



CHARACTERS OF WAR

BACKGROUNDS FOR YOUR SCALES OF WAR HERO

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THE SETTING OF the *Scales of War* Adventure Path is more implied than actual. That's intentional on our part. We want you to make the world your own rather than define it for you (beyond the degree of definition required to place future adventures).

But from "Rescue at Rivenroar" onward, your characters at your table will come to life and develop their own backstories, goals, and agendas. As a launching pad for those backstories, we offer the following character backgrounds. Each one comes with a small game benefit, usually a small skill modifier. But power-gamers beware! You'll search in vain for significant advantage. The bonuses are intentionally small because we don't want a character's past to overshadow that character's present. Think of these backgrounds as aids to roleplaying, not the means to eke out an incremental advantage to a skill check.

We've identified some backgrounds as being particularly good for a given race or class. Check the ones for your race and class out first, of course, but don't limit yourself to those. Sometimes it's fun to play against type and choose a background that stands at odds with what people would expect from your race and class. It's your story, and your PC is a singular character within it. Don't feel like you have to obey a sort of demographic imperative to be a "typical" elf or a "typical" fighter.

One final note: You'll notice proper names lurking in some of the backgrounds. Feel free to run with those, and don't be surprised if some of the places, groups, and people mentioned here appear in future steps on the *Scales of War* adventure path.

WANDERING DUELIST

I am a student of the True Blade. Perhaps you'd like to match yours against mine? I guarantee we'll both learn something.

You are an itinerant warrior—sometimes a conscript, sometimes a mercenary, but often just a wanderer with a sharp sword and an empty coin-purse. How did you learn your initial training in the combat arts? Why haven't you resorted to out-and-out banditry? What places have you visited in your wandering? What would it take for you to settle down?

Benefit: You add Intimidate to your class skill list and give yourself a +3 bonus to Intimidate checks.

Good Background: Dragonborn.

SCORNED NOBLE

I am an exile of honor, set apart from my people. Yet in my heart, I remain as steadfast as ever to those I will never see again.

You grew up as one of the best and brightest, but what happened to send you away from your life of privilege? Was it a legal matter, an affair of the heart, or the skullduggery of a rival noble family? Are members of your noble family secretly supporting you or

remaining sympathetic to your cause? Do you intend to go back, and if so, what needs to happen first?

Benefit: You are used to going it alone. You gain a +2 bonus to saving throws whenever no allies are within 5 squares of you.

Good Background: Dragonborn.

REDEMPTION SEEKER

I am an instrument of honor. I am he who seeks the weight to balance the scales.

Somewhere in your past, you behaved less than honorably. Perhaps it was a moment of ill-considered rage, a flirtation outside society's boundaries, or maybe you took the blame for someone else's lack of honor. Ever since, you have been striving to act impeccably and with such valor that you redeem yourself for the transgression in your past. What great event started your quest for redemption? Is there anyone trying to thwart your efforts? Have you given any thought to what will happen after you balance the scales of honor?

Benefit: You add Diplomacy and Insight to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Diplomacy and Insight checks.

Good Background: Dragonborn.

SEEKER FOR THE LOST CLAN

I'm an ordinary sort, but those I'm seeking are extraordinary. Quite extraordinary indeed.

Some say you are the last of your breed, but you don't think so. Although your family is gone for good, you've been tracking down rumors of another branch of your ancestry. They're out there somewhere, and you want desperately to be reunited with them. What clues do you have that the lost clan exists? Who raised you, if not this lost clan? And on a fundamental level, why do you want to find them so intensely?

Benefit: You add History and Dungeoneering to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to History and Dungeoneering checks.

Good Background: Dwarf.



WARSMITH

"Crafter" is too mundane a term for me, but "artist" implies a concern with form, not function. Place me somewhere in between. Call me an artisan.

You make powerful weapons and armor, instruments of warfare both elegant and deadly. Who taught you your craft, and what is your relationship like with your mentor? Is there something you've always wanted to make, but you've lacked the proper materials for it? To what degree do you insist on wielding weapons you make yourself, and how do you react when you examine someone else's work?

Benefit: You can construct your own weapons and armor, given proper tools and raw materials. Making a weapon takes two days, and making armor takes four days. Doing so confers no economic advantage, however. The item ultimately costs the same as it would if you'd purchased it directly. And you can cast Creation rituals as if you had the Ritual Caster feat.

Good Background: Dwarf.

BROTHER IN BATTLE

I'm the sort that craves only a sharp axe, a bitter ale—and companions true to share them with.

Not everyone needs to be chased across the world by black-cloaked assassins. You crave fighting, beer-drinking, and companionship of either the friendly or the romantic sort. Have you always had such simple desires, or did you come to this simplicity after years spent striving for something more esoteric? Are there particular enemies you relish fighting—or particular brands of ale you savor?

Benefit: You add Endurance to your class skill list, and you gain a +3 bonus to Endurance checks.

Good Background: Dwarf.

SEDUCER

I assure you my reputation is exaggerated—at least a little. But my reputation had to have piqued your curiosity, or you wouldn't be here, would you?

You can't keep away from romantic liaisons with the attractive and the alluring. And after practice, you're good at it, having slept your way through a dozen manor-houses and noble villas. How mercenary are your seductions—do you genuinely fall in love easily, or is there always an ulterior motive? Are you motivated by the sheer beauty of your paramours, the chase and conquest, or the fringe benefits of bedding the wealthy and influential? Is there someone who got away, or someone unusually resistant to your charms?

Benefit: You add Bluff and Insight to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Bluff and Insight checks.

Good Background: Eladrin.

MAGIC SCHOLAR

I can recite the Twelve Trigonomystiks from memory, and I've read all the Moon-Opal Analects. I favor the Vallander Folio, but I do concede that the Braytonburg Folio is more concise.

You believe that magic is the key to unlocking fundamental secrets of the universe, and you'll eagerly delve into eldritch tomes to learn from the masters of bygone ages. Is there a particular aspect of magic that you're eager to master? A particular scholar or school of thought you favor? And how do you react when you encounter a magic phenomenon that doesn't behave the way your theories tell you it should?

Benefit: You add Arcana and History to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Arcana and History checks.

Good Background: Eladrin.

You believe that magic is the key to unlocking fundamental secrets of the universe, and you'll eagerly delve into eldritch tomes to learn from the masters of bygone ages.

ELDRITCH HARLEQUIN

I'm the fly in the proverbial ointment, I suppose. But I've never been much for proverbs. They're just rules that happen to rhyme sometimes.

Your tie to the mysterious and fey places in the world is particularly strong. You've always been a mischievous sort—a troublemaker, and the person who upsets the apple-cart just to see how far the apples will roll. What sorts of trouble has your mischief resulted in?

Are there partners in crime in your past, and what's your relationship with them like? How does someone inclined to mischief make a living? Under what circumstances can you overcome your natural instinct and toe the line?

Benefit: You add Bluff and Thievery to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Bluff and Thievery checks.

Good Background: Eladrin.

SILENT HUNTER

I'm either someone you never see, or I'm the last someone you see.

From a young age, you were trained to track, stalk, and bring down your prey. The hunter's outlook is now pervasive in your life—your problems are merely elusive quarry that you relentlessly hunt down and ultimately claim as a trophy. Is there a particular monster you're particularly good at hunting? One that frustrates you? Or frightens you? Who taught you the art of stealth? And have you ever had the tables turned on you, when someone or something hunted you?

Benefit: You add Stealth and Perception to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Stealth and Perception checks.

Good Background: Elf.

FOREST WARDEN

I'm just part of the Whorlwood. But I'm its leaves, its branches, its trunk, its roots.

You regard yourself as part of the natural world—but you're the part of the natural world that nurtures and protects the rest. You strive against dangers both mundane (like a rapacious woodcutter) and magical (a mysterious taint that kills vegetation by night). Why are you now an adventurer rather than still in your forest? How do you react when you're taken far from the natural world, like the heart of a city or another plane of existence? Is there a particular enemy of the forest that you're still striving against?

Benefit: You add Nature and Perception to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Nature and Perception checks.

Good Background: Elf.

EXPLORER/GUIDE

I'm the only one who can get you from here to Rythan Keep in less than two weeks. And I'll make sure you don't wind up in a gnoll tribe's soup cauldron.

Ever since you saw your first map, you wanted to know what the lands beyond the margin looked like. And as an inveterate traveler, you've started to find out. What places have you seen on your journeys? How do you make ends meet? What's the greatest danger you've ever faced? Is there a mythical place you're particularly keen to visit someday?

Benefit: Learn an extra language of your choice, add Nature to your class skill list, and you gain a +2 bonus to Nature checks.

Good Background: Elf.

MERCHANT PRINCE

I'm the only guy who can get you spiderhaunt silk within 10 leagues of here. And that's just the start of the business we can accomplish together.

You've always had a knack for mercantile affairs, and nothing pleases you more than a deal that's profitable

for you—and good enough for the other party that he comes back for more. Is there a particular trade or commodity that you're expert at doing business in? Who gets you your goods, and to whom do you sell? Who are your business partners? Investors? Rivals?

Benefit: Learn an extra language of your choice, add Insight to your class skill list, and you gain a +2 bonus to Insight checks.

Good Background: Half-elf.

You have a justifiable pride in your powers of observation and deduction, and you take a delight in surprising others with your conclusions that borders on the theatrical.

DETECTIVE

I'm the guy who noticed how sharp your sword is, despite the fact that you aren't carrying a whetstone. But I suppose calling it "your" sword isn't really accurate, is it?

You have a justifiable pride in your powers of observation and deduction, and you take a delight in surprising others with your conclusions that borders on the theatrical. How did you hone your inquisitive nature? With the city watch, in a noble court, or among the priesthood? Are there particularly notable crimes you've solved? If so, did your efforts earn you any lifetime friends or enemies?

Benefit: You add Perception and Insight to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Perception and Insight checks.

Good Background: Half-elf.

WANDERING MERCENARY

I served with the Targa Lancers throughout the Montesi Incursion, then I trained the Wallach family retinue when they took back Blackbarrow Castle. That led to a promotion when the orcs invaded, and I...

The art of war is one you know well, and you've marched with armies both to victory and to defeat. What key battles did you take part in? What was your rank, and did you have any particular duties? Do you have old war comrades around, and how do they feel about you?

Benefit: It takes four failed death saves to kill you.

Good Background: Half-elf.

CON ARTIST

I'm not the guy you're looking for. Seriously, I was in Oakmont last night. I wasn't even here.

You've long made a living on the backs of the greedy, the gullible, and the unobservant. What sort of confidence games did you favor—elaborate conspiracies, rigged games of chance, or ruses that facilitated traditional crimes like burglary, robbery, or kidnapping? How did you learn your trade? How close have you come to being caught? And how many enemies are out there, looking for a chance to get even?

Benefit: You add Bluff and Thievery to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Bluff and Thievery checks.

Good Background: Halfling.



STREET URCHIN

I'm part of the Redboot crew, and that's all you need to hear. You grew up on the mean streets of an urban metropolis, and you quickly found safety amid numbers of likeminded poor youths. They taught you to fight, to steal (mostly from those who had something worth stealing), and to protect what little you had. How did you escape that life of poverty and petty crime? Under what circumstances will you go back? And what happened to your family friends in the meantime?

Benefit: You add Intimidate and Streetwise to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Intimidate and Streetwise checks.

Good Background: Halfling

RIVER SMUGGLER

I'm either a simple boatman, or a not-so-simple boatman. Depends who's askin'.

You've plied the rivers and coastlines of the world, making a little money on official cargo and a lot of money on the crates hidden in the bow compartment. What did you smuggle, and why was it contraband? Who did you deal with on each end of your journey? Did you ever get caught? Or double-crossed?

Benefit: You add Athletics and Streetwise to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Athletics and Streetwise checks.

Good Background: Halfling.

CLOISTERED PRIEST

I took my vows as a child in the grand temple at Tarsalee, and I've served there faithfully ever since. You've grown up in the heart of religious worship, and you know the rituals and rites of your faith better than most. What event sent you out into the wider world? Under what circumstances will you return? Given your sheltered upbringing, how do you react to the strange and the dangerous?

Benefit: You add Religion to your class skill list, and you gain a +3 bonus to Religion checks.

Good Background: Human.

GRITTY SERGEANT

Don't call me 'sir.' I work for a living, soldier! I was picking boys like you off the turf back when your mama was picking daisies in the field. Your papa, too.

You've led people into battle and had them bleed on you as they died. But many of them lived to fight again. You've seen them come and go, sometimes so quickly that you never learned their names. Are there particular battles you remember well—or curse? Particular generals who wasted the lives of the those in your care? To what degree have you made the

transition to civilian life? Ever get caught giving orders just like the old days, or are you glad to have that responsibility lifted from your shoulders?

Benefit: You gain proficiency in a simple or military weapon of your choice, and you gain a +1 bonus to initiative checks.

Good Background: Human.

NOBLE SCION

The last name is Rocannon. Our lands are east of here, encompassing the towns of New Laurel and Krindelton and extending up to Plover Pass.

You grew up as one of the best and brightest, having access to more training and more opportunity than anyone else around you. What sorts of esoteric activities—falconry, courtly intrigues, fine art—were you exposed to? What event set you on the adventurer's path? How do you feel about those who didn't have the privilege and opportunity you did?

Benefit: You add a knowledge skill of your choice to your class skill list, and you gain a +2 bonus to checks with that skill.

Good Background: Human.

SCION OF AN ANCIENT BLOODLINE

The blood of the Khavarran runs through my veins. Aha! I see you're schooled enough to recognize the dynastic name. Your circumstances might be reduced at the moment, but the nigh-mythical sorcerer-kings of the tiefling empire are among your ancestors. You cannot help but dream of those bygone days. What sort of ruler was your ancestor . . . according to your family and according to the history books? Are there particular qualities of your ancestor that you're eager to emulate, or perhaps repudiate? Do you entertain dreams of ruling an empire yourself someday?

Benefit: You add History to your class skill list, and you gain a +3 bonus to History checks.

Good Background: Tiefling.

CULT ESCAPEE

The tattoo means I was a member of the Six-Fingered Hand. You'll notice I said "was" a member.

At first the group appeared to be on to something big, and you wanted to be part. But when you saw how dark their grand design was, you escaped. What drew you to the cult in the first place, and what caused you to spurn it? Who was in the cult: your friends, your family, your whole community? Are they hunting you still?

Benefit: You add Arcana and Bluff to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Arcana and Bluff checks.

Good Background: Tiefling.

YOUNG CUTTHROAT

You've heard of the Chillbain Clan in New Shardaluum? I've got a lot of Chillbain friends. Close friends, if you know what I mean.

You were the violent arm of an organized crime cartel, dispensing bloody punishment for real and imagined slights. How were you recruited into the syndicate; was it based on family, trade guild, or neighborhood ties? How high did you rise in its ranks? Why aren't you still there? Is there a price on your head from the authorities, the crime syndicate, or both?

Benefit: You add Intimidate and Thievery to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Intimidate and Thievery checks.

Good Background: Tiefling.

AUSPICIOUS BIRTH

I was born on the slopes of Mount Emberstare during an eclipse, when the moon turned as red as blood.

The circumstances of your birth were somehow blessed, and you grew up knowing you were somehow set apart and special. Who regards your birth as auspicious? Are you tied to a specific prophecy, and if

so, what does it say? How were you treated differently as a child?

Benefit: You substitute your highest ability score for Constitution to determine your initial hit points.

Good Background: Cleric.

TRAVELING MISSIONARY

I bring you the unending light of Pelor—light that illuminates the darkness, comforts the weary and wounded, and vexes the black of heart.

Your calling is to bring the light of your chosen faith to the dark corners of the world. What places have you seen in your journeys, and were they receptive, indifferent, or antagonistic to your message? How do you feel when you're back in the temples of the faithful? What circumstances will cause you to leave the road and settle down?

Benefit: Learn an extra language of your choice, add Religion to your class skill list, and gain a +2 bonus to Religion checks.

Good Background: Cleric.

RECENT CONVERT

Look, I was once an ordinary fellow like you. But during the Shrieking Plague, I found a source of power I'd never imagined. Or perhaps it found me.

You weren't always the religious sort. But you recently had a supernatural experience that changed your outlook and showed you your true calling. What was that event? Are there unanswered questions in its wake? And how did you feel about religion (both your new one and religions in general) prior to your conversion?

Benefit: Once per encounter, reroll a failed saving throw against a charm effect.

Good Background: Cleric.



FORMER GLADIATOR

I trained under Thool Rhak, fighting in various pits across the northern trade towns. Then I survived two seasons in the Terrimula Arena over in Jarrak City. So yeah, I know my stuff.

You've grown up fighting for the amusement of the crowd. Did you seek out this life, or was it thrust upon you? What sorts of gladiatorial spectacles did you take part in: individual combats, staged mass battles, gladiator-vs.-monster fights, or inherently unfair gladiator

punishments (like unarmed prisoners against beasts)? And what kept you going? The whips of your masters, the lure of competition, or the roar of the crowd?

Benefit: It takes four failed death saves to kill you.

Good Background: Fighter.

HAUNTED VETERAN

I marched south into the jungle with Atrelius. Can we talk about something else?

You saw things in the war that no one should have to see, and the horrors of war changed your personality. What were you like before you went to war? Under what circumstances will you share what you experienced? How do you keep those memories at bay: By adventuring and other hardships, through prayer, or with a bottle?

Benefit: Once per encounter, reroll a failed saving throw against a fear effect.

Good Background: Fighter.

FORMER BARBARIAN

My people are the Khartalli Narash—the “wolves of the desert” in your tongue.

Your formative years were spent as part of an indigenous tribe of hunter-gatherers. As a nomad, you went where the food was, traveling across the wilderness from season to season. What happened to your tribe? What would it take for you to return? And were you a typical member of the tribe, or was there something that set you apart?

Benefit: You add Nature to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Nature checks.

Good Background: Fighter.

PRISON CONVERSION

The scars are just evidence of a wayward youth. I'm actually a testament to the power of prison ministry. You did something bad enough to result in your imprisonment, but while there, your life changed. Upon your release, you took up your new life with a

crusader's zeal. For what crime were you imprisoned? How did you attain your release? Do you have difficulty reconciling your old life with your new calling? How do you react when your old life re-emerges unexpectedly?

Benefit: You add Streetwise to your class skill list, and you gain a +3 bonus to Streetwise checks.

Good Background: Paladin.

CRUSADING ZEALOT

I am but a humble instrument of my god. But I'm an instrument with several sharp edges, to be sure.

Your calling is an intensely personal one. The voices of the gods themselves have sent you on your crusade, and they periodically guide you to this day. How do others react when you tell them what drives you forward? What was it like the first time you received divine inspiration? Do you ever doubt or question the voices from the gods?

Other people run away screaming when they see a monster. You run toward it screaming.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to saving throws until you fail a saving throw, and then the bonus is gone until you rest.

Good Background: Paladin.

TRAINED FROM BIRTH FOR A SPECIFIC PROPHECY

The doves? They come and go as they please. By Choinero's wisdom, the doves will watch over me until the day of the Great Rift.

The prophetic words were written in scripture long before you were born, and you're part of a concentrated effort to fulfill, safeguard, or thwart that prophecy. What is the nature of the prophecy, and what's your relationship to it? Do you question

whether your fate is truly ordained? And who or what is standing in your way?

Benefit: Once per day, you can reroll an initiative check if you don't like the result. You keep the second result whether it's better, the same, or worse.

Good Background: Paladin.

LAST OF THE BREED

Everyone says that the Resolute Two Hundred are no more. That's not true—not as long I draw breath, anyway.

You were part of an elite order of roving guardians—but they're all gone and only you remain. What caused the order to die out? How did you escape that fate? Will you try to rejuvenate the order, or are you resigned to it passing into history?

Benefit: You add Endurance and Perception to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Endurance and Perception checks.

Good Background: Ranger.

MONSTER HUNTER

I'm a hunter of exotic game. The more cunning and elusive, the better. And if the locals all call it a legend, that's best of all.

Other people run away screaming when they see a monster. You run toward it screaming. You like testing your mettle against the strangest and most horrible creatures that the dark places of the world spawn. What's your greatest trophy taken to date? Is there a particular sort of monster that is your nemesis? And are there certain circumstances that make your hunt a “fair” one or make your quarry a “worthy” adversary?

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus whenever you use a knowledge skill to make a monster knowledge check (as described on page 180 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Good Background: Ranger.

FUGITIVE FROM A VENGEFUL RIVAL

Suffice it to say that Lord Sakrath is no friend of mine. There was a falling out, followed by several impromptu duels and an abrupt departure.

You've angered someone powerful enough to make you a fugitive. Every month brings new evidence that your rival's wrath hasn't waned: a bounty hunter, trouble with the authorities, or posters indicated yet another increase in the price on your head. What event caused you to take flight? How long have you been on the run, and what lands have you traveled through on the way? Is there something other than your death that will end the chase? Are you trying to escape, or will you ultimately turn the tables on your rival?

Benefit: You add Bluff and Stealth to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Bluff and Stealth checks.

Good Background: Ranger.

ASSASSIN

I bear the Sigil of Vaurom. I have tasted the Black Lotus Tea and seen the sublime mysteries within Vaurom's Impossible Crypt. I say this not as a boast, but as a warning.

You've been trained in the thousand arts of death, sent to preemptively kill the powerful. What secret order taught you your trade, and how did they recruit you? What targets have you assassinated, and did any escape your clutches? Do you have a current contract, did you give up the assassin's life, or are you on the run?

Benefit: You add Arcana and Stealth to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Arcana and Stealth checks.

Good Background: Rogue.



CAT BURGLAR

The Hrulla Tower in Jarrak City? I've been in and out of there three times. The ivy on the courtyard walls is pretty much a "Please Steal From Me" sign.

You take an artisan's approach to large-scale burglary, stealing from the most well-protected treasure troves you can find. What particularly notable items have you stolen, and what did you do with the proceeds?

Did you work alone or as part of a gang? If you worked with others, what do they think of you now? Did you ever get caught?

Benefit: You add Athletics and Thievery to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Athletics and Thievery checks.

Good Background: Rogue.

POLITICAL REBEL

I'm the guy who's going to put Lord Chaulchert's head on a pike and free the whole Mirrin Valley from the whip of his taskmasters.

You struggle against political injustice. Perhaps the nobles are oppressing the serfs, the church is quashing religious rivals, the king is crushing the trade guilds, or the guilds are suppressing independent mercantilists. You're on the side of the underdog, and you've escalated the struggle beyond words to direct action. Against whom are you rebelling? Are you part of a larger revolutionary cell, or do you act alone? What will things look like when you've won? What put you on the adventurer's path?

Benefit: You add Diplomacy and Streetwise to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Diplomacy and Streetwise checks.

Good Background: Rogue.

ON THE RUN FROM THE DEVIL

I'm just a guy who's looking for a little more time before the bill comes due.

You've made an eldritch bargain, but you no longer like the terms. Accordingly, you're trying to alter or escape the bargain any way you can. Who is the bargain with, and what element of it are you trying to break (the term that involves your death, the devilish imprisonment of your family, or the forfeiture of your soul)? What specific form is the enforcement taking? In other words, who's chasing you?

Benefit: You add Bluff and Perception to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Bluff and Perception checks.

Good Background: Warlock.

APPRENTICE OF SINISTER CABAL

I learned that trick from the very best: The Black Constellation.

To call your fellow conspirators a "cult" is to credit them with more fervor and less intelligence than they've earned. You are part of a secret group that wields arcane power for a dark, mysterious purpose—and there might be secrets within the cabal that you don't know about yet. How were you recruited into this cabal, and what is their professed aim? Do you have mentors, friends, or rivals in the cabal? Are you still an active member, or have you left the cabal temporarily or permanently?

Benefit: You add Arcana and Dungeoneering to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Arcana and Dungeoneering checks.

Good Background: Warlock.

BORN UNDER A BAD SIGN

My mother told me that the caul was just superstition, and the howling wolves were just a coincidence. But I've seen enough to know that something . . . dark . . . is involved.

Your entire childhood was one superstitious omen after another. Individually, they're easy to ignore or

explain away. But collectively, it's clear that something sinister has designs on your soul. What phenomena did you experience as a child? Do you still see omens in your daily life? And do you have any clues about the specifics of your dark destiny?

Benefit: You substitute your highest ability score for Constitution to determine your initial hit points.

Good Background: Warlock.

VET WHO CAN'T LET GO

We were encamped on the southern banks of the Trellisha River when the orcs came. It was like watching ants on the march. You could see the glint of spears from horizon to horizon. Then they just started throwing themselves into the river.

You've mustered out of the army, but you're forever bound to military life and you still see events through a soldier's eyes. What was your army career like? What major battles did you fight in, and did you encounter any great heroes or generals on the battlefield? Why aren't you still in the military? Under what circumstances could you reenlist?

Benefit: You add History and Intimidate to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to History and Intimidate checks.

Good Background: Warlord.

NOBLE BRED FOR WAR

My father, the fourth Lord of the Parapets, gave me that blade. More importantly, he taught me how to use it—and why.

You're part of a noble family with an ancestral mandate to safeguard the lands in your care. Often, that means marching off to war, and you learned the solemnity of that duty from an early age. What is your family protecting its lands against: monsters, barbaric hordes, bandits, or an invading army? Were there family members who spurned their duty? How does the adventurer's life fulfill your noble duty?

Benefit: You gain proficiency in a simple or military weapon of your choice, and you gain a +1 bonus to Diplomacy checks.

Good Background: Warlord.

OFFICER WHO CAME OUT OF RETIREMENT

Well, we didn't do it that way during the Eastern Campaigns, I can tell you that.

You gave up a life in the army or the city watch long ago, but somehow you wound up eating hardtack and sleeping on a bedroll amid well-meaning but green recruits half your age. Under what circumstances did you retire, and then what got you back out on the trail? What lessons are you trying to pass on? What quirks of your comrades drive you crazy? What is it going to take for you to retire once again?

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to initiative checks, you add History to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to History checks.

Good Background: Warlord.

ARCANE STUDENT WHO SAW TOO MUCH

I was one of the brightest students in the Ebon Tower. But I was curious. And after I saw the demons bound in the basement, I knew some of my instructors were even more curious—and less scrupulous—than I was.

You've received extensive arcane training, but then you learned something sinister about your teachers. What did you learn? Did you confront them, or did you flee? Are they chasing you to try to win you back into the fold, or to make sure that you don't reveal their secrets?

Benefit: You receive a +1 bonus to saving throws to end effects that daze, stun, immobilize, or restrain you.

Good Background: Wizard.

BACKGROUNDS AT A GLANCE

| Name | Background | Name | Background |
|---------------------------------|------------|--|------------|
| Apprentice of Sinister Cabal | Warlock | Missing Master | Wizard |
| Arcane Student Who Saw Too Much | Wizard | Monster Hunter | Ranger |
| Assassin | Rogue | Noble Bred for War | Warlord |
| Auspicious Birth | Cleric | Noble Scion | Human |
| Born Under a Bad Sign | Warlock | Officer Who Came Out of Retirement | Warlord |
| Brother in Battle | Dwarf | On the Run from the Devil | Warlock |
| Cat Burglar | Rogue | Political Rebel | Rogue |
| Cloistered Priest | Human | Prison Conversion | Paladin |
| Con Artist | Halfling | Recent Convert | Cleric |
| Crusading Zealot | Paladin | Redemption Seeker | Dragonborn |
| Cult Escapee | Tiefling | River Smuggler | Halfling |
| Detective | Half-elf | Scion of an Ancient Bloodline | Tiefling |
| Eldritch Harlequin | Eladrin | Scorned Noble | Dragonborn |
| Explorer/Guide | Elf | Seducer | Eladrin |
| Forest Warden | Elf | Seeker for the Lost Clan | Dwarf |
| Former Barbarian | Fighter | Silent Hunter | Elf |
| Former Gladiator | Fighter | Street Urchin | Halfling |
| Fugitive from a Vengeful Rival | Ranger | Trained from Birth for a Specific Prophecy | Paladin |
| Gritty Sergeant | Human | Traveling Missionary | Cleric |
| Haunted Veteran | Fighter | Vet Who Can't Let Go | Warlord |
| Imbuer | Wizard | Wandering Duelist | Dragonborn |
| Last of the Breed | Ranger | Wandering Mercenary | Half-elf |
| Magic Scholar | Eladrin | Warsmith | Dwarf |
| Merchant Prince | Half-elf | Young Cutthroat | Tiefling |

MISSING MASTER

I learned the Art at the hands of Rodraig the Raven. He fled into the portal when the . . . things . . . came, and I've been looking for him ever since.

Your mentor disappeared under mysterious circumstances, and you've been trying to find him or her ever since. What was your master like, and what were the circumstances of the disappearance? What clues do you have that drive you forward? What will do when you find your missing master?

Benefit: You add Perception and Insight to your class skill list, and you gain a +1 bonus to Perception and Insight checks.

Good Background: Wizard.

IMBUER

In two different ways, you could call me a collector. I gather antiquities—items who've borne silent witness to great events. And then I collect magical potency to imbue within those antiquities, improving them to the limit of my ability. The blending of magical power with mundane objects has been your forte, and you delight in the creation of

new wondrous items and implements to channel your power. Who taught you how to make such items? Is there a particular item you're keen to make, once you gather the rare and expensive materials for it? How do you assess the work of other arcane artisans when you encounter magic items in the treasure troves you find?

Benefit: You can construct your own implements and wondrous items, given proper tools and raw materials. Making an implement takes two days, and making a wondrous item takes four days. Doing so confers no economic advantage, however. The item ultimately costs the same as it would if you'd purchased it directly. And you can cast Creation rituals as if you had the Ritual Caster feat.

Good Background: Wizard. 🌀

About the Author

David Noonan is a game designer for Wizards of the Coast, Inc. He contributed to the 4th edition core rules and co-wrote the *Scepter Tower of Spellgard* adventure. He lives in Washington state with his wife and two children.