

player's  
guide to

Monks

and

paladins

The Dedicated  
& The Devoted



Some pursue adventuring as a means to glory and riches... while others battle chaos and evil in dedication to a higher cause. Whether they take up sword and shield for a righteous cause or master physical arts to perfect body, mind and spirit, these champions are anything but ordinary.

This sourcebook in the Player's Guide series from Sword and Sorcery Studios details the incredible abilities garnered by paladins and monks.

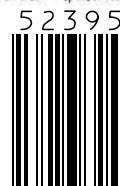
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# player's guide to Monks and paladins

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### DEDICATION

To all of our fans out there who have made the Scarred Lands in general, and the Player's Guide series in particular the rip-roaring success it is. This one is for you, folks.

### GROVELSOME APOLOGIES

To James Maliszewski, for leaving his name out of the Additional Materials section of the *Player's Guide to Wizards, Bards and Sorcerers* and the *Player's Guide to Fighters and Barbarians*. Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.



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# PREFACE

Welcome to the fifth in the Player's Guide series.

Our intent with this series is simple: We want to examine the ways in which players can become a stronger part of the setting in which their characters exist. By providing ways in which characters may derive a background from and have a role in the setting's development, they become closely tied to the setting. In turn, players adopt a more vested interest in both their characters and in the setting as a whole. The more richly a setting is developed, the more characters can "come to life," creating memorable role-playing and exciting adventures.

Thus, our goal is to help your characters become a living, breathing part of the game world.

More than that, though, we want to see how these classes might shape and inspire a campaign setting. The player characters — and characters like them, past and present — are the movers and shakers in the game world. Not every character in the setting has levels in the so-called "PC classes." In fact, those who do are in the minority. But from these relatively few individuals come the events, both heroic and monstrous, that forever shape their world.

Therefore, this series uses the setting of the Scarred Lands to help show you how diverse classes weave their influence into every aspect of the tapestry of a game world. As with the rest of the book, you can refer to it for your own Scarred Lands game, or use it as inspiration in any other campaign.

The *Player's Guide to Monks and Paladins* is more than suggestions and rules on how to play a certain type of character. This is a book about determining how your characters, and those like them, have affected the world. As such, we look at the various disciplines practiced by these men and women of dedication. Monks and paladins are noteworthy in their staunch dedication to precepts and philosophies that most people in the campaign setting do not share — it is that devotion that sets them apart and grants them their power.

Within these pages are the pious, the disciplined, the warriors in the cause of law.

So, welcome to a book filled with the dedicated and the devoted, a book on holy warriors and masters of *ki*, knights and wandering mystics.

Welcome to the *Player's Guide to Monks and Paladins*.

Joseph D. CARRIKER, JR.

SCARRED LANDS DEVELOPER

SWORD & SORCERY STUDIOS

# INTRODUCTION

While the **Player's Guide to Monks and Paladins** is designed for use in any d20 campaign, you'll find that it is undeniably focused on the Scarred Lands. Throughout this book, you will read many references to that setting, its history and its inhabitants.

Yet, it would be a mistake to assume that this book's utility is limited to the Scarred Lands. As explained in the Preface, the purpose of the Player's Guide series is show how the various character classes shape and inspire a campaign setting. The Scarred Lands is used as a single example of this process rather than the only one. Any references to it are meant to inspire your own ideas regardless of the campaign setting in which they occur.

Adapting material in this book to other settings may require some work. This introduction should make that easier, since it offers a comprehensive overview and plenty of suggestions. Armed with its advice, players and Game Masters should have little difficulty tailoring the rest of the book's content to campaigns set in other worlds, or even to other conceptions of the Scarred Lands setting than the standard one presented in *Sword & Sorcery* products.

As always, the key is for GMs to remember the oft-quoted — though oft-forgotten — truism: you are the final arbiter of what is and is not the case for your campaign, wherever it is set. This book offers a multitude of options, variants and alternate takes on many aspects of the core classes of monks and paladins (not to mention an exhaustive discussion of their place in the Scarred Lands setting). If anything here runs counter to your conception of things or would do violence to the established truths of your campaign, feel free to ignore them! That's as true for campaigns in the Scarred Lands as in any other setting. Use only what appeals to you and is genuinely useful, and discard the rest.

So long as you bear that in mind, this book is as valuable to players and GMs alike, regardless of whether the campaign is set in the Scarred Lands or in a game world of their own creation.

## Types of Games

Fantasy roleplaying games come in many flavors, not all of which operate under the same "rules." That is, each type has its own distinct mood, feel and tone, all of which influence how

the game is played and the types of stories that are told within it. These in turn affect how the characters relate to the setting and the kind of impact that they can have on it.

It's important to note that some campaign settings are broadly enough drawn that they can allow for multiple types of games depending on the interests of the GM and the players. The following sections provide some insight into the benefits and drawbacks of each type. They also make it easier for those not playing in the Scarred Lands to categorize their own campaign by its type, so as to take fuller advantage of the material presented in later chapters.

Simply read through the following to see where your campaign best fits, and you'll also find assistance of how to adjust the rest of this book's contents accordingly.

## High Fantasy

High fantasy is, in many ways, the default type of fantasy roleplaying setting. Its name derives from the fact that its fantastical elements — magic, monsters, heroism — are at the high end of the scale. High fantasy games are in no way "realistic." They pay little heed to notions of plausibility. Instead, they rely on over the top plotlines, outlandish locales and larger than life characters to tell epic stories set in a mythical locale. Most high fantasy games also consider that good and evil are more than just ethical principles; they are supernatural realities. Individuals are called to choose one side or the other — or remain neutral — and to fight against those who take up the opposing belief.

The conflicts of a high fantasy setting are thus driven largely by the battle between good and evil, often personified in deities and expressed in the never-ending struggle of those mortals who act as their champions. Indeed, mortals often have a key role to play, for, unlike the gods, they may choose which ethos to follow.

The Scarred Lands setting is largely a high fantasy setting, so the majority of information in this book is well suited to use in other high fantasy campaigns. High fantasy settings are also strongly archetypal, which is to say they use characters that embody certain universal qualities or roles. High fantasy regularly includes warriors — whether armed with weapons or with their own physical

proWess — who enter the battle between good and evil. Consequently, very little in this book need be changed to accommodate a high fantasy setting, since nearly every element is commonplace in such campaigns. All the GM really must do is change the references to those appropriate to his own setting rather than the Scarred Lands.

### LOW FANTASY

Low fantasy, as its name suggests, is at the opposite end of the scale when it comes to fantastical elements. Low fantasy games are often described as “gritty” or “realistic” in that they emphasize the dangers of combat and life in a world with medieval era technology and culture. Considerations of disease, malnutrition and pointless death are often important.

While perhaps not truly realistic, low fantasy games aim for verisimilitude wherever possible. Stories in this type of game focus on lower-key goals — survival, making a living, getting from point A to point B, and the like. This is not to say that low fantasy is all dreary and banal. Many low fantasy stories can be quite exciting, but a lot of the excitement comes from overcoming more mundane obstacles than those in high fantasy. Struggles of all sorts — against opponents, the elements, even oneself — are important parts of low fantasy. They form the basis of most of its stories. Questions of good and evil come up, of course, but they’re often less central than they are in high fantasy. Most low fantasy characters “muddle through” when it comes to questions of ethics or morality, so devotees to a religion or philosophy — such as monks and paladins — stand out from the crowd. They’re unusual, perhaps even a little scary by the standards of a low fantasy world.

To use this book in a low fantasy setting, then, requires some work. A paladin’s overt supernatural abilities — divine spells, many Paragon feats, even Virtue — will be out of place. The same goes for many monk abilities. A GM who wishes to include monks and paladins in a low fantasy game may consider eliminating or at least limiting access to each class’s most obvious supernatural abilities. Likewise, many organizations and prestige classes that rely on moral clarity and supernatural presence will be inappropriate since such things are anathema to low fantasy. Alternately, the GM might decide that monks and paladins are unusual by their very nature — veritable lights shining in the darkness — thereby justifying the use of all their abilities as written. This will make them exceptions to the rules of low fantasy, however.

### GOthic HORROR

In some ways, gothic horror could be considered a subset of low fantasy in that it rarely involves mighty magic or vast storylines. Gothic horror is a specific type of game in which fear, passion, mys-

tery and primitive psychology all contend to create an atmosphere of brooding — even angst-ridden — doom. In such games, characters with detailed concepts and backgrounds are very important, since so many of the plots revolve around their often-frustrated wants and desires. Gothic horror is not about the slaying of dragons or the exploration of new lands. Instead, it focuses on isolation, impotence and self-examination as the springboards for tales of terror.

Despite this, zeal and dedication to a cause have their place in gothic horror. Indeed, it is often through such things that individuals can overcome the terror that pervades the setting. A paladin or a monk who stays true to his principles might find himself a source of hope and solace for others as well as for himself. He would be a most unusual person, but a welcome one — certainly true to the conception of the character classes. Alternately, a paladin or monk might find himself utterly alone, reviled, mocked or even persecuted for his ethos. In such a gothic horror setting, these characters would face opposition in political and social forms, not just the physical ones they’re used to combating.

Much of the advice about divine magic and miracles in low fantasy settings applies equally well in gothic horror settings. In addition, gothic fantasy is dark in its tone and themes. No one, least of all the zealous or the dedicated, can escape the omnipresent evil that cloaks the world in shadow. GMs running gothic fantasy games would be wise to emphasize that even monks and paladins are only slightly better off than those who lack discipline and devotion. For this reason, the GM might wish to limit the supernatural abilities of paladins and monks so that they too suffer at the hands of shadowy evil. In the end, such characters must rely on the strength of their beliefs to sustain them, since it is all they have.

### SCIENCE FANTASY

Science fantasy can use the trappings of science fiction but without any of the underlying science that goes with it. Alternately, it can be a game in which magic mixes with science to produce a fantasy setting that avoids the trappings of medievalism that are usually considered part and parcel of fantasy. In either case, science fantasy differs greatly — at least superficially — from other types of fantasy game settings. In general, it has more in common with high fantasy than low fantasy or gothic horror, but it can employ elements of each, such as a degree of grittiness or the absence of black and white morality.

In science fantasy games, magic is treated like technology. That is, it is just another scientific