

BENJAMIN HUFFMAN PRESENTS
INFAMOUS
ADVERSARIES



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INTRODUCTION

INFAMOUS ADVERSARIES IS A COLLECTION OF unique monsters and villains designed to be easily used as the basis of a one-shot game or a side quest in your ongoing campaign. Within this tome are 40 adversaries, each a unique take on an existing monster from *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*, with all the story hooks and statistics necessary to insert them in your game. There are adversaries for all levels of play within this book, from local nuisances to world-ending threats. Start a new campaign by pitting your party against Cheddar, an awakened rat running a thieves guild, or end it with an epic showdown against Anhktepót, a powerful mummy seeking godhood and the extinction of light.

This book is the product of a globe-spanning collaboration between sixteen writers, our editor, and a layout expert. The team worked hard to bring you innovative takes on familiar monsters and fun rewards to entice your players. I believe we succeeded. On behalf of all the creators of *Infamous Adversaries*, I hope this book inspires thrilling adventures for your campaign and fun times at your table.

—Benjamin Huffman

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The adversaries described in this book come with all the information you need to drop them into your campaign with little additional preparation. Each entry begins with an overview of the adversary or the situation. Further sections outline suggested ways of introducing the adversary to your campaign, ideas on how to roleplay the creature, and rewards players might reap for defeating it. Some entries include additional information beyond these sections, such as information about the adversary's lair or how to adapt the adversary to alternative settings.

The Hook section gives a plot hook you can use to introduce the adversary into your campaign. Hooks are written to prompt the characters into action and get them involved in the ongoing efforts of the adversary. **The Next Moves** section provides an example of the fallout possible if the party doesn't intercede after the hook is presented. This gives you, the Dungeon Master, another chance to engage hesitant or distracted characters in the plot. It's also a great way to make the campaign feel alive as situations continue to unfold with or without the party's intervention.

The **Tactics** and **Traits** sections provide you with all the information you'll need to roleplay the adversary. In the former, you get details about how the adversary prefers to fend off potential threats. In the latter, the adversary's ideal, bond, and flaws are given, if appropriate. In other cases, the creature's instincts and behavior are further explained.

The next section includes the **stat block** for the adversary. If you are unfamiliar with how to read a stat block, you can find that information in the introduction of the *Monster Manual*.

Finally, the **Rewards** section describes magic items, treasure, and other compensation the party can receive for defeating the adversary. Throughout the book you'll find this section includes many original magic items, potions, and spells.

ABIGARRADA

A couatl of many malicious colors

The summit of an isolated mountain, away from eyes both covetous and critical, is the perfect spot for one of humankind's most popular pastimes: morally-questionable research. A burgeoning cabal of journeyman wizards, known only as the **Black Gale**, has established themselves in just such a spot, and their inaugural experiment has already gone terribly, horribly wrong.

Capturing a **couatl**—a celestial serpent of intelligence, grace, and psionic might—was their first mistake. They could be forgiven for that blunder, however; when the Black Gale snatched up the couatl and ushered it to their mountain lair, it was disguised as **Kit Nahua**, a peasant cobbler who'd made a name repairing the local workers' shoes and other leathers.

Binding that "cobbler" to an arcane obelisk and channeling a cornucopia of raw planar energies through them... well, *that* was their second, final mistake. The Black Gale watched, amazed and terrified, as Nahua transformed into a shrieking, writhing couatl, radiating an array of blinding colors from its scales. Once they lowered their hands from their throbbing eyes, the wizards found their laboratory in shambles—polychromatic patterns burned into the walls and a couatl-sized fissure in the craggy ceiling.

THE HOOK

The local villagers, living relatively quiet lives at the mountain's base, have noted Nahua's absence of late, worrying and kvetching over the state of their soles. In addition, a few hunters and traveling merchants have turned up at the village apothecary within the last two weeks, bearing vicious injuries and bizarre tales of a so-called "killer rainbow." Eavesdropping children have taken to calling this being **Abigarrada**, and its legend is now spreading on the backs of their towering tales. The village's de-facto leader, **Ollin the Elder**, now seeks intrepid heroes to investigate one or both of these peculiar happenings.

ABIGARRADA'S NEXT MOVES

Despite the couatl's natural proclivity towards wisdom and goodness, the Black Gale's experiment has left Abigarrada's mind dangerously fractured. The host of hallucinations, murderous impulses, and occasional fugue states continues to take its toll, driving Abigarrada to lash out in seemingly irrational ways: dive-bombing random passersby, destroying farms and workshops, and streaking through the skies with agonizing howls.

But there is a method in its madness: the twistings and turnings of Abigarrada's fevered mind have convinced it that the beings around the mountain are **maurezhi**, marauding demons that feast upon mortal souls and then take the form of their prey. Its duty as a celestial

being compels it to destroy these Abyssal invaders, ironically damning the poor people under its protection. Abigarrada will continue to wage war against these demons until every trace of their taint is eliminated.

ABIGARRADA'S TACTICS

Abigarrada's mental instability leads to an impulsive battle strategy more concerned with speed and intensity than any measured tactical advantage. If it identifies any lone, vulnerable passerby as **maurezhi**, it immediately swoops down from the sky and attempts to constrict the creature. Afterwards, it takes to the air again, viciously biting and poisoning its captured prey before dropping them from a terminal height. Fortunately for its prospective victims, the Black Gale's experiment has left Abigarrada physically weaker than its average couatl brethren, so its attempts at capture aren't always successful. If confronted by a "horde of demons," Abigarrada flies over the creatures (well out of their reach) and uses its innate magical powers to devastate the group before picking off the survivors in a similar fashion.

Casual observers with little knowledge of the couatl might mistake Abigarrada for a regular celestial in distress, leading them to try to intervene in the fight and protect Abigarrada. Characters should take special care not to let a situation like this escalate into full-on mob violence; no self-respecting adventurer wants to be known as the butcher of a farmers' brigade, especially if they value their livelihood.

ABIGARRADA'S TRAITS

Ideal. "Retribution: I stand as ruthless judge, jury and executioner to these **maurezhi**."

Bond. "I must protect the simple people of the mountain's base!"

Flaw. "This demonic threat compels me to fight first and ponder never."

REWARDS

If Abigarrada is slain, the following might be found on or near its ruined form.

ABI'S BRILLIANT SCALES

In the course of a fracas, some of Abigarrada's scales will almost certainly be sheared from its body and strewn across the battlefield. Roll 1d8 to determine how many scales the characters can find if they search the immediate area. These scales, iridescent and subtly vibrating, are merely rainbow curios until they are ground up into powder and added to a potion-vial's amount of freshwater, becoming a potable alchemical concoction of a fixed color (determined at creation):

ABIGARRADA

Medium celestial, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 175 (27d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	23 (+6)	16 (+3)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +7, Cha +10

Damage Resistances radiant

Damage Immunities psychic; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Magic Weapons. Abigarrada's weapon attacks are magical.

Shielded Mind. Abigarrada is immune to scrying and to any effect that would sense its emotions, read its thoughts or detect its location.

Innate Spellcasting. Abigarrada's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16).

Motley Murder. Periodically the unchecked planar energies coursing through Abigarrada's body shift in dominance, leading to one of eight possible states, each with their own set of abilities and modifications. At the beginning of battle, and then every three rounds (18 seconds), roll 1d8 to determine Abigarrada's state:

1 / Violet / The Abyss. Abigarrada can cast the following spells once each: *darkness*, *ray of sickness*, *summon lesser demons*.

Attacks made against Abigarrada with **bloodied weapons or projectiles** temporarily bypass its non-magical damage immunity.

2 / Blue / Plane of Water. Abigarrada can cast the following spells once each: *create or destroy water*, *mirror image*, *tidal wave*.

Attacks made against Abigarrada with **heated weapons or projectiles** temporarily bypass its non-magical damage immunity.

3 / Cyan / Plane of Ice. Abigarrada can cast the following spells once each: *ice knife*, *sleet storm*, *Snilloc's snowball swarm*.

Attacks made against Abigarrada with **flaming weapons or projectiles** temporarily bypass its non-magical damage immunity.

4 / Green / The Beastlands. Abigarrada can cast the following spells once each: *conjure animals*, *hunter's mark*, *Maximilian's earthen grasp*.

Attacks made against Abigarrada with **wooden weapons or projectiles** temporarily bypass its non-magical damage immunity.

5 / Yellow / Celestia. Abigarrada can cast the following spells once each: *blinding smite*, *cure wounds*, *lesser restoration*.

Attacks made against Abigarrada with **cursed weapons or projectiles** temporarily bypass its non-magical damage immunity.

6 / Orange / Hades. Abigarrada can cast the following spells once each: *inflict wounds*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *vampiric touch*.

Attacks made against Abigarrada with **colorful weapons or projectiles** temporarily bypass its non-magical damage immunity.

7 / Red / The Nine Hells. Abigarrada can cast the following spells once each: *fireball*, *hellish rebuke*, *scorching ray*.

Attacks made against Abigarrada with **blessed weapons or projectiles** temporarily bypass its non-magical damage immunity.

8 / White / Fugue State. In this state, Abigarrada is **stunned**, allowing the characters to prey upon it, reason with it, try to heal its fractured mind, heal themselves, retreat...

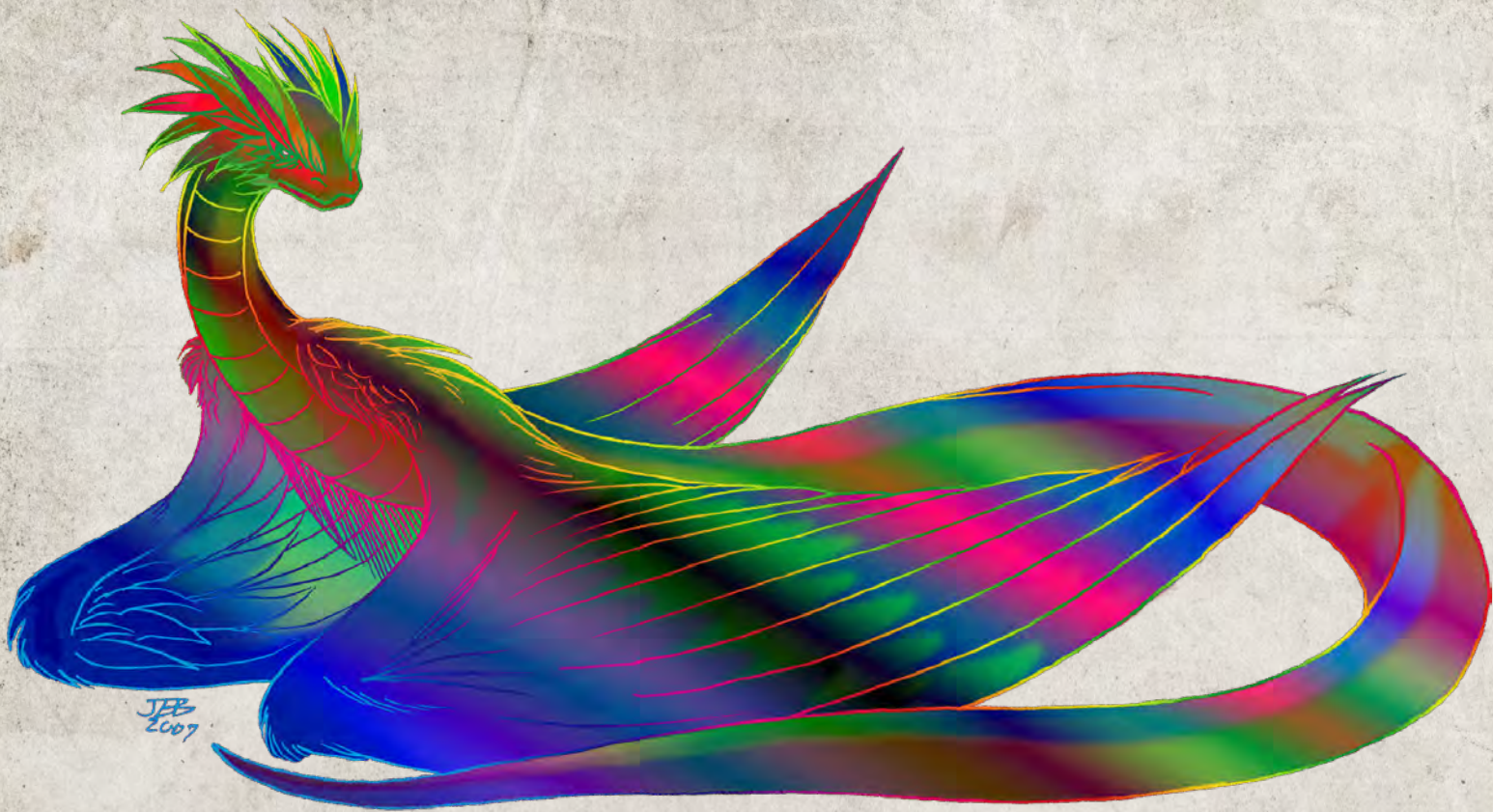
Actions

Multiattack. Abigarrada makes two bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 24 hours. Until this poison ends, the target is unconscious. Another creature can use an action to shake the target awake.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* 15 (4d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and Abigarrada can't constrict another target.

Change Shape. Abigarrada magically polymorphs into a humanoid or beast that has a challenge rating equal to or less than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (Abigarrada's choice). In a new form, Abigarrada retains its game statistics and ability to speak, but its AC, movement modes, Strength, Dexterity, and other actions are replaced by those of the new form, and it gains any statistics and capabilities (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the new form has but that it lacks. If the new form has a bite attack, Abigarrada can use its bite in that form.



ABI'S BRILLIANT SCALES

d8	Color	Effect
1	Violet	For 1 hour, the user glows faintly with a red-orange light, and their fingernails drip a jet-black ichorous fluid (up to 1 quart over the course of the hour). Anyone brave and/ or foolish enough to drink the fluid will gain two things: 1) immunity to acid damage for 24 hours and 2) the recurring nightmare of a churning, roiling ocean of pure acid.
2	Blue	For 1 hour, the user feels the distinct sensation of floating while a saltwater steam seeps out from the orifices on their head; they gain the ability to sense any concentrated quantity of water within 300 feet (including that which makes up the majority of the humanoid body).
3	Cyan	For 1 hour, every reflexive breath from the user's mouth quickly crystallizes once exhaled, falling to the ground as 1d4 razor-thin but remarkably sturdy needles of ice. These needles can be used as either a one-hit simple melee or ranged weapon, dealing 1d6 cold damage.
4	Green	For 1 hour, the user's body reeks of an unidentifiable odor; those able to smell it immediately feel a slight nausea and a burning sensation inside their nostrils. This odor, however, has a 33% chance every 30 minutes to attract with speed whatever animal or creature the user has been legally contracted to hunt and kill.
5	Yellow	For 1 hour, the user's movements are accompanied by the sound of a distant religious choir; spells and abilities sensing good/evil register the user as a celestial of lawful good alignment, and anyone who interacts with them comes away with an overwhelmingly positive and affirming memory of the experience.
6	Orange	For 1 hour, the user's body is drained of all color/pigment, turning a lifeless gray. Fortunately, this monochrome look gives the user the ability to effectively convince one sentient creature that (for the time being) the user is merely a boring, nondescript commoner, posing little to no threat.
7	Red	For 1 hour, the user's footprints are filled with brimstone, and their shadow writhes about in a vaguely sinister dance; they gain the ability to make the next promise spoken directly to them a legally-binding contract, the violation of which is punishable by death.
8	White	The user is immediately struck with a sense of faint and pleasant dizziness, as if they had just sprinted excitedly around a maypole with some local children. They are instantly cured of any conditions, curses, et cetera, affecting their mind or mental abilities, and they gain fluency in an exotic language of their choice for 1 hour.

AETHLIN ADAMAR

Forlorn and forgotten

Neither Lolth nor the Seldarine look kindly on elves who consort with the drow. Aethlin Adamar thought he was untouchable—that he, a sun elf bladesinger, could get away with stealing the heart of a drow noblewoman. How wrong he was! By the power of Lolth he was transformed into a pale, misshapen drider and banished to a lonely cavern deep beneath the surface. He has spent centuries alone, dreaming of revenge. Unfortunately, he's rather lost track of who deserves to be the object of his vengeance.

IN OTHER WORLDS

Although Aethlin's origins are rooted in Forgotten Realms lore, transplanting him to a different setting is simple. Replace the Seldarine with the elven gods of your pantheon—or even replace the enmity between surface elves and drow with two feuding families.

THE HOOK

Aethlin has managed to make his way through the Underdark to caves beneath the settlement of Elventree, in the west branch of the Moonsea. After so long alone, he is overcome with the desire to inflict some of his pain on others. He has preyed on the city for days, stealthily abducting its members and securing them in his lair to kill slowly and painfully. Aethlin prefers to strike at the upper class: nobles, or priests of the Seldarine, but he is not above hunting any elf or half-elf he can find.

The rulers of the city are aware that a killer is amongst them, so far preying only on the elves and half-elves who make up around one third of the town's population. They also know the culprit is powerful indeed, as they have already slain capable swordsmen and mages. The problem is beyond the ability of the town guard to deal with, so its rulers are looking to contract with a well-respected adventuring party (the player characters) to catch the killer. In return, the adventurers can form a strong alliance with Elventree and receive enchanted items or spellcasting services.

While killing Aethlin is the easiest way to end the threat he presents, the curse could be broken with a strong enough appeal from someone the gods favor, such as a party of adventurers with the gratitude of an entire elven city. If the curse were broken, Aethlin would still be a skilled bladesinger. He would make a powerful ally and certainly be motivated to make up for the things he has done during his time as a monster.

AETHLIN ADAMAR'S NEXT MOVES

If Aethlin is not stopped, he continues to wreak havoc on this elven city—and possibly others. Lolth is watching her disturbed creation; the more he achieves, the more it amuses her to grant him even more power... such as the ability to create more driders, allowing him to cause even more mayhem.

AETHLIN ADAMAR'S TACTICS

Aethlin Adamar prefers to control the battleground. He strikes when opportunity presents itself, and flees back into the darkness if he finds he has overextended himself. In his lair, however, he will fight to the death. Of course, if adventurers fight him there, they must also contend with the 2d4 **phase spiders** who share the caves with him and fight as his allies.

Aethlin is powerful, but fully aware that he cannot defeat an entire adventuring party in a fair fight. He uses his magic for mobility, moving from point to point, attempting to end his turn where opponents cannot reach him.

He has a particular distaste for elves—surface or drow—as they evoke memories of his former life. They are his first targets, but he fights to subdue them, rather than kill, so that he can enjoy torturing them at his leisure afterward.

AETHLIN ADAMAR'S TRAITS

Ideal. "Existence is miserable; make as many others suffer as possible."

Bond. "I still care for my drow lover, Syreene, even centuries after her death."

Flaw. "I am consumed by my quest for revenge upon anything and everything, especially elves."

REWARDS

The party finds the following treasure upon defeating Aethlin Adamar.

HEARTSEEKER. AETHLIN'S BLADE

Weapon (rapier), rare (requires attunement)

Aethlin's sword is a slender blade with a silver hilt set with a round opal. A line of elvish script spirals around the hilt. It reads:

Pierce every heart as irrevocably as you pierced mine.

Heartseeker is a *sword of wounding*. Once per turn, when the wielder hits a creature with an attack using this magic weapon, it can wound the target. At the start of each of the wounded creature's turns, it takes 1d4 necrotic damage for each time the sword has wounded it, and it can then make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, ending the effect of all such wounds on itself on a success. Elves and half elves have disadvantage on this saving throw.

AETHLIN ADAMAR

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 110 (13d10 + 39)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	6 (-3)

Skills Arcana +7, History +7, Perception +6, Stealth +9

Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Elvish, Undercommon

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Aethlin has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Aethlin fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Spider Climb. Aethlin can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Walker. Aethlin ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Spellcasting. Aethlin's spellcasting ability is Intelligence, with a spell attack modifier of +7 and a save DC of 15. He can cast the following spells, using the opal in his sword hilt as an arcane focus:

Cantrips: *blade ward*, *green flame blade*, *mage hand*, *sword burst*

1st level (4/day): *absorb elements*, *shield*

2nd level (3/day): *darkness*, *hold person*, *mirror image*, *silence*, *web*

3rd level (3/day): *counterspell*, *haste*, *hypnotic pattern*

4th level (3/day): *banishment*, *dimension door*

5th level (1/day): *hold monster*, *steel wind strike*

Actions

Multiattack. Aethlin makes three attacks with his longsword. He can replace one of those attacks with a bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) poison damage.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage plus 13 (3d8) poison damage. Aethlin's rapier is a *sword of wounding* (see chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), coated in his own venom.

Bonus Actions

Bladesong (2/day). Aethlin can use a bonus action to start the Bladesong, which lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if he is incapacitated, if he dons medium or heavy armor or a shield, or if he uses two hands to make an attack with a weapon. He can dismiss the Bladesong at any time he chooses (no action required). The Bladesong confers the following benefits:

- AC +3
- Walking and climbing speed increases by 10 feet
- Advantage on Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks
- +3 to any Constitution saving throw to maintain Concentration on a spell.

Reactions

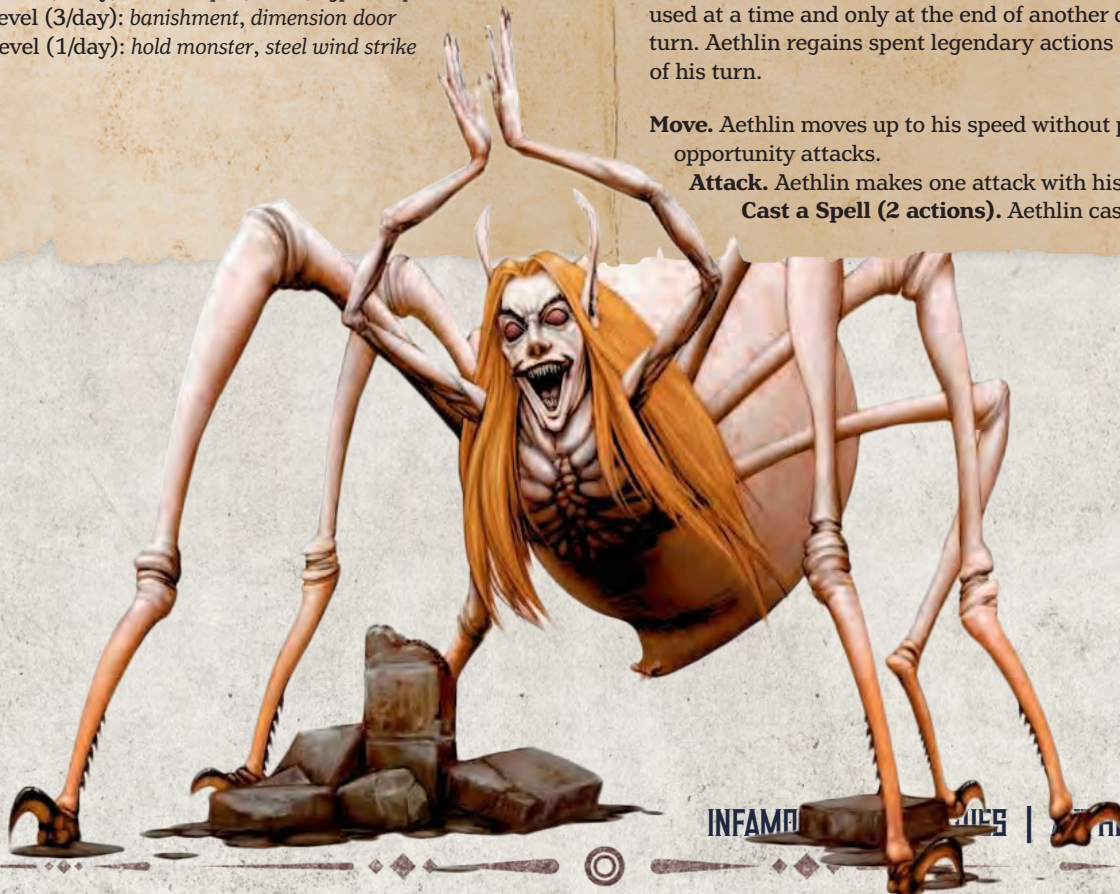
Note that some of Aethlin's spells (e.g. *shield*, *absorb elements*) can be cast as Reactions.

Legendary Actions

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

Move. Aethlin moves up to his speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Attack. Aethlin makes one attack with his longsword.
Cast a Spell (2 actions). Aethlin casts one spell.



Alternatively, the wounded creature, or a creature within 5 feet of it, can use an action to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, ending the effect of such wounds on a success.

AETHLIN'S SPELLBOOK

Found if the party fight him in his lair, the spellbook contains all the spells listed in Aethlin's stat block.

DRIDER WEBS

Drider webs, as any drow knows, have a number of uses beyond trapping prey.

When used as a bandage or poultice by someone proficient in the Medicine skill and/or the use of a healer's kit, drider webs restore 2d4 hit points.

Alternatively, they can be woven into a sticky net that, on a successful attack roll, leaves the victim restrained. A creature can use its action while restrained to make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success, it breaks free of the webs. Dealing 25 slashing damage to the net (AC 15) also frees the creature without harming it, ending the effect and destroying the net.

Enough webs for up to 15 medicinal uses, 5 nets, or any combination of the above can be harvested from Aethlin's lair.



ALCHEMICAL CUBE

“Her first strike ruptured a green sack within the thing, filling it with color. Her second strike aimed at her own leg as it consumed her.”

The mixture of chemicals that spawned this sinister cube are unknown, but it first appeared beneath a city home to an industry of alchemical distilleries and arcane laboratories. A terrible accident saw raw materials and fermented potions flood the city’s sewers. Several weeks after the incident, the city’s vermin, pet, and homeless populations plummeted.

As no one of consequence to those in power had disappeared, the missing weren’t investigated. The city didn’t start an inquiry until several teams of sewer jacks failed to return from their patrols.

Once the strange nature of this creature became known, the wizard elite forbade anyone from destroying it until they could obtain samples. The sewers were sealed, and the thing continued to feed and grow unopposed.

The gelatinous cube’s contact with alchemical pollution has fundamentally changed it. Most odd are the colored sacs trapped within, bobbing and drifting as it lumbers. The acidic nature of the cube has “cooked” a sheath around the magical solutions, purging impurities and leaving much more potent distillates. The film around the sacs makes the liquid within almost like a cyst, ready to burst.

IN OTHER WORLDS

The Alchemical Cube is presented here without consideration for specific settings. DMs who wish to place the adversary in official settings might consider dropping the monster into the following locations:

Ravnica. In the Izzet Guild territory of Kilnspire or Steam Maze in the Tenth District, or The Cauldron. Alternatively, the Alchemical Cube could be an experiment of the Simic Guild and located in or near their district or territory.

Forgotten Realms. The Alchemical Cube feeds in any of the wards that aren’t heavily patrolled, such as the Dock Ward or Southern Ward. The Alchemical Cube itself could have been made in an industry accident in the Trade Ward.

Eberron. Any of the magical industrial cities are suitable locations.

THE HOOK

The frightening strength and speed, along with its variegated sacs, have made this gelatinous cube something of an urban legend. Those who survived encounters with this thing noted how, when injured, the tinted abscesses within ruptured, spilling color throughout the cube much like a drop of dye in a glass of water. After which, the cube exhibited new and terrifying capabilities.

Alchemists and wizards are a curious bunch, and how this creature’s anatomy has interacted with those

magical liquids has drawn their interest. If something in this creature’s unusual nature allows for a quicker or more effective refinement of potions and oils, they want to know. This could potentially present a significant advanced in alchemical science, and arcanists would pay well for samples of both the creature and the substances within.

THE ALCHEMICAL CUBE’S NEXT MOVES

The Alchemical Cube is a slime concerned only with feeding. It doesn’t feel pain or fear, guilt or anger. It knows only hunger. It simply wobbles towards food. It does prefer dark conditions, however, and stays in areas where there is plentiful organic material, such as a refuse dump. It doesn’t necessarily need flesh to eat. Plant and fungal matter also suffice.

THE ALCHEMICAL CUBE’S TACTICS

As a 1 Intelligence predator that only feels hunger, the tactics of this creature are straightforward. It is immune to exhaustion, so it hunts through pursuit predation or ambush. It can sense illumination around it and sets up ambushes in low-light areas.

HUNTING THE ALCHEMICAL CUBE

Because of the sheer amount of potion material floating and bubbling through the cube’s body, *detect magic* can locate the creature by pinging off the magical solutions within it. This method highlights the cube for the caster and negates its translucent quality, removing its ability to surprise. Player characters might benefit from the following tactics when battling against this adversary:

- As with other gelatinous cubes, ranged attacks can be effective at dealing damage while staying out of harm as the creature is relatively slow.
- As with most oozes, acid is the most serious threat. So, any spell, item, or potion that can reduce acid damage proves a great boon.
- Because the nature of its strange abilities isn’t fully known, hit and run tactics may ascertain important strengths and vulnerabilities of the creature.

THE ALCHEMICAL CUBE’S TRAITS

The Alchemical Cube doesn’t have a personality, ideals, or bonds. It is a force of hunger that prowls lightless, wet places and whose sole motivation is finding digestible items and creatures.

ALCHEMICAL CUBE

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 6

Hit Points 147 (14d10 + 70)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	3 (-3)	20 (+5)	1 (-5)	8 (-1)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances acid, poison

Damage Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, poison, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Ooze Cube. The cube takes up its entire space. Other creatures can enter the space, but a creature that does so is subjected to the cube's Engulf and has disadvantage on the saving throw.

Creatures inside the cube can be seen but have total cover. A creature within 5 feet of the cube can take an action to pull a creature or object out of the cube. Doing so requires a successful DC 15 Strength check, and the creature making the attempt takes 14 (4d6) acid damage. The cube can hold only one Large creature or up to four Medium or smaller creatures inside it at a time.

Mostly Transparent. The alchemical sludge pooled in small pockets within the otherwise transparent creature ebbs and flows, bobs and shudders. Because of this, the cube is easier to spot while motionless than others of its kind. It requires a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot the cube if it has neither moved nor attacked. A creature that tries to enter the cube's space while unaware of it is surprised by it.

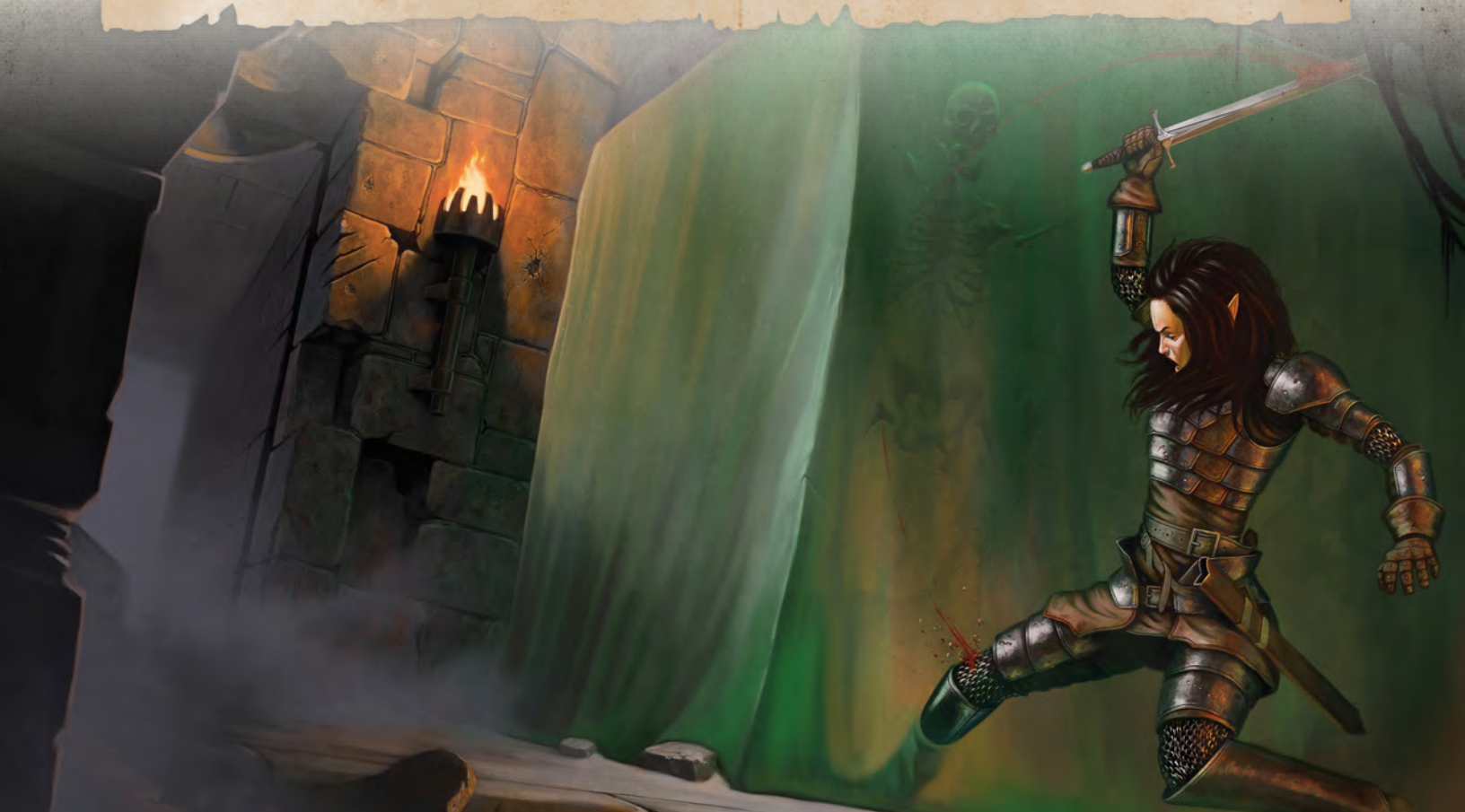
Alchemical Sacs. For every 20 points of damage the cube suffers, a pocket or bubble of alchemical goo within the cube ruptures and spreads the potion's magical properties through the monster. Roll a d6 and consult the Alchemical Sacs table. Multiple instances of the same effect increase the effect's duration.

However, if the cube is struck by a critical hit, the accuracy of the blow cleanly breaches an alchemical pocket and releases the concoction outside the cube. The cube does not roll on the Alchemical Sacs table—no matter how much damage it takes from the critical strike—and instead, a creature within 10 feet of the side the cube that was attacked gains the benefits of a roll on the Alchemical Sacs table as the magical liquid within sprays out.

Actions

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) acid damage.

Engulf. The cube moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Large or smaller creatures' spaces. Whenever the cube enters a creature's space, the creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the cube. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a failed save, the cube enters the creature's space, and the creature takes 14 (4d6) acid damage and is engulfed. The engulfed creature can't breathe, is restrained, and takes 24 (7d6) acid damage at the start of each of the cube's turns. When the cube moves, the engulfed creature moves with it. An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 15 Strength check. On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the cube.



ALCHEMICAL SACS

1d6	Potion	Effect
1	Healing Draught (dark red colored)	The cube immediately regains 14 (4d4 + 4) hit points.
2	Invisibility Tincture (clear but bubbling)	The cube becomes invisible for 2 (1d4) rounds or until it attacks or Engulfs a creature. While the cube is invisible, attacks against it have disadvantage and the cube gains advantage on its first attack roll before it reveals itself.
3	Strength Elixir (transparent but swirling)	The cube's Strength becomes 23, which increases its hit to +11, its Engulf DC to 17, and attempts to extract a creature or object from the cube increase to DC 17 for 2 (1d4) minutes.
4	Invulnerability Distillate (iron colored)	The cube becomes resistant to all sources of damage for 2 (1d4) rounds.
5	Speed Solution (yellow colored)	The cube becomes hasted for 2 (1d4) rounds, and its speed doubles to 40 feet, it gains +2 AC (increasing it to 8). It has advantage on Dexterity saving throws, and it gains an additional Attack or Dash action on its turn.
6	Growth Tonic (red colored)	The cube becomes huge in size, filling a 15 by 15 by 15 space. Any creature that was within 5 feet when this occurs must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw with disadvantage or become Engulfed. The cube gains advantage on Strength checks, Strength saving throws, and creatures attempting to resist its Engulf or extract something from it have disadvantage on the check. This lasts 2 (1d4) minutes.

REWARDS

Consider giving the player characters the following rewards when they defeat the Alchemical Cube.

ALCHEMICALLY TREATED METAL

There are shards of metal floating in the cube from the equipment of its unfortunate victims. These shards have been tempered by the potent acid and alchemical solutions within and have become imbued with magical qualities. They may be collected and forged into armor or weapons.

Gathering the shards requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Intelligence (Arcana) check. Proficiency with smith's tools or alchemist's supplies grants advantage to this check. Success awards 7 (2d6) shards of alchemically treated metal while failure acquires 2 (1d4) shards. Each check takes 10 minutes to complete, and four checks can be attempted before either all the shards has been retrieved or lost to the damaging alchemical sludge within the cube.

The shards then may be forged into armor or weapons by a character proficient with smith's tools. This requires 200 gp of materials, two weeks of time, and a successful DC 14 Intelligence check using smith's tools. A background related to crafting (such as guild artisan or clan crafter) grants advantage to this check. Failure results in the loss of the 200 gp of materials but not the metal shards.

Armor. 2 shards may be forged into metal light armor, 4 shards may be forged into metal medium armor, and 8 shards may be forged into heavy armor.

Weapons. 1 shard may be forged into any simple weapon, 2 shards may be forged into any one-handed martial weapon, and 3 shards may be forged into two-handed martial weapon.

The following magical items can be crafted with the alchemically treated metal shards harvested from the Alchemical Cube.

ALCHEMICALLY TEMPERED ARMOR

Armor (any metal armor), rare

Armor forged from this metal grants resistance to acid damage and advantage on saving throws against traps, abilities, and spells that cause acid damage.

ALCHEMICALLY TEMPERED WEAPON

Weapon (any metal melee weapon), rare

This metal has been infused with a magical acid solution within the Alchemical Cube. One-handed weapons forged of this metal deal an additional 1d6 acid damage while two-handed weapons do an additional 1d8 acid damage.

GELATINOUS SUBSTANCE

Once the Alchemical Cube has been defeated, characters may harvest its acid, which may be used to refine potions, or as spell components. Gathering the acid requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Intelligence (Arcana) check. Proficiency with alchemist's supplies, or the sage or cloistered scholar backgrounds, grants advantage on this check. Success acquires 5 (2d4 + 1) doses of potent acid while failure acquires 2 (1d4) doses. Each check takes 10 minutes to complete, and four checks can be attempted before either all the acid has been harvested or ruined.

This Alchemical Cube acid functions as the acid found in chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook* but deals 4d6 acid damage.

Refining Potions. A character may attempt to use this acid substance to further refine a potion. This requires a successful DC 18 Intelligence check using alchemist's supplies. Characters who have the sage or cloistered scholar backgrounds gain advantage on this check. Success doubles the number of times a potion can be used while failure ruins the potion, rendering it unusable.

Spell Component. Characters may use a dose of the potent acid as a material component in a spell that does acid damage. A single dose causes the spell to deal maximum damage. No dice are rolled. Two doses cause the spell to deal maximum damage and saves against it are rolled with disadvantage. The doses are consumed when used as spell components.

PURIFIED POTIONS

The potion pockets within the cube can be carefully drained and the magical liquids within claimed. Each character may make a DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Intelligence (Arcana) check to gather contents from the cube's alchemical sacs. Characters proficient with an alchemist's supplies or who have the sage or cloistered scholar backgrounds (such an extensive education usually touches on chemistry) gain advantage on this check. Success procures unspoiled potion contents and a character may roll two times on the below chart. Failure on the above check permits only one roll on the chart.

PURIFIED POTIONS

1d6 **Potion**

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | <i>potion of growth</i> |
| 2 | <i>potion of greater healing</i> |
| 3 | <i>potion of stone giant strength</i> |
| 4 | <i>potion of invisibility</i> |
| 5 | <i>potion of invulnerability</i> |
| 6 | <i>potion of speed</i> |

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic features who participated in the defeat of the Alchemical Cube add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: ACID PRISON

2nd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a vial of acid)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

When you cast this spell, a creature within range becomes engulfed by acidic goo. The target must make a Dexterity saving throw. It takes 3d6 acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature who fails the save is trapped within the goo. The trapped creature can't breathe, is restrained, and takes 7 (3d4) acid damage at the start of each of the caster's turns. A trapped creature can try to escape by using its action to make a Strength saving throw. On a success, the creature escapes.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 2nd.



АНХКТЕПОТ

Darklord of Har'Akir

INSPIRATION

This encounter presents a demiplane of dread (Dread Domain) known as Har'Akir. The backstory draws on the Egyptian/Akiri pantheon. An overview of each relevant deity is presented in Appendix B of the Player's Handbook, under "Egyptian Deities."

Inspired by:

[A Touch of Death by Bruce Nesmith](#),
[Ulraunt's Guide to the Planes: The Shadowfell by Marc Altfuldisch, David Josiah Moore, and Hiten Dave](#).

Anhktepót was once a beloved ruler, worshiped by his subjects who considered him a divine protector sent by the gods themselves. He was also a high priest of Re-Horakhty (Ra), and attended by high priests devoted to other deities of the Egyptian pantheon. His entire royal court constantly reinforced tales of his alleged divine heritage to keep him appeased. The coddled Pharaoh internalized all this grandiose praise over the years, seeing every victory as a mark of his growing divinity.

In reality, Anhktepót was as mortal as anyone else. As the years passed and he sensed old age wearing on his body, he panicked, thinking the gods may have abandoned him. In his paranoia, he commanded his priests and sages to pore over their vast troves of lore and unearth the secret of immortality. "Whether through divinity or arcane secrets, I will not perish like a mere mortal," he thought. Anhktepót's deep dive into forbidden magics and profane rituals resulted in the blood sacrifice of thousands of slaves and Akiri common folk. Unfortunately, his prayers were neither heeded nor his rituals successful.

This angered the haughty monarch, who then cursed the gods and burned down their temples in the hope of drawing their attention. Before he could destroy the temple of Re-Horakhty, however, he heard a deep voice echo in his mind, "It is clear that your lust for immortality supersedes your desire for prosperity in your kingdom, Pharaoh. So be it. You need never fear death again. For cursing the gods who blessed your domain, however, Har'Akir will suffer dearly, as will you."

Anhktepót was so ecstatic with the boon of immortality that he didn't give the second part of Ra's message another thought. He promptly withdrew from the sun god's temple and retired to his palace. That night when he embraced his wife, however, her body she withered in his arms and died. Desperate and frightened, Anhktepót raced to find help, but everyone he touched that night suffered the same fate. As was customary, their bodies were mummified and entombed in the great pyramids of Har'Akir. And thus, the first part of his curse was realized: as soon as the sun leaves the sky, his touch was death.

Overcome with despair and loathing, Anhktepót used his newfound power to slaughter every remaining priest in the land, wanting to end all reminders of the gods that once held such high honor. In response, a group of clerics retaliated against their deranged pharaoh,

swarming his royal palace and taking him away to be forcefully entombed. They performed the funeral rites according to their tradition. They began the embalming process by draining his blood. They removed his organs, placing them in individual jars, and bound his body with linen cloth. Anhktepót, however, was fully aware of all of it, for he could not die. He felt every ounce of pain, yet could not scream as he had been infused with a paralytic serum. When the ordeal finally ended, he was entombed in the Valley of Pharaoh's Rest, and the priests returned to their chambers, intending to find a new Pharaoh to crown the next day.

The sun, however never rose over Har'Akir again. That night, dark mists crept through the valley and its surrounding lands, encircling Anhktepót's former kingdom and whisking it away into its own demiplane within the Shadowfell. Anhktepót arose from his tomb as a withered, desiccated, yet powerful mummy lord, still wrapped in funeral linens. He had finally obtained the god-like powers he sought, but was eternally trapped in his realm, along with his people. The eternal fate of Anhktepót and Har'Akir had been sealed, whether as an extension of Re-Horakhty's curse or the will of the mysterious Dark Powers of Ravenloft, no one knows.

АНХКТЕПОТ'S NEXT MOVES

As revenge for the fate that has befallen him, Anhktepót yearns to snuff out the light of Ra. He now worships Set, god of darkness and sandstorms, who has blessed Anhktepót's study of dark magics and granted him the ability to expand the range of his Eclipse action beyond his own Dread Domain into the Material Plane (see Anhktepót's stat block). Anhktepót's power grows by the day as he practices this dark magic. Each day, starting with the beginning of the adventure, the radius of his Eclipse ability extends by 10 miles and its duration increases by 2 hours. Pick any location in the Material Plane (or your world's equivalent) for this darkness to expand from.

THE HOOK

Consider using the following prompts to introduce Anhktepót in your campaign.

Distressed Priest. The characters can learn about the distressing situation in Har'Akir from a **priest** of Ra they meet on the Material Plane. The Egyptian pantheon is embedded into the wider DUNGEONS & DRAGONS multiverse, so it is not out of the realm of possibility for any world to have priests of a new pantheon. Perhaps this priest has seen visions of what happened to an ancient kingdom known as Har'Akir, and is seeking adventurers to venture in and free the land from its curse.

Eclipses. Anhktepót's attempts to bathe the world in eternal darkness has crossed planar boundaries. Each time he uses his Eclipse ability, the Material Plane experiences a 1-minute period of dim light if it is daytime, or pitch blackness if it is nighttime. These

peculiar moments of darkness has caught the interest of Lathandar's clergy and have been studying it for weeks and pin-pointed the source. They approach the characters and beseech them to stop it before Faerûn is engulfed in everlasting darkness.

Engulfed by the Walls. Irrespective of the specific hook used, the only way to venture into the Dread Domain is to be engulfed by the "Walls of Ra" (see below) while traversing a desert. Maybe the characters are in a desert for some other reason when they suddenly feel an inescapable embrace of heat, causing them to land in Har'Akir. Alternatively, they might be assigned to travel to a desert by one of the quest-givers in the hooks above, and told to wait for such a moment.

HAR'AKIR

LAY OF THE LAND

The Dread Domain of Har'Akir is a large, circular desert about 120-miles in diameter. Creatures who enter the domain start in the western portion on a sandy path known as the Muhar road. Following this road for 80 miles leads to Muhar, the only friendly settlement in Har'Akir. A road leading south from Muhar leads to a mountain range known as the Valley of the Pharaoh's rest.

WALLS OF RA

The heat of the desert intensifies along the perimeter of Har'Akir until it becomes an impenetrable wall of heat that engulfs any creature that tries to leave. Even flying creatures and creatures with resistance or immunity to fire damage are subject to these effects.

- A creature that starts its turn in the wall must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion (see appendix A in the *Player's Handbook*). This exhaustion can't be removed while the creature is in the wall.
- No matter how far a creature travels, or in which direction it goes, it eventually gets disoriented and finds itself back in Har'Akir.

ALTERATIONS TO MAGIC

The land of Har'Akir resides in its own demiplane, isolated from all other planes, including the Material. No spell—not even *wish*—allows escape from Anhktepôt's domain. *Astral projection*, *teleport*, *plane shift*, and similar spells cast for the purpose of leaving Har'Akir simply fail, as do effects that banish a creature to another plane of existence. These restrictions apply to magic items and artifacts with properties that transport or banish creatures to other planes. Magic that allows transit to the Border Ethereal, such as the *etherealness* spell and the Etherealness feature of incorporeal undead, is the exception to this rule. A creature that enters the Border Ethereal from Anhktepôt's domain is pulled back into Har'Akir upon leaving that plane.

In similar fashion, no spell can create water, nourishment, or change the weather. Spells such as *create or destroy water* can only destroy water, for example, and the *goodberry* spell offers no nourishment.

For the purpose of spells whose effects change across or are blocked by planar boundaries (such as *sending*), Anhktepôt's domain is considered its own plane. Magic that summons creatures or objects from other planes functions normally in Har'Akir, as does magic that involves an extradimensional space. Any spells cast within such an extradimensional space (such as that created by *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*), however, are subject to the same restrictions as magic cast in Har'Akir.

While in Har'Akir, characters who receive spells from deities or otherworldly patrons continue to do so. In addition, spells that allow contact with beings from other planes function normally, with one proviso: Anhktepôt can sense when someone in his domain is using such magic and can choose to make himself the spell's recipient, so that he becomes the one contacted.

COSMETIC SPELL MODIFICATIONS

At your discretion, a spell can be modified cosmetically to enhance the horrific atmosphere. Here are examples:

Alarm. Instead of hearing a mental ping when the alarm is triggered, the caster hears a painful moan.

Bigby's hand. The summoned hand is wrapped in funeral linen.

Find familiar. The familiar is undead—not a celestial, fey, or fiend—but is immune to effects that turn undead.

Find the path. A ghostly mummy appears and guides the caster to the desired location. It can't be harmed and doesn't speak.

Maze. The surfaces of the demiplane's maze have various hieroglyphs.

Spirit guardians. The spirits appear as ghostly mummies.

Wall of stone. A wall created by the spell has random hieroglyphs carved into it. The hieroglyphs depict the worst moments of the caster's life.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

- Daytime temperatures in Har'Akir hover around 110 degrees Fahrenheit. A creature exposed to the heat and without access to drinkable water must succeed on a Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. The DC is 5 for the first hour and increases by 1 for each additional hour. Between the hours of 11 AM and 1 PM the DC increases by 2. Creatures wearing medium or heavy armor or who are clad in heavy clothing have disadvantage on the saving throw. Creatures with resistance or immunity to fire damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do undead and creatures naturally adapted to hot climates.
- The entire Dread Domain is desecrated ground (see chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).
- All undead creatures in Har'Akir are immune to abilities that turn or destroy undead.

- Regardless of a character's foraging skills or other abilities, the only source of drinkable water in Har'Akir is the Muhar Oasis (see "the Town of Muhar").

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN HAR'AKIR

For each hour spent traveling the desert, there is a 30% chance of a random encounter (increase the odds as needed if you want the party to visit a ruined temple and obtain some Akiri coinage). Roll on the table below to determine the encounter:

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN HAR'AKIR

d20 Encounter

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1 | 1d2 purple worms burrow up from the sand and attempt to surprise the party. Once a purple worm has swallowed a character, it burrows back into the sand. |
| 2 | 1d4 sand elementals (use air elemental stat block) rise out of the sand and attack the party, fighting to the death. |
| 3 | The characters stumble upon a nest of 1d2 rocs . |
| 4-6 | 4d4 Akiri scouts hunting for food (perhaps in the territory of jackals or vultures). |
| 7-8 | One wandering mummy lord who was formerly a high priest of one of the following gods (roll a d10 to determine the god, or pick one from the list below): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anubis 2. Bast 3. Bes 4. Hathor 5. Imhotep 6. Isis 7. Nephthys 8. Osiris 9. Ptah 10. Thoth |

The mummy has no lair and has spent an eternity wandering the desert in misery. It retains the alignment of its deity and loyalty to Har'Akir, however, and seeks to liberate the domain from its cursed existence. It has been repeatedly shunned and driven away from Muhar because its undead presence spoils all the nourishment for the inhabitants there.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 9-11 | 1d4 jackalweres disguised as Akiri natives, who are covert worshipers of Set. They try to lure adventurers into their master's lair.
The lair consists of 2d20 additional jackalweres who serve 1d4 lamias . The lamias are worshipers of Set and loyal to Anhktep. They use their illusion magic to lull adventurers into a false sense of security and hope to send them unprepared to meet their doom in Anhktep's tomb. |
| 12-13 | One yuan-ti abomination , 2d6 yuan-ti malisons , and 2d6 yuan-ti purebloods hide behind small sandy hills and attempt to surprise the party.
The yuan-ti are crazed worshipers of Apep and seek freedom from this Dread Domain. Their lair is an old ruin that was once a temple of Apep. They want to sacrifice the characters in the hope that Apep will help them find a way out of the Dread Domain. |
| 14-20 | The characters enter an area containing the ruins of a shrine belonging to one of the Egyptian gods. There is a 50% chance that 1d6 basilisks have carved out a den for themselves nearby. Among the ruins are 2d100 Ancient Akiri gold coins. |

THE TOWN OF MUHAR

Population: Approximately 300 people (mostly human, except for some adventurers who were lured into this Dread Domain and have not figured out a way to escape).

Government: Theocracy run by a High Priestess of Osiris named Isu Rehkotep.

Commerce: Only Ancient Akiri coins are accepted here, which are blessed with a symbol of Re-Horakhty. Some brave inhabitants of the city go out on raids in the desert to hunt small animals and/or obtain these coins from ruined temples. Most of that coinage is spent as offerings to the temple, in the hope it will appease the gods and one day lift the curse that has befallen Har'Akir.

THE AKIRI PEOPLE

The inhabitants of Muhar, collectively known as the "Akiri," have dark-toned skin with lined and weathered faces. They usually wear loose, white robes to minimize the intensity of the heat, as well as head cloths that can be pulled to cover their faces during sand storms. They are generally quite reserved when confronting a newcomer for the first time. Most Akiri are generally depressed and downtrodden, finding pleasure only in the tales of Har'Akir's prosperous past.

The Akiri believe in "the Ma'at"—a divine principle which states that the fundamental order of truth, justice, law, and order puts gods and mortals in their logical and rightful place in the universe. As such, most inhabitants are Lawful Good or Lawful Neutral.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Muhar Oasis. This is the only source of fresh drinking water available in Har'Akir. Denizens of the city fill their jugs here in the morning and evening. Visitors who do not antagonize the Akiri people are welcome to quench their thirst here.

The Camel's Hump. This three-story-tall building is run by an unusually chirpy fellow named Marmaduke Cutton (CG forest gnome **druid**). Marmaduke has an upbeat tone, despite the dreary conditions of the Dread Domain, but that is mostly his elation at seeing new adventurers, which always brings a flicker of hope.



He entered Har'Akir the same way most other adventurers do and lost his companions to the desert before he arrived in Muhar, where he has stayed ever since.

Marmaduke offers free lodging to those who promise to venture into the Valley of the Pharaoh's Rest and attempt to break the curse on Har'Akir. No alcohol is served in the Camel's Hump, as the only drink available in Muhar is water obtained from the Muhar Oasis. The area outside the tavern has a makeshift stable holding 2d6 camels. Marmaduke is happy to sell the camels to adventurers for 50 Akiri coins each. He doesn't rent them, as no stranger who has ventured out into the desert from Muhar has ever come back alive.

Amunet's Armed Tusk. Characters can buy any piece of equipment listed in chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook* here (except for full waterskins) for half the listed price in Akiri coins. The owner of this general store is a stern woman named Amunet (CG Akiri human **gladiator**).

Temple of Muhar. The temple contains shrines to all deities of the Egyptian pantheon, but most of Muhar's population worships Osiris. The High Priestess is Isu Rehkotep (LN human **priest**), who welcomes newcomers respectfully and can relay the history of Har'Akir to the characters. Isu has the title of Vizier and is the de-facto ruler of Har'Akir and works in earnest to ease the burdens of his subjects, hoping that Osiris will guide them in death to a better life.

Optional Plot Twist. Isu is in league with Senmet and encourages the characters to defeat Anhktep in his tomb and "liberate the land." She doesn't reveal her alliance, however, with Senmet, high priest of Set, who is forcefully bound into Anhktep's service and thus allowing for the rise of Senmet as Darklord (see "Crypt of the High Priests" in the Tomb of Anhktep section below).

VALLEY OF THE PHARAOH'S REST

Opposite the city of Muhar is a small canyon. The road slopes upward as it reaches the entrance of the valley, which itself is raised approximately 200 feet above the level of the desert and can be seen from any point in Har'Akir. The cliffs around the valley rise an additional 500 feet from the valley floor.

TOMB OF ANHKTEPOT

This massive structure is placed against the mountains at the far end of the valley. It is a low, flat building with stone columns along its face. A broad staircase rises up to a broad plaza (see Area 1 below).

Locations in the Tomb of Anhktep are marked on the map below.

I PLAZA

Headless Statues. Along the far wall are six headless statues, each depicting an Egyptian deity (left-to-right: Bast, Hathor, Imhotep, Isis, Nephthys, and Osiris; see Appendix B of the *Player's Handbook*). Their holy symbols are carved into the 1-foot-tall stone platforms under each statue. A DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check can identify each one. Piles of stone debris are scattered around the base of each.

A *stoneshape* spell can restore the heads of each deity from piled debris, as can a character who spends an hour and succeeds on DC 20 Intelligence check using Mason's Tools for each statue. For every two statues successfully restored, the party is ambushed by 1d6 **wraiths**.

Characters who successfully restore the heads of the statues receive the following gifts, based on how many statues they successfully restore; each gift is cumulative and lasts for as long as the characters remain in Har'Akir:

- **One statue:** The creature's hit point maximum increases by 10.
- **Two statues:** The creature has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.
- **Three statues:** Whenever the creature makes an attack roll, it can roll a d4 and add the result to the roll.
- **Four statues:** The creature is immune to the frightened condition.
- **Five statues:** The creature gains truesight out to a range of 60 feet.
- **Six statues:** The creature gains resistance to necrotic damage and advantage on all saving throws.



Between the statues of Imhotep and Isis is a small alcove with a stone door that opens into a 60-foot-long and 5-foot-wide stone corridor.

2 ALTAR OF RA

The stone corridor from Area 1 leads into a room containing a collapsed altar of Ra at the north end. The 30-by-30-foot area next to the northern corridor is filled with stone rubble from that altar's remains. It takes 24 hours of work to restore this.

3 PURIFICATION ROOM

The passage connecting this room to Area 2 is 3 feet wide and 4 feet tall, and the room itself is only 7 feet from floor to ceiling. The room holds several ceramic jars, vases, pitchers, and large urns which were once used by priests to bathe important visitors with holy water. Now they are empty apart from dust.

4 TEMPLE OF ANHKTEPOT

Monolith. A massive, 100-foot-tall statue dominates the north side of this area. It depicts Anhktepote from his days as a pharaoh.

Hieroglyphs. The walls of this room contain carvings that tell the story of Anhktepote.

5 CRYPT OF MINOR OFFICIALS

A dozen sarcophagi dot this 40-by-20-foot room, each containing the **mummy** of a minor palace official that Anhktepote ordered killed and buried with him if he were to die so they could join him in his journey to the Underworld.

6 CRYPTS OF THE CHILDREN

Areas 6a to 6d each contain one sarcophagus belonging to a child of Anhktepote, while 6e is the crypt of his wife, Nephyr. Each remained loyal to Anhktepote into undeath. Use the **mummy** statistics to represent them.

If Anhktepote is awoken, these mummies burst out of their sarcophagi and make their way toward Area 9 to help their Darklord. While in the Tomb of Anhktepote, they have a walking speed of 60 feet.

7 ANTECHAMBER

The passageway leading here from Area 4 is 3 feet tall and 4 feet wide.

This room contains two sarcophagi belonging to lesser priests who were loyal to Anhktepote. Each priest is a **mummy** that only animates if the characters awaken the high priests in Area 8 or Anhktepote.

8 CRYPT OF THE HIGH PRIESTS

This room holds three sarcophagi, each containing the mummified remains of the high priests that stayed loyal to Anhktepote to the very end:

- Menkhaf, high priest of Apep (use the **mummy** statistics).
- Djoser, high priest of Sobek (use the **mummy** statistics).

- Senmet, high priest of Set (use the **mummy lord** statistics; he does not get lair actions as long as Anhktepote is alive).

Each high priest is loyal to Anhktepote as long as Anhktepote is alive. Any character who touches a sarcophagus in this room awakens all of the high priests, who spring out of their sarcophagi and attack.

Optional Plot Twist. If the party is struggling or rapidly depleting in resources, consider the following scenario: Senmet has grown to develop a mind of his own and seeks to usurp the Darklord. If the adventurers prove their might and reduce either Menkhaf or Djoser to 0 hit points, he offers to parlay with them. He can inform them how to bypass the traps and obtain Anhktepote's heart (see Area 9 below). He can't participate in combat with Anhktepote as Har'Akir's curse gives the Darklord dominion over all undead, and the pharaoh could simply end Senmet's existence with a thought. The high priests, however, could certainly hold off reinforcements coming from Area 6.

9 ANHKTEPOTE'S FUNERAL BARGE

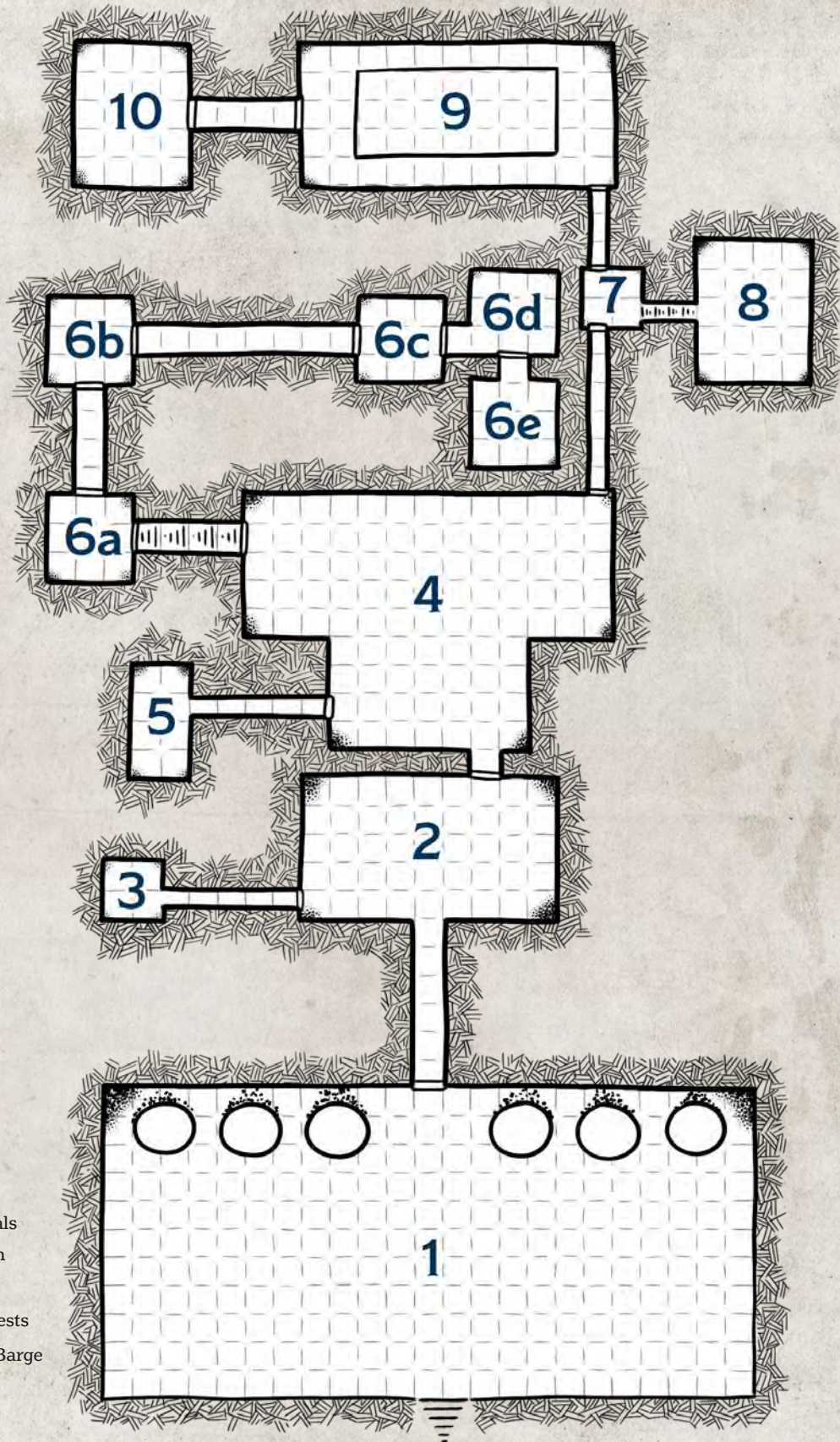
Barge. A 70-foot-long and 20-foot-wide barge dominates this room, with a mummified head carved into the masthead. The barge is symbolic of an Akiri tradition which states the journey to the afterlife takes place on a great river. As such, the tombs of their pharaohs usually contain a barge.

Within the barge is a singular 10-by-10-foot cabin. Each 5-foot-square of the floor here is inscribed with magical glyphs designed to ward off intruders. These are 8th-level *glyph of warding* spells each holding the *feblemind* spell (save DC 21). A character searching for traps can spot the glyphs with a successful DC 21 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

The far wall has a bas-relief carving of Anhktepote's face. The pharaoh's open mouth appears to be a well of utter darkness, but is actually the entrance to a demiplane. The face is sculpted from stone and melds seamlessly with the surrounding wall. The mouth is wide enough for a Medium or smaller creature to crawl through. Once a creature has crawled through it, it starts to slowly shrink. The creature inside, or its companions on the outside, have one minute to join each other before the mouth completely closes. Once the mouth is closed, it does not open again for an hour and can't be opened by any means for that duration.

Demiplane. The cavity behind the wall is a vast, desert-like demiplane that is the lair of an **ancient blue dragon** named Makkura, who Anhktepote enslaved a long time ago. Makkura has known no other life apart from serving Anhktepote and he can't leave this demiplane as long as Anhktepote is alive. He senses the presence of intruders and confronts them.

Escaping the Demiplane. Once a creature enters this demiplane, it is impossible to escape without either defeating Makkura or negotiating with him. Clever characters can appeal to his innate vanity and promise him freedom. With a successful DC 20 Charisma



- 1. Plaza
- 2. Altar of Ra
- 3. Purification Room
- 4. Temple of Anhktepót
- 5. Crypt of Minor Officials
- 6. Crypts of the Children
- 7. Antechamber
- 8. Crypt of the High Priests
- 9. Anhktepót's Funeral Barge
- 10. Anhktepót's Crypt

TOMB OF ANHKTEPÓT



АНХКТЕПОТ

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 24 (natural armor)

Hit Points 289 (34d8 + 96)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	21 (+5)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +12, Int +10, Wis +13, Cha +12

Skills Arcana +20, History +20, Religion +10, Perception +13

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

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

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 23

Languages Common, Akiri

Challenge 25 (75,000 XP)

Curse of Ra. While in sunlight, Anhktepote has the statistics of a commoner. He retains his Eclipse action and Rejuvenation trait in this form.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If Anhktepote fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

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

Regeneration. Anhktepote regains 20 hit points at the start of his turn. This trait does not function if he starts his turn at 0 hit points.

Rejuvenation. If Anhktepote is killed, he gains a new body in 24 hours if his heart isn't completely destroyed, regaining all his hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of whatever remains of Anhktepote's heart.

Spellcasting. Anhktepote is a 17th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). Anhktepote has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
1st level (at will): *bane, command, guiding bolt, shield of faith*
2nd level (at will): *darkness, hold person, silence, spiritual weapon*
3rd level (at will): *animate dead, dispel magic, glyph of warding, speak with dead*
4th level (3 slots): *death ward, divination, guardian of faith*
5th level (3 slots): *contagion, geas, hallow, insect plague*
6th level (2 slots): *forbiddance, harm*
7th level (2 slots): *divine word, symbol*
8th level (1 slot): *antimagic field*
9th level (1 slot): *gate* (1 young **shadow dragon**)

Turn Immunity. Anhktepote is immune to any effect that turns undead.

Actions

Multiattack. Anhktepote can use his Dreadful Glare and make two attacks: one with his rotting fist and one with his choking linen.

Choking Linen. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 30 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) necrotic damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 21). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and can't speak or breathe as the linen begin to choke it. A creature grappled in this manner takes 21 (6d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of Anhktepote's turns.

Anhktepote can only have two creatures grappled like this at a time. While grappling two creatures, he can't use his Rotting Fist.

Rotting Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 35 (10d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. Additionally, its hit point maximum decreases by 35 (10d6) for every hour that elapses. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse can only be removed with a *wish* spell.



Dreadful Glare. Anhktepot targets one creature he can see within 60 feet of him. If the target can see Anhktepot, it must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of Anhktepot's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the Dreadful Glare of all mummies and mummy lords for the next 24 hours.

Eclipse (1/Day). While outside during daytime, Anhktepot magically causes an eclipse. All sunlight is blocked in the Dread Domain of Har'Akir and some distance beyond (see "Anhktepot's Next Moves"). This effect lasts for 1 hour.

In addition, each non-undead creature within 120 feet of Anhktepot must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. An affected creature can repeat the saving throw if it ends its turn within 60 feet of a light source. Creatures with darkvision, or those that can otherwise see in the dark, have advantage on the saving throw.

Legendary Actions

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

(Persuasion or Deception) check, Makkura turns over Anhktepot's heart, which he is guarding.

10 ANHKTEPOT'S CRYPT

This room contains the most lavishly decorated sarcophagus of all. The characters are most likely to encounter **Anhktepot** here.

Tactics. Anhktepot opens combat with an arsenal of offense, using his bonus action to cast *spiritual weapon* with a 6th-level spell slot. Alternatively, he might use the *gate* spell to summon a young **shadow dragon**, which is a gift from the god Set.

If confronted by powerful spellcasters, Anhktepot resorts to casting *antimagic field* around himself and relying on his rotting fist and choking linen for damage (both are technically nonmagical). This can result in an interesting scenario where the characters try to figure out how to disrupt his concentration, as he is immune to nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

AFTERMATH

If Anhktepot is defeated, the Walls of Ra become a shimmering haze, no longer posing a threat to anyone trying to escape this Dread Domain. Those who pass through reappear in the location where they were first absorbed by the Walls of Ra.

Rotting Fist. Anhktepot attacks with his rotting fist.

Blinding Dust. Dust and sand swirls magically around Anhktepot. Each creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of Anhktepot must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of the creature's next turn.

Blasphemous Word (Costs 2 Actions). Anhktepot utters a blasphemous word. Each non-undead creature within 20 feet of Anhktepot that can hear the magical utterance must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of Anhktepot's next turn.

Channel Negative Energy (Costs 2 Actions). Anhktepot magically unleashes negative energy. Creatures within 120 feet of Anhktepot, including ones behind barriers or around corners, can't regain hit points until the end of Anhktepot's next turn.

Whirlwind of Sand (Costs 2 Actions). Anhktepot magically transforms into a 30-foot-radius whirlwind of sand, moves up to 60 feet, and reverts to his normal form in an unoccupied space. While in whirlwind form, he is immune to all damage, and can't be grappled, petrified, knocked prone, restrained, or stunned. Equipment worn or carried by Anhktepot remain in his possession.

In addition, he can move through the space of another creature and any opening large enough for a grain of sand. Each creature he passes through in this form takes 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage.

ANHKTEPOT'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I aspire to rise to godhood and conquer the pantheon."

Bond. "Ra has wronged me. His light is wicked, and I will do anything to permanently extinguish it from my realm."

Flaw. "My hatred for the light often supersedes my sensibilities."

ANHKTEPOT'S LAIR

Anhktepot's lair is a single tomb in the form of a massive, imposing structure of sandstone placed against the mountains at the far end of the Valley of the Pharaoh's Rest in the Dread Domain of Har'Akir.

If encountered in his lair, Anhktepot has a challenge rating of 26 (90,000 xp).

LAIR ACTIONS AND REGIONAL EFFECTS

Anhktepot can has same lair actions and regional effects as a **mummy lord**. Increase the saving throw DCs to 18.

REWARDS

Roll on the "Challenge 17+" treasure hoard table in chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to determine the contents of the treasure uncovered in Anhktepot's tomb.

You might also consider the following additional rewards for defeating Anhktepot:

CHOKING LINEN

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

These linens can be worn as bracers with about 1 inch of loose material. When you successfully hit with an unarmed strike against a humanoid while wearing them, you can also attempt to grapple the target as part of the same attack.

Until this grapple ends, the target can't speak or breathe as the linen chokes it. A creature grappled in this manner takes 11 (2d10) necrotic damage at the start of your turn.

Only one target can be grappled at a time.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the Spellcasting or Pact Magic feature who participated in the defeat of the Anhktepote can add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists. Perhaps they unearth the secret to this spell from one of Anhktepote's many spellbooks.

NEW SPELL: ECLIPSE

9th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Sight

Components: V, S, M (a black pearl worth 10,000 gp, which the spell consumes)

Duration: 1 hour

You magically crush the material component and hurl it into the air. A heavenly body seems to appear between the ground and the sun (or moon), causing an eclipse. All natural sunlight is blocked in the area, as is any light produced using a spell slot of 8th-level or lower.

When you cast this spell, each undead creature of your choice that can see you gains immunity to features like Turn Undead and advantage on all saving throws until the spell ends or you are incapacitated. In addition, all creatures without the Sunlight Sensitivity trait that can see you must succeed on a Wisdom throw or be frightened of you for the duration of the spell. Undead and constructs are immune to this effect.



ARCHIBALD SINISTER

A dexterous vigilante

Archibald Sinister is a gargoyle who, like many of his kind, was hired to guard the entrance to an important institution. He and Harry Dexter, his companion guard across the arch of the doorway, served their master well at a Zhentarim wizard college near the remains of Zhentil Keep for several centuries. Archibald and Harry were given their names by Gryany Wenté, their lord and master and head of the institution, who greeted them by name each day while passing through the entrance. Although the gargoyles were unaware, the names referred to their physical appearances and respective stations above the doorway. In any case, they appreciated the attention and the acknowledgment as individuals.

Whether Sinister and Dexter, as they preferred to be called, were special gargoyles from the time of their creation, had evolved over time due to their experiences, or had been elevated through magic by their master is unknown, but special they were.

The doorway, with its large, private alcove was a common place for those entering and leaving to scheme, discuss tactics, and confront one another. After listening to these conversations for centuries, Sinister and Dexter learned to understand and speak smatterings of several languages. They also learned much about the politics and factions among those who came and went. These things were uninteresting to them, but so was guarding a doorway that was rarely challenged in any real way. So, for fun, they interjected words into the conversations of the unsuspecting creatures below, pitting friends against one another or building alliances among rivals. They made a game of this pastime and awarded each other points for especially well-placed words that turned a conversation or argument.

Master Wenté eventually caught on to their game and saw an opportunity for the school and the Zhentarim. He offered them magical rewards in exchange for gathering information and turning conversations to more constructive, rather than comical, directions. One day Master Wenté showed them a staff he promised would be their ultimate reward when he finished it and their job was finally done. With this new purpose and genuine rewards, not just game points, Sinister and Dexter became even more zealous in their learning and were rewarded with new abilities. They still, however, enjoyed creating havoc with no specific purpose other than to satisfy their chaotic and devious natures and showing each other up.

One day, their original purpose was called upon as the college came under attack. Sinister and Dexter fought valiantly, leveraging all their natural and augmented abilities to protect the college and its occupants. During the battle, while Sinister engaged multiple opponents, he witnessed Dexter's demise and, as the dust settled, he discovered Master Wenté had also fallen. Sinister knew spies from the Harpers were responsible for the

attack, but he only knew the perpetrators, not the mastermind behind it.

Sinister is now on the rampage, taking his retaliation on all those associated with the Harpers. His intent is to topple its hierarchy. This quest has led him to Waterdeep.

IN YOUR WORLD

Scratching the Surface. Sinister's attacks provide immediate opportunity for encounters to investigate and then confront him, but they open the door to far greater intrigue among the factions in your setting.

Words Have Meaning. Sinister knows two languages in addition to Terran. The languages he knows create their own backstory. He earned these while guarding the door or gate from those conducting business with the occupants of the institution. Involve some intrigue as to why visitors to this location would speak these languages.

THE HOOK

Members of the Harpers are being mercilessly murdered in Waterdeep.

Depending on your campaign objectives and the factions of the characters, Sinister can be introduced at two different key points in a story line: before his ill-favored faction, the Harpers, is known, or after. Here are a few ideas on how to introduce Sinister, but the key elements can be mixed and matched to suit your needs.

Out of the Blue. A friend or family member of the characters died in an accident in Waterdeep. One night they were apparently caught in a shower of stone fragments falling from a building and were pummeled to death.

Why Them? The Waterdeep city guards are concerned about several deaths around the city that appear to be related based on the conditions at the scene. Depending on how visible the murdered Harpers are, the guards may have identified membership in the Harpers as the common thread through the murders. They hire the characters to investigate and stop the murders before there is an outcry about their ineptitude or worse, their indifference to the plight of the Harpers.

Why Us? Leaders of the Harpers are concerned because several of their members have been killed. The first death looked like an accident and the second could have been a case of being in the wrong dark alley at the wrong time, but with a third death in a tenday there is no mistake now that members of the Harpers are being assassinated. They hire the characters to investigate and stop the murders. They offer a bonus for quick action as it appears that the murderer is working their way up the hierarchy.

For any of these hooks, or your own, when the characters investigate the incidents, they discover a few intrigues.

- The stonework of the building adjacent to the presumed accident scene is in good condition, having no signs of decay. However, the stone shows signs of recent chipping; as if fragments were chiseled out.
- Some of the scenes have more than one victim, but at least one of them was a member of the Harpers.
- The attacks come at night and although some of the grizzly scenes have been very fresh when discovered—indeed immediately after cries for help have been heard—no perpetrators have been seen.
- In addition to stone fragments around the scene, the victims might have dust in their airways, burns on their bodies, or facial orifices packed with mud.

As soon as the characters are on the case, another incident occurs, pressing them to work quickly.

ARCHIBALD SINISTER'S NEXT MOVES

Sinister is systematically stalking his victims to see who they meet with, so he always has a fresh list of potential victims, and his goal is to work his way to the top of the command chain. He may never locate who was responsible for Dexter's death, but he intends to make the Harpers pay a heavy price for it. Based on his experience with politically motivated conversations, however, he is clever enough to figure out who is in the command chain so he can direct his attention ever upward.

Ideally, Sinister stalks his victims when they are among their comrades, so he can gather information, and then attacks them when they are alone. He is susceptible to his base nature, however, and can't help but attack immediately sometimes. He is unconcerned about collateral damage—it is not his fault that some otherwise innocent creatures consort with his enemies. So far, he has been quick about his business, but as he moves up the command chain, he becomes more susceptible to that base nature, reveling in his retribution. As he closes in on his goal, he tortures his targets and reveals exactly why he is killing them. Reminiscent of his games of deceit with Dexter, he toys with his victims, risking their escape or being caught in the act.

As Sinister's attack methods change, the evidence these occurrences are not accidents, but vicious attacks, increases. If Sinister is allowed to continue, his growing list of victims will certainly include someone close to the characters, or they may get caught in one of his ambushes, either as collateral damage, or for their association with an intended victim or the Harpers in general.

Sinister is a loner, believing that his best chance is to go unnoticed and unsuspected for as long as possible. Although, as his enemies become harder to kill, he might join forces with someone whose goals align with his. Sinister's trust is fragile, so any such alliance is likely short-lived.

ARCHIBALD SINISTER'S LAIR

Once per day, as an action, Sinister can establish a lair if he is in contact with a section of quarried stone at least 10 feet square. The lair extends to a spherical area with a 60-foot radius centered on the point where he established it. He instinctively seeks adequate locations to perch and immediately establishes a lair when setting an ambush or is attacked.

LAIR ACTIONS

While fighting inside his lair, Sinister can use lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Sinister takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; he can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The area of the lair is showered with small stone fragments. Any creature within the lair or exposed below it must make a Dexterity saving throw. The creature takes 1d10 bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
- Sinister draws on the strength of the stonework about him, gaining +2 to his AC until initiative 20 on the next round.

ARCHIBALD SINISTER'S TACTICS

Sinister is focused on revenge. To this end, he fights only when he has to, or his goal is in sight. If a confrontation doesn't serve his purpose, he isn't above fleeing to fight another day, unless he knows the person who orchestrated the attack on the school is present.

Although Sinister uses the typical gargoyle tactic of false appearance to surprise his victims and disappear after a battle, he leans heavily on his practiced and advanced abilities. He avoids using his bite and claw attacks since these might help identify the type of perpetrator. If a victim is getting away, however, he resorts to these attacks as well. Sinister is intelligent enough to know that if a victim survives, his cover is blown.

Sinister can summon mephits and potentially entice other earth elementals of lower intelligence or parallel purposes to join his chaotic cause when they are around. These include:

- **Mud mephit** (CR 1/4, INT 9, Swamp/Wet Urban)
- **Dust mephit** (CR 1/2, INT 9, Desert/Dry Urban)
- **Magma mephit** (CR 1/2, INT 7, Underdark)
- **Magmin** (CR 1/2, INT 8, Underdark): though, they would have to overcome the language barrier.
- **Earth elemental** (CR 5, INT 5, any location): if his retribution requires a siege.
- **Xorn** (CR 5, INT 11, any location): if there was potential treasure involved in an attack.

Sinister might be convinced to join forces with others who can assure him they have a common cause and that Sinister needs their assistance to see his justice served.



ARCHIBALD SINISTER

Medium elemental, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Terran, Common, Elven

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

False Appearance. While the gargoyle remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an inanimate statue.

Elemental Nature. Sinister doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. Sinister's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom. Sinister can innately cast *summon mephit* (1/day), requiring no material components.

Actions

Multiattack. Sinister makes two attacks: one with his bite and one with his claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

ARCHIBALD SINISTER'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I am forever loyal to my friend and my master, though they have passed."

Bond. "I dedicate my being to killing those responsible for Dexter's death."

Flaw. "I may have been elevated above my kind, but I still take pleasure in prolonged, sadistic torture."

REWARDS

The primary reward in subduing or killing Sinister is the information learned regarding the faction associations which caused his need to retaliate. This information can be the key to moving your campaign forward or introducing a plot twist.

If Sinister is destroyed, his two longest fingers can be recovered for use as a pair of +1 daggers.

Additionally, Sinister recovered the promised staff (a *staff of living stone*) from Master Wenté's chambers after the battle. Master Wenté had been experimenting with transmuting stone and flesh and enchanted the staff with his successes. Unfortunately, he was killed before

perfecting a spell to turn inanimate stone to living flesh. Although Sinister doesn't know how the staff functions, and it is cumbersome to carry around, he always stashes it on the rooftop where he hides.

STAFF OF LIVING STONE

Staff, legendary (requires attunement by a sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

The staff has a number of charges equal to its wielder's level. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC and spell casting modifier: *flesh to stone* (6 charges), *investiture of stone* (6 charges), *magic stone* (1 charge), *Maximilian's earthen grasp* (2 charges), *meld into stone* (3 charges), *stone shape* (4 charges), or *stone skin* (4 charges).

Optionally, the staff can be used to cast *stone to flesh* (4 charges) or *stone to life* (1 charge per spell level).

INFAMOUS ADVERSARIES | ARCHIBALD SINISTER

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of Sinister add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: STONE TO FLESH

4th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a pinch of lime, a drop of blood)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You imbue a petrified creature you touch with life energy, ending the effect that petrified the target.

NEW SPELL: STONE TO LIFE

6th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 10 feet

Components: V, S, M (a drop of blood, a free-standing piece of stone the size of a medium creature)

Duration: Instantaneous

Choose a slab of stone within range. The stone becomes a gargoyle under your control.

As a bonus action on each of your turns, you can mentally command any creature you animated with this spell if the creature is within 120 feet of you (if you control multiple creatures, you can command any or all of them at the same time, issuing the same command to each one). You decide what action the creature will take and where it will move during its next turn, or you can issue a general command, such as to guard a particular chamber or corridor. If you issue no commands, the creature only defends itself against hostile creatures. Once given an order, the creature continues to follow it until its task is complete.

The creature is under your control for 24 hours, after which it stops obeying any command you have given it. To maintain control of the creature for another 24 hours, you must cast this spell on the creature before the current 24-hour period ends. This use of the spell reasserts your control over up to three creatures you have animated with this spell, rather than animating new ones.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using an 8th-level spell slot, you can animate or reassert control over two gargoyles. When you cast this spell using a 9th-level spell slot, you can animate or reassert control over three gargoyles.



AUSROC, THE FAUX-PHOENIX

A screeching of fire and more fire

A bird of rare intelligence, the Ausroc uses the natural features of its forested home near an active volcano to hunt its preferred quarry—people. Dropping flaming logs onto nearby settlements the Ausroc sends its prey scurrying out into the open where it picks them off. The Ausroc hunts across plains and mountains, never far from a natural source of fire with which it can create its favored tool. This gargantuan bird is sometimes mistaken for a phoenix, but it has no innate fire magics within itself. Its domain is wide and heavily wooded, leaving the large bird numerous places to flush its prey from their simple hiding places.

THE HOOK

Word has reached the nearest city that the frontier town of **Halberd Glen** has gone silent, with only smoke to mark its existence. Rumors swirl that the enemy was a fire elemental, or a duergar war band from the nearby mountain range, before the reality is revealed by one lucky former resident.

The only known survivor of the town, **Highgram Operlock**, swears that a phoenix descended upon the town from a nearby mountaintop. He believes it is a premonition of an eruption from the mountain, or some kind of divine vengeance.

Regardless of higher powers, the cause of the fire, this 'phoenix', must be stopped to prevent large scale forest fires or further damage. The local government has posted a reward for proof of the fire-bird's death with a 2000 gold reward upon completion.

AUSROC, THE FAUX-PHOENIX'S NEXT MOVES

The Ausroc is often in its mountain-top home, only going out to hunt every $2d4 + 1$ days. The large bird's nest is on a high perch, close to the forest for grabbing small tree trunks and near open lava, where it lights the match. The Ausroc hunts smaller areas and locations such as cabins, small villages, caravans, and hunting camps until food sources are exhausted.

AUSROC, THE FAUX-PHOENIX'S TACTICS

If the Ausroc is fought anywhere other than its nest, the creature flies away and returns with a flaming log in $10 + 1d6$ minutes. It will drop the log as an attack on the largest target, including mounts, buildings, and carriages, as soon as possible, then follows up with talon and beak attacks. Consider using the **Burning Log Drop** mechanic found below:

If the Ausroc is fought at home, it does not use this tactic in fear of losing its nest. The Ausroc takes flying attacks, with a focus on picking up creatures and dropping them off the mountain or in lava.

BURNING LOG DROP

A burning log can dropped from a height of 10 feet or more and lands in a 5 foot by 20 foot area. Any target in this space must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 15). On a failed saving throw, they take $1d6$ bludgeoning damage per 10 feet between the Ausroc and the target (maximum $10d6$), $3d6$ fire damage, and they are restrained. On a successful save, they take no damage and are not restrained.

Any target restrained by this effect may use their action to attempt a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) ability check to end the effect, pushing the log off of themselves.

AUSROC'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I live for the thrill of the hunt."

Bond. "I must protect my nest at all costs."

Flaw. "I am obsessed with fire."

AUSROC, THE FAUX-PHOENIX

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 315 ($21d20 + 84$)

Speed 20 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +9, Int +4, Cha +4

Skills Perception +5, Athletics +13

Senses passive Perception 15

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Keen Sight. The Ausroc has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The Ausroc makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons or may make one burning log drop and one beak attack.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* $(4d8 + 8)$ piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* $(4d6 + 8)$ slashing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 21) until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the roc can't use its talons on another target.

Burning Log Drop (Recharge upon picking up a burning log). A burning log can dropped from a height of 10 feet or more and lands in a 5 foot by 20 foot area. Any target in this space must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 15). On a failed saving throw, they take $1d6$ bludgeoning damage per 10 feet between the Ausroc and the target (maximum $10d6$), $3d6$ fire damage, and they are restrained. On a successful save, they take no damage and are not restrained. A creature restrained by this effect may use their action to attempt a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) ability check to end the effect, pushing the log off of themselves.

REWARDS

After defeating Ausroc, adventurers can try to harvest its body for materials.

Characters can harvest a bundle of its feathers by succeeding on a DC 15 Dexterity (Athletics) check. They can attempt this up to three times with the DC increasing by 2 each time after the first. A character in possession of a bundle of Ausroc's feathers can make a DC 13 Intelligence (weaver's tools) check to attempt to create a *smoke-singed red cape*. On a success, the weaver makes the cape and the feathers are consumed. On a failure, the feathers are destroyed.

Characters can also attempt to harvest the Ausroc's talons by making a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success, a talon is removed. On a failure, the talon is damaged and unusable. The Ausroc has 1d4-1 (minimum 1) intact talons when it is killed. A character can use a talon to attempt to create a *talon of the faux-phoenix* by making a successful DC 15 Intelligence (smith's tools) check. On a success, the smith creates a *talon of the faux-phoenix* and the talon is consumed. On a failure, the talon is destroyed.

SMOKE-SINGED RED CAPE

Wondrous item, uncommon

This cape smells faintly of roasted chicken. The red plumes are burnt black at the tips, leaving them slightly curled. Small harmless sparks fly as the cape rubs against the ground.

While wearing this magic item, you can use an action to cast the *phantasmal killer* spell by flourishing the cape. The being created from the target's mind is made of fire in addition to whatever fears the spell manifests. Once it is used, this property of the cape can't be used again until the next dawn.

TALON OF THE FAUX-PHOENIX

Weapon (any sword or a dagger), rare (requires attunement)

This weapon was forged from a fire-tempered bone talon, infused partially with the Ausroc's unnatural fiery obsession.

While attuned to this weapon you can use a bonus action to speak the command word (Ausroc), causing flames to erupt from the blade. These flames shed bright light in a 40-foot radius and dim light for an additional 40 feet. While the sword is ablaze, it deals an extra 2d6 fire damage to any target it hits. The flames last for one minute or until you use a bonus action to speak the command word again or until you drop or sheathe the sword. Once this property has been used, it cannot be used again until the next dawn.



MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of the Ausroc add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: FLUSHING FIRE

3rd-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 100 feet

Component: S, M (a small partly burnt twig)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

When you cast this spell, raging flames appears in an unoccupied space of your choice within range. Creatures within 10 feet of the flames who can see them must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. If the creature ends its turn in a location where it doesn't have line of sight of the flames, the creature can repeat the saving throw. On a successful save, the spell ends for that creature.

While you are concentrating on this spell you may move the flames 5 feet at the start of your turn.

If a creature enters the same space as the fire or starts their turn within the fire, they take 1d6 fire damage.

BAXTER BRUNDLE

A man of stirge appetites.

In a small town near the Whispering Woods in northern Aundair, a skilled transmuter and minor lord has spent his life and fortune studying lycanthropy. What began as an academic interest for Lord Baxter Brundle, transformed into a full blown obsession with manipulating the supernatural disease to create new strands with desirable properties. In pursuit of this goal, Baxter infected himself with a prototype of a strand he believed would allow him to transform into any number of animals. The test didn't go as Baxter planned and, when he was subsequently attacked by a clot of stirges infesting his home, he became the first and (at present) only **werestirge**.

The lycanthropic infection did more than mutate Baxter's body, it also warped his mind. He became aggressive and single-minded, continuing his experiments unabated and taking even more drastic measures in the name of progress. He used prisoners from the local jail, infecting them with his experimental strands of lycanthropy, even setting some free to see how they would fare in the wild. When his wife discovered the experiments, he used his hideous blood draining abilities to silence her permanently. He blamed her death on one of the werebeasts haunting the region's wilderness. Others who have threatened to expose his research have met similar fates or become experiments themselves.

Recently Baxter became interested in the hereditary elements of his disease. In order to begin trials on that topic, he's spent the last three months courting a local farmer's daughter, Veronica Stock. His abrupt proposal delighted her low-born family but even as she agreed to wed, she sensed a malevolence in her betrothed.

IN OTHER WORLDS

As presented here, Lord Baxter Brundle is in the Eberron setting but he can easily be used in other campaign settings by placing him in any remote village. Other official settings that warrant additional considerations are Ravenloft and Ravnica.

Ravenloft. Dark Powers have taken note of Lord Baxter Brundle and given him his own realm within Ravenloft. In this instance, part of the curse levied on him as a Dark Lord is an inability to spread lycanthropy without the use of transmutation magic—that is, he cannot pass on latent lycanthropy with his own natural weapons and his offspring are born as dire stirges rather than lycanthropes. In this setting, Baxter is obsessed with the idea that his lycanthropy is “flawed” and seeks to correct it.

Ravnica. There is no such thing as a remote village in Ravnica. Instead, Baxter is a member of the Simic Combine and operates in the Undercity. Baxter's goals remain the same although, in this case, he has the full support of his superiors in the Simic Combine. Other guilds are significantly less enthusiastic about his increasing habit of kidnapping and experimenting on their members.

THE HOOK

The poor folk of Brundleton and its surrounding region have suffered for the better part of a decade under a bizarre influx of lycanthropes. The local noble charged with protecting the region, Lord Baxter Brundle, has raised taxes many times over the course of the years to pay for bounties calling for the destruction of these shapechangers. Now, the date of Brundle's marriage approaches and another ravenous lycanthrope is on the loose.

Outside the Brundleton tavern, the Flask and Kettle, a notice alerts residents and travelers passing through of sightings of a werewolf and a generous reward of 500 gold pieces for anyone who can capture the monster, or 100 for killing it, prior to the date of the wedding. Inside the Flask and Kettle, the characters can find plenty of locals willing to talk about the lycanthrope problem.

If the characters succeed in capturing the lycanthrope and hand it over to Baxter, the werewolf confesses that he is working under the orders of the local silversmith, Stathis Argentum, to drum up business. This is a lie, Baxter infected the werewolf with lycanthropy and promised a cure only if the shapechanger implicated the silversmith in a conspiracy to create the pretense of eliminating the town's only blacksmith skilled at silvering weapons.

The characters can learn the truth about Lord Baxter Brundle by questioning the werewolf before handing him over to Baxter with a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check, conversing with the suspicious patrons of the Flask and Kettle with a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check, or come to their own conclusions when the nobleman attempts to imprison and execute Stathis Argentum on the word of the werewolf without a formal investigation or trial.

BAXTER BRUNDLE'S NEXT MOVES

Without the intervention of the characters, Baxter Brundle will marry his betrothed and continue his experiments. His future experiments will focus on three topics: creating new types of werebeasts using his latent lycanthropy strand, testing whether latent lycanthropy is hereditary, and enhancing the virulence of the latent lycanthropy strand.

His efforts to create new types of werebeasts start by importing exotic animals from around the world, which causes him to increase taxes further on the overburdened people of Brundleton. Left to simmer long enough, the locals might turn against the lord resulting in him unleashing his lycanthropes on them.

Exploring the possibility of hereditary latent lycanthropy results in a messy end for his new bride. The exact details of this are best left to the DM to determine what kind of horrible outcome would entertain (rather than alienate) the players.

Finally, when Baxter is satisfied he has perfected his experiments he attempts to unleash his perfected strand of lycanthropy into a highly populated city. There is no rational reason for him to take this course of action, but his increasingly violent and erratic tendencies driven by his own madness compels him anyway.

BAXTER BRUNDLE'S LAIR

Beneath Brundle Manor, Baxter has converted a segment of the family wine cellar into a laboratory where he can perform his experiments. A secret entrance from the wine cellar to the laboratory is found with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) ability check.

Inside the laboratory are a number of horrifying and arcane features. The center of the room holds a large table with a deceased werewolf, on its back with its limbs splayed out, partially dissected. On the far wall, three lycanthropes are kept sedated and in cages awaiting Baxter's next experiment. Strewn everywhere else around the laboratory are books, loose paper notes on magical diseases, and vials of foul smelling dark substances.

LAIR ACTIONS

While fighting inside his lair, Baxter can use lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Baxter takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; he can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Baxter chooses a creature he can see within his lair and a vial within 5 feet of it bursts, splashing onto the creature. The creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw (DC 10) or gain a random strand of lycanthropy.
- Baxter incites his caged lycanthropes to howl and screech. All non-lycanthrope creatures who are

not deafened in the lair must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of their next turn.

- Baxter calls a **stirge** down from the darkened corners of the ceiling. The stirge appears in an unoccupied space within the lair that Baxter can see. The stirge rolls initiative and joins combat the following round.

BAXTER BRUNDLE'S TACTICS

Baxter prefers to avoid fighting if possible and avoid fighting fairly at all costs. If he suspects that the characters, or anyone else, is becoming a credible threat to him he unleashes his captive lycanthropes on the would-be interlopers while he retreats to safety. If he is forced into a confrontation, he relies on spellcraft and his allies until he feels he is losing at which point he will flee. If he is not in danger of being discovered by the locals, he transforms into his hybrid form at the start of a fight and cast spells while flying out of reach of any melee combatants. Baxter only fights to the death if running away is not possible or if all existent strands of his latent lycanthropy have been destroyed.

If you'd like to randomly determine what kind of allies Baxter's brings to a fight, roll on the table below. The table includes how these additional combatants modify the CR of the fight with Baxter.

ADDITIONAL COMBATANTS

1d6	Result
1	8 stirges and a swarm of stirges , +2 CR
2	8 stirges and a wererat , +3 CR
3	swarm of stirges and a werewolf , +4 CR
4	swarm of stirges and a wereboar , +5 CR
5	2d4 stirges and 2 werewolves , +6 CR
6	2d4 stirges , a wereboar and a werewolf , +7 CR

BAXTER BRUNDLE'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I'm not mad—the world is."

Bond. "Nothing will stand in the way of the success of my experiments."

Flaw. "I can outwit and outsmart any adversary."

MINIONS

In addition to those creatures found in the *Monster Manual*, Lord Baxter Brundle sometimes joins combat with a swarm of stirges at his side.

REWARDS

If the characters discover Lord Brundle's secret laboratory, they can obtain a number of specimens that the mad mage was working on. One cabinet containing the bulk of his research is trapped, requiring a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) ability check to notice and avoid. If the trap is triggered, any humanoid within 10 feet of the cabinet must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or contract a random form of lycanthropy using the table below.



BAXTER BRUNDLE

Medium humanoid (human, shapeshanger), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)

Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)

Speed 30 ft. (fly 50 ft. in stirge and hybrid forms)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +5, Int +6, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +6, Investigation +6, Medicine +4, Nature +6, Perception +4

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Senses darkvision 60 ft. (stirge and hybrid forms only), passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan (can't speak in stirge form)

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If Baxter fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Shapeshanger. Baxter Brundle can use his action to polymorph into a stirge-humanoid hybrid or into a stirge, or back into his human form. His statistics, other than his size, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to human form when he dies.

Spellcasting. Baxter is a 7th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mending*, *ray of frost*

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

2nd level (3 slots): *alter self*, *hold person*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *gaseous form*, *slow*, *vampiric touch*

4th level (1 slot): *locate creature*, *polymorph*

The party can also find silvered weapons and medical tools inside the laboratory. There are 1d4 silvered daggers, a silvered rapier, and 2d20 silvered crossbow bolts.

Additionally, the death of Baxter Brundle has a curious effect on his heirloom rapier. If the characters examine his remains they discover the curious appearance of the weapon, *scarlet proboscis*.

POTIONS OF LYCANTHROPY

A cursory search of Baxter's secret laboratory will turn up 1d6 potions while a more extensive search, taking approximately 2 hours, will reveal a total of 3d6 potions. Every potion in Baxter's laboratory causes its consumer to contract a form of lycanthropy. To determine which strand of lycanthropy, roll once on the table below for each potion found.

Actions

Bite (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage and 3 (1d6) acid damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 10) if it is a Medium or smaller creature. Until the grapple ends, Baxter can't bite another target and he has advantage on attacks against the grappled target. If the target is humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with latent lycanthropy. The first time a creature with latent lycanthropy takes damage from a beast after becoming diseased, it becomes a lycanthrope version of that beast.

Blood Drain (Stirge Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and Baxter attaches to the target. While attached, Baxter doesn't attack. Instead, at the start of each of his turns, the target loses 5 (1d6 + 2) hit points due to blood loss. If the target is humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with latent lycanthropy. The first time a creature with latent lycanthropy takes damage from a beast after becoming diseased, it becomes a lycanthrope version of that beast.

Baxter can detach himself by spending 5 feet of his movement. He does so after he drains 30 hit points of blood from the target or the target dies. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach Baxter.

Rapier (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Legendary Actions

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

Attack (Costs 2 Actions). Baxter makes a bite, blood drain, or rapier attack.

Move. Baxter moves up to half his speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Transform. Baxter polymorphs into a stirge-humanoid hybrid or into a stirge, or back into his human form.

POTIONS OF LYCANTHROPY

d8	Lycanthropy
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1	Latent*
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2	Werebear
---	----------

3	Wereboar
---	----------

4	Wererat
---	---------

5	Wereraven**
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6	Weretiger
---	-----------

7	Werewolf
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8	Latent*
---	---------

*The first time a creature infected with latent lycanthropy takes damage from a natural weapon attack of a beast, it becomes a lycanthrope version of that beast.

**For statistics, see *Curse of Strahd*. If this book is unavailable to you, consider this another result for latent lycanthropy.

SWARM OF STIRGES

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	2 (-4)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages –

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny stirge. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Blood Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (4d4 + 3) piercing damage, or 7 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. Additionally, the swarm attaches to the target. While attached, the swarm of stirges doesn't attack. Instead, at the start of each of the swarm's turns, the target loses 13 hit points due to blood loss, or 7 hit points due to blood loss if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

The swarm can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. It does so after it drains 20 hit points of blood from the target or the target dies. A creature, including the target, can use its action and make a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) ability check, detaching the swarm on a success.

SCARLET PROBBOSCIS

Weapon (*rapier*), rare (*requires attunement*)

Enchanted by the death of its former owner, this magic weapon is a finely crafted rapier whose pointed end is stained with blood. No amount of mundane cleaning can remove the stain and when magic is used, the stain reappears after the next sunset.

You gain a +1 to attacks and damage with this magic weapon. When you deal damage to a creature other than a construct or undead with this weapon, you can choose to lodge the blade of the weapon in the creature. While the blade is lodged in this way, the creature takes 10 hit points of necrotic damage due to blood loss at the start of each of its turns. Any creature, including the creature stuck with the blade, can use an action to remove it.

After the blade has been lodged in a creature, this weapon cannot be used again until after the next sunset, when the blade grows out of the hilt in a grotesque (and slimy) regeneration.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic features who participated in the defeat of Baxter Brundle and examine his research can add the following spell to each of their spell lists.

NEW SPELL: BESTIAL TRANSFORMATION

5th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (fur, feathers, and scales from at least five different beasts)

Duration: 1 hour

When you cast this spell on a creature, choose any beast and the target transforms into a hybrid form that merges elements of its normal form and those of the chosen beast. An unwilling creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw to avoid it.

An affected creature gains all of the special senses and movement speeds of the chosen beast and a natural weapon they can use when they make an unarmed strike. This natural weapon's appearance is determined by the traits of the chosen beast and deals 1d8 damage (bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing based on the chosen creature's natural weapons). Finally, the creature has resistance to nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing weapons unless that weapon is silvered.

After the duration of this spell has elapsed, the target gains a level of exhaustion.

If the characters managed to spare Stathis Argentum from falling victim to Baxter's machinations, he happily offers to teach them a long guarded family secret. Any one of the characters who wishes to can spend 1 week learning the following cantrip from Stathis, provided they aided in the downfall of Baxter Brundle.

Characters with the spellcasting or pact magic features can use the spellcasting ability of one of their spellcasting classes.

NEW SPELL: WOLFSBANE

Transmutation cantrip

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a silver piece, which this spell consumes)

Duration: 1 minute

This spell can be cast on a weapon or up to 20 pieces of ammunition. Until the duration of the spell elapses, the weapon or ammunition is silvered. While a weapon is silvered with this spell, its wielder has advantage on saving throws against contracting lycanthropy.

BEAST OF THE ETERNAL BLAZE

A different take on deviled ham.

Stalking the vast wastelands of Avernus within the Nine Hells lives the Beast of the Eternal Blaze, a vicious creature obsessed with sowing as much pain and destruction as possible. Although it enjoys a fulfilling existence slaughtering and torching whoever it can, the Beast has higher aspirations and believes its rightful place is on the Material Plane where it can cause suffering on a much larger scale.

THE HOOK

A few nights ago, deep within Neverwinter Wood, a group of Zariel cultists set out to contact the Nine Hells and gain eternal power and the favor of their archdevil. Unfortunately for them, Zariel has a different idea of what it means to move up her ranks.

The cultists unintentionally summoned the Beast of the Eternal Blaze, a monster bent on causing mayhem and suffering before passing on its soul to a humanoid vessel. Once summoned, the Beast massacred the cultists before rampaging deeper into the forest. A lone survivor, Hercul, emerged and made his way to the Sword Coast where he now spends his days drinking and spreading his story to whoever will listen.

Word has now spread of these events, with hunting parties gathering to see which among them is skilled enough to slay the beast. Although the story has gained much renown, few believe the ramblings of Hercul and doubt they are dealing with anything other than a particularly violent giant boar.

THE BEAST'S NEXT MOVES

Besides death and destruction, the Beast is partially motivated by the idea of eternal life and experiencing rebirth on the Material Plane. At first the Beast was content staying within Neverwinter Wood and killing whoever was foolish enough to search for it, but the Beast soon grew bored. After a few weeks, it moved to the western edge of the forest and attacked travelers along the coast. The Beast studies its targets beforehand looking for anyone who seems evil or speaks Infernal so the Beast can make a deal and be born again (see Heart of Rebirth).

BEAST OF THE ETERNAL BLAZE

Large fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 in fiend form, 12 (natural armor) in giant boar form.

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Condition Immunities charmed

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered.

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Infernal

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Shapechanger. The Beast can use its action to polymorph into a giant boar or back into its true form, a boar-humanoid hybrid. Its statistics, other than its AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Charge. If the Beast moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a target and then hits it with a tusk attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Relentless (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). If the Beast takes 10 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Multiattack (Fiend Form Only). The Beast makes two attacks, one with its tusks and one with its hell fire.

Tusks. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Hell Fire (Fiend Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 60 ft., one creature *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) fire damage.

Legendary Actions

The Beast of the Eternal Blaze can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Beast regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Tusks. The Beast attacks with its tusks.

Infernal Charge (2 actions). The Beast moves up to 20 feet then makes a tusks attack, dealing an additional 1d6 fire damage.

Number of the Beast (2 actions, Boar Form Only).

The Beast gazes at a creature within 40 feet of it. The creature must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or take 27 (6d6 + 6) fire damage and become marked with the Number of the Beast. While marked, the creature has disadvantage on all attacks against the Beast until the end of its next turn.

THE BEAST'S TACTICS

The Beast has become familiar with the forest using the surrounding terrain to gain advantage against any attackers. Hiding in foliage, the Beast attempts a surprise attack using its charge ability to remove someone from the fight immediately.

Once the characters are aware of the Beast's position it switches between its fiend and boar forms to utilize all of its skills during battle. Using its Number of the Beast ability it targets individuals giving the Beast an advantage. Although ruthless, the Beast knows when its defeated. Once the Beast drops below 20 HP, it switches its focus from fighting to retreating. If the Beast escapes, it travels far east to the High Forest where it can stalk different victims.

THE BEAST'S TRAITS

Ideal. "The world is mine for the purpose of spreading destruction and chaos."

Bond. "I am loyal to Zariel, the rightful ruler of Avernus in the Nine Hells."

Flaw. "I am motivated by the idea of being reborn on the Material Plane, a task that I must die to achieve."

REWARDS

Adventurers with a proficiency in Survival can attempt to skin the Beast. They must make a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check, allowing them to salvage 2d6 devil chops, 2d8 infernal rashers, and 1 Heart of Rebirth. On a failure the character is only able to salvage half that amount, apart from the Heart of Rebirth which is gained regardless.

BARBEQUE DEVIL CHOPS

Cooking this recipe requires 1 portion of devil chops, which it consumes, and the use of cook's utensils. To create proper Barbeque Devil Chops, you must succeed on DC 13 Charisma check using cook's utensils.

Success. After you consume the barbeque devil chops you gain 2d8 temporary hit points and, for the next 24 hours, your alignment becomes Neutral Evil. You also gain advantage on the first attack against any good aligned creatures.

Failure. After you consume the barbeque devil chops you gain 1d8 temporary hit points and, for the next 24 hours, your alignment becomes Neutral Evil.

INFERNAL POUTINE

Cooking this recipe requires cook's utensils and the following ingredients, all of which are consumed in the creation of the poutine: potatoes, cheese, and two portions of infernal rashers. To create proper Infernal Poutine, you must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma (cook's utensils) ability check

Success. After you consume the Infernal Poutine you gain 2d6 temporary hit points and, for the next 24 hours, you gain resistance to fire damage and vulnerability to radiant damage.

Failure. After you consume the Infernal Poutine you gain 1d6 temporary hit points and, for the next 24 hours, you gain vulnerability to radiant damage.

HEART OF REBIRTH

The Beast of the Eternal Blaze's heart is its window into the realm of mortals. Consuming the Heart of Rebirth transforms the creature into the Beast after 1d4 + 1 days. Once this happens, the creature gains the ability to shapechange into the Beast's fiend or boar form using its stat block with Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma remaining the same. While in this form the character retains their personality and can shapechange back to their original form using an action, however the character must kill a good aligned creature every 24 hours or the Beast takes over the character permanently and becomes a new Beast of the Eternal Blaze. Once that happens, the character cannot return to normal unless targeted by the *greater restoration* spell or even more powerful magic.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of the Beast of the Eternal Blaze add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: INFERNAL CHARGE

1st-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Instantaneous

When you cast this spell, you burst into infernal flames and move up to your movement speed and, until the end of this turn, each creature that hits you with an opportunity attack takes 1d8 fire damage.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the fire damage creatures take when they hit you with an opportunity attack against you increases by 1d8 for each spell slot level above 1st.

NEW SPELL: NUMBER OF THE BEAST

3rd-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 40 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You gaze at a creature within range and mark them with the number of the beast. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or take 6d6 + 6 fire damage and become marked by the number of the beast until this spell ends. While the creature is marked by the number of the beast, it has disadvantage on attack rolls made against you. The mark ends early if the creature moves out of range of the spell or you can no longer see them.

BLACK NIGHTMARE

I've seen its eyes in the darkness.

The lifespan of a displacer beast isn't known, but it seems these creatures don't stop growing until their death. Some venerable beasts become much bigger and stronger than their kin. These beasts dominate their prides and direct their minions toward hunting blink dogs or humanoids. Meeting one of these elder displacer beasts is rare because they prefer to hide and move at night. However, while looking for entertainment (hunting for the sake of killing), they may move close to big settlements, to be sure to find some humanoids to pursue.

THE HOOK

Along the Trade Way, midway between Daggerford and the Dragonspear Castle, there is a staging-post. It is used by merchants and adventurers to rest or to exchange a tired horse for a rested one. There is a stable, a couple of houses, and a little tavern.

Reaching this place, the adventurers notice that it is much more crowded than expected. Many caravans are stationed around the place and lots of people are moving from one building to the another. Investigating around, the characters easily discover that all the people are merchants and farmers who want to reach Secomber via the path leading through the Misty Forest, but they are all frightened by the presence of a terrible beast, who kills whoever passes. People tell the story of the unfortunate son of the rich Lord Ladbuck: the young boy was swallowed by the beast in one gulp. Those people may also remark that Lord Ladbuck is a rich man and might give a handsome reward for killing the terrible creature.

One caravan stands out from the others. The lead wagon is decorated with precious fabrics, and has a closed cabin. It belongs to the lord. If the characters approach, the servants of the lord intervene for their grieving master. The lord exits the wagon, hearing the conversation outside and tells the story of a terrible black beast which attacked them while crossing the Misty Forest. He promises a reward to those that can kill the monster. A medallion worn by his son is required as proof of success.

BLACK NIGHTMARE'S NEXT MOVES

Black Nightmare, the huge displacer beast, and its two minions, enjoy hunting people while they walk along the paths in the forest. Taking advantage of the dim light under the trees, they surprise their victims.

If the characters don't go to the forest, they soon hear stories about other people killed and may also find some written notice by the rich lord, promising a big reward.

If the adventurers decide to walk through the Misty Forest, the beast will find them, even if they are not actively looking for it.

BLACK NIGHTMARE

Huge monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 157 (15d12 + 60)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +6

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Avoidance. If Black Nightmare is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Displacement. Black Nightmare projects a magical illusion that makes it appear to be standing near its actual location, causing attack rolls against it to have disadvantage. If it is hit by an attack, this trait is disrupted until the end of its next turn. This trait is also disrupted while Black Nightmare is incapacitated or has a speed of 0.

Actions

Multiattack. Black Nightmare makes two attacks with its tentacles.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Legendary Actions

Black Nightmare can take 1 legendary action per turn, choosing from the options below. Black Nightmare regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Claw Attack. Black Nightmare makes a claw attack.

Detect. Black Nightmare makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Move. Black Nightmare moves up to half its speed.

BLACK NIGHTMARE'S TACTICS

Traveling through the Misty Forest, the adventurers come upon a displacer beast in the middle of the path. It isn't Black Nightmare, but one of its minions. This displacer beast runs into the brush using its Dash action to reach the place in which Black Nightmare and another minion are hiding, waiting for their prey. When the characters pursue, Black Nightmare tries to surprise them.

The three displacer beasts try to surround the group of adventurers. They may even try to push the adventurers toward the other members of the pride. If a minion is in distress, Black Nightmare will go to its aid. The pride fights to the death, regardless of the circumstances.

BLACK NIGHTMARE'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I will kill any who enter my territory."

Bond. "My pride of displacer beasts requires my protection."

Flaw. "Shiny items make me curious."

REWARDS

Characters can harvest the corpse of Black Nightmare to gain 2d4 vials of blood.

If the stomach of Black Nightmare is opened, the corpses (or parts of them) of those people that were eaten by the creature may come out. Among them, there are the remaining bones of the lord's young son and his medallion (the *amulet of protection from darts*).

Black Nightmare is big enough to create a *mantle of the night* for one Medium or smaller creature.

AMULET OF PROTECTION FROM DARTS

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This magic amulet deflects missiles. When you are targeted by a ranged weapon attack, you can spend your reaction to reduce the damage you take from that attack by 1d10 + 5.

ELIXIR OF DISPLACING

Creating this consumable item requires 1 vial of blood from a displacer beast, which it destroys, and the use of alchemist's supplies. When you attempt to craft this item, you must make a DC 14 Intelligence (alchemist's supplies) ability check.

Success. When you drink this potion, a magical illusion makes you appear to be standing near your actual location causing attack rolls against you to have disadvantage. If you are hit by an attack, this effect is disrupted until the end of your next turn. This trait is also disrupted while you are incapacitated or have a speed of 0. This effect lasts for 1 hour.

Failure. When you drink this potion, you are poisoned until you take a long rest.

MANTLE OF THE NIGHT

Wondrous item, uncommon

Creating this item requires the leather from Black Nightmare, which it consumes, and the use of leatherworker's tools. Anyone can attempt to craft the item as long as they have the creature's leather. Doing so requires a DC 14 leatherworker's tools ability check.

Success. You have advantage on any Dexterity (Stealth) throw aimed at hiding while you wear this cloak in dim light or darkness.

Failure. The leatherworker fails to create the magic item. The materials are destroyed.

ADDITIONAL REWARD

If the characters have talked with the lord before killing Black Nightmare, they might decide to go back to him and give back his son's medallion. If they do that, the lord will be happy to invite them for a wonderful banquet and he will give them 1,500 gp as reward.



CHEDDAR

AKA *The Big Cheese*

Looking for a reliable scout, a druid with a habit of robbing travelers awakened a rat to aid in her criminal enterprises. When one such traveler gave the rat a piece of cheese, the rat immediately gave up the druid, who was subsequently executed for her crimes. The rat meanwhile, taking the name Cheddar after his new found favorite food, rode with the traveler to the nearby city of Waterdeep where the rodent began a life of crime answering to no one but himself.

THE HOOK

The meteoric rise of the fledgling thieves guild, the Cheesemongers, has cast the criminal underworld of Waterdeep into disarray. The Cheesemongers is primarily composed of rogues and scoundrels who couldn't hack it in more reputable gangs, making their sudden fortune all the more surprising and suspicious. Agents from the Eye, Shadow Thieves, and the Unseen are all scrambling to infiltrate the Cheesemongers to learn their secrets, but so far every spy whose made their way into the new guild has ended up stonewalled or dead.

Of course, the law enforcement of Waterdeep has taken note of the Cheesemongers too. Unlike certain other thieves guilds, the Cheesemongers have no informal relationships within the government, so the City Watch is pursuing information about them more rigorously than they do other criminal organizations. The Watch has found the Cheesemongers distressingly capable of silencing informants, hampering their efforts to learn more.

Depending on which side of the law the party falls on, a representative of one of the aforementioned thieves guilds, or the City Watch of Waterdeep, ask the characters for assistance in infiltrating the Cheesemongers. Their primary interest is in gaining intel on the leader of the group, access to its headquarters, and information about the Cheesemongers' future plans.

THE BIG CHEESE

When Cheddar got to Waterdeep, he quickly established a cadre of rodents who were willing and able to act as his eyes and ears around the city. With a spy network capable of hiding in plain sight, Cheddar hired an actor to serve as his face when interacting with humanoids. With the help of the actor, Cheddar grew the Cheesemongers from a couple of amateur thieves to a dozen or so criminal professionals. In the months that followed, Cheddar had the actor assassinated and now continues to direct the Cheesemongers from the shadows with only a few of his top agents suspecting the truth.

CHEDDAR'S NEXT MOVES

Cheddar is aware that other groups are attempting to infiltrate the Cheesemongers and is growing increasingly paranoid. So far he's managed to root out spies using his own rodent spy network. If the City Watch or any of the thieves guilds ever discover the Cheesemongers are using vermin to outwit them, they'll put countermeasures in place to diminish the Cheesemongers effectiveness. Knowing this, Cheddar spends more of his time orchestrating his rodent-operated information network than directing the Cheesemongers.

That said, Cheddar's early successes have made him ambitious. As his gang continues to rise in prominence he pushes them to take on bigger hauls and gain more territory from other criminal organizations in the city. He's begun to experiment with sending disease-bearing rats into the lairs of his criminal rivals to spread sickness. It's only a matter of time before this tactic creates an epidemic in the poor districts of the city.

CHEDDAR'S LAIR

Cheddar's lair is a 30-foot by 50-foot filthy den in the sewers of Waterdeep. At any given time it houses between three and twenty-four humanoid thieves. Within the lair, the stink of the sewers mixes unpleasantly with the strong smell of cheese. A large table, covered in expensive and exotic cheeses, is easily identified as the source of the second scent. Unnoticed by most who pass through the lair, there are extensive small tunnels surrounding the lair which Cheddar's rodent army uses to come and go unseen.

LAIR ACTIONS

While fighting inside his lair, Cheddar can use lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Cheddar takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; he can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Cheddar commands a **bandit** to reveal itself, appearing in an unoccupied space within the lair. The bandit rolls initiative and joins combat this round.
- Cheddar causes a trap to trigger, choosing a creature he can see within 30 feet of him. That creature must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 piercing damage as they are hit by a crossbow bolt.
- Cheddar commands a **bandit** or **swarm of rats** in his lair to attack. The creature or swarm can move up to its movement speed and make one weapon attack.

CHEDDAR'S TACTICS

Cheddar never willingly joins or stays in a fight. If someone attempts to do violence to him he flees by whatever means are most expedient, using his small size to get into small places his assailants can't follow.

Despite his personal cowardice in the face of physical confrontation, Cheddar uses violence as a tool early and often. When he wants to find out information or take down a rival quietly he sends his rodent minions to overwhelm the target with sheer numbers. When he wants to make a show of force or deliver a message, his humanoid followers join the fight.

Cheddar has no integrity and will happily lie through his teeth to save his life.

CHEDDAR

Tiny beast, chaotic evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 10 (4d4)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Intimidation +2, Sleight of Hand +5

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Thieves Cant

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Keen Smell. Cheddar has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Nimble Escape. Cheddar can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of his turns.

Pack Tactics. Cheddar has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of his allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Rat Speech. Cheddar can understand, and be understood by, rats and related rodents.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or contract a disease. Until the disease is cured, the target can't regain hit points except by magical means, and the target's hit point maximum decreases by 3 (1d6) every 24 hours. If the target's hit point maximum drops to 0 as a result of this disease, the target dies.

Legendary Actions

Cheddar can take 1 legendary action, choosing from the options below. Cheddar regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Bite Attack. Cheddar makes a bite attack.

Call Rats. Cheddar squeaks in rat speech and a **swarm of rats** appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of Cheddar. The swarm takes its turn immediately and on the same initiative count as they were summoned each turn for the remainder of combat.

Move. Cheddar moves up to his movement speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

CHEDDAR'S TRAITS

Ideal. "A heavy wallet makes a light heart."

Bond. "I like being the boss! Better not let them find out I'm just a rat..."

Flaw. "My eyes are bigger than my stomach."

REWARDS

Characters who search Cheddar's liar find 20d10 gp, 2d12 pieces of jewelry (each piece worth 10 gp), and 2d6 cheese wheels (each wheel worth 5 gp).

Cheddar himself can be skinned by making a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check. With 300 gp of additional materials and a successful DC 14 leatherworker's tools ability check, this fur can be crafted into a *cap of the rat king*. A failure on either of these ability checks to skin the rat or craft the cap causes the fur to be destroyed and unusable.

CAP OF THE RAT KING

Wondrous item, rare

This curious, and somewhat repugnant, cap is made from a rat pelt. While wearing this magic item, you can understand, and be understood by, rats and related vermin as if you shared a language.

In addition, you have advantage on Charisma ability checks made against rats and related vermin while wearing this magic item.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of Cheddar add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: DETECT GOLD

1st-level divination (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 action

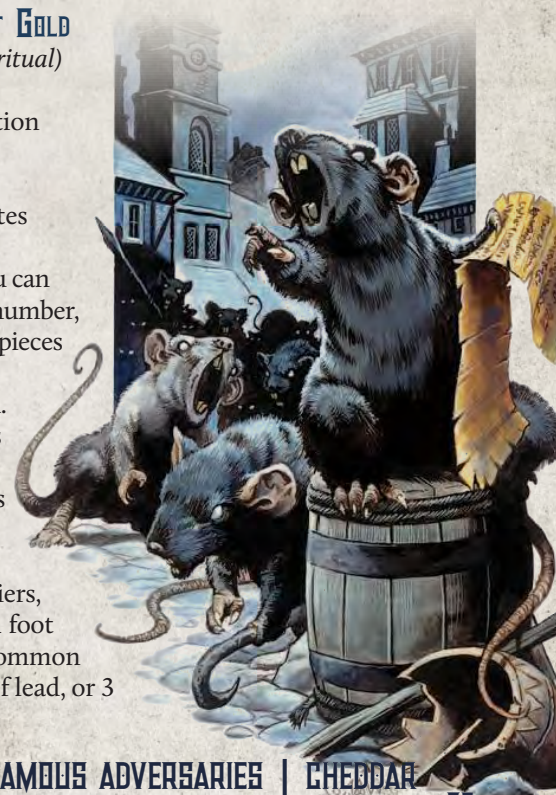
Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: 10 minutes

For the duration, you can sense the presence, number, and location of gold pieces and precious gems within 30 feet of you. If you sense precious gems in this way, you know each gem's value in gold pieces.

This spell can penetrate most barriers, but it is blocked by 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, a thin sheet of lead, or 3 feet of wood or dirt.



CHIEF KLANKLACK

To ko-boldly go where no kobold has gone before.

Just over half a century ago, a modron became stranded in the Storm Horn Mountains of Faerûn. Desperate to get home, the modron created automaton servants to aid in the construction of a massive machine to send it back to Mechanus. After years of toiling, the modron was successful, but left behind a sprawling workshop filled with mechanical traps, constructs, and arcane devices.

Decades passed before a kobold managed, by an unlikely (or “a fortunate”) combination of ingenuity and luck, to bypass all of the workshop’s defenses. From there, the ambitious kobold gradually developed a rudimentary understanding of the wonders the modron had left behind. The kobold kept the workshop a secret for years while she learned to control its advanced defenses.

When she decided she could do no more on her own, she mobilized her automatons to impress local kobold tribes to her service. Her efforts were more successful than she could have anticipated. In addition to creating the largest tribe of kobolds in the region, kobolds from other parts of the world have traveled hundreds of miles to join the legendary Chief Klanklack’s tribe.

As her power grew, so did her ambitions. Chief Klanklack abolished worship of the kobold god, Kurtulmak. Instead, the tribe has deified the lost modron and is making efforts to restart the machine in hope of traveling to Mechanus. Chief Klanklack believes she and her tribe will be welcomed there with open arms.

THE HOOK

The people of Skull Crag are desperate for help and willing to pay. This small mining settlement has had its fair share of troubles in the past but recently its mining operations have been completely paralyzed by—of all things—kobolds. The people of Skull Crag have dealt with kobolds many times over the course of their history, usually with little trouble, but these kobolds are different. They bear mechanical weapons and armor that make them significantly more formidable than other tribes.

Mayor Cenita Stonebreaker sent word to the town’s trading partners that she is willing to pay handsomely for any adventuring or mercenary company capable of handling the kobold threat. Those trading partners are happy to match the sum being offered by Mayor Cenita to ensure the mineral trade resumes quickly, making the total offered reward 1,000 gp. Characters who aren’t motivated by gold may be moved to help the people of Skull Crag out of heroism—over a dozen miners have died at the hands of the kobolds and more were captured. Or they may have an interest in the advanced technology the kobolds are rumored to possess.

If the characters spend any amount of time in Skull Crag as part of investigating the kobold crisis, the people are happy to share everything they know. In their encounters

with the kobolds, they’ve seen the little beasts employ advanced golems, weapons that fire destructive beams of light, and wear mechanical gear which improved their movement and defenses. It’s likely the citizens of Skull Crag, in their fear, will overstate the specifics of the threat, but a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check will help the characters separate truth from fiction.

If the characters investigate Skull Crag at length, they can discover a retired bandit, **Selethia Coppers**, has had an up close and personal encounter with the kobolds and even has one of their weapons. If they speak with Selethia, she is willing to sell the weapon to the characters for 300 gp. She is evasive about how she came to be in possession of the weapon, but with proper motivation will confess to being a trading partner of the kobolds in the past. Unless magically compelled to do so, she will not admit that she personally gave the kobolds information about the location of the mines in current operation by the people of Skull Crag.

KLANKLACK’S NEXT MOVES

If the party doesn’t intervene, Klanklack decides it’s easier to enslave the miners of Skull Crag than rob them. While she pushes the miners of Skull Crag to their limits, she directs her tribe to raid mines farther out for rare jewels and minerals. Any resources she obtains that she doesn’t have a use for she trades with unscrupulous merchants for rare manuscripts on Mechanus and automaton crafting.

Ultimately, Klanklack attempts to open a gate to Mechanus using the machine originally created by the lost modron. Unfortunately for her, the machine was rigged by the modron to self-destruct if anyone ever attempted to use it again. Activating the machine will level a quarter of the Storm Horn Mountains, burying Chief Klanklack and her tribe under the rubble.

KLANKLACK’S LAIR

Chief Klanklack’s lair consists of a series of tunnels, created by the kobolds, that converge on a huge subterranean workshop. The workshop contains technological wonders rarely seen on the Prime Material plane but are ubiquitous on Mechanus: mechanical limbs that manufacture goods out of raw materials, beams of light powerful enough to punch a hole through armor, and more. Most of the advanced devices found in the workshop are infrastructure that can’t be moved.

LAIR ACTIONS

While fighting inside her lair, Chief Klanklack can use lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Klanklack takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; she can’t use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Klanklack chooses a creature she can see within her lair and a crystal lens on the ceiling pivots and fixes on

the creature. A concentrated beam of light blasts out of the lens and the creature must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d8 radiant damage.

- Klanklack calls for reinforcements, causing 2d4 kobolds to join the fray. They roll initiative and join combat this round.
- Klanklack chooses a 30-foot by 5-foot section of the workshop floor that she can see which becomes electrified until the end of this round. Any creature that starts its turn on, or moves through, an electrified space takes 1d6 lightning damage.

KLANKLACK'S TACTICS

It is nearly impossible to encounter Chief Klanklack without first dealing with other kobolds, automatons, and traps. Parties who make their way to the central workshop, where Klanklack spends nearly all her time, are unlikely to encounter her alone. Only those kobolds she has ordained as priests of the lost modron are

CHIEF KLANKLACK

Small humanoid (kobold), unaligned

Armor Class 18 (steel exoskeleton)

Hit Points 72 (16d6 + 16)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +4, Int +6

Skills Arcana +6, Investigation +6, glassblower's tools +6, smith's tools +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Draconic, Modron

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Armored Exoskeleton. Klanklack wears an armored exoskeleton that gives her 100 temporary hit points. She can use the *mending* cantrip to regain these temporary hit points, up to a maximum of 100. Additionally, while in the exoskeleton she counts as a Medium creature. If Klanklack is not wearing her armor, she can summon and don it with an action.

Arcane Artillery. When Klanklack casts the *magic missile* spell, she creates two additional darts.

Arcane Energy Feedback Loop. When Klanklack casts a spell and has less than 100 temporary hit points from her armored exoskeleton, she gains temporary hit points equal to 5 x the level of spell slot expended (to a maximum of 100).

Pack Tactics. Klanklack has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of her allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Klanklack has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

allowed to enter the workshop but she keeps a variety of automatons on hand for research and defense purposes.

Encountered in her lair, Chief Klanklack makes use of her tribe and advanced defenses to dispatch intruders. If she is aware of intruders making their way to the central workshop, she barricades all entrances but one, forcing the unwanted guests to go through a bottleneck while she and her allies bombard the chokepoint with artillery.

In the very rare case she is encountered outside her lair, Klanklack shows significantly more courage than other kobolds. That said, she isn't suicidal and will flee if she believes she's losing the fight and her enemies mean to kill her. If she feels she is cornered and the fight is turning against her, she attempts to parlay with her opponents. While Chief Klanklack is driven by religious fervor, she's not completely unreasonable and willing to negotiate to save her life, her tribe, and her goal to open the gate to Mechanus.

Spellcasting. Chief Klanklack is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following artificer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, mending, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm, detect magic, magic missile, thunderous smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *arcane lock, enlarge/reduce, heat metal, magic mouth, see invisibility*

3rd level (2 slots): *fly, glyph of warding, haste, revivify, tiny servant* ^{XGE}

Actions

Beam Cannon. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 100/300 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d12 + 3) force damage and the creature is pushed back 10 feet.

Flamespitter. Klanklack's exoskeleton belches fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Lightning Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d4 + 1d8 + 3) lightning damage and the creature's movement speed is reduced to 0 until the end of its next turn.

Legendary Actions

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

Attack. Klanklack makes a beam cannon or lightning whip attack.

Cast a Spell (costs 1-3 Actions). Klanklack expends a spell slot to cast a 1st-, 2nd-, or 3rd-level spell that she has prepared. Doing so costs 1 legendary action per level of the spell.

Charge. Klanklack moves up to her speed.



CHIEF KLANKLACK'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I am but a cog in a great machine."

Bond. "The modrons of Mechanus protect and guide me."

Flaw. "I am obsessed with acquiring and understanding technology."

REWARDS

Klanklack's workshop is littered with advanced technology that her kobold tribe wields in a fight. With unlimited time to search the workshop the characters can find 3d12 *beamcasters*, 1d12 *beamcannons*, 3d6 *brightboom orbs*, 3d6 *graviton orbs*, 3d6 *mindmelter orbs*, and 1d6 *orbcasters*.

INFAMOUS ADVERSARIES | CHIEF KLANKLACK

BEAMCASTER

Weapon (*hand crossbow*), *uncommon*

Built from a metal not found on the Material Plane, this weapon superficially resembles a hand crossbow but fires beams of pure light rather than bolts. This weapon can be wielded as a magic hand crossbow that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. Additionally, this weapon does not require ammunition and deals 1d10 radiant damage on a hit, instead of the normal piercing damage for a hand crossbow.

BEAMCANNON

Weapon (*heavy crossbow*), *rare*

Built from a metal not found on the Material Plane, this two-handed weapon superficially resembles a heavy crossbow but fires powerful beams of pure light rather than bolts. This weapon can be wielded as a magic heavy crossbow that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. Additionally, this weapon does not require ammunition and deals 2d6 radiant damage on a hit, instead of the normal piercing damage for a heavy crossbow.

BRIGHTBOOM ORB

Wondrous item, *rare*

Within this glassy orb are roiling dark clouds that emit an occasional burst of light, accompanied by the orb trembling. The orb has 3 charges and regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

The orb can be thrown up to 30 feet, expending a charge when it impacts the ground or a creature and erupts with light and sound. When it does, each creature within 5 feet of the orb must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 thunder damage and be blinded until the end of their next turn. If the orb has no charges remaining when it hits the ground or a creature, it does nothing.

GRAVITON ORB

Wondrous item, *rare*

Within this glassy orb is a thrumming shadowy mass that seems to be forever imploding on itself. The orb has 3 charges and regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

The orb can be thrown up to 30 feet, expending a charge when it impacts the ground or a creature and implodes, creating a forceful vacuum. When it does, each creature within 5 feet of the orb must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 force damage and be restrained until the end of their next turn. If the orb has no charges remaining when it hits the ground or a creature, it does nothing.

MINDMELTER ORB

Wondrous item, rare

Within this glassy orb are tendrils of purple energy, emitting from a central sphere, that dance along the inside of the orb. The orb has 3 charges and regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

The orb can be thrown up to 30 feet, expending a charge when it impacts the ground or a creature and erupts with magical energy. When it does, each creature within 5 feet of the orb must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 psychic damage and the creature is unable to cast spells until the end of their next turn. If the orb has no charges remaining when it hits the ground or a creature, it does nothing.

ORBCASTER

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

When loaded with a brightboom orb, graviton orb, or mindmelter orb, this wondrous item can launch the orb up to a distance of 120 feet. Additionally, this magic item has 6 charges and when you load one of the aforementioned orbs into this magical item, you can expend one of the orbcaster's charges to cause the loaded orb to regain an expended charge. The orbcaster regains 1d6 expended charges daily at dawn.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of Klanklack add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: KLANKLACK'S FULMINATING FIX

1st-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: S, M (disks of copper and zinc wrapped in a rag soaked with salt water)

Duration: Instantaneous

When you cast this spell, you take 1d4 lightning damage and make a spell attack against a creature in range. On a hit, deal 3d4 lightning damage to the target. Each creature within 5 feet of the target is a secondary target and takes 2d4 lightning damage. Each creature within 5 feet of a secondary target is a tertiary target and takes 1d4 lightning damage. If this spell deals damage to a construct, it heals that creature instead.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level, the damage dealt by the spell to the target, secondary targets, and tertiary targets increases by 1d4 for each slot level above 1st.



DIONE THE BEAUTIFUL

The cursed cloud giantess who wanted eternal beauty

A ruined fort on the west bank of River Surbrin has been occupied by a cloud giant so vain that her own kin exiled her from the skies. Dione was so enamored by her own image that she made a deal with a devil to ensure that her beauty would never fade. But the pact resulted in a curse, and now Dione the Beautiful reigns over a silent castle of stone servants, and her vanity can no longer be sated, for admiring her own image would result in her demise.

THE HOOK

The current lord protector of Triboar, **Darathra Shendrel**, has a mission for any brave adventurers that want to gain favors in the eye of the Harpers. The organization is interested in regaining access to one of its old forts on the border of the Savage Frontier, but before sending workers to reestablish dominance over the ruins, they want to make sure that the fort is uninhabited and clear of danger.

Rumors have it that the fort is infested by ghosts, and that loud wails and thunderous steps can be heard from miles away; the citizens of Triboar also say that the skies over the fort are always cloudy and dark.

Darathra disregards these rumors as farmers' fairy tales, but she's willing to generously reward the adventurers for proof that the place is empty.

DIONE'S NEXT MOVES

Dione has found a proper seat in the abandoned fort on the River Surbrin. Many unwary travelers approaching the ruins have met their fate in the petrifying gaze of the giantess. Slowly she's expanding her hunting grounds, and her bitterness towards her kin will drive her to enlarge her domain. Unable to rid herself of her curse, she desires to build a silent, petrified kingdom that will rival the one in the skies that pushed her away.

DIONE'S LAIR

Dione resides in an abandoned fortress, once belonging to the Harpers. The fortress is a large stone structure, almost entirely in ruins with little to no furniture left to determine the previous function of every room.

The center point of the fortress is a circular garden surrounded by a tall colonnaded wall—this is where she will fight any intruders. The large space and the open access to the sky grant her the upper hand, with the chance to escape by flying away if need be.

Only a few of the rooms and hallways are large enough to accommodate Dione, as such many passageways can be used to tread around the fortress unnoticed by the giantess. Almost every portion of the fortress in which she set foot is littered with statues; a keen eye can notice that none of them are in a resting position, every face shows fear, and their arms are extended in fighting or defensive poses.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region surrounding Dione's lair is warped by the giantess's presence, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- Fog lightly obscures the land within 3 miles of the lair.
- There's a noticeable decrease in the population of animals in the region.
- Within 1 mile of her lair, the giantess leaves no physical evidence of her passage unless she wishes to. Tracking her there is impossible except by magical means.

DIONE'S TACTICS

The giantess will fight anyone that comes near her fort. She favors ambushing her prey in the central cloister of the fort. If she senses the arrival of intruders, she uses *control weather* to darken the sky, leaving her hunting grounds in dim light.

During a fight, she makes heavy use of her *fog cloud* to hide from view and surprise any creatures that resist her petrifying gaze. Any creatures that fail the save and fall victim to her curse also become viable ammunition for her ranged attacks.

If near defeat, she attempts to escape, using *misty step* to quickly distance herself, and transform using *gaseous form* if needed.

DIONE THE BEAUTIFUL'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I will rule over a kingdom of still statues."

Bond. "I despise other giants and giant kin."

Flaw. "Nothing and no one is more beautiful than I."

REWARDS

After she's defeated, player characters can recover the *beautiful blade* Dione the Beautiful used in combat.

If Dione is killed without destroying her head, one can try to quickly recover the eyes of the giantess and create a powerful magical object with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) ability check. The extracted eye can be made into the *eye of the medusa* described below.

BEAUTIFUL BLADE

Weapon (greatsword), rare (requires attunement)

This large curved blade was once the prized possession of a cloud giantess. Cursed by a devil, the giantess's bitterness was instilled into the metal, poisoning the sword and anyone it cut. You gain +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. When you hit a creature with this weapon, the attack deals an additional 2d6 poison damage.

Once a day you can extract toxins from the blade, producing 1 vial of poison worth 500 gp or less.

DIONE THE BEAUTIFUL

Huge monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 200 (16d12 + 96)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	14 (+2)	22 (+6)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +6, Cha +7

Skills Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Giant

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Petrifying Gaze. When a creature that can see Dione's eyes starts its turn within 30 ft. of her, she can force it to make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw if Dione isn't incapacitated and can see the creature. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the creature is instantly petrified. Otherwise, a creature that fails the save begins to turn to stone and is restrained. The restrained creature must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn, becoming petrified on a failure or ending the effect on a success. The petrification lasts until the creature is freed by the *greater restoration* spell or other magic.

Unless surprised, a creature can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it can't see Dione until the start of its next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If the creature looks at her in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

If Dione sees herself reflected on a polished surface within 30 ft. of her and in an area of bright light, Dione is, due to her curse, affected by her own gaze.

Innate Spellcasting. Dione's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She can cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *fog cloud*, *light*

3/day each: *feather fall*, *fly*, *misty step*, *telekinesis*

1/day each: *control weather*, *gaseous form*

Actions

Multiattack. Dione makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d6 + 7) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 29 (4d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

Dione can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Dione regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Shortsword Attack or Rock. Dione makes one shortsword attack or uses Rock.

Spell (Costs 2 Actions). Dione casts a spell.

EYE OF THE MEDUSA

Wondrous item, rare

This eye was plucked from a giant monstrosity able to petrify any creature with a single gaze. With an action you can point the eye toward a creature that can see and force it to make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the creature is instantly petrified. Otherwise, a creature that fails the save begins to turn to stone and is restrained. The restrained creature must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn, becoming petrified on a failure or ending the effect on a success. The petrification lasts until the creature is freed by the *greater restoration* spell or similar magic.

Once you use this item, the eye turns milky white and can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Once Dione the Beautiful is defeated, adventurers may choose to make her lair their base or hideout, making use of the broken *teleportation circle*.

BROKEN TELEPORTATION CIRCLE

In the center of the fort's cloister, the adventurers can find the remnants of a permanent teleportation circle inscribed in the stone. The glyphs are marred, but the damage is not deep. A character able to cast the *teleportation circle* spell can spend 8 hours and 50 gp worth of materials to restore the runes, creating a permanent teleportation circle to that location.



EBONBEAK, THE "ORIGINAL" OWLBEAR

Origin of the species ...

*Ebonbeak, first of its name
Bear and owl stolen from its nest
Stitched together by Muglumane
Sleeps deep within the forest*

*Muglumane the Perverse
Took and killed all he'd find
Then with magicks far worse
Took two broken bodies and combined*

*Crafted by lunacy
The first Owlbear now sleeps
Hidden for eternity
In the corpse of Muglumane's keep*

*Muglumane destroyed himself
Perfecting his arcane technique
He now rots as lichen, not elf
His kingdom destroyed, but for Ebonbeak*

—The Tale of Ebonbeak, the first Owlbear, and His creator, Muglumane the Perverse

The origin of the owlbear is one of the most curious in all the realms. Whether an ancient fey-beast or the creation of a mad wizard, it has been debated for generations in magical circles and by drunken adventurers and mages. There was never any proof one way or another, so it was always fun to debate merrily in the glow of an inn's hearth. But what if there was evidence, waiting to be found by some drunkards foolish enough to go looking for it...

THE HOOK

The Verdant Stump is a sole building along the edge of an enormous overgrown jungle. The Stump has become a waypoint for many who adventure in the lands, and its specialty drink, the Elven Armpit, made from the primordial lichen that grows nearby, has been known to heal woes, calm nerves, and wile away many hours. It isn't abnormal to have thirty or forty adventuring types gathering at the Verdant Stump, trading rumors, items, and stories. The most popular story told by the raspy old bard is the Tale of Ebonbeak, the first Owlbear, and its creator, Muglumane the Perverse.

One evening, while you and your party drink with the varied clientele of the Stump, three travelers come crashing through the front door, bloodied and battered: Brakus (a dwarven brawler), Xinora (an elvish priestess), and the unconscious, Kregor the Wise (a gnomish illusionist). Brakus tells everyone the story is true. Ebonbeak has awoken!

Some group must be willing to enter the primordial forest and kill the creature!

ELVEN ARMPIT

Potion, uncommon

A distilled, cloudy green liquor made from the ever present lichen that covers most surfaces of the forest near the Stump. It is somehow both sweet and bitter, and seems to have both alcoholic as well as healing properties. Magical scrutiny reveals it to be a blend of necromantic and transmutation magic. The potion sells for 25 gp in the Stump, 200 gp anywhere else.

When you drink it, you regain 4d4 + 4 hit points. There are also two curious side effects, one well known to the regulars of the Stump, and one unknown. First, for the next 10 hours, you register as undead for the purposes of all spells and magical effects. Secondly, you are also vulnerable to damage dealt by Ebonbeak for 10 hours.

EBONBEAK'S NEXT MOVES

Ebonbeak has been disturbed from his hibernation, and his rage knows no end. Ebonbeak prowls the forest in search of magic to destroy and arcane flesh to devour. He will eventually find his way to the Stump, and those there are not prepared for the magically resilient monstrous Owlbear and the side effects of the Stump's signature drink.

EBONBEAK'S TACTICS

Ebonbeak employs the following tactics...

- Ebonbeak despises Wizards and magic from arcane sources (bards, wizards, and sorcerers), and will do absolutely anything to destroy those sources as soon as Ebonbeak senses them.
- Survival is necessary to Ebonbeak—more so than the eradication of the source of his rage. If a battle becomes too difficult, Ebonbeak does his best to escape, though if cornered, he is wise enough to know there is nothing left but to fight to the death.
- It is entirely reasonable for Ebonbeak to have a small sleuth of owlbeats that have thrived as he slumbered, or perhaps a crazed druid wanting to protect or even feed the unique beast!

EBONBEAK'S TRAITS

Ideal. "All arcane magic must be destroyed."

Bond. "The forest needs me to protect it from arcane meddling."

Flaw. "Once I have the scent of magic, I must destroy it completely."

REWARDS

Hidden deep within the destroyed stones of an ancient keep, the adventurer's can find a scroll case containing *Muglumane's perverse creation*, a new unique spell.

EBONBEAK. ORIGINAL OWLBEAR

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 17 ()

Hit Points 128 (8d12 + 74)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Char +5

Skills Athletics +9, Perception +4

Damage Immunities force

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages All languages

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Arcane Resistance. Ebonbeak has resistance to damage from spells and other magic effects cast by bards, sorcerers, and wizards.

Immutable Form. Ebonbeak is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Inherent Immunity. Ebonbeak has become immune to the force damage from his exposure to the arcane.

Keen Sight and Smell. The owlbear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

Magic Resistance. Ebonbeak has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magic effects of an arcane nature, such as those cast by bards, sorcerers, or wizards.

Innate Spellcasting. Ebonbeak's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). Ebonbeak can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect magic, tongues*

2/day: *shield*

Actions

Multiattack. The owlbear makes three attacks: one with its beak and two with its claws.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 11 (1d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) slashing damage.

Legendary Actions

Ebonbeak can take 1 legendary action, detailed below. A legendary action can only be used at the end of another creature's turn. Ebonbeak regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Thunderous Screech. Ebonbeak screeches a deafening, thunderous roar that can be heard up to 100 feet away. Each creature within five feet of Ebonbeak must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 7 (2d6) thunder damage and be deafened until the end of their next turn.



MUGLUMANE'S PERVERSE CREATION

4th-level transmutation (ritual)

Casting Time: 24 hours

Range: 30 feet

Components: S, M (two living beasts of any kind, rare alchemical liquids and precious gems worth 1000 gp, which the spell consumes)

Duration: Permanent

The casting of this spell destroys two beasts within the spell's range and creates a new creature in their place. Unwilling creatures must make a Constitution saving throw to avoid the effect. The spell has no effect if either of the targets has 0 hit points.

Combining elements of both beasts, the result is a new monstrosity. To create the creature's game statistics, use the following guidelines:

- The monstrosity's size is the larger of the two animals.
- The monstrosity's armor class is the higher of the two animals.
- Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma are always the better of the two beasts.
- The monstrosity has total hit dice equal to the combined hit dice of each animal, the size of the larger hit dice.
- The monstrosity has the higher movement of each movement type the two beasts had.
- The monstrosity has all proficiencies, senses, languages, and abilities of both beasts.
- The monstrosity has all actions of both beasts. Adjust attack bonuses to reflect the new stats.

MAKING MONSTROSITIES

Provided below is an example of the monstrosities that can be created with the *Muglumane's perverse creation* spell. In this example, the spell has been cast on a lion and a mule.

MULELION

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 37 (6d10 + 6)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	3 (-3)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1 (225 XP)

Keen Smell. The mulelion has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pack Tactics. The mulelion has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the mulelion's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Pounce. If the mulelion moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with an attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the mulelion can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Running Leap. With a 10-foot running start, the mulelion can long jump up to 25 feet.

Beast of Burden. The mulelion is considered to be a Huge animal for the purpose of determining its carrying capacity.

Sure-Footed. The mule has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

ENLIGHTENED PIERCER

The piercer, evolved.

Like most dwarven communities, the region around Citadel Adbar contains many tunnels and mines that yield up ore and crystal by the wagon load. Often, these mines push deep into the heart of the earth, passing through long dormant volcanoes and lava tubes. An expedition into one of these deep shafts revealed a creature wholly familiar to the dwarves, yet entirely unexpected in its intellect.

THE HOOK

While mining for gemstones in the mountains north of Citadel Adbar, Skovac Ironpick, Braddock Orechin, and Annyr Oakbuckle came across a particular cave dotted with quartz crystal deposits. Sprinkled among the clear quartz were a myriad of other colors, some not normally native to this region—a rare find indeed! The three dwarves quickly broke out their mining equipment and set about capitalizing on their good fortune.

After extracting a particularly enticing pink quartz crystal, Braddock took his discovery to Annyr, leaving Skovac to mine deeper into the cavern on his own. As Annyr and Braddock were admiring his find, Skovac let out a screech that echoed throughout the cavern. Startled, Braddock and Annyr turned to see Skovac skewered by a long, sharp piece of quartz with a deep blue eye staring back at them menacingly. This mutant piercer had pinned Skovac deep through the torso—not killing him, but making movement all but impossible. Annyr hefted her war axe and charged forward to rescue her fallen friend. As Braddock watched in terror, the piercer's eye glanced to the ceiling and back to the screaming dwarf with a sense of mirth.

Looking up, Braddock saw a half dozen more of the crystal monstrosities plummeting toward his running friend. Before he could call out a warning, four of them drove deep into Annyr, obviously killing her. Though Skovac continued to scream, Braddock could not muster the courage to help him, seeing dozens of more crystals overhead, but not knowing if any of them were camouflaged piercers.

Braddock fled back to the Citadel Adbar with his cowardice and his tale. If these things were as smart as they seemed to be, what would happen if they were allowed to grow to maturity? Ropers were clever enough on their own, but one with heightened intelligence—let alone a whole colony of them—would be quite the danger indeed. They must be eradicated!

In his fear, Braddock has failed to inform his superiors at the Citadel and seeks a resolution to this problem without his superiors learning of his cowardice.

ENLIGHTENED PIERCER'S LAIR

The clutch of eggs—a dozen in total—that spawned this group of piercers was laid in a cavern containing several

shards of quartz crystal growth. After they hatched and grew, they fed on the quartz, the information-retaining properties of which allowed the piercers to learn, strategize, and subtly communicate within their little family. Through each successive generation, the creatures intelligence has grown. Though there are only eight of these piercers inhabiting the cavern, they are the most advanced piercers within their line to date. The enlightened piercers have matured in the cave over decades of generations, mutating and increasing their mental acuity and strength.

LAIR ACTIONS

While an enlightened piercer is in its lair, it can take lair actions as long as it isn't incapacitated. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the enlightened piercer can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects: it can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The enlightened piercer uses the psychic resonance of the cavern to project mental static into the mind of one creature within 5 feet. The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence save or be stunned for one round.
- The enlightened piercer takes the Hide action with a +10 bonus to the roll. This only works if the enlightened piercer is on the ceiling.

ENLIGHTENED PIERCER'S NEXT MOVES

With each successive generation that matures, the hive grows in intelligence and, potentially, in number. If they are not destroyed, their growing intellect makes them an increasing threat to the Underdark and its inhabitants. With their lawful evil nature, they will be more apt to seek out like-minded individuals to ally with as they continue to expand their hive.

ENLIGHTENED PIERCER'S TACTICS

As the colony has grown and fed on the quartz crystal in this cavern, they have formed something akin to a hive mind and gained the ability to strategically formulate their strikes. One enlightened piercer will wait for an individual to get about 50 feet away from its companions, then strike, with the intent to paralyze and injure. While this individual is immobilized and screaming in pain, the other piercers will wait for another of the party to come to the aid of the injured creature before striking en masse.

ENLIGHTENED PIERCER'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I hunger for knowledge."

Bond. "An attack on one piercer is an attack on all of us".

Flaw. "I am the apex predator—there is no prey I cannot kill."

ENLIGHTENED PIERCER

Medium monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 31 (5d8 + 9)

Speed 15 ft., climb 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

Skills Stealth +5

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

False Appearance. While the piercer remains motionless on the ceiling, it is indistinguishable from a normal stalactite.

Spider Climb. The piercer can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Drop. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, one creature directly underneath the piercer. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage per 10 feet fallen, up to 21 (6d6). On a successful strike, the wounded individual must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. Unlike a normal paralyzed individual, the wounded individual can scream out in pain. *Miss:* The piercer takes half the normal falling damage for the distance fallen.

REWARDS

Among the corpses and detritus from the past victims of the enlightened piercers can be a sprinkling of coins and precious gemstones. When gathered up this will total 2,218 gp, 1,920 sp, 719 cp, 3 large rubies worth 100 gp each and a fist sized opal worth 175 gp.

Once slain, the brain of the enlightened piercer, a perfectly clear quartz crystal typically the size of a walnut, may be harvested and crafted into an *ioun stone of intellect*. The proper harvesting of this organ is extremely difficult. The harvester must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check to successfully extract the organ without damaging it and succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence check using jeweler's tools to turn the crystal into an ioun stone. The entire process also requires 5,000 gp in arcane reagents to perform the task.



EYE OF FROST

The scramble for the elusive ring of winter has a new player

Rumor has it that when the original Xanathar felt threatened for power, it shivered in its sleep. As a result, it unwittingly dreamt up a frost-covered eye tyrant, which spawned somewhere in the Sea of Moving Ice. The nascent beholder drifted through the region, growing in power, bending frost giant jarls into submission and raiding white dragon lairs. The creature became known as Eye of Frost.

INSPIRATION

This encounter draws some inspiration from the *Fangbreaker Island* dungeon in the *Neverwinter Massive Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Game*.

THE HOOK

Having had too many close calls with Eye of Frost's minions, Artus managed to get in touch with his former faction, the Harpers, and requested they commission adventurers to hunt down and slay this new icy tyrant.

The Harpers' network of spies in the Sea of Moving Ice have located the cavern complex where Eye of Frost makes its home. They believe the beholder lives in relative seclusion, meeting other creatures only to assign them to search parties. This presents a good opportunity for adventurers to sneak in and fight it.

DM NOTE

Feel free to be as transparent as you need to be about Eye of Frost's traits and lair actions. Preparing for a tactical battle with Eye of Frost is likely to be very fun, and it is not unrealistic for the Harpers' network of spies to have valuable intel. You may even wish for the adventurers to encounter the beholder outside its lair at first, perhaps on one rare occasion where it ventured out to pursue a compelling lead on Artus's location.

EYE OF FROST'S NEXT MOVES

The tyrannical beholder seeks to expand its dominion beyond the Sea of Moving Ice. To do this, it needs the *ring of winter*, a legendary artifact that has been hunted by numerous tyrants for centuries. Under their new commander, dim-witted white dragons and selfish frost giants are more coordinated and efficient in their search for the *ring of winter* than ever before. If Eye of Frost manages to obtain the ring, nothing will stop it from turning Faerûn into its own, icy hellscape.

The *ring of winter* is currently possessed by Artus Cimber, who has been hiding across Faerûn, hoping to keep the ring out of evil hands.

He's been hunted by various arctic foes for centuries, and while he used to easily evade lumbering frost giant search parties, their more coordinated efforts now have him worried.

DM NOTE

While Artus Cimber and the *ring of winter* provide a good backdrop to this adversary's story, neither is necessary to run an encounter with Eye of Frost. If you want to learn more about Artus and the *ring of winter*, check out the *Tomb of Annihilation* adventure.

EYE OF FROST'S LAIR

Eye of Frost's lair is a vast cavern complex located in the frigid lands of the Sea of Moving Ice. He usually dwells in his sanctum: a large, circular cavern located at the highest elevation inside the lair and accessible only through a long, vertical tunnel. The sanctum is at least 150 feet in diameter, with a 200-foot-high ceiling. The walls and ceiling are all covered with protrusions of black ice (see the "White Squall" lair action and "Regional Effects" below).

If you wish to further illustrate the map, refer to chapter 1 in *Volo's Guide to Monsters* for a sample beholder lair and re flavor it to fit an arctic environment. For example, you might wish to replace **hobgoblins** with **ice mephits**, and **ogres** with **ice spiders**.

If encountered in its lair, Eye of Frost has a challenge rating of 15 (13,000 xp).

LAIR ACTIONS

While fighting in its lair, Eye of Frost can invoke its ambient magic to take lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Eye of Frost can cause one of the following effects:

- **White Squall.** Strong gusts of wind emanate from all of Eye of Frost's eyestalks, extending in all directions around it. Each creature within 120 feet of Eye of Frost that is not behind total cover must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be pushed back up to 60 feet. If this causes a creature to hit a wall of black ice, the creature takes 9 (2d8) piercing damage per 10 feet it moved.
- **Pillars of Permafrost.** Eye of Frost magically causes up to six pillars of ice to burst from places on the ground it can see within 120 feet of it. Each pillar is 5 feet square and has a height of up to 30 feet. If a pillar is created under a Medium or smaller creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or become trapped in the ice. While trapped, the creature is incapacitated and suffocating. It remains trapped until rescued. Creatures who succeed on the saving throw can move to the nearest unoccupied space within 5 feet of the pillar.

Each pillar has AC 5, 30 hit points, immunity to cold and psychic damage, and vulnerability to fire damage. When reduced to 0 hit points, the pillar melts away and the creature trapped inside is freed. The pillars otherwise last until destroyed and can potentially be

used as a source of cover (e.g., from the Call of Winter lair action; see below).

- **Call of Winter.** Eye of Frost magically teleports to a location of its choice within the lair and unleashes a magical blast of cold air rippling out in a 120-foot radius centered on itself. Each hostile creature in the lair must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature with at least three-quarters cover from a pillar of permafrost has advantage on the saving throw.

Eye of Frost can't repeat an effect until they have all been used, and it can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region surrounding Eye of Frost's lair is warped by its unnatural presence, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- The walls within the cavern complex of Eye of Frost's lair are dotted with sharp protrusions of black ice.
- Creatures within 1 mile of Eye of Frost's lair sometimes feel as if they are being watched, even when they aren't.
- When Eye of Frost sleeps, minor warps in reality occur within 1 mile of its lair and then vanish 24 hours later. An eerie trinket might appear where none existed before, harmless frost might coat a statue, and so on. These effects apply only to natural surfaces and nonmagical objects that aren't on anyone's person.

If Eye of Frost dies, these effects fade over the course of 1d10 days.

EYE OF FROST'S TACTICS

Eye of Frost is a brutal opponent in its lair, and can't be fully destroyed outside its lair. It uses its eye rays and lair actions to disrupt its enemies' action economy and force them to move to spaces that are tactically sub-optimal. For example, if its enemies are spread around and it can use its hypothermic ray, it targets someone who is farthest away from the rest of the group, because other members of the party must get close and provide their body heat to restore their fallen comrade. Spellcasters are most likely to be targeted by this ray.

Eye of Frost uses its central eye's ability to sap resistance and immunity to cold damage early in a fight.

The beholder is also extremely wary of entering melee and does its best to stay at range. If a creature does manage to get into melee with the beholder, refer to the "Climbing Onto Another Creature" variant action explained in chapter 9 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

EYE OF FROST'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I aspire to make Toril my empire of everlasting ice."

Bond. "I must obtain the *ring of winter*."

Flaw. "I am very quick to take offense."

INFAMOUS ADVERSARIES | EYE OF FROST

ICE SPIDERS

Ice spiders were first introduced in Storm King's *Thunder*. Their statistics are presented below for convenience.

An **ice spider** has the statistics of a **giant spider** with the following changes:

- **Skills.** The ice spider has proficiency in the Stealth skill (+5 bonus).
- **Damage Resistances.** The ice spider has resistance to cold damage.
- **Modified Action: Web (Recharge 5–6).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. While restrained in an ice spider's web, a creature takes 1 cold damage at the start of each of its turns. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to poison, and psychic damage).



EYE OF FROST

Large aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 213 (25d10 + 76)

Speed 0 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +7, Cha +9

Skills Perception +12

Damage Immunities cold

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Eye of Cold. As a bonus action on its turn, Eye of Frost can point its central eye to create an area of chilling cold in a 150-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature gains vulnerability to cold damage. If the target was resistant to cold damage, it loses that resistance on a failed save, and a creature with immunity to cold damage that failed the save now only has resistance to cold damage.

Legendary Resistance (1/day). If Eye of Frost fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. If Eye of Frost is reduced to 0 hit points outside its lair, its essence travels back to its lair and causes Eye of Frost to reform within 1d10 days. Eye of Frost can only die if reduced to 0 hit points in its lair.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one beast or humanoid. *Hit:* 14 (4d6) piercing damage.

Eye Rays. Eye of Frost shoots three of the following magical eye rays at random (reroll duplicates), choosing one to three targets it can see within 120 feet of it:

1. **Charm Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed by Eye of Frost for 1 hour, or until Eye of Frost harms the creature.

2. **Hypothermic Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed for 1 minute. The creature remains paralyzed until its ends its turn within 5 feet of another non-incapacitated creature, or fire, of the same size as the creature or larger. This ray has no effect on undead and creatures immune to cold damage.

3. **Fear Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

4. **Slowing Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the target's speed is halved for 1 minute. In addition, the creature can't take reactions, and it can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

5. **Conjuration Ray.** This ray targets an unoccupied space of Eye of Frost's choice within range. An **ice spider** appears in that space and fights in Eye of Frost's defense, acting on Eye of Frost's turn.

6. **Telekinetic Ray.** If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or Eye of Frost moves it up to 30 feet in any direction. It is restrained by the ray's telekinetic grip until the start of Eye of Frost's next turn or until Eye of Frost is incapacitated.

If the target is an object weighing 300 pounds or less that isn't being worn or carried, it is moved up to 30 feet in any direction. Eye of Frost can also exert fine control on objects with this ray, such as manipulating a simple tool or opening a door or a container.

7. **Blinding Frost Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become blinded for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

8. **Petrification Ray.** The targeted creature must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature begins to turn to statue of ice and is restrained. It must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified until freed by the *greater restoration* spell or other magic.

9. **Chain Frostbite.** A beam of cold energy darts toward one creature of Eye of Frost's choice. Additional rays then leap from the target toward up to three other secondary targets of Eye of Frost's choice within 30 feet of the first target. Each target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the primary target takes 27 (6d8) cold damage, the secondary targets take 13 (3d8) cold damage each, and all targets have disadvantage on their next weapon attack roll. Targets who succeed on the saving throw take half as much damage and do not have disadvantage.

10. **Black Ice Ray.** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 27 (5d10) piercing damage and 27 (5d10) cold damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, its body is sliced into several pieces by the black ice and it dies.

Legendary Actions

Eye of Frost can take 3 legendary actions. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Eye of Frost regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Eye Ray. Eye of Frost uses a random eye ray.

An **ice spider queen** has the statistics of a **giant spider** with the following changes:

- **Armor Class.** The ice spider queen has an AC of 14.
- **Hit Points.** The ice spider queen has 44 (4d10 + 4) hit points.
- **Skills.** The ice spider queen has proficiency in the Stealth skill (+5 bonus).
- **Damage Resistances.** The ice spider queen has resistance to cold damage.
- **New Trait: Cold Aura.** Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the queen takes 5 (2d4) cold damage.
- **Modified Action: Web (Recharge 5–6). Ranged Weapon Attack:** +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. **Hit:** The target is restrained by webbing. While restrained in the ice spider queen's web, a creature takes 2 (1d4) cold damage at the start of each of its turns. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to poison, and psychic damage).

REWARDS

Roll on the “Challenge 11-16” treasure hoard table in chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to determine the contents of the treasure uncovered in Eye of Frost's lair.

Additionally, Eye of Frost and its lair can be harvested for valuable parts by the characters. If a reward refers to crafting a magic item, refer to the crafting rules in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (chapter 6) or *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* (chapter 2). The following parts can be harvested by the party after defeating Eye of Frost.

- Eye of Frost has ten eye stalks, each requiring a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) ability check to harvest. On a failure, the eye stalk is destroyed. A character who wishes to remove an eye from an eye stalk must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check. On a failure, the eye and the eye stalk are destroyed.
- Eye of Frost's central eye can be harvested on a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Medicine) check. On a failure, the central eye is destroyed.
- Black ice shards can be harvested from Eye of Frost's lair. The lair contains 1d10 x 100 black ice shards. To harvest the black ice shards, the character must make a DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, gaining 100 black ice shards on a success.

Using these parts, the party can craft the following magical items.

Black Ice Weapon. Using black ice shards and a weapon, a character must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence checking using alchemist's supplies to create a *black ice weapon*. On a failure, the shards are destroyed but the weapon is not. The number of shards required to turn an object into a *black ice weapon* depends on the object being converted: 200 black ice shards to convert a martial melee weapon, 150 shards to convert a simple melee weapon, and 25 shards to convert a single piece of ammunition.

Potion of Clairvoyance. By placing one of Eye of Frost's eyeballs, removed from the eyestalk, into a vial of cold water and kept stoppered for 7 days, the liquid turns into a *potion of clairvoyance*.

Robe of Eyes. Using five of Eye of Frost's eyes, removed from their eyestalks, a character must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity check using weaver's tools to create a *robe of eyes*. On a failure, 1d4 of the eyes are destroyed.

Staff of Arctic Summoning. Using an eyestalk from Eye of Frost, a character must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity check using woodcarver's tools to make a *staff of arctic summoning*. On a failure, the eyestalk and the eye inside are destroyed.

Staff of the Ice Tyrant. Using an eyestalk and central eye from Eye of Frost, and 50 black ice shards, a character must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity check using woodcarver's tools to make a *staff of the ice tyrant*. On a failure, the central eye is destroyed.

BLACK ICE WEAPONS

Any melee weapon or ranged ammunition, very rare (requires attunement)

A weapon crafted from black ice deals an additional 1d6 piercing and 1d6 cold damage on a successful hit. The weapon ignores any resistance to cold damage a target might have.

STAFF OF ARCTIC SUMMONING

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a druid)

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. While holding it, you have a +1 bonus to spell attack rolls.

While holding the staff, you can use an action to cast a special version of the *conjure animals* spell, choosing from the options below:

- Eight owls, bloodhawks, or giant owls
- Four ice mephits or wolves
- Two brown bears, dire wolves, or ice spiders
- One griffon, ice spider queen, polar bear, or saber-toothed tiger

Once this property of the staff is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

STAFF OF THE ICE TYRANT

Weapon (quarterstaff), legendary (requires attunement by a druid, sorcerer, warlock, and wizard)

This staff has all the properties of a *staff of frost* in addition to the following properties:

Creeping Cold. As an action, you can cause a mist of chilling cold to emanate from the staff in a 150-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature gains vulnerability to cold damage. If the target was resistant to cold damage, it loses that resistance on a failed save, and a creature with immunity to cold damage that failed the save now only has resistance to cold damage.

Sentience. The *staff of the ice tyrant* is a sentient lawful evil weapon with an Intelligence of 18, a Wisdom of 15, and a Charisma of 19. It has hearing and darkvision out to 120 feet.

The weapon can speak, read, and understand Common, Draconic, Giant, Deep Speech, and Undercommon, and can communicate with its wielder telepathically. Its voice is deep and authoritative.

Personality. The staff speaks in a belligerent, imperious tone, as though it is accustomed to being obeyed.

The staff's purpose is to obtain the *ring of winter*. It desires for its owner to wear the ring and bring an everlasting ice age to Toril. If the staff's owner does not seek out the ring of winter, or does not use it to dominate Toril, the staff attempts to dominate its wielder (see "Conflict" under "Sentient Magic Items" in chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the Spellcasting or Pact Magic feature who participated in the defeat of Eye of Frost can add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: PILLAR OF PERMAFROST

8th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You cause a pillar of ice to burst from a point on the ground that you can see within range. The pillar is 5 feet square and up to 30 feet tall. If a pillar is created under a Medium or smaller creature, that creature must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or become trapped in the ice. On a success, the creature can move to the nearest unoccupied space within 5 feet of the pillar.

A trapped creature is incapacitated, has total cover from attacks and other effects outside the pillar, and must make a Constitution saving throw at the start of its turn. On a failed save, the creature loses its breath and is suffocating for as long as it remains in the pillar.

Each pillar has AC 5, 30 hit points, immunity to cold and psychic damage, and vulnerability to fire damage. When reduced to 0 hit points, the pillar melts away and the creature trapped inside is freed rescued. Otherwise, the pillar lasts until you summon a new one (see below) or until the spell ends.

As an action on your turn, you can cause another pillar to rise up from a different point on the ground that you can see within range. If a previous pillar is still intact, it instantly melts away when you create a new one.



GIANT CRAWLING CLAW

Let's give a big hand for this next adversary.

A sea hag can be a cruel and vile creature, evil and manipulative by herself. When she comes together with two of her sisters, the coven gains even greater power and a darker mixture of imaginative, foreboding machinations. A mature coven is powerful enough to even take down a trio of giants.

On a small island chain just off the coast, near the small town of Sangrenox, a coven of three sag hags has lived for a number of years. Long have they held sway over this small island chain, luring in and killing sailors and fisherman that ventured too near their territory. When three hill giant brothers roamed too close to their lair, the sisters plotted and schemed against them. They first appeared to one brother as a beautiful maid, tempting him with promises of feasts and splendor. The next they fed lies of the other two plotting to kill him. To the last, they told a false prophecy in which he would rise during the fall of the giant Ordning, if only he had the strength to take his legacy by force. Just as the coven planned, the three brothers came to blows. A great battle was joined, brother against brother, until only one was left alive, broken and bleeding. From this last giant, the sea hags performed a necromantic ritual, severing the hand of this surviving, murderous brother to serve their will and whimsy.

THE HOOK

One of the local fisherman from Sangrenox sailed too close to the hag's island just as a large storm rolled in. He sought shelter on the island until the storm blew over and there spotted the giant crawling claw. Terrified to his core, he jumped back in his boat with all speed, abandoning all his equipment in his haste. When the storm passed, he returned to the spot to find the giant hand of death still roaming the area. Unable to retrieve the means to make his living, he desperately seeks the characters' assistance.

GIANT CRAWLING CLAW'S TACTICS

The Giant Crawling Claw can remain motionless for as long as it needs to, often appearing as a grotesque trophy or throne. When it goes into motion, it can travel at a very high rate of speed, often surprising its opponent. With only the slightest of motion, the Giant Crawling Claw can make a deadly leap attack upon a victim, crushing them or knocking them prone. As with the normal sized creature of the same name, it cannot be turned as normal undead can.

GIANT CRAWLING CLAW'S NEXT MOVES

The hags of the island have created a great tool of speed and intimidation in this monster. Their confidence and cruelty continues to grow and if the party is unable to destroy the beast, the hags' next target for terror and destruction will be the town of Sangrenox itself.



GIANT CRAWLING CLAW

Large undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 42 (5d10 + 15)

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	9 (-1)	4 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages Understands Common and Giant but cannot speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Turn Immunity. The giant claw is immune to effects that turn undead.

Standing Leap. The giant claw has a long jump up to 30 feet and its high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a moving start.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning or slashing damage (claw's choice).

Deadly Leap. If the giant crawling claw jumps at least 15 feet as part of its movement, it can then use its action to land in a space that contains one or more creatures. Each of those creatures must succeed on a DC 16 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (target's choice) or be knocked prone and take 14 (3d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage. On a successful save, the creature takes only half the damage, isn't knocked prone, and is pushed 5 feet out of the giant claw's space into an unoccupied space of the creature's choice. If no unoccupied space is within range, the creature instead falls prone in the giant claw's space.

GIANT CRAWLING CLAW'S TRAITS

The Giant Crawling Claw is bound to the will of its masters and has no ideal, bond, or flaw of its own.

REWARDS

After it's defeated, the giant crawling claw has 1d6-1 fingernails that remain intact. The fingernails can be pried off with a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check then treated with 10 gp worth of alchemical oils to create a bottle of adamantine glaze. Converting the fingernails to the adamantine glaze requires a successful DC 12 Intelligence (alchemist's supplies) check, otherwise the fingernail and the materials are destroyed. Each bottle of adamantine glaze can be applied to a weapon or 20 pieces of ammunition to give that weapon a permanent adamantine coating.

Though the creature is dead, the strength of the hill giant remains in the essence of the hand. If the characters make a successful DC 14 Survival check, they can harvest the skin from the monster. Any creature proficient with leatherworker's tools can fashion the skin into a *belt of hill giant strength*.



GRAND SABAAR

This is literally a thorny issue

The awakening of a tree is a vanishingly rare event, requiring decades of saturation with magic to happen at all. Even rarer is an awakening in terrain where few plants can grow: a desert. Usually, vegetation in a dry environment is short-lived, but saguaros are a notable exception. They need centuries to develop their multiple arms and in the meantime they also grow in height and weight, reaching up to 80 feet and 5000 pounds. One such giant of the desert, soaked in the weave of magic that flows around it, has awakened and become known as Grand Sabaar.

THE HOOK

While traveling in the nation of Calimshan, either marching along the borders of the Calim Desert or by navigating the Shining Sea, the adventurers reach the city of Calimport. The city offers almost anything in trade and it's well known for having the rarest goods of the deserts. An exceptional product is the nectar of saguaros flowers, which finds use in the production of the most effective beauty creams. Thus, it is not surprising when the adventurers find **Lady Kochooma** screeching in the middle of the street after discovering her supply of cream is at an end. She is an old woman, doing her best to defeat the passage of time. Her blonde hair, slim figure, and short skirt are convincing at a distance, but a closer look reveals deep wrinkles, her skin ruined by too many trials of rejuvenation.

Her shrieks echo through the city and she pleads for help from any adventurer who comes near. If given opportunity, she explains a terrible and gigantic creature has made its lair in the oasis where her precious saguaros grow, and no one can collect the nectar she needs for her beauty treatments. Lady Kochooma is ready to offer anything to rectify the situation.

GRAND SABAAR'S NEXT MOVES

Grand Sabaar always remains close to a group of 2d6 saguaros, each having a 50% chance of having one flower. Grand Sabaar is not immediately hostile to creatures passing through the oasis, but its demeanor quickly changes if the interloper deflowers one of the saguaros or causes them harm in any other way.

During the day Grand Sabaar is motionless, basking in the sun. It moves only after sunset, when the flowers of the saguaros blossom. At that time, it walks among the plants, physically inspecting each one as it talks to them. Grand Sabaar has no grand plans beyond the preservation and protection of its oasis.

GRAND SABAAR'S TACTICS

Most of the time Grand Sabaar sits among the saguaros, exploiting its False Appearance trait to blend in. If someone touches one of the saguaros, Grand Sabaar reacts with a slam attack, if the target is close enough, or with its thousand needles attack if not.

When in a good mood, Grand Sabaar can be talkative, but adventurers cannot easily convince it to give them a saguaro flower or to leave the oasis. However, tricking it into leaving for another oasis in need of protection could be an effective ploy for a good liar.

When engaged in combat, Grand Sabaar prefers its slam attack. When more than one Grand Sabaar's spawn is on the battlefield, they prefer to attack the same enemy. Grand Sabaar (or any spawn) does not leave the saguaros unprotected if there is an evident danger. Hence, running away from battle is not an option for this creature.

GRAND SABAAR'S TRAITS

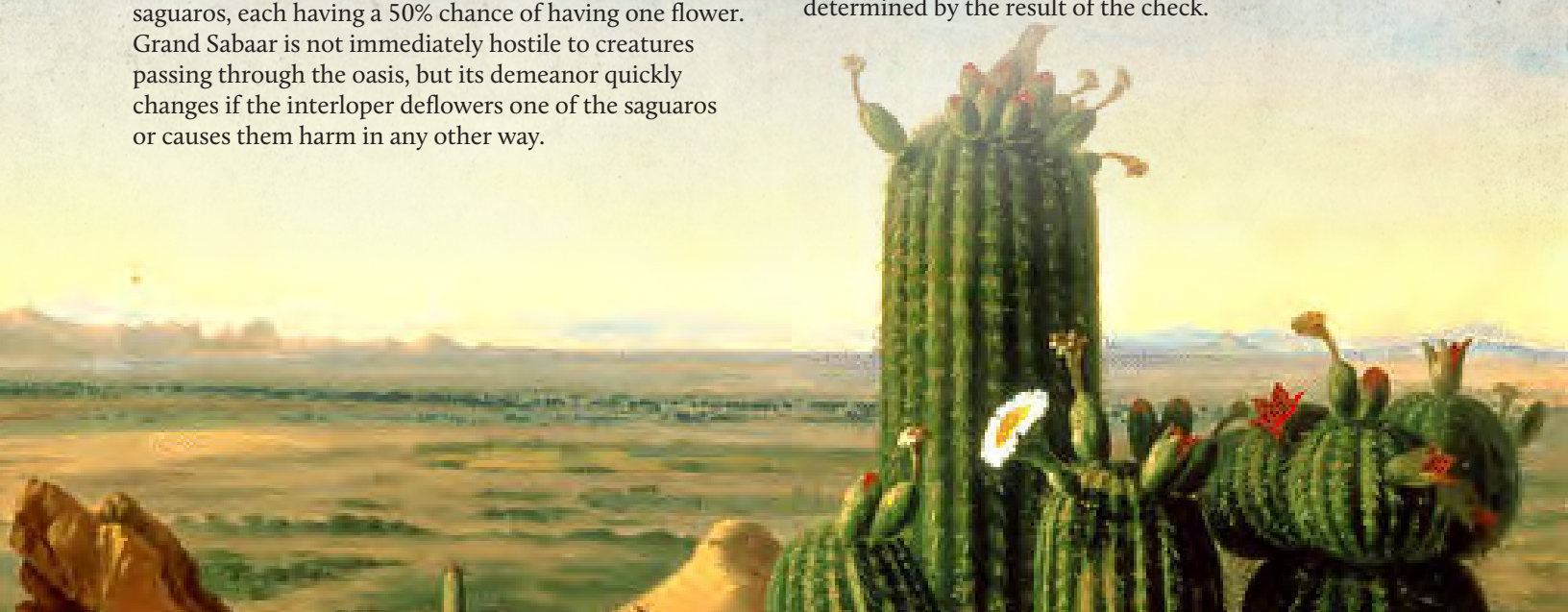
Ideal. "It is my duty to preserve the Calim Desert from those who would abuse it."

Bond. "The saguaros of the oasis are under my protection."

Flaw. "I am quick to violence when someone disrespects or defiles my home."

REWARDS

If defeated, searching the remains of Grand Sabaar will reward the characters with 1d4 + 1 flowers. With an Intelligence (Nature) check, the characters can try to sap the creature, receiving an amount of Grand Sabaar's sap determined by the result of the check.



GRAND SABAAR'S SAP

Intelligence
(Nature) check **Result**

10-13	1 vial of Grand Sabaar's sap
14-17	1d4 vials of Grand Sabaar's sap
18-21	1d4 + 1 vials of Grand Sabaar's sap
22+	1d4 + 2 vials of Grand Sabaar's sap

GRAND SABAAR'S SAP

Grand Sabaar's sap is an odorless, watery white liquid. Drinking it does nothing, but pouring it on a huge or smaller plant causes it to come to life. Your DM chooses statistics appropriate for the awakened plant, such as the statistics for the **awakened shrub** or the **awakened tree**. The awakened plant is friendly to you. The plant remains animate for 8 hours or until it is reduced to 0 hit points, at which time it takes root if possible and becomes a normal plant.

GRAND SABAAR'S FLOWERS

While the restorative properties of a saguaro's flower are doubtful at best, the weave of magic has granted Grand Sabaar's flowers true healing powers. Grand Sabaar has 1d4 + 1 flowers on its body, split among its spawns, if any.

Each Grand Sabaar's flower has the following properties.

- Eating a Grand Sabaar's flower ends the poisoned condition and any disease afflicting the consumer.
- The Grand Sabaar's flower can be used to replace the material components for the *greater restoration* spell but is consumed in the process.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the cleric, druid, or ranger spellcasting feature who participated in the defeat of Grand Sabaar add the following spell to each of those classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: THOUSAND NEEDLES

5th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a cactus needle)

Duration: Instantaneous

A steady stream of needles sprays from your extended hand to a target you can see within range. The targeted creature must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 1d100 piercing damage.

ADDITIONAL REWARD

Lady Kochooma will happily pay 100 gp for each saguaro flower the characters are willing to sell her.

GRAND SABAAR

Huge plant (cactus), chaotic good

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 138 (12d12 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	8 (-1)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Druidic, Sylvan

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

False Appearance. While Grand Sabaar remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal cactus.

Siege Monster. Grand Sabaar deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

Multiattack. Grand Sabaar makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage plus 6 (1d10) piercing damage.

Thousand Needles (Recharge 5-6). Grand Sabaar sprays a steady stream of needles at a target it can see within 60 feet of it. The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d100 piercing damage.

Reactions

Split. When Grand Sabaar, or a Grand Sabaar spawn that is Medium or larger, takes a critical hit from an attack that deals slashing damage and is not reduced to 0 hit points, it splits into two Grand Sabaar spawns. A Grand Sabaar spawn has hit points equal to half the original creature, rounded down. Grand Sabaar spawns otherwise have the same statistics as Grand Sabaar, except they are one size smaller than the original creature.



JABBERKOTH, THE DECAYING HORROR

“Let the Jabberkoth serve as an object lesson in the follies of necromancy, one which, sadly, has claimed many lives.”

The horror known as the Jabberkoth was a failed attempt to ascend a dragon into subservient undeath—to create and bind a dracolich. A necromantic cabal lured a copper wyrm named Ancalakoth into a trap by kidnapping the dragon’s human friends. The dragon was then taken to the cabal’s lair, where they began the rite of unholy binding and apotheosis. As the ritual commenced, however, a band of heroes breached the cult’s lair to rescue the dragon and his friends, who were to be sacrificed in the ceremony.

As the heroes battled their way to the heart of the cabal, the interrupted ritual released a storm of necrotic energy that ripped through the chamber, decaying both flesh and stone—the dragon at the epicenter. As the magic washed over Ancalakoth, his gleaming scales withered to a dead gray and his keen mind rotted into blackness. Trapped within a decomposing body and warped by terrible magic, Ancalakoth’s personality faded until all that remained was a mad and terrible hunger, honed with the predatory instincts of a dragon. The undead thing rampaged through the chamber, slaughtering all who drew breath. No living thing survived.

But somewhere within the putrid husk of the Jabberkoth is the once noble spirit of the copper dragon, trapped and rotting.

THE HOOK

The Jabberkoth is a growing evil. Its malignant presence decays plants and animals, and those killed by its rotting breath rise as undead. If not stopped, this horrific monstrosity will cause an undead plague.

The few survivors of its sudden attacks have witnessed the foul Jabberkoth suddenly gain lucidity and speak in draconic before devolving once more into mindless brutality. If characters who hear this succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Insight) check, they can deduce some part of Ancalakoth must remain inside the horrid thing (see **Rousing the True Dragon** sidebar).

The noble dragon Ancalakoth does not deserve the fate forced upon him. Buried deep within the rotting mind of the Jabberkoth is the dragon he once was, mere faded whispers now, but still reverberating. Clever roleplaying may draw out the dragon’s true self, which wishes to be released from his horrific state. If the heroes manage to vanquish the Jabberkoth, they may pursue a quest to cleanse the dragon’s body and raise him from the dead. This is not easily accomplished, however.

CLEANSING AND RESURRECTING ANCALAKOTH

The process to purify and raise a dragon from the curse of undeath should require several rare items and a special location. A rare location could be a place where

a mortal ascended to godhood, or an ancient dragon graveyard. Here are a few suggestions for rare items:

- Phoenix ashes (phoenixes are native to the planes of Ravnica and the Elemental Plane of Fire, among others).
- An object of the Material Plane touched by a deity of healing (this could be as simple as the ground walked upon by the avatar of such a god or goddess).
- Tears of an angel of planetar standing or higher.
- A seed or sap from a world tree.
- Water from a well of life.
- A scroll or item, such as an artifact, capable of casting *true resurrection*.

Once several rare or unique items have been obtained, they must be added as material components to *true resurrection*. If purified and brought back to life, Ancalakoth’s gratitude will be matched only by his loyalty to the heroes, who will have earned a friend for the rest of their lives. The traditional sense of superiority that is fundamental to a dragon’s nature is not present when Ancalakoth interacts with those who have saved him. For younger versions of the Jabberkoth, consider making the quest to cleanse and revive Ancalakoth appropriate to the party’s level in terms of difficulty and items required to collect.

SCALING THE JABBERKOTH AND SAVING ANCALAKOTH

While the default Jabberkoth is built from an adult dragon, Ancalakoth could have been a wyrmling or young adult who was captured by the cabal to be experimented on as a test to see if the ritual could create and bind a dragon in undeath before they wasted time and resources on an older dragon.

Add up all the character levels in the group and consult the chart below for adjusting the combat difficulty.

15-20, wyrmling version of the Jabberkoth. The wyrmling Jabberkoth is medium size, has 50 hit points, and is challenge rating 4 (1,100 XP). It has no legendary actions, no Legendary Resistance, reduce the attack bonus on all attacks by half, reduce the damage on all attacks by one die, reduce the damage of Rotting Breath by half, reduce the DC of the Jabberkoth’s abilities (e.g., Rotting Breath, Aura of Decay, etc.) and saving throws by 7, and it can make one melee attack (bite only).

21-25, as above except. It has 80 hit points and is challenge rating 6 (2,300 XP). Reduce the DC of the Jabberkoth’s abilities (e.g., Rotting Breath, Aura of Decay, etc.) and saving throws by 5 instead of 7.

26-30, young version of the Jabberkoth. The young Jabberkoth is large size, has 130 hit points, and is challenge rating 9 (5,000 XP). It has no legendary actions, no Legendary Resistance, reduce the DC of the Jabberkoth’s abilities (e.g., Rotting Breath, Aura of Decay, etc.) and saving throws by 4.

31-35, as above except. It has 180 hit points and is challenge rating 13 (2,300 XP). Reduce the DC of the Jabberkoth’s abilities (e.g., Rotting Breath, Aura of Decay, etc.) and saving throws by 2 instead of 4.

THE JABBERKOTH'S NEXT MOVES

The Jabberkoth continues being a pestilence on the land and the living, killing anything that it encounters while raising a larger and more deadly force of undead. It only cares to kill, to unleash its hate and feed its hunger, which cannot be sated, and the undead under its control follow it obediently on its rampages.

It still possesses a few of its draconic faculties and won't launch an attack on an overwhelming force or fortified location, unless it is to weaken defenders before retreating.

THE JABBERKOTH'S TACTICS

The Jabberkoth is a mad, undead monster, but it has a semblance of its draconic mind and spirit.

The Jabberkoth tries to fly into melee range to weaken living creatures with its Aura of Decay before using its breath attack to finish them and raise them as undead under its control. While the Jabberkoth prefers melee, it isn't above strafing victims from the air with its breath, flying high and out of range of spells and missiles until it recharges.

FIGHTING THE JABBERKOTH

The Jabberkoth is much slower than true dragons. It is a shambling mess of rotting flesh. While it can still fly, its maneuverability is quite poor. The Jabberkoth's low Charisma leaves its Frightful Presence ability with a rather unimpressive DC of 12.

The Jabberkoth has a relatively low armor class for a dragon and its challenge rating, and it is vulnerable to radiant damage, so classes such as paladin or weapons such as the *sun blade* can exploit both weaknesses.

Its land speed is no better than a humanoid and its breath attack, its most dangerous aspect, is limited to a 30-foot cone.

The Jabberkoth has a poor Dexterity saving throw, so spells that reduce movement can allow allies to move into advantageous positions or prepare spells.

Rousing the True Dragon. As mentioned above, a part of Ancalakoth's spirit and mind persists within the rotting husk of the Jabberkoth. If Ancalakoth is awakened, he fights the curse that has consumed him, wishing for the heroes to free him from this horrible fate.

A character can spend an action trying to reach the fading soul of Ancalakoth by speaking his name in Draconic or telepathically (such as with the warlock's Awakened Mind ability or the ghostwise halfling's Silent Speech ability). The character then makes an opposed Charisma (Persuasion) check against the Jabberkoth's Wisdom saving throw.

If the character is successful, the Jabberkoth has disadvantage on all attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks (including Initiative). At the end of each of its turns, the Jabberkoth can attempt a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw to suppress the remnants of Ancalakoth's mind, removing this penalty. If the Jabberkoth rolls a natural 20 on its Wisdom saving throw in either case, it destroys the remnants of Ancalakoth's spirit and mind, and characters can no longer reach the dragon. Ancalakoth is truly gone and all that remains is the Jabberkoth. This, however, doesn't prevent the cleansing and resurrection of Ancalakoth if the Jabberkoth is vanquished.

JABBERKOTH'S TRAITS

The Jabberkoth is a cursed horror, feeling no pain, only hate and hunger. It cannot be reasoned with. It cannot be bribed or coerced or intimidated. It is a relentless, remorseless thing of evil and undeath. Only Ancalakoth, buried and dying deep within, still holds the honor and intelligence of a true dragon.

Ideal. "All living things shall feel my decay."

Bond. "I shall breath my essence into the living and they shall serve me."

Flaw. "I feel no pain and cannot be stopped!"

REWARDS

After defeating the Jabberkoth, the party can harvest precious arcane materials from it. These materials can then be used to craft magical items.

ESSENCE OF UNDEATH

Within the foul, rotting body of the Jabberkoth is black blood, saturated with necromantic power. This blood may be carefully harvested and processed into potent consumable magic items.

Gathering the blood requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Intelligence (Medicine) check. Characters proficient with an alchemist's kit, poisoner's kit, or who have a background related to wilderness survival (such as outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) gain advantage on this check. Success acquires 3 (1d4 + 1) vials of unrefined blood while failure acquires 1 vial. If a character fails the check by 5 or more, the character takes 14 (4d6) necrotic damage. Each check takes 10 minutes to complete, and four checks can be attempted before either all the blood has been collected or ruined.

The blood in its unrefined state may coat one slashing or piercing weapon or up to three pieces of ammunition. Applying the blood takes an action and requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or a DC 10 Dexterity check using a poisoner's kit. Once applied, the blood retains its potency for 1 minute.

Creatures that take damage from a weapon coated in black blood take 7 (2d6) additional necrotic damage from the attack.

Refining the Blood. The blood may be refined and made into consumable magic items with a 50 gp of materials and a successful DC 16 Intelligence check with a poisoner's kit or alchemist's kit. Characters with a background related to study (such as sage or cloistered scholar) gain advantage on this check. Failure results in the loss of the 50 gp of materials but not the blood:

- 1 vial may be crafted into a rare potion that grants resistance to necrotic damage for 1 hour.
- 2 vials may be crafted into a rare potion that protects the imbiber from attacks from the undead for 1 hour. Undead creatures attacking the imbiber suffer disadvantage to their attacks and the character gains advantage on saving throws against abilities of undead creatures.

JABBERKOTH. THE DECAYING HORROR

Huge undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 212 (17d12 + 102)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	8 (-1)	22 (+6)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +11, Wis +6, Cha +4

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +4

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances cold, lightning

Damage Immunities acid, poison, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 1

Languages understands Common and Draconic but can't speak

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Aura of Decay. The Jabberkoth is surrounded by a miasma of rot that decays its surroundings. Living creatures within 30 feet of it become vulnerable to necrotic damage and have disadvantage on death saving throws.

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

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

Turn Resistance. The Jabberkoth has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the Jabberkoth to 0 hit points, it must succeed on a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the Jabberkoth drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The Jabberkoth can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 7) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d6 + 7) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the Jabberkoth's choice that is within 120 feet of the Jabberkoth and aware of it must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Jabberkoth's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Rotting Breath (Recharge 5-6). The dragon exhales a decaying mist in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A humanoid reduced to 0 hit points by this damage dies, the creature becomes undead. If the victim had 2 or fewer Hit Dice, it becomes a **zombie**. If it had 3 to 5 Hit Dice, it becomes a **ghoul**. Otherwise, it becomes a **wight**. The undead is under the Jabberkoth's control and acts immediately after the Jabberkoth in the initiative count.

Legendary Actions

The Jabberkoth can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of each turn.

Detect. The Jabberkoth makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail (Costs 2 Actions). The Jabberkoth makes a tail attack.

Breath Attack (Costs 3 Actions). Decaying Breath immediately recharges and the Jabberkoth attacks with it.



- 3 vials may be crafted into a very rare potion that grants immunity to necrotic damage for 1 hour.
- 4 vials may be crafted into a very rare potion that changes a creature's type to undead for 24 hours. The creature does not need to sleep, eat, or breath, and gains the following condition immunities: charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, and poisoned. The character is also affected by all the spells and abilities that affect undead.

Spell Component. Characters may use a vial of blood as a material component in a spell that does necrotic damage. A single vial causes the spell to deal double damage. Two vials cause the spell to deal double damage and saves against it are taken with disadvantage. The vials of blood are consumed when used as spell components.

DRAGONIC BODY PARTS

While the Jabberkoth is a fetid, undead horror, it still has the body of a dragon, which means dragon scales and bones. These are much sought after for the crafting of magical objects as well as spell components. Once the Jabberkoth has been defeated, the bones and scales must be harvested separately. Afterwards, they may be crafted into magical gear.

Harvesting Scales. Gathering the scales requires a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) or DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check. Proficiency with leatherworker's tools or backgrounds related to wilderness survival (such as outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) grants advantage to this check. Success acquires 7 (2d6) sections of scales while failure collects 2 (1d4). Each check takes 30 minutes to complete, and four checks can be attempted before either all the scales have been collected or ruined.

Harvesting Bones. Gathering the bones requires a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) or DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check. Proficiency Backgrounds related to wilderness survival (such as outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) grants advantage to this check. Success acquires 3 (1d4 + 1) bones while failure acquires 1 bone. Each check takes 1 hour to complete, and four checks can be attempted before either all the bones have been collected or ruined.

Once the parts have been gathered, they may be crafted into armor and other equipment with 300 gp of materials and a successful DC 16 Intelligence check with leatherworker's tools. Background related to crafting (such as guild artisan or clan crafter) grants advantage to this check. Failure results in the loss of the 300 gp of materials but not the scales or bones.

- 10 scales may be crafted into light armor or a shield.
- 15 scales may be crafted into medium armor.
- 20 scales may be crafted into heavy armor.
- 1 bone may be crafted into 6 arrows or bolts.
- 2 bones may be crafted into a wand.
- 4 bones may be crafted into a rod.
- 8 bones may be crafted into a staff.

NECROMANTICALLY TEMPERED DRAGON-SCALE ARMOR

Armor (any), very rare (requires attunement)

Armor made from these scales provides you with immunity to necrotic damage and immunity to the following conditions: charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, and poisoned. However, you become vulnerable to radiant damage.

NECROMANTICALLY IMBUED DRAGON-BONE ARROWS

Weapon (arrow), very rare (requires attunement)

This magical arrow does additional 22 (6d6) necrotic damage. If a creature is slain by this arrow, it rises as a zombie under the control of the creature who fired the arrow. This lasts 24 hours, after which, the zombie crumbles to dust.

NECROMANTICALLY IMBUED DRAGON-BONE WAND

Wand (any), rare (requires attunement)

This wand has 7 charges for the following properties. It regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the wand's last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the wand crumbles into ashes and is destroyed.

Spells. While holding the wand, you can use an action to expend some of its charges to cast one of the following spells (save DC 16): *inflict wounds* (1 charge) or *vampiric touch* (3 charges).

Necrotic Guard. While holding the wand, you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge and gain resistance to necrotic damage for 1 minute.

NECROMANTICALLY IMBUED DRAGON-BONE ROD

Rod (any), very rare (requires attunement)

This rod has 10 charges for the following properties. It regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the rod's last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the rod crumbles into ashes and is destroyed.

Spells. While holding the rod, you can use an action to expend some of its charges to cast one of the following spells (save DC 17): *blight* (4 charges), *inflict wounds* (1 charge), or *vampiric touch* (3 charges).

Necrotic Protection. While holding the rod, you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge and gain resistance to necrotic damage for 1 minute. For 3 charges, you gain immunity for 1 minute.

NECROMANTICALLY IMBUED DRAGON-BONE STAFF

Staff (any), very rare (requires attunement)

This staff has 15 charges for the following properties. It regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the staff's last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff crumbles into ashes and is destroyed.

The staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff. On a hit, it deals damage as a normal quarterstaff, and you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 2d10 necrotic damage to the target. In addition, the target must succeed on a

DC 18 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage for 1 hour on any ability check or saving throw that uses Strength or Constitution.

Spells. While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend some of its charges to cast one of the following spells (save DC 18): *blight* (4 charges), *finger of death* (7 charges), *inflict wounds* (1 charge), or *vampiric touch* (3 charges).

Necrotic Protection. While holding the staff, you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge and gain resistance to necrotic damage for 1 minute. For 3 charges, you gain immunity for 1 minute.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or part magic feature who participated in the defeat of the Jabberkoth add the following spells to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: SECOND CHANGE

1st-level abjuration

Casting Time: 1 reaction, which you take when you are reduced to 0 hit points

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (seed or egg)

Duration: Instantaneous

You speak a word to ward off death. If damage reduces you to 0 hit points, unless the damage is necrotic or from a critical hit, you drop to 1 hit point instead and then immediately gain 1d6 temporary hit points.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the temporary hit points increase by 1d6 for each slot level above 1st.

ANCALAKOTH RESTORED

If Ancalakoth is successfully brought back, his loyalty and friendship to the characters is absolute and unwavering. Depending on the style and type of game being played, Ancalakoth may become a permanent traveling companion or an NPC who assists the characters in various ways, such as by taking unneeded equipment and items to a settlement to sell for them and picking up whatever goods they may need and bringing them back. Normally, this kind of labor would seriously chafe a dragon (sometimes even to violence, depending on the dragon type), but Ancalakoth's gratitude surpasses the imperious and supercilious mentality their kind naturally possess.

Ancalakoth was a friendly and garrulous wyrm who enjoyed joking with humanoids before he was lured to his death and cursed. After being rescued from an unspeakable fate by heroes, he views humanoids with far more admiration and deference. He now seeks out their company for true friendship and not merely as entertainment to pass the time, as most copper dragons do.

Ideal. "Those who saved me are true heroes who I will protect at any cost."

Bond. "Mortals are surprising and resourceful. My kind would do well to forge lasting relationships with them."

Flaw. "My confidence in myself has been shaken by the horrible experience I've gone through."



KRANKLOB'OBGUND

This cavern has an unusual amount of rock formations...

Perhaps the faerzress, that strange magical radiation of the Underdark, warped her mind and spurred her growth. Maybe she is an escaped urophion, created by the mind flayers to guard a hidden colony. She might just be an incredibly hardy and ancient matron roper. Whatever her origins, Kranklob'Obgund is a terror lurking in the darkness with her myriad children. The unfortunate souls that have trespassed in her home have perished among a rain of piercers as sticky tendrils slowly drew them into the stony maws of hungry ropers.

Kranklob is an unnaturally large roper that harbors an inexplicable grudge against the drow. She is exceptionally intelligent compared to the mundane examples of her kin, but cannot tell the difference between a dwarf and drow. She is smart enough to select excellent locations to hide her children and ambush prey, but long-term planning is outside her capabilities.

Periodically Kranklob'Obgund moves her offspring to another large cavern in search of more drow to prey upon. In truth, she has no actual method of deciding what properties of her surroundings would make her family more likely to encounter her favored morsels. Her migrations are remarkably inconsistent and nearly unpredictable. When she does travel to a new ambush site, she carries her piercer children within her massive maw and moves cautiously, sometimes traveling slowly for days without sleeping. No community in the Underdark is safe while she wanders.

THE HOOK

The residents of Blingdenstone have recently experienced an incredibly high rate of travelers going missing. Almost anyone who has set out towards Gracklstugh within the last several weeks has failed to return as expected. Senni Diggermattok, leader of Blingdenstone, is frantically looking for answers. To that end, a handsome sum of gold is being offered to anyone brave enough to find answers.

KRANKLOB'OBGUND'S NEXT MOVES

A number of other notable communities are within reach of Kranklob'Obgund's migrations, most notably Menzoberranzan and Mithril Hall. Left unchecked, she and her progeny will eventually become a threat to these places as well. As they mature and seek out territory of their own and are replaced by new offspring, they could conceivably threaten a wide swathe of the Underdark. The deleterious effect upon trade in the region would doom many settlements—including Blingdenstone.

KRANKLOB'OBGUND'S TACTICS

A patient hunter, Kranklob is very careful about what creatures she decides to prey upon. She and her children are naturally camouflaged and safe so long as they do not move. She prefers hanging from the cavern ceiling with her children—two ropers and six piercers (a CR 19 encounter for 15th level characters)—and won't make a den within chambers so tall that she cannot reach prey on the ground. Kranklob's patience runs out when she spots a drow, or a creature she thinks might be a drow, launching an attack without her typical methodical caution.

When prey enters her lair, she attacks when they come within reach. Once she has wrapped a tendril around a creature, she pulls them beneath one of the dozen or so piercers she is raising. After one of these children has crashed down upon her prey, Kranklob'Obgund draws them the remainder of the distance to her massive mouth. Unlike other ropers, she is able to swallow many creatures whole.

Because she and her children are not fast enough to flee, she is careful about what kinds of prey she is willing to risk attacking. She will not attack groups of more than seven creatures, or groups with one or more Large-sized creatures among them. She often makes hateful exceptions for creatures that appear to her to be drow. Small creatures and small groups of Medium creatures are also tempting targets for the hungry bellies of her children.

It is possible that the characters might reach Kranklob'Obgund at a time of year when the size of her brood has changed. The Underdark is hostile and unforgiving and many piercers do not live to maturity. Adolescent ropers will also eventually need to claim their own territory as their appetite grows beyond what they can share with their kin. Alone with only two piercers, Kranklob becomes a CR 13 encounter. If food has been plentiful, she might instead be raising eight piercers and three ropers (making for a CR 21 encounter).



KRANKLOB' OBGUND

Huge monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 144 (14d12 + 53)

Speed 15 ft., climb 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages —

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

False Appearance. While Kranklob'Obgund remains motionless, she is indistinguishable from a normal cave formation, such as a stalagmite.

Grasping Tendrils. Kranklob'Obgund can have up to six tendrils at a time. Each tendril can be attacked (AC 20; 10 hit points; immunity to poison and psychic damage). Destroying a tendril deals no damage to Kranklob, which can extrude a replacement tendril on her next turn. A tendril can also be broken if a creature takes an action and succeeds on a DC 16 Strength check against it.

Spider Climb. Kranklob'Obgund can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Multiattack. Kranklob'Obgund makes four attacks with her tendrils, uses Reel, and makes one attack with her bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d8 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or be swallowed by Kranklob'Obgund. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside Kranklob, and it takes 36 (8d8) acid damage at the start of each of Kranklob's turns.

If Kranklob dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 5 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Tendrils. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 90 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws, and Kranklob can't use the same tendril on another target.

Reel. Kranklob pulls each creature grappled by it up to 45 feet straight toward her.

Legendary Actions

Kranklob'Obgund can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. She regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Protect the Babies. (Costs 2 Actions) If at least one of Kranklob's six tendrils is not grappling a creature, she can sling it out to grab one of her piercer children within 50 feet. Once she has grabbed a piercer, she can whip the tendril and toss the piercer up to 100 feet in the air to safely grab the cavern ceiling.

Whipping Tentacles. Kranklob'Obgund can make a tendril attack, reel, or bite attack.

KRANKLOB' OBGUND'S TRAITS

Ideal. "The drow must suffer as retribution for their cruelty."

Bond. "I will protect my children with all my strength and ferocity."

Flaw. "Many other creatures look much like the drow and I can't always tell them apart."

REWARDS

Like most ropers, Kranklob'Obgund has stomach acid powerful enough to dissolve flesh and a variety of other materials. Incredibly resilient materials—platinum, adamantine, diamond, etc.—are not dissolved by these digestive fluids and can remain present in Kranklob's guts for months before being passed. This is true of the other ropers in Kranklob's brood as well. Searching through the excrement in the cavern might allow the characters to find 1d4 small diamonds, 2d6 of platinum coins, and 1d6 discarded pieces of adamantine or mithral armor. Cutting apart the corpses of the ropers is the best shot the characters have at finding something of value—a blue sapphire or star ruby worth of 1,000 gp or a diamond-studded platinum brooch worth 2,500 gp.

If the characters take the time to cut Kranklob open, they can find the following contents within her stomach: a *ring of acid resistance*, an *elemental gem (blue sapphire)*, a fist-sized, pink-hued diamond worth 5,000 gp, and a serrated dagger made of adamantine. Searching through the corpse of this massive roper is daunting work and it might take the characters several hours to cut away enough of her innards to discover every last item trapped within her expansive digestive system.

Should they undertake such grisly work, the characters may also have in mind putting Kranklob's unique anatomy to use in other ways. Her tentacles can be alchemically treated with 100 gp worth of various desiccating oils and, with a successful DC 15 ability check using alchemist's supplies, turned into a *whip +1*. Multiple tentacles can be strung together with a successful DC 12 ability check using leatherworker's tools, making a length of rope as light as silk but as hard as steel. If bottled within an hour of her death, by succeeding on a DC 14 Survival (Wisdom) ability check, Kranklob's stomach acid can be used as though it were alchemist's acid. Additionally, adding one of her teeth to a set of jeweler's or mason's tools grants a +1 bonus to ability checks when cutting rocks or gemstones.

LEDA "THE SWAN" ALTMAR

Dazzlingly cruel.

The courtesan Leda Altmar, known to the city-state of Harkau as "The Swan," is a cambion, the offspring of a humanoid and a devil. Her mother was a famed courtesan and her father a prince of hell. Leda doesn't know what she is, but she knows what she is capable of: she can tangle humans up in desire for her and make them instruments of her will. She is well connected to every noble in the city and capable of bestowing great favors on those she likes—and inevitably ruining them when they grow tiresome.

The latest lover to disappoint Leda is His Majesty, King Henrik—and now "The Swan" seeks a revolution. She is pulling on her network of connections, and her charm, to stage a coup, overthrowing the king and replacing him with someone a little more exciting... someone with less conscience, piety, and virtue.

WHERE IS HARKAU?

Wherever you need it to be. Harkau is not part of any published D&D setting. You could just as easily use her in Waterdeep, Sharn, or Ravnica. Any city with a wealthy upper class is her playground, just replace the names and faces with some local characters.

THE HOOK

While the characters are at a ball or other society event, His Majesty's bodyguards turn on him in an assassination attempt. When prevented (by the adventurers or other members of the guard), the player characters are asked to investigate.

They must trace back the plot through:

- **Drayven**, the captain of the guard, who was heavily bribed by...
- **Antonin van Dietmeier**, the richest merchant in the city, who is being blackmailed (he runs a thriving slave trade in secret) by...
- **Annelise** the king's sister, who is pregnant with the illegitimate child of, and hoping to be married to...
- **Cordus Ventaion**, a young duke and decadent playboy, who would love to seize power but would surely ruin the city with his hot temper and lack of political savvy, and is being secretly backed by Leda.

Even the young duke thinks his grab for power is his own idea, unaware that Leda has him completely enthralled. Everyone else involved in the plot knows Leda—as does everyone in the city—but adamantly believes she has nothing to do with it. She should be a recurring name and face in the characters' investigation, but it should be difficult to pin anything on her until characters observe her directly interacting with any of her many 'friends,' at which point it is clear that she is socially, if not magically, manipulating them.

LEDA'S NEXT MOVES

After the failed assassination attempt, Leda lies low for a week or so. After that, she prevails upon Cordus to hire more agents to strike at Henrik again. This time they hire a powerful spellcaster to send a *phantasmal killer*, which murders King Henrik in his sleep. Then Leda moves swiftly: Cordus is quickly installed as king, marrying Annelise to ensure his legitimacy. Nobles and merchants deemed too loyal to Henrik are stripped of power and in some cases executed. Whispers quickly start that Cordus is not fit to be king, and Harkau devolves into a reign of terror... which Leda treats as a great entertainment, driving the king and his rivals to ever greater paranoia.

This scheme could ruin the city, destroy player characters' allies, and destabilize the whole region if something is not done.

LEDA'S TACTICS

Leda prefers not to fight in person. She severs adventurers from their allies—or one another—using scandalous rumors (true if she can ferret out relevant information), blackmail, and her own allies' loyalty to her. She sends skilled assassins if she must. Destroying her socially is a necessary precondition to killing her. Otherwise, if her death is traced to the player characters, they will face retribution from an entire city's worth of charmed aristocrats.

Leda would much rather flee the city than stand and fight. Characters may have to pursue her from place to place (including a trip to the Abyss, if she uses her Plane Shift ability) before finally bringing her to justice.

When it does finally come to a fight, however, Leda is far from powerless. She keeps several guards around her: two **veteran** bodyguards, who accompany her openly, and three **assassins**, who move secretly amongst crowds or hide in vantage points where they can see Leda, either using their poisoned crossbows or reach her side within 1d4-1 rounds.

DM note: Unlike most cambions, Leda does not have wings and therefore cannot fly. She is usually mistaken for a tiefling.

LEDA'S TRAITS

Ideal. "Nothing is more entertaining than chaos."

Bond. "I love my mother, Grace, and would do almost anything to protect her. Fortunately, Grace is now safely retired to a manor in the countryside."

Flaw. "I tire of people easily, and when I do, I destroy them."

REWARDS

The party might find the following rewards after defeating Leda Altmar.

LEDA "THE SWAN" ALTMAR

Medium fiend (cambion), chaotic evil

Armor Class 17

Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +4, Con +6, Int +6, Cha +7

Skills Deception +7 History +6 Insight +7 Intimidation +7 Persuasion +7 Performance +7

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Fiendish Blessing. Leda's AC includes her Charisma bonus as well as her Dexterity bonus.

Archfiend's Charm. A creature that fails its saving throw against Leda's Fiendish Charm 3 times is charmed by her for a much longer period. The creature makes a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw each month (at disadvantage if Leda sees and converses with them at least once each week) ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful, or if the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Leda's Fiendish Charm for the next 7 days.

Innate Spellcasting. Leda's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). The cambion can

innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *alter self*, *command*, *detect magic*

1/day: *plane shift* (self only)

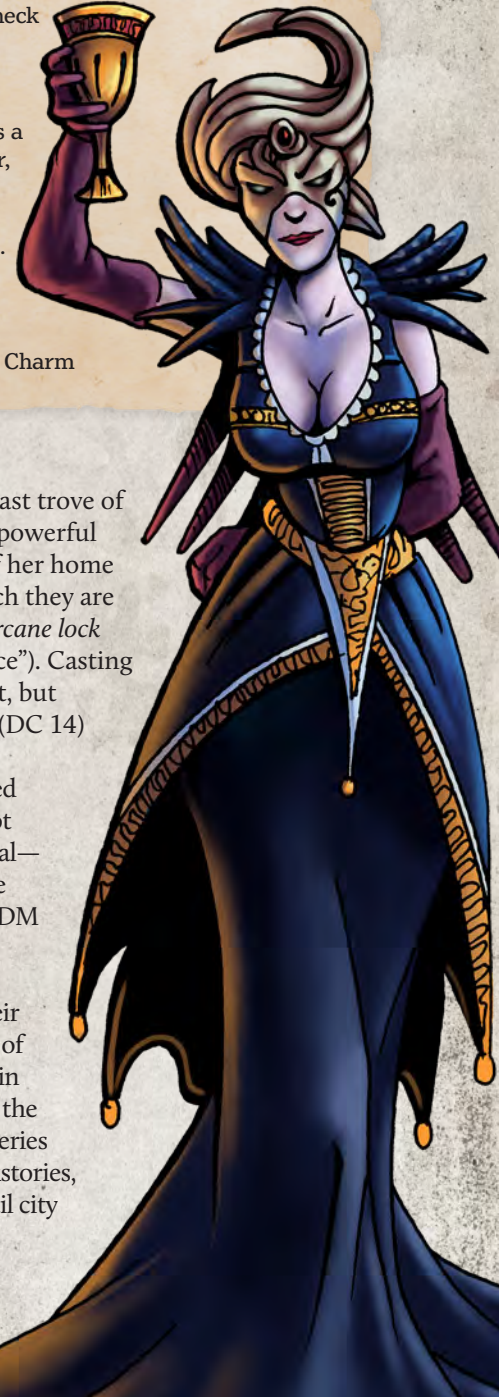
Legendary Resistances (3/day). If Leda fails a saving throw, she may instead choose to succeed it. She can do this up to 3 times before a long rest.

Actions

Fire Ray. Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (3d6) fire damage.

Fiendish Charm. One humanoid Leda can see within 30 feet of her must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed for 1 day. The charmed target obeys Leda's spoken commands, if it understands a language Leda speaks. If there is no shared language the usual features of the charmed condition still apply: the charmed creature can't attack Leda or target her with harmful abilities or magical effects. Leda has advantage on any ability check to interact socially with the charmed creature.

If the target suffers any harm from Leda or receives a suicidal command from her, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful, or if the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Leda's Fiendish Charm for the next 24 hours.



LEDA'S INNOCENCE

Wondrous item, rare, requires attunement

This anklet of braided silver, set with small, delicate pearls, disguises the wearer's true nature so that they appear as a chaotic-good-aligned humanoid to spells and magical effects that detect creature types, such as a paladin's Divine Sense or the trigger of a *symbol* spell. The anklet was a gift to Leda from her mother, who is aware of her true nature but sought to hide it from others (including Leda).

MAGICAL COMPONENTS

Adventurers with macabre sensibilities may be able to use a cambion's mortal remains (e.g. hair, bones, etc.) in a variety of magical items and spells associated with the Enchantment school of magic. Due to the dark and gruesome nature of using humanoid remains as spell components, DMs should consider whether their table would feel comfortable with this reward.

If they are, they can secure up to 2d6 usable remains from Leda. When a spellcaster casts a spell from the Enchantment school while they are holding some of Leda's remains, the spell is cast as if the caster had expended a spell slot one level higher and the remains are destroyed.

BLACKMAIL MATERIAL

Leda is in possession of a vast trove of secrets about nearly every powerful person within 100 miles of her home city. The lead chest in which they are stored is locked with the *arcane lock* spell (the password is "Grace"). Casting *knock* on the box unlocks it, but also triggers a *fireball* spell (DC 14) centered on the lock.

The information contained within is a rich source of plot hooks and blackmail material—perhaps some relating to the player characters—that the DM can use as they choose. The party now has information on crimes committed by their enemies, and possibly some of their allies. The documents in Leda's collection could hold the answers to secrets and mysteries from player characters' backstories, or could be used to blackmail city officials and even royalty.

LEECHKING

Below the surface of the mire, a creature lurks...

Beyond the farm fields outside of the town of Ylaphron lies a loathsome swamp. The wretched stench wafts through the streets on windy days, bringing those who are caught outside to tears that sting. Not much is known about the swamp as there is almost no reason to travel there. Farmers sometimes collect the murky water to fertilize their crops, as it is rich in nutrients, but short of that and its overly pungent smell, it is indistinguishable from any other swamp.

Recently, medical practitioners within the town began sending those with an adventuring spirit into the swamp to collect leeches from its foul water. A trend in medicine has told of the health benefits of bloodletting (the practice of removing contaminated blood from one's system to reduce its deleterious effects and renew its purity) and leeches are inexpensive and plentiful.

THE HOOK

A call to action has caught the village by fire. A dark form has been seen emerging from beneath the swamp. Those who have seen it say it seems insubstantial, writhes, and is entirely alien. Cattle and other livestock from the farms adjacent to the swamp have been found dead, their bodies covered in pucker marks and entirely drained of blood. In addition to this, two citizens, recently treated by the village's apothecary, went missing. The body of one, an androgynous elf who had suffered a bite wound from a rabid wolf, turned up hanging from one of the twisted trees on the edge of the bog—their skin slung over its branches like wet laundry hung to dry.

Adventurers have been called to investigate the swamp creature, and return with proof of its destruction.

LEECHKING'S NEXT MOVES

The creature from the swamp seeks only to drain life force from those around it. When the leeches were applied to the elf with rabies, the disease mutated within the leech. It returned to the swamp and spread its affliction to the other leeches there. The leeches' brain functions and physiology evolved, allowing them to act as a collective mind and take a supermassive form. As the swarm harvests more blood, it continues reproducing and takes larger and more imposing forms.

Left to its own devices, the creature could become something else entirely. Even if it doesn't reach true sentience, it could ravage the countryside, leaving death in its wake.

LEECHKING'S TACTICS

When engaged, the leechking is typically in its swarm form. It uses this form to position itself and deliver strikes designed to debilitate its foes. Once it has a sufficient advantage, it takes its golem form and delivers devastating attacks.

For each creature the leechking reduces to 0 hit points, it regains half its total hit points and the size of its golem form increases by one category, from Medium to Large, for example. The maximum size its golem form can reach is Gargantuan.

If the threat of death is imminent, it returns to its swarm form and attempts to escape into the cloudy muck beneath the swamp's fetid water. If it does so, it automatically gains the benefit of the Hide action, with a Stealth check result of 25 (requiring a Perception check that exceeds 25 to spot.)

SWARM OF LEECHES' TRAITS

Ideal. "Grow."

Bond. "We are strong, together."

Flaw. "When divided, we are weak."

REWARDS

Consider giving the characters the following rewards when they defeat the Swarm of Leeches.



SWARM OF LEECHES (SWARM)

Small swarm of tiny beasts, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive

Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Blood Frenzy. The swarm has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny leech. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points, except through its blood leech feature.

Actions

Multiattack. The swarm makes an envelop attack, followed by a devour attack.

Devour. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 16 (4d4 + 4) piercing damage, or 10 (2d4 + 4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. If this attack reduces a creature to 0 hit points, or hits a creature with 0 hit points, that creature must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, gaining two levels of exhaustion on a failed save or half as many on a successful one. Also on a failed save, the swarm gains hit points equal to half its maximum hit points and increases in size by one size category (this also affects its golem form).

Envelop. The swarm hurriedly climbs over a creature's form, attempting to hold it in place. Any creatures sharing a space with the swarm must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target becomes grappled and restrained by the swarm (escape DC 15).

Legendary Actions

The swarm can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The leechking regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Move. The swarm moves up to its speed.

Unify. The swarm gathers together, becoming combined, in a free space it occupies. It retains its current hit points, and any size increases gained from its Devour feature, but otherwise uses the Leechking stat block. If there is not enough space for the new form, it squeezes into the space available to it.

Devour (Costs 2 Actions). The swarm makes a devour attack.

JAR OF RABID LEECHES

Wondrous item, uncommon

This inornate jar contains several leeches, furiously moving about with such vigor that they can be heard. As an action, you can dump the contents into an adjacent, unoccupied space within 5 feet and a tiny swarm of leeches is created. It shares your initiative, and acts immediately after you. The swarm has an AC of 20, 1 hit point, automatically fails any Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution saving throws, and automatically succeeds on any Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throws. On its turn, it moves 15 feet towards the closest creature with blood, dead or alive, other than you. It deals 1d4 piercing damage to any creature it shares a space with at the end of its turn. In addition, the target must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, contracting the disease Mind Fire on a failure.

Mind Fire. The creature's mind becomes feverish. The creature has disadvantage on Intelligence checks and Intelligence saving throws, and the creature behaves as if under the effects of the *confusion* spell during combat.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of

the Leechking add the following spells to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: LEECHCOAT

3rd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a drop of your own blood)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

Using the drop of blood you provide when casting this spell, you conjure a swarm of leeches that coat your body. This coat of leeches has a pool of hit points equal to 5 times your spellcasting attack modifier. Each time you take damage, the coat of leeches takes the damage instead. At the start of each of your turns, the coat of leeches drains you to restore its hit points to maximum, and you take piercing damage equal to half the amount of hit points it regains. If the coat of leeches is ever reduced to 0 hit points, it explodes in a torrent of blood. Each creature (other than you) within 5 feet of you must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take necrotic damage equal to half the maximum hit points of the coat and the spell ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the maximum hit points of the leech coat increases by your spellcasting attack modifier for each slot level above 3rd.

LEECHKING (GOLEM)

Medium monstrosity, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft., swim 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +6

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive

Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Blood Frenzy. The leechking has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Actions

Multiattack. The leechking makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage. For each size category larger than medium that the leechking is, this attack deals an additional 7 (2d6) damage.

Legendary Actions

The leechking can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The leechking regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Move. The leechking moves up to its speed.

Deunify. The leechking falls apart, becoming a swarm again, in a free space it occupies. It retains its current hit points. If there is not enough space for the new form, it squeezes into the space available to it.

Slam (Costs 2 Actions). The leechking makes a Slam attack.



LIU SHUI

Send them to a watery grave.

Jervas Windough is a human male from an influential family in the small, peaceful town of Secomber. There, he married Liu Shui, a human woman of Shou descent. Jervas was ambitious and sought to ascend to the position of Rod of Justice, a title held by the high governors and judiciaries of the town. When Liu Shui discovered Jervas's infidelity with a woman named Mei Quin, Jervas knew that, were the matter to be leaked to the close-knit town, his reputation would suffer dearly.

For this reason, and because Jervas wanted an excuse to marry Mei instead, he and Mei ambushed Liu Shui as she relaxed in a tributary of the river Delimbiyr. Liu Shui struggled and the murder attempt culminated in Jervas and Mei holding Liu Shui beneath the water until she drowned. Liu Shui's soul anguished at the betrayal and she crawled out of the water as a **revenant**. Jervas and Mei barely escaped with their lives and Liu Shui forced them to abandon their home.

The couple recouped their losses, however, got married, and settled into a larger house, far from any large source of water, as Jervas's influence grew. Decades passed, the couple sired two children: a boy and a girl named Haasralt and Celana, who are now young adults. After unconfirmed sightings of Liu Shui, and a few mysterious disappearances that occurred near the tributary, legend spread of the woman who went mad, drowned, and haunts the site of her death. The legend also states she steals the bodies of her victims so they can experience her pain, too. In truth, Liu Shui cannot rest because Jervas and Mei remain alive and unpunished for their crime.

THE HOOK

When the characters arrive in Secomber, they are greeted by now-Rod of Justice Jervas Windough, a LE human **noble** (unarmed and unarmored) in his early sixties. Mei is also present, similarly aged. The couple welcomingly take the characters in, showing them great hospitality. During discussion over a meal, the two present their offer: they need people capable of dealing with powerful undead to dispatch an evil spirit that lurks around a tributary on the southern outskirts of the town. This undead creature, they say, is a mad woman who was drowned after she tried to kill Mei out of jealousy. They don't know the specific type of undead.

In exchange for destroying the undead, Jervas offers a bounty of 3,500 gp—a sum normally far in excess of what he would normally be willing to part with, but Jervas wants this matter put to rest too much to take chances.

LIU SHUI'S NEXT MOVES

Liu Shui has been driven mad by her hatred, so she doesn't plan in the long-term. Above all else, however, she wants to see Jervas and Mei brought to justice, preferable resulting in them receiving the death penalty,

but she will also settle for the steep punishments usually allotted to those guilty of murder in Secomber, provided it is meted out by the Rods of Justice. Unfortunately for Liu Shui, Jervas and Mei wear matching *amulets of divine protection* which are enough to repel Liu Shui when she is away from bodies of water.

Because of this stalemate, Liu Shui waits anxiously for an opportunity to present itself. If the characters fail to stop her, Liu Shui, in her undead rage, continues to kill innocents. The deaths won't stop if Jervas and Mei are killed without being tried; Haasralt and Celana become Liu Shui's target for her vengeance.

LIU SHUI'S TACTICS

Liu Shui prefers stealth over a direct assault. She attacks when the characters are most vulnerable (such as when they are sleeping) and near a body of water; she can appear out of any body of water with a surface diameter of at least 5 feet. Her appearance is so terrifying it causes some to be petrified by fear.

Liu Shui only retreats if she thinks she can return later that day and finish the characters off more easily. Otherwise, she is willing to let her form be destroyed for 24 hours if it means killing one of her enemies.

After Liu Shui's first attack, she screams in a semi-coherent fashion about Jervas betraying her. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check for more information convinces her to reveal that Jervas killed her, but she still fights as she talks.

LIU SHUI'S TRAITS

Ideal. "Some deeds cannot be forgiven."

Bond. "I will never rest until my murderers have been slain or brought to justice."

Flaw. "I have lost the goodness I held in life."

REWARDS

If Jervas and Mei hear that Liu Shui has been destroyed, they pay the characters the agreed upon bounty. If the two are instead arrested and face punishment, the other Rods of Justice in the town pay the bounty and also grant the characters the *amulets of divine protection* as well as the deed to Jervas and Liu Shui's original abandoned house (which, by this point, is thoroughly run-down).

Furthermore, if Liu Shui is put to rest by her killers being brought to justice, she, in her moment of passing, bestows the characters with the *blessing of the deep*. They can call upon this blessing once. When they do so, each of them ignores the penalties to exploration and combat while underwater; they can walk underwater like normal land and they don't suffer disadvantage on attack rolls, and they can breathe water. The blessing lasts for one hour.

Liu Shui also leaves behind an *elemental gem* (emerald/water elemental).

LIU SHUI

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +7, Wis +6, Cha +7

Skills Stealth +5

Damage Resistances necrotic, psychic, bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common

Challenge 8 (3900 XP)

Hate Everlasting. Liu Shui does not abide by the normal restriction on revenants that causes them to be destroyed if they have not exacted revenge within 1 year of their death.

Regeneration. Liu Shui regains 10 hit points at the start of her turn. If Liu Shui takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of her next turn. Liu Shui dies only if she starts her turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Rejuvenation. When Liu Shui's body is destroyed, her soul lingers. After 24 hours, her soul inhabits and animates another humanoid corpse on the same plane of existence and regains all her hit points. While the soul is bodiless, a *wish* spell can be used to force the soul to go to the afterlife and not return.

Turn Immunity. Liu Shui is immune to effects that turn undead.



Vengeful Tracker. Liu Shui knows the distance to and direction of any creature against which she seeks revenge, even if the creature and Liu Shui are on different planes of existence. If the creature being tracked by Liu Shui dies, Liu Shui knows.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature against which Liu Shui has sworn vengeance, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, Liu Shui can grapple the target (escape DC 15) provided the target is Large or smaller.

Drown Life. A humanoid that is grappled by Liu Shui must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 27 (5d10) damage from asphyxiation, or half as much on a successful save. If the creature failed its save and is reduced to 0 hit points by this damage, it dies and Liu Shui takes control of the body, instantly regaining 27 (5d10) hit points. Liu Shui's previous form melts into a puddle of water. 24 hours later, Liu Shui changes the new body to look like her form at the time of her death.

Legendary Actions

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

Slam. Liu Shui makes a slam attack.

Watery Teleportation. Liu Shui disappears and reappears in a body of water at least 5 feet in diameter within 60 feet of her.

Vengeful Glare (Costs 2 Actions). Liu Shui targets one creature she can see within 30 feet of her. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed until Liu Shui deals damage to it, or until the end of Liu Shui's next turn. When the paralysis ends, the target is frightened of the revenant for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if it can see Liu Shui, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success.

AMULET OF DIVINE PROTECTION

Wondrous item, uncommon

This item has 8 charges and regains 1d4 + 1 charges daily at dawn. As an action, you can spend any number of charges to cast *protection from evil and good*, which lasts for a number of hours equal to the number of charges spent.

MADADH, THE WAYWARD HOUND

"I still think it's adorable!"

The doors to the underworld are hidden and treacherous, guarded by all manner of perilous beasts and spells. But most dangerous of all is that they don't lead back. There is no return from the Lower Planes along the same path, as dictated by ancient edicts to shield the Prime Material.

Despite the many dangers, despite it being a one-way trip, the fiends of the Hells still guard both sides of these doors, for agents of rivals and heroic adventurers still manage to cross unseen into the Hells to sow mischief and mayhem.

Particularly loyal and ancient hell hounds are imbued with great size and intelligence and set to guard portals within the Hells. To assist them in this duty, they are given two additional heads, so they may always be watching. An enchanted collar that both binds them to the location and further enhances their senses is also bestowed upon them.

As Avernus is increasingly fraught by war and the shifting politics of the infernal hierarchies, the doorways into Avernus are becoming erratic and harder to discern and protect. As a consequence, inexperienced hell hounds newly risen from the primordial evil of the Hells are promoted to become guardians, bound to a gateway, and then left to their duty.

Madadh is such a newborn hound, spawned from infernal essence not long ago. Madadh was left alone after being magically chained to a hidden portal on the Prime Material plane. It wasn't long until the curious hound slipped its leash, so to speak, and began wreaking havoc through the lands near the gate.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

This encounter provides an opportunity for adventurers to gain access to Avernus and participate in the events of Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus campaign and materials. The secret gate Madadh was supposed to guard leads into the first layer of the Hells—Avernus—right near an expansive and fortified trading post. This also provides an organic way for late party members to join their teammates who have already arrived in Avernus.

THE HOOK

Madadh broke away from the magic binding it to the hidden portal and is running amok across the countryside. While Madadh possesses a **hell hound's** natural inclination to cause torment and turmoil, the hound is young and has no training or experience. So Madadh does its best, which includes chasing livestock, digging up gardens, charring fields, and scaring travelers.

Rushing after the wayward hound is the **imp** Beag. Beag is responsible for checking on the hounds guarding the doorways into the Hells on the Prime Material plane and was not pleased to discover one had escaped. Beag has already been severely punished for failing

to maintain the integrity and secrecy of portals into Avernus. He can't afford for the infernal courts to learn of this new failure, so he will do anything to get Madadh back, including hiring adventurers for help. As soon as the imp spots likely candidates, he approaches them while invisible and remains so while politely and gently making his offer and disclosing the sensitive nature of events. He is too frantic to resort to guile or deception. He is forthcoming and honest. If the adventurers agree, he reveals himself and offers what aid he can.

The adventures may either opt to slay Madadh or lead him back to the gateway and have Beag rebind the hound.

ROLEPLAYING BEAG

Beag was once a high-ranking amnizu named Maldrednox, mighty and terrifying, but no more. He was demoted for letting a group of adventurers sneak into the Hells through an unguarded portal and abscond with a valuable artifact. He works tirelessly and loyally to reascend the hierarchy of the Hells. He isn't, however, above letting those to whom he owes favors use the portals.

Ideal. "I take my responsibilities seriously. And I have only failed once."

Bond. "I always keep my word, but clever wording on contracts is another matter."

Flaw. "I will do anything to obtain the position and power I lost."

Quote. "Here, doggy, doggy, doggy!"

MADADH, THE WAYWARD HOUND'S NEXT MOVES

For the first time, Madadh is seeing and feeling something other than the limited space around the portal where it was bound. Madadh is excited and wants to experience everything it can. As an infernal creature, Madadh has the urge to cause mortals distress, which has so far manifested as chasing their animals and scratching up their property. It doesn't know any better. It doesn't have a refined sense of how to torment creatures.

LEADING MADADH BACK TO THE GATE

Madadh was supposed to guard a portal hidden in a cave at the bottom a dangerous crag. The adventurers are asked to find Madadh and bring the hound back without killing it. Beag will offer to journey with the adventurers to help. If the heroes decline his aid, Beag offers them Madadh's favorite toy, a monstrously sized bone from some great beast. It is a giant's thigh bone that has been chewed almost beyond recognition.

The character possessing the bone has advantage on ability checks involving Madadh, such as Wisdom (Animal Handling) or Charisma (Persuasion).

Finding Madadh isn't difficult. The hound is large and leaves easily discernible traces of its passage, such as scorch marks, uprooted trees, and terrified travelers. Luring or coaxing Madadh back can be troublesome as the hound gets easily distracted and wants to see, smell, and sometimes taste, everything. It is possible to

befriend Madadh, in which case leading the hound back is much easier. Befriending Madadh is straightforward: offer the hound attention, play, and food.

MADADH'S TACTICS

While Madadh is quite intelligent for an infernal beast, the hound is still young and new to the world. The hound's grasp of tactics is more instinctual than practical. It simply tries to attack whoever hurts it the most or whoever is largest. It will, however, try to catch as many opponents as it can with its Fire Breath, even if it has to move and receive attacks of opportunity to do so.

TACTICS FOR FIGHTING THE MADADH

Madadh is fast and has three attacks in addition to breathing fire. His Fire Breath can do a lot of damage to the unwary and unprepared. While quick, the hound lacks a true ranged attack and can't climb very well, which is a boon to casters and archers, especially ones who gain the high ground. A particularly tough character can hold Madadh's attention and take the brunt of the infernal beast's attacks while teammates flank it or stay back and use spells or ranged weapons.

Because of Madadh's inexperience, the hound is easy to trick or distract. A character can use their action to toss an object past the hound's heads. On a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, the hound is distracted, and it has disadvantage on all its attack rolls and skill checks for that round.

MADADH'S TRAITS

Madadh is a special breed of hell hound, specifically designed to guard entrances to the Hells. It is, however, untrained and undisciplined.

Ideal. "I want to be a good doggo for my masters!"

Bond. "I love people and things and fiends who pay attention to me!"

Flaw. "I love chewing on everything!"

Quote. "Bark!"

REWARDS

The reward varies on which path the adventurers choose. Should they exterminate Madadh, he leaves behind a collar embedded with magical gems that can be removed. If the heroes befriend and return Madadh to his proper place, the imp Beag rewards the heroes for their service by imbuing them with ancient magic.

RETURNING MADADH

If the adventurers successfully bring back Madadh to the secret gateway, Beag rewards them. Beag still retains the arcane knowledge accrued over millennia as an amnizu, including how to weave rune words that awaken magic within a mortal. All mortals possess the magic of creation, some, like the sorcerer, learn to ignite

such power and harness it, but most go their whole lives without realizing the potential within.

Beag, to a degree, can set a spark. The rest is up to the mortal. These marks take the form of a glowing glyph upon the skin, the color and shape a reflection of the person, of who they are and who they wish to be.

Setting a mark takes six hours, and once set, it occupies one of the character's attunement slots. It can be unattuned. When unattuned, the glyph ceases to shine, but it can be reawakened by spending an hour to attune to it.

MINDR ARCANE GLYPH OF EMPOWERMENT

Wondrous, rare (requires attunement)

The glyph grants you a sorcerer cantrip. Once you reach 3rd level, you can pick and cast a 1st-level sorcerer spell once per day. Once you reach 5th level, you can also pick and cast a 2nd-level sorcerer spell once per day. Constitution is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

SLAYING MADADH

If the adventurers opt to slay the Wayward Hound, Madadh's body vanishes back to the Hells due to its fiendish nature. Its collar, however, studded with magical jewels, remains. The enchanted jewels within the collar can be carefully pried out.

Extracting the Jewels. Removing the jewels requires a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. Proficiency with jeweler's tools or tinkerer's tools grants advantage to this check. Success acquires 1 magical gem while failure dislodges the gem but damages it, ruining the magic. A damaged gem is worth 500 gp. Each check takes 10 minutes to complete, and six checks can be attempted before either all the gems have been collected or ruined.

Once a magical gem has been freed undamaged, it may be bound to a piece of equipment. Binding it requires a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check using jeweler's tools. Backgrounds related to crafting (such as guild artisan or clan crafter) grants advantage to this check. Success binds the gem to the item, imbuing it with power while failure wastes the time but doesn't damage the gem. Each check takes 12 hours of work. The item must be made from wood, leather, bone, stone, or metal and it must be worn or carried.



MADADH. THE WAYWARD HOUND

Large fiend, lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +6, Wis +5

Skills Intimidation +2, Perception +5

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., true sight 30 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages understands Infernal but can't speak it

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede Madadh's darkvision.

Three Heads. Madadh has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

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

Magical Collar. Madadh wears a collar studded with enchanted gems. It grants Madadh true sight out to 30 feet and Legendary Resistance (1/day), if the hound fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Reactive Heads. Madadh gets two extra reactions that can be used only for opportunity attacks.

Wakeful. While Madadh sleeps, at least one of its heads is awake.

Actions

Multiattack. Madadh makes three bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 4-6). Madadh exhales fire in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Once a gem is bound to a piece of equipment, the item becomes an uncommon magic item that doesn't require attunement and bestows one of the following enhancements, chosen by the character who binds the gem:

- Movement speed increased by 20 feet.
- Grants darkvision out to a range of 60 feet. If you already have darkvision, the item increases its range by 60 feet.
- +1 bonus to armor class.
- +1 bonus to saving throws.

SCALING MADADH

Madadh may be scaled to suit parties of different levels.

Add up all the character levels in the group and consult the chart below for adjusting the combat difficulty.

10-15. Reduce hit points to 70. Madadh doesn't have Fire Breath.

16-20. Madadh doesn't have Fire Breath.

21-25. Use default.

26-30. Increase Legendary Resistance to 3/day and add legendary actions, see below.

31-35. Increase hit points to 190. Increase Legendary Resistance to 3/day and add legendary actions, see below.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Madadh can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of each turn.

Detect. Madadh makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Bite. Madadh makes a bite attack.

Breath Attack (Costs 3 Actions). Fire Breath immediately recharges and Madadh attacks with it.

- Upon first binding the gem, you choose a saving throw. You gain proficiency in the selected saving throw.
- Upon first binding the gem, you choose a skill. You gain a +5 bonus to the skill.
- Upon first binding the gem, you choose an ability score. The ability score becomes 17. It has no effect on you if your chosen ability score is already 17 or higher.

GEM-SET OBJECT

Wondrous, uncommon

The item's benefit is variable, see above.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of Madadh add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: MANIFOLD CONSCIOUSNESS

1st-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (hydra blood)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You sprout two extra heads, gaining all the faculties of these additional extremities. While the spell is active, you gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

You can also hold multiple conversations or read multiple books at once.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you can target one additional creature for each slot level above 1st.

MADCAP MRAZ

He's entirely bonkers, but I'll tell you a secret: all the best monsters are!

Deep within the Underdark, a lone goblin slave fled his drow overseers. They chased him through tunnel and over chasm—not for his meager labor, but to gleefully exact a price. The desperate goblin fled deeper into a pit of the Underdark even the drow dared not venture into.

There, huddled in the darkest chamber of the dankest cave and facing starvation, he consumed the mushrooms growing from the living ooze on the cave floor. In that moment he forgot the last remnants of his identity that the drow hadn't yet stripped away. As whispers entered his mind, he discovered who he truly was and what he was destined to do. He was Madcap Mraz—and Ghaunadaur, the god of mad abominations, had spoken to HIM. It was time for Mraz to begin his god's work of destruction.

THE HOOK

Within or near the city of Neverwinter, the characters are approached by Brel Rovesen (LN human **veteran**). Brel is a local guard sergeant and has a habit of fussing about how he looks. He wants to hire some adventurers to investigate how, over the past tenday, several travelers have gone missing and many others returned insane. The disappearances seem to be happening around the edges of the Neverwinter Wood. Brel can also direct the characters to one of the surviving commoners, each of which has a random form of indefinite madness as described in Chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. When asked about the circumstances that lead to their predicament, they respond with poorly-structured sentences about “the Lurking Slime,” “Elder Eye,” and other unrelated nonsense. Investigation of the edge of the Neverwinter Wood reveals some of Mraz's goblin fanatics lurking in the shadows, waiting to strike the characters when they are vulnerable.

At the behest of Ghaunadaur, Mraz gathered a force of trolls, oozes, fungal zombies, and fanatical goblins, intending to bring ruin to as many places as he can on the surface world—being it is full of blasphemous things like order, light, and worshipers of other gods. After many raids, Mraz managed to capture, Waeseras Ildender, a lawful good elf **priest** of Selune. The other travelers were either sacrificed (Ghaunadaur needs a steady supply) or were released to spread the “Wisdom” of Ghaunadaur.

MRAZ'S NEXT MOVES

Mraz plans to force-feed the priest an unholy mushroom that, after a few days in the host's stomach, erupts as three **black puddings** when Mraz says a special prayer to Ghaunadaur, after freeing the priest. The goal is for this to happen just as Waeseras is giving a sermon to a temple full of those faithful to Selune. In the ensuing chaos, those who “escaped” with Ghaunadaur's madness

turn into fungal zombies, wreaking havoc on the town from within while Mraz's fighters launch a surprise attack from outside. The aim is to create pure chaos and slaughter in the name of Ghaunadaur.

MRAZ'S LAIR

Mraz's base of operations lies within Neverwinter Wood itself. It can be found with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check, tracking the goblins that have been coming and going. Questioning other denizens of the wood can point the characters in the right direction. Captured goblin fanatics do not divulge any useful information to the characters under any circumstances. Their speech just devolves into increasing insane drivel as they become more desperate.

As the characters approach the lair, the forest becomes increasingly pungent, with fungal growths becoming common and a strange haze hangs in the air. The lair itself is a long cave that goes deep beneath the surface. The cave has many surreal qualities such as rocks that look like they are laughing and ephemeral creatures lurking just beyond the edge of the characters' perceptions. While the characters are in the cave, the DM should try to blur the lines of what the characters think is reality.

Mraz dwells in a chamber where he sits atop a throne of oozing mushrooms watching his minions prepare the unholy meal for Waeseras. There are many cracks in the walls that ooze and slippery goblins can make their way through.

LAIR ACTIONS

While fighting inside his lair, Mraz can use lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Mraz takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; he can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- 1d4 **goblin fanatics** crawl in through one of the holes in the cave's walls.
- A mushroom located at a point of Mraz's choosing explodes. Creatures within 10 feet of the mushroom must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of their next turn.

MRAZ'S TACTICS

Mraz is a dedicated follower of Ghaunadaur and certainly braver than most goblins. His self-preservation instincts are strong, however, unlike his minions. He lets his minions get in the way of any danger and is careful to keep a goblin within 5 feet of him at all times to use as a shield. Mraz also likes to hide in ooze- or spore-infested corners of whatever chamber he is in to discourage pursuit.

When he can, Mraz casts spells from a distance, either dealing damage to characters or disorienting them so his minions can deal the damage themselves. He also takes personal joy in seeing surface creatures polymorphed into hideous things.

If you would like to randomly determine what kind of allies Mraz brought to a fight, roll on the table below. The table includes how these additional combatants modify the CR of the fight with Mraz.

ADDITIONAL COMBATANTS

1d6	Result
1-2	1 troll and 1d6 goblin fanatics, + 6 CR
3-4	1d8 fungal zombies and 1d6 goblin fanatics, + 5 CR
5-6	1 black pudding and 2d4 goblin fanatics, + 6 CR

MRAZ'S TRAITS

Ideal. "There's nothing more insane than sanity!"

Bond. "I gotta make sure Ghaunadaur is happy with my offerings."

Flaw. "I know Ghaunadaur talks to me, but sometimes I just think he is."

REWARDS

Sergeant Roveson rewards the characters with a bounty of 2,500 gp for taking care of Mraz. On his person, Mraz also carried the *staff of the lurking slime*, which the characters may pick up.

Additional rewards you may wish to consider giving to the characters include:

Poisonous mushrooms (1d6 + 1). These mushrooms function the same as Assassin's Blood, as described in the "Poisons" section in chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.



MADCAP MRAZ

Small humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 94 (21d6 + 21)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +4, Wis +7, Cha +3

Skills Religion +3, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Goblin, Abyssal

Challenge 6 (2300 XP)

Nimble Escape. Mraz can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of his turns.

Maddening Presence. Each creature of Mraz's choosing that starts its turn within 30 feet of him must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, or it hears a faint slurping sound in its head for a moment and has disadvantage on its next attack roll, saving throw, or ability check. If the saving throw against the Maddening Presence fails by 5 or more, the creature is instead subject to the *confusion* spell for 1 minute (no concentration required by Mraz). While under the effect of the *confusion* spell, the creature is immune to the Maddening Presence.

Spellcasting. Madcap Mraz is a 9th-level spellcaster. Madcap Mraz's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Madcap Mraz has the following spells prepared:

- Cantrip (at will): *acid splash*, *toll the dead*, *thaumaturgy*, *vicious mockery*
- 1st level (4 slots): *color spray*, *fog cloud*, *hex*, *ray of sickness*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *crown of madness*, *darkness*, *phantasmal force*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *counterspell*, *hypnotic pattern*
- 4th level (3 slots): *divination*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *polymorph*
- 5th level (1 slot): *cloudkill*

Actions

Staff of The Lurking Slime. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 9 (2d8) acid damage. In addition, nonmagical armor worn by the target is partly dissolved and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

Reactions

Redirect Attack. When a creature Mraz can see targets him with an attack, Mraz chooses another goblin within 5 feet of him. The two swap places, and the chosen goblin becomes the target instead.

Hallucinogenic Mushrooms (1d6 + 1). 4d10 minutes after ingesting, a character must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is poisoned for 1d4 hours and suffers hallucinations. If the creature fails the save by 5 or more, it experiences a bad trip and also suffers a randomly determined of short-term madness (as described in chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) for the duration.

STAFF OF THE LURKING SLIME

Staff, rare (requires attunement by a druid, sorcerer, warlock, or wizard)

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that allows the user to use their Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifier instead of their Strength modifier for attack and damage rolls.

The staff also has 5 charges. Once on each of your turns when you use the staff to make a melee attack, on a hit you can expend one of the charges to deal 2d8 acid damage. Additionally, if the target is wearing any nonmagical armor, the AC it offers is permanently reduced by 1. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

The staff regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff turns into sticky ooze that quickly evaporates, lost forever.

Goblin Fanatic

Small humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 38 (7d6 + 14)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Dark Devotion. The fanatic has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Nimble Escape. The fanatic can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the fanatic can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls it makes during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

Actions

Multiattack. The fanatic makes two melee attacks.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage in melee, or 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage at range, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.



MARGRIM, THE BLACK BULETTE

Stronger, faster, better ... smaller?

What Margrim lacks in classic bulette bulk, it makes up for in sheer hunting prowess. From its increased speed, defense, and lithe yet muscular frame, Margrim has become a terror from the depths of the earth. Margrim is made of a different mettle from the rest of its kind, and is clearly known by its blackened color instead of the gray chitin of the rest of its species.

THE HOOK

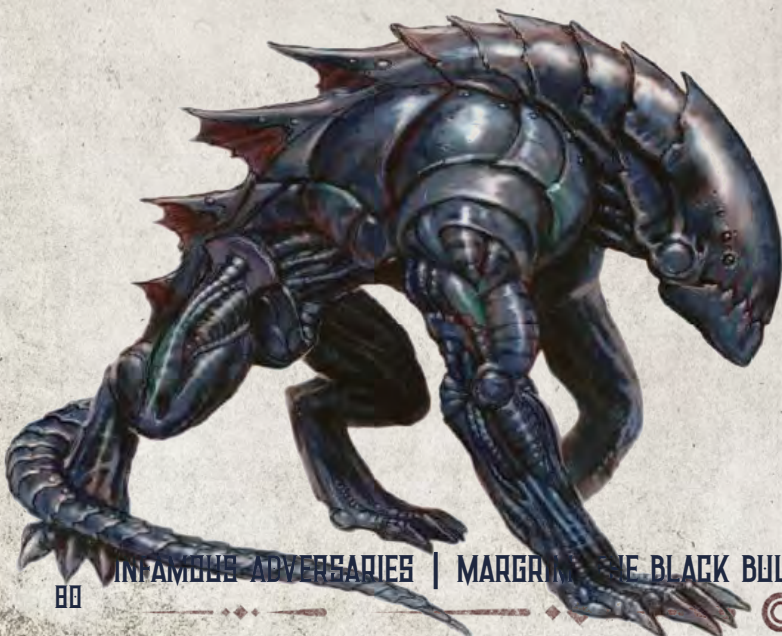
The miners of Drer'thzy, a dwarf clan stronghold, have been assailed without rest while trying to retrieve the precious gold found deep below. The beast attacks from the stone walls as if they were made of water, and all attempts to slay it have met with failure.

Now the beast has tread within the sanctity of the dwarf's stronghold, appearing within the clan treasury where it reportedly ate a number of jewels and gems. If the innermost sanctum of the clan's home is not protected, the rest of Drer'thzy fear they are prone to attack at any time.

The dwarves, represented by Maxral Hammerstaff, have journeyed to nearby settlements seeking adventurers hardy and cunning enough to slay the beast. Allowing outsiders into their home is a shameful ask for any dwarf, which demonstrates how truly fearsome a foe this bulette is. They have dubbed the creature Margrim The Black after the clan's mortal foes, Margrim Duergar clan, long vanquished by the residents of old Drer'thzy hundreds of years ago. Some believe the beast is the Duergar's revenge taken a terrible form, but surely this cannot be the case.

MARGRIM'S NEXT MOVES

If Margrim is not defeated, it eventually drives the dwarves of Drer'thzy to abandon their ancestral home. This only happens after the population has been reduced significantly. If the dwarves move on, Margrim begins nesting, haunting the new dungeon and raising more bulettes, just as deadly and ferocious as it.



MARGRIM, THE BLACK BULETTE

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 119 (14d8 + 56)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +6

Damage Resistances Acid

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive

Perception 16

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Standing Leap. Margrim's long jump is up to 30 ft. and its high jump is up to 15 ft., with or without a running start.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 32 (4d12 + 4) piercing damage.

Deadly Leap. If Margrim the Black Bulette jumps at least 15 ft. as part of its movement, it can then use its action to land on its feet in a space that contains one or more other creatures. Each of those creatures must succeed on a DC 16 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (target's choice) or be knocked prone and take 16 (3d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 16 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage. On a successful save, the creature takes only half the damage, isn't knocked prone, and is pushed 5 ft. out of Margrim's space into an unoccupied space of the creature's choice. If no unoccupied space is within range, the creature instead falls prone in Margrim's space.

Legendary Actions

Margrim the Black Bulette can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of Margrim the Black Bulette's turn.

Burrowing Assault. Margrim immediately burrows under the ground and moves up to its speed. Margrim's top fin juts out of the earth, hitting anyone between its starting and end location, dealing 24 (5d6 + 4) slashing damage to each target unless they succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw.

Margrim's Wrath. Margrim lashes out at all creatures within 5 feet of it, dealing 20 (4d6 + 4) slashing damage to each creature unless they succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw.

Savage Jump. Margrim immediately takes the Deadly Leap action.

MARGRIM'S TACTICS

Some tactics Margrim might use include:

- Margrim positions itself where it can easily escape at any time, such as near a crack in the ground it knows it can leap over.

- Margrim uses its Burrowing Assault legendary action to reach a party's back line, striking most of the party on the way there.
- Margrim can always run away from a fight by burrowing away like a regular bulette, and does so if its destruction is threatened.

Margrim's nest is at the end of a series of tunnels or deep within the mine system of Drer'thyz. This is where Margrim rests to lick its wounds, should it find itself suddenly outclassed or injured.

MARGRIM'S TRAITS

Margrim has only animal intelligence and so has no ideals, bonds, or flaws. Out of instinct, it wishes to flush any threats to its progeny out of the mines.

REWARDS

After defeating Margrim, adventurers can try to harvest its body for equipment and materials.

Any character can remove Margrim's faceplate by spending 10 minutes and using a crowbar or succeeding on a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.

Characters can also attempt to harvest Margrim's body plating by making a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success, the character is able to salvage one use of plating, or two uses of plating if the result is 18 or higher. On a failure, the plating remains on Margrim. A character who attempts this check again after failing it the same day gains a level of exhaustion for each successive failure. A character can spend 8 hours working with the plating and any set of armor, creating a suit of *Margrim's plated armor* on a successful DC 14 Intelligence (leatherworker's tools or smith's tools) check. On a failure, the armor is destroyed but the plating remains unharmed.

MARGRIM'S VISAGE

Wondrous item, rare

A matte black, sleek material, Margrim's face mask is an embodiment of terror and killing design. Wearing Margrim's face might be an overstatement, but damn does it bring a terror-filled grin to the faces of children and men everywhere.

While worn, this magic item grants the wearer advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks and allows the wearer to make an unarmed melee attack using the jaw, dealing 2d4 piercing damage on a hit.

MARGRIM'S PLATED ARMOR

Armor (any), very rare

While you are wearing this armor, you have a +2 bonus to your AC and resistance to acid damage.



MIRRORBORN

Magic mirror in my hand, it is your life that I demand.

There is an old folk legend, passed down through generations, warning children against the dangers of vanity. It is said that all mirrors were once windows into a prison built for doppelgangers. Sometimes the imprisoned doppelgangers would gaze into our world and dream of a better life. According to the legend, these doppelgangers, known as the mirrorborn, become obsessed with a specific person and believe themselves to be the rightful owner of that life and refuse to shapeshift into any other form. This obsession causes them to lay in wait for years for the perfect opportunity to strike and claim what's theirs.

THE HOOK

At some point in the past one of the characters was targeted by a mirrorborn. They move through their day-to-day existence, ignorant of the fact that every time they look in a mirror it is not their reflection they saw. After all these years, the mirrorborn is finally ready to strike, it tries to instill fear in its target before closing in for the kill.

Choose one of the characters as the mirrorborn's target. The best choice for this is a character that is either incredibly vain or has a high Charisma score. The target starts receiving strange, anonymous letters from the mirrorborn. These letters are all threatening in some way.

The target receives one letter a day for 1d4 + 1 days. Each contains personal secrets along side threats to "take back what is rightfully theirs." On the final day, the target receives a note with the address of a local inn and room number and a request to "settle the score."



MIRRORBORN'S NEXT MOVES

Left unchecked, the mirrorborn's obsession grows. If the challenge is ignored it immediately resumes sending the letters before advancing to more drastic means. After 1d6 + 1 days, the mirrorborn uses the target's identity to commit crimes, getting them in trouble with the local guards. After an additional 1d6 + 1 days, the mirrorborn seeks out the assistance of other doppelgangers to act as assassins on its behalf. If the target continues to elude these attempts on their life, the mirrorborn increases the intensity and frequency of these attacks until the target either dies or seeks the mirrorborn out.

MIRRORBORN

Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 11

Languages Common (Any languages that the target can speak)

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Ambusher. The mirrorborn has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it has surprised.

Mirrorwalk. Mirrorborn can cast the *mirror strike* spell at will.

Specific Shapechanger. The mirrorborn takes the form of a Small or Medium humanoid (referred to as "the obsession") that it has seen. Once in this form the mirrorborn loses the ability to revert to its original form. Its statistics, other than its size remain the same.

Surprise Attack. If the mirrorborn surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Legendary Actions

The mirrorborn can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. The mirrorborn regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Slam Attack. The mirrorborn makes a slam attack.

Steal Ability (2 actions). The mirrorborn performs one ability or attack that the obsession can perform. When the ability or attack is performed, it uses the stats that the target has and is performed identically. If an ability has a recharge or number of uses it must be used in accordance with those guidelines.

MIRRORBORN'S TACTICS

The mirrorborn has spent years planning this ambush. Before the characters even show up to the chosen inn, the mirrorborn has already killed everyone inside and replaced them with their own crew of doppelgangers. One of these doppelgangers, using the visage of the innkeeper, will point the characters in the direction of the room where the mirrorborn has planned its ambush.

This room has 1d4 + 1 full length mirrors inside. The mirrorborn uses mirrorwalk to take the party by surprise. Once combat starts, the mirrorborn's allies hear and join the fight from elsewhere in the inn. 1d6 doppelgangers appear and are immediately hostile. The mirrorborn focuses all of its attacks on its target and rarely makes moves against anyone else.

The mirrorborn's vendetta against the target is so personal that they fight to the death, only retreating if the target has been slain. The mirrorborn retreats using mirrorwalk, teleporting to a mirror in an adjacent room where it hides and waits for the party to leave.

MIRRORBORN TRAITS

Every mirrorborn is defined by their obsession. Individual mirrorborn may differ from these traits but, as a rule, they apply.

Ideal. "My obsession's life is rightfully mine. I can take it when I like."

Bond. "My obsession is an imperfect reflection of myself."

Flaw. "I will stop at nothing to eliminate my obsession and take over their life right where they left off."

REWARDS

After defeating the mirrorborn, the party has the opportunity to search the mirrorborn and whatever location it was operating out of.

Searching the mirrorborn's base of operations reveals scattered notes detailing its plans to trap the characters and take over the target's identity. In addition, there are several logs filled with the target's deepest secrets. If the characters choose to search through the mirrorborn's gear, they find items identical to what the mirrorborn's target currently owns. For instance, a mirrorborn may possess the exact same amount of gold its obsession had or an exact replica of their favorite +1 dagger. The mirrorborn should be carrying 1d4 + 1 of these items, use your discretion when choosing which ones.

As a magical creature, the mirrorborn's body contains potent arcane power. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, a character can gain 1d4 + 1 vials of mirrorborn blood. After one attempt, whether or not the attempt was successful, the mirrorborn has no more blood left. Additionally, somewhere beneath the skin of the mirrorborn is a literal mirror fragment imbued with a portion of the mirrorborn's nature. This magical item is called a mirrorborn shard. It can be excised with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check using a dagger or other sharp implement. On a failure, the mirrorborn shard is destroyed.

MIRRORBORN BLOOD

Cooking this recipe requires 1 portion of mirrorborn blood and the use of alchemist's supplies. When you attempt to prepare this recipe, you must make a successful DC 15 Intelligence check using alchemist's supplies. The portion of mirrorborn blood is consumed in the process.

Success. After you imbibe the mirrorborn blood, your body mimics the effects of the 2nd level illusion spell *mirror image* and creates three illusory duplicates of yourself lasting for 1 minute.

Failure. You fail to make anything of use with the mirrorborn blood.

MIRRORBORN SHARD

Wondrous item, rare

This shard of mirror glass is 7 inches long by 3 inches wide and has a sharp edge to it. When a solid object is pushed through the reflective surface of the shard, there is a 50% chance the object and a duplicate of the object drop out of the other side of the shard and the shard is then destroyed. On a failure the shard and the item you attempted to duplicate are both destroyed.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of the mirrorborn may add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: MIRROR STRIKE

1st-level Transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a mirror your size or larger)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You touch a mirror and magically enter it for up to one hour. While inside the mirror you share the physical space of everything that the mirror reflects. You have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) ability checks and nothing can hear you from the other side of the mirror. Using an action, you can exit the mirror and strike with a melee attack at any creature that is within 5 feet of the mirror. Melee attacks made in this manner have advantage to hit and deal an additional 1d6 damage. If you stay in the mirror longer than an hour, or the mirror is moved farther than 5 feet from where the spell was cast, you are magically transported to the nearest unoccupied space outside of the mirror.

If a creature destroys the reflective surface of the mirror while you are inside it, you take 2d6 force damage and teleport to the closest unoccupied space to the destroyed mirror and you are knocked prone.

NEITH-ARACH, THE WEB QUEEN

“Those eyes! They burned in the dark like a hideous constellation, beckoning us closer.”

She arose from the troubled blackness beneath the earth, a forlorn creature escaping the destruction of her home. Magically bred within a dark elf city for their ceremonies and worship, she fled to the surface world to hunt and feed when internal conflict left the city in ruins.

Neith-Arach is a sinister predator. Her venom can fell an ogre and her webs can snare a wyvern. She sets ambushes for the careless and stalks the unwary, all the while growing and increasing her brood. As a hatchling, she was fed a steady diet of slaves taken in raids by the dark elves, so she views most humanoids as succulent food. Within her, however, remains an instinctual connection with those who raised her, something that may be exploited by a clever opponent.

The Web Queen’s eyes are clustered in an unusual diamond shape, and they glow and pulse in strange rhythms that blur the mind and lure prey to her like the phosphorescent hunters of the deep sea. Spines cover her backside and displayed upon her belly is the eight-pointed star of the dark elf goddess.

THE HOOK

Neith-Arach and her young brood have invaded a forest near a sprawling village, preying on the ranchers and their livestock. Where she resides, the woods appear caught in a perpetual fog when viewed from a distance. Like a funeral shroud draped upon the forest, the trees and bushes are completely covered in thick silk and the place is eerily silent save for the wind.

Survivors of her sudden raids describe her as beautiful in a sinister and deadly way—sleek and ebon and moving with a mesmerizing grace. Her abdomen is said to carry a strange, symmetrical mark, an eight-pointed star. Upon hearing this, characters making a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check recall this is the symbol of Lolth, the goddess of the dark elves. Her followers raise and revere spiders, including a magical breed of arachnid that imprints on its dark elf handlers like a baby bird.

NEITH-ARACH’S NEXT MOVES

The Web Queen continues enlarging her domain of webs, and she also actively recruits arachnid creatures, such as **giant spiders** and **ettercaps**. To feed her growing brood, she expands her hunting grounds while becoming more aggressive and territorial. She isn’t foolish, and she knows her presence creates enemies. As a precaution, she uses small spiders to spy on potential threats and attempts to discern weaknesses of her foes.

Neith-Arach is an intelligent arachnid and, under suitable conditions (such as characters disguised as dark elves), she can be bartered with, trading magical silk and venom for livestock.

NEITH-ARACH’S TACTICS

Neith-Arach tries to hide and ambush from her web (she gains several advantages in webbed areas, see the Mistress of Webs trait below). In open battle, she coats areas with her Web action before moving to the location, so she doesn’t lose her Mistress of Webs bonuses. She also uses her Hypnotic Eyes ability to lure foes to become entangled in her snares.

If she has time to prepare, she weaves especially thick and sticky webbing coated in her venom (see **Hunting Neith-Arach**). She also preemptively summons her spider swarms.

Locations where she lurks and hunts are set with lengths of webbing alerting her to intruders or food (see the Web Sense trait in her description). These strands are well hidden and require a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check to spot.

HUNTING NEITH-ARACH

Neith-Arach possesses Darkvision, Blindsight, and Web Sense. She relies on the dark. Her webs pose a dangerous obstacle to her foes and they are twice as tough as normal giant spider silk (they have double the hit points), but are still vulnerable to fire damage. She also gains a number of benefits while in webbed areas, so chasing her from those areas or purging them with flames greatly reduces her combat effectiveness.

Neith-Arach’s Hypnotic Gaze and Web abilities are relatively short-ranged, so spells and missile weapons can weaken her from a distance.

Like her sisters and her mother before her, she was hand-raised by dark elves, who fed and cared for her. Dark elf characters, or characters disguised as dark elves, temporarily cause Neith-Arach to pause, giving the heroes time to cast spells, move into tactical positions, or hide.

Alternatively, the player characters could attempt to rehabilitate the Web Queen. Should the adventurers actively seek a peaceful solution to the menace that is Neith-Arach, she could be taught to value sentient life and, if properly convinced, trade her incredibly valuable silk to local farmers for their livestock. This would satisfy both parties as Neith-Arach would have a steady supply of food and the farmers would have a valuable material to sell.

NEITH-ARACH’S TRAITS

The Web Queen is intelligent and cunning. She speaks in an accented voice that places emphasis on ‘th’ sounds. Because of her upbringing as an object of worship by the dark elves, she considers spiders superior to all creatures. Everything else is merely food. She was traumatized by the destruction of her home by civil war and invasion and, as a consequence, she is overly protective of dark elves and other intelligent spiders.

Ideal. “Upon a throne of silk, I’ll be the queen of an arachnid empire.”

Bond. “All children of the web are my family.”

Flaw. “I trust dark elves, for they raised and fed me.”

NEITH-ARACH. THE WEB QUEEN

Large monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Elven, Undercommon

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Hypnotic Eyes. When a creature starts its turn within 30 feet of Neith-Arach and is able to see her eyes, she can magically force it to make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw, unless she is incapacitated. On a failure, the creature takes no action and uses all its movement to move towards Neith-Arach. Unless surprised, a creature can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it can't see Neith-Arach and makes any attacks at disadvantage until the start of its next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If the creature looks at her in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

Spider Climb. Neith-Arach can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Speak with Spiders. Neith-Arach can communicate with spiders as if they shared a Language.

Mistress of Webs. While within a webbed area, Neith-Arach gains +2 bonus to AC, she has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth and Initiative) checks, and she gains an additional action on each of her turns.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the Neith-Arach knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. Neith-Arach ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Web (Recharge 4-6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 15 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 10; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Spawn Spider Swarm (3/day). As an action, Neith-Arach summons a **swarm of spiders** (MM p. 338). The spawned swarm immediately arrives, acting as an ally of Neith-Arach and obeying her spoken commands. The swarm remains for 1 hour (otherwise she might eat them), until Neith-Arach dies, or until she dismisses them as a bonus action.

REWARDS

In death, Neith-Arach's body can be harvested for items. These items can be used to craft more powerful poisons and magic items.

SPIDER CARAPACE

Characters may also harvest her unusual carapace, which can be crafted into magical gear. Gathering carapace parts requires a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) or DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check. Proficiency with leatherworker's tools or backgrounds related to wilderness survival (such as outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) grants advantage to this check. Success collects 7 (2d6) carapace fragments while failure acquires 3 (1d6) fragments. Each check takes 30 minutes to complete, and four checks can be attempted before either all the carapace has been harvested or ruined.

Once the carapace has been collected, it may be crafted into armor with 300 gp of materials, two weeks of time, and a successful DC 16 Intelligence check using leatherworker's tools. A background related to crafting (such as guild artisan or clan crafter) grants advantage to this check. Failure results in the loss of the 300 gp of materials but not the carapace sections.

- 10 fragments may be crafted into light armor or a shield.
- 15 fragments may be crafted into medium armor.
- 20 fragments may be crafted into heavy armor.

SPIDER CARAPACE ARMOR

Armor (any), rare (requires attunement)

Armor made from this carapace grants you blindsight to a distance of 10 feet and darkvision to a distance of 60 feet. In addition, you can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check, and you ignore movement restrictions caused by webbing.

SPIDER SILK

Once the Neith-Arach has been defeated, characters may harvest her magical silk, which may be woven into magical gear. Gathering the silk requires a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) or DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check. Proficiency with weaver's tools or backgrounds related to wilderness survival (such as outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) grants advantage to this check. Success collects 5 (2d4) bolts of silk while failure acquires 2 (1d4) bolts. Each check takes 10 minutes to complete,



and four checks can be attempted before either all the silk has been harvested or ruined.

Once the silk has been collected, it may be crafted into clothes or rope with 200 gp of materials and a successful DC 16 Intelligence check using weaver's tools. A background related to crafting (such as guild artisan or clan crafter) grants advantage on this check. Failure results in the loss of the 200 gp of materials but not the silk.

- 5 bolts may be crafted into *slippers of spider climbing* (see chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) or a *rope of climbing* (see chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).
- 10 bolts may be crafted into a *rope of entanglement* (see chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).
- 15 bolts may be crafted into a *spidersilk belt* (see below).
- 20 bolts may be crafted into a *cloak of arachnida* (see chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

SPIDERSILK BELT

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

You can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Additionally, you can use a bonus action to become unnaturally lithe for 1 minute. During this time, you gain the following benefits:

- You are unaffected by difficult terrain
- Spells and other magical effects can neither reduce your speed nor cause you to be paralyzed or restrained.
- You can also spend 5 feet of movement to automatically escape from nonmagical restraints, such as manacles or a creature that has you grappled.
- Being underwater imposes no penalties on your movement or attacks.

Once you use this ability, you cannot do so again until the next dawn.

SPIDER VENOM

Each character may attempt to extract the potent venom from Neith-Arach's venom sacs. This requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Intelligence (Nature) check. A character proficient with a poisoner's kit or who has a background related to

wilderness survival (such as outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) gains advantage on this check.

A successful check acquires 3 (1d4 + 1) doses of raw venom. On a failed check, the character is unable to extract any venom. If the character fails the check by 5 or more, the character is subjected to the effects of the venom.

The venom in its unrefined state may coat one slashing or piercing weapon or up to three pieces of ammunition. Applying the poison takes an action and requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using a poisoner's kit. Once applied, the poison retains its potency for 1 minute.

Creatures that take damage from a weapon coated in venom must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 11 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Refining the Venom. The venom may be refined with 50 gp of materials and a successful DC 14 Intelligence check. Characters proficient with a poisoner's kit or alchemist's kit gain advantage on this check. Refined venom works the same as the venom above except it remains effective for 10 minutes, it is DC 14, and it does 17 (5d6) poison damage.

Spell Component. Characters may use a dose of refined venom as a material component in a spell that does poison damage. A single dose causes the spell to deal double damage. Two doses cause the spell to deal double damage and saves against it are taken with disadvantage. The doses are consumed when used as spell components.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of Neith-Arach add the following spells to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: SUMMON GIANT SPIDER

2nd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (giant spider eye)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You summon a giant spider that appears in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. The summoned creature is friendly to you and your companions. Roll initiative for the summoned creature, which has its own turn. It obeys any verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any commands to it, it defends itself from hostile creatures, but otherwise take no actions. The DM has the creature's statistics.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using certain higher-level spell slots, you summon an additional giant spider – one more with a 4th-level slot and three more with an 6th-level slot.

NOCRI DRAGONWING (AKA HALFWING)

I Am Me; I Am More than Me

Often confused as a dragon with vestigial wings or a hybrid drake, Nocri has learned over many centuries to be comfortable in her own scales. Too intelligent for a drake and too small—and nearly wingless—to be a dragon, it is unknown exactly what she is. Whether an experiment gone awry or a genetic misfit, her origin is a mystery even to her. Her earliest memories involve no parents, guardians, or fellows, and she has never seen another being like herself. She has nothing to identify her heritage. Indeed, she stopped worrying over it long ago.

Nocri simply goes by Nocri, but if one insists on adding a descriptive title, she prefers, Dragonwing. Some have referred to her as Halfwing, a term which, for a long time, was guaranteed to earn her full wrath. Eventually, she accepted the reference as evidence of the speaker's ignorance, and restrained from immediately attacking them. Overcoming her identity crisis has made her no less fierce, though, and she refuses to be pitied or patronized.

Nocri has nothing against drakes but, despite looking very similar, she believes they have little in common with her, so hasn't sought them out for company. She is not particularly fond of dragons and is quick to point out their faults—especially their lust for treasure. She, however, allows herself the guilty pleasure of a small treasure hoard of her own, favoring stones the color of deep water. She rationalizes her possessions, justifying each artifact.

Although her wings are ineffective for flying, at an early age she learned to use them for swimming and concluded that was their natural purpose. This made perfect sense since she is also able to breathe underwater. So, she has made her lair in the bank of the Moonsea near Mulmaster, with its entrance safely concealed twenty feet underwater at low tide. The tunnel to the cave containing her hoard is even more concealed and not linked directly to her domicile. It isn't like she needs to view her hoard all the time.

Recently, she has attracted a tribe of kobold admirers who, in addition to bringing her tribute, join her in battle or fight in her stead if they believe she is threatened. Their reverence of her as a dragon is reflective of their winged-kobold chief's ideals; he has associated the similarity in their plight as both being dragon-like in description, but not in respect. Nocri has also befriended many green guard drakes.

THE HOOK

The hook depends on when you want to introduce Nocri into your campaign and where that fits into her story. Here are some possibilities:

IN YOUR WORLD

Location. Nocri establishes a lair anywhere there are existing caves or pockets of material that she can tunnel through: hard stone along a coastline or large river.

The Egg. To present the characters with a moral dilemma and a single adversary with drastically changing motives and ideals, Nocri is described before and after what appears to be an immaculate conception. You can choose to introduce her to your campaign at any point in this story line or ignore the egg and Nocri's modified stat block entirely if that suits your campaign objectives. Giving the characters a glimpse at Nocri before the egg and having a final encounter afterward could be intriguing.

LEVEL 1-2

Use one of these hooks or something similar if you want to introduce the story early with kobolds as the threat, then work up to guard drakes ^{VGEM}, and finally, Nocri as the characters level up.

Jewel Thief. Sengo Bobhub, a halfling jewelry merchant had several high-value items, all with blue stones, stolen from his establishment. There are no signs of entry and he even placed a guard at the door on a night when he received a necklace with a large blue stone; still, the necklace went missing. He hires the party to look into the matter. On closer inspection, there is evidence in the basement of entry via freshly dug tunnels.

Kobold Invasion. For a city that has never had a kobold within its limits before, Mulmaster appears to be overrun by them. At least that is what reports to the city guard claim. There have been several sightings of them sneaking around the city and stealing sundry items. The city guard fears the worst and offers to pay the characters to discover and rid the city of the kobolds.

LEVEL 3-4

Use one of these hooks or something similar if you want to go right after Nocri.

Halfwing. The Mulmaster city guard seeks assistance in dealing with a thief and threat. A jewelry shop near the wharf district was broken into and some valuable pieces were taken. A creature resembling a young dragon with stunted wings was seen in the vicinity skulking off. This is not the first time the city guard has heard of this jewelry thief that has come to be known as "Halfwing." They offer gold to kill or capture Halfwing and recover the missing jewelry.

Harbor Menace. The harbor has been especially busy, requiring smaller vessels to anchor farther from the docks. Some of these vessels have been damaged and set adrift. The port authority offers to pay the party to investigate and eliminate the problem.

Harbor Horror. In addition to the troubles described in Harbor Menace above, some sailors of these small vessels have been found floating just off shore, their bodies mangled with bites and lacerations.

NOCRI DRAGONWING'S NEXT MOVES

Lately, Nocri hasn't felt like herself. She is lethargic at times and at others she maniacally seeks satisfaction by stealing items. She can justify some of the items as valuable additions to her hoard, but some make no sense at all and she packs them away at the back of her lair. She has demanded strange tributes from her kobold followers, including straw instead of gold to fill her lair. They dutifully returned with a pile of straw.

Now, against all possibility, Nocri lays an egg. Placing the egg in the back corner of her lair, securely nestled in straw, she understands her recent behavior. Although she is a unique species and has no reason to believe that the egg is viable, she simply knows it is. When she cuddles it, she feels the presence of another life inside.

Having no memory to draw upon, she is worried her offspring cannot survive without her to nurse and raise it.

NOCRI DRAGONWING'S LAIR

Nocri has taken up residence in a sea cave that is only accessible via an underwater tunnel. Most of the cave's interior is above water, but becomes flooded quickly with rushing water if Nocri chooses.

LAIR ACTIONS

While fighting inside her lair, Nocri can use lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Nocri takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; she can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Water rushes in and the lair is flooded until initiative count 20 of the next round.
- Water rushes out and tugs at any creature within 30 feet of the tunnel entrance. Affected creatures are knocked prone and must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be pulled 10 feet toward and through the entrance tunnel.

If Nocri is defending her egg in the lair, she acquires this additional lair action:

- By furiously splashing water to confound her attackers, Nocri gains +2 to her AC until initiative count 20 of the next round.

NOCRI DRAGONWING'S TACTICS

BEFORE THE EGG

Nocri has lived for centuries and intends to live several more. There is nothing so important to her that she would fight to the death to gain or keep it. She is a vicious but clever fighter. Her amphibious trait plays heavily in her tactics when possible. She uses her stealth to set an ambush for a potential victim then attacks with claw slashes and bites.

AFTER THE EGG

After laying her egg, Nocri adopts new strategies and tactics based on her instinctual need to protect it. Nocri fights to the death if she has no option to remove her egg from the threat of danger or if it is destroyed. Otherwise, she does everything possible to protect her egg, which includes fleeing with it if necessary. She positions herself between any threat and the egg and leverages any allies, adding to their combat capability.

If she is faced with no means of escape and the inevitable demise of herself and her egg, she tries to bribe her way to safety with the promise of delivering her hoard to the attackers.

ALLIES

Nocri has historically worked alone, but her kobold followers actively seek her favor and bravely defend her. Although they might be peculiar in their choice of dragons to venerate, they are otherwise typical of a kobold tribe, which includes:

- Kobold
- Winged kobold
- Kobold dragonshield (green) ^{VGEM}
- Kobold scale sorcerer ^{VGEM}

Although Nocri is often frustrated by being confused for a drake, she bears them no animosity and has even allied with them. With the need to protect her egg, their aptitude as guardians has caused her to keep company with them. These defenders include:

- Guard drake ^{VGEM}

THE EGG

Attacking the Egg. In comparison to a dragon's egg, this egg is tiny and leathery with an AC of 15 and 10 hit points.

Hatching the Egg. For the egg to remain viable, it must be maintained in a warm, damp environment with periodic immersion in salt water (in time with the tide of where it was laid). The incubation period of the egg is 400 days.

NOCRI'S TRAITS

In her I Am Me phase, Nocri has the following traits.

Ideal. "Flying is fleeing."

Bond. "Unique creatures are wonders to be respected."

Flaw. "I will not be pitied or patronized."

In her More Than Me phase, Nocri's traits change to the following.

Ideal. Survive. "The best I can do for my egg is ensure our survival."

Bond. "Unique creatures are wonders to be protected."

Flaw. "Is my egg safe?!"

NOCRI DRAGONWING: I AM ME (BEFORE THE EGG)

Medium dragon, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +5, Wis +4

Skills Stealth +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Draconic

Challenge 4 (700 XP)

Amphibious. Nocri can breathe in air and underwater.

Actions

Multiattack. Nocri makes two attacks: one with her bite and one with her claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Reactions

Protective Nature. When a creature Nocri can see attacks an ally of hers that is within 5 feet of her, as a reaction she can use her tail to impose disadvantage on the attack roll.

NOCRI DRAGONWING: I AM MORE THAN ME (AFTER THE EGG)

Medium dragon, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 90 (12d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +2, Con +6, Wis +4

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Draconic

Challenge 5 (1500 XP)

Amphibious. Nocri can breathe in air and underwater.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Nocri fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack. Nocri makes two attacks: one with her bite and one with her claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Protective Persistence (3/Day). Nocri can draw upon her protective nature. On her turn, she can use a bonus action to regain 1d10 + 4 hit points.

Protective Surge (1/Day). Nocri can push herself beyond her normal limits for a short time. On her turn, she can take one additional action on top of her regular action and a possible bonus action.

Reactions

Protective Nature. When a creature Nocri can see attacks an ally of hers (including her egg) that is within 5 feet of her, as a reaction she can use her tail to impose disadvantage on the attack roll.

Protective Rage (3/Day). If Nocri's egg is attacked, as a reaction she can enter a protective rage. While raging, she gains the following benefits:

- She has advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws.
- When she makes a melee weapon attack, she gains a +2 bonus to the damage roll.
- She has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Her rage lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if she is knocked unconscious or if her turn ends and she has neither attacked a hostile creature nor taken damage since her last turn. She can end her rage as a bonus action on her turn if there is no threat to her egg.



REWARDS

An adventuring party might gain rewards from Nocri by either defeating her or protecting her. However, protecting Nocri, a neutral evil creature on the verge of spawning an offspring of unknown origin and potential, may have dire consequences for the nearby town.

DEFEATING NOCRI

If the characters defeat Nocri, they gain access to her hoard, which contains a wealth of coins, jewelry, and gems (especially blue and green). The value of the hoard depends on when the characters defeat Nocri.

DEFEATING NOCRI

Item	I Am Me	I Am More than Me
Coins	2940 cp, 1720 sp, 103 gp	610 cp, 2420 sp, 710 gp, 13 pp
Gems	2 azurite, 1 blue quartz, 3 lapis lazuli (each 10 gp)	1 chrysoprase, 3 moonstone, 2 zircon (each 50 gp)
Art Objects	Small gold bracelet (25 gp)	Small gold bracelet set with two moonstones (125 gp), gold hair comb set with a zircon and two blue quartz (100 gp)
Magic Items	Roll 1d4 times on Magic Item Table F (see chapter 7 of the <i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i>)	Roll 1d4 times on Magic Item Table F and 1d4 times on Magic Item Table B (see chapter 7 of the <i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i>)

If the characters have not destroyed the egg, they can take it with them. The egg is viable if its incubation conditions are maintained for the remaining incubation period.

PROTECTING NOCRI

If the characters protect Nocri, their reward might still include valuables from her hoard, but can also include the promise of a potential ally.

Whether the egg hatches and what type of being emerges are questions awaiting your campaign to answer.



ONDUAL

Sic semper tyrannis.

Once a proud planetar of Torm, Ondual fell from grace when he was corrupted by an abyssal artifact he was tasked to secure. The artifact slowly eroded Ondual's mental barriers with enchantment magic paired with cunning arguments, using Ondual's own desires against him. By the time Ondual was ready to return to the Seven Heavens with the artifact, he had already fallen, forsaking his god because of Torm's inability to take direct action in protecting mortals from evil.

Taking matters into his own hands, Ondual set out to make sure mortals would be safe from all threats, including themselves. He knew he could only accomplish this by becoming their unquestioned master—one who would prevent all conflict and discord. First, however, he needed to unite the mortals beneath him and that would, regrettably, require enlisting mortals to fight and die for him in their conquest. But in the end, he reasoned, all who remained would be safe.

Ondual chose Braewood Keep, belonging to the Lord's Alliance, located east of the Trollclaws on the Sword Coast, as his starting point. The keep had come under attack from demons—demons that had rushed into the Material Plane through a gateway Ondual himself secretly opened. As the keep's defenses wavered, Ondual arrived, vanquishing the demons and securing the fort. Ondual offered to raise their fallen comrades from the dead should the keep's remaining forces pledge themselves to his service. Their commander among the dead, the battered defenders agreed. Ondual kept his word, raising each of the fallen, who then served him without question.

THE HOOK

One of Braewood Keep's **soldiers**, Private Tah Gardez, managed to escape fort and fled. Tah encounters the characters and begs their protection. A mere footsoldier, she has no coin to offer, but she tells the characters everything she witnessed. This doesn't include knowledge of Ondual's part in the demonic incursion, but does include Ondual's ability to subjugate large groups of people.

ONDUAL'S NEXT MOVES

Ondual chose Braewood Keep because it is a solid, defensible position and a good base of operations. He must first repair it, however, and ensure the absolute loyalty of each of his troops before marching on Triel. The road then leads toward Baldur's Gate and subjugating each populace along the way by turning their leaders and commanders into his servants through magic or psychological warfare. Afterward, every able-bodied person that can be trained and armed joins his army which moves onto the next target.

ONDUAL'S LAIR

Braewood Keep is a highly-defensible fortress and is patrolled by 1d6 + 1 **detachments of soldiers**, 2d6 **honor-bound warriors**, and 2d4 **sharpshooters**. The walls and gate, however, can be circumvented by following an escape tunnel that is carefully concealed in the surrounding terrain. The entrance to the tunnel can be found with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check, and was left open by Tah as she fled the keep.

The tunnel leads directly to the keep's war room where Ondual directs his forces. The war room, once a place of joint planning, has been transformed to show Ondual's true nature: dark chains hang like vines from the stone ceiling, soldiers who questioned Ondual are locked in cages and fitted with barbed collars, while Ondual himself sits on a throne made from the demons he slew.

LAIR ACTIONS

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

- Ondual casts the *command* spell on every creature of his choice in the lair. He needn't see each one, but he must be aware that an individual is in the lair to target that creature. He issues the same command to all the targets.
- Ondual casts the *forcecage* spell on a creature he can see.
- 1d3 **soldiers** rush in to aid Ondual from an adjoining passage.

ONDUAL'S TACTICS

Ondual is a creature of action. He wants to be front and center every fight, and doesn't waste the lives of his soldiers; if the characters are spotted outside the war room, he joins his soldiers in the fight there. Furthermore, he dies before conceding defeat in this conflict.

Under normal circumstances, Ondual is joined by a **sharpshooter**, a **veteran**, and Captain Chiphpa Aadirsk, a LG human **champion**, all of whom are under absolute control of Ondual.

When he enters battle, Ondual's first order of action is to cast *blade barrier* on himself. He then focuses on using his whip to restrain high-damage enemies. He focuses his attention on killing the restrained enemy while it is vulnerable, and orders his soldiers to do the same. Ondual targets one creature at a time. Those soldiers on Ondual's side not focused on the enemy Ondual is targeting focus on occupying additional characters so they don't swarm Ondual.

ONDUAL

Large celestial, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 225 (18d10 + 126)

Speed 40 ft., fly 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	20 (+5)	24 (+7)	19 (+4)	22 (+6)	25 (+7)

Saving Throws Con +13, Wis +12, Cha +13

Skills Intimidation +13, Persuasion +13

Damage Resistances radiant, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages All, Telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Aura of Suppression. Any creature within 120 feet of Ondual that attempts to speak or write anything in opposition to him or his agenda must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, the creature is unable to vocalize or write proper words for 1 minute.

Binding Resurrection. When Ondual brings a creature back to life with his *raise dead* spell, that creature is considered to be magically charmed by Ondual until Ondual dies or until it is on a different plane of existence from the creature. While charmed in this way, the creature must obey any command given to it by Ondual to the best of its ability.

Innate Spellcasting. Ondual's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). Ondual can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *charm person*, *detect evil and good*, *invisibility* (self only)

3/day: *blade barrier*, *dispel evil and good*, *geas*, *flamestrike*, *raise dead*

2/day: *insect plague*, *scrying*

Forceful Weapons. Ondual's weapon attacks are magical. When Ondual hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 4d8 force damage (included in the attack).

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

Actions

Multiattack. Ondual makes two longsword attacks and one whip attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 7) slashing damage, or 18 (2d10 + 7) slashing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 18 (4d8) force damage.

Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d4 + 7) slashing damage plus 22 (5d8) force damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC

18). Until the grapple ends, the creature is restrained. If Ondual moves, the restrained target moves with it. Until the target is freed, Ondual can't use its whip again.

Legendary Actions

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

Longsword. Ondual makes a longsword attack.

Command Ally. Ondual targets one ally he can see within 30 feet of him. If the target can see and hear Ondual, the target can make one weapon attack as a reaction and gains advantage on the attack roll.

Shatter Hope (Costs 2 Actions). Ondual targets one creature he can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see Ondual, it must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of Ondual's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to this ability for the next 24 hours.



ONDUAL'S TRAITS

Ideal. "Protect the innocent, at any cost, even from themselves."

Bond. "I am the only one capable of leading the mortals to prosperity."

Flaw. "I have become so consumed by my goals that I have lost my understanding of why they are important."

REWARDS

Upon Ondual's death, the twisted, blackened frame of his sword is burned away to reveal a *sword of guardianship*, which Ondual couldn't properly utilize after his fall.

Additionally, the Lord's Alliance is extremely grateful to the characters for saving Braewood Keep and likely all the neighboring towns. They award the characters 4d6 x 100 pp and a mark of prestige (see chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) of your choice.

Finally, after the following night, the party is approached by a woman in robes, bearing a torch. She goes by the name Eutheria, but she is, in actuality, a deva sent by Torm. She apologizes that she wasn't there to aid the characters, but bestows them with the *blessing of liberty*. For the next 5 days, the characters have advantage on saving throws against enchantment magic.

SOLDIER

Medium humanoid, any alignment

Armor Class 18 (chain mail, shield)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Martial Advantage. Once per turn, the soldier can deal an extra 7 (2d6) damage to a creature it hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of the soldier that isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

SWORD OF GUARDIANSHIP

Sword (any), legendary (requires attunement)

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. It has the following additional properties:

This weapon has 4 charges and regains 1d3 + 1 daily at dawn. When a creature within 5 feet of you is hit by a melee weapon attack and you are holding the sword, you can expend a charge and use your reaction to reduce the attack's damage by 2d10.

If you have the protection fighting style, you can use this ability as part of the same reaction, so that the damage reduction may occur if the attack still hits.

SOLDIERS. DETACHMENT OF

Huge swarm of 9 Medium humanoids (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 18 (chain mail, shield)

Hit Points 165 (30d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +3

Condition Immunities grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 7 (2900 XP)

Squad. The detachment has the following traits:

- It can move through an opening large enough for a Medium humanoid.
- It can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.
- It takes double damage from effects that target an area larger than a 5-foot square, such as a *fireball* spell, but not volleys from other squads.
- It is immune to the charmed, frightened, and poisoned conditions unless the effect covers a 15-by-15 foot square area.

Martial Advantage. The detachment deals an additional 7 (2d6) damage with melee attacks, and 21 (6d6) damage its volley when it has half or more of its maximum hit points remaining.

Actions

Multiattack. The detachment makes three melee attacks.

Longswords. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) slashing damage or 4 (1d8) slashing damage if the detachment has half or fewer of its hit points remaining.

Light Crossbow Volley. The detachment chooses a point within 80 feet. Each creature within a 10-foot radius circle centered on that point must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 28 (8d6) piercing damage. Creatures wearing heavy armor have advantage on the saving throw. If the detachment has half of its hit points or fewer, the damage is reduced to 14 (4d6).

SHARPSHOOTER

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 22)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +7

Skills Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Careful Aim. At the start of its turn, the sharpshooter can reduce its movement speed to 0. Until the end of that turn, it gains advantage on ranged attack rolls and deals an additional 7 (2d6) damage with a longbow or shortbow.

Actions

Multiattack. The sharpshooter makes two longbow or two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.



REIJLA, THE SANDMAN

Victims covered in sand, dead from nightmares so awful their souls were drawn to the Nine Hells.

Though in form a hag, Reijla has grand ambitions far beyond the traditional activities of his kind. He has forsaken the power offered through participation in a coven in order to attempt to twist a primordial being of nightmares into serving his goals. Reijla discovered one of the portals to the Demiplane of Nightmares that was left open when the Night Parade invaded Calimport. Through this tainted dreamscape he made contact with Dendar the Night Serpent and forged a diabolical pact with this slumbering primordial. Reijla now travels disguised as a dark-skinned withered old man, smiling kindly at those he meets.

In truth, he searches for other dormant portals to the demiplane, gathering the black-flecked golden sand from this terrible realm and using it to bind the power of Dendar's nightmares to the minds of mortals. The joining kills Reijla's victims and sends their souls screaming into the Nine Hells along with a portion of the power of Dendar. There Reijla feeds upon the larvae it creates or barter these potent souls with Mammon in exchange for soul coins.

THE HOOK

After a series of mysterious deaths, the Lazy Fisher in Delthuntle has been forced to close its doors. Five different guests have been found dead in their beds in the past three weeks—each with their mouths full and eyes covered with a coarse, black-flecked golden sand. None of the nearby guests heard anything unusual at the time of the deaths. The proprietor, Geldon Furfoot, suspects these terrible events might somehow be connected to recent rumors of devils being spotted in the Yuirwood. He has sent numerous missives to nobles, rulers, and anyone else he thinks might be able to spur others to action.

None of these communications has been answered yet. In desperation, Geldon is seeking out anyone that will listen and trying to convince them to aid him in investigating the deaths at his inn and the events unfolding in the Yuirwood.

REIJLA'S NEXT MOVES

The portal in the Yuirwood is not the only entrance to the Demiplane of Nightmares. One lies dormant at the edge of the Anauroch desert near the Far Forest. Another is hidden at the foot of Mount Talath in Halruaa. It is also possible that the portal used by the Night Parade to invade Calimport might be reopened should Reijla find the right magic. Opening a portal gives him greater access to the nightmare-tainted sand he uses to amass power in Avernus.

Reijla is not the only one capable of using these portals. The native inhabitants of the Demiplane of Nightmare

have taken notice of the renewed activity of the portals. One of the ancient **nagpa** has been trapped there for centuries and is eager to turn its scheming mind to events in the Prime Material. Numerous feyr wander the demiplane as well and releasing them into any populated areas would undoubtedly prove disastrous. There are other dangers lurking there as well, foul beings spawned by the influence of the Far Realm upon this place of nightmares. If the characters do not stop Reijla and seal the portals he opened, there are countless evils and dangers that could spill into the world.

While the consequences from the portals is apparent, it is not at all clear what Reijla intends to do with the soul coins he is minting. A portion are given to Mammon as payment for his role in their creation. It may be that Reijla intends to purchase an army of devils to usurp the seat of a lesser demon lord. Or perhaps he desires to purchase a contract or free himself from a debt owed to an infernal power.

REIJLA'S TACTICS

Reijla is not one for a fair fight. If he has reason to suspect a coming confrontation, he uses a portion of his hoard of soul coins to purchase a coterie of devils as protection. When it looks like these living shields are failing he quickly flees to another plane. Backed into a corner, he surrenders and attempts to bargain for his life.

REIJLA'S TRAITS

Ideal. "Strength and wealth are the only virtues. I'll never respect or obey one unable to wield both without hesitation."

Bond. "Fear reveals the true nature of mortals. Those that die of fright deserve their fate."

Flaw. "I am terrified of my own mortality and will do anything to stave off death and transformation into a pitiable lemure."



REIJLA, THE SANDMAN

Medium fiend (hag), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Primordial
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Reijla's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *magic missile*

2/day each: *dream*, *plane shift (self only)*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *sleep*

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

Actions

Claws. (Hag Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Change Shape. Reijla magically polymorphs into a Small or Medium male humanoid, or back into his true form. His statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to his true form if he dies.

Etherealness. Reijla magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. To do so, he must have a heartstone in his possession.

Infernal Mercenary. Reijla can expend a soul coin to summon a chain devil in an unoccupied space next to him. This devil obeys his commands and returns to the Nine Hells after 1 hour or when slain.

Dendar's Nightmare (1/Day). While on the Ethereal Plane, Reijla magically touches a sleeping humanoid on the Material Plane. A *protection from evil and good* spell cast on the target prevents this contact, as does a *magic circle*. As long as the contact persists, the target dreams of the many wonderful outcomes of fulfilling their darkest desires. If these dreams endure for at least 1 hour, the target gains no benefit from its rest, suffers one level of exhaustion, and it is charmed by Reijla for the next 24 hours.

If Reijla uses this ability on the same target on multiple consecutive nights, the effects of exhaustion are cumulative and potentially fatal.

REWARDS

Reijla has only a few possessions that he truly values: his *heartstone* (see section H of the *Monster Manual*), *sand of nightmares* (instead of a soul bag), and a copy of Mammon's *The Accounting and Valuation of All Things*. He also has 1d6 soul coins with him at any given time, though he may spend these to summon an infernal mercenary when attacked. Along his journey to open the remaining portals to the Demiplane of Nightmares, he has come across other treasure. Roll 2d4 and select two items from the tables below. If he cannot escape the characters when they attack, he offers them whatever treasure he has in exchange for allowing him to go free.

TREASURE TABLE

1d4	Item	1d4	Item
1	Dagger of venom	1	Pipes of haunting
2	Wand of polymorph	2	Dead man's bottle
3	Sword of life stealing (shortsword)	3	Cape of the mountebank
4	Armor of vulnerability (breastplate)	4	Scroll of hallucinatory terrain

DEAD MAN'S BOTTLE

Wondrous item, rare

Stoppered with a stylized silver skull, this empty wine bottle of green glass looks to be of an incredibly antique vintage and is covered in cobwebs and dirt. When the bottle is filled with alcohol, it keeps the beverage fresh, chilled, and subtly enhances its flavor. If the alcohol is poured upon a grave, any corpse up to 15 feet below is subjected to the effects of speak with dead. It does not need to have a mouth, but can only answer up to three questions. Once used this way, the bottle loses its magic for one week.

SAND OF NIGHTMARES

Wondrous item, very rare

This leather pouch contains 1d4 + 2 handfuls of fine golden sand flecked with coarse black grains. You can use an action to toss or blow a handful in the air, creating a 15 foot cloud. Each creature in the cloud must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or suffer 6d10 necrotic damage and gain one level of exhaustion.

A handful poured onto the face of an unconscious humanoid causes the target to suffer intense nightmares influenced by the power of Dendar the Night Serpent. Before waking, the creature must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom check or it gains one level of exhaustion and takes 10d10 necrotic damage. If this damage is enough to kill the target, their soul is sent to Minauros.

SCARLET STONE-EATER

That's not a cockatrice—this is a cockatrice!

For the past few years, rumors of an oversized cockatrice covered in crimson plumage has circulated in the countryside around and east of Amphail. Whether she's the result of a wizard's experiment gone wrong, or a frightening example of natural selection, Scarlet Stone-Eater has the locals terrified. Every so often, when the nearby villagers believe they may have seen the last of the monstrosity, another prized farm animal ends up petrified and half-eaten.

THE HOOK

Two weeks ago a farmer, **Penni Leahman**, and her farmhands killed a cockatrice that had been attacking farmsteads in the region. What they didn't know was that the creature was the infamous Scarlet Stone-Eater's mate. By the next day, Scarlet Stone-Eater had descended on the farmstead, petrifying most of the farm animals and some of the farmhands, including Penni's husband.

Penni fled the farmstead and went from village to village trying to find anyone brave enough to help her slay Scarlet Stone-Eater. Unfortunately, the fearsome creature's reputation dissuaded any from joining her. Meanwhile, back on the farmstead, Scarlet Stone-Eater has nested in Penni's abandoned home and waits for the last of her fertilized eggs to hatch.

Penni was able to collect a small amount of money from other local farmers and merchants to post a bounty of 100 gold pieces for the head of Scarlet Stone-Eater. Characters will most likely encounter Penni in the countryside outside Amphail.

SCARLET STONE-EATER'S NEXT MOVES

Despite being an extraordinary creature, Scarlet Stone-Eater is still a wild beast. After settling in the abandoned farmstead, she laid 3d4 eggs over the course of two weeks. If she isn't dealt with, Scarlet Stone-Eater will feast on the petrified farm animals, hatch her eggs in the next 3 weeks, and lead her hatchlings to a new food source once they've finished with the farm. Left unchecked, Scarlet Stone-Eater and her flock of cockatrices could bring ruin to many small towns and villages in the region.



SCARLET STONE-EATER'S TACTICS

Scarlet Stone-Eater prefers to ambush prey she deems sufficiently dangerous. She initiates a combat from hiding or by flying in the air and making a screech attack. From there she attempts to petrify the creatures she deems most dangerous first. Given her intelligence, she sees the largest creature as the biggest threat until she has evidence otherwise.

Once Scarlet Stone-Eater is brought to half hit points or fewer, she attempts to flee unless she has only one or two remaining enemies. She will not flee regardless of how much damage she takes if she has unhatched eggs. Any cockatrice chicks that are already hatched flee with Scarlet Stone-Eater when she runs. If the characters are able to capture or kill more than one cockatrice chick, Scarlet Stone-Eater fights the characters to the death.

SCARLET STONE-EATER

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)
Speed 30 ft., fly 45 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Geovore. Scarlet Stone-Eater's bite attacks deal double damage against stone and she can survive on (and prefers) a diet of petrified flesh.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw against being magically petrified. On a failed save, the creature begins to turn to stone and is restrained. It must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified. After 24 hours, the creature makes a final saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified until targeted by a *remove curse* or similar spell.

Screech. Each creature that isn't a cockatrice within 30 feet of Scarlet Stone-Eater must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or take 3 (1d6) psychic damage and have disadvantage on saving throws against being petrified until the end of their next turn.

Legendary Actions

Scarlet Stone-Eater can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Scarlet Stone-Eater regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Bite Attack. Scarlet Stone-Eater makes a bite attack.
Move. Scarlet Stone-Eater moves up to her speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

SCARLET STONE-EATER'S TRAITS

Scarlet Stone-Eater lacks the intelligence to have an ideal but her animal instincts to protect her eggs and her territory serve as her bond and flaw.

Ideal. "..."

Bond. "I must protect my eggs until they hatch."

Flaw. "I must protect my hunting grounds."

REWARDS

Searching the Leahman farmstead and harvesting the corpse of Scarlet Stone-Eater turns up 2d6 unfertilized cockatrice eggs, 2d4 cockatrice cutlets, and 1d6 cockatrice flight feathers. Penni is happy to teach the party regional recipes using this ingredients, detailed below.

Scarlet Stone-Eater's beak can be used to create a set of powerful magical weapons. Anyone can attempt to craft the following magic item as long as they have the creature's beak, plumage, and several leather strips. Doing so requires a successful DC 10 Intelligence check using leatherworker's tools. On a success, the magic item works as described below. On a failure, the leatherworker fails to create the magic item and is petrified until targeted by a *remove curse* spell. The materials are not destroyed by a failed attempt to create the weapons.

CRIMSON KHATARS

Weapon, rare (requires attunement)

These magical khatars are made from leather strips, Scarlet Stone-Eater's stone piercing beak, and decorated with some of her infamous crimson plumage. While wearing these khatars, you can use them to make unarmed strikes. When you do, you gain a +1 to attack rolls and damage. A successful attack deals 1d4 + (your choice of Strength or Dexterity modifier) piercing damage.

When you roll a 20 on your attack with this magic weapon, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw against being magically petrified. On a failed save, the creature begins to turn to stone and is restrained. It must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified. After 24 hours, the creature makes a final saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified until targeted by a *remove curse* or similar spell.

GRILLED COCKATRICE CUTLETS

Cooking this recipe requires 1 portion of Scarlet Stone-Eater's meat, which it consumes, and the use of cook's utensils. When you attempt to prepare this recipe, you must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma (cook's utensils) ability check.

Success. After you eat this meal you gain 3d8 temporary hit points and, for the next 24 hours, you are immune to being petrified.

Failure. After you eat this meal you gain 1d8 temporary hit points and, for the next 24 hours, you have advantage on saving throws against being petrified.

UNPETRIFYING PINION

Creating this consumable item requires 1 cockatrice flight feather, which it destroys, and the use of alchemist's supplies. When you attempt to craft this item, you must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (alchemist's supplies) ability check.

Success. When dragged across a petrified creature, the creature is no longer petrified.

Failure. When dragged across a petrified creature, roll 3d12. The creature is no longer petrified after a number of days equal to the result.

SCRAMBLED STONE-EATER EGGS

Cooking this recipe requires 2 of Scarlet Stone-Eater's eggs, which it consumes, and the use of cook's utensils. When you attempt to prepare this recipe, you must succeed on a DC 10 Charisma (cook's utensils) ability check.

Success. For the next 24 hours after you eat this meal, you have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage and disadvantage on saving throws against being petrified.

Failure. When you eat this meal, gain 1 temporary hit point. If you lose this temporary hit point due to taking damage before 24 hours have passed, you are petrified for 24 hours.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of Scarlet Stone-Eater add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: PETRIFYING PECK

1st-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: S

Duration: Instantaneous

When you cast this spell a translucent apparition of a cockatrice appears and attacks one creature within range. Make a ranged spell attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes 2d6 piercing damage and its speed is reduced to 0 until the end of its next turn. If this damage reduces a creature to 0 hit points or fewer, it is petrified.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 1st.

THE SEA-AMBLING MOUND

The fisherman's terror

A shambling mound followed a small brook leading from the swamp it lived in to the closed bay of the famous purple salmon. The creature hunts a few feet under the surface. The sea is filled with seaweed which the monster co-opted and is indistinguishable from it, especially at night. Since last month, it has roamed around the village, attacking small boats.

THE HOOK

During the party's journey near the Sword Coast, they come across Lanercoast, a small village by the Sea of Swords. Anyone familiar with it describes it as a small but lively place where most families live by fishing the famous purple salmon or the commerce that surrounds this tasty fish. Upon approach, the village seems quiet and the roads surrounding it empty.

When the party enters the village, they see a young boy, **Cromwell**, around the age of 8, begging for spare coins. He claims his father was consumed by the sea monster. If asked for more information, the boy tells them everyone has stopped fishing since the arrival of the sea monster. Noticing they bear weapons, the boy asks them to find and slay the monster before the village is abandoned.



THE SEA-AMBLING MOUND

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Resistances cold, fire

Damage Immunities lightning

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius),
passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Combat Wisdom. The Sea-ambling Mound has survived many skirmishes and understands the way humanoid fight and thus tries to disarm any grappled targets. Whenever a grappled manages to escape, roll a d4. On a roll of 1 or 2, the Sea-ambling Mound manages to keep a weapon, or another visible object like a spellcasting focus, inside its seaweed body.

Lightning Absorption. Whenever the Sea-ambling Mound is subjected to lightning damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.

Water Breathing. The Sea-ambling Mound can breathe underwater.

Actions

Multiattack. The Sea-ambling Mound makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape/DC 14), and the shambling mound uses its Engulf on it.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Engulf. The Sea-ambling Mound engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the mound's turns or take 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the mound moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The mound can have only one creature engulfed at a time.

Drown. The Sea-ambling Mound may, as an action, attempt to drown an engulfed target. The drowning target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed until the end of its next turn.

THE SEA-AMBLING MOUND'S NEXT MOVES

If the party does not deal with the Sea-ambing Mound, it continues terrorizing the village. As the purple salmon is its only source of income, it is abandoned by any citizens that are in condition to leave. The fate of other villages in the area will be the same.

THE SEA-AMBLING MOUND'S TACTICS

The Sea-ambing Mound only attacks creatures in range. If the creatures are on a boat, it spends its first turn trying to overturn it. It tries to kill the creatures by engulfing and drowning them. It tries to remain under the surface in order to take advantage of water combat tactics.

It always fights to the death, but its speed may allow the characters to flee if needed. It will not follow them to the shore.

THE SEA-AMBLING MOUND'S TRAITS

The Sea-ambing Mound lacks the intelligence required to have ideals or bonds. It obeys its sole motivation: to consume flesh.

REWARDS

If the characters search the Sea-ambing Mound's body, a successful Wisdom (Perception) check finds purple salmon (DC 10) and trinkets (DC 13). Characters who search the creature's body discover a gooey core at its center which they can harvest by succeeding on a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check.

CORE GOO

If the player characters succeed in harvesting the Sea-ambing Mound's core, they gain 1d4 + 1 bits of core goo. When a spellcaster casts *protection from energy* while holding a portion of core goo, the targeted creature is immune to lightning in addition to the damage selected by casting the spell and the goo is destroyed.

PURPLE SALMON

If the player characters find purple salmon in the Sea-ambing Mound's body, they gather 3d6 of the fish in good condition. Each purple salmon weighs between 1 and 3 pounds and can be sold in any nearby town for 1 gold piece a pound within 2 days, after which time they are too badly spoiled to be worth anything.

TRINKETS

If the player characters find trinkets in the Sea-ambing Mound, only 1d6 are worth keeping and of any value. These trinkets are the personal effects of those killed and eaten by the monster and can be sold for 10 gp each or returned to the families of those who died.

One of the trinkets that can be found on the Sea-ambing Mound's body is the amulet belonging to the father of Cromwell, the orphan they encountered in the village. If they return the amulet to the boy, he enthusiastically pleads to be allowed to join the adventurers, reasoning that he has no other family to care for him. If the characters agree to allow Cromwell to join them, use the following statistics.

CROMWELL'S TRAITS

Bond. "I want to find a new home."

Ideal. "I adore, and want to become one of, the heroes of legend!"

Flaw. "I drastically underestimate the dangers of adventuring."

COMMONER BOY

Small humanoid

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 5 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +2

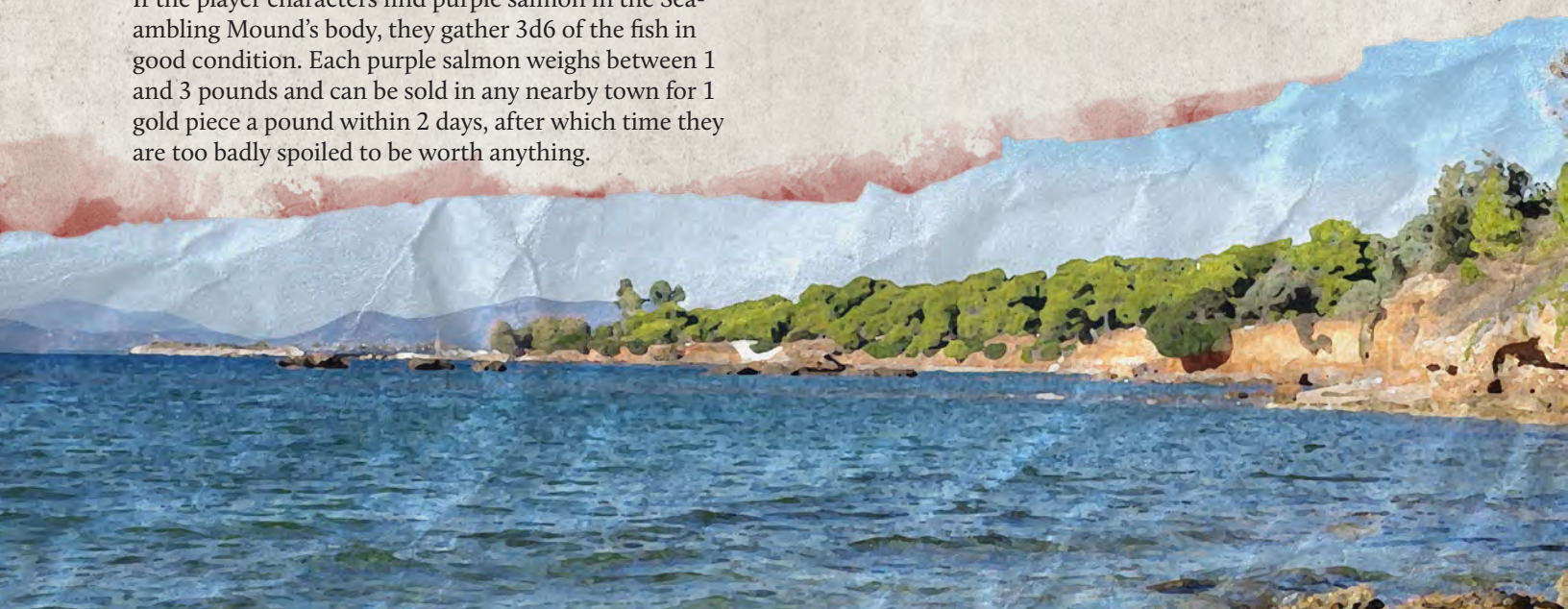
Skills Acrobatics +2, Stealth +2

Senses passive perception 10

Languages Common

Equipment Sling

Sneak Attack. Beginning at 1st level, Cromwell knows how to strike subtly and exploit a foe's distraction. Once per turn, he can deal an extra 1d6 damage to one creature he hits with an attack if he has advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use a finesse or a ranged weapon.



SPELL EATER

“Well, it didn’t kill us, but it did eat all of our armor, weapons, coin, and the wizard’s spell book. As far as such things go, we got off easy.”

In the lightless depths of the labyrinthine Underdark, mythals, ancient enchantments of world-shaping power, bleed magic into the land, infusing the stone and water as well as transforming the animals and plants...It is from this realm Spell Eater arose, a scrawny **rust monster** nibbling at an iron vein imbued by a decaying mythal. The rust monster followed the iron deposit upward, growing all the while and being altered by the strange mythal’s radiation called faerzress. The evolving rust monster was drawn to the surface by the aftermath of a great conflict. The armor and weapons littered across the battlefield were irresistible—all that metal rusting in the wind and blood. It joined other carrion creatures, ghouls and slimes, wolves and birds feasting on the dead. When the survivors who fled the terrible clash returned, they found the ground stripped of all flesh and metal, only a few bones marked the place where thousands had died.

Having sustained itself so long on iron saturated with arcane energies, the rust monster grew to an unusual size and developed the ability to feast on magical energy itself, stripping enchantments, consuming spells, and even devouring magical objects—especially those of metallic construction.

WHAT IS A MYTHAL?

Mythals are ancient enchantments created by elven archwizards during the height of their empire, thousands of years ago. They were designed for different reasons, but all held incredible, sometimes world-changing power.

An example of a famous mythal is the one within Waterdeep, the City of Splendors, that bars dragons from entry. Another is the Dracorage mythal, which covered 250,000 square miles and caused dragons within the area to go berserk. Many elven settlements were protected by mythals, either prohibiting certain creatures from entering, or hiding the city from the outside world. Other known mythals significantly empowered magic or completely suppressed it across whole regions.

As the ancient elven empire fell into ruin, the mythals slowly unraveled over the long millennia, seeping their magic into the land and water, which has had unpredictable effects on not only the flora and fauna, but how magic functions in those areas.

THE HOOK

An ancient elven mythal has infused the rocky hills of the region with magic, making the ore and gems highly prized in the creation of magical objects. And this rust monster has become a nuisance to explorers and prospectors. While the hills contain many caverns worming into the Underdark, the terrible beasts of that dark place are mostly held back by the mythal guarding

the land. Something, however, has been weakening this protection.

All around the hills are menhirs, standing stones carved with ancient runes, which aid in shielding this region from the predators of the Underdark. The troublesome rust monster has found the magic of the menhirs delicious and slowly consuming them. This is causing an already unstable mythal to bleed more arcane radiation into the environment. If not stopped, the great enchantment will collapse in a catastrophic manner and flood the land with unbridled magic and fully open the way to the surface for the monstrous predators and ruthless invaders of the Underdark.

IN OTHER WORLDS

While the default setting is the Forgotten Realms, any setting with potent enchantments that need to be sustained may work. Consider an enchantment keeping an ancient green dragon in stasis, or one that suppresses a curse that raises slain creatures as undead.

Ravnica and its world-spanning City of Guilds uses potent enchantments to keep parts of the city held together or terrible things trapped. All the guilds use powerful enchantments in the theme of their organization. For example, the Izzet Guild uses enchantments to power their unstable devices while the Dimir Guild employs such magic to hide their many hideouts and resource caches.

In Eberron, great enchantments have shaped the world and have created strange and terrifying wonders, such as the elemental trains that certain regions rely on.

Whatever the location or setting, the Spell Eater can be undermining any essential enchantment.

SPELL EATER'S NEXT MOVES

If not slain or lured away, Spell Eater will carry on as it always has, gorging itself on metal and magic before sleeping the day away in a small cave or dense copse of trees. As more time passes with the Spell Eater free to roam and feed on the menhirs, the more unstable the mythal becomes and the ambient magic rises, attracting all sorts of monstrosities and curious wizards of dubious disposition. As the mythal unravels, the region is struck by magic storms and arcane instability (see the Regional Effects of the Damaged Mythal below).

Spell Eater, like most rust monsters, is naturally subterranean and accustomed to the dark, so it scavenges during the night. It is also relatively docile, for a wild creature.

PEACEFUL SOLUTION

If the characters opt for a peaceful solution and lure the Spell Eater away or capture it and give it to someone, they find shed carapace pieces. The amount is up to the DM, but non-violent methods should be well rewarded. Also, the Spell Eater could be made into pet if it is fed regularly and treated well, if that is your style of game.

SPELL EATER'S TACTICS

Spell Eater is a scavenger driven by hunger, but it is more cunning and cautious than most animals. It has the same intelligence as a baboon but is wiser and more patient. If reduced to a quarter hit points, it attempts to flee. As with most rust monsters, it targets creatures carrying the most iron or steel. It is clever enough to hide and stalk humanoids carrying lots of metal, and it attempts to sneak into their camps at night to nibble at their gear before retreating into the darkness.

HUNTING SPELL EATER

Spell Eater can be lured away from the menhirs with food, such as large amounts of iron or magic. Likewise, food can be used to bait a trap for it.

As a rust monster, it damages any metal weapon striking it and its unique properties can interfere with magical weapons as well. It has no ranged attack, so quick moving adventurers can exploit this by keeping a distance and firing arrows at it. While it is highly resistant to magic, it is not immune and certain spells are quite effective against it, especially those that slow it.

REGIONAL EFFECTS OF THE DAMAGED MYTHAL

The region once protected by the powerful elven enchantment is now wracked with magical phenomena as the mythal becomes increasingly unstable.

- Mysterious weather can suddenly appear and vanish without warning or cause. Roll 1d4 or choose from the following weather effects, which may occur every day:
 1. The sky is abruptly filled with a cloudless thunderstorm of prismatic lightning. The thunder is whooshing instead of booming, as though a massive, unseen object is soaring through the sky. The storm lasts 20 (1d4x10) minutes.
 2. Tornadoes made of harmless chromatic light swirl about for 2 (1d4) minutes. Everything touched by them is coated in variegated color for the duration of the storm.
 3. A heavy mist made entirely of bubbles fills the area, reducing sight to 60 feet. Everything beyond that is heavily obscured. The mist smells sweet, and each living creature within it heals 3 (1d6) hit points at the end of its turn. The mist lasts 3 (1d6) rounds.
 4. The ground quakes violently, reshaping whole areas into perfectly flat plains or strict geometric shapes. Hills become perfect pyramids. Streams turn in only right angles. Creatures must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw at the start of each of their turns or be knocked prone. The quake lasts 2 (1d4) minutes.
- The earth and plants are inexplicably altered. Trees are transformed into beautiful crystal, yet they still live and grow, streams are turned into colored vapor which hugs the ground, yet fish still swim within.

Hillsides erupt with pure elemental energy: blue lava that freezes what it touches, creating a landscape of glittering ice, or black lava that petrifies all it contacts into seamless stone, even water.

- Optionally, unpredictable magical effects occur within pockets. Roll on the Mythal Instability table below.

MYTHAL INSTABILITY

As time progresses, the area becomes flooded with unstable magic causing havoc and strange phenomena. The affected area can be as large or as small as needed. Choose what is most dramatic for the narrative and best suits the playstyle of the group.

1. **Wild Magic Surge.** The air fills with a colorful aurora and glitter softly falls from the sky like iridescent snowflakes. Roll on the Wild Magic Surge table (see chapter 3 of the *Player's Handbook*) and apply it to each creature in the affected area. The DM should reroll certain effects, such as 07-08, that could easily lead to killing several characters.
2. **Anti-Gravity.** You and everything around you are suddenly jerked into the air. An anti-gravity bubble appears and lasts 2 (1d4) hours, lifting everything in the area 30 feet. Melee and ranged attacks have disadvantage in the area because of the discombobulation.
3. **Magical Purge.** The air pressure around you suddenly changes, causing your ears to pop and ring. Everything in the affected area is struck by a 5th level *dispel magic*.
4. **Arcane Dissonance.** An unsettling reverberation touches your skin and fills your mind, closing you off to a connection you once had. Each creature within the affected area becomes unattuned from a random magic item.
5. **Empowering Surge.** Multi-colored static energy dances across your skin and through your hair, energizing you. Every spell caster in the area regains 3 total levels of spell slots (e.g., one 3rd level spell, three 1st level spells, or two 1st level spells and a 2nd level spell).
6. **Eldritch Insight.** A gentle chiming resonates around and through you. You feel yourself closer to objects of magic. Attuning items requires only a minute. This effect lasts an hour.

SPELL EATER'S TRAITS

Spell Eater is a fairly timid non-carnivorous creature. While it seemingly hunts and stalks humanoids, it isn't to eat them or even harm them, but to feed on their metal or magical equipment, which it does as stealthily as possible. Its intelligence is too low to have ideals or bonds. Instead, all of its actions are directed towards eating metal objects and magical enchantments or protecting territory rich in its preferred food.

REWARDS

In death, the Spell Eater's body can be harvested for ingredients which can then be used to make alchemical concoctions and magical items.

SPELL EATER

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 51 (6d10 + 18)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Magic Resistance. Spell Eater has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Reflective Carapace. Any time Spell Eater is targeted by a *magic missile* spell, or a spell that requires a ranged attack roll, roll a d6. On a 1 to 3, Spell Eater is affected as normal. On a 4 to 5, Spell Eater is unaffected. On a 6, Spell Eater is unaffected, and the spell's effect is reflected back at the caster as though it originated from Spell Eater, turning the caster into the target.

Iron Scent. Spell Eater can pinpoint, by scent, the location of ferrous metal within 30 feet of it.

Rust Metal. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits Spell Eater corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal that hits Spell Eater is destroyed after dealing damage.

Magic Scent. Spell Eater can sense sources of magic within 30 feet of it.

Disrupt Magic. Any time Spell Eater is struck by a magical weapon, roll a d6. On a 1 to 3, attack is resolved as normal. On a 4, 5, or 6, the weapon is immediately unattuned and that attack is then resolved. If the item has charges or daily use powers, it cannot use those abilities for 24 hours.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Glowing Antennae. Spell Eater corrodes a nonmagical ferrous metal object it can see within 5 feet of it. If the object isn't being worn or carried, the touch destroys 1 cubic foot of it. If the object is being worn or carried by a creature, the creature can make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, avoiding Spell Eater's touch on a success.

If the object touched is either metal armor or a metal shield being worn or carried, it takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. Armor reduced to an AC of 10 or a Shield that drops to a +0 bonus is destroyed. If the object touched is a held metal weapon, it rusts as described in the Rust Metal trait.

An attuned magic item touched by the antennae is immediately unattuned. An item with charges or daily use powers touched by the antenna cannot use charges or daily abilities for 24 hours. If the object is being worn or carried by a creature, the creature can make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, avoiding Spell Eater's touch on a success.

Devour Magic (3/day). As a bonus action, Spell Eater may cast *dispel magic* at 3rd level. If a spell is dispelled this way, Spell Eater regains a number of hit points equal to five times the spell's level. Spell Eater makes dispel attempts at +5.

ANTENNAE FEATHERS

Running the lengths of Spell Eater's two glowing antennae are feather-like protrusions. These strange feeler appendages may be harvested and processed into ingredients for consumable magic items, such as oils.

Characters must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or DC 16 Intelligence check to gather these feather-like parts. Characters with backgrounds related to wilderness survival (such as outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) gain advantage on this check.

A successful check acquires 5 (2d4 + 1) feathers. A character can use 3 or 6 feathers and make a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check to craft a magical potion. Proficiency in alchemist's tools or a background related to scholarly work (such as the sage or cloistered scholar) gain advantage on this check. On a success, the feathers are destroyed and the crafter creates a *potion of the rust monster* if 3 feathers were used or a *potion of the Spell Eater* if 6 feathers were used. On a failure, the feathers are destroyed and the potion is inert and useless.



GLOWING ANTENNAE

Spell Eater has two antennae that may be carefully removed and crafted into magical items. Removing an antenna without damaging it requires a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Wisdom (Survival) check. Characters proficient with leatherworker's tools or who have a background related to wilderness survival (such as outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) gain advantage on this check. Failure on this check results in an antenna being destroyed. Each check takes 10 minutes to complete.

Afterward, the antenna needs to be carefully preserved and petrified in alchemical substances. This requires 100 gp of alchemical goods and a successful DC 16 Intelligence check with alchemist's supplies. Characters who have a background related to crafting (such as guild artisan or clan crafter) gain advantage on this check. Failure on the check means the alchemical supplies are wasted and must be repurchased, but the antennae is unharmed.

REFLECTIVE CARAPACE

Once Spell Eater has been defeated, characters may harvest its strange carapace, which can be crafted into magical gear. Gathering the parts of the carapace requires a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) or DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Proficiency with leatherworker's tools or backgrounds related to wilderness survival (such as outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) grants advantage to this check. Success collects 7 (2d6) sections of carapace while failure acquires 3 (1d6) sections. Each check takes 30 minutes to complete, and four checks can be attempted before either all the carapace has been harvested or ruined.

Once the carapace has been collected, it may be crafted into armor with 100 gp of materials, two weeks of time, and a successful DC 16 Intelligence check using leatherworker's tools. A background related to crafting (such as guild artisan or clan crafter) grants advantage to this check. Failure results in the loss of the 100 gp of materials but not the carapace sections.

- 10 fragments may be crafted into light armor or a shield.
- 15 fragments may be crafted into medium armor.
- 20 fragments may be crafted into heavy armor.

POTION OF THE RUST MONSTER

Potion, rare

When you drink this potion, you gain the following benefits for 1 hour.

- You can pinpoint, by scent, the location of ferrous metal within 30 feet.
- Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits you corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed.

Nonmagical ammunition made of metal that hits you is destroyed after dealing damage.

- You can corrode a nonmagical ferrous metal object by touch. If the object isn't being worn or carried, your touch destroys 1 cubic foot of it. If the object is being worn or carried by a creature, it must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw (DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Constitution bonus) to avoid your touch. If the object touched is either metal armor or a metal shield being worn or carried, it takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. Armor reduced to an AC of 10 or a Shield that drops to a +0 bonus is destroyed. If the object touched is a held metal weapon, it rusts as described in the Rust Metal trait.
- You may consume rust as if it were a nourishing meal.

POTION OF THE SPELL EATER

Potion, very rare

When you drink this potion, you gain the following benefits for 1 hour.

- You can sense sources of magic within 30 feet.
- As a bonus action, you may cast *dispel magic* at 3rd level 3 times during the oil's duration. If a spell is dispelled this way, you regain a number of hit points equal to five times the spell's level. Wisdom is considered your spell casting ability for this ability.
- You gain the ability to unattended magic items with a touch and items with charges or daily use powers you touch cannot use charges or daily abilities for 24 hours. If the object is being worn or carried by a creature, it must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw (DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Constitution bonus) to avoid your touch.
- The character also gains nourishment when dispelling a spell with *devour magic*.

SPELL EATER'S ANTENNA

Rod, rare (requires attunement)

This rod has 5 charges. While you hold it, you can use an action to cast one of the following spells from it: *rusting touch* (expends 1 charge) or *devour magic* (expends 3 charges). The rod regains 1 expended charge daily at dawn. If the rod is reduced to 0 charges, roll a d20. On a 1, the rod crumbles to dust. (See new spells below.)

SPELL REFLECTION ARMOR

Armor (any), very rare (requires attunement)

You gain magic resistance (you have advantage on saving throws against spells) and any time you are targeted by a *magic missile* spell, or a spell that requires a ranged attack roll, roll a d6. On a 1 to 3, you are affected as normal. On a 4 to 5, you are unaffected. On a 6, you are unaffected, and the spell's effect is reflected back at the caster as though it originated from you, turning the caster into the target.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of the Spell Eater add the following spells to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: DEVOUR MAGIC

4th-level abjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

When you cast this spell and touch a creature, you disrupt and consume one spell of 4th level or lower cast upon the creature. If the creature is affected by multiple spells, you can choose which to disrupt with this spell. The chosen spell ends immediately and the creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 5d8 force damage. You gain temporary hit points equal to half the damage dealt and you receive enough nourishment to be sustained for the day without additional food and drink.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, you automatically end the effect of one spell on the target if the spell's level is equal to or less than the level of the spell slot you used. In addition, the damage of the spell increases by 1d8 for each spell slot level above 4th.

NEW SPELL: RUSTING TOUCH

2nd-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: self

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

Your touch corrodes a nonmagical ferrous metal object. If the object isn't being worn or carried, the touch destroys a 1-foot cube of it. If the object is being worn or carried by a creature, the creature must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw to avoid the effect.

If the object touched is either metal armor or a metal shield being worn or carried, it takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. Armor reduced to an AC of 10 or a Shield that drops to a +0 bonus is destroyed. If the object touched is a held metal weapon, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed.

Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits or touches you corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal that hits you is destroyed after dealing damage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, your corroding effect is more potent. The penalty to metal armor and weapons becomes -2 if you use a 3rd level spell slot, -3 if you use a 4th level spell slot, and -4 if you use a 5th level spell slot. If you use a 6th level spell slot or higher, metal objects that would be subjected to the penalty are immediately destroyed instead.



TENSER'S EXPERIMENTAL ARMOR

The spell is well known, but it wasn't a guaranteed success

Creating a spell is often a pursuit rife with trial and error. Even to Tenser, this was no exception. His famous spell, *Tenser's transformation*, is well known for turning even the most frail, scholarly folk into a machine of war. It's only limitation? It was near impossible to don a suit of armor before the spell's effects wore off. He sought to adapt this spell further, combining it with the magic of animate objects to aid in donning the armor. Tenser is not known for *Tenser's transforming armor* though. There was something missing from the equation: each time the spell was cast, the suit came to life and attacked! Thankfully, the bestowed martial prowess of *Tenser's transformation* allowed him to fight back and defeat the armor. On one such occasion, the magic of both spells went wild. The armor became animated, and also gained the benefits of the transformation spell! It was all Tenser could do to expel the armor to a random place in the Prime Material plane. Resigned that the spell would never work, Tenser abandoned the effort. The armor, however, was never accounted for.

While stories of a phantom suit of armor ravaging the country-side or haunting an old blacksmith are all too commonplace among the realms, they are often spun on the whim of creative children and aren't steeped in reality. The story of a young dwarf, however, who stumbled across a living suit of armor buried deep in a mountain side has been corroborated ad nauseum. In childish curiosity, and the allowance of the armor, he donned it and his body became a vessel for the armor's goals and ambitions.

THE HOOK

This armor, notable for its runic carvings and the poor dwarf inside being subject to its whims, has been spotted in a tower outside a small village. The long abandoned tower was once the home of a powerful mage. Thieves and adventurers alike have tried to enter and peel away its mysteries, but it is warded with all manners of arcane trap and device.

Since it entered the tower, nearby residents have reported strange disturbances and flashing lights within the tower at all hours of the day and household objects, such as brooms, pots, and tables, coming to life and scurrying out of their homes. A miasma of red fog engulfs the top most section of the tower once every tenday.

TENSER'S EXPERIMENTAL ARMOR'S NEXT MOVES

The armor is aware of its existence and what that means. The reason it took this young dwarf into its possession was to become something greater. Its goal is to teach the dwarf the arcane arts, forcefully if necessary. The combination of its supreme martial ability and a master of arcane magic at its disposal is the means to mastering the maligned *Tenser's transforming armor* and creating an animated army!

TENSER'S EXPERIMENTAL ARMOR'S TACTICS

The experimental armor is a formidable opponent. It is a full suit of magically enhanced plate mail with no misgivings about the sanctity of life. The dwarf inside, however, is another story. If the two can be separated, the dwarf will make every effort to escape. Spells such as *dispel magic* and *antimagic field* are the key to unlocking the dwarf from the armor, negating the armor's magical abilities. This is something the armor attempts to prevent at all costs.

In addition to making martial weapon attacks, the armor commands a small battalion of 1d10 + 1 magically animated objects, entirely made up of mundane household items ranging from Tiny to Medium in size: brooms, tables, and the occasional gauntlet or sword. The *spell animate* objects has the relevant stats and rules for these objects.

TENSER'S EXPERIMENTAL ARMOR'S TRAITS

Ideal. "To wield magic and become a powerful force to be reckoned with."

Bond. "I've become quite fond of the dwarf who wears me."

Flaw. "With no soul to call my own, I will never be able to break free of my arcane chains."

REWARDS

Upon defeating the armor, there are two types of rewards the characters can receive. The armor itself becomes a lifeless, ordinary suit of plate mail. It is adorned with runic carvings, and looks to be in pristine condition despite its age. If you manage to subdue the dwarf without harming him and without him escaping, he provides you with a spellbook containing all the spells listed in the Tenser's Experimental Armor stat block.

In addition, the dwarf reveals to you that the armor was working on completing the *Tenser's transforming armor* spell and gives you a blank vellum (which the *detect magic* spell reveals is magical in nature and enchanted with the transmutation school of magic) and instructions to cast the *spell animate objects* to animate the vellum. Once animated, the vellum recites the intricacies of the *Tenser's transforming armor* spell in a wheezing, whirring, mechanical voice. A wizard must be prepared to remember this, or scribe the spell as it is being spoken. Once the recital is complete, the vellum ignites in a red-blue flame and disappears. If the spell is copied down exactly, the wizard can add it to their spellbook:

TENSER'S EXPERIMENTAL ARMOR

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 24 (natural armor)

Hit Points 230 (20d8 + 140)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	27 (+8)	25 (+7)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Languages —

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The armor is incapacitated while in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the armor must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute. If the armor is affected this way, the dwarf inside can escape freely.

False Appearance. While the armor remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.

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

Enhanced Strikes. The armor's weapon attacks are magical. When the armor hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 5d6 force damage (included in the attack).

Spellcasting. The dwarf inside the armor is a 9th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). The dwarf has the following wizard spells prepared, which the armor can use its action to cast while the dwarf is inside:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *mending*, *sword burst*
1st level (4 slots): *comprehend languages*, *magic missile*, *silent image*
2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *hold person*, *Nystul's magic aura**
3rd level (3 slots): *enemies abound*, *life transference*, *nondetection**
4th level (3 slots): *fabricate*, *otiluke's resilient sphere*
5th level (1 slot): *animate objects*

*The armor casts these spells on itself before combat.

Actions

Multiattack. The armor makes three melee attacks.

Battle Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) slashing damage plus 17 (5d6) force damage.

MAGIC

NEW SPELL: TENSER'S TRANSFORMING ARMOR

8th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a non-magical suit of plate mail)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

Your body surges with a magical vigor. Upon casting this spell, the suit of armor used as a component is immediately donned. Until the spell ends, you gain the following benefits:

- You gain 50 temporary hit points. If any of these remain when the spell ends, they are lost.
- You have advantage on attack rolls that you make with simple and martial weapons.
- When you hit a target with a weapon attack, that target takes an extra 5d6 force damage.
- You have proficiency with all armor, shields, simple weapons, and martial weapons.
- You have proficiency in Strength and Constitution saving throws.
- You can attack twice, instead of once, when you take the Attack action on your turn. You ignore this benefit if you already have a feature, like Extra Attack, that gives you extra attacks.
- You can choose to take an additional action on your turn. If you do, the spell ends early immediately after that action is taken.

Immediately after the spell ends, you must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion.



VARESSO ISARO, THE BUTCHER IN GOLD

"The count believed he conquered in the name of a good king, slaughtered in the name of a just cause. He was wrong."

Varesso Isaro was a naïve count in a tyrannical court. But he believed in the rule of law and the sanctity of justice, believed himself to be a champion of those ideals. So, when the kingdom he served decreed the northern fiefdoms barbarians in need of civilization, he adorned himself in golden armor and set out with an armed retinue to bring the torch of civilization to those lost in barbarism. He set out to become a hero for king and country. He brought with him flower seeds, and where he warred, he sowed into the bloody earth these symbols of victory, these flowers of his home.

After a decade of war, Varesso had claimed considerable land under the decree. But in his time away, the political winds shifted and those once thought barbarous were now potential allies and Varesso was pronounced a war criminal and executed. His body was thrown into an unmarked grave with his satchel of seeds.

THE HOOK

Varesso's nameless grave has been recently disturbed when bandits ran down a caravan nearby. The blood and violence became a catalyst that awoke Varesso, who rose in the night and slew the highwaymen. His mind has been shattered in undeath and he now hunts the living in the name of a king long dead, for the glory of a kingdom long gone. He believes he is wiping out barbarians to make the land safe for civilization as he did when he lived. He does not recall the tragedy of the war he prosecuted or the betrayal by the king he served.

Where Varesso treads, soft flowers that glow like embers bloom. Whether they are from the curse binding him to undeath or an echo of the hero he wished to be, they rise from the earth where he steps and burn with dim sunlight that is Varesso's weakness (see "Dawnglow Flowers" in the "Rewards" section for further details).

VARESSO ISARO'S NEXT MOVES

Varesso has slowly begun assembling an undead host. For now, he strikes at soft targets: isolated farmsteads and wayward travelers, those with little chance of defense or escape. Like many caught in the curse of undeath, he is trapped in the powerful moments and memories of his life—the war to claim the northern provinces that consumed him in his youth.

Varesso doesn't attack structures, even settlements, bearing the original architecture of his homeland, perceiving these places and people as settlers from the kingdom he serves. He will even defend them if they are threatened.

VARESSO ISARO'S TACTICS

In combat, Varesso attempts to summon as many **skeletons** as possible to overwhelm his foes, knowing his presence bolsters his minions. He always targets low-armored casters and healers first. If low on hit points, he uses his Drain Life attack on his own skeletons, who don't resist, to quickly regain health. Varesso never retreats. Honor dictates he fights to the end, but he will feint withdrawals to lure enemies into ambushes. While Varesso dislikes using ranged weapons himself, he tries to equip his skeletons with better armor and weapons, including bows and arrows, if given the opportunity.

HUNTING VARESSO ISARO

Varesso lacks ranged attacks and only possesses average movement speed. He relies on his high armor class and undead minions for victory.

Spells that strike an area, such as *burning hands*, can clear away the skeletons he summons without having to deal with their increased armor class from Varesso's Aura of Malice ability.

Varesso maintains a shadow of the chivalric code he possessed in life, and he accepts one-on-one melee challenges. Varesso has relatively low hit points, and a character suited to quick damage, such as a barbarian, fighter, or paladin, can overcome him.

To Varesso's shattered mind, most people appear as barbarians and bandits. But good roleplaying and clever plans may exploit Varesso's delusions, such as pretending to be allies from his homeland. This may temporarily confuse Varesso and give the characters time to cast spells, make Stealth checks, drink potions, etc.

The glowing flowers Varesso leaves in his wake grant advantage to all Wisdom (Survival) checks to track him.

VARESSO ISARO'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I serve a cause greater than myself. It is all that matters."

Bond. "I am part of a great crusade to safeguard civilization."

Flaw. "Law and order are penultimate to none."

ROLEPLAYING VARESSO ISARO

Varesso Isaro acts as a courtly gentleman and will parley with nobles or heralds. He demonstrates impeccable etiquette and he is polite to those who don't transgress against traditional (and archaic) expectations of station and standing. In battle, however, he is ruthless and savage, but his honor demands he always accepts a challenge to single combat. He will also accept surrender but will eventually execute all prisoners unless there is a negotiation or ransom, both of which, because of Varesso's undead state, are difficult to secure.

REWARDS

After Varesso is defeated, the party can search the undead's body and the area for resources. Doing so they can collect curse bone fragments, dawnglow flowers, and the *golden armor of Varesso*.

CURSED BONE FRAGMENTS

The tainted bones of Varesso Isaro still hold the curse of undeath, and they may be gathered and used to temporarily summon an undead minion. Gathering the bones requires a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check. Characters with a background related to religion or research (such as the acolyte or sage) gain advantage on this check. Success acquires 3 (1d6) bones while failure collects 1. Each check takes 10 minutes to complete, and four checks can be attempted before either all the bones have been collected or ruined. A bone fragment may be thrown into soft earth, and from the ground rises a skeleton under the control of the character for 24 hours. After that time, the skeleton crumbles to dust.

Spell Component. Characters may also use a bone as a component in a spell that inflicts necrotic damage or summons the dead. If used as a component in a spell



VARESSO ISARO. THE BUTCHER IN GOLD

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 21 (plate armor, aura of malice)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +6

Skills Intimidation +6, Perception +5, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Varesso has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Aura of Malice. Varesso, as well as any fiends and undead allies within 10 feet of him, gain a bonus to melee weapon damage rolls and armor class equal to Varesso's Charisma modifier. These bonuses are negated in sunlight.

Marshal Undead. Unless Varesso is incapacitated, he and undead creatures of his choice within 60 feet have advantage on saving throws against features that turn undead. This bonus is negated in sunlight.

Actions

Multiattack. Varesso makes three rapier attacks. He can use his Life Drain in place of one rapier attack.

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) necrotic damage. Varesso regains hit points equal to that amount. The target then must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

A humanoid slain by this attack rises 24 hours later as a **zombie** under Varesso's control, unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed. Varesso can have no more than twenty zombies under its control at one time.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (1d8 + 7) piercing damage.

Call the Dead (3/day). As an action, Varesso summons 5 (1d6 + 2) **skeletons**. The summoned creatures arrive in 2 (1d4) rounds, acting as allies of Varesso and obeying spoken commands. The undead remain for 1 hour, or until Varesso dies or dismisses them as a bonus action. Skeletons summoned by Varesso have 20 hit points.

Dreadful Aspect (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, Varesso exudes magical menace. Each enemy within 30 feet of Varesso must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If a frightened target ends its turn more than 30 feet away from Varesso, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Those within sunlight gain advantage on this saving throw.



that inflicts necrotic damage, the caster may reroll 1s and 2s on the damage dice but must accept the new results. If used as a component in a spell that summons undead creatures, the duration is doubled. The bone is consumed when used as a spell component.

DAWNGLOW FLOWERS

Where Varesso walks or spills blood, flowers with transparent petals sprout, and within them flickers a soothing glow. The flowers may be harvested with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check or DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check. Characters proficient with an herbalist's kit or who have a background related to wilderness survival (such as the outlander or Uthgardt tribe member) gain advantage on this check. Success acquires 7 (2d6) flowers while failure collects 3 (1d6). Each check takes 10 minutes to complete, and four checks can be attempted before either all the flowers have been picked or ruined.

Once plucked, the flowers continue to shed dim light out to 10 feet for 24 hours. Before they fade, 5 flowers may be rendered into either a potent herbal concoction that heals or a powerful alchemical substance that harms undead.

Creating an herbalist's potion requires a successful DC 16 Intelligence check using an herbalist's kit. Characters with proficiency in Arcana or Nature gain advantage on this check. Failure destroys the batch of flowers. Success creates a *potion of nectar* that glows like the sun. This illumination counts as natural sunlight and illuminates 20 feet with bright light and an additional 20 with dim light. If consumed, the potion heals 20 hit points. In addition, it grants resistance to necrotic damage and hit point maximums cannot be reduced for 1 hour.

Creating an alchemist's vial requires a successful DC 16 Intelligence check using alchemist's supplies. Characters with proficiency in Arcana or Nature gain advantage on this check. Failure destroys the batch of flowers. Success creates a vial of sap that burns like the sun. This illumination counts as natural sunlight and illuminates 20 feet with bright light and an additional 20 with dim light. When thrown, the vial detonates on impact with a bright flash. Each undead creature in a 5-foot radius must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking (14) 4d4 + 4 radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

GOLDEN ARMOR OF VARESSO

Armor (plate), rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this armor, you have resistance to necrotic and poison damage and you are immune to the exhaustion, frightened, and poisoned conditions.

Curse. This armor is cursed, a fact that is revealed only when an *identify* spell is cast on the armor or you attune to it. Attuning to the armor curses you until you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic. Removing the armor fails to end the curse. While cursed you have sunlight sensitivity. While in sunlight, you have disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of Varesso Isaro add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: LIGHT BLOOM

3rd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (sunflower petals)

Duration: 10 minutes

When you cast this spell, a 15-foot area fills with ghostly flowers shedding bobbing motes of sunlight. The area is illuminated with bright light and sheds additional 30 feet of dim light. Any undead creature entering or ending its turn in the area filled with glowing flowers must succeed a Constitution saving throw or take 6d4 radiant damage, half as much on a success. Living creatures within the area gain resistance to necrotic damage.

At Higher Levels. If you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the damage increases by 2d4 for each slot level above 3rd.



VENUS HYDRAP

For those who have a severed green thumb

Something strange is happening around Hothhook Manor: servant attendance is down, and random bones found around the grounds are up. This seems to have started when **Lord Hothhook** hired a new groundskeeper. This groundskeeper is an odd fellow, constantly pacing, muttering, and he won't let anyone into the central garden—he claims there's a rabid gopher infestation. If things continue like this, it won't be long before Lord Hothhook cuts his losses and switches out the delightful garden for a dull stone slab.

THE HOOK

For the last month the eccentric dwarf **Dunt** has been working as the groundskeeper of Hothhook Manor and he had his work cut out for him. Soon after starting his new job he learned that Manor's garden had a horrible gopher problem. Dunt, being the type of dwarf to work smarter, not harder, set out to find a solution.

Using his non-existent skills in horticulture, and just a pinch of hydra blood, Dunt created the Venus Hydrap, a vicious plant meant to show those dumb gophers who's boss... too bad it won't stop after the gophers are gone.

Dunt sealed up Hothhook Manor's central garden and traveled to nearby villages looking for mercenaries willing to help him put an end to the Venus Hydrap. Despite being incredibly incompetent, Dunt is able to offer a proper reward for anyone willing to help. He acquired a golden bracelet with an aquamarine gem fixed in it (value 600 gp) from a snapper vine victim.

VENUS HYDRAP

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178 (17d10 + 85)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +6

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 16

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion

Languages —

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Multiple Heads. The Venus Hydrap has two heads. While it has more than one head, it has advantage on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious.

Whenever the Venus Hydrap takes 25 or more slashing damage in a single round, one of its heads gets sliced off and dies.

At the end of its turn, the Venus Hydrap grows two heads for each of its heads that was sliced off since its last turn, unless it has taken fire or acid damage since its last turn. The Venus Hydrap regains 10 hit points for each head regrown in this way.

Actions

Multiattack. The Venus Hydrap makes as many bite attacks as it has heads.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage, and the target is grappled. A creature can use an action to escape or help an ally escape by succeeding on a DC 15 Strength check. While grappled the target is restrained and takes an additional (1d6 + 5) piercing damage at the start of each of the Venus Hydrap's turns. Any heads currently grappling a target cannot make bite attacks.

Legendary Actions

Venus Hydrap can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Venus Hydrap regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Bite Attack. The Venus Hydrap makes a bite attack.

Grow (Costs 2 Actions). When the Venus Hydrap gains the opportunity to grow two heads it can choose to grow three heads instead.

Photosynthesis (Costs 2 Actions). The Venus Hydrap sprawls out its vines and absorbs sunlight gaining 3d10 hit points. This action can only be chosen if the Venus Hydrap is in direct sunlight.



VENUS HYDRAP'S NEXT MOVES

The Venus Hydrap has no motives or desires aside from growing and devouring everything in its path. It has grown enough to overtake the entire central garden (*its vines make the area difficult terrain*). After two more weeks it breaches the mansion, gaining the attention of Lord Hothhook, Dunt is fired shortly after and Lord Hothhook goes into town himself looking for anyone who can assist him.

VENUS HYDRAP'S TACTICS

If the party took this job when Dunt brought it to their attention, the Venus Hydrap is still relatively docile, and the party can get the jump on it. The Venus Hydrap has blindsight for 60 feet, beyond that it is completely blind, using this the characters can potentially get a surprise ranged attack if they plan it properly. If the party waits, the Venus Hydrap's vines have the time to grow throughout the entire manor and once the characters step on the property it knows they're there.

Once the Venus Hydrap is aware of the party, it opts to devour the party one by one, paying little attention to those it isn't currently eating. When the Venus Hydrap is near death (under sixty hit points) it enrages and uses one of its legendary actions to cast *grasping vine* placing it in an area where it can hit the most characters. It then attacks anyone who becomes ensnared.

VENUS HYDRAP'S TRAITS

The Venus Hydrap lacks the intelligence to formulate ideals or bonds. Instead, its sole motivating urge is its instinct to devour indiscriminately.

REWARDS

The party can harvest parts from the Venus Hydrap, finding 2d4 snapper vines and enough snapper venom to fill 1d6 + 1 vials if they succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Nature) ability check.

Searching Hothhook Manor's central garden reveals the corpses of the servants who encountered the Venus Hydrap before the characters, if searched they have 1d100 + 50 gp collectively. *Dunt's herbalism kit* can also be found in the garden, which he left behind when he fled the grounds.

DUNT'S HERBALISM KIT

Tool, rare

This herbalism kit is almost identical to a standard herbalism kit and contains all the same components, with only one major addition. Inside Dunt's kit are 3 vials of hydra blood. A character can use the hydra blood on an incapacitated Assassin Vine, Corpse Flower, Shambling Mound, or Vine Blight and with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Herbalism Kit) check create a Venus Hydrap in 3d10 + 10 hours.

Any Venus Hydrap brought to life in this manner has no loyalty towards its creator and is considered unaligned. It consumes whatever and whomever it can get its vines on.

SNAPPER VENOM (INJURY)

This poison must be harvested from a dead or incapacitated Venus Hydrap. A creature subjected to this poison must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw every 5 minutes, taking 2d10 poison damage on a failed save and half as much on a successful one. After one successful save this effect ends.

Snapper venom can also be used to create snapper anti-venom. Using one vial of snapper venom a character must succeed on a DC 15 check with a poisoner's kit to make anti-venom.

Success. You successfully convert one vial of snapper venom into snapper anti-venom. If snapper anti-venom is used after being affected by snapper venom, the next snapper venom related saving throw the character makes is an automatic success.

Failure. You fail to create snapper anti-venom, you waste 1 vial of venom.

VENUS HYDRAP VINES

Venus Hydrap vines have incredible regeneration properties. Because of this they can be used to make a very versatile rope. To attempt to craft this item, you must take three Venus Hydra vines and tie them together and make a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Nature) check to craft a *rope of mending*. On a failure, the attempt is unsuccessful and the vines are destroyed in the process.



VORPAL FLYING SWORD

Beware the altar that bears a single sword, surrounded by headless bodies.

This small, otherwise unremarkable town draws a near endless supply of adventurers, seeking a mythical blade. Legend tells of a sword, shrouded in a shimmering glow, used by an ancient champion to rid the kingdom of an oppressive hydra. The people of this town relish the legend and the influx of tourism to their inns, but keep its secrets closely guarded—for it is not a weapon for those who lack conviction.

In truth, the blade was a vorpal longsword once used by a champion to fell a hydra as the stories say. However, that feeling of nigh unstoppable power overwhelmed the champion. He became consumed by it, wielding the sword with a zealous fury against any who stood against him. At the end of his life, he was called upon to pass the sword down to a younger warrior. The mere thought of parting with it was enough to force him into a mindless rampage, killing the young warrior and many others who attempted to subdue him. Once he had finally been secured, a court mage attempted a spell to rid him of the curse of the sword, but it was intrinsic to him now. The spell broke the bond, and killed the champion, but his mind and soul lived on within the sword.

THE HOOK

The rumors circling the fabled weapon reach far and wide, but so do the tales of those who seek it never returning. In particular the famous adventuring party, the Knightly Mine, who had spent the last several years in the service of the region's leaders protecting the realm, had set off in hopes of retrieving the blade during a rare lull in threats. This was several weeks ago, and the leaders are becoming increasingly worried about losing their shield. Bounty notice posters have appeared all throughout the kingdom offering a reward to anyone who can find either the Knightly Mine, or the sword itself.

First hand accounts report having found the sword in the town of Lambilton, at the bottom of the derelict well at the center of town. Anybody who is asked in town will say the same thing: Nobody has ever been seen returning from the bottom of the well and it is best left alone. The Knightly Mine were spotted climbing into the well just a tenday ago, and the smell from the well has been atrocious ever since.

VORPAL FLYING SWORD'S NEXT MOVES

The champion whose being resides eternally within the sword wants only one thing: to vanquish any aggressors. However, the mage who broke the curse also bound the sword to its hidden resting place. Should the sword have its wish, it would find a way to break free of the binding and wreak havoc on the world around it.

VORPAL FLYING SWORD

Small construct, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 121 (22d6 + 44)

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Dex +6

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11

Languages Common, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The sword is incapacitated while in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the sword must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the sword hits with it (included in the attack).

False Appearance. While the sword remains motionless and isn't flying, it is indistinguishable from a normal sword.

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

Magic Weapons. The sword's weapon attacks are magical.

Vorpal Strikes. The sword is a vorpal longsword. When it attacks a creature that has at least one head and rolls a 20 on the attack roll, it cuts off one of the creature's heads. The creature dies if it can't survive without the lost head. A creature is immune to this effect if it is immune to slashing damage, doesn't have or need a head, has legendary actions, or the DM decides that the creature is too big for its head to be cut off in this way. Such a creature instead takes an extra 6d8 slashing damage from the hit.

Actions

Multiattack. The sword makes two melee attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 7) slashing damage which ignores resistance to slashing damage.

Reactions

Parry. The sword adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the sword must see the attacker.

VORPAL FLYING SWORD'S TACTICS

The Vorpal Flying Sword is a ruthless entity. It won't stop until all beings within its path are decapitated. However, it is tethered to the lair under the well and can't leave.

As it is indistinguishable from a real sword, it lies in wait and lets creatures get close before acting. It then moves to block the exit and keep creatures inside its kill zone.

While the sword appears to be bound to the altar it rests upon, it is actually bound to the body of the warrior which rests beneath it. This body can be detected with a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If the skeleton is destroyed, the Vorpal Flying Sword immediately drops to 0 hit points.

VORPAL FLYING SWORD'S TRAITS

Ideal. "I strive for that satisfying feeling of relieving a creature's head from its shoulders."

Bond. "The remains of my former self bind my spirit to this world."

Flaw. "Tethered to this place, my reach is bounded."

REWARDS

The Vorpal Flying Sword is an entrancing item. One would assume that, once defeated, the soul departs and it becomes a normal vorpal longsword. In fact, the curse that binds the mind and soul of a creature to the sword is latent to the forging itself.

HYDRA'S BANE

Weapon (longsword), legendary (requires attunement)

You gain a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. In addition, the weapon ignores resistance to slashing damage.

When you attack a creature that has at least one head with this weapon and roll a 20 on the attack roll, you cut off one of the creature's heads. The creature dies if it can't survive without the lost head. A creature is immune to this effect if it is immune to slashing damage, doesn't have or need a head, has legendary actions, or the DM decides that the creature is too big for its head to be cut off with this weapon. Such a creature instead takes an extra 6d8 slashing damage from the hit.

Curse. This weapon is cursed, a fact that is revealed only when an *identify* spell is cast on the weapon or you attune to it. Attuning to the weapon curses you until you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar

magic; dropping the weapon fails to end the curse. While cursed this way, you are compelled to wield the weapon at all times and can't make attack rolls with a different weapon. Each time it removes a head, you gain a level of bloodlust (consult the table below). You suffer the effect of your current level of bloodlust as well as all lower levels. For example, when suffering level 2 bloodlust, you have disadvantage on spell attack rolls, creatures have advantage on saving throws against your spells, and you are unable to take the Disengage, Dodge, or Hide actions when a creature with a head is within reach.

When you or the sword are the target of the *remove curse* spell, if you have more than one level of bloodlust, the spell removes a single level of bloodlust instead. All levels of bloodlust must be gone before the curse can be removed.

HYDRA'S BANE

Level	Effect
1	You have advantage on opportunity attacks made with this weapon against creatures with a head.
2	You ignore the effects of the charmed and frightened conditions on your turn if a creature with a head is within reach of this weapon.
3	Your weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20, and any critical hit you get with this weapon removes a head as if you rolled a 20 on the attack roll.
4	You gain a level of exhaustion at the end of your turn in combat if you haven't made a weapon attack.
5	You must take the Attack action and attack with this weapon if possible when a creature with a head is within reach of this weapon, regardless of their disposition toward you.
6	This curse becomes permanent, unless removed by the <i>wish</i> spell. In addition, you can't gain the benefits of a long rest if you haven't removed the head from a small or larger creature with a CR $\frac{1}{4}$ or greater within the last 24 hours.



WYRMSLAYER

Dragons shall oppress us no more!

A winged monstrosity has the dragons of Sunset Mountains reeling: a vicious **manticore**, with tail spikes that can easily pierce dragon scales, and a seemingly enchanted hide which can absorb the brunt of any dragon's attacks. Some claim it may have spawned from the blood of Tiamat, who emerged from the Well of Dragons before she was banished back to the Nine Hells. Perhaps it was born from a momentary disgust for dragons—the metallic who helped banish her, and the chromatic who failed to protect the ritual.

DM NOTE

While the default environmental setting for this encounter is a mountain range, manticores inhabit other areas as well (e.g., grasslands). This encounter can be adapted to any environment of your choosing.

THE HOOK

Zimia, an aging **ancient silver dragon** has lost many of her kin to a creature she only knows as Wyrmslayer. Her attempts to ally with the chromatic dragons of Sunset Mountains against this common enemy has fallen on deaf ears, for they would rather face extinction than fight alongside silver dragons. This has prompted her to seek out a group of well-known adventurers for aid, even going as far as to promise a share of her massive treasure hoard if they can defeat Wyrmslayer and retrieve the stolen dragon eggs.

WYRMSLAYER'S NEXT MOVES

While manticores in general are rather dim-witted, predatory creatures, Wyrmslayer has evolved into a ferociously cunning dragon hunter. She has raided the lairs of chromatic and metallic dragons alike, flanked by a gang of loyal manticores.

She isn't interested in the dragons' treasure. Rather, she prefers to steal their eggs and incubate them in her own lair, taking sadistic pleasure in ripping apart newborn wyrmlings right after they experience the first few moments of life. If left unchecked, she looks to expand her territory and possibly breed new manticores of her kind.

WYRMSLAYER'S TACTICS

Against dragons, Wyrmslayer is not afraid of swooping right into melee, knowing full well that most of them cannot pierce her hide. Versus other foes, Wyrmslayer prefers to stay at range and use volleys of tail spikes to wear down foes before swooping in to finish them off. If reduced to 100 hit points outside her lair, she makes a tactical retreat, trusting her hunter's senses to track down her prey again once rested. When on raiding missions, she is surrounded by at least 1d6 Wyrmslayer

spawn. Otherwise, she likes to remain alone in her lair, toying with her stolen dragon eggs.

Wyrmslayer's lair is a huge cavern in the Sunset Mountains, surrounded by a network of large tunnels. When the characters arrive, assume she is alone, waiting for some stolen dragon eggs to hatch.

A Wyrmslayer spawn has the statistics of a **manticore** with the following changes:

- **Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons.
- **Avoidance**. If the manticore is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to only take half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds and only half damage if it fails.
- **Dragon Hunter**. The manticore has advantage on saving throws against the Frightful Presence and breath weapons of dragons, and on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to track them.
- In addition, its tail spikes deal an extra 10 (3d6) damage to dragons.
- **Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

WYRMSLAYER'S TRAITS

Ideal. "My kind will rise to the prominence of dragons."

Bond. "The dragons have stolen our territory and enslaved us for too long. I aim to avenge this."

Flaw. "My hatred for dragons often supersedes my sensibilities."

REWARDS

Once the party reports back to Zimia, she keeps her word and offers them a considerable portion of her hoard. Roll on the "Challenge 17+" treasure hoard table in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (Chapter 7).

In addition, the party can harvest various elements from the Wyrmslayer after they defeat it. If a reward refers to crafting a magic item, refer to the crafting rules in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (Chapter 6) or *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* (Chapter 2). The following parts can be harvested from the Wyrmslayer:

- Tail Spikes (as many as she has remaining)
- Claws (up to 20)
- Heart (x1; requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check to harvest properly)
- Thigh bones (x4; requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check to harvest properly; 50% chance of each remaining intact if she took more than 50 points of bludgeoning or force damage during the fight).
- Blood (up to 50 vials)
- Skin/hide

WYRMSLAYER

Large monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 287 (25d10 + 150)

Speed 50 ft., fly 100 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	22 (+6)	22 (+6)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +11, Con +11, Wis +8, Cha +6

Skills Perception +13, Stealth +16, Survival +13

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses blindsight 90 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Avoidance. If the mantichore is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to only take half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds and only half damage if it fails.

Dragon Hunter. The mantichore has advantage on saving throws against the Frightful Presence and breath weapons of dragons, and on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to track them.

In addition, its tail spikes deal an extra 10 (3d6) damage to dragons (included in the attack).

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If the mantichore fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Weapons. The mantichore's weapon attacks are magical.

Tail Spike Regrowth. The mantichore has 120 tail spikes. Used spikes regrow when the mantichore finishes a long rest.

Using these parts, the party can craft the following magical items.

Potion of Evasiveness. By mixing one of the ground up remains of 1 thigh bone of the Wyrmslayer into a vial of blood of its own blood, a character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom check using an herbalism kit can create a *potion of evasiveness*. On a failure, the ingredients are all destroyed.

Wyrmslayer Ammunition. Using a tail spike, 200 gp of herbal materials, and one piece of ammunition, a character must succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence check using woodcarver's tools to create a piece of *Wyrmslayer ammunition*. On a failure, the 200 gp of herbal materials is destroyed.

Wyrmslayer Armor. Using the Wyrmslayer's hide and 50 gp worth of thread, a character must succeed at a DC 16 Intelligence check using leatherworker's tools to create a set of *Wyrmslayer armor*. On a failure, the hide is destroyed.

Actions

Multiattack. The mantichore makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws or three with its tail spikes.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Tail Spike. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) piercing damage. If the target is a dragon, it takes an additional 10 (3d6) piercing damage.

Dragon Sense (3/day). The mantichore opens its awareness to detect the presence of dragons. For 1 minute, it can sense the location, number, and type of dragons present within 30 miles.

Legendary Actions

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

Detect. The mantichore makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Spike. The mantichore makes a tail spike attack.



Other parts of the Wyrmslayer can be used on their own.

Wyrmslayer's Claws. If one of Wyrmslayer's claws is applied to a damaging spell against a dragon, the spell deals an extra 13 (3d8) damage. In addition, there is a 30% chance that the dragon is vulnerable to all damage until the end of your next turn. Using a claw as a spell component in this manner expends it.

Wyrmslayer's Heart. The harvested heart must be preserved in at least 2 quarts of Wyrmslayer's blood. If the heart is used as a material component for a harmful spell targeted at a dragon that requires it to make a saving throw, there is a 25% chance the dragon automatically fails the saving throw and can't use its Legendary Resistance on that turn. The heart dissolves into dismembered tissue after it is used successfully or after three unsuccessful attempts (whichever is first).

POTION OF EVASIVENESS

Potion, very rare

When you drink this potion, you gain preternatural reflexes for 1 minute. During that time, if you are subjected to an effect that allows you to make a saving throw to only take half damage, you instead take no damage if you succeed and only half damage if you fail.

WYRMSLAYER AMMUNITION

Weapon (any ammunition), uncommon

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this ammunition. When you hit a dragon with this ammunition, the dragon takes an extra 3d6 damage of the weapon's type. For the purpose of this weapon, "dragon" refers to any creature of the dragon type, including dragon turtles and wyverns.

WYRMSLAYER ARMOR

Armor (any light armor), very rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this armor, you gain a +2 bonus to AC, you have advantage on saving throws against the Frightful Presence and breath weapons of dragons, and you have resistance to all damage dealt by dragons.

Additionally, you can focus your senses as an action to magically discern the distance and direction to the closest dragon within 100 miles of you. This special action can't be used again until the next dawn.

EGGS

Zimia expects that the dragon eggs be turned over to her so that she can return them to their parents. At your discretion, she might let the characters keep one metallic dragon egg, knowing that its parents were one of Wyrmslayer's victims. If the characters steal a dragon egg, however, she might take notice and take appropriate action against them.

Wyrmslayer has 40 eggs in her lair. Half of them are manticores, and the other half are dragon eggs for the various types of dragons.

Among the 20 manticore eggs, there is only a 10% chance that a given egg will spawn a manticore with the capabilities of Wyrmslayer. The rest are all regular manticores. Refer to the "Rearing a Manticore" section if the characters decide to keep one or more eggs for themselves.

Among the 20 dragon eggs, only 10 are likely to hatch, while the others have suffered a pre-birth death. The shell of each egg resembles the different colors corresponding to the 10 different types of dragons outlined in the *Monster Manual*. If the characters decide to sneak away some of these eggs, refer to the "Rearing a Dragon" section for ideas on one way to play out the process.

If you want to play out the rearing process for dragon hatchlings, below are some rules you can use:

REARING A DRAGON

Dragons in *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* tend to be innately egotistical to various extents and wouldn't want to be reared by a "lesser" creature. A nascent wyrmling is likely to be suspicious of a non-dragon foster parent at first, potentially thinking it to be a captor, or perhaps a dim-witted fool. A potential foster parent must have a compelling personality as well as basic animal rearing prowess in order to placate a newborn wyrmling.

A character looking to bond with a newly hatched wyrmling must make a Charisma (Animal Handling) check contested by the wyrmling's Wisdom (Insight) check. If the character is not proficient in Animal Handling, allow them to add half their proficiency bonus if they are proficient in Persuasion or Intimidation (depending on how they roleplay their approach). Grant advantage on the check if the character has the same alignment or ideals as the Wyrmling (consult the *Monster Manual* for details on their dispositions). If the character wins the check, the dragon accepts them as a foster parent.

If the wyrmling wins the check, its natural instinct is to attack and flee. Most wyrmlings, however, are smart enough to weigh their odds in combat and might bide their time with a more powerful creature, playing nice for a while before fleeing at an opportune moment. For this reason, you might want to make its Wisdom (Insight) check in secret.

For the first 5 years of its life, a dragon requires at least 10 gp worth of food each day. This represents the cost of approximately 600 lbs. of food, which is the minimum a maturing dragon needs to eat everyday. While dragons tend to be carnivorous, they can eat and metabolize almost anything, including metal and dirt. Metallic dragons are more likely to be receptive to inorganic food than their chromatic cousins.

Once the wyrmling becomes a young dragon, the character rearing it must succeed on another Charisma (Animal Handling) check. The DC for the check is equal to 10 + the young dragon's challenge rating, and represents an aggregate for how receptive it has been to its companionship. Grant advantage or disadvantage on the check in accordance with how the dragon was treated.

On a failed check, the dragon gains a renewed zeal for living autonomously, and might flee instantly, conspire to attack the character, or confront them to “talk” about how it must leave to forge its own path in life. On a successful check, the character’s bond with the dragon strengthens, possibly lasting for life.

REARING A MANTICORE

Manticores are less complicated creatures than dragons. An infant manticore imprints on the first creature it sees when it hatches. It thereafter follows the creature around like a parent, demanding to be fed. It requires 5 gp worth of food every day to mature properly. This represents the cost of approximately 300 lbs. of meat, which is the minimum that a developing manticore needs to eat everyday. Manticores are carnivorous with a tough digestive system, and can gobble up humanoids, beasts, dragons, as well as most monstrosities. So long as the manticore is adequately fed, it remains loyal to its foster parent, although its innate maliciousness might kick in from time to time, which can provide for some interesting roleplay opportunities at your table!

MANTICORE MATURATION

Age	Size	Notes
Infant (up to 1 month)	Tiny	AC 9; 5 (1d4 + 3) hit points; speed 10 ft.; fly 10 ft.; Str 7 (-2); no effective attacks; challenge 0 (0 xp)
Young (1 – 3 months)	Small	AC 10; 13 (2d6 + 6) hit points; speed 15 ft., fly 20 ft., Str 12 (+1); bite and claw attacks are +3 to hit, have a reach of 5 ft., and deal 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage on a hit; Challenge 1/4 (50 xp)
Juvenile (3 – 6 months)	Medium	AC 12; 39 (6d8 + 12) hit points; speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft., Str 15 (+2); bite and claw attacks are +4 to hit, have a reach of 5 ft., and deal 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage on a hit; Challenge 2 (450 xp)
Adult (6+ months)	Large	See <i>Monster Manual</i>

If the manticore is a Wyrmslayer, it receives a +1 bonus to AC and ability scores, and a +10 bonus to its speeds each month after it becomes an adult, until it assumes the statistics of Wyrmslayer.

MAGIC

At your discretion, characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of the Wyrmslayer can add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes’ spell lists.

NEW SPELL: DRAGONBANE

3rd-level necromancy

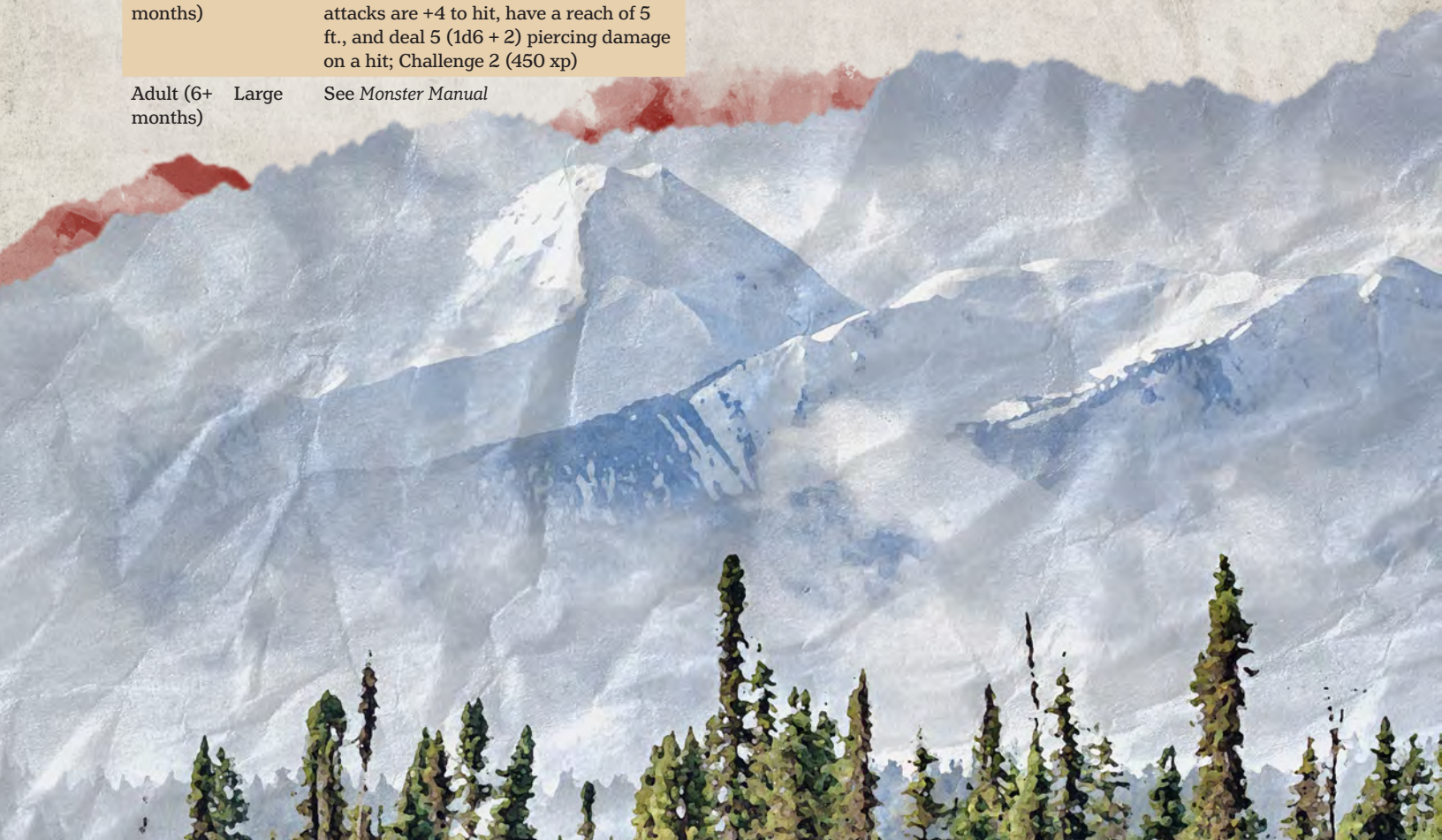
Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You touch a dragon you can see within range, marking its life force for termination. The next time the dragon takes damage while this spell is in effect, it is vulnerable to that damage.



ZUPHREZASK

That is one massive mind flayer. Look at the size of those biceps!

Seven months ago a neothelid attacked a group of traders just outside of Gracklstugh. The duergar eventually dispatched it, but over the next several days, reports reached the city of perhaps more than a dozen other neothelids spotted in the connecting tunnels in the Underdark. Then, a handful of traders from Skullport returned with rumors that some kind of hulking, brutish mind flayer had been seen there. Illithid merchants in Gracklstugh put the clues together and realized that whatever the creature was, it had likely destroyed a mind flayer colony nearby.

THE HOOK

Those living on the surface lacked the clues available to the denizens of Gracklstugh. When a pack of quaggoths was slain by elven rangers along the edge of Ardeep Forest, when a mindwitness was spotted wandering the road outside Candlekeep, and when an intellect devourer was caught on the streets of Waterdeep, these events were viewed as isolated incidents. They were forgotten almost as quickly as they happened.

Then a traveler from Phandalin brought wild news to Waterdeep. Rynla Torevir, a dwarven local who had disappeared from the town many years ago, was found battered on the road outside her old home. When she awoke and was brought before the town master, she told a harrowing tale of how she had been captured by mind flayers. During her captivity, she witnessed what might have been an ogre, or half-giant of some sort, implanted with one of the mind flayer's larva. The transformation of this poor soul was gruesome, but something must have gone awry. The creature turned on the mind flayers and decimated their colony. Rynla was able to escape in the ensuing chaos.

Rynla has sent word to places like Waterdeep and Baldur's Gate that she seeks the aid of heroes to return with her to the colony in the Underdark and rescue the other captives that were being held with her. What remains unclear is whether or not Rynla is truly an escapee or if she is a covert agent of the mind flayers. If she was made into a thrall and any remnants of the colony or her captors remain alive, it is quite possible she may turn on the characters.

ZUPHREZASK IN EBERRON

Xor'chylic the Old, governor of the city of Graywall in Droaam, has been made aware by his spies that some unknown soul has used the knowledge of the daelkyr, perhaps with stolen texts from the Closed Circle, to create a bestial variant of a mind flayer. This creature, calling itself Zuphrezask, has been sent out to obliterate the colonies of mind flayers that have been hiding in the depths of Khyber. Xor'chylic wants this beast dispatched and has started a manipulative campaign to entice would-be adventurers into doing his dirty work.

ZUPHREZASK'S NEXT MOVES

According to the small cadre of insanely zealous mind flayers that follow him, Zuphrezask experienced some kind of enlightenment after punching his way out of the colony that birthed him. He gives no details as to what precisely transpired, but he now claims to follow Thoon. Worship of this entity is considered heretical by most mind flayers and few speak of the particulars of what exactly Thoon is or what danger it poses. Zuphrezask believes, as do other mind flayers that worship Thoon, that all creatures contain a substance called quintessence.

As his obsession with quintessence grew, so did his desire to attack remote colonies of mind flayers so that he could consume their elder brains. Whatever inspires his faith also makes him believe these enormous brains contain concentrated amounts of quintessence. Ultimately his objective is to ingest sufficient amounts of quintessence to expand his psionic abilities to the point where he will effectively ascend to godhood. The longer the player characters wait to intervene in his activities, the more disruptive Zuphrezask's quest ultimately becomes.

If Zuphrezask is right and elder brains are massive repositories of quintessence, each one he devours moves him closer to his goal and makes him considerably stronger. There is considerable fallout from the power vacuum he leaves in his wake as he obliterates mind flayer colonies. Some of the mind flayers who survive his onslaught decide to follow him. Many more flee, posing a considerable threat for nearby humanoid populations as they desperately try to secure new sources of food to ensure their survival.

ZUPHREZASK'S TACTICS

Zuphrezask fights more like a warlord than most mind flayers. He surrounds himself with a coterie of drow or duergar thralls. He also tolerates a small following of mind flayers that decided to grovel before him when he killed and consumed the elder brain that previously led their colony. In the same way, he has come to control an assortment of other creatures present in the colonies he has conquered: grimlocks, quaggoths, and a single petulant mind witness. When fighting breaks out, he often walks away and leaves his lackeys to deal with the situation.

If the characters confront him within a colony he has invaded before he has killed its elder brain, his fanaticism is likely to get the better of him. Believing his path to ascendancy requires the quintessence harbored within these massive brains, he is willing to risk his life to destroy and consume it before fleeing. He splits his attention between directing his followers to slay the characters, knocking them out of his way, and dealing with the elder brain.

ZUPHREZASK

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 210 (20d10 + 100)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	21 (+5)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +10, Con +10, Int +9

Skills Arcana +9, Athletics +10, Insight +7, Perception +7, Survival +7

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

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

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). Zuphrezask's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

At will: *detect thoughts*, *telekinesis*

1/day each: *feblemind*, *plane shift* (self only)

Actions

Multiaction. Zuphrezask makes three melee attacks using any combination of its fist and slam attacks.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Strength

saving throw or be pushed up to 10 ft. away from Zuphrezask. A creature that fails this save falls prone at the end of this forced movement.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 18) and must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

Extract Brain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one incapacitated humanoid grappled by Zuphrezask. *Hit:* The target takes 66 (12d10) piercing damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, Zuphrezask kills the target by extracting and devouring its brain.

Mind Blast (Recharge 5-6). Zuphrezask magically emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or take 31 (5d10 + 4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Legendary Actions

Zuphrezask can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Zuphrezask regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Pummeling Blows. Zuphrezask makes a fist or slam attack.

Telepathic Command. As an action, Zuphrezask chooses one ally he can see within 60 feet. That ally can use their reaction to immediately take the Attack action against targets of Zuphrezask's choosing.

Psionic Alacrity. Zuphrezask can move up to twice his speed. During this movement, he does not provoke opportunity attacks and gains a climb speed equal to his walking speed.

ZUPHREZASK'S TRAITS

Ideal. "All mind flayers deserve to be reunited with Thoon and can only do so by consuming quintessence."

Bond. "The elder brains are my prey and no one else's. Anyone who tries to prevent my kill, or steal it from me, will be dealt with."

Flaw. "Thoon guides and protects me—there is no limit to what I can accomplish with his protection and strength."

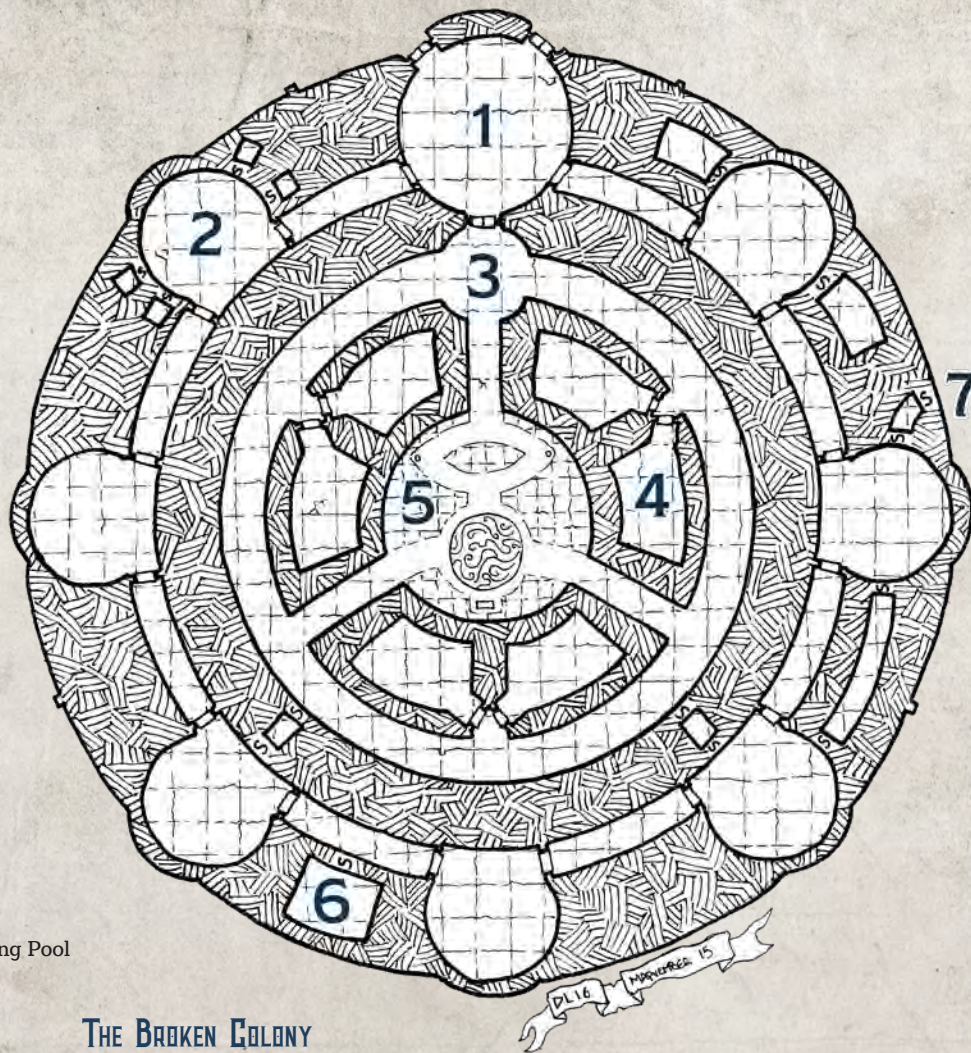
THE BROKEN COLONY

Finding an illithid colony is the most reliable way to locate Zuphrezask. The following map provides potential details you can use for a typical colony. It is also possible to use this as the site of Rynla's captivity. The rooms and chambers within all share the following features unless otherwise noted:

- The walls are composed of a black, almost metallic substance. They are etched with Qualith, the indecipherable tactile language of mind flayers.


INFAMOUS ADVERSARIES | ZUPHREZASK





1. Antechamber
2. Illithid Quarters
3. Inner Hall
4. Holding Cells
5. Elder Brain Resting Pool
6. Brain Chamber
7. Escape Tunnel

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- The air is thin and cold. Cloyingly sweet and vaguely metallic, an unidentifiable scent permeates the environment.
- A dim, purplish light emanates from an unidentifiable source, suffusing the entire room and leaving almost no shadows.
- Every few moments, a tingle or vibration thrums out through the complex. As it does, there is a distinct sensation of intense pressure within your skull.

If the characters manage to catch up to Zuphrezask before he subjugates the colony, the mind flayers inside will be in a state of disarray and confusion. Each time they encounter a mind flayer there is a 20% chance it will ignore them and flee (roll 1d10; the mind flayer tries to escape on a result of 9 or 10) either to escape the colony or confront Zuphrezask. It is possible, though incredibly unlikely, that such a surprised mind flayer might be receptive to striking a bargain where it aids the characters if they are willing to save the colony's elder brain.

I ANTECHAMBER

The bodies of several mind flayers and quaggoths lay bloodied and broken within the chamber. A pair of doors straight ahead have been knocked from their hinges,

but the doors on either side along the curving walls remain unmolested.

2 ILLITHID QUARTERS

Seven nearly identical rooms are spaced evenly along the curved hallway that encircles the perimeter of the colony. Some of these rooms contain secret doors that either connect to the inner portions of the colony or lead to the escape tunnels. Each time the characters enter a new room, roll 1d10 on the chart below to determine the contents of each room.

ILLITHID QUARTERS

d10 Random Inhabitants

1	1d4 + 1 mind flayers and 1 intellect devourer
2	3d4 quaggoths and 1 mind flayer
3	1d4 + 3 drow thralls and 1d4 mind flayers
4	2d4 + 2 quaggoths , 1d4 intellect devourers , and 2 mind flayers
5	6 mind flayers , all deceased
6	2 mind flayers , 4 drow thralls , and 8 quaggoths - all deceased
7	2d4 + 1 umber hulk thralls , 1 mind flayer
8	6d6 sleeping quaggoths
9	1 mind witness , 2 mind flayers
10	1 ultralithid , 2d4 + 1 mind flayers

3 INNER HALL

The bodies of several mind flayers lay twisted and broken on the floor. Concussive echoes resound from the chamber directly ahead and the hallways left and right are eerily silent.

4 HOLDING CELLS

While each of these cells contains foul drek and other remains that indicate living creatures were held within recently, all of the cells are empty. It is unlikely that the specific individuals held captive here could be identified, but a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the types of creatures held here.

5 ELDER BRAIN RESTING POOL

Three short corridors, spaced evenly around this circular room, lead into the central chamber of the colony. It is here where the massive **elder brain** rests in a pool of briny cerebral fluids. **Zuphrezask** is already in a pitched battle with the elder brain. For the moment, the elder brain is holding him at bay. Three **mind flayers** are in the room as well, but they are no match for Zuphrezask.

If the characters decide to involve themselves in the conflict, both sides divide their attacks between the characters and their other adversaries. Zuphrezask holds a fanatical focus on slaying the elder brain and ignores any enemies that are unable to harm him. Once the elder brain is slain, he has little interest in speaking with the characters, and gladly ignores them if they do not attempt to stop him. Should they have information about the location of other mind flayer colonies, he gladly follows up on their leads—though this could spell doom for the realms should Zuphrezask's beliefs about quintessence prove true.

6 BRAIN CHAMBER

This concealed chamber requires a successful DC 17 **Intelligence (Investigation)** check to discover. Inside are twelve rows of shelving that cover all of the available inner surfaces. Stacked with little remaining space upon these shelves are countless jars, each containing a single brain. Most are suspended within a greenish-grey translucent fluid, but a few brains of exceptionally large or small sizes are contained within fluids of other colors—strikingly crimson for some of the smallest, while larger brains are in violet or orange substances.

These brains were collected from sapient creatures that possessed information somehow valuable to the mind flayers of this colony. Each brain is alchemically preserved and technically alive. Any creatures with the ability to communicate telepathically can converse with the intelligences that have been trapped within, though few of them are aware of their fate and several are outright hostile towards attempts at communication.

7 ESCAPE TUNNEL

This lightless tunnel meanders slowly upwards, finally emerging upon the surface beneath a concealed outcropping of rock next to a small pond miles above the mind flayer colony.

REWARDS

The mind flayers in this colony do not have much in the way of material wealth, but characters might come upon several examples of the multitude of exotic personal possessions and magic items that can be found on a typical mind flayer: the *brainmate*, *psicrystal of agony*, and the *striator*. Other possible rewards might include magic items like an *adamantine breastplate* taken from a captive duergar, an *amulet of proof against detection and location* or *elven chain* bartered from the drow, an *ioun stone of awareness* recovered from an abandoned dwarven fortress, or a *wand of paralysis* stolen from a sahuagin.

STRIATOR

Wondrous item, common

This foot-long, one-inch thick rod is made of a strangely glistening material that resembles wood or bone. When drawn across a piece of parchment, the striator translates the thoughts of the creature holding it into the pattern of raised symbols: Qualith, the tactile language of the mind flayers.

PSICRYSTAL OF AGONY

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

This foot-long cylinder of dark green crystal holds 7 charges. Etched along the countless tiny facets that make up its surface are faintly glowing glyphs of Qualith, the language of the illithid. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more charges to cast the *inflict wounds* spell (save DC 15). For 1 charge you cast the 3rd-level version of the spell. You can increase the spell level by one for each additional charge you expend.

The crystal regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the crystal's last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the crystal crumbles into glittering dust and is destroyed.

BRAINMATE

Wondrous item, common

A glass vial of dark green ichor the size of a sling stone dangles at the end of a delicate silver chain. Within is a walnut-sized piece of brain matter taken from an elder brain. This material is partially sentient and serves something like a cherished memento for a mind flayer. They can communicate with this sentience and use it for comfort during travels far away from their colony. Sometimes a brainmate contains information regarding the mission the mind flayer was sent to accomplish. Other times it simply knows anecdotes or aphorisms culturally significant to the colony.

ZYLDROHAR

Herald of the End

Zyldrohar's story begins with the end of Velsharoon's. A demigod of necromancy and evil, Velsharoon perished in a cataclysmic event in the year 1425 DR. Alassra Shentrara, also known as the Simbul, queen of Aglarond, was with Velsharoon when he died. She vanished, along with Velsharoon's home plane. Aglarondian agents searched for their queen, but only discovered Velsharoon's corpse.

With the disappearance of its monarch, Aglarond nearly fell into civil war. Various factions vied for power until the Simbarch Council, comprised of 15 mages, was formed to rule the kingdom. The insurrection came to a close, but not before Velsharoon's corpse went missing. In the decades since, the Simbarch Council made efforts to locate the divine remains without success.

In the chaos of the transition from monarchy to magocratic state, a cult calling itself the Golden Ladder obtained the body of Velsharoon and hid it on a remote island off the northern coast of Aglarond. The cult has since been preparing the corpse for reanimation, developing a ritual to create a godflesh golem. Finally, at the last full moon, they performed the ritual they hoped would produce a demigod under their control.

It did not go as planned.

Instead the ritual summoned a shard of oblivion and imbued it with consciousness. When Zyldrohar woke from a nightmare that was simultaneously instantaneous and longer than the lifetime of the multiverse, he annihilated the entire cult and much of the island, leaving a massive crater. As he sat in the rubble sobbing, drooling, and contemplating the fresh misery of existence, scavenger birds flocked to pick at his now animate flesh. He let them.

IN OTHER WORLDS

Although Zyldrohar is written for the Forgotten Realms setting, he can be used in any campaign setting by simply changing his backstory. To adapt him to your setting of choice, find or create a deceased god to use in the ritual. The Golden Ladder cult can be inserted into any campaign setting although the specifics on how they acquired the corpse of the god will depend on your choice of setting and deceased divinity. In this entry, Zyldrohar starts in a relatively isolated place, so the party has time to become aware of the threat he poses before he does massive damage to the setting. Alternatively, have him come to life in the middle of a major city to immediately up the stakes!

THE HOOK

Strange tidings spread across Faerûn as the long-sequestered Abbalaya have left their fabled city, Ul'sahab, en masse to warn heroes and rulers everywhere of the grave threat facing the world. The Abbalaya are a people known for their oracular talents and are widely respected and feared. When they arrive in groups at the seat of

every nation claiming the future of all living creatures on Faerûn comes to an abrupt end within the next year, panic grips the world.

Although the Abbalaya can't see what causes the destruction of Faerûn, they believe it has something to do with a large area obscured from their clairvoyance. This area is located in the Sea of Fallen Stars off the northern coast of Aglarond. With the advisement of the Abbalaya, the majority of world powers set aside their differences to resolve the existential threat to Faerûn.

The party may be called on to complete any number of tasks. They could escort Abbalaya to the mysterious region blocking their sight to assess the threat, or track down lost powerful artifacts with the aid of the Abbalaya's divinations, or parley with powerful creatures across Faerûn in an attempt to further bolster the power of the allied forces. Ultimately they could be asked to join the front lines of battle to save the world.

In the wake of the massive global focus on preventing the apocalypse, various groups of ne'er-do-wells use the opportunity to openly pursue their own goals. With Faerûn's eyes on the Sea of Fallen Stars, criminal enterprises flaunt the law, cultists abduct sacrifices, and cutthroat rebels start revolutions. If the party is not high enough level or well known enough to be asked to participate in the resolution of the world-ending threat there are still plenty of other emerging dangers for enterprising adventurers to handle.

DIVINE INTERVENTION?

The gods are not coming to save the world. The out-of-game reason is that there's very little reason for the party to get involved if a dozen gods can just take a quick jaunt to Faerûn and gang up on Zyldrohar. The in-game reason should be tailored for the tone of your campaign. Presented here are a few options you might consider:

- The gods can sense the presence of oblivion on Faerûn and it absolutely terrifies them. Gods are not used to pondering their own mortality, so the thought of a final and absolute death is enough to paralyze them from taking action.
- The gods swore off directly intervening in the realm of mortals. Long ago, the Material Plane was a sprawling battlefield in the war between the powers of the multiverse. Taking action on Faerûn would break the truce that's kept the cosmos in relative stability all these millennia.
- The gods simply do not care enough to intervene. Mortals are born and die, kingdoms rise and fall, worlds start and end. In a large enough multiverse, there's always an apocalypse happening somewhere.

ZYLDROHAR'S NEXT MOVES

Zyldrohar is single-minded in his pursuit of the end of all things. Thankfully for everyone, he is prone to bouts of ennui that last anywhere from a few minutes to several days. During these times, he sobs uncontrollably until he

retches and pounds his fists against the earth, tortured by his existence. Once his ennui passes, or if he is roused from the state by attackers, he returns to his task.

The godflesh golem focuses first on destroying every living thing. Long term, he plans to unmake even the stones and stars, but he understands the greatest threat to his goal is the intervention of living beings who wish not to die. For this reason, he travels from one place to the next, razing every town, city, and nation he comes across.

If Zyldrohar senses the powers arrayed against him are too great, he casts *plane shift* to travel to a different world on the Material Plane and continue his assault there. In this way he will crisscross the multiverse, leaving a swath of ruined worlds in his wake. Once he believes enough time has passed, he reappears in a random location on the world that gave him trouble and begin his attack again.

ZYLDROHAR'S LAIR

Zyldrohar's malevolent spirit burns within him, metaphysically scorching the world around him. Wherever he goes, animals are driven to acts of suicidal violence, plant life withers, and the minds of humanoid turn fearful and fragile. In the Material Plane, whenever Zyldrohar remains somewhere for 1 minute or longer, everything within 5 miles becomes his lair. While traveling in other planes, he must remain stationary for 1 hour or longer before the planar structure buckles under the dread weight of his primordial presence and creates a lair. Scavenger birds flock to Zyldrohar wherever he is, instinctively drawn to the smell of his divine rot.

LAIR ACTIONS

While fighting inside his lair, Zyldrohar can use lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Zyldrohar takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; he can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Zyldrohar contemplates the peace of nonexistence and the psychic stress reverberates out to all creatures within 30 feet. Each creature must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or take 3d6 psychic damage and be frightened until the end of their next turn. On a success they take half damage and are not frightened.
- Zyldrohar recalls the serenity of oblivion and his insensate experience infects all creatures within 30 feet. Each creature must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be blinded and deafened until the end of their next turn.
- Zyldrohar remembers the birth of the multiverse spreading across the face of the void like spilt blood and the world around him spasms in shared agony. Each creature within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d12 force damage and be knocked prone. On a success, they take half damage and are not knocked prone.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The region containing Zyldrohar's lair is warped by the god's profane existence, which creates one or more of the following effects:

- Any creature who dies within 100 miles of Zyldrohar's lair has their spirit eaten by the scavenger birds constantly pecking at Zyldrohar. A creature whose spirit is eaten this way cannot be returned to life by any means.
- Zyldrohar's stain on the Weave inhibits certain forms of magic within 10 miles. Magic cannot be used to scry in the area and teleportation magic can be used to exit, but not enter, this area.
- Light falters in the area within 10 miles of Zyldrohar's lair. Bright light becomes dim light and dim light becomes darkness.
- Within 1 mile of Zyldrohar's lair, opaque black cloudlike objects move through the sky in accordance with Zyldrohar's mood. When he is contemplative or remorseful, they move slowly. When he is enraged and destructive, they move like a swift tempest. Occasionally a bolt of darkness arc out of these clouds, striking the ground, followed soon after by a deafening silence.
- Zyldrohar is always aware of the direction and distance to every celestial, elemental, fey, or fiend that comes within 1 mile of his lair.

If Zyldrohar is slain, these effects fade over the course of 1d12 decades.

ZYLDROHAR'S TACTICS

Zyldrohar may appear indiscriminate in his appetite but that is not the case. The godflesh golem hates creators above all others and targets them by the number of their works. For example, he hates artisans more than warriors because artisans corrupt the void with further creations. The most extreme example of this is the gods, the presence of which drive him into a blind rage as he contemplates the idiotic malignance that compelled them to create whole races and worlds where there were none.

That said, Zyldrohar does not have a well conceived plan for ending the multiverse. For the time being he contents himself with destroying Faerûn before traveling to other worlds and planes to do the same there. Having witnessed the entire history of everything that exists, he is aware of all possible threats to his end goal and works to neutralize them as early as possible.

In a fight, Zyldrohar uses his *breach oblivion* spell to control where his enemies are in battle. He uses the spell offensively, casting it where his foes are grouped up, or defensively, placing it between him and his enemies to break their line of sight and force them to move through the dangerous spell to get to him. Otherwise he relies on brute strength and his destructive aura to dispatch enemies.

ZYLDROHAR

Gargantuan construct, chaotic evil

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)

Hit Points 666 (36d20 + 288)

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	14 (+2)	27 (+8)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Str +17, Con +17, Wis +15, Cha +16

Skills History +14, Intimidation +16, Religion +15

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, poison, slashing

Damage Immunities necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing that is nonmagical

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages all, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 30 (155,000 XP)

Aura of Unraveling. When Zyldrohar's turn starts, all creatures and objects within 100 feet take 1d6 force damage and 2d6 psychic damage.

Innate Spellcasting. Zyldrohar's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 24). Zyldrohar can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *counterspell*, *crown of madness*, *darkness*, *dispel magic*, *dissonant whispers*, *Tasha's hideous laughter*

3/day each: *banishment*, *disintegrate*, *plane shift*, *power word kill*

1/day each: *breach oblivion*

Legendary Resistance (5/Day). If Zyldrohar fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Weapons. Zyldrohar's weapon attacks are magical.

Oblivion Nears (1/Day). When Zyldrohar takes damage that reduces his current hit points to half or less than half of his maximum hit points, he senses oblivion nears.

For the next 8 hours, Zyldrohar has resistance to all damage he is not immune to, the damage from his aura of unraveling is doubled, and if he has already cast the *breach oblivion* spell with his innate spellcasting he regains the ability to cast that spell.

Oblivion Arrives (1/Day). When Zyldrohar is reduced to 0 hit points, oblivion arrives. He gains 666 hit points, becomes immune to all conditions, and can cast the *breach oblivion* spell at will. At the end of his next turn, he deals 100 necrotic damage to all creatures and objects within 1 mile, then dies.

Undetectable. Zyldrohar can't be targeted by divination magic, perceived through magical scrying sensors, or detected in any way by any other form of magic.

Actions

Multiattack. Zyldrohar makes three slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 50 (4d20 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Unmake. Zyldrohar points at a non-magical object he can see and it takes 100 necrotic damage.

Legendary Actions

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

Attack. Zyldrohar makes a slam attack.

Cast a Spell. Zyldrohar casts a spell from his innate spellcasting list with a spellcasting time of 1 action or 1 bonus action.

Scavenge. Zyldrohar directs the scavenger birds circling him to attack a creature he can see. That creature must succeed on a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw or take 16 (3d10) necrotic damage and be stunned until the end of its next turn.

Zyldrohar longs for death. Although he desires nothing short of the destruction of the entire multiverse, the possibility of his own end can tempt him to remain in a fight he's losing. Because of these conflicting impulses, he is as likely to retreat as he is to fight to the death.

ZYLDROHAR'S TRAITS

Prior to this incarnation, Zyldrohar never existed. In the moment his consciousness manifested within the godflesh golem body, he retroactively experienced the complete history of the multiverse and the infinite nothingness that came before it. He is consumed by that singular moment where he experienced the peace of nonexistence being torn away and aches to return to it. To ensure he never exists again, before he destroys himself, he will do everything within his power to destroy all of existence.

Ideal. "Oblivion is peace."

Bond. "Existence is a blight on the perfect face of the void. It must be undone."

Flaw. "Within me lies the capacity for creation—I despise myself for it."

REWARDS

Should the party defeat Zyldrohar they will earn the ultimate reward: the continued existence of the multiverse. When Zyldrohar dies he collapses into a singularity, annihilating his physical form and leaving little behind. A search of the area turns up 1d12 black diamonds worth 10,000 gp each and a *supernal germ*.

SUPERNAL GERM

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This wondrous item has the appearance of a nut protected by an indestructible shell. Once you attune to it, the shell slowly opens over the course of centuries revealing a growing sapling. Nothing can cause you to lose attunement to this magical item unless you choose to unattune. The length of time you have continuously attuned to the item determines the benefits it confers upon you while you are attuned to it.

1 Hour or More. You are immune to disease and no longer age.

1 Day or More. You no longer need to breathe, eat, or sleep.

1 Week or More. You gain resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons.

1 Month or More. You regain 1 hit point at the start of each of your turns.

1 Year or More. You gain truesight out to a range of 120 feet.

10 Years or More. You can cast the *plane shift* spell at will without providing material components. If you cast this spell on an unwilling creature, the DC of the saving throw is 22.

100 Years or More. If you die and no one else attunes to this magic item within 1 week, you return to life fully restored at the location of this magic item.

1,000 Years or More. You learn a ritual that takes 100 years to complete and can only be performed once. Upon completing the ritual, you create a new world on the Material Plane.

10,000 Years or More. You learn a ritual that takes 1,000 years to complete and can only be performed once. Upon completing the ritual, all of the benefits conferred to you by this item become permanent, the item is destroyed, and you create a new multiverse. The multiverse you came from is separated from the one you created by a sea of endless void and the Far Realms.

MAGIC

Characters with the spellcasting or pact magic feature who participated in the defeat of Zyldrohar add the following spell to each of their spellcasting classes' spell lists.

NEW SPELL: BREACH OBLIVION

9th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 100 feet

Components: V, S, M (a black diamond worth at least 10,000 gp, which the spell consumes)

Duration: 1 minute

A fragment of the oblivion that preceded the universe spreads from a point you choose within range to fill a 5-foot-radius sphere. The sphere spreads around corners and envelops everything within with darkness. A creature with darkvision can't see through this darkness and no light can illuminate it.

Each creature within the area must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or lose 100 hit points. On a success, creatures lose 50 hit points instead. All nonmagical objects within the area lose 100 hit points. For the duration of the spell, each creature within the sphere at the start of your turn must repeat the saving throw and the damage to objects is dealt again.

For the duration of the spell, the radius of the sphere increases by 5 feet at the start of each of your turns.

APPENDIX: ADVERSARIES BY CR AND TYPE

ADVERSARIES BY CR

Adversary	CR	Adversary	CR
Cheddar	1/4	Ebonbeak, the "Original" Owlbear	7
Enlightened Piercer	1	Margrim, The Black Bulette	7
Scarlet Stone-Eater	2	Chief Klanklack	8
Spell Eater	2	Liu Shui	8
Archibald Sinister	3	Vorpal Flying Sword	8
Giant Crawling Claw	3	Abigarrada	9
Alchemical Cube	4	Kranklob'Obgund	9
Neith-Arach, the Web Queen	4	Aethlin Adamar	10
Nocri Dragonwing (AKA Halfwing)	4 or 5	Dione the Beautiful	10
Baxter Brundle	5	Venus Hydrap	10
Beast of the Eternal Blaze	5	Grand Sabaar	11
Leda "The Swan" Altmar	5	Ausroc, The Faux-Phoenix	13
Madadh, the Wayward Hound	5	Eye of Frost	14
Mirrorborn	5	Zuphrezask	14
Reijla, The Sandman	5	Jabberkoth, the Decaying Horror	16
The Sea-ambling Mound	5	Wyrmslayer	16
Varesso Isaro, The Butcher in Gold	5	Ondual	18
Black Nightmare	6	Tenser's Experimental Armor	20
Leechking	6	Anhktepot	25
Madcap Mraz	6	Zyldrohar	30

ADVERSARIES BY TYPE

Adversary	Type	Adversary	Type
Eye of Frost	aberration	Black Nightmare	monstrosity
Zuphrezask	aberration	Dione the Beautiful	monstrosity
Cheddar	beast	Ebonbeak, the "Original" Owlbear	monstrosity
Leechking	beast / monstrosity	Enlightened Piercer	monstrosity
Abigarrada	celestial	Kranklob'Obgund	monstrosity
Ondual	celestial	Margrim, The Black Bulette	monstrosity
Tenser's Experimental Armor	construct	Mirrorborn	monstrosity
Vorpal Flying Sword	construct	Neith-Arach, the Web Queen	monstrosity
Zyldrohar	construct	Scarlet Stone-Eater	monstrosity
Nocri Dragonwing (AKA Halfwing)	dragon	Spell Eater	monstrosity
Archibald Sinister	elemental	Wyrmslayer	monstrosity
Beast of the Eternal Blaze	fiend	Alchemical Cube	ooze
Leda "The Swan" Altmar	fiend	Grand Sabaar	plant
Madadh, the Wayward Hound	fiend	The Sea-ambling Mound	plant
Reijla, The Sandman	fiend	Venus Hydrap	plant
Baxter Brundle	humanoid	Anhktepot	undead
Chief Klanklack	humanoid	Giant Crawling Claw	undead
Madcap Mraz	humanoid	Jabberkoth, the Decaying Horror	undead
Aethlin Adamar	monstrosity	Liu Shui	undead
Ausroc, The Faux-Phoenix	monstrosity	Varesso Isaro, The Butcher in Gold	undead

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