

# CHRONOMAD



**A PLAYABLE RACE OF TIME-VAGABONDS**

BY DAVID SOMERVILLE



## CHRONOMAD

HER SILVER HAIR PILED HIGH ON HER HEAD, the chronomad unsettled her companions. It wasn't the way she'd always trail off in the middle of sentences, staring into the future, or how her smooth hands were mismatched with her old-woman eyes.

*It was her missing neck.*

*Her head appeared to float six inches above her shoulders. She called it a "clockburn," said it was from when she'd once run into herself behind a curtain of hours. She was always saying things like that. Tomas asked Vendra if an otherworldly creature like her was really worth the trouble.*

*"You tell me," said Vendra, and pointed. There, sliding down the castle's wall, was Luladin. Tomas could see that she held the stolen diamond in one hand. It would be another hour before the diamond disappeared from the castle.*

*"Okay, she might be worth it."*

—David Somerville, *The Chronoan Chronicles*

Castaways from the Plane of Time, chronomads are a race for whom past, present, and future are blurred. They move through a maze of years, armed with uncanny insight about the past and a memory of things that have not yet occurred. Chronomads are survivors of paradox, back-alley vagabonds from the Immortal City of Chronoa, where streets are measured not in feet but in hours. Some say that they are a lost tribe of wanderers—but as any chronomad will tell you, they know exactly when they are.

### STRANGE AGES & CLOCKBURNS

Chronomads are otherworldly creatures, hailing from the Plane of Time. With wide-set eyes, small stature, delicate features, and slightly pointed ears, they at first appear somewhat like elves. Yet their skin, ranging from dark to pale, has a shimmering quality like wood or glass, polished until it shines.

Most chronomads, unless they are disguising themselves, can be recognized by their uneven aging—a withered old woman might have fiery red hair, a young boy could sport a trim white beard. It's impossible for an outsider to guess the age of a chronomad by looking at them, with their silver braids, crow's feet, and smooth hands. They age from young to old, but unevenly, with their bodies aging quickly or slowly in different places. Many also sport "clockburns," missing or faded places on their bodies where they have bumped up against the edge of temporal paradox and had parts of themselves erased.

### CASTAWAYS IN TIME

Chronomads on the Material Plane exist in tight-knit communities, never staying long in any one place. They see the world unlike other races, as a commingling of before, now, and after, and make their way as fortune-tellers, tricksters, or advisors to the powerful. Chronomads have little patience for anxiety, regret, or other cares of mortals who have only seen time from one direction. A chronomad caravan is a place full of strange riddles, guesses about yesterday, and memories of tomorrow.

Individual chronomads tend to be vague, a little abstract, confused about what is, was, and will be. They are a kind people, but guarded, careful to make sure that whatever occurs next will end to their advantage. They will usually step sideways to avoid a direct confrontation—but pity the creature who finds itself on the other end of a chronomad's blade... they tend to strike before the fight has even begun.

## EERIE FORTUNE-TELLERS, USEFUL SEERS

Chronomads are seen by most other races as lowly travelers and odd freaks. Gnomes have more respect for them than most, understanding some shred of the chronomadic insight about time. To elves, they are a riddle, to dwarves, an irrelevance. Halflings and chronomads usually get along well, both being of an easygoing nature. Humans seek them out for fortune-telling, with some powerful lords and ladies entertaining caravans on their land to be able to more easily consult them about the future.

## CHRONOAN ALLEY-RATS

In the Plane of Time stands the Immortal City of Chronoa. Some say the chronomads were the first inhabitants there, who laid the city's foundations. Others say they were the children of poor fools who got lost. No matter where—or when—the truth lies, chronomads have little power in the city. Instead, they scurry through the back-alleys and sewers of the city, zig-zagging through time, confronting paradox at every turn.

Some chronomads wander farther than others, finding themselves slipping entirely from the streets of Chronoa into the times and lands of other planes. Once outside the city, it's hard to find your way back, and chronomads make their homes in enclaves throughout the multiverse. On the Material Plane, they can be found in brightly-painted caravans guarded by ravens and hungry blink dogs, with whom they seem to share an affinity.

## BLURRING OUTLINES, SHIFTING AGES

Chronomads are a people unstuck in time, and their bodies show it. Not only do many of them bear permanent marks of the vanished areas called clockburns—which they often decorate with jewelry, hide with wrappings, or cover with prosthetics—but they also have a unique ability to blur their silhouettes, tilting forward or backward in time to become difficult to see, or disappearing from one place and appearing too soon a few steps ahead.

Unique among their kind is the ability to alter their apparent age. A chronomad's true age is a very personal matter, but any chronomad can, for a short time, appear to be whatever age they choose. Visitors to chronomad caravans have often been fooled by wise elders appearing as children, or offered alms to an ancient crone who straightens up into a young woman and walks away laughing. Though almost never glimpsed by outsiders, chronomad celebrations are a stunning affair, with all the members of the caravan altering their appearances to the flower of youth for an hour as the sun sets. Those who deal closely with chronomads know not to take them at face value—because their faces might look different in a minute.

## WHY ADVENTURE

Chronomads separated from their caravans have their reasons for traveling alone, but it's rarely by choice. Whether by necessity or punishment or irresistible calling, a chronomad usually longs to be back with their own kind, rather than sojourning among those they call "time-blind."

Sometimes, chronomads will be banished from their caravans for crimes they have committed, or will commit in the future. Others are sent because their caravan foresees they will bring back some great treasure boon. A few simply wander away, distracted by the confusing shape of time and space, and never stop searching for their lost caravan, or hoping for a safe reunion.

## WHAT'S PAST IS PRESENT

Every chronomad adventurer has a story, although the time-blind might find it hard to follow. Roll for your character's past, present, and future... or determine it for yourself.

### Home

#### d6 Your caravan is...

- |   |                                                                                                                          |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | A circle of brightly painted wagons that travel through fields and farmland.                                             |
| 2 | A flotilla of boats that make their way along the coast and up and down rivers.                                          |
| 3 | A collection of tents that can be set up anywhere, and taken down twice as fast.                                         |
| 4 | A company on horseback that moves from city to city and tavern to tavern.                                                |
| 5 | A quickly-built circle of shacks, constructed of whatever material comes to hand.                                        |
| 6 | A group without any particular pattern or plan, who make the best of whatever their current circumstances have to offer. |

### Past

#### d6 You are adventuring because...

- |   |                                                                                                                                                         |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | I was separated by my caravan through misfortune, and hope to find them again soon.                                                                     |
| 2 | I have committed (or will commit) a terrible crime, and am exiled until I make penance or prevent it.                                                   |
| 3 | The leaders of my caravan determined I would bring back a great treasure if I sought my own fortune. I am determined to retrieve it and return to them. |
| 4 | I chose to leave because my caravan is enslaved to a cruel lord, and I am determined to liberate them.                                                  |
| 5 | I felt a calling stronger than that of my caravan, summoning me out into the world to adventure, much to their sorrow.                                  |
| 6 | My caravan and I haven't crossed paths yet, but I remember them in the future, and can't wait to meet them.                                             |

## Present

### d4 You have clockburns...

- 1 In small, inconspicuous places, making it easier to pass among the time-blind.
- 2 On my face, unsettling all I gaze upon.
- 3 On one of my limbs, and I use a prosthetic to cover the gap.
- 4 I have never encountered a paradox, and have no clockburns

## Future

### d6 Whatever is to come, you are sure...

- 1 Something that I find in the dark will change my life forever.
- 2 A noble offering gifts is to be avoided.
- 3 No good can come of going to sea.
- 4 A terrible monster will provide the opportunity of a lifetime.
- 5 What I've been looking for is buried in a shallow grave.
- 6 The farther I travel, the closer I come to home.

## CHRONOMAD NAMES

Chronomad names are lyrical and otherworldly. Many take a local nickname followed by a descriptor of their caravan, suitable to the people they move among. But with their own kind or those they trust, their names are long, musical, and unique, inspired by the languages of the Plane of Time and the loveliest names of the eras in which their people have wandered.

**Nicknames:** (Male) Nick, Hob, Peet, Lefty, Jack, Will, Han; (Female) Sara, Bet, Sal, Ana, Chare, Nixie, Pickles, Rach; (Caravan Names) Greenwagon, Riverboat, Quicktent, Innhopper, Shackscrabble, Spotfinder.

**True Names:** Luladin, Vyndasavos, Rambandamor, Tolabolo, Andava, Cendare, Malevandax, Sarnadyz.

## CHRONOMAD TRAITS

Your chronomad character has a number of qualities in common with others of the same race.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Dexterity and Charisma scores increase by 1.

**Age.** A chronomad's age is a very personal matter, usually only disclosed to immediate family. They normally experience about 100 years of life—but they age unevenly, appearing old in some features and young in others. Still, eventually time catches up to them all, and very old chronomads will look old everywhere.

**Alignment.** Being a peaceful people used to living on the edge of society, most chronomads tend towards neutral good alignment. Raiders are an exception. Their choice to embrace their gifts as a weapon inclines them towards evil more often than not—although there are raiders who have been known to use their strength to protect instead of harm.

**Size.** Chronomads range from about 4 to over 5 feet in height. Your size is Medium.

**Speed.** Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

**Languages.** You can speak Common and Chronomadic, a kind of rapid slang of your own people, spoken just a little too fast for other humanoids to keep up with.

**Inner Clock.** You always know exactly what time it is.

**Eyewitness.** You gain proficiency in the History skill.

**Alter Age.** As a bonus action, you may alter your apparent age to become older or younger for one hour. Any clothes or equipment you are wearing or carrying do not alter in size, weight, or appearance. If you alter your age to become a baby or ancient, your speed and AC is halved, and you have disadvantage to Strength and Dexterity ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws. As child, your size is Small, and as a baby, your size is Tiny.

**Timegathering.** You have the ability to store up time to be used later by what your people call “timegathering.” To a time-blind creature, you appear to be sleeping, but in fact your spirit is skipping forward through time. This is not actual sleep, and cannot be done during a short or long rest. For a number of hours equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1), you may enter a sleep-like state. You may be woken from timegathering as from normal sleep. For each complete hour spent timegathering, you store 1 gathered hour, which may be spent on various racial traits. After each long rest, your gathered time expires, resetting to zero gathered hours.

**Take Your Time.** You can spend 1 gathered hour to gain advantage on your next ability check.

**Unwind Entropy.** With a little time, you can pull objects back to a time before they were broken. You know the mending cantrip.

**Subrace.** Most chronomads skirt the edges of society, avoiding trouble. But there are some who see their inheritance from the Plane of Time as a weapon, to be used in times of need or desire. These second type are known as raiders, and travel in militant caravans, usually shunned and avoided by other chronomads.

## CARAVANERS

As a caravaner, your intuition is to avoid attention and trouble, using your time-bending abilities to earn a little coin, stay out of harm's way, and see some wonders. You strive to treat the time-blind with sympathy and compassion, being as they are trapped in the present, and do what you can to help them, as long as that help also benefits those you care about.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Charisma score increases by 1.

**Useful and Pleasant.** As a traveler, you've learned to make yourself good company wherever you go. Gain two tool proficiencies.

**Tell Fortune.** Taking a little time to center yourself, you can peer past the present, getting a sense for the outcome of things. Starting at first level, you can cast the augury spell as a ritual. You may not use this trait again until you finish a long rest.

## RAIDERS

As a raider, you know the truth: The world is a wild place, and you are a wolf in it. Perhaps your caravan was victimized by violence, or perhaps you simply realized one day that it was easier to take what you wanted than to turn cartwheels and smile for it. You see the time-blind for what they are: defenseless creatures wedged into a tiny crack between the past and the future.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

**Might Makes Right.** Gain proficiency with 1 martial weapon.

**Take Haste.** As an action, you can spend 1 gathered hour to steal time from another creature that you touch. The target must make a Charisma saving throw. The DC is equal to 8 + your Charisma modifier. On a failed save, until the end of the target's next turn, the target's speed is halved, and your speed is doubled. On a successful save, there is no effect.

**Forewarned.** Peering into the future, you get a glimpse of dangers that might lie ahead. For one minute, you can spend gathered hours to enhance your saving throws, gaining +1 to your next saving throw for each gathered hour spent.

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