

Dark Ages & Dragon Gods

A SAVAGE WORLDS SETTING

WORDS OF LUCIUS CORNELIUS MARCIUS, ACOLYTE OF THE ROMAN DRACONIC CHURCH

“The bells? Why the bells ring to welcome in the Year of the Dragon God 399, all praise! I can think of no more wondrous time than this day. We bask in the glory of the Roman Empire under the benevolence of the Dragon God! Our Roman Draconic Pope speaks the will of the Dragon God and we obey. Our faith spreads from Boulogne to the shores of the Summer Sea by our Priests of the Scale. Our legions hammer on the gates of Byzantium and hold back the hordes of darkness. Our men of trade dominate the entire Known World. Once again strong, our Roman Empire moves by word and by sword.

True, we do not yet rule an empire as large as the First Romans, but armored within the fire of the Dragon we are powerful and protected. Our mightiness is inevitable. Let the feral tribes battle for scraps in the wilderness outside the light of knowledge. Let the Goths tend to their own when the trolls raid out of the Ruhr. Let the godless dwarves toil beneath their high Alps and the elves lurk in their black forests, lands no right man would seek out by choice.

Dangers lurk near and far to be sure. Even the lands outside our cities are vulnerable to the foul creatures that infest the wilderness: goblins, trolls, orcs, and dogmen. Perhaps most frightening are the Willowkin—those monsters who walk among us bearing our faces or those of our loved ones. Only true faith in the Dragon can save our souls from the fireless cold.

But I dwell too much on nightmares and perilous journeys. Here in the heart of Rome with the Great Temple towering over us, we can be the true men that the philosophers adore. We dine on the fruits of the Empire and bask in its victories. Who does not fill with pride to walk down the Palladius between the trophies of conquest: the obelisk of Aegyptus, the Starlight Fountain of the Elves, and the Titan of Athens?

The low classes work the fields for their lords and slaves serve masters as has forever been. Our Draconic Lord be praised that serfs and slaves know their place. Only the ignorant and the heretics resist the rule of their natural superiors. The worst are the Christians, a plague from Jerusalem. You see their heretical graffiti everywhere on the walls of Rome. They worship a god in the blasphemous shape of a man. Why it is pure madness to believe that god is like us in our frail and vulnerable form! Our one, true God of stone breathes fire.

Sadly, even under the Dragon's rule our exalted senators and nobles squabble with each other, setting their private armies against one another, scrapping for shreds for power. The Crown of the West has rested unclaimed upon the throne of the Gauls, but should a king rise there, dark days of war would rise with the coming sun. Byzantium stands battered but unyielding, its lands consumed by Rome and the Salemic hordes who infest the deserts of Africa and Aegyptus and raid Roman towns and ships. Their disregard for law is legendary. Stories from far north in Angland tell of a young king who has ascended to the Throne of the Isles and clings to it as he seeks allies in resisting Jarl Kurth and the blue men of the icy north. How anyone survives such terrible cold and the constant raids of the monstrous Northmen is beyond me!

Magic? Certainly magic is everywhere in street fairs from the desert wastelands of the Southern Lands to the hovels of barbaric London, and in the shadow of the Great Temple here in Rome. Many can command slight glamers to make their daily struggle a bit easier. It is true that in the enlightened places of the Roman Empire powerful practitioners of magic are lauded. In others they are hunted and persecuted as heretics or demon-worshippers. Of course all must acknowledge the supremacy of the Church in all matters, but mages can have their role to play. Any noble who plans to stay in power has a wizard or two at his beck and call to protect his person, his treasury, and, above all, his domain.





His enemies will use magic at every chance to steal from him or depose him for good. I even hear that in a few wilderness kingdoms of the North, wizards have eliminated the middle man and taken thrones for themselves.

But as powerful as wizards can become, they will never rival priests in their power. By the Grace of the Dragon, our priests work miracles far more potent than any magical trickery. More than just fortresses of faith and knowledge, the Church's monasteries are often fortresses of war, relying on swords and priestly magics to repel monsters of the wilderness and the armies of covetous, neighboring kingdoms.

To be sure, some still cling to the Old Gods, those of the First Romans which were put down by the Coming of the Dragon. Their time has passed and their power waned. Even their temples are all but rumors, torn down to build the One Temple upon their bones. The Gods of the barbarians cannot dim the light and power of our Draconic Father.

Change is, as ever, on the wind. Look now to the canals and ornate buildings of Venice, a young city rapidly growing to be one of the most prosperous in all of the Empire. With over three thousand ships in its mercantile fleet and a reserve of a thousand warships ready for any naval threat, Venice has quietly grown to rival Rome for rule of the Summer Sea. While they pay ready tribute to the Dragon every year, the Doge of Venice is plotting and preparing. How we will avoid war if he does not come to Rome and submit to the Senate, I do not know. Fisherman's taverns and the banquet halls of the rich are overrun with rumors of war between Venice and Rome.

But you look like bright, adventurous folks even if you are 'fresh off the boat'. I'm sure you'll find your way soon enough whether you join the legions, serve the Church itself, or even petition for charter as an Adventuring Company to enrich our Empire and confound those who plot against us. The choice is yours. Now, I believe there was a promise of wine for my counsel?"



Lady Vera d'Antielle

The Lady of Red Silk is a delight to have at one's court—beautiful, witty yet courteous, with a dash of the risqué. Noble by bearing and entourage, the Lady's origins are a mystery, but when pressed she will refer vaguely to a small kingdom at the shore of the endless Western Seas. Amused by new places and new people, she enjoys the life of a rich pilgrim, filling herself on the generosity of her hosts. The fact that her god changes to suit the moment doesn't bother her nightly slumber.

The Lady carries many secrets; the most interesting is her alter ego, the Lady of Shadows. An exceptional burglar, she targets the wealthiest lords and merchant princes, those she considers unworthy of their riches or station. Few are worthy.

Accompanying the Lady on her travels are her devoted bodyguard, Rodrigo Sabinus, her jester, Periwell Fool, and a handful of personal servants. Rodrigo knows her secret and helps guard it as well as her. She is unaware that he is deeply in love with her. She believed Periwell to be simple but the buffoon is sharper than he lets on. After some revelations they came to a deeper understanding and Vera decided to let him into her bed.

DESCRIPTION:

No more than five and a half feet high in her loftiest heels, the Lady appears delicate with the pearl-like skin of a northerner. Her features are lovely but only distinctive when her use of cosmetics makes them so. Close study would reveal a hint of elfish blood in her features. She is agile on the dance floor and can outride most men. Her dark hair is tinged with red and brushes past her shoulders.



STATISTICS:

RACE:

Human (Elf-Blooded)

RANK:

Legendary 80 xp

ATTRIBUTES:

Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

SKILLS:

Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Gambling d4, Investigation d4, Knowledge (Gems) d4, Knowledge (Nobility) d4, Lockpicking d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d6, Throwing d6.

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2); **Charisma:** +4

HINDRANCES:

Greedy (minor), Overconfident (There is nothing she can't steal), Wanted (minor) (The Lady of Shadows has a price on her head).

EDGES:

Acrobat, Alertness, Attractive, Charismatic, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Elf-Blooded (Start with d6 Agility), Extraction, Fleet-Footed, Improved Extraction, Quick Draw, Thief.

GEAR:

Daggers (4), Finest clothes befitting a noble Lady, Dark leathers for Lady of Shadows, rare Dwarven Chainmail tailored to her body, Lock picks, Padded folding grapnel.

YOUNG VERA (NOVICE):

Elf-blooded Human. Ag d6, Sm d6, Sp d8, St d6, Vi d6. Skills: Climbing d4, fighting d4, Gambling d4, Investigation d4, Knowledge (Gems), Knowledge (Nobility) d4, Lockpicking d4, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Riding d4, Stealth d6, Streetwise d4, Throwing d4. Pace: 6, Parry: 4, Toughness: 5, Charisma: 2. Hindrances: Greedy (minor), Overconfident, Wanted (minor). Edges: Alertness, Attractive, Elf-Blooded (Agile)

SETTING RULES:

ADVANCEMENTS FOR VERA

- 5 Agility d8
- 10 Acrobat
- 15 Climbing d6,
Lockpicking d6
- 20 Stealth d8,
Fighting d6
- 25 Thief
- 30 Charismatic
- 35 Vigor d8
- 40 Danger Sense
- 45 Notice d6,
Persuasion d8
- 50 Throwing d6,
Riding d6
- 55 Quick Draw
- 60 Combat Reflexes
- 65 Extraction
- 70 Improved Extraction
- 75 Streetwise d6,
Riding d8
- 80 Fleet-Footed

NEW EDGE: ELF-BLOODED (BACKGROUND EDGE)

Requirements: Novice

Be it from a recent or ancient ancestor, the character has an Elf in her bloodlines. Those with elf blood often show it in some fashion such as remarkable beauty or a knack for climbing, although it can vary between members of the same bloodline. The influence does not diminish over the generations even though some generations may show no sign at all. The character selected one trait from the Dwarf Racial Abilities (as defined in the DA&DG Setting).

NEW GEAR/MAGIC: DWARVEN CHAINMAIL

Fashioned by a secret alloy of steel, this very rare chainmail provides +2 Toughness but only weighs five pounds. Tailored to the wearer, it is not easily used by anyone of a different height or weight. The price involves more than just gold but only those who seek out the dwarves learn what that price is.

Adventure Hooks

PILGRIMAGE TO THE GODLESS (NOVICE)

The Lady of Shadows is just a dream for Vera but she has finally accumulated the wealth to make it happen. She risks traveling into the high mountains of the Alps to seek out the dwarves who dwell therein. She hopes her gold will buy her a very special suit of chainmail that can protect her from the attacks of stronger men but not encumber her reflexes. Beset by a pair of tenacious monsters, she only survives through the intervention of Rodrigo Sabinus, a traveling soldier. Rodrigo is smitten at once and he agrees to join her for the journey. Even with his sword at her side, she is still a tempting target for foul beasts and hungry highwaymen as ransom for their own enjoyment.

If faced with overwhelming odds, Sabinus and the Lady might have to seek the protection of the PCs. That group would certainly earn her undying appreciation or perhaps our heroes seek her for her past crimes.

NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T (SEASONED)

A brilliant ruby shines in the Draconic Temple of Livorno on the coast. The true faithful see the Dragon God's heart beating with crimson light. Such a gem would be priceless to the right buyer. The temple is guarded by the Swords of the Scale and is magicked by the Priests of the Scale as well—a true challenge to any burglar. The Lady of Shadows may need to arrange a larger game to snatch the jewel.

Will she find the PCs willing accomplices or heroes looking to pocket the price on her head? Can she use the latter as Lady d'Antiolle to play her game anyway?

A LADY IN WINTER (VETERAN)

Lady arrives at the gates of Firenze as the first snows are starting to fall. Travel between cities is risky enough with bandits and monsters, so no one is surprised when she seeks the hospitality of Argus the Duke of Firenze for the winter. While her 'title' and beauty convince the Duke to give her rooms at Palazzo Nuovo, his councilor-priest, Seneca, is suspicious. The Lady's home kingdom is conveniently cut off by rampaging Gauls so her pedigree must remain assumed. But it isn't long before the wealth of the Palazzo Nuovo and its courtiers draw forth her shadowy side. Recruiting locals and courtiers, she wants to humiliate a pompous member of the Scambiatore and pilfer his rumored cache of Grecian gemstones.

Perhaps the PCs are ambitious courtiers willing to join her scheme. If the PCs are more the law-abiding sort, perhaps they are approached by Seneca to thwart an anticipated robbery in the Palazzo Nuovo which would sully the Duke's reputation.

A LITTLE BIRD TOLD ME (HEROIC)

The Duke of Firenza fears the growing power of Bologna. To secure Firenze's position in the region, he is seeking an alliance with Brevezio of Ravenna, a merchant prince outside of the control of the Scambiatore. Brevezio has the monies necessary to hire a competent mercenary company to defend Firenze. Lady d'Antiolle has made her way into the Duke's inner circle and is entrusted with a letter to be delivered to Brevezio who happens to be visiting Bologna. If discovered by the Bolognesi, it would give them cause for war. If discovered by the Church, the consequences are less certain but best to be avoided. Fearing her journey may have been revealed to the Duke's enemies, the Lady seeks allies to join her entourage to Bologna as added protection.

Perhaps the PCs will answer her call. Will they be strong enough to thwart the armed agents of the Bolognesi? Will they be smart enough to avoid the wiles of a maiden who secretly serves the Church? Will Lady d'Antiolle keep her pledge or sell the secret to the highest bidder?

VOWS MADE IN STORMS ARE FORGOTTEN IN CALMS (LEGENDARY)

Duke Argus is smitten with Lady and rumors are flying that they will be wed before the end of summer. Unfortunately, Argus' recent power plays have upset his enemies. Some say a storm mage named Tempest has been hired to drown him in his bed. Others swear that the shadowy Cabal has been hired to slay the Duke with dark arts. An attack by bandits with water magic while the Duke was hunting outside the city convinced Argus enough to look for someone to stop Tempest by any means necessary.

Perhaps the PCs are right for the job. When they are allowed that close to the Duke they might spot the Lady's own plots in motion. Is she selling out her betrothed? Will the PCs ascertain Tempest's true role or simply attack him without garnering any proof? Or is it time for the Duke's reign to end?