SOFTWARE & TECH

Hangman Vigilante Pathfinder

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Unmasking the Hangman Vigilante in Pathfinder

In the sprawling world of Golarion, where shadows stretch long beneath the sun and justice often wears a mask, few character concepts capture the imagination quite like the Hangman Vigilante. This archetype within the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game offers players a unique blend of stealth, intimidation, and brutal, single-target control. The Hangman Vigilante is not merely a fighter; they are a specialist in fear, a master of the rope, and a bringer of a very personal, often terrifying, form of justice. For players looking to step away from straightforward damage dealers and embrace a more thematic and tactically rich role, the path of the Hangman Vigilante is both rewarding and demanding. This article will explore every facet of this intriguing build, from its core mechanics and archetype features to optimal strategy, roleplaying potential, and common pitfalls to avoid.

What is a Hangman Vigilante?

The Hangman Vigilante is an archetype of the **Vigilante** base class, introduced in the *Ultimate Intrigue* sourcebook. The Vigilante class itself is built around the core concept of a dual identity: a public social identity and a secret, crime-fighting vigilante identity. The Hangman archetype leans heavily into the dark, gritty, and intimidating aspects of this premise. Instead of relying on fancy footwork or magical disguises, the Hangman specializes in the use of the rope—specifically the **hangman's rope**—as a primary weapon for control, restraint, and execution.

At its heart, the Hangman Vigilante is a **controller and executioner**. They excel at isolating a single target, neutralizing them with their rope, and either delivering a final verdict or leaving a grim message for others to find. The thematic core is one of fear and judgment. You are not a hero in the traditional sense; you are a symbol, and that symbol is a noose. This archetype replaces several of the standard Vigilante class features, most notably the usual social talents and vigilante specializations, with abilities focused entirely on rope combat and intimidation.

Core Mechanics and Signature Abilities

To truly understand the Hangman Vigilante, one must first delve into its unique mechanics. The entire build revolves around a single, specialized weapon: the hangman's rope. This is not a simple piece of cordage. It is an extension of the character's will.

The Hangman's Rope

The hangman's rope is a 20-foot length of silk rope with a properly tied noose at one end. It is treated as a **grapple weapon** with the *blocking* and *performance* weapon qualities. The Hangman Vigilante gains **Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hangman's rope)**for free at 1st level. This weapon is the core of the build, used for everything from tripping and disarming to the archetype's signature move: the noose.

- Grapple and Control: The primary combat use of the rope is to initiate a grapple. Unlike a standard grapple, using the hangman's rope allows the Vigilante to make a special combat maneuver check to lasso a target. Success means the target is entangled and you have a hold on them.
- Strangle: Once a target is in the noose, the Hangman can attempt to strangle them. This functions like the constrict special ability, dealing nonlethal damage and forcing the target to hold their breath, leading to potential suffocation.

- Garrote: In a surprise round or against a helpless target, the Hangman can use the rope to perform a garrote, which deals significant precision damage and is exceptionally lethal.

Key Archetype Features

The Hangman Vigilante archetype modifies several core class features. Here are the most important ones:

This is the archetype's flagship ability, gained at 1st level. It allows the Vigilante to use the hangman's rope to make a special combat maneuver check against a target within 20 feet. If successful, the target is **entangled** for 1 round. The Vigilante can maintain this hold in subsequent rounds, and on each successful check, they can choose to either deal nonlethal damage (strangle) or attempt to render the target helpless by tightening the noose. This ability replaces the standard Vigilante's **social talent** gained at 1st level.

At 3rd level, the Hangman becomes exceptionally proficient at choking the life out of their foes. When using the noose ability to strangle, they gain a +2 bonus on the combat maneuver check, and the target takes an additional 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. This ability replaces the vigilante specialization talent gained at 3rd level.

At 7th level, the Hangman can tie a "hangman's knot" as a full-round action. When a creature is suspended from this knot, they take increasing damage each round as the knot tightens. This is a brutal execution method, perfect for making an example of a target. This ability replaces the 7th-level vigilante talent.

At 19th level, the Hangman reaches the pinnacle of their grim artistry. When using the noose on a helpless or pinned target, the Hangman can deliver a **coup de grace**with the rope, dealing massive damage. This is the ultimate expression of the archetype's theme: a final, irreversible judgment. This ability replaces the 19th-level vigilante talent.

Building the Ultimate Hangman Vigilante

A strong build is essential for maximizing the potential of this archetype. The Hangman Vigilante is not a frontline brawler; they are a tactical controller who needs to set up their kills carefully. Here is a guide to building an effective one.

Ability Scores (Point Buy)

- Strength (STR): 14-16. This is your primary stat for combat maneuver checks. You need a high Strength to successfully land your noose and maintain the grapple.
- Dexterity (DEX): 12-14. A good Dexterity helps with initiative and ranged touch attacks (if you use a thrown rope), but Strength is more critical.
- Constitution (CON): 14. You are a melee character who will be in the thick of it when you grapple a target. High hit points are essential.
- Intelligence (INT): 10 or 12. You need a few skill ranks, but this is not a primary stat.
- Wisdom (WIS): 10-12. Useful for Will saves and Perception, but not a priority.
- Charisma (CHA): 14-16. This is critical for your social identity and for intimidation. Many of your class features key off of fear, so a high Charisma is a major asset.

Race Choices

Certain races synergize exceptionally well with the Hangman Vigilante.

1. Human: The +2 to any ability score (put it in Strength), bonus feat, and extra skill rank per level make humans a top-tier choice for any build, including this one.
2. Half-Orc: The +2 to Strength is perfect. The Intimidating racial trait and access to the Favored Class Bonus that improves intimidation checks make the Half-Orc a natural fit for a fear-based character.

3. Dwarf: The +2 to Constitution and Wisdom, plus bonuses against poisons and spells, make for a very durable Hangman. The penalty to Charisma hurts, but it can be mitigated with feats and items.
4. Ratfolk: The +2 to Dexterity and Intelligence, along with a small size, can make for a surprisingly nimble Hangman, though the Strength penalty is a serious drawback.

Essential Feats

Feats are where the Hangman Vigilante comes to life. Here are the must-have feats in order of priority.

- Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hangman's rope): You get this for free, but you must ensure you have the prerequisites.
- Weapon Focus (hangman's rope): A +1 bonus on attack rolls with your primary weapon is invaluable for landing your noose.
- Improved Grapple: This feat gives you a +2 bonus on grapple checks and allows you to grapple without provoking attacks of opportunity. It is absolutely essential.
- Greater Grapple: This allows you to maintain a grapple as a move action, freeing up your standard action for other things (like using your rope to harass another target or using a move-action ability).
- Intimidating Prowess: Add your Strength modifier to Intimidation checks. This is fantastic for a Strength-based character who also wants to be scary.
- Skill Focus (Intimidate): Another +3 bonus on Intimidation checks. Combine with Intimidating Prowess and a high Charisma to become a master of fear.
- Combat Expertise: Required for many advanced combat maneuvers. It also gives you a defensive option.
- Improved Reposition or Improved Trip: Your rope can also be used to trip or reposition foes. These feats open up tactical options.

Skills and Talents

The Hangman Vigilante emphasizes skills that support its core theme.

- Intimidate (CHA): Max this out. It is your primary tool for demoralizing foes and setting up your kills.
- Stealth (DEX): You need to get close to your target to use your rope effectively. Stealth is your best friend.
- Perception (WIS): Always important. You need to know where your targets are.
- Acrobatics (DEX): Useful for moving through threatened squares and avoiding attacks of opportunity.
- Climb (STR): A Hangman should be able to get to high ground. Climb is thematic and practical.
- Disguise (CHA): The Vigilante class relies on dual identities. Disguise is key for your social identity.

For vigilante talents, prioritize those that improve your rope work or your social identity. The **Lethal Grace** talent is excellent as it adds Dexterity to damage when using a weapon from the close or light blades group. If you carry a backup weapon (a dagger or a short sword), this is a solid choice. **Safe House** and **Many Guises**are excellent social talents for maintaining your secret identity.

Strategy and Tactics for the Hangman Vigilante

Knowing how to use your abilities in combat is the difference between a frustrating character and a legendary one. The Hangman Vigilante is not a straightforward beatstick. You must think ahead and control the battlefield.

Opening Moves

Before combat begins, you should ideally be hidden. Use Stealth to get into a favorable position, preferably elevated or behind cover. Your first action should be

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