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Erastil

“The first gift you ever receive is your family. A man grows from the seeds his parents plant.”

—Parables of Erastil

Erastil (eh-RAS-till), also known as Old Deadeye, is an ancient deity from before the Age of Darkness, when early man began to domesticate and dominate his natural surroundings. Pastoral legends claim that Old Deadeye crafted the first bow as a gift to mortals so that they might learn to hunt and survive in the dangerous world. Though civilization has continued to advance beyond simple villages due to the influence of Abadar, Erastil remains popular in tradition, a transitional figure between the worship of the Green Faith and fully modern religions. His faith remains strongest in the northern lands, where long ago people lived simpler lives in the frontiers of civilized lands.

Erastil is primarily a nature deity focusing on the plants and animals that farmers, hunters, and ranchers deal with in their ordinary lives. He is also a god of close-knit communities and families and has a protector aspect that only surfaces when such things are threatened. Erastil is no god of crusades or heroism, and he has no grand plans to eradicate chaos and evil from the world; he simply wants people to be able to live their lives in peace without the threat of being devoured by monsters, conscripted into an army, or destroyed by world-ending magic. He is a stern patriarch whose spirit is as hard as wood, unafraid to face down a bully yet able to calm a frightened child. He teaches how to read the turning of the seasons to know when to sow and reap, how to tell when livestock are sick or gravid, how to poultice a wound and set a broken leg, how to spot a straggling sheep or signs that a dog has gone rabid. He believes that it is man's duty to help others, that cooperation leads to friendship and safety, and that if man respects the gifts of nature, she will sustain him. He loves old customs that encourage strong family bonds, no matter how quaint they are by modern standards, and enjoys hunting for sustenance but not for sport. Happy weddings and new babies make him smile. He is not one to spout philosophy and instead gives practical advice and hands-on teaching.

Old Deadeye is set in his ways and doesn't take well to those who challenge his opinions or upset how things work. He believes the strength of a man's will makes him the center of a household, and while women can be strong, they should defer to and support their husbands, as their role is to look after the house and raise strong children (consequently, there are few female priests in his church). Independent-minded women, he believes, can be disruptive to communities, and it is best to marry them off quickly so their duties as wife and mother command their attention. Children should honor their parents and know when it is time to work or time to play. He dislikes the chaos and trouble that adventurers bring, and while they may have their uses when monsters come sniffing about, it is best if adventurers take care of the problem quickly, receive a meal and a place to sleep, then move on before their wanderlust catches on in otherwise good families. His androcentric beliefs are unusual given his religion's intermediate role between the Green Faith (which is largely egalitarian) and modern faiths (which have a mix of male and female deities).

Erastil's avatar is an upright old trapper—usually of Ulfen heritage—with weathered skin, clad in well-used leathers

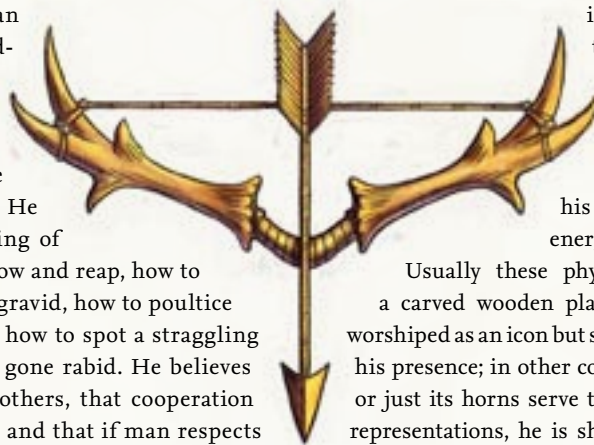
and carrying a simple bow. Old legends say that halflings and humans each see him as a member of their own race, even when members of both races are looking at him at the same time. When Erastil is angry or must enter battle, he has the head of an elk, but most representations show him as fully human, as common folk rely more on his hunter and farmer aspects than on his warrior aspect. In most stories, Old Deadeye's arrows never miss, and a few communities still own a spent arrow supposedly once fired by Erastil-in-the-world, passed down through the generations and treasured for its connection to the god.

Depictions of Erastil in artwork are uncommon, as his followers prefer focusing their energy on more practical matters.

Usually these physical representations are just a carved wooden placard bearing his likeness, not worshiped as an icon but serving as a constant reminder of his presence; in other communities, a stuffed elk's head or just its horns serve this purpose. In more elaborate representations, he is shown fighting off wild animals or teaching men how to hunt. A few old caves dating to the Azlanti era have painted upon their walls primitive silhouettes of an elk-headed man performing similar acts.

Old Deadeye shows his approval through bountiful hunts, bumper harvests, mild weather, the appearance of straight paths, and the like, but he prefers to limit his direct intervention to helping needy people in lean times, as he does not want to encourage laziness. A hungry family might find their tiny garden provides bushels of vegetables, an old cow might start giving milk again, a weary hunter's prey might stumble or become entangled, and so on. Any hoofed animal may be a channel for his power, and elk-horns are favored by his worshipers for making simple tools, like knives or dowsing rods, because of their connection to him. Forked lighting is a sign of his presence. His anger is reserved for followers who betray his principles; he usually punishes them by changing them into something more useful to their community, such as a pig or a fruit tree. Mothers often warn lazy or misbehaving children that Erastil will transform them, and most communities have at least one small but dependable tree that local legend claims was once an especially unruly or slothful child.

Given Erastil's focus on simplicity over frivolous adornment, the formal raiment of his clerics and druids is practical, usually a leather or fur shoulder-cape branded with his symbol or affixed with a wooden badge bearing his mark. Communities led by a druid may have a ceremonial horned hat or drape made from the tanned hide of an elk's head and neck.



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Among the faithful, elk iconography is common, such as a pair of antlers scratched on a door or threshold, or an actual head or horns mounted on a wall. Erastil's followers have no taboos about hunting elk, for the animals are good sources of food and leather and can thrive in most areas. Because elk shed their antlers at the start of winter, tools made from them are fairly common, and even children may own simple knives made from antlers. At birth, firstborn males are given an elk tooth, supposedly to ensure virility and a long life. In the extreme north, reindeer iconography is more common than elk, though the traditions and rituals are essentially the same.

Erastil is lawful good and his domains are farming, hunting, trade, and family. His weapon is the longbow (his clerics and druids are proficient with both the longbow and shortbow). His holy symbol is a bow made of elk antlers with an arrow nocked. His domains are Animal, Community, Good, Law, and Plant. Most of his priests are clerics, but a small minority are druids, rangers, and (most rare) paladins; a few scattered communities are served by adepts. Druids usually serve communities in places where natural hazards and the weather are their greatest threats, while paladins tend to be leaders in lands where monsters lurk. Often called Old Deadeye by his faithful, Erastil is also known as Elk Father and the Old Hunter. In the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, he is named Ullerstarl and is usually depicted on skis.

A typical worshiper of Erastil is a common farmer, rancher, village tradesman, or subsistence hunter who wants to live his life, take care of his family, and not worry about kings, wars, or monsters. He's not pretentious, and while he may be proud of his accomplishments, they're simple and easily demonstrable—a good crop, a fine piece of land, fat livestock, and a healthy wife and children. He looks after his neighbor's farm in an emergency and expects the same in return but is otherwise content to be left alone.

The church's music is simple hymns, often with a strong rhythm so they can be sung to keep time during repetitive work. Flutes, drums, horns, and other easy-to-make, easy-to-play instruments are the norm.

Erastil is very pro-marriage, seeing it as the proper way to create families and frowning on those who would bend or break the sacred bonds with adultery or divorce. The church sees marriage as a way to "tame" unruly men and women, and most villages have at least one married couple who tied the knot after being caught in an indiscretion. Widowers and widows usually remarry, especially if there are still children in the house. Most of his priests are married, though they are not required to be.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

A temple to Old Deadeye is almost always a simple wooden building, longhouse, or even town hall that serves a rural community as a gathering place, with religion being only

one of its many uses. Sparsely decorated, such structures often contain highly functional and modular furnishings; the faithful prefer not to waste their holy area with rows of awkward, heavy pews and statues when sturdy tables and stools make the area well suited for mending tools and clothes, food preparation, and other helpful crafts. In some cases, temples of Erastil have no seating, leaving the congregation to stand. Sitting during a service, while not taboo, is looked down on for all but the elderly or infirm—and even they bring their own chairs. A shrine to Erastil is usually little more than an antler- or bow-mark carved on a tree or rock.

A PRIEST'S ROLE

Erastil's priests usually have a conventional role in a community (such as being a farmer or tradesman) in addition to their religious duties, and their priestly tasks are often secondary to the needs of their own land and families. They are often called upon to help build homes, birth children, oversee trade, and bless crops. Most of their day is spent doing mundane tasks just like any other member of the village, pausing only to speak a blessing at the dawn's breaking, but always ready to drop what they're doing and pitch in when they are needed. They are careful to put the needs of the community first, because Erastil's gifts may give them an advantage. For example, a cleric of Erastil who is a shepherd uses his skill and magic to take care of all the village's animals rather than just his own, even if that means he makes less money selling his own sheep at market; the prosperity of the community and the health of its flock is more important than his own wealth. Priests usually have ranks in Diplomacy (though Intimidate may work just as well), Heal, Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nature), and Sense Motive.

Priests bless farmland and herd animals, plan the planting and harvest, and look after injured folk and families in need. Sometimes a priest has to step in with a firm hand to deal with a rebellious or disruptive member of the community, whether that person is a frequent drunk or a child prone to screaming tantrums. Adult troublemakers who repeatedly break the community's trust are usually branded on the hand and exiled from the community—usually in the direction of a large city—to prevent more problems. If something comes along that's too much for the priest to handle, such as bandits, an orc band, or a hungry monster, it is the priest's responsibility as community leader to find someone who can deal with the problem (such as adventurers).

Adventurer priests of Erastil are rare, and overall the number of mid-level priests is lower than most other churches, to an extent that in times of great need (such as during a plague) they must rely on magic lent or donated from allied faiths. However, every few years the church

encourages young priests to travel in search of news, seeds for new crops, and useful new skills that can help their home village. Though these wanderers appear to be fish out of water, their stubborn dedication to helping those back home has guaranteed the survival of many a poor village, either by having money sent or by eradicating foul beasts that lurk in the shadows. Young adventuring priests often end up settling in remote villages saved by their heroic efforts, especially if there is no local priest. This gives the faith an opportunity to grow and establishes the bonds of a greater community outside the immediate interests of a single village—though the church prefers to focus on life in a small settlement, it sees the greater community as a kind of extended family. Because a priest usually has a leadership role in a community, the priests of Erastil prefer to take charge when part of an adventuring party, where they sometimes run into conflict with an equally headstrong member of the group.

Though druids are a minority among the clergy, all priests respect the druids for maintaining the traditions that have allowed so many to survive to the present day. They also give a nod to the rare paladins of the faith willing to take up sword and shield so the common folk can get on with their lives. Rangers rarely become leaders in the church, as their skills and magic cater less to healing and growth compared to other priests.

Erastil's church is simple and practical; most communities have only one or two priests, so complicated hierarchies are unnecessary, and priests defer to the wisdom of elder clergy. Visiting priests are shown hospitality as is appropriate for any guest, but unless the visitor is very unusual (such as the eldest priest in the country) she typically defers to the judgment of the local leaders. Priests who are part of a community are usually called Elder, regardless of their rank within the community or the church. Traveling priests not associated with a community are called Brother or Sister.

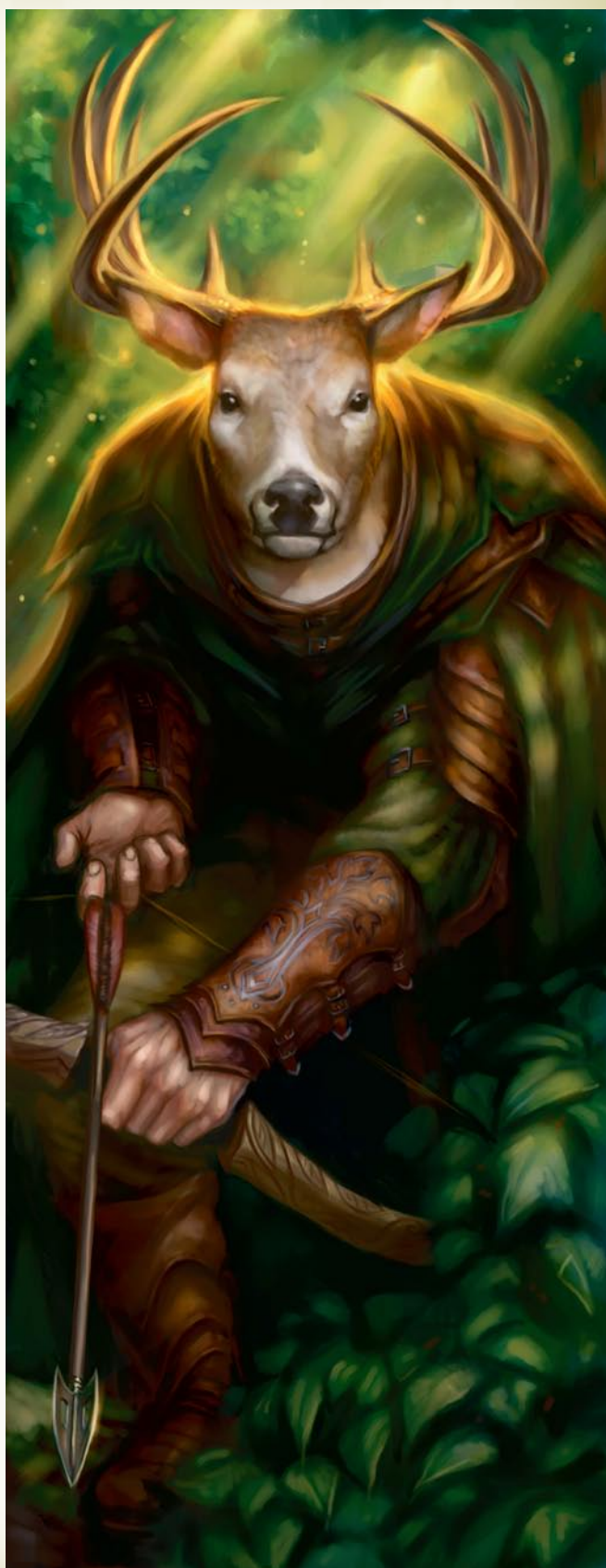
HOLY TEXT

The *Parables of Erastil* is the common text of the faith. It gives homilies on strengthening family bonds, almanac-like advice on planting, and lore about game animals and tracking. The number of chapters varies from place to place, as communities omit things irrelevant to their way of life or add fables emphasizing local events or traditions.

APHORISMS

Any folksy, rural saying is likely to spill from the mouth of one of the faithful as if it were the god's dogma. Two in particular are favorites.

Never trust a fool: Whether the fool is the village idiot trying to catch the moon with a spoon or a traveling adventurer trying to inspire the locals to rise up against



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the local lord, a sensible man ignores him, as no good will come of this “work.”

Nothing is more satisfying than the fruits of a day’s labor: This is used to chastise lazy folk and rebuke those who wonder what’s so satisfying about a simple country life. Gold and gems make a man weak; hard work in a field shows strength of body and character.

HOLIDAYS

Erastil believes extensive and complicated ceremonies take time away from necessary things like tending to crops and putting food on the table, so most religious events are short and to the point. The solstices and equinoxes are holy days for the church (the week of the vernal equinox is called Planting Week by the faithful, and Harvest Feast is the week of the autumn equinox, but even the associated rituals only take about an hour). The summer month of Erastus is named for him.

Archerfeast: This holiday on 3 Erastus is a day of food, fun, and relaxation. Villages hold archery and stone-throwing contests, ranchers rope and trade calves and lambs, and village men ask permission to marry eligible maids. Cider is served cold during the day and hot at night. At



sundown, an animal is offered to the god, and everyone in the community eats a piece to share in his blessing.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Erastil can be gruff and reserved, but he is still on good terms with most nonevil deities of Golarion. However, he is very set in his ways and frequently dispenses “advice” about his fellow deities and how they’ve gone astray from the traditional values he espouses. Erastil is unusual in that he is very direct when it comes to addressing the shortcomings of other deities, and his followers have heard these criticisms through his parables and divine representatives just as they’d hear a village elder talking about troublesome members of their community.

Abadar: “He’s a good boy, but he’s forgotten where he came from, like a country kid who goes to the big city and gets in with all sorts of undesirable folk. There’s a reason you don’t see slums in villages; that’s city-stink, where some folk think it’s all right for someone else to suffer just so they can have an easy life. What good is wealth if it costs you your dignity, your soul?”

Aroden: “A perfectly respectable man, though a bit too interested in his own legacy and doing things the way he wanted. If he had shared his burdens with others, perhaps he could have built something even greater—and spared himself whatever trouble consumed him.”

Cayden Cailean: “This boy’s heart is in the right place, but to be honest, he’s not thinking with his head. He’s like one of those fancy adventurers who comes to town, throws a lot of money around, disrupts things, and leaves a few girls in the family way before skipping town. What he needs is a nice, determined woman to convince him to settle down—nothing like a wife and kids to tame a bachelor.”

Desna: “This old gal always makes me a little sad. Desna’s mistake is that behind all her color and songs she let loss harden her heart, and now she is alone, when what she really needs is the love of a husband and family to make her whole. But, given that she is what she is, I’m not surprised she chose this path—she was ancient before mankind learned to farm, and you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”

Gorum: “This one is a thug, always looking for a fight instead of letting well enough alone. Everything is a challenge for him, an excuse to make noise, when the real challenge is being a provider for your family when the land is stubborn.”

Gozreh: Erastil has found a balance with Gozreh and has little to say about him. In the same way only a fool expects cursing the weather to reverse his fortunes, Erastil accepts the god of nature for what he is and perseveres, expecting neither quarter nor malice from the fickle deity.

Iomedae: “Though I don’t normally approve of a woman with such strange ideas, she has shouldered an enormous responsibility without complaint and her actions have saved countless lives. That doesn’t mean she’s not confusing—she was a mortal woman once. Has she no desire for a family? A strong-willed woman like her needs a strong man in her life to guide her and set a good example.”

Irori: “The thing I respect most about this boy is his determination; he conquered every obstacle life put in his path and ended up a godling. Imagine what such an iron will could do if he brought it to bear on the needs of the community instead of being selfish with it! At least he understands the rewards of a simple life.”

Sarenrae: “This woman has such fire in her, such spirit, I wonder if any man could tame her. She would surely make a fine wife and mother—and her husband wouldn’t dare have a wandering eye, lest he earn her temper right quick.”

Shelyn: “Such a sweet, beautiful girl, how could you not love her? She is the prettiest girl in a village, but is still dutiful enough to make sure all of her less-pretty friends find husbands before she does. Her power is what kindles love in an arranged marriage and keeps the fire hot between a husband and wife even after a long life and many children. She may follow her heart more than her head, and some village girls make that mistake, but I have to forgive her for that.”

Torag: “He and the dwarves are good people who believe in strong families and strong communities. They’re a little too interested in battle for my tastes, but when your early history is all about driving the filthy orcs off your lands, you can’t blame them. They’re good with their hands, and many of my villages prosper by trading food for dwarven tools—or dwarven warriors to keep them safe.”

NEW DIVINE SPELL

Clerics, paladins, and rangers of Erastil may prepare *goodberry* as a 2nd-level spell, and druids can cast the spell on nuts or seeds as well as berries. Clerics and paladins may cast *animal messenger* as a 2nd-level spell, and all priests may use that spell on any nonhostile animal (including friendly guard animals and domesticated animals). In addition to *Deadeye’s arrow* (see page 15 of *Pathfinder Chronicles: Gods and Magic*), his priests have access to the following spell.

TRACKING MARK

School evocation; **Level** druid 1, cleric 1, paladin 1, ranger 1 (Erastil)

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components S, DF

Range long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

Target one creature

Customized Summon List

Erastil’s priests can use *summon monster* and *summon nature’s ally* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells.

Summon Monster II/Summon Nature’s Ally II
celestial elk (LG; see *Pathfinder* #32)

Summon Monster III/Summon Nature’s Ally III
celestial dire boar (LG)

Duration 10 minutes/level (D)

Saving Throw Will negates; **Spell Resistance** yes

You gain a supernatural sense about tracks and other clues left behind by the target creature. Treat all Survival DCs to track the creature as 5 lower than normal and gain a +5 bonus on Perception checks made to notice the target if it is using Stealth or recognize it using Disguise.

PLANAR ALLIES

Most of Erastil’s divine servants are animals or benign forest creatures. Some of them reside permanently on the Material Plane, patrolling frontier areas and keeping an eye out for settlers in need. A few “legendary” animals known to villages are actually Old Deadeye’s minions rather than true animals, making appearances once or twice a generation to protect the community. Erastil’s herald is the Grim White Stag (see page 82). The following creatures are well known supernatural servitors of Erastil, suitable for conjuring with *planar ally* or similar spells; given that most of his priests are low-level, some of these have been known to appear in response to *summon monster* or *summon nature’s ally* spells as well.

Arangin: Said to be the resurrected spirit of the paladin Jaydis Von’s equally heroic and storied mount, Arangin appears where servants of Erastil most need aid, carrying the lost out of labyrinthine forests and saving the wagons of desperately stuck pioneers from hidden bogs. This ruby-toned heavy horse has an Intelligence of 8 and understands Common but speaks no languages.

Blackfeather: Able to take the form of a man, an eagle, or an eagle-man hybrid, this fierce archer is a skilled marksman who only hunts for sustenance or to defend the innocent. Often he is content to perch on a rooftop, silently watching over a village when strangers appear—just in case there is trouble.

Scorchbark: Nearly crippled in a skirmish with a barbed devil, this reckless young treant now displays his burns like a badge of honor. He is obviously shaken whenever an enemy uses fire near him, but he never lets it deter him from his responsibilities.