

SHROUDED HORRORS

THE

DEATH- MOTHER



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THE DEATH-MOTHER

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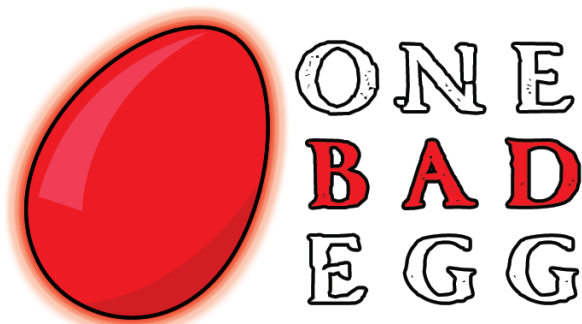
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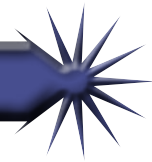
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SHROUDED HORRORS: THE DEATH-MOTHER
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THE DEATH-MOTHER



Few horrors of the Shroud can match the death-mother. Found consuming entire graveyards to give birth to its terrible spawn, a single death-mother with an ample supply of deceased meat can bring an entire town or small city to its knees . . . or worse.

A mockery of motherhood, the death-mother appears as a rotting, clawed zombie with an enormous, bloated abdomen that splits open to reveal rows upon rows of sharp, needle-like teeth. A single long tentacle emerges from that maw on occasion; striking a foe, the death-mother exerts a momentary control over the victim's mind and feeds its gestating get with leeches life-force. A death-mother produces many full-fledged zombies every hour if given sufficient corpses on hand as food.

Make no mistake about a death-mother, however—despite its resemblance to a mindless zombie, the creature possesses a shrewd and evil intellect. Though they are prized as pets by necromancers throughout the Shroud and beyond, no death-mother easily bends the knee to such powers. Those who think they have a “tame” death-mother on their hands often discover too late just how wrong they are.

Death-Mother	Level 7 Solo Controller
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 1,500
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +11; darkvision
Skull Lantern (Fear) aura 5; squares within the aura are illuminated. Enemies that start their turns in the aura are pushed 1 square. See also <i>skull bomb</i> .	
HP 320; Bloodied 160; see also <i>protect me my children</i> and <i>avenge me my children</i> .	
AC 23; Fortitude 21, Reflex 20, Will 21	
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic;	
Vulnerable 5 radiant	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 5	
Action Points 2	
⊕ Claw (standard; at-will)	
+12 vs. AC; 1d10+4 damage and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.	
⊕ Hungry Womb (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 damage and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).	
‡ Two Clawed Hands (standard; at-will)	
The death-mother makes two <i>claw</i> attacks.	

‡ **Tooth and Claw** (standard; recharge ☹)

The death-mother makes two *claw* attacks and a *hungry womb* attack.

↩ **Horrendous Shriek** (minor; at-will) ♦ **Fear**

Close Blast 3; +11 vs. Will; the target is pushed 3 squares and deafened (save ends).

✱ **Skull Bomb** (minor; encounter) ♦ **Psychic, Thunder**

Burst 2 within 10 squares; +11 vs. Will; 2d8+4 psychic and thunder damage. The target is dazed until the end of its next turn. *Miss*: Half damage. *Special*: The death-mother loses its *skull lantern* aura once it uses this ability.

‡ **Umbilical Noose** (standard; recharges on a missed umbilical noose attack) ♦ **Charm, Necrotic**

Reach 2; +11 vs. Reflex. The target is grabbed, suffers ongoing 5 necrotic damage, and is dominated (escape or save ends all). While the target is grabbed, the death-mother loses the use of its *hungry womb* attack. If the target is reduced to 0 hit points while grabbed, the death-mother's *spawn greater horror* ability is recharged.

Spawn Greater Horror (move; encounter)

The death-mother shifts 1 square. Place a new Medium size zombie or corpse-creature (see *silent corpse*, below) of equal or lower level than the death-mother in the square the death-mother just vacated.

Spawn Lesser Horror (move; encounter)

The death-mother shifts 1 square. Place a new Small size zombie or corpse-creature minion (see *corpse-child*, below) of equal or lower level than the death-mother in the square the death-mother just vacated.

Ingest Corpse (move; at-will)

The death-mother shifts up to 3 squares and must end its move in the same square as a corpse. The death-mother's *spawn lesser horror* ability recharges. The corpse is destroyed.

Protect Me My Children (immediate reaction, when the death-mother is bloodied by an attack; encounter)

Close burst 5; each undead ally within the burst area is pulled up to 3 squares. After all allies have been pulled, each ally may make an immediate basic melee attack as a free action.

Avenge Me My Children (immediate reaction, when the death-mother is reduced to 0 hit points; encounter)

Close burst 3; all destroyed or unconscious undead within the burst area of equal or lower level than the death-mother are restored to 1 hit point and stand up as a free action.

Alignment Evil

Languages Common

Skills Intimidate +10, Stealth +9

Str 14 (+5)

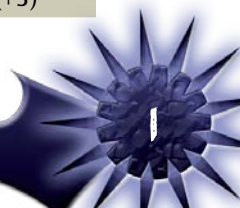
Dex 13 (+4)

Wis 16 (+6)

Con 16 (+6)

Int 19 (+7)

Cha 15 (+5)





CORPSE-CHILD

These small horrors waddle around like nightmarish toddlers, gleefully chewing on any living thing they find.

Corpse-Child		Level 5 Minion
Small natural animate (undead)		XP 50
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +3; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 20; Fortitude 16, Reflex 18, Will 16		
Immune disease, poison		
Speed 5		
⊕ Chew (standard; at-will) ⊕ Necrotic		
+11 vs. AC; 4 necrotic damage (7 necrotic damage with combat advantage)		
Cry For Mama (minor; encounter)		
Pull an allied death-mother 1 square.		
Alignment Evil	Languages –	
Skills Stealth +9		
Str 10 (+2)	Dex 15 (+4)	Wis 12 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 8 (+1)	Cha 8 (+1)

CORPSE-CHILD TACTICS

Corpse-children scatter around the battlefield, making it difficult to group them up for area attacks. Their positioning also lets them *cry for mama*, giving their death-mother some additional battlefield mobility (though they'll never use the ability when the death-mother has a dominated victim—they know better.)

DEATH-MOTHER TACTICS

A death-mother keeps dangerous melee enemies at bay with its *skull lantern* and *horrendous shriek*—the latter setting up enemies to be unaware of lurking allies before they strike. Those that get too close are treated to *tooth and claw* whenever possible.

Preferring to lair around several piles of bodies, a death-mother uses *ingest corpse* to move around the battlefield, recharging its *spawn lesser horror* ability whenever possible. It uses *spawn greater horror* once it has a sense of what sort of enemies it faces, following up with its *umbilical noose* at the first opportunity.

As things get desperate, the death-mother lobs its lantern as a *skull bomb* and cries out, *protect me my children*.

SILENT CORPSE

Silent corpses are “born” without mouths—the one tell-tale sign that they are anything other than a dead body. Preferring to lie on the battlefield like fallen soldiers, they leap to their feet when springing an ambush.

SILENT CORPSE TACTICS

Silent corpses hide among piles of dead bodies—the perfect camouflage for their ambush, thanks to *lie perfectly still*. Just as mobile in the dirt as on their feet, they deal with foes using *drag them down* and *smother* in succession.

Silent Corpse		Level 6 Lurker
Medium natural animate (undead)		XP 250
Initiative +9	Senses Perception +7; darkvision	
HP 68; Bloodied 34		
AC 20; Fortitude 19, Reflex 17, Will 19		
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic;		
Vulnerable 5 radiant		
Speed 4		
⊕ Bludgeon (standard; at-will)		
+11 vs. AC; 1d6+6 damage.		
⊕ Drag Them Down (standard, when prone; at-will)		
Standing target only; +9 vs. AC (includes -2 for prone); 2d6+6 damage. The target is knocked prone.		
↓ Smother (standard; recharge ☞☞☞)		
Prone target only; +9 vs. Fortitude; 4d6+6 damage.		
The Dead Arise (minor; at-will)		
The silent corpse stands up.		
At Home In The Dirt		
The silent corpse does not grant combat advantage for being prone, and its speed is not reduced when crawling.		
Lie Perfectly Still		
The silent corpse gains +5 to Stealth checks while prone.		
Alignment Evil	Languages –	
Skills Stealth +10		
Str 19 (+7)	Dex 14 (+5)	Wis 18 (+7)
Con 14 (+5)	Int 8 (+2)	Cha 8 (+2)

BONE-MOTHER

Stripped of the meat, a death-mother's skeleton can be reanimated to create a lesser creature called the bone-mother. The death-mother's tentacle is replaced with a pointed, long, spindly bone-spur anchored to its sternum. While in general a weaker threat, a bone-mother can still hold its own (especially given a plentiful supply of skulls), and is more mobile than a death-mother.

Bone-Mother		Level 2 Solo Skirmisher
Medium natural animate (undead)		XP 625
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +3; darkvision	
Glowing Head (Fear) aura 5; squares within the aura are illuminated. Enemies that start their turns in the aura are pushed 1 square. See also <i>skull bomb</i> .		
HP 160; Bloodied 80; see also <i>second verse</i> and <i>skull bomb</i> .		
AC 18; Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 14		
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic;		
Vulnerable 5 radiant		

Saving Throws +5		
Speed 6		
Action Points 2		
⊕ Claw (standard; at-will)		
+7 vs. AC; 1d10+3 damage.		
↓ Hungry Ribcage (standard; at-will)		
+5 vs. Reflex; 1d8+3 damage and ongoing 5 damage.		
↓ Stab and Drag (standard; at-will)		
Reach 2; +5 vs. Reflex; the target is grabbed and takes ongoing 5 damage (escape ends both). Both the bone-mother and the target slide 4 squares in the same direction. If the target is reduced to 0 hit points while grabbed, the bone-mother's <i>assemble bloody-bones</i> power recharges.		
↓ Scuttling Strike (standard; recharge ☞☞☞)		
The bone-mother shifts up to 6 squares, and may make two claw attacks at any point during its move.		
↔ Cloud of Tainted Blood (minor; at-will) ♦ Acid		
Close blast 2; +5 vs. Reflex; 3 acid damage. Squares within the blast area are temporarily treated as difficult terrain and provide partial cover until the start of the bone-mother's next turn.		
Assemble Bloody-Bones (move; encounter)		
The bone-mother shifts 2 squares. Place a new bloody-bones creature (see <i>bloody-bones</i> , below) in the square where the bone-mother began its move.		
Assemble Bone-Child (move; encounter)		
The bone-mother shifts 2 squares. Place a new bone-child creature (see <i>bloody-bones</i> , below) in the square where the bone-mother began its move.		
Collect Bones (move; at-will)		
The bone-mother shifts up to 3 squares and must end its move in the same square as a bone-pile. The bone-mother's <i>assemble bone-child</i> ability recharges. How many times a single bone-pile can support this ability is dependent upon the number of reasonably intact skulls present.		
↔ Bone-Song (move; encounter)		
Clacking bones spring to life and stab at those nearby. Only enemies standing adjacent to a bone pile within the burst area; Close burst 10; +5 vs. Reflex; 1d10 damage.		
Second Verse (immediate reaction when the bone-mother is bloodied for the first time)		
The bone-mother's <i>bone-song</i> ability recharges.		
↔ Skull Bomb (immediate reaction when the bone-mother is reduced to 0 hit points; encounter) ♦ Psychic, Thunder		
Close burst 2; +5 vs. Will; 2d6+2 psychic and thunder damage. The target is slowed (save ends). Miss: Half damage.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common	
Skills Intimidate +8, Stealth +7		
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 13 (+2)	Wis 14 (+3)
Con 16 (+4)	Int 17 (+5)	Cha 14 (+3)

BONE-MOTHER TACTICS

A bone-mother seeds its lair with piles of skulls for use with its *collect bones* and *bone-song* abilities. It uses *scuttling strike* to brutalize its enemies while maintaining distance, and *cloud of tainted blood* to make pursuit difficult. It sings the *bone-song* when enemies get near its precious bone-piles. The bone-mother uses *assemble bloody-bones* and *assemble bone-child* to bolster its forces. When possible, it uses *collect bones* to bring in another, and uses *stab and drag* against wounded opponents to isolate them and construct more bloody-bones.

BLOODY-BONES

Constructed out of dry bones soaked in fresh blood, a bloody-bones looks like an undulating sinewy snake of animated carnage. They tend to be short-lived—but the same can be said of their prey.

Bloody-Bones		Level 2 Brute
Medium natural animate (undead)		XP 125
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +3; darkvision	
HP 47; Bloodied 23		
AC 15; Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 13		
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic;		
Vulnerable 5 radiant		
Speed 7		
⊕ Stabbing Bones (standard; at-will)		
+5 vs. AC; 2d6+3 damage.		
↓ Encircle (standard; at-will)		
Only against a target in the same square as the bloody-bones; +3 vs. Reflex; 2d6+3 damage and the target is grabbed (escape ends).		
↓ Constrict (move; at-will)		
Only against a target the bloody-bones has grabbed; +3 vs. Fortitude. The target falls prone (save ends). If the target is already prone, the target is dazed (save ends).		
Flowing Form		
A bloody-bones may occupy the same square as another creature.		
Sudden Ferocity		
The bloody-bones deals an extra +1d6 damage when ending a charge in the same square as its target.		
Alignment Evil	Languages –	
Str 18 (+5)	Dex 16 (+4)	Wis 15 (+3)
Con 17 (+4)	Int 8 (+0)	Cha 8 (+0)

BLOODY-BONES TACTICS

A bloody-bones charges a target and enters its square using *flowing form* to take advantage of *sudden ferocity*. At first opportunity, it uses *encircle* on its victim, immobilizes him, and then uses *constrict* while piercing its foe with *stabbing bones* and sustaining the grab.

BONE-CHILD

Typically composed of a large adult skull perched upon just enough bones to make up a body, the bone-child looks almost comical, like a macabre skeletal doll . . . until it strikes.

Bone-Child		Level 1 Minion
Small natural animate (undead)		XP 25
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +1; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 17; Fortitude 12, Reflex 15, Will 13		
Immune disease, poison		
Speed 5		
⊕ The Biting (standard; at-will)		
+7 vs. AC; 3 damage		
Death Rattle (immediate reaction when reduced to 0 hit points; encounter)		
Each adjacent ally gains a +1 power bonus to AC, Reflex, and Perception checks until the end of its next turn.		
Alignment Evil	Languages –	
Str 12 (+1)	Dex 18 (+4)	Wis 12 (+1)
Con 10 (+0)	Int 3 (-4)	Cha 8 (-1)

BONE-CHILD TACTICS

Bone-children cluster and stick close to stronger allies, treating enemies to *the biting* if they stray too close. When killed, a bone-child's *death rattle* warns those nearby to stay wary and alert.



LORE

A DC 15 Religion check is sufficient to learn the basic facts of any one of the lesser creatures listed above, with the exception of the silent corpse, which is DC 20.

For the mothers, a character knows the following information with a successful Religion check.

DC 15: Death-mothers are products of the Shroud, twisted mockeries of motherhood that give birth to zombies of all sorts. They are most often found near graveyards. They should be destroyed whenever discovered. If you leave them alone, nearby areas are soon overrun with undead.

The bones of a death-mother can be reanimated to create a lesser, but still fantastically dangerous, creature known as a bone-mother.

DC 20: Death-mothers also have a long tentacle they can attach to a victim's spine and control its actions while slowly draining it of life.

A character knows the following information with a successful Streetwise check.

DC 20: Confirmed locations of death-mothers fetch a pretty price on the necromantic black market, as do the bones of death-mothers that have been killed.

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 20: Each death-mother carries the skull of an arcane practitioner as a strange sort of "lantern". Under duress, they throw the lantern at a group of enemies, causing an explosion.

Shady practitioners and ritualists have long tried to capture one of these lanterns intact, in the interest of studying its construction and duplicating it. So far, no one has managed it.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Level 2 Encounter "Bad Omen" (675 XP)

- ◆ 2 bloody-bones (level 2 brute)
- ◆ 5 bone-children (level 1 minion)
- ◆ 2 skeletons (level 3 soldier)

See the **D&D 4E MONSTER MANUAL** for statistics of the skeleton.

Level 4 Encounter "Into the Bone-Lair" (875 XP)

- ◆ 1 bone-mother (level 2 solo skirmisher)
- ◆ 4 bone-children (level 1 minion)

Note: With its abilities, the bone-mother adds a bloody-bones (level 2 brute) and another bone-child (level 1 minion) in short order, bringing this encounter up to the listed XP total. More follow if the players are particularly unlucky.

Level 7 Encounter "Signs of a Nest" (1,600 XP)

- ◆ 2 silent corpses (level 6 lurker)
- ◆ 5 corpse-children (level 5 minion)
- ◆ 2 chillborn zombies (level 6 soldier)
- ◆ 2 corruption corpses (level 4 artillery)

See the **D&D 4e Monster Manual** for the statistics for the chillborn zombie and the corruption corpse.

Level 10 Encounter "Nest of Death" (2,500 XP)

- ◆ 1 death-mother (level 7 solo controller)
- ◆ 1 silent corpse (level 6 lurker)
- ◆ 4 corpse-children (level 5 minion)
- ◆ 1 chillborn zombie (level 6 soldier)

Note: With its abilities, the death-mother adds a silent corpse (level 6 lurker) and another corpse-child (level 5 minion) in short order, bringing this encounter up to the listed XP total. More follow if the players are particularly unlucky.



ADVENTURE IDEAS

BAD FAITH

An ambitious necromancer has been offering large sums of money for information leading to the location of a death-mother. The heroes are contacted by a young snitch who is convinced that his companion found such a creature and informed the necromancer, but hasn't been seen since.

The snitch knows where the death-mother can be found, and offers his services in the future if the heroes will locate his lost companion and retrieve the money they are owed.

CSI: CRIME SCENE INVASION

A morgue near the edge of the city has been overflowing with new residents as plague and sickness run rampant. Such a large supply of dead bodies has attracted a death-mother to the morgue, and it has sealed itself in with a number of living attendants who are now trapped.

The heroes are tasked with the job of crossing into plague-infested streets, breaking into a zombie-infested morgue, and freeing the terrified attendants. If they destroy the death-mother in the process, the rewards will be great . . .

BONE OF CONTENTION

A small company of adventurers claims to have eliminated a death-mother recently after locating its lair in a rural graveyard. The local farming folk heaped praise upon the adventurers, but now it's been a week and the grisly attacks upon livestock and farmhands have not decreased.

Investigation reveals that the death-mother has returned as a bone-mother, and is raising an army of skeletons from the graves of generations of villagers. The first company is long gone, so do the player characters have what it takes to finish the job and stop things from getting even worse?

FOG OF WAR

Rival death-mothers are competing over the casualties of a protracted civil war between border towns. Warlords on both sides have agreed to call a truce after they see their soldiers brought back from the dead as hideous re-enactors of their own bloody conflict.

Although eliminating the threat of not one but two death-mothers may seem a challenging task, perhaps the most difficult quest for the heroes will be to settle the frontier's unrest before more creatures emerge from the Shroud to exploit it.

