

INTRODUCTION

Death is the ever-present companion of life. Mortals are driven to strive for great achievements by the desire to create something that will live on in legends after their own time is over. When the things that matter most are at stake, conflicts find their ultimate escalation in a fight to the death. One way or another, all who seek adventure must come to grips with the fact that death is certain to follow them wherever they go.

In the worlds of fantasy, death is not the end. The power of death can be overturned, as when fallen heroes are brought back to life by powerful rituals. Death's power can also be perverted into undeath, allowing corpses and spirits to remain active in the mortal world, even after their lives have fled. And even when a mortal does pass beyond the veil of death, his existence does not necessarily come to an end. The souls of the dead may find new forms in the afterlife, and powers both light and dark can call on such souls to provide guidance from beyond, or even to return briefly to the mortal realm to provide material assistance.

These themes are at the heart of *Forgotten Heroes: Scythe and Shroud*. Because player characters are the focus of everything that happens in a role-playing game, this book presents four "forgotten" character classes: the assassin, deathwarden, necromancer, and spiritsworn; along with the powers, paragon paths, rituals, feats, and magical items that give them depth. Including these classes in your campaign gives you a unique way to explore the meaning of death and its implications for the world of your game.

Forgotten Heroes: Scythe and Shroud introduces death as a new power source for Fourth Edition characters. All of the four new character classes presented in this book draw upon the death power source, with powers known as harrowings. Each class has a special relationship to mortality that goes deeper than every adventurer's concern with avoiding his own death and hastening that of his enemies. Although the assassin, deathwarden, necromancer, and spiritsworn may be familiar archetypes to any fan of fantasy literature and role-playing games, listed below is a short summary of the role and abilities of each one, as presented in this product.

The assassin is a dedicated killer that relentlessly stalks his victim, waiting in the shadows for just the right moment to launch a deadly assault. The assassin's instrument of lethality may be a sharp blade, a crossbow bolt from the darkness, or caustic venom; the assassin specializes in them all. The assassin's role is the striker, and none can match his talent for studying a chosen foe and dispatching it quickly. Prowler assassins focus on striking from concealment, while sinewy assassins are more eager to do their dirty work up close and personal.

Both assassin builds are formidable combatants with an array of deadly tricks up their sleeves.

The deathwarden is a sentinel on the boundary between life and death who uses his shield to make sure that, when trouble arrives, his friends and enemies each wind up on the right side of that boundary. Always standing near the front lines ready to provide cover for a fallen ally, the deathwarden's role is the leader. All deathwardens can use their influence over death to buy time for a comrade whose sand is running out. Channeling deathwardens focus on borrowing the power of death's intermediaries to deliver devastating melee attacks, while portal deathwardens specializing in using a shield as a gateway to release waves of energy from the next world into this one.

The necromancer is a student of death and undeath who is at home with the grimmest tokens of mortality. His dark arts give him command of the entropic forces that blossom when death triumphs over life, as well as the negative energies that allow the dead to rise again and wreak vengeance on the living. The necromancer fulfills his role as a controller by scattering his foes with necrotic eruptions and terrifying apparitions. Reaper necromancers use a scythe to reap a wide swath through the ranks of the enemy, while animator necromancers specialize in calling forth the risen dead to do their bidding.

The spiritsworn is an armored knight who fights on behalf of those who are no longer among the living. His relationship to the souls of the departed allows him to draw upon the spirits to aid his cause. A spiritsworn in full battle array is often wreathed in a haze of spectral warriors, flowing from his weapons and armor. The spiritsworn excels at the defender's role, using his allied spirits to beat foes back within reach of his weapon if they try to flee his wrath. A warding spiritsworn concentrates on presenting an impenetrable defense, while a vengeful spiritsworn typically forsakes a shield to gain a scythe's greater reach.

As mentioned earlier, all adventurers are vitally concerned with death. Further exploration of the theme of mortality is certainly not required to introduce these classes into your campaign. In fact, it can be abandoned altogether. Regardless of which approach you prefer, the assassin, deathwarden, necromancer, and spiritsworn can fit right into your fantasy world alongside classes with other power sources. But death will always be present in your game, and when you are ready to peer beyond its veil, you'll find plenty of information in *Forgotten Heroes: Scythe and Shroud* to help death and the afterlife become a wellspring of inspiration in your campaign.

WHERE DEAD SOULS GO

In fantasy role-playing games, the voyage of the departed soul is a journey across the planes. While each campaign presents its own cosmology, the following section discusses the common archetypes that formed the basis for our assumptions in writing *Forgotten Heroes: Scythe and Shroud*. These concepts gave flavor to the mechanics in this book, but you can be confident that you can use the material we present in subsequent chapters in your game even if your world has a radically different planar structure.

Classic fantasy cosmology presents three destinations that souls might reach in the afterlife, which (as shown in Table 2 below) we call the Seven Heavens, the Nine Hells, and Sheol. However, it is by no means certain that a soul will successfully reach any of these three realms, because it must first navigate the journey through the Land of the Dead. Some souls may be unable to make this transition because they can't relinquish an unresolved issue binding them to mortal affairs. These souls can become ghosts, cursed to haunt the living as long as they remain stuck on the threshold. There are also hazards in the Land of the Dead that can trap a soul in undeath against its will. Mortals know the most potent of these threats as the dread lord Orcus.

Fortunately, the cosmic powers of death have empowered lesser intermediaries to usher dead souls to their proper destinations. These servants are known as soul conductors, or psychopomps. The deathwarden is the new class most intimately concerned with these intermediaries. In the names and illustrative text for the deathwarden's powers, we have drawn inspiration from the rich array of soul conductors presented in classical mythology from many different cultures. Such creative borrowing from real-world mythology is definitely part of the old-school traditions of the game, but if it's not to your taste, we hope that the evocative lore of figures like Charon and the Valkyries will provide useful inspiration as you replace them with powers appropriate to your own campaign world.

PLANAR DESTINATIONS IN THE AFTERLIFE

Land of the Dead

AKA: Purgatory, Transitory Plane, Shadow Realm

Keywords: Shadow, necrotic; a gloomy borderland full of graves, ruins, and haunted forests

Denizens: Undead, Orcus

Destination For: Souls that refuse to move on to the afterlife or have been forsaken by the gods and have no one to guide them onward.

Adventure Hook: A magic sword rips a tear in the membrane between the realms of life and death whenever it is swung and draws blood. A death knight who seeks to draw adventurers into his crypt wields the sword. Whether they fall to his blade or wield it themselves, the heroes unwillingly aid the vile quest of opening a breach through which death's legions can conquer the mortal world.

Seven Heavens

AKA: Celestial Kingdom, Astral Plane

Keywords: Radiant, healing; light-filled realms of soothing winds, soaring temples, and pristine beauty

Denizens: Angels, good-aligned deities

Destination For: Souls that have demonstrated their virtue during life; faithful worshippers of the celestial gods.

Adventure Hook: In her youth, an archmage created a vault that only she could enter. The party needs an item stored in the vault, but the archmage has passed on to her heavenly reward, and enjoys it too much to return to the mortal realm. The party must determine what worldly affairs might compel her interest.



CONFLICTS

The theme of this book is death, which is already the central issue at stake in the majority of your game's conflicts – will the heroes escape with their lives and deal death to their enemies? You probably already know how to create exciting life or death struggles. This section shows how you can use death as the subject of more subtle conflicts between and within the assassin, deathwarden, necromancer, and spiritsworn classes. You won't find this expressed directly in the rest of the book, because it's designed to be usable with any campaign. It's all in the tables below.

BODIES AND SOULS

Two of the classes in this book are fundamentally concerned with death and undeath. We refer to these classes – the assassin and the necromancer – as affiliated with bodies. The other two new classes, the deathwarden and the spiritsworn, are more concerned with the afterlife and the realm of the spirits. We consider these classes to be affiliated with souls. This distinction is not as clear-cut as the difference between good and evil, and a party that contains some soul-types and some body-types is likely to get along just fine. In Table 4, however, we suggest some situations that might use the friction generated by this subtle distinction to spark an adventure that offers unique role-playing opportunities for players of each class.

TABLE 3. CLASSES, THEIR AFFILIATIONS, AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN CLASSES

Class	Affiliation	Thematic Goals	Conflict Situation
Assassin	Bodies	Turn creatures into carcasses, unconcerned for the victim's spirit unless it returns to life and has to be killed again.	A sacrilegious noble prefers to deny the reality of any existence beyond that of the flesh, but is haunted by the ghost of a man he murdered. He now seeks an assassin to destroy someone who's already dead. Doing so requires the help of those accustomed to dealing with souls, but their reverence for the spirit world may make this plan difficult for them to accept.
Deathwarden	Souls	Draw power from the realms to which souls travel after death and the intermediaries that conduct them there.	The Angel of Death is frustrated by a witch's cauldron that intercepts the departing souls of those killed in its vicinity and traps them in shells of decaying flesh. Deactivating the cauldron is a job for a necromancer, who might be unwilling to see such a potent artifact go to waste.
Necromancer	Bodies	Compel the spirits of the dead to remain among the living as undead, or destroy souls for the energy they yield, either way preventing them from reaching the afterlife.	A long-dead necromancer holds secrets of vital interest to the living practitioners of his art, but contacting his spirit is difficult, as the intermediaries of death have banished his soul to a special purgatory – a fitting punishment those who deal with the spirit world may be reluctant to undo.
Spiritsworn	Souls	Form an alliance with the souls of the departed in order to fulfill their shared destiny.	A renegade spiritsworn has betrayed those who supported him among the halls of the dead, but he has found a way to hide himself and his captive spirits from any occult retribution, necessitating the talents of an assassin.

ASSASSIN PARAGON PATHS CHIRURGEON

*“Oh, it’s just a little cut here and there.
By the time I’m finished, you won’t feel a thing.”*

Prerequisite: Assassin class

You have filled your days with the study of the body: its connections, its powers, and its weaknesses. What started with a fascination for this most excellent machine, and the varieties that different races and species can provide, has become an obsession. You take great joy in dissecting still-living creatures to see precisely how they work, and you don’t hesitate to experiment on a new victim... er, subject whenever possible.

Chirurgion Path Features

Anatomy’s Student (11th level): You gain a +4 bonus to monster knowledge checks. In addition, you increase the number of study points you can accrue against one target to 2 + your Intelligence modifier.

Leeching Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, the first attack you make that turn that hits deals ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Chirurgery’s Reward (16th level): Whenever one of your assassin or chirurgion powers drops an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer, you gain a study point against one enemy within 5 squares.

Chirurgion Harrowings

Sudden Slice **Chirurgion Attack 11**

Finding yourself a new victim, you make a preliminary cut against him before proceeding.

Encounter ♦ Death, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Target: One creature against which you have one study point or less.

Attack: Dexterity vs. AC

Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier + Intelligence modifier damage. You gain one study point against the target.

Study the Victim **Chirurgion Utility 12**

You take a moment to survey the chaos of battle around you.

Encounter ♦ Death

Standard Action

Close burst 10

Effect: You gain two study points against any one enemy within the burst.

Cavity Incision

Chirurgion Attack 20

Your blade slices into your target, opening him like a body ripe for examining.

Daily ♦ Death, Weapon

Standard Action

Melee weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Dexterity vs. AC

Hit: 5[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target gains vulnerability 10 to your attacks until the end of the encounter. You gain one study point against the target.

Miss: Half damage, and the target gains no vulnerability. You gain one study point against the target.

HASHASHIN

Prerequisite: Assassin class

Killing is your religion, and you love your religion. You worship death in all its manifestation, but none is greater for you than killing. You never take life indiscriminately, always having a purpose laid out by your organization. Your purpose might be to kill a rival assassin, to destroy a bully preying on the weak, or to assassinate a political leader of a nearby kingdom. No matter the reason, you take great relish in the destruction of the life, and it fuels your passion for death.

Hashashin Path Features

Killing is Living (11th level): Whenever you reduce a creature to 0 hit points or fewer, you can spend a healing surge.

Passionate Murder (11th level): When you spend an action point, you can roll twice on the damage roll and take the better of the two results on the first attack to hit in that turn.

Dread Hashashin (16th level): When you use a daily or encounter power that results in a creature, except a minion, being dropped to 0 hit points or fewer, you do not use up that daily or encounter power.

DEATHWARDEN POWERS

Your deathwarden powers are known as harrowings. Some are optimal for channeling deathwardens and others are best for portal deathwardens, but regardless of your build, you can choose any power of the appropriate level when you select your powers.

CLASS FEATURES

Warden's Plea Deathwarden Feature

You sense death coming for your ally and call out to buy a little more time.

Encounter (Special) ♦ Death, Healing

Special: You can use this power twice per encounter, but only once per round. At 16th level, you can use this power three times per encounter.

Minor Action **Close** burst 5 (10 at 11th level, 15 at 21st level)

Target: You or one ally

Effect: The target can spend a healing surge and regain an additional 1d6 hit points. Increase the amount of additional hit points regained to 2d6 at 6th level, 3d6 at 11th level, 4d6 at 16th level, 5d6 at 21st level, and 6d6 at 26th level.

Level 1 At-Will Harrowings

Sheltering Strike Deathwarden Attack 1

Your weapon bites into your foe, clearing a space for you to step forward and cover an ally with your shield.

At-Will ♦ Death, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Wisdom vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Wisdom modifier damage, and one adjacent ally gains a +1 power bonus to AC and Reflex defenses until the end of your next turn. Increase damage to 2[W] + Wisdom modifier at 21st level.

Vision of Fate Deathwarden Attack 1

All who look at the designs on your shield see a vision of their destination in the afterworld, for better or worse.

At-Will ♦ Death, Healing, Implement, Psychic Standard Action **Close** blast 3

Target: Each enemy in blast that can see you

Attack: Wisdom vs. Will

Hit: 1d6 psychic damage.

Increase damage to 2d6 at 21st level.

Effect: Until the end of your next turn, when you or an ally within the blast is granted healing by a power with the healing keyword, add your Wisdom modifier to the hit points the recipient regains.

Chill of Tartarus Deathwarden Attack 1

Your shield acts as an interplanar conduit for the deadly winds of a frozen hell.

At-Will ♦ Cold, Death, Implement Standard Action **Ranged** 5

Target: One creature

Attack: Wisdom vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8 + Wisdom modifier cold damage, and you grant a +1 power bonus to the next attack roll made against the target before the end of your next turn. If this attack roll scores a critical hit, it deals additional cold damage equal to your Wisdom modifier. Increase damage to 2d8 + Wisdom modifier at 21st level.

Special: If you are wielding a heavy thrown weapon, you can replace the implement keyword for this power with the weapon keyword and attack the target's AC instead of Reflex.

Fated Strike Deathwarden Attack 1

Your weapon is guided by the vision of the Angel of Death, who foresees which paths will bring your foe closer to dying.

At-Will ♦ Death, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon or
Ranged thrown weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Wisdom vs. AC

Hit: 1[W] + Wisdom modifier damage.

Increase damage to 2[W] + Wisdom modifier at 21st level.

Special: This power counts as a melee basic attack. If you are wielding a weapon with the heavy thrown property, this power also counts as a ranged basic attack.