

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]

DUNGEON MASTER[®]
Guide

2nd Edition

Rules
Supplement

The Complete Book of Villains

by Kirk Botula





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Virtue untested is innocence.
—Anonymous

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Introduction



Bakshra's Tale

He was called Dog Eater and Priest Hunter. At first we thought the man was our salvation. In the end, he made us fight for the little we had. He's gone, we think, but even now that it's all over, the smell of burning fields and flesh lingers in our dreams and makes it hard for us to sleep at night. His persistent memory suffocates us.

When his horsemen first thundered through the muddy lane of our sleepy hamlet, they were our rescuers. It was as if our darkest thoughts and bitter rage had taken form to protect us from the attacking orc hordes. They cut down our enemies like a farmer threshing his fields, and we prayed for their victory.

As the threat of the orcs diminished, the warriors turned their fury on our people. None realized there would be more to pay for this unholy bargain than just our gratitude. Before it was over, our priests had been burned at the stake and buried in our field. The field has never grown wheat since, and we call it Bakshra's Plain. It was Bakshra, the Dog Eater, who was our undoing.

Overview

This book is intended to help you make your AD&D® game villains nasty, believable, and grandiose. It provides you with practical tools to create unforgettable villains that will make adventures more fun for yourself and your players. In the chapter "Defining Your Villain," we explain how to create a complete and compelling villain. "Henchmen, Flunkies, & Lackeys" describes how to define the individuals who play a minor role in your villain's plots. "Villainous Organizations" looks at the hazards villains create when they band together.

The practical aspects of weaving a plot for your villain are described in the chapter "Introducing Your Villain." The next chapter, "Delivering the Goods," reviews ways of bringing your villain to life through your performance at the game table. The chapter "Monsters into Villains" explains how to turn a MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® entry into a great villain. The wide variety of unique villains is examined in the chapter



“Advanced Villains.” Tools, topics, and techniques that will make your villains more abominable are included in “Creative Villainy.” This module ends with a compendium of sample villains, a catalog of ideas for helping to create your own villains, and a series of charts for randomly generating adversaries for your game.

What Is a Villain?

Unlike the friendly innkeepers and livery men who may people your campaign, villains motivate the player characters to action. It is the villain who captures the imaginations of your players and brings them back session after session. A player character may have many foes who are not “real” villains. A villain is more than a random monster or an enemy. Of all the characters who come and go, villains are the most important roles you play as a Dungeon Master.

There are five basic criteria for creating a villain. Let’s step through each of the criteria for true villains to discover where they differ from mere enemies. We will find that while all villains are enemies, not all enemies are villains.

1. Villains are opposing forces.

A villain may be an individual or a force of nature. The purpose of a villain in any story is to oppose the heroes and force them to make decisions. Common enemies also share this role as an opposing force to the heroes.

2. Villains are powerful adversaries.

The villain should command more resources than the heroes. The more powerful a villain, the more heroic his defeat.

For dramatic purposes, both enemies and villains alike benefit from playing Goliath to the heroes’ David. It is possible to have a vil-

lain or enemy who is not very powerful, but such a character would not be much of a challenge to the heroes.

3. Villains are unsympathetic.

Sympathy weakens a villain. The more understanding your characters extend to an opponent, the less fear he creates. The less fear a villain creates, the less danger he poses. The less danger he poses, the less heroic are those who oppose him.

Villains are characters heroes can freely despise. Enemies are sometimes sympathetic. An example of a sympathetic enemy who is not a true villain would be an enemy warrior or a misunderstood monster.

4. Villains have bad motives.

When Robin Hood stole from the rich to give to the poor, he proved that a person can do a bad thing for a good reason. A villain should have bad intentions regardless of whether his actions are considered good or bad.

The very essence of villainy may be bad motives or needs so excessive they are pursued to the detriment of other people. An enemy may have perfectly honest intentions and simply have goals in opposition to those of the heroes.

5. Villain engage emotions.

By giving your players a villain that they love to hate, you will find them coming back to play again and again.

Any game is more exciting if your players care about the outcome of events. To this end, villains, enemies, and even allies should be characters who engage your players’ emotions.

By keeping an eye toward these simple rules of thumb, you can create diverse and unique villains to populate your game world.

This chapter takes you through the basic steps to create a compelling villain. Each of the following topics covers one aspect of your villain. We will go through each one and apply it by building a sample villain—Bakshra, the brutal warlord introduced at the beginning of this book. When we have put the finishing touches on our creation, we will interrogate the newly created villain for completeness.

While you can spend hours working up every aspect of a villain's life and personality, you need to know only enough to make the character believable to you. If you have a concise and clear picture of your villain, it is easier to make him come alive for your players.

In this chapter, we will look at each of the following aspects of your villain's life:

1. Occupation
2. Objective
3. Motive
4. Personality
5. Attitudes and behaviors
6. Tastes and preferences
7. Surroundings
8. History
9. Network
10. Appearance
11. Abilities and alignment

As we move through each topic, jot down your own ideas on a piece of paper for a villain of your own creation.

1. Occupation

If we want a believable villain, we need to give him a means of support. What does your villain do for a living? A good place to start when making a villain is to decide how he pays his bills. Simply knowing how a villain supports himself can tell us a great deal about

how he spends his time and who he deals with on a daily basis. The first thing we ask when we meet someone is often, "What do you do?"

Many famous villains are known by their occupation. Sweeney Todd, the murderer who killed his victims and served them up in meat pies, was called the "Demon Barber of Fleet Street."

A villain's occupation is sometimes integral to his crimes. Cruella DeVil of *The Hundred and One Dalmatians* was a furrier who was bent upon turning innocent puppies into fur coats. Auric Goldfinger of Ian Fleming's James Bond novel was a gold and jewelry dealer who tried to irradiate the gold in Fort Knox to drive up the value of his own bullion.

Few villains can afford to sit around being villains full time. Batman's enemies always appear with expensive equipment and hideouts, but we are not expected to really accept these characters as "real."

Bakshra is a petty warlord who oversees his own castle and is supported by the serfs who work the surrounding farmland.

2. Objective

Your villain's objective should be in direct conflict with those of your heroes. He might want the throne of their kingdom. He might want to destroy one of their friends.

The events and people affected by the villain's actions should be important to the heroes. The players would hardly care if a vicious man spent years in a subterranean catacomb laboring over a stamp collection. However, if he started kidnapping farmers to use as philatelic slaves, you might find your players more interested (and maybe amused).