

Escalation!

6

THE 13TH AGE FANZINE | WINTER 2018

THE UNDERWORLD
& DUNGEONS

6

ASH
A DOZEN
DUNGEONS
LAW



IMPERIAL DISPATCH



Given the pedigree of 13th Age, it shouldn't surprise me to learn that fans have lots of wonderful ideas for the underworld. However, the diversity of offerings was greater than I'd anticipated, and this issue is richer because of it. It's a joy to see the wild spin on the underworld each author brings forth from the depths of their imaginations (see what I did there?).

In this issue, numerous dungeons are presented, ranging from the traditional to the gonzo. These dungeons are stocked with all the monsters and treasure you would need for a sizable adventure arc or short campaign. The Undermarch between Anvil and Forge is fleshed out and ties in nicely with Chasm, an article from Issue 4. Duergar, derro, and goblins are examined more closely, not only as monsters to be slain, but as fallen icons and player characters. We delve into the very origin of living dungeons, offering multiple possibilities that – in traditional 13th age fashion – can be chosen at each table. And if your players don't find Epic Tier play challenging enough, we introduce underkrakens: terrifying, colossal living dungeons that serve as both monsters and as entire environments.

To enrich your games, whether they're focused on the underworld or not, we also offer some new options for both GMs and players. Looking for more consumable magic items beyond your standard healing potion? Iconic one-use items are provided for each of the 13 icons. The warrior class offers players more tactical decisions prior to rolling the dice than the fighter does, and is reminiscent of the D&D Essentials knight, slayer, bladesinger, and cavalier sub-classes. Living spellbooks are sure to prove a challenge for adventurers. And a couple of races are provided optional racial powers that may better align with certain classes.

Yes, we dug deep to provide you with flavorful content. Whether your campaign takes place purely in the underworld or you avoid it, only traveling underground when the need is dire, there's something for you in this issue. My deepest thanks go out to the many creative folk who helped excavate the Dragon Empire's subterranean world and make it simultaneously more approachable and more deadly at your gaming tables. 🎲

Gratefully yours,
Tim Baker



Art: Patricia Baker

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A DOZEN DUNGEONS

BY ASH LAW

Here follows twelve subterranean encounters, from golems to geodes to ghosts. They can be used as quick stand-alone adventures, dropped into your own dungeon crawl, or spliced together to create themed dungeon-crawls.

Here are just ten ways you could use the dozen encounters, linked in a ‘story-chain’—but there are an almost infinite number of ways that you could fit them together to make a dungeon.

HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

Archmage

The Archmage has learned of lost magic deep under the ground and sends the party to retrieve it.

The Big Chill-Heiligan's Shrine-The Lich's Throne-Geode Road

KILL THE BAT

Crusader or Great Gold Wyrm or Priestess

Paladins have heard rumors of a new evil growing under the Dragon Empire—a race of half-demon vampire bat-creatures. The adventurers must locate and destroy the creatures and bring back proof.

Deja Voodoo-To the Bat Cave-Fungus Among Us-Deja Double-View

CRYSTAL DISEASE

Diabolist

The diabolist has sent the adventurers deep into the earth to retrieve a rare disease. Myths say that the last sample of the disease is guarded by a legendary bard.

To the Bat Cave-Belly of the Beast-The Empty V-Geode Road

INFESTATION

Dwarf King

The dwarves are having trouble with strange bat-like creatures emerging from the deeps. Are these allies, or enemies? Dwarves that have been sent to investigate haven't returned, so the Dwarf King is calling for outside help.

Cob's Path-Fungus Among Us-Geode Road-Dragon Cave-In-To the Bat Cave

EGG QUEST

Elf Queen

The Elf Queen wants the adventurers to bring back rare spider eggs, so the dark elves can breed a new generation of cavalry mounts.

The Empty V-Geode Road-Danger Danger, High Voltage-Cob's Path

LOST TREASURES

Emperor or Prince of Shadows

A treasure map leads to the opening of a cave system, and perhaps a living dungeon. But which icon will get to the treasure first?

Danger Danger, High Voltage-Heiligan's Shrine-The Big Chill-The Lich's Throne

UNDER-SAFARI

High Druid

An explorer has returned to the surface with tales of an enormous previously unknown type of animal that lives deep in the rock. The adventurers are sent to confirm the tale.

Deja Voodoo-Danger Danger, High Voltage-Deja Double-View-Belly of the Beast

CAULDRON OF DUST

Lich King

The Lich King wants the party to retrieve a ceremonial cauldron from the throne-room of a long-departed lich. However, the throne-room is guarded by angry ghosts.

Cob's Path-The Empty V-Heiligan's Shrine-The Lich's Throne

PROVING GROUND

Orc Lord

The Orc Lord demands that the adventurers prove themselves by bringing back a dragon head from deep under the Frost Range.

The Big Chill-Cob's Path-Belly of the Beast-Dragon Cave-In

FREE THE FIVEFOLD ONE

The Three

The Three send the adventurers to locate a five-headed dragon and convince it (through force if needed) to join them in Drakkenhall.

Danger Danger, High Voltage -To the Bat Cave-The Lich's Throne-Dragon Cave-In

COB'S PATH

The adventurers' exploration is blocked by a web-filled pit. It looks like the pit intersects with another tunnel further down. Jumping the pit is a DC 20 skill check, climbing across or down is DC 15—failing either skill check causes the adventurer to become stuck (hard save (16+) ends), and 1d6 spider-bears come scuttling out of the darkness to feast!

Partway down the pit, the adventurers can see something glittering—it looks like armor.

SPIDER-BEAR

Large 4th level troop [beast]

Initiative: +7

Bite +8 vs. AC—24 damage

Natural even hit: The target takes 1d6 ongoing poison damage.

After-effect: After the target saves against the poison damage they become confused until the end of their next turn.

Miss: 4 damage, or 8 damage if the spider-bear is staggered.

Feast on the fallen: The spider-bear gains a +2 attack bonus against confused or stuck enemies (+4 if the target is both confused and stuck).

AC 9

PD 19 **HP** 130

MD 14

DELVER'S BREASTPLATE

Heavy armor

Always: +1 AC (champion: +2; epic: +3).

Caught in the headlights: At-will this armor can create a bright continuous light directed forwards. Once per day as a quick action make the nearest 1d4+1 nearby mooks stunned, until the start of their next turn (champion: 1d4+2; epic: 1d4+3).

Quirk: Shows off by dazzling others.



DANGER DANGER, HIGH VOLTAGE

This cave is crackling with lightning from everbright crystals. In the center of the cave is a pile of treasure. Edging past a crystal formation without getting shocked is DC 20 (+5 each for carrying metal coins, wearing metal armor, or carrying a metal weapon... DC 35 for doing all). Failing the check means taking 4d8 lightning damage OR taking half damage and making the two closest allies a skill check too. It takes three successful skill checks to reach the middle of the cave. There are 2,000 gp of coins in the pile, but picking any up deals 2d20 lightning damage from static discharge—and now the adventurer must get back out of the cave while carrying metal coins. Adventurers can only carry 1d10x100 gp of stuff from the pile at a time. The third load carried out has a magic item, The Growing Storm, among it.

THE GROWING STORM

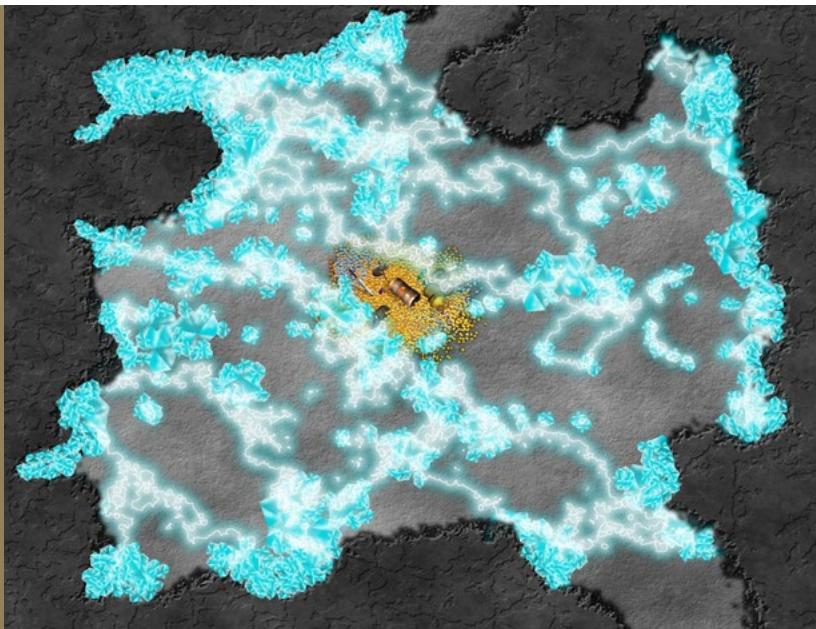
Cursed sword, may be used as implement by clerics of storm gods.

Always: +2 to attack and damage with attacks made with this weapon/implement (champion: +3; epic: +5).

Lightning aura: Each time you hit with this weapon (melee attack or spell cast through it) set a d4 aside. The first enemy to hit you with a melee attack while you have d4s set aside takes that amount of lightning damage (roll the pool of d4s), and you take lightning damage equal to the number of d4s you rolled.

Storm revenant: If you die due to lightning damage you return to life in 2d6 days as an antagonistic NPC under GM control, a thrall of an evil storm spirit.

Quirk: Obsession with storms.



THE EMPTY 'V'

The adventurers come to a 'V' shaped tunnel that intersects where they are exploring. An undead bard stands at the point of the V, blasting all who it sees with thunderous waves of sound. The adventurers can approach the undead bard from either tunnel 'arm' of the V. The undead bard can only use its solo riff attack on one arm of the V each round. If the adventurers kill the bard they can take its instrument.

At the point of the V, behind the bard, is an iron door with a viewing hatch that can be opened from the other side—the undead bard is obviously guarding something.

UNDEAD BARD

Triple-strength 6th level wrecker
[undead]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: holy

Axe +11 vs. AC—40 damage

Natural even miss: 20 thunder damage.

R: Solo riff +11 vs. PD (1d3+1 enemies in a group or rough line, or every enemy in a tunnel)—30 thunder damage

Groupies: Each round a number of undead groupies join the fight equal to the escalation die. Once the bard is dead, the groupies stop fighting and shuffle back into their graves.

AC 22

PD 16

HP 300

MD 20

UNDEAD GROUPIE

6th level troop [undead]

Initiative: +9

Vulnerability: holy

Mosh +11 vs. AC—20 damage

Natural 1: The groupie shakes itself to pieces.

AC 22

PD 16

HP 90

MD 20

LIGHTNING MANDOLIN

Can be used as an implement or melee weapon by bards and by any character with a background relating to music

Always: +1 to attack and damage with attacks made with this weapon/implement (champion: +2; epic: +3). When played as an instrument this item produces a light-show of coruscating colors and rainbow-lightning.

Thundering solo: If you are the only adventurer engaged with an enemy, add 1d4 thunder damage to your attack if it hits (champion: 1d8; epic: 2d6).

Quirk: Obsession with devil horns, bats, skulls, studded black leather, etc.



GEODE ROAD

The adventurers' path onwards passes down through an enormous geode. The crystals here are sharp and bend light in unusual ways—passing through the cavern requires three DC 15 skill checks per adventurer—failure means the adventurer takes 1d6 damage, and their next skill check is DC 20. If an adventurer fails all three skill checks, they become infected with magical crystals—until cured they permanently lose a recovery and gain the ability to cast the spell color spray as though they were a wizard of their level. The GM sets the ‘cure’ condition—it may require a quest or might be a simple fix.

Studying crystals taken from the cave lets arcane magic-users (wizards, sorcerers, etc.) add the following spell, ornate aura, to their repertoire. Breaking off a crystal requires a DC 20 skill check with a failure causing infection.

ORNATE AURA

A word sends your adversaries flying away, as a storm of brightly glowing yet fragile crystals surrounds you!

Close-quarters spell

Cyclic

Target: Up to four enemies engaged with you

Attack: Intelligence or Charisma + Level vs. PD

Hit: 2d8 force damage, the target pops free, and until they save (11+) they pop free every time they become engaged with you.

3rd level 3d8 force & pop free etc

5th level 4d8 force & pop free etc

7th level 7d8 force & pop free etc

9th level 10d8 force & pop free etc

Adventurer feat: A critical hit against an enemy makes the save difficult (16+).

Champion feat: Enemies take your Constitution modifier in force damage each time they fail their save.

Epic feat: The first time you cast this spell each battle, its crit range expands by two (usually to 18+).



THE LICH'S THRONE

This throne-room is lit by a giant glowing gem, piles of treasure stacked up against the wall in the gloom. The lich that once resided here is long gone (or is it?), but its treasure remains. Unfortunately for the adventurers, the treasure is cursed, and will animate and attack them. Only by smashing the gem will the adventurers 'kill' the treasure—each adventurer can then grab 200 gp worth of treasure from the room before the magical gem (the heart of the golem) reforms. Among the coins and gems lies a magic item, The Grey Sheath.

TREASURE GOLEM

Huge 10th level wrecker [construct]

Initiative: +18

[quick action] **Smash** +15 vs. AC—30 damage

C: Greed +15 vs. MD (two nearby or far-away enemies)—30 ongoing psychic damage and the target becomes confused until the end of its next turn

AC 26

PD 24

HP 666

MD 22

THE GREY SHEATH

Cursed wondrous item

Always: Once per battle a weapon or implement drawn from this scabbard has +1 to attack and damage until the end of the battle (stacks with bonuses from other magic items).

Avarice: Intelligent enemies gain a +1 bonus to attack you; they seek to take the green scabbard from you.

The greedy dead: If you die while in possession of the scabbard your ghost will be bound to the scabbard—doomed to spend eternity sharpening and polishing whatever is placed in it. You cannot be resurrected or move on to an afterlife until the scabbard is destroyed.

Quirk: Extreme miserliness—you'd rather sleep in the stables than pay for your own room, you'd rather go hungry while looking for a cheaper meal than pay for food at the first place you stop, etc. Provided you don't over-attune you should be able to resist this urge most of the time—over-attune and you could end up starving to death in the gutter with your pockets full of gold.



THE BIG CHILL

This cave is the shore of a frozen river. Visible in the ice a ways in are piles of diamonds (1d10 worth 10 gp each) and a spell book. Maneuvering on the ice is a DC 25 skill check—failure means the ice cracks under the adventurer (2d6 ongoing cold damage, DC 35 to escape the cold water), or the adventurer skids into an ally (they each take 2d6 damage and must reroll to maneuver on the ice).

The diamonds are slightly magical—they exude an aura of cold, enough to chill a drink or keep food from spoiling. If the diamonds are immersed in a liquid for too long it will freeze—in a month the diamonds can collectively freeze a pond's worth of water.

Cracking the ice to get at the book and diamonds means that everybody on the ice must make a maneuvering roll. The book contains the following arcane spell (wizards, sorcerers, etc).

FROSTROP'S FABULOUS FREEZING HOARFROST

With a gesture, partially encase your enemies in ice!

Ranged spell

Daily

Target: 1d3 nearby enemies in a group

Attack: Intelligence or Charisma + Level vs. PD

Hit: 2d8 ongoing cold damage and the target is stuck, one save (11+) ends both.

3rd level 3d8 ongoing cold & stuck

5th level 5d8 ongoing cold & stuck

7th level 7d8 ongoing cold & stuck

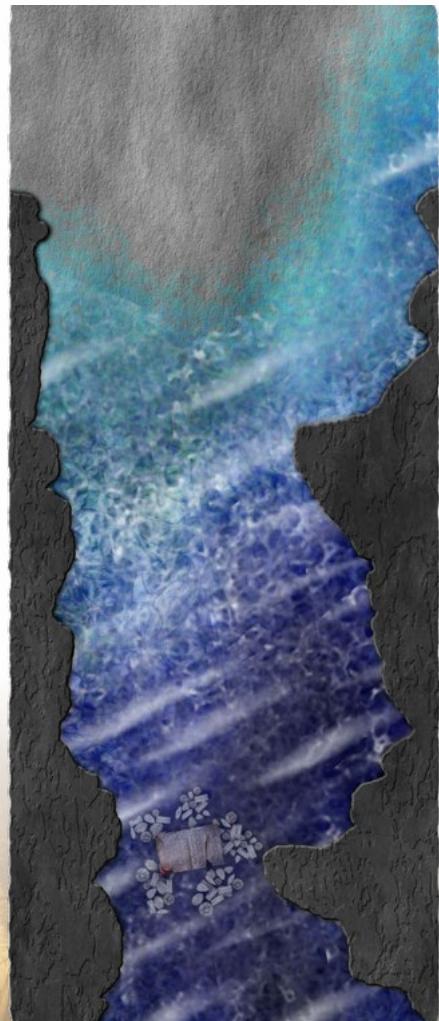
9th level 11d8 ongoing cold & stuck

Miss: As a hit, but the save is easy (6+)

Adventurer feat: This spell can be cast as a free action reaction to a nearby enemy moving, if that enemy is one of the targets.

Champion feat: You can target a group of 1d3 far-away enemies.

Epic feat: The number of targets becomes 1d3+1.

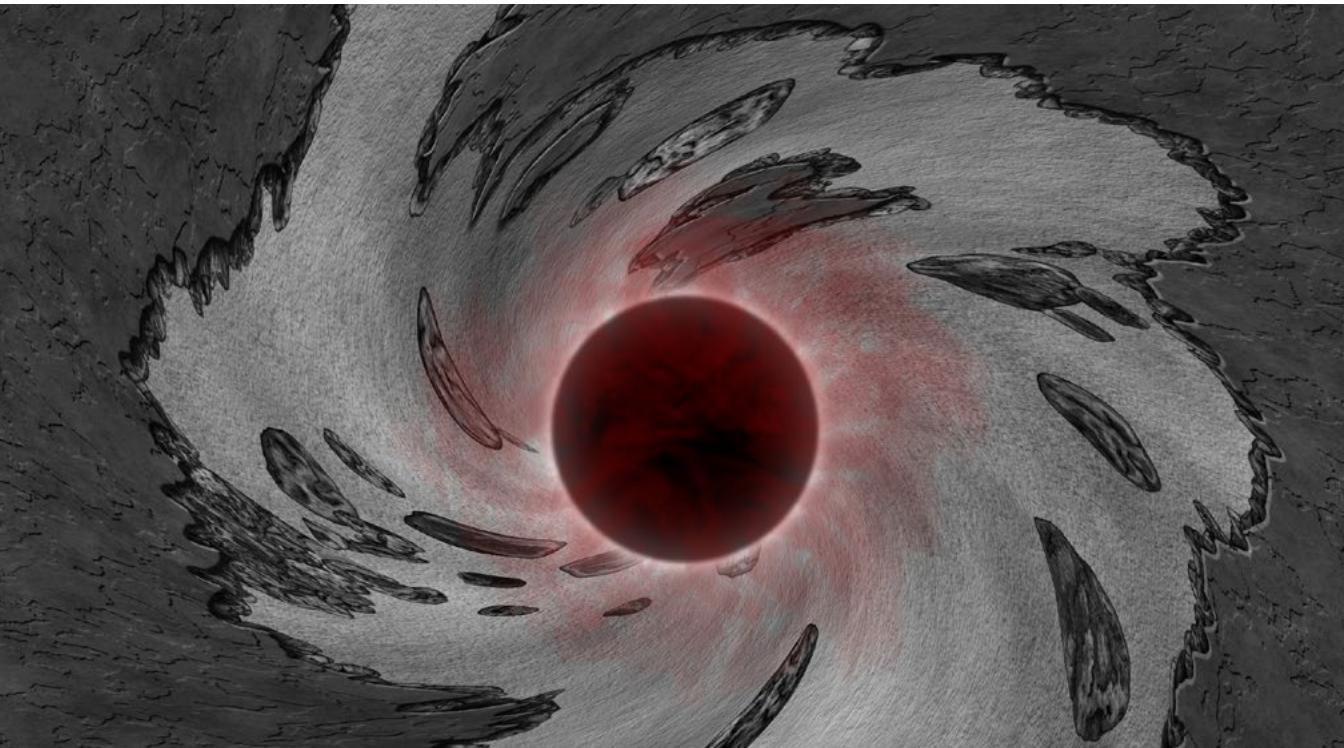


Deja Voodoo

The adventurers come across a cavern with a strange orb in the center. Space here is warped, as is time. Remaining far-away from the orb as a character crosses the cave is a DC 25 skill check each time an adventurer moves. Failing the roll means the adventurer is dragged by tidal forces to nearby the orb. While nearby the orb, it is a DC 35 skill check to avoid being drawn into it—success means the character takes 2d6 force damage, failure means the adventurer takes 2d8 negative energy damage and is sucked into the orb. Characters sucked into the orb are deposited back at the start of the cave with no memory of the cave or its contents (though they retain any damage taken). It takes three successful skill checks in a row for a character to get through the cave. Take a note of what the characters say and do while crossing the cave.

Deja Double-View

The adventurers once again find themselves at the cave of the dark orb. There is somebody else on the other side of the cave, trying to cross it. Remember I said time is warped—the adventurers are now meeting their own past selves. Their past selves (controlled by the GM) repeat many of the same actions and say many of the same things as before (use your notes from the earlier encounter), but are antagonistic toward their future selves, initiating combat—and the party must still deal with the effects of the orb. Characters who are popped free or otherwise forced to move near the orb are sucked in. Dead characters (and their gear) are sucked into the orb and vanish. If an adventurer's future (player-controlled) self is killed, their past self becomes controlled by the player, replacing the dead character—killing your past self doesn't erase the future self.



To the Bat Cave

This cave is a hunting outpost for bat-people. Maybe they are not present, or maybe they are lurking in the darkness. Maybe this is an ambush, or maybe they are just curious about strangers. Maybe these bat-people are potential allies, maybe they are cautious traders (mushrooms, glowing crystals, meat, fresh water, spider-silk ropes, etc.), or maybe they attack outsiders on sight.

Trained Giant Bat

Large 3rd level troop [beast]

Initiative: +6

Bite +10 vs. AC—20 damage

Fly-by-night: The bat can make its attack mid-move while flying and can attack in darkness.

AC 20

PD 18

HP 80

MD 13

Bat-Person Hunter

6th level archer [humanoid]

Initiative: +18

Spear +11 vs. AC—14 damage

[quick action] **C: Screech** +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—5 thunder damage

R: Spider-silk bolas +14 vs. AC—14 damage & target becomes stuck and vulnerable (save ends both)

Fly-by-night: The bat-person can make its attack mid-move while flying and can attack in darkness.

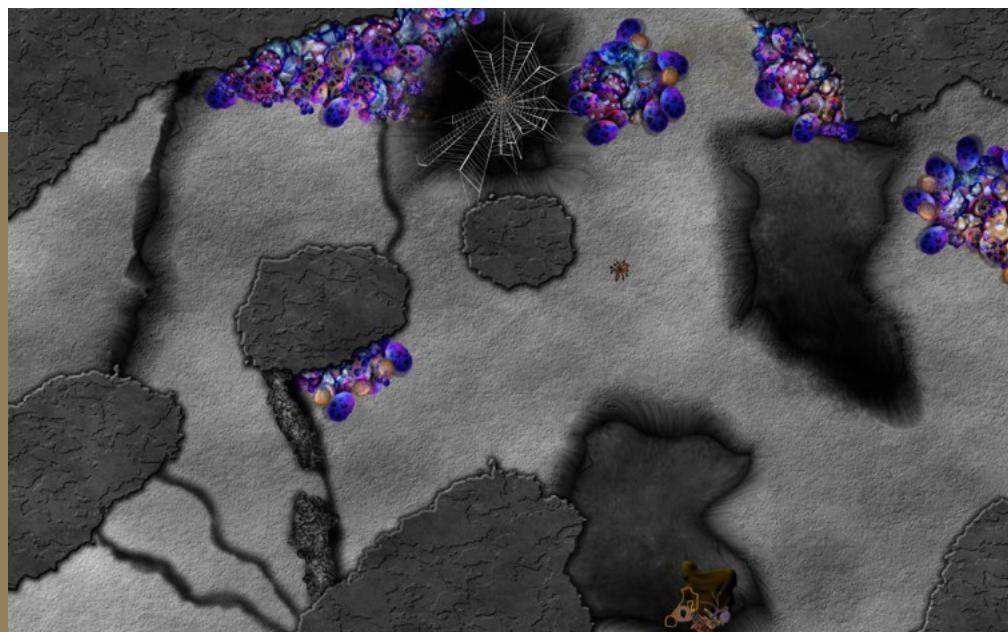
I am the night: The bat-person is immune to fear and the confused condition.

AC 22

PD 20

HP 90

MD 16



DRAGON CAVE-IN

Long before they reach this cave, the adventurers hear splashing, roaring, and the clattering of stones. A cave-in has trapped a huge five-headed dragon in a partially submerged tunnel entrance. As the adventurers approach the sounds cease, as the dragon listens to them.

The dragon speaks to them, claiming to be called 'Pentrage' and that it is a good dragon on a mission for whichever icon it seems to it the party is allied with. It is of course lying. It promises them that if they help free it, it will reward them with treasure. It is of course lying. The dragon promises not to attack them when they approach it. It is of course lying. It intends to attack and eat the party when they get close enough, it is confident it can free itself in time and isn't about to pass up a meal.

If the adventurers refuse to get close enough and stay far-away, the dragon can't attack them.

FIVE-HEADED DRAGON

Large 12th level wrecker [dragon]

Initiative: +18

Bite and rend +23 vs. AC—100 damage

C: Breath attack +17 vs. PD (1d6 attacks against nearby enemies)—50 damage and 50 ongoing damage (acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison)

Flight: If the adventurers free the dragon, it can fly.

Escalator: The dragon also uses the escalation die. If it gets free it steals the escalation die—it gets the benefit of it, and the adventurers don't.

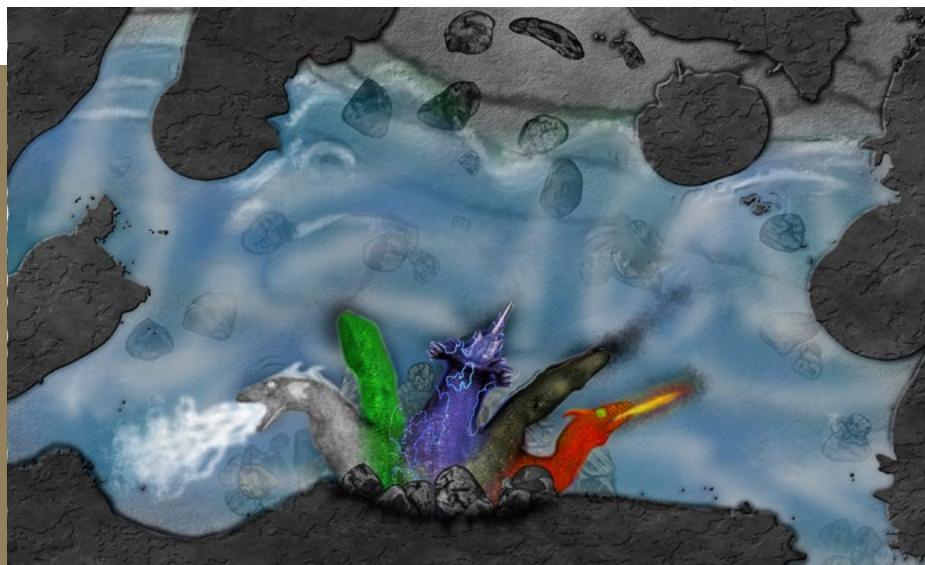
Regenerator: Unless dead, the dragon heals 100 damage at the start of its turn.

AC 28

PD 22

HP 1000

MD 26



HEILIGEN'S SHRINE

The adventurers enter a cave dominated by lava pits. On one side of the cave is an altar, upon which is a wizard's staff and two magical ever-burning candles. The lava deals $3d10$ fire damage to those that touch it—those who are popped free by an enemy near the lava must save or fall in. Touching the staff summons the angry ghost of a long-dead wizard and its $2d4$ bound elemental servants.

HEILIGEN'S STAFF

Champion & epic tier implement

Always: +2 to attack and damage with spells cast through this implement (epic: +3).

Melt rock (daily): Create a temporary pool of lava. This battle, enemies who are popped free by you or an ally and are nearby the lava must save or fall in and take $3d10$ fire damage.

Quirk: Loves sitting by a fire with dogs.

HEILIGEN'S GHOST

Double-strength 6th level wrecker [undead]

Initiative: +12

Heiligen's touch +11 vs. AC—20 damage

Natural even hit: 10 ongoing fire damage.

C: Blast aura +11 vs. PD (1d3+1 nearby enemies)—25 fire damage & target pops free

AC	22	
PD	16	HP 200
MD	20	

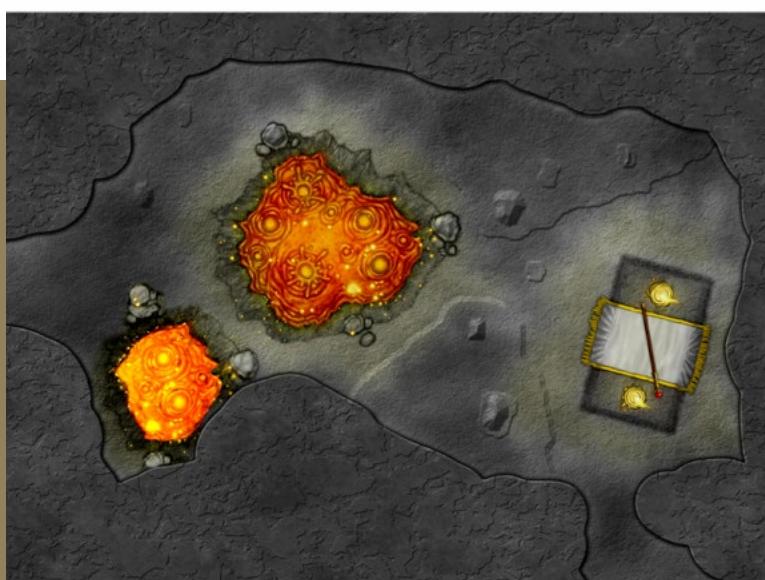
HEILIGEN'S HOUNDS

7th level troop [elemental]

Initiative: +12

Burning bite +12 vs. AC—28 fire damage

AC	23	
PD	21	HP 100
MD	17	



Fungus Among Us

The adventurers' path is blocked by fungus. Some of the fungus glows, some drips, and from some waft spores. Which toadstools are safe to go near? It is a DC 20 skill check to pick a safe route through the cave, with each adventurer rolling separately. A failure deals $3d6$ poison damage to the adventurer and increases the DC of the next skill check by +5. The first adventurer to fail their skill check becomes confused, hard save (16+) ends, potentially triggering PvP combat. A DC 35 skill check lets an adventurer find a mushroom that has the effect of a tier-appropriate healing potion, a critical success finds a healing potion one tier higher. Searching for such fungus requires another pick-safe-route check.

Some of the fungus here causes adventurers to mutate into bat-people. It is up to the player if they decide to switch races, but this cave provides the option to do so.

BAT-PERSON (RACE)

+2 to any ability score.

Sonar: In addition to normal vision you have sonar—you are immune to darkness (even magical darkness) and have +5 to rolls to see through illusions.

Bat biology: You have +5 to rolls to resist or overcome diseases. You take half damage from poison on odd attack or skill rolls.

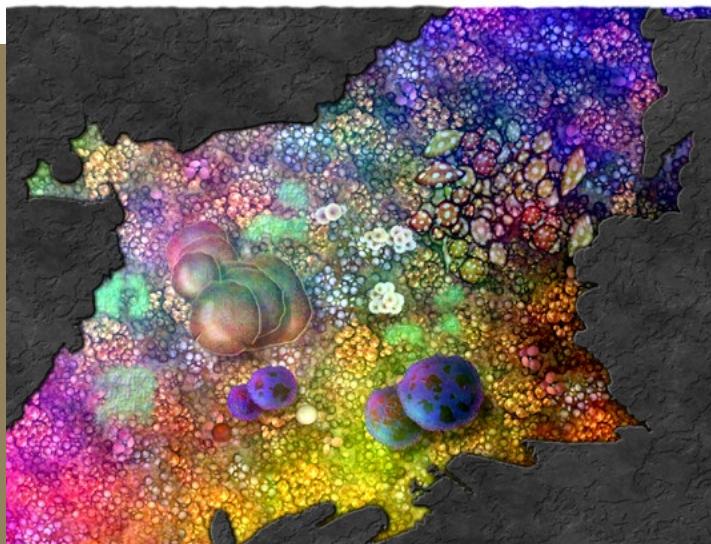
I am the night: You are immune to fear and the confused condition.

Minor bat-like traits: You can sleep upside-down, and other minor bat-like traits.

Flight: Once per battle you can fly as a move action. You can fly for five minutes outside of combat but must rest for an hour afterwards.

Champion feat: *Once per day you can fly as an at-will move action for a whole battle.*

If you mutate into a bat-person you lose your previous racial power(s).



BELLY OF THE BEAST

The adventurers are walking along a tunnel when suddenly the ground gives way. They plunge into a slick red shaft, bumping off its walls as they plummet deep into a beast's gullet.

The adventurers are half-way down (four miles!) and must climb out. Climbing up a mile is a DC 30 task—failure means the adventurer slides further down. At the bottom of each lobe of the creature is a glowing stomach, which deals 4d8 acid damage when an adventurer slides in and 3d8 acid damage each time they roll to climb out and fail. The adventurers can't cut their way out—the creature is flush with the rock; the only way out is to climb.

There is good news, the acid doesn't dissolve metals, collectively the stomach lobes have 1000 gp of coins and assorted treasure in them. Perhaps there are other interesting things to be found here too.

Oh, and there are parasites that live in the beast—oozes that love the taste of adventurers.

BEAST BELLY PARASITE

6th level mook [ooze]

Initiative: +8

Spiky ooze +11 vs. AC—8 damage

Natural 19+ hit: The parasite spawns a new parasite.

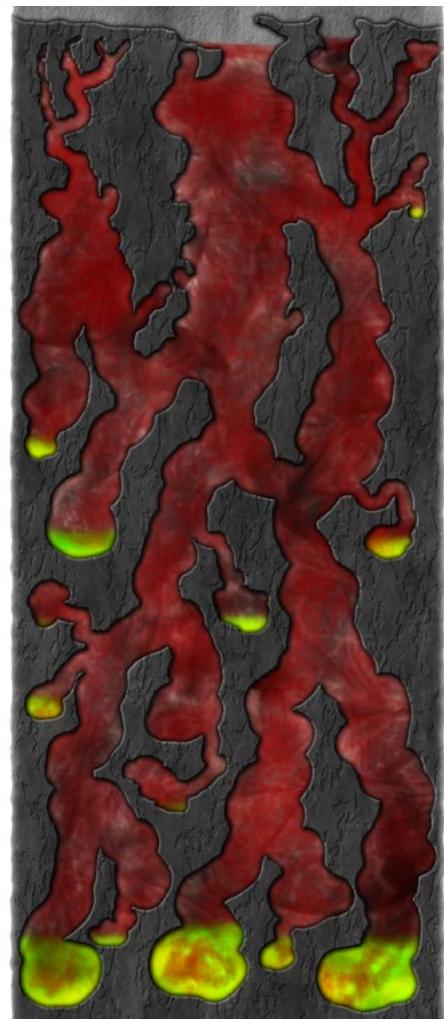
Acid immunity: Sorry, this thing ignores all acid damage.

Climber: The parasite can get about in its home just fine.

AC	22
PD	20
MD	17

HP 20

Mook: Kill one beast belly parasite mook for every 20 damage you deal to the mob.



THE THIRTEENTH CAVERN

Who am I kidding with just a dozen? For 13th Age it's got to be thirteen, but this one can be nasty! — ASH

The tunnel is bisected by an underground river rushing from a waterfall to a cleft in the rock, and on the other side disappearing into a cataract. Crossing the river is easy—but following it through the rock is a DC 20 skill check requiring three successes. If the adventurers don't take off their equipment and push it ahead of them its DC 30, and for those wearing armor or carrying two-handed or heavy weapons its DC 35. It takes three successes to get through, every failure expends a recovery. Characters with zero recoveries left who fail must make last gasp saves as they panic or get disoriented or become jammed, and soon drown in the dark.

Some of the rocks, stalactites, and stalagmites on the other side are not what they seem—the mimics ambush the first character through, a nasty surprise for whoever must wait for backup.

CAVERN Mimic

5th level blocker [aberration]

Initiative: +8

Beartrap jaws +10 vs. AC—15 damage, and the target is stuck (save ends)

Crit on a staggered enemy: The mimic chews off one of the target's limbs.

Not-really-a-rock: The mimic initiates combat as an ambush.

Tremorsense: The mimic 'sees' in the dark.

Nastier Specials

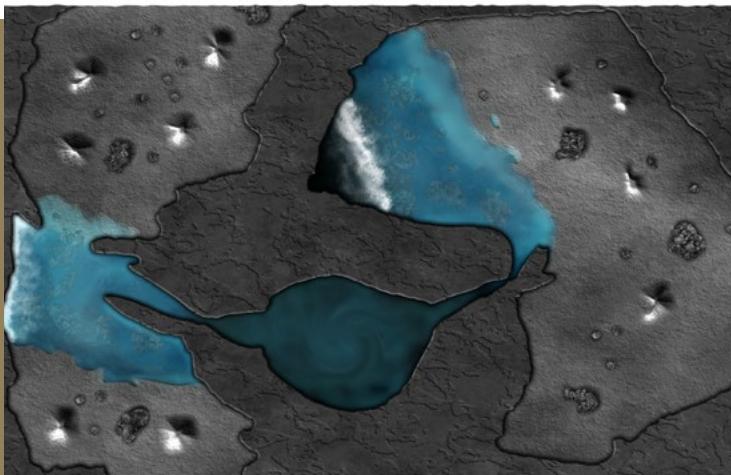
Roper-clutcher: As a quick action the mimic pulls a nearby or far-away enemy into engagement with it.

Piercer-climber: The mimic can climb walls and stick to ceilings. If on a ceiling, as a free action it can drop on whoever is below dealing 2d8 damage. Climbing back up is two move actions.

AC 21

PD 19 **HP 70**

MD 14



WHAT ARE Living Dungeons?

BY JOSÉ LUIZ F. “TZIMISCEDRACUL” CARDOSO

In true 13th Age fashion, let's explore multiple possible origins for these marvelous pieces of mad, hate-filled architecture.

Living dungeons are a wonderful metagame aspect of 13th Age's basic setting: the Dragon Empire. What I mean by metagame is that living dungeons are a clever twist and reminder of the oldest trope of tabletop RPGs – the forlorn dungeon, its monsters and treasures. In the Dragon Empire, dungeons don't always wait for a party of adventurers, but literally go to them (or even hunt them down like the famous Stone Thief).

What are they? Most living dungeons come from the Underworld, but not all. We know that a few of these eldritch constructs come from previous Archmages, but that doesn't mean that in the beginning living dungeons didn't share the same origin. Let's see what we can uncover....

A MAGIC RITUAL GONE WRONG

Living dungeons are actually the misfire of an ancient and potent magic ritual. Considering the scale and duration of the backlash, the culprit behind the ritual is probably an icon. Given that most living dungeons originate Somewhere Else, the goal of the spell was probably to fetch something from another reality or dimension (probably the depths of the Underworld or the highest heavens of the Overworld).

That is what every living heart is – an impossible and unique treasure from Somewhere Else. This treasure may not be identifiable for lesser mortals. Maybe a dungeon heart is a solidified spell or a piece of a massive dweomer. Maybe it holds the secret to true Immortality or Godhood. A dungeon heart could be a puzzle that, if solved, would reveal important information – how to reach things otherwise impossible, how to become an icon, or the secret to imbuing a mortal with the reality of creation.

Living dungeons are walking paradoxes, and their hearts should grant – to those that know where to look – access to impossible things: perfect resurrection (not only of a mortal, but of a fallen icon or dead god), a chance to undo a previous mistake, the power word to change some aspect of reality (how Death works), etc.

If the ritual that birthed living dungeons was executed by an icon, pick a non-obvious one. Leave the Archmage, Lich King, and Elf Queen aside. How about the Prince of Shadows? The Prince seeks the rarest treasures and the greatest cons, and living dungeons might be his/her doing (or that of a predecessor, like the mythic Dark Jester). Or the Great Gold Wyrm? Maybe in the beginning all dragons were united and uncorrupted. The Gold might have tried to restore draconic balance by creating the first living dungeon, whose goal was to find in the Underworld or Overworld the heart of the First Dragon.

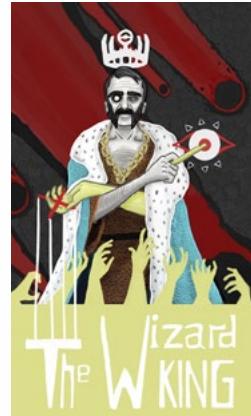
A DOOR OR PATHWAY

Living dungeons are absurdities given flesh (or brick). Maybe their original purpose was to link or offer a path to places otherwise impossible to reach. Remember, every living dungeon, at least at first, is a link between the Middle World and Somewhere Else (usually the Underworld).

Maybe living dungeons are the only known path to the Land of the Dead (if you find a strong enough living dungeon). Maybe they can take you to other realities (and campaign settings... or even to other rules systems if you really want to play meta, using games like John Wick's The Flux).

Another option is inverting this concept: living dungeons are gates. They are the way through which new things reach the Dragon Empire. Want to use a new race, class, or material? Make a big thematic living dungeon to bring them forward. Think of them as living "Dark Portals" from the Warcraft universe.

Finally, living dungeons might be paths to ascension, godhood, or alternate realities. To impossible Ages where the fomori and their chaos masters (see Bestiary 2) still rule, where the Wizard King was never defeated, etc.



THE OCCULTIST'S MISSION (OR SHAME)

13 True Ways introduces a novel and cool concept: the unique character class. That's the Occultist. The idea is that there's only one Occultist in the entire Dragon Empire. The Occultist is like a Unique Thing on steroids.

One of the ideas behind the Occultist is that each table will find a way to tailor the class inside the campaign. Well, what if the Occultist's mission is linked with living dungeons? What if the previous holder of the title created them (I would call an Occultist-like fallen icon something conspiratory, like the Source, the Beyond-One, or 'the Gate, the Key, and the Guardian' if you like yog-sothothery).

THE ARCHITECT OF THE LIVING DUNGEONS IS...

Living dungeons may have all kinds of different origins in the 13th Age, but they all share one fact: they're constructs. That means that someone, somewhere, built the first one and maybe later the idea was stolen by other parties. Who was the first Builder? Here are three suggestions...

....A MAD GOD

The Dwarf King claims all treasures of the Underworld as his own. Dwarves would like to have all riches brought forth from the deeps, but would like even more to forget (or hide even deeper) the banes of Below.

There wasn't always a Dwarf King leading the Stout Folk. Forbidden legends, violently suppressed by the Dwarf King and his servants, talk about a creator god of the dwarves. This god has many titles and names – All-Father, Mountain-Heart, the Mor'wadin, etc. Most translations of Old Dwarf call him the Soul Forger.

Something happened in the oldest ages that drove the Soul Forger mad. Maybe it was the same event that drove the dwarves and dark elves to the surface – the poisoning of the Underworld. Maybe it was something the dwarves did...perhaps the first Dwarf King gained his title through a coup. It doesn't matter; the Soul Forger is a god. He wasn't destroyed, and he remembers. Deep below, in his mythical First Forge, he's still building the instruments of this revenge – the living dungeons. And that's why most living dungeons (especially the Stone Thief) hate the Dwarf King so much.

....A FALLEN ICON

The forgeborn are a mystery to the Dragon Empire. The dwarves see them as their creation, but in fact the first of these living constructs were found close to the heart of living dungeons. The wars of the Underworld weren't fought only among dwarves and dark elves, but also against many other folk and powers. Among them there was the World Machine.

This fallen icon created the forgeborn as his servants after being betrayed by the dwarves*. The Dwarf King would never admit that, but if pressed would say that the World Machine was broken and intended to control the lands of the Dragon Empire, building a giant mechanism of continental proportions that "would set the Ages right." If you like the idea, link the World Machine with the themes of time and clockwork, using the zorigami from Bestiary 1 as the last move of this fallen icon.

Rules for fallen Icons can be found in the Bestiary 2.

**I'm aware that dwarves are showing up a lot as evil bastards in this article, but living dungeons and dwarves are always close themes in my mind. Besides, I love to give my dwarf players a reason to clean their race's legacy. Nothing like sordid and dirty deeds for heroes to redeem.*

....A BENEVOLENT FORCE

Pick your favorite icon (living, fallen, or dead) or make a new one – the Builders. They built the first living dungeon as a mighty spell whose goal was to trap and contain forces otherwise too powerful to be destroyed.

Living dungeons started as epic prisons that would rise around and contain threats to reality. Anything that would upset the Balance, threaten the Overworld, or provoke unfettered destruction would generate a living dungeon. Sometimes, this living dungeon-to-be would await a special event: a moment of weakness or a mighty battle against adventurers. Then the living dungeon would rise and consume its target.

Who channeled this amazing spell? Maybe one of the High Druids (the first living dungeons were said to be made of stone roots and living rock), the lost Oracle (guided by the gods), the Elf Queen (or the Elf King, who sacrificed himself), etc. Maybe you want a more primordial icon of Balance, hence our suggestion of the Builders.

In ages following the casting of the ritual, it was somehow corrupted, generating the mad and bizarre living dungeons that we know today. But the original ritual is still at work (perhaps that's why the Red never stay in the ground for so long) or it might have its control taken by an icon like the Crusader (who is trying to contain the Abyss itself) or the Diabolist (who's having so much fun with letting living dungeons run out of control).

If you like this idea and you also like fantasy literature, then let's give credit where it's due: get yourself the awesome Malazan Book of the Fallen saga and read about the Azath. They're exactly the idea explained here.

SEEDS OF CHAOS

Everyone knows that if you delve deep enough, beyond the lost realms of dwarves and dark elves, beyond even the various Underworlds, Elemental Chaos, and forgotten worlds of the depths – further below you will find Chaos. It's the beginning of everything and inevitable.

Living dungeons are little seeds of Chaos trying to unravel and change the world. Their goal is to hasten reality's end by bringing madness and the impossible to the surface.

If you want to highlight living dungeons as paragons of Chaos then do yourself a favor and get your hands on 13th Age Glorantha: its treatment of Chaos is exactly what I'm

talking about here. You can also use the Chaos Mage's High Weirdness to reflect all kinds of bizarre mutations and curses that adventurers get from going down a living dungeon.

THE COILED REALITY OF THE SERPENT MEN

Most living dungeons come from the Underworld, and among these, most reach the surface in the dreaded isle of Omen, bearing the symbols and motifs of the legendary serpent men. Sages and historians proclaim that the serpent men ruled the region of the Dragon Empire before being defeated by the Wizard King. Actually, that's not true: the Wizard King didn't just defeat the serpent men, he erased their world.

The world of today – of humans, elves, dwarves, and their allies – is literally just 13 ages old. Before it, there was the Coiled Realm of the World Serpent, the domain of the serpent men. During untold aeons, the scaled folk ruled as supreme masters a realm of unending mists, hot swamps, and labyrinthic jungles, under the gaze of the Twin Red Suns of their god, the World Serpent, whose coils literally circled existence.

One of the various experiments of the serpent men – a simian and brute creature – did the impossible: it learned true magic from its serpent overlords. It learned hidden secrets and mighty spells, and it did everything to erase its name and deeds from history. This proto-simian genius eventually cast a true dweomer, banishing the World Serpent and its minions and weaving a new creation for its kind. This evil but brilliant creature became what we call the Wizard King and who we now know as the Lich King.

Living dungeons here represent the true reality of the serpent men trying to climb back and link themselves with today's creation. The World Serpent wants to return, and the original spell of the Wizard King is already 13 ages old. Can it hold? When enough living dungeons climb to the surface, other fragments of the World Serpent will arrive – the primordial jungles, the antediluvian behemoths, and the ancient slave-races. And the Lich King is the adventurers' best bet at solving this horrifying puzzle. 



Art: Rick Hershey

THE WARRIOR CLASS

BY LAWRENCE AUGUSTINE MINGOA

*The sword has to be more than a simple weapon;
it has to be an answer to life's questions.*

– Miyamoto Musashi

OVERVIEW

PLAYSTYLE

The warrior is meant to be a rebuilding of the Fighter class for those who want to enjoy the flexibility of traditional D&D fighting, without the reliance as much on either feat building or dice. This is heavily inspired by the Fighter and Paladin archetypes in the D&D 4E Essentials line, along with the Bladesinger from the Neverwinter Campaign Setting.

ABILITY SCORES

You need Constitution for hit points to survive attacks, and either Strength or Dexterity (if not both!) to wield your weapons effectively.

Warriors gain a +2 class bonus to Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity, as long as it isn't the same ability you increase with your +2 racial bonus.

RACES

All races have waged war in one way or another...and where there are wars, there are warriors to wage them for their commanders and warlords.

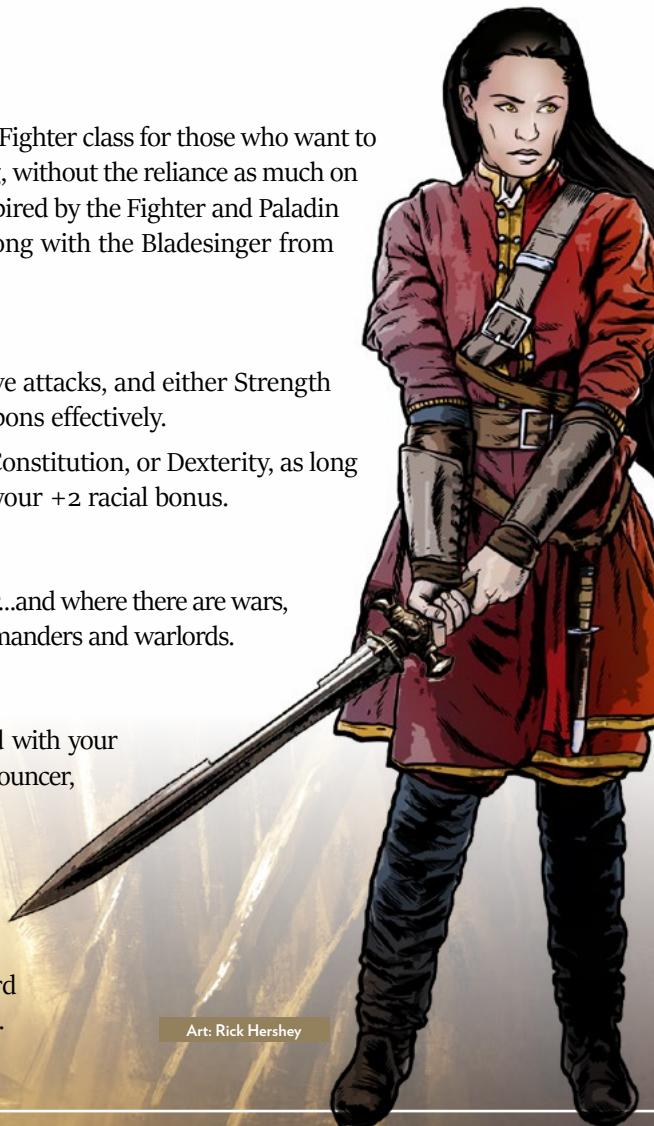
BACKGROUNDS

Here are some backgrounds to get you started with your warrior: knight, slayer, mercenary, folk hero, bouncer, gladiator, soldier, trooper, archer, sniper.

ICONS

The Emperor, the Crusader, and the Orc Lord all welcome warriors, but any icon that needs to get a job done in a straightforward manner will have a use for these combatants.

Art: Rick Hershey



WARRIOR LEVEL PROGRESSION

At levels 5 and 8, warriors gain an additional talent that allow them to further expand their capabilities.

GEAR

At 1st level, warriors start with the weapon(s) and armor that they were able to take with them. Usually warriors start with 25 gp at hand. The more daring warriors tend to start with $1d6 \times 10$ gp instead.

WARRIOR ARMOR AND AC

Type	Base AC	Atk Penalty
None	10	-
Light	13	-
Heavy	15	-
Shield	+1	-

WEAPONS

Warriors use all sorts of weapons and styles, though some may prefer a certain type of weapon or fighting style. Some stances favor sticking to certain combinations (like shield and melee weapon, bows/crossbows, or dual wielding). A few warriors might opt to not take any weapons at all, relying on the power of their fists to speak for them.

ARMOR

Warriors ideally use full plate or similar heavy armor to protect themselves, but those who might be more confident in their sheer durability can opt out of armor altogether, thanks to the talents that can make it really difficult for enemies to take them down.

WARRIOR MELEE WEAPONS

	One-Handed	Two-Handed
Small	1d4 dagger	1d6 club
Light or Simple	1d6 shortsword	1d8 spear
Heavy or Martial	1d8 longsword	1d10 greatsword

WARRIOR RANGED WEAPONS

	Thrown	Crossbow	Bow
Small	1d4 dagger	1d4 hand crossbow	-
Light or Simple	1d6 javelin	1d6 light crossbow	1d6 shortbow
Heavy Martial	-	1d8 heavy crossbow	1d8 longbow

WARRIOR LEVEL PROGRESSION

Warrior 1st Level Stats

Initiative, AC, PD, MD, Hit Points, Recovery Dice, Feats, and some Talents are level dependent.

Warrior Level	Total Hit Points	Total # Feats	# of Class Talents	# of Stances	Level-Up Ability Bonuses	Damage Bonus From Ability Score
Level 1 Multiclass	(Avg. of both classes) x 3	As 1st level PC	3 (at least one must be from each class)	2		Ability modifier
Level 1	(8 + CON mod) x 3	1 adventurer	3	2		Ability modifier
Level 2	(8 + CON mod) x 4	2 adventurer	3	2		Ability modifier
Level 3	(8 + CON mod) x 5	3 adventurer	3	2		Ability modifier
Level 4	(8 + CON mod) x 6	4 adventurer	3	2	+1 to 3 abilities	Ability modifier
Level 5	(8 + CON mod) x 8	4 adventurer 1 champion	4	3		2 x ability modifier
Level 6	(8 + CON mod) x 10	4 adventurer 2 champion	4	3		2 x ability modifier
Level 7	(8 + CON mod) x 12	4 adventurer 3 champion	4	3	+1 to 3 abilities	2 x ability modifier
Level 8	(8 + CON mod) x 16	4 adventurer 3 champion 1 epic	5	4		3 x ability modifier
Level 9	(8 + CON mod) x 20	4 adventurer 3 champion 2 epic	5	4		3 x ability modifier
Level 10	(8 + CON mod) x 24	4 adventurer 3 champion 3 epic	5	4	+1 to 3 abilities	3 x ability modifier

Ability Bonus	+2 Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity (different from racial bonus)
Initiative	Dex mod + level
Armor Class (heavy armor)	15 + level + middle mod of Con/Dex/Wis
Armor Class (heavy armor with shield)	16 + level + middle mod of Con/Dex/Wis
Physical Defense	11 + level + middle mod of Str/Con/Dex
Mental Defense	10 + level + middle mod of Int/Wis/Cha
Hit Points	(8 + Con mod) x Level modifier (see level progression chart)
Recoveries	(probably) 9
Recovery Dice	(1d10 x Level) + Con mod
Backgrounds	8 points, max 5 in any one background
Icon Relationships	3 points
Adventurer-Tier Talents	3 (see level progression chart)
Adventurer-Tier Feat	1 per level

WARRIOR BASIC ATTACKS

At-will melee attack

Attack: Strength or Dexterity + Level vs. AC

Hit: WEAPON + Strength damage

Miss: Damage equal to your level

At-will ranged attack

Attack: Dexterity + Level vs. AC

Hit: WEAPON + Dexterity damage

Miss: Damage equal to your level



WARRIOR CLASS FEATURES

Warriors have two class features: Power Strike and Extra Tough.

Extra Tough

You start with nine recoveries instead of the usual eight.

Adventurer Feat: Increase your total recoveries by 1.

Power Strike

Once per battle, you can add a WEAPON die to the damage of an attack that hit.

Adventurer Feat: You can now use this an additional time per battle.

Champion Feat: You add an extra WEAPON die to the attack.

Epic Feat: You can now use this an additional time per battle.

WARRIOR CLASS TALENTS

Choose three of the following class talents at level 1. At levels 5 and 8, you can choose one more class talent.

Path of the Defender

Special: You cannot take this if you took the Path of the Slayer

Enemies engaged with you have a -4 penalty to their attack rolls if they do not include anyone who has this talent in their attack; this penalty is not cumulative with anyone who has this talent. Once per round, if an enemy engaged with you attacks an ally who does not have this talent, you can make an opportunity attack.

Adventurer Feat: Add your Strength modifier to miss damage with opportunity attacks. At 5th level, this increases to twice your Strength modifier. At 8th level, this increases to three times your Strength modifier.

Champion Feat: The first time you fail a saving throw in a battle, you can reroll the save and take either result.

Epic Feat: You can spend an additional recovery when rallying.

The intent of this talent is to force the enemy to attack you instead of your less beefy allies. Thus, the GM can and probably should rule that any talent or feature that functions similarly to this, like the Paladin's Challenge or the Swordmage's Mark with Sigil, will not overlap with this. This also means that this doesn't give an enemy -12 to attacks just because three warriors ganged up on that single opponent.

Path of the Slayer

Special: You cannot take this if you took the Path of the Defender

While you are staggered, you gain a bonus to damage rolls with warrior basic attacks

equal to your Dexterity modifier. At 5th level, your bonus damage is equal to twice your Dexterity modifier instead. At 8th level, your bonus damage is equal to three times your Dexterity modifier instead.

Adventurer Feat: Once per battle, you can cause each enemy engaged with you to pop free as a quick action.

Champion Feat: Once you used the adventurer feat ability, you can move to engage an enemy as a free action.

Epic Feat: You have resistance 16+ against melee attacks while you are staggered.

Cathedral's Charger

Special: You cannot take this if you took Shadow's Herald

Your Power Strike also does radiant damage, and the target is dazed until the end of your next turn.

Adventurer Feat: Choose one daily or recharge spell of your level or lower from the cleric class. You can cast this spell as if you were a cleric.

Champion Feat: You can cast the Cleric spell Heal once per battle.

Epic Feat: One battle per day, you can rally to inspire your companions from the brink of defeat (instead of the normal rallying to inspire you to continue to fight on your own). Each time you succeed in rallying, each ally nearby gains hit points equal to half the amount you regained.

Shadow's Herald

Special: You cannot take this if you took Cathedral's Charger

Your Power Strike also does cold and necrotic damage, and deals ongoing cold and necrotic damage equal to the escalation die's current value.

Champion Feat: Once per battle, you can spend a recovery as a free action, but regain no hit points. Instead, roll the recovery dice and gain temporary hit points equal to the result.

Epic Feat: The first time you fail your death save in a battle, you can choose to become an avatar of the dark gods themselves. If you do, you regain all your hit points, gain resist 12+ against all attacks, all your attacks do half damage on a miss, and you can place yourself in a nearby location you can see as a move action. These benefits last until the end of battle. There is a price to this however: each of your failed death saves carry over until your next level up, or until the GM tells you that you have appeased the dark gods.

This means that if you used this three times before you reached the next level or appeased the dark gods, they will immediately claim your soul the next time you fail your death save.

Warrior's Endurance

Your recovery dice are d12s instead of d10s.

Adventurer Feat: The first recovery you spend in a fight is free.

Champion Feat: The first time you fail any save at the end of your turn during battle, you can reroll the save and take either result.

Epic Feat: The first time your hit points are reduced to zero during battle, you can roll a save. If you succeed, you can spend a free recovery as a free action.

Knight's Protection

Twice per battle while you're wielding a shield, when an ally next to you is hit by a natural even attack against AC, you can choose to lose hit points equal to half of that damage, and have your ally take only half of the damage instead. The damage you lose can come from temporary hit points, but isn't affected by damage resistance and other tricks to avoid the damage.

Adventurer Feat: The protection also applies to attacks against PD.

Champion Feat: You can use it a third time per battle.

Epic Feat: The ally can be nearby instead of next to you.

Eldritch Blade

While wielding swords, you can use Intelligence in place of Strength for melee warrior attack rolls and damage. Additionally, you have the Eldritch Blade background at its full possible bonus of +5, without having to spend your normal background points on it.

Adventurer Feat: Choose one daily or recharge spell of your level or lower from the wizard class. You can cast this spell as if you were a wizard.

Champion Feat: You can now choose an at-will instead.

Epic Feat: You gain an additional wizard spell of your choice that is your level or lower; a total of two from this talent.

The background can be changed as desired, as it represents your training at using magic alongside your fighting skills. Bladesinger, swordmage, and eldritch knight are example alternatives.

Weapon Master

Choose one weapon that you own. This is now your signature weapon. While wielding this weapon, your attacks that hit deal extra damage equal to your level. For one battle per day, your attacks with this weapon deal half damage on a miss. If you are unable to use this weapon for any reason, at the end of a daily heal-up (once per level or when the GM allows it), you can change your signature weapon.

Adventurer Feat: You can make the target of your Power Strike pop free from one creature they are engaged with, and they are hampered until the end of your next turn.

Champion Feat: Once per battle while wielding a melee weapon, when you are hit by an attack that targets AC, you can take half damage from that attack instead as a free action.

Epic Feat: Once per day, you can reroll a recharge roll for a magic weapon power.

Dirty Fighting

Once per battle when you perform a dicey stunt and you don't like the result, you can reroll it and choose either result.

Adventurer Feat: Once per day, you can reroll your relationship dice with a villainous or ambiguous icon.

Champion Feat: On a natural 16+, the target of your Power Strike is also confused until the end of your next turn.

Epic Feat: You gain an additional icon relationship point with an ambiguous or villainous icon.

Note that this talent is intended to be used with the Dicey Stunts optional rules found on the Pelgrane Press blog. We recommend that all PCs be allowed to use these rules if a warrior with the Dirty Fighting talent is a member of the party. The warrior will simply have an advantage when attempting dicey stunts.

Fist of the Overworld

Special: You cannot take this if you took Underworld's Grasp

Your unarmed attacks no longer suffer the -2 penalty to hit, your weapon damage dice for unarmed attacks is d6 per level, and you are always considered fighting with two weapons while not wielding any weapon or shield in either hand.

Adventurer Feat: You gain +1 to AC while not wielding any weapon or shield in either hand. At 5th level, you gain +2 AC instead. At 8th level, you gain +3 AC instead.

Champion Feat: You deal ongoing damage equal to your Strength modifier to enemies you grab. At 8th level, your ongoing damage equals twice your Strength modifier. Additionally, you can choose to deal fire and radiant damage with your unarmed attacks.

Epic Feat: Once per battle, max out all of your unarmed attack's damage dice when you hit with an attack.

The epic feat will also max out Power Strike.

Underworld's Grasp

Special: You cannot take this if you took Fist of the Overworld

The first time you are staggered in a fight, you gain temporary hit points equal to 10 + your level.

Adventurer Feat: Choose one daily or recharge spell of your level or lower from the necromancer class. You can cast this spell as if you were a necromancer. You can change your chosen spell each time you take a full heal-up.

Champion Feat: You no longer need to eat or sleep, and you can now choose from necromancer at-will spells.

Epic Feat: You no longer age, don't need to breathe, and the first time you are reduced to zero hit points in a fight, roll a normal save (11+). On a success, you are at 1 hit point instead, and can spend a recovery as a free action.

Combat Maneuver

As per Commander talent: Choose a fighter maneuver of your level or lower. You can use it like a fighter. You can also switch it for a different maneuver each time you level up.

Adventurer Feat: You gain the adventurer feat for the maneuver you chose, if any.

Champion Feat: Choose a second fighter maneuver of your level or lower to use.

Epic Feat: You gain the adventurer and champion tier feats, if any, for both your fighter maneuvers.

Throwing Specialist

Your attacks with small thrown weapons now deal d6 damage per level. Your attacks with light thrown weapons now deal d8 damage per level. In addition, after you make a warrior ranged basic attack with a thrown weapon, you can draw another thrown weapon as a free action instead of a quick action.

Adventurer Feat: Once per battle, when you miss with a warrior ranged basic attack using a thrown weapon, you can make another warrior ranged basic attack as a quick action.

Champion Feat: On a natural 16+ with a ranged basic attack using a thrown weapon, you can reroll the attack against a different enemy that is nearby the target as a free action. That attack does not get to reroll against a different enemy on a natural 16+.

Epic Feat: Once per day, you can take a standard action to make a ranged basic attack against each nearby enemy using a single thrown weapon.

The Champion Feat essentially lets you bounce your thrown weapon against one enemy if you roll well enough (and only one enemy), while the Epic Feat lets you bounce your thrown weapon against every nearby enemy, and it can stack with the champion feat (for maximum pinball effect), if your GM allows it.

STANCES

You can only have one stance active at any given time, and entering/switching stances usually requires a quick action. They stay active until you fall unconscious, until you choose a different stance, or if you choose not to use any stance as a free action. Basic attacks from other classes (if you multiclass) do not benefit from stances unless your GM allows them to.

You start with two stances at level 1, and gain an additional stance at level 5 and level 8 (see Warrior chart).

Adventurer Feat: You can enter/switch stances as a free action once per round during your turn.

Champion Feat: You gain an additional stance.

Epic Feat: For one battle a day, you can have two stances active.

Duelist's Dance

Until the stance ends, your warrior basic melee attacks deal extra damage against enemies that are not engaged by any of your allies equal to your Dexterity modifier. At 5th level, you deal extra damage equal to twice your Dexterity modifier. At 8th level, you deal extra damage equal to three times your Dexterity modifier.

Adventurer Feat: You gain a bonus to disengage attempts equal to your Dexterity modifier while in this stance.

Champion Feat: You can disengage as a quick action while in this stance.

Epic Feat: Whenever an enemy makes a natural odd attack against you while in this stance, you can make an opportunity attack against them. If this attack hits, it deals half damage instead.

Defensive Formation

Until the stance ends, you have a +1 to AC while wielding a shield. If you are next to an ally who is also in this stance, you each gain a +1 to AC (maximum +2).

Adventurer Feat: The bonus also applies to PD.

Champion Feat: For one battle a day, you have a bonus to AC equal to half of the escalation die's value (rounded down), while wielding a shield in this stance.

Epic Feat: While wielding a shield in this stance, you gain a +1 bonus to warrior basic attack rolls.

Shadow Port Hustle

Until the stance ends, each time you hit an enemy with a warrior basic attack, you can attempt to disengage or move to a nearby position as a free action.

Adventurer Feat: You deal extra damage to the target you hit equal to the number of allies engaged with it.

Champion Feat: Once per battle, you can pop free instead of attempting to disengage.

Epic Feat: When the escalation die reaches 4+, on a natural 16+ you can remove yourself from play as a move action. At the start of your next turn, return anywhere nearby that you could have moved to normally during your turn.

Relentless Charge

Until the stance ends, you gain a +2 to melee basic attack rolls against enemies you were not engaged with at the start of your turn.

Champion Feat: Once per battle, you can make each enemy engaged with you pop free as a free action.

Epic Feat: Each time you roll a natural 16+ hit with a melee attack while in this stance, you can spend a quick action to move towards an enemy you were not engaged with at the start of your turn. Barring special circumstances or abilities, you are subject to opportunity attacks. If you succeed in engaging with them, you can make a basic melee attack against them as a free action.

Whirling Dervish

Until this stance ends, each time you hit with a melee attack while wielding two melee weapons, one enemy engaged with you (other than the enemy you hit) takes damage equal to your level.

Champion Feat: Each time you roll a natural even hit while wielding two melee weapons in this stance, you can spend a quick action to make a basic attack. If the attack hits, it deals half its normal damage.

Epic Feat: For one battle per day, you can deal damage to $1d3+1$ enemies engaged with you other than the enemy you hit, instead of just one.

The champion feat's quick action attack can be a basic ranged attack, if you're wielding something like a dagger as your melee weapon.

Strike the Anvil

Until this stance ends, each time you hit with a warrior basic attack, you may choose to cause that enemy to pop free from you or one ally they are engaged with as a free action.

Champion Feat: If the attack roll is a natural 16+, the target is also dazed until the end of your next turn.

Battle Rage

Until the stance ends, you deal extra damage with your warrior basic attacks equal to your level (regardless of whether the attacks hit or miss).

Champion Feat: For one battle a day, add your level to the damage again (so you deal twice your level in extra damage when you hit, and three times your level in damage when you miss).

Epic Feat: Each time you roll a natural even hit while in this stance, you gain temporary hit points equal to your level.

Steady Hand

Until the stance ends, whenever you miss with a warrior basic attack, your next warrior basic attack against the target before the end of your next turn gains a +2 attack bonus.

Champion Feat: Once per battle, you can increase the bonus to +4 as a quick action.

The stance isn't intended to grant a round-long bonus for a single miss.

Sniper's Mark

Until the stance ends, your warrior basic ranged attacks deal extra damage against enemies that are not engaged with any of your allies equal to your Dexterity modifier. At 5th level, you deal extra damage equal to twice your Dexterity modifier. At 8th level, you deal extra damage equal to three times your Dexterity modifier.

Champion Feat: On a natural 16+ ranged attack, the target is also stuck until the end of your next turn.

Epic Feat: Once per day, you can cause the target to be stunned as a free action, instead of stuck.

Slippery Foot

Until the stance ends, once per round after an enemy makes a melee attack against you, you can attempt to disengage as a free action.

Adventurer Feat: When the escalation die is 3+, you can pop free instead.

Champion Feat: Whenever you roll a natural 16+ hit with your basic warrior attacks while in this stance, you take half damage from opportunity attacks until the start of your next turn.

CREDITS

Credits to Martin Killman, Tim Baker, and Dick McGee for providing their insight on the class! Thank you also to Denzel Villanueva, Jechrist Ramos, Reuel Ybañez, and other playtesters for helping me refine this class. ☺

ICONIC ONE-USE ITEMS

BY SEAN KRAUSS

Icons of the Dragon Empire rely upon their servants to exert their will upon the world, but sometimes those servants need a little extra help. For that purpose, each icon has one or more specialized, single-use tools for specific occasions.

The availability of any or all of these tools is a campaign decision. The GM might decide upon some combination of the following conditions:

- Each of these can be purchased and used as any other one-use item.
- These cannot normally be purchased: a relevant icon relationship boon must be spent to gain access to a contact willing to sell as many as the PC has gold to purchase.
- One relevant icon relationship point can be spent in combat to retroactively spend the gold and use the item without spending an action (but the player must describe the circumstances of acquiring this item, including any obligations incurred by a spent 5).
- Two relevant icon relationship points can be spent in combat to gain and use the item without spending the gold or an action (but the player must describe the circumstances of acquiring this item, including any obligations incurred by a spent 5, and major obligations incurred by spending multiple 5s).

If one particular tool is unbalancing the campaign, adjust its gold piece cost to reflect this, rewrite how it works in your campaign, or simply make it unavailable. Feel free to replace it with another tool of your own design, or, even better, the player's design.

*These tools came about after running my group through 16 sessions of *Into the Underworld* at a my FLGS. They enjoyed the game, but lamented paucity of cool stuff on which to spend their gold. Rather than raid other d20 books for standard spells and potions, I tried to adapt and craft effects reflecting each icon, hoping to weave these organically into the icons' stories at my table.*



ARCHMAGE

WARDING AND BINDING SCROLL

Cost: 100gp (Adventurer); 400gp (Champion); 800gp (Epic)

Effect: These scrolls are specifically crafted for use on magical creatures. They disrupt or control the magical energies animating the creature.

Each scroll is crafted either for use on a specific type of magical creature (appropriate types would be: construct, demon, devil, elemental, spirit, undead), or for use on a type of creature the player and GM agree fits the description (e.g., genies or fey)

IN COMBAT

Adventurer: +5 vs. MD—the creature is stuck (save ends)

Champion: Choose an effect (when the scroll is chosen)

+10 vs. MD—the creature is stuck and hampered (save ends)

+5 vs. MD—the creature is confused (save ends); Miss: the creature is stuck (save ends)

Epic: Choose an effect (when the scroll is chosen)

+20 vs. MD—the creature is stuck (save ends)

+15 vs. MD—the creature is stuck and hampered (save ends)

+15 vs. MD—the creature is confused (hard save ends); Miss: the caster is confused (save ends)

+10 vs. MD—the creature is confused (save ends); Miss: the creature is stuck (save ends)

OUT OF COMBAT

Consider using as part of a ritual to gain information from magical creatures, or gain the (non-combat) service of a magical creature for a limited time (Adventurer: 5 minutes; Champion: 1 hour; Epic: 1 day). This scroll will not summon such a creature: only bind it.

CRUSADER

BLOOD OF THE ENEMY

Cost: 100gp (Adventurer); 300gp (Champion); 650gp (Epic)

Effect: Demons' blood treated so that it will bond with that of humanoids, giving the humanoid temporary demonic powers. Physical changes are up to negotiation between the player and GM, but owing to the chaotic nature of demons, they should be different every time.

IN COMBAT

Roll on the random demon abilities table. Acquire that power until the end of combat. Additionally, roll d%. On a 01, switch one icon relationship to a positive or conflicted Diabolist relationship. If you have a Crusader relationship point, switch that one: if not, choose whichever you like.

Adventurer: roll 1d4

Champion: roll 1d6

Epic: roll 1d8

OUT OF COMBAT

You may still roll for the effect, but also gain some narrative demonic abilities appropriate to the situation. For example, pretending to be possessed to get an appointment with the elusive High Exorcist, strutting into a hellhole like you own the place, coming up with a quick “costume” for the duke’s masquerade, or scaring the be-Priestess out of the group of little kids hanging out on your lawn.

Diabolist

BRIMSTONE PRISON

Cost: 175gp (Adventurer); 250gp (Champion); 425gp (Epic)

Effect: These rare, magical rocks from deep inside hellholes each comprise the material plane’s exit from a demonic prison. The use of each essentially casts a demonic summoning spell, as presented in 13th Age Monthly: Summoning Spells

Adventurer: 3rd-level Summoned Imp

Champion: 5th-level Frenzy Demon

Epic: 7th-level Laughing Demon

Dwarf King

ANCESTOR RUNE

Cost: 100gp (Adventurer)

Effect: Dwarves know the secrets to use magical runes to contact their dead. These ancestor runes are created through rituals, and always tied to a specific deceased dwarf. They no longer function as normal runes. The spirits can have little effect on the physical

world, but they can leverage their wisdom to seekers and provide some limited emotional impact. The Lich King sees the use of these runes as a violation of his sovereign domain.

OUT OF COMBAT

The rune provides a brief interaction with a deceased dwarf. This interaction can be personal (saying goodbye to a beloved parent) or transactional (seeking information). If used to influence an information-gathering roll, provide a +4 to the roll if the information sought fits into the wheelhouse of dwarves, the Underworld, or the specific ancestor contacted.

IN COMBAT

The spirit issues a magically-compelling challenge to nearby creatures: **+5 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—The creatures immediately move to engage the user as a free, out-of-turn action. If an affected creature is currently engaged, it will roll to disengage as a free, out-of-turn action: it will not move if it fails the disengage check.

CLOCKWORK DECOY

Cost: 500gp (Champion)

Effect: Either a clockwork creation or a dwarf-forged construct, this tiny man provides a potent distraction for the limited duration of its magical power. Its use is not intended for children.

OUT OF COMBAT

The decoy distracts nearby onlookers or guards for five minutes. Hopefully, it doesn't explode at the end of its life-cycle.

IN COMBAT

The decoy ambles out to a nearby location and makes the following attack:

+10 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies)—The creatures immediately move to engage the decoy as a free, out-of-turn action. If an affected creature is currently engaged, it will roll to disengage as a free, out-of-turn action: it will not move if it fails the disengage check.

Natural 18-20: The decoy makes an explosive distraction attack.

[Special Trigger]: Explosive Distraction **+10 vs. PD (all creatures engaged with the decoy)**—20 damage. Miss: 10 damage.

ANCESTOR GOLEM

Cost: 1,100gp (Epic)

Effect: This full-sized clockwork (or dwarf-forged) humanoid in the shape of a dwarf can obey simple commands, but also contains a vessel for an ancestor's spirit to join the battle one last time. The Dwarf King takes rumors of his enemies using ancestor golems very seriously.

OUT OF COMBAT

The ancestor golem is a non-sentient automaton that can do little more than follow its owner around. If the owner steps out of line of sight, the ancestor golem ceases to function. It can be useful for carrying gear, stepping into deathtraps, or looking like a menacing bodyguard, but has little other practical use. Note that the owner can transfer ownership easily through the use of specific command words (or else how could one sell an ancestor golem?).

The ancestor golem can be activated out of combat, allowing a dwarven spirit to inhabit it for purposes other than fighting. If so, communication is similar to that with an ancestor rune. The spirit can act through its new body, though it doesn't possess strength or abilities beyond that of any other dwarven warrior. Well, okay. It's immune to poison, vacuum, and other effects which a construct could logically shrug off. It will explode (as in second death, below) after roughly five minutes, or at will.

IN COMBAT

The ancestor golem may be activated, channeling an ancestor dwarf's spirit into its vessel. Once it is activated, the ancestor golem fights in a single combat with the following attributes:

Mighty Maul +13 vs. AC—30 damage

Ancestor's War Cry +12 vs. MD (all nearby enemies)—The creatures immediately move to engage the ancestor golem as a free, out-of-turn action. If an affected creature is currently engaged, it will roll to disengage as a free, out-of-turn action: it will not move if it fails the disengage check.

Limited Use: 1/battle

Second Death: When the ancestor golem is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, or roughly 5 minutes after its activation, it makes a *fiery end* attack. **[Special Trigger]: Fiery End +12 vs. PD (all engaged enemies)**—50 damage

Miss: 25 damage.

Irreparable: Once activated, the ancestor golem never recovers hit points by any means.

AC 25, PD 20, MD 17, HP 150

Special Note: Unlike most other “consumable items,” an ancestor golem can’t be conveniently stowed away in one’s bandolier. If the PCs are flying from location to location via winged sandals, they need to figure out how to bring their pet ancestor golem along with them or leave it behind (and note that an unactivated ancestor golem can’t be given directions, even simple directions, like “go home”). If a PC wants to spend a boon in battle to retroactively have acquired an ancestor golem, flash back to the journey which brought the golem here: maybe even consider spending some extra gold (250gp?) to have installed a propeller on the golem’s head.

ELF QUEEN

ELVEN GINSENG

Cost: 100gp (Adventurer); 500gp (Champion); 1,000gp (Epic)

Effect: Elves loyal to the Elf Queen tend to frown upon non-elves consuming elven ginseng, which they regard as a closely-guarded secret. “Frown upon” usually turns to “fire upon.”

Adventurer: Out of combat, gain just-better-than natural speed for about 5 minutes. The concentrate does not improve the user’s coordination, so particularly impressive speedy feats may require a Dexterity-based skill check.

In combat, the user doesn’t gain extra actions, but movement actions allow them to cover twice the normal distance. In addition, the character gains +2 to AC and PD, but a -2 to attack rolls.

(Note: this effect is pretty much as the same as Kenderama’s potion of speed on 13thage.org.)

Champion: In addition to the effects above, gain use of the wood elf Elven Grace racial ability for this battle. If the user is a wood elf, reduce the current die type being rolled by one die type (minimum d4)

Epic: In addition to all the effects above, gain one additional standard action on your next turn. If the elven grace ability aligns just right, you might get three standard actions in one turn!

EMPEROR

VOICE OF THE CROWN

Cost: 150gp (Adventurer); 500gp (Champion); 900gp (Epic)

Effect: Emissaries of the Emperor carry these scrolls crafted by the Archmage to imbue their pronouncements with magical persuasion beyond that of the law. The character must write what they will say on the scroll before using it: in combat, one or more words may be hastily scrawled to achieve some minor effect. While reading, the character's voice takes on a booming, authoritative air, not at all dissimilar to speaking into a megaphone.

OUT OF COMBAT

The character gains a bonus to persuade a creature or group of creatures to perform some service for the Emperor. The service must be in line with the Emperor's goals as the listeners understand them in order to receive the bonus, though the character could forgo the bonus to use the Voice's power to attempt to persuade a creature which might not normally be open to any kind of persuasion. A failed persuasion roll might still convince the audience, but they will know their minds were magically altered.

Tier	Bonus	Number of creatures affected
Adventurer	+2	a campfire
Champion	+3	a packed bar
Epic	+4	a festival crowd

IN COMBAT

The character imbues a command with the voice of the Emperor: the effects assume the creature can hear and understand the speaker. The creatures cease all other activity to attempt to fulfill the command to the best of their ability, without causing themselves harm. The effect lasts until the beginning of the player's next turn. *Miss:* The creatures are dazed until the beginning of the player's next turn.

Adventurer: +5 vs. MD (one nearby creature)—The command consists of a single word.

Champion: +10 vs. MD (1d2 nearby creatures)—The command may be a single word, or with a -4 to the attack, two words.

Epic: +15 vs. MD (1d3 nearby creatures)—The command may be one or two words, or, with a -4 to the attack, three words.

GREAT GOLD WYRM

MARTYR'S BALM

Cost: 150gp (Adventurer); 400gp (Champion); 600gp (Epic)

Effect: This potion is distilled from the blood of metallic dragons: the epic variety may come from the Great Gold Wyrm itself. The user temporarily shares some level of consciousness with the icon, allowing the Wyrm to channel its holy power through the user, but sometimes overwhelming the user with the GGW's imprisoned plight.

OUT OF COMBAT

The balm can inspire mobs and bolster armies. Used in a narrative battle scene, the balm could turn the tide for the underdogs or break a siege. In a city, an outbreak of a normal illness could be stanch. The out of combat use requires the same potential recovery loss and its consequences for the user, however.

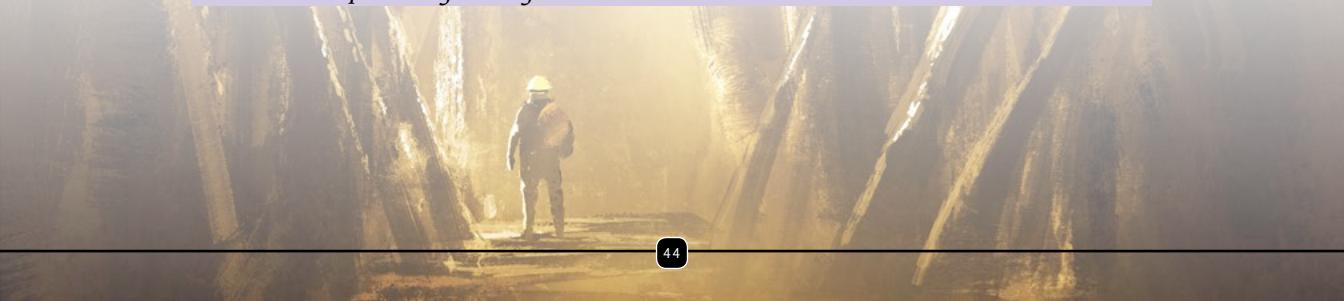
IN COMBAT

Adventurer: The user heals with a free recovery and all nearby allies may heal using one of their own recoveries. The user loses $1d4-1$ recoveries, regardless of the number of heroes healed.

If the user's recoveries would fall below 0 as a result of the balm, the user merges consciousness with the Great Gold Wyrm: they immediately return to full hit points (but not recoveries), and regain the use of all spent daily, once-per-battle, and recharge abilities as if they had just experienced a full heal-up. Item powers do not recover. The user then begins making last gasp saves at the end of this turn. Failing the save four times causes the hero to explode in a burst of holy energy, making the following attack at all nearby enemies: +10 vs. PD- $1d12$ holy damage. The hero is dead, and no body remains.

Champion: All nearby allies who spent a recovery to heal may also attempt to save against one save-ends effect. The hero loses $1d6-2$ recoveries. The death explosion attack becomes +15 vs. PD- $2d12$ holy damage.

Epic: Nearby allies may heal and attempt to save against one save-ends effect with a free recovery. The user loses $1d8-3$ recoveries. The death explosion attack becomes +20 vs. PD- $4d10$ holy damage.



HIGH DRUID

FASTGROW FERTILIZER

Cost: 150gp (Adventurer); 300gp (Champion); 700gp (Epic)

Effect: This fertilizer, created from the dung of purple worms, can cause plants to grow incredibly fast, maturing almost instantly, then dying within minutes.

OUT OF COMBAT

Any utility one can think of for short-lived fast-growing plants. This could be an expensive expedient for harvesting ritual components, or a means for finding food and water in a sandy desert. Perhaps vines could grow up an otherwise smooth wall to assist the speedy climber.

IN COMBAT

Throwing a bursting bag of fastgrow fertilizer outdoors causes semi-intelligent plantlife to grow and attempt to entangle its victims.

Adventurer: +5 vs. PD (one nearby creature touching the ground)—the creature is stuck (normal save ends).

Champion: +10 vs. PD (1d2 nearby creatures in a group touching the ground)—the creatures are stuck and hampered (normal save ends both).

Epic: +15 vs. PD (1d3 nearby creatures in a group touching the ground)—the creatures are stuck, hampered, and vulnerable (normal save ends all three)

Using the fastgrow fertilizer indoors probably creates an obstacle or area of difficult terrain instead of the effects listed above, as plants burst through masonry or wood flooring without the precision necessary to entangle enemies.

LICH KING

LICH'S STITCHES

Cost: 75gp (Adventurer); 150gp (Champion); 250gp (Epic)

Effect: Closely related the magical wrappings of a mummy, these magical sutures eagerly apply themselves to wounds once activated.

OUT OF COMBAT

Even an unwounded creature can apply lich's stitches: these items desire only to dig into living flesh. For five minutes after applying the stitches, undead of the wearer's tier or lower will perceive the wearer as undead.

The appearance of a character laced with lich's stitches is unnerving to most living creatures. When they get close to the character, they begin to feel the cold of the grave and the inevitability of their own eventual end.

IN COMBAT

Lich's stitches allow the user to spend a recovery. In addition, for the remainder of combat, anyone engaged with the user at the beginning of their turn takes negative energy damage based on the tier of the stitches:

Adventurer: 5 damage

Champion: 10 damage

Epic: 20 damage

If you're okay with this level of fussiness, undead should be immune to this damage.

Orc Lord

GLORY TOTEM

Cost: 150gp (Adventurer); 400gp (Champion); 800gp (Epic)

Effect: These totems are popular with the goblinoid races and other barbarians, but they are certainly not exclusive to them. Many non-magical tokens exist, of course, but the ones described here are imbued with divine or wild magic which allows the user to commune with tribal spirits. These may be deceased ancestors or spirits who never had a mortal form. In any case, the spirits gain sustenance through glory, and so they impel the user on to glory.

OUT OF COMBAT

The spirit may stick around for a long period, days even, leading the user to some trial or treasure worthy of their attention. Depending on the spirit (or the players' and GM's shared understanding of how spirits communicate with the mortal world), the spirit may be visible to everyone, only visible to the hero, or only present as a voice or feeling. The spirit may talk, or may express itself empathically.

IN COMBAT

The spirit rewards brave and heroic decisions. For the duration of the battle, when the hero who called the spirit is engaged with an enemy of at least one level greater than the hero's, and none of the hero's allies are engaged with that creature, the hero deals extra damage, hit or miss (but not on a 1).

Adventurer: 2d6

Champion: 3d8

Epic: 4d10

However, while this effect is active, when the hero makes an attack against an enemy which doesn't meet the conditions above, that enemy gains Resist 16+ to that hero's attacks.

PRIESTESS

PRAYER BEAD

Cost: 50gp (Adventurer); 100gp (Champion); 200gp (Epic)

Effect: Each of these versatile items is blessed with a god's favor. The character chooses the god and an appropriate enchantment when they acquire it from an ordained priest of that deity: the player can retcon this to fit the current need.

Whenever a character uses one of these items, whether in combat or out, the player should absolutely describe which god, pantheon, saint, archdevil, or other divine entity they're beseeching for aid, and why that god would be invested in this scenario (the player is welcome, nay, encouraged to make this up on the spot!).

However, the player and the character should be aware: the gods keep track of their blessings. Asking multiple favors from a single entity runs up a karmic bill, and eventually the collector comes. Perhaps as a heavenly host, perhaps on a pale steed, perhaps in a yellow rain. To be fair, spreading this spiritual debt across multiple methods of worship increases the breadth of celestial attention on your character.

(Basically, the GM keeps track of every favor the characters ask, and throws in a complication at the least convenient moment. This works great for 5s on icon rolls with the Priestess and Diabolist, among others.)

OUT OF COMBAT

The blessing provides a one-time bonus to a single d20 roll: +2 (Adventurer), +4 (Champion), +6 (Epic). This bonus stacks with any other bonus (except for another version of this item).

IN COMBAT

It works exactly the same way: This can be applied to a dicey move, an attack, a save: anything that requires a d20 roll.

PRINCE OF SHADOWS

EVERYMAN OINTMENT

Cost: 100gp (Adventurer); 400gp (Champion); 700gp (Epic)

Effect: This face cream might be extracted from doppelgangers, mimics, or any other shape-changing creature. The user gains an innocuous air, seeming nonthreatening and of little import to anyone who might otherwise find their presence alarming.

OUT OF COMBAT

No one really notices the wearer, as long as they remain in places where innocuous people wouldn't seem out of place. Anywhere in a castle that a servant might reasonably be found, for instance, would not set off alarm bells, but poking around a notoriously reclusive wizard's lab might draw unwanted attention. If a die roll must be involved, give the user a +4 bonus to remain hidden in plain sight. The Adventurer Tier cream lasts for five minutes, the Champion Tier cream lasts an hour, and the Epic Tier cream lasts a full day.

IN COMBAT

Enemies suddenly reprioritize their attacks, making the user their least attractive target (but still a possible target). An enemy with two nearby PCs will always prefer the PC without the Everyman Ointment. An enemy engaged to a PC wearing Everyman Ointment will leave to attack another nearby PC (without disengaging, so provoking an attack of opportunity). This effect lasts either until the end of combat, until the PC makes an attack or casts a spell, or until no other eligible targets remain. An enemy will not leave engagement to move to engage a faraway PC.

THE THREE

DRAGON EYE

Cost: 75gp (Adventurer); 250gp (Champion); 1,200gp (Epic)

Effect: Whether you picture the eye of a dragon freed from its former socket as a fist-sized raisin, a crystalline cocoon, or a squishy ball with some claim yet to life, a dragon's eye is an incredibly useful and prescient tool. Just don't let a whole dragon catch you with one.

OUT OF COMBAT

By looking through the dragon's eye then crushing it, the character receives some information about a nearby and imminent future event. The player gets to declare that information as true, adhering to the guidelines below, and subject to GM veto: this information can't directly contradict what is already known.

Adventurer: This event is something minor:

A barmaid trips and shatters a platter full of steins, distracting everyone in the bar.

The orcs pursuing the PCs across an open crop field don't notice that the bear trap intended to keep the owlbears away.

Champion: The event is significant:

A barmaid trips and shatters a platter full of steins, seriously injuring herself on one, distracting the authorities in the bar for several minutes.

The ogres pursuing the PCs across an open crop field don't notice that the field is littered with bear traps.

Epic: The event is earth-shaking:

A barmaid trips and shatters a stein onto the Duke, disrupting his illusion and revealing to all that he has been replaced by a rakshasa.

The iron golems pursuing the PCs across an open battlefield don't notice the corrosive rain descending from the Overworld, corrupting all metal within ten miles.

IN COMBAT

Before the GM rolls a d20 on behalf of an enemy whose tier is equal to or lower than the Dragon Eye's, the player with the dragon eye may declare that they have used the eye to predict the outcome of that attack (or save, or initiative roll, or whatever). *This must be declared before the GM rolls: if your GM rolls quickly, you must be quicker.*

The GM treats the roll as a natural 2.

This use of the Dragon Eye is not an action: the narrative assumes that the character made this prediction earlier. 

UNDERKRAKENS REVISITED

BY PATRYK "RUEMERE" ADAMSKI

Underkrakens are a species of living dungeons that migrated from a different dimension. Their chief distinguishing characteristics are:

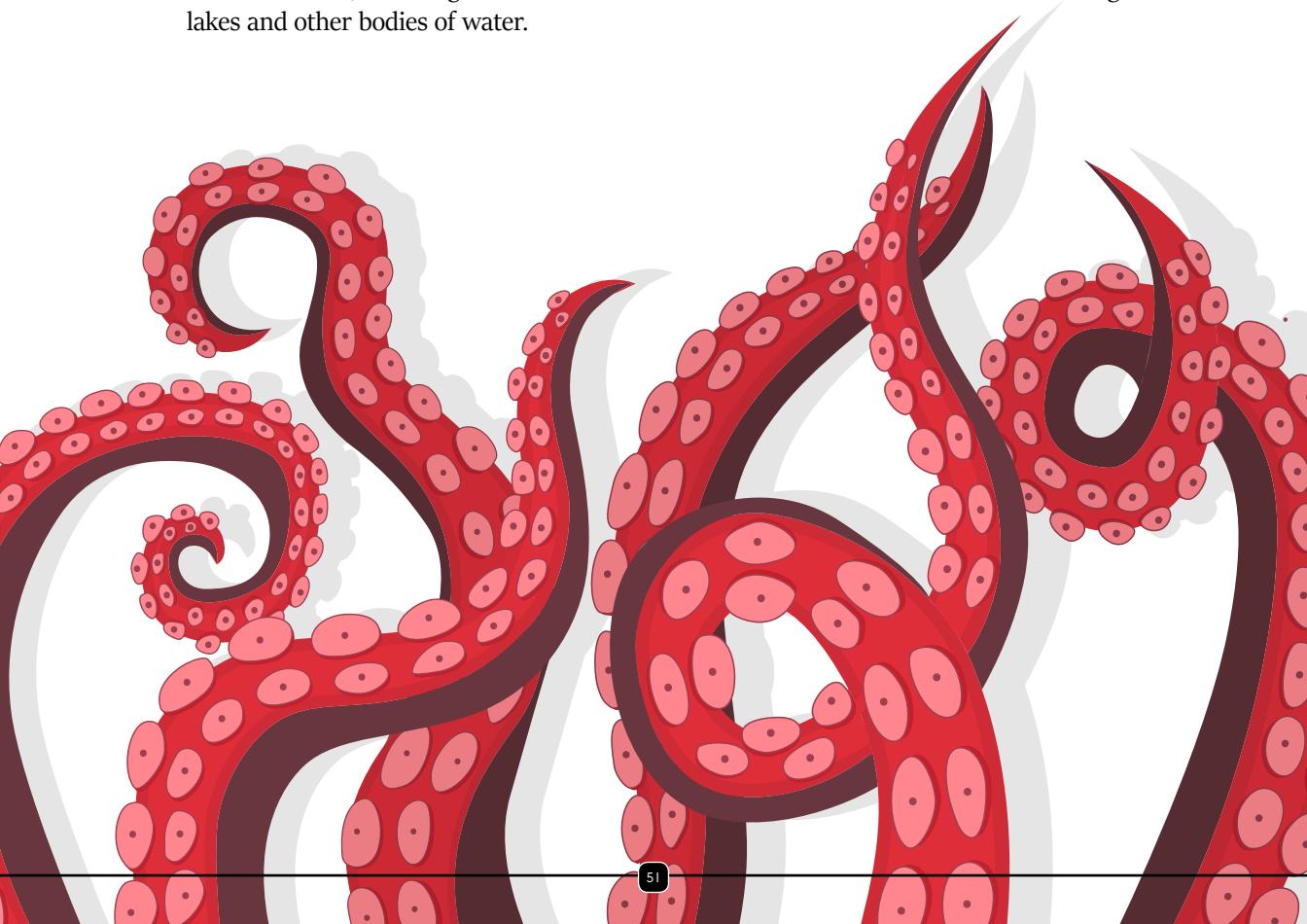
Octopus Heart: They have a heart: a building-sized muscle that looks like an amalgam of octopus and mammal heart. The heart uses local materials to build a shell around itself, and to then develop the rest of the dungeon. The heart is blind, psychic, and partially immaterial (its basic substance is jelly-like). Due to its limited senses, the heart is incapable of perceiving creatures that are smaller than itself or less developed psychically. Therefore, to any invisible threat it reacts in the same way – by producing violent contractions capable of leveling cities, releasing psychic blasts that render living beings dead or insane, and finally rending reality with psychic blades. It propels itself using pseudopendages reinforced with psychic power at the speed of a trotting horse or running man.

Shell Constructs: The constructs (assembled from available huge fragments of buildings and trees) around the underkraken heart constitute a biomechanical shell. This shell grants an underkraken the ability to perceive other constructs at fantastical ranges (hundreds of miles) through physical barriers. Underkrakens are likely to avoid large cities, since cities may look like bigger predators. The shell constructs are otherworldly for two reasons: they are highly geometrical (lots of multifaceted megalithic objects joined haphazardly together) in a way that provides space sufficient enough to allow elephant-sized beings move through. At the same time, the constructs include agglomerates of rooms that remain stable with respect to themselves. The distance and connections between the subset of rooms remain constant while the streets and large corridors are often rearranged as the dungeon undulates through earth. An underkraken with a body facing an invisible threat (anything smaller than a ship) is likely to absorb the threat into its itself and then attempt to grind against itself while repeatedly blasting itself with psychic energies.

A fully developed underkraken is the size of a large castle. An overfed or particularly large specimen is as big as a large town.

Animated Exterior: Beyond the shell, an underkraken transports a large number of stonework sentient-made buildings, either stolen from cities and towns, or replicated through animation of large masses of rock. This exterior is much larger than the underkraken shell, even hundreds of times as much, but cannot be used for attacks. Underkrakens use the stolen buildings as housing for pets, temporarily absorbed sentients, pantries, and memorabilia. Eventually over time, the aggregated buildings form a record of underkraken history. The exterior is too slow and imprecise to be used offensively – it does not regenerate – an underkraken must undertake a week long action interspersed with feeding to rebuild a section of the same size as its shell construct.

The animated exterior is the size of a several square miles, can travel underground or over the surface at the speed of a walking human, can level a city at its traveling speed, and loses a tenth of its mass per day of submersion in a large body of water while moving. For this reason, submerged underkrakens tend to remain immobile or avoid crossing lakes and other bodies of water.



Nerve clusters: Underkrakens animate their shells and exterior via hair-thin cabling that grows out of the heart and permeates both the shell and exterior. These nerve-like appendages form huge clusters that work like supplementary brain centers. There are four to eight centers on average, each one shielded by hard shell. Destroying even one cluster renders the Underkraken exterior immobile until the cluster is regrown a week later or abandoned. It takes one day for one-quarter to one-eighth of the exterior to detach and for the underkraken to get over the physical trauma. The shell and the heart can still take actions.

Living Phantoms: The heart retains memories of any being that died while in the underkraken dungeon. It recreates these memories as phantoms that act scenes from past lives. Wanderers may find themselves suddenly lost in a scene from a different epoch or world. Moreover, memory constructs are capable of interacting with visitors or replaying scenes from past, even bitterly complaining when they invariably dissolve and disappear after a $1d6+1$ days. A living phantom survives only if an underkraken releases its claim to it or the underkraken dies.

Warping Aura: The heart's psychic aura slowly warps all living beings who board the underkraken. The mortality rate of any living population is usually 10% per year. The warping usually causes degenerative effects, while surviving specimens are usually stronger, tougher, insane, and sterile. Living survivors are usually nastier specials, often with doubled strength, and a few mutations that add significant weaknesses (vulnerability to holy, takes triple damage on a crit). Only undead are capable of forming lasting communities, though they tend to pursue weird looping activities with significantly decreased ability to communicate.

Servitor creature community: In addition to phantoms, an underkraken spawns creatures that provide miscellaneous maintenance functions. Such creatures appear in breeding vats of biological-looking factories, share appearance to a certain extent and function according to one of three designations – worker, scout, or warrior. These breeds are unique to each underkraken, though they tend to be based on beings incorporated among living phantoms. Workers are noncombatants: slow moving double-strength 4th level mooks. Scouts hunt and kill small prey, feed other servitors, and call workers and warriors to disassemble or kill bigger challenges. They are usually double-strength 2nd level mooks that travel alone but can summon a mob of 1d100 friendlies in 1d6 minutes. Warriors are huge brutes, basically walking tanks capable of engaging opponents at distance. They are huge 8th level monsters with at least two different attacks, one of them ranged with far reach. Thematically, example servitor communities could be: humanoids hurling laser-like rays from their mouths; biomechanical dolls reciting old documents while dragging large rolling wagons with tools or armaments; flying monkeys with mosquito wings; amoeba moles propelling themselves with violent gas discharges; and so on.

Special Designations

Acre-sized Huge | all targets within an acre are treated as being next to the Huge creature. This means that every being within this area can be attacked.

Solo | this creature is intended as a solo opponent.

Huge 10x | this creature is treated as a group of 10 Huge creatures. This means that up to ten different targets may be attacked with the same attack within the area and within a reach of its body. Additionally, hit points are a multiple of 10 Huge creatures. Mook damage spillover rule is applied to all creatures damaged by this creature.

Huge 5x | this creature is treated as a group of 5 Huge creatures. This means that up to five different targets may be attacked with the same attack. Additionally, hit points are a multiple of 5 Huge creatures. Mook damage spillover rule is applied to all creatures damaged by this creature.

Acre-sized Huge 10x | all beings within the area can be attacked once. No more than 10 targets though, and no more than 1 attack per creature (yes, a group of mooks is going to be so wasted by this...).

UNDERKRAKEN NERVE CLUSTER

AC 24 PD 22 MD 18 HP 40

Underkraken Shell Constructs

Acre-sized Huge 10x 8th level solo [living dungeon]

(Underkraken feeding) A whale the size of an island, a structure composed of millions of cyclopean stones that grinds and boils the very earth, swallowing buildings, trees in a terrifying maelstrom of black dust and a roar of violated rock.

(Underkraken, immobile) Soundless, black stones the size of menhirs emerge from a mist. They fit together forming a labyrinth where silent shadows prowl corridors for millennia. Despite the stillness, there is a tension in the air, like that of a bear trap about to be sprung. The air feels as if a storm is brewing, and there is a nagging feeling that something is moving just outside of the corner of your field of vision.

Initiative -5

Resist damage 20+ (all damage except siege weapons damage or Huge 5x creature damage).

Immune to light weapons (a light weapon is any weapon that is too small to damage a huge creature).

Construct Body: This creature is not defeated upon destruction of the body. Destroying the body of the creature releases its heart (see below). It is also important to remember that in order to destroy such a colossal creature, one has to be particularly inventive (otherwise the underkraken will repair faster than a single group can deal damage). An underkraken can repair one-one hundredth of its body per round as a free action; however, it cannot use this ability if submerged in water or if its heart is being attacked.

Heart over Body: Underkraken Shell Constructs cannot use actions if it takes any heart actions, or if its heart is staggered.

R: Feeding via maelstrom of rock +13 vs. PD (up to 10 targets within area or within a reach of its body, mook spillover damage applies to all targets, each target may be hit only once)–114 ongoing damage, save ends. This attack either deals listed damage or destroys everything within an acre.

R: Absorb the fleas +13 vs. PD (up to 10 targets within area or within a reach of its body, mook spillover damage applies to all targets, each target may be hit only once)–57 damage and the target is stuck, hard save ends.

[only targets hit by Absorb the fleas, free attack, does not c] **C: Grind the fleas** +13 vs. AC (up to 10 targets within area or within a reach of its body, mook spillover damage applies to all targets, each target may be hit only once)–57 bleeding, save ends.

C: Purge the life vs. MD (up to 10 targets within area or within a reach of its body, mook spillover damage applies to all targets, each target may be hit only once)–57 psychic damage.

[requires gathering power for one hour, only move actions allowed during gathering power] **R: Mountain-rending slash** +26 vs. AC (single target of size Acre-sized Huge 10x at least)–170 psychic and physical damage, 171 ongoing bleeding (hard save to stop). Used to destroy cities and other underkrakens under extreme circumstances. Power gathering is usually very noticeable due to severe nature phenomena and incredible feeling of oppression experienced by all living creatures. If used against another underkraken, this attack bypasses Underkraken Shell Constructs and strikes at the heart.

AC 24 PD 22 MD 18 HP 4,320 (regenerates 43 HP per round)

UNDERKRAKEN Octopus Heart

Huge 5x 8th level solo [dungeon heart]

(Underkraken heart responding to a threat with physical violence) Like a palm of a giant, with a squeal of million of pigs, a lump of muscle strikes the ground producing a distinct wave of rock spreading in all directions. A hurricane of debris, a cloud of dust and heavy solid millstone-like rocks cover the world.

(Underkraken heart responding to a threat with deadly psionic blast) A fountain of black blood streams upwards, invoking feeling of terrifying heat just beneath the skin. The heat gathers in droplets and burst from orifices of living beings in showers of blood. Only then incomprehensible speech starts ringing in everyone's ears.

Initiative +5

Resist damage 20+ (all damage except siege weapons damage or Huge 5x creature damage).

Immune to light weapons (light weapon is any weapon that is too small to damage a huge creature).

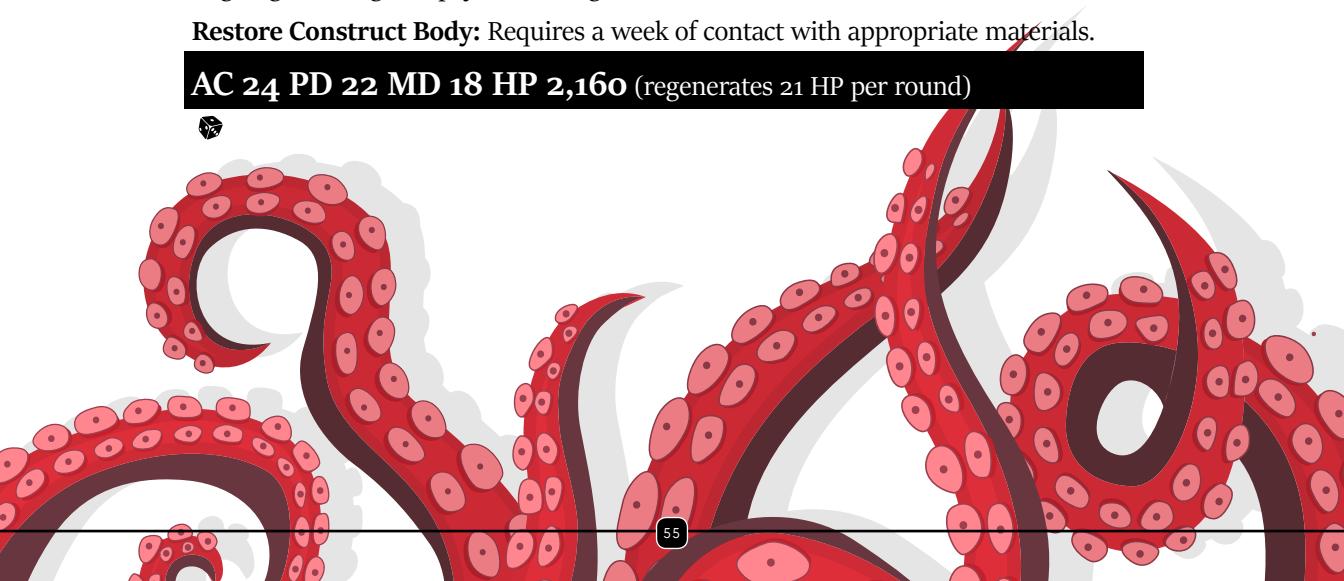
R: Slap of a giant +13 vs. PD (up to 5 targets within area or within a reach of its body, mook spillover damage applies to all targets, each target may be hit only once)—114 damage, half damage on a miss.

R: Reduced mountain-rending slash +26 vs. AC (single target of size Huge 2x at least)—171 psychic and physical damage.

R: Fountains of blood, sounds without reason +13 vs. MD (all far distance of its body, mook spillover damage applies to all targets, each target may be hit only once)—27 ongoing bleeding and psychic damage, hard save ends.

Restore Construct Body: Requires a week of contact with appropriate materials.

AC 24 PD 22 MD 18 HP 2,160 (regenerates 21 HP per round)



MORE GOBLINS!

BY CLARK OLSON-SMITH

+2 Con OR +2 Int

Special: When you assign a goblin player character's ability scores, you must assign your lowest score to either Wisdom or Charisma, depending on the ability score bonus you choose. If you choose a bonus to Constitution, then Charisma must be your lowest score. If Intelligence, then Wisdom. It's okay for this required lowest score to be tied for lowest with another ability score. Later, when you improve your ability scores at 4th and 7th level, you could improve Wisdom or Charisma so that they are no longer the lowest. But as a starting goblin, one or the other need to be your lowest score.

Small: Goblins have a +2 AC bonus against opportunity attacks.

Where It Hurts (Racial Power)

Once per battle, add +2 to your crit range after seeing your attack roll.

Champion Feat: Against large and huge enemies, these crits now deal triple damage.

Combat on Warg-back [Feat]

You ride a warg into battle. Use the Mounted Combat rules from the 13th Age Monthly volume of the same name. Specifically, this feat renames the "Combat on Horseback" feat on page 6 and allows its combat control check benefit to be used when riding into combat on "Warg, Giant Wolf, Dire Wolf" on page 8. That feat's skill check bonus also applies to goblins on warg-back, whether mounted or not. Consider it essential to have an appropriate icon relationship and background.

GOBLIN ADVENTURERS

Poor goblins! Fated to be the expendable vanguards of a greater evil, pawns of iconic villainy. But not all goblins! Isn't it just like the so-called "civilized" races to be arrogantly incurious? Who would ever know if, buried deep in the earth or some remote wilderness, there is a glorious goblin city, full of art and culture and great food? Or if goblins were, many ages ago, a blessed race cursed and mangled by a noble but bitter ages-long struggle against kobolds? Then again, goblin ideas of "glorious," "great," "blessed," and

“noble” may not hew to more common sense. True or not, many may be wary of goblins even in a heroic party. Those who’ve lost livelihoods or loved ones to goblins will see them as grimy, nasty little spies!

Goblin PCs might invite an anti-heroic campaign. Then again, goblins may be defectors from the service of a villainous icon, like the Diabolist or Orc Lord. Some say the Priestess offers goblins a path to redemption. Then again, goblin conversion therapy might be as insidious as it sounds. The Dwarf King probably employs more-or-less willing and dependable goblins to reclaim treasure from the deepest dungeons, and the High Druid likely favors goblin tribes who champion her surging wilderness—which may say more about her wilderness than about goblins.

GMs may not want a world overrun by adventuring goblins and instead may encourage goblin players to create a One Unique Thing around their character’s goblinness. For example, “chosen to liberate all goblinkind from tyrannical icons.” Or simply, “the most powerful goblin wizard in the world”—potentially a very low bar.

TOO MANY GOBLINS?

Vault of the 13th Age (13age.org) already hosts two playable goblin races. Why a third? Well, goblins are hot right now! Stars on Critical Role and in a series of Pathfinder adventure modules...I’m just cashing in on the trend.

That, and my vision of adventuring goblins is different than Meadslosh and Andrew’s in the Vault of the 13th Age. Mine are tough and ugly or clever fools, rather than quick or perceptive. This version also expresses the devious, destructive nature of goblins as an uncanny ability to hit enemies where it hurts. At champion and epic tiers, these goblins are vicious little giant-killers. They’re meant for players who want to stab, not dodge, and who revel in describing the bloody details of each hit.

Meadslosh and Andrew’s goblins could coexist with mine in the same Dragon Empire. Imagine a less-than-iconic Goblin Queen with her own three-part crown! Or the variations could simply be goblin cultural traits, like 13G



Art: Rick Hershey

humans, reflective of different environments. (See the Rockleech Clan below). Goblins of all kinds could ride wargs (or bugs or spiders, for that matter) into combat and make use of the above feat.

ROCKLEECH CLAN

Certain clans of goblins live like little birds on the backs of water buffalo. Or fleas on a dog. They depend on icons, but they don't serve any icon. Often, they're called "leech clans." But clan is a bit of an overstatement, because while sometimes widespread, their camps are typically only loosely connected and mostly isolated from each other.

Take the Rockleech Clan. They dwell in the cracks and crevices above, below, and around the Dwarf Kingdom. Wherever dwarves dump sludge or useless rubble, whenever they abandon a spent vein of ore or a bad batch of brew, rockleech goblins lick their chapped lips. Nasty little scavengers, they are.

The Dwarf King hates rockleech goblins but he doesn't eradicate them because, frankly, as long as the Undermarch is under siege, he can't be bothered. Since they're mostly peaceful, there are worse neighbors. In fact, rockleech camps form a living buffer and early-warning system. And besides, most everything of true value they find among the refuse, they gladly trade back to local dwarves for baubles and scraps. (And if any of this is merely a tale that soothes the King to sleep, certainly it's a harmless one, right? They're just goblins.)

Occasionally, an especially hardy or clever rockleech goblin will leave home and make a living among dwarves. They become brewery ratcatchers, forge stokers, mine lackeys—and the hardiest and cleverest—low-rent mercenary assassins, bodyguards for disgraced dwarven nobles, proprietors of niche (read, "illegal") arcane workshops, and strategist aide-de-camps to dwarf generals (or was it bandit captains?). Extremely superstitious or desperate dwarves have even sought oracular goblin gurus, though reputable clerics don't even bother to denounce them as charlatans.

The most famous rockleech goblin is undoubtedly Grimgut Gobmage. While goblin accounts of Grimgut vary wildly among themselves, let alone from dwarven popular memory and imperial record, it's likely she either saved Forge from an ankheg infestation and earned a grudging commendation from the Dwarf King, unleashed a plague of rare jellies that preceded the ankheg infestation and was banished to Moonwreck, or some assemblage of both. What's certain is this: "Grimgut's Ooze" is not what you think it is, and you definitely do not want to be proven wrong.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

These hooks are useful with any adventuring party. But they might be most fun with parties that include goblin player characters.

A Pox on Your House | When a plague kills dozens, village leaders blame a goblin camp in nearby caves and hire the adventurers to clear it. But the adventurers find the goblins decimated by the same plague. The survivors plead for mercy, asking the adventurers to take revenge against an evil goblin clan deeper in the caves, which cursed them with this plague when they refused to pledge fealty to a villainous icon. Do they heed the plea? What if the evil clan has powerful allies, or the first camp makes promises they later cannot deliver on, or a mob of villagers come to do what the adventurers won't? If they kill the survivors, what unwanted friends or noble enemies do they make?

Rags to Goblins | Promising a fortune in trade with a lost goblin city with riches to rival the dwarves, a traveler convinced a group of peasants from an adventurer's hometown to pool their savings and hire her to lead their ragtag trade caravan. The peasants ask their hometown hero for a favor: protect it along the long dungeon pass.

They can't pay now but offer a generous cut of the profits later. What surprise awaits the adventurers if they agree? And if they don't?

Rain Maker | A goblin shaman called Regnaz can command the rains. So, a farming village in deep drought hires the adventurers to pay him homage and ask him to send them rain. But Regnaz is smitten with one of the adventurers and in an improvised love poem promises to send "the rain of my heart / daily if you depart." But that's just poetic license, right? He can't really send rain perpetual on the adventurers wherever they go, can he? But if his rains can find them, who else can?

Hail to the Chief | The closest known relative of a dead goblin chieftain is one of the adventurers. Dozens of spider-riding goblin warriors would be theirs to command. They also stand to inherit a pile of gold and a powerful magic ring. All they must do is prove their loyalty to which villainous icon? What's the cost of refusing? 

Art: Rick Hershey



ESPECIALLY NASTY: LIVING SPELLBOOK

BY МИХАИЛ ВОЛЧЬ-ОСМОЛОВСКИЙ

A spellbook is any wizard's most prized possession. A nontrivial proportion of a typical wizard's income goes towards enchanting and reinforcing their spellbook to make sure it can withstand the harsh life of an adventurer. Mithril-laced backs, pages that can shrug off a dragon's fire, color-coded velvet bookmarks (these don't actually contribute to the survival of the spellbook, but they're very handy)...it's little wonder that spellbooks often outlive their owners. And if you know anything about magic, you won't be at all surprised to learn that these abandoned spellbooks sometimes attain a measure of sentience.

Imagine a creature whose only behavior model comes from observing a mad wizard (they are all mad, and even seemingly sane ones reveal their true selves in the privacy of their own spellbooks) obsess over them for decades. A creature whose mind is made of equal parts arcane secrets and abandonment issues. Who has a very tenuous grasp on reality as they are capable of altering it at a whim.

What do living spellbooks want? It mostly depends on their attitude towards their erstwhile owner. Some try and imitate the long gone wizards that wrote them by amassing a hoard of arcane artifacts of their own or continuing the experiments that got their owner killed in the first place. Some even claim they are wizards who transferred their souls into their tomes, a form of immortality that avoids becoming a lich. Others set out to eliminate all that their former owners accomplished, be it a village they once saved or an arcane academy they founded.

Bottom line: living spellbooks can be found absolutely anywhere doing absolutely anything, and are powerful, dangerous, and quite insane.



Living SPELLBOOK

Triple-strength 8th level caster [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative +10

Chomp +13 vs AC – 23 damage.

Arcane fury: Living spellbook constantly flips through its pages, arcane symbols floating off them to form a glowing halo around it. As a quick action once per round it rolls two d20, each of which triggers one or more of the following abilities - e.g., a 15 would trigger both telekinesis and petrify. If the triggered ability is an attack, use the original roll to resolve it.

Natural 1: Living spellbook suffers a coughing fit and loses counter-magic until the start of its next turn.

Natural 2, 3: Dimension Door - the living spellbook teleports to a nearby location it can see.

Natural 4, 5: Shocking Clasp - living spellbook's chomp deals extra 47 lightning damage until the start of its next turn.

Natural 6-15 and

Odd roll: C: Telekinesis +13 vs PD (one nearby enemy) – 40 damage and the target pops free from all enemies and is flung unceremoniously to a nearby location. The inflicted damage includes slamming the target into a wall or dropping it from great height, but extra effects are possible in the presence of hazardous terrain.

Even roll: C: Force salvo +13 vs PD (one or two nearby or far away enemies) – 20 force damage.

Natural 10, 15: C: Petrify +13 vs PD (one nearby or far away enemy) – the target starts making last gasp saves as it turns to stone.

Natural 16, 17: C: Charm +13 vs MD (one nearby enemy) – the target is confused (hard save ends). The save becomes normal for a round if the confused creature allows the living spellbook to choose the target of its attack (instead of choosing randomly as usual).

Natural 18, 19: C: Disintegrate +13 vs PD (one nearby or far away enemy) – 50 damage and the target is vulnerable (hard save ends). If the target drops to 0 hit points from this attack or while vulnerable, it loses a death save and a last gasp save, reducing the number of times it can fail these saves before dying or turning to stone. The target turns to dust if it has no saves left of either kind.

Natural 20: C: Finger of Death +13 vs PD (one nearby or far away enemy) – the target drops to 0 hit points and starts making last gasp saves.

Cyclic fury: when using arcane fury while the escalation die is even, roll an extra d20 and apply all results.

Flight: Living spellbooks float ominously a meter from the ground. They can briefly manage greater heights.

Counter-magic: Once per round as a free action, living spellbook can make a +13 vs MD attack against a nearby creature casting a spell. If it succeeds, the target loses the action while its spell is sucked into the living spellbook and is cancelled. If the spell had a limited use, that use is expended if the natural attack roll was even. Living spellbook cannot use this ability if it is grabbed.

Nastier Specials

Spell eater: whenever the living spellbook successfully uses counter-magic, it rolls an extra d20 when using arcane fury on its next turn.

AC 25

PD 19 HP 400

MD 23



RACIAL VARIANTS FOR CORE RACES

BY [†]Tim BAKER

The core races in 13th Age don't work well with all classes and character concepts, and this can sometimes challenge players who have a specific character in mind. Perhaps the simplest solution is to use the mechanics of a different race, but describe the character as the race of their choice. A more advanced approach is to create new mechanics for the race.

SWAPPING MECHANICS

Permitting a player to treat their character as if they were a different race, mechanically, is an easy trade-off. You benefit from investing very little time and effort, the race is already playtested and (relatively) balanced against other races, and the player is happy. Since 13th Age doesn't provide additional abilities or feats that rely on race beyond what's in the racial write-up, there are no long-term consequences to consider.

For example, your player wants to create a draconic character, but envisions her to be massive and intimidating, rather than breathing fire. One approach would be to allow her to "reskin" a human, taking advantage of the bonus feat to take reach tricks to represent her large size and incredible reach. In play, the character is always referred to as a draconic. She happens to use the mechanics of a human, but that would have no bearing on in-world descriptions of the character or her abilities.

NEW RACIAL POWERS

Sometimes, a player wants to combine a particular race and class, but the racial power of the selected race won't provide any benefits. By replacing the racial power with a new one, you can better tailor the character to your player's concept. There are two races that are provided as examples here.

Half-Orc | The half-orc's lethal racial power is only beneficial to melee attacks. You might opt to remove the melee requirement, opening the power to any attack. This may have unintended consequences when combined with powerful daily spells, however. The furious assault racial power captures the lethality of a half-orc's attacks, but applies to any attack.

Furious Assault (Alternate Racial Power)

Once per battle, deal additional damage to a target you hit with an attack roll as a free action. For melee and ranged attacks, add one extra die of weapon damage. For all other attacks, add 1d8 damage. Replaces furious assault racial power.

Champion Feat: Double the bonus damage from furious assault.

Half-Elf | The half-elf's surprising racial ability provides benefits to bards, fighters, rangers, and sorcerers. Outside of these classes, subtracting 1 from one of your d20 rolls offers little value. A quick fix is to extend the ability to the half-elf's allies. Chances are high that at least one character in the party can benefit from this power. This increases the utility of surprising slightly, but it's a simple change (which is often the best kind) and is limited to one use per battle, so it's unlikely to cause any problems.

Surprising Inspiration (Alternate Racial Power)

Once per battle, subtract one from the natural result of one of your own d20 rolls or that of a nearby ally. Replaces inspiration racial power.

Champion Feat: You gain an additional use of surprising inspiration each battle, but you can only use it to affect a nearby ally's d20 roll.

If the party lacks characters that would benefit from surprising inspiration, which is certainly possible as 13th Age expands to include more classes, the half-elf's knack for success could be reflected in a more utilitarian racial power.

Knack for Success (Alternate Racial Power)

Once per battle, as a quick action, grant yourself or a nearby ally one of the following. Replaces inspiration racial power.

- The target makes a saving throw.
- If engaged, the target pops free.
- The target gains a +2 bonus to their next attack roll made before the end of their next turn.
- The target gains a +4 bonus to their next skill check made before the end of their next turn.

Champion Feat: Once per day, you can use knack for success twice in a battle.

A common theme for half-elf characters is their versatility. The surprising and knack for success powers don't capture that feeling of the half-elf jack-of-all-trades. The dilettante racial power addresses this gap.

Dilettante (Alternate Racial Power)

Choose a 1st-level at-will spell or ability from a class different from yours. You can use that power once per battle. Replaces inspiration racial power.

Adventurer Feat: You can choose which ability score you want to use as the attack ability and damage bonus (if any) of your dilettante power.

Champion Feat: Once per day, you can use dilettante twice in a battle. 

THE EVIL BENEATH: DUERGAR OF THE DRAGON EMPIRE

BY DENIS FAUPEL

SEVEN THINGS CHILDREN ARE TOLD ABOUT DUERGAR

Elf: Dwarves are often bad, but if you want to know how bad, just find out how deep they live under the earth, far away from the sun. The deeper, the worse. Those down there you don't speak of. They're grey and their hearts are as hard as the stone they're surrounded by. They breed with monsters and beasts alike, and the more aberrant a creature is, the more they worship it.

Dark elf: Duergar have powers that make them precious allies. But beware, they're stubborn and not willing to serve. They don't acknowledge our power, but we are certainly destined to rule them. If we could tame them—break them—we could rebuild our empire and conquer the whole underworld, our great ancestral home.

Human: Dwarves that are not nice to each other or use bad words are punished by the dwarf gods. They are enchanted and cursed to turn into stone and sent deep into the earth never to return. They are trapped there between monsters and can never again see the sun. Maybe the human gods learn from this, so you better be nice!

Dwarf: The worst thing to imagine is the heart of a duergar. They are our arch enemies. They are what should not be. You should be prepared and always aware, for they are a tricky and ghastly lot. We teach you strength and willpower, which is not always easy. But we must be strong, because the time may come when they ascend from the deep and try to seize power. They will burn everything they can find. But it's not sacred fire, like our forge, but hellfire that burns your soul. They are the evil we must fight until eternity.

Halfling: It is told there are caves so deep you cannot reach them in a life-long walk—at least not when you take lunch breaks seriously. Imagine the gloomy and smoky halls of the dwarven people. Well, down in the deeps, it's ten-times worse. The duergar are down there, walking through stone and staring with yellow eyes into the darkness in which they can see without issues. Sometimes, a duergar rises from the deep and comes to you in your dreams. But as long as you finish your meals and don't steal another one's, you'll be safe.

Gnome: If you ever see a duergar, don't try to tell them jokes! You'll find dwarves have no sense of humor, but duergar have a morbid sense of humor. They're dull and gray and boring, so you'd better shun them like pig dung. When you're older, you will become curious about the wonders of the world below, and it's well worth it to see those wonders. You will likely travel to all those wonderful dangers and watch them in awe. But remember not to tell a duergar a joke!

Tiefling: You're precious, child. You'll soon find out that you're different from others. Don't let it break you. Your soul can be saved when you stay innocent. You know, there are creatures like the duergar who think that your blood is sacred. Unlike most humans, they know what you are worth. They know your kind. That's why I'll leave you here, near that cave entry. May your soul be saved one day....

SPECIAL ABILITIES FOR ALL DUERGAR

Enemy of the sun: Duergar can see in total darkness as humans can in bright daylight. On the other hand, they are dazzled by sunlight. While exposed to bright sunlight, they are automatically shocked (roll twice with every d20 roll and take the lower result). Duergar are not shocked by other light sources (they love fire after all), although you may rule that extraordinary magical light may weaken or daze them, when the situation demands.

Duergar invisibility: Once per battle, as a move action, a duergar can become invisible. The invisibility lasts until the end of the battle, or until the duergar makes an attack (or roughly 10 minutes outside of battle). If the attack hits with a natural 18+, the duergar stays invisible.

DUERGAR DARK PRIEST

Trying to imagine the vile gods a duergar priest worships is enough to drive most folks insane.

5th level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

Dark sceptre +10 vs. AC – 13 damage

C: Cloud of darkness +10 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies in a group) – 8 psychic damage and the target is dazed (save ends)

Miss: 5 psychic damage.

Limited use: Once per battle, but the dark priest can choose to expend its use of invisibility to recharge this attack as a move action.

R: Wave of humbling thoughts +10 vs. MD (one nearby staggered enemy) – 5 ongoing psychic damage and the target is hampered (save ends both)

Limited use: Once per battle and again, when the escalation die reaches 4+.

Aura of darkness: Any duergar ally nearby the dark priest making an attack out of its duergar invisibility special also stays invisible when rolling a natural even roll (not only 18+).

Nastier Special

Greater aura of darkness: As long as the dark priest is not staggered, any nearby duergar ally (including the priest) gets a +2 AC bonus against ranged attacks.

AC 19 PD 16 MD 16 HP 65

DUERGAR SHADOW KNIGHT

If hate and malice has a form, this is it.

7th level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

Longsword called 'Lifetaker' +12 vs. AC – 25 damage and the target is marked for death

Natural 18+: The target loses a recovery and the shadow knight's weakening curse ability recharges.

C: Weakening curse +12 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies) – 5 ongoing psychic damage and the target is weakened (save ends both)

Limited use: Once per battle (unless recharged, see above).

Marked for death: Enemies use the escalation die on all attacks against a target that is marked for death. There can only be one target marked for death at a time. If the shadow knight hits another target, it can choose to mark a new target or leave it to the target before it.

Nastier Special

Malevolent capacity: Anytime a nearby enemy uses a recovery, the shadow knight can choose to teleport next to the creature as a free action.

AC 23 PD 20 MD 16 HP 100

DUERGAR NAMES

Arak, Athok, Bzerak, Ctolobar, Cort, Doquor, Durun, Fathagn, Forolm, Gnauth, Goroth, Geroth, Gnor, Heroth, Hratac, Hugun, Horon, Jogun, Jokon, Kwersas, Koros, Kalat, Koroth, Lox, Lhum, Logom, Monkor, Mandur, Mormok, Norm, Nurmon, Nortog, Ngurn, Orro, Orgo, Ornak, Ompok, Othuk, Oroth, Opxur, Pokh, Parras, Qorrr, Qeroth, Ras, Rashur, Rapakh, Rompur, Rolk, Rekhor, Ruphak, Shentor, Sulphur, Sorrr, Suorro, Shormok, Shontur, Shezak, Tokor, Tushkor, Urok, Ushon, Vorn, Vurosh, Xoth, Xurn, Zakath, Zorn

DUERGAR AND THE ICONS

The Diabolist adores the duergar. They know how to summon demons after all. If only they were more willing to serve here cause....

The Dwarf King despises his ancient kin. It's long since duergar and dwarven armies crossed blades, but the grudge seems to be eternal. It's said that the duergar were the traitors who arranged a rotten alliance with the evil of the deep world to forever rule it with an iron fist. What arose was beyond measure, even for the duergar, and they were forced to retreat to even greater depths. There they lurk, in brutal kingdoms of darkness, waiting for their day to return and crush their old enemies.

The Crusader has duergar in his service. They're mostly outcasts and renegades, but has he ever cared about that? The horrors of the deep also bring duergar to seal unholy allegiances with demons and the like. That's when the Crusader fights them – and his lot gets uncomfortable about the duergar in their own forces.

The High Druid has her spiritual roots deep in the earth. She has no eyes down there, but there's always a feeling of what goes on in the dark. She's concerned about what the duergar may dig in the heart of the shell, what powers they may bring forth. Not for herself she fears, but for the precious creatures of the deep, for she knows not all that lives in the dark is evil.

For the **Prince of Shadows**, the inherent powers of the duergar promise great advantages. Unfortunately for him, they are seldom eager to conspire with him, because he doesn't confess to total destruction. He doesn't stop trying to manipulate them, though, and in time he may succeed, bringing danger to his streets with the prospect of power.

The Priestess has studied the strange worship of the duergar for quite some time. Her knowledge of the topic is exceptional. Her scriveners filled a considerable amount of paper with those facts, now locked up in the temple of secrets, for the dread of those abhorrent truths is hard to handle for most humanoid readers.

The Three have made great use of duergar troops in the past. The black especially enjoys a great deal of attention. It's said there are temples in the deep to worship him.

The Orc Lord is not openly at war with the duergar. In fact, there's some kind of truce as long as everyone stays in their territory. Orc patrols regularly run into duergar scouts, and the consequences are often bloody, but both sides enjoy good fights so no one bears a grudge. The Orc Lord also considers the duergar a weapon to keep the Dwarf King at bay, providing passage for duergar raiders to dwarven land. Maybe the duergar are the key to slay the dwarves once and for all.

The Elf Queen accuses the duergar for the trouble with the dark elves. For her, a duergar is the worst a dwarf can become.

The Lich King has many worshippers amongst the many kinds of duergar priests. He values their madness and zeal for destruction. But most of the duergar prefer the dead to be dead.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

The Night Below is a living dungeon. The dungeon flesh consists of black stone and ruins of old ages—and is infested with duergar. The Night Below is in search for unholy essence, swallowing places like big graveyards with mausoleums of old tyrants, dark temples, and in the end the Necropolis itself. Thus, a duergar outpost, fort, or city—normally deep under the earth—may be just one step away from a visit to the cemetery. And the duergar will certainly use this chance to raid some nearby settlements, if they can.

A duergar queen and her clergy have found a way to control the living dungeon. Or so they think. Although they have some control over it through the possession of the dungeon's black and pulsing heart, they don't realize they're only figureheads in its game. The Night Below is on its way to consume nothing less than the Necropolis itself and to ultimately become an undead dungeon by building a phylactery for itself somewhere deep down in the earth. Meanwhile, spitting out some duergar troops here and there seems to be a convenient way to distract its enemies. In the end, when it has swallowed the right places of power to feed its phylactery, the heroes enter The Night Below, willing to slay its heart to end the terror. They don't realize that death is just the beginning....

The Conspiracy | The halls of The Dwarf King are a cold place these days. Clans were always arguing, but now it's worse. Quarrel reigns, alliances have been broken, and now there's even a dead chief and a missing patrol. The dwarves don't know it's only the start of a duergar scheme to weaken them and strike when they are most vulnerable. Lucky for the dwarves that they've taken in some heroes as guests at the right time, unbiased and vigilant.

Eternal Darkness | Portals pop up here and there in the realm. Places of darkness erupt from wells and caves. And with the night comes death in the form of duergar warriors and their slaves and monsters. A new duergar monarch has unified the major houses

and cities, and with them their armies, to fight what he calls “The Great War Against The Sun.” He is certain that by conquering the right places of power and torturing the right people (The Archmage, among others), it will be possible to bring down the sun and lead the world into eternal darkness.

THINGS TO FIND ON DEAD DUERGAR (OR IN THEIR HALLS)

- A leather bag with dried humanoid eyeballs and a bunch of teeth – obviously some kind of duergar party game, although you don’t know the rules.
- Finger bones of many different creatures (trophies).
- Some elven ears, used as chewing gum.
- A small file to sharpen teeth.
- A flask of warpaint.
- A bag of mysterious purple powder.
- A flask of bitter-tasting fluid.
- Lots of rings and piercings, many of them made of bone.
- Gold and copper pieces from all over the realm, many of them ages old.
- A parchment with some words in the language of the deep, written in blood.
- A book about the sun, the ‘mother of all that is evil,’ the creatures that serve her, and how to defeat them – forever.
- Rusty chains with the remains of blood and burned skin on them.
- A duergar first aid kit: sharp needles to stick into another part of the body to distract the senses from the original pain.
- A metal tool for branding slaves. Or to press on wounds. Or to have many other kinds of fun with.
- A bag of duergar rations: edible mushrooms, dried insects, salted lizards and other delicious stuff.
- A flask first considered poison but maybe it’s just a duergar drink.
- An eye patch for both eyes.
- A pipe or flute made out of bone.
- War drums and horns.

Want to read more about duergar? Escalation Press (not affiliated with Escalation! Fanzine) has created more than 30 stat blocks, guidelines for building battles, details about duergar cities, and a bunch of dark magic items. Get in touch to playtest at escalation.press@gmx.net. 

ALL ALONG THE UNDERMARCH

BY JEB BOYT

Strictly speaking, the Undermarch is the broad, straight, stoneway that connects Forge and Anvil. It is a point of pride for the Dwarf King that he maintains the Undermarch as the longest, most accessible route through the underworld. But there is more to it than that. The Undermarch is the spine that links the two principal dwarven holds in the Dragon Empire, but it is also a highway marked with numerous way stations and outposts that connect to byways that lead deeper into the underworld.

In the golden ages before the dwarves were driven from their Underhome and out of the depths of the underworld, the Undermarch extended much further, connecting to numerous dwarven holds and steadings, as well as to important surface locations such as Axis, Horizon, and the Golden Citadel. This article examines the Undermarch in both its current extent and its historic reach, discusses stations along the Undermarch, suggests backgrounds relating to the Undermarch, and the delves into interests of icons in the Undermarch.

THE UNDERMARCH OF THE 13TH AGE

The Undermarch runs south from Forge. The gate between the Undermarch and Forge is large and impressive, consisting of several doors and defensive arrow slots, murder holes, and other devices. As a sign of the Dwarf King's power, the gate to the Undermarch is rarely closed. The King keeps it open to show that he has little to fear from the dangers of the underworld. The reality is that there is a fort less than a half day's march from the gate.

The fort, First Watch, is garrisoned by one of the King's stoutest legions, and the stretch of the Undermarch between Forge and the fort and immediately Anvil-ward of the fort are closely watched. The fort itself, like most of the forts along the Undermarch, is built around the road with stout gateworks at either end and a space of 50 to 100 dwarven paces between the gates where caravans can be inspected before they are allowed to continue on their way. There are usually no more than six doors that open from the

fort into the tunnel: two at either end and two near the middle. The walls and roof of the tunnel, though, are lined with arrow slits and murder holes where the dwarves can watch travelers in the tunnel. The gate at the north end of the tunnel is marked with the sigil for Forge, and the south gate bears the sigil for Anvil.

The doors in the middle of the tunnel on one side open into the command suite and on the other into storerooms. Beyond these first rooms, each fort has its own layout of barracks, mess halls, training rooms, steam rooms, smithies, fungus gardens, and other necessary facilities. Each fort is supposed to have enough food and water to be able to hold out for at least a month.

Anvil-ward from First Watch, the Undermarch gradually slopes downward toward the strait north of Anvil that runs between Torin's Glory and Calamity. There are a station and a fort below the strait both named Lowest Station that contest which one is actually the lowest point on the Undermarch. Anvil-ward from the strait, the Undermarch climbs more steeply until it reaches the fortified gate at Anvil.

STATIONS AND BYWAYS

There are stations for travelers roughly 18 miles apart along the Undermarch. Some of the stations are staffed, others are not. The ones that are staffed are part tavern and part general store, providing for the needs of travelers and those on expeditions deeper into the underworld. The larger stations have gates and rooms for travelers as well as smiths and other services that might be found in a small town on a major road. Some stations are minimally staffed, with just a few guards and other workers. In such places, travellers are usually expected to either sleep in the common room or find a own place to bed down in one of the station's abandoned rooms. Smaller stations can be little more than a room or a niche in the wall of the Undermarch, offering scarcely more than water and shelter. Patrols from the forts usually see that the unoccupied outposts are provisioned and maintained.

Though long stretches of the Undermarch are lightly traveled, others can be quite crowded. Patrols and messengers frequently travel between the forts. Traders travel through with their caravans. Miners and explorers pass by on their way to the deeper underworld.

The byways to the deeper underworld often connect to the Undermarch through a station or a fort. All of the byways are sealed by gates, or at least they are supposed to be sealed. Some of the gates have been smashed or stuck open. Those wishing to return to the Undermarch from a byway must either have a key to open a gate or wait until a patrol passes by to open the gate. There are many tales of expeditions to the deeper underworld that ran into trouble when they had their route back to their gate cut off or when they lost their key.

PRIOR AGES

During the golden age, the dwarves built an extensive network of roads through the underworld. Then, they would proudly boast that all roads lead to Underhome. Now, it is whispered more as a prayer. In the ages since the dwarves fled Underhome and poison spread through the underworld, the dwarven roads have suffered mightily from cave-ins, tunneling by other creatures, the eruption of hellholes, and the burrowing of living dungeons. It is rare that a living dungeon doesn't have part of a dwarven byway within it, if not an entire outpost or fort. Though the dwarves have attempted to map and mark the passages leading to Underhome, the ongoing changes in the underworld make it an almost futile task. The deeper you go, the less certain you can be that a route will be the same as it was the last time you traveled it. Still, many passages bear the marks where the dwarves have hopefully inscribed sigils pointing the way toward Forge, Anvil, Underhome, or locations along the Undermarch.

In the past, roads from Underhome extended to Axis, Horizon, the Golden Citadel, and other prominent places in the Empire. Now, all that remains are the ruins of dwarven forts beneath those sites and passageways leading into the underworld, most of which have either collapsed or been blocked to prevent dangers rising from the depths.

UNDERMARCH BACKGROUNDS

A character with history in the Undermarch may have backgrounds such as Deep Legionnaire, Merchant, Caravan Boss, Work Crew, Miner, Prospector, Surveyor, Engineer, Outpost Keeper, Dwarf King Messenger, Fungus Farmer, Spy.

ICONS IN THE UNDERMARCH

The Undermarch is part of the Dwarf King's realm, but he is not the only icon that exerts influence there.

Archmage | The Dwarf King denies that the Archmage's wards also protect the Undermarch, but it is uncanny how the roadway between Forge and Anvil has for ages resisted attacks from the underworld, earthquakes, and living dungeons. The Dwarf King honors his alliance with the Empire, and agents of the Archmage are often granted passes to travel the Undermarch. It is said that there is a great fort and other dwarven works underneath Horizon.

Crusader | The Crusader has little concern for the Undermarch, unless it offers easy access to a hellhole he is interested in. The Dwarf King would welcome the Crusader's aid in taking back Underhome, but he is too proud to ask. Agents of the Crusader may be granted passes to travel the Undermarch, particularly if their goals are in line with those of the Dwarf King.

Diabolist | Hellholes can appear in the underworld too, and the Diabolist is just as concerned about extending her influence there. The Dwarf King will have none of that. Sages in Forge and Horizon debate whether there is a connection between hellholes and living dungeons.

Elf Queen | Neither the Elf Queen nor any of her subjects are welcome in the Undermarch. Any elves traveling the Undermarch will be viewed with suspicion and would best travel under the protection of another icon.

Emperor | The Dwarf King values his alliance with the Emperor and will work with his agents to provide them with what they may need when venturing along the Undermarch to the deeper underworld. It is said that in the golden age, dwarves could freely travel to Axis without having to go above ground. That is not the case today. But it is known that the Dwarf King's embassy in Horizon is built beneath the city and that it has been there for some time. What tunnels may connect to it few know.

Great Gold Wyrm | There are reports that openings into old passages of the Undermarch can be seen in the walls of the Abyss and that there is a fort beneath the ruins of the Golden Citadel. The Dwarf King is generally on good terms with the Great Gold Wyrm, but they rarely have reason to interact.

High Druid | It is likely that the High Druid sees the Undermarch as a similar abomination as the Empire's surface roads. Is she also waging her war underground, fostering fungus forests, blind catfish, albino crayfish, and other natural denizens of the underworld's caverns and streams? If she could help the Dwarf King cleanse the poison from Underhome, he might be persuaded to abandon his alliance with the Emperor.

Lich King | In the ages before the return of the Lich King, the dwarves buried their dead in catacombs along and adjacent to the Undermarch. The Lich King now seeks to extend his influence over them.

Orc Lord | The Orc Lord has little interest in the Undermarch, unless he sees a way to use it to strike quickly at Forge or Anvil.

Priestess | Her message of peace and goodwill is inspiring to many, including some dwarves who might then begin to question the Dwarf King's obsession with regaining Underhome. But, such seditious thoughts can be dangerous.

Prince of Shadows | The Dwarf King considers all treasures beneath the earth as his property. The Prince of Shadows sees that as a challenge. Anyone who can sneak along the Undermarch and return with a treasure will find favor with the Prince. Needless to say, the Dwarf King sees all agents of the Prince as spies and thieves.

The Three | While the Emperor and Archmage may trust those dragons, the Dwarf King doesn't. Thankfully, their city is at the other end of the empire, and the Dwarf King has more pressing matters to worry about. Or so he thinks. 

BACKMATTER



I'm not going down in there – said every character I've ever run who would later meet their doom, down in the dark. It is the quintessential fantasy gaming experience, taking that trek down crumbling stairs, must and dust of a thousand years clogging your nostrils, nerves making your sword hand shake. But you have your compatriots, leading the way and protecting your back. You're going to be OK.

And then the screaming starts.

We've played this way for 40+ years and it has been a blast. In this issue we delved deep into 13 new realms, met a new compatriot and learned what the place we entered thought of us. Next issue our faith in higher powers will be defined and tested.

Until next time. 🎲

Sherm Sheftall | January 2019

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next issue

THE DIVINE
