

player's
guide to
Rangers
and **Rogues**

The Vigilant
& **The Villainous**



None are better suited to tracking foes through wilderness and stalking profit through dark allies than the ranger and the rogue. Whether used for ends good and noble or selfish and foul — or something in between — such talents are indispensable in any fantasy campaign. This sourcebook in the Player's Guide series from Sword and Sorcery Studios explores the talents of enigmatic rangers and secretive rogues.

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players guide to Rangers and Rogues

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To R.K. Millholland and Something Positive, for the fantastic laughs and acerbic wit. I'm never sure whether to laugh or be appalled by your work, man, which must mean that it's just that good.

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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 fourth 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 Rangers and Rogues* is more than suggestions and rules on how to play a certain type of character. This is a book about determining where your characters, and those like them, have affected the world. To this end, we examine the skills and tricks involved in hunting the shadows, whether the stalker does so for the greater good or for personal gain. The men and women who are the focus of this book tend to exist on the outer limits of the law — whether because they eschew those laws or simply because they haunt the fringes of civilization.

Within these pages are the stealthy, the hunters, the stalkers, the watchers.

So, welcome to a book filled with the vigilant and the villainous, a book on criminals and bounty hunters, assassins and protectors, law-keepers and law-breakers.

Welcome to the *Player's Guide to Rangers and Rogues*.

Joseph D. CARRIKER, JR
SCARRED LANDS DEVELOPER
SWORD & SORCERY STUDIOS

INTRODUCTION

While the *Player's Guide to Rangers and Rogues* 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 rangers and rogues (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 have a strong component of black and white morality to them. The forces of good are virtuous and praiseworthy, while the forces of evil are vicious and blameworthy.

High fantasy need not be simplistic, however. In fact, many high fantasy tales contain very sophisticated examinations of the nature of evil and the very real temptation to choose it over good as a means to achieving an otherwise just end.

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. Two such archetypes are the "wilderness warrior" and the "thief with a heart of gold," both of which dovetail nicely with traditional conceptions of the ranger and rogue character classes. 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. Low fantasy characters are often rough and tumble sorts of individuals, people who are willing to do whatever it takes to succeed in their goals, even if it means flouting the conventions of the society in which they exist. Whether literally or not, low fantasy characters are often outsiders who live by their own rules, making this genre a natural one for games that focus heavily on rangers or rogues — outsiders if ever there were any among the standard character classes.

To use this book in a low fantasy setting, then, requires little work. The primary issue is one of magic. Low fantasy, by its nature, has few encounters with genuine magical or supernatural elements. When it does happen, it’s usually outside the protagonists’ control. In a low fantasy setting, rangers might not have access to divine spells or, if they do, their spell list might be shorter, eliminating some of the obvious supernatural ones, such as *speak with plants* or *polymorph*. The same applies to certain rogue abilities, such as *slippery mind*, depending on how (or if) the GM wishes to justify its existence. Likewise, many feats or prestige classes introduced in this book would be off-limits because of their dependence on magical or supernatural aid. Still, rangers and rogues are among the most suitable classes for low fantasy, making them good character choices for games that use this genre.

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, mystery 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.

Neither rangers nor rogues are natural characters for a gothic horror setting, but neither are they inappropriate for it. That is to say that, while the genre is geared more towards introspective and emotional characters, rangers and rogues are just as likely as anyone else to

possess these traits as anyone else. Their status as outsiders definitely sets these classes apart from others, which means that they might find no respite from the horrors they encounter in “polite society.” They may find themselves shunned or otherwise avoided, treated as if they were as pernicious as the evils they face. This fact gives the GM plenty of ammunition for some very interesting stories should he wish to take advantage of it. If isolation and frustration are important elements of the genre, then rangers and rogues could easily exemplify them.

Most of the advice presented above in the discussion of low fantasy applies equally well to gothic horror. Magic and the supernatural remain rare and largely outside the control of the player characters in this genre. Thus, any feat, prestige class or item that runs counter to this convention of the genre could, if not considered carefully, undermine the feel of the setting. Many of the groups and organizations described in this book could, if properly presented, be used in a gothic horror game. The same goes for the tricks of the trade, some of which, such as the rogue’s contacts, for example, work very well in a genre that depends heavily on social interactions for much of its tension.

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 process that can be understood and harnessed, whether for good or for evil. In some science fantasy settings, magic reproduces contemporary or futuristic technologies, like automobiles or spaceships. In others, the laws of magical science are different and lead to unexpected developments that bear no resemblance to anything existing in the real world. Science fantasy assumes that magic has an impact on the world beyond that of adventurers and their enemies. In many ways, science fantasy is the ultimate type of high fantasy.

Depending on the specifics of the setting, rangers and rogues may find their fortunes vary a great deal in a science fantasy campaign. If, for example, the GM rarely sets his adventures in a wilderness environment — or there is no wilderness area at all! — the ranger finds himself lacking much of his *raison d’être*. Of course, with the right selection of feats, a ranger need not be a one-trick pony and could be just as useful in urban environments as any other characters, perhaps even more so. The same issues are less