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[The nightmare beast is one of seven monsters in the *Dark Sun Monstrous Compendium* that is said to be the most fearsome on Athas barring the Dragon of Tyr. Like, they can't all be the most fearsome, my dudes. More 90s edginess, I guess. The nightmare beast has been sufficiently popular to turn up in both 3e and 4e, which means there were plenty of versions for me to compare and draw from. The 2e and 4e art both have short, bulldog like jaws, a motif that turns up in a number of Dark Sun creatures. The longer jaws that Reynolds gave it are more distinctive to me (although of course, the 3e version is the first one I saw, so it might just be a nostalgia bias).

The 2e and 4e versions of the nightmare beast are explicitly defilers, the type of magic in Dark Sun that draws the life from other creatures. Defiling is what destroyed most of Athas' ecosystems, leaving it a dying desert world. It's a metaphor. So I gave my nightmare beast the ability to deal negative levels, which it had in 2e but lost in all other editions, and gave it the healing thief ability, because it seemed thematically appropriate.]

## Nightmare Beast

### CR 17 CE Magical Beast

*This scaly creature resembles no true animal, but an amalgamation of the worst qualities of many of them. It stands on four legs tipped with saber-like claws, and has a maw of sword-sized teeth. Two curving tusks grow from its lower jaw, and its enormous eyes are red globes.*

A nightmare beast is a true terror, a magical mutant that spreads destruction in its wake. All nightmare beasts hate other living things, and they rampage for days on end, destroying buildings, tearing down forests and slaying all in their path. These rampages are interrupted by long sleep, up to a year at a time, but all creatures near a resting nightmare beast dream of its rampages and are worn down psychically. The land around a nightmare beast lair is shattered, scarred, and bereft of

most life.

If it sights potential victims a way off, a nightmare beast will often torment them at range with spells or summoned monsters before teleporting into the middle of the group. A nightmare beast prefers to be up close in combat, crushing foes under its feet and goring them with its swiveling tusks. This way it can drain the life from enemies with its teeth and steal their healing spells through magic. Every time it does so, its own spells grow stronger. Nightmare beasts will flee from a fight if they feel threatened, but few creatures are strong enough to concern it.

Nightmare beasts eat what they kill, and have been known to consume pieces of buildings, armor and weapons as well. They do not intentionally collect treasure, but their guts collect small valuables, and those foolish enough to rifle through their droppings may find a few surviving items. The ground tusks and teeth of a nightmare beast are coveted for use as components in making items of the necromancy or evocation schools, but forgeries are much more common than the real deal in markets.

A nightmare beast speaks Abyssal, but rarely has little to say except threats and curses. They can live for centuries.

### **Nightmare Beast CR 17**

**XP 102,400**

CE Huge magical beast

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Perception +23, scent

**Aura** healing theft (30 ft., Will DC 28), nightmares (1 mile, Will DC 28)

**Defense**

**AC** 30, touch 10, flat-footed 28 (-2 size, +2 Dex, +20 natural)

**hp** 287 (23d10+161)

**Fort** +20, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12; +8 vs. mind-influencing effects

**DR** 15/magic; **Immune** ability damage or drain, bleed, curses, divination, energy drain; **Resist** fire 20; **SR** 28

**Offense**

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** 2 gores +30 (2d10+9/19-20), bite +30 (2d8+9 plus energy drain), 2 claws +30 (2d6+9)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

**Special Attacks** defiled casting, energy drain (2 negative levels, Fort DC 28), trample (4d6+13, DC 30)

**Spell-like Abilities** CL 17<sup>th</sup>, concentration +24

Constant—*mind blank*

At will—*fireball* (DC 20), *shout* (DC 21), *wall of fire*

3/day—empowered *chain lightning* (DC 23), quickened *dimension door*, *disintegrate* (DC 23)

1/day—*incendiary cloud* (DC 25), *mass inflict serious wounds* (DC 25), *summon monster VIII*

**Statistics**

**Str** 28, **Dex** 15, **Con** 25, **Int** 10, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 25

**Base Atk** +23; **CMB** +34 (+40 sunder); **CMD** 46 (48 vs. sunder, 50 vs. trip)

**Feats** Blind-fight, Critical Focus, [Dimensional Agility](#), Empower SLA (*chain lightning*), Greater Sunder, Improved Critical (gore), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Quicken SLA (*dimension door*), Staggering Critical, Stunning Critical

**Skills** Acrobatics +21, Climb +27, Perception +23

**Languages** Abyssal

**SQ** double damage against objects

Ecology

**Environment** any land or underground

**Organization** solitary

**Treasure** incidental

Special Abilities

**Aura of Nightmares (Su)** All creatures within 1 mile of a nightmare beast must succeed a DC 28 Will save every time they fall asleep or be affected by a *nightmare* spell. Casting *dispel evil* on a victim of these nightmares does not stun the nightmare beast, but does automatically dispel the nightmare effect. A nightmare beast's aura of nightmares does not affect creatures under *protection from evil* or a similar effect.

**Defiled Casting (Su)** Any spell-like abilities used by a nightmare beast for 1 round after it deals negative levels with its bite or is healed with its healing theft aura gains a +2 to its save DC.

**Double Damage against Objects (Ex)** When a nightmare beast makes a full attack against an object or structure, it deals double normal damage.

**Healing Theft Aura (Su)** Any time a creature casts a spell that heals hit points or channels positive energy to heal within 30 feet of a nightmare beast, it must succeed a DC 28 Will save or half of the healing is redirected to heal the nightmare beast instead of its selected target. The save DC is Charisma based.