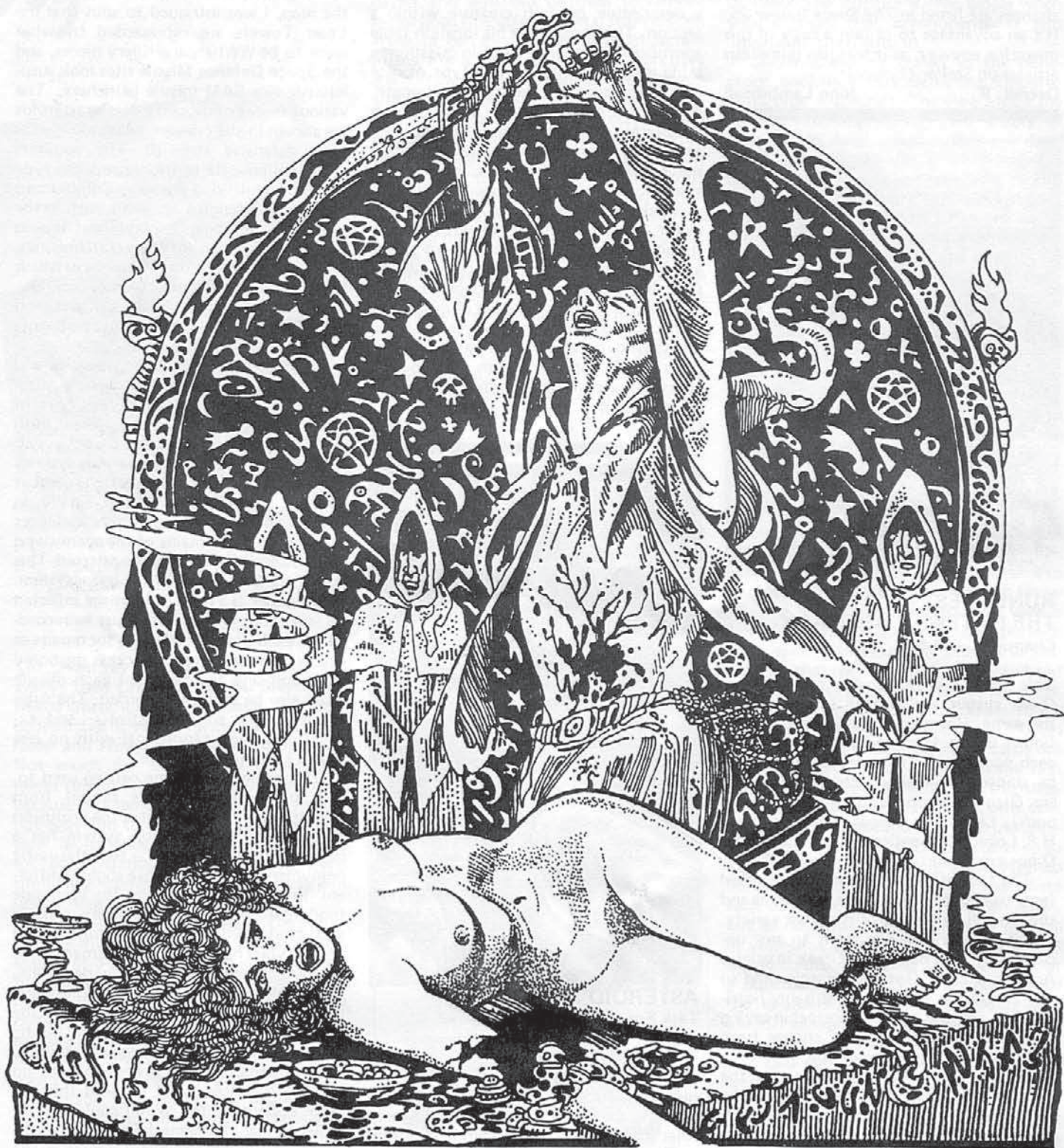


BLACK PRIESTS

by Lewis Pulsipher



Traditionally, the evil religious figure has been more furtive and sinister, in closer contact with his gods, than the *Dungeons & Dragons* evil cleric. The Black Priest subclass is intended to fill this role.

Only humans with wisdom, dexterity, and charisma of at least 13 may be Black Priests. Hit dice are six-sided. Except as noted below, this character is treated as an evil cleric. If a Black Priest changes to a non-evil alignment he loses all special

abilities and becomes a thief. He can never become good, nor will he associate with any good character. Black Priests of a given alignment have a secret gods-given language known and knowable only to themselves.

Black Priests may wear no better than leather armour, and may use a shield except while attempting to climb, move silently, or hide in shadows. They climb as thieves of a similar level and have percentage chances of moving silently and hiding in

shadows as indicated in the Table. These chances are *doubled* when the Priest is in his own temple.

Black Priests may use any non-magical one-handed weapon. They may also use some magical weapons: daggers, one-handed swords, and weapons normally permitted to clerics. In all cases swords are used at -1 hit probability and damage, and daggers at +1 hit probability and damage.

When using the characteristic strangling cord a Black Priest may strike silently from behind, the equivalent of the thief's backstab, increasing damage with level as a thief does. Only Black Priests can effectively use the cord, with a minimum strength of 7 required. If a hit is scored the cord inflicts 1-8 damage, but it is usable only from behind the victim (whether silent or not) and only against human-size or smaller necks or armour class 7 or worse. In rounds following a successful attack, the victim cannot attack the strangler until the latter fails to hit, and until that time the victim cannot vocalize, though struggling may cause noise. For these additional attacks the backstab bonus is given for hit probability but not for damage.

Because they prefer to grapple with victims ("to feel them die"), Black Priests do not practise with missile weapons and are -2 hit probability with all except a distinctive throwing knife. Each Priest carries only one such knife at a time.

Black Priests turn and control undead as do evil clerics. They use clerical spells but wisdom has no effect, whether advantageous or disadvantageous, except that a 16 wisdom is needed to allow use of sixth level spells, and a 17 for seventh level.

Because he is closer to his gods than are evil clerics, the Black Priest may call upon them for special aid, as below. On the other hand, because of this special relationship with the gods a Black Priest may not have a patron demon.

The Black Priest may call upon the Evil Lords of the Higher Planes as often as he wishes for aid, the result if successful equaling a *monster summoning* spell, except that the monster(s) summoned will stay through an entire battle and not just 6 melee rounds. However, if no battle is in progress when they are summoned, they stay only 6 rounds even if a battle begins. Summoning requires one melee round of *loud* prayer (except that a *silence* spell will not prevent summoning even though there is no noise). If successful, the monsters arrive at the end of the same round. The following formula determines the chance success (in percent):

Multiply the gift to the gods (in percent of earnings) in the past ten weeks by the level of the Priest. Add thousands of gold pieces of treasure offered in addition, giving a suitable value to magic items. Divide the result by the sum of the level of the *monster summoning* spell desired and the number of

times the Black Priest has called upon the gods for help in the past four weeks, including the present call.

This formula may be altered in accordance with very evil or not-so-evil deeds of the Black Priest. Gold or magic need not be given if the call is not answered. If it is, the gold must be given after the adventure, and the magic as soon as possible, by leaving it behind if it is present (but not so that a pursuing creature will find it!)

For example, a fifth level Black Priest has given 20% of his earnings over the past 10 weeks. He has called on the gods twice (whether successful or not) in the past four weeks, counting the present call. He offers a (necessarily) evil +1 sword. He wants *monster summoning III*.

$$[(20 \times 5) + 10] / [3 + 2] = 22\%$$

If the Black Priest rolls a 22 or less with percentile dice, he then rolls as if *monster summoning III* to see what help arrives. If the roll indicates a Lawful-only creature, roll again.

Monster summoning VII equals 20 for formula purposes. If the number of the spell is doubled, tripled, and so on, then if successful the Priest may roll two, three, and so on times and pick the roll he prefers. For example, the formula would be the same as above if the Priest tripled *monster summoning I*. If successful, he rolls three times, including duplicate rolls, and chooses which of the monsters he wishes to come to his aid.

The Black Priest may attempt to summon a familiar, as though a *monster summoning VI* spell but the creature remains with the Priest until one or the other dies. Familiars are black cat-like beings, move 15", one half hit die, AC 9, claw once for zero hits but with the possibility of putting the victim to sleep unless he saves vs. poison. They always move silently. The familiar may pass information telepathically to the Black Priest when within five feet and looking eye-to-eye, but there is no permanent homonculus-type link. If the familiar is killed within 2" of the Priest, or within his sight in any case, he is stunned 1-6 melee rounds, but takes no permanent damage. A Black Priest may have only one familiar at a time. Two weeks without other activity are required for the Priest to come to a useful and "proper" relationship with his new familiar. When the Priest and familiar are alone, but rarely when with others, the latter may take the shape of a human of the opposite sex, then registering on *detect magic*. Familiars only eat human flesh.

Beginning at the ninth level, and adding one each level, the Priest acquires non-replaceable special followers, in addition to those permitted by charisma. (Roll d100 on the Follower Table.)

FOLLOWER TABLE	
Die Roll	Follower
01-10	Black Priest level 2-5
11-19	Evil Cleric level 2-5
20-22	Displacer Beast
23-27	Gorgon
28-32	Hellhound, 4 dice at 9th level, 5 at 10th, 6 at 11th, 7 at 12th and above
33-37	Hill Giant
38-47	Monk, level 1-4
48-67	Lycanthrope: Werewolf at 9th level, Wereboar at 10th, Were-tiger at 11th and above
68-77	Minotaur
78	Priest may summon invisible stalker maximum of once per week until it is killed
79-83	Troll
84-98	Undead: Wight at 9th level, Wraith at 10th, Spectre at 11th and above
99-00	Nightmare

BLACK PRIEST TABLE						
Experience Points	Level	6-Sided Dice		Move Silently	Hide in Shadows	Spells
		for Accumulated Hit Points				
0-2500	1	1	15%	5%	- - - - -	
2501-5000	2	2	20%	10%	1 - - - - -	
5001-10000	3	3	25%	15%	2 - - - - -	
10001-20000	4	4	30%	20%	2 1 - - - - -	
20001-50000	5	5	35%	25%	3 2 - - - - -	
50001-90000	6	6	40%	30%	3 2 1 - - - - -	
90001-175000	7	7	45%	35%	3 2 1 1 - - - - -	
175001-275000	8	8	50%	40%	3 3 2 1 - - - - -	
275001-525000	9	9	55%	45%	4 3 2 1 1 - - - - -	
525001-775000	10	9+1	60%	50%	4 3 3 2 1 - - - - -	
775001-1025000	11	9+2	65%	55%	4 3 3 2 2 1 - - - - -	
1025001-1275000	12	9+3	70%	60%	5 4 3 2 2 2 - - - - -	
1275001-1525000	13	9+4	75%	65%	5 4 4 3 2 2 - - - - -	
1525001-1775000	14	9+5	80%	70%	6 5 4 4 3 2 - - - - -	
1775001-2025000	15	9+6	85%	75%	6 6 5 4 4 2 - - - - -	
2025001-2275000	16	9+7	90%	80%	6 6 5 4 4 3 1 - - - - -	
2275001-2525000	17	9+8	95%	85%	7 6 5 5 5 3 1 - - - - -	

Note: Dexterity does not alter chance of success for thievish skills.
Level titles are as for clerics, with the prefix 'Black' added.