



ISSUE 14



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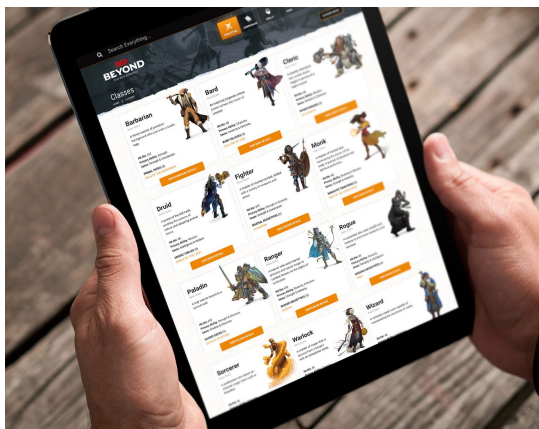


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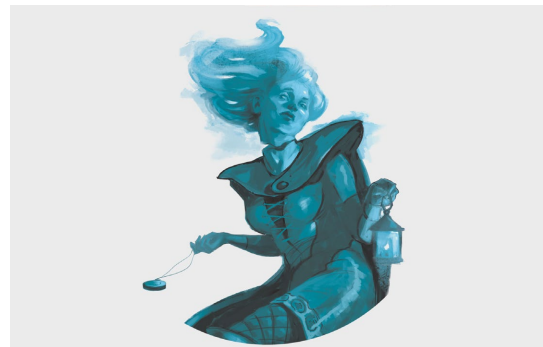
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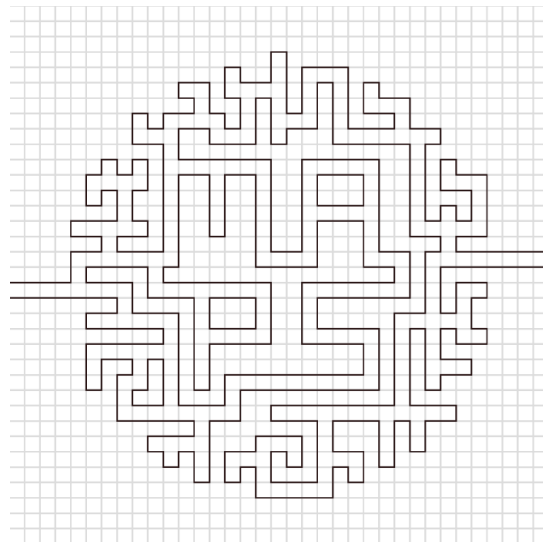
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Next Issue: Dragon+ 15

The summer really heats up as *Dragon+* roars towards its fifteenth issue



DRAGON+ 14

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Bart Carroll introduces an issue of literature and travel.

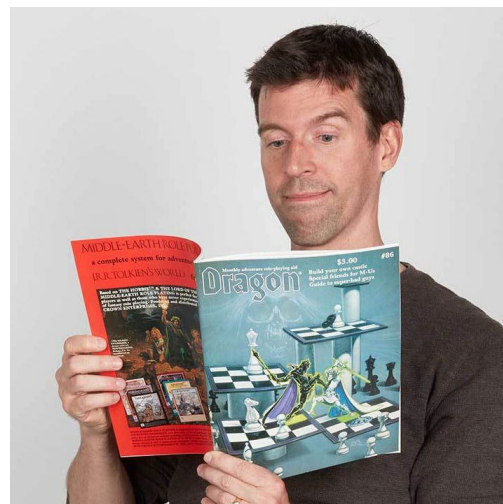
Welcome to an issue of exotic travel, literature, and exotic travel literature.

There we were, aboard a merchant ship. Searching the hold. And as the wont of players everywhere, we were inquiring as to the contents of every container we came across (at one point, the D&D website even offered a Barrel, Crate, and Sack **random generator** to field such queries).

Our DM, scrambling for a more descriptive way of saying “There’s nothing here, so please stop looking. Let’s move on...” instead mumbled to the effect: “Ah, it’s all just filled with old love letters between two goblins...”

Appreciative laughter ensued.

In Luke Skywalker Can’t Read: And Other Geeky Truths, Ryan Britt wonders that no one in the *Star Wars* Universe ever reads any books. They would, of course; they must—they have stories and fiction, they’re just never really shown. In the D&D multiverse, however, there’s no mystery on this account. Spellbooks abound, there’s Candlekeep and many other libraries, not to mention that proficiency in a language provides characters with literacy in that language as well.



Bart Carroll

So yes, D&D characters enjoy fiction. As do *Dragon+* readers.

Last issue, we took a gamble. For each of the seven adventures in *Tales from the Yawning Portal*, we provided a fiction intro—which made for quite a bit of fiction, and so we asked your preferences and tolerance for this in our reader survey. The results came back: over 60 percent of you preferred the current amount or even more fiction, with a further 30 percent neutral on the matter. Write-in comments further bolstered the call for continued or even further fiction.

Fiction has long been a part of *Dragon* magazine, an element that I very much wish to continue in *Dragon+*. For the past several issues, this fiction has been fairly standalone; even with *Tales from the Yawning Portal*, the pieces were only loosely connected as stories told around the tavern regarding the book's adventures.

Over at *Magic: the Gathering*, one of their popular online columns has been **Magic Story**. These episodes offer an ongoing narrative over the course of many weeks that takes readers through each of the current card sets; and while the story beats are largely conveyed through the cards themselves, Magic Story helps better connect it all together and further fleshes out the narrative details.

It's a bit different for D&D. We release a storyline via our campaign books (such as the forthcoming *Tomb of Annihilation*), and while we provide the setting, challenges and antagonists, when it comes to fleshing out the story beats, that's often rather up to you and your player group.

That said, in our ever-experimental mindset we're still interested in pushing our fiction ever further. While *Dragon+* fiction will remain somewhat episodic (given that issues are bimonthly), we're also looking to better connect them as part of a more cohesive story—at least for the next few issues. Starting in Issue 15 (August), Adam Lee will be penning an ongoing story to carry through the end of the year and lead us deep into the jungles of Chult... and all that may be hidden there.

As always, we look for your thoughts and feedback on this approach to fiction, as well as all our other content. On that note, looking back into the reader survey, I'll also point out that you're especially

interested in material you can use more immediately in your games—advice for DMs, adventures, and even simply more anecdotes from around the table. In fact, of all the material we’ve presented over the last several months, the area that consistently rates of lesser interest has been this very welcome letter!

So to that end, this issue offers an early look at *Tomb of Annihilation*, DM advice for running *Tomb of Horrors* and connecting it forward, and our next piece of fiction. And as for this letter... let’s see if there’s a way to make it more useful...

snaps fingers

Got it! A mini container table, for the next time your players are randomly looting the world! Based on the strangest things that folks here on the D&D Team have ever found or placed in containers during their games:

1. Heaps of old love letters (Bart Carroll)
2. Portal to the Nine Hells (Chris Perkins)
3. Alchemical liquid that hardens into an undrinkable plasticky goop when it comes into contact with the air, and thus can’t be tasted for potion identification (Sam Weigelt)
4. Portal to a demi-plane that’s basically “Candy Land” with food (especially sweets) growing on trees and rivers of ale, mead, and lemonade (Stan!)
5. Nicotine patch, useful to dwarves who chain smoke cigars and are trying to quit (Hilary Ross)
6. Dead clone of the one of the characters (Chris Perkins)

Bart Carroll, Digital Marketing Manager for Wizards of the Coast/Dungeons & Dragons

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Imagining the Ampersand

Meet Nicholas Little, the artist responsible for the amazing animated cover of this issue of *Dragon+*

Brooklyn-based Nicholas Little came to illustration the long way around, having first studied psychology as an undergraduate. He blames a diet of Disney movies and regular visits to the wildlife sanctuary with his grandmother for the number of animals and creatures that appear in his illustrations (as well as his modest collection of insects).

“I think a great gif should be a self-contained little story, which fills the same niche that a short animation might in terms of storytelling,” he tells *Dragon+*, as we grill him about his depiction of archlich Acererak. “There should also be lots of things to look at, some visual interest. And an



(Select to view)

emotional response is essential, whether that be humor or something else.”

How would you describe your artistic style?

My goal is to embrace the computer as its own distinct medium. I treat it as its own thing with its own vocabulary, rather than a tool for replicating

traditional media. I work completely on the computer now, as it’s more comfortable for me. I still do like to draw more traditionally on my own time. But it’s more flexible and efficient if I work on the computer, and the sketches come out a little bit more polished.

There’s a retro video game feel to a lot of your pieces. Are you old enough to have been an 8-bit gamer the first time around?

I’m actually not. There’s been a resurgence in indie games of that kind of aesthetic, which I really find attractive. So I think I’m responding to that. But I always played video games growing up, they just didn’t happen to be 8-bit games.

What kind of brief were you given to create the cover for *Dragon+*?

Shauna [Narciso], the senior art director that I worked with, had seen one of my pieces that she liked. We used that as a jumping off point, making Acererak the central figure. We then built around him all these components

that fit into that universe.

What were the first steps?

I guess I'm very literal in the sense that I start by nailing down a color palette and then that forms the pieces that fit into the image. For example, if we were working with a red and green palette, I could have strawberries in the image but not bananas, if that makes sense. There's no reason to be that literal, it just helps me in my approach.

Do you follow that up with a sketch?

I start with a loose sketch, just placing things on the canvas to see how they fit together. I'll add a little bit of motion and then build on that, trying to get some variety in movement so it's not too repetitive. We wanted to keep Acererak central to the composition. There are a lot of pieces in this particular image, and I want them all to be cool, but we have to make sure he's still the focus.

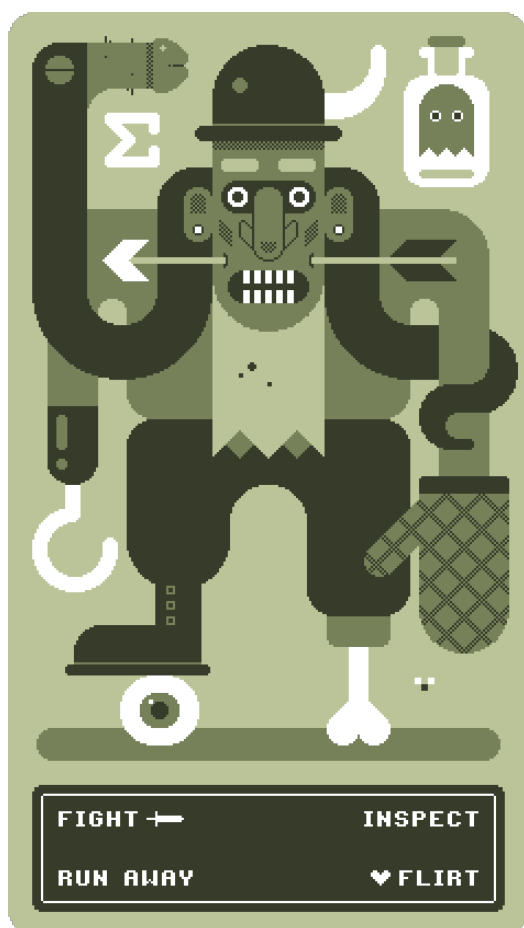


'Run the Jewels' The New Yorker (select to view)

Do you map out the animation in your head, or do you actually draw plans for the moving parts?

I start with some basic stuff, just moving things up and down and toggling things on and off. That gets more elaborate as I see how things are coming together. I want some pieces to be simple, so the more important pieces can then have increased animation, with full gestures and full cycles. The other stuff stays a bit more binary.

Do you do a lot of tinkering with



'Extremely RPG Encounter' A .gif for an upcoming mobile application (select to view)

the art and animation until you're happy with it?

When I'm working, I usually try to nail down each component and get it to a place that I like. By the end of it, I'll usually have made a bunch of revisions, so everything fits more nicely together. It helps if you're working in this

Frankenstein manner, combining a lot of pieces, to take another look at it at the end and make sure everything works together.

The style is quite cartoony. Does that lend itself to pieces that aren't gifs?

Fortunately, I've had a lot of variety in terms of recent commissions. Lots of editorial work, some technology pieces. The trick is framing those articles and that content into my own style. Sometimes I get a really dry article and the challenge is, how do I make this fun? How do I make it visually interesting, while still holding true to the intent of the article?

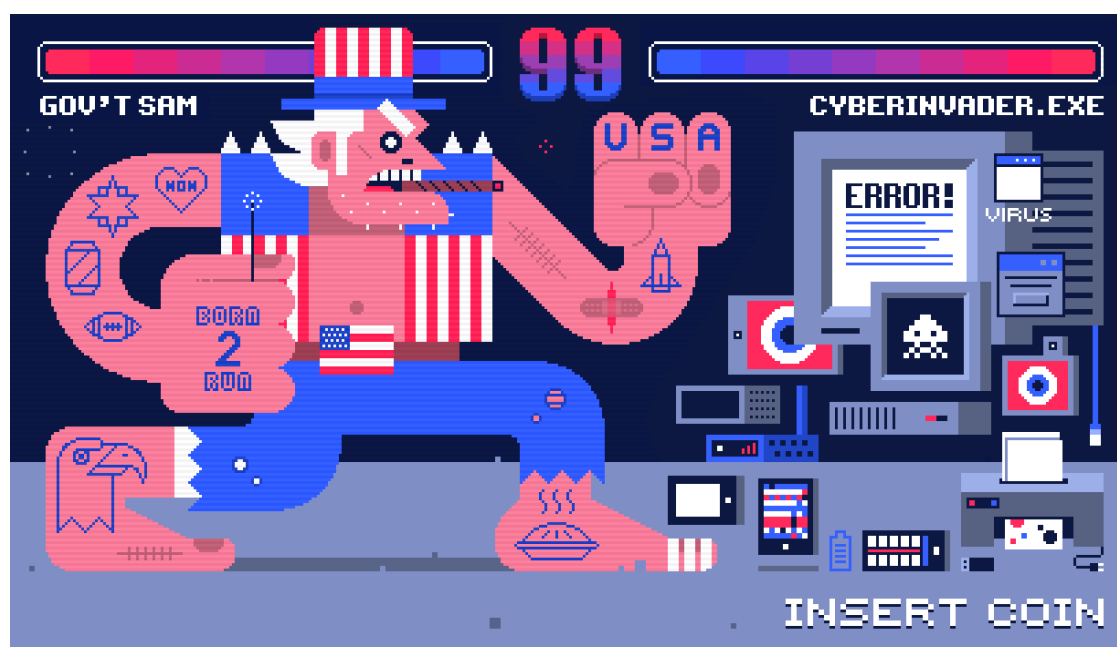
Do you have a favorite out of all your gifs?

I love working for the *MIT Technology Review*. I've got a few pieces for them on my website. I think my favourite would have to be the Government Sam gif that I did. I'm also very proud of the Run the Jewels portrait that I did for *The New Yorker*, because that was my first *New Yorker* assignment. I happen to be a big fan of Run the

Jewels, it was just coincidence it worked out that way.

How close is the final *Dragon+* cover to the initial discussions you had?

It's pretty close, actually. It was very helpful to have that jumping off point. But it's hard to say because Shauna and I have had back-and-forth discussions, so the evolution of the piece seems very organic. There's not a big jump from where we started to where we are now, and all the changes are logical and can be traced back to the original.



'GOV'T SAM vs. CYBERINVADER.EXE' MIT Technology Review (select to view)

It features Acererak as a small figure, surrounded by his trophies and things he's collected, all of these moving pieces—some of them gross, some of them cool. It's a lot of moving pieces and that's where the visual variety comes from. That's also where the challenge is, trying to get a variety of motion and keeping him central.

Did you dig into Acererak's history to get a handle on him?

I read the story guide a few times to understand his character a little better. I also did my own research, looking through some of the older stuff and getting visual inspiration from that. I hope I didn't deviate too far from his design. There were some great allusions to other works of fiction in the story guide that were very helpful. They describe him at one point as a James Bond villain, which gave me a better sense of his character.

How familiar were you with *Dungeons & Dragons* before this

project?

I've never played D&D specifically, but I've played tons of RPGs, most of them fantasy-themed. Based on this assignment, I've been converted. I was so surprised reading through the story guide at how accessible it is. There's a great sense of levity that doesn't break the immersion. That was really encouraging and I'll probably get into it after this.

To see more of Nicholas Little's work, visit his [official website](#).

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Travels with D&D

From linguistic quirks to snacks that can't be beat, *Dragon+* chronicles the differences, and the similarities, of D&D around the globe...

As the ink dries on the *Player's Handbook*, the final tables are collated in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the toothy illustrations are all accounted for in the *Monster Manual*, you might think that's where the work stops. Mission accomplished. Job done. In the English-speaking world, you'd be right. But in the hundreds of countries where another major language is king, the process is just beginning.

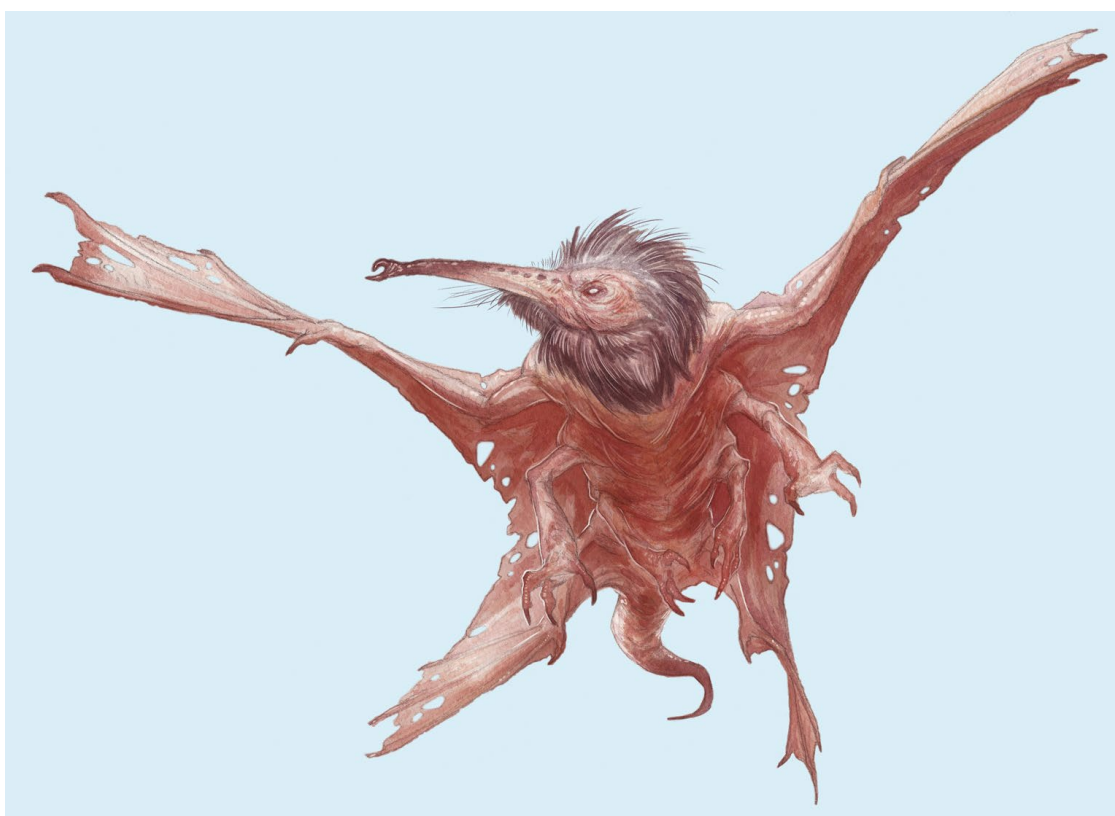
"We have a company in Japan, people in France, Germany and Italy," says Matthew Vaughan, project manager at Gale Force Nine, which handles the localization of Dungeons & Dragons products. "I head up the operation and deal with a small internal team, as well as different partners globally."

If you expect the process to be purely academic, swapping English words for their foreign counterparts, then you haven't taken into account the inherent differences in the languages of the world. "I

have noticed that English is a more epic and adventurous language than Danish,” says Jussi R. Foltmar Svendsen, the multi-lingual author of [this issue’s DMs Guild module](#). “I was born and raised in Belgium, so I’ve also played quite a bit in French. The French vocabulary enables a different approach to descriptions. It is very romantic, and a lot of the terms—especially names of weapons and how to use them—are therefore described very differently.”

LOST IN TRANSLATION

The chance to create a new edition of D&D also presents the opportunity to correct mistakes. Vaughan admits that third edition was “a bizarre translation” in places, and some of that material was still in need of an update.



The original French translation for Stirge didn’t actually make sense. (Select to view)

“The stirge was a key one, recently. It had been translated in French but it didn’t actually make sense. Because it looked like a vampire, assumptions were made, and early on it had all the established lore. Now we’re updating it to what it actually is.”

Spanish translator Rodrigo García Carmona admits he had a little chuckle when he realized the humble deer had a bite attack (“Now I

respect those cute beasts a little bit more”), but it was another creature that stumped him when it came to an accurate portrayal.

“We already knew that English has many words that mean ‘person that has come back from the dead in a spiritual form’. But we didn’t expect each to be a different monster: ghost, specter, wraith, banshee,” he explains. “We really had to work hard with this one and, in the end, we decided to leave the banshee in English. Her cry is so characteristic that there was no equivalent. There are also a ton of monsters whose names are wordplays or strange compound words, like the bugbear or the owlbear. Now that I think of it, what’s with all the bears?”

While specific creatures might pose a problem, you’d expect other D&D staples to be more easily translated at this point in the roleplaying game’s history. Surprisingly, you’d be wrong. Even some major parts of the RPG, such as character classes, present their own unique problems.



The rogue class has been the most difficult to translate. (Select to view)

“The rogue class has once again been the most difficult to translate, as it always has been in past,” says Massimo Bianchini, Gale Force Nine’s man in Italy (who’s worked on D&D sourcebooks for twenty years, starting back in 1997 with AD&D second edition).

“Rogue has no pertinent translation in Italian, so historically it’s always been known as ‘ladro’, which is the correct translation for ‘thief’. Unfortunately, as in past editions, thief is an archetype of the rogue, so we had to translate that using another less-related word, ‘furfante’, which means scoundrel.

We’re practically swapping them, which is not the perfect solution, but we’re forced to call rogue ‘ladro’, or every player who loves that class in Italy would complain.”

Bianchini cites a similar problem with both the ranger and the warlock. Despite translations of Tolkien’s works using the word “ramingo”, the English word ranger has become accepted over a long period of use in Italy. “Warlock is a relatively newer entry,” he adds. “There would be a terrible Italian translation, ‘fattucchiere’, which brings to mind Disney’s characters rather than darker magic users. The other potential translation, ‘stregone’, is already in use for ‘sorcerer’. In the end there were no options besides using the English warlock, which luckily still sounds good in an Italian accent.”

Even an everyday item can provide its own frustrations. Spain’s Carmona came unstuck when he encountered a list of names describing the humble barrel. “In the General Furnishing and Appointments list in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, there are eight barrels of different sizes and shapes: the butt; the firkin; the hogshead; the cask; the keg; the pipe—no, not that kind of pipe, the kind that’s a big barrel!;—the tun; and, of course, the barrel itself. Each needed a different word in Spanish. Suffice to say, we’re now true experts in liquor containers.”

PLAYING STYLES

Translation of key phrases, creatures and character classes isn’t the only thing that differs around the world. The physical act of how and where the game is played also offers up some subtle (and not so subtle) differences, depending on what part of the world you roll your dice in.

For example, in South Africa the high price of rents makes it hard for hobby stores to offer large playing spaces. “Most stores can’t afford to have a dedicated space for gaming, and usually will have a customizable set-up that allows them to move shelves and set up game tables,” says Clive Burmeister of **Outer Limits**. “In our old shop, we had a balcony area, which was mostly used for gaming. Since roleplaying requires a quieter area, we usually ran that



in the front of the shop.”

Conversely, hobby gaming stores in Japan and Italy both attract a lot of players and DMs, for very different reasons. “We have plenty of groups playing D&D,” says the owner of the **Jolly Joker Game Café** in Turin, Italy. “Some play D&D Adventurers League and some are playing their homebrew campaigns, but we also have many Dungeon Masters available for pick-up games for new players. Although, the fact that we offer free food and drinks to the DMs may help.”



Jolly Joker Game Café

In Japan, two factors draw crowds to the gaming stores: the lack of space in many Japanese homes; and the expertise of the Dungeon Masters. “The housing situation is still very bad in Japan and most people don’t have enough playing space in their house to play games. So they’ll usually meet in the play rooms of gaming stores,” says the owner of **Role&Roll Station** in Chiyoda, Tokyo who also confirmed that: “online sessions are very active in Japan, because of the housing situation.”



LANGUAGE BARRIERS

The language in the source books can clearly have a big impact on Dungeons & Dragons, but the language spoken at the table can also be a major factor. As D&D contributor **Chris Sims** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*, *Tales from the Yawning Portal*) found, when he moved to a little village in Austria.

“My German is intermediate at best. I’d say my comprehension is about 50 percent, and my ability to speak, at least in the complex ways D&D play can require, is 35 percent or so. I can get by here, but asking me what kind of pact a would-be noble might make with a mighty erinyes devil is a bit beyond me,” he says.



Chris Sims

“The other players are all bilingual, or more, but they’re most comfortable playing in German. As the new player, I felt it was only right to conform to the norms of the group. That said, the others understand when I’m forced to speak English. Which is often. One solution I came up with is that my character has memory issues. As such, Common is not his native tongue. So, when I make a mistake voicing Kamod, he makes the same mistake in the game world. It makes the language navigation a little more fun.”

“We started out in English,” adds DMs Guild module designer Svendsen, discussing the game he runs online at **YouTube** and **Twitch**. “But since our players and viewers are Danes, we switched language, especially since two of our players were struggling in English.”

Burmeister suggests language isn’t always the issue, however. Sometimes the very concept you’re trying to explain may be beyond those playing the game. “I myself am English speaking, and can barely speak Afrikaans, but we do have Afrikaans players in both of my games at Outer Limits,” the South African DM explains. “There has been the occasional hiccup trying to explain something to a new gamer, but more often than not this is more a fantasy concept which is totally new to the person—what, a vampire that doesn’t sparkle in the sun?”

When in doubt, the universal language of signs and gestures makes a great shortcut, in some cases replacing words altogether. “Mind flayers have largely lost their name completely. When one of them pops up, people generally wiggle their fingers in front of their mouths, Cthulhu style,” Burmeister says with a smile.

LOCAL INFLUENCE

Communications issues aside, different cultures have the benefit of bringing their unique influences to the table with them. The rich folklore of a region might color its monsters, the shared history might establish memes and in-jokes, or a love of a certain pastime might make one particular character type more popular than all the others.

“For starters, I’ve lost count of the capoeira-inspired monks that have shown up at my table over the past decades,” says fantasy illustrator **Claudio Pozas**, commenting on the martial art that’s popular in Brazil.

“We’re in Perth in Scotland, where there’s a large musical tradition, and that translates into a *lot* of people making bards. One of our most regular players has a bard who specializes in the bagpipes,” adds Stuart Kane, who



Scottish players have seen their fair share of swearing Orcs! (Select to view)

runs **Big Dog Books** in Scotland. “The Tolkienesque influences are also quite strong here, so we get a lot of stereotypical dwarves and elves. And orc warlords have a habit of swearing in uniquely Scottish ways!”

“The history that forms the basis for the default D&D milieu does surround us here,” says Chris Sims of his environment in Austria.

“Europe is old. I’ve been in a farmhouse, which a friend’s parents live in, that’s older than the United States as a national entity. From my apartment, I can see two castles. One was the home of a branch of the Knights Templar. And the Styrian Armory in Graz, full of arms from many centuries of Austrian empire, has to be seen to be believed. This is a land where many of our fairy tales have their origins, and it’s easy for me to imagine taking the local landscape and making a D&D campaign with it.”

Even the less fun elements of a society can make their mark in the fantasy world. The harsh realities of modern life, which might seem a million miles away from the politics of Waterdeep or the feudalism of an early society, can also imprint themselves on a campaign.

“As a South African DM, I can say that my experience of this country definitely colors my storytelling style,” says Russell Goldman, who runs a game at Outer Limits in South Africa. “I believe my campaigns tend to have a bleaker outlook than the norm, and also tend toward the more violent end of the spectrum. Cities possess large slums and tend to be in some state of disrepair, while racism, corruption and grotesque levels of oppression tend to be

commonplace. I also tend to focus more on economic hardship and practicality in my campaigns, which I believe reflects my own fears over the instability of our country's economy."

CUISINE AND KARMA

Despite all those cultural distinctions, there are many things that D&D players of any nationality would recognize at game nights held around the world. One of those is its association with food. The menu might change depending on the region, but that coming together of like-minded people always seems to be accompanied by a snack or two.

Whether that's Russian players sharing their own food with each other (with a supply of cookies provided by the store), the free food for DMs that brings an abundance of them to the Jolly Joker Game Café in Italy, or the uptick in general snack quality noticed by Sims ("Austrian baked goods cannot be beat, honestly!").



Food continues to be a theme that successfully crosses language barriers.
(Select to view)

"Most of our D&D players buy a monthly pass that gives them free drinks and snacks during the game," says Kane from Big Dog Books in Scotland. "Popcorn is very popular, and frequently bits of it end up taking the place of goblins when a DM runs out of figures."

"I don't think there's too much different here to what might happen in America," confirms Burmeister from Outer Limits in South Africa. "Your food might be different, although people generally stick to generic sodas and potato chips, but it's not unheard of to have some biltong or boerewors rolls." "No Mountain Dew, though," adds Pozas from Brazil. "That thing is strictly American."

What's not strictly American is a belief in "bad" dice. If there's any practice likely to extend beyond national borders, it's that luck can



Superstitions around dice is a belief that extends around the globe. (Select to view)

sometimes be manipulated. And when it has all been used up, it might be time to invest in some new dice.

“I’m not sure if they are different from anywhere else, but people have all sorts of superstitions when it comes to dice,” says Kane from Big Dog Books, telling a familiar story. “It’s felt that certain dice have had their high numbers ‘rolled out’ already.” “People

believe that bad dice, which have made several one, two or even three rolls, should be punished and kept away from the main pool.

Sometimes there is even a need to buy new ones,” says Stanislav Ivanov from Russia’s [Edinrog store](#) (translation: Unicorn), showing that the belief extends across the globe. “I’ve seen people yelling ‘kill!’ or ‘20!’ to bring them luck. And prayers to ‘dark old gods’ for good throws are common too.

In Japan, a society with a rich folklore of spirits, this goes even further. “There’s a superstition with regard to dice, that if a player puts a spirit into them, they will be able to manipulate the outcome,” says the owner of the Yellow Submarine stores in Tokyo. “After that, the dice used for this difficult role is viewed extremely suspiciously.”

MORE SIMILARITIES THAN DIFFERENCES

“I’d hazard a guess that South African role players wouldn’t seem too out of place at an American table,” says Burmeister from Outer Limits, summing up a belief that, at heart, D&D players are often cut from the same cloth. While it can be unusual to hear the term “globalization” used in a wholly positive way at times, it seems in this instance it actually helps build the shared experience that binds us closer together.

“By and large, games here tend to be influenced by the same media that influenced D&D itself, with movie-inspired werewolves and zombies being featured, instead of the African ghost of local lore or the cursed eighth son,” says Pozas in Brazil. “I know some people are experimenting with folklore-based settings, but—fortunately or unfortunately—most people prefer imported tales and stories,” confirms Ivanov in Russia.

“The D&D experience actively benefits from globalization,” says Sims. “Austrians have Netflix and they also watch Critical Role, so they get the cultural references that might have been more exclusively American in a bygone era. One might think this homogeneity is a bad thing, but I think the elements of life that connect and unify us are good and important.”

“I was amazed by how little gamers change from one culture to the next. I have played games with people from Brazil, the United States, Canada, Argentina, Germany, and the UK, among others, and we all have more similarities than differences. We tend to love the same movies, read the same comics, play the same games, and that brings us closer together,” says Pozas.

“Here in Denmark, there’s a Danish term that can’t really be translated, where we say that we ‘hygger os’ playing the game,” says DMs Guild designer Svendsen. “It means that we have fun, create friendships, and have a good time.” A term that can’t be directly translated, but which so aptly describes the experience we all share—what better way to sum up the differences and similarities D&D enjoys around the globe.

BACK TO TOP



Fiction: Prelude

Prelude to the Tomb of Annihilation, as cursed secrets are discovered throughout Faerûn!

By Bart Carroll

So there was a joke being told around the city's lanceboards. Not a terribly good one, it must be said, but Pion heard the same joke everywhere he plied Neverwinter's game halls, and drinking dens, public squares, back alleys, libraries, and even classrooms... anywhere he might find a lanceboard set up and pick up a match.

The joke went that once chess pieces were taken these days, they now remained defeated forever and couldn't return to the game. Not even to promote an advancing pawn. Not even returned to the board for the next game.

"Someone should collect all those old pieces," Pion usually quipped

in return. “They’d have quite a few of my own by now.”

The joke, as it were, reflected the rumors (if the temples and churches could be believed) of a death curse. Now no one could be returned from the dead. For Pion, it didn’t much matter to him how many times he heard it. Truth be told, it hardly mattered whether he even won or lost the matches he played, only that he learned more stratagems of the game.

He had to; his own life depended on it.



When Neverwinter’s Midsummer Festival passed without Alfin Biscop’s attendance, it was noted but without great concern. The city had enough on its mind. And besides, Biscop had once campaigned a great deal in the service of Torm. Although these days he stayed largely retired at his manor home, it was not unreasonable to think he still occasionally traveled the Realms.

Then the Wonders of Gond came and went. And Highharvestide. And then the Masquerade of Liars, and concern finally did begin to grow. Adding to news from the temples—from all the temples, seemingly, that those spells and high rituals which brought the dead back to life no longer worked; that they no longer worked at all—and now one of the city’s famed clerics had vanished as well. Not even Biscop’s servants had been seen for quite some time.

More specifically, they had not been seen for at least the past six months, Pion’s guild calculated. And so the cleric’s manor would be well unattended.



For the tendays since, Neverwinter’s sect of Shadow Thieves had been plotting the task. Pion knew that he’d never been a particularly good cutpurse for them, an even worse smuggler, and an absolutely dismal street thug; but where he’d always excelled had been at gambling. No one in the guild dorms would play him in dice or cards, and he was always assigned to either deal in the Shadow Thieves’ own gaming halls or to play at their competitors’ establishments.

“But what do you know about chess?” his guild sergeants had asked.

Pion shrugged. Enough to wager on a friendly match, not enough to play competitively.

“Work on that, then,” they told him. “Quickly.”



Alfin Biscop himself loved chess, they explained. The cleric reportedly brought a lanceboard with him on all of his old expeditions, once even playing against a silver dragon with Biscop’s own life for stakes (and won), and once against a blue dragon (and lost, later resurrected by his temple). So however he’d locked his manor’s vault, it would have to do with the rules of the game. The warlock who designed its vault had hinted as much, after guild agents happened to sell him components for his next creation (an entire clutch of *gems of seeing*). Find some solution to the game, and the vault would open; lose, and be slain.

From the Shadow Thieves’ perspective, the only difficulty would be in getting Pion inside unobserved.

“We’ll polymorph him into a mouse,” one of the guild wizards offered. “Let him crawl his way inside.”

“May be predators along the way, down in the sewers,” his sergeants cautioned. (Pion said nothing but did not care for this plan himself, especially when they considered adding further complications—that perhaps one of the wizard’s familiars, a quasit, could travel alongside and protect the mouse. Pion knew the quasit; the quasit was mad. It would kill him at first chance and carve his mouse skull into a tiny helm.)

“Gaseous form,” another of the wizards suggested. “Have him drift his way in.”

“Just no telling about the currents.” (Pion liked this plan no better, also further complicated with the idea of a guild tinker’s clockwork device to fly alongside and fan him in the proper direction. Pion also knew the tinker; his last device had dragged a thief down the privy to his death.)

In the end, they simply brought Pion to the alleyways behind and cast

a *passwall* spell.



Pion crept through the manor—advancing across the lanceboard, he thought to himself, noting the floor’s checkered tiles. And except for himself, no other pieces; no one else here, and no illumination other than moonlight falling in through tall, arched windows.

He’d heard of veteran warriors who built their strongholds in the wilds, clearing the lands of dangers to then establish their own small freeholds, dukedoms, principalities. Biscop had built his own stronghold as a manor house here on the outskirts of Neverwinter—smaller, but no less impressive. Pion marveled at its trophies and displays—the posed, stuffed bodies of an owlbear, a girallon; the glaive of a bearded devil, the rope of an erinyes, the hooked polearm of an osyluth; from the ceiling, an orrery. He passed a massive closed door, its heavy wood bound in what appeared to be the reshaped limbs of an iron golem, its hand forming the door’s handle.

His heart nearly stopped, as he came upon the gorgon. It knelt in the chamber before him, motionless. Eventually, after neither of them had moved, Pion determined that it too was merely another trophy. The gorgon had been refashioned into a table, its back hammered flat into a smooth, even surface inlaid with the squares of a lanceboard set, its pieces already positioned as if in the midst of play.

The pieces, large as goblets, flickered oddly in the light.

They drew Pion closer.

Closer still, and he could see glyphs carved onto the lanceboard’s squares. Pion understood at once that he would have to make the singular, correct move, checkmate the enemy king, and the correct combination of glyphs would align.

And Biscop’s hidden vault would open.

He also saw how it was the pieces flickered. The body of each was composed of some crystal or glass (tinted darkly for the black player), in which resided the figure of some tiny mephitis or imp. These prisoners were armed with small, needly blades, Pion noted, and writhed and hissed within their chess piece cells at the sight of

him.

Pion studied the board. And there was the way, he saw, recalling his many games and lessons, to check the black king. When he reached for the white queen to attack, the imp inside jabbed futilely at him from behind the glass.

He remembered that much.

When he set the piece down, some tiny aperture in the glass opened. He felt a pricking. The imp's tiny blade pierced his thumb.

And he remembered nothing more.



When Pion awoke, he found he'd been moved onto a couch in a different chamber, one with a dome of paneled windows overhead, out the top of which extended the workings of an enormous telescope. Slowly turning his head, he realized this was the chamber behind the iron golem's door.

And that the door remained open.

He began to see how slowly and quietly he could shift his body toward the doorway, when he noticed the iron hand forming the handle shift its fingers. Run for the door, and it would either close itself, he suspected, or worse—grab him.

“That was well-played,” intoned a deep, commanding voice. “You know your way around a lanceboard, at least enough to have checked the black king. Unfortunately for you, it was the wrong king.”

Pion turned back around, and followed the voice over to a figure silhouetted before the windows.

“Perhaps it was natural to assume you're meant to take the black king; to vanquish evil. But no; chess is a game of self-discipline and mastery. You were meant to take the white king instead; to overcome yourself. You did not even see this option, did you?”

Pion checked his hand. The prick in his thumb was still there; the pain of the wound reduced to a low throbbing.

“And so you should have died, thief.” The figure finally turned from the window and approached. “Any other time and I would have let you... only now I have need of a servant.”

Pion had seen cattle ravaged by disease. A ram, the only sign of its former strength in the breadth of its frame, but covered in a thinned and decaying pelt, unable to even lift its own head under the weight of its horns. So Alfin Biscop appeared. As he came into view, Pion recoiled. The remains of the cleric’s hair hung lank, his skin sallow and seeping, nose already decayed away and cadaverous: a visage of the demon Anthraxus, a living man molting into undeath.

“What...” Pion slowly found his voice. “What is it you want me to do?”

“I would have you deliver a message.”



According to Biscop, the message needed to be delivered to the Harpers—an organization, he intimated, that might well detain the messenger, a wanted Shadow Thief. “It’s a risk you’ll have to accept. The message is that essential.”

Of all the plans, of quasits and clockwork devices, Pion liked this one least of all. He had no intention of delivering anything. “Where are your own servants?” he asked, stalling long enough to somehow try and get back out through the door. “What happened to them?”

“Gone,” Biscop said. “All gone. My most trusted servants, I sent into the world to help search for an answer. They learned nothing, or never returned. As for the rest, a few fled from here on their own. Abandoned their posts. The rest I dismissed. After all, I would not have need for them much longer. The only news I ever received concerned members of my former party... about those that once died and returned as well. It seems we all share the same fate. We are rotting.”

“... sim... similar news throughout the city,” Pion managed to whisper.

“Throughout the entire Sword Coast, I imagine.” Biscop turned away, sparing Pion the horror. “The gift is being reclaimed, it seems.

Whatever gift it ever truly was that brought us back. Our resurrection... perhaps it never was a divine blessing, but a temporal one... the return to life, paid for by our future selves—is that all healing ever was? I wonder now... What do you suppose?”

Pion surely had no idea. It was not just Biscop’s physical form wasting away, but his mind and faith as well; Pion couldn’t tell which had wasted furthest, or was the more disconcerting to experience.

“Or perhaps we are being punished for our transgressions. Instead of this manor house, was I meant to live in a hovel?” Biscop stepped back towards the windows, speaking as if towards the heavens directly. “And yet these material things have furthered my cause. After all, must I strike with a bare fist, when I can kill so many more devils with an adamantite mace? Must I pay for a beggar’s supper, when I can host affairs here, and fete the politicians, and convince them to pay for so many more suppers for the poor?”

Biscop moved to the base of the telescope.

“Take this device. No mere machine. It is a living entity, can you imagine? The warlock who built my lanceboard constructed it for me as well. The workings come from modrons: malfunctioning rogues, and still very much alive, now serving as this telescope. They have to be; otherwise, their bodies would disintegrate. And I had need for them....”

With Biscop’s back to him, Pion positioned himself at the edge of the couch.

“But should I not have used this to look into the heavens? Am I being punished for spying upon the gods? Yet without it, I would not have learned what I did about this curse.”

Biscop turned then, and Pion froze. Still, his legs held tight as a drawn crossbow, ready to spring.

“This all seems cruel...” Pion considered the telescope, the chessboard, and especially the door to the chamber. He steadied himself to run through it, come what may. “All these creatures kept alive and imprisoned for your use.”

“These creatures are evil, either by their inherent nature, or by the actions they’ve chosen. I could have destroyed them all. I destroyed many of them. Others, I’ve allowed to exist and put into some goodly service. Take the modrons; they’ve allowed me to view the planar heavens. To compose my message, for the Harpers.

“And take yourself. All my other servants are gone, so I must rely on the thief who came to rob me.

“I cannot leave here. In my weakened condition, my enemies would strike me down in the streets only too easily. You must deliver the message for me. And you should know, before you charge through that door without my message in hand—”

Pion had already reached the threshold, and stopped.

“—the lanceboard’s poison is still in your system. I have used healing magic to slow its course so that it now strolls, not races, to your heart. But it still strolls. It cannot be cured.”

The Shadow Thieves had numerous poisoners, as well as long experience healing novice members learning to both set and disarm coated traps. “No, no, there’s always a cure,” Pion babbled, “medicine or spells to neutralize poison.”

“Not this. It came from the tail of Geryon; it is a poison without antidote. But not to worry. I will plead in my message to the Harpers on your behalf; I will ask that they release you, since I alone can slow the poison in your system until an answer to this death curse is found.”

“And then what?”

“And then we’ll let the poison overtake you, and in payment for your service, I’ll have you raised.”

His legs weakened. Pion couldn’t even make it back to the couch, but slumped to the floor. “I’m to remain here while they search?”

“The Harpers are quite good at finding things.” Biscop walked past him, the door opening itself wider to admit him out toward the lanceboard in the other room. “And so long as you’re here, you may prove yourself a worthy player to at least pass the time together. Who

knows? You may defeat me and open the vault after all.”

“And if you rot away before the death curse is lifted? Or if it’s never lifted at all?”

Biscop shrugged. “Then let the curse take me, and the poison take you. But I promise, those chairs set around the lanceboard are at least quite comfortable ones for us to die in.”

PART 2

The craft had been constructed from brass: spherical, trailing long, metallic tentacles behind it. A xag-ya, in its appearance. And although outwardly solid metal, its eyes had been constructed from honeycombed *gems of seeing*, such that within its tiny cockpit it was as if the hull didn’t exist at all, transparent save for the controls. And from there, Rokh Manti watched the entirety of the plane through which he sailed, in this craft of his own design.

Not that there was much to see. If clerics prayed for healing as if for water, the Positive Material Plane was the well their gods and emissaries drew from; a font. Yet even so, to immerse yourself fully in it was to be held under the surge of a roaring cataract that could not be survived for long. Even travelers who gated or plane shifted here could not overstay. Only Rokh in his golemic craft.

He had devoted much of himself to its construction—quite literally, as demanded by the warlock’s patron, the artificer Kwalish.

Pure white brilliance, Rokh noted. Although not uniform. It is just as Alfin Biscop described: currents of energy run throughout the Plane.

The Harpers had funded this expedition. Generously. The highest clerics and spellcasters in their organization had communed with the gods, consulted with mystics knowledgeable in the multiverse—and at great cost, even met with Szass Tam and the liches of the Red Wizards. Their best understanding had directed them here. Yet even the greatest among them did not have the means to undertake this expedition themselves, and had been forced to commission his services.

As directed, I have located the current to Toril. A funnel, directing

the plane's energies down towards our world. I have also discovered the anomaly in the current Biscop described.

To continue the analogy, it is as if the waters downstream from this current had somehow been dammed, the current redirected. Rokh had discovered this much, when other creatures came into his view: spherical, trailing long tentacles behind them. Xag-yas. Curious about his craft resembling them in form, or sensing an intruder and come to defend their territory.

Their tentacles reached for his craft. Grasping for it, as he maneuvered away. Only they were too nimble here on their home plane. They latched on, draping over the craft.

Rokh send out a single blast of negative energy. A xag-ya erupted, crackling violently as it fell away.

The others responded. Overwhelming the craft with a flood of positive energy. At once, the interior appeared solid once more as Rokh lost sight through the gemstones. The riveted seams began to glow. The slightest breach, and he would be destroyed.

Even Rokh's physical body was little more than another construction of his own design; but his brain—his brain, and the knowledge to bring back to the Harpers—that he had to save above all else. He'd encased it within a brasswork skull that served as his emergency escape; another device, able to gate back to the Prime Material Plane, to another body waiting for him there.

The current has been choked off. It still leads to Toril, but all of it redirected to a singular location there. To Chult.

Rokh Manti carried these last thoughts with him, as his brain gated away, his ship and body annihilated.

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Tomb of Annihilation

An early look inside *Tomb of Annihilation* from
Chris Perkins and Adam Lee

On June 2-3, Dungeons & Dragons hosted its **Stream of Annihilation**, bringing together livestreamers and luminaries to hang out and roll some dice. The event also announced D&D's next campaign storyline: *Tomb of Annihilation*.

Releasing September 19, this story begins:

Extra-planar evil is trapping the souls of the dead with a “death curse.” Manifesting within the Realms as a terrible plague, it is a slow, withering rot that takes hold of any soul who has been restored by divine intervention.

Now the candle of their borrowed life burns with sickening swiftness. Adventurers and wealthy patrons—those most likely to have been resurrected—have scrambled into action, using every means at their disposal to find out the cause of their fatal affliction.

As revealed during the livestream event, vital clues about the disease

have indicated the source of the curse is a necromantic device called the Soulmonger. This device is trapping the souls of the dead and using their power—for what purpose, however, remains a mystery. It was further discovered that the Soulmonger lies hidden deep within the unexplored jungles of Chult, buried under a long-forgotten city called Omu.

Omu's dreaded yuan-ti custodian, Ras Nsi, awaits all trespassers with an array of monsters, traps and magical trickery at his disposal. Adventurers will need all the help they can muster to get past Ras Nsi, and help may come in the form of special powers bestowed by the nine trickster gods—but their help will come at a price. Armed with trickster power, each tentative step takes the heroes deeper into the tomb, where they will uncover more clues about the dungeon's evil architect—the archlich Acererak.

As Tomb of Annihilation asks: "Is there anyone who can survive the tomb and defeat its evil architect?" For those about to embark on this adventure, we share some insight into its creation—and provide further warning and clues to the dangers awaiting you in Chult!

Tomb of Annihilation

With the appearance of Acererak on the cover of fifth edition's *Dungeon Master's Guide*, it was inevitable that players would someday face off against the game's most famous lich. Yet in addition to appearing in such a cornerstone adventure as *Tomb of Horrors*, there's more to what makes Acererak such a compelling villain.

"Unlike other liches," D&D's Chris Perkins says, "Acererak relishes the pain and suffering inflicted on adventurers, actively taunting them along the way."



(Select to view)

From the art order: Acererak, powerful undead wizard. Eyes: Pinpricks of blue-white in empty/black eye sockets. Flesh: gaunt, with dead skin drawn tightly over its skeletal features. Wardrobe: ornate robes with various embellishments, but no armor. Acererak wears a Green Devil Mask amulet around his neck.

The Jungles of Chult

For the *Tomb of Annihilation*, the decision was made to set the campaign within the Forgotten Realms, a setting which attracts its fair share of planar travelers. The question then became what would Acererak's tomb be like here? Where exactly would it be located? Even the original *Tomb of Horrors* postulated it might exist in any number of locations (a list revised by Bruce Cordell for his 3.5 edition update):

1. In the Bright Desert
2. Somewhere in the Vast Swamp south of Sunndi
3. In the Vast Swamp of Cormyr
4. On a small islet, one of many of the Nelanther Isles
5. In the Crawling Swamp in the Shadow Marches
6. Submerged in the Basura Swamp of Q'Barra

Fan sentiment had generally shown a desire to move away from the Sword Coast and its well-known cities for the next campaign. Thus, the tomb would be in a more far-flung place. A “lost land” that felt right for the hidden tomb:

Chult.

Overall, *Tomb of Annihilation*’s story team (Chris Perkins, Adam Lee, and Richard Whitters) loved Chult’s jungle setting, with its opportunity for pulp adventure—including the possibility of dinosaurs combined with the undead. As Chris states, they intentionally looked to combine *Tomb of Horrors* with *Dwellers of the Forbidden City*, such that hazards might include weird tropical diseases (mad monkey fever! Throat leeches!), dehydration, and hidden civilizations (consider the aarakocra, grung, and especially yuan-ti—a race very much in the spirit of Robert E. Howard stories). Even the characters’ entry point, Port Nyanzaru, with its merchant princes, guides for hire, and pack dinosaurs, stands on the brink of the jungle’s encroaching darkness.

And all that before adventurers even step foot inside the tomb, where even greater dangers await! And where it was time to bring in Pendleton Ward as story consultant....



(Select to view)

From the art order: We can see the tunnel-like entrance of the tomb

with the green devil mask over the archway. Outside the entrance to the tomb stands a 15 ft stone obelisk covered with writing. The obelisk arises out of the lush grass and jungle flora all around. An adventurer (cleric or mage) has cleared away the foliage and is reading the script.

Pendleton Ward

The team also knew well in advance that they wanted to work with *Adventure Time*'s famed creator. Pendleton had come for an initial visit some time back (playing D&D with various team members), and returned later on for a week-long session of collaboration. With *Tomb of Annihilation* as a veritable deathtrap campaign, the team wanted to balance its severity with lighthearted touches; so during Pendleton's collaboration, he helped brainstorm how the story might play out, the workings of various traps, and riffing on ideas—such as Chris's concept of the dead gods, which Pendleton steered toward becoming the nine trickster gods of alignment with their associative powers and drawbacks.

A Curse Most Deadly

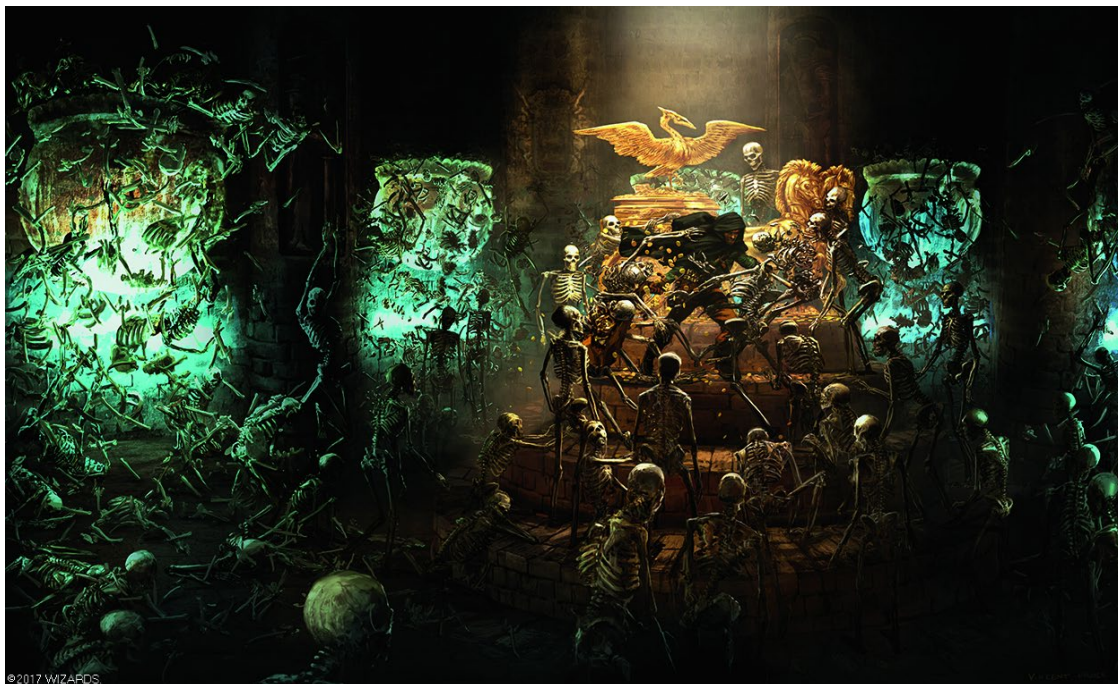
D&D's Mike Mearls wanted *Tomb of Annihilation* to have a deadlier feel than other campaigns. Normally, death is an obstacle for characters but not an insurmountable one through such spells as raise dead and resurrection. Here without those spells, death is the ultimate risk.

So for DMs looking to lead into this new campaign, they might keep in mind which of their players' characters, allies, or perhaps loved ones have died and returned to the game. With Acererak's death curse, such characters have started to rot within the world. Furthermore, once slain, they no longer have the ability to return from the dead... with one possible exception: Nanny Pu'pu.

Parties desperate for such aid may meet Nanny Pu'pu somewhere deep in the jungles. While some regard the green hag as one of the greatest evils on Chult, she alone has a ritual (albeit an unpleasant one) that can help slain party members continue. When asked about a fairly ridiculous name for such a terrible character, Chris explained that for a roleplaying encounter, they wanted to help dispel some of

the potential menace; a funny name helps diffuse the encounter at the onset.

And as if things weren't dangerous enough, the team created an additional variable for the campaign: meat-grinder mode. Added later in the development process, the team opted for a simple, but effective way of even further increasing the adventure's risk. As showcased in the recent *Stream of Annihilation* game, this option requires death saves at 15, instead of 10. So good luck with that, adventurers!



(Select to view)

From the art order: Lining the walls are six glass cauldrons brimming with human bones. The bones are reassembling into skeletons crawling out of the cauldrons to attack. In the middle of the floor, an ancient chariot bears a stone sarcophagus with treasure strewn atop it. Paintings on the chariot's body show a tall, evil-looking, ibis-like bird with a long, sharp beak. This is Papazotl, a trickster god whose bones are within the sarcophagus.

A Final Note on Campaigns

Tomb of Annihilation had actually been planned even before the *Tomb of Horrors* was added to *Tales from the Yawning Portal*. While *Tomb of Horrors* updated the original adventure to fifth edition, *Tomb of Annihilation* aimed to be a much broader story—a campaign that could well span a year of gameplay around the table.

In general, Chris says, D&D campaigns are designed to stand on their own, with measurable differences in tone from each previous campaign. It's a chance for the team to focus on something completely different each time, in a brand with no end of stories to tell and avenues to explore.

Still, they also look to provide connective tissue between campaigns. Just consider last year's campaign, *Storm King's Thunder*. Players might remember Artus Cimber (and the captured *ring of winter*). They might also be surprised to discover that the frost giants haven't given up their pursuit—no matter how far it takes them!

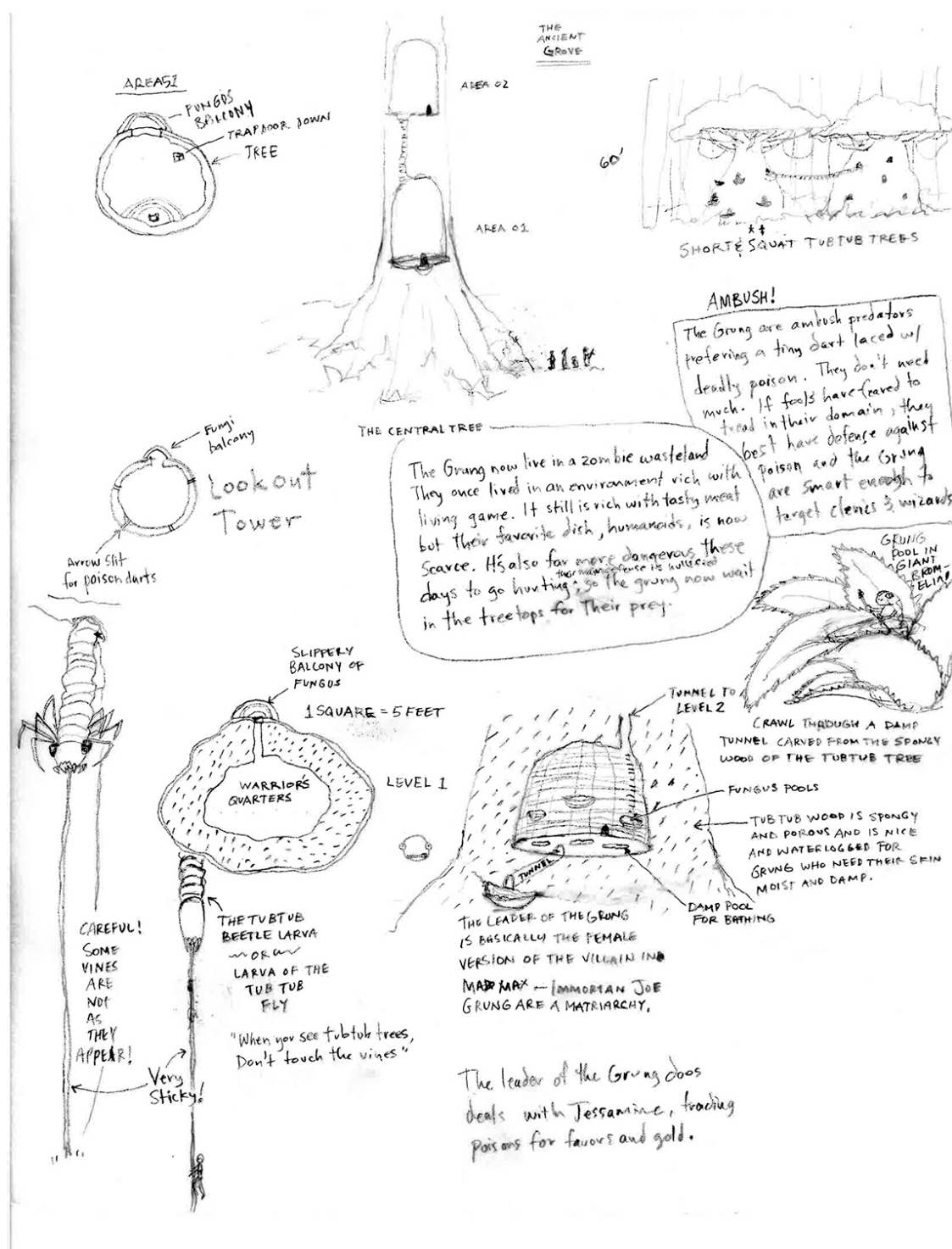
The Grung

While concepting the campaign, Adam Lee helped develop the grung village, Dungrunglung—showcased in the forthcoming Force Grey: Season 2 live games.

As Adam says: “I wanted Dungrunglung to be a mini-drama that would give a peek into grung culture and

be its own standalone adventure, something a DM could plug into any adventure that they choose. I wanted to create a fun place to really let the DMs and players do some full-out role-playing, so I packed it with a spectrum of memorable characters with interesting motivations and compelling reasons for a party to stay and engage with the story. Plus, I think the grung provide some great fun for voice actors to bring out the full arsenal of croaks and peeps.”

And, for your enjoyment, a look at the original concept work he created!



Live Stream Announcements

The Stream of Annihilation wasn't all Chris Perkins mercilessly tearing up character sheets, as Chult claimed its victims in Meat Grinder Mode. Beyond the announcement of the new D&D storyline, which will naturally include the *Tomb of Annihilation Campaign Guide*, there were also plenty of other major reveals to enjoy.

On-camera star Anna Prosser Robinson and professional streamer Kelly Link were on hand to marshal the big names queuing up to finally spill the beans now that *Tomb of Annihilation* was out of the bag. *Neverwinter* lead designer Thomas Foss came armed with a **teaser trailer** showing the lush but dangerous jungle environments that will be added to the MMORPG video game. The main star of that was the T-Rex. “Constantly, we have arguments: who is going to win, the green dragon or the T-Rex?” says Foss, before adding. “T-Rex is king!”



(Select to view)

WizKids Games president Justin Ziran and vice president Bryan Kinsella also popped up between celebrity death matches to introduce **the company’s seventh set of D&D figures**. These 44 pre-painted miniatures will be sold in random boosters, with each pack containing four figures in total (one large and three medium or small figures). They’ll bring the world of Chult to life on the tabletop, including wonderful creatures like the jungle goblins wearing face masks, and the version of Acererak seen on the *Tomb of Annihilation Campaign Guide* cover. (Be warned, there’s also a clear version of him, in case he ever turns invisible.)

Those who pre-order a D&D Icons of the Realms: Tomb of Annihilation Standard Booster Case also get the opportunity to add a very special set-piece collection to their order. This ‘Case Incentive’ package contains everything a Dungeon Master needs to create an unholy tomb likely to annihilate their players, including a devil face

statue, sarcophagus, archway, Acererak (demilich) skull, *sword of sharpness* and *shield of missile attraction*, as well as numerous other tiles for loot and traps.



(Select to view)

WizKids also announced the *Tomb of Annihilation Adventure Board Game System*. Following on from other critically-acclaimed D&D board games, this single-player or cooperative game (two to five players) will take adventurers into the unforgiven territories of both Chult and the Tomb of the Nine Gods. As with previous releases, a ‘Premium’ edition will feature fully-painted character and monster miniatures. The game can also be combined with other D&D Adventure System Cooperative Play Board Games, including *Temple of Elemental Evil*, *The Legend of Drizzt*, *Castle Ravenloft*, and *Wrath of Ashardalon*.



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Mike Mearls and Chris Perkins also joined forces on **day two of *Stream of Annihilation*** to announce *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* , a brand new resource expanding fifth edition rules. “Fifth edition has been around for nearly three years now,” says Mearls. “We took a look back and thought, what are all the things that are missing that people want, in terms of new rules options for characters, and new tools and toys for Dungeon Masters?”

Xanathar—Waterdeep’s most infamous crime lord, and a beholder to boot—shares his personal thoughts on how to dispatch anyone foolish enough to interfere with his business dealings, and ponders how tricks, traps, and even treasures can be put to villainous use. Players will also find complete rules for more than twenty new subclasses (including the cavalier, the inquisitive, and the horizon walker), dozens of new feats and spells, and a system to give characters a unique, randomized backstory.

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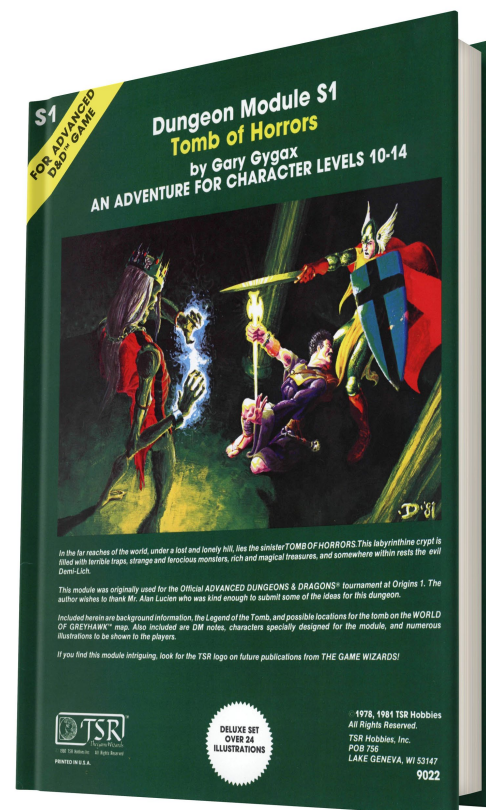
Tomb of Horrors

The Yawning Portal's deadliest adventure went competitive at Gary Con IX, where it had a rich prior history...

"I've heard people describe **Gary Con** as a family reunion, but with the family you choose to be with," says Luke Gygax, talking about the yearly roleplaying event set up in his father's name. It may bring people together, including Gygax's own extended RPG family, but he isn't afraid to cause a ruckus by pulling out the big guns.

"At Gary Con I, there were a big group of my friends, many of whom I had recently reconnected with and hadn't seen for a long time. Some were people I used to game with when I was a private in the military, in Germany in 1990. I thought, 'OK, we're at Gary Con, we don't see each other regularly, what's an iconic, one-shot adventure?' So I pulled *Tomb of Horrors* from my bag."

Fast forward eight years, and Acererak has raised his crowned skull once more. “I talked to Mike Mearls a couple of Gen Cons ago and invited him to come to Gary Con. I told him we had a very strong Adventurers League presence there, which was growing. So at Gary Con VIII he came with some of his folk—Chris Lindsay and Jeremy Crawford—and they supported us with some unique events. We got into discussions for Gary Con IX and they were talking about rolling out some classic adventures, including some of my father’s stuff. They proposed *Against the Giants* and some other possible scenarios, and I said, ‘You’ve got to do *Tomb of Horrors*.’ It’s such an iconic module,” Gyga remembers.



However, Gary Con IX didn’t just provide the opportunity to play the revamped fifth edition *Tomb of Horrors* campaign, as featured in *Tales from the Yawning Portal*, it also ushered in an era of Dungeons & Dragons competitive play.

“There are a couple of key differences between competitive and non-competitive play for D&D,” says Lindsay, lead Dungeon Master at Gary Con, working alongside Thomas Valley and his amazing crew. “First off, the event is timed. Dungeon Masters must all begin and end their game at exactly the same time. Players work together to move through the ‘dungeon’ encountering challenges. Points are awarded for overcoming challenges and are deducted for things like character death. At the end of the event, we tally the points up, and the team that has the most points wins.”

Lindsay says another key difference is the role of the Dungeon Master. In traditional play, DMs are encouraged to do whatever is necessary to ensure that players have a fantastic experience. Play therefore tends to be very collaborative.



Gary Con IX held the first D&D competitive play event. (Select to view)

“While it is no less important that the players have fun playing competitively, the DM ceases to be collaborative, and becomes the arbiter,” Lindsay explains. “It is the DM’s responsibility to present challenges to the players in an objective, no nonsense, and consistent manner. At the same time, it is also the DM’s responsibility to maintain the rules-as-written with a high degree of consistency. Where the rules would indicate that it is up to the DM to make the decision one way or another, that’s when they must engage the Lead Dungeon Master for the event. Consistency in rulings is of paramount importance in competitive D&D.”

With *Tomb of Horrors* once more being pulled from the bag, was that likely to have the same reaction it did at the first Gary Con? “*Tomb of Horrors* strikes fear into peoples’ hearts,” Gygax says. “When my friends saw me reveal the original AD&D version at Gary Con I, that monochrome cover with a pinkish tint, they immediately became extremely cautious. The guy who played a character that transforms into a minotaur, who typically was very rash and would charge into any situation with his axe, was suddenly less cavalier. So it does have an influence on how people approach the adventure. Even though I didn’t see the Adventurers League version at Gary Con IX, I would have a very strong feeling that was the case.”

“There was a high level of paranoia and caution in the room, and groups that employed a solid trap-finding rogue seemed to do very well. Trap, rogue; trap, rogue; trap, rogue... truly the MVP of this event,” Lindsay confirms. “We actually had a team

that was so cautious playing *Tomb of Horrors* that they emerged with a negative triple-digit score at the end of the event. However, none of their characters died.”

Back in the day, things might not have been quite so tense, as players would have brought along henchmen or hirelings. While that’s not so much standard practise these days, the fact it existed at all actually had a huge part in the construction of *Tomb of Horrors*.

“When my father designed this module, he had his group of players in mind. These were very astute, skilled gamers; in particular Rob Kuntz, who was a smart guy. He was so good, that even when travelling through my dad’s complex dungeons under Greyhawk—which were filled with sloping passages, shifting walls, one-way doors, and teleporters—he didn’t map, he just remembered where he’d gone. He had that kind of memory. His evil character Robilar would bring a small army of orcs with him, and he would force them to walk in front of him as pit detectors. So my father designed *Tomb of Horrors* with Rob in mind. He said Robilar did make it through to the end, but there was a dead orc in every single pit. My dad was very proud of that.”



Chris Lindsay finds another use for the cloth map of Acererak's tomb. (Select to view)



Acererak's tomb strikes fear into even hardened gamers. (Select to view)

Gary Gygax might have deliberately tried to stifle his clever players' abilities, making the sacrifice of minions a room-by-room occurrence, but the familiarity of his iconic adventure no doubt made modern-day players wish they had the same kind of cannon fodder at their disposal. While that wasn't an option, they did at least understand the gravity of their situation.

"The adventures were known ahead of time, so it was entirely possible for our players to 'study up'. For future D&D competitive play events, we're looking at various solutions to level the playing field, using original content that can't be reviewed ahead of time," says Lindsay. "We also hope to pose a greater variety of threats in the future, in order to engage a greater range of character types outside of rogues."

Still, Lindsay feels the Gary Con experiment, with an overall 'winner' among D&D teams, was a success. "We really thought of this as a playtest. Since a significant number of players did enjoy this style of play, we'll now be working on fleshing out an entire program or track of competitive events, hopefully to begin in 2018."

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Tomb of Horror's Acererak's Message

A new take on Acererak's legendary message in the Tomb of Horrors!

Original Poem

Careful observers within the entrance to the *Tomb of Horrors* will note a famed poem, set within “barely noticeable runes in the mosaic floor.” This original message from Acererak offered clues as to the nature of the tomb’s deadly challenges—though many of those clues were frustratingly obscure, and often open to deadly misinterpretation.

Acererak congratulates you on your powers of observation, so make of this whatever you wish, for you will be mine in the end no matter what!

Go back to the tormentor or through the arch, and the second great hall you'll discover.

*Shun green if you can, but night's good color is for those of great
valor .*

*If shades of red stand for blood, the wise will not need sacrifice aught
but a loop of magical metal—you're well along your march .*

*Two pits along the way will be found to lead to a fortuitous fall, so
check the wall.*

*These keys and those are most important of all, and beware of
trembling hands and what will maul.*

*If you find the false you find the true, and into the columned hall
you'll come, and there the throne that's key and keyed.*

The iron men of visage grim do more than meet the viewer's eye.

You've left and left and found my tomb, and now your souls will die.

Key for the original

The following key is made possible by the countless DMs who have shared their analysis and theories of Acererak's poem over the years. Notably, we give thanks to the [Raven Crowking's Nest blog](#) and the discussion over at the [Giant in the Playground forums](#).



Entrance to the Tomb of Horrors. (Select to view)

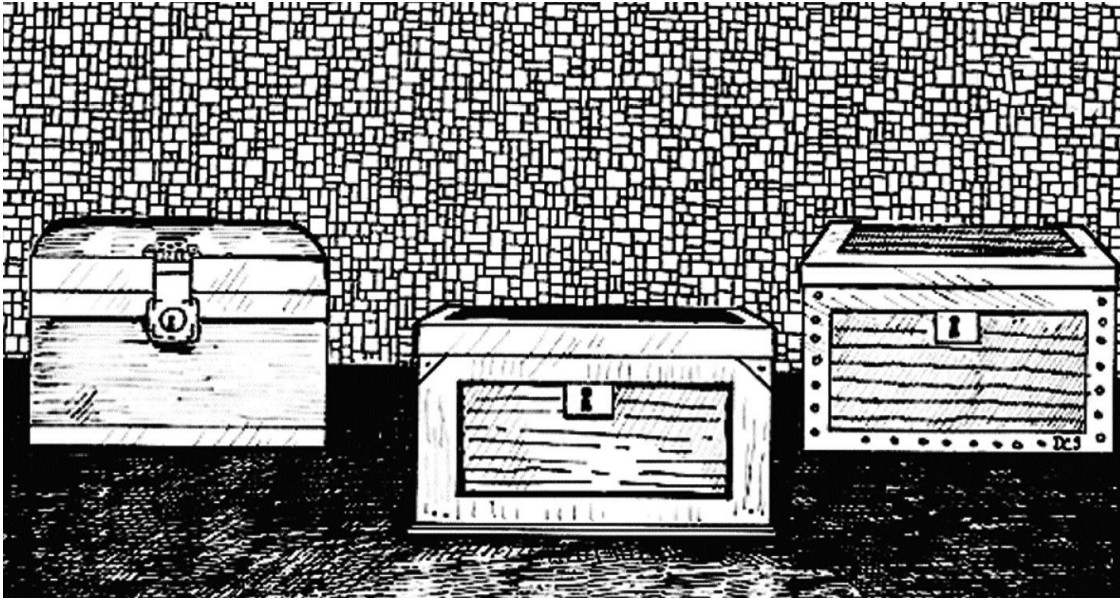
1. “Make of this whatever you wish,” indeed, as some of the following lines are a bit more obscure or potentially misleading than others. But let’s see what we can discover...
2. “The tormentor” most likely refers to the fresco in the west wall of area 3’s entrance to the Tomb of Horrors: “...the door of a torture chamber.” Removing the plaster and lath reveals a door toward area 8 (the gargoyle lair). Likewise, “the arch” refers to the arch of mist at area 5, where pressing the correct sequence of stones clears the mist and provides teleportation to area 11 (the three-armed statue). Either way provides a route to the “second great hall”—

namely, area 10 and the great hall of spheres.

3. “Shun green” is confusing if it is assumed that characters are meant to have now progressed to the second great hall. Both green and pale green spheres are found there, but none offer any benefit. Rather, this clue refers still to the first great hall (area 3), and hints that characters there should avoid area 6 — the legendary face of the great green devil. (Players who remember this will know to avoid the same green devil face in area 25 of the tomb.) But in a devious twist, the reference to “night’s good color” does not refer to the black of the green devil face’s mouth (whose deadly effects are well known), but to the black sphere in area 10 that covers a crawl way leading to area 14 (the chapel of evil).
4. “Shades of red” can refer to the red sphere in area 10 that leads to area 13 (the chamber of three chests) and the danger waiting therein. But the more important reference is to the red mosaic tiles leading to the altar of area 14 (which offers nothing but a *lightning bolt* or *fireball* spell to anyone touching it). There, a “loop of magical metal” (a magic ring sacrificed by the party) can be inserted into the slot on the eastern wall to open the stone gate at area 15.
5. “Two pits along the way” refer to the pit traps in the corridor of area 15. But it’s then the third pit that has a secret door at the bottom (thus requiring a “fortuitous fall” to reach it), leading to area 18 (the corridor protected by fear gas).
6. There are two actual keys found within the tomb—the first assembled in area 19’s laboratory and mummy preparation room, and the second found in area 28 (the wondrous foyer). But calling them “most important of all” is premature at this point in the dungeon, as neither should be used at the keyhole of the valves of mithral in area 29. Instead, they are reserved for the more important access through the secret door of area 32, and into area 33—the crypt of Acererak the demilich. As for “trembling hands,” this might refer to the dangers of area 21 (the agitated chamber), where characters who grab the tapestries to steady themselves when the heaving floor activates find those tapestries transformed into green slime. Alternatively, this warning might also refer to the effects of the fear gas in area 18, with “what will maul” referring to the stone juggernaut at area 23A (the knockout corridor).
7. Finding the false and the true no doubt refers to the seemingly false

door at area 23, which reveals a blank wall of stone hiding a secret door leading to the “columned hall” (area 25’s pillared throne room). There, characters find the obsidian throne that’s *key* and *keyed*—such that when the proper key (in this case, the scepter) is fitted, it provides access to the last section of the dungeon.

8. The iron men refer to the statues of black iron in area 30 (the false treasure room), behind one of which is a secret door.
9. Leaving area 30 and turning *left* takes characters to the secret door of area 32—and the tomb of Acererak beyond!



Chamber of Three Chests. (Select to view)

A second take

As an aid for DMs looking to run Tomb of Horrors—especially with players who have some experience of that classic dungeon, and who might receive too much information from hearing the original poem again—we’re pleased to offer an optional version of Acererak’s poem for your consideration crafted by Ruty Rutenberg (Dungeon Master of D&D’s Summer of Annihilation live-stream *Fury’s Reach* and *Maze Arcana*).

In area 3 of the adventure, start with the following introduction when the characters decipher Acererak’s message.

Solve these riddles you've found but dare trust these lines?

What interest have I, to prolong your demise?

You've come too far; the answer matters not.

In the end, once you begin, your soul is mine.

Then continue with the clues and challenges of the alternative poem.

Retrace the lair of pain or under arch-shrouded sprawl.

Thrice gifts await taunting in twice-longing great halls.

Avoid at all cost the green gaping maws

If You're on the path, But One of three skies will call.

Lone sibling of stone waits to grind ten gems to dust

Two lips divulge when they know that they must

From a quarter of one, half-half dozen the other

A dozen times, but not more, see these eyes you can trust.

Sailor's sunrise in the east, noon to night "ahoy" safe shores

Four square yield protection, after poison galore.

Greed's toil bleeds metal, wisdom wonders why

Continue the march, after the loop you provide.

If you fall from grace, I can promise you a point

Twins of despair host hinges and joints

Where the dead are prepared, one might extend their reach

From the depths of three, two wait. When fused, a hole will breach.

Find one door but not its twin. Two wrongs a right, down again.

If north's secret is up, each step cuts our time thin.

Why boldest give way, to "what dreams may come?"

Where moss gathers not, the slumbering will succumb.

In the grove pastel, ivory brows labor bare

Heed transmuter's gifts, the greatest of care

Two different size crown, both secrets to declare

Gold to gold, you'll see again. Against silver when you dare.

The burden of my knowledge, is heavier than you know

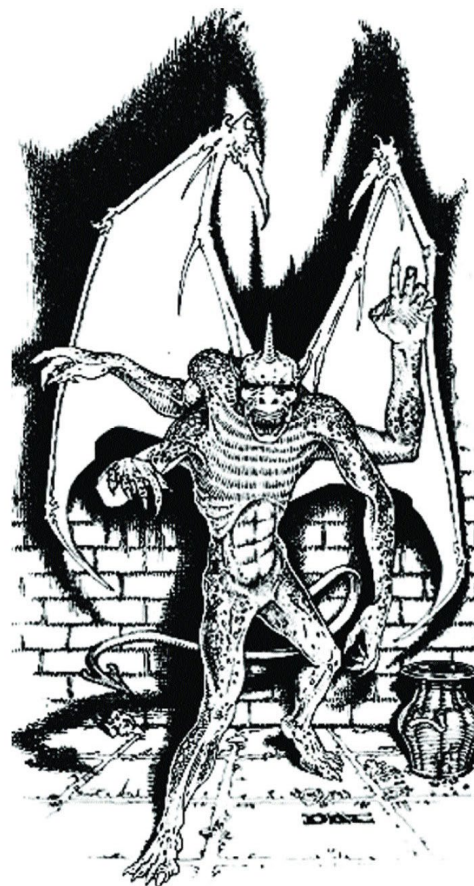
The First memento fuse, but away it should go

The Second turn three, one click, then the stone

Your demise is now, forever bound to my throne.

Key for the alternative poem

1. Taunted by the dungeon's threats and the promise of treasure, the adventurers should retrace their steps to the torture chamber painting leading from area 3 to area 4. If the characters are on the path, the capitalized letters in the final line of the first stanza indicate the first letter of the colors needed to negate the mist and enter the archway in area 5 (yellow, blue, and orange), marking the colors of the sky at dawn, midday, and sunset. Either option allows access to the great halls and their gifts.

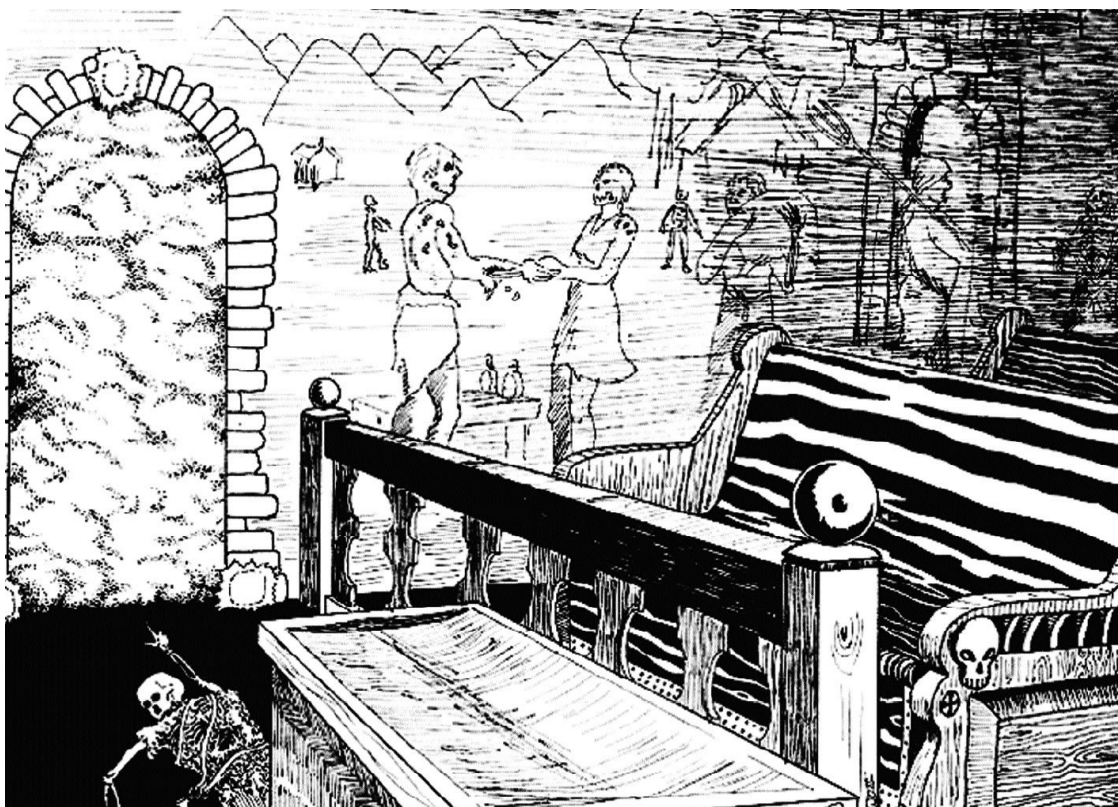


Gargoyle Lair (select to view)

2. The “lone sibling of stone” refers to the individual gargoyle statues in areas 11 and 8. “A quarter of one, half-half dozen the other” marks the number of arms (four and three, respectively) of the gargoyles, and is meant to differentiate the gargoyles in each area. The three-armed statue of area 11 grinds the gems found in the gargoyle lair (area 8) to dust, causing the lips of a *magic mouth* to appear to speak of the *gem of true seeing* in the fallen fourth arm. This grants the characters trustworthy sight, but only twelve times.
3. “Sailor’s sunrise in the east, noon to night ahoy safe shores” refers to the red sky that sailors watch for, the bright gold of noon, and the black of night, respectively, indicating the colors of the orbs in the great hall of spheres (area 10), that lead to areas 11, 13, and 14. Once in area 13, “four square” refers to three chests (gold, silver, and oak), and the crystal box set into the bottom of the silver chest. The “loop” is the *ring of protection* that the wise will know is trapped—a lesson the greedy will learn the hard way. The adventure can continue once the characters have decided to sacrifice the ring at area 15.
4. The promised point refers to the spikes in the pits of areas 3 and 16, reached by a “fall from grace.” However, two of those pits (the “twins of despair”) feature secret doors (the last pit south in area 3 and the western pit in area 16). Two key parts found within the three vats of the laboratory and mummy preparation room (19) need to be fused together to gain access to Acererak’s true crypt. But the characters should be wary of investigating the vats without extending their reach, to avoid the double hazards of acid and ooze.
5. The mention of “one door” and “down again” calls out both the existence of a secret door in the northern wall of area 23, and the second secret door beyond that leads down to area 24. If these aren’t found, the party will find another dead end further north and must turn back south. But the adventure might go entirely south if they don’t survive the release of the sleeping gas and the rolling stone juggernaut (“Where moss gathers not”), which flattens anyone in area 23A of weak enough constitution to see “what dreams may come.”
6. “The grove pastel” is found in area 25’s colored columns, while the “transmuter’s gifts” refers to the gold and silver that are

reagents used by such a spellcaster. The clear connection of gold to gold and silver to silver gives away the purpose of using the scepter to remove the crown and reveal the secret passageway. But if that clarity is undone by touching the scepter's silver cap to the gold crown, it's the end of the road.

7. The last stanza contains more taunting, and hints that the characters must be wary of the "knowledge" Acererak has given them to discover that finding the false crypt and treasure isn't the end after all. The first of the fused keys should be kept only as a memento, not to be used again after its successful use in area 32. (A character who tries to use it in the next keyhole will find out why.) The second key needs to be turned three times in succession, but characters must be quick to flee the rising stone floor. Finally, Acererak (once a mortal, and still not above a petty jab) allows the remaining adventurers to consider their last few moments with an "I told you so."



Chapel of Evil. (Select to view)

A note for increasing difficulty

Old-school DMs might prefer to dial up the difficulty of the tomb, not wanting to hand their players a full road map from the beginning. Excluding stanzas 2, 5, and 7 makes the characters' journey more difficult, but still provides hints of the party's most expedient path. Alternatively, those missing stanzas can be added to later areas of the tomb, granting new information to the players as rewards at appropriate times.

Easter Egg in the Crypt of Acererak



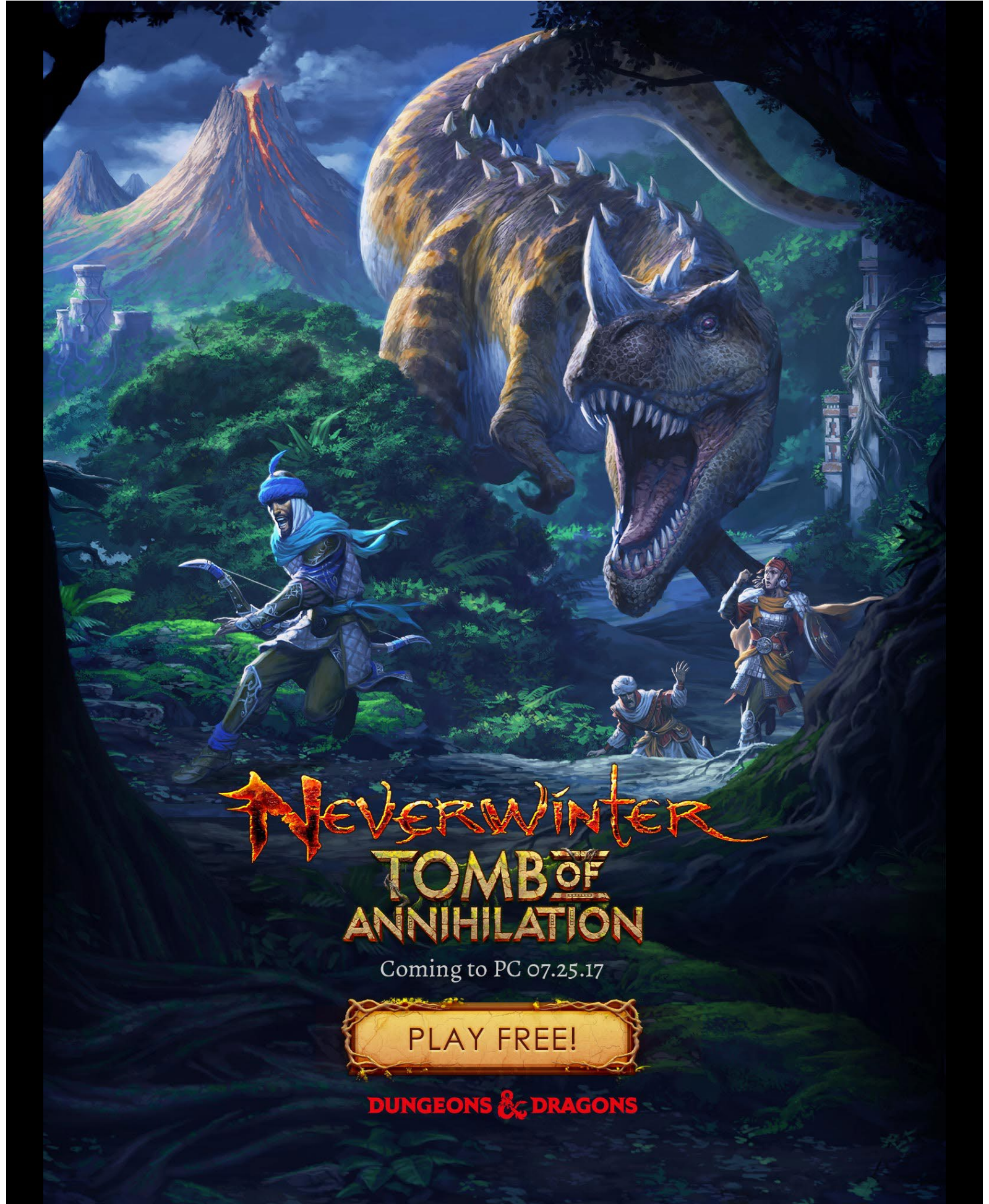
Acererak (select to view)

With Acererak at the center of the upcoming *Tomb of Annihilation* adventure, DMs running the classic *Tomb of Horrors* or *Tales from the Yawning Portal* have a chance to connect the two tombs, and to foreshadow the world-shaking events of the new adventure.

Upon enduring the tomb's horrors, adventurers who claim the six spell scrolls from the hoard in Acererak's crypt find a seventh scroll coiled in the center of the bunch. On that non-magical parchment, the demilich has exquisitely quilled with diligent care a final message to the adventurers.

*See all here in my lair, I've collected through ages
Occult, gargantuan things, still lurk in mist and cages
Under no soft repose, decay and stench rages .
Live but for the moment, consider the wages
Mysteries lesser stump greater sages
On deaths I sustain, as your number fall
Now you may start to glean, but an inkling so small
Gruesome jungles await. Heroes answer my call.
Enjoy revelries today, tomorrow these words recall
Revenge will come as surely, Annihilation for all.*

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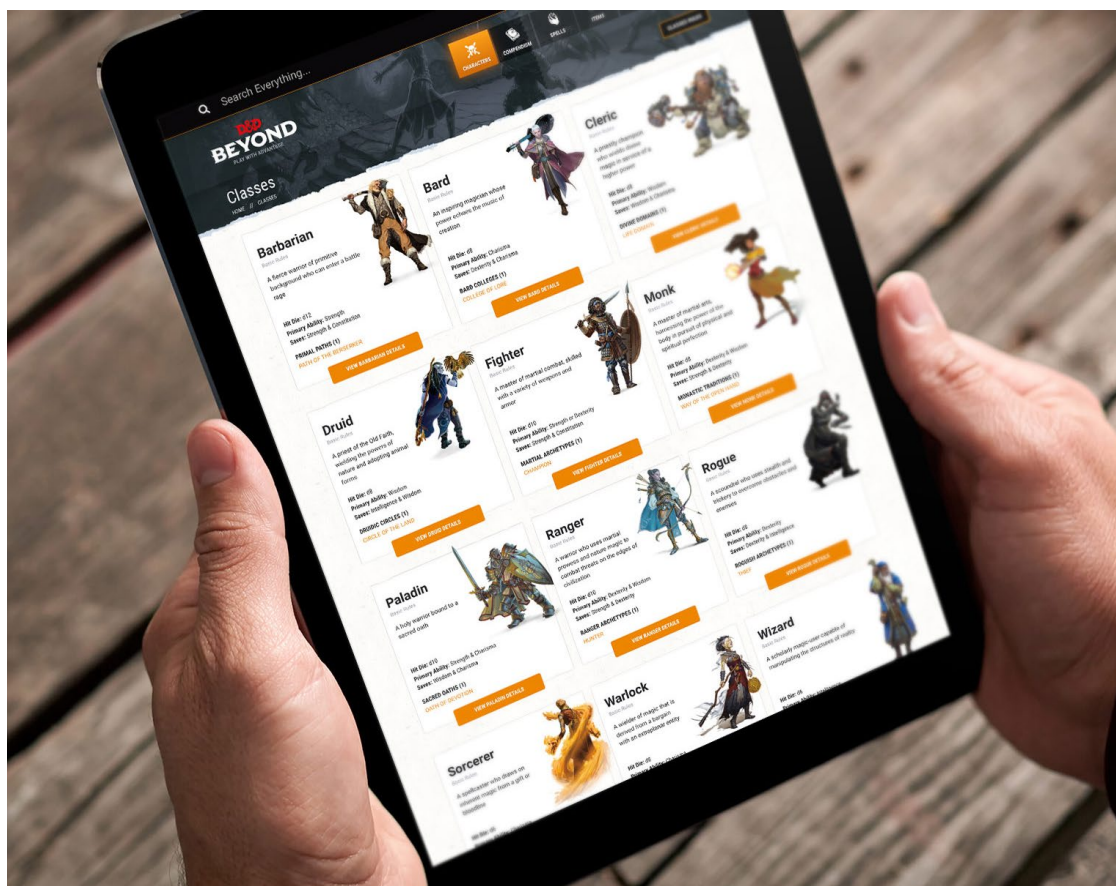
A dramatic illustration for the game Neverwinter: Tomb of Annihilation. A massive, yellow and brown T-Rex with white spikes on its back looms over a group of adventurers in a lush jungle. In the foreground, a character in a blue turban and armor runs towards the left. To the right, another character in a red and gold outfit stands ready. A third character is crouching in the background. In the distance, a volcano with a red lava flow rises against a dark, stormy sky. The scene is framed by large, dark tree trunks.

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS



Behind the Screen:

How to enhance your Dungeon Mastery with today's digital tools

Sam Weigelt

My first foray into digital D&D was born of necessity. At a house party, I had a conversation with a group of friends who were all interested in playing Dungeons & Dragons, but either hadn't had the chance or felt intimidated by it. By the end of the evening I had eleven people who wanted to play. Before our first session, two more were added and I found myself DMing a group of thirteen players. Most had never played D&D before, and even those with experience hadn't played in a couple of editions.

A packed house with so many new players can make it difficult to

wrangle a simple conversation, let alone combat. I knew I was in for a challenge when it came to basic things like describing scenes so that everyone could hear me. Within a few sessions, I decided to use digital programs to supplement my toolset and I have no regrets about the decision. I'd like to share some things I picked up while DMing the largest party of my life using these tools.

Minimize player downtime during combat

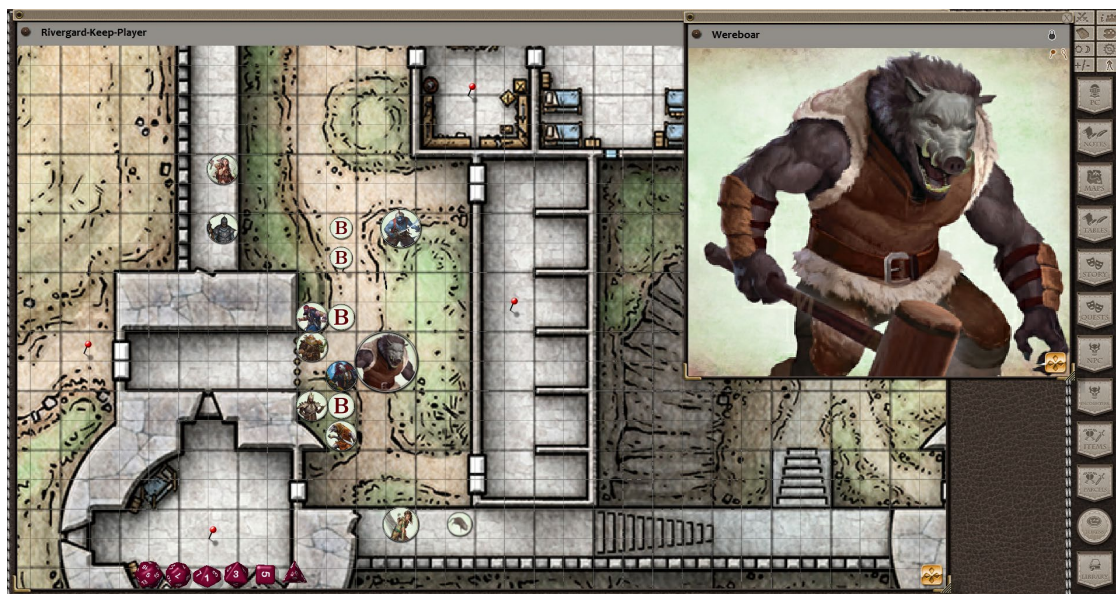
Sometimes turns can take a while in D&D, especially for new players. Indecision can play a part in that, but even the most decisive player must make and interpret dice rolls. I told the players that I'd be taking care of all the rolling for combat to speed things along. With Fantasy Grounds or Roll20, you can easily set up single buttons that perform complex dice rolls instantly. I set myself up with macros to roll combinations of dice for each of the characters' primary attacks. It worked like a charm and soon the players could stride through combat without the sessions being dominated by downtime.

The screenshot shows the app.roll20.net editor interface for a character named Virgil Urkat. The character is a Fighter 4, Human, Chaotic Good, with 1320 experience points. The interface is divided into several sections: Bio & Info, Character Sheet, and Attributes & Abilities. The Character Sheet section displays the character's stats: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Constitution 2, Intelligence -1, Wisdom 2, and Charisma 0. It also shows the character's skills, including Athletics, Deception, History, Insight, Intimidation, Investigation, Medicine, Nature, Perception, Performance, Persuasion, Religion, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, and Survival. The character has a total of 36 hit points and 0 temporary hit points. The interface also shows a list of attacks and spells, including Sharpshooter Bow, Bow, Rapier, and a feat called Sharpshooter. The interface is designed to be user-friendly and accessible, with clear labels and intuitive controls.

Virgil (select to view)

The players don't even need to be using these programs to get the benefits from them. This approach can particularly enhance the roleplaying experience for new players. Since the mechanics of dice rolling and numbers are being handled by the programs, they don't need to gather and roll 8d6 for their lightning bolt, or know that it did 22 damage, they just see cooked goblins and react appropriately. This also softens one of the barriers to entry for D&D; that level of discomfort with the dice and figuring out what to use each turn. Using programs to roll the dice has made D&D more accessible and exciting for my entire group.

Maps and tokens to show players their locations



(Select to view)

My favorite features of Fantasy Grounds are the map and token sets. With around a dozen players in each session, combat positions can be tricky. We tend to simplify some movement rules to avoid frustration, but it can still be tough for everyone to remember where their character is, and it's easy for me to make a mistake as the DM. In early sessions, the question I most dreaded from a player on their turn was; "Wait, where is everyone?"

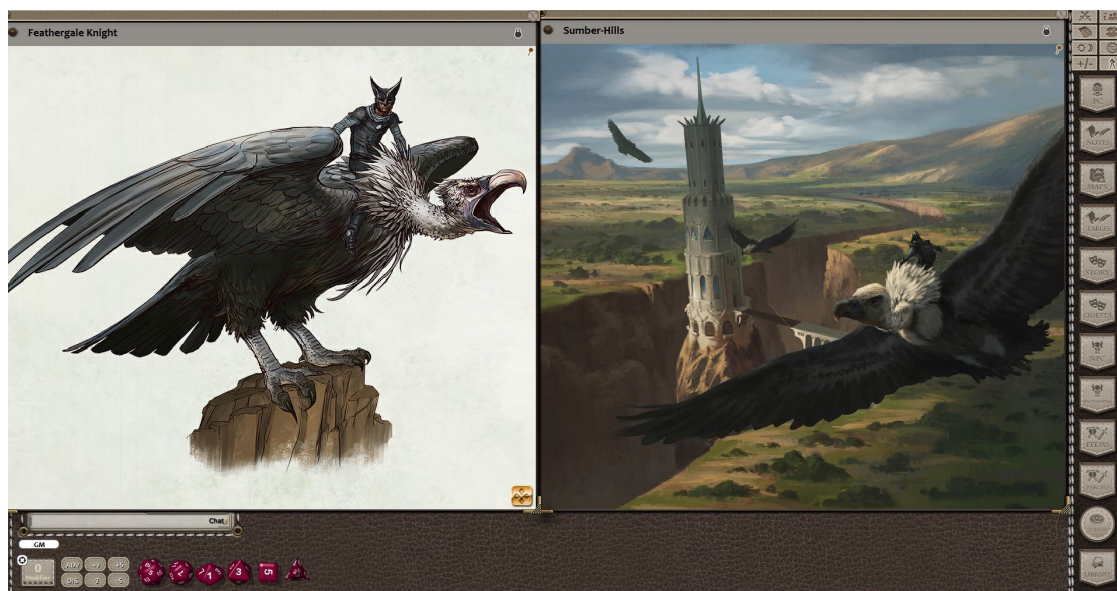
After a few sessions, I began using maps inside Fantasy Grounds (you can download official supplements that include packages of maps, or create your own) in conjunction with tokens for each player. Now I can throw a map on the screen in front of the players, showing each of their positions. Even when I'm not showing the screen to players, I'll often be keeping track using Fantasy Grounds behind the scenes for my own sanity.

Quick references during the game

This one might seem a little obvious, but the benefits of using digital tools for reference really cannot be overstated. My old setup for DMing usually included three or four books (littered with bookmarks for the material I'd need to reference during the session), and my notebook. Now I have my laptop computer, and that same old notebook (truthfully, the contents of my notebook could easily be a document on my laptop, but I find something comforting about handwritten notes). I keep most of my DM materials on my laptop screen, including maps, magic items, and enemy stats. I can keep a few

windows open to the encounters I've planned for the session, and even the most unanticipated additions can be accessed with a quick search.

Supplement your descriptions with images

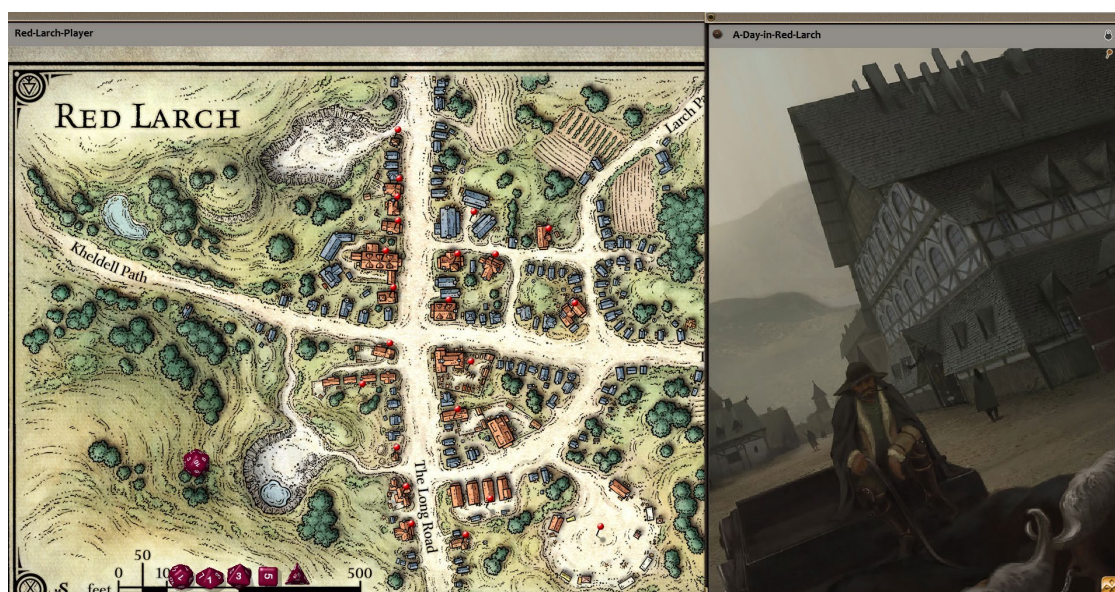


Feathergale (select to view)

When players encounter a new monster, I throw an image of it onto a television screen. The image is large enough for everyone around the room to see. This elicits the proper reactions to the beast's grotesque form, without the added awkwardness of me holding up a book and covering the monster's name and stat block.

Similarly, when describing a scene, I'll generally put an image depicting the scene onto the screen as I'm speaking. This draws everyone's attention to the scene itself, and sometimes gives the players ideas during upcoming encounters. For example, a player might speak up and search barrels that weren't mentioned in my initial description, but which make complete sense to be sitting at the side of a dock and are present in the image I showed.

Don't be afraid to turn the tools off



Redlarch (select to view)

One extra tip about using a television screen during sessions: try not to use it all the time. I've found that when I throw a monster or scene onto the screen, it snaps everyone's attention to it, and they view it as a significant enemy or place. However, if you leave the screen on the whole time, it can be a distraction. I try to keep the screen off for most of the session, turning it on when I think it will be most effective.

Only using the screen when necessary makes it feel like something special that's adding to the experience. By leaving a digital screen on in front of your players every session, it can start to feel like that's the game, rather than a supplement to enhance the game. The magic of D&D will always be in the imaginations of the people who are playing it. Try to use these tools in a way that inspires your players' imaginations. If you think your digital enhancements are stifling them instead, don't be afraid to keep them hidden for a session.

Dungeon Mastery achieved!

My biggest takeaway as a DM using these tools has been how much easier they've made my life. I knew I wanted to run this campaign for a large group of inexperienced players, but I wasn't sure I could handle it. Using Roll20 and Fantasy Grounds for the last few months, sessions have gone more smoothly, and players are more engaged. Ask me one year ago if I thought I could handle a group of more than a dozen players and I would have answered, "No."

When I first heard of digital D&D tools, I thought they would be a hard sell for a group. But my experience using them as a Dungeon Master taught me that the entire group doesn't even need to use them. As a DM, you can rely upon them to do some of the heavy lifting, and your players experience D&D in the same way as always, but with a little extra enhancement. The flexibility of Fantasy Grounds and Roll20 have also really impressed me; I can include as many tools as I feel will help me. I know that I'll be using them for future campaigns.



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The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

Intrigue meets jungle warfare, as an *Elfhunt* plunges players into Chult's deadly environments



The Dungeon Masters Guild is the perfect platform for creating, sharing, and publishing your adventures. Since its launch, hundreds of DMs, players, and fans have created new characters, monsters, spells, and locations, bringing a wealth of options and detail to the Forgotten Realms.

But with so many choices, how do you know which ones to pick? Well, *Dragon+* is here to help. Each issue, we shine a spotlight on some of the best content on the DMs Guild, and speak to its creators to learn how it was made.

This issue we head off on an

Elfhunt, courtesy of an adventure created by Jussi R. Foltmar Svendsen. With *Tomb of Annihilation* taking adventurers deep into the jungles of Chult later this year, this adventure from the DMs Guild allows players to further explore its harsh environments. This multi-session module for fifth-level characters is full of intrigue and mystery. (And—as that title suggests—sees the party embark on a mission to track an elf who has absconded with vital military intelligence.)



Jussi R. Foltmar Svendsen

If you're looking for creatures to populate this wild environment, we also recommend taking a peek inside *The Bestiary*—a collection of fifty wild animals and monstrous beasts, with stat blocks for fifth edition.

Best of all, *Elfhunt* is available as an exclusive free download for *Dragon+* readers for the duration of this issue. But before you rush off to claim your free adventure, enjoy our chat with its creator and learn more about the making of *Elfhunt*, his thoughts on module design, and how children can go rogue when you get them together to roleplay.

Did you create *Elfhunt* as a module to play in your home game or specifically for the DMs Guild?

This adventure was first conceived in 2015 and playtested in 2016. Our group of players came together when my wife saw a notice from someone looking to play D&D. We had a newborn daughter at the time, so we posted that we would be interested in playing at our place, so that she could remain in a safe environment. Another requirement was that our daughter came first. So whenever she wasn't asleep, was hungry, needed to be changed, etc., then one of us would focus on that instead of playing D&D. My wife and I were going to take turns being the DM, so we created two adventures in the same setting. The project evolved into each player taking turns

being the Dungeon Master.

My wife chose the jungles of Chult because it reminded her of Feralas in *World of Warcraft*, which was the source of inspiration for her adventure. It was the wild, elven beauty and the mystery and exploration that appealed to us, and I wanted to create an event-based adventure that took place in the same environment.

As an engineer working in R&D I have a very structured workflow when creating an adventure. I expanded on the skeletal adventure I had created and then divided it up into three parts, one for each main NPC: the elf; the soldier; and the rogue. I further expanded on this by applying a five-act structure. Initially, the adventure was written using small cards for each scene, but when the opportunity to publish it on the DMs Guild arose, I changed the format to what it has become today.



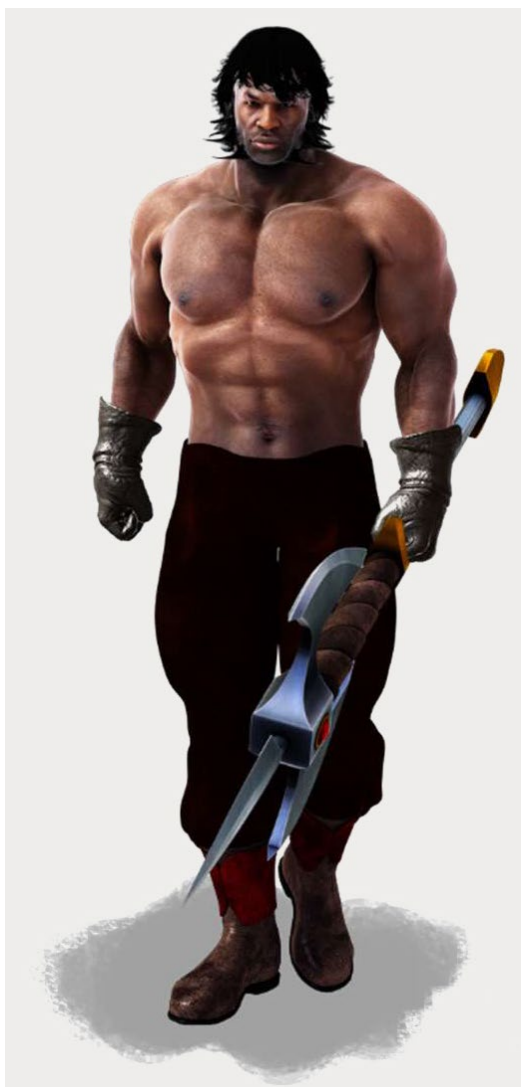
Johan Petry (select to view) Why did you choose to set it in Chult?

What was it like having different people take turns being the DM? It was fun to try and run a campaign with different DMs, but also difficult and something I would only recommend to the most advanced groups. The characters were always the same, and therefore evolved in a very different way than if we had just a single DM.

The game has a few different outcomes, depending on choices the players make. Have you ever been surprised by the outcome? I'm always surprised by the outcome.

Reading **your blog**, you've also been running a weekly two-hour session for kids. What's that been like?

I'm still playing a two-hour session with the local kids every Tuesday, and it's teaching them a lot. Hopefully more will join us after the summer break. We were playing *Storm King's Thunder*, and when the players created characters, nearly every single player ended up creating a half-elf rogue. Fortunately, it is still possible to have a balanced game even without covering every single role.



Chief Filip (select to view)

Why was that class so popular? The appeal of the rogue was the fact that it was a deadly and silent character, similar to the type of characters the kids play in their LARP games. They play the rogue more like a fighter, even though the character's strengths lie elsewhere.

One of the children eventually took over as DM...

The reason we stopped *Storm King's Thunder* is because one of the children wanted to try and be the DM. I had the pleasure of trying a real kids' game!

We've now had two of the kids as DMs, and they are incredibly creative and remind me of games I created when I was their age. They prefer their own games, but we've added a rule saying that I'm the DM once per month to ensure that I still teach them a few things.

We're missing the books not being in Danish, though.

You also broadcast some of your D&D games. What has that experience been like?

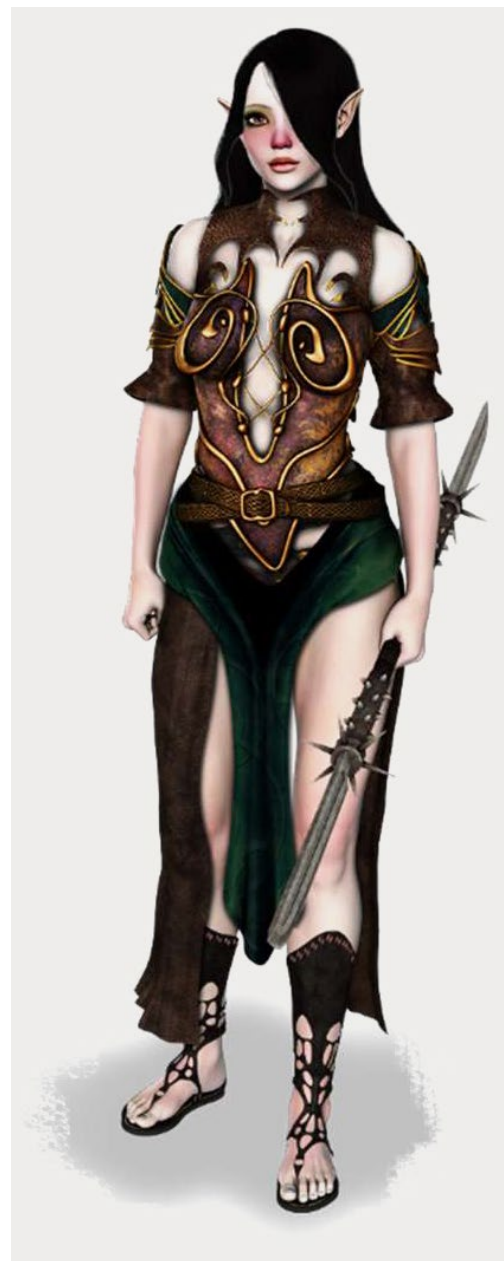
We put content on both **YouTube** and **Twitch**. I try to run our streams like podcasts, so that everyone can follow without having to look at the screen. I add a few extra things on the screen for those that do want to look at us. Streaming has given me a chance to play roleplaying games, even when I can't leave the house or don't have

free weekends. We started out in English, but since our players and viewers are Danes, we switched language, especially since two of our players were struggling in English.

You've also been raising money for the Youth's Red Cross using **D&D Extra Life**. What have those events and games been like? In 2014 and 2015 I ran *Tyranny of Dragons* and *Elemental Evil* at Extra Life. In 2016 I ran *Out of the Abyss* for the Children's Cancer Foundation. These have been very different games than conventional sessions, because people have been able to influence the game through donations. This year, I've recruited several DMs in an attempt to run multiple games on September 30-October 1, 2017. It is a large project involving YouTubers, streamers, camera people, unions, shops, conventions, etc. At one point we were aiming to have the event take place at the second Copenhagen Comic Con, but that has been moved to 2018. So we're now running it at a game shop in Denmark, where we'll stream face-to-face and Roll20 games, while gathering donations for the Youth's Red Cross.

What advice would you give to other people designing modules for the DMs Guild?

When I published *Elfhunt*, other Dungeon Masters who were also interested in publishing things asked me how I set up my adventures. So **I shared those details in a series of steps online**. But as an R&D engineer I need to be flexible, and sometimes a project takes a completely different route to that structure. My greatest advice to anyone who wants to write and publish adventures is to follow your inspiration. Take it in steps and don't try to write everything at once. If you have no ideas, but feel like drawing a map, then do that first. The map may lead you to get inspired to run an adventure



Imis Elvan

on an island in the middle of lake, which may lead you to write about a nearby town and a ruined castle on the island, which includes all the encounters. Before you know it, you have an entire adventure.

Eventually, you'll write something awesome, and even if it's not awesome, publish it. Others may appreciate it more than you do.

You mention you have plans to write additional adventures. Any sneak peeks you can give us about what those might be? The adventure I'm working on right now is the jungle of Chult adventure my wife created. It's a treasure-hunting adventure that should be on the DMs Guild at the end of summer at the latest. After that, I might start working on a larger adventure, which sees the players scour the land for dead heroes to bring them back to life to help defend the world.

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Community Poll: Lich Phylacteries

Your responses to our community question: What unusual phylacteries might a lich devise?

Although the exact secrets of achieving lichdom remain undisclosed (save to powerful wizards taking up the path), it is known how an arcane ritual traps the wizard's soul within a phylactery—traditionally, an amulet in the shape of a small box. And yet, not all liches choose such traditional phylacteries... and not all hiding places for them need be such well-defended vaults.

With the release of *Tales from the Yawning Portal*, players dared confront the liches and demiliches within its adventures. As such, **we asked for your ideas** on especially fiendish, strange, or otherwise unexpected lich phylacteries. So the next time you're looking to create a lich with a well-designed, well-hidden or otherwise memorable phylactery, we suggest you consult the following list..



Our sincere thanks to all the contributors—and we look forward to your creativity in our next community poll!

1. An acorn, which grew into a tree, which grew into a forest. To destroy the lich, every oak tree in the forest must be destroyed.
2. An artificial eye implanted in a beholder.
3. A sharpened, golden tooth inscribed with numerous arcane symbols and passed down from the leader of a goliath tribe. The item is a symbol of leadership and is embedded in the mouth of each chief, after he is defeated in combat.

4. A dragon's tooth.
5. The king's crown, always under heavy guard.
6. An amethyst, embedded in the center piece of a beautiful golden necklace given to the queen of the realm on the day of her wedding.
7. An impressive magic item such as a *ring of invisibility* or *staff of the magi* (that adventurers will simply consider valuable loot).
8. Through an ancient ritual found in the *Book of Vile Darkness*, a lich created a Death Knight phylactery—immortal until they atone for their deeds or find redemption. Thus, the party might have to stage an intervention or go on a life-changing road trip before they can permanently take out the lich they're really seeking to defeat.
9. A fruit bowl, bristling with pristine ripe fruit. Among the many luscious fruits within it, is a single peach. The phylactery is the stone of the singular peach.
10. A rock gnome turned lich builds clockwork toys as a phylactery. Over the years, the gnome has made hundreds of these toys scattered throughout the world, many with minor enchantments to throw off detection spells.
11. The skull of the lich's child, whose untimely death led the lich to ponder mortal frailty and seek immortality through undeath.
12. Inside of a warforged paladin (unbeknownst to the warforged, who is on a quest to defeat the lich).
13. A giant, twisting necropolis, resembling an M.C. Escher painting in intricacy, with depths and areas that take days or weeks to travel through, carved with runes and glowing channels of energy. The soul of the lich wraps through it all, and heroes must break key lines and areas, or even bring the whole structure down, to finally bring him to an end.
14. A beautiful conch shell, inlaid with gold and gems. A thick silver chain with arcane symbols is attached to the ends of the shell forming a necklace. The conch necklace is attached to a slumbering kraken for protection, deep in the ocean.
15. From a folktale in Hungary, in which the evil crone kept her life force in a black bug. One must kill a specific boar and in that boar's head is a rabbit. In the rabbit's head is a pigeon and in the pigeon's head is a small box which held the black bug.
16. Alternatively, a variant on Koschei the Deathless: the actual

phylactery is a needle, inside an egg (on which *sequester* has been cast), inside a simulacrum of a duck (ordered to fly away, alongside two programmed Illusions also ordered to fly away in different directions), inside another simulacrum of a hare (ordered to run, again alongside two programmed illusions), inside a diamond chest which is inside a gold chest which is inside an iron chest which is buried in a pocket dimension which consists of a small island surrounded by an ocean.

17. A singular grain of sand, kept within an hourglass but housed in no vault... Instead, it was given to a rural common-folk family without the means to afford such a treasure, where they protect it life-and-limb hoping to preserve it as an heirloom.
18. An ornate wooden puzzle box made of dozens of small pieces that tightly fit together. The box itself is nearly impossible to solve, except by those with extraordinary intelligence and patience.
19. A single coin in a dragon's hoard. Alternatively, a copper piece travelling from Neverwinter to Baldur's Gate in the purses of commonfolk. One can tell the difference because the pegasus on the face has 29 feathers on its wings rather than 30. The coin is also a slight shade darker than most coppers, but that's just age and the effects of time, right?
20. A full height, brass-framed mirror. Extremely fragile, it may be carried in a padded wooden crate—perhaps on the very back of the lich's trusted minions, in order to keep it safe.
21. A crystal gem darker than the darkest nights floating in an empty chamber in absolute silence.
22. A special bone pot found by a clan of goblins—whose warlord deemed it a mighty crown, and so it adorns his head and fills his mind with dark whispers. The goblins are unaware of its true nature and so often brew foul concoctions with it when their warlord isn't looking.
23. Another lich, whose phylactery is the original lich. These twins forged their lichdom status together having cooperated from their earliest days as witches. Their phylacteries are each the heart of the other; as long as one lives, so too shall the other. The heroes must slay both liches within a single day or the first one felled simply revives.
24. The entire dungeon/stronghold/fortress itself. Large, solid, and

extremely difficult to destroy without siege weapons at your disposal, and effectively hidden in plain sight!

25. For the nautically minded lich, storing their soul in ship parts—the ship’s wheel being an obvious choice, often a lantern in the fore cabin or an innocuous nail in the keel. Stocking the hold with distracting or cursed treasures is often a precaution against would-be heroes, but for an added layer of protection, a lich may crew such a ship with damned souls pressed into their service, or hidden beneath the waves in the belly of a dragon turtle.
26. A gem in the pommel of a weapon, which makes the weapon not only enchanted but also sentient.
27. The map of the lich’s dungeon (a stone tablet with the map engraved). The lich, impressed that its ancient lair would have been found, cleverly allows itself to be defeated then revives in the party’s camp, ambushing them and reclaiming its map to be hidden once more.
28. A chess piece that cannot be destroyed if it hasn’t been legally captured. Alternatively, the black queen in a chess-set, used by the leader of the Zhentarim.
29. A small, stone box containing the drow warlock’s soul is melded onto the underside of a stone gear on the plane of Mechanus. An inevitable forge lies on the other side of the gear, meaning that a *scrying* spell cast on this phylactery bewilderingly points a marut towards home.
30. The lair of the lich houses a strange variety of rats. On the tail of each appears to be a ring; however, this ring is only a biological mutation... save for one rat. This unique rat, a construct, wears the phylactery of the lich on its tail (in the form of an actual ring).
31. A chain-wrapped iron flask with a glass window through which is seen a tiny human form made from flames of colors according to alignment of the viewer, hovering in a fetal position.
32. An entire dam overlooking a city. Thus, you can’t destroy the phylactery without destroying the city, and attempting an evacuation gives the lich time to rejuvenate.
33. A black metal lantern inscribed with images of stars and planets. It glows with a pulsating, purple light and is always cold to the touch. There are no latches or any ways of opening it and it is impossible to see through the hide to observe what is giving off the light

inside. It is located on a small funeral boat alongside a statue in a sleeping position, fashioned after the likeness of the lich. There are other treasures from his living life placed alongside, including a sextant that opens a temporary gate back to a location on the Prime Material Plane. The boat and its contents were gated and cast adrift in the Astral Plane on a course to a destination known only to the lich.

34. An ornate music box enchanted to disorient anyone who opens it, causing them to forget they ever found it.
35. A silver hourglass. The grains are white and all contained in the upper part. The middle section is a gold band with runes inscribed in it. No amount of shaking or poking seems to make the hourglass work, but when the lich is destroyed, black grains starts to fall to the bottom half as the white grains start to disappear. Once the hourglass has drained, the lich reappears.
36. The innkeeper's towel. Once upon a time, there were two friends. One a mage and the other an innkeeper. While the mage went on adventures to gain greater power, the innkeeper would make sure that, when the mage returned, drinks were to be had. As the mage ascended to lichdom, he gave his friend a present: a towel that never goes bad, no matter how many glasses or kegs you clean with it. He doesn't know that it's in fact the phylactery of the lich, but an innkeeper always keeps his towels safe, for while thousands of adventurers gaze upon the towel, there is no scarier boss than an angry innkeeper.
37. A magnificently brightly colored stone. Legends say if you find the stone you will be granted one wish, but once fulfilled the stone then teleports you to a random spot around the world.
38. A set of nesting dolls, with each doll gradually becoming more necrotic and foul in appearance. Before a layer may be opened to access the next doll within, a specific puzzle or condition must be fulfilled, or trap bypassed.
39. An undead treant, roaming a corrupted forest in the Feywild.
40. Bards sing from an old book of dirges and laments, oblivious to the fact that the composer is a lich. So long as those songs ride the current of their voices, those melancholy melodies and verses act as the lich's phylactery. Bard colleges even teach lessons about the lyrics to initiates, for funerals and tributes to the departed, and the initiates unwillingly ensure the lich's reign by studying and

memorizing the lines written by his dead hands.

41. A collar around the neck of an intelligent skeletal rat named Nibbles, which lives in the lich's keep and burrows deep underground whenever intruders enter.
42. In the center of the desert town stands a fountain, around which the town was built. It displays a playful mermaid holding out a conch shell that streams water day and night, keeping the town prosperous despite no other sources of water for tendays around. Inside the conch is a crystal the size of a fist, holding the soul of the lich. To destroy the phylactery, one must first destroy the conch, but to do so sentences an entire town to a slow, thirsting death.
43. A pearl in the eye of a resurrected storm giant, who serves as a guardian to the phylactery.
44. A piece of colored stone that's part of a mosaic in a temple of Pelor.
45. The ashes of a phoenix. So long as the phoenix keeps being reborn, the phylactery persists. Only someone who can slay the mad phoenix and wish it out of its reincarnation cycle can destroy the phylactery.
46. Deep within the lich's lair, well defended by traps and monsters, is an adamantine box, radiating magic and containing ornately scribed fragments of parchment. It sits atop a stone pedestal. This pedestal is actually the phylactery.
47. The phylactery is housed at the bottom of a deep artificial lake. The lich's essence is contained inside a single, ordinary smooth stone, just like the tens of thousands of other ordinary stones that fill the bottom of the lake. The lich doesn't need to breathe, being undead (and may have been a triton in life), so she doesn't mind reconstituting in lightless, watery depths. Her would-be foes, on the other hand, must secure the ability to breathe water to even try to locate the stone, and cannot sift through the lake bottom without inevitably attracting the attention of the lich's shark-like golem servants and the sahuagin tribe that maintains them.
48. A lantern that when lit acts as a *darkness* spell but only during time that the lich's soul is not inside.
49. A beautifully crafted elven prosthetic leg, buried within an elven heroine's tomb.

50. Inside a reliquary said to hold a finger bone of Saint Cuthbert, feverishly protected by the acolytes of the temple.
51. A necklace that contains the soul of a slain lich but does not have enough power to recreate it. The necklace forms a link to a specific weapon, so intelligent creatures slain with that weapon have their soul harvested into the phylactery. Once enough souls are fed into it, the phylactery is able to reconstruct the lich.
52. An obsidian statuette modeled after the first dracolich Shargrailer, gilded in rubies, and poised to breathe flames.
53. An enchanted playing card, hidden in a deck of playing cards. The phylactery card can only be drawn if it ends up as the top card of the deck after a thorough and truly random shuffle.
54. Alternatively, the death card in a tarot-style deck. The visual on the card could represent a Dorian Grey-esque lich in his/her prime. The deck is carried by a Vistani, and thus not tied to a single plane.
55. The casket of the lich's long-dead lover, tucked away in an overgrown mausoleum in a forgotten graveyard.
56. *A mirror of life trapping*: A magic item that no level-headed adventurer would dare enter to explore inside, and yet houses a small space also containing a collection of magic items and books for the lich in one of its cells. The lich of course has the magical expertise to escape the mirror at-will.
57. A totem for shamans of nomadic creatures (orcs, centaurs, thri-kreen) making its location extremely difficult to track as it constantly moves. Destroying it also becomes a greater challenge as the adventurers must defeat the group sheltering it.
58. A mechanical koi fish, swimming with other koi in a fully-stocked ornamental pond. The other fish are undead: a mixture of ghost koi, skeletal koi and zombie koi.
59. Inside an intelligent weapon that's sole purpose is to destroy the very lich that created it. The weapon itself does not know that it is actually the object that must be destroyed to defeat the lich once and for all. Heroes would work to protect it, hence keeping the lich alive.
60. Deep in the cellars of the Stone Boulder Brewing company are casks of strong brew that have been aging for untold years. Many independent brewers will contract to place their barrels within the vaults, in order to claim a portion of the history that has been

brewed within. Hidden amongst these is a peculiar barrel, untapped and marked only with a single unrecognizable rune. However, more lies within this barrel than some potent ale. Its inner magic masked by the spells and wards of the cellar itself, the barrel is the phylactery of a most ancient brewer lich.

61. The knocker inside the bell on a church or temple.
62. A *rod of resurrection* or *staff of healing* that lessens the lich's return time with each successful resurrection or heal.
63. A key, which opens an empty vault in the lich's lair.
64. A copper filling in the mouth of a mad beggar.
65. An entire village, built and paid for by a seemingly wealthy noble who hides the secrets of their vast necromantic power in the walls of innocent villagers' homes and businesses. Hiding runic cornerstones, covering support beams made of bone, and inscribing ritualistic circles that can be easily covered by furniture, the secret of the village is protected by the lich's minions.
66. Some powerful wizards (that have become liches) have adventuring backgrounds behind them; their phylactery may be old, traditional magical or mundane adventuring gear, such as a *bag of holding* (due to its extradimensional possibilities, which may lead to some arcana shenanigans).
67. A collar with runes etched into the inner band. The lich leaves the collar on Rover, his beloved dog. Upon the death of the lich, adventurers may happen across Rover, who is very friendly and will likely accompany the party as they loot the lich's lair. Rover has been trained to be very observant and will discern what the party has taken from the lair and where they put it. When the lich regenerates near Rover, he uses speak with animals to determine what has become of his belongings.
68. A gem that is an integral part of a greater seal. The lich sealed a powerful demon behind it, so that unless the adventurers wish to release it, they'll need to leave the phylactery intact.
69. A stuffed owlbear toy.
70. A conch shell. When held to your ear, you hear a dark ritual being chanted.
71. A wooden chalice. Obviously worn with odd teeth marks along the rim.
72. An unassuming holy book located within a library. The book was

originally written by the wizard (before becoming a lich), concerning the wickedness of lichdom and how to destroy them. It details intentionally false information and rituals designed to feed a foolish and unfortunate reader's soul directly into the book-phylactery.

73. A brass mortar and pestle inscribed with glyphs that inspire alchemists and lend aid to their skill... and leech a bit of their life force in exchange. It is said that this tool imparts the knowledge of all its previous owners, enabling the user to expertly craft alchemical concoctions, including those mythical and legendary recipes lost to the sands of time.

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17 DEXTERITY

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13 STRENGTH

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MOD +5

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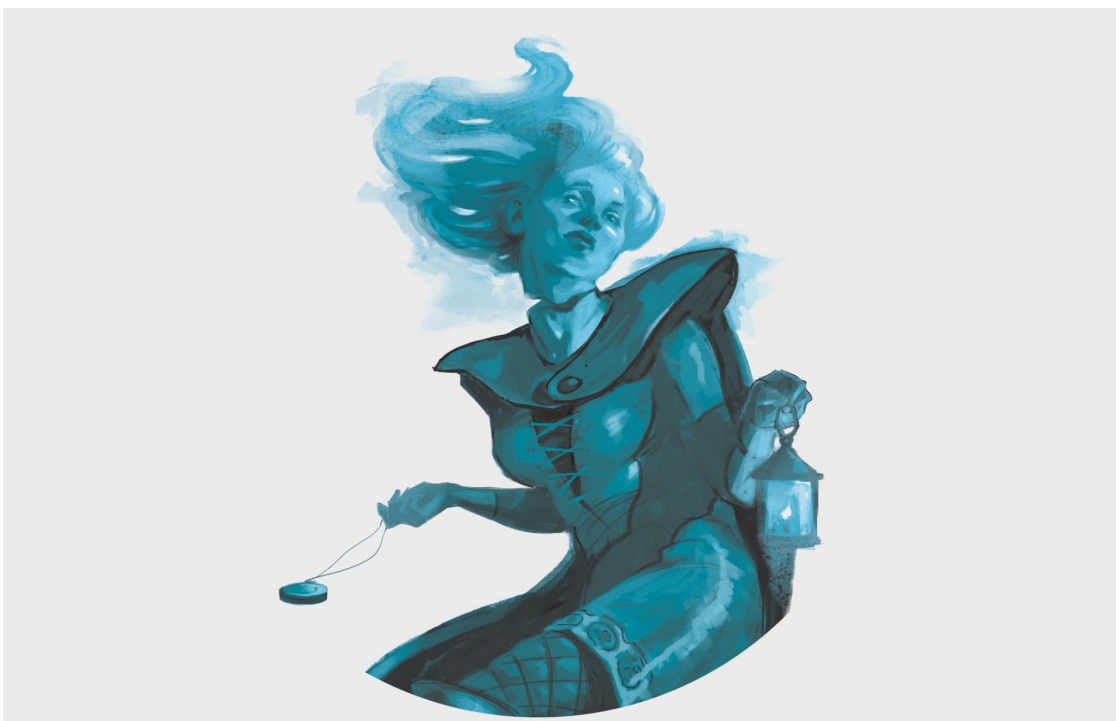
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Paint by Numbers: Beyond the Basics

Master painter Daniel Gelon tackles the intricacies of a translucent plastic figure

Daniel Gelon has over twenty-five years of painting experience, was one of the original artists for *Magic: The Gathering*, and is a long-time miniatures painting expert (as evidenced by this [amazing video tutorial series](#)). Daniel has been introducing *Dragon+* readers to a number of advanced techniques that don't take much time, but which can really make a miniature stand out on the tabletop.

This issue he provides instruction for players and DMs looking to expand their painting skills to include a more unusual subject: a clear miniature.

Even as a beginner, you probably have a good grasp on how to lay down a solid base coat, as well as applying washes and dry brushing. The question is, how the heck does any of that help you paint a clear

miniature?

Translucent miniatures are cast in a clear vinyl, plastic or resin. Light passes through them and they are almost see through. These miniatures are therefore mostly reserved for portraying magical effects or otherworldly spirits. To keep that translucent quality after painting, a painter must think differently. Clear materials need to be painted with translucent paints so light can still pass through them. Clear materials are also notoriously hard to get paints to stick to. Yet, when painted well, translucent miniatures look awesome on a gaming board because of their uniqueness.

As when painting traditional miniatures, there are many possible techniques involving a variety of materials, such as inks and specialty washes. Inks may be the easiest way to achieve good effects for this task right out of the bottle, but that requires buying or owning a wide selection of ink colors. I don't own a good selection of inks and I want to be able to use any of the colors in my collection, so I'm going to describe a different technique that involves the purchase of only one or two new bottles.

My choice of miniature is the ghost from **WizKids' D&D Nolzur's Marvelous Miniatures line**, which comes in the "Ghost and Banshee" pack. I'll be doing a basic tinting of the ghost using an easy-to-follow method, to help build your skills (and the game table) fast.



Figure 1: The unpainted ghost

Prepping the figure

Nolzur's Marvelous Miniatures come pre-primed, ready to paint right out of the package. If this wasn't a translucent miniature, you'd be set to pick up that paint brush and dive right in. Clear materials are challenging to get paint to adhere to, so a little precaution will save you headaches later. The clear part may still have mold release on it from the molding process. Or you may have, if you handled your mini quite a bit admiring the details and planning your colors as I tend to, have transferred some finger oils to it. Both finger oils and mold release will stop paint from adhering.

A quick wash with some warm water and dish soap and a gentle scrub with a soft toothbrush will do the trick. (It should go without saying that you need a dedicated miniatures scrubbing tooth brush, and not the one you use on your teeth.) Make sure you don't scrub the base section that already has primer on it. Dab off any excess water with a paper towel and let it fully air dry before you start painting. Using a heat source like a hot lamp or a hairdryer to dry the miniature will make its material soft, and when it returns to room temperature its shape may have warped a little. Letting it sit for a few hours is a much better option. Once dried, I take a little piece of poster tack and stick the miniature onto the lid of an old paint jar, so I don't have to handle it again.

Do you need to prime the miniature?

Normally, I would prime the surface of a miniature to give my paints something to adhere to. Two common methods of "priming" clear miniatures are with a coat or two of a dull sealer, or by using Future Floor Wax on the miniature. Both methods are valid, but I like the shine that the dull coat would remove; while Future, although it is perfectly clear, can fill in some fine details. With my technique, I'm going to leave it au naturel.

Base coating

I would like my ghost to resemble the one in the *Monster Manual*, so she will be light blue. For the base coat I am using Reaper Paint's Master Series Surf Aqua. The color is a soft, sky blue that should give the mini an ethereal feel.

Note: Miniature paint brands are a personal preference — some work better with specific techniques — and I'm comfortable with the paints I'm using. I've provided the details of the specific colors and brands I used, but you should feel free to substitute any brand you own or like. Most different lines of paint have similar or identical colors to each other, using different names.

All miniature paint is slightly translucent, so common sense suggests that thinning it with water will make it more translucent. However, in this case, water is not your friend. Additional water will make the paint puddle, and you will have a terrible time getting it to stick to the

mini. All acrylic paints consist of pigment (the color), the vehicle (water used to suspend the pigment), and binder (an emulsion to stick everything together and dry it into a cohesive film). If water is not going to work, adding more binder will. My binder of choice is Vellejo's Game Color Glaze Medium. This will make my blue color more translucent and help it stick to the clear plastic.



Figure 2: The blue and the glaze.

Note: Depending on the brand you choose, glaze medium can also be known as glaze liquid. It is not the same as matt or gloss medium, or matt or gloss paste, which will make your paint more transparent but will also thicken it.



Figure 3: The glaze and the blue mixed into a liquid.

I'll be adding three drops of glaze medium to every drop of Surf Aqua. Apply the first coat, making sure all the clear parts get covered. The paint will tend to puddle in the creases. Every bit of that paint needs to be removed or it will become opaque when it dries. I wipe off my brush and then just touch the tip of it to the pooled paint, to whisk it all up. I repeat this process until there is a consistent even coat. At this point the coat is really light and a little splotchy. Adding this amount of binder to the paint thins the color out, so you need to apply several coats. After three coats I have a nice transparent blue base.



Figure 4: After the first coat, I'm just about to remove the paint in the deep recesses.

The blue looks nice and ethereal. But just as when it was not yet colored, the transparent nature of the material makes the details hard to see. I'm therefore going to define the creases a little further with some shadows.

Adding a wash

I want to give the miniature a wash of a darker shade of blue, allowing the color to pool in the recesses. I only want the color in the creases, I don't want to stain the miniature, so I don't add glaze. I could add water, as the miniature now has a surface of paint, so any new paint will adhere to that. But adding water could make the paint leave the edges as it dries, which would look bad on the translucent figure. One solution is to add just a touch of dishwashing soap to the water, to lessen its surface tension. Instead I'm using another additive. To extend out the paint's vehicle, I'm going to be adding a "substitute water" — in this case Reaper Master Series Paint Flow Improver. To ensure that the creases don't become opaque, my choice is Reaper's Clear Blue paint.



Figure 5: The materials for the wash.

Unlike a normal wash, where I would load up a large brush and slosh it over the entire miniature, I'm going to use the previous method to remove any excess paint. But instead of wiping a fine brush off, then touching the tip to a crack to whisk up the paint, I'm loading a fine brush and touching the tip to a crease's edge and letting capillary action fill the crack.

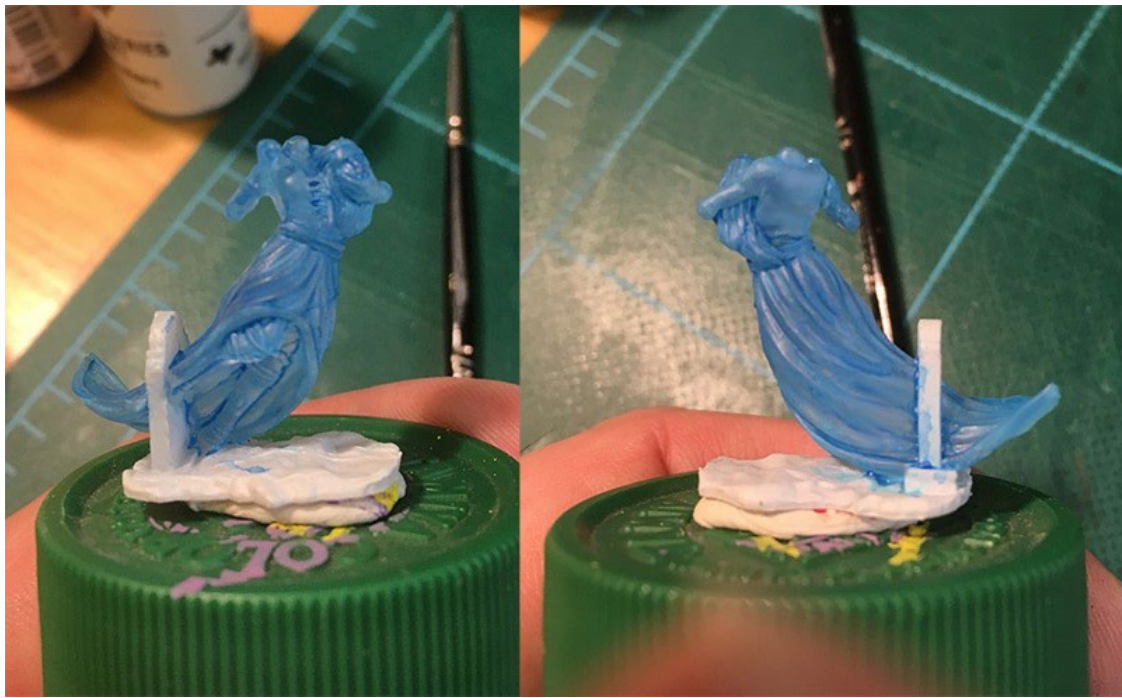


Figure 6: The wash going on.

At this point I would add some highlights. I could do a little dry brushing with a white/blue to pick out some detail, but that would leave little opaque spots that I don't want. Backlighting the ghost gives the desired effect. I feel that the translucent part is now finished and it's time to move onto the tombstone and base.



Figure 7: The backlit ghost looks very spooky.

Closing

The remaining parts of the miniature are painted using traditional techniques, with a grey and brown base coat, a darker wash and some lighter highlights. I added a little flocking to the base, then glued it onto the supplied disk with crazy glue. This was a very simple paint

job but the ghost looks like it is made of ectoplasm, and appears very different to a standard painted miniature.



Figure 8: The final ghost in some strong light to show off its transparency.

I hope you have gained some insights on painting translucent figures, and that you can now add glazing mediums and flow improvers to your arsenal. Both work very well with painting miniatures the traditional way, and are also good at making subtle color transitions much easier. As always keep gaming, keep painting, keep experimenting and most of all have fun. Thank you for reading, and happy painting!

Even if you've never painted a miniature before, don't worry. March saw the release of **Nolzur's Marvelous Miniatures**, an all-new line of unpainted minis from WizKids. Featuring Dungeons & Dragons creatures and characters already fully primed and assembled, Nolzur's Marvelous Miniatures are a great opportunity to try out some of these painting techniques.

Though this guide is intended for people newer to miniature painting, more experienced painters can find endless resources online—including an entire **subreddit**. On the Wizards of the Coast website, Daniel Gelon created a **video tutorial series** detailing some miniature construction and painting techniques during D&D's *Elemental Evil* storyline.

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Dragonfire

Shadowrun’s deckbuilding card game gets all fired up for D&D

Matt Chapman

“The whole thing has been redeveloped, top to bottom,” Catalyst Games director Loren Coleman says about the *Dragonfire cooperative deckbuilding game*, which is based on *Shadowrun: Crossfire*. Given that *Crossfire* took place in a technological world that had awoken to magic, where players might face anything from enhanced hackers and gang members to flesh-eating ghouls and dragons, such a deep change comes as no surprise.

“It uses the game engine first published in *Crossfire*, but *Dragonfire* has been re-engineered

to be a Dungeons & Dragons game,” he continues. “Players may recognize pieces of the basic engine, such as the damage track, but other than that it doesn’t share many similar components. It’s been upgraded, and adapted to be more compatible with D&D; which wasn’t hard to do, but it was time consuming. We wanted to really do it right.”



(Select to view)

True to the spirit of the Dungeons & Dragons Roleplaying Game, *Dragonfire* is about character empowerment and teamwork. Players start as first-level characters, choosing from a number of races (from dwarf and elf to half-orc and human), equipping themselves with weapons, spells, and magic items as they assume the quintessential roles of cleric, rogue, fighter, and wizard.

The first *Dragonfire* release will contain: five Encounters decks; Market and Magic Items decks; Character and Adventure cards; an Adventure booklet; sticker sheets; tokens; plastic clips; and a rulebook.

A separate Character expansion pack will boost the number of character types players can choose. A monthly adventure deck will then add more characters, spells, creatures and adventures, while a quarterly campaign pack will expand things further.

Dragonfire has an MSRP of \$59.99 and will be released at Gen Con on August 17, 2017. “We’re on target and we’ll have it out in stores late August, early September,” Coleman confirms.

“We stayed true to the tabletop RPG as much as possible. Where we blur the lines, it’s where you’re talking about a card-based mechanic and it’s done for the sake of really good gameplay,” Coleman says. “Characters still progress and level up. You earn experience, and when you complete a new adventure you gain magical treasures. But rather than gaining a level that awards abilities, instead you

customize your character by directly purchasing abilities with the Experience Points gained through game play, which eventually earns you your level. So it's a little different, but the same general principle. And as you progress, you get access to greater personal abilities."

Each player starts with a small deck and as they acquire cards, usually from a common selection available to everyone, they become more powerful. As with the D&D tabletop RPG, there's a wider mission to accomplish, in this case decided by one of the Adventure cards. That might be a standard dungeon crawl, an operation to safeguard a noble, or an assignment to retrieve an item. If you're wondering where the Dungeon Master is, that role is carried out by a number of 'Encounters' decks (Adventurers, Wilderness, City, and Dungeon).



Players acquire cards from a common pool. (Select to view)

"Adventures use random encounter decks, which reveal different monsters from D&D lore," Coleman explains. "Then there's also the Dragonfire Deck, which represents the vagaries and diabolical whims of the Dungeon Master. That is what's going to complicate your life along the way. So you've got your base game, your random monsters, and the overarching intentions of the DM."

The first release for *Dragonfire* will see adventures taking place on the Sword Coast. Coleman says players will recognize a lot of these environments, such as Dragonspear Castle and the Trollclaws, as well

as a quick adventure in the Moonshae Isles, and an Underdark campaign.



Dragonfire uses the damage track from Shadowrun: Crossfire. (Select to view)

“We’ll also be hitting the big cities, so they should expect to visit Baldur’s Gate, Neverwinter, and Waterdeep. It’ll be a great tour of the Sword Coast area and how far players travel will depend on how far they want to go for their adventures,” he says, although he won’t reveal if famous faces such as Elminster and Minsc will be making an appearance. “There could very easily be heroes from those areas that players might expect to meet as NPCs. Either as favorable NPCs, or as obstacles to encounter.”

“You’ll see classic undead and other major D&D monsters, but in my opinion the best bad guys are the Slaad,” Coleman says when we ask if he has a favorite card. “They’re one of the nastiest creatures in the Encounters deck and when those show up they just ruin your day.”

While the game is currently listed as being for three-to-six players, Coleman reveals that it has since been cleared for even smaller adventuring parties. “It’s actually for two-to-six players now. Some of us were always hoping to make it a two-player game, and playtesting that element went well. It is harder with two players, because you have fewer people guarding your back, but the game is very playable now.”



(Select to view)

As with the tabletop version of Dungeons & Dragons, variety is also the spice of life. Overall, it takes a combination of all four abilities (deception, devotion, martial, and arcane powers) to defeat the obstacles your group encounters. So it's easiest with a standard mixed party that contains a rogue, a cleric, a fighter and a wizard.

"We're not going to tell you that you can't bring five warriors to the battle, but you are intentionally making the game harder when you do that. You can buy the devotion and the deception cards, but you'll still be missing some of the basics you need to defeat an encounter. We always suggest having at least one of all four classes," Coleman advises. "If you're under four players, everyone should be trying to cover the missing color. If you're missing your wizard, you all better buy a *magic missile* or a *cloud of daggers* spell, because without them you're going to be hurting by the time you get to the end of the game."

For other great examples of gameplay and strategy, check [the official Dragonfire behind-the-scenes blog](#) every week.

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Adventure Scenario: The Hangover

Rat Queens author Kurtis Wiebe pens an exclusive module starring his kick-ass party of adventurers

“I’ve been roleplaying since I was twelve or thirteen,” says Kurtis Wiebe when *Dragon+* asks about his D&D history. “I started off with the *Star Wars* D6 West End Games roleplaying game, and weirdly the *James Bond 007* RPG from Victory Games. I wasn’t allowed to play D&D in my house because I grew up in a very religious home, and that was a no-no. [Laughs] I was probably 19 or 20 when I first played it. I met a friend online who lived close by, and played a one-on-one game. I’m pretty sure that was second edition, Advanced D&D.”

His experiences since then have

held him in good stead when it comes to creating the popular comic *Rat Queens*. Following the bawdy antics of a party of all-female fantasy characters, it's a comedic series that lovingly pokes fun at high fantasy tropes. Much like the exclusive adventure he's written for *Dragon+*, featuring those very same characters. While we'd love to say you're the first people to play through it, a group of Wiebe's friends has already claimed that honor.



Kurtis Wiebe

“It was something I originally wrote for fun. I was never going to publish it, I wrote it for my friend who was in from out of town. She'd come up from Los Angeles and wanted to play some D&D. Since it was myself and four other friends, I thought I might as well make it a *Rat Queens* thing and see how it goes,” he remembers.

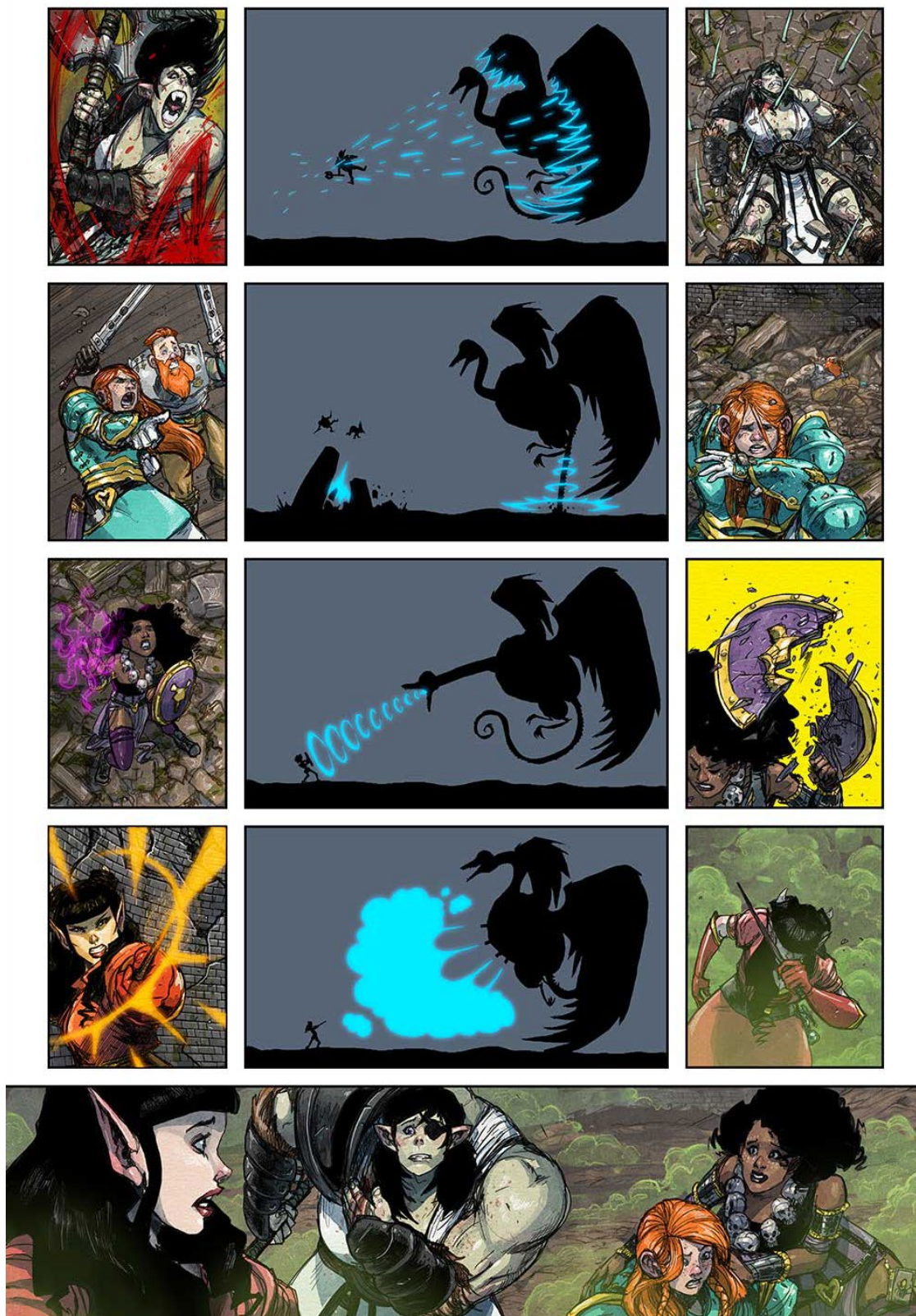
“From there, I've had it sitting on my computer for the last two years. When they announced the **Dungeon Masters Guild** I thought about putting it up there, but at that stage I was already in contact with the people at Wizards, so I reached out to them to see what they thought.”

Download the Hangover

The adventure, which is fittingly titled *The Hangover*, begins with a night of partying. Eventually, all of the characters black out following too much hedonism, and awake in the forest to a very interesting scenario. Given that opening, and the fact that this is a *Rat Queens* adventure, even following some editing there are plenty of colorful situations—and language.

“I wrote it for myself, so I knew there would probably be a little bit of editing that would need to happen. That kind of abrasive humor is part of what makes *Rat Queens* what it is, so thematically, that has to

be in there. But we've reached a happy medium, a balance between staying true to that tone and being publishable," Wiebe says with a laugh.



Rat Queens lovingly pokes fun at high fantasy tropes. (Select to view)

He says his favorite part of the adventure is a character called Dick the Word Dirk. “But if I was doing a splash page, it would be the scene where they’ve just woken up with a hangover in the woods. All the different things that are going on in that shot would be pretty interesting.”

Readers also get the chance to play as the four lead characters from *Rat Queens*: sorceress Hannah; necromancer Dee; candy-loving Betty; and rebellious dwarf Violet. Naturally, Wiebe had to translate his cast into D&D characters to allow that to happen.

“*Rat Queens* is an homage, not just to high fantasy, but also to my love of roleplaying games,” he says. “Even when I was creating the characters originally, I was thinking in terms of what role they would play within a group. With D&D there’s the classic four: the fighter; the thief; the cleric; and the mage.

“So when it came to writing this adventure, I already knew pretty much what roles they would fill. Then it was a matter of tweaking the rules just the absolute slightest to fit the narrative. So, Betty obviously isn’t a halfling, but for all intents and purposes, she is. Hannah also had a reveal in the comic that she has half-demonic heritage. So I had to create her as a half elf/half demon by taking bits of both and splicing them together.”

Wiebe says the conversion was actually very straight forward, and seemed a lot easier because level scaling is really quick in fifth edition.

“If it was third edition or 3.5, there would be a lot more crunch to it. Let’s say I wanted to start them at level three, you would have to add up all of the different ranks, and how that would pattern over three levels. In fifth edition, there’s a proficiency bonus and the numbers stay the same, so it’s a lot quicker to scale the characters. And while I did make up little things for the characters’ backgrounds, it was still mostly based on what you could find in the *Player’s Handbook*.”

Excitingly, Wiebe confirms that *The Hangover* is the first ever *Rat Queens* story to appear outside of a comic book. If it gets a good response, it could add another string to his bow.

“Traditionally, all the stories for *Rat Queens* have been in the comics exclusively, and this is a story that I’ve written in the *Rat Queens* universe that is exclusive to a roleplaying game. I think that’s fun and I hope the audience likes it, especially since it’s a new story,” he says.

“D&D and roleplaying games in general have always been a big part of my life. If I can write adventures and scenarios that are humorous and, like this one, contain comedy in the actual adventure outline, then I would love to be able to do that. Even if they’re not *Rat Queens* adventures.”

Rat Queens is published by Image Comics. Volume 2, Issue 4 is released on July 5, 2017, and three collected volumes are also available.

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Streaming Highlights

Stream of Annihilation brought together celebrity gamers from across the world.



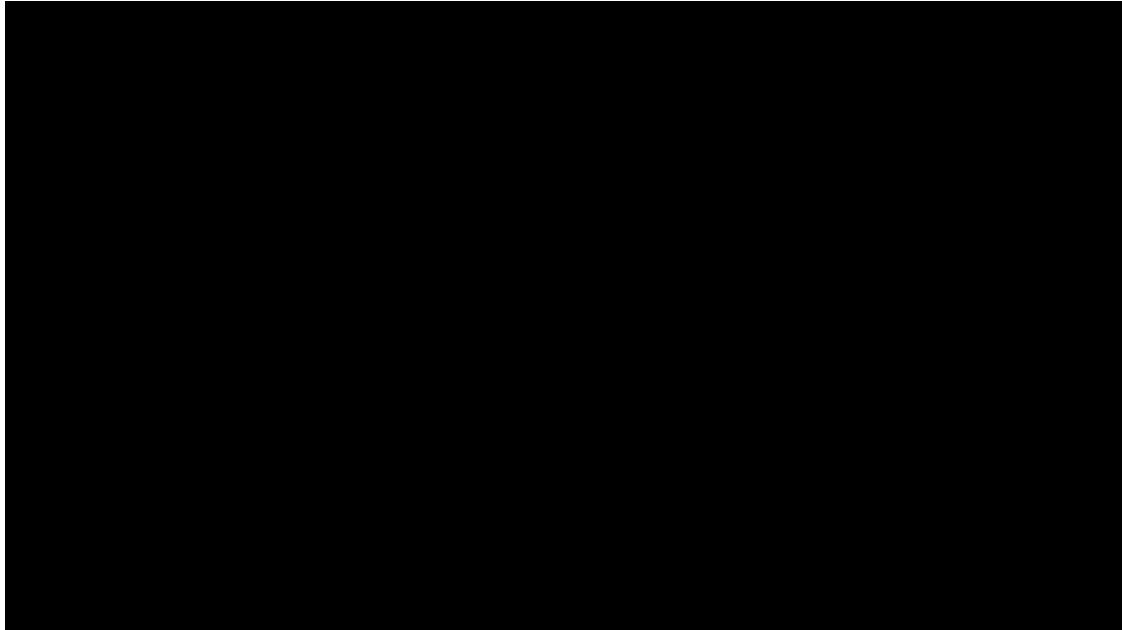
The epic two-day Stream of Annihilation event brought the cream of the streaming community together, each adding their own unique twist to the jungles of Chult. While games such as Acquisitions Incorporated: The “C” Team and Dice, Camera, Action! continued their run, Stream of Annihilation also introduced a number of new weekly streams that will premier in June/July.

Those who pass their Constitution save can binge on **two whole days of action, interviews and announcements**. Everyone else can enjoy these individual ninety-minute games, featuring some of the world’s most entertaining D&D players.

Dice, Camera, Action!

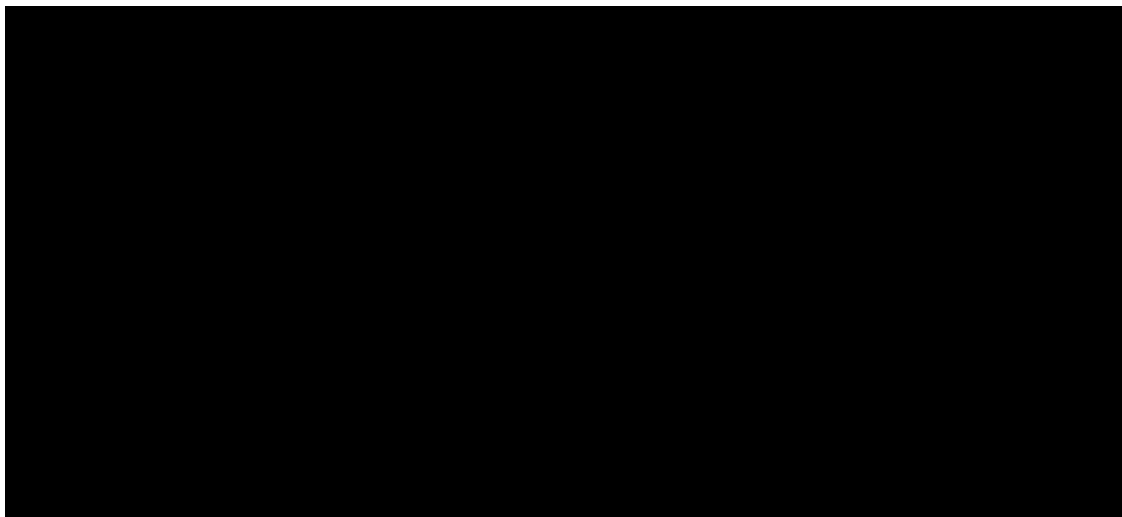
Dungeon Master Chris Perkins led streamers/YouTubers Holly

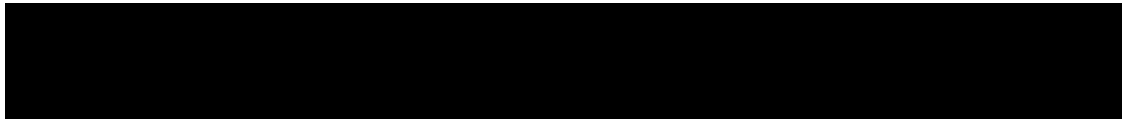
Conrad, Jared Knabenbauer, Anna Prosser Robinson, and special guest Allie Gonino (Girls, Guts, Glory) in an adventure fittingly titled, *Bite The Dust*. Get ready for one hell of a cliffhanger! Dice, Camera, Action! streams **every Tuesday from 4-6pm PT**.



Acquisitions Incorporated: The “C” Team

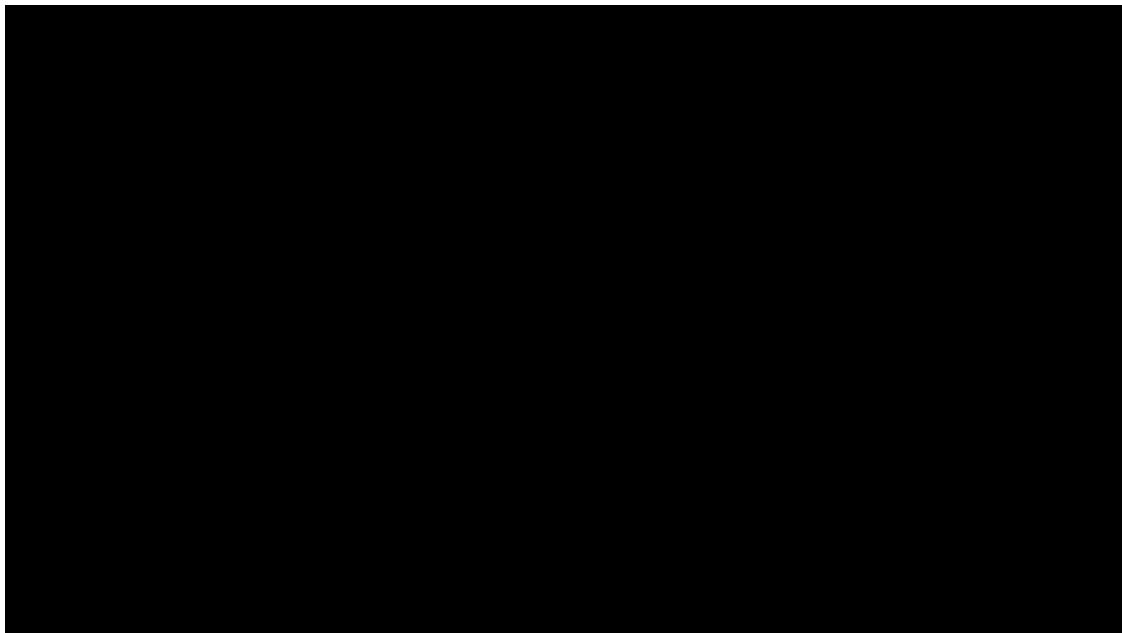
DM Jerry Holkins, AKA ninth level CEO Omin Dran, led the latest expansion of Penny Arcade’s Acquisitions Inc. comedy-tabletop franchise. The C-Team (Amy Falcone, Kris Straub, Kate Welch) took part in a canon one-shot game for Stream of Annihilation, accidentally inventing trigonometry as part of a halfling toss. Acquisitions Incorporated: The “C” Team streams live **every Thursday at 3.30pm PT**.





Misscliks

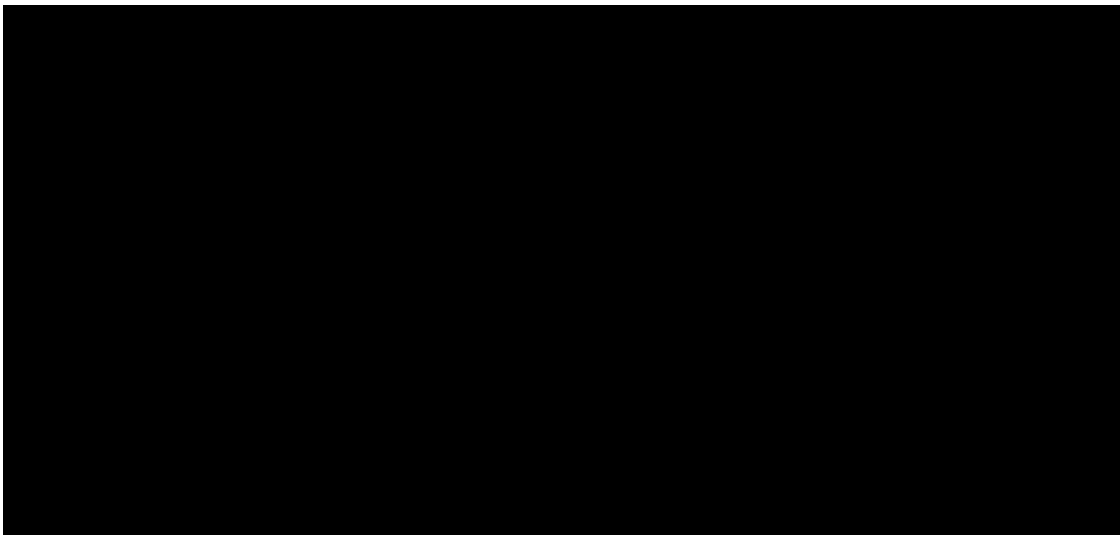
DM Nadja Otikor introduced the new Misscliks: Risen adventure with Kelly Link, Stephen Lumpkin, Brit Weisman, and Neal Erikson. Kicking off with a victory in the first moments, it wasn't long before more halfling tossing (an odd Stream of Annihilation trend) led to two members of the party falling victim to an axe attack. The story continues when **Misscliks D&D: Risen** officially premieres June 28, streaming Wednesdays at 4PM PT.



Maze Arcana

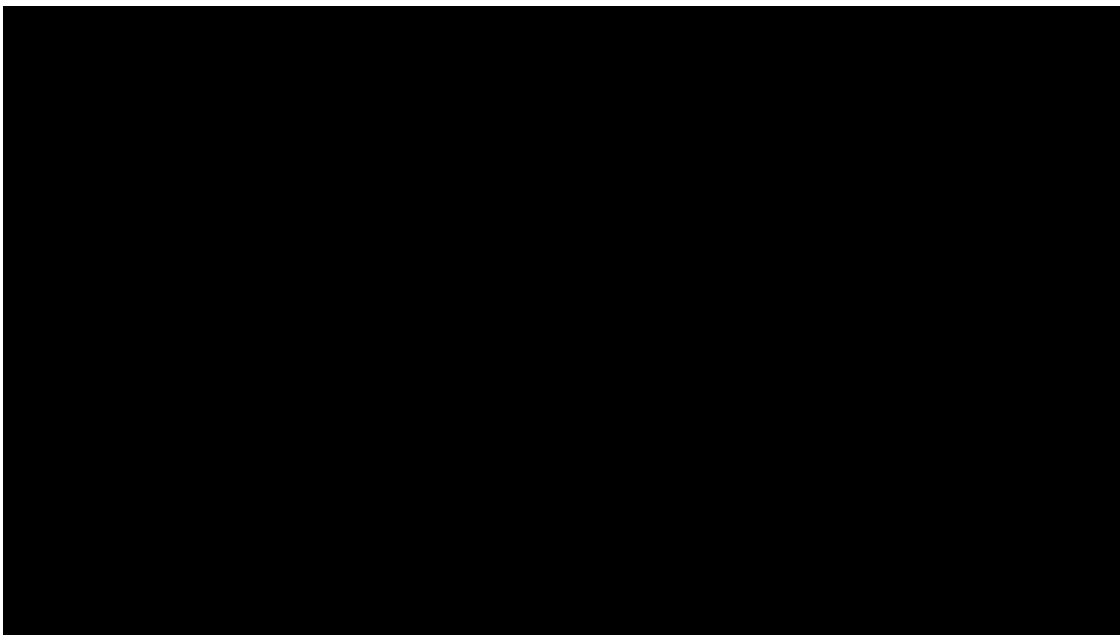
DM Ruty Rutenberg came armed with an amazing prop, as Lauren Urban, Mark Hulmes, Vieparlafoi, Matthew Lillard, Satine Phoenix, Nathan Stewart, and Abraham Benrubi boarded a ship to soar in the skies of Chult. Maze Arcana **premiers June 27/28 at 7pm PT**, when two groups in a shared timeline will both be hunting an artifact. Who will find it first?





High Rollers

The UK-based streamers (DM Mark Hulmes, Kim Richards, Katie Morrison, and Chris Trott), welcomed guest Dylan Sprouse to Chult, while Benny Davis from Dragon Friends provided live musical accompaniment on keyboards. High Rollers: Uncharted Territory **premiers Friday June 30 at 12pm PT.**



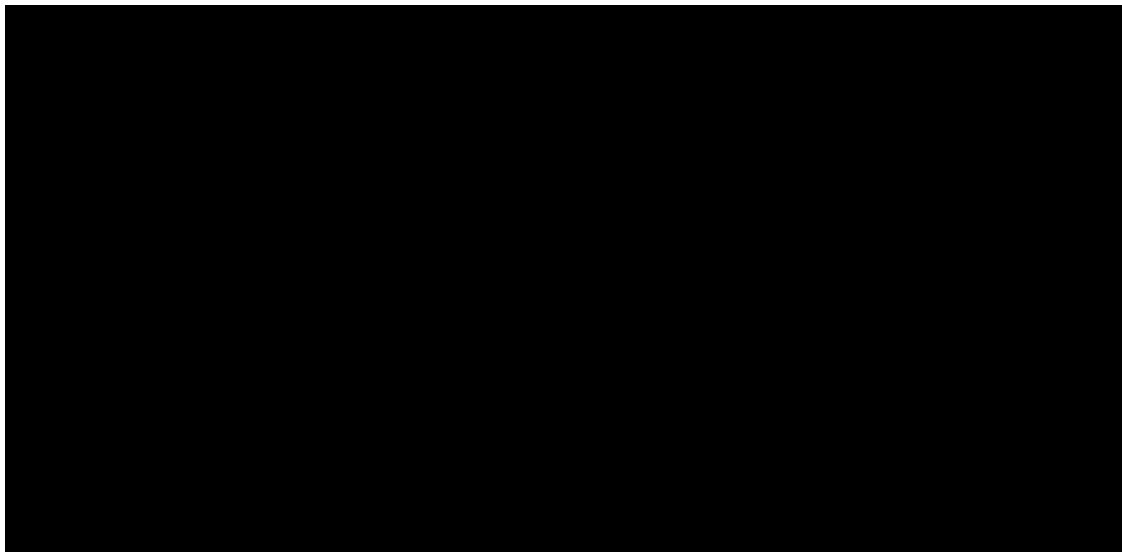
Dragon Friends

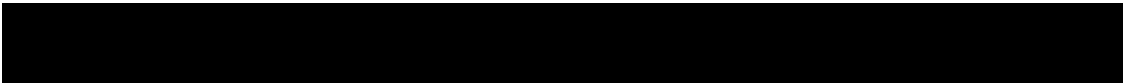
DM Ben Harmon led the Dragon Friends, a bunch of Australian comedians (Michael Hing, Alex Lee, Edan Lacey, Simon Greiner, Ben Jenkins, and Benny Davis), as they muddled their way through a

harrowing adventure in Chult. It seemed like a great idea for the group to get out of the cage they woke up in, until the dinosaurs appeared... **Dragon Friends' Tomb of Annihilation adventure** will premiere later in June.

Girls, Guts, Glory

Guest DM Matt Mercer led Girls, Guts, Glory (Kim Hidalgo, Alice Greczyn, Erika Fermina, Rachel Seeley, Allie Gonino, and Sujata Day) on an adventure to Chult. The all-female RPG group had to weather a storm at sea and survive the horrors of sea maggots, twitching vines, and worse. Girls, Guts, Glory streams every Thursday at 2pm PT and the group's **Tomb of Annihilation adventure** will premiere in June.





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EXPERIMENT 7



Dragon Retro: The Path to Lichdom

From the *Dragon* archives, we revisit the makings of a lich and other assorted miscellany!

Dragon 26 was released in June of 1979 (back when Ridley Scott's original *Alien* was at the top of the box office). Featured content within the issue included NPC stats for classic fantasy characters created by authors Jack Vance, Karl Edward Wagner, and Talbot Mundy; monster stats for the barghest; as well as a new magic item, the (tarot-based) *deck of fate*.



Lich (select to view)

While liches appeared in the first edition *Monster Manual*, it was with the simple explanation that they had formerly been high-level spellcasters in life. Here in *Dragon 26*, there was now an actual formulae for one to become a lich. After all, the game may largely have espoused heroic virtues, but characters could be of any alignment—and for every noble fighter and cleric seeking to build castles and churches in the service of good, there were thieves looking to become the Grandfather of Assassins, and magic users interested in achieving lichdom.

An easier path would later appear in fourth edition's *Arcane Power*. There, any arcane caster of 21st level could take on the archlich epic

destiny: “Unlike many who have become lichs before you... you did not perform the foul ritual that traded your life for animation the moment you found it; you waited until your power was equal to the challenge. Nor did you accept the aid of Orcus, Demon Prince of the Undead, to empower the ritual, but you waited to find methods outside his control.”

But for now, we’ve excerpted the article from *Dragon 26*:

Bazaar of the Bizarre

Liches are high-level clerics or magic users who have become very special undead. Before becoming a lich, the cleric or magic user must have been at least 14th level in life, although 18th level is most common. Once a lich is created, it might drop in level, but below 10th level, one cannot exist.

Preparation for lichdom occurs while the figure is still alive and must be completed before his first “death.” If he dies somewhere along the line and is resurrected, then he must start all over again. The lich needs these spells: magic jar, trap the soul, and enchant an item, plus a special potion and something to “jar” into.

The item into which the lich will “jar” is prepared by having enchant an item cast upon it. The item cannot be of the common variety, but must be of high quality, solid, and of at least 2,000 gp in value. The item must make a saving throw as if it were the person casting the spell. (A cleric would have to have the spell *enchant an item* and *magic jar* thrown for him and it is the contracted magic user’s level that would be used for the saving throw.) The item can contain prior magics, but wooden items are not acceptable.

If the item accepts the *enchant an item* spell (this requires eighteen-plus hours), then *trap the soul* is cast on the item. *Trap the soul* has a chance to work equal to fifty percent plus six percent/level of the magic user/cleric over 11th level. (A roll of 00 is always failure.) If the item is then soul receptive, the prepared candidate for lichdom will cast *magic jar* on it and enter the item. As soon as he enters the jar, he immediately loses a level and the corresponding hit points. The hit points and his soul are now stored in the jar. He then must return to his own body and must rest for two to seven days. The

ordeal is so demanding that his top three levels of spells are erased and will not come back (through reading/prayer) until the rest period is up.

The next time the character dies, regardless of circumstances, he will go into the jar, no matter how far away and no matter what the obstacles (including *cubes of force*, *prismatic spheres*, lead boxes, etc.). To get out again, the magic user/cleric must have his (or another's) recently dead body within 90 feet of the jar. The body can be that of any recently killed creature, from a mouse to a kirin. The corpse must fail its saving throw versus magic to be possessed. The saving throw is that of a one-half hit die figure for a normal man, animal, small monster, etc., regardless of alignment, if the figure had three or fewer hit dice in life. If it had four or more hit dice, it gains one of the following saving throws, according to alignment: Good Lawful, Good Choatic, Good Neutral—normal saving throw as in life; Neutral Lawful, Neutral Choatic, Pure Neutral—normal saving throw as in life minus three; Evil Lawful—saving throw minus four; Evil Neutral—saving throw minus five; Evil Choatic—saving throw minus six. The corpse can be dead no longer than thirty days. If it makes its saving throw, it will never receive the lich. The magic user's/cleric's own corpse can be dead any length of time and is at minus ten to receive him. He may attempt to enter his own corpse once each week until he succeeds.

If the lich enters another's corpse, he will have the limited abilities of the corpse when it comes to physical strength. Intelligence and wisdom will be his own, regardless of what the corpse had. It can have no more than four hit dice, and will behave as a wight, but has no energy draining ability. If the corpse could cast spells in life, then the possessed corpse may cast up to, but not beyond, the 4th level of spell ability. The wightish body will be telepathic if the corpse could speak in life.

In the wightish body, the lich will seek his own body and transport it to the location of the jar. Destruction of his own body is possible only via the spell *disintegrate* and the body gets a normal saving throw versus the spell. Dismemberment or burning the body will not totally destroy it, as the pieces of the corpse will radiate an unlimited range *locate object* spell. Naturally it may be difficult for the lich to obtain these pieces/ashes, but that is another story. If and when the wightish

body finds the remains of the lich's original body, it will eat them and after one week will metamorphosis into a humanoid body similar to that of the lich's original body. Once the lich is back in his own body, he will have the spells he had in life and never has to read/pray for them again. In fact he *cannot*, except once to "fill up" his spell levels. As a lich, he can never gain levels, use scrolls, or use magic items that require the touch of a living being.

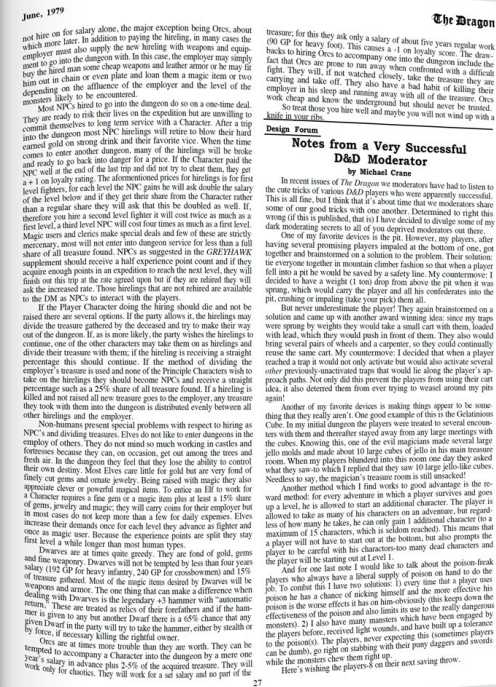
Each time the lich returns his life force to the jar, it always costs him a level. When he drops to 10th level, any subsequent return to the jar destroys the lich. The lich will try to teleport back to the jar, however, before he is "killed" (that is, before he goes to zero hit points). If he does go to zero points, he is destroyed forever! If he has the spell *teleport*, the lich can transport his body, also, but just his "life force" goes back into the jar. (He does *not*, however, need the spell *teleport* to get just his life force back to the jar, although if he loses his body in this manner, he must start the search for it all over again.

If his body is disintegrated then the lich can only be a wightish body unless he can find someone to cast a *wish* for him to get the body back together again. The jar must be on the *Prime Material*, the *Negative Material* or the *Positive Material Plane*, and of course he must have a means of gaining access to the appropriate plane in the first place.

A living person will never radiate anything that will indicate he is prepared for lichdom. No charm will ever make him tell this fact or where his jar is hidden! However a charm can make him tell what the jar is. In like manner, *locate object* will not find a lich's jar unless a god-ranked figure is willing to cast the spell and its range is limited to 100 miles in only one plane!

The lich must find a means of continual access if he places his jar on another plane. Hirelings can be charmed (paid) to keep a supply of dead bodies (under 30 days) at his disposal but that is risky. A jar hidden too well may never offer a corpse for him to enter.

Miscellany



(Select to view)

The same issue also saw a number of shorter columns, of historical interest:

D&D Meets the Electronic Age
By Rick Krebs. Even back in 1979, the article opens with: “While the subtitle to the original Dungeon & Dragons rules set states that it is a fantasy role playing game playable with paper and pencil and miniature figures, to many fanatics of the game and its genre, the equipment used has gone far beyond that point.”


Hirelings Have Feelings, Too
By Charles Sagui. At the time, it was more common to enlist members known as hirelings to a dungeon-delving crew, and Dragon 26 included added details for their employment. After all, “The hiring who accompanies the player into the underworld is facing proven danger and acting as porter for heavy loads of gold and other treasures. They are a different sort of person and require a different pay structure.”

Notes from a Very Successful D&D Moderator
By Michael Crane. Nothing against the original author, but the tone of the article does not quite mesh with current DMing advice. Instead, it offers some fairly aggressive tactics to counter player

schemes, particular when it comes to foiling their ingenious efforts to avoid pit traps.

Postscript

In coming issues of *Dragon+*, we'll continue to look back into the vast trove of *Dragon* magazine back issues to present some favorite pieces from years past. Though the rules and editions of D&D have changed over the years, there's still much to be savored from nearly four decades of *Dragon*. If there are particular articles or content that you would like to see republished in a future issue of *Dragon+*, please **let us know!**



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D&D Meets the Electronic Age

Rick Krebs

While the subtitle to the original *Dungeons & Dragons* rules set states that it is a fantasy role playing game playable with paper and pencil and the miniature figures, to many fanatics of the game and its genre, the D&D equipment used has gone far beyond that point. Not that the D&D claim is false, far from it. It's in the nature of fanatics to take their interest seriously and to constantly seek new ways to expand their interest.

Over the years access to photocopiers and mimeograph machines have aided many *Dungeon Masters* in copying maps, charts and even publishing their own zines, all to the expansion of their campaign. But, the recent electronics explosion has now brought another tool to those DMs fortunate to have access to them: the micro-computer.

We were one of those fortunate groups to gain the use of a 4K (4,000 bit) memory, BASIC speaking microcomputer. We mentioned to several fellow DMs and gamers of our plans to program it to handle role playing games (D&D, Boot Hill), and to my surprise there was a lot of concern about letting a machine become a part of role playing games. Well, either I did a lousy job of explaining the planned programming (possible as I am by no stretch of the imagination a computer scientist, merely a gamer looking for new ways to use technology in gaming) or the concern was unwarranted. As any of our group of gamers can testify, the SAFE has improved our handling of the mechanics of our campaign, at no expense to creativity.

An analysis of D&D reveals that movement around a dungeon (which way to go, which door to open, should we fight or run, how do we disarm the trap, etc.) is basic logic (sometimes good logic, sometimes bad) problem solving that can be broken into a mathematical or a computer flow chart. But, the contents of the rooms, how monsters react, what a chamber looks like is an art that a DM develops from experience and use of his/her imagination. So why not let the computer handle the mechanics and the DM handle the material. With the computer doing part of the job it leaves the DM more time to be creative and interact with the players.

What does the computer do in the Realm of the Celestial Wizard (our campaign)? At present with our limited memory, the SAGE is programmed for the hit charts and damage allocation, name generation (for the thousands of minor NPCs), creating requisites and levels of non-player characters, handling the bookkeeping details on player characters, and a basic *Dungeon* that runs itself.

The hit charts are easily programmed, though repetitiously dull to work on, but the knowledge that once done it never has to be done again is compensation. The program is based on simple if... then, as well as "logical AND" and "logical OR" statements. First you tell the computer to generate a random number (X) from 1 to 20. Now you INPUT the monster's hit dice (Y) and then foe's armor class (Z). A sample program entry shows what is done with the preceding information: If Y equals 1 and Z equals 9 and X is greater than or equal to 10, then go to 600.

The computer's dice rolls a 12, it goes to line #600 in the program, where it is told to print "hits." The computer tells you the monster has hit, but it now waits for further input. It needs to know what type of die to roll and how many in order to give damage. Since the monster in the example was an orc, we enter 6 for type of dice and 1 for how many. Had the computer rolled a 20, it would have informed us of double damage and the 6 would be rolled twice. Now the computer returns to the start of the program ready for more action.

Had the computer rolled less than 10 in the example, the SAGE would have gone back to the beginning of the program, indicating a miss. No need to have it print "Miss" as it takes up valuable space in the memory. Another important thing to remember is to include a "timer loop", when the damage is rolled, as it will disappear from the screen as rapidly as it appeared. Even the computer is eager to get back to battle.

Programming to generate names is accomplished by giving letter values to numbers and generating randomly a string of numbers (letters) according to certain pre-determined patterns. Professor Barker's *Throne* provides a reference for these patterns which can be adapted to suit your own taste.

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Our computer dungeon is based on a labyrinth, and the only limit to it is the size of SAGE's memory bank. But by using recurring rooms and passages, the size of the memory can be compensated for. As to try and explain the program for the dungeon would take too much space, a few generalized patterns will be demonstrated, and if you have access to a micro computer try and expand on it yourself.

The computer dungeon is based on if... then statements such as, "You are standing in an east-west corridor. Which way?" If east, go to Room #1, which is empty but has 3 doors. If west, then go to Chamber #2, which contains a dagger trap and 2 doors. From here the computer can take you back to the initial corridor, or to a series of other rooms, which also leads to the initial corridor. By wording corridors and rooms similarly, it makes the trick of repeating rooms impossible to detect and this misdirection poses as much of a threat as the Minotaur and other creatures trapped within the labyrinth. To demonstrate how confusing a program can be, try navigating your way through it right after completing the program.

The computer in gaming has been around awhile, but now as technology takes steps forward, the next several years contain the possibility of general access to the more complete systems for the average consumer. However, the fear that the use of a micro computer will destroy the creativity of role playing games if used in them is groundless. Our experience in recent months has been very positive in SAGE's use in both D&D and Boot Hill (our program for Gamma World is not finished yet), and if anything, has helped this DM in handling his chores. We now are adding new ideas that previously couldn't be adopted, as we were busy enough rolling dice and trying to locate all the different charts.

The micro computer has its place in role playing gaming as long as its limitations are understood, and the human programmer remembers that his duty is in creativity, while the computer can and should only speed up the mechanics. The computer provides the skeleton for gaming, and the DM still creates the flesh of the campaign.

Design Forum

Hirelings Have Feelings Too

By Charles Sagui

One of the strange relationships of *D&D* is that between the Player Character and those he pays to accompany him into danger and possible death. A hireling is an extension of the will of the player but he has a will of his own expressed in morale and reaction rolls to determine how an NPC hireling will act in a given situation. What follows are some of my ideas on treatment of hired NPCs.

The hireling is not a slave, he is a free man who has made the choice to risk his life. This type of duty should not be confused with the hirelings who sit around the castle surrounded by an army of comrades ready to ride forth if the smallest band of Orcs happen to trespass on the holdings of their lord. The hireling who accompanies the player into the underworld is facing proven danger and acting as porter for heavy loads of gold and other treasures. They are a different sort of person and require a different pay structure.

A hireling should be offered at least two years normal salary in advance (72 GP for human heavy foot etc.) plus a share of the spoils. There are several ways to divide spoils. The first and easiest is to give a share of the treasure equally to all who participate; while many DMs like this idea, many players do not. Another way is to give a percentage of the treasure much as they are given a percentage of experience points, a 25-50% usually works fairly well. Finally I will list the way which I prefer, the principal employers and player characters receive a share and they in turn give a share to their NPC employees, usually 5-10% as a base. Very few people can be convinced to enter the dungeon on a strict salary basis. Those who will go are not trustworthy and will ask at least the equivalent of five years salary in advance. In relatively safe encounters, such as a few Goblins or a Kobold or two, these purely mercenary hirelings will not act with outstanding courage; but when they face the dragon, or the Balor demon steps into the corridor, snaps his whip and ignites, these *warriors-for-money* are going to question the wisdom of their decision to go along and in most cases they will take off, along with any treasure you were foolish enough to let him carry! Non-humans will

not hire on for salary alone, the major exception being Orcs, about which more later. In addition to paying the hireling, in many cases the employer must also supply the new hireling with weapons and equipment to go into the dungeon with. In this case, the employer may simply buy the hired man some cheap weapons and leather armor or he may fit him out in chain or even plate and loan them a magic item or two depending on the affluence of the employer and the level of the monsters likely to be encountered.

Most NPCs hired to go into the dungeon do so on a one-time deal. They are ready to risk their lives on the expedition but are unwilling to commit themselves to long term service with a Character. After a trip into the dungeon most NPC hirelings will retire to blow their hard earned gold on strong drink and their favorite vice. When the time comes to enter another dungeon, many of the hirelings will be broke and ready to go back into danger for a price. If the Character paid the NPC well at the end of the last trip and did not try to cheat them, they get a +1 on loyalty rating. The aforementioned prices for hirelings is for first level fighters, for each level the NPC gains he will ask double the salary of the level below and if they get their share from the Character rather than a regular share they will ask that this be doubled as well. If, therefore you hire a second level fighter it will cost twice as much as a first level, a third level NPC will cost four times as much as a first level. Magic users and clerics make special deals and few of these are strictly mercenary, most will not enter into dungeon service for less than a full share of all treasure found. NPCs as suggested in the *GREYHAWK* supplement should receive a half experience point count and if they acquire enough points in an expedition to reach the next level, they will finish out this trip at the rate agreed upon but if they are rehired they will ask the increased rate. Those hirelings that are not rehired are available to the DM as NPCs to interact with the players.

If the Player Character doing the hiring should die and not be raised there are several options. If the party allows it, the hirelings may divide the treasure gathered by the deceased and try to make their way out of the dungeon. If, as is more likely, the party wishes the hirelings to continue, one of the other characters may take them on as hirelings and divide their treasure with them; if the hireling is receiving a straight percentage this should continue. If the method of dividing the employer's treasure is used and none of the Principle Characters wish to take on the hirelings they should become NPCs and receive a straight percentage such as a 25% share of all treasure found. If a hireling is killed and not raised all new treasure goes to the employer, any treasure they took with them into the dungeon is distributed evenly between all other hirelings and the employer.

Non-humans present special problems with respect to hiring as NPCs and dividing treasures. Elves do not like to enter dungeons in the employ of others. They do not mind so much working in castles and fortresses because they can, on occasion, get out among the trees and fresh air. In the dungeon they feel that they lose the ability to control their own destiny. Most Elves care little for gold but are very fond of finely cut gems and ornate jewelry. Being raised with magic they also appreciate clever or powerful magical items. To entice an Elf to work for a Character requires a fine gem or a magic item plus at least a 15% share of gems, jewelry and magic; they will carry coins for their employer but in most cases do not keep more than a few for daily expenses. Elves increase their demands once for each level they advance as fighter and once as magic user. Because the experience points are split they stay first level a while longer than most human types.

Dwarves are at times quite greedy. They are fond of gold, gems and fine weaponry. Dwarves will not be tempted by less than four years salary (192 GP for heavy infantry, 240 GP for crossbowmen) and 15% of treasure gathered. Most of the magic items desired by Dwarves will be weapons and armor. The one thing that can make a difference when dealing with Dwarves is the legendary +3 hammer with "automatic return." These are treated as relics of their forefathers and if the hammer is given to any but another Dwarf there is a 65% chance that any given Dwarf in the party will try to take the hammer, either by stealth or by force, if necessary killing the rightful owner.

Orcs are at times more trouble than they are worth. They can be tempted to accompany a Character into the dungeon by a mere one year's salary in advance plus 2-5% of the acquired treasure. They will work only for chaotics. They will work for a set salary and no part of the

treasure; for this they ask only a salary of about five years regular work (90 GP for heavy foot). This causes a -1 on loyalty score. The drawback that Orcs are prone to run away when confronted with a difficult fight. They will, if not watched closely, take the treasure they are employer in his sleep and running away with all of the treasure. Orcs work cheap and know the underground but should never be trusted. So treat those you hire well and maybe you will not wind up with a knife in your ribs.

Design Forum

Notes from a Very Successful D&D Moderator

by Michael Crane

In recent issues of *The Dragon* we moderators have had to listen to the cute tricks of various *D&D* players who were apparently successful. This is all fine, but I think that it's about time that we moderators share some of our good tricks with another. Determined to right this wrong (if this is published, that is) I have decided to divulge some of my dark moderating secrets to all of you deprived moderators out there.

One of my favorite devices is the pit. However, my players, after having several promising players impaled at the bottom of one, got together and brainstormed on a solution to the problem. Their solution: tie everyone together in mountain climber fashion so that when a player fell into a pit he would be saved by a safety line. My countermove: I decided to have a weight (1 ton) drop from above the pit when it was sprung, which would carry the player and all his confederates into the pit, crushing or impaling (take your pick) them all.

But never underestimate the player! They again brainstormed on a solution and came up with another award winning idea: since my traps were sprung by weights they would take a small cart with them, loaded with lead, which they would push in front of them. They also would bring several pairs of wheels and a carpenter, so they could continually reuse the same cart. My countermove: I decided that when a player reached a trap it would not only activate but would also activate several other previously-unactivated traps that would lie along the player's approach paths. Not only did this prevent the players from using their cart idea, it also deterred them from ever trying to weasel around my pits again!

Another of my favorite devices is making things appear to be something that they really aren't. One good example of this is the Gelatinous Cube. In my initial *dungeon* the players were treated to several encounters with them and thereafter stayed away from any large meetings with the cubes. Knowing this, one of the evil magicians made several large jello molds and made about 10 large cubes of jello in his main treasure room. When my players blundered into this room one day they asked what they saw-to which I replied that they saw 10 large jello-like cubes. Needless to say, the magician's treasure room is still unsearched!

Another method which I find works to good advantage is the reward method: for every adventure in which a player survives and goes up a level, he is allowed to start an additional character. The player is up a level, he is allowed to start an additional character, but regardless to take as many of his characters on an adventure, but regardless of how many he takes, he can only gain 1 additional character (to a maximum of 15 characters, which is seldom reached). This means that a player will not have to start out at the bottom, but also prompts the player to be careful with his characters-too many dead characters and the player will be starting out at Level 1.

And for one last note I would like to talk about the poison-freak players who always have a liberal supply of poison on hand to do the job. To combat this I have two solutions: 1) every time that a player uses his poison he has a chance of nicking himself and the more effective his poison is the worse effects it has on him-obviously (this keeps down the effectiveness of the poison and also limits its use to the really dangerous monsters). 2) I also have many monsters which have been engaged by the players before, received light wounds, and have built up a tolerance to the poison(s). The players, never expecting this (sometimes players can be dumb), go right on stabbing with their puny daggers and swords while the monsters chew them right up.

Here's wishing the players-8 on their next saving throw.

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Unearthed Arcana: Revised Class Options

Revised versions of four subclasses, and Eldritch Invocations for the warlock

Playtest Material

The material here is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by final game development and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

This document provides revised versions of class material that appeared in previous instalments of Unearthed Arcana: four subclasses for various classes, along with Eldritch Invocations for the warlock. This material was all popular, and the revisions to it were driven by feedback that thousands of you provided in surveys.

The subclasses are the druid's Circle of the Shepherd, the fighter's Cavalier, the paladin's Oath of Conquest, and the warlock's Celestial (formerly known as the Undying Light).

One of the main pieces of feedback we got about the Eldritch Invocations is that you didn't want them exclusive to particular Otherworldly Patron options, so we've opened them up to more warlocks, tweaked them, and cut the least popular ones.

Druid: Circle of the Shepherd

Druids of the Circle of the Shepherd commune with the spirits of nature, especially the spirits of beasts and the fey, and call to those spirits for aid. These druids recognize that all living things play a role in the natural world, yet they focus on protecting animals and fey creatures that have difficulty defending themselves. Shepherds, as they are known, see such creatures as their charges. They ward off monsters that threaten them, rebuke hunters who kill more prey than necessary, and prevent civilization from encroaching on rare animal habitats and on sites sacred to the fey. Many of these druids are happiest far from cities and towns, content to spend their days in the company of animals and the fey creatures of the wilds.

Members of this circle become adventurers to oppose forces that threaten their charges or to seek knowledge and power that will help them safeguard their charges better. Wherever these druids go, the spirits of the wilderness are with them.

Paladin level

Feature

2nd	Spirit Totem, Speech of the Woods
6th	Mighty Summoner
10th	Guardian Spirit
14th	Faithful Summons

Speech of the Woods

At 2nd level, you gain the ability to converse with beasts and many fey. You learn to speak, read, and write Sylvan. In addition, beasts can understand your speech, and you gain the ability to decipher their noises and motions. Most beasts lack the intelligence to convey or understand sophisticated concepts, but a friendly beast could relay what it has seen or heard in the recent past. This ability doesn't grant you any special friendship with beasts, though you can combine this ability with gifts to curry favor with them as you would with any nonplayer character.

Spirit Totem

Starting at 2nd level, you gain the ability to call forth nature spirits and use them to influence the world around you. As a bonus action, you can magically summon an incorporeal spirit to a point you can see within 60 feet of you. The spirit creates an aura in a 30-foot radius around that point. It counts as neither a creature nor an object, though it has the spectral appearance of the creature it represents.

As a bonus action, you can move the spirit up to 60 feet to a point you can see. The spirit persists for 1 minute. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

The effect of the spirit's aura depends on the type of spirit you summon from the options below.

Bear Spirit. The bear spirit grants you and your allies its might and endurance. Each creature of your choice in the aura when the spirit appears gains temporary hit points equal to 5 + your druid level. In addition, you and your allies gain advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws while in the aura.

Hawk Spirit. The hawk spirit is a consummate hunter, marking your enemies with its keen sight. When a creature makes an attack roll against a target in the spirit's aura, you can use your reaction to grant advantage to that attack roll.

Unicorn Spirit. The unicorn spirit lends its protection to those nearby. You and your allies gain advantage on all ability checks made to detect creatures in the spirit's aura. In addition, if you cast a spell with a spell slot that restores hit points to anyone inside or outside the aura, each creature of your choice in the aura also regains

hit points equal to your druid level.

Mighty Summoner

At 6th level, you gain the ability to conjure forth powerful beasts and fey. Any beast or fey summoned or created by your spells gains two benefits:

- The creature appears with more hit points than normal: 2 extra hit points per Hit Die it has.
- The damage from its natural weapons is considered magical for the purpose of overcoming immunity and resistance to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Guardian Spirit

Beginning at 10th level, your Spirit Totem safeguards the beasts and fey that you call forth with your magic. When a beast or fey that you summoned or created with a spell ends its turn in your Spirit Totem aura, that creature regains a number of hit points equal to half your druid level.

Faithful Summons

Starting at 14th level, the nature spirits you commune with protect you when you are the most defenseless. If you are reduced to 0 hit points or are incapacitated against your will, you can immediately gain the benefits of conjure animals as if it were cast with a 9th-level spell slot. It summons four beasts of your choice that are challenge rating 2 or lower. The conjured beasts appear within 20 feet of you. If they receive no commands from you, they protect you from harm and attack your foes. The spell lasts for 1 hour, requiring no concentration, or until you dismiss it (no action required).

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

Fighter: Cavalier

The archetypal Cavalier excels at mounted combat. Usually born among the nobility and raised at court, a Cavalier is equally at home leading a cavalry charge or exchanging repartee at a state dinner. Cavaliers also learn how to guard those in their charge from harm, often serving as the protectors of their superiors and of the weak. Drawn to right wrongs or earn prestige, many of these fighters leave

their lives of comfort to embark on glorious adventures.

Fighter level	Feature
3rd	<i>Bonus Proficiency, Born to the Saddle, Combat Superiority (d8s, 4 dice)</i>
7th	<i>Ferocious Charger, Combat Superiority (5 dice)</i>
10th	<i>Improved Combat Superiority (d10s)</i>
15th	<i>Relentless, Combat Superiority (6 dice)</i>
18th	<i>Improved Combat Superiority (d12s)</i>

Bonus Proficiency

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in one of the following skills of your choice: Animal Handling, History, Insight, Performance, or Persuasion. Alternatively, you learn one language of your choice.

Born to the Saddle

Starting at 3rd level, your mastery as a rider becomes apparent. You have advantage on saving throws made to avoid falling off your mount. If you fall off your mount and descend no more than 10 feet, you can land on your feet if you're not incapacitated.

Finally, mounting or dismounting a creature costs you only 5 feet of movement, rather than half your speed.

Combat Superiority

At 3rd level, you gain a set of combat abilities, referred to as maneuvers, which are fuelled by special dice called superiority dice.

Superiority Dice. You have four superiority dice, which are d8s. A superiority die is expended when you use it. You regain all your expended superiority dice when you finish a short or long rest. You



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gain another superiority die at 7th level and one more at 15th level.

Maneuvers. You spend your superiority dice on your maneuvers. You can use more than one maneuver per turn, but no more than one maneuver per attack.

You know the following maneuvers:

Control Mount. When you make a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to influence a creature that you or an ally is riding, you can expend one superiority die, roll it, and add the number rolled to the check. You can do this before or after rolling the d20, but before applying the results of the check.

Precision Attack. When you make a weapon attack against a creature, you can expend one superiority die, roll it, and add it to the attack roll. You can use this ability before or after rolling the d20, but before any of the effects of the attack are applied.

Trip Attack. When you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can expend one superiority die to attempt to knock the target down. Roll the die, and add it to the attack's damage roll. If the target is Large or smaller, it must also succeed on a Strength saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength modifier) or be knocked prone.

Warding Maneuver. If you or a creature within 5 feet of you is hit by an attack, you can expend one superiority die as a reaction if you're wielding a weapon or a shield. Roll the die, and add the number rolled to the target's AC against that attack. If the attack still hits, the target has resistance against the attack's damage.

Ferocious Charger

At 7th level, you gain additional benefits when you use your Trip Attack maneuver. You can expend up to two superiority dice on it, adding both dice to the damage roll. When you spend two dice in this way, the target has disadvantage on its Strength saving throw to avoid being knocked prone.

Improved Combat Superiority

At 10th level, your superiority dice turn into d10s. At 18th level, they turn into d12s.

Relentless

Starting at 15th level, when you roll initiative and have no superiority dice remaining, you regain one superiority die.

Paladin: Oath of Conquest

The Oath of Conquest calls to paladins who seek glory in battle and the subjugation of their enemies. It isn't enough for these paladins to establish order. They must crush the forces of chaos. Sometimes called knight tyrants or iron mongers, those who swear this oath gather into grim orders that serve gods or philosophies of war and well-ordered might.

Some of these paladins go so far as to consort with the powers of the Nine Hells, valuing the rule of law over the balm of mercy. The archdevil Bel, warlord of Avernus, counts many of these paladins—called hell knights—as his most ardent supporters. Hell knights cover their armor with trophies taken from fallen enemies, a grim warning to any who dare oppose them and the decrees of their lords. These knights are often most fiercely resisted by other paladins of this oath, who believe that the hell knights have wandered too far into darkness.

Tenets of Conquest

A paladin who takes this oath has the tenets of conquest seared on the upper arm. A hell knight's oath appears in Infernal runes, a brutal

reminder of vows to the Lords of Hell.

Douse the Flame of Hope. It is not enough to merely defeat an enemy in battle. Your victory must be so overwhelming that your enemies' will to fight is shattered forever. A blade can end a life. Fear can end an empire.

Rule with an Iron Fist. Once you have conquered, tolerate no dissent. Your word is law. Those who obey it shall be favored. Those who defy it shall be punished as an example to all who might follow.

Strength Above All. You shall rule until a stronger one arises. Then you must grow mightier and meet the challenge, or fall to your own ruin.

Paladin level	Feature
3rd	<i>Oath Spells,</i> <i>Channel Divinity</i>
7th	<i>Aura of Conquest</i> <i>(10 ft.)</i>
15th	<i>Scornful Rebuke</i>
18th	<i>Aura of Conquest</i> <i>(30 ft.)</i>
20th	<i>Invincible</i> <i>Conqueror</i>

Oath Spells

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

Paladin level	Feature
3rd	<i>armor of Agathys,</i> <i>command</i>
5th	<i>hold person,</i> <i>spiritual weapon</i>
9th	<i>bestow curse, fear</i> <i>dominate beast,</i>

13th	<i>stoneskin</i>
17th	<i>cloudkill, dominate person</i>

Channel Divinity

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options. See the Sacred Oath class feature for how Channel Divinity works.

Conquering Presence. You can use your Channel Divinity to exude a terrifying presence. As an action, you force each creature of your choice that you can see within 30 feet of you to make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature becomes frightened of you for 1 minute. The frightened creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Guided Strike. You can use your Channel Divinity to strike with supernatural accuracy. When you make an attack roll, you can use your Channel Divinity to gain a +10 bonus to the roll. You make this choice after you see the roll, but before the DM says whether the attack hits or misses.

Aura of Conquest

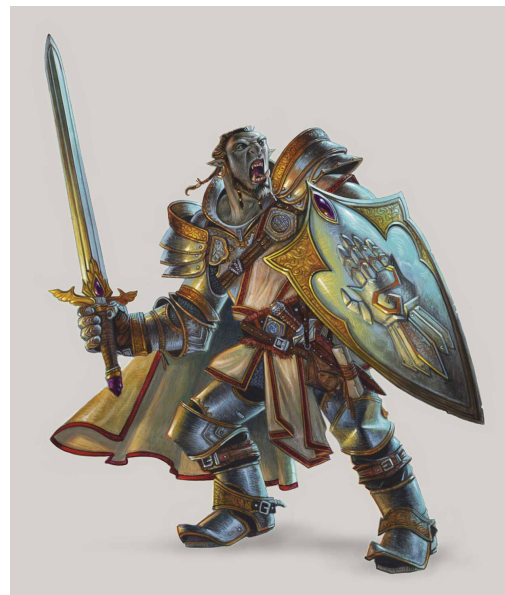
Starting at 7th level, you constantly emanate a menacing aura while you're not incapacitated. The aura includes your space, extends 10 feet from you in every direction, and is blocked by total cover.

If a creature is frightened of you, its speed is reduced to 0 while in the aura, and that creature takes psychic damage equal to half your paladin level if it starts its turn there.

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

Scornful Rebuke

Starting at 15th level, those who dare to strike you are psychically punished for their audacity.



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Whenever a creature hits you with an attack, that creature takes psychic damage equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of 0) if you're not incapacitated.

Invincible Conqueror

At 20th level, you gain the ability to harness extraordinary martial prowess. As an action, you can magically become an avatar of conquest, gaining the following benefits for 1 minute:

- You have resistance to all damage.
- When you take the Attack action on your turn, you can make one additional attack as part of that action.
- Your melee weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 on the d20.

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

Warlock: The Celestial

Your patron is a powerful being of the Upper Planes. You have bound yourself to an ancient empyrean, solar, ki-rin, or unicorn or to another entity that resides in the planes of everlasting bliss. Your pact with that being allows you to experience the barest touch of the holy light that illuminates the multiverse.

Being connected to such power can cause changes in your behavior and beliefs. You might find yourself driven to annihilate the undead, to defeat fiends, and to protect the innocent. At times, your heart might also be filled with a longing for the celestial realm of your patron, a desire to wander that paradise for the rest of your days. But you know that your mission is among mortals for now and that your pact binds you to bring light to the dark places of the world.

Warlock level

Feature

1st	Expanded Spell List, Bonus Cantrips, Healing Light
6th	Radiant Soul
10th	Celestial Resilience
14th	Searing Vengeance

Expanded Spell List

The Celestial lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

Spell level	Spells
1st	<i>burning hands, cure wounds</i>
2nd	<i>flaming sphere, lesser restoration</i>
3rd	<i>daylight, revivify</i>
4th	<i>guardian of faith, wall of fire</i>
5th	<i>flame strike, greater restoration</i>

Bonus Cantrips

At 1st level, you learn the sacred flame and light cantrips. They count as warlock cantrips for you, but they don't count against your number of cantrips known.

Healing Light

At 1st level, you gain the ability to channel celestial energy to heal wounds. You have a pool of d6s that you spend to fuel this healing. The number of dice in the pool equals 1 + your warlock level.

As a bonus action, you can touch a creature and heal it, spending dice from the pool. The maximum number of dice you can spend at once equals your Charisma modifier (minimum of one die). Roll the dice you spend, add them together, and restore a number of hit points equal to the total.

Your pool regains all expended dice when you finish a long rest.

Radiant Soul

Starting at 6th level, your link to the Celestial allows you to serve as a conduit for radiant energy. You have resistance to radiant damage, and when you cast a spell that deals radiant or fire damage, you add

your Charisma modifier to that damage against one target of your choice.

Celestial Resilience

Starting at 10th level, you gain temporary hit points whenever you finish a short or long rest. These temporary hit points equal your warlock level + your Charisma modifier. Additionally, choose up to five creatures you can see at the end of the rest. Those creatures each gain temporary hit points equal to half your warlock level + your Charisma modifier.

Searing Vengeance

Starting at 14th level, the radiant energy you channel allows you to overcome grievous injuries. When you have to make a death saving throw at the start of your turn, you can instead spring back to your feet with a burst of radiant energy. You regain hit points equal to half your hit point maximum, and then you stand up, if you so choose. Each creature of your choice that is within 30 feet of you takes radiant damage equal to 2d8 + your Charisma modifier, and it is blinded until the end of the current turn.

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

Warlock: Eldritch Invocations

At 2nd level, a warlock gains the Eldritch Invocations feature. Here are new options for that feature, in addition to those in the Player's Handbook. If an eldritch invocation has a prerequisite, you must meet it to learn the invocation. You can learn the invocation at the same time that you meet its prerequisite. A level prerequisite refers to your level in this class.

Aspect of the Moon

Prerequisite: Pact of the Tome feature

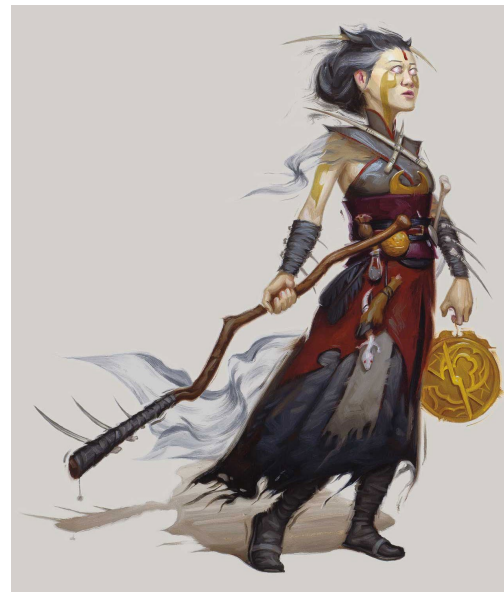
You no longer need to sleep and can't be forced to sleep by any means. To gain the benefits of a long rest, you can spend all 8

hours doing light activity, such as reading

Cloak of Flies

Prerequisite: 5th level

(Select to view)



As a bonus action, you can surround yourself with a magical aura that looks like buzzing flies. The aura includes your space, extends 5 feet from you in every direction, and is blocked by total cover. It lasts until you're incapacitated or you dismiss it with a bonus action.

The aura grants you advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks but disadvantage on all other Charisma checks. Any other creature that starts its turn in the aura takes poison damage equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of 0 damage).

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

Eldritch Smite

Prerequisite: 5th level, Pact of the Blade feature

Once per turn when you hit a creature with your pact weapon, you can expend a warlock spell slot to deal an extra 1d8 force damage to the target, plus another 1d8 per level of the spell slot. If the target takes any of this damage, you can knock the target prone if it is Huge or smaller.

Frost Lance

Prerequisite: eldritch blast cantrip

Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with your eldritch

blast, you can reduce that creature's speed by 10 feet until the end of your next turn.

Ghostly Gaze

Prerequisite: 7th level

As an action, you gain the ability to see through solid objects to a range of 30 feet. Within that range, you have darkvision if you don't already have it. This special sight lasts until the end of the current turn. During that time, you perceive objects as ghostly, transparent images. Once you use this invocation, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Gift of the Depths

Prerequisite: 5th level

You can breathe underwater, and you gain a swimming speed equal to your walking speed. You can also cast water breathing without expending a spell slot. Once you cast it using this invocation, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

Gift of the Ever-Living Ones

Prerequisite: Pact of the Chain feature

Whenever you regain hit points while your familiar is within 100 feet of you, treat any dice rolled to determine the hit points you regain as having rolled their maximum value for you.

Grasp of Hadar

Prerequisite: eldritch blast cantrip

Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with your eldritch blast cantrip, you can move that creature in a straight line 10 feet closer to yourself.

Improved Pact Weapon

Prerequisite: Pact of the Blade feature

You can use any weapon you summon with your Pact of the Blade

feature as a spellcasting focus for your warlock spells. In addition, the weapon counts as a magic weapon with a +1 bonus to its attack and damage rolls, unless it is already a magic weapon that you transformed into your pact weapon.

Kiss of Mephistopheles

Prerequisite: 5th level, eldritch blast cantrip

When you hit a creature with your eldritch blast, you can cast fireball as a bonus action using a warlock spell slot. The spell must be centered on the creature you hit with eldritch blast.

Maddening Hex

Prerequisite: 5th level

As a bonus action, you cause a psychic disturbance around the target cursed by your hex spell or by a warlock feature of yours, such as Hexblade's Curse and Sign of Ill Omen. When you do so, you deal psychic damage to the target and each creature of your choice within 5 feet of it. The psychic damage equals your Charisma modifier (minimum of 0 damage).

Relentless Hex

Prerequisite: 7th level

Your curse creates a temporary bond between you and your target. As a bonus action, you can magically teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space you can see within 5 feet of the target cursed by your hex spell or by a warlock feature of yours, such as Hexblade's Curse and Sign of Ill Omen. To teleport in this way, you must be able to see the cursed target.

Shroud of Shadow

Prerequisite: 15th level

You can cast invisibility at will, without expending a spell slot.

Tomb of Levistus

Prerequisite: 5th level

As a reaction when you take damage, you can entomb yourself in ice, which melts away at the end of your next turn. You gain 10 temporary hit points per warlock level, which take as much of the triggering damage as possible. You also gain vulnerability to fire damage, your speed is reduced to 0, and you are incapacitated. These effects all end when the ice melts. Once you use this invocation, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Trickster's Escape

Prerequisite: 7th level

You can cast freedom of movement once on yourself without expending a spell slot. You regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest.

You can read the rest of this Unearthed Arcana PDF [here](#). To see the full treasure trove of Unearthed Arcana articles, covering new classes and feats, conversions of rules from previous editions, and much more, [visit the archive here](#). Have a request for Unearthed Arcana? Follow [@mikemearls](#) on Twitter and let him know.

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Unearthed Arcana:

Revised Class Options

This document provides revised versions of class material that appeared in previous installments of Unearthed Arcana: four subclasses for various classes, along with Eldritch Invocations for the warlock. This material was all popular, and the revisions to it were driven by feedback that thousands of you provided in surveys.

The subclasses are the druid's Circle of the Shepherd, the fighter's Cavalier, the paladin's Oath of Conquest, and the warlock's Celestial (formerly known as the Undying Light).

One of the main pieces of feedback we got about the Eldritch Invocations is that you didn't want them exclusive to particular Otherworldly Patron options, so we've opened them up to more warlocks, tweaked them, and cut the least popular ones.

This Is Playtest Material

The material here is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by final game development and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

Druid: Circle of the Shepherd

Druids of the Circle of the Shepherd commune with the spirits of nature, especially the spirits of beasts and the fey, and call to those spirits for aid. These druids recognize that all living things play a role in the natural world, yet they focus on protecting animals and fey creatures that have difficulty defending themselves. Shepherds, as they are known, see such creatures as their charges. They ward off monsters that threaten them, rebuke hunters who kill more prey than necessary, and prevent civilization from encroaching on rare animal habitats and on sites sacred to the fey. Many of these druids are happiest far from cities and towns, content to spend their days in the company of animals and the fey creatures of the wilds.

Members of this circle become adventurers to oppose forces that threaten their charges or to

seek knowledge and power that will help them safeguard their charges better. Wherever these druids go, the spirits of the wilderness are with them.

Circle of the Shepherd Features

Druid Level	Feature
2nd	Spirit Totem, Speech of the Woods
6th	Mighty Summoner
10th	Guardian Spirit
14th	Faithful Summons

Speech of the Woods

At 2nd level, you gain the ability to converse with beasts and many fey.

You learn to speak, read, and write Sylvan. In addition, beasts can understand your speech, and you gain the ability to decipher their noises and motions. Most beasts lack the intelligence to convey or understand sophisticated concepts, but a friendly beast could relay what it has seen or heard in the recent past. This ability doesn't grant you any special friendship with beasts, though you can combine this ability with gifts to curry favor with them as you would with any nonplayer character.

Spirit Totem

Starting at 2nd level, you gain the ability to call forth nature spirits and use them to influence the world around you. As a bonus action, you can magically summon an incorporeal spirit to a point you can see within 60 feet of you. The spirit creates an aura in a 30-foot radius around that point. It counts as neither a creature nor an object, though it has the spectral appearance of the creature it represents.

As a bonus action, you can move the spirit up to 60 feet to a point you can see.

The spirit persists for 1 minute. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

The effect of the spirit's aura depends on the type of spirit you summon from the options below.

Bear Spirit. The bear spirit grants you and your allies its might and endurance. Each creature of your choice in the aura when the

spirit appears gains temporary hit points equal to 5 + your druid level. In addition, you and your allies gain advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws while in the aura.

Hawk Spirit. The hawk spirit is a consummate hunter, marking your enemies with its keen sight. When a creature makes an attack roll against a target in the spirit's aura, you can use your reaction to grant advantage to that attack roll.

Unicorn Spirit. The unicorn spirit lends its protection to those nearby. You and your allies gain advantage on all ability checks made to detect creatures in the spirit's aura. In addition, if you cast a spell with a spell slot that restores hit points to anyone inside or outside the aura, each creature of your choice in the aura also regains hit points equal to your druid level.

Mighty Summoner

At 6th level, you gain the ability to conjure forth powerful beasts and fey. Any beast or fey summoned or created by your spells gains two benefits:

- The creature appears with more hit points than normal: 2 extra hit points per Hit Die it has.
- The damage from its natural weapons is considered magical for the purpose of overcoming immunity and resistance to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Guardian Spirit

Beginning at 10th level, your Spirit Totem safeguards the beasts and fey that you call forth with your magic. When a beast or fey that you summoned or created with a spell ends its turn in your Spirit Totem aura, that creature regains a number of hit points equal to half your druid level.

Faithful Summons

Starting at 14th level, the nature spirits you commune with protect you when you are the most defenseless. If you are reduced to 0 hit points or are incapacitated against your will, you can immediately gain the benefits of *conjure animals* as if it were cast with a 9th-level spell slot. It summons four beasts of your choice that are challenge rating 2 or lower. The conjured beasts appear within 20 feet of you. If they receive no commands from you, they protect you from harm and attack your foes. The spell lasts

for 1 hour, requiring no concentration, or until you dismiss it (no action required).

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

Fighter: Cavalier

The archetypal Cavalier excels at mounted combat. Usually born among the nobility and raised at court, a Cavalier is equally at home leading a cavalry charge or exchanging repartee at a state dinner. Cavaliers also learn how to guard those in their charge from harm, often serving as the protectors of their superiors and of the weak. Drawn to right wrongs or earn prestige, many of these fighters leave their lives of comfort to embark on glorious adventure.

Cavalier Features

Fighter	
Level	Feature
3rd	Bonus Proficiency, Born to the Saddle, Combat Superiority (d8s, 4 dice)
7th	Ferocious Charger, Combat Superiority (5 dice)
10th	Improved Combat Superiority (d10s)
15th	Relentless, Combat Superiority (6 dice)
18th	Improved Combat Superiority (d12s)

Bonus Proficiency

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in one of the following skills of your choice: Animal Handling, History, Insight, Performance, or Persuasion. Alternatively, you learn one language of your choice.

Born to the Saddle

Starting at 3rd level, your mastery as a rider becomes apparent. You have advantage on saving throws made to avoid falling off your mount. If you fall off your mount and descend no more than 10 feet, you can land on your feet if you're not incapacitated.

Finally, mounting or dismounting a creature costs you only 5 feet of movement, rather than half your speed.

Combat Superiority

At 3rd level, you gain a set of combat abilities, referred to as maneuvers, which are fueled by special dice called superiority dice.

Superiority Dice. You have four superiority dice, which are d8s. A superiority die is expended when you use it. You regain all your

expended superiority dice when you finish a short or long rest.

You gain another superiority die at 7th level and one more at 15th level.

Maneuvers. You spend your superiority dice on your maneuvers. You can use more than one maneuver per turn, but no more than one maneuver per attack.

You know the following maneuvers:

Control Mount. When you make a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to influence a creature that you or an ally is riding, you can expend one superiority die, roll it, and add the number rolled to the check. You can do this before or after rolling the d20, but before applying the results of the check.

Precision Attack. When you make a weapon attack against a creature, you can expend one superiority die, roll it, and add it to the attack roll. You can use this ability before or after rolling the d20, but before any of the effects of the attack are applied.

Trip Attack. When you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can expend one superiority die to attempt to knock the target down. Roll the die, and add it to the attack's damage roll. If the target is Large or smaller, it must also succeed on a Strength saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength modifier) or be knocked prone.

Warding Maneuver. If you or a creature within 5 feet of you is hit by an attack, you can expend one superiority die as a reaction if you're wielding a weapon or a shield. Roll the die, and add the number rolled to the target's AC against that attack. If the attack still hits, the target has resistance against the attack's damage.

Ferocious Charger

At 7th level, you gain additional benefits when you use your Trip Attack maneuver. You can expend up to two superiority dice on it, adding both dice to the damage roll. When you spend two dice in this way, the target has disadvantage on its Strength saving throw to avoid being knocked prone.

Improved Combat Superiority

At 10th level, your superiority dice turn into d10s. At 18th level, they turn into d12s.

Relentless

Starting at 15th level, when you roll initiative and have no superiority dice remaining, you regain one superiority die.

Paladin: Oath of Conquest

The Oath of Conquest calls to paladins who seek glory in battle and the subjugation of their enemies. It isn't enough for these paladins to establish order. They must crush the forces of chaos. Sometimes called knight tyrants or iron mongers, those who swear this oath gather into grim orders that serve gods or philosophies of war and well-ordered might.

Some of these paladins go so far as to consort with the powers of the Nine Hells, valuing the rule of law over the balm of mercy. The archdevil Bel, warlord of Avernus, counts many of these paladins—called hell knights—as his most ardent supporters. Hell knights cover their armor with trophies taken from fallen enemies, a grim warning to any who dare oppose them and the decrees of their lords. These knights are often most fiercely resisted by other paladins of this oath, who believe that the hell knights have wandered too far into darkness.

Tenets of Conquest

A paladin who takes this oath has the tenets of conquest seared on the upper arm. A hell knight's oath appears in Infernal runes, a brutal reminder of vows to the Lords of Hell.

Douse the Flame of Hope. It is not enough to merely defeat an enemy in battle. Your victory must be so overwhelming that your enemies' will to fight is shattered forever. A blade can end a life. Fear can end an empire.

Rule with an Iron Fist. Once you have conquered, tolerate no dissent. Your word is law. Those who obey it shall be favored. Those who defy it shall be punished as an example to all who might follow.

Strength Above All. You shall rule until a stronger one arises. Then you must grow mightier and meet the challenge, or fall to your own ruin.

Oath of Conquest Features

Paladin Level	Feature
3rd	Oath Spells, Channel Divinity
7th	Aura of Conquest (10 ft.)
15th	Scornful Rebuke
18th	Aura of Conquest (30 ft.)
20th	Invincible Conqueror

Oath Spells

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

Oath of Conquest Spells

Paladin Level	Spells
3rd	<i>armor of Agathys, command</i>
5th	<i>hold person, spiritual weapon</i>
9th	<i>bestow curse, fear</i>
13th	<i>dominate beast, stoneskin</i>
17th	<i>cloudkill, dominate person</i>

Channel Divinity

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options. See the Sacred Oath class feature for how Channel Divinity works.

Conquering Presence. You can use your Channel Divinity to exude a terrifying presence. As an action, you force each creature of your choice that you can see within 30 feet of you to make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature becomes frightened of you for 1 minute. The frightened creature can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Guided Strike. You can use your Channel Divinity to strike with supernatural accuracy. When you make an attack roll, you can use your Channel Divinity to gain a +10 bonus to the roll. You make this choice after you see the roll, but before the DM says whether the attack hits or misses.

Aura of Conquest

Starting at 7th level, you constantly emanate a menacing aura while you're not incapacitated. The aura includes your space, extends 10 feet from you in every direction, and is blocked by total cover.

If a creature is frightened of you, its speed is reduced to 0 while in the aura, and that creature takes psychic damage equal to half your paladin level if it starts its turn there.

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

Scornful Rebuke

Starting at 15th level, those who dare to strike you are psychically punished for their audacity. Whenever a creature hits you with an attack, that creature takes psychic damage equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of 0) if you're not incapacitated.

Invincible Conqueror

At 20th level, you gain the ability to harness extraordinary martial prowess. As an action, you can magically become an avatar of conquest, gaining the following benefits for 1 minute:

- You have resistance to all damage.
- When you take the Attack action on your turn, you can make one additional attack as part of that action.
- Your melee weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 on the d20.

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

Warlock: The Celestial

Your patron is a powerful being of the Upper Planes. You have bound yourself to an ancient empyrean, solar, ki-rin, or unicorn or to another entity that resides in the planes of everlasting bliss. Your pact with that being allows you to experience the barest touch of the holy light that illuminates the multiverse.

Being connected to such power can cause changes in your behavior and beliefs. You might find yourself driven to annihilate the undead, to defeat fiends, and to protect the innocent. At times, your heart might also be filled with a longing for the celestial realm of your patron, a desire to wander that paradise for the rest of your days. But you know that your mission is among mortals for now and that your pact binds you to bring light to the dark places of the world.

Celestial Features

Warlock Level	Feature
1st	Expanded Spell List, Bonus Cantrips, Healing Light
6th	Radiant Soul
10th	Celestial Resilience
14th	Searing Vengeance

Expanded Spell List

The Celestial lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

Celestial Expanded Spells

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>burning hands, cure wounds</i>
2nd	<i>flaming sphere, lesser restoration</i>
3rd	<i>daylight, revivify</i>
4th	<i>guardian of faith, wall of fire</i>
5th	<i>flame strike, greater restoration</i>

Bonus Cantrips

At 1st level, you learn the *sacred flame* and *light* cantrips. They count as warlock cantrips for you, but they don't count against your number of cantrips known.

Healing Light

At 1st level, you gain the ability to channel celestial energy to heal wounds. You have a pool of d6s that you spend to fuel this healing. The number of dice in the pool equals 1 + your warlock level.

As a bonus action, you can touch a creature and heal it, spending dice from the pool. The maximum number of dice you can spend at once equals your Charisma modifier (minimum of one die). Roll the dice you spend, add them together, and restore a number of hit points equal to the total.

Your pool regains all expended dice when you finish a long rest.

Radiant Soul

Starting at 6th level, your link to the Celestial allows you to serve as a conduit for radiant energy. You have resistance to radiant damage, and when you cast a spell that deals radiant or fire damage, you add your Charisma modifier to that damage against one target of your choice.

Celestial Resilience

Starting at 10th level, you gain temporary hit points whenever you finish a short or long rest. These temporary hit points equal your warlock level + your Charisma modifier. Additionally, choose up to five creatures you can see at the end of the rest. Those creatures each gain temporary hit points equal to half your warlock level + your Charisma modifier.

Searing Vengeance

Starting at 14th level, the radiant energy you channel allows you to overcome grievous injuries. When you have to make a death saving throw at the start of your turn, you can instead spring back to your feet with a burst of radiant energy. You regain hit points equal to half your hit point maximum, and then you stand up, if you so choose. Each creature of your choice that is within 30 feet of you takes radiant damage equal to 2d8 + your Charisma modifier, and it is blinded until the end of the current turn.

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

Warlock: Eldritch Invocations

At 2nd level, a warlock gains the Eldritch Invocations feature. Here are new options for that feature, in addition to those in the *Player's Handbook*.

If an eldritch invocation has a prerequisite, you must meet it to learn the invocation. You can learn the invocation at the same time that you meet its prerequisite. A level prerequisite refers to your level in this class.

Aspect of the Moon

Prerequisite: Pact of the Tome feature

You no longer need to sleep and can't be forced to sleep by any means. To gain the benefits of a long rest, you can spend all 8 hours doing light activity, such as reading your Book of Shadows and keeping watch.

Cloak of Flies

Prerequisite: 5th level

As a bonus action, you can surround yourself with a magical aura that looks like buzzing flies. The aura includes your space, extends 5 feet from you in every direction, and is blocked by total cover. It lasts until you're incapacitated or you dismiss it with a bonus action.

The aura grants you advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks but disadvantage on all other Charisma checks. Any other creature that starts its turn in the aura takes poison damage equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of 0 damage).

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

Eldritch Smite

Prerequisite: 5th level, Pact of the Blade feature

Once per turn when you hit a creature with your pact weapon, you can expend a warlock spell slot to deal an extra 1d8 force damage to the target, plus another 1d8 per level of the spell slot. If the target takes any of this damage, you can knock the target prone if it is Huge or smaller.

Frost Lance

Prerequisite: eldritch blast cantrip

Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with your *eldritch blast*, you can reduce that creature's speed by 10 feet until the end of your next turn.

Ghostly Gaze

Prerequisite: 7th level

As an action, you gain the ability to see through solid objects to a range of 30 feet. Within that range, you have darkvision if you don't already have it. This special sight lasts until the end of the current turn. During that time, you perceive objects as ghostly, transparent images.

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

Gift of the Depths

Prerequisite: 5th level

You can breathe underwater, and you gain a swimming speed equal to your walking speed.

You can also cast *water breathing* without expending a spell slot. Once you cast it using this invocation, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

Gift of the Ever-Living Ones

Prerequisite: Pact of the Chain feature

Whenever you regain hit points while your familiar is within 100 feet of you, treat any dice rolled to determine the hit points you regain as having rolled their maximum value for you.

Grasp of Hadar

Prerequisite: eldritch blast cantrip

Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with your *eldritch blast* cantrip, you can move that creature in a straight line 10 feet closer to yourself.

Improved Pact Weapon

Prerequisite: Pact of the Blade feature

You can use any weapon you summon with your Pact of the Blade feature as a spellcasting focus for your warlock spells.

In addition, the weapon counts as a magic weapon with a +1 bonus to its attack and damage rolls, unless it is already a magic weapon that you transformed into your pact weapon.

Kiss of Mephistopheles

Prerequisite: 5th level, eldritch blast cantrip

When you hit a creature with your *eldritch blast*, you can cast *fireball* as a bonus action using a warlock spell slot. The spell must be centered on the creature you hit with *eldritch blast*.

Maddening Hex

Prerequisite: 5th level

As a bonus action, you cause a psychic disturbance around the target cursed by your *hex* spell or by a warlock feature of yours, such as Hexblade's Curse and Sign of Ill Omen. When you do so, you deal psychic damage to the target and each creature of your choice within 5 feet of it. The psychic damage equals your Charisma modifier (minimum of 0 damage).

Relentless Hex

Prerequisite: 7th level

Your curse creates a temporary bond between you and your target. As a bonus action, you can magically teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space you can see within 5 feet of the target cursed by your *hex* spell or by a warlock feature of yours, such as Hexblade's Curse and Sign of Ill Omen. To teleport in this way, you must be able to see the cursed target.

Shroud of Shadow

Prerequisite: 15th level

You can cast *invisibility* at will, without expending a spell slot.

Tomb of Levistus

Prerequisite: 5th level

As a reaction when you take damage, you can entomb yourself in ice, which melts away at the end of your next turn. You gain 10 temporary hit points per warlock level, which take as much of the triggering damage as possible. You also gain

vulnerability to fire damage, your speed is reduced to 0, and you are incapacitated. These effects all end when the ice melts.

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

Trickster's Escape

Prerequisite: 7th level

You can cast *freedom of movement* once on yourself without expending a spell slot. You regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest.

Frost Giant's Fury: Part 3

From getting the cold shoulder from a captured frost giant to butting heads with a white dragon!



BUY IT HERE

Make sure you check back here in early July, to see an exclusive sneak peek of *Dungeons & Dragons: Frost Giant's Fury Part 4*!

Part three of IDW's D&D comic sees Minsc and the party skip the dungeon in favor of a dragon ! Having initially struggled to interrogate a captured frost giant and uncover his evil plans, our heroes must ascend the treacherous ice-covered mountain known as 'Cold Crag'. There they will confront its guardian, a short-tempered white dragon eager to destroy any who dare invade her sanctuary.

This all-new story ties into the *Storm King's Thunder* event that runs across the whole Dungeons & Dragons range. While we love Max Dunbar's regular cover for *Frost Giant's Fury Part 3*, and Nelson Daniel's variant subscriber cover depicting the team's ascent is also first-rate, we'd recommend tracking down the Hasbro Art variant cover, which features Ned Rogers' amazing icy ocean scene (gracing the top of this page).

Minsc—the legendary ranger do-gooder with a heart of gold, brain of lead, and hamster of pronounced wisdom—features heavily! He's just one member of the party that has already fought its way through the hit *Legends of Baldur's Gate* and *Shadows of the Vampire* comic-book series.

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

FROST GIANT'S FURY





DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

FROST GIANT'S FURY



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GIGANTIC REAVERS FROM THE FREEZING LANDS BEYOND CIVILIZATION, FROST GIANTS ARE FIERCE, HARDY WARRIORS THAT SURVIVE ON THE SPOILS OF THEIR RAIDS AND PILLAGING.

FROST GIANTS ARE CREATURES OF ICE AND SNOW. THEIR HAIR AND BEARDS ARE PALE WHITE OR LIGHT BLUE, MATTED WITH FROST AND CLATTERING WITH ICICLES. THEIR FLESH IS AS BLUE AS GLACIAL ICE.

[WHEN I GET FREE, I'LL CRUSH YER BONES TA POWDER, YE LI'L MAGGOTS!*

WHAT'D HE SAY, SHANDIE?

HE'S A BIT...
UNHAPPY...





[OKAY, PAL. I KNOW YOU'RE **ANGRY**, BUT WE NEED SOME INFORMATION BEFORE THINGS ARE GOING TO GET ANY BETTER FOR YOU.]

[FREEZE AND DIE, HALF-SIZE!]

[SIGH]

WE MUST FIND OUT WHAT THE FROST GIANTS ARE PLANNING

I CAN **TRANSLATE**, BUT THAT'S NOT MUCH HELP IF HE WON'T TELL









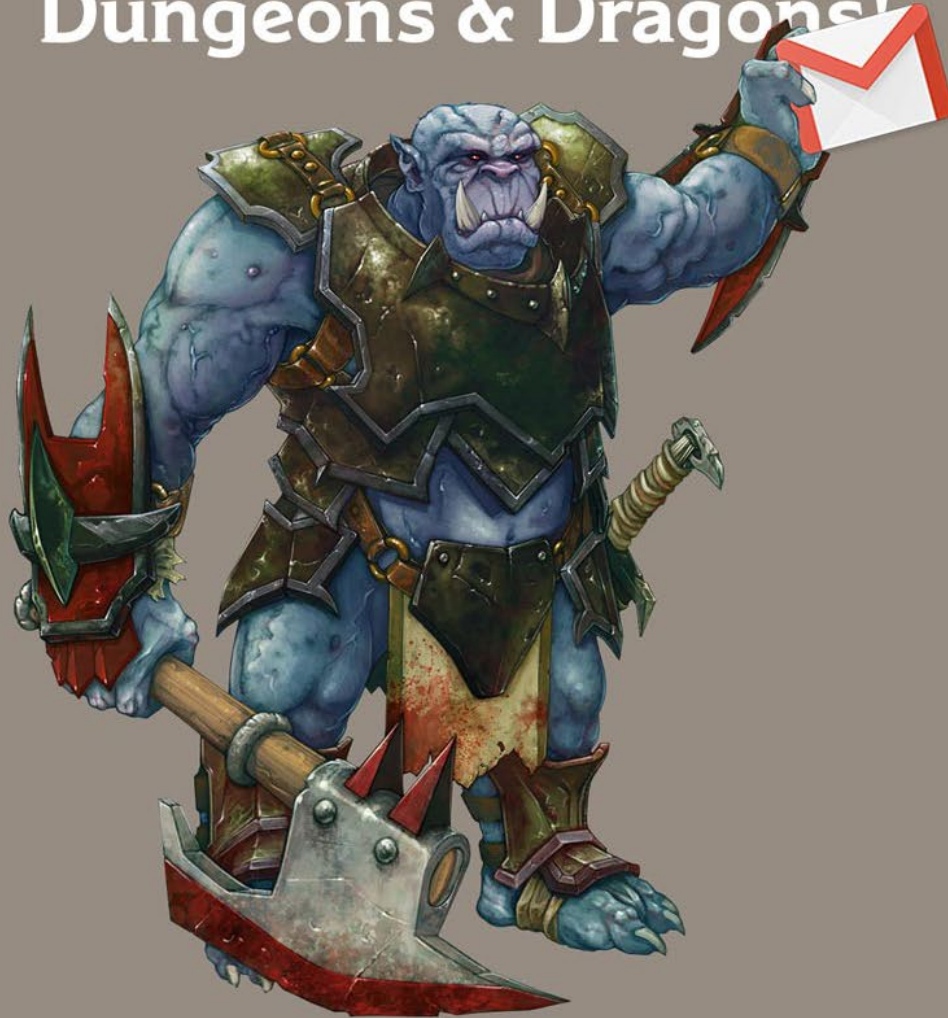






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Next Issue: Dragon+ 15

The summer really heats up as *Dragon+* roars towards its fifteenth issue



We gave you a glimpse inside *Tomb of Annihilation* this issue, but we'll be stepping further through its stony gateway next time to get a really good look around. That will include a definitive spotlight on its NPCs, including background info, sketches, and adventure hooks.

It won't be the only big reveal on offer, as we focus on two new board games coming your way. *Betrayal at Baldur's Gate* takes semi-collaborative exploration game *Betrayal at House on the Hill* and goes full D&D. Never split the party... unless someone is the traitor!

We'll also be digging deep into the latest Adventure System Board Game, as upcoming D&D storyline *Tomb of Annihilation* spins off onto your coffee table. Play as a single player or as part of a co-operative group as you explore the jungles of Chult and the Tomb of the Nine Gods, all the while dodging the ever present threat of being, as the name suggests, annihilated!



And just when you thought you were safe in the digital world, there's even more *Tomb of Annihilation* to enjoy, as Acererak's monstrous creation comes to life in the *Neverwinter* MMORPG. We'll speak to lead designer Thomas Foss to hear what horrors you'll face there.

(Contents subject to change)



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