



Heroes of High Favor:



ELVES

A d20 Supplement
by Benjamin R. Durbin

Sample Pages

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BA02103: *Heroes of High Favor: Elves*

ISBN: 0-9720416-2-1

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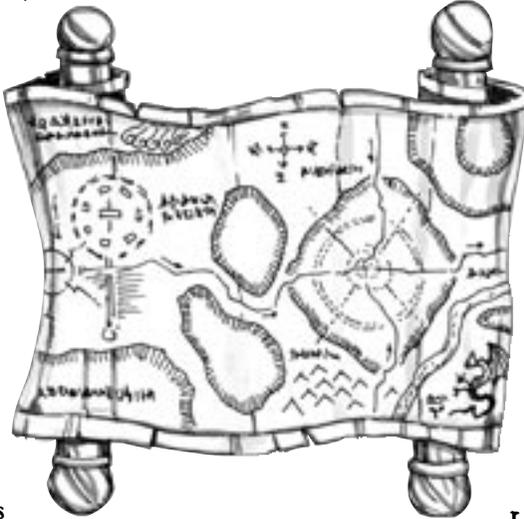
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Ley Lines and Power Nexuses

Spellcasters of all kinds, and elves in particular, are subconsciously aware of the presence of ley lines and power nexuses. A power nexus is a geographical location, marked with some relatively permanent and immovable fixture, and suffused with magical energy. Standing stones, fairy rings, crossroads, sacred altars, mage towers— all of these are potential power nexuses.

Ley lines are invisible, intangible currents of magical energy that connect all power nexuses. Each power nexus is connected by a ley line to every other power nexus, forming a vast network of ley lines like an invisible web. Each time a power nexus is created, new ley lines are formed, and the power nexus is immediately woven into the web.

The power that runs through ley lines and power nexuses is raw magic, neither arcane nor divine. Magical energy flows through the ley lines until it terminates at the power nexuses at either end, like the terminals of a great battery. There is no “direction” to this current— regardless of where you stand on the ley line, energy flows towards both power nexuses simultaneously.



The following set of rules has potentially world-changing implications for the GM. This is the stuff of high magic, with ley lines potentially connecting power nexuses from across the continents. In particular, the ability to cast spells from nexus to nexus forms a support network that may not otherwise exist, even given the ability of high level casters to *teleport*, *plane shift*, *scream*, or otherwise travel and communicate over long distances. The GM must be alert for “clever abuses” and feel free to shake things up occasionally: storms of magic clouding the ley lines, magical infections of power nexuses, etc.

The web of ley lines can be limited as the GM sees fit to maintain control of his campaign world. Certainly it is recommended that ley lines cannot cross the planes (each plane possibly having its own web of ley lines), but the GM can limit things further by restricting ley lines to the same continent.

Ley lines that cross the seas and oceans may be possible, but they may be few, powerful, dangerous, and ultimately controlled by the GM.

Anchoring

Any character with sufficient knowledge can tap into a ley line or power nexus through a process called *anchoring*. Although tales speak of elven warriors who are able to tap this energy for their own uses, generally

speaking only spellcasters are able to take full advantage of the magical energies coursing through the ley lines.

By anchoring, a spellcaster can draw on the energy of the ley line or power nexus to improve their spellcasting ability. However, once anchored, the character cannot move without disrupting the flow of magical energy.

Maintaining an anchor to a ley line or power nexus is an exhausting process requiring a great deal of concentration. It is impossible for a caster to rest and recover spells while anchored.

Anchoring to a Ley Line

It is not important for the GM to chart out the exact course of every ley line in his campaign world. The random nature of the d20 skill check accounts for both the strength of the nearest ley line as well as the spellcaster's ability to tap into it and successfully form an anchor. Of course, the GM is free to locate certain permanent, powerful ley lines as he sees fit. Using these rules is a merely a kind of shorthand that allows characters to tap into ley lines without necessitating a complete map of the network from the GM.

As a standard action, any character can anchor to a ley line by making a Knowledge (arcana) skill check (DC20). However, anchoring is a risky business, as the character is opening himself up to the flow of magic. If the check is failed, the character is *stunned* for 1d4 rounds. He may attempt to establish an anchor on his next action.

Unlike most skill checks, a check result of 1 is always considered a critical failure. A character who attempts to anchor to a ley line and rolls a 1 on his Knowledge (arcana)

check is *stunned* for 1d4 rounds, and cannot attempt to anchor again (either to a ley line or a power nexus) for one day.

A spellcaster who is anchored to a ley line may boost his spellcasting ability in the following ways:

MAINTAIN LEY LINE ANCHOR (CONCENTRATION DC20)

As a standard action, the spellcaster can make a Concentration check. If successful, he may then take a move-equivalent action and maintain his anchor to the ley line. If the check is failed, the anchor is lost. A roll of 1 is a critical failure: The anchor is lost, and the character is *stunned* for 1d4 rounds. He may attempt to re-establish the anchor on his next action.

BOOST CASTER LEVEL (SPELLCRAFT DC20 + SPELL LEVEL)

As a free action, the spellcaster can attempt a Spellcraft check to enhance his spellcasting ability as he casts a spell. All level dependent effects of the chosen spell are resolved at +1 caster level. Because he must control the flow of magical energy from the ley line and through his own body, the casting time of all spells is increased to 1 full round. (Spells whose casting time are already 1 round or longer have their casting time extended by 1 round.)

If the spellcaster attempts to use a ley line to boost his caster level and fails, the spell is lost. A roll of 1 is a critical failure: the spell is lost, and the ley line drains an additional 1d4 spell levels from the caster. (Many powerful spellcasters believe that much of the energy flowing through the network of ley lines is sapped in this way from inexperienced spellcasters.)

Anchoring to a Power Nexus

A power nexus is much more powerful than a ley line— in part because it is a permanent fixture in the campaign world. Anchoring to a power nexus is far easier and usually less dangerous than the ley lines.

Every power nexus must have a physical focal point— the center of a ring of stones, a tree, an altar, etc. The power nexus has a rating from 1-20, indicating its overall strength. The radius of effect of a power nexus is (rating \times 10) feet, measured from the focal point. It is impossible to tap into a ley line within the range of a power nexus— you must use the power nexus, or nothing at all.

Any spellcaster within range of the power nexus can anchor as a standard action, with no skill check required. However, certain extra conditions may be required of any spellcaster, as determined by the creator of the power nexus (see below, *Creating a Power Nexus*). Characters who do not meet those requirements may not attempt to anchor unless they are in *direct physical contact* with the focal point.

Once anchored, the spellcaster is tapped into the power nexus. He is immediately aware of the rating of the power nexus and can attempt to use it for a variety of effects, though each of these effects requires a skill check of some kind. As with ley lines, the ebb and flow of power through the nexus is highly volatile: A roll of 1 on any of the following skill checks is a critical failure, and in addition to severing the anchor, the spellcaster is *stunned* for 1d4 rounds.

MAINTAIN POWER NEXUS ANCHOR (CONCENTRATION DC15)

As a standard action, the spellcaster can make a Concentration check. If successful,

he may then take a move-equivalent action and maintain his anchor to the power nexus. If the check is failed, the anchor is lost.

BOOST CASTER LEVEL

(SPELLCRAFT DC20 + SPELL LEVEL)

As a free action, the spellcaster may attempt a Spellcraft check to enhance his spellcasting ability as he casts a spell. All level dependent effects of the chosen spell are resolved at +1 caster level. Unlike the level-boosting effects of anchoring to a ley line, this does not increase the casting time. In addition, there is no risk of losing the spell or any additional levels at a power nexus. If the check is failed, the spell is simply cast as normal.

SUBSTITUTE CASTER LEVEL

(SPELLCRAFT DC15 + RATING)

As a free action, the spellcaster may attempt a Spellcraft check to use the rating of the power nexus in place of his own caster level for determining all level-dependent effects of the next spell he casts. Casting a spell in this way increases the casting time to 1 full round. (A spell whose casting time is already 1 round or more has its casting time increased by 1 round.) If the check is failed, the spell is lost.

FUEL METAMAGIC

(SPELLCRAFT DC20 + SPELL LEVEL + METAMAGIC INCREASE)

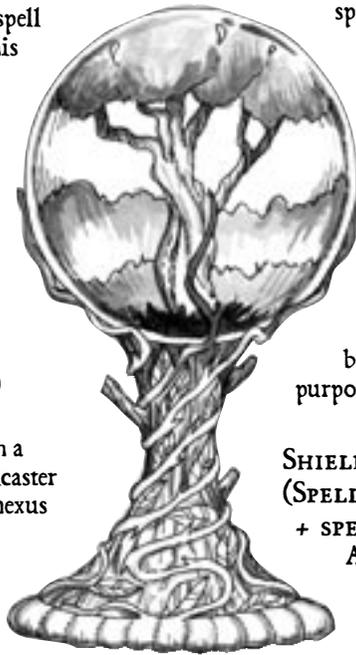
As a free action, the spellcaster can make a check to enhance any spell with any metamagic feat he knows, even if the spell was not prepared with that feat, and without increasing the spell level. The power nexus must have a power rating twice the normal required spell slot for the metamagicked spell. Casting a spell in this way increases the casting time to 1 full round. (A spell

whose casting time is already 1 round or more has its casting time increased by 1 round.) If the check is failed, the spell is cast as normal.

Example: Aramil has the Maximize Spell feat, he has a *fireball* spell prepared, and he is anchored to a power nexus with a rating of 12. *Fireball* is normally a 3rd level spell; the Maximize Spell feat would normally require a 6th level spell slot. The power nexus meets the rating requirements (twice the required 6th level spell slot). If Aramil succeeds at his Spellcraft check ($DC_{20} + 3$ (*fireball*) + 3 (Maximize Spell) = DC_{26}), he can cast the *fireball* from his 3rd level slot, and the power nexus will do the rest, fueling the Maximize Spell effect.

LOCATE POWER NEXUS (KNOWLEDGE (ARCANA) DC 30 – RATING)

As a standard action and with a successful skill check, a spellcaster who is anchored to a power nexus can attempt to locate a path along the shifting ley lines to any other power nexus to which he has previously anchored. (It is actually easier to locate a powerful nexus than a weak one.) A path to any given power nexus lasts for only one day; the shifting, flowing nature of ley lines requires a new check each day. If the check is failed, the spellcaster cannot locate the remote power nexus. He may try again the next day.



REMOTE CASTING

(SPELLCRAFT DC $_{15}$ + RATING + SPELL LEVEL)

A spellcaster who has located another power nexus as above can cast spells from nexus to nexus as if he had line of sight and line of effect. Regardless of range, the spell effect is centered on the focal point of the remote power nexus. This requires a Spellcraft check with a DC equal to $15 +$ remote power nexus rating + spell level. Casting a spell in this way increases the casting time to 1 full round.

(A spell whose casting time is already 1 round or more has its casting time increased by 1 round.) Elves commonly use this ability to cast helpful spells such as *healing circle* from nexus to nexus— though it is certainly clear that it may be used for more insidious purposes.

SHIELD POWER NEXUS

(SPELLCRAFT DC $_{10}$ + RATING + SPELL LEVEL)

A spellcaster who is anchored to a power nexus is instantly aware of any incoming spell and may attempt to shield the nexus from remote casting. The Spellcraft check is $10 +$ remote power nexus rating + incoming spell level. If the check succeeds, the spell fails and dissipates harmlessly. If the check fails but is within 5 of the DC, the spell succeeds but its effect is centered on the defending spellcaster rather than the focal point. If the check fails by 5 or more the incoming spell takes effect at the focal point as normal.

Contesting a Power Nexus

There is a steady flow of energy into a power nexus, and friendly spellcasters can freely share the same nexus. The total number of anchors a power nexus can sustain is equal to (rating)². Thus a rating-1 power nexus can support one anchor, a rating-2 power nexus can support four anchors, all the way up to a rating-20 power nexus which can support up to four hundred anchors simultaneously.

However, a spellcaster who is already anchored can attempt to deny anchoring to any other spellcaster. A spellcaster who is anchored is immediately aware of any attempt to anchor to the same power nexus, and as a free action he can attempt to deny access (or sever an existing anchor) with an opposed Knowledge (arcana) skill check. In the case of multiple allied spellcasters, only the highest level spellcaster currently anchored may attempt to deny an anchor.

The spellcaster who scores highest on his check gains control of the power nexus and maintains his anchor. The spellcaster who loses the opposed roll loses his anchor (but he may try again on his next action). If either spellcaster rolls a 1 on his skill check, it is a critical failure: he loses his anchor and is stunned for 1d4 rounds. If the casters' check results are even, ties go to the spellcaster who is already anchored.

Creating a Power Nexus

A power nexus is created with the Item Creation feat *Create Power Nexus* (see Chapter 2). The cost to create a power nexus is (rating)² x 50 XP, and requires one day per rating. Two or more spellcasters, each with the Create Power Nexus feat, can combine their efforts and their XP to create

a power nexus, though the creation time is not reduced. The power nexus may not have a rating higher than the Knowledge (arcana) ranks of the highest participating creator.

At the time of creation, the creator must set a physical focal point; many casters prefer to tie the focal point to a masterwork item, such as an altar, that may then be further enchanted with protective magics. A power nexus cannot be created within the range of effect of another power nexus, nor such that its own range of effect overlaps that of any other nexus.

The creator may also set the conditions required to attempt anchoring to the power nexus. These conditions may be as simple or as complex as desired, anything from “any spellcaster” to “any arcane spellcaster” or “any spellcaster whose Knowledge (arcana) is equal to or higher than the rating of the power nexus.” Even more elaborate conditions are possible, such as “anyone who has participated in the *ritual of bonding*.” Regardless of the conditions stated, any spellcaster in *direct physical contact* with the focal point may attempt to establish an anchor as a standard action, with no skill check required.

The physical focal point of a power nexus radiates magic as any other magic item, and it may be suppressed or destroyed just as any other magic item. Once set, the focal point cannot be moved without destroying the power nexus. For this reason, most creators prefer to affix their focal point to a permanent, immobile, and relatively robust item, such as a large standing stone or altar.

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