



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]

THE BOOK OF VILE DARKNESS[™]



PLAYER'S BOOK

Robert J. Schwalb



INTRODUCTION

"You're adventurers, aren't you? I used to be an adventurer, back before I got turned into a demon. I was also a king. Yeah, a king! With a great kingdom and a million loyal subjects! Say, is that the Book of Vile Darkness you got there? Y'know, they only made nine copies. I have the other eight. Wouldn't mind adding that one to my collection."

—Fraz-Urb'Luu, Demon Prince of Deception

The *Book of Vile Darkness* corrupts all who come into contact with it. Its pages contain the wisdom, musings, and mad ravings of evil gods, demons, archwizards, liches, dragons, and other mighty beings. By opening its covers and thumbing through its contents, one can achieve great power—at the cost of one's life, soul, sanity, or all of the above. Such is the nature of evil, and such is the nature of this unholy tome.

Adventurers, not surprisingly, are among the most tempted to seek out the *Book of Vile Darkness*, drawn by the promise of power and too arrogant to think they could fall victim to its destructive tendencies. What they find in its pages are disturbing images and countless ways to inflict pain and terror on their enemies. What they don't see is the path down which the book guides them—a path leading to their own annihilation and the destruction of everything they hold dear—for the power and the allure are oftentimes too great to ignore.

The book you hold in your hands is aimed at players and provides new options for adventurers of any alignment, although the contents are even more tempting to characters who are evil-curious or rotten to the core. These new options include:

- ◆ Starting on page 9, five new character themes: cultist, disgraced noble, infernal slave, reaver, and vile scholar.
- ◆ Starting on page 20, five new paragon paths: blood-crazed berserker, contract killer, demonologist, idol of darkness, and vermin lord.
- ◆ Starting on page 28, the Exemplar of Evil epic destiny.
- ◆ Starting on page 29, a selection of divine devotion feats, divinity feats, and vile feats.

If you're looking for magic items of evil bent, you won't find them here; however, a number of them appear in Chapter 5 of the accompanying *Dungeon Master's* book. Read about them at your own peril!

PLAYING EVIL

"What you condemn as evil, I call a willingness to do whatever it takes to succeed. I have done terrible things and I take no pride in those acts. But I would do them again, a thousand times, if it meant reaching such heights."

—High Cardinal Krozen

If you're a player interested in trying out an evil character, this book is for you. The *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* roleplaying game recommends you avoid choosing the evil alignment for good reason. Evil characters cause problems. Not only must the players contend with their enemies on the battlefield but also they must keep an eye on their evil-minded companions. Furthermore, evil adventurers tend to become alienated as a result of their actions. In time, they are no longer welcome in any community that knows them or knows of them. An evil adventurer's career is often brutish and short, ending with quests left unfulfilled and the campaign a failure.

Given all this, why bother playing an evil character? In truth, many reasons exist: You might be looking for a change of pace or a roleplaying challenge, your DM might be running a one-shot adventure suitable for evil characters, or you might be hankering for an object lesson in behavior and consequences. If that's your wont, don't let the rules dissuade you from trying something new.

Proceed with Caution

Playing an evil adventurer is usually not a good idea. Some players take the evil alignment as a license to behave badly and an excuse to cause mischief and suffering whenever and wherever the opportunity arises. Evil characters seem to have a hard time honoring agreements and are quick to turn against their allies. They aren't about to risk their necks for a town on the edge of civilization without a considerable reward. Even if they take that job, there's no guarantee that they won't double-cross the town by taking the money and running.

Despite the problems evil characters can cause, such a play style can work. If you embrace the following suggestions, you can mitigate the challenges and enjoy a successful, if sinister, adventuring experience.

Cooperative Game

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS is a cooperative game. Player characters work best when they work together, and most D&D encounters are built around this assumption. That one or more of the heroes are evil doesn't change this fact or alter your responsibility to your teammates. You might not like the people you work with, but if you expect them to watch your back, you had better watch theirs. Nothing dictates that evil

characters are unable work within an adventuring group. They can contribute to the group dynamic as their role demands.

To ensure the group remains together, it's critical that you shield your companions from whatever wickedness you intend. In sum, you must avoid stealing from, maiming, exploiting, and murdering the other members of your party. One way to keep everyone in check is to make sure you have a strong reason for being together in the first place. You might serve a more powerful master, follow the same god, be from the same homeland, or pursue a common goal, such as wiping out all orcs, elves, or dragons. If everyone can agree to a party-binding element from the outset and can create a plausible explanation for maintaining this truce, your group should find success.

Be Considerate

Playing an evil adventurer gives you a chance to explore the dark side: to be the ruthless killer, to steal without regard for the victim, to dabble in dark magic, and to bargain with terrible powers. Although such options and other, more dreadful actions are possible, always consider the feelings of other players at the table. Avoid offending other players by exploring taboo subjects. Many people play D&D as an escape from real world problems and ugly truths. Games that focus too much on the sinister have limited appeal for many gamers.

Before play begins, talk with the Dungeon Master and the other players to determine what events they want to avoid and what subjects they'd rather not explore. Respect these limits and don't test them. Doing so ensures the game remains fun for everyone involved.

Understand the Implications

Good adventurers earn fame and notoriety from their achievements, gaining advocates among the people they help and accolades for the monsters they defeat. Evil adventurers gain few of these rewards. Their actions lead to infamy, enemies, and scorn. In place of open gates and celebrations, evil characters find closed doors and suspicious stares. The more evil these characters do, the harder it becomes for them to find haven and move safely through the world.

A reckless, insane killer might not care about the implications, but an adventurer probably should. Needlessly and wantonly closing off havens and cutting off access to supplies makes it harder to survive and complete any given mission. Always keep in mind the repercussions of your actions, thinking about how your choices impact your character's chances for survival in the long term.

EVIL ADVENTURING GROUPS

"I assure you, paladin king, that if I had a sword in hand, I would willingly cut out your heart, here and now."

—Artemis Entreri

You cannot do enough to ensure that the evil adventuring group stays together. No matter how much you prepare, no matter how many connections you make to other characters, no matter how much you discuss limits and player comfort levels, odds are significant conflict will arise. If handled poorly, the group's destruction is almost certain to follow. The trick is to prevent that level of discord from happening in the first place. The best way to do that is to focus on strengthening the connections between the characters.

Before you get down to the business of creating your character, it's a good idea to work with your fellow players to construct a strong group identity. One of the best ways to accomplish this goal is to adopt a group concept. Simply put, the group concept describes the reasons why you work together. The following group concepts are especially tailored for evil adventurers. Feel free to tweak them to fit a different group concept.



Agents of Evil

Fear is a good motivator for ensuring some level of cooperation. As agents of evil, your characters are a powerful villain's champions and lackeys. You could be agents of an organization such as the Aurum in the world of Eberron or the Zhentarim in Faerûn, or you might work for a powerful warlord or wizard. Chances are you work together because you have an idea about what will happen if you don't. Your dark master is quite terrible—angering him, her, or it is not a good idea.

So who is your dark master? You should enlist your Dungeon Master to see how your employer fits into the campaign. What kinds of tasks does your patron assign you? At some point, someone had to have failed your patron. What happened to him or her? Are you loyal to your patron or do you plot treachery? Do you serve out of your own free will or are you little better than slaves?

Criminals

Your group is a criminal outfit assembled from disparate individuals, each of whom brings a different talent to the group's cause. You might be professional killers who take dangerous missions to eliminate hard-to-reach targets. You could be an upstart thieves' guild trying to establish a foothold in a new city. Perhaps you are brigands waylaying caravans and travelers on the wilderness's darkest roads. Or are you pirates who lost their ship to a hated rival?

A number of questions must be answered. What is your criminal enterprise? Who founded the group? How did you each come to join? Have you made any enemies yet? If so, who are they and why are they out for your blood?

Devotees of a Dark God

Religion unites many individuals, including those in your group. You all share the same faith—a mutual pledge to attend one dark god, archdevil, demon lord, or some other dreadful being.

Which power do you serve? How did you find yourself in that entity's service? Who in the group is the spiritual leader? This character need not be a member of a divine class. What kinds of missions do you undertake? Dark powers often have a number of enemies. Who are most important as far as your party is concerned? Do you have rivals? Is it a friendly rivalry or something decidedly darker?

Family Ties

Familial ties might be enough to keep your group together. Not every adventurer has to be a blood relative, however. Perhaps two or three characters in the party are noble kin and everyone else acts as an advisor,

companion, retainer, or bodyguard. For example, two or three players could play drow while the rest are mercenary soldiers. Alternatively, most characters could be half-orcs from the same tribe, perhaps with a human and an orc as cousins.

In a family ties approach, race is particularly important. Most adventurers should be from the same race. If you choose a different race, come up with a reason why your character is considered part of the family.

Fugitives

Your group committed some grievous crime and is now on the run. Maybe you were bandits who killed the duke's son. You could be deserters from an army, having left before the orcs wiped out your legion (perhaps with some aid from the party). You might be criminals who managed to escape prison by working together.

In the fugitives scenario, your shared predicament has forced you to depend on each other to escape certain death and survive in the world. What is your story? What hardships have you had to survive? Who hunts you? Why do you stay together and what ensures you will stay together in the weeks and months ahead?

Mercenaries

Many evil adventuring groups are no more complicated than a band of sellswords. They travel the world, selling their services to the highest bidder. When the money runs out, they move on to serve a different master. You are such a group of mercenaries. Over time, you've found that you work well together despite your differences.

How did you come together? What kinds of masters have you served so far? Have you double-crossed anyone? If so, are they still out there, nursing a grudge? Who won't you work for? Why?

Survivors

Your characters were once members of a powerful, evil organization. An adventuring band struck your base, wiped out the group's leadership, and scattered the rest. Stripped of your community and driven to the frontier, you must find some way to make ends meet.

As usual, several questions arise. What was the organization? Was it a cult, a secret society, or some political institution? Who destroyed the group and why? What did your organization do to merit its destruction? How did your party escape? How do you feel about the attackers? Do you want revenge or do you fear them still?

CREATING AN EVIL ADVENTURER

"Sane is boring."

—Jarlaxle

When it comes to character creation, evil adventurers are little different from other types of characters. You still choose a class, race, feats, and powers, then purchase equipment. For the most part, the options available to good and unaligned heroes serve just as well for evil characters. *Power strike*, for example, proves as effective for an evil fighter as it does for a good fighter. Exceptions in both story and mechanics do exist, however, and they are discussed below.

Archetypes

Nearly all adventurers are heroic in some way. Their jobs lead them into dangerous places, where they spend their time battling monsters and thwarting dastardly plots. Upstanding heroes fight against the darkness to protect the last bastions of light and goodness left in the world.

On the surface, evil adventurers look and act like other adventurers. They tromp through the same kinds of dungeons and fight the same kinds of monsters. Where they differ is in the motivations that drive them into these places.

Most evil adventurers fall into one of three archetypes. These categories describe in broad strokes how the character might behave and what goals he or she pursues. You don't have to choose an archetype, but look them over as you think about the kind of character you want to create.

Antihero

The most palatable option for adventuring groups, the antihero is a classic archetype in fantasy fiction, films, and television stories. These characters often pursue good ends, but in ways other people find objectionable.

Antiheroes compromise their morals and ethics by performing despicable deeds they believe they have to commit. Few are the means these dark adventurers won't employ. They might commit murder, steal, torture to extract information, threaten innocents, and commit any number of other heinous acts. As much as they regret these actions (if at all), they see them as necessary to achieve a greater end that might actually be noble were the methods not so reprehensible.

If you're thinking about playing an evil character in a party of good or unaligned adventurers, the antihero is the best archetype to play. You share your allies' goals even if you do go about achieving them in disturbing ways. You are probably insightful enough of know how

your companions view your actions, and you know the limits of what they will tolerate. As a result, you might conceal your activities from them to avoid causing disruption. Even so, you're not likely to apologize for your actions should they come to light.

Michael Moorcock's Elric is an excellent example of an antihero.

Nonhero

Only the naïve believe all adventurers have the world's best interests in mind. Sure, certain shining examples might save the village from certain destruction or brave the bowels of the Abyss to stop some demon lord from invading the natural world—all for altruistic reasons. Still, extraordinary people who selflessly champion the weak and fight against evil's advance are the exception, not the rule.

Most people are not so noble. They are content to go about their lives, attend to their responsibilities, and look after their own. Among these "regular folk," the ones who set out to adventure do so for other reasons: revenge, wealth, glory, or something else. All in all, they do not possess high-minded goals. For the most part, they are in it strictly for themselves.

Self-interest as a driving motivation tends to make nonheroes unaligned or evil. These characters fit into mixed alignment groups with only a little friction as long as they are compensated for their efforts or convinced a job will profit them even if no immediate financial rewards are offered. Nonheroes work best in groups of other nonheroes, usually working together for the same objectives.

The characters in Glen Cook's *Black Company* novels are good examples of nonheroes. They'll work for nearly any sort of employer, provided they receive their regular pay.

Villain

The last evil adventurer archetype is the villain. In some ways, the villain is a fusion of the antihero and the nonhero, but without the good parts. Basically, villains do evil because they want. Rather than help people in need, villains exploit them. Rather than destroy evil monsters, villains enslave them. Villains are truly the bad guys.

A villain is rarely an appropriate addition to a good or unaligned adventuring group. Villains oppose anything and everything a hero fights for. They create needless friction and complications for the group. It won't take long before a confrontation results. The best outcome possible is for the villain to go his or her own way; the worst results in character death and dissolution of the party.

In certain instances, a villain party member could work. Your adventurer might be replaced by an evil doppelganger and your DM might let you play that

character for a time until the villain's unmasked. Alternatively, the party might join forces with your villain character to defeat a common foe, though such arrangements are fraught with tension and often short-lived. Outside these and similar situations, you should probably avoid introducing a villain to a nonevil group even if the other players are on board.

A villain is best used in groups made up of other villains and nonheroes. Such story lines hardly resemble a normal adventuring experience because the characters are not likely to undertake the same kinds of missions. Even if they do, they do so for some sinister purpose. Villainous groups go on missions to destroy good enemies, prowl through dungeons in search of evil magic items, recruit evil humanoids to besiege a castle or invade a city, and endeavor toward other goals that nonevil adventurers are so often called upon to stop. A villainous group lasts only as long as the players refrain from plotting against each other. So tenuous are the ties that the discovery of a single magic item desired by two characters might be enough to tear the group apart. For this reason, villainous groups are best used for short campaigns spanning, at most, a tier.

Goals

Think about what your character wants, why he or she wants it, and what your character will do to get it. Consider tying these elements to other characters in the group to strengthen the party bond. Establishing a strong motivation and behavior before you play helps you portray the character in an appropriate manner while still contributing to the group effort.

Alignment

Choose the alignment that best fits your character's story concept. For an evil adventuring party, the best alignment choices are unaligned and evil. Chaotic evil can work, but you must find a story excuse for why you're willing to work with others for an extended period. If you're playing a one-shot adventure, any alignment will do.

Personality

Come up with a few personality traits that best express your character's identity, behavior, and general nature. Pick from the personality traits described in *Heroes of the Fallen Lands™* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms™* or from those described here. Where possible, demonstrate your most positive traits during interactions with the other player characters, and save your most negative traits for exchanges with monsters and NPCs.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Angry	Hedonistic
Avaricious	Hidebound
Brutish	Introspective
Craven	Jaded
Cruel	Lazy
Deceitful	Lustful
Detached	Mischievous
Deviant	Nihilistic
Diabolical	Pliable
Dishonorable	Proud
Domineering	Quiet
Erratic	Scheming
Extravagant	Strange
Focused	Treacherous
Foolish	Unhinged
Gluttonous	Uptight
Haughty	Wrathful

Appearance

Decide whether your character shows any outward sign of his or her alignment. Your character might conceal a darker nature behind a pleasing façade. Conversely, your character might demonstrate his or her dark side through style of dress, body art, ritual scarification, jewelry, and other adornments.

Background

Although your background might not affect your character much during his or her adventures, having an idea about why your character chose the path he or she did can help you develop the character's personality and motivations during play. For an evil adventurer, the biggest question you should answer is how your character came to be evil. Were you born this way? Are you a product of your upbringing? Did some other event change your outlook, enabling or compelling you to commit dark or unspeakable deeds?

Powers

When choosing powers, consider whether the flavor of the power should be tweaked to account for your evil nature. For example, if you have a power that deals radiant damage and you think it would befit your character's nature to have the power deal necrotic damage instead, discuss it with your DM. If he or she allows it, change the damage type.

ARCANE EVIL

"All other paths to power are riddled with flaws. A sword can break. A mind can hesitate. Faith falters, nature dies, and light banishes shadow. Magic? Magic is forever."

—Rary the Traitor

Arcane magic is everywhere. It pervades the cosmos as residual energy left from creation. The paths to its mastery are various, and there are few limits to what it can accomplish in the right or wrong hands.

Many speculate that arcane magic was founded in the Elemental Chaos. It is possible that a monumental form of arcane magic was used to fashion the world from disorder. If the Elemental Chaos spews arcane energy, the Abyss no doubt taints such magic to one degree or another. Nothing touched by the Abyss remains unsullied. It could be that a thread of Abyssal darkness worms through all arcane magic. If so, that darkness might be enough to nudge those standing at the precipice into evil.

Most arcane spellcasters believe that their work attracts the best and worst from all races, promising power, glory, and wealth to any capable of controlling it. They claim that, just as a beautiful sword might be used for evil ends, so too can magic be a terrible weapon. Although some arcane masters forge pacts with evil beings to grow their magical mastery and others scribe spells of singular wicked nature to feed their own sinister interests, goodly arcane magicians maintain that it not arcane magic that is to blame but rather the infinitely corruptible hearts of mortals.

Evil arcane characters adventure to master new spells and gain power. They use their amassed wealth and prestige to raise towers and citadels within which they perform experiments that lead to a greater understanding of magic. Like Vecna, they might aspire to become lichs or gods, or like Iggwily they might broker deals with powerful extraplanar entities. In either case, the ultimate goal is immortality.

DIVINE EVIL

"I whip my servants thrice daily: once after morning prayer, once before they go to sleep at night, and once when the mood strikes me."

—Verminaard

One does not have to look far to locate evil in the cosmos. Certainly, the Abyss holds evil enough. But what about the evil above? What of the calculating, vengeful dark gods who embody evil in their perfect, divine forms? Do they not affect the world? Are their hands not felt in the murders and betrayals, the slaughter and the hatred pervading the natural world? Many are the horrific deeds done in their names.

Evil divine characters seek to please the gods they worship, to rise through the ranks of the clergy and become champions of the faith, divine exarchs, or demigods. They impose the will of their gods upon lesser creatures and use their faith like a hammer to smite infidels.

The Dark Gods

Before the Chained God's fall and subsequent Dawn War, the deities represented certain amoral concepts—traits reflecting the ordered universe they hoped to shape. Tharizdun brought morality to the cosmos when he created the Abyss. His foul deed released evil into the multiverse and sundered the divine harmony forever. Since his fall, some gods have declared for the light, while others have embraced darkness. Those deities trapped in the middle long for a return to the perfection that once was.

Eight major evil gods exist. Two have fallen so far from their divine origins, they root in the Abyss with the demon lords against whom they once fought. The rest pursue other agendas, their unholy goals often at odds with those of their holier peers. For more details on the evil gods, see *Rules Compendium*[™], page 46.

Divine Magic

A common fallacy attributes divine magic to the gods. In fact, divine magic is a force apart from the deities. Indeed, it is the magic that gives the gods their power and status in the planes. Most mortals interact with divine magic by asking for access from their deity. If the mortal is a prized servant, the god might comply. Some divine characters can harness divine power directly, but such ability is reserved for the most cherished devotees of all.

Because divine magic exists apart from the deities, divine powers from one god are similar to those of another god. The intended outcome might be different, but the prayers are more or less the same. For this reason, one can find both Vecna's and Pelor's priests scorching enemies with radiant energy. Nonetheless, some evil gods have strong ties to particular themes that are best expressed through damage types. You might talk with your Dungeon Master about swapping out the radiant damage type for a different damage type more appropriate to your character's faith. Examples include fire for Asmodeus, necrotic for Vecna, and poison for Zehir.

MARTIAL EVIL

"It is proper that the strong master the weak, and the powerful rule the powerless."

—Warduke

It is difficult to say that any particular moral imperative naturally invests the martial classes. One needs only the willingness to learn the tricks and maneuvers, and the courage to set into the world to win one's fortune.

That said, evil's rationale for staking a claim on martial power is telling. The goal of martial prowess is to degrade an opponent before he or she has the opportunity to respond in kind. Whether one's martial damage is slow and steady or swift and brutal, the objective is to do unto others before they do unto you. The means to this end are bloodshed, pain, and mayhem. All in all, evil is decidedly comfortable with martial power, whether it manifests in bludgeoning, slashing, or piercing. For evil, a journey filled with pain and dismemberment is as satisfying as the ultimate defeat of the enemy. Good cannot make such a claim with respect to martial power.

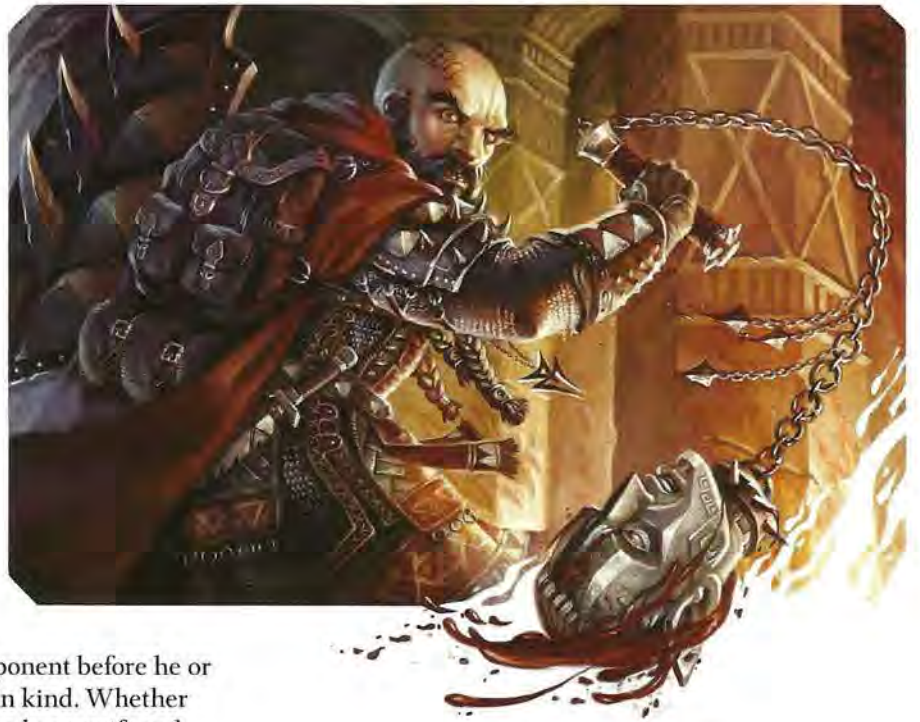
Evil martial characters adventure for many of the same reasons as other adventurers. They are simply less likely to lend their swords, hammers, and arrows to a cause without proper compensation, whether that is money or some more vile reward. Altruism is a foreign notion. Revenge, on the other hand, is a common motivation and might be treasured more deeply by an evil warrior.

PRIMAL EVIL

"It is not enough to respect nature; you must fear it. This is why I entrust my nganga with the power to bend the spirits to their will. Only under my firm control will the spirits stay their teeth and claws. Only then will we thrive."

—Lalali-Puy

Primal magic flows from the spirit world, a realm that is both a part of the natural domain and somehow separate from it. Primal spirits pervade the spirit world; from them flows great magic. The spirits guard the world against intrusion from both the Astral Sea and the Elemental Chaos. They want no part in the cosmic struggle between the gods and their elemental counterparts. Since the time of the Dawn War, the spirits have shielded the world from outside interference. As long as



they remain, no deity or primordial is permitted to violate the ban upheld for eons.

Protecting the world implies self-sacrifice, an act some people might describe as good or noble. Also, considering the pristine beauty of the primeval forests, the windswept mountains clawing at the heavens, and the scintillating vistas of the great oceans, the primal spirits are easily seen as agents of life and plenty.

GNAW

No primal spirit strictly abides by any mortal conception of good and evil. Nonetheless, a few primal entities are marked by an undeniable darkness. Whisper is a capricious spirit, a trickster, and a bringer of monsters. The Primal Beast is violence personified, a wrathful hunter that preys on all. Still, neither of these beings evokes the terror inherent in Gnow.

Legend has it that Gnow is the misbegotten child of Whisper and the Primal Beast. Once Gnow clawed free from the womb, Whisper cast it away, sickened by what she had brought into being. Having never known a mother's affection, Gnow exists at the edges of the spirit world, always creeping and crawling, surviving on the leavings of more powerful spirits.

As the spirit of creeping things, scavengers, and eaters of the dead, Gnow revels in twitching corpses alive with vermin, in the drone of carrion flies as they propagate, and in the vulture's screech as it circles the dying. Primal peoples appease this dark spirit by offering viscera, by burning their dung, and by cowering in the hours before dawn in hopes of keeping his killing presence at bay.

As much as the primal spirits are creations of living creatures, personifications of the world's many forms, they are also agents of death and decay. For life to thrive, the living must die. To make room for the new, the old must be cleared away.

Many primal champions stand apart from the cosmic struggle between good and evil. Preserving the world's natural states is of far greater import than the petty squabbles between the virtuous and vile. Because those beholden to darkness often seek ruination and destruction, unaligned primal characters often throw in their lot with the good. Still other primal adventurers find nature's dark side more palatable. They choose to protect and facilitate the crucial processes of death and decay. Advancing these natural aspects does not guarantee that the individual attends evil, but the work they do requires a hard heart. Their tasks are also more effectively completed through an affinity for fetid places, for the carcass's pungent stench, and for the things that burrow and creep, skitter and crawl.

PSIONIC EVIL

"My will can shatter mountains. Imagine what it can do to your bones."

—Serenity, Fist of Zuoken

The ability to wield psionic energy appears in the very best, the very worst, and a fair number of those in between. Some gifted individuals use their psionic powers to fight the Far Realm threat, while others exploit the growing aberrant presence to increase their power.

The mind is a hive of evil thoughts. While those of heavy conscience use discipline and deprivation to quell these thoughts, others bereft of scruples and guilt embrace them to unlock the mind's full potential and, in so doing, become slaves to them.

Evil psionic adventurers use their unusual powers to coerce and torment their opponents. They infiltrate their enemies' minds and enslave them, or they hurl destructive force at foes to shatter bones and bodies. Once again, evil enjoys wielding its destructive power nearly as much as accomplishing its dark ends.

PARAGON PSIONIC EVIL

Psionic Power™ offers great options for characters when they reach the paragon tier. Evil psions find great success as alienists and thrallherds, while evil monks might become unseen hands. You might tweak the story elements for other paragon paths to play up their sinister natures. The blackstone guardian for the battlemind and the anarchic adept for the ardent are strong choices.

SHADOW EVIL

"The darkness can devour you if you're not careful. Learn to master it, and you can train it to devour others."

—Evvard

Only those willing to trade a fragment of their souls for a shard of darkness can wield shadow magic. Such a bargain is not the sort of arrangement a good character relishes. A shadow adventurer might be comfortable as unaligned, but those that excel in their dark arts tend to give in, to one degree or another, to evil.

Rare is the shadow character who fights for the world's or its inhabitant's defense. Most such adventurers use shadow as a means to achieve personal goals. Assassins, in particular, embrace all that shadow offers to better hunt down and eliminate their victims. Blackguards, necromancers, and binders (as described in *Player's Option: Heroes of Shadow™*) turn from the light as a result of vice, knowledge, or power. These motivations easily place them within the grasp of evil. Only the rarest and most steadfast good-aligned master of shadows can survive long in the gloom. Evil, on the other hand, delights in darkness.

SHADOW OPTIONS

For more information on the shadow power source, check out *Player's Option: Heroes of Shadow*. Many of the options in that book are appropriate for evil adventurers.

Themes

"One day I will stand among the gods and not have to look up to them."

—Fzoul Chembryl

Your character's theme is a career, calling, or identity that describes who he or she is in the world. Just as race and class create basic definitions about who your character is, theme adds a third character component to help refine your story and identity. For example, you might be a human wizard who chooses the vile scholar theme, but "human vile scholar" might mean many different things. You might live on the outskirts of a village and sell dark lore and treasure maps to adventurers. Perhaps you live in an academy among other wizards and want to travel to see more of the world. Or perhaps you roam the forest or swamp, gathering lore and ritual components from monsters. Each theme can encompass several unique stories within the same concept.

This section presents five new themes, which are summarized on the table (see next page).

Theme	Description
Cultist	Devotee to a dark power
Disgraced Noble	Fallen member of the aristocracy
Infernal Slave	Thrall to an archdevil
Reaver	Savage killer and plunderer
Vile Scholar	Seeker of forbidden lore

Most character themes can accommodate members of a wide range of classes. Cultists might be clerics or blackguards dedicated to a dark god, or they might be assassins working from the shadows to honor Zehir. Then again, a cultist could be a fighter or a barbarian, a wild zealot blinded by deranged faith. The vile scholar suggests a wizard, yet could not a rogue steal forbidden books to unlock the lore within? In almost all cases, a theme is broad enough in concept to allow characters from any classes to choose them. There are exceptions and you're bound to find them in narrow-focus themes presented in other sourcebooks, in which case they include any requirements in the theme's entry.

Choosing a Theme

A character can have only one theme, which you choose when you create your character. The theme you select grants the following benefits:

Starting Feature: Each theme includes one or more features that you gain when you select the theme. If a starting feature grants an attack power, keep in mind the following rules:

Ability Scores: Whenever you use a power that calls for your highest ability, you use your highest ability modifier. For example, if Strength is your highest ability and you use a theme power whose attack is "Highest ability vs. AC", you would make a Strength vs. AC attack. Damage and effects resulting from using the power might also use this notation.

Implements: Theme powers with the implement keyword can be used with any implement whose use you are proficient in. Unlike most implement powers, however, you need not have proficiency with an implement to use these powers. Using a theme implement power without an implement simply means you do not add an implement's enhancement bonuses or make use of a magic implement's powers or properties.

Additional Features: Most themes offer additional features at levels 5 and 10. You gain an additional feature automatically when you reach the appropriate level; it doesn't replace any of your class features.

Optional Powers: Some themes include a number of utility powers that you add to the ones you can choose from when you reach the appropriate level.

You can use retraining to replace a class power with an optional theme power or vice versa, exchanging one power for another power of the same type (at-will attack, encounter attack, daily attack, or utility). The

new power must be of the same level as the old power or lower. You can also replace an optional theme power with a different optional power of the same theme, as long as the new power is the same type and is of the same level or lower.

Background: You can choose to use one of these themes as a background for your character. Each theme's "Background" sidebar mentions two or more associated skills. If you choose a theme as your background, then you gain a +2 bonus to checks with one of those associated skills, or you add one such skill to your class's skills list before you choose your trained skills.

Themes in Character Creation

When creating your character, you can use a character theme to guide your choices. Themes are intended for use as creation tools, ways for you to add further detail to your character, to push beyond the limits of class and race, and maximize your customization options. Certainly, if you already have a class in mind, you can use a theme to improve or expand your character options. For example, if you're playing a fighter or a barbarian, you could choose reaver to escalate the carnage.

Character themes can also expand your character's capabilities on and off the battlefield. A theme's starting feature can let you do things outside your class role, perhaps taking on some of the defender responsibilities even though you're a striker or by boosting your attacks by giving you some striker potential.

Choosing your theme before your race or class can help build a character concept. From this concept, you can go on to choose race, class, feats, and so on to reinforce the idea that began with the theme.

Regardless of when you choose your character theme, look for ways to incorporate the theme into your character's background. Your theme might reflect the event that propelled you into your adventuring career, or your theme might reflect specialized training you underwent to prepare you for the objectives or destiny set before you.

Gaining Themes at Higher Levels

If you don't have a theme, you can always adopt one at a higher level simply by going back and choosing the theme that best fits your character. Generally, taking a theme at a higher level results from a development in the campaign. Several themes included in this chapter are suitable for acquisition at any point in your career, and gaining the theme might result from completing a major quest, becoming corrupted, or succumbing to dark temptations in the game. You might find an evil magic item that lures you to explore forbidden lore, turning you into a vile scholar. Or having offended your king or been denied your birthright, you could become a disgraced noble on the path of vengeance rather than redemption.

Before you choose a theme, consult your Dungeon Master to come up with an explanation and method for gaining your theme. The DM might make the theme a reward for completing a major quest, especially if themes don't play a big part in his or her campaign. You might have to perform a sinister task for a dark power or perform an evil act. Then again, the DM might just let you take the theme without any requirements.

Changing Character Theme

Although choosing a theme is a decision intended to last throughout your character's career, circumstances might arise where it makes sense in the campaign's story for your theme to change or even to drop the theme altogether. You might begin your career as a cultist and later break from your cult and survive by viciously slaughtering those who come after you. It would make sense for you to abandon your cultist theme and adopt the reaver theme (or some other theme) instead.

With the DM's permission, you can change your theme choice (under the auspice of retraining) when you gain a level. If you have any optional powers from your current theme or any feats that require it, you must first retrain those powers or feats to choices that don't have the theme as a prerequisite. When you do lose a theme, you lose all the features that it granted to you, including any items provided by those features.

CULTIST

"My master is the Truth, the Way, and the Will!"

Given the vital role that religion plays in many societies and the number of people who venerate gods, cults could find wider acceptance in the general population. After all, cults honor a higher power, a greater good, or a treasured ideal.

What sets a cult apart from other religious institutions is a fundamentally bad belief, a perception about the cosmos that is diametrically opposed to those held by right-thinking folk. A cult's creed could be based on an extraordinary interpretation of a god (any god, even a good one) that compels certain sinister practices in their worship. Another cult might elevate a demon lord, monstrous alien, or dark power to divine status. Cults could be founded by devotees of beings that exist only in their minds. Such strange and deviant belief breeds dangerous behaviors and attracts the attention of forces that champion the good. As a result, most cults are driven underground.

Cults spring up regularly the world over. Fear, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction foment offbeat beliefs and unwholesome ideas about how the world works and what the future holds. Cult leaders prey on doubts and superstition, drawing the disaffected and the despairing under their influence. One by one, adherents are brought under the cult's sway, abandoning families and work to find the salvation promised by following the one true path.

Few cults subscribe to peace and harmony. Such rewards must be earned, a task that is impossible to realize in the present state of affairs. Therefore, cults are subversive societies, working against governments and widespread faiths, all to attain whatever objective the cult was founded to achieve.

Building a Cultist

When you choose the cultist character theme, spend some time thinking about the group and your affiliation. Work with your Dungeon Master to come up with a suitably interesting and dark society. Be sure to establish who or what it is that you serve and what it wants. Then, think about how you came to be part of the cult. How were you recruited? What were you promised? Once you joined, what responsibilities were you assigned? Are you one of the leaders or a devoted specialist follower? Have the higher-ups in the cult revealed the full extent of its power, or do they keep things hidden from you? Have your beliefs evolved since joining? Are you just as fervent as you were or have you become jaded about the organization?

Class Prerequisite: None. Any character can profit from being a cultist. Divine adventurers such as avengers, clerics, and paladins might serve a dark



god forbidden or reviled by other peoples. Alternatively, such characters might devote themselves to one of the archdevils, drawing their power from the Nine Hells directly. Other types of cultists, especially those pledged to beings or ideals other than gods, appeal strongly to other classes. Fighters and warlords might join militant cults, while wizards and sorcerers could favor primordial or aberrant groups. Psionic characters can also become prominent cultists, especially in those groups sworn to an alien being or elder evil. Finally, a cult might be made up of members from several different classes, suggesting a broader appeal rooted in some cosmological or social change.

Race Prerequisite: None. That said, while most cults will accept anyone into their ranks, some cults might have specific racial restrictions, as determined by the DM.

BACKGROUND

Cultists don't have to be experts in religion, but they do need to learn how to get around and practice their heretical beliefs without arousing the suspicion of local authorities.

Associated Skills: Stealth, Streetwise.

Starting Feature

All that you do, you do for your dark master. Still, you must constantly prove your worth. Using this power attracts your patron's attention. If you succeed, your master's blessing encourages you. If you fail, your master's ringing laughter staggers you.

Master's Eye

Cultist Attack

Your obsequious call draws attention to your deeds, risking your master's ire if you fail.

Encounter ♦ **Shadow**

Minor Action

Personal

Effect: If you make an attack this turn and hit with your first attack roll, the creature you hit takes 1d8 extra damage from that attack, and you gain 5 temporary hit points.

If the attack roll misses, or if you do not attack this turn, you grant combat advantage and are deafened until the end of your next turn.

Level 11: 10 temporary hit points.

Level 21: 15 temporary hit points.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

Your longevity sets you apart from most cultists. Whether luck, determination, or some unspeakable blessing was responsible for your survival thus far, you are convinced that your master watches over you.

Benefit: While you are bloodied, you gain a +1 power bonus to Fortitude and Will.

Level 10 Feature

Devotion to a dark power has defined your life for some time. As a result, your fanatical belief unnerves those around you, particularly when you are angry.

Benefit: You gain a +2 power bonus to Intimidate checks.

In addition, during the first round of each encounter, enemies take a -2 penalty to attack rolls against you.

Optional Powers

Level 2 Utility Power

It takes unshakable belief to persevere in service to your particular patron. This devotion gives you the ability to push past obstacles, grasping victory where others succumb to defeat. This power draws strength from your zealous devotion, but it can also delude you into believing you are invincible.

Mad Confidence

Cultist Utility 2

Your master is with you. You cannot fail.

Daily ♦ Shadow, Stance

Minor Action

Personal

Effect: You enter the mad confidence stance. Until the stance ends, you grant combat advantage and gain a +4 power bonus to damage rolls.

Level 6 Utility Power

No matter what dark power you serve, it craves blood and souls. Leading cultists oversee profane ceremonies during which living sacrifices are offered. *Ritual sacrifice* demonstrates your master's pleasure when you speed a creature to the grave.

Ritual Sacrifice

Cultist Utility 6

By offering your latest victim to the dark master, you are rewarded with a surge of power.

Daily ♦ Healing, Shadow

Free Action

Personal

Trigger: You kill a nonminion creature.

Effect: Choose one of the following effects:

- ♦ You spend a healing surge.
- ♦ You gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of the encounter.
- ♦ You gain a +5 power bonus to Arcana checks, Dungeoneering checks, Nature checks, and Religion checks until the start of your next extended rest.

Level 10 Utility Power

Faith can carry a cultist only so far. Eventually, all cultists come to understand their place in the eyes of the dark master. They are nothing, tools to be used and discarded. Worse still, no guarantee of paradise after death exists. Self-preservation becomes paramount, even if it means sacrificing an ally to succeed.

Reluctant Sacrifice

Cultist Utility 10

Shared pain transforms near failure into a resounding success.

Encounter ♦ Shadow

No Action

Melee 1

Trigger: You make an attack roll and dislike the result.

Target: One ally

Effect: You and the target each take damage equal to your level. You then reroll the attack roll with a +2 power bonus and must use the second result.



DISGRACED NOBLE

DISGRACED NOBLE

"Don't let my reputation color your impression, my darling. The rumors are all lies, spurious tales told by enemies who resent my good fortune."

Song and story profess that nobility carries a higher morality, that the aristocracy upholds honor, justice, truth, and valor. The hard truth is that this celebrated virtue is a myth—what distinguishes nobles from everyone else are the circumstances of their birth. Money, land, privilege: none of these things ensure good character and high ideals. In fact, such boons often create the worst villains.

If the masses pierce the veil of pomp and circumstance and see the noble for who he or she truly is, that vaunted individual is bound to tumble from great heights to wallow in the filth of the fallen. As a result, the aristocracy works hard to preserve the illusion, to maintain at least the veneer of respectability. Waging war against scandal and rumor, nobles fight to preserve their lifestyles, their fortune, and their lives.

No matter how cunning, some nobles succumb to temptation and forget their fragile position. Perhaps it was a careless moment, maybe it was a full assault on his or her character—no matter, the damage is done. A reputation, no matter how carefully nurtured, can be torn down in an instant. The fate of those nobles who topple, whose carefully constructed masks shatter, is one of disgrace and shame.

BACKGROUND

Disgraced nobles don't spend as much time cavorting with society's elite as their more esteemed peers, but they still remember the rules of diplomacy. They are also practiced liars.

Associated Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy.

Building a Disgraced Noble

Choosing the disgraced noble character theme suggests some past crime or action that destroyed your reputation. Cowardice, corruption, deviant behavior, cruelty, and any number of other flaws might lead to your downfall. What caused your fall from grace? Are the accusations true or were they fabricated by your enemies? Have you lost everything or do you still possess some influence? What have you done to escape your enemies? What would you do?

Class Prerequisite: None. Nobles include characters of any class.

Race Prerequisite: None. That said, your DM may impose a race prerequisite based on the social structures of his or her campaign.

Starting Feature

Honor is for fools and dreamers. In life's grand ledger, a few achieve success and the rest are downtrodden. You learned long ago that your elevated position resulted from a willingness to do what you must. You're not at all above a bit of treachery on the battlefield to dispatch a troublesome foe.

Dirty Deed

Disgraced Noble Attack

Seizing an opening, you shove a distracted enemy and send it sprawling, just as an ally strikes.

Encounter ♦ Martial

Standard Action **Melee 1**

Target: One creature granting combat advantage to you

Attack: Highest ability modifier + 3 vs. Reflex

Level 11: Highest ability modifier + 5

Level 21: Highest ability modifier + 7

Hit: The target falls prone.

Effect: One ally of yours adjacent to the target can make a melee basic attack against the target as a free action.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

Rumors fly on whispers, and before you know it, your exploits, true or not, have sullied your "good" name. Rather than lament your infamous reputation, you embrace it. Unfavorable expectations about you prove a powerful ally in nearly all your endeavors.

Benefit: You gain a +2 power bonus to Bluff checks and Streetwise checks.

Level 10 Feature

So many lives have been shattered and ruined by your hand that your numerous enemies are difficult to track. Thus, you find it advantageous to surround yourself with people who do not yet have cause to loathe you. Indeed, you offer them incentives to keep you alive.

Benefit: The power bonus to your Bluff checks and Streetwise checks increases to +4.

In addition, while you are not bloodied, allies within 2 squares of you who can see or hear you gain a +1 power bonus to saving throws.

Optional Powers

Level 2 Utility Power

Survivors know when to engage in a tactical or strategic retreat, and when to flee. When the cost might be a noble's life or limb, caution is indeed a virtue. When you use *disgraceful retreat*, you respond to an ally's fall in the most prudent manner. You run away.

Disgraceful Retreat

Disgraced Noble Utility 2

An ally's fall makes clear that withdrawal is the better part of valor.

Encounter ♦ Martial

Immediate Reaction **Personal**

Trigger: An ally within 5 squares of you falls unconscious.

Effect: You can shift 1 square and then move up to your speed + 2. You must end the move farther from your ally than you were when you began the move.

Level 6 Utility Power

Being hounded by enemies has cultivated your survival instincts to the point that you're always ready for an attack. *Unabashed treachery* reflects the extent to which you will go to preserve your own life.

Unabashed Treachery **Disgraced Noble Utility 6**

A quick step and a slight push places an ally in the path of harm intended for you.

Encounter ♦ **Martial**

Immediate Interrupt **Melee 1**

Trigger: An enemy hits you with a melee or a ranged attack.

Target: One ally

Effect: The triggering attack hits the target instead of you.

The triggering enemy grants you and the target combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Level 10 Utility Power

A good servant is hard to find and it's always regrettable when you have to sacrifice one. Still, what better service could such an individual provide than to suffer harm so that you might live?

Regrettable Sacrifice **Disgraced Noble Utility 10**

With little more than a rueful pause, you undermine an ally to reinvigorate yourself.

Encounter ♦ **Healing, Martial**

Minor Action **Melee 1**

Target: One ally

Effect: The target loses a healing surge. If the target can't lose a surge, he or she takes damage equal to his or her healing surge value. You then regain hit points equal to your healing surge value.



INFERNAL SLAVE

"I know what lies beyond the veil. That's why I'm sending you in my place."

Free will shapes the infernal slave's identity. Whether the decision was made after careful consideration or in the heat of passion, the infernal slave agrees to sacrifice the future—a dimly understood afterlife, a shadowy doom not yet realized—in exchange for some immediate gain.

The boon could be something as base as wealth. Treasure chests filled to bursting, a prized jewel long coveted, a successful business venture: all translate into mortal comfort. The gain could be satisfaction of lust, carnal, material, or otherwise—a longing that would not be denied. The greatest lure, however, is power. Command over other people is intoxicating, as is the ability to do as one wishes without fear, without persecution, without regard for consequences.

These prizes are great temptations. To the infernal slave, they are immediate and full recompense for a sacrifice payable far off in the future. Some claim that the slave is doomed to an unspeakable fate, suffering and dying a thousand deaths at the hands of the cosmos's most vile entities, those god-killers called devils. But what do the naysayers truly know. Maybe the consequences are far less dire. One never knows what the future holds. Given the immediacy of the boon and

the remoteness (and sheer conjecture) of the payment, the infernal slave considers the arrangement a true bargain.

In the end, an infernal slave comes to understand that he or she has bargained badly. The boon turns out to be fleeting, ruined by personal choice or circumstance. The bargainer becomes worse off than he or she was prior to making the deal. In this wretched state, the full horror of the pact is revealed and annihilation's imminence bears down with a hammer's force. The slave sees his or her doom in the shadows, hears the screaming souls as they burn in hellfire—a waking nightmare that never ends.

At that point, panic and horror shape the slave's existence. Escaping this fate comes to eclipse any other consideration. In this way, the devils gain a mortal thrall—a vessel to spread evil and corruption. Evil appears the only way out for the misguided fool who desperately seeks to escape the doom he or she willfully accepted.

Building an Infernal Slave

As usual when choosing a theme, several questions should be asked. What bargain did you make to become an infernal thrall? How did you contact a devil and what were you promised? Why did you accept the Faustian pact? Do you cling to the hope that you can escape it, or have you accepted your hellish fate?

Class Prerequisite: None. Any character can become an infernal slave regardless of class.

Race Prerequisite: None. Characters of any race may become infernal slaves.

BACKGROUND

In exchange for hellfire's gift, the devils demand you work evil in the world. They urge you to tempt, corrupt, and destroy. If you embrace this purpose, the fiends grant you the insight to know your victims' weaknesses as well as a better understanding of the art of deception.

Associated Skills: Bluff, Insight.

Starting Feature

Diabolists believe Mephistopheles was the first to discover hellfire's power when he set fire to a soul that displeased him and bestowed its power to those mortals bent to his service. Now, all archdevils can arm their servants with hellfire, a destructive boon that can carry a high price.

Hellfire Touch

Infernal Slave Attack

Clinging, searing blackness drawn from the Nine Hells erupts from your hand.

Encounter ♦ **Divine, Fire, Necrotic**

Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: The next creature you hit with an attack before the end of this turn takes 5 extra fire and necrotic damage from that attack. Also, you slide that creature up to 5 squares. If you do not hit a creature with an attack before the end of the turn, you take 5 fire and necrotic damage.

Level 11: You deal or take 10 fire and necrotic damage.

Level 21: You deal or take 15 fire and necrotic damage.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

Your successes have earned you favor. As a reward, you acquire a disturbing brand or mark on your flesh. The sign might be an inverted star, a black handprint, or a Supernal rune. Irremovable, it declares to all with the proper knowledge that your soul belongs to the Nine Hells.

Benefit: While you are not bloodied, you gain a +1 power bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will. While you are bloodied, you take a -1 penalty to those defenses.

Level 10 Feature

The power granted by your infernal patron guarantees you a place in the Nine Hells. As your wickedness grows, the devils become more eager for the rich bounty your soul will bring. When you stand before

death's door, hellfire bursts from you, portending your ultimate fate.

Benefit: Whenever you drop below 1 hit point, each creature adjacent to you takes fire and necrotic damage equal to 2 + your level.

Optional Powers

Level 2 Utility Power

You are a mortal agent charged with harvesting souls from other mortals and delivering them to your greedy masters. *Wicked temptation* gives you the means to single out an enemy and condemn it to a swift death. Allies who aid you in this effort are rewarded; those who fail feel the sting of your scorn.

Wicked Temptation

Infernal Slave Utility 2

A fiery rune appears over your target's head, tempting all who see it to destroy the object of your scorn.

Encounter ♦ **Divine, Fire**

Minor Action **Close burst 5**

Target: One creature you can see in the burst

Effect: Until the end of your next turn, the first creature to hit the target gains temporary hit points equal to 3 + one-half your level, and the first creature to miss the target takes 1d10 fire damage.

Level 6 Utility Power

It doesn't take long for you to realize that the devils do not care if you live or die. Alive, you advance evil; dead, your soul descends into the fiery pits. Either way, the fiends win. You, however, are partial to the former fate. By experimenting with hellfire, you continue to elude the everlasting torment you have earned.

Hellfire Step

Infernal Slave Utility 6

Greasy black clouds conceal your escape, filling the air with a sulfurous stench.

Encounter ♦ **Divine, Teleportation, Zone**

Move Action **Close burst 1**

Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. The zone is lightly obscured, and creatures have vulnerable 5 fire while in it. You also teleport up to 5 squares.

Level 10 Utility Power

At this point, the devils begin to value your continued existence. You have proven your prowess in spreading evil. The fiends offer you new incentives to serve their interests, gifting you with health or magical power. To earn these gifts, you must deliver a soul in your stead.

Soul Snatcher

Infernal Slave Utility 10

You consign the soul of a living foe to the Nine Hells and are rewarded for your dark deed.

Daily ♦ **Divine, Healing**

Free Action **Personal**

Trigger: You kill a nonminion creature.

Effect: Choose one of the following effects:

- ♦ You spend a healing surge.
- ♦ You regain the use of an expended encounter attack power.

REAVER

"I take what I want, kill what I please, and do as I will."

Fingers of smoke claw at the sky from the burning village. The bones of shops and houses smolder in the attack's aftermath, crumbling as the flames consume them. Bodies, black with crows, twitch and jerk with each peck and tear. Another community ravaged. More lives destroyed. Death reigns, feeding the reavers' insatiable bloodlust.

Ferocious reavers tumble out of civilization's fringes to plunder settled lands for food, goods, slaves, and mates. These grim-faced killers go about the bloody business of slaughter with a zeal that stops hearts and sends courage dribbling down their enemies' legs. They emerge from the darkness, sometimes in vast hordes on horseback or from dragon-prow longships. These fearsome howling warriors are bent on rapine and death, their cruel weapons rising and falling with a butcher's precision. When the reavers attack, none can hope for mercy or escape. They are purveyors of death, remorseless killers despoiling the world as they see fit.

Building a Reaver

Because reavers place such a high value on combat prowess, warrior classes are most common to this character theme.

Class Prerequisite: None. Fighters, barbarians, blackguards, and rangers all excel as reavers. Reavers disdain honorable combat or finesse. Thus, knights, cavaliers, and paladins are typically unsuitable for this character's theme.

For all their fierceness in battle, reavers are often superstitious. Angry primal spirits, dark gods, and sinister powers intrude upon their daily lives. Druid, shaman, and warden reavers might lead raids into settlements and evoke the blessings of bloodthirsty spirits. Reaver clerics of Gruumsh or Kord call forth the violence of their gods to firm up courage and grant strength to their champions.

Reavers distrust other forms of magic. They deride those who employ arcane or psionic magic. The rare exceptions involve individuals who hold positions of great power and influence in a tribe. One reaver band might serve a vile magician; another might be under the thrall of a powerful psion, mind flayer, or similar



figure. In those cases, and at the whim of the overlord, a mage or psion might be accepted.

Race Prerequisite: None. Reavers are not exclusive to any particular race. One can find reavers among humans, dragonborn, half-orcs, and other communities. These peoples raid and plunder for the same reasons as their monstrous counterparts. Some reavers are primitives, isolation and hardship stripping away civilization's last vestiges. Others serve dark gods, violent ancestor spirits, or demons who demand blood sacrifice, define strength and ferocity as virtues, or simply fill them with bloodlust.

The savage races—orcs and gnolls—produce reavers in great numbers. Such races have no interest in cultivating their lands or building lasting communities. Raiding is their principle and preferred means of survival. What little culture they have is a warrior's creed centered on taking from others.

BACKGROUND

You were raised from birth to withstand the heartless weather of your homeland and to greet your enemies with utter savagery—the kind of brutality that weakens the knees of even the most stalwart civilized folk.

Associated Skills: Endurance, Intimidate.

Starting Feature

You live under a shadow cast by the savage warriors who came before you. You must prove that you possess sufficient strength, courage, and bloodlust to join them in song and story. You roar into battle, ever eager to douse your weapon in your victims' blood. *Vicious assault* turns your charge attack into a terrifying offensive.

Vicious Assault

Reaver Attack

Building on the savagery of your initial assault, you lash out in all directions.

Encounter ♦ Fear, Primal, Weapon

No Action Special

Trigger: You hit an adjacent enemy with a melee weapon attack.

Effect: Each creature other than you that is adjacent to the enemy takes 1[W] damage. In addition, you and each enemy within 2 squares of you grant combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

Each battle is a chance to prove your might to your ancestors. As you reave, you display courage, skill, and ferocity. Your efforts fortify you and give you a grim and fearsome aspect.

Benefit: Whenever you reduce a nonminion enemy below 1 hit point, you gain a +1 bonus to melee attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Level 10 Feature

You are a killer. It is in your blood. It is how you live. Spilling blood feeds your unspeakable craving, giving you the drive to continue the slaughter until nothing lives.

Benefit: Whenever you use *vicious assault* or score a critical hit, you gain 10 temporary hit points.

Optional Powers

Level 2 Utility Power

Overwhelming force characterizes your fighting style. You spring forward, rushing to meet your foes and hewing victims to all sides. As the bodies drop like cordwood to the ground, you press on, driven by bloodlust to slaughter.

Driven to Kill

Reaver Utility 2

One kill is never enough. Before your foe hits the ground, you leap to make the next attack.

Encounter ♦ Primal

Free Action Personal

Trigger: You drop a creature below 1 hit point.

Effect: You shift up to a number of squares equal to your speed + 2.

Level 6 Utility Power

You are a veteran of many battles and are accustomed to the hardships and injuries sustained in combat. Pain is expected, wounds embraced. The more damage your enemies inflict, the more ferocious you become.

Killing Menace

Reaver Utility 6

An enemy's success incenses you. Your rising anger infects your enemies with dread, making them susceptible to injury.

Daily ♦ Aura, Fear, Primal

Immediate Reaction Personal

Trigger: An attack bloodies you or damages you while you're bloodied.

Effect: You activate an aura 1 that lasts until the end of the encounter. Creatures in the aura have vulnerable 3 to weapon attacks.

Level 10 Utility Power

Nothing can distract you from killing your enemy. You shake off beguiling magic, steeling your mind against confusion and doubt. You press on, slaughtering everything in your path.

Pain Preserves

Reaver Utility 10

Pain clarifies your thoughts and purpose, rendering your mind nearly impervious to bewilderment.

Daily ♦ Primal

No Action Personal

Trigger: You are bloodied and start your turn subjected to an effect that is dazing, dominating, or stunning you.

Effect: The triggering effect ends. Until the end of your next turn, you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls.

VILE SCHOLAR

"I do not fear the darkness. I study it, even as it studies me."

Certain things mortals were not meant to know. These ideas are so foul and so obscene that to understand them is never to be clean again. The gods and devils recoil from such vile darkness. Even demons pause before its wicked majesty.

Such considerations do not dissuade the vile scholar. He or she is not put off by disturbing concepts and horrid revelations. In fact, the vile scholar craves them, chases after them, and devours them.

The vile scholar is often an intellectual drawn to dark study. Some seek out the forbidden to unlock the darkest and most dangerous secrets the world has ever known. Others accumulate vile knowledge from profane texts to transform themselves into liches, to destroy a god, or to locate some powerful artifact. Whatever the reason, the darkness they explore afflicts them in body and mind, twisting them to evil. They become strangers to virtue and decency, slaves to their own corruption.

BACKGROUND

Long, glorious hours of study have turned you into a veritable font of dark lore. Knowledge is, after all, the most formidable and remorseless of weapons.

Associated Skills: Arcana, History.

Building a Vile Scholar

What distinguishes you from other academics is an enduring interest in the profane and forbidden. You study tomes filled with content so dark, your sanity begins to fray. The more effort you put into your studies, the more tricks and techniques you learn to harness the darkness in useful yet disturbing ways.

Class Prerequisite: None. Many vile scholars come from arcane traditions. Wizards, bards, warlocks, or sorcerers might have encountered a sinister tome during their training and become seduced by the power it promised.

Other debased students come from the divine persuasion. Service to a dark god might lead them to forbidden lore. An invoker of an evil deity could find the divine fragment impelling him or her to seek out lost lore, while a cleric could dabble in the strange to access more divine power.

Psionic characters might also dabble in the dark arts, especially if doing so expands their consciousness and helps them access even greater reservoirs of psionic energy. The secret to ever more potent psychic power might only be a scroll, tome, or crystal away, for those with the will to grasp it.



Race Prerequisite: None. Characters of any race can become vile scholars.

Starting Feature

The first lesson you learn is the power contained in the Abyssal tongue. The most unhinged writings use this vile language to convey thoughts and concepts that mortal minds naturally shun. As your proficiency with this language grows, you learn to unlock its power to undo the creative forces that give your enemies form and function.

Benefit: You are fluent in Abyssal.

In addition, you gain a +2 bonus to Bluff checks, Diplomacy checks, and Intimidate checks when interacting with evil creatures. You also gain the *dark speech* power.

Dark Speech

Vile Scholar Attack

Your Abyssal curse assaults a victim, rending body and mind with its profanity.

Encounter ♦ Fear, Implement, Shadow

Standard Action Ranged 5

Target: One creature that can hear you

Attack: Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma vs. Fortitude, Reflex, and Will. You make a single attack roll and use it against each defense.

Hit (Fortitude): The target falls prone.

Hit (Reflex): The target grants combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Hit (Will): You push the target up to its speed.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

Countless hours spent examining profane texts fills your mind with esoteric knowledge about the world and the creatures living in it. You can draw on this knowledge to unearth secrets to an enemy's downfall.

Benefit: You gain a +2 power bonus to knowledge checks, including monster knowledge checks made with Arcana, Dungeoneering, History, or Religion.

Level 10 Feature

Mastering dark magic requires a willingness to make sacrifices, to do things no right-thinking person would. Such exploration alters how you see your companions. They are not comrades in arms but rather tools to exploit, to sacrifice, and to discard in your bid to attain true mastery over the darkness. The dark powers reward your willingness to forgo your allies with a surge of disturbing power that strengthens your dark magic.

Benefit: Whenever you use a close or an area attack power and attack one or more allies with that power, you gain a +2 power bonus to the attack rolls for that power.

Optional Powers

Level 2 Utility Power

You learn a dark hex that transforms an ally into a more useful servant. *Corrupt the flesh* creates intense pain as your target's body pops and cracks, flesh splitting to accommodate new growth. This transformational pain brings a deadliness of purpose.

Corrupt the Flesh

Vile Scholar Utility 2

At your insistence, an ally screams in agony, then twists into the perfect killing machine.

Daily ♦ Shadow, Stance

Minor Action Ranged 10

Target: One ally

Effect: The target assumes the flesh warp stance. Until the stance ends, the target gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and a +4 power bonus to damage rolls, but is slowed and grants combat advantage.

Level 6 Utility Power

Exploring vile darkness inevitably leads you to the Abyss. That great, churning pit holds the truest expression of darkness's power. *Shadow of the abyss* lets you call and bind a demon to an ally you are not yet willing to sacrifice to ensure your companion's survival.

Shadow of the Abyss

Vile Scholar Utility 6

Your swift and subtle gesture calls a fiend from the Abyss to infest an ally, lending its protection against elemental energy.

Encounter ♦ Shadow

Immediate Interrupt Close burst 5

Trigger: An ally within 5 squares of you takes acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage.

Target: The triggering ally in the burst

Effect: The target gains resist 10 to the triggering damage type (or types) until the end of your next turn. Each creature adjacent to the target takes 5 damage of the same type.

Level 10 Utility Power

Having pored over myriad forbidden sources, you unlock the secrets of creation and the means to undo it. When you use *vile undoing*, you unravel a creature's essential nature to defeat its resistances to your attack.

Vile Undoing

Vile Scholar Utility 10

Your wicked curse turns a foe's reliable defense into its greatest weakness.

Daily ♦ Shadow

No Action Special

Trigger: You hit an enemy that has resistance to your attack's damage type.

Effect: The enemy loses the resistance and gains vulnerability in its place (save ends both). The vulnerability equals the lost resistance.

Paragon Paths

"Do not shun the evil in your soul. Embrace it."
—Baalzebul, the Lord of Flies

As one who has embraced evil, you walk a dark and dangerous road to greatness. Given the hardships you face, you might be tempted to become a blood-crazed berserker, contract killer, demonologist, idol of darkness, or vermin lord. Regardless of your choice, you continue to blaze a path for dark forces.

BLOOD-CRAZED BERSERKER

"Kill! Kill! KILL!"

Prerequisite: Fighter, evil alignment

You have fought myriad battles, each a contest to determine who was strongest, who was most worthy of the champion's mantle. You survived these battles through brute strength, speed, and toughness, but you always sensed something else, something truly monstrous, threatening to break free in the thick of battle. At one glorious point, your prowess grew mighty enough that the monster emerged. It burst through your self-control and transformed you into a raging killer. All finesse, planning, and moderation fell away. Only an unspeakable craving for blood and a terrible talent for producing it remained.

Fighters are distinguished by a mastery at arms and the rigorous control they apply in desperate situations. Every warrior must come to terms with anger in combat, to channel it in useful ways lest he or she become ruled by it. To fail is to wind up dead, skewered on an enemy weapon. Still, a few fighters surrender completely to their anger, girding themselves in hatred's armor and powering their strikes with rampant ferocity.

Level 11: Blood-Crazed Action

Your bloodlust drives you to the brink of madness. Barely do you find self-control not to butcher everyone around you. When you dig deep and push beyond your normal limits, your hatred breaks free and sends you careening into the next foe.

Benefit: When you spend an action point to use an attack power, your charge attacks gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and a +4 power bonus to damage rolls until the end of your next turn.



BLOOD-CRAZED BERSERKER

Level 11: Unstoppable Killer

You are violence incarnate, a destructive killing machine. You will not pause, let up, or stop. Through supreme force of will, you can shake off conditions that would hinder a lesser warrior.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against the dazed, dominated, immobilized, restrained, and stunned conditions.

Level 11: Mutilating Strike

Moving across the battlefield, you leave tangled corpses in your wake—fitting punishment for those foolish enough to stand in your path.

Mutilating Strike Blood-Crazed Berserker Attack 11

Your vicious strike inflicts an appalling wound that leaves your enemy reeling in shock and horror.

Encounter ♦ **Martial, Weapon**

No Action **Special**

Trigger: You hit an enemy with a melee basic attack using a weapon.

Effect: The enemy takes 1[W] extra damage from the attack, and it is dazed until the end of your next turn.

Level 12: Foaming Wrath

Only the bravest or most foolish foe dares face you in battle. If that unlucky enemy manages to bleed you, it unleashes a storm of pain. When you use this power, you gnaw on your shield or foam at the mouth, eager for the next chance to strike.

Foaming Wrath Blood-Crazed Berserker Utility 12

Pain shatters what little restraint you retain, driving you forward to butcher your enemies.

Encounter ♦ **Martial**

Immediate Reaction **Personal**

Trigger: An enemy bloodies you with an attack.

Effect: You gain temporary hit points equal to 10 + your Strength modifier. In addition, you gain combat advantage against the triggering enemy until the end of your next turn.

Level 16: Bloodied Aggression

The greater your pain, the greater your threat on the battlefield. The injuries you sustain increase your strength, turning wild attacks into potentially killing blows.

Benefit: While you are bloodied, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls with melee weapons, and your melee weapon attacks can score critical hits on a roll of 19-20.



Level 20: Maniacal Fury

Your hatred and anger are the stuff of legend. When sufficiently roused, you unleash your darker emotions, chewing through opponents in a brutal display. While in this state, you do not distinguish friend from foe. All are grist for the mill of your anger.

Maniacal Fury Blood-Crazed Berserker Attack 20

Your towering wrath transforms you into a whirlwind of destruction. Relentless and uncaring, you strike out again and again.

Daily ♦ **Martial, Stance**

Minor Action **Personal**

Requirement: You must be bloodied.

Effect: You assume the maniacal fury stance. Until the stance ends, your at-will attacks using a melee weapon deal 1[W] extra damage, and when any creature ends its turn adjacent to you, you must make a melee basic attack against that creature as a free action.

CONTRACT KILLER

"I have a message for you."

Prerequisite: Evil alignment, trained in Stealth

Anyone can kill under the right circumstances. Every city boasts hundreds of people willing and able to do the deed, given the motivation. What differentiates you from other would-be killers is your consummate professionalism. You aren't deluded by a purported darkness deep in your heart or some religious obsession. You know your job and you do it well, without fuss, without mess. As a result, your employers return time and time again.

All kinds of rogues and assassins become contract killers. They take to this path because it provides a steady revenue stream while indulging their talents and inclinations. Scoundrels from other classes adopt this profession once they determine that their consciences raise no objection.

Level 11: Killer's Action

Your astonishing agility creates openings where, only heartbeats before, none existed.

Benefit: When you spend an action point to use an attack power, each enemy adjacent to you grants combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.

Level 11: Killer's Aggression

You carefully choose the moment to strike. When you do, you do so with terrifying speed and accuracy.

Benefit: Whenever you hit an enemy granting combat advantage to you during your first turn in an encounter, the attack deals 1d6 extra damage to that enemy.

Level 11: Fulfill Contract

You are not just an ordinary killer. You eliminate specific targets for a very specific purpose. When you use *fulfill contract*, you identify your target and commit your every resource toward eliminating it.

Fulfill Contract

Contract Killer Attack 11

Singling out an enemy ensures your attacks land with the desired accuracy, so you can reap the rewards for completing your mission.

Encounter ♦ Martial

No Action

Special

Trigger: Using an at-will attack power, you make an attack roll against an enemy that is granting combat advantage to you.

Effect: You gain a +3 power bonus to the attack roll, and the enemy takes 2d8 extra damage if the attack hits. If the attack bloodies the enemy or drops it to 0 hit points, you gain temporary hit points equal to 3 + one-half your level.



Level 12: Next to Die

When you have settled on a target, you are inexorable. Only death can keep you from fulfilling your mission.

Next to Die

Contract Killer Utility 12

You single out a target, pursuing it until it is no more.

Daily ♦ Martial

Minor Action

Personal

Effect: Choose one enemy that you can see within 5 squares of you. Until the end of the encounter, you gain combat advantage against that enemy, and you take a -2 penalty to attack rolls against creatures other than it until it drops to 0 hit points. In addition, whenever the enemy moves more than 2 squares on its turn, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free action.

Level 16: Hidden Threat

You skulk in the shadows, patiently preparing for the perfect opportunity to strike.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls against enemies from which you are hidden.

In addition, you can use *fulfill contract* twice per encounter, but only once per turn.

Level 20: Certainty of Death

Scrutinizing a target that you have marked for death reveals how best to exacerbate its injury.

Certainty of Death

Contract Killer Attack 20

A vicious attack from a hidden position gives you the opportunity to eliminate the target with a single strike.

Daily ♦ Martial

No Action

Special

Trigger: You hit a bloodied enemy with an at-will attack power, and you are hidden from it.

Effect: The triggering attack deals 5d8 extra damage to the enemy, and it grants combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

DEMONOLOGIST

"The power of the Abyss is mine to command. Demon, obey!"

Prerequisite: Any arcane class

You have nothing to fear from things you control. It's the things you can't control that can ruin you. As a demonologist, you know this lesson well. When you look into the eye of the Abyss, you have no doubt in your mind that you can learn to master it—one demon at a time, if need be.

You have never shrunk from looking into shady places to serve your ambition. The longer you peer into darkness, the more certain you become that the secret to overwhelming power is hidden in the Abyss.

As a consequence of your studies, you have gained the attention of a minor demon—a filthy quasit. Discussions with this companion have expanded your mind to grim new possibilities. At the same time, the lessons have dissipated any reservations that perhaps you have gone too far. The more you learn from this quasit, the greater the power you control. Thus far, you have blithely ignored a nagging suspicion that somehow things might go terribly wrong.

Level 11: Demonic Companion

You have bargained with the Abyss and called forth a minor demon called a quasit. This creature is bound to aid your work and to serve as your companion during your adventures.

Demonic Companion

Your demonic companion obeys your commands without hesitation as long as you are conscious and aware. Your bond allows you to communicate with the quasit, enabling you to work together toward mutual goals.

Benefit: You gain a quasit companion. The quasit is a creature allied with you, but not with your allies.

You can communicate telepathically with the quasit as long as it is within 20 squares of you. You do not need line of sight or line of effect to do so.

Your quasit's level is equal to yours, and its hit points, defenses, and attacks are determined by your level, as noted in its stat block.

The quasit shares your healing surges. Whenever an effect requires your quasit to spend a healing surge, the surge is deducted from your total. When you use your second wind, your quasit also regains hit points equal to your healing surge value. At the end of a short rest, your quasit regains all its hit points.



If you die or your quasit drops below 1 hit point, it disappears. You have two ways of calling your quasit back.

- ◆ **Minor Action:** You take a minor action and lose a healing surge. Doing so causes your quasit to appear in your space with hit points equal to your healing surge value.
- ◆ **Short or Extended Rest:** You lose a healing surge at the end of the rest. Doing so causes your quasit to appear in your space with full hit points.

Quasit Actions

As a creature under your control, your quasit relies on you for strict guidance while you are within 20 squares of it. You take actions so that it can act, and its initiative is the same as yours during an encounter.

Standard Actions: To take a standard action, your quasit needs you to take a standard action to command it to do so.

Move Actions: Whenever you take a move action, your quasit can also take a move action. Alternatively, you can stay put but take a move action to command your quasit to take a move action.

Minor Actions: To take a minor action, your quasit needs you to take a minor action to command it to do so.

Free Actions: Your quasit can take free actions without you taking an action to command it.

Triggered Actions: The quasit can take a triggered action only if you take the same kind of action to command it to do so. For example, if an enemy adjacent to your quasit companion provokes an opportunity attack from it, you must take an opportunity action to command the quasit to make the attack.

Quasit Independent Actions: Your quasit serves you against its will. If you are in a situation where you can't give the quasit commands, such as when you are unconscious, stunned, dominated, or more than 20 squares away from it, it acts under the Dungeon Master's control as your enemy. When you can issue commands again, the quasit comes under your control once more.

A quasit acting independently can take a standard, a move, and a minor action on its turn. It can also take opportunity actions and free actions, but cannot take immediate actions.

Quasit

The quasit is a hideous creature, standing no more than a few inches tall. Thin to the point of gauntness, it ambles about on spindly limbs. When it speaks, it does so in a raspy, whispering voice, which seems to echo all around you.

Quasit Companion

Tiny elemental humanoid (demon)

HP your bloodied value Initiative equal to yours
 AC 15, Fortitude 11, Reflex 13, Perception equal to yours + 2
 Will 15 (add your level to each defense) Darkvision
 Speed 8

TRAITS☼ **Tempter's Influence** ◆ Aura 1

Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to saving throws.

STANDARD ACTIONS⊕ **Bite** (poison) ◆ At-Will

Attack: Melee 0 (one creature); your level + 5 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6 + your Intelligence modifier + your Charisma modifier damage plus 1d6 poison damage.

☼ **Invisibility** (illusion) ◆ At-Will

Effect: The quasit becomes invisible until it makes an attack roll.

MINOR ACTIONS◆ **Demonic Lore** ◆ Encounter

Effect: You gain a +4 power bonus to the next Arcana, History, or Religion check you make before the end of your next turn.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS☼ **Vengeful Temptation** (charm) ◆ Encounter

Trigger: An enemy within 5 squares of the quasit attacks you.

Attack (Immediate Reaction): Ranged 5 (triggering enemy); your level + 3 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dazed (save ends). The effect also ends if the target makes an attack against one of its allies.

Str 8 Dex 21 Wis 14

Con 11 Int 10 Cha 16

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common

Level 11: Demonic Action

The power of the Abyss infuses you. When you push further than your normal limits, darkness swirls about you, helping you withstand enemy attacks.

Benefit: When you spend an action point to take an extra action, choose acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. Each creature adjacent to you takes 5 damage of the chosen type, and you gain resist 10 to that type until the end of the encounter.

Level 11: Demonic Possession

You can draw forth demonic essence and use it against your foes. A creature affected by *demonic possession* grows pale. Shadows circle its eyes, and blasphemous runes appear on its flesh.

Demonic Possession Demonologist Attack 11

You bind a demon to your enemy's soul and bend the creature to your will.

Encounter ◆ Arcane, Charm, Implement

Standard Action Ranged 5

Target: One enemy adjacent to your quasit companion

Attack: Intelligence or Charisma vs. Will

Hit: You slide the target up to a number of squares equal to its speed. The target then makes a melee basic attack as a free action against a creature you choose. The target has combat advantage for the attack and a +4 power bonus to the damage roll. If the attack misses, the attacker is dazed until the end of its next turn.

Level 12: Unnerving Gaze

You have peered into darkness so often that it has changed you. Foes who confront you see the Abyss reflected in your eyes.

Unnerving Gaze Demonologist Utility 12

You turn toward an enemy and fix it with a disturbing stare.

Encounter ◆ Arcane, Fear

Immediate Interrupt Close burst 3

Trigger: An enemy that can see you hits you while within 3 squares of you.

Target: The triggering enemy in the burst

Effect: The target takes a -4 penalty to the attack roll and grants combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.

Level 16: Demonic Summons

The creatures you summon hail from the Abyss. If not demons, they share their characteristics.

Benefit: Your quasit companion and any creatures you summon gain a +2 power bonus to damage rolls. In addition, these creatures gain resist 5 to one of the following damage types (choose when the creature appears): acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder.

Level 20: Demonic Hordes

Darkness's hold on you is complete when you learn a spell that invites demons into the world. *Demonic hordes* tears reality so that the shadows of hordelings tumble free to rend your enemies.

Demonic Hordes Demonologist Attack 20

You rip a hole in reality, letting loose a horde of minor demons that claw, rend, and trip your foes.

Daily ◆ Arcane, Implement, Zone

Standard Action Close blast 5

Target: Each creature in the blast

Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d8 + Intelligence modifier damage, and the target falls prone.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The blast creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. While the zone persists, you can take a standard action to cause each creature in the zone to take 5 + your Intelligence modifier damage and fall prone. If the creature is already prone, it takes 5 extra damage.



IDOL OF DARKNESS

"The road I walk leads to darkness. Dare you follow?"

Prerequisite: Paladin or cleric, evil alignment

Having embraced the dark side of divine magic, you are now ready to delve deeper into the forbidden, to fully embrace the power offered by the dark forces of the cosmos. Only those who have committed evil are invited to study these black arts. Through the filthy deeds you have done and the wickedness in your heart, you have proven yourself worthy.

Dabbling in occult mysteries carries a heavy price in body, mind, and soul. To harness the magic these entities offer, you must carve your flesh with blasphemies. To understand the rites, you must push your mind to madness's brink. To prepare your soul, you must indulge in every evil, wallowing in the horror of it all.

Where paladins fight for honor, good, and order, idols of darkness are treacherous, wicked, and capricious in their dealings. They kill for pleasure. They maim to learn from their victim's suffering. They never hesitate to feed their ambition and to grow their temporal power—they know that beyond the mortal coil lies only annihilation.

Level 11:

Unwholesome Resilience

Your encounters with evil have inured you to their toxic presence. You are better able to withstand minor venoms, the caress of an undead creature, and the foul plagues festering in the dark.

Benefit: You gain resist 10 necrotic and resist 10 poison. You also gain immunity to diseases of your level or lower.

Level 11: Vile Darkness Action

Your corruption is a weapon. When your need is great, you can call forth a blinding cloud that burns your enemies' eyes and conceals you.

Benefit: When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you gain partial concealment against enemies while they are adjacent to you and a +4 power bonus to damage rolls. If you are bloodied, the concealment is total concealment. Either way, these benefits last until the end of your next turn.

Level 11: Font of Despair

As evil's champion, you bring suffering and despair to the world. When challenged by multiple enemies, you lash out with a savage attack that reveals the depths of your corruption and commitment.

Font of Despair

Idol of Darkness Attack 11

You raise your weapon above your head and pronounce doom upon nearby foes. As they quail, you grow strong.

Encounter ♦ **Divine, Fear, Weapon**

Standard Action Close burst 1

Target: Each enemy in the burst

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and all defenses until the end of your next turn.

Effect: You can either make a saving throw, with a power bonus equal to the number of enemies you hit with this attack, or gain resistance to all damage until the start of your next turn. The resistance equals your Strength modifier.

Level 12: Unholy Aura

Evil values your service and lends you its unholy conviction so that you can drive back your enemies or make them cower.

Unholy Aura

Idol of Darkness Utility 12

You whisper a prayer asking for protection. The evil within grows until none can bear to linger in your presence.

Daily ♦ **Aura, Divine, Fear**

Minor Action Personal

Effect: You activate an aura 1 that lasts until the end of the encounter. Whenever a creature ends its turn in the aura, you can push that creature 1 square as an opportunity action.

Level 16: Death-Driven

Death drives you. You respond to a dying creature with a sudden surge, fueled by the soul's horror at its unexpected departure.

Benefit: Once per round, when a creature within 5 squares of you drops below 1 hit point, you can take a free action to shift up to a number of squares equal to your Charisma modifier.

Level 20: Dark Burden

You have borne the burden of your corruption for so long that you can scarcely feel its weight on your soul.

Dark Burden

Idol of Darkness Attack 20

As an enemy crumples beneath your devastating attack, the evil within escapes to torment all around you.

Daily ♦ **Divine, Necrotic, Psychic, Weapon**
Standard Action **Melee weapon**

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs. AC

Hit: 5[W] + Strength modifier damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: Each creature adjacent to you other than the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic and psychic damage (save ends). At the start of each of your turns, you can slide each creature taking this ongoing damage up to a number of squares equal to your Charisma modifier.



VERMIN LORD

VERMIN LORD

"Quiet now! Do you hear them? Can you feel them? My children are everywhere, eager to feast on your ripe flesh."

Prerequisite: Druid, evil alignment

Your enduring interest in the lowliest creatures grants you power over them. You cement your connection when you invite vermin to inhabit your body, to nestle in your crevices and drink deep on your fluids. In exchange, the clicking and skittering creatures serve your command, lending their power to your efforts in championing darkness.

The vermin respond each time you wield primal magic. The more accustomed you are to these parasites, the more you learn to direct them in useful ways. Still, the cost to your body is severe. Forever more, your flesh bears the signs of the infestation you host.

Level 11: Vermin Action

You are host to countless creeping and crawling insects. When you push yourself beyond your normal limits, they emerge from your body in a terrible cloud.

Benefit: When you spend an action point to take an extra action, each enemy adjacent to you takes poison damage equal to your Wisdom modifier, and you and

each ally adjacent to you gain a +2 power bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn.

Level 11: Vermin Friend

You have an affinity for all manner of vermin and scavengers. You welcome their presence, suffering their stings and bites gladly.

Benefit: You gain resist 10 poison. At 21st level, the resistance increases to 15.

Level 11: Maggots to Flies

This terrible evocation infests your enemies with maggots. They grow quickly into thick clouds of black flies that swarm and distract.

Maggots to Flies

Vermin Lord Attack 11

Your foes are horrified when squirming maggots bulge from their bodies, then transform into biting flies.

Encounter ♦ **Implement, Primal**

Standard Action **Close blast 3**

Target: Each creature in the blast

Attack: Wisdom vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6 + Wisdom modifier damage, and you can slide the target up to 2 squares.

Effect: Until the end of your next turn, each target grants combat advantage and gains vulnerable 5 to all damage.

Level 12: Hive Mind

You can use primal magic to bond with your allies. Your party becomes a hive, able to act with one mind.

Hive Mind

Vermin Lord Utility 12

Your consciousness worms its way into you allies' minds. You all now fight with a single purpose.

Daily ♦ Primal

Minor Action Close burst 5

Target: You and each ally in the burst

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, each target can communicate telepathically with any of the other targets within 20 squares. In addition, enemies cannot gain combat advantage by flanking a target, and you can use a move action to slide another target within 10 squares of you up to 5 squares.

Level 16: Wings of the Swarm

When you channel primal magic, the vermin infesting you take wing, lifting you where you wish to go.

Benefit: Whenever you use a primal encounter or daily attack power, you gain a fly speed of 6 until the end of your next turn.

Level 20: From One to Many

Drawing on primal magic agitates the vermin you host. You surrender yourself to the swarm, joining your essence with theirs to terrorize your enemies.

From One to Many

Vermin Lord Attack 20

Your body collapses into a seething cloud of ravenous insects. They devour anything in their path.

Daily ♦ Polymorph, Primal

Minor Action Personal

Effect: You assume the form of a vermin swarm until the end of the encounter or until you end it as a minor action.

While in this form, you can occupy the same space as another creature; enemies can enter your space, which is difficult terrain to them; you cannot be pulled, pushed, or slid by melee or ranged attacks; and you can use the secondary power at will.

Secondary Power (Poison, Primal)

Standard Action Melee 1

Target: One or two creatures

Effect: Each target takes ongoing 20 poison damage (save ends). You then shift up to half your speed. Each time the target takes the ongoing damage, you can slide it 1 square as a free action.

Epic Destiny

"I used to sleep with the book under my pillow. It gave me the most wonderful nightmares! Then I loaned it to my daughter, and the little fool lost it."

—Baba Yaga

At the pinnacle of your career, darkness defines you. You embody all that is corrosive, vile, and horrible. The exemplar of evil epic destiny epitomizes your profoundly dark nature.

EXEMPLAR OF EVIL

"There is no stopping me now. I stand at the brink of immortality. The world will know my name and deeds forever!"

Prerequisite: 21st level, evil alignment

You have walked through the darkest shadows to achieve your destiny. You have sacrificed companions, betrayed allies, and performed acts so despicable they are legendary. You are beyond temptation. You have passed through the veil of corruption and unmasked true evil. You bask in the awful glory of true wickedness.

It no longer matters why you descended into darkness. The past is trivial. What matters now is that you secure your place in the cosmos or destroy it in the process. Your destiny is to become one of the world's greatest antiheroes, to carve your name in the annals of history through blood and death. The objective you seek is what you were born to do, the act you were made to perform. You have come this far; you will not allow anything to stop you.

Immortality

Your fate is not to create a good work, to stand at a god's side in the heavens, or to build a nation. Your fate is to become part of history, a nightmare in flesh and bone that torments generations to follow. You seek an end most terrible, a goal even the darkest gods would reel against. Your aim is singularly evil. Its fulfillment will leave the world forever after changed, undoubtedly for the worse. When you choose this epic destiny, you should have some notion of the evil outcome you hope to achieve. Communicate this idea with your Dungeon Master so he or she can devise the various goals you must meet to achieve this destiny.

Level 21: Ability Score Increase

You might be a soulless butcher, a cunning opportunist, a vile cultist who consorts with demons, or a perverse spellcaster who dabbles in the darkest arts. Whatever you are, your abilities increase as a result, proving to all the significance of your threat.

Benefit: You increase two different ability scores by 2.

Level 24: Epic Evil

Vile darkness drives your attacks. Each spell you cast, each swing from your weapon, leaves your enemies shrieking and maimed. The evil you work lingers in the tortured carcasses you create.

Benefit: When you kill a creature with an attack, its space becomes a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. While in the zone or adjacent to it, any enemy of yours takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and grants combat advantage.

Level 26: Vile Assembly

You cannot fail. Even if you wanted to enter the void, the dark powers lending you strength would not allow it. When you fall, your body dissolves into a noisome slick or a mass of crawling vermin. Moments later, you reappear and continue your dreadful work.

Vile Assembly

Exemplar of Evil Utility 26

The dark forces are not about to let you die now, not when you are so close to achieving your ultimate purpose.

Daily ♦ Healing

No Action Personal

Trigger: You drop below 1 hit point.

Effect: You regain hit points equal to your healing surge value, and you are removed from play. At the start of your next turn, you return to play in an unoccupied space within 10 squares of the space you last occupied.

Level 30: Victory at Any Price

Your allies serve a purpose. They exist to help you fulfill your destiny. They are commodities to be drained as your dark will dictates. When you use this power, you debilitate an ally to impose a devastating fate on an enemy.

Victory at Any Price

Exemplar of Evil Utility 30

You sacrifice an ally to ensure a swift and certain victory.

Daily

No Action Close burst 5

Trigger: You hit an enemy with an at-will or an encounter attack power.

Target: One ally in the burst who is not bloodied

Effect: The target takes damage equal to his or her bloodied value, and your hit becomes a critical hit.



Feats

"Where's the chapter about me?! Demon lord who achieved godhood, hello! Who in the Nine Hells wrote this thing?"

—Lolth, Demon Queen of Spiders

Although intended for evil characters, any adventurer who meets the prerequisites can take these feats.

ADVENTURER FEATS

The feats described below are grouped into categories. Reviewing the feats in a category can help you find the best ones for your character. Other feats in the categories appear in *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*.

Divine Devotion Feats

These feats indicate that you have pledged service to one of the gods, inviting that deity to take a central role in your life. You could serve as a priest or as a divine crusader, or could simply have strong religious convictions.

DIVINE DEVOTION FEATS

Disciple of Darkness	Disciple of Trickery
Disciple of Destruction	Disciple of Tyranny
Disciple of Madness	Disciple of Vengeance
Disciple of Torment	Disciple of War

Divinity Feats

Clerics and other divinely powered adventurers can channel divine energy. In addition to divine powers granted by their classes, such characters can channel this power in ways that better reflect service to and favor from a god.

DIVINITY FEATS

Asmodeus's Fiery Command	Tiamat's Bitter Vengeance
Bane's Instructive Stratagem	Torog's Binding Chains
Gruumsh's Battle Fury	Vecna's Final Command
Loth's Cruel Sacrifice	Zehir's Dark Blessing

Enduring Stamina

The feats in this category let you resist certain types of damage and bounce back faster from injuries.

ENDURING STAMINA FEAT

Betrayal of Body

Steadfast Willpower

The feats in this category represent focus, discipline, and an indomitable mind.

STEADFAST WILLPOWER FEAT

Wicked Defiance

Asmodeus's Fiery Command [Divinity]

Asmodeus demands obedience from his servants. Those devotees who disobey are punished with a burst of hellfire.

Prerequisite: Channel Divinity class feature, must worship Asmodeus

Benefit: You gain the power *Asmodeus's fiery command*.

Asmodeus's Fiery Command Feat Utility

Asmodeus rewards those who please him and destroys those who fail.

Encounter ♦ Channel Divinity, Divine, Fire

Minor Action Close burst 3

Target: One ally in the burst

Effect: If the target hits an enemy with an attack before the end of the target's next turn, the target gains 5 temporary hit points. Otherwise, the target and each creature adjacent to him or her take 3 fire damage at the end of his or her next turn.

Level 11: 10 temporary hit points or 5 fire damage.

Level 21: 15 temporary hit points or 10 fire damage.

Special: You can use only one channel divinity power per encounter.

Bane's Instructive Stratagem

[Divinity]

Bane offers his followers a choice: rise to the challenge and experience great success, or fall short and face extinction.

Prerequisite: Channel Divinity class feature, must worship Bane

Benefit: You gain the power *Bane's instructive stratagem*.

Bane's Instructive Stratagem Feat Utility

Bane shows the clear path to victory.

Encounter ♦ Channel Divinity, Divine

Minor Action Close burst 3

Target: Each ally in the burst

Effect: The target gains a +1 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn. If the target's next attack hits an enemy, that attack deals 3 extra damage to the enemy. If the attack misses, the target grants combat advantage until the end of his or her next turn.

Level 11: 6 extra damage.

Level 21: 9 extra damage.

Special: You can use only one channel divinity power per encounter.

Betrayal of Body

Taking advantage of your ally, you shed an affliction and bestow it on him or her.

Benefit: While you are suffering ongoing damage that lacks a type, you can transfer the ongoing damage to one ally adjacent to you as a free action. If you do so, the ongoing damage increases by 5.

Disciple of Darkness

Zehir's blessing bends the shadows to your will, cloaking you and hiding your movements.

Prerequisite: Dexterity 13

Benefit: You gain a +5 feat bonus to Stealth checks made to hide while you are in darkness.

When you use your second wind on your turn and you are in an area of dim light or darkness, you become invisible until you make an attack or until the end of your next turn.

Disciple of Destruction

Gruumsh urges his followers to revel in the slaughter, to wage eternal war until nothing remains. You can call on this destructive compulsion to punish injured enemies.

Prerequisite: Strength 13

Benefit: Whenever you bloody an enemy with an attack, that enemy takes 5 extra damage.

Disciple of Madness

The unhinged mortals who struggle to interpret the Chained God's will often go mad from the effort. This lunacy helps them throw off distracting mental assaults.

Prerequisite: Charisma 13

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to saving throws against effects that daze, stun, or dominate you, as well as against ongoing psychic damage. In addition, whenever you succeed on a saving throw to end one of these effects, you can shift 1 square as a free action and gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of your next turn.

Disciple of Torment

Torog, called the Dark Jailer and Tormentor, rules the Underdark. The dark god offers pain and suffering to his followers, channeling the agony of his broken body through the willing vessels in his thrall.

Prerequisite: Charisma 13

Benefit: Enemies grant combat advantage while subject to effects caused by you that a save can end.

Disciple of Trickery

Lolth advises her servants to use deception and trickery rather than direct confrontation. Your faith allows you to distract an enemy when the situation looks grim.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 13

Benefit: When you use your second wind on your turn, one or two enemies you can see grant combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.

Disciple of Tyranny

Asmodeus obliges his followers to gain and to hold power in the world. When hope wanes, you exert your will and direct an ally to a better position.

Prerequisite: Charisma 13

Benefit: When you use your second wind on your turn, one ally who can hear you can shift up to 3 squares as a free action.

Disciple of Vengeance

Tiamat does not allow her followers to forgive slights and affronts. Each time you shrug off your injuries, your righteous anger deepens.

Prerequisite: Constitution 13

Benefit: Whenever you spend a healing surge to regain hit points, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Disciple of War

Bane expects his followers to perfect their talent for warfare, and your dedication keeps you focused on dominating the battlefield.

Prerequisite: Strength 13

Benefit: During your first turn in every encounter, you gain a +1 bonus to your first weapon attack roll, and the first creature you hit that turn takes 2 extra damage. Increase the extra damage to 3 at 11th level and 4 at 21st level.

Gruumsh's Battle Fury [Divinity]

As one of Gruumsh's faithful, you can infect allies with his bloodlust and drive them to reckless violence.

Prerequisite: Channel Divinity class feature, must worship Gruumsh

Benefit: You gain the power *Gruumsh's battle fury*.

Gruumsh's Battle Fury Feat Attack

An ally's violent success earns Gruumsh's reward. You channel divine power to inspire an ally to greater acts of violence.

Encounter ♦ Channel Divinity, Divine

Free Action **Close burst 3**

Trigger: An ally within 3 squares of you drops a creature below 1 hit point.

Target: The triggering ally in the burst

Effect: The target can charge or make a basic attack as a free action. In addition, the target grants combat advantage until the end of his or her next turn.

Special: You can use only one channel divinity power per encounter.

Lolth's Cruel Sacrifice [Divinity]

If you sacrifice an ally to an enemy's attack, Lolth rewards your efforts with a surge of divine power.

Prerequisite: Channel Divinity class feature, must worship Lolth

Benefit: You gain the power *Lolth's cruel sacrifice*.

Lolth's Cruel Sacrifice Feat Utility

You channel the goddess's blessing to save you from danger at an ally's expense.

Encounter ♦ Channel Divinity, Divine, Healing, Teleportation

Immediate Interrupt **Close burst 3**

Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack.

Target: One ally in the burst

Effect: You and the target teleport, swapping positions, and the target is hit by the attack, instead of you. You or one ally (other than the target) adjacent to you can then spend a healing surge.

Special: You can use only one channel divinity power per encounter.

Tiamat's Bitter Vengeance

[Divinity]

Any wrong done to you fills you with anger, driving you to do the same to the one who crossed you.

Prerequisite: Channel Divinity class feature, must worship Tiamat

Benefit: You gain the power *Tiamat's bitter vengeance*.

Tiamat's Bitter Vengeance Feat Utility

You can channel Tiamat's wrath, gaining the revenge she demands above all else.

Encounter ♦ Channel Divinity, Divine

Immediate Reaction Personal

Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack.

Effect: You shift up to 3 squares. Until the end of your next turn, each time you or an ally hits the triggering enemy, it takes 2 extra damage.

Level 11: 4 extra damage.

Level 21: 6 extra damage.

Special: You can use only one channel divinity power per encounter.

Torog's Binding Chains [Divinity]

Painful shackles hold your enemies in place.

Prerequisite: Channel Divinity class feature, must worship Torog

Benefit: You gain the power *Torog's binding chains*.

Torog's Binding Chains Feat Attack

You channel your god's presence into your attack that causes shimmering chains to wrap around your foe.

Encounter ♦ Channel Divinity, Divine

No Action Melee 1

Trigger: You hit an adjacent enemy with a melee attack.

Target: The enemy you hit

Effect: The target is immobilized (save ends). The target can end the effect by taking 5 damage as a free action.

Level 11: 10 damage.

Level 21: 15 damage.

Special: You can use only one channel divinity power per encounter.

Vecna's Final Command [Divinity]

You can use your god's influence on the evil within to compel a random act of violence against your foes.

Prerequisite: Channel Divinity feature, must worship Vecna

Benefit: You gain the power *Vecna's final command*.

Vecna's Final Command Feat Utility

You hold death back to allow the dying one final attack.

Encounter ♦ Channel Divinity, Divine

Immediate Interrupt Close burst 5

Trigger: A creature within 5 squares of you drops below 1 hit point.

Target: The triggering creature in the burst

Effect: The target makes a basic attack against a creature you choose.

Special: You can use only one channel divinity power per encounter.

Wicked Defiance

Your twisted mind proves agile against attacks that target your thoughts.

Prerequisite: Wisdom 15 or Charisma 15

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to Will. This bonus increases to +3 at 11th level and +4 at 21st level.

In addition, whenever an enemy targets you with an attack against Will, you can take 5 damage (10 damage at 11th level and 15 damage at 21st level) as an immediate interrupt to change the target to an ally adjacent to you. You cannot reduce this damage in any way.

Zehir's Dark Blessing [Divinity]

As an enemy falls, you turn its death into a boon for an ally.

Prerequisite: Channel Divinity class feature, must worship Zehir

Benefit: You gain the power *Zehir's dark blessing*.

Zehir's Dark Blessing Feat Utility

An ally's attack becomes an offering to Zehir. Darkness cloaks your companion, granting him or her sudden vigor.

Encounter ♦ Channel Divinity, Divine

Free Action Close burst 5

Trigger: An ally within 5 squares of you drops a creature granting combat advantage to him or her below 1 hit point.

Target: The triggering ally in the burst

Effect: The target gains 5 temporary hit points. The target also gains partial concealment until the end of his or her next turn.

Level 11: 10 temporary hit points.

Level 21: 15 temporary hit points.

Special: You can use only one channel divinity power per encounter.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, *The Book of Vile Darkness*, *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, *Monster Manual*, *Rules Compendium*, *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, *Dungeon Master's Kit*, *Monster Vault*, *Manual of the Planes*, *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*, *Demonomicon*, *Player's Option: Heroes of Shadow*, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the U.S.A. and other countries. All characters, and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast LLC. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast. Printed in the U.S.A.
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