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By Christopher Perkins

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Player's Option: Heroes of the Elemental Chaos™ hits stores this month, just in time for players to create elemental-themed heroes for *The Elder Elemental Eye*™, the next D&D Encounters™ season. To celebrate, we're letting gods, primordials, and elemental-themed heroes run amok in the pages of *Dragon* and *Dungeon* this month. I hope you like what we have planned!

Rather than dive into the Elemental Chaos, I'd like to turn my editorial eye toward an unrelated subject, namely the Forgotten Realms® campaign setting, about which more source material has been written than any other "swords & sorcery" fantasy world in history (although one cannot dispute that Middle Earth is the reigning king when it comes to scholarly essays and cultural inspiration).

This year in the magazines, we're taking a break from the Nentir Vale "points of light" setting to shine a light on the Forgotten Realms as well as some of our other popular worlds, past and present. You'll see more Eberron® articles, more Dark Sun® articles, and even some content for Ravenloft®, Planescape®, and the *World of Greyhawk*™. But the Realms, in particular, will receive a lot of love.

While I've always admired the lavish detail of the Forgotten Realms® campaign setting, which lends it a mind-boggling verisimilitude, what draws me to the setting is that it's true to the core D&D medieval fantasy experience, and it doesn't take a degree in rocket science to repurpose FR content for home campaign use. I've never run a Forgotten Realms campaign, but I've plundered a lot of FR content for my home campaigns over the years.

If you ask me what I think is the most iconic D&D story, I'd probably defend the War of the Lance as my #1 choice. I grew up reading *The Dragonlance Chronicles*, and nothing else in my opinion comes close to feeling as epic. However, the Dragonlance® setting is hamstrung by the fact that there's one story worth telling, and every other adventure seems to pale in comparison. (Feel free to disagree.)

On the other hand, the Forgotten Realms setting is a place where thousands of stories and adventures can play out. True, the Realms has seen its share of world-shaking events, and there are linchpin characters the likes of Drizzt Do'Urden and Elminster, but for whatever reason, none of that impinges on my ability as a DM to conjure up new adventure ideas set in the Realms. Furthermore, FR players rarely feel as though their characters live in the shadows of legends. The Realms always seems to make room for the next great story, the next great hero, no matter how many articles and novels and game supplements we publish.

But the thing I like most about the Forgotten Realms *right this very minute* is our new board game, *Lords of Waterdeep*, which just hit stores this month. I don't consider myself a board game connoisseur, but I know a good game when I play it, and *Lords of*

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Waterdeep immerses me in the Forgotten Realms world while staying true to the core D&D experience, and also makes me feel like a Big Man when I win. It has turned me from an FR fan to an FR freak, and it's gotten me excited about the Forgotten Realms articles we have planned for this year. If you've played the board game and feel inspired to drop us a comment, please do. We'll be listening.

History Check: Corellon and Gruumsh

By Jeff LaSala

Illustration by Wayne Reynolds

Introduction

Welcome to the second installment of a new series that delves into the storied history of some of the most iconic characters and events in the lore of the Dungeons & Dragons® game. Each article offers new insights into a different hero, villain, organization, or event, sifting through the varied myths and contradictions of D&D® history to offer knowledge both familiar and new. Throughout the text, sidebars single out what an adventurer might know about the topic at hand based on a successful skill check.

This installment sheds light on one of the most epic battles of all time: the clash of Corellon, god of the elves, and Gruumsh, god of the orcs.

The Elven Glen

"Set your gear down, friend. We shall rove no farther today—not until nightfall, at the very least. That bridge you see up there, beyond the tree line? That marks the edge of a sacred elven glen, and the people

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THE ZAROVANS

The narrator of this "History Check" is a member of the Zarovan tribe of the Vistani, a mystical, gypsy-like people who can cross the planes as easily as they ford a woodland stream. The Zarovans place great value in the future, which is made relevant by the past, and they might share their lore with *giorgios* (non-Vistani) in exchange for an open mind, dark secrets, or mysterious long-term favors. You can learn more about the Vistani in *Player's Option: Heroes of Shadow*™, the boxed set *The Shadowfell: Gloomwrought and Beyond*™, and the Vistani articles in *Dragon* 380.

of this realm permit travelers to pass through their domain only by moonlight. How do I know this? Look closer, if you dare, and you will see the slender pikes of ash driven into the earth . . . and the defiant, tusked faces mounted atop each. That is the work of elves. Still not convinced? Trust me, *giorgio*, you would be feathered with arrows before you reached the far side of that bridge. So, rest for a bit. The sunlit hours are their time, not ours. We will move on when Corellon's grace allows it and when Sehanine's light unveils the path.

"Menodora sent you to me, yes? Or was it Marov? They are cousins of mine, though as you can see, I do not share their rounded ears or the tellurian pupils of their eyes. Venjar, my given name, is an eladrin one, after all. Yes, even some fey, like myself, have exchanged kith and kin for blood bonds stronger than any race. I am proud to call myself Vistani, and I have chosen to forgive the people who once cast me out—though they are kin to me no more. You see, decades ago, the glen beyond that bridge was my home. Elves and eladrin represent two sides of the same coin—a coin fashioned with tears and blood by the Protector—and their lands overlap between the mortal world and the Feywild.

"Why was I cast out? That is a rude question, *giorgio*. But I am feeling wistful today and nostalgic for the old stories.

"My exile has nothing to do with the Vistani; in fact, the dissolution of my elven ties is what brought me to the Vistani in the first place. No, the truth is simple: I spared the life of an orc and dared to befriend her. Is that so unforgivable a crime? To the worldly children of Corellon, the Protector, First of the Seldarine, Coronal of Arvandor, and Father of the Feywild, it most certainly is. Come. Sit. I will tell you why.

"The Vistani have heard every version there is of this tale, and none are better equipped than we to sift truth from shadow and rumor. Here, then, is the closest truth you will ever hear about Corellon and his enemy Gruumsh One-Eye. Ah, but the god of destruction didn't always have that grisly moniker, did he? That's what this tale is all about. Come, I will tell you the story. I'll even do the voices. For an eladrin, I do a pretty good orc."

Origins and the Dawn War

"Elves revile and shun orcs in every realm I have walked. Likewise, orcs slaughter elves whenever they can. Rare is the land that does not see bloodshed between the two. This is no simple feud or clash of culture, but an enmity as old and deep as the world itself—as immortal as the gods who began it. It is a rage coursing through the veins of orcs like a torrent. It is a pulse of primal anger beating through the heart of every elf. Perhaps you have seen it at work.

"But first I must speak a bit of heresy—and quietly. This is something bandied about by loremasters of Vecna and particularly intrepid theologians. Some claim, you see, that there were once two brothers, twins of a primogenitor deity that sacrificed its own life so that its offspring would live. It imbued one son with exceeding intelligence, light, and beauty, and the other with savagery, darkness, and chaos. This deity believed its sons could turn the tide of war in favor of the gods. To the elder brother, Corellon, it granted arcane magic, knowing he would possess the care and wisdom needed to deliver it to the mortal world. For the other, its less intelligent and uglier son, Gruumsh, the deity felt great compassion, and so it seeded in him a spark of divine prescience. Yes, the power of foresight, though it was a mere echo of the greater power that Ioun, god of prophecy, possessed.

"There is no knowing the truth of this heresy—and it is not wise to speak of these twin gods around those with pointed ears or those with jutting tusks. But none will deny that a vicious rivalry has always existed between Corellon and Gruumsh. The two gods are mirrors unto each another: Where Corellon is graceful and fair, Gruumsh is brutal and wanton. The two sparred time and again, each leery of the other. But their eternal hatred, the emotion we see play out with every hissing arrow or bloody axe, was yet to be realized.

"Then came the mythic Dawn War. As the old legends go, the primordials of Creation sought to destroy the world and the gods who dared to reign over it. By the time Gruumsh joined the fray, Corellon had already vanished into the Feywild. He dallied there with the rest of the Seldarine, the deities of the fey, and chief among them were the goddesses Sehanine the Moonbow and Lolth the Weaver. The Seldarine remained aloof from the war that raged across the Astral Sea, instead creating wondrous works of art, magic, and music that the world can only strive to recall. It was also the dawn of elvenkind, who had been a dream in Corellon's mind since his own genesis. In the vast and virgin beauty of the Feywild, eladrin, elves, and dark elves took shape from the

HISTORY CHECK

All characters know of the fundamental conflict between elves and orcs (reflected in their respective faiths), but only some have a vague sense of its origin. Elves and eladrin, or characters who make successful DC 20 History or Religion checks, know of Corellon's time in the Feywild and the rebellion of Lolth and the dark elves. A DC 30 History or Religion check is required to know of the heretical theory that Corellon and Gruumsh are twins.

Protector's own tears, which were shed for beauty, joy, and sorrow.

"Alas, when Lolth betrayed the Seldarine—a complex and tragic story I must save for another day—Corellon's heart was forever wounded. Civil war erupted in the Feywild and ravaged the Seldarine's refuge of Arvandor. The eladrin and elves took up arms against their dark cousins, whose loyalties were claimed by the Spider Queen's jealous power. In the end, Lolth and her greatest servants were cast into the Abyss, while the dark elves were banished to the depths of the mortal world, forsaken by Corellon. These became the drow we have all heard such stories about.

"Devastated by their loss, and with Arvandor now in ruins, Corellon, Sehanine, and the rest of the Seldarine finally turned their attention to the Dawn War that raged beyond the Feywild, understanding the threat that the primordials posed for all of creation. Lolth's corruption had been a tragic demonstration of the evil of the Elemental Chaos. When the Dawn War did conclude, the gods were at last free to claim their dominions—and contend more directly with one another. It had been a pyrrhic victory, you see, for although the primordials had been defeated, they had denied the gods their chance for a unified domain. Chaos and strife would endure among the heavens for all time."

He Who Never Sleeps

"No god so embodied this divine chaos more than Gruumsh. While Lolth is comparable, her malice is deliberate, complex, and entirely capricious. In contrast, Gruumsh's rage is as mindless and steady as a storm. Angry from the start, he was never a cooperative deity. Some ridiculous stories suggest that the gods drew lots to determine which part of the world each would be given for their works and worshipers. Imagine that—divine dominion by sortition! The lots were all used up before Gruumsh's turn, of course, leaving him without a place in the world. He has been incensed ever since.

"In the Dawn War, Gruumsh fought beside Corellon, whose devotion to the fight was second to none. Though Corellon was a god of artistry and song, he fought with the fervor of a general and the camaraderie of a sibling. Yet Gruumsh dreamt murderous dreams about the Coronal of Arvandor. He sided against Chaos, but Gruumsh was ruled by contradictions, violent rages, and undeniable evil. He was named He Who Never Sleeps, for Gruumsh was tireless, even for a god. It is told in every orc tribe that Gruumsh never stopped battling the primordials during that mythic conflict, and never once broke off to rest or recover his strength. Indeed, his strength was endless.

"And indeed, the combined prowess of Gruumsh and Corellon proved to be necessary in the war. Together they threw down primordials and staved off the demonic hordes of Chaos, but Gruumsh's bitterness and jealousy grew with every passing battle. Corellon, beloved by many, had joined the Dawn War late and was yet lauded as a champion of war and arcane might. The Protector had come forth from the Feywild with a host of fey servants and beauteous mortals under his care, and they were not, according to Gruumsh, properly deferential to him. Elvenkind and the whole of the Seldarine were an abomination in the eyes of He Who Never Sleeps—weak, irritating, favored. At war's end, when he turned his attention to the mortal world and sought influence there, it was too much for Gruumsh to allow.

"With a measure of divine prescience, perhaps his gift from that primogenitor parent, Gruumsh saw visions of the battle he desired and its gruesome aftermath. He dreamed of Corellon's death, saw his body hewn apart and paraded through the Astral Sea as Gruumsh assumed dominion over magic in his stead. He believed he could make this turn of events come to pass. He thought he could tear asunder the still-young races of elvenkind and replace them with a race of his own—a people shaped in his own image who would rend, bite, and make the mortal world a battlefield. He had only to make the first strike."

HISTORY CHECK

A character knows the nature of Gruumsh (as related here) with a DC 20 Religion check, as well as his jealousy of Corellon, though a DC 30 Religion check is required to know that some once believed that Gruumsh had a measure of premonitory power. Certainly he does no longer.

The Vale of Blood

"Some accounts of the legendary battle suggest that Corellon was the provoker, others that Gruumsh spoke the challenge. The truth is that both gods knew it was coming and prepared accordingly. The fight began in the world, in a wooded vale where elvenkind had first ventured from the Feywild, where the veils between the Feywild and the mortal realms were sheer. Gruumsh stood at the vale's heart, a giant of a god clad in thick, black-stained armor fashioned from the hides of forty slain dragons. He stood unarmed.

" 'Corellon!' he called out, the fury of his voice shaking the whole of the mortal world and every world beyond. Gruumsh laughed as he kicked down a great tree, a mighty oak that had been cultivated by elven enchantments and had been the first worldly temple to the Protector. 'Lord of Cowardice! Face me!'

"In time, Corellon emerged from the forest shadow. He, too, came empty-handed. 'Must we fight, brother?' the god of spring asked in a light tone. Most agree that he meant the term figuratively, as one god to another. Heretics claim that the meaning was literal. Corellon was resplendent in supple mail armor, a sky-blue cloak swaying behind him.

" 'When this has ended, your people will serve me,' Gruumsh rumbled as he approached. 'I have seen it.'

" 'Let us talk first, Gruumsh. The war is past. This is not a matter for blood.'

" 'Oh, it is. I've seen you bleed already.' The god of destruction spat on the ground. 'And talk is for the weak. Did talk spare you Lolth's betrayal?'

"At this, Corellon fell silent. And Gruumsh, being Gruumsh, had no intention of parley anyway. He charged at Corellon, and suddenly a great spear appeared in his hand—the work of Lolth and her brief collusion with the god of destruction. The Spider Queen had woven a terrible spell into Gruumsh's mighty weapon, rendering it invisible and poisoning its tip; Gruumsh intended to lay his enemy low in a single strike. With a shout of triumph, he plunged the spear into Corellon's chest.

"But neither god was playing fair. Corellon's apparent form, one of Sehanine's most powerful illusions, dissolved in a vortex of green leaves and liquid moonlight. Snarling at the deception, Gruumsh whirled around. Corellon's true form stood high on a pinnacle of rock across the valley, and Gruumsh's keen eyes sought him frantically—almost too late. Corellon's bow hissed with divine power as an arrow almost took the god of destruction in the eye. In fact, according to elf loremasters, Gruumsh was blinded then and there—but those sages underestimate He Who Never Sleeps and do not wish to recognize his prowess. Gruumsh's premonitory sight alerted him to turn his head just in time, and Corellon's arrow instead drew a bloody line across his brow.

"The pain elated Gruumsh—it invigorated him and drove him into a lust for violence that orc warriors still strive to match. He shouted and laughed, the thundering sound reverberating across the world. Corellon, knowing he would have no opportunity for a second arrow, dropped his bow, sprang from the rock, and met Gruumsh at the center of the vale. In his hand he held a blade he had forged before the Dawn War from the shards of a gleaming star. Even dwarf clerics assert this might have been the first and strongest longsword in all of creation.

"As the two gods clashed, the deities and servants of the Seldarine rose from the shadows of the vale. Unknown to Corellon, his friends had come to join the fight; whether it was fair or not for them to join the battle, they refused to stand idle as their Coronal fought for his life. Yet Gruumsh had already accounted for this eventuality by mustering the deities and exarchs who also desired the fall of the Seldarine. And now they came. Two armies crashed against one another, transforming the valley into a pit of swirling mud, deadly spellfire, and spattered blood. Some theologians call this the Godswar, for many were the deities who fought one another—some with scores to settle, using Corellon's and Gruumsh's conflict as an excuse for battle.

"Of course, those who did not fight—especially gods of law, like Bahamut, Erathis, and Moradin—watched from afar, shaking their heads at the chaos their impetuous brethren had been drawn into. 'Was it not enough that the primordials shattered the Lattice of Heaven?' they fumed.

"At first, no telling blows were exchanged between Corellon and Gruumsh. They were perfect counterparts in every way. Corellon's peerless agility and Gruumsh's tireless strength drove their weapons together time and again, but every strike was parried, every killing stroke foiled. Corellon was faster, but Gruumsh's foresight anticipated every swing of the elf god's blade. For days—at least, as immortals reckon them—the Godswar raged on, until all others fell back, too exhausted to continue.

"But neither Gruumsh nor Corellon broke off. The Protector began to tire and knew he could not outlast his larger opponent, so he took the battle elsewhere. Corellon led his foe on a chase across the wild places of the world, avoiding mortal civilizations wherever possible. Gruumsh smote the earth with his spear as he ran, venting his rage. Canyons yawned open, cracks coursed beneath the hills, and storms rose up in their wake. Where the lands were fragile and in need of guard from Gruumsh's wrath, the Protector turned and renewed the fight. By this time, both gods were suffering true wounds at last. Their immortal blood spattered the land and soaked into the earth. Corellon's blade pierced Gruumsh's flesh, and a venomous spear slashed the god of magic.

"Corellon took refuge in a bruised and sullen wasteland edged on one side by a jagged mountain wall. There he paused, exhausted. Night had fallen, and it seemed the powers of darkness were strengthening. But the borders between the planes were thin in this remote corner of the world, a fact upon which

Corellon was relying as he drew spirit and song from the Feywild. Gruumsh strode onto the plain after him, scenting the kill. The two gods clashed again, scoring wounds against one another that would have felled the greatest of titans. Blood fell like rain, until finally Corellon found his opportunity."

RELIGION CHECK

A character knows of the Godswar or some of its interpretations with a DC 25 Religion or History check. Even secular histories of some kingdoms reference an ancient time when the gods fought one another. A successful DC 30 Religion check provides the "accurate" details of Corellon's long battle with Gruumsh.

Blind Ambition

"And here, at last, is where accounts of this mythic battle differ the most. To speak the unpopular version—depending on your audience—can earn you raised eyebrows, scathing words, or drawn weapons. The question at hand . . . what made Gruumsh falter?

"Some orcs say it was the demon Lolth who intervened, issuing from a fissure in the mountain wall like the spider she was, and distracting Gruumsh with some dark glamor. Others claim that Sehanine's moon tore through the clouded sky and blinded their god with its cruel light.

"In support of the first school of thought, we know the drow teach their young that the enchantments Lolth had woven into Gruumsh's spear turned against him in the end, paralyzing him for the one precious moment his enemy needed. That the Spider Queen would betray Gruumsh surprises none, but why she would deliver this victory to Corellon, whom she hated, few can understand. Are not love and hate, at times, one and the same? Obsession is perilous, either way.

"As for the argument that condemns Sehanine for turning the tide, there is no denying that this was Corellon's seminal moment. Whether Gruumsh's waver was spurred or mere chance, Sehanine the Moonbow was Corellon's bride, and her light shone upon him and gave him strength in his darkest hour. I have little doubt she took part in that final confrontation, and even less that Lolth was near, watching, weaving. Scheming.

"Elves typically subscribe to neither of these theories—those who acknowledge that the battle waged for this long choose to believe that Corellon's stamina wore down even the tireless Gruumsh, and that he struck when the god of destruction let down his guard.

"However it happened, Corellon struck fast and hard. His sword cut through the space between them and lodged deep in Gruumsh's left eye, forcing the other god back against the mountain wall. Corellon twisted the blade as Gruumsh howled, carving a gaping hole in the savage god's head, to make sure the wound could not heal. The force of Gruumsh's bellow sent Corellon to the ground, where he lay, stunned. The paralytic venom from Gruumsh's spear was also finally taking its toll.

"Lolth, ever the opportunist, scuttled from the shadows of the mountain to approach Corellon—but whether to kill the battle-weary Protector or to beg his forgiveness? We shall never know, because Sehanine appeared before her, checking the Spider Queen's advance with a jealous flare of her power.

"Gruumsh, oblivious to both of the interfering forces, sank to the ground in agony. Black ichor spewed from the cavity where his eye had been. The god of destruction clutched at the wound even as his remaining eye dimmed from the pain. He was forced to decide: fight on, more than half-blinded—for surely the mighty Gruumsh could—or retreat.

"Lolth, furious at being spurned again, called to the god of destruction as a writhing whisper in his mind. 'Come, Gruumsh. Join me in my realm below. I will nurse your wounds and satisfy your darkest desires. Together we will weave Corellon's glorious death. I know his secrets, his weaknesses, his fears.' Tempted though he was—for relief and for Corellon's demise—Gruumsh ignored her. For Lolth was a deceptive demon and had already betrayed him once despite their dalliances in the past.

"Gruumsh One-Eye roared at Corellon, who merely looked on, trying to catch his breath, unsure if the battle would resume. Gruumsh cursed the Protector for what he had done, promising him woe for all time, vowing vengeance against his every creation and the eternal slaughter of elvenkind. Such melodrama, I know! But if someone cut out your eye, your curses and threats could perhaps give Gruumsh a run for his gold.

"Indeed, orcs tell a very different tale of this mythic battle. Gruumsh, they claim, always had only a single eye—a great unblinking orb in the center of his forehead—and that He Who Watches gouged his own eye out at birth, to enhance his senses or as a token of fealty to the forces of chaos. To suggest that Corellon took Grummsh's eye is blasphemy to the orcs. Yes, they say, the two gods fought, but the cowardly Corellon fled Gruumsh's wrath when he saw that he was outmatched. The Protector, in this version, used a fey trick to distract Gruumsh so that he, the Father of Elvenkind, could run.

"Regardless of the original number of eyes their god possessed, orc shamans are required to remove one of their own—usually the left eye. Why? This is an act of devotion and pain made to honor He Who Watches. Orcs believe that Gruumsh One-Eye watches and judges every one of their kind."

The Aftermath

"At last, Gruumsh rose, turned, and broke through the mountain wall behind him, entering the earth as he fled. Foul ichor dripped from between his fingers. And his eye . . . oh, yes, what of the eye? Gruumsh's left eye, as it happens, had been the source of his prescient power. And Corellon had known this.

"You see, it wasn't mere pride that had bade the Protector to consent to this terrible war. He knew of the foresight that Gruumsh had commanded. At great personal cost, Corellon had secured knowledge—perhaps from Ioun—of how to rid his enemy of this ability if it ever came to that. The Protector had entertained no thoughts of killing Gruumsh. He Who Never Sleeps was a god, after all, and even Corellon believed that Gruumsh had a place in the heavens. But should Gruumsh prove himself unworthy of his prophetic sight, Corellon was determined to keep the god of senseless carnage from one day becoming as powerful as the primordials. He knew he would not kill Gruumsh, but he could cripple him. And so he had.

"The eye was destroyed, or so it is presumed, and its remnants dripped down into the cracks of the mountain as Gruumsh fled. Where it mingled with latent primordial pockets, monsters spawned; dread beasts that men still unearth from time to time to sate their unwholesome appetites.

"Because the barriers between the planes were thin in this part of the world, some of Gruumsh's ichor seeped into the Feywild and took root deep belowground. Some say that the fomorians—those monstrous, fey reflections of the titans—found their clairvoyant sight by bathing in the fluid vestiges of an angry god. Each fomorian was blessed and cursed by it, as one eye distended and grew, afflicting them with terrible pain and terrible power. Surely you've heard of the cyclopses, those one-eyed brutes who serve the fomorians. Are they not said to resemble Gruumsh as the orcs depict him? Hardly a coincidence.

"When Gruumsh walked away from that field of battle—either as the victor or the vanquished—it was his will, his hate, and his blood that gave malevolent life to the first orcs. His blood mingled with the mortal earth through all the lands of the battle. Gruumsh's dark dream of dominion over a race that would serve him alone, that would pillage and plunder and destroy the works of Corellon, had come to pass as a consequence of his most painful hour. The orcs dwelled in the rifts, chasms, and caves opened up by Gruumsh's mighty spear, and in their hearts was seeded a hatred for the elves and their Protector.

"As bitter as the orcs' hatred is, it pales beside the enmity Gruumsh feels for Corellon. Not only had Corellon maimed him, but he had denied Gruumsh the power of premonition. For that, Gruumsh One-Eye swore vengeance against all the deities, Corellon above all. He Who Never Sleeps remains to this day a ferocious warlord among the gods, incapable of being trusted by anyone and far too angry to be ignored.

"Corellon, meanwhile, had shed much of his own lifeblood upon the mortal world. Where eladrin preferred the twilit shelter of the Feywild, the elves who so adored the world were deeply affected by the Protector's struggle and pain. When the moon's light shined upon his blood, it transformed into a mist that washed over the elves. In their hearts was sewn defiance and animosity against the works of Gruumsh and especially his children, the orcs. The broken lands upon which Corellon had bled and over which he had stood victorious became a verdant realm, a primeval forest perched at the edge of a mountain wall. It has known many names, and elves and orcs clash there to this day."

HISTORY CHECK

Most characters know that Corellon allegedly blinded Gruumsh at the end of their battle. A successful DC 25 Religion check or DC 30 History check reveals all the theories of its aftermath, such as the arrival of Sehanine and Lolth or the connection between Gruumsh and the fomorians and cyclopses.

Plot Hooks

Here are a few ideas for DMs who want to use Corellon's and Gruumsh's enmity in their campaigns. Additional information about the Seldarine can be found in the articles "Channel Divinity: Corellon" in *Dragon* 386, "Channel Divinity: Corellon's Devoted" in *Dragon* 394, and "Channel Divinity: Sehanine, Arrows from the Moonbow" in *Dragon* 386.

The Eye Lives: A heretical cult devoted to He Who Watches is gaining popularity among orc tribes. These one-eyed supplicants concede that Gruumsh's eye was cut out by Corellon, but they claim it was not destroyed. They believe Gruumsh's orb is an artifact of enormous power. While avoiding the vengeful shamans of orthodox faith, these cultists have recruited muscle well beyond those of orc blood and will soon possess a map to their prize. Is it really Gruumsh's eye, roiling with oracular power, or is another agency manipulating them to find something else—something worse?

One from Two: Fomorians honor no god, but one particular fomorian witch (*Dungeon* 176), obsessed with elves and eladrin, believes in the creation myth of her race as it relates to Gruumsh. With the help of a house of drow nobles, she captures a renowned elf sorceress and a powerful orc warlord. She is convinced that a ritual can fuse the two together and engender a new race. Such an act might be the key to making the vain fomorians more beautiful. And it would certainly give the hated elves and orcs a new foe. The heroes must venture into the Feydark and stop the witch's ritual.

Rematch: Orc shamans the world over begin receiving auguries and omens from Gruumsh One-Eye suggesting that, after all these ages, he is mounting a new war against Corellon and all of elvenkind. In short, Gruumsh wants a rematch, and even the maiming of Corellon won't be enough to satisfy his lust for revenge. Arvandor must be destroyed anew, and the eladrin of the Feywild also will not be safe from Gruumsh's plan.

About the Author

Jeff LaSala is a writer/editor of speculative fiction and an inquisitory game designer. His first Eberron® novel, *The Darkwood Mask*, showcased his love for all things dark, monstrous, and masked. He usually dwells in the chthonic depths of New York City, perching like a gargoyle over jefflasala.com. When he was seven years old, his big brother threw a metal-tipped dart in his eye, so he feels Gruumsh's pain (but sides with Corellon anyway).

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Character Themes: Reborn from Chaos

By Matt Goetz

Illustrations by Chris Seaman and Scott Murphy

Developing your character into someone who has a rich story can be a fun and rewarding process. You likely have an idea of what race and what class you want to play, but you might have only a general idea of what your character's life was like before you start playing the character at the gaming table. A theme can help you flesh out your character and provide some interesting options for developing his or her background.

This article details three character themes: the brazen ambassador, the chaosmade, and the stormraider.

Brazen Ambassador

The City of Brass in the Elemental Chaos is a complex net of social intrigue, woven through the courts of the efreet lords who stand as the city's masters. The feuds, alliances, and enmities of the city require a special class of citizen to navigate: the brazen ambassadors.

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Developed as a means for embattled efreets to communicate with their peers, brazen ambassadors have taken on a greater role, not just within the City of Brass but also on far-flung planes. Today, brazen ambassadors handle most of a lord's affairs, from negotiating alliances with the city's many courts to brokering with planar traders that come to the city. They even deign to represent Bashamgurda, Lord of the Efreets, and through him, the City of Brass itself.

Each brazen ambassador is drawn from the ranks of slaves within the City of Brass, and the decision to elevate such an individual is not made lightly. The process requires potent magic, demanding the investment of an efreet patron's power. The efreet first draws off some of its burning blood, which a specially trained ritual practitioner, or *sahaar*, uses to tattoo arcane symbols on the skin of the chosen figure. As it cools, the blood leaves a brass filigree etched into the ambassador's skin. This initiation is dangerous; the frail do not survive. Adventurers are prized choices to become brazen ambassadors because they are far more likely to survive the process than any common slaveling.

The markings on an ambassador serve two purposes. The first and most obvious is to distinguish a brazen ambassador as more than a mere slave. At a glance, an efreet can know that the words of such an individual are not the mere whining of a lowly slave—they are treated as the words of a peer. Second, the ritual causes the blood of the patron to intermingle with that of its ambassador, causing the ambassador to become a part of that efreet's bloodline. The connection between an ambassador and its patron is a potent one, permitting the efreet to invest an ambassador with some of its power, even across the planes.

CHARACTER THEMES

Your character's theme is a career, calling, or identity that describes who he or she is in the world. Just as race and class create basic definitions about who your character is, theme adds a third character component to help refine your story and identity. For example, if you are a human thief who chooses the brazen ambassador theme, you might have been caught while attempting to steal the treasures of an efreet lord's vault, and pressed into service. Perhaps the efreet was impressed with your boldness, and decided to elevate you from the rank of a mere slave to the position of representative. Each theme can encompass several unique stories within the same concept.

For information on using themes as part of character creation and rules for how to gain and use theme powers and features, see "Heroes of Nature and Lore," Dragon 399.

Creating a Brazen Ambassador

A brazen ambassador must speak with unshakable confidence and quick wit; stories claim that such envoys are able to cause kings to doubt themselves. As the mouthpieces of their lords, ambassadors are expected to emulate the arrogance and certainty of the efreets. Bards and warlords are sought out for this ability, though anyone capable of constructing an entertaining enough lie could catch the attention of an efreet lord. Sometimes negotiations in the City of Brass are conducted at the tip of a sword, though, so it is also possible for members of martial classes to slip into the ranks of the brazen ambassadors. Of those, quick-witted rogues excel, since they can operate as assassins when demands go unmet and negotiations fail. Brazen ambassadors who use divine power are almost unheard of: Efreets are jealous creatures, and demand their servants follow no other master.

Starting Feature

Cutting your diplomatic teeth within the courts of the efreets is a dangerous prospect. The masters of the City of Brass are not known for being humble or forgiving, and the wrong choice of words can result in a painful death. Fortunately, your patron has taught you to tap into the burning blood that now runs in your veins. When you do, the brass markings on your skin erupt, evidence of the inexhaustible wrath of an efreet that will not tolerate attacks against its ambassador.

Benefit: You gain the *bound by brass* power.

Bound by Brass Brazen Ambassador Utility

While the mystic symbols on your skin burn bright, enemies dare not strike you for fear of drawing the ire of your master.

Encounter ✦ Charm, Elemental
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the end of your next turn or until you attack, creatures of your level or lower cannot target you with melee attacks or ranged attacks.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

Rumors among the brazen ambassadors claim that a clever lie, told well enough to convince an efreet, can earn an ambassador freedom from his or her servitude. Because of this, many ambassadors meet in secret at "lie moots," where they hone their deceptive arts. These meetings also familiarize ambassadors with the minor tics and tells that reveal when someone is lying; once a moot begins, everything said from that point forward is an untruth.

Whether an ambassador can truly win freedom in this way is uncertain. The efreets tacitly encourage

the ambassadors' practice of becoming better liars, since it makes their representatives better negotiators, and it is true that they have a deep love of falsehood—but the lie an efreet loves most is its own.

Benefit: Once per encounter, when you roll a Bluff check against a creature of the elemental origin and dislike the result, you can reroll the check. You must use the second result.

Level 10 Feature

Slaves are a common gift given by efreets who want to curry favor with more influential lords within the City of Brass, and a skilled brazen ambassador is considered more valuable than a thousand common slaves.

When gifted to a patron of higher status, you are marked with fresh tattoos, turning your body into a litany of secrets. At a glance, all who look upon you see your worth to your master. Only the foolish—or suicidal—will dare accost you. You can confidently stride through the jaws of the most terrifying battlefields, your status an aegis against attack.

Benefit: You can sustain the effect of *bound by brass* as a standard action. This benefit lasts until the end of your next turn or until you attack.

Optional Powers

Serving as a brazen ambassador leads to your acquisition of new talents and gifts, as your duties require you to take on a stronger role within the politics of the City of Brass. A gracious master might grant you these gifts, or perhaps you learn them in private by scouring the libraries of the city. Regardless, the more abilities that you have at your disposal, the better you are at pursuing political goals.

Level 2 Utility Power

Ambassadors who serve a patron well often represent their masters outside the City of Brass. You learn the secrets of cinderspeech, adapted from the Primordial language as a way to communicate with creatures across the planes.

Use Cinderspeech Brazen Ambassador Utility 2

You instill your words with primordial echoes that transcend simple language.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Elemental
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You would make a Diplomacy check or an Intimidate check.
Effect: You instead make an Arcana check with a +2 power bonus. You are considered to share a language with the target of the check.

Level 6 Utility Power

You have learned the advantage of working with a group of capable sword-slingers. After all, commands shouted in cinderspeech can be motivating, but little speaks louder than a group of angry adventurers who are armed to the teeth.

Me and This Army Brazen Ambassador Utility 6

You inform opponents that the adventurers wielding a legion's worth of blades are, in fact, your comrades.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Aura
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You activate an aura 1 that lasts until the end of the encounter. Each ally in the aura gains a +2 power bonus to Will. While the aura is active, you gain a +1 power bonus to Intimidate checks and Diplomacy checks for each ally in the aura (maximum +5).

Level 10 Utility Power

You are marked as a favored servant of Bashamgurda, leader of the City of Brass. By his dictate, any action taken against you is an affront to all efreets in the city. That status alone is enough to make most opponents think twice, and swift punishment awaits those who do not.

Blazing Reprisal Brazen Ambassador Utility 10

Your foes reconsider interfering with you when they learn whom you call master.

Encounter ✦ Charm, Elemental, Fire
Immediate Interrupt **Close** burst 5
Trigger: An enemy within 5 squares of you hits you with an attack.
Target: The triggering enemy in the burst
Effect: The target rerolls the attack and must use the second result. If the attack still hits, the target takes fire damage equal to 5 + one-half your level after the attack is resolved.

Chaosmade

Throughout the mortal world and scattered among the planes, hidden pockets of the Cult of the Elder Elemental Eye work in secret to avoid persecution from those who do not understand their faith. The cult is a fragmented organization. Few members fully understand the forces they worship, but all have a common goal: to blur the lines between the mortal world and the Elemental Chaos. The various sects have different understandings of what will happen when they achieve that goal, but they all pursue it with equal fervor.

One of the more unusual methods used by the cults to hasten the planar merging is the creation of the creatures known as chaosmade. Strange hybrids of mortal races and the Elemental Chaos itself, the chaosmade are living, breathing hosts of the disquieting forces of the plane. Wherever chaosmade walk, order is doomed to fall into disorder, and, little by little, the Elemental Chaos leaks into the world.

The creation of a chaosmade is an exercise in potent magic, done in secret. The cult continually watches the offspring of its members to see if any bear the marks of chaos. These marks manifest in many ways, from an unusual birthmark, to a hatred for tradition, to an unrestrained spirit. These criteria change from one cult to another, but the outcome is

the same. The cult takes the child to its inner sanctum, where it is reborn as a chaosmade.

The high priest strips a portion of the child's soul away and plants in its place a seed of pure chaos, which in time will grow and flourish. This force feeds on the whims and urges of the individual, and in turn, it shapes those urges toward fomenting discord. In return, a chaosmade has access to immense power that, while it can be directed, is torturously difficult to control.

Creating a Chaosmade

Wisely considered dangerous, a chaosmade is able to infuse any plane with the disquieting forces of disorder, calling upon the raw energy that rages within. Chaosmade who expose themselves to this energy face the risk of burning out from the power within their soul. Eventually, most will learn to restrain themselves, but some choose to let the chaos run wild, believing that it is their place to unfix the stagnant bonds of order wherever they find it.

Chaosmade can pursue nearly any career, but many choose to enter professions that allow them to indulge in their chaotic nature. The lure of the arcane is seductive to a chaosmade, and many work as mages. Others feed the call for pandemonium with wanton destruction as barbarians or ferocious rogues. A rare few, though, attempt to quell the chaos within, seeking some fragment of order in their otherwise disordered lives by enrolling in organizations with strong structure and rules they can build their lives around. These chaosmade make potent fighters and warlords. The path of leadership is particularly seductive to young chaosmade. Within their cults, they were destined for positions of leadership, either as the heads of a cultist cells, or ordained as generals meant to lead armies of the faithful against the world.

It is rare to find sorcerers, particularly those who wield wild magic, within the ranks of the chaosmade. The seed of chaos within a chaosmade's soul jealously consumes any other source of power, and any attempt to draw more fully on the Elemental Chaos is to invite disaster. A mortal form simply cannot withstand so much of the plane's raw energy, and the unlucky few who attempt to do so are twisted into horrifying creatures, shifting from one agonizing form to the next with each breath.

Starting Feature

Your altered nature becomes evident as the chaos within begins to change you. Your eyes become deep wells of elemental storm, shifting to reflect your emotions, and your voice echoes with the sound of a howling gale—representing the untamed forces that destroy order. To others, your temper seems wild and unpredictable, as the planar energy storms within you. The concerns of mortals become static, dull things to you; they are like flies trapped in a web, begging for you to instill them with a bit of chaos. Your chaotic soul is constantly seeking an opportunity to manifest, and when it does, it empowers you and your allies or hinders those that would dare face you.

Benefit: Your origin changes to elemental if it is not elemental already. For the purpose of effects that relate to creature origin, you are considered an elemental.

In addition, you gain the *seed of chaos* power.

Seed of Chaos Chaosmade Utility

When extra effort is called for, your chaos-touched being cannot help but respond.

Encounter ✦ Elemental
Free Action **Ranged** sight
Trigger: You or an ally you can see spends an action point to make an attack.
Effect: After the attack is resolved, roll a d6. The triggering character gains the resulting benefit.

1. The character gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.
2. Until the end of your next turn, the target of the attack takes 2 extra damage each time it is hit with an attack.
3. The creature gains a +2 power bonus to speed until the end of your next turn.
4. Until the end of your next turn, the target of the attack grants combat advantage.
5. The character can make a basic attack as a free action.
6. Until the end of your next turn, the target of the attack cannot shift.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

The influence of chaos within you grows stronger. You become able to see the tapestry of disorder all around you, and you glean understanding of arcane truths from it. You can also see the outcome of certain actions woven through this invisible tapestry, and you are capable of moving through them better than others navigate. To some your behavior might seem bizarre, but they are unable to see the glowing skeins of chance and misfortune that help to guide and protect you.

Benefit: You gain a +2 power bonus to Arcana checks and Endurance checks.

Level 10 Feature

You have learned to exploit narrow windows of chance to let your chaotic nature loose upon the world. The warp and weft of chaos are eager to act through you, and you are able to indulge them more often. As a reward for your devotion, the fragment of the Elemental Chaos within you permits you to speak with its voice, so you are better able to commune with its creatures.

Benefit: You can use *seed of chaos* one additional time per encounter.

In addition, you gain fluency in Primordial if you do not already have it.

Optional Powers

You can attempt to control chaos or choose to let it run as wild as it wishes. The more you explore the force within you, however, the quicker it will overwhelm you—the Elemental Chaos is a cruel and greedy mistress.

Level 2 Utility Power

Though you still lack the ability to command the force of the Elemental Chaos, you have learned to channel more of it into the world. When you let loose a piece of your soul, the inherent chaos surrounding you manifests with greater ease.

Foment Chaos Chaosmade Utility 2

Siphoning off a piece of your soul, you unleash it to run wild in the world.

Encounter ✦ Elemental
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You roll initiative.
Effect: You are weakened until the end of your first turn during this encounter, and you can use *seed of chaos* up to two additional times this encounter.

Level 6 Utility Power

As the Elemental Chaos digs deeper into your soul, the better you understand it. You become able to reach through threads of pure chaos and pluck out those you desire. You have learned to shape chaos, but doing so exacts a steep price from those who would wield it.

Command Chaos Chaosmade Utility 6

You take command of your chaotic essence, wresting it into your desired shape. Chaos demands payment for such acts, though, and you are left drained for the effort.

Encounter ✦ Elemental
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You use *seed of chaos*.
Effect: You lose a healing surge, and you can select the result of your d6 roll.

Level 10 Utility Power

You become a focus of chaos energy, and that energy eagerly contorts the world to suit your desire. Earth slips beneath a running foe's feet, wind pushes an ally's errant arrows back on target, and lethal strikes happen to glance off carried items. Your manipulation of events can be as obvious or as covert as your desire, but the result is the same: What you want to happen happens.

Warp the World Chaosmade Utility 10

Dissatisfied with the course of events, you draw upon your ability to reshape it to fit your whims.

Encounter ✦ Elemental
Immediate Interrupt **Close** burst 5
Trigger: A creature within 5 squares of you makes an attack roll or a skill check, and you dislike the result.
Effect: Roll a d6. Use the result as a bonus or a penalty to the roll or check.

Stormraider

In the Elemental Chaos, merchants must transport valuable goods between cities in order to make a profit, and where there is trade, there are pirates who stand ready to acquire those goods. Stormraiders are a specialized class of pirates who strike the trade lanes of the Elemental Chaos aboard their fast lightning skiffs.

Known for the suddenness and ferocity of their attacks, stormraiders lack any formalized structure. Instead, they have a loose fraternity built around a few common guidelines: "Help a raider crew in need," "Share in the plunder," and "Never betray a comrade before the mast" serve as the only laws of stormraider society. Petty disputes are resolved in bloody duels on the deck of a lightning skiff, usually surrounded by a cheering crew betting on the outcome. It is a hard and uncertain life, knowing no home but one's ship, with no safe port of call. Death can come quickly at the end of a sword, or slowly at the talons of a demon that is tired of losing its treasures to stormraider crews. The only havens known to stormraider ships are a few small pirate ports built on twirling earthmotes, where lighting skiffs can rest their crews, resupply, and repair their vessels. Still, many are willing to fight beneath the thunderhead-black flag of piracy. Escaped slaves from the City of Brass revel in the freedom they find in the stormraider's life, and pirates from the Riverweb seeking new adventures can readily find it on the deck of a lightning skiff. No matter the background of the individual, the life of a raider is one of constant momentum, quickly transitioning from one adventure to the next.

Stormraider heroes regularly command the respect of the crews they serve alongside, often seeming to be marked for greatness. Aboard a lightning skiff commanded by a particularly bloodthirsty captain, these heroes are often the sole voice of reason, able to keep the captain from bouts of wanton and

pointless slaughter. It is not unheard of for communities in the Elemental Chaos to hire adventuring stormraiders as privateers, or for lords to employ crews to raid the ships of personal enemies. The Elemental Chaos is full of opportunities, and clever stormraiders stand poised to claim them all.

Creating a Stormraider

There are many different reasons to become a stormraider. Some do it as a way to escape their past, others out of lust for treasure. So long as a raider can hold his own in raids, he is welcome aboard a lightning skiff. Most raids happen in tight quarters, and members of classes that favor hand-to-hand combat are common. Stormraider crews also use sharpshooters in the rigging to pick out officers or troublesome defenders on enemy ships, so rangers and warlocks are valuable to raider captains.

Upon induction to a stormraider crew, all new members receive new names. This is because they are being reborn in a new family, with the captain as father, the ship as mother, and the crew standing in as a family of bloodthirsty brothers and sisters.

Starting Feature

Stormraiders usually find themselves fighting against enemies that are more numerous. In response, raider crews developed a style of fighting that echoes the lightning they ride. They strike suddenly and viciously, falling upon targets with such ferocity that sometimes the battle is over before the enemy even knows it is under attack. Survivors often tell tales of the dozen howling lunatics that charged across their ships, hurling expensive and armored sentinels overboard with fanatic glee.

Benefit: You gain the *storm the deck* power.

Storm the Deck Stormraider Attack

You charge a foe and send it stumbling over the nearest gunwale.

Encounter ✦ Martial
No Action **Special**
Trigger: You hit a creature with a charge attack.
Effect: You can push the creature 1 square. On a natural attack roll of 20, the creature also falls prone.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

Stormraiders strike quickly, viciously, and usually on their own terms. They are masters of exploiting the first panicked moments of a raid, using the confusion to target officers and other high-value targets, hoping to foil any attempt at defense. A swift raid is always the goal, and crews are notorious for throwing all their strength into the first blows of a battle.

Benefit: You gain a +2 power bonus to initiative checks. If your initiative is higher than any enemy's initiative, during your first turn of the encounter you can reroll any melee attack damage dice that come up as 1.

Level 10 Feature

Most stormraider conflicts are resolved on deck, which offers little room to maneuver. These fights are a chaotic blur of blades and bodies. Experienced raider crews have learned to choreograph the ebb and flow of swordplay to enable the strike of one crew member to reveal a weakness in a target to the experienced eye of another member of the crew. You are one of the great masters of this method of fighting. You can strike in at any window of opportunity you are given, no matter how narrow.

Benefit: If you and one or more allies are adjacent to an enemy, you and those allies are considered to be flanking that enemy.

Optional Powers

Stormraiders have lives that share the qualities of the lightning that carries them aloft—loud, flashy, violent, and very short. There are a special few, though, who have not only survived in their work beneath the black flag, but also thrived into old age, and you are destined to join their ranks. With a little luck, a strong sword arm, and sheer velocity, fame and fortune are yours for the taking.

Level 2 Utility Power

Stormraiders have a term for a crew member who can't adapt to the constantly shifting decks of a lightning skiff: "man overboard."

In order to survive pitched battles on the heaving deck of your ship, you have developed a keen sense of how to move amid commotion, letting the heave of the deck bring your next prey within striking distance. Known by the stormraiders as getting one's "storm legs," having this ability separates true a true raider from a mere dabbler.

Storm Legs Stormraider Utility 2

You ride with the attack's momentum, letting it carry you where you want to be.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You are subjected to a push, a pull, or a slide from an attack.
Effect: You negate the forced movement against yourself, and you can shift 1 square. If you end the shift adjacent to an enemy, you gain a +2 power bonus to your next melee attack roll against that enemy.

Level 6 Utility Power

The longer you stay aboard a lightning skiff, the more you understand the power that drives the vessel through the Elemental Chaos. The lightning seems to speak to you, showing you how to move as quickly and unpredictably as it does.

Blitz Rush Stormraider Utility 6

You sprint into combat, twisting away from enemy blades with the vicious grace of a thunderbolt.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift up to half your speed, ending the shift adjacent to an enemy. Until the end of your next turn, you gain a +2 power bonus to AC and Reflex.

Level 10 Utility Power

You become a powerful and renowned figure among the stormraiders, able to inspire those around you to new heights of ferocity. When you are injured in battle, entire raider crews are compelled to come forward, acting quickly to eradicate an enemy ship's defenders.

Blood and Thunder Stormraider Utility 10

Witnessing your injuries, nearby allies go mad with rage and rush the enemy.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Move Action **Close** burst 2
Requirement: You must be bloodied.
Target: Each ally in the burst
Effect: Each target shifts up to half his or her speed as a free action, ending the shift closer to an enemy. Until the start of your next turn, each target is considered to be flanking an enemy as long as he or she and at least one ally are adjacent to that enemy.

About the Author

Matt Goetz is a freelance designer living in Seattle. His credits include *Monster Manual® 3*, *Player's Strategy Guide*, and *The Shadowfell: Gloomwrought and Beyond™*. When he isn't writing, Matt enjoys tormenting players with new creations at his weekly game.

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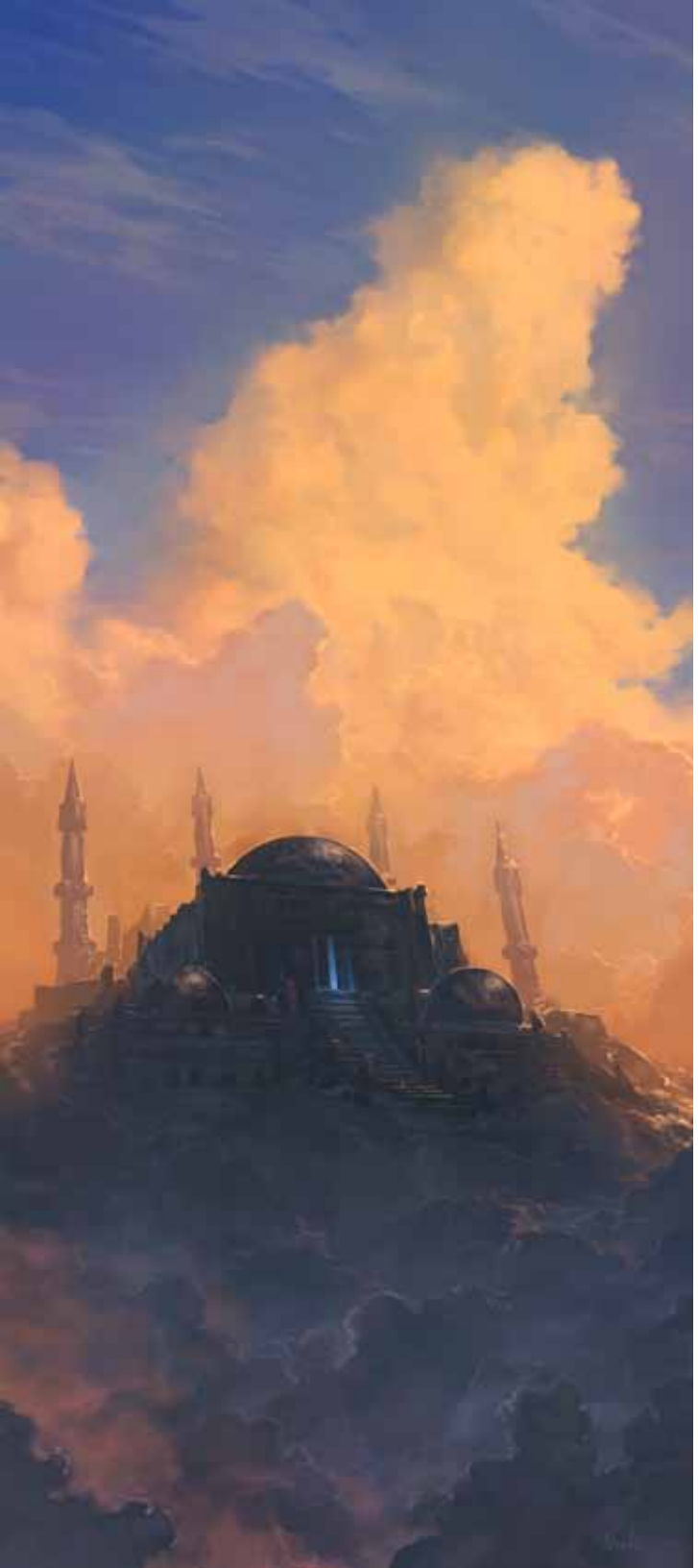

Elemental Patrons and Palaces

By Claudio Pozas

Illustrations by Noah Bradley

Roiling beneath the rest of the cosmos, the Elemental Chaos is home to beings as varied and unstable as the elements that compose that plane. Its natives range from mephits no bigger than butterflies to enormous primordials larger than continents. Amid this staggering diversity, one race of beings sees itself as the true heirs of the Elemental Chaos. Throughout the ages, mortals have come to know them as genies, or "guardians," and view them as a stabilizing force in the Plane Below.

The genies are largely credited with the creation of genasi, that race of elemental mortals thought to be either direct descendants of the genies or of another older race the genies created. Genasi have long acted as agents for the genies, and through these proxies, mortals have served the mightiest of the genie lords. This article presents four of these lords, known to be more amenable and benevolent than others of their kind—which, in the case of a genie, might not amount to much. As the saying goes, "If you trust a genie, it has already stolen your wits."

Although the DM is the final arbiter on how trustworthy or altruistic an elemental patron is, an adventurer should be able to trust one's patron to be straightforward and honorable in its dealings with him or her. The genie lords described in this article have a fondness for the natural world and a sympathetic disposition toward mortals. Otherwise they would not have accepted mortals to serve as their agents and proxies.

You can use these elemental patrons to introduce material from *Player's Option: Heroes of the Elemental Chaos* to your existing campaign, or they can serve as the basis for a new campaign focused on quests that advance the goals of the patron. Each genie is associated with a number of quests that exemplify its nature. Use them as guidelines when creating adventures for characters who follow an elemental patron, but don't feel compelled to feature the patron's goals in every session. Despite being more closely connected to the material world than gods are, elemental patrons are still ageless beings whose plans might take millennia to come to fruition. The heroes shouldn't feel so familiar with their patrons that they rely on them for rescue in dangerous situations. Even an elemental patron that can live forever has no patience for agents that don't perform well during missions.

Serving an Elemental Patron

The relationship between an elemental patron and a mortal agent is different from that between an astral god and a mortal worshiper. The gods are banished from the world, as are their primordial counterparts,

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thanks to the efforts of the primal spirits. Gods are distant, enigmatic and unfathomable. Primordials, despite their power, are yet more inscrutable, incapable of coherent thought beyond what is demanded of their nature. They are fundamental forces of the cosmos, not entities that can be reasoned with.

Genies, on the other hand, have a mindset somewhat closer to that of mortals. They have ambitions, needs and quirks. They can be reasoned with and bargained with. And most important, they can be reached and spoken to directly—if the petitioner can earn an audience. This accessibility makes elemental patrons more familiar to their mortal agents, and the relationship can be more rewarding for those who earn their gratitude.

Contacting a Patron

An elemental patron is contacted by prospective agents through its proxies in the mortal world. These proxies need to be found, which might entail another adventure, and convinced of the petitioner's intent to serve their elemental patron. If a proxy is convinced of a petitioner's sincerity, it will give the petitioner a specialized ritual that can be used to communicate with the proxy, which will function as a herald or a messenger between the petitioner and the patron. When the petitioner has proven his or her worth to the patron, the petitioner will be taught a unique way to contact the genie directly—the exact means depends on the nature of the patron. Each of the patrons in this article is presented with example proxies and the means by which the genie's agents can contact it.

Elemental Palaces

Genie lords and other elemental patrons are unable to fully enter the mortal world. They are so powerful that they are also affected by the ban enforced by the primal spirits to keep gods and primordials apart. Yet elemental patrons have found a way around this forbiddance by taking advantage of the porous nature of the frontier between the Elemental Chaos and the world.

Every elemental patron has a demesne, referred to as a palace regardless of the demesne's actual appearance or form. A genie lord can make its palace cross into the world in places where the porous barrier that keeps the Elemental Chaos at bay is at its weakest, thus allowing its agents to go back and forth between the Elemental Chaos and the mortal world. Raging thunderstorms, active volcanoes, and other such places or events can be used by a genie lord as gateways into the world.

Elemental Patrons and Divine Characters

It may seem contradictory for divine characters to seek out and serve elemental patrons. After all, divine characters are empowered by the gods, the immortal enemies of the primordials, whereas elemental patrons have a deep connection to the lords of the Plane Below. How does a divine character reconcile these two opposing forces? A divine character might seek to make peace between the two sides of the Dawn War, and could see an elemental patron as the perfect partner in such an endeavor. Other divine characters forsake their divine masters, keeping whatever power they had garnered and switching sides to serve masters that are more familiar with the plight of mortals.

More commonly, though, mutual enemies can make for strange bedfellows. In this case, the common enemies are the hordes of the Abyss, a blight upon the Elemental Chaos inflicted by the greatest enemy of the gods, the dread immortal Tharizdun. In a campaign that uses the Chained God as the ultimate adversary, divine and elemental forces can put aside their differences to ensure the survival of the cosmos.

Primal characters have an easier time dealing with elemental patrons because they recognize elementals as part of their extended pantheon. The primordials known as Black Land and Father of Rivers, for instance, are considered "honorary primal spirits" by characters versed in primal lore. See the entries for Kristobal and Lureq for more information on these primordials.

Elemental Patrons and Rewards

If you feature elemental patrons in your campaign, consider replacing magic items with alternate rewards that symbolize the patron's blessings upon the characters. Legendary boons, grandmaster training, and other alternate rewards are appropriate, and divine boons can be described as being based on elemental magic instead of the powers of the Astral Sea.

Kristobal, Dao Khan

Deep within the Elemental Chaos floats a continent-size earthmote, crisscrossed with mazes, mines and dungeons: the Great Dismal Delve, home of the reclusive dao. These earth genies are covetous to an extreme, and their only loyalty is to wealth, especially that which comes from earth and stone. The dao spend their days mining the Great Dismal Delve or raiding other mining communities, both in the Elemental Chaos and outside it, that they determine do not deserve to keep their wealth. The race's rigid society is organized around this central goal, with a mighty sharif directing the dao's struggle to obtain more wealth.

Yet the most powerful dao stands outside the rigid hierarchy of their society. His love of things taken or

made from earth and stone encompasses more than unfeeling metals and gems, to include plants and the life that grows with them. He is Kristobal, the Great Khan.

Background

In the later days of the Dawn War, when the djinns issued a call for help to the other genie races, the dao refused to join the battle against the gods. It wasn't their way to be embroiled in an outside conflict, especially one that would take them away from the Great Dismal Delve. But that decision wasn't unanimous. One dao, well versed in the wars of the natural world, disagreed. His name was Kristobal, and he served as squire for an ancient primordial on earth called the Black Land. This primordial, who was on good terms with the primal spirits and was as old as Father of Rivers (see "Lureq, Marid Pharaoh," below), loved the growing plants of the natural world, seeing in them a living counterpart to the gems and ores commonly associated with his element. Kristobal shared the Black Land's love for the green, breathing world, and tried to convince his brethren to join the war effort in an attempt to protect the middle world from further destruction. It was during this time, when the Black Land was alone and unguarded, that Ogrémoch attacked.

The self-styled prince of evil elemental earth gathered his power and sundered the Black Land, scattering his form throughout the planes. Ogrémoch's ruthless attack cemented the loyalty of other creatures of elemental earth, and sentenced the Black Land to oblivion. But the fallen primordial still had one follower that remembered him and the things he loved. Empowered by the stray spirit of the Black Land, the lowly squire Kristobal was filled with a thirst for revenge.

Already a brilliant strategist, Kristobal abandoned the Great Dismal Delve and began a pilgrimage throughout the Elemental Chaos in search of the scattered earthmotes that were once the Black Land. He knew that the husk of his former master still contained a fraction of his power, and devised a plan to bring these pieces together in order to gain enough power to challenge and slay Ogrémoch.

When the Dawn War ended and the primordials were cast down, Kristobal began his crusade by reclaiming a piece of the Black Land upon which the efreets had built the observatory of Dar el-Hariq (see "Fumeran, Efreet Sultan," below). With newfound followers behind him, he rode out of a chaos storm and seized the land, dragging it away with the help of elemental whales. In time, Kristobal assembled enough pieces of the Black Land to form his own realm, which he guided through the Plane Below as if it were a massive airship.

As Kristobal grew in power, he was soon banished from the mortal world by the same primal decree that held out the gods and the other primordials. With fragments of the Black Land strewn across the natural world and the Astral Sea, it became obvious to the Great Khan that he would need agents and proxies to carry out his orders if he is to protect the middle world and one day repay Ogrémoch for his crime.

Appearance and Personality

Kristobal is a study in contrasts. He is a towering dao, 12 feet tall, with brown skin glittering with hundreds of tiny crystals and veins of gold. Although dao dress in practical, subdued clothing in earthen tones, the Great Khan is wears an intricately embroidered yellow surcoat over armor of bulette leather. Although he wields considerable magical power, he is never far from his falchion.

Kristobal's prowess in battle is legendary, as is his strategic mind and great charisma. Those who flock to the Great Khan's banner become enthralled by his personality and thunderous laughter. Though he possesses more power than most creatures in the cosmos, he remains a simple warrior at heart, and enjoys a good drink by the campfire as much as any mortal soldier does. But if one thing clouds his eyes and brings forth the ruthless slayer in him, it's betrayal. Kristobal abhors treason and traitors, and deals with them harshly.

Contacting Kristobal

Kristobal's petitioners commune with him by writing messages for him in the soil and in turn receiving written responses. The style of writing requires getting used to, though, and any messages exchanged between petitioner and patron need to be short.

Reaching Kristobal's palace is likewise a simple affair, as befits an elemental patron with simple tastes. All an agent needs to do to reach the Great Khan's demesne is to run barefoot as fast as possible, until one's legs falter. When this happens, the agent falls to the ground, only to reappear on an expansive grassy plain illuminated by an elemental aurora. In the distance, flickering campfires and torches mark the location of the Great Khan's palace.

Palace

Even for someone as grounded—in more ways than one—as the Great Khan, Kristobal's palace still comes as a surprise, not because it is exotic or luxurious, but rather because it is so mundane. Kristobal's elemental palace is a large yurt, a round tent that can be disassembled and transported anywhere on or the expansive earthmote that shares the name of the primordial from whose fragments it was assembled: the Black Land. Made of the leather harvested from exotic creatures such as purple worms and remorhazes, Kristobal's tent is large enough to house an entire army inside its walls. Despite its common appearance, it is stronger than any castle in the mortal world, capable of withstanding onslaughts from all manner of elemental creatures.

If other elemental patrons reside in gilded palaces surrounded by servants, Kristobal makes his abode in the middle of an expansive tent city that looks like a large army camp. Genasi warriors tend to their bulette mounts, go out on hunts for elemental beasts, and otherwise carry on their business as if they were a horde on the march. And that is what they are. Kristobal's ability to guide the floating patterns of the Black Land allows him to use the entire kingdom-sized earthmote as a mobile base of operations for his raids across the Elemental Chaos. Those seeking an audience with the Great Khan have to help him in a minor skirmish before being allowed to meet him.

Those that wander about Kristobal's palace will find a great number of earthsoul genasi, and in addition the greatest variety of followers among the genie princes' hosts. From common humans and dwarves to galeb duhrs and minotaurs, to stranger creatures such as iron dragons and shardminds, all manner of beings serve under the Great Khan's banner. Some do it out of hatred of Ogrémoch, but most do it because they recognize how dedicated Kristobal is to the survival of the middle world.

Sample Quests

Kristobal works best as a patron for campaigns that focus on defending the natural world from outside threats, be they aberrations or agents of Ogrémoch. Primal heroes are specially drawn to the Great Khan, who might grant them access to material from *Heroes of the Elemental Chaos*.

Kristobal sends his agents on missions that include:

- Defeating catastrophic dragons.
- Locating and liberating earthmotes.
- Stamping out cults of Ogrémoch.
- Defending communities from attacks by the dao.

Zephyria, Djinni Calipha

If the Elemental Chaos ever had a race of princes, it was the djinns. The truest heirs to the primordials, these capricious genies molded the raw stuff of the Plane Below into works of art that stand unrivaled to this day. Moreover, the genies were steadfastly loyal to the primordials, siding with their sires when the Dawn War broke out between the lords of the Elemental Chaos and the gods of the Astral Sea. Yet this loyalty came at a terrible cost when the primordials were defeated. For their part in the Dawn War, the djinns were sentenced by the gods to be imprisoned inside mundane objects scattered throughout the mortal world. Rumors persist that this imprisonment was possible only with the involvement of the efreets.

The once-proud djinns are now a sullen, leaderless race. The mightiest of their kind are still trapped inside common items in the mortal world, and their beautiful sky cities lie in ruin. Those who escaped their imprisonment seek a way to reclaim their former glory. Except for the mightiest of the free djinns, the ascetic calipha Zephyria.

Background

When the Dawn War broke out, the djinns were quick to stand beside their primordial progenitors. Some sages say this was due to simple loyalty, though others claim that this was the only way the djinns could be able to retain their wondrous power over the unbridled elements of the Plane Below. The victory of the primordials would also cement their own power over creation. At first, the war went in favor of the elemental forces because the gods were scattered and disorganized. But when the forces of the Astral Sea unified under the leadership of the war god Achra—later known as Bane—and the primordial called the Queen of Bronze fell before him in battle, the tide turned.

When the immortal armies crushed the elemental hordes, the djinns sent out a call for their geniekin to gain the upper hand in the conflict. This call went unheeded. The reclusive dao declined to enter the fray. The greedy efreets offered many excuses, never openly denying the djinns' request. If the individualistic marid gave any reply, it will never be known. What matters is that the djinns stood alone in the end, and are still paying the price for their part in the Dawn War. Their race, especially their caliphs, was imprisoned. One of these caliphs was a female djinni known as Zephyria, the Daughter of Winds.

Once an arrogant calipha native to the fabled First City, Zephyria was cast into a beggar's bowl in a cruel attempt to break her spirit. For decades, the Daughter of Winds raged helplessly inside the wooden bowl. As the storm inside her waned, she became feebly aware of her surroundings. It took years for her to be able to hear what happened in the vicinity of the bowl. When Zephyria managed to calm the hurricane of her heart, she began not only to hear what was around her, but also to listen.

As the centuries passed, the bowl that held Zephyria passed from owner to owner. As it did so, the bound djinn witnessed myriad mortal dramas and joys, betrayals and charities. Most important, she witnessed the mortal potential for compassion. And as the voices merged in her mind, she began listening to something she called the Unseen Speaker. It might be a figment of her own frail mind, a fragment of her personality that she created to cope with her imprisonment. Or perhaps her suspicion is correct, that she managed to achieve unity with an underlying conscience of the cosmos, beyond god and primordial. True or not, the existence of the Unseen Speaker brought peace to the Daughter of Winds, and eventually brought her freedom.

Zephyria managed to influence the wielder of her bowl in subtle ways, guided by the whispers of the Unseen Speaker, bringing good fortune to those wielders that possessed a good heart. The more she redeemed the beggars and the poor souls that used the bowl, the more Zehpyria expanded her senses, until the bowl was shattered and she was released. It is said that the beggar that was holding the bowl that day became the first in a long line of kings.

Freed from her millennia-long imprisonment, Zephyria again wandered the cosmos, guided by the whispers of the Unseen Speaker, until she chanced upon a dilapidated djinn palace in the Elemental Chaos. There, the Daughter of Winds took residence, restoring the palace to its former glory and moving the cloudmote it rested on to the frontier between the Elemental Chaos and the natural world. Having experienced firsthand the possibilities of a world made permanent by the gods, she was determined to spread the whispers of the Unseen Speaker, easing suffering and bringing peace to a cosmos ravaged by war.

Appearance and Personality

Zephyria's serene and humble demeanor is a great departure from what is expected of the proud djinns. Even though she is taller than the tallest goliath, her simple bearing makes human-size beings feel more at ease than they otherwise would. Her long, white hair is tied in a simple braid that reaches down to the small of her back. Her white and gray flowing garments, though they are well made, are unadorned. Her gleaming, sky-blue skin boasts no jewelry, except for a simple silver chain that holds a blue diamond over her heart. Atypically for djinns, Zephyria prefers to walk on two legs. She still retains the ability to turn her lower body into a whirlwind.

Petitioners who seek out the legendary Zephyria are taken aback by her unassuming poise and whispered words. Those who are granted an audience with her must be patient, because she pauses in mid-sentence, as if listening to someone else who is speaking to her. Regardless of dire news or severe emergencies, Zephyria remains calm, and she punctuates her sentences with words of the Unseen Speaker's wisdom.

Contacting Zephyria

Making contact with the Daughter of Winds is deceptively simple. A petitioner seeking to hear Zephyria's voice must first give something away to a person in need, perhaps a coin to a beggar or food to someone who is hungry. If no one in the vicinity satisfies this requirement, the agent must become the person in need, forsaking food and water until hunger and thirst begin to set in. After either of these conditions is met, the petitioner closes his or her eyes and feels the gentle breeze that carries the whispers of the Daughter of Winds.

Reaching Zephyria's palace is a more straightforward affair, but by no means easier. The traveler must climb to high terrain, whether a mountain peak or a hilltop, that is covered by low-lying clouds or fog. If an agent of Zephyria is among the travelers, the clouds will gather until visibility is negated. Before they know it, the travelers will be stepping on the clouds, and as the fog parts, they will emerge within sight of Zephyria's palace.

Palace

Standing atop an enormous cumulus cloud that floats close to the border of the natural world, Zephyria's palace is a testament to the skill of the djinns. The placid serenity of the blue sky beyond it and the quiet majesty of the cloud it rests upon are echoes of the personality of the palace's owner.

Zephyria's palace is a round, domed structure at least 600 feet in diameter, made of elemental marble, solid cloudstuff, and silver ornaments. Abstract designs along the walls are reminiscent of flower petals, clouds, and sunbursts. Four minarets, each 1,000 feet high, flank the main structure. Each of the minarets is tipped with silver domes and is said to house one of the four winds that blow through the natural world.

The interior of the palace is surprisingly spartan. Although the walls, floor and ceiling are lavishly decorated with mosaics and inlaid silverwork, few luxuries are available for visitors other than soft cushions to sit or lie on. Underneath the central dome, a spiraling column of clouds marks the origin of the Unseen Speaker's whispers—or so Zephyria claims.

There are no servants inside the palace, but that doesn't mean it's deserted. Several pilgrims volunteer to work in the palace, tending to Zephyria's needs and helping her in the ongoing task of renovating the place. Even her own agents must be prepared to contribute their labor, replacing cracked tiles or plastering the walls.

Sample Quests

Zephyria works best as a patron for campaigns that deal with selfless sacrifice and in which player characters aim for exalted deeds. In this light, any enemy that purposefully causes suffering works as an antagonist. In such a campaign, treasure becomes a secondary concern, replaced by alternate rewards such as legendary boons and grandmaster training, or access to material from *Heroes of the Elemental Chaos*.

Zephyria sends her agents on missions that focus on correcting great injustices, such as:

- Toppling a cruel, corrupt government (such as the Iron Circle, detailed in *Monster Vault: Threats of the Nentir Vale*).
- Battling devils and other forces of the Nine Hells.
- Foiling the machinations of Bane and helping develop diplomatic solutions to wars.

Fumeran, Efreeti Sultan

If any race can claim to rule the Elemental Chaos, it is the efreets. Their ancestral home, the City of Brass, serves as an unmoving landmark for any traveler wishing to navigate the Plane Below. Their fabled scholastic tradition allowed efreets to develop the method of elemental mapping and divination known as *al-buraj*. They hold claim over thousands of servants and slaves, and their mercantile society indulges in excess, arrogance, and perversion.

Yet for all their vices and shortcomings, the efreets are a stabilizing force in the Elemental Chaos, promoting order to further their own agendas. Such is the case with the displaced sultan Fumeran, who, in exile, found power that far surpassed that of other efreets.

Background

One of the most respected members of efreet society is the *sahaar*, a mix of sage and seer that studies the ebb and flow of the Elemental Chaos to predict environmental hazards, chart maps and foretell the future. *Sahaars* work their craft in observatories established by the efreets throughout the Plane Below. Fumeran was a junior efreet *sahaar*, a promising scholar that quickly earned a commanding position in the observatory of Dar el-Hariq. It was a risky position, especially for one so young, but Fumeran was a political genius and an accomplished oracle. He foresaw that he would attain great status if he became the overseer of Dar el-Hariq, and so he focused his attention and talent to attain that position.

Fumeran's hopes were dashed when a band of dao marauders emerged from a chaos storm and stormed the observatory (see "Kristobal, Dao Khan," above). The loss of Dar el-Hariq was catastrophic for Fumeran's clan, and the young efreet was sentenced to one of the most humiliating punishments possible for his kind: service to a rival clan. (Only service to a mortal would have been more demeaning.) Fumeran spent a century being humiliated, tortured, and degraded by the members of the clan that ruled the City of Brass. When his sentence was complete, he was further appalled when his own clan banished him for having been sullied by his failure and subsequent servitude. Fumeran wandered the Elemental Chaos aimlessly, unable to understand how he could have been so wrong in his *al-buraj* predictions.

In his darkest hour, Fumeran stumbled across a planar gate that took him to the natural world, where he roamed among mortals incognito. As an efreet, Fumeran abhorred the anarchic nature of the primitive mortals he encountered, and proceeded to impose order upon his surroundings. He subjugated a promising tribe of humans and began carving out a fiefdom. Through his followers, he gained access to power previously unknown to his kind, one that stemmed from the devotion of mortals. It took Fumeran a few centuries, but in the end he obtained the abilities he foresaw, just not in the form he expected.

With new tools at his disposal and a renewed impetus to spread order through the cosmos, Fumeran cast a great spell that would draw the attention of the primal spirits. When the spirits enforced the ban on the gods and the primordials, in the process shunting Fumeran back to the Elemental Chaos, they were inadvertently doing Fumeran's bidding. Because of his preparations, his palace and followers were transported with him.

From his seat in his great palace, the self-titled Blazing Sultan plays chess with the cosmos. It is said he manipulated events that led to the deposing and death of Bashamgurda, the ruler of the clan that humiliated him. Some whisper the rebellious efreets that have taken up residence in Dar el-Hariq are working under Fumeran's orders. Most of all, Fumeran has been empowering mortal agents to put in motion plans that might lead to Fumeran ruling over the entire Elemental Chaos and imposing order upon the cosmos, even if it takes eons to do it.

Appearance and Personality

Those that meet Fumeran in person expecting a typical efreet are taken aback by the Blazing Sultan's appearance. During the century of servitude he endured under the ruling clan of the City of Brass, he was horribly tortured, and his ageless body carries the scars of this ordeal.

Fumeran stands over 10 feet tall, but his skin, instead of appearing to be glistening bronze, is charred and cracked like a petrified tree. His strong frame is wiry for an efreet, and his voice is hoarse, as if heavy with smoke. Perhaps as an effort to improve his appearance, Fumeran's arms, back and head are covered with swirling tattoos that gleam like orange flames. The Blazing Sultan's damaged appearance doesn't stop him from parading about in fine clothes and jewelry. His luxurious garments are made of fire-resistant red silk, and his fingers, horns, and tusks are decorated with rings of brass and gold.

In spite of his terrible appearance, Fumeran has an amiable personality. He treats his enemies' messengers with diplomatic smiles, and those that earn his appreciation are spoken to with little regard for protocol. Conversely, those that earn his displeasure are lucky to escape unscathed . . . if they escape at all.

Contacting Fumeran

Petitioners seeking to reach the Blazing Sultan learn how to light a small fire and then smother it until only crackling embers and swirling smoke remain. These items serve as Fumeran's voice and face. When contacted in this way, Fumeran is blunt, as if he were a battlefield leader giving order to soldiers behind enemy lines.

But he is also secretive. Access to Fumeran's palace (see below) is granted only to those who endure great heat and hardship to reach it. Visitors must travel on

foot (guiding any mounts by the reins), with no food or water, through a region blasted with severe heat. This journey might include climbing down into the bowels of a volcano, wandering into a desert, or walking into a burning forest. As the travelers are about to be overcome by the heat, and if there is an agent of Fumeran among them, they will be transported to the causeway that leads to the Blazing Sultan's palace.

Palace

Resting upon a sea of lava and hidden from casual view by the walls of a gigantic volcano, Fumeran's luxurious elemental palace defies any attempt to explain how it could survive such extreme temperatures. Yet there it remains, a testament to its owner's magical prowess.

Fumeran's city-sized palace is made up of dozens of square buildings, merged to form a squat, sprawling structure around a large central dome. The palace's outer walls are roughly 1,000 feet long on each side, and the building rises about 300 feet before reaching the base of the dome, which adds another 200 feet to its total height.

Visitors to the Blazing Sultan's palace appear on a wide stone causeway that leads to a staircase and the entrance. Upon reaching the main building, the visitors notice a stucco exterior and glowing, swirling patterns formed by red-hot metal latticework in the masonry. The staircase leads to a large double door flanked by huge metal statues of Fumeran. Despite the lava and the searing iron lattice, the temperature near the palace is survivable.

Despite its enormity on the outside, the interior of the palace is remarkably more human-scale, if ostentatious to an obscene degree. Every wall is decorated with paintings, every window is inlaid with gold, and every visitor is treated with enough comfort to put kings to shame. Food, drink, song, and laughter are indulged in with abandon, because this is the way of the Blazing Sultan. Before being granted an audience, every visitor is ushered to a private room to refresh, a welcome respite after the arduous ordeal of reaching the palace. Eventually, the Blazing Sultan will demand the visitor's presence in his throne room. There, amid cushions and tables filled with delicacies, Fumeran will listen to requests, relay instructions, and concoct strategy.

Fumeran's palace is filled with servants, agents, and proxies that share the Blazing Sultan's desire for order and follow his requests to the best of their abilities. All manner of fire creatures can be found there, from the more common azers and firesoul genasi to salamanders and a rare fire-based version of a Nyfellar mammoth that serves as Fumeran's mount. Most surprisingly, a small but growing number of young efreets have begun to flock to Fumeran's banner, hoping to see the City of Brass elevated to the status of true capital of the Elemental Chaos

Sample Quests

Fumeran is a great patron for campaigns that focus on battling chaotic evil forces, especially demons such as those spawned by the Abyssal plague. Campaigns that revolve around reestablishing fallen empires or kingdoms are also a good fit for the Blazing Sultan. Because the Blazing Sultan is such a great proponent of law and order, heroes who become his agents might gain access to some of the material from *Heroes of the Elemental Chaos*.

Fumeran sends his agents on missions that would undermine the forces of anarchy, such as:

- Hunting down roadside marauders and bandits (see "Red Shoals of Dkar," *Dungeon* 174, for an example).
- Upholding the law of a realm in times of chaos.
- Stamping out cults of elemental evil, especially those of Imix (see *Monster Manual* 3).
- Battling the forces of slaads and demons.

Lureq, Marid Pharaoh

Scholars argue whether or not the marids are the most powerful of all the genie races. What no sage questions is that water genies are the most individualistic and mercurial of their kin. Their arrogance puts efreets to shame, and their mood swings make djinns seem tame by comparison. Despite the marids' fabled magical might, their egotistical ways prevent them from organizing and influencing the Plane Below as much as the efreets do.

Each marid styles itself a high-ranking member of the nobility, barely acknowledging the authority of a more powerful marid. Any other being or race—including other genies—is considered inferior to a marid's own majesty. It might thus seem contradictory that the most powerful of marids, who considers himself a godlike entity, acknowledges another being to be superior. Yet that is the case with Lureq, the Viridian Pharaoh.

Background

Lureq's origin is lost to time. What little is known to scholars has been passed on by Lureq himself, becauses the Viridian Pharaoh indulges in the marids' penchant for storytelling and self-aggrandizement. If anything told by Lureq is to be believed, his story begins before the Dawn War, when the primordials freely shaped the natural world.

In those dark days before Pelor's sun bathed the middle world with its golden light, a mighty primordial saw potential in the barred world that his peers were shaping out of the void. This primordial was a being of elemental water, and by drawing on his power, he drenched the world in a deluge that formed rivers, lakes and oceans. When the first of the primal spirits began to coalesce in the depths, they are said to have referred to the primordial as Father of Rivers. For his part, Father of Rivers saw the teeming life that thrived in his watery depths and was pleased with his creation.

In time, the gods noticed the newly formed world and began meddling with it. This didn't bother Father of Rivers, because he noticed that even with the permanence imposed by the gods, the world's seas were forever changing, rising with the tides and crashing upon the shores. But the other primordials were not so understanding. When the Dawn War ignited, Father of Rivers was set upon by the other primordials, who mistook his complacence for complicity. In what may have been the first casualty of the war, Father of Rivers was torn asunder, his watery form sent raging through the Elemental Chaos as a gigantic storm cloud.

As the Dawn War raged on, a new force emerged from the storm that was once Father of Rivers. Claiming to be the heir and the reincarnation of the deceased primordial, this being reached out not to primordials or gods, but to the lowly mortals that had been forgotten by the clashing powers. This being called himself Lureq, the Viridian Pharaoh, and he offered life-giving water to those who would honor him. His gifts earned him followers among primitive mortal tribes, especially those that lived in arid locations and considered rivers to be sacred.

But the Viridian Pharaoh was taken by surprise when the primal spirits rose up to defend the world from the warring immortals and elementals. When the primal spirits enforced the ban upon god and primordial alike, Lureq was cast out of the world and back to his palace, where he spent ages trying to find a way around the primal ban. But as time passed, Lureq began fading from the memories of the people who worshiped him, until he was little more than a half-forgotten legend among mortals.

Since his banishment, Lureq has learned the means to summon to himself mortals that seek to master the magic of the elements. He favors those who love the water, be they sailors, fishermen, farmers, or aquatic races. If they show proper respect—and appeal to Lureq's ego—the Viridian Pharaoh shares a portion of his might with these petitioners in hopes of once again influencing the mortal world.

Appearance and Personality

Lureq considers himself a divine ruler, and he makes no effort to conceal that. A towering, 18-foot-tall figure of powerful physique, Lureq has green-blue skin and pupilless white eyes that resemble glistening pearls. His voice thunders like a crashing wave.

Lureq dresses in a manner that emphasizes his impressive physique, wearing only a pleated skirt of white linen. He also wears a headcloth decorated with a sea cat's head. The Viridian Pharaoh is never seen without jewelry made of gold, pearl, coral, lapis lazuli, aquamarines, and emeralds.

Those who seek out Lureq are intimidated by his physical presence and his haughty personality (which is fortunate for them, because failure to show deference or fear might invoke Lureq's wrath). The Viridian Pharaoh despises bravado and foolhardiness, and anyone who acts in such a manner will be cast out into the eternal storm around Lureq's palace. For all his poise and so-called divinity, Lureq is still a marid, and as such is susceptible to flattery as a means of convincing him of a course of action.

Contacting Lureq

Petitioners and minor agents seeking Lureq's counsel are instructed to kneel before a bowl of water until the liquid's surface begins to ripple with the whispered voice of the Viridian Pharaoh. Such communication is short and enigmatic, because Lureq is fond of using metaphors as a means of challenging the petitioner's intellect.

Those seeking to reach Lureq's palace have to take a boat or other sailing vessel and steer it into stormy weather. If a petitioner or agent of Lureq is aboard, the storm will worsen until the pouring rain blocks

visibility beyond a few feet. As the vessel sails on, the roiling water will calm and the rain will abate to reveal that the vessel is now sailing through the air amid a giant green storm cloud heavy with water. Despite flying through the air, the vessel leaves a wake behind it, as if it were still cutting through the surface of the sea. Finally, the clouds part to reveal Lureq's bipyramid floating in the maelstrom's eye.

Palace

Floating in the middle of a raging storm cloud larger than a city, the Viridian Pharaoh's elemental palace is a sight to behold. Illuminated by an unseen sun, the glistening palace helps explain why Lureq's petitioners see him as a godlike figure.

Lureq's gargantuan palace is formed by two four-sided pyramids joined at their bases, resulting in an octahedron.

The entrance to the great bipyramid is through a pylon, a majestic gateway flanked by two 200-foot-tall tapered towers that protrude from one of the structure's faces near its equator. Petitioners approaching the palace in a sailing vessel glide into the space between the two towers, where the vessel can be moored and the visitors can ascend a wide staircase to the palace entrance, where they are greeted by minor servants.

The palace's interior is a testament to Lureq's image as a self-styled deity. Walls are decorated with intricate bas relief carvings of Lureq's heroic exploits. Several of Lureq's former agents are also honored in these carvings. But visitors are soon ushered to the throne room, where the Viridian Pharaoh holds court. This room is decorated with a series of columns made of roiling water, and the Pharaoh's throne is made of glittering, multicolored coral.

The palace boasts enough rooms to hold the population of an entire city, but is sparsely inhabited because most of Lureq's agents are out in the cosmos. The Viridian Pharaoh's proxies are invariably creatures of water. In addition to a few marid viziers, he is known to use tritons, locathahs, and watersoul or stormsoul genasi, which also compose his attending servant staff. If he is displeased, Lureq sends water archons, coral-based golems, and blue dragons to mete out his punishment.

Sample Quests

Lureq is a useful elemental patron for campaigns that are focused around bodies of water or that deal with exploring ancient or lost civilizations. By discovering the existence of the Viridian Pharaoh in old, half-sunken temples, an adventurer can petition to Lureq and be granted access to some of the material from *Heroes of the Elemental Chaos*.

Lureq sends his agents on missions that would increase the Viridian Pharaoh's standing if successful:

- Saving coastal villages from marauding raiders.
- Helping desert communities withstand severe droughts.
- Recovering sunken treasure.
- Battling the agents of rival elemental lords, specially water-based ones.

About the Author

Claudio Pozas is a freelance artist and writer whose recent design credits include *Player's Option: Heroes of Shadow*™ and *Player's Option: Heroes of the Feywild*™, as well as several articles for *Dragon*® magazine. He lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with his wife, Paula; son, Daniel; and pet dire tiger, Tyler.

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Bazaar of the Bizarre:
Treasures of the Elemental Chaos

By Michael W. Haneline

Illustrations by Patrick McEvoy

The Plane Below is a dangerous mix of uncontrolled elemental forces and swirling disorder. It is also a place of potent magic great enough to tempt many spellcasters, despite its obvious danger. Many users of arcane power have tried to bind the plane's volatile energy into permanent magic items. Those who have succeeded have created truly marvelous, if occasionally unpredictable, items that have become the stuff of legend.

Chaos Storm Dagger

Hundreds of years ago, the kingdom of Haldea was plagued by a nightmarish invasion of slaads and elemental beasts. When the realm's queen sent out a call for help, the sorcerer Heleyon answered. A master of wild magic and a scholar of the Elemental Chaos, Heleyon strove fiercely to seal the planar rift and defeat the remaining invaders. He was praised as a great hero, and when offered a boon by a grateful queen, he asked for only a parcel of land on the outskirts of the capital and the privacy to do what he desired with the property.

As part of the new estate he erected on the site, Heleyon built an ominous black tower designed to focus wild magic. Soon the locals began to notice strange lights and sounds coming from the tower at night. Yet no one investigated, either because of the queen's decree that Heleyon not be disturbed, or because most were too terrified of the eccentric sorcerer to go anywhere near the place. As time went on, the kingdom was struck by a new tragedy: The firstborn sons and daughters of Haldea's most prominent priests went missing.

Many suspected but few knew with certainty that Heleyon had kidnapped the missing youths and converted them into his loyal followers. Under his direction, they summoned powerful creatures of the Elemental Chaos, only to sacrifice them with a ritual dagger. The dagger funneled the creatures' life energy to the eccentric sorcerer, imbuing him with their power. With each sacrifice, the dagger grew and changed, transformed into something almost alive by the wild magic that flowed through it. Its metal blade warped and lengthened, and the blue jewel in its hilt began to resemble a sinister eye. The dagger's mirror-like sheen began to reflect images of the churning Elemental Chaos instead of the world around it.

Heleyon's mastery of the dagger began to slip, as his mind was fractured by the enraged thoughts of the creatures he drained. One night during a summoning ritual, the dagger unleashed a storm of energy, killing several of the sorcerer's followers in

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the midst of their spell-weaving. The out-of-control ritual called forth a being unlike any other—the legendary slaad assassin Xenda-Dran. Almost casually, Dran slew everyone in the tower and returned to his home, leaving the dagger to sit abandoned for decades until brash adventurers breached the tower's walls. Many replicas of the dagger are now in circulation, but none match the rumored might of the original. Legend says that blade is still haunted by the spirits of Heleyon and his kidnapped assistants.

Chaos Storm Dagger Level 3+ Uncommon

This serrated dagger constantly seems to squirm in your hand, as if it were alive.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Weapon: Dagger
Enhancement Bonus: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 psychic damage per plus
Attack Power ✦ Daily (Free Action)
Trigger: You make an arcane ranged at-will attack using this dagger, and your attack roll is an odd number.
Effect: After the triggering attack is resolved, you use the attack power again against a different target, with a power bonus to the attack roll equal to the dagger's enhancement bonus.

Xenda-Dran's Array

Slaads are known for their imposing presence and their unpredictability, yet the legendary Xenda-Dran struck fear into even the mightiest of his kindred. Sages say that during Dran's metamorphosis into what should have been a green slaad, he instead became something else, a creature that drew power from both chaos and shadow. This new Dran was quickly recruited to the service of the slaad Ygorl, Lord of Entropy, as a sorcerous assassin.

Few killers have shed more blood across the worlds than Xenda-Dran. The slaad took great pleasure in assassinating powerful enemies, and with each slaying his powers grew stronger. The mightiest denizens of the Elemental Chaos found their existences cut short as they were strangled by their own shadows or saw their own flesh stripped from their bones by discordant energies.

Xenda-Dran began to collect trophies from his greatest kills, and he enchanted them into armaments that made him even more formidable.

- ✦ From the hands of a rival assassin, the babau Timmevinc, the slaad crafted grisly gauntlets that channeled the demon's corrosive power.
- ✦ When Dran defeated a pack of ice devils bent on Ygorl's death in the middle of a deadly storm, he claimed the leader's horn for a special focus.
- ✦ The hides of sixty-six different elemental denizens were sewn into his cloak, including the skins of slaad warriors, the scales of demons, and the preserved flesh of myriad archons.
- ✦ The djinn lord Abisali-agharr sat in his fortified palace in the clouds, surrounded by mighty elemental warriors. Still, he could not find safety from Xenda-Dran's blades, and his soul was trapped in the assassin's magic ring.
- ✦ Even the most powerful slaads who crossed Dran met grisly fates—Dran's boots were made from the remains of the void-bending black and gray slaads, reminding his fellows that he found them fit only for treading on.

The legends are unclear on how Xenda-Dran met his end. Some say his final adversary was none other than the enlightened githzerai master, Liricosa. Most believe that Dran was destroyed in their confrontation, but some monks claim that Liricosa's transcendent wisdom taught even a slaad the way of order. They believe that Xenda-Dran transformed one final time, into one of Liricosa's pupils.

Whatever truly happened, Xenda-Dran's armaments were scattered throughout the worlds. From time to time, the items resurface, spreading death and destruction before disappearing again, inspiring legends as well as the crafting of many imitations.

XENDA-DRAN'S ARRAY

Lvl	Name	Price (gp)	Item Slot
8+	Hailstorm ki focus	3,400+	Implement
8+	Rift dancer boots	3,400+	Feet
9+	Elemental ward cloak	4,200+	Neck
10+	Babau gauntlets	5,000+	Hands
11+	Ring of the djinn slayer	9,000+	Ring

SET BENEFITS

Pieces	Benefit
2	At the end of each extended rest, choose acid, cold, fire, thunder, or lightning. You gain resistance to the chosen damage type equal to twice the number of items you have from this set until the end of your next extended rest.
5	When you score a critical hit with an assassin attack power, the target of your attack has its vulnerability to acid, cold, fire, thunder, or lightning (your choice) increased by 5 (save ends). A creature that has no vulnerability to the chosen damage type instead gains vulnerable 5 to that type.

Babau Gauntlets Level 10+ Uncommon

These clawed, demon-hide gauntlets ooze the corrosive blood of a babau on command.

Lvl 10	5,000 gp	Lvl 30	3,125,000 gp
Lvl 20	125,000 gp		

Hands Slot
Property
You can use your Dexterity modifier in place of your Strength modifier when making a melee basic attack.
Attack Power (Acid) ✦ **Encounter** (Immediate Reaction)
Trigger: You are bloodied by a melee attack, or you are hit by a melee attack while bloodied.
Effect: The triggering attacker takes acid damage equal to one-half the item's level.

Hailstorm Ki Focus — Level 8+ Uncommon

This ice devil horn is inscribed with glowing runes. When you meditate upon it, you visualize yourself enduring the merciless ice and lightning of a mighty hailstorm.

Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp
Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp			

Implement: Ki focus
Enhancement Bonus: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 cold and lightning damage per plus

Property

If you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll using this ki focus, you take cold and lightning damage equal to the item's level.

Utility Power ✦ Encounter (Minor Action)

Effect: Until the end of your next turn, your melee attacks using this ki focus deal 1d6 extra cold and lightning damage.

Rift Dancer Boots — Level 8+ Uncommon

These mismatched boots look somewhat unremarkable on the outside, but on the inside they appear to be filled with an unnaturally black void.

Lvl 8	3,400 gp	Lvl 18	85,000 gp

Feet Slot

Utility Power (Teleportation) **✦ Encounter** (Move Action)

Requirement: You must have used an attack power that allows you to move this turn.
Effect: You teleport up to your speed.
Level 18: You can use this power twice per encounter.

Elemental Ward Cloak — Level 9+ Uncommon

This midnight blue cloak has many different and colorful hides stitched into its lining.

Lvl 9	+2	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp
Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp			

Neck Slot
Enhancement Bonus: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Property

You gain an item bonus to all defenses against attacks with the acid, fire, cold, thunder, or lightning keywords. The bonus equals the enhancement bonus of this cloak.

Ring of the Djinn Slayer — Level 11+ Uncommon

This gold and silver ring feels lighter than air and seems to be constantly crackling with static electricity.

Lvl 11	9,000 gp	Lvl 21	225,000 gp

Ring Slot

Property

When you deal untyped damage with your *assassin's shroud* power or your *assassin's strike* power, you can choose to make the damage cold, thunder, or lightning damage instead.

Utility Power (Varies) **✦ Daily** (Minor Action)

Effect: Choose cold, thunder, or lightning. Until the end of your next turn, any enemy that hits or misses you takes 1d10 damage of the chosen type.
Level 21: 2d10 damage.

Wand of Fiery Hordes

Fear can cause friend to turn on friend, family to turn on family, and countryman to turn on countryman. Fear leads to anger, hate, and suffering. Some say fear is at the core of all that is evil.

Tethanos the illusionist was not the first to use fear as a weapon, but one would be hard-pressed to find a person more obsessed with it. The mage understood well the power of fear. He strove to master the use of fear as a tool, and to craft the perfect nightmare with his spells. His research brought him to the Elemental Chaos in search of an ancient artifact, but all Tethanos found there was agony and madness. Hunted by slaads too strong-willed for his magic to beguile, he was frozen, electrified, and deafened by thunder. For Tethanos, the worst torment of all was the fire. Oceans of fire poured over his tender flesh, and burning rain singed him with every step. Despite his magical protections, creatures of flame and pain overwhelmed the once-confident wizard and burned him nearly to death. Tethanos managed to flee back to the world, only to find that his burns would not fully heal.

In a cruel irony, it was Tethanos who now suffered terrible nightmares. Every time he slept, he dreamed of being devoured by fiery monsters. Before

completely losing his mind, the mage vowed he would inflict his fear on others. He crafted one final item, a wand that infused his own fiery nightmares into his favorite terrifying illusion from his adventuring days. Since then, other cruel crafters have duplicated and spread the wands, keeping the legacy of Tethanos's horrid dreams alive.

Wand of Fiery Hordes — Level 3+ Uncommon

This red lacquer wand resembles a miniature totem pole of impish creatures.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Implement: Wand
Enhancement Bonus: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 fire and psychic damage per plus

Property

When you hit with the *winged horde* power using this wand, the power deals extra fire damage equal to this wand's enhancement bonus.

Attack Power ✦ Encounter (Standard Action)

Effect: As the wizard's *winged horde* power.

About the Author

Michael Haneline is the author of "Channel Divinity: Moradin's Faithful" in *Dragon* 385, and the author of the D&D web comic *Twice Blessed*. He'd like to thank all his D&D players for their support, especially Ms. Genevieve Gauss, his future wife and co-conspirator at the game table.

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Making Race Count, Part 3

Utility Powers for Dragonborn, Half-Orcs, and Tieflings

By Matt Sernett and Robert J. Schwalb

Illustrations by Raven Mimura, William O'Connor, and Chris Seaman

Embattled by the undead horrors, struck on all sides by their baleful claws, Ghesh felt his scales losing their luster, rotting away. He loosed a mighty roar, calling upon his draconic heritage to overcome the decay afflicting his flesh. Renewed and emboldened, Ghesh raised his blade and began the grisly work of carving a path to freedom. The pain and agony he had felt moments before was a memory dimmed by his wrath.

✦✦✦

Feng roared a battle cry, the old feelings of bloodlust swelling in his breast. The goblins had proven frustrating foes, all tricks and misdirection. With their blackened arrows sprouting from his chest like impossibly thick hairs, he found all restraint and reason bleeding away as his anger came to the fore. Leaping toward the largest group, he brought down his greataxe and split a goblin in two. With each death that followed, the pain he had felt and the injuries he had sustained were submerged beneath his furious onslaught.

✦✦✦

Azrael dove to avoid the hill giant's club, but he wasn't fast enough to escape completely. Pain lanced up his leg, causing him to twitch his tail in agony. Rather than give in to his suffering, he looked up at his enemy, eyes blazing with hellfire. Pale flames flowed across his curved blade. There would be a reckoning, of that he was certain.

The first "Making Race Count" article in *Dragon* 402 presented utility powers designed for dwarves, half-elves, halflings, and humans as a way to reinforce how important racial choice can be when creating a new adventurer. The second article in *Dragon* 405 offered utility powers for drow, eladrin, and elves.

This article presents new options for other races. Dragonborn gain racial utility powers to accentuate their battle prowess and intimidating personae. Half-orcs can tap more fully into their brutish heritage. Tieflings can explore their infernal heritage and its benefits. Each racial utility power helps you to realize your race's culture and identity, allowing you to further characterize your adventurer beyond class and paragon path and become an exemplar of your people.

Race is a key decision you make when you create a new character. The traits you gain from your race provide significant benefits, ranging from ability score modifications to potent powers that give you an edge in battle. When race is combined with class, you have the fundamental building blocks in place to carry you forward through all thirty levels of adventuring.

Yet after you choose your race and record its benefits, that choice often does not affect your character's development. It's true that certain feats might interact

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with your racial traits, and some races have access to racial paragon paths. Although these options can help develop your character, the most interesting gains thereafter can come through the choices granted by your class whenever you gain a level.

To help you enhance the importance of your character's race, this article introduces new racial utility powers. Racial utility powers represent an awakening of natural talent and capability. Taking a racial utility power demonstrates your character's ability to call upon his or her heritage and natural abilities.

Gaining a Racial Utility Power

Racial utility powers are similar to utility powers granted by a class, except that you must be a member of the race to gain and use a race's powers. Whenever you gain a level that grants you a utility power from your class, you can choose a racial utility power in place of a class power. The racial utility power must be of the same level as or lower in level than the class power you would have gained.

You can use retraining to replace a class utility power with a racial utility power or vice versa, as long as the new power is of the same level as or lower in level than the replaced power. You cannot replace a utility power from a paragon path or an epic destiny with a racial utility power.

Dragonborn

"*Though Arkhosia may have fallen, its memory lives on in me.*"

The dragonborn are inspired by the legend of how they rose from droplets spilled from Io's body when the ancient dragon-god was slain by the axe of the rapacious Erek-Hus. The story inspires them to be honorable in their dealings, to work hard to perfect their skills, and to live up to the example set by their divine sire. Dragonborn utility powers demonstrate several ways in which these noble humanoids awaken the power within and harness it to aid them in their struggles.

Now with their empire in ruins, their cities and edifices turned to rubble, personal honor is the only thing the dragonborn have left. They conduct themselves in a fair and noble way in all that they do, whether fighting a duel on the battlefield or negotiating service with a potential employer. In this way, they keep Arkhosia alive.

You must be a dragonborn to gain and use dragonborn powers.

Baleful Glance

The ability of great dragons to cause dread just by their presence is legendary, but they don't need supernatural powers to inspire fear. A simple look from a dragon can freeze a soul in terror. It is the fright inspired by a predator's stare—the fear a rabbit feels when held not by the fox's jaws but its golden eyes. You have studied the ways of dragons and practiced something of this charismatic power. Now you can use your *dragonfear* to hold a foe within your gaze.

Baleful Glance Dragonborn Racial Utility 2

You single out an enemy, holding the foe's gaze with your menacing stare.

Encounter ✦ Fear
Free Action **Close** burst 5 (increases to close burst 10 at 21st level)
Target: One enemy affected by your *dragonfear* power
Effect: The target is dazed (save ends).

Dragon's Dive

When dragons take wing, they are masters of the sky. The greatest of the flying beasts—including wyverns, manticores, griffons, and rocs—hasten away when a dragon's silhouette darkens the clouds. Supreme aerial fighters, dragons often attack from on high, diving through storms of hail or flashing lightning to strike at prey or foes. Although you can't fly, you've taken this tactic to heart, learning to treat the melee around you as the storm and letting it wash off your back as you advance toward your enemy.

Dragon's Dive Dragonborn Racial Utility 6

You set your sights on your foe and dive through the fray, heedless of the threats of others.

Encounter
No Action **Personal**
Trigger: You charge an enemy.
Effect: Your movement made as part of the charge does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Arkhosian Resilience

Dragonborn and dragons fought side by side against their tiefling enemies. The dragonborn learned to protect themselves against their partners' breath weapons so they could keep fighting even as destructive energy washed around them.

WHAT IS DRAGONFEAR?

In *Dragon* 388, the "Winning Races: Dragonborn" article introduced an alternative to *dragon's breath* called *dragonfear*. Emulating the frightful presence that dragons are known for, the *dragonfear* power allows dragonborn that choose this racial trait to strike terror into the hearts of their enemies. Two powers in this section provide additional options for characters who want to explore this aspect of their heritage.

Arkhosian Resilience Dragonborn Racial Utility 10

You call forth the elemental forces that power your breath weapon to shield you from harm.

Daily
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You take damage of a type that matches the damage type you chose for your *dragon breath* power.
Effect: You gain resistance equal to 5 + one-half your level to the triggering damage type until the end of the encounter.

Triumphant Roar

Your draconic heritage is as obvious as the scales on your face, but that doesn't mean you can't shout it out. When you strike a decisive blow in battle, your voice reveals your pride and echoes the terrifying roars of the greatest dragons.

Triumphant Roar Dragonborn Racial Utility 16

Your success gives you such enthusiasm that you loose a roar that strikes fear into all the foes around you.

Encounter
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You bloody an enemy with an attack or reduce a nonminion enemy to 0 hit points with an attack.
Effect: You use *dragonfear* even if it is already expended.

Half-Orc

"You want a piece of me?"

Although half-orcs have always existed in the world, they didn't appear in large numbers until after retreating orc clans collided and intermingled with the remaining human settlements left behind after Nerath's fall. A shared reverence for the primal spirits allowed these groups to set aside their differences to combat a common enemy. Half-orc children were born from these alliances and have been an important part of these fringe communities ever since.

Not everyone is so accepting of half-orcs; their brutish features remind others of the cruel savagery common to their orc sires. After coming up against intolerance and sometimes hatred, half-orcs often take up adventuring as a way to provide for themselves and give their lives meaning. A few of those individuals are able to build on the anger in their hearts and call it forth to serve them in battle.

You must be a half-orc to gain and use half-orc powers.

Untamed Aggression

Half-orcs take pride in their strength and tenacity. To shrink away from an enemy betrays all that you are. When an enemy tries to maneuver around you or slip away, you react quickly to remain nearby.

Untamed Aggression Half-Orc Racial Utility 2

You foil an enemy's attempt to slip away with an aggressive step forward.

Encounter
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to you shifts.
Effect: You can shift 1 square, and you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls against the triggering enemy until the end of your next turn.

Revitalizing Charge

When you charge, your blood pounds in your veins like war drums. You feel the bull-headed determination of your human heritage and the bloodlust of your orc ancestors.

Revitalizing Charge Half-Orc Racial Utility 6

You exhilarate in the rush to engage your foe, growing more confident with each enemy that fails to stop you.

Encounter
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You charge an enemy.
Effect: You gain a number of temporary hit points equal to your Strength modifier. In addition, you gain a power bonus to your charge attack roll equal to the number of enemies that attack you during your charge movement.

Blood-Fueled Fervor

Your love of battle drives you to revel in carnage. When you hurt those who would harm you, it gives you renewed vigor.

Blood-Fueled Fervor Half-Orc Racial Utility 10

Your attack strikes true, and you feel your blood surge even as your enemy feels its life fade.

Daily ✦ Healing
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You hit a bloodied enemy with an attack.
Effect: You can spend a healing surge. In addition, you can make a saving throw with a +2 power bonus.

Killer's Mind

You have learned to live with both sides of your heritage. Although you feel conflicting instincts when confronted by danger—survive or destroy, control or abandon—sometimes you can fuse them into one drive. This is the mind of the determined killer, and its relentlessness defends you against those that would confuse or control you.

Killer's Mind Half-Orc Racial Utility 16

You harden your thoughts and think of nothing other than dealing death to your foes.

Daily
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and to Will. When an attack targets your Will, you can make a basic attack against the attacker as an immediate reaction.

Tiefling

"Do I frighten you?"

Tieflings inherit their devilish ancestor's corruption at birth and must ever after contend with the darkness in their souls. Some tieflings strive to rise above their legacy, whereas others seem to revel in it. Each of the unique powers that a tiefling can cultivate serves either of those two types of individuals.

You must be a tiefling to gain and use tiefling powers.

Hellish Gaze

The infernal curse to which all tieflings are born does more than give them a distinctive appearance. It lives in their very souls. The curse reveals itself in your gaze, which embodies all your hate in one level stare.

Hellish Gaze Tiefling Racial Utility 2

Seeing doom reflected in your fiery eyes, your enemy turns away from your countenance.

Encounter ✦ Fear
Minor Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature that can see you
Effect: Make a Bluff check opposed by the target's passive Insight. If the check succeeds, you can push the target 1 square, and the target cannot make opportunity attacks against you until the start of your next turn.

Grim Isolation

Most tieflings spurn aid from their fellows, preferring to trust in themselves. You are so accustomed to going your own way that you sometimes drop into a familiar stance that you employ when fighting alone. Feints, dodges, and spinning maneuvers keep you just out of your enemy's reach.

Grim Isolation Tiefling Racial Utility 6

You don't need help. You can protect yourself just fine.

Daily ✦ Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You assume the grim isolation stance. Until the stance ends, you gain a +2 power bonus to all defenses while no ally is adjacent to you.

Hellfire Shroud

The fiends with whom your ancestors bargained were the lords of the Nine Hells. Their compact infused your kind with infernal power, which helped you to beat back your enemies in Arkhosia. You have learned to tap into this power and shield yourself in unearthly flames.

Hellfire Shroud Tiefling Racial Utility 10

Flickering black flames swirl around you to shield you from harm and punish those who would attack you.

Encounter ✦ Fire
Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: Until the end of your next turn, you gain a power bonus to all defenses equal to your Charisma modifier. In addition, whenever an enemy adjacent to you hits you with a melee attack, that enemy takes fire damage equal to your Charisma modifier.

Eternal Returns

As kin to an immortal, you have little fear of death. It's what happens after death that causes you concern. Who can say if you'll receive your just reward, or if the Nine Hells will claim your soul—or if going to the Hells is your just reward? You'd rather not find out, so you've made a bargain that should help keep your fat out of the fire, at least for a while.

Eternal Returns Tiefling Racial Utility 16

Your defeat opens a door for your return to the world.

Daily ✦ Healing
No Action **Personal**
Trigger: You drop below 1 hit point.

Effect: You are removed from play until the start of your next turn. At the start of your next turn, you can spend a healing surge, and you return to play in an unoccupied space within 5 squares of the last space you occupied.

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Matt Sernett is a game designer at Wizards of the Coast whose recent credits include the *Neverwinter™ Campaign Setting*.

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DARK SUN
CAMPAIGN SETTING

Eye on Dark Sun

Faded Power

By Rodney Thompson

Illustration by Adam Paquette

The gods of ancient Athas are dead—if they ever lived. The inhabitants of the burned world of Athas have no concept of what a god is, other than from stories planted in their minds by the malevolent sorcerer-kings. Yet in the deep deserts, in hidden subterranean realms, in the jungles of the forest ridge, and in other remote and undisturbed reaches of the world, long-forgotten shrines remain from a time so ancient that it is miraculous any part of them survives. These ancient structures once held worshipers, though divine magic—and by extension, true divinity—is so long gone from the world that scholars debate whether or not divine power ever existed. They have nothing to debate over except fragments of lore overlooked by the sorcerer-kings. What would have been the purpose of structures meant to house worshipers? What was the purpose of worship, for that matter?

These temples are few and far between; explorers who have visited a temple from the distant past are unlikely to visit another, nor even learn of the existence other shrines. Of course, the sorcerer-kings attempt to eliminate any knowledge of the location of such temples, fearing that what might be discovered within could be used as a weapon against them. Interestingly, Veiled Alliance cells, like the sorcerer-kings, also attempt to destroy such knowledge. They fear that there might be another terrible power slumbering the eons away within these shrines to whose tyranny and power the sorcerer-kings pale in comparison. Discovering an ancient holy site, and then announcing that discovery, is a good way to make sure that both templars and Veiled Alliance agents come hunting for you.

The interiors of these ancient shrines have been so worn away by the ravages of time that little true knowledge can be gleaned from exploring them. At best, explorers become looters, plundering a few ancient relics to sell off as archaeological marvels to nobles with an interest in the past. Reliefs, statues, and tablets have been worn down by sand, heat, and wind, tomes and accoutrements turned to dust centuries ago, and many structures have collapsed under the ravages of time. The interiors of these ancient temples are incredibly dangerous, because they are unstable and threaten to collapse at the slightest disturbance.

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Yet despite the dangers associated with finding and entering them, ancient temples still draw explorers eager to discover the secrets they hold. Although the vast store of knowledge once held within these temples is long gone, explorers might occasionally find a miraculously preserved artifact within. Usually, this amounts to little more than a curiosity—perhaps a preserved book written in a language alien to Athas, statuettes of completely unknown creatures, or metal weapons so decorated and adorned that they are useless in combat. Rarely, however, an explorer might discover a shred of true knowledge about the ancient world, and it is this that the sorcerer-kings most fear.

Divine Boons of Athas

When adventurers delve into the depths of long-forgotten temples, they might find the relics of a bygone age, jewels, gems, metal weapons, and other oddities. Yet they could come away with something more. Whether it is true divine power or strange, ancient magic that the people of Athas cannot understand, vestiges of that magic sometimes attach to those who come into contact with them. This magic is so old and so faded, however, that an explorer might not know that he or she is carrying a fragment of power out of the ancient ruins. Then, when this old and weakened magic manifests, it does so in an unpredictable manner.

The four divine boons here are examples of the kinds of fragments of ancient divine power that heroes might find when exploring the ruined temples of ancient ages. These boons might be the last hints of divine power on Athas, and can serve not only as a reward for players but as a hook for further adventures; a hero imbued with divine power might be targeted by a sorcerer-king that wants to steal it. Alternatively, recovering a fragment of power from a temple could be the first step in bringing divine magic—and perhaps the gods—back to Athas.

Echoes of Providence — Level 18+ Uncommon

Faint whispers speak of knowledge and events both ancient and prescient.

Lvl 18 85,000 gp Lvl 28 2,125,000 gp
Alternative Reward: Divine Boon

Properties

- ✦ You cannot be deafened.
- ✦ You gain blindsight 1 (2 while you are blinded).
  Level 28: You gain blindsight 2 (5 while you are blinded).

Utility Power ✦ Daily (No Action)

Trigger: You make an ability check or a skill check.
Effect: Roll a d6. On a 3 or higher, treat the d20 result as if you rolled a 20 plus the result on the d6.
Level 28: Treat the d20 result as if you rolled a 20 plus twice the result on the d6.

Embers of Divinity — Level 9+ Uncommon

Light and warmth from a forgotten power burns within you, revealing the hidden and flowing out to burn your foes.

Lvl 9 4,200 gp Lvl 29 2,625,000 gp
Lvl 19 105,000 gp
Alternative Reward: Divine Boon

Properties

- ✦ You gain low-light vision.
- ✦ When you roll a saving throw against an ongoing damage effect that deals fire damage or radiant damage, roll twice and use either result.

Attack Power (Fire, Radiant) **✦ Daily** (No Action)

Trigger: You use an at-will attack power and hit at least one target.
Effect: Roll a d6 for each target you hit. On a 3 or higher, the target also takes ongoing 5 fire and radiant damage (save ends).
Level 19: Ongoing 10 fire and radiant damage (save ends).
Level 29: Ongoing 15 fire and radiant damage (save ends).

Flickers of Faith — Level 4+ Uncommon

A sense of benevolent reverence, so unlike what the sorcerer-kings demand, fills and sustains you.

Lvl 4 840 gp Lvl 24 525,000 gp
Lvl 14 21,000 gp
Alternative Reward: Divine Boon

Property

Your number of healing surges increases by one.

Utility Power (Healing) **✦ Daily** (Immediate Interrupt)

Trigger: You drop below 1 hit point but do not die.
Effect: Roll a d6. On a 3 or higher, you regain hit points as if you spent a healing surge, plus additional hit points equal to the d6 result.
Level 14: The additional hit points are equal to twice the d6 result.
Level 24: The additional hit points are equal to three times the d6 result.

Last Breath of the Gods — Level 12+ Uncommon

A faint breeze stirs around you, the last gasps of a long-absent power mingling with your own breath.

Lvl 12 13,000 gp Lvl 22 325,000 gp
Alternative Reward: Divine Boon

Properties

- ✦ You do not need to breathe.
- ✦ When an effect pulls, pushes, or slides you, you can move 1 square less than the effect specifies.
  Level 22: You can move 2 squares less than the effect specifies.

Attack Power ✦ Daily (No Action)

Trigger: You drop below 1 hit point.
Effect: Roll a d6. On a 3 or higher, you can push each creature adjacent to you up to 3 squares.
Level 22: You can push each creature adjacent to you up to 5 squares.

About the Author

Rodney Thompson is a designer for Dungeons & Dragons R&D at Wizards of the Coast, originally from Chattanooga, Tenn. His credits for the Dungeons & Dragons® game include the *Dark Sun® Campaign Setting* and the *Dark Sun® Creature Catalog*™, and *Player's Option: Heroes of the Feywild*™.

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EBERRON

Eye on Eberron

Baator

By Keith Baker

Illustration by Steve Ellis

Where were your Sovereigns when the Mourning came? What did you buy with your tithes and your prayers? Khyber stirs below us, and the drums of war are beating. Will you look to the heavens for salvation, or are you ready to negotiate a better deal?

—Hathal Kosorak, Aurum Concordian and Servant of the Ninth Circle

Fear has Khorvaire by the throat. A century of war has left deep scars on the psyche of the Five Nations. There are Valenar raiders, Darguul slavers, a kingdom of monsters to the west, and unknown terrors massing in the depths of Khyber. The Lord of Blades rallies the warforged against their makers. Changelings, rakshasas, and spies of all races hide behind friendly faces. The Mourning overshadows all of these. Until someone finds an explanation for this cataclysm, people fear that it will happen again—that a second Mourning could devastate Breland or Thrane.

In the wake of the Mourning, a new power is spreading across Khorvaire. Covens are sprouting up in hamlets and villages. Power-hungry Aurum Concordians are signing new deals. Wherever fear

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and jealousy holds sway, there is a chance for an imp to whisper in an ear or a devil to slip out of the shadows with an offer that seems too good to be true. The sages of the Arcane Congress and the templars of the Silver Flame are equally baffled by this sudden wave of corruption. Who are these devils? Where did they come from, and what do they want?

The answers lie in Sea of Siberys, in the forgotten prison of Baator.

RECKONING WITH THE RECKONING

A great deal of lore has built up about the Nine Hells through the editions of the Dungeons & Dragons® game. In this article's interpretation of Baator, the devils are only recently freed and largely unknown in the outside world; the place is a maximum security prison now ruled by the inmates. Any of the past lore can be reconciled with this version of Baator, however. The Reckoning was less a clash of legions and more a gang war between the rival archfiends. Levistus has been imprisoned for only two years; this was one of Asmodeus's first acts as lord of Baator. Infernal intrigues remain a way of life in Baator; only the scale has changed. The physical descriptions of Baator remain valid. It's a prison with walls of magic, not stone. Just bear in mind that it was designed to torment the devils, and that the mortal souls that now reside there are new guests.

What Is Baator?

The Sovereigns created the planes, and the names of many of them are known to every student of the arcane. Yet there is more to reality than the well-known planes. Other islands are in the Sea of Siberys, and Baator is one of them. Angels fear to tread within this prison for rebellious immortals.

The angels of the Astral Sea say that at one time the gods of the Sovereign Host walked among them and perfected the work of the Progenitors. In Daanvi, minions of Aureon tend the Infinite Archive, while the angels of Boldrei keep the First Hearth burning. They are cogs in the vast machine of creation. Most of these divine servants are dedicated to their Sovereigns and their sacred duties. Yet there are always exceptions. Pride, passion, hunger for power, or simple doubt in the divine order—any of these things can cause an angel to fall. Angels are truly immortal and eventually re-form after physical death, so there needed to be a way to contain malevolent spirits.

According to records in the Infinite Archives, in the days before their final ascension, the Sovereigns worked together to build a prison from the raw stuff of the Sea of Siberys. Aureon wove binding spells to prevent any escape, while Onatar and Dol Dorn built mighty automatons that could crush any uprising. Each Sovereign created a personal domain within the prison as a place of punishment for those who rose up against them—nine hells for rebellious spirits. For a hundred thousand years, angels have been cast into Baator. The immortals of the outer planes are more ideas given form than they are creatures of flesh and blood, and as that fundamental idea changes, they physically change to reflect it. And so these former angels became devils as the seeds of pride and hate flourished over eons of torment.

Asmodeus

Asmodeus was the first pillar of Daanvi, created by Siberys in the dawn of time. He was a mighty force for order, and he claims to have taught Aureon the ways of both magic and politics. He laid the cornerstone of the Infinite Archive, and his treatises on leadership are some of the finest in existence. For eons he governed Daanvi in Aureon's name. As human civilization thrived and worship of the Sovereign Host spread across Eberron, Asmodeus grew jealous of the distant deities. Siberys had fallen. The Sovereigns had ascended to an unknown place, if they still existed at all. And who offered prayers to Asmodeus? Where were his temples?

He gathered a host of followers, and as the Sundering shattered the established order in Sarlona, Asmodeus fought a war in the Astral Sea. Had it remained a battle of angel against angel, he might have changed the divine order. But those faithful to the Sovereigns brought in additional champions. The Chamber of Argonnessen had foreseen these troubles in the Draconic Prophecy, and the combined might of the angels and the dragons broke the rebel army and cast the traitors into Baator. Asmodeus was flung into the Ninth Circle, the prison built by Aureon.

Aureon's wards trapped Asmodeus in Baator, but they couldn't strip the archfiend of his cunning or his charisma. Asmodeus swiftly worked his way into the cabals and intrigues afoot in the hells. He retained the support of many devils that were banished with him in the Daanvi uprising, and he turned the greatest powers of the other layers against one another. Though he couldn't escape Baator or destroy Onatar's guardians, Asmodeus soon became the most influential devil in Baator. His power grew when he found a crack in Aureon's walls. Many mortals on Eberron sought arcane power, and Asmodeus whispered to these mortals and formed the first infernal pacts. Other fiends quickly followed in his footsteps, and

pacts became the most valuable currency in the divine prison. Every archfiend has its followers, but none have as many as Asmodeus.

The devastation of the Mourning had repercussions across the planes. Perhaps the grievous wound to Eberron was felt across her creations. Whatever the truth, on the Day of Mourning the power sustaining Baator faltered, and Asmodeus made his move. Pit fiends led squads of lesser devils to shatter the weakened guardians, while Asmodeus and the mightiest of the fiends pounded at Aureon's wards. By the time the fluctuation passed, the guardians were destroyed and Baator was in the hands of the devils. They couldn't entirely break the wards surrounding Baator, and as a result the devils cannot leave en masse. But with the assistance of an archfiend or a mortal's summoning ritual, it is possible for a devil to reach Eberron.

Baator in the World

Asmodeus is consolidating his strength, and he has neither the power nor the desire to challenge the Chamber, the Lords of Dust, or any of the other ancient forces afoot in Eberron. Rather than investing heavily in one grand scheme that could draw the eye of powerful foes, he is making pacts across the world. Here, fear is his ally. In western Breland, he promises witches the power to defend themselves against the monsters of Droaam. In Q'barra, he plays on settlers' fears of the Poison Dusk. The Mourning, Khyber, the Ashbound, Darguun, Valenar, the next war . . . there are many things to fear in Eberron, and an infernal pact can give you the power to defend yourself. All it costs is your soul, and perhaps a favor or two. When fear doesn't work, greed often will. Many in the Aurum are willing to bargain with fiends to gain an edge on a dragonmarked competitor.

Although different covens might share an infernal patron, this doesn't imply any sort of communication or loyalty between them. A bargain with a fiend is a personal path to power, not a religion. Beyond this, the fiends receive their payment (the warlock's soul) regardless of whether the schemes of the coven succeed or fail. This allows adventurers to face powerful infernal forces without being caught up in massive schemes or drawing the anger of mighty enemies. When heroes kill an infernal warlock, Asmodeus collects her soul; far from spoiling Asmodeus's plans, the adventurers have added to his wealth.

Baator is a mystery even to the sages of Eberron. Until recently it was known only to those angels devoted to the Sovereign Host, and the Inspired and the Lords of Dust know little about it. A worshiper of the Sovereign Host who makes a hard Religion check knows that Baator is some sort of inescapable astral prison. A hard Arcana check provides simple details about the archdevils, primarily those that fell from grace and vanished.

An infernal pact is the common way that Baator influences Eberron. A fiend provides mystical power to a mortal, who uses it as he or she sees fit. Although infernal pacts have been around for centuries, they have become vastly more common since the Mourning, and devils can be involved in many ways aside from pacts. Consider the following.

- A dragonmarked heir carves out a tiny nation in one of the wilder regions of Khorvaire, supported by infernal legions and a diabolic power behind this makeshift throne.
- A businessman has remarkable success and somehow knows all his rival's secrets; this is the work of his fiendish advisor.
- A village once troubled by bandits is now shunned by these outlaws. Bandits avoid the place because a group of devils is protecting the town, but the villagers must sacrifice one of their own to the fiends every few months as payment for this protection.
- The Church of the Silver Flame has discovered the spread of infernal pacts and believes that this activity must be suppressed. A true witch hunt is about to begin. Do the adventurers help, or do they oppose it?
- A cleric of the Sovereign Host is asked to investigate the theft of a number of ancient artifacts connected to Aureon, which leads to Sovereign temple ruins in Sarlona and Xen'drik. Asmodeus is gathering relics connected to the time before his fall, but why?

What's in a Soul?

When a sentient mortal dies, its soul travels to Dolurrh. In Dolurrh, memories fade until the soul is but a shadow of its former self. This bleak reality is the foundation of the Blood of Vol's battle against death. Other faiths, however, have a more positive outlook concerning the fate of the dead. The Sovereign Host asserts that Dolurrh is a gateway, not a conclusion. The fading of memory is a reflection of the soul's transition to the higher realm where the Sovereigns dwell. What's left behind in Dolurrh is merely a cast-off husk, like a snake's abandoned skin. The church of the Silver Flame holds a similar belief, asserting that cleansing in Dolurrh is required before a soul can join with the Silver Flame. Asmodeus believes that the power of the Flame and the Sovereigns is a direct reflection of the souls devoted to them. Rather than winning allegiance through faith, he is stealing souls with his pacts. He believes that he can fuse these souls into a divine power battery—his own personal answer to the Silver Flame.

- A cult of assassins is using a variation of the *Keeper's Fang* blades—weapons that capture the souls of their victims and send them to Baator. Can the adventurers get to Baator to recover the soul of a victim?

DEVILS OF SHAVARATH, FERNIA, AND BAATOR

Although angels and devils are found in many of the outer planes, the fiends of different planes have little in common. So, the inhabitants of Shavarath are spirits of war and have no interest in the souls of mortals. The devils of Fernia are lords of fire, embodying the destructive power of the flame and its seductive lure. And, as discussed earlier in this article, Asmodeus and those who serve him have different goals, which he accomplishes as well as he can from Baator.

Devils from different planes might have the same game statistics, but their motivation, loyalties, and physical appearance varies by plane of origin. For example, all legion devils are foot soldiers in infernal armies. The legion devils of Shavarath have iron horns, wear heavy armor, and constantly chant the war songs of their units. The legion devils of Fernia have crimson skin and beards of fire, and they never speak at all; they sweep across the plane razing all that they find. Identifying a devil from Baator is challenging, however, since so little is known about the plane. What a sage typically knows in this case is that the fiend isn't from Shavarath, Fernia, or any other common source of devils.

- A handful of devils slipped out of Baator during the Mourning. They have allied with a criminal guild in one of the major cities of the Five Nations and are clashing with Daask and other established forces.
- The forces of Daanvi rarely act on Eberron and have little curiosity about Baator. However, one angelic sage in Aureon's Vault wants to know more and asks a paladin of Aureon to serve as its personal agent in these investigations.

Rivalries among the Lords of the Nine can play out on Eberron, and if you want Baator to play a more dramatic role, Asmodeus could be working to trigger a massive harvesting of souls. The first Mourning cracked the walls of Baator. A second could shatter them completely.

About the Author

Keith Baker is the creator of the Eberron® campaign setting and designer of the card game *Gloom*. Contrary to popular belief, his success did not involve an infernal pact of any kind, and he does not possess a fearsome hellcow familiar.

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FORGOTTEN REALMS®

ED GREENWOOD'S
Eye on the Realms

The Enchanted Painting of Manyshields Hall

By Ed Greenwood

Illustration by Chris Seaman

A wealthy Sembian merchant has been buying fine furnishings for his newly built country mansion. Among them, he picked up many large old paintings at auction from the homes of fellow Sembians who had fallen on hard times or died. Whenever moonlight touches one such painting, strange monsters emerge from it. Is it a portal? If so, to where? Where did it come from? Who made it, and why? And why have attempts to destroy it had such deadly consequences?

The Misfortunes of Malthus Traganther

The dardrane[1] of Malthus Traganther mirrors many Sembian tales of personal success. He is one more energetic, unscrupulous entrepreneur of that land who can shift investments quickly when he sees an opportunity and who has soared to riches several times. Although he lost most of his holdings between those successes whenever his risks overreached prudence, he eventually managed to amass an impressive collection of land, buildings, and investments before withdrawing from the most volatile—and personally dangerous—mercantile practices.

In Traganther's case, his successes included importing kegs of smoked mussels to Sembian tables from many small islands and ports around the Sea of Fallen Stars; a long and much-tarnished career as a landlord in the Sembian cities of Saerloon, Selgaunt, and Yhaunn; and devising several soft (and therefore both malleable and short-lived) shiny alloys for use in jewelry and armor adornments. The mussels made him no known foes at all, but in urban Sembia, both of his other endeavors earned him the usual and expected share of enemies. Despite this, he is

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generally regarded as an honest and even a nice man in Sembian social circles.[2]

Yet a reputation of being a simple, coarse wanderer has always clung to Traganther, bolstered by his gruff manner and his daily dress (which reflects a habit of wearing practical garb rather than following fashion). Evidently stung by this tag, when Traganther set about building "the great house where I'll spend the twilight of my days,"[3] he diligently and energetically followed a well-worn path, buying furnishings of elder styles intended to make him seem "old coin" successful rather than newly risen to wealth. To the untutored eyes of an outlander visiting the mansion, Malthus Traganther would seem born to wealth, success, and refinement rather than being a brash grabber of riches. In Sembia, of course, such a pretense fools no one and is commonly accepted in everyday dealings—and actually militates against a low or bumpkin reputation, because the pretender is seen as acting like a "true" Sembian.[4]

Like most Sembians, whose tastes in art are casual, Traganther saw auctions as a practical way to obtain as many huge paintings in a hurry as his bare walls required. He did well, purchasing secondhand art from the dead, the dying, and those fallen into penury. He amassed portraits of beautiful women and strong-looking, handsome men who could be passed off as ancestors; stirring scenes of great battles; beautiful landscapes of moonlit forests adorned with unicorns and the gentle manifestations of sylvan deities; and the usual interpretations of legendary encounters between gods and mortals. Those hired to decorate Traganther's bright new Manyshields Hall—and paid well to make it seem neither bright nor new—admired the collection as superb, and particular of its paintings as delights for the eyes.

One of the more realistic but less strikingly dramatic paintings is about the size of the front doors for a grand Waterdhavian tallhouse: the width of a large overland trade wagon, and a little taller than it is wide. It depicts a brightly moonlit view of a moss-girt woodland path, climbing away from the viewer and curving slightly to the right as it proceeds down an avenue of huge old trees in the heart of a thick forest. By some magic, a trick of the painter's technique, or phosphorescent growths, the path captures some of the moonlight lancing down through the trees, illuminating the more distant visible stretch with a soft glow where deep gloom would be expected to reign. Although no bird nor beast can be seen in the painting, nor any suggestion of movement at all, there is something arresting about the scene, something that draws the eye and the attention. It presumably enthralled Traganther, who insisted on buying all of his own paintings rather than entrusting the purchasing to any other factors, such as the "finecloaks" hired by many Sembians to decorate their living spaces.

The painting is unsigned, of canvas stretched over diagonal tongue-and-groove-joined boards set into a finely crafted backframe of dalash wood from the Tashalar. Both the artist and the pigments used are unknown to all who have examined the work, which seems to be of fairly recent making (forty summers or less). Its ornate overframe is even newer. The painting was hung in a large back room on the ground floor of Manyshields Hall, which was intended as a relaxed, informal space for conversation, game playing, and evening reading. At that time, the chamber was what it still is: a bare storage area for furnishings not yet moved to the unfinished rooms they were meant to eventually occupy.

The mansion-building went smoothly until the very end of Traganther's hunt for furnishings, when his newly acquired art was hung—and the trouble began. These events have been described in all manner of wild ways by various builders, servants of Traganther, and passersby, but can be summarized as follows:

Whenever moonlight touches the face of the painting,[5] monsters leap out of it. The canvas is not damaged and has no holes, but the beasts appear in midair right in front of it, moving as if they have just burst through, and fall or spring to the floor. Multiple monsters emerge, most often three or four but sometimes as many as eight; the first two of them are always the same sort of creature, but the third and any others are all of different sorts (both from each other and from the initial pair). Thus far, fourteen such appearances have been observed in Manyshields Hall, and every one has featured monsters different from all previous incidents.

The monsters arrive angry or agitated, usually hungry, and have thus far killed and devoured six painters, two carpenters, and a doorjack.[6] They have wounded dozens more, causing wild rumors to spread and making it difficult for Traganther to hire replacement workers and servants. The fiercest creature reported to have emerged is a grell, but some of Traganther's surviving doorjacks say that worse things might well have fled to roam Sembia rather than confront and fight humans who, as time went on, were increasingly ready for them.[7]

Reavers to the Rescue

Traganther's initial responses to the marauding monsters were too feeble to defend his home, regardless of how well he armed and equipped local warriors, retired soldiers, and thugs. Attempts were made to destroy the painting with cast spear, swung sword, or a blazing torch thrust against the canvas, but all resulted in injury or death. Some sort of magic protects the painting and the wall behind it, so that any attack causes no harm to either but is instantly visited on the attacker: the spear-thrower struck by his own spear, the arsonist burned by his own torch, and so on. The casualties extended even to builders who tried to break down from behind the wall on which the painting hung; their bones were shattered by the blows of their own hammers. The shaken Malthus Traganther finally hired Brundabuld's Reavers, a

small but veteran team of Selgauntan monster slayers and self-described hardhelm guardians,[8] to rid his almost-finished mansion of the beasts that had invaded it.

Erich Brundabuld is widely rumored to have gnome blood in his ancestry: Although he's a stout, big-boned man, his features resemble those of the wee folk. Insulted and challenged lifelong for his appearance, he became a bold, ruthless warrior known for his quick wits. He built a loyal, capable team of sellswords he dubbed the Reavers, who enjoyed two decades of success as hired bodyguards and bullyblades[9] to the wealthy of Sembia. The Reavers had grown large and successful enough for Brundabuld to split them into two full-sized "banners" (separately operating forces) only months before Traganther hired them. Brundabuld sent his fledgling Second Banner, under the command of his trusted sword-comrade Urstur Arthade, to Manyshields Hall. He never saw any of the mercenaries alive again.

Arthade deployed his warriors in three groups. Two of the groups guarded specific doors so as to isolate the rooms immediately around the painting from the rest of the mansion. A third war band began by scouring the rest of Manyshields Hall for five days and nights, having much success, then rested for the next day before entering the guarded zone to try to deal with the painting. The team was promptly overwhelmed by a stampede of beasts that slaughtered all the warriors and then destroyed the guarded doors, the two details of Reavers assigned to them, and the few servants still at the mansion. The next morning, monsters were roaming the grounds, and no one could even approach Manyshields Hall.

Salkrorn's Summation

In desperation, with monsters now threatening the nearby roads and adjacent estates, Traganther hired Morrus Salkrorn, a haughty, extremely wealthy wizard of Ordûlin,[10] to destroy the painting—or at least remove it far from his estate. Salkrorn cast various scrying spells, observing Manyshields Hall at a distance, and advised Traganther to hire veteran monster-slayers and place them under Salkrorn's command. With his magic, he could locate and identify the beasts and direct the adventurers to approach, corner, and dispatch them with the least danger to themselves. This was done, and in a tenday Salkrorn had capably managed the elimination of all the emerged monsters that could be found. (There is general agreement that some escaped into the wider Realms and presumably survive.)

Salkrorn then tightened the ring of adventurers around Manyshields Hall and directed them in careful infiltration and occupation, until the danger was once again confined to the same guarded zone that the unfortunate Reavers had established. Then the wizard relocated to one of the turrets of Traganther's mansion, along with certain spell tomes and several large crates of alchemical substances and oddments concerned with advanced magical experimentation, and really settled down to work.

Four days later, he emerged to deliver a report to Malthus Traganther that he called his summation of the matter. In it, he identified the painting as a transformed deepspawn—a sentient and aware beast that could create monsters at will, up to the limits of the mass and the life energy of what it consumed. This was no typical deepspawn, though; not the near-mindless creature usually encountered in desolate ruins and wilderland caves, but a cunning, reasoning menace. Its mobility had been magically stripped from it, but before that, it had received a formidable augmentation: a new and permanent magical aura that reflected hostile magic—and most physical attacks—back at the source.

Salkrorn speculated that the creature's transformation into an immobile painting might have been done by a senior Zhentarim mage, and he strongly believed that its augmented intelligence and attack reflection were the work of one Usandur of Scardale. A few wizards, clergy of Mystra, and sages of the arcane know that several dozen deepspawn were so modified by that long-deceased wizard, to serve as guardians of his now-vanished tower (which was shattered and plundered by Maalthir of Hillsfar decades ago). These "guardspawn" were all thought to have been destroyed in Maalthir's assault on the tower, but several rumors persist that Zhentarim used spells to whisk some of them away as the magical battle began—leaving a huge breach in Usandur's defenses that enabled Maalthir to triumph swiftly and easily, in a battle he was not expected to win.

Failure and Woe

A horrified Traganther was more than willing to pay Salkrorn handsomely to magically cage and remove the guardspawn painting. Salkrorn embarked on the attempt, only to somehow fall under the control of the creature and become its agent. Without warning, he lashed out at Traganther with his spells, slaying the merchant but sparing his young family (who were then dwelling in Saerloon, the city from where Traganther hailed). The family promptly engaged a Cormyrean adventuring band called the Company of the Oskrisk[11] to destroy the painting and reclaim Manyshields Hall, but Salkrorn destroyed them with casual ease. So the Traganthers hired a considerably more expensive mercenary band from Westgate (the Red Goad, led by Alandanther "Flamebeard" Flors) to accomplish the same mission—and the wizard happily destroyed them too.

Salkrorn then set about killing and thieving from many Sembians, apparently settling scores for the guardspawn and amassing certain items for some sort of magical task it desires to attempt (possibly a further augmentation). This activity scared the surviving Traganthers into fleeing the country for parts unknown; as they continue, a far wider circle of Sembians has become alarmed. Salkrorn has not recently

been seen marauding about Sembia, but his fate—and that of the monster-spewing painting of Manyshields Hall—thus far remains unknown.

Notes

1. A "dardrane" is a term used by bards and minstrels, meaning "the life story, thus far, of a still-living mortal."

2. Which really bespeaks the bolder ruthlessness and nastiness of other Sembian traders.

3. These words are drawn from written invitations that Traganther delivered to Sembian builders he wanted to hire to work on Manyshields Hall. He named his manor for the hundreds of tall shields with pointed, tapered bottoms, all brightly (and incorrectly) painted with heraldic designs, that he picked up from a warehouse in Telflamm for "a small handful of coins," and intended to hang on every blank stretch of wall once the other furnishings were all in place. No one knows if Traganther intended to claim they were the arms of ancestors or relatives, or knights he had bested or slain in combat, or (as one of the builders archly suggested) trading partners he had driven to suicide.

4. Sembia has an unofficial nobility of the powerful, cultured, and wealthy that sneers at the impoverished nobility of other lands who inherit rather than earn their high station, so that foolishness, incompetence, and outright madness are tolerated. In Sembia, such qualities would lead to swift ruin.

5. Not every moonlit night, nor when moonlight floods into other parts of the room.

6. A doorjack is a domestic uniformed manservant, so named because he is usually stationed by the door of a chamber. He usually performs fetch-and-carry errands and delivers messages. An "anandjack" is either the chief doorjack of a household or, in a very large mansion (or palace or castle), the head of a shift of doorjacks. We might call such a servant a butler.

7. Traganther armed his servants after the first few attacks, set up guards at strategic doors in an attempt to isolate and discover the monsters' point of entry, then hired well-armed warriors to deploy barricades and traps. Finally he turned to Brundabuld's Reavers.

8. The Reavers proudly advertise themselves as hardhelm guardians. This urban Sembian term refers to highly trained bodyguards who have their own plate armor and are accustomed to fighting in it, have proven battlefield experience, have killed in public without hesitation—and are proud of all of this and want Sembian clients to know it. The name says, "We are professional, disciplined, aggressive killers who can follow orders." A simple hardhelm is a hired killer or strike-force member, whereas a hardhelm guardian protects a person, cargo, valuable item, or building on an ongoing basis.

9. "Bullyblade" is a term that has many shades of meaning, from "aggressive habitual armed drunkard" to the meaning employed here: a standing, paid force of armed thugs used not just for lawfully guarding persons and property, but also as a strike force used to attack rivals or foes. The latter sort of bullyblade is a hired lawbreaker who is engaged to commit theft, arson, murder, kidnapping, or vandalism.

10. Salkrorn's riches come from the fish farm he owns, at a little-known upland Sembian location. In its dozen or so ponds, he rears fish that are smoked in liqueurs by his own secret process and sold at very high prices to the best Sembian eateries.

11. An oskrisk is a creature believed to be mythical, though some evil wizards have recently transformed live captives, slaves, or servants into oksrisk form. In heraldry, it is depicted as a speaking guardian in the shape of a door that can thrust forth from itself a long, dragon-like neck with devouring jaws (and retract this appendage, leaving no trace of it). Some legends insist that oskrisk bites and projected spittle slow the limbs of mammals for short periods.

About the Author

Ed Greenwood is the man who unleashed the Forgotten Realms® setting on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, plus he writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is happiest when churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. He still has a few rooms in his house in which he has space left to pile up papers.

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D+D=XO

By Shelly Mazzanoble

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I signed up for a zillion wedding-related email lists, market research surveys, and sweepstakes last year. I'm sure it was important at the time to learn about 412 ways to "autumnify" my bouquet and see how Jamie from Covington, Louisiana, made topiaries in her wedding colors out of nothing but frosting, toothpicks, and donuts. Somewhere down the line I must have agreed to be sold off to a bevy of new virtual suitors, because now I'm getting bombarded with tips on how to "feather our newlywed love nest" (hint: it really does involve feathers) or instructions on how to tell if we're "baby ready" by taking a twenty-three-page questionnaire. My maybe baby will be walking by the time I'm done taking that quiz. Come on, people! It's only been five months since the big day.

Alas, five months is plenty of time to develop all sorts of dysfunction in your relationship. In fact, these email marketers can make you feel sort of awkward and remedial if you're not suffering from some major communication roadblock, moral debate, or intrusion from the past. Admittedly, I haven't unsubscribed from all of the email lists yet, because they're so darn amusing. And they sometimes have good recipes. And okay, what if one day I need to discover the seven secrets to fighting dirty? (It's not what you think.)

Today's email touted the Top Seven Traits (why is it always seven?) for a Successful Relationship. What I discovered was truly shocking for a few reasons.

It was good advice.

It was common sense.

It was about D&D.

It turns out you don't need a therapy session to help find peace and harmony in your relationship. You need a game session. For those of you who have wanted your significant other to join you on your next great adventure, you now have seven good reasons to make your case.

Friendship: "Couples who have strong friendships not only love each other but genuinely enjoy hanging out together."

Bart was one of my best friends for five years before we started dating. I know some girls that won't even let their boyfriends see them without makeup. But during our courtship he saw me at my most vulnerable—neck deep in the Shadowfell, surrounded by shadar-kai, down to single-digit hit points and a missile that was no longer magic.

While it's a game—a fantasy game at that—D&D still offers up valuable insights into a person's soul. I do believe how a person responds to your party will give you a hint to how a person might act *at* a party. Are they polite to their hosts? Do they remember a friend's birthdays? Do they celebrate your accomplishments and blame failures on the ineptness of those around you who can't recognize true talent when it's staring them in the face? This is the person who is most likely to work well in a group, be happy

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to assist, and be humble when it's their swiftshot that takes the monster down.

Now, that jerkwad who always insists on firing the first shot or being at the head of the party even though the dwarf fighter with low-light vision would be a better choice? Or the cleric who hoards the *healing words* because there are only two left and honestly, "You're not that badly hurt, right?" Wrong. These are people you do *not* want as your emergency contact.

Humor: "Partners who make each other laugh tend to be good at de-escalating conflict."

Do you know what Shamu wearing a yarmulke, the question "Wanna ride bikes?," and Christopher Cross all have in common? No, of course you don't. But they're all absolutely hysterical in a "you had to be there" sort of way. I'll spare you the details, but I'm sure you have similar tales.

Is there anyone who thinks D&D *isn't* funny? I mean, we're generally grown-ups pretending to be elves and gnomes. That alone is funny. I'm fairly certain my D&D games are not atypical in that they are often riddled with laughter and jokes your average eight-year-old boy would think were comedic gold.

Laughter *is* the best medicine, and it's also the best bonding agent.

In D&D sometimes you do the wrong thing and sometimes the party suffers because of it. It's not entirely uncommon when the dice control your fate. Learn to laugh off your mistakes and roll with the punches—especially if that punch was followed by a ***flaming sphere*** and you happen to be on fire.

Forgiveness: "Couples who learn to forgive each other are happier in the long term."

Yep, it's true. Sometimes people you love and trust do really crappy things. Like hit you with an *acid arrow*. (It was an accident!) How many times have I had to apologize for miscalculating the area of a burst and mistakenly catching a party member in it? Let's just say . . . often.

Sure, my fellow adventurers could get angry and retaliate. They could make fun of me for still not getting the difference between a *burst* and a *blast*. They could just stop playing with me. But instead they snuff out the flames, dust off the dirt, and brush off my apology. I mean, I don't always hit the wrong guy. Sometimes I take out a whole army of minions with my awesome *burning hands*. And someday they might mess up a spell, too. It's all in a day's work. We'll gladly take one for the team as long as it's for the greater good.

Chores: "Couples who divide up the household responsibilities in a mutually agreed-upon way are less likely to resent one another."

We do not have a chore list at home, because neither Bart nor I is motivated by gold stars or the promise of Judy Blume books. Sometimes the laundry just doesn't get folded. Sometimes we have to grab our wine glasses from the clean dishes in the dishwasher rather than in the sideboard where they belong. And sometimes, much to Zelda's dismay, her litter box doesn't get cleaned as often as it should. That's my fault. As much as I'm loath to admit it, she's my cat, so it's my job. (Sadie, the dog, would gladly take on this chore, but she already has a serious halitosis issue, and well . . . it's just gross.) Every now and again I secretly wish Bart would have some strange out-of-body experience and decide he wants to clean the litter box. But alas, not even Zelda's piercing, blue-eyed glare while we eat our dinner at the coffee table four feet from her bathroom will persuade him.

I appreciate knowing my role in a D&D party. Some of us are good at breaking and entering. Some of us are always willing to lead the herd into the depths of a dungeon. I can rest assured that whatever needs to get done gets done, and everyone feels like they're contributing. Learning how to share the burdens (literally and figuratively) like we do in a D&D game can do wonders for teaching couples how to go about it in real life. Once Bart and I figured out that the person who cared the most about how the cereal bowls were stacked (guess who!) should probably empty the dishwasher and the person who walked by the dumpster every morning while walking the dog should probably take out the trash, living together became a lot easier. Still no takers on the litter box thing, though.

Communication: "Couples who are able to openly and articulately express feelings in an emotionally safe environment deal better with frustrating situations."

What's the one thing you do most in a D&D game? Besides eat. No, not rolling dice. Okay, besides math. Perhaps I'll rephrase. What *else* do you do *a lot* in a D&D game? Talk. That's right. *Communicate*. The thing these so-called experts say couples don't do enough of.

There's a difference between the talking in real life that goes something like, "Can you turn that down? The neighbors across the street aren't paying our cable bill!" and the conversations that happen during a D&D game. If you don't communicate then, you're liable to get stuck in your slapdash wizard's miscalculated burst. Or is it a blast? Whatever. Our conversations may be drenched in tactics and optimization, but we're still *talking*. And it shows you respect your partner's role and want to help him succeed, which coincidentally is another thing the experts say couples don't pay enough mind too.

Reliability: "Couples who do what they say and say what they do, create an atmosphere of comfort."

Let's be honest: No one wants to get stuck with the ADD-challenged rogue, or the ranger who can't put down his smart phone, or the wizard with such bad time management skills she's always in the kitchen heating up her lunch when her turn comes around. If you're going to accept an invitation into a D&D game, you're basically saying, "Yes, my friends, I am here for you. You can count on me."

A D&D party isn't like a cocktail party. If you can't make the latter, chances are the party goes on. But if you blow off your D&D party, you're leaving your friends in potentially dire straits or, worse, without a game. There have been times when we've sat around the table with our dice and our lunches getting cold, waiting for a party member to show up. Five minutes, ten minutes, until finally they pop their head in to tell us they have to finish some report and can't play after all. In the grand scheme of things, our game may not be life or death. We get paid to *work*, not to play games (even though sometimes the two are interchangeable). But blowing off your game several weeks in a row while insisting you really, really want to be in the group is like taking the last cupcake because you *might* get the urge for something red velvet later on. Not cool. Some of us have the urge for red velvet all the time. Put down that cupcake!

Passion: "Couples who have maintained passion in their relationships feel closer physically and emotionally and well taken care of."

Well, D&D may not be what the experts are referring to when they're talking about keeping the spark alive (though roleplaying might be involved). Let's face it, D&D players are a passionate bunch. Games can take up a lot of free time, not to mention the amount of prep that goes into making characters and creating lasting campaigns. Books, minis, maps, tiles—well, it's not the stuff that makes a mantel look good (at least according to our real estate agent). Whether it's just a casual game now and again or being your most dedicated Dungeon Master, it's way easier, not to mention more fun, to share the hobby you love with the person you love.

Easy, right? And you don't need to argue with any insurance company about co-pays. Who knew all you needed to maintain your T.L.A. was some D and D. Clearly these therapists are using the wrong kind of roleplaying.

About the Author

Shelly Mazzanoble firmly believes D&D can help improve many facets of your life. That's why she wrote a whole book about it. Look for *Everything I Need to Know I Learned From Dungeons & Dragons,* at a bookstore near you. (And P.S. her editor made her write that.)

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From Warduke to Websites

D&D Alumni

Bart Carroll

F or a game that celebrates its rich history as well as its current implementations, a column such as *D&D Alumni* always seemed like a natural fit for the website, which is why I initially proposed this series back in 2006. This column is a means to help unearth and consider treasures of the game. Starting early on with a Brief History of Warduke*, *D&D Alumni* has touched upon everything from dice and minis in the game, to its monsters and villains, and on to its adventures and settings.

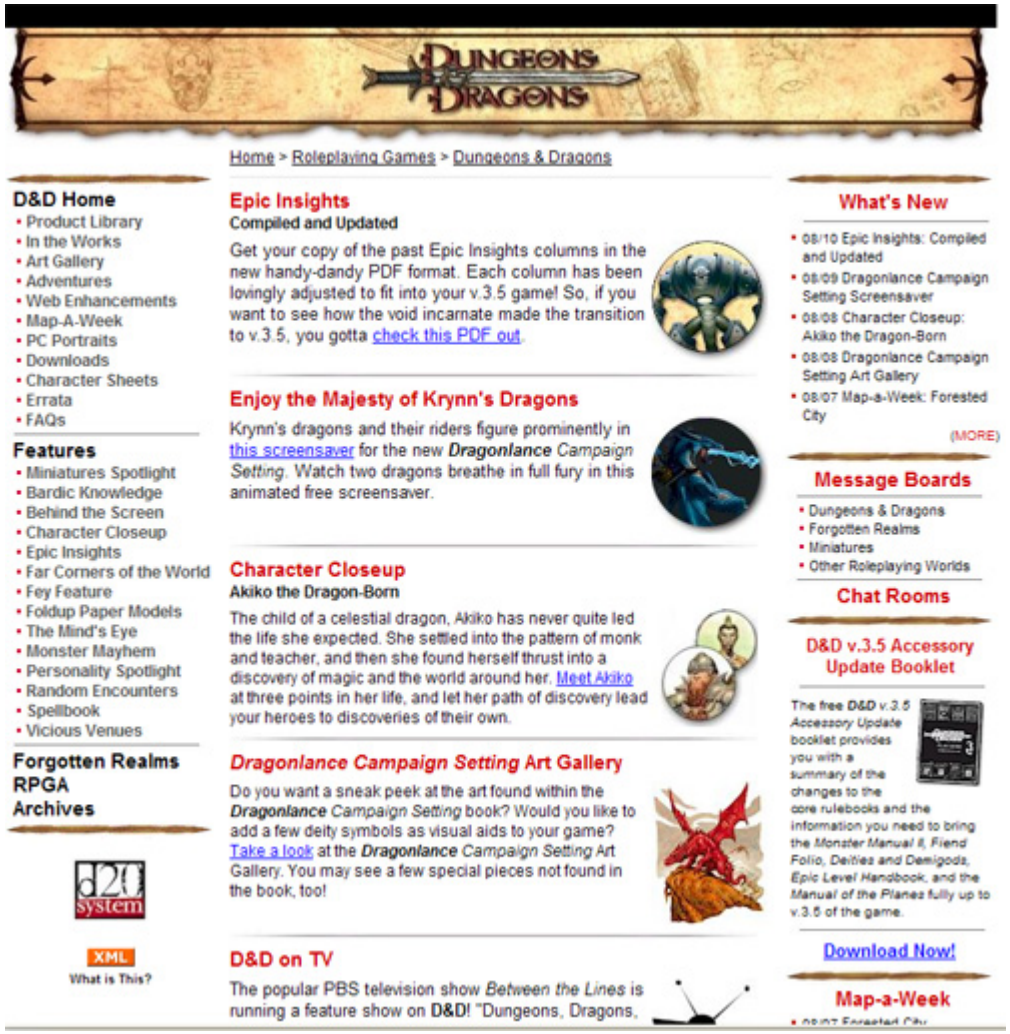
What I enjoy about this column—what I enjoy about *Dungeons & Dragons* in general—is the fact that we've barely touched upon the vast, vast trove of potential topics. There's so much more to be considered and discussed. Next month, for example, we'll take a further look at the 1st Edition rulebooks that have been announced for re-release, and we'll cover their impact on the game.

This month, I wanted to start things out by taking a quick tour through the D&D website. We've recently refreshed the homepage and created an interior content page (Daily D&D), as a means to help our divergent audiences (new and experienced users) better navigate the website.

When *D&D Alumni* debuted, it was quite a different website experience around here altogether. In fact, through the wonders of the *Way Back Machine*, we can show you how the D&D homepage has looked at various times in its life.

2000: “The adventure begins now!” At least, it begins for our coverage of 3rd Edition, including a preview of Dragon 274 (the first 3rd Edition issue):

2003: By now, the left-hand navigation has certainly expanded, and the homepage largely focuses on presenting the most recent articles:



2005: The navigation took on its distinct dungeon map aesthetics, and the homepage presents the most recent articles and products arrayed in the right-hand column:

2008: Here's our initial 4th Edition site, with tabbed content panels and expanding navigation. It retains its right-hand product array:

Against the Giants: Round Two

In the southeast corner of Chief Nosnra's treasure room there originally appeared to be a broken barrel. This was but an illusion, "for it is actually a well-made and water tight cask which contains a map showing the Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl and an obsidian box. In the latter is a chain of weird black metal and instructions written in hill giant on a sheet of human skin. The instructions show that the chain is a magical device which is to be looped into a figure 8. Thus shaped, it will transport up to six persons in each circle of the figure 8 to the glacial rift if one of their number holds the map."

In Chris Perkins's revised series, *Against the Giants*, a similar clue can be found in Nosnra's steading. "Buried under the gold is a wooden scroll tube containing a map. The map is drawn on a ragged piece of dwarf skin and marks the locations of the hill giant steading, the stone giant warrens, the glacial rift of the frost giants, and the hall of the fire giant king."

However, no similar magic device accompanied the map, which would have allowed characters to have an automatic means to reach the continuing locations. Instead they would need to negotiate their own way to the giants' later hideouts—and this month, the series moves on to the frost giants' glacial rift.

As described in the original, "The whole place is windy and very cold. Visibility atop the rift is about 150'. The wind at the bottom of the rift is worse still, and visibility there is only 30'. The floor of the rift is a maze of snow and ice hillocks and mounds, with peaks of ice and rock thrusting up here and there like fangs. Movement through this howling maze of cold is reduced to 50% of normal. Due to wind force and eddying currents, levitation or flying there will cause movement in a random direction equal to one-half the distance flown or levitated."

And that's just the approach to the frost giants' lair.

Repeating our introduction from last month, the G-series was originally published back in 1978. That same year, it was played in the Origins Convention in a tournament that involved "over 275 players and judges in two days of grueling, torturous fun honed sharp by the nature of the competition. Teams of nine each adventured through up to three

rounds slaying giants and other fearsome monsters . . .” *Dragon* 19 provided a description of the final events by the winning team, with the following players and DM notes:

Round 2: The first round led us to the hill giant’s stronghold . . .

Players: The second leg of our quest, the frost giant’s lair, proved to be an icy maze of caves surrounding a windy, snowbound glacial rift. We found a war party preparing for a raid and once again used fireballs to good effect—killing all of them. In this realm, fireballs proved to be the most effective weapon available as they almost completely obscured all vision and allowed our thief to strike from behind (which almost always guaranteed a kill).

After killing two snow leopards we then proceeded to kill every giant we could find. A search after one such slaughter revealed a chest with special armbands and treasure which we took with us. Once again, the questioning of a dead giant guard provided the information we needed to continue our quest to the next giant stronghold.

DM: What is truly amazing about this second round is how much they didn’t kill and still managed to get into the third and final round. . . . However, clever questioning led to clues which compensated for the low kill ratio.

Look for the “Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl” coming soon to *Dungeon*. The "Steading of the Hill Giant Chief" and "Warren of the Stone Giant Thane" are available now.

1st Edition Re-Releases

You’ve no doubt seen the announcement that we’re re-releasing the 1st Edition *Player’s Handbook*, *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, and *Monster Manual*, with a portion of proceeds going to benefit the Gary Gygax Memorial Fund.

Next month, we’ll be examining these books in greater detail and exploring their impact on the game. Until then, Mike Mearls shared a few words regarding the re-releases and how they pertain to D&D Next:

Mike: Back on January 9th, we announced our plans for the future of the D&D RPG. Many fans have focused on the specifics of game mechanics, approaches to creating campaigns and adventures, and methods of presentation. The project we’re undertaking is

more than just a revision of the D&D rules, it's a new approach to how we look at D&D as a whole. The release of the classic *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* game is part of our plan to make it clear that we support all versions of D&D, from the original white box set to the newest 4th Edition expansions. D&D has a long and rich history—one that we intend to embrace and support even as we move into the future.

And with that, let's end with a look at the potion miscibility table!

If you're not familiar with this entry in the 1st Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, it might be fair to say that it rather nicely summed up the spirit of the book's miscellany. Just after the section on magical research, the material on page 119 touched upon use of magic items.

On this page, we learned that combining two potions at once, or ingesting a second potion if a first one was already in effect, often led to random, occasionally disastrously painful results! As corner case as such an event might be, the table presented in the *DMG*, I feel, was just one of many such entries that fueled DMs' imaginations about what other unexpected events can—and often should—happen in their games.

So emblematic was this simple table, that in 3rd Edition we went on to recreate the potion miscibility table for April Fool's. In 4th Edition, others took up the cause, with a version of the table appearing in Kobold Quarterly!

Potion Miscibility Table

Dice Score/Result

01: EXPLOSION! Internal damage is 6–60 h.p., those within a 5' radius take 1–10 h.p. if mixed externally, all in a 10' radius take 4–24 hit points, no save.

02–03: Lethal poison results, and imbiber is dead; if externally mixed, a poison gas cloud of 10' diameter results, and all within it must save versus poison or die.

04–08: Mild poison which causes nausea and loss of 1 point each of strength and dexterity for 5–20 rounds, no saving throw possible; one potion is cancelled, the other is at half strength and duration. (Use random determination for which is cancelled and which is at half efficacy.)

09–15: Immiscible. Both potions totally destroyed, as one cancelled the other.

16–25: Immiscible. One potion cancelled, but the other remains normal (random selection).

26–35: Immiscible result which causes both potions to be at half normal efficacy when consumed.

36–90: Miscible. Potions work normally unless their effects are contradictory, e.g. diminution and growth, which will simply cancel each other.

91–99: Compatible result which causes one potion (randomly determined) to have 150% normal efficacy. (You must determine if both effect and duration are permissible, or if only the duration should be extended.)

00: DISCOVERY! The admixture of the two potions has caused a special formula which will cause one of the two potions only to function, but its effects will be permanent upon the imbiber. (Note that some harmful side effects could well result from this . . .)

Roll for miscibility secretly whenever it occurs. Give no uncalled-for clues until necessary.