

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]

Player's Handbook **2nd Edition** Rules Supplement

The
Complete
Thief's
Handbook

Sample file



The Complete Thief's Handbook

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Written by John Nephew, Carl Sargent and Douglas Niles
 Edited by Scott Haring, TSR staff
 Black and White Art by George Barr
 Color Art by Larry Elmore, John and Laura Lakey, Robin Wood
 Typography by Gaye O'Keefe

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TSR Inc.
 POB 756
 Lake Geneva,
 WI 53147 U.S.A.

TSR Ltd.
 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton
 Cambridge CB1 3LB
 United Kingdom



Introduction

The world of the thief is a world of darkness and stealth, hidden from the eyes of respectable folk, yet often under the scrutiny of the zealous enforcers of the law. It is a world of courage and fear, of bravado and cowardice, of violence and treachery.

Yet it is also a world of color and laughter, lively parties and bustling markets. The thief, more than any other character class, practices his arts among his fellow men (or halflings, or elves, or whatever). He seeks the gatherings of population, the confluence of wealth and avarice, where treasures are there for the taking.

To be sure, many a thief has proven his worth time and again in the darkest reaches of a forgotten dungeon, among the snowy peaks of the bleakest of wild vistas, or within the halls of a fortress or military camp. Quests into the wild contain as much appeal for the thief as they do for other characters. In fact, should the prospect of treasure appear significant enough, many a thief will lead the way in encouraging his companions to embark on such a mission.

But when the adventurers return to the sheltering walls of their homes, wherever these may be, and rejoin the population, the thief is best equipped to find adventure there. And when such adventure is discovered, it is thieflly skills that are most often called into play.

The Purpose of the Complete Thief's Handbook

This book provides information of use to players of thief characters, and to DMs running campaigns including thieves. The emphasis lies heavily upon a campaign where many PCs are thieves, but there is no reason provisions in this book cannot be employed by groups with but a single thief among them.

None of the information here changes any existing AD&D® 2nd Edition rule. Instead, the idea is to amplify and detail those rules for players who are interested in playing thief charac-

ters. Indeed, it is possible and in fact quite easy to play a thief character without the information herein.

However, the player who wishes to develop his player character thief in a unique fashion, or who seeks aid in deepening and broadening the character's personality, goals, and motivations, will find helpful suggestions and ideas in the *Complete Thief's Handbook*.

But the book is a guide for DMs as well. Information on organizing thieves' guilds, for example, is essential to any ongoing thief campaign. If no guild is present, consistent information on other societal sanctions needs to be determined by the DM—and the information must be available to players as well.

Consequently, no portion of this book is prohibited, or player viewing, nor is any part of it irrelevant to the activities of a good DM.

New rules and procedures only become official campaign rules in a campaign when the DM so declares. Players who wish to employ some of these materials can certainly ask the DM to use them, but as always, the Dungeon Master has the last word.

The Role of the Thief

The skulking burglar pilfering through the night is perhaps the most common picture of the thief. Neither players nor Dungeon Masters should blind themselves to other possibilities, some of them more useful (and socially acceptable) than common theft.

The thief character kits introduced in Chapter 3 provide a variety of thief types. These are not new character classes by any means, but the kits can help players define thieves in one of several areas of specialty. Some of these include:

The Spy, long a noble practitioner of the thieflly skills. Indeed, lockpicking, moving silently, hiding in shadows, and the like are all skills of prime importance to the Spy.

The Scout can do for an adventuring party what skirmishing troops do for an army: he is a fast, lightly armored individual who can utilize stealth and speed to study terrain and watch for ambush. Thief-scouts and rangers in combination make splendid reconnaissance bands.

Other kits include the **Troubleshooter** (the dungeon-crawling thief), **Acrobats**, **Beggars**, **Bounty Hunters**, **Swindlers**, and many more.

Typical thieflly personalities are also provided, allowing players to create detailed PCs based upon these archetypes, but also providing useful pieces of imaginative roleplaying information for many long-lived, high-level PCs.

Chapter 2 describes additional non-weapon proficiencies of particular use to thief characters. New equipment types, both magical and mundane, are introduced in later chapters. And a few new rules cover areas of concern to thieves—lethal and non-lethal poisons, for example, and how to determine the quality of workmanship used to build a lock or trap.

A section on running a thief campaign provides players, and most particularly DMs, with suggestions and guidelines on ways to tailor the campaign toward the thief PCs' areas of interest and expertise.

Whatever area of the book yields the most use, players and DMs alike who wish to expand the domain of the thief in their campaign world should find many things of interest between these covers.

Thieves and the Law

Geraldor slipped through the alley, his black cloak masking his progress through the filthy passage. Reassuring himself that he was not pursued, he stepped boldly onto the Golden Way. With a nervous gesture he smoothed his oily black hair and attempted to stroke his wispy mustache.

Sighing, Geraldor realized that any attempt to look like a gentleman was

doomed to failure. He hoped his guildmaster's plan was intact.

And there before him was the Highgate! Geraldor's heart pounded as he examined the brawny men at arms, four in number, manning the post. As the only public route into the city's Golden Quarter—home of all the wealthiest merchants, most powerful lords, and influential ambassadors in all the land—the Highgate was usually guarded well.

But not tonight. Geraldor recognized the giant, hulking form of Morto, sergeant-at-arms of the city watch. As Geraldor had expected—nay, hoped—Morto commanded the detachment at the Highgate.

With a barely concealed nod of recognition, Geraldor stalked to the gate and stood impatiently as Morto made a pretense of examining his "pass." In reality, this crudely forged slip would fool no one with any capacity for comprehending script.

But Morto's reading ability was not the issue tonight. Instead, the guard's loyalty to the guildmaster was the force behind Morto's curt nod and his gesture ushering Geraldor through the Highgate. Geraldor fairly skipped through the great stone arch. He had entered the Golden Quarter!

Now his movements took on the shadowy aspect of the master thief at work. Though he remained alert, he knew that the major obstacle had been passed at the gate. The hefty bribes offered to Morto and his associates had paved the way to riches. It only remained for Geraldor to haul those riches away.

The wiry thief found the mansion that had been selected by the guildmaster. Family and servants all slept, and they had no dog. In a matter of minutes Geraldor had collected the lady's gems. He spent several more minutes seeking the strongbox, finally discovering it in a small, luxurious sitting room. He picked the lock and pulled out only the most valuable coinage, platinum and gold, before soundlessly slipping toward the exit.

In the house he saw magnificent sil-

ver candleabra, a huge and obviously enchanted sword, and other wonders. All of these he disdained as too bulky for his current mission. After all, Geraldor was a professional!

Scarcely suppressing an urge to whistle, Geraldor sauntered back along the Golden Way. He would pass through the Highgate again and immediately disappear into the clustered neighborhoods that crowded both banks of the muddy river.

He saw Morto at the guardpost and nodded casually, passing under the great stone arch again on his way out of the Golden Quarter. Only then did he notice something wrong: Morto stood mute, with his hands shackled before him.

At that same instant a heavy gauntlet fell upon Geraldor's shoulder and a massive arm propelled him into the stone wall of the gatehouse.

"What have we here?" growled an unfamiliar voice. Terrified, Geraldor saw that it issued from beneath the shiny cap of a watch captain.

"I-just going home, m-my lord!" he stammered, wriggling in a futile attempt to break away.

The captain laughed, having already found and discarded Geraldor's fake pass. The man's gloved hands continued to poke through Geraldor's clothes and pouches, retrieving object after object, often with a low chuckle.

"The lady Allorana's diadem, I see—perhaps she loaned it to you!" The captain roared with hilarity, joined by the guffaws of a full company of guardsmen that Geraldor now saw in the shadows.

Then the captain's voice lowered as his hand tightened around Geraldor's throat. "Now, thief, you will find out what the laws are in our town. And you will have time to learn them while you rot in gaol!"

From even before the time, thousands of years ago, when the Code of Hammurabi first defined the legal system of a body of government, and extending to the present day, societies have created procedures for defining

personal possessions. An inherent part of this definition includes the penalties due those who violate these procedures. Odd as it may sound, thieves cannot exist without some kind of legal framework.

And from the time in any culture when personal possessions come into being, there have been those who seek to remove the possessions of others and make them their own. It is for players of characters who attempt this perilous exchange of wealth, and to their Dungeon Masters, that this tome is intended.

Of course, some thievery occurs under the guise of authority, and as such falls beyond the scope of this book. Tax collectors, for example, may steal from those who regard such claims as thievery. So do conquerors. But these are not AD&D® thieves. While they may approach the category of bandits, their "theft" demands more fighting skill and aggression than stealth.

By far the more common type of thievery, and the one that generally comes to mind when discussing the character type, is the furtive pilfering described in the incident above. Poor Geraldor has suffered the fate known to many of these wrongdoers as he is taken by the long arm of the law. But if that law did not exist, then Geraldor's task would become meaningless.

This point is one that should be well remembered by those who play thieves as well as those who run the campaigns. Regardless of how chaotic the setting, a structure at least vaguely approximating a legal system is necessary before the thief can really begin to ply his trade.



Sample file

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