

NON-EVIL LICHES

Nost liches are foul, evil beings who are selfish and are willing to sacrifice others to prolong their presence on the Material Plane. Yet history has recorded the names of some very few liches of good or neutral alignment.

Such beings are so rare that they are thought to be an inherent oxymoron or mere rumors meant to foul the names of some heroes of the past. A deeper investigation would reveal their presence in such places as keepers of ancient libraries, guardians of old monasteries that house the remains of legendary heroes, or even as the head of a noble house of elves. Some elven or half-elven good liches are known as baelnorns, they are gifted undeath by elven gods under rare circumstances should one be needed to preserve ancient lore or if one is the last of their tribe. Yet the good or neutral lich in general can come from a variety of humanoid races, not just elves.

These non-evil liches are known as archliches, they are liches that overpower the status quo of undeath.

Unfortunately some powerful evil liches have started to call themselves "archliches", hence furthering confusion between the two, so the term *baelnorn* has begun to be used to apply to even non-elven good or neutral liches, despite there being differences in powers and creation of archliches and baelnorns.

ARCHLICH

An archlich is a powerful spellcaster of any humanoid race, whom like the evil-aligned lich has chosen to pursue immortality by becoming a powerful undead being. Most archliches are wizards, but there have been instances of clerics or warlocks becoming archliches.

Greater Purpose. A powerful spellcaster may desire to become an archlich to continue pursuing arcane knowledge, but have no interest in the evil activities often associated with lichdom such as amassing undead armies. Some become archliches to become powerful, undying, and ever-vigilant vessels of good and protectors of their domain. Many archliches were once adventurters or renown heroes who decided to slip into obscurity and watch the world continue rather than move onto the afterlife.

Renounced Life. A defining trait between a good lich and an evil lich, is that an evil lich sacrifices others for immortality, while a good lich sacrifices a part of themselves for immortality. Becoming an archlich is not just an act of gaining power, but as an act of devotion and sacrifice for a greater purpose. The candidate for archlichdom, like those aspiring to be evil liches knows they are giving up the sensory pleasures of life such as food, but the archlich also begins much weaker than an evil lich, and loses a lot of magical power in the process of lichdom that only until much later do they regain. The ritual to become an archlich is long and painful, and one has to go through periods of time depriving one's self of certain pleasures. The final transition to undeath is also much more gruesome and painful to the archlich-to-be than becoming a soul-devouring lich, and in some instances is known to involve a dying a heroic death or sacrificing one's life to benefit another being.

Cautious Immortality. An archlich's phylactery does not feed off souls, nor does its creation require the sacrifice of a soul. The arcane secret to this type of phylactery is even more guarded than the type of phylactery that does. The secret is usually passed from an archlich to apprentice, or bestowed to someone an archlich deems worthy. A great amount of mental and magical dedication must be put forth to devote one's self to the process, moreso than the typical method an evil lich does. One must prepare one's mind not to fall into the pitfalls of power and immortality, and to refuse the help of evil beings who might appear to offer help to make the process faster and bolster one's magical power.

Gift of the Phoenix. The ritual and ingredients for an archlich's phylactery differ from that of a soul-devouring lich. Due to this difference, the abilities and characteristics of an archlich slightly differ. Archliches do not have resistance to lightning damage, but instead are resistant to fire. This difference hints one of the secrets to becoming an archlich: a pinch of the ashes of a phoenix. The effect of the phoenix ashes imbues the archlich with some of its fiery power, allowing the archlich to even use its own reanimating force as a weapon.

Unlikely Ally. Most adventures who encounter archliches are surprised and often rightly suspicious of a friendly lich; the knowledge of archliches does not exist in most parts of the world. Most archliches are prepared to face such prejudices and make it a habit to prepare spells to stop righteous adventures from hurting them before they can explain themselves. Once a party of good-aligned adventures can gain the favor of an archlich, they have made a valuable ally for life.

AN ARCHLICH'S LAIR

Archliches can be found secreted away in abandoned places that have stood a great test of time such as old monasteries. Some archliches are less isolated and maintain regular contact with the living in great keeps and mansions. The lair of an archlich depends greatly on what it pursues in unlife, whether an existence of solitude or arcane research or and existence watching over the living.

Archliches understand that they may be targeted by do-gooder adventurers who believe them to be evil liches, or agents of gods who despise the undead, or worse gods or demon lords who despise undead who aren't under their influence. An archlich may have traps and wards to watch for such dangers or loyal cohorts who would be on guard.

An archlich encountered in its lair has a challenge rating of 22 (41,000 XP).

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the archlich can take a lair action to cause one of the following magical effects; the archlich can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The archlich rolls a d8 and regains a spell slot of that level or lower. If it has no spent spell slots of that level or lower, nothing happens.

- The archlich can cast two prepared spells of any level (but still expend spell slots) twice in the same turn, with one effect occurring right after the next but either spell can be dismissed in any order, for example an archlich casts *time stop* to freeze time, and then casts *cloudkill* to release a cloud of poison gas that disperses once *time stop* is dismissed. It cannot cast any spells on its next turn after using this lair action.
- The archlich can take on the fearsome mein of a phoenix. The archlich appears to be wreathed in flames that do not harm it or anything it has equipped, its eyes or eye sockets release fire and fire spills out of its mouth. A pair of enormous phoenix wings with exposed blackened bones and drenched in flame appear behind the archlich's back. Each creature that can see the archlich must make a DC 20 Wisdom save or become frightened. A frightened creature can repeat its saving throw at the end of its turn to stop becoming frightened or until after the archlich is no longer under this effect. Any creature that comes within 10 feet of the archlich takes 20 (4d8) fire damage when first entering the area, and at the beginning of the creature's next turn it continues to take 20 (4d8) fire damage and is caught on fire, when the creature leaves the area it can make a DC 15 Dexterity or Constitution saving throw or continue taking 5 (1d8) fire damage at the start of each of its turns on a failed save. A creature effected this way can also stop being on fire if hit by a spell that deals more than 5 water damage.

This effect lasts until initiative count 20 on the next round or if the archlich chooses to dismiss it with a free action.

BAELNORN

Baelnorn are extremely rare, but well revered members of elven communities who became undead through a consensus by elven leaders and permission from the elven gods.

When Needed Most. Baelnorn are usually created under pressing circumstances when an elf is needed to be immortal to continue a task such as guarding a powerful artifact or becoming a vessel of lore and knowledge. Many ancient baelnorn are also guardians and advisors to elven families who have chosen to remain in the world of the living to guide their descendants.

Holy and Undead. Baelnorn are considered holy beings by the elves despite their undeath and despite how this annoys certain deities such as Kelemvor and his followers. The knowledge of baelnorn is next to nonexistent outside elven communities, among the reasons being that hardly anyone else believes such seemingly absurd tales not just of good-aligned liches but ones that are holy and created by good-aligned gods.

Records of the Ruins. The ruins of places such as Myth Drannor are where baelnorn are likely to be found. There, they continue vigilantly taking care of ancient objects and knowledge. An adventurer who allies with a baelnorn can find them a very valuable "living" record of history and vast knowledge who can provide stunning first-hand accounts of events in very ancient times

Contradictory Existence. Some credit the existence of baelnorn to the chaotic ways of the elves and much of the Seladrine, as it seems nothing else can explain the troublesome contradiction of their existence. Many baelnorn not only can wield power over undead, but some who were highly attuned to nature in life continue doing so despite their "unnatural" existence. Others suspect the common assumptions of undeath being "wrong" might not be as accurate as many believe.

A BAELNORN'S LAIR

Baelnorn that dwell in ancient ruins continue to guard the sacred and valuable treasures of the elves. They can be found among the objects they diligently guard and care for and will do what they can to make sure such treasures do not fall into decay. A baelnorn may construct or repair a ruined area such as a library or vault to a condition where it can protect what is inside and then dwell there for ages, the only sign being a strangely unruined building among ruins.

Baelnorn that dwell among the living can be found cloistered in libraries, magic academies, or temples to give guidance. Their "lair" in these cases will usually consist of a space where they usually haunt or dwell in, but others rarely venutre, or an officially designated space such as an office or quarters.

A baelnorn encountered in its lair has a challenge rating of 22 (41,000 XP).

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the baelnorn can take a lair action to cause one of the following magical effects; the baelnorn can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The baelnorn rolls a d8 and regains a spell slot of that level or lower. If it has no spent spell slots of that level or lower, nothing happens.
- The baelnorn magically summons two werewolves with the following changes: the werewolves' alignment is chaotic good, the werewolves have the fey ancestry trait, and cannot transmit werewolf lycanthropy. The baelnorn may also attempt to summon one shambling mound with a 40 percent chance of success. The summoned creature appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of its summoner, acts as an ally of its summoner, and cannot summon any other creatures. It remains for 10 minutes, until it or its summoner dies, or until its summoner dismisses it as an action. The baelnorn cannot have more than three summoned creatures present at one time and cannot attempt to summon the same type of creature after it is dismissed by any means for 8 hours.
- The baelnorn can telepathically communicate a message lasting no longer than 1 minute to a creature it knows is present within 500 feet of it. The baelnorn cannot send a message to the same creature for 10 minutes.

ARCHLICH

Medium undead, any non-evil alignment

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 151(20d8 + 60)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +10, Int +12, Wis+11

Skills Arcana +12, History +12, Insight+11, Perception+11

Damage Resistances cold, fire, necrotic

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, petrified, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common and up to five languages

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Dead Whisperer. The archlich has advantage on Charisma checks on undead creatures with a CR of 5 or lower. The archlich can also cast *speak with dead* at will without spending a spell slot. The archlich also can cast *spare the dying* as a wizard cantrip and also affect undead creatures with it.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the archlich fails a saving throw, it can choose so succeed instead.

Phoenix Soul (1/Day). If damage reduces the archlich to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken. On a success, the archlich drops to 1 hit point instead. All creatures within 5 feet of the archlich must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (3d8) fire damage.

Rejuvenation. If it has a phylactery, a destroyed archlich gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the phylactery.

Spellcasting. The archlich is a 20th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). The archlich has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): chill touch, mage hand, prestidigitation, *spare the dying**

1st level (4 slots): detect magic, disguise self, shield

2nd level (3 slots): detect thoughts, invisibility, mirror image

3rd level (3 slots): animate dead, counterspell, dispel magic, fireball

4th level (3 slots): dimension door, fire shield

5th level (3 slots): cloudkill, immolation, scrying

6th level (2 slots): contingency, globe of invulnerability, investiture of flame

7th level (2 slots): project image, teleport

8th level (1 slot): demiplane, power word stun

9th level (1 slot): time stop

Turn Resistance. The archlich has advantage on saving throws against being turned.

Water Walk. The archlich can walk on water at will, as if under the effect of the *water walk* spell and dismiss the effect at will if it chooses to.

Actions

Necrotic Blessing (3/Day). The archlich can take some of its own necrotic animating force, and convert it to bolster other creatures. The archlich can choose to take up to half of its current hp in damage but can use the same points of damage to distribute hitpoints evenly across any creatures of its choice within 30 feet of it. Any creature with hitpoints added this way is also becomes resistant to necrotic, fire, and cold damage and immune to becoming poisoned or poison damage for 1 hour. A creature that was poisoned is cured of poison.

Turn Living or Undead. The archlich can bring forth terror to either the undead or living surrounding it. Before the archlich takes this action, it must choose either undead or non-undead creatures. Each creature of the chosen type that the archlich can see within 30 feet must make a DC 20 saving throw or be turned for 1 minute. Turned creatures must spend their turn trying to move away as far as possible from the archlich and cannot willingly move to closer to it. Turned creatures can only use their Dash action or try to flee an effect that prevents it from escaping. If the creature cannot move any farther, it must use their Dodge action. This counts as a fear effect for turning living creatures. Constructs, oozes, elementals, and aberrations are immune to this effect.

Reactions

Countertum. If a creature attempts to turn the archlich, and the archlich succeeds its saving throw, it can, as a reaction turn the caster and up to six other creatures of its choosing. This counts as a fear effect for turning living creatures. Constructs, oozes, elementals, and aberrations are immune to this effect.

Legendary Actions

The archlich can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The baelnorn regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Cantrip. The archlich casts a cantrip.

Misty Step (Costs 2 actions). The archlich casts *misty step* without spending a spell slot.

Phoenix Aura (Costs 3 actions). The archlich can emit a destructive aura from the power of its own animating force. Creatures within a 5 foot radius centered upon the archlich must make a Constitution save (DC 20) or take 15 (3d8) of either necrotic or radiant damage (the archlich must choose either before using this action) in addition to 15 (3d8) fire damage.

BAELNORN

Medium undead, any good alignment

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 151 (20d8 + 60)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +11, Int +10, Wis+12

Skills Arcana +12, History +12, Insight+11, Perception+11

Damage Resistances cold, fire, necrotic

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, petrified, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common and up to five languages

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Eschew Materials. The baelnorn can ignore material requirements for spells even if the materials have a monetary cost or are consumed.

Holy Undeath. The baelnorn does not count as undead for the effects of holy water.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the baelnorn fails a saving throw, it can choose so succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The baelnorn has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Projection (3/Day). The baelnorn can project a wraith-like image of itself up to one mile away. The projection has 100 hit points, an AC of 16, and a fly speed of 30 feet. If a projection is damaged, the baelnorn takes half of that damage, a projection vanishes if reduced to 0 hit points. The baelnorn can see, hear, speak, see into the Ethereal Plane, and cast spells through its projection. The projection is capable of passing through magic barriers such as from spells such as forcecage and magic circle. A projection can lightly interact with its environment, such as pushing a small object, drawing a message in sand, or turning the page of a book. The projection cannot attack (but may still cast spells that deal damage) or carry solid objects.

Rejuvenation. If it has a phylactery or clone, a destroyed baelnorn gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the phylactery if it has one. If it uses a clone instead it takes over the clone as a new body.

Spellcasting. The baelnorn is a 20th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 20, + 12 to hit with spell attacks). The baelnorn has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): chill touch, mage hand, thaumaturgy, spare the dying*

1st level (4 slots): detect magic, guiding bolt, shield of faith

2nd level (3 slots): spike growth, spiritual weapon, zone of truth

3rd level (3 slots): animate dead, dispel magic, water walk, wind wall

4th level (3 slots): banishment, grasping vine

5th level (3 slots): geas, insect plague, legend lore

6th level (2 slots): forbiddance

7th level (2 slots): ethereallness, regenerate

8th level (1 slot): antimagic field

9th level (1 slot): true resurrection

*The baelnorn can effect undead creatures with this spell.

Turn Immunity. The baelnorn is immune to being turned by good or neutral-aligned creatures.

Water Walk. The baelnorn can walk on water at will, as if under the effect of the *water walk* spell and dismiss the effect at will if it chooses to.

Actions

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Turn Living or Undead. The baelnorn can bring forth terror to either the undead or living surrounding it. Before the baelnorn takes this action, it must choose either undead or non-undead creatures. Each creature of the chosen type that the baelnorn can see within 30 feet must make a DC 20 saving throw or be turned for 1 minute. Turned creatures must spend their turn trying to move away as far as possible from the baelnorn and cannot willing move to closer to it. Turned creatures can only use their Dash action or try to flee an effect that prevents it from escaping. If the creature cannot move any farther, it must use their Dodge action. This counts as a fear effect for turning living creatures. Constructs, oozes, elementals, and aberrations are immune to this effect.

Legendary Actions

The baelnorn can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The baelnorn regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Cantrip. The baelnorn casts a cantrip.

Fey Step (Costs 2 actions). The baelnorn casts *misty step* without spending a spell slot.

Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 actions). The baelnorn uses its Paralyzing Touch.

ARCHLICHES AND BAELNORN IN CANON

These rare undead have been a part of Forgotten Realms lore for a long time, but their presence is often ignored so they often come as a surprise for most players. Some who are more well-versed in lore may recall a few scattered appearances of archliches and baelhorn.

Balenorn first appeared in 2ed D&D in *Monstrous Compendium Annual Volume One* and *Cormanthyr: Empire of Elves* and *The Ruins of Myth Drannor*. They also appear in 3rd edition's *Monstrous Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn*. 5th edition's *Sword Coast Adventure's Guide* briefly mentions baelhorn when discussing how the followers of Kelemvor have opposition from more than just the evil-aligned.

In 2nd edition *Monstrous Compendium Volume One*, liches and demi-liches were listed as having any alignment. They were described as being usually unconcerned about good and evil but could be encountered of any alignment. The archlich, as defined as a good-aligned lich appeared in the 2e supplement *Lost Ships* for the Spelljammer setting. Later it also appeared in the same 3e book *Monsters of Faerûn* as the baelhorn did and both were described on the same page. In the 3.5e book *Libris Mortis* there is a small mention of a "good lich" variant of liches. In 4e, the archlich is reintroduced as an epic destiny available to level 21 arcane classes.

As of 5e, it seems the term "archlich" to denote a good (or just non-evil) lich has been dropped, and now used to refer to any extremely powerful lich like it is in other media such as World of Warcraft. The existence of good liches is harder to justify with the new requirement that liches feed souls to their phylacteries, yet there is still hope for them. In one official 5e adventure (not gonna spoil!) a lich does appear who has been referred to as an archlich in previous edition lore, and if you remind him he was once a hero in life he will become friendly to you. In another published adventure, there is a lich who is in very bad shape due to not feeding his phylactery but can be restored with a certain spell without the need to sacrifice any souls.

Forgotten Realms lore does mention the names of a few specific archliches and baelhorn:

Lady Saharel, Netherese archlich, ally of the Harpers and once a lover of Elminster. Her undead body is no longer, but her ghost remains in Spellgaard.

Renwick Caradoon, brother of Samular Caradoon and Amphail Caradoon the Just. He had prepared his potion of archlichdom, but it was administered to him by Samular as he lay dying on the battlefield.

The Srinshee, a noted baelhorn who was later restored to life by Mystra for saving Elminster and was instrumental in preventing the evil lich Larloch from becoming a god.