BG3 Builds

- Oath of the Crown Paladin 6 / Hexblade Warlock 6
- Death Domain Cleric 12
- Shadow Magic Sorcerer 12
- Gloom Stalker 5 / Assassin 4 / Champion 3
- Karlach -- Throwbarian (Berserker 5 / Thief 4 / Champion 3)
- Shadowheart -- Life Domain Cleric 12 -- Pure Healer & Buffer
- Gale -- Utility Wizard (Evocation 12)
- Astarion -- The Drama Queen (Swashbuckler 5 / College of Swords 7)

Oath of the Crown Paladin 6 / Hexblade Warlock 6

> **Your Role:** Frontline tank and party protector. You smite enemies with divine radiant damage, blast at range with Eldritch Blast, and make your entire party harder to kill with Aura of Protection.

At a Glance

Race: Half-Orc (extra crit damage via Savage Attacks, Relentless Endurance to survive a killing blow 1/long rest) **Other strong picks:** Zariel Tiefling, Shield Dwarf, Half-Elf **Background:** Noble or Guild Artisan (Persuasion proficiency)

Stats: STR 8 / DEX 10 / CON 14 / INT 10 / WIS 12 / **CHA 17** Charisma is your everything. Attacks, spells, smites, Aura of Protection, and social checks all scale with it. You don't need Strength because Bind Hexed Weapon replaces STR with CHA on weapon attacks.

Skills from Paladin: Persuasion, Athletics **Skills from Warlock:** Arcana, Deception

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Level-by-Level

Level 1 -- Paladin 1 (Oath of the Crown)

Why start Paladin: Proficiency in ALL armor (including heavy), ALL weapons, shields, and WIS + CHA saving throw proficiencies. Starting Warlock would only give you light armor and simple weapons, forcing you to wait for Hexblade's medium armor. Starting Paladin means you're in plate mail from day one.

You gain:

- **Heavy Armor + Shield + Martial Weapon Proficiency**
- **Lay on Hands** -- A pool of 5 HP healing (scales with Paladin level). Use it to stabilize downed allies or cure diseases/poisons.
- **Divine Sense** -- Detect nearby celestials, fiends, and undead. Situational but occasionally useful.
- **Righteous Clarity** (Channel Divinity) -- Target yourself or an ally to grant the target's proficiency bonus to their attack rolls. Strong early-game buff.
- **Champion Challenge** (Channel Divinity) -- Force nearby enemies to attack only you. Their attacks against other targets get Disadvantage. Great tanking tool.

Gameplay: Equip the heaviest armor you can find. Chain mail + shield = 18 AC at level 1. You're extremely durable but limited to basic weapon attacks. This is fine; you're tanking and using Channel Divinity to support the party.

> **Oath Warning:** Oath of the Crown tenets are Law, Loyalty, and Responsibility. Triggers that break your oath include: attacking the tieflings guarding Lae'zel's cage, evading arrest, prodding the Exhausted Bird, and breaking sworn promises. Play it straight and you'll be fine.

Level 2 -- Warlock 1 (Hexblade)

The build comes alive. You choose the Hexblade patron and immediately get a massive power spike.

You gain:

- **Hex Warrior** -- Medium armor, shield, martial weapon proficiency (redundant with Paladin, but the real prize is below).
- **Bind Hexed Weapon** -- Your main-hand weapon now uses **Charisma** for attack and damage rolls instead of STR or DEX. The weapon's damage becomes magical. This is the build's engine. You can dump STR entirely.
- **Hexblade's Curse** -- Bonus action to curse a target. Adds your proficiency bonus to damage rolls against them, reduces your crit threshold by 1, and heals you (Warlock level + CHA mod) when the cursed target dies. Use this on the biggest threat every fight.
- **Cantrips (pick 2):**
  - **Eldritch Blast** -- Your ranged bread and butter. Scales with total character level (not Warlock level), so it gains beams at levels 5 and 11.
  - **Booming Blade** -- Melee cantrip with bonus thunder damage. Punishes enemies who move after being hit.
- **Spells Known (pick 2):**
  - **Shield** (Hexblade expanded) -- Reaction, +5 AC until your next turn. Best defensive spell in the game.

    - **Wrathful Smite** (Hexblade expanded) -- Bonus action smite that adds psychic damage and can Frighten.

Gameplay shift: Bind your weapon immediately. Every melee attack now uses CHA. Open fights with Hexblade's Curse on the biggest threat.

Level 3 -- Warlock 2

Your ranged game becomes elite.

You gain:

- **2nd Warlock Spell Slot** -- Two short-rest-refreshing slots now.
- **Eldritch Invocations (pick 2):**
    - **Agonizing Blast** -- Adds your CHA modifier to each Eldritch Blast beam. This is the single biggest damage increase for your ranged output.
    - **Repelling Blast** -- Each EB beam pushes the target up to 4.5m (15 ft). Combined with Agonizing Blast, EB becomes a ranged cannon that also controls positioning. Push enemies off cliffs, out of chokepoints, or away from your backline.
- **New Spell:**
    - **Hex** -- Bonus action, 1d6 necrotic on every hit against the target. Stacks with Hexblade's Curse. Moves to a new target when the current one dies.

This is your "safe" level. EB + Agonizing + Repelling is now your bread and butter for any situation where melee isn't ideal. At range, you're outputting 1d10 + CHA per beam with knockback. In melee, you have Bind Hexed Weapon + Hexblade's Curse + weapon attacks. You're solid everywhere.

Level 4 -- Paladin 2

Divine Smite unlocks. This is the payoff for the Paladin side of the build.

You gain:

- **Divine Smite** -- When you hit with a melee weapon attack, spend a spell slot to deal bonus radiant damage (2d8 at 1st level, +1d8 per slot level above 1st, +1d8 vs undead/fiends). This works with your Warlock spell slots, which recharge on short rest. You now have renewable smite fuel.
- **Fighting Style: Defense** -- +1 AC while wearing armor. Pushes your AC even higher.
- **Paladin Spellcasting** -- Access to Paladin spell list. Prepare spells from: Command, Compelled Duel (Crown oath spells, always prepared), Thunderous Smite, Cure Wounds, Bless.

Why this matters: Warlock slots recharge on short rest. You can smite twice, short rest, smite twice more, short rest, smite twice more -- all before needing a long rest. No other Paladin gets this kind of smite economy.

Level 5 -- Paladin 3

You gain:

- **Oath Spells: Command + Compelled Duel** (always prepared, don't count against your limit)
- **Turn the Tide** (Channel Divinity) -- Shout to heal all nearby non-enemy creatures. Small but useful mass heal.
- **2nd Channel Divinity charge**

Gameplay: You now have three Channel Divinity options (Righteous Clarity, Champion Challenge, Turn the Tide). Champion Challenge + Turn the Tide makes you a legitimate tank/healer hybrid. Command is excellent crowd control -- "Grovel" forces a target prone, granting your melee allies Advantage.

Level 6 -- Paladin 4

You gain:

- **Feat or ASI:** Pick one:
  - **+2 CHA (17 -> 19)** if you're planning to cap at 20 CHA at the next ASI.
  - **Resilient (CON)** -- +1 CON (14 -> 15), proficiency in CON saving throws. Massively improves Concentration on Hex/Bless. This is the competitive pick if you value consistency.
  - **War Caster** -- Advantage on Concentration saves, cast spells as opportunity attacks (Booming Blade AoO is devastating). Strong alternative.

Level 7 -- Paladin 5

Major power spike: Extra Attack.

You gain:

- **Extra Attack** -- Two weapon attacks per Action. Doubles your melee DPR and doubles the chances to proc Hexblade's Curse bonus damage.
- **2nd-Level Paladin Spell Slots**

- **Oath Spells: Warding Bond + Spiritual Weapon** (Crown, always prepared)
  - Spiritual Weapon is a bonus action summon that attacks independently. It lasts 10 turns and doesn't require Concentration. Excellent action economy.
  - Warding Bond links you to an ally, granting them +1 AC and resistance to all damage, but you take the same damage they take. Use on squishy backliners if you have HP to spare.

Combat rotation: Hexblade's Curse (bonus action) -> two weapon attacks with Bind Hexed Weapon -> each hit benefits from CHA to-hit/damage, Curse proficiency bonus damage, and crit threshold reduction. If the target dies, you heal. If you crit, you smite. If you need range, EB + Agonizing + Repelling handles it.

Level 8 -- Paladin 6

The reason you went 6 levels into Paladin.

You gain:

- **Aura of Protection** -- You and all allies within 10 ft (3m) gain a bonus to ALL saving throws equal to your Charisma modifier. With 18 CHA, that's +4 to every save for your whole frontline. With 20 CHA, it's +5. This is widely considered **the single most powerful party buff in BG3**. It makes your entire group dramatically harder to CC, frighten, charm, or kill with save-or-suck spells.

This is the Paladin capstone for this build. From here, every remaining level goes into Warlock.

Level 9 -- Warlock 3

You gain:

- **Pact Boon: Pact of the Tome** -- Three free cantrips from any class list (Guidance is the standout). At Warlock 5, you also gain once-per-long-rest access to Animate Dead, Call Lightning, and Haste (no slot cost).
  - *On Tactician/Balanced:* Pact of the Blade is the damage pick. Deepened Pact Extra Attack stacks with Paladin Extra Attack for 3 attacks per action. **On Honor Mode, they do NOT stack**, so take Tome.
- **2nd-Level Warlock Spell Slots** -- Smites now deal 3d8 radiant.
- **New Spell:** Darkness (create magical darkness; pairs with Devil's Sight later) or Misty Step (bonus action teleport, great for heavy armor repositioning)

Level 10 -- Warlock 4

You gain:

- **Feat: +2 CHA** -- If not at 20 yet, get there now. 20 CHA means +5 to attacks, damage, spell DC, Aura of Protection saves, and EB beams. This is the single highest-value ASI in the game for this build.
  - If already at 20: Savage Attacker, Alert, or Great Weapon Master.
- **New Spell:** Counterspell (shut down enemy casters) or Hold Person (paralyze humanoids; melee hits auto-crit)

Level 11 -- Warlock 5

Big Warlock power spike.

You gain:

- **3rd-Level Warlock Spell Slots** -- Divine Smite with a 3rd-level slot deals 4d8 radiant (5d8 vs undead/fiends). Average 18-22.5 bonus damage per smite, twice per short rest.
- **Deepened Pact** -- If you took Pact of the Blade, 3 attacks per Action on Tactician/Balanced. If Tome, you get free Haste, Animate Dead, and Call Lightning.
- **Eldritch Invocation:** Devil's Sight (see in magical darkness), Mire the Mind (free Slow), or One with Shadows (free invisibility in dim light)
- **New Spell:** Hunger of Hadar (area denial + blindness zone; pairs with Devil's Sight) or Fly
- **Eldritch Blast upgrades to 3 beams** at this character level. Each beam: 1d10 + 5 (CHA) + 4.5m push.

Level 12 -- Warlock 6

You gain:

- **Accursed Spectre** -- When a creature under your Hexblade's Curse dies, you raise an Accursed Spectre from its corpse as a **Reaction** (no action/bonus action/slot cost). The spectre fights alongside you with bonus HP and attack rolls based on your Warlock level and CHA. Less useful in Act 2 (many undead can't be raised) but excellent in Acts 1 and 3.
- **New Spell:** Blink (50% chance each turn to vanish, untargetable; stacks with heavy armor AC and Shield spell) or Shadow Blade (psychic damage weapon with Advantage in darkness)

Gear to Grab

Act 1

Phalar Aluve (longsword) *Where:* Underdark, stuck in a stone near Selunite Outpost (X: 116, Y: -192). Pass a Religion or Strength check to pull it. *Why:* Excellent longsword with party-wide buff/debuff aura. Sing mode adds 1d4 Thunder to allies' attacks; Shriek mode debuffs enemies. Best Act 1 weapon for this build.

Adamantine Splint Armor *Where:* Grymforge, crafted at the Adamantine Forge using Splint Mould + Mithral Ore *Why:* 18 AC, incoming crits become normal hits, attackers are knocked Reeling (-1 to attack rolls). Best armor until Act 3. The Splint Mould is in the lava area past the Grymforge waypoint. Mithral Ore is found in two deposits in the Underdark/Grymforge area.

Adamantine Shield *Where:* Grymforge, Adamantine Forge using Shield Mould + Mithral Ore *Why:* +2 AC, Shield Bash reaction that knocks attackers Reeling, crits become normal hits. If you can only forge two items, prioritize this + the Splint. Shield Mould is on the south side of the Grymforge near some Duergar.

Strange Conduit Ring *Where:* Creche Y'llek, Inquisitor's Chamber, inside an Elegant Chest (X: 1360, Y: -657). Reach via Mountain Pass -> Rosymorn Monastery -> Creche. Need Githyanki Barrier Disruptor from Kith'rak Therezzyn (persuade or kill). *Why:* +1d4 Psychic damage on all weapon attacks while Concentrating on a spell (Hex, Bless, etc.). Stays relevant the entire game.

Blood of Lathander (mace) *Where:* Rosymorn Monastery, hidden chamber past the Creche. Requires placing the Dawnmaster's Crest in the correct slot. Careful: there's a trap that can destroy the weapon if you don't disarm it. *Why:* Legendary mace: sunbeam once per long rest, auto-heal to 2-12 HP when downed (once per long rest), and undead/fiends within 6m at dawn take radiant damage.

Disintegrating Night Walkers (boots) *Where:* Grymforge, looted from True Soul Nere after freeing/killing him *Why:* Can't be Enwebbed, Entangled, or Ensnared; can cast Misty Step once per short rest. Huge mobility for a heavy armor build.

Haste Helm *Where:* Blighted Village, locked chest (X: 29, Y: 405) *Why:* At start of combat, gain 3 turns of Momentum (+1.5m movement). Nice quality of life for a heavy armor character.

Infernal Iron (x3-4) *Where:* Blighted Village basement (locked chest), Goblin Camp (Dror Ragzlin's hoard), Zhentarim Hideout (chest), Grymforge (Stonemason Kith -- pass observation checks or buy) *Why:* Give to Dammon in Act 2 for Flawed Helldusk Armor pieces AND Karlach's heart repairs. Collect all you can find.

Act 2

Shield of Devotion *Where:* Sold by Quartermaster Talli at Last Light Inn *Why:* +1 shield that grants Aid (bonus max HP) once per long rest.

Potent Robe -- *Give this to your Shadow Sorcerer, not this character.* You wear heavy armor.

Eversight Ring *Where:* Gauntlet of Shar *Why:* Immunity to Blindness. Useful for party members near your Darkness spells.

Act 3

Helldusk Armor *Where:* House of Hope, defeat Raphael. Access via Helsik at the Devil's Fee in Lower City. *Why:* Best armor in the game. 21 AC, fire resistance, -3 all damage, Fly spell (no Concentration). The chest piece doesn't require heavy armor proficiency, so any class can wear it.

Birthright (helmet) *Where:* House of Hope treasure hoard *Why:* +2 CHA. Pushes you past 20 CHA to 22 for even more Aura of Protection / EB / smite damage.

Viconia's Walking Fortress (shield) *Where:* House of Grief, Shadowheart's Act 3 questline in Lower City *Why:* +3 shield with Spellguard (Advantage on saves vs spells), Warding Bond reaction, and Reflective Shell. Best shield in the game.

Cloak of Displacement *Where:* Sold by Entharl Danthelon at Danthelon's Dancing Axe, Wyrm's Crossing *Why:* Attackers have Disadvantage against you until they hit you. Resets each turn.

Quick Tips

> **Short rest after every 1-2 fights.** Your Warlock slots (your smite fuel) recharge on short rest. Two short rests per long rest means up to 6 smites per day from Warlock slots alone, plus your Paladin slots.

> **Aura of Protection is always-on.** Make sure it's activated. Keep your squishiest party members within 10 ft / 3m of you during fights. Position carefully.

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> **EB is not just a fallback.** 3 beams x (1d10 + 5 + knockback) is 3d10+15 force damage with triple displacement. Use it to shove enemies off cliffs, into hazards, or away from your backline. It's often better DPR than melee if you can't reach the target.

> **Stack Hexblade's Curse + Hex on priority targets.** Turn 1: Curse (bonus action) + 2 attacks. Turn 2: Hex (bonus action) + 2 attacks. Now every hit does weapon + CHA + prof bonus (Curse) + 1d6 necrotic (Hex).

> **Smite on crits.** Hexblade's Curse reduces your crit range by 1 (crit on 19-20). Wait to see if you crit before declaring a smite, since smite damage dice are doubled on a crit.

> **Don't forget Spiritual Weapon.** It costs a bonus action to cast (Paladin 2nd-level slot) but then attacks on its own each turn with only a bonus action. It lasts 10 turns with no Concentration. Excellent action economy when you don't need Hex/Curse on a given turn.

Party Gear Assignments

This build gets: Helldusk Armor, Birthright (+2 CHA), Viconia's Walking Fortress, Strange Conduit Ring

Passes to others:

- Helldusk Gloves -> Karlach (she attacks 4-6 times per turn vs your 2). *Your backup:* Gloves of Dexterity.
- Helldusk Boots -> Astarion. *Your backup:* Boots of Persistence.
- Markoheshkir -> Shadow Sorcerer. You use weapon + shield, not a staff.
- Potent Robe / Robe of the Weave -> Sorcerer / Gale. You wear heavy armor.
- Amulet of Greater Health -> Life Cleric. *Your backup:* Any defensive amulet.

Death Domain Cleric 12

> **Your Role:** Necrotic spellcaster and necromancer. Melt enemies with Spirit Guardians, raise undead armies, and ignore necrotic resistance entirely. You still have the full Cleric healing and support toolkit as backup.

At a Glance

Race: Wood Half-Elf (Darkvision, Fey Ancestry, extra speed + skill) or Drow (Superior Darkvision)
Background: Folk Hero (Animal Handling + Survival, both WIS-based)

Stats: STR 8 / DEX 14 / **CON 16** / INT 8 / **WIS 17** / CHA 10 Wisdom powers your spells. CON keeps you alive and Concentrated. DEX 14 caps medium armor AC contribution.

Key limitation: Death Domain only gets medium armor proficiency (no heavy armor). You'll need to either build around medium armor + DEX or take the Heavily Armored feat at level 4.

Level-by-Level

Level 1 -- Cleric 1 (Death Domain)

You gain:

- **Reaper** -- Your Necromancy cantrips that target one creature can target an additional creature. This means Toll the Dead and Bone Chill both hit two targets. At level 1. This is absurd cantrip value.
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** False Life (7 temp HP, no Concentration), Ray of Sickness (2d8 poison + can Poison the target)
- **Medium Armor + Shield + Martial Weapon Proficiency**

Cantrips: Toll the Dead (your primary damage -- 1d12 vs injured targets, hits two with Reaper), Bone Chill (prevents healing, hits two with Reaper), Guidance (essential utility), Sacred Flame (radiant damage backup)

Prepare: Healing Word (bonus action ranged heal -- essential), Bless (Concentration, +1d4 to attack rolls and saves for 3 allies), Command (versatile crowd control), Shield of Faith (+2 AC to an ally, Concentration)

Gameplay: Double Toll the Dead is your bread and butter. Two enemies take 1d8 necrotic each (1d12 if damaged) as a single cantrip action, no spell slot cost. Bless your frontline, Healing Word downed allies as a bonus action, and use Ray of Sickness when you want to apply Poisoned.

Level 2 -- Cleric 2

You gain:

- **Channel Divinity: Turn Undead** -- Force nearby undead to flee. Situational but very strong in Act 2 (full of undead).
- **Channel Divinity: Touch of Death** -- When you hit a creature with a melee attack, spend a Channel Divinity charge to deal bonus necrotic damage equal to 5 + (2x Cleric level). At level 2 that's 9 extra necrotic on a melee hit. This scales to 29 at level 12. Very strong burst.
- **1 Channel Divinity charge** (recharges on short rest)

Prepare: Spiritual Weapon (bonus action summon that attacks independently for 10 turns, no Concentration)

Tactics: Touch of Death is your burst tool. Walk into melee, hit an enemy with a weapon or Booming Blade, then Channel Divinity for a big chunk of necrotic on top. Then step back and Toll the Dead from range on subsequent turns.

Level 3 -- Cleric 3

You gain:

- **2nd-Level Spell Slots**
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Blindness (CON save, no Concentration -- blinded enemies have Disadvantage on attacks and your party has Advantage against them), Ray of Enfeeblement (halves target's weapon damage)

Prepare: Aid (permanently boost max HP of 3 allies by 5 per slot level, no Concentration, lasts until long rest), Hold Person (paralyze humanoids for auto-crit setup), Silence (shuts down enemy casters in an area)

Level 4 -- Cleric 4

You gain:

- **Feat or ASI:** Pick one:
  - **Heavily Armored** -- +1 STR (8 -> 9), gain heavy armor proficiency. Lets you wear the Adamantine Splint you forged in Grymforge for 18 AC + shield = 20 AC. Solves the "no heavy armor" problem permanently.
  - **+2 WIS (17 -> 19)** -- Higher spell save DC and more prepared spells. Better if you're comfortable in medium armor (16-17 AC with shield).
  - **War Caster** -- Advantage on Concentration saves. Critical if you plan to maintain Spirit Guardians in melee constantly.
- **New cantrip:** Bursting Sinew (Patch 8 necromancy cantrip that explodes corpses) if available, benefits from Reaper.

Level 5 -- Cleric 5

The build comes online here.

You gain:

- **3rd-Level Spell Slots**
- **Destroy Undead** -- Turn Undead now also deals 4d6 radiant damage to turned undead. Devastating in Act 2.
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Animate Dead (raise a corpse as a zombie or skeleton to fight for you, lasts until long rest, upcasting to 4th level summons 3), Vampiric Touch (Concentration melee spell, deal 3d6 necrotic and heal for half the damage dealt, lasts 10 turns)

Prepare:

- **Spirit Guardians** -- THE Cleric spell. Creates a damaging aura around you (3d8 radiant or necrotic per enemy per turn, their speed is halved). Concentration. **Choose the necrotic version** so it benefits from Inescapable Destruction at level 6. This spell alone carries entire runs.
- **Revivify** -- Resurrect a downed ally in combat. Must have.
- **Mass Healing Word** -- Bonus action ranged heal for up to 6 allies.
- **Glyph of Warding** -- Place a trap. Sleep variant is extremely strong CC.

This is where the build transforms. Spirit Guardians (necrotic) + walking into packs of enemies is your primary combat strategy for the rest of the game. Wade into melee, let the aura shred everything around you, use Touch of Death for burst, and Healing Word downed allies as a bonus action.

Level 6 -- Cleric 6

Your necrotic damage becomes uncounterable.

You gain:

- **Inescapable Destruction** -- Your spells ignore resistance to Necrotic damage. This is enormous. Many enemies in Acts 2 and 3 resist necrotic. You now bypass that completely. Spirit Guardians (necrotic), Toll the Dead, Vampiric Touch, Touch of Death -- all hit for full damage regardless of enemy resistances.
- **2nd Channel Divinity charge** -- Touch of Death twice per short rest, or mix with Turn Undead.

Level 7 -- Cleric 7

You gain:

- **4th-Level Spell Slots**
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Blight (8d8 necrotic single-target nuke, CON save for half -- ignores resistance via Inescapable Destruction), Death Ward (place on an ally before a fight; first time they'd drop to 0 HP, they go to 1 instead, no Concentration)

Prepare: Banishment (remove a dangerous enemy, CHA save, Concentration), Guardian of Faith (spectral sentry dealing 20 radiant per enemy entering, 60 total, no Concentration), Freedom of Movement

Upcast tip: Animate Dead at 4th level summons 3 undead instead of 1. Start building your army.

Level 8 -- Cleric 8

Melee power spike.

You gain:

- **Divine Strike: Necrotic** -- Once per turn, your melee weapon attacks deal an additional 1d8 necrotic damage. Stacks with Touch of Death (Channel Divinity), your weapon damage, and Booming Blade.
- **Feat or ASI:** +2 WIS to reach 20 (if you took +2 at level 4) or 19 (if you took Heavily Armored). At 20 WIS: +5 to spell save DC, spell attacks, Perception, and all WIS skills. If WIS is already 20: Resilient (CON), Alert, or Sentinel.

Melee combo: Booming Blade (weapon + thunder + movement punishment) + Divine Strike (+1d8 necrotic) + Touch of Death (5 + 2x12 = 29 necrotic from Channel Divinity). That's a devastating single hit.

Level 9 -- Cleric 9

You gain:

- **5th-Level Spell Slots**
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Cloudkill (5d8 poison AoE cloud per turn, repositionable, Concentration -- many enemies resist poison though), Contagion (apply a disease via melee touch, niche but flavorful)

Prepare: Insect Plague (4d10 piercing AoE per turn), Greater Restoration, Mass Cure Wounds, Flame Strike (8d6 fire/radiant burst, no Concentration)

Upcast opportunities: Spirit Guardians at 5th level = 5d8 per enemy per turn. Animate Dead at 5th level = 5 undead. Blight at 5th level = 9d8.

Level 10 -- Cleric 10

You gain:

- **Divine Intervention** -- Once per campaign (not per rest, once ever). Options:
  - **Sunder the Heretical** -- Massive radiant AoE nuke. Great burst.
  - **Opulent Revival** -- Resurrect all fallen companions and fully heal them. Emergency button.
  - **Golden Generosity** -- Camping supplies, potions, scrolls.
  - **Arm Thy Servant** -- Devotee's Mace (legendary weapon). **Give this to your Life Cleric instead.** Take Sunder the Heretical or Opulent Revival.

Level 11 -- Cleric 11

6th-level spells. The endgame power tier.

You gain:

- **6th-Level Spell Slot** (one per long rest)
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Harm -- 14d6 necrotic damage to a single target (CON save for half). Ignores necrotic resistance via Inescapable Destruction. Average 49

damage, up to 84 on a failed save. Your delete button.

Prepare: Heal (70 HP to one creature), Heroes' Feast (party-wide immunity to poison/fear, Advantage on WIS saves, bonus max HP), Create Undead (summon a mummy), Blade Barrier (wall of spinning blades, 6d10 slashing, no Concentration)

Level 12 -- Cleric 12

You gain:

- **2nd 6th-Level Spell Slot** -- Double Harm, or Harm + Heal, or Harm + Heroes' Feast.
- **Feat:** Alert (+5 Initiative), Resilient (CON), Tough (+24 HP), or Sentinel

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Gear to Grab

Act 1

Necromancy of Thay (book) *Where:* Blighted Village, Apothecary's cellar (hidden lab behind bookcase). Requires the Dark Amethyst from the Whispering Depths spider cave to open. Read it and pass the WIS checks (DC 10, 15, 20). *Why:* Eventually unlocks Danse Macabre (summon 4 ghouls per long rest) once you get the Tharchiate Codex in Act 3. Even partially read, you get Speak With Dead. **Do NOT skip this.**

Hollow's Staff *Where:* Zhentarim Basement, locked chest in a cell *Why:* Heightened Necromancy -- your necromancy spells that require saves impose Disadvantage on the saving throw. Massive accuracy boost for Toll the Dead, Blindness, Ray of Sickness, etc.

Abyss Beckoners (gloves) *Where:* Sold by Blurg in Myconid Colony (Underdark) *Why:* Summoned creatures gain resistance to all damage except psychic. Your Animate Dead zombies/skeletons become significantly tankier. Critical for a necromancer build.

Adamantine Scale Mail *Where:* Grymforge, Adamantine Forge (Scale Mail Mould + Mithral Ore). If you took Heavily Armored feat, craft Splint instead. *Why:* 16+DEX AC (up to 18 with shield), crits become normal hits.

Act 2

Ring of Exalted Marrow *Where:* Moonrise Towers rooftop *Why:* Grants the Exalted Marrow cantrip (melee necromancy + paralyze) and gives enemies Disadvantage plus -1d4 on saves against your necromancy spells. Huge.

Circle of Bones (helmet) *Where:* Looted from Balthazar (fight him in the Gauntlet of Shar or at the Nightsong) *Why:* Free Animate Dead per long rest (no slot cost) AND buffs allied undead within range. Best-in-slot helmet for necromancer builds.

Crypt Lord Ring *Where:* Gauntlet of Shar, sarcophagus in a side room *Why:* Free Create Undead (summon mummy) per long rest. Free powerful summon on top of your existing Animate Dead.

Callous Glow Ring *Where:* Gauntlet of Shar, Self-Same Trial reward *Why:* Bonus radiant damage to illuminated targets. Lets you proc Radiating Orb effects even with necrotic Spirit Guardians.

Boots of Stormy Clamour *Where:* Gauntlet of Shar or Last Light Inn vendors *Why:* Applying a condition to an enemy = they also gain Reverberation (-1 to attack rolls/saves, stacking). Spirit Guardians applies conditions constantly, so these boots give persistent enemy debuffs.

Act 3

Staff of Cherished Necromancy *Where:* Sold by (or looted from) Mystic Carrion in Philgrave's Mansion, Lower City *Why:* **Best weapon for this build.** Heightened Necromancy (Disadvantage on saves vs your necromancy spells) AND Life Essence Harvest: when you kill an enemy with a necromancy spell, gain Life Essence. Life Essence lets you cast a necromancy spell without using a spell slot. Free upcasted Inflict Wounds or Spirit Guardians refresh. Game-changing.

Quickspell Gloves *Where:* Sorcerous Sundries, sold by Rolan or Lorroakan's Projection *Why:* Cast a cantrip as a bonus action once per short rest. With Reaper, that's a bonus action double Toll the Dead. 4 enemies hit by cantrips per turn total.

Tharchiate Codex *Where:* Sorcerous Sundries vault (portal puzzle, same area as Markoheshkir) *Why:* Re-read Necromancy of Thay with this to pass a DC 20 WIS check and permanently unlock Danse Macabre (summon 4 ghouls per long rest).

Quick Tips

> **Spirit Guardians (necrotic) is your primary combat spell.** Walk into enemies, let the aura shred them. Inescapable Destruction means nothing resists it.

> **Toll the Dead hits TWO enemies every turn for free.** With Quickspell Gloves from Act 3, you can hit 4 separate enemies per turn with cantrips alone.

> **Touch of Death at level 12 = 29 bonus necrotic on a melee hit.** Combine with Booming Blade + Divine Strike for massive single-target burst.

> **Summon undead BEFORE fights.** Cast Animate Dead out of combat and enter the fight with 3-5 extra bodies on your side. Buff them with Aid to boost their max HP.

> **Staff of Cherished Necromancy is the endgame unlock.** Kill something with Spirit Guardians, get a free fully-upcasted necromancy spell in return. That loop is insane.

> **You're still a Cleric.** Keep Healing Word prepared always. Picking up downed allies is always your backup job.

Party Gear Assignments

This build gets: Staff of Cherished Necromancy, Circle of Bones, Crypt Lord Ring, Ring of Exalted Marrow, Quickspell Gloves, Boots of Stormy Clamour

Passes to others:

- Helldusk Armor -> Paladin/Hexblade. *Backup:* Adamantine Splint or Yuan-Ti Scale Mail.
- Viconia's Walking Fortress -> Paladin/Hexblade. *Backup:* Adamantine Shield.
- Helm of Balduran -> Life Cleric. Circle of Bones is better for you.
- Amulet of Greater Health -> Life Cleric. *Backup:* Spellcrux Amulet.
- Markoheshkir -> Shadow Sorcerer. Staff of Cherished Necromancy is better for you.
- **Divine Intervention:** Take Sunder the Heretical or Opulent Revival. Life Cleric takes the Devotee's Mace.

Shadow Magic Sorcerer 12

> **Your Role:** The party's arcane blaster and controller. Nuke groups with Fireball and Chain Lightning, lock enemies down with crowd control, summon a shadow hound that generates Sorcery Points, and manipulate darkness itself. You also provide Twinned Haste to supercharge your martial allies.

At a Glance

Race: Half-Elf (High) -- Darkvision, Fey Ancestry, extra skill, free cantrip (grab Booming Blade to free up Sorcerer cantrip slots) **Other strong picks:** Drow (Superior Darkvision, free Faerie Fire), Zariel Tiefling, Half-Orc **Background:** Charlatan (Deception + Sleight of Hand) or Noble (History + Persuasion)

Stats: STR 8 / DEX 14 / **CON 16** / INT 8 / WIS 10 / **CHA 17** Charisma powers all your spells. CON keeps you alive and focused. DEX for AC with Mage Armor and Initiative.

Metamagic picks:

- Level 2: **Twinned Spell** + **Quickened Spell**
- Level 3: **Heightened Spell**
- Level 10: **Careful Spell** or **Subtle Spell**

Level-by-Level

Level 1 -- Sorcerer 1 (Shadow Magic)

You gain:

- **Eyes of the Dark** -- Superior Darkvision out to 24m (80 ft). See in complete darkness, magical or mundane. Always active, costs nothing.
- **Strength of the Grave** -- The first time you drop to 0 HP per long rest, you regain 1 HP instead of going down. Free death save.

- **Sorcerer Spellcasting** -- CHA-based, known spells (pick spells permanently, can swap one per level up).
- **Proficiencies** -- Light armor, simple weapons, CON + CHA saving throws. CON saves are excellent for Concentration.

Cantrips (pick 4, or 5 with racial): Fire Bolt (1d10 fire), Ray of Frost (1d8 cold + slow), Shocking Grasp (melee, Advantage vs metal armor, prevents Reactions), Minor Illusion (stealth utility). Multiple damage types help with Hound Omens at level 6.

Spells Known (pick 2): Shield (+5 AC reaction, non-negotiable), Chromatic Orb (3d8 damage, choose the element -- versatile nuke that lets you match Hound Omens later)

Level 2 -- Sorcerer 2

You gain:

- **2 Sorcery Points** -- Metamagic fuel. Also convertible: burn a spell slot to create Sorcery Points, or spend Sorcery Points to create spell slots.
- **Metamagic: Twinned Spell** -- Cast a single-target spell on two targets for SP equal to the spell's level. Twinned Haste on two martial party members. Twinned Hold Person. Absurd value.
- **Metamagic: Quickened Spell** -- Cast a spell that normally takes an Action as a Bonus Action (3 SP). Lets you cast two leveled spells in one turn.

New Spell: Mage Armor (13 + DEX = 15 AC when not wearing armor)

Level 3 -- Sorcerer 3

Your shadow toolkit comes online.

You gain:

- **3 Sorcery Points** (total)
- **Metamagic: Heightened Spell** -- Force Disadvantage on the target's saving throw (3 SP). Use on save-or-suck spells like Hold Person, Banishment, or Disintegrate.
- **2nd-Level Spell Slots**
- **Eyes of the Dark: Darkness** -- Cast Darkness for 2 Sorcery Points instead of a spell slot. While inside, you gain Eyes of the Dark for 10 turns: you can see through magical darkness. Enemies inside are Blinded. Ranged attacks can't be made into or out of it.

New Spell: Shadow Blade -- Bonus action summon. Creates a finesse weapon dealing 2d8 psychic damage (scales with slot level). Grants Advantage on attacks in dim light or darkness. With your

free Darkness, you always attack with Advantage while wielding this.

Gameplay shift: Cast Darkness (2 SP, not a slot), step inside, summon Shadow Blade (bonus action), and swing with Advantage. Enemies inside are blinded, enemies outside can't shoot in.

Level 4 -- Sorcerer 4

You gain:

- **4 Sorcery Points**
- **Feat:** +2 CHA (17 -> 19), War Caster (Concentration saves), or Elemental Adept (Fire) if leaning into Fireball blasting.
- **New Spell:** Scorching Ray (3 rays, 2d6 fire each, separate attack rolls, can split across targets)

Level 5 -- Sorcerer 5

Major power spike: 3rd-level spells.

You gain:

- **5 Sorcery Points**
- **3rd-Level Spell Slots**
- **New Spells -- pick from these essentials:**
  - **Fireball** -- 8d6 fire in a huge radius. THE blaster spell. Clears encounters.
  - **Haste** -- Concentration. +2 AC, doubled movement, Advantage on DEX saves, extra Action. **Twinned Haste on two martial allies (costs 3 SP) is one of the strongest plays in the game.** If your party has a Paladin and a Fighter/Barbarian, this is devastating.
  - **Counterspell** -- Reaction to negate enemy spells. Essential from Act 2 onward.
  - **Hypnotic Pattern** -- AoE incapacitate. Ends encounters without damage.

Level 6 -- Sorcerer 6

The Hound arrives.

You gain:

- **6 Sorcery Points**

- **Hound of Ill Omen (Nimbus)** -- Spend 3 SP to summon a shadow hound (once per short rest). 42 HP, 18 AC, with unique features:
  - **Ominous Bite** -- Bites a target and places a Hound's Omen specifying a damage type. When YOU hit that enemy with the matching damage type, you regain 1 SP. This creates a SP generation loop.
  - **Splinter Shadow** -- When the Hound is hit by a melee attack (not radiant), it spawns a weaker shade copy. These shades last 3 turns and also fight. Can generate multiple shades.
  - **Shadow Vines** -- Root enemies in place.
  - The Hound sees through magical darkness and fights effectively inside your Darkness zones.

SP Economy: Summon Hound (3 SP), Hound places Omen, you hit with matching damage type = 1 SP back per hit. Over a fight, the Hound can return most or all of its summoning cost. This is why you want multiple damage type cantrips.

Level 7 -- Sorcerer 7

You gain:

- **7 Sorcery Points**
- **4th-Level Spell Slots**
- **New Spell:** Greater Invisibility (Concentration, stay invisible even after attacking -- permanent Advantage), Banishment (remove a creature from the fight), Wall of Fire (5d8 per turn area denial), or Ice Storm (AoE damage + difficult terrain)

Upcast: Shadow Blade at 4th level = 4d8 psychic per hit with Advantage in darkness. Average 18 damage per swing.

Level 8 -- Sorcerer 8

You gain:

- **8 Sorcery Points**
- **Feat:** +2 CHA to reach 20. Top priority. 20 CHA = +5 to spell save DC, spell attacks, and all CHA skills.
  - If already 20: Alert (+5 Initiative), Spell Sniper (crit on 19-20 for spell attacks)

Level 9 -- Sorcerer 9

You gain:

- **9 Sorcery Points**
- **5th-Level Spell Slots**
- **New Spell:** Hold Monster (paralyze ANY creature type -- auto-crit on melee hits against them), Cone of Cold (8d8 cold AoE), or Dominate Person

Upcast: Shadow Blade at 5th level = 5d8 psychic per hit. In Darkness with Advantage, potentially 40 psychic per swing.

Level 10 -- Sorcerer 10

You gain:

- **10 Sorcery Points**
- **Metamagic:** Careful Spell (allies auto-succeed on saves in your AoEs) or Subtle Spell (can't be Counterspelled)

Level 11 -- Sorcerer 11

6th-level spells and Shadow Walk. The endgame power tier.

You gain:

- **11 Sorcery Points**
- **6th-Level Spell Slot**
- **Shadow Walk** -- Bonus action: teleport up to 18m (60 ft) into a shadow or dimly lit area. The next spell you cast that turn benefits from **Distant Spell** for free (doubled range, no SP cost). Bonus action teleport + free Metamagic every turn.

New Spell -- pick from these:

- **Disintegrate** -- 10d6 + 40 force damage (average 75). DEX save; on success, nothing happens. If the target dies from this, completely destroyed (no Revivify). Shadow Walk into range + Heightened Disintegrate = delete anything from across the map.
- **Chain Lightning** -- 10d8 to primary target, jumps to up to 3 secondary targets for 10d8 each (DEX save for half).
- **Mass Suggestion** -- Suggest a course of action to up to 12 creatures. No Concentration. Lasts until long rest. Can end fights without combat.

Level 12 -- Sorcerer 12

You gain:

- **12 Sorcery Points**
- **Feat:** Alert, Spell Sniper, Lucky (3 rerolls/day), Tough (+24 HP), or Resilient (WIS)

Gear to Grab

Act 1

Spellsparkler (quarterstaff) *Where:* Rescue Counsellor Florrick at Waukeen's Rest (burning inn) or receive as a reward *Why:* +1d4 Lightning on spell attacks. Each Scorching Ray beam procs this. Generates Arcane Acuity (bonus to spell attack rolls) on hit. Best Act 1 caster weapon.

Bracers of Defence *Where:* Blighted Village, Apothecary cellar *Why:* +2 AC when not wearing armor. Stacks with Mage Armor for 17 AC.

Necklace of Elemental Augmentation *Where:* Sold by Omeluum in Myconid Colony (Underdark) *Why:* Adds CHA modifier to matching elemental cantrip damage. Fire Bolt becomes 1d10+5 at 20 CHA.

Daredevil Gloves *Where:* Creche Y'llek, sold by A'jak'nir Jeera *Why:* +1 to spell attack rolls, use ranged spells in melee without Disadvantage.

Strange Conduit Ring *Where:* Creche Y'llek, Inquisitor's Chamber (X: 1360, Y: -657) *Why:* +1d4 psychic while Concentrating. Great with Shadow Blade (Concentration).

Act 2

Potent Robe *Where:* Last Light Inn, reward from Alfira after "Rescue the Tieflings" quest. Alfira must be alive from Act 1, side with the Grove. *Why:* **This is YOUR robe.** Cantrips deal bonus damage equal to CHA mod (+5 at 20 CHA), AND you get CHA mod as temp HP each turn. Fire Bolt goes from 2d10 to 2d10+5. With Necklace of Elemental Augmentation, that's 2d10+10 per cantrip.

Resonance Stone *Where:* Mind Flayer Colony (end of Act 2), small alcove SW of Necrotic Laboratory near Mind-Archive Interface (X: 692, Y: -114). Rare spawn. *Why:* Doubles psychic damage in 9m radius. Deploy for Shadow Blade fights, stow otherwise. **Warning:** Also makes you vulnerable to psychic damage. Don't use vs Ketheric or psychic enemies. May stop working after Act 2 for some players.

Spellcrux Amulet *Where:* Mind Flayer Colony loot *Why:* Restore one spell slot per long rest. Swap it on between fights, restore a slot, swap back.

Act 3

Markoheshkir (quarterstaff) *Where:* Sorcerous Sundries vault (portal puzzle behind Lorroakan's room) *Why:* Legendary. Arcane Battery (free spell 1/long rest, no slot cost), +1 spell save DC, +1 spell attacks, elemental attunement. Best caster weapon in the game. **This goes to you, not Gale.** Gale takes Staff of Spellpower instead.

Cloak of Displacement *Where:* Wyrm's Crossing, Danthelon's Dancing Axe shop *Why:* Attackers have Disadvantage against you until they hit you. Resets each turn. Excellent survivability for a squishy caster.

Birthright (helmet) *Where:* House of Hope treasure hoard *Why:* +2 CHA. Pushes CHA past 20. More Potent Robe cantrip damage, higher spell DC. **Contest with Paladin/Hexblade.** Paladin gets priority since CHA affects their Aura of Protection for the whole party.

Quick Tips

> **Twinned Haste on two martial allies wins fights.** 3 Sorcery Points to give your Paladin and Karlach extra Actions, +2 AC, and double movement. This can double your party's damage output.

> **Quickened Spell lets you cast two spells in one turn.** Quickened Fireball (bonus action) + Action Scorching Ray. Or Quickened Hold Monster + Disintegrate on the paralyzed target.

> **Heightened Spell on save-or-suck spells only.** Don't waste it on damage spells (they still deal half on a save). Use it on Hold Monster, Banishment, or Disintegrate where pass/fail is everything.

>

> **Darkness + Eyes of the Dark costs 2 SP, not a spell slot.** You see through it, enemies don't. Free Advantage on all your attacks inside.

> **Hound Omens regenerate Sorcery Points.** Summon Hound (3 SP), have it bite to place an Omen, hit with the matching damage type cantrip. Each match = 1 SP back. Over a fight, the Hound pays for itself.

> **Shadow Walk (level 11) is insane mobility.** Bonus action 18m teleport + free Distant Spell on your next cast. Teleport behind cover, Disintegrate from across the map.

> **Convert unused low-level slots to Sorcery Points.** At end of combat, before short rest, burn remaining 1st/2nd-level slots into SP. Maximizes your Metamagic fuel.

Party Gear Assignments

This build gets: Potent Robe, Markoheshkir, Necklace of Elemental Augmentation, Resonance Stone, Spellcrux Amulet (Act 2)

Passes to others:

- Robe of the Weave -> Gale. Potent Robe is better for you.
- Staff of Spellpower -> Gale. You have Markoheshkir.
- Quickspell Gloves -> Death Domain Cleric (Reaper double cantrip is more impactful). *Backup:* Daredevil Gloves.
- Cloak of the Weave -> Gale. *Backup:* Cloak of Displacement for survivability.
- Helm of Balduran -> Life Cleric. *Backup:* Fistbreaker Helm (+1 spell DC).
- Amulet of Greater Health -> Life Cleric. *Backup:* Spellcrux Amulet.
- Strange Conduit Ring -> Paladin/Hexblade (always Concentrating on Hex). You can contest this if you run Shadow Blade often.

Gloom Stalker 5 / Assassin 4 / Champion 3

> **Your Role:** Alpha strike archer. Start every fight from stealth, surprise enemies, and unload 7+ attacks on turn one -- most of them automatic critical hits. End fights before enemies take a single turn.

At a Glance

Race: Wood Half-Elf (extra movement, Darkvision, Stealth proficiency, Fey Ancestry) **Other strong picks:** Halfling (Lightfoot -- reroll natural 1s, Advantage on Stealth), Deep Gnome (Superior Darkvision, Gnome Cunning), Githyanki (free Misty Step at level 5) **Background:** Urchin (Sleight of Hand + Stealth)

Stats: STR 8 / **DEX 16** / CON 14 / INT 8 / WIS 14 / CHA 10 DEX is your primary stat. Attacks, damage, AC, and Initiative all scale with it. WIS 14 for Ranger spells and Perception.

Note on DEX 16 vs 17: Since Karlach gets Auntie Ethel's Hair (+1 STR), start at 16 DEX and take two +2 DEX ASIs (Ranger 4 and Rogue 4) to reach 20.

Level-by-Level

Level 1 -- Ranger 1

Start Ranger for medium armor, shields, martial weapons, and DEX + STR saving throw proficiencies.

You gain:

- **Favoured Enemy:** Bounty Hunter (Investigation proficiency + Restrain spell) or Ranger Knight (heavy armor proficiency + History)
- **Natural Explorer:** Urban Tracker (Stealth bonus) or Wasteland Wanderer: Cold/Fire/Poison (damage resistance)

Gameplay: Equip Lae'zel's Githyanki Half Plate (15 AC) if she's not using it, grab a longbow, and start shooting from high ground for the +2 attack roll bonus.

Level 2 -- Ranger 2

You gain:

- **Fighting Style: Archery** -- +2 to ranged weapon attack rolls. This is enormous. It offsets the Sharpshooter -5 penalty later. Non-negotiable pick.
- **Spellcasting**
- **Spells (pick 2):**
  - **Hunter's Mark** -- Bonus action, Concentration. Deal an extra 1d6 damage on every hit against the marked target. Moves to new targets when the current one dies (bonus action). Your sustained damage buff for the entire game.
  - **Longstrider** (no Concentration, +3m movement until long rest) or **Ensnaring Strike** (root a target on hit, STR save)

Level 3 -- Ranger 3 (Gloom Stalker)

The subclass that defines the build.

You gain:

- **Dread Ambusher** -- On the first turn of combat, your movement speed increases by 3m and you gain an extra attack that deals an additional 1d8 damage. This extra attack is on top of your normal attacks. Free burst on turn one.
- **Dread Ambusher: Hide** -- After making a Dread Ambusher attack, use a bonus action to Hide (become invisible until your next turn or until you attack/cast). Alpha strike then disappear.
- **Umbral Shroud** -- Become invisible if you're obscured (in shadow or darkness). Costs nothing. Incredible for re-stealthing mid-combat.
- **Superior Darkvision** -- See in darkness up to 24m.
- **Gloom Stalker Spells (always prepared):** Disguise Self, Fog Cloud

New Spell: Goodberry (create 40 HP of healing berries, great out-of-combat healing)

First turn at level 3 (from stealth): 1 normal attack + 1 Dread Ambusher attack (+ 1d8 bonus) = 2 attacks total. Then Hide as bonus action. Enemies can't target you.

Level 4 -- Ranger 4

You gain:

- **Feat: Sharpshooter** -- This is the build-defining feat.
  - **All-In (toggle):** Your ranged weapon attacks deal +10 damage but take -5 to the attack roll. With Archery (+2), high DEX (+3-5), and Advantage from stealth/high ground, the -5 is easily offset. Every arrow hits like a truck.
  - Ignore half and three-quarters cover.
  - No Disadvantage on long-range attacks.

With Sharpshooter active, each arrow deals: Weapon die (1d8 longbow) + DEX mod + Sharpshooter (+10) + Hunter's Mark (1d6) + Dread Ambusher (1d8 on first attack) = roughly 25-30 damage per hit at level 4.

Level 5 -- Ranger 5

Major power spike: Extra Attack.

You gain:

- **Extra Attack** -- Two weapon attacks per Action. With Dread Ambusher on turn one, that's 3 attacks on the first round.
- **2nd-Level Ranger Spell Slots**
- **Gloom Stalker Spell (always prepared):** Misty Step (bonus action teleport)

New Spell:

- **Pass Without Trace** -- Concentration. You and all nearby allies get +10 to Stealth checks. **This is how your entire 8-person party initiates from stealth reliably.** Cast this, have everyone stealth, and guarantee Surprise on enemies. Absolutely critical.

Turn 1 from stealth at level 5: 3 attacks (Extra Attack + Dread Ambusher), all with Sharpshooter + Hunter's Mark. If enemies are Surprised, you have Advantage on all of them.

Level 6 -- Rogue 1

You gain:

- **Sneak Attack (1d6)** -- Extra damage once per turn if you have Advantage or an ally is within 1.5m of the target. You'll almost always have Advantage from stealth, high ground, or Surprise.
- **Expertise (pick 2):** Stealth + Sleight of Hand (or Perception). Double your proficiency bonus for those skills. Your Stealth becomes absurdly high.
- **Bonus Skill Proficiency**

Level 7 -- Rogue 2

You gain:

- **Cunning Action** -- Dash, Disengage, or Hide as a bonus action. Huge for an archer: reposition with Dash, avoid opportunity attacks with Disengage, or Hide to set up another round of Advantage.

Level 8 -- Rogue 3 (Assassin)

The second pillar clicks into place.

You gain:

- **Assassinate: Ambush** -- Any hit against a Surprised creature is an **automatic critical hit**. Stealth -> Surprise -> every single attack on turn one auto-crits. With Sharpshooter, Extra Attack, Dread Ambusher, and all dice doubled from crits, the damage is astronomical.
- **Assassinate: Initiative** -- Advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn yet. Even without Surprise, you get Advantage on the first round if you beat their Initiative.
- **Assassin's Alacrity** -- At the start of combat (if you initiated from stealth), your Action AND Bonus Action are immediately restored. This effectively gives you a "pre-turn" before your actual first turn. You act twice before enemies move.
- **Sneak Attack scales to 2d6**

Turn 1 from stealth at level 8:

1. Pre-turn (Alacrity): 3 attacks (Extra Attack + Dread Ambusher), all auto-crits
2. Turn 1: 2 attacks (Extra Attack), still with Advantage
3. **Total: 5 attacks on turn one**, the first 3 are guaranteed crits

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Level 9 -- Rogue 4

You gain:

- **Feat:** +2 DEX to reach 20 (if starting 16: 16 -> 18 at Ranger 4 via Sharpshooter... wait, Sharpshooter doesn't give +DEX. Let me clarify: take +2 DEX here to go from 18 -> 20, having taken +2 DEX at Ranger 4 to go 16 -> 18).
  - If DEX is already 20: **Alert** (+5 Initiative, can't be surprised). Going first is everything.

Level 10 -- Fighter 1

You gain:

- **Fighting Style: Defense** -- +1 AC while wearing armor. You already have Archery from Ranger. Stack Defense for survivability.
- **Second Wind** -- Bonus action self-heal (1d10 + Fighter level). Emergency HP recovery.

Level 11 -- Fighter 2

Action Surge. The third pillar.

You gain:

- **Action Surge** -- Once per short rest, gain an additional Action. Turn one from stealth becomes:
  1. Alacrity pre-turn: 3 attacks (all crits if Surprised)
  2. Turn 1 Action: 2 attacks
  3. Action Surge Action: 2 more attacks
  4. **Total: 7 attacks on turn one**

This is the build at its peak damage. 7 Sharpshooter attacks, 3+ auto-crits, all in a single turn. With proper gear, this can deal 200+ damage before any enemy acts.

Level 12 -- Fighter 3 (Champion)

You gain:

- **Improved Critical Hit** -- Weapon attacks crit on 19 or 20 (instead of just 20). Combined with Assassinate's auto-crits on Surprised enemies, even on subsequent rounds you crit twice as often.
- *Alternative:* Battle Master gives 4 Superiority Dice and maneuvers like Precision Attack (+d8 to hit, offsetting Sharpshooter's -5), Trip Attack (knock prone), and Menacing Attack (frighten). More flexible, but Champion's passive crit range works on every attack automatically.

The Alpha Strike (Turn 1 from Stealth)

1. **Alacrity pre-turn:** 3 attacks (Extra Attack + Dread Ambusher) -- all auto-crits vs Surprised
2. **Turn 1 Action:** 2 attacks -- still with Advantage
3. **Action Surge:** 2 more attacks
4. **Total: 7 attacks.** With Elixir of Bloodlust, killing anything grants another Action = **9 attacks.**

Each arrow with Sharpshooter + Hunter's Mark: ~25-35 damage. On crits, double all dice. Total turn-one damage: **200-400+** before enemies act.

Gear to Grab

Act 1

Titanstring Bow *Where:* Sold by Brem in Zhentarim Hideout (under Waukeen's Rest). Also at Grat the Trader in Goblin Camp. *Why:* Adds your STR modifier to damage. With Elixir of Hill Giant Strength (STR 21, +5 mod), every arrow gets +5 extra damage on top of DEX and Sharpshooter.

Elixir of Hill Giant Strength *Where:* Craft from Hill Giant Fingernails + any sublimate. Buy fingernails from vendors. *Why:* Sets STR to 21. Normally useless for DEX builds, but with Titanstring Bow, adds +5 per arrow. Craft in bulk.

Gloves of Archery *Where:* Goblin Camp, Shattered Sanctum area (locked chest near torture room) *Why:* +2 to ranged weapon attack damage. Free damage boost until Act 3.

Killer's Sweetheart (ring) *Where:* Gauntlet of Shar, Self-Same Trial room *Why:* When you kill a creature, your next attack is a guaranteed critical hit. On your alpha turn, your first kill procs this for a guaranteed crit on the next attack. Extends the crit chain into Action Surge attacks.

Haste Helm *Where:* Blighted Village, locked chest (X: 29, Y: 405) *Why:* Start-of-combat Momentum (+1.5m movement). Helps reposition on the crucial first turn.

Disintegrating Night Walkers *Where:* Grymforge, looted from True Soul Nere *Why:* Free Misty Step per short rest, immune to web/entangle. Crucial mobility.

Caustic Band (ring) *Where:* Sold by Derryth in Myconid Colony (Underdark) *Why:* +2 acid damage on all weapon attacks. Flat damage boost on every arrow.

Act 2

Yuan-Ti Scale Mail *Where:* Sold by Quartermaster Talli at Last Light Inn *Why:* 15 + DEX (max 2) = 17 AC. Grants **Advantage on Initiative rolls**. Going first is everything for this build.

Elixir of Bloodlust *Where:* Craft from Worg Fang + any sublimate. Buy ingredients at Last Light Inn. *Why:* Kill an enemy = 5 temp HP + extra Action. Combined with Alacrity + Action Surge + Bloodlust, you can potentially have 4 Actions on turn one (9 attacks).

Oil of Accuracy *Where:* Craft from Ashes of Balsam + sublimate *Why:* +2 to attack rolls for the coated weapon. Stacks with Archery. Further offsets Sharpshooter's -5. Brew in bulk.

Boots of Speed *Where:* Last Light Inn vendors *Why:* Double movement speed as bonus action (1/short rest). Sprint to high ground, then unload.

Act 3

Gontr Mael (longbow) *Where:* Steel Watch Foundry, from the Steel Watcher Titan boss *Why:* Legendary +3 bow. Celestial Haste (free Haste 1/long rest), enemies you hit glow for Advantage on next attack (Guiding Bolt aura). Best ranged weapon in the game.

Legacy of the Masters (gloves) *Where:* Sold by Dammon, Lower City *Why:* +2 to weapon attack rolls and damage. Direct power boost. Replaces Gloves of Archery.

Boots of Persistence *Where:* Sold by Dammon at Forge of the Nine, Lower City *Why:* Freedom of Movement (immune to difficult terrain, paralysis, restraint) + Legendary Resistance 1/short rest.

Cloak of Displacement *Where:* Wyrm's Crossing, Danthelon's Dancing Axe shop *Why:* Attackers have Disadvantage until they hit you. Resets each turn.

Quick Tips

> **ALWAYS initiate from stealth.** Cast Pass Without Trace (+10 Stealth for all 8 party members), position on high ground, and stealth. Your entire alpha strike depends on Surprise.

> **Elixir of Bloodlust is mandatory for peak performance.** Kill anything on your alpha turn and Bloodlust gives you ANOTHER Action. 9 attacks in one turn.

> **High ground = +2 to ranged attack rolls.** With Archery (+2) and 20 DEX (+5), that's +9 to hit, making Sharpshooter's -5 effectively only -1.

> **Hide after your alpha turn.** Dread Ambusher: Hide or Cunning Action: Hide makes you invisible. Enemies can't target you.

> **Killer's Sweetheart extends crit chains.** First kill procs a guaranteed crit on your next attack. Combined with Assassinate auto-crits, you might crit 5+ times on turn one.

> **Pass Without Trace is a party buff.** +10 Stealth for ALL 8 party members. This character enables the whole group to initiate from stealth.

> **Action Surge recharges on short rest.** Use it every fight. Short rest between encounters.

Party Gear Assignments

This build gets: Gontr Mael, Killer's Sweetheart, Yuan-Ti Scale Mail, Legacy of the Masters, Cloak of Displacement

Passes to others:

- Helldusk Armor -> Paladin/Hexblade. You wear medium armor.
- Helldusk Gloves -> Karlach (she attacks 4-6 times per turn). *Backup:* Legacy of the Masters.
- Helldusk Boots -> Astarion. *Backup:* Disintegrating Night Walkers or Boots of Speed.
- Nyrulna -> Karlach. You use bows, not thrown weapons.
- Auntie Ethel's Hair -> Karlach (+1 STR). Start at 16 DEX and take two +2 DEX ASIs to reach 20.
- Birthright -> Paladin/Hexblade. CHA is useless for you.

Karlach -- Throwbarian (Berserker 5 / Thief 4 / Champion 3)

> **Your Role:** Ranged and melee wrecking ball. Rage, then hurl weapons at enemies for massive damage from any distance. Tavern Brawler doubles your Strength modifier on throws, Thief gives you a second bonus action for double throws, and Action Surge lets you unload 6-8 throws in a single turn. Also, you can pick up enemies and throw them off cliffs.

At a Glance

Race: Zariel Tiefling (Karlach's default -- fire resistance, Soul Coin bonus 1d4 fire damage while raging) **Background:** Outlander or Soldier (Athletics + Survival or Athletics + Intimidation)

Stats (respec at Withers): STR 17 / DEX 14 / CON 14 / INT 8 / WIS 10 / CHA 10 STR is everything. Tavern Brawler doubles your STR bonus on thrown attacks.

> **Auntie Ethel's Hair goes to Karlach.** +1 STR permanently. Progression: 17 base -> 18 (Tavern Brawler at level 4) -> 19 (Ethel Hair) -> 20 (+2 ASI at Rogue 4). This path reaches 20 STR efficiently.

Level-by-Level

Level 1 -- Barbarian 1

You gain:

- **Rage** (2 charges/long rest) -- Resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage. +2 to melee/thrown damage. Always rage before fighting.
- **Unarmored Defense** -- AC = 10 + DEX + CON (16 with 14/14). Medium armor is usually better until late game.

Gameplay: Equip medium armor, grab a weapon, and start smashing. Early levels are straightforward. Throw javelins when enemies are out of melee range.

Level 2 -- Barbarian 2

You gain:

- **Reckless Attack** -- Advantage on all melee/thrown attack rolls for the turn, but enemies have Advantage on attacks against you until your next turn. Use when you need guaranteed hits; skip when survival matters more.
- **Danger Sense** -- Advantage on DEX saving throws you can see (like dodging Fireballs). Helps survive AoEs.

Level 3 -- Barbarian 3 (Berserker)

You gain:

- **Frenzy** -- Your Rage becomes Frenzy, unlocking two new bonus actions:
  - **Frenzied Strike** -- Bonus action melee attack. Extra swing per turn.
  - **Enraged Throw** -- Bonus action throw with your STR modifier added as bonus damage. **This is the build's bread and butter.** Every turn you can make a powerful throw as a bonus action on top of your regular attacks.
- **Improvised Weapon Proficiency** -- You can throw anything. Including enemies, furniture, and corpses.

Note: Frenzied attacks apply a stacking -1 to attack rolls per use. This penalty is mostly negated by Tavern Brawler's bonus at level 4. Don't worry about it.

Level 4 -- Barbarian 4

The build-defining feat.

You gain:

- **Feat: Tavern Brawler** -- +1 STR (17 -> 18). Your STR modifier is added **TWICE** to attack and damage rolls with thrown weapons and unarmed attacks. With 18 STR (+4 mod), every throw gets +8 damage instead of +4. This is the engine of the entire build.

Use Auntie Ethel's Hair to bump STR from 18 to 19 if you have it.

Level 5 -- Barbarian 5

Major power spike.

You gain:

- **Extra Attack** -- Two weapon attacks per Action. You can now throw twice with your Action, then Enraged Throw with your bonus action = **3 throws per turn**.
- **Fast Movement** -- +3m movement speed while not in heavy armor. Helps get to high ground.
- **Extra Rage Charge**

Level 6 -- Rogue 1

You gain:

- **Sneak Attack (1d6)** -- Extra damage once per turn when you have Advantage (from Reckless Attack) or an ally is within 1.5m of the target.
- **Expertise (pick 2):** Athletics (for throws, shoves, and grapples) + Stealth (for surprising enemies)
- **Bonus Skill Proficiency**

Level 7 -- Rogue 2

You gain:

- **Cunning Action** -- Dash, Disengage, or Hide as a bonus action. More mobility options beyond Enraged Throw.

Level 8 -- Rogue 3 (Thief)

The second pillar of the build.

You gain:

- **Fast Hands** -- Gain a **second bonus action** per turn. You can now:
  - Enraged Throw (bonus action 1)
  - Enraged Throw (bonus action 2)
  - Two throws with your Action (Extra Attack)
  - **Total: 4 throws per turn** as your baseline every single round.
- **Sneak Attack scales to 2d6**

Level 9 -- Rogue 4

You gain:

- **Feat:** +2 STR. If you used Ethel's Hair and hit 19, this brings you to 20. If not, adjust accordingly. 20 STR (+5 mod, doubled to +10 per throw by Tavern Brawler) is the goal.
  - If already 20: Savage Attacker (reroll weapon damage dice), Great Weapon Master (melee backup), or Alert.

Level 10 -- Fighter 1

You gain:

- **Fighting Style:** Archery (+2 to ranged/thrown attack rolls -- applies to thrown weapons!) or Defense (+1 AC). Archery is the damage pick; Defense is the survivability pick.
- **Second Wind** -- Bonus action self-heal (1d10 + Fighter level). Emergency HP.

Level 11 -- Fighter 2

Action Surge. The third pillar.

You gain:

- **Action Surge** -- Once per short rest, gain an additional Action. Your turn one becomes:
  1. Action (Extra Attack): 2 throws
  2. Bonus Action 1 (Enraged Throw): 1 throw
  3. Bonus Action 2 (Fast Hands + Enraged Throw): 1 throw
  4. Action Surge (Extra Attack): 2 throws
  5. **Total: 6 throws in one turn**

Level 12 -- Fighter 3 (Champion)

You gain:

- **Improved Critical** -- Crit on 19-20 instead of just 20. With Reckless Attack granting Advantage (rolling twice), you crit significantly more often. Crits double ALL your throw damage dice.
- *Alternative:* Battle Master (4 Superiority Dice, maneuvers like Precision Attack and Trip Attack). More tactical flexibility, but Champion's passive crit range works on every attack automatically.

Throws Per Turn Summary

Normal Turn	Burst Turn (Action Surge)
2 (Action) + 2 (Bonus Actions) = **4**	2 + 2 + 2 (Surge) = **6**

With Elixir of Bloodlust (kill = extra Action), burst turns can hit **8 throws.**

Damage per throw (Nyrulna, 20 STR): 1d6+1d4 (trident base) + 10 (STR x2 Tavern Brawler) + 2 (Rage) + 3 (Nyrulna enchantment) + 1d6 (Nyrulna thunder) + 1d6 (Helldusk Gloves fire) + 1d4 (Soul Coin fire) = roughly **28-35 per throw**. Times 6 = **170-210 on a burst turn**.

Gear to Grab

Act 1

Returning Pike *Where:* Sold by Dammon at Emerald Grove *Why:* Returns after throwing. Essential early game weapon until you get better returning weapons. Stock spare javelins as backup.

Elixir of Hill Giant Strength *Where:* Craft from Hill Giant Fingernails + any sublimate. Buy fingernails from vendors. *Why:* Sets STR to 21 (+5 mod, doubled to +10 per throw by Tavern Brawler). Use these every long rest until your natural STR reaches 20, then switch to Elixir of Bloodlust.

Gloves of Uninhibited Kushigo *Where:* Monastery/Creche area *Why:* +1d4 damage on thrown attacks while not wearing armor. Strong if going unarmored, otherwise replaced by Helldusk Gloves in Act 3.

Adamantine Scale Mail *Where:* Grymforge, Adamantine Forge (Scale Mail Mould + Mithral Ore) *Why:* 16+DEX (max +2) = 18 AC with shield. Crits become normal hits. Best medium armor Act 1.

Haste Helm *Where:* Blighted Village, locked chest (X: 29, Y: 405) *Why:* Start-of-combat Momentum. Helps reach high ground on turn one.

Act 2

Enraging Heart Garb *Where:* Act 2 chest or vendor *Why:* Medium armor that grants Wrath stacking (+1 melee damage per stack) when you take damage. Stacks with Rage bonus. You WANT to be hit.

Elixir of Bloodlust *Where:* Craft from Worg Fang + any sublimate. Buy ingredients at Last Light Inn. *Why:* Kill an enemy = 5 temp HP + extra Action that turn. Makes 8-throw burst turns possible. **Craft these in bulk.** This is your elixir once natural STR reaches 20.

Dwarven Thrower (warhammer) *Where:* Act 2 loot or vendor *Why:* Returning warhammer, +1d8 bonus damage when thrown. Upgrade from Returning Pike.

Act 3

Nyrulna (trident) *Where:* Circus of the Last Days in Rivington. Win from Akabi the Djinni's rigged wheel -- let him scam you, then pickpocket the real ticket from him. He teleports you to a jungle; the trident is at the end. *Why:* **Best throwing weapon in the game.** Legendary, +3, returns when thrown, +1d6 thunder damage, AoE thunder explosion on impact. Every throw is a mini-bomb.

Helldusk Gloves *Where:* House of Hope, Boudoir (behind a painting in a safe, key from Haarleep) *Why:* +1d6 fire damage on ALL weapon attacks. On 6 throws per turn, that's 6d6 extra fire damage per burst turn. Nobody in the party benefits more from these than you.

Boots of Persistence *Where:* Sold by Dammon at the Forge of the Nine, Lower City *Why:* Freedom of Movement (immune to difficult terrain, paralysis, restraint) + Legendary Resistance 1/short rest. Can't be locked down.

Quick Tips

> **Rage EVERY fight.** Rage -> Frenzy -> throw weapons. If you don't attack or take damage each turn, Rage ends. Keep throwing.

> **Only use Returning weapons.** Non-returning weapons are one-throw-and-done. Nyrulna, Returning Pike, and Dwarven Thrower all come back to your hand.

> **Elixir of Hill Giant Strength until STR 20.** Tavern Brawler doubles your STR mod on throws. 21 STR = +10 damage per throw from a potion. Once you naturally hit 20 STR, switch to Elixir of Bloodlust.

> **High ground = +2 to thrown attack rolls.** Position Karlach on elevated terrain for accuracy.

> **You can throw ENEMIES.** Enraged Throw lets you pick up smaller enemies and hurl them into other enemies or off cliffs. It's hilarious and effective.

> **Reckless Attack works on throws.** Advantage on all your thrown attacks for the turn. Great for ensuring Sharpshooter-like accuracy without needing the feat.

Party Gear Assignments

This build gets: Nyrulna, Helldusk Gloves, Auntie Ethel's Hair (+1 STR), Enraging Heart Garb

Passes to others:

- Helldusk Armor -> Paladin/Hexblade. You wear medium armor + use Rage resistance.
- Helldusk Boots -> Astarion. *Backup:* Boots of Persistence.
- Helm of Balduran -> Life Cleric. *Backup:* Haste Helm.

- Cloak of Displacement -> Gloomstalker or Astarion. You have Rage damage resistance already.
- All caster gear -> Irrelevant to you.

Shadowheart -- Life Domain Cleric 12 -- Pure Healer & Buffer

> **Your Role:** Keep the party alive. Every heal you cast is supercharged with bonus HP, attack buffs, damage resistance, and temp HP thanks to your gear combo. You also buff allies with Bless, Aid, and Heroes' Feast, and contribute damage with Spirit Guardians when healing isn't needed.

At a Glance

Race: Gold Dwarf (+1 HP per level = 12 extra HP at level 12, Darkvision, poison resistance) **Other strong picks:** Wood Half-Elf (extra speed + skill), Human (+1 all stats) **Background:** Acolyte (Insight + Religion)

Stats: STR 14 / DEX 10 / **CON 14** / INT 8 / **WIS 17** / CHA 10 Wisdom powers your heals and spells. STR 14 for heavy armor (no movement penalties). DEX doesn't matter in plate mail.

Skills from Cleric: Medicine (WIS), Perception (WIS)

The Healing Gear Combo (Get These in Act 1)

Get these four items and your heals become absurd. They all trigger simultaneously on every single heal:

The Whispering Promise (ring) *Where:* Sold by Volo at Emerald Grove *Effect:* When you heal someone, they get **+1d4 to attack rolls and saves** for 2 turns.

Hellrider's Pride (gloves) *Where:* Rescue Counsellor Florrick at Waukeen's Rest (burning inn) *Effect:* When you heal someone, they get **physical damage resistance** until their next turn.

Wapira's Crown (helmet) *Where:* Reward from Zevlor for completing "Save the Refugees" (accept the monetary reward, it's in the sack) *Effect:* When you heal someone, **you heal 1d6** too.

Boots of Aid and Comfort *Where:* Sold at Emerald Grove (Arron) or Goblin Camp (Grat the Trader) *Effect:* When you heal someone, they get **3 temp HP**.

> **What this means in practice:** A single Healing Word (bonus action, 1st-level slot) at level 6 with 20 WIS now does: ~11 HP healed on the target + 3 temp HP + +1d4 to their attacks and saves + physical damage resistance until their next turn + you heal ~7 HP on yourself from Wapira's Crown + Blessed Healer. All from one bonus action. Your Action is still free. This is why Life Cleric is the best healer in the game.

Level-by-Level

Level 1 -- Cleric 1 (Life Domain)

You gain:

- **Disciple of Life** -- When you cast a healing spell, the target regains additional HP equal to **2 + the spell's level**. This applies to every target healed. Cure Wounds (1st level) heals 3 extra. Mass Cure Wounds (5th level) heals 7 extra per target. This passive alone makes you the best healer in the game.
- **Heavy Armor Proficiency** -- Life Domain is one of the few Cleric domains that grants heavy armor. Equip plate mail + shield for 20 AC from level 1.
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Bless (Concentration, +1d4 to attack rolls AND saving throws for 3 allies -- arguably the best buff spell in BG3), Cure Wounds (touch range heal, 1d8 + WIS + Disciple of Life bonus)

Cantrips: Guidance (essential -- +1d4 to ability checks, cast before every skill check), Sacred Flame (radiant damage, DEX save, hits behind cover), Resistance (+1d4 to next saving throw)

Prepare: Healing Word (**your most important spell** -- bonus action, 18m range, picks up downed allies without using your Action), Shield of Faith (+2 AC to an ally, Concentration),

Command (versatile crowd control)

> **Why Healing Word is the most important spell in the game:** It's a bonus action, it has 18m range, and it heals a downed ally from 0 HP. You can Healing Word a downed ally AND cast a leveled spell or attack on the same turn. Every healer must always have this prepared.

Level 2 -- Cleric 2

You gain:

- **Channel Divinity: Turn Undead** -- Force nearby undead to flee. Devastating in Act 2.
- **Channel Divinity: Preserve Life** -- Heal yourself and allies within 9m for **3 x Cleric level** HP. At level 12, that's 36 HP in a big radius. Also triggers Disciple of Life (+2 HP flat). No spell slot cost, recharges on short rest.
- **1 Channel Divinity charge**

Prepare: Spiritual Weapon (bonus action summon that attacks independently for 10 turns, no Concentration -- excellent action economy since you can heal with your Action and the weapon attacks with your Bonus Action)

Level 3 -- Cleric 3

You gain:

- **2nd-Level Spell Slots**
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Lesser Restoration (cure disease, poison, paralysis, blindness), Spiritual Weapon (now always prepared, doesn't count against your limit)

Prepare:

- **Aid** -- Increases the max HP of up to 3 allies by 5 per slot level. No Concentration. Lasts until long rest. **Cast this every morning.** With an 8-person party, cast it twice to buff 6 members. Disciple of Life adds +4 HP per target at 2nd level. So each cast actually gives +9 max HP per target.
- **Hold Person** -- Paralyze a humanoid (WIS save). Paralyzed = auto-crit on melee hits. Setup for your damage dealers.
- **Silence** -- Zone where no verbal spells can be cast. Shuts down enemy casters completely.

Level 4 -- Cleric 4

You gain:

- **Feat:** +2 WIS (17 -> 19). Higher heal amounts, better spell save DC for Hold Person/Command, more prepared spells.
  - Alternatives: War Caster (Concentration Advantage for Bless/Spirit Guardians), Resilient (CON)

Level 5 -- Cleric 5

Major milestone: 3rd-level spells.

You gain:

- **3rd-Level Spell Slots**
- **Destroy Undead** -- Turn Undead now deals 4d6 radiant to turned undead.
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Beacon of Hope (Concentration -- all healing spells on affected allies heal the MAXIMUM amount, no rolling), Revivify (resurrect a dead ally in combat, always prepared for free)

Prepare:

- **Spirit Guardians** -- Creates a 3d8 radiant damage aura around you per enemy per turn, halves their movement. Concentration. Even as a healer, this is your best way to contribute damage. Walk into enemies, let the aura work, heal allies with bonus action Healing Word.
- **Mass Healing Word** -- Bonus action, heal up to 6 allies within range. Emergency party-wide pickup. Incredible in an 8-person party.
- **Glyph of Warding** -- Magical trap. Sleep variant is top-tier CC.

Beacon of Hope math: With Beacon active, Cure Wounds at 3rd level heals maximum 3d8 (24) + WIS (+4) + Disciple of Life (+5) = **33 HP** per heal. Mass Cure Wounds at 5th level with Beacon: 24 + 5 + 7 = **36 HP to each of 6 targets = 216 HP total** in one Action.

Level 6 -- Cleric 6

You become self-sustaining.

You gain:

- **Blessed Healer** -- When you cast a healing spell on another creature, YOU regain HP equal to **2 + the spell's level**. Healing Word (1st level) heals you for 3. Mass Cure Wounds (5th level) heals you for 7. You never need to spend resources healing yourself again.
- **2nd Channel Divinity charge** -- Two Preserve Life casts per short rest.

Level 7 -- Cleric 7

You gain:

- **4th-Level Spell Slots**
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Guardian of Faith (spectral sentry, 20 radiant per enemy entering its area, 60 total, no Concentration), Death Ward (ally stays at 1 HP instead of dropping to 0, no Concentration, lasts until long rest -- cast on key allies before boss fights)

Prepare: Freedom of Movement (immunity to paralysis, restraint, difficult terrain -- no Concentration), Banishment (remove a target from the fight)

Upcast Aid: At 4th level, Aid gives +15 max HP to 3 targets (+17 with Disciple of Life). Cast it twice in the morning = +17 max HP on 6 party members. Over 100 bonus HP for your party before the day starts.

Level 8 -- Cleric 8

You gain:

- **Divine Strike: Radiant** -- Once per turn, melee attacks deal +1d8 radiant. Gives you some melee relevance, but healing is still your priority.
- **Feat:** +2 WIS to reach 20. At 20 WIS: +5 to spell save DC, spell attacks, healing bonuses, Perception, and all WIS skills.
  - If already 20: Alert (+5 Initiative to get Bless up before enemies act), Tough (+24 HP), Sentinel, or Shield Master.

Level 9 -- Cleric 9

You gain:

- **5th-Level Spell Slots**

- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Greater Restoration (remove charm, petrification, curse, ability reduction, exhaustion), Mass Cure Wounds (heal up to 6 creatures for 3d8 + WIS + Disciple of Life)

Prepare: Insect Plague (4d10 piercing AoE per turn -- strong damage when healing isn't needed), Flame Strike (8d6 fire/radiant burst, no Concentration)

Level 10 -- Cleric 10

You gain:

- **Divine Intervention: Arm Thy Servant** -- Summon the Devotee's Mace. Legendary weapon that heals nearby allies when it hits. Combined with your Disciple of Life, Whispering Promise, Hellrider's Pride, Wapira's Crown, and Boots of Aid and Comfort, every melee swing becomes a heal + buff engine for your frontline. **Permanent for the rest of the game.** Your Death Domain Cleric takes a different Divine Intervention option.

Level 11 -- Cleric 11

6th-level spells.

You gain:

- **6th-Level Spell Slot** (one per long rest)
- **Prepare:**
  - **Heal** -- Restore 70 flat HP to one creature + cure blindness, deafness, disease. With Disciple of Life: 70 + 8 (2 + spell level 6) = **78 HP** in a single Action. Emergency full heal button.
  - **Heroes' Feast** -- Party-wide buff: immunity to poison and fear, Advantage on WIS saves, bonus max HP. Lasts until long rest, no Concentration. **Cast before every boss fight.** In an 8-person party, this is absurdly good.
  - **Blade Barrier** -- Wall of spinning blades, 6d10 slashing, no Concentration. Area control.

Level 12 -- Cleric 12

You gain:

- **2nd 6th-Level Spell Slot** -- Double Heal, or Heal + Heroes' Feast, or Heal + Blade Barrier.

- **Feat:** Alert (+5 Initiative), Tough (+24 HP), War Caster, Lucky, or Shield Master.

Other Gear to Grab

Act 1

Adamantine Splint Armor *Where:* Grymforge, Adamantine Forge (Splint Mould + Mithral Ore) *Why:* 18 AC + shield = 20 AC. Crits become normal hits.

Pearl of Power Amulet *Where:* Grymforge or vendors *Why:* Restore a spell slot (up to 3rd level) per long rest. Extra Mass Healing Word or Spirit Guardians.

Cloak of Protection *Where:* Goblin Camp, Shattered Sanctum (hidden room near Priestess Gut) *Why:* +1 AC, +1 all saves. Solid until Act 3.

Act 2

Shield of Devotion *Where:* Sold by Quartermaster Talli at Last Light Inn *Why:* +1 shield with free Aid spell per long rest. Extra Aid cast = more party HP.

Act 3

Devotee's Mace -- From your Divine Intervention at level 10. Heals allies on hit. Triggers your whole gear combo.

Helm of Balduran *Where:* Wyrmway, defeat Ansur the dragon beneath Wyrm's Rock *Why:* +1 AC, +1 saves, immune to crits, heals 2 HP/turn, immune to stun. Keeps the healer standing. **You take this over Gale.** A dead healer means dead party members.

Amulet of Greater Health *Where:* House of Hope archive *Why:* Sets CON to 23. Massive HP pool and Concentration saves for Bless/Spirit Guardians. **You take this over Gale** for the same reason.

Boots of Persistence *Where:* Dammon, Forge of the Nine, Lower City *Why:* Freedom of Movement + Legendary Resistance 1/short rest. Can't be CC'd.

Quick Tips

> **Healing Word is your most important spell. Always.** Bonus action, 18m range, picks up downed allies. Never use your Action to heal if you can use Healing Word instead.

> **Cast Bless on your 3 best damage dealers every fight.** +1d4 to all their attacks and saves. With 8 party members, consider casting it twice (6 targets) if you have the slots.

> **Cast Aid every morning.** Two casts at 3rd level buff 6 party members with +12 max HP each (with Disciple of Life). That's +72 bonus HP for the party before the day starts.

> **Beacon of Hope before big heals.** All heal dice are maximized. Then Mass Cure Wounds for 36 HP each on 6 targets = 216 total healing.

> **Warding Bond on your squishiest member.** +1 AC and all damage resistance for them, but you take the same damage. Put this on your Shadow Sorcerer. With your heavy armor, HP, and self-healing from Blessed Healer, you can absorb the transferred damage.

> **Death Ward before boss fights.** Free domain spell, no Concentration. Put it on whoever is most likely to get nuked.

> **Heroes' Feast before every boss fight.** Poison/fear immunity, Advantage on WIS saves, bonus HP. One of the best pre-fight buffs in the game.

> **You can deal damage too.** Spirit Guardians (3d8 radiant aura) + Healing Word (bonus action) is a perfectly good combat loop.

> **Two Preserve Life charges per short rest.** At level 12, each heals 36 HP in a 9m radius. Use freely.

Party Gear Assignments

This build gets: The Whispering Promise, Hellrider's Pride, Wapira's Crown, Boots of Aid and Comfort (ALL exclusive to this build), Devotee's Mace, Helm of Balduran, Amulet of Greater Health

Passes to others:

- Helldusk Armor -> Paladin/Hexblade. *Backup:* Adamantine Splint.
- Viconia's Walking Fortress -> Paladin/Hexblade. *Backup:* Shield of Devotion or Adamantine Shield.
- Cloak of the Weave -> Gale. *Backup:* Cloak of Protection.
- Quickspell Gloves -> Death Domain Cleric. Hellrider's Pride is your glove slot and non-negotiable.
- Birthright -> Paladin/Hexblade. WIS is your stat, not CHA.
- Markoheshkir / Staff of Spellpower -> Sorcerer / Gale. Devotee's Mace + shield is your setup.

Gale -- Utility Wizard (Evocation 12)

> **Your Role:** The party's arcane Swiss army knife. You have the biggest spell list in the game, the most spell slots, and Sculpt Spells so your Fireballs never hurt your own team. Crowd control, AoE damage, battlefield manipulation, and unique utility spells that no other class can provide.

At a Glance

Race: Human (Gale's default -- +1 to all stats, extra skill) **Background:** Sage (Arcana + History)

Stats (respec at Withers): STR 8 / DEX 14 / **CON 16** / **INT 17** / WIS 10 / CHA 8.

INT 17 is your primary stat. Use Hag Hair or ASIs to reach 20. Intelligence powers your spells. CON keeps Concentration spells up. DEX for AC with Mage Armor and Initiative.

Wizard superpower: You can copy spells from scrolls into your spellbook permanently. **Buy every Wizard scroll you see from every vendor.** By Act 3 you should know 50+ spells and can prepare the perfect loadout for any situation.

Level-by-Level

Level 1 -- Wizard 1

You gain:

- **Arcane Recovery** -- Restore spell slots once per day on short rest (up to combined 6th level). Essentially a free bonus spell slot per day.

- **Proficiencies** -- Light armor (if starting Wizard), daggers, darts, slings, quarterstaves, light crossbows. INT + WIS saving throws.

Cantrips (pick 3): Fire Bolt (1d10 ranged damage), Ray of Frost (1d8 cold + slow), Minor Illusion (stealth/bait utility)

Spellbook (start with 6): Shield (+5 AC reaction -- non-negotiable), Mage Armor (13+DEX AC = 15), Magic Missile (guaranteed damage, never misses), Find Familiar (summon an owl for the Help action = free Advantage for an ally), Thunderwave (knockback AoE), Sleep (early game powerhouse, falls off later)

Level 2 -- Wizard 2 (Evocation)

You gain:

- **Sculpt Spells** -- When you cast an Evocation spell (Fireball, Shatter, Ice Storm, Chain Lightning, etc.), choose allies in the AoE. They automatically succeed on their saving throw and take **ZERO damage**. You can drop Fireball directly on top of your Paladin and Karlach without hurting them. In an 8-person party where friendly fire is a constant risk, this is essential.

Learn 2 spells. Chromatic Orb (versatile elemental nuke), Grease (AoE prone zone, no Concentration)

Level 3 -- Wizard 3

2nd-Level Spells open up the toolkit.

Key spells to learn:

- **Misty Step** -- Bonus action teleport. Essential mobility.
- **Web** -- AoE restrain. Fantastic crowd control, Concentration.
- **Scorching Ray** -- 3 beams, 2d6 fire each. Good focused damage.
- **Hold Person** -- Paralyze humanoids. Melee hits auto-crit.
- **Knock** -- Open any locked door or chest. Saves Astarion's time.
- **Detect Thoughts** -- Unlock dialogue options. Great exploration utility.

Level 4 -- Wizard 4

You gain:

- **Feat:** +2 INT (17 -> 19). Or if you used Hag Hair to reach 18, take +2 INT to reach 20 now.
  - Alternative: War Caster (Concentration Advantage), Resilient (CON)
- **New cantrip**
- **Key spells:** Mirror Image (3 decoy copies, no Concentration -- excellent defense), Phantasmal Force, Enlarge/Reduce

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Level 5 -- Wizard 5

3rd-level spells change everything.

You gain:

- **3rd-Level Spell Slots**

Key spells -- these are some of the most powerful in the game:

- **Fireball** -- 8d6 fire in a huge radius. With Sculpt Spells, allies in the blast take zero damage. Fire at will into melee without fear.
- **Counterspell** -- Reaction to negate an enemy spell. Essential from Act 2 onward. You and your Shadow Sorcerer should both have this.
- **Haste** -- Concentration. +2 AC, doubled movement, Advantage on DEX saves, extra Action for an ally. Your Sorcerer can Twin it, but having a backup Haste source in an 8-person party is invaluable.
- **Hypnotic Pattern** -- AoE WIS save or incapacitated. Ends entire encounters without dealing any damage.
- **Slow** -- AoE debuff: -2 AC, halved speed, targets can only use Action OR bonus action. Devastating against groups.
- **Glyph of Warding** -- Place trap glyphs. Sleep variant is top-tier CC.

Level 6 -- Wizard 6

You gain:

- **Potent Cantrip** -- When a creature succeeds on a saving throw against your cantrip, they still take half damage. Fire Bolt and Ray of Frost always do something now.

Key spells: Fly, Lightning Bolt (100-foot line, 8d6 lightning), Animate Dead (if nobody else has it)

Level 7 -- Wizard 7

4th-Level Spells open up even more powerful options.

Key spells:

- **Wall of Fire** -- Creates a fire wall dealing 5d8 per turn to enemies passing through or ending on one side. No save for initial damage. Incredible area denial.
- **Greater Invisibility** -- Concentration. Target is invisible and stays invisible even after attacking. Can't be targeted by single-target spells. Incredible offensive/defensive buff.
- **Banishment** -- Remove a creature from the fight (CHA save, Concentration). Emergency removal.
- **Polymorph** -- Turn an enemy into a sheep. Or turn a dying ally into a full-HP Giant Ape (157 HP). It's effectively 157 temp HP as an emergency heal.
- **Ice Storm** -- AoE damage + difficult terrain.

Level 8 -- Wizard 8

You gain:

- **Feat:** +2 INT to reach 20 (if not already there). 20 INT = +5 to spell save DC, spell attack rolls, and number of prepared spells.
  - If already 20: Alert (+5 Initiative), War Caster, Lucky (3 rerolls/day)
- **Key spells:** Dimension Door (teleport yourself + one ally up to 152m), Stoneskin (physical damage resistance, Concentration)

Level 9 -- Wizard 9

5th-Level Spells. The game-changers.

Key spells:

- **Wall of Force** -- Creates an indestructible transparent wall or dome for 10 turns. Concentration. **Nothing passes through it.** Split enemy groups in half, trap ranged enemies inside a bubble while your melee handles the rest, or protect a chokepoint. Arguably the best crowd control spell in the game.
- **Hold Monster** -- Paralyze ANY creature type (not just humanoids). Paralyzed = auto-fail STR/DEX saves, Advantage for attackers, melee hits auto-crit.
- **Conjure Elemental** -- Summon a powerful elemental ally. Concentration.
- **Telekinesis** -- Move creatures and objects. Throw enemies off cliffs or into hazards.
- **Cloudkill** -- Repositionable poison AoE cloud.

Level 10 -- Wizard 10

You gain:

- **Empowered Evocation** -- Add your INT modifier (+5 at 20 INT) to the damage of Evocation spells. Fireball gets +5 flat damage. But the real power is **Magic Missile**: each dart does 1d4+1+5 = 8-10 damage. Three darts at 1st level = 24-30 guaranteed damage with no attack roll or save. Upcast for more darts.
- **New cantrip**

Level 11 -- Wizard 11

6th-Level Spells. The endgame power tier.

Key spells:

- **Disintegrate** -- 10d6 + 40 force damage (average 75). DEX save; on success, nothing happens (no half damage). If the target dies from this, completely destroyed (no Revivify). The delete button.
- **Chain Lightning** -- 10d8 lightning to a primary target, jumps to up to 3 additional targets for 10d8 each (DEX save for half). Massive multi-target nuke with Sculpt Spells protecting allies.
- **Globe of Invulnerability** -- Sphere where no spells of 5th level or lower can affect anything inside. Concentration. Makes your party immune to most enemy magic.
- **Otto's Irresistible Dance** -- No save. Force a creature to dance (incapacitated, Disadvantage on DEX saves, attackers have Advantage). Guaranteed one-round disable.
- **Flesh to Stone** -- Petrify a target over multiple failed saves.

Level 12 -- Wizard 12

You gain:

- **Feat:** Alert (+5 Initiative), Lucky, Tough (+24 HP), Spell Sniper (crit on 19-20 for spell attacks), or Resilient (WIS)
- Fill out your spellbook with anything you've missed from scroll copying.

Gear to Grab

Act 1

Bracers of Defence *Where:* Blighted Village, Apothecary cellar *Why:* +2 AC when not wearing armor. Stacks with Mage Armor = 17 AC. Best bracers until Act 3.

Warped Headband of Intellect *Where:* Dropped by Lump the Ogre in Blighted Village *Why:* Sets INT to 17. Useful early if you haven't respecced yet. Replaced once you naturally reach 20 INT.

Cloak of Protection *Where:* Goblin Camp, Shattered Sanctum (hidden room near Priestess Gut) *Why:* +1 AC, +1 all saves. Solid until Act 3.

Pearl of Power Amulet *Where:* Grymforge or vendors *Why:* Restore a spell slot per long rest. Free extra Fireball or Counterspell.

Ring of Protection *Where:* Various Act 1 vendors *Why:* +1 AC, +1 all saves. Stacks with Cloak of Protection.

> **Buy every Wizard scroll you see.** Check every vendor. Copy them all into your spellbook. This is your unique advantage over Sorcerers.

Act 2

Spellcrux Amulet *Where:* Mind Flayer Colony (end of Act 2) *Why:* Restore one spell slot per long rest. Stacks with Arcane Recovery for extra slots every day.

Boots of Stormy Clamour *Where:* Gauntlet of Shar or Last Light Inn vendors *Why:* Applying conditions = Reverberation stacks on enemies (-1 attack/saves). Your AoE spells proc this constantly.

Act 3

Robe of the Weave *Where:* Sorcerous Sundries vault (portal puzzle behind Lorroakan's room) *Why:* +2 spell save DC, +2 spell attack rolls. **This is YOUR robe.** Your Shadow Sorcerer takes Potent Robe instead.

Staff of Spellpower *Where:* Dropped by Lorroakan if you fight him at Sorcerous Sundries *Why:* +1 spell save DC, +1 spell attacks, Arcane Battery (free spell 1/long rest). Your Sorcerer gets Markoheshkir; you get this. Still excellent.

Cloak of the Weave *Where:* Sorcerous Sundries vault *Why:* +1 spell save DC, +1 spell attacks, Absorb Elements reaction. With Robe of the Weave, that's +3 spell DC total from gear.

Quick Tips

> **Sculpt Spells is your party's safety net.** Drop Fireball, Ice Storm, or Chain Lightning on clustered enemies even if allies are in the blast. Your allies auto-succeed and take zero damage.

> **Empowered Evocation + Magic Missile = guaranteed damage.** Magic Missile never misses. At level 10, each dart does 1d4+6. Three darts = 24-30 guaranteed damage from a 1st-level slot. Upcast to 3rd level for 5 darts = 40-50 guaranteed.

> **Wall of Force wins fights.** Split enemy groups in half, trap ranged enemies, protect chokepoints. Indestructible for 10 turns.

> **Counterspell everything.** You and your Sorcerer should both have it. Two Counterspells = enemy casters can't function.

> **Polymorph is an emergency heal.** Ally at 1 HP? Turn them into a Giant Ape (157 HP). When the form ends, they return to original HP.

> **Copy every scroll.** By Act 3 you should know nearly every Wizard spell. Prepare the perfect loadout for each situation.

Party Gear Assignments

This build gets: Robe of the Weave, Cloak of the Weave, Staff of Spellpower, Bracers of Defence, Spellcrux Amulet

Passes to others:

- Markoheshkir -> Shadow Sorcerer. Staff of Spellpower is nearly as good.
- Potent Robe -> Shadow Sorcerer. Robe of the Weave is better for your role.
- Helm of Balduran -> Life Cleric. *Backup:* Hood of the Weave (+2 spell saves).
- Amulet of Greater Health -> Life Cleric. *Backup:* Spellcrux Amulet.
- Quickspell Gloves -> Death Domain Cleric. *Backup:* Daredevil Gloves.
- All martial gear -> Irrelevant to you.

Astarion -- The Drama Queen (Swashbuckler 5 / College of Swords 7)

> **Your Role:** Flashy dual-wielding duelist and the party's face. Dart in, stab with guaranteed Sneak Attack (no hiding needed thanks to Rakish Audacity), disengage for free via Fancy Footwork, and use Bard spells for utility, crowd control, and backup healing. Also the party's lockpicker, trap disarmer, and smooth-talker.

At a Glance

Race: High Elf (Astarion's default -- Darkvision, Fey Ancestry, free cantrip: grab **Booming Blade** for melee thunder damage + movement punishment) **Background:** Charlatan (Deception + Sleight of Hand)

Stats (respec at Withers): STR 8 / **DEX 17** / CON 14 / INT 8 / WIS 10 / CHA 14 DEX for attacks, damage, AC, and Initiative. CHA for Bard spells, Bardic Inspiration, and social checks. INT dump is fine -- use Warped Headband of Intellect if you need INT checks.

Level-by-Level

Level 1 -- Rogue 1

Astarion starts as a Rogue. No respec needed for level 1.

You gain:

- **Sneak Attack (1d6)** -- Extra damage once per turn when you have Advantage or an ally is within 1.5m of the target.
- **Expertise (pick 2):** Stealth + Sleight of Hand. Double your proficiency bonus. Astarion is the party's lockpicker and scout.
- **Bonus proficiencies:** Light armor, simple weapons, hand crossbows, longswords, rapiers, shortswords, Thieves' Tools

Racial Cantrip (High Elf): Booming Blade -- Melee cantrip with bonus thunder damage. If the enemy moves after being hit, they take more thunder damage. Excellent with Swashbuckler's hit-and-run style: hit them, Fancy Footwork prevents their opportunity attack, walk away -- if they chase you, Booming Blade triggers.

Level 2 -- Rogue 2

You gain:

- **Cunning Action** -- Dash, Disengage, or Hide as a bonus action. Extra mobility for positioning.

Level 3 -- Rogue 3 (Swashbuckler)

Astarion stops hiding in shadows and starts fighting with flair.

You gain:

- **Fancy Footwork** -- If you make a melee attack against a target, that target cannot make opportunity attacks against you for the rest of your turn. This is a free Disengage on every attack. Hit and walk away without penalty.
- **Rakish Audacity** -- +2 to Initiative rolls (scales with Rogue level). You no longer need Advantage to trigger Sneak Attack as long as you're within 1.5m of the target and don't have Disadvantage. **Guaranteed Sneak Attack damage every single turn without needing to hide.** This is what makes Swashbuckler special.
- **Sneak Attack scales to 2d6**

Gameplay shift: Run in, stab (Sneak Attack triggers automatically via Rakish Audacity), Fancy Footwork prevents the enemy's opportunity attack, walk away to safety or to the next target. No hiding required. Pure swashbuckling.

Level 4 -- Rogue 4

You gain:

- **Feat:** Pick one:
  - **Actor** -- +1 CHA (14 -> 15), gain Expertise in Deception and Performance. Astarion becomes the ultimate face of the party with double proficiency in Deception, Performance, Stealth, and Sleight of Hand. Thematic and powerful for social encounters.
  - **+2 DEX (17 -> 19)** -- More damage, AC, and Initiative. Stronger in combat, less thematic.
- **Dirty Tricks (Swashbuckler level 4):**
  - **Dirty Trick: Pocket Sand** -- Bonus action, blind a target (CHA save). Blinded enemies have Disadvantage on attacks, and you have Advantage against them. Guarantees Sneak Attack AND sets up possible crits.
  - **Dirty Trick: Flick o' the Wrist** -- Bonus action, attempt to Disarm. Knock the weapon out of an enemy's hand.

Level 5 -- Rogue 5

You gain:

- **Uncanny Dodge** -- When an enemy hits you with an attack, use your Reaction to take **half damage**. This is your primary survivability tool. Astarion is squishy; this keeps him alive. Works once per round.
- **Sneak Attack scales to 3d6**

This is where we pivot to Bard. 5 levels of Rogue gives you Sneak Attack 3d6, Uncanny Dodge, Fancy Footwork, Rakish Audacity, and Dirty Tricks -- everything you need from Rogue. Now Bard adds Extra Attack, spells, Blade Flourishes, and more skills.

Level 6 -- Bard 1

You gain:

- **Bardic Inspiration** -- Grant an ally a d6 bonus to their next attack roll, ability check, or saving throw. CHA modifier uses per long rest (2 at 14 CHA, 3 at 16+).
- **Bard Spellcasting (CHA-based)** -- Access to the Bard spell list. Key picks:
  - **Healing Word** -- Bonus action ranged heal. Your Life Cleric is the primary healer, but a backup Healing Word is always valuable in an 8-person party.
  - **Faerie Fire** -- Concentration. Outline enemies in light; all attacks against them have Advantage. Helps your whole party.
  - **Dissonant Whispers** -- 3d6 psychic damage + forces target to flee.

Level 7 -- Bard 2

You gain:

- **Song of Rest** -- Party heals extra HP on short rest. Nice passive.
- **Jack of All Trades** -- Add half your proficiency bonus to ANY ability check you're not already proficient in. Astarion becomes competent at literally everything. Even skills he hasn't trained in get a bonus.

Level 8 -- Bard 3 (College of Swords)

You gain:

- **Blade Flourish** -- When you take the Attack action, gain +3m movement speed. You can spend a Bardic Inspiration die to perform a Flourish:
  - **Slashing Flourish** -- Hit the target AND all nearby enemies + deal Inspiration die as bonus damage.
  - **Defensive Flourish** -- Add the Inspiration die to BOTH your damage AND your AC until your next turn. Can push your AC to 22+ for a round.
  - **Mobile Flourish** -- Hit the target, deal bonus damage, and push them backward.
- **Fighting Style: Two-Weapon Fighting** -- Add your DEX modifier to offhand attack damage. Essential for dual-wielding.
- **Bonus proficiency:** Medium armor, scimitars

Spell: Hold Person (paralyze a humanoid, melee hits auto-crit)

Level 9 -- Bard 4

You gain:

- **Feat:** +2 DEX to push toward 20 (adjust based on earlier choices and whether you used Hag Hair)
  - Alternative: Dual Wielder (+1 AC while dual-wielding, can use non-light weapons in offhand)
- **Spell:** Invisibility or Silence

Level 10 -- Bard 5

You gain:

- **3rd-Level Bard Spell Slots**
- **Bardic Inspiration now recharges on short rest.** Much more Flourish fuel throughout the day.
- **Spell:** Hypnotic Pattern (AoE WIS save or incapacitated) or Fear (AoE WIS save or frightened + drop weapons)

Level 11 -- Bard 6 (College of Swords)

Big power spike.

You gain:

- **Extra Attack** -- Two weapon attacks per Action. Combined with a bonus action offhand attack, that's **3 attacks per turn**. Sneak Attack (3d6) applies to one of them.
- **Improved Blade Flourish** -- Flourishes now add a minimum of +4 to damage/AC (instead of rolling the Inspiration die, unless the die would be higher).

Combat rotation at this level: Main hand attack + Extra Attack (2 hits, one triggers Sneak Attack 3d6) + bonus action offhand attack + optional Flourish on any hit = 3 attacks per turn with guaranteed Sneak Attack, free Disengage via Fancy Footwork, and Flourish bonuses. Then walk away without provoking opportunity attacks.

Level 12 -- Bard 7

You gain:

- **4th-Level Bard Spell Slots**
- **Key spells:**
  - **Greater Invisibility** -- Concentration. Stay invisible even after attacking. Permanent Advantage on ALL attacks for the duration. Enemies can't target you with single-target spells. Devastating on Astarion.
  - **Dimension Door** -- Teleport yourself + one ally up to 152m. Emergency extraction.
  - **Polymorph** -- Turn an enemy into a sheep or a dying ally into a 157 HP Giant Ape.

Gear to Grab

Act 1

Shortsword of First Blood *Where:* Sold by Roah Moonglow in the Shattered Sanctum (Goblin Camp) *Why:* +1d8 damage against targets at full HP. Astarion's high Initiative (Rakish Audacity bonus) means he often acts first, making this bonus reliable.

Knife of the Undermountain King *Where:* Grymforge *Why:* +1 shortsword. Advantage on attacks against lightly/heavily obscured targets (works in Darkness zones from your Sorcerer). Crits on 19. Excellent weapon.

Gloves of Thievery *Where:* Sold by Brem in Zhentarim Hideout *Why:* +1 to Sleight of Hand, can use Knock as a bonus action. Lockpicking utility.

Act 2

Sword of Life Stealing *Where:* Act 2 vendor or loot *Why:* On crit: +10 necrotic damage and 10 temp HP. Pocket Sand gives Advantage = more crits.

Yuan-Ti Scale Mail *Where:* Sold at Last Light Inn *Why:* 15+DEX (max 2) = 17 AC. Advantage on Initiative rolls. Going first matters for a Swashbuckler.

Act 3

Crimson Mischief (shortsword) *Where:* Orin's corpse (Act 3 main quest) *Why:* Legendary. +7 damage when attacking with Advantage, +1d4 necrotic, extra 1d4 on offhand hits. Best main-hand weapon for dual-wielding rogues in the game.

Bloodthirst (dagger) *Where:* Bhaal Temple reward or Orin's loot *Why:* Legendary. +1d4 piercing, +10 damage on crit, True Strike cantrip. Best offhand weapon.

Bhaalist Armour *Where:* Murder Tribunal (side with Bhaal). Requires a dark story path. *Why:* Aura giving enemies Vulnerability to piercing damage. Every stab does double piercing. Insane with dual-wielding piercing weapons. *Alternative if you don't want the dark path:* Armour of Agility (medium armor, no Stealth Disadvantage, +2 AC)

Helmet of Grit *Where:* Szarr Palace (Cazador's lair, Act 3 -- thematically tied to Astarion's storyline) *Why:* At 50% HP or below, gain a bonus action. Extra offhand attack when wounded.

Helldusk Boots *Where:* Wyrm's Rock Fortress, Gortash's quarters (sneak in or kill Gortash) *Why:* Hellcrawler (teleport on landing) + Infernal Evasion (succeed on a failed save 1/short rest). Perfect for a hit-and-run character.

Cloak of Displacement *Where:* Wyrm's Crossing, Danthelon's Dancing Axe shop *Why:* Attackers have Disadvantage against you until they hit you. Resets each turn. Keeps you alive between Uncanny Dodge and Fancy Footwork.

Quick Tips

> **Rakish Audacity = guaranteed Sneak Attack every turn.** No hiding needed. Just be in melee within 1.5m of the target without Disadvantage. This makes Astarion consistent and reliable unlike traditional Rogues who hide every turn.

> **Hit-and-run is your identity.** Attack -> Fancy Footwork prevents opportunity attacks -> walk to your next target or to safety. You are never stuck in one place.

> **Pocket Sand sets up big damage.** Bonus action Blind -> attack with Advantage -> Sneak Attack + possible crit. If you don't need the offhand attack that turn, Pocket Sand into Advantage attacks is higher expected damage.

> **Defensive Flourish when in danger.** Spend Bardic Inspiration die to add to both damage and AC. A good Defensive Flourish can push Astarion's AC to 22+ for a round.

> **Greater Invisibility for boss fights.** Concentration. Stay invisible even after attacking. Permanent Advantage on all attacks.

> **Astarion is the party's skill monkey.** Expertise in 4+ skills, Jack of All Trades for everything else, high DEX and CHA. He handles lockpicking, trap disarming, Persuasion, Deception, Stealth, and Performance. Let him lead dialogue when you need to charm or deceive.

> **Backup Healing Word.** Your Life Cleric is the primary healer, but Astarion with Healing Word can save a downed ally when the Cleric is busy or out of range.

Party Gear Assignments

This build gets: Crimson Mischief + Bloodthirst, Helldusk Boots, Cloak of Displacement, Helmet of Grit

Passes to others:

- Helldusk Armor -> Paladin/Hexblade. You wear light/medium armor for Stealth.
- Helldusk Gloves -> Karlach. *Backup:* Legacy of the Masters or Gloves of Dexterity.
- Viconia's Walking Fortress -> Paladin/Hexblade. You dual-wield, no shield.
- Gontr Mael -> Gloomstalker. You fight in melee, not at range.
- Nyrulna -> Karlach. You don't throw weapons.
- Birthright -> Paladin/Hexblade. DEX is your primary stat, not CHA.
- All caster robes/staves -> Sorcerer/Gale. You wear armor and use swords.