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INTRODUCTION

The news passed through the armies on the wings of rumor, changing the mood from resignation and fear to one of anticipation. The knight's challenge had been accepted; the issue would be decided by a duel rather than by battle. One person would die rather than hundreds. A few voiced regret at the loss of their chance for glory, and others expressed a cynical disbelief that either lord would accept a result that went against him, but most were relieved and eager to watch the two champions battle.

The challenging knight would, of course, champion the opposing army, but both sides waited eagerly to see whom the other lord would choose to uphold his side of the dispute. The forces drew into a circle around the plain chosen for the duel, the wings of each army coming close together. A few insults were exchanged, but the captains quickly knocked some sense into their troops — no sense in having battle break out anyway.

Two figures detached themselves from their forces, and rode into the open space. A cheer rose from both armies, as each side looked upon its champion and saw the certainty of victory. From one side an armored figure paced slowly into the circle. The light glinted from his polished plate, and his shield proclaimed his proud arms. The other figure was smaller, mounted on a light horse, without weapons or armor. She was dressed in a light robe, and had a wand thrust through her belt. As the two figures descended, she paused and, turning back towards her army, drew the wand and held it out. A messenger ran from the ranks to take it from her, and it seemed that she spoke a few words to him before turning back to the field of combat.

The duelists drew up and simply gazed at each other for long moments, each taking measure of the other. Then they saluted, one drawing and raising his sword, the other bowing her head in acknowledgment. And

the duel began, both combatants dodging in and out looking for openings, one swinging a sword and the other trying merely for a touch. The flare of magic and the striking of steel were visible, but in the chaos none of the observers could see who was winning.

And then it was over. The knight rode slowly back to the army, cheered by the troops and captains alike as they formed into a passage leading to their lord. The troops of the other side rushed onto the field to recover the body of their champion, hoping to find signs of life. The victorious knight seemed hardly to hear the shouts, but rode quietly through the army, dismounting in front of her lord.

"It is done," she said, as she knelt before him.

CHIVALRY

Valorous and loyal, serving both his god and his lady, the knight is the archetypal hero. Not for him cunning words or tricks, not for him disguises and ambushes. The knight faces his enemies boldly on the field of combat, risking his own body in the conflict. A worthy opponent, even a villain, is assured of fair treatment. The knight's life is one of quests, tournaments, and epic battles, recounted in poems recited for the pleasure of his lady-love.

But the knight is not made by his sword and shining armor, nor by his steed. The scion of knights need not be a knight himself, and, although many would deny it, a knight can spring from base stock. The knight is made by his virtue. A knight is one who follows the path of chivalry.

Chivalry is defined by the combination of four virtues: valor, loyalty, piety, and love. Only by combining all four does a person become a knight; one alone is not

enough. After all, many warriors are valiant, but if they serve no lord, no god, and no lady, they can't claim to be knights. Similarly, the gods have many pious servants, but those who show no valor, loyalty, or love are assuredly not knights.

Even so, there is much variation between knights, because the four virtues can be ranked in any order and interpreted in many ways. While many knights ride into battle wearing shining armor, some wield powerful magic instead, or spend much of their time at court, serving their lord and waiting on their lady. Some take loyalty to enjoin absolute obedience; others see it as requiring service to a lord's true interests, not necessarily his commands. Some knights would never wear shining armor, because such arms offend their god.

This sourcebook investigates the role of chivalry in the typical roleplaying game setting, concentrating on options for characters, but also providing some ideas for GMs to use in designing adventures and campaigns.

WHO ARE KNIGHTS?

The classic image of a knight is that of a paladin in shining plate armor, mounted on a warhorse. Knights can range far from this stereotype, however, and members of any class, any race, and either sex can follow the path of chivalry. In the introductory fiction, the mounted warrior in plate is not a knight, but the female wizard is. Knighthood is not about your skills,

but about your attitudes and the way you live your life. Accordingly, this book provides extensive resources for members of all classes who want to be knights.

BECOMING A KNIGHT

At one level, becoming a knight is extremely simple. The character simply decides to follow the chivalric virtues — to act as a knight would act. This decision can be made at any point, from character creation to the climax of a glorious career. For the overwhelming majority of this book, the term “knight” refers to any character who has decided to uphold the chivalric virtues. Such a decision does not, however, mean that anyone else will recognize the character as a knight — although if a powerful wizard decides that she wants to be called a knight, few are going to argue to her face.

Knights do have some status in society, as discussed in Chapter Six, so your GM might not want your character to be recognized as a knight until he has gained a few levels. This doesn't stop you from playing the character as a knight, though, and doing so makes it more likely that your character will receive recognition when his level makes knighthood appropriate. The status of a knight brings responsibilities, which means adventure hooks as well as privileges, so most GMs will be happy for your character to achieve public recognition of his status.

Public recognition of knighthood can come in several ways. Characters born into the noble class of a feudal



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