

# The Assassin

You once stood in death's court and escaped sentence by striking a bargain: the lives of others in place of your own. Now you are a bloody-handed killer, a death-dealer by practice and profession. But humanity is dwindling, the dark grows colder and emptier by the year, and passions and rivalries are ebbing before the bare needs of survival. Perhaps there are greater souls to consign to the abyss. Perhaps a hunter of men can also use those skills as a hunter of things worse than men.

## History

As long as there have been people, there has been a need for murder. Condemned by the mouths of the mighty while well-paid in their coin in the dark, there were assassins aplenty in the age of the sorcerer-kings: a time when a quick knife in the dark could be harder to trace than a curse which transformed blood to flame. Some claim that there were once hidden guilds of assassins, death-cults which sanctified their kills to the great mystery at the end of life. If so, those guilds ceased to be long ago, but their practices endure. Sometimes death still reaches out. Sometimes it still recognizes those who feed it well.

## Origin

Assassins share only two things in common: they have taken lives, and nearly lost their own. Here are some possibilities:

- You took a life in a fit of passion, and were condemned for it. Hanging at the end of the noose, or bleeding from a slit throat, or drowning at the bottom of a river, a great shadow loomed above you and you agreed to its bargain, and found yourself set free.
- You learned that the necessities of life are most easily acquired by taking it from others, and plied your trade in the dark for years. Finally, there came a day when your band of brigands was wiped out. You staggered away into the dark, the lone survivor, and by the time you next came to the company of men, you had placed a lien on your soul.
- You once had a patron, a terrible patron who paid well for your services. But then the day came when you knew too much about their sins, and they sought to get rid of you. You made a bargain and survived the charnel pit where they left you. Perhaps you have since fled their domain, or perhaps you secured your revenge and set forth to find a new patron.
- In the alleys and sinks of the Brass City there is want and need and poverty, and blood flows freely. You were one of the predators at society's bottom, distinguished from the rest of the human refuse only by your brutality and skill. In the end, it made you a target, and you were left for dead outside the city. But you survived, and now you wander the dark seeking a new fortune.
- In the perfumed parlors and elegant drawing rooms of the Brass City there is hatred and rivalry aplenty, and a need for skilled killers. You were one of the best, until your clients abandoned and betrayed you. Taken outside the city, you were hunted for sport, and escaped only by pledging yourself to death, who had always been your most true and constant employer anyway.
- Something else—a tale of murder and dark rebirth of your own devising.

## Gender

Choose one:

Man, woman, ambiguous, transgressing, or concealed.

Gender has no impact your character's traits. While incognito, you may find both restrictions and opportunities set before you as a result of gender expectations. When your deadly skills are a known quantity, it is unlikely anyone will dare raise the issue of your gender.

## Name

Select a plain name, a sinister name, an obvious alias, or an elegant name. This is how others will know you in the long cold dark.

## Appearance

Choose one of the following:

- **Rakish:** You're not a classic beauty, but there's some aspect of dark charisma about you. Perhaps it's your fast smile, or the twinkle in your killer's eyes. Perhaps it's your deep laugh. You've stolen countless kisses from death, and it has taught you to take life fast and hard and reckless, and something of this attracts people. Add +1 to rolls relying on bravado, fast-talk, or aimed at seduction.

- **Menacing:** There's something fearful about you. Perhaps you have a wide frame and strangler's hands. Perhaps you sport a wicked or disfiguring scar. Perhaps you seem pale and unwholesome and your stare burns through others. Add +2 to rolls to intimidate, threaten, and strong-arm others. Suffer -1 to attempts to appeal, seduce, or otherwise seem nonthreatening or benevolent.

- **Inconspicuous:** You can seem like anyone else, when you put your mind to it. Neither memorably ugly nor attractive, you simply seem like another person making their way in the world—at least until the killing starts. Add +1 to rolls to be unobtrusive or put others at ease.

## Mysticism

Though death is your great patron, it is a poor mentor in the secrets of the Dark Arts, much less the wider realms of magic. Suffer -2 to attempts to enact rituals or operate magical apparatuses.

## Shadowclad

You find it easy to slip into the ever-present shadows of your world, moving and striking unseen. On your turn, you may choose to enter stealth as your action. Roll at +2. On a 7-9, you are unseen and cannot be deliberately targeted until your next turn. On a 10+, you are unseen and cannot be deliberately targeted until you do something to reveal yourself, and if you reveal yourself by launching an attack, that attack gains a +1 bonus.

Additionally, roll at +2 when shadowing someone.

## Details

Choose up to two of the following details for your character:

- **Dark Contract:** Death taught you the trick of accepting murder contracts for ephemera. You may collect intangible payment for your services as an assassin in the form of things like memories, knowledge, skills, or even years of the client's life. In all cases, the client permanently loses whatever thing they give up as payment. The client must still willingly complete payment once you have fulfilled your end of the contract—they retain the ability to try to mooch on their end of the deal.

- **Mimic:** You can flawlessly imitate any voice you hear, along with most sounds.
- **Nimble:** You move with certainty and impeccable balance, for death has promised never to claim you through ill-footed happenstance. Climbing rock faces, leaping from branch to branch, and scrambling across broken rooftops poses no challenge for you. All such tasks are rolled at +2, and cannot produce a result lower than 7.
- **Eclectic:** You've found many things rummaging through the pockets of the dead. Select a second trinket, which may come from any playbook's trinket list.
- **Far-Strider:** You are at home in the lonely wastes where men dare not tread, and schooled in the ways of survival. Roll at +2 when attempting to forage or track.
- **Craftsman:** Death is your profession and your art, and you are ever-vigilant for more tools with which to ply your trade. You may use certain salvaged body parts after successful hunts to craft special items.
- **Incognito:** Your work is best carried out in the shadows, and you have made yourself kin to them. Roll at +3 for Shadowclad rather than the normal +2.
- **Larcenous:** You come from a criminal background and boast a wide range of illicit talents, such as jimmying windows, picking locks, making objects that don't belong to you disappear up your sleeves, and fishing things out of people's pockets. When you wish to perform a criminal act, roll at +2.
- **Soultaker:** There are certain forbidden and forgotten methods of ending a life—a specific knife-twist, a particular knot wound into a strangler's rope—that will extract and extinguish the soul along with life itself. This trick renders soul and body unusable for any further purpose—they cannot be questioned or raised, and the cadaver itself is nigh-eternal as even bacteria find it wholly inedible.

## Tools of Death

It is important for someone in your trade to have several options for dealing death. Select two weapons from the list below:

- A pair of sharp and deadly daggers. These allow for two attacks on your turn at +2 each, with each inflicting 2 harm.
- A well-balanced bastard sword. This allows for one attack on your turn at +2, inflicting 3 harm.
- A brace of throwing knives. This allows for two attacks on your turn at out to *medium* range at +2, inflicting 1 harm each.
- A bow and a quiver of arrows. This allows for one attack on your turn at out to *long* range at +2, inflicting 1 harm.

You are considered to have access to both of your weapons at all times during battle, and need take no special action to switch between them, though you may still only attack with one weapon per turn. You are also considered to have enough knives or arrows to last out a fight.

## Movement

When in battle, you have a base movement of one range band per round. You can take this movement before or after acting.

## Defense

You are swift, nimble, and always on edge. Add +2 to rolls to defend, or +3 while in stealth.

## Intimacy

When you share a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you may ask them a question which they must answer honestly, *or* reveal your nature without causing alarm.

## Trinket

In your journeys through the endless night, you may have come across an interesting curio. Select one of the choices below to begin the game with.

- **Mourning Shroud:** Woven in Anacrethe from souls lost to despair, this slick gray hooded cloak causes the wearer's features to blur into indistinguishable shadows while worn. Distinguishing characteristics, skin color, even gender are impossible to discern for a certainty. The hem of the mourning shroud is tattered, and it slowly unravels year by year as its soul-threads evaporate from ennui, despite the binding spells woven into it.
- **Devil Venom (x3):** A viscous black liquid carried within a flask of brass and tin, which attempts to crawl up onto your skin when the flask is unstoppered. One dose of this terrible poison can be used to envenom a projectile weapon such as a throwing knife or arrowhead; because devil venom is so volatile, this preparation must be carried out before battle begins. If an envenomed weapon inflicts harm, then the target suffers an additional 2 points of harm at the beginning of its next three turns.
- **Old Shield:** A battered old shield, bearing the faded heraldry of a long-dead kingdom. Requires the use of a hand in battle. Up to three points of harm may be negated by use of this shield; this negation doesn't have to happen all at once. Once three harm have been blocked, the old shield shatters into useless fragments.
- **Dead Water:** Enchanted decanter holding water from the Empty Sea. If upturned, a limitless volume of water will drizzle out, but this liquid cannot parch thirst, nourish plants, sustain aquatic life, or drown the living.
- **Mysterious Tome:** A heavy tome bound with golden thread, written in an unknown tongue. Its construction speaks to its importance, but its contents remain a mystery.
- **Silver Mirror:** A small hand mirror, its rim woven with enchantments once easily performed by even the most novice magus, now lost and precious. The mirror's surface will reflect human beings, and nothing else.
- **Nothing:** Only death herself travels with you.

## Death Moves

When your death clock reaches midnight, choose one:

- Become *badly wounded* and erase all harm. You suffer -1 to all actions, and remain *badly wounded* until you have a period to rest and recover in safety, or are otherwise healed of the condition. You can't choose this option if you are already *badly wounded*.
- You find yourself in death's abode. The MC will tell you whose life death demands in exchange for your own. If you agree, erase all harm. You cannot choose this option again until you have silenced your target.

- You die.

## Deathblows

You may select one of the following techniques to master:

### Shadowswift

While in stealth, your movement covers two range bands rather than the normal one.

### Shadow Strike

When you break stealth with an attack, you may make one extra attack.

### Paranoia

Once per hunt, when you trigger the trap card in a monster's death deck, suffer no harm and avoid the attack entirely.

### Perfect Strike

Once per hunt, *after* drawing death cards, you may discard the results of one attack roll and replace it with an automatic 10+ result.

### Killer Instinct

After landing an attack with at least one 10+ result and resolving all death cards, look at the next card in your target's death deck and then put it back.

### Teamwork

When your target is at *close* range with at least one of your allies, you may make one extra attack.

### Single Out

When there are no other characters within *close* range of your target, you may make one extra attack.

### Measured Strike

When you attack last in the round, you may re-roll one of your attack rolls and keep whichever result you prefer.

### Assassin Strike

While in stealth, you may attack first in the round if you wish, pre-empting the monster.

### Bleed Out

If you successfully inflict harm on a living target with half or less of its Vitality remaining (round up), then at the end of the round, it suffers one additional harm as it slowly bleeds out.