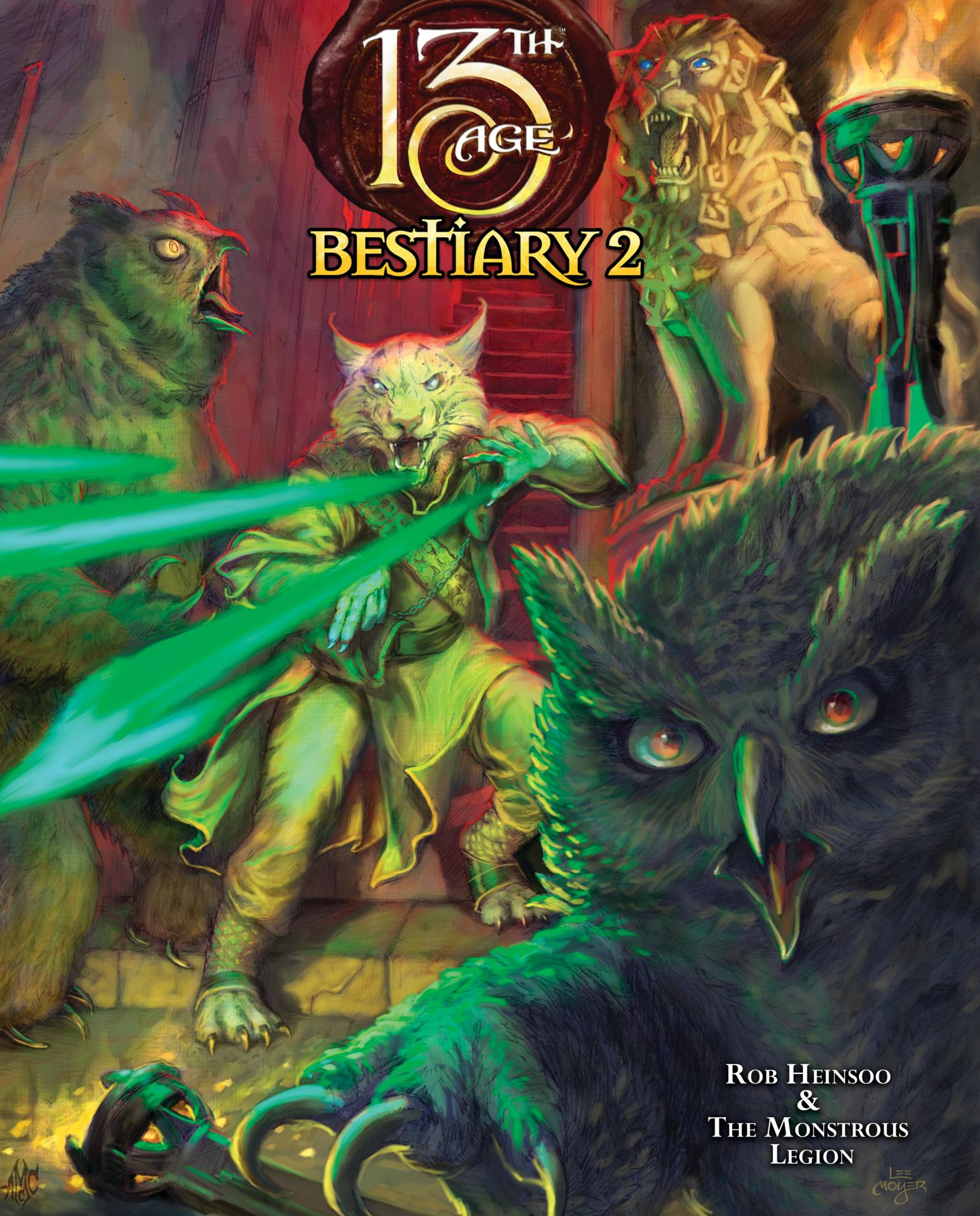


LIONS & TIGERS & OWLBARS

13<sup>TH</sup>  
AGE  
BESTIARY 2

ROB HEINSOO  
&  
THE MONSTROUS  
LEGION

LEE  
MOYER





# LIONS & TIGERS & OWLBEARS:



## BESTIARY 2

BY ROB HEINSOO & THE MONSTROUS LEGION



13TH AGE IS A FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME BY  
ROB HEINSOO, JONATHAN TWEET,  
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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Lions & Tigers & Owlbears: 13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary 2*!

For lions, see the temple lion on page 130.

For tigers, see the elemental beast (page 52) and the rakshasas (page 222).

For owlbears, page 211.

Otherwise, turn to any of the 48 other monster entries in this volume—or stick with us through this brief introduction, and a few new game terms.

## THE MONSTROUS LEGION

*13<sup>th</sup> Age* campaigns are about blending perspectives, with everyone at the table shaping the world in creative and surprising ways. We took that approach to an extreme in our second bestiary, gathering new ideas from sixteen game designers and six artists! There's a bit of everything in the pages that follow: horror (briar elves, fomori, star-masks), humor in strange places (ghosts, frogfolk), high concepts for high fantasy (the bonded, eidolons), formerly-iconic antagonists (the Great Ghoul, the Gold King, Forest that Walks), enemies who could become patrons (Malatyne, the Purple Dragon), creatures of the light who might still cause trouble (hallowed gargoyles, kohwa), and nasty cults who are *definitely* trouble (Golden Demon, Silver Hand, and Hell Marsh cults).

## SOURCES

A few of the monsters in this book originally appeared in shorter form in the digital *13<sup>th</sup> Age Monthly*.

For a few others, we had help from the fans who came to our GenCon 2014, 2015, and 2016 monster design seminars! We would not have come up with these strange and magical creatures without the suggestions and enthusiasm of those folks. You'll find most of their names in the credits above.

## OUR CORE ADVICE

The Stories section on page 7 of the first *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary* said it well; but we're not in the first bestiary, are we? So we'll say it again: when we present story ideas and motives for our monsters, we're hoping to inspire your current campaign rather than setting a precedent you need to follow.

The fire giant entry that starts on page 70 is a good example. Most of the entry concerns the fire giant religion, their faith in the destruction of the current world, and a longed-for rebirth in fire. There's even a named fire giant creator-god and a holy symbol.

That's fun stuff, but we don't expect everyone playing *13<sup>th</sup> Age* to use all these ideas in their campaigns. We won't necessarily even use them in things we publish in the future!

Maybe this fire giant mythology isn't true for all fire giants—as a GM, you might decide that in your version of the Dragon Empire (or whatever setting you use) they're the beliefs of a small and troublesome faction of giants. Or maybe your fire giants have a different mythology, but you'll still make use of the monster write-ups for fire giant holy warriors and priest-generals.

Sometimes we mention a few alternatives to using our ideas as-written. But even when we don't offer alternatives, we know *you've* got them.

## MANY SHADES OF FEY

As an example of alternatives, several contributors wrote about fey, sprites, and naiads. The core *13<sup>th</sup> Age* rulebook's silence on the topic opened that door, and at least three contributors went through it into faery.

The nymph, fey, and naiad entries each contain a different approach to magical beings connected to faery magic, elves, and nature. If this were a game line that relies on a consistent canon, we would make an effort to unify the approaches in order to tell a single story; but with *13<sup>th</sup> Age* we let our different authors follow their separate muses, so that you can choose whichever approach you like for your current campaign—or combine elements of all three.

The **fey** entry has the widest possible story implications. It opens with iconic fey options that show how fey creatures could be reinterpreted as part of stories that hinge on the Crusader, Diabolist, Great Gold Wyrm, High Druid, or even the Orc Lord instead of defaulting to the Elf Queen. The monster stats that follow show how core stat blocks can be reinterpreted with different names to portray many different fey creatures.

The **nymph** entry has more of a single central story involving the Elf Queen, the High Druid, and secrets which require immortal guardians. It's possible you could use the iconic options in fey to twist the stories of the guardian nymphs.

The **naiad** entry offers the most straightforward story. The rivers of the Dragon Empire are dangerous places and these fey are the most commonly monstrous of the entries. On the other hand, they're also usually shapechangers, so it's not always clear who they will serve and how they might enter the PCs' lives.

## HELL-IN-THE-BLANK MONSTERS

Hell wasn't a deliberate theme of this book, but somehow we ended up with a bunch of monsters who invoke the infernal depths with the first syllable of their names! One of the hell-critters is an F20 staple (hellcat). A couple of others came from writers working independently (Hell Marsh cultist, hellstone gargoyle), and another was a surprise creation of the art process (hellwarped beast!).

## NEWCOMER MONSTERS

Often we write monsters as if they've been part of the world forever. This is partly because we like to associate them with the icons, who are firmly rooted in the world and its history. Another explanation for writing monster backstories is that we roleplaying game writers love telling stories! Stories rooted in ancient times are especially powerful.

But we know that the most important stories are the ones you create in your campaign. That may mean that you'll turn some of our backstories into things that haven't happened at all in your campaign . . . *yet*. Here's Jonathan on the topic.

## JONATHAN SAYS SIDEBARS

Jonathan wrote the original version of a couple of the monsters in the book, but he wasn't involved again until close to the end of the design process. When everyone else was done, Jonathan had fun writing sidebars as closing comments on a few of the entries. As you'll see, he sometimes presents an alternative way to use the monster, something he might try as a twist. Other times he expands on an idea he likes in order to show how a good idea can be taken farther. In a couple of cases he presents a dissenting opinion, showing how he would have handled the creature.



*In early rpgs, a classic way to introduce a new monster was to put it in a published adventure, where the players and their characters knew nothing about it. An encounter with an unknown creature is more exciting than one with a monster that everyone knows about. You can get much the same effect by introducing monsters into your campaign as one-offs rather than as well-known inhabitants of the Dragon Empire. The encounter is more dramatic, and you have more authority as a GM in how to use the monster. You can redefine the monster any way you want, reskin it as you like, modify it, etc. Maybe you can have the monster relate specifically to a character's One Unique Thing, to an important icon relationship, or to an ongoing plot line in the campaign.*

## FALLEN ICONS

Three of our new epic-tier monsters were once icons. The Gold King, Forest that Walks, and the Great Ghoul have new game mechanics that model the fact that even fallen icons are much harder to dislodge from reality than normal monsters.

Although ASH LAW didn't write the entries for the fallen icons, the idea of introducing fallen icons into the game literally came to him in a dream, complete with game mechanics!

We ended up improving on the dream's mechanics, but not on the core concept. Thanks, ASH's unconscious!

## ASH SAYS SIDEbars

Acknowledging ASH LAW's significant contributions to this book—around sixteen entries and pieces of several others—we're running *ASH Says* sidebars alongside Jonathan Says and Rob Says sidebars. You'll recognize the ASH emblem by the big letter A and its bright plumage.

## ELITE & WEAKLING MONSTERS

Some monsters, like the fire giant priest-general and the various xorn, are elite monsters. When building battles, elite monsters are worth half again as much as a normal monster of the same level. To figure out how much an elite monster is worth, look at the improved Building Battles table on page 303 in Appendix C, that adds both elite and weakling monsters as new columns.

If you only have the tables from the earlier books at hand, add half again to the monster values. For example, at adventurer tier, an elite monster of your own level is worth 1.5 PCs when the GM is building battles. At champion-tier, an elite monster one level above the PCs is worth 1.5 PCs, and so on.

If you missed *13 True Ways*, we'll mention now that some other monsters are *weaklings*. Weakling monsters also adjust the Building Battles math, counting as half a monster.



## NEW MONSTER TYPE: SPIRIT

Eidolons were the first monster that we designed that has a new monster type: SPIRIT. It seems to us that there are plenty of creatures that fit this category that shouldn't be classified as undead, or that fall outside normal boundaries (like the eidolon). The lines are fuzzy, and we're not aiming to be perfectly consistent with these types.

*13<sup>th</sup> Age in Glorantha*, coming soon to game stores near you, has an extra Nastier Special for any spirit monster. Here's an excerpt that contains the nastier special; for a full discussion, see *13<sup>th</sup> Age in Glorantha*.

**Spirit body:** For each attack against this spirit, a PC uses their best mental ability score (Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma) instead of the ability score they normally use for attacks. Use the same mental ability score to determine damage for that attack.

For example, fighter with a 20 Strength has to use their 12 Wisdom when attacking a spirit. The character's Wisdom modifier is +1, which is 4 less than the Strength modifier of +5, so the bonuses of all attacks that are normally Strength-based are 4 lower than normal, and damage is also based on Wisdom instead of Strength. Conversely, a sorcerer's basic melee attack against a spirit could be better than it is against other creatures, since the spirit's supernatural nature lets the storm voice use their Charisma as the attack stat instead of their melee stat.

For magicians and spellcasters, fighting such spirits is no harder than fighting anyone else, and maybe easier. For characters who are physical powerhouses but mental . . . umm, mediocrities, fighting spirits can be tough!

And speaking of *13<sup>th</sup> Age in Glorantha*, Appendix A on page 291 discusses how many of the monsters in this book could be useful in Glorantha campaigns.



## SHOCKED AND RAGING

When a power or ability lets a character roll twice and take the better d20 result, ignore the shocked condition for that roll. For example: a barbarian's barbarian rage power means that the barbarian gets to ignore the shocked condition for their basic attacks, but still applies the shocked condition to their saves and skill checks.

Whenever the shocked condition conflicts with something else that lets you roll multiple d20s, that other thing takes precedence over being shocked.

Moreover, a barbarian who enters their barbarian rage while shocked may roll a normal save (11+) to immediately end the shocked condition. Barbarians aren't easily shocked.

## NEW CONDITION: SHOCKED

We're adding a new condition to the game. It's not getting used much yet, but you'll see it in the future.

**Shocked:** When a character is *shocked* they are mentally shaken by something that they have seen, heard, or experienced. This is different than being dazed or stunned: a blow to the head might daze or stun you, but won't shock you. Seeing an unholy abomination do something horrific might shock you, though it might not daze or stun you.

While you are shocked, you roll twice for all d20 rolls (attack rolls, saves, skill rolls, etc.) and take the lower result.

In this book, only gibbering mouthers use the shocked condition. Other monsters it could apply to include the fomori (page 80) and the briar elves (page 22). If you like the mechanic, replace the dazed or stunned entries in those monsters with shocked. It'll work.

## ENJOY!

Thanks for playing! Thanks for reading!

And check the Pelgrane Press website for occasional monster-boosters for creatures in this volume.

Rob Heinsoo  
June 2017

# BATTLE SHADE

*Scars are the reminders that people carry with them after bloody combat. Battle shades are the scars that the land itself carries after carnage and death.*

Battle shades are undead spirits cursed to fight endless echoes of the battles that caused their deaths. They surface wearing temporary bodies made of earth, stone, rusted weapons, and traces of ancient blood to attack the living. Falling again, they lie dormant for days or years before reawakening to fight again.

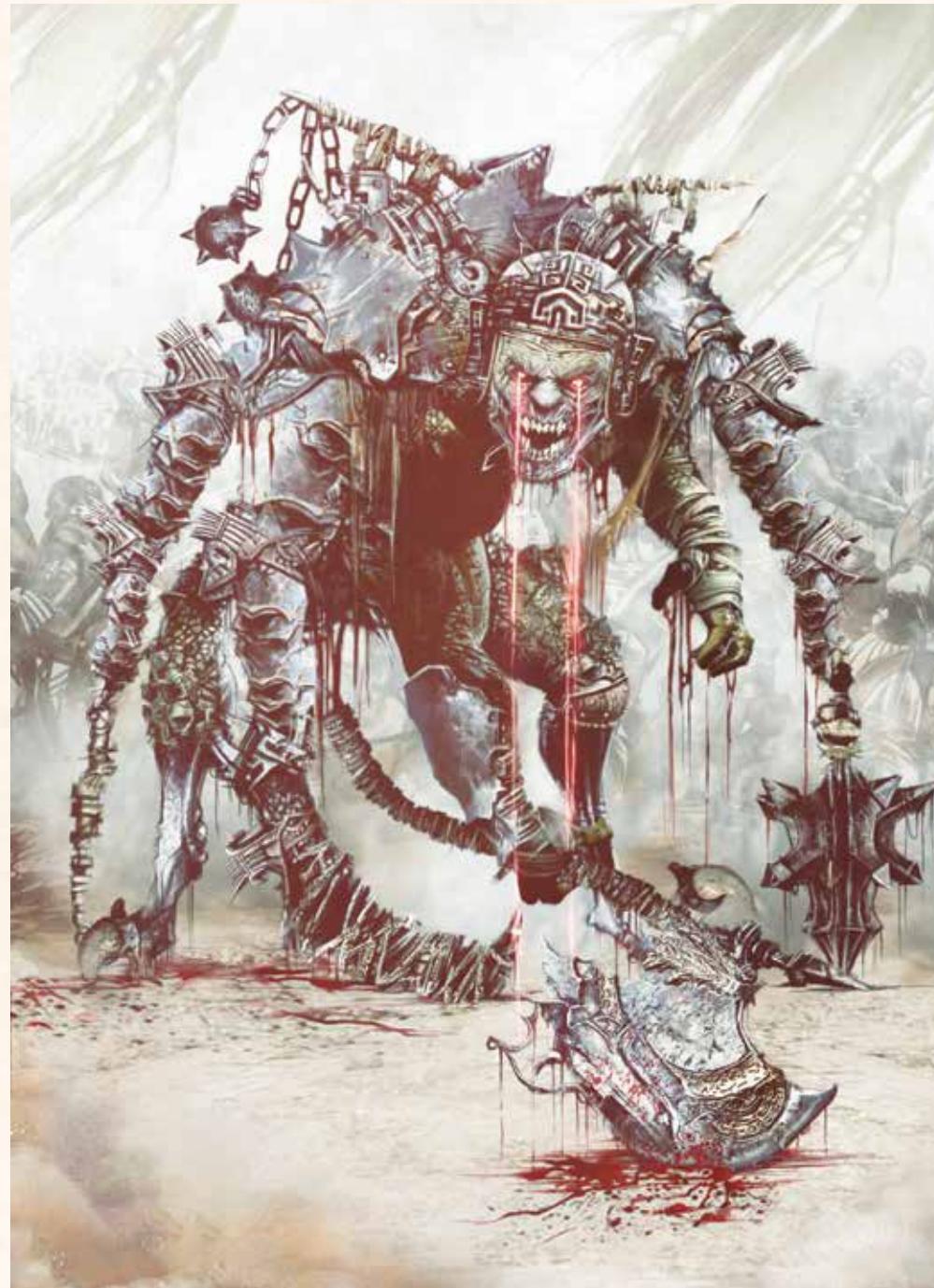
Battle shades generally appear as largely featureless humanoids formed of the nearby clay, dirt, stone, and debris. Bits and pieces of armor cover their body, and they carry weapons long rusted and broken. Weapons, arrows, and battlefield detritus pierces the body in locations that suggest where the spirit suffered their mortal wounds. In contrast to their nondescript bodies, the faces are disturbingly detailed, caught up in expressions of terror, pain, or hate.

Battle shades are capable of speech, though rarely of true communication. They scream war cries, call out orders, and yell in pain and fear.

**Battlefields abound:** Hundreds of areas in the Dragon Empire are known to be ancient battlegrounds that might suddenly spawn battle shades. But not all battles are remembered. A pitched battle or small skirmish fought by the player characters might awaken the ghosts of an ancient battle forgotten by everyone but its shades, assuming you feel like springing this monster upon your player characters rather than foreshadowing its presence!

**Crossing over:** Battle shades sometimes fight among each other, but they usually rise to slay all living interlopers. Appeals to shared allegiances aren't likely to work with the shades. Their origins, races, beliefs, personalities, and icon relationships have been mixed together like bones in a mass grave. They're mostly mindless threats that need to be slain or avoided. (For another take on leftover spirits of the dead, see the ghosts entry on page 105.)

Alternatively, if you or your PCs want to roleplay significant dialogue or interactions with the battle shades during the fight, allow a PC, once per battle, to attempt a difficult (DC 20) skill check as a quick action. If the check succeeds, and the PC's



words sound like a reasonable way to try and contact a soul from the original battle, choose a random nearby battle shade as the shade that's affected. Success means that some fragment of the battle shade may be willing to speak or call out to the PC. A natural odd success means that the communication will be extremely angry, and that battle shades gets a +4 attack bonus against the PC until the end of the battle! A natural 19 or 20 on the skill check means that the battle shade is partially knocked out of its fugue, becoming dazed (hard save 16+ ends), and is more likely to talk meaningfully. Yes, it's intentional that the shade could be both angry and dazed!

Using an icon relationship advantage could make such interactions more fruitful. But see the mechanics below for permanently ending a battle of shades.

**No easy way out:** Defeating battle shades in combat saves your own life and allows you to move on. But battle shades are souls cursed by an original magically devastating defeat, so defeat alone is not enough to end to them.

If it's important to the player characters to truly end a specific battle of shades, try something like this as a mechanical challenge:

First, the PCs must defeat the battle shades in combat without having had any PC drop to 0 hit points.

Second, one PC who fought well must use an icon relationship advantage, explaining how the power of the icon is going to help the PCs end this particular curse.

Third, that PC, or another magically talented PC, must use a ritual to end the curse. The ritual succeeds if the PC succeeds with a DC 20 skill check. The DC is +1 point higher for each point that was on the escalation die at the end of the battle; finishing the battle shades decisively while the escalation die is low improves your chances of ending the curse.



Treasure that hurts you: *Perhaps a magic ax or shield was lost in an ancient battle, and someone with the right incantation or bloodline can provoke a battle shade to appear and attack while wielding it. The wielder might be more than your typical battle shade, and it won't arrive alone. What's better than having your next magic item hand-delivered?*

## BROKEN SHADE

*It's bad enough to spend eternity reliving your death battle. It's worse to stagger endlessly through the history of your death as a twisted and muddy bit player.*

2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +1

Vulnerability: holy

**Rusty broken weapon** +7 vs. AC —5 damage

*Natural 2-5 miss:* If there is at least one non-mook ally of the broken shade still in the fight, add another broken shade to the mob.

*Amorphous Material:* Broken shades do not take miss damage from weapons.

Nastier Special

*Collective Strength:* When a member of the mob dies, other broken shades gain +1 to damage until the end of the battle (max +4)

AC 17  
PD 16  
MD 13

HP 10 (mook)

*Mook:* Kill one broken shade for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

## BLOODY SHADE

*Once spilled, never resting.*

Double-strength 2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +4

Vulnerability: holy

**Blood spikes** +7 vs. AC —10 damage

*Natural even miss:* 4 damage

**R: Terrible blood** +6 vs. PD—8 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit:* 4 ongoing negative energy damage

*Blood of the fallen:* When a bloody shade dies, one random nearby non-mook ally regains 2d6 hp.

AC 18	PD 16	MD 12	HP 18
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*Mook:* Kill one bloody shade for every 18 damage you deal to the mob.

## BLADE SHADE

*Mud, rusted weapons, and broken bones coil into a body like the bodies of those who fell centuries ago... and last week, because this battle recruits its own reinforcements.*

3<sup>rd</sup> level troop [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +5

**Rusty blades** +8 vs. AC —10 damage

*Natural 1-6:* The battle shade can use its *earthen assault* ability this turn.

*Earthen assault:* As a quick action, the battle shade may disappear from the battlefield, melding into the ground. At the start of its next turn it reappears nearby as a move action. Attacks made the turn it reappears gain a +2 attack bonus and +2 to damage.

*Limited use:* Only when triggered by *rusty blades*.

Nastier Special

**C: Scream from beyond** +7 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—7 negative energy damage

*Special trigger:* Use as a free action when a creature in the battle scores a critical hit.

AC 20	PD 16	MD 13	HP 40
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## ARCHER SHADE

*Parents teach their children not to dig up old arrowheads. Leave them where they lie. This is why.*

3<sup>rd</sup> level archer [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +7

**Scrap dagger +7 vs. AC—7 damage**

*Natural 1-6:* The archer shade can use its *earthen assault* ability this turn.

**R: Rain of ghostly arrows +8 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—8 negative energy damage**

*Natural 1-6 with its first attack roll:* The archer shade can use its *earthen assault* ability this turn.

**Earthen assault:** As a quick action, the archer shade may disappear from the battlefield, melding into the ground. At the start of its next turn it reappears nearby as a move action. Attacks made the turn it reappears gain a +2 attack bonus and +2 to damage.

**Limited use:** Only when triggered by *scrap dagger* or *rain of ghostly arrows*.

**AC 19**

**PD 16**

**MD 14**

**HP 40**

## SLAUGHTER PIT SHADE

*This misshapen specter of iron and mud slams itself to pieces as it carves you up. Unfortunately for you, its pieces surface moments later as battle shades!*

Large 4<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +5

**Cracking blades +9 vs. AC—28 damage**

*Natural even hit:* Deal 25 damage to the slaughter pit shade; then add a 3<sup>rd</sup> level battle shade OR a 3<sup>rd</sup> level archer shade to the battle that will act 1d6 initiative counts after the slaughter pit shade acted. Treat this battle or archer shade as if it had used its *earthen assault* ability, so that it starts off the table and reappears where it likes nearby the slaughter pit shade.

*Miss:* 7 damage

**All are one:** When a nearby non-mook undead ally drops to 0 hit points, the slaughter pit shade immediately removes one ongoing condition.

**AC 20**

**PD 17**

**MD 13**

**HP 160**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Battle shades pair well with other forms of undead, especially skeletons, ghosts, and wraiths. Creatures that have been long dead may fit better than something more recent and fleshy like zombies or ghouls, though there's nothing wrong with pairing those as well.

Beyond the obvious team-up with undead creatures, battle shades fit well with constructs like golems. It's plausible that constructs don't trigger the hostile response that living creatures do. Predatory plants and fungaloids also work well alongside battle shades, to the point that there might be a frequently encountered mushroom/battle environment.

## BATTLEFIELD EFFECTS

Battle shades already feel like pieces of a battlefield come to life. What if we pursue that metaphor? What if the earth itself was part of the curse, functioning as an extension of the battle shades' semi-corporeal bodies?

Treat the battlefield effects that follow as a big nastier special, to be used when player characters are smug about their ability to handle undead or just because you feel like making things more interesting for everyone. Don't worry, they'll thank you after the campaign.

## AGAINST THE PCS

Until all battle shades have been reduced to 0 hit points, select one of the following effects at the start of each round. You could keep the same effect for the entire battle but what fun would that be? Choose whatever seems like the most fun, round-to-round.

- Half-formed hands of mud and dirt reach out of the ground, grasping at the legs and feet. Make the following attack against 1d3 non-flying creatures.
  - **+7 vs. PD** – The target is stuck until the start of their next turn.
- A literal fog of war (smoke, fog, blowing dust, etc.) covers the area. Ranged attacks from non-battle shade creatures have a -4 penalty.
- Broken and shattered weapons erupt out of the ground. Choose up to three characters in a group. Those players must roll a normal (11+) saving throw or take 2d10 damage.
- Wild necromantic energy bursts like a geyser from the earth with a scream of pain and fear from dozens of spectral throats. Target 1d3 characters with the following attack.
  - **+6 vs. MD** – 4 damage and the target is dazed until the end of their next turn.
- Blood begets blood. As the characters are beaten and injured, the accumulated pain and blood revitalizes the battlefield and the battle shades. The first time a character becomes staggered or any time one drops to 0 hit points, add a broken shade mook to the fight. Add it to an existing mob if possible.

## COUNTERACTIONS

Player characters expecting to deal with battle shades can take precautions.

- Ritual casting certain spells like the cleric's *turn undead* or an appropriate Terrain Caster spell from the druid could return the battle area to normal for the duration of the battle.
  - Players may think to try this during combat instead of beforehand. If they do so, they should make a normal (11+) saving throw at the beginning of each round. If they succeed, the battlefield effect is suppressed. If they fail, it activates like normal that turn.
- The obvious icon relationship advantages that could help are the Priestess and Lich King, but players may be able to justify others. A six, along with a bit of a description should nullify the battlefield effects. A five would nullify the effect but create some other complication; for example, summoning the attention of the Lich King's servants!

## THINGS FOUND WITHIN A BATTLE SHADE

Tarnished and unfamiliar coins. A shattered dagger whose pommel has been engraved with the family sigil of a prominent noble line. Ornate but rusted armor plates. An unidentifiable chunk of machinery mysteriously devoid of rust or wear. Broken chunks of metal recognizable as being from swords, axes, and armor. A skeletal finger with silver ring still on it. A broken plaque from a war memorial. A bent and battered pewter flask, still filled with some sort of strong alcohol.

## BATTLE SHADES AND THE ICONS

**Dwarf King:** No dwarf has ever risen up as a battle shade. No battle shade has ever taken the form of a dwarf. If there's a solid explanation for this, your campaign can figure it out.

**Lich King:** The Lich King sees himself as the ruler of all undead. Battle shades disprove the claim. The magic which reanimates them may be tied to the Lich King but it's not magic he controls. So far the Lich King hasn't benefited from attempts to take control of battle shades. Could enemies of the Lich King use things learned from fighting battle shades to reduce the Lich King's control on other undead?

**Prince of Shadows:** If a single battlefield can be looted many times, with new pieces of the past surfacing each time, can you even call it grave robbing? Maybe it counts as adventure archaeology. Maybe the Prince of Shadows has a much better idea when battle shades will surface, and why, than anyone else.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Fallen Priests**—A group of priests, probably from the Cathedral, have traveled to a remote part of the Dragon Empire to put down a persistent field of battle shades and other undead menaces. Characters associated with the Priestess are contacted after the group goes missing. At least one of the priests has information they really should have written down or passed to someone before this 'adventure,' and their spirit doesn't seem to have separated from its body in any way that makes it magically accessible . . . without going into the battle for a problematic parley!

**Imperial Shades**—Rumors circle of battlefield in the Giantwalk Mountains where there is a battle shade that looks exactly like the last Emperor to fall in battle. The battle shades of this site show unusual awareness of themselves and their surroundings, refraining from attacking those who show the sigils of the Dragon Empire. Investigate!

**War Games**—Battle shades have begun appearing within a fine gladiatorial arena near Axis that's devoted to the Emperor. Nothing seems to keep the undead away for long, and gladiatorial combat vs. battle shades turns out to be interesting once and terrifying afterwards. The characters are approached by someone who claims to have an idea that will permanently remove the battle shades. The method might work, but it also might mystically bind the site to another icon. Also: it only works if the arena gets set up as a full gladiatorial spectacle again, so the PCs won't be able to use all their normal equipment. Hopefully that won't hurt the show, since there need to be a lot of spectators, and some of them may matter to the PCs down the road.

# THE BONDED

*"Bonded with my sword? No my friend, I am my sword and my sword is me—you see two where there has always been one."*

—Harla Oathkeeper, living weapon

True magic items are tricky things. They pull at your mind, invade your soul, and twist your perceptions.

Most magic items contain a spark of intelligence, imprinted on them by their creator or by the circumstances of their creation; over time the spark of intelligence grows until the magic item becomes almost self-aware. A few magic items reach full sentience, speaking directly into the minds of their owners, whispering and cajoling and seeking a crack in the mortal's psyche where they can insert themselves.

Most would-be heroes who are fortunate enough to come into possession of a true magic item and attune to it try their hardest to keep their minds free of interference. Wizards and warriors who over-attune, forging bonds with more true items than they can handle, become the unwitting puppets of the items that they have opened their soul to.

And then there is a rare third path. The bonded are people who have reached accords with powerful magic items, bonding and becoming as one in will and mind.

## Two Become One

The bonded are so deeply in tune with their magic item (and vice-versa) that they become physically as one. A bonded sword and fighter might have bladed claws and rune-inscribed metal instead of skin. A bonded wizard and tome might look like an animated storm of paper, or the creature pictured above! A bonded ranger and bow might have wooden flesh and bow-strings for hair. Each bonded creature is unique.

Not only does the magic item and its wielder become physically merged as one, but they become mentally unified as well—sharing two sets of memories but a single mind.

## BONDED PCs

As bonded are exceptional creatures, it is impossible to create a single set of bonded racial rules. If you want to play a bonded your best bet is to use the rules for the race that is closest to your bonded's powers, and handle the rest via your backgrounds and one unique thing.



## THE SECRET SOCIETY OF THE BONDED

Bonding is such a rare occurrence that most magic item owners have never heard of it. Since bonded can live until they're destroyed, there are more of them about than you'd expect.

Many bonded enter the service of an icon and become a trusted servant. Others roam free following the quirk of the item that they once were and the drives of the mortal that they no longer are.

Though the ‘free’ bonded each follow their own inscrutable and unique agendas, when they do cross paths they have a habit of aiding each other. This isn’t a formal relationship, more an opportunistic team-up. The drives and goals of any two bonded are unlikely to be in serious opposition, so these unique creatures tend to trade information and resources when they meet instead of getting in fights with each other.

## SECRETS OF ARCHMAGES PAST

Though the current Archmage does not continue the practice, past Archmages created powerful magic items and gifted them to children under their care. The past Archmages considered themselves to be one of the parents of the creature that was about to enter the world, the magic item was the other parent.

The result was a carefully planned bonding between mortal and magic, creating unified beings of strange powers. Each being was unique, but their loyalty to their parent remained constant. Some have perished over the ages, obviously, but those still in existence continue to serve the successors to the Archmage who created them.

Unless the Archmage in your campaign tends to turn down useful allies, play that the current Archmage makes good use of the bonded across the Dragon Empire. There might be an elite cadre of bonded sentinels who guard the Emperor. Another group might be garrisoned on one of the smaller islands of the Spray to watch over the Necropolis.

It seems likely that the current Archmage is always interested in contacting new bonded, if only to ensure that they are not a threat to his laid plans.

It’s likely that the Dwarf King and Elf Queen both have bonded in their courts, swaddled in cloaks waiting their monarch’s command. Showing bonded agents in the open would attract attention from the Archmage, and crowned heads know when to keep some of their power hidden.

## THE POSSESSED

Bonding is not a process that happens instantaneously. For some it takes hours but others can only bond over the course of years. Most do not realize what is happening until they are already irrevocably merged with their magic item.

Those who are in the process of merging with their magic item are either so controlled by their item’s quirk that they don’t notice changes to the mind, or they were already so mentally similar to their item that their own personality quirks and drives match those of the item.

Naturally, those in the process of bonding are loath to be far from their item, and either wear it against their skin or are constantly touching and stroking it.

In the early phases of full bonding the item may have already physically merged with part of the mortal, but the mortal has not yet fully transformed and are still able to hide the change.

Such ‘stealth’ bonded are much in demand among the icons as spies and assassins. The Three and the Diabolist have both been known to make use of mostly-bonded agents, though the Crusader prefers to wait until the bonding process is complete and use them as shock troops.

## COOL LOOT?

If you kill a bonded does it separate out into a corpse and a magic item? Probably not. Then again, maybe yes.

...Or maybe the bonded shrivels down to a particularly willful magic item that you really don’t want to loot—especially if you were the one that ‘killed’ it.

Whatever happens looting an item that was formerly part of a bonded should be a serious thing, with interesting story consequences.

## BONDED HERO

*This bonded used to be a mortal and some form of weapon, but now is something much stranger.*

**Triple-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level wrecker [CONSTRUCT]**

Initiative: +8

**Sword-tip claws +7 vs. AC—15 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* Make the bonded’s special attack as a quick action.

**Special Attack (choose one per bonded hero)**

**C: Energy shroud +9 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—15 ongoing fire or cold damage**

**Hex hammer +9 vs. AC—20 force damage, and the target pops free and is stunned until the start of their next turn**

**Touch of the divine +9 vs. AC (vs. 1 or 2 engaged enemies)—15 holy damage**

**Mystic shield +9 vs. AC—20 thunder damage and the bonded’s AC and PD increase by +1 (to a maximum of +3) until the end of the battle.**

**R: Storm gaze +9 vs. AC—20 lightning damage**

*Natural even hit:* Make a second *storm gaze* attack against a new target.

**AC 19**

**PD 16**

**MD 15**

**HP 135**

## BONDED VEIL

*What happens when you bond to a magic cloak or robe? This, apparently.*

**Triple-strength 4<sup>th</sup> level troop [CONSTRUCT]**

Initiative: +10

**Fluttering shroud +12 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Natural even hit:* The bonded pops free and flies until the end of its turn as a free action. It must land at the end of its turn, or take falling damage.

*Natural 20:* The target becomes weakened and vulnerable (save ends), and the bonded can fly until the end of its next turn.

*Miss:* 15 damage.

*Special, once per battle:* The bonded makes this attack as a free action on somebody else's turn.

**Cut to ribbons +10 vs. AC (4 attacks)**—20 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The bonded must pop free and as a free action move into engagement with a different enemy it has not already attacked this turn, then continues its *cut to ribbons* attack if it still has any of its four attacks left. If there are no other enemies that can be attacked, the *cut to ribbons* attack ends.

*Special, once per battle:* The bonded makes this attack as a free action on somebody else's turn.

### Nastier Special

*Veiled:* Until the bonded is hit, it has a +4 bonus to all defenses.

**AC 19**

**PD 16**

**HP 140**

**MD 16**

## BONDED HEXKNIGHT

*Its skin is the flowing steel of magic armor; its intentions are the lethal variety of an angry knight.*

**Triple-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level troop [CONSTRUCT]**

Initiative: +12

**Fists of steel +13 vs. AC (1d3 attacks)**—60 damage

*Natural even miss:* The bonded's crit range expands by a cumulative 1 (to a maximum of 16+) until the end of the battle.

*Natural odd miss:* Make a whirling steel attack as a move action, unless you have already used the bonded's move action this turn.

**C: Whirling steel +13 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—30 damage and the bonded pulls the target into engagement with it

### Nastier Special

*Puissance:* This bonded's attacks ignore any sort of damage reduction or avoidance. You can't make it re-roll the attack, teleport away to avoid damage, take half damage due to an ability, etc. If it rolls well enough to hit you then you take the full damage, end of story.

**AC 25**

**PD 21**

**MD 19**

**HP 280**

## BONDED ARCANE ARCHER

*It steps lightly, holding its body taunt and ready to explode into action. Its eyes glow with lethal energy.*

**Triple-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level archer [CONSTRUCT]**

Initiative: +15

**Fast strike +13 vs. AC**—40 damage and the bonded makes an *arrows of fate* attack as a quick action

**R: Arrows of fate +13 vs. AC**—40 force damage, and the arcane archer can make another *arrows of fate* attack as a quick action. Each enemy can only be targeted once by an arrows of fate attack on each of the bonded's turns.

### Nastier Specials

*Doesn't provoke:* This bonded can make ranged attacks in melee and not provoke attacks from those that it is engaged with. When leaving engagement the bonded does not provoke attacks.

*Overwatch:* As a move action if the bonded isn't engaged it can declare a creature or item or point on the battlefield to be the target of its overwatch. If before its next turn an enemy moves close to the focus of the overwatch, the bonded can make the following attack on the triggering enemy:

**C: Overwatch shot +12 vs. AC (the triggering enemy)**—60 force damage and the target loses the rest of its move action

**AC 21**

**PD 19**

**MD 19**

**HP 310**

## BONDED PROPHET

*A walking talking holy symbol.*

*Triple-strength 8<sup>th</sup> level leader [CONSTRUCT]*

Initiative: +14

**Smite the unworthy, bless the worthy** +18 vs. AC (1d4 engaged enemies or allies the bonded is touching)—50 force damage

*Hit against ally:* Instead of taking 50 damage, the target heals 30 damage. Each ally can only benefit from this healing once per battle.

**R: Eerie radiance** +18 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies or dead allies)—30 damage

*Hit against dead ally:* If the attack beat the PD of a dead ally, instead of taking damage the ally returns to life with 20 hp (or their maximum hp if it is lower than 20). Each ally can only be targeted by eerie radiance once per battle. This effect only works on allies who have died during the battle.

**C: Malediction** +18 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)—70 damage, and the next ally of the bonded prophet to hit the target heals 4d10 hp

### Nastier Specials

*Returned saints:* The bonded's eerie radiance also works against long-dead creatures, even returning corpses that are no more than dust and bones to full life. GMs beware, this is a very nasty special if the bonded prophet happens to be standing in a graveyard at the time.

*Divine retribution:* The bonded prophet's mighty smite is even mightier if the PC has violated some taboo, broken a sacred law, or transgressed into a holy place. The attack deals an additional 20 force damage, hit or miss, even on a 1.

**AC** 23

**PD** 18

**HP** 420

**MD** 21

## RETURNED "SAINTS"

So what counts as an ally when the *returned saints* nastier special of *eerie radiance* is in play? The answer is that any creature who in life would choose to fight alongside the bonded prophet against the adventurers, can be returned to life.

There are some interesting story possibilities for *returned saints*. Supposing the adventurers need to resurrect one of their own? Can they turn to a bonded prophet for aid? Well, that would probably mean that the resurrected character would have to be willing upon resurrection to join the bonded prophet on whatever quest or mission the bonded was undertaking. If the bonded prophet raises somebody and they refuse to follow the bonded prophet, then the resurrection starts to fail.

So yes, some bonded prophets could, if properly convinced, raise a dead PC—but then the raised PC would either have to leave the party for a level or two to complete a task for the bonded prophet, or the whole party would need to join the bonded prophet for a quest.

## BONDED WARLOCK

*This magic-user bonded to their spellbook, becoming a living repository of arcane power.*

*Triple-strength 8<sup>th</sup> level caster [CONSTRUCT]*

Initiative: +14

**Spell-breath** +18 vs. AC (1d4 enemies engaged with the warlock)—50 force damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target is teleported to the far side of the battlefield, and hampered (save ends).

*Natural 16+ hit:* Make a violent dispelling attack as a quick action against the target, if it hits it does no damage but does dispel spells and spell-like effects.

**C: Violent dispelling** +18 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)—70 damage, and any spell-like effects on the target or caused by the target end

**R: Hexplosion** +18 vs. the lowest PD in the group of targets (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—90 damage, split evenly (rounded down) between all targets hit

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target is dazed (easy save, 6+, ends).

*Natural 16+ hit:* Make a violent dispelling attack as a quick action against the target, if it hits it does no damage but does dispel spells and spell-like effects.

### Nastier Specials

*Spell absorption:* Once per battle when a spell not granted by a talent hits the bonded, it has no effect. Later in the battle as a quick action the bonded can cast the spell that hit it, using the original caster's attack and damage bonuses.

*Warlock's warp:* When one of the bonded's attacks misses all targets, the bonded teleports as a free action.

*Violent undoing:* The bonded's violent dispelling attack "dispels" all manner of useful conditions, such as a rogue having momentum or a fighter having a higher crit range. In particular, this higher-strength version of the attack shuts down that really irritating effect that's always being used by that one character.

**AC** 23

**PD** 18

**HP** 430

**MD** 21

## VIOLENT DISPELLING— WHAT EXACTLY DOES IT DO?

What ‘spells and spell-like effects’ does this end? Extrapolate from the examples below!

Things like the effects from bardic battle cries, a cleric’s *bless* spell or something like *hammer of faith*, spells like *blur* or *teleport shield*, a necromancer’s *ghost form*, all these definitely get shut off by *violent dispelling*. Spells that you get through a talent but that come from another class get shut off too—a spell granted to a bard by *jack of spells* or a wizard spell known by a sorcerer get switched off by *violent dispelling*.

If you are flying thanks to a spell, you fall out of the sky (and take falling damage). Invisible thanks to a spell? Nope—no longer. Similarly, ongoing damage from any spell that you cast or magic item that you used ends.

If a spell or ability is granted by a talent (and isn’t a spell that comes from another class) it is harder to keep shut off—the target gets to save (11+) at the start of each of their turns to reactivate them. A druid’s *beast form* or *wild heal* might shut off, but they get to roll at the start of each of their turns to switch them back on. A cleric’s invocation, similarly, gets a roll to reactivate at the start of each of the cleric’s turns.

Summoned monsters are not unsummoned by *violent dispelling*, unless the bonded rolled a natural 20 and was targeting the summoned monster. A barbarian’s *ancestral warband* isn’t a summoned monster, and *violent dispelling* makes that warband go away.

If the occultist is hit by *violent dispelling* they lose focus, and a sorcerer who has gathered power loses that gathered power. However, *violent dispelling* doesn’t touch a rogue’s momentum or a commander’s command points as these are primarily non-magical things.

Bardic songs are unaffected by *violent dispelling*, neither is a chaos mage’s high weirdness shut down by it... in fact a chaos mage gets to roll and add a new high weirdness to the battle if they are hit by violent dispelling (it’s sort of like throwing fuel onto a fire), meaning that there might be two high weirdness’s at the same time! Racial abilities don’t get shut off by *violent dispelling*.

Magic items get an easy save (6+) to avoid deactivation, and make an easy save at the start of each of their owner’s turns to reactivate their powers.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Friend or Foe?**—An elven adherent of the god of the forgefire has bonded with their magic hammer and calls itself Forgetruth. Forgetruth is travelling to Horizon with a growing group of zealous and sometimes violent followers. Forgetruth’s disciples claim that the bonded wants to take up the role of a judge, with plans for punishing the ‘guilty’ of Horizon. An icon that the party is allied with sends them to meet with Forgetruth and discover if the bonded will be an ally or enemy of the Archmage. Meanwhile the adventurers’ magic items have begun acting oddly—is this something that Forgetruth is unknowingly responsible for?

**Heroes and Heroines**—A group of youths from a bucolic town stumble across powerful magic items in ruins that were exposed by a recent landslide. In short order, they become powerful bonded beings. The newly minted bonded are a mix of youthful foolishness and ancient obsessions. Will the adventurers mentor the new bonded creatures or menace them? What enemies have the new bonded already made? Can the adventurers recruit these powerful beings into the service of the Empire? Should they?

**Sense and Sagacity**—A sage has built a tower on a powerful magical node, and has heavily enchanted the structure. The sage intends to bond with their tower, becoming a living monolith of arcane power. However, the sage needs experimental subjects, bonded to examine and dissect. The sage has prepared a list of thirteen bonded, and wants the party to capture them and bring them back to the tower. The sage assures them that the bonded on the list are all evildoers of the highest vileness, and surely the adventurers can trust their new friend the sage, right?

**Time and Tide**—A bonded that was originally a magic compass asks the adventurers for their help in repelling undead that are trying to come ashore. Sometime later the adventurers meet a bonded who was originally a magic lantern, who wants help building a lighthouse. The two bonded are unaware of each other’s existences, but the items were obviously part of a single set. What is it about the party that attracted these bonded to them? Does a party member unknowingly carry a third item to the set, and if so how will they choose to deal with that fact?

**Fighting Your Own Sword**—A serious villain of the villain’s minions capture a PC’s magic item, maybe their favorite one. Soon the item returns as a bonded that is out to kill its former owner in order to achieve true independence. If the party can take down this bonded, they can probably retrieve the PC’s item. It might be better than before. It won’t be the same.

# BONE IMP

*Little demons are just as nasty as big demons. Nastier if you're measuring by the pound.*

Bone imps are on the lowest rung of hell, just above the worm-like things found in some caverns, and the barely-living remnants of tortured souls. So long as other demons are around, bone imps end up as slaves.

Among demons, bone imps' survival trick is an ability to ignore some magic. The worst tortures of hell are usually magical in some way or another, so when bone imps cry out under the enchanted flaming whips and poisonous gazes of their hellish masters, they suffer far less than they pretend.

When bone imps do manage to escape the Abyss and the hellholes, they commonly end up enslaved by mortal magicians and devils. When you're dealing with bone imps, the right question to ask is "Who's your master?"

Physically bone imps look like tiny horned skeletons with even tinier bat-like wings.

## MESSING WITH MAGIC

Some bone imps resist magic, creating odd situations in which a non-magic sword may deal more damage than a magic sword!

In battles where bone imps resist magic it forces parties rich in magical resources to improvise. The monk may set aside their magic bracers. The barbarian may set aside their magic axe and fight with a handaxe. The wizard and sorcerer might opt to go into their packs and grab that unused crossbow that has been sitting on their equipment list since character creation, or just keep blasting and aim to roll high.



If the magically-inclined character doesn't usually carry non-magical weapons and their 'spare weapons' really are at the bottom of a backpack you could impose some sort of penalty for upending the pack and rummaging about mid-battle—maybe it takes a move action to find a hand crossbow buried under grimoires and spare robes (then the usual quick action to load it, and a quick action to equip/draw it).

# BONE IMP STORIES

Bone imps are habitual liars who make a habit of lying about most everything, including obvious things they wouldn't lie about if they were smart.

Here are some things that bone imps have said about themselves. Probably none of these 'facts' are true, but it would be just like a bone imp to hide the truth in with lies.

## A (SUPER)NATURAL ΡΗΕΠΟΜΕΠΟΝ

At the border between the underworld and the world of the dead there is a sunless sea that drains endlessly into windswept beach of bones. The interaction of that sea and that shore on the bizarre borderland leads to the ongoing spontaneous generation of bone imps.

Beyond the endless beach, in a land lit only by rivers of souls, the bone imps make their home. Between the mountainous bones of forgotten gods the bone imps plot and scheme. Unfortunately for the imps, safaris by larger demons lead to the tiny bone imps becoming enslaved.

*"Too fanciful a tale for you? Harken to the next one then, it's easy to understand."*

## BONE IMPS ARE BABY DEMONS

Yes, that's right, demons are born. And when they are born they are bad to the bone. It is only when they grow up that demons get skin and muscle (harvested from mortals).

*"Oh dear, you don't believe that lie? One thousand apologies oh great one. Well how about the next lie?"*

## HAPPY LITTLE ACCIDENTS

Bone imps are what happens when a wizard tries to summon something infernal but doesn't aim quite right. Rather than summoning anything, the wizard unknowingly creates a bone imp.

That is why bone imps lie so readily—they just don't know the answers to anything their 'summoner' asks them. Since they're eager to please they improvise. Usually wizards see through their lies and send them 'back' to hell, but a bone imp that accidentally guesses the correct answers comes to be regarded by its 'summoner' as a font of wisdom. Of course sooner or later the bone imp's luck dries up and its guesses turn out to be wrong—something that wizards regard as deliberate disobedience and trickery on the part of their previously 'reliable' demonic tutor.

*"Too easy an explanation? Not fooled? I can see you are a summoner of discernment."*

## JUST ALWAYS KIND OF THERE

Bone imps have always just kind of been there. There is no great mystery to them, they are simply another type of demon.

Bone imps are easy to summon, and are weak and small enough to escape the various hells into the mortal world. So bone imps end up wandering deep in the underworld, summoned by wizards, or coming up to the mortal world as part of the slave entourage of a greater entity.

*"Ha. At last we get to the truth. Or do we? No no, wait, I have a better answer."*

## CREATED AS SLAVES

The truth is that bone imps are made to serve, crafted out of the remains of tortured mortals condemned to the inferno—a sort of diabolic necromancy, but using the powers of hell rather than the power of undeath to animate the body.

Bone imps that die are recycled for parts, but after a couple of cycles, some of the bone imps get smarter and rebellious. That's why so many bone imps end up in the mortal world, they are cast-offs and rejects.

*"Ha ha, put down that wand. No need to do anything that you might regret later. I was just testing to see if you were ready for the real truth..."*

## A PACT BETWEEN ICONS

Bone imps are a relatively recent thing, they only came about in the 12<sup>th</sup> age because of a pact between the Diabolist and the Lich King. Bone imps are vanquished demons raised from the dead by the Lich King, and act as messengers and intermediaries between the two icons.

That's why there are so many bone imps kicking around the mortal world—they were made here. The Lich King and the Diabolist particularly like it when one of the Archmage's wizards tries to use magic against a bone imp only to discover that it is one of the ravenous bone imp mage-eaters.

*"You like that one? Sounded good didn't it? Be careful with that wand . . ."*

## BONE IMP MAGE-EATER

*A nasty little surprise for wizards, and a swift cure for magical hubris.*

*Weakling 2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [DEMON]*

Initiative: +10

**Frenzied teeth** +6 vs. AC—4 damage

*Freakish speed:* On rounds when the escalation die is odd the imp may move as a quick action once on its turn, flapping its wings madly as it dashes about.

*Resist magic 13+:* This creature has resist damage 13+ to all damage from magic sources (even magic weapons). When a magic attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Weakling:* When building battles using this monster, it counts as half a normal monster. And that's half a normal mook! .

Nastier Special

*Magic eater:* When this imp resists magic while the escalation die is odd, it takes no damage instead of half damage, and the crit range for all bone imp mage-eaters' attacks expand by 1 (to a maximum of 6+) until the end of the battle.

**AC 18**

**PD 12**

**MD 16**

**HP 4 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one bone imp mage-eater mook for every 4 damage dealt to the mob.

## BONE IMP TORMENTOR

*Bone imp tormentors have larger wings than their infernal siblings, allowing them to make wing-assisted leaps in battle.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level spoiler [DEMON]*

Initiative: +8

**Bone-dissolving bite** +7 vs. AC—3 damage, and 5 ongoing acid damage

**R: Bone dust** +7 vs. PD—7 negative damage, and the target chooses between being dazed (save ends) OR taking a -1 penalty to all defenses until the end of the battle (cumulative to -4).

*Tormentor's mark:* Once per battle when the tormentor imp hits with a natural even attack roll it does an extra 2d6 ongoing acid damage (easy save 6+ ends).

*Freakish leap:* On rounds when the escalation die is odd the imp may fly as a quick action once on its turn, landing at the end of its movement.

Nastier Special

*Resist magic 13+:* This creature has resist damage 13+ to all damage from magic sources (even magic weapons). When a magic attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**AC 20**  
**PD 13**  
**MD 16**

**HP 38**

## BONE IMP ARCHER

*Were you trying to summon a bone devil? A devil? Lucky for you that you just got this nasty little demon.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level archer [DEMON]*

Initiative: +10

**Bone claws** +8 vs. AC—10 damage

**R: Ossifying arrow** +8 vs. AC—6 damage and the target is stuck (save ends). Each time the target fails to save they take damage equal to twice the escalation die value.

*Freakish speed:* On rounds when the escalation die is odd, the imp may move as a quick action once on its turn, flapping its wings madly as it dashes about.

Nastier Special

*Resist magic 13+:* This creature has resist damage 13+ to all damage from magic sources (even magic weapons). When a magic attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**AC 19**  
**PD 13**  
**MD 17**

**HP 45**

## BONE IMP SKULLBITER

*No one is as good at exploiting weakness as the perpetually trod upon.*

*4<sup>th</sup> level troop [DEMON]*

Initiative: +11

**Marrow-seeking tongue** +9 vs. AC—14 damage, or 20 damage vs. a staggered target

**C: Bone splinters** +8 vs. AC (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—10 damage

*Freakish speed:* On rounds when the escalation die is odd the imp may move as a quick action once on its turn, flapping its wings madly as it dashes about.

Nastier Special

*Resist magic 13+:* This creature has resist damage 13+ to all damage from magic sources (even magic weapons). When a magic attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**AC 18**  
**PD 15**  
**MD 18**

**HP 60**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Bone imps are deceptively irritating monsters that are perhaps best used against jaded groups who are accustomed to the magic working in their favor. As low-level demons, they're pressganged by all the usual suspects: more powerful demons, evil spellcasters, gnolls, and real estate developers.

### БОНЕ ИМР ВС. МАГИК МИССИЛ

The bone imp's resistance reduces magic damage by half unless the attacker rolls a natural 13+. *Magic missile* attacks normally don't roll a d20 (unless you've got the champion feat!). It's nice for *magic missile* that it automatically hits, but when it doesn't make an attack roll, it's not rolling a natural 13+, so most magic missile damage is halved.

## THINGS FOUND IN A БОНЕ ИМР'S POSSESSION

Bone imps don't tend to go in for possessions, they barely bother with clothing. Bone imps who do decide to hang onto an object do so because they believe it to be important. Anything that a bone imp is carrying is therefore likely to be either *expensive* or in some way *significant*. Here are two lists, the first for expensive things (worth 1d20x50 gp), the second for objects of significance.

Uncut ruby. Golden hand making a strange gesture (part of a larger statue). Pilfered famous oil painting ('*Brown cow looking mournful, 12<sup>th</sup> age*'). Small black velvet bag of diamonds. Deed to a manor house.

Map of a maze. One third of a complicated key. Letter to an agent of one of the icons. Book containing forbidden prophecies. Black steel coin, with an unsettling inscription that shifts when you try to read it.

## БОНЕ ИМР NAMES

Bone imps lie about their own names, often giving the names of famous historical figures instead. Those unaware of the tendency for bone imps to lie about everything sometimes believe that the bone imp in question is the soul of the dead historical figure, incarnated in hell as a lowly imp. Of course, the lie is more convincing when the bone imp chooses a person that the listener wants to think of as badly reincarnated!

Bone imp familiars tend to get given nick-names by their masters. Such epithets are rarely complimentary: *slug-breath, worm-features, bone-face, filthling, lowest, liar-tongue, etc....* sooner or later an insult will please the bone imp familiar and it will adopt it as its official name.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**A Wizard's Request**—A bone imp familiar known as Worthless has been sent by a gravely ill wizard to fetch aid. The wizard is in a tower besieged by monsters, and needs medical help. Worthless hates the wizard that it is bound to, and though it is forced by magic to obey the wizard it always finds ways to foul things up—for example, but not telling the adventurers about the monsters and lying about where the traps in the tower are.

**Mouths to Feed**—Agents of an icon friendly to the party has sent them a message urgently requesting their aid in a far-off village that is troubled by a dragon. Of course, the message has been sent in such a way as to obscure its true sender. The village was abandoned years ago when the crops failed, and is now the lair of bone imp mage-eaters eager to have the party for dinner.

**Reformed Characters**—A group of bone imps (called Fish-Slime, Wicked, Insignificant-Wretch, Maggot, and Stink-Hole) have joined a small travelling puppet show, masquerading as the puppets. The human illusionist 'puppeteer' (*Jaon d'Uppe*) seems to believe that the bone imps are reformed individuals just trying to make their way in the world. Of course, this is all a cover for the bone imps to travel about and steal things. Bone imps don't usually care about material possessions, so what are the tiny demons up to?

**Screwfly's Doors**—A bone imp called Screwfly approaches the party with tales of a pair of granite doors in a swamp, doors that it says leads to a dungeon with a great treasure. The imp says that it was bound to the area the PCs are in by a cleric a generation ago and cannot leave until the treasure has been found. Naturally, the bone imp is lying—though asking around will reveal that the locals do know of a strange pair of stone doors in a nearby swamp. Why does the imp want the adventurers to go through the granite doors?

# BRIAR ELF

*“...but they died, too.”*

—the ending of each stanza in an 8<sup>th</sup> Age poem about the briar elves.

There are no briar elves. They are a myth, a legend, a story told to scare little children into being good.

Right?

*Right?*

Like all good legends, there is a dark truth to the stories told of a lost elven race, a lost race that some say still lurk in hidden tracts of the old forests.

## SHADOW FROM THE PAST

Not everyone know about briar elves at all. When people do know something, each race, each locale, has a different version of the legend. The story told by gnomes in Glitterhaegen varies in its grisly details from the tale told by humans in Axis, and neither fully agrees with the legend of the briar elves that orcs pass on over the centuries.

If you wish, you could say that the legends agree on some points. We've got one example of a legend that some groups might share. We're not saying you should definitely use this version of the story, it may not fit your campaign, since it has some implications for the picture of the triune elven race and the Elf Queen's three-part crown.

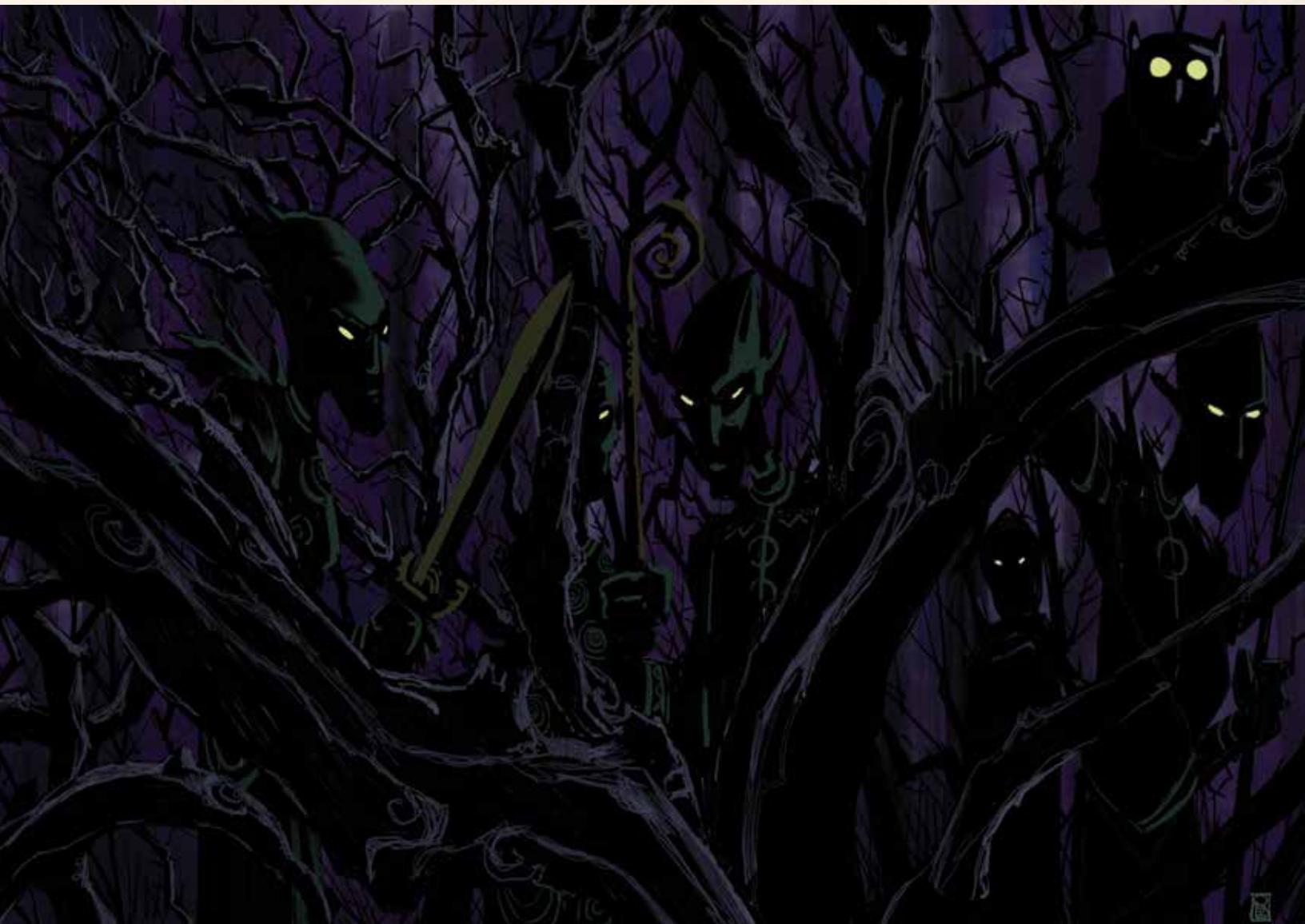
## ONE LEGEND OF THE BRIAR ELVES

Long before even the rule of the Wizard King, there were four types of elves—the three races of elves that are still in existence today, and a fourth race of elves.

The fourth race of elves was so wicked and evil that the other three races agreed to cooperate and make war upon the fourth race.

So wicked was the fourth race that the other races of elves exterminated them completely, expunged them from their songs and histories, and pulled down their monuments and buried their cities. Once the war ended, no trace of the fourth kind of elves was left.

But so terrible and evil were the fourth kind of elves that the other three races made a pact that no matter what happened



they would never make all-out war upon each other, because if even a tiny remnant of the fourth race had survived, all other elves would need to work as one to save the world.

Do the elves themselves truly remember all this? Is it magically hidden, so that no one even knows this legend, but it's always almost surfacing? If the elves did destroy all records and evidence of their exterminated cousins, then it might be that the elves themselves do not remember what the truth is.

## WHY ARE THEY CALLED 'BRIAR ELVES'?

Here's where the legend gets hazy. Some say that the briar elves caused plant life to become noxious, growing thorns to prick and poison intruders into their realm.

Others say that the briar elves were themselves part plant, that when their limbs were severed thorny vines would emerge from the wound to knit into new flesh.

Some say that the briar elves wore rusted spiked armor, or had thorns growing out of their flesh.

Whatever the truth, the briar elves are an ancient bogeyman throughout the Dragon Empire and beyond.

## USING BRIAR ELVES

Briar elves are designed to be a little different from other monsters. They aren't something that just pops up, like orc raiders or a band of kobolds. They aren't something that you stumble upon randomly in a dungeon or the wilderness. They are intended to be a horror show threat—something to keep the adventurers huddled around a dying campfire, staring out into the darkness long after their watch has ended.

Long before the adventurers ever see a briar elf they should see creepy evidence of their existence. Long before they find their first piece of evidence, the adventurers should hear tales of the briar elves.

Briar elves work best when the adventurers don't fully understand what is happening. The fear of the unknown is the secret behind the design of the briar elves. Try to make briar elves like slasher-movie antagonists—appearing seemingly out of nowhere, performing vile deeds, and vanishing once they have terrified the protagonists. A briar elf should never speak directly to the adventurers, and their motivations should be opaque. If a briar elf does speak, it should be to whisper something freaky and threatening—something creepy like '*you have pretty eyes*' whispered from the seemingly empty darkness directly behind a PC.

The fear that a briar elf might be nearby is in some ways more powerful than having briar elves actually show up. Strange tracks, thorny arrows, slain villagers displayed impaled on thorn trees, deadly vines that wrap around the adventurer's feet—use these events, and more, to build suspense. Use legends and tales told by NPCs to increase the fear that the adventurers feel. The briar elves actually showing up should be the climax to a series of events.

For that matter the PCs don't always have to encounter briar elves. Take a tip from horror movies—keep the tension high by giving obvious signs that briar elves are about (displays of creatively tortured-to-death NPCs, thorny plants, abandoned settlements), but leave the players unsure if this is a session where the ancient menace will reveal itself again or if they will instead face more conventional challenges.

When the briar elves do appear don't spring them all at once on the party. As the adventurers travel through briar elf territory they should glimpse distant movement, hear the birds suddenly go quiet, feel unfriendly eyes upon them. Long before the briar elves show up the adventurers should know that the briar elves are out there, watching and waiting.

**Show don't tell:** Rather than saying "*five briar elves step out from the dark between the ancient trees*" you could describe them instead "*in the sudden silence you hear the crunch of dry pine needles, and spin to see a half dozen emaciated figures standing at the edge of the path, their claw-like hands stained red with blood, thorns emerging from tears in their flesh, their eyes like those of sharks—soulless and without mercy*". You need never say the phrase 'briar elves', leaving the players to whisper to each other in fear about those freaky things that live in the woods and about how the party isn't going back there ever again.

Don't underestimate the fear of the unknown.

Let the players make the connection between the sylvan apparitions and the local legends that nervous NPCs keep telling them about.

## BUILDING BATTLES (UNFAIRLY)

Plant monsters may accompany briar elves. Not so much fungaloids, but certainly if a creature looks something like a walking tree, the briar elves can probably subvert its will to their will.

Otherwise, briar elves usually won't be found alongside other monsters. Even orcs fear briar elves. Briar elves regard non-briar elves as... well who knows what they think about others? What we know is that they are indiscriminate about killing other races and leaving their grisly remains displayed for others to find.

Don't try to balance briar elf fights—briar elves only strike when they have absolute superiority. Make every briar elf fight a double-strength fight. Of course, you could trick the players into thinking that they've lucked out and it is a fair fight for once, only to spring even more briar elves out of the deep arboreal shadows once the fight looks won and reveal a triple-strength fight.

That's not to say that the adventurers should never be able to beat briar elves—with a bit of planning (and maybe arranging a forest fire or two) anything is possible. But fighting briar elves means engaging a dangerous enemy with unknown abilities and unknown (or unknowable) motivations on their home ground. Reward careful planning with a better chance at victory.

## VARIANT BRIAR ELVES

We aren't telling you exactly what briar elves are. Perhaps they're a humanoid race, or plants infused with the souls of a long-vanquished people, or vengeful undead spirits, and maybe a mix of all three. The default option is 'humanoid' but each monster has alternate options. You pick what briar elves are, and it could even be that what outsiders see as one race is really several kinds of creatures banded together to enact their vengeance upon the world!

We've also got a few new environmental effects that briar elves can trigger, and plant allies to throw into the fight. We'll list those first, before the briar elves.

### FATES WORSE THAN DEATH

A double- or triple-strength fight might be unfair (it is, these are briar elves, deal with it), but it doesn't have to mean that the adventurers die if they lose the fight and heroically decide against fleeing.

Briar elves delight in torturing and maiming their victims. If an adventurer drops you could simply end the battle then and there, with the briar elves dragging the fallen adventurer off into the darkness between the trees. The fallen adventurer isn't dead, but will die soon unless their friends can get the courage together to track the briar elves even deeper into the forest.

What's going to happen to the captured adventurer? Well, if the other PCs do nothing, they *will* die. If the other PCs track them down they will likely find their friend impaled high up on a tree, with their eyes plucked out or worse. Yes the adventurer is rescued, but at a great cost. The damage from briar elf torture probably doesn't ever heal right either, not even with magical healing, at least not without some sort of quest to find an antidote to the poisons that they pour deep into their victims' wounds.

Fleeing from briar elves is a reasonable response to them showing up, but should always involve a campaign loss. Maybe it means that you must go out of your way to avoid further entanglements with the evil forest-dwellers, and so you arrive at your destination too late, with tragic consequences. Maybe it means that the briar elves follow you, and you inadvertently lead them to fresh victims.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Before the battle, roll a d4 to determine which environmental effect will show up during the fight. Then roll a d3 for the minimum escalation die value that triggers the effect at the start of the round and stays in effect the rest of the battle.

In the unlikely event that PCs have managed to find or lure briar elves outside the briar elf's forested places of power, these effects probably wouldn't apply. Or maybe they would, horrifically!

### HUMANOID BRIAR ELVES

- Snares**—Enemies who take more than two actions on their turn while on the ground must save (11+) or be whipped into mid-air by a snare trap and hung upside-down (stuck & -2 attack penalty), it is a standard action to free oneself or an ally. (GM: Choose how many snares you want set before the fight, probably the number of PCs plus or minus 1.)
- Pit traps**—The briar elves have created spike-lined pits disguised with forest-floor litter. If you roll a natural 1-5 on d20 roll you must save (11+) or become stuck (move action to end) and take your level x d6 damage.
- Blowdarts**—More briar elves are lurking on the edge of the fight, just out of sight. If a PC rolls lower than the escalation die value on any natural d20 roll they take poison damage equal to their level.
- Gruesome display**—The whirl of battle has revealed some fresh corpses desecrated by the briar elves and impaled in the trees. Story consequences are best here: it can be someone the PCs cared about.

### PLANT BRIAR ELVES

- Grasping grasses**—Disengage checks by non-plant creatures and non-briar elves take a -5 penalty.
- Cutting leaves**—Adventurers must save (11+) when they move or take damage equal to twice their level.
- Crushing vines**—Any adventurer who doesn't move on their turn takes their level in damage.
- Thorny plants**—Each time an adventurer becomes staggered they also take damage equal to their level times the escalation die value.

### UNDEAD BRIAR ELVES

- Whispers of the past**—PCs have a -2 penalty to MD and PD, as overlapping ghostly whispers cause pain and anxiety.
- Ghostly terrain**—On rounds when the escalation die is odd the PCs are stuck, unable to move due to ghost trees that suddenly block their paths.
- Spectral hands**—PCs take a -1 penalty to attack rolls, as ghostly thorn-pierced hands grab at them.
- Fearful destiny**—PCs who could normally resist fear effects cannot do so for the duration of this battle. PCs who cannot normally resist fear take a -2 penalty to their saves whenever they are affected by fear.

## No Looting the Bodies

OK, so the PCs win a fight against all odds. Why not have the briar elves' bodies decompose rapidly into autumn leaves, or turn into shadows that are cast by the surrounding trees, or simply stand back up while the PCs are not looking and walk into the forest from whence they came? Players expect certain things of vanquished enemies, and mildly messing with those expectations is a nice way to emphasize the otherworldly scariness of the briar elves.

## Plant Allies

If the briar elves aren't part of your current campaign's plans, these plants can be used to tangle up other forests.

## Barbed Vines

*These plants sprout wherever briar elves have been. Not that you're going to know that, not at first.*

7<sup>th</sup> level mook [PLANT]

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: fire

**Rip and tear +12 vs. AC (1d3+1 enemies)**—10 damage

*Rooted in place:* Barbed vines can't move and can't be moved, at least not until they're dead and chopped down.

*Expanding reach:* The barbed vines can make its rip and tear attack against engaged enemies when the escalation die is 0, nearby enemies when the escalation die is 1-3, and when the escalation die is 4+ the vines can reach anywhere in the battle.

Nastier Special

*Mobile roots:* They can move, but they still can't be moved.

**AC 23**

**PD 16**

**HP 26 (mook)**

**MD 20**

*Mook:* Kill one barbed vine for every 26 damage you deal to the mob.

## Simplify

Instead of rolling 1d3+1 to determine the number of targets each barbed vine mook can attack with *rip and tear* each round, roll once per mob and use that number of targets for each of the mob's barbed vines.

## Briar Tree

*Some thorny trees seem to be warnings to stay away. These want you to get close and plunge in. Forever.*

9<sup>th</sup> level leader [PLANT]

Initiative: +9

Vulnerability: fire

**Ripping briars +14 vs. AC (each engaged enemy)**—35 damage

**C: Waves of anguish +14 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—40 psychic damage

*Natural 16+ hit or miss, and a briar elf is engaged with the target:* The briar elf heals 20 hp.

*Rooted in place:* Barbed vines can't move and can't be moved, at least not until they're dead and chopped down.

*Sheltering thorns:* When a briar elf next to a briar tree takes damage, half that damage is dealt to the tree instead.

Nastier Special

*Mobile roots:* They can move, but they still can't be moved.

**AC 24**

**PD 23**

**MD 20**

**HP 180**

## THORNIFICATION

Trees in territory contaminated by the presence of briar elves tend to get a bit thorny. Unless the adventurers are already suspicious of thorny trees, then until these trees attack they seem just like any other tree in the forest.

# BRIAR ELVES THEMSELVES

The fiends of the piece appear.

## BRIAR ELF SLAYER

*It moves with a languid grace, like a flower's petals unfolding—then it explodes into lethal action.*

6<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +14

**Thorn claws +11 vs. AC**—14 damage

*Natural even hit:* 7 ongoing poison damage

*Crit:* The ongoing poison damage can't be saved against while the briar elf that inflicted it still lives and is in the battle.

*Counterstrike:* When the briar elf is targeted by an opportunity attack, it makes a thorn claws attack against the creature that is targeting it first.

### Choose one

*Humanoid:* The briar elf can make the following ranged attack:

**R: Bramble bow +11 vs. AC (1 nearby or far away enemy)**—14 damage

*Plant:* This monster's type is [PLANT]. This monster has *resist weapons 16+* (weapon attacks that roll less than a natural 16 deal only half damage).

*Undead:* This monster's type is [UNDEAD]. Provided it is next to a tree, this monster can teleport to a different nearby tree as a move action.

### Nastier Specials

*Thorny carapace:* When an attacker misses this monster with a melee attack, the attacker takes 12 damage.

*Fear aura:* Enemies engaged with this briar elf who have fewer than 30 hp are dazed (-4 attack) and can't use the escalation die.

*Dark escalator:* On turns when the escalation die is even the briar elf slayer uses the escalation die, and any enemy engaged with it does not.

**AC 22**

**PD 20**

**MD 18**

**HP 100**



## BRIAR ELF STALKER

*It flits silently from shadow to shadow, always staying within the tree line.*

8<sup>th</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +16

**Whip of thorns +13 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Miss:* 10 damage

*Natural 16+ hit:* 5 ongoing damage

**R: Barbed arrows +14 vs. AC**—25 damage

*Miss:* 10 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The briar elf can *green walk* as a move action instead of a standard action this turn.

*Green walk:* Provided the briar elf stalker is next to a tree, as a standard action they can step into the tree and disappear. At the start of their next turn they reappear next to another nearby tree, and hit or miss their attack does double damage.

### Choose one

*Humanoid (default):* Twice per battle, make a barbed arrows attack as a quick action.

*Plant:* This monster's type is [PLANT]. Once per battle when this monster reappears after its green walk it does triple damage instead of double damage.

*Undead:* This monster's type is [UNDEAD]. Once per battle when the escalation die is 4+, this monster green walks it immediately gets another turn.

### Nastier Specials

*Strength of the forest:* When this monster *green walks* it heals 1d4 x 10 hit points.

*Fear aura:* Enemies engaged with this briar elf who have fewer than 48 hp are dazed (-4 attack) and can't use the escalation die.

**AC 24**

PD 21

MD 20

**HP 140**

## BRIAR ELF SORCERER

*This forest is an extension of its malice.*

10<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +18

**Blood to sap +15 vs. PD**—60 poison damage

*Natural 16+ hit:* The target becomes vulnerable to *flesh to bark* until the end of the battle.

**C: Flesh to bark +16 vs. PD**—50 poison damage and the target is stuck (save ends)

*Crit:* The target must make 4 last gasp saves, as it struggles to avoid turning into a tree.

**R: Storm of thorns +16 vs. PD (1d3 enemies in a group)**—40 damage

*Natural 16+ hit:* 20 ongoing poison damage.

*Miss:* 10 damage

*Forest-shape:* The briar elf sorcerer can cause trees to reshape themselves or to spontaneously grow from the ground. Once per battle the briar elf sorcerer can use this ability as a free action: to stop another character mid-movement, to pop a creature free, or to block and cancel a ranged attack.

### Choose one

*Humanoid:* Once per battle, for one turn; storm of thorns becomes a quick action to use.

*Plant:* This monster's type is [PLANT]. Every time the briar elf sorcerer misses with its flesh to bark attack, its crit range with that attack expands by 1.

*Undead:* This monster's type is [UNDEAD]. This monster can phase through solid objects and creatures, but cannot end its turn inside another object or creature. The monster automatically disengages when it moves, and cannot be intercepted (unless the creature intercepting it is also phasing).

### Nastier Specials

*Fear aura:* Enemies engaged with this briar elf who have fewer than 72 hp are dazed (-4 attack) and can't use the escalation die.

*Dark escalator:* On turns when the escalation die is even, the briar elf sorcerer uses the escalation die, and each staggered adventurer does not.

**AC 26**

PD 24

MD 22

**HP 220**

## BRIAR ELF WARRIOR

*Poison. Is. Life.*

9<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +18

**Thorn claws +14 vs. AC**—40 damage

*Natural even hit:* 15 ongoing poison damage

*Crit:* The ongoing poison damage can't be saved against while the briar elf that inflicted it still lives and is in the battle.

*The poison builds:* For each nearby enemy that is taking ongoing damage, the briar elf warrior's attacks deal an additional 10 poison damage, hit or miss.

### Choose one

*Humanoid (default):* The briar elf can make the following ranged attack:

**R: Bramble bow +14 vs. AC (1 nearby or far away enemy)**—40 damage

*Plant:* This monster's type is [PLANT]. This monster has resist weapons 16+ (weapon attacks that roll less than a natural 16 deal only half damage).

*Undead:* This monster's type is [UNDEAD]. Provided it is next to a tree, this monster can teleport to a different nearby tree as a move action.

### Nastier Specials

*Thorny carapace:* When an attacker misses this monster with a melee attack, the attacker takes 24 damage.

*Fear aura:* Enemies engaged with this briar elf who have fewer than 60 hp are dazed (-4 attack) and can't use the escalation die.

*Dark escalator:* On turns when the escalation die is even the briar elf warrior uses the escalation die, and any enemy engaged with it does not.

*Poison is life:* The briar elf warrior has +4 to all its defenses against attacks by creatures suffering ongoing poison damage.

**AC 25**

PD 23

MD 21

**HP 200**

## BRIAR ELF ASSASSIN

*It fights like other briar elf archers, but with more of an edge.*

11<sup>th</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +16

**Whip of thorns +17 vs. AC**—40 damage

*Miss:* 20 damage

*Natural 16+ hit:* 10 ongoing damage

**R: Barbed arrows +17 vs. AC**—50 damage

*Miss:* 20 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The briar elf assassin can *green walk* as a move action instead of a standard action this turn.

*Green walk:* Provided the briar elf assassin is next to a tree, as a standard action they can step into the tree and disappear. At the start of their next turn they reappear next to another nearby tree, and hit or miss their attack does double damage.

### Choose one

*Humanoid:* Twice per battle make a barbed arrows attack as a quick action.

*Plant:* This monster's type is [PLANT]. Once per battle when this monster reappears after its *green walk* it does triple damage instead of double damage.

*Undead:* This monster's type is [UNDEAD]. Once per battle when the escalation die is 4+ and this monster *green walks* it immediately gets another turn.

### Nastier Specials

*Strength of the forest:* When this monster *green walks* it heals 1d4 x 20 hit points.

*Fear aura:* Enemies engaged with this briar elf who have fewer than 96 hp are dazed (-4 attack) and can't use the escalation die.

**AC 27**

PD 24

MD 23

**HP 280**

# BRIAR ELF SOVEREIGN

*A leader. Surely not the ultimate sovereign, but if it consoles your spirit to say you were tortured and slain by the briar king or queen, go ahead.*

*Double-strength 12<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +20

**Thorny scepter +17 vs. AC—100 damage**

*Natural 16+ hit: 80 ongoing poison damage*

*Aftereffect:* When the target saves against the poison damage it becomes dazed (-4 attack) until the end of its next turn.

*Miss: 50 damage*

**C: Verdant evolution +18 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)—80**

poison damage and 50 ongoing poison damage

*Aftereffect:* When the target saves against the poison damage it becomes confused until the end of its next turn.

*Natural 18+ hit: Until the end of the battle the target's saves against poison damage all become hard saves (16+).*

*The sovereign's orders:* When the escalation die is 1, as a free action the sovereign can cause an ally to reroll a missed attack and take the better roll. When the escalation die value is 2 the sovereign can do this twice during the round. When the escalation die is 3+ the sovereign gets to order three attacks rerolled.

#### Choose one

*Humanoid:* The sovereign has a magic item. You don't need to work out what the item is right now, just give it +2 to all its defenses, saves, and attacks to represent a generic magical 'thing'. Once the battle is over the adventurers can loot the body for a magic item, and you can reveal/decide what the item actually is.

*Plant:* This monster's type is [PLANT]. Whenever the briar elf sovereign is standing on soil and doesn't move on its turn it heals 14 hit points.

*Undead:* This monster's type is [UNDEAD]. Other undead refuse to fight this monster (sorry necromancers). Cleric attack spells that target this monster only deal half damage on a hit.

#### Nastier Specials

*Royal command:* The briar elf sovereign is no longer capped at three rerolls per round from *the sovereign's orders*—it gets four when the escalation die is 4, five rerolls when the escalation die is 5, and can order six allies a round to reroll their attacks once the escalation die reaches 6.

*Fear aura:* Enemies engaged with this briar elf who have fewer than 120 hp are dazed (-4 attack) and can't use the escalation die.

*Dark escalator:* On turns when the escalation die is even the briar elves uses the escalation die, and their enemies do not.

**AC 28**

**PD 24**

**MD 26**

**HP 750**

# BRIAR ELVES OUTSIDE OF FORESTS

We keep mentioning trees and forests in relation to briar elves, because that is where they show up. Maybe they can't leave their forests, maybe they just don't care to.

If the briar elves are an ongoing and growing threat in your campaign (and if you are using them, they probably should be) then maybe forests will start spontaneously growing in cities too. Imagine the players faces when they are resting in a walled town, thinking themselves safe from the briar elves, only to look out the window to see trees sprouting up everywhere!

How would the High Druid feel about the briar elves returning and trees sprouting in cities? Not good: the briar elves are everybody's enemy, and a world consumed by the briars is a world that's headed to a lightless end.

# BRIAR ELF RELICS

Despite the best efforts of the elves (or whoever it was that has kept the briar elves suppressed), there are artifacts that survive from whoever and whatever the briar elves were in their earlier days. Statues of screaming figures being squeezed to death by thorny vines, ancient implements of torture, spike-covered black fortresses, blasphemous spells... all these and more might be found by adventurers brave enough to go looking for evidence of briar elves. Who would be crazy enough to look? Adventurers looking for magic items, of course.

# MAKING YOUR OWN BRIAR ELF ITEM

Were we to list out every possible briar elf item we'd take up half this book and it would be called '*The Book of Briar Elves (and Some Other Monsters Too)*'. Instead you can take any existing non-cursed magic item and turn it into a briar elf magic item by making it cursed.

First the look of the item should be dark, twisted, spiky—unwelcoming and covered in thorns and briars. When the adventurers find the item they should be in no doubt that this is a relic from a very wrong time—and is probably something that will get them into deep trouble if the authorities discover they have it.

Briar elf items tend to feature scenes of torture, figures in obvious pain, or screaming thorn-pierced faces. Briar elf magic items don't look at all friendly, and radiate an aura of malevolent awareness. Those who look upon such items feel unclean, as though they have been tainted by the many vile deeds that the item was used to perform. Those who are brave enough to touch a briar elf item will inevitably be pricked or slashed by barbs that they had until then not noticed.

Secondly if the magic item normally grants a static bonus, increase the bonuses the item grants so that it is in line with other cursed items (adventurer: +2; champion: +3; epic: +5). If the item doesn't normally grant a bonus, then give it a tier-appropriate bonus. So an epic tier wondrous item might as a cursed item give its owner +3 to MD, but an epic crown that normally gives a bonus of +3 to MD has a cursed version that gives a bonus of +5 to MD.

Thirdly the item can't be got rid of easily. Briar elf magic items usually require quests to dispose of, either by dropping it into a volcano or something similar, or by finding the briar elves and giving it back (don't expect them show either gratitude or mercy).

Lastly give it one of the following seven curses. Naturally the curses don't work if the creature attuned to the item is an NPC briar elf, in fact in the hands of a briar elf the curses are probably somehow beneficial.

**Blood drinker (any item)**—This item grows new spikes whenever it is used, painfully drawing blood from its wielder. Whenever the item's limited use or sometimes-active power is used (not just an always-on bonus) the wielder takes  $1d6 \times$  their level in damage. If the wielder avoids the damage, the item's power doesn't work.

**Death bringer (any item)**—Enemies gain a +2 attack bonus when the wielder is in darkness or in a wooded area—but not against the wielder, only against their allies.

**Kin slayer (ranged weapons, and implements)**—If the wielder rolls a 1 when targeting an enemy engaged with one or more of their allies, then the attack automatically hits one of the allies instead.

**Life drainer (any worn item)**—Once per day when an ally spends a recovery to heal they regain no hit points but the recovery is still spent. The gamemaster chooses when the curse triggers.

**Oath breaker (any item)**—When rolling relationship dice, count any 1s as being unfavorable results indicating an imminent misfortune related to that icon or their agents not keeping their promises or acting in bad faith.

**Thorn bearer (any item)**—Brambles grow beneath the skin of the wielder, their thorns piercing out through the skin and inwards to muscle. The wielder is in constant pain, and when using a recovery must roll twice and take the lower result.

**Will twister (any weapon or implement)**—Once per day the cursed weapon turns a miss into a hit or a hit into a crit, without the permission or prompting of its wielder. At some point later that day (probably in battle, but not always) the weapon forces its wielder to make an attack of its choice (perhaps expending a limited use power) against an ally of the attuned character or an innocent bystander.

## GETTING RID OF CURSED ITEMS

While this is true of all cursed magic items, we haven't really emphasized it as much as we could have: getting rid of cursed magic items is hard.

Cursed items that are thrown into rivers or off cliffs turn up again, a bit wet and unhappy, but otherwise ready for action on the character's hip. A character might put a cursed book into a locked iron chest and throw it into the sea and believe it to be gone, only to find it soaking the pillow that night. A character that tosses a sword into a deep pit might find the sword instantly back in their hand as if they had never thrown it. If the character (or their friends) repeatedly tries to get rid of the item they will find that the magic of the curse causes the book to find them by coming into the possession of an enemy that attacks them that same day, or they return to camp only to find the sword that they had cast away piercing the heart of their hireling. The more you try to get rid of the cursed item, the crueler the twist of fate the item will employ to get back to the attuned character.

Strange things happen when an attuned character attempts to give away or sell a cursed magic item. Normally the 'new owner' will rush to give it back as soon as they can, citing a series of misfortunes caused by the cursed item. In extreme cases a cursed magic item will warp the strands of fate to ensure that it finds its way back to the attuned owner, causing as much misery along the way as possible.

**But of course there's hope:** There is usually a way to get rid of a cursed magic item that a character has foolishly attuned to, such as leaving it in the tomb of its original owner or creator, completing the quest that the item was created to fulfil, or giving it to an NPC powerful enough to force the cursed item to attune to them instead (such NPCs tend to be evil, naturally).

Then again there is the full chuck-it-into-Mount-Doom route. Magic items tend to resist their own destruction, exerting their influence over the minds of others to the detriment of those on the quest to destroy the item, and mystically arranging coincidences to hamper or harm those on the quest. Anybody headed out to some far-off temple or hellhole to destroy a magic item had best be prepared for betrayals, (un)natural disasters, and plenty of 'random' encounters with monsters along the way. Oh, and of course cursed magic items tend to attract the attention of evil icons, who will send their minions to kill the PCs and take the item—a cursed item which is naturally the one thing they need to complete their age-ending evil plan.

So, all told the best thing is not to attune to cursed items. Naturally, players being players some just can't resist the extra bonuses that come with cursed items.

There are a few cursed items where you can't tell that it is cursed until it is too late. As you noticed, that doesn't apply to briar elf items, which look cursed from any angle, there is no mistaking their dark power for anything else.

# THIRTEEN SIGNS OF THE RETURN OF THE BRIAR ELVES

Here are thirteen things that the heroes could discover which could point to the existence of the briar elves. We're using these secrets instead of our usual adventure hooks because the revelation that the briar elves are real and lurking in the dark places of the world could be enough to spark a whole campaign.

Your campaign and its version of the Dragon Empire is unique to you and your group—so not all of these need to be true in your campaign. Any one of the signs could be enough to worry the adventurers.

**A King Trembles**—The Lich King is shuttering the Necropolis, preventing all landings on his island and destroying all plant life that grows there. It appears that the lord of undeath is expecting trouble.

**A Queen Falls?**—The Elf Queen has fallen sick with a strange malady, and will no longer let herself be seen by any except her closest advisors.

**An Unusual Treaty**—Emissaries of all the icons, including the Lich King and Orc Lord, have been meeting in secret. Rumor has it that they are preparing a unified front against a menace that could bring them all down.

**At Their Feet They'll Cast Golden Crowns**—Previously reliable citizens of the Dragon Empire are refusing to obey imperial dictates and refusing contact with the outside world. At first it was just a few settlements on the edge of the empire, but the number and size of settlements is growing. The one commonality is that the settlements are all close to areas mentioned in briar elf legends.

**Failing Magic, Returning Myths**—All across the Dragon Empire people are starting to notice things that they hadn't noticed before—a passage in a book here, a statue there, a road elsewhere. Most people do not realize what is going on, but those with the ability to correlate the facts realize that evidence of the briar elves, long suppressed by magic, is returning.

**Ghost Ship**—Sailors have recently returned spooked from the Midland Sea, their hair white and premature lines in their faces. They report seeing a mist-shrouded ship full of elves with thorns for skin.

**Lo, what Rough Beast?**—Nightmares of some terrible creature being born are vexing the dreams of elves all across the Dragon Empire. The terrifying dreams are getting more intense, and no magic or medicine seems able to cure the affliction.

**The Bitterwood Wall**—Why did the Bitterwood have a wall around it? And why is evidence of that that thick high wall just now starting to surface? The watchtowers all look into the forest.

**The Green and the Grey**—Plants across the dragon empire are developing thorns, and becoming toxic. Grasses irritate the skin, wheat causes hallucinations and nausea, even burning firewood gives off fumes that blind and blister. The strange blight is spreading out from the Bitterwood, threatening an age-ending famine.

**Whirlwind and the Thorn Tree**—The dwarves of Anvil have been going missing, scouts and trading parties not returning. Each incident is followed by a wild wind that screams through the dwarven tunnels. Now clues to the disappearances are trickling in from all parts of the Empire: flayed skins of dwarves found on thorn trees hundreds of miles from Anvil in all directions.

**Who is Walking the Thorny Paths?**—Stretches of prickling gorse and briar are spontaneously growing, broad road-like ways that run through field and garden alike. At night rake-thin figures have been seen walking the thorny paths, but those who have approached to speak to the strange travelers have disappeared—not attacked or taken, they just vanished into the shadows never to return when they got too close to the midnight walkers.

**Who Messed with Our Stuff?**—Previously reliable magic items the adventurers acquired early in their career are now developing extra powers . . . and becoming items cursed by the briar elves' magic! If the PCs reinvestigate the people and places who helped them obtain the items, they'll stumble into thicker curses.

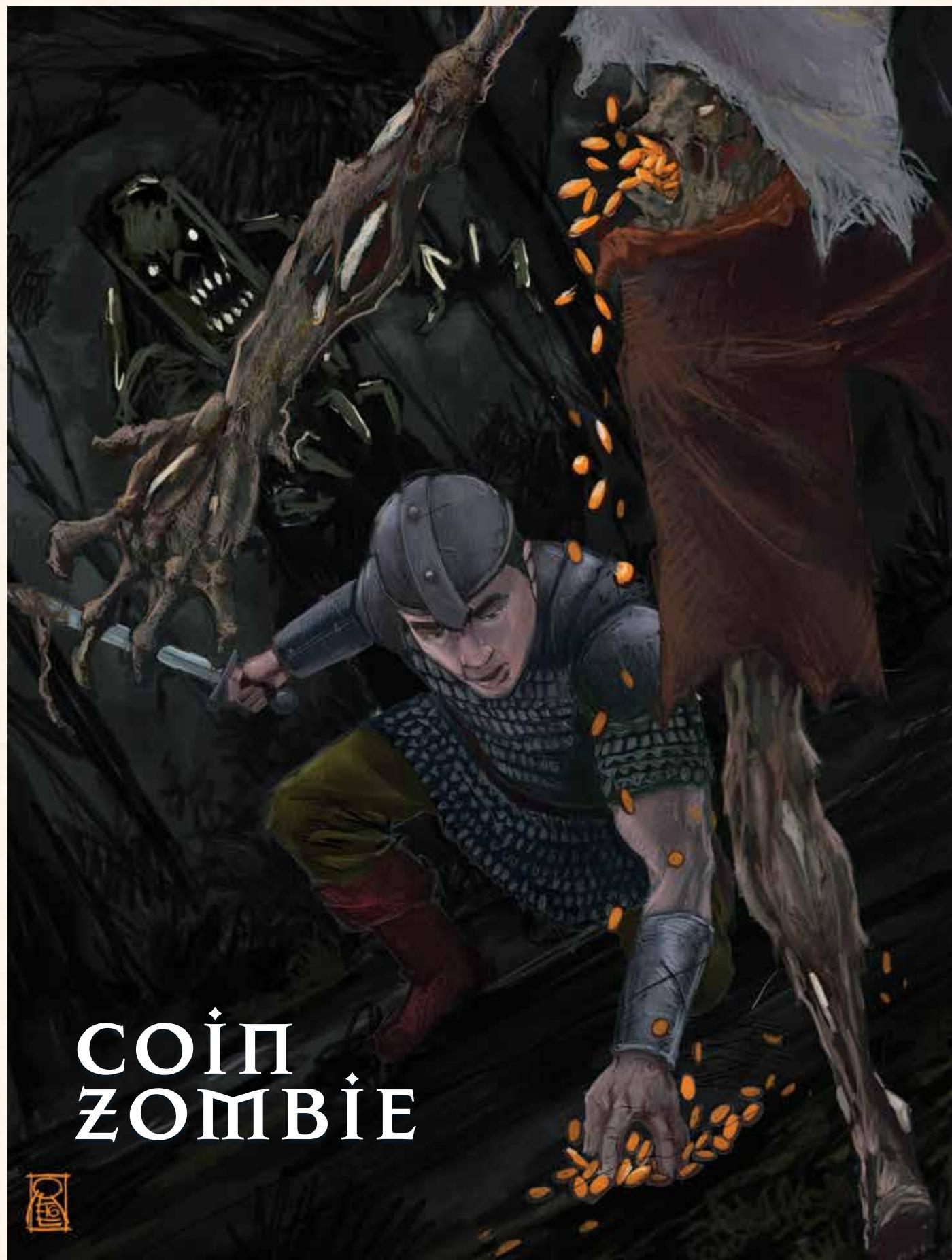
**The Crown Grows Sharp**—Surely the Elf Queen's magic can hide the signs for awhile, but illusions don't hold forever. The three-part crown of the elven peoples is putting out thorns. The Queen may hide the truth for a time, but this is bloody certainty. Perhaps the PCs will discover the truth without realizing what it means, at first: "The Queen's concerns over her people have become so terrible that her brow bursts with blood."

## CAN A PC BE A BRIAR ELF?

No. Never.

Briar elves are supposed to be bloody-terrifying, with motivations and plans that the adventurers cannot fathom. It's hard to fear a monster if you go drinking with one once a week at the local tavern. Even if somebody is 'the only good briar elf in the world,' that in our opinion is one good briar elf too many.





# COIN ZOMBIE



Given the lengthy history of necromancy, there has been ample time to tinker with possible solutions to the art's most fundamental problems.

So, dear necromancer, here's the problem on this century's agenda: zombies are slow. You create or summon a horde of zombies, you turn them loose, and way too many people just run away. You can use strategy and tactics to surround people with zombies, but you're a necromancer, not a commander—if it can't be done with twisty necromantic magic it just doesn't have that corpse-flesh appeal.

So here's what you, or someone like you, engineered: zombies that are full of slightly enchanted coins. When the zombie falls, so do the coins, exiting the corpse, scattering about, and compelling the weak-minded to fall to their knees grubbing for precious gold. Or copper. Whatever.

Combine a small expenditure of coins with an enchantment based on mortal greed, and you've got a zombie that magically convinces its targets to stick around and be eaten! They're most effective when mixed with other zombies who can concentrate entirely on eating just enough of the weak-minded fools that they'll make effective zombies themselves.

**Coin mechanics:** If your PCs are the types who count every coin, feel free to let them collect coins of various denominations that add up to 1d4 gp per coin zombie after the fight, or 1d20 gp per jackpot zombie.

If innocent bystanders and NPCs ended up getting nabbed by the jackpot or sticking around to pocket coins, subtract a few from the loot. If your PCs are the type to track down every last coin . . . (*insert GM stage whisper*), you could curse the coins. They did fall out of a zombie's guts, so they were cursed to begin with. See Stories for Coins below for other ideas about the zombies' coins.

**Details, details:** Maybe one of your PCs will notice that the coin zombies aren't vulnerable to holy damage. Please encourage them to make up the worst possible explanation for this inexplicable lack of a weakness. *Something* must be going on!

**Jackpot zombie?:** If the name is too silly for you, call it something like 'ancient coin zombie.' That could refer to the zombie or the coins. Or both.

## Coin Zombie

*We're not sure where you got the idea that treasure falling out of dead monsters was a good thing, but it wasn't from this booby-trapped horror.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +2

**Greedy claw +7 vs. AC—3 damage**

**C: Lethal jackpot +7 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies/bystanders)**—3 ongoing psychic damage, and if the target moves while taking that damage, it can only move to the jangling pile of coins that fell out of the zombie's crumbling body to cause this attack.

*Limited use: 1/battle per coin zombie mook, when that zombie drops to 0 hit points.*

**Headshot:** A critical hit against a coin zombie cancels one mook's *lethal jackpot* ability that turn, though if the crit eliminates more than one coin zombie, others will still trigger their own lethal jackpots.

**Nicer Special for any coin or jackpot zombie**

If you're feeling merciful, say that a PC can use a quick action to pocket some of the coins and grants a +2 bonus to the save against the ongoing psychic damage from the *lethal jackpot* attack.

AC	17
PD	12
MD	16

**HP 8 (mook)**

**Mook:** Kill one coin zombie mook for every 8 damage you deal to the mob.

## Jackpot Zombie

*Here in zombie land, jackpot hits you.*

*5<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +5

**Greedy claw +10 vs. AC—10 damage**

**C: Lethal jackpot +10 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies/bystanders)**—10 ongoing psychic damage, and if the target moves while taking that damage, it can only move to the jangling pile of coins that fell out of the zombie's crumbling body to cause this attack.

*Limited use: 1/battle per jackpot zombie mook, when that zombie drops to 0 hit points.*

**Headshot:** A critical hit against a jackpot zombie cancels one mook's *lethal jackpot* ability that turn, though if the crit eliminates more than one coin zombie, others will still trigger their own lethal jackpots.

AC	20
PD	15
MD	19

**HP 16 (mook)**

**Mook:** Kill one jackpot zombie mook for every 16 damage you deal to the mob.

## Stories for Coins



What kind of coins spill out of coin zombies? Maybe they're normal imperials with a few scattered draks, elven trines, and dwarven towers (*13th Age* core rulebook, page 56). Or perhaps the zombie's coins have other interesting stories?

## Coin Collector Zombie

*Someone's got to pick up the coins. Make that 'something' has got to pick up the coins.*

6<sup>th</sup> level blocker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +6

**Grubby claw +11 vs. AC**—18 damage

**C: Lethal payout +11 vs. MD (1d3 + 1 nearby enemies/bystanders)**—10 ongoing psychic damage, and if the target moves while taking that damage, it can only move to the jangling coins that dropped out of the zombie to cause this attack.

*Limited use:* Free action when hit by a natural even attack against AC, and when this zombie drops to 0 hit points.

*Coin eater:* A coin collector zombie that spends its standard action stuffing coins into its mouth (or directly into its gut if there's a convenient hole) heals 3d6 hit points. It normally doesn't spend its time this way in combat, but who can predict collectors?

*Headshot:* A critical hit against the coin collector zombie cancels its *lethal payout* attack.

**AC 21**

**PD 16**

**MD 20**

**HP 110**

## Ghoul-Stamping

Maybe the imperials that spill out coin zombies don't show the Emperor. Maybe they're ghoul-stamped instead.

Ghoul-stamped? Let us explain. On a separate story-path, Rob became fond of the image of ghouls wearing strings of imperial coins with their centers punched out to destroy the symbol of the Emperor.

The practice might have started in a living dungeon or it might have started on Omen. It's also exactly the type of toadying stunt a member of the Undying Peerage (*13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary*, page 134) would come up with. Ghouls may not be responsible for any of the coin-stamping, but the liches don't want to call attention to themselves, and the fact that ghouls seem to enjoy wearing the coin cords has made the name stick.

If the idea spreads, more and more coins that come into contact with sentient or semi-sentient undead get mutilated. Some are worn on cords. Others get fed to coin zombies, or picked up by coin collector zombies. Others just get dumped, along with the waste bits that hold the Emperor's symbol, which the undead probably dispose of in as nasty a way as they can come up with.

In some human cities, ghoul-stamped coins are viewed as cursed. They have to be melted down, and are probably worth a third of their normal value at most. Places that accept ghoul-stamped coins generally consider them to be worth half their normal value, and call them *ghost coins*, leaving ghouls out of it. If you're in some weird city that accepts ghoul-stamped coins at

full value, splash some holy water on your face and prepare for the worst, you're among cultists!

In some campaigns, the Lich King wouldn't have anything directly to do with ghoul-stamping. It's beneath him. He didn't start it and he doesn't encourage his direct followers to practice it. But he's somewhat flattered that it has taken off on its own. If he ever gains the upper hand in his struggle to take an empire, his currency would now be much more likely to feature a hole in the middle.

In other campaigns, the Lich King started the practice and enforced it anywhere he doesn't care about having his influence discovered.

## BUILDING BATTLES

If you stick to the original plan, you'll team these creatures with other zombies. Ghouls would also appreciate the assist.

Evil necromancers created these monsters and there's a reason: most zombies are pretty useless as guardians for magicians, but coin zombies may draw off attackers who would rather come to grips with melee-deficient spellcasters.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Anywhere zombies work, coin zombies can provide change. Or put them at the center.

**Tastes like Mint**—The small town of Silvers near Glitterhaegen isn't notable for much, but when coins were minted outside Axis, it used to have a mint. And now that the undead have overrun the town, they've chosen the former mint's basement as their bastion, and are cranking out ghoul-stamped coins. The funny thing is that they're kinda obsessed with the task and not as busy trying to eat people as you'd expect. A bin of coins left nearby, Trojan Horse-style, might distract them enough to make this an easy rescue mission, since some of Silver's inhabitants are holding on a second floor . . . .

**Greetings from the Necropolis**—What floats, has 27 arms, and is full coins? A driftboat pushed off from the Necropolis jammed with 15 coin zombies.

**Outer Defenses**—Is the baron with a taste for impaling people really a vampire? The evidence is not all-in, but when you, or the pitch-fork wielding mob, try to reach his castle, it's definitely surrounded by a reinforced cordon of coin zombies. The mob ain't gonna make it through, but maybe you adventurers can.

# DERRO

*We had a warning: unhinged laughter from further down the tunnels. We gripped our weapons more tightly, but continued on. Then in the far darkness we saw points of yellow light appear. First two, then half a dozen more, then perhaps more than thirty. We knew then that we had wandered too far.*

—Ashe Thunderstone, Explorer

## DEPTHES OF CORRUPTION

Derro are dwarves who have been touched by terrible magic deep within the earth. You can decide the historical roots of the problem for your campaign: it may have been the dark elf curse that drove the rest of the dwarves out of the deepest underworld, it could have been some strange side-effect of a lost icon like the Gold King (page 112), or it may have been a different set of tragedies altogether. (See the Origins of Derro section below for more possibilities.)

Whatever the source of the catastrophe, derro have only two things in common with dwarves: height and hardiness. Otherwise their madness has taken them far from their ancestors.

**Options:** The derro detailed in this entry have fallen very far indeed, into a culture so twisted and sadistic it barely holds together as a culture. Since derro are familiar figures in F20 games, this may not match the way you're accustomed to using derro in your games. You might want to portray some derro as not-entirely-fallen—in which case you could treat the derro described below as exceptions, or as the farthest-gone on the spectrum-of-descent.

## PHYSICAL OFFENSE

Derro are often thin-bodied and gaunt-faced, almost to the point of appearing emaciated. Their skin is grey, sometimes nearly translucent, and their hair alternates between black and shocking white. Derro rarely cultivate lush beards and flowing hair like dwarves, instead cropping hair close, shaving it into bizarre patterns, somehow growing hair into long spikes and growing gravity-defying mustaches. Tattoos, piercings, and intentional disfigurements like brands and ritual scarification are also very common. It's not a beauty thing. The derro fashions all look like they're designed to hurt.



Their most striking feature is their eyes, which lack pupil or iris and instead are solid pale yellow. This would be unnerving in and of itself, but the eyes flash with sickly pale light when the derro feels a nasty emotion like rage, hate, or sadistic pleasure. Unfortunately for many who encounter the derro, this glow is nearly constant.

## MENTAL OFFENSE

Derro are almost universally cruel and sadistic. If they follow logic, it's only understandable to derro. Their behavior and beliefs make settlements difficult, so their "society" is splintering

and reforming hodgepodge of active cells, warbands, and isolated individuals. There could be a handful of derro cities deep underground, but odds are they're mostly in ruins.

Derro are aggressive and combative, and they constantly raid and war with neighboring groups and individuals deep in the earth. Dark elves, dwarves, and fungaloids are all frequent targets of their assaults. Derro plunder weapons, steal food and water, and capture slaves, but their deep-seated insanity leads them to do many other illogical things to their neighbors as well. Indiscriminate slaughter, bizarre ritualistic sacrifices, horrific torture, and cannibalism are some of their most common offenses.

Unlike some monsters of the deep underworld, derro enjoy raiding the surface. One of their favorite tactics is to board living dungeons on their way up to the surface. It's probably the closest these fallen creatures come to having a hobby: find a living dungeon, hitch a ride, and try to help it survive to the surface!

They don't stay on the surface long, particularly not in sunlight. A seriously rainy day might allow derro to raid before nightfall, but their eyes and skin can't abide much sun.



*Dawn of the Dwarves: These monsters are creepy, so what would make them creepier? Instead of derro, these stats could represent powerful dwarves turned into zombie-like monsters when exposed to a magical plague. Actually it affects everyone by creeping them out and making them super-nervous, but it turns dwarves into monsters that spread the plague further. The dwarf plague was thought to be a thing of the ancient ages, but suddenly local dwarves need outsiders to put down an outbreak. This scenario works if you don't have a dwarf in the party, but it's also pretty good if you do. Heh. Maybe the party can save the victims if they can destroy the mastermind behind it. Maybe the contagion eventually turns dwarves into unspeakable blobs, with stats derived from the gibbering mouther. Maybe the party finds out too late that it's a trap, a scheme to spring a new mutant form of dwarves on the world. It's an infection that spreads to humans, and maybe to lots of races besides dwarves. Starting with the PCs.*

## CONFUSION STRATEGIES?

Like the derro in the core 13<sup>th</sup> Age book, all the derro below share the following ability:

*Derro are Confused to Begin with:* Confusion effects only affect derro if they secretly want to murder one of their own companions, a not uncommon condition.

## DERRO Berserker

*These derro have lost themselves entirely to the pain, blood, and violence of combat. Whether it's your death or theirs, it no longer matters.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +5

**Scavenged weaponry +8 vs. AC—8 damage**

*Natural 16+:* The target takes 5 ongoing damage.

*Bad laughter:* While the derro berserker is staggered, it deals 4 extra damage when it hits with an attack.

*What pain?:* The derro berserker ignores the first 6 points of damage it takes each turn.

### Nastier Specials

*Dead but still laughing:* When a derro berserker drops to 0 hp, it doesn't die. Instead, it can take one final turn, and then it dies. Once the berserker drops, it can't be healed.

*Wrong head:* When an enemy targets the derro berserker with an attack against MD and gets a natural odd roll, that enemy is dazed until the end of its next turn. This effect occurs whether the attack hits or misses.

AC 19

PD 17

MD 13

HP 40

## FALLEN DERRO

*These derro have dropped so far that they attack nearly anything that attracts their attention.*



*3<sup>rd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +5

**Dirty fists and bites +8 vs. AC—6 damage**

*Natural 16+:* The target takes 3 ongoing damage.

*Psychotic scream:* When a fallen derro dies, it makes the following attack as a free action.

**C: Psychotic scream +7 vs. MD (each non-derro creature engaged with it)**—The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

*Natural roll above target's Wisdom:* The target is confused until the end of its next turn instead of dazed.

### Nastier Special

*Broken minds, broken bodies:* As a quick action, a fallen derro can take 5 damage to end one ongoing effect on a creature in its mob.

AC 18

PD 16

MD 12

HP 9 (mook)

*Mook:* Kill one fallen derro mook for every 9 damage you deal to the mob.

# DERRO WHISPERER

*The whispers of these derro cut through the sounds of battle to shatter the hearts and minds of even the stoutest warriors.*

4<sup>th</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Obsidian blade +8 vs. AC**—8 damage

**R: Cutting whisper +8 vs. MD**—14 psychic damage

*Natural even miss:* The target's closest nearby ally takes 4 psychic damage.

*Natural 16+:* The target is stuck (save ends).

*Chaotic babble:* Enemies engaged with the derro whisperer take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and saving throws.

#### Nastier Specials

*Psyche shift:* When an attacker targets the derro whisperer's MD and misses with a natural 1–5 attack roll, that enemy must reroll the attack against itself.

*Silent shout:* When the escalation die is odd, cutting whisper targets 1d3 nearby enemies in a group instead.

**AC 19**

**PD 14**

**HP 52**

**MD 18**

# DERRO SEER

*In the darkness lies insight, or so the old saying goes. Derro that survive to old age find that the touch of dark magic grants them an insight to the underlying rules of reality . . . and how to break them.*

4<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Clubstaff +8 vs. AC**—10 damage

**C: Ripples of dark magic +9 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy)**—12 force damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is teleported to a nearby location the seer can see. It can't be moved directly into dangerous terrain, over a cliff, etc.

*Natural 1–5:* The seer is dazed until the end of its next turn.

*Not here but there:* As a quick action, the seer can teleport a nearby ally it can see to any location that the seer can see.

*Prophecy of death:* As a quick action once per turn, the seer chooses an enemy it can see. The seer's non-mook allies gain a +2 attack bonus against that enemy. When an ally of the seer attacks that enemy and staggers it or drops it to 0 hp or below, that ally heals 8 hp. The effect lasts until the start of the seer's next turn.

#### Nastier Specials

*I did not see that:* Once per battle, as an interrupt action when a critical hit is scored against the derro seer's ally, the seer can turn it into a normal hit instead.

*Not how it should be:* The first time each turn that the seer teleports an ally using not here but there, that ally heals 4 hp.

**AC 18**

**PD 14**

**MD 19**

**HP 50**

# BUILDING BATTLES

Outside of living dungeons, the derro's twisted worldview means they rarely work with other humanoid races, though it's not unheard of. Dark elves have been able to maneuver derro into the paths of their foes often enough that there's a term for it within the elven language that roughly translates to "trapped in the web with the yellow-eyed ones."

While humanoid allies are uncommon, derro use beasts and other creatures with comparative ease. Dire animals, such as rats or badgers, are common sights within derro-controlled areas, as are scavenger creatures like ochre jellies, gelatinous cubes, and otyughs.

Chaos beasts also coexist decently with derro, whose random behaviors match their own.

Of course, once derro have latched onto a living dungeon, all rules of 'normal' interaction are ignored. In the chaos of a living dungeon, derro may be the sensible ones!

# ORIGINS OF DERRO

It's almost certainly true that the derro are dwarves who were corrupted or changed by some terrible dark magic or event deep below the surface of the world. The usual story is that the dark elves destroyed the deep dwarven underworld and created the derro as collateral damage.

But maybe that's not true. Or maybe you want characters in your campaign to uncover other stories that may or may not be true. Here are a few options that might fit the story you or your players want to tell.

- The derro were originally Clan Derro, sent by a long-ago Dwarf King to colonize and strengthen the deep borders of his kingdom. After setting up several outposts and settlements over several decades, all contact was lost with Clan Derro. When they were found again, they had changed into the creatures now known as derro. All records of the clan were supposedly erased after the incident.
- The derro aren't living creatures at all. Instead, they're constructs, created by an unknown icon and unleashed into the deep earth. How and why that icon decided to make such a mockery of life in the form of dwarves isn't known. The Dwarf King and Archmage would gladly point the finger at the Wizard King, but the accusation, for a change, has never stuck.
- Once, a dwarven noble named Derro lead a rebellion against the rightful rule of the Dwarf King. After years of civil war hidden from the surface dwellers, Derro and his followers were defeated and fled into the deepest places of the earth. And we know what they look like now that they're back.

## DERRO AND THE ICONS

**Archmage:** The derro normally would be beneath the notice of the Archmage. Since they're clearly not, and the Archmage's wizards seem interested in where derro can be found and what they're up to, there might be something to the gossip that derro are more to living dungeons than just random hitchhikers. Does the Archmage really think that the derro know something about how living dungeons are created? Has anyone come back from the expeditions looking for clues, or might the PCs be the first?

**Dwarf King:** Derro are reminders of tragedy and a symbol of how bad things can get. The Dwarf King would love to eliminate them forever, but in a grand strategic sense, sending dwarves into the deepest underworld to kill derro is a bad idea. Alliances with other icons might help, though the Priestess' suggestion that the derro might be cured and brought back to the Dwarf King's halls hasn't stabilized the situation.

**Elf Queen:** If wood elves and high elves feel a little guilty around derro, that could be because they're leftovers of what amounts to a supernatural war crime. Dark elves aren't usually so squeamish. When a dark elf wants to start a fight with a dwarf, saying the word "derro" and snickering works even better than patting the dwarf on the head.

**Orc Lord:** Derro may be the only dwarves that the orcs would rather entirely avoid than fight. Or maybe you'd rather mix things up a little: maybe derro are bad news, but taste great, and strange orcish hunting expeditions aim to intercept derro squads before they get 'safely' embedded in living dungeons.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

As a chaotic force, derro are both easy and difficult to work into existing adventures. They don't always need a reason to get tangled in whatever situation in which the heroes are involved. Their warped worldview means that they could have any reason at all and it might not ever be obvious to the heroes.

On the other hand, working them in with a planned manner sometimes takes more effort. Using the icon connections listed above is a good start, and it's simple to add them to any intrigues or adventures directly related to the Dwarf King.

If you need other ideas for derro-related adventures, here are more story hooks.

**Crazed and Confused**—A small village near Anvil has torn itself apart in a frenzy of blood and gore for no apparent reason. The heroes investigate the mysterious slaughter and either spot the marks of derro involvement or get horribly ambushed.

**The Siege Beneath**—Divination magic has detected an impending living dungeon containing a derro warband coming up under a town under siege (by the Orc Lord, Crusader, or Lich King, as your campaign needs). If the heroes don't stop the derro and the living dungeon, the defenses will be breached from within and the town will be overrun from without.

**Hard Research**—The heroes are contacted by a dwarven scholar and physician team researching the ailments of the derro and the corruption they spread. The two think that they can devise a treatment, but it would be more effective if they had a handful of derro to try it out on.

# THE EBON GAUNTLET

The Crusader presents himself as the only icon who can defeat the world's true enemy: **demons**. The Great Gold Wyrm? Trapped in a hero's grave. The Emperor? Trapped on a shaky throne. The Priestess? Trapped in a cocoon of soft lies told by flickering gods. Demonic corruption spreads like a disease through hellholes cut into the land by the magic of the Diabolist. The Crusader's armies conquer corrupted areas of the Empire, or better yet take the land before it can fall.

Demonic corruption spreads like a disease through weak-hearted mortals. The Crusader's priests and inquisitors pry minds open so that demon cultists have nowhere to hide. Many who face the Crusader make the mistake of assuming the ruthless commander has little subtlety in his approach. They see him as a brutal conqueror with as much delicacy as a hammer smashing through stained glass.

But not all the Crusader's forces are as blunt as his armies, his fortresses, and his Thousand Confession Triumphs. The Crusader's reputation as a fire-and-steel conqueror helps mask subtler moves in his war against the demons and their self-appointed master, the Diabolist.

One weapon he calls the Echo, a magical realm that is a dark mirror of the world the rest of the icons know. The second weapon he calls the Ebon Gauntlet, a magically augmented covert strike force created using powers the Crusader found inside the Echo.

Introducing these subtle weapons into your campaigns is generally meant to make your player characters' lives more *interesting*. For the most part, the Crusader's people are better as NPCs than PCs. The Crusader is usually a harsh and somewhat loathsome hero, if he's a hero at all. The Ebon Gauntlet stands far over on the harsh-and-loathsome side of the Crusader. But players who read this piece might find elements of the story to adapt to their character's backgrounds or One Unique Thing.

## RECONSTRUCTION & THE ECHO

We wrote about the Echo and some of its locations in detail in the *Echo & Gauntlet* issue of 13<sup>th</sup> Age Monthly. For our purposes now, a presentation of the Ebon Gauntlet as semi-monstrous opponents dedicated to the Crusader, that full write-up of the Echo isn't relevant.

What you need to know about the Echo is that it is a damaged and entropic world of ash and cinders parallel to the world of the Dragon Empire. The Crusader either created or discovered the Echo. Possibly both, if the parallel world's weird time distortion effects mean that effect preceded cause.



**Short-cuts:** Some of the Crusader's forces can use the Echo as a short-cut across the world, emerging where least expected. The shortcut has a price for the travelers, both in lost time and lost strength, but the Ebon Gauntlet, in particular, is willing and able to pay that price. Unfortunately for everyone else, people who emerge from the Echo take a piece of the Echo with them, polluting and breaking the land. The High Druid hates whatever it is the Crusader is doing, and if she becomes aware of the Ebon Gauntlet's role she'll become their worst enemy.

**Reconstructions:** The Crusader's magicians found that the barriers between the physical world and the mental world can be more easily broken down in the Echo. The Crusader loves taking weapons from his enemies and making them his own. When the Crusader confronts an enemy possessing a level of conviction or inner strength that few ever possess, his favorite strategy is to make that enemy serve him. Of course it often doesn't work. Most must be cut down or incinerated or impaled or hung. But some can be turned to the Crusader's cause. The best, and the worst, are taken into the Echo.

Members of the Ebon Gauntlet remember little of their time in the reconstruction pits. Surely that's by design. Their remaining memories, however, have been altered to insert the will of the Crusader running through a series of reconstructed life lessons. Old childhood traumas are rebuilt, not to remove the pain, but to redirect it toward loyalty to the Crusader and anger at everything else.

**Bound with dark-iron:** When they return from reconstruction, these elite warriors are symbolically bound to the Crusader's will with dark-iron collars forged around their neck. Each collar is covered with runes. It's not clear whether the collars and their runes serve a control function or are mainly useful for withstanding the ravages of the Echo. Members of the Ebon Gauntlet may have been many things before they were converted into ruthless agents of the Crusader. One may have served as a commander in the Dwarf King's ranks. Another may have been a priest in service to the Priestess who never performed a single harmful deed in his life before serving the Ebon Gauntlet. Another may have been an abandoned child on the streets of Shadow Port, an apprentice in service to the Archmage, or a sadistic murderer in service to the Diabolist. Now they serve a single cause and give absolute fealty to the will of the Crusader.

So far no one has found a way to remove a collar without killing the member of the Ebon Gauntlet wearing it. So when you are in the Ebon Gauntlet, you're in for life. Or perhaps until you are a PC with a dark-iron collar and a very risky One Unique Thing!

## AUTONOMOUS AGENTS OF THE CRUSADE

The Ebon Gauntlet acts independently from the rest of the Crusader's conventional forces. It is his secret weapon, his elite and unconventional force. In your campaign, it's possible that no one has heard of the Ebon Gauntlet before they begin destroying places and people the PCs care about.

Strike teams move quickly, conduct their mission, and leave smoking ruins behind them. The Ebon Gauntlet's name and its acts of "cleansing" are synonymous with organized campaigns of terror, death, and destruction. For some—the criminals, murderers, brigands, and dark sorcerers the Crusader chose to reconstruct, life in the Ebon Gauntlet is a culmination, a path to the dark dream. For those who served a more benevolent cause, the brutal acts they commit in service to the Ebon Gauntlet force them into deeply buried emotional torture every moment of their existence. This is one of the Crusader's most ironic punishments. He wants his worst enemies to finish their day inflicting the type of red justice and sudden pain they'd worked to stop in their former lives.

## EBOН GAUNTLET STATS

We see the Ebon Gauntlet as a champion-tier problem. It's clearly above the threat range of beginning adventurers, but as a covert strike force, it's probably not up to facing the mightiest adventurers. It could still kill some of the things the adventurers love, however.

## EBOН GAUNTLET SWORD

*Its grin is the only sign of humanity beneath its dark-iron armor. Unfortunately for you, it's a hideous murderous grin.*

*4<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +9

**Echoing blade +9 vs. AC—12 damage**

*Natural even hit:* A duplicate of the Ebon Gauntlet sword appears next to another nearby enemy and makes an identical echoing blade attack against that target. This effect can only occur once per turn. After the second attack, choose which Ebon Gauntlet sword remains on the battlefield and which \*pops\* away with an echo of crashing iron. (The sword's hit points and conditions aren't affected.)

AC 20

PD 17

MD 17

HP 52

## EBOН GAUNTLET ADJUDICATOR

*Plates of armor are bolted into the intricately tattooed skin of these hulking monsters. The "adjudicator" name is a bit of dark humor. They render decisions quickly, using the edge of their two-handed weapons.*

*Large 5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +8

**Blade of adjudication +10 vs. AC—30 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The adjudicator can make an echo of decay attack as a free action.

**C: Echo of decay +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—10**

ongoing negative energy damage; every time the target suffers the damage, normal plants and animals next to the target wither and die

*Trollish regeneration 10:* While an adjudicator is damaged, its glyphed flesh heals 10 hit points at the start of the adjudicator's turn. It can regenerate five times per battle. If it heals to its maximum hit points, then that use of regeneration doesn't count against the five-use limit. When the adjudicator is hit by an attack that deals acid or force damage, it loses one use of its regeneration, and it can't regenerate during its next turn. Dropping an adjudicator to 0 hp doesn't kill it if it has any uses of regeneration left.

Nastier Special

*Fear of the Echo:* Nearby enemies of the adjudicator are vulnerable to all attacks.

AC 21	HP 130
PD 18	
MD 18	

**EBOН GAUNTLET EYE**

*The eyes are former wizards and priests twisted into silent servants of the Ebon Gauntlet. A pair of iron spikes driven through the temples of their dark-iron masks pins them to this world.*

*6<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +10

**Touch of pain +11 vs. PD**—10 damage

*Natural even hit:* Add the escalation die to the damage.

**R: Mind spike +11 vs. MD (one nearby or faraway enemy)**

—21 psychic damage

*Natural even hit:* The target takes a —4 penalty to all its defenses until the end of the eye's next turn.

**R: Echo of nightmares +11 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or faraway enemies)**—20 psychic damage, and the target is hampered and dazed (save ends both); the target can remove these conditions by taking an additional 10 psychic damage and allowing one of its most terrible memories to ripple through its nearby allies, dealing 1 psychic damage to each nearby ally  
*Limited use:* 1/battle after the Ebon Gauntlet eye has hit with at least one mind spike attack.

*Gray shift:* Once per hit it has scored this battle, as a move action, the eye can teleport to any nearby location it can see.

*Echo fade:* Once per battle, as an interrupt action, the eye can gain damage resistance 18+ against attacks that target AC or PD. The resistance ends when the eye makes an attack.

AC 20	HP 78
PD 18	
MD 20	

**GAUNTLET'S MASCOT**

*It's encased within dark-iron beaten into the shape of a large dog or panther, but with huge claws. Its face is sealed-up, blank. It moves on all fours, but sometimes it moves like a person. Or a demon. Or maybe something that has forgotten everything but how to kill.*

*6<sup>th</sup> level blocker [BEAST?] [DEMON?] [HUMANOID?]*

Initiative: +9

**Raking claws +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—7 damage

*Natural even hit:* Target takes a cumulative -2 penalty to disengagement checks until the end of the battle.

AC 24

PD 18

MD 22

HP 70

**EBON GAUNTLET INQUISITOR**

*"You don't need my mercy. You already have the mercy of your soft gods. I send you to them now."*

*7<sup>th</sup> level double-strength leader [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +10

**Rune dagger +12 vs. AC**—28 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target is weakened (save ends).

**C: Judgment of the Crusader +12 vs. MD (one or two nearby or far away enemies)**—28 psychic damage

*Natural odd hit:* The target lies prostrate in front of the inquisitor until the beginning of their next turn. While in this position, enemies gain a +4 attack bonus against the target.

*Call to action:* Once a round, as a quick action, the inquisitor can spur a nearby ally into making an at-will attack as a free action.

*Flight:* The inquisitor sits upon a flying throne. As a rule, it can't fly extremely high, but it can usually fly just a little faster than a victim can run.

Nastier Special

**R: Vision of the Echo +12 vs. MD (1 nearby or far away target)**—56 psychic damage, and the target is stunned until the beginning of the inquisitor's next turn. At the end of the battle, the target must roll a normal save; if it fails, it ages one year.

AC 22

PD 18

MD 21

HP 190



## GREATER EBON GAUNTLET SWORD

*Some swords are bigger than others.*

7<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +12

**Echoing blade +12 vs. AC**—23 damage

*Natural even hit:* A duplicate of the greater Ebon Gauntlet sword appears next to another nearby enemy and makes an identical echoing blade attack against that target. This effect can only occur once per turn. After the second attack, choose which greater Ebon Gauntlet sword remains on the battlefield and which \*pops\* away with an echo of crashing iron. (The sword's hit points and conditions aren't affected.)

**AC 23**

PD 20

MD 20

**HP 102**

## USING THE EBON GAUNTLET IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The Ebon Gauntlet can serve a number of roles in your campaign.

**Principal enemy:** It might act as a primary antagonist as your PCs struggle against the will of the Crusader. Unlike many antagonists, the Gauntlet isn't a static enemy. As the Crusader's elite force, the Gauntlet is always on the move. Members of the Ebon Gauntlet are not found guarding the Crusader's citadels or protecting his treasure; they are the forces sent to find artifacts long lost or to wipe out the leaders of troublesome foes. In a sense, the Ebon Gauntlet might be the PCs' dark shadows, the antagonistic parallel party that seeks some of the same power or goals as the PCs without the troublesome morals.

**Where villains go to recur!**: Are there enemies of the PCs who drifted out of the campaign instead of being slain once and for all? Maybe those previous adversaries of the PCs were taken by the Crusader and reconstructed as new members of the Ebon Gauntlet. The PCs might find a former adversary returned very much changed. Though the PCs faced and potentially defeated the foe only a few weeks or a month ago, the villain has spent years in the compressed time of the Echo and can return with

new purpose, new capabilities, and perfect memories of why they hate the PCs and should have them eliminated or tortured for the Crusader's greater glory.

**A crazy PC thing:** It is also possible that the PCs need information from someone in the middle of reconstruction. Is a valiant PC going to more or less volunteer for reconstruction in order to gain access to the soul they need before it is wiped out? Could be a very big way to change a character who is looking for a makeover!

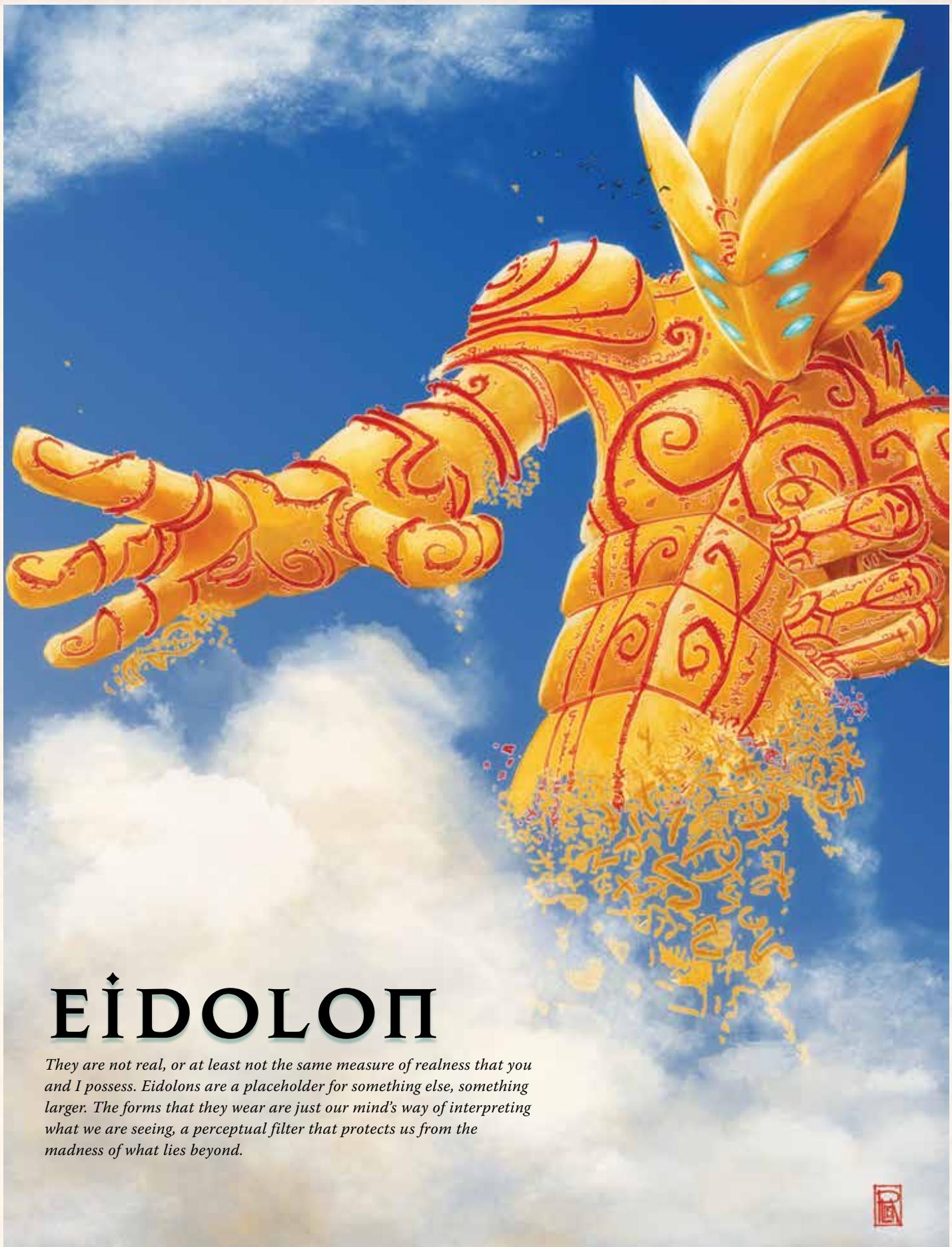
**Nemesis of the High Druid:** If the PCs have positive relationships with the High Druid, the Ebon Gauntlet makes an excellent major threat. Destruction of the land caused by careless exits from the Echo is an Ebon Gauntlet terror tactic. If the Gauntlet plans to slay half a community that is overly devoted to the Priestess or that has allowed a cultist or three to survive unnoticed, the Gauntlet doesn't care much about how badly its exit from the Echo will damage the area's farms and watershed for decades to come. How many desiccated forests, ash-choked rivers, and crumbling mountains would it take for the High Druid to notice that something was seriously wrong? Not many. In most campaigns, the Crusader and the High Druid may not come into direct opposition because they're focused on such different worlds. Not if the Ebon Gauntlet runs amok. A campaign in which the Ebon Gauntlet is wasting the world as a side effect of wasting the Crusader's enemies will put followers of the High Druid on their own style of crusade. Once the Druid's crusade has launched, even PCs with no connection to the High Druid would have to notice that the Ebon Gauntlet's movements have a way of making the Echo repeat itself in the world. The Crusader is one of those "I had to destroy the world to save it" types, and most player characters know which side to take in that style of fight.

**The cleansing of [your home town]:** As a fast-moving covert strike force, the Ebon Gauntlet is an ongoing threat to most any town, woodland community, nomadic camp, market square, monastery, or tavern that the PCs are fond of and rely on for moments of home-style roleplaying. An assault on a place the PCs love could introduce the Gauntlet, or ratchet up the hate after its agents have made their earlier appearances in ways that didn't seem all that threatening to the PCs.

Maybe it's not such a good idea to always kill or threaten the NPCs the PCs are fond of. So maybe it's not the NPCs themselves; maybe it's their loved ones. Someone ends up staked by an inquisitor. Someone else ends up carried off for reconstruction, and you've been summoned for vengeance and rescue, all for the sake of the people a reliable NPC cares about.



THE  
EBON  
GAVNTLET



# EIDOLON

*They are not real, or at least not the same measure of realness that you and I possess. Eidolons are a placeholder for something else, something larger. The forms that they wear are just our mind's way of interpreting what we are seeing, a perceptual filter that protects us from the madness of what lies beyond.*



## THE RIDDLE OF THE EIDOLONS

Eidolons come from outside this reality and are given shape by the expectations and fears of those that perceive them. They are neither angels nor demons, but rather powerful spirits whose single-minded pursuit of their own core realities takes precedence over any other concern.

Every eidolon is an embodiment of a specific concept. Given that the eidolons are creatures from inhuman dimensions, it's odd that the concepts they embody are mortal constructs such as honor, love, imagination, fear, destruction, despair, temptation, and remorse. It's possible that the idea that each eidolon embodies a concept is a translation error, an artifact of incompatible realities intersecting imperfectly, but if so, no one has been able to cut to the deeper truth. For the purposes of your *13<sup>th</sup> Age* campaign, eidolons are multi-purpose plot vehicles, embodiments of darkness or light depending on what the plot requires.

Many eidolons can "serve" the same concept, though they might have different interpretations of the concept or embody it slightly differently. For example, an eidolon of "strength" might serve "strength-of-leadership" but be an enemy of an eidolon who is a living embodiment of "strength-of-community" and friends with an eidolon of "strength-through-joy".

As these examples suggest, eidolons have less impact on the world than they might if they were in any sense unified. Eidolons famously entangle themselves in confrontations with opposing eidolons rather than managing to truly change the world. They all seem to know each other and sometimes refer to broader goals and internal factions. So far, the eidolons' self-referential vision means that they seldom rise to become a threat to the icons. The icons' servants, on the other hand, are less sanguine.

**Appearance:** Eidolons come in a range of shapes and sizes. An eidolon might have a double-row of blue eyes whether its form is that of a wild beast or a little girl. Another eidolon might have skin covered in golden swirls, or be made of coral-shaped flowing blood, or be covered in singing harlequin diamonds. Other icons briefly assume wildly divergent sizes, becoming huge for a few moments before shrinking down to human-sized, or appearing as small as a house cat before blossoming into its 'true' size. Each eidolon is different and can assume different forms (as mentioned later in the stats section), but each eidolon also has its own distinct "look" and "voice" that it possesses no matter what shape mortals perceive it to be taking. These distinctive personal appearances are part of the translation process by which mortal minds perceive the eidolon.

Life would be simpler if eidolon appearances mapped logically to the concepts they embodied. No such luck. An eidolon of despair might sometimes appear like a golden-eyed angel, while an eidolon of joy may sometimes look like a hell beast.

**Arrivals:** There are two sure ways that eidolons enter the realms of mortals. First, they sometimes appear as a sort of special add-on to summoning spells. It's not clear why a tiny fraction of summoning spells invite an eidolon into the world

rather than the intended creature. The Diabolist has hinted that she knows more than anyone else about the phenomenon but the knowledge doesn't appear to be doing her any good, so the rest of the icons aren't taking her seriously. Wizards claim that their summoning spells aren't as vulnerable to eidolon-leakage as other spellcasters, but they would say that, wouldn't they?

There's also a convincing argument that the distant gods somehow open the door to a few eidolons each year. Certainly many eidolons seem to function as proxies for deities that can't visit the world themselves. But once their initial holy or unholy missions are complete, eidolons sent into the world by the gods don't disappear like obedient summoned creatures, so it's not entirely clear who is using who in this relationship.

**Not entirely here:** Eidolons are made of some sort of weird soul-stuff. It may look like an eidolon is wearing armor, carrying weapons, and sporting a jaunty hat, but if an eidolon sets one of its objects down, or dies, all its "normal" possessions fade into mist. An eidolon killed while it was carrying a bag of real world coins would drop the coins, but don't count on that style of luck. Eidolons don't care much about physical possessions; greed and similar acquisitive concepts are notable exceptions to the list of concepts eidolons represent.

**Varied forms:** We've presented stats for eidolons in different forms at several different levels and across tiers. It's worth noting that all these stats could be used for the same eidolon, depending on what its current intentions are. Yes, this means that a specific eidolon could show up as a creature that is anywhere from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> level! Given the undying ability mentioned below, it's almost certain this will happen if PCs end up having lethal battles with an eidolon. This isn't how we usually handle monsters in *13<sup>th</sup> Age* . . . and eidolons aren't our usual monsters.

## THAT WHICH САПНОТ ДИЕ

Eidolons can't be killed, not by conventional means nor by unconventional means. They are mystically embedded in reality, part of the fabric of the universe itself.

However, just because they are immortal doesn't mean that clever adventurers couldn't find some way to trap one. It wouldn't be easy, would involve trickery and prior research and probably something unique to trap the eidolon in, but in theory it could be done. It's likely that trapping an eidolon probably involves knowing its true name, and each eidolon need a specific and inimitable form of trap. Which leads to the question—if you trap an eidolon and each eidolon is an embodiment of some aspect of the universe, what happens to the universe?

## UNIQUE EIDOLON ABILITIES

Eidolons have several unique abilities directly related to their status as aliens from an uncommon reality. These abilities don't even qualify as magic; they represent the power to pull back from reality and reorder things.

As a free action each round, an eidolon can use one of the three following abilities, which to them are as natural as breathing is to mortals. (GMs, due to these special abilities, eidolons are especially deadly when they have allies.) When including eidolons in battles, you don't need to (and probably shouldn't!) use these abilities all the time; they're better as a nasty surprise.

**Split reality:** The eidolon splits the party into different realities. Each player rolls a d4 for their character. That PC can only perceive and interact with the eidolon and with other characters who rolled the same number. That means PCs in different realities can't communicate or affect each other in any way. For the rest of the battle, each player rolls a d4 at the start of the round to see which reality their character is now in. At the start of each round, the eidolon can choose which version(s) of reality its allies are in.

**Warp time:** At the start of each round two combatants swap places in the initiative order as determined by the eidolon. Alternately, the eidolon warps the momentum of the battle and the escalation die value is determined at the start of the round with a d6 roll.

**Reshuffle space:** The eidolon swaps the position of two creatures in the battle at the start of the round. Alternately, if you are using minis and some sort of map tiles you can rearrange the tiles with the minis still on them.

Finally, all eidolons have the following ability, which plays well with the "recurring enemy" story.

**Undying:** When an eidolon drops to 0 hp it becomes disorporate. The eidolon isn't dead, just gone. It has lost its link to or focus upon the time and place where the adventurers are. If adventurers drive off an eidolon repeatedly it will probably just stay away. Eidolons can be vindictive and hold grudges, but they have many possible worlds to interact with and if a mortal proves too troublesome the eidolon will move on. In general eidolons need defeating on three separate occasions to convince them to stay away forever.

## USEFUL TOOLS

Eidolons are free agents that can surface most anywhere you need a plot complication. Did the PCs wipe out the evil cult too quickly? Maybe the cult's eidolon was away and will now return to hunt them. Have a 5 on an icon relationship roll that needs explaining? The appearance of an eidolon at cross-purposes to a PC might be a fine complication to accompany a 5, particularly if the eidolon is at least temporarily involved with the forces or plans of an icon.

## EIDOLON IN HUMANOID FORM

*It moves like a woman, but the proportions are all wrong. It has arms, but from elbow to shoulder they are empty space. "Her" legs move and her hips sway, but her gait doesn't match the speed with which she moves through space. More than anything it reminds you of a marionette, with the puppeteer some vast cosmic force.*

*Triple-strength 1<sup>st</sup> level troop [SPIRIT]*

Initiative: +6

**Dark-matter fist +6 vs. AC—15 damage**

*Natural even hit:* Choose a damage type for the attack: acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison, or thunder.

*Natural odd hit:* Choose a damage type for the attack: force, holy, negative energy, or psychic.

**R: Mind-shattering whisper +6 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)—15 psychic damage**

*Miss:* 5 psychic damage.

**C: Transreality tendrils +6 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby or far away enemies)—8 negative energy damage**

AC	<b>16</b>
PD	15
MD	13
<b>HP 81 (see Undying)</b>	

## ATTACHED EIDOLON

*Sometimes an eidolon adopts a mortal who possesses an abundance of their desired concept. At best, it's socially awkward. At worst, the mortal is going to need new friends who measure up to their angel/demon buddy.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level troop [SPIRIT]*

Initiative: +7

**Sharp claws, sharper teeth +8 vs. AC—10 holy damage**

**C: Long tongue +8 vs. AC (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—3 ongoing acid and holy damage**

**Change shape:** An attached eidolon can look like any medium- or small-sized normal beast or humanoid creature. It generally changes shape to blend in, choosing to look like a pet or attractive humanoid companion of the one who summoned them.

**Flight:** Attached eidolons can fly, but not well. If their current shape doesn't have wings, it can grow some as a move action.

**Terrifying glare:** Twice per battle as a quick action; the eidolon can terrify each enemy engaged with it that has 30 hp or fewer (they are dazed and unable to use the escalation die until the end of their next turn) as a fear effect.

Aid Another

The eidolon's presence can provide aid to its allies, especially the one to which it's attached. Once per round as a quick action, one of the eidolon's nearby allies can gain one of the following benefits:

*Winning ways:* The ally's crit range expands by 1 until the end of the battle.

*Wide smile:* The ally gains a +1 attack bonus until the end of the battle.

**AC 19**  
**PD 17 HP 45 (see Undying)**  
**MD 16**

## EIDOLON IN WAR FORM

*A mass of weapons and roiling energy, it folds and unfolds into new configurations as it moves. In silhouette, it somehow is still humanoid, but in substance it is an impossible amalgamation of tools of war.*

*Triple-strength 4<sup>th</sup> level troop [SPIRIT]*

Initiative: +10

**Scissors, scythes, and chains +9 vs. AC—28 damage**

*Natural 16+:* The target takes 14 extra damage.

*Natural 18+:* As above, and the eidolon grabs the target if doesn't already have a creature grabbed.

**R: See the awful truth +9 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)—18 psychic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends)**

*Psychic link:* Each time a hit enemy rolls the save against weakened, one of its allies of the eidolon's choice) takes 14 psychic damage.

**C: The awful nature of reality +9 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—The target is hampered (save ends); each time the target fails the save, it takes 14 psychic damage**

**AC 22**  
**PD 16 HP 162 (see Undying)**  
**MD 16**

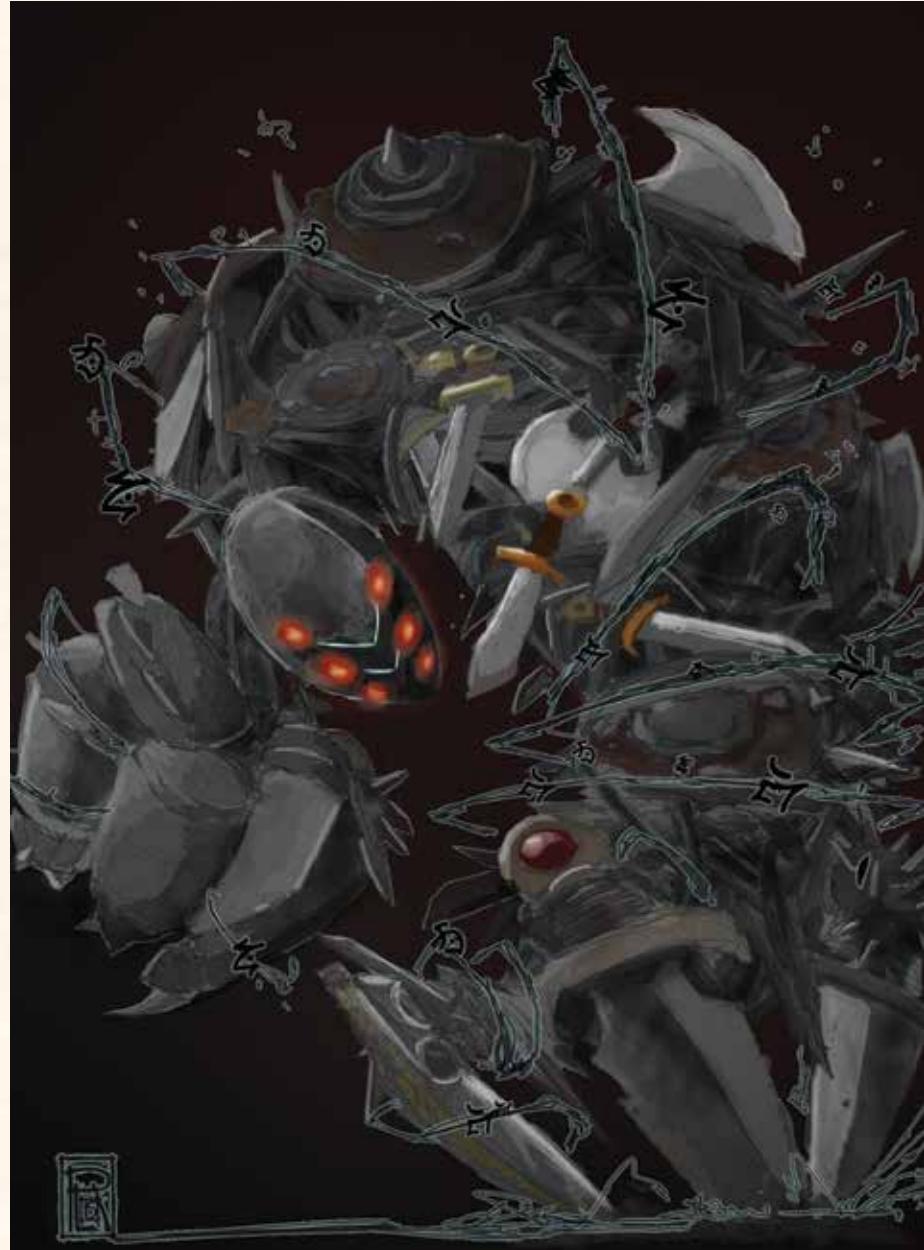
## EIDOLON IN HUNTING FORM

*It resembles a beast. That is what your mind is telling you. Your eyes are reporting something far more horrifying.*

*Triple-strength 6<sup>th</sup> level troop [SPIRIT]*

Initiative: +13

**Slashing jaws +11 vs. AC—60 damage**



*Fading:* The first creature the eidolon hits with an attack each battle must start making last-gasp saves. After the fourth failure, the target fades away from reality—they are not dead, just gone. Erased. The eidolon can bring them back at will, another eidolon might also be able to retrieve them, and a quest by the adventurers to another realm might retrieve them.

**AC 22**  
**PD 22 HP 270 (see Undying)**  
**MD 18**

## EIDOLON IN GUARDIAN FORM

*This eidolon has pledged itself to the service of the gods, guarding their places of worship and relaying messages to those whom the gods wish to guide or chastise.*

*Triple-strength 9<sup>th</sup> level troop [SPIRIT]*

Initiative: +16

**Empowered weapon +14 vs. AC (two attacks)**—70 holy damage

*Both attacks hit different targets:* The eidolon can make its *divine proclamation* this turn as a quick action, but it is still only once per battle.

[once per battle] **C: Divine proclamation +14 vs. PD (all non-immortal creatures within the sound of its voice)**—25 thunder damage, and 25 ongoing holy damage and target is weakened (save ends both)

*Miss:* 25 holy damage.

[once per battle] **R: Word of judgement +14 vs. MD**—150 holy damage

*Miss:* The attack can be used again this battle.

*Flight:* This eidolon chooses to manifest wings, though its ability to fly has very little to do with flapping them.

*Chosen ones:* PCs with positive icon relationships with the Priestess roll those dice at the start of the battle, until the end of the battle subtract the total rolled amount from any holy damage the adventurer would otherwise take. This includes holy damage from creatures that are not the eidolon.

### Nastier Special

*Mission from the gods:* Until the eidolon makes its *divine proclamation*, natural odd attack rolls against it miss.

**AC 25**

**PD 24**

**MD 20**

**HP 520 (see Undying)**

## EIDOLONS AND THE ICONS

**Archmage:** “With the greatest respect, Sir . . . interacting with these so-called ‘living ideas’ is something I have found stimulating, but I wouldn’t read too much into their proclamations. Raw magic seeking to shape itself into forms that we are familiar with is simply the universe’s homage to us. I would take no profound decisions based on what they say.”

—Mattias “Maelstrom” Pennington, wizard and genius

**Diabolist:** The Diabolist doesn’t actually understand anything more about eidolons than anyone else. She just knows that they seem to be generated occasionally as a side effect of hellholes. Unfortunately, they’re not always on her side.

**Elf Queen:** Eidolons are often attracted to holy or consecrated sites like iron to a lodestone, so the elves watch over old temples or holy stone circles in their realm. The Elf Queen considers eidolons to be spies from a land she would rather not have associated with her realm.

**Great Gold Wyrm:** The paladins of the Great Gold Wyrm treat eidolons on a case-by-case basis. Some eidolons are well-known to them and are allies, others are eternal enemies. The golden paladins maintain a list of the usual manifested forms of eidolons that are their enemies.

**Priestess:** The Red Sisters of the Cathedral wait for eidolons to manifest within the mighty structure, and serve their needs. They work closely with guardian-form eidolons, and through them defends many holy sites that are dedicated to the gods of light. Eidolons appearing elsewhere in Santa Cora are usually carrying messages from the gods, or have come in response to the prayers of the faithful, or are there to report directly to the Priestess. Eidolons that serve the dark gods avoid the Cathedral.

## ICONIC EIDOLONS

While guardian-form eidolons seem attracted to the service of the Priestess, eidolons can end up allied with any icon that serves the same interests as they do.

Eidolons who act in the interests of an icon have unusual weaknesses and strengths related to that icon, eidolons usually call icon-related oddities ‘iconic tests’. How much of these icon-related ‘tests’ are due to the eidolons being mythically linked to an icon and how much is a role that the eidolon is playing is left to you as the GM to decide.

Eidolons usually go out of their way to reveal any weaknesses they have as part of their ‘test’ of mortals.

**Archmage**—Wizard spells do double damage against the eidolon (crits do triple). Wizard spells used creatively against the eidolon have additional effects depending on the whim of the GM.

**Crusader**—The eidolons’ attacks do double damage against those who have positive relationships with the Diabolist and sorcerers with the *infernal heritage* talent.

**Diabolist**—If you are willing to owe a mystically-enforced favor to the Diabolist, you can make this eidolon weakened (-4 attack and defenses) until the end of your turn.



**Dwarf King**—The eidolon does double damage against those using magical items, unless they have recently tithed to the Dwarf King.

**Elf Queen**—The eidolon takes double damage from attacks made by bards, and attacks made using bows (but not from crossbows, which do their normal damage).

**Emperor**—Adventurers who fight side-by-side with each other (or back-to-back) gain +2 to all their defenses while doing so.

**Great Gold Wyrm**—Attacks by dragonics, breath weapons, and attacks from sorcerers with the *metallic protector heritage* talent deal double damage to this eidolon.

**High Druid**—The eidolon takes double damage from animal companions, and from druids in beast form. Plants near this eidolon grow more verdantly, flowers blooming in its presence.

**Lich King**—Spend a recovery to weaken (-4 attack and defense) the eidolon until the end of your turn. Well, we say 'spend' but what you are actually doing is sacrificing a sliver of your life-energy to the Lich King.

**Orc Lord**—If the attacker subtracts a die from their damage dice before rolling them, it takes double damage. The extra die of damage must be used to harm something or somebody relating to cities or civilization (*instead of rolling 3d8 damage you'd roll 2d8x2 damage, and deal 1d8 damage to a window, book, mayor, etc.*). The GM and player should work together to determine what a 'die of damage' means to whatever is getting smashed or slashed as part of the attack.

**Priestess**—If since the start of the Eidolon's last turn, any adventurer has received healing from somebody who has a positive or conflicted relationship with the Priestess, then the Eidolon is dazed (-4 attack) until the end of its next turn.

**Prince of Shadows**—Sneak attack damage dice for attacks against this eidolon are two die types higher (1d4 becomes 1d8, 2d6 becomes 2d10, etc.). Rogues can *shadow walk* without needing to make a roll first.

**The Three**—This eidolon takes double damage from poison, lightning, or fire attacks, as well as from attacks from sorcerers with the *chromatic destroyer heritage* talent deal double damage to this eidolon.

## Names

Eidolons prefer to choose names that have meaning and relate to their tasks and purpose. Some choose simple names like Phalor, Legion, or Riddle. Some eidolons choose names designed to sound important like Primus, Revelation, or Ghost-Dancer. Eidolons with a darker bent choose to name themselves things like Thrash, Lament, or Grieve.

It is said that if you ever learn the hidden *true name* of an eidolon you have a form of control over it. That would explain why the Priestess has encouraged every tavern and public house in Santa Cora to post the names of some of the darker eidolons that have crossed her. Santa Cora is a hostile environment for eidolons that run afoul of the Priestess.

## BLESSINGS AND CURSES

Some eidolons come into the realm with the intention of testing heroes; when they find a hero that exemplifies the concept that the eidolon embodies, it will (after proper trials) grant a blessing. The duration of each blessing is up to the GM.

### BLESSINGS

**Runemarked Blessing:** You gain a rune upon your forehead. One battle per day you can activate the rune as a free action to give benefits to one item that you are wearing or wielding as if it had a tier-appropriate rune upon it. The rune normally looks like a faded burn or old scar but it lights up when used.

**Supernatural Aid:** Once per day you can roll two d20s for a skill check. It's obvious to anybody witnessing your act that you had supernatural aid. Discuss ahead of time with the GM what would be an appropriate special effect (angels and trumpets, ghostly helpers, glowing with a baleful light, etc.) when you use this blessing.

**Preternatural Endurance:** Until the end of your next level you are no longer affected by one condition. While you carry this blessing, your body shows signs of abnormality; discuss with the GM how that manifests (armor-like metal strands woven through your skin, your outline occasionally blurring, your voice has a strange reverb effect, etc.). Roll a d10 to see which immunity you gain:

1. *Fearless:* Never affected by fear.
2. *Iron will:* Never confused.
3. *Liberty:* Never hampered.
4. *Nigh invulnerable:* Never vulnerable.
5. *Robust:* Never weakened.
6. *Sureness:* Never dazed.
7. *Swift:* Never stuck.

8. *Unfazeable:* Never stunned.

9. *Watchfulness:* Never helpless.

10. *Exemplar (permanent):* You are immune to some banal irritation of mortal life . . . you never need to wash again and are eternally clean, or you never suffer from the effects of non-magical weather or environmental conditions, or you never get lost if you know the route to where you are going, or you never need to sleep again, or you need neither food nor water to survive, etc.

### CURSES

Who are we kidding? The PCs are more likely to be cursed by an eidolon than blessed, right? Maybe the PCs killed the eidolon a couple times. Or maybe a PC stands against everything the eidolon embodies. Okay. We've got it covered.

Eidolon curses are usually in the form of "If you X, then you will Y." They're not always terribly damaging, as curses go. The eidolon's dislocation from standard reality probably prevents them from knowing exactly how to inflict curses that are dreadful to normal mortals.

Here are some examples:

*If you fail to show hospitality, you will not sleep until you have made amends.*

*If you boast of your prowess in battle, you will give a weapon away to the next child you meet.*

*If you are rude to a child, others will be rude to you for a week.*

*If you become drunk in a tavern, you will be unable to leave until you have cleaned the kitchens.*

*If you eat horse meat, you will offer rides on your back to the next ten strangers you meet.*

Eidolon's curses can only be removed by another eidolon or by becoming an exemplar of whatever concept the eidolon that cursed you embodied.

## BLESSINGS AND TREASURE

The bonuses from eidolons' blessings do not stack with bonuses from magic items. Blessings and curses are a way to bestow rewards outside of traditional treasure and magic items and to give risk outside of mere death. If you prefer you could have eidolons simply make an item magical or remove the magic from an item as an alternate way of handling treasure and risk.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Bliss**—An eidolon of joy wants to treat the party to a night of carousing and celebration, but can they keep up with the spirit? Why has it selected them? What unearthly delights will the party be subjected to? As a twist the eidolon has an equally powerful opposite number, which wishes to destroy those that follow the eidolon of joy.

**Exploit**—An eidolon of adventure gives the party a map to an island on the Iron Sea. It will calm the sea's waves, allowing them to travel there and back again. The only problem is that the treasure is protected by an eidolon of guardianship, a fact the first eidolon deliberately failed to mention.

**Fated**—One of the adventurers discovers that their parents were brought together by an eidolon in order to beget them, and the mentor who sponsored their learning to be an adventurer was an eidolon. The adventurer has been groomed for something great, but what? Whatever the reason is, they are the subject of a prophecy that a church (and its paladins) is willing to commit murder for in order to avoid it being fulfilled.

**Herald**—An eidolon approaches the party and hands them a sealed and coded message. It has selected them to deliver the message to the other side of the Dragon Empire. If they refuse this quest the eidolon threatens to curse them, but as an enticement, it offers to bless them if they deliver the message. The delivery of the message is a ruse to draw the eidolon's enemies out of hiding: the party will be dogged by assassins and obstacles all the way.

**Insight**—An eidolon has given the people of a village a prophecy that the party will save them from a dragon, and has now gone off to arrange for a dragon to attack. Can the heroes save the village by defeating the dragon, or getting to the dragon first and convincing it not to listen to the eidolon?

**Integrity**—An eidolon appears on the path in front of the party. It seeks to test the heroes to see how closely they match with the concept it embodies. If they pass the test it will aid them, but failure will cause it to attack. Along the side of the road are the corpses of those who have previously failed the test; if the PCs pass they can loot the corpses, but would that be considered honorable? Maybe that's the real test?

**Motley**—The bones of a titan are strewn across a valley that the adventurers need to cross. An eidolon of chaos and destruction appears and promises the party great riches if they dig under the shin bone. Buried under the shin bone is an ancient evil that has wards around it to stop eidolons approaching, but the characters are able to enter the area, which is a tomb. It holds treasure, but the party risks unleashing a plague of undead if they disturb it.

**Quietude**—An eidolon of peace wishes to test the party. It will bless them if they are able to attend a high-class party and not start a fight. If they fail it will attack them the following morning. Unknown to the PCs, a rival (and despised) band of adventurers has been set an identical test. Can the adventurers get themselves into the party, comport themselves with dignity, and not start a bloodbath when they are forced to make nice with their arch-rivals?



# ELEMENTAL BEAST

*It's one thing when you're dealing with a pack of wild dogs attacking farm animals. Ugly work, but standard fare for a few coins. It's another thing altogether when those dogs are part of some fire . . . thing and burn the ground that you're walking on.*

—Ramdal Minewalker, dwarven adventurer

## LOCATION MATTERS

There are many types of magic in and around the Dragon Empire. Many of these magics manipulate the same basic elements: fire, earth, wind and water. The effects accumulate, and leftover magical energy and powerful natural events can leave deep and not always obvious marks on the world. In some places, they forge a deep connection between a site or area and one of the four elements.

In some of these locations, the boundaries between the world and the parallel dimensions of the elements break down. Crossing over entirely is seldom a possibility, but connections between objects and creatures in one world with their counterparts in another world can have powerful consequences for animals and beasts from the area.

Occasionally an elemental entity's energy crosses the boundary and infuses itself in its counterpart, giving an animal a touch of elemental magic. The elemental link isn't necessarily permanent, and if a creature leaves the area of magical potency its elemental abilities will eventually fade away. The planar energy bonded to the animal often isn't self-aware or intelligent like a true elemental and isn't capable of acting independently of the creature to which it's connected . . . at least not at first. After several years being connected to a living creature, the elemental energy may become a self-aware entity that is able to act separately. After the bonded animal dies, the elemental becomes entirely independent and can grow or change in whatever way an elemental might do or even find another animal to bind itself to.

Mundane animals benefit from the bond, becoming deadlier predators or becoming difficult to prey upon. Elemental beasts are often at the top of the local food chain, rivaling magical creatures and dire animals in their ability to carve out a niche for themselves in the wilderness.

At rest, elemental beasts look like any other member of their species. Careful observers may detect hints of the truth. For example, flame-touched shimmer the air around them with heat, earth-touched have somewhat metallic (and therefore sparking) fur, or stonelike flesh, and so on. As you'll see from the stats below, their elemental powers become more apparent when they're hunting or fighting.

## WHERE TO FIND ELEMENTAL BEASTS

Before we get into the case-by-case list of the most common places where elemental energy may have created an elemental beast, it's worth noting that the terrain you can see may not be the terrain that creates the link! Any location that has been subjected to powerful elemental forces can hold a link to that type of elemental energy from other worlds. For example, an open field that was once flooded by a river may have a strong water connection. Or a forest that burned down during a thunderstorm could be linked to the planes of air and fire. Given the natural and supernatural changes on the land over the ages, it's possible to encounter elemental beasts in terrain that seems to have nothing to do with that type of energy. The elements may tell the story of past eruptions and the elemental beasts are their messengers!

**Fire** elemental beasts can be found near volcanoes, active or dormant, as well as any place that has seen a large fire in its history or is connected magically to fire or intense heat. For example, a burning building, a huge bonfire, a forest that burned in another age, a ruin where a wizard cast an empowered fireball spell, or the grave of a notorious arsonist.

**Water** elemental beasts can be found near any body of water, be it river, lake, or sea. Underground sources of water are not exempt either, so water beasts in or around an aquifer or well are possible. Other places include flood plains, areas that get excessive amounts of rain or snow, an ancient dried-up sea, boiling geysers, or the hill where a magically conjured wave washed away a farming village.

**Earth** elemental beasts seem like the rarest variety, but that's only because normal people don't venture often into places where they can be found. Underground caves, deep canyons, and craggy mountains aren't uncommon, and places that have had mudslides or rockslides, swirling sand dunes, a medusa's stone garden, or an earthquake zone all generate the creatures as well.

**Air** elemental beasts can be found almost anywhere above ground and not within a body of water, but are most common in places of heavy winds and thunder. Other possibilities include high mountain peaks, the wind-blown river deltas of the Inland Sea, the still-scarred land where a typhoon or hurricane tore the landscape asunder, and places where powerful druids summoned wind and thunder and wind and thunder gleefully answered the call.

## MAKING ELEMENTAL BEASTS

Any creature with the [BEAST] type can become an elemental beast, such as the wolf or bear from the *13<sup>th</sup> Age Core Rulebook*. Want your hunting spider to have a little more oomph? Make it an elemental beast. We're presenting several animals here that make good base creatures for elemental beast abilities, but you can choose any other type of beast that works for you, just follow these guidelines.

The base creature loses whatever resistances and vulnerabilities it had and gains those listed for its elemental affinity. It also gains between one and three elemental abilities for that affinity from the options below.

With just one ability, as well as a new vulnerability and resistance, creatures that become elemental beasts aren't powerful or changed enough to warrant adjusting their level for purposes of creating encounters. It's more like adding a small nastier special to a monster which may be evened out by the new vulnerability, depending on the player characters' energy damage capabilities. However, you may want to up-level beasts with two or three abilities depending on those abilities and your desired level of difficulty, especially if you're creating a battle with several elemental beasts.

For balance, simplicity, pacing, and playability, don't use more than three abilities for an elemental beast.

## BEASTS ONLY

Only beasts seem to forge the link across the worlds to elemental other-selves. Some druids say that when it happens to people, those people become druids with a connection to the land. Some wizards say that's nonsense, and if it were possible for a human or elf to link with an elemental-self, the elemental would take over and they'd become a full elemental. Maybe a player character's One Unique Thing will reveal another truth?

## POWERS OF AIR

All elemental beasts with an affinity for air gain the following three abilities:

- *Flight*: This creature can fly.
- *Resist thunder 16+*
- *Resist lightning 16+*

All air elemental beasts have *vulnerability: force*.

In addition, choose at least one and no more than three additional abilities from the following list.

- *Swirling winds*: When a ranged attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll 2d20 and take the lowest result.
- *Dust devil*: Make the following attack as a standard action.
  - C: Swirling dust devil +5 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—The target is dazed (save ends).
- *Gust front*: When this creature rolls a natural even hit with an attack, it can pop free from the target of that attack.
- *Static field*: Each enemy engaged with this creature at the start of its turn takes lightning damage equal to this creature's level x 3.
- *Lightning rod*: Any attack against this creature's nearby ally that deals lightning damage instead targets this creature.

## POWERS OF EARTH

All elemental beasts with an affinity for earth gain the following three abilities.

- *Roots of earth*: When an effect would move this creature, roll a save. On a success, the creature doesn't move.
- *Resist force 16+*
- *Resist poison 16+*

All earth elemental beasts have *vulnerability: thunder*.

In addition, choose at least one and no more than three additional abilities from the following list.

- *Indomitable*: This creature gains a +2 bonus to MD.
- *Skin of stone*: This creature takes normal damage from critical hits. In addition, once per battle as a free action, it can take only half damage from an attack that hits.
- *Earthsea*: The creature gains the *burrower* trait if it does not already have it.
- *Rockslide*: When this creature moves before making an attack, it deals additional damage equal to twice its level on a hit.
- *Mending earth*: Once per battle as a standard action, this creature can heal 15 hp or 20% of its maximum health, whichever is higher. It can only use this ability while it is in contact with the ground.

## POWERS OF FIRE

All elemental beasts with an affinity for fire gain the following abilities.

- *Blazing brighter*: When this creature is targeted by fire or lightning attacks, it gains a cumulative +1 bonus to attack rolls until the end of the battle (max: +4)
- *Resist fire 16+*
- *Resist lightning 16+*

All fire elemental beasts have *vulnerability: cold*.

In addition, choose at least one and no more than three additional abilities from the following list.

- *Ashen earth*: Each enemy engaged with this creature at the start of its turn takes ongoing fire damage equal to this creature's level x 2.
- *Magma skin*: When an enemy hits this creature with a melee attack, it takes damage equal to this creature's level x 3.
- *Burning breath*: This creature can make the following attack as a standard action.
  - C: Burning breath +5 + level vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—d6 x level fire damage
- *Obsidian shards*: When this creature is hit with cold damage, it gains temporary hit points equal to its level x 4.
- *Heat exhaustion*: When an enemy engaged with this creature heals using a recovery, it gains only half the normal healing.

## POWERS OF WATER

All elemental beasts with an affinity for water gain the following abilities.

- *Fluid motion*: This creature rerolls all natural 2 attack rolls.
- *Resist cold 16+*
- *Resist acid 16+*

All water elemental beasts have *vulnerability: fire*.

In addition, choose at least one and no more than three additional abilities from the following list.

- *Torrent*: When an enemy intercepts this creature, it takes cold damage equal to this creature's level x 3.
- *Flow like water*: This creature can disengage freely without needing to roll a disengage check.
- *Blood streams freely*: While this creature is staggered, its crit range expands by 2.
- *Fish in the sea*: While fighting underwater or in a watery environment (heavy rain, knee-deep swamp), this creature gains a +1 bonus to all defenses and to saving throws.
- *Splashback*: This creature gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against creatures that attacked it during the last round.

## RAT SWARM

*Swarms are good for representing large groups of small angry animals like rats, bats, or monkeys.*

*1<sup>st</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]*

Initiative: +4

**Bleeding bite +6 vs. AC**—5 damage

*Natural 16+:* The target also takes 5 ongoing damage.

*Small and nimble:* Rat swarms gain a +5 bonus to disengage checks and take only half damage from opportunity attacks.

### Nastier Specials

*Disease carrier:* When an enemy engaged with the rat swarm heals using a recovery, they must reroll the highest die and take the second roll.

*Overwhelming distraction:* Enemies engaged with the rat swarm take a -2 penalty to attack any other enemy than the rat swarm.

**AC 18**

**PD 14**

**HP 24**

**MD 11**

## VENOMOUS SNAKE

*Why did it have to be snakes (or lizards or salamanders or frogs)?*

*1<sup>st</sup> level troop [BEAST]*

Initiative: +4

**Swift strike +6 vs. AC**—3 damage, and 3 ongoing poison damage

*Special:* The venomous snake gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls with this ability against creatures with a lower initiative.

**R: Venom spit +6 vs. AC**—3 ongoing poison damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is dazed (save ends).

*Erratic movement:* Venomous snakes can't be intercepted.

### Nastier Specials

*Poisonous skin:* When an enemy hits the venomous snake with a melee attack, that enemy takes 3 poison damage.

*Shed skin:* As a free action during its turn, the venomous snake can take 4 damage to end any ongoing effect on it.

**AC 17**

**PD 15**

**HP 25**

**MD 11**

## BADGER

*Small, furry, and much more dangerous than it initially appears. See also: wolverines, weasels, and polecats.*

*1<sup>st</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]*

Initiative: +5

**Tearing chomp +6 vs. AC**—4 damage

*Miss:* 2 damage.

*Natural even hit:* The badger can make a *kicking claw* attack against the target as a free action.

**Kicking claw +6 vs. AC**—3 damage

*Burrower:* The badger can burrow (see page 200 of the core rulebook). It gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls the turn after it emerges from the ground. It can begin a battle underground.

*Persistent predator:* When an enemy disengages from a badger, the badger rolls a save. On a success, the badger can immediately move to engage that enemy as a free action.

### Nastier Specials

*Little ball of rage:* While the badger is staggered, it deals an 2 extra damage, hit or miss.

*Thick hide:* The badger ignores the first 4 damage dealt to it each turn.

**AC 16**

**PD 15**

**HP 34**

**MD 11**

## GREAT CAT

*Lions and tigers and cougars (and panthers and cheetahs), oh my.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]*

Initiative: +7

**Pounce and rend +8 vs. AC**—10 damage

*Special:* If the great cat moves before making this attack, it takes a -1 penalty to the attack roll but gains a +4 bonus to the damage.

**Paw swat +8 vs. AC**—8 damage, and the target pops free from the great cat

*Powerful leap:* When the escalation die is odd, the great cat can jump across the battlefield as a move action, avoiding obstacles and dangers. It can't be intercepted when leaping.

### Nastier Special

*Stunning roar:* As a quick action when the escalation die is even, the great cat can make the following attack.

**C: Unnerving roar +8 vs. MD (1d3 enemies engaged with it)**—The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against the great cat until the end of the great cat's next turn.

**AC 18**

**PD 18**

**HP 48**

**MD 14**

## Giant Bird of Prey

*Giant birds are large enough for smaller humanoids to ride on, and they're able to carry away a goat, sheep, or similar small animal. This entry covers many enormous predatory birds including giant eagles and hawks.*

*4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]*

Initiative: +7

**Beak and claws +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—7 damage

**Diving strike +9 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Limited use:* The giant bird of prey must move before making this attack.

**Wing buffet +8 vs. PD**—7 damage, and the target pops free from the giant bird

*Natural even hit:* The target is also dazed until the end of its next turn.

*Flight:* The giant bird of prey flies fast and strong, but needs a little time to maneuver. It can't be intercepted during its movement except by a truly amazing enemy flyer.

### Nastier Special

**Talon grab +9 vs. AC**—11 damage, and the giant bird of prey grabs the target unless the target is large or bigger. Until the target escapes, it moves with the bird of prey when it moves. If it breaks free while in the air, it takes 4d6 damage from the fall.

**AC 19**

**PD 18**

**MD 14**

**HP 50**

## Building Battles

Any fight where you might use an animal is an opportunity to insert an elemental beast. They fit naturally into any sort of wilderness encounter, regardless of locale. Settled locations also work as it's easy enough to have water-aspected snakes in the sewers or air wolves hunting the livestock of a farming community. Elemental beasts can be pets, pests, or guard creatures just as any mundane version of that animal might be.

Elemental beasts battling alongside other creatures, humanoids or not, that share the same elemental affinity is a natural fit. This is doubly so in an environment that suits the element, such as water creatures in a swamp.

**Fire** elemental beasts are natural partners for creatures like hellhounds, kobolds who worship the Red, orc raiders and siege masters burning down settlements in the north, or fire giants in the Giantwalk Mountains.

**Water** elemental beasts are at home working with the sahuagin lurking in the Fangs, pirates on the high seas, troglodytes in their festering swamps, or as servants to a swamp hag, picking off those who survive the initial encounter.

**Earth** creatures are often found near or with dwarven patrols near the Undermarch, gargoyles in lost ruins, derro in the deep earth, or gelatinous polyhedrons who have a hard time digesting the earthen affinity beasts.

Common team-ups for **Air** creatures include rocs and giant eagles in the high mountains, assisting Blue sorcerers near Drakkenhall, or lingering near the infamous harpies of the Owl Barrens.

## Elemental Beasts and the Icons

**Archmage:** Wizards and other agents of the Archmage have been attempting to artificially create elemental beasts in controlled conditions like laboratories as well as wilderness areas for some time. The stated reasons for the experiments have been wildly inconsistent, and the truth of the matter is a mystery likely only known to the Archmage and a few trusted confidants . . . or perhaps to a manipulative traitor.

**Elf Queen:** The Elf Queen has long allowed, and even encouraged, elemental beasts within the Queen's Wood, where they are sought after pets and guardian animals. If you want to locate an elemental beast that's used to being around people, or at least elven people, try the Court of Stars.

**Orc Lord:** Elemental beasts make useful tools for the Orc Lord's various campaigns. Yes, there are some difficulties and casualties incurred while capturing them, but that's true of any dangerous beast. Orcish animal-tamers prefer fire beasts to burn out stubborn defenders and earth beasts to collapse town walls.

**The Three:** Dragons find elemental beasts to be fantastically filling meals. The sensation as they sit in the stomach is described as "tingly" from the elemental connection. Fortunately for dragons associated with the Three near Drakkenhall, the thunderous magic wielded by blue sorcerers tends to encourage the creation of air-aspected beasts.

*We'd say they're a little bit country and a little bit rock'n'roll, but that would be anachronistic. Say instead, that they're a little bit wilderness and a little bit well-coordinated drumming and show tunes.*

## FAVNS OF DIFFERENT STRIPES

Fauns weren't part of the race selection in core 13<sup>th</sup> Age and they aren't part of our traditional inheritance from our d20-rolling ancestors. Jonathan's perspective, as expressed in the Introduction on page 7, is that we should empower GMs to introduce fauns during the campaign, so that the arrival of this new race, or these new monsters, can affect the campaign as something new rather than show up with an established backstory. But that's not what all GMs want, some GMs want pieces of a larger story they can fit in as something already established.

Therefore we're presenting two possible story approaches to fauns. The first, Wild Fauns, posits fauns as new arrivals in the Dragon Empire, brought along by the resurgence of the power of the High Druid. The second approach, Eclectic Hybrids, establishes fauns as a familiar part of the Dragon Empire, though not often seen in the highly populated cities.

The monster stats that follow the story-stuff can mostly be used regardless of which approach your current campaign prefers. A couple of the stat blocks lean in the direction of one story or the other and would benefit from cosmetic changes to dovetail with the other tale.

## WILD FAVNS

Fauns aren't universally devoted to the High Druid. That would be boring. But according to the Druid herself, conditions near the Empire wouldn't have allowed fauns to thrive until she rekindled natural powers that the Emperor and the Archmage have long struggled to suppress.

Along this story line, fauns are just now entering the Dragon Empire, possibly on foot down through the Dragon Wood, or riding in on a forested Koru behemoth and jumping off in the Wild Wood, or poling in on a barge on the Eld, or taking another route that seems



# FAVN

likely to put them into early contact with the player characters!

**Mood and mode:** These newly arrived fauns don't have to be wild, actually. They may be quite civilized, it's not as if we really need another barbaric faction. But if they are civilized, their civilization is built as part of the wilderness.

If the High Druid is warlike and villainous in your campaign, fauns may be too. Or they could be immigrants who are being wrong-footed by a belligerent icon, pushed into confrontations they're not actually committed to.

**Personality:** Use any aspects of the next section that appeal to you or develop your fauns' personality based on an NPC or player character's lead.

## ECLECTIC HYBRIDS

If fauns have been in and around the Dragon Empire for quite some time, think of them as composite creatures: civilized and wild, mystical and natural, goat-legged and human-armed, antelope-horned and human-faced.

Like halflings, they frequently live in villages. Unlike most halflings, they're also comfortable living entirely in the wild.

Like centaurs, fauns don't have a taste for farming. Being so tied to one section of land is too much like slavery. When fauns live in villages, they aim to support themselves hunting, fishing, crafting, and performing, with only a smallish farm set-up that frequently hires non-fauns to handle the agricultural work.

Also like centaurs, fauns that spend time in stone and cobbled cities frequently choose to wear special shoes. Faun-shoes are iron or bronze footwear for their hooves. That's not necessary in Concord, but walking the other seven cities won't be comfortable for long.

Unlike centaurs (*13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary*, page 34) fauns aren't given to grand philosophical stances expressed by the group. The separate destinies you'll see in the stat blocks below are individual orientations, not group affiliations like the centaur's tribal groups of *hoof, hand, and heart*.

**Wandering:** A few young fauns, and some older fauns, leave their homes and go wandering, living in ways they wouldn't want to try around their relatives and kin. Some of these rebels never go home. A few fall into evil ways, a few get mixed up in the affairs of icons, and a small number become adventurers. All but the worst are welcome to come home eventually, assuming they can find wherever their clan now calls home.

**Bardic reputations:** Poetry, satire, scandalous skits, epic poems, love ballads and heroic tales (mostly about *other* people's crazy battles) are all hugely popular among fauns. A faun NPC who seems of little account to power-focused adventurers may have a lot of sway in his society thanks to artistry fauns may or may not be willing to share with outsiders. Talented human and half-elven bards may eventually enjoy studying with fauns, but only if they keep their sense of humor until the fauns in question have exhausted their repertoire (and specially-created new material!) of human, Emperor, and half-elf jokes.

Their bardic reputation helps fauns in a couple subtle ways. Sane people considering violence against fauns know that they're risking becoming a target of widespread musical theater. Second, non-faun raiders and warriors tend to underestimate fauns, figuring that they're mainly craftspeople and singers and that their hunters don't even show up in the Imperial legions. Which is true, so far as it goes, but mainly because fauns are wise to the ways of empires and most live in ways that ensure they don't have to fight other people's battles.

## FAUNS OF TWO DESTINIES

There are many types of fauns, covering a full range of capabilities. We're presenting six sets of monster stats here. These are stats for highly competent fauns, the type who can give player characters a bit of trouble.

### Ability for all fauns: destiny

Fauns who are likely to end up in a fight choose one of two paths. The paths determine which of their defenses will be higher, and in some cases determine an additional ability or two.

**Path of the Sword:** More martial-minded, these fauns are usually warriors, thieves, and hunters. They have a higher Physical Defense (PD).

**Path of Song:** Magically-inclined, these fauns are usually bards, magicians, priests, or druids. They have a higher Mental Defense (MD).

## FAUN TROUBADOUR

*Some young fauns are well-versed in finishing bar fights without being blamed for starting them.*

2<sup>nd</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative +5

**C: Heckle +7 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)—5**

psychic damage

*Natural 18+:* Target is hampered (easy save ends).

*Limited use:* Cannot be used on two consecutive rounds.

**Bob and weave and headbutt +7 vs. AC—6 damage**

*Miss:* The troubadour pops free.

*Destiny:* Choose either *Path of the Sword* or *Path of Song*.

**Path of the Sword:** *Gang leader*—Creatures hit by *heckle* are vulnerable to attack by the troubadour's allies until the start of the troubadour's next turn.

**Path of Song:** *Throw your voice*—Targets of *heckle* may not attack the troubadour until the end of their next turn.

*Nice one!*: If an enemy rolls a natural 1 on an attack against the faun troubadour, use *heckle* as a free action, but only against the triggering enemy. This does not count as a use of *heckle*.

Nastier Special

*Full destiny:* The troubadour gains the other *destiny* benefit, and adds 1 to its lower defense.

**AC 16**

PD 15 or 13

MD 13 or 15

**HP 36**

## FAUN HARRIER

*They move fast over soft ground, but are prone to wild shots.*

4<sup>th</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative +8

**Hatchet +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)—6 damage**

**R: Pinning shot +9 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)—15 damage**

*Natural 18+:* The target is stuck (save ends).

*Natural 2–4:* Reroll the attack against a random nearby creature.

*Destiny:* Choose either *Path of the Sword* or *Path of Song*.

**Path of the Sword:** *Barbed arrowhead*—*Pinning shot* deals 1d6 extra damage on a natural even hit.

**Path of Song:** *Entangling arrows*—On a natural odd hit with *pinning shot*, the target is hampered until the end of its next turn. The target or an adjacent creature may spend a standard action to remove this effect.

Nastier Special

*Full destiny:* The harrier gains the other *destiny* benefit, and adds 1 to its lower defense.

**AC 22**

PD 21 or 17

MD 17 or 21

**HP 90**

## FAUN KEEPER

*This faun keeps everyone else in line.*

5<sup>th</sup> level blocker [HUMANOID]

Initiative +6

**Gnarled staff +10 vs. AC—15 damage**

*Natural even miss:* 5 damage.

**C: Snare +10 vs. PD (one nearby enemy engaged with an ally)—15 damage, and the target pops free from the keeper's ally**

*Natural 16+:* The keeper engages the target.

*Destiny:* Choose either *Path of the Sword* or *Path of Song*.

**Path of the Sword:** *Sweep the leg*—On a natural odd hit with *gnarled staff*, the target loses its next move action.

**Path of Song:** *Thorny whip*—If the natural roll with *Snare* is above the target's Constitution, it deals additional ongoing poison damage equal to twice the escalation die (save ends).

Nastier Special

*Full destiny:* The keeper gains the other *destiny* benefit, and adds 1 to its lower defense.

**AC 22**

PD 15 or 18

MD 18 or 15

**HP 70**

## FAUN BANDLEADER

*Musical mayhem.*

5<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative +8

**R: Horn of power +8 vs. PD (all nearby enemies)—5 thunder damage**

*Natural 18+:* One ally engaged with targeted enemy can make an attack as an interrupt action.

**Baton of office +11 vs. AC—17 damage**

*Destiny:* Choose either *Path of the Sword* or *Path of Song*.

**Path of the Sword:** *Allegro*—Allies gain a +4 bonus to initiative.

**Path of Song:** *Fanfare*—If *horn of power* misses all targets, two nearby allies may roll one saving throw each as a free action.

Nastier Special

*Full destiny:* The bandleader gains the other *destiny* benefit, and adds 1 to its lower defense.

**AC 23**

PD 15 or 19

MD 19 or 15

**HP 52**

## FAUN ENCHANTER

*Sweet songs draw you in, and draw out your sense of self.*

6<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative +8

**Swift hoof +11 vs. AC**—18 damage, and the enchanter pops free from the target

**R: Whispered sonata +10 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—11 psychic damage

*Crit:* The target is dazed (save ends).

*Destiny:* Choose either *Path of the Sword* or *Path of Song*.

**Path of the Sword:** *Shin kick*—On a natural even hit with *swift hoof*, the target is hampered until the end of enchanter's next turn.

**Path of Song:** *Lullaby*—On a critical hit with *whispered sonata*, the target must begin making last gasp saves instead of being dazed. On the fourth failure, it falls unconscious.

### Nastier Special

*Full destiny:* The enchanter gains the other *destiny* benefit, and adds 1 to its lower defense.

**AC 21**

**PD 17 or 20**

**MD 20 or 17**

**HP 88**

## FAUN RANGER

*A protector of the wilds . . . from people like you.*

7<sup>th</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative +13

**Longsword +12 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* Make a second longsword attack, but ignore this trigger for the second attack.

**R: Pinning shot +13 vs. AC (two attacks vs. nearby or far away enemies)**—15 damage

*Natural 18+:* The target is stuck (save ends).

*Destiny:* Choose either *Path of the Sword* or *Path of Song*.

**Path of the Sword:** *Barbed arrowhead*—*Pinning shot* deals 1d12 extra damage on a natural even hit.

**Path of Song:** *Entangling arrows*—On a natural odd hit with *pinning shot*, the target is hampered until the end of its next turn. The target or an adjacent creature may spend a standard action to remove this effect.

### Nastier Special

*Full destiny:* The ranger gains the other *destiny* benefit, and adds 1 to its lower defense.

**AC 22**

**PD 21 or 17**

**MD 17 or 21**

**HP 90**

## FAUN OUTLAW

*Most of the time, an ambush by fauns results in lost items rather than lost life.*

7<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative +12

**Thief's dagger +12 vs. AC**—24 damage

*Natural 18+:* The outlaw also steals a random consumable magic item or wealth of equivalent value from the target.

**Feint & dodge +11 vs. PD**—The target is stuck until the end of its next turn

*Natural 18+:* The target instead loses all actions during its next turn and does nothing as it gets tangled up.

*Limited use:* 2/battle, as a move action.

*Destiny:* Choose either *Path of the Sword* or *Path of Song*.

**Path of the Sword:** *Sucker punch*—*Feint & dodge* now deals 7 damage on a miss.

**Path of Song:** *Blink*—*Thief's dagger* can be used against a nearby enemy if the outlaw is not engaged.

### Nastier Specials

*Full destiny:* The outlaw gains the other *destiny* benefit, and adds 1 to its lower defense.

*Fleet of foot:* Faun outlaws that flee from battle are quick and boosted with magic that's all about escape. Pursuers must have some powerful magic or iconic advantage to have a chance of catching them.

**AC 23**

**PD 21 or 18**

**MD 18 or 21**

**HP 92**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Fauns are like most people, and during combat the composition of the group is usually determined by factors other than species. Hunting bands are likely to have a pet or companion beast along.

In the wilderness, fauns and centaurs often live near each other, and they will guard each other's lands or hunt with each other, especially during times of astrological importance, such as the beginning of a season.

Due to their nature, fauns following the path of song often discover interesting secrets of those they encounter. Maybe they're not above trading such secrets with the ettercaps for personal gain.

Maybe particularly mad (or drunk) fauns carouse with redcaps during periods of high bacchanalia!

## FAUNS AND THE ICONS

For the moment, let's assume that your campaign treats the fauns as established folk. In which case, they may have some established relationships with a few of the icons.

**Archmage:** (*known folk*) Inspired by the legendary bards of their kin, many fauns travel to Horizon to train. The illusion courses at the College Arcane are predominantly taught by a set of faun triplets . . . or are they?

**Crusader:** (*known folk*) Fauns who follow the sword and get involved with the Crusader, like the fellow in the art a couple pages back, are usually tasked with scouting new hellholes. (*newcomers*) If fauns are new to the world, one unfortunate side effect of their cloven hooves could be that demon-hunters think they've found an easy kill.

**Priestess:** (*both*) Fauns aren't particularly devout, but now the gods of light are telling the Priestess their stories, and she likes what she hears. Maybe there's a way that leaves blessed in the Cathedral could be carried into the forests, to be shared, high high up the greatest trees, where the goat-footed people, against all odds, above the clouds?

## NAMES

If you like, you could let newcomer fauns use ancient names from a language not otherwise known in the Dragon Empire, things like Euthalia, Titus, or Aspasia. Otherwise fauns have names they use with family and names they use with non-family, and if you somehow learned both you'd probably have no idea why one was a public name and one was for family. But fauns know.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**False Flag**—A sawmill near New Port was destroyed by “wood-grained goat men” according to locals. The High Druid denies any involvement, but evidence implies otherwise. One of the icons wants the heroes to find out who was really behind it before the Imperial Legion gets involved.

**Glory Daze**—A group of rambunctious young fauns decided to revive the cult of the Satyrs after finding an old ritual book. Unfortunately for them, what was supposed to start a year-long bender really summoned the old sect's mistress, a despoiler mage named Satiros. Now their town is host to a demon-fueled carnival that threatens to spin out of control.

**Lute & Plunder**—Celestina of the Bitterwood ran off with her third cousin's prized magical instrument, joining up with her highwayman brother and his crew. They've been using the instrument on Imperial tax collectors, and the magistrate has offered a considerable bounty for the receipts that were taken from them.

F



FEY



This batch of iconic campaign plotlines and monster stats comes to you courtesy of the fey, shadowy travelers with ambiguous magic.

*Who Are These Fey?* distinguishes between traditional definitions and our use of the term, which mainly excludes the elves.

*Iconic Options* offers ten storyline options for integrating the magical fey into the world of the Dragon Empire's icons. It's obviously useful for GMs but it might also work for players who want their characters to draw on unusual backstories that the archetypes wouldn't predict.

*Fey by Many Names* are the monster entries, several of which come with a unique complication, since certain fey archetypes have multiple expressions each with its own name, appearance, personality traits, and power variants.

## WHO ARE THESE FEY?

Traditionally, the word “fey” can be used to describe elves as well as a number of other sprites, spirits, pixies, and brownies. For the most part, we’re using a narrower definition, because we’re happy with our three flavors of elves, their affiliation with the Elf Queen, and their tangled histories with orcs and dwarves.

The shades of fey we’re focusing on in this entry include mostly non-elven magical creatures associated with faery. If you want to give your campaign world a big shake, you *could* reinterpret elves along these lines; we’re not.

On the other hand, there is a standard 13<sup>th</sup> Age race that might accept a gentle push toward the fey. Given how little we have done with gnomes in published 13<sup>th</sup> Age materials, it might be fun to apply some of the iconic campaign options appearing below to illusion-loving gnomes. Or tell your players you’re going to. But really don’t. Tricksy!

## ICONIC OPTIONS

Fey are traditionally associated with elves, the world of Faery, and the Elven Court. In the Dragon Empire, the Elf Queen is the icon who stands for all things elven. If you want to stick with the style of archetypal thinking that generated our icons, use the *Aristocrats from Another World* notes a few paragraphs below to associate your fey, whoever they are, to the queen of the elves.

But in a world where elves aren’t exactly unified, who says the tricksy fey have to be? The nine other icon associations below serve as starting points for plotlines in which the Elf Queen is not the only icon closely associated with the fey. You could use these connections as surprise plot elements for factions of the fey or use an iconic association as the standard for all fey in your campaign.

That’s especially relevant to this book because of the two later entries that involve creatures that are ordinarily thought of as fey: naiads and nymphs.

## A FINE LINE OF NAMING

Names are important, so we avoided using most of the *overtly* Celtic language and terminology in these notes for the Dragon Empire. With the nameplates filed off, you don’t have to think of all the original source material unless you want to.

If you’re playing in mythic Europe or a Dragon Empire or world of your own creation that has no problem using the original Celtic terms, feel free to use traditional names like the Aos Si, the Seelie Courts, and so on.

## MAGIC MADE FLESH

If some of the fey seem obsessively single-minded, it could be that they started “life” as magical spells rather than as normal people like humans and elves. They might have been created as part of the **Archmage**’s attempt to stabilize the world after overthrowing the Wizard King. In this case, not all the magic that matters takes place in Horizon! The Archmage may be atypically indulgent of fey whims, excesses, and occasional rampages. Why isn’t the Archmage more concerned with the trail of carnage left behind by a run of great hounds and malicious sprites? Because they’re part of the grand solution and the damage they’re causing is not worse than the alternatives.

Alternatively, these fey could be free-roaming fragments of failing wards. The Archmage isn’t exactly hostile to them, since the damage is done, but their increased presence in the 13<sup>th</sup> age is one more sign that wizardry is not holding the line.

## LEFT HAND OF THE DARK GODS

Most of the heroic icons and great powers of the Dragon Empire accept the **Crusader** as the lesser of two evils. The Crusader plays along with that mindset because he knows that not all conquests are achieved by force . . . and he has some unlikely allies.

In this storyline, the nastier fey are part of the Crusader’s long-term strategy. He has plenty of frontline warriors. The fey are shadowy allies working to weaken the institutions that could resist the dark gods once the Diabolist and her demons have been taken care of. It’s an open question whether the Crusader won these allies himself or whether they have been inherited via unwise pacts between fey bargaining for power and gods that can’t be trusted to bargain fair.

If you’re using this storyline in your campaign, interpret affected fey in as harsh a light as possible. They’re hugely evil, but patient. They don’t need to indulge themselves in the types of petty cruelties that might reveal the grand scheme too early.

## LEVERAGED DYNASTIES

Hellholes corrupt the land, and the Abyss holds the focus of the Great Gold Wyrm, but the **Diabolist** was not the demonic horde's first attempt to project influence in the Dragon Empire. Ages ago, demonic pacts turned entire bloodlines into powerful beings of magic and madness. These dynasties may now view the Diabolist as the herald of their ascendance, or they might think of her as a usurper, an overly public wielder of demonic power.

These demonic dynasties stay hidden, upholding their agreements with infernal lords and passing their knowledge down to their children. "Eccentric" and "reclusive" are the adjectives often used to describe these wealthy families by outsiders. Occasional suspicions of demonic influence come to naught, because while these families aren't precisely human, they're not demons either. Yes, they're fey, and the illusions that cloak them in the human world aren't evil, per se, so they've managed to stay hidden through the centuries.

Of course, player characters tend to trample through circles of secrecy, so if these dynasties enter your campaign, they're probably going to be earning some new adjectives!

## ARISTOCRATS FROM ANOTHER WORLD

The fey may not entirely look like it when they've translated into this world, but they're actually the immortal rulers of a verdant realm that mirrors the mortal world. Time flows in odd cycles for these fey, they can't quite see the world as mortals see it, and in this case, the elves are the most relevant mortals.

These Faerie courts claim they seldom interfere in the affairs of their mortal kin; history begs to differ. Allegedly, the **Elf Queen** is descended from refugees, exiles, and adventurous types that left the courts behind aeons ago.

Visitors from the Spring Court are flighty, easily distracted, and especially close to nature. Courtiers of the Summer Court are strong in magic and the most receptive to assisting mortals. The Autumn Court distrusts the shorter-lived races and seems to take delight in driving home their mortality. The most dangerous are those beholden to the Winter Court, because what's pleasure for them feels like pain and despair to everyone else.

## MANIFESTATIONS OF A VERY SPECIFIC DREAM WORLD

Dreams are wondrous things, but some dreams always balance on the edge of nightmare. Such are the ways of these mercurial beings, pulled to the world by the straining magic of the **Great Gold Wyrm**. These dream fey aren't deliberately malicious, at least not for long. But you can't count on them staying helpful; they're by-products of the waking dreams of a dragon beset by demons, and they change from helpful and insightful to horrid and deadly with no notice.

Even if you don't use this idea for all it's worth, how could you resist enlisting a few pixie knights in the quest to restore the Golden Citadel?

## ELEMENTAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE LAND

Natural spirits have always been here and always will be. Their forms are many and their minds are as fluid as the winds. The old ways are returning to these lands, and these creatures are among the first to return, often in the lands closest to the Koru migration path.

Nature cares little for mortal plans, and even the mightiest tower will crumble with time. These creatures are just more direct about it. Apparently, the **High Druid** agrees.

## ETERNAL LIFE, AT A PRICE

Remnants of the **Lich King**'s servants in ages past await the reclamation of his Empire, protecting sources of ancient power from those who would trespass. Masters of illusion, they appear as normal people or even function as beneficial spirits until it's time to rise in the service of their true king.

If you take this approach, the fey often manifest as ghosts before they take physical form. Slain once, they may well return for a rematch.

## SINISTER REFLECTIONS OF SAVAGERY

Odds are that at least one of the PCs is aware that the elves created the first **Orc Lord**. If you want to tie some fey to the Orc Lord, complicate his origin story. The Orc Lord was the terrible physical result of the elven magic; these fey were the spiritual result of the rituals. Unlike the Orc Lord, the savage fey possessed magic power and mercurial intelligence—they hid in the shadow of the great orc and have lain dormant in the generations and centuries of the Orc Lord's disappearance.

But with the return of the Orc Lord, these savage changelings are gaining strength. While the Orc Lord musters hordes, the savage fey tear communities apart from the inside. They've been successful while they've remained mostly hidden, but increasing power is going to blow their cover. Now that they're fully awake, the savage fey are probably too bloodthirsty to stay hidden for long.

## BENEVOLENT TRICKSTERS

The **Priestess** recognizes these fey as favored children of long-forgotten gods. She may be especially fond of the simpler and more joyous sprites and brownies. Their circles act as holy sites, and their tricks are reminders that life is never as it seems. They also tend to congregate at the intersection of magical currents, so any perturbations in their circles quickly reaches the Priestess' ears.

Various temples and orders serving the Priestess often ask travelers to check in on certain fey circles to ensure their welfare. There may even be a mushroom path hidden in the side ways of the Cathedral itself.

## SHAPESHIFTING BRIGANDS

Everyone's heard of the Dark Ones—mystical beings of untold power that will let you live if you pay tribute. Taverns along every main trade route are full of merchants with writs of passage that ensure their goods make it to market.

That's the public story, anyway. Initiates into the Dragon Empire's largest protection racket are taught the illusion magic needed to maintain the ruse and avoid Imperial retribution. Besides, this way the **Prince of Shadows** gets paid twice.

The shapechangers of the naiad entry (page 198) would be perfect recruits for this iconic option.

## FEY BY MANY NAMES

The fey bear many faces and many names. To simultaneously embrace some archetypes and acknowledge ever-shifting fey illusions, we've added a new mechanic to several of the monsters that follow—*power of a name*.

Creatures with this ability have differing effects that depend on which name they are using. Names are both fluid and eternal—you're meant to make the most of their possibilities. Clever fey might masquerade as another form to throw off heroes who think they know the score. For example, a banshee may cast a glamour spell upon herself and pretend to be a siren tied to another icon. When a certain trigger is met, or deception is no longer needed, she will revert to her base form and powers.

You'll see that some of the names invoked by creatures with the *power of a name* ability have been used elsewhere, or are going to be used again in products appearing soon. There's more than one way to skin a pixie. . . .

## CHOOSE YOUR TYPE

The monster stat blocks below default to treating the fey as humanoid, but that's written in wind, not stone. The Iconic Options section may have pointed you in a new direction. If your version of the fey would make more sense as spirits, constructs, undead, or even demon types, go for it.

## THE RASCAL

Small, often working with others of its kind, and with a puckish sensibility, the rascal takes one of three forms: the helpful-unless-s slighted brownie, the persistent boggart, and the saboteur gremlin. Brandishing tiny hammers and bars, rascals work together to complete their tasks. Brownies and gremlins are more likely to inhabit homes and structures in cities, while boggarts love swamps and dark places.

*Mischiefous imps that amuse or terrorize.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]*

Initiative +9

**Small tool +10 vs. AC**—4 damage

*Ankle-biters:* The rascal's opportunity attacks deal 3 additional damage.

*Power of a name:* This creature gains different abilities based on which name it has taken.

*Brownie:* When the rascal rolls a natural even hit with its *small tool* attack, one nearby ally can roll a save against an effect that can be ended by a save.

*Boggart:* The rascal deals additional damage equal to the escalation die with its *small tool* attack.

*Gremlin:* When the rascal gets a natural even roll with its *small tool* attack, the target takes a -2 penalty to AC if it's wearing heavy armor (save ends; non-cumulative but it does apply to that attack).

**AC 18**

**PD 14**

**MD 17**

**HP 11 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one rascal mook for every 11 damage you deal to the mob.

## WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THEIR LAIRS

Brownies will have hobnails and thread in their pouches.

Boggarts hoard trinkets taken from fallen travelers. Gremlins always take a trophy from their work, usually a crucial bolt or pin.



## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Gremlin Hell**—As the Crusader's army assaults a hellhole, impish beings cripple the siege equipment and hinder the cleansing. The sapper tunnels are the obvious point of entry. Somebody needs to take care of the pests. But as the player characters pursue, the 'hellhole' starts looking more and more like a fey castle. Whose magic is fooling who? Is the Crusader attacking the wrong target, or does he know exactly what he's doing?

**A Missing Child**—A child has disappeared from a small town along the northern edge of the Fangs. Her mother disappeared while searching for her, and the rumors have it that she offended a nature spirit nearby and that creature's boggart minions originally took the child. The father is frantically asking for help in finding his family from the nearby temple.

## Sprite

Sprites tend to be effervescent and bubbly. Many are natural pacifists, preferring to put their attackers to sleep and restrain them for everyone's safety. In game mechanic terms, this may mean their psychic damage is drowsiness and being dropped to 0 hp means you've fallen asleep. But some sprite laughter is cruel. Sprites' darkest incarnations are as malicious pranksters who delight in toying with their victims until madness or death takes them. Unless you're a supremely good judge of character, you're not likely to know which type of sprite you're dealing with until they hand you a fresh strawberry or feed you a knife. (Watch out for knives concealed in strawberries.)

*Tiny winged humanoids that punch far above their weight.*

*4<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative +11

**Tiny knives +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—7 damage

**R: Whispered song +9 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—14 psychic damage

*Fluttering:* The sprite flies, but never too far from the ground.

*Power of a name:* This creature gains different abilities based on which name it has taken.

*Pixie:* When the sprite scores a critical hit with its *whispered song* attack, instead of taking damage, the target falls unconscious (save ends).

*Grig:* When the sprite rolls a natural odd hit with its *whispered song* attack, the target loses its next move action as it begins dancing uncontrollably.

AC	21
PD	15
MD	17

**HP 46**

## GREAT HOUND

In the shadowlands, terrible dog-like beasts howl omens of death. Some bear grim warnings, others carry raiders and reavers, and the most vicious will simply kill you.

The grim is the herald of death, a dog the size of a horse with long ebon fur; its bite prepares the ill-fated for the cull.

Wargs bear savage riders to battle, but their bloodlust makes fighting while atop one a dangerous proposition.

The barghest is a beast of pure animal hunger known to consume its fallen enemies. When trained, barghests are effective guard animals as long as you don't mind dead intruders (and occasionally, dead handlers).

*Malice is when it takes out your throat; mockery is when it pretends to fawn for your touch a moment before.*

*Large 5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]*

Initiative +10

**Savage bite +13 vs. AC**—40 damage

**Overbear +13 vs. PD**—32 damage

*Natural 16+*: The target is stuck and can't make ranged attacks (save ends).

*Power of a name*: This creature gains different abilities based on which name it has taken.

*Barghest*: When the hound scores a critical hit with its *savage bite* attack, it heals 20 hp.

*Grim*: When the hound hits with its *savage bite* attack, the target is also vulnerable (save ends).

*Warg*: When the hound rolls a natural even miss with its *savage bite* attack, the target takes half damage and the warg's rider, if any, takes the other half. In addition, a creature riding the hound deals only half damage with natural even misses with melee attacks.

### Nastier Special

*Dire Feature*: Add a dire feature. Roll a d6.

**1: Armor plates**—Add +2 to the dire animal's AC, and add +1 to its PD.

**2: Spiky bits**—Whenever an enemy hits the hound with a melee attack, deal 10 damage to that attacker.

**3: Carnage**—The hound's attacks that miss deal 5 damage. When staggered, its missed attacks deal 10 damage.

**4: Poison**—*Savage bite* also deals 10 ongoing poison.

**5: Dire regeneration**—When the escalation die is even, the hound heals 15 hp.

**6: Fury**—While staggered, the hound gains a +2 attack bonus and deals +4 damage, but at the end of each of its turns it takes 2d6 damage.

**AC 18**

**PD 17**

**MD 12**

**HP 140**

## WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THEIR DENS

When functioning as a harbinger of death, the grim doesn't seem to have anything to call its own, no possessions, no trophies, and no den. Wargs and barghests have bone trinkets and fetishes if they are "domesticated." Otherwise, they have only remnants of their victims.

## COLD IRON?

Traditionally, iron and "cold iron" are anathema to faeries, but since we're not dealing with weapon materials in *13th Age*, feel free to ignore them here too.

If you're feeling nasty, want to play off the old faery stories, and want to give specific powerful fey a powerful nastier special, you could use something like this: *Fey resistance*: The fey gains *resist weapon damage 12+* except against iron or cold iron weapons.

## PIXIE KNIGHT

Champions of the forest or the fey lands, these tiny warriors are less nuanced than their kin. They typically wear armor of snail shells and carry blades of enchanted grass, which would be funny if they didn't seem tougher and sharper than your own magic weapons.

*No power of a name abilities here: what you see out of the corner of your eye is what's going to hit you.*

*6<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]*

Initiative +15

**Verdant sword +11 vs. AC**—18 damage

*Natural even hit*: The target takes 5 ongoing damage.

**R: Fairy bow +11 vs. AC**—18 damage

*Fluttering*: The pixie knight flies, but never too far from the ground.

*Dancing mote*: The pixie knight can't be intercepted and doesn't provoke opportunity attacks by moving.

**AC 25**

**PD 19**

**MD 17**

**HP 64**

## WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN A FAIRY CIRCLE

Small coins and wands made of pine needles, lutes made from acorns, and if you're feeling generous, one of the knights might carry a greatsword that could work as a dagger for a halfling or gnome.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Holy Guardians**—In a fairy circle deep in the Bitterwood, sprites and their “Monarch Paladins,” aka pixie knights, defend an ancient temple to the gods of light. Unfortunately, a relic of the 2<sup>nd</sup> age that they are guarding is the only way to subdue a rampaging living dungeon. Here’s hoping they’re feeling amenable.

## SPRIGGAN

*Gnome-like guardians with an unsettling trick.*

The spriggan’s unassuming size is its primary weapon, drawing in trespassers and punishing their hubris. Using illusions to hide their appearance until roused, spriggans masquerade as statues, children, gnomes, or halflings. When pressed, their real abilities become clear, usually when the spriggan grows to the size of a small giant and begins tossing enemies like toys.

**6<sup>th</sup> level blocker [HUMANOID]**

Initiative +10

**Scraggly fist +11 vs. AC**—15 damage

*Limited use:* Only usable when the spriggan is at its normal size; but still usable if hampered!

**R: Fairy lights +11 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—20 damage

*Natural 18+:* The target is dazed (save ends).

*Limited use:* Once per battle, with an additional use for each critical hit scored by the spriggan’s enemies this battle.

**Giant-sized slap +11 vs. PD (each enemy engaged with it, OR one enemy engaged with it and one nearby enemy)**—17 damage

*Natural odd hit:* The target is thrown somewhere far away but non-harmful (like over a cliff) and loses its next move action.

*Natural 1–3:* The target can make an opportunity attack against the spriggan.

*Limited use:* Only usable when the spriggan is at its larger size.

*Hidden guardian:* If a spriggan wants to stay hidden in an illusory form instead of joining a battle, roll initiative for the spriggan as normal. When the spriggan “acts,” by doing nothing, have the most perceptive PC roll a DC 25 Wisdom check, adding +1 for each of their allies in the fight. On a success, the spriggan’s illusion is pierced and the spriggan can use a single move action during its turn, but nothing else—it burned its standard action trying to stay hidden.

*Embiggen:* When the escalation die reaches 2, the spriggan grows in size as a free action, acquiring its *giant-sized slap* attack. Note that as a free action, this transformation can take place any time, usually at the start of a round. If the spriggan was using its *hidden guardian* ability, it’s not hidden anymore!

**AC 22**

**PD 20**

**MD 16**

**HP 90**

## WHAT YOU’LL FIND IN THEIR HIDING PLACES

Spriggans are usually guardians. Their personal possessions are few. Whatever they’re guarding must be worth it!

## RIVER-SPIRIT

River-bound beings of ethereal beauty or stunning good looks, river-spirits personify the thrill and peril of rushing water. Since the rivers of the Dragon Empire became deathly dangerous after the monsters of the Midland Sea scrambled out across the land, the river-spirits fit right in. Maybe the sirens, banshees, and rusalkas were part of the sea once called Stormmaker. Or maybe they were the original embittered inhabitants of a now over-crowded perilous riverine ecosystem!

*Sirens* call to mortals, drawing them to the shore and enslaving them.

The banshee draws out souls.

The rusalka entangles victims in its flowing hair.

*The river is eternal. You? You are fleeting, mortal.*

**Double-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]**

Initiative +12

**Enchanting touch +12 vs. MD**—The target is confused (save ends), and two other random nearby enemies take 30 psychic damage.

*Miss:* 20 psychic damage.

**R: Otherworldly aria +12 vs. MD (2d3 nearby or far away enemies)**—30 psychic damage

*Miss:* 10 psychic damage.

*Fear Aura:* While engaged with the river-spirit, enemies with 36 hp or fewer are dazed (−4 to attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

*Power of a name:* This creature gains different abilities based on which name it has taken.

*Siren:* When the river-spirit scores a critical hit with *otherworldly aria*, it also stuns the target (save ends).

*Rusalka:* Targets hit by the river-spirit’s *enchanting touch* attack must start rolling last gasp saves instead of being confused. On the fourth failure, they fall into a long sleep that mortals call a coma.

*Banshee:* The river-spirit’s *otherworldly aria* attack becomes *haunting wail*, deals negative energy damage, and on a natural 18+, the target is weakened (save ends).

**AC 23**

**PD 19**

**MD 22**

**HP 215**

## WHAT YOU'LL FIND ON THE SHORE

On the banks, you'll find gifts from allies and enchanted suitors, and golden nuggets from the silt. Best not to dawdle long, however: because it's probably true that the river-spirits really are eternal, turning to foam and reforming somewhere downstream after 'death.'

## GRANDMOTHER

In story and fable, there's usually an old woman of immense magical power. Wisdom and time are a potent combination, and these women have enjoyed both.

Benevolent and kind, the so-called fairy godmother protects and aids her charges.

Reading the threads of destiny, the fates weave the lives of mortals and heroes into grand or tragic tapestries .

She is not always a singular figure. The grandmother-witch may or may not be reversed. She's certainly feared, granting boons or curses as she chooses. In some worlds, a particularly powerful grandmother witch has been known as Baba Yaga.

*Whose grandmother? Maybe the world's.*

*Triple-strength 10<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative +15

**C: Ancient spell +15 vs. PD (2 attacks against nearby or far away enemies)**—88 special damage (type determined by the grandmother's name)

*Natural odd hit:* The target becomes vulnerable to the grandmother's type of special damage until the end of the battle.

*Power of a name:* This creature gains different abilities based on which name it has taken.

*Fairy godmother:* *Ancient spell* deals force damage, and when the grandmother scores a critical hit with the attack, the target is weakened (save ends) and 1d4 of the grandmother's nearby allies heal 30 hp.

*Fate:* *Ancient spell* now targets MD and deals psychic damage. In addition, a target hit by *ancient spell* can't use the escalation die until the end of its next turn.

*Grandmother-witch:* *Ancient spell* deals negative energy damage, and when grandmother rolls a natural even hit with *ancient spell* against an enemy engaged with her, she can make a *pestle* melee attack as a free action.

**Pestle +15 vs. AC**—66 damage

*Bad idea:* When a creature attacks grandmother, it takes 1d6 x 10 damage of the grandmother's special type on a hit, or 1d3 x 5 damage of that type on a miss.

*Flight:* The grandmother flies somehow, either through a magic item or by using spells that have become second nature.

**AC 25**

**PD 21**

**MD 25**

**HP 600**

## WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THEIR HUTS

Seriously, you're going into the grandmother's hut without her permission? Even though you're pretty sure you just destroyed her? Huh. Good luck or good bye!

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Discover the Crusader's Origins**—When the Crusader

appeared in the Dragon Empire, it was a shock to all that someone of that much power had never been heard of before. Now that the dark army has turned against the Emperor, the source of his power must be found. Obscure documents found in the Cathedral tell that in the western reaches of the Knee Deep dwells a "witch" who introduced the Crusader to the dark gods all those years ago.

**Altered Fates**—High in one of the Archmage's towers in

Horizon is one of the near-immortal fates. She has apparently begun to manipulate events in ways that the Archmage can't understand, and now she's gone missing, though all the oracles say that she's still somewhere in Horizon's spiraling towers. Find the fate before fate finds you all. . . .

# FIRE GIANTS



*Children of a deadly sun, destroyers with a  
vision of a new world, reborn in fire.*

Most people forced to live and die around fire giants assume that they are brutish evil monsters who live to destroy everything good. The truth could be more complicated than that—as far as fire giants are concerned they are ‘good’ and the rest of the world is either ‘evil’ or misguided.

Note that this view of fire giants is a bit different than the tidbit of information contained in the flavor text on page 227 of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook. If you like the view in the core book, use the following stories for one nation or section of fire giant society and stick to the core rulebook’s picture of apocalyptic mercenaries (most associated with the Diabolist . . .) for another.

## FIRE GIANT LEGENDS

To understand fire giants, first understand their legends. Fire giants believe they are part of an eon-spanning conflict between fire and ice. They live to bring about a prophesized victory for their side.

### THE WORLD IS CREATED

This is a typical version of the story the fire giants tell about the creation of the cosmos:

*“At first there was only the spark, and it roared to life and filled the darkness with light. Fire flew above, and lava flowed below, and life was everywhere and in everything. Everything was Fire, and Fire was everything.”*

*“Then the glorious Fire met its opposite, Ice, crushing and evil. The lava cooled to rock, fire was quenched with water, and the world was born—its seas were ice melted to water, its skies filled with steam, and the ground was lava robbed of life. Ice covered the land, and fire retreated deep below.”*

*“The world was lifeless, but from the ground sprung Unyr the Sun. Unyr was the first giant, a fire giant, and gave birth to the moon and stars who were his family. The moon became the consort of Unyr, and Unyr called the moon Zurtyr.”*

**Analysis:** As creation myths go, it’s efficient. The fire giant god is the sun, the biggest burning thing anyone has ever seen, and it’s really a fire giant! No wonder fire giants care so much about genealogy. Ice is more than a substance; it is pure evil. Fire on the other hand is synonymous with life and light, pretty much what you’d expect from a race that enjoys eating lava and wood and coal only when they are on fire.

### EGOCENTRIC UNIVERSE

Needless to say the fire giants’ legends don’t match up with other races legends. In their own legends the fire giants are the heroes, and have a role in the creation of the gods themselves.

How much of this is true is down to you. Like everyone else, the fire giants tell stories to make themselves seem more important than they are. In someone’s campaign, they really are the first primal creators of the universe. Maybe even your campaign . . .

### THE FIRST PEOPLE, CREATORS OF THE GODS

This is the story the fire giants tell about the early days of the world:

*“Unyr and his family looked down and saw that the spark of life was fading from the world below. The first fire giants descended from the sky and took iron from the ground, and though it had been hardened by ice they breathed fire into it until it glowed with life. From iron the first living things that were not giants were created: the primal dragons. To the primal dragons Unyr gave the gift of fire. Next the first giants created all other kinds of life. Lastly Unyr created the gods to speak for him to the lesser kinds of life.”*

*“But Ice is jealous, and tries to create life. It cannot create life, but is always jealous. So Ice steals the spark of life from the creations of Unyr, creating death.”*

**Analysis:** Here the fire giants reiterate that they are divine, the offspring of the first beings and descendants of the fire giants who created gods and dragons.

Interestingly fire giant legends use the present tense for the Ice, implying that while the creation of life was something that happened long ago that death as a concept only exists because Ice continually steals away the divine Fire. Unyr is a distant god, but the Ice is an ever-present urgent threat.

The fire giant obsession with crafting and iron shows through here, with all other races ultimately originating from the fire giants’ forges.

### THE ETERNAL WAR

This is the story the fire giants tell about their place in the cosmos:

*“Unyr the Sun had created all things. But the Ice robs Unyr’s creation of their fire and so death comes to be. Unyr sent his children the stars down to the world, and these were the first fire giants.”*

*“The Ice creates mockeries of the children of Unyr, and these are the frost giants. Into each of the frost giants the Ice places a stolen piece of fire to give them life, for ice cannot create life but only bring the stillness of the grave.”*

*“The Ice slays many fire giants to bring life to its frost giants—each frost giant is a trapped fire giant soul. Unyr*

*decreed that forevermore his children would fight to destroy the frost giants and free the stolen souls of their ancestors so that they may rejoin Unyr in the sky."*

**Analysis:** And here we have the fire giants' rationale for their war with the frost giants. The frost giants, in the fire giant world-view, are not truly alive but are blasphemous mockeries of life. Slaying a frost giant means freeing the divine soul of a fire giant. The militaristic nature of fire giant society is explained as the result of a divine mandate to make unending war on whomever they perceive as being in the grip of the Ice (especially frost giants).

It's up to your campaigns whether frost giants share any of this mythology. We suspect they don't. We suspect that frost giants think fire giants are insane religious kooks as well as being dangerous flame creatures! But if you want multiple giant societies based on different interpretations of elemental mythology, you've got the elements and the tools to tinker with these myths.

## THE TRIUMPH OF FIRE, AND THE WORLD REBORN IN FIRE

This is the story the fire giants tell about the creation of the cosmos:

*"The time will come when the Ice steals all life, and only the fire giants stand between the world and darkness. On that terrible day, the frost giants will rise up, and a great stillness will come over the world.*

*On that glorious day, the fire giants will destroy the frost giants, and Unyr will descend to meet the fire below the rock, and the fire below the rock will ascend to Unyr. There will be no more darkness, no more death, and all will be Fire.*

*On that day the world will be reborn, and all things will be reborn, and there will be no more death. Unyr will no longer need to descend beneath the ground to warm the fires beneath, for all will be in Unyr's presence."*

**Analysis:** Here we have the prophesied vision the fire giants have for the world. It's a world without death where the fire giants are eternally in the presence of their god the sun. Of course anyone who can be burned by lacks the fire giants' precondition for deserving life, so a world reborn in fire means death for flammable creatures. From the fire giant perspective, we weren't all that alive anyway (see the hierarchy of life just below).

The likelihood that the fire giants are completely wrong about almost everything doesn't mean they won't try for their longed-for apocalypse. True or false, the beliefs of the fire giants could lead to the end of the world—or at least the end of an age.

## FIRE GIANTS AND THE ICONS

Fire giants don't serve any icon, but they might decide to temporarily ally with an icon that they decide is worthy. Naturally the fire giants will always insist on being in charge of any alliance. Do the icons humor them? Up to you.

**The Lich King and the Emperor:** The fire giants equate death with Ice, and so the Lich King is their number one enemy (after the frost giants, of course).

The Emperor they see as an upstart—a lowly human giving orders to dragons? The fire giants have a very strict hierarchy: plants at the bottom, mindless beasts, humanoids and other thinking animals, gods, dragons, fire-breathing dragons, and finally them on top. The Emperor as a human elevated above fire-breathing dragons offends them almost as much as the Lich King does.

**The Priestess and the Crusader:** In the fire giant's world view the gods are the servants of Unyr the Sun, first of the fire giants. As such they believe themselves to be more important than the gods. However, they support the Priestess and Crusader because the gods that they serve are in turn servants of Unyr.

...so chalk this one up as a conflicted relationship. Either icon might ask the fire giants for aid (especially against the Lich King), but the giants won't hesitate to smash and burn any uppity non-giants that have the audacity to give them orders.

**The Three and the Great Gold Wyrm:** The fire giants respect the Red (and to a much lesser extent the Blue). Anything that breathes fire is OK in their book. The Great Gold Wyrm likewise is a fire-breather and is partially in the Abyss so they admire him too.

They won't obey dragons, but they respect fire dragons.

**The Archmage and the Dwarf King:** The Dwarf King's subjects work iron in forges; that puts them one step above other humanoids in the fire giant's world view. Depending on the personality of the current Dwarf King, trade between these adversaries may be rare or common. The dwarves can make fine chainmail garments for the fire giants, and supply delicious charcoal and flammable drink. In exchange the fire giants can produce lots of metal goods of very high quality and fish diamonds and nuggets of rare metals out of lava flows.

The Archmage's symbol is a flame rising from a book. Fire is good. The fire giants don't really understand magic, at least not magic that isn't fire or iron based, but are willing to give wizards who can create fireballs the benefit of the doubt.

**The Diabolist:** The Diabolist? She does have links to fiery infernal places (a point in her favor), but she also resists the gods (considered by the fire giants to be servants of Unyr). Maybe the fire giants are the Diabolist's favorite unknowing servants, or maybe they detest her completely. Probably both at the same time.

**Other icons:** The fire giants barely acknowledge the existence of other icons. The High Druid? They are aware of and sometimes cooperate with elemental druids, but they see trees as fuel for fire. The Orc Lord? He lives in a cold place, so why go there? The Elf Queen or Prince of Shadows? It is doubtful that the fire giants have thought about them twice.

## WHAT IF THEY ARE RIGHT?

A Dragon Empire where the Fire Giant's cosmology is correct creates an unusual campaign. Actually, it doesn't have to be *correct* to reshape your campaign world: it would just need to be believed by important people other than the fire giants. The PCs, perhaps, if they are all members of a fiery doomsday cult or a Frost range barbarian tribe?

This could lead to an interesting campaign where gloomy heroes attempt to die glorious deaths worthy of the poets before the inevitable apocalyptic Fire vs. Ice showdown at the end of time. Alternatively, it could lead to a campaign where the heroes are trying to destroy the warring forces of Fire and Ice so that the mortal races can forge their own destiny free of the threat of a pyrocaustic Ragnarök.

## FORGE WOLF

*A thing of iron, filled with fire, straight from the fire giants' lava-heated forges.*

*Large 6<sup>th</sup> level mook [CONSTRUCT]*

Initiative: +10

Vulnerability: cold

**Red-hot teeth +11 vs. AC**—12 damage

*Natural even hit:* 12 ongoing fire damage

*Miss:* 6 damage

*Implacable:* The forge wolf gains +1 to its AC against melee attacks for each other iron wolf engaged with its target (max +4 AC).

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

### Nastier Special

*Furnace-like interior:* Whenever the last mook in a mob of forge wolves dies it deals 2d12 fire damage to anybody engaged with it at the time. Creatures that resist fire damage ignore this effect.

**AC 22**

**PD 20**

**MD 16**

**HP 50 (large mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one forge wolf mook for every 50 damage you deal to the mob. This is a large mook, so count it double when calculating mook numbers for battles.

## FIERY RELATIVES

Whether or not fire giants and their gods actually created azers, forgeborn, and other fire-oriented and forge-related beings, the fire giants might believe they did. We haven't done much with azers as player characters, but forgeborn/dwarf-forged might have backstories that get the party involved in the giants' holy war.

## FIRE GIANT HOLY WARRIOR

*To a fire giant killing means freeing the divine fire from its prison offlesh, a holy act that Unyr will bless.*

*Large 7<sup>th</sup> level troop [GIANT]*

Initiative: +11

Vulnerability: cold

**Burning axe +13 vs. AC**—40 damage and 20 ongoing fire damage

**C: Breath of Unyr +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group or one far away enemy)**—70 fire damage

*Limited use:* 1/battle, as a standard action.

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Fire aura:* Enemies engaged with a fire giant holy warrior at the end of their turn take fire damage equal to 5 times the escalation die (0-5-10-15-25-30) if they have not taken fire damage since the end of their last turn. Enemies who resist fire damage ignore this fire giant's fire aura.

### Nastier Special

*Unyr's consecration:* Once per battle, the fire giant holy warrior gains an additional use of *breath of Unyr* when they become staggered.

**AC 24**

**PD 21**

**MD 18**

**HP 190**

## THE MAGMA KEEPS

There is an area of volcanoes in the Dragon Empire called the Magma Keeps. It seems logical that fire giants live there and frost giants like in the Frost Range and that the Giantwalk Mountains between them are contested territory.

But that need not be the case in your campaign. The fire giants might live *beneath* the mountains, and the frost giants live atop of them, and their war takes place both inside lava tubes and caves as well as on the mountains slopes and peaks. Volcanoes are just mountains where the fire giants have won.

## FIRE GIANT SMITH

*To the fire giants there is no difference between metalwork and magic.*

*Large 7<sup>th</sup> level caster [GIANT]*

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: cold

**Burning hammer +11 vs. AC**—30 damage, and 10 fire damage

*Natural 16+ hit against a target wearing metal armor: 20 ongoing fire damage.*

*Crit against a target with metal armor and/or shield:* The armor and/or shield is shattered, the target now counts as unarmored with no shield. Magic armors and shields get a save (12 minus the magical AC bonus—so between 11+ for a +1 shield to 7+ for cursed epic +5 armor) to avoid shattering.

**C: Awaken the primal fire +12 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—20 ongoing fire damage

*Aftereffect:* Once the target saves against the ongoing fire damage, until the end of the day each time they spend a recovery they also take 2d10 fire damage.

*Miss:* 10 fire damage.

*Limited use:* 1/battle, as a quick action.

**R: Reforge the firmament +12 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—20 fire damage, and 15 ongoing fire damage and the target is stuck, save ends both.

*Heat metal:* Enemies who start their turn nearby the fire giant smith take fire damage, unless they resist fire damage. If the enemy is wearing metal armor they take 2d6 fire damage, enemies wielding a metal weapon take 1d6 fire damage, and enemies with an offhand weapon or shield take 1d6 fire damage, and those with coins or clasps of metal take 1d4 fire damage—a maximum of 4d6+1d4 fire damage. Enemies with absolutely no metal items or belongings ignore this ability.

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Fire aura:* Enemies engaged with a fire giant smith at the end of their turn take fire damage equal to the escalation die times five (0-5-10-15-25-30) if they have not taken fire damage since the end of their last turn. Enemies who resist fire damage ignore this fire giant's fire aura.

### Nastier Special

*Holy blaze:* Fire attacks that miss the fire giant smith do not damage it and have no effect, and the fire giant instead heals hp equal to twice the attacker's level.

**AC 22**

**PD 20**

**MD 19**

**HP 180**

## FIRE GIANT PRIEST-GENERAL

*For a fire giant warfare is religion. Luckily, their religion demands constant war.*

*Elite large 8<sup>th</sup> level leader [GIANT]*

Initiative: +14

Vulnerability: cold

**Spear of burning iron +14 vs. AC**—80 damage

*Miss:* 40 damage.

*Natural even hit or miss:* Up to three nearby enemies take 20 ongoing fire damage.

**R: Unyr's divine fist +14 vs. AC (1d4 nearby or faraway enemies in a group)**—70 holy damage and 25 ongoing fire damage

*Natural even hit:* Target is vulnerable to fire damage (save ends).

*Miss:* 35 holy damage.

*Limited use:* Standard action when the escalation die is even.

*Free the sacred flame:* Whenever the fire giant priest-general makes an attack that staggers a target or reduces a target to 0 hp or fewer, each non-mook fire giant in the battle heals 25 hp.

*Resist fire 18+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 18+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Superior fire aura:* Enemies engaged with a fire giant at the end of their turn take fire damage equal to the escalation die value times ten (0-10-20-30-40-50-60) if they have not taken fire damage since the end of their last turn. Enemies who resist fire damage take half damage from this fire giant's fire aura.

### Nastier Specials

*Greater fist of Unyr:* Once per battle, the fire giant priest-general can use Unyr's divine fist as a quick action.

*Building flame:* Whenever the fire giant priest-general makes an attack that staggers a target or reduces a target to 0 hp or fewer, enemies lose their fire resistances until the escalation die next advances.

*Incandescent holy blaze:* Fire attacks that miss the fire giant do not damage it and have no effect, and the fire giant instead heals hp equal to five times the attacker's level.

**AC 24**

**PD 21**

**MD 22**

**HP 360**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Fire giants will work with and fight alongside other fiery creatures. Red and gold dragons (but *never* the ice-breathing silver or white dragons) make good fire giant allies. Salamanders make great pets for fire giants.

Red basilisks can be found in fire giant territory though fire giants can't stand the presence of other kinds of basilisks. Throwing in a red basilisk with a load of giants is a way to make a fight interesting (as in the curse "may you live in interesting times"). If you're interested in this type of team-up, use the following exceptions: *fire giants are immune to the stare of red basilisks; red basilisk poison heals them instead of harming them.*

Fire elementals obey high-ranking fire giants, so a fight with a fire giant priest-king or smith should probably feature at least one fire elemental. In fact getting a fire elemental to serve you is a sure way to move up in social rank for fire giants.

When building battles with fire giants, remember that the forge wolves are large mooks (counting as two mooks) and that the 8<sup>th</sup> level fire giant priest-general is both elite and large, meaning that it counts as two elite 8<sup>th</sup> level creatures.

## THINGS FOUND IN A FIRE GIANT'S MAGMA KEEP

*Flammable objects don't last long in the possession of fire giants, even their clothing must be made of chainmail.* Blades ready for sharpening (trade-goods to send to the Dwarf King). Chainmail sack full of golden nuggets (a fire giant purse). Splendid sheet of chainmail with links too fine to see (the fire giant equivalent of a silk handkerchief). Giant-size iron armor, inlaid with silver and gold depictions of a flaming sun. Holy book made from hinged iron plates. Metal box full of charcoal (a fire giant's lunch). Pile of giant-sized chainmail underthings, rusted in places. Selection of large roughly spherical uncut diamonds (fire giant marbles). Unidentified burnt object—might have been a horse and cart.

## FIRE GIANT NAMES

Aamtr, Blotsym, Brubr, Frebbr, Glimyr, Jenkaron, Kezk, Krorzum, Krym, Malbor, Surt, Surtr, Tydir, Thudr, Trogdr, Untr, Ymir. Fire giant names are non-gender specific, for their society places little importance on differentiating male and female roles—indeed sometimes their male sun god Unyr is seen as a female sun goddess, and sometimes as either both female and male at once or neither, as the situation demands. Unyr and the moon deity Zurtyr are variously husband and wife, or sisters, or battle-brothers, depending on what part of the fire giant creation myth you are listening to. It doesn't much matter to a fire giant what gender you are, what matters is if you are a good fire giant who fights against the evils of Ice.

## MAGMA KEEP ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The salamander entry in this book has extreme heat environmental effects, but here is a new one to throw into the mix for fire giant locations:

### CHAMPION TIER: LAVA POOL

Toxic fumes (DC 25 to avoid).

**Toxic fumes +12 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—4d8 poison damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

Extreme temperature (DC 20 to avoid).

**Sizzling wind +10 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—4d6 ongoing fire damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

Bubbling lava (DC 15 to avoid).

**Burned away +15 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—15 fire damage and possible loss of limb

*Miss:* Half damage, and permanent scarring.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**A Steamy Romance**—A young fire giant apostate has fallen in love with a frost giant ice sorceress and the pair have eloped. The impending giant-vs.-giant conflict threatens a location important to an icon that the adventurers are allied with. Can the party stop the war before it is too late?

**Axis Mundi**—The party stumble upon a fire giant plot to ignite the dormant volcano that the imperial capitol of Axis sits in. They are tasked by an icon that is normally their enemy to stop the fire giants without letting the Emperor know about the danger or who averted it. Just what wheels within wheels are turning here?

**Blue Flame Seers**—In a cave whose floors and passageway flare with blue fire, a group of fire giants are sacrificing humanoids to their god Unyr. Until recently, the cavern of blue flame was the home to seers loyal to the Priestess. The seers are pacifists, and want the adventurers to remove the fire giants peacefully.

**Burning Rampage**—The fire giants have decided that the adventurers' favorite city or home town is a work of their enemy the Ice, and are marching out to destroy it. No twists here for once—just primordial giants on a rampage and the adventurers caught up in events. Do the adventurers loot during the panic, or try to prevent looting? Do the adventurers evacuate, stand their ground, or try to divert the giants? Do the adventurers try to settle old scores or carry out a mission while the giants are attacking, or do the adventurers join with old enemies so that both can survive the pyrocaust?

**The End is Nigh, or is It?**—An ancient manuscript has come to light that lends credence to the fire giants' legends. The adventurers are tasked with examining the Book of Flames (a fire giant holy text) for confirmation or refutation of the manuscript. Unfortunately, the 'book' is composed of foot-tall burning letters carved into a cliff face, deep in a fire giant keep.



# FLUX ELEMENTAL

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Do you *need* free-willed elementals with their own weirdly monomaniacal agendas in your game? Perhaps not. Is there room for free-willed elementals that poke around where no one expects them? In a world that includes living dungeons, magical death-traps left over from the Wizard King, sentient forests, a deeply poisoned underworld, and an overworld that has a tendency to shed the wrecked palaces of the losers in the games of cloudy thrones, surely the answer could be *yes*.

## THE SINGLE-MINDED NORM

Followers of the Archmage think of elementals as creatures connected to the building blocks of reality who are relatively easy and safe to summon. Followers of the High Druid know elementals as single-minded creatures vital to the basic workings of nature who gladly answer their call.

When the Archmage and the High Druid agree on something, they may be right. Maybe most elementals are such cookie-cutter expressions of their element that it doesn't make sense to speak of them as free-will individuals. Maybe the elementals of fire, earth, air, and water are usually single-minded, operating something like arcane or magical machines. But what if an elemental had a shifting perspective? Would it be more like us, or more like an unpredictable machine?

## ALL IS FLUX

If you wish, the flux elemental could be the most human-like of the elementals because its nature is split. Like the rest of the world's non-elemental corporeal creatures, the flux elemental is composed of multiple elements. In the flux elemental's case, that's one element at a time, ever-changing, instead of all mixed together in a stable configuration, but this elemental can't dodge psychological shifts borne of multiple perspectives. Maybe the struggle to incorporate a constantly shifting body creates a more sophisticated mind.

## WHY NOW?

The High Druid is resurgent, and powerful elementals move through the earth, soar out of storms, and erupt from the waters. At the same time, the Archmage's wards are failing.

Are flux elementals a sign of resurgent nature, brimming with the possibility of new creation? Are they more proof that the Archmage's wards are disintegrating into self-directed bits? Maybe wizards and druids trying to summon normal elementals are getting flux elementals instead, who fly out into the world instead of disappearing when dispelled. Maybe flux elementals themselves aren't the point, but when the great forces of the world collide, flux elementals splash out in all directions. Maybe flux elementals are new magically-fused consequences of a great overworld battle that the PCs themselves fight?

Or maybe you bought the *Sorcerer Summoning* issue of 13<sup>th</sup> Age Monthly and have been summoning flux elementals for a couple campaigns already!

## FLUX ELEMENTAL

*5<sup>th</sup> level troop [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +10

Roll 1d4 when the flux elemental rolls initiative and when it shifts to determine its new form, a benefit, and its current attack

**1 Shift to air:** When the flux elemental shifts to air, it gains flight until it shifts to a different form (it can land as part of its next move after shifting out of air), and it also gains a +1 attack bonus (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Wind touch +10 vs. PD—14 damage**

*Miss: 4 damage.*

**2 Shift to earth:** When the flux elemental shifts to earth, it gains a +1 AC bonus (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Rocky fist +10 vs. AC—18 damage**

**3 Shift to fire:** When the flux elemental shifts to fire, it gains a +1d6 damage bonus with all its attacks (cumulative, only applies to hits).

**Scorching hands +10 vs. PD—10 fire damage, and 5 ongoing fire damage**

*Miss: 5 fire damage.*

**4 Shift to water:** When the flux elemental shifts to water, it gains 2d6 additional hit points (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Whoosh and a slam +10 vs. PD—10 damage**

*Natural even hit: If the target is staggered, it is dazed until the end of its next turn.*

*Shift: Unless the escalation die is 6+, roll a d6 at the start of the flux elemental's turn. On a 4+, the flux elemental shifts.*

*Power-up: The bonuses from shifts are cumulative, but each category of bonus maxes out at 4 bonuses.*

**AC 19**

**PD 19**

**MD 16**

**HP 70**

## BIG FLUX ELEMENTAL

*7<sup>th</sup> level troop [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +12

Roll 1d4 when the flux elemental rolls initiative and when it shifts to determine its new form, a benefit, and its current attack

**1 Shift to air:** When the big flux elemental shifts to air, it gains flight until it shifts to a different form, and it also gains a +1 attack bonus (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Wind touch +12 vs. PD—20 damage**

*Miss: 7 damage.*

**2 Shift to earth:** When the big flux elemental shifts to earth, it gains a +1 AC bonus (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Rocky fist +12 vs. AC—26 damage**

**3 Shift to fire:** When the big flux elemental shifts to fire, it gains a +1d8 damage bonus when it hits with an attack (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Scorching hands +12 vs. PD—15 fire damage, and 10 ongoing fire damage**

*Miss: 8 fire damage.*

**4 Shift to water:** When the big flux elemental shifts to water, it gains 2d10 additional hit points (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Whoosh and a slam +12 vs. PD—15 damage**

*Natural even hit:* If the target is staggered, it is dazed until the end of its next turn.

*Shift:* Unless the escalation die is 6+, roll a d6 at the start of the flux elemental's turn. On a 4+, the flux elemental shifts.

*Power-up:* The bonuses from shifts are cumulative, but each category of bonus maxes out at 4 bonuses.

**AC 21**

**PD 21**

**MD 18**

**HP 100**

## GREATER FLUX ELEMENTAL

*9<sup>th</sup> level troop [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +15

Roll 1d4 when the flux elemental rolls initiative and when it shifts to determine its new form, a benefit, and its current attack

**1 Shift to air:** When the greater flux elemental shifts to air, it gains flight until it shifts to a different form, and it also gains a +1 attack bonus (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Wind touch +14 vs. PD—35 damage**

*Miss: 15 damage.*

**2 Shift to earth:** When the greater flux elemental shifts to earth, it gains a +1 AC bonus (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Rocky fist +14 vs. AC—44 damage**

**3 Shift to fire:** When the greater flux elemental shifts to fire, it gains a +1d12 damage bonus when it hits with an attack (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Scorching hands +14 vs. PD—25 fire damage, and 15 ongoing fire damage**

*Miss: 10 fire damage.*

**4 Shift to water:** When the greater flux elemental shifts to water, it gains 6d6 additional hit points (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Whoosh and a slam +14 vs. PD—30 damage**

*Natural even hit:* If the target is staggered, it is dazed until the end of its next turn.

*Shift:* Unless the escalation die is 6+, roll a d6 at the start of the flux elemental's turn. On a 4+, the flux elemental shifts.

*Power-up:* The bonuses from shifts are cumulative, but each category of bonus maxes out at 4 bonuses.

**AC 23**

**PD 23**

**MD 20**

**HP 165**

## EPIC FLUX ELEMENTAL

11<sup>th</sup> level troop [ELEMENTAL]

Initiative: +17

Roll 1d4 when the flux elemental rolls initiative and when it shifts to determine its new form, a benefit, and its current attack

**1 Shift to air:** When the epic flux elemental shifts to air, it gains flight until it shifts to a different form, and it also gains a +1 attack bonus (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Wind touch +14 vs. PD—55 damage**

*Miss:* 15 damage.

**2 Shift to earth:** When the epic flux elemental shifts to earth, it gains a +1 AC bonus (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Rocky fist +14 vs. AC—64 damage**

**3 Shift to fire:** When the epic flux elemental shifts to fire, it gains a +1d12 damage bonus when it hits with an attack (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Scorching hands +14 vs. PD—35 fire damage, and 20 ongoing fire damage**

*Miss:* 15 fire damage.

**4 Shift to water:** When the epic flux elemental shifts to water, it gains 6d10 additional hit points (cumulative) until the end of the battle!

**Whoosh and a slam +14 vs. PD—40 damage**

*Natural even hit:* If the target is staggered, it is dazed until the end of its next turn.

*Shift:* Unless the escalation die is 6+, roll a d6 at the start of the flux elemental's turn. On a 4+, the flux elemental shifts.

*Power-up:* The bonuses from shifts are cumulative, but each category of bonus maxes out at 4 bonuses.

**AC 25**

**PD 25**

**MD 22**

## FLUX ELEMENTALS AND THE ICONS

If you like the idea that flux elementals have unpredictable free will, they may be involved with icons who normally have less to do with elementals. If you don't

**Archmage:** Can failing wards be restored by capturing and harnessing ever-shifting flux elementals? Even if the answer is 'no, not really' you can imagine the Archmage being a lot more likely to try it if flux elementals are signs of his power fading or are more likely to connect with the High Druid and other rivals.

**Emperor:** If flux elementals became an actual force in the Dragon Empire, would the current Emperor borrow a page from his ancestor's diplomacy with the half-orcs and offer the flux elementals citizenship? Maybe the rumor that the Emperor is considering this and the resulting espionage stunts from icons looking into the possibility qualifies as an adventure hook.

**Priestess:** As a metaphor for ever-shifting gods of light, flux elementals are not half-bad. Maybe the Archmage and High Druid have brought the creatures into the world and the Priestess is going to show them where they belong.



# THE FOMORI

*Creeping crawling fear stalks me—cold hands, twisting my bones, and tearing my skin. Underneath, its hide, terrifying red. Horrible and horrifying, terrible and terrifying, awesome and awful. The old gods, returned at last. None shall survive.*

—The Old Gods Returned, ancient elven poem

Long before the gods of darkness and light, there were other gods. Gods that were worshiped by monstrous races, and were worshiped with depraved deeds. The old gods of chaos.

Fortunately for the civilized races these old gods were defeated. Their monstrous worshipers were slain, their high places pulled down, and their sacred stones smashed and buried. The chaos gods themselves were banished deep into the Iron Sea. They faded into memory, then into legend, and finally into obscure myths known only to the most diligent delvers into forbidden tomes.

But now they are at last returning, to reclaim what was once more and bathe the world in blood.

## THE OLD GODS, RETURNED

Exactly why the old gods have returned from their banishment is up to you.

Ultimately, the real reason for the return of the fomori should be left as a mystery for the adventurers to discover. Once the secret has been brought out of the darkness, the heroes might be able to put things right and banish the terrible old gods again.

Here are several ideas to get you started, but feel free to come up with your own reasons for the old gods coming back.

## WORSHIP RESUMED

The fomori gain power through the worship of their followers. The Dragon Empire has loosened its grip, allowing populations of bugbears, goblins, and similar monstrous humanoids to grow too large. Facing threats from all sides, the Empire has not been as dedicated as it should have been to stamping out monstrous cults.

There was no one single incident that bought the fomori back. It's a problem that has been growing for ages and now it is too late to prevent their return.

. . . or is it? Perhaps if the icons joined together to wipe out the monstrous races the power of the fomori could be sufficiently weakened.

## BROKEN SEAL

There was something important that was keeping the fomori at bay. Maybe it was a ritual that needed to be repeated every century that didn't take place, or maybe it was a big rune-covered stone that was cracked, or it could have been a bloodline whose last member died without leaving any children.

Another option would be to relate it to the characters, something innocuous that the adventurers previously had a hand in. That nameless villager that they killed was the last Oath-Binder, or the lost temple that they desecrated and looted was the thing keeping the fomori sealed away. Oops.

## FADED WARD, OR PROPHECY

Wards only last so long—this one lasted eons, but has now finally faded away. It's nobody's fault, though it is a pity that everybody forgot to prepare for the fomori returning.

Maybe there was some sort of precondition for the fomori returning. Great spells usually have some sort of get-out clause or loophole that ends them, after all. *"The ward would last until the son of iron burns the last rose."* And so the line of Emperors have been carefully keeping rose gardens to ensure that there would never be a last rose—and then an adventurer who is the son of a smith burns down the Last Rose Tavern, which happened to be situated in the very spot the prophecy was given.

## TYPES OF FOMORI

There are various types of fomori, which can be encountered at various tiers of play. The unclean are an adventurer-tier problem, the fomorians are a champion-tier threat, and the true-fomori are an epic-tier menace. Then there are the greater fomori, a world-ending menace to be prevented rather than a monster to be fought.

## UNCLEAN-ONES (AKA HERALDS)

True-fomori can gift those that worship them with a portion of their power. These foul devotees, known as unclean-ones, can usually pass for a normal member of their race, but are host to a strand of the soul of a true-fomori. Unclean-ones are the preachers and evangelists for the chaos gods, encouraging others of their race to join secret fomori cults.

Unclean-ones aren't always aware of the scope of their transgressions. They often don't know that they are actually worshiping the fomori. True-fomori can trick otherwise holy and righteous people into worshiping them, sending them visions and drawing them deeper into depravity. Most unclean-ones think that they are worshiping an obscure aspect of their god, or are in contact with a spirit or demon—and the true-fomori fosters that illusion to better hide its activities. It doesn't matter to the true-fomori whose name the unclean-ones call forth during their depraved acts, provided the dark ceremonies are completed and power is siphoned to them.

It is therefore difficult to root out fomori cults without an inquisition that squashes all forms of heresy or deviation from orthodoxy and kills the worshipers of all unfamiliar gods.

## FOMORIANS (AKA FOMORI GIANTS)

Fomorians are either the children of an unclean-one, or unclean-ones that have survived long enough to be blessed with amazing size and strength, or the true-bred offspring of fomorians. Whatever their origin, fomorians are twisted, brutish versions of their "base" race. Usually they are hunchbacks and their features are asymmetrical, with one larger eye, twisted drooling lips, and mismatched limbs.

Unlike unclean-ones, fomorians can't pass as normal people—they are a distinct and recognizable monstrosity. True, some have vestiges of the bloodline from which they came still showing (a gnollish muzzle, pointed elven ears, etc.), but no one from their original race would recognize them as kin.

Fomorians are pitiless, uncouth, and generally nowhere near as intelligent as their non-monstrous ancestors. They respect power but not much else. They prefer to make their lairs in caves, tunnels, basements, and sewers, and emerge at night to snatch up victims to eat, enjoying the taste of sentient beings in particular. While unclean-ones must be tutored in the vile acts of debased worship and torture that the true-fomori draw power from, such things come naturally to fomorians. Each nest of fomorians is led by whoever is best able to club their rivals into submission and take the most meat for themselves.

## TRUE-FOMORI (AKA THE CHAOS GODS)

True-fomori are not humanoids and never were. Each true-fomori is uniquely horrible in appearance. One might be an undulating sheet of bleeding skin covered in diseased eyes, another might be a spine-covered crab-like monster, while a third might be a writhing mass of worms.

Regardless of a true-fomori's form, their nature requires that they have a host. They choose a fomorian to bond to if they can, otherwise they choose the strongest humanoid they encounter upon crawling forth from the Iron Sea.

Horrifyingly, the fomori's host is fully aware of their plight. The fomori takes pleasure in causing its host pain and even allowing its host enough autonomy to plead for death. Displays of cruelty are displays of power.

Once a host can no longer be tortured physically and mentally (generally due to slipping into madness), the fomori loses interest and searches out a new host to transfer itself to—often a friend or relative of its current host in order to extract one last drop of anguish from its victim.

True-fomori draw power from acts that cause pain, debase and shame others, or corrupt what is beautiful. They surround themselves with worshipers who will commit vile acts to give the true-fomori strength. Those same worshipers become torture-toys when fomori becomes bored.

## GREATER FOMORI (AKA THE OLD ONES)

These creatures are vast, as large as Koru behemoths. Each one was unique, and was the progenitor of a line of true-fomori. In their prime, they could warp reality to create horrors on a grand scale, and kept those in their presence from dying no matter what tortures were inflicted. To come to the attention of a greater fomori was truly a fate worse than death.

Thankfully, the greater fomori have not returned . . . not yet.

### COSMIC HORRORS

Greater fomori are Lovecraftian cosmic horrors, world ending threats able to destroy cities with ease. If they returned, even for an hour, it would mean the end of an age. This could lead to an interesting 14th Age campaign where the adventurers survive the greater fomori's brief return and must try to rebuild civilization while dealing with unleashed horrors. So no, we're not statting these things up for player characters to fight. A greater fomori is an event, rather than a monster.

## THE FOMORI AND THE ICONS

**The Lich King:** The fomori can't gain worship from the undead, and cannot corrupt them either. The Lich King is therefore going to be an ally of the fomori, or the world's only hope against them.

**The Orc Lord:** It's true that they both want to see civilization burn, but the fomori want the orcs to worship them (along with every other monstrous race). That puts them in direct competition with the Orc Lord.

If the Lich King decides to fight the fomori, then the Orc Lord might end up in a bizarre alliance with his oldest foe.

**The Crusader and the Priestess:** The Crusader serves the dark gods, and the Priestess serves the gods of light—the old gods predate both these icons' divine patrons. The Priestess and the Crusader working together to form a holy inquisition is one possible outcome of the return of the fomori.

**The Diabolist:** Corrupting the followers of the gods? That sounds like something the Diabolist would be interested in. The Diabolist might ally herself with the fomori, but not if she understood the true threat that they pose to reality.

## EVERYBODY ELSE

The Archmage and the High Druid might know about the fomori threat, or might believe that the fomori were banished long ago.

The other icons most likely don't know about the fomori, at least not yet. As far as well-informed icons know, the fomorians are just a particularly monstrous race of giants. Since most of the unclean-ones and other cultists don't understand that their sacrifices and rituals serve to strengthen the fomori, there's no unified cult to uncover or mastermind to oppose.

## UNCLEAN-ONE ABILITIES

Rather than list all the potential types of unclean-ones, we're providing some nastier special types of mutations that unclean-ones might have. Unclean-one, therefore, is a template, rather than a monster.

Add one or two of the following abilities to humanoids to create cultists who worship the true-fomori (or to beasts to create corrupted animals).

1. *Ugly physique*
2. *Uncanny speed*
3. *Unearthly beauty*
4. *Unhealthy vigor*
5. *Unhinged joints*
6. *Unholy regeneration*
7. *Unnatural strength*
8. *Unreal scent*

**Ugly physique:** The cultist is repulsive almost beyond comprehension, but its twisted form grants it the ability to withstand blows. It gains +2 to AC and +1 to PD. (Consider taking this ability with unearthly beauty, with the beautiful skin ripping off mid-battle to partially reveal the puss-covered true form).

**Uncanny speed:** The unclean-one gains a +1d10 bonus to its initiative. It has a +2 attack bonus against enemies that started the battle with lower initiative scores.

**Unearthly beauty:** The cultist has a perfect and unaging physical body, a counterpoint to its increasingly corrupted soul. It gains +2 to PD and MD. (See ugly physique.)

**Unhealthy vigor:** When a melee attack hits the unclean-one, sores and pustules on its body burst, and the attacker takes 5 acid damage (champion: 10 damage; epic 15 damage).

**Unhinged joints:** The unclean-one cultist can move in strange ways, crawling up walls like a giant bug, skittering along the ground, and so forth. It gains a +2 bonus to disengage checks.

**Unholy regeneration:** When the escalation die is odd, the unclean-one heals hit points equal to its level times the escalation die value at the start of its turn.

*Unnatural strength:* Once per battle, when the unclean-one misses with an attack (but not when it fumbles), it can change it to a hit and increase the damage by 2 for every point in the difference between the missed result and what it needed to roll to hit as a free action. When it does, it takes 1d6 damage for every 2 extra damage it deals this way. (It must deal the extra damage if it changes a miss into a hit.)

*Unreal scent:* Humanoid enemies that move into engagement with the unclean-one must immediately roll a save or take 5 poison damage (champion: 10 damage; epic 15 damage). Non-humanoid enemies (including druids in beast form, those who have taken undead form with the aid of necromantic spells, construct races, ooze races, etc.) might be more susceptible (hard save, 16+), or less susceptible (easy save, 6+), GM's call.

Oh, and all unclean-ones get the following ability whether they like it or not:

*Unreasonable master:* The true-fomori can reach into the unclean-one's mind to give them visions and look through their memories. In this way the fomori keeps an eye on its far-flung cults, and gives guidance to its heralds, even speaking directly through them if it desires. Oh, and those visions can be instructive religious apparitions, pleasing dreams sent as rewards, or terrifying and painful hallucinations sent as punishment (or because the fomori felt like inflicting suffering).

## FOMORIAN MUTATION PASTIER SPECIALS

The twisted shapes of the fomorians reflect their equally twisted minds and souls—for once, you can judge a book by its cover.

Fomorians are more likely than other races to be born with mutations. Usually, these mutations result in further twisting of their forms, but occasionally they produce something special. Roll on the table below if you wish. You can also give fomorians some unclean-one abilities (though never *unearthly beauty*).

1. Extra arm
2. Extra eyes
3. Fair is foul
4. Thick skin

*Extra arm:* When the escalation die is odd, the fomorian can make one extra melee attack per round as a quick action.

*Extra eyes:* The fomorian has a cluster of small eyes in the back of its head, a huge eye on a shoulder, a slug-like eye stalk, etc. The fomorian can't be surprised or ambushed, and it has true sight (spells like blur, invisibility, etc. don't work on it).

*Fair is foul:* Once per turn as a free action, the fomorian can make the following attack:

**C: Evil eye +11 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy, but not one that has been targeted by this attack since the start of the last round)**—10 ongoing damage, and the target's skin and bones painfully twist to make them hideous to behold. At the start of each day, provided they receive some form of magical healing, the twisted victim rolls a save with a bonus equal to their Charisma or Constitution modifier (whichever is lower) to recover their original appearance.

*Limited use:* Once one target has been hit by this attack, no further *evil eye* attacks can be made by any fomorian this battle.

*Thick skin:* Thanks to the fomorian's rock-like bones and scaly hide, it gains +1 to AC and +2 to PD.

## FOMORIAN BRUTE

*As stupid as it is ugly.*

*Large 5<sup>th</sup> level mook [GIANT]*

Initiative: +8

**Crude club +10 vs. AC**—18 damage

*Dog pile:* If there are at least three other fomorians engaged with the target, the fomorian brute can make the following attack:

**Bite +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—12 damage

*Double-strength mook:* The fomorian brute mook counts as two 5<sup>th</sup> level mooks when you are building battles.

AC 21	HP 36 (mook)
PD 19	
MD 12	

*Mook:* Kill one fomorian brute mook for every 36 damage you deal to the mob.

## FOMORIAN BULLY

*All fomorians are bullies. This one is just particularly good at it.*

*Large 6<sup>th</sup> level troop [GIANT]*

Initiative: +9

**Big club +11 vs. AC**—40 damage

*Resist mental attacks 16+:* When an attack against MD targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Too stupid to notice:* When the fomorian is moving, it only takes half damage from attacks—it isn't really tougher, it just doesn't notice some wounds.

AC 23	HP 180
PD 21	
MD 13	

## FOMORIAN TOP-CANNIBAL

*The leaders of the mob eat their competitors.*

Large 7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [GIANT]

Initiative: +8

**Big spiked club +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—30 damage

*Both attacks are natural even rolls, hit or miss:* The fomorian can make a third attack as a free action.

*Eat the dead:* Twice per battle, if the fomorian is next to a dead body, as a move action it can eat part of the corpse, healing 1d6 x 10 hp.

### Nastier Special

*Strength from the dead:* When the fomorian top-cannibal heals from eating a corpse, it gains a bonus to damage with its next attack, hit or miss, equal to the hit points it healed.

AC 24

PD 22

MD 14

HP 220

## TRUE-FOMORI HOUSES NASTIER SPECIALS

We're going to get to the stats for the true fomori and true fomori tyrant soon, but for a change we're going to cover their possible nastier specials first. Yes, it's their nastier specials that truly define these terrible creatures!

Each of the greater fomori had many offspring, the true-fomori. While true-fomori are each unique you can usually tell which clade a true-fomori originated in.

Use the following nastier special groups when you want to summon on the offspring of a specific greater fomori. You can also add in some fomorian mutations and unclean-one abilities if you like.

## CHILDREN OF GNILISST, PIPER AT THE EDGE OF ETERNITY

These fomori sing songs that drive listeners to insanity.

*Song of Gnilisst:* When the escalation die is odd, the enemy with the highest MD must roll a save at the start of the round. If it fails, it's confused until the end of its next turn. When the escalation die is even, the same effect applies to the enemy with the lowest MD. The fomori chooses if enemies are tied for highest or lowest MD.

*Ear-bleed:* The ears of all non-fomori creatures in the battle begin to bleed, and continue to do so until the end of the day. Until the next full heal-up, those creatures take a -4 penalty to skill checks involving social situations or detecting sounds.

*Discordancy:* The first time each battle the true fomori is staggered, each of its enemies in the battle is hampered until the end of its next turn.

## DAUGHTERS OF DEHOTHU, THE EYE-MOTHER

These fomori usually have lots of eyes, or a single prominent eye, and fly by hovering.

*Hovering flight:* This creature flies, its host's unwashed and diseased feet hovering inches above the ground.

*Eye beam:* Once per turn as a quick action, the daughter of Dehothu can fire a powerful ray from one or more of its eyes.  
**R: Eye beam +5 +fomori's level vs. PD**—7 ongoing force damage (champion: 14 damage; epic: 21 damage)  
*Natural 16+:* The target pops free from enemies it's engaged with and can't engage any enemies until it saves against the ongoing force damage.

*Eye theft:* When a creature is staggered, it begins to feel as if its eyes are being pulled out by an invisible force. It takes a -1 penalty to hit and damage. Enemies that die in the presence of this fomori do indeed have their eyes sucked out as the daughter of Dehothu absorbs the eyeballs.

## OFFSPRING OF STHUGO-FGHAK, FATHER OF ONE-THOUSAND NIGHTMARES

These fomori shift their forms instinctually, constantly devolving into ever-more horrible creatures.

*Shifting of Sthugo-Fghak:* When the true-fomori is hit by an attack that targets PD or MD, until the start of its next turn, the values of its PD and MD switch and it gains a bonus to AC equal to the escalation die.

*Nightmares:* After a battle with the fomori, the character with the lowest MD (randomly choose on a tie) has a nightmare during the following night, with a 50% chance that the nightmare somehow comes true the next day.

*Skin theft:* You know that trick with the tablecloth? When the true-fomori scores a critical hit, it does that to some of its target's skin, and the target is stunned (save ends). Replacing the skin might take more than normal healing, too, and it might take a while to look right on a creature again.

## SCIONS OF ATHOICAB, THE SPIDER THAT EATS THE SUN

These true-fomori tend to have lots of legs and can control spiders, scorpions, ticks, and other arachnids.

*Scuttle:* The true-fomori can climb like a spider and squeeze its body down to scuttle swiftly under low openings.

*Bite:* Once per turn as a quick action, the true-fomori can make the following attack to inject acid into its victim and drink its innards.

**Draining bite +5 + fomori's level vs. AC—7 acid damage**  
(champion: 14 damage; epic: 21 damage)

*Natural 16+:* The target heals using a recovery, but the true-fomori gains the hit points.

*Sun-eating:* A creature staggered by this fomori can no longer see the sun the following day and must rely on lantern light or magical illumination. There is a 50% chance each day thereafter that the adventurer recovers and can once again see sunlight and feels its warmth. While a creature is unable to see or feel the healing sun, whenever it rolls recovery dice, it must reroll any die that has the maximum result (for example, a 10 on a d10).

## SONS OF İSSİZOGTHA, THE TALKER IN DARKNESS

These true-fomori have plumage or fur in unnatural madness-causing colors.

*Color out of time:* An enemy making a ranged attack against the true-fomori takes a penalty to the attack equal to the escalation die and can't use the escalation die for that attack.

*Color drain:* When the true-fomori drops a creature to 0 hp or lower, that creature is drained of all color and can no longer perceive color. While under this effect, the creature takes a -4 penalty to social skill checks and a -1 penalty to saves. Restoring color to the creature requires a quest involving walking a sacred labyrinth.

## FOMORI TYRANT

*If you're close enough to smell their breath, you know what you smell like, dead and eaten. It's prophecy.*

*10<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: holy

**Crushing embrace + 15 vs. AC—40 damage, and the target is stuck (save ends) if the tyrant isn't already embracing an enemy**

*[Special trigger] C: Skin-twisting breath +15 vs. PD—65 poison damage*

*Limited use:* Only against a target that is stuck from its crushing embrace attack.

**C: "I command you to eat your own flesh" +15 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or far-away enemies)—15 psychic damage, and 10 ongoing psychic damage and the target is hampered (save ends both)**

*Crit:* The target is helpless instead of hampered.

*Chaos aura:* At the start of each round roll a d6 and compare it to the escalation die. Whichever result is highest determines the true-fomori's effect on local reality for that round. (If there are multiple true-fomori in the battle, only roll for one per round.)

**1: Bleeding steel**—Inanimate objects scream and bleed.

**2–3: Creeping insanity**—Each non-fomori creature takes a -2 penalty to MD.

**4–5: Abandoned and friendless**—The adventurers can't aid each other, communicate with each other, or otherwise count each other as allies.

**6: Doom**—The fomori and its allies use the escalation die and the adventurers do not.

*Fear aura:* Enemies engaged with the true-fomori who have 72 hp or fewer are dazed (-4 to attack) and cannot use the escalation die.

*Power from worship:* At the start of its turn, the fomori tyrant heals 5 hp for each fomorian that can see or hear it, and also heals 5 hp if at least one unclean-one can see or hear it. This effect affects the fomori even if it's dead, healing it from 0 hp.

**AC 26**

**PD 24**

**MD 20**

**HP 220**

# FOMORI TORTURER

*A person with a job as a torturer presumably does other things, things other than torturing. For a true-fomori, it's not a job, and there aren't really other things worth mentioning.*

*12<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: holy

**Irradiant touch +17 vs. AC**—40 damage, 30 ongoing poison damage, and the target's teeth and hair start to fall out  
*Crit:* The target is weakened (save ends).

**C: "Kill your friends" +17 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—45 psychic damage, 35 ongoing psychic damage and the target is confused (save ends both)  
*Miss:* 45 psychic damage.

**Chaos aura:** At the start of each round roll a d6 and compare it to the escalation die. Whichever result is highest determines the true-fomori's effect on local reality for that round. (If there are multiple true-fomori in the battle, only roll for one per round.)

**1: Crawling shadows**—Wherever the fomori's shadow falls, small objects turn into insects.

**2–3: Deeper insanity**—When an enemy target's the fomori's MD and gets a natural odd attack roll, the attack rebounds and that enemy must reroll the attack against itself.

**4–5: Sudden reversals**—This round the escalation die value is a negative, subtracting from the adventurers' attack rolls.

**6: Doom**—The fomori and its allies use the escalation die and the adventurers do not.

**Fear aura:** Enemies engaged with the true-fomori who have 120 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 to attack) and cannot use the escalation die.

**Power from worship:** At the start of its turn, the fomori torturer heals 5 hp for each fomorian that can see or hear it, and also heals 5 hp if at least one unclean-one can see or hear it. This effect affects the fomori even if it's dead, healing it from 0 hp.

**AC 28**

**PD 26**

**MD 22**

**HP 360**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Unclean-ones are the heralds of the fomori, most often unknowingly. As such you can mix them in with any humanoids you wish and call it a cult. Kobolds? Yep. Troglodytes? Sure. Kobolds and troglodytes and orcs together? Why not. Just give them matching cult robes and a keen interest in unwholesome and degraded religious practices and you are good to go. No undead though—the fomori can't derive any worship from undead creatures, and intelligent undead seem to instinctively avoid anything to do with the fomori.

Fomorians usually don't ally themselves with other creatures, don't make ranged attacks, and don't employ

## MORE CHAOS

The true-fomori are sometimes called chaos gods. Once their cults are fully up and running and sacrificing whole cities, the true-fomori can again claim that title in truth, ushering in the return of the Old Ones. For now, however, they are diminished demigods at best—but they still have more than a touch of chaos to them.

If you have *13 True Ways* you should check out the chaos mage's random High Weirdness effects on page 18, and perhaps throw those into the battle whenever the escalation die changes value.

The prismatic ogre mage from the first *13th Age Bestiary* comes with a random chaotic environmental effect table (page 154), something you might want to use in an area touched by the fomori. In fact, an unclean-one prismatic ogre mage works well as a lieutenant to a true-fomori.

complicated tactics: fomorians simply rush forward and mob the weakest opponent with the intent of eating it as soon as they can. If there was a monster most likely to use the coup-de-grace rules, it is the fomorians—other monsters will move on to fighting one of your allies once you drop, but what makes fomorians frightening is that they'll keep clubbing your dying body to mush before an ally can heal you.

True-fomori should be frightening and stand out, so they are best used singularly or in tyrant and tormentor pairs. If you use multiple fomori each round, pick which fomori's *chaos aura* to roll on. True-fomori benefit from having fomorians and unclean-ones watching them fight, so throw lots of those in the battle. The first time the adventurers see the true-fomori heal they will realize that a true fomori cannot die while it has worshipers believing in it—and the adventurers will have to split their efforts between fighting the true-fomori and wiping out the fomori cultists and fomorians.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**The High Plateau**—A cultist who believes that they are worshiping a moon god has had revealed to them (via visions and dreams) the resting place of a lost tome, one that contains a ritual that will allow them to bring their moon god down from the heavens. The cultist wants to hire the adventurers to accompany the cult to the plateau where the book resides, a bare and dangerous place full of cave-dwelling fomorians. Of course, the cultist is unknowingly in the thrall of a fomori. The fomori has tortured a scribe into creating a fake "ancient" book full of ritualistic torture and murder designed to feed it power, and it wants to get the book into circulation as a believable fake (or get new victims up to the fomorians). Will the adventurers spot the deception? Will they notice the secret depravities of the cult? And what will they do if they end up with the book?

**The Black Stone Temple**—Years ago the members of an isolated temple were subverted by a fomori and started

producing fomorian children. Not wanting to admit their fault (or reveal their secret heretical rituals) the priests and priestesses of the temple quietly took the fomorian youths out into the wilderness to die. The fomorians survived, and the giants have returned to eat their parents (as is their way). The adventurers are sent to the temple to aid the residents, but those in the temple are strangely stand-offish. Will the adventurers discover the temple's secret? If not, will they defeat the fomorians only to be attacked in their sleep by the clerics?

**Nameless Horror**—A fomori has taken up residence deep under a city and is spreading misery by instructing its scattered cultists to commit acts of terror and wickedness. Can the adventurers locate the root cause of the sudden uptick in gruesome murders, while also dealing with a sudden inexplicable infestation of cannibalistic fomorian giants in the sewers?



## How Much Horror? Playing Like Adults

*You should discuss with your group how much horror is okay, and what types of horror are definitely not okay. Discuss what narrative or descriptive lines your group won't cross, and what sorts of things are alright for the GM or a player to introduce but that nobody will describe in detail.*

*Me? I'm freaked out by face-stealing monsters. Bloody terrifying. However, I'm okay with tons of gore and limbs and guts flying everywhere mid-battle. Whenever I start a new campaign I let my players know that, and ask them about what sorts of things they are and aren't okay with, and what things they are sort-of-okay-with but would rather have a veil drawn over and not graphically described (we usually all agree that any sex scenes to be handled with a skill check and described as "and stuff happens and we fade to black . . .").*

*It's my intention that true-fomori be horrifying in ways that goblins and trolls might not be, but that might push up against some players' and GMs' boundaries in a way that might not be fun for them. You can read online about the X-card and O-card and consent in gaming, which could be a mechanic that your group is interested in using in a fomori-heavy game.*

*Why consent? Why not go all-out for graphic violence and deep depravity? Well, while it might seem "cool" and "edgy," what usually happens is that somebody gets uncomfortable (or somebody gets a little too into it and makes the rest of the group very uncomfortable), and by unspoken agreement the group stays away from adult topics from then on out and sticks to technicolor PG-13 stuff (or just stops playing together). By setting boundaries and playing with common consent you can go beyond PG-13 with confidence.*



## Corrupting Horror

*What could make the fomorians more terrible? If the chaos and corruption that they bring is further reaching.*

*They call up the primal power of Chaos that was long ago put down. This power invigorates everything that is physical, active, and driven. It washes out all that is nuanced, measured, and civilized. Before the adventurers tangle with actual fomorians, they must face the people, beasts, and natural forces that have been liberated from everything that kept them in line.*

**Society of Brutes:** *Under the influence of the fomorians, social life becomes direct and brutal. Gone are comedy, writing, wit, fine music, fine art, and decency. The people don't miss these niceties. Instead, they revel in the power surging through their limbs: howling, capering, fighting, coupling, drumming, burning, dancing, whirling, killing, feasting, racing, smashing, laughing, and relishing all that is loud and mighty. Torture and human sacrifice are the spectacles that bring the mob together and drive them to ecstasy. Give the PCs reasons to walk among these people and meet them on their terms, not just fight them. For a layer of irony, maybe all these people look fabulous: healthy, vigorous, alert, bright-eyed, and strong.*

**Worshipful Giants:** *Ogres, giants, and their kin return to the sacred sites of their ancestors, consumed with zeal for the Old Ones. They rave, caper, and beam with joy. The ogres' religious enthusiasm and the people's brutality together blur the line between civilians and monsters. They also make good opponents for parties that need enemies worse than demented townsfolk but still not fomorian level.*

**Violent Animals:** *Like people, they become active, energized, strong, and passionately violent. Farm beasts roam the streets of town, and the humans accept them as peers. At sites of fomorian power, beasts bellow out their hymns of adulation, filled with ardor for their unseen masters. People and animals revere the same altars, where lifeblood is spilled. From across the land, more animals migrate to the fomorian power centers, drawn by an unspoken promise of power and ecstasy.*

**Monsters?:** *It's not that interesting to have creatures turn monstrous if they're already monsters. In fact, one could imagine evil dragons or even demons sometimes fighting the fomori. Of course, if you really like wyverns or bulettes or something, they can sure be devoted to the fomori like the giants are. Their ancestors served the Old Ones, and now they convert to the service of their returned lords.*

**Abundant Plants:** *Trees, vines, and other plants grow faster, larger, and stranger. They bear larger and more pungent fruits, perhaps even the tree that don't normally bear any fruit at all. When cut, plants bleed copious amounts of smelly sap.*

**Stormy Nature:** *Storms, wind, lightning, earthquakes, landslides, and floods become more common and powerful. They act almost as if they have a wicked intelligence that bends them toward destruction.*

**Words of an "Old One":** *These lines from "The Call of Cthulhu" have long stuck with me: "The time would be easy to know, for then mankind would have become as the Great Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and reveling in joy. Then the liberated Old Ones would teach them new ways to shout and kill and revel and enjoy themselves, and all the earth would flame with a holocaust of ecstasy and freedom."*

—H. P. Lovecraft



# THE FOREST THAT WALKS

*Who can rein in the High Druid as she gains power over nature and the other icons? Perhaps a creature that rose as she has risen, but has fallen to become a monster.*

The Forest that Walks is a fallen icon. We think of it as a former High Druid, though you might invent a different story if you're playing with alternative icons.

We suspect the Forest that Walks' fall happened long ago rather than in recent memory. It is probably not a familiar visitor to the Dragon Empire. Perhaps it has been roaming in distant lands. Perhaps it has been asleep and has recently awokened.

This entry also includes a monster we call the barrier beast. It might be a herald or a servant of the Forest that Walks, or you may decide to use it as a nasty monster on its own in a campaign that doesn't want to get involved in the story of a fallen icon.

## ORIGIN STORIES

How did a High Druid fall so badly and become a monster? You may not want to decide at first, letting your campaign sort it out. In case you eventually want to know, here are a few possibilities.

## BETRAYAL BY THE EMPEROR

The Dire Wood used to extend all the way to the Bronze River. When Axis was founded, the Emperor assured the High Druid that would always be the case.

Eventually, an Emperor decided that Axis needed to expand its boundaries and fortify its defenses. The Dire Wood was burned and cut back. The earlier promise had been forgotten, but not by the High Druid who joined with the spirits of the destroyed forest to become the Forest That Walks.

## CURSED BY THE ELF QUEEN

The High Druid declared that all woods belonged to the beasts and the trees, and personally journeyed to the Queen's Wood to tell the Elf Queen that she was to give up her claim. This went over as well as you would expect: the Elf Queen decreed that if the High Druid gave allegiance to beasts and plants and the elements, then that is what the High Druid would become.

A High Druid walked into the Queen's Wood. A forest walked out.

## MURDER OF A HIGH DRUID

However High Druids are supposed to pass, or pass on their legacy, that's not what happened to this High Druid. Slain by the forces of an enemy icon, or possibly even the enemy icon themselves! But which one?

Perhaps identifying and holding that icon accountable in some way accountable could calm the Forest That Walks?

## DRUMS OF THE ORC LORD

The dwarves gouging at the earth for trinkets, the elves ruling over the woods rather than living in them, the Empire claiming dominion over the whole land from their corrupt city. All of the peoples of the world see nature as theirs to rule, except for those that now serve the Orc Lord. Orcs, giants, and others live simply. Violently, it is true, but violent mostly against those who commit their own violence against the world.

If you found those sentiments hard to believe, well so did we! But this is what a former High Druid believed, and in the long ages when the Orc Lord was missing, this former High Druid found him and worked for his return. Now the former High Druid is back as a savage fallen icon called the Forest that Walks, and perhaps so far gone that it doesn't recognize the icon that prompted its original fall.

If you are extremely happy with this version of the story, replace some of the mook allies that spill out of the Forest that Walks during combat with more orcs instead of elves. Hell, make them elves twisted into orcs!

## INTERRUPTED SLEEP

The creation of the Forest that Walks wasn't a catastrophe. It was a peaceful process and a surprise. A High Druid decided their life as a person and an icon was finished. They flew far into the wilderness to rejoin the natural world. But instead of dying, they slept, and as they slept they shifted and absorbed the forest around them.

The catastrophe has hit in the 13<sup>th</sup> age because something has woken the ancient druid from what they'd thought was their ultimate rest. Maybe someone tried to destroy the forest that the fallen icon had become. Maybe it's some other event that has already occurred in your campaign, a revelation that will make the players say "Ohhhhhh."

Of the origin stories we've touched on, this is one that offers hope for redemption rather than salvation through violence.

## ANOTHER IRON SUNRISE

The other monsters in this entry, that may or may not be closely tied to the Forest that Walks, are the barrier beasts, great monsters that come out of the Iron Sea. If you wished, you could tie the Forest that Walks to the same tragic Wizard King mistake that made the Iron Sea the enemy of the land.

We've never gotten specific about what that great mistake was. Involving the Forest that Walks as a fallen High Druid opens up new possibilities.

## BARRIER BEASTS

Are the barrier beasts part of the Forest that Walks' story? They might be. We've put them into this write-up because it makes sense that the Forest that Walks has unique and powerful under-beings to go along with its many mooks. But another way to use the barrier beasts is as their own set of problems, unrelated to the Forest that Walks. We'll touch on that possibility before spending more effort discussing connections with the fallen icon.

**Barrier beasts on their own:** They could be some of the most powerful giant monsters that throw themselves out of the Iron Sea against the southern coast. This might be more interesting if the player characters are already involved trying to defend the Sea Wall.

Another option is to have living dungeons carved of caverns and underground oceans that are surfacing in the wilderness. They're protected by hugely powerful barrier beasts who defy the High Druid's power. So who is behind them?

**Well duh:** Both the ideas above also work just fine when you use barrier beasts as underlings, heralds, or servants of the Forest that Walks. Barrier beasts might appear singly, two at a time, or even in trios. When more than one barrier beast is encountered together, their wild abilities, vulnerabilities, and nastier specials like breath weapons are always different from each other.

**What beasts are these?**: The stats are designed to mesh with a wide variety of possible creatures. Each barrier beast is unique. You should describe them in ways that suit the attacks and abilities they're about to use against the player characters!

**Agents of destruction:** If you're using the barrier beasts as the Forest that Walks' heralds, each barrier beast might have a unique target it seeks out—a castle, an army, a village, even an overly tame forest or overly cultivated valley. If not stopped by a truly threatening enemy (like the player characters!), the barrier beast will find and destroy their target, then flee into the earth, the sea, or the sky until it acquires a new target.

## BARRIER BEAST

*Something rises from the sea... and keeps rising.*

Huge 11<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]

Initiative: +14

Vulnerability: varies (see *if it bleeds*)

**Barrier breaker (1 target, or adjusted targets equal to the escalation die; see *melee breaker* ability below) +16 vs. AC—125 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* One normal structure of house or ship size that the barrier beast is next to is destroyed.

*Natural even hit:* 20 extra damage and the target stuck and weakened until the start of the barrier beast's next turn, until the beast moves, or until it uses *beast surge*.

*Natural 16+:* A non-druidic spell cast on the barrier beast ends. If there are none, a non-druidic spell cast on the target ends.

*Natural 20:* All non-druidic spells cast on the barrier beast or the target end.

*Miss:* 50 damage

**Melee breaker:** The barrier beast's barrier breaker attack can target 1 engaged enemy, or engaged enemies equal to the escalation die; or the attack can target a nearby enemy for a 'cost' of two points on the escalation die. For example, if the escalation die is 6, the attack could target two engaged enemies and two nearby enemies.

**Wild Ability:** Each barrier beasts has one of the following wild abilities.

**Amphibious:** The barrier beast can swim underwater swiftly and indefinitely.

**Burrowing:** As amphibious, but instead of travelling underwater the barrier beast can "swim" through the earth.

**Flight:** The barrier beast can fly very quickly, if not very gracefully.

**Mountain Shell:** Twice per battle as a standard action, the barrier beast can gain a +4 to all defenses until it makes an attack.

**Regrowth:** Twice per battle as a standard action, the barrier beast can regain 100 hit points.

**Beast surge:** Once per round when a barrier beast takes more than 100 damage from an attack, all enemy-caused conditions affecting the barrier beast end. Then the barrier beast rolls a normal save; if the save succeeds, the barrier beast gets an additional free action that depends on its *wild ability* (see below):

If the barrier beast has *amphibious*, *burrowing*, or *flight*, it can choose to swim/burrow/ or fly someplace far away without taking opportunity attacks as a free action. At the start of its next turn, the barrier beast gains a free move action.

If the barrier beasts has *mountain shell*, it uses it as a free action that does not count against its uses of the ability.

If the barrier beast has *regrowth*, it can use that ability as a free action as a free action that does not count against its uses of the ability.

**Beast resilience:** At-will and basic attacks do not deal miss damage to a barrier beast, and when an attack against AC or PD targets this creature it deals half damage unless the natural attack roll is 16+.

This ability does not work against attacks it is vulnerable to, and ends when the escalation die is 6+.

**Shrug:** The barrier beast ignores damage that's less than 10.

**If it bleeds:** Each barrier beast is vulnerable to one damage type (chosen by the GM or determined randomly). When a barrier beast is hit by an attack it is vulnerable to, it cannot use *beast surge* until the end of its next turn.

**Big enough:** A barrier beast is immune to opportunity attacks from any creature that is not huge size or larger (like a barrier beast). Normal sized enemies can disengage from a barrier beast by rolling 6+ instead of the normal 11+.

### Nastier Specials

**Wilder beast:** The barrier beast has two (or even three!) *wild abilities* instead of one. Choose which additional effect is used each time beast surge is triggered.

**Breath weapon:** When the escalation die is even the barrier beast can make a *breath weapon* attack as a quick action once per round, or use it as the additional effect when *beast surge* is triggered. Pick or roll a random energy type that is different from the vulnerability of the barrier beast. *Breath weapon* does that type of damage

**C: Breath weapon +16 vs. PD (1d4 nearby or far away enemies in a group)—40 damage**

*Natural 16+:* 20 ongoing damage

*Miss:* 20 damage

**AC 26**

**PD 24**

**MD 20**

**HP 700**

# THE FALLEN ICON

As a fallen icon, the Forest that Walks isn't as straightforward as most monsters. The stats which follow have three sections.

First there's the standard stat block for the fallen icon.

Second, there are stat blocks for several varieties of mooks that charge out of the forest when it fights. Except for the treant avenger, each of these mooks represents a number of weaker creatures. It's an abstraction, a mechanic meant to depict cinematic battles against dozens or hundreds of foes. These mook squads are designed to be used in battles featuring this fallen icon, but there's no reason they can't be used elsewhere.

Third, there's a Campaign Impact section following the monster stats that reveals campaign victories that can lead to defeating the Forest that Walks once and for all instead of risking the fallen icon's vengeful return.

## THE FOREST THAT WALKS

*The forest rears up into the darkening sky, or it a great beast with a forest on its back? Is it focused on the torchlight in the city behind you, or on the gleam of your weapons? In a couple seconds the answers aren't going to matter.*

Huge 14<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]

Initiative: +17

**Wrathful Earth + 19 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—60 damage

*Natural 16+*: The target is stuck and takes 60 ongoing damage (hard save ends both). Until the target saves it remains engaged with the Forest That Walks, though it cannot be otherwise targeted or damaged by the Forest that Walks (which does nothing to prevent the Forest's allies from piling on!). If the target attacks and hits the fallen icon for more than 100 damage, their next save against the *wrathful earth* effect is an easy one (6+).

**C: Angry Sky + 19 vs. PD (all nearby flying enemies, and a number of random nearby enemies equal to the escalation die, one attack per target, or all nearby enemies when the escalation die is 6 or higher)**—50 lightning damage and target loses the flight ability (save ends)

*Natural even miss*: 30 thunder damage.

*Natural odd miss*: 15 cold damage.

*Special trigger*: Use as a free action once per turn at the start of the Forest that Walk's turn.

*Ambulatory landscape*: When the Forest That Walks uses its first move action each turn, each creature of less than huge size that is engaged with or next to it before or after the movement takes 60 damage. In addition, The Forest That Walks is immune to opportunity attacks. Enemies of less than huge size can disengage from it with an easy save (6+).

*Wildest shape*: At the start of its turn, the Forest That Walks can change its creature type to beast, elemental, or plant. This ends all conditions affecting it.

*Natural resistance*: The Forest That Walks has resist poison 16+. In addition, as a beast it has resist cold 16+. As a plant it has resist lightning 16+. As an elemental it has resist fire 16+.

*Earth and sea and sky*: The Forest That Walks can sprout wings to clumsily fly, and can swim indefinitely at any depth.

*Natural supremacy*: The Forest That Walks' existence disrupts arcane magic and divine magic (but not druidic magic): natural odd hits by arcane and divine spells miss the Forest That Walks, while odd misses are rerolled against an enemy engaged with the Forest That Walks. Natural 1s target the caster.

*Enemy of civilization*: As a move action, the Forest That Walks can destroy one ordinary structure it can reach, such as a house, castle wall, temple, or ship. The structure is automatically rendered useless, and each creature inside or on the structure is subject to a *collapse* attack

**Collapse +16 vs. PD (each creature in/on structure)**—90 damage and the target is stuck and takes 20 ongoing damage (hard save ends both, 16+)

*Those that walk the forest*: Whenever the Forest That Walks becomes staggered, suffers more than 120 damage from a single attack, or is critically hit, a mob of Forest That Walks mooks (see below) will join the battle nearby the triggering enemy. While these creatures are in play, the Forest That Walks has a bonus to all defenses equal to the number of Forest That Walks mobs in the battle.

*Seeds on the wind*: If the Forest that Walks is slain, the GM secretly rolls a normal save (11+) at the end of *each session*, including this one. If the save succeeds, the Forest that Walks returns to life near where it fell or in some distant wilderness. If the campaign somehow ends while the Forest that Walks is still dead, it's the GM's call whether the Forest that Walks stays dead or rises after the events of the campaign.

Nastier special

*Omnivorous*: When a creature engaged with or next to the Forest That Walks dies (including the last mook of a mob), the Forest That Walks consumes it and regains 100 HP.

AC	28	HP	1400
PD	24		
MD	24		

## Mook Squads

These are the mooks brought forth by the *those that walk the forest* ability. When the ability is triggered, roll 1d4+2 for the number of mooks in the mob. Then roll a d6 to determine which mooks join the battle; 1-2: fanatical druid circle; 3: frenzied wolf pack; 4: militant ranger squad; 5: opportunistic orc band; 6: treant avenger.

Remember that starting a battle with these mooks in play makes the Forest that Walks tougher thanks to the defense bonus that's part of *those that walk the forest*.

These mooks have slightly unusual stats that make them interesting additions to battles that don't involve the Forest that Walks or the barrier beasts.

## Fanatical Druid Circle

*New growth requires the death of the old.*

11<sup>th</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +16

**Thorn blades +16 vs. AC—15 damage**

*Natural even hit:* 7 extra damage

*Natural even miss:* 7 damage

**R: Cleansing fire +16 vs. PD—22 fire damage**

*Natural even hit:* Also deal 11 ongoing fire damage

*Natural even miss:* 11 fire damage

**AC 26**

**PD 20**

**HP 70 (mook)**

**MD 24**

*Mook:* Kill one fanatical druid circle mook for every 70 damage you deal to the mob.

## Frenzied Wolf Pack

*They're not rabid. They're devoted.*

10<sup>th</sup> level mook [BEAST]

Initiative: +14

**A hundred fangs +17 vs. AC—14 damage**

*Natural even hit:* 7 extra damage

*Natural even miss:* 7 damage

*Pack tactics:* Enemies take a -5 penalty to disengage checks against the wolf pack.

**AC 26**

**PD 24**

**HP 55 (mook)**

**MD 20**

*Mook:* Kill one wolf pack mook for every 55 damage you deal to the mob.

## Militant Ranger Squad

11<sup>th</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +16

**A hundred cuts +14 vs. AC—15 damage**

*Natural even hit:* 7 extra damage

*Natural even miss:* 7 damage

**R: Rain of arrows +18 vs. AC—22 damage**

*Natural even hit:* 11 extra damage

*Natural even miss:* 11 damage

**AC 26**

**PD 24**

**MD 20**

**HP 70 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one ranger squad mook for every 70 damage you deal to the mob.

## Opportunistic Orc Band

*Orcs aren't normally much for forests, but they've been seduced by this Forest's path of destruction.*

10<sup>th</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +13

**From all sides +13 vs. AC—20 damage**

*Natural even hit:* 10 extra damage

*Natural even miss:* 10 damage

*Horde tactics:* Enemies take a -5 penalty to disengage checks against the orc band.

**AC 25**

**PD 23**

**MD 19**

**HP 70 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one orc band mook for every 70 damage you deal to the mob.

## Treant Avenger

12<sup>th</sup> level mook [PLANT]

Initiative: +15

Vulnerability: fire

**Rending branches +17 vs. AC—40 damage**

*Natural 16+:* 40 extra damage

*Hardwood resistance:* This creature has resist damage 16+ to all damage except fire damage and melee attacks against AC, which damage it normally.

**AC 30**

**PD 28**

**MD 22**

**HP 76 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one treant avenger mook for every 76 damage you deal to the mob.

# CAMPAIGN IMPACT

Defeating the Forest that Walks in one sweet battle is not that likely. And even if the PCs' win their first battle with the fallen icon, abilities like *seeds on the wind* make it a possible dead end.

The list that follows details a number of campaign victories that the PCs might achieve before confronting the Gold King itself. Alternatively, they may fight the Gold King once before achieving any of these wins, only to realize that they're going to need to destroy the Gold King's heritage before they can complete the fallen icon's destruction.

## RAZING THE FOREST

The player characters can achieve the campaign victories listed in the next section in any order. Successive victories remove the Forest that Walks' abilities one at a time, in the following order:

**First PC campaign victory:** Remove the Forest that Walks' *natural supremacy* ability.

**Second PC campaign victory:** *Angry sky* only triggers when the escalation die is even.

**Third PC campaign victory:** Remove the *seeds on the wind* ability.

**Fourth PC campaign victory:** Remove the 60 damage dealt by the *ambulatory landscape* ability.

## CAMPAIGN VICTORIES VS. THE FOREST THAT WALKS

The possible victories below could be modified or added-to to suit your campaign.

**Behemothic:** The PCs figure out how to send a Koru Behemoth through or over the Forest that Walks before attacking it themselves! Of course this shouldn't be an easy task, worth a big adventure/quest all on its own.

**Druidic Champions:** The High Druid endorses the PCs as her personal champions after they have accomplished a separate great quest, empowering them to eliminate the Forest that Walks in her name.

**No Beasts, No Barriers:** The PCs have slain three barrier beasts! If that's too much barrier beast battling for your campaign, make it two.

**Natural Concession:** The PCs convince the Archmage to lower the wards on the Inland Sea, bringing it closer to nature and increasing the power of the High Druid while lessening the Forest that Walks' anger.

**Win and Win Again:** Slay the Forest in two different battles.

## BUILDING BATTLES

Most any beast, wild creature, or wilderness associated monster could be suborned or recruited to the Forest that Walks' cause. The mook squads provided by the creature's *those that walk the forest* ability are a sample. If your campaign has kept the High Druid as an ally, and the High Druid's creatures off-limits as monsters, this is your chance to summon nature's champions as deadly enemies.

Having said that, we're aware that there aren't all that many 10<sup>th</sup> level and beyond creatures that will make proper allies for the Forest that Walks. The first 13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary has a few, including the ancient purple worm (page 164), the elder couatl (page 53), and a variety of dragons. The most entertaining possibilities from this volume could be the briar elves; talk about an unholy alliance.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**No Great Loss**—The Forest That Walks has appeared out of the Wild Wood itself, and is unmistakably slamming towards Drakkenhall, with scores of lesser creatures and a handful of barrier beasts as its vanguard. Many counsel the Emperor, the Elf Queen, and the Dwarf King to offer nothing but condolences to the City of Monsters, though agents of the Three have approached the party for aid.

The party can attempt to face the Forest That Walks themselves, or aid the Three's plan to overcome the Archmage's wards and allow the Red to manifest its full draconic power within the bounds of the Empire! Or will the PCs call on the other icons for aid? And where might the fallen icon turn next after Drakkenhall if the PCs and icons decide the Blue's city is expendable?

**A New Weapon**—The Forest That Walks has appeared south of Anvil. The Crusader has offered to keep the fallen icon away from Anvil, as well as Glitterhaegen and Axis, by luring it to Hell Marsh. The problem: the Crusader intends to gain the attention of the Forest That Walks by burning the great forest known as the Stalking Trees. The party can attempt to stop the Crusader's fire knights and enslaved demons before they can start the burn, deal with the Forest That Walks before the Crusader has a chance to implement his plan, or deal with demons erupting from smashed hell holes under cover of a burning forest after the fallen icon crashes and burns in the Hell Marsh.

**From One High Druid to Another**—Hundreds of the High Druid's followers have perished since the Forest That Walks has appeared. The High Druid refuses to meet her predecessor in combat, but claims to be able to pacify the Forest That Walks once others (the party) have weakened it enough. Can the characters put the fallen icon on the ropes so the High Druid can perform her ritual? Not if the hundreds of followers of the Forest That Walks have anything to say about it. It's a two front battle: protect the High Druid's ritual, fight the fallen icon.



# FROG FOLK

*"ribbit".*

—Last sound heard by many adventuring parties.



Every age of the world ends in apocalypse. The races that dominate the Dragon Empire today are the races resilient or lucky enough to survive the catastrophes that annihilated their less fortunate brethren.

The briar elves (who or may not have been exterminated by the other elves, see page 22) are perhaps the best known of these vanished peoples, but arcane researchers in Horizon also speak of the serpent kings, the bandaged deadfolk of the eastern shore, the cryptic race that raised crystalline pillars all through what is now the Red Wastes, and the salamander-people who descended into the blazing tunnels beneath the Magma Keeps, never to be seen again.

Judging from the manner in which historians and Imperial administrators almost completely ignore them, you might imagine that the secretive race known as “the frogspawn” or the “frogfolk” sunk into the swamps ages ago alongside other fabled races. But it’s not so. The frogspawn still hop and croak in the swamps, but scholars of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age seldom speak of them.

Inquiries concerning the frogfolk are usually met with brush-offs and more-or-less truthful statements that the frogspawn hardly matter. The even-stranger truth is that scholars agree that nothing good has ever come of speaking or writing about the frogspawn. Terrible and weird things seem to happen to historians, bards, and scribes who have seriously considered the frogfolk in past eras. There’s apparently some great curse at work. The frogspawn seem like such a minor frayed thread in the world’s great tapestry that none of the great powers seem to have troubled themselves to unravel the mystery.

We’ll reveal as much as we can about the frogfolk, but if you hear any strange noises outside your window, or there’s an unexplained *moistness* in the air, or you hear some strange unnatural croaking, don’t hesitate—RUN!

## I3 REASoNS TO BE PARAnoID...

We aren’t going to delve into all the possible sources of the supposed frogspawn curse. You can fit that to your campaign or keep it a mystery. Instead we’re going to dig into frogfolk psychology.

Why are the frogfolk so paranoid and secretive? Have they always been this way? They’re never going to tell you straight out, they’re paranoid and secretive! So any of the following could be true...

- The Diabolist-sponsored plague that ended the 12<sup>th</sup> Age was spread by frogspawn. The frogfolk were hunted to the brink of extinction, and now they hide from the world in case vengeful agents of the Crusader try to finish the job.
- The frogfolk know something about one of the icons, a secret that would forever change the Dragon Empire if it were ever revealed. They’re in hiding from the servants of that Icon until the time comes when the truth can be revealed.
- That thing you heard about the Diabolist and the Prince of Shadows collaborating on some big project? Frogspawn are

the result of that collaboration, though they may be more of a side effect than the intended result.

- Properly prepared, frogspawn skin exudes hallucinatory toxins that promise visions of the future. Drug dealers, servants of dark gods, oracles, and visitors from other realities enslave or skin frogspawn when they can find them. And so, the frogspawn try not to be found.
- The gods hate the frogfolk. *All* the gods, even the meekest and most forgiving of the deities of the Light. The frogs aren’t part of *any* divine plan—they bubbled in from some alternate dimension, and they’re like a spiritual poison. If one of the frogfolk worships a god, it’s reverence poisons the deity. The only thing to do is make sure the frogs never find religion.
- Or maybe the frogfolk are the remnants of some former divine plague, a living weapon that rained down from the Overworld to bring devastation and sorrow to the lands below. They’re hiding from their creators.
- Toadstones, gentle reader. Toadstones! The frogfolk hide because whenever they come to the surface, greedy adventurers pry their foreheads open looking for magic gems. (They won’t find them in this book however!)
- The frogfolk are not native to the Dragon Empire—they came here from the stars in a silver ship that crashed in the swamps, or maybe they folded space and time to come here from another dimension.
- Or they were *made* by visitors from another place, and are trying to ensure that the secrets of their vanished creators are not profaned.
- They’re biologically incapable of *not* being paranoid and fearful, any more than an owlbear can choose not to hunt or a wyvern to sting.
- PCs searching for the source of the frogspawn curse first learn that more than one age has ended when someone succeeded in uncovering the secret. It must be a coincidence.
- There’s some link between the frogspawn and the tarrasque. By all means, investigate!
- We’ve said too much. The frogs are here!

## FROGSPAWN STATS

*Survivors of frogspawn ambushes develop a nervous habit of poking at calm swamp water with ten foot poles. Preferably with sharp points attached.*

## SPECIAL ABILITIES FOR ALL FROGSPAWN

As a hidden threat, the frogspawn should abilities that come as a surprise. Instead of pegging specific abilities to specific frogspawn, we’ll start with a list of froggy abilities that can be added to any of the frogspawn monsters that follow.

You should certainly use one ability per frogspawn, occasionally two. For frogspawn mooks, treat the abilities as usable once per battle.

If you're in the mood for frogspawn super-swamp ninjas in a climactic battle, you might use all three abilities piled onto one monster.

*Disgusting tongue:* The frogspawn deals poison damage equal to its level to any character that pops free of it or successfully disengages from it. (Teleporting away is probably tongue-free unless the GM is hopping mad.)

*Dunk and cover:* If the battle is taking place in a swamp, lake, or river, whenever the frogspawn misses with a natural even attack roll, it can duck out of sight. Remove the frogspawn from the table until the start of its next turn. At the start of its next turn, place it anywhere nearby its previous location, but not engaged with an enemy.

*Erratic leap (move action):* If the frogspawn is unengaged at the start of its turn, choose a random nearby enemy the frogspawn can see. The frogspawn leaps into engagement with that enemy and its crit range with melee attacks expands by 3 until the end of the turn.

*Paranoid destroyer:* This frogspawn can't be surprised. If there's a surprise round, it gets to act. If there isn't a surprise round at the start of combat, the frogspawn gets a surprise round if its natural initiative roll is 16+. On the down side, subtract 2 from this frogspawn's MD, because it's always sure it's going to die. (**Gamemaster:** Don't give this ability to all the frogspawn in a battle. Just one or two.)

## FROGSPAWN GRUNT

2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +6

**Frogspear +6 vs. AC**—6 damage

### Nastier Special

*Poisoned Spears:* When using a frogspear, a natural attack roll of 16+ inflicts 3 ongoing poison damage.

AC	16	HP 7 (mook)
PD	15	
MD	11	

*Mook:* Kill one frogspawn mook for every 7 damage you deal to the mob.

## FROGSPAWN MONK

*These fanatical assassins consume a concoction of rare fungi and toad juices before going into battle, to sharpen their reflexes and flood their bodies with poison. As a side effect, they lose all fear of death or pain, become willing to take absurd risks, and hallucinate wildly.*

3<sup>rd</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Flailing frog fists +8 vs. AC**—8 damage, or 12 damage if this is the first time the frogspawn monk has attacked the target this battle.

*Poison Burst:* When a frogspawn monk is slain, it may make a *poison burst* attack as an interrupt action.

[special trigger] C: **Poison Burst +8 vs. PD (all enemies engaged with the monk)**—5 ongoing poison damage

AC	18	HP 45
PD	18	
MD	14	

## FROGSPAWN SPELLCROAKER

*As these magicians bellow and croak, a disconcerting luminescence billows in their pale throats. When you look across the swamps and see a cluster of pale lights pulsing in the distance, know that some less fortunate traveler is trapped in a frogspawn nightmare.*

4<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Frogspear +9 vs. AC**—13 damage

R: **Curseblast +9 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—13 damage, and if a target is staggered by this attack, the spellcroaker may make another *curseblast* attack immediately against a different target.

C: **Eruption of Frogs +9 vs. PD (all engaged enemies)**—15 ongoing poison damage, and the target pops free of the spellcroaker.

*Limited Use:* 1/battle

*Croaking Chorus:* At the start of each round, all spellcroakers in a battle start to croak together in chorus. This imposes a special bonus or penalty depending on the croak generated by the chorus that round (roll 1d6).

1-2: *Croak of Dismay:* If the number of spellcroakers is equal to or greater than the value of the escalation die, then the player characters do not get the benefit of the escalation die, but all frogs and frogfolk may add the value of the escalation die to their attack rolls instead.

3-4: *Croak of Victory:* All attacks by frogfolk gain a bonus to damage equal to the number of croakers.

**5-6: Croak of Choking:** Over the course of the round, you may force the player characters to reroll a number of d20 rolls (attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, death saves) equal to the number of croakers.

When a spellcroaker drops to 0 hit points, roll a d20—on a 11+, the remaining spellcroakers maintain the croaking chorus for the rest of the round. Otherwise, the chorus effect is cancelled for the rest of that round.

#### Nastier Specials

**Croakmaster:** This spellcroaker counts as two spellcroakers for the purposes of the *croaking chorus*.

**Frog Curse:** If a spellcroaker rolls a natural 18+ when using a curse, the target is transformed into a steadily shrinking frog-like humanoid and is *hampered* and *weakened* (save ends all effects). If the curse somehow ran its full course, the target would no doubt shrink down into a frog, but PCs are made of strong stuff and should be able to evade a fate that might affect common folk.

**AC 18**

**PD 19**

**HP 50**

**MD 17**

## FROGSPAWN DECEIVER

*Wait, something's off about that dancer. Did you see damp warty skin under her veils? Nah—my imagination. Let's just enjoy the drinks she brought us.*

*5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +8

**Hidden knife +8 vs. AC (or +12 vs. AC if the frogfolk has a higher initiative)**—20 damage

**R: Poison darts +10 vs. AC**—18 poison damage

**Poison touch:** This monster can coat items with poison. Once per battle on a hit their attack does an extra ongoing 10 poison damage (hard save ends). Outside battle they can coat objects with a skin-contact poison—10 poison damage and 10 ongoing poison damage (save ends, or hard save if the target ingests the poison).

**Disguise:** Frogspawn deceivers are experts at disguising themselves as other less froggy races, it requires a DC 25 skill check to see the truth beneath their veils or deep cloaks and lifelike masks. Once they attack what they are becomes obvious.

**Jump:** These froggy assassins can jump huge distances. When the escalation die is even frogspawn deceivers can jump as a quick action, leaping over enemies and past obstacles in a way that can't be intercepted and that doesn't provoke attacks.

#### Nastier Special

**Slippery customer:** Frogspawn deceivers do not take miss damage.

**AC 21**

**PD 19**

**HP 72**

**MD 16**

## A CURSE LIFTED WITH A KISS

Stories are full of frogs and kiss-related transformations. In the Dragon Empire few stories are without some grain of truth in them. A frogspawn deceiver's disguise can always be lifted with a kiss. It's your call whether a kiss dispels a magical disguise, or whether the disguise is mostly physical and there is no disguising a huge humanoid frog when you get that close.



## FROG KNIGHT

*As they wear rusty armor salvaged from paladins and warriors who drowned in the mud, frog knights might seem absurd at first glance. Keep laughing through your new sucking chest wound when they've skewered you.*

5<sup>th</sup> level blocker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Knobbly club +10 vs. AC**—18 damage

**Lance +10 vs. AC**—25 damage, and 5 ongoing damage (save ends).

*Limited Use:* 1/battle

*Leap to the defense:* Once per round, if a frog knight is unengaged, and an ally is targeted by an attack against AC anywhere on the battlefield, the frog knight may immediately leap to its ally's side and give that ally a +2 bonus to AC for the rest of the round as an interrupt action.

### Nastier Specials

*Heavy Armor:* Once per battle, when struck by an attack that targets AC, take half damage from that attack instead.

*Poisoned Spikes:* On a natural 16+, a hit from a frog knight's club inflicts 5 ongoing poison damage (save ends).

AC	22	HP	100
PD	20		
MD	14		

## MUTANT BULLFROG

*It's unclear if these are giant mutant horned frogmen, or giant mutant horned frogs bred and trained by frogmen. Or perhaps the distinction is nugatory, as we must immediately flee for our lives lest we be gored and eaten.*

Large 5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]

Initiative: +8

**Gore +10 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Natural even hit:* The bullfrog may also make a *bite* attack as a free action.

**C: Tongue Grab +10 vs. PD (one nearby target)**—15 damage, and the target pops free of whoever it is engaged with now and moves to be engaged with the bullfrog.

*Natural even hit:* The bullfrog may also make a *bite* attack as a free action.

[special trigger] **Bite +10 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Natural 16+:* If smaller than the mutant bullfrog, the target is partially-swallowed, and takes 10 ongoing damage (disengaging or popping free ends).

*Roar of Pain:* The bullfrog *bellows* as a free action when first staggered or when the escalation die becomes even....

[special trigger] **C: Bellow +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—20 thunder damage

### Nastier Special

*Frenzy:* The bullfrog may add the escalation die to its attack rolls when staggered.

AC	18	HP	200
PD	20		
MD	14		

## FROGSPAWN THUG

6<sup>th</sup> level double-strength mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +9

**Barbed spear +12 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Natural 16+:* 5 ongoing poison damage.

*Double-strength mook:* This monster counts as two mooks when building battles.

AC	21	HP	50 (mook)
PD	19		
MD	16		

*Mook:* Kill one frogspawn thug mook for every 50 damage you deal to the mob.

## FROGSPAWN CHAMPION

*Kings? Chieftains? Heroes? Who knows—you'll have to ask the frogspawn and they're not telling.*

6<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +9

**Feathered frogspear +11 vs. AC**—22 damage

**C: Whirling chains +11 vs. AC (one nearby enemy, or one far away enemy at +5 vs. AC)**—18 damage and the target is stuck (save ends, as does the frogspawn making a *whirling chains* attack again)

*Great leap:* The frogspawn champion can use its whole turn to leap high into the sky, taking it out of combat (or at least making it really hard to hit, your call). The following turn the great-one lands on top of or next to an enemy and makes the following attack:

**Death from above +14 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Miss:* 10 damage.

*Long sticky tongue:* Nearby enemies who roll a natural 1 save or attack roll get an item of theirs stolen by the frogspawn champion—probably their weapon.

### Nastier Special

*Longer stickier tongue:* Enemies now get their items taken away on a natural 1, 2, or 3.

AC	22	HP	90
PD	20		
MD	16		



## FROGSPAWN OLD-ONE

An enormous telepathic toad monarch? This explains everything!

Elite 7<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Pulsing batrachite scepter +12 vs. PD (each engaged enemy)**—30 force damage

**C: Mental whip +12 vs. MD (one or two nearby creatures)**—30 psychic damage

*Hit against a frogspawn ally:* If it wasn't killed by the attack, the ally heals 60 hit points and immediately moves as a free action.

*Miss against an enemy:* 15 ongoing psychic damage.

**C: Mindblast +12 vs. MD (one or two nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—35 psychic damage

*Natural odd hit when the escalation die is odd:* The target's next move action is controlled by the old one.

*Natural even hit when the escalation die is even:* The next time the target attacks, if it includes the old one in the attack the old one may make a free *mindblast* attack against the target.

*Levitating throne:* The old-one is much too ponderous to move on its own, but can levitate its throne slowly about. Allies of the old-one that are next to it can cling to the throne for a free ride. Engaged enemies that could make an opportunity attack against the frogspawn old one when it moves can instead roll a save (11+) to cling on as well.

### Nastier Special

*Hallucinogenic sweat:* Enemies who miss with a melee attack must save (11+) or become confused until the end of their next turn. The save is easy (6+) for characters who missed with a longish weapon like a staff or spear, hard (16+) for those who missed with an unarmed attack.

**AC 23**

**PD 21**

**MD 24**

**HP 160**

## BUILDING BATTLES

The frogfolk are not beloved by any other race, and it is unlikely to find others working for them. Similarly you'd have to be a pretty down on your luck monstrous despot to employ frogfolk. Oh, and the frogfolk are paranoid about others finding out about their continued existence—so there's that too. So unless there is a very good story reason (possibly involving an icon-related plot in your campaign) for frogfolk to show up working with others, it's probably not going to happen.

Frogfolk patrolling near one of their hidden temples might feature grunts and maybe a knight and a spellcroaker or two. Frogfolk defending their temples would feature either grunts or thugs, knights (maybe riding mutant bullfrogs), and of course spellcroakers. Inside the temple will be a frogspawn old-one sat on a massive throne, protected by all of the above.

What if the frogfolk come for you? Well, that fight will probably feature monks and spellcroakers if it is an ambush. If the frogfolk come into town to kill you they'll send in a couple of deceivers to poison you, then waves of monks and grunts will pour out of the local ponds or sewers to take out any witnesses.

In fights frogspawn work best when they keep moving, hopping about the place. Frogspawn also love ambushes, and will flee before adventurers if it means leading them into an ambush.

They are also the monster most likely to run away from a fight—if continuing the fight means that the frogfolk risk exposure and discovery they'll pick up their dead and leave as quickly as they can. Frogfolk aren't tied to a win-at-all-costs battle-fury mentality like orcs or hobgoblins, they'll attack in force and cold-bloodedly withdraw over and over—this means that you can create 'unfair' fights that the frogs suddenly run away from when it looks like they aren't winning (frogs are slippery foes). Frogfolk 'win' when they preserve their secrets—if you capture a froggy corpse expect them to send a raiding party in to get it back and kill any witnesses.

## THE SEVEN TEMPLES OF THE FROGS

There are seven fabled temples of the frogs, hidden sanctums where they carry on their secret ways. Each temple knows of the others, but if forced to reveal their secrets the frogs of any given temple will claim that they are the last one, and the frogs there the last of their species.

Each temple has thematic links to the icons—not because they are necessarily sponsored by an icon or in league together but so that you can fit the best temple to your campaign's needs. If you love the idea of magical frogs and you have characters in the party with icon relationships with the Archmage use *The Temple of the Everstorm*. For an undead-themed temple use *The Vault of the Fanged Frog*.

One fact unites all these disparate temples of the frogfolk—secrecy. Remember, it is whispered that anyone who talks openly about frogfolk ends up dead. The temples of the frogs may be the graves of the adventurers if they are unwary.

## 7 ICONS

Most of the temples that follow match up with the icon combinations we used in the *7 Icon Campaign* issue of *13th Age Monthly*. If you're playing a seven icon campaign, or maybe if you want to mix things up, we've got the symbols of the icons from the *7 Icon Campaign* alongside the normal icon symbols. Maybe when the frogspawn temples were established, two of the icons had been joined, so that the combo symbol appears in your world even if those icons aren't presently together . . . .

## ARCHMAGE OR PRIESTESS: TEMPLE OF THE EVERSTORM



In a previous age a cataclysmic storm blew in from the Iron Sea, threatening civilization. A powerful magic user who had looked deep into the mysteries of magic and the soul, the Hierophant, chained the storm. The storm still exists in all its city-shattering fury at the edge of the Iron Sea, roiling away in its chains.

Beneath the chained 'Everstorm' is a swamp, known as Shadow Swamp due to it being eternally in the shadow of the storm. Nowadays nobody goes near Shadow Swamp—the ground supports neither farm nor town, and there is something unsettling about the Everstorm looming overhead that makes sane folk deeply uncomfortable.

Such a benighted and abandoned (and damp) place is a perfect refuge for the frogfolk. In fact they built their mud and reed nests inside the temple that anchors the great chains that holds the storm in place. What was once a palace of steel and crystal is now rusted and covered in moss and muck and mire.

### THESE FROGS ARE DIFFERENT

If you like to link monsters to their environments give these frogfolk *resist lightning* 6+ and replace any poison damage from their attacks with lightning damage.

**Blue Storm**—A blue dragon by the name of Azhela has taken up residence in the swamp, magically feeding off the lightning of the Everstorm. The frogfolk don't like her, and want to kill her, but she's too powerful so they pretend to worship her. Azhela spends the gloomy days and lightning-lit nights studying the chains. What does she want, and what is her secret link to the Priestess or the Archmage? More importantly—why has Azhela sent for the adventurers?

**Living Storm**—The storm is in fact a chained storm-god!

The frogfolk are unaware of this fact (so far), but the god's followers have recently discovered why their god no longer answers their prayers like he used to. Will the adventurers side with the frogfolk and keep the devastating Everstorm chained, or will they aid the misguided faithful?

**The Ascendancy of Frogs**—The frogs have worked out a ritual to increase the power of the Everstorm. The storm is held by chains, the chains run to the half-sunken temple, and a more powerful storm means that the temple becomes airborne. An airborne temple of frogspawn raining over the Dragon Empire and creating new swamplands will lead to a new age of frogemony—and all they need to complete their plan is to ritually sacrifice the adventurers!



### CRUSADER OR DWARF KING: BOG OF SINNERS

In a previous age a dwarf king made war against demonologists, capturing them and interring them upside-down in a bog. Either by accident or design, the magic of the bog keeps the demonologists forever alive (or rather keeps them eternally on the very edge of drowning).

The frogfolk who lived in the swamp have come to treat the suffering captives as a food source, consuming the flesh of the demonologists to gain power (lots of spellcroakers and frogspawn old-ones among their number). Over time this has led to some of the demonologist's tainted essence seeping into the bloodline of the frogfolk of the Bog of Sinners, and they have over many generations developed a disturbing new religion.

### YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT?

For a nasty cannibal frog-themed surprise replace the frogspawn monk's *poison burst* ability with a mook demon entering the fight from the frogfolk's burst belly.

**Undercover in the Upside-down Hell**—The Crusader is using the Bog of Sinners as a prison—and employing the frogfolk as guards. Once the frogfolk have broken a prisoner's will they are supposed to send them back to the icon for re-education, but recently fewer and fewer have been handed back. The Crusader wants to check up on his prison, but his relationship with the paranoid frogfolk is a tricky one—he'd like to send in some adventurers undercover as prisoners.

**Lost Dwarven Treasure**—One of the demonologists knows the location of a great dwarven treasure, but no records were kept of where that prisoner was buried upside-down in the bog. Finding the treasure will mean pulling a lot of now-insane demonologists out of their upside-down-hell and angering the frogfolk.

**Delectable Trap**—The frogspawn have developed quite the refined palate, and want to sample treats from further abroad. To that end they've sent out frogspawn deceivers to lure outsiders in. One set of deceivers has gone out as sages with maps to lost treasure, another as beautiful youths and fair maidens asking for adventurers to retrieve their lost sibling from goblins. Will the adventurers fall for the trap and end up a delicious treat for the frogs? As a twist—how about the adventurers get hired to retrieve somebody who has already fallen for the trap (and have that also turn out to be a trap).

## ELF QUEEN OR HIGH DRUID: THE WHISTLER



What better place to hide the last bastion of frogfolk than on the back of a Koru behemoth? Wait. Don't answer that question. We're not sure it's all that great a place to hide. But it's a dramatic place to hide!

The behemoth known as the Whistler hosts a rainforest upon its back, and high in its branches is a frogfolk temple consisting of hundreds of interlinked spherical woven grass huts, some half-filled with water and damp mud.

The Whistler gets its name from the strange whistling sounds that come from the forest—most assume it is caused by the wind blowing across strange vegetation, and they would be half-right. The truth is that some of the whistles are communications between frogs that use thin leather-and-wood wings to glide.

## DEATH FROM ABOVE

Froggy gliders aren't suitable for swooping around in combat—instead they circle high above out of range dropping rocks.

When there are frog gliders in the mix roll a d20 at the start of combat—through combat any character who rolls that number takes their level in damage from falling rocks dropped from on high (the frogs can decode the warning whistles, and get a save to avoid the damage). The closer to the temple the characters get the more dropping-rocks d20s you can roll at the start of combat.

**Elf War**—Wood elves also live on the Whistler, locked in a multi-generational war with the frogfolk. As the Whistler comes close to the Queen's Woods they get reinforcements and the war turns in their favor, when the behemoth moves onwards the war's balance shifts in favor of the frogfolk. If only there were some brave (and disposable) adventurers who could be prevailed upon to decide the war once and for all. Also, why have the elves helped keep the frogspawn's secret until now? Embarrassment? Complicity? A curse?

**The Frogs Croak at Midnight**—The frogfolk from the forest of the Whistler have decided that they want more—they want whatever others have. To that end they have begun a concerted campaign of midnight raids (dropping firefly lanterns from their gliders to light the ground force's way). The adventurers are dispatched to discover why so many villages have become deserted and so many trade caravans have disappeared.

## EMPEROR OR GREAT GOLD WYRM: TEMPLE OF THE FINAL DOOM



In a past age the frogfolk suffered a magical catastrophe when they learned the forbidden *chant of doom*, a spell so powerful that it can break reality and rewrite history if enough voices chant it at the same time. Of course the frogfolk attempted to reverse their destiny and make themselves masters of the world. It may even be that the frogfolk owe their current forms to the results of the chant.

The surviving frogfolk were rounded up by the Dragon Empire and quietly imprisoned beneath Axis. There in their temple-prison they toil endlessly, writing out what they can remember of the chant.

## CHANTING THE CHANT OF DOOM

This could be a spell that at 1<sup>st</sup> level is (relatively) innocuous but at 9<sup>th</sup> level is potentially age-ending.

Here's one take on the spell—an outsized damage spell that enemies can't dodge, but that warps the fabric of reality in ways that make things worse for everybody. Maybe at lower levels casting this spell to win a fight means that you kill the monster but you also kill the person you were trying to rescue and destroy the monster's treasure. At epic tier you might end up unleashing age-ending plagues, accidentally destroying wards that prevent demons from entering the world, or cause the angry monster-filled Iron Sea to rush in and replace the Midland Sea.

Of course, this doesn't have to be the *chant of doom* that appears in your campaign. Your game, your rules. Maybe your *chant of doom* is something completely different, tied to the unique plotline of your own campaign.

### Chant of Doom

Ranged spell

#### Daily

**Special:** This spell requires two standard actions to cast, over two consecutive turns. If you are interrupted (*you become dazed, confused, stunned, weakened, hampered, take damage, etc.*) you must start again.

**Target:** One nearby or far away enemy, or 1d3+1 enemies in a group with the ongoing damage split evenly between them (round down).

**Attack:** Automatic hit

**Effect:** 25 ongoing acid damage.

3 <sup>rd</sup> level spell	50 ongoing damage.
5 <sup>th</sup> level spell	100 ongoing damage.
7 <sup>th</sup> level spell	150 ongoing damage.
9 <sup>th</sup> level spell	200 ongoing damage.

**Aftereffect:** Even if the adventurers win the fight, the party suffers a major campaign loss and the world becomes a worse place because of that. The higher the level the spell is cast at, the wider and worse the consequences will be.

**Epic Feat:** Enemies cannot resist the acid damage, it ignores immunities, and the save against the damage is a hard save. However, undoing whatever calamities result from the casting of the spell becomes almost impossible.

**Raiders of the Last Doom**—The almost-completed record of the *chant of doom* spell has been stolen from the prison/temple. The adventurers are sent to investigate, but first they must penetrate the sealed temple and discover a hidden secret of the paranoid frogfolk.

**The Best Laid Plans of Dragons and Men**—Paladins associated with the Great Gold Wyrm want the *chant of doom* to seal the abyss. Unfortunately, the chant always rewrites fate to the detriment of whoever is using the spell. The paladins have been encouraging the frogfolk to experiment, so it can control how the downside of the spell will manifest. Unfortunately the experimentation is causing the kind of side-effects that adventurers are best suited to clearing up.

**To Boldly Go**—The Emperor, or more likely someone he employs to make bad decisions, is trying to perfect the chant to use as a weapon, to expand the Dragon Empire beyond its current borders. The empire needs a few good bands of explorers to go out and scout out strange new lands and new civilizations—and take some captive spellcroakers along with them.

**Memories of Dooms Past**—By a strange mischance (a blow to the head, a mystic vision, a spell gone awry), one of the player characters suddenly remembers being abducted and carried into the temple. The adventurer realizes that they know the *chant of doom*. What does the spell do? Did the adventurer escape, or did the frogfolk let the adventurer go? If so, why? Did they deliberately intend for the adventurer to carry the *chant* away? Why has the memory returned now? And most importantly, how can they get the spell of doom out of their head? The answers to all these questions can be found somewhere in the temple of the final doom...

## LICH KING OR THE DIABOLIST: THE VAULT OF THE FANGED FROG



Deep in the Fangs north of Fairwind Sound is a temple of frogfolk who dabble with raising the dead and making deals with infernal beings. These dark frogfolk have been slowly poisoning and despoiling the swamp around them—now all the animals are venomous, the whole area stinks of decaying plants, and a thick mist makes overland navigation almost impossible.

The temple itself is in the skull of a colossal fanged giant as big as a castle.

## FROG NECROMANCERS AND DEMONOLOGISTS

Whenever a spellcroaker rolls an 18+ add a frogspawn grunt mook to the fight (or a frogspawn thug if the occasion demands). If the Lich King is important to your campaign then the new grunts are undead frogfolk, if the Diabolist is in play the new frogspawn grunts are demon-possessed. You should add some special effects to the new mooks to show that they are different (translucent skin with bones showing through, glowing eyes and steam coming off damp bodies with hellfire inside, etc.).

You could even stick frogfolk vampires into the mix (*they won't drink the blood of mammals so the adventurers are safe*)—give them +1 to attack and 30% extra hit points.

**Frogdeath**—The frogfolk are pulling power away from the Lich King, which means that fewer undead are under his control and increasing numbers are roaming free. If the Lich King doesn't act soon there may be an age-ending zombie plague. Of course a zombie plague might be just what the Lich King desires—if he controls the zombies. Can the adventurers shut down the frogfolk temple known as the Vault of the Fanged Frog before disaster strikes?

**Tainted hells**—The frogfolk are pulling power away from the Diabolist, infecting hell itself with their froggy taint. Already hellholes are starting to get increasingly misty and marshy and less fiery. The Diabolist wants to somehow bring the frogfolk under her sway, or destroy them, but can't act openly because that would expose her weakened state to the Crusader. Will the adventurers play the role of diplomats, or conquerors, or exterminators?

**Frogula lives!**—A vampire who reincarnates whenever he is 'defeated' has come back a bit different this time—as a frogfolk! (*Use the usual stats for this vampire and any retinue, but give them all the ability to hop*). Will the adventurers be the ones to finally croak the vampire for good?

## PRINCE OF SHADOWS OR THE THREE: FROGHAVEN



What's this? A temple associated with both the frogspawn, the Prince of Shadows, and the Three? Surely you jest. Neither the frogspawn nor the person you refer to exist. And the Three want nothing to do with frogs. Froghaven? A myth.

## ORC LORD: THE POISON SHRINE

The Orc Lord knows that frogfolk worship is poison to the gods, and has decided to weaponize that. With the Orc Lord's aid the frogfolk have constructed a hidden temple in the Owl Barrens, within mystical striking distance of Santa Cora.



## POISONED GODS

If you like turning the screws on holy characters make them save (11+) to activate daily cleric powers when near frogfolk centers of worship. If the save fails the action isn't wasted and they can try again on their next turn, they just can't access their gods power then and there.

**A froggy icon?**—The Orc Lord has lost control of the frogfolk—they have started worshiping (and thus poisoning) orc gods too. Can the adventurers restore the balance of power, or would the adventurers prefer that the Orc Lord end up replaced by a Frog Lord?

**The redemption scam**—The Priestess has tricked the Orc Lord into believing that gods are poisoned by having frogfolk worship them. By setting up a religious community for a forgotten race the Orc Lord has been fooled into performing a deed good enough to start his redemption. What would a redeemed Orc Lord look like?

**Rise of the Frog God**—Frogfolk worship doesn't so much poison gods as diverts their power. The frogfolk, by worshiping the gods, are turning those gods 'froggy' and creating a new chief god (or 'over-frog'). Can the adventurers stop the frogs before they have to learn to prey in croaks and ribbits?



### Hated Cowards

*Frogfolk are masters of slipping away. As tadpoles, they live in giant breeding pools. Each clutch is five to eight tadpoles, more than the parents can really raise. Tadpoles are traded away as a ritual currency and eaten. The last tadpole in the pool, the one the slipped away every time the parents tried to catch it, is allowed to metamorphose into a young adult. Frogfolk carry this slipperiness with them all their lives.*

*All of which is an excuse to torment the players with frogfolk that keep getting away. The frogfolk harry the party but don't allow themselves to get cornered, so most of them usually get away, sometimes all of them. They can leap away or swim away underwater. Let them meet a too-powerful frogfolk early in the story arc, but one that repeatedly flees. Players will relish finally taking it out.*

Most ghosts are benign. Spirits of the dead are usually powerless, intangible, and invisible, marked as a strange remembered scent or a breeze from another time. Ghosts may or may not be all around you, but they're usually nothing that the living have to worry about, or even notice.

But if you're interacting with a ghost, odds are that it's *not* harmless. Ghosts that have the power to be seen in the mortal world are usually either angry, cruel, or guarding something. They may be fueled by horrible regret, terrible hatred, or the power of an icon or other great magician.

**Spirits of the dead:** One of the knock-on effects of our decision to leave the details of the deities up to your campaign is that we try not to take a firm position on the soul-related consequences of death. Clearly the Lich King manages to harvest many dead souls (and bodies) that haven't been properly cared for, but the details of those proper arrangements are pretty much up to you.

It seems likely that the gods of both darkness and light assure their worshippers that they won't end up as undead or as ghosts. But deities probably have varied success rates for dealing with dead worshippers. Most souls probably end up where they're 'supposed to go, sucked up into the heavens or down into dark underworlds. But apparently some gods can't always be bothered. This is a world with a Diabolist and a Lich King, where mistakes, accidents, and hostile intervention are as common in death as they are in life.

Obviously many unclaimed spirits fall into the service of the Lich King as undead. Other untethered souls hang around their death sites without doing any real damage, or return on a cyclic or seasonal basis.

A few other souls *haunt*, and those are the ghosts we're concerned with.

## ABILITIES FOR MOST GHOSTS

Most ghosts have several or all of the following abilities. Normally we use these sections to cover abilities possessed by all the monsters of a certain type, but there's enough variation in ghost stories that we figure we should provide tools for you to choose from rather than try to force ghosts into one style of haunting.

For the record, all ghosts also have some version of the ghostly ability, but its strength varies so we've put it into each stat block.



**Bound hauntings:** Most ghosts are bound to an area, usually the area of their death. This ability won't come up much in play, but it does make it seem likely that ghosts can be easier to get away from than other monsters. Move far enough fast enough and the ghost returns to the area it's bound to. Occasionally festivals for the dead or other rituals can call bound ghosts from their hauntings, but those are unusual and temporary circumstances.

**Exceptions:** There may be ghosts that are bound to people, or events, or phenomena that travel. There might even be ghosts

that aren't bound to anything, but at that stage there are several other questions that surface and odd magical, iconic, or unique intervention seems likely.

**Flight:** Most ghosts fly, though some may be quite slow, seeming to drift or walk on air. Ghosts that fly in unusual ways will be flagged with their own abilities.

**Exceptions:** Not all ghosts fly. Some seem constrained to act much like they acted when they were alive, and flying wasn't part of their life package.

**Unnatural touch:** Many ghosts can alter the temperature of their environment to more closely match the underworld or afterlife that they've so far evaded. Sometimes that's icy cold, sometimes that's burning hot, and sometimes it's just kind of normal, which would go unnoticed unless the ghost is somewhere abnormal!

**Exceptions:** This is more of a special effect of ghost stories than part of a creature's combat abilities, and you can safely ignore it unless you find telling moments when it adds to the game.

## SADSACK

*"No one cleans my gravestone."*

2<sup>nd</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +1

**Jarring touch** +7 vs. AC—4 damage

*Natural 2-5+:* Target is hampered (save ends).

**Contagious ennui:** Each enemy that misses an attack with a natural odd roll this battle takes a -2 penalty to all its defenses until they score a critical hit or the sadsack is reduced to 0 hit points. (As usual, this ability does not stack.)

**Ghostly:** This creature has resist damage 12+ to all damage except holy damage. A ghost can move through solid objects, but can't end its turn inside them.

**Relic affinity:** Sadsacks are also vulnerable to the type of weapon or attack that ended their lives Interpret this liberally, GM.

**Flight:** Gravity does not influence sadsacks unless they are staggered. When they're staggered, they sink to the ground and stay there.

**AC** 19

**PD** 16

**MD** 13

**HP** 24

## LESSER HAUNTING

*You know how heroes often find themselves surrounded by spiraling spirits of the dead but somehow escape without being seriously damaged? That's how this should work out, provided you cut through them fast . . . .*

3<sup>rd</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +6

Vulnerability: holy

**Terrible touch** +7 vs. PD—4 negative energy damage

**Mob-based:** For every separate mob of lesser haunting mooks in the battle (mobs start with at least four mooks), add a +1 bonus to the lesser haunting's attacks and damage.

**Ghostly:** This creature has resist damage 14+ to all damage except holy damage. A ghost can move through solid objects, but can't end its turn inside them.

**Fear-boosters:** While there are three or more lesser haunting mooks in a battle, the fear abilities of their allies affect enemies with half again as many hit points as usual. (For example, a 3<sup>rd</sup> level hungrymouth ghost normally has a fear threshold of 15 hit points. When there are three or more lesser haunting mooks in the battle, the hungrymouth ghost's fear threshold bumps up to 22 hit points.)

**AC** 18

**PD** 16

**MD** 13

**HP** 9 (mook)

**Mook:** Kill one lesser haunting mook for every 9 damage you deal to the mob.

## HUNGRY MOUTH GHOST

*So very hungry, but with a fire for a stomach everything tastes like ashes.*

5<sup>th</sup> level blocker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +9

Vulnerability: holy

**Horrible fingernails** +10 vs. AC—14 damage

*Natural even hit+:* Target is stuck (save ends).

**Distending jaw** +10 vs. PD (stuck target)—24 damage

*Natural even hit:* 10 ongoing fire damage.

**R: Exploding pustules** +10 vs. PD (2 random nearby enemies)—22 fire damage

*Natural even hit:* 5 ongoing fire damage.

*Limited use:* 1/battle while staggered.

**Ghostly:** This creature has resist damage 14+ to all damage except holy damage. A ghost can move through solid objects, but can't end its turn inside them.

**Nastier Special**

**Fearsome jaws:** After using its distending jaw attack, the hungry mouth ghost has a fear ability against engaged enemies with fewer than 30 hit points.

**AC** 20

**PD** 17

**MD** 17

**HP** 50

## PETULANT NEVER-WAS

*A failure as a wizard, a failure as a high elf, a failure as a husband and provider.*

*Double-strength 5<sup>th</sup> level caster [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +9

Vulnerability: holy

**Ghostly staff +10 vs. PD**—26 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit:* Petulant never-was can make a *disparaging rummage* attack as a free action.

**R: Flashy zaps +10 vs. PD (1 or 2 nearby targets)**—28 energy damage (damage is either force OR a type of energy most recently used by an enemy spellcaster, as the petulant never-was demonstrates that they also control that energy type).

*Natural odd miss:* Petulant never-was takes 3d6 damage that ignores its ghostly resistance.

**C: Disparaging rummage +10 vs. MD (nearby enemy)**—10 ongoing psychic damage and hampered (save ends both); hampered part of the effect only affects spellcasters!

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

*Ghostly:* This creature has resist damage 16+ to all damage except holy damage AND force damage. A ghost can move through solid objects, but can't end its turn inside them.

*Iconic sadsack:* Each enemy that has one or more icon relationship points with the Archmage that misses an attack with a natural odd roll takes a -2 penalty to all its defenses until the end of the battle.

AC 19

PD 15

HP 123

MD 18

## DISGRACED LEGIONNAIRE

*The real disgrace is that this ghost is still trying to drag everyone else down.*

*Double-strength 6<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +12

Vulnerability: holy

**Ghostly sword +13 vs. PD**—40 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* Disgraced legionnaire can make a *confusing orders* attack as a free action.

**C: Confusing orders +11 vs. MD (nearby enemy)**—5 ongoing psychic damage and target's weapon attacks do not add the escalation die (save ends both).

*Critical hit:* Target is also confused (same save ends).

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

*Ghostly:* This creature has resist damage 12+ to all damage except holy damage. A ghost can move through solid objects, but can't end its turn inside them.

*Iconic sadsack:* Each enemy that has one or more icon relationship points with the Emperor that misses an attack

with a natural odd roll takes a -2 penalty to all its defenses until the end of the battle.

AC 22

PD 19

MD 16

HP 140

## MAJOR HAUNTING

*Who's scared of mooks?*

*6<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +9

**Terrible touch +10 vs. PD**—8 negative energy damage

*Mob-based:* For every separate mob of major haunting mooks in the battle (mobs start with at least four mooks), add a +1 bonus to the major haunting's attacks and +2 to its damage.

*Ghostly:* This creature has resist damage 14+ to all damage except holy damage. A ghost can move through solid objects, but can't end its turn inside them.

*Fear-boosters:* While there are three or more lesser or major haunting mooks in a battle, the fear abilities of their allies affect enemies with half again as many hit points as usual.

AC 21

PD 19

MD 16

HP 18 (mook)

*Mook:* Kill one major haunting mook for every 18 damage you deal to the mob.

## TWISTED SOUL

*Weirdly obsessive and creepy when alive; now a creep that can walk through walls.*

*Double-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: holy

**Disturbing caress +12 vs. PD**—36 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit+:* Twisted soul can make a *weird muttering* attack as a free action.

**C: Weird muttering +12 vs. MD (one random nearby**

**enemy)**—10 ongoing psychic damage and if engaged with an enemy, target must use its next move action on its turn attempting to disengage (save ends both).

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

*Ghostly:* This creature has resist damage 12+ to all damage except holy damage. A ghost can move through solid objects, but can't end its turn inside them.

*Iconic sadsack:* Each enemy that has one or more icon relationship points with the Diabolist that misses an attack with a natural odd roll takes a -2 penalty to all its defenses until the end of the battle.

AC 23

PD 18

MD 20

HP 200

## EPIC HAUNTING

*They put the boo in kaboom.*

9<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +12

**Terrible touch +13 vs. PD**—20 negative energy damage

**Mob-based:** For every separate mob of major haunting mooks in the battle (mobs start with at least four mooks), add a +1 bonus to the major haunting's attacks and +5 to its damage.

**Ghostly:** This creature has resist damage 14+ to all damage except holy damage. A ghost can move through solid objects, but can't end its turn inside them.

**Fear-boosters:** While there are three or more lesser, major, or epic haunting mooks in a battle, the fear abilities of their allies affect enemies with half again as many hit points as usual.

**AC 24**

**PD 22**

**HP 36 (mook)**

**MD 19**

**Mook:** Kill one epic haunting mook for every 36 damage you deal to the mob.

## MOST HUNGRY GHOST

*Tell yourself they were a horribly awful person in life and that this couldn't possibly happen to anyone you know.*

10<sup>th</sup> level blocker [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +14

Vulnerability: holy

**Horrible fingernails +15 vs. AC**—50 damage

*Natural even hit+:* Target is stuck (save ends).

**Distending jaw +15 vs. PD (stuck target)**—85 damage

*Natural even hit:* 15 ongoing fire damage.

**R: Exploding pustules +15 vs. PD (2 random nearby enemies)**—80 fire damage

*Natural even hit:* 10 ongoing fire damage.

*Limited use:* 1/battle while staggered.

**Ghostly:** This creature has resist damage 14+ to all damage except holy damage. A ghost can move through solid objects, but can't end its turn inside them.

**Nastier Special**

**Fearsome jaws:** After using its distending jaw attack, the hungry mouth ghost has a fear ability against engaged enemies with fewer than 96 hit points.

**AC 25**

**PD 22**

**HP 160**

**MD 22**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Ghosts are most frequently accompanied by other undead. If there's an interesting story to the ghost, they're also frequently attached to powerful spellcasters like rakshasas, ogre magi, and necromancers like the golden eye necromancer on page 249.

Iconic sadsacks may also be accompanied by determined enemies of their original icon, though it's just as likely that they're too whiny for that and can only be tolerated by other undead.

## HOSTS AND THE ICONS

Like other undead, most ghosts spiral around the terrible gravity of the Lich King.

Iconic sadsacks are different, powered more by their resentment of their former icon than the existence of the Lich King.

At first glance, iconic sadsacks may seem like something of an oxymoron. But there are many ways to fail, and exposure to the actual powers that shape the world may have powerful consequences for souls too weak to measure up.

The stories of the iconic sadsacks don't have to end with whimpers. Each iconic sadsack might have history involving specific failures that living agents of the icon could set right.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Violence to the Ancestors**—Revered ancestors, long-dead but not forgotten, have been returning as powerful and weirdly angry ghosts. The problem hits home when one of the player character's ancestors begins haunting them and doesn't give up even when 'slain.' What's responsible for these tragedies, and are the PCs an incidental target or being set up for something worse?

**Proof of Contempt**—Play off of the PCs' established dislike for a representative of an icon they're otherwise well-disposed towards. Bring in another storyline involving this NPCs' obnoxious behavior, and then send them on the run. When the PCs investigate the NPC's disappearance, they find a number of ghosts and at least one iconic sadsack, victims of the NPC's manipulation of politics and magic. Vengeance is required! Perhaps ghosts will dog the PCs' step until they take action, or perhaps more ghosts will surface as obstacles.

**Ghost Machine**—The more monsters the PCs kill in this dungeon, the more mobs of lesser or major hauntings they'll have to fight on the way out!

# GIBBERING MOUTHER

*The gibbering in a hundred voices is bad, but it's when it stops sounding like gibberish and starts making sense that you're really in trouble.*

Mix dozens of mismatched eyes with just as many gnashing mouths. Mount them on the surface of a roiling mess of magically mutating flesh. Add mad chants, meaningless babble, and almost comprehensible gibberish erupting from each mouth. Augment with the ability to absorb organisms it doesn't simply tear to pieces and eat. *Voila:* gibbering mouther.

Just being around it can drive you insane. And for the gods' sake don't *listen*.

**Shock Rules & Madness:** The gibbering mouther stats below use the shocked rules introduced on page 8.

As a reminder, shocked is a condition that makes you roll 2d20 for all attacks and saves and use the lower result.

## ABILITIES FOR ALL GIBBERING MOUTHERS

Gibbering mouthers have the following abilities:

**Eyes everywhere:** Gibbering mouthers can't be ambushed or sneaked up on.

In addition, though gibbering mouthers are aberrations they are ooze-like enough that they use the ooze abilities *flows where it likes* and *ooze*.

**Flows where it likes:** The gibbering mouther is immune to opportunity attacks.

**Ooze:** The gibbering mouther is immune to effects. When an attack applies a condition to a gibbering mouther (dazed, hampered, weakened, ongoing damage, etc.), that condition doesn't affect it.



**Absorb +9 vs. PD (one grabbed enemy)**—10 acid damage and the crit range for this attack expands by 1 until the end of the battle (down to a maximum of 16+)

**Miss:** 4 acid damage.

**Crit:** Target must begin making last gasp saves as it is slowly absorbed. Absorbed creatures can't be resurrected by normal means.

**C: Gibbering insanity +9 vs. MD (one random nearby enemy)**—Target is shocked (save ends)

**Aftereffect:** The next time this battle that the target saves against shocked it is an easy save (6+).

**Quick use:** 1/round, as a quick action

### Nastier Specials

**Insane terrain:** A gibbering mouther causes surrounding rocks and dirt to soften. On rounds when the escalation die is odd characters must succeed at a save (11+) when they attempt to move or their movement ends and they become stuck (save ends).

**Stone to flesh:** A gibbering mouther that also has the insane terrain nastier special slowly turns the softening terrain to flesh, then absorbs it. When the escalation die becomes 6, the die flips straight back to 1 and the gibbering mouther heals up to half its full hit points.

**AC 20**

**PD 17**

**MD 12**

**HP 54**

## GIBBERING MOUTHER

*"Grurbgah!mGLEIVIANSKISKkkksaaa! BlurbBleCHAYaaarg!  
Suggschassmash!"*

4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +6

**Tearing mouths +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—4 damage

*Natural 19+:* Target is grabbed.

**C: Pseudopod grasp +9 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy)**—Target is grabbed and moved into engagement with the gibbering mouther

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

## ATROCIOUS GIBBERING MOUTHER

*"MurGrablaha! BleeuurmGlup! sChtw/W^onO3TT! Hehehe!"*

Large 6<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +8

**Tearing mouths +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—11 damage

*Natural 19+*: Target is grabbed.

**C: Pseudopod grasp +11 vs. PD (PD (1 nearby enemy))**—

Target is grabbed and moved into engagement with the gibbering mouther

*Quick use*: 1/round, as a quick action

**Absorb +11 vs. PD (up to two grabbed enemies)**—20 acid damage and the crit range for this attack expands by 1 (to a maximum of 11+)

*Miss*: 10 acid damage.

*Crit*: Target must start making last gasp saves as they are slowly absorbed. Absorbed creatures can't be resurrected by normal means.

**C: Gibbering insanity +11 vs. MD (2 random nearby**

**enemies)**—Target is shocked (save ends)

*Quick use*: 1/round, as a quick action

### Nastier Specials

*Really insane terrain*: A gibbering mouther causes surrounding rocks and dirt to soften. On rounds when the escalation die is odd characters must succeed at a save (11+) when they attempt to move or their movement ends and they become stuck (save ends). On turns when the ground softens the gibbering mouther can move once on its turn as a quick action, as well as once as a move action.

*Stone to flesh*: A gibbering mouther that also has the *insane terrain* nastier special slowly turns the softening terrain to flesh, then absorbs it. When the escalation die becomes 6, the die flips straight back to 1 and the gibbering mouther heals up to half its full hit points.

**AC 22**

**PD 19**

**MD 14**

**HP 180**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Gibbering mouthers are nasty monsters. Their ability to impose the shocked condition allows them to last longer than you'd expect. Their expanding crit range with their absorb power makes them deadlier than other creatures their level.

The nastier specials aren't just nasty, they're ghastly. The *insane terrain* nastier special nudges the mouther's spoiler role towards blocker, and the *stone to flesh* nastier special means that unless the adventurers finish the fight quickly the tide will turn against them when they least expect it.

There may not really be a 'fair' fight against gibbering mouthers. The adventurers will either win quickly because they are smart enough to throw everything they have into finishing the battle, or the gibbering mouthers will hang on long enough to do real damage.

**Tactics**: Gibbering mouthers can fight a couple different ways. Generally they want to get close enough to grab a nearby enemy with a quick action, then try to absorb someone they have grabbed. The last thing they do on their turn if they have a quick action left is to use their insane gibbering. *Move (if needed) > grab > absorb > gibbering insanity (if a quick action left)*. The *tearing mouths* attack is another option if they are engaged, particularly if they already have an enemy grabbed.

**Few allies**: Gibbering mouthers don't work well with other monsters, so their allies tend to be other gibbering mouthers or fellow aberrations. Perhaps the bizarre reality within a particular living dungeon could create an environment in which mouthers 'cooperate' with non-aberrations.

A powerful (and insane) magician might believe that they can control gibbering mouthers, but they won't believe that for long.

## ORIGINS FOR GIBBERING MOUTHERS

If any of these ideas of how gibbering mouthers came to be appeal to you, you'll have a useful story lever for your campaign. It's possible that more than one story is true.

### HORRIBLE TELEPORTATION ACCIDENT

Gibbering mouthers are what happen when two creatures try to occupy the same space. Naturally the Archmage has set up special mosaics on the floors of chambers and plazas in Horizon where wizards might want to teleport to, mosaics that can be scryed upon at any distance to allow wizards to check that their intended destination is clear.

But accidents still happen—even in Horizon. The Archmage has a special hospital ward full of healers and teleportation experts who try to undo the damage and revert the gibbering mouther to its constituent humanoid parts. Those gibbering mouthers who can't be separated are sent to live out their days on Omen, though some do escape and wreak havoc.

We imagine that a player character with the background "Was a gibbering mouther for a week" says very interesting things in their sleep.

## BAD HEALING POTIONS

Gibbering mouthers are created as a side effect of faulty alchemy. The humanoid form is not *infinitely* malleable, and healing potions require a certain cellular flexibility to work—imbibe too many improperly mixed healing potions and a body starts to get a little—soft. Soon the devolution into a mindless mass begins, and the victim ‘dies’ to be replaced with a polymorphous abomination.

For this reason the Priestess is keen to regulate the production and sale of healing potions, something that would be sure to drive up the price. Cynics and servants of the dark gods mutter that the Priestess must be deliberately tainting healing potions to create this problem and drive up demand for clerical healing.

## ANOTHER WIZARD KING MISTAKE

Wizard King, oh Wizard King. You really made a mess of things, didn’t you?

Gibbering mouthers were a failed attempt by the Wizard King to create the ultimate life-form. Gibbering mouthers don’t babble and cry because they are in pain, or insane. No, they gibber because their shared minds are filled with near-infinite knowledge and they experience constant pleasure.

That’s what the Three claim. They keep a pit of gibbering mouthers in Drakkenhall to throw criminals into when they decide to show ‘mercy’. Thank you, Wizard King! Thank you, Three!

## VISITORS FROM THE REALM OF MADNESS

There exists a realm outside of mortal comprehension, a terrible dimension where gravity and direction are subjective and interconnected branching tubes of living flesh are what passes for the ‘ground’. It is from this terrible other-world that things like hungry stars and gibbering mouthers hail.

Was there someone specific who opened the door and let them into our world?

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Bottled Sanity**—An alchemist has a plan to extract fluids from a gibbering mother, from which he plans to make a potion to cure madness. The only problem is that the alchemist, having encountered a gibbering mother, is now terrified and won’t go anywhere near another one. The party are provided with a huge syringe-like flask (*count it as a large two-handed weapon with a -1 attack penalty*) and told where they are likely to find a gibbering mother.

**Loose in the Meat Market**—A gibbering mother has got loose in a meat warehouse (or fish market, or cattle market, whichever is appropriate for the town or city the adventurers are in). The town guard want to trap it there and just burn the whole place down. The merchants want the adventurers to kill the monster, before the town guard takes drastic action. While the two factions each try to sway the adventurers to their way of thinking, the gibbering mother is inside eating and absorbing. As a special GM treat, the food is good enough that it’s dividing into many gibbering mouthers instead of just one. That’s going to be a surprise.

**One Step Beyond**—A wizard has constructed a mechanism into which a gibbering mother can be placed, and the mechanism will then open a portal to wherever the aberration came from. The wizard has three problems: she needs to obtain a gibbering mother first, she needs somebody to go through the portal and report back, and one of the icons has sent agents to stop her. The wizard is willing to pay handsomely if the adventurers solve all three problems.

**The Sound of Madness**—A gibbering mother is loose somewhere in the city sewers, and its sounds echo up into the city. The citizenry are starting to lose their grip on sanity, and mini-mass hallucinations are becoming common. The adventurers must track the foul thing down. But of course it’s not that simple. First they’ll have to contend with various delusional lunatics (chief among whom are the mayor, the guard captain, and the city’s foremost cleric).



### The Unnamable

*The gibbering mother is perfect for the sort of monster that doesn’t exist as part of the world background but that appears during the campaign, as part of an adventure or story arc. These aberrations could be the result of all sorts of magical works gone horribly awry.*

*They could appear spontaneously with the arrival of the fomorians or any other Old Gods.*

*As a variant on the “visitors from the realm of madness” origin, the portal through which they will come has not been opened yet. It will open and they will come through when it works for your campaign. See if you can get the party to be complicit in the arrival of the unnamable monsters. They might, for example, be hired to gather magical ingredients or tomes that are later used to open the portal.*

# THE GOLD KING

*The Dwarf King of a previous age led every man, woman, and child from Underhome to a promised greater fortune, deep in the underworld. All perished, but the fallen icon and undead remnants of its greed survived.*

## THE DWARF KING'S SHADOW

If you want to name the age in which the Gold King fell, that's up to your campaign. So are the details of the fall. Did the dwarves lose Underhome for a time, or did a new Dwarf King rise swiftly to hold the capital? Does anyone know the Gold King's original mortal name? Our hunch is that the current Dwarf King is publicly silent on all matters regarding his predecessor, but you may have a more interesting idea.

**Foolish questers:** A few dwarves and humans in the 13<sup>th</sup> age disbelieve the story of the fallen dwarven icon and say that if the Gold King was ever real, the story has been changed into a tale to frighten dwarves away from the deep underworld. They say that the 'Gold King' might have been just another dwarf who was lost going a little too deep into the Underworld for more treasure, and that treasure *could still be there!*



The persistence of this false hope is not an accident. Some portion of the Gold King's magic is devoted to attracting more credulous victims. The true Dwarf King can generally slow this exodus to a trickle, but the Gold King is still drawing new followers.

Dwarfs and humans are the standard 'recruits'; but no mortal race is immune to this fate. Most disappear into the underworld, and most of the rest become gray gatherers, or their variants: gray hoarders, loyal gatherers, and screaming hoardlings. Those that show more value are forged by the Gold King into bearers or bronzes. These former mages and warriors either venture forth to "reclaim" magic items for the Gold King, or remain near the fallen icon to help defend against those foolish enough to attempt to claim the Gold King's treasure for their own.

## GENERAL NOTE ON MAGIC ITEM-RELATED ABILITIES

Player characters with many magic items are more desirable targets for the creatures that serve the Gold King. *Scent of treasure* and other abilities give these creatures an accurate sense of who has prime loot.

**Stealing from the PCs:** Several of the Gold King's minions have abilities that allow them to wrest away magic items. These are magical abilities that ignore the logic of how the physical world normally works. For example, when the gray hoarder magically yanks away a random heroic-tier magic item from a PC it has critted, that random item might turn out to be the player character's magic armor!

As a rule, taking an item away from a PC doesn't give the Gold King's minion the ability to use the item against the PCs. It's not like the monster has time to attune to the item in the middle of combat. Of course you can make an exception to the rule if there's some hilarious or powerful dramatic moment you want to add to the game when an item gets stolen. Just remember to give the PCs their own chance at a dicey dramatic moment later on to keep things even.

**Stealing from the minions:** Likewise, the Gold King's minions have a couple powers that can cause them to drop magic weapons, or have magic armor pop off their body. Just as for items the PCs lose mid-combat, we'd say that the rule is that these items can be picked up and possibly attuned after the battle. If they're picked up mid-fight, they're not likely to cooperate with the PCs.

Dear kindly GMs: if you've been hesitant to foist a cursed weapon on the player characters, weapons that the Gold King's minions drop in the middle of combat should be the excuse you've been waiting for.

## GRAY HOARDER

*A gray hoarder is a two-time loser, scrabbling to secret a meager hoard all its own in some forgotten cave, believing that decayed mundane treasure and minor magic items will stay beneath its master's notice.*

*Double-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +7

**Greedy claws + 8 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—11 damage

*Critical hit:* The target loses the use of a random heroic-tier true magic item that the gray hoarder magically wrests away. The item can only be retrieved as a standard action from the body of the slain gray hoarder.

*Scent of treasure:* The gray hoarder's crit range expands by the number of heroic-tier true magic items that the target is attuned to. (Targets with more of these items are preferred prey.)

*Mine forever:* If the gray hoarder starts its turn next to a fallen enemy, it will spend a quick action to pick up a random magic item or implement belonging to that enemy. The gray hoarder will then attempt to disengage (if necessary) and move as quickly as possible from the battle without taking opportunity attacks. (*Mine Forever* is also triggered when acquiring an item by scoring a critical hit.)

### Nastier Special

*Necromantic resistance:* The gray hoarder has resist negative energy 16+, as well as a +2 bonus to defenses and saves against attacks and effects that specifically target undead.

AC	20	HP	75
PD	15		
MD	14		

## GRAY RAIDER

*Dreams of a great reward have dulled to an undead roar.*

*5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +10

**Greedy iron claws + 8 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—9 damage

*Critical hit:* The target loses use of a random true magic item as the raider wrests it away. The item can be retrieved as a standard action from the body of the slain gray raider.

*Scent of treasure:* The gray Raider's crit range expands by the number of true magic items of champion-tier that the target is carrying.

AC	19	HP	90
PD	18		
MD	17		

## GLITTERING BEARER

*Ghostly echoes of mages who didn't let death prevent them from obsessively cataloging the Gold King's treasure.*

6<sup>th</sup> level caster [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +11

**R: Lash the thief +13 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—12 psychic damage, plus 6 psychic damage for each true magic item of champion tier that the target is carrying.

**C: Weight of wealth +13 vs. PD (one nearby enemy wearing magic armor)**—The target is stuck and weakened (save ends).

**R: The King's due +13 vs. PD (One nearby enemy wielding a magical weapon, implement, or shield)**—The target must choose one: 30 damage and the target teleports to become engaged with a creature nearby the glittering bearer; OR the target loses a random magical implement, shield, or weapon to the glittering bearer until the bearer is slain.

*Limited use:* 1/battle

*Limited Flight:* The glittering bearer normally hovers a foot or two off the ground, and can glide over obstacles.

*Ghostly:* This creature has *resist damage 16+* to all damage except force damage, which damages it normally. A glittering bearer can move through solid objects but it can't end its movement inside them.

*Lost opportunity:* This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

**AC 21**

**PD 16**

**MD 21**

**HP 70**

## SCREAMING HOARDLING

*Followers of the Gold King who are permitted access to a bigger slice of the fallen icon's magic receive a proportionally larger dose of mind-destroying greed.*

7<sup>th</sup> level troop [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +10

**Magic axe and hammer +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—13 damage

*Natural 1-3:* The screaming hoardling drops its weapon and makes a *howl of emptiness* attack as a free action.

**R: Returning axe or hammer +12 vs. AC**—13 damage

*Natural 1-3:* The screaming hoardling drops its weapon and makes a *howl of emptiness* attack

*Triggered use only:*

**C: Howl of emptiness +12 vs. MD (each nearby enemy)**—10 psychic damage

*Effect:* The screaming hoardling is dazed and vulnerable until the start of its next turn as it scrambles for its 'lost treasure,' the weapon it just dropped.

*Piecemeal armor:* When the screaming hoardling survives a critical hit to AC it makes a howl of emptiness attack as a free action, as a piece of its scavenged armor falls away. Knock a point off its AC.

**Nastier Special**

*Eternal greed:* If the screaming hoardling is reduced to zero HP while coping with the effects of its *howl of emptiness* attack, at the start of the next turn it rises with 36 HP, then spends a quick action (or two) to re-equip lost items. A character can negate this recovery-from-death by returning a lost item to the corpse with a quick action. If a character has for some reason taken the screaming hoardling's fallen treasure, they will find themselves pursued by an unkillable enemy until they give that item back.

**AC 23**

**PD 21**

**MD 17**

**HP 110**

## BRONZE ERRANT

*Former mortal warriors obsessed with having the most impressive weapons and armor, bronze errants have become what they coveted in life. And now maybe shining inhuman perfection is something you want too . . . .*

*Triple-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level blocker [CONSTRUCT]*

Initiative: +8

**Whistling double-headed axe +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—40 damage

**R: Returning axe +10 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)**—40 damage

**C: Gleaming perfection +10 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—The target must use its next move action to move closer to the bronze errant.

*Limited use:* When an enemy not engaged with the bronze errant rolls a natural odd attack roll against it, the bronze errant can make a gleaming perfection attack against that enemy as a free action.

*Armor Supremacy:* Enemies engaged with the bronze errant and wearing magical heavy armor who roll a natural odd attack are vulnerable until the start of their next turn, as they exaggeratedly act out their armor's quirk.

*Perfect immunity:* Bronze errants are immune to effects. They can't be dazed, weakened, confused, made vulnerable, or touched by ongoing damage. You can damage one, but that's about it.

**AC 23**

**PD 20**

**MD 18**

**HP 280**

## ROYAL BEARER

*The royal bearers are vaguely wizardly things empowered by the Gold King to obtain the most valuable treasures—and to dispense with that treasure's erstwhile owners.*

*10<sup>th</sup> level caster [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +15

**R: Lash for thieves +17 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—40 psychic damage, plus 8 psychic damage for each true magic item of epic tier the target is carrying.

**C: Crushing weight of wealth +17 vs. PD (one nearby enemy wearing magic armor)**—32 force damage and the target is stuck and weakened until the start of the royal bearer's next turn.

**R: The King's due +17 vs. PD (nearby enemy wielding a magical weapon, implement, or shield)**—The target must choose one: 60 damage and the target can be teleported into engagement with one of the royal bearer's allies; OR the target loses a random magical implement, shield, or weapon to the glittering bearer.

*Natural even hit:* No choice, the target suffers both effects.

*Limited use:* 2/battle

*Flight:* The glittering bearer normally hovers a foot or two off the ground, though it can achieve impressive elevation and mobility if need be.

*Lost opportunity:* This creature can't make opportunity attacks.

*Ghostly:* This creature has *resist damage 16+* to all damage except force damage, which damages it normally. A glittering bearer can move through solid objects but it can't end its movement inside them.

AC	25
PD	19
MD	25

HP 160

## LOYAL GATHERER

*Adorned in decayed dwarven finery, a loyal gatherer knows its place—tearing true magic items from your bleeding body to offer to its King.*

*10<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +15

**Grasping iron claws +15 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Critical hit:* The target loses use of one random epic tier true magic item. The item can be retrieved as a standard action from a slain loyal gatherer.

*Scent of treasure:* The loyal gatherer's crit range expands by number of true magic items of epic tier the target is carrying. Targets with more of these items are preferred prey.

AC	25
PD	24
MD	21

HP 45 (mook)

*Mook:* Kill one loyal gatherer for every 45 damage you deal to the mob.

## BRONZE KINGSGUARD

*10<sup>th</sup> level blocker [CONSTRUCT]*

Initiative: +14

**Whistling axe +13 vs. AC**—55 damage

**R: Returning axe +10 vs. AC (one nearby or far away enemy)**—55 damage

**C: Gleaming perfection +13 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—The target must use its next move action to move closer to the bronze errant.

*Limited use:* When an enemy not engaged with the bronze kingsguard rolls a natural odd attack roll against it, the bronze kingsguard can make a *gleaming perfection* attack against that enemy as a free action.

*Armor supremacy:* Engaged enemies wearing magical heavy armor who roll an odd attack roll are vulnerable until the start of their next turn, as they exaggeratedly act out their armor's quirk.

*Perfect immunity:* Bronze kingsguards are immune to effects. They can't be dazed, weakened, confused, made vulnerable, or touched by ongoing damage. You can damage one, but that's about it.

AC	26
PD	23
MD	21

HP 200

# THE GOLD KING

*The King found what he was looking for. He wants to share it with you.*

*Triple-strength 13<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +20

**Hammer of golden sovereignty +18 vs. AC (up to 3 enemies)**—90 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target pops free and takes extra damage equal to the attack roll

*First natural even miss each round if targeting one or two enemies:* The Gold King makes another *hammer of golden sovereignty* attack against the enemy it missed.

**C: Behind the mask +18 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—160 psychic damage and the target is weakened (save ends).

*Miss:* 80 psychic damage and the target is weakened until the end of its next turn.

*[Special trigger] C: Golden greed +18 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)*—The target is confused (save ends)

*Limited use:* When a nearby enemy uses the magic item power of an epic tier item, the Gold King may make a *golden greed* attack against 1d4 other nearby enemies as a free action. (It's possible the PCs should have some warning, for example, a magic item might be too-eagerly wheedling to be used. Or maybe you'd rather teach lessons the hard way.)

*The mask slips:* When first staggered, the Gold King makes a *behind the mask attack* against the enemy that caused the triggering damage as a free action.

*The wandering king:* The Gold King can deal 4d6 damage to itself and teleport someplace it can see nearby as a move action.

*Sticks and rags:* The Gold King has resist 16+ to attacks not made with epic-tier magical weapons, implements, or bracers. Enemies not wearing epic-tier magical armor are vulnerable to its *hammer of golden sovereignty* attacks (that's right—eschewing magic items makes it easier to defeat the minions of the Gold King, but harder to beat the King itself).

*Even worse:* When the escalation die is even, the Gold King rolls 2d20 instead of 1d20 and uses the higher result whenever it attacks or rolls a save.

*Fallen icon:* The Gold King is no longer an icon, but it still possesses magical bonds with reality that make it difficult to destroy. See the Campaign Impact section immediately following the Gold King's stat block for ways in which significant campaign victories can make the Gold King easier to defeat. (To be clear: if the PCs don't achieve any of these campaign victories, the Gold King will be difficult or perhaps even impossible to destroy.)

*Compel fealty:* An epic-tier dwarf, forgeborn, or human slain by the Gold King will arise at the end of the battle as a bronze kingsguard, loyal gatherer, or royal bearer—whichever seems most appropriate.

*Eternal kingdom:* If the Gold King is slain, the GM secretly rolls a normal save (11+) at the end of *each session*, including this one. If the save succeeds, the Gold King returns to life in one of its secret treasure rooms deep in the underworld. If the campaign somehow ends while the Gold King is still dead, it's the GM's call whether the Gold King stays dead or rises after the events of the campaign.

## Nastier Specials

*Fealty owed:* Human, dwarf, and forgeborn characters may not use their racial power until the escalation die reaches 4 or higher, and not when engaged with the Gold King (so standard humans are simply out of luck).

*Fealty shown:* The first time each round an attack would reduce the Gold King to zero hit points or less, it instead damages the closest nearby loyal gatherer. If these have all been destroyed, the attack damages the closest nearby royal bearer, then finally the closest bronze kingsguard. If these have all been destroyed, the Gold King is reduced to zero hit points—but see *long live the king* below.

*Long Live the King:* When the Gold King is finally defeated, nothing remains but a featureless gold mask that wants to be picked up. This mask makes a *golden greed* attack against each enemy in the battle as a free action. The save to end the confusion from this attack is a hard save, with confused targets violently fighting over the mask. When no targets are confused, the mask crumbles into dust. (If one PC slays the others while confused, they're probably going to put on the mask.)

AC	30
PD	27
MD	27

HP 1200

# CAMPAIGN IMPACT

The wrong way to defeat the Gold King is to treat it as just another monster—one-fight-and-we-got-this is not likely to work against a fallen icon. The *right* way to defeat the Gold King is to dedicate yourself to destroying the pieces of reality that help it sustain its power.

The list that follows details a number of campaign victories that the PCs might achieve before confronting the Gold King itself. Alternatively, they may fight the Gold King once before achieving any of these wins, only to realize that they're going to need to destroy the Gold King's heritage before they can complete the fallen icon's destruction.

## HIS ARMOR CLATTERS ABOUT HIM

The player characters can achieve the campaign victories listed in the next section in any order, but successive victories remove the Gold King's abilities one at a time, in the following order:

**First PC campaign victory:** Remove the Gold King's *eternal kingdom* ability.

**Second PC campaign victory:** Remove *even worse*, and ignore any nastier specials even if you are a nasty GM.

**Third PC campaign victory:** Reduce the Gold King's defenses by 2.

**Fourth PC campaign victory:** Remove *the wandering king*.

## CAMPAIGN VICTORIES VS. THE GOLD KING

The possible victories below could be modified or added-to to suit your campaign. If your campaign has heavily featured the Dwarf King, the PCs may have been delving for one or more of these victories in previous tiers.

**Reclaim Underhome:** The dwarves return to Underhome, probably led by the PCs, because the NPCs of the world aren't going to manage it, not even the Dwarf King himself. This goal need not require long-term success, but if the dwarves have already been kicked out again, well, the victory isn't valid anymore, is it?

**The Extremely Generous Dwarf King:** To prove that the Dwarf King is not like his terrible golden predecessor, the PCs must have lived their lives well enough that the Dwarf King has willingly gifted an epic tier true magic item to each PC that is a half-orc, elf, forgebore, or that has at least one positive or conflicted icon relationship point with the Orc Lord or the Prince of Shadows. A character with some peculiarly anti-dwarf One Unique Thing would also qualify as requiring a gift. If there's only PC who qualifies for such a gift, it needs to be a Really Big Deal. Obviously if there are no PCs who qualify as recipients of extreme generosity, this campaign victory isn't available.

**Artifact Side Quest:** Find the legendary trapped treasure room of the Gold King that all those other seekers have been after and liberate its chief treasure, an artifact belonging to an icon that the PCs are probably friendly with and the Dwarf King may not be. This is a mission that can fail, since the consequences aren't necessarily lethal, so the odds should be against the heroes.

**Iconic Altruism:** Several allies or loved ones of an icon have fallen to the Gold King. This icon wants the bodies of their friends returned for a proper ceremony, or maybe even dicey resurrection, depending on the icon. Can the PCs find and defeat the icon's allies, now transformed into the Gold King's servitors? Can they do it in a way that preserves enough of the bodies to convince the icon that these really are their friends? Will they have to quest farther to find the friends' identifying treasures? Just how many quests is this going to take? Can the PCs stay true and return these awesome magic items to the icon, instead of giving in to greed themselves?

**Two Time Winners:** Drop the Gold King to 0 hit points in two different battles. Eventually, piling the hurt on the fallen icon has an impact.

## BUILDING BATTLES

Creatures loyal to the Gold King have a limited range of outsiders they can team up with. Greed gets in the way! Any intelligent creature that is at all interested in treasure is a problem. The most likely allies are mindless undead, constructs, demons, temporary slaves, and creatures that think they are the ones manipulating the Gold King. The Creatures of the Gold King table above offers examples of creatures that could be drafted into a Gold King battle.

Gray hoarders usually act alone, or in groups of two or three, or in the company of lesser mindless undead like zombies and skeletons.

A bronze errant will often be accompanied by a glittering bearer or two and a few gray raiders and perhaps a screaming hoardling. If they're seeking to claim a specific ancient dwarven magic item or treasure for their King, they may have recruited temporary allies who have abilities that can aid their mission.

The Gold King will always be protected by a handful of bronze kingsguards and royal bearers as well as a similar number of groups of loyal gatherers.

# GOLD KING MONSTERS BY LEVEL

Full stats for new creatures devoted to the Gold King appear in this entry. Here's a guide to adapting existing *13th Age* monsters to the Gold King's purposes. 13A: *13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook; 13B: *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary*; 13TW: *13 True Ways*; 13G: *13<sup>th</sup> Age in Glorantha*.

Level	Gold King Monster	Existing Monster Stat (pg #)
1st	<b>greedy bandit</b> Humans, dwarfs, and others who have heard rumors of great treasure in the underworld. They'll kill you before you get to it first.	human thug (13A: 235)
3rd	<b>gray hoarder</b>	this entry
3rd	<b>golden ghoul</b> Lightly touched by the Gold King, these jaundiced undead dwarfs still hunger for meat, not treasure.	ghoul (13A: 225)
4th	<b>King's chaos</b> In areas under the Gold King's influence, chaos twists to his commands.	chaos beast (13B: 39)
4th	<b>lost dwarf</b> Many subjects of the Gold King fail to transform fully and are left as gibbering wretches who cling to memories of promised treasure.	derro maniac (p. 216)
4th	<b>lost sage</b> Though the Gold King has nothing to do with them, lost sages consider themselves his prophets. They might even be prophets, but few understand their ranting.	derro sage (p. 216)
5th	<b>gray raider</b>	this entry
6th weakling	<b>avenging spirit</b> Change their slayer ability to target creatures that belong or have an icon relationship point with the Dwarf King.	bronze bat spirit (13G: Chapter 5)
6th	<b>glittering bearer</b>	this entry
7th	<b>bronze errant</b>	this entry
7th	<b>bronze golem</b> An ornate golem made of precious metal that's marred by a crucial flaw? It's almost like the Gold King <i>created</i> bronze golems.	bronze golem (13B: 100)
7th	<b>elder madness</b> Where the Gold King treads, these shimmering beasts from outside the world are sometimes released or invited.	umluppuk (13B: 69)
10th	<b>royal bearer</b>	this entry
10th	<b>loyal gatherer</b>	this entry
10th	<b>bronze kingsguard</b>	this entry
13th	<b>The Gold King</b>	this entry

# THE GOLD KING AND THE ICONS

The Gold King is a rival not just to the Dwarf King but to all who claim to rule part of the Dragon Empire. Some say the Gold King will return to Underhome when he has amassed enough followers and wealth. Others say it will be Forge he attempts to claim or even Axis.

As a fallen icon, the Gold King isn't really capable of allying with any of the existing icons. We usually encourage weird alliances and strange factions, but fallen icons are usually an exception. The Gold King's magic no longer fits into the world of the icons, in fact all the existing icons push against the Gold King's existence. It knows it needs to take the existing icons out, and no matter how much existing icons hate the Dwarf King, the Gold King is magically worse.

The note that follow are therefore limited to special patterns of mistrust!

**Dwarf King:** Depending on who you listen to, the Dwarf King sometimes dismisses tales of the Gold King as just another underworld fable. Could he be serious, or is that a calculated pose of a victor who doesn't want to pay too much public attention to a fallen predecessor?

**Elf Queen:** The Dwarf King has shown himself able to reconcile with the Elf Queen. The Gold King? Never.

**Emperor:** Everything will be alright unless the Emperor gets seduced by the prospect of treasure to rival the Dwarf King.

**Lich King:** The Lich King hates this guy. Not only is he another would-be king of the world, he also manages to create undead that the Lich King can't control or win to his side. Destroying the Gold King is a prospect that could win unusual cooperation from agents of the Lich King. If you're looking for an endgame way to shuffle the campaign's understanding of balance of allies and enemies, this could be it.

**Prince of Shadows:** Don't say it out loud. Be careful how loud you think it. But it seems possible that the Prince of Shadows has been burnt by the Gold King. The greed that's part of the psyche of many of the Prince's agents does not prepare them well for dealing with the fallen icon.

## THE GOLD KING'S TREASURE

The Gold King is conceived of as a late game problem, though possibly not the campaign's final threat, unless your campaign is dwarf-centric. Feel free to save a level's worth of treasure (or more) for the Gold King's lair. By now you may not need cryptic clues suggesting far greater treasure that is ripe for the taking deeper in the underworld. The PCs are beyond that kind of prompting by now, right? They must know the Gold King is coming for them . . .

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Gifts Fit for a King**—To strengthen the alliance with Forge, the Emperor has decreed that he will deliver a gift of great lost treasures to the dwarf King. But first they must be found! The adventurers who obtain these treasures will be rewarded with riches and titles. The Empire even provides a rough map to the hoard's location!

But where in the Underworld is there a treasure that the Dwarf King could not obtain more easily than could the Emperor? Why the insistence that the treasure be delivered to the Emperor himself and not to Forge? And what is the meaning of the terse (even for dwarves) avoidance of the subject of these gifts, when agents of the Dwarf King are questioned?

**Lost Treasure Hunters**—An old friend/employer of the characters in concerned for another party of adventurers, who left seeking the bounty on a pair of marauding dwarven brothers. The party is days overdue, and as a favor the characters are asked to ascertain the whereabouts of the lost party. They are also asked to, incidentally of course, make sure to return with any unclaimed treasure, and with any "clues to greater treasure."

What the players don't know is that they are not the second or even third group of adventurers sent after the "dwarfs." Perhaps the employer is fixated on this treasure, or maybe he keeps feeding adventurers to whatever waits there in hopes of obtaining an invitation, of sorts, to a greater wealth that waits below.

**Impossible Thefts**—A retired group of adventurers from Glitterhaegen has reported that prized magic items from their adventuring days have begun to disappear. This should be impossible, as each former adventurer wielded an item that was enchanted so that no living hand but theirs could grasp it.

The rogue of this party, now living in Shadow Port, has fallen under suspicion. For his part, he suggests that perhaps it is not living hands that are responsible. But what do the dead want with someone else's treasure?

# GREAT GHOUL

*An icon in half-remembered Ages, a name to quiet naughty children. Yet in the night one may still hear the cackling of his jackal priests.*



The Great Ghoul is a fallen icon. Once he was as dominant as the Emperor or the Lich King, representing the forces of decay to their fullest. Can an icon that embodies decay remain powerful? Perhaps it was inevitable that the Great Ghoul's power would wane.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> age, the Great Ghoul relies on priests, underlings, and dupes to do his work. He is rarely seen except in climactic battles. Adventurers most often confront the Great Ghoul's power in the form of his masked jackal servitors. So they believe, anyway, but many of the sworn servants of the Great Ghoul are not so obvious.

## POWERED BY DEATH

When he was an icon, the Great Ghoul drew power from a never-ending supply of corpses, scavenged by his special servitors, a race of jackal-like humanoids. They scoured battlefields, collecting charnel provender to sate their master's hunger. They swept down on plague-rotted cities, carrying off wagons full of the dead. They arranged wars and disposed of the corpses on all sides. Executioners knew better than to give bodies to the next of kin. Living souls who swore allegiance to the Great Ghoul drew unholy power from the bargain and promised at least one thing in return—their own corpse.

Mortals argued over the Great Ghoul's nature. Was he truly evil? With rare exception, the creatures allied with him did not kill to increase his consumption or their own, sating themselves instead on the fragility of the living and their many petty wars. In any region frequented by his servitors, no lich or necromancer could long hold sway. Some towns pledged themselves as eventual provender for his consumption in return for magical protection in life. Others considered his appetites vile and monstrous. Those who believed in afterlives or in reincarnations dreaded death in battle or on the road, as it left their corpse vulnerable to his scouts and bearers. Families interred their dead in cellars, fearing his priests might discover their remains in graveyards. Wizard and charlatan alike sold talismans and spells said to render one's corpse distasteful to the Ghoul.

In an Age when truces held and battles went unfought, when the Archmage's magics held plagues at bay, the Great Ghoul's strength waned. Emboldened, and fearing what machinations those in his service might use to restore their master's sources of sustenance, his enemies rose. And so, led by a band of paladins, an army of humans and dwarves marched on his stronghold deep within the Earth. With flame, they destroyed the bodies of their fallen and those ghouls, ghosts, and priests whom they slew. When at last they arrived at the stronghold, they found it empty. And yet the day was not lost, for that which they could not destroy, they starved. Never again would the Great Ghoul be counted among the icons of an Age.

The Great Ghoul still draws followers from those who still wish to engage in ancient bargains. But any seeking corpses for the Ghoul must contend with both the Lich King and the magics used to protect graveyards against his corrupting influence.

Despite his fall, the Great Ghoul's power at times grows strong enough to concern the icons. As long as mortal things die, he lives. The days when his jackal servitors could be thought of only as scavengers rather than murderers are gone. What is his plan? Does he need a plan to kill his way back to the top, or will the bloody 13<sup>th</sup> age gift him everything he needs?

## JACKAL SERVITORS

Long-faced and lightly-furred, these humanoids do not seem to have a name for their species or a sense of that species as one race, like elves and dwarves, but refer to themselves by hierarchical titles which always reference the Ghoul or His Maw. A low-level mook who transports bodies (stretchers, wagons, wheelbarrows, and sacks all serve the purpose) refers to himself as "16<sup>th</sup> Bearer of the 22nd, in service to His Maw." A scimitar-brandishing priest claiming the Ghoul's right to a city's plague dead introduces to herself as "the 88<sup>th</sup> Priest of the Great Ghoul and 94<sup>th</sup> servant to His Maw."

In some past age, the Ghoul's servitors became commonly known as "jackal priests" (shortened by some to "jacks"), whether or not they actually hold the office of priest. No one but the jackal priests truly knows whence they come, how they live, or how many still exist. Some believe that they were once humans who became perverted through their service to their foul master, and certainly there are also humans who wear the mask of the jackal priest. Others speculate that they are a lost race of a former age, reduced in number and only kept alive by the Ghoul's power. A few even assert that those of any race who swear fidelity to the Great Ghoul are eventually reborn and remade through ritual into these scavengers.

No one sees the face of a living jackal priest. From lowliest bearer to high Priest, they cover their features with unnerving skull masks. The masks are usually unique. Some are cast in bronze or iron, others carved in ivory or wrought from dragonscale. Adventurers easily recognize some masks as skulls of known races and beasts. Others are supposed to come from strange fancies, beings from other worlds, or perhaps races and creatures which died out in past ages. The only substance which the Jackal Priests never wear is bone. Nor do they carry implements carved from bone or similar talismans, *'for all flesh and bone belongs to the Great Ghoul and to him only.'*

## ORDINARY GOHOLS

As undead, ghouls and ghosts generally serve the Lich King, their mindless instinct recognizing in him the undead power of this age. Yet those whose unlife begins in close proximity to the Great Ghoul's current abode sense their connection to his essential nature and answer his unspoken call instead. A snarling rivalry exists between those ghouls who serve the Lich King and the Great Ghoul. Under the wrong circumstances, a fight breaks out between cadres of undead, giving befuddled mortals a chance to flee.

# MONSTER STATS

We start with lowly mooks, move up to more powerful servitors, cult leaders, higher level ghouls and ghosts and end with the incarnations of the fallen icon.

## JACKAL GRAVEWRECKER

*Probably the only jackals in the world that can be trusted to dig up corpses without nibbling on them.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +4 (+2 when physically carrying a corpse)

**Claws +6 vs. PD**—3 damage, and 3 ongoing poison damage (easy save ends, 6+)

**(group) Shovel to the face +8 vs. AC**—7 damage

*Natural 18+*: With a resounding “WHANG!,” the shovel leaves the target dazed until the end of their next turn.

*Group ability:* For every two jackal gravewreckers in the battle (round up), one of them can use *shovel to the face* once during the battle.

*Still a jackal:* When a jackal gravewrecker mook rolls a natural 1 with an attack, its cowardly nature takes over and it flees, leaving the rest of its mob to fight on.

**AC 17**

**PD 15**

**MD 12**

**HP 9 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one jackal gravewrecker mook for every 9 damage you deal to the mob.

## JACKAL SCOUT

*Knows where all the bodies are...or were...buried.*

*5<sup>th</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +11

**Short spear or dagger +10 vs. AC**—14 damage

**R: Shortbow, nasty arrow +10 vs. AC**—14 damage

*Natural even hit:* The scout can take an additional move action this turn.

*Natural odd hit:* Speedy reload. If not engaged, the scout can make a second attack against a different nearby enemy as a free action.

*Rally:* As a quick action, the jackal scout attempts to rally its fellows. Roll a normal save. If the save succeeds, add a 5<sup>th</sup> level jackal bearer mook to the battle somewhere nearby the jackal scout, either as part of an existing mob or as a new one-creature mob if there are no other jackal bearers left in the fight.

*Limited use:* 1/battle when the escalation die is even.

**AC 20**

**PD 18**

**MD 16**

**HP 76**

## JACKAL BEARER

*Now a threat, as well as homicidal.*

*5<sup>th</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +8 (+6 when physically carrying a corpse)

**Shovel and claws +9 vs. AC**—6 damage, and 6 ongoing poison damage (easy save ends, 6+)

**(group) R: Sack full of bonegrit +9 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—10 damage, and target must roll an extra d20 for its next attack and use the lower roll

*Group ability:* For every two jackal gravewreckers in the battle (round up), one of them can use *shovel to the face* as a free action once during the battle.

**AC 20**

**PD 18**

**MD 15**

**HP 20 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one jackal bearer mook for every 20 damage you deal to the mob.

## JACKAL MAGE

*Ready to give you a taste of death's icy fingers. Hint: they taste awful.*

*6<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +8

**Obsidian scimitar +11 vs. AC**—14 damage

*Natural even hit:* The mage can make a second attack against the same target as a free action.

**R: Breath of the dead +11 vs. PD (1 nearby or far away enemy)**—20 negative energy damage

*Natural even miss:* Half damage.

*Nastier Special*

**C: Those you left behind +11 vs. MD (1 nearby enemy)**—28 negative energy damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

*Limited use:* 1/battle, as the jackal mage uses its psychic connection with the Great Ghoul to show an image of the moment of death (always past, not future) of someone the target loved or someone they let down.

*Miss:* Half damage.

**AC 22**

**PD 16**

**MD 20**

**HP 90**

## JACKAL PRIEST

*Press this priest closely or she will summon more ghoul! It seems a good plan, until you are in reach of her scimitar.*

*Elite 7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +11

**Obsidian scimitar and terrible claws +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—18 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target also takes 5 ongoing damage.

**R: Charnel shadow +12 vs. PD (1 or 2 enemies)**—20 negative energy damage

*Natural 16+:* The target takes an 10 extra psychic damage.

**Summon ghoul:** The jackal priest starts each battle accompanied by a mob of  $1d4 + 1$  7<sup>th</sup> level summoned ghoul mooks. (The mooks gained via this ability are accounted for in the building battle math by the jackal priest's designation as an elite monster.) At the start of each of the jackal priest's turns, if the jackal priest is not engaged, roll a d6. If you roll less than or equal to the escalation die, use the jackal priest's standard action to add another mob of  $1d4 + 1$  summoned ghoul mooks to the battle. The newly summoned mooks take their turn after the jackal priest's turn. Stop rolling the d6 after the ability has triggered to summon the second mob of ghoul mooks.

**Elite:** When building battles with this monster, it counts as 1.5 of a monster at 7<sup>th</sup> level.

### Nastier Special

**Last breath:** As the jackal priest drops to 0 hp, she can use summon ghoul as a free action.

**AC 23**  
PD 19  
MD 21

**HP 130**

## SUMMONED GHOUL

*In death there is power. So long as you're a creature of the Great Ghoul.*

*7<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +14 (or immediately after summoner if summoned during a battle)

Vulnerability: holy

**Wicked claws +13 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—7 damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends)

**AC 24**

**PD 20**

**MD 16**

**HP 25 (mook)**

**Mook:** Kill one summoned ghoul mook for every 25 damage you deal to the mob.

## JACKAL HIGH MAGE

*Not afraid to die and not afraid to trade blows hand-to-hand and watch you wither.*

*9<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +13

**Obsidian scimitar +14 vs. AC**—37 damage

*Natural even hit:* The mage can make a second attack against the same target as a free action.

**R: Breath of the dead +14 vs. PD (1 or 2 nearby or far away enemies)**—40 negative energy damage

*Natural even miss:* Half damage.

**C: Death's grasp +15 vs. PD (1 random nearby enemy)**—50 negative energy damage, and the target feels death's presence (save ends)

*Each failed save:* The target takes 5 negative energy damage.

**Warding:** When an enemy hits the jackal high mage with a melee attack, that enemy takes 15 ongoing negative energy damage.

**AC 25**  
PD 19  
MD 23

**HP 180**

## JACKAL HIGH PRIEST

*Bigger, badder, surrounded by even more ghouls. Doesn't want just your soul or your city's soul. Aiming for the world.*

*Double-strength 10<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +17

**Morningstar of reckoning +15 vs. AC**—70 damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

**R: Charnel wind +15 vs. PD (1 or 2 nearby or far away**

**enemies)**—88 negative energy damage

*Natural 16+:* The high priest can make a *cull the weak* attack as a free action.

*[Special trigger] C: Cull the weak +15 vs. MD (1 nearby enemy)*—15 psychic damage, and any ghoul or ghast attacking the target gains a +5 attack bonus until the start of the priest's next turn

*Summon ghouls:* The jackal high priest starts each battle accompanied by a mob of  $1d6 + 1$  10<sup>th</sup> level greater summoned ghoul mooks. (The mooks gained via this ability are accounted for in the building battle math by the jackal priest's designation as a double-strength monster.) At the start of each of the jackal priest's turns, (whether or not the jackal high priest is engaged!) roll a d6. If you roll less than or equal to the escalation die, use the jackal priest's standard action to add another mob of  $1d6 + 1$  greater summoned ghoul mooks to the battle. The newly summoned mooks take their turn after the jackal high priest's turn. Stop rolling the d6 after the ability has triggered to summon the second mob of ghoul mooks.

### Nastier Specials

*Fear aura:* While engaged with this creature, if the target has 72 hp or fewer, it's dazed (−4 attack) and does not add the escalation die to its attacks.

*Last rites:* When a jackal high priest drops to 0 hp, each creature that isn't allied with it must roll a hard save (16+). On a failure, it takes 12 psychic damage.

In addition, the high priest can use *summon ghouls* as a free action.

**AC 26**

**PD 22**

**HP 332**

**MD 24**

## NO SHADOW

The Great Ghoul's Shadow doesn't appear on the monster list at the end of the book because it's only intended to enter the campaign as a consequence of the Maw's sweeping shadow ability. It's not meant to appear in a battle unless the Maw has been 'slain.'

## GREAT GOUL'S MAW

*A gaping void in the earth? A disorienting fog in a cave? An enormous tongue tearing apart a city or graveyard? How the Great Ghoul manifests matters far less than what you're going to do about it.*

*Huge 12<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +20

**Tongue strike + 17 vs. AC (1 nearby enemy)**—150 damage,

and 50 ongoing negative energy damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* Roll a second or third tongue strike against a different enemy.

**R: Charnel storm +15 vs. MD (up to 3 nearby or far away**

**enemies in a group)**—120 psychic damage, and 30 ongoing

negative energy damage (hard save ends)

*Natural even miss:* Half damage.

*Critical hit:* The target is vulnerable (save ends).

**C: Snapping jaws +15 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy)**—180 damage, and the target is weakened (hard save end, 16+).

*Miss:* Half damage.

*Limited use:* 2/battle.

**Charnel breath +15 vs. PD (each enemy engaged with it)**—50 damage

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

*Empowered by death:* When the last mook in a mob is slain nearby, or when a creature drops to 0 hit points or dies in some other fashion nearby, the Great Ghoul's Maw heals hit point equal to 10 x the creature (or mob's) level.

*Sweeping shadow:* If the Great Ghoul's Maw is slain, the GM secretly rolls a normal save (11+) at the end of *each session*, including this one. If the save succeeds, the Great Ghoul regains a semblance of life: the Great Ghoul's Shadow, the 13<sup>th</sup> level creature statted just below, returns to life with attendant high priests and mages. If the campaign somehow ends while the Great Ghoul's Maw and Great Ghoul's Shadow are dead, well, it's not *really* dead, is it?

### Nastier Special

*Fear aura:* While engaged with this creature, if the target has 120 hp or fewer, it's dazed (−4 attack) and does not add the escalation die to its attacks.

**AC 28**

**PD 25**

**MD 25**

**HP 1080**

## GREATER SUMMONED GHoul

*Can the Lich King's servants match this power? (Don't answer that question.).*

*10<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +18 (or immediately after summoner if summoned during a battle)

Vulnerability: holy

**Wicked claws +16 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—15 damage, and the target is vulnerable (save ends)

AC	27	HP 50 (mook)
PD	23	
MD	19	

*Mook:* Kill one greater summoned ghoul mook for every 50 damage you deal to the mob.

## GREAT GHoul'S SHADOW

*Slaying death? It's a process.*

*Large 13<sup>th</sup> level troop [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +22

**Great leeching + 18 vs. PD**—110 negative energy damage, and Great Ghoul's Shadow heals 2d6 x 10 hit points.

*Natural odd roll:* Target also takes 50 ongoing negative energy damage.

**R: Fanged shadows + 18 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—140 psychic damage, and target is dazed (save ends)

*Natural odd miss:* 40 ongoing psychic damage.

*Empowered by death:* When the last mook in a mob is slain nearby, or when a creature drops to 0 hit points or dies in some other fashion nearby, the Great Ghoul's Shadow heals hit point equal to 10 x the creature (or mob's) level.

*Open Maw:* When the escalation die reaches 6, the battle ends as a campaign loss for the player characters. The first consequence of the loss is that the Great Ghoul's Shadow disappears and the Great Ghoul's Maw returns to life at some other distant location. Perhaps there is no other terrible consequence. Perhaps that's enough.

### Nastier Special

*Fear aura:* While engaged with this creature, if the target has 144 hp or fewer, it's dazed (-4 attack) and does not add the escalation die to its attacks.

AC	28	HP 800
PD	26	
MD	26	

## CAMPAIGN IMPACT

The Great Ghoul's Shadow is not meant to be encountered until events involving the Great Ghoul's Maw trigger that meeting.

The Great Ghoul rarely shows his terrible Maw, except perhaps at the end of a saga aimed at ending the fallen icon entirely. That may be a mercy to the player characters. If they haven't achieved significant campaign victories against the Great Ghoul, or perhaps against the generalized forces of decay, directly fighting the Great Ghoul's Maw may not go well for the heroes.

The list that follows details several campaign victories that the PCs might achieve before confronting the Great Ghoul's Maw. Or not. Maybe the PCs enjoy taking the hardest path to the afterlife.

Unless the PCs have achieved four campaign victories, defeating the Great Ghoul's Maw will probably become a prelude to confronting the Great Ghoul's Shadow in some future battle. The Shadow is higher level than the Maw, but weaker in some respects. If the Shadow is eliminated, the Maw will not return, and the fall of the Great Ghoul will be complete.

## ELIMINATING THE GREAT GHoul

The player characters can achieve the campaign victories listed in the next section in any order. Successive victories remove the Great Ghoul Maw's abilities one at a time, in the following order:

**First PC campaign victory:** The Great Ghoul Maw's *tongue strike* attack is now limited to a second attack with no chance of a third attack, even if the second attack is a natural even roll.

**Second PC campaign victory:** Remove the *snapping jaws* attack.

**Third PC campaign victory:** Remove the *charnel breath* attack.

**Fourth PC campaign victory:** Remove the *sweeping shadow* ability.

## CAMPAIGN VICTORIES VS. THE GREAT GHoul

Here are a few possible campaign victories that might soften up the Great Ghoul. Your campaign may have others to offer.

**Saviors:** The PCs have personally saved or restored an icon that's opposed to the decay and death which are central to the Great Ghoul's existence. This could count more if the PCs never truly got credit or reward for their actions.

**Death is for Everyone:** The Lich King has personally endorsed the PCs as his agents for bringing a final end to that which should have died long before. There's plenty of irony here, vis-à-vis undeath, but play along and the fallen icon stays down for good, OK?

**Tricked & Trapped:** The PCs have managed to entice the Great Ghoul's Maw to fight them some place it really shouldn't have dared enter. The Cathedral, or the restored Golden Citadel, or Starport, the center of the Wild Wood, or maybe even First Triumph.

**Experience Counts:** The PCs have already defeated (even if it was just winning one battle) a different fallen icon.

**Just Winning:** If the PCs have defeated the Great Ghoul's Maw at least once before, and have never fled from creatures associated with the Great Ghoul, that counts as a campaign victory.

## BUILDING BATTLES

Lower level battles with the Great Ghoul's forces also involve the ghouls from the core *13<sup>th</sup> Age* rulebook (page 225) and the *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary* (pages 97-98). Towards the end of champion-tier, the summoned ghoul mooks statted above become more relevant.

The Great Ghoul wouldn't have survived in any fashion if all its followers were obviously jackal-furred humanoids. You can use other human warriors and magicians to represent cultists, reactionaries, and those who services have been bought by loyalists.

On the other hand, non-ghoulish undead aren't fond of the Great Ghoul, and vice versa. If you'd like to make exceptions, start with incorporeal undead whose bodies aren't required to sate the Great Ghoul's hunger. If you start with the reavers from page 229, you'll have an excellent monster combo and a set-up for someone's inevitable betrayal. Not sure whose, yet.

## THE GREAT GOHUL AND THE ICONS

Your campaign's story seems likely to overrule some of the icon interactions below. Use these ideas if your campaign hasn't already set the battle lines.

**Archmage:** The Archmage loathes undead and will dispatch resources or charge adventurers to investigate any signs that the Great Ghoul grows in power or seeks to establish a visible stronghold. He can live with the Lich King if he must, but two lords of the undead, even if in conflict with each other, would greatly tax his powers of protection.

**High Druid:** Though one might consider a ghoul antithetical to most druids, the current High Druid tolerates his presence as she does (most) all things she regards a part of the natural world. She regards the Great Ghoul as she might a mushroom on a stump. Perhaps if she had faced him as an icon, she would feel differently.

**Lich King:** The Lich King considers the Great Ghoul a trespasser. Those dead whose corpses lie outside of graveyards and free from imperial rituals belong to him and his chosen necromancers.

**Orc Lord:** If he thought it was worth his while, the Orc Lord might arrange the gift of many cities for the Great Ghoul. But so far the Great Ghoul treats the Orc Lord as an upstart, which rather misses the point that it's the Ghoul who needs help. If the PCs were to hear that a far-thinking jackal priest was brokering a deal between fell icon and fallen icon, they'd want to scramble to avoid serious problems.

## PRIESTS CARRY

Shovels. Intricate talismans, wrought in the shape of otherworldly skulls. Flint-edged spears and curved scimitars. Treaties. Grubby contracts. Lanterns. Grave dirt. Maps to cemeteries. Small baggies of vaguely-magical dust.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Bad Bargain**—One of your adventurers wakes up after a night of hard drinking with strangers to find, neatly signed and dated, a contract promising their body to the Great Ghoul. On the plus side, the adventurer has some new magical ability or blessing. But the ongoing consequences, including haunted dreams and voices in their head, well, there's probably going to need to be a deal broken. Shouldn't take long, right? A tier or three?

**Paws and Pestilence**—Some say that the Great Ghoul's followers spread plague within great cities. Is it a coincidence that, as a plague spreads through Glitterhaegen, residents now hear the gentle pad of jackal feet outside their doors in the night?

**Requiem for a Dignitary**—The icons, excepting the Lich King, rarely pay much attention when reports reach them of a village cemetery carried off in the night. However, when the body of a close friend (for example, the Elf Queen's brother, or the High Druid's herbalist, or the Priestess's counselor, or the Crusader's chief military strategist) is unceremoniously ripped from the earth, the icon sends PCs to recover the body and restore it to rest and dignity. And the rumors of bargains the deceased made with the Great Ghoul? Perhaps some mysteries are best left in the ground. Oh! Too late.

**Risky Business**—A druid who joins the PCs' apocalyptic struggle against the Lich King suggests a logical next step—find the lair of the Great Ghoul and form a diplomatic alliance with his High Priest. But how do you find a fallen icon and what do you offer when you do? Or the next question: who is this druid, really, and how have they cursed the PCs if they don't proceed as desired?

# HALLOWED GARGOYLE

*With cleanly chiseled lines and gleaming gemstone eyes, the hallowed gargoyle is a joy to look upon. Unless you're planning something evil. Or happen to look at it sideways on the wrong saint's day.*

Perched high on the eaves of the Cathedral and other temples of the gods of light, hallowed gargoyles sit as ever watchful protectors. These gargoyle variants are created and enchanted as servitors for The Priestess, inlaid with blessed metals, protective runes, and prayer.

As creatures laced with precious metals and gemstones, hallowed gargoyles might seem like reasons to attack a temple rather than temple guardians. We have a couple ideas about this.

- The shiny metal and ‘precious’ gems aren’t actually precious. It’s a trick meant to distract thieves and intruders from the true treasures that the gargoyles guard.
- The Priestess and the gods of light really are so strong that they can endow temple guardians with magically charged gems. Occasionally people manage to loot a smashed gargoyle, but somehow the treasure they take never seems to work out well for them.

## THE PRIESTESS' GUARDIANS

Hallowed gargoyles are centered completely on the Priestess. You could call them fanatics, but that’s unfair to creatures who have been created and supernaturally boosted for a single purpose. Since most player character groups aren’t outright enemies of the Priestess, using hallowed gargoyles as monsters rather than as NPCs may be a stretch for some campaigns.

But there are ways!

Many player character groups are clean-living paragons of righteousness who would never do anything, think anything, or feel anything that would trigger a hallowed gargoyle’s protective programming.

Other player character groups murder, steal, break in where they are not legally allowed to go, lie to authority figures and have unclean thoughts about farm animals. We made that



last one up, but you get the picture. It's possible that hallowed gargoyles will react to player character groups who are just being their normal adventuresome selves. Even when it's sorted out quickly in the grand tradition of superhero team-ups, the PCs may have explaining to do.

Or perhaps the PCs will become tangled with hallowed gargoyles the way some group of heroes is about to get involved with a temple lion on our cover—the rakshasa and the owlbears started it! Is the temple lion going to be certain which side the PCs are on?

**Temple lions:** Not all the Priestess' holdings are above ground. Underground temples and basements are more often guarded by temple lions, a hallowed gargoyle variant more suited to fighting on the ground.

#### Nastier Specials for all Hallowed Gargoyles

These nastier specials also apply to temple lions.

**Mirrored aggression:** Hallowed gargoyles have some ability to sense intentions and a larger capacity to react appropriately! PCs with a negative or conflicted relationship with the Priestess are vulnerable to all the hallowed gargoyles' attacks.

**Statues, statues, everywhere:** Because they look so much like statues, and because most of the things that look like hallowed gargoyles are statues, hallowed gargoyles are capable of springing a surprise on inattentive PCs. When there's a chance of such an ambush, give the PCs a normal skill check (DC 20 at champion-tier, DC 25 at epic tier) to notice the gargoyles waking and avoid being surprised (*13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook, page 164).

## BEAUTIFIC GARGOYLE

*Evil temples are studded with grotesques. When the Priestess has her way, temples to the gods of light are ornamented with beautifics!*

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +5

**Claws +9 vs. AC (two attacks)**—6 damage

*Miss:* 2 damage.

**Drop like a stone +13 vs. AC**—18 damage

*Natural 16+ hit:* Target is weakened and hampered until the end of its next turn.

*Limited use:* Only when the beautific starts its turn flying and ends its turn engaged on the ground.

**Flight:** Beautifics can fly, but not gracefully. Mid-air, they take a -2 penalty to all their defenses, and it takes them two move actions to get airborne unless they can launch from above.

**Rocky Hide:** The beautific gargoyle has *resist damage* 12+ against attacks targeting AC.

**AC 21**

PD 18

MD 17

**HP 60**

## HALLOWED GARGOYLE

*Lesser gargoyles drop stones on their enemies. Hallowed gargoyles protect their territory rather than risking property damage.*

6<sup>th</sup> level leader [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative: +6

**Claws +11 vs. AC (two attacks)**—9 damage

*Miss:* 3 damage.

**Drop like a stone +13 vs. AC**—26 damage

*Natural 16+ hit:* Target is weakened and hampered until the end of its next turn.

*Limited use:* Only when the hallowed gargoyle starts its turn flying and ends its turn engaged on the ground.

Each hallowed gargoyle has **one** of the following attacks.

Choose, or roll a d3; 1: *bizarrely beautiful chant*; 2: *magic missiles*; 3: *denunciation*.

**C: Bizarrely beautiful chant +11 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—20 psychic damage

*Natural even hit:* One nearby ally can roll a save against a save ends effect. If no allies are affected by a save ends effect, one nearby ally can make a basic attack as a free action.

*Limited use:* Once per battle.

OR

**R: Magic missiles (1d4 nearby enemies)**—14 force damage

*Limited use:* 1/ battle.

OR

**C: Denunciation +11 vs. MD (1 enemy that has attacked the haloyle this battle)**—30 psychic damage

*Natural even hit:* Hampered (save ends)

*Limited use:* 1/ battle.

**Flight:** Hallowed gargoyles can fly, but not gracefully. Mid-air, they take a -2 penalty to all their defenses, and it takes them two move actions to get airborne unless they can launch from above.

**Halo:** The first time the hallowed gargoyle is hit by an attack against MD, reroll the attack with a -2 attack penalty.

(Sometimes the halo sputters, so if you forget to use it the first time, use the reroll later in the battle.)

**Rocky Hide:** The gargoyle has *resist damage* 12+ against attacks targeting AC.

**AC 24**

PD 20

MD 19

**HP 100**



## TEMPLE LION

*Statues of lions are popular with many temples of the gods of light. Which adds the element of surprise when this creature roars and attacks.*

*Large 7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [CONSTRUCT]*

Initiative: +6

**Stone claws +12 vs. AC (two attacks)**—25 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The temple lion can make another *stone claws* attack against a different engaged enemy.

Each temple lion has **one** of the following attacks. Choose, or roll a d3; 1: *great roar*; 2: *magic missiles*; 3: *rumbling omens*.

**C: Great roar +12 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—50 thunder damage

*Natural even hit:* Target is weakened until the end of its next turn.

*Limited use:* 1/ battle.

OR

**R: Magic missiles (1d4 nearby enemies)**—36 force damage

*Limited use:* 1/ battle.

OR

**C: Rumbling omens (1d3 nearby enemies, quick action to cast) +12 vs. MD**—15 ongoing thunder damage, and while target is taking ongoing thunder damage, the temple lion can reroll a missed attack against the target once per turn.

*Limited use:* 1/ battle.

*Haloed Mane:* The first time the hallowed gargoyle is hit by an attack against MD, reroll the attack with a -2 attack penalty. (Sometimes the halo sputters, so if you forget to use it the first time, use the reroll later in the battle.)

*Rocky Hide:* The temple lion has resist damage 12+ against attacks targeting AC.

**AC 25**

**PD 22**

**MD 18**

**HP 180**

## BUILDING BATTLES

As written, hallowed gargoyles are usually defenders rather than active agents of the Priestess. She has player characters for active work!

Aside from the kohwa on page 161, we haven't provided stats for a large number of creatures who are associated with the Priestess. We'll be changing that in an upcoming book, but for now, hallowed gargoyles usually team up with golems that look like holy statues, with kohwa who don't have anything better to do, and with each other. The 6<sup>th</sup> level hallowed gargoyles and the temple lions are in fact designed to be interesting opponents when confronted in numbers—give each of them a different spell and you've got an easy way to tell them apart and a battle that has many different things happening.

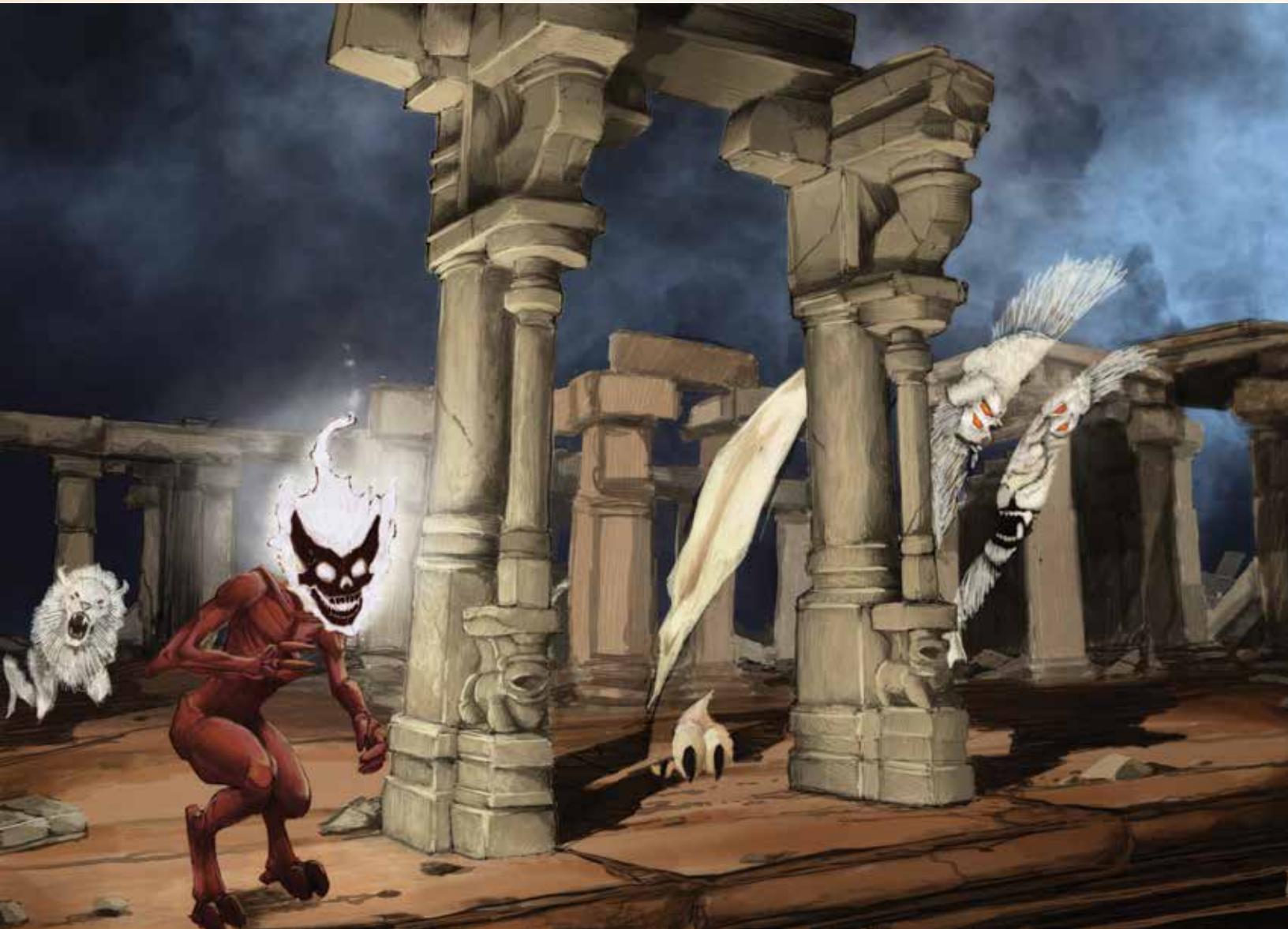
## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Festival Drunkards**—The monks of the Honeyed God have a festival once a year. Just once, you'd think they could have a festival that won't turn into a giant brawl that will set off the hallowed gargoyles. But that doesn't seem likely, so other temples within the Cathedral want to hire the PCs to try and keep the monks contained. And if that doesn't work, well, someone is gonna have to deal with the gargoyles!

**Overgrown Temple**—The clerics say that the Priestess was the first magician to introduce hallowed gargoyles, but the gems a rival adventuring crew brought back from an ancient temple they found in the Wild Wood sure seem like gemstones from hallowed gargoyles. A couple disciples of the Priestess are curious, and would like a guide to the temple. The other adventurers are uncooperative jerks, so the disciples are talking with the PCs. When the PCs have agreed to the mission, it turns out that one or two hallowed gargoyles are coming along, announcing themselves by dropping in on the expedition when it's out of Santa Cora!

**The Children's Festival**—It's not all doom and gloom in Santa Cora. The Cathedral hosts the Empire's best children's festival! Probably the only children's festival, to be honest. Every year children decorate hallowed gargoyles for the festivities, but this year, many of the hallowed gargoyles are hiding high up where most people can't follow. Someone adventurous, lithe, and glib needs to track down the gargoyles and talk them into joining the Festival. Or if some part of that two-part mission fails, come up with a different magical art assignment to keep the Festival rolling.

**That's No Halo**—One of the gargoyles loaned out by the Cathedral is no hallowed gargoyle! Track down the impostor, find out who or what is controlling it and snuff their plan. Or perhaps . . . turn the gargoyle into a double agent and strike the enemy from within!



# HELLCAT (BEZEKİRA)

*"You'll feel their fire before you hear them. Provided you can still feel anything once they get their claws into you."*

—Novakri, Cleric of the Tomes

Hellcats are both beautiful and terrifying. Practically invisible in bright light, their faint, sleek, and slightly fiery outline shows only while they are in the shadows. They are deviously intelligent and happy to serve other devils and occasionally even mortals, provided their masters are powerful and wicked. They have a capricious nature, to the point of dropping feebler bosses as soon as more powerful prospects show their strength.

A lone hellcat is a tough adversary. Unfortunately hellcats

aren't loners, they tend to roam in prides. Unlike mere beasts, they don't growl or roar or waste breath on verbalizations. Hellcats communicate telepathically, both to each other and their master, if any, and more rarely to other creatures. Telepathy allows a pride to move nearly soundlessly to pounce upon their prey easily. If they feel like simultaneously playing with their food and cooking it, they'll use their fiery breath instead.

## DEVILS, NOT DEMONS

Hellcat is the common name. Other devils call them bezekira, but most people don't even know that. And if they do, using devilish names is a sign that you either a) have power to burn; or b) are eager to burn.

Of course the hellcat nickname tends to make people think of these creatures as demons. They're not, and the Diabolist has no power over them, not unless you've made devils and demons synonymous in your campaign.

As detailed in Chapter 5 of *13 True Ways*, the story of how devils interact with the Dragon Empire and the icons is up to you. It's liable to change each campaign depending on the player characters' icon relationships. In other words, we're not including details of how hellcats might relate to the icons because that's usually already part of how you bring devils into the campaign. Hellcats aren't really the type of devil to pioneer new icon relations, unless you count capricious betrayals as significant in the grand scheme.

## CATS & THEIR IMPS

Wild prides, free roaming hellcats, and even some hellcats with devilish masters frequently keep imps as pets, specifically ember imps, a type of small devil. These imps have constantly burning skulls that cast forth bright light for the hellcats to hide in, but the imps aren't terribly intelligent or confident on their own. Some imps enjoy the chance to 'ride' into battle atop a hellcat, but that tends to reveal that the hellcat is the invisible thing underneath a midair imp, so it's not something hellcats allow unless they're playing with their food. While fighting, if a hellcat needs a distraction, it simply dumps an imp off near an enemy to get its attention and then comes at that creature from behind.

## HELLCAT

*At first glance, those who spot a hellcat in the shadows think they've seen a fiery white lion, powerful and proud, and take it as a sign from the gods. The second glance, if there's time for one, corrects the impression.*

*Large 6<sup>th</sup> level troop [DEVIL]*

Initiative: +12

**Claws and fangs +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—15 damage

**Blazing pounce +12 vs. AC**—13 damage, and the hellcat pops free from the target and uses its move action to engage a nearby enemy. It can't be intercepted during this movement. It then makes a second attack that also deals 10 ongoing fire damage on a hit.

*Limited use:* The hellcat must have its move action available to use *blazing pounce*.

**C: Fiery breath +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—15 fire damage

*Devil's due (stalker):* When you choose to add the escalation die to an attack against a hellcat, during its next turn it gains a cumulative +2 bonus to attack if it's invisible. Otherwise, it gains a non-cumulative +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn as its form blurs.

*Fire fur:* When an enemy is engaged with the hellcat at the start of its turn, that enemy takes 5 fire damage.

*Invisible:* While in bright light, the hellcat is invisible; attacks against it have a 50% miss chance.

*Resist fire 13+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

### Nastier Specials

*Corona aura:* Fire attacks that target an enemy engaged with the hellcat gain:

*Natural 16+:* The target takes 5 extra fire damage.

*Fearless pursuer:* A hellcat takes only half damage from opportunity attacks.

AC 21

PD 20

MD 19

HP 140

## EMBER IMP

*While they look similar to demonic imps, ember imps lack the wings and tail of their smarter cousins.*

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [DEVIL]

Initiative: +4

**Frantic claw +9 vs. AC**—8 damage, or 12 damage if the imp is not riding or next to a hellcat

**R: Flaming coal dust lugey+7 vs. PD**—7 fire damage

*Natural odd hit:* 5 ongoing fire damage.

*Miss:* The imp's *flaming coal dust lugey* attack gains a cumulative +1 damage bonus.

**Burning skull:** The ember imp's skull constantly burns with flame, casting bright flickering light in the nearby area. In addition, any enemy that fumbles a melee attack against the imp takes 5 ongoing fire damage.

**Devil's due (flame):** When you choose to add the escalation die to an attack against a ember imp, the imp's *flaming coal dust lugey* attack gains a cumulative +1 damage bonus.

**Resist fire 13+:** When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**AC 18**

**PD 16**

**HP 40**

**MD 12**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Hellcats are best used in groups, whether it's a pride of hellcats, a group of hellcats with one to six ember imps, or a single hellcat acting as a mount or guard for a more powerful devil.

When pairing hellcats with lower-level enemies, they push the imps or other allies around to suit their needs, often using them as bait or distractions. When paired with higher-level allies, hellcats become bodyguards or silent slayers.

Hellcats working as a pride use tactics to pick out the weakest enemy and take it out of the fight, circling in closely to soften the target up with the automatic damage from their *fire fur* aura. If a battle turns badly, the hellcats will try to retreat, taking any downed enemies with them that they can.

## WHO'S GOT THE LIGHT?

Before throwing your PCs against hellcats, you might want to think about which PCs are providing light, what sorts of light sources do they have available, and how bright that light is. Of course you could also just wing it, but since invisible hellcats are MUCH harder to fight, caring about illumination makes sense for a change.

You can decide what constitutes "bright light," but here's our general sense of it. Bright light is:

- Daylight (and you should probably run).
- Magical light like the *light* cantrip, but probably not *dancing lights* (or maybe every other round).
- Lantern light to about 40 feet.
- Torchlight within about 5 feet of the bearer.
- A flaming weapon within about 10 feet of the bearer.
- Ember imp light.

Sources that probably aren't bright light would be: candles, natural phosphorescence (maybe), the hellcats' slight glow. For anything else, use your best judgment.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Broken Cages**—The Goblin Carnival has recently lost its newest addition to the roster, and the Carnival's keepers are trying to quietly locate and contain the beast, a hellcat, before it causes trouble for the locals and they get banned from another town. Maybe the PCs will help the Carnival out, or maybe the PCs are going to tear the whole devilishly stupid Carnival down whether or not they find the hellcat!

**Ghost of the Gate**—Travelers passing through Twisp have reported hearing a voice calling out to them as they pass through the gates to the city. The voice asks, in a child-like tone, if they are evil, and if evil, to prove it. Perhaps an immature hellcat is looking for someone to teach it the ropes.

**Magical R&D**—Wizards of Horizon need help in settling a bet. What happens when you pour water on a sleeping hellcat? If your PCs need incentives for getting involved in such nonsense, find something that makes sense for high intelligence/low wisdom wizards to offer. If the PCs turn them down, they may still need to get involved to help clean up bungled consequences when someone else takes the job.



# HELL MARSH CULT

*When these degenerate swamp dwellers, corrupt priests, and mad wizards aren't consorting with demons in the Hell Marsh, they serve the Diabolist as spies, assassins, and emissaries.*



## ALL ARE WELCOME IN HER DARK EMBRACE

It has been said that the Diabolist is capable of kindness when it suits her. Hell Marsh cultists are occasional instruments of her generosity—though the gifts they offer leave a mark on the soul, and draw recipients ever closer to the Abyss.

Some Hell Marsh cultists were born and raised in that diseased swamp. Others foolishly entered the Diabolist's realm (or were lured there), and were slowly driven mad by its horrors. Others are evil individuals from across the Dragon Empire, humans, dwarves, half-orcs, elves, and others who journeyed to the Hell Marsh to shed the constraints of civilization and revel in the worship of demons.

Those who've lived in the Hell Marsh the longest have a greenish pallor and sunken, red-rimmed, yellowed eyes. The most degraded of them smell of muck and decay, and tainted swamp water drips from their damp hair and sodden clothes.

**Missionary zeal:** As you'll see, the Hell Marsh priest and Hell Marsh wizard possess abilities that are likely to hurt them while helping the Diabolist's long-term plans. Their abilities aren't meant to take over a campaign, which is why the summoning aspect of this missionary work has a once-per-campaign restriction for both the priest and the wizard.

*"We was deep in the marsh when the drums and the chanting started, and after that they didn't stop for days. No matter which direction we went, the sound never got no further away, nor closer. Then, when it finally stopped, they came. Oh, gods of light, their horrible grins. The things they offered. Oh, forgive me."*

—Slywit Swiftfingers  
(current whereabouts unknown)

## HELL MARSH FANATIC

2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +4

**Filed teeth +7 vs. AC—5 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The target takes 2 ongoing poison damage (normal save ends).

**Strangling cord +7 vs. PD—4 damage**

*Natural 16+ hit:* The target is stuck so long as the Hell Marsh fanatic does not move or die (normal save ends), and the Hell Marsh fanatic's next *strangling cord* attack against the target gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage.

**R: Blowgun +7 vs. AC—5 damage**

*Natural even hit:* The target is dazed (normal save ends).

AC 17

PD 16

MD 13

HP 10

*Mook:* Kill one Hell Marsh fanatic mook for every 10 damage you deal to the mob.

## HELL MARSH PRIEST

*When the Diabolist is in a generous mood, the cultists may bestow gifts on those she favors, or perhaps even on those she despises—luring their recipients to the side of chaos.*

3<sup>rd</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +6

**Spectral dagger +8 vs. AC—10 damage**

*Natural 16+ hit:* One nearby ally gains a +4 bonus to hit on its next attack.

**C: Liturgy of the Abyss +8 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—12 damage**

*Natural even hit:* All nearby allies get a +1 AC bonus (cumulative!) until the Hell Marsh priest drops to 0 hit points.

*Limited use:* Every use of *liturgy of the Abyss* reduces one random nearby Hell Marsh fanatic to 0 hp. If there are no Hell Marsh fanatics nearby, the Hell Marsh priest cannot use *liturgy of the Abyss*.

**R: Kill the soul +8 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)—10 damage.** If an ally is engaged with the target, it can make a basic attack against the target as a free action

*The Diabolist's mercy:* Once per battle as a standard action, the Hell Marsh priest can heal a nearby ally or enemy for 40 hit points; the target also regains the use of one expended daily or once-per-battle ability.

If the target of *the Diabolist's mercy* is a player character or other enemy, the target chooses whether to accept this *mercy*; if not, the ability has no effect. A PC who accepts *mercy* and who has a negative relationship with the Diabolist, it becomes conflicted; if the relationship is conflicted, it becomes positive. If the PC does not have an icon relationship with the Diabolist, the character must shift one relationship point with another icon into a conflicted relationship with the Diabolist.

*Ye called in Her name, and I came hither:* As a standard action, a player character in the Hell Marsh (or some other evil marsh or cursed area!) who has a 5 or 6 icon advantage with the Diabolist can spend it to summon a Hell Marsh priest to their location. The Hell Marsh priest teleports next to the summoner, and acts on the turn immediately after the summoner's to perform *the Diabolist's mercy* on the summoner or a nearby ally. After doing so, it teleports away.

*Limited use:* Once per campaign for all Hell Marsh priests after the player characters' first battle against a Hell Marsh priest. And if used on a character who already has a positive relationship with the Diabolist, the PC gets another such point, replacing one of their other icon relationships.

AC 19

PD 14

MD 17

HP 45

## HELL MARSH WIZARD

Sometimes, ambitious students of magic in Horizon meet a friendly stranger who tells them the Diabolist knows the secret of enhancing wizards' spells with demonic power. That's how it begins. This is how it ends.

*4<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +7

**Half-hearted stab +8 vs. AC—8 damage**

**R: Accursed bolt +9 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)—12 lightning damage**

*Natural even hit:* The Hell Marsh wizard can make an *accursed bolt* attack against a second nearby enemy, followed by a third and final different nearby enemy if the second attack is also a natural even hit.

*Natural odd hit:* The Hell Marsh wizard can make an *abyssal curse* attack as a free action.

*[Special trigger] Abyssal curse +9 vs. MD (creature hit by a natural odd abyssal bolt)*—the target is weakened until the end of its next turn.

**R: Hellfireball +9 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group and any allies engaged with those enemies)—18 fire damage**

*Miss:* Half damage.

*Natural 16+ hit:* 7 psychic damage.

*Limited use:* 1/battle, and generally after trying to corrupt at least one icon relationship.

**C: Corrupting grasp +9 vs. PD—12 negative damage, and the target pops free.**

*Natural 16+ hit:* The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

*The Diabolist's knowledge:* Once per day, the Hell Marsh wizard can offer to answer truthfully one question about the adventure, with knowledge drawn from the Diabolist or her spells rather than from the wizard. If the questioner has a negative relationship with the Diabolist, it becomes conflicted; if the relationship is conflicted, it becomes positive. If the PC does not have an icon relationship with the Diabolist, the character must shift one relationship point with another icon into a conflicted or positive relationship with the Diabolist.

*The Diabolist's blessing:* Once per battle as a standard action, the Hell Marsh wizard can grant one nearby player character a random demon-style power from the table below. The blessing only takes effect if the character accepts it, but the character can choose to accept the blessing at any point this day, in this or another battle. If the blessing is accepted, *the Diabolist's blessing* affects the target's icon relationships the same as *the Diabolist's knowledge*.

### Random Demon-Style Power (d4)

- Resist energy 16+*—When an attack that deals energy damage targets you, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.
- Fear aura*—Enemies engaged with you that have fewer hit points than double your current hit points are dazed. If they could normally use the escalation die, now they can't.
- Demonic speed*—You can take an extra standard action each turn that the escalation die is even. You lose 2d6 hit points each time you use the extra action.
- Teleport 1d3 + 1 times this battle*—As a move action, you can teleport anywhere you can see nearby.

*Ye called in Her name, and I came hither:* As a standard action, a player character in the Hell Marsh (or some other evil marsh or cursed area!) who has a 5 or 6 icon advantage with the Diabolist can spend it to summon a Hell Marsh wizard to their location. The Hell Marsh wizard teleports next to the summoner, and acts on the turn immediately after the summoner's to either answer a question with *the Diabolist's knowledge* or perform *the Diabolist's blessing* on a nearby ally. After doing so, it teleports away.

*Limited use:* Once per campaign for all Hell Marsh wizards after the PC's first battle against a Hell Marsh wizard. If used on a character who already has a positive relationship with the Diabolist, the PC gets another such point, replacing one of their other icon relationships.

**AC 20**

**PD 14**

**MD 18**

**HP 54**

## BUILDING BATTLES

For Hell Marsh cultists, killing you is Plan B. What they *really* want is to bring all living beings under the sway of the Diabolist. It's common knowledge that Hell Marsh priests and wizards are cowards in battle, and will offer their enemies healing, knowledge, or power in exchange for letting them escape. This information is spread by the priests and wizards themselves, so their foes are already thinking about making deals when they enter combat.

To make these bargains more attractive, Hell Marsh cultists like to fight alongside the most terrifying monsters they can align with: hellbugs, gnolls, demons, hags, green dragons, haunted skulls, demonic ogres, demon-touched rangers, hydras, ghouls, vampires, and zombies. Predatory plants guard the approaches to Hell Marsh cultists' marshy huts, crumbling towers, shunned temples, and ritual circles.

## HELL MARSH CULTISTS AND THE ICONS

**Archmage:** Because they are dedicated to acquiring knowledge and increasing their power, wizards are especially tempted by the secrets of the Diabolist's magic. Many staunch foes of Hell Marsh wizards have met with ruin because they couldn't resist just a peek into their vanquished enemies' spell books. On the other hand, maybe everyone has it all wrong: maybe the Archmage is a tyrant who jealously hoards true knowledge and power, and the Diabolist is a heroic lightbringer? Right?

**Diabolist:** To the Diabolist, it is both entirely appropriate and quite useful that so many weak-willed mortals have chosen to worship her as a goddess. Maybe someday, an unusually ambitious priest or wizard she's trained will decide it's their turn to be the Diabolist, and destroy her; but what's life without risk?

**Emperor:** Wipe them out. *All* of them.

**Orc Lord:** It's not uncommon to see orcs fighting alongside Hell Marsh cultists. But if an orc is ever found spreading their claims that the Diabolist is a goddess, orc commanders' standing orders are to make an immediate, vigorous, and lethal counter-argument.

**Priestess:** The cult of the Diabolist is small, and an aberration, but it is capable of doing terrible spiritual damage. If the Priestess doesn't already have a special task force dedicated to countering its threat throughout the Empire, she should. Volunteers?

## THINGS FOUND IN A HELL MARSH CULTIST'S LAIR

A scorched thigh bone, wrapped in a hank of hair. A pouch or box of hallucinogenic mushrooms. An illustrated book on how to butcher and cook various humanoid races. A small glass sphere with what looks like one of the PCs trapped inside, silently pleading for help. A sliding puzzle box. A ritually defiled symbol of the gods of light. A doll made of dried, knotted marsh grass. A wooden pipe carved with the faces of laughing demons. A crude stone statue of the Diabolist, caked with dried blood.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Demon in the Dark**—Dwarven miners have discovered the remains of Hell Marsh cultists who fled into these caverns long ago, and were trapped by an earthquake. Ever since their bones were exhumed, muttering voices and distant drums have echoed through the mine, and the dwarves are plagued with terrible nightmares. Is an evil from the past returning?

**The Sign of 13**—There are many secret societies in the magical university at Horizon, but few as exclusive and mysterious as the Sign of 13. A new member has been found dead on the school grounds, and evidence points to murder by demonic magic. Has the Sign of 13 been infiltrated by a Hell Marsh wizard? If so, what are they up to? The answer might lie within the hidden chambers beneath the university, where the society first began—and where its darkest secrets are buried.

**Strike Force BRIGHT ENIGMA**—Word has reached the Cathedral that Hell Marsh cultists have gained a foothold in New Port, with cultists in powerful positions within the government and shipping. A militant faction within the Cathedral wants to respond with overwhelming force; others argue for sending an undercover team in to gather more intelligence, and make precise strikes against the enemy. In either case, the Priestess will need people she can trust to do the job.



# HELLSTONE GARGOYLE

*The rock near conquered hellholes is polluted, noxious, and difficult for normal people to be around without getting sick. So of course the Crusader is carving new gargoyles out of it.*



Hellstone gargoyles are newcomers in the Crusader's temples, forts, and warbands.

**Magical geology:** Hellstone is what happens to normal rock that's exposed too long to a hellhole. Hellstone is usually a sandy brown, sometimes mixed with darker granite or basalt that hasn't been corrupted. Hellstone is softer than granite, more like alabaster, but breathes and moves and reforms in ways that rock shouldn't.

Exposure to hellstone is terrible for non-corrupt creatures who lack magical defenses. Adventurer-types are too tough to be bothered by this type of magical pollution, but normal animals, plants, and people get sick around hellstone, particularly when it's allowed to leech into the water.

Hellstone gargoyles appear to know this, and like it, because when they're given a moment or three to themselves, they're always messing with the water. This 'hobby' is aided by the fact that each hellstone gargoyle is carved with a basin or water vessel, something to hold water or other fluids in. Left to themselves, hellstone gargoyles find a perch, choose a pose, and begin cycling fluids through their spouts and basins, closed

fountains. Except they don't stay closed, they slop water out of their basins. They're happiest sitting in the rain or in an existing fountain, but they also seem capable of getting their fountains started when no one else has water to drink.

For what it's worth, they aren't comfortable in rivers, ponds, lakes, or oceans. It's possible that being trapped in a natural body of water would shut a hellstone gargoyle down, eventually, but it's not like anyone is experimenting with that.

**Volunteers or draftees?:** It's not clear whether hellstone gargoyles call from the rock, asking to be carved free and sent against the Diabolist, or whether they're forcibly controlled conscripts like many of the Crusader's other magical servants. The answer to that question might determine whether the Crusader has a monopoly on the creatures or whether the secrets of their birth/construction will leak out into the wider magical community.

If the gargoyles have to be actively carved, that can't go so well for the carvers. So are the carvers actually enslaved demons? If so, can the hellstone gargoyles be trusted, in the long run?

## HELLSTONE GARGOYLE

*Damaged creatures of corrupt stone and infinite patience.*

7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [CONSTRUCT]

Initiative +10

Vulnerability: thunder

**Weathered claws +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—10 damage

*Metamorphic talons:* Whenever the hellstone gargoyle misses with a melee attack, *weathered claws* deals an additional 1d6 psychic damage until the end of the battle (maximum 4d6).

**R: Foul waterspout +14 vs. PD (one nearby enemy that is dazed, weakened, stunned, or has not acted yet this battle)**

—15 damage and 25 ongoing psychic damage

*Miss:* 15 psychic damage

*Limited use:* 1/battle

*Cloud of dust:* Whenever an engaged enemy misses with an attack against AC or PD, the attacker is *vulnerable psychic* until the end of their next turn (fyi, that applies to weathered claws attacks that now have bonus psychic damage).

*Not-quite-flight:* The hellstone gargoyle can't fly per se, but a clumsy glide can be achieved.

*Part of the scenery:* When there's the chance of an ambush, give the PC's a hard champion-tier skill check (usually DC 25) to notice the gargoyle and avoid being surprised (*13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook, page 164).

### Nastier Specials

*Grotesque Visage:* The hellstone gargoyle has a *fear aura*: enemies engaged with the hellstone gargoyle who are below 36 hit points are dazed and can't use the escalation die.

*Extra-toxic:* *Cloud of dust* is now save ends (11+).

**AC 22**

**PD 24**

**HP 97**

**MD 18**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Anyone who would fight for the Crusader would fight alongside hellstone gargoyles.

As guardians, they might be found alongside golems and other gargoyles in places where human soldiers can't survive without powerful magic; places like volcanoes, pocket dimensions, flying realms, and other remote locations with bad supply lines.

On missions for the Crusader, they're best used as aerial scouts or in conjunction with other flyers. That might include enslaved demons.

## HELLSTONE GARGOYLES AND THE ICONS

Most icons will steer clear of hellstone gargoyles.

**Archmage:** There are wizards who are sloppy enough to bring hellstone into their sanctums. The Archmage hopes that they don't expect to continue working with him, his universities, or his black ops research laboratories.

**Diabolist:** How does a demon-summoner show off? Well, lots of ways, but one of the more recent is to have a hellstone gargoyle as a hat rack.

**Dwarf King:** Even if it's possible for someone other than the Crusader to create a hellstone gargoyle, the Dwarf King wants no part of it. Dwarves are beginning to suspect that hellstone isn't a problem just for living things. Dwarves understand rock, and rock that's too near hellstone also seems to have trouble. Spreading magic from hellholes around the world is one of the Crusader's bad ideas, and the Dwarf King's forces quietly aim to suppress or destroy hellstone gargoyles without making a big deal of it with the Crusader.

**Great Gold Wyrm:** Nothing good comes from hellholes.

Members of the Golden Order treat hellstone gargoyles as second-order corruptions. They're not obviously demonically possessed, but they're untrustworthy and proof of the Crusader's lack of wisdom. Destroy them if you can.

**High Druid:** The Crusader pretends to hate demons. He kills plenty of them, but then he loots the corpses and figures out how to modify their weapons. These creatures are even worse.

**Orc Lord:** They don't need to eat? Good. They make normal people and animals sick? Good. They fly? They kill demons? If your campaign has any type of cooperation between the Crusader and the Orc Lord, hellstone gargoyles would be a strong piece of the Crusader's negotiation package.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Let's Experiment**—Someone wants a few hellstone gargoyles taken out over the Iron Sea and dropped into a shallow section. They need to be in no condition to fly. Whoever handles the mission needs to stick around for an hour and will be provided with magical goggles that should let them watch the gargoyles sinking. Given that this is a very high arcana experiment, magical rewards will surely go the survivors. I mean, experimenters.

**We've Got Families**—Soldiers otherwise loyal to the Crusader have figured out their families' recent illnesses and untimely deaths. It's not magic from the Diabolist, as their superior officers claim, it's the hellstone gargoyles they're fighting alongside. Enough is enough, and the soldiers have had to choose between leaving the Crusader's armies (difficult) or doing something about the hellstone gargoyles. Are the PCs discreet agents who could be trusted to 'deal with' hellstone gargoyles without damaging the rest of the Crusader's operation? Or will the PCs take this opportunity to do a lot more damage? (If so, the punitive deaths of the families are probably on them . . . .)

# HELLWARPED BEAST

*If a hellhole erupts nearby, you're usually either running at top speed to get away or dead. Hellwarped beasts didn't die, but they didn't get away clean, and now they're bellowing somewhere in the middle. Now you run.*

When the Diabolist and her demons create a hellhole, forming a link between this world and theirs, powerful energy disrupts the normal functioning of the world. Most of the creatures living in the vicinity of an emerging hellhole either flee, die from exposure to horrible magic, or get taken by demons. Every so often, there's an exception, an odd or "lucky" creature that survives outside the hellhole, but warped by demonic energy. Hellwarped beasts are one such aberration—larger, stronger, and just thoroughly freaking weird.

## CREATURES OF TWO WORLDS

Demonic energies infuse hellwarped beasts, but unlike demons, they are of the world. Unlike demons, hellwarped beasts can freely move into and out of a hellhole zone. They can roam great distances away from their "home" hole, but eventually they must return to its unique demonic energies or wither and die.

These connections with the world keep hellwarped beasts from falling under the Diabolist's control as easily as demons, though those with greater intelligence usually acknowledge her as queen.

It could be that hellwarped creatures have some sort of symbiotic relationship with their original hellhole, communicating with it or providing it with something gathered from the world. If that suggests a storyline you can use in your campaign, run with it. Certainly most other



hellwarped beast storylines are brutal and direct, since the only experiences hellwarped beasts have in common with normal beasts is pain and hunger. Hellwarped beasts are a preview of the world-as-conquered-by-the-Diabolist: chaos, hunger, a dismal frenzy, and heart-rending ties to a place that used to be sane and normal.

## HELLHOLE GUARDIANS

Because hellwarped beasts must return to their hellhole to feed, some are protective of their territory. Even if the Diabolist and her demons can't always fully control the hellwarped, this dynamic works well for the demons, who can always use another line of expendable defense against would-be crusaders. If the demonic inhabitants of a hellhole want to allow certain types of folk entry (say, adventurers), they may have tricks to convince (or distract) the local hellwarped creatures to leave such guests alone.

It's possible that such moments send hellwarped beasts on their longest rambles. They may go on a rampage to gorge themselves on all the flesh they can find in the nearest town or village, wander the wastes looking to thrash any creature that suffers less than them (which is most everything), or even get the idea (Diabolist knows where) to destroy a holy site or temple of the light.

## A TASTE FOR YOU

Rarely, a hellwarped beast's prey escapes it, or a bold group of heroes manages to drive one of the creatures off. Most people consider themselves lucky to have survived such an encounter. Tracking the aberration down and slaying it isn't on most people's agendas.

This mistake can cost you your life, even your soul. If a hellwarped beast manages to return "home" with the taste of an enemy's blood upon it, it will convey that taste to its hellhole, and to all the demons living within it.

How bad is that? Well, it's not good! Consider reinterpreting one or more icon relationship dice, secretly, as dice complicated with Diabolist problems. Put demons where the PCs expected allies.

It's not at all clear how you can get your taste out of a hellhole's mouth. Probably something to do with visiting the hellhole and kicking it in the teeth.

GM, it's up to you whether you want to warn PCs about this problem. Most people in the Dragon Empire have no idea, hellwarped beasts are rare and survivors of their attacks are also rare. It's likely that most of the icons would have no idea about the problem, but the High Druid, Priestess, and Crusader may have inklings.

## THE HIGH DRUID AND HELLWARPED BEASTS

Most hellwarped beasts are aberrations created from normal creatures that lived too close to a hellhole. The beast's natural form is reshaped as it grows and warps, and what it once was is mostly lost, except perhaps in some basic characteristics such as a wolverine's burrowing claws or a ram's curving horns.

No surprise: corruption of the natural form is hateful to the High Druid and her servants. Whenever possible, they will try to slay hellwarped creatures, either directly or through the use of adventurers skilled at fighting horrors (a fitting complication for a high-level PC calling in favors in the Druid's name).

In fact the High Druid's followers have learned how to disrupt the demonic energies driving the hellwarped's mutated flesh by ritually empowering those who hunt them in the Druid's name, allowing heroes to fight the aberrations and survive. Each ritual is slightly different and provides specialized protections. PCs should be able to acquire these blessings by roleplaying and/or icon relationship advantages.

## DRUIDIC ANTI-HELLWARPED RITUALS

For those who knowingly go to face a hellwarped, the druids can perform a ritual to assist them that will have one of the following effects on those undergoing it.

- *Wild-enhanced flesh:* The power of life and pure nature causes hellwarped beast attacks to be weaker. During the next battle with hellwarped beasts, the beasts take a -2 penalty to hit and damage against the PC.
- *Corruption resistance:* The first 1d2 attacks by hellwarped beasts that hit the PC deal no damage.
- *Overwhelming scent:* Strong predatory scents confuse hellwarped beasts. During the next battle with hellwarped beasts, when a beast can make an aberrant attack, it has only a 50% chance of doing so if a PC with this effect is nearby.
- *Predator's instincts:* Roll a d6 at the start of each turn during the next battle with hellwarped beasts. If the result is equal to or less than the escalation die, the PC can reroll one missed attack it makes against a hellwarped that turn.

## HELLWARPED BRUTE

*The bigger the hellhole the bigger the hellwarped.*

*Huge 10<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +10 + 1d4

**Piercing claws +15 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—70 damage

*First natural odd hit each turn:* The hellwarped can make one aberrant attack as a free action.

*Dual miss:* The hellwarped gains a cumulative +1 attack bonus to its *claw* attacks until the end of the battle.

**Aberrant attacks**—While building a battle with a hellwarped brute, roll twice on the Aberrant Attacks table to see what types of attacks it has. Reroll if you get the same result. The brute can use its aberrant attacks normally, or trigger one of them with a *piercing claws* attack.

*Infected by hell:* As creatures created by the energies of hellholes, hellwarped beasts are usually also affected by powers that affect demons. GM, it's your call. In exchange, feel free to allow the hellwarped to deal fire, cold, acid, lightning, or thunder damage with its *aberrant attacks*.

*Mutated form:* Since different creatures become hellwarped beasts, some are tougher or harder than others. Before battle, roll a d8 and adjust the hellwarped's stats accordingly.

1. -2 to all defenses
2. +2 to all defenses
3. -10% to hit points (-65)
4. +10% to hit points (+65)
5. -1 to all attacks
6. +1 to all attacks
7. Only roll once on the Aberrant Attack table
8. Roll three times instead of twice on the Aberrant Attack table

### Nastier Specials

*Special movement:* The hellwarped brute has flight, burrow, an extra move action, the ability to teleport as a move action, or some other movement related ability of your choice. Decrease all its defenses by 1 due to the weak points this anatomy creates.

*Tough for its kind:* For its *mutated form* ability, choose one instead of rolling.

**AC 25**

PD 24

MD 19

**HP 650**

## HELLWARPED SPAWN

*Uniquely twisted, universally hateful.*

*Large 6<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +6 + 1d4

**Piercing claws +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—17 damage

*First natural odd hit each turn:* The hellwarped can make one aberrant attack as a free action.

*Dual miss:* The hellwarped gains a cumulative +1 attack bonus to its *claw* attacks until the end of the battle.

**Aberrant attacks**—While building a battle with a hellwarped beast, roll once on the Aberrant Attacks table to see what type of attack it has. The spawn can use its aberrant attack normally, or trigger it with a *piercing claws* attack.

*Infected by hell:* As creatures created by the energies of hellholes, hellwarped beasts are usually also affected by powers that affect demons. GM, it's your call. In exchange, feel free to allow the hellwarped to deal fire, cold, acid, lightning, or thunder damage with its *aberrant attacks*.

*Mutated form:* Since different creatures become hellwarped beasts, some are tougher or harder than others. Before battle, roll a d6 and adjust the hellwarped's stats accordingly.

1. -2 to all defenses
2. +2 to all defenses
3. -10% to hit points (-18)
4. +10% to hit points (+18)
5. -1 to all attacks
6. +1 to all attacks

### Nastier Specials

*Special movement:* The hellwarped has flight, burrow, an extra move action, the ability to teleport as a move action, or some other movement related ability of your choice. Decrease all its defenses by 1 due to the weak points this anatomy creates.

*Tough for its kind:* For its *mutated form* ability, choose one instead of rolling.

**AC 21**

PD 20

MD 15

**HP 180**

## ABERRANT ATTACK TABLE

Roll a d6 to determine what type of additional attack(s) the hellwarped beast has, and its general characteristics. Use the first set of stats for the brutes, and the second for the spawn.

1. **Biting mandibles +15/+11 vs. AC**—50/13 damage, and the target is stuck (save ends); while the target is stuck this way, at the start of the hellwarped's turn, it automatically deals 50/13 damage to the target but can't make an *aberrant attack* that turn.
2. **Extra claw +15/+11 vs. AC**—75/19 damage (and the claw can benefit from the *dual miss* effect).
3. **Lashing tentacle +15/+11 vs. PD**—20/5 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends); the first time the target fails this save, it becomes stunned instead (save ends).
4. **C: Antennae waveburst +15/+11 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—20/5 psychic damage, and the target must roll an immediate save. If it fails, it's confused until the end of its next turn.
5. **R: Shooting quills +15/+11 vs. AC (one nearby enemy not engaged with it)**—40/10 damage. In addition, it takes only half damage from opportunity attacks thanks to the spikes covering it.
6. [use only when triggered as an aberrant attack] **Charging horn slam +15/+11 vs. PD**—50/13 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).
  - Free charge:* The hellwarped pops free from each enemy engaged with it after making its *claws* attacks, then moves to a nearby enemy as a free action and makes this attack.

## BUILDING BATTLES

The obvious creatures to team up with a hellwarped beast are demons like vrocks and despoilers (or giant vrocks or nalfeshnees for the brutes), and similar beasts like hell hounds (advanced versions for the brutes). Anything that might be found in a hellhole's zone of chaos, really.

An unexpected group to include in a battle with a hellwarped beast might be a herd of corrupted beasts from the same stock as the hellwarped, creatures that are also tainted in some way but not as far gone as the hellwarped beast. Such creatures could function as mooks that the hellwarped generally ignores.

Most people flee from hellwarped beasts, but a group of Crusader knights and priests might consider a "tamed" beast as a great prize. A hellwarped could also show up when a group of Diabolist death cultists think they're calling forth a demon, only to be surprised (and delighted?) at what arrives and fights for them.

## HELLWARPEDS AND THE ICONS

**Crusader:** The Crusader has devised various methods of dealing with hellwarped beasts, since these guardians usually must be defeated before any attempts on a hellhole can begin. Sometimes they are killed, other times they can be put to use. He may hire adventurers for the dirtiest work.

**Diabolist:** Hellwarped beasts are her type of pets: big, scary, and warped. The more guarding a hellhole, the better.

**Orc Lord:** He's trying hard to figure out how to assert some control over the beasts. They are a siege engine and heavy infantry unit all in one, and he's got to have a couple, even if it costs him a few . . . hundred troops.

## STORY HOOKS

**On the Blood Trail**—An Imperial noble or a priest high in the ranks of the Priestess' organization has a problem. Through subterfuge, someone has acquired some of her blood and fed it to a hellwarped from a (relatively) nearby hellhole. Now she's got the beast on her trail, and demons oozing out of the woodwork trying to devour her, or worse, take her back home. She needs some serious help to put an end to the problem, from the type of people who can destroy a hellhole and its denizens.

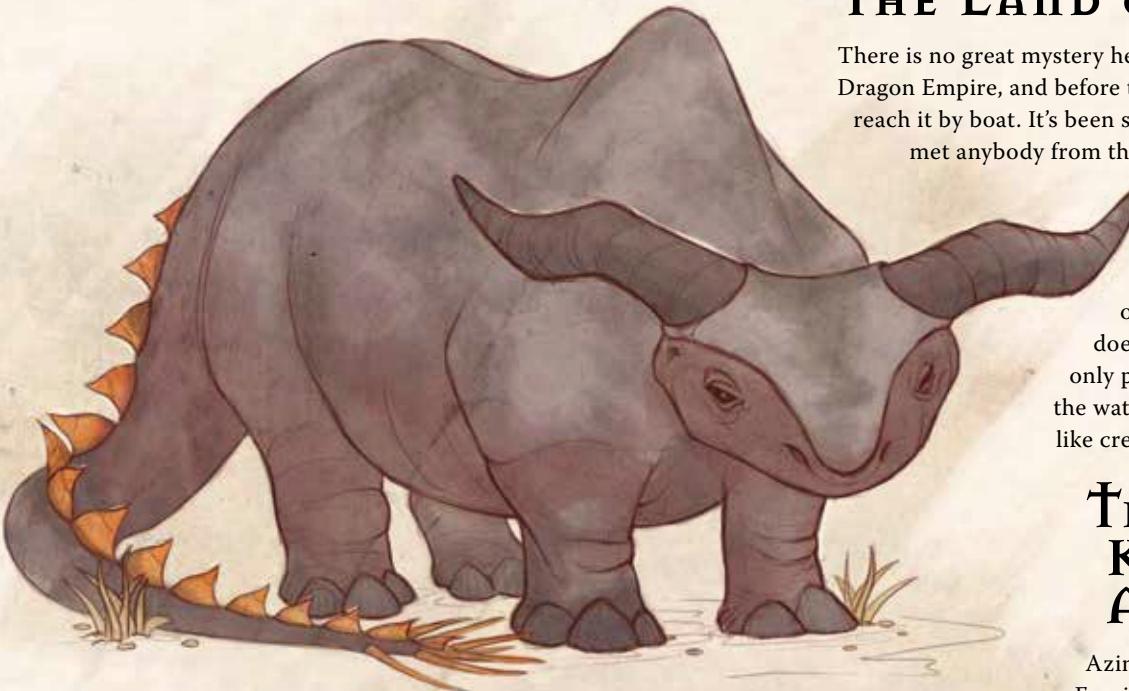
**The Crusader's Pet**—Word has reached agents of the Emperor, Archmage, or perhaps the Diabolist that the Crusader has a crazy new plan involving hellwarped beasts. Someone working for him believes the creatures can talk to hellholes, like they're sentient creatures. This mad dark priest, Ardimers, has been given the resources to capture a hellwarped to try to prove his theory. The Crusader being able to talk hellholes into switching sides without a fight is bad on a lot of levels. These agents want to hire the PCs to put an end to Ardimers and his nonsense. Of course this whole situation may be nonsense. But it's dangerous nonsense!

**Bad Fauna**—The PCs are contacted by a druid about a problem that would otherwise have been concealed by the forest. Something has been tearing through the villages and camps of the people of the woodlands, leaving no person or animal alive. They can tell it's big and it leaves signs of demonic corruption behind, but it's definitely not a demon, since at least one of the villages was well-warded against demons. The druid, Jafendil, thinks he knows what it might be, a hellwarped. If that's true, then there's probably a hellhole forming in the area. He needs the PCs to find the hellwarped, if that's what it is, and put the corrupted creature down while he and his folk try to deal with the hellhole.

# HORNED AZINTH

*“Wait, what was that?”*

—Pyruso the sorcerer, shortly before his death by trampling.



About the size of a bull with four legs and a thick brindled hide that shifts in and out of focus, the horned azinth eats plants and doesn't usually enter the conversation when it comes to heroes, except for the fact that it has a natural ability to hide from nearly anyone, is naturally attractive to rogues, assassins, and the Prince of Shadows, and might just trample you when you've walked into the center of the herd.

## SIX STORIES OF AZIN

Azin is either another world or another realm of existence. Supposedly, a past incarnation of the Prince of Shadows brought the horned azinth from Azin to the Dragon Empire for reasons unknown. That could be why it's called a *horned* azinth, because there are other azinthi creatures out there.

As stories go, that's not ambitious. Is there a truth your campaign can use? Are there . . . six such truths?

## AZIN ASCENDING

Azin doesn't exist . . . yet. The Prince of Shadows is so good that he managed to steal something from the future! If there are other azinthi creatures, they don't yet exist either. Of course, that means that the future . . . and then maybe the past too . . . can be fooled with by at least one icon. What does that mean for this age?

## THE LAND OF AZIN

There is no great mystery here—Azin is a land just like the Dragon Empire, and before the Iron Sea was angered you could reach it by boat. It's been so long since anybody from Azin met anybody from the Dragon Empire that all sorts of strange myths have grown up surrounding the other land.

Doubtless the people of Azin tell equally strange stories about those of the Dragon Empire. Though this doesn't do anything to explain why the only piece of Azin that has made it across the water is a weirdly unnoticeable buffalo-like creature.

## THE LOST KINGDOM OF AZIN

Azin was once a kingdom of the Dragon Empire, a land to the east of what is now the Koru Straights. When the kingdom of Azin disappeared from the world, the ocean rushed in and the Midland Sea was created in a great deluge.

The horned azinth is one of the creatures associated with Azin that was left behind. The Prince of Shadows claims that he “stole” the beast, but really it's just another tale about the mysterious icon that owes more to mythology than history.

Where did Azin go? Some say it became a flying land in the overworld, others claim that it drifted away over the centuries to the east, and a few think that it was the home of occultists who in their hubris banished their home to another dimension. Or maybe it just sank.

## THE MOON OF AZIN

Azin is an invisible moon, detectable only to those who pay very careful attention to the course of the stars. The Archmage and Elf Queen know of Azin, but only the Prince of Shadows knows how to get there, and it is on Azin that the Prince has his secret palace.

. . . but that's probably a fiction the Prince spreads to discourage people from looking for his true base of operations. You'd have to ask an astrologer about invisible moons to start to unravel the truth. (Yes, we said astrologer. In these times, astronomers are irritated by talk of invisible moons.)

## THE REALM OF AZIN

Azin is another dimension that is occasionally in concordance with the one that contains the Dragon Empire. The last time the two realms were “close” to each other the Prince of Shadows led a raid to capture its wealth and bought back azinthi creatures, including the horned azinth.

### AZIN IS A MYTH

Azin doesn’t exist. It never has. It isn’t a flying island or a secret moon or in a different dimension—it’s a story. The first horned azinth came from an alchemical vat or a mutation field, stolen from another icon by the Prince of Shadows. The story about its origin was crafted by the original icon to cover their embarrassment at the theft.

### AZIN AND YOUR CAMPAIGN

If you need a far-off land or different dimension for the adventurers to explore for a level or two, why not Azin? We aren’t going to say what Azin is like, it’s a blank canvas for you, except for this sneaky horned creature.

You should find ways for the icons to have influence in Azin too, to keep icon rolls meaningful.

## HORNED AZINTH AMBUSHES

Due to the horned azinth’s ability to move about undetected, it’s likely that the adventurers are going to run into trouble with them by accidentally wandering into the midst of a herd. If that happens, the horned azinth will ambush the heroes. Use this variant on the standard ambush and surprise rules.

First, 1d3 + 1 horned azinth get to act before initiative is rolled instead of only two of the beasts. Second, if you normally advance the escalation die at the end of the surprise round, don’t do it. The azinth are too well concealed for momentum to favor the heroes.

## HORNED AZINTH CALF

*Where there’s a calf, there is a protective azinth mother around somewhere, too.*

*Double-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]*

Initiative: +8

**Headbutt +8 vs. AC**—18 damage, or 24 damage if the horned azinth first moves before attacking an enemy it was not engaged with at the start of its turn

*Natural blurring:* Attacks against the horned azinth calf have a 20% miss chance. An attacker must roll the miss chance before the attack roll. In addition, the azinth is nearly invisible while standing still or slowly grazing, as it blends in with its surroundings.

#### Nastier Special

*Protect the young:* Each horned azinth adult gains a +1 attack bonus during a battle that includes one or more calves, +2 if any calves are attacked, and +4 if any calves are killed!

AC **19**

PD **17**

MD **11**

HP **75**

## HORNED AZINTH ADULT

*Normally docile, horned azinth are ferocious when they feel threatened.*

*Large 6<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]*

Initiative: +8

**Thrashing horn +11 vs. AC**—30 damage, or 50 damage if the horned azinth first moves before attacking an enemy it was not engaged with at the start of its turn

*Natural even hit:* The horned azinth adult can make a *trample* attack as a quick action this turn.

**Trample +10 vs. PD**—10 damage, and the horned azinth pops free from the target and can move nearby.

*Natural blurring:* Attacks against the horned azinth adult have a 30% miss chance. An attacker must roll the miss chance before an attack roll. In addition, the azinth is nearly invisible while standing still or slowly grazing, as it blends in with its surroundings.

#### Nastier Specials

*Increasing blurriness:* Increase the miss chance from the azinth’s *natural blurring* by an amount equal to 5 x the escalation die.

*Reactive camouflage:* The first time this battle the azinth is staggered, it becomes harder to detect until the end of the battle, gaining a +4 bonus to all defenses.

AC **22**

PD **20**

MD **14**

HP **160**

## Not Quite There

It's unusual for us to give monsters an ability like the horned azinth's *natural blurring* miss chance. It means that these monsters stick around in a battle for far longer than their defenses and hit points would suggest.

Is their blurring related to the wizard spell *blur*? Probably, and it suggests a link between the Archmage and horned azinths that the Prince of Shadows might not be entirely honest about.

Does the horned azinth's ability extend to its footprints and other evidence of its passage? That depends on how you want their blurring ability to work, and the story of Azin in your game. If Azin exists in another dimension, then horned azinths are probably not entirely "real" in the Dragon Empire, but if Azin is just a far-off land then maybe horned azinth have a natural innate ability to defend themselves against predators.

## HORNED AZINTH AND TREASURE

Horned azinths can be domesticated—if you can find them and keep them calm while transporting them from their grazing areas.

The Prince of Shadows might use horned azinths to move goods without being noticed. Wagons pulled by horned azinths can move about almost entirely unobserved, the azinths' blurring ability extending to those traveling with them and the loads that they pull.

Adventurers who come across one of the Prince of Shadows' mini-caravans can be assured that raiding it will turn up something very interesting . . . but doing so will also gain them his scrutiny, and possibly enmity, since he wants to keep that trade advantage for his folk.

Once the adventurers have earned the trust of a horned azinth and convinced it to pull a wagon, they will have a mobile base that is hard for their enemies to spot. It's not gold or a magic weapon, but for some groups, it might be more valuable than either.

## BUILDING BATTLES

Horned azinths work well as wandering wilderness monsters. Adventurers might accidentally encounter a herd of horned azinths, only discovering that they are surrounded when the creatures suddenly charge. Or maybe the curious azinth wander into the heroes' camp and the PCs don't realize the danger until one of them gets stepped on.

Then again, a group of enemy humanoids could be using captured azinth to sneak up on the heroes—an orc band could use the beasts to reach raiding areas considered unreachable by civilization, including the middle of the heroes camp—and once the attack begins, the horned azinths will panic and join in too.

Or maybe an enemy uses a horned azinth as a mount, gaining some of its blurring advantage in combat, even if they don't move overly fast or exactly where they want.

## HORNED AZINTH MOUNTS

It's okay to extend a horned azinth's *natural blurring* ability to its rider when that rider is an NPC enemy that you want to make tougher. For PCs it is potentially unbalancing.

A decent compromise is to let the PC benefit from the ability *but* have the beast stubbornly wander around the battlefield ignoring the directions of its rider (they aren't too bright) or just run away from battle on a natural 1 or 2 attack roll or at the worst possible moment, trampling allies as it goes. So yeah, the PCs get to be partially invisible, but they'll end up where the GM puts them.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Stampede!**—What's that sound? Thunder . . . but the sky is clear.

**Lost Treasure**—Somebody important was transporting something important. It might not matter who or what, but what does matter is that it was being transported by a horned azinth and the thing must have caught the scent of another azinth. Unfortunately, it's mating season and now the azinth and whatever it was carrying is lost. Whoever can find the lost beast will gain a great treasure, but the heroes aren't the only ones who've heard about this and they'll have to fight off other perspective azinth wranglers.

# HUBRIS DEVIL

*Where a devil is involved step carefully: good deeds depend on which side of the deed you're on.*



Like their other devilish brethren, hubris devils delight in twisting and corrupting mortals. Hubris devils are distinguished by the unique methods they've developed to trick their favorite prey—adventurers, would-be heroes, and other souls looking to walk a path of good intentions.

Passing through a small village, the characters might be asked by a villager with a wandering eye to kill a warlock in the next settlement over who has bewitched the whole village. The magic seems to line up . . . Eager to be of help, the heroes go

to the village and slay the man with surprising ease. Returning to report their success to the villager, the group now sees the man for what it really was: a giant devil with all the village folk connected to it by long tentacles. The devil informs them they have just slaughtered an innocent, and now it will feast on their souls.

**Newcomers:** We think the most fun way to use the hubris devil is to spring it on the PCs as a new threat instead of a known threat.

## THE DEVIL MISTAKES THE DETAILS

Every form a hubris devil takes may be slightly off or peculiar in some way, as the slips and overlooks details about unimportant mortals.

- The villagers speak oddly, using the same eccentric pronunciation.
- The village well is just a ring of stones placed on the ground, with a rope buried in the dirt at the center.
- A PC asks the tavern keep for ale and are given wine in an ale mug, or something even weirder. “No, that’s ale,” insists the tavern keeper.
- The fortune teller of a caravan offers to read their foot.
- A band of traveling priests talk to the characters about the Lord of Dirt.

## THE MANY FORMS OF HUBRIS

A hubris devil doesn’t have to appear as a village, but the strongest of their kind like to take larger forms to become more convincing, while less-well-fed devils can’t maintain such vast disguises.

A weak hubris devil will start out small, eating anyone foolish enough to take up its task. As it grows, its ability to disguise itself increases as well, and it will travel to locations where it can more easily obtain tasty adventures. No matter its size, however, its deceptions aren’t perfect and there’s always something a little odd about the people or the town it inhabits.

## TRAVELING PRIESTS

*“The two men up the road, they took all my coin. Please, kind sir, teach those heathens a lesson.”*

The weakest of hubris devils hide along remote trails and paths, where finding a victim alone is easier—perhaps it’s a traveling priest, a lone guard at a remote post, or a kind old lady living in the mountains. A group of weak-looking (low-level) heroes also makes an enticing target for the devil’s tales.

## TRADING CARAVAN

*“The village we just traveled through contained secret cultists. They attacked us and kidnapped one of our members. Please, I beg of you, save them!”*

As the hubris devil feeds, its bulk will shift. It can choose to stay mobile to find a good hunting ground, or start setting up more permanent roots. Examples of forms it might take at this stage would be a lone tavern along a road, a trading caravan camp, or a merchant ship.

## THE QUIET VILLAGE

*“A man claimed to be a diplomat of the Elf Queen, but we discovered his seal was a fraud. Such people should be punished, I’m sure you agree!”*

At this point the devil has grown strong and found an ideal location to sate itself. It has to be more selective about what ruse it uses to trick its prey, since it’s not able to move as easily. It might become a village, a fishing town along a river, or a garrison.

### Nastier Specials for all hubris devils

*Friend or enemy?:* A hubris devil using NPCs to attack the heroes makes it tough for them to know if there are friends or allies among the attackers, forcing the characters to be more careful with their attacks. Any natural 1–5 attack roll against the devil is an automatic miss with no miss damage.

*Surprise!:* When the hubris devil attacks, it gains a surprise round unless the PCs were extremely perceptive (by making a ridiculously hard skill check for tier).

*Final-gasp soul snatch & escape:* When the devil drops to 0 hp, it appears dead until the start of its next turn, at which point it will attempt to steal a piece of the soul of the closest character before it escapes into a supernatural bolt hole. That character must roll a save. If they fail, they lose a chunk of their soul—see below for possible effects. Anyone who uses a coup de grace (*13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook, page 172) on the devil before its next turn will slay it before it can claim a chunk of a soul and escape (but the PCs might not be aware of this).

## WANDERING HUBRIS DEVIL

*The weakest of the hubris devils are very cautious about selecting prey, only taking a single person here or there, and only when they are certain they can overpower them.*

**Huge 7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [DEVIL]**

Initiative: +12

**Rain of blows +12 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—25 damage

*Natural 18+*: The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

**Crash and bash +12 vs. PD**—50 damage, and the target is hampered until the end of its next turn.

*Miss*: Half damage.

**C: Looming fear +12 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—60 psychic damage

*Natural 16+*: While the target has 36 hp or fewer, it's dazed (-4 attack) from fear and doesn't add the escalation die to its attacks (save ends all).

*Limited use*: 1/battle.

*Devil's due (Chakra suppression)*: When you choose to add the escalation die to an attack against a great hubris devil, the devil can choose one of your magic items whose powers won't work for the rest of the battle (default bonuses still apply).

*Resist holy 13+*: When a holy attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**AC 21**

**PD 20**

**HP 360**

**MD 24**

## GREAT HUBRIS DEVIL

*Hardier hubris devils will take more risks to get a good meal. Having more bulk gives them more options for taking prey.*

**Huge 9<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [DEVIL]**

Initiative: +14

**Rain of blows +13 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—33 damage

*Crit*: The target is dazed (save ends).

**Crushing weight +14 vs. PD**—70 damage, and the target is stuck (hard save ends, 16+)

*Miss*: The target is hampered until the end of its next turn.

**C: Looming fear +14 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—80 psychic damage

*Natural 16+*: While the target has 60 hp or fewer, it's dazed (-4 attack) from fear and doesn't add the escalation die to its attacks (save ends all).

*Limited use*: 1/battle.

*Devil's due (Chakra suppression)*: When you choose to add the escalation die to an attack against a great hubris devil, the devil can choose one of your magic items whose powers won't work for the rest of the battle (default bonuses still apply).

*Resist holy 13+*: When a holy attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**AC 24**

**PD 22**

**MD 26**

**HP 600**

## COLOSSAL HUBRIS DEVIL

*Its 'true' form is buried inside the mass it puppets, but from lashes out you're guessing it competes in the horn & tentacle category of the terror show.*

**Huge 12<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [DEVIL]**

Initiative: +16

**Omni strike +16 vs. AC (4 attacks)**—48 damage

*Crit*: The target is weakened (save ends).

**Folding the land +17 vs. PD**—160 damage, and the target is stuck and dazed (hard save ends both, 16+)

*Miss*: The target is dazed and hampered until the end of its next turn.

**C: Suffocating fear +17 vs. MD (1d6 nearby enemies)**—120 psychic damage

*Natural 16+*: While the target has 120 hp or fewer, it's dazed (-4 attack) from fear and doesn't add the escalation die to its attacks (save ends all).

*Limited use*: 1/battle.

*Devil's due (Terror)*: When you choose to add the escalation die to an attack against a colossal hubris devil, during its next turn the devil can make a suffocating fear attack against each character that has given it its due this battle, even if it has already expended that attack. For example, if two PCs have given it its due, and a third does so, during the devil's next turn it can make a suffocating fear attack against those three PCs.

*Resist holy 13+*: When a holy attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 13+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**AC 27**

**PD 25**

**MD 29**

**HP 1200**

## STOLEN SOULS

Depending on your gamemastering tastes, the nastier special called *final-gasp soul snatch & escape* is worth using once . . . or always. If you use it all the time, you might want to give the affected PC a save against the effect. If you're only using it for one devil, you could probably use the ability as written.

**Effects:** What does it mean to have a chunk of your soul stolen. You're free to come up with complications that suit your campaign's metaphysics or take the suggestions that follow as a starting point. Use one or more, as you choose.

- Magic items no longer work for the affected character, even ones already attuned to them, and in a similar vein, no new items can be attuned by that PC.
- The PC loses access to their highest level of spells or powers. For example, a cleric who normally casts 7<sup>th</sup> level spells could only cast them at 5<sup>th</sup> level.
- The PC takes a -2 penalty to saves.
- The PC must roll 2d20 for attack rolls and take the lowest result for the first two rounds of each battle.
- The PC's appearance changes in some disturbing, hollow way and they take a -4 penalty to skill checks.
- PC loses one to three recoveries; not temporarily, their ability to heal decreases
- One icon relationship changes to become a sign of complications with devils, not advantages
- Devils gets some huge combat advantage against the PC

**Restoration:** Similarly, you can choose how the missing piece of soul might be restored. Some examples:

- No big deal: the PC rolls a normal save each time they gain a level. If the save succeeds, they get their soul back.
- The party must find and kill the escaped hubris devil. Luckily, the PC's 'link' to the devil means that each day the PC can roll a normal save; on an 11+, they have a good idea of which direction the devil is in. And hubris devils don't move all that much.
- Instead, the party must travel to the center of the devils' power and steal back their friend's soul shard. Or whatever it is that you think their particular soul piece is gonna look like.
- The devils immediately barter the soul shard to an enemy icon, leading to an entirely new set of quests and complications.

## BUILDING BATTLES

The hubris devil is one entity, and everything the PCs interact with in its location is part of its body: the NPCs, the buildings, even things like hay bales and buckets. Any given attack by the devil could be using most anything that's around, though it's also interesting to have things wander in that aren't part of the devil.

This means the heroes could attack any of these to damage the devil, which partially explains its slightly lower AC and slightly higher hit points. It also means that the PCs are pretty much always engaged with the hubris devil until they move far away. (That's why the devils' *looming fear* attacks don't bother mentioning engagement like other fear aura effects.)

For playability's sake, and to avoid breaking your brain, ignore opportunity attacks by and against the hubris devil this battle, unless you think the story demands it, in which case you might offer the creature about to suffer the attack a save to avoid it anyway!

## ATTACK EXAMPLES

- The hubris devil flings everything it has, including NPCs, at its enemies, figuratively and literally.
- It uses just the NPCs to attack like puppets on strings. NPCs ragdoll around, feet floating just above the ground.
- Black tentacles lash out from the body of the devil (i.e., most anywhere) indiscriminately attacking anyone in range.
- The adventurers are attacked by inanimate objects rather than NPCs, perhaps instilling the fear of your object of choice in a certain PC. "Oh god, not the bucket, anything but a bucket, please!"

## HUBRIS DEVILS AND THE ICONS

The PCs may be the first serious adventurers to survive an encounter with the creatures. The icons may end up depending on the PCs for guidance on how to deal with them, or perhaps your campaign has an overarching plot for all devils.

**Crusader:** Sometimes there's a clear line between demon and devil. This isn't really one of those times, and the Crusader already has a modus operandi that involves destroying entire villages. Which probably just means that when the Crusader begins understanding these monsters, it will be worse for everyone.

**Prince of Shadows:** Hubris is easily manipulated. It would probably be best if the Prince of Shadows were not the first icon to learn of this devil.

### BAD INTELLIGENCE

If your campaign uses the idea of making devils a special enemy of a specific icon (*13 True Ways*, page 209), hubris devils offer a special way of screwing with the player characters. By the time they reach champion and epic tier, the players will be accustomed to obtaining missions and story benefits through their PCs' icon relationship advantages. Hubris devils are all about misdirecting heroic intentions, so for a few terrible sessions, until the PCs figure out what's going on, secretly take over icon relationship advantages for the devils' enemy icon with hubris devil directives!

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Pop-up Village**—Council members in Glitterhaegen have received reports that a small village has appeared near the Bitterwood, but no one has kin there or remembers selling supplies for building a village. The city guardsmen were sent to check on the village but said they couldn't find it. The council isn't convinced the guardsmen really tried, but with the sixth sense guardsmen have for avoiding trouble, that might mean this is a job for adventurers.

**Turbulent Priest**—While the heroes are camping along the road, a priest approaches them. After chatting awhile he mentions he's traveling the same direction as them and asks if he join them for a while, as the roads are dangerous for a lone traveler. In exchange, he'll tell stories of the gods and even take a watch that night. And get this: he's not a hubris devil. He's just a somewhat troubled priest. The players were wrong to suspect that you betray them every time. (Keep lulling them until the hubris devil hits hard.)

**Spirited Away**—Someone has set up a magical bathhouse near the foot of the mountain that hosts Starport. The springs there are said to cure any ailment, and the treatment is so good you'll feel like a new person. Perhaps these springs are the solution to a problem one of the characters is dealing with. (Perhaps you don't tell your movie-loving friends the name of this adventure hook.)

**The Nowhere Tavern?**—While crossing a vast stretch of wasteland or desert, the group comes across a tavern. There are no roads or other signs of civilization for miles around, but not only is the tavern fully stocked, it's filled with patrons inside and out. The beer tastes a little weird, but that must be because you're parched.



# HYDRA

We talked a little about icons that might be involved with hydras in the core book (page 236) and that's still good info. Given how we've used hydras in published adventures, it's clear that we see them as whacky and dangerous monsters that might be wild and on their own in dungeons (*Eyes of the Stone Thief*, page 51) or magically controlled as temple guardians (*13<sup>th</sup> Age Monthly: Temple of the Sun Cabal*).

The monster that follows starts with the chaos that's inherent in the head-sprouting hydra and dials it up. If anyone in the Dragon Empire is responsible for this creature's creation, it could be any of the usual suspects: Archmage, Elf Queen, perhaps the Diabolist or the Three.

If one of the player characters is a chaos mage, make sure they feel *personal responsibility* for doing whatever it is that attracts the attention of a chaos hydra.

## CHAOS FLAVOR

This hydra starts with four heads, but they're not always the same heads! Roll a d6 four times before the fight begins to find out which heads the chaos hydra starts the battle with. A head that starts the fight may not finish the battle, heads shift mid-fight, and as usual for hydras, new heads sprout when the creature takes serious damage.

**One attack per head:** As for the more generic hydras, each of the chaos hydra's heads can make an attack when it uses a standard action. Unlike those other hydras, each separate head is going to have its own attack style, though it's possible that the hydra will randomly have two or more of the same type of head for a couple rounds!

**Heads with bonuses:** A few of the heads provide abilities or bonuses as well as one or two possible attacks. For a change, these bonuses are cumulative. For example, a chaos hydra with two draconic heads would have a +4 bonus to its AC. Since the heads shift frequently, those bonuses won't last forever.

# CHAOS HYDRA

Huge 8<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]

Initiative: +14

**1-2: Reptile head**—no bonus

**Cutting teeth +13 vs. AC**—46 damage

*Natural odd miss:* After the attack, this head may shift into a new head; roll 1d6 to determine the new (or maybe repeated!) head.

*Miss:* 15 damage.

**3: Serpent head**—hydra gains +2 PD

**Serpent teeth +13 vs. AC**—30 damage, and 10 ongoing poison damage

*Natural odd miss:* After the attack, this head may shift into a new head; roll 1d6 to determine the new (or maybe repeated!) head.

*Miss:* 10 damage.

**4: Great monstrous head**—hydra gains fear aura, dazing engaged enemies with fewer than 48 hit points and preventing them from using the escalation die (for each additional great monstrous head, add +20 points to the threshold)

**Monstrous teeth +11 vs. AC**—60 damage

*Natural odd miss:* After the attack, this head may shift into a new head; roll 1d6 to determine the new (or maybe repeated!) head.

*Miss:* 20 damage.

**5: Draconic head**—hydra gains +2 AC and adds the escalation die to its attack rolls for either its *draconic teeth* attack or its *minor breath weapon* attack

**Draconic teeth +13 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Natural odd miss:* After the attack, this head may shift into a new head; roll 1d6 to determine the new (or maybe repeated!) head.

OR

**C: Minor breath weapon +13 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy)**—40 random energy damage (roll 1d4; 1: acid, 2: cold; 3: fire; 4: lightning)

*Natural even hit:* Make a second minor breath weapon attack against a random different nearby enemy. This second attack lacks this *natural even hit* trigger.

*Natural odd miss:* After the attack, this head may shift into a new head; roll 1d6 to determine the new (or maybe repeated!) head.

**6: Chaos ray head**—hydra can either bite with *chaotic teeth* or use *chaos ray* attack

**Chaotic teeth +13 vs. AC**—35 damage

*Natural even hit:* Target is weakened (save ends).

*Natural odd miss:* After the attack, this head may shift into a new head; roll 1d6 to determine the new (or maybe repeated!) head.

OR

**R: Chaotic ray +13 vs. PD (1 nearby or far away enemy)**—50 random energy damage (roll 1d4; 1: acid, 2: cold; 3: fire; 4: lightning)

*Natural even hit:* Roll 1d4; 1: Later this turn, hydra can teleport somewhere nearby as a quick action, 2: Hydra gains flight until the end of its next turn, 3: The next attack which hits the hydra must be rerolled with a -2 attack penalty, 4: GM: roll on the High Weirdness Table on page 17 of *13 True Ways* and apply the result in the most amusing way possible.

*Natural odd miss:* After the attack, this head may shift into a new head; roll 1d6 to determine the new (or maybe repeated!) head.

**Reaching necks:** On its turn, the chaos hydra can use any of its teeth attacks against nearby creatures it can see and get to, but has a -2 attack penalty when using teeth attacks against creatures it is not engaged with.

**Wild thrasher:** The chaos hydra's attacks deal full damage against creatures it has not already hit this turn. If the chaos hydra attacks a creature it has hit earlier in the turn, the attack only deals half damage, hit or miss or crit.

**Too tough to trick:** Whenever the chaos hydra would suffer any of the following conditions, it ignores the condition and takes 10 damage instead: confused, dazed, hampered, stunned, or weakened.

**Sprout fifth head:** The first time the hydra is staggered, as a free action it gains 70 hit points and a random fifth head. Roll 1d6 to determine which head. The chaos hydra is considered undamaged at its new hit point total. Using the hydra's current hit points as a new baseline, the hydra will be staggered again when it drops below 50% of that total.

**Sprout sixth head:** The second time the hydra is staggered, as a free action it gains 70 hit points and a random sixth head, etc. Use a new hit point baseline as before, but there is no seventh head waiting to sprout.

AC 23

PD 22

MD 20

HP 300



## Hydra Mechanics

Back in 2016, I made comments about hydra math in the *Temple of the Sun Cabal*. My comments were wrong. The hydra stats in the core 13<sup>th</sup> Age rulebook are actually fine. The 5-headed and 7-headed hydra on page 236 deal about the right amount of damage, and they don't necessarily have to be powered-up to be interesting.

I got confused about the damage math for the 5-headed and 7-headed hydra because I paid too much attention to the *natural even hit or miss* trigger on their *gnashing teeth* attacks. (That's right: I was wrong about having done the math wrong. Yes, that means the sea gods' hydra in the *Temple of the Sun Cabal* is a dreadful beast!) A natural even attack roll allows the hydra's next gnashing teeth attack that turn to target a nearby enemy instead of a creature it's engaged with.

That sounds keen, and there are circumstances when the attack against a nearby creature could be interesting, but the truth is that spreading the hydra's damage out by actually taking advantage of this trigger makes the hydra a less dangerous combatant. This is the type of disconnect I try to avoid with our mechanics, where something that advertises itself as a power-move is actually a loser-play.

Instead of using space on revised 5-headed and 7-headed hydras, all that needs to be fixed for a more entertaining monster is the *natural even hit or miss* trigger on their *gnashing teeth* attacks.

Of course there are multiple possible fixes. Here are a couple that I'll choose between the next time I run one of the core book hydras.

### Version 1, bumping up the spread:

*Natural even hit or miss:* The hydra's next *gnashing teeth* attack, if it has an attack left this turn, can be against any nearby enemy instead of against a creature engaged with it. If the next attack is against a nearby enemy instead of a creature engaged with it, add 7 damage (7-headed hydra: 10 damage) if the attack hits.

### Version 2, dragon style, ignoring the spread:

*Natural even hit or miss:* The hydra's next *gnashing teeth* attack, if it has an attack left this turn, can add the escalation die to its attack roll.

## BUILDING BATTLES

The chaos hydra feels right in the company of creatures that are a touch stranger than you'd expect them to be. From this volume, we see storylines that could put chaos hydras alongside an eidolon (page 44), flux elementals (page 76), fomorians (page 80), and a higher level incarnation of the Hell Marsh cult (page 134).

Of course chaos hydras could team up with most anything inside living dungeons. Yes, that's namby-pamby 'you are limited only by your imagination' advice, but this creature's combination of bestial fury and bizarre chaos seems like the key to the lid of Pandora's box. Indulge yourself with a Rube Goldberg living dungeon ecology that only needs player characters to get rolling.



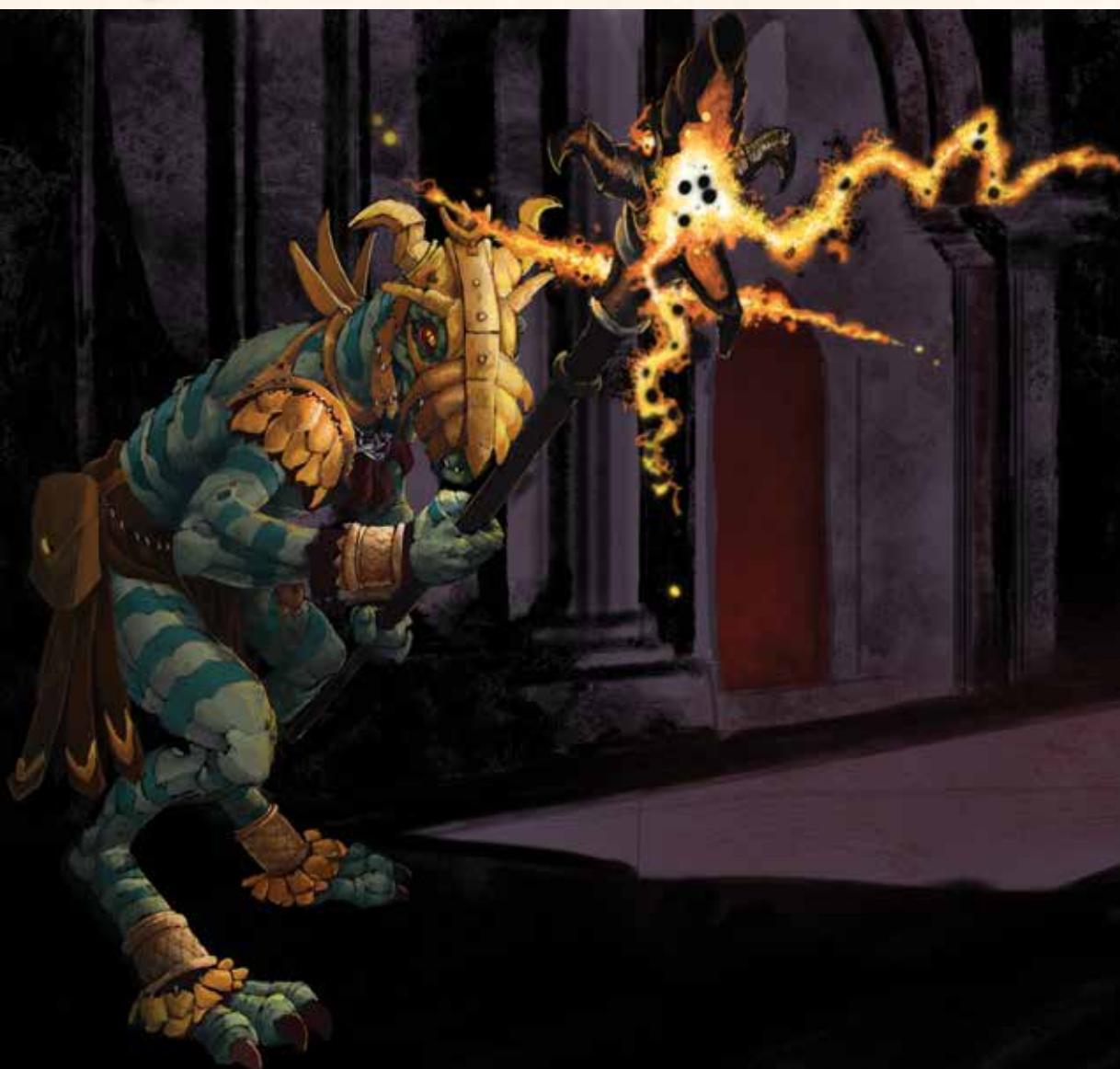
# KOBOLD

Each of the kobolds below is closely associated with a draconic icon—by their colors you shall know them! Black, red, blue . . . and gold!



## BLACK

We've introduced a variety of kobold killers in books like *High Magic & Low Cunning* (page 160), *The Crown Commands* (page 83), and the original *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary* (page 125). The assassins below aren't the highest level examples, but they may be the nastiest.



## KOBOLD ASSASSIN

*Unlike solitary assassins of other races and creeds, kobold killers trained by the Black work in teams.*

*4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +10

**Black acid blade +9 vs. AC**—7 damage, and 5 special acid ongoing damage (no save; this special damage only ends if the creature affected uses a standard action to shake off all the special ongoing damage)  
*Miss:* 4 damage.

**R: Blackscale throwing star +9 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—5 damage, or 10 damage against a creature taking special ongoing acid damage.

*Natural 2-5:* Make another blackscale throwing star attack against a different nearby enemy.

*Skitter:* The kobold assassin can choose to roll an 11 whenever it rolls a disengage check. (In other words, it can get away from any one normal enemy, it takes two enemies and/or the need to roll at least a 12 to force the kobold assassin to actually roll the check.)

AC 22  
PD 19  
MD 17

HP 46

## ICONS

Several evil icons have been known to employ kobold assassin squads. Only the Blue and the Red, as part of the Three, can be sure that the assassins are truly working for them and not just serving the purposes of the Black.

## ASSASSIN TACTICS

GMs know that when you're trying to avoid just-killing the PCs, you spread the monster's attacks around, pitting each monster against a different PC for dramatic face-offs that the PCs try to end by ganging up. The kobold assassin's special ongoing acid damage makes spreading out to fight smart tactics—the more enemies suffering from the special ongoing acid damage the more enemies will have to waste an action that should have been an attack to shake off the acid burning.

**PC actions:** It's possible that the smart move for a PC is to wait until they've been hit twice or more by the black acid blades. The standard action shakes off all the special ongoing acid damage at once, so one action is a lot more efficient than using two or three actions at different times in the battle. Yes, waiting to shake the acid off, as you burn more every hit, takes some nerve.

**Tier advice:** This style of special ongoing damage is quite nasty. It's deliberate that we're attaching it to an adventurer tier kobold instead of a champion tier or epic tier threat. Combined with some higher level monster abilities, this form of special ongoing damage might be way too lethal. It's not an effect

we want to use often, mostly because it cuts down on player fun. We've deliberately put it here, attached to kobolds, as a dramatic threat that can be somewhat easily dealt with instead of as a TPK-threat.

## RED

The Red loves super-violence. Kobolds aren't normally known for pushing violence up to super-levels, so this berserker starts wimpy and might experience a battlefield promotion.

For maximum game fun, use the nastier special!

### Nastier Special for all Versions

*Red rage:* Roll 2d20 for each of the kobold's attacks and use the higher result.

## KOBOLD BERSERKER

*Kobolds devoted to the Red have a way of fighting two or three times above their weight class.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +7

**Two-handed chopper +8 vs. AC**—6 damage

*Natural 20:* This kobold berserker mook transforms into an undamaged really angry kobold after the attack.

*Group ability:* Each time an enemy attack reduces one or more kobold berserkers to 0 hit points, roll a single berserker transformation save for the entire mob of all kobold berserker mooks left in the battle. Add the number of kobold berserker mooks that were slain with the attack to the save (i.e., one big attack slays three kobold berserker mooks, roll a d20 save and add 3.)

*Berserker transformation:* If the save result is 6+, transform one of the remaining kobold berserker mooks into a really angry kobold. If the save result is 16+, instead transform one of the remaining kobold berserker mooks into a red haze berserker.

AC 18	PD 16	MD 13	HP 12 (mook)
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*Mook:* Kill one kobold berserker mook for every 12 damage you deal to the mob.

## REALLY ANGRY KOBOLD

*Now you've made it angry!*

3<sup>rd</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Two-handed chopper +9 vs. AC—9 damage**

*Natural 20:* This really angry kobold transforms into an undamaged red haze berserker after the attack.

*Weakling:* When building battles using this monster, it only counts as half a normal monster.

**AC 17**

**PD 17**

**HP 26**

**MD 14**

## RED HAZE BERSERKER

*Uh oh.*

3<sup>rd</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Two-handed chopper +10 vs. AC—10 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* Deal 2d6 bonus damage to the target.

**AC 16**

**PD 18**

**HP 44**

**MD 15**

## TRANSFORMATION MECHANICS

We're expecting that you'll ordinarily start a battle with a big mob of kobold berserkers instead of starting with really angry kobolds and red haze berserkers, but you can mix it up however you like. Build the battle based on the starting creatures—the transformations are a GM bonus that makes the battle tougher, but don't feel obliged to account for it from the start since there's no way to know the extent to which the PCs' tactics and the dice will create berserker transformations.

If you're using up to 8 kobold berserkers, it's probably better to make them all part of one mob. If you want even more berserkers, and more transformations, go ahead and split into two mobs, in which case you only roll the berserker transformation for the mob that lost one or more mooks.

When one of the mooks transforms into a more powerful warrior, bring them in as a full strength warrior. If they had pretty obviously taken damage before, describe the transformation as they shake off their earlier flesh wounds.

When the berserker transformation save results in a transformed kobold berserker, you can choose a mook randomly or choose one that makes dramatic sense, the kobold who would have been most angered by their comrade's death!

## ICONS

Kobold berserkers are obviously most associated with the Red and the Three, but depending on the story of your campaign there are other options. If your campaign involves warlike kobolds who have somehow become devoted to the Great Gold Wyrm, this style of battlefield promotion can model heroic spirit instead of insane battle rage.

In fact, there's a new way of being 'devoted' to the Great Gold Wyrm coming up in a couple pages, so hold the thought . . .



## KOBOLD GLINTER

*Drakkenhall is home to the Glinting Legion, a contingent of elite kobolds that serve as the Blue's shock troops. The unit's remarkable coordination and esprit de corps are the results of secret group rituals of questionable propriety. Glinting Legionnaires, or Glinters, are highly trained, well fed, smartly armed, intelligently led, and deadly effective. If kobolds were like this all over the worlds, they'd be running things.*

5<sup>th</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Slick, stabby blade +10 vs. AC—9 damage**

*Natural 16+: Each other glinter in the battle gains a +1 attack bonus (cumulative) until the end of the turn.*

**R: Stick-launched dart +10 vs. AC—9 damage**

*Limited use:* A mob of glinters can use this attack only once during the battle. On the turn that they use the attack, each glinter in the mob can choose whether to make the attack or not. Any who don't use it, lose it.

*Home turf tricks:* The first time each enemy in a battle attacks a glinter mob, it must roll a save; on a failure, that attack is negated. The glinters have traps, hidden weapons, trick furniture, and other resources that they can use against attackers. Improvise some trick, ideally involving scorpions, that either protects the kobolds from the attack or interferes with the attacker, assuming the glinters are on familiar ground.

*Stubborn resilience:* Whenever three or more glinters drop from a single attack (possibly involving multiple attack rolls), one-third of those glinters are undamaged instead (round down).

*Free-form ability—Unstoppability:* Glinters can pour through small openings in large numbers, crowd into tight spaces, scramble over or through obstacles, and otherwise get into places faster than you would believe. This trait helps them overwhelm enemies with numbers that the unfortunate targets don't believe is possible.

### Nastier Specials

*Bitter resolve:* When a glinter mob is reduced to half its number or less, the surviving glinters gain a +4 bonus to all defenses until the end of the battle.

*Coordinated strike:* Once per battle as a free action, the glinter mob can utter a war cry in unison and each member of the mob gains a +4 attack bonus that turn.

**AC 21**

**PD 21**

**MD 16**

**HP 15 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one kobold glinter mook for every 15 damage you deal to the mob.

## ICONS

These elite kobolds owe their superiority to the Blue, and they know it. Their devotion to her is total. They hate the Prince of Shadows without reservation, so if you're desperate for common ground with glinters who are about to take you out, improvise a lie about how the Prince of Shadows hates you too. It probably won't work, but it will make a good story for later PCs.

## GMR STUNT: GLINTER ESCAPES

If your game is set in or near Drakkenhall, try this stunt the next time one of your compelling villains wants to flee a battle with the player characters . . . and survive!

When Glinting Legionnaires aren't busy actually waging war, many of them function as the cops of Drakkenhall. When these cops show up, it's not the 'monsters' fighting the PCs who need to worry, it's the PCs.

If you have a villain or monster who's ready to flee, bring in three or four mobs of Glinting Legionnaires to show "that's enough, that's all, everybody who wants to live clear the area." Any PC who keeps fighting, going after the villain who is trying to flee, takes the following condition: Double damage from natural even kobold glinter attacks (hard save ends).

Make it clear to the PCs that they can go after their enemy if they're willing to open themselves up to what could be a serious amount of pain. If the villain escapes, they'll thank you for it eventually, because everyone loves recurring villains. And now they have something else to be angry at the Three about.

## GOLD

The Three are happy (or at least indifferent) to have kobolds devoted to them. The Great Gold Wyrm's case is altogether different.

If you had to boil the beliefs of the Golden Demon Cult into a single sentence—a sentence that's far more coherent than anything you'll hear from a member of the cult, by the way—it would go something like this: *The golden dragon that humans stupidly worship as an enemy of demons is actually the greatest demon of the Abyss! Hail the Golden Demon!*

You won't hear anything that coherent from a cult member because a) the Golden Demon cult values actions over thought; b) the cult member is trying to spear you or to summon a demon to roast you first.

As cults go, the Golden Demon cult isn't very good at staying hidden. Serious members wear, or carry, golden dragon masks like the mask worn by the priest picture on page 155.

## GOLDEN DEMON WARRIOR

*There's a brighter day ahead for kobolds. Not necessarily better, but lit by golden flames.*

2<sup>nd</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Snaggle sword +7 vs. AC**—6 damage

**R: Shortbow +7 vs. AC (1 nearby enemy)**—7 damage

*Natural even hit:* One ally engaged with the target can attempt to disengage as a free action.

**R: Longshot +6 vs. AC (1 far away enemy)**—5 damage

*Mutually destructive:* This creature's critical hit range against an enemy with icon relationship points with the Great Gold Wyrm is increased by that enemy's number of relationship points. It's mutual: for every point of relationship with the Great Gold Wyrm, expand the critical hit range of attacks against the Golden Demon cultist by 1.

AC 17

PD 15

MD 12

HP 38

## GOLDEN DEMON CULTIST

*Dear looting adventurer: the cultists' masks are golden. Not gold.*

Double-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level mook [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +8

**Sword tooth +8 vs. AC (two attacks)**—3 damage

**R: Dart +7 vs. AC (1 nearby enemy)**—4 damage

*Mutually destructive:* This creature's critical hit range against an enemy with icon relationship points with the Great Gold Wyrm is increased by that enemy's number of relationship points. It's mutual: for every point of relationship with the Great Gold Wyrm, expand the critical hit range of attacks against the Golden Demon cultist by 1.

*Mystically expendable:* If a nearby Golden Demon cultist or golden demon-drake takes miss damage, the Golden Demon cultist can take it instead.

AC 19

PD 17

MD 13

HP 18 (mook)

*Mook:* Kill one Golden Demon cultist for every 18 damage you deal to the mob.

## GOLDEN DEMON PRIEST

*Faith is optional. Flame is mandatory.*

3<sup>rd</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +6

**Demon staff +9 vs. AC**—8 damage

*Natural even hit or miss against a 5<sup>th</sup> or lower level enemy:*

Demons gain a +2 attack bonus and a +7 damage bonus against the target (hard save ends, 16+).

**R: Flaring staff +9 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy, and 1 other nearby enemy engaged with a demon)**—6 fire damage

*Natural even hit or miss against a 5<sup>th</sup> or lower level enemy:*

Demons gain a +2 attack bonus and a +7 damage bonus against the target (hard save ends, 16+).

**R: Fireburst +9 vs. PD (1 nearby or far away enemy)**—12 fire damage

*Miss:* Deal 6 fire damage to the Golden Demon priest.

*Mutually destructive:* This creature's critical hit range against an enemy with icon relationship points with the Great Gold Wyrm is increased by that enemy's number of relationship points. It's mutual: for every point of relationship with the Great Gold Wyrm, expand the critical hit range of attacks against the Golden Demon priest by 1.

*Somewhat evasive:* This creature takes no damage from enemies' misses.

AC 18

PD 14

MD 17

HP 40

## DEMON DRAKE

*Looks like a dragon. Golden flames. Proof of the prophecies!*

4<sup>th</sup> level troop [DEMON]

Initiative: +10

**Flashing jaws +9 vs. AC**—12 damage

*Natural even hit:* 5 ongoing fire damage

**C: Borrowed fire +9 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy)**—20 fire damage

*Limited use:* 1 battle, and only targeting a creature that is presently saving against the effect of a Golden Demon priest's staff attack.

*Mutually destructive:* This creature's critical hit range against an enemy with icon relationship points with the Great Gold Wyrm is increased by that enemy's number of relationship points. It's mutual: for every point of relationship with the Great Gold Wyrm, expand the critical hit range of attacks against the demon-drake by 1.

*Flight:* Demon-drakes fly like bat-winged dragons. Funny that.

AC 21

PD 18

MD 14

HP 50

## THE GOLDEN DEMON CULT AND THE ICONS

Unless your campaign is open to radical reinterpretations of the icons, the Golden Demon Cult's view of reality makes no sense. So what's behind their magic?

At the moment, maybe nothing except a few strands of arcane magic. The cult may not have any strong iconic connections . . . yet! An interesting way to introduce the cult into a campaign would be as a newly surfaced threat that is working behind the scenes to establish iconic patronage. If the player characters can disrupt those attempts, and snuff the cult out before it gains an icon's magical backing, they could crush the cult before it fully hatches.

**Crusader:** The Crusader could almost enjoy this cult's jest at the Great Gold Wyrm's expense, but *demon* ruins the joke. Unless the Crusader in your game is a poser or an extremely subtle schemer, it seems unlikely that his power will end up propping up the cult. That doesn't mean that the cult would be entirely off-limits. Some of the Crusader's people can temporarily tolerate lesser evils in search of a greater evil. Perhaps overzealous underlings of the Crusader will attempt to use kobolds of the Golden Demon cult to embarrass the GGW. Put player character witnesses into the mix and now the zealots need to eliminate the witnesses.

**Diabolist:** Of course the Diabolist could be behind the cult already. Maybe everyone suspects that she is, so that she doesn't actually find any reason to give the cult any support. If everyone thinks she's involved, fine, let them waste their time killing kobolds and their strange little demons, won't hurt her plans any. Of course it's also funny to let the kobolds pal around with/ feed her demons.

**Lich King:** The Lich King's followers do not see fiery demonic dragons and think, "That looks like a cult we should try and get involved with." Any support the Lich King provides to these demon priests will be opportunistic and short-lived.

**The Three:** Plot by plot, the Blue is the most active schemer in the chromatic trinity. But the Blue has plenty of ways of employing magically competent kobolds, and the Abyss, Red Wastes, and other spots the cult is blooming are a long way from Drakkenhall. If any of the Three are going to get around to supporting the cult, our coppers are on the Black.

## BUILDING BATTLES

There's nothing exclusive about the cult. The creatures we've statted up as Golden Demon cultists could team up with most any other kobolds, who may or may not be members of the cult or even fully sympathetic to its goals. A few of our previously published kobolds, like the kobold dragon-soul from page 124 of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age Bestiary*, are overjoyed by the emergence of the cult!

Likewise, there are plenty of low level demons who might be available to supplement the cult's signature demon drakes. We suggest that the demon drakes are fine working with other demons, but viciously competitive with other demons that fly, so stick with ground-bound creatures like dretches and frenzy demons.

Perhaps the most interesting plots and battles involving the cult will rope in agents or representatives of the icons the cult is trying to impress. The cultists may find themselves involved in battles that have nothing to do with their own short-term interests. Depending on the situation, the other icon's forces may be present as observers (ready to flee), advisors (*willing* to win), troops (in the thick of the fight with the cultists), or commanders (determined to take the prize).

# KOHWA

*What is beautiful in theory and from a distance is a bit terrifying and smelly up close. And that's for the people who are pretty sure the kohwa are on their side!*



They began arriving in Santa Cora a few weeks ago, silently demanding to speak with the Priestess, insisting they had an important message to give to her and her alone. No one knows what that message was, but more of them keep appearing, apparently waiting for an answer that the Priestess is either unwilling—or unable—to give.

These large, winged felines stalk the shifting corridors of the Cathedral. They seem immune to the disorienting effects of its impossible architecture.

But maybe they aren't destined to stay in the Cathedral. If the Priestess can't give them an answer, maybe they'll help find the answer in the wider world. Meaning: what trouble do you want them to start this week?

## CAT COMPLICATIONS

The commonly accepted story is that the kohwa cannot return from whence they came until the Priestess gives them a reply for the gods they serve—just who those gods are, and what they represent, is up to you. Whether they are gods of light or darkness, or something else entirely will, of course, affect the type of person the kohwa are willing to associate with, and who their enemies might be.

You have an interesting option when it comes to the kohwa's' activities outside the Cathedral. Clearly they are single-minded and duty-bound when it comes to their main task. Does that extend to everything they set their will to? Or are they sometimes as perverse and unpredictable as the felines they

certainly resemble? Can you be an incorruptible messenger of the gods and a little bit crazy? Maybe the kohwa haven't had to spend much time around mortals before.

Is there any difference between kohwa with bat wings and kohwa with bird wings or moth-like wings? Are the missions kohwa have started to perform things they've agreed on with people in the Dragon Empire, or the Cathedral, or are they missions the kohwa have chosen themselves?

## ABILITIES FOR ALL KOHWA

**Flight:** Kohwa are winged, and therefore capable of flight. While they are strong fliers and able to travel great distances in this way, they are acutely aware of how ungainly they look while doing so, and therefore prefer to walk or run unless they are certain no one is watching.

**Swimming:** Unlike many cat species, kohwa are perfectly at home in the water, so diving into a lake or river is a poor defense against them.

**Telepathy:** Kohwa are capable of short-range telepathy with non-kohwa. It is assumed (although no one is entirely sure) that they are capable of communicating with others of their species at greater distances, as when one is in trouble, others are sure to appear—eventually.

## KOHWA MESSENGER

*An unimpeachable courier of the gods, and perhaps of others who are convincing about the justice of their cause.*

Slightly smaller in size than their more dangerous companions, the enforcers, the kohwa messengers are magnificent beasts. Their thick fur is charcoal gray, with the merest hint of darker stripes and their emerald green eyes glow with an inner zeal.

The messengers do not speak, exactly—in fact, they rarely make any sound at all. The person they are communicating with just somehow knows exactly what the creature wants to say to them. It's not an unpleasant sensation, being akin to someone whispering quietly but clearly in your ear, but it is slightly surprising the first time it happens.

*Large 5<sup>th</sup> level caster [BEAST]*

Initiative: +12

**Jaws of Steel +9 vs. AC**—30 damage.

**R: Piercing Gaze +9 vs. PD**—24 lightning damage.

**Natural odd roll:** Each time the kohwa messenger makes a natural odd roll when using this attack, it can immediately make another *piercing gaze* attack roll against a different target it has not already targeted this turn.

**C: Judgment of the Gods +11 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—40 psychic damage.

**Natural roll above Wisdom:** The target is dazed (normal save ends).

**Limited use:** 1/battle while staggered

## Nastier Specials

**Invocation of the Gods' Protection:** Once per battle, as a quick action, the kohwa messenger can invoke the protection of their unknown gods. Once the invocation has been made, at the start of each of the messenger's turns, roll 1d6. As long as the roll is equal to or less than the escalation die, critical hits against the messenger and its allies only inflict normal damage (although they do still trigger the kohwa enforcer's *acid rain* attack, if appropriate). As soon as the roll fails, the protection lapses.

**R: Implacable Dread +11 vs. MD**—The target is weakened (normal save ends). During the next round, if the target is unengaged, it takes no action other than to move away from the messenger. If engaged, then the target's first action is to attempt to disengage from its foe, moving away if successful. If the target fails the disengage check, they use their second action to move away, inviting opportunity attacks as described on page 164 of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age core rulebook.

**Limited use:** Cannot be used until the escalation die reaches 4+.

**Miss:** The target develops a deep and abiding mistrust of all kohwa.

**AC 21**

**PD 20**

**MD 19**

**HP 162**

## KOHWA ENFORCER

*You have to wonder about gods that send telepathic flying cats as messengers. But not somewhere those flying cats can hear you thinking!*

More imposing than their smaller brethren, the kohwa enforcer's muscles bunch and glide impressively beneath its sleek fur. Their gaze is lit with inner fire. Only those with strong principles can usually meet their stare full on.

*Large 7<sup>th</sup> level troop [BEAST]*

Initiative: +14

**Tooth and Claw +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—24 damage

**Miss:** Half damage.

**R: Spit Shot +10 vs. PD (1 nearby or far away enemy)**—42 cold damage. One of the few times a kohwa can be heard to make a noise, the horrific yowl that accompanies this attack heralds a stinging barrage of freezing hailstones.

**Fury of the Gods:** When staggered, the kohwa enforcer gains a bonus to damage equal to triple the escalation die.

**Acid Rain:** The first time the enforcer is struck by a critical hit, provided it survives the blow, it sprays horrible acidic urine on its enemies using its *pitter patter* attack as a free action.

**[Special trigger] Pitter Patter +12 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—20 acid damage and 15 ongoing acid damage (normal save ends).

Nastier Special

*Leaps and Bounds:* If the enforcer is unengaged and moves to engage an enemy, it can make a *leaping strike* attack as a standard action.

[*Special trigger*] **Leaping Strike +12 vs. AC**—54 damage and target is hampered while still engaged.

**AC 23**

**PD 22**

**HP 230**

**MD 21**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Hallowed gargoyles, marble golems, and other creatures associated with the Priestess make obvious allies for the kohwa.

## KOHWA AND THE ICONS

**Crusader:** Such stalwart and determined creatures could make valuable allies in the fight against the Diabolist, particularly given their unquestioning devotion to duty. And then there's the question of why the Priestess hasn't dealt with them so they can go on their way. Could that knowledge give the Crusader the upper hand in his ongoing battle of wills with Santa Cora?

**High Druid:** Are the kohwa slaves of the gods, then? Shouldn't they be free to serve their own nature? Is there a way that could be arranged? If not for all kohwa, for a few, who have already chosen to fly out into the wilderness? Are the bird-winged kohwa more likely to welcome this gift?

**Priestess:** Why is the Priestess reluctant to answer the kohwa? Did she not understand the message? Is it a sign that her power is failing, or is she putting off making a decision she knows will damage her reputation as a champion of the light? Or is her reputation for wisdom intact and she knows that a wrong answer is worse than no answer?

**Prince of Shadows:** Incorruptible, you say? He'll take that as a challenge . . .



## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Shadowed**—The characters have acquired a new companion.

Wherever they go, whatever they do, there's a kohwa messenger shadowing their every move. It arrived one day and delivered a message to one of them, but the character in question has never heard of the sender and the message means nothing to them. Is it a case of mistaken identity, or is there something even stranger going on? Regardless, they either have to convince the kohwa it's got the wrong person or give it an answer, and who knows what that will set into motion. Or they could try and find whoever sent the message and learn how they've managed to co-opt the Priestess' messenger cats.

**Bad for Business**—Not everyone is happy to have a steadily increasing contingent of imposing, glowing-eyed felines stalking the City of Temples. Nothing dampens joyous, carefree spiritual communion quite like the feeling you're being judged by an oversized pet with wings and a tendency to urinate on people who really irritate it. Now one temple factions is blaming the kohwa for a series of deaths on the pilgrim routes into Santa Cora. Are the kohwa responsible? Is someone trying to frame them in order to have them expelled from the city? Is there another large, cat-like creature picking off the devoted as they make their way to gain the Priestess' blessing? If so, it certainly seems difficult to see clearly.

**Another Missed Message**—Apparently several kohwa were hired to deliver a message to a wizard or cleric in a city the PCs know, or perhaps even an NPC the PCs know well. But the person has died. And now the kohwa won't leave the grave, or the person's home, and they say they still have to deliver the message and that the person they're supposed to talk with "will be back." What's worse, having the cats around when they're mistaken or having the cats around when they're somehow going to be proved correct? If the PCs manage to send the kohwa away, what happens when the NPC does come back, in a perhaps unwelcome form? Are the ghost mechanics elsewhere in this volume about to get involved?

**Oathbreakers Beware**—Offstage, behind the plot, a shadowy crime lord has managed to convince a kohwa enforcer or two that there are oathbreakers who need to be punished in the city's criminal ranks. The crime lord's rivals are being torn apart, since they're certainly oath breakers, the oaths were clear enough. But not all the oathbreakers involved are criminals and the enforcers seem to be expanding their vigilante activities towards other oaths. Maybe they're just bored, or maybe they're experimenting with malice.



# KORUKU

*The Iron Sea is learning new tricks from angry old gods like Kruku, god of monstrous transformation. The only good news is that the magic isn't strong enough to affect Koru behemoths directly. The bad news is that humans are a lot weaker than Koru behemoths.*

## AVATAR OF THE IRON SEA

Aside from getting himself killed by the coalition that created the Dragon Empire, the Wizard King's greatest mistake may have been to turn the Iron Sea into the enemy of the land. Working separately, and sometimes together, the Archmage, Emperor, Priestess, High Druid, and Great Gold Wyrm have so far kept the Iron Sea's tsunamis and giant monsters in check. But recently, that furious ocean has devised another, subtler angle of attack—a living weapon that strikes at the land's heart.

### *Known threat, or a new threat?:*

We've written what follows as if the koruku are a problem that has cropped up in the last few years. Something new, but not necessarily brand new. That may not be the most interesting choice for your campaign. Maybe you want to get the PCs in at the larval stage, so to speak, so that the Dragon Empire gets introduced to the koruku at the same time the PCs have their first encounters with the problem. Perhaps one of the PCs has a One Unique Thing or a background that you can use to make a dramatically explosive introduction?

## INVASIVE LIFE CYCLE

A koruku starts as a parasitic larva. Swarms of these larvae periodically emerge from the Iron Sea, and scuttle inland in search of humanoid hosts.

When a koruku larva successfully bonds with a host, it transforms into a koruku symbiont. With strategically arranged head covering such as a hood, a turban, or a wizard's pointed hat, a careful symbiont can mingle in society without anyone noticing that they have a large squidly crab monster attached to their head. While in this state they wield considerable power, but they constantly feel a slight tug at their consciousness. That tug grows over time until it becomes an all-consuming imperative to seek out a Koru behemoth.

Once the koruku symbiont reaches a Koru behemoth (or vice versa), the koruku detaches itself from its host and

climbs aboard the behemoth. There, it spins a cocoon of slime around itself and goes into hibernation.

If you're wondering what happens to the host, the apparent answer is nothing, assuming it doesn't just get trampled by the behemoth. The actual answer could be more complicated, depending on your campaign. Perhaps part of the soul of the former symbiont gets added to the spirits of the koruku servitors (see below).

As the behemoth traverses its migratory route around the Dragon Empire, the koruku absorbs and stores the land's magical energy. It also gains some understanding of the Empire's geographic weaknesses, knowledge it will apply in the next stage of its life.

At a point along the route far from the Iron Sea, the koruku's adult form—the huge koruku landkiller—emerges from its cocoon and races at incredible speed across the land and back to the sea that gave it birth. Strange spirit-creatures, manifestations of the landkiller's stolen magic, wheel and dart in a glittering swarm around the koruku.

As the landkiller travels, it occasionally sprouts giant gouging plates that tear the land as it moves. The wounds aren't like normal tears in the earth—they fill with water magically associated with the Iron Sea.

Optimally, the koruku's path to the Iron Sea takes it through cities, towns and villages that it more or less scrapes from the map. Once it reaches the stormy waters of the Iron Sea, the koruku plunges in, never to be seen again.

Of course, in your campaign, it could be that the koruku transforms into something even worse after it manages to reach the Iron Sea. That's a threat to unleash if the PCs fail to deal properly with the koruku we already know!

## KORUKU LARVA

*It's squishy, but it has a shell, and claws, and a sharp pointy thing, and...oh, now it's on your face. I guess I should have intercepted it.*

5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]

Initiative: +8

**Snapping claws +10 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—7 damage

*Natural even hit:* The koruku larva can make a *blood-sucking proboscis* attack against the target as a quick action this turn.

**Blood-sucking proboscis +10 vs. AC**—9 damage

*Natural 16+ hit:* The target takes 5 additional damage and the koruku larva can heal 5 hit points.

*Acid blood:* Each creature engaged with a damaged koruku larva at the start of its turn takes 2d6 acid damage.

*Join with us:* The koruku larva can physically and magically bond with a willing humanoid, or a humanoid it has reduced to 0 hp, and evolve over the course of a day into a koruku symbiont.

**AC 21**  
PD 18  
MD 16

**HP 60**

## KORUKU SYMBIONT

*Humanoid hosts of koruku call themselves "Blessed of the Iron Sea." It's debatable whether this altered state is really a blessing, but you're probably better off not arguing with someone wearing an angry sea monster as a hat.*

7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +10

**Crashing fist or weapon +12 vs. AC**—25 damage

*Natural 16+ hit:* The target is weakened (normal save ends) and the koruku symbiont can pop free of the target.

**Stinging tentacles +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—15 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target takes 8 ongoing poison damage (normal save ends).

*Natural 1-5:* The koruku symbiont can make an *acid spew* attack as a quick action.

*Limited use:* Escalation die 2+

**C: Acid spew +12 vs. PD**—20 acid damage.

*Natural even hit:* The target is hampered (normal save ends).

*Limited use:* Only when triggered by a *stinging tentacles* attack.

**C: Wrathful tsunami +12 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—28 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target is stunned until the end of its next turn.

*Limited use:* 1/battle when the escalation die is 4+

*Scuttle forth:* When the koruku symbiont drops to 0 hit points, it rolls a normal save (11+). If the save succeeds, place a 5<sup>th</sup> level koruku larva with 30 hit points on the battlefield where it has detached itself from its former host. The staggered larva maintains the initiative of its host, but any conditions placed upon the host end. (If the save fails, the larva gets squashed along with its host!)

*It's been fun:* When the koruku symbiont is nearby a Koru behemoth, the koruku detaches itself from its host and leaps onto the behemoth. Once it finds a likely spot for hibernation it secretes a slime which hardens into a cocoon. The host reverts back to its original stats, losing all of the benefits it gained as a symbiont, but takes no damage.

**AC 23**

**PD 19**

**MD 21**

**HP 94**

## FATES WEIRDER THAN DEATH

What if a PC becomes a koruku symbiont? You can handle this in a few ways. One is to have the player temporarily play a different character while the host PC goes off with its new, squishy friend in search of a Koru behemoth. Or you could all tell the story of the group's journey to the Koru behemoth using a montage in which the player to your left describes a challenge encountered along the way, then the player to *their* left describes how their character overcame the challenge, and so on until everyone's had a chance to add to the story. A third option is to treat the koruku as a cursed magic helmet whose quirk is, "Must fulfill my biological destiny by finding a Koru behemoth." For every battle the PC fights after bonding with the koruku, there's a cumulative 10% chance that the koruku takes over and compels the PC to immediately travel to the nearest Koru behemoth. Finally, you could make "We have to save our newly squidcrab-headed friend" your next adventure: Maybe someone in Horizon or Santa Cora (or, gods forbid, the Hell Marsh) knows how to safely remove a koruku from its host.

## KORUKU LANDKILLER

*You managed to get in front of the giant monster that's been tearing across the landscape at incredible speed, and now you can get a good look at it: an armored, amphibious creature with huge earth-gouging plates, that's surrounded by blue storm-spirits made of stolen magic. After a good look at you, it charges.*

Huge 8<sup>th</sup> level leader [BEAST]

Initiative: +17

**Thrashing tail +13 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—80 damage

*Miss:* 40 damage

*First miss:* The koruku landkiller makes a second *thrashing tail* attack against a different target

*Natural 1-5 on either attack:* The koruku landkiller regains its *stolen magic* attack if it's expended.

**Earth-gouging plates +13 vs. PD (2 attacks)**—55 damage

*Escalating saves:* The koruku landkiller adds twice the escalation die to its saves.

*Stolen magic:* Once per battle as a standard action, a koruku landkiller can make one of the following magical attacks.

The first five attacks can add the escalation die when rolled against a target that has an icon relationship with the icon the power has been stolen from! Feel free to roll a d6 if you don't want to spend time choosing between attacks. (If its *thrashing tail* attack roll allows the landkiller to regain stolen magic, it doesn't have to choose which magical attack it will use until it actually uses the attack.)

**C: Flame of the Archmage +13 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—114 fire damage.

*Natural even hit:* One nearby koruku servitor can make a *wild magic blast* attack (fire damage) as a free action.

**C: Snare of the High Druid +13 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—90 damage and the target is stuck (normal save ends).

*Natural 16+ hit:* All nearby koruku servitors gain a +4 attack bonus against stuck targets on their next turn.

**C: Roar of the Orc Lord +13 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—90 thunder damage, and koruku servitors gain a +4 attack bonus against the target on their next turn.

**C: Treachery of the Three +13 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—80 psychic damage and the target is confused (normal save ends).

*Natural 16+ hit:* Add a cumulative +2 to the defenses of all koruku servitors until the end of the servitors' next turn.

**C: Storm of the Crusader +13 vs. AC (1d3 nearby enemies)**—114 damage.

*Natural 16+ hit:* All nearby koruku servitors gain a +4 damage bonus until the end of their next turn.

**C: Wrath of the Iron Sea +13 vs. PD (all nearby enemies)**—70 lightning damage.

*Natural 16+ hit:* Add a koruku servitor to the battle.

*Miss:* 35 lightning damage

### Nastier Special

*So many servitors:* When the koruku landkiller is hit by an attack, add a koruku servitor to the battle.

**AC 24**

**PD 22**

**MD 19**

**HP 432**

## KORUKU SERVITOR

*They're fragments of the soul of the land, creatures made of unpredictable stolen magic. They may resemble the people and things they've been stolen from—or may flow into the shapes of nightmare beings dreamt in the Iron Sea.*

8<sup>th</sup> level mook [SPIRIT]

Initiative: +16

**Wild magic touch +13 vs. AC**—23 damage

*Natural 1-5:* The koruku servitor takes 10 damage and the target gains a random Wild Magic Benefit from the table below.

### *Wild Magic Benefit*

1–2: You gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of your next turn.

3–4: Heal hit points equal to your level + twice your Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom modifier (whichever is highest).

5–6: Roll to recharge a single expended magic item power or expended recharge power.

**C: Wild magic burst +13 vs. PD (all enemies engaged with the koruku servitor)**—36 damage and deal 40 damage to this koru servitor.  
*Limited use:* Escalation die is 4+.

**R: Wild magic blast +13 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—23 damage

*Flight:* Koruku servitor fade away if they fly too far from their koruku landkiller, but are quick and agile fliers in battle.

**AC 24**

**PD 19**

**HP 40**

**MD 23**

*Mook:* Kill one koruku servitor mook for every 40 damage you deal to the mob.

## BUILDING BATTLES

Their associations with the Iron Sea, iconic magic, and high weirdness make koruku good company for sahuagin, blue sorcerers, chimeras, ogre magi, and naga. A leader of a gang of troublemakers (human thugs, lizardfolk, orcs, goblins, etc.) might have become a koruku symbiont, upgrading them from a minor nuisance to a serious threat. Raiders might follow a koruku landkiller, looting the ruined settlements it leaves in its wake.

## KORUKU AND THE ICONS

**High Druid:** Technically the High Druid could be happy about a wild monster that's mainly killing city folk. But it's not that simple. First, the koruku landkiller takes out anyone and most everything it runs into, not just the towns and cities. Second, the High Druid isn't even an enemy of all towns and cities. She's mainly an enemy of cities and towns that have no business being where they are—like the newly built city of New Port. Third, the weird pockets of cursed Iron Sea water left behind the landkiller's gouging plates may sound like something the High Druid would welcome, but she doesn't. The Iron Sea has a place, over there in the East, definitely not tearing cursed holes in the land. The High Druid's people and animals and animal-people have already been helping kill giant Iron Sea monsters in the Blood Wood. None of them are at all happy that Iron Sea is messing with Koru behemoths.

**Lich King:** The Lich King knows the Iron Sea is out for revenge over their...*unfortunate disagreement* when he reigned as the Wizard King. He gets a bit twitchy when the subject of koruku comes up. Fortunately, he's safe on his island in the Midland Sea. Right?

**The Three:** Drakkenhall is close to the Iron Sea, and the Three tend to see opportunity where others see disaster. Would-be villains who are looking for temporary powers and don't mind having a horrifying squid-crab on their heads might be able to find koruku larva for sale in the black markets of Drakkenhall. There are rumors that some assassins of the Black have been seen with something writhing beneath their hoods.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**The Laughing Mariner**—On a stormy night near the Iron Sea coast, the PCs take refuge in a remote inn. There, they sense a strange atmosphere of expectation and dread among some of the guests that grows more intense as midnight approaches. What's special about tonight? Who—or what—do they await?

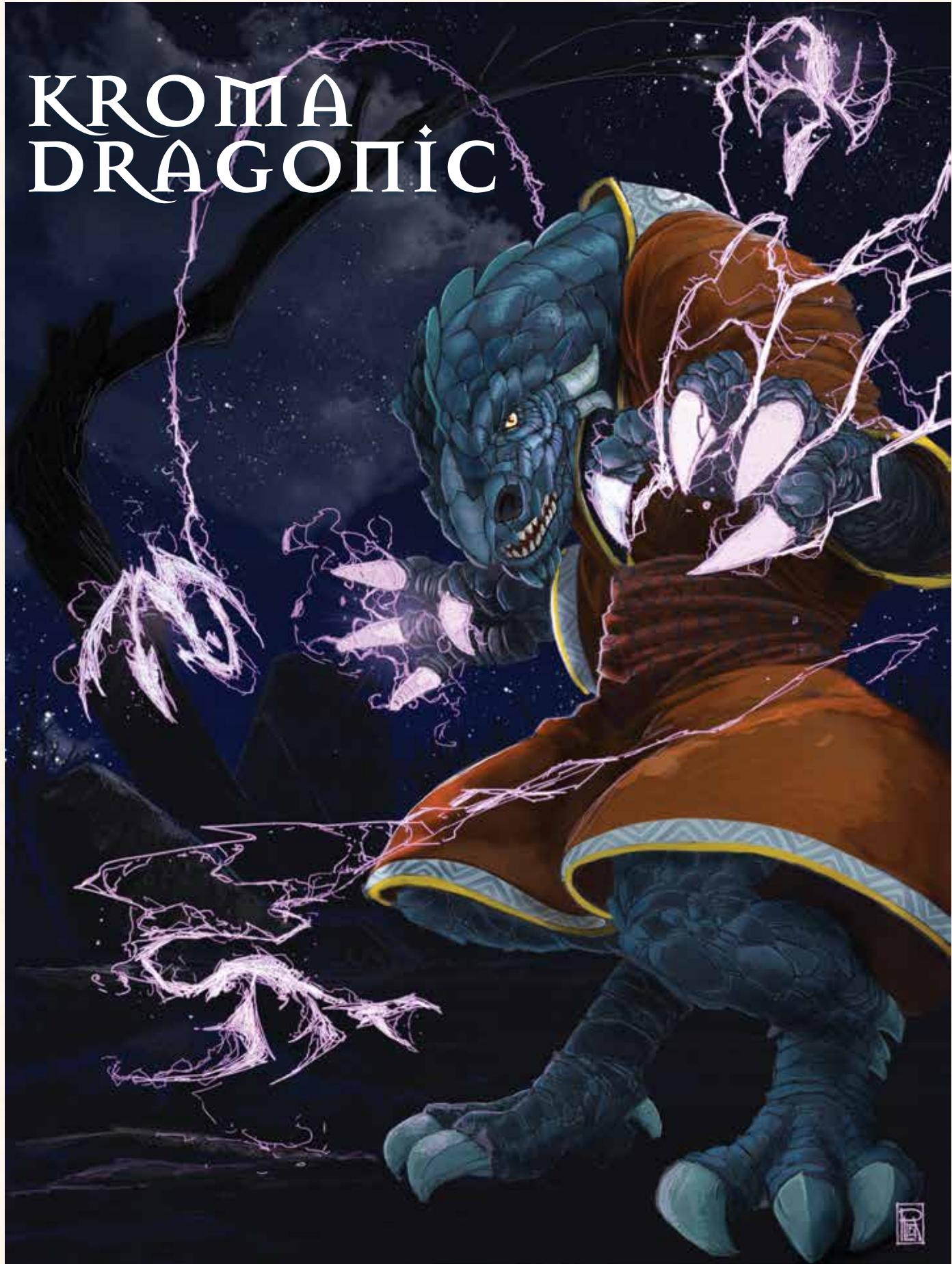
**Meet the New Boss**—The uneasy truce between the city's criminal organizations is broken when a thieves' guild leader is found dead in his sanctum, his lungs filled with salt water. Meanwhile, the head of the assassins' guild hasn't been seen on the streets ever since a meeting where he promised "big changes ahead." Can the PCs prevent a gang war that will tear the city apart?

**Journey into the Eld**—While it's hibernating on a Koru behemoth, the koruku is vulnerable—and valuable. Magically charged koruku organs, hide, bones, and even its cocoon slime can be used to make especially powerful potions, oils, and true magic items. The catch is, the koruku has to be harvested while the Koru behemoth is passing through the dangerous region of wild, ancient magic known as the Eld.

**Not a Clean Bath**—Normally the violence of a Koru behemoth's plunge into the Koru straits makes it impossible for anything to hold on to the behemoth while it's in the Iron Sea, much less spin a cocoon. But one behemoth recently slipped without a splash into the water and came out on the other side just as quietly . . . and seems to have an infestation of koruku cocoons! Someone needs to get aboard, find them all, and kill them all, before the entire Empire pays the price.

**Koruku vs. Megadungeon**—The Stone Thief is a living megadungeon that rises from the depths and eats places—castles, villages, neighborhoods, even natural surface features—and turns them into new dungeon levels. Now, a koruku landkiller and the Stone Thief are both heading for the same place: one to destroy it, the other to devour it intact. Can the PCs defend it from this double threat?

# KROMA DRAGONIC



R

We introduced dragonics as an optional player character race so that people could decide whether they wanted humanoid dragonfolk as a standard player character option in their campaigns.

A handful of years later, it looks like most *13<sup>th</sup> Age* campaigns are happy using dragonics in some fashion. They make sense in a world shaped by conflicts between the Three and the Great Gold Wyrm. And after all, ‘humanoid-dragon-person’ isn’t likely to be the wildest character concept in campaigns with flamboyant One Unique Things!

In this entry, we’re presenting a few story options for dragonics who are related to the chromatic dragons. Instead of just one option, we’re suggesting multiple approaches that can be tuned to diverse campaigns. Our story options are accompanied by several player character powers and features for exploring what it’s like to be a two-legged relative of the great (more-or-less) evil dragons. No matter how you decide to use the chromatic dragonics in your campaigns, the monster stats grouped together at the end of the article should find a home.

## KROMA STORIES

We start with an explanation of names, mention questions about relationships between dragonics of different scales, present five (or maybe four) origin myths, and then get into campaign options based on icons and a behemoth.

### NAMES

Enemies of the chromatic dragonics call them wyrmspawn, emphasizing their supposedly fallen status compared to the glory of true dragons. Your dragonics might or might not use ‘wyrmspawn’ as an insult themselves, but when they want to talk about themselves as distinct from other dragonics, they usually call themselves the kroma.

Unlike the drow, who tend to have big problems getting anyone else to refer to them as the silver folk, the kroma dragonics have been more successful seeing their own term for themselves adopted by others. That’s probably partly because ‘kroma’ is short and easy to say. It doesn’t hurt that it’s easy to pronounce with a bit of a snarl and sounds like it might already be a curse word in someone’s language.

Nearly everyone, including most kroma, refers to individual chromatic dragons by the color of their scales: whitescales, greenscales, blackscales, bluescales, and redscales. As you’ll see in the origin myths section, there are other terms that get used, but generally not by people other than the dragonics and, perhaps, the dragons.

### DIVIDED DRAGONICS?

Each color of chromatic dragon is very much its own creature. As a rule, blue dragons aren’t friends with red dragons, green dragons don’t pal around with whites, and so on. Most of the issues are hierarchical—it’s very rare for chromatic dragons to be able to put aside power struggles unless someone much stronger is making them cooperate.

Obviously the very top of the chromatic dragon hierarchy knows how to cooperate! The Three don’t always get along, but they’re united in a bond that makes them an eternal threat to the supposedly more lawful metallic dragons who’ve aligned themselves with the Empire’s less-evil icons.

So what do you want from the kroma in your campaign? Do you want them to mirror the dragon hierarchies, so that the blue and red are on top, black a bit underneath, and green and white handicapped by the loss of their original iconic dragons?

Or do you want them to forge their own identities that aren’t beholden to the scales and magical affinities they’ve inherited from their great draconic ancestors?

Did we say ancestors? Maybe that’s not true in your campaign. Maybe the dragonics aren’t exactly descended from or related to dragons. Maybe they’re the result of a different magical process, something that was trying to steal power from the dragons to create a new species, so that the relationship between dragons and dragonics is... tense.

*Drakkenhall:* However you want to explain the existence and nature of chromatic dragonics in your campaign, consider making use of our core iconic story that the Blue has shaken things up in Drakkenhall. Whatever the status quo was, the Blue’s experiments might be rephrasing the kroma’s situation. It’s up to you how many of the kroma are comfortable with the extent to which their (probably) improved circumstances near Drakkenhall so wonderfully serve the Blue, and by the extension, the Three.

### CULTURE & PERSONALITY

Compared to elves, dwarves, and even halflings, dragonics don’t have a lot of the archetypal fantasy elements we usually imagine as the default assumptions your campaigns will riff on. We’re still leery of defining the dragonics too thoroughly. Since they’re not necessarily standard fantasy creatures, it seems to us that your campaigns should have leeway to treat them in the widest variety of ways.

That said, we’re going to list *13 Things that Might be True about Kroma Dragonics*.

1. They don’t care much about possessions that aren’t strong enough to withstand their breath weapons. Accidents and small spats happen, so only very durable items or magically durable items truly matter to dragonics.
2. No, wait, that’s mostly true, but the most precious possessions of many kroma dragonics are extremely fragile items. Being able to care for and preserve such an item shows that you are truly powerful.
3. They hatch out of eggs that are carefully cared for, but luckily don’t take all that long to grow.
4. They’re magical beings that get born in ways not even dragons are born, and that means live births are frequent, and families work something distantly like slightly violent human families.
5. Dragonics haven’t been the same through the ages. There’s no guarantee that creatures just like these will be around in the next age. It’s not that there’s anything wrong with them, or weak. It’s that you can’t be so enmeshed in sorcery and remain stable.

6. Kroma dragonics, oddly enough, are extremely loyal to people and monsters they respect. Metallic dragonics are bitter and more vengeful. This explains some of the reasons the Great Gold Wyrm has so many human paladins instead of metallic dragonics.
7. It's not that the kroma are evil, per se. They just don't have much empathy for how others might see the world. And they don't really understand people who do.
8. Oh come on. Evil! Evil! Evil! How many kroma have you met that you would trust to pull you out of a pit if your stuff happened to be left above it? One, maybe. Two? Then you're lucky, because those two were freaks. It's nice they exist, but don't count on other kroma being freaky.
9. Actually kroma are every bit as diverse as some other supposedly moral races, but evil dragons can smell goodness and it tastes *delicious*.
10. Unlike the metallic dragonics, kroma tend to snort a little of their breath weapon on anything they intend to eat. See the earlier comment about needing durable possessions.
11. The Three, the High Druid, and at least one other icon have used great spells, in different ages, to reshape dragonics in ways that suit them better.
12. Dragonics came first, before dragons, who were essentially hugely powerful draconic sorcerers who redefined the world's playing space, back before people got around to counting ages.
13. If you've got an interesting new religion you want to test with fervent believers, the kroma dragonics may be the people you're looking for. Well, most of them. Not the greenscales.

## ORIGIN MYTHS

Speaking of religions... like most people connected to powerful magic who are not *quite* on top of the power pyramid, the kroma have stories about who they might really be, when forces align in their favor. Some of these stories take the form of origin myths told by one type of kroma, but not the others.

We'll present a few of these stories in case you find something your campaigns can make use of. You don't have to use all the stories that follow. Certainly most of the kroma don't believe them all. But many of the kroma believe one or two, or think it's useful that other members of the kroma believe them.

## CHILDREN OF THE GLACIER

The oldest of the origin myths seems to belong to the whitescales, who say that they are formed from the pure ice of the glacier known as Xolinth. Xolinth was a cold goddess, or perhaps the home of a goddess of cold and darkness. The White, wishing to have loyal servants that could withstand the frozen places, killed the god and breathed new life into the ice, breaking off pieces that stood on two legs and became dragonics.

Whether Xolinth exists or not, many whitescales *believe* that the glacier is reforming, and that its full recovery will . . .



. well, what is it the speaker wants? Either the ascension of a new White, or a reconnection with a dark goddess whose ice is still in the heart. Or both, if the White was the father and the goddess was the mother. The myth gets a bit tortured when it attempts to talk about the future, and whitescales who really believe this stuff aren't likely to want to talk about it, in case an enemy realizes they should start looking for Xolinth before it's too late.

Do all whitescales believe this myth? Probably not. But even if they don't believe it, it could be part of what shapes their world. Compared to white dragons who've floundered after losing their icon, whitescale dragonics coped. Maybe it helped that their myth says that the White was not their first immortal 'parent' to die.

**Player characters:** If you're playing a whitescale, you could do a lot worse than linking your destiny to a dark glacier, somewhere only creatures of the cold, and crazy-ass player characters, dare to tread. For backgrounds that could help you shape the story, start with *Frost Range nomad*, *Xolinth quester*, *priestess of a dead dark goddess*, and *glacier oracle*.



## GREEN PRAGMATISTS

Unlike mystic whitescales who believe in Xolinth, greenscales' long-term response to the concrete-verifiable death or abduction (or in any case disappearance) of their icon has been to try to stick to the facts. If you think you know what the facts about dragonics 'really' are in your campaign, most greenscales probably think that's pretty much the gist of it.

It's not that the greenscales aren't against powerful myths. They're just aware that if they really want to force a myth of power to become true, they're going to have to gain a lot more power by attaching themselves to the existing icons, or somehow making their own icon via a new Green.

And a myth that isn't powerful? One that is more woe-is-us storytelling? A typical greenscale spits poison at that sad-shlock.

**Player characters:** Of course, if you're playing a greenscale dragonic, you may be something very different than a typical greenscale. Well, you probably still spit poison. But maybe your background is tied to the actually still living Green, or to a destiny by which you intend to create another Green in its place.

## DANCING SHADOWS

Some blackscale dragons refer to themselves as shadow dancers. They have a curiously specific story explaining that they were created when the Black traveled to the Shadow Well, focused her will, and made a summoning. The shadows that left the well and followed the Black back to the world were the first shadow dancers.

The Black values shadow dancers as spies and agents, warriors and priests. But if the myth is true, she doesn't need them returning to their source. Everyone has forgotten the location of the Shadow Well except the Black, and she isn't sharing.

Blackscales who can't take the Black's hint often start looking near Shadowport, but maybe the Bitter Wood's many shadow dragons and other shadow monsters are just a coincidence. Or maybe the Prince of Shadows is playing a trick . . .

Other shadow dancers believe that the Shadow Well is somewhere near the center of the island of Omen, and that the Well is the driving force behind the island's cancerous growth. Living dungeons spill out of the Well, piling up as they push outward away from it. Maybe that's why ruins near the center tend to be ruled by denizens of shadow.

Ask those who are searching for the Shadow Well why they want to find it and you'll get many answers. There's a persistent rumor that several true dragons started as blackscales that found the Shadow Well. But the original myth doesn't even support that idea, so maybe *this* is the piece that's disinformation from the Prince.

**Player characters:** If you're a blackscale dragonic, the reputation of the Black and her assassins can be a bit hard to shake. So do you try to shake it, or get it working for you?

## ORIGINAL DRAGONS

The bluescales who serve the Blue in Drakkenhall say that they were originally true dragons! Long ago, the Blue Dragon constructed a tower of stone and magic somewhere in the Dragonwood (some claim it's the same tower now in Drakkenhall moved there magically, others say the tower is still in the wood). There, the Blue traveled into a future-seeing during a long slumber. Through her visions, she understood that only by magic would she control the world, and so she commanded each blue dragon to deliver one egg to her in tribute. She spent decades perfecting the rituals and bathing the eggs in sorcery, imprinting her will. They hatched as bluescale dragonics with the majesty of dragons. Both blood and sorcery flows through their veins.

It's often said that the bluescale sorcerers are involved in some great endeavor for their mistress. One theory is that the Archmage holds magical secrets that the Blue is trying to tear away, and when she succeeds, sorcery will far outstrip wizardry. Others are convinced that the Blue's ultimate goal is to usurp the Emperor while keeping the empire in place, setting her dragonics as the first among all citizens. A few whisper that the Blue wishes to absorb the powers of the Red and Black (and that she was ultimately responsible for the losses of the White and Green), so that none of the other icons will be able to stand against her might.

In most campaigns, the Blue is also served by many non-blue dragonics, only some of whom paint their scales blue. If you're enforcing a harder line between dragons and dragonics of different colors, you'll be cutting away some stories while opening others.

**Player characters:** Whether you really believe it or not, hatching from a dragon's egg is a pretty powerful origin story. Especially if it's literally true because it's your One Unique Thing.

If you want to make the Blue's big kroma-related scheme into one of the campaign's ongoing elements, choose a background something like *Drakkenhall lab sorcerer*, *Imperial spy of Drakkenhall*, or *former Blue-crèche warden*.

## Eggs & Flame

The myth told by “religious” red dragonics is an odd mix of self-aggrandizement and kinship with other dragonics.

Ages ago, the Red and his lesser brethren conquered everyone that mattered, meaning all the other dragons, chromatic and metallic dragons alike. Dragons that handed over their hoard and half their eggs were allowed to live. The Red collected the eggs and tempered them in his fire and magic. Weak eggs perished, stronger eggs eventually hatched as dragonics serving the Red, and the strongest dragonics were the redscales. Obviously.

It's up to your campaign whether similar experiments performed on modern dragon eggs have similar effects, or merely get you killed.

## PUTTING THE STORIES TOGETHER

If your campaign wants a strong argument for unifying the kroma instead of splitting them apart along color lines, here's a theory: all the myths are more or less true. The kroma didn't all come from the same place, different kroma, even of the same color, were created at different times, but now they can join together and become one powerful force.

If the Blue in your campaign is a cunning politician, this sounds like the argument she might be using to bring the kroma together in Drakkenhall. Alternatively, the Blue's power games got in her own way and this canny use of competing myths is best expressed by the High Druid, who can deal with the dragonics' savagery better than most.

## ICON INFLUENCES

However you phrase your campaign, the kroma are entangled with the Three, and to some extent with the High Druid. Here are story options and adventure ideas related to a few of the other icons. Our ideas steer away from the most obvious storylines. You don't need us to point out that the kroma could be locked in struggles with any of the heroic icons. We'll be suggesting surprising ways you could entangle the kroma with the followers of other icons as something other than simple antagonists. The ideas have more in common with unique campaigns than ideas all campaigns could have in common.

**Bad Mother:** Dragons get in the Diabolist's way. She'd love to forge a new tool. Maybe, just maybe, she could use her hellhole laboratories to breed a new type of dragonic, something combining the evil nature of the kroma with a touch of the demon. Maybe she wouldn't have to stick to just one color. The current dragonics seem to breed into five lines, regardless of parentage, but there have been great dragons that combine all the colors. Why not these new things?

**The Dragonic Crusade:** As the antithesis of the Great Gold Wyrm, the Crusader makes sense as the icon who gathers the kroma when they escape the influence of the Three. You want to shake things up? Get rid of that human guy in the Crusader armor on page 178 of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age core rulebook. The Crusader in your campaign is a kroma dragonic! Which type? No one is sure. Nobody reliable sees through this Crusader's full helm, and breath weapons aren't a clue because she (or he) uses them all. Tie this storyline in with the Diabolist's *Bad Mother* attempt to create new dragonics and you've got a double-twist and a motive for the Crusade.

**Imperial Pardons:** As the Archmage falters, the metallic dragons dwindle, and the Orc Lord rises, might the Emperor look for a new source of draconic allies? The earlier Emperor who brought the half-orcs in as full citizens gained well-deserved laurels in the annals of empire. Could the kroma dragonics strengthen the Empire as the half-orcs have? Particularly if they were granted, say, the land west of the Wild Wood, and a portion of the lands near New Port? Land the High Druid is already doing her best to reclaim for the wild? Sure, the metallic dragons and the Great Gold Wyrm will hate this, but they aren't getting the job done, are they. Your campaign gets to play through the consequences. Consider adding a new line to the characters' resumes: *Troubleshooting (and Three-suppressing) ambassadors to the fledgling state of Western Kroma*.

**The World's Most Dangerous Truce Zone:** Overall, the Three would rather rule the world than destroy it, and even the Red once-upon-a-time laid waste to a potentially world-destroying demon horde, if you believe that story about the creation of the Red Wastes. So maybe the Abyss is a truce zone between kroma dragonics and followers of the Great Gold Wyrm, both of whom hunt demons, albeit for their own reasons. There's something amusing about paladins who need to contact followers of the Red going a ways into the Abyss, with both sides exiting in different directions to avoid the unpleasantness they can expect from each other in the world beyond the Abyss.

## THE KROMA BEHEMOTH

Here's a longer campaign option involving the High Druid and as many other icons as you like. It could play off most of the earlier ideas or be used in isolation.

What happens if an alliance of kroma dragonics set themselves up as the rulers of an independent 'city-state' perched atop one of the great Koru behemoths? They circle through and outside the Empire in the great counter-clockwise migration route, interacting in turn with each of the Empire's other power blocs.

The behemoth may have had an earlier name and identity, but it's usually known as Kroma now. Like most of the behemoths that serve as platforms for powerful and long-lasting communities, Kroma seems at least tacitly accepting of the kroma dragonics' presence, if not all of their schemes.

**Leaders and actions:** No matter how you're phrasing dragonic interactions away from the behemoth, consider the following unorthodox arrangement for leadership on top of Kroma: ultimate authority tends to shift between the pre-eminent dragonics of different colors based on the behemoth's location along the migration route. The far north and off the map to the West is where whitescale dragonics are in charge. By the time the behemoth returns to the map near the KneeDeep, the redscales are mostly in charge, all the way over to the turn north up toward the Blood Wood. The bluescales take over up the coast and past Drakkenhall. Greenscales help most in the middle of the Queen's Wood and over to Forge, followed by the whitescales again as the behemoth stomps out onto the ice.

You noticed the blackscales were missing? In Rob's version of the story, the blackscales prefer to stay out of the leadership game and 'just get things done.' When they do take charge, it's because other people asked them to. Or maybe they just lost patience and 'got it done.'

Your campaign's version of the story could be different. For starters, you get to decide whether this is some form of weird leadership council or a shifting chiefdom or queenship. But consider treating the different varieties of kroma dragonics as one of the Kroma behemoth's strengths.

**Icon relations:** Maybe Kroma prospers by maintaining various allegiances with many different icons? Maybe the kroma dragonics stay in the good graces of the heroic icons, despite being essentially evil, by always being willing to burn out a hellhole or an orc well when they find it? Or maybe the Kroma is a new development and all the icons are competing to undermine the obvious favorites, the Three and the High Druid?

**Dominance or survival:** If the Kroma behemoth is strong in your campaign, that shapes how dragonics get treated everywhere else on the map. It seems pretty likely that metallic dragonics are more often a valuable part of the empire than the kroma, so the fact that chromatic dragonics now have a shifting and bizarrely powerful home of their own could change the power balance.

## PLAYER CHARACTER OPTIONS

For the players who've joined us to create the campaigns, here are a few new powers, spells, feats, and talents for various dragonics.

### DRAGONIC BREATH WEAPONS

We'll start with some feats any dragonic can use. Here are additional feat options for your racial *breath weapon* power, as well as a new racial power: *limited flight*. The feats are meant to be user-friendly: you don't have to take these feats in any order.

The limited flight ability replaces your normal breath weapon racial power. If you have other class or magical powers that could supplement your wings, discuss flight upgrades with your GM!

### NEW FEATS

**Adventurer Feat:** Roll a hard save (16+) when you use your breath weapon. If you succeed, the breath weapon is not expended.

**Champion Feat:** Your breath weapon damage dice are d8s instead of d6s.

**Champion Feat:** The first time each battle you are staggered, you regain one use of your breath weapon attack if it's expended.

**Epic Feat:** You can use your breath weapon twice per battle instead of once, and the target of your breath weapon attacks can now be far away.

### LIMITED FLIGHT

You must be a dragonic to take this racial ability.

One battle per day, you gain flight as a move action. You must land at the end of your turn or fall and take damage (as per the tier).

**Champion Feat:** You also gain limited flight while the escalation die is 4+, but lose it at the end of your turn in the round when the escalation die can no longer advance.

### DRAGONIC BARBARIAN

Most of the character class and race powers we're presenting would work just fine for metallic dragonics, or dragonics who live outside the spectrum. The kroma just happen to be feeling the love.

## CHAMPION TIER BARBARIAN TALENT

Barbarians are a bit short on options for new talents at champion tier. Here's another.

### Roaring Rage

When you use your breath weapon while you are not raging, roll a save. If you succeed, you start raging and continue raging until the end of your next turn. This power functions like other barbarian rages, but it neither expends a rage nor gives you the option to roll to recharge your rage after the battle.

**Champion Feat:** Until you've succeeded once in a day with the *roaring rage* save, it's an easy save (6+) instead of a normal save.

**Epic Feat:** If you score a critical hit with your breath weapon, you can start raging as a free rage that lasts until the end of the battle and does not expend your use of Barbarian Rage.

## DRAGONIC FIGHTER

We've got two fun maneuvers for the dragonic fighter, both making use of your unique physiology.

### 1<sup>ST</sup> LEVEL MANEUVER

#### Tail Whip

Flexible melee attack

**Triggering roll:** Natural 2-4

**Effect:** Choose one: an enemy you're engaged with takes damage equal to your Dexterity modifier (5<sup>th</sup> level: double your Dexterity modifier; 8<sup>th</sup> level: triple it); OR on your next fighter melee attack against this target, you can roll two d20 and choose the best result.

**Adventurer Feat:** Add your level to the damage you deal with *tail whip*.

**Champion Feat:** This power now triggers on a natural 2-5.

**Epic Feat:** Twice per day, you can trigger this power on a natural 1.

### 7<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL MANEUVER

#### Gather Breath

Flexible melee attack

**Triggering roll:** Any natural odd miss

**Effect:** You regain a use of your dragonic breath weapon power.

**Epic Feat:** When you use this power but don't use your breath weapon that same round, add a number of damage dice equal to your Constitution modifier to your breath weapon damage the next time you hit with it this battle.

## DRAGONIC SORCERER

Obviously kroma sorcerers need some attention.

### Sorcerer Talent

This talent is only available to dragonics who have the *breath weapon* racial power.

#### Rumble Mumble Rumble

Your dragonic breath weapon is tuned to your magic. When you roll high enough to re-use one of your breath weapon spells during a battle, you also regain a use of your dragonic *breath weapon* power, if it's expended.

**Adventurer Feat:** When you use your dragonic breath weapon attack the same turn as you use your standard action to gather power, your dragonic breath weapon deals half damage if it misses.

**Champion Feat:** One battle per day, you can choose to add the escalation die to your rolls to re-use breath weapon spells.

**Epic Feat:** Your dragonic breath weapon attacks deal half damage when they miss.

## On Monster Names

It's worth mentioning that many of the monster names in our 13<sup>th</sup> Age books don't have anything to do with what the monsters, or anyone else in the world, calls that creature. This is especially true for intelligent humanoids like the dragonics that follow. It's possible that the blackscale shadow dancers sometimes refer to themselves as shadow dancers. But it's unlikely that a whitescale dragonic with the powers of the blighter refers to itself as a "whitescale blighter." These names are for the GM's convenience. In the world, most of these creatures are probably just referred to by their enemies as dragonic warriors and sorcerers.

# MONSTER STATS

Unlike dragons, which have a hierarchy that extends to fairly clear progressions of who is stronger than whom, some dragonics with scales that are weak colors for dragons aren't weak at all.

## GREENSCALE WILD STALKER

*Suddenly reptilian eyes open and the vegetation erupts as a green-scaled draconic hidden among the foliage lunges for you.*

3<sup>rd</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +6

**Poisoned claws +8 vs. AC**—4 damage, and 3 ongoing poison damage

*First failed save:* The ongoing poison damage increases by 2.

*Second failed save:* The target is also weakened (save ends both).

**R: Poisonous spit +8 vs. PD**—8 poison damage

*Natural even hit:* The target is partially blinded and takes a -2 penalty to attacks and defenses until the end of its next turn.

*Superior camouflage:* The wild stalker's scales naturally change to blend with its surroundings, allowing it to hide in plain sight and making checks to detect it take a -5 penalty. When it attacks from concealment without being seen first, the target is vulnerable to its attack. It can regain its camouflage by moving out of direct sight and hiding (hard DC to spot).

*Resist poison 14+:* When a poison attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	<b>19</b>
PD	16
MD	12

**HP 42**

## BLUESCALE LIGHTNING CALLER

*Lightning crackles as the blue-scaled draconic unleashes a bolt at you. Then the lightning cycling around the sorcerer pulses and takes the shape of dragons!*

4<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +5

**Sharp claws +8 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—6 damage

**R: Jagged lightning +10 vs. PD (up to 2 nearby enemies)**—6 lightning damage

*First natural even hit each turn:* The lightning caller can target another nearby enemy with jagged lightning.

**C: Lightning breath +10 vs. PD (each enemy engaged with the lightning caller)**—2 lightning damage, and the target pops free from the lightning caller  
*Limited use:* 1/battle, as a quick action.

**Call lightning minion:** Once per battle as a move action, the lightning caller can summon 1d2 small lightning minions that protect it. They look like small dragons made of lightning that circle around the caller and can't be attacked directly. When an enemy attacks the lightning caller, one minion makes a *lightning zap* attack against it as an interrupt action. All minions dissipate at the end of battle.

**Lightning zap +10 vs. PD (one enemy attacking the lightning caller)**—3 lightning damage, the target takes a -2 penalty to the attack, and the minion dissipates.

**Resist lightning 14+:** When a lightning attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

<b>AC</b>	<b>19</b>
PD	14
MD	18

**HP 46**

## WHITESCALE RIME WALKER

*The white-scaled draconic breathes out a cloud of ice crystals that coats its body in*

5<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +7

**Rime-coated spear +10 vs. AC**—10 damage and 5 cold damage

*Natural even hit:* The rime walker can make a *frost breath* attack against the target as a free action. This use of *frost breath* doesn't count toward the 1/battle limit.

**C: Frost breath +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—8 cold damage

*Natural 16+:* The target is stuck (save ends).

*Limited use:* 1/battle, as a quick action.

*Coated in rime:* As a free action at the start of the battle, the rime walker breathes a cloud of frost that coats it in rime. The next attack that hits it this battle deals only half damage.

*Resist cold 14+:* When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

<b>AC</b>	<b>20</b>
PD	18
MD	13

**HP 65**

## BLACKSCALE SHADOW DANCER

*The only thing you notice before it strikes is a slight wavering of the shadows.*

6<sup>th</sup> level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +12

**Scale blade +11 vs. AC**—18 damage, and the shadow dancer can pop free from the target

**C: Shadow vapors +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—10 acid damage

*Shadows everywhere:* Hit or miss, the nearby area around the shadow dancer is filled with shadowy vapors until the end of the battle that make it difficult to see. Other creatures besides shadow dancers in the vapors take a -2 penalty to attacks and defenses.

*Limited use:* 1/battle, as a quick action.

**R: Hand crossbow +11 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Step into the shadows:* Twice per battle as a move action, a shadow dancer can step in heavy shadows, or shadows created by its *shadow vapors*, and step back out of nearby or far away shadows. It often uses this ability to move next to a target. When it attacks an enemy after stepping out of the shadows, it gains a +2 bonus for that attack.

*Resist acid 14+:* When an acid attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC 21

PD 21

MD 16

HP 80

## REDSCALE FIERY VANQUISHER

*This thick-bodied, red-scaled draconic brute tries to slash you in half with a mighty axe stroke, then gives you a blast of fiery breath when it gets in close.*

7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +9

**Heavy axe +12 vs. AC**—26 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The fiery vanquisher can make a *burning breath* attack against the target as a free action.

[Special trigger] **C: Burning breath +11 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—3 fire damage, and 5 ongoing fire damage

*Red rage:* When the escalation die is odd, the fiery vanquisher can roll two d20s for its *heavy axe* attack and use the best result.



*Resist fire 14+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC 23

PD 21

MD 15

HP 110

## WHITESCALE BLIGHTER

*There's are many reasons imperial forces won't enter the Frost Range without magical support, specially fire-wielding magicians. These dragonics are about number three on the list.*

8<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: fire

**Frost claws +13 vs. AC**—20 damage, and 15 cold damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The damage for all subsequent cold attacks this battle increases by 1 (to a maximum of 4 extra cold damage).

*Crit:* Each enemy that doesn't have resistance to cold damage becomes vulnerable to cold damage until the end of the battle, and the cold damage increase for all cold damage attacks resets.

*Miss against a stuck target:* 10 cold damage.

**C: Blizzard breath +13 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—18 cold damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target is stuck (save ends).

*Escalating cold:* All whitescale dragonics in the battle can use the escalation die. This monster's escalating cold ability ends for this battle if it takes fire damage.

*Resist cold 16+:* When a cold attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

#### Nastier Specials

*Gift of rime:* As a free action at the start of the battle, and also once per turn as a quick action, the whitescale blighter breathes a cloud of frost that coats it or a nearby whitescale dragonic in rime. The next attack that hits the rime-covered whitescale this battle deals only half damage.

*Tail whip:* The draconic deals 2d4 extra damage to a target it misses with a melee attack.

*Undead killer:* The whitescale blighter hates undead and necromancers, and its crit range expands by 1 against them.

<b>AC</b>	<b>24</b>	
<b>PD</b>	22	<b>HP 140</b>
<b>MD</b>	19	

## GREENSCALE SPINEBACK

*Spinebacks pride themselves on their poison teeth and spines to the point that they eat noxious plants to increase their body's natural toxicity.*

*9<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +14

**Needle teeth +14 vs. AC**—20 poison damage, and 15 ongoing poison damage

*Natural 16+:* The target becomes vulnerable to poison damage until the end of the battle. Creatures that resist poison damage ignore this effect.

*Crit:* The target loses all its resistances and is weakened until the end of its next turn.

**R: Spine barrage +16 vs. AC**—25 damage, and 25 ongoing poison damage

*Limited use:* 1/battle, but missing with the attack doesn't expend it.

**C: Poison cloud +14 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—25 poison damage

*Natural even hit:* The crit range for this attack expands by 1 (to a maximum of 16+).

*Miss:* 10 poison damage.

*Hallucinogenic exhalation:* The first time this greenscale spineback becomes staggered, each nearby enemy must roll a save. If it fails, it's confused and takes 10 ongoing poison damage (save ends both). Enemies who resist poison are immune to this effect.

*Resist poison 16+:* When a poison attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

#### Nastier Specials

*Elf killer:* The spineback hates elves, and its crit range expands by 1 against them.

*Tail whip:* The draconic deals 2d6 extra damage to a target it misses with a melee attack.

*Toxic skin:* This spineback is not so much scaly as slimy like a rare toxic frog. When an enemy makes an unarmed attack against it or otherwise grapples with the draconic, that enemy takes 2d6 poison damage.

<b>AC</b>	<b>24</b>	
<b>PD</b>	23	<b>HP 162</b>
<b>MD</b>	19	

## BLACKSCALE LIGHT-KILLER

*It blends into the shadows, the gleam from its eyes the only clue that you are being stalked.*

*10<sup>th</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +15

**Blackened blade +14 vs. AC**—40 damage

*Natural even hit:* 10 ongoing acid damage.

*Natural even miss:* The blackscale light-killer gains a darkness token (see below).

**R: Acidic breath +16 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—25 acid damage

*Natural even hit:* 12 ongoing acid damage.

*First natural even miss each turn:* The blackscale light-killer gains a darkness token (see below).

*Darkness spreads:* The light-killer can expend a darkness token as a quick action to make a nearby enemy weakened until the end of its next turn. Enemies that don't need to see to fight or who can pierce magical darkness ignore this effect.

*Resist acid 16+:* When an acid attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

#### Nastier Specials

*Darkling maw:* The blackscale light-killer gains a darkness token on odd misses too.

*Speed of dark:* Instead of a quick action to use darkness spreads, it's a free action. Wait and use it just before a PC attacks.

*Tail whip:* The draconic deals 2d8 extra damage to a target it misses with a melee attack.

<b>AC</b>	<b>25</b>	
<b>PD</b>	25	<b>HP 206</b>
<b>MD</b>	19	

## DARKNESS TOKENS

If you use miniatures it's kind of fun to start stacking tokens next to the light-killer to show how shadow spreads out from it. A cheap way to create darkness tokens is to paint some pennies black.

If you don't use minis to represent the relative positions of characters in combat, use black dice to keep track of the amount of light the blackscaled light drinkers are absorbing.

## BLUESCALE ORB-BEARER

*This draconic has a crystal orb implanted in the center of its chest, and smaller gemstones inserted throughout its body. It's a living weapon for the Blue.*

*11<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +16

**Crackling energy +16 vs. PD**—40 force damage

*Natural 16+:* 16 ongoing lightning damage.

**C: Lightning breath +20 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—30

lightning damage, and 30 ongoing lightning damage

*Aftereffect:* If the target rolled an even save against the ongoing lightning damage, the target's nearest ally takes 10 ongoing lightning damage.

*Miss:* 10 lightning damage.

**R: Force barbs +16 vs. PD (up to 3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—40 force damage

*Absorb magic:* The first time this battle that the bluescale orb-bearer is hit by a magic spell or spell-like power it has no effect—the attack hits but does no damage, imposes no conditions, etc. Each time it's hit this way thereafter, the bluescale takes no damage and can make the following attack as a free action:

**C: Arcane discharge +20 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—24 damage and 24 ongoing damage, both of the same damage type of the spell that it absorbed

*Resist lightning 16+:* When a lightning attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

### Nastier Specials

**Tail whip:** The draconic deals 2d10 extra damage to a target it misses with a melee attack.

**Esoteric expulsion:** When the orb-bearer dies having absorbed a spell but not having released the energy via *arcane discharge*, roll a d6:

**1: Spatial bend**—Whoever made the attack that finished the orb-bearer swaps places with the ally or enemy furthest from them.

**2: Time twist**—The last character to act disappears, and reappears in the same place at the end of their next turn.

**3: Esoteric detonation**—The 1d3 + 1 closest creatures take 10 force damage and 10 ongoing lightning damage.

**4: Weird expulsion**—Something harmlessly odd happens, centered on the area around the body: a rain of frogs, or colored lights start to dance, or a glowing cloud appears, etc.

**5: Bizarre expulsion**—Something distractingly odd happens that causes one random enemy and one random ally to be dazed until the end of their next turns: their local gravity becomes warped, they blaze with coruscating light, they briefly turn inside out, etc.

**6: Stranger expulsion**—Something dangerously odd happens, dealing 40 ongoing damage to the nearest enemy to the orb-bearer and perhaps having a lingering effect after the battle: target ages or becomes younger rapidly, target enveloped in ice, target's skin catches fire, etc.

AC 26

PD 23

MD 26

HP 260

## REDSCALE FLAMEWING

*The borderline between dragon and draconic gets blurry at the top. The flamewings are said to be the personal enforcers of the Red, infused with his power by . . . well, no one really knows, and the guesses are terrifying.*

*12<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +17

**Burning mace +17 vs. AC (one or two attacks)**—45 damage and 45 fire damage, divided between the targets if two different enemies are hit, or piled onto one target if only one target is hit.

**R: Fireball breath +17 vs. AC (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—60 fire damage

*Miss:* 10 fire damage.

*Special:* The redscale flamewing can instead target 2d3 enemies in a group, but with a different miss effect:

*Special miss:* Any ally of the flamewing engaged with the missed target takes 20 fire damage, and the flamewing loses its ability to fly using its *fiery wings* until the end of the battle.

**C: Fiery wings +17 vs. AC (1d3 closest nearby enemies)**—60 fire damage

*Attack on the wing:* The flamewing can make attacks mid-movement as it flies past without taking opportunity attacks, but at a -2 attack penalty. It can split its *burning mace* attack between two enemies in two locations as it flies past. As its wings are made of fire, the flamewing might accidentally set the environment ablaze, which might benefit one side or the other in the battle (or harm both).

*Fiery temper:* When the flamewing is forced to land, it rolls 3d20 for its next attack roll and takes the best result.

**Flight:** The flamewing can fly, and fly fast—soaring on wings of flame. However, its turning circle isn't great and it can't hover, so in tight quarters it needs to land. Also, its wings are made of fire, and overusing its fireball breath can cause the wings to gutter and fade.

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

#### Nastier Specials

*Healed by fire:* The first time each battle the flamewing is hit by a fire attack, instead of taking the fire damage it heals that many hit points.

*Tail whip:* The draconic deals 2d12 extra damage to a target it misses with a melee attack.

**AC 28**

**PD 26**

**HP 380**

**MD 21**

## NASTIER SPECIALS FOR ALL DRAGONIC WYRMSPAWN

If you'd like to make your draconic wyrmspawn more deadly, give them wings and limited flight. Or if your draconics have the blood of the mighty wyrms flowing through them (or the magic of dragons has worn off on them), consider giving some of them a random dragon ability.

*Limited flight:* At the start of each turn, roll a d6. If the result is less than or equal to the escalation die, the draconic gains flight as a move action during its turns thanks to a pair of wings it unfurls from its back. The flight tends to be more power-flapping or gliding from one place to another rather than hovering. Flamewings who also have limited flight prefer to use their burning wings to fly in combat wherever possible, resorting to their physical wings only if needed.

*Blood of the wyrm:* This draconic displays traits of its forebears, the mighty wyrms. Roll a d10 and consult the random dragon ability table on page 217 of the core rulebook, or choose one of the first ten options that looks likely to shape the story or battle.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**A Whiter Shade**—The whitescales of the Frost Range have decided to attack a small town called Cambourne. The adventurers arrive in the town just as it becomes snowed in and the first whitescale attacks are launched. The adventurers can't leave the town without braving the sparkling yet deadly winter and are forced to not only defend the town from attacks and ensure it can weather the winter, but must also contend with a danger from within—there is a traitor in the town working against the adventurers' efforts.

**Bloodshot Arena**—The city of Drakkenhall is opening a new gladiatorial arena, with the legendary redscale Rrum Blazeflare as its opening fight. The only problem is that Rrum Blazeflare has suddenly decided he's not interested and has seemingly left Drakkenhall in a hurry. The adventurers are hired by the arena's manager to track down the missing redscale. The twist in the tale is that Blazeflare didn't retire willingly, and the adventures find themselves caught up in the intersection of politics and crime.

**Cerulean Blues**—The Blue is quietly increasing her military power and needs somebody experienced to train her next batch of bluescale sorcerers in actual battlefield conditions. The adventurers are asked to take a load of raw bluescale recruits to the Spider Woods and put them through their paces against the monsters there. What is the Blue really building an army for? Is the adventurers' task a cover for something else?

**Dusk Peak**—The Dusk Peak Abbey has a unique problem—none of the blackscale monks can enter the catacombs beneath the abbey due to a powerful ward, and nobody can remember what is down there or why the ward is in place. Who has messed with the monks' memories, and why? The abbot wants the adventurers to find out—but can they trust him? The adventurers must not only deal with the secrets of the catacombs, but the machinations of the monks too.

**Emerald Claws**—An imperial courier passing through the Queen's Wood was ambushed by a band of greenscales that call themselves the Emerald Claws. Both the Emperor and the Elf Queen are interested in recovering whatever the courier was carrying, and both make independent offers to the heroes. Whatever the group chooses, they'll need to cross at least one icon. What was the courier carrying that makes the mission so important?



# LAUGHING DEMON

*These demons enjoy a laugh as much as the next person—more so considering the next person is often dying.*

Laughing demons have a reputation as the only demon with a sense of humor. Given the terrible and ridiculous things that happen in hellholes, might be safer to say that laughing demons are the only demons with an obvious and always-engaged sense of humor.

That's not a good thing—the joke is always on someone else.

Amusingly (for laughing demons), other demons are no better than mortals at being tormented by 'jokes.' Laughing demons are reportedly much easier to summon than most other demons of their power level, probably because being summoned is an escape hatch that gets them away from the sword arms of wrathful mariliths.

## GIGGLING DEMON

*6<sup>th</sup> level mook [DEMON]*

Initiative: +10

**Sharp little teeth +11 vs. AC—6 damage**

**Pinned down:** These demons torment with their tickling tails. Enemies that disengage from them suffer a cumulative -1 penalty on all checks and attacks until the end of the character's turn (no maximum penalty).

**Weakling:** When building battles with this monster, it only counts a half a normal mook.

**AC 19**

**PD 13**

**MD 17**

**HP 11 (mook)**

**Mook:** Kill one giggling demon mook for every 11 damage you deal to the mob.

## CACKLING DEMON

6<sup>th</sup> level leader [DEMON]

Initiative: +10

**Jagged grin +11 vs. AC**—22 damage

**C: Screams of laughter +11 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—14

psychic damage

[once per battle special effect] *Natural even hit:* The target begins to laugh and laugh and laugh... laughing up 2d3 giggling demons and adding them to the fight. The newly arrived demons act immediately after the cackling demon that made the attack.

[once per battle] *My what big teeth you have:* As a quick action the cackling demon eats one or more mook demons of its own level or lower (consuming up to six), and either recharges its once per battle special for screams of laughter OR one nearby demon heals 1d20 hp per mook demon eaten.

**AC 22**

**PD 16**

**MD 20**

**HP 90**

## LAUGHING DEMON

*Slaughter is slapstick, torture is terrific, and tragedy is comedy gold.*

8<sup>th</sup> level troop [DEMON]

Initiative: +12

**Tooth & claw and stomp +13 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Natural 18+:* One demon ally of the laughing demon can regain the use of a limited use ability it has already expended this battle.

*Miss:* 15 damage

*Won't ... stop ... laughing:* While one or more laughing demons are in a battle, deal psychic damage equal to twice the laughing demon's level to each enemy who fails a save. Yes, that means death saves also. Nasty.

**AC 24**

**PD 19**

**MD 21**

**HP 150**

## LAUGHING DEMONS AND THE ICONS

There's nothing truly unusual to report here. Laughing demons aren't all that different from other demons and the only icon with a solid control-grip is the Diabolist.

Wizards and demonologists who work for other icons may kid themselves about having some special angle on laughing demons, but the joke's gonna be on them.

## GIGGLING TORMENT

We like the idea of giggling demons hiding away in cupboards, in adventurer's packs, under logs and in trees—only appearing to mock the adventurers or cause some sort of minor misfortune. If a party flees from a fight with one of the giggling, cackling, or laughing demons each PC takes a -1 penalty to skill rolls and you should interpret any natural 1s as being the fault of the giggling demons.

The player characters may have believed they'd outgrown this type of foolishness when they became champion tier heroes. But that's the thing about demons, they take you right back to your weak points, casting *summon inadequacy* at-will. And laughing about it.

The demons will also go out to commit crimes to pin on the party, ensure that their belongings go missing, and generally make the party's life as miserable as possible.

Of course, eventually the giggling demons will get bored of mischief and will start attacking the adventurers in their sleep, only to run away giggling once combat proper starts.

Ultimately the demons will increase their deadly pranking to outright open combat—perhaps joining in a fight that they otherwise would have no cause to be involved with, or waiting until the adventurers are crossing a precarious rope bridge before attacking.

If you like that idea too, here is a nastier special for those lethally troublesome mooks.

### Nastier Special

*Invisibility:* Well, not invisibility pre-se, but more an ability to hide from sight until they choose to reveal themselves. Outside of combat giggling demons can fold themselves up into very small spaces, slide under doors, even slip through cracks in floorboards. Of course, you can still hear them giggling when you suffer a misfortune at their hands.

## BUILDING BATTLES

Giggling demons are nasty little blighters, appearing in hordes and preventing their enemies from moving. Individually they aren't very threatening, in a mob they can literally pin PCs down and curtail their effectiveness. There is no maximum disengage penalty from these tiny terrors—if enough climb onto you, you aren't going anywhere!

Cackling demons both add giggling demons to the fight and remove them to heal tougher demons. Cackling demons love the look on their enemies' faces when they pop a giggling demon into their mouth only for a laughing demon to recuperate with a roar of mirth.

Laughing demons are the big bads, recharging the powers of cackling demons (or much nastier allies) as they stomp and bite and tear at their enemies. Even if cackling demons and giggling demons are way below the level of the party, having them in a fight still makes laughing demons more dangerous.

Who is likely to have these demons on their side? Diabolical followers of the Diabolist, obviously. Gnolls enjoy the

## SUMMONING HALOES

Wizards who summon demons but think of themselves as morally superior to those who consort with demons use floating pentagrams to a) show that the demon is being used by enemies of the Diabolist; b) attempt to maintain control. We introduced the summoning-haloes in the *Summoning Spells* issue of *13<sup>th</sup> Age Monthly*, whose cover we've borrowed for the laughing demon illustration. The demon-haloes will resurface in a future book that's focused on wizards. They're not that relevant to how NPCs summon and control demons, but if you like the imagery, feel free to introduce a demon that breaks free of its halo and goes berserk, especially if the PCs target it with an attack against Mental Defense.

lethally dark comedy of laughing demons, and some go so far as to set up cults of worship centered around the infernal entities.

Maybe it's not a surprise that laughing demons sometimes show up accompanied by skeletons and flameskulls—after all, skulls never stop grinning.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Most laughing demon encounters will involve a demon that attacks in a frenzied manner, aiming to inflict maximum carnage. There are exceptions. Some laughing demons are a bit more than mindless engines of destruction, some can plan...

**Adventurer Hook**—A laughing demon has taken up ‘fishing’, a pastime that it finds hilarious. The demon has set up a treasure chest beneath a huge stone bridge, and conceals itself on a rope beneath the bridge so it can swing down and snatch up anybody who tries to retrieve the chest. It has been very successful, and each time it snags an treasure hunter it adds that victim’s possessions to the chest. The PCs know about the demon, but need something in the chest. Can the PCs come up with a cunning plan, using their foreknowledge wisely to get what they want—or will they charge blindly in? Is the demon part of some grander plan, or is it just enjoying the misery it causes people?

**The Unfortunate Gnome**—A horde of giggling demons has decided to torment a gnome priest, hiding in unexpected places and springing out to startle and torment the cleric. Sounds innocuous? Not so, for they are tormenting him day and night, not allowing him rest or sleep. The giggling demons are enjoying ruining this poor gnome’s life, and it is just a prelude to the bloodshed that they have planned after they pester the gnome to death. The cleric turns to the adventurers for aid, as nobody else believes him that he’s being tormented by the tiny terrors.

## STRANGE SYNERGIES

The giggling-cackling-laughing triumvirate works well together. However, there may be odd outcomes when you add these monsters in with other demons, especially cackling demons. If you find that a cackling demon’s abilities make fights deadlier than they perhaps should be then make an on the spot decision: either a) other demons don’t find them funny and their ability to heal other demons stops working; or b) the ability only works on demons of 9<sup>th</sup> level or lower. You could use the same logic for limiting laughing demons’ power recharge ability.

**Laughed to Death**—For several years now a laughing demon has been plaguing the area around the Opals, capturing travelers. Unusually for a laughing demon it doesn’t use violence against its victims—it just takes them to some isolated spot and watches them die of thirst while chuckling to itself. The Elf Queen has proclaimed that any who bring her this laughing demon’s head shall gain a dukedom in her realm. It’s kind of a mystery how the demon is surviving. Is something weirder happening here?

**First Summoning**—A wizard’s apprentices have managed to accidentally summon up a laughing demon, and are unable to dismiss it. The apprentices can’t control it, and sooner or later the summoning halo that’s controlling it will fail and it will escape. The apprentices have decided to let it go and point it towards somebody who deserves a visit from a laughing demon. Have the adventurers done anything recently to deserve a demon attack? Will the apprentices instead come to the PCs for advice on who to unleash the demon on?

**Village Games**—A band of laughing demons have told two isolated villages that they will spare one village if they will kill the inhabitants of the other. Naturally the laughing demons intend to watch the carnage and then destroy the village that survives. The adventurers turn up at one of the villages as they are preparing, and the villagers are torn between asking for help, asking for the adventurers to join them in wiping out the other village, and encouraging the adventurers to leave. How will the adventurers actions help the villagers come to a decision, and what will be the unexpected outcome of that decision be?

# MALATYNE, THE PURPLE DRAGON

*Welcome to my party adventurers, please leave your weapons and armor with my servants and they'll find you something more... suitable... to wear for the festivities.*

—Lady Elspeth Malatyne.



Malatyne is known for her hedonistic ways, fancy parties, enigmatic connections, and seemingly endless supply of wealth. Whether she's building pleasure palaces, sponsoring expeditions to bring back rare artifacts, or sponsoring unusual festivals, Malatyne does it best and biggest.

What is not common knowledge—but is not exactly a secret either—is that Lady Malatyne is a huge purple dragon skilled in shape-changing, illusion, and obscure psychic disciplines. From her silken couch in Concord, the Purple Dragon plots her intrigues.

## FIVE LIES ABOUT MALATYNE, AND ONE TRUTH

Malatyne, the Purple Dragon, hesitates to talk about her origins. Others, however, are more than willing to speculate.

Here are six tales you might hear about the Purple Dragon, one of which might even be partially true.

### CHILD OF THE THREE

The Purple Dragon is the child of the Red and the Blue, part of a semi-formal series of compacts and treaties that keeps the most powerful dragons in the world from tearing each other apart.

Of course, the Purple Dragon can't risk getting too close to the Red or Blue in case they see her as a threat or perceive her as going over to a rival's camp, so she lives in the cities of the Dragon Empire under a series of assumed names, like 'Lady Malatyne'.

What does she want? Well that's obvious—to kill the Black and take his place. Or maybe just to grow into her power and turn the Three into the Four.

### ASCENDANT ENCHANTRESS

Child of the Red and the Blue? Ridiculous! The so-called 'Purple Dragon' is the child of the Archmage and the Priestess. She has gained the ability to cast the illusion of a dragon about her to intimidate and deter her enemies.

The rumor is that Lady Elspeth Malatyne is attempting to turn herself into a dragon and usurp the power of the Three, and that would shift the balance of power to her parents.

What does she want? To destroy the Three and become ruler of Drakkenhall.

### RETURNING ICON

The Priestess and the Archmage together erect a tower and suddenly everybody's making jokes about their secret children. Not likely.

This 'Purple Dragon' is the cover for a returning icon, the Dream Princess. Not a lot is known about the Dream Princess,

beyond that she was associated with crystals, illusion, and psychic powers—all things that 'Malatyne' is known for. The few remaining artifacts of the Dream Princess that were not 'forgotten' out of history are luxurious items—silks and gold—just the sort of things that Malatyne loves.

With the Dream Princess returning the Elf Queen had best watch herself, after all it was the elves who bought the Dream Princess down.

What does the Purple Dragon want? To find the scattered crystals that hold her lost memories, and deal with the usurper who betrayed her.

### FIRST OF HER KIND

Stories about Malatyne's iconic parents or being a returning icon are just stories. The Dream Princess isn't gone, she is the Elf Queen, and the icons obviously have so many so-called 'children' and secret apprentices running around that it's pointless to keep track. No, the truth is that the Purple Dragon is the first of a new kind of dragon.

Obviously, these new purples will come down on the side of the Dragon Emperor—just look at his crest, it's got a purple backing. The Emperor even wears purple. It's his color. It's even called the Dragon Empire. The Emperor created Malatyne, or found her, or something. How do you think she got so rich? Imperial funds. How do you think she got so good at magic? Imperial tutors.

It's possible that she's line to marry the Emperor. Which might or might not make her the Empress, but would certainly rejuvenate the Empire's draconic powers.

### UNLIKELY EXPERIMENT

If Malatyne really is in line to be officially involved in the Empire, that will be just another development in the strange life of a creature created in an experiment by the Priestess and the Diabolist.

The Priestess captured a powerful chromatic dragon and worked to turn it towards the light, to change its cosmic alignment permanently. The Priestess hoped to find a way to bring monsters towards the light, and the Diabolist helped for a laugh—for the pure chaos of messing with the Three . .

Alright, so the experiment didn't end up with 'good' so much as 'not actively evil in its pursuit of unbridled hedonism'. What do you want from the Diabolist?

### PARALLEL UNIVERSE PURPLE

The Diabolist and the Priestess, cooperating? Easier to believe that the Purple Dragon comes from *Elsewhere*.

There are many worlds, each separated from the other by a thin membrane of magic. So you've got your elemental realms, places that are made of shadow, dream-realms, wizard-created pocket universes. That sort of thing. The Purple Dragon comes from one of those places.

What does Malatyne want? She's extremely interested in gathering magical artifacts. She's either consolidating her power or she's trying to reopen the way between worlds. Maybe she's the pathfinder for an invasion of purple dragons.

## PURPLING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Here are a few of the ways you could introduce Malatyne to your game.

### AS A VILLAIN

The Purple Dragon is designed to be a returning antagonist, encountered at various tiers—someone that the adventurers can really *grow* to hate. The adventurer tier and champion tier versions of the Purple Dragon have abilities that allow them to escape from battles to return later at the next tier up, ensuring that she's always a threat that can come back later.

Of course, defeating the Purple Dragon means that any influence she has is diminished and her plans spoiled until she returns later. So at adventurer tier and champion tier the adventurers should be able to stop her, but will have to wait until epic tier to kill her.

### AS AN ALLY

Or maybe she's not a returning villain. Maybe she's an ally and patron for the party—sending them help and giving them quests. She might work for one of the icons, and so a 6 on that icon's relationship die could indicate help arranged by the Purple Dragon.

This version of the Purple Dragon works best as an initially off-screen NPC: the adventurers hear about her parties, see her on a podium at a distance, and finally make her acquaintance where she reveals that she has heard of them and wants to invite them to a high-class soiree and introduce them to some friends of hers—an introduction that leads to a quest and her continuing patronage of the party.

### SHADES OF PURPLE

Or maybe she's more of an ambiguous figure, sending the party on quests which benefit them while advancing her secret plans. She could switch from antagonistic to sympathetic over time, or reveal layers of plans and identities as the campaign progresses.

This version of the Purple Dragon is ideal for campaigns where icons are morally ambiguous, or where the PCs have lots of conflicted relationships. This Lady Malatyne is an enigma, never quite revealing who she is currently working for, switching allegiances as she likes.

Also, the Prince of Shadows wants to say that he's glad he wasn't included in the icon rumors up above.

## STANDARD ABILITIES

Rather than repeat these for each entry the following abilities are standard for the Purple Dragon.

*Escalator:* Malatyne adds the escalation die to her attacks.

*Shape-shifter supreme:* Malatyne can choose to be in its human form or its dragon form. Switching forms is a move action. Though her dragon form is huge, her human form is regular size, and other forms are whatever size is appropriate to that form. By epic tier the Purple Dragon can conceivably take any form, but regardless of tier her vanity limits her to forms that feature purple and magenta (purple clothes and magenta hair, purple scales and magenta wing membranes, etc.).

*[Adventurer and champion tier non-allies only] Cunning escapes:*

When Malatyne drops to 0 hp or fewer (or would otherwise die) she is not slain, but instead escapes leaving an illusion in her place. When she escapes it is a campaign win for the party, as though she had been killed, and her plans crumble. The Purple Dragon cannot return until the next tier (if defeated at adventurer tier she cannot return until champion tier, if defeated at champion tier she returns at epic tier).

*[once per battle, in human form only] "No, she's the real Purple Dragon, shoot her!"*: As a quick action at the end of one of her turns, Elspeth Malatyne uses her powers of illusion and mind-control to make one of her attackers (usually the closest one to her) look and sound like her; the next attack against the Purple Dragon has a 50% chance of being targeted against the wrong target. Once the next attack is made, the illusion vanishes.

*Flight:* In her dragon form the Purple Dragon can fly. Malatyne can also fly using magic, but prefers to not do so unless she needs to fight a flying enemy.

*Illusionary soiree:* Each round roll a d6 (or a d4 if the fight is at a party or a luxurious lair), if it is equal to or less than the escalation die it has the following effect.

**1: Sparkling lights**—Ranged attacks against the Purple Dragon or her allies have a -2 penalty.

**2-3: Kaleidoscopic kinescope**—Any attacks against the Purple Dragon this round that are natural 1s are rerolled against the nearest ally of the attacker (or against the attacker themselves if there is no other possible target).

**4+: Illusionary terrain**—Any of the Purple Dragon's enemies that move this round must roll a save, on a failure they end up in a place they did not intend.

#### Nastier specials

*"You've got the wrong person!"*: Lady Malatyne's "No, she's the real Purple Dragon, shoot her!" ability lingers long after the battle, maybe for days. This is probably deliberate magic on her part, because when she skips town the party member that looks and sounds like her will take the fall (or at least create enough confusion for her to make good her escape).

*[Epic tier only] Not dead yet:* The Purple Dragon gets one last *cunning escape* at epic tier, and though her plans are ruined by her defeat she'll return one last time to exact her vengeance upon the party.

## THE PURPLE DRAGON (ADVENTURER-TIER)

*Malatyne holds the most luxurious balls in Concord, owns the biggest mansion in New Port, and has the sharpest claws in Glitterhaegen.*

*Huge 4<sup>th</sup> level caster [DRAGON]*

Initiative: +12

*Standard abilities: Shape-shifter supreme, cunning escapes, "No, she's the real Purple dragon, shoot her!", flight, illusionary soiree.*

Human form: Elspeth Malatyne

**Bladed fan +10 vs. AC—25 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* Make a second *bladed fan* attack, and if that is a natural even roll make a third *bladed fan* attack.

*Natural odd hit:* The target is blown back from Elspeth Malatyne.

*Natural odd miss:* Elspeth Malatyne pops free and moves away from the target (blown by the wind of the fan).

**R: Bedazzling deceptions +9 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)—10 psychic damage and 10 ongoing psychic damage**

*Crit against a target already taking ongoing psychic damage:*

The target must start making last gasp saves, if they fail they believe that *they* are Lady Malatyne. Removing this delusion from the target's mind is as difficult as turning a petrified character back from stone (hard, but not impossible).

*Miss:* 7 psychic damage.

*[once per battle] "No, she's the real Purple Dragon, shoot her":*

Lady Malatyne uses her powers of illusion and mind-control to make one of her attackers look and sound like her; the next attack has a 50% chance of being targeted against the wrong target.

Dragon form

**Painted claws +9 vs. AC—40 damage**

*Miss:* 14 damage

**C: Psychoactive breath +9 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies, or 1d3 far away enemies in a group)—25 psychic damage**

*Natural even hit:* The target is also dazed (save ends).

*Intermittent breath:* The Purple Dragon can use her *psychoactive breath* 2d4 times each combat but never two turns in a row. She can also choose to make her targets confused (save ends) on a hit or miss with her psychoactive breath, but that uses up her breath for the rest of the battle.

*Wing buffet:* That *bladed fan* attack? Yeah, that was the Purple Dragon's wings hidden by an illusion. The Purple Dragon can use the bladed fan attack in this form, but now it is clear that she is using her wings so it is only +9 to attack.

*[once per battle] Cloak of illusion:* As a quick action the Purple Dragon fills the battlefield with illusions that give enemies attacking her a -2 penalty to their attacks. This lasts until she next attacks.

AC	20	HP	170
PD	18		
MD	20		

## THE PURPLE DRAGON (CHAMPION)

*Malatyne is far more dangerous than she looks, but you know that by now.*

*Huge 8<sup>th</sup> level caster [DRAGON]*

Initiative: +16

*Standard abilities: Shape-shifter supreme, cunning escapes, "No, she's the real Purple dragon, shoot her!", flight, illusionary soiree.*

Human form: Elspeth Malatyne

**Bladed fan +14 vs. AC—68 damage**

*Natural even hit or miss:* Make a second *bladed fan* attack, and if that is a natural even roll make a third *bladed fan* attack.

*Natural odd hit:* The target is blown back from Elspeth Malatyne.

*Natural odd miss:* Malatyne pops free and moves away from the target (blown by the wind of the fan).

**C: Mirrorball burst +13 vs. MD (1d4 nearby or far away enemies)—35 damage and 30 ongoing psychic damage**

*Target fails a save against the ongoing damage:* The target is dazzled by light and takes a cumulative -1 penalty to attacks (up to a maximum of -4) until the end of the battle.

Dragon form

**Gilded claws +13 vs. AC (two attacks)—50 damage**

*Miss:* 28 damage

**C: Psychoactive breath +13 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies, or 1d3 far away enemies in a group)—40 psychic damage and 10 ongoing psychic damage**

*Natural even hit, once per target per battle:* The target is also dazed and stuck (save once for both effects and the ongoing damage).

*Aftereffect:* Once the target saves against the ongoing damage if the save was a natural odd roll the target is dazed (save ends).

*Intermittent breath:* The Purple Dragon can use her *psychoactive breath* 2d4 times each combat but never two turns in a row. She can choose to make her targets confused (save ends) on a hit or miss with her *psychoactive breath*, but that uses up her breath for the rest of the battle.

*Wing buffet:* Just like adventurer tier, the *bladed fan* attack translates in dragon form to wing buffet but with only +13 to attack.

[once per battle] *Cloak of illusion:* As a quick action the Purple Dragon fills the battlefield with illusions that give enemies attacking her a -2 penalty to their attacks. This lasts until she next attacks.

<b>AC</b>	<b>24</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>HP</b> <b>450</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>24</b>	

## THE PURPLE DRAGON (EPIC)

*It's been fun. It's been games. Now it gets real.  
Oh wait. That was an illusion too.*

Huge 12<sup>th</sup> level caster [DRAGON]

Initiative: +20

*Standard abilities:* Shape-shifter supreme, “No, she’s the real Purple dragon, shoot her!”, flight, illusionary soiree. Perhaps also not dead yet.

Human form: Elspeth Malatyne

**Bladed fan +18 vs. AC**—160 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* Make a second *bladed fan* attack, and if that is a natural even roll make a third *bladed fan* attack.

*Natural odd hit:* The target is blown back from Lady Malatyne.

*Natural odd miss:* Lady Malatyne pops free and moves away from the target (blown by the wind of the fan).

**C: One thousand delights +17 vs. MD (1d4 nearby or far away enemies)**—Target is stuck until the start of their next turn as their mind is assailed by pleasant images pulled from their own inner fantasies

*Natural even hit:* Target is confused (save ends).

*Natural odd hit:* Target is weakened (save ends).

*Aftereffect:* Once the target saves against weakened or confused they take 100 psychic damage for each failed save against the effect before they successfully passed the save.

### Dragon form

**Filigree-gilded claws +17 vs. AC (four attacks)** 55 damage  
*Miss:* 30 damage

**C: Psychoactive breath +17 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies, or 1d3 far away enemies in a group)**—60 psychic damage and 50 ongoing psychic damage

*Natural even hit, once per target per battle:* The target is also weakened and stuck (save once for both effects and the ongoing damage).

*Aftereffect:* Once the target saves against the ongoing damage if the save was a natural odd roll the target is weakened (save ends).

*Intermittent breath:* The Purple Dragon can use her *psychoactive breath* 2d4 times each combat but never two turns in a row. She can choose to make her targets confused (save ends) on a hit or miss with her *psychoactive breath*, but that uses up her breath for the rest of the battle.

*Wing buffet:* Just like the previous tiers, the *bladed fan* attack translates in dragon form to wing buffet but with only +17 to attack.

[once per battle] *Invisibility:* As a quick action the Purple Dragon becomes invisible until she next attacks. Characters attacking the Purple Dragon ‘blind’ have a 50% miss chance before rolling their attack.

<b>AC</b>	<b>28</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>HP</b> <b>1100</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>28</b>	

## BUILDING BATTLES

Unless you are emphasizing her draconic self, Malatyne prefers to maintain her ‘Elspeth Malatyne’ human form for as long as possible. At the start of the fight she will use her “No, she’s the real Purple dragon, shoot her!” ability to create confusion and potentially turn her attackers on each other. She prefers to keep attackers at bay, using her magical illusions rather in preference to her *bladed fan*, but switching to the fan attack when needed.

Once she is staggered she switches to her Purple Dragon form, and at champion tier uses *cloak of illusion* after her first attack (at epic tier it is *invisibility*). In dragon form the Purple Dragon prefers to use its breath weapon as early and often as possible.

Malatyne might have any ally you could think of—either as a mentally dominated slave, a paid mercenary, or a loyal ally. As she tends to stick to cities and is (at least as far as general public knowledge is concerned) law-abiding, she might have the city watch, imperial soldiers, priests of the gods of light, and wizards ready to defend her.

## But of Course

Yes, mentally dominated slaves. It's not in her monster stats, but she can probably do this. It isn't an instant domination, but a type of insidious control that she builds using her innate psychic powers—a super-dragon-hypnotism that can be cured with therapy but not with a quick counter-spell.

Feel free to give her other non-combat psychic powers: she can probably shape dreams, she might be able to alter memories and implant suggestions in the weak willed, and will almost certainly have some sort of mental power that lowers other's resolve against giving in to their more hedonistic impulses.

The PCs are almost certainly too strong willed for her mind tricks to work, but NPCs fall to her easily.

## Things Found in the Purple Dragon's Lair

*Lair? Boudoir in a mansion or palace, maybe an intimate bordello, but never a cave. Silk cushions. Tall magenta wig. Silver mirror (worth 50 gp). Elegant dresses. Risqué dresses. Dubious alchemical substances. Illegal substances (she's rich, she can get away with it). Gold tiara (worth 200 gp). Box of jewelry (worth 500 gp). Letters from paramours. Perfume. Box of coded letters, false bottom, hidden key. Book of poetry. Bottle of fine elven wine. Paramour, sleeping. Map of the city. Household finances for a manor house in the countryside that she uses for discrete occasions. Quill from an angel. Crystals, lots of crystals. Invitation to a party tomorrow night.*

## Adventure Hooks

**Crystal Visions**—The Purple Dragon hires the adventurers to retrieve the crystal diadem of the first Elf Queen. Though lost for centuries, the Purple Dragon believes that the crystals from the diadem can be found either built into the spikes of the Orc Lord's metal skullcap, or the Lich King's crown—not

their current headgear, she explains, but the historical pieces held in the Hall of Heroes. It's probably located in Axis.

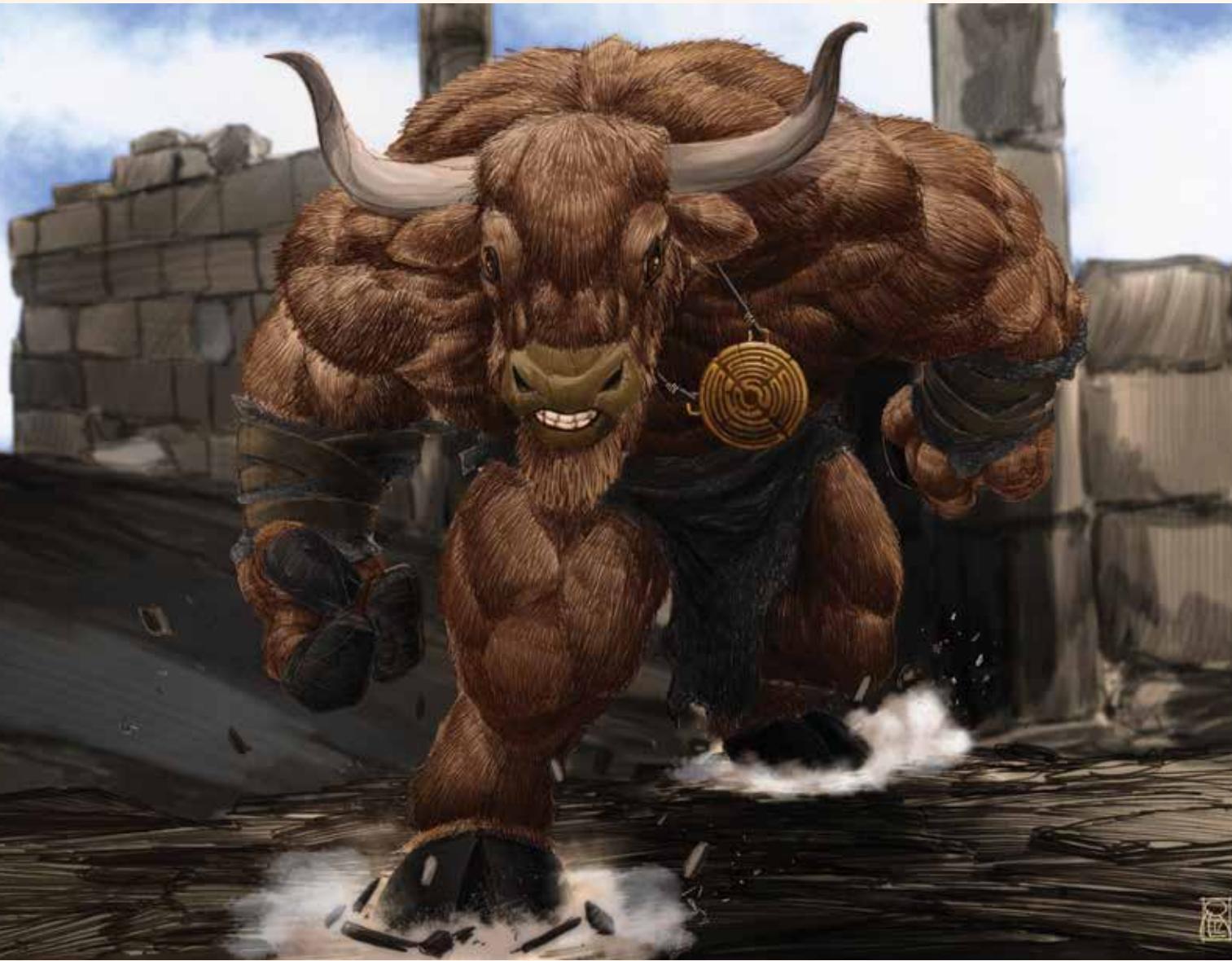
You're the adventurers. Find it.

**Dream a Little Dream of Me**—Many local nobles have become infatuated with Elspeth Malatyne; already somebody important has died in a duel, and it looks like a feud will break out that will draw the entire city into opposing factions. Malatyne claims innocence, is it her fault if others find her alluring? Maybe she is innocent, maybe Malatyne is influencing the locals through their dreams, or maybe something else is going on here.

**Party Invited to Party**—Elspeth Malatyne has invited the adventurers to a celebration she is hosting. Of course, the party is the social event of the year and that means that one of the party's enemies will be there. Has the decadent Purple Dragon planned all this so that the adventurers will fight for her guests' entertainment? If a fight does break out it might mean job offers for the adventurers, or could it end with them being put on trial?

**The Dragon's Bride**—The Purple Dragon has decided to take one of the party (or an NPC they care about) as her next paramour, and she (in her alluring Elspeth Malatyne form) explains the many benefits to such an arrangement. Of course, the adventurer must prove their suitability first, by discovering what happened to the Purple's last paramour. One of the icons sends an agent to approach the party and urge them to take up the Purple Dragon's offer so that the party can spy on the Purple Dragon for the icon. Just what did happen to Malatyne's last favorite, and what does it have to do with the icon sending agents to snoop around?

**The Rival**—Another dragon has taken up residence near the city that the Purple Dragon calls home. The Purple Dragon has just had her claws painted and polished, and would be very appreciative if the adventurers could go slay her rival. In return the Purple Dragon offers to throw a high-class party in their honor. The twist? The other dragon is attempting to court the Purple. Is the Purple trying to kill off a rival, testing the strength of a potential mate, or sending him a gift in the form of food? Food? Tasty tasty adventurers.



# MİNOTAUR

We're doing something a bit different with minotaurs. Instead of expanding the tiny write-up on page 239 of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook, or playing off the supernatural champion who appears in *Eyes of the Stone Thief*, we're presenting two other possible minotaur cultures for the Dragon Empire—one barbaric, one civilized. The point, as usual, is that our half-designed Dragon Empire isn't trying to choose a single path and remain internally consistent. Use the approaches you like best for your campaigns.

The **tribal minotaurs** are the barbarians you'll find from the Frost Range to the Giantwalk—or in gladiatorial arenas in Axis. These minotaurs might be related to the write-up in core *13<sup>th</sup> Age*, but it's also possible that the core write-up is a third direction, more bestial and centered on the Diabolist.

The **minotaurs of Claster** are civilized minotaurs who live in a maze-like city, a former prison run by guilds that are one step up from organized crime. If they're associated with one or more icons, that's for your campaign to decide, and it might be a well-guarded secret.

# TRIBAL MINOTAURS

*"Our lands. Back off!"*

—Cliff-Hurdler, minotaur scout.

## STRANGERS, THEREFORE SAVAGES

Minotaurs are hulking warriors from tribes outside the imperial heartland who fight with bestial fury.

Citizens of the Seven Cities think of the minotaurs as primitive savages, too stupid to work metal and too bloodthirsty to avoid getting ‘recruited’ into the gladiatorial games of Axis. It’s up to your campaign to decide how much of this view is self-congratulatory imperialism and how much might be justified.

## THE THOUSAND TRIBES

If you haven’t dealt with minotaurs in person, you may not be aware of the differences between their tribes. There are dozens, hundreds, perhaps thousands of tribes scattered in the far off mountains and high plateaus. In search of interesting details that might influence encounters with tribal minotaurs, here’s a small minotaur tribe generator to charge your own imagination.

### TRIBE NAME

Roll 2d8: 1. Mountain- 2. Sky- 3. Thunder- 4. Wind- 5. Wandering- 6. River- 7. Cloud- 8. Stone- 1. -brothers 2. -sisters 3. -killer 4. -searchers 5. -people 6. -warriors 7. -ghost 8. -eaters.

So rolling 1+3 gives you the *Mountain-killer tribe*, 2+1 gives you the *tribe of the Sky-brothers*, and 6+7 equals the *River-ghost tribe*.

For variation in your tribes, replace our words with your own.

## WHAT DO THE TRIBE MEMBERS LOOK LIKE?

Roll 2d10, and combine the results ignoring any duplicates. Adjust the result with details from the tribe name, if you wish.

1. Bedecked with beads and trinkets, and wearing woven-bark hats from which dangle more trinkets, this tribe wears its wealth on display.
2. Carved stone medallions with labyrinth designs are common among this tribe, the complexity of the design a mark of relative social status in the tribe.
3. Huge and hulking, with hunched shoulders—this tribe are more like bipedal bison than humanoid cows.
4. Members of this tribe are constantly chewing on cud and drooling (*they are addicted to a grass that has a mildly narcotic effect on minotaurs*).

5. Their pelts are dyed with bright colors, giving them a startling appearance when they attack.
6. This tribe has unusual horns (roll d4: 1. *very long* 2. *curly* 3. *short* 4. *decorated*).
7. This tribe is into piercings—metal nose rings and earrings are a sign of wealth for them.
8. This tribe tattoos maze-like designs over their bodies. It may be magically significant. . . .
9. This tribe wears leather armor, tanned from the hides of their enemies.
10. Unusual hair marks this tribe as different (roll d6: 1. *braided* 2. *woven with feathers and ribbons* 3. *short and curly like a bison's* 4. *long and shaggy, covering the eyes* 5. *no hair* 6. *cut into spiral patterns*).

## WHAT IS THE CAMP LIKE?

Roll 1d8, for details of what the tribe’s camp is like.

1. Clan law demands all weapons be left outside the camp, kept safe by a designated elder of the tribe. A huge pile of spears and other weapons greets visitors who pass beneath the entrance to the camp—an archway made of dragon bones.
2. Dominance is important for young adult males, who live in a separate camp to keep those rivalries from threatening the relative peace of the tribe. The main camp is well-ordered, the young bull’s camp is a noisome and noisy place.
3. The camp is a solidly built mud brick town, a permanent settlement for this tribe that also serves as a place for other tribes to meet and trade.
4. The camp is mostly simple hide tents as the tribe moves about following wars, game, and trade.
5. The perimeter of the camp is demarcated by decorated poles with skulls atop them.
6. The tribe moves encampments on a seasonal basis, moving yurts from one stone-walled pre-prepared site to another in a cycle. There is always a remnant that stays behind to stop other tribes claiming their empty ‘villages’.
7. The tribe’s camp moves on an irregular basis when they exhaust local resources, and it is the task of the old women to choose when and where the camp relocates to.
8. This tribe is a loose confederation of extended families who only come together at special occasions. Their camps are small, and they rarely stay in the same spot for more than a day or two.

## INTERESTING FACTS

Roll 2d20, for two interesting facts about the tribe. If the facts conflict, then it is a very large and diverse tribe.

1. The members of this tribe are afflicted with a seasonal madness that causes them to lose their minds and stampede (or attack outsiders)—other tribes know well enough to leave them alone when the red madness passes through the tribe.
2. The members of this tribe are renowned among their own kind for both their strength and their stupidity, something that other minotaurs attribute to this tribe’s vegetarianism.

3. The members of this tribe are smarter than average, and are viewed by other tribes with suspicion as trade partners but valued for their cunning when allies in war.
4. The members of this tribe build and maintain giant turf labyrinths that they use in their religious ceremonies. Other tribes avoid making war on this tribe, regarding them as sacred, at least while they're at the labyrinths.
5. This tribe are slave-takers, not just among their own kind but raiding afar to bring back human, dwarven, and elven slaves.
6. This tribe has a few non-minotaurs among their full tribal members, and that's not usual among minotaur tribes.
7. This tribe has a lot of worked metal tools and weapons, unlike other tribes who more commonly use bone and flint implements.
8. This tribe has good relations with non-minotaur traders, and are more civilized than most ('more civilized' here meaning aware of customs that the Dragon Empire considers acceptable).
9. This tribe has multiple social gender-roles that confuse outsiders used to male/female binary arrangements.
10. This tribe hates outsiders due to past experiences—the adventurers will be met with hostility unless they can prove that they are trustworthy.
11. This tribe is an outcast tribe due to some social norm among other tribes that they don't adhere to (roll d4: 1. *cannibals*, 2. *ardent atheists* 3. *death cultists* 4. *they don't wear any clothing at all*).
12. This tribe is led by its shamans, seers, and chaos-mages—and revered (or reviled) by other tribes who fear their magic.
13. This tribe is known for their peaceful ways, and other tribes come to them to resolve inter-tribal disputes.
14. This tribe is led by whoever holds a ceremonial object—whichever minotaur is cunning enough to steal it or strong enough to wrest it away from its previous holder in a fight leads the tribe that day.
15. This tribe is run by matriarchs, males are viewed as too headstrong to be in charge.
16. This tribe knows of secret caves which contain something that outsiders would be very interested in.
17. This tribe shaves their wooly quick-growing fur, weaving it and selling it to others.
18. This tribe worships dragons, prizing dragon scales and using them as currency.
19. To become an adult in this tribe you must pass seven tests of adulthood, administered by the eldest among the tribe—the tribe is at least partially a gerontocracy.
20. War-band leaders are chosen via victory in primitive gladiatorial contests and other shows of strength and dominance.

## TRIBAL MINOTAURS AND THE ICONS

The Crusader, Diabolist, Emperor, and the High Druid have the most influence over tribal minotaurs. Use the tribal elements you generated above and the notes below to decide which icon might be most influential in a tribe, or if you'd rather let the dice decide, roll a d20:

**1-7:** No icon holds any particularly strong influence on this tribe. Individuals probably care a bit, but there's no strong feeling among strong members;

**8-10:** Crusader is central;

**11-13:** Diabolist is central;

**14-16:** Emperor is central;

**17-19:** High Druid is central;

**20:** One of the other icons has a key role in this tribe, but you're going to have to roll a d10 to find out which! 1: Archmage, 2: Dwarf King, 3: Elf Queen, 4: Emperor, 5: Great Gold Wyrm, 6: Lich King, 7: Orc Lord, 8: Priestess, 9: Prince of Shadows, 10: The Three.

As you'll see below, being centrally important isn't a guarantee that the icon is respected by the tribe. It's possible that the icon with a central role in the tribe is viewed as an enemy. (If you're still set on rolling, use a d6; 1-2: Positive; 3-4: Conflicted; 5-6: Negative.)

**Crusader:** On the plus side, the Crusader loves recruiting minotaurs for his armies. On the minus side, the Crusader has been known to forcibly conscript minotaurs, particularly those he suspects of favoring the Diabolist. And not many minotaurs in the Crusader's armies survive. So it's a toss-up.

**Diabolist:** Historically the Diabolist was good to minotaurs. But the stronger she gets, and the more demons she controls, the less she needs to cultivate minotaur worshippers. This feels like a strong age for the Diabolist. While many tribes owe her allegiance, others no longer trust her or are sick of demons.

**Emperor:** Minotaurs do amazingly well as gladiators in Axis, whether or not they're willing participants. There may not be a lot of love here, but there's certainly some love-hate, and player characters with gladiatorial connections might get on better than others. Unless they're also slavers. In which case there is no time to read further, you're being stomped on.

**High Druid:** Individual minotaurs often follow paths that lead them to the High Druid. Tribes? Not as often, even when the tribes contain druids. A connection with the High Druid probably gives PCs the chance to prove themselves.

**Other Icons:** Sometimes a strong association with an icon comes from a chieftain or former hero. Other times it's because of interactions with strange people like the player characters . . .

## TRIBAL MINOTAUR BERSERKER

*The phrase “seeing red” isn’t so funny anymore, is it?*

*Large 5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +11

**Head-but** +10 vs. AC—32 damage, or 40 damage if the minotaur has just moved into engagement with the target  
*Natural even hit:* The target becomes stunned until the start of its next turn.

**Stampede** +10 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies, the minotaur can move between each attack as part of the attack provided the enemies are sort of in a line)—27 damage, and target cannot make an opportunity attack against the minotaur this turn.

*Blood frenzy:* +4 bonus to attack staggered enemies.

### Nastier Specials

**Gore:** This minotaur does 10 miss damage.

**Prey or predator:** The minotaur’s crit range against staggered enemies expands by 2 (to 18+).

**Gladiator’s brand:** The minotaur is a gladiator (perhaps an escaped one), and gains +1 to its attacks against armed enemies (but not against magic-users).

AC	21
PD	19
MD	15

HP 140

## MINOTAUR ADEPT

*If the horns don’t get you then the lightning will.*

*Large 5<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +18

**Horn or hand** +9 vs. PD—20 damage, and the target pops free from the druidic adept, is stuck, and takes 10 ongoing damage (save ends all)

*Natural even roll:* This attack only uses a quick action rather than a standard action.

**R: Sun beams** +11 vs. PD (1 or 2 nearby or far away enemies)—30 fire damage

**C: Jagged spark** +11 vs. PD (one nearby or far away enemy)—36 lightning damage, or 50 lightning damage against a creature that is flying

*Natural move:* As a move action, the minotaur adept teleports somewhere nearby that it can see. Through the earth it looks like burrowing, through air like teleporting, etc.

*Limited use:* 1d3 times per battle.

*Circle’s strength:* The adept gains a bonus to saves equal to the escalation die.

AC	20	HP 150
PD	19	
MD	19	

## BUILDING BATTLES

Tribal minotaurs could be found mixed in among the forces of any icon, especially those with an interest in wilderness, gladiatorial arenas, or monsters. A minotaur among a gnoll clan, yep—if they all worship demons. A minotaur working as a body guard for dwarves traveling in dangerous terrain? Sure, why not.

A wild minotaur tribe will have a mix of 5<sup>th</sup> level berserkers, 4<sup>th</sup> level minotaurs from the core rule book (page 239,) and slightly weaker minotaur warriors (use Clasterian minotaur guards from page 196 below without their crossbows). Throw in a number of minotaur adepts and you’ve got a battle.

## THINGS FOUND IN A TRIBAL MINOTAUR’S POSSESSION

Flint knife. Decorative porcupine quills. Scraps of leather. Bone handled tool. Tiny glass beads. Low-tech fire-starting kit. Single metal coin. Dried meat, and berries. Tiny carved stone idol.

## WILD MINOTAUR NAMES

Some tribal minotaurs have names that are bellowed challenges, unpronounceable by human throats. Other tribes give deed names like Dragon-runner or Sword-breaker.

Tribes with contact with outsiders might adopt ‘civilized’ trade-names, mixing them with their traditional names. Some isolated tribes eschew personal names entirely—they know who they are, and they let outsiders give them whatever names help outsiders tell them apart.



## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Slavemaster Shut Down**—A particularly nasty slaver known as Mama Garnet has made a fortune kidnapping and selling young minotaurs to gladiator pit masters. Her slavers target small clans, and employ orcs to capture lone minotaur hunters and herd drovers. As minotaurs live outside of imperial law officially nobody cares much, but two of the captive minotaurs have broken out of the arenas and injured several important people. The adventurers are called in to shut down Mama Garnet’s operation, quietly.

**Turf Skirmishes**—A minotaur tribe wants to settle within a day’s travel of a wood elf village, but the elves are too busy shooting at the newcomers to listen to their pleas for refuge. The minotaurs come to the adventurers, subtly but unmistakably asking for them to act as go-betweens. The tribe is very small, and most of them are young or wounded. Will the adventurers help them, or take advantage of them? How did the minotaurs get wounded, and why are they trying to stay quiet about what happened to their tribe?

**Research & Disaster**—A human wizard has the idea that it’s going to be worthwhile to figure out whether minotaurs were originally humans who turned into beast-people or cows who gained humanoid intelligence and form, or something else entirely. Depending on the player characters in your campaign, they get involved helping the wizard, protecting her or him, or stopping the silly research plan and its acquisition of occasional minotaur subjects.

**The Axis Game**—A group of former gladiators, some of them minotaurs, is looking to start their own arena, near or in Axis. They’ve got a plan for hiring powerful minotaur gladiators from their tribal connections. So who is gonna try to stop them? Someone the PCs don’t like, we’re guessing. Maybe the Diabolist (who wants minotaurs kept out of Axis, when possible), or other arena-owners (possibly including dragons).



# MINOTAURS —CITIZENS OF CLASTER

*"Welcome to Claster. Need a guide?"*

—Pollox Mantell, Claster city guard.

## THE MAZE CITY OF CLASTER

Claster is a huge maze, with walls many stories tall and as thick as buildings. Long ago Claster was a prison, though for what or who is no longer remembered (unless you have a bright idea and want it to be remembered). Nowadays Claster is a bustling city—its stone walls carved out into homes, shops, and temples.

The minotaur residents of Claster no longer remember if their maze-city was built for them or if it was here before—some ancient graffiti points to previous occupants, but many find comfort in believing their ancestors were worthy prisoners of such a complex prison.

The twisting paths have become familiar to the residents. Here and there passageways through walls have been carved, or stairways and walkways up and over walls have been added to make the city easier to navigate.

### A PRISON FOR WHAT?

There are at least three interesting story options here, each of which will have different implications for your campaign.

The first is that the maze-prison of Claster was built to hold minotaurs, and they either overthrew the guards and turned their prison into a home. In which case the question is why were the minotaurs imprisoned?

A second option is that the minotaurs were the guards, and were keeping something trapped inside the maze. If that is so, did whatever they were guarding escape, or is it still trapped but forgotten? What, exactly, needs a city size maze to contain?

The third option is that Claster predates the minotaurs' residency, and they colonized it as a ready-made defensible city without ever understanding what the maze is for. So what was it for, and what nasty secret does it still hold?

## CITY GEOGRAPHY

The geography of Claster is confusing, deliberately so. Visitors stay mostly to the main well-mapped and sign-posted routes, and hire a local guide if they have a strong need to venture further into the city proper.

There are three entrances to the city of Claster—the Grand Gate, the Green Gate, and the River Gate. The Grand Gate was the original entrance to the prison-maze, a sweeping archway closed by thick doors. Beyond the gate is a grand plaza, used today for public religious ceremonies and market days.

The Green Gate opens out on to the fields and agricultural lands outside the city, and daily work crews file through to harvest the city's crops.

The River Gate opens towards the city docks—built against the will of the city's Council of Elders by the powerful Claster Merchant's Guild as an easy entrance for trade goods. A pragmatic bunch, the City Elders have decided to guard and tax the gate rather than try and block it up again.

Apart from the three gates the inside of the city is maze-like (obviously), lacking major landmarks and confusing to outsiders but comforting to those that have made Claster their home.

## MAZE-INTUITION AND MAZE BUILDING

Something about growing up in a city meant to befuddle people with its layout seems to give the long-time residents of Claster a special sense of direction. They have a knack for finding the best way from *here* to *there* when neither are visible; along with this knack comes a certain trepidation about cities with streets that *don't* turn back upon themselves.

Former residents of Claster attempt to mimic some aspect of Clasterian architecture in new homes: a rented house or room might just have an oddly-placed bench or table, causing a slightly circuitous route through a room—but a home built by an Clasterian might contain twisting hallways or a garden hedge as a subtle nod to their proud heritage.

Work-crews of Clasterians are often brought together on building projects to create mazes for wealthy clients—merchants looking to protect their goods, rulers look to guard their palaces with minimal guards, and so forth.

## WHERE IS CLASTER?

Carrie Rasmussen, the designer who created Claster, likes to think of it as being at the western edge of the Fangs, but stresses that isn't her canonical answer and it could easily be somewhere on the Grandfather or Green Star rivers, or sat where the Goldleaf empties into the Iron Sea.

You could drop Claster into the Dragon Empire as one of the unmarked large towns on the map, or say that it is just off one of the edges of the map. Maybe Claster is a suburb of one of the more famous cities—a district of Drakkenhall or part of Shadow Port maybe. Claster could even be one of the ruins that border the Iron Sea, the prison-complex surviving when the city around it was reduced to rubble.

## NOTABLE CITIZENS

### PHILO BANTIUS, LEADER OF THE FARMER'S GUILD

While past his middle years, Philo is robust and more than willing to lend a strong hand in the field during harvest season. The Farmer's Guild is organized like prison work-crews—small groups of farmers, each with an 'overseer' to ensure that quotas are met and wages are paid. Having control over the city's food supply and groups of well-regulated workers, the Farmer's Guild holds an unusual amount of sway in the governance of Claster.

Under the steady hand of Philo Bantius, the Farmer's Guild has become a rival to the Merchant's Guild. The farmers often 'accidentally' disrupt trade passing through the River Gate, and in response the Merchant's Guild brings in shipments of fresh fertilizer so that families may have vegetable patches on their flat-topped roofs and thus lessen the farmer's growing influence.

Some would say that the guilds are little more than organized criminals with a veneer of respectability and a core of necessity. They keep the city fed and safe so their games of power continue as they have for generations.

**Guildmaster Bantius as enemy**—Philo can be a powerful enemy, in the mob boss mold. Of course, Philo doesn't regard himself as a villain—he's just doing what he needs to ensure that his farmers get their fair share (and if that means disposing of the adventurers so be it).

**Guildmaster Bantius as ally**—The leader of the farmer's guild is a powerful mover and shaker, able to bring both political influence and manpower to bear on any obstacles in the adventurers' way.

**Guildmaster Bantius as plot hook/event**—Roll a 5 on an icon relationship? Philo has struck a deal with an icon for something that his guild needs, and he's paying the icon back by helping the adventurers. Of course, Philo will need something in return.

## FAUSTINA HELVIA, CITY WATCH CAPTAIN

Faustina followed her parents and elder siblings into the Watch, and while some might say she got to where she is now because of family connections, none would dare say it to her face. Faustina has worked hard to keep the Guilds in check, playing them off against one another, always stepping in before conflicts get too out of hand. Unfortunately, this has earned her enemies on all sides—each guild is frustrated that she occasionally allows attacks to happen against them (and sometimes stops their attacks against other guilds), and the City Elders and general citizens are frustrated that guild-based disruptions are happening at all. Someday, Faustina will be pushed out of power by one group or another—or she'll have to start managing things with a firmer hand.

**Captain Helvia as enemy**—The watch takes a dim view of outsiders coming into the city and causing trouble, especially if they upset the delicate balance of power between the guilds. Faustina will not send guards to harass the adventurers unless they have committed a crime, but she can bring other more subtle pressures to bear on them to get them to move on from her city.

**Captain Helvia as ally**—Faustina's hands are far from clean, she plays the labyrinthine games of power in Claster as well as any guild leader. If the adventurers prove to be no friend of the guilds, then Faustina may champion their cause.

**Captain Helvia as plot hook/event**—Roll a 5 on an icon relationship? The adventurers are caught up in an investigation that Faustina is conducting. She'll help the adventurers, but won't let them leave town until her investigation is over.

## LARCA LOLLISS, CITY ELDER

Claster has traditionally not considered itself part of the wider world, being insular in its outlook. Matriarch Lollis is the youngest of the City Elders, and the most open-minded of them—she traveled extensively in her youth and has a certain sense of kinship with adventurers. However, as a member of the city's governing body, she must balance the needs of her own young children, the guilds, the watch, and Claster's expanding influence.

**Matriarch Lollis as enemy**—The adventurers are a disruptive influence, and their icon relationships threaten Claster's relative independence. Matriarch Lollis can instruct merchants to raise their prices, close down inns that the adventurers stay at, even contact the adventurer's enemies. She doesn't hold a grudge, but she wants them gone.

**Matriarch Lollis as ally**—The adventurers are just what the city needs, and their relationships with the icons might open the city up to outside influences. Matriarch Lollis is a rich and powerful patron, eager to use the adventurers as a force for reformation.

**Matriarch Lollis as plot hook/event**—Roll a 5 on an icon relationship? The City Elders need something from the adventurers, and are willing to offer aid in exchange.

## CLASTER AND THE ICONS

### The Archmage

Legends say that a previous Archmage built the prison city long ago, and the current Archmage keeps an eye on the city and its inhabitants in case the stories are true. So far the Archmage's attention seems to be benign, but his agents have been visiting the city more frequently in the last few years—perhaps what he is watching for is finally happening.

### The High Druid

As the city of Claster starts to expand beyond its walls and its farmlands grow, it pushes its influence into lands surrounding it that had been left untouched for centuries. Old forests are slowly turning to new farmland, animals are being hunted, mine sites are being explored. The High Druid is not entirely pleased with this development, but given how fractious the guilds are to each other would they even notice or suspect when an outside force starts throwing its weight against them?

### The Prince of Shadows

The guilds loudly proclaim that the Prince of Shadows has no influence in Claster. Yeah, right.

### The Lich King

Some say that Claster dates from the time of the Wizard King. Does the city have a place in the Lich King's current plans? Either way, it is probably for the best if Clasterian funeral rites are strictly adhered to and the catacombs beneath the city are well maintained—catacombs that are even more maze-like. Perhaps the city-maze is just the upper layer of something much bigger.

## CLASTERIAN MINOTAUR GUARD

*They stand shoulder to shoulder, blocking the street, their nostrils flaring.*

**Large 3<sup>rd</sup> level archer [HUMANOID]**

Initiative: +8

**Cestus and shortsword +9 vs. AC**—12 damage

*Natural even miss:* 8 damage

**R: Repeating crossbow +9 vs. AC (1d4 nearby or far away enemies)**—16 damage if the target is nearby, 8 damage if the target is far away

*Limited use:* Requires a standard action to reload, starts the battle loaded.

**R: Sling +9 vs. AC (1 nearby or far away enemy)**—12 damage

*Stand strong:* Once per battle when any minotaur is popped free or is otherwise forced to move, all Clasterian minotaur guards can move into engagement as an immediate free action.

**AC 19**

**PD 17**

**MD 15**

**HP 70**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Clasterian minotaur guards will generally turn up and try to parley, threatening to fire their repeating crossbows if the adventurers don't stand down. They prefer to stand at a distance and use their slingstones to knock adventurers unconscious and drag them off to a guardhouse, but if forced to defend against serious opposition themselves will use their shortswords and crossbows.

Use a tribal minotaur berserker for brutes sent by the guilds to shake the adventurers down for protection money. Use a core book minotaur as tougher guard, and a minotaur adept as a spellcaster in the guild's employ.

## THINGS FOUND IN A CLASTERIAN MINOTAUR'S POSSESSION

Pouch of coins, some of which are minted locally and have no real value outside of Claster. Architectural drawings and floorplans (mazelike of course). Amulet or ring with the insignia of a guild on it. Bottle of hoof polish. Candied mushroom snack. Bunch of keys, confusingly labeled. Small folio of local poetry. Ball of string.

## CLASTERIAN MINOTAUR NAMES

If you follow our lead, Clasterian names have a classical feel to them (Greek or Roman): Aelia, Aetes, Alba, Felix, Flavia, Jocasta, Livia, Marcus, etc.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**The Green Gate**—A representative of the Farmers Guild wishes to hire some faces from out of town to disrupt shipments coming in through the Green Gate. But why would the farmers want to disrupt their own grain shipments into the city? Is it pointing to a split between factions in the powerful farmers guild? Or is the contact really representing the guild he says he is?

**Circle of stones**—A few miles outside Claster is a circle of giant stones, mined from the same quarry as the city walls. It was recently discovered by Clasterian mushroom foragers and has become a site of interest, with increasing numbers of people from the city come out to look at it. Some sightseers have gone missing and there are whispers about servants of the High Druid protecting the stone circle. Have her servants done something to the missing people, or has the High Druid sent them to protect the citizens of Claster from something more dangerous?

**Clearing the catacombs**—Every year, the bones of the previous year's dead are de-articulated and arranged in their final resting place deeper in the catacombs. This year, the crews have discovered signs of disturbance within the catacombs—bones out of place, fresh scuffed footprints where no one should have tread in months. If followers of an icon are interfering with Clasterian funeral rites there is cause for real concern. What else is down in the catacombs besides bones?



# ΝΑΙΑΔ

*Once upon a time, these creatures were protector spirits guarding people against the spirits of the dark waters. Times changed. Now it feels more like these shapechangers protect the dark waters from us.*



We've presented several fey creatures associated with rivers in this book. The river-spirits from the fey entry (page 68) and the river nymph (page 206, also sometimes referred to as naiads) are complex beings who slide towards the potentially-decent-person side of the monster spectrum. The naiads in this entry are shapechanging fey who are much closer to functioning as outright monsters.

Partly this is because the rivers of our default Dragon Empire inherited most of the evil that should fester in the Midland Sea. The rivers are dangerous places and these river-creatures have adjusted to their environment. Partly it's because this is a monster book, and when we have simple stories that make creatures useful as monsters, we go with them!

We didn't bother mentioning it, but all these creatures swim incredibly well, naturally.

## KELPLING

*Just how dangerous could ambulatory water weeds possibly be?* Composite creatures made up of individual algal forms (see the kelplets below!), kelplings were saltwater creatures, living among the kelp forests, until the Emperor tamed the Midland Sea. Now they're usually found in river weeds and they're not happy about that.

Coming in varying shades of green or brown, with a slick, shiny skin, kelplings mimic humanoid forms but are not true shapechangers—you'd never mistake one for an actual creature of that type. Well, not unless it was pretty dark, anyway. They also have a characteristic salty smell (if from the Iron Sea) or one of ever-so-slightly rotting vegetation (if from rivers and lakes).

*Double-strength 5<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [PLANT]*

Initiative: +10

**Slashing Fronds +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—15 damage

*Miss:* 7 damage

*Bladderwreck!:* The first time the kelpling is staggered during a fight, various bladders and blebs on its component symbionts rupture in self-defense, causing 4 acid damage plus 2 ongoing acid damage to all nearby enemies (normal save ends). The kelpling can then perform its stings a bit attack as a free action on the creature it is engaged with.

*[Special trigger] Stings a bit +10 vs. PD*—4 acid damage plus 5 ongoing acid damage (normal save ends).

*Miss:* Well, isn't it your lucky day?

### Nastier Special

*The sum of its parts:* When the kelpling reaches 0 hp, it doesn't die. Instead, it separates into 1d3 + 1 constituent symbionts, known as kelplets.

**AC 19**

**PD 18**

**MD 16**

**HP 130**

## KELPLET

*Aw, aren't they cute? Argh, get them off me, get them off me!*

Being separated from their previously bonded companions makes kelplets annoyed and more than a little bit vengeful.

*4<sup>th</sup> level mook [PLANT]*

Initiative: +7 (keeps same initiative if created by a dying kelpling)

**Slimy scratch +11 vs. AC**—4 damage plus 2 ongoing acid damage (normal save ends).

**AC 18**

**PD 16**

**MD 18**

**HP 18 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one kelplet mook for every 18 damage you deal to the mob.

## WATERHORSE

*Adds new meaning to the term "taking someone for a ride." Or maybe this is the old meaning.*

Compared to most of our monsters, the waterhorse is a story in itself.

Stunted, hairy humanoids in their true form, waterhorses prefer to ensnare their victims by taking on the guise of a beautiful black charger and parading themselves along the edge of the lake in which they live.

Carnivorous by nature, the waterhorse likes to drag its victims under the water, drowning them before devouring their carcasses and spitting the bones back up onto the shore. (A telltale sign a waterhorse has taken up residence, for those paying attention.)

It is said, though, that much of a waterhorse's power resides in its bridle and, if a person can snatch it, the creature must obey the thief's commands. Another version of the story says that the bridle holds the creature's powers of transformation. Is it worth the risk?

*Double-strength 6<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +11

**Hoofbeating +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—19 damage

*Limited use: Beast form only, but OK while hampered.*

**Crushing grasp +11 vs. AC**—22 damage plus 10 ongoing damage (no save, ends when the victim is no longer engaged with the water horse)

*Limited use: Humanoid form only, but OK while hampered.*

**C: A truly wild ride +13 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—The victim is drawn to the waterhorse in its black charger form and happily mounts the beast (treat it as a teleport for simplicity's sake). Once they are astride, the waterhorse attempts to flee into the nearest body of water, taking the rider with them. To prevent this, the rider can attempt a DC 25 Strength-based control check as a quick action (1d20 + level + Strength modifier + any relevant background +

escalation die). If they succeed, the rider gains control of the creature and can either dismount or steer it to where they wish, potentially with a view to stealing its bridle on their next turn (requiring a successful attack roll with that specified aim). If the rider does not attempt to steal the bridle on their next turn, they must make another DC 25 check to remain in control. Stealing the bridle turns the waterhorse into its humanoid form and throws the rider clear. If the rider fails to control the creature at any point, it converts its next standard action to a move action, using it and any other move actions it may have to enter the water and trigger its *watery grave* attack 1 round later. The rider can continue to make control checks until *watery grave* is activated.

**Limited use:** Beast form only, and only when the escalation die is 3+.

**[Special trigger] Watery grave**—Any creature not in control of the waterhorse is dragged beneath the surface of the lake. They no longer make control checks and instead begin to make last gasp saves. If they accrue five failures, they drown. Their bones will make a nice addition to the pile, as soon as the waterhorse has finished gnawing on them.

**Shapechanger:** As a standard action, the waterhorse can change between its true hairy humanoid appearance and its black charger disguise. A successful DC 25 skill check is required to see through the shapechange. If the waterhorse loses its bridle, it cannot change shape again until it recovers it. Blame the creature's lack of imagination for its limited forms.

#### Nastier Special

*Not the first rodeo:* The DC for a truly wild ride is now DC 30.

AC	22		HP	162
PD	19			
MD	14			

## MELUSÍNE

*Melusines may well be a freshwater form of mermaid—they certainly look like one.*

Did melusines go crazy when pushed out of both the Midland Sea and the angry Iron Sea? Or are historical explanations off-the-mark because the melusines have always been nastier than other fey?

In her shapechanged form, the melusine appears as a female humanoid appropriate to her location. In her true form, the melusine's top half resembles either a beautiful human or elven woman, while her lower extremities consist of two fish-like tails, making her an extremely powerful swimmer. A pair of diaphanous wings attached to her underarms and sides (down to her waist) gives her a limited ability to fly.

The melusine's true form always reasserts itself as soon as she enters a large enough body of water. Even if she lives on land, she must return to water once every seven days or she begins to sicken and die. This does not have to be the spring or river from which she originated, but it must be of a sufficient size for her to fully submerge most of her body.

**Brighter waters:** A less-evil melusine, or a melusine taking a break from being a monster, might venture onto shore to find a partner and raid a family. Sorry: *raise* a family.

Folklore emphasizes the stories about human husbands but the odds favor dark elves who can hold their own with a fey shapechanger. Any male offspring are of the same species as their father; the girls, upon reaching puberty, acquire their mother's abilities, as well as her weaknesses.

*Double-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +10

**Cold, Wet Slap +10 vs. AC (2 attacks, or 1 attack if in humanoid form)**—24 damage, or 30 damage vs. a confused target.

**R: Dread Wail +12 vs. MD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—40 psychic damage.

*Natural even hit:* Target is confused (save ends).

**Limited use:** Only in her true form when no enemy is confused.

**Flight:** If in her true form, the melusine has limited flight capability, which she uses to effect an escape if sufficiently close to a convenient source of fresh water.

**Invisibility:** The first time the melusine is staggered in battle, she becomes invisible and attempts to extricate herself from the fight. She remains invisible until she either attacks someone, or performs a flashy maneuver (such as regaining her true form and flying away).

**Shapechanger:** As a standard action, the melusine can change her form to that of any humanoid or fish (the latter usually only if already in water), or turn back into her true form. A successful DC 25 skill check is required to see through the shapechange.

AC	21		HP	199
PD	21			
MD	19			

## ΠÍX

*Some days they'll happily tutor you in harmonic chorale. Other days they'll drown you just to hear the bubbles as you go down.*

Another type of freshwater merfolk, the male of this species is referred to as a nix, the female as a nixie. Unlike the melusine, nix/nixies don't specialize on maintaining beautiful forms, although they are, universally, somewhat vain. They also lack wings and have but a single fishtail.

Every nix and nixie is obsessed with music. They most often play the fiddle, harp, or reed flute and are fine singers, with silvery, clear voices, with undertones reminiscent of water bubbling in a brook.

They prefer to live in waterfalls and areas of fast-flowing water, but they are prepared to slum it in lakes if there's no better local alternative.

It's said that if you can discover a specific nix's price, you can acquire a magical tutor who'll make you a musical prodigy. It's not clear whether that's just a lie that nixies tell to cull the population of its most gullible would-be bards.

*8<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +11

**Bop on, or straight through, the nose +13 vs. AC—30 damage.**

**C: Mellifluous music +13 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—20

psychic damage and the target is entranced and becomes confused (save ends). Often, instead of attacking their fellows, the hapless sap rushes to the creature's side, permitting the nix/nixie to use their what lies beneath attack on their next turn provided they are close to a suitable water source.

*Limited use:* Can only be used when the escalation die is even.

*[Special trigger] What lies beneath*—any creature drawn to the nix/nixie's side and still confused falls into the creature's arms and lets themselves be dragged under the water by their new paramour. They begin to make last gasp saves (in place of those for being confused), drowning when they reach their fifth failure.

*Shapechanger:* As a standard action, the nix/nixie can change its form to that of any humanoid, or turn back into their true form. A successful DC 25 skill check is required to see through the shapechange. Whether or not the old wives' tale about nix/nixies always having wet hem is true in your game is up to you; but if it is, the DC check may be lowered to 20 as a result.

AC 23

PD 19

MD 20

**HP 160**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Kelplings are by nature communal creatures. They lack initiative and are happy to serve naiads, frogspawn, sahuagin, and most any other water-dwelling creature they come into contact with as servants, bodyguards, or worshippers. Just tell them what to do.

Nix and nixie live in groups. Nix also sometimes form friendship or con-artist teams with waterhorses; nixie as bard, waterhorse as horse, theater!

Melusine may have devoted friends of nearly any type, usually an elf or other fey. But only one at a time.

## NAIADS AND THE ICONS

**Crusader:** The Crusader's people say that the naiads of Lake Hope are in league with the Diabolist and are just as bad as demons. That may be propaganda, but it's definitely a sign that the demon-hunters aren't as competent dealing with aquatic threats as they are with hellholes.

**Elf Queen:** Naiads are not welcome in the Court of Stars. "Not welcome" as in "slain as monsters, particularly if they come up the rivers or try to shapechange to hide their nature." It's your call whether this is because the naiads *are* monsters or this is part of the reason they *act like* monsters.

**High Druid:** It's not exactly the naiads' fault that they have become river-monsters, but the High Druid would prefer that they get out of the rivers and get back to the oceans where they belong. Since they simply can't, there's no love lost.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Wedding Bells**—The family of a young and impressionable noble approach the characters with an interesting proposition: The youth has his heart set on marrying a most beautiful and enchanting maiden, but no one knows anything about her or her family connections. Would they mind doing a little bit of legwork to make sure the family isn't about to become entangled in a messy (or somewhat soggy) scandal?

**Tone Shift**—The local musical festival is rapidly approaching and the competition this year is the fiercest it's ever been. It's rumored that some people will go to any lengths to make sure they get their hands on the Grand Prize, even though the use of magic is forbidden. But Tinker Fosse, a gnome notorious for his inability to carry a tune in a bucket, swears he's going to be victorious this time. Why has there been an outbreak of petty thefts and vandalism since he made his intentions clear? Has he managed to discover a nix's price, or has he got something else up his sleeve entirely?

**Weed Issues**—The locals in a nearby fishing village are complaining about their recent run of bad luck. Even in the calmest of seas, boats are regularly foundering for no apparent reason. Survivors claim that the seaweed itself came alive and attacked them. Some are trying to lay the blame at the kelplings' door, but these villagers have always had a good relationship with those creatures in the past. What could have happened to change the kelplings' attitude, if that is, indeed, what's really going on? (Hint: Something much worse.)

# ΝΥΜΦΗ

*Nymphs are magical creatures bound to the land as guardians. Although they began their lives as elves, as the ages roll on, many nymphs lose themselves to the lands they are bound to, becoming more and more elemental.*



# NEAR-IMMORTAL GUARDIANS BOUND BY SERVICE

We're going to present one likely story of the nymph's origins, while hinting at others. Even if you decide that our detailed story is not the final truth in your campaign, it at least makes a compelling secret that could motivate many iconic plots.

## DANGEROUS SECRETS

The player characters may or may not know the story of the Elf Queen's creation of the original Orc Lord, part of the icons' all-out effort to destroy and replace the Wizard King.

The most likely story behind the creation of the nymphs involves similar dangerous rituals. The Elf Queen of ages past (or whoever wore the crown as the monarch of elvenkind) had many such powerful secrets, rituals, and artifacts and processes that seemed too dangerous to preserve intact and too powerful to be entirely destroyed.

To hide these magics, and erase their memories, the elves splintered the magic into hundreds or thousands of pieces and secreted them through the world, assigning each splintered piece a guardian. The guardians were volunteers (supposedly!), elves who gave up their normal lives to become magically transformed guardians of fragments of secrets they were glad not to comprehend.

The Elf Queen and others at her Court acknowledged such unselfish sacrifice by bestowing power upon these elves, extending their lifespan through rituals that blended elven lifeforce with elemental energy drawn from the site where the magic would be stored. The elf was tasked to guard the site for all time, or until an unspecified time in the future when service was no longer required. The elves called these immortal guardians *nymphaea*. Except among the pretentious or pedantic, it's been shortened to "nymph."

Elves who became nymphs were transformed by the process, becoming something more than mortal as their life energy mixed with the land. Each nymph becomes acutely aware of its domain, whether lake, grotto, river, wood, hill, or mountain. The attunement is so strong it could feel the river's anger or the forest's pain when someone despoils the land nearby. Each also begins to take on characteristics of the land it guards, becoming tree-like, or river-like, or hill-like. One cost of their service and transformation, however, is being limited to the region where they were bound to the land, never able to experience the wider world.

As ages pass, most nymphs loses more of their original identity as their attunement to the land they guard increases. Many still remember themselves and their purpose, though their outlook upon the world will have shifted. A few, especially those who have suffered side-effects from the magic they were set to guard, have degraded further. Damaged nymphs may barely remember their purpose, or may have become confused and seek to destroy any who enter their domain rather than simply protect that which was hidden away.

Whether they remember their duty or not, one other side effect of the nymph's sacrifice usually holds true—it's probably a lonely existence. Becoming a nymph removes an elf from the shared dreams of its kin and the Elf Queen, and the nymph's forced isolation takes a toll, even on creatures capable of losing themselves within the land for centuries. For these reasons, they often seek news of the wider world from those who pass by, as well as the company of others. Stories about nymphs and other fey creatures taking mortals captive could be based on interactions with nymphs who lose track of time.

**More social nymphs:** A few more stable implementations of the nymph rituals established several nymphs in close proximity to each other. Domains that overlap slightly may protect areas that have intrinsic value as well as holding magical secrets. The cover of this issue shows such an arrangement, a quiet moment when a river nymph is constructing an image of the castle whose ruins the hill nymph is both bound to and sitting upon. What the wild dryad in the background thinks, we can't be sure.

**Where's the loot?** Nymphs may be guardians, but you'll have noticed that we're not suggesting that the GM needs to create magic, treasure, and artifacts for the nymphs to be guarding. Obvious treasure locations tend to get looted, which is why there are so many thoroughly-raided tombs. The version of the story we're focused on suggests that the magic which nymphs are guarding is so subtle that most people, and even most would-be adventuresome looters, have never noticed it's there. You can fight off a nymph, search its domain, fight it off again, and eventually destroy the area and you're probably still not getting any actual loot out of it. The secret? Well, that may have been released (see below). But the sum of all those released secrets could be more of a campaign plotline event than a lootable moment.

Of course, if you want to make nymph land prime looting grounds, you can do that. Stocking nymph domains with actual treasures suggests that the creation of the nymphs may have been quite recent instead of ancient.

**To release a secret:** PCs could probably release a nymph's secret magic by slaying (temporarily!) the nymph and then performing a powerful ritual or using an icon relationship advantage. NPCs are probably stuck attempting a powerful ritual. Alternatively, destroying the area entirely or laying waste to everything that gives it its identity might also work, but doing so may also earn you new enemies.

If you'd like the secret to have an element of a game effect, while encouraging player input in the campaign, you could treat part of each secret as a powerful icon relationship advantage. It might be with the Elf Queen. Or perhaps not . . .

**A shell game:** Maybe there aren't actually magical secrets attached to all the lands the nymphs are guarding. Perhaps most of the nymphs are decoys, meant to give the Elf Queen time to respond if anyone makes a serious effort to plunder the domains of her guardians. How would nymphs react if they learned that they were decoys? Would that vary by individual or would there be a common response? Would nymphs who truly guard magical secrets now differ from the rest, or would that be too obvious a giveaway?

**Penance, not volunteerism:** What if not all nymphs were volunteers? What if some were serving sentences? If those sentences were magically enforced, might these nymphs be freed from their duties after a lengthy servitude? Thirteen ages seems about right!

What happens to their secrets or the magic they've been guarding in this case? Perhaps some of the nymphs in your campaign aren't as bound to a location as we're assuming: they've done their time, but stayed on with land they've come to love. But they may not act predictably or with any fondness for the icons and magicians who you'd expect them to get along with.

For another possibility, see the Orc Lord as a Former Secret paragraph on the next page.

## GUARDIANS OF WOOD, WATER, AND STONE

Over time, each nymph takes on the appearance of the land where it resides. Nymphs in a forest (dryad) become tree-like. Nymphs guarding a river, stream, or pond (naiad) take on the appearance of running water or river stones as they let the currents wash over them. Nymphs protecting a hilltop ruin or a mountain cave (oread) become still and stone-like, sunbaked and weathered by wind and rain. Nymphs guarding a sea grotto (nereid) take on the appearance of seaweed, sand, or sea creatures that glide on the water's currents.

Nymphs spend the long hours of the ages shifting between more-or-less-elven and elemental forms. Those who remember themselves and their duty can always choose elven form (though often with elemental or natural characteristics like water flesh, bark hair, or stony flesh). They usually take humanoid form to converse with humanoids passing through their domain to get news of the wider world.

Nymphs in humanoid form may be female or male, androgynous or none of the above. Eventually, the oldest or most wild nymphs can no longer remember themselves or their original form, and shift more and more into elemental shapes.

No matter how little of their original selves nymphs remember, one truth almost always holds. Nymphs will protect the magic they were originally tasked with guarding, whether directly through force, or by misdirection and lies. If their charge is removed from their domain, the nymph's bonds to the land are destroyed.

What happens then? That could be up to you. Is it more interesting for a failed guardian to disappear, or to be charged with regaining their secret?



## NYMPHS AND THE ICONS

Initially, nymphs were linked to the Elf Queen. An earlier Elf Queen and that age's equivalent of the Court of Stars used significant amounts of power to create nymphs, forging strong bonds to last for centuries.

Nymphs who remember themselves will always help the Elf Queen and elves in need as long as that help doesn't interfere with their ability to guard their magic. They may help other folk, if it suits them, but a nymph's view of the world is alien to most PCs. Not only do they hold a measure of power from the Elf Queen and her Court and thus share the sensibilities of those elder beings, but their near-immortal lifespans and connection to the land also gives them a long-term worldview, so their actions can seem strange to short-term thinking PCs.

The process of creating nymphs had an effect the Elf Queen didn't expect, however. Because a nymph's lifeforce is bound to the land it guards, many of the oldest nymphs are losing their sense of "elfness" and becoming more elemental in nature. As this happens, they become wild and are more likely to attack those entering their domain without provocation, or they follow their whims and collect a humanoid or two who piques their interest.

As a nymph goes wild, its allegiances shift toward the High Druid and her followers, who can now connect with the creatures on an elemental level. Sometimes wild nymphs lose humanoid speech, and can only converse using the voices of water and wind. A wild dryad's trees might grow angry and attack PCs who aren't listening to it, or a naiad might cause a sudden flood of a small river as the PCs cross because they are ignoring its warnings (which sound like river stones clinking to the characters).



As the nymphs' relationships change from Elf Queen to High Druid, they might or might not reveal some secrets to their new master. It's possible that each secret revealed sends power from the Elf Queen to the High Druid. Alternatively, the burden of holding these secrets could be shifting from the Elf Queen to the High Druid. If you feel like adding high-magic complications to your campaign, the specific nature of the dark magic kept hidden by the network of nymphs could become a fracture point between the icons.

**Other icons:** If you decide that you want the secrets that nymphs guard to connect with other icons, you could bend long-lived nymphs away from the land and toward other icons. If the magic goes wrong, Orc Lord-related secrets might turn the region into a spawning pit. Archmage-related secrets could end up interrupting the great wards. Secrets related to the ancient Wizard King could accomplish all sorts of mischief.

**Orc Lord as a former secret:** Thirteen ages is a long time for a secret to be kept hidden. What if the forces that came together to create the Orc Lord got loose as the result of the death or dissolution of a large number of nymphs? If you're having fun with the concept that the nymph-network is loaded with dangerous secrets, this seems worth hinting at! If the Orc Lord is now loose because something happened to too-many-nymphs, does that mean the Orc Lord has uniquely evil intentions toward the surviving nymphs? Is the Elf Queen going to recruit heroes like the adventurers to visit nymphs, gain their magical power in some possibly peaceful way, and bring it back to the Elf Queen? So many things could go wrong.

## Using ΠΥΜΡΗS AS ΠPCs

While nymphs can be dangerous foes, especially to those trying to take the magic they guard, many still remember themselves. Nymphs that have strong connections with the Elf Queen and that haven't gone fully wild could be allies. They are knowledgeable about the region, and might be competent historians within a limited scope unless they've begun going wild.

Locals might have stories about a nymph in the area, ranging from helpful to dangerous. Some have been given titles, such as Lorekeeper, Old Man Tree, the Pool's Delight, the Talking Mound, Ancient One, the Sea Daughter, and more.

On the other hand, nymphs that remember themselves may have unusual agendas. That could be particularly true if the nymph has somehow grown bitter about its situation, or if it has been turned by an icon other than the Elf Queen or High Druid.

## ΠΥΜΡΗ POWERS

The following powers are common for nymphs.

**Domain bound:** Nymphs are tied to an area of land or water.

Land areas will be at most a couple miles wide; water areas might be much larger. As a rule, nymphs can't leave the area they're bound to.

**Limited immortality:** A nymph that drops to 0 hit points or is otherwise slain will eventually return to life in its domain, so long as its domain and its secret survives. After an hour, a nymph needs a hard save to return to life. After eight hours, a nymph needs a normal save to return to life. If the nymph has still not returned, roll an easy save at the end of each 24 hours until the nymph succeeds.

**Note on types:** The following nymphs with the humanoid type probably remember themselves. Nymphs that have probably forgotten their original selves have the elemental type.

## WOOD ΝΥΜΡΗ (DRYAD)

*Maybe there were always wood elves who longed to truly become creatures of bark and branch. Or maybe the magic was just easier that way.*

*Double-strength 2<sup>nd</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +6

Vulnerability: fire

**Sharp wooden fingers** +7 vs. AC—12 damage

**R: Spiked acorn** +6 vs. AC—11 damage

**C: Willowy words** +7 vs. MD (1d2 nearby enemies)—The target is confused (save ends)

*Natural 16+*: The save is hard (16+) instead.

*Environmental boost*: The dryad gains a +4 bonus to the attack against targets that have consumed natural food or water within the dryad's domain within the last day.

*Tree stride*: As a move action, a dryad can enter any living tree within its domain it's touching and teleport to another tree within that region. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

### Nastier Specials

*Call tree friends*: Before the start of the battle, the dryad summons 2d4 awakened trees (*13 True Ways*, page 202) that fight with it.

*Entrancing beauty*: The dryad can appear as a beautiful wood elf. While speaking with creatures outside of battle, the dryad can choose to add power to its words to try to charm those listening. Make a *willowy words* attack against each creature that can hear the dryad. On a hit, instead of being confused, the target is charmed (as per the *charm person* spell). It then considers the dryad a friend. Creatures missed by the attack only notice the charm attempt if it misses by 4 or more. A dryad can attempt to charm a creature only once per day.

*Woodland grace*: The dryad can take an extra standard action during its turn when the escalation die is even.

AC 18

PD 15

HP 76

MD 13

## WILD DRYAD

*The grower the dryad, the treer he thinks.*

*Double-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level wrecker [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: fire

**Branching clubs and flailing branches** +8 vs. AC (1d4 attacks)—15 damage

**C: Unexpected natural hazards** +8 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)—24 damage (representing things like bees erupting from underground hives, branches falling from other trees, cave-ins, and whatever else seems available in nature's arsenal)

*Limited use*: 1/battle.

*Environmental boost*: The dryad gains a +4 bonus to attacks against targets that have consumed natural food or water within the dryad's domain within the last day.

*Tree stride*: As a move action, a dryad can enter any living tree within its domain it's touching and teleport to another tree within that region. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

### Nastier Specials

*Call tree friends*: Before the start of the battle, the dryad summons 2d4 awakened trees (*13 True Ways*, page 202) that fight with it.

*Woodland grace*: The dryad can take an extra standard action during its turn when the escalation die is even.

AC 19

PD 17

MD 15

HP 100

## RIVER ΝΥΜΡΗ (ΝΑΙΑΔ)

*"I have remembered what is important. Have you?"*

*Double-strength 3<sup>rd</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +9

**Fist of water** +8 vs. AC—17 damage, and the target pops free from the naiad

**R: Skipped river stone** +7 vs. AC—12 damage

*Natural even hit or miss*: The attack targets another nearby enemy unless it's already targeted three enemies this way.

**C: Watery words** +8 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)—The target is confused (save ends; see *the river's song* below)

*The river's song*: When a creature is confused from the naiad's *watery words* attack, it immediately moves into the water next to the naiad as a free action to defend the naiad. The target takes half the damage of the next attack that hits the naiad. During its turn, it doesn't attack, instead moving to stay next to the naiad. Each time the target fails its save, it will again defend the naiad against the next attack that hits it, taking half damage.

*One with the river*: A naiad can walk on the surface of water, making it seem shallow, and it can swim through the water and breathe underwater with ease. Its enemies might have a more difficult time engaging it.

### Nastier Special

*Naiad's cleansing*: Each time a target confused by *watery words* fails its save, it will forget something important. GM's choice or player's suggestion!

AC 18

PD 18

MD 14

HP 80

## WILD NAIAD

*Careening water in what was calm, a wave that shows a face for a moment before it hits.*

*Double-strength 5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +11

**Fist of water +10 vs. AC**—32 damage, and the target pops free from the naiad

**R: Skipped river stone +9 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The attack targets another nearby enemy unless it's already targeted three enemies this way.

**C: Watery words +10 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—The target is confused (save ends; see *the river's song* below)

*The river's song:* When a creature is confused from the naiad's *watery words* attack, it immediately moves into the water next to the naiad as a free action to defend the naiad. The target takes half the damage of the next attack that hits the naiad. During its turn, it doesn't attack, instead moving to stay next to the naiad. Each time the target fails its save, it will again defend the naiad against the next attack that hits it, taking half damage.

*One with the river:* A naiad can walk on the surface of water, making it seem shallow, and it can swim through the water and breathe underwater with ease. Its enemies might have a more difficult time engaging it.

### Nastier Special

*Naiad's cleansing:* Each time a target confused by *watery words* fails its save, it will forget something important. GM's choice or player's suggestion!

AC	20	HP	130
PD	20		
MD	16		

## HILL NYMPH (OREAD)

*The elflad sitting on the toppled column at the peak of the hill watches you approach. "You're not allowed here," he says slowly. Then his flesh turns as cold and hard as the marble column he's sitting on.*

*Double-strength 4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +6

Vulnerability: thunder

**Hardened fist +9 vs. AC**—25 damage

*Natural 14+:* The target is stuck until the end of its next turn as a stone hand rises from the ground to grasp it.

*Natural 18+:* As above, but save ends.

**C: Hard words +9 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—20 psychic damage, and the target is overcome by the cold beauty and piercing words of the oread (save ends); while overcome, the target takes a penalty to all defenses equal to the escalation die

*Natural 16+:* The target also takes the penalty to attacks.

*Miss:* 10 psychic damage.

*Limited use:* 1/battle.

*Earth's embrace:* Once per battle as a move action, the oread can pull one creature currently overcome by its *hard words* attack under the ground into an embrace with a part of its consciousness. The oread's physical form remains above ground and continues to battle. The target remains underground, taking no actions except to bond with the oread and telepathically reveal its secrets to the oread until it saves. While underground, it can't be seen or targeted by allies. Saving from being overcome releases the target from underground.

### Nastier Special

*Resist weapon damage 12+:* When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 12+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	21	HP	100
PD	17		
MD	12		

## WILD OREAD

*The party druid may be able to talk you out of this fight. No druid? Fight.*

*Double-strength 6<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: thunder

**Hardened fist +11 vs. AC**—38 damage

*Natural 14+:* The target is stuck until the end of its next turn as a stone hand rises from the ground to grasp it.

*Natural 18+:* As above, but save ends.

*Stoneflow:* As a move action once per round, the oread can sink into the ground and emerge somewhere nearby. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

### Nastier Special

*Resist weapon damage 14+:* When a weapon attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 14+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

AC	23	HP	170
PD	19		
MD	14		



## SEA ΝΥΜΦΗ (ΝΕΡΕΙΔ)

*Perhaps because they are some of the oldest nymphs, or perhaps because of the magic the First Emperor used to tame the Midland Sea, sea nymphs are most likely to have forgotten themselves. Thus, they are also the most likely to immediately attack PCs who wander into their domain instead of first talking to them.*

*Double-strength 5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +8

Vulnerability: fire

**Coral claws +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—16 damage

**C: Rippling words +9 vs. MD (up to 2 nearby enemies)**—The target falls unconscious as it begins to slumber (save ends; an ally next to the target can also use a standard action to wake the target)

*Limited use:* When the escalation die is odd.

*Call of the sea:* Twice per battle as a quick action (once per round), the nereid can call to a slumbering creature, and during its next turn (while still unconscious), that creature will swim under the water seeking the nereid. The creature must start making last gasp saves, which replace its save against being unconscious. After the fourth failure, it drowns.

*Child of the sea:* The nereid can walk atop the waves and move (and breathe) underwater without restraint. Its enemies might have a more difficult time engaging it.

AC 20

PD 20

MD 16

HP 135

## WILD ΝΕΡΕΙΔ

*Not likely to be found in the Midland Sea. But around eleven ruins swamped by the Iron Sea, like the Grey Towers? Oh yes.*

*Double-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +10

Vulnerability: fire

**Coral claws +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—25 damage

**R: Rising wave +12 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—24 damage, and the target loses its next move action

*Escalation die is 3+:* The attack targets 1d3 + 1 nearby enemies in a group instead.

*Child of the sea:* The nereid can walk atop the waves and move (and breathe) underwater without restraint. Its enemies might have a more difficult time engaging it.

AC 22

PD 22

MD 18

HP 200

## BUILDING BATTLES

While nymphs often try to misdirect people from entering their domain, sometimes they must take a more direct approach to protect their secrets. A single nymph might be a fitting enemy for a low-level group of PCs, but nymphs often fight with allies they trust. Usually, they befriend local beasts who fight with them when needed. Beasts don't care about what the nymph is guarding, making them the best allies. Bears, wolves, wolverines, apes, eagles, spiders, ants, alligators, eels, sharks, long-toothed gar, and similar creatures that can suddenly emerge from concealing terrain work well. Thanks to the nymph's connection with these beasts, they might act more intelligently than normal, using simple tactics.

Nymphs willing to trust more intelligent allies often seek aid from fey beings, sentient plant creatures, or those who are kindred spirits in their respect for nature and the wild. A band of centaurs, colony of fungaloids, or cluster of pixie pods might fight alongside a dryad or oread. A naïad or nereid might be protected by a well-fed clutch of harpies, school of mermen, or even a partially tamed and often fed river hydra. These types of creatures will definitely use the local terrain, whether water, wood, or hill, to their advantage to take enemies by surprise.

The most powerful nymphs probably have a small group of humanoid defenders who've become enthralled with the nymph's charms. Such allies could be of any race, with a mix of abilities to call upon when the nymph is threatened.

Another option could be an enclave of druids who revere an elemental nymph as some sort of manifestation of a forest god and dedicate themselves to the nymph's protection.

## THINGS FOUND IN A NYMPH'S DOMAIN

As we mentioned previously, a nymph's true treasure is usually so well hidden no one ever discovers it. But as visitors enter a nymph's domain, sometimes failing to leave, interesting items begin to show up. Many nymphs will pass those items along to friendly travelers, hoping to keep treasure seekers from their domain, while others might create caches for would-be looters to find, thinking they've found the nymph's treasure and happily going on their way.

Here are lists of items that might be found in a nymph's domain. Some may be valuable, while others are just interesting or strange.

**Dryad:** Woodland sculptures of beasts in action poses. Leaf-inspired jewelry made of jade and silver. Ebony drinking mug carved with an image of a tree. Fungus infused skeletal remains with a rotting pack filled with coins. Painted bullseye with a single white-fletched arrow in it. Ivory hunting knife depicting a panther. Stump throne. Necklace of goblin ears strung between trees. An empty campsite with three tents and food laid out on a flat rock but no one in sight.

**Naiad:** Tinted goggles. An intact keg of fresh ale, still cold. Dwarf skeleton tied to weighted boots. Slightly waterlogged canoe with only a backpack inside. A reverse whirlpool. A partially buried iron strongbox with gems and a journal inside. River stones and logs laid to spell out messages only readable by someone high in the air. A huge beaver dam that forms a large natural pool. An old troll cave filled with bones and trinkets. Gold nuggets arrayed into an image of the Elf Queen's or High Druid's symbol.

**Oread:** Fossilized skeletons with jeweled rings on hands embedded in stone. Marble bust of the Emperor, with charcoal graffiti on it. Vein of purple crystals under a small waterfall. Orc-made helm split at the top. Small rocks stacked into pyramids in strange formations. A cave opening just wide enough to crawl into. A petrified mountain troll body. An open sinkhole filled with water and huge, white jutting crystals of some sort. A flask of ice wine being kept cool in a runoff of glacier water.

**Nereid:** Sunken ship graveyard. Necklace of coral seahorses. Underwater explorer's brass bell helmet. Glass fishing globes. A bottle with a message inside. A wax-sealed scroll tube with a map inside locked in a chest stuck in a ship's wreckage underwater. A dug-up, seemingly empty treasure chest on a sand bar. A series of three waterlogged halfling corpses, each linked to the next by a rope around their necks and an icon's rune carved into their flesh. A playful dolphin that seems like it's trying to communicate. A giant clam colony.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**The Great Oak**—Someone the PCs need to talk to is delirious with sickness. The local healer says the affliction can only be cured with a leaf from the Great Oak in a nearby glade. The only problem is the tree has a guardian who doesn't like people taking from the tree. Her name is Gerseil, and she lives in the glade. Maybe they can talk her into letting them have a leaf.

**Weeping River**—A short while ago, the river that is the town of Springbrook's primary water source went bad. The water turned reddish, like blood, and it now makes people sick. What's worse, the water seems to be changing the beasts that live in and around it, mutating them and making them hostile. Divinations have revealed something or someone upriver is causing the trouble with magic. The heroes need to figure out what it is and get the water back to normal.

**Hill 273**—The local Imperial geographer has been ordered to update the empire's maps of the region with the elevation of all hills in the area to verify borders and for other reasons that are state secrets. Camilla Arellles, the geographer, has measured nearly all 311 hills in her region, but is having trouble with one of them on the edge of the Imperial border. One apprentice she sent up there came back raving, and another never returned. From what she could gather from the former, the hill is alive somehow. She's not sure what that's about, but she has permission to spend Imperial coin to get the job done, and she's going to do it. Enter the PCs, who are being paid to measure a hill. How hard could this be?



### Mother Nature's Little Killers

*Powerful, elemental creatures that can master the natural world and twist one's mind—that has possibilities. Guardians are passive. What if these "nymphs" were assassins instead? Call them vengeance elementals, maybe, or dread nymphs. They could be a secret weapon that the briar elves have cooked up, ancient evil revived with unholy rites and the spilling of innocent blood. They could be spirits called up out of ancient ruins to feed the earth with mortal blood.*



# OWLBEAR



# Six Things That May or May Not Be True About Owlbears

1. Evil masterminds and deviant city guards who train owlbears tag them with owl-bells. An owlbear who thinks you can't hear it is an owlbear who is thrice as likely to tear off a limb. So the next time you hear gently jangling bells getting closer up the alley, it may not be a cat with a songbird habit.
2. Druids who befriend owlbears wouldn't think of magically embedding bells in an owlbear's ears (what, you thought the owlbears were just going to let the rakshasa dangle bells around their neck like a housepet?). Druids work a bit harder on attuning to the owlbear's scent, and then making sure they stay downwind of their 'friend.' That's a fun way to design a battle, by the way, with 'masters' who are always making sure they stay downwind of their utterly untrustworthy attack beasts!
3. Owlbears can twist their heads around 180 degrees. Like owls. And some weird ghosts. Please use this the very next time a player character tries to sneak up on an owlbear. We could have used this concept to illustrate this entry but we're saving it for a social media campaign.
4. We generally avoid thinking too much about baby monsters. There's an entertaining two-volume *Baby Bestiary* from Andreas Walters and Metal Weave Games if you want to go that direction, but in most games I run, the spell *summon baby monster* is a bit of a counterspell vs. *summon high-power heroic fantasy*. That being said, our publisher keeps commissioning pictures of baby monsters and dang, we've got this cute baby owlbear posed near a snowman just freezing a hole in our pocket. So yeah, baby owlbear stats. We did 'em a little in *The Crown Commands* (page 60) and there's another set below.
5. The thing no one mentions about owlbears are their haunting calls. Or maybe that's not the right word. Owls are haunting. Whooooo they cry, lonely in the night. Owlbears cry WHHHOOOOOOOO and as it echoes off the canopy and the mountains you huddle by your bedroll and think, "Not me, not us, not tonight, please just find your mate or whatever and let us get to sleep." A few minutes later you're negotiating with the wizard again to see if she can jerry-rig an unconventional casting of the *sleep* spell for you while she's on watch. WHHHOOOOOOOOOOOOOO.

6. We try not to waste your time with filler text. Sometimes icon notes aren't all that useful for monsters. There just may not be that much new to say about a particular monster and the icons. Does anyone need to know that the Crusader always wears armor because he's sensitive about the scars from the 'owlbear incident' back before he became a full icon? Does anyone care that the Priestess regards owlbears as twin-souled animals? Is it worth the space to mention that a previous Archmage established a laboratory owlbear-breeding program because he wanted to ensure that contestants in the animal-mutation battles outside Horizon all started with an equal-strength creature? (Not this Archmage! Oh no! Never! Sins of the previous generation and all that.)

## OPTIONS TO LOSING A LIMB

If having a PC lose a limb doesn't fit the story, or doesn't work well in the middle of the campaign, consider these alternatives.

- The PC loses two recoveries, or
- The heroes take a campaign loss because the wound slows the group down and forces them to find a healer. They get back into the action soon, but first something bad happens.

## GREAT HORNED OWLBEAR

*There's a touch of the Druid about this one. Yes, that Druid.*

*Large 5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]*

Initiative: +10

**Rip and peck +11 vs. AC**—20 damage, and until the end of the owlbear's next turn, the target is hampered (*makes only basic attacks*) while engaged with the owlbear.

*Savage hybrid:* If the escalation die is odd, make another *rip and peck* attack.

*Feed the cubs:* An owlbear that scores a critical hit against a hampered enemy tears a piece of the creature off (GM chooses a limb) and will subsequently attempt to retreat with the prize, screeching to its cubs to flee with it. The torn-up enemy is stunned until the end of its next turn.

*Silent hunter:* Checks to hear a great horned owlbear take a -5 penalty.

*Half owl, half bear, half marvel:* Until the escalation die is 5+, if no enemies are hampered at the start of the great horned owlbear's turn, it regenerates 3d6 hit points.

AC 20

PD 18

MD 14

HP 120



## Snowy Owlbear

*One guess where you'll find the most of these things. First word rhymes with 'lost.' Second word rhymes with 'strange! No, not the Moss Grange, that's for the mossy owlbears.*

*Large 3<sup>rd</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]*

*Initiative: +8*

**Peck & tear +8 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—8 damage, and until the end of the owlbear's next turn, the target is hampered (*makes*

*only basic attacks*) while engaged with the owlbear.

**Natural even hit:** Until the end of the snowy owlbear's next turn, the target is hampered (*makes only basic attacks*) while engaged with the owlbear

**Feed the cubs:** A snowy owlbear that scores a critical hit against a hampered enemy tears a piece of the creature off (GM chooses a limb) and will subsequently attempt to retreat with the prize, screeching to its cubs to flee with it. The torn-up enemy is stunned until the end of its next turn.

**Protect the cubs:** The snowy owlbear's crit range expands by 1 for each owlbear cub that has dropped this battle.

**Resist cold 14+:** Attacks that deal cold damage deal half damage to the snowy owlbear unless they roll a natural 14+.

**Silent hunter:** Checks to hear a snowy owlbear take a -5 penalty.

AC	<b>19</b>	
PD	17	HP <b>94</b>
MD	14	

## Snowy Owlbear Cub

*Too cute for words. But the snowman has got to be an illusion or a reality break from some other world.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> level troop [BEAST]*

*Initiative: +6*

**Beak or claw +7 vs. AC**—6 damage



**Rolly-polly:** Gains a +3 bonus on disengage checks, or adds the escalation die, whichever is higher.

**Resist cold 12+:** Attacks that deal cold damage deal half damage to the snowy owlbear cub unless they roll a natural 12+.

**Weakling:** This monster only counts as half a normal monster when building battles.

AC	<b>18</b>	
PD	15	HP <b>30</b>
MD	11	

If phoenixes were not so rare, the Dragon Empire might be named the Phoenix Empire! As a symbol of immortal power, phoenixes are so much more than a symbol—they seem functionally immortal, though there may be years or decades or even centuries between some rebirths.

But depending on how you count, there are between two and four dragon icons and no phoenix icons. As you'll see in the Languages and Names sidebar below, phoenixes can't talk, relying on nonverbal communication. Dragons talk, and dragons are powerful, ruthless, and extremely, extremely smart. Phoenixes are powerful, potentially occasionally ruthless, and not so smart. Not smart at all, really, compared to dragons, though there are a lot of PCs in most adventuring groups who can't compare to dragons! Phoenixes are fiery elementals who may be just as intelligent as the average human, but who don't have to be intelligent or wise to survive—they end up surviving, more or less, no matter what silly situations they get themselves into.

Young phoenixes are followers. Ancient phoenixes are more often loners than leaders, but may still be loyal to causes the rest of the world has forgotten. Sometimes phoenixes serve great causes of the gods or icons of light. Sometimes they're just fiery beasts. And sometimes they're burning down all that's good and holy because that's what their best friends are into.

## LIGHT AND DARK PHOENIXES

The phoenix is associated with change, but it's not widely known that as fiery phoenixes go through their cycle of rebirths the birds themselves change, drawing in light and fire into their internal furnaces until they become rare creatures known as void phoenixes. Eventually the void phoenix ignites, becoming a solar phoenix and leaving the world to live high in the sky.

The life cycle (or rather the life-death-life-death-life cycle) of the phoenix is famous, even to uneducated peasants. It is commonly thought that phoenixes are immortal, and that may or may not be true. They can cheat death by self-immolating and being reborn.

# PHOENIX



## LOYAL HEARTS OF FIRE

Phoenixes value loyalty above all else. Once they decide to serve somebody, or give a promise, they follow through no matter what. If those that they serve display great loyalty to others, or a self-sacrificing nature, the phoenix may well form a bond for life. Some phoenixes serve those that they bond with long after the mortal has died: guarding an important site, delivering important messages to descendants, or carrying out missions generations after a scheme has been set in motion.

Generally, this loyalty has a time limit. When a friend, master, or monarch dies, the phoenix *eventually* finds new loyalties. Rebirths burn away the old loyalties. But for some phoenixes, that's a long slow process. In human or even elven terms, a few phoenixes might be hanging on to philosophies or attachments that died in a previous-apocalypse-twice-removed.

## ALTERNATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Gamemastering is about finding story hooks where the world looked smooth. Phoenixes loyal to the PCs' enemies can burn the PCs plenty, but perhaps you'd like another angle.

Consider the possibility that a small number of phoenixes eventually go insane after too many deaths. If death is painful, but certain, it's possible that a few phoenixes will be out of their minds.

We'd treat this as a rare option because there are already enough insane monsters in the Dragon Empire. But it's a good option to keep around.

## HERALDS OF ROYALTY, SERVANTS OF ICONS

Monarchs and would-be monarchs find the phoenix hard to resist. Glorious life followed by majestic rebirth? Yes, we'll have some of that. Most every icon that has claimed any type of rulership has claimed the phoenix as its emblem at some point. Phoenixes do not mind. In fact, they like being associated with monarchs, emperors, and icons who boss aspects of existence. Flattery isn't stupid if it's appropriate, and most phoenixes think their relationship with monarchs is both entirely deserved and a blessing to the monarchs.

**Archmage:** It is said that one of the past Archmages had a phoenix as a familiar. If you wish, that may have continued into the current age, in which case the Archmage has placed a strong claim on the phoenixes' elemental allegiance. Certainly solar phoenixes serve the Archmage in the overworld. You might say that they serve as the Archmage's spies, but that would be crass, since they're glowing brighter than the sun and everyone knows what they're up to.

**Crusader:** At present, at least until your campaign takes wing, no phoenixes serve the Crusader. Maybe they know something the rest of the world doesn't. Or maybe the Crusader's attachment to the dark gods gets in the way of the flatteries that phoenixes need to feel wanted. As you'll see, phoenixes don't care much for the Diabolist either. In the war between the Diabolist and the Crusader, the phoenixes fly elsewhere.

**Diabolist:** If there's a phoenix who willingly serves the Diabolist, that's *new* bad news. Phoenixes dislike the Diabolist's chaotic whims and venomous disregard for her subjects. Phoenixes serve some of the icons, but they're no one's minions. The Diabolist can't hide her contempt for underlings long enough to earn a phoenix's loyalty.

Fortunately for GMs who enjoy intricate plots, this doesn't

## LANGUAGE AND NAMES

Phoenixes are intelligent, but unable to speak humanoid languages. They are, however, amazingly expressive and able to communicate via gestures, meaningful looks, and a sort of projective empathy. Think of the old breed of animal heroes in television and movies before we just started letting the animals talk—heroes like Lassie and Flipper who somehow got their point across. Your player characters aren't likely to know phoenixes own names for themselves, but individual phoenixes that spend much time around humanoids tend to be given names that seem to suit them, at least until they've died a few times and moved on. (*Rob says:* please don't blame ASH's kid for the Lassie and Flipper references.)

Of course player character druids, and the High Druid herself, don't have this problem. Which means phoenixes can be a lot of fun for druid PCs who end up as the only people who can interpret the phoenixes' screams and caws: "What's that you say, Igni? The wizard needs to stop making terrible puns when she casts *fireball* or you're going to set her staff on fire?"

mean that there are no phoenixes serving servants of the Diabolist. It works like this: take a perfectly respectable and powerful magician who earns the friendship and loyalty of a phoenix. Now corrupt that magician via the Diabolist's demonic wiles. The phoenix is now in a quandary, and loyalty to the original friend sometimes wins out, at least as long as it takes for the foolish magician to die once or twice. The phoenix can handle dying a couple times and is guaranteed to come back to life more often, so eventually it's going to be free of the entanglement.

**Dwarf King & Elf Queen:** Phoenix devices appear on the shields of many dwarf clans, and the banners of many elf armies. The Dwarf King plays up the phoenixes' molten origins. The Elf Queen loves the phoenixes' magical rebirths. In past ages when dwarves and elves went to war against each other, phoenixes loyal to the two sides fought flame to feather overhead. Most of those battles have long since been sorted out, but there might be a phoenix or two harboring an old grudge long after all but the longest-lived elf or dwarf from the original battles has perished.

**High Druid:** The High Druid is particularly fond of these elemental beasts and does what she can to keep them attached to the land instead of ignoring it for the overworld.

Outsiders expect druids to have mixed feelings about phoenixes because while they are majestic beasts, they tend to set trees and sometimes entire forests on fire. Druids and other followers of the High Druid understand that wood is meant to burn. Phoenixes, unlike, say, demons and human pyromancers, are part of the natural cycle in which things that can burn, do. Forests burned by phoenixes grow back quickly, and strong.

Druids and rangers who have phoenix animal companions are looked upon with awe by their compatriots. Phoenixes as

animal companions? Yes, possible! But of course it'll be a newly hatched phoenix, not yet come into its full powers. Use the eagle stats, and have the phoenix deal fire damage.

This could certainly play into a character's One Unique Thing, in which case the phoenix might grow into more power later in the PC's career.

**Lich King:** The phoenix used to be associated with the Wizard King. That dread icon's return to power as the Lich King may darkly reflect the phoenixes' ability to return from death. Phoenixes who serve the returned Lich King usually burn with a blue flame, rather than the red-and-yellow flames that the majestic creatures normally exhibit.

Some people fear that void phoenixes are by definition associated with the Lich King because of their association with negative energy. It's not true. As far as we know.

**Orc Lord:** The Orc Lord likes his phoenixes raw and hastily devoured, and that's a problem, since they often flare back to life. If your campaign's Orc Lord is somehow a regal and imposing figure, the ability to attract a phoenix or two would be a litmus test. But in the type of campaign world we normally present, phoenixes and the Orc Lord are opposed if they're involved at all.

**Priestess:** Loyalty, especially to bright or at least glorious causes? Resurrection or its equivalent as a way of life after life? Some say that the Priestess is the icon that phoenixes have been waiting for. A few make their home in strange flaming nests built atop the Cathedral. Others act as last-resort messengers, delivering scroll cases or messages to servants who are otherwise not contactable by magic or mundane messengers.

But given the Priestess' apparent advantages in attracting friends among the phoenixes, there aren't that many life-birds near the Cathedral. The Priestess herself doesn't use phoenix imagery in her vestments, and it may be that she's not oriented toward the type of flattery that more worldly icons have no trouble with. Phoenixes want to be lauded, not greeted as obvious members of a celestial team.

**Dragon icons not much involved with phoenixes:** The Emperor, the Great Gold Wyrm, and the Three all either take dragons as their standards or are dragons themselves. If there's one thing dragons are pretty sure they

don't need, it's phoenix feathers clogging the works. In Rob's campaign, legends from a previous age tell the stories of the Phoenix Emperor, who got confused about who his real allies were, and the (now) amusing ways he was burnt. Would the current Emperor make the same mistake?

**A shadowy icon probably not much involved with phoenixes:** No one would expect the Prince of Shadows to use phoenixes as part of a scam. So, right... Tell the players that phoenixes hate the Prince of Shadows and would never be involved with him.



## PHOENIX STATS

You can encounter phoenixes in any tier, and it's always going to be tough.

### FLAMEBIRD PHOENIX

*In this early phase of its existence, the phoenix has quick life-death cycles. Scant days from death, or just a few days removed from birth, they act a bit like flighty teenagers, growing too quickly to keep themselves entirely under control. Unlike human teenagers, they're not dangerous to themselves. . . .*

*Double-strength 3rd level wrecker [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +11

Vulnerability: cold

**Fly-by flaming talons +8 vs. AC**—16 damage, and 5 ongoing fire damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The phoenix may move again this turn as a free action if it has already made a flying move on its turn.

*Miss:* The flamebird phoenix can use a *flaming screech* attack as a quick action, either this turn, or on its next turn.

*[Usually special trigger, but also possible as a standard action]*

**C: Flaming screech +8 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—5 fire damage, and 5 ongoing fire damage

*Flight:* The flamebird phoenix can fly extremely well.

*Flaming wings:* The flamebird phoenix deals 4 fire damage to each enemy that ends its turn engaged with the phoenix.

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Spectacular effects:* When the phoenix is dealt a critical hit, it must roll an easy save (6+). If the save fails, the phoenix drops to 0 hit points; see the *reborn in fire* ability below!

*Reborn in fire:* Whenever the phoenix drops to 0 hit points, roll a d20 and add the escalation die. For each time this phoenix has rolled its *reborn in fire* ability earlier this battle, subtract 10 from the roll. For example, a phoenix making its second *reborn in fire* roll (because its first roll ended up being 20+) when the escalation die is 6 would roll the d20 and subtract 4.

**20+:** The flamebird phoenix is immediately reborn, healing to 40 hit points, and keeps fighting!

**15–19:** The phoenix is reborn in fire, but vaults into the overworld, removed from the battle. On the other hand, it's not done with the PCs! Add the phoenix to an upcoming battle by surprise, adding it as an additional monster not accounted for by the usual encounter-building calculations.

**8–14:** The flamebird phoenix is reborn in fire but wants nothing more to do with this battle. It makes the following attack, but when the attack is over it shoots off into the overworld so quickly that it's a teleport effect, and does not return to the battle, nor to the adventure.

**Conflagration of rebirth +9 vs. PD (every nearby enemy)**—10 fire damage

**7 or less:** The phoenix flares back to life somewhere nearby in a few hours, days, months, or years. Probably not relevant to the PCs unless they or the phoenix bear a special grudge.

#### Nastier Special

*Fire eater:* If a fire attack against the flamebird phoenix fails to beat its resistance, then instead of taking damage the flamebird phoenix heals that amount instead.

**AC 19**

**PD 15**

**MD 15**

**HP 78**

### RESURGENT PHOENIX

*Years or decades or centuries older and wiser than their flamebird siblings, and more likely to have found an interesting cause to attach themselves to.*

*Large 5th level leader [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: cold

**Fly-by flaming talons +10 vs. AC**—25 damage, and 10 ongoing fire damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The phoenix may move again this turn as a free action if it has already made a flying move on its turn.

*Miss:* The resurgent phoenix can use a *victory screech* attack as a quick action, either this turn, or on its next turn.

*[Usually special trigger, but also possible as a standard action]*

**C: Victory screech +10 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies)**—10 psychic damage, and the resurgent phoenix and its allies can add +1 to their attacks until the start of the resurgent phoenix's next turn; the bonus is cumulative if more than one *victory screech* attack hits.

**Ignition +10 vs. PD (the creature that triggered the attack)**—8 fire damage and 8 ongoing fire damage

*Limited use:* 1/battle, as an interrupt action when an enemy makes a melee attack against the phoenix.

*Flight:* The resurgent phoenix can fly as well or better than anything you've seen airborne.

*Flaming wings:* The resurgent phoenix deals 7 fire damage to each enemy that ends its turn engaged with the phoenix.

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Spectacular effects:* When the phoenix is dealt a critical hit, it must roll an easy save (6+). If the save fails, the phoenix drops to 0 hit points; see the *reborn in fire* ability below!

*Reborn in fire:* Whenever the phoenix drops to 0 hit points, roll a d20 and add the escalation die. For each time this phoenix has rolled its *reborn in fire* ability earlier this battle, subtract

10 from the roll. For example, a phoenix making its second *reborn in fire* roll (because its first roll ended up being 20+!) when the escalation die is 6 would roll the d20 and subtract 4.

**20+:** The resurgent phoenix is immediately reborn, healing to 70 hit points and keeps fighting!

**15–19:** The phoenix is reborn in fire, but vaults into the overworld, removed from the battle. On the other hand, it's not done with the PCs! Add the phoenix to an upcoming battle by surprise, adding it as an additional monster not accounted for by the usual encounter-building calculations.

**8–14:** The resurgent phoenix is reborn in fire but wants nothing more to do with this battle. It makes the following attack, but when the attack is over it shoots off into the overworld so quickly that it's a teleport effect, and does not return to the battle, nor to the adventure.

**Conflagration of rebirth +11 vs. PD (every nearby enemy)**—15 fire damage

**7 or less:** The phoenix flares back to life somewhere nearby in a few hours, days, months, or years. Probably not relevant to the PCs unless they or the phoenix bear a special grudge.

<b>AC</b>	<b>20</b>	
PD	17	<b>HP 124</b>
MD	17	

## VOID PHOENIX

*The phoenix has drawn all its heat into itself in order to ready itself for the next stage of its life cycle. Silver and purple turns out to be an excellent look for the bird.*

*Large 8th level spoiler [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +16

**Fly-by talons +13 vs. AC**—60 damage, and 10 ongoing negative energy damage (hard save ends, 16+)

*Natural even hit or miss:* The phoenix may move again this turn as a quick action if it has already made a flying move on its turn.

*Miss:* The void phoenix can use a *void calling* attack as a quick action, either this turn, or on its next turn.

*[Usually special trigger, but also possible as a standard action]*

**C: Void calling +13 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—35 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit:* Target is dazed (save ends). Target takes 10 negative energy damage each time it fails the save.

*Flight:* The void phoenix can fly amazingly well for a creature that is turning itself spiritually inside out.

*Void aura:* Enemies that end their turns engaged with the void phoenix must attempt an easy save (6+). If the save fails, they're dazed until the end of their next turn.

*Resist fire and negative energy 16+:* When a fire attack or negative energy attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Spectacular effects:* When the phoenix is dealt a critical hit, it must roll an easy save (6+). If the save fails, the phoenix drops to 0 hit points; see the *reborn in void* ability below!

*Reborn in void:* Whenever the phoenix drops to 0 hit points, roll a d20 and add the escalation die. For each time this void phoenix has rolled its *reborn in void* ability earlier this battle, subtract 10 from the roll. For example, a void phoenix making its second *reborn in void* roll (because its first roll ended up being 20+!) when the escalation die is 6 would roll the d20 and subtract 4.

**20+:** The void phoenix is immediately reborn, healing to 120 hit points above staggered and keeps fighting!

**15–19:** The void phoenix is reborn in a blast of cold and fire and negative energy, but vaults into the overworld, removed from the battle. On the other hand, it's not done with the PCs! Add the phoenix to an upcoming battle by surprise, adding it as an additional monster not accounted for by the usual encounter-building calculations. Add a level if you feel like it, because it's angry.

**8–14:** The void phoenix is reborn in a blast of negative energy but wants nothing more to do with this battle. It makes the following attack, but when the attack is over it shoots off into the overworld so quickly that it's a teleport effect, and does not return to the battle, nor to the adventure.

**Void rebirth +13 vs. PD (every nearby enemy)**—35 fire and negative energy damage

**7 or less:** The phoenix flares back to life somewhere nearby in a few hours, days, months, or years. Probably not relevant to the PCs unless they or the phoenix bear a special grudge.

<b>AC</b>	<b>23</b>	
PD	18	<b>HP 230</b>
MD	22	

## SOLAR PHOENIX

*The greatest phoenixes tend to leave the mortal world and soar in the overworld until duty or pleasure calls them to once more return below.*

*Large 12<sup>th</sup> level caster [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +20

**Fly-by talons +17 vs. AC**—140 damage, and 20 ongoing fire damage (hard save ends, 16+)

*Natural even hit or miss:* The phoenix may move again this turn as a quick action if it has already made a flying move on its turn.

*Miss:* The solar phoenix can use a *solar wind* attack as a quick action, either this turn, or on its next turn.

*[Usually special trigger, but also possible as a standard action] Solar wind +17 vs. PD (1d4 nearby or far away enemies)*—70 fire damage, or 120 fire damage if used as a standard action.

*Natural even hit or miss:* The solar phoenix teleports to a point nearby or far away.

*Flight:* The solar phoenix flies like the sun unleashed.

*Flaming wings:* The solar phoenix deals 20 fire damage to each enemy that ends its turn engaged with the phoenix.

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

*Spectacular effects:* When the solar phoenix is dealt a critical hit, it must roll an easy save (6+). If the save fails, the phoenix drops to 0 hit points; see the *reborn in fire* ability below!

*Reborn in fire:* Whenever the phoenix drops to 0 hit points, roll a d20 and add the escalation die. For each time this phoenix has rolled its *reborn in fire* ability earlier this battle, subtract 10 from the roll. For example, a phoenix making its second *reborn in fire* roll (because its first roll ended up being 20+!) when the escalation die is 6 would roll the d20 and subtract 4.

**20+:** The solar phoenix is immediately reborn, healing to 400 hit points and keeps fighting!

**15–19:** The phoenix is reborn in fire, but vaults into the overworld, removed from the battle. On the other hand, it's not done with the PCs! Add the phoenix to an upcoming battle by surprise, adding it as an additional monster not accounted for by the usual encounter-building calculations.

**8–14:** The solar phoenix is reborn in fire but wants nothing more to do with this battle. It makes the following attack, but when the attack is over it shoots off into the overworld so quickly that it's a teleport effect, and does not return to the battle, nor to the adventure.

**Conflagration of rebirth +17 vs. PD (every nearby enemy)**—90 fire damage

**7 or less:** The phoenix flares back to life somewhere nearby in a few hours, days, months, or years. Probably not relevant to the PCs unless they or the phoenix bear a special grudge. But who are we kidding? This is a solar phoenix. It has its own agenda, and the PCs just got onto the agenda, one way or another.

**AC 27**

**PD 24**

**MD 24**

**HP 640**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Phoenixes are the type of fire elemental that expects other fire elementals to follow its commands—and for the most part they are correct. Other fire elementals are drawn to phoenixes like... well like moths to flames.

If you have an extremely powerful NPC with some trace of nobility, consider giving them a phoenix ally or servant.



### The One and Only Phoenix

*A phoenix carries more cachet if it is not one of an endless race but is instead the one and only immortal phoenix. It's also more likely that this one and only phoenix is tied up in the destiny of the Thirteenth Age. And of course it has whatever personality, origin, secret power, or other plot point you need.*

# ΦΗΟΕΠÍXES AND TREASURE

Phoenixes don't care about treasure, but sometimes guard treasure on behalf of others. A phoenix's nest might contain a magic item that they are keeping out of circulation, or a heirloom that they intend to deliver to its intended recipient when the time is right.

Phoenixes themselves might be considered treasure. Their tears have healing properties, as do their feathers. The following items could be gifted to an adventurer by a phoenix or by the agent of an icon for whom phoenix's work... or unscrupulous adventurers might kill a phoenix in order to obtain the raw materials for such an item.

## ΦΗΟΕΠÍX TEARS (CHAMPION TIER POTION)

These potions can't be found for sale, but occasionally servants of the Priestess might be given one of these rare potions as a reward for their loyalty.

*Consumable item:* When you drink this potion or have it poured upon your wounds, heal using a recovery and end any ongoing effects on you. If you are staggered when you drink this potion the recovery is a free recovery, if you are not staggered when you drink this potion you gain resist fire 16+ until the end of the battle.

## ΦΗΟΕΠÍX CLOAK (EPIC TIER)

One of these red and yellow feathered cloaks hangs at the entrance to the Cathedral in Santa Cora in a glass case, guarded by a phoenix that waits the birth of the saint destined to wear it.

*Always:* +3 PD (epic).

*Always:* Resist fire 16+.

*Daily:* When you are staggered; teleport as a quick action and spend up to 1d3 recoveries.

*Quirk:* You can only love things that have proved themselves by passing through flames.

## ΦΗΟΕΠÍX EGGS

Which came first, the phoenix or the egg? Phoenixes nest, but they don't seem to use their nests as egg-crèches like lesser birds. The High Druid's people, and the Dwarf King's people, say that the youngest phoenixes erupt from volcanos or lava flows. But there's a chance that those younglings are actually hatching from eggs concealed in the magma.

Phoenix eggs exist. They're magnificent. They're huge. Inside the egg, the phoenix appears to blossom and be reborn in fire hundreds or thousands of times. The surface of the eggs looks like molten rock and will melt rock and set other materials on fire. Phoenix eggs are fantastically durable, but they can be destroyed, sort of. See the *rebirth in fire* ability of the creatures statted out above for the type of thing that happens when you attempt to destroy a phoenix egg. You may succeed, up to a point, but the eggs are usually as likely to return as the adult birds.

In fact, it's mostly likely that the eggs are the adult birds, in a sense. In our campaign, a phoenix that is ready to move between the early life stages enters the egg for a time, like a caterpillar in a cocoon, flaming and rebirthing until it finally erupts from the shell.

If you're using the idea that phoenixes sometimes go insane from too many deaths, perhaps returning to the egg is a method of recovering sanity.

*Treasure or not:* Phoenix eggs aren't precisely treasure, but everyone wants to be around them. They're lucky. It's not that they're thought to be lucky. They really are lucky. Interpret that as you like for NPCs and the icons. For player characters, establishing a base around a phoenix egg, or managing to stay near one regularly, should be good for some precious advantage, like an incremental advance or occasional rerolls of icon relationship dice.

Of course, phoenix eggs may also attract unwanted attention. There's also the irony that everyone loves a phoenix egg, but the full birds, once hatched, may turn out to be aligned with your enemies!

## ΦΗΟΕΠÍX & STAR-MASK

In the 13<sup>th</sup> AGE adventure *IRONFIRE* by ASH LAW the shards of a phoenix egg had properties that were antithetical to star masks. That might be a property limited to just the eggs of one phoenix, or it might be universally true.

Phoenixes spend time in the overworld, star masks come from the overworld (or perhaps even beyond that)—maybe there is a story there about a war in the heavens that the mortal races are only just becoming aware of.



## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**A Darker Dawn**—One day the sun just doesn't rise, its place in the sky taken by wheeling phoenixes. The cloud of phoenixes provides insufficient light, and the world is growing colder. The icons are busy preventing an eternal winter, but the adventurers are in a position to travel into the overworld to investigate the missing sun.

**Dark Omens**—Void phoenixes have been spotted from the lighthouse at Vigil, circling over the Isle of Omen. The last time that they did this was shortly before the return of the Orc Lord. The Seven Cities have assembled an official team to investigate, but every icon is keen to learn what this omen above Omen means before the others, and so each is sending an unofficial secret team. The adventurers are tapped to be on a plausibly deniable secret team for an icon that they have good relations with, and must discover what new threat or ally the phoenixes herald. The adventurers must contend with rival factions, the official team, the monsters of Omen, living dungeons, and whatever the new force arrived on Omen is.

**Doom of Fire**—The adventurers must travel to the Isle of Fire to retrieve a phoenix egg for the Archmage, who needs to scrape the egg for at least a week to get materials for a spell component. Not only does this dangerous journey involve crossing a portion of the deadly Iron Sea, but they must face the natural dangers of a volcano, and the supernatural creatures that live on the Isle of Fire. Of course, retrieving the egg is just the beginning, phoenix eggs are rare things indeed, they tend to melt and ignite transport ships, and the Lich King wants to get his boney hands on it.

**Inheritance of Fire**—One of the adventurers has inherited a legendary item, promised to them in a will by a distant relative. Unfortunately, the distant relative had lent the item to an adventurer friend, who has recently died. The item is in a tomb, buried with its last wielder. The tomb is guarded by a phoenix who is willing to allow access to the tomb to the adventurers if they can prove that they are supposed to have the magic item, but legal documents won't sway the phoenix... They must prove to it that they are self-sacrificing heroes who deserve to wield the legendary item.

**Phoenix Down**—The adventurers are contacted by an emissary of the Priestess. One of the phoenixes that chooses to nest on the Cathedral has been captured by a necromancer ally of the Orc Lord, who intends to eat its heart and gain its mystic powers. The Priestess has sent agents to save the phoenix, but each of her agents has been intercepted due to a mole in Santa Cora. The emissary wants the adventurers to free the phoenix, and track down the mole. If the PCs turn down the job, or don't quite entirely succeed, you're now free to hit them with orcs who flame into undead when slain the first time.

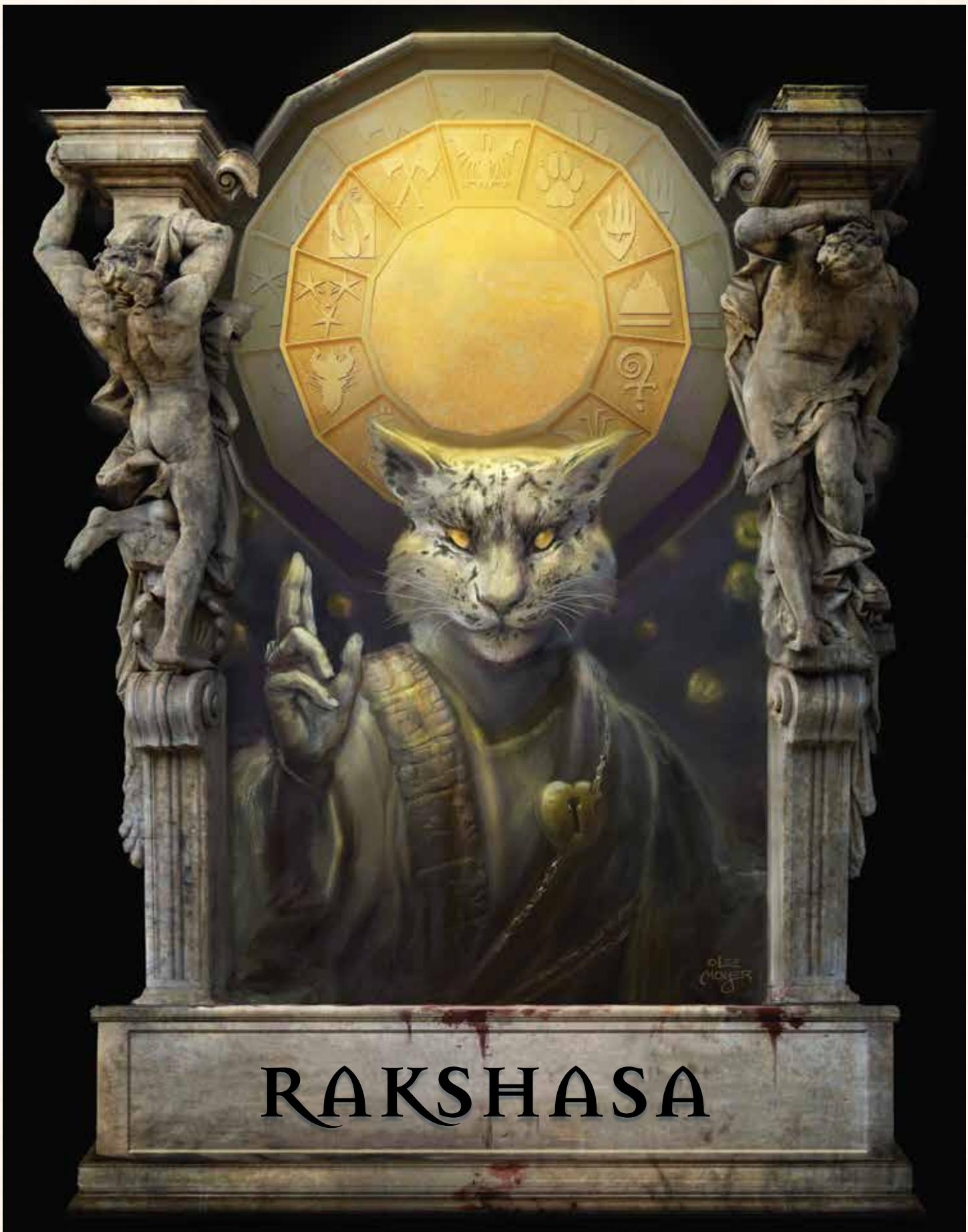
**Return of the Phoenix King**—The ogre magi want to resurrect their long-lost ruler, an icon of a previous age when ogres were civilized, and to this end they seek the adventurers help. The ogres promise *not to destroy a village* if the adventurers recover a scroll from a cave high on Cloudborne. The tomb is guarded by giants and their phoenix ally. The cave's guardians won't let the ogres near, but the adventurers might be able to trick their way past the guards.

**Talismancer's Tears**—Everybody knows that there is no such thing as a potion of resurrection, but the talismancer of Fullcatch Bay believes that there is a way to create one. He's almost certainly wrong, but is willing to pay the adventurers in healing potions and other one-use magic items if they bring him back a bottle of fresh phoenix tears. The adventurers could find a phoenix and attempt to make it cry, or they could steal a phoenix tear potion and claim that it is fresh.

**The Crown of Phoenix Claws**—A legendary item has recently been stolen from the Emperor, the *Crown of Phoenix Claws*. The adventurers wake up one morning to discover that the crown is in their possession, but the claws have been replaced with those from a non-magical bird. Imperial agents are searching the area for the crown, and if they find the adventurers with it they'll want to know what the adventurers have done with the irreplaceable and priceless claws. Is this all a ploy of the Prince of Shadows, and if so what does he really want?

**The Flaming Feather**—A pirate ship sailing out of Drakkenhall has been raiding all across the Iron Sea, and the bounty on the capture of the ship is high enough to tempt the adventurers on to the high sea themselves. The loyal crew of the ship *The Flaming Feather* are fearless, for their captain has the aid of a phoenix who provides the crew with phoenix tears to heal them. Will the adventurers capture the pirates and their ship, be captured, or join the jolly crew?

**War of the Wings**—In a past age the phoenixes were on the sides of both the dwarves and the elves, and while that conflict is far past the phoenixes that fought in the war are still around. A seemingly innocuous recent event that the adventurers were involved in has reignited the conflict, between the phoenixes at least. The adventurers, as the spark that started a battle between phoenixes, are prevailed upon by agents of the Emperor, Archmage, or Priestess to make peace between the battling fire birds.



# RAKSHASA

*Evil shapechanging masterminds? Don't be ridiculous, the rakshasa are a myth the Emperor uses to herd his cattle. You're smarter than that, that's why I work with you. Now get to work. You have your orders. Time is short.*

—Rarv Lanse, secret rakshasa

The shape-shifting rakshasa stalk through the history of the Dragon Empire like walking nightmares—tiger-like humanoids who manipulate others into carrying out their evil plans. In some ages they have operated openly, in others they disappeared into the shadows. It remains to be seen how the rakshasa will shape the 13<sup>th</sup> age.

Rakshasa are violent sybarites, hedonists of the highest order who put their own jaded desires above the good of others. Smarter and stronger than those humanoids around them, with natural magical abilities, it is little wonder that they consider all others beneath them.

## RAKSHASA OPTIONS

The rakshasa in the core 13<sup>th</sup> Age book is an 8<sup>th</sup> level double-strength handful. Its nastier specials create very different battles and it's not the type of monster that makes sense to face two or three of at a time.

That's a reasonable approach to rakshasas. You may decide that in your campaign, they prefer to associate with servants and slaves rather than other rakshasas. Or you could follow the lead of a couple other F20 games and portray rakshasa society as its own secret order.

In this book we present rakshasas who might operate as magical masterminds, including one who is a higher level update of the mastermind in the core book, and rakshasas who might operate as lethal wanderers.

For a unique epic tier rakshasa mage and a rakshasa guard, see page 76 of *High Magic and Low Cunning: Battle Scenes for Five Icons*.

## ORIGINS

The word rakshasa is borrowed from Hindu demons. When F20 games borrow a monster-name from an active world religion, it's a good thing when the creature that's being borrowed is also a monster where it came from. That said, the Hindu rakshasas are only tangentially related to the traditional rakshasas of the F20 games. We'll focus on F20 lore rather than the original sources.

## MASTERMIND GAMES

Both the ideas that follow work well when rakshasas are powerful masterminds who the PCs fight one at a time (with followers and minions) or at most two at a time. It's also possible that you'll want to use greater numbers of rakshasas in a battle, in which case these abilities will have much more of an impact.

## CHARMED DEATHS

Rakshasa lore features occasional stories in which the rakshasa can only be slain by a wooden crossbow bolt or some other oddly charmed weapon or spell. This type of mythic strength/weakness makes for interesting stories but sketchy roleplaying game mechanics. We have a few creatures that are proof against several types of attack (golems, for one), but compared to other F20 games we avoid this type of mechanic far more often than we indulge it.

So what shall we make of the charmed death stories? If you're interested in borrowing the mythic sense in which rakshasas are extremely difficult to kill, we suggest tying their perma-deaths in with the icon dice mechanics. Play that rakshasas drop to 0 hit points and out of the battle like any other creature . . . but if the rakshasa's slayer or one of their allies doesn't immediately use a 5 or 6 on an icon die and a convincing story to explain how the power of the icon (or magic related to the icon) ensures that the rakshasa's death is final, that rakshasa will resurrect soon, in a place of power, and surely attempt to destroy the PCs' lives in the future.

This ability might not make a huge difference in play, but it turns the rakshasa's death into a story event with possible magical consequences, particularly if the icon die result is a 5 instead of a 6. You probably don't need to warn the PCs about this problem in advance. It makes for an interesting addition to the combat-story the first time it happens in battle, so feel free to keep it a secret unless a PC is extraordinarily well-informed.

An extremely powerful rakshasa might require two or even three icon die results to finish off! That gets even more interesting if lower-level rakshasa underlings drop to 0 hit points before the mastermind commander does; if you 'save' icon dice results for the hoped-for death of the mastermind, maybe the lower level rakshasa will have leveled up by the time they come back for vengeance!

If you're enamored of the story possibilities of a rakshasa who is almost certainly going to escape the first time the PCs 'kill' her or him, use the following nastier special that plays off this issue's art.

### Nastier Special for all rakshasas

*Lockheart:* The first time a rakshasa is dropped to 0 hit points, it dies but will definitely be reborn, even if the PCs attempt to use an icon die result to prevent the resurrection. A PC who scores a critical hit against the rakshasa can attempt to nullify lockheart by choosing to ignore all other effects of the critical hit (*all* damage, not just the doubling) and attempting a normal save. If the save succeeds, lockheart is ignored this battle. If the save fails, lockheart is still in effect. A rakshasa can only use lockheart once in its lifetime.

Alternatively, instead of rolling saves, the PCs could go on a quest to find the lockheart's key before confronting the rakshasa! That's a story angle you get to manipulate as you choose.

## BACKWARDS HANDS

You can tell from our art that we opted against the one piece of F20 rakshasa lore that people are most likely to remember—that their hands are backwards, with their palms where the backs of their hands would be on a human!

This was Rob's call. He decided he didn't want to present a shapechanging mastermind that tended to reveal itself by having its hands facing the wrong way. But upon reflection, Rob has come up with a different way of handling the rakshasas' palms in his own game. If you want to bring this element of the lore into your world, give your rakshasas the following ability as a (slightly) nastier special.

### Nastier Special for all rakshasas

*Backwards palms:* When staggered, the rakshasa's hands shapeshift so that its palms trade places with the backs of its hands. It not only looks extremely weird, it also presents the player characters with an odd choice: The next time the escalation die would advance, the PCs have to choose whether the escalation die will decrease by 1 (minimum 0) or whether this rakshasa gets to use the escalation die until the end of the battle. If the PC group is split, the decision goes to the character with the highest initiative.

## RAKSHASA STATS

When you've managed to corner the rakshasa and force a fight, here's your reward.



## RAKSHASA SYBARITE

*A keen interest in alchemy and an understanding of the physiology and psychology of humanoids makes this hedonistic monster mad, bad, and dangerous to know.*

*Double strength 6<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +11

**Silver-shod claws +11 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—12 damage

*Attack also beats the target's PD: 12 ongoing poison damage.*

**C: Powders, potions, and lotions +11 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—20 poison damage

*Natural 2 or 12 hit:* Target is weakened until they next take damage.

*Natural 3 or 13 hit:* Target is vulnerable to poison attacks until the end of the battle.

*Natural 4 or 14 hit:* Target is hampered until they next heal or gain temporary hp.

*Natural 5 or 15 hit:* Target is hampered until they next hit with an attack.

*Natural 6 or 16 hit:* Target is stuck, save ends.

*Natural 7 or 17 hit:* Target is dazed, easy save ends.

*Natural 8 or 18 hit:* Target is stunned until the end of its next turn.

*Natural 9 or 19 hit:* Target is confused, easy save ends.

*Miss:* 7 poison damage.

[once per battle] **C: Psychic seduction +11 vs. MD (1d3+1 nearby or far away enemies in a group, group must contain at least two targets)**—20 psychic damage, and the target is confused (hard save ends).

*Miss, but another target in the group was hit:* Target is confused until the end of its next turn.

*All targets missed:* The psychic seduction attack is not expended can be used again this battle.

*Shapechange:* As a standard action, the rakshasa can change its form to that of any humanoid, or back to its own shape. Seeing through the shapechange requires a DC 20 skill check.

### Nastier Specials

*Contrabando:* The rakshasa has a stash of illicit substances—once per battle as a quick action, it can either deal 20 ongoing poison damage to one enemy that it has just left engagement with OR become dazed but heal 30 hit points at the end of each of its turns (save ends).

*Shapechanger's surprise:* Once per battle as a quick action the rakshasa changes forms to something that causes consternation and misunderstanding among its enemies—causing each enemy to become dazed until the enemy with the lowest MD saves.

**AC 20**

**PD 20**

**MD 19**

**HP 230**

# RAKSHASA, DEVOURER OF WIZARDS

*The name might be a title. It's certainly a way of life.*

*Double strength 7<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +12

**Terrible claws +11 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—15 damage, and target is hampered (save ends)

*Miss:* 5 damage.

**R: Psychic freeze +11 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—40 psychic damage, and 10 ongoing psychic damage and target is stuck (save ends both).

*A taste for high magic:* The devourer of wizards adds the escalation die to its attacks and damage when it targets a creature that has one or more icon relationship points with the Archmage.

*Unstoppable pounce:* The first time an enemy tries to intercept the devourer of wizards each round, the devourer of wizards can roll a single rending claws attack against the would-be interceptor. If the attack hits, the interception is ignored and the devourer of wizards can continue moving to its target unimpeded.

*Shapechange:* As a standard action, the rakshasa can change its form to that of any humanoid, or back to its own shape. Seeing through the shapechange requires a DC 20 skill check.

<b>AC</b>	<b>21</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>HP</b> <b>250</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>21</b>	

## RAKSHASA DELVER

*This rakshasa is interested in accumulating wealth at any cost, not caring what ancient wards it breaks or slumbering evils it awakens. Actually, that's not a cost: it's a benefit.*

*Double strength 8<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +12

**Awful bite +14 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—25 damage, and target is hampered (save ends)  
*Miss:* 8 damage.

**C: Ten-foot collapsing staff +14 vs. AC (one nearby enemy, or +10 attack against two nearby enemies)**—60 damage, and if there is a pit or ledge next to the target it must save or be pushed off and potentially take falling damage

**R: Mesmerizing magic +14 vs. MD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies that can see the rakshasa)**—25 psychic damage, and if it is the first time this battle this target is hit it becomes confused until the end of its next turn

*Aftereffect:* When the target is no longer confused it takes 50 psychic damage.

*Shadowy step:* When the escalation die advances the rakshasa teleports as a free action to any spot it can see nearby or far away. If the rakshasa is engaged with a PC, that character's player can choose to prevent the teleportation at the cost of the escalation die not advancing.

*Shadow pounce:* Once per round as a free action when an enemy moves into engagement with the rakshasa it can roll a save (11+), on a success the rakshasa teleports into engagement with the enemy with the fewest hit points.

*Shapechange:* As a standard action, the rakshasa can change its form to that of any humanoid, or back to its own shape. Seeing through the shapechange requires a DC 20 skill check.

### Nastier Special

*Allies:* The rakshasa isn't alone—it bought a team of hirelings and hangers-on into the dungeon with it, though they are currently elsewhere. When the escalation die reaches 3+ these allies rush into the fight and act at the start of the round.

<b>AC</b>	<b>25</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>HP</b> <b>230</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>20</b>	

## RAKSHASA MASTERMIND

*One moment you're finally defeating your nemesis. The next you're dodging for your life.*

*Double strength 9<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +13

**Decisive bite +14 vs. AC**—75 damage  
*Miss:* 45 damage.

**R: Striped lightning bolts +14 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—40 lightning damage, or 80 lightning damage against a staggered target

*Natural even hit:* The rakshasa can make a *rend mind* attack as a free action.

**C: Rend mind +14 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—30 psychic damage, and the target is confused (make a basic or at-will attack vs. ally) (save ends)

*Hidden plans:* As a standard action, the rakshasa mastermind rolls a d4 or a d6, your choice. If the roll is equal to or less than the escalation die, a number of the rakshasa mastermind's allies equal to the die roll will enter the battle in the *next* round. Each new ally should be about as tough as a single PC according to the building battles table. Explain this ability as the culmination of the rakshasas' cunning plans.

*Shapechange:* As a standard action, the rakshasa can change its form to that of any humanoid, or back to its own shape. Seeing through the shapechange requires a DC 20 skill check.

<b>AC</b>	<b>25</b>	
<b>PD</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>HP</b> <b>330</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>23</b>	



## RAKSHASA SAINT

The rakshasa are masters of manipulation, and are not beyond a little light blasphemy. The right words at the right time, the right illusions—it's easy to manipulate others.

*Double strength 10<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +16

Vulnerability: holy

**Dreadful claws +15 vs. AC (1d3 attacks)**—40 damage and 40 ongoing damage

*Two attacks hit the same target on the same turn:* The target's saves against ongoing damage become hard (16+) until the end of the battle.

**R: Arrows of radiance +15 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—40 force damage, and target is stuck

*Aftereffect:* Enemies who are no longer stuck take 40 ongoing force damage.

*Faked miracle, real magic:* Once per battle the rakshasa does something miraculous. Of course the 'miracle' is artful illusion together with some cleverly used basic spells, but all who witness it must save (11+) or become confused until the end of the rakshasa's next turn.

*Aftereffect:* Enemies who are no longer confused become hampered (save ends).

*Commanding presence:* The rakshasa saint can use a quick action to command 1d3 confused enemies to move as a free action, or take another non-attack action (drop a weapon, destroy a potion, unlock a door) as a free action.

*Shapechange:* As a standard action, the rakshasa can change its form to that of any humanoid, or back to its own shape. Seeing through the shapechange requires a DC 25 skill check.

### Nastier Special

*Real miracles?:* The rakshasa has a real link to the divine (or maybe it's actually a link to the infernal realms, or a bargain with the chaos of the outer dark). Twice per battle as a free action the rakshasa can cause itself or a nearby ally to heal an amount equal to half that creature's maximum hit points.

**AC 25**

**PD 22**

**MD 24**

**HP 480**



## RAKSHASA MAGICIAN

The nastiest villains are often those about to figure out that they are finally about to be outclassed.

*11<sup>th</sup> level caster [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +19

**Claws and bite +14 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—25 damage

*Natural even hit:* The rakshasa can make a *rend mind* attack as a free action.

**R: Striped lightning bolts +16 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—25 lightning damage, or 50 lightning damage against a staggered target

*Natural even hit:* The rakshasa can make a *rend mind* attack as a free action.

**C: Rend mind +16 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—15 psychic damage, and the target is confused (make a basic or at-will attack vs. ally) until the end of the rakshasa's next turn

*Shapechange:* As a standard action, the rakshasa can change its form to that of any humanoid, or back to its own shape. Seeing through the shapechange requires a DC 25 skill check.

*Master of chaos:* The rakshasa gains a bonus to all defenses equal to the current number of confused enemies in the battle.

### Nastier Special

*Reversal of fate:* Once per day as a quick action, the rakshasa steals the escalation die; until the end of the battle, the rakshasa gains an attack bonus equal to the die's value when it was stolen. Reset the escalation die to 0 for the players and increase it normally with each new round.

**AC 26**

**PD 23**

**MD 25**

**HP 280**

## RAKSHASAS & ICONS

Let's start by quoting the original text from the core book:

*"Rakshasas act as if the icons are beneath them, and as if they know a secret history in which mortal kingdoms are ephemeral side effects of a deeper history. They delight in pitting the icons against each other while accomplishing their true aims in the shadows. Puffing on their water pipes, wreathed in smoke, the rakshasas bask in their superiority, more or less forgetting that they are not alone in the shadows and that the smoke has a Prince."*

Truthfully, that all stills sounds great to us. So we're going to mention only one other delicious possibility.

What if the Prince of Shadows is a rakshasa? Shapechanger? Check. Wreathed in mystery? Check. Arrogant? Oh yeah. Supremely evil? Maybe...

If the Prince of Shadows is a rakshasa, it seems most likely to us that a) the other rakshasas don't know it; and b) the Prince of Shadows isn't functioning like a typical rakshasa. More like a rakshasa that figured out how to win the enemy's game and is

now keeping its own secrets. Or perhaps becoming an icon put the rakshasa into a very different magical web of obligations and precautions than it had anticipated.

Better yet, this is exactly the type of confusing rumor the Prince of Shadows might spread if it *wasn't* true. You could dangle this possibility in your campaign and not necessarily even have to make up your own mind on whether it's true.

**An ongoing plot:** Another approach to the idea would be that a rakshasa is trying to supplant the current Prince of Shadows. The PCs would probably end up opposing the move, but your PCs may vary.

## BUILDING BATTLES

Thanks to their shape changing powers rakshasa could be part of any humanoid enemy force facing the adventurers—an orc warband leader, the head of a corrupt city guard, the leader of a band of marauders.

If you prefer rakshasa to be solitary shape changers then they'll surround themselves with disposable flunkies and bodyguards, especially if they are operating semi-openly as a local crime boss. Rakshasa with secret societies probably distrust each other enough to keep bodyguards on hand, both monstrous ones and ones that can slip in among the general population to carry out the dark bidding of the masterminds.

Of course, most rakshasa prefer to take on roles as city councilors or advisors to rulers (if not taking over the position of ruler itself), positions where they can order others to their deaths. There is nothing that rakshasa enjoy more than subsuming the agencies of civilization for their own self-centered ends—draining the coffers of taxes to line their own pockets and corrupting others to do the same. Well, no—they enjoy slaughter more than money, so any scheme where others die and enriches them is preferable to one where nobody suffers.

## RAKSHASA LAIRS & TREASURES

Rakshasa lairs are luxurious. Silks stolen from trade caravans, gold idols looted from temples, jewelry ripped from still-cooling bodies. If the adventurers find a rakshasa's lair it is only fair to give them way more than the treasure that they might usually get from an adventure—they've either defeated a rakshasa or they are bold enough to be stealing from a still-living foe!

Of course, some rakshasas buck the trend, preferring to sleep upon a pile of their rotting enemies or other foul and unusual arrangements—such rakshasa have become so jaded that only extreme home decoration will do for them.

Traps are usual in rakshasa lairs, as they enjoy watching guests die because they don't know which floor tile to avoid or which chalice is poisoned. Rakshasa are always thinking ten steps ahead—sometimes the traps are themselves trapped, catching unsuspecting thieves unawares.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Adventurer al Dente**—The city's latest diversion is something called the Tiger Club, a group of voluptuaries that feasts on exotic meats. The Tiger Club wants to hire the adventurers to bring them back the flesh of a rare monster. Of course, a secret rakshasa runs the club, and if the party fails to bring back the requested monsters the consequences will be dire. Can the adventurers avoid ending up on the menu?

**Alternative Ballads**—A rakshasa has killed the local head of the bard's guild and taken their place. Bards who do not sing some 'newly re-discovered' songs are censored by the guild—the songs are intended to increase tension between humanoid races. The rakshasa hasn't any long-term plan here, it just enjoys manipulating other humanoids into killing each other while it lives in luxury using the coffers of local guilds. Are the adventurers musically-conscious enough to notice what's going on, or do they have bardic friends who can point out the troubles with the trebles?

**Dangerous Dungeons**—A rakshasa dungeon delver (in a shapeshanged disguise, naturally) hires the adventurers to clear monsters out from a dungeon that it wants to loot. Naturally, the map that the adventurers have been given doesn't show the real treasure room of the dungeon. Will the adventurers stumble upon the treasure that the rakshasa wants, and if so what will be their patron's response? What ancient ward will the adventurers likely be forced to break, and what will be unleashed?

**False Prophets, Real Profits**—A rakshasa is pretending to be the returned prophet of not one but two local temples, ordering the devotees of each faith to attack followers of the other deity. Meanwhile each 'prophet' is building up an inner circle that engages in hedonistic 'holy rituals'. When the adventurers show up the faithful followers of one of the two religions come to the party to engage their services in purging the other temple of the false prophet. How will the adventurer's involvement interrupt the rakshasa's scheme? What clue is most likely to allow the adventurers to discover the truth before they are in too deep?

**Purging Puppets**—A rakshasa has woven its magic over a whole neighborhood or district. The inhabitants under its thrall work to build a palace for their master. Unfortunately for the adventurers, the place where they are staying is right in the heart of the rakshasa's domain—and its psychic slaves are intent on moving them on. Will the adventurers notice what is going on right under their noses, or will they move on after the umpteenth 'accident' targets them? Who from the neighborhood isn't under the rakshasa's sway, and why?



### Make the Dragon Empire Great Again

*One of the icons has been expanding their power, thwarting their enemies, recovering ancient secrets, and defeating hidden cabals of rakshasa. The party might comprise the sort of band of resourceful experts needed to follow the leads and take down the rakshasas. Who's giving the icon all these valuable reports on the rakshasa, plus the other advantages that the icon has been enjoying? Why, it's the most powerful rakshasa, who are using the Empire's forces to settle scores against rivals.*

# REAVER

*Reavers prove that all are not equal in death.*



The Lich King may be more than just a lord of the undead, more than the Wizard King returned from beyond the grave. Some of his more eloquent followers and apologists say that whatever he was before, the Lich King is now guardian of the cycle of life and death.

Not all deaths are mourned, sometimes death brings an end to suffering caused by great age, sometimes a final act brings meaning to a life, and sometimes death is a fitting reward for misdeeds.

Using magic to cheat death, bending fate, is something not done lightly. The Lich King is wise and powerful enough to do so without upsetting the cosmic balance—not so lesser beings who meddle in such matters.

To redress to cosmic balance the Lich King sends out his reavers, cloaked scythe-carrying specters to gather in his harvest. For what else can the harvest hope for, if not the harvester?

**Bulls\*\*\*:** The Lich King's enemies, and most impartial observers, believe that talk of "cosmic balance" and "gathering in harvests" is the noise of wind through an empty skull that the foolish make into a trumpet call. The Lich King wants a monopoly on life-extension, resurrection, and death, and reavers are his thuggish enforcers.

## DEATH MARKER

*They mark those who are next in line.*

6<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +9

Vulnerability: holy

**Marked for death +10 vs. PD**—7 negative energy damage

*Target is hit by a marked for death attack for the second time this battle:* Until the end of the battle, when the target tries to spend a recovery they have to succeed at a save (11+) first. If they fail, they haven't used their action but can't spend recoveries that turn.

*Target is hit for the third time this battle:* The save to spend a recovery is now a hard save (16+).

*Target is hit for the fourth time this battle:* Until the end of the battle the target cannot spend recoveries.

*Phasing flight:* Death markers can float on unseen winds, moving through solid objects and creatures as though they were not there. The death marker must still end its move on solid ground and not inside an object or creature.

**AC 22**

**PD 16**

**MD 20**

**HP 25 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one death marker mook for every 25 damage dealt to the mob.



## REAVER

*It's said that these cloaked phantoms are sent by the Lich King to collect those who have cheated death five times too often. That's you, adventurers. Good luck on the sixth cheat.*

*Double-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler*

[UNDEAD]

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: holy

**Reaping scythe +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—26 negative energy damage

*Both attacks hit the same target:* Until the end of its next turn, the target is affected by the reaver's *fear aura* even if it has more than 36 hp.

*Phasing:* While the escalation die is odd, the reaver takes no damage and suffers no effects from attacks with natural attack rolls less than 18+ (or 16+ for attacks that deal holy damage). It does take full damage and effects from attacks that are able to affect it.

While phasing, the reaver can move but creatures can't intercept it, and it can travel through solid objects but not end its turn in them. In addition, while phasing the reaver can't attack (including opportunity attacks) or affect the physical world except in the following way: When an enemy starts its turn engaged with the phased reaver, it takes 13 negative energy damage.

The reaver can also use *phasing* outside of battle, but only for a short time.

*Call upon death shades:* Until the reaver drops to 0 hp, when one of its living (not undead or construct) enemies or non-mook allies rolls a death save or dies, a death shade enters the battle. Death shades act immediately after the reaver in initiative order.

*Fear aura:* While engaged with this creature, enemies with 36 hp or fewer are dazed (–4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

*Flight:* Reavers ignore the bonds of gravity while they're phasing.

**AC 23**

**PD 18**

**MD 20**

**HP 185**

## DEATH SHADE

*Anyone who dies, or should die, around a reaver, donates a splinter of their soul to fight for the Lich King.*

7<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]

Initiative: +7, or immediately after the reaver that created it

Vulnerability: holy

**Soul-grab +11 vs. PD**—11 ongoing negative energy damage

*Natural 18+:* The target is dazed (–4 attack) until the end of its next turn.

*Flight:* Death shades can hover and fly about easily.

*Partial phasing:* As a quick action, a death shade can pass through a small or narrow solid object or pop free from all enemies engaged with it. When a creature intercepts a death shade, that creature takes 11 negative energy damage.

*Shadow of death:* A death shade gains a +2 attack bonus against the last creature in the battle to roll a death save. Death shades specifically target dying or helpless creatures unless somebody is actively attacking them while standing over the body of the dying or helpless creature.

**AC 22**

**PD 21**

**MD 13**

**HP 25 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one death shade mook for every 25 damage you deal to the mob.

## GRUESOME REAVER

*A skeletal hand emerges from the darkness and beckons. The cloaked figure stepping from the wall didn't really expect you to come when it beckoned. It just likes to scare you before it scythes you to death.*

*Double-strength 10<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +16

Vulnerability: holy

**Reaping scythe +15 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—50 negative energy damage

*Both attacks hit the same target:* Until the end of its next turn, the target is affected by the reaver's *fear aura* even if it has more than 72 hp.

*Phasing:* While the escalation die is odd, the reaver takes no damage and suffers no effects from attacks with natural attack rolls less than 18+ (or 16+ for attacks that deal holy damage). It does take full damage and effects from attacks that are able to affect it.

While phasing, the reaver can move but creatures can't intercept it, and it can travel through solid objects but not end its turn in them. In addition, while phasing the reaver can't attack (including opportunity attacks) or affect the physical world except in the following way: When an enemy starts its turn engaged with the phased reaver, it takes 25 negative energy damage.

The reaver can also use *phasing* outside of battle, but only for a short time.

*Call upon death shades:* Until the reaver drops to 0 hp, when one of its living (not undead or construct) enemies or non-mook allies rolls a death save or dies, a gruesome death shade enters the battle. Death shades act immediately after the reaver in initiative order.

*Death aura:* When the escalation die is 6+, all normal saves made during the battle become hard saves (16+).

*Fear aura:* While engaged with this creature, enemies with 72 hp or fewer are dazed (-4 attack) and do not add the escalation die to their attacks.

*Flight:* Reavers ignore the bonds of gravity while they're phasing.

*Marked by death:* When a creature disengages or moves away from a reaver that's phasing, that creature is vulnerable to negative energy until the end of its next turn.

*Unholy backlash:* Deal 3d10 negative energy damage to any creature that targets the gruesome reaver with an attack that deals holy damage.

**AC 26**

PD 24

MD 20

**HP 380**

## REAVERS AND RESURRECTION

Can you be resurrected if a reaver kills you? Good question, and one that we're not giving a definitive answer to. Maybe 'yes'. Maybe 'no'. Maybe 'maybe' but you need to go get the soul back, and stop the reavers from showing up and reclaiming it during a protracted resurrection ritual.

## GRUESOME DEATH SHADE

*What's that bright thing pulsing in the shade's hand after it reaches into your body? Part of your soul...*

*10<sup>th</sup> level mook [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +10, or immediately after the reaver that created it

Vulnerability: holy

**Soul-grab +14 vs. PD**—25 ongoing negative energy damage

*Natural 18+:* The target is dazed (-4 attack) until the end of its next turn.

*Flight:* Death shades can hover and fly about easily.

*Partial phasing:* As a quick action, a death shade can pass through a small or narrow solid object or pop free from all enemies engaged with it. When a creature intercepts a death shade, that creature takes 25 negative energy damage.

*Shadow of death:* A death shade gains a +2 attack bonus against the last creature in the battle to roll a death save. Death shades specifically target dying or helpless creatures unless somebody is actively attacking them while standing over the body of the dying or helpless creature.

**AC 25**

PD 24

MD 16

**HP 50 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one gruesome death shade mook for every 50 damage you deal to the mob.

## REAVERS AND THE ICONS

In what world is the reaver associated with someone other than the Lich King? Perhaps the Dwarf King has opened a deep tomb and inherited several dwarven reavers, and now wants them 'taken care of' before the Lich King notices and asserts control. Or perhaps the necromancer in your party has inadvertently created these monstrosities and they trouble no one but the necromancer and her allies, until the PCs can get to the Necropolis and perform a ritual ending the curse.

## BUILDING BATTLES

Reavers and their associated undead allies are likely to come drifting out of a foggy night to claim the lives of those who have cheated death.

When you use reavers you need to decide if they are here for all the adventurers, for a specific adventurer, or are willing to leave with the first soul that they get.

However, you could slip a reaver or some death markers into a fight that involves other creatures. The other creatures might not even be aware that they're going to have 'help' from the undead—imagine a band of orcs who ambush the party, and just as the party is finding its feet in the fight up from the ground phases a reaver, arriving to ensure that this battle the adventurers die like they are supposed to!

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are some example storylines that could bring reavers into your campaign as something other than a random event or a vendetta from the Lich King.

**A Dance with Death**—An isolated village is unusually prosperous, and its citizens unusually healthy. They have cut a deal with the Lich King to avoid death and gain wealth, but they must offer up villager each year at their harvest dance to the reavers as payment. Usually the villagers choose a 'year king' who is treated like royalty for one year before they are collected. This year the villagers decide that they can buy several more years of extended life and prosperity by making the adventurers their sacrifice instead. Will the adventurers stick around to be officially made year kings, or will they notice that something odd is going on before they accept their laurel crowns?

**Between the Inferno and the Grave**—A penitent former follower of the Diabolist lies on their death-bed; they fear that their soul will be claimed by infernal forces and taken to hell for eternal torment when they die, so they have invited the Lich King to claim it instead. The penitent has willed their entire estate to the adventurers, if only the PCs will defend their body and soul from devils and demons long enough for the reavers sent by the Lich King to arrive. The executor of the estate will be cowering in a cupboard nearby to see who and what claims the penitent's soul.

**Soul Concern**—The reavers have collected an entire imperial fort and are leading their ghosts off to the Necropolis. The only survivor from the garrison was a battle-priestess who warded herself inside the fort's chapel. The battle-priestess has preserved the bodies of her fallen comrades, but needs their souls back. Can the adventurers intercept the reavers before they cross the midland sea with their cargo of souls? What is the battle-priestess not telling the adventurers about the situation?

**The Old Tyrant**—A duke has lived far past his time, and what were merely spiteful quirks and mild paranoia in his character have curdled into an evil malevolence as he has aged. The duke's people suffer under the duke's tyranny and oppression, as he overturns or ignores laws that get in the way of his black-hearted desires and sends his thugs out to enforce his will. The bloated and decaying duke has been able to ward off death using dark magic and pacts with unspeakable forces, and even the reavers are kept at bay. An agent of the Lich King approaches the party to make a deal—if they discover and destroy whatever it is in the duke's castle that is keeping the reavers out the Lich King will give the next party member to die another shot at life (a 'free' resurrection, though doubtless with some Lich King style side-effects).

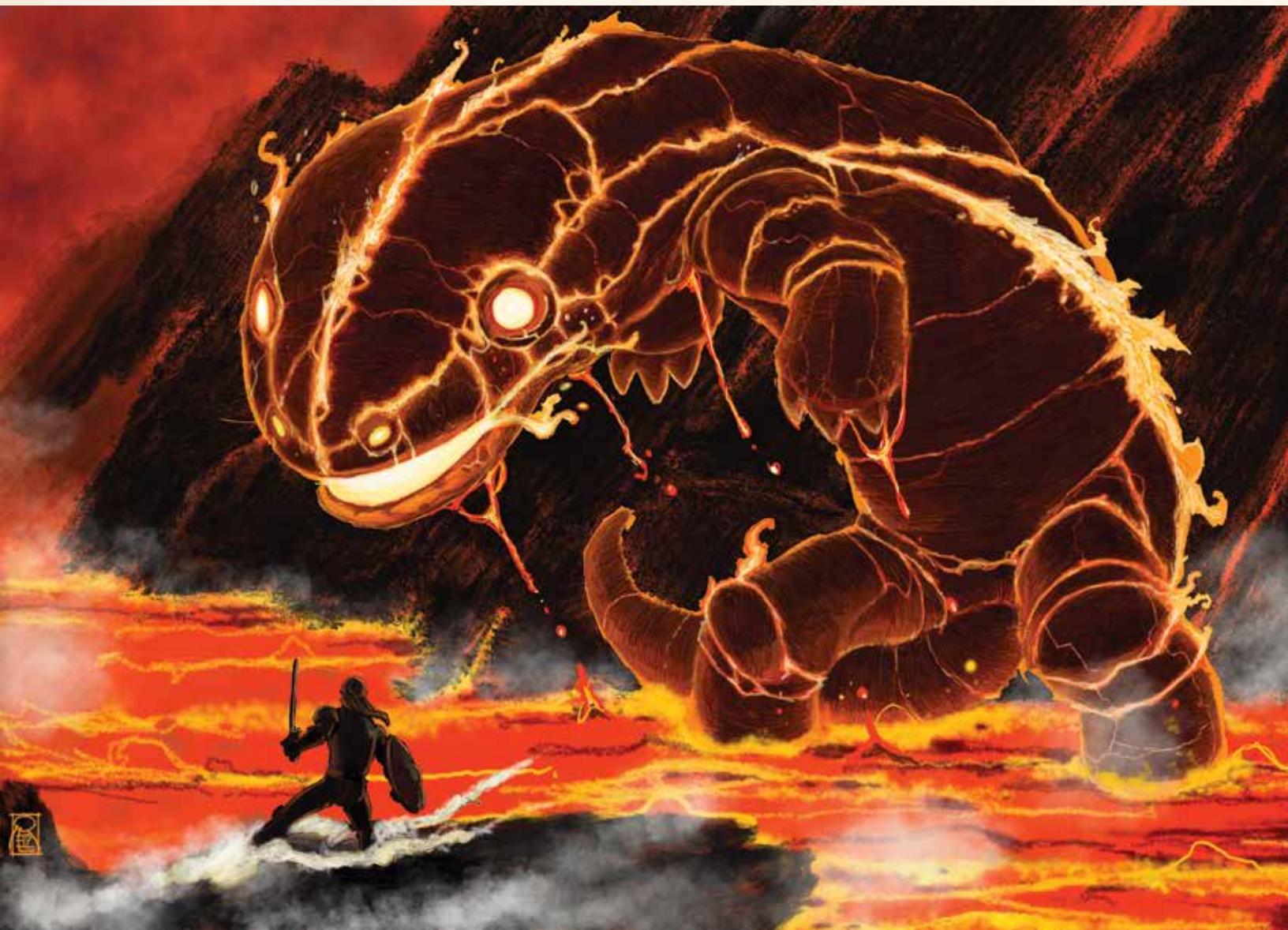
**Triage and Treatment**—The plague that ended the 12<sup>th</sup> age is back. A cadre of clerics and wizards have been able to contain the outbreak and prevent any deaths, but those afflicted with the plague are highly infectious. The Lich King is sending reavers to cleanse the infection (i.e., kill the infected and claim their souls). Is the Lich King trying to prevent another age-ending plague, or is he attempting to gain a biological weapon? Can the adventurers find the lost cure for the plague *before it is too late?*



### Unholy Magic and Lines

#### Best Not Crossed

*Phasing death spirits sound like just the thing to mess with the party. They could be a surprise, unliving monsters created and controlled by someone other than the Lich King. They could be demon worshipers gradually drained into wraiths. Or arcane creations of the Blue, undead dragon spirits. Or maybe the Archmage has a dark side and created them. It could have been the work of a past Archmage, or the work of a mysterious past icon called the Pale One. Clerics of dark gods might create such creatures or even become them. They operate outside the sphere of the Lich King's influence, so let the players hope that something good might come of parleying with the reavers. And maybe it will.*



# SALAMANDER

*Salamanders prefer environments that are on fire. If they end up somewhere that's not already on fire, redecorating is easy.*

Salamanders are either fire elementals that look like lizards or lizards that have all the properties of fire elementals. They might be natural in some magma-rich area of the world, they might be lizards from a dimension of fire, or they might be supernatural creations of wizardry amok. People who poke around explanation for these creatures tend to end up dead and cremated, usually at the same time.

Physically a salamander is a huge lizard-like creature, with black-and-red/orange markings, surrounded by (or exuding!) a fiery aura. Salamanders lay eggs in very hot places—volcanoes

and lava fields by preference—and seem to be sustained by heat energy rather than any particular substance. Of course, they're happy to supplement their heat-diet with the bones of adventurers and other creatures insane enough to come near them.

The names we've attached to salamanders are more for roleplaying convenience than as a guide to how people in the Dragon Empire refer to salamanders. Normal people don't have much to say about them at all and would-be scholars of elemental monsters might have their own fussy nomenclature.

## ABILITIES FOR ALL SALAMANDERS

The salamander fights better in hot environments with lots of flame. They are comfortable with extreme heat. All salamanders have the following two abilities: *escalating inferno* and *resist fire*.

**Escalating inferno:** If the salamander is in an area with flames, lava, or that it has set on fire, it gets to use the escalation die, adding it to its attack rolls. Even when not fighting in such an environment, a salamander attacked with a spell or attack that deals fire damage gets to use the escalation die until the end of its next turn, or longer if it's a powerful or lingering spell. Avoid casting *fireball* in battle with a salamander!

**Resist fire 16+:** Fire attacks against the salamander must roll a natural 16+ attack roll or the attack does half damage. Whether or not such an attack hits, see *escalating inferno*!

### Nastier Special

**Heat metal:** Enemies who make a melee attack with a non-magical weapon against a salamander and who roll a natural 1 or 3 take ongoing fire damage equal to twice the salamander's level unless they drop their weapon as a free action.

## BLUEFLAME SALAMANDER

*Did we say black-and-red/orange markings? We meant bright blue markings. Glowing bright blue markings.*

**Huge 2<sup>nd</sup> level troop [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +8

**Blueflame tongue +7 vs. AC—7 damage**

**Heat haze aura:** All enemies who start their turn nearby the salamander take 7 fire damage. All enemies who do not resist fire and who end their turn nearby the salamander take 7 fire damage. Salamanders ignore damage from *heat haze aura*.

### Nastier Special

**Enduring flame:** Staggered enemies who are hit by blueflame tongue also take 3 ongoing fire damage.

<b>AC</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PD</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>13</b>

**HP 100**

## DOOMLANTERN SALAMANDER

*Their glowing eyes hypnotize and lure the weak-willed to their doom.*

**Huge 4<sup>th</sup> level blocker [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +9

Vulnerability: cold

**Fearful flame +8 vs. PD—14 fire damage and ongoing fire damage equal to the escalation die value times seven (so the amount keeps going up as the escalation die goes up, to a maximum of 42 ongoing fire damage)**

**Special save:** The save against ongoing damage has different effects depending on the roll:

**1-10:** Save is failed, and the burning target's closest ally takes 7 fire damage.

**11-15:** Save is successful (ongoing damage ends), but burning target's closest ally takes 7 fire damage.

**16+:** Save is successful (ongoing damage ends).

**R: Lure of the flames +8 vs. MD (two nearby or far away enemies)—25 psychic damage**

*Natural d20 attack roll higher than the target's Wisdom*

**attribute:** Until the target is engaged with the salamander, it will use its move and standard actions to move and become engaged with the salamander!

### Nastier Special

**Ignite:** Any unattended flammable objects ignite (straw in a stable, the party's tents, trees, etc.) and nearby liquids boil. Provided that there was anything flammable in the area the salamander gets to use its *escalating inferno* power.

**AC 19**

**PD 19**

**MD 15**

**HP 160**

## HORNED SALAMANDER

*These salamanders deliberately hunt out things to burn. They especially enjoy things that scream while burning.*

**Huge 8<sup>th</sup> level troop [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: cold

**Glowing horns +13 vs. PD (1d3 attacks)—30 fire damage**

*Miss:* 10 fire damage.

**R: Burning gaze +13 vs. PD (two enemies in a rough line, one further away than the other)—30 ongoing fire damage, hard save (16+) ends**

**Heat haze aura:** All enemies who start their turn nearby the salamander take 15 fire damage. All enemies who do not resist fire and who end their turn nearby the salamander take 15 fire damage. Salamanders ignore damage from *heat haze aura*.

Nastier Special

*Ferrous furnace:* All enemies wearing metal armor who start their turn nearby the salamander take 2d12 fire damage. All enemies wearing metal armor who do not resist fire and who end their turn nearby the salamander take 2d12 fire damage.

AC 23

PD 23

MD 19

HP 440

## PYROCLASTIC SALAMANDER

*The thing's skin is hot enough to melt the very rocks it stands on.*

**Huge 12<sup>th</sup> level trooper [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +17

Vulnerability: cold

**Furnace skin +17 vs. PD (each creature engaged with the salamander)**—100 fire damage

*Natural even miss:* 60 fire damage.

*Natural odd miss:* 30 ongoing fire damage.

**R: Pyroclastic roar +17 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—10 damage and 35 ongoing fire damage  
*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

*Spreading flames:* Any enemy of the salamander who is not taking ongoing fire damage, and who during any point on their turn is next to or engaged with a creature taking ongoing fire damage, must roll a save (11+) or take 50 ongoing fire damage.

Nastier Specials

*Building fire:* Enemies take a penalty to saves against ongoing fire damage equal to the escalation die.

*Igneous aura:* Ranged weapon attacks with non-magical weapons or non-magical ammunition against the salamander fail—the missiles simply burn up mid-air.

AC 28

PD 26

MD 23

HP 1080

## BUILDING BATTLES

Salamanders are most likely to be found in fiery environments. Adding fiery environmental hazards to a battle with salamanders just makes sense. Other creatures that are at home in such environments include red dragons and basilisks. Unlucky adventurers might find themselves stumbling into the middle of a territorial face-off between such monsters.

Salamanders are elementals, so pairing them with other fire elementals makes sense. However, they are more free-willed than the sorts of fire elementals that wizards might call up and bind to their will, so they might be found in the fire-blackened ruins of a wizard's sanctum rather than guarding it! Are salamanders the type of elementals that interest druids? That's up to you. If the answer is no, salamanders may be abominations that druids are trying to expunge, which could mean that other creatures that are anti-druid might find reasons to collaborate with the flaming lizards.

If a salamander gets summoned as part of a ritual of mass destruction, there's no telling what other horrible creatures could be part of the rampage.

Regarding creatures found elsewhere in this book, salamanders are either phoenix prey or wonderful custodians of phoenix eggs (page 219). It could go either way. Meanwhile fire giants, in the version we've presented on page 70, probably love salamanders and keep them as pets like other giants keep huge wintery wolves.

## SALAMANDERS AND THE ICONS

*Wizards' bane:* Wizards love summoning elementals, and why not. Summon one, bind it to your will, and you've multiplied your personal power by having a tame monster at your beck and call. Only salamanders don't like to be bound. They don't like it at all. The word 'rampage' springs to mind.

So dangerous are the fire elementals that the Archmage has passed a decree that anybody in Horizon who summons a salamander will be exiled from the city of wizards. As one high-ranking wizard put it: *"It's all fun and games until somebody loses a library of priceless books."*

Naturally, purposely summoning a salamander (or at least claiming to have done so) has caught on among certain secretive countercultural cliques in the city.

*Infernal pets:* You know who doesn't mind fire? Demons. The Diabolist.

Some of the hellholes controlled by the Diabolist feature horrible horned salamanders who roam her torture mazes, keeping the walls just the right temperature (painfully hot) as they pass. Even the infernal monsters that serve the diabolist fear the horned salamanders. However, it is unknown if the Diabolist controls the horned salamanders, or if they just moved into the hell-holes because they like it there.

... or maybe they are spies sent by the High Druid to keep an eye on the Diabolist's minions?

**Fires in deep places:** The dwarves and salamanders have a complicated history. Miners who delve too deep might accidentally break through into a cavern with a lava well and a population of salamanders, and so the whole mine is lost to fire. On the other (scorched) hand a tame salamander is a boon to forge and furnace, producing smokeless heat in exchange for regular treats of coal and wood.

The dwarves have even been known to use salamander body parts in their creations—in almost any dwarven outpost you can find a trader who claims that this cloak is genuine salamander skin or that axe was heated in the blood of a salamander... though most such claims are exaggeration at best, and outright lies if you ask those tricked into purchasing goods for more than they are worth. Of course, every so often something does come out of the deep forges that is a *little unusual*, and such items keep the traders' tales going.

The Dwarf King himself is said to keep a salamander as a pet, one that guards his most prized treasures and that he feeds traitors to. How much of the tale is true depends on who you talk to, but the tale gets wilder the more a dwarf has had to drink.

## SALAMANDER TREASURES

We've hinted that salamanders might be linked to special items that the dwarves make. Maybe that's true, or maybe it's just good advertising for dwarven foundries—"Hey, buy our anvils, made using salamander bones! Half off today only!"

If you the idea that there are some truly salamander-centric things coming out of the dwarven holds then you'll probably want to introduce some special dwarven items for the players to purchase. These don't have to be true magic items that you must attune to, just items that are a little bit more magical than would otherwise be the case:

**Ever-burning lantern**—These lanterns' flames burn, and keep burning. Under water, encased in ice, it doesn't matter they will keep burning. The flames are hot, but not hot enough to burn skin or ignite paper. So yeah, they're great, but they don't last forever, and can wink out unpredictably. *Cost: 100 gp.*

**Salamander leather**—Clothing made from this substance, or lined with it, is always warm and dry. Salamander boots and salamander cloaks are always popular. Wearing a full suit of this (*5x cost*) grants resist cold 5+ to the wearer. *Cost: 100 gp.*

**Fire snuffer**—This blanket (said to be made from the stomach-lining of a salamander) won't burn, keeps things beneath it cold, and will snuff out any non-magical fire it is put in contact with. *Cost: 150 gp.*

These prices are of course just guidelines; the closer to the city of Forge the market is the lower the price will be, the further away the market the higher the prices (and the greater the chances of fakes or substandard copies).

## EXTREME HEAT ENVIRONMENTS

Salamanders are often found in extreme heat environments—in fact they make such environments by setting forest fires or burning cities just by near flammable objects.

Here are some common hazards of extreme heat environments to put in the path of adventurers or to throw into combats as one-time events when the escalation die reaches a certain value (roll a d6 beforehand to determine when the event will occur):

### ADVENTURER TIER: BURNING TAVERN

Fire (DC 20 to avoid).

**Burning alive +5 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—2d4 fire damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

Falling timbers (DC 15 to avoid).

**Crushed +10 vs. AC (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—10 damage

Smoke inhalation (DC 25 to avoid).

**Choking smoke +15 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—2d8 poison damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

### CHAMPION TIER: FOREST FIRE

Fire (DC 25 to avoid).

**Burning alive +15 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—2d8 fire damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

Smoke inhalation (DC 30 to avoid).

**Choking smoke +20 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—4d8 poison damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

Heat (DC 20 to avoid).

**Scalding air +10 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—15 fire damage

### EPIC TIER: VOLCANO

Noxious fumes (DC 35 to avoid).

**Noxious fumes +25 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—20 fire damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

Heat (DC 25 to avoid).

**Scalding air +10 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—20 ongoing fire damage

*Miss:* Half damage.

Slow lava flow (DC 20 to avoid).

**Burned away +25 vs. PD (adventurers who failed the skill check)**—50 fire damage and possible loss of limb

*Miss:* Half damage, and permanent scarring.

## FIRE AXOLOTL FAMILIARS

Some types of salamander start their lives very small, just a finger-length or so large. If a wizard can get to the boiling pools of toxic water that salamanders lay their eggs in they could adopt a baby salamander as a familiar.

Of course, you'd have to get past the adult salamanders first.

## AXOLOTL FAMILIAR

Axolotls are permanently immature salamanders, and like living in lanterns or atop the staffs of wizards who practice fire magic. A pyromancer with an axolotl need never be cold, never go without a source of light, and always has a handy fire lighter.

Axolotl familiars have abilities just like regular familiars, but must take their abilities from the below list.

**Axolotl flare:** This works identically to the regular familiar ability *counter bite* but the damage is fire damage.

**Fire aura:** You gain +1 AC against most ranged attacks (*your aura can burn physical things like arrows and webs*), +1 to skill checks and saves to escape from ropes, and +1 to saves against both fire and cold damage.

**Fire hardened:** This replaces *tough* (and likewise counts as worth two familiar abilities); the only difference between *fire-hardened* and *tough* is that you can also handle small hot things (*like live coals or your axolotl familiar*) without pain or damage.

**Fire proof:** You gain resist fire 6+, or if you resist fire damage otherwise (due to a spell, racial ability, power, magic item, etc.) then add 2 to whichever the greater fire resistance is—so if you drink a potion that normally grants fire resistance 16+, you will have fire resistance 18+ for the potion's duration.

**Flaming:** Just like *axolotl flare* replaces *counter bite*, so *flaming* replaces *poisonous* with a fire damage equivalent.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Elemental Experimentation**—A wizard wants the adventurers to capture and bring him a salamander. He believes that as salamanders are elementals of fire (and undines of water, and sylphs of air) so humanoids are elementals of ‘soul’. Once the party brings him a live salamander the wizard will drug the adventurers and trap them in his menagerie ready for his grand experiment.

**Eye of Newt**—An enchanter that the adventurers want to perform a ceremony (perhaps removing a curse or undoing the strange damage dealt by a shadow mongoose or soul-flenser) agrees to perform the dangerous spell, but at a cost: she needs some magical ingredients first—specifically she needs tears from a still-living salamander. Can the party make a salamander cry?

**Lost Artifact**—Salamanders tend not to have treasure, at least not in the traditional sense that they bring it to their lair.

However, sometimes the presence of a salamander colony ensures that a location that contains treasure goes unvisited for generations. Long ago a magic ring was cast into the fires of a salamander-infested volcano but didn't make it into the lava to be destroyed. Now the adventurers must descend into the volcano, find the legendary ring, and either retrieve or destroy the artifact.

**Salamander Poison**—It is said that a salamander's touch is toxic enough to contaminate the land, make the fruit of a tree noxious, and poison water. Of course, normally the extreme heat of the salamander makes the point moot, but rumor has it that the Lich King is closing in on a lost book that details how to extract the legendary poison from the skin of the salamander.

**Surfacing in Flames**—A living dungeon getting close to the surface is putting out smoke like it's always on fire. Sure enough, it's full of salamanders. The question you don't want to see answered is whether this dungeon will surface as a living volcano.



### Wisdom of the Flames

*Salamanders are promising as ambiguous allies or benefactors for the PCs. Salamanders are dangerous and exotic, but players usually don't have a lot of pre-existing assumptions about them. You can invent the details you need without violating the players' expectations. For example, the doomlantern salamanders have a beguiling gaze, making them good candidates to be sources of mystic wisdom or arcane insights.*

*Burnt offerings: What gifts can PCs bring to the salamanders? Cattle for the salamanders to burn and devour? Fragrant wood for them to burn, sort of like incense? Skeletal remains of salamanders, returned to their homeland for ritual burning? Hearts of the salamanders' enemies?*

*Shared enemies: It might suit your story for the salamanders and PCs to have the same enemies. It could be fire giants, since it is often one's neighbors that one has the most conflict with. More traditionally, the enemy could be creatures associated with cold or water. Then again, you can surely come up with plausible reasons for the salamanders to be in conflict with the monsters or people of your choice.*

*Magic blessings: What could the salamanders do for the party? Maybe they've found a magic sword that will reveal its mighty, fiery powers once the salamanders have attuned it for the party. Maybe they know how to destroy a cursed item such that its curse is finally broken.*

*Divided salamanders: If some salamanders are willing to parley with the party, perhaps other salamanders are unhappy with such a turn of events. The party may be provoked, challenged, insulted, or sharply questioned by this faction of the salamanders.*



# SHADOW MONGOOSE

*If this coiling twist of shadow is a mongoose, your relationship with the Priestess is a tasty egg. Whoops! Both gone.*



Shadows mongooses are strange shapechanging spirits that steal power from the icons and survive when they appear to be finished. When possible they operate in humanoid forms, befriending adventurers in order to steal their icon relationships.

The shadow mongoose might be a friendly tavern owner who lets the adventurers stay with her free of charge, a love interest for one of the adventurers, a local guide, a wise sage ready to offer advice, or a plucky young henchman who wants to one day be just like his heroes (the adventurers). Shadow mongooses don't need to kill adventurers, they just want to steal their icon relationships; it is in the best interests of a shadow mongoose to help adventurers out, at least until they're vulnerable to a quick attack. As far as the shadow mongoose is concerned, adventurers are the proverbial geese that lays golden eggs.

**To tell or not to tell?:** At the GenCon panel where this monster was created some of the audience wanted to have a way to detect shadow mongooses, and the idea of a tell-tale sign was talked about... though Rob and ASH have differing memories of that long-ago discussion.



*For some reason, it sticks in my mind that the shadow mongoose is a consummate shape-changer and trickster that can never change its eyes. They each have distinctive and memorable eyes, with each shadow mongoose's unique eyes staying the same no matter what form it takes.*



*Eyes seem like too much of a give-away. I hope I said that if every mongoose has a tell, it's always different, and you usually don't figure it out until after the mongoose has been exposed.*

*Maybe one mongoose always smells just a bit like cinnamon the first time you meet it, another whistles that ancient tune called Dreams of a Lost Age, and so on.*

## SHADOW MONGOOSE DESTROYER OF FATE

4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [SPIRIT]

Initiative: +11

**Cloud of claws +9 vs. AC—7 damage**

**Natural even hit:** After the current battle is over, the next time this day that the target takes ongoing damage, the shadow mongoose gets to make a *destruction of fate* attack against the target.

[special trigger only] **R: Destruction of fate +9 vs. MD (one target that has been hit twice by the shadow mongoose this battle)**—The target rolls their icon dice, and any that come up 1-4 the shadow mongoose steals until the end of the day. At the start of the next day the target rolls a save (11+) for each stolen icon relationship, on a success the icon relationship die returns to them.

**Crit:** ...and the shadow mongoose steals an item belonging to the target, preferably a magic one but sometimes the most vital one (a key, a map).

**Shadow's slide:** The shadow mongoose can move over any solid surface, slithering like a shadow.

**Play dead:** Once per battle the shadow mongoose may fake being dead. Only magical senses and a DC 25 skill roll from the PC who struck the 'killing blow' will detect that the creature is still alive. Shadow mongooses like to fake their deaths so that they can escape battle with their stolen icon relationships. Since shadow anatomy isn't entirely biological, this ability functions like fleeing the battle if it succeeds, the PCs can go ahead and blast away at what they think is the corpse, but they'll be fragging the mongoose's shadows, not the mongoose itself.

**Trapper:** The shadow mongoose can change shape, though not mid-battle. Shadow mongoose destroyers of fate use this ability to seem innocuous until they are ready to strike.

**Shadow fate:** When the shadow mongoose dies all the icon relationship dice that it stole return to their owners. The person who killed the shadow mongoose gains a magic item that the shadow mongoose had stolen (though maybe not one that it had stolen from the party).

### Nastier Specials

**Drop the loot:** The shadow mongoose flees the battle. One nearby enemy of the shadow mongoose has their icon relationships flip positive to negative and vice-versa (conflicted relationships are unaffected). This relationship inversion is temporary, lasting only until the end of the next game session.

**Shadow dancer:** If the shadow mongoose doesn't attack on its turn it can turn into a flat shadow, and cannot be intercepted or attacked it is moving in this form. When it returns to its normal form, it deals double damage with its next attack, hit or miss.

AC	17
PD	14
MD	18

# SHADOW MONGOOSE SUBVERTER OF FATE

6<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [SPIRIT]

Initiative: +13

**Cloud of claws +11 vs. AC—18 damage**

*Natural even hit:* 1d12 to a nearby target not engaged with the shadow mongoose.

**Subversion of fate +11 vs. MD (one target that has been hit twice by the shadow mongoose this battle)**—The shadow mongoose steals the escalation die until the end of its next turn. While the escalation die is stolen, all shadow mongooses and their allies use it, and the adventurers do not.

*Crit:* ...and the shadow mongoose steals an aspect belonging to the target. The target might lose their gender, or age, or lose part of their appearance, or an outward personality quirk. The character's race, class, attributes etc. remain intact, as does their personality and their memories.

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

*Shadow's flight:* The shadow mongoose may become a thing of dark smoke and shadow, flying swiftly through the air or through the smallest cracks.

*Play dead:* Once per battle the shadow mongoose may fake being dead. Only magical senses and a DC 30 skill roll from the PC who struck the 'killing blow' will detect that the creature is still alive. Shadow mongooses like to fake their deaths so that they can escape battle with their stolen icon relationships. Since shadow anatomy isn't entirely biological, this ability functions like fleeing the battle if it succeeds, the PCs can go ahead and blast away at what they think is the corpse, but they'll be fragging the mongoose's shadows, not the mongoose itself.

*Trader:* The shadow mongoose can change shape, though not mid-battle. Shadow mongoose subverters sometimes take on non-shadowy visages so that they can set up shop as traders, offering to take aspects that others do not want, or selling stolen or traded aspects to those that do desire them.

*Shadow fate:* When the shadow mongoose dies all the aspects that it stole return to their owners. Stolen aspects that have been traded away also return, but slowly. The person who killed the shadow mongoose gains a random aspect chosen by the GM.

## Nastier Specials

*Drop the loot:* The shadow mongoose flees the battle. One nearby enemy of the shadow mongoose gains an unwanted aspect. This new unwanted aspect is temporary, lasting only until the end of the next game session.

*Shadow dancer:* If the shadow mongoose doesn't attack on its turn it can turn into a flat shadow, and cannot be intercepted or attacked if it is moving in this form. When it returns to its normal form, it deals double damage with its next attack, hit or miss.

AC	19
PD	16
MD	20

HP 116 (see *shadow fate*)

## LOSING ASPECTS

What does it mean to lose your age? Do you become unaging and immortal, or do you simply lose all outward signs that could allow somebody to guess at your age? Tales are full of characters who look neither young nor old—could these characters have traded their age to a shadow mongoose in exchange for fame or power?

What about trading for an aspect that contradicts one you already have? What if somebody is both genders, not a-gendered nor androgynous but somebody who is strongly both at the same time? What about somebody who is simultaneously young and fresh-looking *and* old and wizened? Somebody whose voice is both the deepest bass and the highest soprano? How would others react to such a contradiction, how would their minds perceive them? Would they be like walking optical illusions, or would they present a shifting overlapping image?

What if you lose all outward aspects of your appearance to a shadow mongoose? Would people be able to remember your appearance, or would you just show up in their memory as a person-shaped vague blank? Would you even *have* an appearance? For some this would be a curse—for others a blessing. Both the Prince of Shadows and the Black of the Three might have need for killers that nobody can identify.

# SHADOW MONGOOSE

## THIEF OF FATE

8<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [SPIRIT]

Initiative: +15

**Tenebrous claws +13 vs. AC—24 damage**

*Natural even hit:* Make a second tenebrous claws attack as a free action.

**Theft of fate +13 vs. MD (one target that has been hit**

**twice by the shadow mongoose this battle)**—The shadow mongoose steals an icon die from the target. The target may not use the stolen icon die, until the shadow mongoose gives it back, or the shadow mongoose dies.

*Crit:* ...and the relationship that the adventurer has with that icon flips from positive to negative or negative to positive. Conflicted relationships are unaffected.

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

*Shadow speed:* As a move action the shadow mongoose may teleport into engagement with a target that it missed the previous round.

*Play dead:* Once per battle the shadow mongoose may fake being dead. Only magical senses and a DC 35 skill roll from the PC who struck the ‘killing blow’ will detect that the creature is still alive. Shadow mongooses like to fake their deaths so that they can escape battle with their stolen icon relationships. Since shadow anatomy isn’t entirely biological, this ability functions like fleeing the battle if it succeeds, the PCs can go ahead and blast away at what they think is the corpse, but they’ll be fragging the mongoose’s shadows, not the mongoose itself.

*Trickster:* The shadow mongoose can change shape, though not mid-battle. Shadow mongooses sometimes join adventuring parties as helpful hirelings, love interests, or local guides to repeatedly steal icon relationships from adventurers.

*Shadow fate:* When the shadow mongoose dies all the icon relationship dice that it stole return to their owners. The person who killed the shadow mongoose gains 1d3 ‘5’ icon dice results with a random icon that they do not have a relationship with OR a 6 with the Prince of Shadows if they do not have a relationship with him (roll 1d3 for relationship type: 1= Negative, 2= Conflicted, 3= Positive).

### Nastier Specials

*Drop the loot:* The shadow mongoose flees the battle. One nearby enemy of the shadow mongoose gains an unwanted icon relationship worth 1d3 icon dice. This new relationship is temporary, lasting only until the end of the next game session.

*Shadow dancer:* If the shadow mongoose doesn’t attack on its turn it can turn into a flat shadow, and cannot be intercepted or attacked it is moving in this form. When it returns to its normal form, it deals double damage with its next attack, hit or miss.

AC	21
PD	18
MD	22

HP 188 (see *shadow fate*)

## THE SHADOW MONGOOSE AND THE ICONS

Shadow mongooses aren’t the type of creature that allies willingly with icons—if anything they are the enemies of all icons equally, weakening bonds between the icons and their followers.

The Prince of Shadows is the icon most likely to have an alliance with shadow mongooses—heck, he might be a shadow mongoose. Probably not, but it could explain a few things. Maybe he’s got some sort of long-term plot that involves shadow mongooses, or maybe they are distractions that he throws at his enemies so that they never look to closely at what he’s really up to.

It’s also possible that the current icons are unaware of the existence of these creatures. Maybe the shadow mongooses are secretly draining power from the icons to create an icon of their own. Maybe it’s something weirder.

## LOST ICON OF NAGAS

It may be that there was once an icon that was somehow related to the nagas, a Duke of Nagas. If that was the case then it was ‘defeated’ by the shadow mongooses, its power and influence stolen away piece by piece by the shadow mongooses. Even today the shadow mongooses have an enmity with the wise nagas, stealing their eggs and destroying their crystal libraries.

## ANCIENT ICON RESULTS

Shadow mongooses live for a very long time, and might have stolen icon relationships with the Duke of Nagas or another ancient icon like the Dream Princess, the Dark Jester, or anything else you feel like introducing into the game. Perhaps there was an ogre icon, or a divine platinum dragon, or an icon that was a dark spider goddess. Whatever you pick, killing a shadow mongoose might give you a temporary icon relationship with that ancient icon. Exactly what that means for your game is up to you.

## ICONIC CRYSTALS

What do shadow mongooses do with their stolen icon relationships? Maybe they store the energies in ‘iconic crystals’: some sort of egg-like geode that allows the owner to mystically alter their fate and gain the aid of icons. If this is so then maybe they can be traded with other creatures to gain their aid, or even swapped with adventurers. Certainly a crystal-filled stone egg that gives you an icon relationship die is an unusual treasure.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Ape slaves of howling island**—A shadow mongoose has made a tidy fortune as one of its assumed identities as a writer of sensationalist adventure stories, with lurid titles such as ‘the dragon of vengeance’ and ‘the lost treasure of curse castle’. The shadow mongoose, seeking new material, joins the party to chronicle its adventures (and sneakily steal icon relationship dice).

**Love in the time of shadows**—A shadow mongoose tricks a party member into falling in love with it, only to later fall in love with the adventurer for real. Now it works to protect the party while attempting to avoid its secret being revealed. The party is constantly plagued with mysterious happenings, strange co-incidences, and sightings of shadowy creatures.

**Raiders of the Lost Egg**—The race is on for an iconic crystal said to grant a relationship with the Wizard King. The adventurers must beat rival groups to get it for an icon, and claim their reward. Not only are agents of all the icons involved in the race to the lost egg, but a shadow mongoose has slipped into one of the parties.

**Temple of Phantom Shadows**—A shadow mongoose openly approaches the party, revealing its true self. It wants them to open up an ancient tomb and retrieve the golden statue of a goblin found therein—they can keep the rest of the treasure for themselves. Obviously it is a trick of some sort, so what does the shadow mongoose really want?

**Tricksters Abound**—An ancient naga is headed to Horizon to meet with a college of wizardry and share its knowledge. The adventurers are hired to provide security for the meeting, which will take several days. Just after the naga arrives one of the wizards turns up dead, their body disintegrated. The adventurers know that at least one of the wizards is an imposter, but who?

**Unicorn’s Legacy**—The owner of the Prancing Unicorn tavern in Concord has been discovered to be a shadow mongoose and has fled the city. The adventurers find themselves, as they have the largest bar tab, to be the inheritors of both the Prancing Unicorn and the large debt on the property. Now the party must settle a debt not theirs, run a tavern, avoid suspicion that that are shadow mongooses, and keep an eye out for the return of the true shadow mongoose.

# SILVER HAND CULT

*There is always hope, and we are proof.*

—Franabeth, Undying One.

The Silver Hand is a mystery cult devoted to the Lich King. It provides hope to those who have none by promising that death is not the end.

## HOW THE SILVER HAND GROWS

The Silver Hand's activities in a region follow a set pattern. If you like the idea that the cult has survived for centuries, the pattern has been carefully worked out over generations by the Lich King's wisest and most insightful strategists. If you're happier with the idea that the cult is a recent development that hasn't been squashed yet by the Lich King's enemies, then it's likely the scheme is likely the brainchild of one undead mastermind or another.

### BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

When the Silver Hand decides to expand its influence into an area it looks for a problem that it can solve. If there is no problem, then the perception of a problem can be created ("*Damn gnomes, coming here and taking all the jobs*")—or a problem can be created. It doesn't take much to create a problem—crop failure, banditry, monster attacks. Whatever the problem is, it is important to the Silver Hand that it is blamed on an icon that isn't the Lich King.

Then the Silver Hand sends in phantoms, friendly 'spirits' that give advice to easily swayed individuals, and then solve the problem for those individuals. To cure blighted crops the Lich King's agents drain the life from other fields (they can't create life, but they can pull it out of plants and deliver it to the farms of those they are seeking to influence). Bandits are convinced to move on (to other towns that can later be targeted for conversion by the Silver Hand). Likewise, agents of the Lich King have ways to convince monsters to leave the area.

Once the problem is *mostly* solved the phantoms start to reveal themselves to a wider audience, while still not revealing themselves publicly. Those who are most open to influence or who secretly crave power are set up as informal leaders of those in on the secret.

The most important part of the Silver Hand's plan at this stage is to make those joining the side of the Lich King believe that this is all a grass-roots social movement developing organically.



## THE STRATEGY OF PARTIAL SUCCESS

Why only *mostly* solve an area's problems? Well, that way there is always the unspoken threat that if the Lich King's influence is decreased the problems will return. Who wants the bandits back, the plague to come back, the harvest to fail again? Nobody, that's who.

Even better, if the Silver Hand promotes the idea that a certain section of society is responsible for any problems (real or imagined), but doesn't get rid of those that it blames, then it gives its members something to unite against—a common enemy to hate.

The more nebulous and hard to identify the group blamed is the better: if 'witches' secretly in the employ of the Diabolist are blamed for a bad harvest or a trade route shifting away from the town then the Silver Hand can persecute anyone who it wishes to with the excuse that they are a witch or are in league with witches.

## THE MOVEMENT GROWS

The Lich King's phantoms then encourage the mortals to recruit more members, and to become more organized. Clubs and 'community organizations' spring up, with the stated aim of helping the community but really to increase the power of people the Lich King has the most influence over.

Such organization start as 'good ideas' or 'common sense' and so the traditional leaders of the community (mayors, lords, sheriffs) don't move to stop them. However, over time the organizations seize more power, and their perceived popular support makes traditional leaders hesitant to move against them.

Soon the secretly Lich King backed groups are running the area, with the traditional leader's day-to-day roles usurped from them.

## THE SLOW REVEAL

Up until this point almost every leader of the movement thinks that their phantom advisors are just helpful spirits, and nothing more. They may even have been fooled into thinking that the phantoms are nature spirits, messengers from the gods, or ancestors returned to guide them. Anybody who would or could have rebelled against the Lich King on principle has already been marginalized within the movement or corrupted by their newfound power.

At this stage the Lich King's agents privately reveal who they are working for to those at the top of the movement. By this point even if the local movement's leaders wanted to stand against the Lich King they can't—to do so means losing the power that they crave, and if they step aside there is somebody below them that is ready to take their place in the movement.

## MYSTERY CULT?

A mystery cult is a religion where there are layers of secrecy and degrees of initiation. The lowest ranking cult members know only a few of the secret teachings of the cult, but as they rise in rank and prestige they are inducted into the secret teachings of the cult known as the 'mysteries.'

Mystery cults thrived in the ancient world and were prevalent in Rome, and often had secret meeting places known only to initiates at higher levels.

Some modern religions are mystery cults too, revealing ever more of their inner secrets as initiates increase in rank: the lowest ranking members only know the (relatively) sane-sounding teachings that outsiders also know, and as they become more involved with the cult and prove their loyalty they learn the crazy-sounding secret teachings about ancient astronauts or the lizard-men who run the world or Atlantis...and by that time they are so invested in the cult in terms of time and money and emotion that they accept teachings that would have sounded insane earlier. Just like simple farmers getting drawn into worshiping a lich.

## THE PYRAMID

Those at the top of the movement now know that they are working for the Lich King. They are instructed in some simple secrets of the ways of undeath, and encouraged to bring more true believers into the fold. This is the start of the mystery cult proper.

This part of the Silver Hand's take-over is known as 'the pyramid' because the more recruits you bring in to the growing mystery cult, the more likely you are to move up a level within the cult and have more secrets of undeath revealed. Of course, if those that you recruit in turn recruit others you move up within the cult. And so, promotion within the mystery cult helps the cult grow.

By this time the traditional power structure of the area is circumvented and irrelevant. People no longer bring their problems to the sheriff, they bring them to the local 'public safety committee.' Taxes no longer go to the local lord, instead money is funneled to the cult. The mayor may pass laws, but they are ignored in favor of the rules imposed by the new clubs and cooperatives. At this stage those who were previously in power are either inducted into the cult, or are quietly 'removed.'

Clerics of the gods loyal to the Crusader or Priestess and wizards loyal to the Archmage find that they have reasons to move on—the locals become surly and uncooperative, homes and places of worship or magic suffer vandalism, and eventually if the 'undesirable elements' don't leave town... well, accidents happen.

## THE CULT OPERATES OPENLY

Once the cult is sure of its local control it begins to operate openly. Undead walk the streets, mingling with the living. Outsiders are carefully kept away from seeing anything that they shouldn't, and visitors are encouraged not to stay long.

### SOMETHING FOR THE KIDS

The Lich King knows the importance of winning hearts and minds, and doing so early. He takes a long view, and so is willing to put in effort now that reaps greater rewards down the line.

Adventurers might be surprised to see undead entertainers in a Lich King controlled area: skeletal jugglers (juggling their own heads) who play xylophone with their ribs, ghost-controlled puppets, adorable vampire kittens. Yeah, it all seems twee and cute. It's designed to be 'cute' and 'harmless' and 'funny.' Remember, those children are being indoctrinated by the Lich King's unsleeping propaganda machine.

While the children laugh at the antics of their undead 'friends,' their parents are off being partially drained by vampires or making a human sacrifice to their dark lord. Those children will grow up thinking that the horror is normal, all because a talking skeleton in a funny hat told them a few jokes at an impressionable age.

## THE LICH KING'S POWER GROWS

Now the Silver Hand starts to reap rewards for the Lich King. By this point there is no way to advance within the mystery cult by gaining new members (everybody is either a member or is no longer living in town, or in some cases no longer living). Cultists can still rise in rank within the cult by performing certain deeds and rituals intended to increase the Lich King's temporal and magical power.

The Lich King's agents now operate in the open, offering his support to the people in return for obedience to and veneration of the Lich King.



## WHAT THE CULT OFFERS

The cult obviously offers power to those that crave it, and a sense of unity and belonging that is a powerful motivator for humanoids.

The Lich King knows that he needs to keep his subjects happy, so once the cult is out in the open (and sometimes long before) offers the following things:

### SECURITY

*"A true king cares for his subjects safety and well-being. It is obvious that those who would chain you are no true kings."*

Problems with bandits, monsters, unruly adventurers? Well don't fret, the Lich King can send his Death Knights to patrol your roads. Of course, you'll need to ask for their protection.

The only thing is that once a town or town has asked for the protection of the Lich King there is no way to get them to leave... and why would you want them to? Don't you like being safe?

### PROSPERITY

*"The Lich King cares about people like you."*

A bad harvest? Well the Lich King can teach you a ritual to drain the life from the neighboring town's crops and direct it to your own. Need help getting in your sudden bumper harvest? Fret not, just dig up some skeletons and sacrifice some livestock and you have new helpers for your fields.

Unfortunately farmland that is enriched by the powers of undeath has a habit of going barren. Once you've performed the dark rituals one year, you'll need to do it every year. Before you know it the sacrifice of people in wicker men is a venerated local tradition.

### HOPE

*"Your pain can end today, there is no need to suffer."*

Those afflicted diseases can have them alleviated by draining the lives of others. Those who are grieving can bring friends and loved ones back to (un)life. For those that suffer the Lich King offers concrete solutions where other icons offer 'faith' and platitudes about an unseen afterlife.

However, the price is steep. If you want a disease permanently cured, you must offer yourself to the Lich King as one of his undead after you pass. If you want to bring a loved one back you must prove your loyalty to the Lich King beyond doubt.

## CHANGE

*You can be who you were born to be, in the service of the Lich King.*

If you suffer from a deformity, it can be fixed in undeath. If you feel yourself born into the wrong body, in undeath that can be changed. If you hate how you look, in undeath you can be perfect. Worried about aging? You can be eternally young.

Willingly entering into the Lich King's service, welcoming undeath, being a living sacrifice to the undying king? Yeah, that sort of thing leaves a stain on the soul. However, eternal service is a price many are willing to pay. Such individuals usually end up as phantoms or tempters.

## A SENSE OF BELONGING

*"One of us."*

Belonging gives people identity, community, and friendship. By itself 'belonging' isn't a bad thing, and is a basic human need for most of us—but it can pull you in some unexpected directions and get you to do some crazy stuff that you might not otherwise consider doing.

The Lich King is no longer among the living, and has a perspective that most humanoids don't. He uses other's need to belong, to make them belong to him.

## POWER

*"Together we are stronger."*

Some crave power at any cost, and no amount is ever enough. The Lich King can make gifts of power to those who are still living, but in exchange they become undead monsters once dead.

## ETERNAL LIFE

*"Death is but a door..."*

Yeah, this is the big one. The Lich King is willing to save you, your family, and your friends from the grave. However, there is a cost. He's not going to just let anyone in.

The more you do for the Lich King the better your unlife will be. Rise in rank in the cult, perform special deeds, make the right sacrifices, and you'll end up as an intelligent undead that doesn't look too far removed from how you look today. Do nothing much for the Lich King and you'll end up as a mindless phantomaton working in a cult member's field.

## WHY A RURAL CULT?

Why not a city cult? Well for one thing rural cults can get away with a lot more than cults in a city, can stay unnoticed for generations, and once they have taken over an area they can operate openly (far easier to take over an isolated village or small town than subvert a whole city).

Rural areas are more likely to have unguarded graveyards, are less able to call for aid and therefore more willing to accept the Lich King's help, and are insular enough that it is easy to spot outsiders.

It's also possible that the Diabolist's cults have the cities sewn up!

## THE SILVER HAND'S OPERATIVES

The Silver Hand's undead members are the masters and servants of the living cult members. Ultimately the cult is controlled by and reliant upon the undead, but the Silver Hand is clever enough to make the living cultists think that it is the living who are calling the shots.

Monster stat blocks follow in a couple pages. We'll work through the hierarchy before we get to the fighting.

## UNKNOWING ACOLYTES

These are the farmers, shopkeepers, heralds, brewers, scribes, potters, and other common folk who unknowingly serve the Silver Hand. They don't know that they are serving the Lich King—as far as they know they are just members of a local club or organization.

Just because they don't know whom they serve, doesn't mean that that are disorganized or not actively dangerous. An ignorant mob is still a mob.

## DRUDGE/CITIZEN

Known to the living cultists by the euphemism 'citizen', a drudge is a cultist who has earned (or who has had earned for them) unlife. The majority of cultists who return from the grave are drudges.

Drudges spend much of their time as shambling mindless undead, carrying out tasks alongside phantomatons. However, between tasks their spark of intelligence and a measure of life returns. As this indentured servitude is not too different from their lives drudges rarely complain. Those who do complain find that the Lich King has ways to make their unending existences very miserable.

## CULTISTS

These individuals are in the know, and like the fact that they are privy to a secret that others are not. Cultists might be found stirring up a mob, performing a dark ritual, or at a secret meeting.

Cultists are often in positions of unofficial and unelected power—the leaders of the various community organizations and clubs set up by the Lich King's agents. So even though they might be lowly farmers they receive an undue amount of respect from those who an outsider might think are their social superiors.

## EMPOWERED CULTISTS

These are the cult's secret leaders, who coordinate the actions of seemingly separate groups to achieve their aims. They are picked by the Lich King's agents because their fears, bigotries, and need for power make them easy to influence.

These cultists are empowered with undeath, given special 'gifts' by the Lich King—gifts maintained by sacrifices and dark rituals.

## PHANTOMS

These are the advisors to the empowered cultists, free-willed and intelligent ghosts bound to the service of the Silver Hand. The cultists think that these 'spirits' are their servants, when in fact it is the other way around.

Phantoms are the first undead in an area, seeking out those individuals who are most open to the Lich King's influence. The phantoms use their powers to appear as either child-like 'spirits', the wise souls of ancestors, or nature elementals. Then they solve problems (often after creating them first), and act as advisors to the growing cult.

Before their deaths phantoms are cult members who knowingly and whole-heartedly serve the Lich King with great distinction.

## PHANTOMATONS

Phantomatons are puppet-like objects that have souls bound into them. They aren't golems, but are possessed objects. Most phantomatons are humanoid—walking scarecrows, 'living' dolls, or walking statues. A few are shaped like skeletal horses, clay bulls, or iron hounds.

Phantomatons are rarely free-willed, but horrifically are intelligent. It is common for criminals in Silver Hand controlled territories to be executed and their souls trapped in a phantomaton. Though they can still think and feel their actions are bounded by the commands given to them by their owners.

A few phantomatons are fully free-willed, those who earned their way to an undeath better than drudge, but did not earn their way to tempter or death knight. Free-willed phantomatons are usually propagandists for the Lich King—jesters to make kids laugh, bards to entertain adults, and dancers to inflame the passions of those who still live.

## TEMPTERS

A tempter is a life-like undead that looks a little too beautiful, an uncannily perfect 'person' with too-smooth skin and too-symmetrical features. Cold to the touch, of course, but that's undeath for you.

Tempters come from the ranks of cultists who have 'earned' a better class of undeath, and serve him as propagandists. "Look", says the tempter "*undeath isn't so bad. Undeath is better than life. Serve and you can be rewarded as I have.*" In life, tempters felt that they were dealt a bad hand—deformity, disease, ugliness, or being born into the wrong body. To a tempter undeath is usually a rebirth.

Of course earning an undeath as a tempter requires the cultist to rise to a high rank in life, and so tempters are among the most fanatical of the cultists even before their transformation.

## DEATH KNIGHTS

Death knights are the fist of the Silver Hand. They keep cult-controlled territory safe from bandits (preferring to move bandits along to the next town or village rather than kill them), and enforce the Lich King's will if an area tries to rebel.

Death knights start their careers as living warriors bound into magical armor, armor that traps their soul once they die. Even if they don't die the armor slowly drains their soul into itself, allowing the knight to feel through the armor and see through their helm. Most death knights can't even pinpoint the exact point when they stopped breathing.

Becoming a death knight is considered a high honor in the Silver Hand, and is reserved only for those who have proved their loyalty for killing again and again in the name of the Lich King.

# MONSTER STATS

Once the PCs have seen too much, it's time to roll initiative!

## SILVER HAND CULTIST

*2nd level mook [HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +6

**Pitchforks and torches +7 vs. AC**—4 damage

*Natural even hit:* Also deals 6 fire damage.

**R: Slingshot staff +6 vs. AC (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—5 damage

*Fanatical mob:* Each cultist counts as two monsters for the purpose of disengage checks (disengaging from one requires a disengage check of 12+, from two is 14+, three is 16+, etc.).

### Nastier Specials for Empowered Cultists

*Undying breath:* This mook has twice as many hit points as other mooks.

*Strength of the dead:* This mook has +1 to attack.

*Death's promise:* When this mook dies, it rises immediately on full hit points but is now UNDEAD not HUMANOID.

**AC 17**

**PD 16**

**MD 12**

**HP 8 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one Silver Hand cultist mook for every 8 damage you deal to the mob.

## DRUDGE CITIZEN

*"Grains, must harvest graaaiiins..."*

*3rd level troop [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +3

**Clumsy scythe +8 vs. AC**—10 damage

*Natural 1-5:* Deal damage equal to the natural d20 roll to both the target and the drudge citizen.

*Sudden intelligence:* Once per battle when the drudge moves it does not provoke opportunity attacks and if it makes a clumsy scythe attack immediately after it moves it gets a +2 bonus to its attack and deals half damage on a miss.

### Nastier Special

*Smarter than it looks:* Once per battle the drudge gets to reroll a missed clumsy scythe attack, and deals 5 damage if it still misses.

**AC 18**

**PD 18**

**MD 10**

**HP 52**

## PHANTOMATON

*Around here, the scarecrows scare a lot more than crows.*

*4th level troop [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +8

**Hidden bone claws +9 vs. AC**—14 damage

*Natural 19+ hit:* 6 ongoing negative energy damage, and the target becomes vulnerable to all attacks by undead creatures until the end of the battle.

### Nastier Special (worker-type phantomaton)

*Iron hoe:* The phantomaton is armed with a farming implement, and once per battle can make the following attack as a quick action:

**Iron hoe +10 vs. AC**—10 damage

*Miss:* 4 damage to one other engaged enemy.

### Nastier Special (beast-type phantomaton)

*Built to last:* This phantomaton has been built with sturdier materials than other phantomatons: it has +2 AC and 20 extra hp.

### Nastier Special (guard-type phantomaton)

*Built-in spike-thrower:* The phantomaton has a ranged weapon built directly into its body, and can make the following attack:

**R: Spike-thrower +9 vs. AC (1d3 nearby enemies, or 1d3+1 nearby enemies in a group)**—10 damage

**AC 20**

**PD 19**

**MD 13**

**HP 60**

## PHANTOM

*"Of course I'm not 'evil,' I'm here to help."*

*6th level spoiler [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +12

**Chill touch +11 vs. AC**—14 negative energy damage and 14 ongoing cold damage

**C: Poltergeist activity +11 vs. PD (1d6 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—13 damage

*Immaterial:* As a quick action the phantom can become immaterial, phasing through solid objects, but not ending its turn inside a solid object. Its *chill touch* attack takes a -2 attack penalty while it is immaterial, but all its defenses gain a +2 bonus against non-magical weapons and unarmed attacks. It is a quick action for it to become material again.

*Face of death:* The phantom changes its appearance to become terrifying. All nearby and far away enemies with less than 60 hp must save or become affected by fear (dazed and unable to use the escalation die) until the end of their next turn. Necromancers are immune to this effect. (Characters with active icon relationship advantages might also be able to dodge it, depending on the story they tell . . . )

*Quick use:* 1/battle, as a quick action

*Flight:* While immaterial the phantom can fly.

#### Nastier Special

*Personalized terror:* Those affected by the *face of death* must save to end their fear instead of it ending at the end of their next turn.

AC	22	HP	90
PD	16		
MD	20		

## TEMPTER

*Its beauty is perfect and cold. Exactly like a death-mask.*

*Double-strength 7<sup>th</sup> level blocker [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +14

**C: Supernatural strength +12 vs. AC**—60 damage

*Natural 16, 18, or 20 hit or miss:* The target is thrown far away from the tempter.

*Natural 15, 17, or 19 hit:* The target is hampered (basic attacks only) until the end of its next turn.

**C: Steal breath +12 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—25 negative energy damage and 20 ongoing negative energy damage

*Natural 16, 18, or 20 hit or miss:* The target is pulled into engagement with the tempter.

*Natural 15, 17, or 19 hit:* While the target is taking the ongoing damage it is also hampered (basic attacks only).

*Miss:* 10 negative energy damage.

#### Nastier Special

*Shatter:* Normal non-magical armor and shields shatter under this monster's supernatural strength attack. When the tempter crits, the if the target is wearing non-magical heavy armor the armor is destroyed (count as a -4 penalty to AC until the end of the battle).

AC	23	HP	204
PD	21		
MD	21		

## DEATH KNIGHT

*This knight keeps the roads safe from adventurers and other crusaders.*

*Double-strength 8<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +14

**Soul-piercing spear +13 vs. AC**—50 damage

*Hit or miss, attack beats MD:* 50 ongoing negative energy damage.

**R: Chilling gaze +13 vs. MD**—Target is stuck (save ends)

*First failed save against stuck:* Target is also dazed (save ends both).

*Second failed save against stuck:* Target is now weakened instead of dazed (save ends both).

*Third failed save against stuck:* Target is stunned instead of stuck and weakened (save ends).

*Target fails to save against stunned:* Target is helpless (save ends).

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

#### Nastier Specials

*Death aura:* Nearby targets who attack the death knight and roll a 1 take 20 negative energy damage.

*Phantomaton horse:* If the death knight is riding a phantomaton horse, the phantomaton isn't strong enough to do a whole lot on its own, just count it as a nastier special while ignoring the phantomaton's other stats. As a standard action the phantomaton horse can make the following attack on its turn while it is still mid-move:

**Trample +13 vs. AC**—20 damage

*Miss:* 10 damage.

AC	25	HP	260
PD	22		
MD	18		

## GOLDEΠ EYE NECROMANCER

*True power dangles for the taking in the highest ranks of the Silver Hand.*

*Triple-strength 8<sup>th</sup> level caster [UNDEAD OR HUMANOID]*

Initiative: +18

**Fickle finger of fate +13 vs. AC**—60 negative energy damage

*Natural even hit:* 60 ongoing negative energy damage.

*Natural odd hit:* A nearby undead ally of the necromancer gains 60 temporary hp.

*Miss:* 30 negative energy damage.

**R: Call the dead +13 vs. PD (1d3 nearby or far away enemies in a group)**—60 ongoing damage and the targets are stuck (save ends both) as ghostly hands burst up from the ground to restrain them.

*Miss:* One nearby mook dies, and the necromancer or one of their nearby undead allies heals 20 hp. If there are no nearby mooks for the necromancer to slay there is no miss effect.

*Control undead:* Each turn roll a d6—if the result is equal to or higher than the escalation die, then any undead allies of the PCs turn on them until the end of the round. If any of the PCs are UNDEAD, or are under the effects of zombie form, ghoul form, ghost form, vampiric form, or similar then they must save or become confused until the end of their next turn.

#### Nastier Specials

*[once per battle] Undying melody:* When an ally of the necromancer dies it instead heals to full hp and its creature type becomes UNDEAD if it was not already.

*[once per battle] Revolving door of undeath:* If the necromancer starts the combat as a living HUMANOID, then when it dies instead its type becomes UNDEAD and it instantly heals to 226 hp.

AC	24	HP	452
PD	16		
MD	22		

## BUILDING BATTLES

Living cultists can be mixed in with undead drudges. Adventurers likely won't notice that the more listless looking citizens aren't breathing until the fight starts. Phantoms and phantomatons will come to the aid of their charges if the cult is in a phase of its growth where it is operating out in the open locally.

Tempters make for great surprises—they are life-like enough that it comes as a great shock when the wan poet or lithe dancer starts throwing people across the room.

Necromancers backed up by death knights are really scary. Remember to include some cultists for the necromancers to testily pull life energy out of when they miss with their *call the dead* ability. You'll probably want to keep the cultists off-stage until you need them, since champion-tier PCs can probably mow down cultist mooks without much effort!

Feel free to mix in other types of undead—skeleton field-workers and guards, zombies, even vampires who have moved in to take the place of the local lord.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**A Quiet Town**—The adventurers arrive in a quiet out of the way town, where everything is a little off. The streets are a little too clean, nobody is working the fields, and the locals appear either suspicious (cultists), nervous (the few remaining non-cultists), or dead tired (drudges). It probably won't be until nightfall that the adventurers spot the (phantomaton) workers in their fields. If the adventurers hang around too long they'll end up with the locals trying to sacrifice them. The only problem is that they need to stay in town—the adventurers are meeting an important contact in what both parties thought was an innocuous and anonymous little town.

**Fire from Below**—The adventurer's home base has been infiltrated by the Silver Hand. At first the adventurers notice that crime is down and much needed repairs are suddenly getting done thanks to new 'citizens' committees'. The adventurers are then asked if they are interested in joining the local 'citizen's watch' groups. If the adventurers agree they'll find themselves at the bottom rung of a cult to the Lich King, if they say now they'll find themselves the target of many misfortunes (minor at first but building to some really nasty stuff). Do the adventurers try to find a way to clean the rot out of their town without destroying it in the process or do they use strong-arm tactics which will eventually lead to war with their neighbors?

**Into the Lich King's pyramid**—One of the adventurers' friends or relatives contacts them with an exciting opportunity to join a "fast-growing organization that is promoting social change." Can the adventurers find a way to extricate their friend from the cult, or will they also be lured into the Lich King's pyramid scheme? The twist is that their friend or relative needs to move up in the organization to earn a better class of undeath for their dead spouse that they want to bring back from beyond the veil.

**New Recruits**—The adventurers are tasked with joining the

Silver Hand to uncover how far the corruption has spread. The adventurers must pass themselves off as simple farming folk looking to settle down in the village, and gain the trust of the cult. The only problem is that a monster comes and starts harassing the town just as the adventurers are inducted into the cult; can the adventurers deal with the monster while still maintaining their simple-farmer-folk cover?

**The Resurrectionists**—The adventurers hear of a wise person who can bring a dead friend of theirs back to life. The 'wise person' is the local Silver Hand cult necromancer, and they want the adventurers to undertake some quests before they'll perform the resurrection. Naturally the friendly locals will aid the adventurers on their quests. By the time the adventurers work out they are now working for the Lich King they'll have advanced the Lich King's agenda quite a bit. Does the party rebel and let their friend rot, or do they stay the course so their friend can be resurrected? (Use the cleric resurrection rules, but the friend comes back with their creature type now UNDEAD).

## SWITCHING IT UP

All these adventure hooks assume that the adventurers don't want the Lich King to spread his influence—but some groups might be aligned with the Lich King thanks to positive icon relationships with him.

That's a different set of stories! Can the adventurers cause problems to pin on another icon, so that the Silver Hand can spread its influence to an area and solve the problems? How good are the party at PR for the undead? Can the adventurers protect the cult's secrets from outsiders? How do the adventurers deal with blabber-mouth cult members, without upsetting the blabber-mouth's friends and family?



Haunted clown dolls and worse: *Phantomatons deserve special thought. The ones statted up here are phantomatons big enough to put the hurt on adventurers. What about smaller ones? What about marionettes, children's dolls, toy soldiers, toy animals, hand puppets, stick puppets, shadow puppets, and statuettes? They can't smash adventurers, but they can sure cause trouble. They can counsel evildoers like familiar spirits, and they can corrupt good people with useful wisdom seeded with artful lies. They can spy, and they can ferry messages.*

*Phantomatons are just as creepy without legs. Souls could be bound to busts or masks—a face is enough.*

*Resist the temptation to gin up phantomatons that are spirits bound into specially-designed war machines. The creepy thing about phantomatons is that they are regular objects turning dangerous.*

*If phantomatons are the first Silver Hand creatures that the party encounters, the PCs won't have a name for them. But a helpful NPC could say, "They're like a cross between a phantom and an automaton." See if you can get the players to "come up with" the portmanteau term "phantomatons" themselves.*

Spell golems have a long and not entirely savory history dating back to the rule of the Wizard King. Spell golem warders served as bodyguards to the mages of the Wizard King's secret police. The deadlier spell golems called mage hunters tracked down criminals, outlaws, and magicians the Wizard King's people thought the world could do without.

**Warders:** Spell golem warders make excellent bodyguards for wizards and other spellcasters thanks to their ability to resist many conditions and special powers focused on a chosen ward. They have the speed to intercept physical attacks against their ward, and each is crafted with the ability to absorb magical attacks as well. If a golem warder's magical defenses can't completely disrupt the spell, it repurposes that energy to empower itself with greater strength for a short time, allowing it to quickly end a threat.

**Mage hunters:** The mage hunters were designed as weapons. Instead of absorbing spell attacks, the mage hunter is layered with protections that negate or even deflect magical attacks, sometimes reflecting the harmful energies back at an enemy caster. Mage hunters have always been rare, but their reputation is dark enough to give all spell golems a bad name with magicians who don't have one of their own. Which is to say, nearly everyone.

## MAGICAL SECURITY THROUGH THE AGES

The golem warders were a common sight in the early ages of the empire. Any mage of status would be accompanied by at least one of the constructs, and those with influence or noble birth would often keep a pair at hand. In those times they were a necessary tool, since the Wizard King encouraged those serving him to weed out the weak among them, and wizard duels occurred with very little provocation,

In the current age, few arcane spellcasters have access to such powerful servants. The most elite and powerful wizards of Horizon still have one or two spell golem warders available, or at least that's what publicly acknowledged. Openly acknowledging control over a mage hunter would spawn a different political thicket.



# S P E L L   G O L E M

*Most spell golems were crafted during an earlier age when magical things were considered useful whether or not they were dangerous.*

It's clearly possible for a magician to create a spell golem, but all indications are that the necessary spells have become more and more difficult over the ages. Unless you want this age to be an exception, only a few new spell golems are turning up.

On the other hand, living dungeons don't obey the laws of magical supply. Spell golems are sometimes encountered in the presence of masterminds and mercenaries who unearth them in ancient ruins or encounter them in bizarre dungeons. Those who don't sell the constructs for a fortune use them as bodyguards or hunters.

## ARCANE CONSTRUCTION

Here's what the theorists say: because spell golems must be able to absorb or resist magical attacks, they are commonly crafted from wood, a material that was once living and which can absorb arcane energy without shattering, or even use that power to mend themselves over time. Wood was also seen as a superior base material by the original arcanists, because it was easier and quicker, and thus cheaper, to craft parts from, and because wooden golems are less obtrusive than those made from other materials.

Unlike the enormously ponderous stone and iron golems, wooden spell golems have lighter footfalls and can be painted and dressed in such a way as to resemble living humanoids. Most spell golems are roughly man-size, allowing them to blend into civilized areas easier and to be less noticeable. Others flaunted unusual designs just to be showy and prove that resistance was futile. The golem in the illustration above is clearly intended to blend in outdoors, not among people.

There are simple rituals designed to make spell golems look like slack-faced servants who trail after a mage wherever they go, surprising would-be attackers who believed there was only an easily defeated guard or butler attending their target. While a golem's wooden construction means it can be dropped more quickly by an axe or blade, the time it buys its ward is usually more than enough for the mage controlling it to get off a spell or two and end the attack.

For spell golem warders, softer woods such as yew and silverwood are the preferred base material, while more durable hardwoods like ash and maple serve the mage hunters best. In either version, the golem is given sapphire eyes, which are a focus for its magical defenses.

## FIVE PIECES OF LORE ABOUT SPELL GOLEMS

Most people don't know much about spell golems. Strange stories about spell golem's capabilities crop up through the ages. Here are five possibilities for GMs.

- The powerful magic used to create spell golems also repairs their bodies over time; destroying them permanently requires a powerful ritual.
- Back in the Wizard King's day, every major arcane institution had spell golems, even bard schools. Some of the golems people discover today won't work, but that's because

they require a musical key to activate and control. Those golems are easier to master, too.

- The spellcasters who keep spell golem bodyguards are playing with fire. The constructs are flawed and will only last so long before their magic goes bad and they begin attacking anyone unlucky enough to be nearby.
- If a wizard is willing to invest a piece of their soul (giving up one of their total recoveries) to a spell golem, they can bond with it and treat it like a familiar, seeing through its eyes.
- Every spell golem is created using a touch of the Wizard King's (now the Lich King) power, and because of that, they draw the undead to them like beacons. Wherever they go, a ghoul pack or something worse follows.

## SPELL GOLEM WARDER

*Usually crafted from softwoods and other fine materials, these protectors can pass for a servant or common guard at a distance. Up close, they just look like trouble.*

*6<sup>th</sup> level blocker [CONSTRUCT]*

Initiative: +7

**Mighty slam +11 vs. AC—18 damage**

*Natural 16+: The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.*

*[Special trigger] Empowered slam +12 vs. AC—27 damage*

*Natural even hit: The warder pops free from each enemy engaged with it and can move as a free action, usually next to an ally.*

*Limited golem immunity: A golem warder can't be dazed, weakened, confused, or made vulnerable. Ongoing damage doesn't harm it either, unless it's acid, fire, or lightning.*

*Protect the master: While the golem warder is next to an ally, once per round when a melee attack targets that ally, it can try to intercept the attack as a free action. Roll an easy save (6+); if it succeeds, the warder becomes the target of the attack instead.*

*Spellward: Twice per battle when a spell attack hits a nearby ally, the warder can have the attack target itself instead as an interrupt action. If the attack roll doesn't hit against the warder's defenses, the attack misses. Otherwise, the warder takes all damage and effects of the spell for that ally. When the warder takes damage this way, it can make an *empowered slam* attack during its next turn.*

Golem warders are usually linked to a master through a ritual. Unless instructed otherwise, they use *spellward* only to protect that master.

### Nastier Special

*Hard to destroy: Only natural even spell attack rolls deal damage to the golem.*

**AC 20**

**PD 23**

**MD 18**

**HP 80**

# SPELL GOLEM MAGE HUNTER

*What's the last thing the wizard marked for death sees? Glowing sapphire eyes.*

*Large 9<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [CONSTRUCT]*

Initiative: +11

**Negating strike +14 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—40 damage, and the target is hampered until the end of its next turn

*Natural roll is above target's Intelligence:* The target is hampered (hard save ends, 16+) instead.

**R: Ray of disjunction +14 vs. PD**—70 damage, and the target is hampered (save ends)

*Natural 16+:* 1d2 random magic items on the target are also affected. One-shot items like potions and oils are ruined; true magic items lose their default bonus and any powers until the end of the battle.

*Limited use:* Twice per battle.

*Limited golem immunity:* A golem warder can't be dazed, weakened, confused, or made vulnerable. Ongoing damage doesn't harm it either, unless it's acid, fire, or lightning.

*Spell deflection:* When a spell attack targets the mage hunter, roll a d20. On a 1–7, the attack or effect hits normally. On an 8–15, the attack or effect is negated. On a 16+, the attack or effect is reflected back at the caster as if that enemy had been targeted instead of the golem (so it must overcome defenses and resistances, as normal).

## Nastier Special

*Made of tougher stuff:* Instead of wood, stronger materials were used to create the golem, such as crystal or brass. This golem is non-organic and has *golem immunity* (so ongoing acid, fire, and lightning don't harm it).

**AC 25**

**PD 22**

**MD 19**

**HP 300**

## BUILDING BATTLES

Unless it's an exceptional battle, we suggest only including one of these golems in a fight.

The obvious combination for a warder is to pair it with a lich! An enemy wizard or other arcane spellcaster is also a good choice, especially someone involved in archeology or looting old tombs. The warder should be able to keep its master in the battle for an extra round or two with its protective abilities. Adding it to a battle with a naga could effectively neuter any PCs with arcane powers, forcing them to deal with other minions first.

The mage hunter might show up in more varied company, or even alone. If put on the PCs' trail by a vengeful villain, it could take on lower-level PCs by itself. Or perhaps a crime lord with a touch of arcane power, like a blue sorcerer or medusa,

could keep one on hand as the perfect muscle for those who try to thwart a gang.

Most dragons would have the necessary arcane lore to be the master of a mage hunter, and one would make a great distraction against a group of hoard looters as the dragon gets into position. Used "terminator-style" where the golem's magic allows it to reform after being destroyed, a spell golem mage hunter could become a recurring villain that always shows up at the worst time until the PCs find a ritual to keep the thing down.

## GOLEMS AND THE ICONS

**Archmage:** If the Archmage is strong in your campaign, it's possible that spell golems aren't as rare as people think. They are made to look like one of the servants or normal guards and therefore don't get noticed.

**Emperor:** Some outlaws, especially the ones wielding powerful arcane magic, are too dangerous to bring to justice without great expense and loss of resources. That's when mage hunter golems are called in, a special force made available to the Emperor by the Archmage. So far the system is reasonably secret and reasonably successful, but if the Archmage is losing some fine-arcana control, this could all go terribly wrong.

**Lich King:** The powerful magic in spell golems allows them to exist a long time, and the once-living servants of the Lich King like to hold onto the things they controlled back in the good old days when the Wizard King ruled. Is that a win-win or a lose-lose? It's not a win for the player characters!

## STORY HOOKS

**Modern Construction**—Rumors among magical circles in Horizon suggest that there is at least one artificer in the city who is fully competent in the construction of spell golems, but whether that skill has been passed down over time or is a recent discovery is unclear. The representatives on an icon will pay well for information about or introduction to such a person, if there's any truth to the rumors.

**On the Trail**—Word reaches the PCs that the last few places where they stayed have been torn to the ground. Something is on their trail! They need to discover who or what is hunting them. Eventually they figure out that someone has sent a spell golem mage hunter after one of them. Why?

**Rezzel's Golem**—The mad wizard Rezzel has been seen in public with a spell golem. The mage rarely leaves his abode, but he does send the golem out into the streets of New Port to hunt down wizards who owe him money. One such wizard, Verenia Noblestar, believes the golem is on her trail and is looking for bodyguards.

**The Greater Prize**—Agents of an icon know the location of a lost magical vault. They are willing to reveal its location to the PCs if they agree to retrieve one item from it: a spell golem. Anything else is theirs to keep. Of course, the vault is said to have strong magical defenses . . . and it's probably one of the Wizard King's former stashes, so there's most likely some vile undead guardians too.

## CONTROLLING A SPELL GOLEM WARDER

While spell golems will most often be enemies the PCs will have to face, they might also be allies. Perhaps the PCs find one of these constructs in the lair of a lich or at an enemy wizard's estate, or as loot in an old vault. Or maybe they defeat the golem's master, and the GM decides that it stands down at that point and it can be controlled by a new master with a bit of effort on the PCs' part. In such cases, a PC with arcane talents could gain a spell golem warder as a bodyguard.

Doing so requires a pair of skill checks using a PC's primary arcane ability, the first to activate the construct or bypass its last orders (normal check), and another to mystically link with the golem (difficult check). If the PC succeeds on both, they now control a spell golem warder! It won't be forever, since the golem falls apart at 0 hit points, but it should be fun while it lasts.

We suggest adding at least one of the following three abilities to a golem warder a PC controls. If you give the spell golem self-healing, also give it *hidden flaw* or *inevitable burnout*. If you don't give it self-healing, see the parenthetical text in that ability for the spell golem's fate.

You don't need to tell the golem's new controller about the ability's effects until they become obvious, unless, perhaps, the player character invests real time and effort trying to master their warder.

**Hidden Flaw:** When the spell golem attacks and rolls a natural one, or when an enemy scores a critical hit against it, the golem must roll a save. On a failure, it begins to rampage and no longer uses its abilities to protect its controller. While raging, it will target its controller until they drop, then attack the nearest creature. The rampage lasts until the end of the battle, when the golem's master can roll another save to reassert control over it. If the controller fails, the golem continues to attack until destroyed, or flees to cause more havoc elsewhere.

**Self-healing:** The magic contained within the spell golem can be empowered to heal physical damage done to the construct. After a short rest, the golem's controller can expend a single spell slot to channel arcane energy into the golem to repair damage. It heals 20% of its total hit points. During a full heal-up, the golem has time to completely repair itself without requiring any spell slot expenditure. (Without this ability, the golem doesn't heal quickly enough for the adventuring lifestyle, meaning that it can only lose hit points, not regain them.)

**Inevitable burnout:** At the start of each day after the first, roll an easy save. If the save succeeds, you control the spell golem warder normally that day. The first time the save fails, the golem remains dormant that day. The second time the save fails, the golem stays active that day, but is on its last legs, hissing and smoking and about to flameout.

## CONTROLLING A MAGE HUNTER

By definition, this seems unlikely! If you want to allow it for some reckless or ambitious PC spellcaster, play that even when supposedly under control, the mage hunter randomly attacks spellcasters, allied or not, making life interesting for the PCs and wonderful for the GM. Once a mage hunter rampages because of its flaw, all control saves are hard (16+).



### Make it Personal

*Instead of spell golems being known monsters with general antimagic ability, what if the golems the party meets have been custom built by a major villain to take down the spellcaster in the party? The antispell effects work only against that character's spells! That kind of personal finger in the eye is bound to catch the player's attention.*

*It doesn't even have to be a spellcaster who's the target of the golems. Can you imagine a golem built to stymie the party's rogue? You'll have to do some thinking about how to rework some of the abilities, but that work will pay off.*

# STAR-MASKS

*They came from beyond the sky, from the thing once called the Archmage's Comet but that mortals now fear as the Dungeon Moon.*

—Evard Cahntier of Horizon



A long time ago, in a past age, an Archmage gathered up the worst of the living dungeons and the most pernicious of monsters and hurled them deep into the cosmos. To prevent his enemies from using the exiled monsters against the Dragon Empire, that Archmage erased (almost) all memory of what had happened. . . because that always works.

In the astral void the living dungeons found each other, merging and growing together until they formed a small moon.

The monsters of the living dungeons battled each other, and interbred. After long strange eons had passed what was left was the star-mask “race.”

Now in the current age the Dungeon Moon has returned. It wanders across the sky like a comet, turning this way and that and shedding meteorites that rain down on the Dragon Empire. From these meteorites crawl the star-masks.

## THE STAR MASK SAGA

The end of Season One and all of Season Two of 13<sup>th</sup> Age Organized Play focused on the star-mask parasites! For over a year we published monthly adventures detailing the coming of the star-masks and the quest to kill the Dungeon Moon. For more details on how to acquire these adventures, go to pelgrane.com.

- Race to Starport (*level 1–4*): 5 weeks
- Into the Underworld (parts 1–4; *level 1–4*): 16 weeks
- IronFire (*level 5–6*): 8 weeks
- Tides of Fate (*level 7–8*): 8 weeks
- Archmage's Orrery (*level 8*): 4 weeks
- Battle for Axis (*level 8*): 4 weeks
- Dungeon Moon (*level 9–10*): 4 weeks

Playing off that storyline, there are a number of possible entry points for star-mask adventures: In the early phase of the incursion, with star-masks an unknown and no one understanding what the “Archmage’s Comet” is; during the saga when star-mask cults are springing up everywhere and each icon is racing to discover what this new danger is; or after the Dungeon Moon has been killed.

Most of this star-mask entry is written as if you are playing after the Dungeon Moon has been killed, but that the star-mask menace has not been entirely defeated. You should be able to shuffle the timing easily enough if you want to make the star-masks’ home moon a current instead of vanquished threat.

**Returning, revisedly:** If you decide to run the old adventures, you’ll want to look carefully at what we’ve done with the revised and improved monster stats below.

## THE ECOLOGY OF THE STAR-MASK

Well, “ecology” may be the wrong word—but “life-cycle” is wrong too. The star-masks are a psychic colony organism that takes over hosts in various ways in order to amass controlled brain-matter. When they have enough brain-matter controlled, they start warping reality to create giant star-mask brains.

The star-masks are the result of millennia of magical interbreeding, competition, and mutation in an environment nothing like the world of the Dragon Empire. What the star-masks were originally only the Archmage who banished them knew, and he or she is long gone. Just as animals from an isolated island take evolutionary paths not found on the mainland, so too are the star-masks stranger than most people comprehend. In fact the star-mask “species” is so unfamiliar to humanoids that they may not even realize that the various types have a single origin.

Each stage of a star-mask infection lays the groundwork for the next stage. Xombies and eggs infect people, who then form cults. The cults in turn recruit members and form a psychic network while tending to the eggs, and once the cult is large enough it psychically warps reality to create a star-mask brain.

## EGGS & XOMBIES

The first stage of a star-mask invasion involves covering an area with star-mask eggs. In their birth state they are a white scummy mass that chews away at rock or soil as it grows and forms into a bubbly mess of “eggs.” These white, rubbery ovoids are eggs in name only, for they contain masses of oily-black tentacles that they can extrude to move about on their own.

Eggs seek out living hosts, strangling them and taking over their bodies the way a hermit crab takes over a shell. If the host body is already dead (or undead), all the better. The host body serves as a walking incubator for yet more eggs, and as a means for the eggs to protect those of their kind that have not yet fully grown. These walking dead puppets are called “xombies,” because they often resemble such undead in form and movement, even though no necrotic energies power them.

Once there is a sufficient mass of eggs in a xombie host, the eggs consume what remains of the body and mature into star-masks.

## STAR-MASKS & CULTISTS

A star-mask is a white mask, warm and slightly yielding to the touch, porcelain smooth and featureless. Some would even describe them as beautiful. The back of the mask is lined with a black rubbery material.

A star-mask seems like normal object of its kind . . . until the mask moves and the black back of the mask morphs into bifurcating tentacles, which carry the mask along like the limbs of an octopus.

Star-masks find living hosts, and at first offer them power (usually boosted physical or mental abilities, sometimes psychic powers, and occasionally physical mutations). Initially, the wearer’s will is their own, though with a growing compulsion to wear the mask and encourage others to gain and wear masks. Soon mask wearers form into secretive cults, and the group mind of the assembled masks begins to overcome the mask wearers. Eventually, those wearing the star-masks are entirely in thrall to the creatures. The worst thing about the star-mask cults is that even as a wearer’s thoughts are replaced by those of the mask, they still believe themselves to be fully in control and so don’t fight the mask’s influence on their mind.

Star-masks prefer intelligent humanoids, but lacking those will bond to beasts and even to dragons, subverting their wills. Star-mask brutes are the result of a common animal (or several merged animals) being warped to become a monstrous host to dozens of star-masks.

## STAR-MASK BRAINS

The final stage of a star-mask infestation is for the cultists' brain power to be harnessed to warp reality itself. This effect manifests in many strange ways, such as eyes appearing in the knot holes of trees and wooden boards, wood and stone structures becoming fleshy, and the mutation of wild animals into slug-like masses.

Finally the star-masks bring a star-mask brain into existence. The brain is a huge, throbbing, tentacled organ that can control the minds of lesser creatures and warp reality on a scale that a star-mask cult alone cannot.

Some star-mask brains are mobile, sporting tentacles or the ability to float through the air. Eventually, each one warps reality so that a living dungeon forms around it, using whichever town or fortification is closest to them as a pattern (and sometimes as raw material).

Once a star-mask brain has grown large enough, the surrounding living dungeon begins to spawn new monsters for the star-masks to dominate and control. The dungeon spreads in every direction it can (down into the underworld, upward as towers into the overworld, and out across the land) and spawns new sub-dungeons.

## ADVENTURER TIER: EGGS & XOMBIES

### FAST XOMBIE

*The star-mask's tendrils act just like muscles and tendons for this hijacked corpse.*

0 level spoiler [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +8

**Stumbling rush +5 vs. AC**—4 damage, and the xombie pops free from each enemy engaged with it and can move to engage a nearby or far away enemy

*Natural even miss:* The xombie pops free from the target and can move to engage a nearby or far away enemy.

*Natural odd miss:* The xombie pops free from the target.

*Unnatural leap:* While the escalation die is 1 or below, the fast xombie can engage a nearby or far away enemy as a move action.

#### Nastier Special

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**AC 16**

**PD 10**

**MD 14**

**HP 20**

## METEORITE XOMBIE

1<sup>st</sup> level mook [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +8

**Decaying fists +6 vs. AC**—3 damage

*Natural 16+:* The attack does double damage, but the xombie takes 1d6 damage.

[Group ability] **C: Vomit tentacles +6 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies in a group)**—4 damage

*Group ability:* For every four meteorite xombies in the battle (round up), one of them can use vomit tentacles once during the battle.

#### Nastier Special

*Resist fire 16+:* When a fire attack targets this creature, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

**AC 17**

**PD 11**

**MD 15**

**HP 7 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one meteorite xombie mook for every 7 damage you deal to the mob.

## XOMBIE EGG SWARM

*Once they're in your head, things get squirmy.*

2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +5

**Swarm +7 vs. AC**—5 damage

[Group ability] **C: Puppeteer tentacles +7 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—The target makes a basic attack against a target of the xombie egg swarm's choice

*Miss:* The target is immune to *puppeteer* abilities for the rest of this battle and until the end of the next battle.

*Swarm rush:* Once per battle as a move action, the egg swarm can pop free from each enemy engaged with it and take two move actions, but it must finish its move engaged with an enemy.

*Group ability:* For every four xombie egg swarms in the battle (round up), one of them can use *puppeteer tentacles* once during the battle.

#### Nastier Special

*Corpse puppet:* If there is at least one intact corpse in the battle (say a star-mask cultist died), then once per battle part of the xombie egg swarm can burrow into it as a quick action, and it rises as a skull crab xombie at the start of the next round (roll initiative and give the new xombie a +10 initiative bonus for the shock of its arrival).

**AC 18**

**PD 12**

**MD 16**

**HP 9 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one xombie egg swarm mook for every 9 damage you deal to the mob.

## SKULL CRAB XOMBIE

Lacking a full corpse, these xombie eggs make do with the parts they can find—they'd be happy to trade up once you're dead!

*2<sup>nd</sup> level spoiler [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +5

**Bite or butt +7 vs. AC**—7 damage

**Scrabbling tentacles +7 vs. PD**—5 damage

*Natural even hit:* The skull crab has burrowed its tentacles into the target's flesh; the target takes a –1 penalty to all d20 rolls (save ends). Until the target saves, whenever it moves the skull crab comes with it, and the crab will continue to bite the target.

*Each failed save:* The penalty to all d20 rolls increases by –1 (first failed save = –2 penalty, etc.)

*Meat puppet:* If a creature fails three consecutive saves against the *scrabbling tentacles* effect, attacks against the skull crab deal half damage to it and half to that creature as the crab burrows deep. The effect lasts until the creature saves.

*Sudden leap:* Once per battle as a move action, the skull crab can engage a nearby or far away enemy.

### Nastier Special

*New host:* When an enemy making saves against the *scrabbling tentacles* effect drops to 0 hp or below, the skull crab eggs rush out of its skull and the crab dies. That enemy must start making last gasp saves in addition to any death saves, with it turning into a xombie on the fourth failure.

**AC 18**

**PD 12**

**HP 36**

**MD 16**

## XOMBIE SPIDERS

These star-mask eggs have merged with spiders to produce something truly horrible.

*3<sup>rd</sup> level blocker [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +10

**Claws that burrow under your skin +8 vs. PD**—8 damage

*Natural even hit:* The xombie spider is under the target's skin. The target takes 8 damage if it disengages from the spider.

**C: Chittering call +7 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—The target can't willingly engage a xombie spider or any other spider (save ends). Creatures immune to fear are immune to this effect.

*Limited use:* 1/round, as a quick action. In addition, once a creature has saved against the effect, it can't be targeted by *chittering call* attacks again this battle.

*[Group ability] Tendril web +7 vs. PD (1d3 enemies engaged with it)*—The target is stuck (save ends); until the target saves, the xombie spider gains a +1 attack bonus against it

*Group ability:* For every three star-mask spiders in the battle (round up), one of them can use *tendril web* once during the battle.

**AC 17**

**PD 11**

**MD 15**

**HP 46**

## BRAIN-ABSORBER XOMBIE

This xombie is mostly composed of black tentacles, with star-masks crawling about the outer surface. Freshly harvested brains writhe inside the dark mass.

*Large 4<sup>th</sup> level caster [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +10

**Tentacle smash +13 vs. AC**—22 damage

*[Group ability] Brain-ripping tentacles +13 vs. PD*—14 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target loses a recovery, OR it must immediately roll a save; if it fails, it's confused (save ends) (target's choice).

*[Group ability] C: Mass confusion +13 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies)*—14 psychic damage, OR if the target is the first enemy this attack hits each round, it must make a basic attack against an ally of its choice.

*[Group ability] C: Psychic crush +13 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)*—14 psychic damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* 10 ongoing psychic damage.

*Group ability:* For every two brain-absorber xombies in the battle (round up), one of them can use *brain-ripping tentacles*, *mass confusion*, or *psychic crush* once during the battle.

*Harvest:* When the brain-absorber xombie is next to an unconscious or helpless living enemy at the start of its turn, it can use its full turn of actions (quick, move, and standard) to remove the creature's brain and add it to its collection. When it does, that enemy dies and the xombie heals to full hit points.

*Re-broadcaster:* Once per battle, the brain-absorber xombie can take no actions during its turn to allow 1d4 nearby lower-level allies to take an extra standard action during their next turns.

**AC 20**

**PD 16**

**MD 20**

**HP 90**

# CHAMPION TIER: STAR-MASKS & CULTISTS

To change things up, here are some additional nastier-special abilities to give to the star-mask cultists and puppets the PCs face. The abilities key off who the star-mask cultist was before they were taken by the mask.

## Dwarf (or maybe Half-Orc)

[Group ability] *Stronger than stone*: Once per battle, a staggered dwarf heals to full health as a free action. No matter how many dwarves there are in the battle, only one can use this ability.

## Elf (or maybe Halfling)

[Group ability] *Elf-like grace*: Once per battle, an elf can take a second standard action during its turn. No matter how many elves there are in the battle, only one can use this ability.

## Human (or maybe Half Orc)

[Group ability] *Sudden cunning*: Once per battle, a human can turn one of its missed attacks into a hit, or a hit into a critical hit. No matter how many humans there are in the battle, only one can use this ability.

## Halfling or Gnome (or maybe Elf)

[Group ability] *Quicker than that*: Once per battle, a halfling or gnome can turn a hit against it into a miss, or can ignore the miss effects of an attack against it. No matter how many halflings or gnomes there are in the battle, only one can use this ability.

# SCUTTLING STAR-MASK

*The white mask scuttles along the ground on barbed tentacles, looking for a host to “wear” it.*

## *5<sup>th</sup> level mook [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +11

**Strangling tentacles +9 vs. PD**—5 damage, and 5 ongoing damage (damage also ends if the target is no longer engaged with the star-mask)

[Group ability] **C: Suffocating thoughts +10 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—Until the end of the battle, if the target drops to 0 hp or below, it rejoins the fight as a 5<sup>th</sup> level star-mask cultist. Converted player character star-mask cultists can be freed from their masks as a standard action by a character next to them. Use cultist stats and ignore the PC's hit points and normal attacks and powers; some hand waving may be necessary here, be forgiving if the PCs spend serious resources to deal with the problem during combat.

*Group ability*: For every four star-masks in the battle (round up), one of them can use suffocating thoughts once during the battle.

**Leap**: When the escalation die is odd, the star-mask can move and engage a nearby enemy as a quick action.

AC 21

PD 15

MD 19

**HP 19 (mook)**

**Mook**: Kill one scuttling star-mask mook for every 19 damage you deal to the mob.

# STAR-MASK CULTIST

*This hapless person has become host to a mask, and is in thrall to the group mind.*

*5<sup>th</sup> level archer [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +11

**Club or other weapon +10 vs. AC**—14 damage

**R: Bow +10 vs. AC**—18 damage

**C: Psychic blast +10 vs. MD (1d3 nearby enemies or 1d3 far away enemies in a group)**—6 psychic damage

*Limited use: 1/round, as a quick action when the escalation die is odd.*

*Group ability*: For every two star-mask cultists in the battle (round up), one of them can use *coordinated attack* once as a free action during the battle.

*Coordinated attack (group)*: Until the start of its next turn, the star-mask cultist gains a +2 attack bonus against enemies that are engaged with the cultist's allies.

## Nastier Special

*New host*: When this cultist drops to 0 hp, a new scuttling star-mask joins the battle (in the same location as the dead cultist) and immediately makes a *suffocating thoughts* attack as a free action against the closest enemy.

AC 19

PD 15

MD 17

**HP 68**

## STAR-MASK CULT LEADER

*This cultist is more in tune with the group mind than others and issues orders to its underlings.*

*Double-strength 6<sup>th</sup> level leader [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +11

**Iron-shod staff +11 vs. AC**—35 damage

**Mark of the stars +11 vs. PD**—21 psychic damage, and the target is marked with a glowing rune (hard save ends, 16+). While the target is marked this way, the cult leader's allies gain a +1 attack bonus and +3 damage bonus against it. A creature can have only one mark at a time.

*[Group ability] R: Psychic domination +11 vs. MD*—18 psychic damage, and 18 ongoing psychic damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* One dead (or unconscious or otherwise out of the fight) star-mask cultist, dead star-mask cult leader, or dead star-mask brute becomes a living scuttling star-mask mook.

<b>AC</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PD</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>19</b>

**HP 180**

## STAR-MASK CULT PUPPET

*This unfortunate probably doesn't even know they are host to a star-mask, so complete is the parasite's grip on their mind and body.*

*6<sup>th</sup> level troop [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +10

**Tentacles and fists +11 vs. AC**—18 damage

**C: Tentacle whip +13 vs. PD**—15 damage, and the target pops free from each enemy engaged with it and is pulled into engagement with the star-mask puppet

*Psychic coordination:* For every star-mask puppet engaged with an enemy, other star-masks not engaged with that enemy gain a +1 attack bonus against that enemy (maximum +4).

*Wall-crawler:* The star-mask puppet can use oily tentacles to climb on ceilings and walls as easily as it moves on the ground.

*Psychic chaff:* Star-mask parasites that create puppets quickly die and fade to dust after their puppet drops to 0 hp. After a battle against star-mask puppets, each character must roll a hard save (16+). If they fail, they remember only the host body and not the white mask and black tentacles that were embedded in its flesh. Even characters who succeed find it hard to keep the memory of the star-mask in mind afterward, potentially making for confusing battles against these puppets.

<b>AC</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PD</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>21</b>

**HP 80**

## STAR-MASK BRAINBURSTER

*Staggering under the weight of its own pulsating brain; this masked cultist has been heavily mutated by the star-mask parasite.*

*7<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +12

**Mind-linking tentacles +12 vs. PD (1d3 attacks)**—The target is confused until the end of its next turn

*Miss:* 14 psychic damage.

**C: Astral tentacles +12 vs. MD (1d3 closest nearby or far away enemies)**—10 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends)

*Natural even hit:* The target is confused (save ends) instead of dazed.

*Hit against a target that has been confused and saved against it this battle:* 20 psychic damage, but no dazed or confused effect.

<b>AC</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PD</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>MD</b>	<b>24</b>

**HP 100**



## STAR-MASK BRUTE

*These bipedal masses of muscle studded with multiple ‘masks’ were once large beasts.*

*Large 7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +13

**Warped antler, hoof, or claw +12 vs. AC**—50 damage

**Slamming crush +12 vs. AC**—28 damage, and 20 ongoing damage

*Natural 16+:* The star-mask brute can make a *throw* attack against the target as a free action.

**Throw +16 vs. PD**—The target is thrown far away, takes 20 damage, and is weakened (easy save ends, 6+).

*Miss:* The target pops free from the brute.

**AC 23**

**PD 18**

**HP 220**

**MD 20**

## EPIC TIER: STAR-MASK BRAINS

The epic tier star-mask creatures are all star-mask brains. Star mask brains warp the reality around them, creating odd effects that can surprise the unwary

### STAR-MASK BRAIN EFFECTS

At the start of each round in a battle with one or more star-mask brains, roll a d10 to see what happens. Some effects are immediate, others last the entire round:

- Consumption.** One brain can consume any lower-level zombie, star-mask, or brain ally to heal back to half hit points if it's staggered, or to full health if not staggered. If there are no allies present, 1d4 zombies or cultists show up (note, they may be too low level to have any effect except to be swiftly eliminated by the PCs or consumed in a later round).
- De-escalating illusion.** The star-mask brain blasts the minds of the adventurers with illusions—the escalation die decreases by 1 (to a minimum of 0).
- Delusions.** The star-mask brain messes with the adventurers' perceptions. Once this round as a free action, the brain can roll a save to avoid a ranged attack that hits it. If it succeeds, the attack misses instead. If it rolls 16+ on the save, the attack is redirected and automatically hits a nearby enemy other than the attacker of the brain's choice.
- Mental empowerment.** Each star-mask brain or cultist in the battle gains a +2 bonus to saves and MD this round.
- Intrusive thoughts.** The star-mask brain is thinking hard about the characters—each PC takes 2d12 psychic damage.
- Magical flux.** When the PCs use spell attacks or other magic attacks, they must roll twice and use the lower result.

- Magical reflux.** When a PC casts a spell this round, they take 2d20 force damage.
- Matter warp.** Everything shudders and twists for a moment, and each engaged creature pops free from engagement.
- Possession.** The hive mind possesses a PC, who is automatically confused until the end of their next turn. Each adventurer can be confused only once per battle from this effect.
- Steal the momentum.** The star-mask hive mind temporarily steals the escalation die; this round, so the monsters get the benefit of the die and the adventurers don't.

## STAR-MASK FLOATING BRAIN

*These huge, pulsing red brains hover a few feet above the ground. Each brain is wrapped in a white mask, and tendrils from the mask spike into the brain.*

*10<sup>th</sup> level mook [ABERRATION]*

Initiative: +14

**C: Psychic pulse +14 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—18 psychic damage, and the target is hampered until the end of the floating brain's next turn

*If the target was already hampered:* The floating brain's crit range expands to 11+ for the attack.

*Group ability:* For every three star-mask floating brains in the battle (round up), one of them can use *psychic puppetry* once during the battle.

*Psychic puppetry (group):* When a star-mask floating brain scores a critical hit with *psychic pulse*, instead of dealing extra damage, the target becomes confused (save ends) instead of hampered.

*Hovering brain:* The brain uses telepathic energy to float in the air at about head height.

*Lost opportunity:* Star-mask floating brains can't make opportunity attacks.

**AC 25**

**PD 20**

**MD 24**

**HP 50 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one star-mask floating brain mook for every 50 damage you deal to the mob.

## STAR-MASK BRAIN ZEALOT

*This brain has a gelatinous body surrounding it that is vaguely and disgustingly humanoid in form.*

12<sup>th</sup> level archer [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +20

### Phasing tentacles (automatic hit against each enemy engaged with it)—30 damage, and the target pops free from it

**R: Phased blast +17 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—25 force damage, and 25 ongoing damage (hard save ends 16+, or using a standard action to restore equilibrium also ends)

*Warpwalk:* While the escalation die is odd, the star-mask brain zealot can't be intercepted, doesn't suffer opportunity attacks, and takes only half damage from attacks that target AC or PD.

AC 28

PD 27

MD 23

HP 300

## STAR-MASK ОМПІОТЕНТ BRAIN

*This giant pulsing brain pushes out waves of psychic influence and magical radiation.*

Huge 12<sup>th</sup> level caster [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +16

**Invasive tentacles +17 vs. AC (1d3 nearby enemies)**—30 damage, and 30 ongoing psychic damage

*Target fails a save against the ongoing psychic damage:* At the start of the target's next turn, it must use its move action to engage the omnipotent brain. It won't take opportunity attacks to do so, instead trying to disengage.

**C: Psionic supremacy +17 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—35 ongoing psychic damage

*Aftereffect:* When the target saves against the ongoing damage, it must choose one: it makes a basic attack against itself or an ally with its next standard action, OR it becomes weakened (-4 to attacks and defenses) until the end of its next turn.

*Limited use:* 2/round, as separate quick actions.

*Miss:* The brain heals 50 hp.

*Natural 1–5 hit or miss:* The target is immune to the aftereffect of *psionic supremacy* until the end of the battle.

*Crawling brain:* The brain can crawl about on tentacles but prefers to use its *telekinetic grasp* to move enemies toward it or its allies.

*Psychic contamination:* Creatures engaged with the star-mask omnipotent brain that have 120 hp or fewer can't target the omnipotent brain with attacks.

*Telekinetic grasp:* As a move action the brain can move an ally or enemy, causing them to fly about. An enemy can roll a save to avoid being moved against its will. If it succeeds, there's no effect. Enemies hurled against solid objects or other allies take 2d20 damage, or possibly more if hurled into dangerous terrain.

### Nastier Specials

**Absorb:** When an enemy engaged with the star-mask brain omnipotent rolls a natural 1–5 on a disengage check, it's absorbed into the omnipotent brain's flesh. Absorbed characters are stuck, weakened, and move with the omnipotent (hard save ends all, 16+). Creatures can also be freed from an omnipotent brain's flesh with a DC 30 skill check as a standard action. If the check fails by 5 or more, the assisting ally is also now absorbed with the same effects.

**Perceptual warp:** When an enemy targets the omnipotent brain with a ranged attack and rolls a natural 1–5, it must reroll the attack against an ally engaged with the brain, if any, as if it had fumbled.

**Psychic command:** The omnipotent brain can use a standard action to allow a nearby ally to make an attack as a free action with a +4 attack bonus. If the ally misses it takes 1d8 damage and the brain heals 50 hp.

AC 26

PD 22

MD 28

HP 900

## STAR-BRAIN DUNGEON HEART

Huge 14<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [ABERRATION]

Initiative: +20

**C: Mutagenic emanations +22 vs. AC (each enemy)**—80 ongoing damage

*Instant rebirth:* Any enemy that dies due to ongoing damage from *mutagenic emanations* instantly rejoins the fight as a star-mask brain zealot allied to the dungeon heart.

**C: Sickly sweet feelings +22 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy)**—Until the end of the battle, the next time the target drops to 0 hp or below, the target recovers with temporary hit points equal to its normal maximum hit points, but is now an ally to the dungeon heart. It is a standard action to free an ally next to you from their sickly sweet feelings, but doing so makes them lose their temporary hp (at which point they'll collapse again unless they have been somehow healed above 0 hit points).

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action.

*Mental scream:* The first time the dungeon heart is staggered, it makes the following attack as a free action:

**R: Mind-erasing blast +22 vs. MD (the enemy that staggered the dungeon heart)**—200 psychic damage

*Lost opportunity:* The dungeon heart can't make opportunity attacks.

*Neuralogenic:* The brain doesn't move about by itself, but it does infect nearby matter, turning wherever it is into more of itself: if you are close enough to fight the brain, you are *de facto* engaged with it, and will be affected by its *mutagenic emanations* attack.

#### Nastier Specials

*Flesh absorption:* When an enemy fails to save against the ongoing damage from *mutagenic emanations*, the dungeon heart heals 20 hp.

*Soul drain:* Enemies killed by the dungeon heart become mindless living husks with no resurrection or healing possible—their soul is gone. (Of course, there may be some miraculous quest for healing magic that could restore them.)

AC	30	HP	1200
PD	24		
MD	28		

## STAR-MASK HOST TEMPLATE

Star-mask cultists can range from those who are simple followers who are unaware of the cult's true purpose, to fully controlled puppets, to individuals who welcome their star-mask "partners."

A star-mask brute normally begins life as a large beast or a dragon, but becomes host to dozens of star-masks. The star-masks warp and mutate their host, and eventually it is no longer recognizable.

To convert a regular monster or NPC to a star-mask host, give it a couple abilities from those listed under psychic powers, physical warping, and tentacles. In addition, increase its attack bonus by +4. The base creature's level increases by 1 for purposes of building battles.

## PSYCHIC POWERS

The star-mask hosts have psychic powers granted to them by their symbiotic masks. Such hosts usually have some outward sign of their powers—swollen skulls or throbbing veins.

#### Choose one or more of the following:

**C: Dysthymic ray +5 + level vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—10 psychic damage (champion: 20 damage; epic: 30 damage)

*Natural 18+:* The target is confused (save ends) and any confusion effect from the ray on a previous target ends.

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

*Group mind:* Provided there is a star-mask brain around (it doesn't have to be in the fight, just in the general vicinity), the host gains a +4 bonus to MD and knows everything that the star-mask brain knows (and vice-versa). If there isn't a star-mask brain in the area, the host only gains a +1 bonus to MD.

*Healed by the hive mind:* Once per battle as a standard action, the host heals 25% of its maximum hit points, as does one of its nearby allies.

*Hive mind puppet:* When an enemy drops to 0 hp or below, it must roll a save. If it fails, it's "turned" to the star-masks' side. A turned creature recovers during its next turn with temporary hp equal to its normal maximum hit points, but it's now an ally of the star-masks (hard save ends, 16+). Once that creature saves and breaks free, it must roll a normal save. If it fails, it loses the temporary hit points.

**R: Psychic chains +5 + level vs. MD**—5 ongoing psychic damage (champion: 10 ongoing damage; epic: 20 ongoing damage)

*Aftereffect:* When the target saves against the ongoing damage, if the save was a natural odd roll, the target becomes confused until it hits an ally with an attack.  
*Limited use:* 1/battle.

*Psychic illusion:* The host looks normal. It requires a DC 30 skill check to notice things like tentacles or bulging muscles on it. If a creature's MD is 17 or less, it won't even notice the mask itself.

*Telekinetic flight:* The host can fly. When an enemy misses the host with an attack and rolls a natural 1–5, it pops free from that enemy.

**C: Woe betide you +5 + level vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—10 psychic damage (champion: 20 damage; epic: 35 damage), and the target can't heal using a recovery (save ends)

*Limited use:* 1/battle.

## PHYSICAL ENHANCEMENTS

The star-mask host has been physically enhanced by the star-mask. Hunched and twisted forms or skin split open over bulging red muscles are common side effects. The greater the physical enhancements the more brutish and less intelligent the host becomes (and the easier for the star-mask to influence).

#### Choose one or more of the following:

*Amazing endurance:* The host gains +2 AC and +1 PD, or double that bonus while it is defending a star-mask brain.

*Leap:* Once per battle when the escalation die is even, the host can pop free from all enemies and leap somewhere nearby or far away as a move action. If the host engages an enemy with this movement and attacks, it gains a +1 bonus to that attack.

*Trampling charge:* As a standard action, the host moves through an enemy's space without taking an opportunity attack and finishes its move out of engagement, making the following attack against that enemy.

**T: Trample +5 + level vs. AC**—10 damage (champion: 20 damage; epic: 40 damage)

*Natural even miss:* Half damage.

*Natural even hit:* The target pops free from the host and is hurled far away from the host.

## TENTACLES

The star-mask grips to its host with tentacles, but this star-mask has gone further than that.

Choose one or more of the following:

*Barbed tentacles:* Enemies that pop free of the host or move away from it without first disengaging take 10 damage.

*Climbing tentacles:* The host can climb up walls and across ceilings as easily as it moves on the ground.

*Grasping tentacles:* Enemies engaged with the host must roll twice for disengage checks and take the lowest result.

*Tentacles everywhere:* If the star-mask host is intercepted, it can make a *probing tentacles* attack as a free action.

**C: Probing tentacles +5 + level vs. PD (an enemy intercepting it)**—The enemy becomes stuck and takes 5 ongoing poison damage (save ends both) (champion: 10 ongoing damage; epic: 20 ongoing damage)

*Target dies while still stuck:* If a creature dies while stuck in the tentacles, the host lays 1d4 star-mask eggs in it, which hatch into scuttling star-masks after 1d3 – 1 rounds (0 rounds mean the eggs hatch almost instantly).

**R: Whipping tentacles +5 + level vs. AC—10 damage**

(champion: 20 damage; epic: 35 damage)

*Quick use:* 1/round, as a quick action

## BUILDING BATTLES

We've split the star-masks into three tiers, based upon their relative power and when they are most likely to be encountered in a campaign.

Star-masks brains warp reality to create living dungeon "shells" around them, and these living dungeons spawn monsters—so if there is a serious star-mask infestation there will be other monsters beside star-masks in the area.

Of course, sooner or later star-masks take over anything living in the area, even co-opting the undead, so converting monsters to star-masks via the *star-mask host template* is the best way to proceed with adding new types of star-mask creatures. Our *Tales of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age* adventures even featured a star-mask infested dragon.

## MYSTERIOUS FORCES

Star-mask eggs, zombies, cultists, and brains look dissimilar enough that you might keep players in the dark about the connection between them.

At adventurer tier the heroes fight strange "undead" that have tentacles—but you keep the star-masks' true threat a mystery. At champion tier they face cultists up to no good, a strangely secretive and well-organized cult. Then finally at epic tier they discover the horrifying truth.

## STAR-MASKS AND THE ICONS

**Archmage:** Yeah, everybody blames the Archmage for the menace of the star-masks. Even the Archmage blames his ancient predecessor for the star-masks returning. The servants of the current holder of that title are busy either studying the star-masks or putting an end to them.

**Dwarf King:** The Dwarf King was one of the first to send his followers to investigate meteorites that fell in the Dragon Wood, and so was the first to have to deal with star-mask infected citizens and secret cults. The standing order among dwarves now is to destroy star-masks on sight, and to report all sightings of falling stars immediately.

**Elf Queen:** The star-masks have entirely subverted whole underworld cities of dark elves, launching the Elf Queen into a secret war against her own possessed subjects. Her subjects are divided; one faction thinks that the weakening of the power of the dark elves at court is a good thing, while the other fears an uprising from the undercities of the possessed drow.

As for the dark elves, currently there is a *lot* of behind the scenes maneuvering for power. Destinies can be reshaped if the right city falls or holds steady, so the intrigue in the Court of Stars has reached a frantic pace not seen since the days of the Orc Lord's creation.

## OTHER ICONS

The Diabolist made an early grab for power by trying to control the star-masks, but discovered that she was as much at risk from the aberrant things as any other icon. The Three had meteorites land directly on Drakkenhall, and are still trying to root out the star-masks from the ruins and slums. And the Lich King is said to be particularly incensed at the star-masks taking over his undead and using them as hosts.

Naturally, each evil icon is secretly trying to harness the power of the masks for their own ends, but so far they have met with no success—at least, none that they are willing to publicize.

# PUTTING ON A MASK

Sooner or later a PC will decide to put on a mask. One way to handle that is a +15 vs. MD attack. On a hit, the mask converts them into a cultist NPC, and a miss means the mask scuttles away. Their friends can *probably* free them from the mask (by cutting it off and burning out tentacles that have burrowed into their brain) or you can rule that their decision meant the end of that PC.

Or you could go a more dramatic and insidious route. After all the star-masks *want* people to wear them, and an adventurer makes a great host to slowly subvert. A star-mask might even cause a cultist to die to jump ship to an adventurer as “treasure.” The best way is to give the following item as a “defeated” mask, but not reveal the text of the *secret curse* section of the item.

## White Mask

### *Cursed mask*

**Default bonus:** +2 MD (champion: +3 MD; epic: +5 MD).

You can move nearby small objects with your mind by concentrating (a standard action), similar to the wizard spell *mage hand*.

**Recharge 11+**: You extrude tentacles for a short time, giving you a +4 bonus to skill checks for climbing or other movement where having extra limbs would be useful.

**Recharge 6+**: When one of your attacks misses, it's a hit instead.

**Curse:** Instead of giving a bonus to MD against star-mask attacks, you take a -1 penalty to MD when star-masks are involved.

**Secret curse:** Whenever you use the recharge 6+ power to turn a miss into a hit, you gain +1 to your “curse counter.” The curse counter starts at 0. At the end of each day the GM secretly rolls a d20. If the result is equal or less than the curse counter total, then the mask's wearer becomes an unwitting puppet of the star-mask hive mind. At that point the GM will take over playing the character, generally at the worst time possible, and afterward the now-NPC adventurer will leave the group to form a star-mask cult. Only by finding the possessed character and freeing them from the mask will the heroes get their friend back.

**Quirk:** You *really* don't want to remove the mask, and you encourage your friends to wear masks of their own.

# ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Ambassadors**—Two normally antagonistic icons have set up a secret meeting for high-level agents to discuss the star-mask problem. The adventurers are there at both parties' insistence as neutral observers to keep the peace. Naturally, a third icon wants the group to be their spies, a fourth icon has decided to attack the conference, and the whole thing is on a fifth icon's land. Oh, and one of the ambassadors is secretly under the control of a star-mask and doesn't even realize it.

**Election Eve**—An election in an important location is taking place, and a bumbling bumpkin with no experience is standing for high office. All this happens in the background as “local color” while the adventurers are resting up or are on another adventure in the location. However, the outsider candidate's support keeps inexplicably growing and on election night they are voted in (much to the confusion of the adventurer's local friends). The real story—a star-mask cult is spreading through town, infecting the weak of mind and putting patsies of the star-masks in positions of power. With the local government tied in knots, nothing can stop the star-masks openly taking over—it will be up to the adventurers to expose the truth and destroy the star-mask cult.

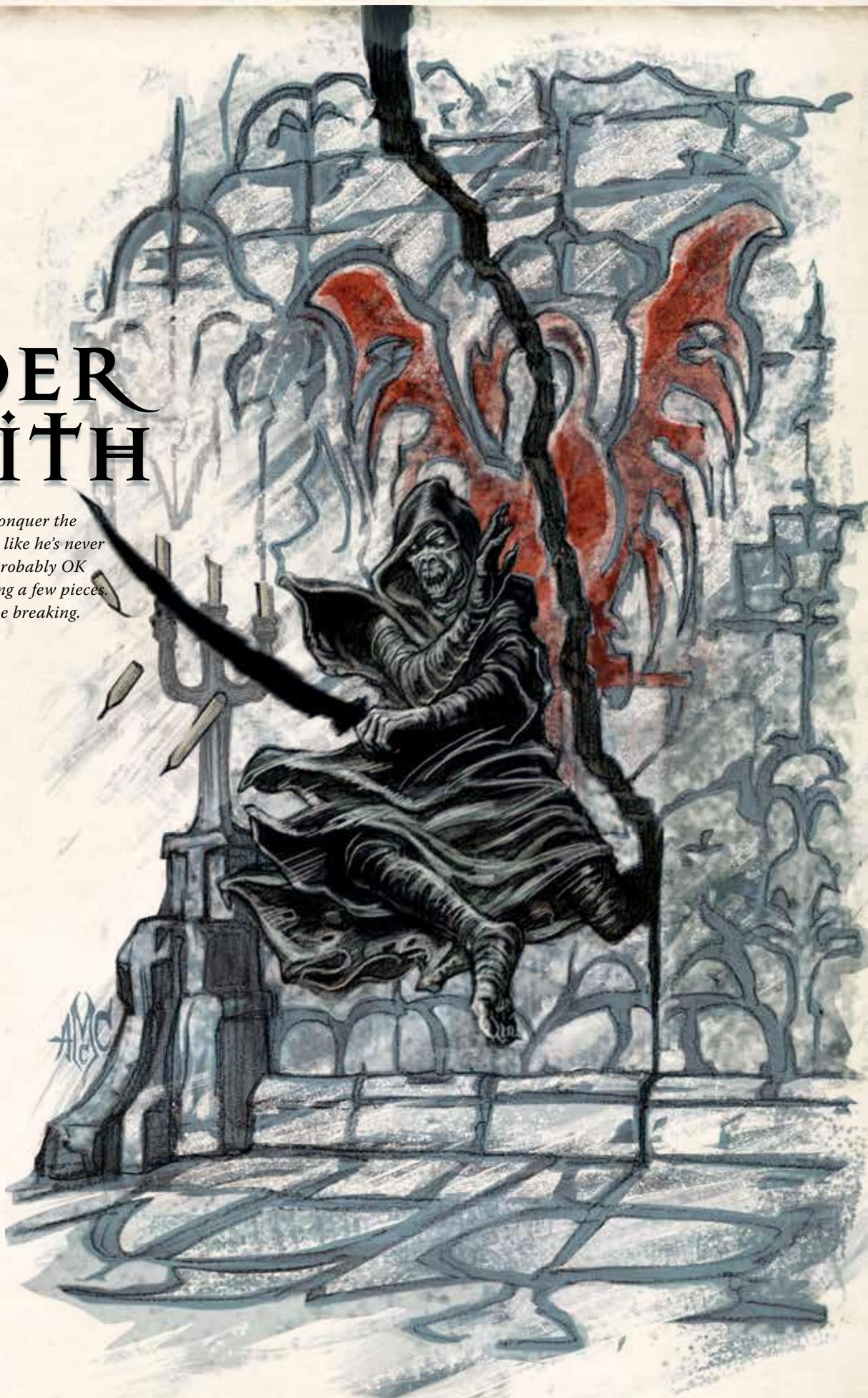
**Get Out of My Mind**—A powerful NPC (a wizard, dragon, guildmaster, or similar magically competent entity) has become host to a star-mask, but amazingly can resist it to some extent. The NPC comes to the adventurers, dropping cryptic hints and acting oddly. Will the adventurers figure out what is going on before the star-mask notices what is happening and snatches back full control?

**Masks and Hoods**—The adventurers are hired by a hooded figure to act as their agents. The hooded figure seems to be on the up-and-up; they work for an icon friendly to the adventurers—however, the hood is hiding a star-mask on the back of their head. The adventurers are unwittingly acting as agents of the star-mask hive mind, without even being infected. Oh, and the hooded patron has some magic items for them as payment—white masks.

**Night of the Xombie**—A village is having problems with the dead from the local graveyard rising and attacking the living. The village priest has tried warding the village against the undead, but these are not zombies but xombies. Of course, the xombies look just like zombies, and only close inspection will reveal the strange white eggs inside them. (If your group isn't the type for close inspection, savage dismemberment might suffice.)

# SUNDER WRAITH

*The Lich King would rather reconquer the world. But if he can't, if it looks like he's never going to regain dominion, he's probably OK breaking the world and collecting a few pieces. Sunder wraiths are all about the breaking.*



Sunder wraiths are horror monsters that telegraph their moves. You know they're going to try to pass through and disrupt you; their *sundering* attack abstracts this movement with a teleport effect. Once you've been sundered, they're going to gang up on you with their *shivering blades*, that cut without visible scars. Get help quickly or you'll make an all-too-pretty corpse.

## SUNDER WRAITH

*8<sup>th</sup> level blocker [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +16

Vulnerability: holy

**Shivering blade +13 vs. PD**—25 negative energy damage, or 50 negative energy damage if the target has been hit by at least one *sundering* attack earlier in the battle.

*Miss:* Negative energy damage equal to the natural attack roll.

**C: Sundering +13 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy)**—30 negative energy damage, and teleport the sunder wraith into engagement with the target

*Natural even miss:* Teleport the sunder wraith somewhere nearby the target, but not engaged with an enemy.

**Flight:** Sunder wraiths fly like the world is defined however they want it to be defined.

**Ghostly:** This creature has resist damage 16+ to all damage (yes, even holy damage) except force damage, which damages it normally.

A sunder wraith can move through solid objects, but it can't end its movement inside them.

**Destroyer:** Twice per battle when the sunder wraith moves through a solid object like a wall, throne, door, or chest, the object must roll a normal save. If the save fails, the object is broken. Strongly magical objects get bonuses on the save, but err on the side of uh-oh.

**AC 22**

**PD 18**

**HP 126**

**MD 20**

## GREAT SUNDER WRAITH

*11<sup>th</sup> level blocker [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: +19

**Shivering blade +16 vs. PD**—50 negative energy damage, or 100 negative energy damage if the target has been hit by at least one *sundering* attack earlier in the battle.

*Miss:* Negative energy damage equal to the natural attack roll.

**C: Sundering +16 vs. PD (1 nearby enemy)**—60 negative energy damage, and teleport the sunder wraith into engagement with the target

*Natural even miss:* Teleport the sunder wraith somewhere nearby the target, but not engaged with an enemy.

**Flight:** Sunder wraiths fly like the world is defined however they want it to be defined.

**Ghostly:** This creature has resist damage 16+ to all damage (yes, even holy damage, and for that matter, this creature has outgrown vulnerability to holy damage) except force damage, which damages it normally.

A great sunder wraith can move through solid objects, but it can't end its movement inside them.

**Destroyer:** Three times per battle when the sunder wraith moves through a solid object like a wall, throne, door, or chest, the object must roll a hard save. If the save fails, the object is broken. Strongly magical objects get bonuses on the save, but err on the side of uh-oh.

**AC 25**

**PD 21**

**MD 23**

**HP 252**

## BUILDING BATTLES & ICON THOUGHTS

Odds are that sunder wraiths are rare high-powered servants of the Lich King, sent to destroy objects and elements that obstruct his path to power.

But there could be other options. With high level undead like the sunder wraiths, the question is “What creatures other than undead, necromancers, and servants of the Lich King might be encountered alongside them?”

**Demons:** Thinking beyond the box, powerful demons would love to make use of sunder wraith’s ability to destroy binding chains and pentacles. What terrible pacts between Diabolist and Lich King could seal this alliance? Or are some demon lords freelancing in hopes of breaking free?

**Orcs:** Maybe sunder wraiths can’t be wraiths created from just anyone. Maybe they’re the spirits of orc champions slain by the Lich King. Maybe the Lich King screwed up by using souls tied to the Orc Lord, who has reclaimed his followers.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Fetch the Sundering**—While the PCs are off dealing with one problem, have sunder wraiths destroy something that they normally guard well. Turns out that the only way to restore the object will be to destroy the responsible sunder wraith in a ritual centered on the treasured possession. So the PCs not only need to track the flying and ghostly sunder wraiths, they need to catch them and bring them back home. So many moving pieces to go wrong.

**Desperate Counter-Measures**—An encounter with sunder wraiths has panicked a fortress or legion loyal to the Crusader. They’ve got something breakable, apparently, and it’s been made pretty clear that they can’t defend it properly. They need help: will the PCs function as additional defenders, or will they take the fight to the Lich King? Can the PCs really handle this job without knowing the stakes? And how will they react when they learn about the terrible objects they’re protecting?



# THUNDER LIZARD

*Don't underestimate giant lizards.*

## SUMMON THE THUNDER

We all know about dinosaurs. They're big, they hit hard, some of them have armor, others have spiky tails, a few are fearsome carnivores, and one has three awesome horns. We've seen this done in a dozen tabletop roleplaying games—it's not rocket science, it's paleontology. Even the newest revelations about dinosaurs (feathers; warm blooded; basically big birds!) struggle to push this style of treatment beyond the type of been-there-done-that ennui we try to avoid in *13<sup>th</sup> Age*.

So let's start with a few curveballs, ideas for how thunder lizards might stand out as creatures worthy of occupying table-time in your campaign. If none appeal to you, you may have better ideas, or you may be happy using the straightforward monster stats that appear in the next section. We aim to give you options other than vanilla, but if it's vanilla you want, the basic thunder lizard monster stats are playable and fun and don't need to get embroiled in any of these campaign twists. Perhaps the right approach is to use vanilla thunder lizards in one campaign followed by twisted thunder lizards the next . . . .

### Ancient or Not?



*Creatures based on dinosaurs may make better psychological sense to us 21st century gamers if there is something ancient about them, something a touch more primordial than many of the other fantastic creatures in the fantasy world. Several of the campaign twists that follow recognize this possibility. Even a campaign that uses thunder lizards as a new element in the player characters' lives may want to use the idea that the thunder lizards are actually somehow an ancient phenomenon.*

## CREATURES OF AN ANCIENT ICON

Thunder lizards are the descendants or the creations of an ancient icon, perhaps even a primordial icon. Long centuries or magical decay may have eclipsed the icon's name. Was it the Thunderer? The Earthshaker? The Great Terror? Was the icon itself a thunder lizard, or was the icon humanoid? Your answers are the answers that matter so there's not a lot more that we can say about the icon possibility, other than that all the campaign twists that follow might also be relevant.

## BRAINS, NOT WALNUTS

Scientifically speaking, we can be sure that creatures with brains the size of walnuts weren't very intelligent. But your campaign doesn't have to 'know' what we know about dinosaurs.

After all, dragons are smart. Wyverns may or may not be smart. Maybe thunder lizards are smart enough to speak languages humans can understand. Thunder lizards could be on the really stupid side if you like, but still, talking is talking. Or maybe it's more interesting if you treat them like the animals in C. S. Lewis' Narnia books—some thunder lizards can talk and understand language, and some can't, and you won't know who is who until you try.

Obviously the manner in which creatures talk makes a great deal of difference in a roleplaying game. We're inclined to make talking thunder lizards live up to the thunder half of their name, except for the dainty lizards . . . who should talk like whatever most irritates the greatest number of players.

This approach may make sense if you're connecting thunder lizards to an ancient icon.

## SCRAMBLE THE DIETS

What if the terrible lizards of *13<sup>th</sup> Age* can't be judged by the eating habits of the dinosaurs we know from fossils? We know that the triceratops was a largely benign herbivore, but so what? What if the creatures we know as plant eaters are opportunistic omnivores, happy to supplement their diet with squashed humanoid? Perhaps earthshakers head into the middle of the swamp to munch crunchy sahuagin, while spiketails trundle down to the Magma Keeps to top up on their sulfur levels by nibbling on hellhounds and fire giants.

You can mix it up completely. One peaceful herbivore will be perfectly happy to ignore the PCs, but the next such thunder lizard may see them as a tasty snack. For an explanation for such dietary shifts, read on . . .

## JINXED

What if some (but maybe not all) thunder lizards are the subject of a curse? In a previous age, one or more members of a species offended or otherwise irked an icon or other powerful entity, leading to their current predicament. As a result, they must consume a particular creature, or class of creatures—such as sentient plants, for instance—in order to survive. When these

creatures aren't found within their own habitat, the cursed thunder lizards' cravings lead to mass migrations heading to wherever their prey is hiding.

Perhaps there's a specific trigger that sets off the curse and subsequent migration. In this age, it could be that no one is expecting a thunder lizard migration as there hasn't been one in living memory.

What if the curse is a bit worse, and is a case of the thunder lizards being weaponized against one of the nasty icon's special foes? Magically tipped off to the presence of their prey, they ruthlessly hunt down said creature whenever it enters their domain.

## SOMETHING ABOUT THE KORU

One of the enduring dinosaur-related themes of our culture is the lost world, a place where dinosaurs and other extinct creatures still endure. We tend to put our lost worlds at the center of the earth, or on a mysterious island.

What if thunder lizards were largely extinct, except for thunder lizards who live in an ancient (possibly magical) environment carried on the back of one or more Koru behemoths? Storylines involving the thunder lizards turn out to involve the behemoths, and that's no bad thing.

**The great oval:** Alternatively, if you're looking for a way to split thunder lizard behavior into two parts, you could use an idea Rob is playing with in his campaign. Reality is a bit different on either side of the Koru Behemoth migration route. Inside the oval of the migration route, thunder lizards act like dumb animals. Outside the oval, thunder lizards are usually highly aware and talkative agents with their own agendas.

Maybe it has something to do with the High Druid. Maybe not. Not telling!

## STORM GIANT PETS

We don't really have to work hard to spell this out, do we? Your campaign may have ideas already about what storm giants are up to. If not, adding thunder lizards as pets could shake things up.

Our half-designed world notes in Chapter 8 of the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* core rulebook suggest that storm giants frequently live in the realm of Clouddome, and that some of these clouds splinter and drift onto the earth as cloudbreaks. That's as good a randomly distributed origin point for thunder lizards as we could hope to find!

Maybe the thunder lizards aren't so much pets as creatures from the storm giants' cloudscapes? Maybe the giants' actual pets are more magical, and can speak, while the thunder lizards that have gone wild on the surface have lost part of the magic and no longer speak.

However you use this idea, it suggests one great unintended consequence: storm giants' clouds don't have to be boring cloudscapes! We tend to think of the cloud lands as mostly featureless fluffy cloud worlds, because that's what we know

clouds are like in our world. But in the same fantastic process by which we realize that thunder lizards don't have to be exactly like our concept of the dinosaurs, storm giants' cloud homes don't have to be anything like our world's clouds. They should be great wooded and jungled assemblages of rock and waterfall and lightning towers, a place where thunder lizards fit in like panthers and deer in the Wild Wood!

If you like this path, consider tweaking a game mechanic borrowed from the storm giant in the 13<sup>th</sup> Age core book as an ability possessed by all non-mook thunder lizards:

*Rumbling thunder lizard:* When the thunder lizard hits with a natural even melee attack, deal thunder or lightning damage equal to twice the thunder lizard's level to a random nearby enemy of the thunder lizard (5<sup>th</sup> level: triple the thunder lizard's level; 8<sup>th</sup> level: quadruple the thunder lizard's level).

## THUNDER LIZARD STATS

The stats that follow mostly play it straight, describing thunder lizards along the lines of what we know about our world's dinosaurs. Nastier specials may go beyond the call of science, and the campaign twists above may have given you other ideas already.

**Size:** Most thunder lizards are probably much bigger than our stats suggest, up to huge size or beyond. That's why several of them have attacks that can target nearby creatures instead of needing to be engaged. The size category listed in the stats is a measure of their aggressiveness, strength, and difficulty to bring down rather than a precise measurement of actual size. Feel free to up the ante in your description of them while keeping the stats the same.

**Initiative:** The initiative ratings of the thunder lizards below follow modern discoveries that indicate that most dinosaurs were fast-moving and active rather than ponderous reptiles. If your preferred dinosaurs are ponderously slow green-skinned creatures instead of brightly feathered and fast-moving, drop the initiative ratings down to the thunder lizard's level or one point above.

## DAINTY LIZARD

*By far the smallest of the thunder lizards, the dainty lizard is nevertheless a dangerous predator if encountered in any numbers. And c'mon—it's always going to be encountered in numbers.*

About the size of a wild turkey, and twice as ornery, the dainty lizard (to us, a *Compsognathid*) is covered in a soft, mossy green down, save for its feet, claws, and the tip of its narrow, tapering snout. The down turns to short feathers under the arms of the largest specimens.

The creature also has a flat spike at the end of its long tail. This is not a weapon, but a folded fan of bright orange feathers that the dainty lizard unfurls to use as a threat display when cornered or surprised.

The pesky little blighters are omnivorous and prefer meat if they can get it. Dainty lizards generally hunt in packs when taking on anything larger than an insect. However, given that they live in places like the KneeDeep, sometimes overcoming the insects requires them to join forces if they want to be the predator rather than the prey.

Dainty lizards usually live along lake, swamp, and sea shores, but they are opportunists and are not above scavenging closer to centers of habitation if they're hungry enough.

If your PCs are dismissive of mooks, definitely use the nastier special. If your PCs are dismissive of 'dainty' lizards, use the nastier special; or call them sawtooth lizards or packtooths if you hate the name too.

*1<sup>st</sup> level mook [BEAST]*

Initiative: +5

**Nasty nip +6 vs. AC**—4 damage from rows of small, very sharp teeth

### Nastier Special

*Sweet dreams:* Some dainty lizards have a soporific bite that allows them to inject a powerful anesthetic into the wound from a gland located in the roof of its mouth. Make this triggered attack as a follow-up when the *nasty nip* attack hits with a natural even roll.

**Soporific bite +6 vs. PD**—The target rolls a save. If it fails, the target is helpless (−4 to all defenses) as it falls unconscious (save ends, or taking 10 damage ends). When a creature falls unconscious this way, each other nearby dainty lizard that is not already engaged will move and attack the target during its next turn.

**AC 16**

**PD 14**

**MD 12**

**HP 9 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one dainty lizard mook for every 9 damage you deal to the mob.

## CLUBTAIL

*Low slung and heavy set, this lizard swings a tail that can pulverize trees, small hills, and you.*

Covered in bony, armored plates the color of dried leaves, the clubtail (*Ankylosaurus*) is an herbivorous tank. Its broad, triangular head has two small horns (mostly decorative) and beaked jaws suitable only for delicately nipping off young leaves and buds. Don't be fooled, though—the creature is quite capable of defending itself with its enormous clubbed tail (hence its name).

It prefers to live in forested areas (for example, around the Stalking Trees) where its favored food is plentiful. Where you find clubtails, you also tend to find trihorns and tyrant lizards.

*Large 3<sup>rd</sup> level troop [BEAST]*

Initiative: +4

**Headbutt +6 vs. AC**—16 damage

**C: Tail swipe +8 vs. AC (one nearby enemy)**—20 damage

*Natural 20:* The clubtail can make a second attack.

**AC 20**

**PD 18**

**MD 11**

**HP 80**

## SPIKETAIL

*There's not a great deal of room for brains in that tiny little skull. But watch out for the other brain near the tail. That's the one that's got your number.*

Another lumbering herbivore, the spiketail (*Stegosaurus*) is blessed with even less intelligence than its club-tailed cousin. However, big and stupid can be just as dangerous as small and smart, particularly if you get in its way.

With a tough, gray hide almost completely covered with feathery bristles in varying shades of gray and black, the spiketail is easily recognized by the double row of plates along its spine and tail. While these do help in the creature's defense (if attacked from above), they are also used to warn off attackers, blushing an angry red whenever the spiketail feels threatened. They also use the color-changing ability of their spinal plates in mating displays. Some brave (or foolish) farmers have found an alternative use for them—the largest make handy ploughshares or shovel blades, provided you can harvest them. (Going after plates from dead spiketails is as equally fraught with danger as trying to procure fresh ones, as stalkers like to feast on their remains.)

While their horny beaks might deliver a vicious nip if you get too close, the main danger with these thunder lizards are the two pairs of large spikes at the end of their tails, which they swing with uncanny accuracy.

With a preferred diet of mosses and ferns, they tend to be found along the edges of great swamps. They are also rather partial to fruit, and belligerent, drunken spiketails that have feasted on fermenting windfalls have been known to rampage through . . . well, most anywhere they're near.

*Large 4<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]*

Initiative: +8

**Thagomizer +10 vs. AC**—24 damage

*Hit and natural attack roll exceeds target's Dexterity:* Target is flung 1d6 x 10 feet in a random direction. (If that's going to put it into a very dangerous place or over a cliff or similar bad spot, it can roll a normal save to catch itself before being thrown and take another 2d6 damage.)

**R: Rear and stomp! +9 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—22 damage and the target is hampered (save ends)

*Limited use:* 1/battle, but not while staggered

*Whooosh:* When the escalation die is even, the spiketail can target a nearby enemy with its thagomizer attack instead of needing to be engaged.

**AC 19**

**PD 17**

**MD 14**

**HP 124**

## TRIHORN

*Just because it doesn't eat meat doesn't mean it's friendly. Wait a second... what has it got in its mouth?*

Recognizable by its three horns and the large, bony frill that protects its neck, the trihorn (*Triceratops*) has an even sturdier build than its cousin, the clubtail.

Like its other cousin, the spiketail, trihorns are covered in feathery bristles, although they are a dappled mix of sage and olive green and are restricted to the creatures' bodies. Male trihorns also have two fleshy, red-and-blue wattles hanging just below their nose horn, one on either side, which the male inflates like brightly-colored balloons during mating displays.

Trihorns are far more common than the clubtails they share their habitat with and, during the mating season, the hills and forests ring with the sound of their titanic skulls clashing together.

*Large 4<sup>th</sup> level troop [BEAST]*

Initiative: +9

**Three-pronged attack +9 vs. AC**—20 damage, or 30 damage if the target is large or bigger

*Furious charge:* The three-pronged attack instead deals +10 damage on a hit if the trihorn first moves before attacking an enemy it was not engaged with at the start of its turn.

**Nastier Special**

*Knocked flying:* Not only does the *furious charge* cause damage, but on a *natural even hit*, the target is knocked to one side and dazed until the end of its next turn. On a *natural odd hit*, the target is thrown backward and dazed (save ends). The trihorn ends the round unengaged and ready to make a new *furious charge* attack.

**AC 21**

**PD 19**

**MD 13**

**HP 122**

## EARTHSHAKER

*Seriously, what did you expect to happen if you got that close to its feet?*

An earthshaker (*Brontosaurus*) is big—really big (at least as far as thunder lizards go). Its long neck is matched by an equally long tail, which it uses like a gigantic whip if attacked.

Fond of water weeds and other difficult-to-reach vegetation, the earthshaker lives in very similar locations to the spiketail and the dainty lizard. Its knobby skin—reminiscent of a ripe avocado—is tough but also prone to sunburn, so it likes to wallow in mud (and there are plenty of places in the KneeDeep that are more than suitable for the job). It's also a surprisingly good swimmer.

*Huge 5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [BEAST]*

Initiative: +8

**Squish +10 vs. AC**—50 damage

**C: Whipcrack of a tail +10 vs. PD (1d3 nearby enemies)**—20

thunder damage, and the target is stunned (save ends) by the pealing boom created

*Limited use:* The earthshaker can use *whipcrack* only when the escalation die is even. With such a long tail, it takes the earthshaker a little time to ready its inbuilt whip.

**AC 20**

**PD 21**

**MD 13**

**HP 235**

## STALKER

*Something this big and nasty shouldn't be this sneaky. Death isn't fair.*

While not the largest of the carnivorous thunder lizards, the stalker (*Allosaurus*) is still a terrifying and implacable hunter.

The stalker's striped and mottled blue-green skin serves as excellent camouflage, but unlike its larger relative, the tyrant lizard, it is not covered in down. It does, however, have a crest of iridescent blue feathers running from its head to the tip of its tail. Like its eye 'horns,' these can be raised and lowered at will for display purposes. Some druids and shamans prize the feathers for magical purposes, and rangers and rogues wear them for luck.

The stalker's feathers are not the only thing sought after by trophy hunters. The beast's teeth, which it regularly sheds, are coveted as dagger blades by lizard folk, barbarians, and others who don't make their own metal weapons.

While found in the same locales as the spiketail and the earthshaker, the stalker prefers to avoid the water where it can and stays on dry ground.

*Large 5<sup>th</sup> level trooper [BEAST]*

Initiative: +10

**Slashing teeth +9 vs. AC**—30 damage

*Natural even hit:* The stalker locks onto its victim with its powerful jaws. If it's still engaged with the target at the

start of its next turn, it can make a *tearing claws* attack.  
*Miss:* 15 damage.

*[Special trigger] Tearing claws +10 vs. AC (2 attacks)*—18 damage as the stalker rakes its victim with its clawed feet  
*Miss:* 5 damage.

**Nastier Special**

*Surprise!*: Despite its size, as an ambush hunter, the stalker is very good at shadowing its prey. Checks to notice it and avoid surprise are ridiculously hard. (See the core rulebook, page 164.)

**AC 20**

**PD 20**

**MD 16**

**HP 160**

## TYRANT LIZARD

*Its deafening roar instils terror into the hearts of everyone that hears it. Truly the king of the thunder lizards.*

The tyrant lizard (*Tyrannosaurus*) is a large, ferocious creature that isn't too bothered about where its next meal comes from as it is equally happy hunting or scavenging.

Its body is mostly covered in a soft green and gray-brown down, except for its legs, tail, and head. A V-shaped crest of sulfurous yellow feathers runs down from its brow ridges to the nape of its neck; these usually lie flat, but can be raised at will. The down of the tyrant lizard is considered to be inferior to that of the dainty lizard in terms of insulation, but that doesn't stop young hill giants from seeking out the lizards' pelts in what is essentially a rite of passage.

Tyrant lizards like to wander far and wide, although they are usually found in close proximity to trihorns and clubtails. Some giants enjoy capturing the creatures and setting them against one another; fights between trihorns and tyrant lizards are considered to be by far the most entertaining, perhaps because they're also the most likely to occur in nature. It's practiced combat.

*Large 7<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [BEAST]*

Initiative: +12

**Rending jaws +12 vs. AC**—60 damage

*Natural roll above target's Constitution:* 15 ongoing damage

**C: Earsplitting roar +12 vs. MD (1d6 nearby enemies)**—40 thunder damage

*Natural 14+:* The target can't use the escalation die until the end of its next turn.

*Limited use:* The tyrant lizard can use *earsplitting roar* during its first turn of a battle and when the escalation die is odd.

**Nastier Special**

*Terrifying bellow:* The tyrant lizard's earsplitting roar attack instead weakens the target until the end of its next turn.

**AC 22**

**PD 21**

**MD 16**

**HP 240**

## BUILDING BATTLES

If you're using thunder lizards as normal beasts, they're most likely encountered in small herds that have the same eating habits. Conceivably some barbarian tribes and hill giant warbands might semi-domesticate a thunder lizard or three, but they're most often going to be encountered above ground in the wild with their own kind.

If you're using any of the campaign twists outlined above, you'll have identified creatures, humanoids, and giants who are likely to be accompanied by thunder lizards.

## THUNDER LIZARDS AND THE ICONS

A lot depends on the campaign twists you've chosen. Here are a couple more generic notes that might apply

**Emperor:** Is there any good reason why thunder lizards couldn't be brought into the arenas of Axis? Dragons are off-limits, but thunder lizards should be possible, right? Make it so!

**High Druid:** If thunder lizards are simple beasts, they're part of the High Druid's realm. Even if thunder lizards are complex beasts, they might be part of the High Druid's realm. If thunder lizards are for some reason not part of the High Druid's realm (creatures of an ancient icon perhaps?), the High Druid may want to change that.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Hubble Bubble**—Every generation or so, the alchemists of the Black Fang forget why they shy away from trying to use dainty lizard venom in their poisons and try to acquire serious quantities of it. It's not going to work out in the long run, but if the PCs can be hired or blackmailed into helping, you'll have the PCs helping demonstrate the problems.

**Here, Boy!**—If you're using the idea that storm giants have something to do with thunder lizards, or even if you're not, what happens when a more-or-less friendly storm giant comes looking for her beloved thunder lizard pet? Or perhaps the thunder lizard pet of her beloved? If the beast happens to be an otherwise much-higher-level threat than the adventurer tier PCs can safely handle, that they have already been hired or requested by some icon-related friends to handle, the PCs could accomplish a couple missions with one toss of the dice. Or maybe they're about to get into something way over their heads that takes them up to Cloudhome!

**March of the Thunder Lizards**—Thunder lizards are acting weird, moving in what can almost be described as parades, and there are prophecies of the reappearance of a vanished icon. Do the thunder lizards hold the key to past glory? Where are these parades headed?

# TROGLODYTES

*Troglodytes stink so bad you want to die.  
And the trogs are right there to help.*



## ODD LIZARD OUT

Troglodytes, commonly known as “trogs” by the races of the surface, are hideously stinky lizardfolk who live in places even more awful than most non-stinky lizard folk. In the rare cases in which you’re separated by a magical barrier or have lost your sense of smell, you can reliably identify a troglodyte by the crest that runs down their backs or their wide face.

Troglodyte speech is mainly hisses and crackling grunts, but overhearing them is of little use. The nuances of their language are expressed through scent variations, something that few outsiders ever have the stomach to grasp.

There’s no consensus about troglodyte origins, meaning that there are a few competing theories. At least two versions of the Dwarf King’s *Book of Grievances* holds that they are feral descendants of a lizardfolk slavery and breeding program by the dark elves during the early days of the war in the 1<sup>st</sup> Age. Of course, the Court of Stars’ lorekeeper maintains that the dwarves are mistaken and the ancient naga magically cleansed the early troglodytes, transforming them into the savage lizardfolk.

Iconic politics aside (and it’s worth noting that trogs really hate both elves and dwarves), it’s likely that no one fully understands troglodyte origins. If it’s the kind of thing that interests you or your players, feel free to create deep ancestral caverns that announce themselves with nearly solid walls of scent.

## IT TAKES A FETID VILLAGE

Trots tend to live in small clans, hunting the marshes above ground, and the shallow reaches below. Most exist as foragers, living simple lives away from civilization and the outsiders who would harass them at every turn. Larger camps of the trogs will occasionally raid nearby lands or lend out their warriors to those who need mercenaries and are able to pay, as long as that means dead dwarves or elves.

Their villages contain mainly communal buildings, with separate areas for egg clutches and the performance of rituals. The exception is what the dwarves call the trogs’ “fouler,” a larger and smellier outcast upon whom each village seems to bestow both scorn and affection. The fouler lives at the edge of the community and is thought to represent a totem against ill fortune. There is only one in each settlement, and any other among their kind that shows the traits is exiled before adulthood.

## FOR ALL TROGLODYTES

**Trog stench:** Trogs spray scents that stink so badly that other humanoids take penalties to all attacks, defenses, and saves when engaged with a troglodyte or when nearby three or more troglodytes. Non-humanoids usually aren’t affected.

Humanoids affected by trog stench can make a normal save at the end of each of their turns (though they’ll be taking a penalty . . .). If the save succeeds, the humanoid can ignore all trog stench for the rest of the battle.

Trog stench penalties vary for different humanoid races:

- 4: Elves, gnolls, gnomes
- 3: Humans, halflings, half-elves, holy ones, tieflings, most everyone else
- 2: Half-orcs, dragonics
- 1: Dwarves
- 0: Forgeborens



## TROG FOULER

*Larger than most trogs and oozing in pustules, this cyst-riddled brute prefers to get in close to do its worst.*

5<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [HUMANOID]

Initiative +4

**Slimy backhand +9 vs. AC—14 damage**

*Natural 18+:* The target pops free from the trog fouler and loses its next move action.

*Miss:* Ongoing damage equal to twice the penalty the trog’s stench currently imposes on the target. This damage continues until the target saves against the stench effect.

*Chameleon:* Underground, or in swamps and rivers, attacks against troglodytes by enemies who aren’t engaged with them take a -4 penalty.

*Pungent pugilist:* Until the trog fouler drops to 0 hp, while a creature is nearby the fouler, it is subject to *trog stench* and doesn’t roll saves against the stench at the end of its turn.

### Nastier Special

**Dead stench:** Dropping the trog fouler to 0 hit points isn’t enough. The PCs need to use a magical effect of some sort—or possibly an icon relationship advantage—to end the stench after the fouler has fallen, or move the fight so that it’s no longer nearby the fouler’s corpse.

**AC 20**

**PD 19**

**MD 14**

**HP 88**

## TROG SHAMAN

*They're the spiritual advisers of their clans, and the custodians of their ancestral grudges.*

6<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative +6

**Grimy spear +11 vs. AC**—18 damage

*Natural odd hit:* The target is again affected by *trog stench* if it had saved against the effect.

*Miss:* Damage equal to three times the penalty the trog's stench currently imposes on the target.

*Special:* See *primeval grudge*.

**C: Sibilant curse +11 vs. MD (one nearby enemy)**—17

psychic damage, and the target is vulnerable to all attacks by troglodytes

*Primeval grudge:* Until the trog shaman drops to 0 hp, the melee attacks of each trog nearby the shaman deals 6 extra damage to elves and dwarves, and 3 extra damage to half-elves.

*Chameleon:* Underground, or in swamps and rivers, attacks against troglodytes by enemies who aren't engaged with them take a -4 penalty.

Nastier Special

*Extra grime:* *Grimy spear* now re-applies *trog stench* on any natural odd roll (other than a natural 1, of course)

AC 22

PD 19

HP 90

MD 17

## TROG CHIEFTAIN

*The best, smartest, and most handsome of all the trogs.*

7<sup>th</sup> level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative +8

**Ancestral trident +12 vs. AC**—28 damage, and the target takes a -5 penalty to disengage checks until the end of its next turn

*Miss:* Damage equal to five times the penalty the trog's stench currently imposes on the target.

**C: Bellow of dominance +11 vs. MD (one nearby enemy not effected by trog stench)**—25 psychic damage, and the trog chieftain gains a *fear aura* against the target (save ends)

*War cackle:* When the chieftain drops an enemy to 0 hp or below, each nearby troglodyte can roll a saving throw against one effect on it. If that enemy is a dwarf or elf, the save gains a +5 bonus.

*Chameleon:* Underground, or in swamps and rivers, attacks against troglodytes by enemies who aren't engaged with them take a -4 penalty.

### Nastier Special

*Scuzzy-toothed yawp:* While an enemy is affected by the *fear aura* of the trog chieftain's *bellow of dominance*, that enemy can't attack a troglodyte.

AC 23

PD 20

MD 18

HP 125

## BUILDING BATTLES

Troglodytes are not well tolerated by other humanoid races, because any allies are subject to the same penalties as enemies. Undead, plant creatures, demons, and devils don't have this problem. Their issue is more likely social.

Small bands hunting in swamps and tunnels are more common than massive armies. Adding in a suitable trained beast is always a good way to shake things up, preferably one without a good sense of smell.

In some games, the dark elves might be very good at getting the trogs to do things and be in places where the elves want them, like guarding an entrance to someplace important. The elves will watch as their enemies wear themselves down against the trogs, and then cruelly attack the prey that's low on resources.

## TROGLODYTES AND THE ICONS

Most icons have little to no interaction with troglodytes. It varies from clan to clan whether they're shunned or are the ones who are doing the shunning. Whichever stokes the most indignant rage, we guess.

**Diabolist:** Some trogs in the Hellmarsh have bent their scaly knee for a promise of demon-powered revenge. But it's mainly so she can scry her enemies gagging on the smell and giggle.

**Dwarf King:** Trogs sure do hate him, and he pays them little heed. Occasionally, he'll send troops to clear out a warren as a favor to another icon, but only because dwarves (and especially forgeborn) are less affected by trog stench. Occasionally a dwarven or (more often) human arcanist surmises that troglodyte stench may have been part of the poison that the dark elves used to drive the dwarves out of the deepest underworld, but dwarves' relative indifference to the stench seems to spoil that recipe.

**The Three:** Trogs are most likely to be working for the Three, probably the Black, in some way, through many layers of intermediaries. While technically a reptilian race, trogs are seen as the bottom of the barrel by the draconic icons.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Troglodytes aren't usually an avowed enemy, but more of an environmental concern. Raiding parties coming out of a swamp or underground warren or young trogs trying to bring back a dwarf beard as a trophy typical trog problems. If you're actively tracking them into their hovels and warrens, you know exactly what you're in for.

**Bald Vengeance**—A dwarven merchant named Fenril Shorthands lost several guards and, more importantly, his beard when a group of troglodytes raided his caravan in the tunnels near Foothold. He has promised a hefty sum to anyone who can get a chieftain's totemic necklace in revenge.

**Hideous Stench**—Lieutenant Visst'arlen has received reports of demons and trogs working together in the eastern reaches of the Fangs. He would confirm it for the Crusader himself, but his personal guard is comprised of dark elves as well, and would fare poorly.

**Research Assistant**—Annalise, a young alchemist looking to weaponize trog stench, has asked you to capture a "fouler" for study. There are just two problems, one ethical, and the other practical, as the nearest troglodyte hunting camp is rather large.



### Some of My Best Friends are Trogs

*Bored nobles have befriended a small group of troglodytes and are featuring them in exclusive parties all across the Empire. While trogs are known for their combat stench, they also produce a number of subtler scents, some of which have psychoactive effects. These scents are a hit at parties, as is their ability to swallow up small mammals.*

*The troglodytes are indulged in ways they could not imagine back in the caverns, so they're not exactly sideshow attractions. Not exactly. PCs can interact with the trogs, maybe learn something from them. Or the party might be there just to serve as bodyguards as a sage meets with them or a priestess evangelizes to them.*

*Pork was good enough for a couple months, but now the troglodytes are getting impatient for their favorite meal. If the trogs' noble hosts are particularly indulgent, they may be providing human flesh for their diet.*

# THE WAKING STONES

*Spend too much time studying the great stone monoliths and you're sure to spot an ear or an eye or the hint of an elbow, natural contours that have randomly folded themselves into the stone. Randomness is one explanation, anyway. It may not be correct.*



The remains of previous ages lie scattered across the world like the bones of long-dead creatures. Some of them, of course, *are* the bones of long-dead creatures, cut down in the conflicts that shape each passing generation. Others are the subject of garbled myths and half-recalled truths, their original identity and purpose obscured by the weight of time and the vagaries of mortal and immortal memory.

And still others, at the center of our tale, are not the bones of long-dead creatures, but the stone creatures themselves, resting in shapes that can't be distinguished from normal monoliths (if in fact there is such a thing as a "normal" monolith in your campaign!).

## THE OLD STONE TRUTH

In a few wild, forgotten places, hidden beneath shady forest canopies or blankets of moss, or exposed to the elements on wide, windswept moors, stand great circles and long avenues of stones, their pockmarked surfaces testament to their incredible age. No one is sure who built these stone monuments—or why—but there they remain, watching the seasons roll over them year after year, generation after generation.

Anyone paying attention may realize that some of the stones sometimes move. But then, it's a magical world. There are any number of druids, cultists, and wizards who find powerful uses for circles and avenues of stones, and there are stranger things than rocks that occasionally turn up in new configurations or that seem to have increased in number over the years.

Odds are that most of these stones are exactly what they look like: timeworn monuments of forgotten powers. But a few are sleepers, ancient stone beings who call themselves the taranar. Few others use that name, so we'll also refer to them as the stone people. They are giant living humanoid beings of stone and quartz who fold their humanoid selves within chunks of dead rock when they slumber.

The stone people sleep through the eons, waking periodically to discover what each new age or century has to offer, but usually returning to sleep so quickly that no one recognizes them for what they are. But this is the 13<sup>th</sup> age! All the world's ancient powers are waking and realizing that this is the time they've been waiting for, the moment when everything will come to a head, when the world will be remade, or destroyed, or set upon a new cycle.

The stone people are stirring, and when they go back to sleep, folding back into rock, it may be for only a season, or a week, or a night.

## CAMPAGN OPTIONS

Who are the stone people? Who *were* they? What will they care about now that they are waking? Below are a few suggestions for use in your campaigns. Take the elements which appeal to you or that fit into your current campaign. If multiple stories appeal to you, it's entirely possible that there are different types of stone people, created in different eras by different icons or gods. (If you're more interested in options for

megaliths that don't necessarily require the stones to be capable of waking, see the notes on sleeping stones that start on page 285.)

**The Displaced:** The strange monoliths were once a race of rock-born humanoids who lived on the edges of the civilized world. According to their own legends, they were among the first creatures to walk the earth, formed from its very bones long before the dwarves ever thought of tunneling into the depths in search of treasure.

By dint of their location, the taranar fell into being defenders of the borderlands, fighting against numerous enemies to keep the neighboring "softskins" safe. But their fight was never ending; over time, their civilization grew weak and they, themselves, grew desperately weary. Eventually, they were pushed out of their homelands and forced to live a nomadic life—always moving, never settling. They called to the icons for help, for some respite from their sorrows in payment for their services against the forces of chaos and villainy. One of the icons of the time answered their call and sent them into a magical sleep from which they periodically awaken, on the anniversary of their enchantment, to see if they can return home. Until now, they have remained disappointed. But a world with 13 icons is more or less what they've been waiting for. It's up to you whether the icon who originally "blessed" the taranar with sleep still remembers the act or is happy with the taranar's apparent choice of a homeland.

**Dereliction of Duty:** Another version of this legend records that the stone people were not accidental guardians of the wild places, but were charged with their protection by an icon, though the stone people themselves no longer remember *who*. It may have been a former High Druid, or even a lost icon not known in this current age—one with a particular dislike of giants and dragons, the taranar's oldest and bitterest foes.

Once noble and fearless, as time drifted on their dedication began to waver and, either through cowardice, apathy, or coercion, the stone people deserted their duties and allowed the hinterlands under their stewardship to fall to their enemies. Fearing the wrath of their former patron, they fled. They could not, however, outrun their fate and were turned to solid, unthinking stone by the icon they had betrayed. Their repeated wakings are a bittersweet time of joy at experiencing true life once more, tinged with deep regret as they ponder the consequences of their original sins. Perhaps one day they will be able to seek forgiveness—they certainly hope so.

**Vessels:** The stone creatures were never truly living beings in their own right. Instead, they are merely vehicles used by the consciousnesses of incorporeal beings which make their home on a distant star. When the star passes over the stones in its slow journey across the heavens, the beings (the actual taranar) migrate into their rocky avatars, activating the crystalline nerve networks deep within the stone and bringing them, however briefly, to "life."

For a set period (dictated by the rate of the star's passage through the sky), the taranar revel in a form wholly different to their normal intangible existence. Once the star passes too far away, the beings are drawn back to their home and must wait until the star's alignment once again permits them to indulge in a physical reality.

Alternatively, this particular version of events may be incorporated with Dereliction of Duty, in that the taranar's fate was to be banished to a distant star instead of being put to sleep. There, they exist as beings of pure thought who can do little else but reflect on their wrongdoing until their prison brings them back in range of their true forms. Their brief reclaiming of their original bodies serves to further underline the degree of their treachery by reminding them exactly what it is they've sacrificed.

If you're using anything like the timeline ASH LAW used in the Tales of the 13<sup>th</sup> Age campaign adventures, you've already got comets of prophecy and meteorites of destruction in play. Stellar or cometary taranar would fit in perfectly.

**Fully Charged:** In this version, the stone people are a secret the Archmage has kept, mostly.

Stories of guardians fleeing their homes and being sent to sleep or banished to distant stars is stuff and nonsense, at least as far as some of the more learned inhabitants of Horizon are concerned. According to them, the sleep/wake cycle of the taranar is perfectly natural, and, while it may be governed by a celestial body, it has nothing whatsoever to do with spiritual possession.

The stones, like every other creature, require a source of energy to remain active. Being a siliceous life form, the wizards argue, means that the source of that energy is unlikely to be run of the mill. Current theories range from receiving power from some as-yet-unidentified celestial body when its wanderings bring it close enough to charge up the crystals in the stones to the creatures tapping into the system of ley lines that crisscross the world to supply their needs. This would certainly explain why standing stones tend to be found along the paths of the lines and why those lines outside the Empire have a tendency to be weaker than those governed by the Archmage. Both theories also help to explain the stones' unusual orientation (either facing the star or the flow of energy along the lines).

Wherever their sustenance comes from, the stones are limited to a set period of activity before they run out of energy and must return to their dormant state. Those in the celestial camp insist this is because the star has moved on and can no longer provide nourishment for its "children." Those who prefer the ley line theory believe that the stones slowly recharge themselves in readiness for the next time they awaken.

**Hibernation:** Certain creatures go into a very deep sleep during the coldest times of the year in order to survive. Softskins don't have a monopoly on such a system, and the taranar regularly fall into a state of torpor that looks very much like hibernation for extended periods of time. This may be in accordance with the rise and fall of magic in the world, or follow some overarching cycle that only the taranar are truly aware of, if only subconsciously.

**Druidic Allies:** Over the centuries, followers of the High Druid have become comfortable in the ancient stone avenues and circles of menhirs, thinking of them as natural terrain instead of as the creations of previous empires. The taranar are part of the reason for the stones' easy acceptance by druidic magic. Now that there is a powerful High Druid within the Empire, the stone people are going to be her strongest allies,

regardless of their original origins. It's an advantage the Empire never saw coming.

**Burying the Hatchet:** The truth behind the taranar is dark. Most of the great stone avenues of the north are carved with the symbol of a double axe. These stones are part of a closely guarded secret, held between the Emperor, the Dwarf King, and the Elf Queen: the other stories presented above are rumors spread to hide the truth once the stone people begin to wake. The taranar's activation is, in fact, tied to the appearance of the Orc Lord. Just as the first Orc Lord was a construct of the elves, so the stone people are a construct of the dwarves, made originally to fight alongside the Orc Lord, to whom they swore an oath of fealty. Now that the Orc Lord has returned, the three icons are deeply concerned, particularly as there are reports of the stones beginning to stir. Do they harbor a grudge against the dwarves as great as that the Orc Lord holds for the Elf Queen? Or are they going to pick a new target?

## STONEY PC

The taranar aren't really intended to be a playable race. However, there is nothing to stop a player character's One Unique Thing making them somehow related to the taranar—especially if the adventurer is a forgeborn (or rather 'stone-born').

*"I'm the mystically conceived child of a taranar and a softskin."* OK, that's thought-provoking, and maybe there is a further story in there about how and why that came to be. Were your 'parents' in love? Were you created for a purpose, and if so have you yet to fulfil your destiny? Was this a purposeful act, or were you a one of a kind accident resulting from a ritual gone wrong?

*"The taranar created me as their emissary."* Perhaps you're a craggy and weathered mini-taranar, or maybe you look enough like the softskins that others have to touch you to notice that you are polished stone. Who are you the emissary to? What do the taranar want?

*"I'm a reincarnated taranar."* Lots of possibilities here. What was it that ended your life as a waking stone? How much of your past life do you remember? Why did you reincarnate as something that isn't a waking stone?



## TARANAR

*Their true nature forgotten by all but a few, these slumbering megaliths dot the landscape awaiting the day they will fully awaken once and for all.*

The taranar are, according to most of the above alternate descriptions of their history, elemental humanoid creatures composed of living rock and crystal. However, if you prefer the theory that they are stone shells occasionally used by an animating consciousness or dwarven fabrications from an age long past, then treat the following creature types as [CONSTRUCT] rather than [ELEMENTAL].

## SPECIAL ABILITIES FOR ALL TARANAR

**All-rock** (*resist weapons and negative energy 16+*): All taranar are resistant to physical damage as a result of their stony nature. If an assailant fails to make a natural roll of 16+ when using a weapon against a taranar, the attacker deals only half damage. The resistance also applies to negative energy damage, which tends to fizzlie ineffectively against the ancient stones.

**Lightning-flare:** As a last ditch defense, when a taranar is reduced to between 1 and 10 hp, it can discharge its remaining stored energy as a counterattack (no attack roll required) against the character who delivered the telling blow,

dealing 1d6 lightning damage per level of the taranar. The taranar immediately returns to its immobile rock form and cannot take any further role in the battle. It will then remain torpid unless destroyed or the cycle turns full circle and the conditions for it to wake are met again (providing they can be). Such severely damaged creatures reawaken as broken taranar, regardless of what they were before.

**Thick-skinned:** Being made of stone has its benefits. The taranar are immune to almost all effects—they cannot be dazed, weakened, confused, or made vulnerable to anything beyond those energies they are already vulnerable to (fire and cold; see below). Taranar are also immune to ongoing damage.

## CRACKING UP

Taranar are big and tough. But even big, tough creatures have a weakness (or, at least, you really have to hope they do if you don't want to get squashed). For the stone people, their two main fears are fire and ice. This may stem from their clashes with their ancient foes the frost and fire giants, or it may be due to the actions of those who, over the centuries, have used heat and cold to smash their bodies into manageable fragments.

As a result, the taranar are vulnerable to fire *and* cold energy, both of which play havoc with their physiology—so much so that a hit from a fire attack followed immediately (either in the current or subsequent round) by a hit from a cold attack will cause double cold damage, irrespective of whether a critical (normally 18+) has been rolled. If a critical is rolled, triple the damage inflicted.

## ICONIC POWERS

Centuries of existence as free-standing monoliths have exposed the taranar to many of the world's most powerful magical traditions. There's something about a circle or avenue of standing stones that inspires druids, cultists, chaos magicians, and wizards to get a ritual going.

Part of the taranar's remarkable success at hiding through the ages comes from the fact that they don't wake up just because someone is using their stone as an altar for a goblin sacrifice or a ritual of rebirth. But sleeping through centuries of ritual magic doesn't mean that the taranar have been unaffected by the experience. It's possible that a taranar could have acquired lingering magical abilities.

You can use the following special abilities in at least five ways:

1. As a consequence of a story connection between a taranar and its location in the world, obviously exposed for a long period of time to magicians associated with an icon.
2. As a reaction to a PC's use of an icon advantage, particularly as a possible complication of an icon advantage used when the taranar are in play or in the story.
3. To cast the taranar as heroes or villains relative to the player characters' intentions.
4. As lower impact nastier specials in battles that seem overly easy on the PCs.
5. In combination with each other, since it's entirely possible that the magic of more than one icon has shaped a stone!

**Archmage** (The Flying Stones): In sympathy with the magic that keeps Horizon aloft, a taranar influenced by the Archmage's magic can fly until the end of a battle after it has either scored or suffered a critical hit. The flight isn't quick or agile. More like empowered levitation, about what you'd expect from an airborne monolith.

**Diabolist** (The Stones Are Red): Roll a random demon ability (core 13<sup>th</sup> Age book, page 209). The taranar will use that ability once this battle, and once only.

**Elf Queen** (Repose): Roll a normal save when dropped to 0 hit points. If the save succeeds, the taranar only drops to 1 hit point and teleports somewhere far away to sleep for a while. And then it wakes up. And remembers everything...

**High Druid** (The Call): The first time the escalation die reaches 5+, another taranar surfaces in the battle, called up from hidden slumber.

**Lich King** (Simple Fear): The taranar has the *fear* ability, affecting creatures at or beneath the fear threshold for its level indicated on the DIY monster tables on pages 254–255 of the core rulebook.

**Orc Lord** (Savagery): -2 to all defenses. +2 to all attacks.

**The Three** (Fight the Claw): Taranar are usually enemies of the dragons. Exposure to their magic has taught the taranar to use the escalation die whenever it is odd.

## TARANAR HUNTER

*Proof, if it were needed, that you really don't want to get between a rock and a hard place.*

*Large 4<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +4

Vulnerability: cold, fire

**Fists of stone +9 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—14 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target takes 7 lightning damage from the electrical energy released on impact by the taranar's integral crystals.

**R: Lightning strike +8 vs. PD (one nearby or faraway enemy)**—21 lightning damage

*Natural 16+:* The taranar smashes its fists together to generate a fearsome bolt of lightning that also dazes the target (save ends).

*Miss:* The target is dazed until the end of their next turn.

### Nastier Special

*Shard burst:* When reduced to 0 hp the taranar hunter explodes in a shower of rock splinters, causing 10 damage to anyone it is engaged with and 1d3 other nearby enemies.

AC	21
PD	19
MD	14

HP 88

## TARANAR BUGLER

*Some stones are riddled with holes, marking them out in local superstition as something special. If you blow through them, you can make a sound eerily like a hunting horn if you have the breath for it. And while taranar don't breath as such, only a fool wouldn't expect them to know how to blow their own trumpet, which they use in an almost bard-like manner to call the thunder from the heavens and the stones of the earth to do their bidding.*

*Large 5<sup>th</sup> level caster [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +6

Vulnerability: cold, fire

**Rock smash +8 vs. AC**—18 damage

*Natural odd hit:* The target takes 9 lightning damage released by the taranar's all-pervading crystalline components on contact.

**R: Call to the storm +9 vs. PD (1d6 nearby enemies)**—30

thunder damage, and the target is weakened until the end of their next turn

*Limited use:* 1/battle, when the escalation die is 3+.

**R: Song of summoned stones +11 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—27 damage

*Natural even hit:* The summoned stones attacking the target fall from above, dazing them (save ends).

*Natural odd hit:* The summoned stones attacking the target roll into them, hampering them (save ends).

*Natural 18+:* Once per battle, the taranar bugler can cause the stones it summons to coalesce into animated conglomerates, whose number is determined by the escalation die +1. The conglomerates take their turns immediately after the bugler when they first appear and each round thereafter.

*Miss:* 9 damage.

AC	21	HP 104
PD	16	
MD	19	

## TARANAR CORYPHÉE

*Legend states that many stone circles are the calcified remains of dancers. Legend has no idea just how accurate it is.*

**Large 3<sup>rd</sup> level blocker [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +5

Vulnerability: cold, fire

**Sparking clogs +7 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—10 damage

*Natural even hit:* The target takes 5 lightning damage from the electrical discharge caused by the impact of crystal-laced stone feet on their person.

**C: Stoneshoe shuffle +8 vs. PD (1d4 nearby enemies)**—18 damage

*Natural roll over target's Dexterity:* The target is hampered as the localized earth tremors generated by the dancing stones causes them to struggle to maintain their balance (save ends).

*Limited use:* The coryphée can use this ability only when the escalation die is even.

**AC 20**

PD 18

**HP 66**

MD 13

## BROKEN TARANAR

*Even broken stones can break the softskins.*

**Large 4<sup>th</sup> level troop [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +3

Vulnerability: cold, fire

**Boulder blow +9 vs. AC**—21 damage

*Miss:* 7 damage.

Nastier Special

*Rolling stone:* Once per round, if the broken taranar misses its target with a natural even roll, it can immediately pop free, move to engage a nearby enemy it was not engaged with, and attack. If it misses that enemy, it cannot attempt another attack until its next turn.

**AC 20**

PD 18

**HP 76**

MD 14

## CONGLOMERATE

*Assembled by the bugler's clarion call, these shifting, clattering collections of rubble fight mindlessly until they are destroyed (or the battle ends). While they are resistant to weapons and immune to most effects like their summoners, they are not actually living taranar.*

**2<sup>nd</sup> level mook [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +2

Vulnerability: cold, fire

**Pebble dash +7 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—3 damage

Nastier Special

*Rock pile:* Once per battle the conglomerate can launch itself at a nearby enemy as a hail of rubble.

**C: Throwing stones +6 vs. PD (one nearby enemy)**—7 damage and the conglomerate teleports to become adjacent to the target.

**AC 18**

PD 16

MD 12

**HP 8 (mook)**

*Mook:* Kill one conglomerate mook for every 8 damage you deal to the mob.



## TARANAR AVALANCHE

*When the stone folk are broken in body, mind, and soul, all that remains is a huge avalanche of rage, simultaneously growing but tearing itself apart. This never happened in previous ages, so the taranar themselves may be shocked when a taranar avalanche wrenches itself out of the ground and charges.*

**Huge 6<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +11

Vulnerability: cold, fire

**Crashing & smashing +12 vs. AC (1d4 attacks)**—25 damage

*Natural odd hit or miss:* The taranar avalanche deals damage to itself equal to 1d6 per point on the escalation die; damage is not reduced by the *all-rock* ability.

*Miss:* 10 damage.

*No lightning flare ability.* Taranar avalanches are too far gone.

<b>AC</b>	<b>20</b>	
PD	19	<b>HP 200</b>
MD	18	

## TARANAR WARRIOR

*Slow to anger, quick to end it.*

**Large 8<sup>th</sup> level spoiler [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +4

Vulnerability: cold, fire

**Fists of stone +12 vs. AC (2 attacks)**—30 damage

*Natural even hit or miss:* The target takes 10 lightning damage from the electrical energy released on impact by the taranar's integral crystals.

**R: Lightning strike +8 vs. PD (one nearby or faraway enemy)**—44 lightning damage

*Natural 16+:* The taranar smashes its fists together to generate a fearsome bolt of lightning that also weakens the target until the end of their next turn.

*Miss:* The target is dazed until the end of their next turn.

<b>AC</b>	<b>25</b>	
PD	22	<b>HP 160</b>
MD	17	

## TARANAR GREAT STONE

*The biggest stone in the circle, around which the others were arranged. Into its surface spiraling lines have been carved by hands long forgotten. The locals called it the 'queen's stone'—they were more right than they imagined.*

**Huge 8<sup>th</sup> level wrecker [ELEMENTAL]**

Initiative: +13

Vulnerability: cold, fire

**Stones' might +13 vs. AC (two attacks)**—50 damage

*Both attacks hit the same target:* The taranar smashes the target into the ground, the target is either stuck, hard save ends (if the ground was soft), or takes 20 damage (if the ground was hard).

*Miss with both attacks:* The taranar ends up just pounding the ground, and can make a follow-up *seism* attack as a quick action.

**C: Seism +13 vs. PD (the four closest nearby or far away enemies)**—40 damage

*Miss:* 10 damage.

*Throw enemy:* The taranar great stone can use an enemy as a missile weapon, making the following attack

**Heave +13 vs. AC**—60 damage, and the target is thrown away from the taranar, and the taranar makes a *thrown adventurer* attack to see if the character just tossed through the air hits anybody

**Thrown adventurer +13 vs. AC (1d4 enemies in a group)**—30 damage, and the thrown adventurer slams into the targets

*Miss (with heave):* 30 damage, and the adventurer avoids being thrown.

### Nastier Special

*Blade breaker:* Once per battle when a melee weapon attack hits the taranar and is not a crit, the attack does half damage and the weapon breaks. Wielders of magical weapons have a choice between dealing no damage but their weapon staying intact, or dealing normal damage but their weapon shatters and deals 2d10 force damage to both them and the taranar.

<b>AC</b>	<b>22</b>	
PD	21	<b>HP 400</b>
MD	20	

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

The hooks below hinge upon choices you've made for the taranar's origins and intentions.

**Paying Your Dues**—The High Druid has discovered the existence of the taranar and knows their next awakening is imminent. Whether they were once guardians of the wild places or not doesn't matter to her—she wants to recruit them to her cause before anyone else has a chance of intervening. She has hired the adventurers (either directly or through her intermediaries) to approach the oldest and largest of the waking circles as her envoys and negotiators. If the taranar did betray a previous High Druid, then her bargaining chip is simple: release from their punishment in return for services rendered. (It would also be somewhat ironic if the adventurers were paying off their own debt to the High Druid when undertaking this mission.) To complicate matters further, it would appear that the Dwarf King has sent his own representatives in an attempt to recruit the taranar as part of his ongoing battle with the giants on his doorstep...

**The Restless Earth**—Tremors and minor quakes are being felt in a region not normally known for such geological activity, and a village has recently been destroyed. Some locals claim that the stones have taken to their feet in order to punish them, but they're being very tight-lipped about why they would want to do so. Are the taranar seeking vengeance for their treatment at the hands of the villagers (either through superstition or plundering them for stone), or are the locals hiding an even greater secret? Just what rites have they been performing up at the circle? (Or is the problem that the old ways have not been properly observed?)

**Heart of Stone**—The megalithic monuments in the lands around the Abyss are disappearing. Rangers report that shortly before they vanish, crude graffiti in the shape of a hand appears daubed onto the monoliths in what may (or may not) be blood. There are also rumors of an army of stone warriors massing in the Red Wastes. But who has recruited the taranar—the Diabolist or the Crusader? Or is someone else trying to implicate one or the other of the two in order to provoke a reaction? An important question that no one seems to be asking—yet—is how whoever is behind the gambit is controlling the stones. There is, of course, always the possibility that the taranar are willing volunteers in the fight, but what have they been promised in return for facing down (or standing beside) creatures who wield one of the few forces they fear?

**Settling an Argument**—The wizards of Horizon are always on the lookout for ways to prove their own pet theories (or discredit the claims of their rivals). One such has decided to put an end to the speculation regarding the taranar once and for all and has recruited the adventurers to go and fetch one for him. However, it had better be in good condition and still alive/awake by the time they get it back to the floating city if they expect to get paid for their troubles. An additional wrinkle may be that the stones have yet to wake when the adventurers set out on their quest. Just how do you tell a taranar from a conveniently weathered piece of rock anyway? (Hint: It's either ridiculously difficult or requires icon advantages!)

**Power Down**—One of the Archmage's wards is failing. Located right on the edge of the Dragon Empire in disputed/hostile territory, it is essential to discover what the problem is if the Empire's safety is to be maintained. Has the Archmage unwittingly built a hibernating taranar circle into this particular ley energy harvesting node—one that is now waking up and moving on? Has a troupe of taranar decided that the ley lines in the area will make the perfect spot to replenish themselves during their coming sleep, stealing the node's power in the process? Or, in a more sinister turn, has someone sent the taranar to put the Empire (and the hard-pressed Archmage) at a disadvantage? Regardless, the matter cannot be left unattended.

**A Merry Dance**—A friend or associate of the adventurers has failed to meet up with them as agreed, leaving them a bit shorthanded for whatever it is they had planned. It's not like their companion to leave people in the lurch, and their absence bears investigating. The last known sighting of the person was while they were on their way to their hometown—an industrious place of dedicated, sober smiths and artisans. Journeying there reveals that things have certainly changed of late. Everyone seems to have decamped into the hills to a stone circle high on a crag overlooking the town, where they are engaged in some fairly serious merrymaking. It's possible this is just some age-old local celebration that's got a little out of hand this year, but what if something more ominous is going on? Could the taranar (or some other meddling agency) have discovered a way for them to escape their stony bodies? And if they have, how do you put them back where they belong?

# MEGALITHS, MORE ASLEEP THAN AWAKE

Not all stone circles and avenues in the Dragon Empire are secretly waking stones; it might be that only a minority are slumbering taranar, and some megalithic complexes are probably ‘normal’ stones, but with a taranar guardian.

But what counts as ‘normal’ in the Dragon Empire anyway? Here are some ideas for unusual properties that a megalithic complex might have. These properties can easily fit with the magic of the waking stones; when taranar slumber, their formations might share some of these strange qualities.

## Ancient Ward

The circle of stones is there to keep something locked away. The right ritual can unbind whatever the stone circle keeps bound, allowing it to rise from its grave under the circle or descend from the stars.

Hopefully the stone circle is guarded, and nobody accidentally performs something resembling the ritual through a series of otherwise innocent actions.

## Cosmic Calendar

There are high magic rituals that can only be performed at the right time and place, and the stone circle not only marks the spot but allows you to calculate the time.

It could even be that a magical event will happen at the place and time no matter what and the stone circle is there to guide people to the event (or warn them away).

## GATEWAY TO ELSEWHERE

The megalithic complex is a gateway to some other realm. Maybe it can be used to enter (or exit) the afterlife. Maybe it is a portal to the overworld, or to hell. Maybe it is a doorway to the realm of the fey. Maybe it leads into dream.

How is the gateway opened? Sacrifice, cosmic conjunction, special dance? Once it is opened, how does it shut again?

## PURELY CEREMONIAL

The megalithic complex was raised to be a ceremonial center. This could be the meeting place of a parliament of barbarian queens, the open-air temple of a forgotten god, or the burial place of a great king.

There are probably vengeful undead waiting to rise should the adventurers disturb the sacred site—but provided the PCs do nothing more than make camp here they are probably OK (don’t dig a latrine).

## TAMED NODE

The megalithic complex channels and collects magical energy—its avenues linking to leylines, its nestled circles acting like a battery.

A magical node is probably going to be valuable terrain, guarded by druids or watched over by wizards. Maybe the guardians will try to leave the site untouched, or maybe they’ll build a tower right in the middle of the circle.

If a stone circle is a node, decide if it is turned to a particular type of magic or style of spell, and if so how that affects other magic in the area. How does necromancy act in an area overflowing in healing magic, or a *ray of frost* behave if the locale is awash in fire magic?

## TELEPORTATION CIRCLE

In the *Diamonds and Shadows* and *Omenquest* adventures by ASH LAW a pair of stone circles are used by kobolds to get to and from the isle of Omen.

Stone circles that are useable as shortcuts are probably watched closely by the Archmage, but can he watch them all at once? What of stone circles that have been lost, or that have been hidden by other icons for their own use?

And there is always the possibility that a stone circle could lead to somewhere that is normally inaccessible. Lost tombs long cut off from the surface—that sounds like something that a mountain-top trio of stones might allow entrance to. A far-off land beyond the Iron Sea—well, maybe the Dragon Empire is only a magic ritual and the right stone circle away from your own homebrewed setting.

## WILD NODE

It is no secret that magic ebbs and flows as the ages turn. This circle was raised to handle wild chaotic magic, smoothing flows of energy and preventing surges of weirdness.

Wild nodes are places where casting magic can cause unpredictable effects. Use the chaos mage’s *high weirdness* table to discover what happens each time a spell is cast, or if you don’t have 13 *True Ways* roll on the table below. Where it says ‘somebody’ you as GM can either pick randomly or pick maliciously. It is down to you whether the strange effects are played for laughs, or if you present them as a symptom of an imminent and disastrous breakdown of reality if the PCs keep poking at the circle. Of course a wild magic surge may also cause one or more of the stones to awake...

1. A strange weather effect (snow in summer, hailstones shaped like dice, etc.) manifests within the circle and only within the circle.
2. An apparition briefly appears above the center of the circle. While this looks like a ghost or spirit, it is (probably) a distorted image of somebody in the circle.
3. An out of place artifact appears in the circle, probably falling out of mid-air. It could be anything from a hat to a row-boat—large objects falling on people cause damage as well as confusion.

4. Ball lightning rolls from stone to stone, scorching the grass as it passes. Mildly painful shocks afflict all characters (no damage) and swords and staffs display St. Elmo's fire.
5. Coruscating sheets of colored light in the sky, pretty or terrifying depending on your point of view.
6. Highly localized rain of frogs, fish, caterpillars, or similar small living creatures.
7. Somebody levitates (stuck, save ends) and begins babbling. This could be wild magic causing the character to see visions and speak in a strange language, or it could just be a magical overload of their brain causing them to make gibberish sounds.
8. Somebody begins to vomit something very unusual (silk ribbons, fresh chicken eggs, live spiders, wrapped chocolates). The afflicted individual takes a -4 penalty to all d20 rolls until they save at the end of their turn (11+).
9. Somebody either becomes very young or very old. The condition is temporary, they quickly de-age or re-age over the next 2d8 days until they reach their prior age once again. While in an extreme aged or rejuvenated state the affected person has -1 to all d20 rolls.
10. Somebody finds that their personal gravity no longer attracts them to the ground but now attracts them to the stones. Lasts until the affected person is pulled (or 'climbs') away from the circle.
11. Somebody is blasted by magic, throwing them clear of the circle and dealing 2d6 force damage (champion: 4d6 damage; epic: 2d20 damage).
12. Somebody is turned into an animal, *definitely* temporary. However, the person might end up with mannerisms left over from their minutes as a hare or deer.
13. Somebody notices one of the stones seem to move by itself. A taranar shifting in its slumber, a magical effect, or just a delusion?
14. Somebody switches gender, probably only temporarily. The change is startling, probably uncomfortable, but ultimately not harmful. The change back might be a gradual process that happens while the character next sleeps, or could last until the character is a certain distance from the stone circle.
15. Somebody's hair or beard either falls out or starts growing at a rapid rate. The effect lingers for hours after the afflicted individual has left the circle.
16. Sparks leap from the stones, each character caught *between* stones takes their level in damage, those inside or outside the circle are safe.
17. The air between some of the stones shimmers, briefly showing distant scenes.
18. The local wildlife becomes mutated in unpredictable ways (growing much bigger or smaller, or animals and plants taking on the characteristics of other animals and plants). Small chance of the spontaneous creation of owlbears or dire animals.
19. The sudden appearance of sprites, who proceed to pester everybody (harmless but annoying, -1 to all d20 rolls) until they are appeased or everybody in the circle leaves.
20. Time inside and around the circle slows down, the sun and stars wheeling in the sky above. Once the world stops spinning 2d6 days have passed.



### Unbeatable Stone

*Mighty stones come to life deserve some respect, so set up a battle that the party can't win. Give the party, one way or another, the mission of defeating certain taranar; such as two particular buglers that have been causing trouble. The battle, when it comes, is on the taranar's home turf, and they have allies, such as coryphées. During the battle, more taranar rise out of the ground or animate around the scene. If the party can take down the specific taranar, then they can flee without taking a campaign loss. They win the encounter, but the last thing they remember about the taranar is an ever-growing array of stony killers bearing down on them from all sides.*



# XORΝ

*No one thinks much about xorṇ except poets  
looking for rhymes with born, forlorn, or suborn.  
Or in one obstinate case, stubborn.*

What are we sure of? Xorn are physically weird and their minds may be stranger. Xorn have trilateral symmetry, three arms, three legs, and three eyes. They have 360 degree vision. They swim through rock as though it were water.

**Many xorn:** The traditional treatment of xorn in F20 games has been to present them as rock eaters from an alien dimension who most love eating gold and silver and precious gems.

Do you find that that story interesting? If your answer is *yes*, that's good, you're set. You can use any of the bits that follow that catch your eye in conjunction with earlier xorn ideas in our d20-rolling heritage and you've got your campaign's rock-eater ready to trundle.

But we admit that our answer is *no*, the inherited storyline doesn't do much for us. Partly that's because *13<sup>th</sup> Age* is less concerned with spending gold pieces on magic items—creatures that eat gold are a hassle for icons and monarchs and nobles, but our *13<sup>th</sup> Age* player characters care less about their golden loot than player characters involved in other fantasy economies.

## XORΝ OPTIONS

Instead of developing a single idea in detail, we're going to provide a list of short ideas to inspire unexpected storylines. The wackiest ideas are perhaps best understood as samples of the bizarre phenomena in Rob's home campaign, high fantasy tutored by years of exposure to Dave Hargrave's *Arduin Grimoire*. Hopefully you'll make up something even better and the xorn will never have to be mere three-eyed rock eaters ever again.

### THE TRADITIONAL LINE

Let's start with a traditional F20 view.

Xorn come from another plane where they have no trouble eating their fill of precious metals and gems. Xorn are in the Dragon Empire, or rather, usually deep below it, by accident. If fed gold and gems, high quality food that may give them the energy to return home, they may provide information that could help adventurers. If ticked off, they'll claw claw claw bite and rummage for good metallic food through the inedible corpses.

### HERALDS OF THE LIVING DUNGEONS

What else surfaces unpredictably in the Dragon Empire? Living dungeons!

In this version, people really hate xorn because whenever you have xorn digging around, you're sure to have problems with a living dungeon soon. Maybe the xorn dig through an area and soften it up for living dungeons, so that it's a 'natural' part of the supernatural process rather than outright collusion between xorn and the dungeons.

Or maybe it's more interesting if xorn know exactly what they're doing, so that you could cut deals for sending xorn into your enemy's territory, knowing that you're seeding them with a dungeon problem.

Perhaps someone connected to the earth like the Dwarf King or the High Druid can tell when xorn have disturbed stone. Or perhaps those icons claim they can tell and they really can't!

Is there any obvious motive for this form of living dungeon heraldry? Maybe your players will blurt out something useful, or maybe you'll want to use the slightly silly idea that living dungeons that make it to the surface become extra yummy and ever-renewing xorn food. Or maybe the answer to the question at the start of this paragraph is "no"!

### EATING CLEAN-UP

No, xorn aren't showing the way for living dungeons. Exactly the opposite. What happens to living dungeons when they've been slain? They stick around a short while, long enough to be looted. Then they start sinking again, and creatures like the xorn spiral in and eat them.

To ensure problems for player characters, xorn hover around living dungeons in the rock, waiting for the moment of death so they can sweep in to scavenge all the yummy dungeon-flesh. At which point they become a problem for already tired adventurers who haven't had time to finish looting.

You could combine both the living dungeon idea. You could also use them once or twice as a plotline for specific xorn instead of as an ecology plan for the species.

### TRUE ALIENS

In a world full of thousands of magical creatures, it may be weird to single the xorn out as truly alien. But think about it: they live in rock, a substance most everything else living can scrabble at, at best. They might be more like living spaceships from another world that happen to sail through rock instead of space than surface creatures.

What in the world does *that* mean? For starters, it may not be just rocks that they want to eat. I mean, they've got access to rocks and minerals any time they want to go find them down there in the big earth. So maybe their dietary needs vary, based on alien biology no one can predict. Except, perhaps, the GM.

In other words, don't knock yourself out looking for adventure hooks. Xorn are events, tools, not the stuff that entire adventures are made of.

## THREE EYES & THE THREE

Three arms plus three legs plus three eyes? Could it be any more obvious? Xorn are creations of the Three!

Admittedly, xorn are nothing like dragons, so the Three must be branching out.

What do the Three want with tunneling earth aberrations? Maybe nobody knows for sure yet. Here are some possibilities.

**Egg raiders:** The Three aren't getting any closer to beating the metallic dragons. So they've enlisted weird allies, creatures that can tunnel in wherever the metallic dragons try to hide their eggs. Of course, while you're aiming at eggs, you may as well raid hoards.

This may explain why so many metallic dragons roost in clouds and other spots in the overworld.

**Imperial counter-threat:** How did the Blue convince the Empire to make her the official governor of Drakkenhall? Maybe the xorn are a hidden threat, poised to eat down into the earth beneath Axis. Which, if you'll recall, is built in the crater of an old volcano. Maybe the volcano won't stay extinct if the xorn eat away the rock.

So fighting and defeating the xorn is a job for heroes allied with the Emperor. Discreet heroes, who can handle the job without making it obvious.

## XORN STATS

We're providing one set of stats. You may want to tailor these stats based on the story you've chosen, but you don't have to.

## ABILITIES FOR ALL XORN

All xorn have the following abilities:

**Rock swimming:** As a move action the xorn can swim through the ground, or through a wall.

**360 degree vision:** The xorn can't be surprised, and rogues can't use their Sneak Attack class feature on them.

**Penetrating vision:** The xorn can see through all types of rock and soil for some distance, let's say "nearby."

**Resist cold and fire 16+:** Xorn are used to the fires of the deep and the cold of solid rock—when a cold or fire attack targets a xorn, the attacker must roll a natural 16+ on the attack roll or it only deals half damage.

## LESSER XORN

*You didn't surprise it so it must want something.*

*Elite 4<sup>th</sup> level troop [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +8

**Claw Claw Claw +9 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—6 damage

*Second hit against the same target in a round:* Make a bite attack against the target as a free action.

**Bite +11 vs. AC**—10 damage, and 5 ongoing damage

### Nastier Special

**Eruption:** When the xorn moves out of the floor or wall or ceiling into engagement with an enemy, deal 2d6 damage to that enemy.

AC 19

PD 17

MD 18

HP 74

## GREAT XORN

*As adventurers and xorn gain power, they converge.*

*Elite 8<sup>th</sup> level troop [ELEMENTAL]*

Initiative: +14

**Claw Claw Claw +13 vs. AC (3 attacks)**—16 damage

*Second hit against the same target in a round:* Make a bite attack against the target as a free action.

**Bite +15 vs. AC**—20 damage, and 15 ongoing damage

### Nastier Specials

**Eruption:** When the xorn moves out of the floor or wall or ceiling into engagement with an enemy, deal 6d6 damage to that enemy.

**Xorn 'cleric':** Twice per battle as a quick action (once per round), the xorn can heal 20 hit points.

**Xorn 'fighter':** The xorn's attacks deal half damage on a miss.

**Xorn 'rogue':** Once per battle when the xorn attacks immediately after swimming out from rock, it can deal double damage on a hit.

**Xorn 'wizard':** When an enemy rolls a natural odd spell attack against the xorn, it only deals half damage. In addition, a natural 1 means that the spell is reflected back at the caster (the enemy rerolls the attack against itself).

AC 23

PD 21

MD 22

HP 200

# APPENDIX A

## 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE IN GLORANTHA CONVERSIONS

*13<sup>th</sup> Age in Glorantha*, published by Moon Design, uses the *13<sup>th</sup> Age* system in Greg Stafford's world of mythology and Bronze Age heroism. Along with many new classes that can be added to any *13<sup>th</sup> Age* game, *13<sup>th</sup> Age in Glorantha* (aka 13G) contains around a hundred pages of monsters that can slide straight into Dragon Empire games.

*Bestiary 2* returns the favor. For those of you playing 13G, here are Rob's notes on some of the Gloranthan conversions he's likely to use from this book. It's not an exhaustive list, since there are obvious connections (chaos hydra, anyone?) and many creatures (demons and fire giants, for example) have already been discussed in detail in Chapter 5: Enemies of *13<sup>th</sup> Age in Glorantha*.

You can read the entries below if you're unfamiliar with Glorantha. You'll pick up some of the story. But this is aiming at people who know Glorantha already or are learning it through 13G and the introductory Gloranthan books.

### BATTLE SHADE

❖ **Chaos:** Enormous battles with supernatural wreckage have occurred often in Glorantha, but the combination of abilities possessed by battle shades seem to belong to areas that have not been touched by the healing □ Earth. If you want to make battle shades something that's connected to ancient battles, I'd suggest making them a feature of Chaos nests like Snakepipe Hollow and Larnste's Footprint, places that have never fully healed. Throw a couple Chaos features onto the battle shades and sprinkle in living broos and a gorp and you've got a proper ❖ Chaos nightmare.

Alternatively, battle shades could be a horrific example of how out of balance the world is now that Chaos has unraveled the order of things. The Hero Wars may have moved on from the area the PCs are operating in, but the ghosts of Orlanthi, Praxian, and Lunar warriors rise as shades from poisoned earth.

### BRIAR ELF

❖ **Plant:** The Aldryami, aka elves, are one of the elder races we didn't have space to address in the *13<sup>th</sup> Age in Glorantha* book. Happily, the briar elves are perfect for the way angry Gloranthan elves might interact with other ✪ Man rune races. The Dragon Empire's wood elves, high elves, and dark elves have very little to do with the 'elves' of Glorantha. The Aldryami are humanoid plants with an alien mindset, far more alien than the trolls. Briar elves, in all their horror, come close to the mark.

### ELEMENTAL BEAST

The elemental beast powers could come in handy for impromptu encounters with creatures of ♀ Air, □ Earth, ♂ Fire/Sky, or ✪ Water.

### FOMORIAN

❖ **Chaos:** You may want to change the appearance of a few of the monsters in this write-up, but the picture of hidden evil that crescendos with catastrophic impact fits 13G's default Chaos Rising campaign perfectly. Keep the elder god names as great demons and slain Chaos gods or associate one or two with known Chaos gods.

### FLUX ELEMENTAL

△ **Law or Y Truth:** We haven't said *anything* about the God Learners in *13<sup>th</sup> Age in Glorantha*. But if you're running a campaign that wants to tap into forbidden magic from that fallen empire, elementals that oscillate between four of the five elements seem very God Learner to us! Maybe your PCs will learn the hard way why ● Darkness is missing.

### FOREST THAT WALKS

† **Plant:** Glorantha may never have seen a massive Aldryami forest walking to war before, but what are we waiting for? The lightning and thunder attacks don't make sense, they should be replaced with poison. Likewise all the mooks should be elf or plant-related.

The barrier beasts don't fit into an Aldryami story, but there are plenty of enormous and terrible beasts hoping to be unleashed in Glorantha. One less obvious option that would be fun would be to use the barrier beasts as ancient ● Darkness monsters.

### GHOST

✧ **Spirit:** The iconic sadsacks come closer to showing how violently disappointed ancestors might present themselves than most of our other undead. You'll want to reinterpret the *iconic sadsack* ability itself to emphasize one or more of the PC's links with the angry ancestors instead of the Dragon Empire's icon relationships.

Of course the rest of the ghosts are useful as general purpose monsters, particularly the lesser, major, and epic haunting mooks.

### GIBBERING MOUTHER

❖ **Chaos:** Not much to say here, but I'd suggest springing this as a surprise on player characters who have previously fought gorp. Even better if they're serious Gloranthan fans who know what gorp is about. "Yeah, it's a gorp. A couple gorp actually. Roll initiative." And then the 'gorp' begin gibbering.

## GOLD KING

▲ **Stasis:** This fallen icon might not even be an aberration with undead followers if it's connected to the Mostali project to repair the World Machine. Endless avarice, enticing and stealing from surface humans? That's no sin in Mostali terms, that's optimal functioning in pursuit of Code Gold Initiatives!

Your more serious work will be figuring out what, if anything, counts as campaign victories when attempting to defeat the Gold King. I don't think the Dwarf of Dwarf Mine really equates to the Dwarf King of the Dragon Empire. I doubt that this is a story about convincing powerful NPCs to express generosity instead of greed—the Dwarf of Dwarf Mine is sort of on that track already. Maybe campaign victories vs. the Gloranthan Gold King might require direct action against the dwarven project to repair the World Machine. Which is all kinds of ironic when you think about it: break things worse so that the dwarves don't 'fix' them!

## GREAT GOUL

✖ **Undead:** The stats for the Great Ghouls' could be used for servants of Delecti the Necromancer. You wouldn't have to keep the jackal imagery, but the masks are great!

I don't think the Great Ghoul itself works well as Delecti. But it could be one of the Necromancer's powerful lieutenants. Unlike the Gold King's campaign victories, a couple of the campaign victory mechanics for the Great Ghoul translate between worlds.

## HALLOWED GARGOYLE

□ **Earth:** As creatures that fly (albeit badly), these hallowed gargoyles look like excellent temple guardians, creatures created as a blend of power in the Eralda & Orlanth pantheon. Glorantha would normally downplay the precious metals and gemstones angle, but not during the Sacred Time, and not if you encountered these creatures while heroquesting!

Given that all is not going according to plan in the Chaos Rising setting, and that many temples have been destroyed, the guardians may not be acting in accordance with their original instructions.

## HELL MARSH CULT

▼ **Chaos:** Why yes, this cult pertains to Chaos, though the Hell Marsh cultist mechanics are a departure from the way Gloranthan Chaos normally operates.

There is a benevolent side to Chaos in Glorantha. It's usually expressed through Nysalor and/or the Lunar Empire. But the Hell Marsh cultist mechanics feel much more overt than Nysalor, and too self-defeating to have that much to do with the Lunar Empire.

Which is to say: these guys make a great new Chaos cult! Find a Chaos god you want to bring back, make the worshippers a mix of humans and broos and whatever, and stick them somewhere that's gotten a lot more dangerous.

Maybe this could be a human reaction to the emergence of Gagix Two-Barb's Queendom of Jab? Call it the Gift of Jab? That might not make any sense, in the long run. But cults ain't here for the long run!

## MALATYNE, PURPLE DRAGON

▲ **Illusion:** The Puppeteer Troupe are presently alone in Chapter 5: Enemies as ▲ Illusion monsters. Malatyne looks like a splendid ambiguous patron/rival/threat to join them.

In a world that's fallen into bad times, Malatyne may function as something like an oasis. It's no fun being a lonely hedonist, so she may have a community around her that will be a change of pace from the rest of the campaign.

Purple isn't red, so Malatyne isn't *necessarily* a servant of the Red Moon. But with connections to ▲ Dragonewt, ▲ Illusion, and ▲ Movement it wouldn't be a surprise if she was somehow also linked to ▲ Moon. Ask me again in a few months because Malatyne is going into my home 13G campaign now!

## NYMPH

□ **Earth:** Stories of hidden secrets and powers associated with place could be connected to Eralda, hiding her secrets while she was slain, either during the Gods War or more recently, by the Lunars. The Dragon Empire connection with the High Druid might mean that the nymphs and their secrets eventually blossom . . . .

## PHOENIX

○ **Fire/Sky:** We barely touched the creatures of Yelm and the Sky in the 13G book. Phoenix is an excellent dangerous creature to introduce the PCs to the rightly arrogant creatures of ○ Fire/Sky.

## THUNDER LIZARD

▼ **Beast** or □ **Earth:** In Glorantha they're usually called earthshakers and associated with Eralda and her sisters rather than being associated with Orlanth the Thunderer. They've got a story already thanks to these divine connections, you don't have to use the stories we've presented in this write-up.

In Glorantha, most earthshakers are not intelligent. The exception are the trachodons, who are also spellcasters. I don't see an easy conversion with what we've presented, so that's going to wait until we've done a couple Gloranthan earthshaker stats.

## WAKING STONES

□ **Earth:** Maybe they're creations of the dwarves. Maybe they're early creations of the gods that use the ✖ Man rune but didn't quite get it right, so they're mostly asleep like the □ Earth.

## XORN

□ **Earth:** Xorn make sense as Earth creatures from the Green Age. Maybe they got eaten up by Krarsht and are only now resurfacing thanks to a heroquest the PCs will get involved with. Call them stone eaters instead of xorn.

# APPENDIX B

## MONSTER LIST

Monsters with an A in their page number appear in the *13th Age* core rulebook.

Monsters with a B in their page number appear in the *13th Age Bestiary*.

Monsters with TW in their page number appear in *13 True Ways*.

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page	Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
0	kobold grand wizard	normal	mook	B: 123	1	wolf	normal	troop	A: 207
0	squib swarm	normal	mook	B: 179	1	badger	normal	wrecker	55
0	stirgelings	normal	mook	B: 197	1	giant scorpion	normal	wrecker	A: 206
0	fast zombie	normal	spoiler	257	2	Golden Demon warrior	normal	archer	159
0	giant ant	normal	troop	A: 206	2	orc archer	normal	archer	B: 156
0	stirge	normal	troop	B: 197	2	splotchcap	normal	archer	B: 175
1	archer stirge	normal	archer	B: 197	2	enduring shield	normal	blocker	B: 204
1	skeleton archer	normal	archer	A: 246	2	ettercap hunter	normal	blocker	B: 73
1	cobbler stirge	normal	blocker	B: 197	2	giant web spider	large	blocker	A: 207
1	skeletal hound	normal	blocker	A: 246	2	hook scuttler	normal	blocker	B: 113
1	dainty lizard	normal	mook	270	2	avenging orb	normal	caster	B: 204
1	decrepit skeleton	normal	mook	A: 246	2	feral warbanner	double-strength	caster	B: 207
1	dire rat	normal	mook	A: 206	2	goblin shaman	normal	caster	A: 229
1	ettercap acolyte	normal	mook	B: 73	2	kobold hero	normal	leader	A: 237
1	goblin scum	normal	mook	A: 229	2	orc shaman	normal	leader	A: 242
1	gravemeat	normal	mook	B: 97	2	aerial spore	normal	mook	B: 83
1	kobold archer	normal	mook	A: 237	2	bloody shade	double-strength	mook	10
1	meteorite zombie	normal	mook	257	2	bone imp mage-eater	weakling	mook	20
1	wibble	normal	mook	B: 223	2	broken shade	normal	mook	10
1	zombie shuffler	normal	mook	A: 251	2	coin zombie	normal	mook	33
1	rat swarm	normal	spoiler	55	2	conglomerate	normal	mook	283
1	swarm of bats	normal	spoiler	B: 13	2	frogspawn grunt	normal	mook	96
1	eidolon in humanoid form	triple-strength	troop	46	2	Hell Marsh fanatic	normal	mook	135
1	fungaloid creeper	normal	troop	B: 83	2	human rabble	normal	mook	B: 208
1	goblin grunt	normal	troop	A: 229	2	jackal gravewrecker	normal	mook	122
1	human thug	normal	troop	A: 235	2	kobold skyclaw	normal	mook	B: 124
1	kobold warrior	normal	troop	A: 237	2	newly-risen ghoul	normal	mook	A: 225
1	orc warrior	normal	troop	A: 242	2	pit-spawn orc	double-strength	mook	B: 156
1	venomous snake	normal	troop	55	2	razor shark	normal	mook	B: 187
1	watch skull	normal	troop	B: 109					
1	white dragon hatchling	normal	troop	B: 219					

# LIONS & TIGERS & OWLBARS: 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE BESTIARY 2

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
2	Silver Hand cultist	normal	mook	248
2	xombie egg swarm	normal	mook	257
2	claw flower	normal	spoiler	B: 161
2	faun troubadour	normal	spoiler	59
2	hellwasp	normal	spoiler	B: 113
2	sadsack	normal	spoiler	106
2	skull crab xombie	normal	spoiler	258
2	Trog	normal	spoiler	A: 247
2	wood nymph (dryad)	double-strength	spoiler	206
2	ankheg	large	troop	A: 208
2	bear	normal	troop	A: 207
2	blueflame salamander	huge	troop	234
2	boombug	normal	troop	B: 113
2	bugbear scout	double-strength	troop	B: 24
2	dire bat	normal	troop	B: 14
2	hobgoblin warrior	normal	troop	A: 230
2	human zombie	normal	troop	A: 251
2	medium brass dragon	normal	troop	TW: 184
2	medium white dragon	normal	troop	A: 218
2	orc berserker	normal	troop	A: 242
2	sahuagin raider	normal	troop	B: 187
2	skeleton warrior	normal	troop	A: 246
2	skin devil	normal	troop	TW: 168
2	wererat	normal	troop	TW: 204
2	zombie beast	large	troop	TW: 207
2	bat cavalry	large	wrecker	B: 14
2	destroying sword	normal	wrecker	B: 204
2	hunting spider	normal	wrecker	A: 206
2	lizardman savage	normal	wrecker	A: 237
2	sporrior	normal	wrecker	B: 84
2	swarming maw	normal	wrecker	B: 113
3	archer shade	normal	archer	11
3	bone imp archer	normal	archer	20
3	Clasterian minotaur guard	large	archer	196
3	gnoll ranger	normal	archer	A: 229

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
3	greenscale wild stalker	normal	archer	175
3	ettercap warrior	normal	blocker	B: 74
3	ogre penitent	large	blocker	B: 149
3	otyugh	large	blocker	A: 243
3	small water elemental	normal	blocker	TW: 189
3	taranar coryphée	large	blocker	283
3	xombie spiders	normal	blocker	258
3	blue sorcerer	normal	caster	B: 21
3	Crusader warbanner	double-strength	caster	B: 208
3	drow spider-mage	normal	caster	B: 58
3	ettercap supplicant	normal	caster	B: 73
3	Orc Lord warbanner	double-strength	caster	B: 209
3	bugbear schemer	normal	leader	B: 25
3	Hell Marsh priest	normal	leader	135
3	kobold engineer	normal	leader	B: 124
3	Golden Demon priest	normal	leader	159
3	orc battle screamer	normal	leader	B: 157
3	pixie pod	double-strength	leader	B: 161
3	trog chanter	normal	leader	A: 247
3	cave orc	normal	mook	B: 156
3	dretch	normal	mook	A: 210
3	fallen derro	normal	mook	36
3	fire bat	normal	mook	TW: 162
3	kobold berserker	normal	mook	156
3	Golden Demon cultist	double-strength	mook	159
3	lemure	normal	mook	TW: 169
3	lesser haunting	normal	mook	106
3	poddling	normal	mook	B: 161
3	rascal, the	normal	mook	65
3	weaver swarm	normal	mook	B: 61
3	bone imp tormentor	normal	spoiler	20
3	dawn zorigami	normal	spoiler	B: 225
3	death-plague orc	large	spoiler	B: 158
3	frogspawn monk	normal	spoiler	96
3	ghoul	normal	spoiler	A: 225

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
3	goblin bat mage	normal	spoiler	B: 14
3	Imp	normal	spoiler	A: 210
3	intellect devourer	normal	spoiler	B: 116
3	pixie warrior	normal	spoiler	TW: 198
3	river nymph (naiad)	double-strength	spoiler	206
3	rust monster	normal	spoiler	B: 184
3	slime skull	normal	spoiler	B: 109
3	snowy owlbear	large	spoiler	212
3	spinneret doxy	normal	spoiler	B: 120
3	attached eidolon	normal	troop	46
3	barbellite	normal	troop	B: 170
3	blade shade	normal	troop	10
3	bugbear	normal	troop	A: 230
3	cenotaph dragon	normal	troop	B: 219
3	clubtail	large	troop	270
3	derro berserker	normal	troop	36
3	dire wolf	large	troop	A: 207
3	drudge citizen	normal	troop	248
3	fungaloid drudge	normal	troop	B: 84
3	gnoll savage	normal	troop	A: 228
3	kobold dog rider	normal	troop	B: 124
3	large brass dragon	large	troop	TW: 184
3	ogre	large	troop	A: 240
3	orc tusker	normal	troop	B: 157
3	really angry kobold	weakling	troop	157
3	small earth elemental	normal	troop	TW: 189
3	small fire elemental	normal	troop	TW: 189
3	snowy owlbear cub	weakling	troop	212
3	werewolf	normal	troop	TW: 205
3	bonded hero	triple-strength	wrecker	14
3	braincap	double-strength	wrecker	B: 84
3	catacomb dragon	large	wrecker	B: 17
3	flamebird phoenix	double-strength	wrecker	216
3	great cat	normal	wrecker	55
3	gray hoarder	double-strength	wrecker	113

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
3	hell hound	normal	wrecker	A: 234
3	horned azinth calf	double-strength	wrecker	145
3	hungry star	normal	wrecker	A: 235
3	magma brute	normal	wrecker	TW: 163
3	medium black dragon	normal	wrecker	A: 218
3	medium bronze dragon	normal	wrecker	TW: 184
3	ochre jelly	large	wrecker	A: 241
3	red haze berserker	normal	wrecker	157
3	redcap	normal	wrecker	B: 175
3	small air elemental	normal	wrecker	TW: 189
3	wild dryad	double-strength	wrecker	206
4	derro whisperer	normal	archer	37
4	faun harrier	normal	archer	59
4	doolantern salamander	huge	blocker	234
4	flesh golem	large	blocker	A: 231
4	gelatinous tetrahedron	huge	blocker	B: 88
4	ghoul licklash	normal	blocker	B: 97
4	kobold bravescale	normal	blocker	B: 125
4	bluescale lightning caller	normal	caster	175
4	brain-absorber zombie	large	caster	258
4	derro sage	normal	caster	A: 216
4	despoiler	normal	caster	A: 210
4	Hell Marsh wizard	normal	caster	136
4	kobold dungeon-shaman	double-strength	caster	B: 125
4	Lich King warbanner	double-strength	caster	B: 210
4	Purple Dragon (adventurer)	huge	caster	186
4	sprite	normal	caster	66
4	derro seer	normal	leader	37
4	ettercap keeper	normal	leader	B: 74
4	frogspawn spellcroaker	normal	leader	96
4	fungaloid monarch	double-strength	leader	B: 84
4	gnoll war leader	normal	leader	A: 229

# LIONS & TIGERS & OWLBARS: 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE BESTIARY 2

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
4	hobgoblin captain	normal	leader	A: 230
4	lethal lothario	normal	leader	B: 121
4	awakened trees	normal	mook	TW: 202
4	cambion dirk	normal	mook	B: 31
4	chaos glorp	normal	mook	B: 39
4	drow soldier	normal	mook	B: 58
4	elder spore	normal	mook	B: 85
4	kelplets	normal	mook	199
4	kobold shadow-warrior	normal	mook	B: 125
4	ravenous cannibal	normal	mook	B: 212
4	woven	normal	mook	B: 121
4	zombie of the Silver Rose	normal	mook	TW: 207
4	chaos behemoth	huge	spoiler	B: 40
4	demonic ogre	large	spoiler	B: 149
4	ghoul pubbuster	normal	spoiler	B: 97
4	giant bird of prey	normal	spoiler	56
4	gibbering mouther	normal	spoiler	109
4	harpy	normal	spoiler	A: 234
4	hell imp	normal	spoiler	TW: 170
4	hill nymph (oread)	double-strength	spoiler	207
4	jest bones	normal	spoiler	B: 109
4	kobold assassin	normal	spoiler	156
4	lich baroness	normal	spoiler	B: 135
4	medium copper dragon	normal	spoiler	TW: 185
4	medium green dragon	normal	spoiler	A: 219
4	shadow mongoose destroyer of fate	normal	spoiler	239
4	taranar hunter	large	spoiler	282
4	wight	normal	spoiler	A: 249
4	lesser xorn	elite	spoiler	290
4	azer soldier	normal	troop	TW: 162
4	beautific gargoyle	normal	troop	128
4	Blackamber skeletal legionnaire	normal	troop	A: 246
4	bonded veil	triple-strength	troop	15
4	bone imp skullbiter	normal	troop	20
4	broken taranar	large	troop	283

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
4	centaur lancer	normal	troop	B: 35
4	chaos beast	normal	troop	B: 39
4	chuulish slave	normal	troop	B: 51
4	demon drake	normal	troop	159
4	derro maniac	normal	troop	A: 216
4	dire bear	large	troop	A: 207
4	Ebon Gauntlet sword	normal	troop	40
4	eidolon in war form	triple-strength	troop	47
4	ember imp	normal	troop	133
4	half-orc legionnaire	normal	troop	A: 233
4	honey devil	weakling	troop	TW: 171
4	huge brass dragon	huge	troop	TW: 185
4	large white dragon	large	troop	A: 218
4	minotaur	large	troop	A: 239
4	ogre crusader	large	troop	B: 150
4	phantomaton	normal	troop	248
4	screaming skull	normal	troop	B: 110
4	trihorn	large	troop	271
4	troll	large	troop	A: 248
4	wereboar	double-strength	troop	TW: 205
4	barbarous bugbear	normal	wrecker	B: 25
4	basilisk	large	wrecker	B: 10
4	big zombie	large	wrecker	A: 251
4	chaos brute	large	wrecker	B: 39
4	fungaloid empress	huge	wrecker	B: 85
4	ghoul fleshripper	normal	wrecker	B: 97
4	ogre berserker	large	wrecker	B: 149
4	owl bear	large	wrecker	A: 243
4	slaughter pit shade	large	wrecker	11
4	spiketail	large	wrecker	271
5	demon-touched human ranger	normal	archer	A: 235
5	jackal scout	normal	archer	122
5	star-mask cultist	normal	archer	259
5	thunder bat	normal	archer	B: 15
5	earth elemental	normal	blocker	TW: 190
5	faun keeper	normal	blocker	59
5	frog knight	normal	blocker	98

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page	Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
5	gelatinous cubahedron	huge	blocker	B: 89	5	wild naiad	double-strength	spoiler	207
5	gelatinous cube	huge	blocker	A: 241	5	wraith	normal	spoiler	A: 250
5	hungry mouth ghost	normal	blocker	106	5	stalker	large	stalker	272
5	water elemental	normal	blocker	TW: 190	5	cambion sickle	normal	troop	B: 31
5	flaming skull	small	caster	B: 110	5	dire boar	large	troop	TW: 160
5	hobgoblin warmage	normal	caster	A: 230	5	drow sword maiden	normal	troop	B: 58
5	kohwa messenger	large	caster	162	5	ettin	large	troop	A: 224
5	manticore bard	large	caster	B: 139	5	flux elemental	normal	troop	77
5	medium blue dragon	normal	caster	A: 219	5	gargoyle	normal	troop	A: 224
5	minotaur adept	large	caster	192	5	huge white dragon	huge	troop	A: 219
5	petulant never-was	double-strength	caster	107	5	kobold dragon-soul	normal	troop	B: 125
5	sahuagin glow priest	normal	caster	B: 188	5	mausoleum dragon	large	troop	B: 219
5	taranar bugler	large	caster	282	5	smoke devil	normal	troop	TW: 172
5	faun bandleader	normal	leader	59	5	werebear	large	troop	TW: 206
5	resurgent phoenix	large	leader	216	5	whitescale rime walker	normal	troop	175
5	swaysong naga	large	leader	B: 143	5	air elemental	normal	wrecker	TW: 190
5	whispering prophet	normal	leader	B: 216	5	bulette	large	wrecker	A: 208
5	fomorian brute	large	mook	83	5	centaur raider	normal	wrecker	B: 35
5	Iron Sea shark	double-strength	mook	B: 188	5	Ebon Gauntlet adjudicator	large	wrecker	40
5	jackal bearer	normal	mook	122	5	fire elemental	normal	wrecker	TW: 190
5	jackpot zombie	normal	mook	33	5	frenzy demon	normal	wrecker	A: 211
5	kobold Glinter	normal	mook	158	5	ghast	normal	wrecker	B: 98
5	scuttling star-mask	normal	mook	259	5	great hound	large	wrecker	67
5	binding bride	normal	spoiler	B: 121	5	green bulette	large	wrecker	B: 27
5	common treant	normal	spoiler	TW: 202	5	gray raider	normal	wrecker	113
5	earthshaker	huge	spoiler	272	5	half-orc tribal champion	normal	wrecker	A: 233
5	frogspawn deceiver	normal	spoiler	97	5	hydra, 5 heads	huge	wrecker	A: 236
5	gorge dragon	large	spoiler	B: 17	5	kelpling	double-strength	wrecker	199
5	great horned owlbear	large	spoiler	211	5	koruku larva	normal	wrecker	165
5	mantikumhar	large	spoiler	B: 139	5	lumberland dirt-fisher	huge	wrecker	B: 28
5	rust monster obliterator	normal	spoiler	B: 184	5	mutant bullfrog	large	wrecker	98
5	sea nymph (nereid)	double-strength	spoiler	208	5	ogre champion	large	wrecker	B: 150
5	swarm prince	normal	spoiler	B: 121	5	ravenous bumoorah	normal	wrecker	B: 28
5	trog foul	normal	spoiler	275	5	sahuagin	normal	wrecker	A: 245

# LIONS & TIGERS & OWLBARS: 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE BESTIARY 2

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page	Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
5	tribal minotaur berserker	large	wrecker	192	6	lokkris	normal	mook	B: 61
5	warped beast	normal	wrecker	B: 70	6	major haunting	normal	mook	107
5	wendigo spirit	large	wrecker	B: 212	6	apex zorigami	normal	spoiler	B: 225
5	wyvern	large	wrecker	A: 250	6	atrocious gibbering mouther	large	spoiler	110
6	centaur ranger	normal	archer	B: 35	6	chuul	large	spoiler	B: 47
6	manticore	large	archer	A: 238	6	clay golem	large	spoiler	A: 231
6	bearded devil	large	blocker	TW: 173	6	coursing manticore	large	spoiler	B: 140
6	coin collector zombie	normal	blocker	34	6	crimsoncap	normal	spoiler	B: 175
6	Gauntlet's mascot	normal	blocker	41	6	faun enchanter	normal	spoiler	60
6	gelatinous octahedron	huge	blocker	B: 89	6	hag	normal	spoiler	B: 105
6	lich flower	double-strength	blocker	TW: 194	6	intellect assassin	normal	spoiler	B: 118
6	spell golem warder	normal	blocker	252	6	medium silver dragon	normal	spoiler	TW: 185
6	spriggan	normal	blocker	68	6	parasitic dybbuk	double-strength	spoiler	B: 64
6	death blossom	double-strength	caster	TW: 194	6	phantom	normal	spoiler	248
6	drider	large	caster	A: 223	6	poison dandelion	double-strength	spoiler	TW: 195
6	drow spider-sorceress	normal	caster	B: 59	6	shadow mongoose subverter of fate	normal	spoiler	240
6	Ebon Gauntlet eye	normal	caster	41	6	vampire spawn	normal	spoiler	A: 249
6	glittering bearer	normal	caster	114	6	vrock	normal	spoiler	A: 211
6	jackal mage	normal	caster	122	6	waterhorse	double-strength	spoiler	199
6	rakshasa sybarite	double-strength	caster	224	6	wild oread	double-strength	spoiler	207
6	cackling demon	normal	leader	181	6	blackscale shadow dancer	normal	troop	176
6	centaur champion	double-strength	leader	B: 36	6	briar elf slayer	normal	troop	26
6	hallowed gargoyle	normal	leader	128	6	chuulish swarm	normal	troop	B: 47
6	sparkscale naga	large	leader	B: 144	6	corpse dybbuk	double-strength	troop	B: 64
6	star-mask cult leader	double-strength	leader	260	6	dire tiger	large	troop	TW: 160
6	trog shaman	normal	leader	276	6	disgraced legionnaire	double-strength	wrecker	107
6	bat demon	normal	mook	TW: 164	6	eidolon in hunting form	triple-strength	troop	47
6	death marker	normal	mook	230	6	fomorian bully	large	troop	83
6	forge wolf	large	mook	73	6	frogspawn champion	normal	troop	98
6	frogspawn thug	double-strength	mook	98	6	frost-wurm	large	troop	B: 180
6	giggling demon	weakling	mook	180	6	hellcat (bezekira)	large	troop	132
6	ice zombie	normal	mook	B: 79	6	hill giant	large	troop	A: 225
6	jotun auroch	huge	mook	B: 78					

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
6	pixie knight	normal	troop	67
6	spider mount	large	troop	B: 60
6	star-mask cult puppet	normal	troop	260
6	weretiger	large	troop	TW: 206
6	winter beast	large	troop	B: 79
6	blizzard dragon	large	wrecker	B: 220
6	blood rose	double-strength	wrecker	TW: 195
6	cambion katar	normal	wrecker	B: 31
6	hellwarped spawn	large	wrecker	142
6	horned azinth adult	large	wrecker	145
6	large black dragon	large	wrecker	A: 220
6	large bronze dragon	large	wrecker	TW: 185
6	medium red dragon	normal	wrecker	A: 220
6	Medusa outlaw	double-strength	wrecker	A: 238
6	ogre mage knight	large	wrecker	B: 152
6	sahuagin mutant	double-strength	wrecker	B: 189
6	specter	double-strength	wrecker	TW: 201
6	taranar avalanche	huge	wrecker	284
7	bonded arcane archer	triple-strength	archer	15
7	drow darkbolt	normal	archer	B: 59
7	faun ranger	normal	archer	60
7	gnoll fiendfletch	normal	archer	TW: 196
7	big earth elemental	normal	blocker	TW: 191
7	big water elemental	normal	blocker	TW: 191
7	bronze errant	triple-strength	blocker	114
7	gelatinous dodecahedron	huge	blocker	B: 90
7	gnoll shredder	normal	blocker	TW: 196
7	tempter	double-strength	blocker	249
7	cloud giant magician	huge	caster	TW: 165
7	fire giant smith	large	caster	74
7	ice sorceress	large	caster	B: 77

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
7	Medium gold dragon	normal	caster	TW: 186
7	ogre mage	large	caster	A: 240
7	rakshasa, devourer of wizards	double-strength	caster	225
7	void dragon	huge	caster	B: 18
7	Ebon Gauntlet inquisitor	double-strength	leader	41
7	frogsplash old-one	elite	leader	100
7	manafang naga	large	leader	B: 144
7	trog chieftain	normal	leader	276
7	barbed vines	normal	mook	25
7	death shade	normal	mook	230
7	orc rager	normal	mook	A: 242
7	summoned ghoul	normal	mook	123
7	bergship raider	large	spoiler	B: 77
7	Devil of the Fangs	huge	spoiler	TW: 180
7	frost giant	large	spoiler	A: 226
7	koruku symbiont	normal	spoiler	165
7	large green dragon	large	spoiler	A: 220
7	melusine	double-strength	spoiler	200
7	reaver	double-strength	spoiler	230
7	river-spirit	double-strength	spoiler	68
7	star-mask brainburster	normal	spoiler	260
7	twisted soul	double-strength	spoiler	107
7	umluppuk	huge	spoiler	B: 69
7	wild nereid	double-strength	spoiler	208
7	big flux elemental	normal	troop	78
7	bonded hexknight	triple-strength	troop	15
7	cloud giant warrior	huge	troop	TW: 165
7	faun outlaw	normal	troop	60
7	fire giant holy warrior	large	troop	73
7	greater ebon gauntlet sword	normal	troop	42
7	hezrou	large	troop	A: 212
7	hooded devil	normal	troop	TW: 174

# LIONS & TIGERS & OWLBARS: 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE BESTIARY 2

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page	Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
7	kohwa enforcer	large	troop	162	8	rakshasa delver	double-strength	caster	225
7	lammasu warrior	large	troop	B: 131	8	shadow dragon	large	caster	B: 193
7	moon dragon	huge	troop	B: 220	8	golden eye necromancer	triple-strength	caster	249
7	screaming hoardling	normal	troop	114	8	bonded prophet	triple-strength	leader	16
7	big air elemental	normal	wrecker	TW: 191	8	elder swaysong naga	normal	leader	B: 144
7	big fire elemental	normal	wrecker	TW: 191	8	fire giant priest-general	large elite	leader	74
7	bronze golem	large	wrecker	B: 100	8	half-orc commander	normal	leader	A: 233
7	cloud giant thane	huge	wrecker	TW: 165	8	koruku landkiller	huge	leader	166
7	crustycap	normal	wrecker	B: 176	8	whitescale blighter	normal	leader	176
7	ethereal dybbuk	double-strength	wrecker	B: 65	8	koruku servitor	normal	mook	166
7	fallen lammasu	large	wrecker	B: 131	8	parasitic lightning beetle	normal	mook	B: 164
7	fomorian top-cannibal	large	wrecker	84	8	purple larvae	normal	mook	B: 165
7	hellstone gargoyle	normal	wrecker	139	8	shadow thief	normal	mook	B: 193
7	hydra, 7 heads	huge	wrecker	A: 236	8	trog underling	normal	Mook	A: 247
7	jackal priest	elite	wrecker	123	8	couatl	large	spoiler	B: 52
7	phase spider	large	wrecker	A: 244	8	frost giant adventurer	large	spoiler	B: 78
7	redscale fiery vanquisher	normal	wrecker	176	8	lammasu wizard	large	spoiler	B: 132
7	star-mask brute	large	wrecker	261	8	lich count	double-strength	spoiler	B: 135
7	temple lion	large	wrecker	130	8	great xorn	elite	spoiler	290
7	tyrant lizard	large	wrecker	272	8	nix	normal	spoiler	200
7	volcano dragon	large	wrecker	B: 168	8	shadow mongoose thief of fate	normal	spoiler	241
7	wandering hubris devil	huge	wrecker	149	8	taranar warrior	large	spoiler	284
8	briar elf stalker	normal	archer	27	8	void phoenix	large	spoiler	217
8	giant praying mantis	large	blocker	TW: 161	8	horned salamander	huge	troop	234
8	stone golem	large	blocker	A: 232	8	laughing demon	normal	troop	181
8	sunder wraith	normal	blocker	267	8	marble golem	large	troop	B: 101
8	black skull	normal	caster	B: 110	8	stone giant	large	troop	A: 226
8	bonded warlock	triple-strength	caster	16	8	adult remorhaz	large	wrecker	B: 180
8	glabrezou	large	caster	A: 212	8	cambion hellblade	normal	wrecker	B: 32
8	large blue dragon	large	caster	A: 221	8	chaos hydra	huge	wrecker	153
8	ogre lightning mage	large	caster	B: 152	8	death knight	double-strength	wrecker	249
8	Purple Dragon (champion)	huge	caster	186	8	fire giant	large	wrecker	A: 227
8	rakshasa	double-strength	caster	A: 245	8	fury devil	normal	wrecker	TW: 175

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
8	iconic chimera	large	wrecker	B: 42
8	mummy	double-strength	wrecker	TW: 197
8	purple worm	huge	wrecker	B: 164
8	taranar great stone	huge	wrecker	284
9	epic earth elemental	normal	blocker	TW: 192
9	epic water elemental	normal	blocker	TW: 193
9	despoiler mage	normal	caster	A: 213
9	jackal high mage	normal	caster	123
9	lammasu priest	large	caster	B: 132
9	prismatic ogre mage	large	caster	B: 153
9	rakshasa mastermind	double-strength	caster	225
9	briar tree	normal	leader	25
9	elder sparkscale naga	normal	leader	B: 145
9	fire giant warlord	large	leader	A: 227
9	epic haunting	normal	mook	108
9	giant zombie	large	mook	A: 251
9	hoard spirit	normal	mook	B: 169
9	hooked demon	normal	mook	A: 213
9	ogre minion	large	mook	B: 150
9	The Flensed	normal	mook	TW: 200
9	wraith bat	normal	mook	B: 15
9	djinn	large	spoiler	B: 93
9	elder wendigo	huge	spoiler	B: 212
9	empyrean dragon	huge	spoiler	B: 18
9	giant vrock	large	spoiler	A: 214
9	greenscale spine-back	normal	spoiler	177
9	hoardsong dragon	large	spoiler	B: 169
9	Large copper dragon	large	spoiler	TW: 186
9	soul flenser	normal	spoiler	TW: 199
9	spell golem mage hunter	large	spoiler	253
9	bone devil	large	troop	TW: 176
9	briar elf warrior	normal	troop	28
9	eidolon in guardian form	triple-strength	troop	48

Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
9	greater flux elemental	normal	troop	78
9	headless zombie	normal	troop	TW: 207
9	black pudding	huge	wrecker	A: 241
9	chimera	large	wrecker	A: 209
9	deep bullette	huge	wrecker	B: 28
9	dread specter	triple-strength	wrecker	TW: 201
9	drow cavalry	double-strength	wrecker	B: 59
9	epic air elemental	normal	wrecker	TW: 192
9	epic fire elemental	normal	wrecker	TW: 193
9	great hubris devil	huge	wrecker	149
9	huge black dragon	huge	wrecker	A: 221
9	huge bronze dragon	Huge	wrecker	TW: 186
9	skull of the beast	large	wrecker	B: 110
10	blackscale light-killer	normal	archer	177
10	storm giant	huge	archer	A: 228
10	bronze kingsguard	normal	blocker	115
10	most hungry ghost	normal	blocker	108
10	barbed devil	normal	caster	TW: 176
10	briar elf sorcerer	normal	caster	27
10	grandmother	triple-strength	caster	69
10	nalfeshnee	large	caster	A: 214
10	rakshasa saint	double-strength	caster	227
10	royal bearer	normal	caster	115
10	elder manafang naga	normal	leader	B: 145
10	jackal high priest	double-strength	leader	124
10	frenzied wolf pack	normal	mook	92
10	great fang cadre (orc)	normal	mook	A: 242
10	greater summoned ghoul	normal	mook	125
10	gruesome death shade	normal	mook	231
10	loyal gatherer	normal	mook	115
10	opportunistic orc band	normal	mook	92
10	spawn of the master (vampire)	normal	mook	A: 249

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Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page	Lvl	Monster	Size	Role	Page
10	star-mask floating brain	normal	mook	261	12	star-mask omnipotent brain	huge	caster	262
10	fomori tyrant	normal	spoiler	85	12	briar elf sovereign	double-strength	leader	29
10	gruesome reaver	double-strength	spoiler	231	12	smoke minions	normal	mook	B: 171
10	large silver dragon	large	spoiler	TW: 187	12	treant avenger	normal	mook	92
10	treant titan	large	spoiler	TW: 203	12	flamewreathed dragon	huge	spoiler	B: 170
10	vampire	normal	spoiler	A: 248	12	fomori torturer	normal	spoiler	86
10	dusk zorigami	normal	wrecker	B: 225	12	lich prince	double-strength	spoiler	B: 136
10	efreet	large	wrecker	B: 93	12	horned devil	large	troop	TW: 177
10	hellwarped brute	huge	wrecker	142	12	marilith	large	troop	A: 215
10	iron golem	large	wrecker	A: 232	12	pyroclastic salamander	huge	troop	235
10	large red dragon	large	wrecker	A: 222	12	ancient purple worm	huge	wrecker	B: 164
10	massive mutant chuul	huge	wrecker	B: 48	12	Great Ghoul's Maw	huge	wrecker	124
10	river devil	normal	wrecker	TW: 180	12	colossal hubris devil	huge	wrecker	149
11	briar elf assassin	normal	archer	28	12	redscale flamewing	normal	wrecker	178
11	great sunder wraith	normal	blocker	267	13	Final Devil, The	huge	leader	TW: 181
11	bluescale orb-bearer	normal	caster	178	13	river devil minion	normal	mook	TW: 181
11	large gold dragon	large	caster	TW: 187	13	The Gold King	triple-strength	spoiler	116
11	medusa noble	double-strength	caster	A: 239	13	huge silver dragon	huge	spoiler	TW: 188
11	rakshasa magician	normal	caster	227	13	balor	large	wrecker	A: 215
11	ice devil	normal	leader	TW: 177	13	Hagunemnon	large	wrecker	B: 69
11	fanatical druid circle	normal	mook	92	13	huge red dragon	huge	wrecker	A: 223
11	militant ranger squad	normal	mook	92	14	huge gold dragon	huge	caster	TW: 188
11	barrier beast	huge	spoiler	90	14	The Forest that Walks	huge	spoiler	91
11	elder couatl	large	spoiler	B: 53	14	pit fiend	huge	wrecker	TW: 178
11	huge copper dragon	huge	spoiler	TW: 187	14	star-brain dungeon heart	huge	wrecker	262
11	huge green dragon	huge	spoiler	A: 222	15	tarrasque	huge	wrecker	B: 201
11	epic flux elemental	normal	troop	79					
11	greathoard elder	huge	wrecker	B: 170					
11	remorhaz queen	large	wrecker	B: 180					
12	star-mask brain zealot	normal	archer	262					
12	huge blue dragon	huge	caster	A: 222					
12	Purple Dragon (epic)	huge	caster	187					
12	solar phoenix	large	caster	218					

# APPENDIX C

## BUILDING BATTLES

### MONSTER EQUIVALENTS: Поп-Мooks

This version of the table adds weakling and elite monsters while excluding mooks, which are broken off into a second table. As always, use the *large* column for double-strength monsters and the *huge* column for triple-strength monsters.

MONSTER LEVEL COMPARED TO PARTY LEVEL	ADVENTURER BATTLE	CHAMPION BATTLE	EPIC BATTLE	WEAKLING COUNTS AS...	NORMAL COUNTS AS...	ELITE COUNTS AS...	LARGE COUNTS AS...	HUGE COUNTS AS...
	2 levels lower	1 level lower	SAME LEVEL	.25	0.5	.75	1	1.5
	1 level lower	SAME LEVEL	1 level higher	.35	0.7	1	1.5	2
<b>SAME LEVEL</b>	<b>1 level higher</b>	<b>2 levels higher</b>		<b>.5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	1 level higher	2 levels higher	3 levels higher	.75	1.5	2.25	3	4
	2 levels higher	3 levels higher	4 levels higher	1	2	3	4	6
	3 levels higher	4 levels higher	5 levels higher	1.5	3	4.5	6	8
	4 levels higher	5 levels higher	6 levels higher	2	4	6	8	

### MONSTER EQUIVALENTS: Mooks

This version of the table is mooks only, with added columns for weakling, large, and even huge mooks. No, there are no elite mooks. The line has to be drawn somewhere and we're drawing it there. We're also not sure anyone needs huge or triple-strength mooks, but if you do, that's covered.

MONSTER LEVEL COMPARED TO PARTY LEVEL	ADVENTURER BATTLE	CHAMPION BATTLE	EPIC BATTLE	WEAKLING MOOK COUNTS AS...	MOOK COUNTS AS...	LARGE COUNTS AS...	HUGE COUNTS AS...
	2 levels lower	1 level lower	SAME LEVEL	.05	0.1	.2	.3
	1 level lower	SAME LEVEL	1 level higher	.075	0.15	.3	.45
<b>SAME LEVEL</b>	<b>1 level higher</b>	<b>2 levels higher</b>		<b>.1</b>	<b>.2</b>	<b>.4</b>	<b>.6</b>
	1 level higher	2 levels higher	3 levels higher	.15	.3	.6	.9
	2 levels higher	3 levels higher	4 levels higher	.2	.4	.8	1.2
	3 levels higher	4 levels higher	5 levels higher	.3	.6	1.2	1.8
	4 levels higher	5 levels higher	6 levels higher	.4	.8	1.6	2.4

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- Silvermoon Starblade, drow fighter  
(subsequently stabbed to death by the party's rogue)

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