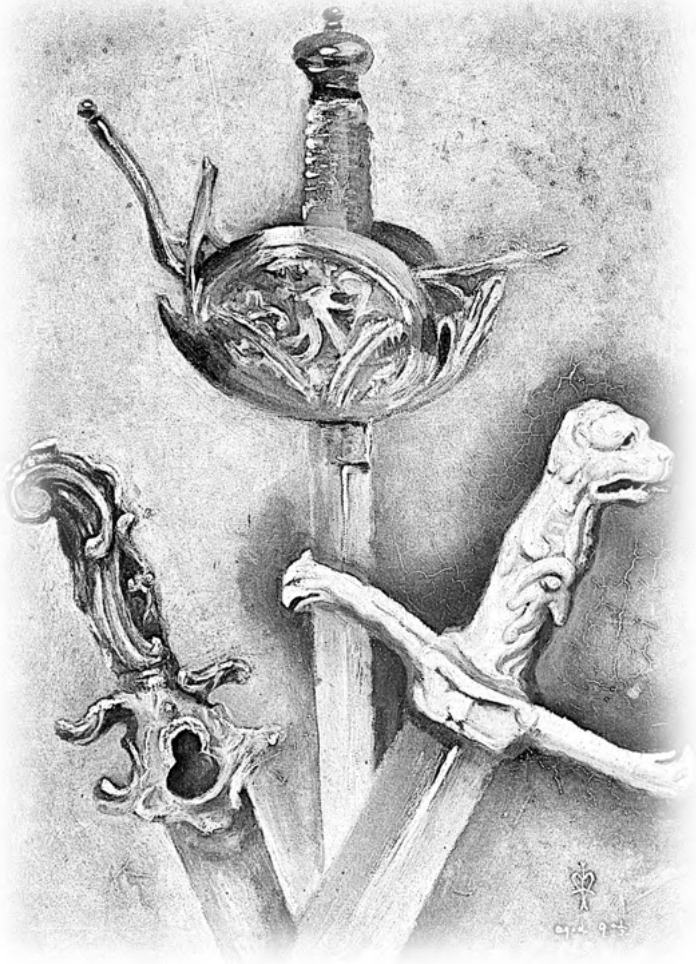


A Gathering Of Blades



being a collection of sword-forms,
both of materiel and of origin

What makes a blade a fine
treasure, a thoughtful reward, a
precious prize?

Some swords are unique in make
and nature,
without the need for
enchantments
layered upon them.

Which is not to say, of course,
that these sword-sources may
not carry magic as well ...

Ol. Thornwrought

The blades of faerieland are distinctive, whether gifted to mortals (or stolen, or discovered by same) or forged by mortal hands from round billets of "faerie silver", a disquietingly shimmering, translucent silver metal.

No matter its size, a thorn is as light in the hand as a dagger or dart. Its edge flares with silvery light if it strikes magic; wounds left by it fester, disgorging string and feathers and fishbones.

Striking iron shatters it.

02. Oathbreaker

Maybe not all of the swords branded
oathbreaker owe their state to a
literal broken oath,
but the name sticks.

Whatever the cause -- oathbreaking,
failing a sworn quest, abandoning
cause or creed -- the result is the
same: somewhere on the sword a
tiny black barbed spiral appears,
and the blade grows spiteful.

Should its wielder, new or old, fall
short in any way, the sword turns
itself on them with the next strike,
no matter how impossible.

03. Moon's-Eye

No matter the size or make of a moon's-eye sword, this blade will follow the phases of the moon in the injuries it inflicts:
full, two-handed or bastard sword;
gibbous, longsword;
half, shortsword;
crescent, dagger;
and during the new moon, a strike from a moon's-eye sword will heal its target the equal of a full moon strike, but only once a day.

Moon's-eye swords shift colour to reflect their phase, or sport a gem or glass that does so.

04. Revelation

Nothing escapes the light of the sun, and no falsehood survives the touch of a revelation blade.

A wielder could use it simply as a source of light -- golden to dawn, it is certainly that -- but it is better deployed against lies and falsities.

One may choose to cause no injury with a revelation sword; instead a hidden truth is spoken, a true form is revealed as a sunshine silhouette, and so on.

But the sword dissipates if its bearer turns false.

†

05. Martyring

A martyring blade, whatever else its enchantments or qualities, is always rusted, tarnished, stained -- unkempt-looking no matter what is done to clean or mend it.

Each such blade has seven martyrdoms when first forged. At any time, the martyring sword may be touched to a broken object and it will make it whole. Touched to any wound, it heals that wound.

Each time, the sword deteriorates further, and at the end it falls to pieces.

†

06. Emberi

The blast of dragonfire; a lordly
fire elemental's heart; arcane
forges, leagues-wide conflagrations
-- any and all of these may leave in
their wake a tapering tongue of
glowing essence
in all the colours of Fire.

Such a congealed flame can be used
as a blade on its own, but risks
abound; adding it to fine metal
produces a flame-hued sword that
wounds like fire itself, warms its
wielder, and bolsters any endeavour
that requires a passionate response.

07. Gelidi

A rippled spar of transparent silver-blue or -teal, or a mass of glittering white nodules (best ground to powder and folded into metal now turned colourless and cold), gelidi is found at the heart of glaciers, in the permafrost of lands locked in eternal winter, and piercing the core of ice elementals.

Gelidi blades deliver winter's numbing paralysis with their strike, and bolster any action that requires calm clarity.

They are sometimes fragile.

†

08. Fulguri

A sword of lightning?
Never more literal than a fulguri
blade, sharpened from a gleaming,
soldified blue-gold bolt; rare as
primal blades go, found in the arc
of a dragon's breath, hurled by
vengeful -- or magnanimous --
stormlords, spun from the wake of
eldritch storms.

Such a blade harms even the
wielder to touch unless a pact is
made.

Then it boosts speed, sharpens
senses, and is sure death to
knights, to metal elementals, and to
the constructed.

09. Dayneedle

On far-off mountains wreathed in
clouds grow pink-golden lilies --
lilies so titanic the stands of them
are like bamboo forests adorned
with blossoms broader than one's
armspan.

Plucked and dried unopened,
mounted in cedar and silk, the right
charms murmured, the bud of such
a lily becomes sharp as a rapier and
suited to any who won't or can't
bear metal.

Some even seep nectar into a hilt
reservoir, a draft every three days
that sustains for one.

10. Wychbane

A wychbane sword is usually a
shortsword or, rarely, a rapier;
one very seldom sees, say, a
wychbane claymore.

The hilt and trappings are simple --
bronze or steel, leather plaiting --
and the blade is unornamented. Why
would it be, when its entire surface
gleams like quicksilver?

It's not for reflecting images, mind,
but magic: a sword-blow can be
against a spell -- even mid-cast --
and if the strike is true, the magic
is sent back to its source.

11. Blooded

Many kingdoms, such as Avren, Rechiv, and the Swan Kingdom, award those of their royal house with Blooded swords, from slim rapiers for courtly souls to broad bastard blades for royal warlords.

All bear inscriptions naming their bearer, and pull blood from the very pores of any not of the line who dare to wield it; but, if a single droplet be deliberately placed upon a Blood blade, it will indicate whether that one is of any sort of royal line.

12. Stone-Sword

Sometimes, when foundations are dug deep, or a mine expanded, or a new dungeon burrowed into the earth, one or more swords are found embedded in the stone.

Strange stony swords, of middling size; sturdy blades like hexagonal prisms, with simple hilts.

No one has an answer yet, and the gods refuse to explain; but the swords take enchanting well, and absorb blows meant for their wielder.

Some give hazy visions of a strange fern-forested land.

13. Finality

A sword of finality is a lovely sight: perfectly balanced, often etched with a dedication or oath -- and worked entirely from one piece of gleaming, perfectly transparent glass.

Its frightful edge causes any struck to bleed freely unless treated swiftly; but there is always a 2-in-6 chance to break.

The name comes from the decision to commit -- one terrible blow that trebles the injury, bleeding the wielder as well from the cataclysmic shards.

14. Starglass

So-called starglass swords are exceedingly rare, all known examples stemming from one exploration by the Swan Knight and their companions through a metallic dungeon deep in the Rorolit Forest.

These swords, at rest, are a black ceramic hilt mounting a stiff "wire" of a glassy, unbreakable substance.

At will it flares to life: a blade's outline in burning light of many colours, the "flat" intangible and yet gleaming and capable of parrying.

15. Gigante

There are greatswords, and then there are so-called gigante swords, the length of a claymore but easily three or more times the width. One needs unusual strength to wield it, but it deals twice the injury of a lesser blade and grants a bonus to strike any who has already been wounded.

Tales say the first gigante was forged for a mercenary whose brazen horns and towering height marked a titanic heritage, but glory-hounds throughout Nifasan covet them.

16. Godgift

It's rare to find a godgift blade; these swords are not forged, but granted to a faithful one by a deity as a blessing or a tool for a divinely ordained mission. All godgifts have a numinousness clinging to them.

A godgift grants a boon pertinent to the faith: turning water to honey or blood to ice, carving through stone, etc.

Anathema are maimed if they touch the sword; others who find a lost blade may be pressed to accept a lost soul's mission.

17. Kin-crypt

Despite its ominous common name, a kin-crypt sword does not contain the remains of one's kin.

What these weapons do hold is the memories, knowledge and sometimes physical skills that former bearers chose to pass to their descendants.

A bearer may impart five memories or dreams and either a body of knowledge or physically learned skill. Accessing one of these familial echoes takes a minute's meditation.

If one is not kin, the blade is mundane.

18. Eternal

Many fear the end. Of those, most simply die; some pursue undeath or some esoteric state.

Then there are those who choose the embrace of cold sharp steel.

An Eternal is a once-mortal soul bound into a sword. They may communicate; dreams, mindspeech, ecstasy and goading pain, all known.

A wych may share magic, a courtier political wiles, a warrior skill at arms. And any may place a geas to bring one closer to the Eternal's own goals or ethos.

19. Paragon

A swordsmith will only forge one paragon in their life. These are the exemplars of the form; exquisite in balance, edge, weight, silhouette.

The pinnacle to which all other blades are compared.

The essence of "sword".

A paragon is a wonder. It parts flesh like water and steel like flesh; it can sever the wind, sunder speech, cleave oaths.

A blessed weapon by very nature, anathema to corruption and entropy. Like calls to like, blade to blade.

20. Bonewalk

A bonewalk is an odd-looking sword; whether a cunning marquetry of closely-fitted shards or carved from a single bone, they are heavy in cross-section and duller than a metal blade.

No matter. A razor edge isn't needed as long as the bonewalk draws any blood at all.

And then, one of two things: the sword expands in an unfolding jigsaw to become a skeletal servant, or it leaves a shard in the victim to change their bones into a new bonewalk.

21. Rosetta

Named for the duchess who stymied
spies and assassins with her
wonderfully baroque blade,
"rosettas" are not practical
weapons. With slender blades but
heavy basket hilts adorned with
metal "cords" or vines, blooms and
crests and rosettes -- in a matching
sheath -- a rosetta is utterly
impractical.

Their worth is in the tiny blades,
hidden hollows and secreted phials,
cutting-wires and other clever
fancies hidden in the sword's fancy
dressage.

22. Grand Claw

There are Great Beasts upon the world. The Dragon is one such, as is the Gryphon, the Leviathan, the Roc. They are immense, ancient; and in the rare times a Beast falls, another takes its place.

Most Claws are found where the ancient creature slept its last.

Massive, curved, keratinous, such a sword is suited for tearing and puncturing; it grants wild wisdom and beastspeech. Victims injured by a Claw may be tracked by the bearer with ease.

23. Essencyst

An essencyst doesn't look like a sword: a smooth oval lens of some crystal-like substance that nestles comfortably in the palm.

When a spellcaster pours magic into the essencyst, a needle (or other shape; some are broad wedges of sizzling force, twisting element dragons or stranger shapes) of eldritch power hovers before their hand, following every motion.

The stronger the spell sacrificed for a strike, the greater its potential to harm.

†

24. Umbran

What's a good way to hide a sword
on one's person?

Put it where it cannot be seen.

Umbrans are spun from wisps of
their bearer's shadow, and so long
as the donor exists, no one else may
touch its shadowstuff.

More the silhouette of a blade, an
umbran is only as solid as its bearer
wishes and it may be returned to
one's shadow. The edge of an
umbran is hair-fine and its wounds
strange; they may go unnoticed
until the victim, overwhelmed,
collapses.

25. Guide

Some bids for mortal proxies,
and mortal souls,
are more subtle than others.

A guide is a sword of fine but
unremarkable make; but it soon
grows comfortable in the hand, a
favoured weapon and tool, a most
treasured possession.

It is also a devil shaped into the
form of a sword, and all too content
to encourage its "owner" with
subliminal nudges and frissons of
pleasure when they act in ways --
large or little -- that accord with
hell's own plans.

26. Hundred-year

In the remnant "empire" of Rekhoy
is the tradition of the hundred-year
sword.

It's monstrous cloud-oysters that
finish the work, after a
mastercrafter pares down a blade to
a hair-thin shadow of the glory it
will hopefully become. That sliver is
placed inside the oyster's mantle,
and the wait begins.

If successful, a hundred-year
sword: gleaming, nacreous, wind-
sharp and granting freedom to slip
beneath the waves and upon the
clouds themselves.

27. Liar's Blade

A liar's blade can look like any old sword -- because looks are deceiving, right?

And lie it does. Should its wielder choose, any wound dealt by the liar's blade is but whimsy and illusion, a temporary twisting of perception.

Even a fatal blow, though blood flow and breath stop, is a lie.

Within a half-day at most the wounds vanish as if they never were, sometimes to the great surprise of the "dead" -- or those who assumed they were dead.

28. Firmament

A sword of the firmament is a
shortsword, with few exceptions,
mostly daggers.

It takes a lot, after all, to spirit
away a smooth curved shard of the
sky itself; cerulean to indigo, dotted
with stars.

Fortune favours one with such a
blade: their luck is strong, their
intuition stronger, and future
insights flash through their mind.

Bearing a fragment of the great
beyond creates a longing in many,
however, to join the rest of the
heavens above.

29. Oathblade

Is a sword with no edge still a sword?

An oathblade is crafted of such material as porcelain or wicker or stiffened silk, without edge or point, suitable to wrap a hand around.

Doing so and swearing a vow seals that vow; the vowed one is marked by the blade, protected against attempts to force them to breach it.

But an oathblade also serves another purpose. Touched to the heart of one trapped in a forced binding of any kind, it destroys it utterly.

30. Fellmark

Some creatures of the night shrug
off steel and even silver as if
shedding raindrops.

But fellmark swords, and the deft
woodwrights who carve them, show
those monsters that mortals yet
fight back.

Dark with age or freshly cut, a
fellmark is carved of wood -- oak or
cherry, cedar or peach -- cunningly
doweled and dovetailed, not a touch
of metal.

It ignores immunity.
And it is lethal to the unliving, to
demons, to the fae and to malignant
spirits.

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