

Aspects of the Champion

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Introduction

Knights are a staple of the fantasy genre, and for many, no character better embodies the quintessential elements of a hero in fantasy roleplaying games, movies, or literature. Whether acting as a bastion of hope during troubled times or a chivalrous warrior of incomparable martial prowess, they remain perennially popular with audiences, writers, and gamers.

Something about a knight resonates powerfully in our minds. The archetype spans the globe in the form of the honourable samurai of feudal Japan, the Arthurian knight of Camelot, or the crusading Templar steeped in the Holy Land's mysteries. Blackguards and "dark knights" too are popular and feared villains, providing some of the most memorable foes in history and RPGs. While a knight in shining armor stands for the very embodiment of justice and compassion, her diametric opposite takes those same ideals and twists them subtly. Unique and unusual character concepts originate out of one of the most enduring cornerstones of D&D.

This PDF presents a variety of options for the *d20 System*'s great holy warriors – paladins and their dreaded counterparts, black-knights – that expand upon their traditional roles and offer fresh interpretations of just what a champion of the faith can do or should be. While many of these options are designed upon existing class abilities and features in the *Core Rulebooks*, all the feats, magic items, prestige classes, and spells are themselves unique to Ennersea. I have fused the wide body of real world lore with Ennersea's richly developed setting to give each mechanic a little background and flair to root it into the game. Paladins and black-knights of each religion are individual and unique. These options aim to set them apart while capitalizing upon the mystique of these champions.

Aspects of a Champion is designed to offer you a wide range of character options for different character goals and for different levels. While geared primarily towards the black-knight and paladin classes, not all the new material is exclusive to them. The article on honour price affects anyone from Orcan Hold or interested in the culture of the Tribes. Your pious fighter might fit the *Sworn Defender* perfectly or perhaps a particular Blessing feat looks tailor made for your druid.

Using This Product

This product is intended to supplement the *Player's Handbook* and the rules for Ennersea.net. It features new additions to the MUSH that expand on the options in character generation (CharGen), present new magic items, and introduce new thematic elements.

Aspects of the Champion is the first PDF produced for Ennersea's community. We draw upon player requests, new submissions, and brainstorming sessions to generate new material based upon a certain theme. This PDF puts the spotlight upon paladins and black-knights because traditionally they have some of the fewest character options available.

Blessing Feats

Faith brings more than the benefits of comfort and participation in an active community. For a fortunate few that choose to serve divinity, the power of their faith allows them to act as conduits for prayers and divine energy that connect our mortal world with the immortal planes beyond. Despite the skeptical protests from the few atheists in the world, mystical communion between a deity and a true believer results in very real, tangible effects that cross the spectrum from a simple feeling of comfort to drawing down the ethereal fires of the stars themselves. The majority of such manifestations of divine power, however, occur in much less dramatic and overt ways.

As champions of their deities, black-knights and paladins are generally perceived as the sword of a faith, whereas priests, druids or shamans act as the voice or the soul. Knights launch into the fray, carrying a banner high for those behind to follow and their enemies to quake before, holding the path for their fellow worshippers to follow behind. However, it would be a mistake and gravely misleading to assume that the only powers these divinely-ordained guardians possess apply strictly to the battlefield. They can draw upon an entirely different suite of abilities that enrich the other role they often fall into: one of leadership and as a shining beacon of faith.

These new feats all share several characteristics that make them predominantly oriented on divine spellcasters and divine warriors. First and foremost, the *blessing* feats listed below all require strong belief in a deity; without that, it is impossible for a character to gain the benediction of his patron god or goddess. Ennersea's pantheons rather jealously guard their influence and power against their enemies, and not even gentle Damara grants prayers freely to all that ask of her. Several of these feats require a class ability that draws upon some form of divine blessing already, such as a cleric's ability to turn undead or a black-knight's unholy grace.

Any feat that requires a character to spend a turn or rebuke check will only activate if you have the ability to turn or rebuke undead (or spirits, in the case of shamans). If you have no turn attempts remaining for the day, you cannot use that feat until you rest and your turn attempts are replenished. Unless otherwise noted, using any feat that activates with a turn or rebuke attempt requires a standard action. You may only activate one blessing or divine feat per round, though you can enjoy their benefits normally.

Activating a divine feat rarely draws an attack of opportunity unless the feat itself causes direct damage to a target. In this situation, a blessing improving a black-knight or paladin's smite damage would not qualify because the smite attack, not the feat, does the damage. All divine feats are considered supernatural abilities.

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blessing: astute mind [divine]

Your canny knowledge and coldly logical mind focus your divine powers.

Prerequisites: Int 13+, patron: Silfarenya, unholy glory

Benefit: You use your Intelligence bonus rather than your Charisma bonus to calculate your smite attack, bonuses to saving throws, and hit points damaged (or healed) by lay on hands. In all other respects, the abilities remain the same.

Normal: A black-knight uses her Charisma modifier to determine several class abilities.

blessing: charity [divine]

You bestow the protection of the Heavens by sharing your own belief and mercy.

Prerequisites: Blessing: Piety, divine grace ability

Benefit: You can share the blessing of your divine grace upon another person. You spend one turn undead attempt and touch a target. The target gains your Charisma modifier as a bonus to all saving throws for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). If your Charisma modifier changes after you use this feat, the bonus granted to your ally does not change.

A blessing of charity does not stack with a black-knight's unholy glory, a paladin's divine grace, or any other class ability that adds an ability score bonus to all saving throws.

blessing: discipline [divine]

Your disciplined faith in your patron deity strengthens your control over undead.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, patron: Eldanoth or Silfarenya,

rebuke undead

Benefit: You rebuke undead as a cleric of your class level.

Normal: A black-knight rebukes undead as a cleric of three levels lower would.

blessing: majesty [divine]

You infuse the unholy energy of the Hells to stiffen your allies' resolve.

Prerequisites: Blessing: Piety, unholy glory ability

Benefit: You can share the blessing of your unholy glory upon another person. You spend one rebuke undead attempt and touch a target. The target gains your Charisma modifier as a bonus to all saving throws for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). If your Charisma modifier changes after you use this feat, the bonus granted to your ally does not change. A blessing of majesty does not stack with a black-knight's unholy glory, a paladin's divine grace, or any other class ability that adds an ability score bonus to all saving throws.

blessing: piety [divine]

The strength of your faith bolsters your abilities past the norm.

Prerequisites: Divine spellcaster 1+

Benefit: By praying to your god, you can temporarily enhance a physical or mental attribute. You gain a +2 enhancement bonus to one single ability score of your choice. The bonus lasts for a number of rounds equal to 1 + your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). You can use this ability once per day.

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blessing: sunkissed [divine]

By channeling pure positive energy from the Heavens, you can devastate undead.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, patron: any Celindari, turn undead

Benefit: You can spend two of your turn attempts to destroy undead rather than turn them. This acts as a greater turning, destroying any undead that would normally be turned. If your turning fails, the attempts are spent.

blessing: tranquil mind [divine]

Your clarity of mind and steady composure focus your divine gifts.

Prerequisites: Wis 13+, patron: Cyhiraeth or Damara, divine grace

Benefit: You use your Wisdom bonus rather than your Charisma bonus to calculate your smite attack, bonuses to saving throws, and hit points healed by lay on hands. In all other respects, the abilities remain the same.

Normal: A paladin uses his Charisma modifier to determine several class abilities.

blessing: vitality [divine]

Your connection to a deity empowers your ability to turn undead.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, patron: Gwyneth, Liasiardim, Tiriel, turn undead

Benefit: You turn undead as a cleric of your class level.

Normal: A paladin turns undead as a cleric of three levels lower would.

blessing: wraithgift [divine]

By channeling negative energy, you fortify undead creatures.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, patron: any Veluakir, rebuke undead

Benefit: You can spend one of your rebuke attempts to temporarily strengthen undead. This bestows a +1 profane bonus to Armor Class of all undead creatures within 30 feet of you. This benefit lasts for 1 minute.

censure apostate [divine]

Your devotion to the Pale Mother enables you to strike against the creatures that betrayed Her cause.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, patron: Silfarenya, Extra Turning, rebuke undead

Benefit: You can spend one rebuke attempt to try and overcome the immunity of an elemental creature to critical hits. If you successfully roll a critical hit against an elemental, you can apply extra damage normally. Additionally, if you have the sneak attack ability, you may apply your sneak attack damage to your rolls against the elemental normally.

This feat lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). The benefits of this feat apply only to you, and not your allies or opponents.

Normal: Elementals are immune to sneak attacks and critical hits.

dauntless mien [divine]

Your stalwart presence gives your allies great hope and courage.

Prerequisites: Aura of courage class feature, Cha 15+

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Benefit: Your aura of courage affects all allies within 30 feet.

Normal: Without this feat, your aura of courage affects allies within 10 feet.

diabolic bladeguard [divine]

Unholy energy channeled through your weapon enhances its infernal qualities.

Prerequisites: Evil alignment, smite good, ability to cast *Bless Weapon* (^Evil descriptor)

Benefit: Any manufactured weapon you wield is treated as an evil-aligned weapon for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. A weapon already so aligned gains no further benefit.



empyrean swordgift [divine]

Holy prayers channeled through your weapon empower its celestial qualities.

Prerequisites: Good alignment, smite evil, ability to cast *Bless Weapon*

Benefit: Any manufactured weapon you wield is treated

as a good-aligned weapon for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. A weapon already so aligned gains no further benefit.

misconstrued beliefs [general]

Priests may expound upon the evils of your actions and enemies decry your church as one ridden with degenerate, depraved acts. You let none of it penetrate the resolute shell of your faith because you know they speak out of ignorance, fear, or jealousy. They are all misled by generations of belief that reviles what challenges the status quo. You work towards creating a better world for all, contrary to outside opinion, and seek to further the common good. Or at least that's your opinion.

Prerequisite: Evil alignment, patron: any Infernal deity, Nashale or any neutral or evil totem

Benefit: Your entrenched viewpoint does not identify the core of your strongly held beliefs as evil acts. Though your alignment registers as evil in system mechanics, you honestly perceive yourself as crusading on behalf of a greater, just and pure cause. Therefore, when subject to a detect evil spell, or supernatural or spell-like abilities that discern alignment, you do not register as evil. Only a creature whose aura power exceeds your own by at least one step can discern any taint of evil, and even then, you register as two steps lower in power than you normally would.

You are still affected by spells and abilities that otherwise target creatures of evil alignment. For example, a cleric's "holy word" or a paladin's holy avenger would function normally against you.

Honour Price

It comes as a surprise to many ignorant southlanders that Orcan Hold's society is heavily stratified and hierarchical. They expect the tribes of orcs, hobgoblins, giants, and skh'olla to be a chaotic, disorganized mass of barbarians with few social ranks, when in fact the opposite is true. The tribes possess amongst the most complex social structure in the known world based upon a foundation of reputation, kinship ties, primacy, and personal achievements. An esteemed orc could realistically take a full evening reciting his full nomenclature, and nearly every assigned title or bestowed standing carries a story behind it. Disentangling the intricacies of an elaborate system built up over centuries is a daunting challenge, but the culture that places such value in caste also originated the elegant, breathtaking solution that outlanders know as honour price.

The philosophy of honour price:

The concept of honour price is a simple one: it measures the rank an individual holds. The higher one's honour price, the more influence and respect tribal society accords him. Unlike many other social systems where the perception of power depends entirely on whether or not an individual or organization chooses to recognize it, in Orcan Hold, honour price is absolute. Everyone from the lowliest indentured goblin slave up to the Akk'han in theory acknowledges the honour price granted to another. Bitterly opposed courtiers and tribes caught up in a blood feud are expected to put aside their grievances over an issue of honour price. Few

insults register as more dire or worthy of absolute humiliation in this martial culture than failure to recognize the proven achievements of others.

This mentality stems from two very distinct sources with a common goal of survival. Orcan Hold's harsh environment weeds out the weak mercilessly, and it demands mental and physical discipline from everyone if the community is to withstand the perilous winters and constant threats from hostile beasts. A key aspect of a person's honour price reflects his physical achievements as a hunter or a warrior, for example. Therefore, the most decorated and honoured tribal members often possess the best skills and abilities that provide the whole tribe with valuable resources and, more importantly, the means to weather the worst. Secondly, the totemic belief system prevalent at the northern edge of the continent holds that the great totems will accept only the pure and the righteous into the spirit realm. Furthermore, spirits jealous of the fertility of the earth seek to cross into our world and would happily hunt or destroy living creatures upon it. Orcs in particular see themselves as the sentinels and guardians tasked by the greatest totems to protect all of nature (and ignorant southlanders) against these destructive incursions. Together with their competitive society, the concept of purity and prowess as a measure of someone's ability to safeguard the most precious and vulnerable of things is one of the pillars of Orcan Hold's social structure. Simply, the tribes must be able to set aside their petty squabbles in the face of a larger enemy or problem.

Honour price's physical form:

As the orcs and hobgoblins take honour price very seriously, they must be able to take stock of an individual quickly and immediately. Improperly greeting someone by according them too little or too great a respect can be disastrous and hold long lasting social implications. Children raised in Orcan Hold or among the Tribes, even in Firandir, innately pick up the skill of measuring another person's overall honour price in the speech she uses, her body language and carriage, and how she interacts with others. However, these cues require concentration and the chance to pay attention -- a task often complicated by boisterous meetings, savage battle, or emergencies. Even so, tribal society allows absolutely no excuses to anyone but infants for not paying respect where it is due. Mistakes lead to corrective behaviour and often physical violence, like a slap or jeering. If anything, tribal children learn quickly!

Measuring the honour price of a stranger is not difficult because everyone in good standing (in other words, not a slave) wears it proudly -- literally. Honour price, in its physical form, consists of metal or, rarely, leather bracers that go up the forearm. What outsiders mistakenly take for bracelets, gauntlets, or vambraces in fact put a person's honour price on public display. Children receive their first



band after a shaman or a khan accepts them into the tribe, officially recognizing the infant as part of the family. These bands typically display some element of the parents' achievements, and any noteworthy ancestors; no one would dare slander the granddaughter of a spearmaiden or the son of a shaman. But more importantly, these symbols tie the child into a greater web of kinship and announce her connection and pedigree to the totem spirits. Otherwise, the band remains quite plain.

As she grows older, she hopefully gains more honour price. Particular exploits worthy of recognition result in new motifs and decorations added to her bracer. It is customary for parents or elders in the tribe to present a new bracer with an initial design to a newly acknowledged adult. The purpose is threefold; one, it signals the end of childhood and a transition to a new period of life, a time of great celebration in Orcan Hold. Second, it encourages her to gain respect and influence by filling out and adding to the design on the bracer. A largely blank vambrace is a cause for despair and ridicule without obvious reason, such as physical disability. Finally, the vambrace is literally a canvas to recount the tales of her life for perpetuity.

Previous bands are designed to expand or fit into new vambraces. Khans, shamans, and successful warriors often boast elaborate, elegant bands that appear to fuse into a single sheathe of sparkling metal, gems, and embossed symbols all the way up their arms. Incidentally, such masterpieces usually deflect sword or axe blows remarkably well and can deliver grievous wounds.

Events are imprinted upon the bands in a style completely

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unique to each person. When she dies, the bands are very rarely buried with her, but instead turned over to the tribal shamans, the khan, or sometimes her children and close relatives. These become part of the ancestor shrines set up to reverence predecessors for their great deeds, and Orcan Hold believes so much power is imbued in these physical symbols of honour price that they can ward off lesser totem spirits.

obtaining honour price:

Only one way exists to improve your honour price, and that is to earn it. Many checks and balances protect this treasured asset, such as requiring recognition from the tribe, a shaman's approval, and generally witnesses to speak on behalf of the honoured person. While he could certainly try to manufacture evidence or manipulate circumstances to enhance his prestige, doing so carries terrible risks. Tales of warriors claiming to defeat dreaded scourges and killing or threatening anyone that could speak out against them end tragically. Hobgoblins treat false claims especially ruthlessly and with sickening creativity, whereas orcs prefer to strip honour price altogether on the grounds removing the coveted prize makes the punishment that much worse.

The usual method to gain honour price is for someone to bring forth a petition to the tribal elders and the shamans. If the request is sound, then the tribe investigates the situation and brings its advice to the shamans and the khan. Shamans meditate and seek the approval of the totems, while the khan deliberates over matters or hears testimony for and against. The khan's court is considered confidential and a time-honoured tradition where anyone may speak their opinion

without fear of reprisal. If all goes well, the khan informs the tribe and the tribe in turn authorizes the shamans to recount and bless the tale in the vambrace. They add elaborate filigree or tiny scenes depicting the events in lavish detail, calling upon the full command of their artistic crafts. Sometimes a new band is added, though this is a rare and momentous occasion in his life. Such holy artisans are as much revered as the person receiving an increase in his status!



losing honour price:

A loss of honour can occur at any time, but permanently losing it to the point of divestment of honour price is rare and tragic. It often takes heinous deeds or severe infractions to cause someone to fall from grace; it never occurs frivolously or without at least cursory investigation. Being stripped of honour price affects more than one person, but it touches his

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family, his ancestors, his relatives, and his tribe. In some instances, suicide is considered the only noble method of atonement to leave others untainted.

Social mobility in Orcan Hold remains far more flexible than in the Dominions, so any number of methods of obtaining and losing honour price exist. Typically, though, an orc or hobgoblin becomes dishonoured by acting in a manner that harms his tribe and their general wellbeing, or otherwise shames his caste. A warrior that flees from combat and allows five children to be slaughtered would be considered nearly irredeemable, especially given the value of children in the Hold. Consorting with dangerous spirits could not only strip a shaman of his power, but also his protection.

No single person except the Akk'han or a highly revered shaman of one of the great totems, such as Father-Storm, can strip honour price completely from another orc without the approval of a majority of the tribe. Then again, most disputes settle without the need for such intervention unless the responsible party lives and refuses to accept a change in his station. When honour price is removed, it happens symbolically by removing a portion or all of the vambrace signifying his achievements, and replacing it with a blank one, a partially designed one, or not at all. The next step is one that often results in the greatest shame, as the totems and the winds are warned of the action and the tribe's singers and dancers perform an eerie performance rife with sorrow. Others learn of the change; all these events remain very public.



Magic Items

Every adventurer dreams of the day she might discover a valuable relic hidden away in a drafty tomb or recovered from marauders in a deep, dank dungeon. There are nearly as many legends about rare and unique sets of armour and weapons as there are for the heroes and villains that owned them! In some cases, the lore about a famed possession may match or even outstrip that of its owner. While not all of Ennersea's most noteworthy and famous items bear any kind of magical ability, a good number most certainly do. Artificers from within the high kingdom of Denethor and archmages of the Arbormists' fabled Istalindar, the great institution of arcane study, developed several of the most famed and coveted magical items in existence. However, they certainly do not hold a monopoly over the creative and financial markets for these cherished goods. As long as there are wars to be fought, power and wealth to be had, and competitive spirits, the demand remains high and far outstrips the limited supply of healing potions, flaming swords, and empowered shields available.

The magical items listed herein provide a sampling of what exists in the world, from the humble Mercy Arrow up to rare and even fabled enchantments lost to time and the passing of centuries. Several churches have special affiliations or longstanding, tangled histories with particular enhancements or holy items, so buyers are advised to educate themselves wisely!

Champions of any pantheon can benefit from the plethora of abilities represented here, whether they prefer subtlety, a finesse style of fighting, or charging into the fray.

specific magic weapons:

Aubades of the crescent moon

When an explorer from the Order of the Pilgrim's Star discovered the oldest known of these exceptionally rare weapons, he was shocked to discover its blade appeared nearly invisible. When he delivered to experts in Ozuthkan's great library almost three weeks later, the formerly translucent haft gleamed like bluesteel. This peculiar characteristic enabled researchers to distinguish its true identity and signified the tidal connection the weapon and the natural cycles of the world. *Aubades'* real name remains almost lost to the world, replaced by the temporary title assigned to it by elven and dwarven sages: *Soul Hook*.

Researchers discovered *Aubades'* initial properties early on. It acts as a +2 ghost touch scythe that can shed *light* as per the spell. Its metal blade changes in overall colour and opacity with the waxing and waning of Telessen, changing always just before dawn. Regardless of the stage, *Aubades* can affect creatures on the astral or ethereal plane just like it does opponents on the material plane. Its wielder can send *Aubades* slicing through the weft separating the worlds without shifting into another plane. However, the wielder cannot transition onto the astral plane and she cannot perceive it without the aid of spells, magic items, or other special abilities.

Aubades' true power only reveals itself in combat and testifies to its formidable Silfarenyan heritage. When this scythe successfully strikes a target, it unleashes a silvery aura that unfurls like a trumpet lily. The shimmering opal field

completely blocks any form of extradimensional travel for 2d6 minutes, including *astral projection*, *blink*, *dimension door*, *ethereal jaunt*, *ethereality*, *gate*, *maze*, *plane shift*, *shadow walk*, *teleport*, and similar spell-like abilities. The spell also prevents the use of a *gate* or *teleportation circle* for the duration of the spell.

Aubades' *dimensional anchor* effect does not interfere with the movement of creatures already in ethereal or astral form when the spell is cast, nor does it block extradimensional perception or attack forms. Also, *dimensional anchor* does not prevent summoned creatures from disappearing at the end of a summoning spell.

Strong abjuration; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *dimensional anchor*, *plane shift*; Market Price 50,180 gp; Cost 25,090 gp + 2,000 XP; Weight 10 lb.

Darts of Doom

New clerics and shamans often learn to create these +1 darts as their first magic weapons. They are a dull, dark grey metal, with bright, menacing red fletching. Though a favourite of the Legion of the Crimson Hand, they are almost universally known from the tribes of Orcan Hold to Thes'phanian assassins. Just as they strike their target, the darts evaporate into a dreadful cloud of entropy. Thus, the damage becomes nonlethal (in the same amount as would be lethal damage), and the effect forces the target to make a DC 11 Will save or become shaken.

Faint necromancy; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *doom*; Market Price 132 gp; Cost 69g 5s + 5xp.

Honour's Vengeance

Vhal'tok Bridgeburner raised triumphal banners above the camp of the E't'Agahn tribe when his emissaries returned from Orcan Hold with word of the Akk'han's approval for supporting the Charlin rebellion in Firandir. In a handful of months, the E't'Agahn went from a relatively unimportant tribe in hostile territory to feared warlords in a crumbling human land beset by civil war. He commemorated the victories of his champions over war parties from Denethor, guerrilla fighters in the Principia Albiesti and his new allies' enemies in the Celindari resistance by ordering shamans of Redhawk to forge weapons that would reflect their honour. They chose the formidable symbol of the armies of the north, the vkhakra, and honed the weapons out of Firandir'a steel to razor sharpness and laid down blessings that bring the full fury of Redhawk to bear. This weapon acts as a +3 unholy vkhakra that can shed a pale red glow like the eerie light of a battlefield. A radius of bright illumination extends to 20 feet, and shadowy illumination extends to 40 feet.

Moderate evocation; CL 14th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *unholy blight*, creator must be evil; Price 50,200 gp; Cost 25,100 gp + 2,000 XP; Weight 10 lb.

Mercy's Thorn

Also known by the vulgate "Mercy Arrow", paladins of Damara first manufactured these formidable and ingenious weapons to provide succor to unreachable allies on battlefields. Their use has since spread widely although most retain the basic design of a long, oak shaft and soft brown or green feathers. Its blunted head is its most distinctive feature,

shaped often into an acorn, leaf or other non-edged symbol. If the arrow strikes a target, it instead bursts with positive energy and deals no damage. Instead, it heals a living target of 1d8+5 points of damage, but creatures susceptible to positive energy (such as undead) take 1d8+5 points of damage.

An undead creature hit by a mercy arrow benefits from its spell resistance and can attempt a Will save (DC 11) to take half damage. A mercy arrow gains no benefit from a critical hit; the amount cured or inflicted stays the same.

Faint conjuration; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *cure light wounds*; Price 132 gp; Cost 69 gp 5 sp + 5 XP.

penitent heart: lost holy weapon

A mouldering tome in the Mother's Bower in Nirhanval recounts the tale of a hero of yore, a hero of the village from a time when royal edicts permitted only nobles of the Charlin Court or more distant aristocratic circles to hunt and travel through the Demakore Forest. History probably forgot that young man, Soreyn kep'Afantos, but the few versed in his tale know it might teach a thing or two in the troubled days all Firandir'a live in. Soreyn entered military service like his father before him, and he witnessed in full the glories heaped upon Prince Devran's army. He basked under adulation and thought to make a career of heroism. The rout of the Firandir'a army in the Arbormists before combined elven forces shattered that dream and Soreyn's faith in his leaders, his people, and god shattered. In the subsequent years, his allegiance shifted to the fledgling Eldanothi church and he answered the Fiend Prince's Calling.

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For many years, Soreyn served as a black-knight across the southern extremes of the country and he campaigned against his former allies and enemies alike. The swelling support from other disenchanting soldiers like himself provided a new vision of a strong, centralized nation with effective power that would not betray and deceive a gifted leader, like Devran. Soreyn's dark history involved many events, but they came to a head on a windy moor where he thought to bring down his quarry, a lone traveler that radiated purity to match the darkness in Soreyn's heart. Civilized as he was, however, the black-knight challenged the wanderer to battle and announced an end for his interference in affairs the traveler had no right to be apart of. No one knows what answers came through the sortie except those two, but the effect would be monumental. The knight struck against his foe and fatally wounded him, but words spoken in those dying moments resonated in Soreyn's heart and mind long after he returned to Gerios. He questioned his faith and his purpose; in doing so, Eldanoth revoked the dire blessings of knighthood.

Soreyn wandered and in time found shelter with a young family in Nirhanval under an assumed identity. In that solitude, he found his visions for the future skewed with the reality of their simple, peaceful life. His beliefs had left no room for the woodsman, the mother tending her garden, or the children playing joyously on the green. Much older and wiser, Soreyn instead realized the virtue of his new lifestyle and that revelation led him to the hands of the Lady of Life. He accepted the burden he put down so long before, and received from a hamadryad a weapon of shimmering gold

crystal. He took it as a symbol of faith renewed, and bore it in defense of the Demakore Forest until he lay upon his deathbed. The flail was bestowed upon the son of the family who originally sheltered him, and the unknown hero bore it off into the Broken Plains to hunt aberrations. He disappeared, and all trace of Penitent Heart vanished. It likely remains there, forgotten and unknown.

penitent heart: special Abilities

This +1 evil outsider-bane ambar heavy flail is constructed from red gold crystal decorated with fine engravings in a pattern of leaves. Red gold bands wrap about the hilt, terminating in an open prong where a gemstone perhaps once sat. Streaks of honey sweep up the ambar flail head, which weighs significantly less than might be expected.

In addition to its primary ability, Penitent Heart acts as a phylactery of faithfulness, allowing a divine caster holding it to discern any action or item that could adversely affect his alignment and faith. Once per day it can cast a *bless* spell.

The unique characteristic hidden within the weapon allows a wielder to attempt to smite evil with one normal melee attack once per day. He deals 1 extra point of damage per level, but does not add his Charisma bonus to the attack roll. If he accidentally smites a creature that is not evil, the smite has no effect, but the ability is still used up for that day.

If the wielder is already a paladin, the blessing augments slightly. He cannot smite evil, but he can use *Penitent Heart* once per day to turn one of his smite goods into a smite chaos. This supernatural ability is identical in all respects to smite evil, except that it only affects chaotic creatures.

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This weapon bestows one negative level on any evil creature attempting to wield it. The negative level remains as long as the weapon is in hand and disappears when the weapon is no longer wielded. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way (including restoration spells) while the weapon is wielded.

Moderate evocation; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bleed*, *detect evil*, *dispel chaos*, *dispel evil*, *summon monster I*, creator must be good and lawful; Market Price 24,150 gp; Cost 12,075 gp + 960 XP.

weapon abilities

These weapon abilities tend to be less commonplace on the markets than those found in the *Player's Handbook*, so their availability may be restricted.

blurstrike

On command (a free action), a weapon with this special ability fades partially from view, appearing as only a faint, amorphous outline. The wielder can see it normally. When used in an attack, an activated blurstrike weapon (along with its wielder's hand and arm) appears as nothing but a scintillating shimmer near the wielder's body. The blurring effect prevents a foe from knowing exactly where the blow is aimed.

The first attack made with a blurstrike weapon each round is made as if the target were flat-footed. Foes that don't rely on sight for combat (such as creatures with the blindsight special quality) and creatures with the uncanny dodge class

feature retain their Dexterity bonus and dodge bonuses to AC against the wielder's attacks.

A blurstrike weapon can remain blurry for up to 10 rounds per day. The duration of this effect need not be in consecutive rounds; deactivating the effect is also a free action. This property can be applied only to melee weapons.

Faint illusion; CL 3rd; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *blur* or *invisibility*; Price +2 bonus

bonded

A weapon granted this ability shares a unique link with the creature that wields it. As part of a ritual that takes ten minutes, the wielder may bond with the weapon by invoking its command phrase. Only one bond remains active at a time, and bonding with a weapon erases any previous links it might have with others. The wielder of a bonded weapon can use a free action to draw it. Further, he gains a +4 circumstance bonus on checks made to avoid being disarmed while wielding it.

Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; *shield other*, *magic weapon*; Price +1 bonus

disarming

This weapon ability functions differently depending on whether it's applied to a melee or a ranged weapon. If applied to a melee weapon, the disarming ability eliminates the opponent's bonuses for both weapon size and two-handed weapons. If applied to a ranged weapon, the disarming ability makes possible a disarm attack; you can shoot a weapon out of someone's hand. The relative weapon

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sizes don't matter for a ranged disarm attempt, but the defender gains a +4 bonus for wielding a weapon in two hands.

Moderate transmutation; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *telekinesis*; Price +2 bonus

Dispelling

Once per day as a free action, the wielder of a dispelling weapon can use a targeted *dispel magic* effect upon a creature the weapon strikes. The wielder can decide to use this power after the blow has landed, but the *dispel magic* must be used in the same round that the weapon strikes.

Faint abjuration; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *dispel magic*; Price 6,000 gp

Dawnrise

On a critical hit, a dawnrise weapon casts *daylight* on the target struck by it. This spell lasts for one hour.

Faint evocation; CL 6th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *daylight*; Price +1 bonus

Domineering

A creature hit by a domineering weapon must make a Will save (DC 16) or become shaken for 11 rounds. This ability has no effect on creatures that are already shaken or immune to fear.

Moderate enchantment; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *fear*; Price +2 bonus

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duskset

On a critical hit, a duskset weapon casts *darkness* on the target struck by it. This spell lasts for one hour.

Faint evocation; CL 6th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *darkness*; Price +1 bonus

earthbound

A weapon with the earthbound special ability functions more powerfully when its wielder is in contact with the ground. On worked stone (such as a city street or typical dungeon corridor), the weapon has an enhancement bonus of +1. If the wielder is in contact with unworked stone, like a mountainside, the enhancement bonus increases to +2. It operates with a +3 enhancement bonus so long as the wielder is in contact with raw earth. If the wielder is airborne, flying or otherwise not in contact with the ground, the enhancement bonus fades completely.

Moderate enchantment; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *stone shape*; Price +2 bonus

exhausting

A creature hit by an exhausting weapon must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or become fatigued for 5 minutes. A creature with spell resistance gains the benefit of its spell resistance on the check. This ability has no effect on creatures that are already fatigued or immune to fatigue.

Faint necromancy; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *ray of exhaustion*; Price +1 bonus

invisible

When its command word is spoken, this weapon becomes almost impossible to discern. It turns as transparent as air except for its hilt or shaft. Opponents suffer a -4 penalty to sunder and disarm checks against the wielder of an invisible weapon because there is so little to observe. The wielder of a weapon with the invisible ability gains a +4 bonus to feinting checks.

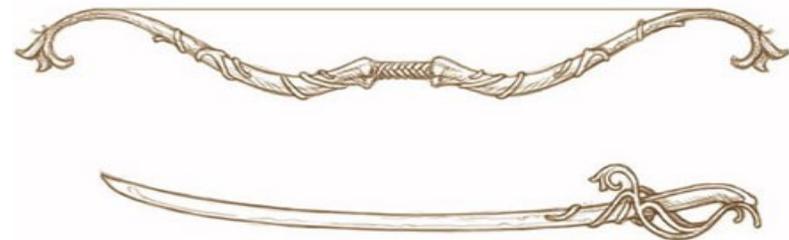
An invisible weapon can remain invisible for up to 10 rounds per day. The duration of this effect need not be in consecutive rounds; deactivating the effect is a free action. This property only applies to melee weapons.

Moderate illusion; CL 6th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *invisibility*; Price +1 bonus

knockback

This quality can apply only to ranged weapons. Any creature struck by this weapon must make a Strength check (DC 20). Those who fail are knocked back by 5 feet.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *telekinesis*; Price +1 bonus



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shattering

A shattering weapon does an extra 1d6 points of damage on a successful sunder attempt. This ability can only be placed on a slashing or bludgeoning weapon.

Faint evocation; CL 6th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *shatter*; Price +1 bonus

wondrous items

Wondrous items often reflect the matchless creativity and fearless drive of mages in this golden age of enlightenment and study. When innate gifts are properly nurtured, the mind fully flowers with a blessed few given the arcane or divine potency to match their intellectual potential. Such inventors of course remain rare, just as brilliant engineers and visionary politicians mark their generations with their splendid creations, new ideas, and marvelous innovations. A few sages hold fast to the notion it is in the field of baubles and elixirs, bespelled gems and enchanted cloaks that practitioners of the High Art truly define their craft down to its essence. While no doubt this promotes heated debate, no one can deny the vital spark of artistry and finesse that shape these legendary relics.

consecrated belt

This finely wrought weapons belt is

designed with a motif specific to the deity or totem it is consecrated to. For example, a belt infused with prayers to Gwyneth may boast a pattern of grain sheaves and curling strawberry leaves on honeyed leather, with a buckle embossed with the goddess' cornucopia. Only true worshippers of the belt's patron deity gain any benefit from wearing it.

It bestows one negative level on any non-faithful creature attempting to wear it. The negative level remains as long as the belt is worn and disappears when the belt is taken off. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way (including restoration spells) while the belt is worn.

The belt grants its wearer a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength and a +2 deflection bonus to Armor Class.

Moderate transmutation; CL 8th; Craft Wondrous Item, *protection from evil* (or *protection from good*), *bull's strength*; Price 28,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

cloak of sanctification

This finely wrought cloak is generally made in a primary colour associated with a deity or totem, and the brooch that clasps it shut carries on their motif. It has long been considered a standard magic item bestowed upon chosen members of a faith. The cloak can adapt itself to the alignment of its owner, so it produces a different



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effect depending upon the owner's alignment. Curiously enough, the symbols are known to alter in effect to suit the wearer as well.

If the owner is neither good nor evil, and neither lawful nor chaotic, the cloak has no power whatsoever. If she is good-aligned, then invoking the cloak's magic with a prayer has the effect of a *protection against evil* spell, targeting only evil creatures. If she is evil-aligned, then the prayer grants the effect of a *protection against good* spell, targeting only good creatures.

If she is chaotically aligned, the prayer bestows the effect of a *protection against law* spell, targeting only lawful creatures. If she is lawfully aligned, the prayer provides her with the effect of a *protection against chaos* spell, targeting only chaotic creatures.

When the wearer has a non-neutral alignment (for example, she is Chaotic Good), the cloak initially allows her to choose between either protection spell. Once decided, she can only call upon that effect thereafter. The cloak has no chosen alignment when a new owner wears it for the first time, but previous owners would still gain the effect they originally chose if they wear it.

The ward conjured by the cloak lasts for one minute. It may be called upon once per day.

Faint abjuration; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *protection against chaos* or *protection against law*, *protection against evil* or *protection against good*; Price 3,250 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Spells

Many spells are exclusively associated with champions of the divine faiths, although they are in widespread use today. A church customarily adds the prefix of its deity's name before the spell name, or applies one of its ecclesiastical titles for a personalized choice. Thus, *Champion's Holdfast* is known as *Corona's Holdfast* among the Tiriellites and *Shard's Holdfast* in the shrines consecrated to Eldanoth. The spells presented below carry very strong, established affiliations with knights of Ennersea's pantheons.

Antinomy

Abjuration [Chaos]

Level: Cleric 3

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)

Thought to come from the madcap mind of a Xordren, texts for this ritual remain few and very far between. The grueling chant is a cacophony of discordant sounds that grate upon the ears. You gain spell resistance equal to 11 + your caster level against spells with the lawful descriptor. This protection does not apply against spells cast by a lawfully aligned spellcaster, such as a paladin, unless they have the proper descriptor.

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antipodes

Abjuration [Evil]

Level: Black-knight 3, Cleric 3

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)

Hissing, searing sounds shaped in the sinister echoes of Infernal form the basis of a dreaded ritual shared only with anointed and acknowledged members of the Veluakir faiths. The pantheon of Shadow's power rests upon chosen guardians with terrible splendour and weight, prepared to deny the light with unrelenting force. You gain spell resistance equal to 11 + your caster level against spells with the good descriptor. This protection does not apply against spells cast by a goodly aligned spellcaster, such as a cleric of Damara, unless they have the proper descriptor.

blessed companion

Transmutation

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 2

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Touch

Target: Your mount

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You perform a ritual that alters the nature of your paladin

or black-knight mount, gifting it temporarily with the celinseir template (for a paladin's mount) or the veluardar template (for a black-knight's mount). This spell only works on an actual mount, and it has no effect on a normal animal, a familiar or an animal companion. Once the spell expires, all benefits are lost.

celestial aversion

Abjuration [Good]

Level: Cleric 3, Paladin 3

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)

This spell, a bulwark of the Celindari faith, girds champions of the pantheon of Light whenever they venture forth to combat evil. Its potency can protect a warded creature against the ministrations of fiends and the corruptive influence of evil spellcasters alike. The harmonious aria chanted at its beginning rings sweetly in the ears, drawing upon a litany taught by celestial servitors. You gain spell resistance equal to 11 + your caster level against spells with the evil descriptor. This protection does not apply against spells cast by an evilly aligned spellcaster, such as a black-knight, unless they have the proper descriptor.

champion's holdfast

Abjuration [Lawful]

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 3, Cleric 3

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Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)

Drawing upon the cycles and patterns inherent in all creation, this spell provides but a small reflection of the vast scope of order governing the universe. Its power diminishes the effects of anarchy and chaos, bringing such forces to heel beneath inviolate rules. The ritual must be spoken in a litany of precise, careful sounds to properly activate. You gain spell resistance equal to 11 + your caster level against spells with the chaotic descriptor. This protection does not apply against spells cast by a chaotically aligned spellcaster, such as a cleric of Palahi, unless they have the proper descriptor.

discern Devotion

Divination

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 1, Cleric 1, Shaman 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: One creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: No

You can discern whether someone channels the might of the divine with but a touch. If the target fails a Will save, you detect the presence of divine spell energies within her. You

can also determine the maximum spell level the target can cast.

divine Redoubt

Conjuration (Creation) [Force]

Level: Cleric 2, Black-knight/Paladin 2

Components: V, S, F, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 hour/level (D)

You can imbue the garments of your faith to provide as much protection as a suit of mail. Your clothes take on the appearance of a shining cuirass emblazoned with your patron deity's symbol prominently on the chest, and a suit to match. Anything worn beneath the holy armor cannot be seen; you effectively appear dressed in a breastplate.

This spell provides a +5 armor bonus to AC. Unlike mundane armor, this divine armor composed of pure energy entails no armor check penalty, arcane spell failure chance, or speed reduction. Since the suit is made of force, incorporeal creatures can't bypass it the way they do normal armor.

Focus: A tabard, cloak, robes, or other garments associated with his church, donned at the time of the spell.

fiendblind

Abjuration

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 4

Components: S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

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Range: Touch
Target: One touched creature/2 levels
Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Using a few drops of unholy water if you are a black-knight or holy water if you are a paladin, you conjure an invisible ward that protects you and your chosen targets against attention from evil outsiders. Fiends cannot see, hear, or smell the warded creatures. Even extraordinary and supernatural sensory capabilities, such as blindsense or scent, cannot detect or locate warded creatures. If a warded ally attempts to control a fiend, touch or attack it, or cast a spell on it, the spell ends for all recipients.

Heavenly ward

Abjuration [Good]
Level: Paladin 2
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You draw down the positive energy of the Heavens and manifest it briefly on the mortal plane when you touch a target. Her skin glimmers with a faint azure or jade patina. You can choose one creature for this spell to act upon, and she must be a worshipper of a Celindar deity or the spell

automatically fails. Your spell gives the subject damage reduction 5/cold iron.

hellguard

Abjuration [Evil]
Level: Black-knight 2
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

The negative energy of the Hells channels through your target's body and lingers upon her skin as a dusky violet or crimson patina. You can choose one creature for this spell to act upon, and she must be a worshipper of an Infernal Veluakir deity or the spell automatically fails. Your spell gives the subject damage reduction 5/chemical silver.

impact vitality

Abjuration [Good]
Level: Cleric 1, Paladin 1
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: One creature/2 levels
Duration: 1 hour/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

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Originating amongst the Gwynari, this boon grants a target increased vitality at the expense of your own health and stamina. You grant any willing creature two temporary hit points for every hit point you sacrifice. You may choose to divide your healing among multiple recipients, and you may divide the hit points in however you like.

Temporary hit points last until the spell expires or the target takes damage that removes them. She cannot regain the temporary hit points once lost through cure spells or other means. You cannot regain your lost hit points naturally until the spell's duration ends.

invigilator's helm

Divination

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 round/level

You weave a cap of divine energy around your head, creating the faintly shimmering outline of a helm. It does not impede your vision in any way. This spell hones your senses to a supernatural level of awareness. You gain a +4 bonus to Spot checks, and you cannot be flanked or caught flat-footed during the duration of the spell.

loyal servitor

Abjuration

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 1

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 10 minutes/level

You witnessed a glimpse of divine manifesto at the time of your Calling. That image remains with you still to stiffen your spine and shake off beguiling influences that lead you off your foreordained path. This prayer fills your mind with memories of that blessed moment and gives you a +4 sacred (if a paladin) or profane (if a black-knight) bonus on saving throws for mind-affecting spells and effects.

mercurial companion

Transmutation

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Your mount

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Your prayer enables your mount to move faster for a short period of time. Your mount's base land speed increases by 20 feet. It gains a +8 bonus on all Constitution checks to resist effects of fatigue due to forced marches or to continue running. This spell only works on an actual mount, and it has no effect on a normal animal, a familiar or an animal companion.

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oak roots

Transmutation

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 1, Druid 1, Shaman 1

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

You become firmly rooted to the ground by a divine connection that plunges almost deeply as a tree's roots. Your affinity with the earth makes you exceptionally stable when you are standing. You gain a +4 bonus on ability checks made to resist being bull rushed or tripped. This bonus does not apply when climbing, flying, riding, or otherwise not standing firmly on the ground.

polarize water

Transmutation [Lawful]

Level: Cleric 1, Black-knight/Paladin 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Target: Flask of water touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates (object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (object)

This transmutation imbues a flask (1 pint) of water with divine energy, turning it into axiomatic water.

Axiomatic water acts like holy water, except that it

damages chaotic outsiders (such as demons) rather than undead or evil outsiders. A flask of axiomatic water can be thrown as a splash weapon.

A direct hit by a flask of axiomatic water deals 2d4 points of damage to a chaotic outsider. Each such creature within 5 feet of the point where the flask hits takes 1 point of damage from the splash.

Material Component: 5 pounds of powdered brass (worth 25 gp).

spell snare

Abjuration

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 3

Component: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch; see below

Target: One creature touched

Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You can create a ward of divine energy around a chosen target that siphons magical spells off to you. Whenever a spell specifically targets your ally, the spell affects you instead. Spells with an area of effect, such as cone of cold or magic circle versus evil, target your ally normally.

Once you touch your ally, the spell activates. It functions only so long as you and your ally are within medium range (100 ft plus 10 feet per caster level) of one another. If you stray beyond range of your ally, the spell remains active but any incoming spell cannot be snared and directed at you. If

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you both are separated farther than medium range, the spell ends.

stoneblade

Transmutation

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 2, Druid 2, Shaman 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Weapon touched

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

Your prayer invests a weapon with greater durability and resilience than it otherwise possesses. You may target any single weapon, but it does not apply to natural weapons, such as an unarmed strike. This spell gives the weapon a +5 enhancement bonus to hardness, a +2 circumstance bonus to damage and doubles the weapon's base hit points. However, it becomes heavy and cumbersome, causing anyone who wields it to take a -1 penalty to attack rolls made with it.

surging resolve

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 1, Shaman 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature

Duration: 1 minute

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You give your target a sense of purpose and renewed courage. He gains a +2 morale bonus to his attack rolls for the duration of the spell. As a free action, the target may choose to use the spell's secondary effect which allows him to immediately reroll a Will save that he has just made. He must declare the use of this ability before the DM declares whether the roll results in success or failure. The creature must take the result of the reroll for better or for worse. Gaining this ability ends the spell immediately.

sungold gaze

Divination

Level: Paladin 1

Components: V, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: See text

A favourite spell of Coronas, you draw upon positive energy to bolster a turning attempt that proves devastating to undead. Your eyes become luminescent like molten gold as long as the prayer is active. Your next single turning check (if it is made before the end of the next round) gains a +4 insight bonus. You deal extra damage equal to your paladin level x 2 (maximum 10 points).

visage of terror

Necromancy [Fear, Mind-Affecting]

Level: Black-knight 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature with 15 or fewer HD; see text

Duration: 1d4 rounds or 1 round; see text

Saving Throw: Will partial

Spell Resistance: Yes



Your presence invokes unmitigated horror in a single living creature whose hit dice are equal or less than yours. The affected creature becomes frightened. If he succeeds on a Will save, he is shaken for 1 round. Creatures with 16 or more hit dice or with hit dice exceeding your own are immune to this effect.

volant companion

Transmutation

Level: Black-knight/Paladin 4

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Touch

Target: Your mount

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You perform a ritual that grants your black-knight or paladin mount the ability to fly. It gains a fly speed of 60 feet with good maneuverability. This spell only works on an actual mount, and it has no effect on a normal animal, a familiar or an animal companion. A mount's fly speed is impacted normally by encumbrance, barding, wind speed and other factors. Once the spell expires, all benefits are lost.

Radiant Template

When saturated with positive energy of the Heavens, living creatures often gain a lasting residue of that holy power. Exposure to divine power threatens most living creatures unprepared to act as a vessel. Sometimes providence spares an innocent being, leaving it forever marked. Planar creatures that dwell natively in the celestial realms occasionally manifest this gift when worthy servitors petition them to cross onto the material plane. Radiant creatures are often confused with celineirs or members of the celestial choirs. Instead, an echo of divine energy bright as the sun suffuses their being. That hint of goodness compels even animalistic minds to protect their native territory and prevent great misdeeds from occurring if they can. Often radiant animals lurk near areas infested with aberrations or undead, preying upon these creatures when they can.

sample radiant creature

Radiant Leopard

Medium Animal (Augmented Animal)

Hit Dice: 3d8+6

Initiative: +4

Speed: 40 ft (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+5

Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3)

Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d6+3) and 2 claws +1 melee (1d3+1)

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, pounce, rake 1d3+1

Special Qualities: Darkness sensitivity, light resistance, low-light vision, luminous, scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Balance +12, Climb +11, Hide +8*, Jump +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Spot +6*

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Warm forests

Organization: Solitary or pair

Challenge Rating: 2

Advancement: 4-5 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: —

Sleek and graceful, this spotted feline's fur gleams with health even in darkness. Its large chocolate brown eyes glow golden in the depths of its pupils. Shadows fail to encroach upon its presence.

A radiant leopard looks very much like a normal member of its species, except that it almost bursts with vitality. Its spotted fur absorbs light and almost shimmers with glints of gold, copper, and bronze. Its disposition is less suspicious and hostile than other cats.

Radiant leopards often occur near sanctified wayshrines and altars dedicated to Gwyneth and Tiriell, particularly in Zahnah'deem and Denethor. Pilgrims and local residents view these majestic creatures as benevolent and symbols of good fortune, so they take very poorly to anyone threatening or disturbing them. In return, the leopards strike against corrupted aberrations, undead and evil outsiders that infest tombs and lonely plains.

combat

Radiant leopards are ambush predators, so they rely upon stealth and deception to confuse their prey. They rarely use their luminous ability except to disorient a target or when pouncing out of the grass. Radiant leopards occasionally hunt alongside other leopards and draw the prey's attention while others sneak attack from behind.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a leopard must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can rake.

Pounce (Ex): If a leopard charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +6 melee, damage 1d3+1.

Skills: Leopards have a +8 racial bonus on Jump checks and a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. Leopards have a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb



checks. A leopard can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened. *In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus improves to +8.

creating a radiant creature

"Radiant" is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal animal, fey, giant, humanoid, magical beast, or monstrous humanoid of good or neutral alignment (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A radiant creature uses all the base creature's statistics and abilities except as noted here. Do not recalculate the creature's Hit Dice, base attack bonus, saves, or skill points if its type changes.

Size and Type: A radiant creature becomes augmented but otherwise does not change type. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: As the base creature.

Armor Class: Armor is same as the base creature.

Attack: A radiant creature retains all the attacks of the base creature.

Special Attacks: Same as the base creature.

Special Qualities: A spirit animal retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those described below.

Light Resistance (Ex): A radiant creature has a +2 bonus to saving throws against spells and effects with the light descriptor.

Darkness Sensitivity (Ex): A radiant creature has a -2 penalty to saving throws against spells and effects with the darkness descriptor.

Low-light Vision (Ex): A radiant creature gains low-light

vision if it did not already have it.

Luminous (Su): A radiant creature constantly sheds a pale aura of light from its body. It glows about as brightly as a torch normally whenever this aura is active, although it can choose to diminish or dampen the glow altogether. As a standard action, the creature can cause the aura to burn out, causing it to disappear altogether with some discomfort (no system effect, but for roleplay). The glow cannot be summoned again until the creature has rested for at least 8 hours. After such time, the luminous aura automatically reappears at normal strength.

Abilities: The base creature's ability scores do not change.

Skills: A radiant creature suffers a -8 racial penalty on Hide checks and a +4 racial bonus on Spot checks whenever its luminous aura is active. Otherwise same as the base creature.

Environment: As the base creature.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature.

Alignment: Any good or neutral.

Level Adjustment: +0

ECL: +0

radiant creatures as companions

Animals with the radiant template make excellent companions for holy champions, druids, rangers, and even shamans that worship good-aligned totems. They represent divine goodness manifest in the world, acting to protect and safeguard others of their kind. Radiant creatures symbolize sacred pacts, mercy to the innocent, and justice delivered to wrongdoers that often become their foes or prey.

Prestige Class

The sworn defender

Wild frontier and sparsely settled hinterlands pose a threat to anyone seeking to cross the nation of Firandir. Highwaymen eager to prey on unsuspecting and poorly defended travelers lurk in the foothills, while aberrant scourges haunt lonely moors and marshes. Cities provide uncounted dangers beneath their veneer of civility, from heartless thieves ready to slit an urchin's throat to scheming, powerful merchants. Whether in the countryside or the capital, abundant opportunities to threaten an innocent's life arise. Many seek to personally protect themselves through a variety of methods, but perhaps the most successful alternative lies in the sworn defender.

The title is an old one, originating from the esteemed class of warriors and fighters trained in Garlossken with the express purpose of protecting the city-state's valued steel-smiths. In that lost era, the sworn defender gave up ties of family and property to swear his service to Garlossken's lords. Charged with the protection of the smiths, in return he received extensive arms and tactical training, access to Garlossken's armoury and an air of prestige matched by few others. Long after Garlossken fell, the texts and traditions carried on, dispersed across the Black Diamond by successors of the old way.

Today, sworn defenders follow many of the original tenets of the martial class, but other aspects changed to suit the times. All sworn defenders share in common a code of ethics

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and conduct rooted deeply in the belief that he must serve his ward to the best of his ability. A sworn defender maintains a cool reserve in all situations that reflects positively upon himself and his ward. He takes matters of dignity very seriously, particularly in proper address, appearance, and behaviour. His strict code allows little room for immature or impulsive behaviour. Most of all, he must afford complete respect to his ward at all times, regardless of whether she deserves it or not. While a sworn defender can take it upon himself to censure her or refuse a request, he cannot berate or condemn her in a public manner. This remains constant regardless of creed, ethnicity or upbringing. If a ward cannot trust or respect her sworn defender, then he is as good as useless.

Many of the bonds between ward and guardian begin with an arranged contract for a specified stipend over a specific period of time. Sworn defenders can determine for themselves the duration and nature of their contract, but once agreed upon, it is considered binding until fulfilled or circumstances irrevocably terminate it. For example, a ward severing her protection from the defender would be sufficient for his release. He can only take on one such contract at a time, traditionally. A majority of sworn defenders enter into extended service, sometimes lasting decades.

Because of its martial orientation, fighters, black-knights, and paladins constitute the majority of candidates for the sworn defenders. The intense focus on defensive combat requires dedication, discipline, and mental clarity generally found only on the battlefield. Clerics and rangers are not unknown, but their numbers are few at best.

Sworn defenders learn their trade from others versed in the skill. While not part of a formal order, trained members share a grudging respect for their skills. Rarely, small units receive a joint contract towards a very specific job, a matter of considerable importance. Diplomatic emissaries in particular may warrant such situations. However, the lone sworn defender finds no trouble in his solitary path; it allows the opportunity for independence in his choices and focusing his full attention on the wellbeing and safety of his chosen ward.



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"Wherever you may go, I shall be at your back with my blade readied in your defense. You may trust in that as you trust the sun to rise and the night to fall."

-- Rhyllaran kep' Sorloth

prerequisites

Alignment: Any lawful

Base Attack Bonus: 6+

Feats: Combat Expertise, Improved Expertise

Skills: Diplomacy 4 ranks, Spot 4 ranks

Special: Must be trained by a Sworn Defender of 3rd level or higher, and must have an unimpeachable reputation.

table 1-1: the sworn defender

Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1 st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Devoted Aegis, Fealty
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Shared Expertise
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Focused Fury
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Avenging Blow
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Divert Attack
6th	+6	+5	+5	+2	Daunting Presence
7th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Dire Need, Avenging Blow +1
8th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Wrath of Reprisal
9th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Safeguard the Innocent
10th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Avenging Blow +2

Hit Dice: d10

Class Skills (4 + Int Modifier): Climb, Craft, Diplomacy, Heal, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (War), Listen, Ride, Search, Sense Motive, Spot, Swim, Tumble, and Use Rope.

class features

All of the following are class features of the Sworn Defender prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The Sworn Defender gains no additional proficiency with any weapons or armor.

Multiclass: A character with paladin or black-knight levels before joining this prestige class can freely add levels of the prestige class without losing his ability to advance as a paladin or black-knight.

Devoted Guardian (Ex): The Sworn Defender can opt to place himself in harm's way in order to protect his ward. At the beginning of combat when rolling initiative, the Sworn Defender declares his ward. The elected person cannot be changed once selected until the combat is complete. This ability works only if his ward is one category larger than he is, or smaller in size.

Whenever the Sworn Defender is within 5 feet of his ward, he can choose to switch places with her when she is subject to an attack. The two physically switch places. He takes the attack instead of her and it is resolved normally against his AC.

The Sworn Defender must declare the use of this ability before the opponent's attack roll is made.

Fealty (Ex): When he promises to act as a guardian, the Sworn Defender draws his mettle and determination from those words. He never speaks an oath lightly, and his observance of its strictures provides an unyielding resolve in the face of harrowing challenges. He will protect his ward at all costs. He gains a morale bonus against mind-affecting

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spells and spell-like abilities equal to one half his Sworn Defender class level (minimum 1).

Shared Expertise (Ex): The Sworn Defender rarely leaves his ward unprotected in combat. He learns special techniques that allow him to fight tactically while keeping her safe. Whenever he uses Combat Expertise, or the fighting defensively or total defensive action, any adjacent ally gains the dodge bonus from AC as well.

Focused Fury (Ex): When his ward enters a hostile situation, the Sworn Defender governs his emotions with iron-fisted mastery, heightening his combat prowess. By 3rd level, he has mastered the training that allows him to enter a calm mental state. He sheds his anger and fear in favour of icy clarity. He receives a +2 morale bonus on attack and weapon damage rolls, and +2 morale bonus on saves against fear effects.

Avenging Blow (Ex): Beginning at 4th level, the Sworn Defender's experience safeguarding his ward hones his intuition in combat to an almost preternatural level. If an adjacent opponent attacks his ward with a melee attack, the Sworn Defender can respond with an immediate attack of opportunity provided he is within reach.

Normal limitations on attacks of opportunity apply. Unless he has the Combat Reflexes feat, the Sworn Defender cannot make multiple attacks of opportunity against a single target in one round.

Thanks to his enhanced vigilance, the Sworn Defender gains a +1 bonus to attacks made with Avenging Blow for every three levels he gains above 4th.

Divert Attack (Ex): Surrounding her in a whirlwind of

blocks and parries, a Sworn Defender of 5th level can turn away melee threats to his ward with frightening ease. He must be within 5 feet of his ward at all times in order to attempt to parry a melee attack aimed at her. He must be aware of the attack and not flat-footed. He also must have a melee weapon or shield in hand, or must wear vambraces capable of deflecting the attack.

Once per round when his ward would normally be hit with a melee weapon, the Sworn Defender may attempt to deflect it so his ward takes no damage. Attempting to deflect a ranged weapon doesn't count as an action. He must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 20 + attacking weapon's magic bonus, if any) to render the attack harmless.

At 8th level, the Sworn Defender gains a +1 competence bonus on the Reflex saving throw.

Daunting Presence (Ex): Rarely, if ever, does a Sworn Defender's steely control over himself slip. His purposeful, cool presence is enough to deter most opponents from threatening his ward. However, he gains an alternate tactic at 6th level. Infuriated and ready to sacrifice his life for his ward, the Sworn Defender can strike awesome fear in his foes by threatening them. The Sworn Defender must be within 30 feet of his charge when using this ability.

All enemies within 60 feet of the Sworn Defender who can hear or see him must succeed at a Will save (DC 10 + Sworn Defender level + Charisma modifier) or become shaken. These fear effects are cumulative, and the duration lasts for 3d6 rounds. Anyone succeeding against the Will save is immune to the Sworn Defender's presence for 24 hours.

He can use Daunting Presence three times per day. This is

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a mind-affecting fear effect.

Dire Need (Ex): A Sworn Defender carries on in the face of terrible odds to protect his ward. At times he stands on the brink of the abyss or walks through the Hells to ensure her safety. When reduced to between -1 and -9 hit points while in a hostile situation with his ward, he automatically stabilizes. He does not fall unconscious and he may still perform limited actions without injury. He can take either a single move or standard action each turn, but not both. He cannot perform a full round action unless he uses withdraw to leave the battlefield with his ward. He takes 1 point of damage after completing a strenuous act. If he reaches -10 hit points, he immediately dies.

Wrath of Reprisal (Su): Watching the person you gave everything to protect, shelter, and keep safe fall is an indescribably horrific experience. For the Sworn Defender, bound at a psychological level to his ward, the result is both awesome and terrible to behold. Whenever his ward is rendered unconscious or helpless, the Sworn Defender is entitled to a reprisal against the foe that felled her. This works similarly to a smite attack. He must declare its use before making the melee attack.

The Sworn Defender adds his Charisma bonus (if any) to his melee attack roll. He deals twice his Sworn Defender level in damage on a successful hit. If he misses, the reprisal still counts against his use for the day. He can make a number of reprisals per day equal to his Charisma bonus (minimum 1), and he cannot make more than one reprisal per round.

Salvation (Ex): The 9th-level Sworn Defender responds nearly instantly to threats of all kinds to his ward, not just

melee attacks. Any time that his ward is forced to make a saving throw to avoid an effect that results in physical damage (such as avoiding a *fireball* spell or falling rocks), and the Sworn Defender is within 5 feet of her, he can roll the saving throw instead at the normal DC. All his normal modifiers apply. If he succeeds, he takes three-quarters of the damage (rounded up) and his ward takes the other quarter. If unsuccessful, the ward takes half damage and he takes the other half (rounded up).

Iconic Champion

Shaunay kep'Akathos is perhaps the most famous paladin in Firandir, though others stand above her in the church of Cyhiraeth and certainly outstrip her in experience. Her fame derives from standing up against the steely tide of Eldanoth's faithful and fearlessly upholding the torch of the Celindar despite overwhelming opposition from all sides.

Appointed as the senior tactician for the Whitewind Bastion, this woman is better known as *the Faithblade Shaunay* or, less commonly, the *Sword of Justice*. Rising from relative obscurity to commanding combined Celindari forces in the south, she personally sees to the defense of the Whitewind Bastion and its outlying areas. Her relative youth is at complete odds with her rigorous training and reputation; the Damaran, Tirielite and her own Cyhiraethe churches all readily vouch for her capabilities. Shaunay serves as second-in-command to Dorngir Azahl, but the great majority of visitors to Whitewind Bastion mistake her for another labourer. She rarely flouts her position, a fact known to have saved her life against assassins in the past.

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shounay kep'akothos

Female human paladin 5/Celindari tactician 5; CR 10; Medium humanoid; HD 10d10+10; hp 55; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. armored); AC 24; Base Atk +10, melee +14, ranged +10; Grp +14; Atk +16 melee (1d6+10/19-20, +2 holy longsword) or +11 ranged (1d8+5, +1 Comp.4 longbow); Full Atk +16/+11 melee (1d8+10/19-20, +2 holy longsword) or +11/+6 ranged (1d8+5, +1 Comp.4 longbow); SA smite evil 2/day; SQ aura of courage aura of good, corona's edge, detect evil, divine grace, divine health, enhanced flanking, lay on hands, maiden's rally, redeemer's mercy, roots of the oak, shield of wisdom, special mount, turn undead; AL LG; SV Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills: Diplomacy +19, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Region: Denethor) +4, Knowledge (Religion) +13, Knowledge (War) +13, Ride +7, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +5

Feats: Combat Expertise, Devotion to Justice, Expert Tactician (B), Improved Disarm, Weapon Focus (Longsword), Weapon of Faith

Language: Dominion, Dwarven

Paladin Spells: 1 - *Bless Weapon, Cure Light Wounds*; 2 - *Heavenly Ward, Impart Vitality*

special abilities

Aura of Courage (Su): Shaunay is immune to fear. Each ally within 10 feet of her gains a +4 morale bonus on saving throws against fear effects.

Canny Defense (Ex): Shaunay can take a full round to gain a +2 dodge bonus to AC for 5 rounds. She can use this five times per day.

Corona's Edge (Ex): She adds a +2 bonus to damage when fighting with a longsword.

Divine Grace (Su): Shaunay adds a +3 bonus to her saving throws.

Divine Health (Su): She is immune to all diseases.

Expert Tactician: If Shaunay hits a creature with an attack of opportunity, she and all his allies gain a +2 circumstance bonus on melee attack rolls and damage rolls against that creature for one round. She gains the benefit of the Expert Tactician feat.

Enhanced Flanking: Shunay gains the benefits of the Enhanced Flanking feat, and so does any ally who is flanking the same opponent with him. She loses this benefit whenever she is caught flat-footed, surprised or otherwise denied her Dexterity bonus.

Lay on Hands (Su): Each day she can heal a total number of 30 hit points of damage.

Maiden's Rally (Ex): When there is more than one enemy attacking Shaunay and her allies (even if the enemies are not working together), she can take a full-round action to compose a strategy and issue orders. By making a Knowledge (War) check against a DC of 20, if she succeeds, all allies within 30 feet of her when she activates this ability gain a +2 competence bonus to attack rolls for 5 rounds. This is a language-dependent, mind-affecting ability. Her allies must be able to hear and understand her for this ability to work.

Redeemer's Mercy (Ex): Shaunay can coup de grace as a standard action.

Roots of the Oak (Ex): Shaunay receives a +4 competence bonus to her roll to resist being disarmed.

Turn Undead (Su): She can turn undead 6 times per day as a 2nd level cleric.

shounay's ethos

In these troubled times, the dark influence of the Veluakir can find purchase in vexed minds and concerned spirits. Those weak in their faith slink into shadows, fearful of standing up and being noticed. They release their morals, claiming them "too hard to live up to," "too dangerous to hold." They spurn ethics of a just, fair society in favour of standing by and avoiding cruel intentions, allowing someone else to take their place. I will not do that.

Franchise: I will be the bastion of light in a time of darkness. I will not bend low as others do, but let them see in me the holy precepts of the Celindar. Let my example serve to empower others in the name of what is right, and as we speak truths and acknowledge cruelties as wrong, let others find the strength to do the same.

Principle: I will not be held and bound by what others proclaim is right, or the coming of the tides. An act of evil can be nothing but evil, and I refuse to accept it otherwise. I swear to uphold my oaths, so they will be upheld. I speak truth, and thus spurn lies and deceit as tools to weaken my fellow allies. Franchise holds my Principle for others to see, but Principle holds my Faith at my heart.

Justice: This is a time of fear, and in it, many great atrocities occur. Why should tyranny and despair be

permitted to foment the worst tragedies? I will see those who commit ills punished for it. Cyhiraeth, champion of heaven, sets upon us the need of loyalty and honour in these dark days. I will be that light.



shounay's childhood

The life that she lead, as Alyse Marnessi, reads like half a million other young girls' from the same age and period. Third-born child in a family of labourers, she knew hunger when the years were lean and thrilled at the simple pleasures: riding her first horse, showing her straggling garden off with pride to her mother's friends, writing the whole day's lesson without an error in her learning book. She escaped the squalor of the poor in great cities; the family was firmly raised within an hour's walk of a respectable town of 2,000 souls, and Alyse enjoyed rural living.

Farm life is never easy, and Alyse took to it with patience enough. She in particular loved the docile, sturdy grey mare who pulled their cart into town every second day, and Hamaa, the ropey little scrubb her eldest brother Dain received at the end of two summers' labour for an elderly neighbour. Her affinity with the animals didn't approach the extraordinary and never marked her as unusual, it was just the passion of a young girl.

As she grew, though, Alyse knew no difficulties mingling

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with those her own age in the Firandir'a town she had come to know well. Her peers in Hamatka thought well of her, and none could deny she had a certain way with people. In disputes, she seemed to know just what to say to help cool tensions and after dealing with her rambunctious older brothers, some might say she had all the peacemaking experience a sister needed to deal with others.

The first battle

Everything centered around a fight. It wasn't important then, no one thought it. A few boys in Hamatka decided to start a fight one balmy summer night in 1169, when Alyse was nineteen. Dain, the eldest brother, had made the decision to go campaigning at the lord's call, against the wishes of mother, father, sister. In his wake, middle brother Amri declared he'd go too. Others had headed out that same summer for training, bound for larger places, for castles and keeps and manors to pledge service.

The few boys called themselves the Crimson Hand, and took it to acting like a company. In fact, they seemed little more than ruffians and thugs by town standards, modeling themselves on none knew what. The Crimson Hand's cocky airs got the better of them, and Hamatka's youths -- bored already by inactivity and maybe a bit gone on the watered apple wine popular that year -- engaged them. Bloody lips and black eyes amounted before the tussle was ended, but it didn't stop there.

Things were quiet, though the Crimson Hand didn't stop flouting their silly name, their pompous gait. They had a knowing look about them, no one thought much of it. Some

of the boys in it got older, a bit wiser. Dain and Amri went off in 1170, to do their service, and Alyse found herself content at home, alone with her parents for a time. She'd taken to courting a boy, Alorithe, known as much for his grave counsel as for his superb woodcarving. Maybe, she'd thought, they'd be married and he'd have his studio and she a lute or a mandolin; he'd promised to make her an instrument and teach her to play it, if she wanted. And things were well.

And then the standards were raised. Flags flapping in the wind, banners beneath a grey sky. Lords in the south turned their faces away from the ailing Rhydemunite dynasty of the north and denounced the rightful lord set upon the throne. The games of lords meant nothing to Alyse, save when they taxed too deep or suggested legislation some didn't like. But this was greatly different: Amando, the Prince, soon lay dead and war began. Of course, Amri and Dain rode to battle, proud but pensive, and the Crimson Hands went with them. Everyone did, none thought the better.

Hamatka mourned her dead on the return in bitter 1170, a winter without bright Amri, a winter missing Dain. No one knew where the boys had gone, but the battle wasn't spoken of save by those who said they'd been beset near the Broken Plains by orcs -- who'd believe it? -- and all fought for freedom.

The year of silent bells

It so happened that Dain returned in spring, a fugitive taken into his own home. Alyse fretted when she learned the truth, as he told it: the Crimson Hands had started to attack

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the men of Hamatka, others, turning upon the battle. No one knew, but they caught stragglers and slit their throats. He wouldn't stay long, only enough to beggar the faithful Hamaa, his scrubb, and ride on towards the north to warn greater lords of treachery and danger. He wanted to find the Cyhiraethe, who still stayed loyal to Princess Tallirea, Prince Daine.

Alyse stayed behind, as was her place. She was there when the Crimson Hands were unleashed against her people, with other "brigands" carrying red banners, and people were stabbed in flight, homes ransacked, places set ablaze. She watched through stinging eyes when Dain's head was paraded on a pike, and look upon his face was despair.

Hamatka's story reads like half a hundred other villages from the same place and year.

endings, beginnings

Alyse was one of Hamatka's survivors, having lost all. Alorithe was buried by his grieving mother, the Marnessi by Alyse, the only one left. She could have lived in their house, with offers to rebuild, but it was empty and full of ghosts. The docile old mare was dead and she was left with a few coins. The season was rainy and she couldn't even find heart for employment, so setting out with a stick and a bundle of old clothes, both Amri's and her own, Alyse left Hamatka for good. She saw rocky fields and burnt out homesteads, prosperous mills and nobles' manors. None warmed a heart aching with emptiness.

After a month, Alyse was ready to forsake everything, give over to the tremendous sorrow building within her. She

could not bring herself to die by her own hand, but merely to lie down and forget all was a balm she longed for. She did not receive it. Instead, as she lay on a muddy hillside, she dreamt. She dreamt of cities ablaze and fields defiled, sights far worse than her short travels revealed. She wept asleep, and awoke with burning eyes. In sickness, she travelled away, fearful of old magics and fell influences. Each night she slept, the images were the same but the sounds were worse. People wailing, sobbing, crying piteously for help that would not come. Her ears rang awake.

The worst, though, was the last night, the eighth. There she saw people spiritless and unresisting, viewing the atrocities committed. She dreamt of the numbing poverty and misery of spirit. And she cried out, "Enough! No more!"

shaunay's calling

The next night she dreamt as she had earlier, of the sadness, the despair. It did not pass. She awoke troubled and angry, marching aimlessly down the trail until she came to a place in the countryside where the fires had not yet reached. Into its doors she walked, much to the surprise of a startled, small congregation in the middle of its services. Confined as a muddy, miserable young woman to sit at the back of the room until someone could be sent scurrying from the washroom with a bucket of hot water and cloths, Alyse found a need for patience she had never required before. It nearly broke her until the company departed, muttering and whispering at her rude behaviour.

Thus did Alyse enter the arms of the Cyhiraethe, ignoble and dirty, rude and agitated.

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The church lay inside a private home, and it amounted to less than great cathedrals. There was Alyse interned for six months, given odd jobs meant to last a week. One week bled into the next and her duration extended. She proved to be a hale, hearty young woman, resilient in body if not in spirit. But three priests of Cyhiraeth saw to that, instilling quiet faith as she joined them in their rhythms. They clothed her, fed her, and nourished a void. In time she came to speak of her dreams, which surprised none given the trauma she endured. Others had had similar visions they couldn't shake, but putting herself to labouring was good. It cleansed, though the visions never entirely left.

She took on the duties they gave her, though never did Alyse find herself imbued with prayer or even great peace. Her memories were too strong, and the rumours carried by petitioners only troubled her more. Many were eager to follow the Cyhiraethe standard into battle and prepared themselves for the hue and cry for aid. Shaking her head, she merely tended to the horses and listened quietly to what all had to say. When they discussed battle, she paid quiet attention as she felt was owed her caretakers.

Two years would come and go, with wounded and ill straggling through. 1173 came and was terribly cruel, but Alyse could do little to spare the pain Hamatka suffered upon other regions. It was not until someone entered carrying word of "Dain, Hamatka's butcher" that she broke, the long imposed introversion cast aside as she stood up and berated the startled man in front of many petitioners. Her voice never rose to yelling, but many were taken strongly aback by what she had said, what was learned in that hour.

Many left shaken by her language and the clergy took it upon themselves to pay a greater mind to someone who clearly suffered so much.

From waif to faithblade

Still, stung by the rumours of Dain, Alyse decided to adopt a new name. It was Shaunay, perhaps intended as tribute to Princess Shaunde, though this was never a decision she consciously recognized. Anger prickled her, no matter how she threw herself into work, and finally she turned to the clerics, asking for a task with some value, some means to serve. They feared her request, unable to tell if she meant to destroy herself in pain or shake off the languor. After conversing amongst themselves, they decided to charge her into the service of a more important church in the larger town of Dercein.

Shaunay was forced by happenstance to cross through lands terribly changed, places she had never seen prosperous. By the end of her journey of four days on horseback, she staggered into Dercein and demanded absolution, wept for it. Her dreams were too vivid, the times were too difficult. Unclear of how to take this news, the clergy ushered her into the sickroom before reading the missives accompanying her, fearing that she was taken with some fever or delirium. They were right, she was; an instance of illness taking her some days to recover from. Her health was not good, but she insisted upon some redemption, some freedom from suffering. The priests could grant her naught but prayer, and she walked away to her bed still troubled and vexed in dreams.

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Day by day Shaunay took to prayer, to the training, and finally the physical routine. If not by prayer, she decided, then by the sword must she make this sadness stop. She could not liken herself to hiding away, pretending Firandir did not suffer. It had, she knew. She rode hard though it hurt her weakened limbs. She lifted sword until her muscles screamed. Hard labour until she approached collapse strengthened her body even if her stamina didn't grow commensurately.

Soon enough, word of trouble came, and Shaunay went out with others to meet it. She found a place similar to one she had already seen: a village alight, bodies bloodied, people sobbing. There were no crimson banners from the horses' saddles, there were no faces she knew. But she descended into the fray with no more than her wits, and struck those whom she could. She gave quarter and mercy to the fearful, in the throng trying to guide them away from fighting. Her muscles screamed by nightfall, her body stinking and so very much ill. But she had survived, and in surviving, found a quiet calm for the first time since 1170.

It would be Shaunay who rode out time and time again. It would be chance and then experience that built up her understanding of tactics, that enabled her to bring people to safety. They followed her, and the Eldanothi feared her: to the point a failed assassination attempt hopelessly destroyed her health and left her much weaker than it had been. Fortified by blessings of Cyhiraeth, all the same, Shaunay struggled then as now to lead light and hope.

From soul-numbed survivor to divine warrior, Shaunay is one of many leading hope to Firandir where darkness falls.



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