

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I haven't read *Dragon* in a long time. I'm not sure why, exactly. I used to read it faithfully every month for nearly 10 years straight. Part of the reason, I think, is that I've never fully acclimated to D&D 3.5. That sounds strange, I know. I play the game and I write about it, but I guess I've never been comfortable with the prestige classes and emphasis on high level play. Nevertheless, I recently picked up *Dragon* #351 and found a few things that really sparked my interest. Items so interesting, in fact, that I decided to share one with you. On the back page is an NPC I wrote for GURPS. His name is Sheridan and I think he could be used in a modern, fantasy or sci-fi setting. As always, hit me up at Christian@IridiaZine.net if you have any questions or comments.

Until next time, Christian

Defiler

d&d 3.5

TSR used to publish a campaign setting called *Dark Sun*, which was set in the world of Athas. Athas is a blasted, desert setting where wizards (called Defilers) have destroyed all plant life as a side effect of their spell casting. The inhabitants of Athas consumed most of their natural resources long ago and are forced to use weapons crafted from bone and rock. When the setting was first published, I didn't think much of it. I guess I was really into the traditional orcs and elves style of play at the time. After reading an article in *Dragon* #351, however, I'm really thinking about picking up some *Dark Sun* material on EBay.

The article presented a feat for *Dark Sun* called *Defiler*, but I really think it could be used in any milieu. Basically, *Defiler* allows a wizard to boost the power of his spells at the expense of nearby plant life. A group of selfish wizards reducing lush forests to ash in order to empower their spells would make great villains!

Defiler

You can power your spells using energy stolen from plants around you.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast 1st-level arcane spells.

Benefit: You may draw the life force from plants around you in an act known as defiling. Casting a spell with defiling magic increases the caster level of the spell by +1. A spell cast with defiling magic takes longer to cast. If the spell's casting time is a standard action or less, its casting time increases to 1 round. If the spell's casting time is measured in rounds, its casting time is increased by 1 round. If the spell's casting time is measured in minutes, its time increases by 1 minute. If the spell's casting time is measured in hours, its casting time increases by one hour.

You may only use defiling magic to enhance arcane spells cast with an arcane spellcasting class. You cannot, for example, use defiling magic to cast a cleric's domain spell that also appears on an arcane spellcasting class' spell list.

When you defile, you instantly destroy all plant life (but not plant creatures) in a radius of 5 feet per level of the spell. A 0-level spell defiles a single 5-foot square. The defiled area becomes completely sterile and can never again support life. Only a carefully worded *miracle* can reverse this permanent sterility.

In an area without plant life (such as an area in which you already used defiler magic once before), any spell you cast with defiling magic fails and you lose that spell.

Special: You cannot cast arcane spells on Athas unless you possess this feat, even if you intend on never defiling. Wizards native to Athas gain this feat as a bonus feat when they gain their first level of wizard.

Sheridan

gurps 4e

“Not all of the criminals out here want to kill you. Some just want your skin.”

Sheridan isn't a bad man, he's just a bit lazy. He wandered extensively in his younger days, hoping to strike it rich without actually having to strain himself. Eventually, Sheridan ended up getting arrested for vagrancy. He was branded with a "V" on his right forearm, then exiled. Expelled into the wild with other condemned men, Sheridan learned to either work or die.

Sheridan managed to befriend a dozen or so non-violent criminals. They banded together for mutual support and now spend their time maintaining the defenses of the camp in which they live. He dreams of returning home, but he knows it's futile. The walls that surround his homeland are 40 feet high and the guards who patrol them shoot anything that approaches.

The wild lands where Sheridan lives are home to fierce animals and dangerous sub-humans. If that weren't bad enough, more violent criminals often raid the camp where Sheridan and the more passive exiles live. Many of the dangerous convicts have serious mental illnesses and life in the wild has caused them to grow increasingly unstable. Sheridan worries that it's only a matter of time before the camp is overrun. He hopes and prays that his luck will turn and that relief will come. Until then, there are trenches to dig, fires to tend and food to be gathered.

Using Sheridan In Play

There are some who believe that exile is a rather harsh sentence. This is especially true given the fact that the prisoners often turn upon on another and that many of the exiles are not equipped to deal with living in a brutal environment. The people who argue for reforms in the law are correct to wonder why a petty crime, like vagrancy, is punished with a potential death sentence.

Characters might be hired to smuggle supplies, medicine and letters from relatives to the exiled prisoners. The party would have to be very careful, since being caught could very well result in the characters being exiled as well. In the wild, the party would have to defend themselves from attacks by the more violent exiles, as well as fend off wild animals.

Conversely, characters might be hired by city officials to survey the criminal camps, determine the prisoners'

relative health and organization and then report on their findings. It's possible the exiles have organized themselves into a rag tag army and plan on attacking the society that treated them so cruelly. It'd be up to the party to pacify the exiles.



Sheridan and a band of exiled convicts living on the fringes of civilization were inspired by Patrick Carman's Dark Hills Divide.

Sheridan (-5 points)

SM 0 (5' 8" tall, 155 lbs.);
ST 11 [10], DX 10, IQ 11 [20], HT 11 [10];
HP 11, Will 9 [-10], Per 11, FP 11;
Basic Lift 24, Damage: Thr 1d-1/Sw 1d+1;
Basic Speed 5.25, Basic Move 5;
Dodge 8, Parry (see attacks), Block -
DR 0.

Advantages and Perks

Less Sleep 1 [2].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Social Stigma (criminal record) [-5], Status -2 [-10], Wealth (dead broke) [-25].

Skills

Camouflage-12 [2], Gardening-12 [2], Melee Weapon (broadsword)-9 [1].

Attacks

Light Club-9, 1d+2 sw/cr or 1d thr/cr, reach 1, parry 7.

Equipment

Tattered clothing, waterskin, club.



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