of. They do not speak of this, though it is clear they remember it.

The Lady of Brass arrived and gave them form and substance, and for this they pledged their lives to her. They are her fanatical death commandos, willingly giving their lives if necessary and sacrificing their eternal being to aid her.

They are grim and taciturn. It appears they resent being summoned but do their duty in the name of the Lady.

"Concordant, our queen commands me aid you, and this I have done. This world of yours is pain for us. Do not ask more of me, for I have no more to give. I leave."

Tactics: The High Templar of Dust focuses on movement, moving through enemies to use its Scour ability, damaging everyone standing around with Sandstorm, and generally wading into enemies. Its Armor Class isn't amazing, but it has a lot of hit points and should survive a few rounds of punishment. It tends to fire off Lightning and Fire before engaging in melee with its halberd.

High Templar of Dust

Large elemental, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 189 (18d10 + 90)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Str +9, Con +9, Wis +7, Cha +5

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning, cold, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

LANGUAGES Aquan, Auran, Common, Ignan, Terran

CHALLENGE 10 (5,900 XP)

Sandstorm. At the start of each of the templar's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Scour (Recharge 5–6). The Templar moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks. It can move through creatures, and each creature it passes through must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) force damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The Templar makes four attacks with its halberd, Lightning, or Fire. Lighting and Fire can only be used twice each.

Halberd. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage.

Lightning. Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (3d6) lightning damage.

Fire. The templar hurls a ball of fire that explodes at a point it can see within 60 feet. Each creature within a sphere of 10-foot radius centered on that point must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. The sphere spreads around corners. On a failed save, a creature takes 10 (3d6) fire damage, or half as much damage on a successful one.

"BLACK GODS, WHAT is it?"

The inner sanctum was exactly as they imagined it. A round room, only twenty feet across, but tall, maybe forty or fifty feet tall. Every wall lined with bookcases, every shelf packed with books and scrolls.

A creature about their size hovered at head level. Just floated in the air with no obvious means of staying aloft. It was a little smaller than a grown man. Its four rear legs curled underneath it. Its tail was wrapped around it, as though to keep warm. It seemed made of flesh, but gemstones studded its skin and glimmered in the lamplight.

It turned briefly from examining the bookshelf to look at them.

"What? Oh, hello!" It turned back to the bookcases. "Wondered what all that noise was downstairs. Hope you got it all sorted out."

They stared at the small creature.

"It's flying," Meliora said.

"Ah, levitating, I think you'll find," the creature said, not looking at them. "Although the psychokinetics are more akin to your *fly* spell, to be sure. You're to be forgiven for not knowing the difference." It glanced at them again briefly. "Do you know where I put the *Treatise on Manifold Planes*? I was certain I filed it away with the rest of the geometries. Will take me forever to organize this place. And I don't have forever." This last was muttered under its...

"I...can you all hear that?" Jeremy asked, pressing his hands to his head.

"It's in my mind," Credan said. "I can hear it between my ears." It wasn't an unpleasant sensation. There was a bit of an echo. The voice seemed to be coming from a cave. Were it not for the incredibly expressive face of the creature, eyebrows raising, eyes darting around, lips frowning or sneering, they wouldn't have connected the voice to the creature.

The creature floated around. "What?" it asked. "Oh. Well, we topaz develop mindspeech early. It shouldn't cause you any...discomfort." It spoke absentmindedly, tiny hand-like paws fingering the spines of books. A fin atop its head waved slowly in time with tendrils growing from its jaw, as though moved by underwater currents.

"It's a...I think it's a *dragon*," Meliora said.

The creature turned and gave them a knowing look. If it had possessed spectacles, it would have peered over them. "Yes, well done. And you are terrans. Oh that's rude, isn't it? Forgive me. Men."

"And women!" Wenna exclaimed.

"Truly?" The dragon turned back to the books. "Well. I cherish my ignorance on the subject."

"If you're a dragon..." Wenna said, suspiciously, "where are your wings?!" Credan tugged on her linen shirt in a vain attempt to hush her.

"Hands are better, don't you think?"

"But how do you fly?" Meliora demanded.

The dragon turned again to them. It tapped its head with a single finger from its tiny forepaws, then returned to its work.

"We have to go back," Credan said, now tugging on Dade and Jeremy's makeshift armor. "Da needs to know about this."

The topaz wyrmling turned at this, and stared at them, blinking. Then it made the connection. "You're children!"

"I'll have eighteen summers this Lyleth," Dade said, standing up straight.

"Indeed? Fascinating, fascinating. Older than me, when taken in percentages."

"Older than you?" Meliora stepped forward. She couldn't control her curiosity. Her hands twitched with desire to touch the thing.

"Yes, well. What is time? I've spent most of the last several thousand years asleep. Lot of that going around, I'm told. Though, of course, not anymore."

Very little of the conversation made sense to the children. Jeremy looked at Dade. Decided to assert himself.

"We killed the goblins," he said. "Who infested the tower."

"Did you!? Well done, well done. Filthy little things, probably a mistake in retrospect. Ah, well that deserves an introduction, I dare say." The creature floated around, following the curve of the round room, lowering itself until its legs, in the daintiest way possible, reached out and touched the ground, supported its weight. Then it fluidly walked toward them, each of its six legs moving like on a well-coordinated marionette.

"My name is Irdizavonax." The little dragon bowed. When it straightened, it was only a little shorter than Dade. As tall as Jeremy. Taller than the others. "I am the keeper of this tower. Currently. I believe the tradition established by the human wizards who build these things is that, having gained the inner sanctum, you may ask a question."

They looked at each other. Meliora, as was typical, ventured a response.

"Well...w-what should we ask?"

The topaz wyrmling looked around the abandoned wizard's tower, its original owner long dead, then looked back at the children. "No idea!" it exclaimed. "Not my tradition. Perhaps it would be better if I gave you answers first."

The creature looked at the ground, suddenly somber. Seemed to gather its thoughts. Then it regarded them again with its alien eyes.

"Your world is in danger," the creature thought at them. "Corovaxinar stirs, and many of my kith and kin awake. I don't need to tell you, this bodes ill."

"It does?" Jeremy asked, astonished.

"Alright, I *do* need to tell you. Someone from another world, perhaps the World Below? Primordius? I can't be certain, I'm new at this. Someone is trying to merge their world with yours. With ours. It's an invasion, you might say. One reality attacking another. If successful, it would mean most of our world would be...*rewritten*. Replaced. This would be a catastrophe, you understand." It drew itself up proudly.

"The gemstone dragons intend to stop them. I think...I think it's why we were created, if you would allow me to wax philosophical for a moment."

Jeremy looked from Wenna to Credan to Dade. Meliora was lost in admiration. He looked back at the dragon. "We don't understand."

"I'm not surprised. Well, this place is yours now, if it's anyone's. I can teach you what you want to know. Or at least, what you *need* to know, which is more important. I thought some great human wizard would be here but...perhaps...children are better. Much to learn here and all of it written by your ancestors, not mine. Your Shauraseni Empire rivaled any loremasters of the celestials. Ah, elves, I think you call them.

"In any event, by right this tower is now yours, and I," it said, bowing again, "am your servant. For the time being at least."

"Oh my," Wenna said, and the others looked from the dragon to her. She turned to them and beamed.

"We've been on a quest!"

GEMSTONE DRAGONS

A long-forgotten branch of the *draco* genus, *draco crystallus* are primarily hexapods like their more common cousins *draco metallus* and *draco chromaticus*. They are older than the other draconic genii, which accounts for their wider diversity in body type.

Many long ago abandoned their wings or let them atrophy, relying instead on their innate mental powers to lift and propel them telekinetically. They are now rare, hunted for the gemstones that grant them—and, for a brief time, anyone who holds one—their psionic powers. Many have slumbered or hidden from civilization for many thousands of years, only awakening during times of catastrophic need.

They are sages and hoard knowledge rather than treasure and so are often found in or near ancient libraries. Their crystalline structure grants them enhanced speed and agility, their nerve impulses being conducted by the piezoelectric effect rather than mere chemical signals.

As a result they are more agile, and their quasic-rystalline skin grants them natural armor. Weapons spark and chip jeweled fragments off their hides but find little purchase there. They are harder to hit and damage but have less raw health than their metallic and chromatic cousins.

They are the keepers of forgotten lore and rarely take sides in the battles between good, evil, law, and chaos. Rather, they act to preserve the world, or knowledge, or to prevent dangerous knowledge from falling into *any* hands. They come in every flavor of neutral alignment, but if one is neutral good, they're more *neutral* good than neutral *good*, if you take my meaning.

Unlike their more barbaric cousins, they rarely have an affinity for one type of terrain over other (the emeralds being an exception) and so their lairs can be found anywhere, caves, dungeons, libraries, cities, clouds, pocket dimensions. There is no such thing as a 'typical,' gemstone dragon lair.

Psionics

The gemstone dragons are silico-organic organisms. When hatched, they are almost entirely organic. As they grow, their crystalline structure grows, as does their psionic power.

The crystals that grow on and thread through their bodies form a network of psionic filaments that capture, conduct, amplify, and store charges of psionic energies, which the dragons then convert into **manifestations**.

Each dragon begins with a number of charges based on their age. They can expend these charges to cast any psionic manifestation. Many of these manifestations have a base cost and can be enhanced by expending more charges.

Over time, the dragon's crystals conduct more psionic energies into its body, recharging its power. **At the end of each round, roll the recharge die and restore that many charges.**

Each dragon also has a **fracture rating**. Each time it takes more damage than its fracture rating from a single attack, its crystalline form fractures, diminishing its ability to recharge its power. Roll the recharge die and reduce the dragon's **total** charges by the result. This damage heals itself upon finishing a long rest.

Manifestations

Psionic charges are used to manifest psionic abilities. These **manifestations** are the primary source of a gemstone dragon's power. All manifestations have a range of 30 feet, unless noted otherwise.

The following manifestations are by no means the only ones the dragons have access to. It is known that the most powerful gemstone dragons can alter their form at will in a manner that defies all inspection. But these are the most well-documented and commonly used manifestations available to all psionic creatures.

AMPLIFY

Casting Time: 1 action **Range:** Self
Duration: 1 round **Charges:** 4

The dragon focuses the power of its mind and wreaths its teeth, claws, and tail in glowing psionic force. For the next minute, all of its melee attacks deal an extra 3d8 psychic damage.

ANOTHER WORLD

Casting Time: 1 action **Range:** 60 feet
Duration: Special **Charges:** 20

What if things had been different? Maybe in another world, I am the wizard, and you are the fighter!

Target two enemies. Both must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw or else swap character sheets until they take a short rest.

BELIEVE

Casting Time: 1 action **Range:** 60 feet
Duration: 1 round **Charges:** 10

Target one creature. The dragon infects the mind of the target with a new belief. The target must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw or suffer an effect chosen from the list below.

Friends: Until the end of its next turn, the target will not attack enemy combatants, and enemies have advantage on their next attack against this target.

Enemies: On its next action, the target will move to the closest ally and attack it.

Chasm: The target perceives a chasm opening up beneath it. It falls prone and takes 1d8 psychic damage. This belief persists—at the start of each round, the target makes an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, it continues feeling as though it is falling into an infinite abyss, taking 1d8 psychic damage.

Wonder: The target spends a round doing nothing.

Disaster: The target feels the world is ending and flees for one round.

DISTANCE

Casting Time: 1 action **Range:** 30 feet
Duration: Instantaneous **Charges:** 1 per target

Space contorts and twists. Choose any number of targets the dragon can see within 30 feet. Each target must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw or be pushed back 30 feet.

ELSEWHERE

Casting Time: 1 action **Range:** 30 feet
Duration: Instantaneous **Charges:** 2 per 5 feet

Pick a target within 30 feet. The target must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw or be teleported 5 feet per 2 charges spent. The destination must be within sight of the dragon and not currently occupied.

FLAY

Casting Time: 1 bonus action
Range: Self (60-foot cone)
Duration: 1 round
Charges: 2 per d6 of damage

As a bonus action, the dragon blasts pure psionic energy from its eyes, frying the brains of all creatures in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, it takes psychic damage of a d6 per 2 charges spent, or half as much damage on a successful one.

FORGET

Casting Time: 1 action **Range:** 60 feet
Duration: Special
Charges: 5 + 1 per spell level if a spell is chosen

The dragon reaches into an enemy's mind and plucks a critical memory from their cortex, either the knowledge of a spell or of a weapon. This effect lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The dragon can only use this manifestation once every ten minutes on the same target. Saving against the manifestation means the target is immune to *Forget* for 24 hours.

Spells: Pick a target and choose a spell the target knows. Spend charges equal in number to 5 plus the spell level. The target must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target cannot cast that spell until the effect of this manifestation ends.

Weapons: Pick a target and choose a weapon. Spend 3 extra charges. The target must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target does not gain the benefit of their proficiency bonus with the chosen kind of weapon while the effect lasts. (For example, they might forget how to use a longsword, but still gain their proficiency benefit with shortswords.)

MINDSCAPE

Casting Time: 1 action **Range:** 30 feet
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute
Charges: 3 + 1 charge per round

The dragon implants a vision of a new landscape in the target's mind, making them blind to their actual surroundings, causing them to move randomly and erratically. Choose a target to make an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, this manifestation becomes active. If the target chooses to move while the manifestation is active, it moves 10 feet in a random direction (roll 1d8) instead of the distance and direction it intended.

THE REAL

Casting Time: 1 action **Range:** Self
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour
Charges: 4
The dragon sees the real reality. It can tell what is an illusion, and it sees invisible creatures and creatures hidden or disguised by magic. Magical darkness does not affect it, and it can see into the Ethereal Plane.

REFLECTION

Casting Time: 1 action **Range:** Self
Duration: 1 minute
Charges: 10 + reflection rank
The dragon reaches through time and plucks an ally from the timescape to come and fight alongside it. Choose a row from the Servitors chart. The cost of manifesting a reflection is 10 charges plus the type of the summoned creature on the table. (For example, summoning the Inexorable of Nature costs 16 charges: 10 plus the Inexorable's type of 6.)

SYMPATHY

Casting Time: 1 reaction **Range:** 30 feet
Duration: Instantaneous **Charges:** 2 charges per d8
The dragon violently reacts to being hurt, raking its enemy's nervous system with sympathetic psionic vibrations.

As a reaction to taking damage from something the dragon can see within 30 feet, the dragon expends charges to force the damaging creature to make an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 1d8 psychic damage per 2 charges spent. The maximum damage this can deal equals the damage dealt to the dragon that prompted this manifestation.

WEIGHT

Casting Time: 1 reaction **Range:** 30 feet
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute
Charges: 3 + 1 charge per round
The gemstone dragons know that the weave of the timescape isn't a true force—it's little more than a quirk of geometry. One they can enhance or reverse at their discretion.

Choose a target within range and select either *Levitas* or *Gravitas*. The target must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw or suffer the effect described below.

Levitas: The target rises 10 feet per round. A levitating target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, until they save. When the target eventually hits the ground, it takes 1d6 damage per 10 feet fallen, with the maximum dice equal to their level (e.g., 5d6 for level 5).

Gravitas: The target's movement is reduced to 10 feet.

Auras

A dragon projects an aura 30 feet around it. The aura persists while the dragon has psionic charges remaining.

Crystal Hide

Normal weapons bounce and spark off the crystals extruding from a gemstone dragon's skin. These dragons are resistant to damage from nonmagical slashing, bludgeoning, and piercing attacks.

Sympathetic Vibrations

All gemstone dragons are vulnerable to psychic damage. The same crystalline structure that makes them hard to damage with normal weapons natively conducts any psionic radiation, causing its latticework to crack and shatter.

Mindspeech

All gemstone dragons develop telepathy as they age. Most acquire it when they are young, but the topaz dragons are born with it.

Matrix Mind

The gemstone dragons can maintain several persistent manifestations simultaneously but doing so requires expending 1 charge per manifestation at the start of each round. Damage disrupts psionic concentration just as it does a spell, but the saving throw is based on Intelligence rather than Constitution.

Emerald Dragons

One of the oldest species of gemstone dragons, the emeralds studied the lore of the sea and the unique, chaotic boundary between sea and land. It was the tide pools and estuaries that fascinated them, and they developed a theory of the timescape based on this intermingling. The Estuarial Hypothesis holds that the Mundane World lies on an interspace boundary between the worlds, and for this reason good, evil, chaos, and law all intermingle here.

Their obsession with the oceans and their unique biologies and rhythms took them into the sea until, after ten thousand generations, they were specially adapted to it. Their forelimbs atrophied until now all that remains of them are a handful of small bones that can only be seen via dissection.

Ancient Emerald Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 22 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 252 (24d20 + 0)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover), swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	24 (+7)	10 (+0)	24 (+7)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)

SAVING THROWS Dex +14, Int +14, Wis +10, Cha +13

SKILLS Arcana +14, Insight +10, Perception +10, Religion +14

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 27

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 21 (33,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 24 • **RECHARGE:** 1d10 • **FRACTURE:** 27

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Interference Aura. Enemies within 30 feet must make a DC 22 Intelligence saving throw every round to maintain spells that require concentration.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit; reach 20 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 14 (2d6+7) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. The dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- The dragon summons a water elemental.
- The dragon casts *control water* (save DC 22). It does not require concentration to maintain.
- The dragon casts *thunderwave* with DC 22. The area is a 30-foot cube, and the damage is 4d8.

Regional Effect

Intelligent creatures who sleep within 12 miles of an emerald dragon's lair dream of unending depths, tidal waves, starfish and crustaceans, or a calm sea under solid white sky with constellations under the waters.

Water dampens the dragon's mindspeech and as a result their psionics has evolved to be stronger, to pierce this liquid veil. As a side effect, an emerald dragon's mind is so powerful that it interferes with the thinking portions of other creatures' brains, making it very difficult for them to maintain concentration on their spells.

Their interest in our world and its relation to others makes them experts on the planes. Rumors speak of emerald dragons whose wings propel them naturally through the Sea of Stars that separates worlds, allowing them to travel at will to any plane. But this behavior has never been witnessed by mortals.

Adult Emerald Dragon

Huge dragon, chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 127 (17d12 + 17)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover), swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS DEX +10, INT +10, WIS +8, CHA +9

SKILLS Arcana +10, Insight +8, Perception +8, Religion +10

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 15 (13,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 17 • **RECHARGE:** 1d8 • **FRACTURE:** 19

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Interference Aura. Enemies within 30 feet must make a DC 18 Intelligence saving throw every round to maintain spells that require concentration.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit; reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 12 (2d6+5) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

Young Emerald Dragon

Large dragon, chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 91 (14d10 + 14)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover), swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +6, Int +6, Wis +5, Cha +6

SKILLS Insight +5, Perception +5

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 14 • **RECHARGE:** 1d6 • **FRACTURE:** 14

Interference Aura. Enemies within 30 feet must make a DC 14 Intelligence saving throw every round to maintain spells that require concentration.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Emerald Wyrmling

Medium dragon, chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 31 (7d8 + 0)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover), swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +4, Int +4, Wis +3, Cha +3

SKILLS Insight +3, Perception +3

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 7 • **RECHARGE:** 1d4 • **FRACTURE:** 6

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Ruby Dragons

The rubies protect the knowledge of reality, which they call *realitas*, the essential thing that separates real things from illusion.

They alone understand the danger that illusionists present to the Mundane World, because they alone know what even the most powerful spellcasters do not: illusion magic, properly applied, could replace this reality. Starve it until it withers, replace it with a phantasm. They are happy to sequester themselves from the world, locking their knowledge away. But should a sufficiently powerful illusionist catch a glimpse of the power contained within their spells, they will wake, seeking mortals to help them prevent the end of the Real. They believe that illusions are manifestations in this world of beings, objects, and power from other worlds—and that, given the chance, those alien worlds would attack ours.

They are measured and formal, slow to give trust. They like seeing things done properly, traditions obeyed and upheld. If you approach one with respect and introduce yourself properly and do not saw the air too much with your hands, then they will listen and grant you the opportunity to impress them.

Ancient Ruby Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 23 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 299 (26d20 + 26)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	26 (+8)	12 (+1)	26 (+8)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)

SAVING THROWS Dex +15, Int +15, Wis +11, Cha +14

SKILLS Arcana +15, Insight +11, Perception +11, Religion +15

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 28

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 23 (50,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 26 • **RECHARGE:** 1d10 • **FRACTURE:** 32

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Amplification Aura. Allies' spells cast within 30 feet have their saving throw DC increased by 4.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit; reach 20 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 15 (2d6+8) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. The dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- The dragon manifests *amplify* at no cost.
- The dragon manifests *the real* at no cost. It does not require concentration and lasts for 10 minutes.
- The dragon casts *dispel magic*. The spell automatically ends spells of 5th level or lower. For each spell of 6th level or higher on the target, make an ability check using the dragon's Intelligence as its spellcasting ability. The DC equals 10 + the spell's level. On a successful check, the spell ends.

Regional Effect

Intelligent creatures who sleep within 12 miles of a ruby dragon's lair dream of people they know transforming into other people, of places they've been dissolving to reveal barren wastelands.

Adult Ruby Dragon

Huge dragon, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 135 (18d12 + 18)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	22 (+6)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

SAVING THROWS Dex +11, Int +10, Wis +8, Cha +10

SKILLS Arcana +10, Insight +8, Perception +8, Religion +10

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 16 (15,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 18 • **RECHARGE:** 1d8 • **FRACTURE:** 22

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Amplification Aura. Allies' spells cast within 30 feet have their saving throw DC increased by 3.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit; reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 12 (2d6+5) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

Young Ruby Dragon

Large dragon, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 104 (16d10 + 16)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +7, Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +7

SKILLS Insight +6, Perception +6

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 16 • **RECHARGE:** 1d6 • **FRACTURE:** 16

Amplification Aura. Allies' spells cast within 30 feet have their saving throw DC increased by 2.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Ruby Wyrmling

Medium dragon, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 49 (9d8 + 9)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Dex +4, Int +4, Wis +4, Cha +4

SKILLS Insight +4, Perception +4

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 9 • **RECHARGE:** 1d4 • **FRACTURE:** 8

Amplification Aura. Allies' spells cast within 30 feet have their saving throw DC increased by 1.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

A SOUND ROARED and thrummed in their minds. But the creature in front of them was recumbent, sleeping. Still. It looked like a great beast of the plains, satiated after a long hunt.

The massive sapphire gemstones embedded in and extruding from its skin flashed and coruscated like a lightning storm, arcing along its whole body. And as the young adventurers looked around the cave, with sapphires as big as houses jutting out from all angles, some growing through each other, the jewels of the cave flashed and hummed in response. Sympathetic energies echoed from dragon to cave and back.

"Behold!" Irdizavonax said, "Corovaxinar!"

"It's huge," Credan whispered. He and his friends were bathed in deep blue light.

"It's asleep!" Wenna said.

"It is in battle," Irdizavonax said.

"Battle?!" Jeremy asked. "What...it's just lying there."

"In this realm, yes. But the Eldest are...what did Orvosortiax call it? *Realitas*? They are too real for one world alone. Corovaxinar exists simultaneously in many worlds. There's a term for the bending of the timescape back upon itself, but I won't bore you with it."

"Thank you," Meliora said darkly.

"This is an ancient dragon?" Wenna asked.

"Any category would shame it. No, I met an ancient emerald once—it wasn't like this. It could still talk and move without...endangering anyone. This is more. This is the Eldest."

"Battle." Dade watched the creature's internal lightning strikes illuminate them and the cave. "It's fighting something on some other plane."

"Better there than here!" Credan said.

"We thought we came here for answers," Jeremy said, looking at Dade.

Dade looked to the topaz dragon who'd befriended them. "But all we find is violence."

"Oh, answers often lead to violence," the topaz wyrmling sighed. "It is the way of things." They noticed, every time the eldest sapphire dragon's gemstones flashed with deep blue energy, Irdizavonax's fins and tentacles blew in an invisible wind. The light from the eldest sapphire wasn't blinding, but Irdizavonax had to squint to see through whatever powers were bleeding out of the sleeping, embattled dragon.

"I think...the same things we fought in Blackbottom...wherever they're from...that's where it," Jeremy nodded at the sleeping dragon, "is fighting."

"How did you figure that out?" Dade asked.

Jeremy shrugged. "Just seemed obvious."

"Hmhp," Irdizavonax sniffed.

"Irdy," Meliora said. The little dragon appeared to ignore her. "This is because of you, isn't it?"

"Ah, probably," the topaz wyrmling said. "I'm not a theologist, but others have suggested that we topaz were made by Ket to ah...accelerate any potential victory." The little dragon turned to Meliora and smiled. "Accelerate *you,* you might say. *Dumb* humans aren't much use to us."

"What...what happens when we're not around you anymore?" Wenna asked, gripping the handle of her lute tightly.

"You know the answer. Our name for ourselves is the Carisovantinaar. It means the Quickening of the Way. The sapphire dragons," he said, nodding to Corovaxinar, "project Awe, as is their right as the First Born. The rubies enhance arcanism, as you yourself saw, Meliora, when we fought alongside Orvosortiax.

"We topaz project...cleverness." It seemed the little dragon was amused.

"Intelligence," Dade said.

The topaz dragon looked the eldest boy—certainly a man now, after everything they'd been through—up and down. "Well that remains to be seen," he said. And Dade smiled, recognizing the joke. They'd all gotten used to the little dragon's mode of speech in the last few months.

"I don't think I like it," Meliora said.

"Now you know how I feel," Irdy said, smiling.

"What happens if we wake him up?" Wenna asked.

"Her, I think you'll find. Oh, I should think it would be the end of this reality," Irdizavonax said casually. "Or at least this version of it. Perhaps something more interesting will come along, that would be nice."

"The end..." Dade said.

"Well it's true of all the eldest. I don't mean the creatures of meat and bone you call dragons. Echoes. I mean the real thing. The chromatics, the metallics. The eldest of them sleep to protect the world—the ones remaining do, at any rate. Mostly I think the chromatics sleep because they know how angry their god would be if they dared to wake."

"But we *have* to talk to it!" Wenna said. "You saw what happened in Blackbottom! Our town may already be...be erased."

"There may be other ways." Irdizavonax's tendrils stroked his own chin in thought.

"Can't you...talk into her head?" Credan asked.

"Oh of a surety," Irdizavonax said. "But you see we jeweled dragons operate on similar wavelengths. And I am but a lowly wyrmling. Were I to attempt it...attempt it and *succeed*, she would almost certainly shatter my mind. Nothing personal, you understand." Irdy looked with some awe at the eldest sapphire. "It's just the power of it."

After a moment lost in overwhelming fascination, Irdy turned to Meliora. "I believe this is your puzzle to solve, young wizard."

Meliora shook her head. "No," she said, backing away. "Not after the Fane. Not after what that ruby dragon did to me."

Irdy's tendrils drooped. "I understand," he said. "I'm sorry."

"Wenna," Jeremy said. "Wenna, what about you?"

The young girl gripped her lute in a brief panic.

"Capital! Yes, tiny minstrel, sing us a song!" Irdy said. Wenna cast him a dark look, but without much malice. She knew the dragon liked teasing her.

Dade smiled and put a hand on her shoulder. "You don't have to, if you don't want to."

Had he not, she might have balked. But being condescended to pushed her over the edge. She jerked her shoulder away. "I want to," she said defiantly.

She tuned her lute and stepped forward. She always seemed frightened, frightened by everything, but music made her bold. Given the nature of her weapons, perhaps the boldest of them all. To face the ancient sapphire demigod, armed only with strings and a song.

The song was a trifle. Nothing like the tunes the Riojan in Blackbottom taught her. It was a folk song from home, and it made the children glad and homesick.

Before she could finish the song, a flash of sapphire energy—and a being materialized in mid-stride, walking toward them.

It was short, at least, shorter than Dade. Lithe. Humanoid in form, but otherwise an insect with brilliant, multifaceted eyes. It bore twin rapiers at its hips and wore emerald green armor that reflected light with a liquid sheen, unlike any substance they'd seen before. It reminded them of a beetle's carapace.

Its antennae curled and twitched, sensing arcane forces in the air. It seemed full of cocky confidence and daring.

"A mantis knight!" Irdy exclaimed in delight. "Oh I'd forgotten about them. Well done, old lady."

Wenna, Dade, and Jeremy had drawn their weapons. Credan started saying a prayer under his breath. Only Meliora did nothing, except wonder. She was already way ahead of them.

"This isn't real, is it?" She could tell by the way it manifested.

"Very good," Irdizavonax said with a slight bow. "Well, real is, as Orvosortiax taught you, mostly a collection of habits, and by that standard...this creature is *very* real."

The creature stopped before them and bowed, one hand flourishing before it, the opposite leg extended slightly out.

It spoke. Its voice was gay, like birdsong on a spring morning. "Corovaxinar remembers things that were, things that should have been, and things that might yet be. I am Lady Eweshtleth. I hold the honor of the Gate and the Door."

The children stared in rapt attention. Only Irdizavonax was not in awe. "They're from the Court of...well, now the Court of Arcadia, I suppose," he said. "But once the Mantis Knights were the chief lieutenants of the elves. Still are, I imagine. Somewhere."

"So this a...a memory?" Meliora asked.

"Good guess, but I don't think so. Well, maybe. Rather I suspect this is a real person who lived...or will live, displaced chronographically."

"What?" Several of the children asked.

"Oh she's from the past, probably. Or the future." When none of them spoke, Irdy took it upon himself to impress them with the gravity of the situation. "This is the power of the Eldest."

Meliora looked at the little dragon. Someday...if they succeeded, a million million years from now, Irdy would be like that massive creature slumbering before them. She wondered, privately, if the little dragon would remember them then.

"Corovaxinar welcomes you," the alien insect-woman spoke in a smooth, assured voice. Quite unlike the absentminded old professor they'd gotten used to in Irdy.

Everyone looked to Irdy, but Irdy nodded to Meliora.

"Oh. Ah. Okay, um...hello. Ah, welcome to...our world."

"A world under siege," the Mantis Knight said to Meliora. "Corovaxinar needs your help."

"We need hers," Meliora said.

"A happy mutuality of purpose," the knight said, and bowed its head, smiling.

"Oh I like her," Irdy said, turning to Dade with a smile.

"Prepare yourselves," the knight said, drawing herself up.

"Um...um for what?" Credan asked.

"The War rages. Corovaxinar's projections falter. But you are not projections."

"But we're just..." Credan gestured from Wenna to Jeremy. "Kids."

Lady Eweshtleth raised an eyebrow and one antenna twitched. "Are you now? I think not. You summoned me. You found the hidden fastness of the Eldest when none of your ilk could gain its sanctum.

"I do not wot of Men. There are none yet, in my time. Or have not been any for millennia. But I deem thee worthy, if any are."

"'If any are,'" Jeremy echoed, looking at his older brother. Dade shook his head in disbelief.

"Besides," Lady Eweshtleth said, nodding at the axe on Dade's hip, "you bear *The Edge That Severs Souls*. A weapon that would master lesser beings."

"*The Soul Carver!*" Irdizavonax exclaimed, taking a step back from Dade. "Ah yes! Many threads converge. Much that was hidden is now revealed. Hah! And to think I stood with you when you found it. Ahh, to be alive and young in such a time."

"We didn't..." Dade said, his hand on the pommel of the axe. "We don't know what that means."

"Yes well don't let that stop you, by all means. You've managed to do pretty well for yourselves knowing not much more than a bunch of farmers' sons and daughters. No reason to change tactics now."

"What..." Meliora said, taking a step toward the Mantis Knight. "Where will we be going?"

The knight cleared her throat, and a portal opened behind her. A swirling, cloudy thing. "I am the Gate and the Door," she said.

"The door to *where*?" Meliora challenged.

"The World Below," Lady Eweshtleth said. The children gasped. They suspected, they feared, but knowing it was another thing altogether.

"I don't think..." Credan put a hand on the talisman to St. Gryffyn the Stout. "I don't think St. Gryffyn can hear me there."

Lady Eweshtleth cocked her head as though listening to a voice, which she was, and nodded. "Corovaxinar will maintain the portal and act as a conduit. Your saint will hear your prayers."

"What will we find there?" Meliora asked.

Lady Eweshtleth straightened and assumed a dour persona. "Horrors," she said.

"How can we face them?" Wenna asked.

"As with all things," Lady Eweshtleth laughed, her dour demeanor gone. She placed a hand on one elven rapier. "With song, spell, and steel."

She stepped aside and gestured to the portal. Dade and Jeremy looked at each other and then started forward. The others followed.

At the edge of the portal, they stopped and looked behind them. Irdizavonax hadn't moved. Looking very small now, he stood alone.

"Aren't you coming with us?" Credan asked.

"Coming with you? Into that?" The small topaz dragon nodded at the gate. "I beg your pardon! Hardly. No, you've already got Corovaxinar on your side—I would be useless. A trifle. Besides, what use is a young sage compared with five stalwart heroes!" He was teasing them. But he really wasn't going.

Meliora walked back to him. She'd grown and was now a little taller than the topaz wyrmling. "But we need you," she said, her eyes watering.

"Ah, you *like* me, and for that am I flattered, lady. But you do not *need* me. Think back to all you've done. What hand did I play? A humble narrator, little more. It was your actions, your bravery that led you here. All I did was...explain things frankly that I don't think you needed to know."

"We'll miss you," Meliora said, her voice quiet.

"Well, I'm not going anywhere," Irdizavonax said, looking around the cave. "I'll be safe as houses here. And I'll be waiting, when you come back."

"Come on," Dade said, not unkindly.

Meliora nodded and turned. But Irdizavonax stopped her.

"Meliora," he said, and she turned back.

"To answer your question," Irdy said, walking forward. His voice in her mind was quiet. She knew only she could hear him now. "I will *always* remember you," Irdizavonax, the topaz wyrmling, said, his wide milky eyes looking up at her in wonder.

Meliora started to cry.

Irdizavonax took a step back and turned his mindspeech back up.

"Goodbye, tiny humans!" He waved to them as Meliora joined her friends, wiping her eyes with the sleeve of her robe. "And good luck."

The children stepped through the portal. Lady Eweshtleth saluted Irdizavonax with her rapier, and followed.

"I'll miss you too," Irdizavonax thought, to no one in particular.

Sapphire Dragons

Eldest, first, the sapphire dragons inspire awe in any who see them. They guard the knowledge of past and future and the power that lets one shift between them. They approve of the dwarves, who imposed the rigid rules of causality on the world, and consider the remnant domains of the elves, the wodes, as a danger. Not a *threat* per se, because they know it is in the elves' nature to ignore past and future, but when mortals exploit this or discover the means to move through time, or summon creatures from the past and future, then the sapphire dragons get riled up.

Of course, because they guard this knowledge, they are also experts on it and thus are sometimes the best sages to seek out if you are in dire need. They will aid adventurers, using their knowledge to bend the rules of the timescape if they feel the danger warrants it.

Being oldest, they are also the most reserved, taciturn. Even the young sapphires are aware of their species' place in history and expect to be treated with respect. They talk like old university professors who know they have tenure and expect everyone to hang on their every word.

Ancient Sapphire Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 23 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 350 (28d20 + 56)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	27 (+8)	14 (+2)	26 (+8)	19 (+4)	24 (+7)

SAVING THROWS Dex +15, Int +15, Wis +11, Cha +14

SKILLS Arcana +15, Insight +11, Perception +11, Religion +15

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

CONDITION IMMUNITIES stunned

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 28

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 24 (62,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 28 • **RECHARGE:** 1d10 • **FRACTURE:** 35

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Awe Aura. All creatures within 30 feet must make a DC 22 Charisma saving throw in order to attack this dragon. On a failed save, the attacking creature's turn ends immediately. On a success, that creature is immune to the Awe Aura of all gemstone dragons for 1 week.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (2d10 + 7) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d6 + 7) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit; reach 20 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 15 (2d6+8) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

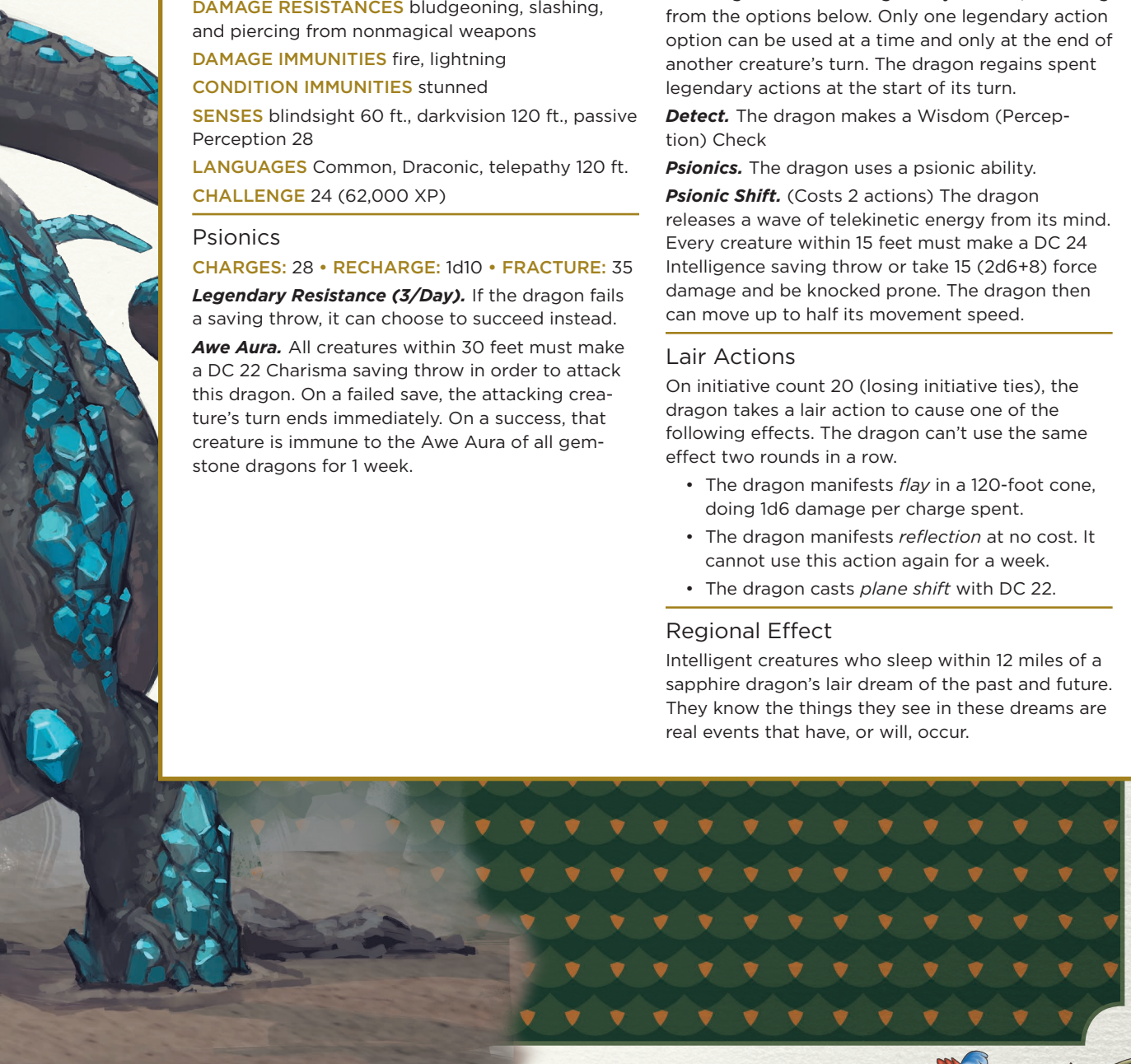
Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. The dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- The dragon manifests *flay* in a 120-foot cone, doing 1d6 damage per charge spent.
- The dragon manifests *reflection* at no cost. It cannot use this action again for a week.
- The dragon casts *plane shift* with DC 22.

Regional Effect

Intelligent creatures who sleep within 12 miles of a sapphire dragon's lair dream of the past and future. They know the things they see in these dreams are real events that have, or will, occur.



Adult Sapphire Dragon

Huge dragon, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 21 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 161 (19d12 + 38)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	23 (+6)	14 (+2)	22 (+6)	17 (+3)	22 (+6)

SAVING THROWS Dex +12, Int +12, Wis +9, Cha +12

SKILLS Arcana +12, Insight +9, Perception +9, Religion +12

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

CONDITION IMMUNITIES stunned

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 25

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 17 (18,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 19 • **RECHARGE:** 1d8 • **FRACTURE:** 23

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Awe Aura. All creatures within 30 feet must make a DC 20 Charisma saving throw in order to attack this dragon. On a failed save, the attacking creature's turn ends immediately. On a success, that creature is immune to the Awe Aura of all gemstone dragons for 1 week.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit; reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 13 (2d6+6) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

Young Sapphire Dragon

Large dragon, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 19 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 127 (17d10 + 34)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +7, Int +8, Wis +7, Cha +7

SKILLS Arcana +8, Insight +7, Perception +7, Religion +8

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 21

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 10 (5,900 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 17 • **RECHARGE:** 1d6 • **FRACTURE:** 17

Awe Aura. All creatures within 30 feet must make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw in order to attack this dragon. On a failed save, the attacking creature's turn ends immediately. On a success, that creature is immune to the Awe Aura of all gemstone dragons for 1 week.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Sapphire Wyrmling

Medium dragon, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 55 (10d8 + 10)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Dex +4, Int +4, Wis +4, Cha +4

SKILLS Insight +4, Perception +4

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 10 • **RECHARGE:** 1d4 • **FRACTURE:** 9

Awe Aura. All creatures within 30 feet must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw in order to attack this dragon. On a failed save, the attacking creature's turn ends immediately. On a success, that creature is immune to the Awe Aura of all gemstone dragons for 1 week.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

Topaz Dragons

The youngest species, the most enthusiastic about the world, the one you're most likely to meet, topaz dragons study magic obsessively, and their older kin consider this juvenile. *When you're older you'll realize magic is just ambient interference from overlapping manifolds constrained by oblique functions*. Well, poo on that, look, I made a fireball!

They're fascinated by it, and they collect scrolls and tomes like other dragons hoard gold pieces and gemstones, which the topaz dragons find vaguely threatening. Why the obsession with *gemstones* in particular? Why would you *sleep* on a bed of them if you weren't trying to make a statement? I don't sleep on a bed of *scales*. Harumph.

They all seem like absentminded professors. They accumulate so much lore that they spend all their time categorizing it, and just when they have everything neatly filed away they realize this *one* treatise doesn't fit any classification and the whole thing must be redone from scratch. Ugh. It will take millennia at this rate.

They're approachable and easy to talk to as long as you don't mind never getting a straight answer. You'd think they'd be experts on everything, considering how many books they have, but the opposite is true. They can imagine anything and defend it with references, many of which contradict each other.

Ancient Topaz Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, neutral good

ARMOR CLASS 22 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 231 (22d20 + 0)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	24 (+7)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

SAVING THROWS Dex +13, Int +12, Wis +9, Cha +11

SKILLS Arcana +12, Insight +9, Perception +9, Religion +12

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 25

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120ft.

CHALLENGE 20 (25,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 22 • **RECHARGE:** 1d10 • **FRACTURE:** 23

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Uplift Aura. All allies within 30 feet gain +6 on Intelligence tests, skill checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit; reach 20 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 13 (2d6+6) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. The dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- The dragon manifests *another world* at no cost. It affects up to four creatures.
- The dragon remembers a 5th-level spell it once researched, and casts it. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence, and the save DC to resist its spells is 21.
- The dragon remembers *counterspell* and can cast it as a reaction within the next minute. The dragon's spellcasting ability is Intelligence.

Regional Effect

Intelligent creatures who sleep within 12 miles of a topaz dragon's lair dream of ancient lore they never studied, and in these dreams they hold conversations with sages speaking languages the dreamer does not know, but in the dream can speak and understand.

Adult Topaz Dragon

Huge dragon, neutral good

ARMOR CLASS 19 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 104 (16d12 + 0)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	21 (+5)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Dex +10, Int +9, Wis +7, Cha +9

SKILLS Arcana +9, Insight +7, Perception +7, Religion +9

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 14 (11,500 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 16 • **RECHARGE:** 1d8 • **FRACTURE:** 13

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Uplift Aura. All allies within 30 feet gain +4 on Intelligence checks, skill checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit; reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 11 (2d6+4) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

Young Topaz Dragon

Large dragon, neutral good

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 71 (13d10 + 0)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Dex +5, Int +5, Wis +4, Cha +5

SKILLS Arcana +5, Insight +4, Perception +4, Religion +5

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 13 • **RECHARGE:** 1d6 • **FRACTURE:** 10

Uplift Aura. All allies within 30 feet gain +2 on Intelligence checks, skill checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d10 + 2) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Topaz Wyrmling

Medium dragon, neutral good

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 27 (6d8 + 0)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +3, Int +3, Wis +2, Cha +3

SKILLS Arcana +3, Insight +2, Perception +2, Religion +3

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 2 (450 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 6 • **RECHARGE:** 1d4 • **FRACTURE:** 5

Uplift Aura. All allies within 30 feet gain +1 on Intelligence checks, skill checks, and saving throws.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

Amethyst Dragons

The renegades of the jeweled dragons, the amethyst dragons seek new knowledge and so manipulate mortals to do dangerous, even deadly things in order to push the boundary of the known.

The other gemstone dragons are aware of this dangerous obsession but turn a blind eye to it. Perhaps they're afraid of meddling, or perhaps they look forward to benefitting from the new lore produced this way, without having to get their hands dirty.

The amethyst are sinister, manipulating, and scheming. They enjoy using the psionic manifestation *form* (Not all known manifestations are listed here.) to disguise themselves as mortals and infiltrate colleges of wizardry and sorcery. They have no feeling or remorse for mortals and willingly drive them and ultimately sacrifice them if it means learning something new about the fabric of the timescape.

When encountered, they are often conciliatory, deferent. They want to put you at ease to catch you off guard. They are helpful, they *love* helping mortals, they love making mortals trust them, because it is a short path from trust to dependence. They cannot be trusted.

Ancient Amethyst Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 22 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 276 (24d20 + 24)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	25 (+7)	12 (+1)	26 (+8)	16 (+3)	23 (+6)

SAVING THROWS Dex +14, Int +15, Wis +10, Cha +13

SKILLS Arcana +15, Insight +10, Perception +10, Religion +15

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 27

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 22 (41,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 24 • **RECHARGE:** 1d10 • **FRACTURE:** 27

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Feedback Aura. Each time the dragon takes damage, all creatures within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 23 Intelligence saving throw or else take 14 (4d6) psychic damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit; reach 20 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 15 (2d6+8) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. The dragon can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- The dragon manifests *believe* at no cost.
- The dragon manifests forget at no cost. If it forces the target to forget a spell, the dragon knows that spell and can cast it using Intelligence as its spellcasting ability, with a DC of 23.
- The dragon manifests an illusion of a shifting battlefield. The terrain within 30 feet of it is considered difficult terrain until the end of the dragon's next turn.

Regional Effect

Intelligent creatures who sleep within 12 miles of an amethyst dragon's lair dream of an opulent party with a charming host to whom they willingly and happily reveal their deepest secrets.

Adult Amethyst Dragon

Huge dragon, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 135 (18d12 + 18)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

SAVING THROWS Dex +10, Int +10, Wis +8, Cha +10

SKILLS Arcana +10, Insight +8, Perception +8, Religion +10

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, lightning

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 16 (15,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 18 • **RECHARGE:** 1d8 • **FRACTURE:** 21

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Feedback Aura. Each time the dragon takes damage, all creatures within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence saving throw or else take 10 (3d6) psychic damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit; reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) Check

Psionics. The dragon uses a psionic ability.

Psionic Shift. (Costs 2 actions) The dragon releases a wave of telekinetic energy from its mind. Every creature within 15 feet must make a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or take 12 (2d6+5) force damage and be knocked prone. The dragon then can move up to half its movement speed.

Young Amethyst Dragon

Large dragon, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 97 (15d10 + 15)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +7, Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +7

SKILLS Insight +6, Perception +6

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 15 • **RECHARGE:** 1d6 • **FRACTURE:** 18

Feedback Aura. Each time the dragon takes damage, all creatures within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or else take 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Amethyst Wyrmling

Medium dragon, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 36 (8d8 + 0)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +4, Int +4, Wis +3, Cha +3

SKILLS Insight +3, Perception +3

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES psychic

SENSES blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Psionics

CHARGES: 8 • **RECHARGE:** 1d4 • **FRACTURE:** 7

Feedback Aura. Each time the dragon takes damage, all creatures within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence saving throw or else take 3 (1d6) psychic damage.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

GEMSTONE DRAGONBORN

Much rarer than their metallic or chromatic cousins, the gemstone dragonborn are the result of powerful rituals. They are proud of their heritage. Because the gemstone dragons are rare, so rare as to be considered mythical, it's not unusual for their humanoid descendants to pursue a great quest to find their ultimate progenitor...or just *any* gemstone dragon, to get a sense of where they came from and prove the jeweled dragons are real.

GEMSTONE TRAITS

Your gemstone ancestry is obvious to anyone who looks at you. You bear multifaceted crystals embedded in your scales, and your eyes are solid gemstones. In times of extreme emotion—the specific emotion varies from individual to individual—your gemstones flare with light.

Ability Score Increase: Your Intelligence increases by 2, and your Wisdom by 1.

Age: Gemstone dragonborn mature quickly; their reptilian ancestry produces children who can walk and talk only a few months after birth. They reach adulthood at the age of seven and live to be around 115, longer than their cousins.

Alignment: Gemstone dragonborn trend toward neutral alignments, but are free-thinking creatures able to choose their own path.

Size: Gemstone dragonborn are on average as tall as a normal human, which means other dragonborn tower over them.

Speed: Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Crystal Armor: Gemstone dragonborn pride themselves on the vibrant, glowing crystals embedded in their skin. The gems fuel their limited psionic abilities and grant them a natural armor bonus. They gain a +1 bonus to AC.

Limited Psionics: You have 4 psionic charges, which refresh when you finish a long rest. You know *flay* and *amplify*. At your GM's discretion, you may learn more through adventuring and research. The DC for your psionic saving throws equals 8 + your Intelligence modifier + your proficiency bonus.

Languages: You can read, speak, and write Common and Draconic. You can hear the murmurs of gemstone dragon mindspeech within 1 mile.

"WE ARE THE Inexorables," the machine-thing said. "We cannot be corrupted."

"I know. You said that before. But...I didn't summon you this time." Credan was bolder than his companions had seen before. This was his realm, his business, and when it came to calling on his saint, he was on more secure ground. "What are you...why now? What...?"

"There has been a disruption. The Law of Time has been violated. I repair."

"The Law of Time? I...we don't understand."

"No. It defines you. The sword does not know the meaning of steel."

"It's talking about Ryllach," Wenna said. "Aren't you? You mean the Monarchon."

"The servants of Val are agents of chaos. The act that one took was a violation. I repair."

"You *repair*? What does that mean?"

"I repair."

"It means it's going to kill Ryllach." Dade fingered the arrows in the quiver on his hip.

"No," Meliora said, gripped with terrible knowledge. "It means it's going to undo what the Monarchon did. It's going to put time back the way it was."

The children stood rooted to the spot. Horrified by what that meant. "But I..." Jeremy said. "We don't even..."

Meliora stepped forward. Confronted the Inexorable. "We don't even know what the Law of Time is, how can we be bound to it? How can Ryllach have saved us—she saved the *world*—how can that be possible if you're right? If there *is* a Law of Time, how did the Monarchon do what she did?"

"Time is inexorable." The machine-man of glass and mirror-polished steel didn't move.

"Irdy, do something," Meliora muttered toward the topaz dragon.

"By all means! Actually I think you were on rather the right track there. Just have to speak its language, as they say."

The dragon floated forward, its little hands wringing, its legs tucked underneath it. "You are the Inexorable of Time."

"The Law of Time is inexorable."

"Quite. Where are you from?"

"The third city of Ordos."

"And *where* is Ordos?" Irdy said. The little dragon's telekinesis had lifted it up until Irdy was face to face with the Inexorable.

"Ordos is the capital of Axiom."

Irdy turned to the gathered children. "The Plane of Uttermost Law."

The topaz wyrmling turned back and continued his inquisition while the children watched in rapt attention.

"This is not Axiom. This is the Mundane World, and here law and chaos exist side by side."

"Nevertheless."

Irdy floated forward, almost nose to...faceplate with the machine.

"Consider, Inexorable, that no one here summoned you. No mortal brought you here. And you didn't come here of your own accord. Is it not *possible* that some other agent, some other power, summoned you *on purpose* to disrupt our plans?"

The Inexorable appeared to tense, but otherwise did not move.

"What would you call that? Trying to disrupt this world, its natural balance, what do they call that in the city of Ordos?"

The Inexorable looked at the children, who were afraid but standing their ground.

"Chaos," the Inexorable said, unable to contain the hate it felt for the idea.

"And *if* you were manipulated—" Meliora took her place besides Irdizavonax. "—*if* your presence on this plane, in our world, is a deliberate deceit designed to advance *chaos*, then what would your purpose dictate?"

The thing didn't move for several moments. Then its head, banded by a thin black stripe where its eyes would be, turned and look left and right, as though seeing the world for the first time.

It regarded Meliora again. "Such a power...if it existed...must be neutralized...with extreme prejudice."

Meliora cocked an eyebrow. "Want some help?"

Time clenched its fists. "Yes," it said.

Meliora turned her back to the machine and faced her friends, a lopsided smile on her face. None of them could remember the last time she smiled.

"Alright," she said. "He's on our side now."

THE INEXORABLES

The Inexorables—the Knights of Axiom, the plane of uttermost law—arrive at the summons of those devoted to opposing chaos.

Each Inexorable is charged with enforcing one of the Laws that bind the universe together. They don't bother explaining this, and the nature of these laws and the Inexorables themselves remains a mystery to most mortals, few of whom have ever heard of the Law of Time—or the Law of Death.

Like the Celestial Court, the Inexorables do not have distinct psychologies, being more a manifestation of a deity. So while they can and do speak, it's not clear what their intention in the Mundane World is. They hate the violation of law, this much is clear, but their notion of what counts as a "law" is alien to mortal minds.

How many Inexorables there are, no one knows. Only those who have visited the Five Cities of Ordos, the capital city of Axiom, can say. It is known that there are Inexorables greater and lesser than those described here. Probably there's an Inexorable for the Law of Whichever Side of the USB Cable You Try First Will Always Be the Wrong Side, but it'd be like CR 1/2 and probably an adorable little maniac.

The Inexorables are primarily infantry, eschewing ranged attacks, which limits them severely. The flip side of this is: they're very easy to run.

Magic Is Chaos

Each Inexorable has their own Law, and there are many Laws. But one force the Inexorables universally hate is magic. Magic is chaos made manifest. Magic is the tool chaos uses to disrupt the world.

Almost all the Inexorables are vulnerable to magic. It interferes with the perfect order of their logic and, moreover, it *offends* them. Its existence is anathema. Some Inexorables, however, can overcome this revulsion and maintain their purpose in the face of discord.

Inexorable

The forces of Law that grant the Inexorables the power to travel the planes, arriving when summoned to repair the damaged fabric of reality, also prevent their duty from being interfered with. When it comes to denying the Inexorables the opportunity to pursue their purpose, even the chaos of magic cannot stop them. The Inexorables are immune to any effects that would slow them or deny them actions or movement.

Space

The Inexorable limitations of Space forbid anyone from moving from point A to point Z without passing through the rest of the alphabet. Certainly nothing as vulgar as *teleportation* is allowed on Axiom.

"The fundamental theorem forbids," is a common refrain whenever Space prevents someone from moving in a manner contrary to the strict laws of motion. A creature under the effect of a *haste* spell, for instance, gains all the benefits of *haste* except for the extra movement. They may attack, hide, or use an object, but cannot take a second movement action and dash or disengage.

Space allows a second attack, or a second use of an item, because those are in the purview of Time. And Time may do what is necessary to enforce its Law.

Tactics: Space is the light infantry of the Inexorables, and pretty easy to use in combat. Fast like all the Knights of Axiom, Space uses its 40 feet of movement to get where it needs to be, to bludgeon its enemies. It prefers to focus on spellcasters but obeys the commands of the creature who summoned it.

Space

Medium construct, lawful

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 112 (15d8 + 45)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 feet, passive Perception 16

LANGUAGES all those of the creature who summoned it

CHALLENGE 5 (1,800 XP)

The Law of Motion. No enemies within 60 feet can gain the benefit of magical movement.

Chaos Vulnerability. The Inexorables have disadvantage on all saving throws against spells.

Inexorable. The Inexorables are immune to any effects that would slow them or deny them actions or movement.

Actions

Multiattack. Space makes three slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Death

"This microstate partition lacks sufficient entropy. I will repair."

All things must end. The Inexorability of Death is not concerned exclusively with ending life—its purview covers *all things*. Civilizations, ideas, stories. All things end.

Death does not *cause* this ending, it *enforces* it. It arrives ready to stop something or someone trying to undo the Law of Death. Therefore, it focuses most on the undead, on those things persisting after their natural end.

It also has the power to prevent a creature from meeting its end before its time. Why it is granted the power to use magic, when magic is chaos and therefore anathema to the Inexorables, is a question Death does not know the answer to. It only knows it can prevent.

Tactics: This thing is powerful, but not hard to run. Its Law of Death radiates damage to undead, and its Death to Undeath ability has an obvious use. But if there aren't any undead around, it'll happily wade into combat for you, just smashing things with its hammer-like fists.

Death

Medium construct, lawful

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 112 (15d8 + 45)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 feet, passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES all those of the creature who summoned it

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

The Law of Death. At the start of each of Death's turns, undead within 10 feet of it take 10 force damage.

Chaos Vulnerability. The Inexorables have disadvantage on all saving throws against spells.

Inexorable. The Inexorables are immune to any effects that would slow them or deny them actions or movement.

Innate Spellcasting. Death's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day: *death ward*

Actions

Multiattack. Death makes three slam attacks or makes one slam attack and one Death to Undeath attack.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Death to Undeath. Death points at an undead creature within 60 feet. The target must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or take 33 (6d10) force damage. On a successful save, the target takes half that damage.

Change

A close cousin to the Inexorables of Death and Fate, the Law of Change states that what has been done cannot be undone. Change opposes any magical attempt to reverse what is done, such as using magical healing to close a wound. *"You cannot rewrite the world."*

Of course, Change knows who its master is, and being more sophisticated and complex in its order than either Space or Death, Change can make subtle distinctions between friends and foes. The null-entropy field that prevents magical healing near Change only works on enemies.

> "Lore is a tool. A tool used in the advancement of chaos must be stopped. But the pious do work with lore that benefits order. This I can ignore."

Tactics: Change is more versatile than its simpler cousins. Its javelin grants it facility in both melee and ranged, something neither Space nor Death has. It's still not the powerhouse Time and Will[6] are, but the laws that govern the multiverse are obscure for a reason.

Change

Medium construct, lawful

ARMOR CLASS 18 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 120 (16d8 + 48)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 feet, passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES all those of the creature who summoned it

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

The Law of Change. Enemies with 10 feet cannot benefit from magical healing.

Chaos Vulnerability. The Inexorables have disadvantage on all saving throws against spells.

Inexorable. The Inexorables are immune to any effects that would slow them or deny them actions or movement.

Actions

Multiattack. Change makes three javelin attacks.

Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

6 Will is the Prime Inexorable who cannot be summoned by these rules and therefore is not listed here.

Fate

The Law of Fate forces events to have predetermined outcomes whether you like it or not. There is no chance when Fate is present. All things proceed as the universe intends, and neither good nor bad luck is possible.

There is no Inexorable of Luck. Luck is a force of Chaos. Fate is its enemy. Chance is the enemy of Fate.

Armed with the Destiny Light, Fate inflicts perfect order on her enemies. Those who fail their saving throw against the beam may still be very effective in combat, as they no longer need worry about rolling poorly...or well. All things thereafter proceed in a perfectly ordered fashion.

Tactics: Depending on the battle, and the enemies you're fighting, forcing them to make all attacks with a 10 result on their die may mean they simply can't hit your more heavily armored allies. *Or* they can't miss, so be careful with where you position Fate.

The Destiny Light makes an enemy always do average damage if they fail their save. This is incredibly useful against boss monsters with attacks that combine many dice and will give players a lot more certainty about what it can do. They will know, for instance, how many more successful attacks they can weather.

Because Fate does not use dice (see *The Law of Fate*, below) there may be enemies Fate simply cannot hit. Fate is not omniscient though and won't know that until it tests an enemy. Once it fails to hit, it won't attack the same enemy again.

Fate

Medium construct, lawful

ARMOR CLASS 19 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 136 (16d8 + 64)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 feet, passive Perception 15

LANGUAGES all those of the creature who summoned it

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

The Law of Fate. Fate does not make attack rolls, always using as 12 as its result (before applying bonuses) and cannot be affected by advantage or disadvantage. Fate does not roll damage, instead always taking the average result, though damage dice are listed so the average can be calculated.

Chaos Vulnerability. The Inexorables have disadvantage on all saving throws against spells

Inexorable. The Inexorables are immune to any effects that would slow them or deny them actions or movement.

Actions

Multiattack. Fate makes three slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

The Destiny Light (Recharge 5–6). Fate fires a beam of Destiny Light at a target it can see within 60 feet. The target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 36 (8d8) necrotic damage, and it only deals average damage and uses 10 for its attack rolls (before bonuses) for the next 10 minutes. On a successful save, it takes half as much damage, and its attack and damage rolls are not affected.

Time

Time is something of the hypocrite among the Inexorables, perfectly happy to speed things up for *itself* while denying that same ability to anyone else. Many of the Inexorables don't mind if their *allies* bend the rules so long as their enemies toe the line, and if this seems like commentary on the nature of law and how it tends to be applied, *of course it is*. Or is it? Maybe it's the opposite.

Time enforces the rules of causality and ensures the past remains *firmly* behind the future in spite of attempts by creatures like the elves to muddy the waters. The Inexorable of Time *really* doesn't like elves, by the way. The elves have an annoying habit of ignoring causality altogether.

Tactics: Time prevents enemies from taking bonus actions or reactions, which is very useful for players who want to maneuver around enemies without suffering attacks of opportunity. Like most of the Knights of Axiom, Time lacks ranged weapons and thus is barely effective against flying enemies, but if its target is on the ground, it is going to pummel the thing into oblivion. Between Haste and Time Is Inexorable, Time can act many times, moving around enemies while denying them opportunity attacks, and it can attack seven times! Time prefers to focus on those enemies benefitting from Haste or who act on turns other than their own. And elves, of course.

Time

Large construct, lawful

ARMOR CLASS 19 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 161 (17d10 + 68)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 feet, passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES all those of the creature who summoned it

CHALLENGE 9 (5,000 XP)

The Law of Time. Enemies within 15 feet cannot take bonus actions or reactions.

Chaos Vulnerability. The Inexorables have disadvantage on all saving throws against spells.

Inexorable. The Inexorables are immune to any effects that would slow them or deny them actions or movement.

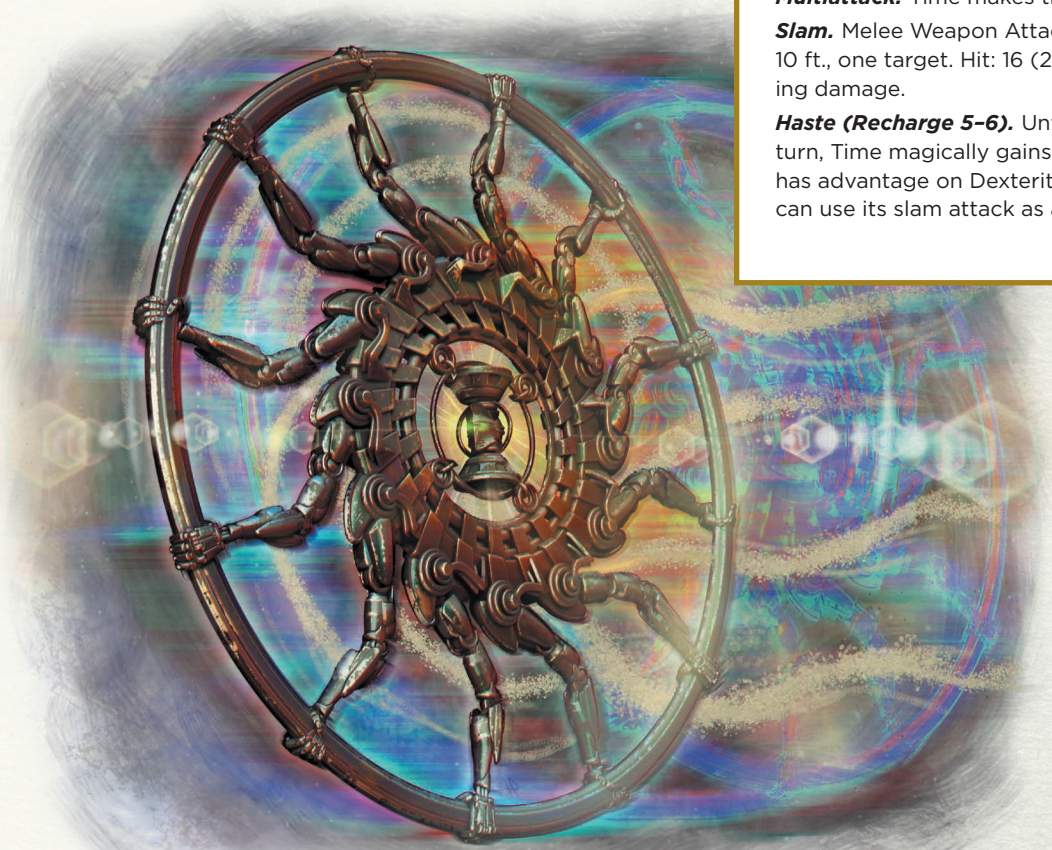
Time Is Inexorable (Recharge 6). At the end of the round, after all creatures have acted, Time takes another turn.

Actions

Multiattack. Time makes three slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Haste (Recharge 5–6). Until the end of its next turn, Time magically gains a +2 bonus to its AC, has advantage on Dexterity saving throws, and can use its slam attack as a bonus action.

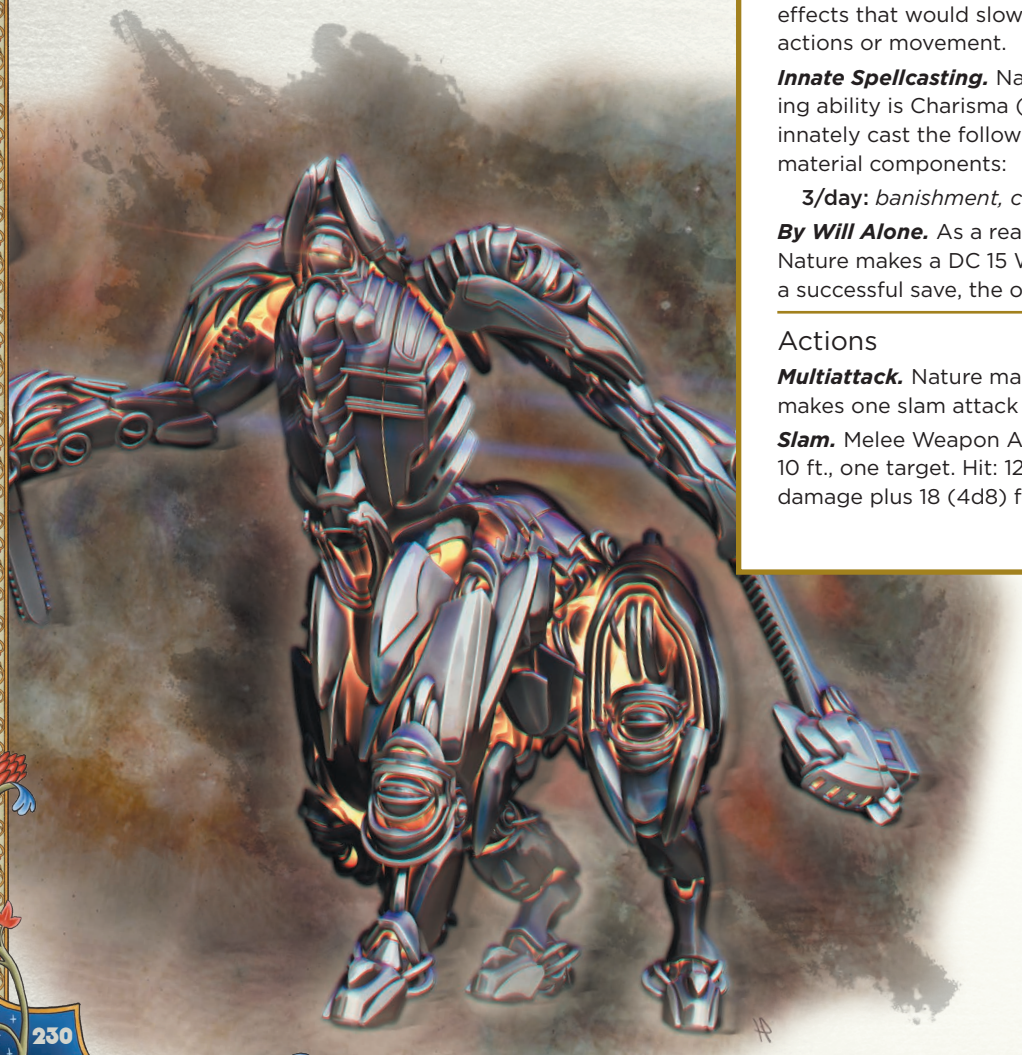


Nature

Chief amongst the Knights of Axiom is Nature. The Law of Nature states that all actions must proceed according to the fundamental axioms of the universe.. Magic is a tool used by those who would bypass those laws and act on the world using their will alone. This cannot be permitted. Nature can reflexively attempt to counter a spell as it's being cast, pointing at the caster and bellowing, "OBEY!" or "CONFORM!"

Nature has no particular interest in the local phenomenon humans call "nature." Plants and streams and such. To the Inexorables, "Nature" is stars and elementary particles. The world Men inhabit is messy but legal as far as the Inexorables are concerned. Until someone starts using magic.

Tactics: Nature's *counterspell* reaction has a range of 60 feet, so Nature can pummel easy-to-reach enemies while keeping tabs on enemy wizards and denying them their spells. Nature also abhors creatures who travel to other planes under their own power, especially fiends and members of the Court of All Flesh, whom the Inexorables hate above all others.



Nature

Large construct, lawful

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 190 (20d10 + 80)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

SAVING THROWS Str +9, Dex +4, Con +8, Wis +8, Cha +9

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

SENSES truesight 60 feet, passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES all those of the creature who summoned it

CHALLENGE 10 (5,900 XP)

The Law of Nature. Allies within 20 feet have advantage on all saving throws.

Inexorable. The Inexorables are immune to any effects that would slow them or deny them actions or movement.

Innate Spellcasting. Nature's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day: *banishment, counterspell*

By Will Alone. As a reaction to missing an attack, Nature makes a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, the original attack is successful.

Actions

Multiattack. Nature makes two slam attacks or makes one slam attack and casts *banishment*.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) force damage.

Warfare

Large-scale battles have been part of the fantasy genre since Tolkien invented it in 1937 with *The Hobbit* and the Battle of Five Armies but, tellingly, that entire battle happens offscreen while Bilbo is knocked out.

Like that battle, warfare in the game has always been something the GM was expected to handwave away. And that's fine for the core game—it has enough to cover just managing skirmishes and everything else that can happen in an RPG. It's up to supplements like this to cover that material.

Raising an army is a meaningful part of this book, and it plays heavily into the next book, *Kingdoms & Warfare*. Building a stronghold is only the beginning. The region around the stronghold becomes your demesne, and you might want to grow it beyond a single province and gain more power and influence. And in any event, as a GM I've always assumed the last step in acquiring a stronghold is *defending it in battle against those who would take it from you*.

To this end, we present a system for resolving epic battles featuring hundreds or thousands of combatants on a side. Since that system gets an entire book after this one, we present only those bits you'll need to get the job done.

Not a Wargame

One core assumption of this system is: 5th Edition players are already playing a very complex game and should not be expected to *also* play a whole other wargame.

You may disagree with that. You might think that having a complete, robust, epic-scale miniatures wargame for 5th Edition would be keen. And I would agree with you! But you and I are not the only people to consider.

Because every table I've played at had one or two players who loved wargames, one or two who didn't feel strongly about them one way or the other, and one or two who really didn't want to play a wargame of any sort. They showed up to play *their character* and had no interest in running an army.

This system, therefore, is opt-in. You can award your players units, they can hire mercenary units, they can build a stronghold and attract units, and they may use them in battle. But a player who finds warfare distasteful can literally ignore it all, and while the other players are commanding an army, they'll just be playing their characters.

While you can use this system all by itself to resolve a battle—or use the rules in **Appendix: Simple Warfare** (page 241) for something even faster and more streamlined—this system assumes a battle (clash of armies) takes place at the **same time** as an encounter (PCs fighting monsters and bad guys). While the heroes fight the villains in the castle courtyard, their armies clash outside.

Heavily Abstracted

This system deploys a lot of jargon that evokes the feel of real strategy and tactics—"heavy infantry," "flanking," "morale"—and those terms all have real mechanical meaning. But we don't track position at all. The Order of Battle (page 239) describes which units that a unit can legally attack, but **the physical positions of your units are entirely abstract**. The armies clash outside the castle walls, or over the nearby hill, or along the road leading to the town, but we don't worry about where the units are standing, or how far away they are from each other, or which unit is next to which. We presume the armies know how to do their job and are doing their best to maintain position and carry out orders.

Likewise, **we do not track individual soldiers** nor do we worry overmuch about exactly how big a unit is. The typical Medium Infantry unit is assumed to be 100 soldiers, give or take. A group of 12 knights could be a unit unto themselves, and they would have very good stats indeed, but a very small casualty die (probably a d4, see **The Casualty Die** on page 242).

Individuals Don't Matter

Every time I release a mass combat system, going all the way back to 2002, there's always a vocal minority of people arguing that their 5th-level wizard with a *potion of fly* should be able to single-handedly obliterate an enemy army.

I know that sounds like I'm exaggerating, but that's a real example of a complaint that stuck in my head.

It's perfectly reasonable in an RPG about heroic fantasy to expect your hero to be the key figure in a war. But in my opinion, if that's the kind of game you want to run...you don't really need a system for warfare. If you're running a game where the outcome of an entire war depends on the actions of one character or a small group...you've got a whole fantasy RPG for that! That sounds like a great adventure!

There are plenty of examples of this in the canon. WWII was certainly a war, but WWII movies aren't about armies—they're about small groups of heroes who alone make the difference. An RPG party, in other

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words. Look ye to *The Dirty Dozen* or *Where Eagles Dare* or *Inglorious Basterds*.

Instead we accept that warfare in the game is *essentially* the same as real medieval warfare, and the existence of wizards and clerics doesn't render armies obsolete—because, again, if that is your philosophy, you don't need rules—it just makes armies *more interesting*.

The Army that Holds Morale Holds the Field

All commanders yearn for a tactical masterpiece, a la the Battle of Cannae, whereby through careful planning, expert maneuvering, and a little luck, one side executes a perfect encirclement of the other.

But even under these ideal conditions, the battle isn't won when the last soldier is killed—that is a deeply ahistorical notion. The battle is over as soon as one army *breaks morale and runs*. Archeological diggings bear this out: the heaviest casualties were not inflicted on the site of the battle, but along the path of the fleeing army.

So, *morale* is critical. Every unit has a **Morale** score—its ability to deal with adversity and the unexpected without freaking out. Your units will make *lots* of Morale checks, and failing a Morale check is just as devastating to a unit as its soldiers dying.

This is something all field commanders quickly learn: Killing a soldier with sword or pike is long, dangerous, bloody business. But if you can cause a soldier to panic, if you can convince them the battle is lost before it's begun, if you can throw their unit into disarray, then you have won.

A soldier who quits the field and runs away is tactically no different than a dead soldier. Neither contributes their might to their unit anymore, and the unit is diminished as a result. If enough soldiers panic and flee, the unit disbands. An entire unit can be annihilated without a soldier ever dying. Because a unit is not merely a collection of soldiers—it is their ability to move, take orders, and fight in a coordinated fashion. Attack that ability, and you attack the unit.

The good news is, soldiers who run away actually do live to fight another day, and units that break morale in one battle *can*, under certain circumstances, be reformed to fight in the next battle.

ANATOMY OF A UNIT

Your army is made up of units. Each unit has a card with stats, and its status is tracked with a **casualty die**. Let's take a look at a typical unit card.

IRONHEART DEFENDERS

DWARF SEASONED MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: 470

ATTACK:	+4	**DEFENSE:**	13
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	13
MORALE:	+4	**SIZE:**	1d6

TRAITS

Made of Sterner Stuff. Enemy battle magic has disadvantage on power checks.

That Just Made Them Angry. While diminished, this unit has advantage on attack checks. Enemy power tests against this unit have disadvantage.

ORDERS

Stand Your Ground! Once per battle, for the next round all successful enemy power checks against this unit must be rerolled.

Lots to unpack here—let's take it from the top.

Name and Keywords

Every unit has an evocative **name**. *The Ironheart Defenders*. *The Blood Moon Infantry*. *The 7th Imperial Legion*. These names are purely flavor.

Our *Ironheart Defenders* have the following **keywords**: *Dwarf* (ancestry), *Seasoned* (experience), *Medium* (equipment), and *Infantry* (type). Each keyword has an associated chart (See Creating Your Own Units, page 235) showing you which bonuses you get from each keyword.

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Ancestry

You can find a chart listing several likely ancestries you might need and the unit bonuses they confer on page 235. Any ancestry you find in the core rules, any species or monster, *could* be fielded as a unit, and *Kingdoms & Warfare* will list many more. My players once fought an army composed of jellies and oozes when they failed to stop the cults in the *Temple of Primordial Chaos*.

Our sample unit is of Dwarf ancestry, which determines its basic stats.

Experience

Experience describes both how much fighting the unit has seen and how well trained they are. The levels of experience are:

- **Green:** Soldiers with any training, but who have seen no action. Levies who survive a battle automatically convert into Green Infantry.
- **Regular:** Normal soldiers. A unit of volunteers who've been well trained by seasoned commanders can begin as Regular, and a typical large army is mostly composed of Regular units.
- **Seasoned:** Troops who've seen more than one battle and lived to tell the tale. Well versed in warfare, probably been exposed to stuff that really challenged their morale, like battle magic.
- **Veteran:** Troops who have seen several battles and know what to expect in warfare. They are resilient and versed in tactics used to break morale.
- **Elite:** Soldiers who haven't just seen a lot of battle and survived, but have trained and executed complex maneuvers under extraordinary conditions. Elite troops require a degree of flexibility in thinking and improvisation rarely found in normal soldiers, even veterans.
- **Super-elite:** The most highly trained and battle-hardened units. These are typically shock troops, orders of knights on horseback. Small units capable of surviving for long periods behind enemy lines.

Experience affects a unit's **Attack** (their ability to successfully execute an offensive maneuver) as well as their **Toughness** (their ability to withstand a successful attack without taking casualties). But mostly a unit's experience affects their **Morale**: their ability to withstand punishment and endure confusion on the battlefield without becoming afraid or—just as bad—getting so disorganized that they can no longer fight effectively.

Our Ironheart Defenders are Seasoned, which means they are not only well trained, but they've served in combat and survived. But there are three more levels of experience above that!

Equipment

How heavily armed and armored is the unit? The ranks are:

- **Light:** Leather or no armor. Some troops are lightly armored because they're peasants. Some are lightly armored because it grants them greater mobility, allowing them to be deployed quickly into a distant battle.
- **Medium:** Hide or a chain shirt.
- **Heavy:** Breastplate and shield, or chain mail. Maybe ring mail—we don't get really picky about exactly where each armor combo falls on this scale.
- **Super-heavy:** Full plate mail, heavy weapons, and the training to use them effectively.

Equipment grants bonuses to the unit's **Power** (the effectiveness of their weapons) and **Toughness** (their ability to withstand a successful attack without suffering casualties).

Our Ironheart Defenders are Medium, which means they're probably wearing chain shirts, which is pretty typical for dwarf units. They don't like wearing light armor.

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Type

What kind of unit is this? How does it fight? More than any of the other keywords, type defines the unit and affects all of its stats. It also defines which units are legal targets, as described in the Order of Battle (page 239).

- **Levies:** Unsoldiers. Levies have no experience level and always have Light equipment. They are peasants forced to fight by cruel masters, or willing to fight to defend their land. They're basically crap at everything, but they perform a critical function: they absorb casualties, allowing your better-trained units to keep fighting longer. If they survive, they can become Green Infantry!

  Levies usually disband after a couple days' battles. They do not stick around for weeks waiting to fight, they have farms to tend. Once they disband, must convince them to fight all over again. You cannot pay upkeep to maintain them as a standing army.
- **Infantry:** The meat (possibly literally, depending on whom you're fighting) and potatoes of your army. Very limited in whom they can attack.
- **Archers:** *Typically* archers. Could be javelin-throwers if you're talking Bronze Age dudes. Can basically attack anyone.
- **Cavalry:** Highly mobile troops deployed to flank the enemy and hit them where they're not defended.
- **Airborne:** Flying units! That's right!
- **Fortifications:** Keeps, towers, and temples are all fortifications (see **Strongholds as Fortifications** on page 9), but so too can a hill or a wall be one. Any terrain feature one side can defend or occupy. Typically, defending a fortification grants the defending units a Morale bonus.
- **Siege Engines:** Typically catapults and trebuchets, but also monsters like treants, if pressed into service.

Our dwarves are Infantry, which is pretty typical for them. Dwarves have an aversion to riding on anything taller than them and tend to consider most missile weapons cowardly.

Now that we know what Dwarf Seasoned Medium Infantry is—a unit of dwarves, on foot, carrying medium gear, who've seen a lot of battle—let's look at what their stats mean.

SIZE

How big, in numbers, is your unit? This is the unit's **Size**, which is represented by a **casualty die** placed on its unit card. A unit begins a battle with its casualty die on its highest face (e.g., "6" for a d6, "8" for a d8). A unit's die is **decremented**—reduced by one—each time it fails a Morale check and each time an attacker succeeds on a Power check against it.

Your army only has one card for a given unit. So if your army has a lot of Regular Heavy Human Infantry, to pick a random example, you won't have several cards all with the same stats. Instead, that unit gets a larger casualty die. The largest casualty die is a d20, which represents a very large unit[7] that can suffer many casualties before it breaks or is slaughtered.

ATTACK AND DEFENSE

When your unit attacks an enemy unit, you roll a d20[8] and add your unit's **Attack**. To succeed on the attack, the result of your roll must equal or exceed the enemy's **Defense**, a measure of both the quality of their gear and their relevant training.

POWER AND TOUGHNESS

If your unit succeeds on its attack, it's time to see whether your unit is strong enough, and well-trained enough, to inflict meaningful casualties.

Any successful attack will have *some* consequences, but when you're dealing with hundreds of soldiers, one or two of them dying isn't significant. **Toughness** represents both their literal physical toughness and the quality of their gear. A successful Power check against a unit means they will suffer enough casualties to decrement the casualty die and, depending on the shape the unit is in, this may cause a Morale check!

MORALE

Morale is a unit's most important stat, since lots of things in battle can prompt a Morale check. Unit abilities or battle magic that forces a Morale check will list the DC in the text of the ability or spell. If your unit is diminished (page 240), just taking casualties can prompt a Morale check.

Failing a Morale check decrements the unit's casualty die. As far as your unit's effectiveness is concerned, there's no difference between losing morale and losing soldiers.

NO HIT POINTS

Your character will be attacked many times over the course of an encounter. Some attacks miss, some hit.

The same is true for the units in your army.

7 Blimey.

8 Units can experience Advantage and Disadvantage just like characters.

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A hit does not always mean your character dies, though. Each attack roll begets a damage roll, and it is only after *many* successful attack rolls and *many* damage rolls that your character finally drops.

The same is true for the units in your army.

But because A: you are already playing a character with hit points and doing math every time you take damage and B: you're maybe running *several* units at once, we do not burden you with doing math over and over again for your character *and* all your units.

Instead, a successful attack check against a unit prompts a **power check**, in which the attacking unit checks to see "Was the strength of our attack enough to overcome the enemy's Toughness?"

A common reaction to this system is "Why are there two attack rolls?" There aren't! There's one attack roll and one damage roll. There's just no *math* associated with the damage roll.

CREATING YOUR OWN UNITS

Using the following rules, you can build your own units with some ancestry options found in most campaigns.

Start by picking a row from each of the following charts. As you go, write down the total for each stat (Power, Toughness, etc.) on a blank unit template (page 263). Remember that **Levies have no equipment rating or experience rating**. They're just Levies.

Defense and Toughness both start at 10.

Step One: Ancestry

Choose an ancestry below and add its stat bonuses to the unit card. Then find the traits of the unit's ancestry on the next page and add them to the unit card.

As an example, a Dwarf unit would begin with +3 Attack, +1 Power, +11 Defense, and +11 Toughness.

UNIT ANCESTRY TABLE

ANCESTRY	ATTACK	POWER	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	MORALE	TRAITS
Bugbear	+2	0	0	0	+1	Martial
Dragonborn	+2	+2	+1	+1	+1	Courageous
Dwarf	+3	+1	+1	+1	+2	Stalwart
Elf	+2	0	0	0	+1	Eternal
Elf (Winged)	+1	+1	0	0	+1	Eternal
Ghoul	–1	0	+2	+2	0	Undead, Horrify, Ravenous
Gnoll	+2	0	0	0	+1	Frenzy
Gnome	+1	–1	+1	–1	+1	—
Goblin	–1	–1	+1	–1	0	—
Hobgoblin	+2	0	0	0	+1	Bred for War, Martial Advantage
Human	+2	0	0	0	+1	Courageous
Kobold	–1	–1	+1	–1	–1	—
Lizardfolk	+2	+1	–1	+1	+1	Amphibious
Ogre	0	+2	0	+2	+1	Brutal
Orc	+2	+1	+1	+1	+2	Savage
Skeleton	–2	–1	+1	+1	+1	Undead, Mindless
Treant	0	+2	0	+2	0	Siege Engine, Twisting Roots, Hurl Rocks
Troll	0	+2	0	+2	0	Regenerate
Zombie	–2	0	+2	+2	+2	Undead, Mindless

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UNIT TRAITS

NAME	DESCRIPTION	COST
Amphibious	This unit does not suffer terrain penalties for fighting in water or on land.	50
Bred for War	This unit cannot be diminished, and cannot have disadvantage on Morale checks.	100
Brutal	This unit inflicts two casualties on a successful Power test.	200
Courageous	Once per battle, this unit can choose to succeed at a Morale check it just failed.	50
Eternal	This unit cannot be horrified, and it always succeeds on Morale checks to attack undead and fiends.	50
Feast	If this unit diminishes an enemy unit, it immediately gains a free attack against that unit.	50
Horrify	If this unit inflicts a casualty on an enemy unit, force a DC 15 Morale check. Failure exhausts the unit.	200
Martial	Inflicts two casualties on a successful Power check if this unit's size is greater than their target's.	100
Mindless	This unit cannot fail Morale checks.	100
Regenerate	When this unit refreshes, increment its casualty die. This ability ceases to function if the unit suffers a casualty from battle magic.	200
Ravenous	While there is a diminished enemy unit, this unit can spend a round feeding on the corpses. Increment their casualty die.	50
Rock-Hurler	If this unit succeeds on an Attack check, it inflicts 2 casualties, against fortifications deal 1d6.	250
Savage	This unit has advantage on the first Attack check it makes each battle.	50
Stalwart	Enemy battle magic has disadvantage on power tests against this unit.	50
Twisting Roots	As an action, this unit can sap the walls of a fortification. Siege units have advantage on Power checks against sapped fortifications.	200
Undead	Green and Regular troops must pass a Morale check to attack this unit. Each enemy unit need only do this once.	50

UNIT EXPERIENCE

LEVEL	ATTACK	POWER	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	MORALE
Green	0	0	0	0	0
Regular	+1	0	0	+1	+1
Seasoned	+1	0	0	+1	+2
Veteran	+1	0	0	+1	+3
Elite	+2	0	0	+2	+4
Super-elite	+2	0	0	+2	+5

UNIT EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT	ATTACK	POWER	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	MORALE
Light	0	+1	+1	0	0
Medium	0	+2	+2	0	0
Heavy	0	+4	+4	0	0
Super-heavy	0	+6	+6	0	0

This section open content.

UNIT TYPE

TYPE	ATTACK	POWER	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	MORALE	COST MODIFIER
Airborne	0	0	0	0	+3	2×
Archers	0	+1	0	0	+1	1.75×
Cavalry	+1	+1	0	0	+2	1.5×
Levies	0	0	0	0	–1	0.75×
Infantry	0	0	+1	+1	0	1×
Siege Engine	+1	+1	0	+1	0	1.5×

Step Two: Experience

Next, choose an experience level and add the bonuses listed to the unit's card.

Step Three: Equipment

Now do the same thing with equipment.

Step Four: Type

And then type. Levies and Cavalry both have traits listed below that can be added to their unit card if you want to make it easier to remember during battle. Cavalry units gain *Charge* and can engage.

Charge: Cannot use while engaged. A Charge is an attack with advantage on the Attack check. It inflicts two casualties on a successful Power check. The charging unit is then Engaged with the defending unit and must make a DC 13 Morale check to disengage.

Levies are always diminished.

Step Five: Size

Choose a size. This can dramatically affect the unit's final cost.

UNIT SIZE

SIZE	COST MODIFIER
1d4	0.66×
1d6	1×
1d8	1.33×
1d10	1.66×
1d12	2×

Step Six: Calculating Cost

Now that you've filled out the unit card with all its stats, it's time to calculate its cost. This can be the literal cost to buy the unit in gold pieces, in the case of mercenaries, or just the cost used to balance encounters and calculate upkeep.

First, add up the **bonuses** to Attack, Power, Defense, and Toughness,[9] and add **double** the total bonus to Morale.

Then, multiply this total by the Cost Modifier from the unit's Type, and then multiply it by its Cost Modifier from Size. Multiply this result by 10.

Add the cost of all the **traits** of the unit's Ancestry. Finally add a flat 30 points.

This sounds more complex than it is. For instance, let's take a unit of Elite Heavy Dwarven Infantry.

ROCKBREAKERS

ELITE HEAVY DWARVEN INFANTRY

COST: 140

ATTACK:	**+6**	**DEFENSE:**	**15**
POWER:	**+6**	**TOUGHNESS:**	**13**
MORALE:	**+8**	**SIZE:**	**1d6**

TRAITS

Stalwart. Enemy battle magic has disadvantage on power tests against this unit.

The total of its Attack, Power, Defense, and Toughness bonuses is **20** (6 + 6 + 5 + 3). Adding double the unit's Morale bonus to this gives **36** (20 + (8 × 2)). This result is multiplied by 1 because they're Infantry (that's easy), and then by 1 again because they're Size 1d6, so we're still at 36.

9 The Defense and Toughness bonuses are added to 10 on the unit card, but for this step we only need the bonuses.

This section open content.

We multiply that whole thing by 10 to get 360.[10] Then we add the cost of all their traits, which is 50 (the cost of Stalwart) plus another 30[11] for a total of 400.

Mercenaries

Mercenaries[12] are troops loyal only to the coin you pay them. They can be bought for gold equal to their unit cost, but **their upkeep is double** that of a normal unit you recruit by rolling on your follower chart.

Ancestry and Attitude

You can buy units with the same ancestry as your character with no extra cost. However, units from other cultures have their own **attitude** toward working for a puny human, or treacherous elf, or whatever your character's ancestry might be, as described on the chart below.

Attitude Chart

Below is an *example* Attitude chart, one designed to reflect the common biases the classic fantasy ancestries have toward each other. You are encouraged to make your own, reflecting your world's history. Also, you could just as easily make a chart with nations or cultures instead of ancestries.

The chart is mirrored across the diagonal, so you can use it in either direction. Find your character's ancestry in either a row or a column, and then index it against the ancestry of the unit you wish to buy.

Allied (A): This unit has its normal cost to buy and upkeep.

Friendly (F): This unit costs 25% more to buy and upkeep.

Neutral (N): This unit costs 50% more to buy and upkeep.

Hostile (H): You cannot buy this unit.

SAMPLE ATTITUDE CHART

	BUGBEAR	DWARF	ELF	GHOUL	GNOLL	GNOME	GOBLIN	HOBGOBLIN	HUMAN	KOBOLD	LIZARDFOLK	OGRE	ORC	SKELETON	TREANT	TROLL	ZOMBIE
BUGBEAR	-	H	H	H	F	H	A	A	H	N	N	N	F	H	H	N	H
DWARF	H	-	N	H	H	A	H	H	A	H	H	H	H	H	F	H	H
ELF	H	N	-	H	H	A	H	H	A	H	H	H	H	H	A	H	H
GHOUL	H	H	H	-	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	A	H	N	A
GNOLL	F	H	H	H	-	H	F	F	H	N	N	N	F	N	H	N	N
GNOME	H	A	A	H	H	-	H	H	A	H	H	H	H	H	A	H	H
GOBLIN	A	H	H	H	F	H	-	A	H	N	N	N	F	H	H	N	H
HOBGOBLIN	A	H	H	H	F	H	A	-	H	N	N	N	F	H	H	N	H
HUMAN	H	A	A	H	H	A	H	H	-	H	H	H	H	H	F	H	H
KOBOLD	N	H	H	H	N	H	N	N	H	-	F	N	N	H	H	N	H
LIZARDFOLK	N	H	H	H	N	H	N	N	H	F	-	F	F	H	H	N	H
OGRE	N	H	H	H	N	H	N	N	H	N	F	-	F	H	H	N	H
ORC	F	H	H	H	F	H	F	F	H	N	F	F	-	H	H	N	H
SKELETON	H	H	H	A	N	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	-	H	N	A
TREANT	H	F	A	H	H	A	H	H	F	H	H	H	H	H	-	H	H
TROLL	N	H	H	H	N	H	N	N	H	N	N	N	N	N	H	-	N
ZOMBIE	H	H	H	A	N	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	A	H	N	-

10 This makes everything scale with the cost of traits and helps differentiate otherwise similar units that would end up with identical costs but not identical utility.

11 This allows us to have very feeble species like kobolds with negative values without throwing the whole thing off.

12 Great game.

This section open content.

Through good roleplaying and negotiation, though, you can change the attitude of a particular leader or army toward your character.

Ambassadors

An ambassador (page 96) allows you to buy units from their ancestry as though they were **friendly**. If the ambassador's presence in your court leads to a formal alliance and a signed treaty, then units with that ancestry are treated as **allied**.

Unit Upkeep and Improvement

Depending on the scenario, the units you command may naturally disband after the battle, such as Levies, or return to their homes, like a unit of elves who come to your aid in a time of dire need. But units you recruit from your stronghold or buy with cash require upkeep.

A unit must be paid a tenth its cost each season. Not all this cash goes into the soldier's pocket—much of it is paying for food and training and repairing their gear.

A unit that has not been paid for a season suffers disadvantage on Morale checks. A unit that has not been paid for two seasons disbands. Improving Unit Equipment

IMPROVING EQUIPMENT

A unit's equipment (Light, Medium, Heavy, Super-Heavy) can be improved once per season by paying gold pieces equal to the difference in cost between the new and old unit.

IMPROVING EXPERIENCE

A unit's experience (Regular, Seasoned, etc.) can be improved by one level after they survive two battles without breaking morale or retreating. It takes a week of training at a keep (or at a barracks if you have a captain follower) and costs gold pieces equal to the difference between the new and old unit.

IMPROVING SIZE

You can field several infantry units, or several cavalry units for instance, but you can only field one unit with identical keywords. You may fight a battle with Human Veteran Light Infantry and Elf Veteran Light Infantry, but not two units of Human Veteran Light Infantry.

If you roll on a follower chart and get an identical unit to one you already have, just increase the first unit's size by one step.

Once per season, you can spend gold to increase a unit's size by one step. The cost is the difference in price between the old unit and the new unit.

Narrating the Battle

We've done our best to give units abilities with evocative names, but at the end of the day it's still the GM's responsibility to narrate what happens after an attack fails or a unit disbands. Of course, you can enlist the players in this cause! They can narrate their units' actions while you narrate the enemy units'.

A unit that fails an attack might be described as surging forward, smashing into the opposing units, but the enemy's shields repulse the attackers. Archer units fire a volley of arrows into the air and the recipients fail to deploy shields in time; dozens of soldiers are cut down by arrow-fire. In the end, however you do it, the raging battle should evoke resounding clash of arms, routs, victories and reversals.

Now that we understand the basic rules, and we've looked at a sample unit and talked about how it functions, let's fight a war!

BATTLE

Setup

Place all the unit cards involved in the battle on the table where everyone can see them.

Feel free to let players with no units control any extra units the party has recruited.

The Encounter

While the PCs are fighting the bad guys, their armies are clashing nearby. Outside the castle walls, or in a nearby field, or on a hill.

Roll initiative and set up your encounter normally, and run it as you would any other.

Issuing an Order

On a player's turn, they may issue one **order** to a fresh allied unit. The default order is "Attack!" A unit may have other possible orders, as described on its card.

Each turn, the GM may issue an order to a number of enemy units equal to the number of players. The GM may choose to have all enemy units act when the main villain acts. Or "give" units to several different enemy characters to act at different points in the initiative order.

Using battle magic[13] also counts as issuing an order.

Issuing an order to a unit exhausts it. An exhausted unit cannot carry out an order again until it is refreshed.

All units begin the battle refreshed. Once all units are exhausted, all units are immediately refreshed.

13 There's very little battle magic in this book, mostly in the *codices*. I didn't want to overwhelm folks.

This section open content.

Attack

Choose an attacking unit and a legal defending unit, as follows.

Levies: Can be attacked by any units.

Infantry: Cannot be attacked by infantry while levies are on the field.

Archers: Cannot be attacked by infantry or levies while allied Infantry is still on the field.

Cavalry: Cannot be attacked by infantry or levies. Archers attack cavalry with disadvantage. Cavalry can only attack every other round, unless engaged. All Cavalry have the Charge maneuver (see below).

Aerial: Can only be attacked by archers and aerial units. Can attack any unit.

Fortification: Can only be attacked by siege engines.

Siege Engine: Can attack infantry, levies, archers, and fortifications. Cannot be attacked, except by aerial units, while any allied infantry, archers, or cavalry are still on the field.

ROLL AN ATTACK CHECK:

Roll a d20 and add your unit's Attack bonus. If the result equals or exceeds the defending unit's Defense, the attack succeeds, which prompts a Power check.

Rolling a 20 on an Attack check is a critical hit and the attacking unit makes two Power tests against the target.

Power

For your unit to inflict a casualty, you must make a **Power check** against the defender's Toughness. Roll a d20 and add your unit's Power bonus. If the result equals or exceeds the defending unit's Toughness, you inflict a casualty! Decrement the defender's casualty die by one.

If its casualty die already shows "1" and takes a casualty, remove the unit from the battle unless it is **rallied**.

Rally

Any unit that would be removed from battle can be **rallied**. Their commander makes a DC 15 Morale check. On a success, the unit remains in the battle with its casualty die at "1," but it cannot be rallied again. On a failure, the unit is removed from battle.

Diminished

Once a unit loses half its size—for example, if its d6 casualty die reads "3" or less—it is **diminished**.

While diminished, it must make a DC 15 Morale check **each time it suffers a casualty**. If it fails, it immediately suffers another casualty.

Levies are always considered diminished.

Charge

Some units and all Cavalry have a special attack maneuver called **Charge**. A Charge is an attack with advantage on the Attack check. On a successful Power check, a Charge inflicts two casualties, and the charging unit becomes engaged with the defending unit.

Engage and Disengage

Some attacking units can **engage** a defending unit. While engaged, both units may only attack each other. Unless otherwise specified, the attacking unit can choose to disengage as an order. The defending unit cannot disengage. As an order, the attacking unit can make a DC 13 Morale check to disengage on a subsequent turn.

An engaged unit cannot Charge.

Ordering a Retreat

Either side might decide the battle is not going their way and wish to preserve as much of their army as possible. You may want to use your army in another battle, or hope that reinforcements are coming, but also even in defeat, having a working (though diminished) army under your command improves your position in negotiations *drastically* more than *not* having an army anymore.

Therefore you can, on your turn, order your entire army to retreat. You can only give this order when all of your side's units are frwesh. All of your units immediately make a Morale check and are removed from the battle, ending the battle. The retreating army suffers any consequences of defeat and the normal penalties for failing the Morale check made to retreat.

However, you army may be unable to retreat because of their position and circumstance. They might be on a hill surrounded by an enemy, for instance, or backed against a sheer cliff, or boxed into a canyon. This is mostly at the GM's discretion and is detailed further in *Kingdoms & Warfare*.

This section open content.

VICTORY AND DEFEAT

The GM will determine the victory conditions for a battle, but here are some typical situations:

- If the enemy leader is defeated, the army immediately disbands.
- If the players are defending a fortification and it falls, their peasant levies disband, their allies (i.e., units who pledged aid for roleplaying or diplomatic purposes) retreat, and any remaining units must immediately make DC 15 Morale checks. At this point, if the players don't call the retreat, they're basically going to grind their army into nothing.
- If either side loses all their infantry, their remaining units retreat.
- If the PCs are defeated in battle, their army disbands. It can, later, reform depending on the consequences for losing the encounter.

As with encounters, we hope and expect the players will win battles, and they usually do. Enemy armies quit the field because their commander is dead. Enemy leaders may surrender because their army is about to be eradicated.

But just as in encounters, we have to deal with the edge case of players losing. The heroes' army may be ground into dust, the heroes may suffer a TPK. These things should be unlikely, but they're possible.

Defeat

If one army is defeated (i.e., all its units have been eliminated or quit the field), the characters on the winning side gain a bonus action each round, which can be used to make an attack or cast a spell with casting time of "one action."

This represents the morale bonus the winners gain for defeating the losers and helps lead the encounter more rapidly to its natural conclusion.

Simple Warfare

Some groups want to resolve a big battle, but aren't interested in managing units and just want to know "who wins?" For those folks, we present this classic solution, which can resolve a battle of any size in a few minutes.

Step One: Army Strength

Determine the army strength of each army by adding up the costs of their units. Special units with no cost are worth 400 points. Units who have suffered casualties from previous battles but which are not diminished contribute their full value to the total. Diminished units contribute nothing.

Step Two: Force Advantage

Now that we know which army is stronger, we need to know: by how much? That means we do a little math. Subtract the smaller army's total from the larger. Then divide the difference by the smaller force. This gives us a percentage measuring how much stronger the stronger army is. This is the stronger army's **force advantage**.

> Lisa's PC Lady Alura Mandrake bought a keep, raised an army and is now taking her army for a stroll into the woods to fight the Necromancer at the Temple of Primordial Chaos. She totals the cost of all her units and get 1,377. The Necromancer's army of undead totals 1,050, a difference of 287. Dividing 287 (the difference) by 1,050 (the force of the smaller army) yields .27 or 27%. Lady Mandrake's army, being larger, begins with a +27% bonus to her roll.

This section open content.

STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES

CIRCUMSTANCE	ADVANTAGE
Well rested	+10%
Well supplied	+10%
Defending homeland	+20%
Has beaten this enemy in the last season	+20%
Has beaten this enemy in years past[1]	+10%
Enemy is hereditary	+20%
Fighting on favored terrain while the enemy is not	+20%
Sunlight sensitivity fighting in daylight	–20%
Ambushed[2]	–30%
Defending a fortification	+10% per fortification level
Forced march	–10%
Lost their previous battle	–20%
Lost a battle this season	–10%
Poorly supplied	–10%
In enemy territory	–20%

1 Does not stack with the bonus above it.
2 That is, surprised by an enemy who are themselves not surprised.

QUICK DEFINITIONS AND ADVANTAGES

What counts as a hereditary enemy? What determines how well supplied an army is? These factors are generally left to the GM. But once you have armies moving around in your campaign, especially armies controlled by players, it starts to become clearer whether, for instance, an army is poorly supplied or not. "You're marching through the hills, there are no farms and little game, how are you going to feed your army?" is a perfectly reasonable question for the GM to ask, and the answer determines whether the army is poorly supplied. Elves and dwarves aren't automatically hereditary enemies, but these elves who live next to *those* dwarves in your campaign very well could be!

Kingdoms & Warfare will go into detail into these subjects, but just knowing it's possible for an army to be ambushed or defending their homeland can help grease the wheels of imagination.

Step Three: Strategic Advantage

We need to know all the **strategic advantages** each army has based on the circumstances of battle. Include all that apply from the table on the left:

Lisa's army is well rested (+10%) but poorly supplied (–10%) and in enemy territory (–20%) for a total strategic advantage of –20%. The necromancer's troops are defending a 3rd-level tower (+30%) but are undead and so have no homeland to defend.

Step Four: Combat Roll

Each side rolls percentile dice. This is their combat roll.

Step Five: Advantages

Both sides add their strategic advantage to their combat roll. The larger army also adds their force advantage.

Step Six: Victory and Defeat

The army with the larger total is the victor. The difference is the degree of victory.

Lisa and the GM both roll percentile dice. Lisa rolls a 71, and the GM rolls a 38. Lisa adds her +27 force advantage and subtracts her –20% strategic advantage for a total of 78 (71 + 27 – 20). The GM adds his +30% strategic advantage for a total of 68 (38 + 30). Lisa wins, but only by 10%! (78 vs 68). This is a pyrrhic victory.

Step Seven: Casualty Determination

Now we figure out which of your units will inflict casualties. Use the chart below to determine which of your units inflicted casualties, and roll dice for them based on each unit's size.

Lisa won a pyrrhic victory. She has one unit of Levies, size 1d8, and four units of Infantry sized 1d4, 1d4, 1d6, and 1d8. She rolls all these dice for a total of 15 casualties inflicted.

The necromancer has two units of Infantry, both 1d6. He rolls both these dice for a total of 8.

This section open content.

Step Eight: Inflict Casualties

Inflict casualties. Distribute the casualties you suffered among your units according to the Order of Battle: Levies, then Infantry, then Archers, then Cavalry, then Flying.

Lisa suffered 8 casualties from the necromancer's army. She has to assign them to her levies first, which eliminates her levies (size 1d8). She has assigned all her casualties, lost her levies, but still has the rest of her army.

The GM takes the 15 casualties Lisa inflicted, and assigns 12 casualties to his levies. He has two levy units, zombies sized 1d8 and skeletons sized 1d10, he assigns 7 casualties to the zombies and 8 casualties to the skeletons. They're both still in the conflict and can absorb more casualties, but because they are now diminished, they no longer contribute to their army's strength total in step one.

Lisa won the battle, but not by enough points to ensure a clear victory. She has lost her levies and even though the necromancer took more casualties, he had so many zombies and skeletons that his levies are still in the battle and can absorb more damage.

Step Nine: Retreats

Determine retreats. If an army loses all their infantry, they immediately retreat. If both sides retreat, neither side wins objectives.[14] Either side can, at this point, choose to retreat and quit the field, granting the opposing side a victory and yielding any objectives. If either side retreats, the battle is over. Otherwise, return to step one, and fight another battle.

SIMPLE COMBAT RESOLUTION

DEGREE OF VICTORY	RESULT	VICTOR ROLLS DICE FROM THESE UNITS	VANQUISHED ROLLS DICE FROM THESE UNITS
0–10%	Pyrrhic Victory	Levies + Infantry	Levies
11–50%	Minor Victory	Levies + Infantry + Archers	Infantry
51–100%	Clear Victory	All Units	Archers + Cavalry + Flying
101–200%	Major Victory	All Units + Archers twice	Archers
201%+	Rout	All Units + Levies twice, Infantry twice, Archers twice	Cavalry & Flying

14 Determined by the GM—for example, why was Lady Mandrake attacking the necromancer?

This section open content.

New Items

INSTALLATION

Some items must be **installed** in your stronghold in order to function. Such items cease to function if taken from the stronghold in which they were installed, and must be reinstalled to regain their power, though their powers may still work on *you* if you leave.

ALTAR OF UNYIELDING FAITH

Wondrous item, very rare, requires installation

Install this altar in your temple and choose a row on the Servitors chart (page 31). Whenever you roll on this chart, you may choose the chart entry one higher than the result you rolled.

CANDLES OF ACCORD

Wondrous item, rare, requires installation

This pair of red wax candles burn magically without consuming fuel, symbolizing the alliance between the two holders of the candles. If one candle is lit without the other, it merely provides normal candlelight indefinitely, and extinguishing it does not affect the other candle.

If both candles are lit together by the owner of an establishment, the owner can give the other candle to an ally and extend the area of the owner's Gather Intel ability (page 36) to include their ally's demesne. When used in this way, extinguishing either candle snuffs out the other one immediately.

Gathering Intel using a *candle of accord* requires meditating for 1 hour with the candle, concentrating on the ally and their territory. At the end of this hour, the owner may make a Gather Intel check, which if successful gives them a vision of the organization they are spying on.

CODICES

There was a time in the earliest Ages of Man when magic was new, and wild, and understanding it shaped it, constrained it. And thereby constrained the world.

The greatest sages wrote their understanding of magic, of fire and shadow, of machines and time and the universe itself into their great works, the *codices*. Each codex is a powerful magical tome, an artifact unto itself, and unlocking its knowledge instantly makes you one of the most powerful people in the world.

No sage is known to have written more than one, and each author was in their lifetime famous as one of the greatest practitioners of magic in all Orden. Each codex requires attunement and thus no wizard could benefit from more than three at once, but even that would be a historical first. These books contain so much power that they have a personality of their own and do not like being in close proximity (say, 500 miles) of another codex.

They aren't items you can run around and collect, and no one knows how many there might be. References in the Library of the Royal College suggest there could be as many as a hundred such tomes, but that list was compiled from unverified and in some cases outright unreliable sources.

Attempting to copy a codex produces a book with all the words in the right order, but no magic and no effects.

Codices in Your Campaign

A codex grants its owner remarkable powers beyond the scope of even most artifacts. No *rules* could cover every possible consequence of their effects, and as the GM, you should only deploy them if you feel *inspired*. If you read this and think, "That's amazing, I'm going to try it!" be aware that a codex may permanently change your setting and place you in a sticky situation where you have to invent some strange and unexpected consequences for the PC who deploys its powers. And if that sounds *awesome*, then you've come to the right place.

If, on the other hand, you read this and think, "I have no idea how that would work," and your head is filled with nightmare scenarios where your entire campaign collapses like a flan in a cupboard, then maybe these books should live as rumors.

Alternatively, it's very easy to award one of these books to your players and just tell them some of the book's secrets are indecipherable. Limit the power of the book to make it a cool reward, but not one that grants omnipotence.

That said, I have never used a codex as a reward—I've only ever deployed them as part of a larger problem. My campaigns assumed the codices should be kept secure in the hands of responsible, powerful NPCs and that, when they are stolen or they disappear under mysterious circumstances, the PCs will be deployed to recover them and return them.

Thus, the players typically get to enjoy the power of a codex for a little while, but not in a manner that permanently unbalances the game.

Reading the descriptions of these ancient tomes these should spark ideas for an adventure where someone, a villain or a well-meaning but misguided sage, has unlocked the power of a codex and must now be stopped!

Attuning to a Codex

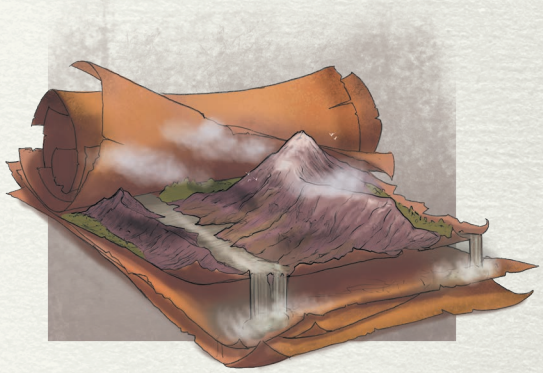
All the codices require attunement, which requires the reader to spend a month in uninterrupted study of no less than 8 hours per day and 48 hourssix days per week.

Once attuned, the owner of the codex need not take the book with them. They can leave it in a secure location and still gain its benefits, but must refresh their knowledge through 8 hours of uninterrupted study once per month or else lose its benefits.

Sacrifice

Some of these books require the attuned owner to surrender some of their life essence to satiate the dark powers constrained or described in their texts. Sacrificing requires rolling some number of Hit Dice, losing that many hit points *and* the Hit Dice immediately, and reducing your maximum hit points by the same amount. While the effect powered by the sacrifice persists, the lost hit points and Hit Dice cannot be regenerated. When the effect ends, you can heal the damage and recover the Hit Dice normally.

If sacrificing Hit Dice causes you to drop to 0 hit points, you fall unconscious and all effects you created end. You cannot sacrifice more Hit Dice than you have. If you must sacrifice a Hit Die to power an effect but you have none, the effect ends.



The Codex Terragnosis

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

Written by Hierophant Prithviraña in the 738th year of the Age of Wonders, this book is a comprehensive treatise on the nature of the Mundane World and the material and philosophical principles that set it apart from Arcadia, Quintessence, and the World Below.

This codex illuminates the Law of Nature, the Law of Time, and the Law of Death and contains a description of the world›s creation, the origins of divine and arcane magic, as well as the War Between the Gods.

The Hierophant built his wisdom and knowledge into the *codex terragnosis*. The book binds and shapes the world, defines it and defends it. While it resides within this manifold of the timescape, the Mundane World is safe.

The Barrier Between Worlds

While this book resides in the Mundane World, sending a native of this plane to another plane, unwillingly, requires a saving throw.

The Phoenix

Huge celestial, good

ARMOR CLASS 21 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 243 (18d10 + 144)

SPEED 30 ft., fly 3,450 ft. (hover)[1]

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	22 (+6)	26 (+8)	25 (+7)	25 (+7)	29 (+9)

SAVING THROWS Int +14, Wis +14, Cha +16

SKILLS Perception +14

DAMAGE RESISTANCES radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 24

LANGUAGES all, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 21 (33,000 XP)

Born of Fire. The phoenix radiates sunlight in a 60-foot radius, and dim light a further 180 feet.

Magic Resistance. The phoenix has advantage on saving throws against magic and other magical effects.

The Fire Is Alive. The phoenix regenerates 3d12 hit points at the start of each round.

Traits

Dazzling Plumage. The Phoenix's feathers cycle through every color in the rainbow. Evil creatures who begin their turn within 60 feet of the Defender of All the Earth and who do not explicitly avert their gaze must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed until the end of their next turn. Charmed targets are stunned. If the target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to the phoenix's Dazzling Plumage for the next 24 hours.

Actions

Multiattack. The phoenix makes two claw attacks and one bite attack.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 25 (4d8 + 7) necrotic damage.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: + 14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (2d10 + 7) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) fire damage.

Light of All Colors (Recharge 4–6). The phoenix exhales a beam of brilliant, prismatic light in a line that is 10 feet wide and 1,000 feet long. Each creature in that line must make a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) fire and 35 (10d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

In battle, this counts as a unit with Attack +17 and Power +15 and can affect every unit in a battle.

1 Yes, it can break the sound barrier.

Steward of the Earth

As an action once per day, you can summon an elemental of your choice to do your bidding. After 1 hour, the elemental returns to its home plane.

Stone and Sea, Obey Me

As an action once per day, you can cast *cataclysm*.

Cataclysm (battle magic): Target: 4 units, Attack: +12, Power: +15. Enemy units damaged by this attack must make a DC 15 Morale save or decrement their casualty die twice.

Defender of All the Earth

Once, a druid who holds the *codex terragnosis* may assume the form of the phoenix. This form lasts until sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first, at which point the phoenix dies in a flare of brilliant light. The druid must make a Constitution save against DC 18 to survive the conflagration. The *codex terragnosis* itself survives the conflagration and, regardless of whether the druid lives, relocates itself somewhere safer, and the Defender of all the Earth ability recharges.

The Codex Umbra

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

Kalidasa Dhar, writing in the *codex umbra* in the second century of Wonder, gives us our only glimpse into scholarly thought regarding the essence of shadow magic before the Ganarajyan Empire. It is surprisingly similar to our own modern notions.

> "Primitive cultures[15] view shadow magic as an extension of literal shadow. The shade cast by a bright light. But I find no connection between the two phenomenon and offer an alternate explanation, supported by the success of the incantations found herein."

Dhar hypothesized that the dark power we call *shadow* is the dead life essence of a previous world. What the nature of this world or the beings that may have inhabited it was, she offers no insight. Few modern sages take Dhar's theory seriously, but all note that no wizard since has penetrated the heart of shadow so successfully.

Whoever holds the *codex umbra* and understands its secrets gains access to the following abilities.

The Vile Form

Once per day as an action, you can assume the form of a dark shadow of yourself. While in this form, you gain resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, including damage from magical weapons. To assume this form, you must sacrifice 1 Hit Die at the end of each round.

You are always considered to be hiding, and you gain advantage on attacks in *vile form*.

If you fall unconscious while in *vile form*, you revert to your normal form. If you die while in *vile form*, you become a shadow and the codex disappears, relocating itself to elsewhere in the Mundane World.

No Man Can Escape His Shadow

Once per day as an action, you can summon 6 shadows, placing each anywhere within 60 feet of you, and each must be adjacent to a character. The shadows act on your turn, doing your bidding. They dissolve after 1 minute.

Shadow Tower

Once per year as an action, you can summon a round spire made of solid darkness. The tower is 30 feet in diameter and 40 feet high with windows on all sides and a battlement on top. The interior is divided into three floors, with a spiral staircase on the inner wall connecting them. The stairs end at a trapdoor leading to the roof. When summoned, the tower side facing you has a door proportional to your size. The door will only open on your command, which you can speak as a bonus action. Magic of less than 7th level will not open the door.

Each creature in the area where the tower appears must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 12d10 bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. All creatures in the area are pushed to an unoccupied space outside but next to the tower. Objects in the area are pushed automatically.

The sky above the tower is always dark, and the tower itself is made of substantial shadow and melds with the ground, preventing it from being tipped over. The roof, door, and walls each have 90 hit points, immunity to damage from nonmagical weapons except siege weapons, and resistance to all other damage. It cannot be repaired, but can be dismissed as an action. The next time the tower is summoned, it is complete and free of damage.

The tower is a 2nd-level tower stronghold and grants units defending it +1 Morale.

15 Here we presume he means the Gol.

SHADOW LEGION

IRON GOLEM REGULAR HEAVY INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+2	**DEFENSE:**	12
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	11
MORALE:	+2	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Amorphous. The legion can move into another unit, occupying its space and engaging that unit. As such, the legion can attack archers while enemy infantry is still on the field.

Strength Drain. If the legion inflicts a casualty on an engaged unit, that unit loses 1 Power. Lost Power regenerates the next day.

Horrify. If the legion inflicts a casualty on a mortal unit, that unit must make a DC 15 Morale check. Failure exhausts the unit.

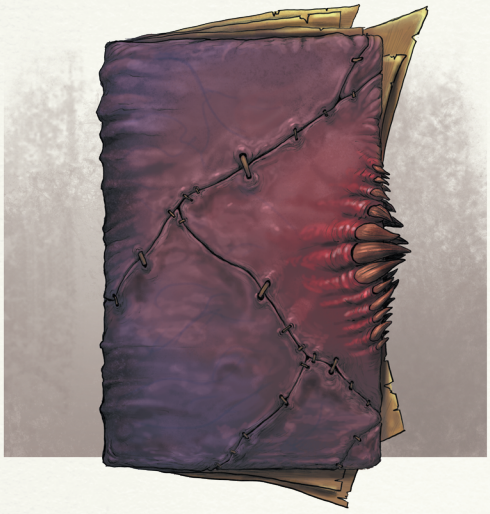
Shadow Legion

Once per week as an action, the holder of the *codex umbra* can summon a Shadow Legion. The legion dissolves after 1 hour or two battles, whichever comes first.

Black Star

Completing this 1-hour ritual replaces the sun with a negative counterpart. The sun winks out and darkness rules the land—a land dominated by a blazing black sun in a sky filled with red stars.

This is a supernatural darkness, and all intelligent creatures who live on the surface of the Mundane World can sense it. All diurnal[16] creatures with an Intelligence score greater than 5 gain darkness sensitivity, giving them disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight. As the owner of the *codex umbra*, you do not suffer this sensitivity. However, while the Black Star blazes, you must sacrifice 1 Hit Die at the end of each hour.



Codex Incabulum

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

The only codex known to be written during the Caelian Empire, the *codex incabulum* is often incorrectly cited as the *cause* of the Fall of Azshan. This is a popular guess repeated so often that it has attained the status of fact. Rather, the codex *stopped* the demonic infestation that razed the ruling city of Kham, confining the sea of fiends that erupted from hell and preventing it from spreading across the world. As a result, no contemporaneous accounts of the sack of the city survive, with the popular histories of the event being authored no earlier than 150 years after the event.

Authored by Marcus Gaius Orestes[17] in the 101st year of the Age of Conquest, during the height of the Caelian Empire, this book—like all the codices—has been lost and found many times over the centuries since. Often those who attune to it delve deep into dark powers and are lost.

Demon Soul

As an action, you can sacrifice 3 Hit Dice to assume the form of a Type III demon or a bone devil, replacing your own stats and abilities with the fiend's. While in this form, you do not benefit from your original race or class abilities, but you can cast your spells normally if you assume a form that can cast spells.

You can maintain this form for 1 hour or until you drop unconscious, after which you revert to your original form, and can heal the sacrificed damage and hit points normally.

Damnation

Demons and devils automatically fail their saving throws against *banish* cast by you.

16 Those who sleep at night and are awake during the day.

17 During their lives, the True Names of the authors of the *codices* were a closely guarded secret, but research in the decades and centuries following their deaths has often ferreted out the truth.

Scion of Seven Cities

After performing a ritual for 10 minutes, you can open a gate to one of the Seven Cities of Hell, allowing you to freely travel there from the Mundane World. Only you can use this gate. It remains open until you return through it, after which it closes.

Flames of Hell

Once per week as an action, you may sacrifice Hit Dice to summon a Legion of Hell. This unit's size depends on the number of Hit Dice you sacrificed, as follows.

HIT DICE SACRIFICED	SIZE OF UNIT
2	1D4
4	1D6
6	1D8
8	1D10
10	1D12

LEGION OF HELL

BARBED DEVIL REGULAR MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+8	**DEFENSE:**	15
POWER:	+7	**TOUGHNESS:**	15
MORALE:	+10	**SIZE:**	

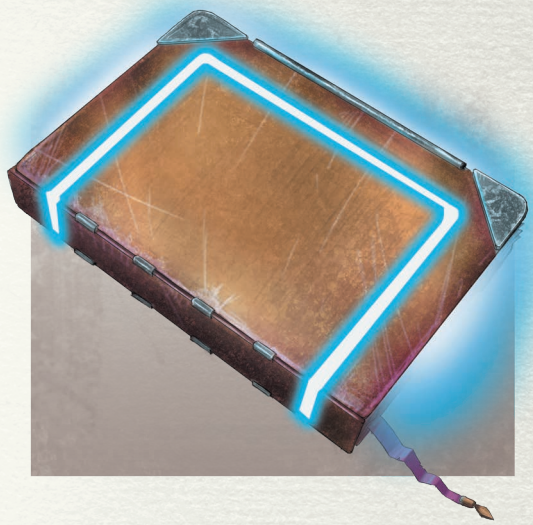
TRAITS

Hellspawn. Mortal units must make a Morale check (DC 15) in order to attack this unit.

Barbs. Whenever Infantry inflicts casualties on this unit, this unit automatically makes a DC 8 Power check against the attacking unit.

The Key to the Gate

While the *codex incabulum* is on the Mundane World, summoned demons and devils cannot summon more demons or devils. Should the *Book of Fiends* ever leave the Mundane World, however, this restriction would be lifted, and then even minor demons could gate in powerful allies, who themselves could gate in more allies, until armies of demons flooded the world.



The Codex Automata

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

Written by the Hànz wizard Huang Fei late in the third dynasty of the Xin Empire, the *codex automata—The Book of Machines*—synthesized three thousand years of scholarly thought on the subject of magical constructs and was instantly realized as the definitive work on the subject. Other tomes detail the process of creating a golem, but Fei called this "mere smithery."

Fei's goal was to understand the fundamental magic of animated constructs, and in this he succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. His golem army defended the emperor and secured his dynasty's rule for a thousand years.

> "Now we shall see, Huang Fei! We shall end all debate. Here! Now! Let the scales weigh my power against yours, and the world will *know* which is greater! Your machine mind...or my supreme sorcery!"
>
> — Cheng Shi,
> contemporaneous owner of the *codex miror*

Machine Mind

You gain magic resistance.

Walking Tower

Once per year as an action, you can summon a tall square tower made of metal and gears. The tower is 20 feet on a side and 60 feet high, with windows on all sides and a battlement on top. The tower has six mechanical legs, granting it a movement speed of 24 miles per day. The interior is divided into five floors connected by an automated moving staircase on the inner wall. The stairs end at a trapdoor leading to the roof. When summoned, the tower side facing you has a door proportional to your size. The door will only open on your command, which

you can speak as a bonus action. Magic of less than 7th level will not open the door.

Each creature in the area where the tower appears must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 13d8 bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. All creatures in the area are pushed to an unoccupied space outside but next to the tower. Objects in the area are pushed automatically.

The tower is made of metal. The roof, door, and walls each have 300 hit points, immunity to damage from nonmagical weapons except siege weapons, and resistance to all other damage. It cannot be repaired, but can be dismissed as an action. The next time the tower is summoned, it is complete and free of damage.

An automated ballista protrudes from each wall, granting the tower an Attack: 12, Power: 14 attack in battles.

The tower counts as a tower stronghold, and it grants units defending it +2 Morale.

Iron Company

Once per month, as an action you can summon the Iron Company, a unit of iron golems. The Iron Company rusts after 1 hour or two battles, whichever comes first.

THE IRON COMPANY

IRON GOLEM REGULAR HEAVY INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+9	**DEFENSE:**	23
POWER:	+13	**TOUGHNESS:**	19
MORALE:	+10	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Magic Resistance. This unit has advantage on saving throws against spells, battle magic, and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Poison Cloud (battle magic). Target: 1 unit, Attack: +12, Power: +15. Enemy units damaged by this attack must make a DC 15 Morale check or increment their casualty die three times.

Machine Lieutenant

By spending 1 week in a laboratory worth at least 1,000 gp, you can produce a machine lieutenant. You can only have one lieutenant at a time. It is loyal to you and obeys your commands, but it will not willingly move more than 30 feet away from you. If it is ever more than 30 feet away, the lieutenant shuts down and awaits your return.

Machine Lieutenant

Medium construct, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (plate, shield)

HIT POINTS 60 (8d8 + 24)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

SKILLS Perception +4

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantine

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES force, necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

SENSES blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond), passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

CHALLENGE 4 (1,100 XP)

Magic Resistance. The machine lieutenant has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Both Guard and Ward. While the lieutenant is within 5 feet of the attuned owner of the codex automata, any attack targeting the codex's owner has a 50% chance to instead target the machine lieutenant.

Actions

Multiattack. The lieutenant makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Master of Golems

No construct will attack you. As an action, you can make a Command check against a construct within 30 feet by rolling 1d20 and adding your Wisdom bonus + 2. If the result is greater than the construct's Hit Dice, then the construct is yours to command, as though you were its creator.

This control lasts 1 hour, after which the construct is free of your influence and cannot be commanded again in this way.

Codex Dryadalis

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

A human adopted as an infant by elves, Irllyn Ffwllyg en Orrell ce Yth went on to become the Ganarajyan Empire's greatest authority on the fae, their magic, and their casual association with cause and effect.

Because she was a mortal wizard, she understood the rules that constrained the use of magic. Because she was raised as an elf, she had the mind of a fae. Because she was the greatest wizard of her time, she was able to synthesize these two antithetical philosophies into one coherent masterwork and thereby change the world forever. The elves never allowed this again.

The Word for World Is Wode

After spending 1 year in a tower while in a forest, the forest transforms into a wode.[18] This transformation is gradual, and if you leave the forest during this period the forest reverts to its original state. Once the transformation is complete, you can attract elven units as though you were an elf, and the wode begins to disobey cause and effect.

Whenever you exit your wode, you can choose to emerge from any other wode. Likewise, you can access your tower's wode from any wode.

Furthermore, when exiting your wode, you can choose to emerge in any *age* in the past or future.[19] Returning to your own time is tricky and usually requires entering another wode.

To Serve Us

After spending 1 year in study in a tower in a wode, you choose a pack of seven mundane beasts of the same species, raising their Intelligence score to 11 and all other attribute scores to 10 or more. They become Medium bipedal creatures and gain the Sylvan language.

The wode is their home, but they are under no compulsion to remain in it, though they do prefer it. They are your followers, and like all followers they are independent creatures with their own will.

The Inconsequent

You cease aging and no longer need to sleep. You cannot be charmed, and magic cannot put you to sleep. You are immune to the effects of *slow* and *time stop*. You are immune to the effects of the *chronos codex*.

Motivate Trees

Once per month as an action, you can transform a copse of trees into a unit of treants. The treants serve you for 1 hour or two battles, whichever happens first, after which they root back into the ground and become normal trees again.

TREANTS

TREANT SIEGE ENGINE

COST: —

ATTACK:	+10	**DEFENSE:**	13
POWER:	+13	**TOUGHNESS:**	23
MORALE:	+9	**SIZE:**	1d4

ACTIONS

Twisting Roots. Sap the walls of a fortification. Siege units have advantage on Power checks against sapped fortifications.

Hurl Rocks. Make a Power check against a fortification. If successful, deal 1d6 damage.

18 Wodes are elf-haunted forests where the Law of Time has not yet encroached. You don't have to use wodes, you can just imagine there are a handful of spooky elf forests in your setting where weird Rip Van Winkle / Epimenides / Peter Klaus stuff is known to happen.

19 Yeah. You can travel in time. I know this is crazy, but this is what the book does. I don't make the rules!

Codex Miror

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

Written by Durthara, the Empress's Archmage, the Book of Wonder is the first recorded codex and gave the Age of Wonder its name. In those days, the Ganarajyan Empire's word for "magic" translated as "wonder" or "marvel." Magic, then, was newly discovered by Men and seemed a limitless resource. Spells were invented, made fashionable, and forgotten before anyone knew they could be written down.

History records the *codex miror* as the greatest, the most powerful of the codices, but no sage has ever owned more than two, so no one in history could claim to be an expert, and most of the records of what the Book of Wonder could do were written hundreds of years after it disappeared.

Sorcerer Supreme

You learn, prepare, and cast spells as though you were four levels higher. You learn these new spells immediately upon attuning to the codex. Multiclass characters choose from among their highest-level spellcasting classes. You can prepare any spell from the bard, wizard, sorcerer, or warlock spell list.

Your spells cannot be resisted.[20]

Master of Magic

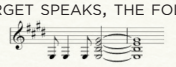
On initiative count 30, you know if any enemies are casting spells on the current turn and which spells they're casting.

Bound to the Book of Marvels

Write your True Name into the book. While you are attuned to the book, you have advantage on saving throws against spells. If you lose the book, and someone speaks your True Name in your presence, you lose this benefit and you have disadvantage on saving throws to resist spells cast by the magic-user who spoke your True Name.

Book of Wonder

The *codex miror* remembers a time when magic was much...friskier. Whenever you cast a spell on a creature, there's a 5% chance one of the following effects occurs (determined randomly).

D100	RESULT
01–04	The target loses all hair and clothes.
05–08	A pit, 10 feet deep and 10 feet wide, opens under the target's feet.
09–12	The target has advantage on attack rolls for the next 3 rounds.
13–17	Fifty bats appear, swarm around your head for 1 round, then flit away.
18–21	The target grows wings. If it already has wings, its wings transform into tentacles.
22–25	You are surrounded by a cage, 10 feet on each side, of solid iron bars.
26–30	Each piece of headgear within 30 feet (including helmets) transforms into a skullcap topped with a bladed device that turns in any breeze.
31–35	The target's skin turns paisley permanently.
36–40	All gold within 10 feet of you transmutes into lead.
41–45	The target is completely covered in an inch-thick coat of honey. Also, 500 bees arrive.
46–49	Every time the target speaks, the following music plays: 
50–54	A small cottage falls on you, dealing 8d10 damage. You are pinned under the house with only your feet sticking out.
55–59	Rotting fish shower down within 100 feet of the target for 6 seconds.
60–63	You are polymorphed into a centaur.
64–67	All weapons within 60 feet turn into bunches of flowers.
68–71	Summon a hippopotamus (01–10), elephant (11–80), or mouse (81–100).
72–76	A sperm whale drops from the sky onto the target.
77–80	You grow by half.
81–84	You shrink by half.
85–89	The target becomes permanently invisible.
90–93	The target is polymorphed into a willow tree.
94–97	14–85 gems with a base value of 1 gp pour from the target's nose over the next hour.
98–99	The target is affected by a *flesh to stone* spell.
100	If the target has fewer than 100 hit points, it explodes.

20 i.e. magic resistance does not work against them, nor does damage resistance based on their damage type (fire, cold, etc...)

Codex Ignis

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

Hu Tai was the last Magister of Fire, and like her contemporaries, the other four elemental magisters, she swore to bind her knowledge into a tome and thereby seal it away, ending the Century of Five Emperors and the wars that ensued as each emperor's elemental magister used their lore to warp and twist reality for their regent.

History records that her efforts were successful. The Five Magisters sealed their power away, and the wars ended. Only rarely in the thousands of years since has one of the five elemental codices emerged and been mastered, and never more than one has been active in the world since.

Magister of Fire

Your fire spells and cantrips deal their maximum damage. Also, whenever you cast a spell that deals fire damage, there's a 50% chance you do not use a spell slot. You are immune to fire damage.

Fire Armor

You are always protected by an invisible *fire shield* spell. Whenever you take damage from a melee attack, your *fire armor* erupts in flame, revealing itself and dealing damage to the attacker in equal amount to the damage taken (instead of 2d8).

Ward of Fire

Whenever you are surprised in combat, a fire elemental immediately arrives and acts on initiative count 20. It attacks your enemies, putting your safety first, obeying your orders second. It remains in the Mundane World for 1 minute, after which it returns to Quintessence.

Sea of Fire

Once per day as an action, you can cast *sea of fire*.

Sea of Fire (battle magic): Target: 3 units, Attack: +13, Power: +13. Enemy units damaged by this attack suffer a Power: +11 check on your next round.

Blazing Form

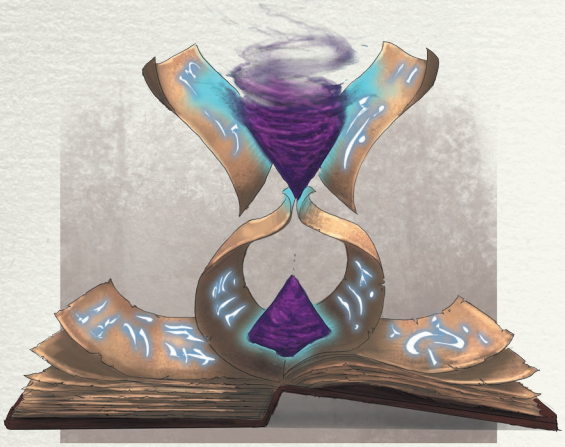
By staring into a fire and concentrating on a distant location no larger than a castle, you sense all large (as big as a fireplace or larger) fires there. You can see and hear as if you were the fire.

Also, once per week you can project an illusory duplicate of yourself into the fire. As an action, you can move this blazing duplicate up to your speed, but it can only move to places illuminated by the fire from which it emerged. You can cast your spells originating from your duplicate.

You can make your duplicate gesture, speak, and behave in any way you yourself could. You can see and hear through this duplicate, and you can switch between using its senses and yours as a bonus action. While you're using its senses, your own body is blind and deaf.

The duplicate is insubstantial and has no hit points. It lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Intelligence bonus, after which it evaporates.

While deploying this form, you must sacrifice 1 Hit Die at the end of each round.



The Chronos Codex

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

Like the *codex multiversalis*, the origins of the *chronos codex* are not well recorded. Its earliest reference is in the possession of the Ganarajyan wizard Subhadrangi, who may also be the book's author. The book is also referenced in the Tales of Rupananda, but it's possible Subhadrangi and Rupananda were the same woman. A handful of references talk of a sage who went by both names during that age, but there's no direct confirmation from any contemporary source, and no source definitively claims either women wrote it or indeed gives an independent account of the life of either.

The Book of Time is the least well known of the codices. It tends to disappear for millennia at a time, and as a result, unlike the other Books of Magic, scholars are happy to leave it drifting in the eddies of the time stream.

It was only 300 years ago when the Khoursir scholar Chartam suggested that the book's author had not yet been born, and that the book's presence in the past of this time manifold is a result of its future author using its power. This once-fringe hypothesis has grown in popularity in recent years.

Summon Temporal Duplicate

Once per month as an action, you can summon a version of yourself from the future. It is one possible version of your future character. It has your stats but is four levels higher and may have different items or even spells, at your GM's discretion.[21] You have no control over your temporal duplicate, but it *is* a version of you and will probably help you out. Because it is from one possible future, it is experiencing one possible past and may not remember the situation it finds itself in, because it never experienced this past.

The duplicate remains in this manifold of the timescape for 4 + 1d4 rounds, after which it returns to its own time. If it drops to 0 hit points, it automatically returns—unconscious—to its original manifold.

While you are attuned to the book, the GM may ask you to make a percentile roll at random moments. If you roll a 100, you disappear for 4 + 1d4 rounds, as you are relentlessly pulled backward into an alternate past to serve a version of yourself four levels lower.[22]

Nomad of the Timescape

You cease aging. As an action once per year, you may sacrifice any number of Hit Dice to move forward or backward in time by a hundred years per Hit Die sacrificed. You can observe and interact with, but cannot change, the past or future. Because of the manifold nature of the timescape, the past or future you find yourself in may not be *your* past or future.

While in another temporal manifold, you sacrifice 1 Hit Dice at the end of each week.

Clockwise

Once per month as an action, choose a mortal enemy you can see within 60 feet. It must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or instantly advance into extreme old age. Its Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity are permanently halved. Because it gained no new experiences, its mental stats do not change. This effect can be reversed by a *greater restoration* spell cast within 24 hours of the time shift.

Jaunt

As a bonus action, choose a target and a number from one to six. If the target is willing, it is removed from the time stream and will reappear on initiative count 20 that number of rounds later. If it is unwilling, it can make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw to resist.

Blink of an Eye

As an action, you can sacrifice any number of Hit Dice to take an equal number of turns in a row.

21 For something like this, I would make a version of my PC that is four levels higher with one or two cool new items and ask for my GM's approval. Your GM can, of course, edit your choices (since you haven't made them yet).

22 An alternate past where, presumably, you found the *codex chronos* four levels earlier!

Codex Mortis

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

Exiled Empress Wu Jiao wasted no time planning her return to the throne and the restoration of the Wu dynasty. Her first goal was the return of her greatest general, the barbarian Lady Czorgan. As Czorgan was dead, this meant much research was in order. But Empress Jiao was already an accomplished wizard, and her first success took less than a year.

Emboldened by her necromantic research and the return of her right hand, Jiao pressed her study further and became the greatest necromancer in history. She succeeded in restoring her family to the throne, but history calls her the Dead Empress and her second period of rule the Dead Empire, granting her no narrative of restoration, only revenge.

Attuning to this dread book requires sacrificing 2 Hit Dice.

Unlife

Reading the Book of Death does not make you undead, but you quickly develop an affinity for the deathless. Your visage and demeanor change, becoming cold and pale. You gain the following attributes:

Life Drain. Whenever you deal melee damage, the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced in equal amount to the damage taken.

This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A humanoid slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a zombie under your control, unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, you have disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Undead Fortitude. If damage would reduce you to 0 hit points, you may make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 plus the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, you drop to 1 hit point instead.

Legion of the Dead

Once per month as an action, you can summon a Legion of the Dead. They remain under your control for 3 days or six battles, whichever comes first.

LEGION OF THE DEAD

GHOUL REGULAR MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+3	**DEFENSE:**	19
POWER:	+6	**TOUGHNESS:**	17
MORALE:	+3	**SIZE:**	1d10

TRAITS

Undead. Levies as well as Green and Regular troops must succeed on a Morale check in order to attack this unit. Each enemy unit need only do this once.

Horrify. Inflicting a casualty on a mortal unit forces a DC 15 Morale check. Failure exhausts the unit.

Feast. If this unit diminishes an enemy unit, it immediately gains a free attack against that unit.

SKELETAL ARCHERS

SKELETON REGULAR MEDIUM ARCHERS

COST: —

ATTACK:	+0	**DEFENSE:**	15
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	14
MORALE:	—	**SIZE:**	1d6

TRAITS

Undead. Green and Regular troops must succeed on a Morale check in order to attack this unit. Each enemy unit need only do this once.

Mindless. Cannot fail Morale checks.

WIGHT CAVALRY

WIGHT REGULAR MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+6	**DEFENSE:**	15
POWER:	+5	**TOUGHNESS:**	16
MORALE:	+5	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Undead. Green and Regular troops must succeed on a Morale check in order to attack this unit. Each enemy unit need only do this once.

Life Drain. Successful Power checks exhaust enemy units.

Lady Czorgan

As an action, you may sacrifice 2 Hit Dice and summon Lady Czorgan, the Death Knight. Lady Czorgan is a being of hatred and resentment who claws at the power of the Book that binds her, but she must obey you. You must concentrate to maintain Lady Czorgan's presence in this world, which is limited to 1 hour, after which she returns to the Abyss and will not return for a month.

Master of Death

You automatically command any undead of less than 9 HD you meet or summon. Mastering undead is automatic for you and does not require an action. These undead obey your commands and serve you faithfully until they are destroyed. Up to 50 HD of undead can be mastered in this way.

Once an undead is mastered, it may not be replaced until it is destroyed.

Lady Czorgan

Medium undead, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (plate)

HIT POINTS 97 (13d8 + 39)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

SAVING THROWS Dex +5, Wis +6, Cha +7

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES Abyssal, Common

CHALLENGE 12 (8,400 XP)

Magic Resistance. Lady Czorgan has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Unholy Aura. Unless Lady Czorgan is incapacitated, she and undead creatures of her choice within 30 feet have advantage on saving throws against
features that turn undead.

Spellcasting. Lady Czorgan is a 13th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command, hunter's mark, inflict wounds*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, magic weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, vampiric touch*

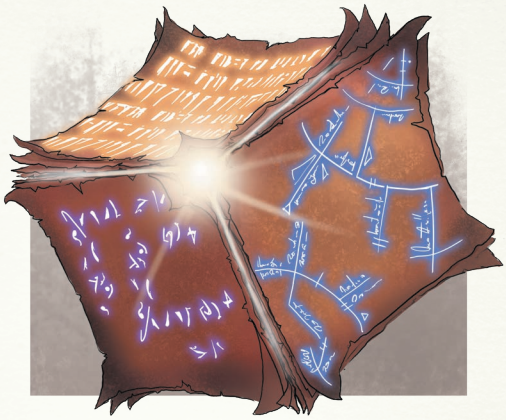
4th level (1 slot): *banishment, blight*

Actions

Multiattack. Lady Czorgan makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 10 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 13 (3d8) necrotic damage.

Decaying Ground (1/Day). Lady Czorgan points at a location she can see and corruption explodes from the ground within 60 feet of her. Each creature in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. The corrupted ground spreads around corners. A creature takes 52 (15d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



Codex Multiversalis

Wondrous item, artifact, requires attunement

Certainly the first Wizard to enter history as an *owner* of the Book of All Worlds was Padmavati, the Alienist. But there's no actual record of her *writing* it, though scholarly consensus is that only she could have done so. Instead, the accepted wisdom is that she *did* write it, just not in this manifold. She is from a different world, sages presume. The truth may never be known. The deeds she performed are well-documented, including enacting *The Forbidding* which permanently exiled the Demon Lord of Death to the Seven City of Hells. If the nature of this ritual is detailed in the *codex multiversalis* no Wizard since has deciphered it.

Attuning to the *Book of All Worlds* exposes you to the energies of a million worlds. This turns your eyes solid black. It does not damage your sight, but you are marked for as long as you stay attuned to the book.

Sight Beyond Sight

You immediately sense the direction, distance, and nature of any being summoned to the Mundane World of 9 HD or greater within thousand-mile radius. As an action, you can *teleport* to the site of the summoning within one minute of sensing it. You cannot use this ability again for 24 hours.

Traveler

Once per day as an action, you can name a location you are familiar with in another world,[23] and travel there.

Alienist

As an action you can *banish* any creature not native to the plane you are on, sending them back to their plane of origin without a saving throw.

No Barrier Between

As an action once per day, you can summon any creature from any row of the Servitors chart. They are free agents, not bound to serve you, and they return to their point of origin after 1 hour.

DIPLOMAT'S POUCH

Wondrous item, uncommon

A letter placed in this pouch, addressed to someone who owns another *diplomat's pouch*, disappears, and the recipient listed in the letter finds a copy of it in their pouch. A letter can be listed to multiple recipients with a *diplomat's pouch*.

DISRUPTOR

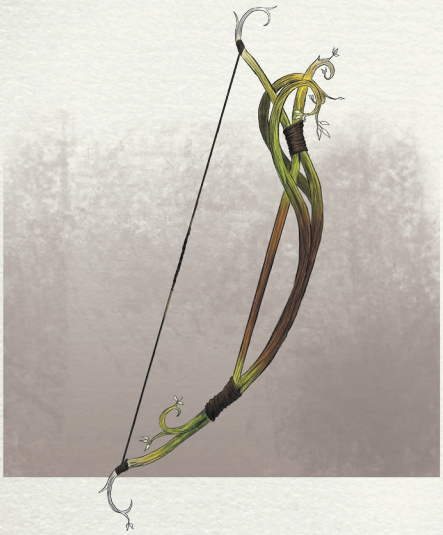
Weapon (longsword), very rare, requires attunement by a chaotic creature

If you are a neutral character, this dull grey longsword functions as a normal weapon with no bonus or special properties. If you are lawful, touching *Disruptor* deals 2d8 necrotic damage to you. If you are a chaotic character, you can use *Disruptor* as a magic weapon with the following properties.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon. This bonus increases to +3 against lawful creatures. If an attack with *Disruptor* reduces a creature to 0 hit points, their chest bursts open and their organs spill out.

Whenever you score a critical hit with *Disruptor*, roll a d6 on the Court of All Flesh row of the Servitors chart (page 31). The critical hit lops a limb off the enemy's

23 Or Plane, they're called Worlds in my setting.

body, and the rolled servitor spawns from the severed flesh. This servitor fights for you and obeys your commands. They return to Morphosis[24] after 1 minute or if they drop to 0 hit points.

FOXGLOVE BOW

Weapon (longbow), very rare, requires attunement by a chaotic creature

If you are a neutral character, this ash longbow functions as a normal weapon with no bonus or magical properties. If you are lawful, touching this weapon deals 2d8 radiant damage to you. If you are chaotic, you can use the *foxglove bow* as a magic weapon with the following properties.

Arrows nocked in this bow begin to drip with poison. All arrows fired from this bow deal poison damage in addition to piercing damage.

Whenever you score a critical hit with this bow, roll a d6 on the Court of Arcadia row of the Servitors chart (page 31). Foxglove flowers begin to fall like rain, and the rolled servitor appears behind the target. This servitor fights for you and obeys your commands. They return to Arcadia after 1 minute or if they drop to 0 hit points.

GLORY

Weapon (mace), very rare, requires attunement by a good creature

If you are a neutral character, this steel mace functions as a normal weapon with no bonus or special properties. If you are evil, touching this weapon deals 2d8 radiant damage to you. If you are a good character, you can use *Glory* as a magic weapon with the following properties.

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon, which deals radiant damage in addition to bludgeoning damage. While wielding *Glory*, you glow with faint light.

Whenever you score a critical hit with *Glory*, roll a d6 on the Celestial Court row of the Servitors chart (page 31). Radiant light floods the battlefield and an angelic chorus begins to play. When the light dissipates, the rolled servitor stands next to you. This servitor fights for you and obeys your commands. They return to their plane after 1 minute or if they drop to 0 hit points.

HARVEST

Weapon (sickle), very rare, requires attunement by an evil creature

If you are a neutral character, this reaping tool functions as a normal weapon with no bonus or special properties. If you are good, touching *Harvest* deals 2d8 necrotic damage to you. If you are an evil character, you can use this sickle as a magic weapon with the following properties.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. This bonus increases to +3 against good creatures. If you reduce a living, mortal creature to 0 hit points, you regain 1d8 hit points.

24 Capital city of Primordius, the Sea of Change, the plane of uttermost chaos.

Whenever you score a critical hit, roll a d6 on the Undead row of the Servitors chart (page 31). A bell tolls and the rolled servitors burst from the ground. These undead fight for you and obey your commands. The undead turn to dust after 1 minute or if they drop to 0 hit points.

HIGH TEMPLAR'S GLAIVE

Weapon (glaive), very rare, requires attunement

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. Each time you attack, you choose whether it deals fire, cold, or lightning damage in addition to its normal slashing damage.

Whenever you score a critical hit, roll a d6 on the Court of Elements row of the Servitors chart (page 31). A tear opens to the elemental plane of Quintessence and the rolled servitor steps through. This servitor fights for you and obeys your commands. They return to Alloy, the Burning City, after 1 minute or if they drop to 0 hit points.

The glaive has a large brass blade on the end of a teak shaft with elemental runes carved into it. The runes glow faintly in the presence of an extraplanar being.

MANTLE OF REGENCY

Wondrous item, rare, requires attunement

This billowing red cloak has a mind of its own. It grants the user 30 feet of fly (hover) speed while worn. As an action, the owner can summon the mantle to them, though how long it takes to arrive depends on how far away it is (it flies much faster when not being worn).

You are a much more impressive figure while wearing the mantle. You have advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks, and whenever you roll on a follower chart, you can select any result within 10% of your roll.

OBEY

Weapon (longsword), very rare, requires attunement by a lawful creature

If you are a neutral character, this crystal longsword functions as a normal weapon with no bonus or special properties. If you are chaotic, touching *Obey* deals 2d8 force damage to you. If you are a lawful character, you can use *Obey* as a magic weapon with the following properties.

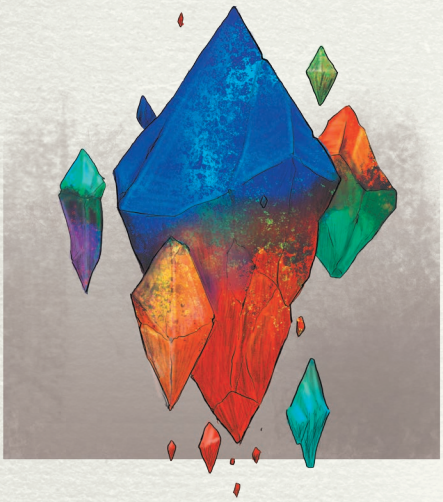
PSIONIC CRYSTAL

SIZE	EXAMPLE	CHARGES	RECHARGE	MANIFESTATIONS
Small	A coin	8	1d4	Amplify, Flay, Distance
Medium	An apple	12	1d6	Amplify, Distance, Flay, Forget, Sympathy
Large	A bowl	16	1d8	Amplify, Distance, Flay, Forget, Mindscape, Reflection, Sympathy
Huge	A pumpkin	24	1d10	Amplify, Believe, Distance, Elsewhere, Flay, Forget, Mindscape, Reflection, Sympathy

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When this weapon strikes a magic-user concentrating on a spell, their concentration is broken and they are knocked prone.

When you score a critical hit, roll a d6 on the Inexorables row of the Servitors chart (page 31). A glowing white door opens in front of you, the rolled servitor steps through, and the door vanishes. This servitor fights for you and obeys your commands. They return to Axiom after 1 minute or if they drop to 0 hit points.

If this weapon strikes a member of the Court of All Flesh, they are immediately returned to Primordius.



PSIONIC CRYSTAL

Wondrous item, rare, requires attunement

Chipped off the hide of a gemstone dragon, this crystal grants you psionic abilities depending on its size. It recharges upon completing a long rest. If you ever use the last charge, it turns into an inert precious stone.

SWORD OF THE DEMON KNIGHT

Weapon (longsword), very rare, requires attunement by an evil creature

If you are a neutral character, this jagged longsword functions as a normal weapon with no bonus or special properties. If you are good, touching Sir Malcoda's blade deals 2d8 necrotic damage to you. If you are an evil character, you can use the *sword of the demon knight* as a magic weapon with the following properties.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. Wielding this weapon with two hands causes it to glow with red light, shedding bright light for 20 feet and dim light for an extra 20 feet. Once per day, the wielder can cause the sword to flash a baleful, blinding red light. Lawful good creatures within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1 round.

Whenever you score a critical hit, roll a d6 on the Demons row of the Servitors chart (page 31). Demonic runes appear on the ground and the rolled servitor appears from the shadows. This servitor fights for you and obeys your commands. They return to the Abyss after 1 minute or if they drop to 0 hit points.

The demonic eye on the sword's cross-guard focuses intently on any lawful good creature within 30 feet.

SPYMASTER'S CLOAK

Wondrous item, uncommon

People who meet you tend to forget you. Gather Intel checks have disadvantage against anyone wearing this fine grey cloak.

SURVEYOR'S COMPASS

Wondrous item, rare

A compass of dwarven origin. Above the north marking of the compass is a small receptacle. Once per season, placing a piece of ore or precious stone into it causes the needle on the compass to point toward the nearest seam containing that material within 12 miles. This seam holds ore and gems worth 4d4 × 100 gp, and mining the seam takes three weeks.

THE TAPESTRY OF REWEAVING

Wondrous item, rare, requires installation

This magnificent tapestry at first appears to display a scene depicting life in the local area. The threads are expensively dyed, and real gold and silver are woven into it, giving it brilliant colors and incredibly fine detail. Expressions can be made out on the tiny faces of any people living nearby.

Watching the tapestry closely reveals it is not an idyllic depiction of a time gone by—it is live. It shows what is actually happening around the area in which it is installed. It is impossible to detect motion while looking at it, however—one only notices change when looking away and then looking back.

If found uninstalled, the tapestry depicts a scene from wherever it was last installed, and it does not change its scene until it is installed again.

THE TYRANT'S TWINBLADES,

VINCERE AND PUNIRE

Weapon (shortsword), very rare, requires attunement by an evil creature

If you are a neutral character, these black iron shortswords function as normal weapons with no bonus or special properties. If you are good, touching either weapon deals 2d8 necrotic damage to you. If you are an evil character, you can use *Vincere* and *Punire* as magic weapons with the following properties.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with these magic weapons. Once per round, if both blades strike a single foe, they deal an extra 1d6 fire damage.

When you score a critical hit with either blade, roll a d6 on the Devils row of the Servitors chart (page 31). Flames burst from the ground and the rolled servitor appears. This servitor fights for you and obeys your commands. They return to Hell after 1 minute or if they drop to 0 hit points.

If this weapon strikes a demon, it shackles it and pulls it down to Hell, removing it from the battle.

VELORIN'S LABORATORY

Wondrous item, rare, requires installation

This elaborate laboratory contains everything a magic-user needs to research new spells. The inks, papers, flasks, pipettes, tinctures, and rare ingredients are worth 10,000 gp and can be packed into two large trunks.

When installed in a tower, this laboratory allows the owner to adjust their result up or down by one when rolling on a research chart page 24).

WHISPERING STONE OF WARNING

Wondrous item, rare, requires installation

You may stare intently at the closed eye carved into this stone and repeatedly whisper a creature type or alignment to the stone for 10 minutes. The stone's eye opens and displays that name in runic text upon its pupil. If any creature of that type or alignment enters your demesne, the stone whispers to you, warning you of its presence. You can hear this whisper across any distance, but only if you are on the plane as the stone. After a season, the rune begins to fade. You can replace the creature type or alignment the stone warns against by performing the ritual again.

SAMPLE UNIT CARDS

SKELETAL ARCHERS

SKELETON REGULAR MEDIUM ARCHERS

COST: —

ATTACK:	+0	**DEFENSE:**	15
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	14
MORALE:	—	**SIZE:**	1d6

TRAITS

Undead. Green and Regular troops must succeed on a Morale check in order to attack this unit. Each enemy unit need only do this once.

Mindless. Cannot fail Morale checks.

WIGHT CAVALRY

WIGHT REGULAR MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+6	**DEFENSE:**	15
POWER:	+5	**TOUGHNESS:**	16
MORALE:	+5	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Undead. Green and Regular troops must succeed on a Morale check in order to attack this unit. Each enemy unit need only do this once.

Life Drain. Successful Power checks exhaust enemy units.

SHADOW LEGION

IRON GOLEM REGULAR HEAVY INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+2	**DEFENSE:**	12
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	11
MORALE:	+2	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Amorphous. The legion can move into another unit, occupying its space and engaging that unit. As such, the legion can attack archers while enemy infantry is still on the field.

Strength Drain. If the legion inflicts a casualty on an engaged unit, that unit loses 1 Power. Lost Power regenerates the next day.

Horrify. If the legion inflicts a casualty on a mortal unit, that unit must make a DC 15 Morale check. Failure exhausts the unit.

LEGION OF THE DEAD

GHOUL REGULAR MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+3	**DEFENSE:**	19
POWER:	+6	**TOUGHNESS:**	17
MORALE:	+3	**SIZE:**	1d10

TRAITS

Undead. Levies as well as Green and Regular troops must succeed on a Morale check in order to attack this unit. Each enemy unit need only do this once.

Horrify. Inflicting a casualty on a mortal unit forces a DC 15 Morale check. Failure exhausts the unit.

Feast. If this unit diminishes an enemy unit, it immediately gains a free attack against that unit.

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THE IRON COMPANY

IRON GOLEM REGULAR HEAVY INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+9	**DEFENSE:**	23
POWER:	+13	**TOUGHNESS:**	19
MORALE:	+10	**SIZE:**	1d4

TRAITS

Magic Resistance. This unit has advantage on saving throws against spells, battle magic, and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Poison Cloud (battle magic). Target: 1 unit, Attack: +12, Power: +15. Enemy units damaged by this attack must make a DC 15 Morale check or increment their casualty die three times.

IRONHEART DEFENDERS

DWARF SEASONED MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: 470

ATTACK:	+4	**DEFENSE:**	13
POWER:	+2	**TOUGHNESS:**	13
MORALE:	+4	**SIZE:**	1d6

TRAITS

Made of Sterner Stuff. Enemy battle magic has disadvantage on power checks.

That Just Made Them Angry. While diminished, this unit has advantage on attack checks. Enemy power tests against this unit have disadvantage.

ORDERS

Stand Your Ground! Once per battle, for the next round all successful enemy power checks against this unit must be rerolled.

ROCKBREAKERS

ELITE HEAVY DWARVEN INFANTRY

COST: 140

ATTACK:	+6	**DEFENSE:**	15
POWER:	+6	**TOUGHNESS:**	13
MORALE:	+8	**SIZE:**	1d6

TRAITS

Stalwart. Enemy battle magic has disadvantage on power tests against this unit.

TREANTS

TREANT SIEGE ENGINE

COST: —

ATTACK:	+10	**DEFENSE:**	13
POWER:	+13	**TOUGHNESS:**	23
MORALE:	+9	**SIZE:**	1d4

ACTIONS

Twisting Roots. Sap the walls of a fortification. Siege units have advantage on Power checks against sapped fortifications.

Hurl Rocks. Make a Power check against a fortification. If successful, deal 1d6 damage.

LEGION OF HELL

BARBED DEVIL REGULAR MEDIUM INFANTRY

COST: —

ATTACK:	+8	**DEFENSE:**	15
POWER:	+7	**TOUGHNESS:**	15
MORALE:	+10	**SIZE:**	

TRAITS

Hellspawn. Mortal units must make a Morale check (DC 15) in order to attack this unit.

Barbs. Whenever Infantry inflicts casualties on this unit, this unit automatically makes a DC 8 Power check against the attacking unit.

_____

_____

COST:

ATTACK:		**DEFENSE:**	
POWER:		**TOUGHNESS:**	
MORALE:		**SIZE:**	

TRAITS

ORDERS

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