



# REALMS

SIDE  
BAR

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## Credits

**Lead Designer/ Producer/ Editor/ Graphic**  
**Art:** Sparkles\_Mandy



**Developers:** GetOffMacCloud, GrimGrixis



**Cover Art:** sacredArtsDesigns

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Welcome back everyone!

With the month of August we are going to be kicking things into high gear!

Our Campaigns "Tales of Chult" and "Tyranny of Dragons" will be going on break at the end of the month so that means our favorite thing **BOSS FIGHTS!**

As also please do your best to show support to your friends during this time it can be really stressful and sometimes, we lose some of our favorite PCs during boss fight time!

If you see someone with a really good play, or moment of RP let them know

### Kalashtar

#### Ingredients

- 1 1/2 oz white rum
- 3/4 oz orange curaçao
- 3/4 oz fresh lime juice
- 1/2 oz orgeat syrup
- 1/2 oz dark rum for float
- Garnish: lime wheel and/or mint sprig



#### Instructions

- **Add Ice:** Add crushed ice to a cocktail shaker.
- **Mix Ingredients:** In a cocktail shaker, combine the white rum, fresh lime juice, orange curaçao, and orgeat syrup.
- **Shake:** Shake lightly for about 15-20 seconds, or until the outside of the shaker feels cold.
- **Pour:** Pour into your rocks glass or tiki mug.
- **Float the Dark Rum:** Gently pour the dark rum over the back of a spoon so it floats on top of the other ingredients in the glass.
- **Garnish:** Add a lime wheel and/or a mint sprig for garnish.

**Serve and Enjoy:** Your Mai Tai is now ready to be enjoyed. Cheers!

it was something you enjoyed! With those Campaigns taking a break that means we are bringing back some old friends!

**The campaigns coming back are:**



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# Sparkles\_Mandy's D&D Quest for Twitch Partnership

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Greetings, adventurers! The Sparkles\_Mandy Twitch channel is embarking on an epic quest for Twitch Partnership, and we need you in our party! For years, we've been rolling dice, crafting unforgettable stories, and building a vibrant fellowship/cult of TTRPG fans. Now, we're ready to level up and chase that coveted Twitch Partner status.

At Sparkles\_Mandy, our channel is a magical haven for D&D lovers. Expect thrilling live campaigns, creative world-building, and tips for Dungeon Masters and players alike. From epic battles to hilarious roleplay moments, every stream is a shared adventure. Our tight-knit group—sparked by your views, follows, and lively chats—is the heart of this journey.

To achieve Twitch Partnership, we're aiming for consistent viewership, more followers, and subscriber milestones. Here's how you can join the quest: tune into our weekly streams at [twitch.tv/sparkles\\_mandy](https://twitch.tv/sparkles_mandy), spread the word with [#mandurgoespartner](#) and [#rpgsidebar](#), and consider subscribing to fuel the adventure.

Let's roll for initiative and make this dream a reality together!

Join Sparkles\_Mandy on Twitch, share your D&D tales in the chat, and let's conquer this milestone as a legendary party!

Join us August 3<sup>rd</sup> for our stream kickoff!





# Xaretul: The Forgotten Flame

## Chapter 2: The Flame Rekindled

By EndYourStreamTV

The boy's name was Arian.

The girl, his sister, was Kira.

They were the world now, the only ones that mattered.

I watched them every day. From the edges of their existence, unseen, a god reborn in the shadows. The world passed them by, their tattered clothes, the dirt under their nails, the cold wind that bit at them as they huddled together in the ruined house. Yet there was a warmth between them, an intimacy I had never known in the centuries of my former glory.

Kira's voice, fragile and wavering, sang life into the pages of my book. Her readings were quiet, tender, as if she were unsure whether the words would reach anyone at all. Yet somehow, they always did.

"Arian, you're too small to carry the basket," she would say softly, her eyes alight with a hopeful sadness. "I'll bring the berries home today."

She'd smile, but it never quite reached her eyes.

Arian always nodded, a child's obedience in his eyes, but I knew, I saw, the hunger that gnawed at him. They never had enough food.

Their days bled into one another, no different from the last. And I was no different from the god who had once shaped entire kingdoms with his will. Except now, I was weak, tethered only by the faintest traces of belief.

It was not power, not strength as it had once been, but something far simpler. Faith. A child's faith.

The spark in me flickered again, a pulse of warmth spreading from the core of my being. I could feel it through the air, as if the very molecules around me shifted with the recognition. My hand trembled with it.

I could do something.

The night had fallen once more, and Kira and Arian huddled together under the threadbare blanket, eyes wide in the dark.

I could hear them, their breath, the steady thrum of a world indifferent to their suffering.

But I was not indifferent. Not anymore.

Kira shifted in her sleep, and Arian reached out, tugging at her sleeve.

"Sissy... I want to believe."

Her brow furrowed in her sleep, but her lips moved, repeating the words I had heard so many times.

"I believe in you, Xar. You're my god, aren't you?"

I felt it then, in a way I never had before, a deep pull within me. A connection, delicate and fragile but real. The belief of a child, the purest form of faith, could still move mountains.

Could I move mountains?

I reached out with the smallest whisper of my essence. There, just on the edge of my reach, the shadows around them began to bend. I pressed harder. A flicker of flame sparked in the distance, a solitary firefly in the dark.

(cont on page 0)





CLOUD'S  
DIABLO  
GOAT



CLOUD  
WITCHFIRE



ARK  
HUTS



MINI  
CLOUD'S  
CAMP  
NAME



PT  
TAME



DIABLO  
FUN



## FROM OUR SERVERS

WE HAVE 2 ONLINE SERVERS OFFERING BOTH  
ARK AND MINECRAFT!!





# Xaretul: The Forgotten Flame (cont)

By EndYouStreamTV

Arian's eyes fluttered open. The shadows in the room thickened. They were not from the night but from me. The air around him grew heavy with the promise of something ancient.

His voice trembled.

"Xar? Is it you?"

The warmth I had conjured flickered, a momentary flash that would have been unnoticed to any mortal eye.

But to him, it was enough.

I could feel his belief, his love for his sister, seep into me like a lifeblood. And in turn, my power surged. It wasn't much, not yet, but it was more than I had known for a thousand years.

And in that moment, I remembered something that was as old as my existence.

**I could change their world.**

Not with thunder or war, not with celestial fire. But with quiet miracles. With tiny gifts that meant everything.

Arian whispered again, "You're real, aren't you?"

A flicker of light danced above his hand, soft, golden, and warm. It was only a shimmer, but his eyes widened, heart racing in disbelief.

"Yes," I whispered, though my voice was nothing but a thought, a ripple in the air. "I am here."

His mouth parted in awe, but before he could speak again, Kira stirred. Her eyes fluttered open, confusion clouding her gaze.

"What's going on, Arian?" She rubbed her eyes, a frown pulling at her lips. "Is... is it morning already?"

Arian held out his hand, and the light flickered again, this time brighter. Kira's eyes followed it, wide with astonishment.

"Look, Sissy! He's real! Xar's real! He... he's here!"

The girl sat up abruptly, her heart pounding. For the first time, I saw hope glimmer in her eyes, like a candle flickering in a vast, dark room.

But I knew the truth. The truth they could not yet see. I could only exist in this form, the form of belief, as long as they remained true to me. And if they ceased believing... if they lost hope...

I would fade again.

But not tonight.

Tonight, I would be the god they needed me to be.

The warmth in the room grew, soft and steady like a breath. A small flicker of light in the dark, pulsing with the strength of a thousand prayers.

And I was enough. For now.



Chill Vibes  
for  
Campaign Prep

@TheCafeDM  
on  
YouTube







## Lizette's Discovery

### The flame refused to die.

By OldManGeras



I'd extinguished a thousand fires in the Temple of the Renewing Flame. Dawn rites, solstice renewals, the passing of the sacred cord. I knew fire like others knew how to breathe. But this morning, when I whispered the rite to send it home, the flame resisted.

Not flared. Not dancing. Resisted.

It recoiled from my breath, clung to the brazier's bowl, curling like a thing afraid of the dark. I narrowed my eyes and whispered again. The flame shivered, then hissed, long and low, like a child hiding under blankets.

I stamped it out with the iron heel of my boot. It didn't die. It whimpered.

The courtyard greeted me with cold light and river chatter. Birds chirped along the stone wall, unconcerned, as if nothing beneath the bell tower had shivered. The children had already gathered, elbow, deep in prayer cord thread. Reds, golds, copper dyed cotton. The bright colors mocked the pit still turning in my stomach.

Brinna Thatch sat cross, legged near the fountain, her smoke-colored gray braid nearly undone, fingers busy twisting a sun-colored cord. She looked up as I approached.

"You're late," she said. Her grin had the edges of someone who knew when not to push too far.

"I was arguing with a flame," I said, kneeling beside her.

Brinna smirked. "Did it win?"

"Let's say it died on its own terms."

She giggled and handed me a loose end. We braided in silence, three strands woven over and under, a small piece of Sirrion's teaching: transformation, flow, tension. I watched her hands.

Then the spark came.

No flint. No friction.

Just a flicker.

The flame caught on to the braid.

A single ember bloomed, bright as a heartbeat, then curled into a perfect spiral at the cord's center. It hovered, then vanished.

I opened my mouth. Brinna beat me to it. "I heard a voice in the fire last night."

I stopped. "What kind of voice?"

She didn't look at me. "It said it knew your name."

The air tightened. I forced my voice low. "What did it sound like, Brinna?"

Her fingers trembled, still braiding. "Like wind down a chimney. Hollow. Lonely. Not angry, just... sad."

Before I could answer, the bell tolled. Evening vigil.

The cord still pulsed with residual warmth.

(cont on page 11)





# Alban of the Eldergrove



## Character Writing

By SexySlothh

Race: Elf

Class: Wizard

Age: old as fuck

Name: Alban of the Eldergrove

In the heart of the ancient Eldergrove Forest, hidden from prying eyes and chaotic happenings of the outside world, stood a magnificent tower woven with enchantments and protected by intricate wards. This was the haven of Alban, an elf wizard known for his unparalleled mastery of the arcane arts. Gifted with centuries of wisdom, Alban devoted his life to the pursuit of knowledge, surrounded by tomes, scrolls, and magical artifacts, from which he never strayed.

Loneliness enveloped him like a shroud, his only companions the flickering flames of his ever-burning candles and the whispers of long-forgotten spells. The outside world, with its tumult and strife, filled him with a sense of foreboding. He had witnessed the rise and fall of empires, the ebb and flow of magic, and the ceaseless struggle between light and darkness. Yet, the fear of the chaotic world kept him tethered to his solitary life.

One fateful night, as Alban delved into an ancient manuscript detailing powerful elemental magics, a storm unlike any other brewed outside his tower. The winds howled like banshees, and lightning lashed out with a fury that he had not seen in many ages. Unbeknownst to him, the tomb had dark magic hidden within it and, unknowingly, Alban unleashed a catastrophic spell, shattering the very foundation of his beloved tower.



As the dust settled, Alban emerged from the rubble, disoriented and despondent. His life's work lay in ruins, and the forest he had cherished for eons began to feel like a trap, closing itself in. As he wandered through the remnants of his home, he stumbled upon a group of unlikely adventurers. A spirited human rogue with quick wits and a roguish charm, a stalwart dwarf warrior with a heart of gold, a clever halfling bard with songs of courage, and an insightful human cleric devoted to healing. [10:19 AM]

Initially wary of their intentions, Alban soon discovered their kindness and determination. They were seeking answers to a dark force that threatened their lands, and despite never having left his tower, Alban felt the pull of destiny. Recognizing that his vast knowledge and magical prowess could aid them in their quest, he reluctantly decided to join forces with the young adventurers.

Together, they forged an unbreakable bond, as each member learned from the others' strengths and weaknesses. Alban's arcane skills complemented the raw energy and enthusiasm of the adventurers. With each obstacle they faced, twisted monsters, and treacherous landscapes, Alban found his long-lost spirit ignited. He not only shared his knowledge of magic but also learned the values of friendship, bravery, and the unyielding power of hope.

From a recluse who wouldn't leave his tower to an adventurer who never stayed in one place too long... Alban didn't want to admit it out-loud but this group... they are his family. As long as the fates allowed him he would protect and teach these young adventurers everything he could before his inevitable end...





## Lizette's Discovery (cont.)

by OldManGaras

The cord still pulsed with residual warmth.

We lit fifty candles.

The sanctuary glowed soft and gold. The villagers stood with bowed heads, hands clasped together. I began the Hymn of Rekindling. It was muscle memory - rise, descend, hold onto the flame's name. I kept my eyes on the brazier.

I said Sirrion's name aloud.

Every flame turned.

They coiled, each fire twisting into spirals, shapes no torch ever took. Red deepened to blood-orange, then deeper. Not light, but heat, memory. The kind of red you see inside your eyelids when you press too hard.

Brinna stood nearest.

Her mouth parted. Her eyes unfocused.

The brazier roared.

No heat. Just sound. The wind shrieked, pulling inward. Brinna screamed... or tried to.

She didn't move. The hearth behind her opened like a throat, and in a blink of ash and soot, she vanished.

Gone.

No cry. No flame. Just the smell of something old being exhaled.

I lunged. Emberlight flared in my grip.

"Reveal what hides!"

The spell burst while fire roared from my palm.

Not gold.

Black.

It didn't burn. It whispered.

"Do you remember me?"

My knees buckled.

Something had spoken through the flame.

And it knew my name.

Click Icon  
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OldManGaras  
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## Doctor Badrolls, or How I learned to Stop Worrying and Embrace the Nat 1.



By W. Adam Clarke

Good Afterwhenever, everyone. Your friendly neighborhood Game Dev, AP Runner, Streamer, Author, and Professional Hatrack W. Adam Clarke again. This week I want to challenge GM and player alike, by looking at the dark, seedy underbelly of roll playing games- The Crit Fail result- and why you should actually be celebrating those rolls.

Role Playing games are, in essence, a series of unfortunate events which the players must try to overcome to reach a satisfactory conclusion- rescue the guy/girl, steal the artifact, get revenge, whatever. These events are told through the randomness of dice, cards, or other mechanics, so that the GM can feign responsibility and argue you had a chance until the dice betrayed you, it's not their fault, honest, really.

We all go into the conflict- be it conversation or combat- with a well laid out plan, the best of intentions, and only our best rolling dice. Sometimes Fate smiles on us, and the dice do what we want- passing, or

perhaps even critically passing. However, even the best laid plans of Mice sometimes fail... and fail spectacularly.

Don't worry, that just means the best is yet to come!

I love critical fails. And you should to. Why? Well, remember how we said that role playing is just attempting to overcome a series of unfortunate events with proper planning? Here's a critical fail- the most unfortunate of events. With no time to plan. You see... steering a critical fail around into a success is the boiled down, concentrated, essential oil of roleplaying.

A real life example: on a table many decades ago, a generic human fighter type played by my buddy Alan wanted to swing his broadsword into the chest of an enemy NPC. The dice... they had other ideas. Crit Fail. I described in closing the gap in the pouring rain, blood and sweat running down the grip, as he slips. He keeps his footing, but loses grip on the sword, and it flies into the tree the NPC

(cont. on page 13)

I am Myrddin  
on  
Twitch







## "StarRiders" our new Merch drop!

With the long awaited return of the Shattered Obelisk campaign coming in September here is the first look at the new merch for this campaign!

With GrimGrixis back at the wheel as our DM, this is going to be a wild ride!



## SERVER PETS



**Send in yours by August 18th**  
in the SideBar server!





## Doctor Badrolls (cont.)

by W. Adam Clarke

is backed against, edging itself into the wood nearly a foot. Without missing a step, Alan quickly points his finger, screws on his best "I totally meant that" face, and yells "You see that, boyo! The same thing'll happen to you if you don't drop your weapons right now!" I had him roll a bluff check. Passed. Intimidation check with a bonus. Passed with flying colors. The NPC dropped to his knees pleading for his life.

Did he want to lose his sword? Never. But more importantly, he knew the Golden Rule: A Mistake is only a Mistake once someone else realizes you made it. Quick thinking turned a detrimental situation (flatfooted and unarmed) into a moment of glory we still talk about.

So, GMs and players, find ways to embrace the crit fail. It's the best improv opportunity in gaming.



GMs: make the situation worse, but keep in mind at least one way the players can turn it around, and be open to their ideas. Players: examine the new battlefield of bad choices, and find your diamond hidden in the coal. It won't always work, but when it does... you create the moment that's the talk of the table for years to come.

And that's really why we play the game, isn't it?



W. Adam Clarke  
Can be found on  
[SingleStepGaming](https://www.twitch.tv/singlestepgaming)





# So You Think You Can't RP?



## By Skyline

Well you can! At least, you can try to, and get better at it!

Dungeons and Dragons has evolved throughout its many years of existence, rule changes, editions, and players, especially how it is played. For a long time, and from what I have learned, RP wasn't a focus point in the game, even though it is a RPG tabletop... strange huh?

This has led to players not integrating RP in campaigns, aside from the dungeon masters, and just relying on the dungeon masters to lay it out for them and just head straight into battles. All that is well and totally valid, especially for older editions, but with new generations creates new players and new ideas for how to play, whether it be in campaigns or oneshots!

So, if there are some struggles with learning how to RP, whether you are an experienced player or someone just starting out, here are some of my favorite tips and tricks!

### 1: Read and Re-Read Your Character

If you're sensing a theme here in my articles, good! Reading through everything you will build for your character is crucial, because things have to mesh together well in terms of class, race, spells, weapons, etc. And that's just on paper! Once you get all that sorted, it has to feel like a well thought character and not something anyone can make, it has to be special to you and personal so that way it makes it easier and fun to play! And by reading and re-reading through your character sheet and backstory, you can have a better time when starting out so you know where they come from, and where they can go...

### 2: Watch and Learn

With so many platforms of entertainment, it's fairly easier now than it was years ago to watch something, specifically for free and live. Whether it's on Twitch, Youtube or something else, it's more common now than ever to find a D&D livestream and playlists of their campaign. And from what I have seen there are all types of players around the world who may or may not have different experiences, but definitely can RP. Anyone can do it, so by watching a group that you like will help integrate their roleplaying skills into you before you know it! Additionally, you can learn from your own dungeon masters, watch how they set the scene and play as NPC's, it will really help you. And hey, catching livestreams and past campaigns of our group isn't a bad idea either...

### 3: Practice Makes Better

As a recovering perfectionist, I learned in college that practice doesn't make perfect, it just makes permanent, or in this specific case, better! If you can't find a local in person group or an online one, you still can practice even if you're by yourself, I'm sure most dungeon masters do anyway! I think a fun way to practice by yourself would be to insert your character into a book, movie or some kind of other fictional world, and see where they would fit! Some questions include:

How would they react in these circumstances? Would they actively seek out answers or stay in the shadows and look from afar? Have they been surrounded by people constantly or are just now getting used to company?

I think running through these questions even before a oneshot with pre set characters would be beneficial! Wow, now I gotta do this with my own characters I've been playing with for fun now...

(cont on pg 13)







## Member Showcase!

### TheCrowDad

We asked a few questions to get to know TheCrowDad just a little better!

#### **Favorite color?**

Black

#### **Tell us about your hobbies?**

D&D, reading (mostly fantasy, urban fantasy, and sci-fi), watching shows (movies, tv, anime), drinking coffee, photography, eating Thai food and sushi.

#### **Do you have any Pets?**

Yes, Three dogs (Midge, Bela, and Victor)

#### **What is your favorite style of game, and what got you into it?**

RPGs is probably the overall fav. I think the oldest one I can remember playing would be Quest for Glory. My favorite of all time is The Witcher 3.



#### **If you would recommend a game to someone in that style, what would you recommend?**

Definitely The Witcher 3. You really don't need to play the earlier ones first.

#### **What's something interesting that people wouldn't guess about you?**

Hmmm... that tough... I'm a pretty wide-open book. Maybe that I really love classical music and grew up attending the Oregon Symphony

#### **Anything else?**

The cake is a lie. Especially that ones that are dropped from giant-assed floating monsters that Cloud has dreamed up.



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## So You Think You Can't RP? (cont)

By Skyline



### 4: Don't Create Something You Won't Like

This may sound simple, but trust me something may sound good on paper and at first, but actually be not fun later on in playing. You also have to think about the environment your character will be in, and whether they will stand out in a good or bad way. It's a bit harder if it's a character you've already made and are invited to a campaign, but it can also be fun for the DM and yourself to find something new and make it even more enjoyable. But simply put, if you don't like an aspect of something whether it's in the backstory or actual character creation, don't put it. This can include evil deities, loose ends in backstories that you don't want explored, etc.

Just remember to be mindful, and have fun!

### 5: Challenge Yourself

I believe in things such as D&D, it's easier to challenge yourself because you can take it with you in other aspects of hobbies and life! It's also fictional but I always get attached to my characters so don't mind me-

Anyway! In all of my trials and tribulations of playing this game, I have made mistakes as all humans do, but what I have also done is learn from them. I also use those lessons to challenge myself and make sure I don't make the same mistakes but make better choices that affect my party, myself and the story. By challenging yourself, not only do you find different outcomes but you become a better player for it, and a person someone wants to have on their table. Some ways you can do this are asking yourself:

Would my character stick to their morals here?  
What is my character feeling in this moment?  
What would drive my character to do something different? What would it take for them to stray from the path?

So you think you can roleplay? Well after reading this article, I hope you can! Or at least have some notes for the next time you play a seladrine drow bard or a half-orc paladin...

Even if you are a good role-player, it's good to remember the basic and refresh yourself to help be an even better player!



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## China's First Postage Stamps – The Large Dragons of 1878

By Papa Sparkles

### Introduction

In 1878, the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) introduced China's first postage stamps, affectionately known as the "Large Dragons." It was a proud milestone in Chinese postal history, reflecting the dynasty's enthusiastic effort to modernize communication during an exciting time of increasing global links. These stamps, featuring a majestic dragon—the emblem of the Qing Dynasty—weren't just for mailing; they also served as proud symbols of imperial strength and authority. This article examines the fascinating history, design, production, and enduring impact of the Large Dragons, situating them within the rich narrative of late 19th-century China.

### Historical Context

By the late 19th century, the Qing Dynasty faced internal and external pressures. The Opium Wars and unequal treaties compelled China to open treaty ports and participate in global trade networks. Consequently, a modern postal system became vital for managing the increasing international correspondence that traditional Chinese courier systems couldn't handle efficiently.

The Imperial Maritime Customs Service, led by Sir Robert Hart, spearheaded the modernization of postal services. In 1878, it introduced China's first adhesive postage stamps, aligning with international standards and marking a step toward modernization amid political and economic challenges.

### Design and Symbolism

The Large Dragons issued on August 15, 1878, had three denominations: 1 candarin (green), 3 candarins (red), and 5 candarins (yellow). The central motif was a coiled dragon, symbolizing imperial power, wisdom, and divine authority in Chinese culture, linked to Qing's Manchu rulers. The dragon reinforced the dynasty's legitimacy while adapting traditional iconography to a modern medium.

The stamps' design was both elegant and practical, showcasing a beautiful dragon surrounded by cloud motifs, which pay homage to traditional Chinese art. They were set in a neat rectangular frame. Plus, bilingual inscriptions in Chinese and English—featuring the word "China" and the

(sont. on page 0)



*Mandurlorians*

Sunday 5pm CST

[www.twitch.tv/sparkles\\_mandy](http://www.twitch.tv/sparkles_mandy)

SIDE BAR



*Writers  
Guild*

Thanks for all of  
your work to bring  
this newsletter  
alive!

Interested in being  
part of the Guild?  
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SIDE BAR







## So you want to fight a monster?



By GrimGrixis

This month we discuss the terror within the trees.... the thing that lurks in the shrubs.... the branches that move against you.... BLIGHTS. Blights come in a variety of forms, these lower tier monsters may seem like no problem at first but beware.... when nature moves against you fear should arise within your hearts. Let us discuss what blights are to start off. Blights are a creation of pure malice and evil.... or so some would have you think, personally I find them quite adorable. The first type of blight we would care to discuss are the prickly ones, the NEEDLE BLIGHT. A little hearty these blights specialize in death by a thousand cuts, boasting both a ranged attack and a melee attack these blights pose a threat to any low level party looking to tussle with them. BUT FEAR NOT, while they may swarm you, they may cut you, and they may try to tear you down... there are more...

Though the needles may stab and pierce your very skin... or hide... then you must gasp with fright at VINE BLIGHTS these terrors of the land grapple their enemies and crush them with force unknown. These two may seem frightening enough but fear not.... there are more monsters in the repertoire to discuss. TREE BLIGHTS... the titanic terror among blights, the very trees have moved against you these massive blights boast an ability to throw the very earth at you, their roots grasp and grapple you holding you down to beat you into submission... but those are not the most fearsome of blights.... the most terrifying of all these mischievous creatures... the TWIG BLIGHT, these small blights are numerous, for the sticks and branches are everywhere you roam.... now one blight alone may not pose a problem but imagine a horde of these moving against you, your party against the masses of twig, brush, vine, and tree, and the best part.... you wouldn't even see them coming. Beware adventurer, nature has it's disguises and though you may think you are safe... keep a weathered eye out. With that, we conclude this month's discussion of "So you want to fight a monster" and next month we will discuss.... Gnolls... the hyena-like terrors of the great plains!!!







## China's First Postage Stamps (cont)

By Papa Sparkles

denomination in candarins, a currency unit equal to 1/100 of a tael—made them accessible to both local and international collectors. With dimensions of around 25 x 30 mm, these stamps earned the nickname "Large Dragons" to set them apart from the smaller dragon-themed issues that came later.

### Production and Printing

The Large Dragons were printed in Shanghai using lithography, suitable for the intricate design. The Imperial Maritime Customs Service oversaw production, likely with foreign input, possibly British or French, given its international staff. The stamps were printed on thin, translucent paper with gummed backing, a novelty in China. The initial limited print run reflected the experimental postal reform. Sheets were perforated for easy separation, but variations in paper, ink, and perforation alignment created many collectible varieties, captivating philatelists.

### Usage and Distribution

The Large Dragons primarily served for international mail sent through the Customs Post in treaty ports, such as Shanghai, Tianjin, and Canton (Guangzhou). For local mail, traditional systems were still in use, which meant the stamps didn't circulate widely at first. The different denominations matched postal rates: 1 candarin for local mail, 3 candarins for domestic letters, and 5 candarins for international ones. These stamps stayed in use until the early 1880s, when new designs were introduced to replace them. Surviving covers with Large Dragons are rare, mostly unused or canceled singles. Their limited distribution and China's developing postal system add to their scarcity, making them highly valuable to collectors.

### Legacy and Philatelic Significance

The Large Dragons are revered in philately as China's first postage stamps and among the earliest dragon-themed stamps globally.

(cont. on page 0)







## A Field Guide to the Weather. Learn to identify clouds and storms and stay safe.

*By Mini Cloud*

Now we'll have to start with the basics like clouds and other stuff, and yes you may hate weather but after you'll be mesmerized. Well let's dive in.

### **Clouds:**

Clouds are the product of rising air, which causes water droplets within the rising air parcel to collide, coalesce, and accrete into larger droplets until they reach the point that their presence can reflect and refract sunlight, making them visible to the naked eye.

Of the types of clouds that you're most likely to see every day in the middle latitudes, there are three base types of clouds-- cirrus, cumulus, and stratus-- and two helpful prefixes: nimbus, meaning convective, and alto, meaning mid-level.

### **Cirrus:**

What They Look Like: Cirrus clouds are wispy clouds found extremely high in the sky.



In fact, cirrus clouds can often be found above commercial airliners at cruising altitude

### **What they say about the weather:**

Because they are so high, they rarely have much to do with the surface, and they are generally indicative of fair weather. If you are seeing cirrus clouds, either the intervening layers are so dry that clouds can't form, or cold air is found fairly low in the atmosphere.

♥ I hope you guys enjoyed it ♥

## A note from the editor

For those who are new Mini-Cloud is the 10 year old daughter of our DM Cloud and she has been a wonderful working with her. Every month I get so excited to see what she will come up with next!



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## China's First Postage Stamps (cont)

By Papa Sparkles

They symbolize China's entry into the international postal community and the Qing Dynasty's efforts to modernize during a period of decline. The dragon motif, deeply rooted in Chinese cultural identity, makes the stamps enduring emblems of national heritage. Large Dragons are prized by collectors for rarity, history, and beauty. Variations like "wide margin" and "narrow margin" add complexity to the study. Collecting Large Dragons can be expensive, but much like U.S. stamps 1-4, they are still an attainable goal.

The stamps also encapsulate a transitional moment in Chinese history, blending traditional imperial symbolism with modern administrative reforms. The Qing Dynasty's collapse in 1911 ended the dragon's role as an imperial emblem, but the Large Dragons remain a testament to the dynasty's final efforts to engage with the global world.

In conclusion, the 1878 Large Dragon stamps are more than philatelic artifacts; they mark a key moment in China's modernization and the Qing Dynasty's adaptation to global pressures. The dragon motif, rooted in tradition, contrasts with the Western-inspired postal system, reflecting a nation at a crossroads. As functional objects, they enabled communication; as relics, they tell a story of reform, resilience, and imperial identity. The large dragons remain cherished symbols, preserving the legacy of the Qing dynasty.

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# SIDE BAR

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## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

All times Eastern

MON 7PM TYRANNY OF DRAGONS  
SE Campaign  
GM: Jerrisa

TUE 8PM SPINERFUR  
Daggerheart  
GM: Adam

WED 7PM CHILDREN OF ELYSIUM  
Blades in the Dark  
GM: Jerrisa

THU 8PM SALVAGE INC.  
Salvage Union  
GM: Mordin

FRI 8PM SMALL PACKAGES  
Simulacrum / SE  
GM: Adam

SAT 7PM Cyberpunk 2025  
Cyberpunk 2020  
GM: Adam

SUN 7PM REMNANTS  
Daggerheart  
GM: Mergoth

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TheBurlyEarl







## Twin Threads of Power

A Comparative Study of the Weave and the Arcane Web  
*By GetOffMacCloud*

### The Lattice & Lash Article 1

"Two great lattices of magic crisscross the world—one a gift of the gods, the other a spider's trap of ambition. To walk one is to be a servant. To walk the other is to become prey."

In a world bound by forces unseen, few truths are more vital—or more misunderstood—than the nature of magic itself. This ongoing series, *The Lattice & Lash*, seeks to unravel the twin currents that shape our reality: the Weave, source of divine order and healing, and the Arcane Web, a volatile nexus of power and peril. We aim to examine not only how these forces were formed, but how they interact, conflict, and shape the lives of all who dare to wield them. Whether you are a humble priest, a power-hungry magus, or a wary onlooker caught in the crossfire, understanding these threads is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity.

These essays are an attempt to explain how divine and arcane energies coexist, interact, and are used by the various spellcasters within *Dungeons and Dragons*.

The attempt here is to explain a more realistic view of how players can visualize their usage of these powerful energies in gameplay.

### The Weave: The Divine Pattern

The Weave is not merely a channel through which magic flows, it is the embodiment of magic itself as it is experienced and shaped in the world of Toril. It is Mystra's, the goddess of magic, essence, a divine tapestry stretching across the planes, allowing mortals to access spellcasting, magical effects, and supernatural power without being destroyed by raw, unfiltered energy.

First established by the original goddess of magic, Mystryl, and later restructured by her reincarnation Mystra, the Weave is both a metaphysical structure and a sentient force. It is said to touch all things in Faerûn, acting as the invisible skeleton of spellcraft. Wizards shape it through studied formulas; clerics and druids call upon it through divine faith; bards sing it into resonance. Even the mightiest of artifacts and the weakest of cantrips draw from the same infinite pattern.

(cont. on page 0)



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## SLAGBORN TITAN

Huge elemental, unaligned

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 184 ((16d12 + 80))

**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	8 (-1)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Str +10, Con +9

**Skills** Perception +5

**Damage Resistances** Bludgeoning, Piercing, Slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, unconscious

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Understands Ignan and Terran but cannot speak

**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)

**Earth Glide.** The Slagborn Titan can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, it doesn't disturb the material it moves through.

**Molten Core.** When the slagborn titan takes cold damage, its movement speed is halved until the end of next turn.

**Volcanic Aura.** Creatures that start their turn within 10 feet of the slagborn titan take 7 (2d6) fire damage.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The slagborn titan makes two slam attacks.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

**Eruption Pulse (Recharge 5-6).** The slagborn titan slams the ground, causing a surge of volcanic energy in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 35 (10d6) fire damage and is stunned until the end of its next turn. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage and is not stunned.

### REACTIONS

**Harden Slag.** When the slagborn titan is hit by an attack, it can solidify its molten slag to fortify itself. Until the start of its next turn, its AC increases by 2. This reaction can be used once and recharges when the slagborn titan uses its *Eruption Pulse*.

### NOTES

#### Description

Slagborn Titans are massive elementals forged from jagged volcanic rock and glowing, molten slag. Hulking in form, they stand over 20 feet tall, pulsing with the heat of the earth's core. Molten streams flow across their craggy surfaces. Born in the fiery depths beneath volcanoes, it is carried to the surface by eruptions, where it roams the crags and mountains of volcanic regions.

#### Behavior

In its natural habitat, molten caverns deep underground, slagborn titans are docile and serene, content to bask in the heat of magma flows and meld with the surrounding stone. They move slowly, almost meditatively, blending into the cavern walls with its *Earth Glide* ability, rarely engaging with other subterranean creatures unless provoked. Their presence in these caverns is almost ghostlike, as they silently drifts through stone, leaving only faint tremors.

However, when volcanic activity forces them to the surface, their demeanor shifts dramatically. Disoriented and enraged by the unfamiliar environment, they become fiercely territorial, perceiving all creatures as threats to their domain. They aggressively defend volcanic crags, lava fields, and ash-covered slopes, using their innate abilities like *Eruption Pulse* to stun intruders, following through with powerful slam attacks to crush opposition. These titans will pursue perceived threats relentlessly across the surface, burrowing to ambush or retreat, but they return to their calm serenity if they can return to the depths, seeking the comfort of their molten home.





## Twin Threads of Power

A Comparative Study of the Weave and the Arcane Web

By *GetOffMacCloud*

More than a medium, the Weave is a living contract between deity and mortal, upheld by Mystra and her Chosen. Spellcasters do not merely use it—they exist within it, and in return, the Weave imposes limits, ensuring the fabric of reality is not undone. It is Mystra's will that no spell above 9th level may function, a direct consequence of the Netherese catastrophe, when the archmage Karsus sought to usurp divinity by casting the only known 12th-level spell. Karsus' Folly tore apart Mystyl, causing the Weave to collapse and bringing ruin to the flying cities of Netheril.

Where the Weave is strong, magic flows effortlessly; where it is damaged, spells falter. Dead Magic Zones, such as those lingering in parts of the Anauroch desert, represent tears in the Weave where no magic functions. Wild Magic Zones, by contrast, reflect areas where the Weave is frayed and unstable, leading to unpredictable outcomes with every casting.

Crucially, the Weave is inherently lawful and life-affirming. While it permits many types of magic, it favors healing, warding, and illumination. Attempts to twist it for selfish gain or dark purposes (such as necromancy or mind domination) often meet resistance. This resistance might manifest subtly: failed spells, corrupted effects, or divine disapproval from Mystra or allied deities.



Even illusion, which deceives rather than creates, sits uneasily within the Weave's design.

Those who work in harmony with the Weave often find themselves protected by it. The Chosen of Mystra—like Elminster, are living conduits, granted Silver Fire as both weapon and ward. But the Weave can just as easily reject a practitioner who offends its integrity, leaving their spells impotent or catastrophically miscast.

To wield the Weave is to participate in a divine legacy, one that stretches from the ruins of Myth Drannor to the wizard towers of Halrua. It is the spine of all spellcraft, and to ignore its nature, or challenge its limits, is to court disaster on a scale the Realms have not forgotten.

### The Arcane Web: Mirror of Ambition

Where the Weave is Order, the Arcane Web is ambition given form. Known colloquially as the Web, it is a dark and unstable construct, a shadow reflection of the Weave, formed when mortal hands first attempted to command magic without divine sanction.

(cont on page 0)



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## Twin Threads of Power

A Comparative Study of the Weave and the Arcane Web

By *GetOffMacCloud*



Its origins are debated. Some believe it emerged when the archmage Karsaryn the Defiant broke the Circle of Vows and cast a resurrection spell without the Weave's blessing. Others whisper that it is the remnant of the Hollow Dream, a forbidden realm whose very laws are incompatible with the divine.

Regardless of origin, the Arcane Web is now an active force in the world. It exists between and beneath the threads of the Weave, a parasitic mesh that feeds on misused energy and offers shortcuts at a cost.

Wizards, Warlocks, Sorcerers, and other arcane spellcasters draw raw power from the Web. But the Web is fickle. Where the Weave is a calm river, the Web is a storm surge, ready to snap and lash at the one holding the reins.

Miscasts, overuse, or spells of unstable nature may cause magic to pool into arcane residue, localized ruptures known as Arcanocyte Puddles. These chaotic anomalies twist the environment, spark magical surges, or create lasting contamination.

Areas saturated with failed Web-magic often become unpredictable, cursed, or outright dangerous.

Moreover, the Web corrupts over time. Those who lean too heavily on its power may experience a craving for greater magic, a creeping urge to push limits. Many of history's greatest archmages fell not in battle, but to their own arcane addictions.

### Weave and Web: Interposition and Opposition

Though seemingly opposite, the Weave and the Web are interwoven realities. In many places, their energies overlay like competing leylines, creating complex arcane weather. These "convergent zones" are unpredictable: one moment enhancing magic, the next silencing it entirely. In Dead Magic Zones, the Weave collapses, but the Web may still seep through—dangerous, unfiltered, and volatile. Conversely, in sacred places of power, the Web may flicker or fail to function, snuffed out by divine resonance.

### Closing Thoughts

To call one "better" than the other is a theological mistake. The Weave asks you to serve; the Web invites you to rule. One nourishes the world, the other bends it. But both are power. And in the end, it is not the source that corrupts, but the hand that wields it. Use wisely, caster. For what you draw shapes not just your fate, but the world's.



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RPG  
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*You know, there are a million ways to die in the west. There's famine, disease, gunfights... and wild animals. You know, like snakes. And Zombies.. yeah, zombies. But hey, at least you can enjoy some fishing, exploration, cholera, living off the land, hunting, dysentery, zombies.. ahh, the old West, how I miss those days.*



By OldManGeras



**Title:** Above Snakes

**Publisher:** Crytivo

**Released:** 2023

**Amount of time played thus far:** 19 hours

**Estimated time to finish:** 35-40 hours

**tl/dr:** -=[7.5/10]=- Zen-like sandbox crafting/survival game set in the old West. Not a zombie-fighter, but more a exploration game.

**From the publisher:** Piece by piece, create your own world in this relaxing Wild West-inspired worldbuilder. Craft, farm, hunt, build your base, and explore.

**Story:** So, Haley's Comet just passed over us and... hold up... another game where something from space causes zombies to happen? And we can die from hunger, thirst, snakes, zombies, bees, cholera, bad shrooms, insanity. You know what else can kill you? Doctors! I had a cold a couple of years ago. I went to see the Doctor. You know what he said to me? He goes, "Oh, you need an ear nail." Anyways, you wake up in a cabin after your mum decides to go to town and leave you alone far away from where she's going. Maybe she's going to go get some milk and will be right back? Well guess what, Haley's Comet dropped all those little fragments, and it caused so much damage that you need to find a way to get to town and find her.

But you're so young that you have no idea what the land around you is like, what dangers are out there, or how to use weapons. So, let's get those skills up, learn how to explore, hunt, fish, skin, cook, garden, you know, live. Oh, and since the West is horrible to live in, and 'settlers' have zero clue, you, as a member of the First Nation, get to help them along. As well as kill zombies.

**Art Style:** I'm going to get this out right now - I love the art style they used in this game. I know, it's not some grandiose 'I need the latest Nvidia card with 128GB of VRAM and a diesel engine to power it up' type, but man, the clean graphics style and way it feels right for the game just clicks with me. Slightly boxy with 2D/3D styles in it, it just fits. Even when you zoom in (the view is only 3rd person and while I'd love for a first-person option for immersion, I don't see Toby bringing that in). You do not need a high-end video card for this game and will enjoy it any potato you use to play games. I mean, it's not quite Doom level, but very simple and clean.

**Gameplay:** This is a Zen game, ok? Why do I start with that when talking about gameplay - simple, there's no real challenge in the game, and you get to proceed at your own pace. I mean, I love the fact that you can do whatever the heck you want to do, and the game lets you do that, but I do wish there was something to move you along or give you a sense of urgency.

There are two different game modes - Adventure and Exploration. Adventure mode has you following along with the story and going in a linear mode, completing quests and unlocking pieces one or two at a time. Exploration gives you the freedom and flexibility to unlock and build in any order, as long as you have the components needed to make the part or unlock the tile. And remember, someone always dies at the fair. If it's your first time playing the game, you'll be doing Adventure, but once you finish the story, you'll realize all the mistakes you made in discovering the land and placing the tiles and jump right into Exploration and redo it. Let's talk about some of the things that make the gameplay of Above Snakes different than other games. You've heard me mention zombies a few times above, but let me be clear, you don't have to really worry about that in this game. They're there more like stumbling blocks and you'll be able to ignore them for the most part. They're the slow, shambling types, not the 'oh god it can run and jump faster than me' type, and you'll have weapons you can craft to take care of them. Just make sure you have campfires at night.







## Roast Beef Sliders with Horseradish Sauce Recipe

By Brad Harris

Roast beef sliders with horseradish sauce are a great game day, party, or weeknight recipe. Easy to prepare for a crowd or just a movie night with the family.

### Why You'll Love These

A spicy, creamy horseradish sauce layered with thinly sliced roast beef covered with gooey, melty cheese in a hand size toasty bun. Man, nothing wrong with that!

You will love this roast beef sliders recipe because they taste way better than Arby's roast beef sandwiches, horseradish sauce included! Perfect game day (Super Bowl) finger food! Easy to make and incredibly delicious.

### Key Ingredients

- **Deli Roast Beef** – Ask the deli to slice it thin. I highly recommend using good-quality deli meat, not prepackaged stuff. The roast beef is the star of this dish!
- **Provolone Cheese** – I highly recommend purchasing the cheese from the deli too!
- **Slider Buns** – Pick your favorite. I'm not particularly fond of the Hawaiian rolls because they tend to be sweet.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

So simple; just layer all ingredients and bake. Place the buns in your baking dish and spread half of the prepared horseradish sauce. Lay on half the cheese slices.

As you can see from the photo above, I had to manipulate the provolone cheese slices to fit properly. This is only because I was stuck buying actual slider buns.

The grocery store I was in didn't have the dinner rolls I prefer to use for sliders, and I wasn't about to make another stop.



Place the roast beef on the cheese by layering and folding it as needed to pile it nice and high.

Drizzle the remaining horseradish sauce evenly over the beef.

Top with another layer of cheese, then place the slider tops on and bake for 15 minutes. Remove the foil and bake another 5 to 10 minutes until the cheese is melted.

(cont on pg 25)



**SIDE BAR**

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You know, there are a million ways to die in the west. There's famine, disease, gunfights... and wild animals. You know, like snakes. And Zombies.. yeah, zombies. But hey, at least you can enjoy some fishing, exploration, cholera, living off the land, hunting, dysentery, zombies.. ahh, the old West, how I miss those days.



**Tile Placement** - Building the map and world around you requires you to place map tiles. To be able to place a map tile, you need to unlock it via a cartographer table, which you get after you upgrade your workbench. AND you must get enough xp to be able to place a map tile. AND you must make sure the type sides of each tile match the tile type. In other words, this isn't just a 'oh, let me put a forest here, and a lake right next to it and then a desert next to that'. You will be planning, placing, deleting, placing again, over and over as you build the map you want for the quests you are on. And it's going to get you frustrated when you realize that you have an empty spot between two tiles because there's no tile that matches a lake with a plain and a forest. So now your beautiful map now needs you to delete one of the tiles and place a different tile there. Yes, you must plan a little bit, and you'll enjoy it.

**Cooking** - Well look at that, you're going to learn how to make Gordon Ramsey proud of you. Because you are about to learn how to cook. Thirsty and all you have is some dirty water? Boil it. A bit hungry and you just have berries you keep finding? Make a pie out of them. Caught a fish and don't want trout sushi? Cook it. And the all-important, learn how to make coffee. Being serious for a minute, this sounds like a lot, but all you have to do to cook these is start a campfire, place the proper ingredients in the pot, and it's done. This isn't even Cooking Mama difficulty,

just somehow put 3 berries in the pot, and suddenly you have a pie. But hey, it's a cute mechanic and gives you something else to do.

**Stats** - So we have health, hunger, thirst, fatigue and sanity. Remember that pie I talked about above. That fixes 2 of these (hunger, thirst). Make some other dishes and fix 1 or 2 of the other areas. They're pretty basic but help keep you from just running around chopping down all the trees, hunting all the creatures, finding all the bees nests and killing all the zombies. You'll get tired after a bit, and you'll start to move slower, or if you're running from the bees, you'll suddenly stop running and get attacked, watching your health drop. Very minor mechanics to the game, but just something else you need to look out for.

**Crafting** - You'll be doing a lot of crafting. Because you don't have anything. You'll start with a workbench, then as you build and upgrade it, you'll unlock other crafting skills (tannery, furnace, anvil, sawmill, fletching and gunsmith) that have more crafting items (up to 20 each) for you. You'll be able to build better weapons, move faster and quieter, be more efficient when chopping trees or killing zombies. Really decent crafting system in place. And you don't have to worry about how much you are carrying, because you have no limits. Build everything and fill in your inventory slots, and there's no over encumbrance you have to worry about. You'll even build up a cabin and have some types of decorations that you can use to

make it look nice.

**Exploration** - 3 different biomes and each has between 17-25 different tiles that you'll be able to place and explore. Along with that, another 20 or so 'special' places that contain areas that you'll be placing and be able to interact with people, hunt special creatures and just add more to do overall. Just remember that you shouldn't drink and horse.

**Steam Deck**: Straight and simple, this works great on Steam Deck. Some folks on ProtonDB have commented to turn of vsync, but I haven't noticed any problems, and that review was from 2024, so whatever issues may have been addressed.

**Audio**: Audio is decent, giving you a light feel of old-West music. Sound effects fit whatever it represents and sounds good. Nothing super exciting about it but given the nature of the game and it's Zen-like aesthetics, it fits.

**Achievements**: Only 34 achievements in the game, most are very easy to get (make an axe, die via snake/bees/trees, collect x items) and all will be unlocked during normal gameplay through to the end. Nothing seriously hard or grindy, though rolling around 100 times will seem slow as it has around a 1 second cool-down between rolls.



## Roast Beef Sliders with Horseradish Sauce Recipe cont.

By Brad Harris



Slice and serve these roast beef sliders with horseradish sauce to those hungry football fans!

### Tips

- To keep them warm for a gathering, wrap each individual slider in aluminum foil and place them in a slow cooker set on warm. Guests can just grab a warm slider from the crockpot during the party.
- The slider buns we used here were already separated. If you purchase ones that come in a "slab form" you will need to slice the still-intact rolls horizontally. Removing the tops of the rolls, then place the bottom bun slab in the baking dish and proceed with the recipe.
- You can also bake these on a sheet pan for easy slicing.
- About your buns, get what you like. There are several that work with this. You can use a standard slider bun, or a dinner roll, whichever you prefer. You can also hit the tops of the rolls with some melted butter and poppy seeds.
- You can also use Hawaiian rolls if you like. They are a bit sweeter than we prefer, but my sister goes crazy over them. So, by all means, get what you like.
- You can mix a little onion powder and garlic powder into the melted butter for extra flavor.
- Havarti, Swiss, Muenster, or white cheddar cheese can also be used.
- Not a fan of horseradish? Try spicy brown mustard, dijon mustard, or even honey mustard.
- Try caramelizing onions and spreading them on the sliders.

For the Full Recipe card click the Icon



## Imperial Magpies

Tuesdays

8pm CST

Live On

Twitch

[www.twitch.tv/sparkles\\_mandy](http://www.twitch.tv/sparkles_mandy)



## Tales Of Chult

Monday 8pm CST

[www.twitch.tv/sparkles\\_mandy](http://www.twitch.tv/sparkles_mandy)





You know, there are a million ways to die in the west. There's famine, disease, gunfights... and wild animals. You know, like snakes. And Zombies.. yeah, zombies. But hey, at least you can enjoy some fishing, exploration, cholera, living off the land, hunting, dysentery, zombies.. ahh, the old West, how I miss those days.

Value: Regular price for the game is \$25USD on Steam, but the game goes on sale very often on Steam for 50% off. Is it worth \$25? I think it's a little high, with the price of \$15-\$20 being the sweet spot for it. But when on sale, it's worth picking up. You're getting a solid 40 hours out of the game if you just play through it. And for the Zen/no-pressure vibes it'll give you, you'll enjoy it. Still not sure? Guess what, there's a demo available on Steam to try!

Let's break it down:

--[7.5/10]--

--[ Graphics ]--

☐ You are in heaven

☒ Good

☐ Decent

☐ A 2 year old made them 30 years ago

--[ Gameplay ]--

☐ Is it live or Memorex

☒ Good

☐ Decent

☐ Get an etch-a-sketch

--[ Audio ]--

☐ Eargasm

☐ Good

☒ Decent

☐ What? I can't hear you..

--[ Audience ]--

☐ Everyone

☐ Adults

☒ Teens and above

☐ Nappy time!

--[ PC Requirements ]--

☐ Potato Potatoe

☒ Decent

☐ Expensive

☐ Frontier or Fugaku are needed

--[ Difficulty ]--

☐ 3X + 1

☐ Challenging

☐ Moderate

☒ Can you color within the lines?

--[ Grind ]--

☐ 400 hours in and almost through the tutorial

☐ Average grinding needed

☐ Only if you care about leaderboards

☒ No grinding needed

--[ Story ]--

☐ There is no life other than this game

☐ Great

☒ Decent

☐ Tetris has more story

--[ Game Time ]--

☐ Time has no meaning, only this game exists

☐ 40+ hours

☒ 20-40 hours

☐ Press start and you're almost finished

--[ Price ]--

☐ Worth the price

☒ If it's on sale

☐ If you have extra money

☐ Just throw your money in the trash

--[ Bugs ]--

☒ Smooth as silk

☐ Early Access game-level bugs

☐ It's annoying but playable

☐ Starship Trooper has less bugs





# Random Rants w/Mandur

## Lets Talk Armor!

In Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), armor plays a critical role in character survivability, balancing protection with mobility. The 5th Edition (D&D 5e) categorizes armor into three main types—light, medium, and heavy—each with distinct characteristics, benefits, and drawbacks. This article explores these armor types, their mechanics, and their strategic implications for players.

### Light Armor

Light armor is designed for agility and speed, offering modest protection without hindering movement. It's ideal for characters like rogues, rangers, or dexterity-focused fighters who rely on quick reflexes.

- **Mechanics:** Light armor provides a base Armor Class (AC) plus the wearer's Dexterity modifier (up to the full modifier). For example, leather armor has a base AC of 11 + Dex modifier.
- **Examples:**
  - **Padded Armor:** AC 11 + Dex modifier, 8 gp, 8 lbs. The lightest and cheapest, but imposes disadvantage on Stealth checks due to its bulkiness.
  - **Leather Armor:** AC 11 + Dex modifier, 10 gp, 10 lbs. A common choice for starting adventurers.
  - **Studded Leather:** AC 12 + Dex modifier, 45 gp, 13 lbs. Offers slightly better protection, favored by rogues and rangers.
- **Advantages:** No Strength requirement, no speed penalty, and no disadvantage on Stealth (except for padded armor). It's perfect for characters with high Dexterity.
- **Drawbacks:** Lower base AC compared to other armor types, making it less effective for characters with low Dexterity.
- **Best For:** Characters who prioritize mobility, stealth, or spellcasting (as light armor doesn't interfere with somatic components).

### Medium Armor

Medium armor strikes a balance between protection and mobility, suiting characters like clerics, druids, or some fighters who need decent defense without sacrificing too much agility.

- **Mechanics:** Medium armor provides a base AC plus a Dexterity modifier (capped at +2). Some medium armors require a minimum Strength score to wear effectively.
- **Examples:**
  - **Hide Armor:** AC 12 + Dex modifier (max +2), 10 gp, 12 lbs. A basic option for early-game characters.
  - **Chain Shirt:** AC 13 + Dex modifier (max +2), 50 gp, 20 lbs. Lightweight for medium armor, offering decent protection.
  - **Breastplate:** AC 14 + Dex modifier (max +2), 400 gp, 20 lbs. Expensive but doesn't impose Stealth disadvantage.
  - **Half Plate:** AC 15 + Dex modifier (max +2), 750 gp, 40 lbs. Strong protection but imposes disadvantage on Stealth checks.
- **Advantages:** Higher base AC than light armor, making it more reliable for characters with moderate Dexterity. Offers versatility for hybrid builds.
- **Drawbacks:** The Dexterity cap limits AC for high-Dexterity characters, and heavier options (like half plate) impose Stealth disadvantage. Some require Strength (e.g., 13 for scale mail).
- **Best For:** Characters with moderate Dexterity or those who want a balance of defense and flexibility, such as clerics or melee-focused druids.

### Heavy Armor

Heavy armor provides maximum protection, designed for frontline fighters like paladins, clerics, or heavily armored warriors who can afford to sacrifice mobility for durability.

- **Mechanics:** Heavy armor sets a fixed base AC, ignoring Dexterity modifiers entirely. All heavy armors require a minimum Strength score to avoid a 10 ft. speed penalty.
- **Examples:**
  - **Ring Mail:** AC 14, 30 gp, 40 lbs., Strength 13. Basic heavy armor with no additional benefits.
  - **Chain Mail:** AC 16, 75 gp, 55 lbs., Strength 13. A solid early-game heavy armor.





# Random Rants w/Mandur (cont)

## Lets Talk Armor!

- **Splint Armor:** AC 17, 200 gp, 60 lbs., Strength 15. High AC but costly and heavy.
- **Plate Armor:** AC 18, 1,500 gp, 65 lbs., Strength 15. The pinnacle of armor, offering unmatched protection.
- **Advantages:** Highest base AC, making it ideal for tanking damage. No reliance on Dexterity.
- **Drawbacks:** High Strength requirements, speed penalties for low-Strength characters, disadvantage on Stealth checks, and high cost (especially for plate armor).
- **Best For:** Strength-based characters like fighters or paladins who focus on absorbing damage and holding the front line.

### Additional Considerations

- **Shields:** Not an armor type but an accessory, shields add +2 AC and weigh 6 lbs. They can be paired with any armor type but require a free hand.
- **Proficiency:** Characters must be proficient in the armor type they wear, or they face penalties like inability to cast spells and disadvantage on ability checks, saving throws, and attack rolls.
- **Donning and Doffing:** Armor takes time to put on or remove (e.g., 1 minute for light armor, 10 minutes for plate). This can affect strategy in time-sensitive scenarios.
- **Magical Armor:** Enchanted armors (e.g., +1 armor) increase AC or provide special effects, enhancing any armor type's effectiveness.

### Strategic Implications

Choosing armor depends on your character's class, stats, and role:

- **Dexterity-Based Characters:** Light armor maximizes their natural agility and supports stealth or ranged builds.
- **Balanced Characters:** Medium armor suits those with moderate Dexterity, offering flexibility for melee or support roles.
- **Strength-Based Tanks:** Heavy armor is ideal for soaking up damage, perfect for characters who draw enemy attention.

- **Spellcasters:** Many spellcasters (e.g., wizards, sorcerers) avoid armor due to lack of proficiency, but clerics or druids may use medium armor to bolster defense.

### Conclusion

Armor in D&D 5e is more than just protection—it's a strategic choice that defines your character's combat style. Light armor keeps you nimble, medium armor offers a balanced approach, and heavy armor turns you into a walking fortress. By understanding your character's strengths and role, you can select the armor that best suits your adventuring needs, ensuring you're ready to face whatever dangers lurk in the dungeons ahead.

