

Love & War

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CHARACTER CONCEPTS

Valorous knights are not all the same. While all of them focus on honorable physical combat, different knights have different fighting styles, different preferred enemies, and different preferred battles. In addition, not every knight devotes his life to the ideals of valor, even among those who rank it highly amongst the virtues. This section provides some character concepts to serve as a springboard for your imagination. These concepts are not mutually exclusive, in most cases, although conflicting requirements make some combinations difficult.

STYLES OF FIGHTING

All valorous knights fight fairly and honorably, as that is essential to valor. However, there are still many choices. It's possible to be valorous without buckling on plate armor and swinging a sword.

UNTOUCHABLE KNIGHT

This knight concentrates on avoiding damage in battle.



A high Dexterity is good for his Armor Class bonus, and the knight should consider his type of armor carefully. For example, if the knight has a Dexterity of 16 or higher, half-plate gives him a worse Armor Class than a breastplate does. If his Dexterity is 26 or higher (due to magical enhancement), leather armor is as good as full plate. Dodge and Combat Expertise are good feats to take, and he should certainly use a shield.

FAST-KILL KNIGHT

Like the untouchable knight, this knight relies on his quickness in battle.



Fast killers need a high Dexterity to act quickly in combat, and Improved Initiative and Combat Reflexes are both good feats to take. On the other hand, he also wants to kill opponents quickly, so a high Strength and the feats Power Attack, Cleave, and Great Cleave are also useful. Taking Two-Weapon Fighting is also a possibility, as this gives more attacks and thus more chance of dealing damage. Rangers pursuing this style should certainly use two weapons. High Spot and Listen skills, and the Alertness feat, also help the knight to avoid being taken by surprise. Of course, valorous knights never take their opponents by surprise.

ONE-MAN ARMY

While it's not valorous for a knight to fight individuals who are much weaker than he is, fighting large numbers of them is both honorable and fair.



Cleave and Great Cleave are the obvious feats here, but Combat Reflexes is also useful if the enemy might try to get past the knight in a mad rush.

This concept combines well with the killing blow fighting style, as the weaker opponents will find it hard to hit the knight unless given multiple opportunities, so killing them as quickly as possible can be the best strategy.

Also see the "Faceless Hordes" combat rules in *Burning Shaolin*, published by Atlas Games, which are designed to let your character bowl quickly through large groups of opponents. Or, try using the mass combat rules in Atlas' *Last Hero in Scandinavia*, which simplify the die-rolling and bookkeeping involved in combating hordes of foes.

TAUNTING KNIGHT

This knight does not kill his opponents, but rather teaches them lessons in humility. He disarms and subdues, but, of course, never takes advantage of an opponent's weakness to finish him off.

 Improved Disarm and Improved Sunder are extremely useful feats for this concept. The knight should also have some skill with unarmed combat, because if a disarmed opponent refuses to quit, the knight must, in honor, cast aside his own weapons. Improved Unarmed Strike is a prudent feat, in case an opponent turns out to have a hidden weapon after all. A knight can't always rely on his opponents being honorable.

KILLING-BLOW KNIGHT

This knight concentrates on dispatching his foes as quickly as possible.

 A high Strength score is very useful, and the knight should use a two-handed weapon to get the 50% increase in his damage bonus. Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, and Warrior's Path are the most obvious feats, but Weapon Focus, Improved Critical, and Weapon Specialization (for fighters) are also very appropriate. The knight should probably wear heavy armor, as he can't use a shield.

MOUNTED KNIGHT

The word "chivalry" comes from the Old French term for a mounted warrior, so the mounted valorous knight is an obvious concept.

 Mounted Combat, Trample, and Spirited Charge are all suitable feats, and the Ride skill is essential. Ride-By Attack is not appropriate, as the point of the feat is to

get the character out of range before the enemy can counter-attack. This is not valorous, as the knight is not risking injury in the proper fashion.

The mounted knight also needs to be careful that his mount, which elevates him and can, in some cases, fight for him, does not make a duel unfair.

CHOSEN-FOE KNIGHT

This knight prefers to fight a particular kind of enemy, often a species of monster.

 This is particularly appropriate for rangers, who have Favored Enemy as a class feature. All knights following this concept should take the Known Opponent feat. *Bane* weapons are a favored enchanted item. The preferred enemy should be something that comes in differing levels of power, such as dragons, or any monster that can progress in a class, so that the knight can find worthy opponents at all levels. Taking a good-aligned race as a preferred enemy is a sign of an evil knight.

WEAPON MASTER

This knight is supremely skilled with one kind of weapon.

 The bastard sword is a good choice, although it takes a feat slot to gain proficiency. Medium characters could use a bastard sword in each hand, with the relevant feats, although since the off-hand weapon is not light the penalty will always be at least -4. Exotic Weapon Proficiency, Weapon Focus, Improved Critical, and Weapon Specialization are the core feats for this concept.